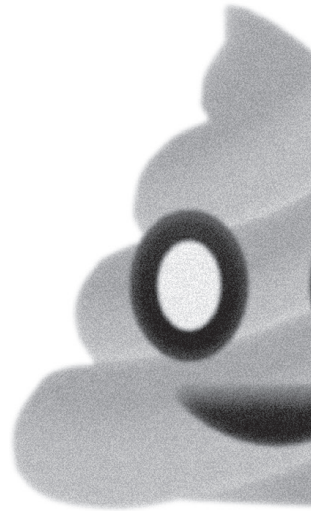


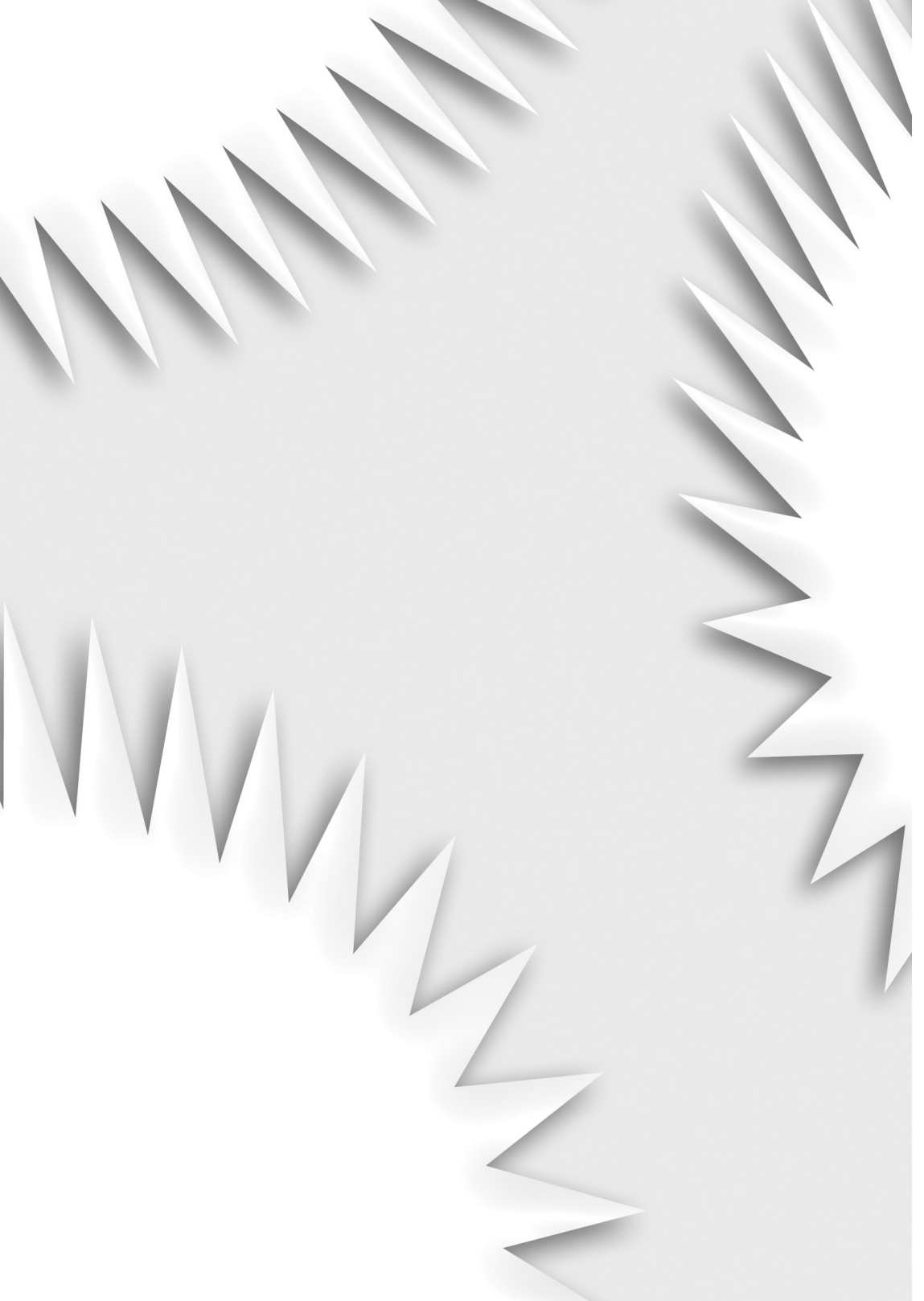
CLASS ISSUES

ART
PRODUCTION
IN AND OUT
OF PRECARIY



Nov 25, 2022 – Jan 9, 2023

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CLASS ISSUES Extreme class differences collide within the field of art. The promise of an art world career is often accompanied by lived realities and conditions of production entrenched in precarity; behind the glamorous image of the artist lurk shrouded poverty and relations of dependence. We want to talk about how strongly social background influences access and careers, and how art production is largely dependent on economic, social, and cultural capital. The exhibition sheds light on structural disadvantages and negotiates questions that erupt within the field of art due to the effects of classism.

