

GALERIE

Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst

WEDDING

Curatorial Concept, Exhibition, Education and Performance Programme 2021-22

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Existing Otherwise | Anders Existieren For a New Politics of the Senses

In Galerie Wedding in 2021 we practice strategies of existing otherwise.

Regular performances on the Rathausvorplatz, **A Movement Research Center** for Choreographic and Activist Movements, Re-schooling lectures, exhibitions in the gallery space - we move toward a new politics of the senses.

Existing otherwise for Galerie Wedding means moving into the streets, the public space and towards our neighbours; that our program, formats, use of space and curation is changing after 6 years of dynamic solo exhibitions and in-depth productions with a great range of Berlin-based artists. This year's program hosts a larger number of artists and more performative formats. Informal evenings for sharing and showing will be held monthly from spring through October on the Rathausvorplatz and focus on collective and individual strategies of resistance to standardization, alienation, and hyper-individualization in public space. By opening up to the potential within collective playfulness we engage in full-bodied practices of attunement to public space, becoming sensitive to the vibrations of urban material and inhabit public space differently with our body language, music and multiple forms of assembly. In 2021 we invite artistic positions which emphasize sociality, mediated intimacy, activations and rhythmic distortions of public space, non-verbal exchanges and more spontaneous, yet in depth encounters in the exhibition space. We offer artistic and curatorial opportunities for new and unexpected positions through our Open Call "Movement Research | Testplatz Wedding" (April 2021), which will result in a series of investigative and experimental showings and movement research presentations on the Rathausvorplatz over the summer.

By adapting to new spatial conditions and privileging the knowledge of the body, we wish to bring attention to ways of living and practicing “otherwise.” This change in formats nurtures the radical potential in making time to assemble, making time to share experiences and bodily practices, and making time to engage differently with the neighbourhood as can already be seen in the framework of the first window exhibition and connected map for magic walking in Wedding by Emily Hunt in “Jobcenter. Aufgeladene Orte. Psychic Places”, March-May 2021.

With the title of this year’s program in Berlin, we as curatorial team pay homage to Saidiya Hartman’s alternative rendering of black social life in the USA in the early 20th Century, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019). In the book’s “A Note on Method” she states:

“The wild idea that animates this book is that young black women were radical thinkers who tirelessly imagined other ways to live and never failed to consider how the world might be otherwise.”¹

Saidiya V. Hartman

In the pages that ensue Hartman twists and stretches the potential of the archive to narrate “a dream book for existing otherwise.”² Hartman is specifically referring to the radical form of resistance in the “refusal to emulate and mimic the standards of who and what you were directed and commanded to be (but never would be),” and in the insistence to “exist otherwise, at odds with the given.”³ This year’s program at Galerie Wedding takes up this evocative phrase and applies it as an institutional and choreographic strategy to generate and highlight existing alternative relations between institution and public, between human and nonhuman bodies, and between individuals and communities. *Existing Otherwise* articulates key questions of human flourishing and what may inhibit it today? These questions along with the investigation and implementation of choreographies for alternative relations as well as dancing as a form of knowledge acquisition are central points in the artistic practice of Isabel Lewis, which are being carried on in this project. Lewis’s practice moves into the world from a place of critical reflection on the thought systems of contemporary so-called western society and the ways they are embedded and embodied to dangerous effects in our biosocial interactions. She works with choreography in order to reimagine and put into action alternative models of relation and sociality between human and more-than-human agents.⁴

¹ Saidiya V. Hartmann, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), p.7

² Ibid p. 8

³ Ibid. p. 255

⁴ A key inspiration to Lewis is Deborah Hay, American choreographer and author, who deconstructs the power relation between choreographer and dancer, teacher and student, trained and untrained bodies, as well as spreading the

A Movement Research Center (MRC)

