

Artist Lecture Series Vienna

Michèle Pagel

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22. October, 2024

Skulpturinstitut, Paulusplatz 5, 1030 Vienna

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I brought some texts, but I didn't translate them into English. So, I will talk in English and then read these texts in German.

I also brought you some books today. These are two books by me; one is an older one from 2020. I make publications every now and then. I started with it as a student, and I think it's also important for you to do some kind of inventory after exhibitions regarding your ideas and what you did.

It's a very good practice to find time every second or third year to update your portfolio, print it out, and maybe even bind it or find a form to show it around.

It also helps you to apply on time. You don't have to sit at the desktop all night and finish your applications if you have a routine of collecting your works in a format.

This book includes my works from 2016 to 2020. This other one is a brochure from my gallery; I did not have much influence in the production. I think it's a nice mix, but I was not involved in all the choices. This brochure also includes more recent works.

The third book I brought is from Jörg Immendorff. „Das tun, was zu tun ist“. I discovered it when I was a student, maybe 24 years old, and I

did Erasmus in Milan. I always like to show this book to my students because it helps to reflect on their art production.

This book is very critical about art education too. It is like a diary. It's handwritten, and it contains reflections about his work. Immenndorff is quite critical, as he is not very happy with all of the work that he has done. It's nice to read about his development in the book. I want to open with a small quote from this book as an introduction.

Here he writes about „Zwei Aktionen“. I will read it now in German.

Maurerautogramm.

Ein Maurer nahm ein altes Bild von mir, um die Baustelle gegen Mörtel abzudecken. Ich erkannte durch diese Aktion, dass ein Bild nützlich sein konnte, deshalb lud ich den Maurer ein und bat ihn um ein Autogramm. Natürlich war es nicht die Absicht des Maurers, mir eine andere Funktion meiner Bilder zu zeigen, doch begann ich aber, mir mehr über den Nutzen meiner Bilder Gedanken zu machen. In der Presse machte der Vietnam-Krieg Schlagzeilen. In der Akademie herrschte das Konkurrenzdenken. Ich wollte eine Kunst für Liebe und Frieden machen. So sollten die Bilder nützen.

Yes, I was often thinking – and you were surely thinking too: Why? What am I doing this for? What is the use of art? In the tradition of the Angewandte, which I really appreciate here, the Angewandte has overcome the difference between art and design. I studied at the Academy, but I was often a guest in the Angewandte's ceramics department because the Academy didn't have a ceramics workshop then.

They were very open to students from other universities, which I appreciated. But also, you were allowed to do everything there. You could build a sink or make free art, whatever. And what I like about the

Angewandte overall is that there's no classification between design and art.

But let's talk about the use of art. What are you doing with your art? What kind of function does art have? There could be a practical function like in design, like in chairs or pens; and then there's an ideal use. It is to change something in the people's heads and in society. I would locate this second aspect more in the free art.

I am convinced that art is not useless. That's why I really like teaching and sharing all my thoughts with you. I really think that in the future generations, there could be a difference made. You make the rules. When I was a student, making political art was a no-go. It was the climax of minimalism and postmodernism for me, at least among teachers in the early 2000s. They said: «If you want to change something, go out and protest, but don't bring it into the classroom.» This has changed.

And I think when you leave the institution and get a diploma, things will change with your actions. And that's what motivates me to be here and talk to you.

I want to give a practical example: It may be triggering for somebody, but let's talk about feminism and sexual violence, and rape culture. Some designers invent gimmicks; they invent pants that protect women – or people – from rape because they don't open. They invent gimmicks like sharp keyholders to defend yourself.

This is a function, a functional object. But what if art can change the minds of the people? Then we wouldn't need gimmicks anymore.

I think this is the use of art, and I want to do this. I want to change minds and change society, and I invite you to follow me in this.

I brought you a small cactus for decoration during my presentation of my works.



I will present my work counter-chronologically. That means I will start with the latest work I did and then go back to the past.

This work is called «Everything Counts». It is also made out of bricks. The same material like the cactus here. This is a technique I developed in 2016. Because I like to work with building and construction materials, I feel it's less elitist and also approachable. But it's quite difficult to work with the bricks because they are hard to glaze, and I have to get them delivered from Wienerberger.

For me, it makes a difference if I get a real brick from the factory or if I make my own brick out of clay, so I went to the Wienerberger factory. It's a very old and traditional company. In Vienna, most of the brick houses were built from Wienerberger bricks - and the company, as generous as it is today, was exploitative in the past – just to the background of the material. This work is called «Everything Counts,» and the title comes, like often in my work, from a song title. Here of Depeche Mode. Maybe you know it; the lyrics are by Martin Gore:

The grabbing hands grab all they can

Everything counts in large amounts

It's a competitive world.

Everything counts in large amounts.

The exhibition was about the last ten people who received the Cardinal König Prize. The Catholic Church gives the prize, and you cannot openly apply, but you can be personally invited to do so.

They ask for a lot of things upfront. They nominate twenty people and ask for printable pictures, an artist statement, to write and answer a thousand emails, a studio visit, and a video broadcast on social media

and their website. And that comes with a visit where you produce and shoot a video.

