

THE PILL®

GERNOT WIELAND



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Gernot Wieland's work, whether in the form of films, drawings, photographs, installations or lecture-performances, addresses a number of universal issues – language, education, otherness, domination, control, social contexts, politics and the psyche – by combining psychoanalysis with the artist's childhood memories in first-person narratives. Gernot Wieland has laid the foundations for a unique and deeply moving universe, permeated by reminiscences of memories that we cannot tell whether they are real or invented by a first-person narrator, without ever establishing with certainty whether it is the artist himself or a fictional alter ego. The fabric of his world is woven from poetry uttered by the haunting voice of a Kafkaesque character who unfolds before our eyes childhood stories and absurd narratives using plasticine characters, colourful pencil-drawn backgrounds, extravagant diagrams, deceptively naive sketches and Super 8 film footage. Gentleness and contrition intermingle, allowing the afflicted dregs of creeping inhumanity to surface here and there, oozing from oppressive institutional machines and deviant educational straitjackets, carefully unfolding neuroses like fragile origami.

His films and everything that stems from them – drawings, photograms and photographs – radiate a poignant clarity, pulsating with a frail beauty in which the incongruous and heart-wrenching feelings beat in unison. While Freudian psychoanalysis and the figure of Kafka populate this universe like wandering ghosts, permeated by Gernot Wieland's Austrian origins, he has managed to invent an extraordinary narrative and cinematic form in which the therapist, trapped in his own memories and associations, is no longer able to listen to his patient, and the authoritarian figures of Kafkaesque systems have dissolved like ink in milk, to borrow the title of one of his films (*Ink in Milk*, 2018). The elusive tone of his films draws the viewer into the inextricable twists and turns of phantasmagorical stories held together by a lucidity that seems to be brought by a stranger to the world who observes – with candour and delicacy – its cracks, dislocations and vulnerability.

His films have received numerous awards: Aus-Blicke au Blicke, Filmfestival, Bochum, Germany; the main prize in the German competition at the 69th International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen, Germany, all in 2023; in 2022, the German Short Film Award in the category of experimental short films up to 30 minutes in length and the Best Film Award at the Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux in Paris, France, and an honourable mention at the Cannes Shorts Film Festival, Cannes, France; in 2021, a special mention at ARKIPEL - Jakarta International Documentary and Experimental Film Festival, Indonesia; in 2020, the Best Film Award, VIII Kinodot Experimental Film Festival, St. Petersburg, Russia; in 2019, the EMAF Media Art Award from German film critics at the EMAF - European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, Germany, and a special mention at the 36th Short Film Festival, Hamburg, Germany; in 2017, it won the 20th edition of MOSTYN Open, Llandudno, Wales.

*The film *The Perfect Square* was selected for the 74th Berlinale - Berlin International Film Festival - Forum Expanded, Berlin, and First Look 2024, Museum of the Moving Image, New York. His works have been exhibited at Argos Centre for Audiovisual Arts, Brussels; Kindl - Centre of Contemporary Arts, Berlin; Künstlerhaus Bremen; Torrance Art Museum, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen; Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg; 3rd International Biennial of Contemporary Art of South America, Buenos Aires; Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga; Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; Steirischer Herbst Festival/Kunsthau Graz, Graz and Hong-Gah Museum, Taipei; Quartz Studio, Turin; Pasquart Art Centre, Biel; Musée du château des ducs de Wurtemberg, Montbéliard; Museo Berardo, Lisbon.*

The MAMC+ / Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Saint-Etienne is dedicating a solo exhibition to him in 2025, accompanied by the publication of a book co-edited by the MAMC+, THE PILL and JBE Books.

GERNOT WIELAND

Born in 1968 at Horn, Austria.

Lives and works in Berlin.

Education

1997 University of Fine Arts, Berlin, DE

1996 Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, AT

Solo exhibitions

2025 Chants pour les Indésirables, MAMC+ / Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Etienne, FR

2024 You do not leave traces of your presence, just of your acts, Künstler:innenhaus Bremen, DE

2023 Square, Circle, Square, Argos centre for audiovisual arts, Brussels, BE
Halb Nackt, Belmacz, London, UK

2022 Turtleneck Phantasies, Kindl – Centre for Contemporary Art – M 1
VideoSpace, Berlin, DE

2021 ...like ink in milk, Quartz Studio, Turin, IT
Virtual Video Space – Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, DE

2020 Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, AT
Diebstahl und Gesänge, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, CH
12x12, IBB Video Space at Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, DE
Videoart at Midnight, Berlin, DE

2019 media annex(e), Argos, Brussels, BE
Vdrome, London, UK
Belmacz, London, UK

2016 „Hello, my name is...“... and ...“Yes, I’m fine.“, Maumaus/Lumiar Cité,
Lisbon, PT

Collective exhibitions

2023 Nexus of Absentias, Rapid Eye Movement, Bangkok, TH
Nouveaux Phonogrammes, Castello di Rivoli, Torino, IT
Héros-Limite, La Générale, Paris, FR
Glued and Screwed organized by wysiwyg, Filmhuis Den Haag, NL
Argos TV47, ARGOS, Brussels, BE

2022 The Palliative Turn, Künstlerhaus Bremen, Bremen, DE
Everyone who doesn't want to come is invited,
AllArtNow, Stockholm, SE
Ecrani i artit, ART HOUSE, Shkodra, AL
Ecopoetics of Generic World, Torrance Art Museum, Los Angeles, USA

2021 Transference, BIENALSUR, 3rd Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de America del Sur, Buenos Aires, AR

Videonale.scope, NRW – Filmforum, Cologne, DE
Privat – öffentlich, Kallmann-Museum, Ismaningen, DE

2020 Zoo Cosmos, Casa Conti /Ange Leccia Art Center, Oletta, FR
ANIMA – Taiwan International Video Art

Exhibition, Hong-Gah Museum, Taipei, TW
On Heavy Rotation, Callirrhoë, Athens, GR

Argos TV19, ARGOS, Brussels, BE
MEMORY, Kunstmuseum Olten, CH

Risentimento / Ressentiment, Merano Arte, Merano, IT
Traumphase 9, Hilbert Raum, Berlin, DE

2019 Medie Annex(e), ARGOS, Brussels, BE
Ten Slotte 4, Het Bos, Antwerp, BE

Pelle d'oca, Villa Vertua Masolo, Nova Milanese, IT
Bruegeling, Herberg Rustique, Brussels, BE

B, Belmacz, London, UK
Symposium on Humour and Absurdity, Nida Art Colony, LIT

36th Short Film Festival, Hamburg, DE
EMAF – European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, DE

IFFR – International Film Festival, Rotterdam, NL
2018 Zeitspuren, The Power of Now, Centre d'art Pasquart, Biel/Bienne, CH

Shame, Künstlerhaus Bremen, DE
Monitoring – Exhibition for Time Based Media Art, Kasseler Kunstverein,
Kassel, DE

The Ashtray Show West, Belmacz, London, UK
res·o·nant, Contribution to a Sound Installation, Jewish Museum Berlin, DE

Ideal-Types, HE.RO, Amsterdam, ND
Plot, New York, USA

OGR, Torino, IT

2017 Survival Kit 9, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga, LT
The Museum of Modern Comedy in Art – A Proposal, Projects Art Centre,
Dublin, IR

MOSTYN Open 20, Llandudno, Wales
9th Norwegian Sculpture Biennial, Vigeland Museum, Oslo, NO

Kasseler Dokumentar, Film und Videofest, Kassel, DE
con_text, Lettrétage, Berlin, DE

2016 Body Luggage – Migration of Gestures, Kunsthaus Graz, Graz, AT
Histoires de l'Île des Bienheureux, Musée du château des ducs de Wurtemberg,
Montbéliard, FR

Kasseler Dokumentar, Film und Videofest, Kassel, DE
Random Walks, Konsthall 44 Møn, Askeby, DK

