

WERE I MADE OF MATTER, I WOULD COLOR

ULRIKE GROSSARTH:
RETROSPECTIVE

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Were I made of matter, I would color. Ulrike Grossarth: Retrospective

Curated by Sabine Folie and Ilse Lafer

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Ulrike Grossarth. Were I made of matter, I would color

Eds. Sabine Folie, Ilse Lafer

With texts by Mieke Bal, Rainer Borgemeister, Michael Glasmeier,
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INTRODUCTION

The most comprehensive retrospective to date of the work of Ulrike Grossarth is the first exhibition to trace the evolution of her art through all major divisions of her oeuvre, drawing out connections between her early years as a dancer in the 1970s and 1980s, her sculptural and pictorial settings and actions, and her most recent work, which touches on issues in the history of ideas and history more generally.

“Making works of art is of secondary importance to me — what I’m interested in is creating radical and vivid spaces for thinking, spaces people can actually experience and use,” Ulrike Grossarth describes her artistic approach. *BAU I* (1989–2000), a complex of works that is central to her entire creative oeuvre, is an experimental ensemble addressing issues of “unmoved object-bodies” created over a period of more than ten years that has been presented in a wide variety of constellations and will be the point of departure for this exhibition. As an attempt to visualize changed spaces of thought and action, *BAU I* bridges Grossarth’s early work, which is informed by dance, Fluxus, punk, and the attempt to come to terms with the postwar era, and her later art with its focus on Eastern Europe. In the so-called Lublin projects (since 2006) — *Szeroka 28, Fabrics from Lublin / Bławatne z Lublina, running Lubartowska*, and the most recent complex of works *SYMBOL gotowe / Subject Aggregates* — the artist seeks to reanimate lost cultural traditions. Of particular significance in these works is the artist’s engagement with phenomena of Jewish mysticism and especially with the motif of the Shekhinah, a complex and potentially integrative figure whose activation poses a challenge to Occidental thought.

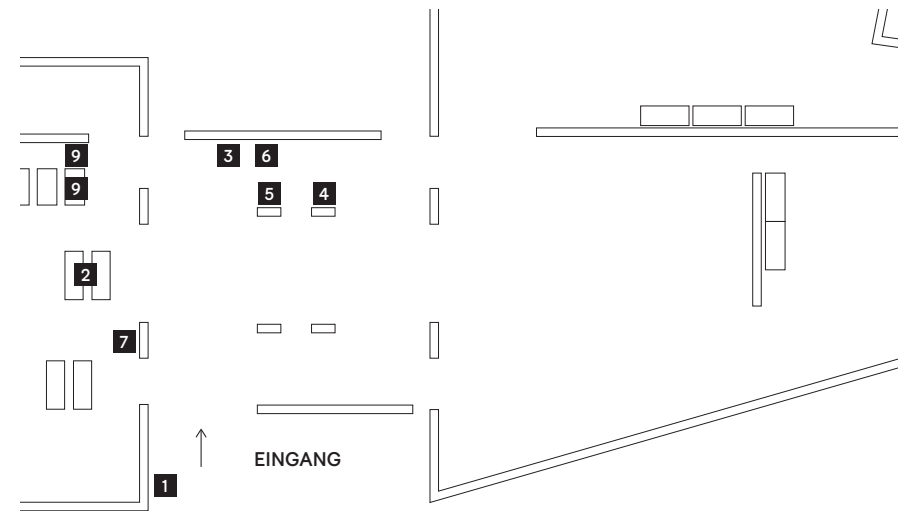
Hannah Arendt’s book *The Human Condition* (1958), in which human life is described as defined by “three fundamental human activities” of labor, work, and action, is a central reference for Ulrike Grossarth. Action, Arendt argues, is the “actual underlying human capacity” that is “irreversible” and “engenders forces without precedent in the household of nature.” Grossarth has applied this concept of action to her own artistic practice and developed a method of empirical research based on what she calls *public exercises*. The artist regards these studies — the most recent ones were conceived as travel projects (Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Czech Republic, Ukraine) — as “series of exercises in how to overcome rigidified cultural modules.”

To use the words of Arendt, this “new science” cannot be of merely “theoretical capacity” and then be applied to selected examples from the world of bodily existence; it arises from an action that, aware of its entanglements and the conditions that sustain it, sets sequences of events in motion “whose outcome is uncertain and unpredictable.”

Ulrike Grossarth was born in Oberhausen, Germany, in 1952 and lives and works in Dresden and Berlin. She studied Artistic Dance at the Else-Lang-Schule, Cologne (1969–72), and at Folkwang Academy (1972–74). In 1974 and 1975, she attended

the Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden. In 1980, she set up the Essen branch of the Free International University initiated by Joseph Beuys. Grossarth has been professor of Expanded Concepts of Art / Mixed Media at the Academy of Fine Arts Dresden since 1998. In 2009, she received the Käthe Kollwitz Award of the Berlin Academy of Arts.

ENTRANCE / FOYER / SMALL HALL



EINGANG

[1] 16 MOVING THINGS, 2005

16 moving things is a video tableau in which the acting figure of the king, as the symbolic top of a hierarchy, is tripled. Through aimless acting with a concentrated but simultaneously broad state of consciousness, contact is established by a rod to a level of arbitrarily compiled items in front of the figures. The actors equally have themselves, the mediating rod, and the items and voids in mind.

FOYER / SMALL HALL

[2] ACTIONS/DANCES, 1978–87

I have been developing dances and actions since 1975. In the first works, which were done together with the group PURR PURR, e.g., *Hochzeit* (Wedding, 1977–78) and *Totentanz* (Danse Macabre, 1978–80), I still used thematic references and pictorial motifs.

The title *Wedding* conveys the impression of a narrative. It is, however, simply a succession of scenes on this topic, a collage. The actions of the six actors were set in front of, between, and behind seven black walls. Three of these walls were movable. That offered scope within the performance for a device generally found in film: cutting between images. The climax of visual destabilization occurred when the “coffee scene,” depicting two figures by a table set for afternoon coffee, unfurled in the vertical plane. The juxtaposition of two- and three-dimensionality within an event, the apparent autonomy assumed by

the world of objects, the interlinking of humans and things, and the horizontal and vertical levels on which the action unfurled offered a plethora of stimuli.

I began to address the topic of the danse macabre in 1976. Studies of medieval representations of the danse macabre led to several dance pieces, centered on the contrast between stasis and movement. Stasis became an essential dynamic dimension, which did not signify torpor but instead a point in which the motion becomes concentrated.

Life (1979–82) was the first action addressing and examining the conditions of spatiotemporal processes by staggered arrangements of the individual aspects. Four actors were dedicated to embodying and at the same time creating divisions between phenomena such as time, space, and weight, aspects that normally count as mere prerequisites for themes propped onto them and for this reason remain invisible. Only one actress in *Life* allowed herself to be interrupted in her purposeless being-there during the action. The minute-long adhering to and fixing an embodied posture and facial expression was the only dramaturgical intervention.

