

Lissy Willberg
selected works



Lissy Willberg (they/them) *lives and works in Leipzig (DE)*

[1] www.lissywillberg.info, mail@lissywillberg.info, +49 (0) 176 80 238 003

[2] Lissy Willberg (b. 1989, East Berlin) is an artist, researcher, and lecturer specializing in live arts. Based on participatory proposals, they explore social and spatial dynamics through sound, text, and movement. These site-specific constellations blur the boundaries between being, performing and participating. At the core of Willberg's work are texts that emerge as performance scripts, movement scores, exhibition manuals, song lyrics, audio descriptions, or essays.

[4] After graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig (2020), Willberg completed an M.A. at the Dutch Art Institute (2022) and participated in the first Postnatural Independent Program (2023). In 2023, Willberg received a working grant from the Cultural Foundation of the Free State of Saxony (GER) as well as the Stiftung Kunstfonds (GER), and from 2017 to 2022 they received the German Academic Scholarship. Their work has been published by Cthulhu Books (ESP) and Transcript Publishing (GER). Since 2021, they have been proposing a variety of educational formats at art academies, art foundations, museums, regular schools and schools for specialized education.

[3] Currently, Willberg is moving-researching along (im)possible demarcations between nature, culture, and technology. Their projects explore the materialities of ways of relating and pursue questions of collectivity and coexistence. For a few years, they've been testing artistic ways of documenting, preserving and archiving the performative.



Lissy Willberg

Artist statement

[1] I understand every kind of engagement with the world and all its inhabitants as part of a continuous process of learning and growth. In this case, growth does not stand for progress. My process is shaped by detours, contradictions and cracks, often uneconomical and irrational. Sometimes I have to pause, turn around and even go back, to re-examine and understand “differently.” As a consequence, I often recycle and remix project-related elements and materials. This reuse creates an ongoing narrative that continues to evolve and overwrite itself because my knowledge and perspectives on the world are allowed to change. I am not on this planet for a coherent, individual experience. Everything is created in collaboration. I use working methods such as sampling to bring assumed dichotomies into conversation, visualizing a dense network of relationality, making it audible and tangible. I thus oppose concepts such as the “original thought” and instead embrace collaborative forms of exchange. For the public presentation of my projects, I focus on the dramaturgy of experiences. I want to create multisensory entry points to intellectualized content.

Currently, I am concerned with body-space relations, specifically the entanglement of concepts of subjectivity and resulting notions of space. I aim to relearn prevalent modes of orientation and decompose perceptions of an isolated and individualized self, present in current geopolitics.

If, according to westernized understanding, spatial orientation is always determined from an egocentric perspective, to what extent does this view influence a relationship with the world, other living beings and the (seemingly) inanimate? Is the subject-object, active-passive, culture-nature dualism deeply rooted in concepts of space that originate in modernity? How would the approach to “the more,” to nature as co-world be shaped today if the relationship to the exterior had been different all along? What if “the other” had always been perceived as pervading the self?

For more than ten years, I have been working on and off as a care worker, which influences how I understand my role as an artist and art as a whole. For two years, I also contributed to a mixed-abled art collective where we connected through reciprocal care and artistic expression. The reflection of privileges in terms of my academic education and corporal mobility informs how I conceptualize artistic formats with consideration for accessibility. Recently, I started exploring the artistic potential of audio description and performance documentation as an access tool.

Since 2023, my great interest in group learning and the facilitation of educational spaces led me to explore settings outside the art academy, offering performance courses at regular schools, schools for specialized education and art education centers. All these encounters continuously shape my artistic practice and broaden my understanding of how artistic techniques may contribute to social transformation.

[2] *Thinking about illusion is thinking about reality. Thinking about you is thinking about me.*

(Embodied) tools for decentralization, 2025
Bistro21 (Leipzig, GER)
Performative demonstration, 16'00''

[2] Performers: Kata Potrykus and Jan Selçuk



[1] Performative demonstration in the frame of the duo show *FABULATIVE LORE: Tools and Handiness* with Eszter Szöke, Bistro21 (GER)

[1] Integrated into the sleeves of their costumes, the performers' mobile devices produce melodic, digital sounds. Their movements modulate various effects, altering the sound in real time. The prototype for this sound tool, developed in close collaboration with artist and computer scientist Jonathan Schneider, utilizes the sensors embedded in conventional smartphones. As the performers demonstrate the sound tool, visitors accompany them in exploring this novel instrument. With their eyes closed, the performers investigate the sounds generated by their movements. At the same time, their bodies respond to the evolving soundscape, creating a situation of mutual affectivity. The project explores moments of bodily, social, and spatial (dis)orientation, drawing inspiration from the decentralized movement patterns of migratory birds and schools of fish.

[3] Model for a school of herring, 2025
plaster, pigment, cotton thread, dimensions variable





[4] Photos: Laura Wichmann

[5] Excerpt exhibition text: Alicia Franzke

This project is currently being further developed for the INACT performance festival in Strasbourg in May 2025. Emerging from a workshop, participants will have the opportunity to engage with the sound tool and collaboratively create a performative situation for outdoor spaces.



