

SONNENDECK, ROSEN- GARTEN, WC WELLE-7 *Hélén Alas, Judith Kakon, Lou Masduraud, Jill Posener, Sunny Pudert*

The British activist, photographer, and playwright *JILL POSENER* documented socio-political movements in the 1980s, with a particular focus on feminist and lesbian struggles. Her series of black-and-white photographs, *Dirty Girls Guide to London*, shown throughout the exhibition, but especially in the last of the rooms, was first published in 1987 in the magazine *On Our Backs*, which positioned itself—explicitly sex- and BDSM-positive and responding to restrictive attitudes within British feminism as well as the policies of the Thatcher government—in contrast to *Off Our Backs*, from which it derived its name.

As a satirical reworking of a conventional travel guide, the series depicts two kissing lesbians—femme and butch—at sites across the British capital that are typically considered representative and desexualized, including Westminster Bridge, Hyde Park, and the British Museum. In the 1980s, one of the most conservative periods of postwar British politics, these spaces—and the public sphere more broadly—were heavily regulated and normatively structured, a condition the series playfully subverts. Shortly after the initial publication of *Dirty Girls Guide to London*, the so-called “Section 28” was introduced, a law prohibiting local authorities, including schools, from the “promotion of homosexuality.” The law remained in force until 2003 and had a lasting impact on the social and cultural climate of the time.

Posener’s work documents the claiming of space by sexual minorities and renders the streets of London as contested terrain. This is also evident in her photographs of graffiti, which capture interventions into often highly sexist advertising or political struggles playing out in neighbourhoods—for instance around notions of the nuclear family (*Squat Against the Nuclear Family, London, 1982*, in Room Three).

LOU MASDURAUD draws on elements of urban infrastructure in her work, such as fountains, lighting systems, or urinals. Her interest lies in the everyday interactions these structures enable in the city and in their sensory qualities: the coolness of drinking from a fountain, the warmth of a kiss on a park bench, the splashing of a stream of urine on ceramic.

The series *Kisses*, developed specifically for the exhibition, spans all rooms. It is inspired by observations of Roman fountains, whose spouts, like those elsewhere, are often shaped like mouths.

Masduraud stages her oversized ceramic mouths as thresholds between the body’s inner life and the surrounding environment. The mouth is the site where we relate to the world—or incorporate it—through speech, eating, kissing, or sticking out the tongue.

The artist adorns the objects with teeth made of rhinestones, glass, and pearls, or gives them a bodily appearance through the application of lipstick. Through these materials, she refers to the mouth’s diverse bacterial flora, but also to teeth as symbols of status and as part of fashion and people’s self-expression.

Beyond the mouth as an erotic-sensory body part, the associations extend to drains, as in *Kiss (with a drain)*, or glory holes (*KISS (with a salivating lover)*), pointing to anonymized, non-normative forms of sexuality in public space. On closer inspection, *KISS (with a molar as a spy camera to get a proof for a trial)* also reveals a surveillance camera between the teeth—the mouth becomes a spy, alluding to control and surveillance.

In the first room, a research archive that we have developed over the course of preparing the exhibition is gathered inside a wall cabinet. The small library with a reading and seating area alongside it, as well as an accompanying bibliography, may be freely used. It is also growing. We warmly welcome your additions to the archive—books, stories, and memories or whatever else you’d like to bring in.

In the second room, the sculptures by *SUNNY PUDERT* obstruct the space. The work *SITTING IS PLEASURE* takes as its starting point so-called “defensive architecture,” which was installed on the grounds of Berlin Ostbahnhof. The aim was to deprive people who used this site as a meeting point of the possibility to sit.

Pudert replaces the metal spikes of the original objects with silicone. This soft and yielding material gives the blocks new formal and haptic qualities. With *SITTING IS PLEASURE*, Pudert addresses the ambivalent pleasure that both the sculpture and the deterrent object to which it responds can trigger.

In this and other works, the artist raises questions about the right to the city and the power structures that become visible in urban contexts—for example, in the distribution of public space along lines of class. Pudert is interested in urban planning failures that exclude certain populations, as well as in the ways such spaces are repeatedly reappropriated. What here turns cold, metallic, and aggressively against the body is simultaneously appropriated and disarmed in an appealing way. The title *SITTING IS PLEASURE* points to the qualities of lingering in public space and suggests the question of whether the right to the city should also include a right to pleasure.

Also *JUDITH KAKON* engages with “hostile architecture” in the second room through her work *Commons*. The form of the bronze sculpture is based on a fan-shaped steel structure the artist encountered in Lyon. Installed at hip height on building corners, the device is used to prevent public urination.

The title *Commons* refers to resources that are collectively produced, maintained, and used by a community. These stand in contrast to the privatisation, gentrification, and commodification of public space. Kakon asks how and for whom public space is designed and regulated—and ultimately to whom it belongs: Why was investment made in deterrent devices rather than public toilets in these locations? What subtle forms of violence are inscribed in this object? And what does it do to our bodies and basic needs in public space?

