

Hyle¹ 30.11.24–23.2.25

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30.11.2024–23.02.2025
Kunsthalle Bielefeld

Nina Beier, Formafantasma, Pauline Julier, Izidora I Lethe,
Ceylan Öztrük, Gina Proenza

curated by Kristina Grigorjeva and Undine Rietz

Vernissage 29.11.2024
Performance **TECHNĒ (flashes)**, 2024
by Izidora I LETHE

with Federica Dauri, Giuliana Beya Dridi, Kimberly Williams,
Len Mettler, Thea Reifler

What materials form the inventory of our shared and individual histories? And how do these materials shape our collective futures?

The exhibition **Hyle¹** explores the underlying connection between materials and temporality. In ancient Greek, *hyle* stands for wood as a raw and untreated matter, that takes on form and meaning through *technè* – the human touch.

Materials can embody power, social orders and cultural symbols. They not only form objects, but are also part of social relationships and cultural meanings. Extracted, processed and integrated into our living environment, materials shape the history of ecological and technological transformation. Filled with meaning in the context of specific time and place, materials–like geological layers–create the construct that we read as culture.

The term *Zeitschichten* or *layers of time* was developed by the Bielefeld historian Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006) and describes history as an interplay of processes that take place on different temporal levels: long-term, structural developments unfolding over centuries, such as geological movements; or short-term events, such as wars or political crises. Koselleck's model hints that material processes connect and influence these different temporal layers, forming and changing our societal structures. The cultural

and symbolic charge of materials, their economic significance and their transformative potential form our understanding of history. So how do we project our multi-layered past into a possible future?

The artists in **Hyle**¹ reveal these temporal layers and make the feedback loop between material and time visible. In their respective practices, the artists Nina Beier, Formafantasma, Pauline Julier, Izidora I LETHE, Ceylan Öztrük and Gina Proenza unveil the cultural significance of materials, studied in relation to time and place. Brought together in the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, the works form layers of meaning through cautionary tales and empowering experiences.

The transitory character of the foyer is reflected by **Gina Proenza**'s work *Moving Jealousy III* (2024). The work was created in response to the absurd story of a medieval court case in Switzerland, in which worms were put on trial for damaging the harvest. In reference to the demarcation of territory by legal authority, the semi-transparent curtain maneuvers the length of the exhibition space. This new reading of the space illustrates the artist's exploration of the topic of interspecies coexistence and how we use stories and words as material.

The artist **Nina Beier** deals with cultural, geographical and logistical conditions of the material. The series *Plugs* (2018-2023) combines two levels of Western colonial history. On the one hand, it is about the history of the production of porcelain and its use in Western colonial countries; even the colors of the sinks - Bahama beige, Indian ivory - have an imperialist echo. On the other hand, the tobacco plugs stand for the exploitation of slaves in the cultivation of tobacco plants. In this way, the artist reveals colonial impulses and echoes that can be found in our everyday lives.

In **Formafantasma**'s video work *Quercus* (2020)–Latin for oak–the overused construction material is given a personality, an opinion and issues an appeal. It speaks of its own world perspective and points to our dependence on it as a material. It emphasizes that it has inhabited this planet for much longer than we humans have. In this way *Quercus* gives us an alternative reading of time and places the

anthropocentric understanding of temporality in a new perspective.

Ceylan Öztrük physically holds up a mirror, creating a powerful encounter where the viewer and their reflection merge into a shared object of contemplation. Through her works *Self-Specular* (2022) and *a moment* (2022), Öztrük seamlessly weaves the physical properties of the mirror with its profound symbolic resonance—evoking a gaze into one’s past, the ephemerality of a fleeting moment, and a potential emblem of deep self-reflection.

In the five-part series *Flash* (2024), **Izidora I LETHE** use the rose as a symbol charged with meaning and recurrent throughout all periods of (art) history. In this way, LETHE refer to the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, who understood history as “matter of a construct whose place is not homogeneous and empty time, but time filled with the present”. In this way, Benjamin referred to the continuum of history.

As a continuation of the work, Izidora I LETHE developed the performance *TECHNĒ (flashes* , which deals with the architecture of the Kunsthalle Bielefeld. *TECHNĒ (flashes* is a performance that raises questions about the body’s relation to different temporal layers and their interdependancy. Part of LETHE's choreography is the citation of works from the graphic collection of the Kunsthalle Bielefeld.

Finally, the video work *Supernova* (2024) by **Pauline Julier** is dedicated to the origin of all material - all being. The video reminds us that an apparent end is often the condition for a new beginning. Stars, planets and ultimately the building blocks for life are created from the explosive force and the ejection of matter from a supernova. This shows that everything in the universe is interconnected. The elements that are released are the basis for new stars and galaxies. Comparable to cultural ideas and values that live on in new forms, continue to exist or merge into something new.

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Curated by Kristina Grigorjeva and Undine Rietz in the context of Residence NRW+, Kunsthalle Münster.

Biographies

Nina Beier (*1975 in Denmark, lives and works in Berlin and Copenhagen) uses everyday materials and objects for her sculptural installations to create new contexts of meaning, thereby criticising Western privileges and the exploitation of others. She is interested in the stories that objects go through and the paths they take from their origins as raw materials to finished products. How are objects produced, transported, reproduced, bought and resold? All objects are connected to the global economy and interpersonal and interspecies power structures. Beier collects objects that have been shaped by the interactions of time and space. These objects have acquired a symbolic value along the way, which is constantly being reinterpreted.

Nina Beier's works have been most recently presented in solo exhibitions at Mudam, Luxembourg (2024), Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2024), Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki (2024), CAPC, Bordeaux (2024), Haus am Waldsee, Berlin (2023) and Museo Taller José Clemente Orozco, Guadalajara (2020), among others.

Formafantasma is an Italian design studio that focusses on the relationship between design, sustainability and natural resources. The studio is characterised by a research-based approach that focuses on the origin, processing and cultural significance of materials. Formafantasma develops works that are both functional objects and critical reflections on man's impact on the environment. Through these, they aim to raise awareness of the ecological and social impact of our consumer culture. The design studio combines traditional craft methods with innovative techniques to create an aesthetic that is both timeless and future-orientated. Formafantasma was founded in 2009 by designers Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin and today works in Milan and Rotterdam.

In addition to several collaborations for exhibition designs at institutions such as the MoMA, Metropolitan Museum, Art Institute Chicago, Walker Art Center, Victoria and Albert Museum and the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, Formafantasma has also presented its own exhibitions at the Serpentine Gallery, London (2020), the Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich (2021) and the Kunsthaus Hamburg (2022).

Pauline Julier (*1981 in Geneva, lives and works in Geneva) explores the relationship between humans, nature and technology and questions the boundaries between these worlds. She examines the influence of human intervention on natural processes and sheds light on the complex interrelationships between ecology, science and culture. Her works often combine the documentary with the fictional and create new narrative perspectives on the environmental crises of our time. Julier uses film, installation and photography to create visual narratives that make the invisible visible and challenge the viewer's perception. In her works, she questions the construction of reality and the role of science as a means of interpreting the world.

Julier's works are part of numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at the Aargauer Kunsthaus (2024), the Musée Rath MAH in Geneva (2023), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2023), the Institut d'Art Contemporain in Villeurbanne (2022), the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2021) and the ZKM/ Zentrum für Kunst und Medien in Karlsruhe (2020).

In their conceptual works, Izidora I LETHE (*1987 in Split, live and work in Zurich) deal with forms of conveying history across spaces and genres and places neglected or invisible knowledge at the centre of her practice. LETHE's work uses a variety of media such as sculpture, print, installation and performance to visualise emotional and psychological states. The ambiguity and changeability of identity play a central role. LETHE use art as a means to refute a static understanding of places.

LETHE have been part of solo and group exhibitions at Kunsthaus Zürich in Zurich (2024), Klöntal Triennale (2024), Kunsthalle Zürich (2023), Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich (2022), KRONE COURONNE in Biel/Bienne, Cabaret Voltaire in

Monte Verità (2021) and Leslie-Lohman Museum in New York City (2021).

Ceylan Öztrük (*1984 in Turkey, lives and works in Zurich) examines recognised forms of knowledge and questions their emergence as well as their role in the control of information flows and power structures. Her aim is to disrupt the flow of information in the mainstream and create alternative, coexisting or substitute channels. She uses interventionist approaches and site-specific elements as methods to change existing conditions and structures.

Öztrük has participated in the Geneva Biennial, Geneva 2022, FriArt Fribourg Kunsthalle, Fribourg, 2021, Gessnerallee, Zurich, 2020, My Wild Flag Festival Stockholm, Stockholm, 2019, Alienze, Lausanne, 2019 and Mars Istanbul, Istanbul, 2016, among others. Ceylan Öztrük received the Swiss Art Award in 2022.

Gina Proenza (*1994 in Bogotá, Colombia, lives and works in Lausanne) deals with cultural identities and the hidden histories of communities in her artistic practice. In her work, she combines personal narratives with historical and mythical elements to explore collective memories and cultural legacies. Her works are often characterised by symbols and rituals that reflect both intimate and social themes. In this way, Proenza questions the construction of history and invites us to reconsider cultural belonging and memory.

Gina Proenza has had a number of solo exhibitions to date, including at the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne (2024), the Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen in St. Gallen (2023), CAN - Centre d'art Neuchâtel (2019), and the Centre culturel suisse in Paris (2018). She has been awarded the Helvetia Art Prize (2018), the Leenaards Foundation Cultural Scholarship (2019), the Kiefer Hablitzel Art Prize (2021) and the Manor Art Prize Vaud (2024).

Credits Photo: Philipp Ottendoerfer, Veit Mette