

YAËL KEMPF

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BIOGRAPHY

Yaël Kempf (b. 1993, Geneva, Switzerland) is an artist and filmmaker based in Marseille, France.

She studied at ENSAV La Cambre in Brussels and graduated from the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 2020, where she studied with Gregor Schneider. Her work has been presented at Museum Ludwig, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Kunsthaus Essen, Villa du Parc and Neuer Aachener Kunstverein (NAK).

Kempf has received support from Kunststiftung NRW, Deutsche Bank and ifa Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen. She was a fellow of Residence NRW+ (2024–25) and the Bronner Residency in Tel Aviv (2022).

She is currently developing *If I Were a Dove*, her first feature-length film and an accompanying installation, in collaboration with Kasbah Films in Tangier.

Her work is held in the Philara Collection, Galila's Collection and the Sigg Art Foundation.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Yaël Kempf works across film, installation, sculpture and performance, moving between gallery, cinema and public space. Her work often begins with situations that already have their own rules: a border, an exhibition, a building, a game, a material or a living system. Rather than approaching these situations from the outside, she enters them, allowing encounters and unforeseen events to shift their existing logic.

Horses play football to the roar of a stadium crowd. A bank vault opens and closes on a street musician playing gypsy jazz. A museum becomes a lighthouse. Visitors are paid to enter an exhibition. Through these displacements, familiar systems begin to behave differently.

Her works bring together places, technologies, found materials, animals and human bodies. Documentary observation and fiction remain deliberately porous, allowing what is already there to slip into something that could have happened, might happen, or actually takes place.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2027 If I Were a Dove, multi-part project presented at Cinéma Rif and Centre Culturel des Associations des Étoiles du Détroit, Tangier, Morocco (upcoming)
- 2024 Annunciation, curated by Katharina Bruns, Kunsthaus Essen, Essen, Germany
- 2022 Républicain social, with Clemens Botho Goldbach, invited by Raimund Stecker, Campus Halle, Wuppertal, Germany
- Play It For What, curated by Katharina Bruns, MUR BRUT 23, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany
- Viser la lune, BPA Space, Cologne, Germany
- 2021 We Don’t Have Forever, BPA Space, Cologne, Germany
- 2020 Listen With Your Heart, organized by Gerolf Schülke, Kultur Bahnhof Eller, Düsseldorf, Germany
- Why Surfers Should Be Fed?, Graduation Show, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2019 Thanx 4 Coming, curated by Angela Theisen and Alexander Pütz, Moltkerei Werkstatt, Cologne, Germany
- Wandering, curated with Moritz Riesenbeck, AStA Ausstellungsraum, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2017 712,2 Disparus, curated by Louis Castel, Nijinski, Brussels, Belgium
- 2015 Are You Really Asking?, curated by Julie Kern Donck, Stocq 72, Brussels, Belgium

Group Exhibitions

- 2026–2027 3RD-SPC./RP no. 6, Još ne. – In Absence of a Map, curated by Lars Breuer, Till Bödeker, Lina Franko and Andi Slawinski, Kunsthau NRW Kornelimünster, Aachen, Germany
- 2026 3RD-SPC./RP no. 6, Još ne. – In Absence of a Map, curated by Lars Breuer, Till Bödeker, Lina Franko and Andi Slawinski, RIZOM [K] Art Association, Frankopan Castle, Kraljevica, Croatia
- 2025–2026 Melting Sands – Glass in Contemporary Art, curated by Julika Bosch, Philara Collection, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2025 Layers in Complexity, curated by Lara Bader and Marlene Kurz, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein (NAK), Aachen, Germany
- NAK Benefiz Auktion 2025, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein (NAK), Aachen, Germany
- 2024 Homo Bulla, CANDAs, Düsseldorf, Germany
- Voies d’évasion, curated by Garance Chabert, Villa du Parc, Annemasse, France
- Säulen, Rinde am Rhein, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2023 1–06, curated by rundgang.io, 106, Berlin, Germany
- The Dreams Are Still the Same, initiated and curated by Mara Sporn, Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf, Germany
- When Metabolisms Become Form, with Hicham Berrada, Anna Dumitriu, Fischli / Weiss and Thomas Feuerstein, curated by Janine Blöß, Anna Pomyalova and Carl Friedrich Schröer, Weltkunstzimmer, Düsseldorf, Germany
- The Invention of Nature, curated by Markus Kersting, MG16, Cologne, Germany
- 2022 Prêt-à-montrer, curated by Ihsan Alisan, presented by Mouches Volantes, Bienvenue Art Fair, Hôtel La Louisiane, Paris, France
- 2021 Unpin the Butterfly, curated by Mara Sporn, Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf, Germany
- Coming to Voice, curated by Florentine Muhry and Cécile Huber, K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2020 What Are We Living For?, curated by Mara Sporn, Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf, Germany
- Max Ernst-Stipendium, Galerie am Schloss, Brühl, Germany
- 2019 NRW.BANK Kunstpreis 2019 – Junge Kunst im Wettbewerb, NRW.BANK, Düsseldorf,

- Germany
- 20190615/20190601, SANSHANG Contemporary Art Museum, Hangzhou, China
- Rundgang, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Class of Prof. Gregor Schneider, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2018 Reborn, Mindenerstraße 33a, Düsseldorf, Germany
- La Totale, curated by Leo Orta and Iseult Perrault, Studio Orta, Les Moulins, France
- Vanity, curated with Albane Lamoril, Shakirail, Paris, France
- Rundgang, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Class of Prof. Gregor Schneider, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2017 To Play, curated by Collectif Pathfinders, Sagacity, Brussels, Belgium
- 36 nuances de vert, curated by Olivier Drouot, La Cambre, Brussels, Belgium

Performances

- 2025 Living Scores, KAI 10 | Arthena Foundation, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2024 We Author, invited by Moltkerei Werkstatt, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
- 2023 You’re Not Alone, happening, Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2022 Why Surfers Should Be Fed? Chapter III: Viser la lune, BPA Space, Cologne, Germany
- Play It For What, MUR BRUT 23, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2021 Why Surfers Should Be Fed? Chapter II: . . --- . / -. -. -. / .-... -.... --- -- -- ., presented in Coming to Voice, K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2020 Why Surfers Should Be Fed? Chapter I: Open it, Graduation Show, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany
- γνώθι σεαυτόν, presented in What Are We Living For?, Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2019 Thanx 4 Coming, Moltkerei Werkstatt, Cologne, Germany
- 2016 Love is the Law, Graduation Show, ENSAV La Cambre, Brussels, Belgium

Film & video screenings

- 2026 The Desert Surfer (2022, short film, 11 min 44 sec), 3RD-SPC./RP no. 6, Još ne. – In Absence of a Map, Kunsthau NRW Kornelimünster, Aachen, Germany
- The Desert Surfer (2022, short film, 11 min 44 sec), 3RD-SPC./RP no. 6, Još ne. – In Absence of a Map, Frankopan Castle, Kraljevica, Croatia
- 2025 Problem of God (2025, short film), Layers in Complexity, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein (NAK), Aachen, Germany
- Samsa, ENTRE DEUX: JUST MOVE, Istanbul, Turkey
- Samsa, ENTRE DEUX: JUST MOVE, İzmir, Turkey
- 2024 The Desert Surfer (2022, short film, 11 min 44 sec), Annunciation, Kunsthau Essen, Essen, Germany
- 2022 The Desert Surfer (2022, short film, 11 min 44 sec), Tel Aviv Artists’ Studios, Tel Aviv
- Play It For What (2022, short film), MUR BRUT 23, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany

Talks & conversations

- 2026 Une heure avec...: Football, art object?, conversation with Amin Motallebzadeh, FIDMarseille, Marseille, France — Franco-German dialogue series initiated by Litterallea, supported by the Fonds Citoyen Franco-Allemand
- 2024 Rencontre professionnelle des acteurs de l’art contemporain en Haute-Savoie, professional

meeting / roundtable, in partnership with Villa du Parc and MJC, Annemasse, France
2021 Perception of Fragility. The Synthesis of Man and Nature, conversation with Christoph Stark, SWAPS / UNTITLED, K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany (online)
2020 Artist Conversation, on the occasion of Listen With Your Heart, Kultur Bahnhof Eller, Düsseldorf, Germany
2019 Art & Value, conversation with Gil Bronner, David Evrard and Markus Kersting, moderated by Raphael Nocken, Moltkerei Werkstatt, Cologne, Germany

Collections

Philara Collection, Düsseldorf, Germany
Galila’s Collection, Brussels, Belgium
Sigg Art Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland

Publications

2027 Bérénice Béguerie, Valentin Brochet-Fernandez and Yaël Kempf, Mycocosmes, publication developed through two research residencies at Les Grandes Fenêtres, Excideuil, France; editorial design by Bérénice Béguerie; graphic design by Phenicusa Press (upcoming)
2025 NRW – State of the Art. Jahresrückblick 2025, Kunststiftung NRW, Düsseldorf, Germany
Heinz-Norbert Jocks, “Mara Sporn: Empty Spaces und das Ausscheren aus den Institutionen,” KUNSTFORUM International, Bd. 302, Surreale Malerei, April/May 2025, pp. 290
2022 Mur Brut, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany
2021 AbsolventInnen 2020, exhibition catalogue, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf / K21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany
2020 Mara Stock, “Yaël Kempf: Listen With Your Heart,” exhibition publication, Kultur Bahnhof Eller, Düsseldorf, Germany — photographs by Petra Suzuki
2019 NRW.BANK Kunstpreis 2019 – Junge Kunst im Wettbewerb, exhibition publication, NRW.BANK, Düsseldorf, Germany