For me it was quite an effort to participate in something that I never aimed for and I never thought I would win, so I was a bit upset in the beginning. I asked myself again, «What am I doing this for?» But then - I won the prize! Tada! Surprise!

I was happy, but it was also weird because I had a lot of rejections in my life. Definitely more than invitations. And I felt terrible for my colleagues. They did all the work like me and didn't get a cent for this. Of course, the Kardinal König Art Prize is from Catholic people who aim to do something good. They support artists, they make them visible, they give a prize, and they give out money. Yeah.

So, in my acceptance speech, I wanted to be critical and let them know that actually it's not okay to invite people, give them hope of winning something, and make them participate – and then the chances are close to zero to win it. One to twenty, to be exact.

This happens quite often in the art world. It is also something that I realized, when my work was more visible. When I started working with a gallery and also showing in institutions, I found out: Aha, the problem with success is, that there doesn't necessarily come more money, there come more problems.

The bigger the institutions, the more capricious they are in paying the artists. With the offspaces in the meantime, it's not a problem. There's fair pay, and they are very transparent and non-hierarchical, but yet the bigger the institution, the more hierarchical it is. The more they use their power to say, „Look, you have the attention and everything, and you can sell the artwork afterward. Please show it in our group show.“ This is also why I'm talking about it because I hope that the next

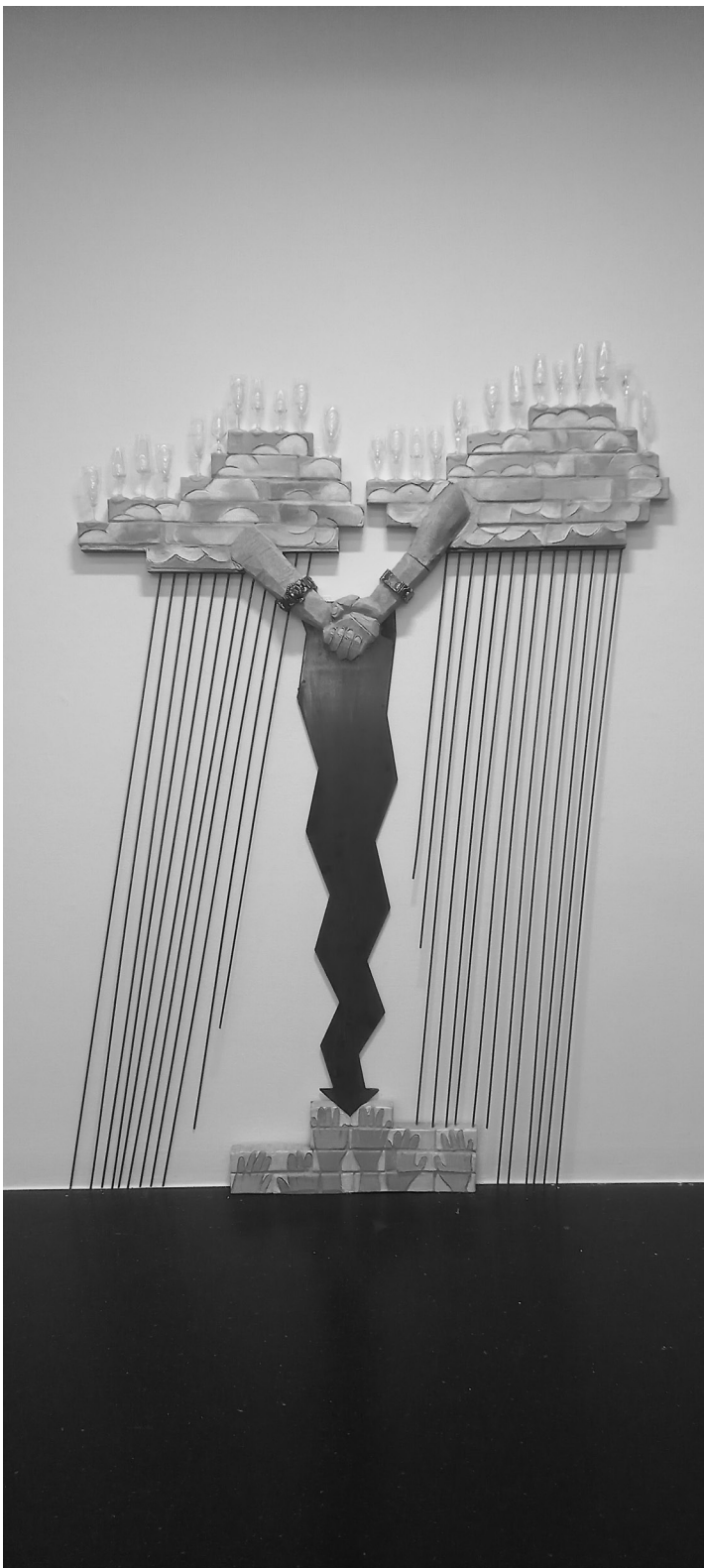
generation, like you, will make rules, and these rules will be made with more solidarity.

I think this system will end, at least in Europe. Let's not talk about the neoliberal rest of the world, but I think here it's really so that the tax money goes to the institutions. It is not only the business people who make the rules.

