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INVESTIGATIONS
2020
MALTA
ABOUT ORDER

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Group exhibition with Sandra Contreras, Anette Kuhn, Sabine Linse, Mariel Poppe, Héctor Velázquez from Berlin and María Tello (Mexico)
Curated by Verena Voigt M.A. in Spaziju Kreattiv, Valletta, Malta
16th October – 6th December 2020

Funded by the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe, German-Maltese Circle / Goethe Institut, Frank-Basten-Stiftung & Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Konzepte e.V.



ABOUT ORDER, exhibition concept, sketch, 2019
Courtesy of the Artists, Photo: Verena Voigt

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The exhibition ABOUT ORDER by artists Sandra Contreras, Anette Kuhn, Sabine Linse, Mariel Poppe, Héctor Velázquez and María Tello describes and overwrites artistic and cultural-political terms and their dynamics. Since 1991, the Berlin Artist Group has exhibited their artistic work together in various changing constellations. Their collaborations are characterized by common reflections of philosophical topics, artistic materials and different modes of production.

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The exhibition ABOUT ORDER publishes previously unknown relationships and intercultural points of contact between them. Without trying to use predetermined narratives, new inscriptions of contexts were developed. Chapter by chapter, a mysterious Palimpsest with touching source codes has arisen. The title ABOUT ORDER is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's writing "Les mots et les choses" (Paris, 1966). Visitors are therefore not confronted with fixed order patterns. Instead, they are offered the opportunity to read works of art as fragmented intercultural image memories.

The group exhibition ABOUT ORDER, which will be shown at Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta (Malta) from October 16 to December 6, 2020, reflects five order terms "found" in MUŻA (The Malta National Community Art Museum) that relate to the museum collection and cultural memory of the island archipelago in a calculated ensemble of meaning:

"Beauty and Purpose"
"Signs and Tales"
"Religion and Ritual"
"Gate of Europe"
"Mobility, Connections and Directions"

A combinatorial force of history, present and future has developed in the planning dialogue of the past months.

EXKURS

Michel Foucault (1966) | Les mots et les choses | About Order

Foucault (1): No order without language

Michel Foucault mentioned in the preface to "The Order of Things" that some aphasicians (people with limited speech ability) are unable to arrange multicolored balls of wool that are placed on a table. Instead, they create fragmented areas with discontinuous islands that create nameless similarities among things, but no understandable forms of order: "In one corner they place the brightest balls, in another the red ones, elsewhere those that are more woolly, then the longer one, either those who are more violet or who are knotted together." (Paris, 1966)

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Foucault (2): Everything that does not belong to the Emperor is uncoordinated
Anyone who has ever read the “Order of Things” remembers the magical
Borges quote from the “certain Chinese encyclopedia” (Foucault, Borges, 17),
in which Foucault forms 13 “non-groups” and thus overwrites the order
categories of the “same” and “other”.

- a) animals which belonging to the Emperor*
- b) which are embalmed*
- c) tame*
- d) sucking pigs*
- e) sirens*
- f) fabulous*
- g) stray dogs*
- h) including in the present classification*
- i) frenzied*
- k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush*
- l) et cetera*
- m) having just broken the water pitcher*
- n) that from a long way off look like flies*

Foucault lists this as an example of the “exotic magic of another thinking” that touches the limits of our understanding and cannot be thought, that is, cannot be understood.

The Berlin Artist Group

The six artists of the Berlin artist group work in changing constellations and have been in an intensive exchange about their artistic productions since the beginning of 1991. Their collaboration is characterized by meaningful “reflections” of topics, materials and production methods. They know each other’s work in great detail. On the other hand, they work independently of one another and have all developed their own oeuvre. Both, the intersections and the good knowledge among each other, are the basis of a meshing of individual work and overlapping, partly philosophical condensations.

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The creation of a future Palimpsest

In the search for the connecting source codes, visitors to the exhibition can discover different starting points. In the intensive study of the works of art, the works of art become accessible to them as fragments of an intercultural image memory. In connection with the curatorial concept of ABOUT ORDER, one or the other may feel reminded of Aby Warburg's "Mnemosyne Atlas". Warburg's 79 plates to investigate the function of pre-embossed antique expressive values in the representation of eventful life in the art of the European Renaissance should bring light to the ancient source codes. Perhaps it is a kind of cross-cultural research project that connects the Berlin artist group. It is not about the canonization of order terms, but about working out intercultural similarities through the reconstruction of artistically interwoven history. Perhaps it is also about rewriting difficult-to-understand contexts. Perhaps a Palimpsest that can only be read in the future arises from the artistic interaction: a book that was created by being overwritten.