Press & online features

2025 Annunciation, Artificiata, Kunsthau Essen
Homo Bulla, SALIVA, CAND A, Düsseldorf
2024 Annunciation, Tired Mass, Kunsthau Essen
Stella Baßenhoff, “Verkündigung im Schneckentempo, Yaël Kempf im Kunsthau Essen,” Gallerytalk
“Yaël Kempf at Kunsthau Essen,” Art Viewer
Annunciation, yyyymmdd.art
“Voies d’évasion at Villa du Parc – Centre d’art contemporain, Annemasse,” Art Viewer
Homo Bulla, Tired Mass, CAND A, Düsseldorf
Homo Bulla, Low Ground Pressure, CAND A, Düsseldorf
2022 Prêt-à-montrer, KubaParis
“Bienvenue Art Fair 2022,” Art Viewer
2021 We Don’t Have Forever, yyyymmdd.art
2020 Listen With Your Heart, Niederrheinkunst
2019 2019 Performance Thanx 4 Coming, APATHCP
Interview, Art Bureau of Investigation (当代艺术调查局), TrueArt.com

Grants & awards

2026 Artist Contacts Grant, ifa, Germany — supporting If I Were a Dove, Tangier, Morocco
2025 AUFTAKT, Kunststiftung NRW, Germany — supporting the development of If I Were a Dove
2024–2025 Residence NRW+ Fellowship, Kunststiftung NRW, Münster, Germany
2024 Research Stipend, Visuelle Kunst – Junge Szene, Kunststiftung NRW, Germany — for La Faim du tigre
2023–2024 Deutsche Bank Atelier-Stipendium (Art & Culture), Germany
2022 AUFTAKT, Kunststiftung NRW, Germany — supporting Républiqueain social
Bronner Residency Fellowship, Kunststiftung NRW, Dan and Cary Bronner-Stiftung, Goethe-Institut Tel Aviv and Artists’ Studios Tel Aviv
Stipendienprogramm des Ministeriums für Kultur und Wissenschaft, Germany
Absolvent:innen NEUSTART KULTUR, Stiftung Kunstfonds, Germany
2021 so geht’s 2021 MKW-Stipendium, Ministry of Culture and Science NRW, Germany
2020 Begrenzt–entgrenzt: Zeit für eine Zeitenwende?, Kunststiftung NRW, Germany
NRW-Soforthilfe, Germany

Residencies

2025 Mycocosmes, research residency with Bérénice Béguerie and Valentin Brochet-Fernandez, Les Grandes Fenêtres, Excideuil, France — research on fungal worlds
2024–2025 Residence NRW+, Münster, Germany — in partnership with museums and art centers
2023 Young Art Residency, Weidingen / SüdEifel, Germany — rural research residency
2022 Bronner Residency, Kunststiftung NRW, Dan and Cary Bronner-Stiftung, Goethe-Institut Tel Aviv and Artists’ Studios Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv
2020 Sommeratelier, Kultur Bahnhof Eller, Düsseldorf, Germany
2019 Iteration, curated by Collectif Galta, Creuse, France — site-specific practices
2018 La Totale, curated by Leo Orta and Iseult Perrault, Studio Orta, Les Moulins, France
2017 Tour-istes, curated by Collectif Galta, Creuse, France
2015 Hydra Residency, Manoir Tompazi, Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) / ENSAV La Cambre, Hydra, Greece

Curatorial projects

2019 Wandering, co-curated with Moritz Riesenbeck, AStA Ausstellungsraum, Düsseldorf, Germany
2018 Reborn, Mindenerstraße 33a, Düsseldorf, Germany
Vanity, co-curated with Albane Lamoril, Shakirail, Paris, France

Education

2016–2020 Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany — Meisterbrief (excellence diploma) and Akademiebrief, Class of Prof. Gregor Schneider
2013–2016 ENSAV La Cambre, Brussels, Belgium — Bachelor of Art, with distinction
2012–2013 University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland — Art History & Philosophy

Problem of God

Video and installation, 2025



Problem of God is a fiction film developed with teenagers in the post-industrial Ruhr region, in Essen. Shot without a script, the film unfolds through collective improvisations across landscapes shaped by pipelines, ruins, and open spaces left behind by industry. Running across giant pipes, turning football into a video game echoing early 2000s gaming aesthetics, or filling the dusk with smoke, everyday gestures become fragments of fiction. Rather than documenting decline, the work reclaims ruins, monuments, and pipelines as stages for play, myth, and invention.

Oscillating between friendship and rage, desire and violence, *Problem of God* offers a fragile and defiant portrait of youth. Situated between music video, dream, and revolt, the film traces how imagination emerges where there is “nothing to do,” within spaces marked by absence.

Developed through a year-long collaboration with educators and local actors, the film invites young participants to shape scenes, gestures, costumes, and performances as co-authors.

Video link: <https://vimeo.com/1118900423>
password: problem





Radio Rheinland International is a fictional radio station inspired by the aesthetics of Grand Theft Auto V and early 2000s video games. Mixing absurd weather reports, fake commercials, improvised interviews and experimental sound design, the project reimagines the atmosphere of American FM radio in the context of the German Ruhr region (NRW).

Radio Rheinland International, 2025
3 Silex (layered and sanded billboard material), stone, Iphone
Audio: Pilot Episode #1 – Radio Rheinland International, 12min 23
NAK Neuer Aachener Kunstverein.
[Link to the radio](#)



Still from *Problem of God*



Bench with Mushroom Cultures, 2025
Layered billboard posters, organic mushroom
cultures, industrial paper rolls,
NAK Neuer Aachener Kunstverein.





Lucis Pulsatio

Performance installation, 2024



[*Watch an excerpt from the performance*](#)

A performer, Patricia Meier-Veit, sits against the wall with a stethoscope on her chest. Her heartbeat is amplified into the exhibition space and transmitted in real time to a bed made entirely of algae, where light pulses at the rhythm of her heart.

An intimate biological signal leaves the body and becomes sound, light and living matter. The algae exist somewhere between aquatic and terrestrial worlds, while the technological system creates a temporary connection between two forms of life.

The work does not attempt to dissolve the boundaries between human, machine and nature. Instead, it holds them together in a fragile state of dependence: as long as the heart beats, the installation remains animated by its rhythm.

Lucis Pulsatio continues a research initiated with *Gnothi Seauton* (2020) and developed through *We Author* (2024), in which the heartbeat gradually moves from self-listening toward collective participation and other forms of life.



Lucis Pulsatio, 2024

Performer, stethoscope, beds and cushions made of algae, light
Canda Space, Düsseldorf



La Nausée, 2020
Bed, furniture and cushions made from algae, light
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf



La Nausée, 2020
Bed, furniture and cushions made from algae, light
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf



La Nausée, 2020
Bed, furniture and cushions made from algae, light
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf



Fair Trade Wall



Fair Trade Wall was developed during my studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf as part of the installation *La Nausée*. Constructed from recycled plexiglass production remnants, pallet wood and transport crates sourced in Düsseldorf, the work combines industrial waste with biodegradable algae-based materials.

The project asks what kinds of traces a society chooses to leave behind. While architecture and infrastructure are often built for permanence, the algae elements propose another temporal horizon: a material that can grow, transform and disappear. Between relics of industrial production and speculative forms of biological construction, the work proposes a material logic organised not around endurance, but around transformation.



Fair Trade Wall, 2025
RPolyester, Plexiglas, wood, metal, 190 × 275 cm
Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf

Annunciation

Mixed-media installation, 2024



In her solo exhibition *Annunciation*, Yaël Kempf transforms the 150 square meters of Kunsthau Essen into a landscape shaped by spirituality, transformation, and the porous boundaries between human and non-human worlds. The project draws on Francesco del Cossa's Renaissance *Annunciation*, particularly its careful staging of space and the small snail placed at the painting's edge, a symbol of grounded time and quiet metamorphosis.

This motif resonates with the chapter "La coquille" in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, where the shell is described as an intimate dwelling and a mobile architecture of the self. Kempf activates this idea through the snail's presence in the exhibition: a guide whose slow trajectory invites viewers to inhabit space inwardly, to shift from observation to contemplation.

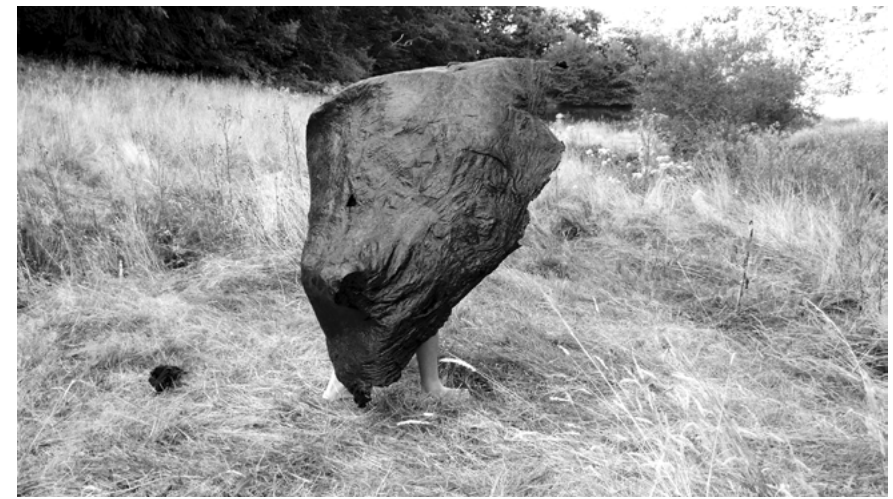
By bridging Renaissance symbolism and bachelardian topoanalysis, *Annunciation* becomes a site where myth, ecology and attentive perception meet. The exhibition unfolds as a space-shell of its own, inviting visitors into a quieter rhythm and a renewed awareness of the fragile architectures that sustain life.