[5] In *Tools and Handiness*, Lissy Willberg and Eszter Szöke explore tools and their influence on our interaction with the world. Just as tools evolve from mechanics to programming, the role of humans shifts from active mastery to passive operation. Willberg and Szöke question the characteristics and conventional uses of various tools, raising the following questions: How does a wagon wheel move when it hangs on a wall? Can a smartphone transform an individual movement into a collective one?

A shock to permanence, 2024 Kunst Raum Mitte (GER) *Performance, 22'00''*

[2] In the frame of the group show *ELEFANT* with students of the Class for Performative Arts:
Adam Harfouch, Andolie Marguerite, Asya Volodina, Kevin Heather Koen, Juli Winterstein.



[3] Specific rules apply for the storage without loss or alteration. A whole system of conservation measures produces the illusion of permanence. This durability is often linked to visual representations. But, what experience remains once the document has decomposed? What do we discover when we devote ourselves to the microbiological traces of performative acts? Is the archive then everywhere? A body, pushed into a corner of the former *gallery weisser elefant*, appears as a glitch of an outdated file version and tells of discontinuity and deterioration. The performance *A shock to permanence* (2024) outlines the detours and cracks in process-based working methods and explores the relationship between loss and inscription in performative practices.

[1] A shock to permanence (2024)
Performance, 22'00''

[5] Exhibition text: Agnieszka Roguski & Natalie Keppler



[5] How can an institution address its history and what methods can be used to approach, explore and expand upon alternative narratives? Students in the Class for Performative Arts of at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig have been exploring these questions in collaboration with artist Lissy Willberg since the beginning of the 2024 summer semester. As part of their research process, the group presented *ELEFANT* in June 2024 at the experimental residency institution *Callie's* in Berlin-Wedding. As a form of open rehearsal and performative investigation, *ELEFANT* opened a window onto the ongoing research process. How can artistic research consciously focus on affects, and what could this achieve? How can historical references, fragmentary stories, and ephemera be handled with both care and playfulness? What resonances do the artists find with the Permanente Kunstkonferenz (Permanent Art Conference), a performance festival held at *galerie weisser elefant* in 1989?

[4]



[4] Photos: Mathias Völzke

Horizons (re-revisited), 2024

KASKO (CH)
Sound performance, 26'00''

[2] Video stills: Samuel Bramley



[1] Sound performance by invitation of *Snippet* Live-Feature Festival at Kasko, Basel (CH).



[3] With the sound performance *Horizons (re-revisited)* (2024), artist Lissy Willberg continues their research into the question of whether performative acts can be preserved and relived. The audio piece interweaves the practice of performance with artistic research in order to create strategies for archiving the performative. The audio piece uses audio description as a central method and thus explores its artistic potential. *Horizons (re-revisited)* (2024) is an adaptation of the sound work *Horizons* (2023) for the *Snippet* Live Feature Festival. The script and the film documentation of the performance *What is the horizon more than two curved lines lovingly embracing you* (2023) form the basis for this work.

If only they had written a score, 2023
IDEAL Artspace (GER)
*Solo exhibition & sound
performance, 26'00''*



[2] Relief sculpture, 2023
plaster, pigments, foam panels, 2000 x 2500 x 40 mm



[3] Exhibition view



[4] The exhibition project *If only they had written a score* (2023) is dedicated to the attempt to relive a past moment. It installs a “recomposition of remains” (Schneider 2012). In doing so, it draws attention to the reconstruction of relationality in a performance project initiated by artist Lissy Willberg. The basis for the (dis)section of this past moment is the performance *What is the horizon more than two curved lines lovingly embracing you*, which took place in Madrid, Spain, in July 2023. Visitors are invited to re-perform this bygone situation through their own bodies, narratives and experiences. The piece of printed matter is accompanying material for them to take home. It functions as a tool to engage with the content and meta-level of the (re)performance. The included essay contextualizes the project within Willberg’s research on notational practices in European performative arts.

[5] Text excerpt:

[5] *Relationality is evidential because it is able to change the way “I” perceive, relate, and (inter)act (im)materially. It has the capacity to bring forth (im)material ways of relation between places, things, animals, people, and plants. Both performing and witnessing the performative can change one’s perception, which in turn can expand the notion of what the self is (capable of). And it is precisely this quality that – in its ephemerality – makes the performative a lasting experience.*

[6] Photos: David Rank



What is the horizon more than two curved lines lovingly embracing you, 2023
Matadero Intermediae (ESP)
Space intervention, 18'00''

[1] *What is the horizon more than two curved lines lovingly embracing you* (2023) was created within the frame of a fellowship at the Institute for Postnatural Studies, Madrid (ESP).



[2] Performers: Sarafina McLeod and Lissy Willberg



[3] The audience was led to the place of the presentation and was protected from the sun by a textile, which depicts the visual notation of the performance.