This work talks about what I wanted to illustrate. The problem is by participating in the group show of the prize winners, I wanted to make a work that is critical about the prize.

What do you see? You see the hands; one has a Rolex, and you have the empty glasses of the type that can often be seen in exhibition openings.

And then there's this kind of a God-like perspective, with the one person who is selected.



I'm teaching in Linz. A lecture that is called „Kunst als Waffe“ (Art as a Weapon). I am doing it for the second year, and the idea was, as I said, that the artwork has a function. In this case, the function is the one of “reform“, reforming the system of the prize. And I am so proud and happy because they changed it!

I put the work in the exhibition; I talked to the press and said, now the rules are different. Meanwhile, every participant gets 500€. Maybe because they couldn't afford to have this bad press, me making this activism. So, they changed the focus of the prize process in the meantime. And for me, this is a big success, and I'm very proud that in the future, nobody will do this labour, and there is also this artificial concurrence situation.

I would like to read to you a small text, not so small actually; it's quite long, in German, a pamphlet about art as a weapon. What do you think? Is it interesting for you, the topic?

Kunst als Waffe #2 Jetzt erst recht!

In der weiterführenden Lehrveranstaltung „Kunst als Waffe - jetzt erst recht!“ werden aus dem Vorjahr erörterte Themen und Problematiken wieder aufgegriffen, fokussiert, künstlerisch umgesetzt und schließlich im Lesesaal des Lentos Linz präsentiert.

Themenschwerpunkt in diesem Semester: Kapitalismuskritik, im Speziellen die Verknüpfung von mangelnder Vergütung kultureller Arbeit und die Schaffung künstlicher Konkurrenzsituationen. Mit welchen Mitteln können wir uns KünstlerInnen gegen gängige Ausbeutungsstrategien der Institutionen wehren?

Die Kulturbranche leidet unter einer Wertbeimessungsstörung

- Arbeitende KünstlerInnen dürfen erst nach Ableistung ihres Brotberufs die Kulturarbeit verrichten, für die sie ausgebildet wurden.
- Erwerbslose Künstlerinnen müssen sich für berufsfremde Tätigkeiten bewerben, während sie unbezahlt Kulturarbeit verrichten.
- Unbezahlte Kulturarbeit ist nicht der kreative Produktionsprozess von KünstlerInnen beispielsweise im Atelier. Folgende Leistungen werden zumeist unter- oder unbezahlt verrichtet:

Das Ausstellen in öffentlichen und privaten Institutionen(!), das Verfassen von Texten, das Empfangen von Studiovisits, das Konzipieren einer Ausstellung oder Ausstellungsbeteiligung, der Transport, die Lagerung und Verpackung der Arbeit, die Betitelung, das Erstellen und Bereitstellen von Texten, Informationen und hochauflösendem Bildmaterial für Ankündigungs-, Dokumentations- und Werbezwecke bis hin zur Produktion von neuen orts- oder themenspezifischen Arbeiten.

- Diese von KünstlerInnen geleistete Kulturarbeit ist keineswegs nur Selbstverwirklichung. Sie steht im Zentrum eines ganzen Sektors bezahlter Arbeitsplätze: MuseumsdirektorInnen und -

MitarbeiterInnen, KuratorInnen, ArthändlerInnen, KunstvermittlerInnen, RestauratorInnen, Jurymitglieder,... all diese entlohnten Berufs- und Tätigkeitfelder kreisen um das von KünstlerInnen hergestellte Kunstwerk.

Erwerbslose KünstlerInnen schaffen einen kulturellen Wert und kurbeln einen ganzen Sektor an, der wiederum einen beachtlichen wirtschaftlichen Mehrwert produziert.

„Der Kultursektor in Österreich erwirtschaftete im Jahr 2020 eine Bruttowertschöpfung von rund 5,3 Milliarden Euro; das entspricht einem Wertschöpfungsanteil von circa 2,4 Prozent an der Gesamtwirtschaft. Dabei waren rund 111.000 Beschäftigte in knapp 36.000 Unternehmen im Kultursektor tätig.“ (www.statista.com)

Diese Statistik beinhaltet noch nicht die Umwegrentabilität von Kultur, etwa für den österreichischen Tourismussektor. Die direkten und indirekten Wertschöpfungseffekte des Kultursektors werden in Österreich auf rund 9,8 Milliarden € geschätzt.

KünstlerInnen wollen ausstellen

Zumeist kann ein Kunstwerk nur dann seine finale Wirkung entfalten, wenn es entsprechend präsentiert und betrachtet wird. Die öffentliche Präsentation eines Kunstwerkes transportiert in erster Linie soziokulturellen, manchmal sogar einen historischen Wert. Das Wunderbare an Kunst ist nämlich, dass man sie erfahren kann ohne sie zu besitzen und das oftmals über die Lebenszeit des Künstlers und des Sammlers hinaus. Die öffentliche Präsentation dient also nicht der (ohnehin fragwürdigen) Steigerung des fiktiven Verkaufswertes eines Produktes und seines Stellenwertes in der Kulturlandschaft, wie dies von Seiten der Institutionen gedacht wird. Die (unter- oder unbezahlte) Teilnahme an einer Ausstellung in einem namhaften Museum gleicht

den Wert der Leistungen nicht aus, indem die „Namhaftigkeit“ der Institution irgendwie auf die KünstlerInnen übergeht - das ist kein realer Tauschwert.