Puppet Slam – Objects Do Things, CCA – Center for Contemporary Art,

Warszaw, PO
 TED Talk for TEDxGhent, Ghent, BE

2015 Midsummer Night Scream, De Appel arts centre, Amsterdam, NL
 No Bad Days, Konstmuseum Kalmar, Kalmar, SE
 Where the place begins, Kunsthaus Dahlem, Berlin, DE
 The reluctant narrator, Museo Berardo, Lisbon, PT

2014 Figures of Conjunction, Kunstverein Nürnberg, Nürnberg, DE
 A Lecture on a Lecture, Centre PasqArt, Biel Bienne, CH

2013 Pecha Kucha: The Bet, Kunst-Werke – Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, DE
 Anyone for Cricket?, Kunstverein Horn, Horn, AT
 71 Werke, 71 Arbeiten, Kunstmuseum des Kanton Thurgaus, Warth, CH
 The legend of the shelves, Autocenter, Berlin, DE
 ‚...dreamed...‘, Ve.Sch, Verein für Raum und Form in der bildenden Kunst, Wien, AU

2012 Nach Bonn – Eine Montage, Kunstverein Bonn, DE
 An exhibition of a Study on Knowledge, Forum Stadtpark, Graz, AU
 Boredom, Essays and Observations, Berlin, DE
 Jahresgaben, Kunstverein Bonn, Bonn, DE
 Montag ist erst übermorgen, xhibit, Wien, AU
 HOTAVANTGARDEHOTHOT, Oslo10, Basel, CH
 Common history and its Private Stories, Sofia City Art Gallery, Sofia, BG

2011 Video_Dumbo, an exhibition of contemporary video art, New York, USA
 Wilhelm Reich/Ayn Rand, Essays and Observations, Berlin, DE
 Il pensiero autobiografico, Kaleidoscope Space, Milano, IT
 Notre vallée, Musée du chateau des ducs de Wurtemberg, Montbéliard, FR

2010 Time is what keeps the light from reaching us, Bluecoat Gallery, The Liverpool Biennial (with David Jacques and Carla Åhlander), Liverpool, UK
 Éclats, CEAAC – Centre européen d’actions artistiques contemporaines, Strasbourg, FR
 Derridas Katze, que donc je suis (à suivre), Kunstraum Kreuzberg, Berlin, DE
 All the rest is literature, House of Contamination, Artissima, Torino, IT
 Gradual Change!, Nordin Gallery, Stockholm, SE
 Love&Space, Salon Populaire, Berlin, DE

2009 EASTinternational at Transmission Gallery, Glasgow; Baltic, Newcastle; Contemporary Art Norwich, Norwich, UK
 Collaboration, Autocenter, Berlin, DE
 ABC_ DEF, Art Berlin Contemporary, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, DE
 Zeigen, an audio tour through Berlin, Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin, DE

Film festivals

2025 13th Berlin Biennale, Berlin, DE

2024 The Perfect Square, Villa Medici Film festival, Rome, IT

2023 74th Berlinale – Berlin International Film Festival, Berlin, DE
 Hidden in plain sight, Jogja Fotografis Festival by wysiwyg, Yogyakarta, ID
 Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux, Paris, FR
 69th International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen, DE
 Trembling Time, EMAF – 36th European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, DE
 Go Short – 15th International Short Film Festival, Nijmegen, NL
 Diagonale ´23, Festival of Austrian Film, Graz, AT
 36th Stuttgarter Filmwinter – Festival for Expanded Media, Stuttgart, DE

2022 Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux de Paris, FR
 Riddles, V-F-X festival of experimental audiovisual practices, SCCA, Center for Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana, SL
 Echoes from the Near Future, 38th Short Film Festival, Hamburg, DE
 The Thing is, EMAF – European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, DE

2021 Fluid States. Solid Matter, Videonale 18, Festival for Video und Time-Based Art, Kunstmuseum Bonn, DE
 ARKIPEL, Jakarta International Documentary and Experimental Film Festival, Jakarta, ID

2020 The Law is a White Dog, TULCA Festival of Visual Arts 2020, Galway, IR
 11th Athens Avant-Garde Film Festival, Athens, GR
 Wait and See, IFFR – International Film Festival, Rotterdam, NL
 VIII Kinodot, Experimental Film Festival, St. Petersburg, RU
 15th IndieLisboa – International Independent Film Festival, Lisbon, PT
 Unter uns, Bildproduktion im Mansfelder Land, Werkleitz Festival, Hettstedt, Halle, DE

2019 Grand Hotel Abyss, steirischer herbst Festival, Graz, AT
 Gimli Film Festival, Gimli, CA
 36th Short Film Festival, Hamburg, DE
 EMAF – European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, DE
 IFFR – International Film Festival, Rotterdam, NL

2017 33rd International Short Film Festival, Hamburg, DE

2016 Dobra, Festival de Cinema Experimental, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, BR

2015 Liberty Taken, A festival of arts in the city of Bombay, Bombay, IN

2013 Videonale.14 – Festival for Contemporary Video Art, Kunstmuseum Bonn, DE

2011 Wonders of progress, TIFF – Toronto International Film Festival, Toronto, CA
 Hard for the money, EMAF – European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, DE

2010 Kasseler Dokumentar- und Filmfestival, Kassel, DE
 A few notes on life, Impakt Festival, Utrecht, NL

Awards and residencies

- 2022 German Short Film Award in the category experimental short film up to 30 minutes
Best Film Award at Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux de Paris, FR
- 2021 Residence, Paliano, by Kultur Niederösterreich, IT
Residence, International Saari Residence, Kone Foundation, Hietamäki, FL
Special Mention, ARKIPEL – Jakarta International Documentary and Experimental Film Festival, ID
Artistic Research Grant from Berlin City Administration for Culture
- 2020 Best Film Award, VIII Kinodot Experimental Film Festival, St. Petersburg, RU
Artistic Research Grant from Berlin City Administration for Culture, DE
- 2019 EMAF Media Art Award of the German, DE
Film Critics at EMAF – European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, DE
Special Mention, 36th Short Film Festival, Hamburg, DE
Residence, Institute for Urban Research, Malmö University, SE
- 2018 Residence, Cripta747, Turin, IT
Residence, Superdeals, Brussels, BE
- 2017 Winner of the 20th edition of the MOSTYN Open
Short list for German Short Film Award, DE
Artistic Research Grant from Berlin City, Administration for Culture, DE
- 2016 Lecture on Writing Art in Digital Space at Society for Artistic Research conference, DK
- 2013 State scholarship for Video and Media, BKA,
Arts Division of the Federal Chancellery of Austria, AT
Residence, ECAV en collaboration avec la Fondation Château Mercier, Sierre, Sierra Leone, ZA
- 2009 Residence, Rome, Italy, BKA, Arts Division of the Federal Chancellery of Austria, IT

Collections (selection)

- FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, FR
FRAC Corsica, Corte, FR
Musée du château des ducs de Wurtemberg, Montbéliard, FR
Fluentum/Markus Hannebauer, Berlin, DE
Videocollection Wulf Herzogenrath/Akademie der Künste Berlin, DE
Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, DE
Kelterborn Collection, Frankfurt, DE
Museum of the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Buenos Aires, AR
Region Skånes Art Collection, SE
State Collection of the Federal Ministry for Arts, Vienna, AT
State Collection of Lower Austria, Sankt Pölten, AT

THE PILL®

Works & Exhibitions



Chants pour les indésirables, MAMC+ St Etienne, 2025



Chants pour les indésirables, MAMC+ St Etienne, 2025

Family Constellation with a Fox, 2025

In *Family Constellation with a Fox*, Gernot Wieland addresses a process whose urgency we recognize, yet which has rarely been successfully put into practice: healing society from the traumatic legacy of male-dominated, colonial Western art history. The therapeutic tool of choice is the family constellation. Its representatives are ceramic figures that stand in for ‘Old Master’ paintings, but also for mother, father, ego, Freudian psychoanalysis - and a fox. We don’t only lose people; Western art history itself is also built upon loss. Like a storyteller, Wieland’s voice-over meanders through memories that at times spread their wings and take flight as fictions, only to suddenly crash back down onto the ground of historical reality.

