

Artist Statement by Sam Vernon

Alter-Reservoir is a new series of photomontages exploring autobiography, relocation, and the concept of *tremblement* proposed by Édouard Glissant. Bodies of subjects dissolve into abstraction, incorporated into collage elements including drawing, paint, Xerox copies, print-media, and found objects. The exhibition asks: what if we considered our personal histories as an echo for future histories with desirable alternatives? Can these desired histories be performed through uncovering ghosts of the past? *Alter-Reservoir* attempts to illustrate a reservoir of images through the speculation over forgotten ephemera as a radical practice, a repository of history. Glissant defines *tremblement* as thinking in which we can lose time, lose time searching, in which we can wander and in which we can counter all the systems...it allows us to be in real contact with the world and with the peoples of the world.¹

Kunsthau Hamburg is currently facing a future move due to redevelopment plans and the expanded footprint of their upstairs neighbor, a popular music venue. The move-out date is undecided, as is the "forever home" for Kunsthau. Surrounded by other arts organizations, it stands as a 60-year-old institution that has only existed in two locations to date, both within walking distance to each other. The artist Sam Vernon has moved 33 times, 34 counting the move that will occur one week after her exhibition is set to open at Kunsthau in March 2024. Vernon knows very intimately what decisions and challenges are present during and after a big move.

This installation will focus on labor (the labor of care, the labor of moving, the labor of stewardship, the labor of preservation, the labor of archiving) intersecting with identity politics, institutional critique, labor practices, and environmentalism. This lends itself to the history of the building, a former flower market, when 19th-century workers sold flowers and plants to customers of Hamburg and beyond. Work, labor, social action, environmental care, spatiality, gender, identity, artist-curator-custodian-archivist; the life-sustaining and communal nature of labor, an idea that care is provided by labor practices. Artists do this work with art spaces, not for them. As such, artists ask the hard questions like, who is asked to move and why? Can we make art out of this new reality? According to Hannah Arendt, "the labor of maintenance" — moving, assessing, clearing space, archiving — is an art form that produces "an everlasting, historical set of socially conscious actions," creating the "condition for remembrance that is for history."² In these times of environmental crises, we no longer need to conceal the maintenance work of moving that society relies on for its survival.

¹ Édouard Glissant, "Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays," trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989).

² Hannah Arendt, "The Human Condition" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

WORKING INVENTORY

As of Dec 6, 2023

1 bike rack for car /1 jet pack
4 small tires in plastic wrap
1 large rusty tire exposed
2 tan large radiators
4 leather seat cushions
1 off white plastic seat cushion
8 metal desk fasteners?
3 panels of glass approximately 24 x 30 in.
2 antique small wooden bed posts (belonging to the same frame) and 2 sides
13 old spot lamps for tracks (some damaged)
8 metal table supports (3 small, 5 medium)
25 linolux plus warmton 58 watt tube lights
1 painted white wooden frame with plexiglas approximately 3 x 4 ft
6 wooden chairs with metal base
2 white metal tracks
3 Misc pieces left over from TOA wireless microphone (1 piece of styrofoam, plastic casing, manual)
16 rocks in a plastic crate (numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 19, 29, 32, 34, 36 out of 150)
1 metal frame with screenprint of nude white woman wearing red lipstick 6/8 April 1985
Jeffrey Zurek? Approx 2.5' x 3 ft
2 white treated panels on linen approx 18 x 24.
1 old suitcase (locked)
Piece of a printer
1 gray metal desk
1 long bench with black leather cushion
25 large metal frames in a stack
1 white metal clothing rack
2 postcard display holders
1 large yellow sign - Hamburger Wochenmarfthalle
1 medium sized plexi vitrine
1 large piece of metal white siding (green on the back)
1 large piece of metal
6 large rolls of felt - 2 magenta, 2 orange, 2 yellow
5 coemar sequenza lights
2 iMac boxes - one empty, one full
1 large piece of glass wrapped in plastic approximately 4 x 8 ft.
10 large wooden frames - some with glass? Approximately 4 x 8 ft.
4 large pieces of plexiglass- 3 with heart stickers (pink, orange, silver, hologram) and one clear with hinges
1 white plastic chair with metal base