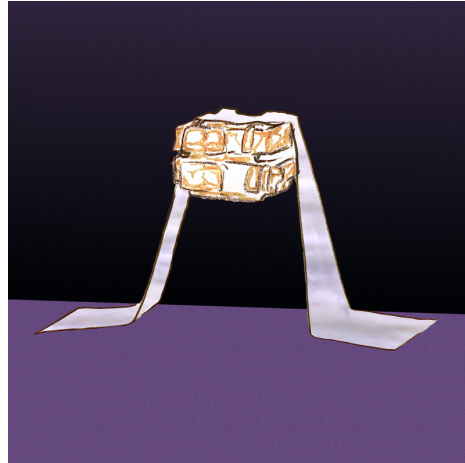




Press Release

GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst



Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen

*Erosion Arranged: we sink, I stretch, you flow*

March 1–May 11 2025

Opening: Friday, 28.2.2025, 19 h

Press talk: Thursday, 27.2.2025, 11 h

The GAK is happy to announce the duo exhibition *Erosion Arranged: we sink, I stretch, you flow* by Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen. The two artists share a sensitivity for the relationship between painting, sculpture, memory, and space in their extended image practices. Their works switch from two dimensions to three and back again, stretching, straining, supporting, and disintegrating.

Negotiations between fragility, erosion, and spatial arrangement also form part of the dialogue between Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen—who did not know each other previously—that shaped their relationship to one another in the exhibition. One image they conjured refers to the River Weser, which flows constantly by the GAK. Water adapts and shapes ambivalently. Another related one evokes the communicative and spatial structure of mangrove forests, which are rooted in the water and thus mediate between land and water. They are anchored and washed out at the same time; they arrange themselves in their formations, standing close together and yet giving each other space to grow. The trees negotiate proximity and distance in an unwritten contract of mutual dependency, which can also be projected onto the GAK, Bremen, and the collaboration between the artists. From here, notions of verticality and horizontality, of the relationship between landscape and movement, of gravity and time emerge, structuring the way the works of Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen insert themselves between floor and ceiling, past and present, tracing the contours of the building and its environment as well as modulating their process-based inhabitation of a shared physical space between material and image.

# Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst

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When Monique S. Desto paints pigmented latex into a mold or onto a material that is not completely flat, the latex adapts to it and a relief is created. Between this relief and the motifs of the painting itself, complementary or conflicting images are created that allude to the conditions of systemized structures and (colonial) histories. Harnessing its flexibility in the exhibition context, Desto frequently stretches or wraps this latex around pillars, radiators, or other elements of the exhibition space. The tension this creates oscillates between support and distortion—both for the image and the space. Despite its elasticity, every exhibition and exposure to light brings the latex a little closer to its eventual dissolution.

Klaartje van Essen often works with wax or plaster. The material may be poured into pre-existing mold-like objects that van Essen appropriates from the streets or her studio. Recently, she has applied plaster to large areas of canvas and arranged them into life-size architectural structures. Sometimes the smoothly hardened out plaster almost looks like a tile, while in other areas the plaster becomes more porous as a result of a rapid working process, creating painterly gestures. Van Essen's works generally form both pictorial and spatial elements that are highly aware of their surroundings and continuously refer to their (ecological) dependencies and supporting structures.

Both artists 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. In some fragile way, Desto's and van Essen's works partly preserve—in ever-changing forms—things that have perhaps already been lost and that may take the desire for presence to the point of absurdity, transforming it into new forms of itself. In their distinct artistic practices, Monique S. Desto and Klaartje van Essen intertwine questions of value and valence with questions of processing and consumption.

In their duo exhibition, a practical material and aesthetic exchange develops between the two artists and draws them closer together, allowing the works to touch each other, refer to, and enact a multitude of relationships.

### *Artists*

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).

*Accompanying events*

Tue, 11.03.2025 19:00  
Guided tour with Lois Kiwala

Tue, 22.04.2025 19:00  
Artist talk with Monique S. Desto and Klaartje Van Essen

Thu, 08.05.2025 19:00  
Input und Tour with Philipp Gufler

Sun, 11.05.2025 15:00  
Curator's tour with Annette Hans

Please contact us for further information or hi-res images.  
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Opening hours: Tue – Sun 11 – 18 h  
Admission: 3,-, ermäßigt 2,- Euro

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