

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

Press release

Alexandra Bircken

Unruhe

September 13 – November 10, 2019

Galerie

Press conference: Thursday, September 12, 2019, 10 a.m.

Opening: Thursday, September 12, 2019, 7 p.m.

Entrance to the exhibition from outside

The human body and the various shells that, as skin and attire, define its relation to the world are key motifs in Alexandra Bircken's work. Many of her sculptural investigations probe the question of the boundary between inside and outside and its relatedness as a permeable membrane, interface, and suture.

For her exhibition *Unruhe [Unrest]*, Bircken has developed numerous new works that interweave themes such as gender, body and machine, power and vulnerability.

Deflated Figures (Pink/Blue) is the most recent in an ongoing series of installations composed of latex suits. Begun in 2014, the series plays with the contradiction between emptied out body shells and the spectral presence of corporeality in the bodies. The colour palette—the figures come in the stereotypical hues of pink and light blue—as well as the variable genitalia, which can be invaginated or made to project, sustain the artist's scrutiny of gender-related clichés. Confronted with the life-sized figures, the viewers and their bodies become active participants in the installation.

This aspect of the beholders sharing the space of the objects and becoming a visible component of the works is also characteristic of the prints on highly polished stainless steel. The depictions of knitted objects literally operate with the viewers' self-reflection. Effecting a displacement of the different bodies, their presence in the mirror reinforces the association of pieces of apparel. At the same time, the knitted objects feel oddly incongruous, dysfunctional, and purposeless. In these works, Bircken plays off the materiality of the object of representation against that of the representation itself. The warm and tactile appeal of fabric clashes with the cold flatness of metal.

Bircken's oeuvre speaks to her abiding interest in fragments and interfaces, on which she reveals not only the structure and materiality of surfaces, but always also the vulnerability of bodies. In some of the

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works on display the artist focuses on the interplay between the cuts and dissections as well as the hinges and joints that reconnect them.. Her alterations endow objects that are rigid and stable in themselves with an agility and flexibility that—read as symptomatic of the contemporary world—suggest the permanent pressure to perform, to stretch, bend, and twist oneself, and the resulting constant state of inner unrest.

Things retaining their autonomy while being transferred into new contexts is the hallmark of Bircken's approach of appropriating artifacts and fabrics. By interweaving a multitude of elements, the artist assigns them unwonted and often disconcerting identities. The encounter between disparate objects defines the conception behind her exhibition as well as the complexion of individual sculptures. For example, Bircken has mounted a Yamaha R6 racing bike on curved wooden rockers instead of the wheels. The powerful machine seesaws back and forth like a rocking horse but goes nowhere, despite its fully functional engine. Bircken harnesses the physical and sensual qualities of her material assemblages as well as their symbolic dimensions to elicit sometimes contrasting chains of associations: the motif of the machine as an instrument of power and vehicle of an ecstatic sense of freedom is interlinked with connotations of childhood, craftsmanship and the organic.

On occasion of her exhibition, Bircken has reproduced her diary calendar from 1986, the year she was eighteen. The calendar is full of dense handwritten entries that obsessively revolve around questions of her identity. Passages that now struck the artist as too private were blacked out in the process. Today's digital trace masks the analogue trace from decades ago. The censorship becomes a graphical addition, a drawing that pulls together the two different periods of time, separated by thirty-three years.

Alexandra Bircken was born in Cologne and lives and works in Berlin and Munich. After training as a fashion designer at Saint Martins College, London, she launched her own fashion label. Beginning in 2004, she adopted visual art as the primary medium of her exploration of the relationship between the body and its shells.

The exhibition program is conceived by the board of the Secession.

Curator: Annette Südbeck

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Artist's book

Alexandra Bircken. 1986

Format: 102x153 mm

Details: Flexible cover, thread binding, 216 pages

Concept: Alexandra Bircken

Secession 2019

Distribution: Revolver Publishing

€ 26,40

“For my artist’s book for the Secession, I reproduced my diary calendar from 1986, the year I was eighteen. The calendar is full of dense handwritten entries that obsessively revolve around questions of my identity. Finding myself was what it was about. Which man? Daniel, Olli, Arnd? My math teacher? No one? Passages that now strike me as too private were blacked out in the process. Today’s digital trace masks the analogue trace from decades ago. The censorship becomes a graphical addition, a drawing that pulls together the two different periods of time, separated by thirty-three years.” (Alexandra Bircken)

Curators' guided tour

Friday, September 20, 2019, 4:30 p.m.

Curators Bettina Spörr, Annette Südbeck and Jeanette Pacher give a tour through the exhibitions by Tillman Kaiser, Alexandra Bircken and Korakrit Arunanondchai.

Press contact

Karin Jaschke

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Press images

Installation views are available for download at www.secession.at/en/presstype/aktuell

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Exhibitions

Hauptraum
Galerie
Grafisches Kabinett

Tillman Kaiser. *Im Dom*
Alexandra Bircken. *Unruhe*
Korakrit Arunanondchai

Exhibition dates

September 13 – November 10, 2019

Edition

Tillman Kaiser, *DAS GLEICHE, NUR ANDERS*, 2019,
Limited edition of 150 pieces (plus 5 AP), € 250,-

Artist's books

Alexandra Bircken. *1986*, 216 pages, € 26,40
Korakrit Arunanondchai, 120 pages, € 26,40

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Permanent Presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

Admission

Adults € 9,50, Pupils, students and senior citizens € 6,-

Curator's guided tour

Friday, September 20, 2019, 4:30 p.m.

