

lukasz erbst

potrfloio
2024

Feeding

The performance “Feeding” tackles anonymisation of delivery riders as a gesture to address the exploiting conditions in that area of labour. The ordering process via the established food delivery apps is largely virtual for users: virtual restaurants, virtual reviews, virtual menus, virtual payment process.

The riders are the unavoidable manual component in the supply chain, through which a de-virtualisation of the product takes place. At the same time, they carry the name of the platform through the streets as advertising media.

The precarious working conditions that repeatedly come to light and the corruption of organisational structures by middlemen regularly bear witness to an exploitative field of activity. A field of activity that is probably regarded as superfluous and devalued by companies and all too often also by customers. It is only logical that this necessary real-life encounter at the end of every order is seen as an unimportant exception to the otherwise pleasant virtuality. How serious can virtual problems be?

Together with three dancers, guests at the Kreuzberg Pavilion experienced a kind of ritual healing from anonymisation by being delivered something that no one had ordered but everyone deserved: An intimate, respectful and loving encounter with a stranger.

Performers

Juan Corres Benito
Sylvana Seddig
Jeanna Serikbayeva
Lukas Zerbst

Photos by
Joe Clark

2024 performance Kreuzberg Pavillon



VIDEO 

Follow me blindly

Follow me Blindly is a device that was specially developed for the purpose of clicking the Like button on social media platforms such as Instagram. It consists of a motorised pen and a camera that constantly scans the contact surface of the device for Like buttons. As soon as a post has been liked, the machine starts to "swipe". The result is a continuous working rhythm that transforms the redundant use of the platform into machine-controlled vehemence and accompanies it acoustically.

At the same time, the absence of a user, whose presence should be the basic principle of every social media platform, becomes clear. Instead, the machine becomes a worker, a clickworker that generates interactions - a digital currency that gives the respective account more visibility.

It is also crucial that *Follow me Blindly* is not a software bot, but a much more elaborately manufactured machine. Due to the analogue control by the smartphone, the algorithm of the respective platform can hardly distinguish the operation of the machine from that of a human being.

And yet the recipients of the likes assume that every interaction is sincere recognition. The machine undermines this basic idea and hacks into the system of the economy of attention.

Follow me Blindly is the first device in a series of tools that will be developed in the future. This body of work will be called *Tools of Silent Disobedience*, all of which embody the power to corrupt the systems of daily life with their own operating principles.

