

**Exhibition title:**

Like ships made of reeds

**Artist:**

Philip Seibel

@philip\_seibel

**Duration:**

07.09. - 22.10.2023

**Curators:**

Alfons Knogl & Lukas Schmenger

@alfonsknogl

@lukasschmenger

**Venue:**

FLⒶT\$

293 Avenue Charles-Quint

1083 Brussels

[https://linktr.ee/\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_flats](https://linktr.ee/_____flats)

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**Photography:**

Courtesy FLⒶT\$ and the artist

**Supported by:**

Kunststiftung NRW

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## Exhibition Text:

Every now and then I am reminded that we spend the vast majority of our time indoors: at home, at school, at the office, in shops and retail spaces, in bars, clubs and restaurants, in the apartments of friends and relatives, in train stations and moving vehicles, in hotels, venues and theaters, in museums, churches and hospitals – big boxes and little boxes with varying ratios of functionality to ornament.

Every now and then I am also reminded that we live in an air-conditioned dream/nightmare. In standard hotel rooms, split AC units are now as common as bedside bibles used to be. In most cases, these units are fixed to the wall above the entrance door, so that upon entering the room, guests can briefly enjoy a view unencumbered by the sight of the bulky appliance – a sort of icon corner in reverse, since an icon corner is usually located to be visible when you first enter. Once you lay down on the bed and gaze up at the familiar yet bewildering piece of engineering, you might begin to wonder: what's the optimal temperature? Will I get sick if I sleep with the AC on? Is this thing more ugly than it is convenient? Would natality rates suddenly drop if these machines didn't exist? Is this a tool that "brings energy home" as Ursula K. Le Guin would have it, or one that "forces energy outward?" How does it work? What's inside the box? Is it good, is it bad? Where is the remote control for this thing?!

Although the overhead placement of these split units is clearly a matter of practicality, I can't help but overthink and ask myself if we also tend to place them at such heights, along with other physical objects including speakers, curtains, wall reliefs and friezes, because they pertain to immaterial realms such as temperature, sound, light and narration. As a "unit," this compact object is at once whole and dependent upon an unseen network, which suggests a hidden elsewhere beyond the confine of the room. While its boxiness could bring to mind minimalism's so-called "specific objects" (objects that can be apprehended on a phenomenological level), the idea that it contains unseen parts and is linked to an unseen system constitutes a conceptual or even metaphoric opening. Philip Seibel's quietly baroque Gehäuse sculptures consciously play with this dichotomy.

In borrowing some of the formal qualities of these units, Seibel paradoxically empties them out, thereby turning what first appears to be an enclosure into a container or a vessel where other ideas can get on board like stowaways. Looking up at his Gehäuse makes us aware of the many other vessels and boxes that create and sustain the conditions for our lives, those that shield us and our belongings, or again, those which act as receptacles for our fears and aspirations. Like ships made of reeds, there is something sensible but absurd about Seibel's encasements. Their sleek finish seems to conceal something that is beyond our reach; or at least, it

blurs the line between the manufactured and the handcrafted, the real and the fake, the readymade and the not already made, the functional and the decorative, the office, the hotel and the gallery.

**Text:**

Emile Rubino  
@emilerubino

**Press release:**

FLA T\$ is pleased to present LIKE SHIPS MADE OF REEDS by Philip Seibel.

Philip Seibel was born 1980 in Hagen (DE). He lives and works in Berlin. Recent solo shows of him include Gehäuse at Magenta Plains, NY (2023), The Word for World is Forest at Union Pacific, London (2022). Recent group shows include Darling, your head's not right at François Ghebaly, NY (2023), Inauguration at LoBruttoStahl, Paris (2023), I heard myself close my eyes, then open them, (with Patricia L. Boyd and K.R.M. Mooney) at Braunsfelder, Cologne (2022)