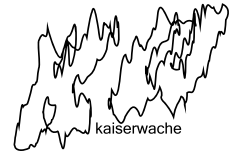


Über uns, unter uns

February 28 – March 30, 2025



David Attwood; Claire Megumi; Andrea Fortmann; Nao Kikuchi; Hannah Kindler; Hojeong Lee; Alice Tioli; Michaela Tröscher, the Icelandic pianist; Lorenz Walter Wernli; Lidong Zhao

It begins with a trace; more precisely, a sedimentation of gazes, a collection of views that overlap in the photographic documentation of past exhibitions. I sift through the digital remnants of Kaiserwache programming from the past three years: images, videos, texts—scattered across various art platforms. Gradually, the most obvious observation settles in my mind. All artifacts—most conspicuously in the photographs—incidentally address or document the architecture, gradually exposing Kaiserwache (or incrementally contributing to its digitally mediated simulacrum). This inevitably leads to the next question: What remains invisible? What eludes capture? Where does the image fall silent?

An answer shots forth: The basement and attic of Kaiserwache constitute spaces beyond the curated gaze, remote zones of our exhibition practice that seemingly evade systematic classification and visibility. In documentation, they are perceptible mainly through their absence. Until now, they have only been alluded to, their doors appearing as latent edges marking a beyond of the exhibition.

Basements and attics: When we think of these dark, often windowless spaces, our mind's eye tends to linger at the threshold—as if the uncertainty of these environments were transforming into a potential threat. Countless horror film tropes stem from this very notion. But is that all? What truly keeps us from entering these spaces?

Perhaps it is the darkness and dust that the camera fears, the disorder that defies the curated gaze, or simply the fact that these spaces were never intended for us. Maybe the answer lies in the architecture itself—in its boundaries, its accessibility, and, not least, its hierarchies. Or in our own perception, which resists acknowledging the invisible as part of what is being shown.

It remains to be stated that these spaces are indispensable (even in the literal sense)—foundational elements that unfold their impact in obscurity. Precisely from this marginal existence, they assert their own logic and challenge us to rethink space.

Above us and beneath us (Über uns, unter uns) are not mere spaces but vectors of movement, of displacement, that seek to renegotiate the act of looking. Attic and basement, beyond their materiality, must also be understood as spaces of thought. They are not the Other of the exhibition but its intensified form: spaces that resonate and reason.

In this exhibition, the hierarchy of space—its function as a backdrop or carrier of a curatorial narrative—is reversed. The exhibition is no longer a display presenting itself to a gaze but a process, a machinery defined by its fractures. The space loses its status as a background and becomes an agent.

The basement and attic in “Über uns, unter uns” elude conventional access for visitors; they are not spaces of direct physical perception as expected but rather spaces of inaccessibility, a deferral or displacement of vision. Their visibility is mediated—through convex mirrors that do not reveal but rather point elsewhere. This reflection

generates a scattering of space, followed by a dispersion of its coherence. What remains is the attempt to decipher the distorted image, yet what lingers is not revelation but an inkling: something is there—above us, beneath us—but always withdrawn, ultimately inaccessible in its entirety.

The exhibition no longer operates in the mode of direct presentation but in a state of displacement, a topological entanglement of the visible and the invisible. Seeing is reflected in its own condition—not as access but as difference. There is no direct gaze, only detours, reflections, afterimages. This points to the paradoxical mediality of exhibitions themselves: their presence is always also their absence, their documentation always already another form of exhibition.

Photography, which ostensibly preserves, in truth transfers its referent into another order. It does not merely create an image of the exhibition but a new exhibition within the image. Every act of documentation is a curatorial decision, a cut through visibility, a frame that conceals as much as it reveals. What does this mediation do to the “actual” exhibition? Or conversely: What would an exhibition be without its mediation?

Yet there is no pure presence. Every artwork is always already framed by prior knowledge, expectation, and context. It does not exist as an autonomous object but as part of a mechanism of capture, projection, and archiving. The notion of immediate experience is deceptive. Without a structure of mediation, the artwork becomes a blind spot. The question is not whether mediation takes place, but how.

In this exhibition, Kaiserwache transforms into an oversized analog camera—a device that produces visibility but also displaces it. It is not far-fetched to consider that an exhibition, in a certain sense, is always already a camera—a machine of reflection, an assemblage of visibility and invisibility, proximity and distance, names and bodies, economy and aesthetics. Visitors find themselves in the illuminated, empty exhibition space—the print—while the actual event takes place in the negative space of the architecture: the basement, the attic. Without the negative, there is no image, no visibility, no exhibition.

The negative of an image must never be understood as a mere inversion of the developed image—they do not relate symmetrically. While it is inevitable that the content of the negative forms the basis of the future image, it would be a mistake to see it as a straightforward reversal of tonal values. After all, the development of the negative is a creative process, yielding different images depending on the mode of perception. The results can be extraordinarily distinct—so long as the chemistry is right, quite literally.