In the subsequent actions, entitled *Das Unheimliche des Normalen* (The Uncanniness of Normality, 1980–82), *Carré* (1981), and *Ex Voto* (1982–84), I used items that, as mediating instances, as intensification aids, as it were, [9] determined and intensified each embodied aspect. In *Gotische Tänze* (Gothic Dances, 1983) the dress I wore as the dancer was assigned the role of a “mediating instance, an intensification aid.”

In the last three actions, which I developed within a period of one-and-a-half years, entitled *Material für's Diktat I, II, III* (Material for Dictation I, II, III, 1984–87), the avoidance of any kind of theme and the unmediated addressing of the given circumstances were increased. In *Material for Dictation I*, I put up for consideration the body itself in terms of its preconditions. I read a text over a microphone, followed by the physical equivalent of what was just read. *Material for Dictation II*, subtitled *Der geliehene Körper* (The Borrowed Body), used as its point of reference an old fire-brigade tower, a clearly defined built volume with six large openings. The action commenced with “civil twilight” (a term taken from meteorology), which begins an hour before sunset. At this time of day, the tower was still clearly recognizable as a built volume. In front of the tower I used a mixer to control light and sound elements that, during the course of an hour, supported the reversal from a clearly discernible built volume to a mere shell for the inflowing light. *Material for Dictation III* completed this series. I regarded myself as the location of formal actions and, following the permanent movement, no longer maintained a planning, controlling distance: without knowledge, without volition, without concept. The type of movements that took place resulted from the interaction with the room surrounding me, as a consciously perceived, active sphere. I was thus able to embody in the moment all the aspects that our culture normally separates.

[3] KOHLENSTRASSE 70, BOCHUM 1984

In connection with the activities at the FIU (Free International University), I worked on issues related to the shaping of consciousness through movement, which I further pursued in seminars at various institutes. One high point of these investigations was the seminar titled *Material und Masse* (Material and Mass) which I held in 1984 at the *Deutsches Institut für Puppenspiel* (German Puppet Theater Institute). A six-week collaboration with just five persons enabled us to take a very slow, detailed approach to linking sculptural principles directly with ways of behavior. We worked in a semi-deserted, former administration building of the Krupp corporation in an industrial zone of Bochum. This location had an influence on many experiments due to the presence of historical references and the “Krupp myth.” One of the most impressive attempts, which we carried out in the fifth week, was an action conceived for six hours in a thirty-square-meter office room on the second storey of the building (*Raum 202* [Room 202]). Beforehand, we had set ourselves the task of encountering this spatial volume with extended masses, i.e., objects of all kinds, form and weight, and with their transport into the room. Over a period of two days we then unsystematically stuffed furniture and appliances that we found in the building into the room, almost up to the ceiling, so that we were just able to shut the door. We then sat for one day in front of the room reflecting on the experiences, the rules, and the conditions of the fullness created in this manner, and we conceived the next step. This was to enter into the mass of items wedged together and stay inside the room for six hours. After an initial effort to somehow interact with the surroundings, it became clear after at most an hour that the most adequate action in this structure was to sleep.

The video *Kohlenstraße 70* was also made in the Krupp building. Two people, keeping time with each other, proceed down the imposing symmetrical stairs on the left and the right, their movements consciously echoing the architecture, and then walk up the steps again. With a slight time lag, just after the pair begin to climb the stairs, pieces of furniture, in other words “bodies” that simply follow the pull of gravity, fall into the foreground of the image.

[4] SUBJECT OF STUDY, MUNICH/VIENNA 1999

The combination of image levels with practical activity as an exercise in “paradoxical action” meanwhile comprises a field in the mentioned workshops titled *public exercises*, in which I presume insights that bundle the themes of both phases: my dance work and my visual artistic work. I am concerned with elaborating a vivid arsenal of formalizations and possibilities to gain insights which can then be transferred from the artistic field to other social fields, where they can lead to transcultural experience and practice.

An early example was the action *Subject of Study*: A complex of materials was brought together by a team of twelve during the course of preparation. These

ranged from personal items to found fixtures and materials of various sizes and proportions. In the action space, chairs were set up in short, nonlinear rows and small groups. The visitors took a seat there. The participants' goal was to act in this pool of materials for an hour without interruption. That is, the vigor of intervening and grasping was to be prolonged for an hour—a vigor that we normally only possess when predictable categories of meaning and purpose are present. In a state of permanent “now,” the people involved in the action act with full energy, and without any intentional goal that would normally give their undertakings meaning. What constituted every moment was the environment, that which was continually changing by the communal action. This activity demands a maximum degree of unprejudiced perception, in every instant from every actor, because the actors have the closest relationship to the matter, that is, they don't allow themselves to pause or take a distance in order to plan. Without exception, the items involved were to be treated equally, moved, pushed, packed, and carried. Through the energetic speed of the action and the lack of concrete guidelines, the actors found themselves in an “unconscious” state on the perimeter between “meaningful” activity and chaotic drifting—both of which were to be avoided. Since the actors acted “self-forgotten,” this in turn robbed the visitors of any possibility to project. Those who acted in this way produced space. It was no longer a space that allows for an appraising gaze at what is hermetically placed, but rather was an action space, a “public space” characterized by the simultaneity of various perspectives. With their physical presence, the visitors were part of the action; they were a sort of “action blockade” that the dynamics of the action's currents break on, jam on, or need to bypass. The issue was not the relationship between human and item, or of the dramaturgical treatment of the separation of the two spheres. The separation occurred here on an entirely different level, namely, between material that was currently moving and material that was unmoved.

[5] COMMON GROUND / 4ER ORDNUNG (COMMON GROUND / ARRANGEMENT OF 4), BERLIN 2003

In the work *Common Ground / Arrangement of 4*, photographs from workshops entitled *Permanentes Handeln* (Permanent Action) were combined with photographs of a forest. These images are linked by the topic of transformation; the temporal development of the forest's transformation cannot be observed continuously, while the protagonists sought to establish equivalences between themselves and the items through directional but unintentional actions, without the usual acts of structuring awareness.