Origin as Obstacle

When social background impedes access to educational institutions, exhibition opportunities, or funding, classism is usually at play. It rears its head via a lack of financial resources or contacts, insufficient knowledge of application jargon, or a failure to master the *habitus* customary in this context. Classism is often intertwined with forms of discrimination such as sexism, racism, and ableism.

The exhibition illuminates how strongly artistic practice can be influenced by the consequences of these forms of discrimination. Self-doubt and self-manipulative strategies are two modes of behavior that exemplify the negative impact experiences of discrimination can have on mental health: people often attribute failure to their own personal shortcomings rather than finding responsibility within the exclusionary structures of the art system ripe for critique. The exhibition aims to expose and raise awareness of these often-hidden interrelations. Therefore, we have selected works that both take up and break with classist ascriptions by means of irony and appropriation.

Conditions of Production

How can one make art when the means of production are limited or non-existent, when there is no space available and the idea of being able to afford a studio is presumptuous or simply absurd? What of those who have conceived of a work that can never be realized due to scarce resources? The exhibition presents works that negotiate and document the precarious working and living conditions within the art field. Exemplary in this regard are productions that remain sketches due to a lack of resources, as well as scenarios where artists resort to “poor” materials or standardized formats, or where the size of an artwork is constricted due to a lack of storage space.

Art Market Derangement

The field of art is characterized by a paradoxical simultaneity. While hoping for a brilliant career in the art market, most artists work under precarious conditions and finance themselves through jobs at minimum-wage level. Poverty is both kept out of sight and at the same time fetishized. Illusive “rags-to-riches” tales continue to be blithely spun. The exhibition draws attention to how these paradoxes control working artists. It exhibits positions that address “class-switching” from underpaid gallery install jobs to exclusive gallery dinners, from the family of origin far removed from art to the art bubble.

It can be observed that one's perception of their own precarity can be quite subjective. How much need can one claim if they're expecting an inheritance or own a condominium?

Areas of Neglect

Which artists remain invisible due to barriers to entry? What remains unspoken (out of shame)? One of the taboo topics that is directly addressed in the exhibition is poverty in old age. It concerned artists like Hannah Höch who are represented within the collection of the Berlinische Galerie, and it continues to concern many today, as noted in the exhibited appeals of artists over 60 affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and applying for a subsidy to live and work. The exhibition also presents works by artists without academic training or a permanent home, as well as by artists with learning disabilities or mental impairments. And it makes space for artists who have experienced system change due to migration or collapsed political systems, as in the GDR or former Yugoslavia.

Options for Action

How can the field of art become more rooted in practices of solidarity? Recognizing forms of discrimination as intertwined prompts what sort of practices of resistance? Approaching the field of art with a lens onto classism leads to questions focused on options for action and proposals for solutions. These include efforts towards making production conditions transparent as well as decisions taken to only work collectively, countering the idealized image of the (ingenious/individualized) artist through modes of collaboration.

This much is clear: classism affects all areas of society and ought to be thoroughly named and called for critique. In this exhibition, we begin by placing a special focus on the field of art.

The exhibition concept incorporates information within the labels concerning the social background and working and living conditions of the exhibitions' participants. This includes specifications about the professions of parents, the number of grants applied for, or the side jobs juggled in parallel with one's artistic practice. Some of the exhibiting artists provided such contextual information, others chose not to.

In the case of artists already deceased, the current comparable market value to the works shown in the exhibition is indicated, underlining the paradoxical simultaneity of precarious living alongside and within mechanisms designed to create value.

Anonymized letters from artists

Thanks to a donation, in 2021 the *berufsverband bildender künstler*innen berlin* [Professional Association of Visual Artists Berlin] was able to provide financial support to artists over 60 who were particularly affected by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The personal testimonies attached to the applications for this one-off grant testify to meager living conditions: some of the letters are handwritten, owing to the fact that guaranteed access to computers is not a given – as can unfortunately also be stated regarding access to adequate healthcare and retirement provisions. In consultation with the authors, a selection of these texts is presented anonymously within the exhibition, including a letter by Elke Philomena Kupfer. Her piece “Ausgegossene Illusionen” [Poured-out Illusions] is shown in close proximity to the enlarged copies of the letters. In the work, a figure holds a shopping bag in their hand. The work dismantles the failed promises of consumer society – where human beings are solely appreciated in regards to their spending power. Kupfer is deeply concerned with the consequences of this development: the aggressive destruction of our environment alongside a steep increase in child and old-age poverty. Kupfer captures the discrepancy between slight hope and actual vulnerability, between quixotic illusion and helplessness.