[3] One of my preoccupations as a sound and movement artist is the exploration of (im)possible demarcations between culture, nature and technology. At the Institute for Postnatural Studies I engaged with geological maps and western notions of space and orientation. With mapping technologies as an example, simple questions appeared, such as: Where does “I” end? Where does landscape, environment, or “the more” begin? US humanities scholar Kathleen M. Kirby explores how concepts of subjectivity are essentially based on assumptions about space. Kirby addresses the problematic interrelationship within which the development of the Enlightenment individual is closely related to a specific concept of space. According to Kirby, mapping historically is a process “to distinguish self from other.” (Kirby 1996: 49) The mapper must not be absorbed by landscape, because cartographic records must remain free of subjective impressions and affect in order to ensure the hierarchical imbalance in relation to the mapped area. European colonial history is characterized by the idea of conquering the horizon. With the performance *What is the horizon more than two curved lines lovingly embracing you* and the accompanying text scores I seek to encounter horizons beyond this dynamic.



[4]



[4] The performance takes place without any verbal interaction. All attendees can access texts and participatory movement scores through a booklet.

The Book of Curiosities, 2022

Kunsthalle Gorlitz (GER)
Multimedia installation, 32'00''

[2] Multimedia installation, 2022
Textile, soda, pigments, dimensions variable



[3] Photos: David Rank



[1] The project on *The Book of Curiosities* was developed as part of the solo research residency “TANZPAKT in Residence.” During the residency period, I researched the history of navigation (shipping) and specifically early Arabic navigation systems (hand and body gestures) that revolutionized nautical orientation. The Book of Curiosities is an 11th-century Arabic manuscript collection that assembles the first cartographic records of the earth. Using a digitized version of these maps through the Bodleian Library, I made freehand sketches that formed a visual score. The spatial installation included several moving panels of fabric, reminiscent of sails, which create different spatial situations during the performance. Inspired by the history of the Silk Road, Arabic incense was burnt and transported through the room.

[5] Text excerpt: *The Book of Curiosities*

[2]



[4] Digital audio, live mixing, 32'00"



[5] *The rectangular world map from the "Book of Curiosities" is considered the earliest preserved map with a graphic scale, not only in Islam, but also in the history of European cartography. The map is reminiscent of its features of the cartographic systems of antiquity, as well as of the works of Islamic astronomers such as al-Khwarazmi.*

Hyphenated score, 2022

Centrale Fies (IT)

Multimedia installation, 22'00"

