

Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt



„Shapeshifter I“, 2025

Potato masher made from melted-down armament material (ca. 1950–1955), lacquered
enamel bowl (ca. 1950–1955), plate holder. 32 × 19 × 13 cm
exhibition view: CIAT – Center for Art and Thought, Berlin, duo exhibition with Dominique Hurth.

Bernadette Wolbring

Grrrt-grrrt

[...] The fusion of war and post-war becomes even more apparent in the wall-mounted Shapeshifters, 2025, a combination of bowls and potato mashers. Once crafted from scraps of military equipment out of sheer necessity, to serve no purpose other than to function in the home, some of these objects can still be found today. Have they been kept for their sentimental value or because these unique objects are still telling (a) history? Wolbring sees the polyvalence of history in everyday life and in the design of its objects. [...]

Hanne Loreck

Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt

„Creeeaaak!“, 2025 (detail)

Ceramic bowl (1950–1955), carabiner, plate holder, lamp base
Hanne Loreck's quotation refers to Fig. 2 on the previous page. The text was published on the occasion of the exhibition "*Grrrt - grrrt, Dominique Hurth and Bernadette Wolbring*", CIAT – Center for Art and Thought, Berlin, 2025.



Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt



„Creeaaaak!“, 2025

Ceramic bowls (1950–1955), lamp bases, curtain hooks, carabiners, feather duster, plant stand, pot lid,
carpet, 200 × 200 × 300 cm;
exhibition view: CIAT – Center for Art and Thought, Berlin, duo exhibition with Dominique Hurth.

Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt

Bernadette Wolbring's body of work Grrrt-grrrt places the kidney shape at its center—a design icon of the 1950s and a symbol of German postwar modernism. As a deliberate departure from the authoritarian formal vocabulary of the National Socialist era, it stands for design as a publicly effective promise of renewal and moral purification.

In Wolbring's works, kidney-shaped ceramics are combined with household objects and re-read in new ways. Familiar objects tip into the grotesque: the base of a bowl, mounted on a lamp structure, becomes an expressive figure with horn-like protrusions. References to the horror genre and to childhood perception—where the everyday turns uncanny—open a space between private memory and collective visual culture. Two-tone ceramics intensify this effect by revealing darkened backsides as

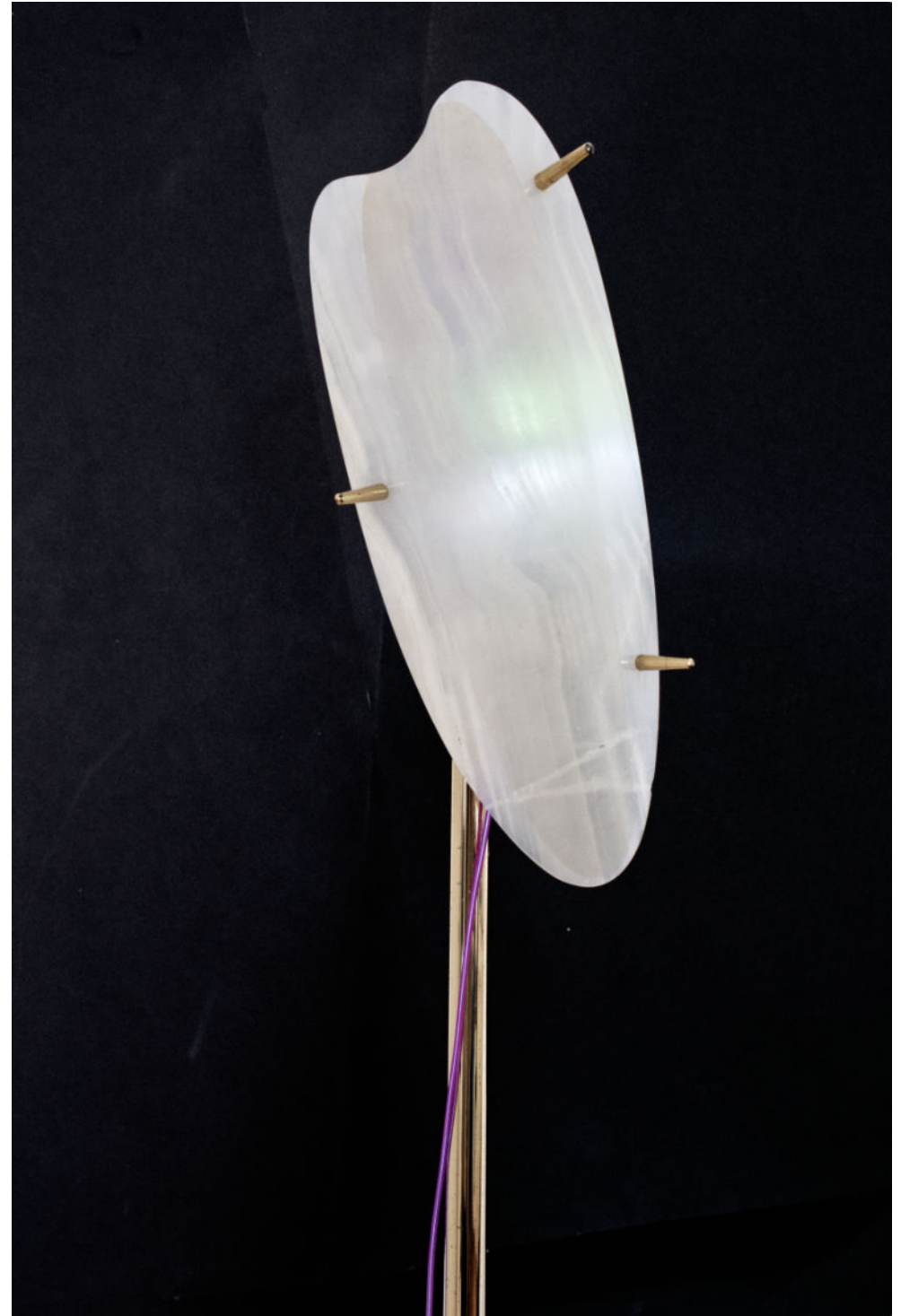
one moves around them, undermining their initially harmless, colourful appearance. The works are autofictional reflections on Wolbring's childhood in Dachau, Germany and her proximity to perpetrators of the Nazi regime, mediated through spaces and objects from her grandparents' interior design shop. Through material culture, the artist negotiates strategies of remembering and repression, making visible how history persists within the everyday.

