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**Kunsthalle  
Friart  
Fribourg**

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Charlotte Johannesson

Save as art?

5.NOV.2023 – 11.FEV.2024

Exhibition guide

## Introduction

Charlotte Johannesson has been producing work centred on an intuitive practice of image creation for fifty years. At the crossroads of the weaving loom and emerging digital technologies, her oeuvre is guided by an anti-authoritarian approach that resonates with events and changes in the eras she has lived through. Her Friart retrospective *Save as art?* puts the accent both on the different media she has explored and the coherence of themes and messages conveyed by her images.

During her training as weaver, Charlotte Johannesson discovered the work of Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970) and Ryggen's tapestries with their expressive realism denouncing fascist society. In Malmö in the 1960s Johannesson opened her studio Cannabis, named after the hemp plant used for the fibres for her works. The studio became a meeting place for the then thriving counter-cultural scene.

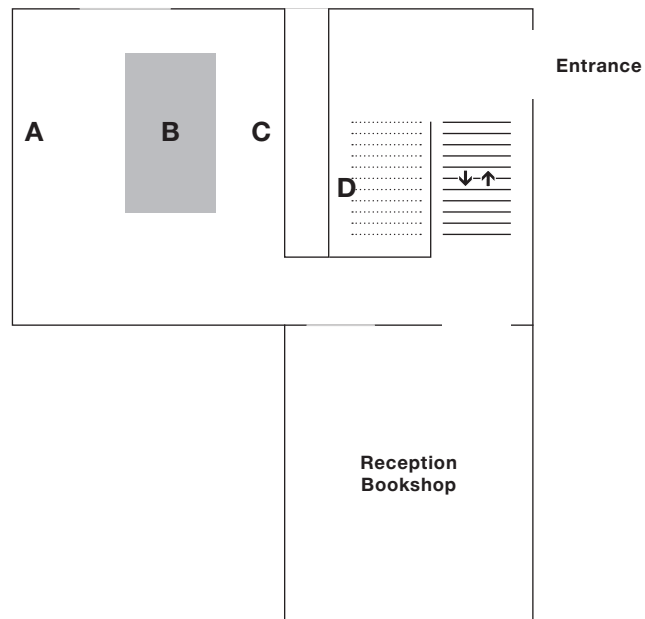
In 1978, fascinated by the similarities between the weaving loom and computer programming, Charlotte Johannesson swapped her textile artwork *I'm no Angel* (1972-1973/2017) for a very early personal computer, the Apple II. At that time, these still relatively scarce machines were used to process information and text. Using a grant, Charlotte and her partner Sture Johannesson set up the Digital Theatre in 1981. The Digital Theatre was a platform for the research and development of artistic digital projects and was described as one of the most advanced Apple II systems of its time. It included seven computers, printers, monitors and synthesisers. It would be operational until 1985.

Neither textile nor digital art were then seen as being part of the field of contemporary art. Retrospectively, the artist's choices, which often went against the current, strengthened the sense of a work in which feminism was allied with new technologies, making the artist a pioneer of post-digital art.

## Biography

Charlotte Johannesson (born 1943 in Sweden) lives and works in Skanör, Sweden. She is represented by the gallery Hollybush Gardens in London.

The exhibition at Friart *Save as art?* follows her participation in the Venice Biennale in 2022 and her recent retrospectives at Nottingham Contemporary (2023), the Badischer Kunstverein (2022) and the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid (2021). This exhibition marks the rediscovery of a self-taught artist whose career has largely taken place on the fringes of the official art system.