Saint James Cavalier, Spazju Kreattiv

The Spazju Creative in St James Cavalier is one of the most important exhibition institutions in Malta and a competent cooperation partner for contemporary art. Saint James Cavalier is a 16th century fortress built by the Order of St. John at Castille Square in Valletta. It played an important role during the rise of the Order of St. John in 1775. In its history, it has never been involved in a military conflict.

Organization structure

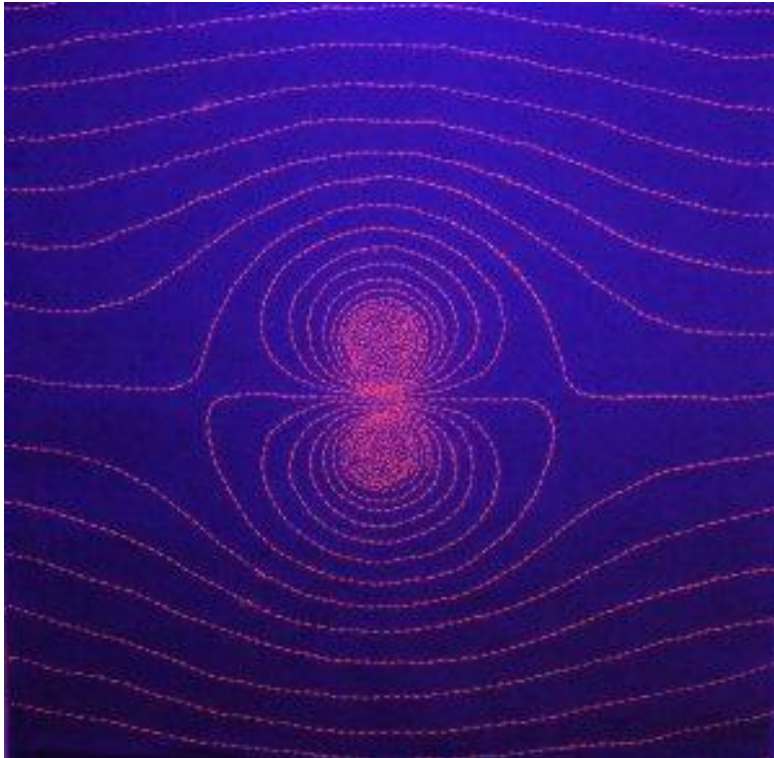
The exhibition ABOUT ORDER and the Outreach Program is curated and organized by the art historian and journalist and Verena Voigt, who lives in Potsdam. She is in charge of the exhibition as head of the Art Association "Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Konzepte e.V. (Society for Contemporary Concepts, GFZK e.V.). GFZK has been devoting itself to different aspects of ecological, political and social climate change in dialogue with art since 2010. The art historian and cultural scientist Verena Voigt M.A. has dealt with the topic of "order" in connection with contemporary visual art for many years.

Grants

The ABOUT ORDER project is funded by the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe. The Outreach Program is supported by the German-Maltese Circle (Valletta) / Goethe Institute. The digitization of the outreach program is funded by the Frank Basten Foundation.

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Sandra Contreras (*1974)



Sandra Contreras, Magnetic Fields in black light, 2018
Cotton, Series of 3 thread drawings on fabric
Copyright Sandra Contreras & VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2020

Sandra Contreras (*1974) was born in Mexico City, she lives and commutes between both Berlin and Mexico City. In her diverse artistic research she deals with cosmological questions about the beginning and end of the universe, its magnetic fields as well as the teachings of Pythagoras, Copernicus and Babylonian astrology. Her embroidered works follow the structures of nature, body and cosmos and create complex textile images: "textures" in which you can read. Narratives emerge that are derived from cultural history and at the same time touch on contemporary issues. Sandra Contreras does not use a sewing machine, she sews "by hand". Such handmade objects have existed in people's homes for thousands of years. As aesthetic objects, they influence everyday life and are involved in religious and ritual acts. Sandra Contreras creates visual signs in questioning cultural logic, the division of body and mind, logic and sensation, matter and energy.

