

I. *Language*

We could say that this exhibition begins with the artist's daily walk to buy the newspaper at a kiosk. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau describes the city as a text shaped by the people who walk in it daily. A vast text we write with our steps but cannot read – “the networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other.”¹ What would it take to be able to read this collective text if not the meticulous recording of footprints and traces? If in 1960 Stanley Broun distributed sheets of paper through the streets of Amsterdam to record the footsteps of anonymous pedestrians, On Kawara archived his routes daily in the series *I Went*, which began in the late sixties in Mexico City. For eleven years, the artist archived his own movements, rescuing them each day from an almost certain oblivion. On each of these maps, one of the routes always corresponds precisely to the walk to buy the newspaper.

Language, journeys, traces, and archives are themes that have always been very present in Ian Waelder's work. Based in Frankfurt, his practice addresses biographical and historical memory through the poetics of the accident and the reuse of the discarded. *Here not today* at Super Super Markt is his first exhibition in Berlin and it brings together a series of recent works on newspaper and raw linen, displayed in an ephemeral cardboard architecture that transforms the exhibition space and conditions the reading of the works.

II. *Journeys*

The title corresponds to a series of works on newspaper (2021 – Ongoing) that the artist began spontaneously during a car trip between Frankfurt and Berlin. During that journey with friends, he bought newspapers at each gas station they stopped and used snacks to intervene on them. Since then, the series has continued over the years. In preparation for this exhibition, he has walked to buy the newspaper every day, in one of those gestures that gain meaning through repetition, becoming a ritualistic routine.

He tries to read the news overcoming the distance with a language that is not his own and awaits the encounter with an image that triggers the process... As Spanish artist Juan Muñoz once said during an interview, “I think that every artist goes through a time of flipping through the pages of the newspaper, hoping that an image will resonate.”² In this case the result of that process is a fragile surface, framed in glass, where images and text coexist with random stains. The time of reading and the time of the accident intertwine poetically

on the delicate newsprint paper. These works will turn into a warmer colour over the years, as part of an unpredictable process that distances the newspaper from its day of publication and leaves it in the hands of the unfolding of history.

III. *Traces*

In the exhibition, this series is displayed on a cardboard architecture that turns the gallery into a narrow space, like a corridor that recreates an intimate environment, partially blocking the window light and leading us to a frontal encounter with the painting *Refraction (Hand in diminuendo)* (2024). This architecture, along with the contrast in size between the works, makes us aware of the necessary distance to approach and read them. While the linen work demands distance and the image reveals itself better the further away one goes from it, the smaller works on paper demand, in the artist's words, "that you get closer and closer, almost until your nose touches the glass".

However, the process and its traces reveal how there is something of both in the two. What to hide and what to show? How far can we go in abstracting a figure so that it remains recognizable?

IV. *Archives*

With the right distance, that figure remains visible on the linen. The work is composed of several layers that add corporeality and depth to it: the printed image is superimposed with a layer of raw linen, and on top of this are oil stains and small images ripped from the same newspapers. Gradually, we perceive large hands manipulating a car's tire. For some years, the artist has used an archive of images of hand gestures from a car manual. The same car model was owned by his grandfather, a pianist living in Stuttgart who had to sell it to escape the rise of Nazism in Germany. In the images found on newspapers, manuals, or films, Waelder constructs a growing archive that allows him to simultaneously engage with the echoes of family genealogy and collective history.

Upon closer inspection of one of the small newspaper fragments attached to the linen, we find anonymous hands resting on a piano... as if we subtly glide from the footprint to the fingerprint and from the journey to the tactile, those hands lead us back to where we started: to the trace, the index of what has been, but is no longer.

At least not here, not today.

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¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988.

² Juan Muñoz in conversation with Paul Schimmel, September 18, 2000.