## Basement

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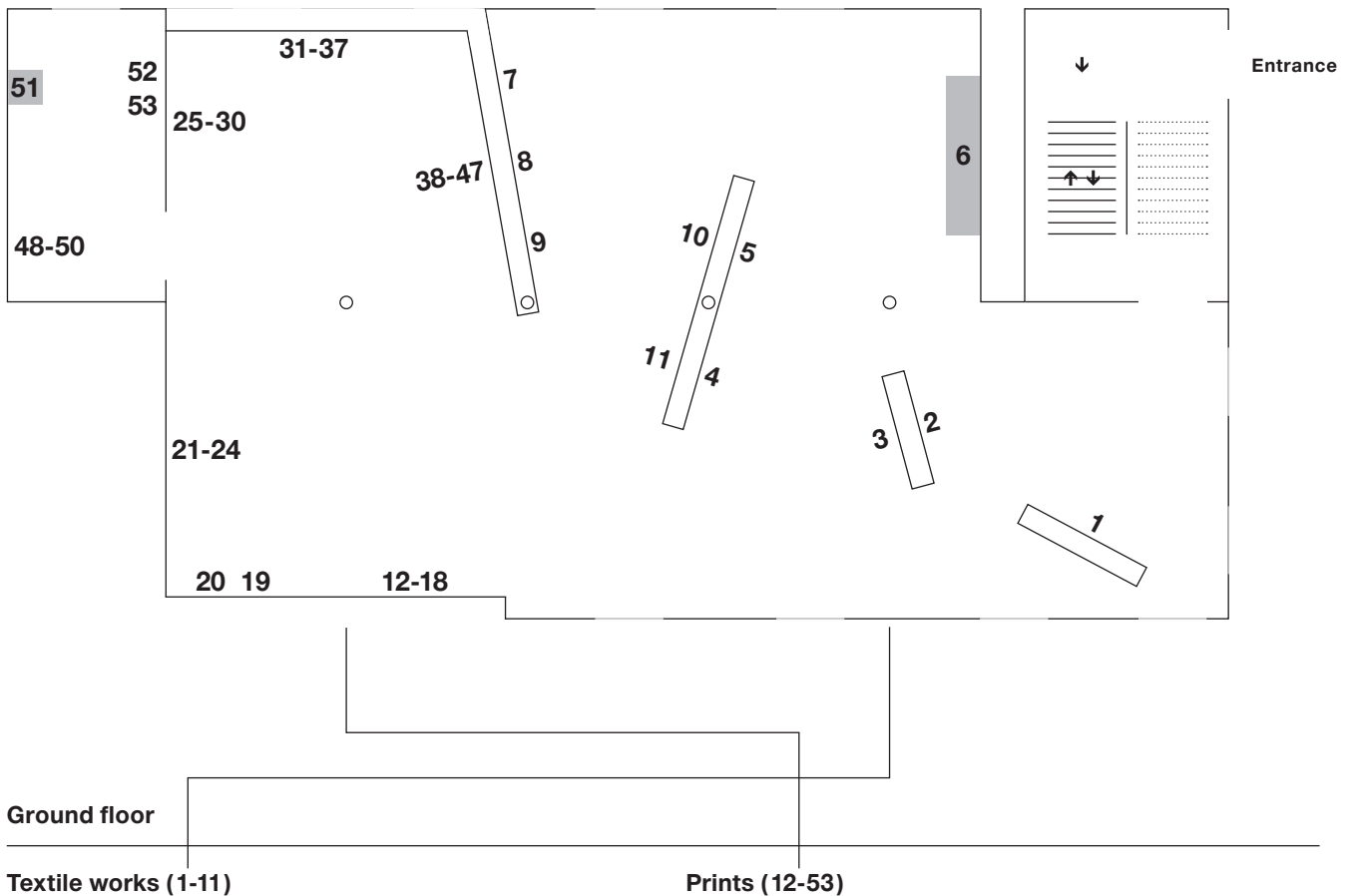
- A** Archives Digital Theatre (slideshow)
- B** Archives Digital Theatre
- C** *Digital computer graphics, 1981-1985*

Images courtesy of the artist's archive

- D** *Human 21, 2017*  
23.5 × 16.5 cm  
3D prints (21 prints)

## Archives

**A patchwork of documents of archives and original digital visions puts the Digital Theatre (1978-1985) into context: memories of a new type of production studio with an experimental ethos.**



The main exhibition space on the ground floor presents a broad selection of the textile works dating from the 1970s. The images resulting from collisions between slogans and reappropriated symbols create semantic games engaging with the chaotic political events of the time. On several tapestries, a number refers to the imposition of the social security code attributed to each individual by the Swedish state. In *No choice amongst the stinking fish* (1970/2016), we see personifications of the political parties of the time. *Chile echoes in my Scull* (1973/2016) evokes the Chilean coup d'état of 1973, while *Freie Die Raf* (1976) echoed the Baader Meinhof affair.

These graphic and satirical works comment on the blurring of the lines between information and media propaganda, as witnessed within liberal politics, the mediatised landscape of terrorism and the punk and industrial culture of the 1970s. Demonstrating resistance rather than direct militancy, the artist used the medium of textiles to open up a space that conflated agit prop and domestic creativity. The interlaced fibres took on the role of a feminist code par excellence, a minor key material subversion of the violence of unequivocal meaning.