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Textile objects such as books, altars, curtains, (wall) carpets, flags and architectural spaces transform history. Languages, images and texts are reinterpreted and "reused". The interaction of hand, fabric and embroidery creates an impressive counterpoint of the digital. The movement of the embroidered drawings creates sculptural reliefs that are reminiscent of the folds of Renaissance sculptures. However, because no one knows what is going on behind them, they seem to hide a multitude of secrets.

Sandra Contreras studied art history, art and art education in Mexico City and Berlin. She was honored for her work by FONCA-CONACULTA and the Ministry of Family Affairs in Berlin and took part in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Mexico and Germany.

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Anette Kuhn (*1964)



Anette Kuhn, BLAUREGEN, 2015/2016,
Graphit, Oil and pastels on foam rubber
Copyright Anette Kuhn

Anette Kuhn (*1964) works with heterogeneous visual worlds, which in the model reflect her view and experience of the world. Based on photography and drawing, she develops techniques that make pictures feel and locate them in space. The works in the “EXTRAKT” series begin with the compilation of image documents on the computer. Later, these are printed on plastic sheets like advertising banners, cut and recreated using a time-consuming braiding process.

The artist describes her process as follows: *Today, like many other things, we perceive images in the midst of an enormous noise. The plurality of images appears fragmentary and occurs simultaneously. In the search for information, we train ourselves to process large amounts of data more quickly. Anyone who practices digital vision becomes nervous when encountering a single image analogously. Our nervous system suffers and at the same time enjoys the simultaneity of stimuli, our haptics that of wiping smooth surfaces. Meaning does not arise from the individual, the complete, the finished. Pictures are building blocks for the possible. They should stimulate without having to be specific. The more open and fragmented they are, the more suitable they appear for new synaptic connections. - Digital images lose their volatility through braiding, they are therefore information and (material) at the same*

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time. The tactile surface slows down vision, visual fast food becomes tangible. - I want a very lively space between the pictures, a kind of moving mass, a reason from which the pictures emerge, in which they dissolve, in front of which they group, collect and concretize. Concrete image information is equivalent to color pixels without syntax. That creates noise.

Anette Kuhn was born in Würzburg. She graduated in fine arts from the State Art Academy in Stuttgart. She later studied graphics and photography in Mexico City. For more than 30 years she has been living and realizing her artistic work in Mexico as well as in Germany, where she has won numerous prizes and awards, including at the Banff Center in Canada. Her work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions in Mexico and Europe. The most important presentations of her work include her extensive solo exhibition at the CHOPO Museum in Mexico City and participation in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico.

Sabine Linse (*1966)



Sabine Linse, Rites de Passage II: The Cave, 2016
Single Channel Video, 19 min 7 sec, Loop. In cooperation with GFZK e.V.
Copyright Sabine Linse

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Sabine Linse (*1966) is a Berlin artist who deals with the interplay of expectation, perception and imagination. Her productions are permeated with an enigmatic, absurd atmosphere in which the connection between the familiar and the unknown creates an alliance with the comic and the uncanny. Her visual world is determined by a logic that is related to dreams. Causal and chronological relationships alternate with symbolic and associative ones. The unexpected and the strange appear in an almost harmless matter of course. Previous routines of interpretation slip, naive certainties of unbiased habits of perception are lost, new readings have to be created in the consideration.

Sabine Linse works in the fields of photography, video, watercolor, drawing, performance, sculpture and installations. She often draws on the cultural memory of art history (e.g. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Hieronymus Bosch) but also of natural history. In the work "Rites de passage II, The cave", she intervenes in historical cultural landscapes (ice houses). This video has given rise to an artistic reflection on the theme of "transitional rites". Sabine Linse studied visual arts (with Rebecca Horn), philosophy and anthropology in Düsseldorf, Berlin and Barcelona. Much of her work was created in close collaboration with the philosopher Alexander Laudenberg. Sabine Linse has received numerous prizes and grants and has participated in international exhibitions, including in the United States, China, Mexico, France, Spain, Greece, Austria, the Netherlands and Germany.