Douglas Boatwright

In Douglas Boatwright's long-term project “Autophag, Brain Drain, Brain Gain, Cannibal,” images from a fluctuating archive are printed using standard printers and ink cartridges in various states of exhaustion. The prints result from machine failures triggered after extended periods of use – from incessantly printing portfolios to reams of bureaucratic paperwork. Boatwright refers to his project as a “hibernatory practice” – a way to generate and nourish artistic work while otherwise busy with freelance jobs. It visualizes a process in which deficient mechanisms (in this case, machines intended to faithfully reproduce images) make adequate representation impossible. In suggestive constellations of specific motifs, the work connects the impenetrability of certain hegemonic images – modernist monochrome painting; Confederate monuments based on neoclassical sculpture; media images of police violence in the United States – with depictions of piercing optical or celestial phenomena. *

Frauke Boggasch

(*1975 in Erlangen; lives in Berlin) comments on the notion of the genius artist with ironic self-presentation. After decades of poorly paid work for others, she calls into question her recent ascent to being a “full-time artist”. During what she considers a very generously funded residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, she created six essayistic video works: “Observations from my Castle, Paris // Notes” provides reflections and observations of life in her alternative reality at the Cité and addresses questions about existence, temporary privilege, queerness, and social background.

Verena Brakonier Greta Granderath Jivan Frenster

Verena Brakonier, Greta Granderath, and Jivan Frenster have jointly conceived the video “Hands”. The video features the hands of people who talk about their class backgrounds in short interviews. Hands that are marked by work. Hands that are shaped by issues of taste. Hands that tell (background) stories. Hands that become markers of class. The question arises: Is social background revealed not only within the framework of possibility and participation (or lack thereof), but in the bodies themselves?

Verena Brakonier is a child of working-class parents. A dancer and choreographer in Hamburg, since 2019 she has been researching the topic of class and classism, combining her artistic work with activism and giving anti-classism workshops. Once a month she invites guests to the online exchange format “Anonyme Arbeiter:innenkinder” [Anonymous Worker’s Children] for those affected by classism in the arts and cultural sector. Jivan Frenster is an artist, filmmaker, and art director. Since 2016 he has been working with his brother Lion as the directing duo jiji&lili. Greta Granderath is a theater maker, dramaturge, and author. Pursuing a feminist approach and aesthetic, her works create situations for exchange and irritation – also outside of theater spaces.

Vlad Brăteanu

(*1986 in Romania; lives in Berlin) works with photography, sound, and video alongside creating site-specific interventions. Working conditions within the field of art are a recurring theme in his work, as in the case of the banner on display. He here refers to two precursors: In 1994, Mladen Stilinović had a banner that read “An Artist Who Cannot Speak English is No Artist” manufactured. With this, Stilinović pointed to the dominance of English in the field of art, which has led to a dynamic of exclusion that has been significantly felt by artists from the former Eastern bloc. Anca Benera and Arnold Estefan varied the line in 2015’s “An Artist Who Cannot Network is No Artist”. With the saying “An Artist Without Funding is No

Artist", Brăteanu describes the fundamental importance of funding for artists: it enables artistic production by providing economic capital or spaces for production and is a crucial factor in the further accumulation of cultural capital.

**Margit Czenki for
"Der goldene Engel – Pro
System" with "Die Mission
– Künstlerische Maßnahmen
gegen die Kälte e.V."**

Chanting "Helft den Reichen!" [Help the rich!], a group moves through downtown Hamburg in a performative demonstration. They call on passers-by to help polish shoes for the well-heeled, hold open doors to the Burberry store, and wipe the hoods of limousines – all in accordance with the maxim: if it's good for the rich, it's good for the rest of us. Activist and filmmaker Margit Czenki's video documents the 1998 action "Arme helfen Reichen" [The Poor Help the Rich], showing workers and guests of Die Mission – Künstlerische Maßnahmen gegen die Kälte e.V. [The Mission – Artistic Measures Against the Cold] marching from Hamburg's central station to the posh Jungfernstieg together with figures from the Golden Pudel Club.

**Karolina Dreit
Kristina Dreit
Anna Trzpis-McLean**

Karolina Dreit, Kristina Dreit, and Anna Trzpis-McLean (Work Cycle: Working Class Daughters) have been collaborating since 2018 around the interconnections of class, gender, and migration. Their contribution, "Fashion Show: Working Class Daughters," consists of two parts, each conceived as listening rooms. Based on interviews, both audio pieces negotiate experiences of class and classism and reflect, among other things, on the role of working class academics. In the installation within the exhibition space, listening takes place on dismounted car seats. The question is posed, "What's classy if you're rich, but trashy if you're poor?" This question is also reflected in the second part of their piece, an intervention taking place during the opening of the exhibition: as if a street vendor selling bootlegs out of the back of a car, the groups own "merch" – t-shirts emblazoned with the WCD logo – is draped across a car parked outside of the Berlinische Galerie. The artists thus make reference to branding in art – comparable to the phenomenon of discount labels or workwear (see: DHL t-shirts) making their way into high-fashion contexts – and at the same time refer to the formal inclusions and exclusions in the field of art and culture. *

Paul Goesch

(*1885 in Schwerin–1940, Brandenburg) was a German architect and painter. After finishing his architecture training, he became active in the Berlin avant-garde art scene of the 1920s as a member of the November Gruppe, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, and the Gläserne Kette. Mental illness resulted in repeated stays in sanatoriums, and in August 1940, Goesch was deported to the Brandenburg/Havel euthanasia center, where he was murdered.