By casting the work in black-patinated bronze, Kakon transforms the original object and deliberately elevates it. Its form recalls a fan or a stylised palm frond. Such “palmettes” have been used since antiquity as ornamental motifs in architecture and decorative design—here, the deterrent device is

turned into a sculpture and bedecks the corner of the room.

HÊLÏN ALAS’ series *Traumhäuser* [*Dream Houses*] negotiates the promise of social mobility and belonging attached to home ownership. In the sculptures, largely modeled or cast in caramel, the house appears as a space that distinguishes between inside and outside, between the self and the other. The longing for a home and a protective space reveals its restrictions in Alas’ works.

The artist uses sugar as a material because it is quickly and cheaply available to her. At the same time, sugar is closely tied to the realm of food and the kitchen, where she rapidly heats and processes it for the *Traumhäuser*. The production of the works can thus take place within the domestic sphere of the kitchen and is not bound to the studio—access to which is impeded for many artists.

The enjoyment of sugar is associated with sticky sweetness and desire. Yet it remains inseparable from the conditions of its production, which are historically rooted in racist exploitation and continue into the present in many production contexts.

The newest work in the series was created for the exhibition and is titled *Traumhaus (adulter)*. The horizontally wall-mounted object made of birch plywood resembles an architectural model of an apartment. Through an opening on the front left side, an ensemble of rooms is revealed, with walls and floors entirely lined with caramel in different shades of brown. This material changes and shifts over the course of the exhibition. While houses are typically associated with stability and permanence, the *Traumhäuser* begin to melt once they are installed.

Text & Curation: Andrea Popelka & Eva-Maria Knüsel

VERANSTALTUNGEN

Eröffnung

Sa, 25.04. 16 Uhr

Rundgang mit Übersetzung in Gebärdensprache

Do, 21.5. 18 Uhr

Ausstellungsrundgang mit Christoph Studer und einer Simultanübersetzung in Gebärdensprache von Janet Fiebelkorn. Alle nicht-hörenden, hörbehinderten und hörenden Besucher*innen sind willkommen!

Hot, Fun, Cute, Queer Treasure Hunt

Fr, 29.5. 18.30 Uhr

A guide on how to love and play with/in the city hosted by Beate Absalon and Juliane Saupe

Come dressed up as if you would go on a date with your new crush and wonder: How do architecture and infrastructure stimulate longing, hot encounters and love? How are we in turn shaping the city with desire and touching it with our emotions? What surroundings inspire us to shine, to become curious about the other and to make an effort? This is an interactive workshop with seductive tasks that invite you to flirt with and in the city – inside and outside of the exhibition, alone, in duos or groups.

Receive perfumed letters or voice memos sending you to secret locations – gossip corners, urban oracles or perfect backgrounds for dating profile images. Negotiate consent with artworks, rehabilitate the lost art of communicating with hand fans as if you're a Victorian baddie and hold on to your experiences by writing into your diary. Because we live in unlovely times. What happens if we romanticize our lives – offline and tangible?

The Secret Rose Garden Society

Sa, 30.5. 17 Uhr

Meeting point: Rosengarten Bern

A historical picnic hosted by Andrea (they/then) Popelka and Eva Orlando Knüsel

On a pleasant spring evening in May, a portal opens in Bern's Rose Garden, from which a long path descends into the depths of hundreds of years of queer history. As the sun hangs low in the sky, the last streaks of light filter through the canopy above us and into the tunnel at our feet.

Inspired by Shola von Reinhold's writing, we use this leisurely gathering to project our queer selves into the past. You're invited to come as your past queer self: as Orlando's reincarnation; as Jack Sheppard; a trans hero of the British underworld; a sailor living outside the regime of private property; a campified Victorian bride; as Sappho's muse. Or whatever have you (!).

We'll lick the frosting off a 500-year-old cake and drop ancient grapes into each other's mouths. We'll write fading letters to each other and cruise the archive. This is The Secret Society of the Rose Garden, and its invitation is open to all queers and friends who'd like to fabulously historify.

wiegen/liegen (rocking together)

Sa, 13.6. 16–18 Uhr

Embodied Session mit Jessica Huber und Cosima Grand

Cosima Grand und Jessica Huber führen in *wiegen/liegen (rocking together)* in eine gemeinsam entwickelte Bewegungspraxis ein: Wir beginnen damit, unseren eigenen Körper zu wiegen und führen langsam auch das Wiegen und Schaukeln anderer Körper ein. Mit der Zeit entwickelt sich ein Wechselspiel zwischen den Rollen – wir wiegen und werden gewiegt, wir halten und werden gehalten.

Bringt bequeme Kleidung mit. Die Bewegungen werden hauptsächlich im Sitzen und/oder Liegen auf dem Boden durchgeführt. Die Praxis beinhaltet Körperkontakt mit anderen. Keine Vorkenntnisse erforderlich.

Anmeldung erwünscht: stadtgalerie@bern.ch
Spontane Teilnahme ist ebenfalls möglich.

Weitere Informationen zu allen Veranstaltungen siehe www.stadtgalerie.ch

TEAM

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VERDANKUNGEN

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grosszügig unterstützt von:



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Öffnungszeiten
Mittwoch – Freitag
14–18 Uhr
Samstag
12–16 Uhr