Grrrt-grrrt

Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt

„Badooom!“, 2026

Pencil tray (onyx, brass) (ca. 1950–1955), lamp bases, plate holder, chasing EL-wire



Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt



„Shhh...shhhhh...“, 2025

Front side of the installation
Ceramic bowls (ca. 1950–1955), plate holder, plexiglass rod, lamp base

Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt



„Shhh...shhhhh...“, 2025

Reverse of the installation
Ceramic bowls (ca. 1950–1955), plate holder, plexiglass rod, lamp base

Bernadette Wolbring
Grrrt-grrrt



„Shhh...shhhhh...“, 2026

(Details)
Ceramic bowls (ca. 1950–1955), plate holder, plexiglass rod, lamp base

Bernadette Wolbring
Reform

Implemented as a participatory project in the urban space of Helsinki, Reform addresses the Finnish gender pension gap: despite Finland's image of equality, women receive around 25% less pension than men. In workshops, umbrella prototypes were developed collaboratively, and together with the dancer Kaisa Kukkonen a choreography was created and performed in public space.

Reform is an artistic intervention in public space that makes social inequality visible and open to negotiation. Its point of departure is the umbrella as an everyday object and carrier of political information: its pattern visualizes statistical data on the Finnish gender pension gap and translates abstract numbers into a physically experienceable form.

The project draws on historical strategies that deliberately inscribed art into everyday life—from the functional designs of Sonia Delaunay to the agitational porcelain of the Lomonosov Porcelain Factory—and reactivates them as a contemporary practice in public space.

Photographs of the dancer Elizabeth Ward in Bartitsu poses function as pedagogical tools in the workshops. Bartitsu—a self-defense method developed around 1900 that incorporates the umbrella—forms the basis of the choreographic postures.

Reform

Bernadette Wolbring
Reform



„Reform (Method Kit)“, 2016

C-Type prints, 50 x 70 cm

Bernadette Wolbring
Reform



„Reform“, 2016

Exhibition view: *Present Progressive, Corner College, Zürich*

Bernadette Wolbring
Reform



„Reform (Workshop)“, 2017

Experiments with rotoreliefs, *Saunabaari Social Center*,
Maunula, Helsinki; participatory project, commissioned by *M-Cult*, Helsinki

**Bernadette Wolbring
Reform**



„Reform (Performance)“, 2017

Night of the Arts Helsinki
Bottom right: filmed with drones, 4 min (looped)

Bernadette Wolbring
Reform



„Reform (Lehrposter)“, 2017

150 × 200 cm; project participants with their designs; left: detail

Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs in Round Holes

Square Pegs in Round Holes

Square Pegs in Round Holes investigates strategies of knowledge transfer, the production of authority, and the public circulation of information. The work positions itself at the intersection of art, pedagogy, and the public sphere, reflecting on how artistic formats can adopt, shift, and recontextualize existing structures of distribution and education.

With the aim of achieving the widest possible and low-threshold dissemination, *Square Pegs in Round Holes* is realized as a lecture performance, each time accompanied by the release of a free poster. The project deliberately adapts the pedagogical distribution format of the German pharmacy magazine *Medi & Zini*. This monthly poster-zine is freely available, aimed at children, and playfully combines visual appeal with the communication of knowledge: an illustrative image—often of a cute animal—is paired with a page of medical information.

In terms of content, *Square Pegs in Round Holes* addresses the relationship between

medical knowledge and concepts of gender. The risograph publication focuses on bodily transformations through testosterone and their impact on social orders. By simulating medical methods—from abstracting modes of representation to specially designed foldable measuring tools—the publication renders visible processes of norm formation and the evaluation of deviation.

The work is presented in various contexts and formats, including as an installation on a portable massage table or in combination with the slide show *Advances in Discreet Modifications*.

Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs
in Round Holes



„Square Pegs in Round Holes“

Lecture performance, exhibition view: *Appleton*, Lissabon, 2019

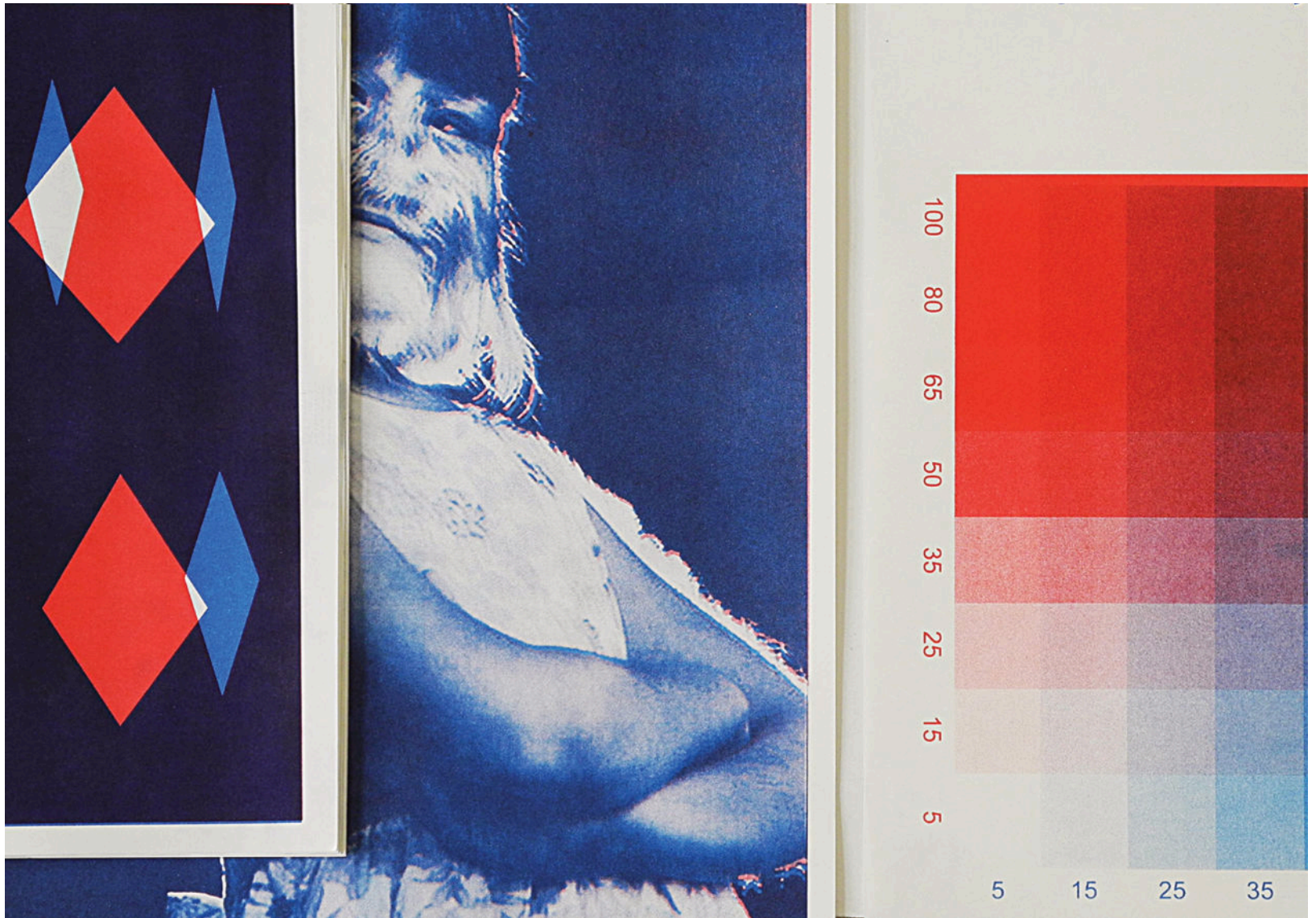
Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs in Round Holes



„Square Pegs in Round Holes“

Lecture Performances, Top: Exhibition *Strainer vs Filters*, *Alta*, Malmö;
Bottom: *Index* - *The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation*, Stockholm, 2018

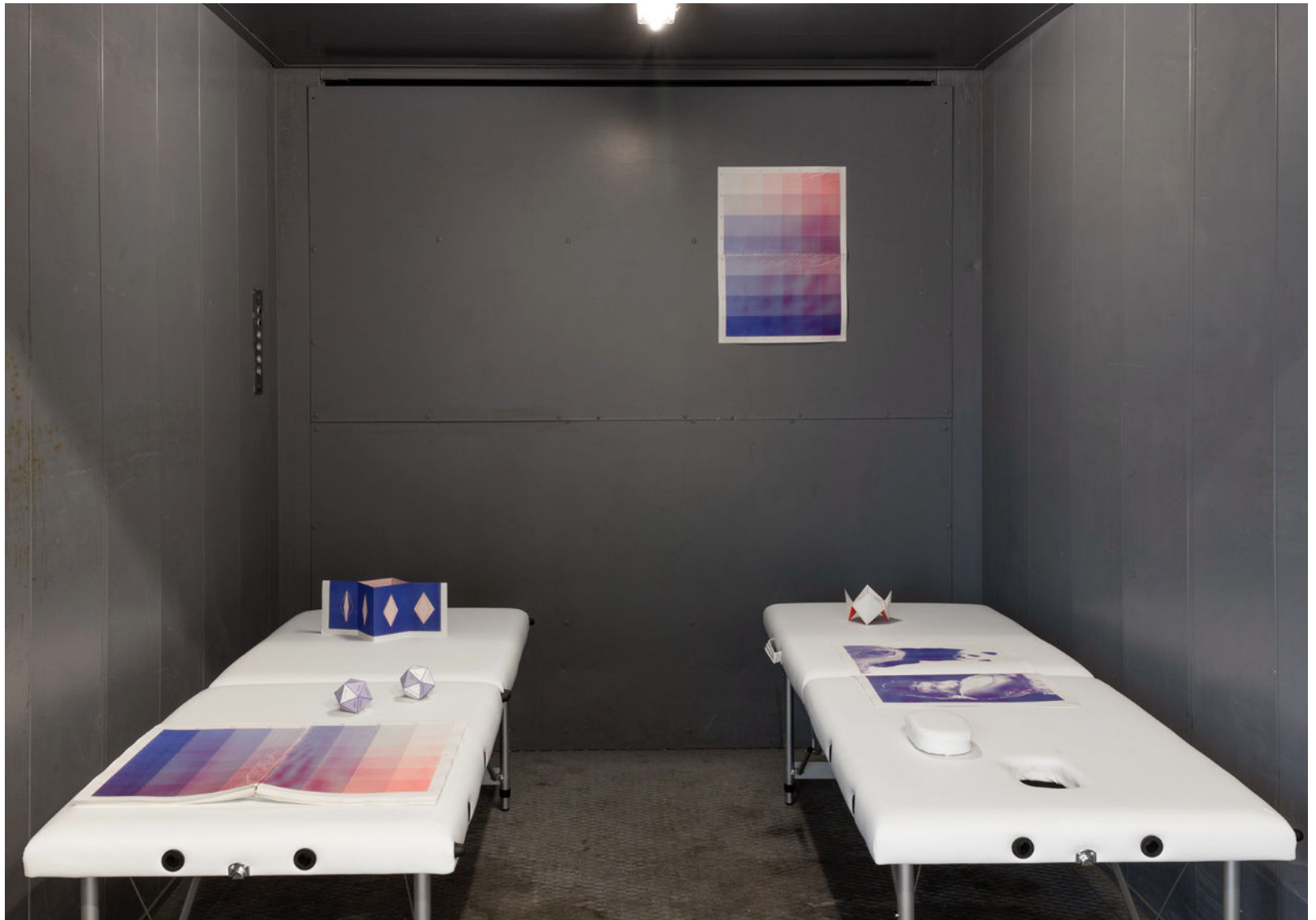
Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs
in Round Holes



„Square Pegs in Round Holes“

Magazine with posters and folding instructions, risograph prints, A3, Munken Pure White (130 gsm),
Centre for Artist Publications, Museum Weserburg

Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs
in Round Holes



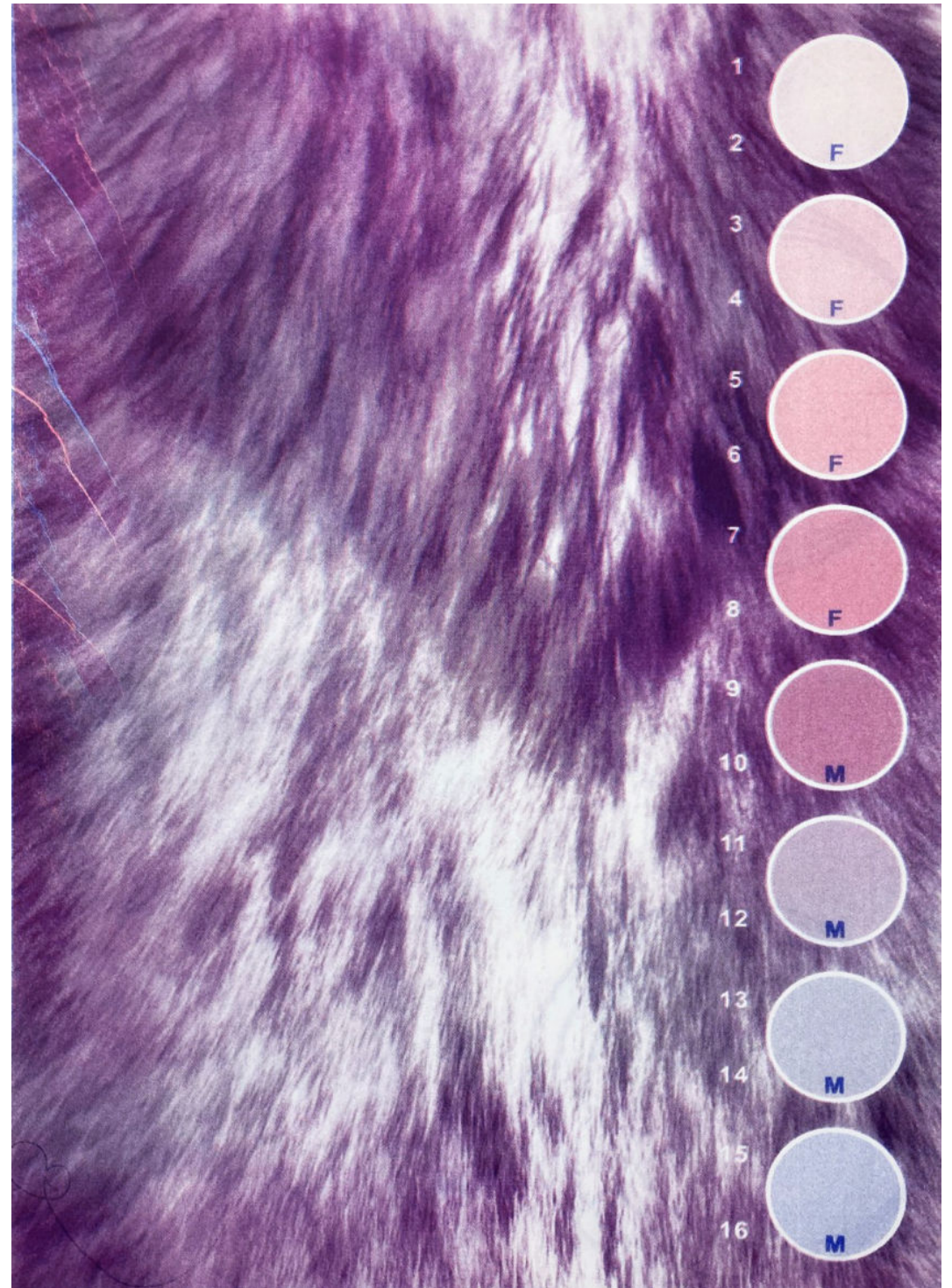
„Square Pegs in Round Holes“

Exhibition view, *Strainers vs Filters*, Alta, Malmö, 2017
Installation in freight elevator, 240 × 280 cm

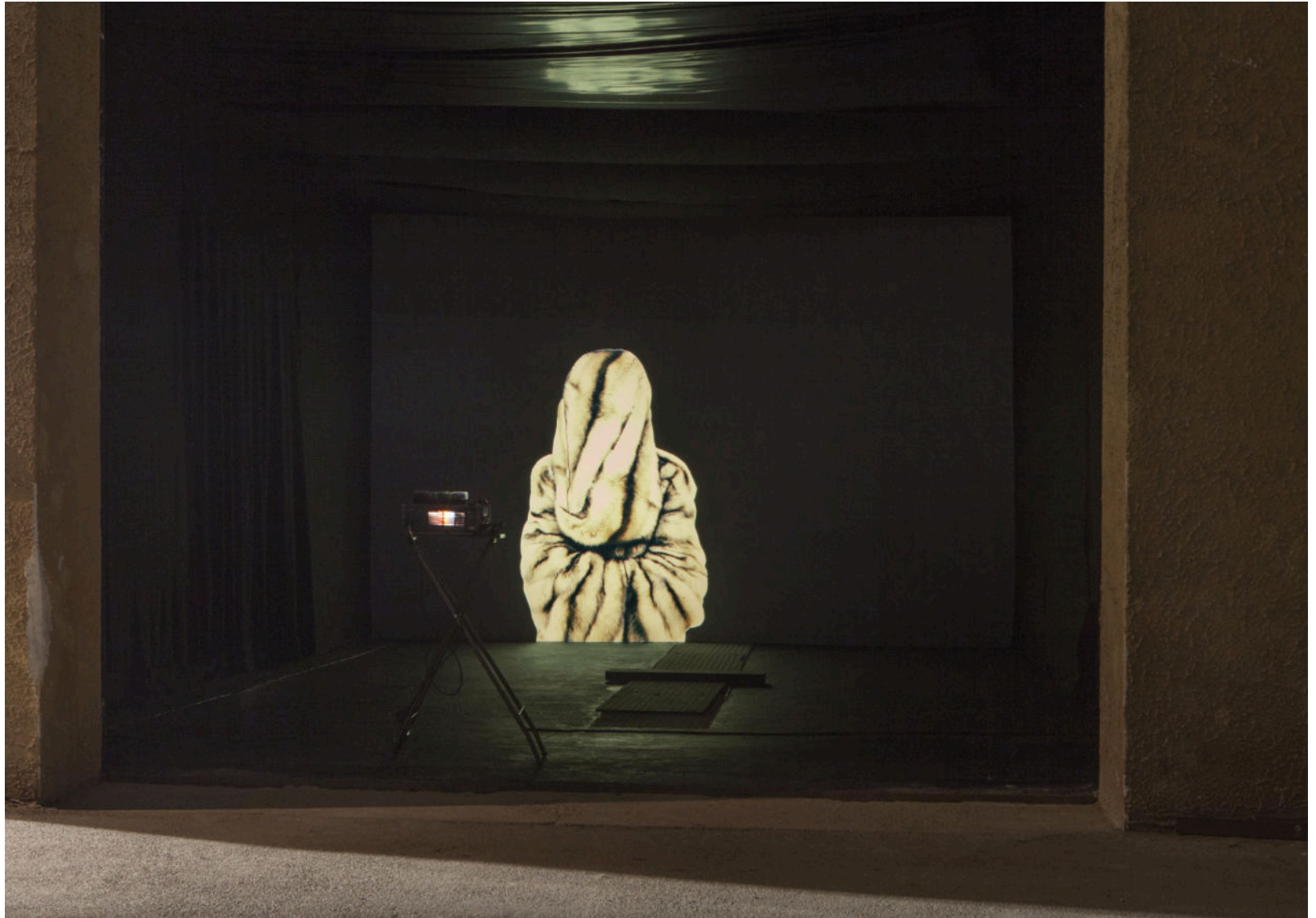
Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs in Round Holes

„Square Pegs in Round Holes“

Poster, A3,
Published as an insert in *Art Lab Gnesta* magazine, Sweden



Bernadette Wolbring
Square Pegs
in Round Holes



„Advances in Discreet Modifications“

34 slides, de-collage, Kodak carousel slide projector, created as a companion installation to *Square Pegs in Round Holes*, exhibition view: *Refine all Pores*, Wagenhallen Stuttgart

Nou- veau- min 20

In performative interventions in public space, the artistic research project *Nouveaumin 20* deliberately addresses passersby and negotiates medical practices as socially effective forms of normalization. By removing medical discourses from their institutional framework, they become experientially accessible as aesthetic, political, and social processes of negotiation.

The project takes the modification of bodies as its starting point and examines its individual as well as collective consequences. A series of performative actions employs orthopedic aids as props, turning them into visible signs of medical intervention and cultural attribution.

Nouveaumin 20 emerged from an artistic research process in collaboration with the choreographer Caroline Pyo Soon Byström (SE), and in dialogue with a behavioral endocrinologist, a psychologist, and a biologist. Through performance, dance, cyanotypes, and cut-up poetry based on scientific texts, the project investigates the effects of hormones in what has been

termed the “pharmacopornographic era.” At its core lies the question of how medical decisions are shaped by notions of gender, beauty, and normality. The term, coined by Paul B. Preciado, describes a present characterized by targeted hormonal regulation.

The project’s title refers to widely used third- and fourth-generation oral contraceptives whose popularity—despite known risks—can be attributed to their gender-normalizing effects.

Bernadette Wolbring
Nouveaumin 20



„Nouveaumin 20“

Interventions in public space,, Landtag Stuttgart;
Performer: Anne Marie Lux (Staatstheater Stuttgart)

Bernadette Wolbring
Nouveaumin 20



„Nouveaumin 20“

Interventions in public space, top: Porsche Museum, Stuttgart; bottom: Gerber Shopping Center; performers:
Anne Marie Lux, Jelena Kunz (both Stuttgart State Theatre), Caroline Pyo Soon Byström (Weld Company, Stockholm)

Peekaboo!

Curatorial projects

What position can artistic practice take within urban space shaped by gentrification and political instrumentalization?

The curatorial duo peekaboo! begins precisely at this point, understanding art as an active practice within the public, social, and political sphere.

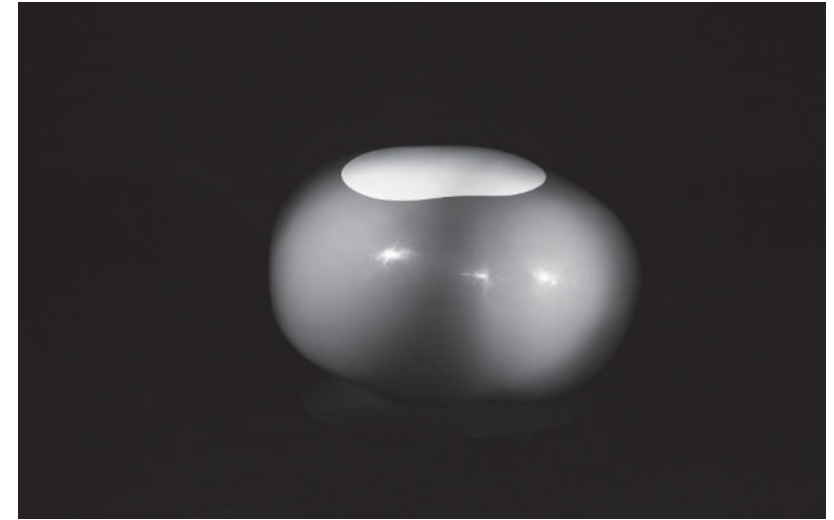
The project questions the role of artists between visibility, co-responsibility, and intervention, and investigates to what extent artistic formats can not only represent political processes but actively shape them. Between 2014 and 2017, peekaboo! realized four international group exhibitions in the context of the urban development project Stuttgart 21.

Curatorial strategies were developed in response to the acute process of gentrification and the respective stage of construction: for example, access was initially to be limited to five people at a time, but shortly before the opening the building authority prohibited entry entirely. In response, the artists developed site-specific works that could only be experienced from the outside. Mobile structures such as video booths and white cubes mounted on truck trailers made processes of exclusion and power structures spatially tangible.

After the fourth exhibition, the city approved funding to preserve the artists' site.

The artist-curator team peekaboo!—Lisa Biedlingmaier and Bernadette Wolbring—consistently expands its practice through curatorial formats. Through exhibitions, screenings, and publications, peekaboo! operates across diverse art and urban spaces. Through international collaborations, they have developed a practice that understands art as a public, site-sensitive, and networked intervention.

Bernadette Wolbring Curatorial Projects



About Glass Ceilings and Sticky Floors

Top, left: Vanessa Billy,

right: Johanna Gustafsson Fürst

Exhibition view, 2014

Kunstverein Wagenhallen Stuttgart,

Co-operation with *Württemberg-*

ischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

Foundation for Freckles

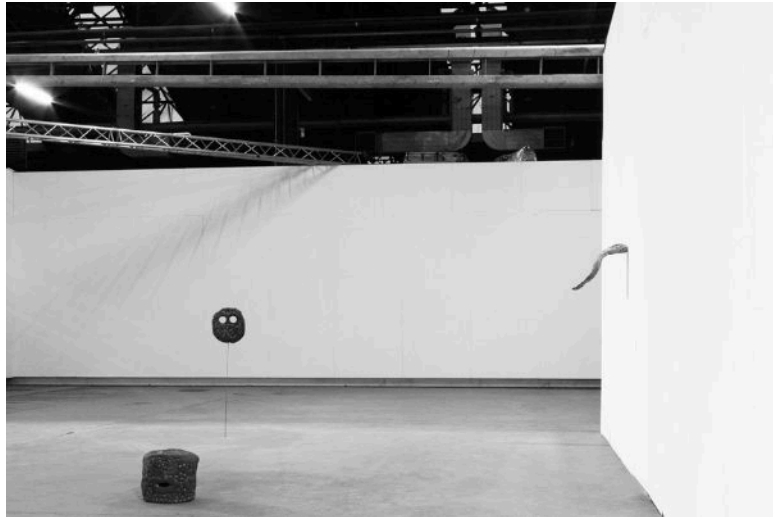
Bottom, left: Pauline Boudry &

Renate Lorenz, right: Ulricke Buck

Exhibition view, 2015,

Taut, Stuttgart

Bernadette Wolbring Curatorial Projects



Present Progressive

Top, left: Lisa Biedlingmaier,
right: Ulrika Jäger
Exhibition view, 2017,
Corner College, Zurich

Refine all Pores

Bottom, left: Linda Semadini,
right: Lisa Trogen Devgun
Exhibition view, 2016
Kunstverein Wagenhallen Stuttgart

Bernadette Wolbring Selected Texts

Grrrt - grrrt Hanne Loreck

Bernadette Wolbring constructs steles from the kidney-shaped ceramic bowls of the 1950s combined with found objects from the realm of interior design and household goods. Three such sculptures, arranged on a carpet, form CREEEAAAACK!, 2025. Clay is fragile, a striking contrast to materials such as formica, which was promoted at the time as an “absolutely hygienic” and age-resistant surface for the popular kidney tables. Bowls without axes of symmetry, but rather “bulged, pressed, compressed, slanted” (Christian Borngräber), departed from traditional habits of use and moved closer to small-scale sculpture. Art during the Nazi era had been ideologically gleichgeschaltet (forced into line) while non-figurative approaches had been denounced as degenerate. After 1945, the formal vocabulary of flowing lines and curves seemed to offer a means of leaving behind the “geometric violence” of the camps. No backward glance was to slow down the dynamism of these parabolic designs. Yet the aesthetic-symbolic departure was by no means valued by the entire population of the young Federal Republic of Germany. According to an Allensbach survey from 1957, the state of design affairs between new beginnings and continuity, between “kidney table and Schrippendale”, showed that only two per cent of the consumers actually appreciated the former rather than the latter (‘Schrippe’ is a regional term for bread roll). Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the kidney shape prevailed as a

hallmark of the German postwar style — and characterizes, as a symbol and perhaps even as a symptom of the new beginning, its un-home-ly formatting.

Bowls are meant to hold or contain. Wolbring tilts them vertically. Now resembling heads, they gaze back at us, while also revealing the technical nature of their mounting and their combination with other utilitarian objects — their “insides”. The fusion of war and post-war becomes even more apparent in the wall-mounted Shapeshifters, 2025, a combination of bowls and potato mashers. Once crafted from scraps of military equipment out of sheer necessity, to serve no purpose other than to function in the home, some of these objects can still be found today. Have they been kept for their sentimental value or because these unique objects are still telling (a) history?

Wolbring sees the polyvalence of history in everyday life and in the design of its objects. If the “beautiful workplace” known as the home was deemed the only legitimate sphere for women under National Socialism — with the exception of female concentration camp guards, whose “unfeminine” function was swiftly suppressed — then the house-wife remained the social ideal even after 1945, closely tied to the (re)design of the home. In black, BW’s statuettes spell out a retrospective of this era and its vision in a contemporary alphabet of figures.

Interview Sebastian Dahlqvist

During the spring of 2017 you have had a residency at Art Lab to work with our Risograph. Unlike normal printers the Risograph is something in-between a printer and photo-copier. Not quite automatic, not quite manual. Since it was first released in Japan in the late 80's, a lot of artists, graphic designers and authors has shown a great interest in working with the Risograph. Why do you think that is the case and how come you are interested in working with this way of printing?

- I guess this is because even though it is a mass-medium it has a very handmade feel to it. Recently it has become more popular among artists and graphic designers because it uses soy ink and therefore it is more friendly to the environment. I'm using it mainly because every copy produced is unique, which fits my topic very well. After all, my project is about gender binaries and this is mirrored by the printing process: the risograph prints with only one color at a time. So I decided to work with two colors, mixing them by layering them on top of each other. Men and women have the same set of sexual hormones, they only differ in quantity, so for me the medium is perfect when exploring these questions. I also chose the risograph because it is cheaper to use than other printing techniques. I wanted to reach a broad audience by producing give-away posters.

In the project you are working on during your residency at Art Lab Gnesta you are

among other things exploring notions of hormonal control in relation to knowledge, power and norms. In society we seldom talk about the control of hormones that contraceptives involves. Why is that and in what way does hormonal control relate to power and norms?

- From Michel Foucault we know that there is something that is called the *medical gaze*. As a doctor, you have all these different notions in the back of your head which affect you when you make diagnoses or prescribe medicine. I think this is very apparent when it comes to the use of hormones or contraceptives. As a matter of fact, the EMA (European Medical Agency) advice against prescribing 3rd and 4th generation contraceptives, as they contain anti-androgens and women on these pills have a much higher risk of developing deep vein thrombosis. Still they are prescribed for reasons related to beauty norms: to make females more female. I was quite surprised when I found out that these contraceptives contain the same kind of anti-androgens that are used when doing a gender confirming transition from male to female.

In what way did you find this connection interesting?

Firstly because one would believe that contraceptives should and would biomedically, only prevent pregnancy. Not altering the "female body" in accordance to a notion of femaleness. I'm interested in the shades in between. There can be much bigger differences between men

Bernadette Wolbring Selected Texts

Interview Sebastian Dahlqvist

can be much bigger differences between men and men or women and women in relation to hormones than between men and women. Gender binaries have existed for a very long time but I get the feeling that the body you are born with needs more and more alteration in order to fit in some category.

To take a probably well used example: every woman has hair on her body and the fact that this is something you need to alter in order to fit into the category of woman is quite disturbing.

Do you think the growing amount of biomedical research also opens up for a greater fluidity in relation to gender?

Yes, of course, I'm very surprised that it is, legally, still as restricted as it. People like the author Paul B Preciado (before Beatriz Preciado) use testosterone illegally because in order to get access to it legally you have to "go the whole way". I think this development or change is really slow since the market is not yet interested in investing in research related to female bodies or further enabling gender fluidity.

For the first time in the history of Fält we have included a poster. It's a poster you have made during your residency, can you tell me about the process behind it?

I came to think of something I grew up with in Germany: "Medi Zini" posters. In pharmacies children get these free posters that have a cute animal on the front and educational material

related to medicine on the back. I really like this pedagogical format and it's way of spreading knowledge. All of my posters reflect my interest in abstraction. I mimic ways in which abstraction is used in the field of medicine: to persuade or convince the viewer/reader that *this is the truth*. Abstraction as a tool can make information look scientific or objective. I relate to the field of *Queer Abstraction*, which I came across via the reader "Pink Labour on Golden Streets", published by Sternberg Press. The term *Queer Abstraction* was coined by J. Jack Halberstam. People tend to have this idea that abstraction would only relate to formal issues but I feel that for my generation it is a medium or practice that opens up for more open and fluid readings, for example making it possible to escape gender binaries.

It seems you are very interested in educating your viewer/reader in relation to the subject. How come you are interested in education and why do you use this format?

I think for once I'm a trained educator working partly in schools and universities, so the interest in education is a part of that. I'm deeply interested in exploring different formats for sharing and gaining knowledge. I think also I came to use graphic design for this project since it is a medium often used for educational purposes. And also, of course, I want to change the world (laughing). Knowledge is one way to do so.

In: *FÄLT*, Issue #17; Ed.: Art Lab Gnesta.

Bernadette Wolbring Selected Texts

Veronika Rudorfer Political Potentials of Abstraction

Bernadette Wolbring's artistic practice begins with the searching process: the artist uses existing pictures, so that her own production is always preceded by their reception. The results from such Google-image searches as "norms", "testosterone" or simply "cute animals" are the starting-point for the analysis of binary systems, analogous or antonymous relationships of objects and the generation of both biological and social norms.

In her publication *Square Pegs, Round Holes* (2015–2017) Wolbring addresses the occasionally constructed dualities sometimes caused by the chosen medium of reproduction: the posters collected here are risographs using only red and blue as colors. Each sheet is unique due to the variations in color values. As cultural codings of socially constructed gender norms, the two colors are combined with the contents of the posters: whether they are schematic medical representations of increased body hair (hirsutism) as a symptom of a "too" high testosterone level in women, pictures of female hyenas that exceed the males in weight and size due to hormonal conditions, or the juxtaposition of a panda with a bearded woman. Its confrontation of images contains an aggressive element, since possible associations seem to be practically forced on the viewers by consciously limiting the options for reception, the artist exposes the way normative mechanisms function. On another sheet there are instructions for folding it which change the poster into a "ctitious measuring instrument. The coloration of the resulting object reminds

one of a body, with its interior and exterior. Wolbring demonstrates how objectivity can be suggested by a process of abstraction and in the posters she questions the construction sometimes supported by hormonal preparations of only two possible biological and, consequently, social genders.

The symbiotic coupling of the two works *abc* and *Oh, Carl! I* (2016–2017) also functions as a duality: the floor installation *Oh, Carl! I* refers explicitly in form to the minimalist structures of Carl Andre, but also gives them a political charge: in Wolbring's case the distribution of the tiles on the concrete floor corresponds to a visualization of the percentage 22.4. A figure that constantly recurs in relation to the proportion of women in leadership positions and salary differences. The cameraless film *abc* shows the movement of red and white points against an orange background. In her film Wolbring abstracts a YouTube video, that shows a systematic group rape at Tahrir Square in Cairo from the birdseye viewpoint. The two autonomous works are connected by the projection being reflected in the shiny black tiles. The cue marks used in the film correspond with the white tile crosses on the floor, which mark gaps in the arrangement. The round cushions, which are a part of the floor installation, turn the viewers themselves into circles in combination with the content of the film *abc*, and in accordance with Wolbring's abstraction processes they thus become protagonists and through this participative act address the

Bernadette Wolbring

Selected Texts

dichotomy of perpetrator and victim or helper. Abstraction, as a means for presenting complex matters in medicine in simplified ways, is examined in the series *Advances in Discreet Modifications II* (2016–2017), whose starting point is the game called *Set!*, a card game, developed by the geneticist Marsha J. Falco, was a by-product of her research into epilepsy in German Shepards. In each case there are three forms, colors and &llings, which stand for various genetic features of the dogs. Each time Wolbring sets three cards against a collage showing a faceless configuration of fur. The association with the abstract forms on the playing cards generates an apparent scientific quality in the

arrangements. In accordance with practices of Dada and Surrealism, the artist lets something new result from reduction and the act of cutting away, thus re-contextualizing her original material.

Bernadette Wolbring, who also works as a curator in the duo *peekaboo!*, creates new contexts by appropriating, rearranging and restructuring existing pictures, and thus questions existing (gender) norms by cleverly taking the constructed duality of male and female, embodying it in her work and finally revealing it as a normative force.

in: *EIKON, International Magazine for Photography and Media Art*, #97.

Veronika Rudorfer

Political Potentials of Abstraction