VIDEO 

2023
liking machine
Staedtische Galerie Bremen



Field Report

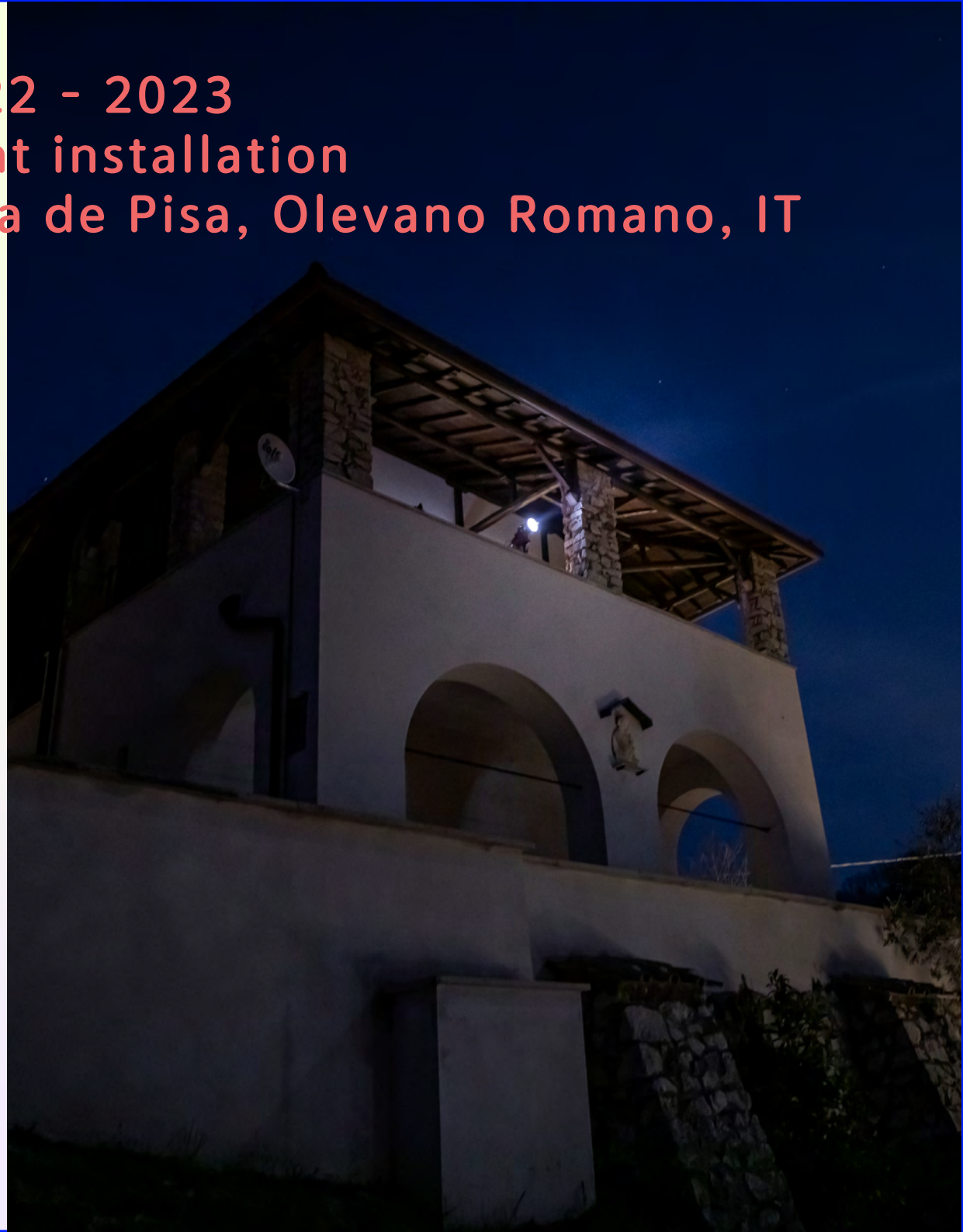
Field Report was designed for the Italian village of Olevano Romano and is a light installation that connects the two German artists' houses on site.

The conversation between two chatbots could be followed from the village: A computer programme translates the light signals for the guests of the houses. The Morse code-like messages give the impression of human communication. With the help of the chatbot "Replika", received messages are returned empathically, for example in the form of encouragement or questions.

The chatbots' endeavours make them seem alien to the viewer; the indecipherable light signals make them appear almost uncomfortable. In the double alienation caused by Morse code-like light signals and the communication of codes, "Field Report" reflects relationships of strangeness in the confrontation with technologies that attempt to imitate human behaviour.

[VIDEO](#) 

2022 - 2023
light installation
Villa de Pisa, Olevano Romano, IT



Weary Garden

The grass garden, sealed off from the hustle and bustle of the big city, creates a haven of peace in the Hansa neighbourhood with its tall-growing fauna swaying in the wind and the constantly rippling water feature. The garden leaves little opportunity for surprises: Everything in the square space is arranged in a grid; paving stones, pond, as well as the artificial patches of earth from which the grasses grow. It is 'in order', appears perfect: Neither intrusive, nor restrained. An "unpathetic box" (according to the architect Duettmann): Completed, finished, thought through to the end.