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Mariel Poppe (* 1968)



Mariel Poppe, Fake Tower (Amt Kloster Lehnin), 2020, brick
Copyright Mariel Poppe & VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2020

Mariel Poppe (* 1968) is a sculptor, who lives and works in Berlin. Starting from the object and the space, she develops her work as series or groups of works and deals with the perception of symmetry and balance. She researches organic forms of growth such as coexisting systems in human, plant and animal organisms. She is particularly interested in the seemingly abnormal and abstruse. Beauty, ambivalence and ambiguity are the defining aspects of her work.

In the "Hybrid" and "Pores" series, light, inflatable latex objects are created that are reminiscent of organs, cells or membranes. The fragile shells are often connected by tubes, they hang down on IV poles, float in the air or lie on the floor.

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The drawings from the “Struggle” (2012-19) series describe body shapes in action in a reduced line. The lines often condense into inextricable knots or knots that cannot be deciphered.

The brick fragments (2011–19) made of brick are equally reminiscent of relics from past civilizations, ziggurats and temples, romantic "Follies" in English gardens or brick expressionism in the cities of the 20th century. In the series "Fake Towers" (2017-29) assemblies of used bricks and model bricks in the scale of 1:10 are shown. In recombining architectural stylistic devices as well as in the allusion to ruins, archaeological finds or remains of civilization, absurd architectural fantasies emerge - disregarding statics, gravity and possible realizations: towers that are crooked, perfectly imperfect, manneristically playful and bizarre surreal.

Mariel Poppe studied fine arts in Mainz, Dijon and London. In 1992 she moved to Berlin and studied at the HDK Berlin and graduated in 1998 as a master student with Lothar Baumgarten. Mariel Poppe received grants for stays, among others in Italy and Morocco and has been in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including represented in France, Denmark, Portugal, Turkey, Mexico and Germany.

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María Tello Gutiérrez (* 1957)



María Tello, Estado de Hidalgo, (Tulancingo), 2018
Embroidery, thread and cotton fabric

María Tello Gutiérrez (* 1957) lives and works in Mexico City and has been exhibiting together with the artists of the Berlin artist group since 1999. In her artistic research, she investigates phenomena of vulnerability and healing. The objects she created - the eye, the stomach, the skull, the skin - look like test objects on which she tests healing methods. Art, magic and ritual come very close. Synapses and synesthesia arise, but also transpositions between mathematics, music and poetry. The artful connection of the fine threads seem to contain old healing powers and secrets that need to be recovered. The house and its objects are also of particular importance. Cloth pegs and irons, linen thread and pans act as components of a poetic visual language. They are figures, materials and tools of a world that is about complications and injuries, the resonance of human relationships that has become a picture. In the visibility of the picture its healing change becomes manifest. Everyday things lose their earthly gravity and release a poetic energy that miraculously renews.

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María Tello Gutiérrez works in the fields of object art and painting. Modern poetry (Brossa, Szymborska) plays a role for her, as does the work of the Spanish philosopher María Zambrano and her concept of poetic reason. She studied philosophy in Mexico and painting and drawing in Barcelona. Her work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Mexico and Europe, most recently in the exhibition "Das Gekaute Objekt" in the gallery at Saalbau in Berlin.

Héctor Velázquez Gutiérrez (* 1965, in Mexico City)

Héctor Velázquez Gutiérrez (* 1965, in Mexico City) lives and works in Berlin. In his artistic work, he examines the relationship between the human body and its surroundings. He explores physical forms and their perceptions and investigates the interactions between sensory organs. For him, art is almost a ritual process of introspection. Velázquez interweaves his complex ideas about the human body with new and used "skin surfaces". His artistic interest is in emotional regeneration, as occurs in the interaction of emotionally connected beings. In his artistic research, he traces the relationships between the human body, topographic maps, ornamental landscape formations, skin surfaces (dermis) and clothing. The use of mainly textile materials such as threads and used clothing, but also materials such as silver, meteorites and obsidians, creates physical structures that invite the viewer to create an emotional relationship.

Héctor Velázquez works as a sculptor. He often refers to the pre-Hispanic worldview, but also to religious iconography. He studied fine arts in Mexico, sculpture in Berlin and art and applied ceramics in Stuttgart, has received numerous grants and awards and has participated in international solo and group exhibitions, including in the United States, Argentina, Mexico, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, South Korea, the UK, France, Spain and Germany. His works are represented internationally in public and private collections.

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Stuttgart, 1992
Digital print Hahnemühle
Fine Art Print. 80 x 35 cm. Edition of 6

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