

Press Info for the Exhibition

## **LIFE'S FINEST VALUES**

April 16 – May 30, 2015

KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE | WUK, Vienna

Participating artists:

Lisa Schmidt-Colinet & Alexander Schmoeger & Florian Zeyfang, Libia Castro & Ólafur Ólafsson, cylixe, Jan Peter Hammer, Annika Eriksson, Brigitta Kuster & Gülây Akin & Angelika Levi, Ina Wudtke, Iratxe Jaio & Klaas van Gorkum, Oliver Ressler, Ines Schaber & Mathias Heyden, Vermeir & Heiremans

Curated by Ina Wudtke and Florian Wüst

April 15, 2015, 7:00 pm: Opening

April 17, 2015, 4:00 pm: *Life, Labor, Looking*. Lecture by Dieter Lesage (in English).

May 29, 2015, 7:00 pm: *Handel mit der Zukunft*. Screening and artists' talk with Arne Hector & Minze Tummescheit and Vermeir & Heiremans, moderated by Florian Wüst (in English).

KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE

WUK Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus

Währinger Straße 59, 1090 Vienna, Austria

[www.kunsthalleexnergasse.wuk.at](http://www.kunsthalleexnergasse.wuk.at)

T + 43 (0) 14012141/-42, F -67

(limited accessibility)

Opening hours:

April 16 – May 30, 2015, Tuesday to Friday 1:00 – 6:00 pm, Saturday 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

Press photo:

Vermeir & Heiremans, "The Good Life (a guided tour)", 2009

Photo: Michael De Lausnay

## **LIFE'S FINEST VALUES**

The exhibition LIFE'S FINEST VALUES presents video works by 21 artists, filmmakers, and architects. The exhibition investigates the interrelations between the realms of housing, art, and capital in different urban contexts around the world: from Berlin to Caracas, from Havana to Hong Kong, from Brussels to Tbilisi. The title of the exhibition was a slogan used by a real estate company in Berlin to market luxury apartments. The values that this slogan bespeaks have been reappropriated by the participants in their works. The video works share a focus on text, dialogue, and interview formats as a means of political analysis and knowledge production. Many projects deconstruct neoliberal language and ideology, which often consciously extract loaded words like "freedom", "values", and "life" from their historical contexts and equate them with the "freedom of the market" and "monetary value", thus promoting a concept of "life" solely as a "market-oriented project".

LIFE'S FINEST VALUES explores different living forms in metropolises and their social, political, and architectural contexts. While researching existing forms, the exhibition also envisions potential new models of living.

The video "Microbrigadas – Variationen einer Geschichte" by Lisa Schmidt-Colinet, Alexander Schmoeger, and Florian Zeyfang examines collective housing in Cuba. Housing was one of the main pillars of the Cuban Revolution. In light of the ongoing housing shortage,

self-help building groups, the “Microbrigadas”, came into being in 1971 – also with the involvement of artists – and still exist to this day.

In their video “Where If Not Us? Participatory Design and Its Radical Approaches” Ines Schaber and Mathias Heyden interview 20 protagonists of so-called “Community Design”, a US American movement dedicated to grassroots, economically fair, and ecologically sustainable planning and building since the 1960s. They discuss, in particular, the different notions of “radicality” in the respective philosophies and fields of actions as well as the corresponding theoretical and practical derivations – a call to continuously reimagine and revise participative design.

With the expansion of the city limits of the Basque capital Vitoria-Gasteiz, the video “From here to there” by Iratxe Jaio and Klaas van Gorkum investigates the different life and living concepts of a group of young people and juxtaposes them with the perspectives of the politicians and architects onto the city.

For some time now, artists have been characterised in the public eye as pioneers for gentrification. But it is usually ignored that the majority of the artists are themselves victims of gentrification in global metropolises and take a position against displacement in their work. Brigitta Kuster, Gülây Akin, and Angelika Levi capture how renters in Berlin-Kreuzberg solidarise in the fight against displacement under the banner “Kotti & Co”. Their video “Tamam Görüşürüz - o.k. Wir sehen uns” places a special focus on the connection between racism and urban displacement.