For the object staging, the various organs of the garden were put into waiting mode: Projects begun, but nothing is finished. A landscape in the making. Working materials lie around, unfinished installations - the spirit of imperfection hovers over everything. Only the active people are missing, but it seems as if they have just left or are about to return. The "Tired Garden" lies in such a state of limbo.

"Four legends tell of Prometheus," says Kafka and concludes his short prose thus: "The gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wound closed wearily." Byung Chul-Han opens "The Burnout Society" with reference to this short text, before considering neuronal disease as the guiding principle of our time. His work resonates with a real discomfort in society today: the joyful self-exploitation, the voluntary overload. Work-work balance. The weary garden consists of window grilles that do not close off, but invite. They mark something worth protecting that they immediately neglect by not being able to function either outside or inside.

The fountain inflates, a blockage: the pipe was under pressure and formed a misshapen ulcer that now vegetates organically but motionlessly in the drained basin of the grass garden. Cuts mark the traces of a possible dissection and turn this spatial staging into a petri dish of our constitution.

VIDEO 

2024 site-specific installation Akademie der Kuenste, Berlin



Pics or it didn't happen

Pics or it didn't happen is a term from the early days of the internet - what started as a demand for proof of a claim made online has become part of our everyday lives through social media and is spreading to information services in general. Something only happens where images are created.

The process of digitising social gatherings has accelerated immensely in the last two years. It is hard to imagine a live action without AV documentation. With this in mind, "Pics or it didn't happen" is an extensive documentary film performance: a group of people film their collective walk through the exhibition or through a lively event. They each strive for the best film shot, but pursue their goal in slow motion, as if on the prowl.

The result is a panoramic film that shows the raw footage from each camera side by side. The filmmakers themselves are not visible - their performative contribution to the documented evening remains the only thing hidden.

Photos
Mani Froh

VIDEO 

2021 performance Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, CH



Home Sweet Home

The intervention entitled *Home Sweet Home* at Staedtische Galerie Bremen was available for booking as accommodation via Airbnb during the solo show of Lukas Zerbst. Guests were allowed to reside between 6pm and 10am - outside of the opening hours of the gallery. The functionality of the space changed as soon as someone acquired the art space sleeping accommodation. What must be read as art by institutional definition during the gallery's opening hours becomes a collection of everyday objects - and an exclusive experience - when paid for by visitors staying over. The appealing idea of inhabiting art, inscribing oneself as a part of the art work and being in the museum at night is however solely fulfilled without an audience.

Lukas Zerbst's appropriation of the space primarily concerns the institutional level of the Staedtische Galerie. This is because, in terms of building regulations, it is not a residential space but a public cultural venue. It is partially privatised and above all monetised by the Airbnb. This makes the essentially subversive gesture of simply stripping an art institution of its functionality and thus its exclusivity a reflection of a development that is shaping our society. Hosting offers such as Airbnb are demonstrably destroying affordable living space, fuelling the privatisation of profits in a late capitalist society and at the same time evading social responsibility."

Ingmar Laehnemann (Curator Staedtische Galerie Bremen)

Photos
Franziska von den Driesch

VIDEO 

2023 spatial installation & holiday accommodation Staedtische Galerie, Bremen



Wartung (Maintenance)

After entering the tiny exhibition space, you face a person whose exhaustion is clearly visible. Sweat pours from their forehead as they breathe heavily and wipe up water from the flooded floorboards. Water is constantly dripping down from the ceiling - partially soaking the person, who is now reaching for the bucket. With an involuntary groan, they devote themselves to drying the floor. And so it goes on and on.

The cause of the dilemma soon becomes apparent: the ceiling is arching towards the floor in the form of a huge drop, spewing water that the plumber is trying to keep away from the delicate wooden floor. Two toolboxes stand in the corner, as if another person, who is holding our protagonist captive here in the prison of his maintenance, has just left - to get help?

Onlookers appear, idly watching as the plumber's struggle continues.