Wieso werden die SchöpferInnen der Kunst nicht bezahlt wie jedes andere Glied dieser Wertschöpfungskette?

Die Kunstgeschichte lehrt uns, dass Königshäuser und Kirchenoberhäupter begabte Malermeister anwarben, ihnen Arbeitsmaterialien, Assistenten und Werkstätten zur Verfügung stellten und sich die gemalten Meisterwerke einiges kosten ließen.

Handwerker bekamen damals einen geringeren Lohn, stellten sie sich ja nur in den Dienst eines Meisters. Heute scheint dieses Verhältnis umgekehrt: Für die Erneuerung des Parketts bezahlt das Museum den HandwerkerInnen einen angemessenen Preis. Am klassistischen Gesellschaftssystem und der großen Schere zwischen reich und arm scheint sich hingegen historisch nicht viel geändert zu haben.

Die KünstlerInnen tragen die Fixkosten für Atelier und Betrieb, oftmals auch die Materialkosten und das gesamte finanzielle Risiko selbst; als Tauschwert wird lediglich der Verkauf des Kunstwerkes oder seine Wertsteigerung in Aussicht gestellt.

Diese Aussicht, diese Hoffnung auf Erfolg ist die vergiftete Triebfeder der kulturellen Kommerzialisierung. So kann die KünstlerIn nur Kapital aus ihrem Werk generieren, wenn es als Produkt verkauft wird. Der soziokulturelle und historische Wert, mit denen öffentliche Institutionen werben wird nicht nur als „Selbstverwirklichung“ von KünstlerInnen herabreduziert, sondern zugleich zum Mythos hochstilisiert - bei der Vergütung jedoch außer Acht gelassen.

Verkauf statt Honorar

Ein Kunstwerk auszustellen garantiert zwar nicht dessen Verkauf, aber die vage Verkaufsaussicht soll die geringe oder fehlende Entlohnung seitens der Institutionen rechtfertigen. Auch dass die Namhaftigkeit, das Renommee, also das Ansehen von KünstlerInnen steigt, ist eine grundfalsche Idee von Tausch. Die Ausstellungspraxis als Werbeveranstaltung für KünstlerInnen zu sehen ist absurd. Institutionelle Kunstaustellungen sind keine Messen.

KünstlerInnen freuen sich zunächst über die Einladung zu einer Ausstellungsbeteiligung. Hierfür wurden wir ausgebildet und nur so können unsere Werke ihren vollen Charakter entfalten. Die Zusammenarbeit mit Museen und öffentlichen Institutionen könnte für beide Seiten wirklich fruchtbar sein, wenn sie unter fairen Bedingungen stattfände.

Doch wer wirbt hier eigentlich für wen? Ist es nicht der Inhalt, also die Kunst, die die Besucher ins Museum lockt? Wirbt der Künstler nicht auch für die Institution? Die Besucher kommen schließlich ins Museum um Kunstwerke zu sehen, und nicht das Museum selbst ohne Kunst. Wenn überhaupt dann ist das Verhältnis zwischen KünstlerInnen und Institutionen (Sammlungen, Museen, Kunstvereinen) ein reziprokes, warum also nicht in der Vergütung?

„Herzlichen Glückwunsch, sie haben gewonnen!“

Diesen Satz kennen viele nur aus dem Spamordner. Für einige Wenige wird der Glücksfall zur Realität- sie können sich das Geld abholen oder eine Reise antreten - mit dem Gewinn rechnen dürfen die TeilnehmerInnen aber nicht.

Für KünstlerInnen und Künstler ist die Zufallslotterie Berufsroutine. Sie stellen sich Wettbewerben und Ausschreibungen, suchen um

Förderungen an und bewerben sich um Preise. Sie müssen sich ein dickes Fell wachsen lassen und mit Ablehnung umgehen können - denn nicht alle können gewinnen und die Juryentscheidung ist immer subjektiv. Manchmal verliert man — manchmal gewinnen die anderen. KünstlerInnen untereinander pflegen grundsätzlich eine große Solidarität, helfen sich gegenseitig mit ihren verschiedenen Fähigkeiten bei der Umsetzung ihrer Werke. Deshalb gönnen wir KünstlerInnen auch den befreundeten MitstreiterInnen, KünstlerkollegInnen oder Ateliergenossen den Erhalt eines Preises oder einer Förderung.

