

Nancy Lupo
Princessletthewind
01.02.–30.03.2025

Kunstverein für Mecklenburg
und Vorpommern
in Schwerin

With „Princessletthewind,“ the Kunstverein für Mecklenburg und Vorpommern in Schwerin presents the first institutional solo exhibition of the American sculptor Nancy Lupo in Germany.

Lupo’s artistic practice is deeply connected to material culture, including language, and draws attention to our presence amidst everyday materials and spaces. The artist examines how collective fantasies, emotions, energies, and ideologies are embedded in these (infra)structures and objects—elements that may be inherited, often overlooked, or entirely fabricated. In this exploration, Lupo not only questions societal structures and material conditions but also develops a perspective that reflects the entire interplay of affective, material, and imaginary practices.

For „Princessletthewind“, an installation created specifically for the spaces of the Kunstverein, Lupo builds upon her most recent body of work, which explores forms of „cruel optimism“—a concept introduced by the American cultural theorist Lauren Berlant. According to Berlant, ‚a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing‘ (Berlant, 2011). When applied to objects of desire, this concept refers to a cluster of promises that someone or something appears to offer or fulfill. Such a cluster of promises can be embedded in a person, an object, an institution, a text, a norm, or an idea—or, as Nancy Lupo demonstrates, in synthetic pearls, traditional Erzgebirge Christmas pyramids, Weimar porcelain candelabras, festive decorative papers, and glass crystalware, among others.

Considering such objects as clusters of promises allows both Berlant and Lupo to engage with the enigmatic and disjointed nature of our affective attachments—those multifaceted potentialities inherent in objects that fuel subjective desires, whether individually or collectively. Both, Berlant and Lupo, make evident that these projections are never neutral but are interwoven with class-specific, racialized, sexual, and gender-coded stances.

In the context of the exhibition, a text eponymously titled „Princessletthewind“, written by Lupo, reflects the artists’s personal experiences with the fires in Athens and Los Angeles, as well as their entanglement in the concept and development of the exhibition. The text evolves throughout the duration of the exhibition and will be presented by Lupo at the closing event.

Curated by:
Hendrike Nagel

Biography

Nancy Lupo (*1983, USA) lives and works in Berlin. Lupo studied at the Cooper Union in New York and Yale University in New Haven, and later participated in residency programs at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, the Tbilisi Propaganda Residency, and Casa Wabi. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at galleries and institutions such as MORAN MORAN, Mexico, Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles, Visual Arts Center at the University of Texas, Austin, and Swiss Institute, New York. Her work has also been included in national and international group exhibitions, including at the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome, the Neuer Kunstverein Wien, Vienna, the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles, the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo. Since 2024, Nancy Lupo has been a professor of sculpture at the Kunst-hochschule Mainz.

