

Constantin Hartenstein

Power Move

curated by Kito Nedo

Die Möglichkeit einer Insel

04.07.2025 – 30.07.2025

Inselstr. 7, 10179 Berlin

opening hours Sa-So: 14.00-18.00h and by appointment

“Unser Leben” (“Our Life”) is the title of the 127-meter-long, seven-meter-high mosaic frieze that wraps around the “Haus des Lehrers” (House of the Teacher) at Alexanderplatz. Designed by Hermann Henselmann, this monumental work was produced in the early 1960s by Walter Womacka (1925–2010) and his team, who spent two years assembling the 800,000-piece mosaic. In bright colors, it celebrates the socialist utopia, the belief in progress through technology, and the image of the ‘socialist human being.’ Today, 35 years after the fall of the GDR, “Unser Leben” appears more like a reminder of a utopia that never materialized.

The mosaic at the Henselmann building serves as a departure point for *Power Move*, an exhibition by Berlin-based artist Constantin Hartenstein. The exhibition will be shown in the rooms of a former store in a prefabricated building from the GDR era - just a few meters away from Womacka's former studio at Wallstraße 90, where he lived and worked from 1984 to 2010. From this propagandistic visual work, Hartenstein extracted twelve thematic blocks, including heteronormative relationship ideals and traditional images of motherhood. In response, he develops futuristic counter-motifs that reflect increasing fluidity and hybridity, rendering them as large-scale soldered wire drawings on concrete panels. “In a queer future,” Hartenstein claims, “we no longer see father-mother-child, diligent workers, and untouched nature but hybrid bodies, artificial intelligences, fluid gender roles, and alternative forms of togetherness.”

These imagined bodies take shape, for instance, in two muscular male figures locked in a moment of mutual gaze. Their technoid appearance evokes cinematic sci-fi aesthetics like James Cameron's *Terminator* (1984) or Steven Lisberger's *Tron* (1982). The image of a baby growing inside an artificial womb, the “biobag”, has appeared in speculative films, but may soon become a reality. The accelerating technologization of human reproduction continues to raise profound ethical and medical questions.

Hartenstein employs the traditional technique of soldering, a method dating back to antiquity, to forge these speculative forms. Soldering joins solid metals using a melted filler metal, the solder, without melting the base materials. The strength of the bond depends on chemical reactions between solder and surface, as well as temperature control. In the GDR, soldering was taught as part of the school subject “Productive Work,” complementing the theoretical course “Introduction to Socialist Production.” Today, the soldering iron is widely associated with the DIY movement, repair cafés, and grassroots maker culture. A democratic tool of

self-empowerment. Yet it has also been embraced by artists such as Anselm Kiefer and Jean Tinguely. More broadly, soldering is a technique for creating connections. — *Kito Nedo*

Constantin Hartenstein is a Berlin-based artist who works at the intersection of technology, queerness, and corporeality. His multimedia works explore evolving masculinities in a post-digital world shaped by speculative futures and queer aesthetics. Navigating between body cult and vulnerability, Hartenstein creates visual scenarios in which non-normative embodiments converge with translucent materials, technoid surfaces, and synthetic substances.

He studied at the University of the Arts Berlin and the Braunschweig University of Art, where he graduated as a Meisterschüler. His works have been shown internationally, including at Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin, Göteborg Biennale, Berlinische Galerie, and the Museum of the Moving Image in New York. Hartenstein has received grants and fellowships from the Berlin Senate, the Arts Foundation NRW, and the Goethe-Institut. Since 2019, he has taught at UdK Berlin, and since 2025, at Muthesius University of Fine Arts and Design in Kiel.