[1] Sculpture I: Your edges go astray #I, 2022

recycled wax, foam panels, wood, pigment, dimensions variable



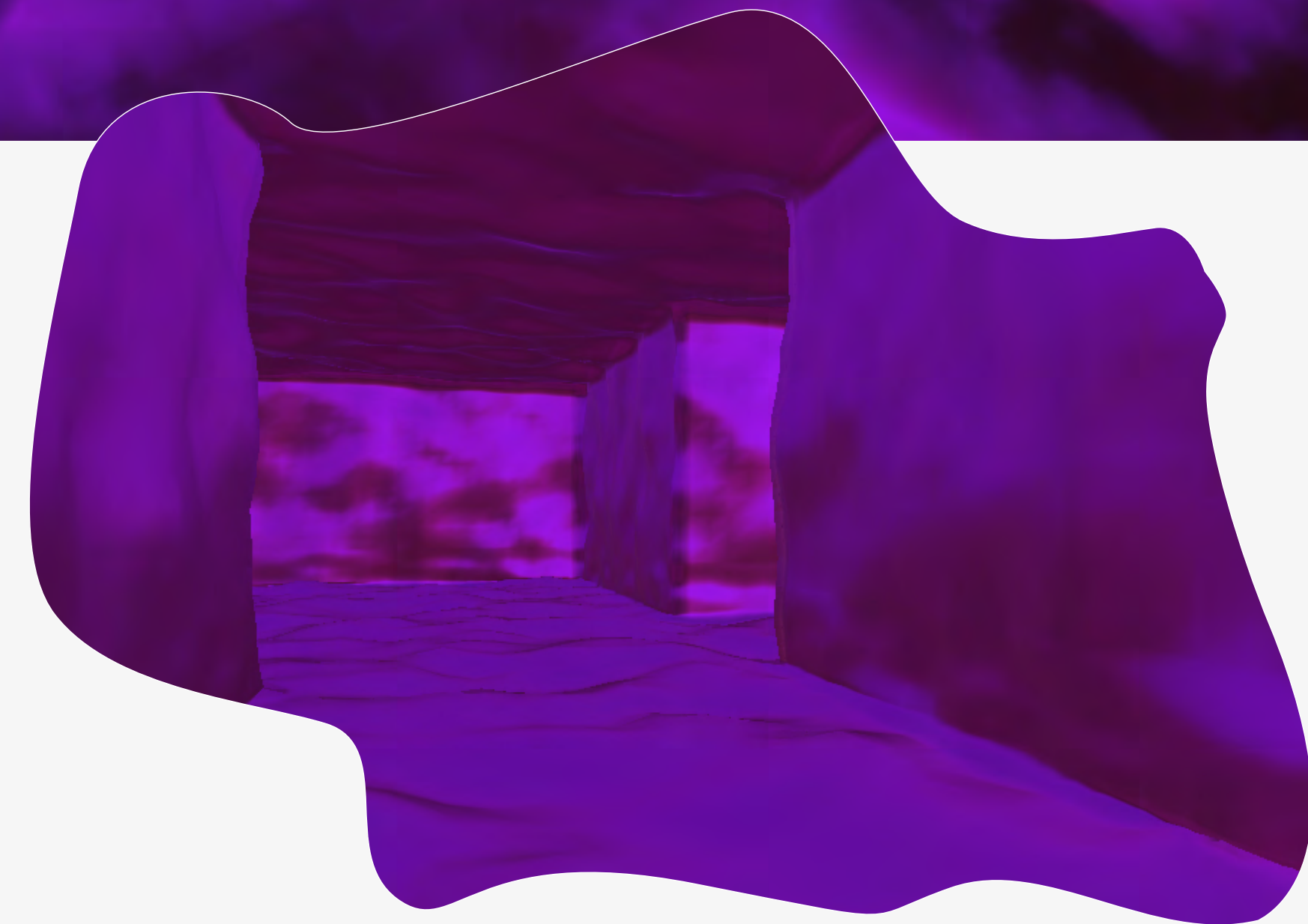
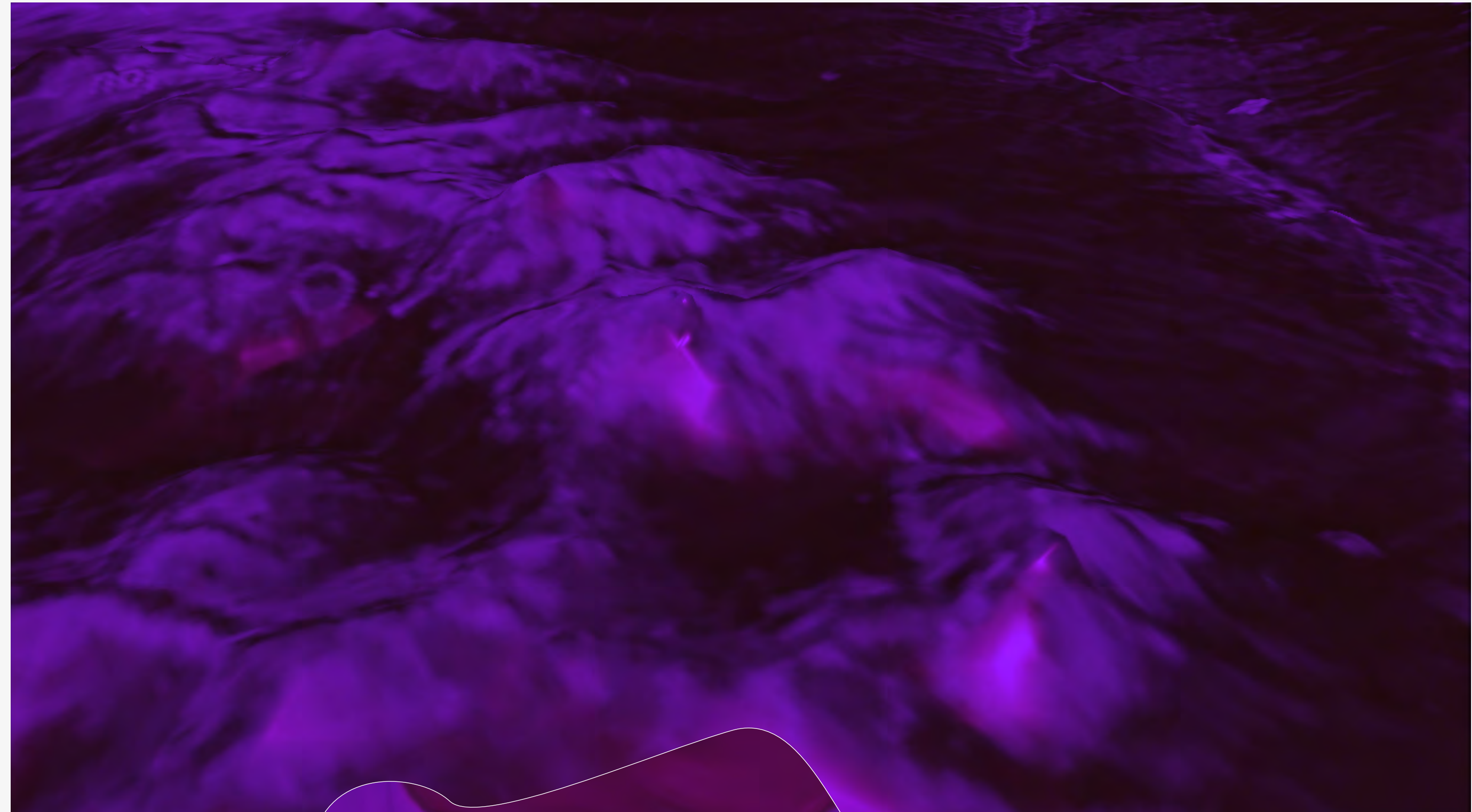
[2] In *Hyphenated score*, the visitors first encounter two relief sculptures, free-standing in space, as well as a rhythmic sound, and another wax sculpture hanging from the ceiling framing a video display. The sculptural forms serve the performer as a visual score guiding dancerly movement. The accompanying spoken text tells of touch: the appropriation of “untouched land,” a touch through the eyes violently scanning “the other.” *Hyphenated score* imagines a way of dealing with and accessing one’s environment based on the principle of a dance score. Rather than attempting to create a uniform, to-scale representation of landscapes, bodies, or movements, this approach is about the act of convergence. Scores create relationality: between bodies, objects, and their exteriority. A score is a means to learn more about the interrelationship between oneself and the world.

