

GRAUE PASSION

MICHAEL VOLKMER



MAY 7 - JUNE, 25 2015

SF: The title of your solo exhibition here at DAS ESSZIMMER – Graue Passion (Eng.: Grey Passion) – is omnipresent, since you have coated all the objects in both exhibition spaces with the same grey colour. It is the first time you are working with this specific colour, a colour that oscillates between a grey-green and beige-grey – depending on the light incidence. Until now, you worked primarily with the RAL-colour 1015 to coat the objects of your installations. Where does your passion for these “non-colours” come from and what made you undertake a colour change?

MV: Actually, I already created an artwork in this specific grey tone for the first time for an exhibition in 2014. There are two reasons for the “colour change”. In the aforementioned work, I realised that it will not function using the “light ivory high gloss” (RAL 1015) I usually used so far. – I worked with old lamp sockets, which were made up of either shiny metal or polished wood. By coating them with the beige high gloss colour no shift regarding their look and feel would have happened. However, with the dirty-grey, matt primer, the sculptural character of the lamp sockets revealed itself successfully, exactly as I had envisioned it. Then, I scanned this colour of the used primer and in this way, I could get the colour in an extremely matt PU-varnish.

A few years ago, I searched for a neutral and unallocated colour; I experimented with different beige tones and ended up with this light ivory (Dt.: Hellelfenbein). Already the name was fascinating to me! In contrast to its name, it is actually an unpleasant colour; yellowed and boringly traditional; reminding of hospitals or German taxicabs. But that was just what I wanted – a colour that brings its own patina right from the beginning. Even colour psychology has not allocated anything with light ivory. Lately, statements about my work pointed to this special colour as something like my trademark – that is a further reason for my colour change. Although I had never worked with light ivory exclusively, and I am not going to that in the future – a colour can only be used there, where it fits and where it makes sense.

3 Handstudien Eva-Maria, 2015 | 30 x 40 cm, prints, exhibition view





Gehäuse #1 / Eva-Maria, 2015 | 180 x 40 x 35 cm, MDF, mixed technique, exhibition view

SF: Through the careful and specific choice of a colour, with which you coat banal objects, like hubcaps, religious souvenirs or discarded lamp sockets, these are transformed, to a certain extent, into sacred or at least museum-like art objects. Very often, staged on pedestals or combined with light. So it is not surprising that you could install some of your "hubcap" objects in churches, where they immediately turn into rosette-shaped windows in gothic churches. Your exhibition here at the ESSZIMMER invokes such sacral echoes too...

MV: I have already been concerned with Christianity during my college years; firstly with regard to formal aspects like the image of the "crucified Jesus", which I understood as a "corporate design" of the church and – having it simplified into a pictogram – used it in different contexts various times.

A mould of a Virgin Mary relief – found on a flea market became also part of several exhibitions. The last 2000 years have formed our western culture and the visual arts have almost exclusively dealt with religious subjects. Who-

ever visits museums will be inevitably confronted with that. Through museum visits, the art history lessons at school as well as through excursions my interest in art history was risen. I became increasingly concerned with the evolution of the western visual arts since the Middle Ages. – An enormous stock to exploit.

Due to my interest in spaces and the positioning of art in space, churches came to my attention quiet fast. I am consistently fascinated by how elaborate and well proportioned many sacred buildings were built.

The exhibition spaces at the Esszimmer I liked immediately, due to their simplicity; the exhibition title „Graue Passion“ (Eng.: Grey Passion) refers hence less to the Holbein cycle in Stuttgart and more to your own house, with the grey facade and the obvious preference for grey tones in the inner space too.

The depiction of the young woman in the "cases", in the first exhibition space, definitely reminds of depictions of saints in churches; but, in my opinion, one is always confronted with this kind of form; whether in fashion or in the music business. Whoever is less informed about the iconography in art history, interprets the artworks as a hyperthermia box in a spaceship or as Snow White's coffin.