Bei der Entgegennahme meines ersten Kunstpreises machte sich ein merkwürdiges Gefühl in mir breit. Die jedem Wettbewerb zugrunde liegende Unverhältnismäßigkeit kannte ich bereits - und ich hatte schließlich auch gelernt, mich für meine KollegInnen zu freuen. Neu war mir jedoch, eben diese Unverhältnismäßigkeit aus der entgegengesetzten Perspektive zu erfahren. Man freut sich über Anerkennung und Preisgeld, und gleichzeitig hat man ein schlechtes Gewissen gegenüber seinen Genossinnen und Genossen, die allesamt leer ausgingen und wieder einmal eine ganze Menge unbezahlte, unehonorierte Arbeit verrichtet hatten. Sollte ich den Gewinn aufteilen? Das Preisgeld würde auf die Größe eines kleinen Almosen zusammenschrumpfen - da könnte ich auch gleich verzichten. Sollte ich etwa verzichten?

Ist es meine Aufgabe als Preisträgerin, diese strukturellen Ungerechtigkeiten auszugleichen?

Ich entschied mich, den Preis anzunehmen und steckte mir damit die materielle Ungerechtigkeit in Form des Preisgeldes in meine Tasche. Ich wollte mich nicht als Wohltäterin gegenüber meinen

MitstreiterInnen darstellen – ich will lieber strukturellen Wandel und Gerechtigkeit für uns alle!

Wohltätigkeit ist ein konservatives Konzept jener Kräfte, die wollen, dass alles so bleibt wie es ist - die Ungerechtigkeit inbegriffen.

Progressive Kräfte hingegen fordern Veränderung und setzen ihr Kapital dort ein.

Exkurs: Die britische Anarcho-Band Chumbawamba landete 1997 einen internationalen Hit, welcher 2002 von General Motors für eine Werbekampagne verwendet wurde. Die Gruppe erhielt dafür 70.000 Dollar und vergab diese zu gleichen Teilen an zwei antikapitalistische Organisationen (CorpWatch und IndyMedia), die mit Kampagnen ihrerseits gegen General Motors vorgingen.

Ich sagte einmal im Gespräch zu einer Kulturpolitikerin: „Wenn alle KünstlerInnen für ihre Leistungen fair bezahlt werden würden, dann bräuchten wir keine Preise und Förderungen mehr.“ Die Politikerin antwortete lachend: „Das ist eine Utopie!“ Sie wollte anscheinend, dass alles so bleibt, wie es ist.

Wer profitiert denn eigentlich von dieser Ungerechtigkeit?

Künstlerischer Erfolg ist auch zum Großteil eine Lotterie—reine Glückssache. Eine bezahlte Jury aus Experten und Abgesandten der Auftraggeber fällt Urteile (mitunter subjektive Geschmacksurteile und pragmatische Urteile), die über die zukünftige Karriere von uns KünstlerInnen entscheiden.

Das beginnt schon an den Kunstakademien und Universitäten.

Im Durchschnitt gibt es in diesem Wettbewerb (am freien Markt oder bei staatlichen Förderungen) etwa 2-5% GewinnerInnen, die zum Aushängeschild, zum Werbeträger dieser kapitalistischen Ungerechtigkeitsideologie hochstilisiert werden.

- ob sie wollen oder nicht. Sie sind sichtbar, sie bekommen Applaus,

sie locken BesucherInnen und TouristInnen an, sie inspirieren andere junge Menschen dazu, in ihre Fußstapfen zu treten und ein Kunststudium zu beginnen. Sie repräsentieren und reproduzieren einen Erfolgstraum mit einer riesigen Schattenseite, die weniger sichtbar und glamourös ist.

Viele ausgebildete Akademikerinnen müssen nach ihrem Studium Jobs verrichten, für die sie überqualifiziert sind und keinerlei Ausbildung benötigen würden. Würden Förderungen oder Ausgleichszahlungen in regelmäßigen Abständen geleistet werden, könnte es die Kulturschaffende damit kalkulieren und schließlich frei entscheiden, ob ein zusätzlicher Job angenommen wird oder nicht. Sie hätten Entscheidungsfreiheit. Sie wären frei.

Politik und Wirtschaft (ist das nicht dasselbe?) haben aber keinen Bedarf an freien ungebundenen Individuen. So wird jeder verliehene Preis zum Unterdrückungsmechanismus, und bringt KünstlerInnen-GenossInnen in eine künstliche Konkurrenzsituation, die ihrer berufsbedingten natürlichen Solidarität entgegensteht.

Kultureller Klassenkampf

Durch das Ausstellen unter den oben beschriebenen Bedingungen entsteht uns KünstlerInnen ein wirtschaftlicher Schaden, über den uns temporäre Förderungen nur zeitweise hinwegtrösten können.

Wir fordern Entschädigung seitens all jener, die von unserer unbezahlten Arbeit profitieren!

Diese finanzielle Entschädigung soll in entsprechender Höhe zum geleisteten Aufwand, direkt an die kulturschaffende Person erfolgen, und nicht über Umwege von den Institutionen aufgezehrt oder zurückgehalten werden. Zusätzliche staatliche Förderungen sollen in zeitlich kalkulierbarer Regelmäßigkeit erfolgen – um eine freie und

unabhängige Kulturproduktion zu ermöglichen.

Wir KünstlerInnen haben viele Ungerechtigkeiten als gegeben angenommen, weil wir darauf hofften, eines Tages selbst von diesem System profitieren zu dürfen. Wir ließen uns ablehnen, auszeichnen, ausstellen und vorführen.