“Ich werde berühmt (Selbstporträt)” [I Will Be Famous (Self-portrait)] from 1922 speaks of an artist's longing for public recognition. The small drawing shows a giant room with people staring at walls plastered with the artist's name: GOESCH GOESCH GOESCH. The promise of fame, then as now, tempts artists to overspend, go into debt, and impoverish themselves. “You just have to try hard enough!” – the capitalist narrative that would associate self-exploitation and some idea of resultant success only works for a few in the arts as well.

Martin Elmar de Haan and Anonymous

Martin Elmar de Haan and Anonymous live on the street. Their artistic works are created from found materials that they paint and assemble into installations. In the summer of 2021, they spent an extended period of time at Berlin's Mehringdamm/Yorckstraße intersection. There, they gathered pieces of furniture, played music, staged spontaneous concerts, and built artworks in public space. Partly prompted by neighborhood noise complaints, the space they had been occupying was cleared by the Straßen- und Grünflächenamt [Berlin Office of Roads and Parks] in October 2021. Since then, they have been nomadic, in the summer of 2022 staying mainly on the grass strip in front of Kreuzberg's Urban-Krankenhaus.

Hannah Höch

(*1889 in Gotha–1978, Berlin) grew up in a liberal, middle-class family and received her artistic training in Berlin. While she was employed by the Ullstein publishing house within the Handicrafts department, outside of her dayjob she was creating her Dadaist collages. “Ich bin ein armes Tier” [I am a Poor Animal] Hannah Höch wrote in 1959 at the age of 70; at the time, she was in fact dependent on financial help. She received an honorary retirement allowance from the city of Berlin and was supported by the Berufsverband der Bildenden Künstler [Professional Association of Visual Artists] and the district of Reinickendorf.

Höch's biography and working methods prompt considerations central to the exhibition: Is her use of “poor” materials and her choice of relatively small formats an indication that she had few financial resources, or is her choice of materials and collage technique a (deliberate) attack on the bourgeois concept of art? Should she be seen as privileged due to her bourgeois background, or disadvantaged because she suffered discrimination due to her gender? Was the support she received a sign of her poverty or evidence of a good funding system within the Federal Republic?

Obstacle

The equestrian obstacle is a curatorial intervention. It is meant to represent the hindered access and restrictions discussed within the exhibition in a tangible manner.

Matthias Horn

(*1959; lives in Berlin) has been working since 1986 as a freelance photographer for magazines and theaters, including the Volksbühne, the Berliner Ensemble, and the Schaubühne. From 1994 to 2000, he was the house photographer at the Schauspielhaus Hamburg, during this time taking pictures of Christoph Schlingensief's action "Passion Impossible – 7 Tage Notruf für Deutschland. Eine Bahnhofsmision" [Passion Impossible – 7 Days Emergency Call for Germany. A Station Mission]. In that project, a vacated police precinct at the main train station was equipped with beds and converted into a soup kitchen and event venue explicitly aimed at homeless and drug-addicted people, who had been increasingly driven out of the inner city since the 1990s. Schlingensief organized discussions and processions bringing together guests of the Mission, theater audiences and train station commuters. The temporary action gave rise to Die Mission – Künstlerische Maßnahmen gegen die Kälte e.V. [The Mission – Artistic Measures Against the Cold], which existed as a self-organized public meeting place for 25 years until it had to close in September 2022.

Marion Lebbe Caroline Sebilleau Emmanuel Simon

Marion Lebbe, Caroline Sebilleau, and Emmanuel Simon are artists with a shared interest in collaborative processes. One focus of their joint work is to address and engage in an artistic discussion on questions of authorship and structures of dependency in the art field. Sebilleau and Simon are also part of La Buse, an independent collective of cultural workers in France that examines the economic structures and labor conditions within the art world, seeking out alternatives to the precarity and abusive practices that are so pervasive within it. One exemplary effort is a digital platform they have created that offers support to those affected by discrimination, abuse of power, and inequality.