Wadjet Lamia, 2024
Mushrooms, Algae, Snails, Bed,
[Link to Artviewer](#), Kunsthau Essen.





Annunciation



Samsa, 2024
Installation with algae and video screen (6 min 36),
[Video link](#), Kunsthaus Essen



The Desert Surfer, detail, (2024, installation)

A solitary figure moves across the arid expanses of the Dead Sea, bouncing a football. The gesture is simple. Repeated over and over, it becomes a way of inhabiting a landscape that appears untouched, yet has been shaped over millennia by water, trade, migration, belief, conquest, and conflict.

Without dialogue or music, the film is carried by the sound of the bouncing ball, footsteps in the sand, passing birds, and the silence of the desert. The landscape carries history. The ball keeps bouncing.



The Desert Surfer
2024 · HD video · 11 min 44 s

[Watch film](#)



Cernunnos & The Dharma's Burns enters a space of metamorphosis. Behind silver engraved panels emerges Cernunnos, a mushroom formed figure inspired by the Celtic deity of nature and fertility. This hidden presence shapes a sculptural environment infused with forest imaginaries and subtle spiritual currents, where organic matter carries traces of memory and renewal.

Les Clochards Célestes, 2024
Plastic, mushrooms
Kunsthau Essen and Villa du Parc



Cernunnos, 2024
Mushrooms, necklace, dried flower, plastic, plastic bottle
Kunsthau Essen

Annunciation



My Deer, 2024
Wallpaper, mushrooms, inflatable buoy,
Kunsthau Essen



Still from *My deer*

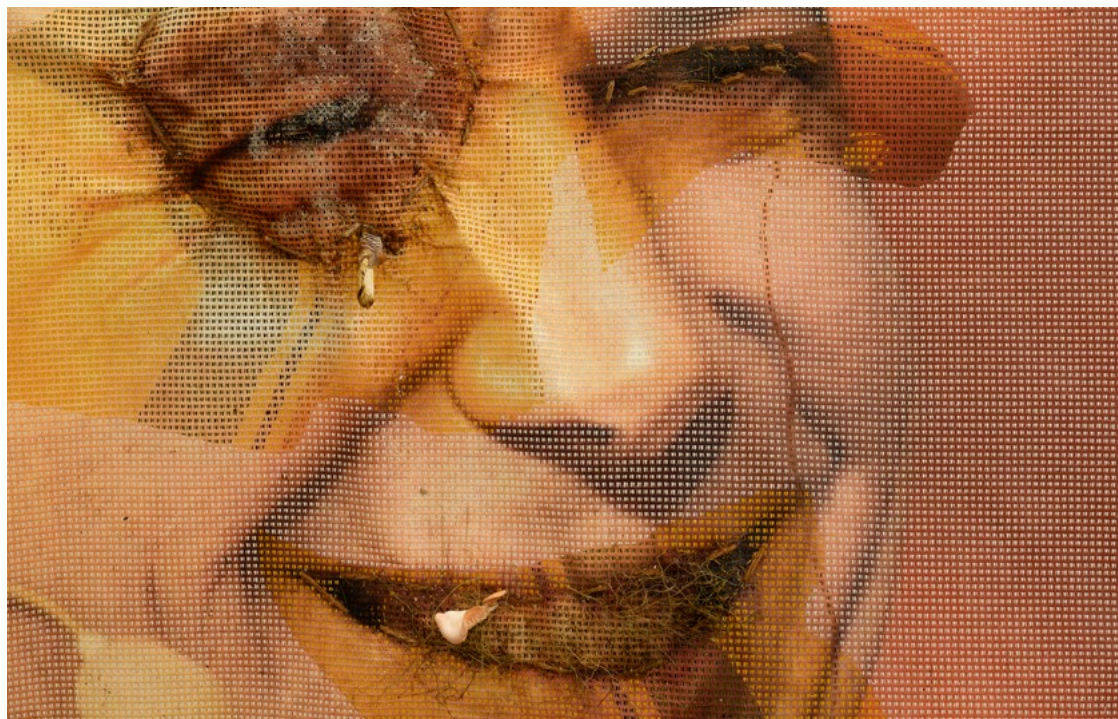


Les Clochards Célestes (detail), 2024
Plastic, mushrooms

My Deer, 2024
Photo prints, video loop (10 min) links
[View an extract](#), Kunsthau Essen

Jeff

Mixed-media installation, 2024



Jeff (2024) unfolds in two parts. The first is a balloon dog from the Sjef Balloon Collection by Fatboy, transformed into a snowman and stuffed with mycelium, an inflatable monument to consumer culture slowly infected from within. The second is a large-format portrait of Jeff Koons, onto which mushrooms and plants have been allowed to grow, including between his teeth, accompanied by a letter addressed to him explaining what happened to his dog.

The work is at once an affectionate provocation and an ecological proposition. Koons built an empire on objects that resist time, shine, and never decay. Kempf introduces exactly what his work excludes: living matter, fungal growth, warmth, decomposition. The letter operates on two registers simultaneously, a complaint about intellectual property and a sexual innuendo that implicates Koons himself in what he supposedly condemns. «Sorry Jeff, your dog's got an STD.»

Jeff, 2024

Print on tarpaulin, mushrooms
Villa du Parc, Annemasse





Poor Thing, 2023
Balloon dog, Sjeff Balloon Collection by Fatboy, mycelium
Variable dimensions
rundgang.io / 1-06, Berlin



Poor Thing (detail), 2023
Balloon dog, Sjef Balloon Collection by Fatboy, mycelium
Variable dimensions
rundgang.io / 1-06, Berlin

Big Brother

Site-specific interactive installation, 2023



Big Brother is a site-specific installation in the former prison chapel Ulmer Höhe in Düsseldorf, a space historically shaped by confinement and religious authority.

Embedded within a charred chapel wall, a hidden camera records visitors as they move through the space. Their images are transmitted to a mini-printer concealed inside a Bible, from which they emerge as printed photographs.

A bronze angel reclaimed from a cemetery stands within this system of recording. Traditionally associated with protection and divine presence, the figure is placed in relation to the hidden camera, shifting between the roles of guardian and observer. The angel and the surveillance apparatus bring together two forms of omnipresence: the sacred and the technological.

Elsewhere, words such as *aware* and *knowbot*, along with numbers, are inscribed into the walls. Together with the camera, the Bible, and the angel, these elements bring technological language and religious iconography into the architecture of the former chapel.



Big Brother, 2023
Reclaimed cemetery bronze, plaster, paint, carbon, camera,
mini-printer
Former prison chapel Ulmer Höhe, Düsseldorf



[Watch the installation in action](#)

Missile

Mixed-media installation, 2023



Missile imagines a landscape in which three quarters of life on Earth have disappeared. A giant inflatable gorilla and its child remain among a group of animal shaped inflatables inhabited by mycelium.

Throughout the exhibition, the mycelium develops inside their bodies. Some of the transparent surfaces reveal its transformation from within, while mushrooms gradually grow through small openings in the inflatable animals, spreading across their faces and bodies. Artificial animal forms become hosts for living organisms, continuously changing the appearance of the installation.

At the center of the space, the giant gorilla continuously sprays water over its surroundings. Water, fungal growth, and the gradual transformation of the animal figures introduce cycles of growth and decay into an environment composed largely of artificial materials.

Missile 2023

Inflatable animals, giant gorilla sprinkler, mycelium, wood, metal
When Metabolisms Become Form, Weltkunstzimmer, Düsseldorf





Missile 2023
Inflatable animals, giant gorilla sprinkler, mycelium, wood, metal
When Metabolisms Become Form, Weltkunstzimmer, Düsseldorf

Play It For What

Video installation and happening, 2022



Play It For What was first presented in the parking lot of Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, temporarily closed to cars and transformed into a site of play. A 10-minute loop shows horses playing football, synchronized with the soundtrack of a FIFA match. Projectors, speakers, and beer taps evoke the charged atmosphere of World Cup gatherings, where celebration meets spectacle.

Filmed in the French Ardennes, a landscape tied to family and childhood, the work links rural imagination to a globally codified sport. Humor functions as a disruptive lens: animals replace athletes, spectators blur into absurdity, and everyday rituals of play become uncanny.

During the screening, three dogs wearing fan jerseys printed with a horse team logo sit in front of the screen, as if watching the game. This playful gesture stages a scene of coexistence and dependency, where fiction, reality, and collective imagination collide. Echoing 1990s cartoons, the work balances comedy with critique, asking how belonging, spectacle, and absurdity shape the ways we gather.

Play It For What, 2022
Single-channel video, 10 min loop
Mur Brut, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

[Watch Replay](#)







Play It For What, 2022
Single-channel video, 10 min loop
Mur Brut, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf
[Watch Replay](#)



Viser la lune

Installation and short film, 2022



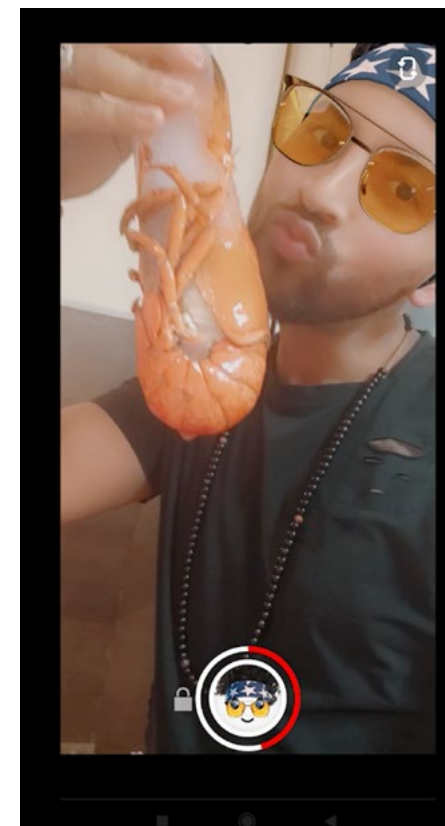
Viser la lune brings together suspended frozen roses containing hand-engraved military dog tags and a short film. The inscriptions reproduce messages exchanged with strangers through an anonymous phone number in an earlier project. As the roses thaw, the messages gradually become visible.

The film follows a young man hoping to meet a girl named Luna. As he moves through the city, signs and coincidences seem to repeatedly lead him back to her. Whether these connections are real or imagined remains unresolved.

[Watch *Viser la lune*](#), short film, 2:57 min

Music: "All I've Ever Known" by Bahamas

Viser la lune, 2022
Frozen roses, engraved military dog tags, video
February 14, 2022, BPA Space, Cologne





Républicain Social



Républicain Social draws on the architecture of the Sociable Weaver¹ to imagine new models of coexistence between care, growth, and sustainability. Temporary structures made from rice paper, chia seeds, and mushrooms rise like islands, forming fragile habitats that evoke the tension between natural resilience and human fragility. Next to them stands a sealed metal cuboid (Clemens Botho Goldbach), welded from industrial panels, recalling shipping containers and the global circulation of goods.

By confronting organic and industrial materials, the exhibition reflects on the contradictions of progress and the ecological limits of production. Between permanence and decay, the installation considers how new forms of life and solidarity might emerge from collapse.

1. a bird that builds vast communal nests in the African savannah

Républicain Social, 2022
Rice paper, chia seeds, *mushrooms*, wood,
Campus Halle, Wuppertal







Républicain Social, 2022
Duo show with Clemens Botho Goldbach
Rice paper, chia seeds, mushrooms, wood,
Campus Halle, Wuppertal

We don't have forever

Installation, 2021



We Don't Have Forever questions the permanence of the artificial and the resilience of the organic. Inflatable swans and sharks, collapsing under their own weight, become improbable hosts for fungal life, active collaborators in a meditation on cycles of growth, decay, and renewal. As mushrooms emerge from plastic, time itself appears fragile and reversible, as if nature were quietly reclaiming space within the synthetic.

Working as a kind of living display, the window functions both as an artwork and as a site of cultivation. Live mushrooms grow by feeding on the plastic structure of inflatable toys, swans and sharks that here symbolise the excesses of the contemporary art world. What might once have been objects of leisure or desire become a source of nourishment, possibly even shared with the local community.

We Don't Have Forever, 2021
Plastic toys, mycelium, algae, lamp
BPA Space, Cologne





We Don't Have Forever, 2021
Plastic toys, mycelium, algae, lamp
BPA Space, Cologne

Run Rabbit Run

Four-channel video installation, 2021

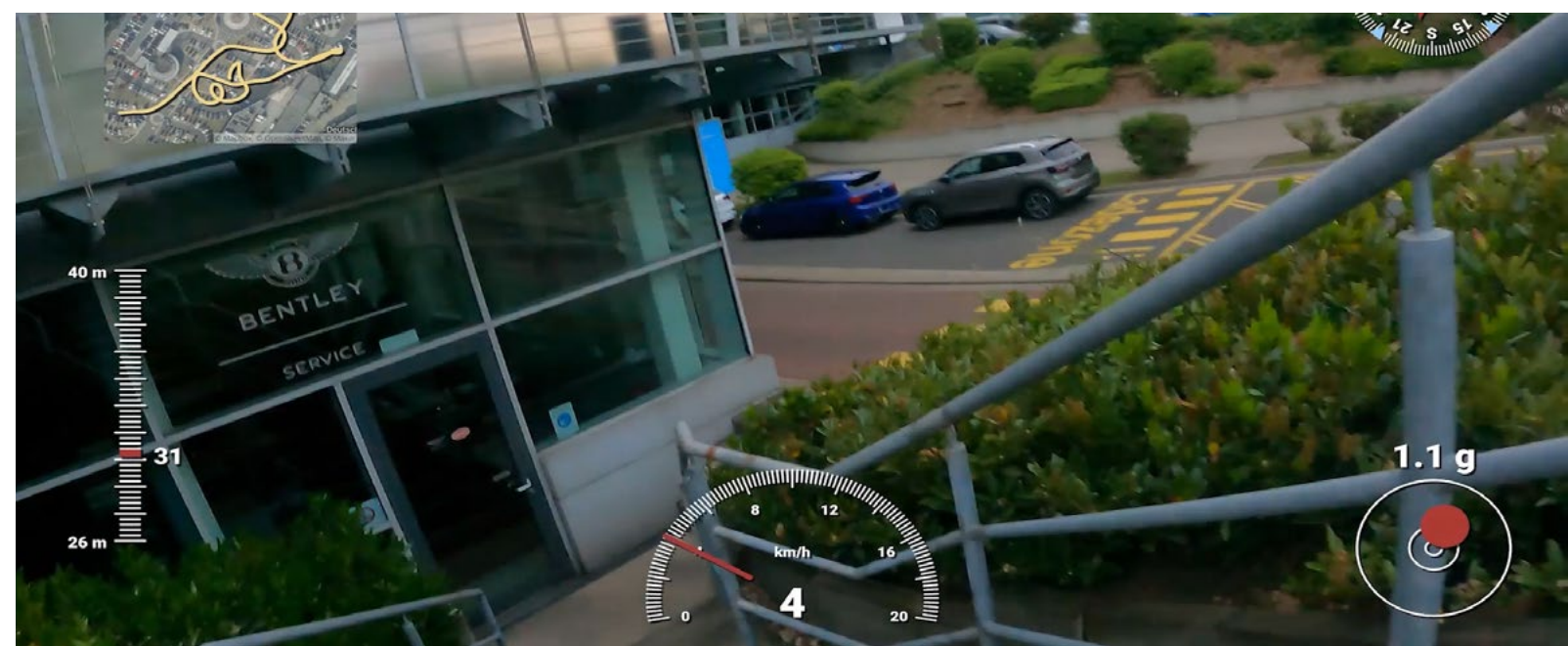
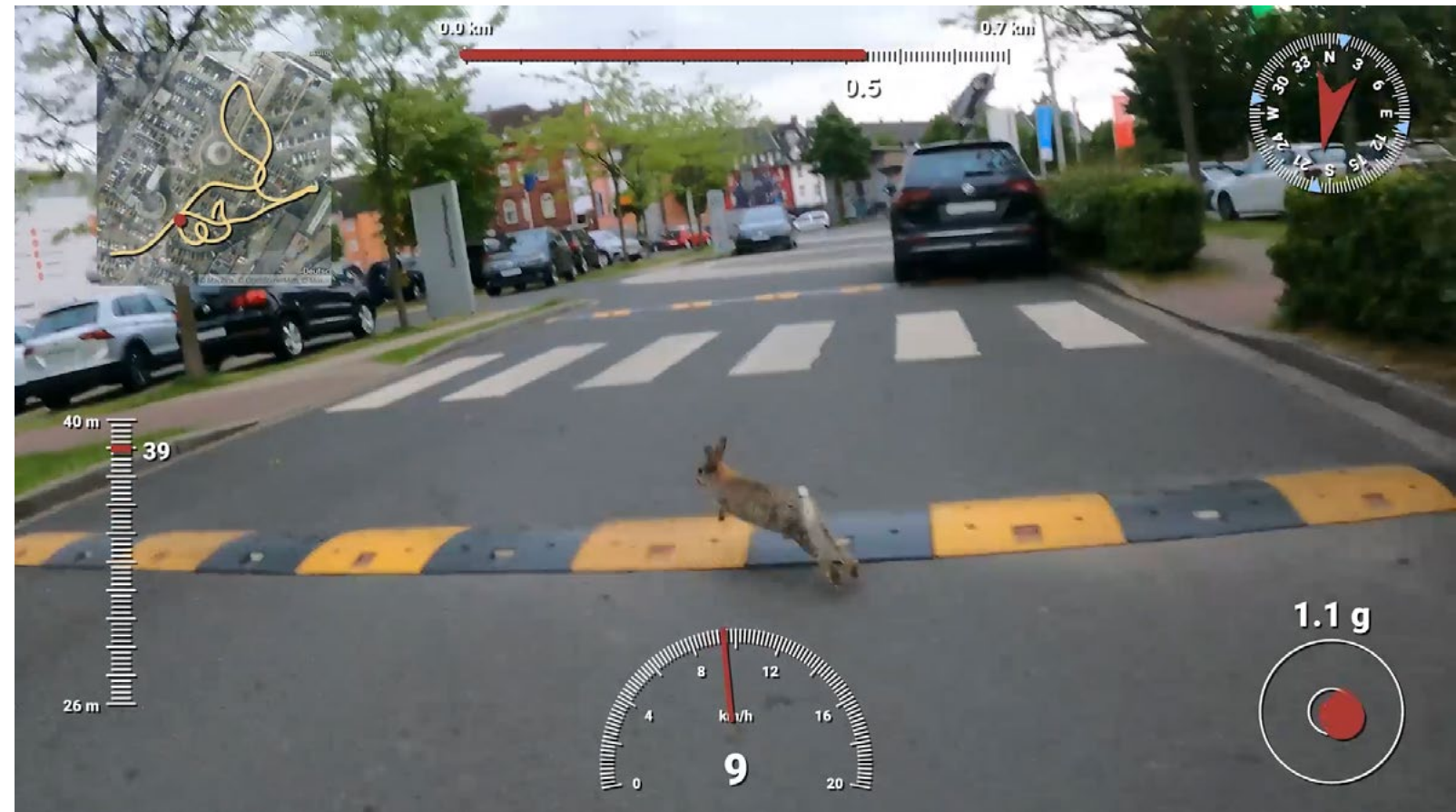