Erhielten wir einen Preis, dann natürlich wegen unserer exzellenten Künstlerischen Leistung, gewannen wir ihn nicht, dann war es einfach Pech. Wir müssen begreifen, dass ein Preisgeld seinen Wert verliert - unserer Künstlergemeinschaft sogar schadet - sobald es sich aus den Ressourcen der „Verlierer“ nährt.

Werden KünstlerInnen unbezahlt zu Gruppenausstellungen eingeladen, so ist es vorzuziehen – solidarisch und in gleicher Konstellation auf alternative, selbstverwaltete Ausstellungsräume auszuweichen um dort die selbe unbezahlte Kulturarbeit zu verrichten, ohne dass sich Dritte daran bereichern.

Nur so werden KuratorInnen und sonstige sekundäre Nutznießer unserer Arbeit verstehen lernen, dass sie sich letztendlich nur selbst schaden, wenn sie sich nicht mit uns KünstlerInnen solidarisieren.

APPLAUSE

Now, I want to read a text from a song that inspired my work for the MAK exhibition.

Danke für diesen guten Morgen

Danke für jeden neuen Tag

Danke, dass ich all meine Sorgen

Auf dich werfen mag

*Danke für alle guten Freunde
Danke, o Herr, für jedermann
Danke, wenn auch dem größten Feinde
Ich verzeihen kann*

*Danke für meine Arbeitsstelle
Danke für jedes kleine Glück
Danke für alles Frohe, Helle
Und für die Musik*

*Wir sagen Dankeschön, wir sagen Dankeschön
Wir sagen Danke, Dankeschön
Wir sagen Dankeschön, wir sagen Dankeschön
Wir sagen Danke, Dankeschön*

*Danke für manche Traurigkeiten
Danke für jedes gute Wort
Danke, dass deine Hand mich leiten
Will an jeden Ort*

*Danke, dass ich dein Wort verstehe
Danke, dass deinen Geist du gibst
Danke, dass in der Fern und Nähe
Du die Menschen liebst (Dankeschön)*

*Danke, dein Heil kennt keine Schranken
Danke, ich halt mich fest daran
Danke, ach Herr, ich will dir danken
Dass ich danken kann*

Danke

Danke

D-D-D-Danke

Danke

Schankedön! (Song by Mickie Krause)

I switch back to English now; this song about thankfulness was triggering me. There is a saying: It is not the happy people who are thankful but the thankful people who are happy.

And then there's a movement in society now that people should be simply happy. It helps to obtain better mental health, and they can overcome depression and fears with thankfulness, and I think this is also what the song is targeting.





With this work here, I was thinking, what kind of function could this sculpture have? The idea was not only for the fame of its being in the museum and to produce new work, but I wanted to address the topic of the toxicity of thankfulness in society.

I thought many other people might also have a problem with this song or find it triggering. You know you should be thankful to your boss that you don't have to work overnight or that he gives you a minimum wage. It's not like that! You don't have to be thankful for this. This is the right of the workers. And I think this mix is our, the artists', mistake: confusing privilege and rights.

It is a problem that thankfulness is a part of this; for example, being thankful for your parents because they don't beat you up and give you a roof and a bed to sleep in. It is a right to be a child and to be safe! You don't have to be thankful to your parents for that. And who doesn't know this sentence: „You're so unthankful, kid.“

I think this is a profound thing in our society; as I said before in the text, a conservative force wants inequality and injustice to remain because as long as you're thankful for your privileges, you might give up your rights because you want to keep your privilege.

I know it's tricky because there is nothing against positivity and affirmations, and I am thankful for all we have here on this little European island, all these privileges that we have, but when we don't fight for it and take it as a given and are just thankful, it's a problem because we do not see that it's a private concept.

I think, for your mental health and to get through the day, it's okay to be thankful. But if it starts concerning our rights, then maybe you should use the right to be unthankful and criticize on behalf of solidarity with other people. And this is what the work meant.

I don't know if you can see this in the work, all the big topics, but I feel

also that the best way into the brain, into the mind of the viewer, is that they think it's their own idea. So, this was the sketch, and these were the photos taken in the studio for the sketch. And what happened? The MAK bought this flowerpot.

This makes its criticism difficult. So, I got another privilege. You know, I play in the game, and then they solve it with the money, which made me think and wonder: It's not enough to do artwork? You also have to talk about it and teach about it. Otherwise, the institutions or the people in power will use their money to include the injustice and make it even. This is a typical strategy of woke-washing. You know, the criticized person puts money on the enemy to buy them in and proceed in their appropriation.

I'm not saying that I'm the enemy of MAK; I'm just stating a problem there. So I thought, It's not enough just to build sculptures in the studio; I also have to go out and talk about this. This was two years ago, and now I see the first fruits from my work that there are different conditions for the Cardinal König prize already.

Also, I went to the radio and did a radio interview. I wrote a letter to the Bundesministerium (Federal Ministry). I had a personal meeting to talk through an exhibition proposal with the Bundesministerium (Federal Ministry), but I used my appointment slot to talk about the institutions that get tax money but don't pay the artists, and the response was: "But you have to unionize; you have to go to «IG Bildende Kunst» and to be much more critical about this, and then we will change something."