2 Fussstudien Eva-Maria, 2015 | 30 x 40 cm, mixed technique, exhibition view





Gehäuse #2 / Eva-Maria, 2015 | 40 x 40 x 180 cm, MDF, mixed technique, exhibition view

In both cases, the person is not really dead, and comes to life again. – That is, exactly what the church sells us as “resurrection”.

SF: This is a multi-layered and interconnected field of references that you are stretching between your “Grey Passion” and our passion for the grey colour, as well as between the cryo-coffin and the Christian resurrection of the dead. Grey seems to be a “distanced” colour – at least in the intention of Holbein’s cycle “Grey Passion”. For me personally, grey tones are absolutely the most relaxing ones. What is the grey colour to you?

MV: The grey colour I am using here is not a colour you can buy in the store; it is a primer. I let it scan and therefore I can have it as a wall paint or in any other paint type. As much as I like the standard grey tones, for the most part they were completely unsuitable for my installations, because they are too beautiful, too harmonic. This primer is, on the contrary, green-tinged and oscillated into beige or grey (according to the light). In this way, it sometimes seems light and at other times dark; but always somehow dirty.

A further ambivalence arises due to fact that the colour is matt – therefore the colour generates a soft velviness on one hand and reminds me at the same time of a stone-like surface...

SF: The colour, as well as the shape of the objects, lead to totally different associations towards what kind of material was used that vary from stone to plastic. Resulting in that, that all visitors of the exhibition felt a strong impulse to touch the objects – in the hope to receive information on the real material used, which is MDF – however this information it not really accessible through touching...

MV: This is definitely an interesting side effect. It is mainly created in the objects with smooth surfaces and slight curves. Many people think of metal or plastic, but also the impression of marzipan came up once. In the cases of the „hub caps“, the bottles or the „lamp sockets“, there is a deception taking place due to the coherent colouring. With the pedestals and the boxes I work with extreme curves and smooth surfaces. These objects “without corners and edges” are hard to be classified by the eye, since the sight slides everywhere and has nothing



Kuppel 1, 2015 | diameter 4 m, height 2 m, HF-slabs, wheel covers, exhibition view





Vierpass, 2015 | 50 x 50 x 22,5 cm, 4 parts, MDF, wheel covers, lighting (background) and *Kuppel 1*, 2015 | diameter 4 m, height 2 m, HF-slabs, wheel covers (foreground), exhibition view

to rest on. In this way, the material thickness and materiality cannot be defined at all.

SF: Your apparent admiration and fascination for church architecture and staging has led to an room filling dome installation in your exhibition at DAS ESSZIMMER, which is guided by the cupola of the PETERSDOM in Rome. Why precisely to this one?

MV: This cupola by Michelangelo is, amongst a few others, like for example the Brunelleschi cupola in Florence, an absolute masterpiece. Regarding its construction, it is very interesting and simply genially designed at the same time. The exhibition deals in all rooms with the trichotomy “under – middle – up”. In the large space this is presented as follows: The bottom is embodied by the minute work “Grundriss” (Eng.: Ground plan) made out of an over painted section of a PVC flooring, that reminds of the ground plan of a central-planned church building. For the middle, that is, the walls of the building, there is the work “Vierpass” (Eng.: Quatrefoil), which can be interpreted through its name and through the formal impression as a tracery window. Finally, the cupola builds the upper finish, whereby, the cupola can

be viewed here from eye height and only from the outside. A corresponding trichotomy can also be seen in the front space, but this time however with regard to a human figure. Nevertheless, not the Christian trichotomy body – soul – spirit, nor instinct – consciousness, soul, as in Islam, but the body segmentation (analogue to the building): feet, hands that are positioned in the middle and head.

SF: Is this (Holy) Trinity of “under – middle – up” something that has already interested you in other works or something that was developed in the context of your exhibition here, at DAS ESSZIMMER?

