

## ***Wenn's gut werden muss***

08.06. — 22.09.2024

Paul Czerlitzki, Elmgreen & Dragset, Gina Folly, Andreas Gursky, Gregor Hildebrandt, Christian Jankowski, Alicja Kwade, Anselm Reyle, Michael Sailstorfer, Roman Signer, Erwin Wurm and He Xiangyu



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The group exhibition 'Wenn's gut werden muss' brings together works by the artists Paul Czerlitzki, Elmgreen & Dragset, Gina Folly, Andreas Gursky, Gregor Hildebrandt, Christian Jankowski, Alicja Kwade, Anselm Reyle, Michael Sailstorfer, Roman Signer, Erwin Wurm, and He Xiangyu. The title, which alludes to the advertising slogan of the Bauhaus hardware store chain, refers to the everyday objects from the hardware store used in the exhibited works as well as the materials associated with them.

Beyond the advertising slogan, the exhibition title also translates to a thematic level in the exhibited works – these utilize easily accessible materials found in hardware stores and elevate them through contextualization to another level. The exhibition presents diverse approaches by the artists, from targeted use and highlighting of the material to the ready-made, using the material as itself. Items like roof battens, air fresheners, neon tubes, hoses, beams, trestles, folding rulers, and parquet rods are employed.

The themes of revitalizing a retail space and vacancy in the village center are not only present in the renovation but also reflected in the exhibition. The space remains as it was when the bank left. Thus, the reuse of materials also refers to the space: remnants of previous use, references to it, and hints of the renovation process of the premises are found. It raises the question of whether renovations are taking place, objects were left behind when moving out, or if the artistic framework is part of a larger context. The exhibition unites works by internationally renowned artists who work with typical hardware store items and (de-)contextualize them. While Gina Folly uses seed mixtures, Elmgreen & Dragset work with plaster, Anselm Reyle with LED tubes and wooden trestles, He Xiangyu uses a light bulb, and Roman Signer uses a hose. Alicja Kwade recreates these used materials – a wooden batten is reproduced in bronze, and a folding ruler is marked with notches. Paul Czerlitzki's wall painting contrasts with his general practice of reduced abstract painting. The fascination lies not only in the deviation from customary use but also in the interpretations and transformations of the materials by lifting predefined parameters, a so-called *displacement*.

The displacement of the exhibition is also part of the premises of a former bank branch of the Kunstverein. The space remains as it was when the bank left, providing a contrast to the artistic interventions. Upon entering the Kunstverein, one encounters Erwin Wurm's *2 Buckets, One Minute* (1998/2016), part of his series *One Minute Sculpture*, which he has been producing for nearly 30 years. The work, visible from outside through the shop window and door, actively invites exhibition visitors to become a sculpture for a moment. In this work, not commercial objects are recontextualized, but the visitors' bodies themselves. Instructions for the work provide a framework for how visitors interact with the pedestal and the two 10L paint buckets.

Non-performatively, but by spreading a scent, Michael Sailstorfer's *Andy Warhol trägt Parfüm* (2007) takes over the space. The cheap material, emitting a rest stop-like toilet smell, seems intended to cover and conceal something – Warhol understood his obsession with perfume similarly, as something to mask his in his view mediocre appearance. Warhol also saw the sense of smell as a way to briefly revive specific memories and maintain control through this recall. Warhol's understanding of perfumes can indeed be seen as a material interest, as one perfume forum author categorizes his love for perfumes: 'I like the way he puts the perfume names in quotations, as if they were titles of books or

movies.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Sailstorfer's work can also be seen as a critical engagement with the value of Warhol's readymades.

Opposite is the work *Historical Detail, Fig. 6* (2016) by Elmgreen & Dragset. The piece, consisting of a stack of plaster held together by two bands, develops complexity through the various shades of white of the individual plaster pieces, particularly due to the historical use of plaster to cover constructions. Here, a sign of class and prosperity ultimately serves only as a means to an end.

Similarly related to the space is Anselm Reyle's work *Untitled* (2024), a neon heart located where the former ATM of the bank branch used to be. The work appears as a remnant of the changed function of the premises. The rudimentary space where the ATM was now glows in a new light. Reyle's installation not only recalls the past use of the place but also captures the aesthetic of former neon signs.

Alicja Kwade's work *Option (option)* (2014) consists of two battens, one made of wood and a reproduction of it in bronze. This raises questions about reproduction and duplication, as well as critically addressing value perceptions of materials and the financial system and its determination of value. Above the work, the imprint of a cross, a relic of the bank branch in Catholic Bavaria, also plays with existing value perceptions.

Anselm Reyle's *Bar* (2023) is a direct engagement with his own practice. This consists of commercial trestles on which he places his paintings to dry, retaining traces of the work process in the form of paint residues. Subsequently, Reyle places a board over the trestles to use them as a bar in a DIY process. Another work by Reyle in the exhibition is the sculpture *Untitled* (2024) made of LED, plastic socket, cable, and chain. The artist creates a (drawing) instruction for purchasing the materials and assembling the work. While the materials are easily accessible, the assembly is complicated by the complex composition of the lamps – the sculpture holds itself in a moment of balance.

