

Meyer Riegger

Schaperstraße 14  
10719 Berlin  
+49 30 315 665 80  
www.meyer-riegger.de  
info@meyer-riegger.de  
Press contact: alicja@meyer-riegger.de

## **Silke Schatz**

*Vanishing point*

**Opening: Thursday, 18 January 2024, 6–9 pm**

19 January–2 March 2024

## **Press Release**

The exhibition *Vanishing point* by Cologne-based artist Silke Schatz (b. 1967) at Meyer Riegger presents groups of works from her long-term project *Manheim calling*, in which she documents a dystopian village in flux. Manheim is situated directly next to the Hambach open-cast lignite mine and – if everything goes according to plan – is set to be wiped off the map in 2024. This research is part of an extensive body of work in which the artist interrogates contexts of injustice, protest cultures and societal models. Silke Schatz uses artistic techniques and processes borrowed from other spheres of life for her field research, which is based on avant-garde practices from the 1970s.

The artist gained international recognition for her large-format perspectival room drawings. In her transparent projections of lines created from memory using coloured and lead pencil, she reflected on subjects including her experiences as a squatter and the places she has lived, as well as Nazi fascism and the Holocaust, up until 2016. Her largest drawing, *Horizont* (2008), was inspired by the Reichswald forest around Kleve.

The Rome Prize winner constructs her exhibitions from elements that metaphorically and materially resonate with her intellectual analyses and experiences. In this exhibition *Manheim calling* (2021), a replica of a bus stop in Manheim, serves as an architectural anchor, a concrete reference point in the space. The sculpture is also used to hang her cyanotypes (a variant of the photogram), which were realised outdoors in Manheim.

Another constant in her symbolic world is natural and electric light, which stands for knowledge, hope and the transformative power of art that takes on a different perspective. Following the demolition of almost all of the houses in the community, which once had a population of 1,600, only the vertically protruding lampposts are left to mark the ramified network of paths in the village, which has been mostly razed to the ground. The artist managed to capture the shadow of one of these striking spherical lamps in a cyanotype produced using sunlight. Light is a prerequisite for growth. Silke Schatz utilises ceramic replicas of the lamps as containers for shrubs and perennials from Manheim.

In the artist's oeuvre as a whole, the work complex *Manheim calling* represents an interdisciplinary exploration of the intersections between nature and civilisation. For example, the artist identified the Latin names of the individual plants and established an online botanical database. She created an eclectic monument to the overgrown meadow orchard on Esperantostraße in the form of preserved fruit and imprints of tree bark patterns in clay. She arranges shards that are evidence of human coexistence in display cases like archaeological finds.

Silke Schatz views Manheim as an educational site on several levels – ecologically, socially and mentally. In her own words:

“The fact that things are constantly changing is an intrinsic feature of this place, even though at first glance everything looks the same. I have to keep working with this change, I want to work with this change, because it is such a challenge, this continual process of letting go. This includes the prospect of the village disappearing completely, which I didn't know at the beginning.”

After the village was stripped of all its landmarks except for the church, all that remains is an almost indefinable nowhere. Vegetation able to thrive among the rubble now dominates the area. The findings and documentation from Silke Schatz's artistic field research chronicle profound changes in a complex and subtle way. In the *Vanishing point* exhibition, present, past and future flow into each other kaleidoscopically and make traces of life visible on multiple levels.

Carmela Thiele