

## To/From

### *between perception and understanding*

Kommunale Galerie Charlottenburg

21 November 2023 – 11 February 2024

#### Audioguide Transcript

Kate: Welcome to the exhibition To/From: between perception and understanding at the Kommunale Galerie Charlottenburg, Berlin. My name is Kate Brehme,

Kirstin: And I am Kirstin Broussard, and we are the curators of the exhibition.

Kate: We are also part of Berlinklusion, a network for accessibility in arts and culture, and a collective of artists and curators with and without disabilities.

Kirstin: We are thrilled to guide you around our exhibition, so let's begin!

Kate: Firstly, to practicalities: The exhibition takes place over two floors. Here in the foyer space is one artwork, which we will describe in a moment. Upstairs you will find the rest of the artworks in the exhibition.

Kirstin: We are actually standing in the gallery as we record this, so you will notice an echo, as the gallery space is large and cavernous. Please feel free to press pause on your journey as you navigate between stops.

Kate: Facing directly across from the glass doors you just entered is the artwork *Still Life in Eve's Garden (untitled part 5: Echo)* by one of our very own curators, Kirstin Naomie Broussard, created in 2023. This diptych features two landscape colour photographs each 70 centimeters high by 90 centimeters wide. The photographs are mirror images of each other, depicting a hand reaching gracefully through layers of grasses, leaves and berries. The photograph on the left has also been flipped horizontally, making it look as if the hands are actually reaching towards each other. The negative image on the left is a colour inversion of the original positive photograph on the right. Instead of the original autumnal burgundy and gold palette of colours on the right, the left image is transformed into a wintery palette of sky blue, lilac and cobalt blue. Each of the photographs are delicately stitched with gold silk thread that connects the hands to their surrounding natural elements. The same gold threads appear cascading down the wall from behind the photographs, all the way to the floor below. This is an interactive work and you can gently blow on the gold thread below to make them move.

Kirstin: If you turn to your right you can follow the wall with your left hand a couple of meters to the foot of the stairs. At the top of the stairs, on the floor, you will find a tactile floor system that will bring you to each artwork. When you walk to the first stop, to your left you will find a table with a tactile map giving you an overview of the space. There is a seat here if you wish to sit down and orientate yourself with the map.

Kate: The six artists in *To/From* show an array of artworks including photography, installation work, and sound art and entice us to incorporate the world via our senses including our sense of history, time, memory and place. They explore the idea of relationality as a feedback loop that travels in multiple directions positioning the body as lens: as both a receptor and locus of knowledge and creativity. They challenge us to consider how we each understand our physical, geographical or temporal environment through different embodied perceptions.

Kirstin: Our senses place and expand us, revealing both visible and invisible connections.

*To/From* invites us to travel through and beyond the borders of our own bodies to reside in the in-between.

Kate: If you follow the guidance system on the floor you will come to the first stop, featuring the work of Asako Shiroki. If you turn to your right, you will find “A twig of interweaving passages” created in 2021. We are facing the middle of the artwork and see three wooden, tables, each connected to the next by a shared leg. The tables on both ends are upside down. Hanging from the ceiling from a silver chain is a brown one meter long twig, suspended horizontally above a diagonally placed piece of clear glass with a hole in the center, which the silver chain drops through, because there is no table top. The chain is anchored to the ground by a brass cylindrical weight. Resting on that same piece of glass is a round piece of glass, with the silhouette of leaves frosted in white on its surface. A short twig rests on top. Resting on the outer right edge of the table is a longer twig.

Kirstin: The upside down table on your left resembles a small writing desk. The drawer of the desk is pulled open but the bottom of the drawer is missing and what’s left is an open frame. Scattered on the underside of this table are a handful of bronze pretzels. The upside down table on the right end is also missing its top. In the cavity of the table on a small plank of wood sits a clear glass vase with a blue frosted base. A white frosted glass lid echoes the white frosted glass circle on top of the middle table. On it rests a bronze pine cone. Next to the vase rests another long brown twig.

Asako Shiroki currently lives and works in Berlin and Tokyo. Her work moves between functionality and abstraction: we recognize fragments of furniture, a table, a mirror, a vase- but meaning remains elusive as she asks us to suspend what we think we know and enter a space of contemplation in which the “ordinary” is seen and experienced in a new light: objects become images and stories -- stories become objects. She says of her work, *A twig of interweaving passages*:

“One day I was walking on the street, I found the shapes of the twigs on the ground charming. As I had one of them in my hand, I spotted a bird's nest over my head. It was the moment of intervening between rational collection and destined accumulation, and it was the moment of discovering passages and the interweaving of different worlds. The charming shape of the twigs was the connection between autonomous existences. I felt that we exist in our time with many different layers of the world.”

Kate: If you turn to your left, you will find a work by Catherine Rose Evans, on the wall, entitled “Constellations” created in 2019 and reworked in 2023 for this exhibition.

*Constellation* is actually a two-piece artwork. Here we have a white framed photograph 50 centimeters high by 40 centimeters wide, of the artists' own back which has been inverted (turned into a negative image), so that the usually dark moles and blemishes on her skin appear as small points of light against a dark, ambiguous surface. These points of light are joined using a ruler and ball point pen to create a new constellation, akin to the mapping of stars against a night sky. We also see, taking up the entire 3 meter long white wall behind the photograph, a geometric tapestry of lines made of sticky tape. As you move past this wall, the light captures the tape rendering it either visible or invisible.

Kirstin: Catherine Rose Evans is a Berlin-based Australian artist. Working across installation, photography, collage and text, her work is characterised by a material intimacy that subverts the utility of everyday materials to give unexpected shifts in our perception of light, weight, scale and balance. Context, relationality and exchange play a key role in Catherine's work. Objects and images shift between what they inherently are: a page torn from a book, a metal pole, an image of a person's back, and what they become in proximity to each other.

Kate: If you follow the guidance system further, you will come to the next stop which features Catherine's second piece in the exhibition slightly to your right. *Mamor, for Antonina*, created in 2019, also re-worked for this exhibition, is a collection of recent collages made from the torn

pages of books found on Berlin streets. There are two collages on either side of a single dusty rose coloured pole that reaches between the ceiling and a stack of archaeological encyclopaedias stacked on the floor. The collages are lightly secured by paper clips, and mirror the museum display systems found in the original images. In the collage facing you, you see half a rose coloured marble sculpture of a woman in a flowing garment with her hand reaching up toward her face. This is bisected by a black and white image of a waterfall. The collage on the opposite side depicts a woman's torso in rose coloured marble, the arms, legs and head are missing. Her torso is bisected by an image of a rocky mountain range.

Kirstin: If you follow the guidance system to the next stop, 2 meters to the left is our materials table. Here you can find a table and chairs where you can sit and creatively respond to a number of written prompts exploring some of the themes of the exhibition.

Kirstin: Following the guidance system will take you to the next artwork, by artist duo Jovana Komnenic and Dirk Sorge.

Kate: Situated on a low, grey pedestal to your right is the first part of a series of 5 installations that make up the work *The Resolution of Sight*. Originally conceived as a site specific artwork for a former monastery situated in a large park area in the west of Germany in 2014 Jovana and Dirk have re-worked this installation in 2023 for this exhibition. This piece, *The Resolution of Sight 1* features a long metal chain suspended from the ceiling that is connected to a thin metal rod. At the end of this rod is a horizontal, black feather. The feather is positioned about 3 centimetres from the top of the pedestal. A small thin piece of black slate is positioned about a centimetre below the feather, on top of a black circular magnet. This is an interactive work and you are welcome to touch the chain that the feather is suspended on, so that it is pushed and pulled back to the center by the magnet. Watching the feather move, illustrates the interplay between air, gravity and invisible magnetic force.

Kirstin: Dirk and Jovana's installation *The Resolution of Sight* forms a network which invites us to participate in mapping space via our embodied perceptions of everyday objects. They literally and metaphorically explore the body as a lens while surreptitiously pointing out both the creative potential of every body, as well as the invisible biases, structures and mechanisms that inhibit access for so many bodies. Dirk Sorge is a media and conceptual artist based in Leipzig and Berlin. He studied fine arts and philosophy and deals with the topics of standardization, ableism and irrational aspects of digital technology. Jovana Komnenic is a visual artist based in Berlin. Her art and research focus on the subject of the invisible yet present. She works on the translation between different media or different perceptual perspectives, and reflects on both the ways and effects of perceiving, relating, connecting and creating on a personal and social level.

Kate: If you follow the guidance system to the next stop, to your right, in the window cavity, resting on the window sill you will find *The Resolution of Sight 2*, their next intervention in the space, where you can explore the idea of lenses even further. We see a window with grey opaque foil on the glass. A small round lens suspended on a metal holder is positioned in the center of the window revealing an inverted, or upside down image of the street outside.

This installation is a creative reflection about the dominance of sight in art and everyday life. Dominance here means that the sense of sight receives so much attention that all non-visual impulses seem unimportant and are often overlooked. The mechanism of overseeing doesn't only influence perception, it has a political and a social dimension as well, leading to exclusion.

Kirstin: If you follow the guidance system to the next stop, you will find the work of Dennis Meier, an artist who also explores the theme of exclusion within his artistic practice. Turn to face the wall on your left and you will find *Digital Intervention Series* created between 2018 and 2023. The works have been installed so that you see a horizontal grouping of 3 framed photographs depicting interior spaces with white walls. In each of these photographs,

geometric coloured wall paintings in black, pink and yellow have been added digitally which makes it appear as if the wall paintings are real. By contrast, the fourth photograph, which hangs higher up and to the right, depicts a black wall drawing in a white room.

Kate: Denis Meier is a Berlin based visual artist working across a variety of media including painting, wall drawings, installations and site specific works in public space. There is a poetic simplicity to the way Dennis alters, transforms and responds to space. Though the effects of his interventions are visual, they shift our equilibrium by changing the way we physically perceive the room we are viewing. Dennis' work is always site specific and responds to the way in which the immediate environment either presents various physical barriers to the body or invites certain sensorial interactions. Here, he invites us to explore the blurred boundaries between the real and the staged, leaving us to question where his intervention, and even reality, begins and ends.

Kirstin: If you follow the guidance system to the next stop, you will come across another of Dirk and Jovana's interventions. Directly in front of you, you will find the work *The Resolution of Sight 3*. A weighted, beaded black curtain obstructs the passageway to the rest of the exhibition. While the beaded threads are hanging in such a way that we can see through to the other side, in order to move through it, you have to push them aside.

If you follow the guidance system straight ahead to the next stop you will find Jovana and Dirk's next work. Hanging from the ceiling is a pendulum on a long silver chain. The pendulum nearly reaches the floor and is positioned between two calling bells. This is another interactive piece and you are welcome to step forward and reach out to your right until you feel the chain. You may gently swing the chain and try to hit one of the bells with the pendulum.

Kate: If you follow the guidance system to the next stop, you will find another artwork of Kirstin Naomie Broussard. Entitled *Still Life In Eve's Garden (Untitled, Part 4: Bitten)* it was created in 2021 and is a photographic diptych, the work on the left is 70 centimetres high by 90 centimetres long, the work next to it is 90 centimetres high by 70 centimetres long. The work to the left depicts a woman's face in profile merging with and surrounded by flowing red hair,

yellow flowers and green leaves. The features of her face look as if they are disappearing into the depths of the surrounding foliage. This image then meets a second one of leaf shadows and silhouettes. A more muted palette presents a dark composite of forest shapes, leaves and the traces of movement.

*Still Life In Eve's Garden* is an ongoing series in which she re-imagines and performs the character of Eve, separate from Adam. There is a visceral quality to her photographs that moves beyond the visual. Her work implies a narrative but remains abstract. It suggests a deeply intertwined relationship with the natural world in which we are both creating, and being created by, our environment. Kirstin, seeing as though you're sitting next to me, you state in your text about your work: "Myths, like a kind of grammar, define our memory of ourselves across generations. I find myself longing for a new syntax." Would you like to tell us a bit more about your work?

Kirstin: Sure! This Eve is her own creator, a body rooted in nature and informed by touch. The photographs are constructed in multiple ways: cliché verre prints made with ink on glass plates, scans of the forest floor interwoven with hand-stitched gold thread. All rely on simple optics: shadow, reflection, intentional light leaks and a play between positive and negative in which the boundaries between figure and ground are intentionally blurred. It is my belief that through touch that we come to know ourselves in relation to others. Touch places us. A kind of mapping, it asserts, 'I begin here.'

Kate: If we turn slightly to the right and follow the guidance system to the final stop, you will find the last piece in the exhibition. It's a haptic sound installation hidden inside a bench by Dirk and Jovana. So take a seat! Or simply rest your hand on top if you would like to experience it.

Kirstin: This piece is an interesting work to end on because it sums up nicely that two-way street of exclusion and inclusion, and how as artists or curators, we speak to different audiences, different members of the public. With Dirk and Jovana's interventions, they wanted



to point out these mechanisms of exclusion and to work in the opposite direction by inviting blind and visually impaired audiences into the gallery. It explicitly addresses these audiences, but it is relevant for sighted people as well, because it points out the creative potential hiding in other ways of viewing things, the ability of invisibility to broaden the meaning. The overall goal is to bring awareness to this theme by using irritation and reflection.

Kate: Their work both addresses the very real issue of access while demonstrating what is generative about playing with and perceiving ones' environment in multiple ways using different senses.

Kirstin: Well, that's it from us, and we hope you had an evocative and memorable experience in our exhibition! To exit the space, simply follow the guidance system back the way you came to the top of the stairs, which will lead you down to the gallery foyer.

Kirstin and Kate: Bye!