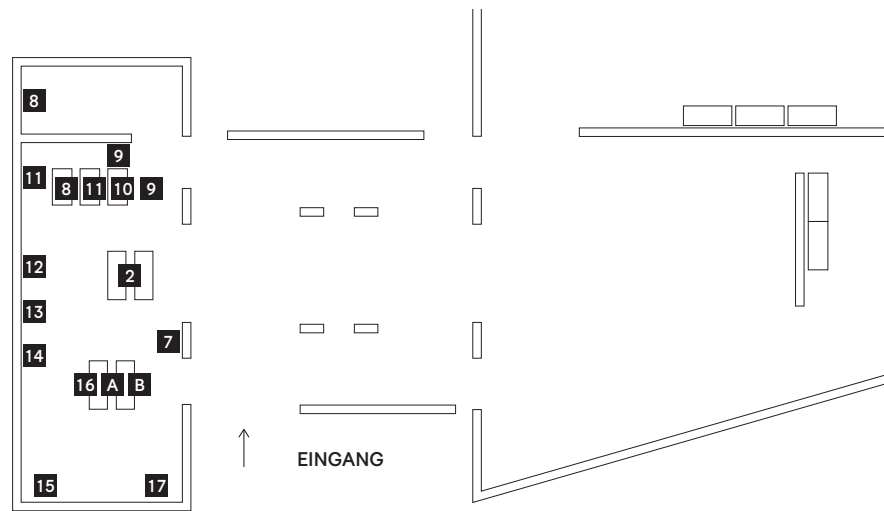
[6] DIE IDEALE STARRE (THE IDEAL STASIS), BERLIN 1987

The *DeForms* were the first drawn elements I engaged. With them, I was able to visualize the experiences I had gained from the *Hochdruckbelastungskörper*

(HighPressureLoadBody). They vaguely resembled stone weights, and the question arises: are these prefunctional or deformed forms? In their purposeful ambiguity, the *DeForms* signify a mentality of occupying free space, of thinking and acting in fixed, hermetic units. They are uncommunicative units, simple placeholders, present masses. The video *The Ideal Stasis* was made in this context

[7] ENTKERNEN (REMOVING THE CORE), BERLIN 1994

We associate the core with notions of origin and identity; core-oriented contemplation and thought lead to centralistic and hierarchical results. Our conception of space also involves the way we perceive things in space, namely through the intermediate space that separates us from the object up to its physical exterior side. We do not stop there, however, but idealistically penetrate further through to its “core.” In our tradition, we are hardly able to simply observe objects, we elevate them to projection surfaces; they do not only possess a capitalistic “surplus value.” Objects are perceived as self-contained, centered, and laid out around a core. I intended to develop a basic model with which the sculptural consequence of a visual dismantling of the traditional concept of the thing and the associated concept of space could be demonstrated. To this end, it was necessary to exemplarily penetrate into the spatiotemporal center of the object in order to hit the target of all Occidental speculations and “remove the core” of the item. Only a totally naive approach could assist in such a high-flown endeavor. I took an empty can and marked the center with a rod. Then I filled the vessel with plaster. After the casting mass cooled down, I removed the “core” so that a hollow space remained. The resulting form assumed by the object is a “negative” of the necessary, constituting principles of the idea. “Minimized” bodies were created, also in the sense of lacking functional use. With the *Entkernen* (Things Without Core), the surroundings and the empty center correspond and make the material zone experiential as a homogenous cylindrical extension of material.



SMALL HALL

[8] DER OFEN (THE OVEN), OBERHAUSEN 1985

The process of lighting a stove and the materials involved in this are filmed in extreme close-up. The camera forces attention on to the elementary nature of such an act: a figure performing actions, wood, coals, a coat, shoes, a poker, the stove. Acoustic expression is an essential aspect, for example the sounds produced by moving the poker against the stove's iron casing, the crackling of burning wood, and the footsteps of the protagonist. The focus is on hearing rather than sight. A second person is introduced acoustically, but appears visually in a "degraded" form, namely solely as the wearer of a coat. Equal value is thus placed on all the elements involved in the process, included the people. Ambivalence underpins the stove itself—in addition to its actual function, there is also an echo of a combustion or incineration chamber: an iron reverberation of German history muffled by the coat's anonymous presence.

[9] GOTISCHE TÄNZE (GOTHIC DANCES), ESSEN 1983

In *Gothic Dances*, the dress I wore was assigned the role of a "mediating instance, an intensification aid," and its color corresponded with the lining of the entire room. The dress was set in motion by movements, which were partially quite vigorous in this piece, resulting in a unity between the person wearing the dress and the worn dress. *Gothic Dances* was the result of an examination of the use of building materials in cathedrals in the Middle Ages. During that time, the attempt was made to use stone not mainly to support organic loads,

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but to thin it out so as to symbolize metaphysical ideas, which are traditionally associated with the reduction of material, of physicality. I was interested in transferring this principle to one's own materiality of the dress and the relationship to the spatiotemporal field while avoiding a subjective will to shape and design. I avoided unequivocal directions of motion within the frame of the spatial geometry in order to set up a multidimensional study, in which the overall impression was of pure intensity in duration.

[10] GROSSDRUCKBELASTUNGSKÖRPER (HIGHPRESSURELOAD-BODY, 1942), BERLIN 1987

With my visual artistic work, a process of delving into prevailing modes of perception, into the intellectual, unconscious and mental foundations of our culture began and my interest in historical processes came to the fore. In 1987, on my expeditions through the city of Berlin, I came upon the *HighPressureLoadBody*, a relic of plans to redesign Berlin, the former capital of the Third Reich. This structure was built in 1941 in the vicinity of the Kolonnenbrücke, where it still stands. As a natural scale experiment, it simulated the weight of a buttress of "Bauwerk T" ("Structure T," the triumphal arch) in order to test the weight-bearing capacity of marly soil layers. The structure weighs 12,600 tons and is cast in massive concrete, except for the central measuring compartments. Its function is to exert a load. It is a pure weight that soil mechanics calls "dead load." The shape and size of the *HighPressureLoadBody* are defined by the specific weight of the concrete which was used. In my opinion, this structure shows the initial gesture of our culture—individualizing, burdening, abstracting, symbolizing. It is a purely self-referential body without attributes referring to a context, or environment, or signifying any kind of connectedness whatsoever. As an illustrative model and the representation of an extreme, undiluted, monotonous physicality to which the world of ideas stands in unmediated contrast, it appears as a gigantic symbol of the division in the Occidental tradition of thought between mind and matter, which is the prerequisite for totalitarian, rigid, bloc-oriented thought and action. Form and function, appearance and purpose, all appear equally vacuous.

[11] MONOPOL, BERLIN 1987

Monopol comes from a 1930s cookbook. It represents a fixed unit of measurement. The conception is economical: the Monopol as a stand-alone, one-liter measure, the fixed, unchanging, authoritative measure. I coated the one-liter Monopol containers with glue to make them transparent and at the same time to give them greater corporeal volume, to render them tangible in the space.