Guided tours

Every Saturday at 11 a.m. in English and 2 p.m. in German
€ 3,- per person plus admission (without registration)

Art Information

Every Saturday, 1 – 2 p.m.
(while exhibitions of contemporary art are on view), free of charge

Press contact

Karin Jaschke
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Press images

download at <https://www.secession.at/en/presstype/aktuell>

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Biografie / Biography Alexandra Bircken

Alexandra Bircken, geboren in / born in Köln / Cologne, lebt und arbeitet in / lives and works in Berlin und München / and Munich.

Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) / Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2018 *Mammal*, Studio Voltaire, London
- 2017 *Stretch*, Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine
Stretch, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach
- 2016 *Stretch*, Kunstverein, Hannover
Parallelgesellschaften, K21 Ständehaus, Düsseldorf
- 2014 The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
- 2012 *Hausrat*, Kunstverein, Hamburg
- 2010 *Blondie*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln / Cologne
- 2008 Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal
Units, Docking Station, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) / Group exhibitions (selection)

- 2019 *May You Live In Interesting Times*, 58. Biennale die Venezia, Venedig / Venice
- 2016 *Trolleys*, Glasgow International, Tramway, Glasgow
The Distance Of A Day: Connections And Disconnections In Contemporary Art, Israel Museum, Jerusalem
- 2015 *Rates Of Exchange*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb
Mapping Bucharest, MAK, Wien / Vienna
- 2014 *Blicke! Körper! Sensationen! Das Dresdner Wachskabinett und die Kunst*, Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden
Fiber In Form, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
humainnonhumain, Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris
- 2013 *5 Jahre Sammlung Stadtparkasse*, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf
Nur hier – Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, purchases from 2007–2011, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn
- 2012 *Made In Germany Zwei*, Sprengel Museum Hannover, Hannover
A Disagreeable Object, Sculpture Center, New York
- 2011 *Skulpturales Handeln*, Haus der Kunst, München / Munich
Suspense. Suspended Sculptures, EX3 Centre for Contemporary Art, Florenz / Florence
- 2010 *Neues Rheinland. Eine postironische Generation*, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen
Undone, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds
SPOT ON 05, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf
- 2008 *Borders*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
- 2007 *Unmonumental*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York

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Werkliste / List of works Alexandra Bircken

Erster Raum / First room

Enfilé, 2019

Motorradketten, Anzug / Motorcycle chains, suit
Maße variable / dimensions variable

Rückgrat, 2019

Beton, Metall, Baum, Wachs, Epoxidharz / Concrete, metal, tree, wax, epoxy
76 x 18 x 57 cm

Technostrick, 2016

Video, 3 min

Raum rechts / To your right

Elan, 2019

Ski, Schaniere, Schrauben / Skis, hinges, screws
74 x 120 x 38 cm

Sigmund, 2019

Plastikstuhl, Deflated Figure (Blau) / plastic chair, Deflated Figure (Blue)
126 x 64 x 70 cm

Deine Beine, 2019

Holz, Metallgelenk, Leder, Nägel, Schaufensterpuppenbein, Acryl, Handtuch, Epoxidharz, Eichel /
Wood, metal joint, leather, nails, leg of a mannequin, Acryl, towel, epoxy, acorn
62 x 58 x 55 cm

Crown, 2017

Wolle, Epoxidharz / Wool, epoxy resin
24 x 34 x 26 cm

Leihgabe / loan: Collection Sebastien Peyret

Lop Lop, 2019

Motorrad, Holz, Stahl / Motorcycle, wood, steel
105 x 220 x 73 cm

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Multiple, 2017

Holz, Leim, Spiegel, ausgestopfter Fuchs, Deflated Figure (Rosa) /
Wood, glue, mirror, stuffed fox, Deflated Figure (Pink)
200 x 90 x 58 cm

Alle Arbeiten / All works: Courtesy Alexandra Bircken, BQ Berlin und / and Herald St, London

Raum links / To your left*Freude, 2019*

Deflated Figures (Rosa / Blau), Plastikstühle, Wolle, Spiegelgestell /
Deflated Figures (Pink / Blue), plastic chairs, wool, mirror
Maße variabel / dimensions variable

Phantomschmerz, 2019

Stamm, Latte, Stoff / Trunk, wooden slat, fabric
71 x 54 x 24 cm

Pferdchen, 2019

Holz, Leder, Sägespäne, Schrauben, Schanier, Lack /
Wood, leather, sawdust, screws, hinge, varnish
67 x 54 x 51 cm

T(raum) 1, 2019

UV Druck auf spiegelpoliertem Edelstahl, Aludibond /
UV print on mirror polished stainless steel, Aludibond
250 x 125 x 1,5 cm

T(raum) 2, 2019

UV Druck auf spiegelpoliertem Edelstahl, Aludibond /
UV print on mirror polished stainless steel, Aludibond
250 x 125 x 1,5 cm

T(raum) 3, 2019

UV Druck auf spiegelpoliertem Edelstahl, Aludibond /
UV print on mirror polished stainless steel, Aludibond
250 x 125 x 1,5 cm

Alle Arbeiten / All works: Courtesy Alexandra Bircken, BQ Berlin und / and Herald St, London