Who dreams of the untouched, 2022

Coehoorn Arnhem (NL) &
University of Coblenz (DE)

Lecture Performance, 42'00''

[1] Video stills: *Who dreams of the untouched*, 2022



[2] Lecture Performance with a 3D-animation by Saou Tanaka.



[3] The lecture performance provides insight into the working state of a process and rhizome-like examination of questions of physical and spatial perception, orientation and navigation. The participants are illuminated by an artificial purple light which speaks to them. The overhead video projection is occasionally backed with 3D animations by the artist Saou Tanaka, depicting Euclidean as well as cartographic representations of land(scape) and space, to which the participants' bodies are set in relation. According to Western conceptualization, spatial orientation is always determined from an egocentric perspective. To what extent does this perspective influence one's relationship to their environment, other living beings, and the (seemingly) inanimate? The presentation describes the mapping of untouched land, the top-down view, as an act of power promoting perceptions of "wilderness" and "otherness" that must be tamed or conquered. Reflecting a critical spatial practice, the project explores the limitations of European languages to express situatedness. It inspires imagining new perspectives on, and relationships to, bodies, land(scapes), and space.



[1]



[4] References: Sara Ahmed, Lucie Avraamidou, Kübra Gümüştay, Kathleen M. Kirby, Hito Steyerl, and in particular the essay *On Touching-The Inhuman that therefore I am* (2012) by Karen Barad.

[7] *One of the elementary and essential characteristics of beings as well as objects is their location in space. Spatial perception plays a central role in guiding spatial behavior. Space is an immediate experience. Objects and people are not only locatable in space; they also own an extension in space, they are perceptible and measurable in at least three dimensions. For this description, the orientation as well as navigation, the three-dimensional Euclidean space and the Cartesian coordinate system are fundamental—at least from a European perspective.*

[9] *We have heard of cartographic processes, of spatial measurements, of maps. Technologies of appropriation of land that otherwise might have had remained landscape. The drawing and marking of land. The body, measured and understood, like the land. Not being lost, signifying, understanding. Nicht lost sein, bezeichnen, verstehen. Needing the experience of the self to explore temporal and spatial distances. Die Selbsterfahrung brauchen, um zeitliche und räumliche Distanzen zu erfahren. Only by roaming through space, being able to perceive oneself as a spatial being. Nur durch das Durchstreifen von Raum, sich selbst als räumliches Wesen wahrnehmen können. And yet everything becomes flatter. Und doch wird alles flacher: screens, surfaces, layers.*

[8] *But it is only evident to certain languages, to put a person at the center of exploring and determining space. This egocentric, or idiocentric view produces a specific positioning related to other beings and objects. In western societies children learn to relate everything around them to their very own position within space. They learn to orientate within the outside by putting themselves at the very center of it. [...]*

[10] *What is the -gra-phy, grafika, the „recording“ in the word car-to-gra-phy, as opposed to the -gra-phy of the word cho-reo-gra-phy? The recording of spatial behavior, measurement, movement, score. If once they had written a score instead of measuring and mapping land, how would it go? How would we today, want it to go?“*



Talkies, 2020 a&o Kunsthalle (GER) *Performance, 32'00''*

[2] Performers: Judith Crasser, Insa Deist, Jens Dickemann, Sophia Eisenhut, Saeyan Kang, Gwen Kyrg, Felix Pötzsch, Philipp Zöhrer, additional voices: JP Langer, Sarai Meyron



[3] The performance project *Talkies* gathers thoughts and research on both the physical and political aspects of voice: the sound and presence of language, polyphony, speaking position, difference and representation. It explores the current organization of voices and places for their equal arrangement. Eight performers explored different methods, sounds and movements involving their voices and political bodies over a period of four months. During the performative situation, the performers mingled with the audience. At times, their voices flew through space from different directions; while at other times, there was silence. It was a conversation that addressed the relationship between the individual and the group – a place for the reception of polyphony.

[1] *Talkies*, 2020
Performance, 17'00''

[5] Audio: polyphonies of the voice I, 2020
4-channel-sound-installation, 17'00



[4] Sculpture: polyphonies of the voice II, 2020
4 benches with inscription, steel, wood, 500 x 120 x 80 cm



Consider me a social butterfly, 2019

Kunstverein Leipzig (DE)

Participatory installation

[2] Sculpture: Pausenhof #1-#20, 2019,
plaster, pigment, 33 x 32 x 10 cm each, Ed. 20



[1] Participatory installation, in the context of the exhibition
Please divide in groups of two or three, Kunstverein Leipzig (DE)