Alicja Schinder

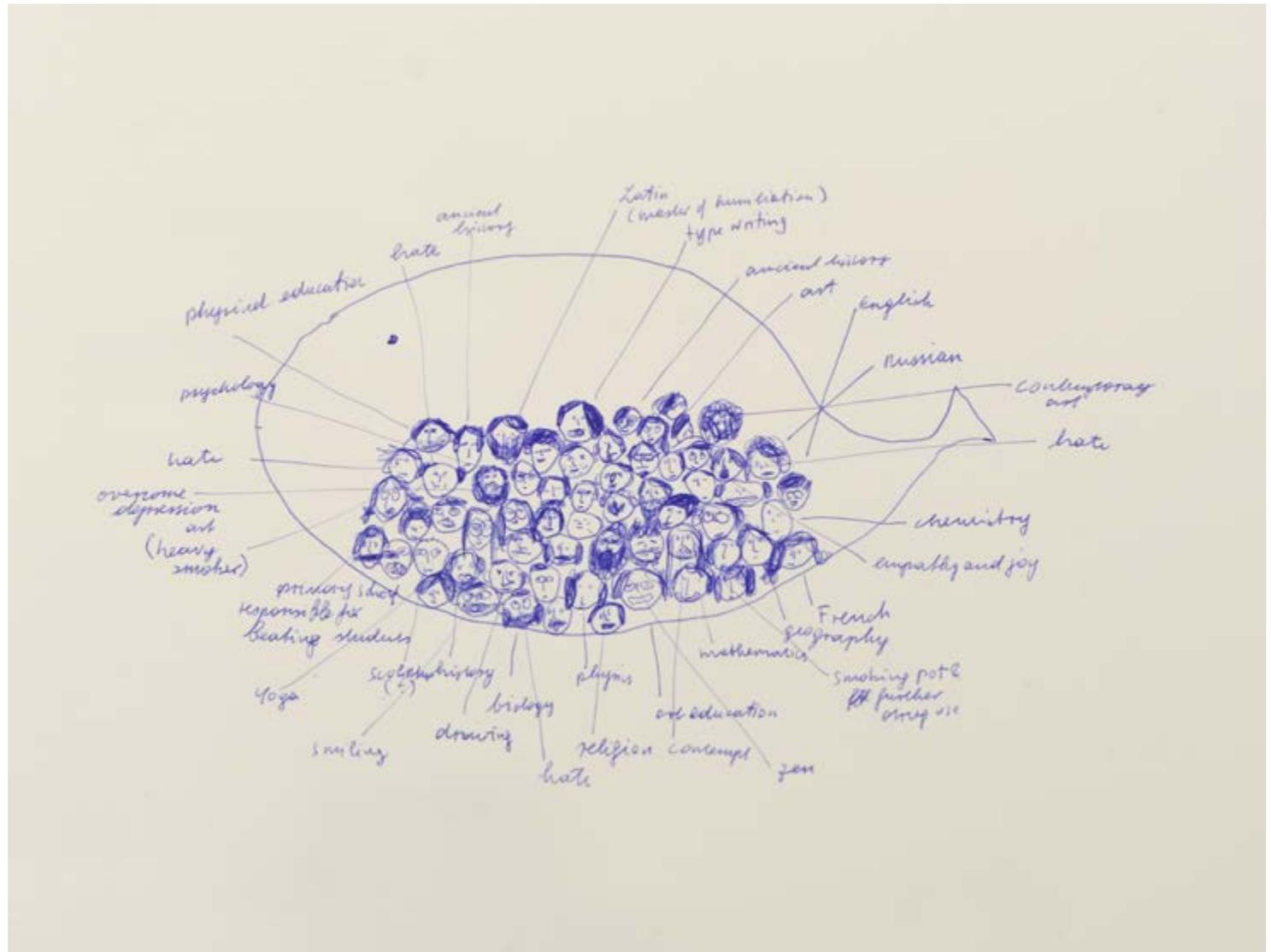
In his new film, Gernot Wieland explores the urgent—but often unsuccessful—attempt to heal the damage left by Western art history, which has long been shaped by colonialism and male dominance. This legacy is just one example of how deep-rooted power structures keep shaping and reinforcing inequality.

Wieland uses the method of “family constellation” therapy as the chosen method of healing, with ceramic figures representing old European master paintings, family roles - mother, father, ego, as in Freudian psychoanalysis - and a fox. This setup tries to uncover how cultural power works: Western art history itself is built upon loss. Its scaffolding holds only by means of dispossession, colonial plunder, and the exclusion of marginalized groups.

The film’s narration flows like a story—sometimes drifting into imagined memories, then snapping back to harsh historical truths. Wieland draws on his childhood in postwar Austria in the 1970s and ’80s, a time he describes as filled with repression. The film balances humor and seriousness in a way that feels almost childlike—honest and unfiltered. Even when the film feels light, you never forget the heavy themes it’s dealing with—grief, trauma, and the long shadow of violence. It’s all there, pulsing just beneath the surface.



Still from *Family Constellation with a Fox*, 2025



Gernot Wieland
All teachers (Family Constellation with a Fox), 2025
Pencil on paper
42 x 59,4 cm



Constellation de 4 oeuvres céramiques de Gernot Wieland incluant :
Pillars of Modernity (Ancestors, mirrored), 2025
8,5 x 13 x 7,5

A Sentence as a Monstrous Image, 2025
26 x 12 x 4 cm

Superego (Über-Ich), 2025
19 x 24 x 3

Pillars of Modernity II (Demons and Ghosts), 2025
11 x 4 x 5,5 cm

Gernot Wieland

The emancipatory potential of the imagination is a way of overcoming an unfree or objectified social situation. (Walter), 2025

Ceramic

26 x 12 x 4 cm



LE POTENTIEL
ÉMANCIPATEUR
DE L'IMAGINATION
EST UN MOYEN
DE SURMONTEUR ~~UNE~~
UNE SITUATION SOCIALE
NON LIBRE
OU OBJECTIVÉE.



Gernot Wieland
Half Naked, 2024
Detail of two drawings, work on paper.