The photographic negative is a trace, an inversion, a shadow of the light conditions that left an image behind. It is a visibility not intended for itself but a transitional form, a possibility. In this show, the negative becomes the principle.

An attic is a boundary: too low to truly be a floor, too high to remain part of the ground. An animal inside is not a visitor, not a pet, not prey, but a constant that was not anticipated. The marten eats, shits, sleeps, disappears. Its territory is not ownership, but a habit. Its presence is a decision or a coincidence, its feces a mark of duration.

Now it is not visible, but its body has used the warmth of the wood and pressed its fur into the dust. I must wipe away its traces, clean its toilet (how ironic this statement echoes here at Kaiserwache), separate its place from mine, but the door remains a boundary that separates not only us but also time and matter. Perhaps the marten is long gone, has given up on its territory, and found some other hidden corner of the city. Or maybe it's right above, tucked between the beams in that twilight, just waiting for me to clear out. After all, spatial production isn't just a human game.

I am fascinated by a certain type of commercial group show that gets by with two-line exhibition texts or even just a list of names (why do I write “get by?” After all, they thrive precisely because of this!) They behave unobtrusively, yet at the same time, they cannot avoid bumping into the institutions of good taste.

The “coherence” of the selection, a protective exhibition theme, an overarching narrative—these elements often feel like mere pretexts for business in this context. A kind of intellectual ornamentation that, given the Potemkin-like motivations behind the framing, either spoils the appetite of those interested in commerce or makes a “serious” engagement with the exhibition uncomfortable, if not impossible, for those invested in the art itself. In contrast, there are those “unpretentious” exhibitions or strategically assembled arrangements. These galleries have grown weary of the masquerade—of having to dress exhibitions in the guise of a tradition of coherence and legibility, a pompous attire that many shows refuse to forgo, not least for its legitimizing effects. Especially when the emphasis on exhibition quality and curatorial value comes into conflict with the sanctified business.

Many galleries have little need to conform to curatorial conventions or etiquette—good business usually begets more good business, whereas „good“ exhibition art offers no such promise of self-sustainability. Thus, this type of exhibition seems to have a different mode of presentation, one that counteracts the tendencies of idealizing motivations and, by the way, lends the exhibition a more down-to-earth, albeit less reflective, appearance.

The exhibitions I speak of can sometimes be understood as a strategic response to certain economic conditions. Galleries have deals with artists but also deals and percentages with each other. The small fish must figure out what artistic leftovers they can grab for themselves, because clearly, there exists a food chain among galleries as well. This may sound more brutal than it really is. But if we stay with the brutal metaphor, the blood trail can be traced back to René Picard’s proclamation: “We no longer collect art, but acquire individuals.” It is no longer possible to separate art from the artist, if it ever was. Their names flash up, and names, as we know, are fleeting, negotiable, connectable, and transferable. It’s not about a hierarchy of quality but about a pragmatics of connection. Clearly, artists have grown or degenerated into brand names that must be understood as symbolic units with individual traits and, hopefully, prospects for value appreciation.

Although we, at Kaiserwache, do not directly engage in value creation through monetary flow, we are nonetheless inevitably embedded in a network of brand and symbolic values. Whether we like it or not, we act like a brand. This model of trading in immaterial values, of dancing with associations and desires, long established in the collaboration between artists and art spaces, is increasingly found in other markets and on ever more spectacular levels. I’m talking about collaborations between international trade brands. Have you ever tasted Coca-Cola® with Oreo™ flavor? Taste here is irrelevant, because the mere idea of their union already generates enough symbolic value to push the actual product into the background. The brands enter into a promiscuous romance, just so their child can carry a double-barreled name. And it is the aura of this romance—not the child—that sparks interest. This need not necessarily be interpreted negatively.

Exactly this logic also shapes the commercial group show, which no longer has to rely on curatorial concepts but only on the economic grammar of names, whose (re-)combinations already generate a narrative. The exhibition as a cocktail of signifiers, as a fleeting arrangement of values that charge each other—not to create thematic depth, but to stage the mechanism of visibility itself.

It would be a lie to claim that the exhibition is completely free from the logic of brand fusion—after all, there is a certain allure in combining names, imagining how their interactions will create new constellations, how their symbolic values oscillate and

charge each other. There is a nearly naïve joy in alphabetically ordering these names: David Attwood, Claire Megumi (Claire and Megumi are both first names of the artist); Andrea Fortmann; Nao Kikuchi; Hannah Kindler; Hojeong Lee; Alice Tioli; Michaela Tröscher, the Icelandic pianist; Lorenz Walter Wernli; Lidong Zhao: imagining a “product” emerging from their connection—more or less uninterested in the conceptual linkage of their works. Perhaps there is a gesture of marketing here, perhaps a deeply rooted need for connection, for association, and of course for communication with these artists.

But if I think this impulse through further, it inevitably begins to dissolve itself. What exactly happens when an exhibition does not rely on the conventional narrative of coherence and consistency? When it does not obey the mechanisms of thematic order or curatorial mediation? Does something get revealed or is just another veil pulled?

