

Franziska Harnisch visited by Stephanie Imbeau

COASTAL thecoastalpost.com/studio-visits-posts/2023/7/13/franziska-harnisch-visited-by-stephanie-imbeau

July 13, 2023

I met Franziska in person after we had worked together once (or twice depending on how you count it), after I had walked onto a barge on the Spree [River in Berlin] to see an exhibition she was in, and walked off with a duvet printed with a photo of my face. This will make sense by the end of the interview, I promise.

I'm quite sure that I have never had anything remotely close to the levels of variety and fun with someone I had only known digitally before than with Franziska. And so of course, by the time we met in person, we were already certain to be friends. And we are. And we have worked together post-real-life-meeting. Because she is always sharing opportunities with her peers, committed to engagement with the world within, and very much outside of, the myriad studio walls of Berlin.

One of the things I value most about Franziska is how calmly and humanely she manages to balance her very busy life. She manages to continue to make her own art while also consistently enabling the showcasing of others. And she does it all kindly, with a kick of humor.

I visited her in her studio where we talked about categorization, making space, and her practice that thrives on possibilities and process.



Your work fights direct categorization, but has a leaning towards satire, and a connection to new media. How do you see it and what do you find pulls you towards the creation of whatever is next?

For my artistic work I use methods of artistic research and explore possibilities for the combination of participative, interactive art with performative gestures and new media. In many of my works transference patterns, the notion of authorship and a certain uncontrollable development of action are of importance. Thereby I play with an extended performance concept and move between the mixing of digital, virtual and analog space. The sequence of terms "coding, interaction, experiment" describes my way of working quite aptly. I often work with open calls, a curatorial strategy, and define the framework for participatory interactions. I believe that artistic work depends on processuality and interacting in one or more or several specific, not exclusively 'art-related' public(s) that are not exclusively 'close to art', and can only develop through this. Art does not take place in the white cube.

The themes I deal with repeat themselves or are interdependent - even over years: My work can therefore not be seen chronologically, but relatively in the sense of referential: Many works have references to earlier ones, e.g. topics such as smart phones, digital wayfinding, open calls/calls for action or the disclosure of private data repeat themselves. The game, which can be found as a pictorial element - you describe it as satire - in almost all my works, is for me the natural approach to life: There are fixed and interpretable rules, within or beyond them certain freedoms, and success as well as failure, desire as well as despair in finding one's way within these (self-)set frameworks in order to overcome them. The playful approach enables me to sound out exactly this framework for myself, while leaving it halfway open for the viewers or participants of my works to explore it themselves. The ideas for my works always emerge as a fairly precise picture of how they are to look, to be realized. I make them in order to understand something, to grasp it - what is "there" (whether virtual or analog) can be dealt with, talked about, interacted with.



Can you walk me through your development of your open-ended catalog, which reflects your way of working very nicely?

I had been thinking for a while that it would be quite nice to have a catalog of several of my works, instead of "only" catalog participations, in which max. 1-2 works are represented. But the prescribed order narrative and "completed" nature of a bound catalog book did not work for me. How I was able to implement the processuality and participativity of my works in the end, I owe to my sketchbook. I have been keeping a

handy ring binder for years, which allows me to unfold and re-file and thus create new contexts and hierarchies as well as collect material. So I used this format when developing my version of a catalog.

Through the app artivive and references via QR codes, I was also able to expand the catalog around the sheer paper page and immobility of the photo images with videos and virtual works. "Arbeiten 2010 - " has been published as an edition and contains all the works that had already been created "up to the editorial deadline". All new works can be found as prepared publication pages on my website to print out yourself in the near future.



please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon” 2021. Photo Credit: Franziska Harnisch

Can you talk about the development of your project “please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon?”

In 2020 I was asked by Arthur Patching if I would contribute a work for the group exhibition EMBARK on a hostel boat near Warschauer Straße in Berlin. It was Corona peak and the boat could not accommodate guests. After a walk-through of the cabins, I knew pretty quickly what I wanted to do: Against the backdrop of the new mundanity of video meetings, contact restrictions, and all the restrictions that also greatly affected culture, I put out an open call on social media, classifieds, and by mail, touting the upcoming exhibition and encouraging people to send me a selfie should there be interest in seeing the exhibition -particularly my work. The booth doors had porthole windows, and the booth where my work was on view could only be entered if you presented a voucher with your name and photo. Otherwise, you had to settle for a limited view through the porthole.

I had the selfies printed on everyday items such as a shampoo, playing cards, flip flops, towels, a beer can, bedding, a wall clock, a mask, etc. and draped them in the hostel booth. I covered the window of the cabin with a film that was mirrored on one side, through which you could only see from the inside to the outside, and which the Zoom meeting lettering "Please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon." adorned the outside, facing the walkway. Visitors entering individually were told by the supervisor, who unlocked the room for them, that they were allowed to take the object their photo was printed on with them when leaving the room.

