



KÜNSTLERHAUS BREMEN

SHAME

**Aleksandra Bielas, Sonja Cvitkovic,
Sofia Duchovny, Gernot Wieland**

30 June – 2 September 2018

Under the title SHAME the gallery in Künstlerhaus Bremen presents four artists who, in their praxis, show a link to the subject of shame. Shame is an affect that regulates the adaptation to social norms: the subject feels insufficient if not meeting the internalised expectations of a social group. In its shame, the shamefaced subjects see themselves through the eyes of the other as inadequate or failed. In this manner the feeling of shame points to the border between what is publicly accepted in society and what is banished to the personal or private sphere. What effect does it have when that which the majority regards as shameful is brought into public view in a conscious act? What does it mean when feelings that were formerly shameful become suddenly accepted in society?

Aleksandra Bielas, Sonja Cvitkovic, Sofia Duchovny and Gernot Wieland present new works that question the relation between the individual and society, the public and the private, conformism and deviance. They take up the theme of emotional states and how they affect social and power structures.

Aleksandra Bielas (b. 1980 in Tychy, Poland) works with texts, performances and print mediums. Her new work *The Red Button* (2018) consists of an audio work and a poster. The female voice in a radio play talks of intimate encounters between two people. In the background the sound of a running subway or the ringtone of a cell phone can be heard. The sounds that evoke an urban environment contrast with the fragile voice that is describing intimate events and feelings. The female voice is that of the artist herself. The listener's immediate question is: are these intimate confessions or fictive narrations? The American author and art critic, Chris Kraus, calls female feelings of shame a suppressive mechanism that confines female perspectives. In the tradition of the authors Kathy Acker, Chris Kraus and Maggie Nelson, Bielas' approach can be seen as re-appropriation and feminist formulation, which effaces the taboo of female lust and frees it from the dark side of its shame.

The artist not only works with spoken words when she reads her text aloud, her texts also take on the form of printed matter: posters, publications or

flyers. The text visualized on the poster recalls concrete poetry. The letters that run down the paper like raindrops seem at first like an assembly of words. Not until you depart from the usual reading direction do the single words coalesce into a meaningful message.

In her art praxis, **Sofia Duchovny** (b. 1988 in Moscow) translates painting methods into other mediums such as sculpture and aquarelle. She is interested in the idea of an artwork as a flexible, non-passive object and its transformative potential. She focuses on art processes and the situation of the artist as a flexible worker in a shifting environment. Duchovny's artworks take the form of mobile sculptures, which assume the performative character of spatial interventions. The filigree materiality of supporting limbs and the transparency of tulle, which recalls skin but also lingerie that the artist stretches out along a flat plane, plays on the permeability and the temporality of spaces and bodies.

For the exhibition the artist has produced a series of new small sculptures which are a combination of sculpture and painting. The works, called *Bats*, hang like trophies on the wall. The sculptural form reminds us of a safety shield on which the painting lies where a coat of arms would otherwise be. Instead of a logo, intimate scenes of abandoned beds are shown.

With her spatial installation, *New Needs – Old Meanings* (2018), **Sonja Cvitkovic** (born in Bremerhaven) has created a stage-set in the gallery space. Her sculptures and objects appear to be leftover props from a performance, into the space and the charged relationship of which visitors step when they manoeuvre around the room. Cvitkovic sketches here her inner subjective feelings of alienation and the resulting tension that arises between oneself and the other, the inside and the out. She materializes her thoughts and feelings into contradictory experiences of her own socialization, making the grotesque reality visible with its paradoxical and antithetical symbols and images. Pastel-pink spheres sit on fields of sugar, carpet or plaster that bring the rolling objects to a standstill. Irregularly formed bits of sugar lie scattered around before the spheres or stuck on a pigeon repellent. The sugar comes from Bosnia-Herzegovina and is promoted for its particular form. No piece is identical to another. This sugar was already produced in communist Yugoslavia and continues to be distributed across the new national borders to Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and other Balkan states. The animation deconstructs the fresco of the battle of the giants by Giulio Romano (1499-1546) in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua. The mortal giants have rebelled against the (immortal) gods. The combat of the giants against the gods stands symbolically for a revolt of chaotic and unlawful disorder against righteousness, order and law. In Cvitkovic's

installation, figures step out of the group individually and become fragile beings.

Gernot Wieland (b. 1968 in Horn, Austria) bases his work on narration and recollection. He works mostly with text, video and lecture performances that examine the psychological interrelations of society and the people. The artist links personal and historical narratives to scientific facts, as well as fictional and real elements to tragicomic events, thereby developing humorous, absurd and touching storylines. His new video work *Ink in Milk* (2018), produced specifically for this exhibition, brings together various stories that convey what shame means. It includes narrations and recollections from his childhood in an Austrian village and thoughts on social origin and growing up in institutions. His drawings and photo prints, which are part of the film, evolve their own storyline in the exhibition space and point to narrative shifts in memory and affective states.

Curated by Nadja Quante.

In cooperation with Projektraum im KunstWerk, Cologne.

Kindly supported by:

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ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

Friday, 29 June

8:30 pm *Reading* by Aleksandra Bielas: *Max Frisch*

10 pm *Performance* by Sonja Cvitkovic: *New Needs – Old Meanings*

Tuesday, 10 July

6 pm *Curator's tour* with Nadja Quante

7 pm *Lecture* by Katrin Köppert (UdK, Berlin): "S is for Shame which is a very important queer feeling."* – Queere Politiken der Scham (*Ann Cvetkovich & Karin Michalski: The Alphabet of Feeling Bad)

Sunday, 26 August, 2 pm

Guided tour with Undine van Elsberg

Wednesday, 29 August, 7 pm

Lecture by Sofia Duchovny (in English)

Friday, 31 August, 7 pm

Lecture Performance by Gernot Wieland: *Speaking of Places*