

N I R A L T M A N G A L E R I E

unfollow me

Lenz Geerk, Samantha Greer, Hubertus Hamm,
Maria Justus, Littlewhitehead, Boris Maximowitz

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The thematically organized group exhibition *unfollow me* addresses the value of personal space in the context of living in multiple realms.

Our understanding of space, in particular of personal space, has changed tremendously in the course of digitalization. What was once seen as “intimate” can nowadays be easily exposed in the virtual realm where there’s only a blurry veil separating private from the public. Reasons for this can be found in the increased enthusiasm towards self-exposure, but also within the reception of so-called “followers” who contribute towards establishing constant observation as socially acceptable behavior. Some of these virtually accepted manners are impossible to imagine as equally acceptable within the physical reality, where traditional values of intimacy still count. How do we define the personal space though given the discrepant attitude towards virtual and physical realms?

The exhibition *unfollow me* brings six artistic positions together whose practice deal with defining space as a mental construct. Their individual approaches show that rational and emotional components shape our perspective on space and boundaries. However, not all participating artists address the interplay of virtual and physical realms directly. It’s rather the fact that all of these works are created within a consciousness of digital culture that creates a common demeanor between them. In that sense, the traditional media present in this exhibition can be seen from the additional angle of them existing in a society that is continuously flooded with imagery. The exhibition invites to emerge from these reflections on spatial perception and self-awareness.

Lenz Geerk

Lenz Geerks paintings hint toward the blurry line between exhibitionistic and voyeuristic tendencies. He is particularly interested in questioning whether the presence of a spectator changes the conception of an intimate act. The two chosen works from the series *Lotion* demonstrate this approach: Applying lotion on the body, especially on the feet, is a highly intimate action of personal hygiene. Knowing that someone is watching though, provides an additional touch of eroticism or even fetish to the scenery. Of course, this approach is intrinsically paradox given that a painting requires a spectator. But it relates to the artist questioning: is there an aesthetic of the unobserved?

Lenz Geerks figurative paintings root in the tradition of 20th century Avant-garde. The odd, distorted body language of the portrayed mirrors their inner self-reflection and insecurities. His paintings therefor also comment on the volatile condition of the overcritical, self-optimizing culture we live in today.

N I R A L T M A N G A L E R I E

Samantha J. Greer

Samantha J. Greer is a multimedia artist, whose focus is on reconstructing intimate spheres within the public realm. Her particular interest lies in creating an interplay between narrative, image, and object, which feed into an atmospherically charged environment. In *The Comfortable* she asked her Facebook community to tell her about a moment in which they felt “truly comfortable”. From all the answers that she received, she picked five to visually recreate in photograph and sculpture. In trying to capture or imitate somebody’s intimate moment, she asked herself what creates our conception of “comfort zones” that are highly subjective but can be re-subjected through her artistic lens.

The Comfortable not only shows our frivolous attitude towards giving away personal content on social media platforms but also demonstrates how comfort zones are virtually constructed - facebook for instance serves as such a virtual form of “safe haven”.

Hubertus Hamm

V1, Untitled names the newest series of works in the extensive body of work by conceptual photographer Hubertus Hamm. The series is part of his continues search for defining photography as a multidimensional media.

For this work, Hubertus Hamm has picked the curtain as a central motive. Sculpturally replicating the drapery, he not only underlines the fall of the fold but equally abstracts the original image of the first light hitting through the curtain. Almost all photographs in this series were captured in hotel rooms on the artist’s journeys. The curtain, which happens to be a strong motive in Western art history standing for the notion of the world being a stage, gains another, very contemporary meaning in Hubertus Hamm’s approach: here the curtain divides the psychological temporary comfort zone of the hotel room from the outside “unknown” territory. In a globalized world of increased travelling this pulls our attention towards how easily comfortable we feel in the foreign.

Maria Justus

Maria Justus works are the only ones in the whole exhibition directly dealing with intimacy defined as erotic, interpersonal space. Using passe-partouts that remind of 18th/19th-century miniature portraits, she captures a fragment of bodily interaction. These fragments are produced from photographs of classical marble sculptures that she took in the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin. In her studio, she then digitally paints the skin using multiples layers in photoshop to recreate the impression of human flesh. The digitalized image resulting from this process re-sensitizes our vision that is often jaded towards classical aesthetics.

Maria Justus is interested in the contemporary perspective on art historical motives charged with meaning. Her works are particularly marked by a curiosity to re-visualize symbols for intimacy through the implementation of digital tools.

NIR ALTMAN GALERIE

Littlewhitehead

The Glaswegian artist duo Littlewhitehead (Craig Little and Blake Whitehead) has gained international acclaim for their polemic interventions into public spaces. In their most recent practice though, based on investigating found digital imagery, their focus has relocated towards a rather subtle and minimalist approach: The series *paintings* deal with symbols of western short-lived luxury culture, in which the swimming pool appears as a recurring metaphor for recreational spheres. The sculpture *bloom* shows a similar nostalgic touch as it consists of drawers replicated in the style of a Charles and Ray Eames dresser. The drawers' arrangement in the shape of a blooming blossom explains the pun on the title. It attracts the spectator's curiosity into a sphere that is usually considered private. The content of a white porcelain shirt and a gelatin cube infused with a mix of iconic perfume is a ridicule on masculine identity.

Boris Maximowitz

Raum-Situation 2.2 DUNKELFELD is a new immersive installation adding up to Boris Maximowitz impressive work of large-scale sculptures. This site-specific work is a conceptual extension of an earlier piece equally termed *DUNKELFELD* (2013). In contrast to its predecessor, which also functioned as a dark field with motion detectors controlling the light situation, *Raum-Situation 2.2 DUNKELFELD* was challenged to fit the gallery's architectural structure without being dominated by it. Boris Maximowitz tackled this challenge by creating a gear alongside two walls of the gallery resulting in two entrance possibilities inviting the visitor to explore the possible encounter with a stranger in complete darkness. Boris Maximowitz architectural intervention is not by itself an impressive experience but has a strong influence on the inner space of the gallery in which the other artworks are exhibited. The resulting tension between the large-scale sculpture and the inside space becomes the central element connecting all the works.