Liang Luscombe

(*1987 in Naarm/Melbourne, Australia; lives in Naarm/Melbourne) completed her Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University, USA. Her practice includes painting, sculpture, and moving image works. Her satirical video "Itchy IOUs" takes on the hamster wheel of debt, centering on two roommates, Fran and Sol. No matter how many money-saving lifehacks they follow or late-night budgets they draw up, their bank balance constantly plummets. As student loans loom, the two contemplate extreme measures: participating in medical trials, looting,

even selling their teeth. Suddenly, on TV, they see a pitch for BLDR (an acronym for Bitcoin Leeching Debt Reliever), a giant boulder worn by the debtor that relieves debt by converting each step they take into energy for Bitcoin mining. Will this modern form of serfdom be a way out of Fran and Sol's mess? Luscombe wraps the fraught subject of debt in colorful backdrops and props: surreal, oversized cardboard kidneys next to giant papier-mâché broken-out hands.

Franziska Liza König

(*1988 in Mühlacker; lives in Berlin) combines different material practices in her work: the metalwork of her mother Jasminka Greganović-König (*1968 in Pridvorje, Croatia; lives in Ölbronn) meets the skillful crochetwork of her grandmother Liza Greganović (*1934 in Pridvorje, Croatia–2022) in installations that are often supplemented with personal remnants of the womens' post-Yugoslav background. Through the combining of disparate aesthetics (including their accompanying value systems), the tense dynamics of system-change and class transition are rendered visible. *

Silke Nowak

Silke Nowak is an artist, arts mediator, and also runs the project space Schneeeule. In her artistic work she deals with borders and structures of power and ownership. How do these become visible in space? In her drawings, elements emerge that would seem to parallel the regimentation of space within architecture, for example in structures like fences and walls. The depictions invite us to imagine how we might move through the model-like landscapes: Which areas are walkable, which are blocked? To make this physically tangible, elements from drawings appear as installative works in the exhibition space. *

Verena Pfisterer

(*1941 in Fulda–2013, Berlin) was an artist while being politically and socially active. After studying art in Düsseldorf, she moved to West Berlin in 1967. There, she studied sociology, psychology, and philosophy and worked as a therapist. She organized exhibitions and political actions, cooperating with workers and founding an anti-authoritarian kindergarten. Withdrawing from the art scene in 1973, she continued to produce art, and it was not until 30 years later that she began to exhibit her multi-layered oeuvre of drawings, objects and photographs again.

Due to her earlier decisions to work in other fields, thus having less time available to produce, much of her artwork remained in the draft stage. These drawings, including drafts for fashion, objects, or spaces convey what could have been realized.

Jelka Plate

(*1971 in Frankfurt; lives in Berlin) studied fine art and scenography at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg. As a stage and costume designer, she works with numerous theater groups; at the same time, she uses her research to develop site-specific installations and performances in public space, her work largely operating at the intersection of art and politics. In her audio work presented here, Jelka Plate deals with the impact of inheritance. Taking her personal experience as a point of departure, she positions the money “earned” through inheritance in relation to her other sources of income and her artistic activist work – among other examples, having worked for several years as a volunteer at Die Mission in Hamburg and her participation within its “The Poor Help the Rich” action. Per her work as an artist and stage designer, her financial situation shifts between irregular pay, Hartz IV, and the privilege of inheriting.

Karin Powser

(*1948; lives in Hanover) is a photographer. She was homeless from 1971 to 1984 and documented life on the street in photographs. She advocates for greater visibility of homelessness and in 1994 co-founded Asphalt magazine, to which she continues to contribute today. In 1986, she co-organized an action in memory of deceased homeless people on the Weißekreuzplatz in Hanover, which she also documented. In her photos, Karin Powser refrains from voyeuristic or romanticizing imagery, instead capturing her subjects in images at eye level.

Anna Schapiro

(*1988 in Moscow; lives in Berlin) writes, works visually, organizes, and curates. She is co-founder and co-editor of Yalta – Positions on the Jewish Present and a member of the collective Ministerium für Mitgefühl [Ministry of Empathy]. Her visual work explores questions of space and imagination, beauty as nourishment, and the migration of color. At the Berlinische Galerie, she applies a “potential space” to the wall using simple means – ink and paper. She understands the human capacity of creating space from its non-existence as the basis of all possible change.

Arthur Segal

(*1875 in Jassy, Romania–1944 London, GB) was an artist and educator. He came to Berlin in 1892, where he studied art. In 1919 he became part of the November Group and was involved in actions of the trade unions and the SPD. In 1933, the Jewish artist fled to London via Mallorca. Some of his paintings were confiscated by the Nazis in 1937 and shown in the exhibition “Degenerate Art” or destroyed. In 1944, he died as a result of an air raid in London.

Resembling an illustrated morality tale or a comic strip, Arthur Segal's painting included in the exhibition summarizes

the arduous moments of an artist's life: the desire for recognition and the bitter reality that success – if any – only comes post-mortem.

