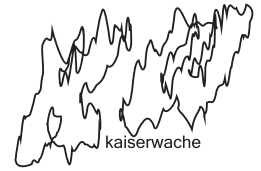


FOUNTAIN

KRIZ OLBRICHT

MAY 03 - 31, 2024



Kaiserwache is pleased to present *FOUNTAIN*, a solo exhibition by Kriz Olbricht, which explores the freestanding building of Kaiserwache as a sculptural form. The exhibition is accessible 24/7 from May 3 to May 31, 2024.

For over a decade, Kriz Olbricht has been a keen observer of urban environments and the architectural structures and anomalies that constitute them. These observations form a cornerstone of his artistic practice, often manifesting as subtle, site-specific interventions in architecture. His interventions are a paradoxical tightrope walk between adaptation and intrusion into spatial structures, revealing the constructed nature and fragility of the quotidian.

Something is happening inside, yet we are denied insight as the doors of Kaiserwache are locked. Accordingly, *FOUNTAIN* points us in another direction. The solitary building takes us by the hand as we circle it. It leads us around, and not silently. It speaks at length, telling not only about itself but also about another place. A place for which Kaiserwache becomes a resonating body, a place of connection and reverberation. For even if this place can speak for itself and does so extensively, it needs an echo of reflection. It is precisely this echo that gives us the necessary distance to truly hear what is being said.

FOUNTAIN's echo leads us into the expanses and depths of the Rhineland lignite mining area. Here, where the earth has been permeated by centuries of coal mining, a mighty rumble sounds, said to have kept the same rhythm for decades and to this day. It is just one of many in this region, and like every sound, it has a story to tell if you listen closely. Let's listen more closely. A deep growl, a guttural bawl from the earth's interior that literally makes the ground tremble. In turn, Kaiserwache quakes. It pulses, its interior stretching outward, and when our hand touches the vibrating exterior facade, we feel the hidden interactions between human and site, turning us into resonators of this tremor. It rumbles and growls almost incessantly. I say "almost" because the dewatering pump, which is the source of this din, allows itself regular short breaks. During these pauses, the constant trickling that blends into the soundscape becomes particularly noticeable. Annoying water can be heard, groundwater that poses an obstacle to mining and therefore must be pumped away. A reminder of the unspoken impacts of mining. Rumbling and trickling alternate. This sound is costly. It costs the groundwater level. Costs enormous energy consumption. Costs flora. Costs fauna. Costs surrounding communities. It remains to be seen what the total sum will rack up to and, of course, who will foot the bill. This is what the rumble tells us as we stand with one leg in Freiburg and the other in the Cologne Bay. Certainly, some statements remain incomprehensible to us, which turns out to be the condition for any communication with the pump at all. What is told underground sounds like gibberish to us surface dwellers. Therefore, the stories we can perceive are inevitably superficial. More symptoms than causes.

FOUNTAIN is a call that haunts: an echo. An echo is a phantom, present and absent at the same time; a sound recording. Thus, an echo on command that Olbricht lets play in a continuous loop, persisting for the duration of the exhibition. But we hear more than just the phantom of a pump, *FOUNTAIN*'s sound is polyphonic, for the Dreisam and the traffic at the nearby intersection also have something to say. We hear many things at once, sometimes harmonies, sometimes cacophonies. Depending on the time of day and the distance from the building, the dialogues between KW and its surroundings sound different. The city sings most beautifully at noon. We hear a reciprocal song. Call and response. The city sings of alienation and of self-regulation mechanisms. Deep tones of control and structure. An industrial song that resonates with the logic of exploitation. In a drunken dance, we follow the rhythm of consumer-oriented city marketing. But KW responds with a call for *the right to the city*.¹ Its facade speaks in illegal colors, graffiti artists leave their messages. The space is repurposed, telling of hidden needs and new meanings. We hear *FOUNTAIN* like a fanfare.

Another story that *FOUNTAIN* tells is about Kaiserwache as an island. An island in the archipelago of the Rhineland region, yet it has drifted far beyond the Cologne Bay. As Gilles Deleuze aptly noted: "*An island is a concentration of land at one point in space, which stands out from its surroundings.*"² According to this definition, KW also rises as an island in another way, namely as a shaped form in the midst of the urban fabric. An architectural anomaly here in the center of the asphalt and concrete sea that we recognize as central Freiburg. The daily streams of people passing by paid it little attention, but with *FOUNTAIN* the solitary building appears in a new light and with an amplified voice. We let ourselves be guided around the building again. Slowly. As if we were drifting along the coast of the island. Suddenly, we notice that the light inside has turned on. In the twilight, it seems as if someone inside has just awakened. But it was us who flipped the switch. Motion sensors react to our presence and activate the lighting in short intervals.

While islands are often considered remote places, far from the currents of everyday life, *FOUNTAIN* reveals a subtle connection to the world around it. Just as an island is influenced by the tides, so *FOUNTAIN* is influenced by the sounds and movements of the city that surround it. In this dialogue between human and site, where the movement of the drifters changes the atmosphere and perception of the place, a new connection to the pump's phantom is established. Indeed, the beginning and end of the coal value chain are symbolically reflected in the building. On the one hand, the origin in water pumping, the first step of the coal extraction process, is represented by the bass-heavy rumble. On the other hand, the result of coal processed into electricity is illustrated by the interior lighting turning on. The circle closes. We see the light inside go out again and we drift on.

We turn the corner and notice a dark blue hose with a quick coupling, wedged into the locked entrance door to the former men's restroom. KW is at a loss (translator's note: There is no direct translation for this German idiom, which means literally "standing on the hose." It implies confusion or being perplexed, much like standing on a garden hose and not knowing what will come out of it.) We step back and briefly wonder if the hardened asphalt puddle we are standing on might have run out of this hose. Probably not. But what should come out of this hose instead? And where would the hose lead us; perhaps into the depths?

¹ The "right to the city" is a concept developed by Henri Lefebvre. It refers to the collective right of citizens to actively participate in the design and use of urban space. It includes the right to access urban resources, to participate in decision-making, and to a diverse, livable, and just city design. The concept criticizes the commodification and privatization of urban space and calls for greater inclusion and consideration of the needs of all city dwellers, especially the socially and economically disadvantaged.

² Gilles Deleuze, Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*, 2002, Columbia University Press, Chapter 3

About the Artist:

Kriz Olbricht (*1986 in Freiburg im Breisgau) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe and at ENSA Villa Arson in Nice, and currently lives in Cologne. His works explore the relationship between humans, bodies and space in solo and group exhibitions and are complemented by collaborative work in project spaces and the organization of site-specific exhibition projects. He has received various awards and grants for his projects, including from the Kunststiftung NRW, the Stiftung Kunstfonds, and the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts Baden-Württemberg.

About Kaiserwache:

The former public restroom, known to Freiburg residents as "Kaiserwache," was well-frequented due to its central location in the city and proximity to the banks of the Dreisam. However, with its original purpose decommissioned, the question of finding an alternative use for the heritage-protected building has arisen. This question has become increasingly relevant, especially given the growing lack of space in Freiburg, despite many buildings remaining vacant. With this in mind, KW positions itself as an offspace that is concerned with its own temporality, interested in suggesting alternatives beyond its interim use. The space at KW acts as a catalyst for the presentation of site-specific works and the facilitation of discourse surrounding the institution of the public toilet. By showcasing site-specific works, KW offers a unique platform for artists to reflect on and engage with the space's heritage and temporality.

Curated by Christina Sperling, Lena Reckord and Ilja Zaharov.

This exhibition was funded by the Cultural Office of Freiburg and the Regional Council of Freiburg.