I was solving the problem like this, with my art and with my teaching, and like I told you before, but of course: It makes sense to unionize. I will show you some more pictures now; there was a lot of reading already. The song "Danke" that I read to you – I couldn't believe it:

yesterday, I found out via the internet, when I researched it, that it is covered by Mickey Krause, and he had already inspired me for another of my exhibition titles, namely «Reiss die Hütte ab!» In the Salzburger Kunstverein. I will quickly show you the exhibition:

This picture says, «Love is ... physical and emotional property.» I did not invent this nonsense. I found it in the newspaper. So this exhibition was about the core family, or better, about the white core family. In the best-case scenario, the mother, father, son, and daughter are involved. They live in Salzburg or Germany, and they live their dream life, building a single-family house and a family in the house, and I wanted to portray this.

So I built this one here, «White Trash Bag,» which you can also see in the Steirischer Herbst at the moment. The white trash bag is in a corset, and then we have the white trash bag in lederhosen. I know that the idea behind these sculptures is a very personal decision, like religion. I am not religious, but I don't judge people who are religious. The same is true for people who become parents. I don't judge people who become parents, but I won't become a parent. I decided, for political reasons, not to multiply my genes. Therefore, I researched the carbon footprint of a white baby compared with that of a baby of color. Of course, it is no surprise that white babies collect flight miles before they can talk, and if you care about the environment, it might statistically be the best thing not to have any kids because the kids produce more kids, and you cannot control it.

There were two interesting American movements in the 90s. The first one is called VHEMT, the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement, and their motto is, May we all live long and die out. And then there is the more radical one it is the Church of Euthanasia. This was more like an artist group in the 90s, and they were for cannibalism, suicide, and

abortion. Everything that makes humanity vanish. They also went onto American talk shows and shocked people, and they made activist art where they spill sperm in front of a sperm bank—and it's very funny. The VHEMT Movement is more about reform, and the group wants to educate the people, and the Church of Euthanasia is more like an artist group that works with provocation. So this time, I was researching the effects of having kids, building houses, and living this hetero-normative life, everything that is actually destroying our planet. Here I had the punching bag. That's for me, like the father figure, and it carries a concrete bag in a baby carrier. And it is connected to the ground with a penis. It is fixed with a stone dildo because this is a kind of reference to this Blut und Boden (blood and soil) idea.

Here, we have healthy kids who live on healthy soil, and it's our German/Austrian soil. And so, on this side of the exhibition space, the topic is the family, like the private house, the toy cars, and the kids, and on the other side of the exhibition, I had this mobile showing the space debris, like satellites and the stuff that flies around—man-made stuff—but also the moon and some stars. And on the other side of it is the religion that is balancing this. I also wanted to make it look stupid because I like angels that have this trance face that makes them look very dull. And here, there's Planet B. Of course, a desert.

Here's an older work of mine, which is the „World Discoverer.“ This is a shipwreck of an expedition cruise. This is not a normal cruise. This is a cruise on a small ship that would bring you to places that are not touristic. It sank in the Indian Ocean somewhere, and it's still lying there.

This work is called „Sorry, we are closed.“ It is talking about the commercialization of nature, so the rose and the butterflies are closed and waiting for better times. They don't show us their beauty.





This now is a small excursus: In the vitrines, I showed my research, like books and scans and also random artifacts mixed with a lot of older works of mine and also some things I bought from Willhaben that represent a kind of domestic space. You know, like some kind of stuff that people have in their home for decoration. I was interested in the associations that jump from piece to piece:

For example, this one is called „Frauennotruf“ (women emergency call), like this kind of cliché insignia of the woman: what they beat their husband with—the frying pan and rolling pin. This was going some more into details. I think that whenever you have a big work, it's also nice to stimulate the mind of the visitor with collections or smaller items so that they can dive in.

But let's go back to the first work. I was talking about the function of an art piece. The function of the first work I showed you, „Everything Counts,“ was “reform“; the second, the flower pot was “information“ and also “rebellion,“ and with this next one, I want to show you the function of art as a weapon.

It is called „Luxus für Alle“. Here is the sketch. I always make sketches and not only sketches but also paintings because I feel that I often make new works for exhibitions, and then people want to know what they will look like upfront. And since I don't like showing old works, I don't have photos to show.

If I give them a sketch, that would be enough for me, like just a pen drawing with some outlines and some measurements; they couldn't deduce from the abstraction to the work.

So I thought in my practice, it's really good to start by painting it or drawing it, like a picture and not only like a sketch, because then the people who receive the email, the curators, they know about colours; they know about the size. You will be surprised by how little fantasy

people have. They can often not visualize things that are clear to you. And this is „Luxus for Alle.“ It is a «Stehtisch“. You know, like at exhibition openings where you have high tables where people grab snacks, but on this table, you could grab cobblestones and Molotov cocktails. And shrimps made out of bricks. So, for me, it was a metamorphosis between a shrimp cocktail and a lifestyle object. And some tools of class struggle. I thought the idea, or the function of art, could also be to take it in hand and throw it at the police for a street fight.