[3] Exhibition text: Anna Jehle & Juliane Schickedanz

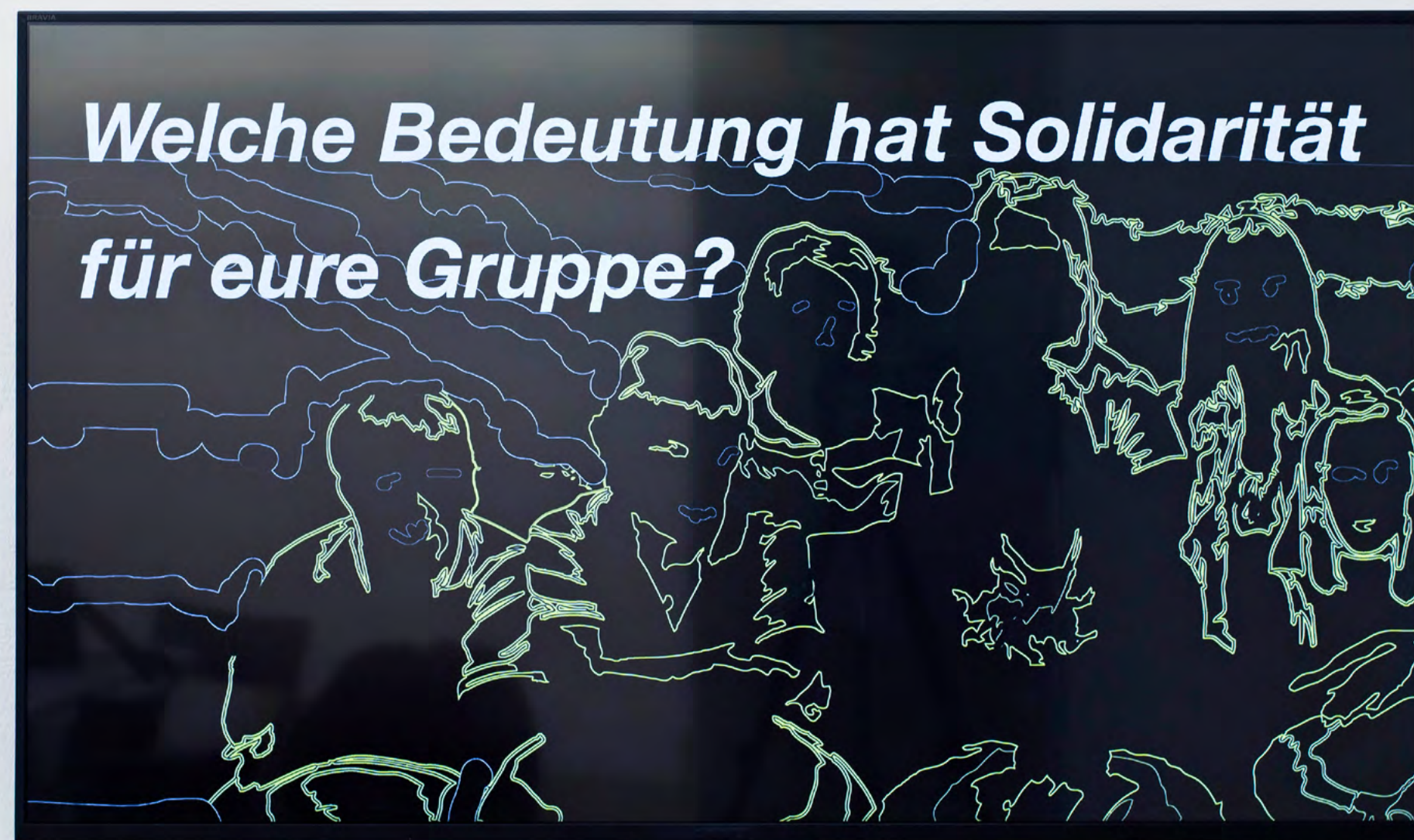
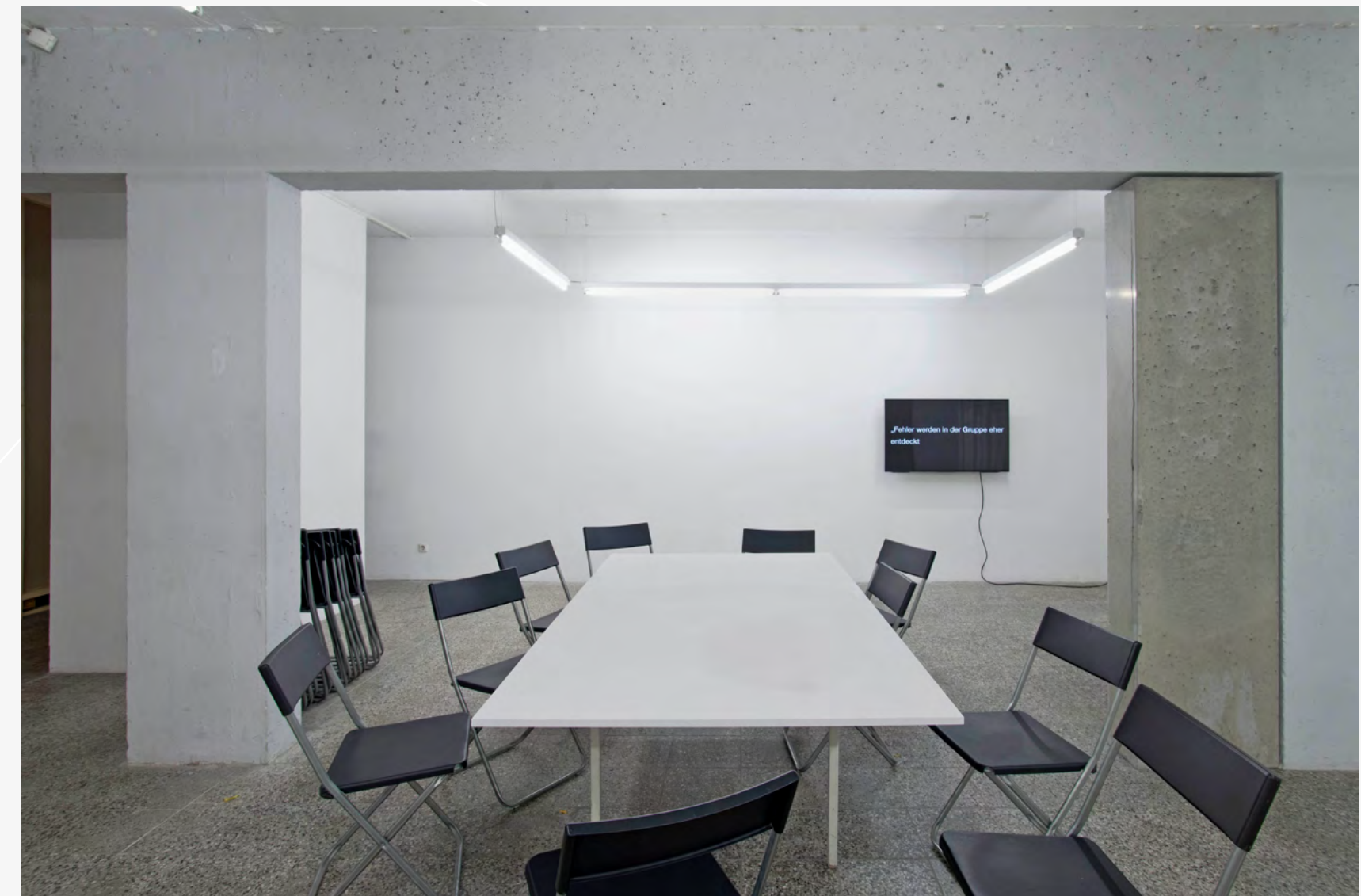
[3] The group exhibition *Please divide in groups of two or three* is a platform for artists and performers that address mechanisms of in- and exclusion in and from communities in their works. Starting from the model of the Kunstverein, the notion of membership is critically examined in different societal, pop-cultural, digital and economic contexts. We are interested in asking which conscious and subconscious rules, codes, languages, symbols and products regulate access to forms of association and commonality. How essential is group affiliation as a condition for social coexistence in society at large? To what extent does the ideal of solidarity-based affiliation simultaneously imply patterns of exclusion?