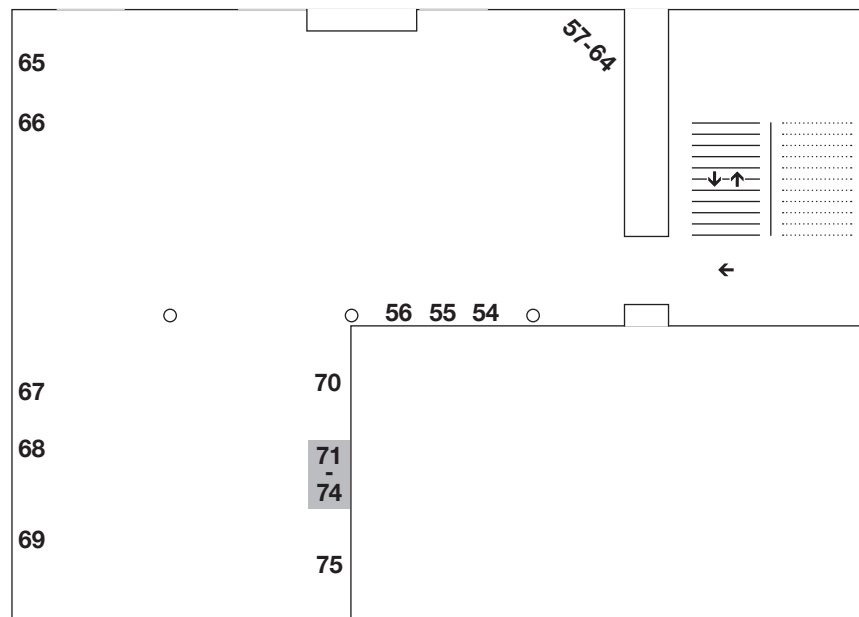
Plotter prints, based on rudimentary code, created by the artist under the banner of the Digital Theatre between 1981 and 1985, were the ethereal visions of a nascent virtual imaginary. They comport within them the magic of revelation, the first times. Although automated, their production remained within the domain of the hand-made and required focussed individual concentration from the artist.

Hung according to both their thematic and formal constellations, the series illustrate the transformation of the social body in contact with digital media technologies. The portraits of famous personalities, of Bowie (14), Massou (24), the artist Beuys (29), the writer Victoria Benedictsson (25) evoke the new viral power of the face. Indian dancers, caravans, maps of the world, mermaids, narcotics, abstractions, make up the figures of a virtual global groove. The ridged digital surface and its pixels impose a technical rationality. They link the eye and the mind to produce an interactive vertigo.

Charlotte Johannesson explores the potential of modifiable images and motifs. Alteration, distortions, pulsations, vibrations, re-compositions are the figures of style of a cybernetic style in test phase. Sat in front of her command posts, the artist methodically composes, codes and remixes. Each image requires of her an applied execution, a routine tripping, establishing a plateau to improvise on. As with the weaving loom, the artist connects to an interface and to its social phylum. Together alone in connected solitude they reason things out.

