

Press release / 8.3.2024

Jakob Spengemann, Akinori Tao
While We're Gone

Sam Vernon
Alter-Reservoir

9.3. – 12.5.2024

The new project of the Kunsthau Hamburg focuses on the upcoming relocation of the institution: in two exhibitions presented together in one hall, the artists Jakob Spengemann, Akinori Tao and Sam Vernon negotiate various aspects of the change of location and the uncertainties that accompany it.

The two Hamburg-based artists **Jakob Spengemann** and **Akinori Tao** convert apparent voids into explicit statements. In their exhibition *While We're Gone*, conceived especially for the Kunsthau Hamburg, aspects of place and time play a vital role. Visitors enter a site that has evidently been abandoned in the midst of being remodelled. It is only a moment later that they notice the presence of sculptures and *objets trouvés* arranged into subtle compositions: window sills, a first aid kit or fire extinguishers function as displays, unfinished walls and cardboard boxes are converted into resonating bodies and some works themselves have assumed the form of building materials and music technology. The interventions thus draw attention to the peripheries of the space, to its flaws and shortcomings. They orchestrate the exhibition space itself as a "work in progress". A steady, gentle rustling and chirping can be heard in various places, interrupted by a melodic sound. This overall installation refers to the transience of the staged space and enquires into the temporal potential of architecture. In an atmospheric play with ambiguities, the exhibition hall serves as a link between the visible and the invisible as well as between production and presentation.

The project addresses the uncertain future and ongoing loss of useable space for many art and culture professionals in Hamburg. Thus, it also reflects on the current state of limbo of the Kunsthau Hamburg. Originally located in its own building at Ferdinandstor, the institution had to make way for the new building of the Gallery of Contemporary Art, part of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, in 1993. The Kunsthau Hamburg relocated to the former market hall, where it is based up to the present. Long-pending renovation work on the building and the expansion of the neighbouring concert hall, however, have necessitated a move in the near future.

Sam Vernon creates dynamic visual worlds oscillating between the historical and the personal realm. Her site-specific installations are often based on intensive research into the art spaces for which she develops new projects. Turning a critical lens on institutional history, she engages in questions of representation, particularly with regard to labour, gender and cultural diversity. Recurrence is a central element of her practice. The artist scans, prints and copies her own drawings and gouaches alongside found footage, which she assembles into new, large-format wall collages. Based on multiple reproductions of the motifs in black and white, the original images are rendered almost unrecognizable. From this form of abstraction emerges a play with identity; the depicted loses its explicit attribution. Instead, information and stories overlap and disappear again. They remind us where we have come from and show us where we are.

Sam Vernon's first solo exhibition in Germany is a collaboration of the Kunsthau Hamburg and the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme, where the artist holds a scholarship for the year 2023/2024. Specifically for the project, she developed the installation *Alter-Reservoir*, a comment on the fate of the institution. Faced with long-pending refurbishment measures and the expansion of the neighbouring music hall, the exhibition venue

is about to be relocated. In her new work, the artist makes reference to Édouard Glissant's concept of "trembling" (*tremblement*). It describes a state of uncertainty, similar to that in which the Hamburg centre for contemporary art finds itself. Both the date of the move and the new location are as yet unclear.

Sam Vernon is quite familiar with the challenges involved in changing quarters; she has already moved more than 30 times and is about to do so again after completing her scholarship. Against the backdrop of this personal experience, she combines autobiographical elements with historical artefacts in her large-format photomontages, in this case, exhibition posters, objects, filed artist portfolios and documents from the Kunsthaus Hamburg's inventory. She understands the process of speculating over those forgotten ephemera as an attempt to illustrate archival history, creating meaning and connection to place. She alludes to the temporality of existing and forgotten, but also emergent objects as alternative memory or image repositories. *Alter-Reservoir*, a term Vernon employs to describe her personal image stock, focuses primarily on labour practices: occupation, social action, administration, maintenance, storage, archiving. Collaborative work has for a long time been a defining feature of the site where the Kunsthaus Hamburg is located today. In the former market hall, workers originally sold flowers, fruit and vegetables. To tie in with this, Sam Vernon invited artists and students from Hamburg to participate in the installation process of her wall treatment.

The exhibition of Jakob Spengemann and Akinori Tao was curated by Anna Nowak (Kunsthaus Hamburg) and is kindly supported by Claussen-Simon-Stiftung.

The exhibition of Sam Vernon was curated by Anna Nowak (Kunsthaus Hamburg) and Melanie Roumiguère (DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme) and is supported by the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme with funds from the Federal Foreign Office.

Opening

Friday, 8.3., 7 pm

With DJ set by Nika Son

Artist Talk with Anna Nowak, Melanie Roumiguère, Jakob Spengemann, Akinori Tao & Sam Vernon

Saturday, 9.3., 3 pm

Performance by Raymond Liew Jin Pin & Jascha Viehstädt

Friday, 22.3., 7 pm

Talk on the preservation of spaces for culture in Hamburg

Thursday, 11.4., 7 pm

Finissage and Performance by Raymond Liew Jin Pin & Jascha Viehstädt

Sunday, 12.5., 4 pm

Guided tours

Friday, 22.3., 6 pm

Thursday, 11.4., 6 pm

Sunday, 12.5., 4 pm

Press contact: Lea Ziegler, presse@kunsthushamburg.de, + 49 40 335803