[12] MOHN (BACKEN UND BAUEN) (POPPY (BAKING AND BUILDING)), BERLIN 1987–90

Since 1987 I have been interested in the architectural measures of the National Socialists in Berlin, particularly in the plans to redesign the city into a capital called Germania. The focal point of planning was the so-called Große Halle (Grand Hall), a gigantic domed structure to which access and parade avenues, in the shape of an axis, were to lead. In a decoration suggestion for a holiday table from a 1930s cookbook I saw something structurally the same: the central “sculpture” of a ring-shaped pound cake from which decorative ribbons ran to the corners of the table, at the ends of which small crowns were fastened. To me, this scene appeared to be a copy of Albrecht Speer’s architectural model. I treated a large photocopy of this motif with ink and dammar resin varnish. During a trip to Oświęcim, I found in the local archive a photo of Carl Clauberg, the concentration camp physician in Auschwitz-Birkenau, standing in a garden with a pound cake. This combination gave cause to subsequently expand the work, which led to completing the ensemble with six additional pictures. With the other picture motifs I wanted to add references and associations in order to visualize what constitutes a perversion of simple things. The formal canon of the bourgeois milieu is applied in its conventional rigidity and enigmatic ambivalence. For example, the tin can on the table of a person plaiting a loaf has great similarity with the cyanide B tin cans in the museum in Auschwitz. This is also underlined by the text from Albert Speer’s *Erinnerungen* (Reminiscences), which gives an account of his last meeting with Hitler in the Führer’s bunker at Potsdamer Platz in 1945. Speer tells of the furniture in the rooms and of Eva Braun offering him cake, confectionary, and sparkling wine.

ON ACTION [A]

In my first works during my residency at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, I was initially concerned with models of states of consciousness, with visualizing staggered arrangements and layers in the “space” of perception and thought. The themes and their visualization therefore stood at the beginning: reflection, projections and the simplest animation of material. Pieces such as *Hilfskörper* (Assisting Bodies) and *Handlungsblockade* (Action Blockade) were materializations of borders—which borders at first remains unclear. The first sculptures completely expressed the utilized material. No “surplus value” was achieved. Over the years, the motifs and methods permanently grew and continue to do so. These were: pouring, immersing, removing the core, reducing the density, condensing, and throwing, combined with motifs like holes/circles, shadows, bars, light as form without body, plants as form without consciousness, and bread.

ON PROJECTIONS [B]

I derived the understanding of what projections could mean for my work from a scene in the film *Long Goodbyes* (1971) by Kira Muratova. In the film, a boy and his mother live together in one room of a communal flat in Moscow, which is of course multifunctional and cluttered with furniture. When the woman goes out in the evening, the boy sets up a slide projector opposite the door, the only free space, and alternately looks at the only two slides he owns, pictures of birds. This scene radiates a strange intensity, maybe because it becomes visible here how, under problematic conditions, a form of expanse and concentration can be created with the simplest means. When the mother comes home again and opens the door, the projection surface disappears and the process is over. Later I asked myself what a projector actually is, of course in a figurative sense as well. I started working with light signs that I projected onto the wall or furniture in my living environment to add an active element, albeit in a bodiless form, to the “causal” structure.

Plants also repeatedly played an important role in these years (1988–90), either real ones or as drawings in transfers and photos. I used the ginkgo biloba because it retains the first cotyledon gesture of division, with the cotyledon simply sprouting to the left and right. During this time I was interested in staggered arrangements of perceivable phenomena. I considered the light signs as form without body and the plants as form without consciousness. The *Ballungen* (Concentrations) are also fundamental, incompatible transfers of the perception of images and actual referentiality. With them, the unique, momentary spatiotemporal relation of a viewing person to an object is quadrupled and layered to a new shape behind one another.

[13] HILFSKÖRPER (ASSISTING BODIES), BERLIN 1987

The *Assisting Bodies* are the first sculptural experiments after the end of the work on movement, in other words, after I “discharged” my body from the process of formalization with the last dance-related action *Material für’s Diktat III* (Material for Dictation III). They are conceived as a counterpart, initiated from “nothingness.” They denote gestures of inclusion and exclusion, and are conical to suggest a “solid,” stand-alone form, in other words a form that is not a “channel” or a segment. The underlying formula “2,” constantly present in varying forms in my work, is present thanks to the bodies hanging adjacent to one another. In the case of the *Assisting Bodies*, I sought right from the outset to impede typical ingrained concentration on and limitation to an object, and through the “2” to attain dynamism, a different weighting. Two similar items confront a person, which means that the human figure, or at least its traditional status, is minimized. The ensuing dynamism stems from the uncertainty introduced by the second object, which is of the same kind as the first. The two similar items also invoke simultaneity. This approach hints at experiments I have attempted to devise beyond the usual plane of reception and action.

[14] **HANDLUNGSMODELL (ACTION MODEL), BERLIN 1988**

The *Action Model* refers to the sphere of the arms. The perforated material support, roughly the size of a hand, with a handle affixed on its narrow side, illustrates the formal consequences of an act of civilization and its inherent abstraction. The key aspect is how characteristics are added. Culture, the addition of forms, stems from walking upright, from liberating the arms. This triggers the question of what would constitute the next step: what form might this assume, and what type of formal consequences would it display?

[15] **PROJEKTIONSMODELL / 4ER ORDNUNG (PROJECTION MODEL / ARRANGEMENT OF 4), BERLIN 1988**

Projection Model / Arrangement of 4 combines a wooden board with two yellow circles and a Krupp jubilee plate with two heads facing each other. Illuminated by four identical circles of light, varying intensity is created as a function of the changing duality on the projection surfaces.

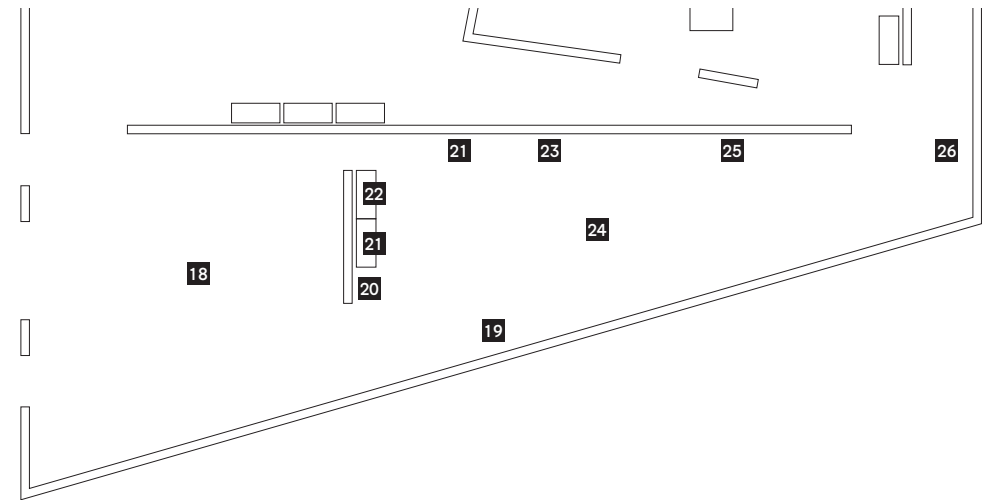
[16] **HANDLUNGSBLOCKADE (ACTION BLOCKADE), BERLIN 1989**

The *Action Blockade* is intended to be incorporated into normal everyday life, to sit on desks, drawing attention in its surroundings to the completion of actions or blocking such actions. The *Action Blockade* is transparent but reinforced, as it is made of dammar resin. The size of the object is the maximum possible extension at which the material remains stable. The holes serve as construction aids. The focus is on the visualization of inaccessible spaces, which also means places in which thought and perception can be expanded.