“Über uns, unter uns” does not use this mode of presentation as a form of rejection, but as a strategy of play—a play that is unsure of its own motivations and doesn’t want to be. For an exhibition that is staged from the start as “authentic” or “down-to-earth” only reproduces another form of masquerade, a new pose of immediacy. Instead, here, the unfinished takes center stage so that the string of names can remain provisional. The reading becomes secondary.

Perhaps that is the real point: Every exhibition is an image with an invisible negative, a reflection that never shows the whole. Because ultimately, every person—every artistic gesture, every exhibition—carries something within them that not only remains incomprehensible but also unreachable. A shadow and a transcending that lies beyond any curatorial construction.

-Ilja Zaharov

Documentation>>>
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About Kaiserwache:

The name Kaiserwache carries a historical irony. The building’s proximity to Kaiser-Joseph-Straße and Kaiserbrücke—named after Emperor Joseph II’s visit to Freiburg in 1777—points to the city’s imperial past. The bridge itself was once adorned with bronze statues of historical figures such as Henry V and Frederick Barbarossa. During World War II, these statues were removed with the intention of melting them down for war production—a plan that was ultimately never realized. Due to high transportation costs, the statues remained unused after the war. To this day, the empty niches remain visible—just steps away from Kaiserwache.

Beyond this historical dimension, the building’s original function as a public restroom adds another layer—perhaps a tongue-in-cheek reference to the throne of the king. The Art Nouveau structure has seen a turbulent past: damaged in both World Wars, used as a refuge for drug users in the 1980s, and evolving into a well-known cruising spot in the 1990s. Traces of this history remain visible—graffiti, phone numbers, and explicit inscriptions, which have been consciously preserved as artifacts of the site’s unofficial past. Today, the building is under historical preservation and serves as an exhibition space since 2021.

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Addendum (Apologies if I repeat myself):

We tend to overlook how much an artwork is not only influenced by its presentation but often brought into being by it in the first place. The white walls, the right angles, the neutralized light—these are the oxygen of the art world. We barely notice them as long as they work their magic reliably. Only when art has to do without the white cube does its breath begin to falter. Or to put it differently: One does not suffocate inside the white cube, but rather outside of it, when the accustomed conditions disappear and the artwork must assert itself in unfamiliar atmospheres.

“Über uns, unter uns” is situated at precisely this threshold. The exhibition shifts the focus away from the neutral presentation space and into the zones that remain outside the reach of a conventional exhibition space: the attic and the basement. These are places untouched by right angles or museal smoothness. They follow their own logic—dust, darkness, confinement, and inaccessibility themselves become active forces.

For me, this was both the challenge and the promise of this exhibition: What happens when art no longer hides from architecture but instead exposes itself to it? When it is not the walls that serve the works but the works that must respond to the edges, niches, and shadows of the space? And beyond that: What does mediation mean under such conditions? How can an exhibition be made tangible when its essential elements withdraw from “direct” view?

“Über uns, unter uns” opens various paths into the exhibition and tests different forms of mediation. These include this exhibition text, a video tour, a photographic documentation using a digital camera, and an analog photo series. The distinct qualities of each medium allow different facets of the exhibition (as well as the possibilities and limitations of the media themselves) to come to the fore, making it evident that the exhibition itself only fully takes shape through these mediations.

Initially, my goal was to treat all formats equally. However, I soon realized this was hardly feasible. On the one hand, I observed a clear difference in audience engagement with the various media. A nearly ten-minute video tour or a multi-page text receives significantly less attention than the digital photo series, which, in its scrollable format—similar to an Instagram feed—proves particularly accessible.

On the other hand, a curatorial decision further shifted the dynamics: the analog documentation is presented exclusively as negatives on-site, with no digital reproductions. The decision to forgo digitization was deliberate—partly because the curatorial interest of this exhibition lies precisely in the differences and idiosyncrasies of each medium. Here, the focus is on the physical negatives, their materiality, and the process of their development. Unlike the digital documentation, these images are not transferred into the digital media landscape. This inevitably creates an imbalance in accessibility—one that is not merely accepted but emphasized.

The choice to present the negatives only in their analog form and not make them available online also serves as a gesture that reinforces the image of Kaiserwache as an oversized camera—an apparatus that produces visibility while simultaneously withholding it.

This withholding arises from the apparatus (or the media) itself. Photographs, texts, and videos do not merely document the exhibition; they also reveal their own shortcomings. Every attempt at mediation leaves behind something that cannot be fully translated. Every perspective opens a gap—a space of the untranslated (or even the untranslatable). And in this, there is a parallel to the so-called “direct” experience on-site. For even when we stand before a work, something remains withdrawn.

After all, we often fail to notice the air of the white cube, or the silent conditions that must be met for the illusion of “immediacy” and “presence” to arise in the first place (see previous text).

