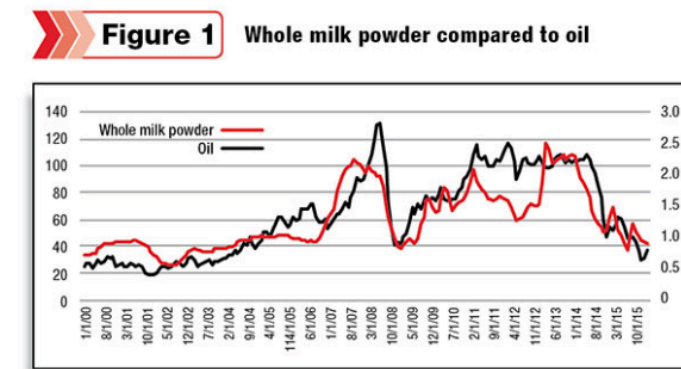


Lucie Stahl was born in 1977 in Berlin, where she currently lives and works. Recent solo shows include presentations at dépendance, Brussels, Belgium (2021); *Queer Thoughts*, New York, USA; Freedman Fitzpatrick, Paris, France (2019); Cabinet, London, UK (2018); Fri Art Kunsthalle, Fribourg, Switzerland (2018); Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg, Germany (2016); Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, USA (2016).

She has recently exhibited in group exhibitions at Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, USA (2019); Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (2019); MRAC Occitanie Pyrénées, Serignan, France (2018); Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2017); 9th Berlin Biennale, Berlin, Germany (2016); *La vie moderne*, 13th Biennale de Lyon, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, France (2015); *Mirror Effect*, The Box, Los Angeles, USA (2015); *DOOM: Surface Controle*, Le Magasin, Grenoble, France (2014); and *Puddle, Pothole, Portal* at Sculpture Center, New York USA (2014). Stahl is professor of photography at University of Art and Design Linz, Austria.

PITS

Tracking down a strange, loose narrative of the acutely violent aspects of power and resource distribution, informed by a female factor that runs like a bloody current pulling loose debris in from the shores of a male dominated landscape, shouting is the only way to be heard over the roar of yourself.



This type of everyday Marie Antoinette'esque behaviour is mirrored in the figure of the dairyman. Having retreated from the politics and terrors of the urban metropolis to the countrified idyll of a barn this persona engages in the simple joy of pouring a glass of milk –over and over again. In a constant selfish flow, all too liberal amounts of the dairy produce exit and enter diverse vessels, while the petrochemical wheels of prayer are forever turning – evoking the slow and steady rotation of a milking carousel.

Like vampiric fossil servants, these steel krakens are mining black gold, leeching ancient sunlight, constantly sucking to nurture our every need, our endless hunger, our never ending thirst for fuel. They are feeding our fantasies, transporting our wishes, channeling our ideas of individualism and independence. Purified, tamed and molded into shape, the fluid fruit of their labor allows us to express the feeling we got used to calling freedom.