[17] **BROT 4 (BREAD 4), BERLIN 1987**

BREAD 4 focuses on a staple foodstuff that is rendered monumental. In terms of its plasticity it is a solid body, a defined unit, of the type found as a model in many early works. *BREAD 4*, simultaneously the title and the work itself, is not a conventional designation from everyday trade. It seems to be a registration, an indication of an exceptional state. You find yourself wondering: what about Bread 1–3?

MAIN HALL



MAIN HALL

[18] **BAU I (CONSTRUCTION I), BERLIN 1989–2000**

The inception of the work dates from the year 1989, which was so marked by dramatic political upheavals. One of the central phrases that sparked ideas for this work was Ludwig Wittgenstein's question in *Bemerkungen über die Farbe* (Remarks on Color): Does glowing gray exist? On vertical and horizontal planes a plastic complex came into being, using simple means to depict an archive of consciousness formation through constellations of individual items, by working out culture-forming principles, formulating these empirically, and thus rendering them visible. There are many different variables even simply in how light is deployed: from a luminous to an illuminating object, from glowing to shining and glaring. There are light shapes, photographs (light images), shadows, mirrors, all principles that permeate Western art and literature as metaphors and form the basis of all dramatology of culture. In *CONSTRUCTION I*, various degrees of intervention were tried out, each triggering a different type of appearance, i.e., the work deals with gradations and modifications of active and passive action. For example, it includes casts of objects and clearly constructed components, painted or dyed items, and inherently colored material. As a result, various pathways through the building emerged: pathways shaped by art history, the history of culture, intellectual history, and phenomenology. I began in 1989 to investigate the concept of object in the twentieth century: from Duchamp's industrial product as prefabrication up to the cult of commodity fetishes and the status of the object as sign and code. In *CONSTRUCTION I* all the objects are confronted with the question of their status as commodities.

However, I was interested in a kind of intervention that allows the space to become indistinguishable from the object, so as to create ways of perceiving and experiencing that are not based on the separation of the two aspects. For this it was necessary, in my opinion, to penetrate actively into the layers of ideas of our culture. I at first experimented with simple items and placed emphasis on their physical state, on expansion and weight, so as to establish up front a physically motivated presence. I was trying to remove the aura of the single articles, the history of their meaning, and the interpretations that arose from their arrangement. By dropping both monolithic gestures and the attributes of gestures that are intentionally set in a continuum, aiming at an “impact,” these are not available in the process of reading the work, i.e., they do not play a part in theory-formulation. Step by step, I developed a fund of basic, operational material including, among other things, tables, projectors, slides, panes of glass, commercial goods, photos, and plaster forms. All the properties of the items I used have an influence on the “logic” of the overall form. That these are so-called everyday things is for me the least relevant factor. I have appropriated them as “found material,” as “cultural characters” (Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Warenform und Denkform* [Commodity Form and Thought Form], 1978). In my use of them I have foregone solitary placement and isolation, since this would have given the things object status, also foregone any defined in-between space that might provide meaning and symbolization. The focus is on a field of perception that offers scope both for an overview and for more profound examination in particular zones, with the groupings of items often seeming monumental despite their manageable formats, and with dimensions and distances at times appearing irrational. From the beginning *CONSTRUCTION I*, was planned as a three-dimensional milieu with a predominantly horizontal expansion in which people can be accommodated who, walking and looking, explore it in time. The fact that it can be encircled, approached, and looked at again from all sides and from different directions corresponds to the field’s open structure. Through the physical presence and movement of people, *CONSTRUCTION I* becomes a performance. Visitors themselves become momentary surfaces for projections, cast shadows, and, through their physical presence, the vertical projection of slides and signs is interrupted, extinguished, or differently emphasized. The choice of the books in *CONSTRUCTION I*, which are of course to be considered here merely as *res extensa*, introduces the dimension of an intellectual historical frame, spanning the 18th to the 20th century.

METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH VIA TRAVEL PROJECTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

For many years, in my class at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, we have been working on a method of empirically extending artistic themes, expanding them toward central themes that are of general relevance in order to develop a lively

concept of culture. In this context we read the work of Emmanuel Levinas and reflected on his differentiation between Greek and Hebrew thinking, in which he elaborates the turn from theory toward ethics. Meanwhile, the traditional Jewish exegesis based on the Talmud has become an integral part of our work. That is, the training and cultivation of a paradoxical way of thinking that remains present in layers that are continually superimposing on each other in different ways through a constant reinterpretation of the Torah. In the last few years we have complemented these topics by intensive studies of Hasidic tradition. Of course this interest must also be viewed against the backdrop of Jewish culture since the Shoah. Since 2003 we have traveled to locations, in particular in Poland and Ukraine, that relate in various ways to this nexus of topics. On the eight- to ten-day excursions, the goal was to continually carry out courses of action in a highly concentrated form, and thereby to consider everything, the excursion itself, the discussions and individual actions, from a formal point of view, and to purposefully put this into confrontation with the historical forms and “cultural preserves” of the respective geographic areas. Our question was: under what conditions do procedural structures emerge that might be valuable or meaningful in other ways? Our topics included, among others: identity in progress, work “lessness,” paradoxes, circular systems, and the playful gestures of the political. My own works, which I have called the Lublin projects, also developed out of these contexts.

[19] STEFAN KIEŁSZNIA, ULICA NOWA 23–19, LUBLIN 1930S

Stefan Kielsznia was born in 1911 in Lublin. He was a bookseller and a member of the Lublin Photography Association. In the 1930s he took a large series of photographs in the Jewish quarter that show everyday life shortly before this area was turned into a ghetto. This unique cycle of images documents life in prewar Lublin. Before the German occupation during the Second World War, Lublin was one of the centers of Jewish life in Poland. In particular many chapters in the multifaceted history of Hasidism, which came into being in the mid-18th century in southeastern Poland and Ukraine and now survives in Jewish communities around the world, unfolded in the city. Lublin’s Jewish population was deported to Sobibor, Bełżec, and to the extermination camp Majdanek, which was situated in one of Lublin’s southern districts. Kielsznia died in 1987.

When I saw Stefan Kielsznia’s photographs in 2006 in Lublin’s Teatr NN on a trip to the city, I was convinced at first glance that something that I had been trying to uncover for years in my own artistic practice was made visible in an entirely natural manner in his work. The various levels of representation and action that I strive to analyze and process in order to track down possible changes were visible here as a normal everyday scenario. Through the photographer’s unobtrusive record, which shows no desire to be representative, an urban space becomes visible that is apparently not characterized by alienation.