Just as the aura of Michael Sailstorfer's perfume and the accessibility of Erwin Wurm's work, He Xiangyu's work *Sorry* (2024) also engages with cultural values and norms and the construction of language as access. The works *Ohne Titel I* (1993) by Andreas Gursky and *Sorry* (2024) by He Xiangyu connect the use of commercial objects and materials with a political sphere. He Xiangyu's work is an iteration of his series *I'm Sorry* whose title derives from his experience as an artist living in the USA with limited English proficiency. The book *Politeness: Some universals of language use*, published in the 1980s, introduced a politeness model explaining the friendliness of Americans. Xiangyu's work deals with the cultural significance of language and communication, as well as privacy and denial of access, based on this friendliness. The exhibited light bulb originally served as a glowing door handle in an earlier iteration of this work; too hot to be touched and pushed down. Andreas Gursky's photograph, on the other hand, shows the carpet of the Bundestag, an image that almost appears accidental and provides no conclusions about the political situation.

In the second room, the former customer office, Gregor Hildebrandt's *Parkett* (2009) made of cassette tapes covers the floor. Each room equipped with his parquet symbolizes a song. Christian Jankowski's video work *Bodenarbeit (Groundwork)* (1993), like Anselm Reyle's *Bar*, makes work processes visible. The video shows the correct use of a sanding machine, demonstrated on the wooden floor of room K22 at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg, which served as a studio space for students of Franz Erhard Walther's class. The floor was to be cleaned of work residues and prepared for the upcoming annual student exhibition. Since the video also served as a commercial for the machine rental business besides Hildebrandt's artistic work, the boundaries between applied and fine art blur.

Paul Czerlitzki's in situ wall painting *Untitled* (2024) in the hallway of the Kunstverein plays with existing everyday objects, allowing conclusions about the previous use of the premises and the renovation processes through marks and tapes. The absence of the canvas creates a historically traditional engagement with painting, often rediscovered in old buildings through renovations, while simultaneously generating painting as a sculptural element. The usually invisible hardware store material becomes part of the work here. Opposite hangs Alicja Kwade's *Meta-cm gelb (0-20 cm)* (2018), which critically engages with the questioning of socially accepted systems, such as units of length or time.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Andy Warhol on Perfume', 06.09.2012:  
[https://www.yesterdaysperfume.com/yesterdays\\_perfume/2012/09/andy-warhol-on-perfume.html](https://www.yesterdaysperfume.com/yesterdays_perfume/2012/09/andy-warhol-on-perfume.html)

In the back room are Andreas Gursky's photograph *Hösel* (1984) and Roman Signer's installation *Blauer Schlauch* (2013). Gursky's photograph shows a house under construction with the supposed builders on the site, while Signer's installation, consisting of a hose, a wooden beam, and a container with blue liquid, provides a direct perspective on work processes on construction sites. The construction of the installation raises the question of whether the beam stabilizes the liquid or if it will tip over. Just like the builders in Gursky's photograph, the recipients of Signer's work seem powerless to the events.

The six works of the series *Select* (2023) by Gina Folly consist of a frame containing a seed mixture and represent an engagement with individual and collective decisions and their influence. Just as seed packets in hardware stores are often available as so-called 'impulse goods' directly at the checkout due to their low price, the six works of this series appear in all rooms of the Kunstverein. At the same time, classification occurs through the titles of the seed mixtures and the respective works.

Just as Gina Folly's works raise a decision-making process and critically engage with it, the exhibition with its renowned artists reflects similar themes. The question of value arises here not only in the context of the individual works but also concerning the craftsmanship of the artists versus the mere use of commercial materials. Does the selection of renowned artists indicate that it 'must be good'?

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## Artist biographies

**Paul Czerlitzki** (\*1986 in Gdansk, Poland) lives and works in Düsseldorf. In his practice, Czerlitzki has developed a process over many years that takes painting back to the basics of the medium: to (canvas) wall, colour and frame. In his reflections on painting, he critically negotiates these and their materiality. Existing orders are questioned through dismantling and the relationship to space through installative stagings. His works have recently been shown at BEIGE Brussels (2024); Piktogram Warsaw (2023); Konrad Fischer (2023) and the Kunsthalle Bern (2021), among others, and are part of collections such as the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; the Kadist Foundation, Paris and the FRAC Provence, Marseille.

**Elmgreen & Dragset** (\*1961 in Copenhagen, Denmark; \*1969 in Trondheim, Norway) live and work in Berlin. They have been working as a duo since 1995, focusing on the recontextualisation of objects. They pursue their artistic practice at the interface of art, design and architecture and negotiate questions of identity and belonging from a socio-cultural perspective. Their most recent solo exhibitions include Museum for Modern Art, Ishoj (2023); Centre Pompidou-Metz (2023) and Fondazione Prada, Milan (2022). The works have also been shown at the Bangkok Biennale (2018), the Istanbul Biennale (2013, 2011, 2001) and the Venice Biennale (2009, 2003).