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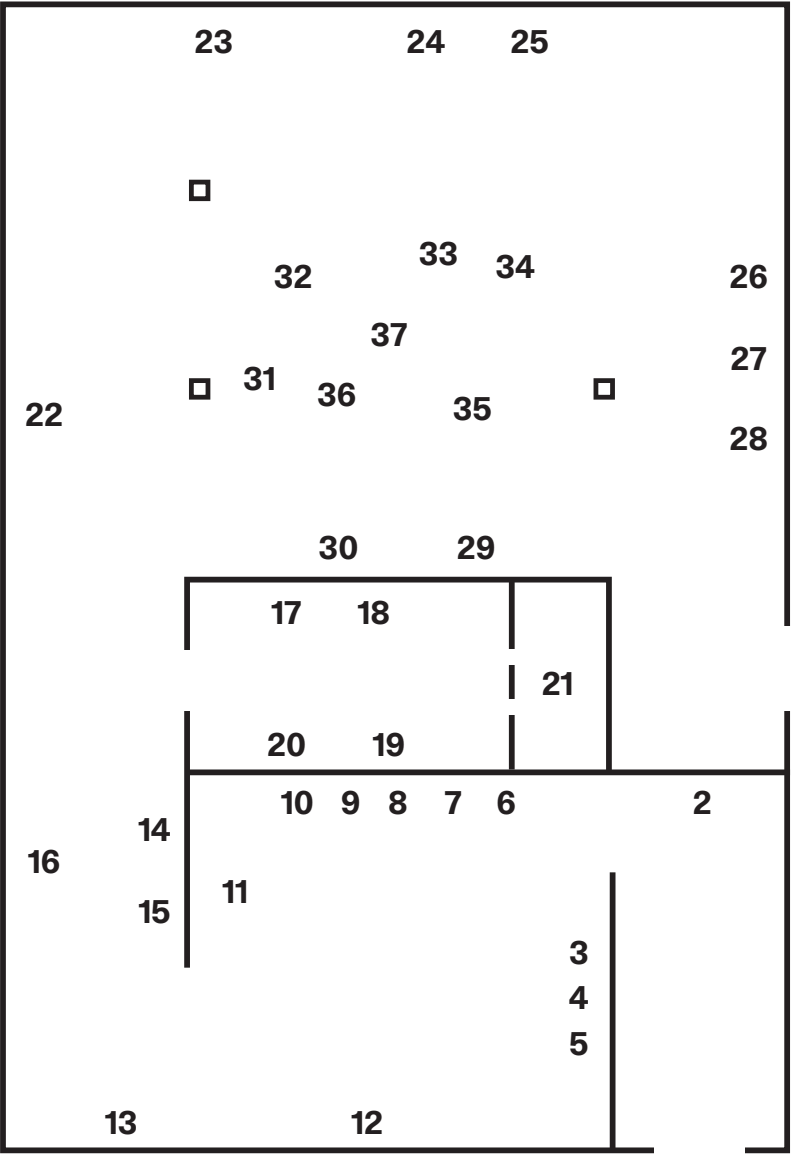
LVR
Qualität für Menschen

Kunststiftung
NRW

Stiftung Kunst
der Sparkasse in Bonn

Exquisite corpse, Lucie Stahl, texts, 2014–22

12 March – 31 July 2022



1	<i>Petrochemical Prayer Wheel (public)</i> , 2022, steel, oil drums, 215 × 240 cm	14	<i>Extractor</i> , 2019, inkjet print, mounted on aluminium, epoxy resin, perspex, steel screws, 70 × 105 cm	26	<i>Burrows (5)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 87 × 115 cm
2	<i>House of Prayer</i> , 2018, inkjet print, aluminium, epoxy resin, 167 × 120 cm	15	<i>Machinist II</i> , 2019, inkjet print, mounted on aluminium, epoxy resin, perspex, steel screws, 70 × 105 cm	27	<i>Burrows (6)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 106 × 125 cm
3	<i>Prayer Wheel (Pepsi)</i> , 2014, can, aluminium, 16,5 × 10 × 7,5 cm	16	<i>Surge</i> , 2018, inkjet print, aluminium, epoxy resin, 264 × 148 cm,	28	<i>Burrows (7)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 108 × 127cm
4	<i>Prayer Wheel (Amstel)</i> , 2014, can, aluminium, 16,5 × 10 × 7,5 cm	17	<i>Sluice (1)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, perspex, 150 × 100 cm	29	<i>Burrows (8)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 113 × 143 cm
5	<i>Prayer Wheel (Dr. Pepper)</i> , 2014, can, aluminium, 16,5 × 10 × 7,5 cm	18	<i>Sluice (2)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, perspex, 150 × 100 cm	30	<i>Burrows (9)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 116 × 92 cm
6	<i>Giant (3)</i> , 2019, inkjet print, gator board, steel frame, epoxy resin, 48 × 50 cm	19	<i>Sluice (3)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, perspex, 150 × 100 cm	31	<i>Seven Sisters (1)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 340 × 44 × 44 cm
7	<i>Giant (6)</i> , 2019, inkjet print, gator board, steel frame, epoxy resin, 48 × 50 cm	20	<i>Sluice (4)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, perspex, 150 × 100 cm	32	<i>Seven Sisters (2)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 235 × 99 × 99 cm
8	<i>Giant (5)</i> , 2019, inkjet print, gator board, steel frame, epoxy resin, 48 × 50 cm	21	<i>FUEL</i> , 2019, mixed media, dimensions variable	33	<i>Seven Sisters (3)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 218 × 150 × 110 cm
9	<i>Giant (2)</i> , 2019, inkjet print, gator board, steel frame, epoxy resin, 48 × 50 cm	22	<i>Burrows (1)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 112 × 128 cm	34	<i>Seven Sisters (4)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 255 × 110 × 110 cm
10	<i>Giant (4)</i> , 2019, inkjet print, gator board, steel frame, epoxy resin, 48 × 50 cm	23	<i>Burrows (2)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 133 × 107 cm	35	<i>Seven Sisters (5)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 315 × 75 × 75 cm
11	<i>New Artisan (Tar)</i> , 2016, inkjet print, aluminum, epoxy resin, 215 × 145 cm	24	<i>Burrows (3)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 112 × 142 cm	36	<i>Seven Sisters (6)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 228 × 132 × 96 cm
12	<i>Milk, Oil and Butter</i> , 2018, inkjet print, aluminium, epoxy resin, 135 × 90 cm each	25	<i>Burrows (4)</i> , 2022, inkjet print, aluminium, 123 × 96 cm	37	<i>Seven Sisters (7)</i> , 2022, steel, fabric, 258 × 180 × 105 cm
13	<i>Repository</i> , 2016, inkjet print, aluminium, epoxy resin, 148 × 264 cm				