The character of the advertising panels—with lettering and depictions of goods juxtaposed and given equal importance—displays a broad spectrum of degrees of abstraction, coexisting and intermingled. The scenarios traced out in images and writing on the architecture, with its projections, entrances, and dark depths, might give rise to sentimental contemplation, were it not for the incessant flow of people that cuts across our gaze. It is a glimpse into a world that has now vanished, but I see in it a “repository” for future structures and possibilities. To my mind, Stefan Kielsznia has succeeded in making visible a stratification that is normally concealed, revealing the multiple layers of a vibrant space of action: the street, the stratum of the signs, the adverts, then the level of the shop windows, which constitute a further zone of transit before trade occurs, and glimpses into the dark spaces of exchanges, ultimately of trade in goods, the mercantile.

[20] WORD-SKIRTS, DRESDEN/VIENNA 2009

The lettering for the *Word-Skirts* comes from the diverse forms of typography used by businesses once located along ulica Nowa und ulica Lubartowska in 1930s Lublin. The “skirt” is a motif from the French *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and d’Alembert of 1751, from the chapter “Lingere: lange de laine pour envelopper le nouveau-né” (Woolen Shawls for Wrapping Newborn Babies). A new beginning is the intention, a reinstatement through swaddling. These destroyed motifs are incorporated into a paradoxical form of reflection and circumspect action to form a basis for a sense of cultural and human understanding.

[21] SYMBOL GOTOWE / TRADING, LUBLIN/DRESDEN 2012

Trade forms the topic of *SYMBOL gotowe / trading*. This complex of works evolved from Stefan Kielsznia’s photo of ulica Nowa 17, in which the window of a tailor shop is visible, with the words “UBIORY gotowe” (prêt-à-porter). The play of light and shadow on the goods in the shop window seem to me to be symbols of a split in acts of consciousness pertaining to the relationship between signifier and signified. That opened up a conceptual space for me in which I could engage in further work. The images portray three phases in trading, or rather the course of a process related to a trading transaction. The shop window and the sales room are the loci of an event in which attributions are transformed and reinterpreted. *SYMBOL gotowe* thematizes the process of exchange per se, focusing not on substitution but on transformation. Assuming that the goods have a fixed symbolic character signifies a perpetuation of the abstraction of (bourgeois) modes of thought, the division that replaces one thing with another, and views this as a process. However, all that occurs is stagnation. I was electrified by Alfred Sohn-Rethel’s description of how goods traverse a context-free state in the moment of exchange (when “set in motion”). This moment has interested me for many years, along with the

way in which it could serve as a deflecting point that leads to a different kind of action and thought.

[22] SYMBOL GOTOWE / TAUSCHAKTION (EXCHANGE ACTION), DROHOBYCZ 2012

During a visit to Drohobycz, Ukraine in 2011, I saw price tags in the markets without any indication of the currency: the bare figures were noted tersely on pieces of cardboard over the goods. My attention shifted at once from observing equivalents in how the markets were organized to imagining a particular number of fruits. For the 5th International Bruno Schulz Festival in 2012 in Drohobycz, I developed a project set in the market and the synagogue. I wished to practice a different, poetic understanding of barter by introducing slight differences to fundamental rules of economics, so that the object itself became the symbol of the exchange, i.e., the means of payment. In this way the rules of creation of value, which are per se abstract, were disrupted and transformed into something poetic, along the lines described by Bruno Schulz in his treatise on “The Mythologizing of Reality” (*The Cinnamon Shops / Sklepy Cynamonowe*, 1934): “Poetry happens when short-circuits of sense occur between words, a sudden regeneration of the primeval myths.”

[23] CHAIA ZYLBERBAUM, ULICA LUBARTOWSKA, DRESDEN/VIENNA 2011

The advertising panels on Chaia Zylberbaum’s grocery store at ulica Lubartowska 11 in 1930s Lublin are not clearly visible on the photograph by Stefan Kielsznia and are almost impossible to read. I accepted this “distance,” which is also historical, and the impossibility of moving in close to the motifs, and I drew what I could see. As a result, indefinable forms came into being, demanding the utmost precision in transposing them into drawn form.

[24] ZWERGE (DWARFS), WARSAW/DRESDEN 2009

The *Dwarfs* are copies of a pair of cast-iron figures in ulica Prózna in Warsaw, in the former ghetto area. Until 2012, parts of the street remained unchanged since the war. It was only during my visit in November of that year that I saw renovation had begun on one side of the street. Flanking a gateway in the part of the street that had not yet been redeveloped, the dwarfs originally served as a distance guide for carts or carriages driving through the entrance. They are concealed behind a conical sign with the date 1898 and seem to be “repositories” of mental contents from various eras, such as the 19th century with its pseudo-mythical formalizations. They might also be custodians, putting the unimaginable history of the Warsaw Ghetto into perspective with their immutable, unyielding air.

[25] ENZYKLOPÄDISCHE KAMMER (ENCYCLOPEDIA CHAMBER),
BERLIN 1999

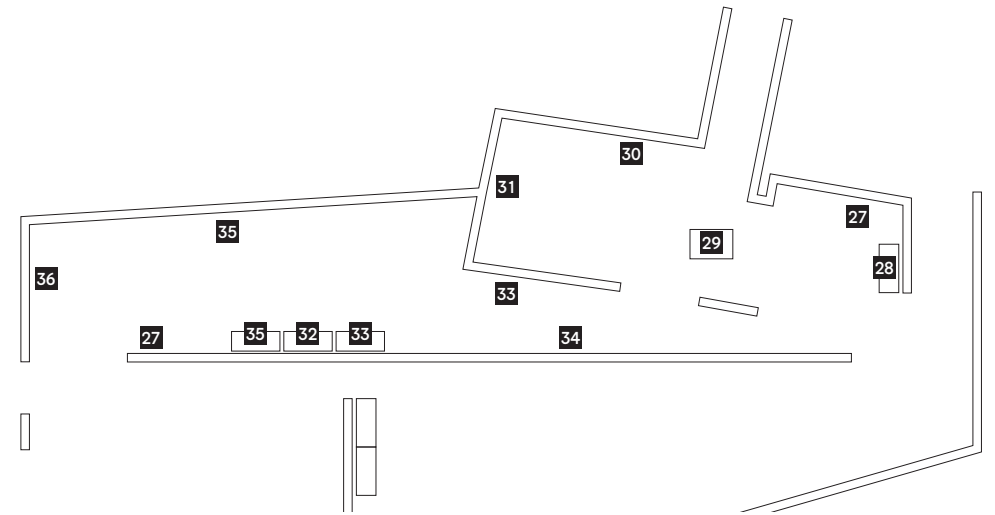
In the illustrated volumes of the 1751 *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert, in which the attempt was made to set all fields of human knowledge in a logical and genetic relationship, more than eight hundred pages contain illustrations of all types of workshops and the analytic listing of all assembly tools and tool parts, down to the tiniest screw. Since this inventory could not be described by means of language alone, depictions became necessary.