Moving, dancing and assembling is thinking in an embodied processual acquisition of knowledge and it generates ways to see the local surroundings from different, potentially new perspectives. A Movement Research Center is a site to cultivate choreographic and social readings of the shifts in energies, human habits, adaptation, and values that happen in our time, right in front of us. With this year's Existing Otherwise program we with the Galerie Wedding curatorial team and the artists, work to inaugurate a new line of practice within the activities of this communal art space. Galerie Wedding is currently co-used by the Social Department of the City of Berlin, which offers direct economic services to inhabitants of Wedding, who are in need. Therefore the curatorial team of Galerie Wedding moves serial and recurrent performance, sound, and choreographic activities out to the spacious Rathausvorplatz, Wedding, Berlin. A plaza where narratives of dwelling, playing, eating, waiting, chatting, demonstrating, collapsing, queuing, screaming, walking and uprising bodies are present. This year's investigations dive into the existing premises of the Rathausvorplatz and its layered sociality with the intention to research and enable new uses and facilitate possible new relations in this particular public space with those who inhabit it. In comparison to the very busy Leopoldplatz, we may ask what characterizes the Rathausvorplatz? Is it a site of dwelling for some, while for others a place where they merely cross on their way to somewhere else, or is it a site of surveillance where everyone is observed from windows of nearby offices?

“Bathed in light, submerged in sound and rapt in feeling, the sentient body, at once both perceiver and producer, traces the paths of the world's becoming in the very course of contributing to its ongoing renewal. Here, surely, lies the essence of what it means to dwell. It is, literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life. The perceiver-producer is thus a wayfarer, and the mode of production is itself a trail blazed or a path followed. Along such paths, lives are lived, skills developed, observations made and understandings grown. (...) The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming.”⁵

Tim Ingold

attention on the dancing ensemble as an organism instead of the individual dancer. As a choreographer, she is known to distribute the dancers all over the space, somebody always being out of sight, and lead the dancers to find their own individual figures and way of expressing a certain move. Furthermore and very importantly, she worked processually and intuitively, and often only wrote her scores after seeing her own performances or after performing. In this way she melted the gap between thinking and doing. Deborah Hay, “(...) I write my scores after I've seen my performances”, Interview in Spike Magazine <https://www.spikeartmagazine.com/articles/language-my-craft> (Downloaded 22.4.21)

⁵ Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Routledge, 2000, pp.153-

A Movement Research Center in Galerie Wedding becomes a hub for hosting conversations, archival research and a backstage for the movement research program in public space surrounding the gallery. Inside it is an archival reading space offering an interdisciplinary focus on movement in a broad sense including both choreographic and social movements. Galerie Wedding thus hopes to generate new lines of inquiry into what can be learned and shared through the bodily modalities of performing, walking, talking, dancing, witnessing, demonstrating, dwelling and assembling. The movement research program reaches out to engage Berlin-based choreographers, performers, and activists of various kinds to work on how we organize and assemble in a new global situation with ever-growing local limitations.

Galerie Wedding's new movement research program is informed and inspired by the non-profit organization Movement Research Inc. founded in 1978 under the name "The School for Movement Research & Construction." Movement Research continues today publishing a printed journal as well as online discourse and organizes performances at the Judson Memorial Church among other locations around New York City. GW's movement research program looks to contemporary dance as a site of cultural production that is radically invested in alternative modes of knowledge acquisition, a practice that in times of social distancing may even hold methodologies of recovery or healing.

Looking at movements in expanded ways - choreographic, sensory, migratory and activist - this new movement research center invites guests to tune in to the social and urban changes that happen in and around us. It offers a space for reflection on the ways we collectively shape the urban environment while it in turn shapes us. The role of the senses in finding a balance between ecology and technology, self and other, is crucial today. A Movement Research Center is a place where multiple disciplines, knowledges, persons, institutions, technologies, and publics can meet to analyze and reflect upon architectures of affect, emotion, adaptation, and memory; disability and the urban sphere; invisible subjects and unseen spaces; the migrant experience in urban space; the shifting relationality of the notions of neighbor and stranger; the policing of bodies; the history and future of public assembly and celebration, and more. Contemporary art and dance in this situation offers a social and discursive space of potentiality where new sensorial experiences as well as alliances can be created.

Why do we need a new politics of the senses today?