Christian Specht

(*1969 in Berlin; lives in Berlin) is an artist and political activist. His drawings and social commentary on current political and social issues are regularly published in the “Specht der Woche” [Specht of the Week] column in the taz newspaper. As a co-founder of the Berlin Parliament for the Disabled and a board member of Lebenshilfe, Specht advocates for the needs of people with disabilities.

In addition to his abstract works, which are painted with watercolors, he creates representational felt-tip pen drawings. They negotiate political or social issues such as exclusion and inclusion, for instance in his depictions of borders and tanks, but also present what surrounds him in everyday life: plants, coffee cups, animals, a bus stop.

Margret Steenblock ClaraRosa

Margret Steenblock and ClaraRosa co-wrote and produced the audio piece “Classism is a Heartbreaker”. It explores different manifestations of classism – from the implicit assumption that everyone must automatically hold ownership of a car and a savings account to the unreflected appropriation and imitation of precariousness by educated middle-class youth.

What both artists have in common is that they prefer to appear under pseudonyms when they speak and write about their origins. Margret Steenblock was active as part of the Berlin queer-feminist spoken word scene from 2009 to 2012. In her personal-political texts, she writes about the experience of being poor and growing up as a child of the working-class. ClaraRosa is an academic who grew up in poverty and foster care, and thus far from the educated bourgeoisie. Her blog “Class Matters” serves as a creative vehicle for her to un-burden her body from the weight of class difference – notably in her doing so under a pseudonym, a position chosen by both her and Steenblock when speaking and writing about their backgrounds.

Hito Steyerl Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze Miloš Trakilović

With “BELANCIEGE Mug”, Hito Steyerl, Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze, and Miloš Trakilović have printed an ordinary black coffee mug with lettering that, at a cursory glance, reads like that of the fashion label Balenciaga, currently in high vogue amongst art circles. While Balenciaga’s collections transfer an aesthetic of precariousness into the luxury sector, Steyerl, Gagoshidze, and Trakilović offer an item that is usually cheaply and serially produced for \$11,000 US as an art edition. The seemingly arbitrary

retail price is based on the value of the Nike Air Yeezy 2 Red October sneakers. In this way, “BELANCIEGE Mug” exemplifies the connections between plagiarism and appropriation, capitalist relations of production, and hyper-commercialization in the art and fashion industries.

Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze (*1983 in Kutaisi, Georgia; lives in Berlin) works with the politics, production, and mediatization of the moving image and examines its socio-political significance. In her multimedia works, Hito Steyerl (*1966 in Munich; lives in Berlin) problematizes the crises of late capitalism against a background of mounting digitization, global networking, and postcolonialism. Miloš Trakilović (*1989 in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina; lives in Berlin and Rotterdam) investigates the dissolution and fragmentation of images in regard to the experience of war via questions of perception, memory and its loss.

Gabriele Stötzer

(*1953 in Gotha; lives in Erfurt) works with a variety of media.

After a year of imprisonment as a political prisoner, she was active in the East German art and underground scene, in 1984 co-founding the women artists' group Erfurt, who for ten years lived out a radical artistic counter-existence to everyday life in the GDR. The group's photographs, Super-8 films, fashion object shows, performances, manifestos, and sound experiments celebrate self-empowerment, gender justice, and artistic freedom as universal human rights while functioning as radical social criticism.

The production conditions for artists in the GDR differed on several levels from those within the Federal Republic. Not only were certain materials and media difficult to obtain, but whether or not one acted in conformity with the system also had a decisive influence on exhibition, commission, and work opportunities. When the GDR disappeared, not only did the political system of coordinates change, but also the conditions of production: “Suddenly, the expensive Western goods that had previously only been available in the Intershop for Western currency were lying empty in the garbage bins,” Gabriele Stötzer recounts concerning her transformation of consumer goods into costumes.

Mika Svolos

(*1984, in Larissa, Greece; lives in Athens) drew his work “Prolific Artist” on ordinary, small-format paper and sent it via mail from Athens to Berlin. He has worked as a private chauffeur as well as in marketing, transport and call-center jobs. Confronted with a variety of working conditions and realities of life, he sites a range of mixed reactions – between curiosity and humor, defensiveness, and sarcasm – as the inspiration for his drawing.