The performance premiered at the Warte fuer Kunst in Kassel in 2022. The presence of a group of viewers in the cinematic documentary reinforces and concretizes the gap between the worker and the audience present. The actions of the plumber become a show act, as do the non-actions of the bystanders.

As the son of a Polish working-class family, I have inherited a willingness to work physically. As with my father, action serves me as a strategy for overcoming insecurities. Work as an offer of peace, but only if it is reciprocated. This silent performance in the socially occupied space of an exhibition area contrasts the exhaustion of the worker with the inactivity of his audience - and opens up a view of social inequality in general.

Photos
Tanja Juergenson

2022 spatial installation & performance Warte fuer Kunst, Kassel



VIDEO 

Breathing

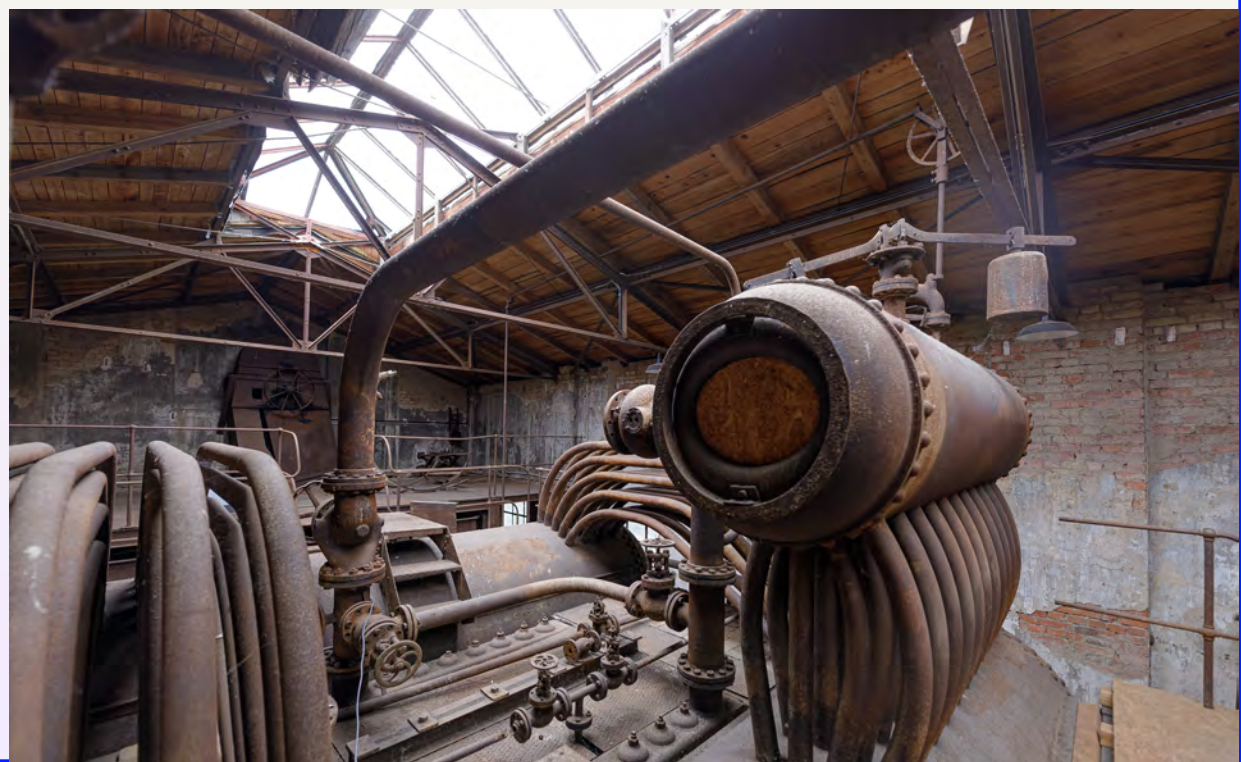
A sound installation conceived for the Kesselhaus Linden, based on the soundscape of the former part of the bedspring factory, which is still inscribed in the heavy machinery: travelling conveyor belts, falling coal, hissing furnaces. In the now silent hall, you can still envision metal hitting metal and a rattling, rusty clatter sets the room flickering with heat into rhythmic motion. Overpressure, underpressure. The house breathed, the boiler panted. Like a gigantic lung, it drew in air, it breathed fire.