My engagement with the illustrated volumes was inter alia from the perspective of depicting workshops with their workers, showing a goal-oriented atmosphere of labor and production. I developed the motifs by overpainting, thus highlighting the actions shown. I see these as examples of structure formation through objectifying and goal-setting procedures and of simultaneous value formation at the start of the era of technologization in the second half of the 18th century. The milieus in the *Encyclopédie* are projections of a consciousness that engenders thinking in rigid units and fixations and in which causality is visualized in a practical way. The items therein constitute a formal vocabulary suitable for simple operations, similar to the construction of language in the field of "bivalent logic." Deviations do not exist because everything is covered that complies with a scientific conception of the world.

[26] ALLEGORIE DER ERKENNTNIS UND MANTEL (ALLEGORY OF
COGNITION AND COAT), BERLIN 2005 / DRESDEN 2010 /
VIENNA 2014

I selected the figure from the allegorical wealth of the *Iconologia* after Cesare Ripa, 1593. The striding female figure with her eyes blindfolded, holding out a flower, originally embodied the allegory of instinct, but the attributes and gesture of the symbolic figure, seeming at once defenseless and decisive, made me feel it would be appropriate as a test-subject for an approach, an attitude and an action contrary to our culture's safeguarding and interpretation systems. I called her *Allegory of Cognition*. I dedicated a coat to this figure, with its patterns also taken from the Lublin adverts and produced on the basis of designs from the *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and d'Alembert.

SIDE HALL



SIDE HALL

[27] X DER PRÄDIKATE (X OF THE PREDICATES) DRESDEN 2008/09
FRIENDLY THINKING BABES, ŁÓDŹ/DRESDEN 2007–09

These works were triggered by the advertising panels for the tailor shops in ulica Nowa, which I discovered in Stefan Kielsznia's photographs. The panels depict painted bales of cloth, piled obliquely one above another to form a cross, with an associated square or triangular decorative element floating above, creating an overall impression reminiscent of abstract bodies. After conducting some studies in the Textile Museum in Łódź, I reconstructed these advertisements in 1930s colors (*X of the Predicates*) and combined them with depictions of figures (*friendly thinking babes*) constructed using various fragments from historical epochs in Western civilization. The heads are reworkings of face-like depictions of the sun from 16th-century copperplate engravings by alchemist Michael Maier, the torso is formed by cape and coat models from the illustrated volumes of Diderot and d'Alembert's 18th-century *Encyclopédie* and the limbs are from an emblem book of 1779 conceived after Cesare Ripa's 16th-century *Iconologia*.

"X of the Predicates" is also a passage from a book by German philosopher and sociologist Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (The Levels of the Organic and Man, 1928). In this text, the "X of the Predicates" refers to a logical function. In my reading, the predicates, i.e., the attributions, are already present but the object is invisible or unknown. I am interested in this inversion model.

[28] WALD VON LUBLIN / SCHECHINA (FOREST OF LUBLIN / SHEKINAH), LUBLIN 2006
PROJECTS WITH STUDENTS

In winter 2005 in our class at the Academy of Fine Arts Dresden we read a passage from *Tales of the Hasidim* (1949) by Martin Buber, which served as a springboard for a number of projects in Lublin und Dresden. The text fragment concerned a mystic vision of Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the Seer of Lublin, an 18th-century zaddik. During a journey through the forest of Lublin by horse-drawn carriage he prophesized: “[...] the entire manifest and hidden teachings together with the Shekinah would once be present here.” The Shekinah is a mysterious, highly productive motif of Jewish wisdom teaching and is present in numerous interpretations in literature, for example as the other, feminine side of God, or as a bride. I recall that the very natural way in which a metaphysical event was linked to an actual location had an immediate impact on us. The initial impetus for our project was the simple comment “We’ll go and see if she is there already.” It was only much later that we realized that the most important passage in the text is the one that refers to driving. The Seer was able to relativize his own position by the moving trees, i.e., he accepted the activity of his surroundings, and was thus able to proclaim the missing element in our culture.

From 2006 on we experimented with imaginative processes on site, first of all in the action *Forest of Lublin / Shekinah* in which we attempted to grasp the Seer’s prophecy in real-world conditions and to bring it to light, which does not signify representing it. Further projects included *Hecht im Ganzen / 3211* (Pike in Toto / 3211, 2007), which we created in Dresden after extensive travels in Poland and *Die Hochzeit / Wesele w Lublinie* (The Wedding, 2009), an action in Bronowice, Lublin. The clothing and items used for both projects were developed out of the extensive collections of Polish motifs that we had compiled on our journeys through the country. These three actions emerged out of our efforts to venture into the space of abstraction, i.e., triggered by linguistic, conceptual, or metaphoric elements, to forge ahead in seemingly paradoxical action while observing what happens.

[29] SCHULE VON LUBLIN (THE LUBLIN SCHOOL), LUBLIN/
DRESDEN 2009

The school of one of the most famous zaddikim of the late 18th century, Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, known as the Seer of Lublin gave rise to a plethora of legends. The house of the Seer was in Lublin’s Jewish quarter, which was declared a ghetto by the SS in 1940, and subsequently destroyed in 1942 after being cleared of its inhabitants. As no concrete traces of this establishment remain, I constructed the model after visiting the yeshiva of Baal Shem Tov, one of the founding fathers of Hasidism, in Medzhybizh, Ukraine. My “travel version”

has already been assembled in various places, where it featured in a number of artistic events.

[30] MANTEL (COAT), DEBLIN/DRESDEN 2006

In winter 2006, on one of the trips from Warsaw to Lublin, I saw a coat hanging on a tree. As a few weeks previously we had experimented with the wedding-dress-and-forest-motif as part of our project *Wald von Lublin / Schechina* (Forest of Lublin / Shekinah), just a few kilometers away on the other side of the railroad tracks, this phenomenon could be interpreted, in a poetic vein, as the appearance of the bridegroom. Weeks later, the coat was salvaged by two students, who brought it to Dresden, where it has hung ever since in the class atelier.

[31] NACHTPROJEKTION (NIGHT PROJECTION), DRESDEN 2011 /
VIENNA 2014

With *Night Projection* I have created a room that displays material and pictorial documents of the works in Poland. The items with altered dimensions, created by revealing and overpainting the color base, are used as a ground for projections of visual motifs, taken from Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* or collected on journeys in southern and eastern Poland and Ukraine. The main motif is the silhouette of the balcony on the Seer of Lublin’s house, visible on the photos from Stefan Kielsznia’s archive, at the legendary address ulica Szeroka 28.

[32] BELVEDERE, VIENNA 1988

When I visited the Belvedere in Vienna, I stood in the center section of the Upper Belvedere and looked from there through a window into the park to the Lower Belvedere. My exposed location at the center of the symmetrical building and the design of the park that underlined this location suddenly conveyed to me the feeling of the consequences of wanting to optimally integrate oneself, as a human, into designed surroundings—which I consider to be the projection of ideal principles onto material circumstances. The prerequisite is being at a standstill. The overall view is perceivable only in motionlessness. When walking through the park, the question again arose at the water basins. To bypass the built symmetry to the right or left implied, given the construction described above, a deviation into existential conditions.