Ina Wudtke’s video “Swing Lesson” makes reference to the video “Funk Lessons” by Adrian Piper. For “Swing Lesson” Wudtke invited the Belgian dancer Sophie Monheim to develop a Lindy Hop choreography for her electronic swing song “The Fine Art of Living” by translating the text of her anti-gentrification song into body movements and performing it in public. A black dance becomes a medium for collective action against gentrification.

Annika Eriksson’s video “I am the dog that was always here” illustrates how not only people but also animals are victims of displacement by real estate speculation. Since 2013 the city government has had innercity street dogs and cats, which were always a part of Istanbul’s cityscape, caught and released on the periphery.

Capital that increases is always speculative. The higher the risk, the greater the profit. The more risky the investment, the higher its price. In “The Anarchist Banker” Jan Peter Hammer stages an egocentric banker in a TV interview. In his video “The Plundering”, which concentrates on the city of Tbilisi in Georgia, Oliver Ressler comments the growing privatisation of public property and real estate. In “Lobbyists” Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson document lobbyism in and around the EU Parliament in Brussels. cylixe shows how an unfinished financial centre in Caracas became the highest squatted house of the world in “Una Ciudad En Una Ciudad”.

To what extent is art integrated into the mechanisms of capital? How is it employed in the urban planning and economic upgrading of certain places? The Belgian artist duo Vermeir & Heiremans explore these questions in their two videos “The Good Life (a guided tour)” and “The Residence (a wager for the afterlife)”.

### **May 29, 2015, 7:00 pm: *Handel mit der Zukunft***

screening, and artists’ talk with Arne Hector & Minze Tummescheit and Vermeir & Heiremans, introduced and moderated by Florian Wüst (in German).

“Futures” are standardised contracts in which the purchase or sale of a good on a date in the future is already set today at an agreed upon price. Arne Hector and Minze Tummescheit’s video “Fictions and Futures #1 – Happiness in the Abstract” (2013) departs from the idea that the future does not belong to us, it has already been colonised. Bets on future grain prices and intellectual property rights on seeds stipulate today what must be paid tomorrow. “Fictions and Futures #1” thematises the connection between futures markets, increasing food prices, and the progressive capitalisation of agriculture. In their new film “Masquerade” (2015) Vermeir & Heiremans examine the relationship between art and capital. A financial market instrument they created, the Art House Index, which stages their own apartment in

Brussels, a loft in Schaarbeek, as a tradable artwork, is the departure point for critical reflection upon speculation and value added, representation codes and marketing in the contemporary art world and beyond. The screenings of the two videos are embedded in an artists' talk moderated by Florian Wüst.

### **CVs of the Participating Artists, Lecturers and Curators**

Together with the Berlin-based artist **Florian Zeyfang** (\*1965) the Viennese architects **Lisa Schmidt-Colinet** (\*1975) and **Alexander Schmoeger** (\*1971) conceive and realise exhibition projects, including "This is my house" in the MAK Schindler House Los Angeles (2000) and "Pabellon Cuba" at the 8th Havana Biennale (2008). Their video "Microbrigadas – Variationen einer Geschichte" premiered in the Forum Expanded section of the 2013 Berlinale and has been screened at international festivals.

**Libia Castro** (\*1969) & **Ólafur Ólafsson** (\*1973) are a Spanish-Icelandic artist duo who have been working together since 1996. Solo exhibitions: *Libia Castro & Ólafur Ólafsson*, Tent, Rotterdam (2014); *Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson*, CAAC Sevilla, Seville (2012); *Under deconstruction*, The National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik (2011); *Under deconstruction*, Icelandic Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale (2011), amongst others.

The Spanish artist **Iratxe Jaio** (\*1976) and the Dutch artist **Klaas van Gorkum** (\*1975) live and work in Rotterdam. Since 2001 they have been collaborating on performances, videos, publications, and installations, in which they investigate the relationship between public and private urban spaces. Solo exhibitions: *The margins of the factory*, ADN Platform, Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona (2014); *Réinventer le monde (autour de l'usine)* FRAC-Aquitaine, Bordeaux (2013); *Amikejo*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (2011), amongst others.

**Oliver Ressler** (\*1970) produces thematic exhibition projects, works in public space, and videos on the topics of capitalism, forms of resistance, societal alternatives, racism, and global warming. Ressler lives in Vienna. Solo exhibitions: nbk, Berlin (2015); Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz (2014); *The Movement of Ideas*, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2013); *After the Crisis is before the Crisis*, Basis, Frankfurt am Main and Artra Galleria, Milan (2012), amongst others.