It was 2022. We're going back in time. At this time, I was interested in the insignias of the class struggle with street fights. The base of this one I took from the «EdleTropfen in Nuss“- (filled chocolates); the box was my model for making this kind of display of the pieces. I made it from ceramics.

I just showed you my folder, in which you can see my research in the process. So this is the Molotov cocktail I wanted to make, like a steady Molotov cocktail, like a thing that could... – like this Red Bull setting that you get in the club with this one bottle of vodka and then Red Bull around it—a little bit like this, but with a Molotov cocktail in the middle. And then I made the flame; it works like an oil lamp. But it would still work as a Molotov cocktail, too.

The starting point or the reference point of this kind of luxury item was the shrimp cocktail. Of course, as a sculptor, the small things are also interesting to me. It's interesting that these tails here are overlapping. It is just formal for me that when the sculpture leaves its ground base, it actually hangs from its own weight. You don't have to fix it because it's held together by pressure and sitting there without being attached. I think this was the thing: these small details were what interested me



in the shrimp cocktail at first, just the formal aspects, and then I loaded them up with meaning from the class struggle.

So, here, you could use „art as a weapon“ to throw it at somebody.

I started with this lecture last year in Linz, and the idea was that everybody has a topic that doesn't let them sleep at night, something that they're angry about, like me with the prize or with the injustice.

For me personally, it was a moment when I had trouble with a policeman, and I thought, how can they have so much power and nobody believes me?

Injustice and police violence, for example. I thought, Well, I'm an artist. I can change it. I can talk about it. This is my power, and I thought maybe the students also have things that are of concern to them.

Some topics can be in the family. It can be in the university, something that you would like to change. Something that you're angry about or maybe even a trauma. You are an artist, and you have the tools to make gold out of the shit. But it's not art therapy. This was the first thing that I told the students. We are not working on your trauma here or doing therapy.

We want to think about who else has this problem that you described, so I started writing some questions for the students that may also be helpful for you. I will read them out:

Is my experience an example?

Which group is concerned with this topic?

In which context do we have to put this topic?

What do I demand?

What do I want to change?

How can this change be executed?

How can I generate attention for this topic?

Who do I want to address?

Who is my target group?
Which formal language do I have to use?
What artistic expression tools do I have?
Could there be misunderstandings?
The border between political art and propaganda?
How can I avoid instrumentalization or woke washing?
What can be criticized about the art?
What does the law say about how far I may go?
Where are the borders of artistic freedom?

These questions, I think, are helpful tools if you want to initiate an artwork that does come from you, but it's not about you. It's about a bigger thing, and I think it is important that we create from our experience and from our past and from our identity.

You don't want to do cultural appropriation and all the stuff; we have to reflect on ourselves in our work. But then, I think we have to use the reflection to go further and for society to progress, to not only be egocentric about ourselves in the artwork, but we should also think about someone else.

Who is coming, who's going to the museum after work in their free time, and what do I want them to see and think? And I think also this is why many people think artists are decadent or geniuses, because the artist doesn't think any more about what they want to say and who they are addressing.

They are just like, um, spiraling around themselves and not talking about everybody. And I think the spiraling movement is important. But for me, I thought that it is healing and empowering to think about a change for society that I can aim at with my artwork. And I told you before that I had trouble with the police.

I made a sculpture about that, where I could put all my hate for the policemen, and this was therapeutic. It started in the ceramic studio; it evolved, but I think it's good to see. So first, I had this police uniform. I found it on Willhaben, and I thought I would put a pig head with the Austrian police thing on top, and then there would come the stinky flies out of it. And I thought, no, I cannot do this. This is too brutal.

I saw a nice ribbon around a sculpture in a French museum, and I wanted to use it too, so I had this ACAB—All Cops Are Bastards. I bent the text to All Creatures Are Beautiful. And I put a lot of insects, snails, and worms in it. I put it around it to make it more open. Here are some research pictures from the internet. I researched the small creatures, and here are pictures to help you get the uniform right. And here is the final work. You see, I didn't take the pig's head in the end because the work didn't need it anymore.

I also thought that this has a more open character because I'm for radical messages, but if the audience closes itself or starts to emphasize the poor pig there, then it's not what I want, and so often, it's also good to step back and reduce. And so only the smelly flies, the stinky flies, were going flying out of the hollow police thing that has a pedestal I fired in the park that it had this nice burnt look, like from the burning barricades somehow. Here, you will see some details of all the creatures there. There was also a roach, a cockroach, and so I think the critique is still there, but it's in a way that people can digest it somehow or that it starts a discussion and does not put too much violence and radicalness.

I remembered this afterward, as still-lives from the mannerism or baroque where this kind of armor is empty and lying down. Maybe you have seen it, and I think this was, so maybe it's a utopia that one day when we don't need police anymore and then only the moths and

insects live in uniforms, in the old abandoned uniforms, and maybe the old police stations become clubs. Anything instead of violence.



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Organized by
Ezara Spangl and Rainer Spangl

Cover by Neue Satz Wien
Layout by Isabella Kohlhuber

<http://artistlectureseriesvienna.com/>

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien.

ISBN 978-3-903288-24-9

di:angewandte

