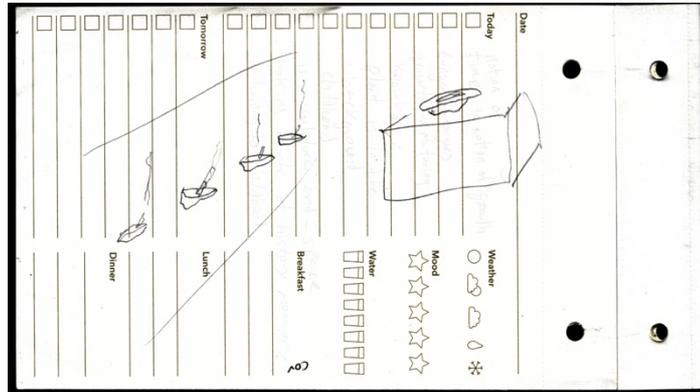




Press Release

GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst



Ian Waelder

Zungen

January 31–March 15 2026

Opening: Friday, January 30 2026, 7 pm

Press talk: Thursday, January 29 2026, 11 am

The exhibition *Zungen* by Ian Waelder is the third in the series *for fear of continuity problems*, which explores the notion of memory in parts of GAK's indoor space and in the poster frames outside.

The conversation around Ian Waelder's exhibition started with a child standing in front of the family bookshelf over the years. When still very small it could only reach the low books, the taller it got, the more shelves and different books could be accessed. This access, reaching up or bending down is something one regularly performs in front of books. Accordingly, knowledge and memory are equally connected to reach, in terms of body and language. And they intertwine.

Within Ian Waelder's exhibition at GAK sits a low-ceiling space, a sort of box, that one is invited to enter. If one is too tall to walk upright, one has to crouch down to explore the photographic images inside. They repeatedly depict a plant, documenting its growth over the years. The photographs capture and retrieve time being intimately connected to the artist himself as the plant was given to his mother on the day of his birth and since then grows alongside him.

The moment of repetition, that reappears in the work for the outside space as well, regularly features in Waelder's work. It gives seemingly arbitrary objects or images that he found or that were given to him, a continuity that attaches a prolonged meaning to them. Embedded in this repetition is an insistence that tries to grasp something that is both present and hidden.

Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst

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On the outside wall that usually holds thirteen poster frames, a series of sculptures extends into the space of passersby. Based on a shoe last that continuously appears in Waelder's work, these objects, like GAK's ashtray next to the entrance, offer themselves as holders for something to be stored or tucked away, creating a slightly unconscious and casual contact zone.

Memory is central to Ian Waelder's work. He intricately intertwines objects, images and spaces as carriers of memory and postures. His modification of spaces, the corners one turns, the sculptures, images and sounds one encounters, are all containers of a knowledge that is not fully accessible but also an invitation to form subtle connections with a personal history and its connections with a history beyond.

The title *Zungen* (German for tongues) maybe alludes to this pre-language moment as a tip of the tongue-experience where conscious memory fails. A word one knows is almost ready to come out but cannot be voiced or reached, creating a lapse in time. This phenomenon is said to be connected to emotions and the stronger they are the more complicated it gets to find the memory of the word.

About the artist

Ian Waelder (b. 1993) graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main in 2023, where he studied as a Meisterschüler under Prof. Haegue Yang. He is currently a fellow of the Laurenz-Haus Stiftung in Basel (2025/26). Recent solo exhibitions include Kestner Gesellschaft (Hannover, 2025), carlier | gebauer (Berlin, 2025), and Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani (Palma, 2023–24), among others. Group exhibitions have taken place at institutions and galleries including Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna), ifa Galerie (Berlin), nsdoku (Munich), Petrine (Paris), Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona), Delfina Foundation (London), Francis Irv (New York), Nassauischer Kunstverein (Wiesbaden), and La Casa Encendida (Madrid), among others.

He has been an artist-in-residence at WIELS – Center for Contemporary Art (Brussels, 2024), and has received grants including the basis Hessisches Atelier Programm (2025–29), the DZ BANK Kunststiftung Förderstipendium (2023–24), and the Städelschule Portikus e.V. Graduation Prize (2023).

Please contact us for further information or hi-res images.
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