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 Laminated paper, textile, plaster,  
 pigments

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In their works, Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen pursue an extended image practice that is in one instance more based on painting and in the other more on sculpture. Their works switch from two dimensions to three and back again, stretching, straining, supporting, and disintegrating.

The two artists, who did not know each other before being invited to this exhibition, share an interest in traces and moldings, friction and dissolution. The latex used by Desto picks up three-dimensional traces of its carrier material, but decomposes when exhibited. Already before this process has reached final disintegration, Desto works with digital documentation or animation, which is eventually the only state in which the works will exist. Van Essen utilizes fermentation to produce drawing tools, which are also handheld sculptures that wear away when used, and continuously recycles materials that have already been used by herself or by others.

**Opens** is a joint work by Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen. It consists of a latex painting by Monique that was created directly on the floor of the GAK. Latex is applied in several thin layers. Once painted and dried, it can be easily removed from a smooth surface, but it absorbs the traces of what it was created on. In other words, this painting is a fairly accurate impression of the floor of the GAK. And whenever this work will be exhibited again, it will have a bit of GAK in it.

The motif of the mangrove trees with their network of roots refers to the Teerhofinsel, on which the GAK stands virtually in the middle of the water and, like the mangroves, is washed around and washed out by water. There is another aspect to the forest motif that interested the two artists, namely the way in which trees mediate between closeness and distance. Trees and forest plants have techniques for supporting each other, but not getting so close that they restrict each other.

Klaartje's sculpture comes from a series called *Distributors*. It presses the latex upwards, or put differently the latex pushes onto the sculpture. The series began with smaller sculptures that are mounted on the walls where the sheathing of electrical cables, for example, runs along the walls. For her sculptures, Klaartje pours warm, liquid wax with cold, also still liquid plaster into a mold, where they are arranged together in their contrasting qualities and form a random mesh. The molds that Klaartje uses for casting are packaging elements made of polystyrene or cardboard that are no longer needed elsewhere. In this constellation, the distributor is now embedded in the network of roots.

**Pillar 1, 2 and 3** build up a larger, architectural structure from smaller elements - an interest that runs through Klaartje van Essen's work as a whole. The plaster strips, which are laid over the basic paper structure, reinforce the elements, but also bear weight on the paper. Each individual element is then supported by another and they brace themselves together between the floor and the ceiling, holding their shape by resting on each other and balancing each other out. Their differences in shape reveal different clusters of tubes. The surface is perhaps more reminiscent of bark and thus of a tree than of a real, architectural column.

The **Crayon Rocks** and the drawings also carry this moment in themselves, where something very small can become something big, but also a cycle of (material) change. The 156 *Crayon Rocks* are homemade wax or plaster crayons that were created because there was leftover plaster and wax from the *Distributors*' production. Van Essen didn't want to simply let these harden, but colored them and poured them into this handy form. Using the chinks, van Essen has now applied the three large-format, temporary drawings to the wall. The drawings are based on observations of tubes and marks that van Essen collects during walks and that capture her sculptural interests. In the process of drawing, however, the chalk stones dissolve (originally there were 157, now there are 156) and the dust on the floor virtually completes the cycle.

The apparatuses depicted in Klaartje's drawings are loosely connected to the five works that Monique S. Desto produced for the GAK **radiators**. These refer to the history of the Weserburg building, which was originally a tobacco and then a coffee warehouse.

The water line, which all five works share, refers to the water running through the radiators, but also to the Weser as a transport route that was once highly important for trade in the Hanseatic city. The waxing and waning units on the paintings also refer to this. Desto painted the works on a background in which five lines of text were embedded, which are now visible as reliefs on the works. They can be read in full in the titles of the individual works. The text is by Lawrence Weiner and refers to his work on façade of GAK, with which Desto's works are located back to back. Weiner's outdoor piece is the title of an LP from 1978 and the lines selected by Desto are taken from a song on this LP.

**Gebanne:Gebälk** also refers directly to the GAK. *Gebanne* is Monique S. Desto's graduation work from the Academy in Nuremberg from 2021. The work is around 80 meters long and changes with each new exhibition and installation. On the one hand, because it refers to the space, whose conditions always determine how *Gebanne* is stretched and give the work its addition (in this case, beams). On the other hand, the latex gradually decomposes through exposure to sunlight and cracks appear due to the tension until the work has dissolved to such an extent that it can no longer be installed.

**Szenebild\_1-9** is based on 30 x 30 cm ink drawings that Desto never shows in the original. The drawings are created stroke by stroke with bamboo pens, which sometimes follow each other more spontaneously, sometimes less spontaneously. Previously they were presented by digital projection or enlarged prints. Here they are now shown as medium-format slides to reveal details down to the paper structure. The rhythm between fading in and out corresponds to the relationship between day and night at the end of the exhibition.

**Scratched Sketches** by Klaartje van Essen is in turn linked to the production process of another work. In the dessert glasses, van Essen stirs the differently pigmented wax with which she pours the *Crayon Rocks*. Once the jars are largely emptied, there is a short moment in which the remaining wax has not yet hardened again, giving her a brief opportunity to make sketches in it. This form of time pressure and the appreciation of materials and moments are captured here in van Essen's small format.

Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen are also linked by their attitude towards the potential of material, which expands in certain moments under certain conditions and in certain places. Because the spatial conditions and the circumstances surrounding them are always different, the works also change. But they also change because they are fragile and ephemeral, condense and are then folded up again, pulverized or disassembled.

Monique S. Desto (b. 1989, lives in Hamburg) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg and was awarded the Bavarian Art Promotion Prize in 2022. Desto's works have recently been shown in solo and group exhibitions at venues such as Westwerk, Hamburg (2024); Galerie Wassermühle Trittau (2024); Kunstverein Weiden (2024); Lothringer 13 Halle, Munich (2023); Atelier- und Galeriehaus Defet, Nuremberg (2022); and Oberpfälzer Künstlerhaus, Schwandorf (2022). Desto is a member of the artist collectives Galerie Douglas and phantom step.

Klaartje van Essen (b. 1998, lives in Amsterdam) studied at De Ateliers, Amsterdam and at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht. Van Essen's work has recently been exhibited at venues including de Omstand, Arnhem (2024); Museum Cobra, Amstelveen (2024); De Ateliers, Amsterdam (2024); Woonhuis, Amsterdam (2023); EXBOOT, Utrecht (2023); Personeelskamer, Amsterdam (2023); and EspaceAygo, Brussels (2022).

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