Movement research and the sensorium

Why do we need a new politics of the senses at all today? The simple answer is that the human sensorium is changing due to compromised ecologies. In the midst of rapid ecological upheavals,

with the prospect of climate wars and the possible extinction of many species, we are in many ways nearing the end of progress, expressing the desire to stop or slow down human actions that lead to global warming and epidemics. We humans have the ability to adapt our sensory system to new ways of tasting and eating, hearing and listening, smelling and breathing, not least touching and reproducing. It is necessary to reorganize ourselves from the ground up (and down) in order to become humane and environmentally conscious again after more than a century of adapting to the modernization processes that estranged us from bodily modes of perception and numbed us from perceiving the toxicity in the smell of pollution, taste of chemical flavor enhancers, foul water, the noise of cars etc. There is a politics behind how we program our senses, and as we find ways to exist otherwise, we must end the era of the Anthropocene as soon as possible.

“The big challenge of our time is to make sure that when our hearts break [amidst climate catastrophe] we stay open and connected and curious rather than coming up with stories to justify ourselves being violent to others that we have othered more than those closest to us.”⁶

Jem Bendell

It is not only global political action at macro level that will help. New dialogues between bodies are needed, especially after a long phase of domestic isolation, as well as new habits in public spaces and at home. Interpersonal interaction in everyday life, whether it is through shared meals, physical contact, collective action in public, or global mobility, is perhaps permanently changed by the global pandemic.. How do we communicate more affectively at a distance? How do we gather safely to continue sensing the energy of multiple bodies in a space or nearby radius? How do we move in the presence of other people, in private and in public? How sensitive is the nose and what does it smell after isolation?

The particular focus on the entire sensorium in this “Existing Otherwise” program and exhibition series is both a call and an opportunity to redevelop sensitivity - also via the vehicle of the visual and performative arts - for ourselves and for our surroundings. In the search for more ethical body-world configurations opening up to the senses and taking their information seriously is crucial. If contemporary visual culture finds us under the control of new media and apps, such as face recognition systems, the question arises whether the other senses can be rehabilitated and cultivated as a form of resistance. Are we able to slow down our consumption routines or even develop new kinds of kinship that help us to continue living and dying on this earth differently?

⁶ Jem Bendell, “Jem Bendell on Deep Adaptation, Climate Change and Societal Collapse - Acceptance and Evolution in the Face of Global Meltdown”, 27.12.2018, www.thefutureisbeautiful.co (Downloaded from the Internet 5.5.2021)

Formats of collective moving and listening, eating, dwelling, gathering, mourning, and cooking as well as regeneration for the body from 2D screenlife, collective intelligence (instead of artificial intelligence) will be tested in this project on how to exist otherwise within the liminal personal space and hyper surveilled public space. With the year-long and geographically spread out project “Existing Otherwise - For a New Politics of the Senses”, we would like to offer another quality of time to experiment with freedom.

“Every generation confronts the task of choosing its past. Inheritances are chosen as much as they are passed on. The past depends less on 'what happened then' than on the desires and discontents of the present. Strivings and failures shape the stories we tell. What we recall has as much to do with the terrible things we hope to avoid as with the good life for which we yearn. But when does one decide to stop looking to the past and instead conceive of a new order? When is it time to dream of another country or to embrace other strangers as allies or to make an opening, an overture, where there is none? When is it clear that the old life is over, a new one has begun, and there is no looking back?”⁷

Saidiya V. Hartman

⁷ Saidiya V. Hartman, “Loose Your Mother - A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route”, Chapter “FIVE The Tribe of the Middle Passage”. Farrer, Staus and Giroux, 2007

Credits and Partners

Existing Otherwise is realized in a collaboration between the communal exhibition space Galerie Wedding - Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst (Space for Contemporary Art), Berlin, and two artist founded institutions. One is located in the Wedding neighbourhood, The Institute for Embodied Creative Practices, and is an ambulatory corpus of particular concerns and the sensorial methodologies for addressing them founded by artist and choreographer Isabel Lewis in 2016 currently operating from Callie's Berlin, Shedhalle Zürich, among other locations and The Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA), Tamale Ghana, founded by Ibrahim Mahama, who is both an artist and a lecturer in art and architecture at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Existing Otherwise - For a New Politics of the Senses is executed and directed by XO Curatorial Projects (UG), Kathrin Pohlmann and Solvej Helweg Ovesen, in close collaboration with all the partners.

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