Gernot Wieland
Half Naked, 2024
Series of twelve drawings and a vase

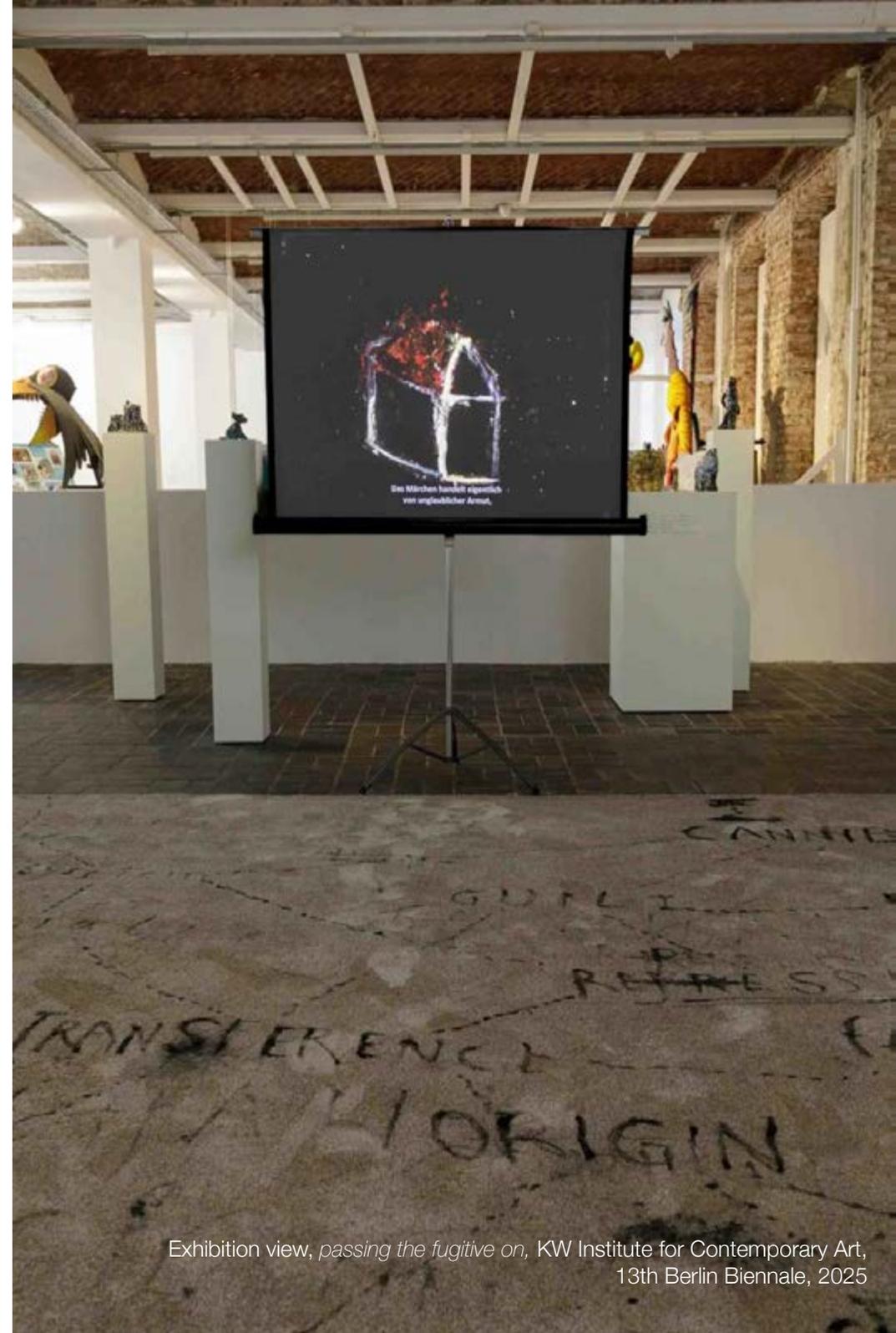




Gernot Wieland

Family Constellation with a Fox, 2025

18:48 min, 1 channel video, 4:3, Super 8 film transferred to HD video, HD video, colour, b&w, stereo, sound



Exhibition view, *passing the fugitive on*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 13th Berlin Biennale, 2025



*You do not leave traces of your presence,
just of your acts, 2025*

Gernot Wieland

You do not leave traces of your presence, just of your acts, 2025

Still from the video, 16:21 min, 1 channel video, 4:3, Super 8 film transferred to
HD video, colour, b&w, stereo, sound



Exhibition view, *Chants pour les indésirables*, MAMC+ St Etienne, 2025

Half Naked, 2024

Half Naked, a series of twelve drawings and a vase assembled from three other broken vases, alludes to the fact that the Self is always more than its mere presence. More specifically, it explores how the Self is a complex and contradictory constellation of states of mind, eras and cultural conclusions, each residing at different depths within the body, in different areas of consciousness.

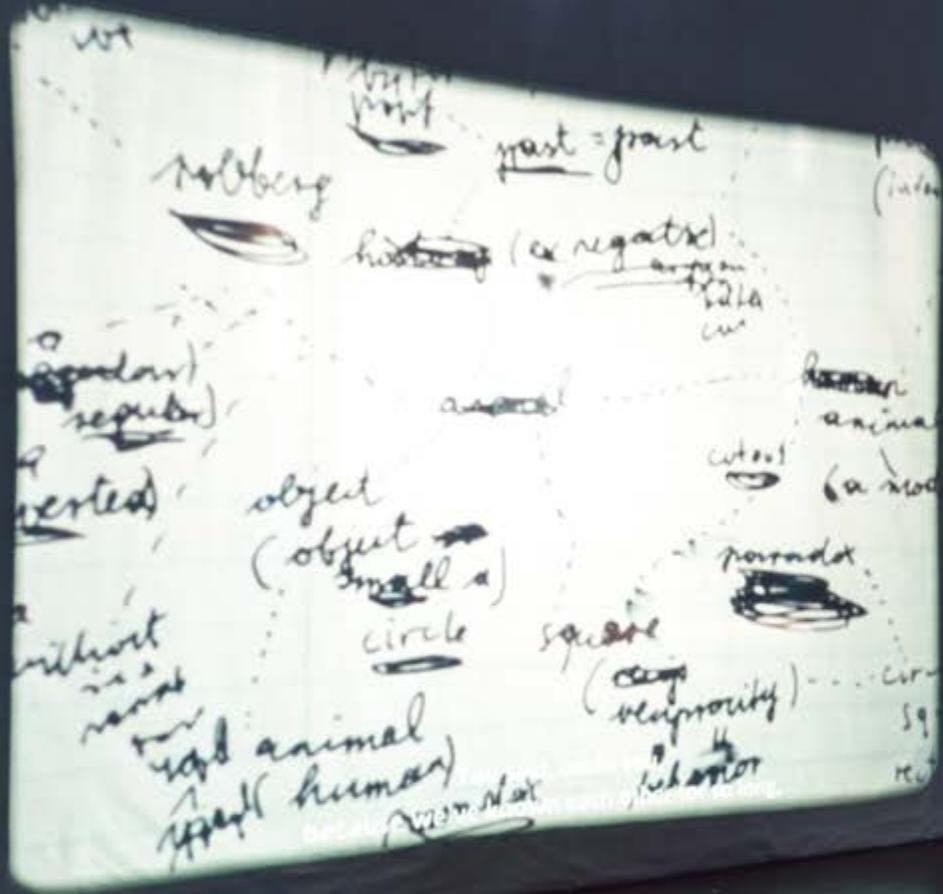
The series can be read as a text and as a drawing, functioning as a kind of storyboard, opening up a space for reflection by suggesting the possibility of personal change despite social constraints and limitations.



Gernot Wieland
Half Naked, 2024
Series of twelve drawings and a vase.



Exhibition view, *Square, Circle, Square*, Argos centre for audiovisual arts, Bruxelles, Belgique, 2024



Exhibition view, *Square, Circle, Square*, Argos centre for audiovisual arts, Bruxelles, Belgique, 2024



Exhibition view, *You do not leave traces of your presence, just of your acts* KH Künstler:innenhaus Bremen, 2024



Film premiere at 74th Berlinale - Berlin International Film Festival - Forum Expanded, 2024.

The Perfect Square, 2024

For twelve years, Gernot Wieland worked with an animal trainer who taught birds to fly in circles or squares. The film initially concentrates on the birds themselves. The image, reduced to the birds flying in and out of the frame, suggests how one might perceive one's own flickering consciousness and perception. The volatile quality of trying to capture flying birds in frame intensifies the desire to confirm whether the birds indeed fly in a circle. Whereas the indexical image captured by the camera is a testament to the difficulty of training the birds to do something on command, the title of the work itself invokes the intellectual purity of geometric forms, considered superior by analytic philosophy to describe the laws of nature. All this implies that non human beings that disobey a command of utility or beauty provide a definition of "otherness", revealing failures of modern systems of representation.

Gernot Wieland
The Perfect Square, 2024
08:01 min

16 mm film/Super 8 film/HD Video

Link to trailer

<https://vimeo.com/906674166>



Gernot Wieland
Painting from the film *The Perfect Square*, 2024
Oil on Canvas
24 x 39 cm

Turtleneck Phantasies, 2023

Turtleneck Phantasies (2022), is an extension of Gernot Wieland's previous work in its remembrance of suppressed, unheard, and forgotten voices. It is dedicated to the murmuring, the illegible, the unspeakable, fragments of childhood memories in sketches and doodles, stumblings that look like a dance - in other words, all the little forms that are so central to our relationship with the world, but are given relatively little attention.

Grand Prize in the German competition at the 69th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany, 2023. Grand Prize at the 25th Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux, Paris, France. Turtleneck Phantasies was presented in 2023 at the 69th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany; Trembling Time, EMAF – 36th European Media Arts Festival, Osnabrück, Germany; 17th KFFK/Shortfilmfestival Köln, Cologne, Germany; Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin; Kasseler Dokumentar, Film und Videofest, Kassel, Germany; at the Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux in Paris, France; Hidden in Plain Sight, at the Jogja Fotografis Festival, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Nexus of Absentias, at Rapid Eye Movement, Bangkok, Thailand; and in 2022 at Kindl – Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany.

Gernot Wieland

Turtleneck Phantasies, 2023

1 channel video, 4:3 / 16:9, Super 8 Film /

HD Video, sound, colour, B&W

ed. 5 + 2 AP

17:36 min

Link to trailer

<https://vimeo.com/800337771>





Gernot Wieland
Turtleneck Phantasies, 2023
Pencil and coloured pencil on paper
21 x 29.7 cm

Gernot Wieland

Ink in Milk

2018

1 channel video, 4:3/16:9, Super 8 film/HD Video,
sound, colour, b&W, 12:30 min

Link to trailer

<https://vimeo.com/800938999?share=copy>

Exhibition view, *Ink in Milk*, Quartz Studio, 2024



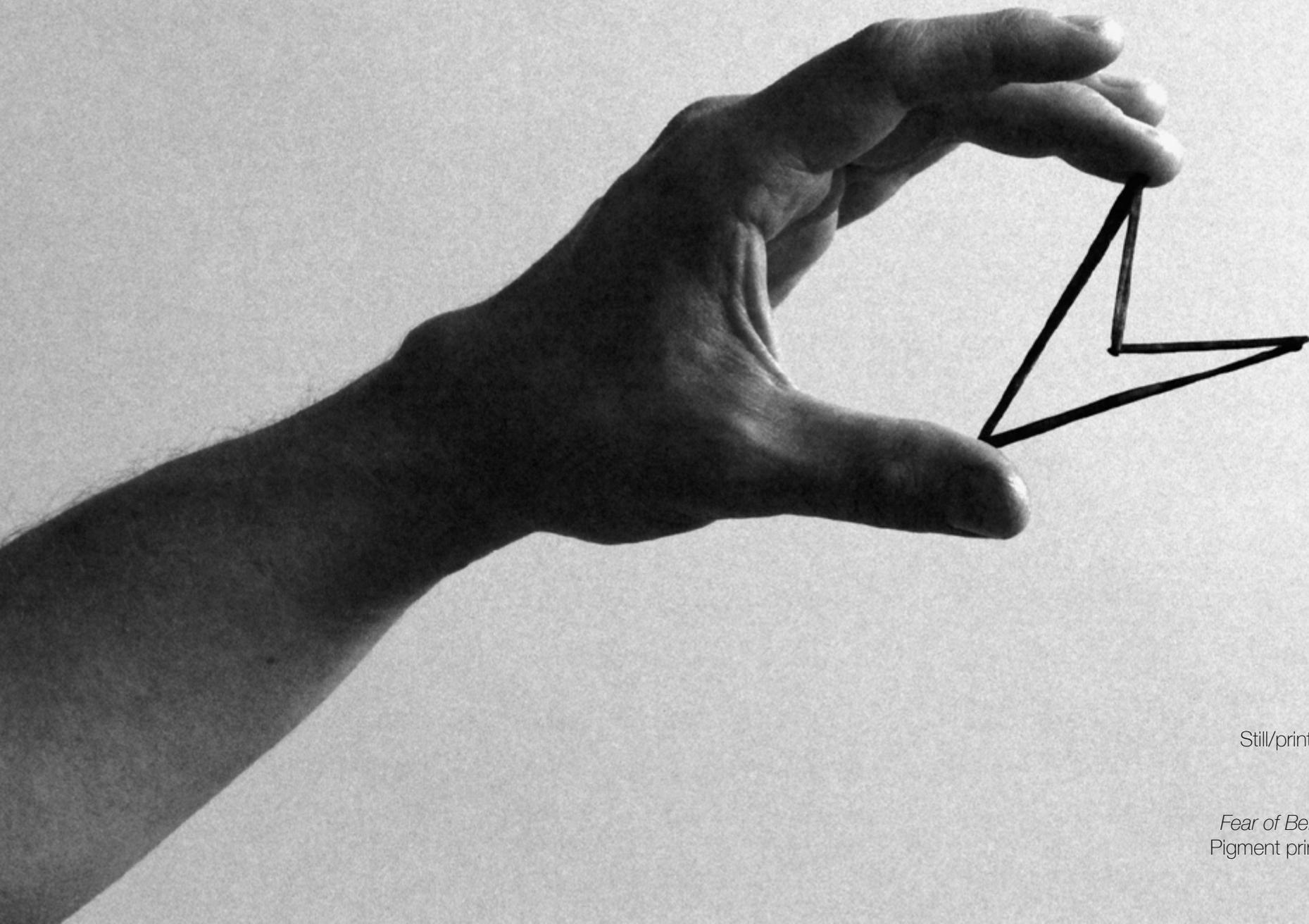


Exhibition view, *Ink in Milk*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Allemagne, 2020



Still/prints from the film *Ink in Milk*, 2018

Gernot Wieland
Fear of the attempt to overcome the fear of heights, 2018
Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper,
27 × 36 cm, 4 + 1 AP



Still/prints from the film *Ink in Milk*

Gernot Wieland
Fear of Being Around People, 2018
Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper,
27 × 36 cm, 4 + 1 AP

Bird in Italian is Uccello, 2021

In 2022, the film received the German Short Film Award, the most important and lucrative award for short films in Germany, the Best Film Award at the Festival des Cinémas Différents in Paris, and an honourable mention at the Cannes Short Film Festival in France.

Gernot Wieland looks back on his own childhood and realises that, no matter how porous the membrane separating the two worlds may seem, no matter how permeable the glass window may be, allowing a glimpse of the landscape behind it, that landscape remains distant. There is no bridge connecting the inside to the outside. The topology of the invisible spaces into which we are born is both unconscious and rigid. The constraint of conformity, which looms like a shadow and determines life plans, opinions and affiliations, is oppressive. *Bird in Italian is Uccello* is a poetic and sinuous search for traces of sovereignty in the socio-psychological structures that define societies. 'I look at my reflection in the car window. If my language existed, I would say: absence - it is this absence that speaks to me.'

Screenings: in 2023 at the Argos Centre for Audiovisual Arts, Brussels, Belgium; 15th International Short Film Festival, Nijmegen, Netherlands; Diagonale '23, Graz, Austria; Glued and Screwed by wysiwyg, Filmhuis Den Haag, Netherlands; 36th Stuttgarter Filmwinter, Germany; 29th Internationale Kurzfilmwoche, Regensburg, Germany; and in 2022 at BIENALSUR, 3rd Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires, Argentina; EMAF – European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, Germany; Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux de Paris, France; 38th Short Film Festival, Hamburg, Germany.

Gernot Wieland

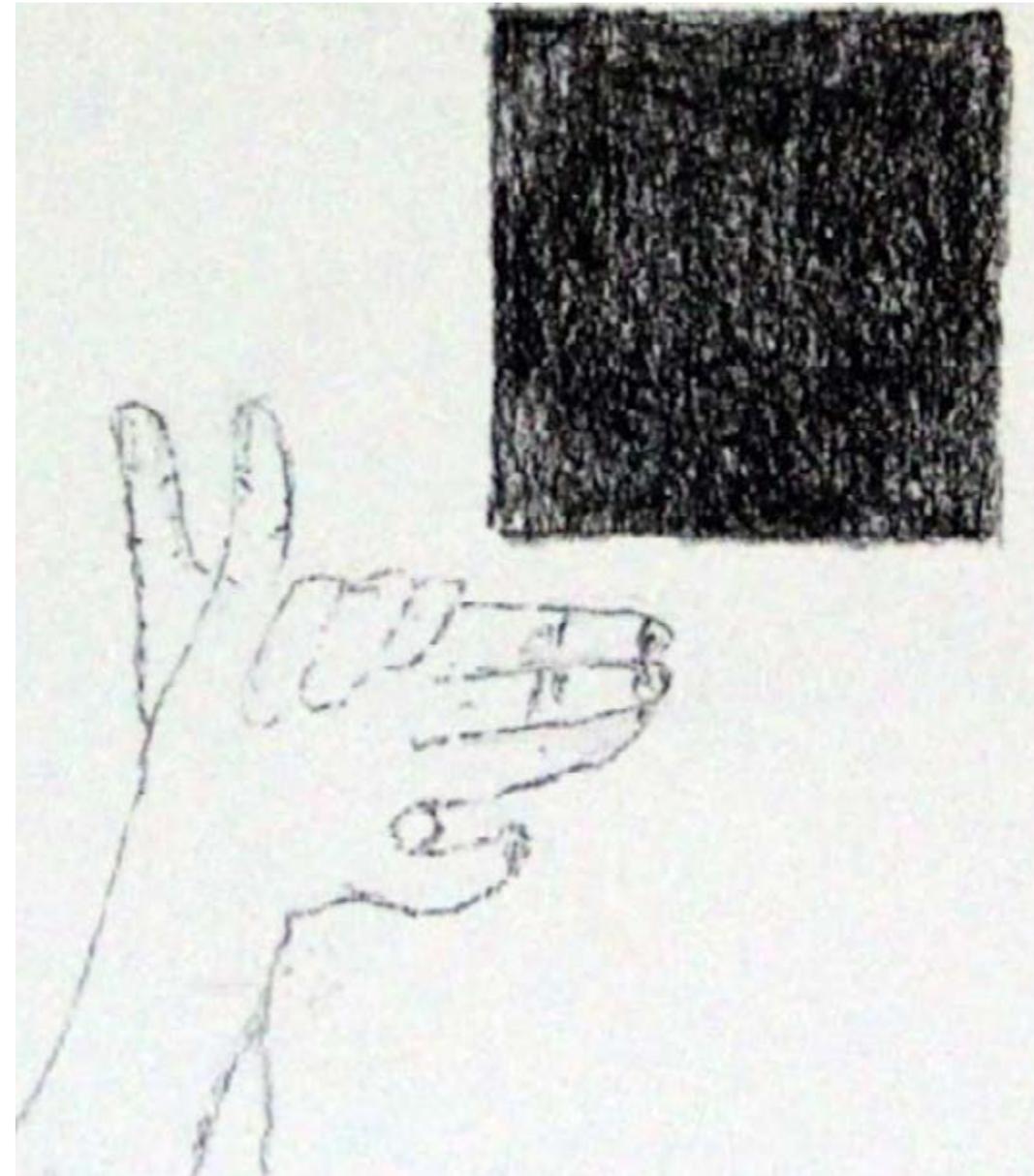
Bird in Italian is Uccello, 2021

1 channel video, 4:3 / 16:9, HD Video,

sound, colour, B&W

ed. 5 + 2 AP

14:26 min



Link to trailer

<https://vimeo.com/800343188>

Gernot Wieland
Bird in Italian is Uccello, 2016
Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper
Edition of 6 different prints



Gernot Wieland

Bird in Italian is Uccello, 2016

Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper

Edition of 6 different prints



Thievery and Songs, 2016

In *Thievery and Songs*, Wieland recounts a dream he had about the Bremen Town Musicians. The film itself feels like a dream; it brings together fairy-tale animal characters visiting their psychotherapists, Wieland's childhood memories, his transformation into a snail, and the meaning of landscapes. *Thievery and Songs* also explores the true story of an Austrian Jewish dancer who fled Austria for Bombay in 1938. Fables, memories, stories, and reflections on contemporary life collapse into a visual philosophy of being, conveying a tragicomic spirit that blends irony and absurdity with a captivating poetic sobriety." Séamus Kealy, Salzburger Kunstverein

Thievery and Songs received the MOSTYN Open 20 award. In a statement, the jury said: "Gernot Wieland's accomplished and complex work stood out to the jury, particularly for the way it creates a narrative around the human condition and examines the place of the individual in society."

Gernot Wieland
Thievery and Songs, 2016
22:40mn
Video

Link to trailer
<https://vimeo.com/188433822>



Stills/Prints from the film *Thievery and Songs*
Untitled, 2016
pigment print on Hahnemühle paper
30 x 40 cm,
4 + 1 AP



Stills/Prints from the film *Thievery and Songs*
Untitled, 2016
pigment print on Hahnemühle paper
30 x 40 cm,
4 + 1 AP



Drawing from the film *"Hello, my name is..."...and..."Yes, I'm fine."*



Gernot Wieland
"Hello, my name is..."...and..."Yes, I'm fine.", 2016
1 channel video, 16:9, Super 8 film / HD Video, sound, colour
ed. 5 + 2 AP
18:25 min

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Press

ArtReview

Gernot Wieland on the couch



Bruce Nauman on the fence

Plus Luc Tuymans, Mexican Macabre, Susan Cianciolo

Gernot Wieland

by Mark Rappolt



In 1945, Allied forces, about to occupy Austria, were issued a guide to the country and its people. "It is no good expecting Austrians to be punctual and reliable, as we understand those terms," it reads. "They are not made that way. They will be quite sincere when they promise to do something; they will be equally sincere when they apologize for not having done it. But they will have a sense of "style". The guide as a whole reduces the people to a type, defined by the geographic space they inhabit (the country looks like a shoe and its western border is "quite a small stream"), the climate of that place ("hard to describe") and its sociopolitical history (it has only been a "self-contained country" since 1938 and "therefore there has not been much time for Austrians to get the feeling of being a nation"). It's those restricted, prejudiced ideas of identity and the way in which it is constructed that the Berlin-based Austrian artist Gernot Wieland seeks to confront in his work. Though the previous statement in itself represents a limited view of his recent output of expansive lecture-performances and films. He does, however, have a definite sense of "style", one that juxtaposes fact and fiction, horror and humour, profundity and bathos, and a sense that art and artmaking can be at once useless and useful in navigating between these poles, but either way can play a role in humanity's search for its place in the world.

In the performance *Speaking in Places (Ink in Milk)* (2017, which presents a schoolboy's traumatic account of a fellow male pupil being shamed for coming into class wearing lipstick, through to the village's obsession with forming their bodies into healing crystals in order to expunge their sorrow over his eventual death), currently being made into a film, Wieland describes how, shortly after moving to Berlin, he discovered that he lived around the corner from Grunewaldstrasse and that house number

13 on that street was where Franz Kafka once lived. As he walked past the property and obsessed about it he became "closer" to Kafka (even adopting what he imagined to be his walk and his "Pragueish" accent), ending up convinced that the author could only have written what he did because of the fact that he lived in this particular house. (There's a sense here, as there is in much of Wieland's work, of Gaston Bachelard's famous description of Victor Hugo's Quasimodo as a person whose deformities are shaped by the building he inhabits, the relation between the two being "like a turtle to its carapace" and posing the issue of whether or not an animal is shaped by its environment or cage.) Later, Wieland reports, he discovered that there is another Grunewaldstrasse in Berlin and that it was on this street that Kafka had actually lived. Ultimately, the Kafka Wieland had constructed

Facts, fictions and how they are instrumentalised in art as in life lie at the slippery heart of Wieland's work

was a fiction based on a misunderstanding, doubtless influenced by the author's own fictions, and tethered to nothing resembling a fact. Although, at a certain point, Wieland's Kafka was a fact, as far as the artist, possessed by the writer's shuffle and talking in tongues, was concerned.