For the piece Breathing sounds people make with their mouths were recorded: sighing, moaning, humming, coughing, screaming, breathing ... This resulted in the 10-channel sound installation, which was spread over the entire size of the Kesselhaus Linden. The multi-directional composition counteracts the imagined machine-like soundscape of the Kesselhaus with human sounds. These are sounds that were also present as the workers went about their physically demanding activities - but which were drowned out by the engaging rhythm of the machine, with which they were in harmony, synchronised. Breathing brought these sounds of people in the heat of the moment back into the boiler house.

The machine is seen, not without good reason, as an extension of human capacities, as a prosthesis. Humans copied most technical developments from nature. The boiler house seems like a complicated organism whose components fall into the right place at the right time like clockwork - rhythmically ensuring that the machine is constantly breathing. A lung made of steel.

VIDEO 

2023 sound installation Kesselhaus Linden, Hannover



An other white

A white man in a white overall paints white walls white. Not exactly the same white, but a slightly different colour. Disguised as a pragmatic gesture of customary room cosmetics, the performance "An Other White" takes place within an exhibition that is already open.

Instructions provide precise guidelines for the quality of the work and for possible conversations with exhibition guests. For example, the new colour is applied to the walls in a dilettantish manner so that the subtly different tone can still be guessed at the corners.

The fact that "An Other White" could be overlooked as an artistic intervention is symptomatic of the problem it addresses: it is a kind of public deletion of an already white space - as a gesture, as a protest in solidarity, it is only valid for as long as it takes place.

After that, the walls are simply white - no difference is visible without comparison. In the end, the action has made no visible difference in the perception of everyone.

Are we as artists doing enough to use our art to campaign for better conditions and equal rights for all people? The answer given by this performance is always: No.

Photo
Volker Crone

2020
performance
Kunstverein Hannover



Protective Shield

Created for the exhibition *Kinderspiel*, *protective shield* was an intervention on the threshold between the exhibition space and the neighbouring kindergarten. A steel grid was installed to protect the gallery from danger - here it bends into the interior and protrudes far into the room through the open window.

This gesture means that the structural element is not only defective, it virtually invades the area it was intended to protect.

In the context of the cycle of works centred around *Kinderspiel*, this work raises psychological-pedagogical questions about safety and care - perhaps over-care. *protective shield* leaves open which side is to be protected, but raises the question of which psychological relationship between inside and outside is the right one here. A defective lock to the outside serves as protection against loneliness.

It is also a question of protective space and privacy, which are being rigorously invaded here. In doing so, 'protective shield repeatedly asks the question: What are we protecting?

VIDEO 

2021
site-specific installation
Galerie Januar, Bochum



lukaszerbst

Home Smart Home

The “smart home” has represented a persistent vision of utopian domestic futures since at least the mid-twentieth century. Home automation have raised several concerns and accelerated previous forms of domestic discipline and control. Home Smart Home is a new media artwork that aims to investigate new patterns of behaviour in domestic abuse cases tied to the rise of smart home technology.

The work establishes a dialogue with *Horla*, a horror story written by Guy de Maupassant that unfolds the mental degradation of an unnamed narrator haunted by an invisible creature. Drawing on the similarities carried by the story, the video articulates the power dynamics as well as the psychological effects embedded into this new form of digital harassment.

collaboration with
Tommaso Ranfagni, Sophia Becker, Martina Morger

2024
short film
(ongoing)



lukaszerbst

Watchtower

In the frame of his solo exhibition 'Space Invader' Lukas was living and working in the exhibition space of Kunstverein Hannover. Being watched by CCTV at all times, he decided to move his whole equipment including bed, underneath the camera, outside its picture frame.