## TEXTILE WORKS

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|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> <i>Jamlika ar vi allihopa (We are all equal)</i><br/>70s/2020<br/>85.5 × 128.5 cm<br/>Wool, wood, barbed wire, handwoven reproduction by Tiyoko Tomikawa</p> <p><b>2</b> <i>I'm No Angel</i><br/>1972-1973/2017<br/>165 × 100 cm<br/>Handwoven wool, reproduction of a missing artwork</p> <p><b>3</b> <i>Terror</i>, 1970/2016<br/>121 × 60 cm<br/>Linen, wool, leather, pins, pencil sharpener, needle, barbed wire, buttons, handwoven reproduction by Tiyoko Tomikawa</p> <p><b>4</b> <i>Street Life</i><br/>1976/2020<br/>80 × 142 cm<br/>Wool, handwoven reproduction by Tiyoko Tomikawa</p> <p><b>5</b> <i>Look</i><br/>60s/2020<br/>85 × 140 cm<br/>Wool, handwoven reproduction by Tiyoko Tomikawa</p> <p><b>6</b> Sketches and archives</p> <p><b>7</b> <i>Frei die RAF</i>, 1976<br/>150 × 100 cm<br/>Handwoven wool</p> <p><b>8</b> <i>No Choice Amongst Stinking Fish</i><br/>1970/2016<br/>100 × 60 cm<br/>Wool, handwoven reproduction by Tiyoko Tomikawa</p> <p><b>9</b> <i>Chile eko i skallen (Chile echoes in my Skull)</i>, 1973/2016<br/>Textile: 108 × 59 cm<br/>Baton: 1.8 × 94.5 cm<br/>Wool, cinnamon stick, handwoven reproduction par Tiyoko Tomikawa</p> <p><b>10</b> <i>No Future</i>, 1977<br/>105 × 94 cm<br/>Weaving<br/>Courtesy Valdemar Gerdin</p> | <p><b>11</b> <i>New Wave</i>, 1977<br/>156 × 107 cm<br/>Weaving<br/>Courtesy Thomas Ekström, stockholmmodern</p> <p>PRINTS<br/>left to right and top to bottom</p> <p><b>12-13/15-18</b><br/><i>How to Make a Plotting of David Bowie</i><br/>1981-1986<br/>44 × 31.5 × 1.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>14</b> <i>David Bowie (With His Autograph)</i><br/>1986<br/>115 × 85 × 4 cm<br/>Screen print on paper</p> <p><b>19</b> <i>Black and White</i><br/>1983<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>20</b> <i>Computer Mind</i><br/>1984<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>21</b> <i>Computer Mind</i><br/>1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>22</b> <i>Self-portrait</i><br/>1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>23</b> <i>Self-portrait</i><br/>1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper<br/>Private collection, Basel, Switzerland</p> <p><b>24</b> <i>Massoud (Ahmad Sha Massoud, Afghan Politician and Military, 1953-2001)</i><br/>1981-1986<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>25</b> <i>Victoria Benedictsson</i>, 1983<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> | <p><b>26</b> <i>World</i>, 1984<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>27</b> <i>Texture 7</i>, 1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>28</b> <i>Texture 3</i>, 1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>29-30</b> <i>Joseph Beuys (German artist, 1921-1986)</i><br/>1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>31</b> <i>Clarten Niebuhr in Happy Arabia 1758</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>32</b> <i>Walk</i>, 1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>33</b> <i>Self-portrait</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>34</b> <i>There</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>35</b> <i>Walk 3</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>36</b> <i>Black Hole (Purple Blue)</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>37</b> <i>Untitled (Purple)</i><br/>1983<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>38</b> <i>Untitled (Orange)</i><br/>1983<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>39</b> <i>Untitled (Grey)</i><br/>1983<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>40</b> <i>Oasis</i>, 1985<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper<br/>Private collection, Basel, Switzerland</p> | <p><b>41</b> <i>Pray</i>, 1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>42</b> <i>Flag (Turquoise Brown)</i>, 1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>43</b> <i>Save Us</i>, 1984<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>44</b> <i>Vote ?</i>, 1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>45</b> <i>A Note in Space</i><br/>1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>46</b> <i>Where</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>47</b> <i>Walk</i>, 1981-1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>48</b> <i>Parsifal</i>, 1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>49</b> <i>Vote</i>, 1984<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>50</b> <i>Richard Wagner (German composer, 1813-1883)</i>, 1983<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>51</b> Charlotte and Sture Johannesson<br/><i>Riksdagshuset</i>, 1983<br/>1:00 min<br/>Digital computer graphics<br/>Sound: Goran Weihs</p> <p><b>52</b> <i>Stockholm City Hall</i><br/>1985<br/>52 × 42 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> <p><b>53</b> <i>Sweden's coat of arms</i>, 1986<br/>42 × 52 × 3.5 cm<br/>Computer graphics plotted on paper</p> |
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### First floor

<b>54</b>	<i>Peace</i> , 1986 42 × 52 × 3.5 cm Computer graphics plotted on paper	<b>62</b>	<i>Brain cell</i> , 2019 111 × 57 cm Wool, digitally woven	<b>69</b>	<i>Worth a World of Arguments</i> , c. 1970 145 × 110 cm Weaving Private collection	The four handmade laces works were commissioned by Nottingham Contemporary.
<b>55</b>	<i>Peace</i> , 1983 42 × 52 × 3.5 cm Computer graphics plotted on paper	<b>63</b>	<i>We Are Not Museum Curators</i> , 2019 121 × 57 cm Wool, digitally woven	<b>75</b>	<i>Desert Dream</i> , 1990 91.5 × 64.5 cm Lace and ink on handmade paper	
<b>56</b>	<i>Bird</i> , 1983 42 × 52 × 3.5 cm Computer graphics plotted on paper	<b>64</b>	<i>Native American</i> 2019 117 × 57 cm Wool, digitally woven	left to right		
left to right		<b>65</b>	<i>More Matter, Less Art</i> 2018 81 × 65 × 6 cm Acrylic on canvas with organic matter	<b>71</b>	<i>Umbrella</i> , 2022-2023 47 × 11.5 cm Handwoven lace	
<b>57</b>	<i>Caravan</i> , 2019 104 × 57 cm Wool, digitally woven	<b>66</b>	<i>Longing</i> , c. 1970 110 × 120 cm Weaving Private collection	<b>72</b>	<i>Robin Hood</i> 2022-2023 49 × 12 cm Handwoven lace	
<b>58</b>	<i>HIGH FOREVER</i> 2019 120 × 58 cm Wool, digitally woven	<b>67</b>	<i>POETS TELL MANY LIES</i> , 2020-2021 60 × 40 × 1.5 cm Acrylic on canvas with organic matter	<b>73</b>	<i>Work MMXXII</i> 2022-2023 46 × 10 cm Handwoven lace	
<b>59</b>	<i>Vote</i> , 2019 105 × 57 cm Wool, digitally woven	<b>68</b>	<i>...that we seen our atoms!</i> , 2020-2021 60 × 40 × 1.5 cm Acrylic on canvas with organic matter	<b>74</b>	<i>Braincell</i> , 2022-2023 47 × 12 cm Handwoven lace	
<b>60</b>	<i>The Brain is Wider Than the Sky</i> , 2019 125 × 58 cm Wool, digitally woven			<b>75</b>	<i>It's All in a Day's Work</i> , 2020-2021 50 × 50 × 1.5 cm Acrylic on canvas	
<b>61</b>	<i>Save as Art Yes/No</i> 2019 128 × 56 cm Wool, digitally woven					