Run Rabbit Run introduces a subtle tension between playfulness and unease. Filmed in the private parking lot of one of K21's patrons in Düsseldorf, the work follows the artist chasing rabbits through a maze of parked Volkswagen and Bentley cars. What begins as a childlike pursuit soon turns into a disquieting game — where fragility, fear, and control intertwine.

Evoking the logic of open-world video games like Grand Theft Auto (GTA), the piece unfolds in reality rather than simulation. The camera moves between pursuit and pause, proximity and distance, creating an atmosphere both absurd and ethical. Through this deceptively simple act, the work questions the fragile boundaries between care and control, entertainment and violence, instinct and surveillance.

Run Rabbit Run, 2021
4-channel video (20 min, loop)

[Watch Replay](#)





Run Rabbit Run, 2021
4-channel video (20 min, loop)
Part of *Unpin the Butterfly*, curated by Mara Sporn
Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf

Je cherche l'Homme

Light installation, Morse code, 2021



Je cherche l'Homme transforms K21 into a lighthouse. At night, light from the museum sends a message in Morse code beyond its opening hours: “*I am looking for a human.*”

The phrase refers to Diogenes of Sinope, who is said to have walked through Athens with a lamp, looking for a human. In the work, Diogenes reappears as an androgynous surfer.

In French, *Je cherche l'Homme* can be read differently. L'Homme can mean humankind, but also a man. A philosophical search slips into something more intimate, almost romantic. The museum keeps sending the same message into the city at night.

Je cherche l'Homme, 2021
Light installation, Morse code
Coming to Voice, K21, Düsseldorf





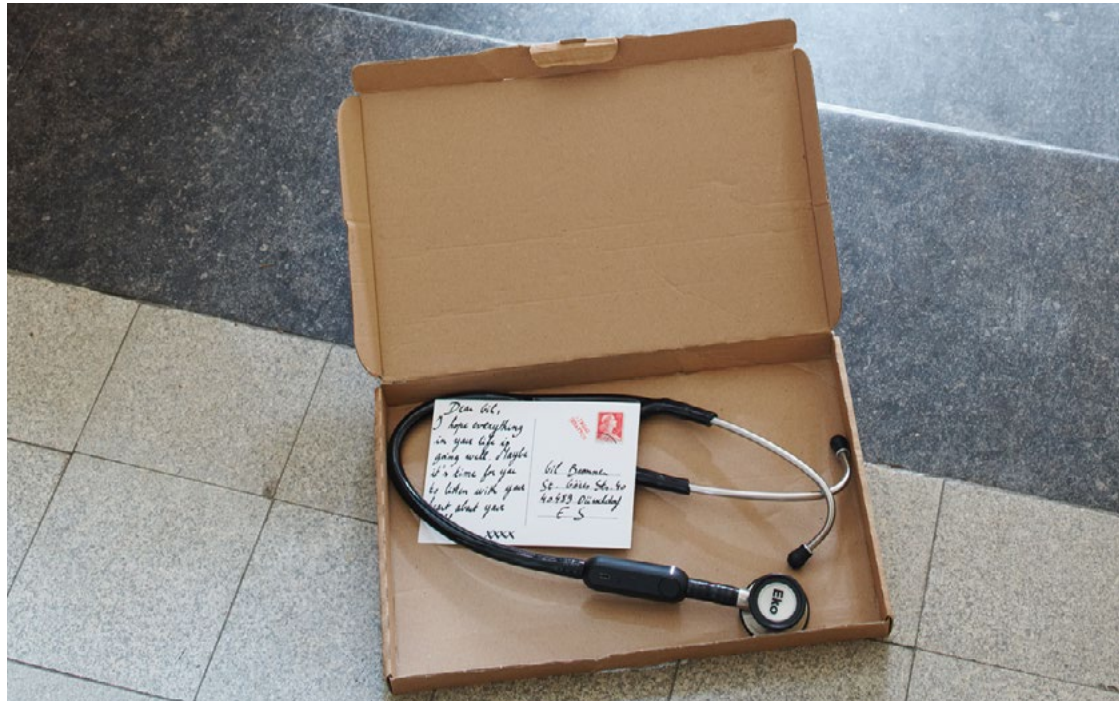
[Watch the installation in action](#)



Je cherche l'Homme, 2021
Light installation, Morse code
Coming to Voice, K21, Düsseldorf

Gnothi seauton

Participatory installation, 2020



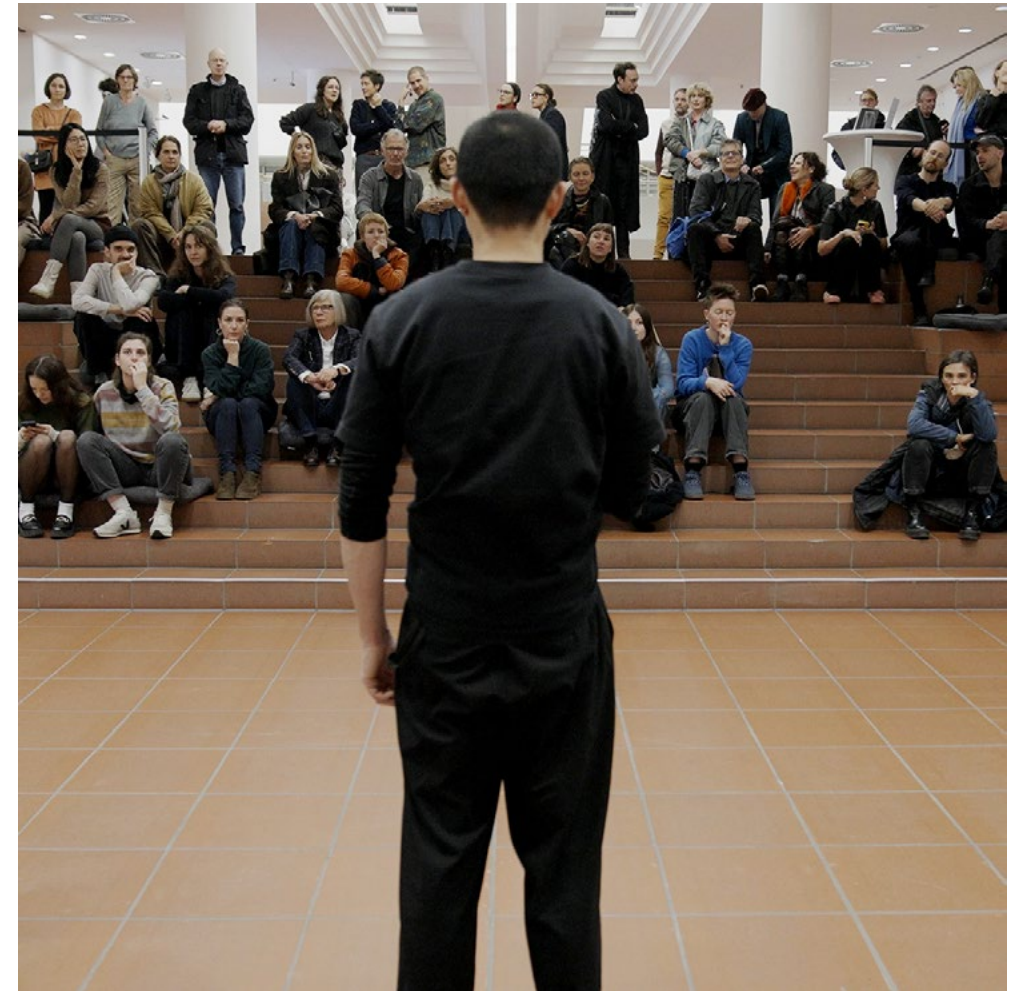
Developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Gnothi Seauton approaches the exhibition space as a temple, a place for pause and introspection. At the entrance, ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ (Gnothi Seauton, “Know thyself”) is burned into the wall in ancient Greek, invoking the maxim associated with the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. The inscription marks the beginning of a journey through the house, leading visitors downward into the cellar.

There, a stethoscope connected to loudspeakers allows each visitor to listen to their own heartbeat. Amplified through the space, this intimate and normally inaudible rhythm reverberates through the foundations of the house. What begins inside the body expands into the surrounding architecture. The body becomes both listener and source.

Gnothi Seauton, 2020

Burned inscription, stethoscope, loudspeakers, sound
Empty Spaces, Düsseldorf





Four years later, the same gesture reappears in [We Author](#) at Museum Ludwig in Cologne. The stethoscope shifts from an instrument for listening inward into a microphone for speaking outward. Participants approach it one at a time, allowing their heartbeat to fill the exhibition space. An intimate and involuntary rhythm becomes a public voice.

Developed in the context of Fluxus, [We Author](#) transforms self-listening into an experiment in collective authorship. As one heartbeat replaces another, the work is continuously rewritten by the bodies present. The distinction between spectator and performer begins to dissolve: participation becomes a form of authorship.

The presence of a participant with a pacemaker complicates this relationship further. Technology is already operating from within the body, participating in the production of its rhythm and unsettling the boundary between autonomy and dependence.

We Author, 2024.
Participant amplifying his heartbeat.
Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

Listen with your heart

Installation, 2020



Dried seaweed sheets are dissolved in water and reclaimed through a sieve before being given new form. Fragile images and delicate structures emerge and expand into space. The artist incorporates plants gathered from the surrounding landscape during walks around the cultural station, linking the interior to the exterior and offering these living forms a new site in which to grow.

“Her work does not portray a bleak apocalypse. Instead, it is deeply poetic, animated by the romantic utopia of a better world.”

Mara Sporn

Listen with Your Heart, 2020
Algae, rice paper,
Kulturbahnhof, Eller





[Watch the exhibition](#)



Visitors listen to an excerpt from Pocahontas in which Grandmother Willow tells Pocahontas to listen to her heart. The headphone cable runs through the algae installation, into the wall and through the former chimney, connecting to a small pink CD player hidden on the roof outside the building.

Why Surfers Should be Fed?

Performance installation, 2018



Why Surfers Should Be Fed? begins with an almost empty room. The windows are left open to the cold air outside, while a single book rests on a windowsill. Its title refers to Philippe Van Parijs's reflections on universal basic income and the figure of the surfer, questioning the relationship between work, leisure, and individual freedom.

Inside the book, a short instruction reads: Call me. Dialing the number triggers a recorded voice, followed by an SMS containing a poem and an invitation to meet at a waste treatment plant at a precise time and location.

Participation remains optional at every stage. The visitor can observe the book, open it, make the call, follow the messages, or leave. Through these successive choices, the work gradually moves beyond the exhibition space and into the surrounding city, where an industrial site becomes the possible location of an encounter.

Why Surfers Should Be Fed?, 2020
Hand-bound book
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf



PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS

Why Surfers Should Be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income

The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action, with a common ownership of the raw materials of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.

John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*

In 1971, Hawaii established a one-year residency requirement for welfare entitlement. This measure was directed against so-called welfare hippies, who had been arriving in considerable numbers to take advantage of the beaches and of a comparatively generous assistance law. As Hawaii senator Wadsworth Yee eloquently put it: "There must be no parasites in paradise."¹ Senator Yee's confidence in his attitude would have been further boosted had he been able to read one of John Rawls's most recent articles. For what Rawls suggests is that one should add leisure time to his well-known list of social primary goods, precisely in order to be able to handle this sort of situation in a manner Senator Yee would have found congenial. The extra leisure enjoyed by those unwilling to work "would be stipulated as equivalent to the index of primary goods of the least advantaged. So those who surf all day off Malibu must find a way to support themselves and would not be entitled to public funds."²

What I want to argue in this article is that Senator Yee was unfair to

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Universities of Louvain-la-Neuve and Leuven in March 1989, and at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Chicago, Harvard University, and Columbia University in April 1990. I am grateful to the Editors of *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Ian Carter, and Peter Hammond for particularly useful and perceptive comments, and to my hosts and many members of my audiences for a wide variety of stimulating reactions. Among them, I owe a debt of a special sort to John Rawls. The origin of this article can be traced to a breakfast conversation we had in Paris in 1987 in which Malibu surfers kept cropping up. Although my central argument takes exception to the view he then expressed and to some fragments of his writings, the extent to which I, along with so many others, am indebted to his thought should be obvious throughout.

1. The story is told by Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income: The Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 32–34.

2. John Rawls, "The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 257 n. 7.



Detail of *Why Surfers Should Be Fed?*, 2020

Thanx 4 Coming

Installation & Performance, 2019



Thanx 4 Coming is a performance and installation that reverses the conventional transaction between exhibition and audience. Instead of paying an entrance fee, each visitor receives a €1 coin. Attendance becomes part of the work's economy. The more visitors enter, the more money the artist loses.

The exhibition space is transformed into a darkened nightclub filled with deep bass, dense fog, and rotating lights. As visitors move through the space, their bodies appear and disappear in the fog, creating a temporary sense of anonymity and collective presence.

Video projections interrupt this environment, shifting between the physical presence of visitors and mediated images. Moving between participation and spectatorship, *Thanx 4 Coming* places financial exchange, social interaction, and the presence of its audience within the same system of value.

Installation view of *Thanx 4 Coming*, 2019
Moltkerei Werkstatt, Cologne





Watch the exhibition and performance

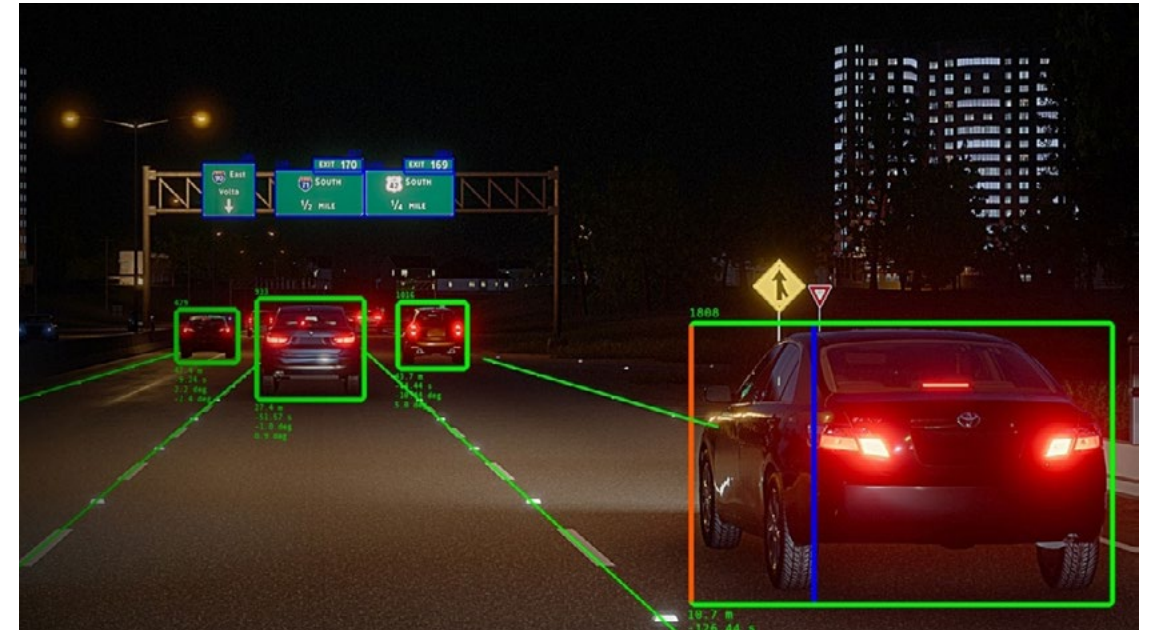


Performance, *Thanx 4 Coming*, 2019.
Photo: Deniz Saridas



Wandering

Installation, 2019



Footage from "NVIDIA Drive IX" autonomous driving software.

Wandering is a collective exhibition conceived with Moritz Riesenbeck, Louis Babeanu and Mostafa Safi-Rahmouni, in a former parking garage in Düsseldorf used partly as an exhibition space, partly as a car repair shop and second-hand car dealer.

The entrance was a dismembered Smart Fortwo, sitting among the other cars in the lot, it served as a staircase. On its panoramic glass roof, the sound of my video *Wedding* was transmitted through bone conduction speakers, turning the car body itself into a sound surface. The video showed a man wrapped in an algae object I had made, walking with him into a lake until the algae slowly dissolved against his skin.

Wandering' entrance, 2019

car, projector, NVIDIA Drive footage
Oberbilk Allee 57, Düsseldorf



Wandering' sound, 2019
Smart Fortwo glass roof, sound system
Oberbilker Allee 57, Düsseldorf

Wand and Air

Installation, 2018

Realized during the Open Days of the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, this installation is inspired by Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*.

A studio window was sealed off by a plywood wall into which an opening was cut. A scaffold, designed specifically for the project and built with the support of the Düsseldorf-based scaffolding company Hohngerüstbau, leads the visitor up to this breach, transforming the window into a threshold toward an elsewhere beyond the walls of the school.

Usually associated with construction and renovation work, the scaffold is displaced from its original function to become the work itself. Infrastructure becomes sculpture; tool becomes point of view.

Taking up the contemplative stance of Friedrich's wanderer, the installation proposes a reversal of the gaze: no longer directed toward the interior of the institution, but toward what lies beyond it.

Wand and Air, 2018
Wood, scaffold
Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf



VAN DYCK

RUBENS

REMBRANDT

FRANS HALS

RUYSDAEL

HOHN GERÜSTBAU

DÜSSELDORF

0211/ 9 40 69 99

God Bless America

Installation sonore, 2018

God Bless America takes Nicolas Steiner's *Above and Below* as a point of departure. In the film, people live in the flood channels beneath Las Vegas, underneath one of the most spectacular embodiments of the American dream.

Installed deep inside the flood channels of a former paper factory, the work brings together three isolated voices: Michael Jackson singing *Billie Jean*, Rihanna singing *Diamonds*, and Shia LaBeouf delivering his viral *Just Do It* performance.

Each carries a different fragment of the American dream: success, visibility, determination, but also its darker side. Stripped of their images and original contexts, the voices emerge one after another from somewhere deep inside the tunnels. From a distance, they sound strangely intimate, almost as if someone were living down there, singing in the shower, talking to themselves, trying to carry on.

In the darkness, dampness and stagnant water, three icons of the American dream are displaced beneath the surface.

Survivors, alone, full of dreams and aspirations.

[Watch video excerpts from the installation](#)





Installation view of *God Bless America*, 2018
Residency and exhibition at Studio Orta, Les Moulins

Underground Youth

Installation, 2018

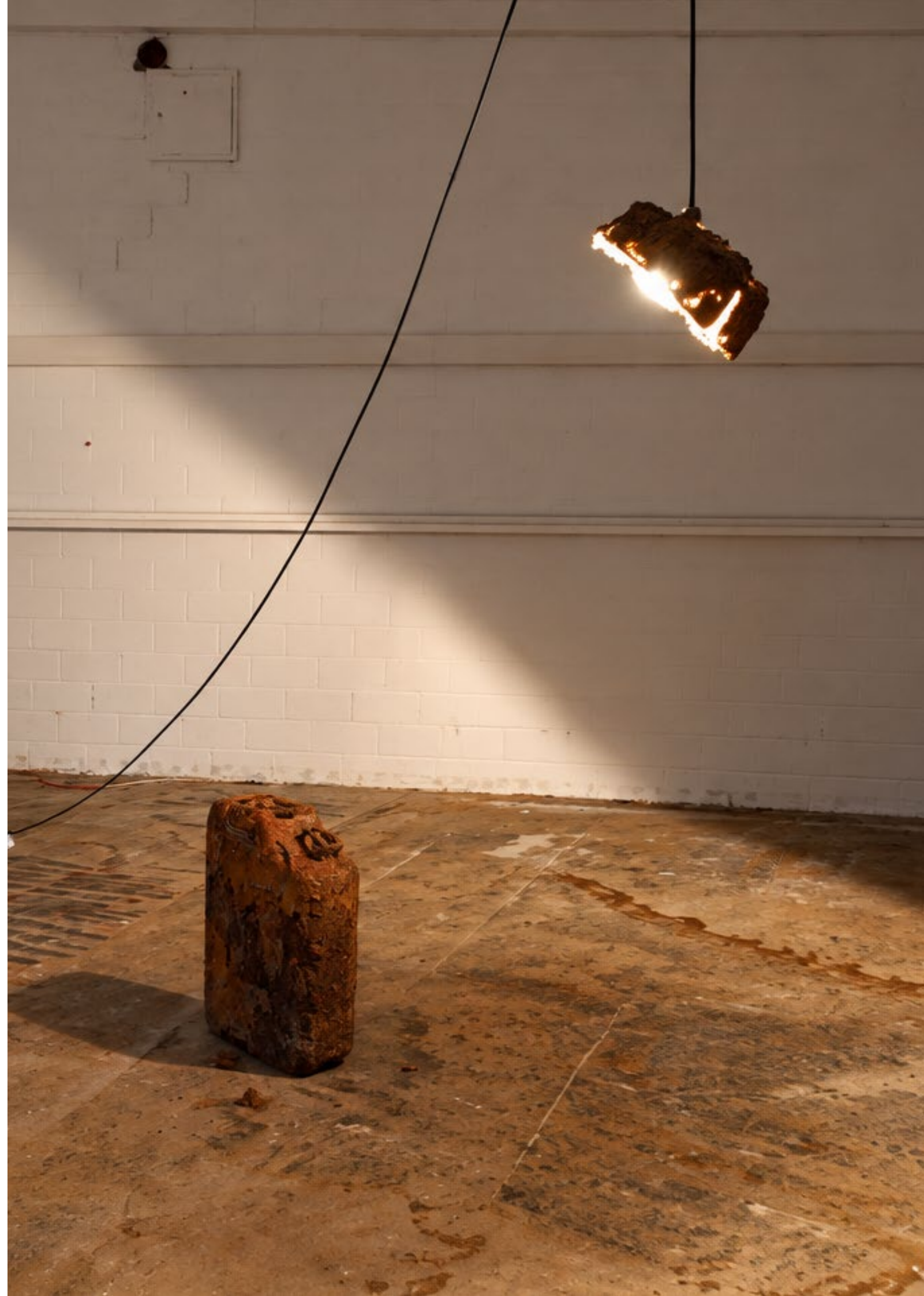


The objects in *Underground Youth* were found in the Rhine in Düsseldorf. A corroded petrol can was left unaltered, while a found bowl was transformed into a flickering light.

Encountering them, I imagined looking at our own society from somewhere in the future, almost as an alien discovering what humans had left behind. The petrol can, once made to contain fuel, had already been transformed by water, rust and time.

What would these objects say about us? What if whatever had shaped or troubled life on Earth was already over?

Underground Youth, 2018
Installation, found objects, modified light
Reborn, PM, Düsseldorf





Underground Youth, 2018
Installation, found objects, modified light
Reborn, PM, Düsseldorf

Vanity

Sculpture, 2018

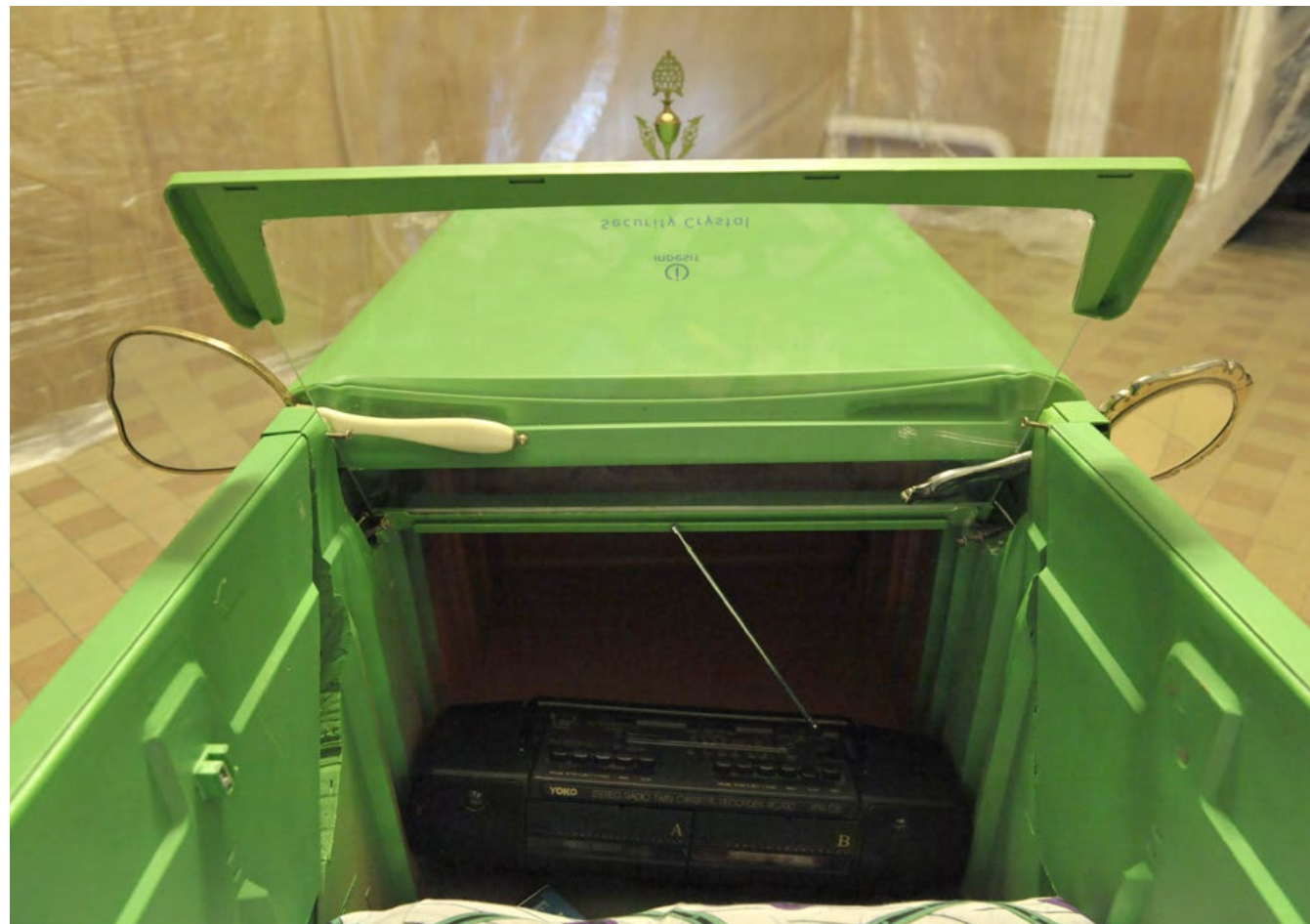
Vanity takes place in a former Franprix supermarket in Paris, repurposed as an exhibition space. At its centre stands a chest freezer, painted in bright green and mounted on wheels. Opened, it reveals a cassette player, car lights, plastic hands, and a wax fabric lining printed with umbrella motifs.