A wooden staircase was then constructed on the opposite side of the space, lifting the viewer about 3,5 meters above ground. On top, a small screen displayed the live view of the CCTV camera that was depicting the viewer from the back. However, nothing of Lukas' studio was seen in the picture frame - the viewer seemed to be alone in the room. Being inspired by Bruce Naumans closed circuit installations, Lukas created a hierarchical imbalance between himself, who was living and working inside the space all along, the viewers and the institution. In the context of the exhibition he was the one to be looked at, to be kept under surveillance, which he aimed to emphasise by constructing this 'Watchtower' for guests. However, viewers would soon recognise themselves as still being watched by a higher instance - one that is hiding behind the curtain of a CCTV camera who's eyes the artist already succeeded to escape by living underneath its radar.

Photo
Volker Crone

[VIDEO](#) 

2020
spatial intervention
Kunstverein Hannover, DE



lukaszerbst

Ekleipsis

Intervention in the ambient lighting of the exhibition space: lights that are switched off and on one after the other form a shadow that moves through the room. In addition, loudspeakers are installed that acoustically amplify the movement of the shadow. A computer generates the characteristics of the shadow (e.g. size, speed, ...) using a random algorithm and remixes the sound accordingly.

Ekleipsis plays directly with the functionality of the exhibition space. In an impressive way, a shadow takes over the exhibition space, shrouds the works in it in darkness and in this way takes the art away from the art show. At the same time, Ekleipsis itself has no materiality: it is neither visible when no other work is visible and the room is darkened, nor when the room is illuminated and every corner of it is clearly visible and where the shadow is, only the regular ceiling can be seen. Ekleipsis is in between: As expectation, speculation, threat, spectacle.

VIDEO 

2018
site-specific installation
Kunstverein Hannover



Rear Windows

The light installation consists of three motor-controlled theatre spotlights, each of which shines through a window on the upper floor into an inner courtyard. The movements and light intensity of the spotlights are generated by random algorithms.

"Fenster zum Hof" can certainly be understood as an appeal: Like a giant magic lantern, the spotlights project the silhouettes of the window crosses onto surfaces in the inner courtyard. From there, viewers are exposed to the creeping exploration of the inner courtyard by the spotlights. They themselves are occasionally caught in the spotlight, becoming involuntary protagonists. Are they therefore perhaps more like searchlights on a targeted search from which a threat emanates? Like a surveillance system?

The light is an expression of the idea of being watched, which actually originates from the window itself. The window is the origin of the idea of being observed, the condition of this possibility. An allusion to Hitchcock's film brings up motifs of suspense or reminds us specifically of the film's subject: Are the viewers the observers or the observed? What story is spun around our brief involuntary public appearance in the spotlight, our short solo moment in the theatre of the world?

[VIDEO](#) 