[2]





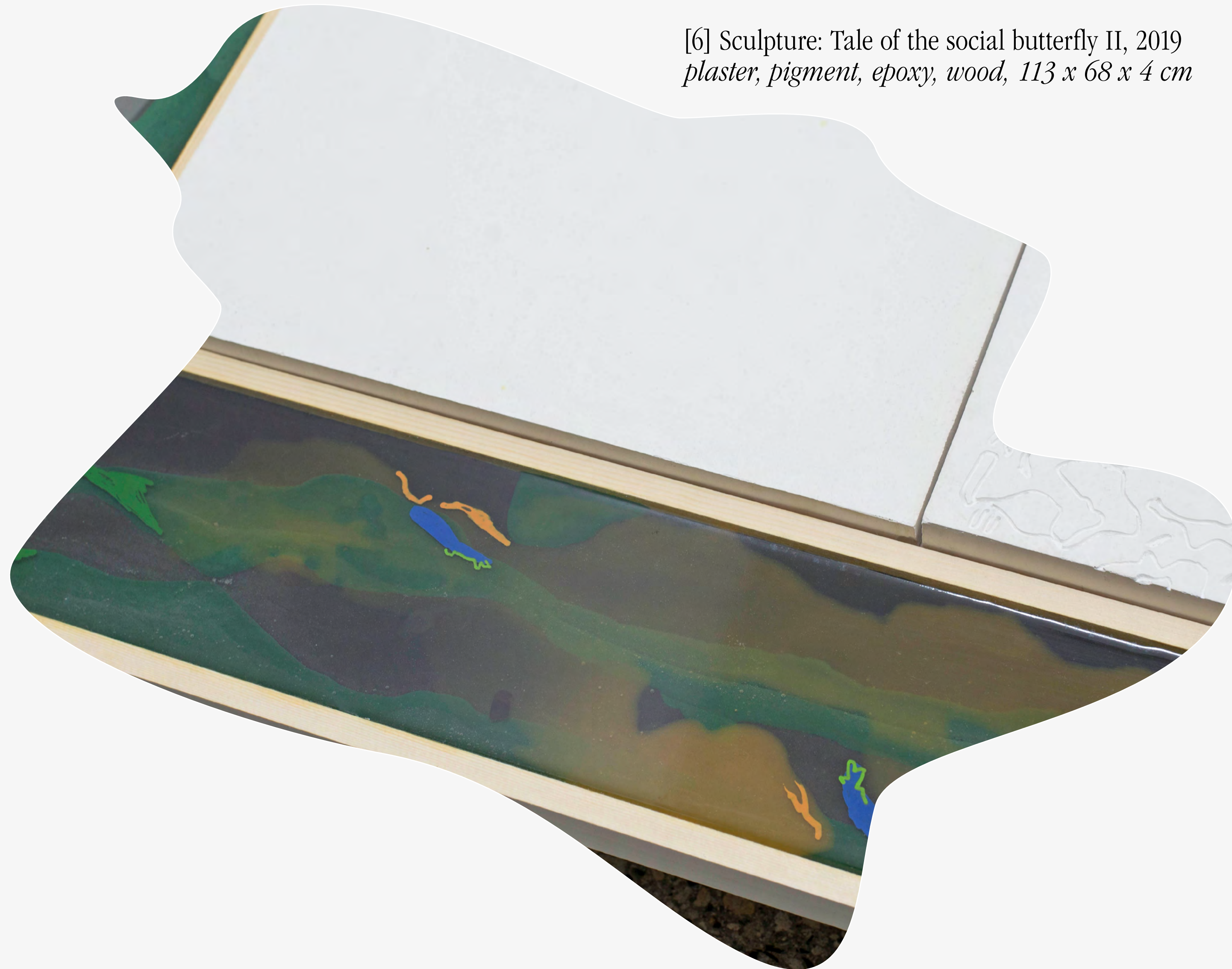
[4] Video: Group Mind, 2019
Animation, animated text and digital drawing, loop, 09'12''



