



# Biennale für FREIBURG 3

## *HAPPY PLACE*



JUNE 05 –  20  
JULY 27  25

# HAPPY PLACE

In some parts of the world, travel has become a familiar and almost unquestioned part of life—a means to unwind, explore, or find self-fulfillment. However, this experience is neither universal nor guaranteed. Access to travel is deeply shaped by economic and social realities, and for much of the global population, such journeys remain a distant possibility.

The idea of travel as a leisure activity is itself a relatively recent and Western construct. What began in the end of the 18th century as a practice largely reserved for elites gradually evolved with industrialization and capitalism into a mass phenomenon. Advances in transportation, rising incomes, and shifting social norms made travel accessible to wider sections of society, embedding it into modern leisure culture. Yet this growth has always been uneven: who can travel, who benefits, and at what cost are questions deeply intertwined within global extractivist systems.

Tourism shapes and commodifies desire—translating feelings of longing and curiosity into experiences, images, and products. At the heart of these narratives is what Lauren Berlant called “cruel optimism”—the hope that renewal and satisfaction will come from experiences and places shaped by the very social and economic structures one seeks to escape.

Within this tension, the notion of the “happy place” seduces with its promise of simplicity and rest, yet it often conceals the very inequalities and exclusions it claims to transcend. Central to this collective imagination is “the South”—less a geographic location than a canvas for projection: exoticized, idealized, and imbued with nostalgic ideas of authenticity and origin. This romanticized image erases colonial legacies, economic dependencies, and his-

tories of violence that continue to shape travel today.

In response to these dominant narratives, artists and intellectuals from the Global South have formulated perspectives of resistance. Their works challenge the supposed neutrality of tourist destinations, anchoring themselves in collective memory, local rootedness, and traditional knowledge. They elude the hegemonic touristic gaze, making room for alternative narratives and self-determined representation.

The Biennale für Freiburg 3 presents local and international artists who engage with the interplay of environment, mobility, leisure, and travel. In the Kunstverein Freiburg, the monumental exhibition space evokes the sensory overload of a souvenir shop. This deliberate density invites reflection on the desires and mechanisms behind holidaymaking. In contrast, kulturaggregat—a cultural association with a focus on street art—points to the urban impact of the travel industry, addressing pressing issues such as housing scarcity and gentrification. Here, the growing influence of tourism on city structures is re-staged and renegotiated by local inhabitants.

The works presented at DELPHI\_space draw attention to the lasting aftereffects of colonialism, revealing the persistence of extractivist legacies across time and space, which continue to shape global dynamics. An installation at the Kaiserwache illustrates how culinary practices bear traces of colonial history, showing how food cultures shape national narratives and operate as subtle undercurrents of power.

In the cinema hall of the Museum für Neue Kunst, visitors gain insight into the transformation of a Nazi-era leisure resort into a luxury destination. This juxtaposition of ruin and opulence—highlighted by footage of stray dogs roaming the ruins of unfinished resorts on the Red Sea—is complemented by a fictive travel agency at Schopf2, where an audio tour

conjures the Turkish Riviera on Freiburg's streets. Meanwhile, at Pförtnerhaus, art historical motifs of idleness are re-examined through the lens of lesbian iconography.

Against the backdrop of these diverse perspectives, Freiburg itself emerges as a tourist site in which many of these themes can be traced locally. Three redesigned gondolas from the Schauinslandbahn create a symbolic link between the Black Forest and the Amazon region. Flaming animals prompt reflection on extractivism and transregional ecologies. A site-specific installation in front of St. John's Church reimagines the figure of the "witch" as an embodied symbol of resistance and preserved Andean knowledge. The work draws parallels with the witch trials in Freiburg between 1546 and 1599 while also referencing the "Fasnethexe," a dominant figure in local carnival traditions. A poster project in the Wiehre district draws attention to the local traces of the climate crisis, contrasting them with idyllic notions of nature. On the meadow near the Faulerbad, a temporary pavilion in the form of a Mediterranean beach bar opens a portal between Freiburg and its partner city Granada. Over the course of the Biennale, it serves as the center of the mediation program.

HAPPY PLACE examines closely the ideologies of leisure tourism—not only offering critique but also proposing new ways of seeing, feeling, and moving through the world. With humor, exaggeration, and satire, the artists disrupt familiar narratives, unsettle comfort zones, and open up spaces for radical reimaginings. In these crafted environments, moments of rupture arise—offering new ways to tell stories, to inhabit places, and to rethink our relationships with travel and leisure.

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# *KAISERWACHE*



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79098 Freiburg

# ELYLA

*The Milky Way is a Wound, 2025*  
Mixed media installation

*The Milky Way is a Wound* is a multidisciplinary project tracing the colonial legacies embedded in milk, cattle, and dairy production across Spain, Central America, and Germany. Rooted in the artist's birthplace in Nicaragua—where colonial cattle culture shaped both landscape and identity—the work explores how food systems have been used to assert imperial power and cultural dominance.

Through various elements, the project links celestial naming and whiteness to territorial conquest and the internalization of colonial food ideologies. A central video performance filmed in the region of Freiburg sees the artist immersed in milk and coagulant, becoming part of a cycle of enforced consumption. Created specifically for the biennale, the work confronts the role of nostalgia, national identity, and the tourist gaze in maintaining picturesque fantasies of the global South.

Elyla (they/them) is a cochón-chontalli-barro-mestiza artist born in Villa Sandino, Nicaragua. Their name, meaning “him-and-she” in Spanish, reflects a deep engagement with gender beyond colonial binaries. Rooted in Mesoamerican localities, their multidisciplinary practice spans video performance, installation, sculpture, and site-specific interventions. Elyla's work researches colonial traces in cultural traditions like La Gigantona, El Güegüense, and cockfighting rituals, imagining new decolonial futures. They co-founded OperaciónQueer/Cochona in 2013 and are currently co-creating the Community Research Center for the Decolonization of Knowledge and Mestizaje, advancing community-based anti-colonial praxis across Central America.

Elyla lives and works in Basel, Switzerland.

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# COLOPHON

Biennale für Freiburg 3

*HAPPY PLACE*

05/06 - 27/07/2025

Exhibition Booklet

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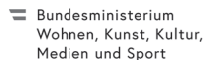
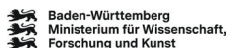
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