MV: I think I am using this trichotomy for the first time here intentionally. The idea of a figure in a case with cut-outs, allowing only a partial view, was developed with the help of a work that had these round openings in the inside too. The idea came to existence through this formal aspect and a coincidental encounter with Eva-Maria, who then functioned as a model for these works. The limitation to three cut-outs, which the viewer combines into a whole – functions, of course, well in the context of a body; in the other works this is not that obvious through the spatial

arrangement. The “up”, the cupola lies on the floor; the “under” hangs on the wall...

SF: ...the cupola on the ceiling could be a fascinating option in another exhibition context too, due to the reversal of the volumes...

MV: Actually, I have already something in the works... the cupola would hang there reversed, in an approximate height of four meters; through a circulatory gallery path, the viewer would be able to see down into the inner side of the cupola; the outer side would be seen from underneath with a direct view on the top of the cupola. – Or a (mirrored, so to speak) double cupola. Perhaps, a reversed cupola would also be a really nice idea in a smaller; harmonious space, like here at DAS ESSZIMMER.

SF: Most visitors automatically looked for an entrance in your cupola, and then, after the circumnavigation, they disappointedly found out that there is none...

MV: One should perhaps hang a sign: “We must sadly stay outside”... the visitors tend to have associations of tents or igloos: these normally stand on the floor and are accessible, and by this means fall into a recognition scheme. A cupola hangs aloft and cannot be seen from eye height usually. So in fact, visitors have the perspective of a bird flapping around the cupola. And the birds can also not enter it.

SF: The term “deception” has already been mentioned various times in our conversation. What is its significance for your work?

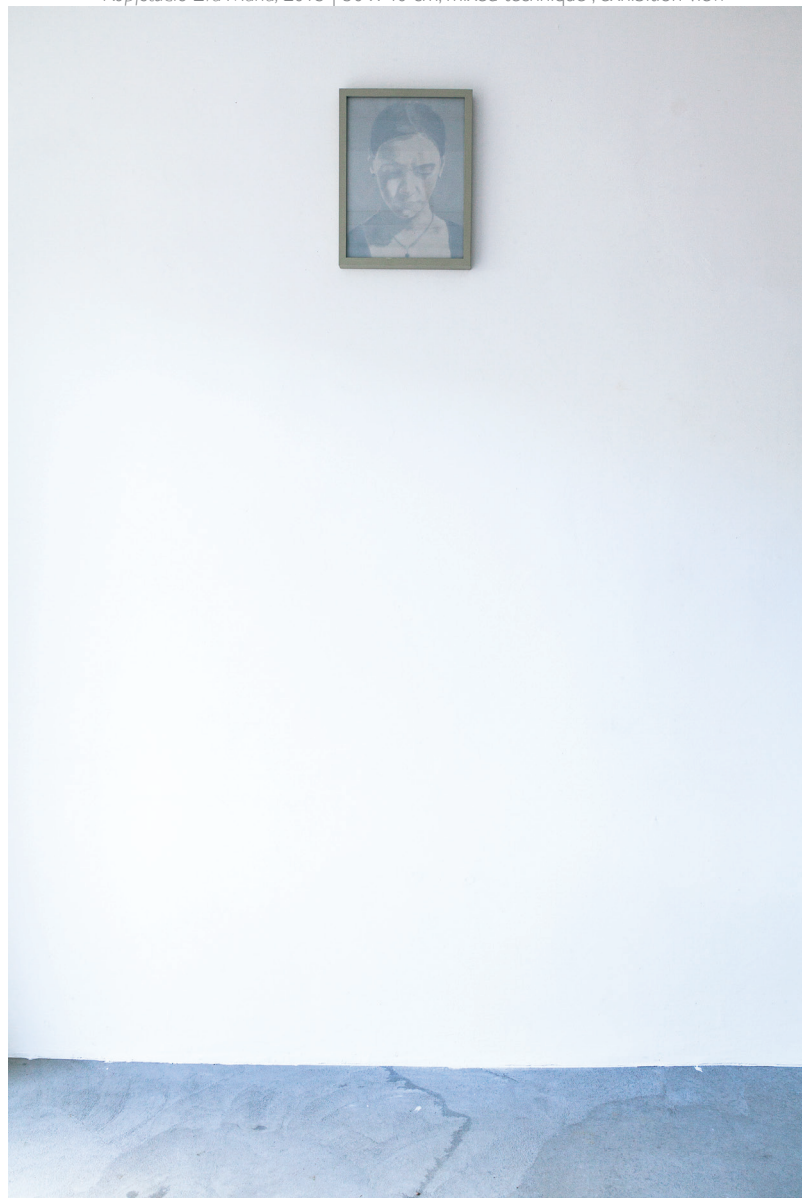
MV: In the concrete case of the „cases“ and of the „Studienblätter“ (Eng.: study pages), faces, hands and feet are softened through multiple piles of transparent paper. Associations, besides the disguise of women – currently a big issue – would be hereby the fading, the declining; either in the sense of the deceased or of the fading of memories. A further aspect is the weathering of stone sculptures outdoors; like at the church porches. In my other works, often the original function of the material used is veiled, by transferring it to a different context. For example the light-rosettes mentioned earlier on, in which the hub caps they are actually made of are only recognized by a second glance, if at all.