Facts, fictions and how they are instrumentalised in art as in life lie at the slippery heart of Wieland's work. He might have made up the entirety of that Kafka stuff, the street address aside. Although his generally emotionless, somewhat monotonous delivery in the performance, combined with his Germanic accent, help to enforce the sense, psychologically (but based on no essential truth), that facts are in the air. *Thievery and Songs* (2016), a 23-minute film that won Wieland first prize at last year's Mostyn Open, entwines the story of Hilde Holger, a pioneering Jewish dancer who fled Austria for Bombay in 1939, with the story of the artist's great-aunt's bondage to a cruel and violent Austrian farmer (as told to him by

Thievery and Songs (still), 2016, video, 23 min 40 sec. Courtesy the artist



his father), a folk tale collected by the Brothers Grimm, a therapy session, the perceived relationship between NASA and Leonardo da Vinci, that between religion and postwar Austrian art, the question of to what extent the past informs the present, the extent to which the experiences of childhood shape the form of an adult, and the relationship of character to place.

At the core of this tightly interwoven ball of problematics is an exploration of how people and the power they wield shape environments: the Anschluss and with it the arrival of the National Socialists in Austria creates an environment that can no longer provide sanctuary to Hilde Holger. When the artist's great-aunt is sold to the farmer (who loses all his 'property', including his wife, to a 'good' farmer over a game of cards in the prewar era, before returning as a member of the Nazi Party to take it back) he shapes her identity and existence. A Hitler-Eiche to which the artist and his brother played Mendelssohn as an act of childhood atonement (for the sins of Austria) is wiped from the landscape and has been replaced by a shopping centre when he revisits as an adult. The Berlin psychiatrist that the artist consults concerning his dreams of imaginary landscapes, whose meaning Wieland can't interpret, demonstrates an obsession with his patient's Austrian dialect and his having lived in Vienna, the home of Freud, even as his patient exhibits mounting anxiety and anger while he tries to reframe the session around the artist's own problems, all the time sweating on the couch.

The narrative is accompanied by a series of illustrations: Plasticine animations, childishly naive paintings, textbook illustrations, scientific-looking emotional diagrams that attempt to make sense of the therapy session, photographs belonging to the artist's father and a filmed performance of a dancer (in a dress that might approximate some of the costumes worn by Holger). At times they introduce visual links between the various narratives, at other times their childlike execution serves to highlight the absurdity of those narratives, while at other times still they're presented as evidence of the purported facts of the tale. For example, we're shown a man waving his right hand as pictured on the plaques that accompanied NASA's Pioneer 10 and 11 probes into outer space during the early 1970s. The artist claims to have confused these messages for extraterrestrial life with Leonardo da Vinci's illustration of *Yiurvan Mao* (c.1490), an ideal image that he then obsessively perpetuates (we're shown several childhood drawings) so that any man he draws is pictured holding up his right hand. This image crops up again, in Plasticine form, illustrating the artist's discomfort during the therapy session and, as the narrative turns to National Socialism, has uncomfortable echoes of the infamous Nazi salute. By the end of the film the image of a waving man comes to mean comfortableness, friendliness, discomfort and hostility: everything and nothing at the same time. Gernot's imagery in general comes to operate in such a way as to leave you questioning whether it's the 'plot' that gives meaning to objects presented or the objects that give truth to the plot. And similarly, does

By the end of the film the image of a waving man comes to mean comfortableness, friendliness, discomfort and hostility

memory define us or do we define our memories? In both cases the one nourishes the other like an Ouroboros gnawing its own tail.

The relation of art to artificiality is something that Wieland pursues in all his work. In *Thievary and Songs*, the artist recalls the much-discussed connection between actionist performance and the Catholic Mass (while digressing on the fact that you are allowed to eat the body of Christ in the form of the host, but not allowed to chew it); in the lecture-performance *Depression in Animals* (2016, in which the artist examines depression in animals as a transference of human problems and a sign of humankind's estrangement from nature) he describes the stuffed animals in an Austrian classroom as being 'like an art installation'. All of which leaves you questioning what is more absurd, the art or the customs and traditions it imitates. And if it's the latter, then what does that say about the society we inhabit? In *Thievary and Songs*, the artist recounts the folk tale 'The Town Musicians of Bremen', in which four domestic animals – a dog, a cat, a donkey and a rooster – having reached the end of their 'useful' lives on a farm decide to go to Bremen and become musicians. Along the way they stop at a house populated by robbers. To scare them off and take the house for themselves, the animals stand one atop the other, leading the thieves to confuse them for a witch, a judge, a giant and an ogre. To a story that ends with the animals living happily ever after, Wieland adds an Orwellian coda: after a while the animals can't decide who should be on top of the other; they go to therapy to resolve their issues; therapy doesn't help so they go their separate ways. Their occupation of the house and what followed, Wieland suggests, is a parable for Occupy Wall Street. Although given that 'The Town Musicians of Bremen' was collected in Grimm's *Fairy Tales* in 1819, perhaps

the fairy tale is more usefully a precedent. Ultimately it's not just the interhuman dynamics of power and hierarchy that the artist seeks to confront, but also humanity's speciesism and dominance over the rest of the world. At the beginning of *Thievary and Songs*, the artist describes feeling that he is in reality a snail and only attempting to fit into human society, 'I eat your food and pretend I share your taste. I talk and show affection, and imitate a normal life,' he proclaims, all the while suggesting that ideals of human society are as much a performance as his artwork. At the end of the film he confounds his dreams about landscapes he doesn't recognise and cannot interpret saying, they are 'the opposite of fear and I do not exist in them'. Oh and by the way Wieland does have a habit of being punctual and reliable.

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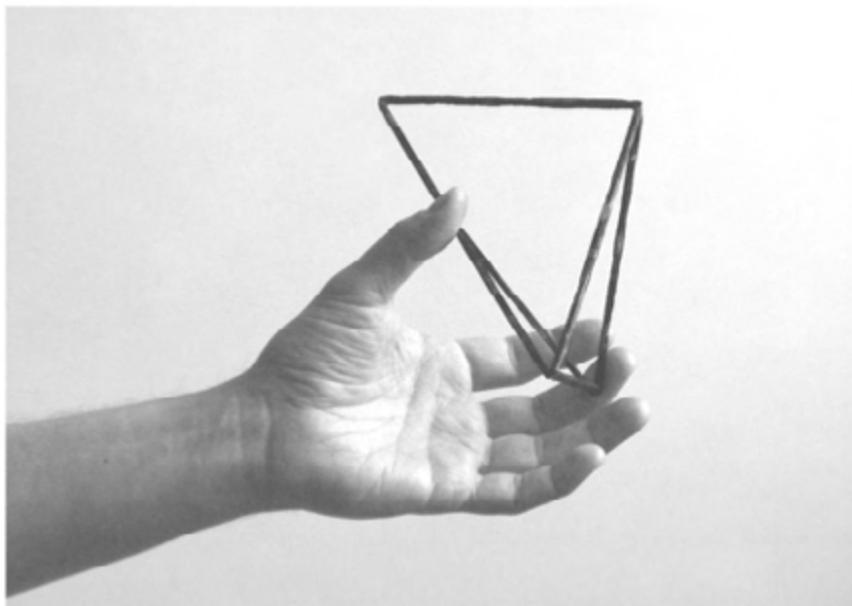
Gernot Wieland will perform the lecture *Depression in Animals* at OCA, Torino on 5 June. The film *Ink in Milk* will be shown as part of *Shame* at Kunstscheichau Bremen, 30 June – 26 August. The artist's work is also included in *Zeitspuren* at the Kunsthaus Centre d'art Pasquart, Biel, Biennne, 9 September – 18 November

opposite page
Thievary and Songs (mills), 2007, video, 20 min 40 sec.
Courtesy the artist

—SPACES

On carpets, cats, cages, and three films by Gernot Wieland

by Barbara Casavecchia



Gernot Wieland, *Ink in Milk*, 2018. Still from video, 12:30 minutes. Image courtesy of the artist.