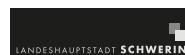
Program

Opening:
Friday,
31.01.2025, 19:00

Curator’s Tour:
Thursday,
20.02.2025, 17:00

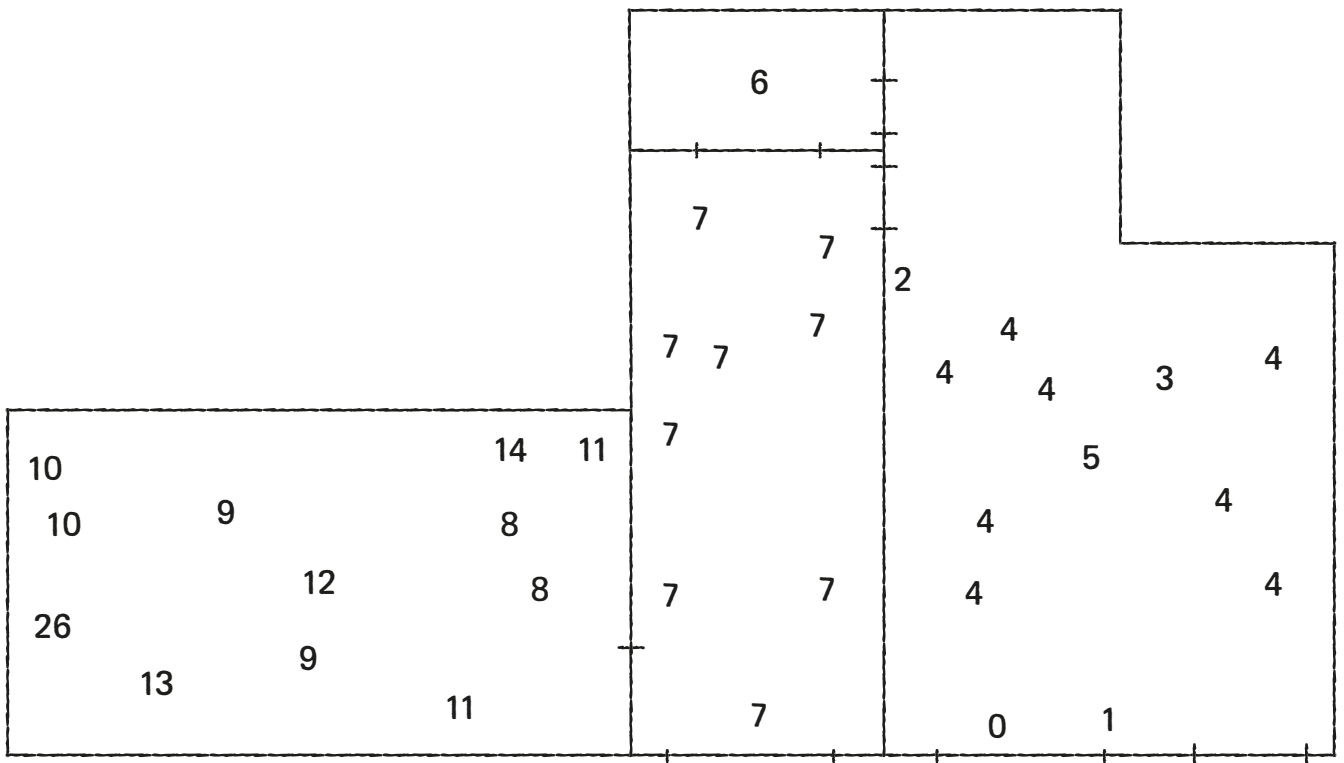
Finissage:
Sunday,
30.03.2025, 15:00

With kind support by:



Floorplan

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>0 Stars (2025)
glow in the dark stickers
dimensions variable</p> <p>1 Untitled (2025)
Battery powered candles, remote control, cardboard box
33×62×32,5 cm</p> <p>2 Untitled (2025)
Battery powered candles, remote control, screwdriver, cardboard box
40×56×39,5 cm</p> <p>3 Untitled (2025)
stainless steel laundry spirals, disco ball motor, nail polish, spray paint, D-battery
66×45×45 cm</p> <p>4 Untitled 1–7 (2025)
wooden Weihnachtspyramide, foil wrappers, motorsdimensions variable</p> <p>5 Assembly (2024)
aluminium, foil wrappers
dimensions variable</p> <p>6 Untitled (2025)
crystal glasses, dry ice, water
18×155×140 cm</p> | <p>7 Closer to Faces 1-9 (2024/2025)
porcelain Kronleuchter from Germany, mostly probably Weimar era or mid-century/ East German, steel "pigtail posts" from various locations in Hiroshima
dimensions variable</p> <p>8 Valentine Tellers 1 (2025)
toilet paper, paper towels, iridescent pigment, wood glue, matte medium, balsa wood (2 units) 29×100×50 cm, 28×115×90 cm</p> <p>9 Valentine Tellers 2 (2025)
toilet paper, paper towels, iridescent pigment, wood glue, matte medium, balsa wood (2 units) 40×100×70 cm, 38×110×60 cm</p> <p>10 Valentine Tellers 3 (2025)
toilet paper, paper towels, iridescent pigment, wood glue, matte medium, balsa wood (2 units) 25×120×95 cm, 38×85×85 cm</p> <p>11 Golden Pair Tellers (2025)
toilet paper, paper towels, iridescent pigment, wood glue, balsa wood (2 units) 90×90×40 cm, 112×80×27 cm</p> | <p>12 Diana Forever (2025)
pearls, string pearls, paper, plastic bags
dimensions variable</p> <p>13 Untitled (2025)
wind spinner, disco ball motor, D-battery
42×18×10 cm</p> <p>14 Untitled (2025)
wind spinner, disco ball motor, D-battery
100×26×14 cm</p> |
|--|---|--|



Princessletthewind

by Nancy Lupo

(1)

You told me that they wait for the winds. It's about building permits. It's easier if everything is burnt down because when it's all still there it's almost impossible in terms of money and also time in the labyrinth of pseudo bureaucracy. But if it's all burnt down then that's that. They will light an animal on fire, probably a cat, and she will dart a crazy path through the brush in order to attempt to put herself out of the pain of burning to death. The main reason they do this is because the fire spreads faster but maybe this way it also looks less like arson.

As we're driving the sky is an insane red orange. There is something foreboding but we are also pretty and glowing under it. I took my favorite picture of us in this light. First you thought it was a sand filled cloud from the Sahara, this apparently happens sometimes. On the boat back from one of the islands, she told a similar story but this time with the added detail that there were the turbines already on trucks waiting by the airport.

