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IN CONVERSATION WITH GHOSTS

23 NOV 2025 — 22 FEB 2026

Curated by Sandra Teitge

IN CONVERSATION WITH GHOSTS

In Vietnam, the living communicate with ghosts to understand the world and the pain lived out in solitude—to make the invisible pain that lingers in the shadows visible. The spirit of a deceased person has the task of coming to terms with the pain and injustice experienced in life. Only after this period of reflection has passed will the spirit be reborn into another life. While waiting for rebirth, ghosts walk upright among us, kept alive through stories. (Excerpts from Maithu Bùi's MMRBX, 2022)

In the GDR, there was hardly any dialogue with the painful ghosts of the past. Looking back was not part of the agenda. In the early years of its founding, in the 1950s, the ambition was to build a new socialist state. To achieve this as straightforwardly as possible and without distraction, there was no pause to confront the immediate past and, along with it, its possible ghosts.

Yet to face the ghosts of the past—ghosts that still concern us today—we must address them. This is precisely why this exhibition is dedicated to the ghosts that continue to shape this place, the Eierhäuschen, and its surroundings: the city of Berlin and the East German regions. Some are friendly and gladly remembered, like the World Festival of Youth in 1973. Others have received far less attention until now, such as the complex and often painful memories of Vietnamese contract workers.

The Eierhäuschen itself has a multilayered history—during the GDR era and beyond. In the 1950s, it first served as an event venue before becoming a prop storage facility for East German television around 1960. With the opening of the Plänterwald Cultural Park in 1969, the Eierhäuschen was converted into an administrative building; its veranda and large hall became the »Café der Jugend« (Youth Café) which opened in June 1973—just in time for the 10th World Festival of Youth. In the 1980s, the Eierhäuschen returned for several years to its role as a venue for events and concerts before closing permanently in 1990.

The works presented in the exhibition In Conversation with Ghosts engage in a dialogue with the ghosts of that time. They not only reference the Eierhäuschen and Spreepark (formerly Cultural Park) directly but also open perspectives on other social moments and conditions during the 40 years of the GDR.

Maithu Bùi's work approaches the presence and significance of the past in the present in a deeply personal and associative way. It shows that every story, in the words of Vietnamese-US American author Ocean Vuong, »has more than one thread, each thread a story of division.«* Josefine Reisch and Franziska Pierwoss, in turn, take specific historical events in and around the Eierhäuschen—such as the 1973 World Festival of Youth —as starting points for their artistic reflections, drawing connections to other cultural contexts. Jackie Grassmann and Ernst Markus Stein place the egg itself at the centre of an extensive installation in the exhibition's entrance area, offering a multitude of poetic-linguistic and artistic elements that invite participation and contemplation.

In today's time , marked by what has been called »spiritual bankruptcy**« in the Global North, this exhibition proposes a conversation with ghosts—ghosts that embody the diverse and deeply individual moments of our shared history. For perhaps it is precisely this engagement with countless and varied pasts that opens a path toward imagining a common future.

The monarchs that fly south will not make it back north. Each departure, then, is final. Only their children return: only the future revisits the past.*

The exhibition is accompanied by a lively and diverse programme of talks, live radio broadcasts, readings, guided tours, a performative aperitif, workshops, music, and an evening of films from Vietnam.

*** Ocean Vuong, On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous, 2019.**
**** from Christelle Oyiris, Dead Good Flow, 2025, LAS Foundation Berlin.**

Maithu Bùi
Mathuat – MMRBX, 2022

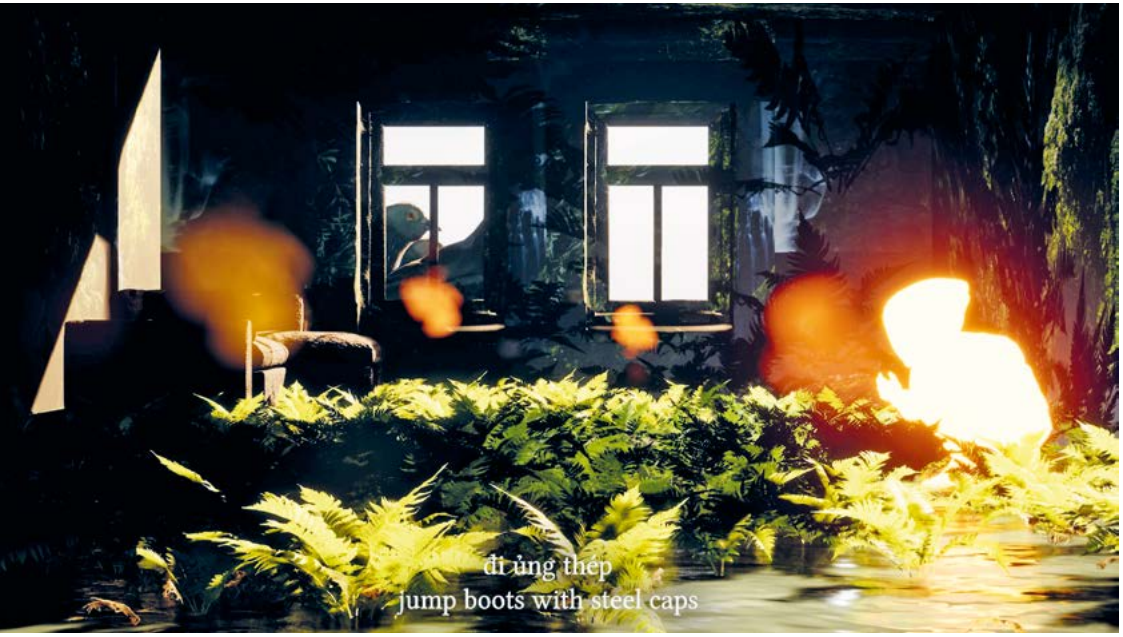
Maithu Bùi grew up in the 1990s in Plauen as the child of Vietnamese parents. Bùi's augmented-reality installations explore networks of violence at the intersection of collective memory, science, and technology.

The video installation *Mathuât – MMRBX* (2020), that premiered at the 12th Berlin Biennale, is based on a video game. It takes as its starting point the popular Vietnamese tradition of water puppet theatre to evoke intergenerational memory through storytelling and song. In Vietnamese, ma means »ghost« and thuât means »craft.« Together, ma thuât translates as »magic.« MMRBX is an acronym for »Memory Box,« a vessel for diasporic experience.

Through layered voices and choral elements, the work evokes a sense of intergenerational continuity—where stories begin and end through ghostly encounters. The work metaphorically connects the Vietnamese ritual of ancestor care with a virtual, allegorical memory box that preserves mnemonic moving images. *Mathuât – MMRBX* is deeply rooted in Southeast and East Asian mythology, where communication with the dead forms part of everyday life. It gestures toward the often invisible, painful past of the diasporas (Viât Kiâu). The work reveals Bùi's conviction that we live in a world suffering from colonial amnesia. We resist by remembering, as it is impossible for the ghosts and spirits of historical traumas to rest in peace.

Based on a text by Đỗ Tường Linh

2-channel video installation, colour, sound, 22 min, salt
Produced for the 12th Berlin Biennale



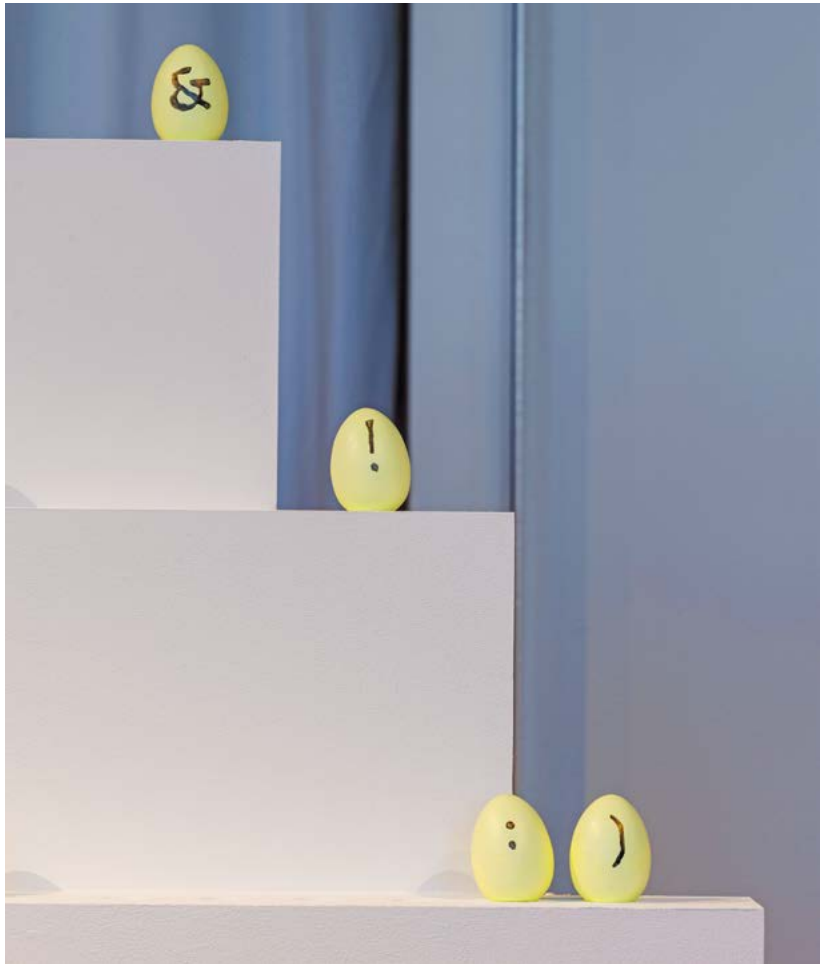
»Hungry ghosts can be born from beings who have suffered violent or unfortunate deaths.«

»We try to communicate with ghosts in order to understand the world and their lonely pain, to make invisible pain visible in the shadows.«

BIOGRAPHY

Maithu Bùi decodes and translates entanglements of life, history, science, and technology into landscapes of collective memory. They hold a BA in Philosophy with a focus on Philosophy of Language and Logic from LMU Munich, aswell as an MFA in Fine Arts from UdK Berlin. Maithu Bùi was a 2024 Human Machine Fellow at Akademie der Künste, a 2025 Dreaming Beyond AI - Coalition Building in Times of AI fellow and a 2025 recipient of the Stiftung Kunstfond stipend. Their work has been presented at the 12th Berlin Biennale (DE), Bundeskunsthalle Bonn (DE), Kunsthalle Bratislava (SK), Galerie im Turm Berlin (DE), Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig (DE), E-WERK x Akademie der Künste (DE) and Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius (LT). Bùi co-founded the research collective Curating through Conflict with Care (CCC) and the working group art+computation at the Gesellschaft für Informatik.

Jackie Grassmann & Ernst Markus Stein
Nimm ein Ei mehr, 2025



Temple installation, prints, radios with audio work

In the expansive installation *Nimm ein Ei mehr* (Take One More Egg), the artists explore the spectrum of meanings associated with the egg—from political and cultural to class-related (or cross-class) perspectives. Within the installation, the egg functions as a symbolic carrier, referring both to the history of the Eierhäuschen and its name, as well as to a 1958 GDR advertising poster bearing the slogan »Take One More Egg.« Each egg is marked with a letter and has been hand-dyed and printed by the artists. The accompanying audio piece, accessible via radios tuned to a designated frequency, serves as inspiration for word formation. It broadcasts deliberately nonsensical, yet poetic advertising and propaganda slogans devised by the artists—promoting things that are usually not advertised at all, such as »breathing« or »spinning in circles.«

Advertising and propaganda operate according to different logics. While advertising seeks to influence consumer desire and distinguish itself from competitors, propaganda aims to steer behavior and exert an educational effect. The title of the installation borrows from a GDR slogan of 1958, when the socialist state attempted to persuade its citizens—through a series of propaganda posters—to eat more eggs, responding to a sudden surplus in production.

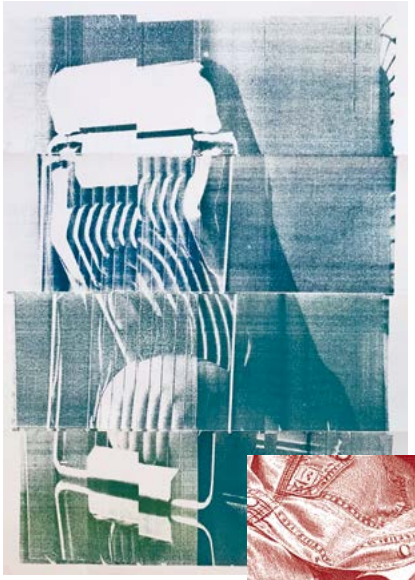
Advertising, on the other hand, as Edward Bernays—the inventor of public relations and nephew of Sigmund Freud—taught, is designed to act upon the unconscious. Whereas the communist and fascist dictatorships of the 20th century displayed their propaganda openly, the democracies of the 21st century strive to project the image of a free society, in which citizens seemingly enjoy unlimited choice: what they buy, what they click, what music they listen to—and even which political convictions they hold. But is that really true?

Within this layered associative network, the artists probe the increasingly blurred boundaries between propaganda and advertising, questioning in particular the language of the future. Which words, idioms, beliefs, and linguistic concepts should we preserve, and which should we forget? And how can meanings be rewritten?

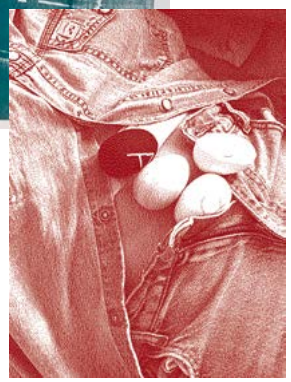
In the beginning was the word. And the egg.

The egg carries a ritual dimension in nearly all cultures: it symbolizes the origin of all existence, as in the »world egg« theory, a universal new beginning; it also indicates fertility; also, it evokes the philosophical »chicken-and-egg question« and the number zero. Arranged in sequences of lettered eggs, the installation also suggests the aesthetics of programming language—a system based on the logic of zeros and ones. Everything within the »temple« adheres to numerological significance: the »altar« or »egg display« has three tiers; each wall tier holds 99 eggs; and the messages are limited to 70 »egg characters,« borrowing from Unicode encoding (UCS-2/UTF-16) for SMS.

At the same time, the egg points to a simple lifestyle and the working class. In bars, it was originally intended for workers who met after their shift for a glass of wine or beer. In many places, bars still traditionally offer a boiled egg—even when nothing else is served. Yet the egg is also a symbol of exclusive luxury: the Fabergé egg ranks among the most precious objects in the world. It thus stands for both value and fragility—think of the expression »to treat someone like a raw egg.« Fittingly, the elaborately crafted and lacquered eggs in the installation are made of wood and were originally produced as darning eggs, tools used primarily by older generations to mend holes in clothing—a form of labor historically associated with the working class who also depends on fixing rather than buying anew.



Egg Harp, 2025

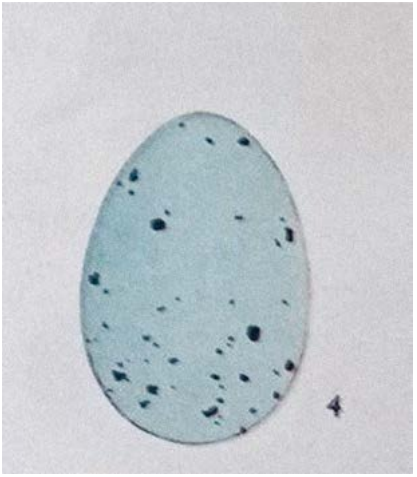


Egg Belly, 2025

»Walking on eggshells«

It is often argued that today one must linguistically »walk on eggshells«, a metaphor the installation proposes to embrace. For what is certain is that the open and inclusive nature of our language is increasingly under pressure. Not only are we fighting –heavily armed– over the interpretation of politically charged terms such as genocide or fake news, but all-encompassing linguistic innovations—such as gender-sensitive language—are also under attack. Yet, in light of rapid developments in artificial intelligence, rising poverty, climate change, and political upheaval, rarely has it been more urgent to put our language to the test. For language not only shapes our relationships within the social spaces we inhabit. Through and with language, we articulate our desires—and thus manifest our future.

Jackie Grassmann with Ernst Markus Stein and Sandra Teitge



BIOGRAPHIES

Jackie Grassmann is an artist, writer, and educator. Based on text and language, her work explores the relationship between fiction, theory, and social reality. Grassmann deals with the so-called post-genius concept of authorship, that understands writing and artistic practice as a polyphonic and dialogical process. Many of her works emerge in close collaboration with other artists and take shape through performance, installation, and printed matter. Most recently, she has presented projects at Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Kunstverein Baden, Kunstverein Rosa Luxemburg, and Cashmere Radio.

Ernst Markus Stein is co-founder of the online radio stream project DIYChurch and part of the Cashmere Radio collective. When he's not helping at westgermany (Berlin), he can be found at home, where he runs a virtual yacht club and devotes himself to underwater landscape painting, networking waves and transforming content management systems into poetry. Occasionally, he dresses up as a disc jockey (DJ ShluchT) and throws sound and information carpets around. Lately he seems to be wasting time with obsolete copy machines, printing out the Internet. Stein studied art at the Münster Academy of Fine Arts and at the Berlin University of the Arts. His work includes painting, sculpture, digital and analogue drawing, net art, sound, radio plays, graffiti writing, fairy tales, performance, installation, photography, textile, conceptual art and animation. Ernst Markus Stein lives and works in Berlin and on the Internet.

Franziska Pierwoss
Die Jugend der Welt klagt den Imperialismus an, 2025

includes a LED piece, audio contributions in the interspace, and a performative aperitif

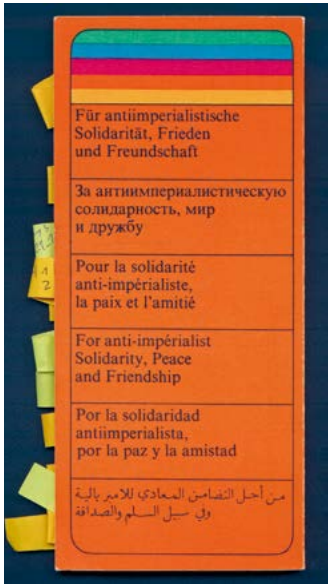
In her artistic practice Franziska Pierwoss explores political contexts and utopias, as well as the instrumentalization of food as a political symbol. Her multi-part installation *Die Jugend der Welt klagt den Imperialismus an* (The Youth of the World accuses Imperialism), created for this exhibition, refers to the tribunal of the same name that took place in Berlin in 1973 during the 10th World Festival of Youth.

The multi-day event *Die Jugend der Welt klagt den Imperialismus an*, 2025 was hosted at Humboldt University and addressed highly topical political issues of the time: the war in Vietnam, racism in the United States, and the struggle for peace and independence among Arab nations. The seminars and colloquia, organized under the banner of anti-imperialist struggle, were carefully prepared by the international association of the World Festival. Shaped by socialist and politically charged language, these sessions offered a platform for speakers from the Global South, representatives of oppressed groups and liberation movements, as well as young people—providing all participants with a valuable opportunity for international exchange. Angela Davis chaired the tribunal. At press conferences, Yasser Arafat reported from Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, while Gladys Marín from Chile spoke about the attacks on the socialist Allende government.

At the same time, the World Festival in Berlin was a deeply contradictory event. Under the code name ‘Operation Banner,’ State Security mobilized more than 4,000 agents. In preparation for the mass gatherings, young people were sent to juvenile detention centres, and individuals deemed suspicious were detained. When the festival began, the SED government granted visitors unusual freedoms. Despite the heavy presence of State Security, the sheer number of thousands of participants made it nearly impossible to monitor or control the conversations and activities of East German youth and international guests. Behind the scenes, the Politburo, the highest policymaking and executive committee of the SED (Socialist Unity Party), used the festival as a diplomatic stage for international affairs.

Within this ambivalence, the historical speeches of the tribunal’s speakers serve as a starting point for a conversation about current political contexts. How

Angela Davis, press conference, Federal Archives, image 183-M0802-418, photographer: Wolfgang Thieme



relevant is the question of imperialist influence on »a lasting and just peace in the Middle East« today? What parallels can be drawn between the discussions on police violence in the United States then and now? And what does a young generation—organizing itself on social media—understand by the terms solidarity, peace, and friendship?

The performative aperitif on December 6, 2025—the centerpiece of the work *Die Jugend der Welt klagt den Imperialismus an*—invites visitors to explore the themes of the tribunal of the 1973 World Festival from today's perspective over drinks and snacks. Several participants from 1973 will join the discussion, including Dominique Vidal, the former coordinating secretary of the World Festival.

EXCERPTS FROM THE WORLD FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

- **Solidarity with the peoples, youth, and students of the Arab countries for a lasting and just peace in the Middle East (30 July 1973)**
- **The struggle of Africa's youth for independent development against neo-colonialism and imperialist interference (31 July 1973)**
- **Racism and Apartheid – a disgrace of the 20th century (31 July 1973)**
- **Youth and the fight against fascism and militarism, for democracy (2 August 1973)**
- **The youth's struggle against the imperialist use of violence against working people and youth, the suppression of democratic freedoms, police and judicial terror, militarism and fascism (2 August 1973)**

Angela Davis,
Speech at the 10th World Festival of Youth on Bebelplatz, 1973

My dear sisters and brothers from throughout the world,
dear comrades and friends,
youth of the German Democratic Republic,

I think I speak for all of us when I say we are immensely inspired by this magnificent international gathering of youth who are determined to break the yolk of Imperialism. As we look around us, we see a splendid collage of thousands of young people, Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and White.

And when we reflect upon the unity of these thousands assembled here in the capital city of the German Democratic Republic, we can begin to acquire a sense of our potential power of the irresistible anti-imperialist united front, which the youth of the world can direct.

Angela Davis,
Speech on Women's Rights at the
10th World Festival of Youth, 1973

My dear sisters, my dear brothers,

(...) My purpose in addressing you is very simple: I would like to take this opportunity, which for me is a unique opportunity, to express my very deepest gratitude to women whom you represent throughout the world, who struggle so arduously for my freedom. Many thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of people became involved in the struggle for my freedom during the two years of my imprisonment and trial. But during my time in prison, I was especially conscious of the special role that women were playing in leading that movement. And it was a great inspiration to me as I sat in my prison cell to see the photographs of demonstrations taking place in Africa, in Latin America, in Vietnam, throughout the capitalist countries and particularly in the socialist countries. And especially here in the German Democratic Republic. I received literally millions and millions of greetings from the youth, the women, the people of the German Democratic Republic. (...) And I think we should draw lessons from this struggle which was waged for my freedom. And one of the things that I think we all recognize was that the participation in the leadership of women in the struggle for my freedom raised it to a qualitatively different level, gave it a dimension, a mass dimension which has rarely been seen in recent years in struggles around a political prison. And I think that that movement was indeed an indication of the fact that the degree to which any democratic or revolutionary struggle penetrates to the masses, the degree to which those struggles are effective can almost inevitably be measured by the degree to which women participate and lead those struggles.

From Wolfgang Winkler, »X. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten,« 1973, Verlag Zeit im Bild, Dresden, photos: Agentur Zentralbild

10th World Youth Festival, 1973, photo: private Dominique Vidal, coordinating secretary of the World Festival

BIOGRAPHY

Franziska Pierwoss works in the field of performance and installation. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig and at the Lebanese University of Beirut. Her performances have been featured at the Fast Forward Festival Athens, the Sharjah Biennial 13, the Literaturforum Brecht-Haus, and the nGbK, among others. For many years, she has been working with Sandra Teitge on questions of the political, social, and financial economics of waste management. As a transformation manager, she gives workshops on the implementation of ecological sustainability. With the Sustainable Culture Collective, she executes artistic projects in rural areas and uses various formats to address the instrumentalisation of food as a political symbol by the New Right.

Josefine Reisch

It's very difficult to keep the line between the past and the present. Do you know what I mean?, 2020 – continuously

Silkscreen and etching on silk, MDF, moiré fabric: Amoir Fou by Dedar
Courtesy by the artist and Noah Klink Gallery

In the garden of her dilapidated estate, Edith Bouvier Beale – Little Edie – looks straight into the camera and says: »It's hard to keep the line between the past and the present. Do you know what I mean?« In 1975, the Maysles Brothers, Albert and David, pioneers of Direct Cinema, filmed the documentary Grey Gardens about Little Edie and her mother, Big Edie. The film captures the faded glamour and enduring illusions of these once-privileged women. It tells the story of people unable to cope with the changes of their time, who instead created a self-referential world in which they could feel free.

Their hopes, deceptions, and peculiar ways of dealing with past triumphs and present crises portray not only the intimate story of mother and daughter. They also reveal a more universal experience of (self-)loss – caught between memory and the present, between reality and performance.

The film repeatedly appears as a reference point in Reisch's artistic practice. In the exhibition In Conversation with Ghosts, the two protagonists and their lives between former spotlight and social margins gain renewed significance. In the series *It's very difficult to keep the line between the past and the present. Do you know what I mean?*, Josefine Reisch draws on the tradition of commemorative scarves, once produced and distributed in the GDR for military honors, sporting events, youth congresses such as the World Festival of Youth in 1973, or the inauguration of memorials and leisure centers. Combining screen printing and etching, the silk scarves layer quotations from these commemorative textiles with film stills from various versions of the American epic *A Star Is Born* and a family photograph of the artist's grandmother.

Different systems of reference and competing political and private narratives intertwine with their own rituals of self-affirmation and stereotypical female roles. The work explores the tension between capitalist hyper-individualism à la American Dream and the celebrated socialist collective body, as well as the artist's own self-conception shaped by both ideologies.

For the exhibition In Conversation with Ghosts, Reisch developed display objects covered with Moiré fabric. The so-called Moiré effect (French: »marbled«) occurs when two layers of fabric overlap, creating a wave-like, almost uncontrol-

lable interference pattern. The material's inherent logic becomes an image for the simultaneity and overlay of non-congruent systems of reference that fundamentally shape Reisch's practice: political and personal narratives, memory and projection, past orders and present readings intersect without fully aligning.

The installation alludes both to the history of the Eierhäuschen as a storage site for props and to the artist's personal connection: her grandfather, DEFA director Günter Reisch, lived near the park at Dammweg. From there, they would take trips into the Plänterwald. With the upheaval of 1989/90, perceptions and the social standing of his oeuvre changed dramatically – much like the »Edies« of Grey Gardens, a gap emerged between what once was and the reality that followed.

The »line« that is part of the title of the work can be understood as a division between history and the present, but also as a physical border – the Wall – or as an ideological line between two worldviews, echoed in the motifs of the silk scarves.

Josefine Reisch with Sandra Teitge and text fragments by Nele Kaczmarek

The artwork was realised with the kind support of DEDAR Milano

BIOGRAPHY

Josefine Reisch's practice is based on a critical, analytical and at the same time playful examination of the past. Her works are often re-editions and re-interpretations of historical or pop-cultural figures and narratives. In paintings, installations, and textile works, she explores their ideological connections. Both the historical motifs and the techniques of her artistic practice serve as clear references to historicization, as used by Bertolt Brecht in his Epic Theatre. Reisch lives and works in Berlin. Recent exhibitions include Half-Light at KW Institute for Contemporary Art (2024, Berlin), Pseudo at Gauli Zitter (2024, Brussels), Dowry at Galerie Noah Klink (2023, Berlin) and Cupid's Bow at Bel Ami (2022, Los Angeles). 2023-2024 she was a participant in the BPA//Berlin Program for Artists.

Gabriele Stötzer/Künstlerinnengruppe Erfurt
Die Überfahrt, 1990; Signale, 1989; Komik-Komisch, 1988

Verena Kyselka
Tanz den Recycling, 1990

Paula Gehrmann
DISPLAY (Im Gespräch mit Geistern), 2025

Super-8-Films, duration: 7'26" / 28'53"/ 29'04"

Performance object made of plastic cups, fishing line glued and sewn together

Installation made of square tubing, aluminium, MDF, plexiglass, acrylic

In 1984, Gabriele Stötzer co-founded the Künstlerinnengruppe Erfurt (Erfurt Women Artists' Group), which remained active—with several changes in membership—until 1994. Core members of the group, which also operated under the name Exterra XX, were Angelika Hummel, Bettina Neumann, Claudia-Morca Bogenhardt, Elke Carl, Gabriele Göbel, Gabriele Stötzer, Harriet Wollert, Ina Heyner, Ingrid Plöttner, Margarete Ehrhard (Birgit Quehl), Marlies Schmidt, Monika Andres, Monique Förster, Tely Büchner, and Verena Kyselka. Positioned in deliberate opposition to the official cultural policy of the GDR and characterized by a predominantly collective practice, the group produced for ten years a radically artistic counter-model to everyday life in East Germany. Their work encompassed Super 8 films, photography, performances, fashion-object shows, and sound experiments. They embodied a determined subversive women's collective, creating spaces of freedom through art—spaces that were otherwise scarcely available within East German conditions. Celebrating female empowerment, gender equality, artistic freedom as a universal human right, they exercised radical social critique against the repressive state. Their films depict the artists in self-made, provocative costumes, embodying alter egos, moving non-conformist, and parading across rooftops, staircases, and parks. In the exhibition »In Conversation with Ghosts«, they form a link between a lived yet ghostly past and a tangible present.

The three films *Die Überfahrt* (The Crossing), *Signale* (Signals) und *Komik-Komisch* (Comedy-Comical) as well as the dress *Tanz den Recycling* (Dance the Recycling) by Verena Kyselka are presented within an installation by Leipzig-based artist Paula Gehrmann. The exhibition features an excerpt from her ongoing series *DISPLAY* (since 2016), based on a modular system of square aluminum tubes. MDF and Plexiglas panels carry gestures of acrylic paint (Malerei, 2020), reminiscent of traces from public space and graffiti. The expansive spatial composition amplifies Stötzer's impact, while simultaneously commenting on and extending it.

Gabriele Stötzer
Excerpt from sprache, 1989

das gegensätzliche sind die zwischenräume
die ferne ist die wahrheit der gedanken
es ist nicht das chaos es ist der raum es ist das schicksal das sich
in meiner mündung scheidet es ist diese qual beim empfinden lernen
worte lispeln worte haspeln worte turteln worte prellen worte schaukeln worte blinzeln
ueberall sind die spuren der worte
auch im stein
auch in der zeichnung der hand
sehen lesen lebend ertragen lernen
dieses wort das sich noch aufgehoben hat

BIOGRAPHIES

Gabriele Stötzer, born in Emleben near Gotha in 1953, studied German and art education in Erfurt, was expelled from university for political reasons in 1976 and imprisoned for a year in 1977 for protesting against Wolf Biermann's expatriation. She then went underground as an artist. She published texts in the male-dominated East Berlin Prenzlauer Berg scene and was part of the Super 8 film underground. In Erfurt, she ran the private Galerie Im Flur and initiated plein air events, which were shut down by the Stasi. She co-founded the Künstlerinnengruppe Erfurt (artists' group Erfurt), which staged fashion shows and performances. Core members of the group, which also operated under the name Exterra XX, were Angelika Hummel, Bettina Neumann, Claudia-Morca Bogenhardt, Elke Carl, Gabriele Göbel, Gabriele Stötzer, Harriet Wollert, Ina Heyner, Ingrid Plöttner, Margarete Ehrhard (Birgit Quehl), Marlies Schmidt, Monika Andres, Monique Förster, Tely Büchner, and Verena Kyselka. Throughout her whole oeuvre Stötzer continuously addresses feminist and socio-political issues and reflects on personal experiences from her time in the GDR. Gabriele Stötzer's work has been exhibited internationally since 2009. In 2013, she was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit and in 2024 the Bremen Pauli Prize. In 2026, the Gropius Bau will dedicate a solo exhibition to her.

Verena Kyselkas artistic work developed in the underground art scene of the GDR in the late 1980s. Together with the artist group Exterra XX, she founded the Kunsthaus Erfurt in 1990. From 1997 to 2003, she studied Fine Arts at the Bauhaus University in Weimar. She works with video, performance, and installation. Her projects on cultural identity and contemporary history emerged from intercultural exchanges in Australia, Albania, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, India, Bangladesh, China, Taiwan, and Oman. In 2025, she exhibited at the 13th Berlin Biennale, the VdBK Project Space Berlin, and the Albertinum Dresden, among others. In 2024, Kyselka presented her work at Casa Bolivar, Buenos Aires (Argentina); the Wende Museum, Culver City/Los Angeles (USA); the Liceo Taoro, La Oratava/Tenerife, Spain; the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) in Berlin; the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum (German Hygiene Museum) in Dresden; and the Kommunale Galerie (Communal Gallery) in Berlin. Kyselka lives and works in Berlin.

Paula Gehrmann's practice is deliberately open and collaborative. Her work often exists at the intersection of art and mediation, or exhibition display. She creates modular sculptures and expansive installations that are functional and always reflect the contexts in which they are presented. Gehrmann creates platforms for participation in discourse, thus enabling viewers to reinterpret and recontextualize relationships. She has participated in numerous (inter)national group exhibitions, including the Museum of Fine Arts Leipzig, the Gallery for Contemporary Art Leipzig (GfZK), Kunstraum München, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (Russia), and the Osservatorio Fotografico Ravenna (Italy), and has a long-standing collaboration with the Open Art Workshop Lebenshilfe Leipzig e.V. Gehrmann lives and works in Leipzig.

Annemirl Bauer
Tanzende in Berlin, 1973

Annemirl Bauer created the series *Tanzende* in Berlin (Dancers in Berlin) on the occasion of the 10th World Festival of Youth in East Berlin in 1973, which she offered for sale.

Bauer was one of the most critical voices in the GDR art system and spoke out strongly against the repressive measures of the state. She lived in precarious circumstances as a single mother and was the victim of so-called 'disruption measures' by the Stasi because of her protest against restrictions on travel and compulsory military service for women. In 1984, she was sanctioned with a professional ban and repression by the Stasi.

In February 1984, Annemirl Bauer wrote a five-page letter to Willi Sitte, president of the Association of Visual Artists, a copy of which she also sent to the GDR Minister of Culture and the Head of Ideology of the SED Central Committee.
In the letter, Bauer denied any legitimacy to the repressive state system of the SED. This document of resistance is now in the archives of the Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service.

Excerpt from that letter:

February 27, 1984

PETITION

Dear Prof. Willi Sitte,

Today I would like to address you regarding a matter of both personal and societal urgency.

Recently, more and more issues have accumulated, which I would like to outline below—conditions that exceed a level I can no longer accept under any circumstances.

Graphic prints
Courtesy by Annemirl Bauer House and © VG Bild-Kunst

Therefore, I urgently demand the free and unhindered entry and exit for myself and my daughter, and secondly, a binding written program for the next three years that guarantees this fundamental right to unrestricted travel for all social groups during that time.

I am addressing you as President of the Association of Visual Artists, which is not least a political association and has always had a say in matters of travel.

However, since I do not want to lead an isolated existence in my own homeland due to privilege, point two of my demand is essential—even if it exceeds the competence of the Association or the Ministry of Culture.

I urgently ask for a clear and unequivocal statement and for the initiation of effective measures within a foreseeable timeframe, because my previously hopeful and patient waiting for 25 years is now subject to biological limits.

And I would only leave my home under compulsion. That could be the consequence of a hopelessly depressive state.

But everywhere in the world I will be able to work for the good idea of a cause—if only I am not deprived of the most important possibility of independent thinking and responsible action (Makarenko).

Ideally, and I repeat this once again, I would like to do this in my own country, where I am rooted, and with which my thinking and feeling are most closely connected.

In the hope of a prompt and concrete response and foreseeable measures leading to a positive outcome, I remain with kind regards,

Yours, Annemirl Bauer-Pezellen

BIOGRAPHY

Annemirl Bauer was born in Jena in 1939 into a family of artists and, after training as a ceramist and toy designer, studied at the Berlin-Weissensee Art Academy. Bauer painted colourfully, figuratively and realistically, and drew expressively and directly. She used letters, notepads, cupboard doors and textiles as her canvas. After the birth of her daughter Amrei in 1971, she lived in precarious circumstances as a single mother and was the victim of so-called 'disruption measures' by the Stasi. She protested against restrictions on travel and compulsory military service for women. Her resistance quickly brought her to the attention of the Stasi. In 1984, she demanded general freedom of travel for all GDR citizens, whereupon she was sanctioned with a professional ban and repression by the Stasi. Shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, she died to cancer at the age of 50.

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CURATOR/TEXTS
Sandra Teitge

EDITING
Nina Sperling, Anja Klaus

GRAPHIC
Christian Schneider/Plateau Design

INSTALLATION VIEWS
Frank Sperling

THANK YOU TO
all participating artists, especially
Franziska Pierwoss with regards to the title of the exhibition
the whole Spreepark Art Space Team
Anja Lückenkemper
Wiley Hoard

spreepark-artspace.de