Gülbin Ünlü

(lives in Munich) belongs to the third generation of a so-called “guest worker” family. During her art studies, for a long time, she felt as if she did not belong. In her artistic work, she reflects on exclusionary mechanisms and the experience of the “in-between”. An investigation of belonging, which Ünlü sees as consisting of fragmented individual parts, runs through her work, as does the attempt to dismantle existing value systems and hierarchies. She works with various approaches and media, combining photography, video, music, painting, and performance, while also working as part of a collective. Within this working method that she refers to as a “mash-up,” Gülbin Ünlü creates expansive installations from materials that she gathers from different contexts. *

Anna-Lena Wenzel

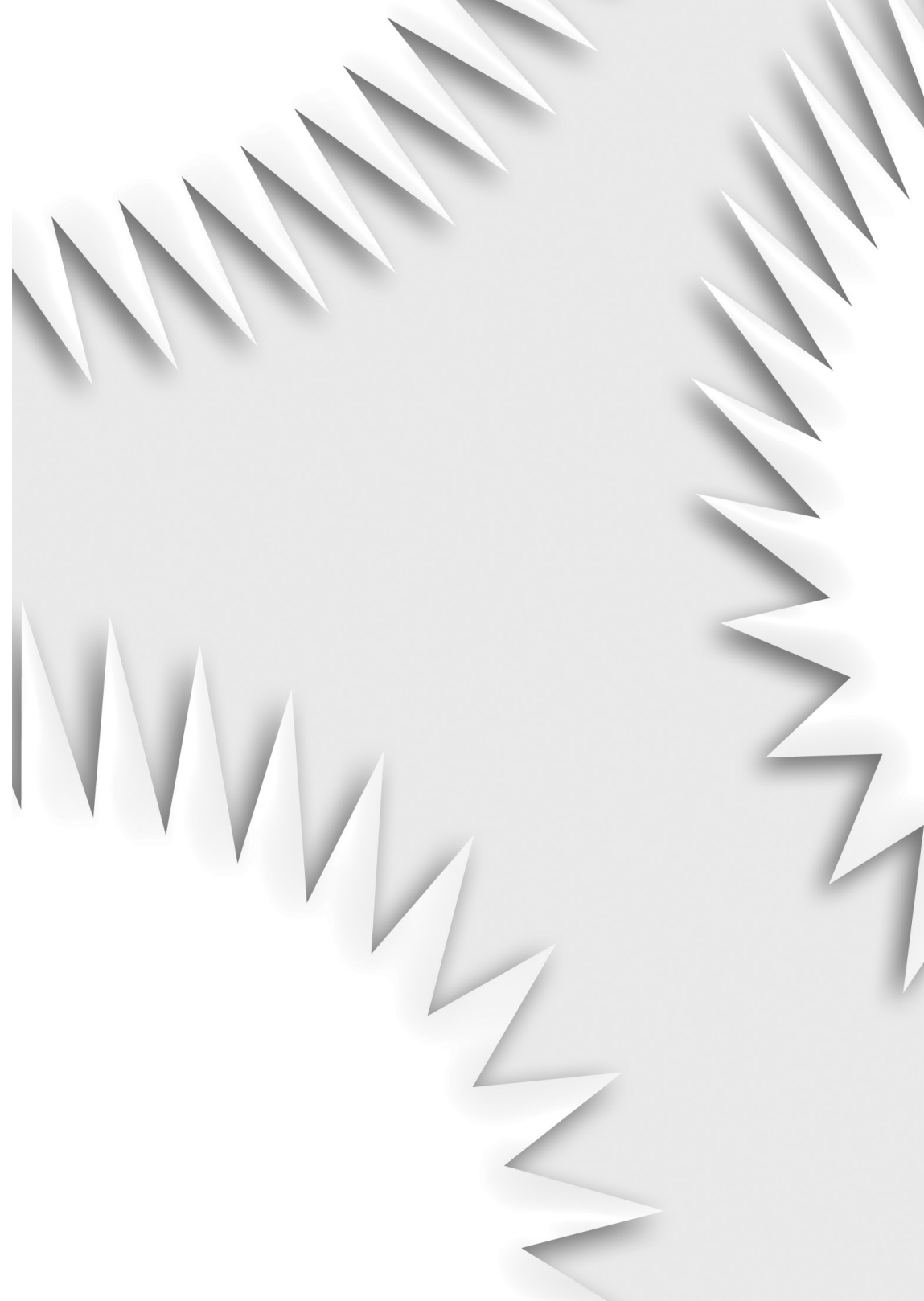
(*1980 Hamburg; lives in Berlin) is an author, artist and holds a doctorate in cultural studies. She brings found objects from public space into the Berlinische Galerie, and thus into the art context. These “objets trouvés” are thus upgraded: what had previously been deliberately thrown away or carelessly dropped now becomes an object to be exhibited. Wenzel selects only those objects whose original function can only be guessed at – and that thus resemble abstract works of art.