But then the next morning the fire is already contained. The sky is completely clear blue easy but people keep txtng and emailing and calling because I guess the AP got ahold of it and that caught too in a different way.

There is no reason I should even be awake so I'm not responding. And by the time you bring coffee I've already had so many lifetimes unfold. The high school track is in the foreground and the hill where the teens go in the background. One day I got a closer view of this hill and one day the pilgrims were going up in an "ants go marching" stream. It changed the feeling of the epoch I thought we were living in. The marble is wet underfoot because of an irrigation set up. They do offer some privacy but everyone's gone from this ghost town anyway. Hallelujah, still, there is nothing like this.

The remainder of the month progresses with many small-time dramas and crises but no real big disasters. I'm just talking about at home. I can't say much about the world outside but I've been reading. I'm still going for my walks and there I'm deeply in something but still it's removed. Everynight you are telling me about a hundred new people that you met. Not really but it does seem like that. It's October now, it's almost November. It's sunny and warm and everyone is talking about how it's more like summer semester usually is. She says she's into heat and uses the description of "fever dream" several times in order to explain her interests. I wanted to say something about the wind and its relationship to fire.

At night on video chat we have our villas to dream about and figure out what it is. Our garbage radar could turn into a garbage empire. And we'll get to see it all and sort it all out first. It's kind of a joke for a couple of weeks. Near the market is an abandoned domicile which could be a villa. Why not? And since the neighborhood would more than likely be undesirable for anyone but us, our dream doesn't have to feel totally unattainable. It looks like it's three floors which seems perfect in that we each have our own and then we have one to share.

(2)

The actual burning city came later. In a different city, in a different time, it actually, finally happened. A lot of people I know lost their homes. I was trying to describe it, like imagine a quarter or maybe even a half of everyone you spent New Year's with is homeless now overnight. Usually, the fires don't come off the hills but this time because of the wind, this crazy once in a lifetime wind, it's different. He laments people not taking heed of the interconnectedness of everything and sort of mocks all of the talk about the wind in this case.

Marta said the smoke and the sky was more foreboding in 2020 when Northern California burned, and some people jumped in their pools in order to escape the rapidly moving flames. I don't know how that story went in the end. I also remember seeing images of a Manhattan that looked like Mars when the fires were burning in Canada. Smoke travels the way the wind blows, it makes sense but then when you experience it somehow it doesn't. That summer I remember I was desperate for an ending, it happened in slow motion and then all these years later, all at once.

And you got one of these air band b donation things, but it was so disgusting you said. You were trying to convince yourself all night; It's free and it's fine and it's only for a week. Plus, to be in one place for a while seemed a reason in and of itself. But it wasn't possible. The good thing is that this week and next week you have some close friends out of town and are staying at theirs. When I say that you can't buy me dinner you ask if it's because you are homeless, and I say that it is and we laugh. But then I forgot to Venmo you, still. When I was leaving it seemed like I'd be back now. Now I'm flying over Greenland so it's happening.

(3)

A pod of pilot whales gathered in a heart formation maybe only for a few moments. This is several years ago now but you may remember the image taken from above. A year before there was something similar.

And then they mass suicided. 97 died in 2023 and then in subsequent years 54, 32, 150; but that time 135 were returned to deep water. It's not always possible to save them and anyway they usually do it again.

In Berlin, Lena told me she also feels collapsed but dealing all day with the hearts made her feel better somehow. In Flagstaff there was a "community valentine." A large decorated wooden heart that the recipient would get to have on their front lawn. I longed for it. You send me an article about the dispersed fate of heart shaped bathtubs, maybe it's my first public sculpture in the Poconos, anyway 'tis the season.

Dying Play was made in Hollywood in 2022 whilst I was living near these two old men who felt to me like they were dying. I felt like I was dying too, stewing in the sad molasses of that spring. Eventually I couldn't extract myself. We are all always already dying, remember that?

dust bunnies

.

(4)

Dear Marta,

Lily sent me a picture of this pile of floorboards from the house next to where we were staying and somehow it was like a pile of dollars or a swimming pool full of coins like Scrooge McDuck. The cover of Max Payday was an image of that. I took out the scrooge and the form of the coins was obviously a kind of breasts and torso situation. It took on a whole other spectrum of desire although for me it's still just about money money money. Specifically this frantic desire and all consuming preoccupation about being "rich" somehow. So rich that whatever it is can be tossed around however and you don't have to worry about it. Anyway, any time that I get that wanting it to come out of my ears feeling I know that's the thing.

I decided if we could figure it out somehow this pile of boards would be the show. It was already the show on the street in Athens, in front of the writer's retirement home that was being disassembled. It was also the show as the boards in those plastic woven construction bags, as the boards in bags, stacked and wrapped in black plastic while in transit and then in the garage in Mainz being sorted by size.

But then as the world turned, before any of that, the pile was mostly already pulverized by the time Lily went back on Monday morning. When he got a guy on the phone he said that there was another whole floor's worth of bags on the top that would be lifted out with a crane on Wednesday and we could certainly have them if we could take them away before evening. At first Lily was able to get some of it into his car but it was never going to be everything and without some kind of overwhelming something it might not even be worth it. Many serendipities and other things came together. At first the guy we usually move things with couldn't do it because his truck broke down but Kiki knew another guy with a bigger truck who could move it.

And so the new guy with the better truck met Lily at the site and he wrapped the construction bags in black plastic like huge saran wrap. They already looked like something like this. Funny but I'm not going to say it. A couple of days later they arrived in Mainz.

When I went to dinner with Martin, some place famous somehow in the context of Carnival, he told me the story about the arrival of the truck and Bjorn and all of it. I've gotten deliveries from this guy too and it's true, he's a character very much not from Germany. Lena told me that last time she received the pearls there was a jar of olives in there. I said I didn't know anything about it but then I remember they are from Lily's dad's grove near Delphi. Yes Delphi as in Oracle of. He sends us olive oil that he makes by himself and I'm very convinced this is how we will live forever and be so beautiful.

I didn't get my hands on any of it for a while, probably a month. For many reasons I had to travel to Vienna and install the other Princessletthewind and then I was in Genova, we were together then. Wait, what is fortitude exactly?

Once it was there, there were several operations. Many hands helped. The sorting by size, the re-configuration. The figuring out of the pattern was something that Axel did. I always wonder if I would have had the fortitude to see it myself. Somehow I doubt it.

The nails were painted with Chanel Charmer which is a really particular holographic pink; deep pink. Not magenta.

The week I booked the Königshof I couldn't in fact do anything. There was water coming in the building and so construction was delayed. They were sanding the concrete floor, particulate everywhere. It's not a big space.

I stayed in the hotel and made drawings on napkins I took from breakfast. I was sitting early at a table for 6 and then disappearing all the settings. I copied the script from a welcome mat and drew it in pencil in triptics, three times on the napkin.

In the end there was a lot of moisture still in the room and so there were fans and this kind of humidity removing machine. The plan was to take them both out but of course I wanted to leave them. It was perfect because then they danced around the napkins and then they got caught in the nails and whatever.

The unfinished (undone, incomplete) building and the undid floor came together in the card of the hanging man. Vinny's story about "Stop" "Halt" "Stay your hand" - - - more on this in a minute.

The opening was fine, or maybe it was a disaster. I always think that the work works best when you become a little quieter, to hear your own breath, your heart, etc. Maybe you consider something tenderly that you normally trample. Before there was an inherent brutality...

Okay, wait no, let me start again.

I think the work works best if you have to be alive to a frequency that's always already going. But it's not cathartic. You don't leave feeling better nor do you get to stew in apocalyptic drama. No one tells you what to believe let alone think and you don't get reassured of my goodness, your goodness or any goodness in general.

But I'm also not looking for freedom.

Oh about the opening, it was hell. Apparently G_d did have a plan though in that my German isn't good enough now to glean all of the details. I was worried the week before when Martin wrote, "Nancy, I've been asked several times about the title of your exhibition 'Our Villas' and I have to honestly admit that I was a bit lost myself as I didn't know your thoughts on it. Could you explain to me why you called the exhibition (which is going to be great by the way!) 'Our Villas'?"

I replied, "I guess in the most basic sense the title "Our Villas" nods towards ideas of aspiration... specifically for a vaguely European sort. I think here it also points towards the aspiration of a home or some kind of place - a wistful abstract notion of "somewhere" that is always out of reach or on the way to a being that will never be.

In general I think it's a little weird to answer questions like this in relation to my work because there isn't one answer. I see language as a material in and of itself that evokes rather than gives specific answers. Do you know what I mean? It's important that the audience is given space to bathe in the abstraction and feel however. It's okay not to know."

I sent him the poem which says everything that needs to be said about Our Villas:

Our Villas is the romance of what might be, not the violin strings of suspense, but waiting for it. This breathing in but not breathing out.

Death, no, hibernating?

Not mammalian, not earthbound.

Our Villas was, "stop", remember? Not letting things become but rather float, or hover, suspended in the moment before, not en route to anywhere really.

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