**Gina Folly** (\*1983 in Zurich, Switzerland) lives and works in Basel and Paris. In her work, Folly takes photography as her starting point and negotiates this with the selection of new forms and materials. She focuses on everyday objects and items and decontextualises them in an examination of openness and separation as well as naturalness and artificiality. Most recently, her works have been exhibited at CAC Synagogue de Delme (2024); Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva (2023) and Kunstmuseum Basel (2023), among others. In 2023 she was awarded the Manor Art Prize.

**Andreas Gursky** (\*1955 in Leipzig, Germany) lives and works in Düsseldorf. Gursky is one of the most renowned photographers internationally. His practice is a systematic conceptual exploration of photography, which appears almost artificial, surreal and abstract through montages and a restrained use of colour. Gursky has recently had solo exhibitions at White Cube, London (2022); Museum Küppersmühle, Duisburg (2021) and K20, Düsseldorf (2016), among others. His works are represented in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Pinakothek Collection, Munich and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

**Gregor Hildebrandt** (\*1974 in Bad Homburg, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. In his practice, he creates complex montages of references to music, film and literature by using cassette tapes, video cassettes or vinyl records to create memory carriers. His works vary between figuration and abstraction and create connections to cultural references and personal memories. His works have most recently been exhibited at the Kunsthalle Rostock (2024); the MAZ - Museo de Arte de Zapopan (2023) and the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg & Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen (2023) and are part of collections such as the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Jil and Peter Kraus Collection, New York and the Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst des Bundes, Germany.

**Christian Jankowski** (\* 1968 in Göttingen, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. In his work, he plays with performative interactions between the art world and other professions and negotiates the role of the mass media. He uses artistic formats to expose social mechanisms. His works were most recently exhibited at the Overbeck Society, Lübeck (2023) and the Kunsthalle Tübingen (2022), among others. His works are represented in collections such as the MMK Collection, Frankfurt; the DZ Bank Collection, Frankfurt and the Julia STOSCHEK FOUNDATION E.V., Düsseldorf.

**Alicja Kwade** (\*1979 in Katowice, Poland) lives and works in Berlin. Her work deals with philosophical, scientific and social themes as well as the constructed perception of reality, truth and time. In her work, she reverses notions of materials and their value. Her works have been shown at the Lehmbruck Museum (2023); the Skulpturenpark Heidelberg (2023) and the Berlinische Galerie - Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst (2021), among others, and are part of collections such as the Gräfling Collection; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek.

**Anselm Reyle** (\*1970 in Tübingen, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. He removes various found objects from their original function and places them in a different context. Reyle works sculpturally as well as with painting. Reyle's works have most recently been presented at MoCA Westport, Connecticut (2023); Kunsthalle Vogelmann, Heilbronn (2022) and Aranya Art Centre, Qinhuangdao (2020), among others. His works are part of numerous collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Pinault Collection, Venice and the Nationalgalerie / Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

**Michael Sailstorfer** (\*1976 in Velden, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. His work is characterised by the use of everyday objects as material for his sculptures and installations and the resulting shift in context. This creates new immaterial experiences. His works have recently been exhibited at the Pejman Foundation, Tehran, Iran (2023); the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, Germany (2022); and the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany (2021), among others. Sailstorfer's work is part of collections such as the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Boros Collection, Berlin; and the Städelmuseum, Frankfurt am Main.

**Roman Signer** (\*1938 in Appenzell, Switzerland) lives and works in St. Gallen. He understands himself as a sculptor and is known for his *time sculptures*, in which he explores the processual transformation of materials and objects. The temporal dimension of his works plays with the momentary, ephemeral and timeless. His works were most recently exhibited at the Malmö Konsthall (2023) and the Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2018). His works are part of numerous international collections, such as the FRAC - Lorraine, Metz; the Kunstmuseum Basel and the MUSEION, Bolzano.

**Erwin Wurm** (\*1954 in Bruck an der Mur, Austria) lives in Vienna and Limberg, Austria. Wurm works in a critical dialogue with everyday objects that are intended to critically question viewing habits, consumption and a Western world view. For almost 30 years, Wurm has also been creating his *One Minute Sculptures*, which invite visitors to become sculptures themselves for a moment. Wurm's works have most recently been shown at the Albertina Modern, Vienna (2024); the Fosun Foundation, Shanghai (2024) and the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade (2022) and are part of collections such as the MUMOK, Vienna; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Museum Ludwig, Cologne and the MMK, Frankfurt am Main.

**He Xiangyu** (\*1986 in Dandong, China) lives and works in Beijing and Berlin. In his practice, he reflects on personal, social and (geo-)political issues and cultural experiences as well as the interplay between political and economic power. His works have recently been exhibited at the Sifang Art Museum, Shanghai (2023), the Venice Biennale (2019) and White Cube, London (2018), among others. Xiangyu's works are part of collections such as the Boros Collection, Berlin; the M+ Sigg Collection, Hong Kong and the Mercator Foundation, Essen.