The architecture of the exhibition has been conceived with an unfolding quality, interconnected chapters and moments of concentration, where inside and outside seep into each other. As such, the show begins and ends with a work extending out into the outside, and the front yard of the Bonner Kunstverein. Drawing on the shape of Tibetan prayer wheels, the sculpture takes the form of a metal frame, holding a line of oil cans, for users to spin and turn. An allusion to the sublime or transcendence, being at once still that, and also, simultaneously a tactile encounter with exuberance and exhaustion.



There are structural parallels between the fossil fuel and dairy industries. Both involve sucking, pumping, flow and pressure in the extraction of raw material to be repurposed for growth and energy. There are also largely neutralised ways of seeing and relating to other beings and the earth that are at the core of these modes of production and consumption. Such links and slippages materialise in Lucie Stahl's work. Her visual language is ambivalent yet exact, playing off the collective sense that the shifting ground of daily reality may be a warning of imminent systemic collapse. In *Seven Sisters*, there is a continuous process of moving close to, and abstracting. In approaching a field that is almost too big for words, she zooms in on the details in lieu of attempting an impossible overview. In a suite of newly conceived photographic works, *Burrows*, a series of crude oil close-ups from an abandoned oil field are captured, the materiality and the seeping or bleeding nature of their openings brought onto a silvery plate. The substance, a remnant of a prehistoric natural world, combined with the materiality of the photographic sheen create both surface and unknowable depth. In the puddles, creatures and forms offer themselves up to us: one might see two beings trailing through a storm; a monstrous profile emerging from the sea, and then the half-submerged outlines of an animal trapped in the actual puddle. These spots of 'waste' are surreal in the close viewing – a sense of strangeness and unreality which seems to touch something at the core of our submerged/subconscious relation with cycles of consumption and waste.



The work is in dialogue with select earlier pieces of Stahl, such as *Giants*, a series of somber photographic views of oil platforms. The epically massive machinery stands in water like stoic automatons, the depths of their foundation and drills extending beneath water and below that, hundreds of meters underneath the surface of the earth. What we view here is the tip. In the unseen, the *Giants* are moving through the seabed, extracting as part of a cycle ecologist and activist Andreas Malm has described as the ‘warming condition’. The terrifying scale and impressive brutality of these complexes also articulate the depth of what cannot be seen, or that which might only have been half-acknowledged. Yet, as soon as the vertigo-inducing possibility of darkness and monstrosity emerges in Stahl’s work, there is also the possibility of the counter, through ambivalence, through destabilising lightness and humour.

This is the case of *FUEL*, an oversized creature on four legs, reminiscent of a milking machine. There is a cartoonish quality to this beast, its thin legs resting on its suction feet. The scale is absurd, a zooming-in effect on the metallic joints and limbs, including the suction openings devised to hold on to soft tissue.



A key strand of the exhibition is drawing on these long-running concerns but also leaning into new spaces of materiality and mood, a quality most powerfully sensed in the new sculptural installation *Seven Sisters*. The title alludes to the eponymous conglomerate of seven transnational oil companies that dominated the petroleum industry after the Second World War, the sisters referencing the mythological Pleiades fathered by the Titan Atlas. Taking the form of steel towers, reminiscent of deep sea oil rigs and drilling pumps, they breathe the optimism of an early industrial, new frontier idea of nature’s bounty. The figures, like fine line-drawings, each exude their individual character stance and attitude, and a sense of embodiment all the more strange through their skirts and ribbons. There is a restricted quality to these creatures, tied together, held in a grip teetering on the edge between the erotic and force. An undertone of bondage complicated by the logic of the milk and oil extraction within which they assemble.