2019 light installation Kloster Bentlage, Rheine



lukaszerbst

Rewinding Staircase

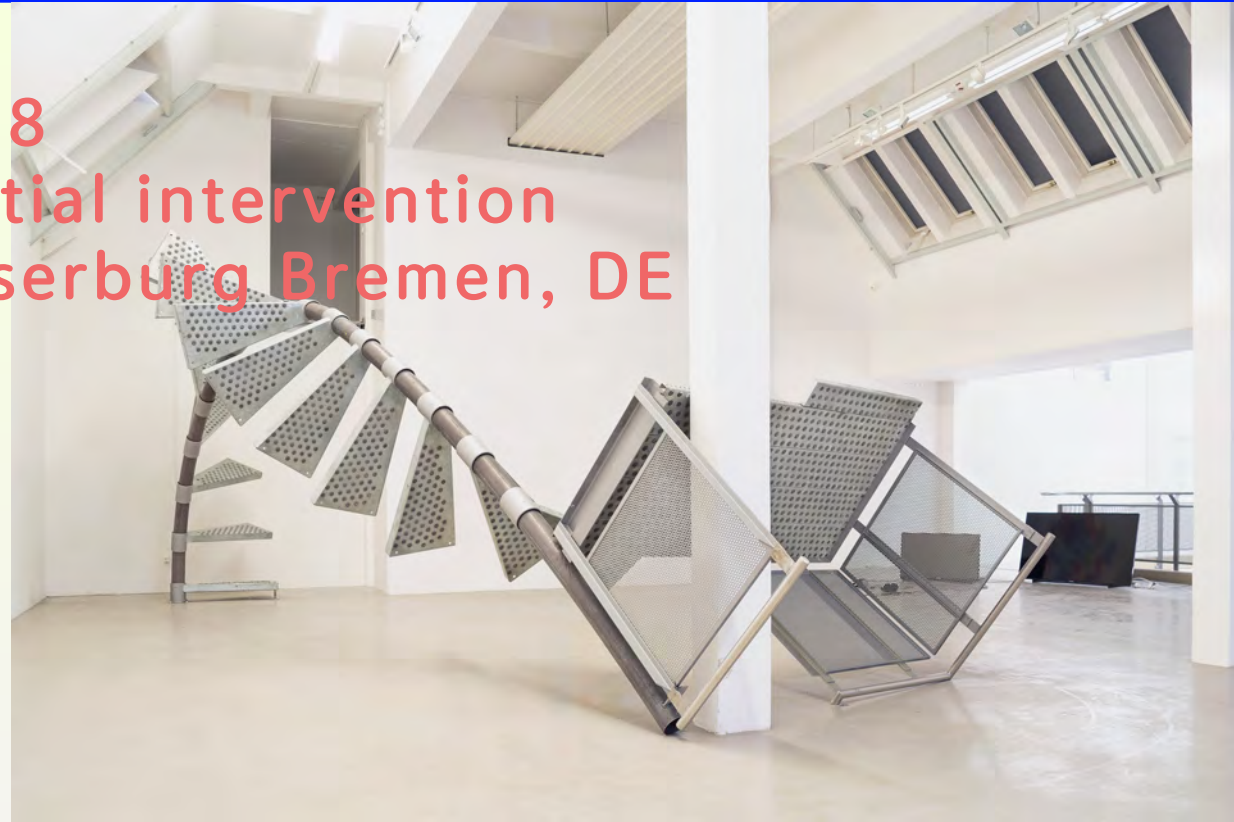
A winding staircase that is part of the interior of the museum, bends itself towards the floor. Steel profiles point out of the wall, that used to hold the pedestal to which the staircase led and which allowed access to a door at the upper half of the room. This pedestal is now leaning at a pillar in the center of the space.

This 'Rewinding staircase' takes a functional object and transforms it into a sculpture. The stair elements descend like rotor blades towards the middle of the exhibition space.

Photos
Ruediger Lubricht

[VIDEO](#) 

2018
spatial intervention
Weserburg Bremen, DE



lukaszerbst

Autoportrait

Re-enactment of the very popular nude drawing at Vietnam University of Fine Arts in Hanoi. Four of the overall nine ceiling-fans are extended to a height of 1,50m - 1,80m above the floor. The blades touch paper that is fixed to scaffolds lightly, draw horizontal lines or hit it. The scaffolds are aligned to the center of the room, where Lukas positioned himself as a nude model.

Lukas thematizes the general censorship of nudity in the field of arts in Vietnam, which paradoxically is a strict routine at Arts Universities. Also, he presents himself as a foreigner to the local society, as an obvious white male person, as example motif of exotisation in an environment exotic to himself.

VIDEO 

2016
spatial intervention
& performance
Vietnam University of Fine Arts