The work begins with a material fact: an unused refrigerator, due to its components and gases, pollutes as much as a car. Rather than discarding it, Kempf transforms the appliance into something alive, a domestic object reactivated through ornament, sound and unexpected intimacy. The interior becomes a kind of vanity, a space of excess and adornment that simultaneously conceals and displays.

Installed against a backdrop of wax-printed wallpaper and suspended white fabric, the piece operates between registers: African textile patterns, consumer waste, the supermarket as site of circulation and desire. What was once designed to preserve and contain becomes an open, generous, slightly absurd proposition.

Vanity, 2018
Fridge, wax, mirror, lights, radio
Curry Vavart, Paris





Underwater Love

Installation, 2017



Underwater Love places a living goldfish inside a darkened OSB structure, visible only through a small window set into the door. From the outside, the viewer looks in the fish drifts through warm light, suspended against the flickering images of a vintage erotic film playing on loop inside.

The piece works through a simple act of looking: what is framed, what is contained, what escapes. The goldfish moves through images of desire and fantasy it cannot perceive and does not know exist. The longing belongs entirely to the viewer.

Underwater Love, 2017
Wood, fish, door, poster, candle,
Pathfinder, Brussels





Underwater Love, 2017
Wood, fish, door, poster, candle,
Pathfinder, Brussels



Detail of *Underwater Love*, 2017, Pathfinder, Brussels.



712.5 Missing

Installation, 2017



712.5 Missing transforms the cellar of Nijinski into the remains of a bookshop after an imaginary flood. A false bookcase divides the space, while a “sea” of damaged books suggests that water once rose to approximately 1.10 metres before receding. Using second-hand books, recovered materials and techniques borrowed from film-set construction, the installation stages not the catastrophe itself, but its aftermath.

“When Yaël Kempf suggested creating an installation in the cellar of Nijinski, she proposed working with elements and materials already available on site, a method that seemed systematic in her practice, if I understood correctly.”

She also wanted to create a mirror space of the bookshop using the same components. And this is exactly what she did: the elements of the installation refer so closely to the original that her work became almost invisible. Even the garden is represented.”

Louis Castel, bookshop owner



Back room of 712.5 *Missing*, with the “sea” of books left by the imaginary flood.





712.5 Missing, 2017
Second-hand books, recovered materials, wood
Nijnski, Brussels

Pimp my Basement

Installation, 2016



"I have been and still am a seeker, but I have ceased to question stars and books; I have begun to listen to the teachings my blood whispers to me. My story is not pleasant."

Hermann Hesse, *Demian*

Pimp My Basement was created in the Reuterkaserne in Düsseldorf, using plywood recovered on site. From 1933, the building housed an SS unit; political opponents of the Nazi regime were detained and tortured in its basement before some were deported to concentration camps.

Knowing this history, I wanted to find a way to escape from it, without pretending it could be erased. A structure was built inside the basement, creating a place within a place, somewhere between a dwelling and a nest, shaped by the architecture and irregularities of the building itself.

The title refers to *Pimp My Ride*, bringing the language of the makeover into a space whose past cannot simply be renovated away.





Pimp My Basement, 2016
Reclaimed plywood, wood, light
ReuterKaserne, Düsseldorf



Untitled, 2017,
OSB boards, paint,
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.



Untitled, 2017,
OSB boards, paint, metal
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.



Untitled, 2017,
OSB boards, paint, metal
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

Love is the Law

Performance, installation, 2016



Love is the Law takes place in a former bank on Avenue Louise, Brussels. At the back of the space, a cupboard filled with ordinary objects opens at irregular intervals, revealing a hidden passage leading to the building's original vault. As the doors swing open, light floods the room and exposes Nelu Chitaristu, a Romanian street musician, improvising gypsy jazz. When they close, the music disappears.

The work transforms a space once dedicated to security and accumulation into a stage for something unpredictable and impossible to possess. The encounter between visitor and musician remains fleeting, dependent on a door, a moment that emerges and vanishes without warning.

Kempf first met Chitaristu late at night on the streets between Louise and Stéphanie. The project begins with that encounter: a conversation made possible through Google Translate, two strangers finding a way to communicate across language. That moment remains at the heart of the work.

Love is the law, 2016
Cupboard jets, wood, piston mechanism,
La Cambre, Brussels
[watch the replay](#)









Les marines

Installation, 2016

The title *Marines* refers to Gustave Courbet, who repeatedly painted seascapes as works he could sell, helping him sustain his practice alongside more radical works.

The series began at the timber merchant where I used to buy my plywood. I became interested in the materials surrounding the wood rather than the wood being sold: plywood sheets used to protect stacks during transport and storage, and long metal straps used to bind them together.

Normally left behind once their function was fulfilled, these materials became the works themselves. Their stains, measurements, cuts and traces of handling remain visible, carrying with them a system of production, protection and circulation.

The metal pieces follow the same logic. The straps that once held the plywood together are cut into fragments and reassembled into surfaces.

Marine, 2016
Plywood, metal
250 × 125 cm
La Cambre, Brussels



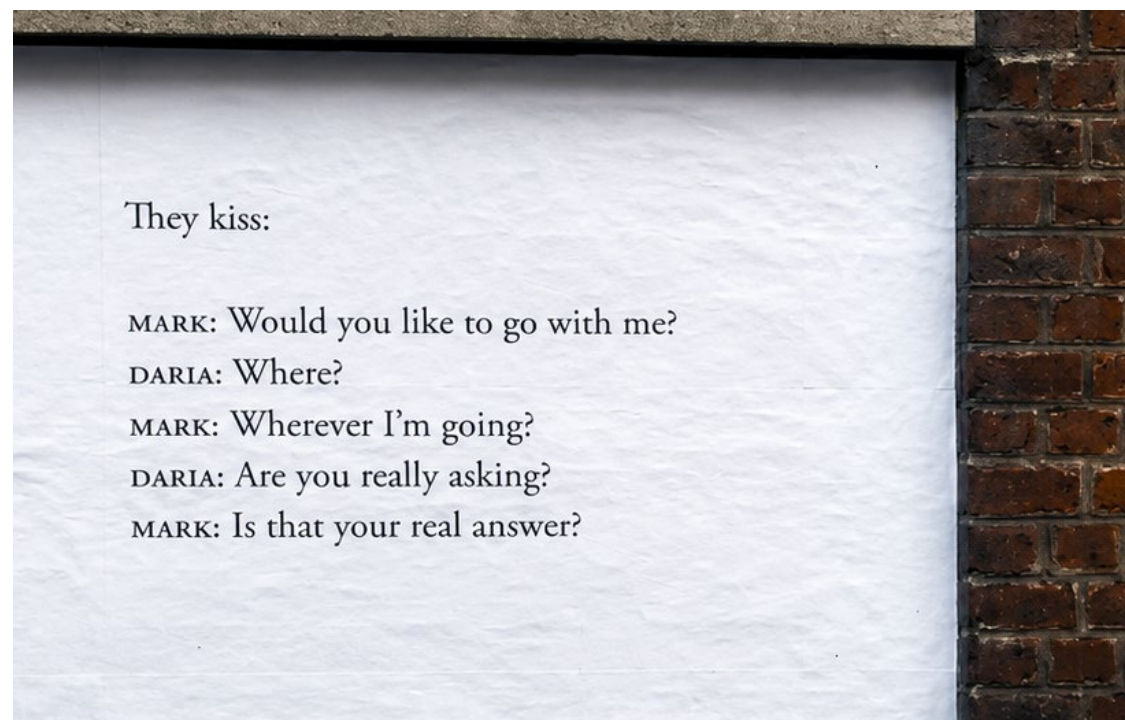
Installation view of the Marines series, 2016, La Cambre, Brussels.



Marine series, dedicated to Courbet, 2016
plywood, painting
Avenue Louise, La Cambre, Brussels

Are You Really Asking?

Installation, 2015



Are You Really Asking emerged from an investigation into industrial wood and processes of formal extraction. Starting from painted OSB panels, individual shapes were isolated, enlarged and reproduced in other materials, generating a chain of forms that continuously referred back to one another.

Installed throughout the domestic architecture of Stocq 72, these elements oscillated between sculpture and architectural residue, embedded into walls and corners, appearing less as autonomous objects than as traces of an event whose origin remained uncertain. A recurring reference was the final sequence of Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970): not the explosion itself, but what remains afterwards.

Art You Really Asking?, 2015
Wood,
Stocq 72, Brussels
Video on demand





*Art You Really Asking?, 2015
Wood,
Stocq 72, Brussels
Video on demand*



Art You Really Asking?, 2015
Walkman, wood,
Stocq 72, Brussels