

## Katja Stuke + Oliver Sieber Sequence as a Dialogue

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Opening: Friday, June 6th, 2019 7pm

Duration: 08.06.2019 – 18.08.2019

Curated by Dr. Nadia Ismail

Official greeting

Dr. Stefan Neubacher

Director of the cultural office for the city of Gießen

Introduction

Dr. Nadia Ismail

Director Kunsthalle Gießen and curator of the exhibition.

The artists will be present.

At the exhibition entitled *Sequence as a Dialogue* at the Kunsthalle Gießen Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber present photographic and video work that focusses on Japan. They began, as early as 2006, to work on the joint, ever-growing body of work *Japanese Lesson*, it examines Japan's present day and its more recent history detached from omnipresent Japanese stereotypes such as tea ceremonies, cherry blossoms and rock gardens. Since the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima in 2011, they have been increasingly focussed on political activism. The exhibition illustrates the artists' intense engagement with Japan's sub-cultural and pop-cultural signs and poses questions about social boundaries that also influence the structures of cities. In doing so, Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber exploit the full range of forms of photographic images and modes of presentation. Motifs appear in ever new contexts, series of works are constantly developed further. The juxtaposition of individual images as artistic process as well as the collaboration of the artists is reflected in the title of the exhibition, which presents these ever-new (developmental) processes as a dialogue.

The video piece *Mash-Up* forms the starting point of the series of works, it combines found visual material from mangas, work by Japanese photo artists, stills taken from Japanese movies, paintings and press photographs together with photographs from Katja Stuke and Oliver Siebers' travels in Japan in rapid succession. At breathtaking speed, the images bombard the viewer and create a feeling of sensory overload.

However, in their individual works Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber approach the different aspects of Japanese culture from their own respective viewpoints. **Katja Stuke** takes a media critical approach as she deals with images of people in the public eye. For her series *Supernatural* she photographs close-ups of television screens, something that is evident in the raster of the images. It portrays an Olympic athlete at the very moment of total concentration just before a competition, while the series *Cry Minami* depicts the Japanese pop singer Minami. She has tears in her eyes and a shaved head to signify her visible remorse as she confesses to the public her relationship with a young man. It remains unclear whether her sentiments are real or part of a predetermined marketing strategy. For the series *CCTV*, shot in Osaka, Katja Stuke films scenes herself. When doing so, she focusses on people who are not aware that they are being observed and thus makes reference to camera surveillance in urban areas that evade control.

**Oliver Sieber** began documenting subcultures with *SkinsModsTeds* in 1999 in Germany, he continues his interest in them with his series *J-Subs*. He portrays the appropriation of Western subcultures by Japanese youths in a sensitive manner. These are part of a global *Imaginary Club*, a fictional community in the underground subcultures of Europe, the USA and Japan that create the artistic vision of an imaginary club. Between adaptation and demarcation, the members of this imaginary community negotiate group affiliations and individual freedom beyond the mainstream and its offerings of identity determined by origin, gender and age.

Since the reactor accident in Fukushima, Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber have been attending protests and photographing people who are fighting against racism and homophobia, against major, media-effective projects such as the Summer Olympics 2020 in Japan and for the rights of discriminated groups. They explore these themes and the sites of the demonstrations in their photo walks (meditation walks), during which they explore the city as a socio-political space. In doing so, they cross the invisible borders created by postal codes, e.g. in San'ya in eastern Tokyo, an area traditionally dominated by socially outlawed day labourers and now home to backpackers in cheap hostels. Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber use the systematic investigation of spatial boundaries in order to question social exclusion and its consequences for urban structures. Their new works focus on districts that have been affected by transformation processes as a result of Olympia 2020 and Expo 1970 and 2025 in Osaka and they negotiate the changing identities of the respective places.

The extensive artist publications that Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber are exhibiting for the first time in their entirety present a special feature of the exhibition. In Japan, photo books are an important part of the photographic culture and the most established means of presenting the medium. The works *A Future Book* and *Sequence as a Dialogue* take the production of a publication as their theme. Various possible combinations of images are shown and the process of selecting and editing is made visible. The different ways of reading the individual images varies and new associations emerge, this is an essential component of Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber's collaboration.

The exhibition *Sequence as a Dialogue* provides an intensive insight into Japan's (sub)culture and the conceptual approach to the medium of photography.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a bilingual (German / English) catalogue, with texts by Dr. Nadia Ismail and Prof. Stefanie Dieckmann, as well as an issue of the artists' magazine *Frau Böhm*. The photographic edition TOKYO NO HATE will be released in cooperation with the publishing house Kettler, Dortmund.

Katja Stuke (\*1968 in Telgte) and Oliver Sieber (\*1966 in Düsseldorf) live and work in Düsseldorf. They have been realising joint projects in addition to individual works since 1999. They are actively engaged as artists and photographers, curators and exhibition designers as well as publishers of artists' books.

## Programme

### Catalogue presentation

With an Electro-Set by Shunsuke Oshio  
Sunday, June 30th 2019, 3pm

### Lecture

Katja Stuke + Oliver Sieber:  
On Photography, Territory and Anarchism  
Thursday July 4th 2019, 7pm

### Guided tour with the curator

Thursday, August 8th 2019, 5-6pm

### Art education in individual conversations

Saturdays 3-5pm: 08.06. + 15.06. + 22.06. + 06.07. + 20.07. + 03.08. + 17.08.  
Tuesdays 2-4pm: 26.06. + 09.07. + 23.07. + 06.08.

### Art and coffee

with Fabian Stein and Ehrenamt e.V.  
Tuesday June 11th and Wednesday July 17th, 3pm  
Registration at [kunsthalle@giessen.de](mailto:kunsthalle@giessen.de)  
Participation fee 2,50 €

Entrance is free to all events.

### Opening times

Tuesday-Sunday, 10-6pm  
Closed: Corpus Christi 20.06.19