So, readers, that's why I have a duvet with my face! Franziska had curated me into something unrelated a few months prior, and during our back-and-forth logistics emails, she sent me her call for selfies as entrance fee. I needed no follow up information. And was completely surprised and delighted with the result.



Studio Supplies

You have worked for a very long time for a very famous artist in a very big studio. Do you feel that your own practice has been influenced or affected by this?

My first reaction to this question was honestly to say no immediately and leave it at that - but that would not be entirely true. Everything we do, situations we are in, what we interact with, influences us in a certain way - even if it is subconsciously. I can clearly deny that my artistic work has anything even remotely to do with the artistic work of the artist for whom I do workshop work - and that's fine, because if it were otherwise, it would keep me busy outside my on-site working hours and take away time and leisure for my own artistic work.

Nevertheless, I enjoy working there and I have also learned a lot, both in terms of craftsmanship and humanity. The work enables me to carry out my own artistic work in a very flexible way and to remain as independent and freelancing as possible as an artist in terms of time and finances.



Studio detail

What is your history with the Alte Münze?

Alte Münze is the historic State Mint of Berlin, built in the 1930s. It is now a cultural center, studio building, and event space.

In 2015 I moved back to Berlin after being away for 2 years to study and was urgently looking for a studio. My flatmate at the time and I started to look for empty shops to use for studios. We wanted to form a studio community and got to know a few others who joined us in our search, but no landlord was willing to have us as tenants. One of our search partners, Julia Benz, was lucky in the meantime and got a studio in the new emerging interim usage at Alte Münze and she put in a good word for me. Since then I have had my studio there and, after my project space, Vitrine01, was torn down I was kindly offered to start a new one there. At some point the old gatehouse was free and so I started raum on demand three years ago. I really appreciate having been able to work at Alte Münze for so long now – in my view it's one of the last places in Mitte that is not yet gentrified and curated to death by the Berlin senate.



raum on demand featuring the march 2021 exhibition series “mkv x raum on demand - INTERLOCK: UPRIGHT BODY,” Curated and with works by Yvon Chabrowski, Aron Lesnik, Ivonne Thein. Photo credit: Franziska Harnisch

Describe raum on demand for us. How do you find that running this project space influences your studio practice? What are your favorite parts of the space? What are the challenges?

As Berliner and artist, raum on demand is a matter of the heart for me: Due to its location in the middle of the Alte Münze and thus in the middle of Berlin, and the concept that I have "helped" to care for it, the raum forms, in my eyes, a kind of bastion against the building, rental, and cultural policies of the city of Berlin, which for years has been organizing, smoothing out, and pushing almost all self-created, alternative places of culture and encounter further and further out of the center of Berlin. Affordable work spaces have become scarce, and it is not uncommon for exhibition venues and residencies to take money instead of paying artists. In addition, many Berlin artists rarely have the pleasure of being able to exhibit in Berlin, since many exhibition venues, also due to the funding conditions, the mass of applications and of course the mutual coolness factors of 'Berlin - international artists' are oriented outward instead of inward. Artists generally don't have it so easy in everyday life, so I think it's good to be able to offer them a fairly unconditional and free opportunity to work and exhibit with the help of the Alte Münze in the raum on demand.

The most obvious connection with my artistic practice is probably that with the raum on demand I provide a very variable framework for action, which can and will be used in many different ways - quite open-ended. I appreciate the great variance of different people and ways of working with which I come into contact and which, despite the special nature and small size of the raum, allow it to emerge again and again in a completely new way.

The high frequency of turnover inherent in the format of a monthly change is certainly challenging, since I am quasi the only person behind the raum on demand and look after mails, applications, Instagram and of course want to be equally responsive to and available for each artist.



Franziska modelling "Karaoke for Artists"

What are you working on now?

New works, applications and grant proposals for already existing works, the preparation of my course, living as an artist, at the art university HBK Braunschweig and helping to organize the artspring festival as well as some exhibitions coming up this year and next year and together with great web designers finally working on the new realization of my website. :)



Karaoke for Artists”, exhibition view as part of ‘turn, turn, turn’, Kunstraum Kreuzberg, 2022. Photo by Franziska Harnisch

What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

Definitely peppermint with chocolate sprinkles!



an excellent surprise

For more information:

[@franziska.harnisch](https://www.instagram.com/franziska.harnisch)

www.franziskaharnisch.de

Tags: [Franziska Harnisch](#), [Stephanie Imbeau](#), [Berlin](#)

1 Likes

Share