SF: What are your next projects?

MV: Besides some upcoming exhibitions, I am in the state of planning some accessible sculptures/architectures; some of

them for the inside, some others for outdoor spaces. This means, the works become larger. This occurs when the respective spatial and financial requirements are available; something one has to work on through the years. A catalogue production is also planned... this should be actually processed urgently, because the development funds must be spent within a certain period of time...

Kopfstudie Eva-Maria, 2015 | 30 x 40 cm, mixed technique, exhibition view



1966 born in Ludwigshafen
1990 – 1994 liberal arts studies in Mannheim
2005 – 2008 lectureship for video arts PH Heidelberg

Awards

2014 WeldeKunstpreis 2014
2. Preis Kunst am Bau - Gesundheitszentrum Glantal (Schuh / Volkmer)
2013 Mahnmal zum Gedenken an die Opfer der Zwangssterilisation, Mannheim, 1. Preis und Ausführung
2010 Großer WeldeKunstpreis der Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar 2010
2009 Kunst am Bau – Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, 1. Preis und Ausführung
2008 Förderstipendium EHF-Fond Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin
2007 Dilsberg-Stipendium der Kulturstiftung Rhein-Neckar Kreis
2006 Kunstpreis der Blickachse 2006, Worms
2003 Arbeitsstipendium für die Schweiz
2002 Asterstein – Stipendium, Koblenz
1999 Stipendium des Deutsch-Französischen Kulturrates
1998 Burgund-Stipendium des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz
Förderpreis der Ludwig-Roos-Stiftung
1994 Kunstpreis der GKW-Gruppe (3.Preis), Mannheim
1992 Förderpreis des Arbeitskreis Rhein-Neckar Dreieck

Solo shows

2015 *Salon Autonome* - Atelier Sabine Dehnel Berlin
Collision Drive - Hôtel de Vogüé Dijon
STADT KADER // ESCOUADE URBAINE, Conseil Cultural régionale de Bourgogne (F)
2014 20. WeldeKunstpreis – Preisträgerausstellung, Kunstverein Schwetzingen *dich trifft keine schuld* – (SCHUH / VOLKMER), Kunsthaus Galerie Raskolnikow, Dresden
Landesart 15 - Michael Volkmer: Ohne Farbe – ohne Titel, Funkhaus SWR Mainz
DESIDERATUM, Ev. Kirche Schönbrunn (catalogue)
verlasse mich nie - ein Projekt von SCHUH/VOLKMER im Rahmen der Ausstellung *Rapunzel & Co – von Türmen und Menschen in der Kunst*, