

VERENA SEIBT &  
CLEA STRACKE





## UNFAMILIAR FAMILIAR PLACES

The Museum Ludwig is starting to lose its balance. The artworks can no longer sit still in their allocated places. The Cologne exhibition hall, in addition to its function as an ennobling site of display, should also serve as a protective sphere against environmental influences and intrusions. Nonetheless, a sculpture by Otto Freundlich is dashing madly about the museum's red tiled floor with its cubical pedestal in tow. A Mondrian painting simply can't bear the turbulence and drops from the wall. The De Stijl artist's stringent geometries crumble into their individual elements — colourful rectangle, squares and bars rearrange themselves. The museum visitor doesn't know what's happening to them and careens alongside the work through room. With their 2013 video *Der Fall K* (The Fall K), the artists Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt bring movement into art.

A revised experience of the seemingly familiar and the visualisation of things otherwise concealed are thematic constants within the sizeable artistic output of Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt. With their 2008 work *Hobbykeller* (Hobby Basement), the artists made a space distinguished by its private character paradoxically public. In a gallery installed in the subterranean 'Universität' subway station in Munich, the artists exhibited scenes usually concealed from public view: a man fiddling at his workbench, a band practicing for their next appearance, a group of friends having an intimate conversation over beers. Every noise produced behind the sheet of the glass was transmitted onto the subway platform by a speaker installed in front of the gallery's display window. The performance of the everyday thus extends onto an everyday stage. The intimate space of privacy of the *Hobbykeller* collides with the public space of a subway mezzanine, which has to be traversed by the public on their way to their trains.

In his 1959 study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, the American sociologist Erving Goffman develops the premise

that we are all actors on the stage of everyday life. This premise, according to Goffman, implies that the actions performed in everyday life are thus a series of roles played and poses presented. Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt are interested in what happens when the stage of everyday life does not explicitly announce itself as such. How do people act in places distinguished by a remarkable indifference — more passageways than stages. How are these places themselves actually constituted? A recycling depot offers just such a space and happens to be the setting of Stracke and Seibt's 2013 video work *Weil ich dich nicht mehr liebe* (Because I Don't Love You Anymore). Old burdens are deposited here. People part with things they can't use anymore, things they've lost any emotional relationship to. In devout silence, they heave their old furniture, sporting equipment or clothes out of their car trunks and drag them to the appropriate containers. They exchange some words with the employees, if only to reassure themselves that they've made the right choice. Others stand around in grimy overalls, looking on absentmindedly as the garbage compactor bursts, snaps and splinters the things that once gave them so many beautiful hours. In the artists' 2009 video *Unterwelt* (Underworld), traces of human activity hint at all that once happened beneath the surface of the earth. Like a scanner, the camera pans across the subterranean scenarios, rendering the deserted scenes in minute detail. Tools have been left on the work benches of hobby rooms. Machines rattle and rumble to themselves. One can even hear the drops of water as they fall from the ceiling and splash on the floor. Somewhere above, a car horn is being blown. At another point in the video, a bowling ball rolls down the alley towards the pins, as though pushed by a ghostly hand.

Alongside these stages which seem almost imperceptibly inserted into the environment at first glance, Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt's are also interested in the 'heterotopia' of the museum. In a

submission to a 2011 competition for redesigning the courtyard of the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, they proposed the installation of sleeping and roaming bronze dogs. The courtyard in question lies in front of what used to be the West Berlin entrance to the Gropius Bau before the fall of the wall — i.e. on the backside of the original and currently used main entrance. The proposal, titled *Still Life*, demonstrates the abandoned status of this historically loaded site within Berlin's contemporary cityscape and, more generally, draws attention to the appropriation of unused spaces within large cities.

In the early video *Und das Schiff fährt* (And The Ship Is Leaving) from 2009, the new building of the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich — where Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt completed their studies — goes lost at sea metaphorically suggesting the precarious status of artists after they've left the 'safe harbours' of educational institutions. A concern with their own status as artists reappears in many of Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt's works. In their most recent video, *Floß der Medusa* (Raft of Medusa) from 2014, the emphasis shifts however towards questions about what fundamentally determines the status of art. For reasons we can only speculate about, Géricault's monumental painting literally goes overboard. Without a specific time or place, the painting floats along in uncertain waters, rising slowly to the top before the waves swallow it up again. Can it manoeuvre itself out of these uncertain waters? Will it be rescued? Or will the once controversial painting disappear once and for all? In Stracke and Seibt's video, the safe rooms of the Louvre, where Géricault's eponymous *Le Radeau de la Méduse* (Raft of Medusa, 1819) is currently shown to the public, have gone astray. The Paris museum seems to have failed at its most simple tasks, namely presenting and protecting the work. But perhaps the painting simply gave up its status as an artwork or forfeited its exhibition value at some point. Or has the museum, as a safeguard of

cultural memory, simply disappeared from the architectural ensemble of the city? Without its aesthetic surplus value, the Raft of Medusa, literally falls back into the function of its historical prototype — a raft built from the remains of the frigate Medusa's shipwreck. It thus becomes a place: a raft that can save lives, a raft that can bring salvation. In 1816 however, the anticipated rescue would not come quickly, leading the surviving members of the crew to turn to cannibalism, a barbaric act which destroys any social community. Nonetheless, Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt hardly try to generate attention through shock effects and extreme situations. Rather they subtly investigate places' political, social and cultural functions. In their work, familiar terrain often emerges as a deceptive obstacle course. Home, it seems, is elsewhere.

Jürgen Dehm

## AND THE SHIPH GOES ON...\*

Half-HD Video, 5:10 min., 2009



"Fluctuat nec mergitur."  
— It is tossed by the waves,  
but does not sink." (Parisian  
city motto)

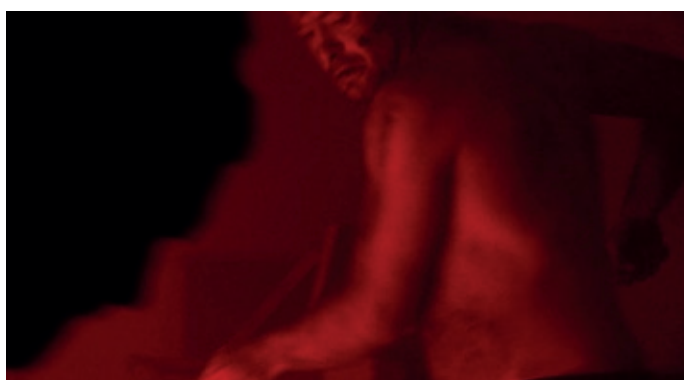
The Video is titled after the 1983 film "E la nave va" by Italian director Federico Fellini. (In the plot of the film, a refined group of travellers on a large passenger ship are on their way to the sea burial of a celebrated soprano singer. Their plans however are overtaken by greater political realities on the eve of the First World War and nearly result in disaster.) In the eponymous installation, this becomes recognisable as the new annex to the Münchner Akademie by Coop Himmelb(l)au only at a second glance. An ostensibly stunning luxury liner with an aesthetically educated crew voyages into an uncertain future. Set to Franz Schubert's ode to the gracious art ("An die Musik", D 547 op. 88,4), the comedy of the film collides with the melancholy of late classical longing. The muscally grotesque vision parodies the academic self-image and sense of reality with allegorical self irony. (Christian Gögger)

fig. 1  
Projection view, And the  
Ship Goes On





all fig.  
Video stills,  
And the Ship Goes On





## THE FIRST YEARS OF BEING PROFESSIONAL\*

As part of “The First Years of Professionalism” exhibition series, the eponymous installation questions the societal system of success and failure, fortune and misfortune.

Galerie der Künstler, München, 2010

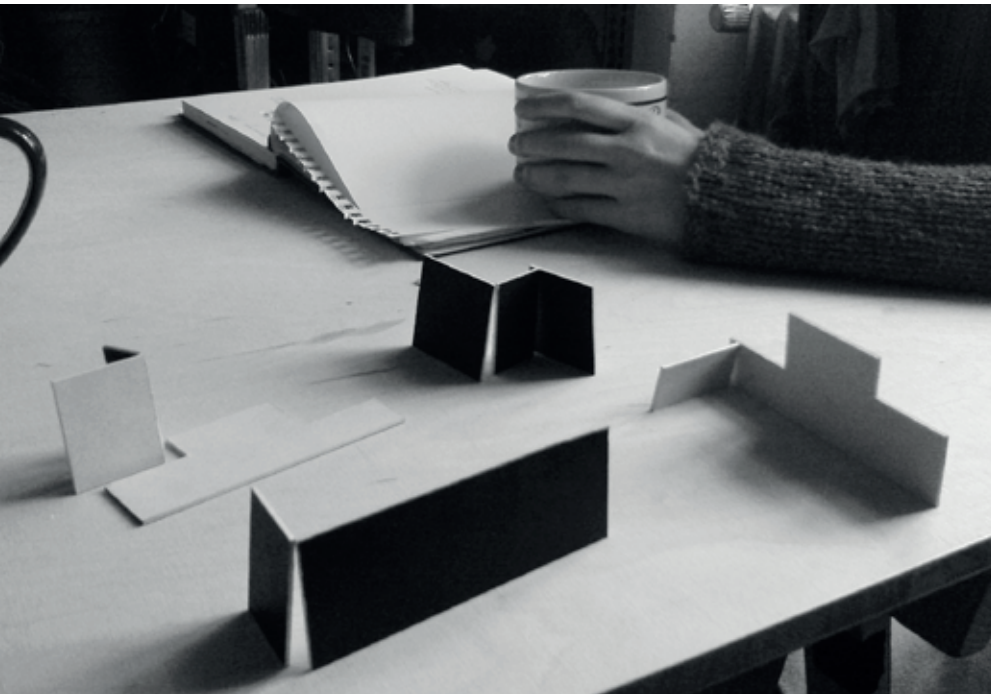


fig. 1

## WINNER PODIUM

The darkly sculptural sketch “The construction of Success”, with its glamorous and abstract heaviness, may quite easily be changed from the winner’s podium into a beautiful double coffin. Consisting of 10 wooden parts, each varnished on one side, it serves as a tangible form, as a construction kit of a system of winning and losing. In its dismantled condition, it encompasses past and future: It can be take apart, having already played its role. Or it stands in storage, a shelved reagent of hope and fear, readily awaiting assembly and its cue to take stage: Whatever an individual dares to hope can become reality and the better they understand the rules, the more precisely the can piece together their own success like bits of lego, building their own precarious constructs. (Pavel Vancát)

Sculpture, MDF, varnished, 10 Pieces,  
220 × 100 × 70 cm, 2010



fig. 1  
Modells, Studio  
STRACKE&SEIBT

fig. 2  
Installation view:  
Konstruktion des  
Erfolgs, Galerie der  
Künstler Munich

fig. 2



THE AWARD CEREMONY

Through the camera’s viewfinder, you can follow the amateur recording of an art award ceremony from the perspective of a family member including the mayor’s immeasurable chain, the gigantic certificate and the eventual storming of the buffet. Looking through the camera tripod, the viewer themself slips into the role of camera man, becoming an involuntary participant at the event.

Installation, video camera, tripod, headphones, 2010

fig. 1



fig. 2, 3

fig. 3



THE WRONG APELLES

The most unclear part of the work complex is the fable of the fox as painter, fake, fabulous and ghost- written, may be seen as the last report on the artists’ position: Are there some given rules in the art world at all? And if there are some, are they based on something more than intricate inter- personal relations? We are really not sure which animals we want to be, somewhere between La Fontaine and Orwell. (Pavel Vancát)

Ghostwriter: Christian Hartard  
Fable, 3 pages, printed, framed, 60 cm × 40 cm, 2010

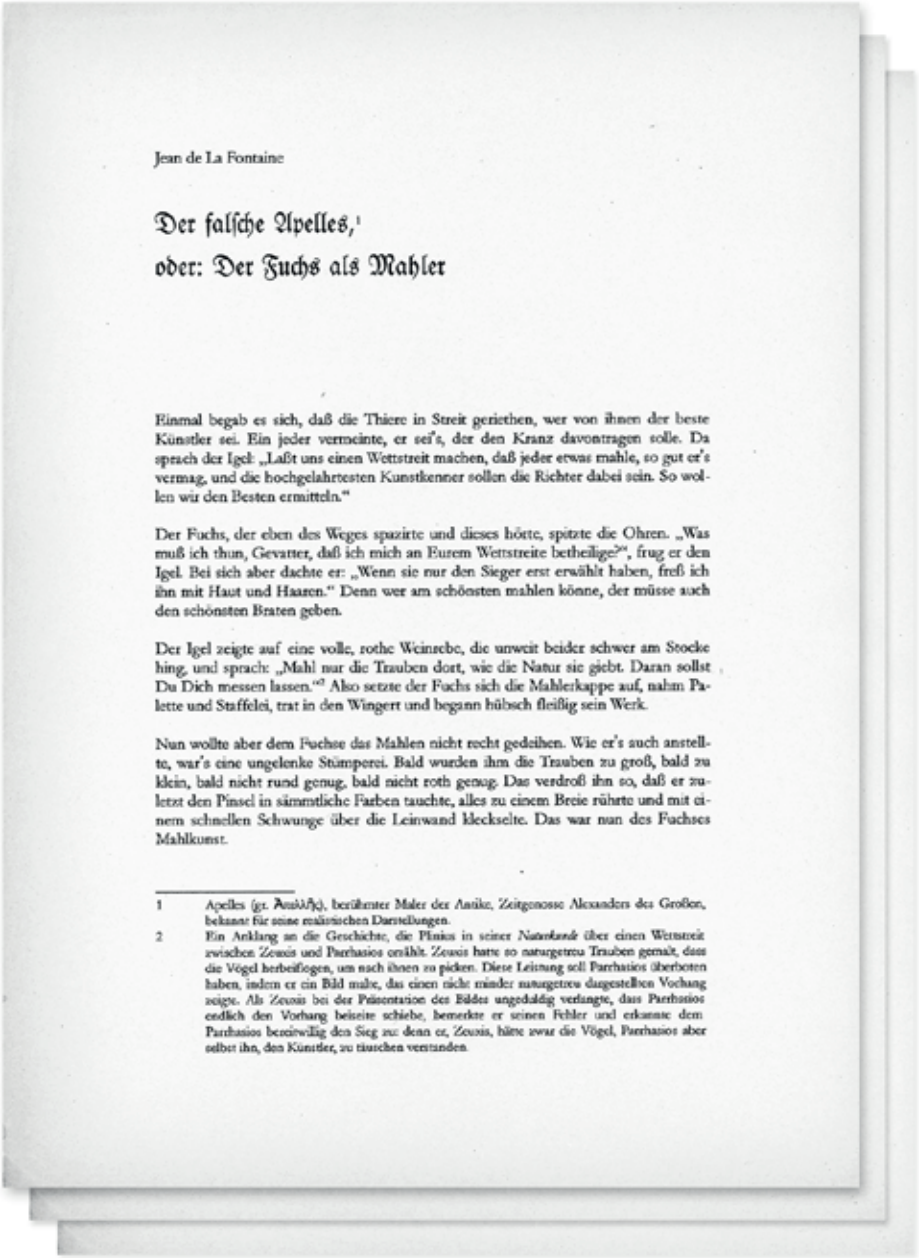
fig. 1  
Installation view,  
tripod with camera as  
mini cinema

fig. 2, 3  
The Award Ceremony,  
Video stills

fig. 4  
Installation view,  
The Wrong Apelles

fig. 5  
Frontpage,  
The Wrong Apelles

fig. 4





DRIVE-IN CINEMA\*

The Peugeot 205 faces the screen, like at a drive-in theatre. The wipers run and run. They tirelessly sweep away the water from the rainmachine, mounted on the roof rack. Sitting inside the vehicle, the beholder hears a soundtrack combining a radio program, engine noise, and the pitterpatter of raindrops. On screen, a night-time drive. Out of the darkness, oncoming cars appear like ghosts, glaring spotlights. Two beams of light hit you and then, in the blink of an eye, darkness again punctuated by the rhythm of white lines. Movement despite standing still, a hurtling standstill. Not only constructs "Drive-in Cinema" a homage to the drive-in culture of the 1950s and 1960s, but also crafts an illusion-machine, that's, standing still, simulates spatial forward motion and holds on to a moment, like a precious memory, with a aconic melancholy. (Anna Schneider)

Space Installation, Car, Rain machine,  
Video projection on canvas, 10 × 2 m, 2009

fig. 1

fig. 1  
Installation detail,  
Reflected projection  
in rain pit

fig. 2  
Installation view

fig. 3  
Video still,  
Car drive view

fig. 4  
Installations inside view



fig. 3

fig. 4



fig. 2





## UNDER WORLD\*

In the exhibition "UNDER WORLD", the subterranean MaximiliansForum is transformed from a white-washed exhibition space into what it maybe once was, actually is or could be. International artists invited by STRACKE&SEIBT, who in one way or another are devoted to the subterranean and concealed, play with the exhibition space as an urban underworld. The urban underworld is the invisible heart of a city traversed by infrastructure. Culturally and mythologically, the underworld always connotes the different and otherworldly, but it also connotes the enigmatic, the behaviours of subcultures distinct from the superficial world and philosophical depth. It also an un-place which enables exploration and experimentation. These investigations will be developed in diverse ways in the course of the exhibition and the accompanying programme of events. (Achim Sauter)

Artists: Felix Burger, Flow Defoe & Daniel Door, Manuel Haible/Heiko Wommelsdorf/Georg Werner, STRACKE&SEIBT, Ann-Sofi Sidén, Thomas Woll

Framework Events: Theaterplay by Florian Fischer with acting students of Otto-Falckenberg-Schule, Participatory Guide by Katharina Heudorfer, Elisabeth Krause, Bettina Wiehler, Screening and Music by Abbé Libansky, Dáša Vokatá, Lecture by Hias Wrba

fig. 1  
Exhibition space  
with artificial pit

fig. 2  
Modell Maximilians-  
forum, Exhibiton  
taking place on front  
space and backstage

fig. 3  
Dia screening with  
Abbe Libansky, „My  
privat Underground“

fig. 4  
Ann-Sophi Sidén,  
Installation view, QM,  
I Think I call her QM,

fig. 1

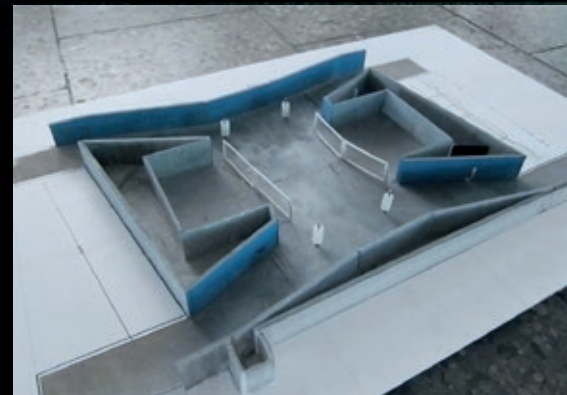


fig. 2



fig. 3

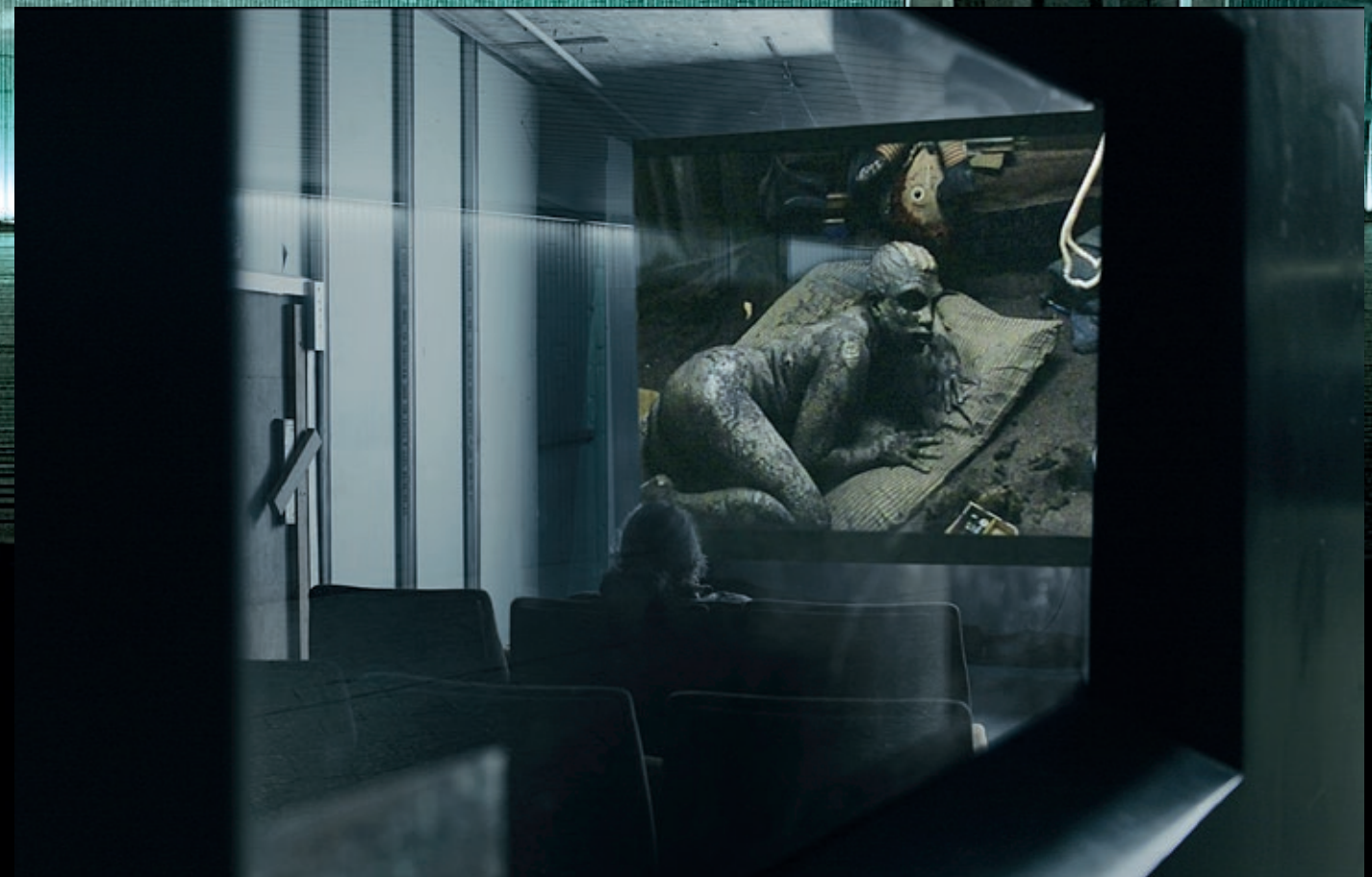


fig. 4



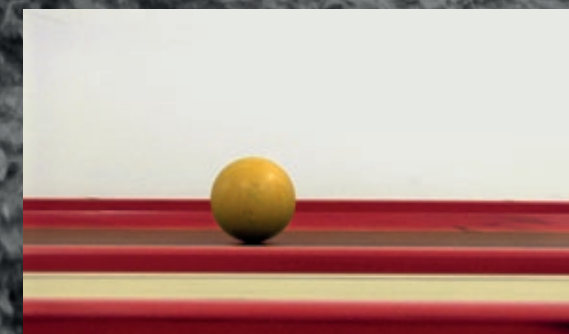
## UNDER WORLD\*

Video HD, 8:50 min., 2009



all fig.  
Video Stills, Unterwelt,  
HD, 8:10 min.

The video shows the city's underground as a secretive place of memory, of the concealed and the repressed. In a long tracking shot, a series of subterranean rooms open themselves up briefly, like slides, to the viewer's gaze. The camera digs through grey layers of earth, in a labyrinthine twilight zone of hallways, shafts and vaults that tunnel under the city like a network of roots. Library catalogues and archives glide by, where peculiarities lie and the one travels through the cathedral-like hall of a water reservoir, followed by laundry rooms and basement storage units dim in yellow lamplight. The world above penetrates only dampered and filtered, this world below. Amidst all this, sporadic traces of humanity and signs of absence: a small cart that circles the fossilized plastic of a model train landscape; a Juke-box plays its last song in a wood panelled hobby room and falls silent. Narratives pop up — and are once again left to themselves. (Christian Hartard)





**WAITING ROOM\***

Site-specific Installation, Mixed media, Munich, 2011

fig. 1



It remains uncertain whether or not there can be an end for those waiting in the room. Just as uncertain is that which actually awaits, in this at one moment phantasmic and at the next oppressive space. We are thrown into this space, as in a dream, in which the world has become porous. Behind frontal functionality there appear, as we continue to watch, abysses. Ordered in rows, sitting-aparatuses offer space in abundance, for those who would wait. The windows are covered over by dull blinds. The grotesque number of potted plants signify an alien idea of nature. (Anna Schneider)



fig. 2

fig. 1, 2  
Installation view,  
space Intervention,  
ground floor

fig. 3



fig. 3  
Photography, Light Box,  
60 × 80 cm, 2012



WINTER JOURNEY (WINTERREISE)\*

Video HD, 8 min., Theresienwiese Munich, 2010

The Theresienwiese (Theresa's Meadow) only serves its actual purpose as Munich's playground for a few weeks of the year. Most of the year it is left fallow, a bookmark, a reminder, a place of remembrance at an unusually prominent location. This video work shows the empty playground at daybreak on a cold winter day. Snowflakes increasingly cover the camera lens as it slowly traverses the main axes of the park. Gusts of wind audibly cross the field of view, intermittently bringing the illustrious sounds past and future amusements to mind and contrasting the sombre loneliness.





## THE END\*

The video “The End” shows a transition. For those on the threshold between life and death, their surroundings often slip away. He lies peacefully in bed until a gust of wind sets the walls of his sparsely furnished room in motion. The dying person tries to grasp, latch on to it, but the attempts fail. He can’t hold it. His environment disappears. (Jürgen Dehm)

The work shows a slow attempt to illustrate death within the language of film. It’s not the dying man who disappears after his passing. He doesn’t ‘leave us.’ Rather it’s his environment that dissolves, leaving him adrift in dark void. In order to spatially integrate the audience into the work, the film is screened in a black box. As the film ends, as the projection fades to black, the audience finds itself in the same black surrounding as the protagonist in the film.

Video installation, black box, dimensions variable,  
video HD, 2:36 min., 2012





## HOLDE KUNST\*

Performance, HD Documentation Video, Opera Singer,  
sheet, plinth, at Esther Donatz, Munich, 2012

fig. 1  
Performer leaving the  
exhibition opening

fig. 2  
Video still,  
Documentation video of  
Music Performance

fig. 3  
Video still, Spooks  
(Gespenster)



fig. 1



fig. 2

## SPOOKS (GESPENSTER)

Video Half HD, 7:50 min., 2015

fig. 3



Die mit schwarzen Tüchern verhüllte Baumgruppe wiegt sich gespensterhaft im Wind der kargen Landschaft Marokkos. Aus der Ferne ruft ein Muezzin zum Gebet, während ein Straßenhund das Gras zu Füßen der Bäume durchstöbert. Das Video dokumentiert eine alltägliche Szene an einem verlassenem Ort in einem fremden Land. Die schwarzen Schemen erscheinen wie eine Ansammlung verhüllter menschlicher Gestalten, die sich im Wind einander zu zuneigen und sich leise zu unterhalten scheinen.



## THE MUSES' BATH\*

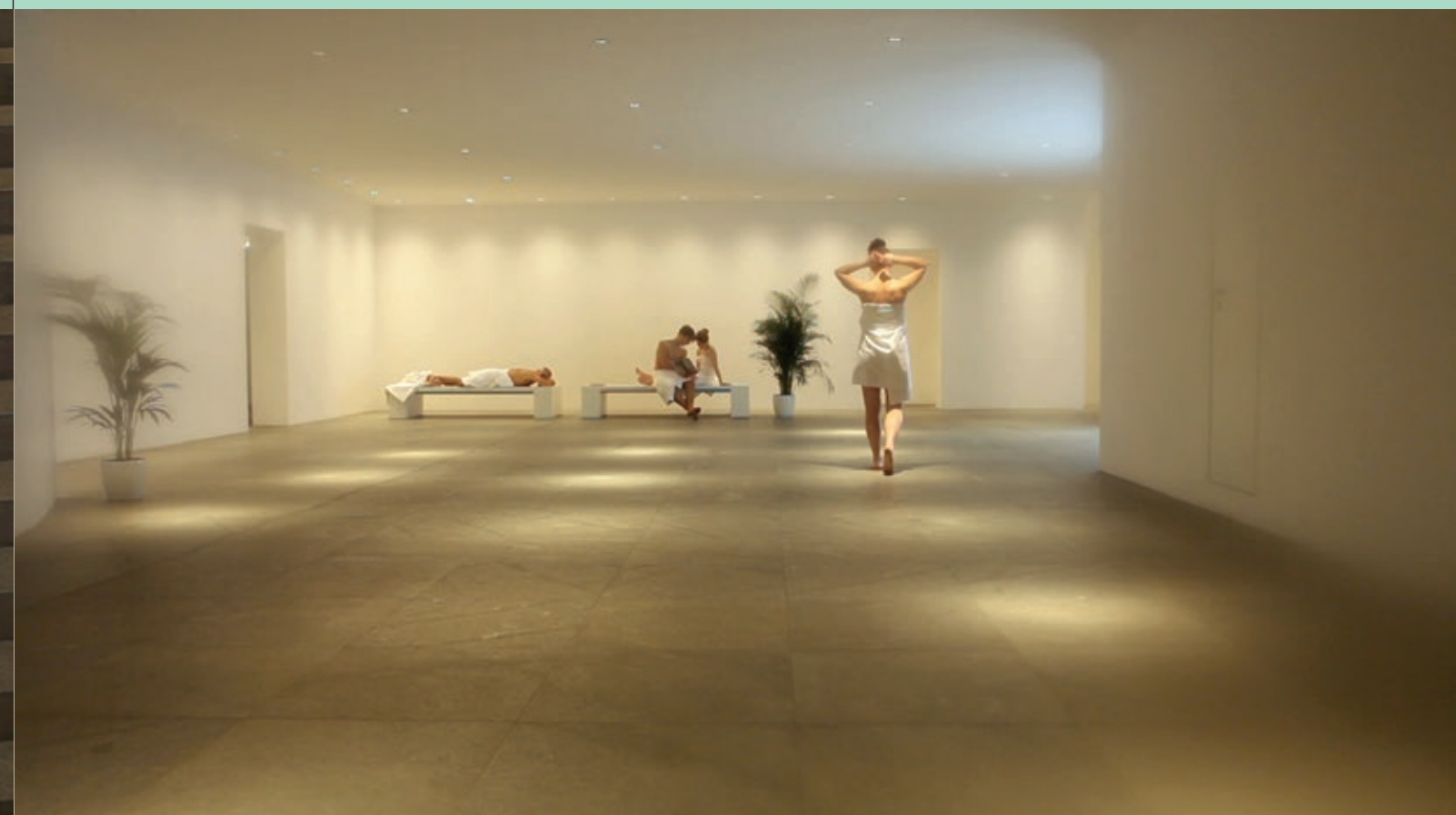
The Kunstmuseum Bonn becomes a landscape of wellness as a metaphor for art and its institution. Through minimal means — the gaze of the camera, a scant use of costumes and props — Clea Stracke and Verena Seibt reframe the museum architecture as a sauna paradise. Bathers and sauna goers move through the building and fill it with new life. In a series of tableaux vivants, the viewer follows the sauna guests as they find rest and renew their minds in the soft light of the dressing rooms, gently resonating conversations in the foyer or steaming in the well heated exhibition rooms. Through this reframed context, the video questions, in brief and calm scenes, the role of the museum and the interests of art as a compensation for everyday life.

Site specific video, HD, 8:30 min.  
Kunstmuseum Bonn, 2013



all fig.  
Video stills, The Muses Bath





all fig.  
Video stills, The Muses Bath



BECAUSE I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE\*

Video HD, 21:00 min., 2014



Because I Don't Love You Anymore plays out in a municipal recycling depot, a place where people can deposit their bulky waste in containers. The camera observes cars driving into the yard. New cars. Expensive cars. Many German cars. The cars open. People from all parts of society come out, alone or accompanied by their whole families. Everyone's brought something to throw away. The furniture of a whole city, mostly large things. (...) The film takes a tragic turn at a container with an integrated compactor. Here it becomes all too clear that the consequences of the divorce are irreversible. You climb the stairs to the edge of the container to throw your things into the metal Orcus and, before your very eyes, the machine chews them up and swallows. You could have rescued them from any other container, put them back in the car and driven home, but not here. Gone is gone. (...) With the recycling depot, the trash dumping station, Stracke and Seibt have recognised a place where every day life becomes a performance. Here, actions and feelings involuntarily and inevitably experience a certain exaggeration and intensification. They seem larger than life. (Jan Verwoert)



all fig.  
Video stills,  
Because I Do Not Love  
You Anymore



fig. 1-3  
Video stills,  
Because I Do Not Love  
You Anymore

fig. 4  
Installation view

fig. 1-3



fig. 4





## UNSTABLE TERRAIN\*

Space Installation, Construction prop, timber, cardboard, foil, Altitude adjustable, KIT Düsseldorf, 2014







fig. 1

## UNSTABLE TERRAIN\*

The installation of heavy, rusty construction supports in the white gallery space may irritate. Is it an art installation or is the gallery actually liable to collapse? The supports congregate almost threateningly at one point where the ceiling seems particularly unstable. As safety tested emergency support, they secure the building and efficiently serve as system maintenance. Additionally, they're bounded by construction planks and bits of cardboard on each end so as to increase their support and protect the floor and ceiling from damage. Plastic foil is stretched out just below the ceiling to protect the room from falling dust and pieces of plaster. As a result of their irregular arrangement and the slender poles' attempts at delicacy, they lose their heaviness and let the room seem, on the contrary, like a forest glade.

Space Installation, Construction prop, timber, cardboard, foil Altitude adjustable, Galerie Esther Donatz, München, 2014

fig. 1  
Installation view,  
Unstable Terrain,  
KIT Düsseldorf

fig. 2-4  
Video stills/Still  
images, C-Print,  
20 × 30 cm, Fall No. 1-5

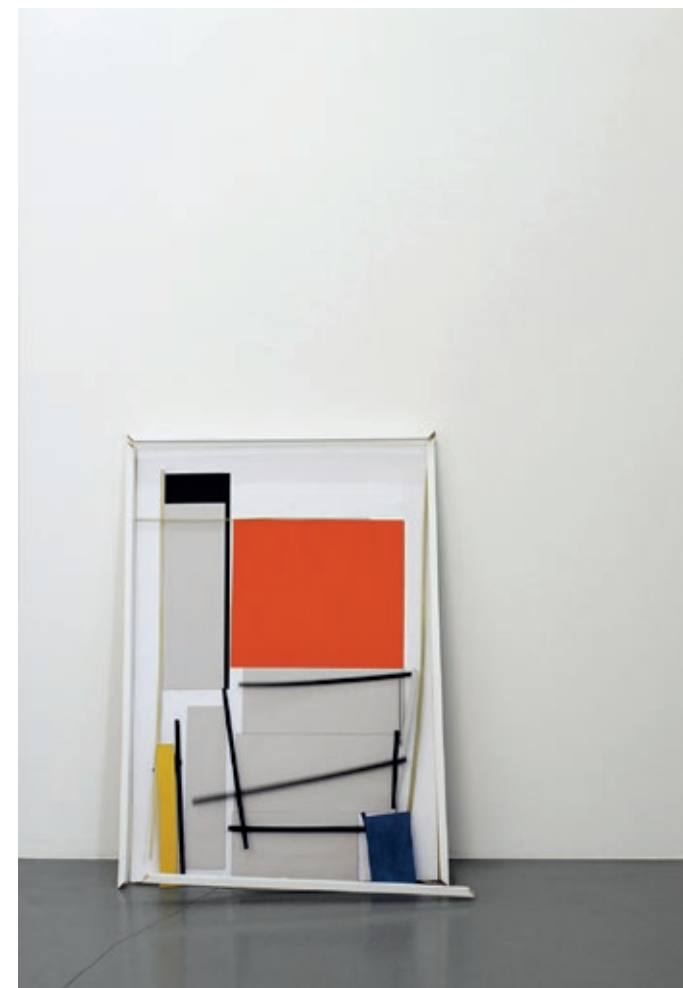


fig. 2-4

## FALL NO.1-5\*

The video/photo-series Fall No.1 through Fall No.5 — here 'Fall' is a word play in German, referring to both a fall and a specific instance or case — records in various versions how Piet Mondrian's painting Tableau I falls from a wall. The colourful rectangles and black lines free themselves from their given order. During the fall, they continuously form, for moments of a second, a series of new compositions, until they adopt their final configuration.

Video HD, 5 Variations, 3 min,  
plus Photographic Sequence  
C-Prints, 5-part  
42 cm × 62 cm 2014





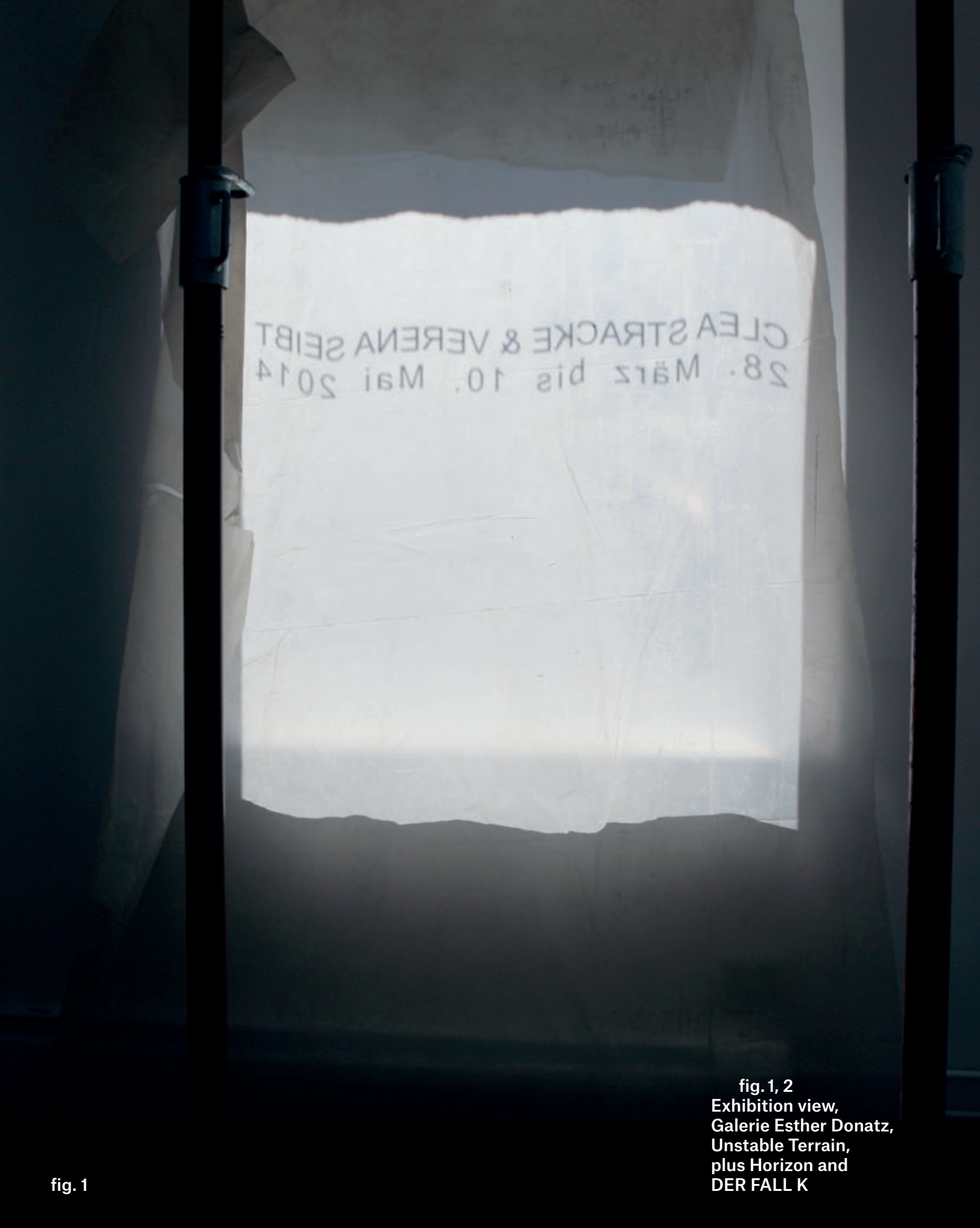


fig. 1

fig. 1, 2  
Exhibition view,  
Galerie Esther Donatz,  
Unstable Terrain,  
plus Horizon and  
DER FALL K

## DER FALL K\*

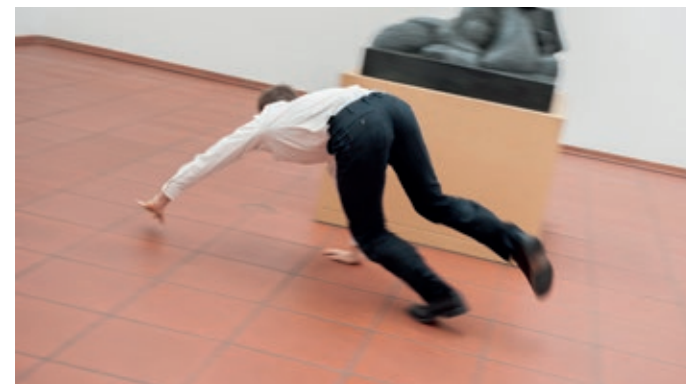
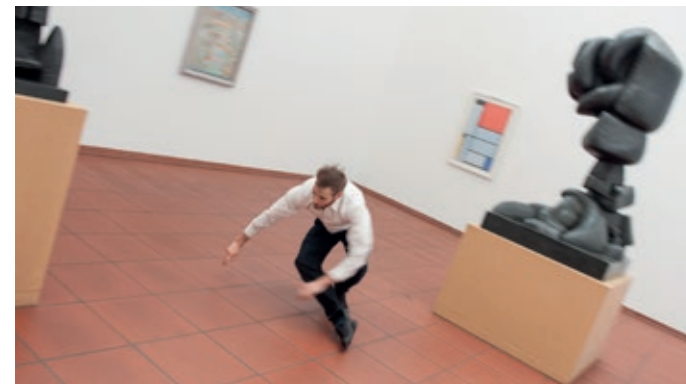
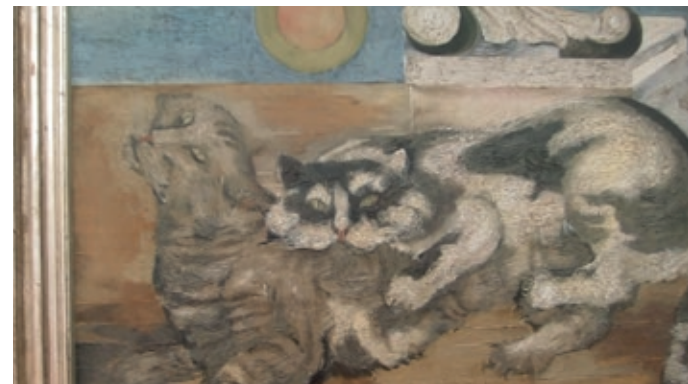
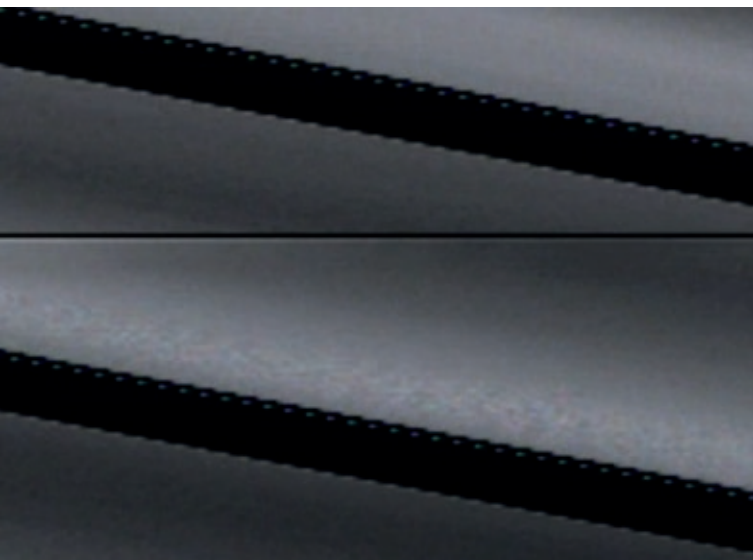
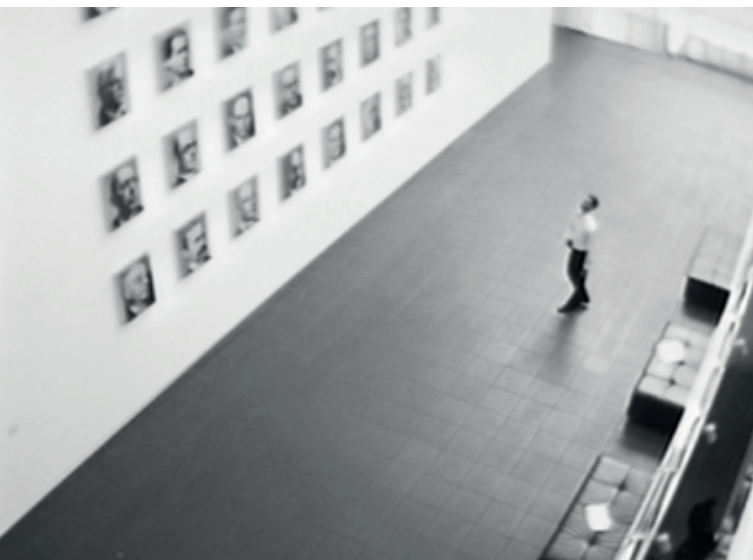
In the video “Der Fall K.” an ordinary museum visit turns out to be a surreal tripping hazard. The floor and walls begin to totter; the protagonist loses his footing and tumbles several times. perception is not reliable any more. The sculpture and their pedestals careen through the image. The paintings free themselves from the walls and crash to the floor. The image on the supposedly objective surveillance camera keeps going out. The various recording media — the protagonist’s subjective camera, the surveillance camera and the pocket camera — dissolve each other’s plausibility through montage. The narrative threads become blurred. What’s happening here? Has anything happened at all? (Nadine Seligmann)

Video HD/Pal/Überwachungskamera, 7 min., 2014

fig. 2







all fig.  
Video stills, THE FALL K





## HORIZON\*

The framed work Horizon shows an unstable seascape where the water level slants to one side of the image. In contrast to the photograph a spirit level placed on top of the frame shows a perfect balance.

Assemblage, C-Print, frame, water level,  
64 cm × 92 cm × 3 cm, 2014



all fig.  
Installation view,  
Horizon plus Unstable  
Terrain



fig. 1  
Detail, Medusa's Raft,  
The Ship is Sinking,  
Light box 60 × 40 cm





THE SHIP IS SINKING ...\*

The video work *The Ship is sinking* shows the highly symbolic painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) by Theodore Gericault. Being inspired by a true naval accident off the Senegal coast, it was made only few years before Caspar David Friedrich's *Sea of Ice/The Wreck of Hope* (1823/24). Transforming the art work itself into the raft, the video version brings up the question if the painting awaits the same fate as the passengers of the French frigate *Meduse*: Will it drown in the depth of the sea or is rescue in sight? Can art survive? What role will it play then? (Nadine Seligmann)

Video HD, 7:40 min., Light Box , 60 × 40 cm, 2014



fig.1

fig.2



fig.1  
Light Box, 60 × 40 cm,  
*The Ship is sinking*

fig.2  
Installation view:  
Video, HD, *The Ship  
is sinking*, Galerie  
Esther Donatz



fig. 1



**NON LO SO\***

Video installation, waiting area of Munich Central Station Steel frame, 3.5 × 4.5 × 2 m, curtain, HD-video, 8:30 min., 2015



fig. 2

fig. 3



fig. 1  
Installation view,  
Waiting Area, Main  
STation, Munich

fig. 2  
Exhibition Invitation,  
Collage, NON LO SON

fig. 3  
Video still, NON LO SON

A man and a woman sit in silence at a kitchen table. Only communicating with their bodies and faces. "Come to stay for good?" — "I don't know." Small changes of the light situation, the movement of the kitchen curtains, the rattle of the windows and a distant sound of passing cars cause the kitchen setting to shift back and forth into resembling the interior of a train.