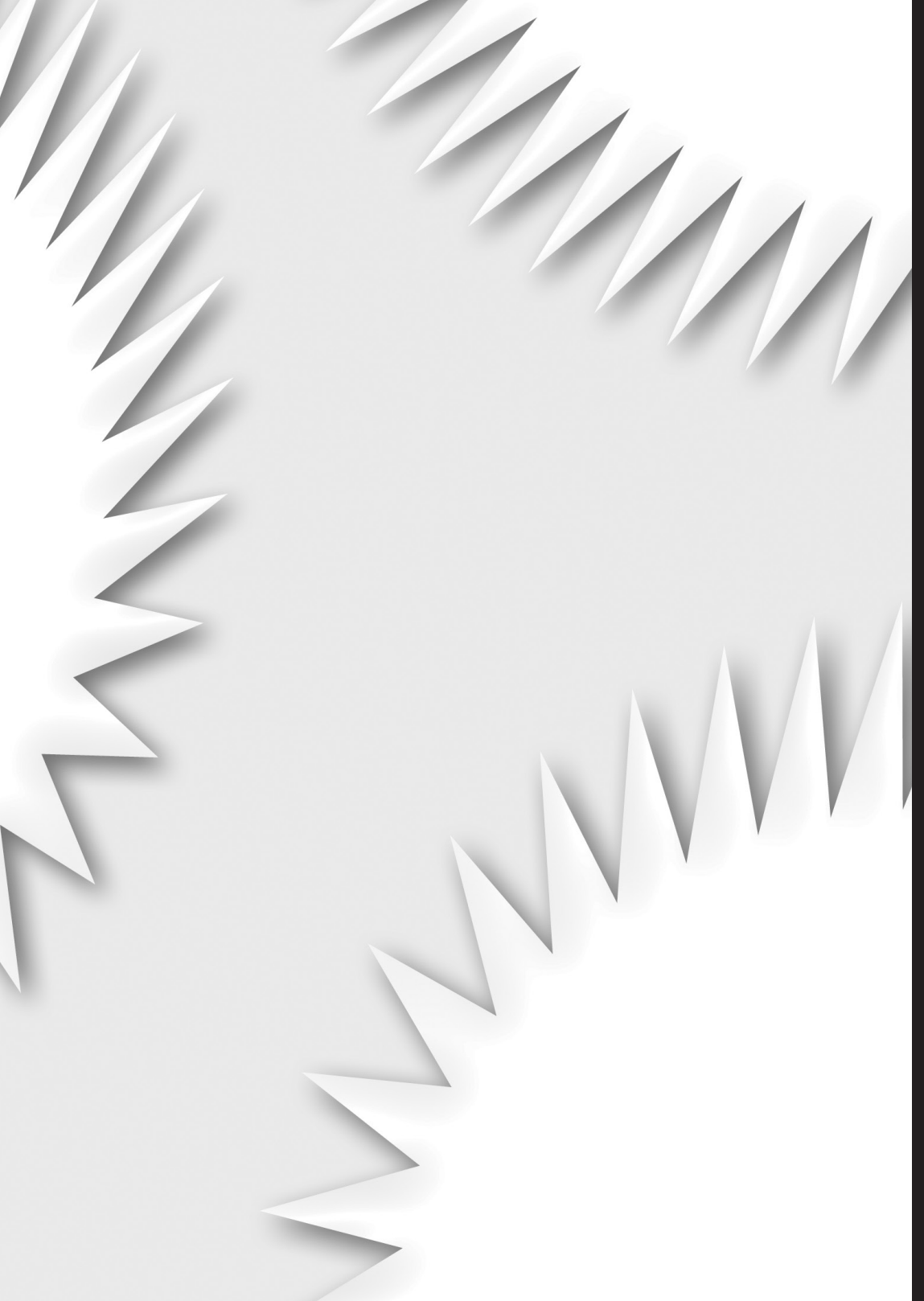
Norbert Witzgall

Within a painting collage, Norbert Witzgall (*1976 in Münchberg; lives in Berlin) depicts himself and his family of origin – and via the collage materials, the house in which he grew up. The support for the work “Heinz Witzgall, Landwirt, mit Familie” [Heinz Witzgall, Farmer, with Family] has been sawn out of a door of the decommissioned family farm. Like all the doors in the house, it was once decorated with Bavarian folk painting. In this home, painting was decoration and not about artistic gesture; the bourgeois concept of art did not exist.

The kaleidoscopic patterns of Witzgall's painting are sourced from a postcard depicting (and advertising) his parents' house, where working class families from Berlin once vacationed. As a collage, they cover the surface of the family portrait, which is based on a commercial-studio photo taken in 1980.

The public presentation of the private within the studio photograph as well as in the postcard motif speaks of the laboriously maintained (social) facades of a peasant family in which there was hardly any privacy.





“WHAT'S CLASSY
IF YOU'RE RICH, BUT
TRASHY IF
YOU'RE POOR?”

Working Class Daughters

CLASS ISSUES

ART
PRODUCTION
IN AND OUT
OF PRECARIETY

The project is a cooperation of the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK) and the Berlinische Galerie, where the exhibition is realized. It has been curated by nGbK project group Class Issues Frauke Boggasch, Silke Nowak, Anna Schapiro, Anna-Lena Wenzel, and Norbert Witzgall.

Texts

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Gina Mönch and Anna Landskron-Neumeier

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Douglas Boatwright

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