

**KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN GOES UNTERER HARDTHOF  
EXBODIMENT #4**

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**Live performances by Kurt Johannessen and Sinéad O'Donnell**  
27 September 2022, 7 pm



Fig.: Sinéad O'Donnell, Dayra Kamal and Poshya Kakil, *Scream of the sea*, 2011, Erbil, Irak © Sinéad O'Donnell

**A performance series in collaboration with the Archive for International Performance  
Art BLACK KIT | DIE SCHWARZE LADE**

**Participating artists:**

**Skip Arnold, Rocío Boliver, Kurt Johannessen, Tokio Maruyama, Sinéad O'Donnell,  
Morgan O'Hara, Nigel Rolfe, Julie Andrée T.**

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While the Kunsthalle Giessen is closed for renovation it will be hosted by Unterer Hardthof. The fourth event in the EXBODIMENT series will feature live performances by the artists Kurt Johannessen from Norway and Sinéad O'Donnell from Northern Ireland on Tuesday, 27 September 2022 at 7 pm.

## **Sinéad O'Donnell**

The right and freedom to be heard cannot be taken for granted for the Irish performance artist Sinéad O'Donnell (\*1975, Dublin, Ireland). On many journeys, she experienced how paralysing silence can be and what energy can be ignited by shared dialogue. The artist seeks out close interactions with communities of different cultures around the world, particularly with the women who live there. She shares stories, fears, dreams and experiences with them. Through encounters and collaborations with local artists, O'Donnell creates performative platforms as a shared language and empowerment in countries such as Indonesia, Argentina, Thailand, Uruguay, but also within Europe. In Iraq, she and local artists Dayra Kamal and Poshya Kakil demanded "Stop the killing of women" or "We need peace" in red letters on a glass plate. Together with Kakil, she carried the fragile disc through the citadel of the city, sometimes overtly like a relic, sometimes subtly just touching it with her fingertips or holding it steadily between their faces. But she also critically explored 'Feminine Culture' in her current hometown of Belfast in 2020, covering her own body with the word 'culture', and using it as a canvas or semiotic whiteboard.

Physical norms are constructed in many areas and deviations are often negatively sanctioned. The personal experience of being neuro-diverse in a neuro-typical world – i.e. deviating from the norm due to 'atypical' neurobiological characteristics – is a further theme in Sinéad O'Donnell's performances. Touched by this issue herself, she brought together six artists from different continents for the CAUTION project at the London 2012 Cultural Olympics to reframe the discourse on invisible physical impairments in public performances, such as dyslexia.

## **CV**

**Sinéad O'Donnell** (\*1975, Dublin, Ireland) lives and works in Belfast. She studied Fine Art, Sculpture and Textiles at the Fine & Applied Arts, University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland and Performance and Time-based Practices at Dartington College of Arts in England. Her work has been presented worldwide, including at Golden Thread

Gallery, Belfast, Northern Ireland; Southbank Centre, London, UK; Momentary American Art Museum, Arkansas, USA; Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan; in Uruguay, Canada, Thailand and Croatia. In 2019, she presented a comprehensive solo exhibition at Millennium Court Arts Centre, Portadown, Ireland.

## **Kurt Johannessen**

What does dust weigh? And how much dust is actually on the floor during a gallery opening? Since the 1980s, the Norwegian artist Kurt Johannessen has been developing performances in which he pays meticulous attention to things that are as overlooked as they are immense, things that people are surrounded by every day. Thus, in 2017, he hiked in complete darkness, by just the light of a single lamp, up a coal mountain near the now-abandoned Russian mining settlement of 'Pyramids', located on the Antarctic archipelago of Spitsbergen. What does the time of a single person mean in relation to infinity? Since the 1980s, Kurt Johannessen has repeatedly exposed himself to the elements with stoic perseverance, submerging himself in mud or rain with absolute devotion. Many of the Norwegian artist's performances seek the specific quality of this direct confrontation, the 'face to face' between the self, things and the world. A stone, a blade of grass, rain and all the details that surround us are viewed and reflected by Johannessen in performances that transform our own perception. In his careful, sometimes minimal touches, the relationship between man and nature is condensed into a microscopic image that resonates.

The fact that Johannessen knows how to dazzle in a small format is also proven by his artist's books, of which more than 100 have been produced since 1985. They are based on word games, drawings or photographs, tell abstruse-surreal, humorous stories in just a few sentences or stand firm with a single sentence and varying illustrations. In the books, Johannessen explores how little is necessary and how little can be a lot. He folds the macrocosm into the microcosm, turns the the smallest into the largest and, in turn, incorporates what is developed in the artist's books back into his performances.

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## CV

**Kurt Johannessen** (\* 1960, Bergen, Norway) studied Fine Arts at The Slade School of Fine Arts, London, UK, Iceland Academy of Fine Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland and The National Academy of Fine Arts in Bergen, Norway. He has realised numerous international solo and group exhibitions in Scandinavia and worldwide. His performances, numbering well over 300, have been staged at the Bergen Art Museum, MOMA PS1, New York, The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo, Consorci de Museus de la Comunitat Valenciana, Valencia, among many others. He also lectures, organises performance festivals and was co-founder of the organisation Performance Art Bergen.



Fig.: Kurt Johannessen, Three Upside Down Trees, 2021, Foto: Thor Brødreskift © Kurt Johannessen

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## EXBODIMENT

The performance series EXBODIMENT was developed by the Kunsthalle Gießen in collaboration with the performance archive BLACK KIT | DIE SCHWARZE LADE, Cologne. All of the invited artists are distinguished by what are sometimes contradictory understandings of performance. What emerges during the encounter remains open and is only revealed in the moment of the performances.

The title EXBODIMENT comes from the English word 'embodiment' and refers to the knowledge, history and cultural modes of action that are inscribed in our physical bodies. The preposition 'ex' (Latin: 'out of', 'from') marks the movement into the external and refers to what happens in the performance: the knowledge stored in the body is transported to the outside world and made visible in the public sphere. How does a body activate a space? When does a moment in time fracture and become an image of permanence?



Fig.: View inside the ‚Schwarze Lade‘, Cologne, 2018 © BLACK KIT

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## BLACK KIT | DIE SCHWARZE LADE

The archive for performance art, the only one of its kind in Germany, was founded by artists in 1981, and has since then been run by Boris Nieslony (\*1945, Grimma) together with the archive team (Michael Stockhausen, Liane Ditzer, Evamaria Schaller, Esteban Sánchez, Tarika Johar). It contains more than 4,000 dossiers on performance, theatre and sound artists, 10,000 specialist publications, videos and photos in various formats, performance relics and many metres of shelf space on networks from different continents. This vibrant archive sees itself as a source of inspiration for the present by organising performance events, lectures and much more.

**You can find the full schedule of events online at:**

[www.kunsthalle-giessen.de](http://www.kunsthalle-giessen.de) | [www.giessen.de](http://www.giessen.de)

### Entrance

Free of charge

### Official greeting

Dr. Nadia Ismail

Director Kunsthalle Giessen

Dieter Hoffmeister

Vice Chairman of the Unterer Hardthof e.V. Association

### Introduction

Tarika Johar

Curator

### Directions:

Unterer Hardthof 17, 35398 Gießen. Please note: Parking is not permitted in the courtyard. By Car: Parking is available on the street in front of the entrance. Bus: Line 7, stop 'Unterer Hardthof'.

### Please note

**Subject to artistic decision, the performative interventions may take place in the vaulted cellars of the Unterer Hardthof, therefore we would like suggest that you bring suitably warmer clothing, if desired.**