All works except when mentioned : Courtesy the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

### Fiber art

**Matter and memories.** A selection of more recent works are exhibited on the first floor. Crochet and paper enrich a practice the artist calls «fiber art». Native digital motifs serve as source code for the production of new tapestries (57-64). The artist's paintings on the long wall at the back give a more natural or cosmic dimension to her work as a whole. Their messages in the form of poetic art (*More Matter, Less Art*, 2018; *POETS TELL MANY LIES*, 2020-2021) enter into dialogue with the early textile works *Longing* (c. 1970) and *Worth a World of Arguments* (c. 1970). This urge to break away, a love for liberty.

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♥ **MERCI**  
♥ **DANKE**  
♥ **THANK YOU**



THE EXHIBITION IS ORGANISED IN  
COLLABORATION WITH

**Nottingham**  
**County Council**

**HOLLYBUSH GARDENS**

DURING THE EXHIBITION

**OPENING**  
**4.NOV.2023, 18:00**

FESTIVAL CULTURE ET ECOLE 2023  
AVEC FANNY DELARZE, KOLLEKTIV ORTIE  
CULTUREETECOLE.CH  
**14-30.NOV.2023**

VISITE DES AMI-E-S AVEC NICOLAS BRULHART  
**16.NOV.2023, 19:00**

LECTURE BY ART HISTORIAN AND CURATOR LARS BANG LARSEN ON  
THE WORK OF CHARLOTTE JOHANNESSON AS PART OF THREE DAYS  
SYMPOSIUM (14 - 16.DEC)  
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG  
*BEYOND REALITY? VIRTUALITY AND EXPERIENCE*  
(AESTHETICS & CRITICS VII)  
**14.DEC.2023**

NOCTURNAL TOUR  
WITH NICOLAS BRULHART AND SADIE PLANT  
**27.JAN.2024, 20:00**

FRIBAR SPECIAL  
CONTRE-BANDE: MUSIQUES ALTERNATIVES ET CULTURE CASSETTE AVEC  
LES STATUES MEURENT AUSSI  
**10.FEV.2024, 20-0:00**

COMPLETE PROGRAM  
**WWW.FRIART.CH**

#### **KUNSTHALLE FRIART FRIBOURG**

NICOLAS BRULHART, ESTELLE NEGRO, SACHA RAPPO, JULIE FOLLY,  
MAXIME PAPAUX, FANNY DELARZE/KOLLEKTIV ORTIE, PIERRICK  
BRÉGEON/EUROSTANDARD, FABIAN STÜCHELI, PIERRE BERSET, STEPHAN  
WEBER, ANNE SUDAN, JÖRG BOSSHARD, GUILLAUME BAERISWYL, ANJA  
DELZ, JACK SIMS, ATELIER 48, CLÉMENCE DE WECK AND THE COMMITTEE  
OF FRI-ART, THE FRIENDS OF FRIART, RECEPTION STAFF, CONCEIÇÃO  
SILVA CARVALHO, ALIONA CAZACU

#### **THANKS**

ANJA CASSER, MARIE GYGER, MALINDA JOHANNESSON, LARS BANG  
LARSEN, BERNHARD ZITZ, NICOLE YIP, VERTICALDRAPE

#### **OPENING HOURS**

**MO-TUE BY APPOINTMENT**  
**WED-FRI 12AM-6PM**  
**SAT-SUN 1-6PM**