Perhaps this is the real break with the white cube: that we are not only leaving it behind spatially but also exposing its promises of clarity, neutrality, transparency, and immediate encounter as mere constructs.

David Attwood (*1990 in Perth/Boorloo, Australia) lives and works in Perth/Boorloo.

„Goddess I“ by David playfully merges two seemingly opposing spheres: the hyper-capitalist consumer product and so-called folk art (Volkskunst)—a term originally coined by Alois Riegl, which warrants critical examination. Considering what David’s work gestures towards, one could argue that in the age of the internet, terms like “DIY decor” and “Pinterest projects” may have long surpassed the notion of “folk art.”

At the heart of the piece is the Scrub Mommy sponge, a variation of the wildly popular Scrub Daddy, which features a dedicated soft side specifically designed for gentler cleaning. The bright yellow sponge, with its unmistakable smiley face, is pierced through the eye holes by two wooden rods and fixed in place with wooden beads. The entire construction is held by a simple oakwood disc with bark—reminiscent of materials commonly found in DIY projects.

The appearance references the exaggerated gestures of cartoons—like when characters’ eyes comically pop out of their heads. Yet “Goddess I” overlays this pop-cultural reference with an art-historical reading: According to Riegl, folk art is a tradition-based practice linked to household craft and home production—a supposedly primitive precursor to art, which he contrasted with industrial mass production.

The ironic title, “Goddess,” elevates this banal cleaning tool, while also pointing to the Scrub Daddy’s status as a pop-cultural phenomenon: a product that has transcended its mere utility to become a symbol of entrepreneurial success and viral brand identity.

Dishwashing—an activity many would rather avoid—is given a “fun” persona through Scrub Daddy/Mommy, transforming from a purely functional object into an icon of household entertainment of sorts. In “Goddess I,” these layers converge: folk art, mass-produced goods, DIY aesthetics, internet memes, and critiques of capitalism intertwine to form a hybrid, humorous sculpture—one that ultimately asks what we take seriously as “art” today, and what we don’t.

Claire Megumi (both are her first names) (*1996 in Saint-Julien-en-Genevois, France) lives and work in Basel and Geneva.

The development of an artistic practice is often deeply intertwined with personal needs, boundaries, and routines. In Claire's work, this connection is particularly immediate. Her practice emerges from a conscious attentiveness to her own pace, from the care not to overstrain the body, and from a sensitivity to colors, materials, and gestures—elements she gathers under an expanded notion of painting. This approach culminates in the installation in the basement of Kaiserwache. The installation, which I carried out, resulted from close consultation with Claire.

The work is titled „a story between them – everything is political から逃げられないよ。on se tient la mano, alles zusammen“, a polyphonic collage of all the languages she is closely connected to: English, Japanese, French, and German. This title not only reflects her biography but also gestures toward the delicate entanglements of stories, relationships, and political responsibility that fundamentally shape her practice.

The installation brings together three works that exist in quiet correspondence with one another. On a raw canvas, a thin, salmon-colored thread rests, seemingly placed there by chance, as if carried by the wind. A hand-twisted cord (cordelette) runs loosely across the right side of the canvas, echoing the thread in both materiality and gesture, extending its movement. The glass bead macramés are directly connected to the canvas as well: suspended from a small needle at their lowest point, they dangle like ornaments—delicate, yet provisional and unobtrusive.

The same cord from the canvas continues as a connecting element through the arrangement of three coin containers, which once collected entrance fees for the Kaiserwache's restroom facilities. On the rightmost container, the cord gathers into a tangled mass, as if forming a counterweight to the canvas at this point.

These techniques and materials—hand-twisted cords, glass beads, macramé—are often associated with craft or everyday production. Claire consciously brings them into dialogue with the expectations tied to a painterly practice, subtly shifting its boundaries. The connection to questions of craft raised in David's work is unmistakable.

The fabrics remain raw, the seams exposed, excess material spilling over, as if the process itself were continuing undecidedly. The only painterly traces on the canvas come from dark stains of rabbit-skin glue—a traditional binding medium in painting, yet here not as a base for color, but as a subtle nod to the history of the medium.

Claire succeeds in creating a shared space for textile craft and painterly remnants. Loose connections form between the elements, allowed to unravel, reweave, and entangle once more. This approach unfolds into a practice of care, repetition, and small, almost imperceptible shifts—always with an awareness that everything is interconnected and, ultimately, as the title states: everything is political.

Andrea Fortmann (*1991 in Bern, Switzerland) lives and work in Lucerne.

Andrea's work "how unforeseen! these places we become" accompanies this exhibition as a kind of echo of its own conditions. Originally conceived as a site-specific intervention for the vitrine-like platform of the Kunstverein Solothurn, the work projected the inaccessible ground-plan area of the glazed interior space onto the asphalt in front of the glass enclosure—a construction large enough to house a person. The space, which could not be entered, was displaced and externalized. An interior became an exterior.