[3] Over the period of the exhibition, the artists Tekla Aslanishvili, Ian Giles, Naomi Ricón Gallardo, Luise Schröder, Lissy Willberg and Frauke Zabel invite to theme-specific events in the form of performances, workshops, installations, screenings, lecture performances and excursions. Curated by Anna Jehle and Juliane Schickedanz.

[5] Exhibition text: Anna Jehle & Juliane Schickedanz

[6] Sculpture: Tale of the social butterfly II, 2019
plaster, pigment, epoxy, wood, 113 x 68 x 4 cm



[5] In their performances Lissy Willberg investigates space and group dynamics by means of participatory offers, which are developed in the form of sculptures and sound for site-specific constellations made available to the visitors. Under the title *Consider me a social butterfly*, the Kunstverein Leipzig was accessible exclusively to groups in the period from November 18-24, 2019 and the installation located there. Interested groups could register in advance as an already existing or temporarily founded community, for a use of the space. The visitors encountered these groups that met in the exhibition space. The figure of the social butterfly becomes the guiding principle of the project, which deals with the exclusivity of groups, their specific admission rituals and the social dynamics within such structures.

[7] Audio: Tale of the social butterfly I, 2019
Digital audio, loop, 08'49''



[8] Photos: Caspar Sanger

Surfaces (are a distinctly human problem), 2019

NYG West (DE)

*Multimedia installation,
09'00" sound loop*



[2] Multimedia installation: Surfaces (are a distinctly human problem), 2019
plaster, pigment, dimensions variable



[3] The installation *Surfaces (are a distinctly human problem)* is based on extensive (material) research that explores gestures of inscription and visual representation processes. In the sense of an archeological practice, the floor installation reveals a moment that has already passed, staged as dancerly movement. The relief forms the score, for the spatial dynamics of this past situation. This narrative is contrasted by the sound of a voice. It performs a monologue that expresses its detached attitude towards tracking technologies. The project explores how body-space relations manifest to be experienced and made accessible for an afterworld.

Kleine Bottle, 2018

Kunstverein Leipzig (DE)
Performance, 33'00''

[3] Sculpture: two-part relief sculpture in aluminium frame, 2018
epoxy, ceramics, pigment, 80 x 42 x 2 cm



[2] Performers: Chiara Kastner and Maria Oblička



[4] The performance *Kleine Bottle* was developed for the opening of the group exhibition *Vessel in Motion* at Kunstverein Leipzig. In topology, Klein's bottle designates an example of a non-orientable surface. With this surface, it is impossible to distinguish between outside (top) and inside (bottom), or beginning and end. If one travels on one side of this object, their journey could be traced back to the starting point, turning travelers upside down. The properties of the Klein Bottle formed the narrative of the performance. The sound piece is a recording of the interior of various, miked clay vessels. The gallery space in itself became a vessel and the windows a place where inside and outside coalesce. This notion coincided with my understanding of human bodies as vessels for herstories, knowledge, and identity.

[1] Performance in the frame of the exhibition *Vessel in Motion*
with Anna McCarthy, Lotte Meret Effinger, Pablo Ehmer, Lindsay Lawson, Peggy Pehl, Teresa Schönherr and Ronny Szillo.

[2]



[3]

