

FORT Undercover

Kunsthalle Gießen in cooperation with the Hessischen Kulturstiftung
Curated by Dr. Nadia Ismail
Duration: 07.12.2019 – 16.02.2020

Press event

04.12.2019 11 am

In the Kunsthalle Gießen

With FORT (Jenny Kropp, Alberta Niemann), Dr. Nadia Ismail (Director Kunsthalle), Eva Claudia Scholtz (Executive Director Hessische Kulturstiftung)

Opening: Friday 06.12.2019 7 pm, Kunsthalle Gießen / Hermann-Levi-Saal

Official greeting

Dr. Stefan Neubacher, Director of the cultural office for the city of Gießen
Eva Claudia Scholtz, Executive Director Hessische Kulturstiftung

Introduction

Dr. Nadia Ismail, Director Kunsthalle Gießen

The artists are present.

The artist duo FORT transfers everyday objects into the context of contemporary art. While doing so, Jenny Kropp and Alberta Niemann incorporate elements of architecture and interior design into their spatial installations out of which they develop mysterious settings. Through subtle negotiations, they alienate the supposedly familiar, allowing it to tip over into the unfamiliar. In the exhibition *Undercover*, FORT negotiates the relationship between presence and absence, whereby the title plays a central role in keeping with the hidden and the unknown.

Many of the scenes created by FORT resemble abandoned film sets in which only set pieces remain. Moreover, the artists interact with the conditions of the exhibition space, responding to them and creating their own staging. In their installations, they play with the perception of what only appears to be known, creating moments of irritation and making fractures in our everyday world visible. They trace yearnings and fears conveyed through the various objects and their composition and staging, thus creating an atmosphere that oscillates between the sinister and the humorous.

The exhibition at the Kunsthalle is expressly dedicated to recipients of the Cultural Foundation of Hesse scholarship. Jenny Kropp and Alberta Niemann have developed works specifically for the exhibition that stage objects not only in space, but also photographically. In this way they are even able to accentuate the hidden with photographs of elaborately packaged gifts. The beautiful casing awakens desire and hope for a positive surprise or for the fulfilment of a long-cherished wish. However, the acceptance of a gift in our exchange-oriented society always represents a risk, for the act of giving implicitly contains the expectation of a corresponding transaction in return. The opulent decoration of the gifts makes a promise, but whether the contents can actually deliver, remains an open question. The sound-work *Secrets* was also created specifically for the exhibition in Gießen, it lies auratically across the room like a blanket of sound and reinforces the mysterious mood in the exhibition.

Removed from their original surroundings and seemingly out of time, the everyday objects that FORT uses in their installations often retain the traces of a human presence. Jackets that move slightly while hanging from a coat rack, as if someone had just placed them there, and the fronts of shoes that peek out from behind the curtains create a tension-filled state of suspense, pointing to the presence of people who do not, however, appear. Old-fashioned telephones, which cannot be used because they are exclusively connected to each other, and apartment doors that do not lead anywhere but seem to observe the viewers with their peepholes, suggest, on the other hand, a strange life of their own that is beyond human control. Deprived of their function and imaginatively loaded, the everyday objects develop a subliminal aura of the mysterious. The various objects remain recognizable as such, but the slight displacements and their dysfunctionality evoke a moment of disturbance.

"With the artists of the FORT collective, no certainty is without an alternative. As an observer and a protagonist one feels uneasiness in the supposed everyday backdrops of the artist duo, a disgruntlement that rubs against reality. With surprise, the visitor becomes aware that they only see themselves through the peephole. With this surreal, uncanny inkling, FORT's tales of absence, fears and expectations in a consumer and performance-oriented society allow us to share and train empathy and humour." Enthuses **Eva Claudia Scholtz, Executive Director of the Cultural Foundation of Hesse.**

Jenny Kropp (*1978, Frankfurt am Main) and **Alberta Niemann (*1982, Bremen)** live and work in Berlin. Jenny Kropp graduated from the Hochschule für Künste Bremen. Alberta Niemann completed her studies at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg. In 2008 they founded the all-female artist collective FORT together with Anna Jandt (*1980, Bremen). They have been active as a duo under the name FORT since 2014 and in 2015/2016 they received the studio grant from the Cultural Foundation of Hesse in New York City.

The Cultural Foundation of Hesse Scholarship program

Since 1992, the Cultural Foundation of Hesse has been running a scholarship programme for female artists with a biographical connection to Hesse. They are awarded as travel or studio scholarships every two years for a period of twelve months abroad. The Foundation maintains its own studios in London, New York City and Paris. To date, it has supported around 180 artists with scholarship funds, thus enabling them to implement artistic projects, build up a professional network and reflect on their own artistic positions.

Eva Claudia Scholtz, Executive Director of the Cultural Foundation of Hesse:

„It is a great pleasure for the Cultural Foundation of Hesse to be able to follow artists beyond the scholarship. We aim to provide scholarships for more artistic freedom, inspiration and international exchange and to support artists in the implementation of their ideas. During their one-year stay in New York, FORT further developed their work. Making this work tangible together with the Kunsthalle Gießen is a great benefit for our program.“

The exhibition is supported by the Cultural Foundation of Hesse and the Ehrenamt association Gießen.

Accompanying Programme

Dialogue-Tour

With Friederike Bülig (Cultural Foundation of Hesse) and Dr. Nadia Ismail (Director Kunsthalle Gießen)

Thursday 16.01.2020 6 pm

At the crime scene

Creative mystery writing with bestselling author Judith Merchant

Registration at the Kunsthalle, tickets 10 €

Saturday 18.01.2020 12-4 pm

Speed Talk

With participants from art and culture

Thursday 06.02.2020 7 pm

Art Education

Guided tour by the curator

with Dr. Nadia Ismail (Director Kunsthalle Gießen)

Tuesday 17.12.2019 5 pm

How does an object become art?

Workshop for ages 7 and above, with parent supervision

Registration: kunsthalle@giessen.de

Tuesday 07.01.2020 2-4 pm

Art education in individual conversations

Saturdays, 3-5 pm: 07.12. + 21.12. + 04.01. + 01.02. + 15.02.

Tuesdays, 2-4 pm: 10.12. + 07.01. + 14.01. + 21.01. + 04.02.

Art and Coffee

With the art historian Fabian Stein and Ehrenamt e.V.

Participation Fee 2.50 €

registration: kunsthalle@giessen.de

Tuesday 17.12.2019 3pm + Wednesday 29.01.2020 3 pm

Entrance to all events is free, unless otherwise stated.

Opening Times

Tues-Sun 10-6 pm

Closed: 24.12 – 28.12 + 31.12 – 01.01