I am not working, so I'm working out. Crunch and plank, back and forth. I do it next to my desk, on the ragged carpet brought back from Morocco decades ago, immersed in the most familiar of interior landscapes.

When I was in elementary school, an unspeakable fear of going blind (ommetaphobia; suggested treatment: hypnotherapy) made me secretly walk around my room at night, eyes wide shut, just to rote-learn every inch of its perimeter. Now, there's an irony in using this domiciliary setting for exercise. On the wall above my desk there are black cats stretching, bending, and arching their backs, stencil-sprayed there by an artist friend, Riccardo Previdi, and inspired by Gatto Meo Romco, a foam

rubber toy designed by Bruno Munari in 1949 as a playful contortionist for young hands. They are a daily remainder of my sentimental education, based among other things on graffiti, punk comics, squatting, absurdist jokes, yoga, and modernist Milanese design.

In Berlin, I think it was the mid-2000s, Riccardo introduced me to his friend and fellow artist Gernot Wieland. We've been in touch ever since and I intended to visit his exhibition at Salzburger Kunstverein, which opened in February. But now I can't. The three films on show (*Thievery and Songs*, 2016; *Ink in Milk*, 2018; and *Square, Circle, Square*, 2020), which were projected there in their original analogue film format, are now accessible as videos through the institution's website. I watch the films under the sardonic gaze of my black cats and laugh at their deadpan humor. When they move me, I curl up on the rug, glad to hide my feelings from other eyes. I'm mourning the loss of a much-loved member of my family. Of course I miss white cubes, which abstract us from the vulnerability of our "daily persons," in Brian O'Doherty's term, and allow us to move around unnoticed, as "The Spectator" and "The Eye." In his introduction to the 1986 edition of O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube*, art critic and poet Thomas McEvilley writes: "In classical modernist galleries, as in churches, one does not speak in a normal voice; one does not laugh, eat, drink, lie down, or sleep; one does not get ill, go mad, sing, dance, or make love."⁽¹⁾

But in housebound quarantine, people do all these things. This housetraining shapes our ways of seeing. John Berger compared visitors to an art gallery, "who stop in front of one painting and then move on to the next or the one after next,"⁽²⁾ to those at a zoo, proceeding from cage to cage, where subjects waver between lethargy and hyperactivity. (In the temporary absence of both galleries and zoos, I guess it's not by chance that millions of viewers are obsessed by *Tiger King* on Netflix.) In an attempt to cope with intensive scrutiny within our own captivity, some of us even decorate our Zoom backgrounds with fake en-plein-air views. "Within limits, the animals are free, but both themselves and their spectators presume on their close confinement," Berger writes. He cites the zoologist (and surrealist painter) Desmond Morris, who suggests that observing the unnatural behavior of caged animals may help humans understand the strain of living in consumer societies. Isolation and artificial environments affect the reactions of all creatures, who become "immunized to encounter, because nothing can any more occupy a *central* place in their attention." When faces and images meet my gaze, now, through the screen, I struggle to sustain it: it's as if they are visitors staring into my moat. Of course I miss my Responsive Eye.

Gernot's films have plenty to do with animals, human and nonhuman: their domestication and their encounters. What makes them so compelling to me, at this moment, is their tactful supply of humor and imagination as strategies for survival, as well as their treatment of the psychopathologies of the everyday (anxiety, depression, grief) as part of everybody's lives on the planet. They take in pain and process it. Small catharses ensue.

The stories are personal, narrated in voiceover by the artist himself and illustrated with simple media (pen and pencil drawings, watercolors, photos, plasticine animations, Super 8 films). Meticulously annotated maps reconstruct the backdrops of certain autobiographical episodes, often drawn from the narrator's youth, but their childlike style makes it difficult to situate them either in the past or the present, as is common with dreams or memories. Likewise, they appear full of mistakes, exaggerations, fictional twists, and sentimental overtones.

Ink in Milk (12 minutes 30 seconds) starts with the image of a dark liquid swirling in a sink (I've cleaned mine twice, today) while Gernot narrates the story of one of his best friends, a boy who came to school, aged eleven, wearing red lipstick, eyeshadow, and nail polish. The teacher enrolled him on her regular list of "losers," who were forced to wrap around their heads a towel full of chalk powder from the blackboard and sit facing her cupboard, vulnerable to the gaze of others. "How we place our bodies in relation to each other is the start of politics," Gernot says. The friend ends up in a psychiatric hospital; when visited, all he wants to do is walk up and down the stairs, as an exercise of freedom. (A friend recently recommended stair-climbing routines for cardiorespiratory fitness, I recall.) The narrator moves to another village, where a person known only as "uncle" convinces everybody to relieve their sorrows and fears by miming the geometric structure of the crystal associated with their psychic conditions. (Rudolf Steiner, who grew up in an Austrian village, felt during his childhood "that one must carry the knowledge of the spiritual world within oneself after the fashion of geometry.")⁽³⁾ The practice becomes so absorbing that villagers stop working, cattle run away, and nature reconquers all dwellings.

A classroom also marked the beginning of the earlier lecture-performance *Depression in Animals* (2010–ongoing)⁽⁴⁾, demonstrating how human identity is constructed upon "the exclusion and control of the other—namely the animal." One day, a sad schoolmate brings with him an equally sad German shepherd, and candidly reveals the dog's fondness for sodomy during a biology class held by a taxidermist. The story unfolds along tragicomic lines, including the artist's recollections of dealing with trauma through obsessive potato-print-making. "I remember sitting with this child psychiatrist in his room full of pictures of Flipper, Donald Duck, nice but imbecile-looking dogs, and he asked me, Gernot, how did you get here, why did you steal half a million of potatoes? And I remember it was not my voice but something in me said: because the zebra was so sad."

Psychoanalysis is an obvious point of reference, as well as an obvious target for parody, with Sigmund Freud in pole position—it should be mentioned that Gernot is Austrian, although not Viennese, and entertains a conflicted relation with his culture of origin and Catholic upbringing. *Thievery and Songs* (22 minutes 40 seconds) departs from an excruciating therapy session and a dream, involving the cast of the fairy tale "The Town Musicians of Bremen" (a donkey, a dog, a cat, and a rooster), who lead the Occupy Wall Street anti-capitalist revolution, but wind up disbanding because they are unable to agree on who will have to stand above all others. The human fixation on anthropomorphizing everything, as well as on placing despotic Sapiens at the top of the natural ladder, seems ludicrous in a time of pandemic and climatic emergency. In the film, the idea of Vitruvian man as ideal measure of all things is wittily upended. With a nod to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), the narrator explains that "in order to understand the world or the many worlds" sometimes one must become animal, and clarifies that he is, in fact, a snail. He adds: "If you want to know how a snail's life feels like in a human body, I can only tell you, it feels quite normal. [...] I eat your food and pretend I share your taste."

The third film, *Square, Circle, Square*, is silent and shot in 16 mm. It lasts only a couple of minutes, and wouldn't be complete without its caption: "Wieland has collaborated for 12 years with an animal trainer who trained birds to fly in a circle or square." We see black birds flying in the sky, alone or in small flocks; their trajectories remain open. Ancient ornithomancists used to see omens in these aerial maneuvers. Like the animals that roam freely across our empty streets, they seem to me to go simply

where they want, without paying much attention to us. This morning, swallows returned to Milan. I think it's a good sign.

Online viewing room

["Gernot Wieland" at Salzburger Kunstverein](#)

- (1) Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986), 10.
- (2) John Berger, "Why Look at Animals," in Filipa Ramos (ed.), *Animals: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2016), 68–69.
- (3) Rudolf Steiner, *The Story of My Life* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Co., 1928), 11.
- (4) See [gernotwieland.com](#).

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