For "Über uns, unter uns," we explored how this approach could be transferred to the attic of Kaiserwache. As executor of the work, I made decisions closely aligned with Andrea's working method: allowing space for process to dictate choices, engaging with materials found on-site, and not merely occupying existing structures but letting them guide the work. Through our discussions, we developed an adapted form, which I then realized and installed. This idea of adaptation is at the heart of the title—"how unforeseen!"—which, in the fusion of artistic intention and practical solutions on-site, creates room for the unexpected. Ultimately, the chimney connection itself became the central element—not through a fixed plan, but through a series of responses to what was already there. In this sense, the work also establishes a quiet dialogue with Michaela's ceramics on the ground floor, forming a connection between the two levels of the house. As the camera in the video tour looks up through the chimney's interior, the light from Andrea's work becomes visible.

The result on the attic floor is a delicate intervention: soot, dust, cobwebs, and the light cable are intentionally integrated into the piece, framing a lightweight cardboard form that encloses the old chimney opening. The phrase "how unforeseen! these places we become" does not appear as painted or applied text but as a cut-out—an absence through which warm light shines. For a moment, it seems as if the chimney were still in use, as if something were still glowing in this long-abandoned shaft.

I am fascinated by how the work carries its own origins forward while simultaneously leaving them behind. Once again, it relies on an architectural boundary—in this case, the chimney opening—yet transforms it into something else: an opening, a permeability, a remembrance of what was, and a glimpse of what places like this might still become.

Nao Kikuchi (*1988 in Tochigi, Japan) lives and work in Karlsruhe.

At first, it is surprising that Nao still refers to her work as painting. Where once a brush moved across canvas, her gestures have now transferred onto relief-like ceramics—solid, tangible objects that nonetheless function as carriers of color. Her works adhere to walls, integrate into architectural spaces, and often form strict arrangements of shapes, colors, and textures. But isn't that precisely what painting is about? The engagement with picture planes, composition, and boundaries?

Nao's practice begins with a close examination of urban spaces. Wherever she is, she roams through cities in search of architectural fragments: decorative elements on facades, patterns in fences, ornaments on doors. She extracts these motifs from their original contexts and translates them into ceramics. What was once wrought iron grating or a stone relief becomes the foundation for her formal experiments. Yet, the source material does not only serve as a collection of motifs but also as a way of thinking: Where does an image begin, and where does it end? When is a surface a barrier, and when is it a passage?

“Karlstraße #2” engages with these very questions. The number does not refer to an address but rather to a second version of the same motif—a variation, a play on possibilities. As in “old” painting, it is about repetition and transformation: different dimensions, different shades, different glazes (or, in this case, none). The idea remains, while its appearance shifts.

The ceramic takes the shape of a superellipse or a squircle—too rounded to be a rectangle. At its four corners, small cutouts form button-like circles, whose shadows inevitably draw the eye. The surface bears a fabric-like texture, traversed by recessed grooves forming a pattern reminiscent of tartan. To me, the surface texture feels like a picnic cloth cast in clay. A soft spray-painted gradient transitions from muted red to blue to a faint yellow, making the boundary between applied color and the original hue of the clay almost imperceptible.

And yet, “Karlstraße #2” does not behave like a classical painting in the attic space. Instead of adhering to a wall, it hangs freely—suspended from a wooden beam in the middle of the sloping ceiling. Its shape is reminiscent of a floor plan, perhaps even that of Kaiserwache itself. After all, Nao's practice is always about how images interact with space. Her works seem to respond to architecture, aligning with it or breaking away from it—here, the latter is the case. Seen in this light, it is only logical to call her practice painting: a kind of painting that operates not only with color but with material, texture, and site-specificity.

Hannah Kindler (*1987 in Niefern-Öschelbronn, Germany) lives and work in Freiburg.

Hannah's artistic practice is deeply rooted in collaboration and exchange. This is evident not only in both collectives that she co-founded, "somebody*ies" and the "Maternal Artistic Research Studio" (M.A.R.S.), but also in temporary alliances that explore political action within communities. Particularly in moments when political processes stagnate, she turns to collective working methods as a means of breaking hierarchical structures and developing new forms of collaboration. Just two weeks ago, she participated in a performance walk with the Feministische Geschichtswerkstatt Freiburg, revisiting the 1970s protests against the construction of the Wyhl nuclear power plant from a queer-feminist perspective. Kaiserwache was one stop in this performative act of remembrance. For the march, Hannah created hand-sewn textile banners that revived historical protest slogans, translating them into the present.

Public movements like these—walking through urban space as part of a group—are a recurring motif in her work. To me, they generate an expanded collective body, momentarily granting forgotten figures presence—not just as an act of remembrance, but as a reactivation and reconfiguration of their stories.