**Vermeir & Heiremans** live and work in Brussels. In 2006 they founded A.I.R. ("Artist in Residence"), a long-term collaborative project that addresses the dynamic relationships between art, architecture, and economy. Exhibitions: *A Glass Darkly*, Stroom, The Hague (2014); Rotwand Gallery, Zürich (2014); 13th Istanbul Biennial (2013); ARGOS, Brussels; EXTRA CITY, Antwerp; 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale; Manifesta 9, Limburg (all 2012); Videonale 13, Bonn (2011), amongst others.

**cylixe** (\*1985) is Berlin-based filmmaker and video artist. Her video works oscillate between documentary and essay films, experiment and narrative. Screenings 2014: Cinema Human Rights Nights, Bologna; Shortwaves, Poznan; International Short Film Experience, Leiden; Festival international du film d'environnement, Paris, amongst others.

In his video works **Jan Peter Hammer** (\*1970) focuses on the narrative structure; real events often overlap with fictional stories. Exhibitions: *Tilikum*, Supportico Lopez, Berlin (2015); Film programme Art Basel (2014); *Relaunch*, Kunst-Werke Berlin, Berlin (2013); *Without Reality There Is No Utopia*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA (2013); *Bergen Assembly*, Bergen (2013), amongst others.

**Arne Hector** (\*1970) & **Minze Tummescheit** (\*1967) have been working together on joint film projects under the name cinéma copains since 2004. Exhibitions: Berlinale/Forum

Expanded, Berlin (2014); *Bergen Assembly*, Bergen (2013); *La Normalidad. Projekt Ex Argentina*, Palais de Glace, Buenos Aires (2006), amongst others.

**Dieter Lesage** (\*1966) is a Belgian philosopher, writer and critic and the director of RITS | School of Arts in Brussels. His latest publication is *Art, Research and Politics. Essays in Curatorial Criticism (1999-2014)*, Brussels, (SIC) Livre VI, 2014. Dieter Lesage lives in Berlin.

**Annika Eriksson** (\*1956) is a Swedish artist living in Berlin. She is a professor at the Bergen Academy of Art and Design. Solo exhibitions: *NOW YOU SEE US NOW YOU DON'T*, Krome Gallery, Berlin (2014); *I am the dog that was always here*, KIOSK, Ghent (2013); 13th Istanbul Biennial (2013); *When Attitudes Becomes Form Become Attitudes*, CCA Wattis, San Francisco and Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2012), amongst others.

The artist and author **Brigitta Kuster** (\*1970), the art therapist and author **Gülây Akin** (\*1978), and the filmmaker **Angelika Levi** (\*1961) work together on a range of different video projects. Exhibition: *Global Prayers, Redemption and Liberation in the City*, Gecekondu of Kotti & Co, Berlin (2013). Angelika Levi coproduced, e.g., the film "Miete Essen Seele Auf" (2015) featured on Arte.

**Ines Schaber** (\*1969) is an artist, photographer, and author and currently teaches photography and media at California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles. In 2012 she participated in dOCUMENTA (13). **Mathias Heyden** (\*1965) is an architect, urban development policy activist, and organiser and an assistant professor in the Urban Design and Urbanization department at the TU Berlin. Since their engagement in the 1990s in the East Berlin squatters movement they work together time and again on projects in Berlin and nationally and internationally as well.

**Ina Wudtke** (\*1968) lives in Berlin. Her work questions hegemonial political and social discourse and tries to strengthen – or even redefine – subaltern counter-discourse on the topics of gender, identity, work, sound, city and housing. She has curated numerous thematic exhibitions at Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna; Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin; Beursschouwburg, Brussels, and other places.

**Florian Wüst** (\*1970) lives in Berlin. As an artist and film curator he investigates the history of social, economic, and technical progress in the modern age. Film series he curated have been screened at, amongst others: Kino Arsenal, Berlin; International Short Film Festival Oberhausen; TIFF Bell Lightbox, Toronto; Tate Modern, London; and the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna.

**For more information an high resolution photos please contact:**

**Ina Wudtke**

**Mobil: +49(0)1734383194**

**Email: ina@thing.org**