I developed a motif in several collages drawing on copperplate engravings of the Belvedere created by Johann Lucas von Hildebrand between 1731 and 1740. The motif shows a pool of water, “the main waterfalls in the center of the garden.” In the original, several figures stand by the edge of the pool. I worked on one of the collages to pick out and isolate one figure from the implied conversational situation, with their residual communicative gesture relating now

to the element of water. I often consider what might happen next. My favorite version: the figure enters the water and consequently wakes up to the fact that it is a living element in the ideationally conceived setting, decides to dive below the surface, and vanishes from the image.

[33] SCHULEN ÜBER DER ERDEN (PARCOURS) (SCHOOL ABOVE EARTH (PARCOURS)), BERLIN 1988

In the treatment of the copperplate engravings taken from J. E. Ridinger's *Vorstellung und Beschreibung derer Schul und Campagne Pferden nach ihren Lectionen* (Description of the School and Campaign Horses by their Lessons, Augsburg 1760), the "methods" applied at the start of my dealing with pictorial representation, which was always intertwined with "body topics," become evident. From the forty-six copperplate engravings that constitute Ridinger's *Lectionen*, I selected nineteen sheets and placed them in a new sequence entitled *Schulen über der Erden* (School above Earth). In a process that lasted one year, I "operated" the horses and horsemen out of the pictures by means of photocopying and collage. I retained the description of the positions of the horses that were once depicted. I thus eliminated the representation of a horse's body trained according to aesthetic aspects, which of course could also be used in a more precise way for military purposes. The work now only consists of original scale copies of views of the empty spaces and the text describing exercises from the "High School" of horse dressage. These depictions are culturally expressive forms of intensification, processes of idealizing material, organic, or living actualities, which reflect the structure of thinking about and perceiving the world in different epochs. What is revealed here is the relation of 18th-century humans to their own physicality/materiality and the resulting thought and action, a consciousness that I believe is still handed down until this day.

[34] DONAUMONARCHIE ÖDIPAL / PREUSSEN ÖDIPAL (DANUBE MONARCHY OEDIPAL / PRUSSIA OEDIPAL), BERLIN/VIENNA 1993

The drawings are a compilation of figures that address historical, mental, and psychological levels: they make properties visible in the guise of something else. On the left there is a horse in a skirt, a tentative entering of the feminine, that Elizabeth II has drawn for her daughter. On the right, an implied horse head can be discerned, designed by Friedrich II. In the center there is a (female) cat with hat, made by Julia Warhola for her son Andy, and finally a policeman, a symbol of the state, a figure of order, guarding a mother, who carries her son Walther Rathenau to the grave. These early works were about uncovering the taboos and repressed episodes of history, about the concealed foundations underlying mental manifestations rationalized in retrospect as history and its "ways."

[35] SUBJEKTAGGREGATE (SUBJECT AGGREGATES), BERLIN 2012–14

I am interested in the "leeway" that might open up beyond the classical stability of contrasts, also including the opposition between subject and object. Opportunities for change take many forms, and are only partially consummated, as was also already suggested in my early works. These steps give rise to aggregates of incomplete formalizations in the throes of an unfolding process. The groups of figures and people in some cases build on and develop out of friendly thinking babes, drawing on the same coats and limbs from the two cultural compendia, Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, 1751, and the *Iconologia* after Cesare Ripa, 1593. As heads they carry so-called "residues"—undefined, unidentifiable forms from the *Encyclopédie's* production cast-offs. Further elements include representations of people from the advertising panels in ulica Świętoduska taken from Lublin photographer Stephan Kielsznia's archive. These figures are "historical"—they are individuals who have experienced a biographical process, i.e., are shaped by a specific cultural consciousness.

The *Liegende* (Reclining Woman), developed earlier to fulfill her "tasks" in the symbol series *SYMBOL gotowe*, where she played a role in the paradoxical trading processes, is also incorporated into this cycle of works.

[36] KONIECPOLSKI, DROHOBYCZ/DRESDEN 2012

It was also in Drohobycz/Ukraine that I found the portrait of a Polish noblewoman from the Koniecpolski family. Specific details on the painting were not available, but the type of wig suggests a late Baroque hairpiece. I have been working for a year with the ways in which this portrait belongs to a certain historical and geographic space, particularly since the literal translation of the subject's surname means "the end of Poland." The dress and wig should be seen as the first results of work on a new scenography for further projects in this context. One plan relates to setting up an agency offering travel projects in the area between Lublin and Lviv.

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

JANUARY 24, 2014, 7 P.M. (GERMAN)
Guided tour by the artist
 Ulrike Grossarth

FEBRUARY 27, 2014, 7 P.M. (ENGLISH)
Deceptive Practice: The Mysteries and Mentors of Ricky Jay
 USA 2012, directors: Molly Bernstein and Alan Edelstein, color, 88 minutes, English
 Filmscreening, followed by a conversation between Molly Bernstein, film maker and Ulrike Grossarth

FEBRUARY 28, 2014, 3–6 P.M. (GERMAN)
public exercises
 Workshop with Ulrike Grossarth, Artist
 Limited number of participants, registration requested

MARCH 27, 2014 (ENGLISH)
Bifurcating the Androgyne: Engendering Sexuality in the Zohar
 Seminar, 3 p.m.
Shekhinah as Mundus Imaginalis: Polymorphism and the Prism of Imagination
 Lecture, 7 p.m.
 Elliot R. Wolfson, Judaicist

APRIL 24, 2014, 6–11 P.M. (GERMAN)
DAS FEINE UND DAS FEINE
Von Nüssen lernen. Adriaen Coorte und die Kunst des Kleinen
 Lecture, 6 p.m.
Leidenschaft und Ostinato. Delirien, Glücksmomente, Trauer, Liebeswahnsinn, Tränen, Jubel, Loops in neuen Interpretationen
 A DJ night with baroque music, 7–11 p.m.
 Michael Glasmeier, Art historian, Curator

MAY 15, 2014, 7 P.M. (GERMAN)
Curatorial tour
 Sabine Folie, Ilse Lafer

JUNE 5, 2014, 6–8 P.M. (GERMAN)
Personen, Figuren, Subjekte.
Ulrike Grossarths neue Arbeiten gegenperspektivisch betrachtet
 Lecture, 6 p.m.
 Hanne Loreck, Art historian
Stoffwechsel. Die Kommunikation der Substanzen
 Lecture, 7 p.m.
 Dietmar Rübél, Art historian
 Followed by a conversation with Ulrike Grossarth

JUNE 6, 2014, 7 P.M. (GERMAN)
Das SEIN kleidet sich ein
 Lecture
 Ulrike Grossarth, Artist

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free admission to all events of the accompanying program;
 general guided tours Thursdays 6 p.m.; additional guided tours by appointment;
 activities for schools