Her installation in the attic of Kaiserwache also revolves around the reinterpretation of female figures. "Triad of Motherhood" is a triptych of three video screens, embedded in an altar-like fabric structure. The Christian altar, with its heavy wooden panels monumentalizing an ostensibly eternal order, encounters in Hannah's work a counter-image—or counter-ritual: a soft, textile sculpture whose figures resist fixed positioning. The fabric husk, adorned with beads, shells, and miniature animals, rejects rigid narratives and instead transforms the altar space into an evolving process. Here, there is no worship—only transformation. Motherhood, femininity, and care remain open for negotiation.

In the moving portraits, the heavily pregnant artist transforms into hybrid female figures that exaggerate and destabilize conventional representations of femininity, motherhood, and care:

At the center appears a superhero—golden mask, drag makeup, flexed biceps, shadowboxing. Here, motherhood is reimaged as a pose of strength: physical, playful, self-empowered.

To the left, a bearded forest nymph-dwarf holds an apple in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, repeatedly letting the latter slip from their grasp. The apple—symbol of original sin—remains tightly clutched, an emancipatory gesture. The handkerchief, traditionally a tool of feminine coquetry, is never picked up. Instead, it endlessly returns to their hand—autonomous, in an infinite loop.

To the right, a figure stands against a backdrop of crashing waves, embodying the Virgin Mary, the fertility goddess Demeter, and the love goddess Venus all at once—an exaggerated fusion of female archetypes oscillating between care, fertility, and desire. By pushing familiar images of femininity and motherhood to the point of caricature, "Triad of Motherhood" opens up space for alternative narratives—not to ridicule these constructs, but to expose and rewrite their underlying structures. The third figure, in particular, dissolves the traditional image of the self-sacrificing mother, replacing it with a complex and self-determined portrayal of femininity.

That this work found its place in the attic seems almost inevitable. Tucked away in an enclosed, hard-to-reach space—the mind's upper chamber, the house's storage—it evokes the unconscious, the unspoken, the buried layers of collective memory. Up here, there is space for what has long been overlooked: forgotten histories, invisible care work, and alternative visions of the future.

Hojeong Lee (*1996 in Anyang, South Korea) lives and works in Karlsruhe.

Hojeong's approach to drawing is an ongoing conversation with paper (or wood in certain cases)—an interaction that does not begin with a blank surface but rather with the finest variations in color, dust particles, or irregularities already present. She responds to these, leaving a trace—first with graphite pencil, now increasingly with colored pencils—fully aware that the surface can never be entirely predictable. Her lines respond to the paper, just as the paper responds to her lines; a dynamic of mark-making and reaction that is not aimed at a fixed outcome but rather at a continuous engagement.

Yet, what unfolds here is not merely a theory of communication. By working on multiple pieces simultaneously, the conversation extends across various surfaces—an organic movement from „canvas to canvas“ that does not conform to a linear development. Her drawings do not reference fixed motifs; rather, landscapes or figures emerge gradually through this process.

“One Way or the Other” initially appears as a dense cluster of delicate, light-green lines. But upon closer inspection, the circling motion of the artist's hand becomes visible—not with the intention of fixing a clear contour through repetition, but rather to capture the subtle variations that arise when the pencil moves over the same path again. There are no perfect circles in her work. Instead, the contours draw their strength from meandering repetition, like a muscle that grows through movement. What matters is not a completed whole, not a final result, but the continuous state of being in motion.

The title reinforces an association with a highway interchange, which might already be perceptible in the viewing experience. But for me, it is not the motif that takes precedence, but rather the process-driven dissolution of form. It is precisely this moment—a state of suspension between mark-making and dissolution—that defines Hojeong's process. Here, the line is not a rigid boundary set against the background but a fluid element that dissolves the dichotomy between drawing and surface. In this sense, the gaze is challenged: the usual focus on the artist's mark, on what is „depicted,“ loses its stability. The artist's hand and the materiality of pencil and ground meet as equals—a drawing that does not impose authority but remains in dialogue.

Her works possess a sculptural quality: Not only is the paper mounted on a wooden box, giving it the appearance of a canvas, but Hojeong also crafts the wooden frames that enclose her drawings herself making them integral to the drawings. “One Way or the Other,” however, deliberately dispenses with a frame—and, in the classical sense, remains unfinished or „still in process.“ After the exhibition, it will return to Hojeong's studio to continue the conversation. This decision to make the process visible reflects a central consideration: that precisely this process—addition, subtraction, transformation—is fundamental to painting and drawing, yet is often overlooked.

When a work is perceived as a completed entity, certain qualities escape our perception. The life of the work is reduced to a flat, static existence, no longer understood as being in perpetual flux. “One Way or the Other,” in this configuration, questions the supposed completeness of the immediate gaze, as it explicitly foregrounds the temporal life of an artwork.

Alice Tioli (*1991 in Padova, Italy) lives and works in Basel.

Alice's works unfold where meanings become uncertain. By subtly shifting or recomposing familiar motifs, she brings their fragility to the surface. In this movement, a certain tenderness emerges—not as a sentimental gesture, but as a form of attentiveness to what lingers in the background: the small motions, the quiet traces, the things that would otherwise go unnoticed. I find that Alice does not so much stage her materials and references as she circles around them—tentatively, inquisitively, without the claim of grasping them definitively.

