

# Where the Sun Pauses

## Wilfrid Almendra's solo show

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Kunsthalle Lingen

Kaiserstraße 10A, 49809 Lingen (Ems), Germany

Writing this text involves motion – between two geographies, two mountains, two meteorological states – between the lights that are engulfed by the carriage of a train.

I observe, like Wilfrid Almendra, a constantly evolving state of light: slow when clouds are passing, or stroboscopic, due to the speed of this train and its encounter with static trees bordering the tracks. It would appear that it is *in-between* that the gestures of Wilfrid Almendra are situated: *between* the interstices of territories that he experiences every day and that allow different lights to appear – those of a city, an industrial zone or a Portuguese countryside. These interstitial zones concern rhythms – of life, of work – and the different strata of a collective memory that is partitioned, that nearly loses itself and is transmitted through gestures, objects and statements *between* several generations that make up the Portuguese diaspora that the artist grew up in and with which he strives to maintain a connection.

Twenty years ago, Wilfrid Almendra bought back a home that once belonged to his family, in a rural hamlet in Portugal. A place with no economy, but whose hectares of land made it rich with potential harvests: potatoes, olive oil, oranges, which the artist has cultivated and traded for working hours, enabling the gradual reconstruction of this building, or for the raw materials used in his artworks. This economy of barter – relating to microcosms rendered precarious, like a response to the limits of the dominant economy – amply furnishes the exhibition with worn, traded and transformed materials, and reveals a form of circularity in labour: one can be made for the other. Each sculpture becomes the trace of a transition, from a state of meeting people developing activities that are at times invisible: foragers of copper, glass plates from abandoned glasshouses, etc. A slow circulation of materials, dependent on both the condition and energy of the human body – which itself becomes a tradeable resource – and natural conditions that enable these harvests to be maintained or not, taking



Photos: Roman Mensing, artdoc.de

into account bad weather, diseases or the slugs that invade the territory.

For the exhibition *Where the Sun Pauses*, Wilfrid Almendra seems to want to cautiously shift the viewers' gaze into this landscape oscillating *between* the imaginary of an abandoned agricultural glasshouse and that of an anarchic garden at a workers' house. Here, everything seems at once tamed and vulnerable. Windows comprising used fragments of coloured glass and mirrors, "cathedral" glass plates – traded in Marseille for litres of olive oil – spray-painted in murky hues, they are mounted and taped together, capturing between their fragile arrangement's wild poppies and other plants, which now appear suspended in an absent gust. Fragments of Bavière stone flooring – the material of suburban patios – form the bases of what constitutes this unstable architecture, like a house of cards that could collapse at any moment.

Objects with disturbing hyperrealism, made of cast aluminium, are placed there, directly onto the ground: not all of the oranges have ripened yet, their skins are still sometimes green, marking the state of time, as the light turns glass yellow or haloes of sweat outlined on the white cotton of a singlet, representing the fruits of labour. Work shoes, clothing placed on an abandoned chair, all become clues that evoke a body that has taken leave of absence. Has it left the scene to rest?

The worker's body has vanished into thin air, replaced by a majestic bird – silent arbitrator of the passage of time, of the hierarchy of forms, bodies and objects – likened to the hierarchical imbalance in our societies – or again, the choreography of imbricating light – *between* them – *between* the artworks – *between* the bodies and gazes – *between* the interstices of the architecture of the Kunsthalle de Lingen.

From ruin to harvest, the gestures of Wilfrid Almendra draw together a powerful humility, situated at the borders of his practice as an artist and an amateur farmer, making do with what remains, that which is subtly and wordlessly conveyed.

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Exhibition curator and independent author



Photos: Roman Mensing, artdoc.de