

Exhibition Title: Interiors  
Artist: Matt Welch  
Duration: October 25 – December 8, 2024  
Location: Kunstverein Siegen  
Kornmarkt 20, 57072 Siegen  
<https://www.kunstverein-siegen.de>  
Contact: [info@kunstverein-siegen.de](mailto:info@kunstverein-siegen.de)  
Curator: Jennifer Cierlitza  
Photographer: Simon Vogel

#### Press Release for the Exhibition “Interiors” - Matt Welch at the Kunstverein Siegen

Is the city a diseased organism or an open living space? Matt Welch's work focuses on the urban environment and its impact on people. He poses critical questions about Siegen's social space, for example through a video filmed in the old Karstadt building. Through his art, Welch filters sociological reflections in a critical light, highlighting the dangers of a consumer-driven, one-dimensional exploitation of urban spaces.

Born in Liverpool in 1988, Matt Welch works at the intersection of installation, sculpture, video, drawing and sound. His immersive works explore the relationship between physicality and infrastructure, drawing parallels between biological processes such as breathing, digestion and excretion, and urban systems such as transport and information. This exploration is also evident in his sculptures Theatre 1 and Theatre 2. These forms evoke architectural models as well as the internal structures of human organs, where the movement and exchange of substances symbolically represent the traversal of spaces or pathways. Here, both bodies and buildings act as protective shells and retreats - the skin shields the body's interior, while architecture serves as a sanctuary for people.

The installed wall creates a dark corridor, transporting us into a mysterious sphere and addressing the dual meanings of inside and outside, front and back, visible and hidden. An integrated one-way mirror acts as a window on one side of the corridor, allowing light into the space, and as a mirror on the other. This interplay between reflection and transparency allows viewers to observe the video and other visitors from the corridor without being seen themselves. This subtle tension between visibility and invisibility turns the viewer's gaze into an active, voyeuristic act, addressing issues of surveillance, privacy and the boundary between public and private space.

The final episode of a video trilogy entitled The Secret Millionaire was filmed by Welch in Frankfurt's Europaviertel, an area once inhabited by workers and now dominated by modern skyscrapers, reflecting the profound transformation of urban landscapes. The title of the trilogy, The Secret Millionaire, refers to a British reality show in which millionaires anonymously visit impoverished neighbourhoods to offer support. For the Interiors exhibition, Matt Welch filmed in the Karstadt building, which has been empty since 2023, one of those iconic but increasingly disused department stores. The video unfolds a dystopian scene: empty shelves, dark storerooms and naked mannequins stand eerily still in a space that once teemed with life.

An unseen protagonist wanders through the abandoned building like a forgotten witness. His presence is perceived only through soft footsteps and heavy breathing, adding to the oppressive atmosphere of the space and creating a sense that he is the last person left in this once vibrant place, now lost and alone amidst silent decay.

For decades, department stores were central landmarks and vital attractions in urban life. However, changes in consumer behaviour - driven by the rise of online shopping and the relocation of shopping centres to the suburbs - have led to increasing urban vacancies. These abandoned buildings reflect a dilemma facing many cities: empty spaces, a lack of commercial activity and declining footfall. This situation raises fundamental questions: How can public spaces be used in the future? How do changing consumption patterns affect the function and vibrancy of urban life? It also highlights the increasing commercialisation and capitalist exploitation of urban spaces.

As part of the exhibition, a roundtable discussion entitled 'The Value of Vacant Spaces - Opportunities for City and Culture' will take place with Thorsten Erl, Simon Neumayer and other guests. The exhibition will close on 8 December at 4 pm with a guided tour by curator Jennifer Cierlitz. The exhibition is supported by Kunststiftung NRW and Stiftung Kunstfonds.