For “Über uns, unter uns,” Alice has developed a two-part work that directly responds to the architecture and setting of the attic—and to its animal inhabitant. The sound installation “Marder, bist du da?” (Marten, are you there?) brings together a series of field recordings in which different sonic sources intertwine: the calls of prey animals, the recurring cries of a marten, the creaking and groaning of footsteps on the attic floor. Interwoven with these are synthesizer sequences that heighten the atmosphere, creating a mix of unease and curiosity. Is it the marten itself we hear, or just its echo? Or is it the footsteps of those searching for it? The composition sustains this ambiguity, sharpening the question of who this space truly belongs to—and whether the seemingly pragmatic solution of removal by an exterminator is truly without alternative.

Accompanying the sound piece is an image transfer on aluminum, loosely connected to Alice's ongoing series of portraits on this industrial material. Here, a shot from a wildlife camera is displayed: the night-vision lens has captured the marten, yet the heart-shaped framing of the image makes it feel less like a neutral piece of documentation and more like a charged fantasy. Almost playfully, with a hint of sentimentality, the image attempts to inscribe a gesture of connection—or at least a form of affection—into this fleeting encounter.

While martens are usually seen as unwelcome intruders—gnawing on cables, causing damage—here, the animal becomes a counterpart, its presence challenging us to reconsider how we engage with non-human visitors, even within the context of an exhibition. Who has the right to claim a space, and at what point does this claiming become a disruption?

I invited Alice to engage with the marten issue, which arose as soon as we stepped into the attic after its long period of disuse. I was aware that this situation not only touches on the boundaries between living spaces and habitats but also on the very framework of the exhibition itself. The goal is not to romanticize the animal guest but to examine the conditions that render its presence visible—and audible. “Marder, bist du da?” thus becomes a question turned back on ourselves: Who is really listening to whom here? And what do we do with what we hear?

Michaela Tröscher, the Icelandic pianist (*1974 in Freiburg i. Br.) lives and works in Titisee-Neustadt and Freiburg.

Michaela's artistic production is deeply rooted in biographical experience. Growing up on a farm in the Black Forest, she encountered a contrasting way of life during her studies in sculpture—an encounter that has since shaped her understanding of movement, rootedness, and community. Migration is a recurring theme in her work—not only in terms of her own travels but also in family narratives, such as the emigration of her great-uncle from the Black Forest to New York, which forms a cornerstone of her artistic identity. I perceive her artistic trajectory as unfolding in the tension between wanderlust and homesickness, between movement and place.

While her earlier works focused on departure and being in transit, her current project—“Der andere Spatenstich” (The Other Groundbreaking) and “Strukturen zur Architektur-Biennale für Freiburg” (Structures for the Freiburg Architecture Biennial), developed in collaboration with architect Wolfgang Borgards—explores the opposite: arrival, dwelling, and the formation of community. The starting point is the new Dietenbach development on the outskirts of Freiburg, a controversial urban planning project aimed at creating much-needed housing. Michaela is particularly interested in how new neighborhoods emerge—and what it means to live within one's own four walls.

At the heart of her project is a walk-in sculpture in the shape of a house, a recurring motif in her work. This minimalist structure is conceived as a meditative space and resonating body. The interior remains empty, open to the needs of those who use it. Four narrow openings at the corners connect the space to its surroundings along two intersecting axes. Without a predetermined function, the sculpture offers a place for retreat, focused perception, and encounter. It simply stands—without being tied to a purpose, without the need for justification.

Adjacent to the house, a small forest is to be planted. The arrangement of the trees resembles a musical composition and follows a simple principle: one day, the trees themselves could become building material. In this way, the forest and the house represent two states of the same idea—growth, use, and reintegration. Michaela speaks in this context of a “humanistic architecture,” understood as an approach that responds to the unpredictable needs of people and rethinks the very notion of building from this perspective.

It is within this framework that her work for “Über uns, unter uns” can also be understood. “Das böse Klärle muss draußen bleiben!” (No entry for the nasty fellow!) emerges as an offshoot of the Dietenbach project—a first public moment in this ongoing endeavor. The ceramic piece serves as a model of the future house sculpture, complemented by a hand-formed opening at the roof ridge. Simplified fir trees surround the house in a circular arrangement.

Installed in the chimney's access opening, the ensemble interweaves with the architecture of the site on multiple levels. It is the only work presented on the ground floor. The ceramic's roof opening directly connects to the chimney, which Michaela describes as the “spine of the house”—a central, breathing element—that, in this exhibition, also acts as a link between attic and basement. The work's title recalls traditional protective phrases for threshold spaces, intended to ward off misfortune. At Kaiserwache, the piece transforms the once-busy restroom into a place of quiet contemplation, forming a counterpoint to its turbulent past.

Michaela emphasizes that the glazed ceramic, capable of withstanding the heat of Kaiserwache's furnace, not only endures as a resilient object but, in its very robustness, preserves and transmits a particular kind of intimacy. An intimacy stored within the material—ceramic that withstands fire yet remains fragile in the hands, always at risk of shattering into pieces. It is a delicate proximity that moves along a threshold: between protection and exposure. Just like Kaiserwache itself—once a public toilet, straddling the line between public space and private retreat—the ceramic unfolds an intimacy that opens and closes again. Michaela describes it as „indestructible“ not because it is untouchable, but because it embraces its vulnerability—firmly embedded in the material and yet receptive to touch.

Lorenz Walter Wernli (*1997 in Bern, Switzerland) lives and works in Basel and Bern.

Lorenz's work moves along the blurred boundary between the everyday and the extraordinary. His artistic practice revolves around collecting moments and objects that are neither spectacular nor trivial but exist in a state of in-between. These elements are sculpturally processed, fragmented, and ultimately detached from their original references. It is a strategy that places trust in the material and its transformative processes.

"October Third," presented in the basement of Kaiserwache, is a machine-milled relief made of polyurethane and part of a series that examines the standardization and distortion of memory. In an era when digital image floods—shaped by advertising, social media, and pop culture—structure individual memory processes, the distinction between personal experience and mediated recollection becomes increasingly harder to uphold. Lorenz engages with this uncertainty, translating it into a work that, while machine-produced, retains a subjective dimension.

The underlying snapshot comes from the artist himself: The relief suggests the form of a snowman, with outstretched branch arms, wide-open eyes, and an agape mouth—a figure from the past, whose origins are no longer precisely identifiable or reconstructable. This raises the question of who the image, the snowman, and ultimately the memory of this scene actually belong to.

The specific milling technique creates a visual blurriness, transforming the subject into a fleeting echo of itself. The documenting camera—particularly its autofocus—struggles with the milled surface, as if the work were resisting photographic capture. In this tension, the piece reflects on the limitations of mediated vision, the peculiar fragility of photographic perception, and, at the same time, the fundamental instability of memory itself.

The tension between individual memory and collective image production is further reinforced by the choice of title. "October Third" does not reference German Unity Day but, according to Lorenz, a personal day of remembrance—one that is fictional yet has become a pop-cultural marker through its cinematic embedding. The title alludes to a scene from "Mean Girls," in which the protagonist, played by Lindsay Lohan, narrates in voiceover that this was the day she first spoke to her crush.

Among fans of the cult teen film, October 3rd has long taken on a life of its own: It is not only spread as a meme but is actively celebrated—a date that has evolved from an individual memory into a collective reference. The relief thus reflects not only the mechanics of perception but also the dynamics of memory formation: To what extent does a memory still belong to someone when, through media repetition, it ceases to be private and becomes public? Inevitably, this raises the question in my mind: Is the snowman screaming in pain, surprise, or joy?

Lidong Zhao (*1986 in Jiangsu, China) lives and works in and around Freiburg.

“Sustenance. Gleam.” (Lebensmittel. Glanz.)
Two words, a cut. A rupture, a connection.
Sustenance—the thing that sustains life.
Gleam—the thing that catches light, reflects, shimmers.
A contrast? An intensification? A contradiction?

A pointed white cabbage. Upright. Supermarket-fresh, that is: vacuum-sealed in transparent plastic film.
The film stretches tight, smooths itself out, catches the light.
An artificial skin, a gleaming membrane.
An object in between—between natural and industrial, between thing and image, between something and something else.

A gaze. Another gaze. One sees through, sees beyond, looks elsewhere.
Because Lidong’s images don’t hold on—they let go.
They are not surfaces, but passages.
The motifs too ordinary, too familiar—thought immediately escapes, landing in one’s own memory:
Supermarket, fridge, kitchen.
Where does one recognize this from? Where has this been before?
It could just as well be an advertisement.
High gloss.
Or a documentary record for a scientific archive.

Different from the shelf, different from the plate.
Alone and fragile. The vegetable balances, poses.
It evokes a physicality, almost anthropomorphic.
A portrait of a figure. Or an image of a sculpture—upright, exhibited, exposed.
The pointed cabbage is no longer just a pointed cabbage.
Teetering or standing?

The light: focused, directed, deliberate.
A flashlight sets points of brilliance, cuts through darkness, heightens the glow.
Not a spontaneous snapshot, but a composition.
Photographed in the studio. Like a model.
Printed on paper. Uncoated. Framed.
Reflections exist only in the print.
Reflection exists in the title.
No glass.
And so we feel the breath of the work, but for the same reason, we do not see it fog.
Vampiric.

And then: the attic.
A place where things disappear, are stored, are forgotten.
The cabbage, preserved in plastic, meets a space where everything belongs to dust.
A new layer. A new film. A new skin.
A new threshold between seeing and forgetting.
Here, memory exists as quicksand.

Sustenance. Gleam. (Lebensmittel. Glanz.)
A gaze that begins to slip.
An image that remains.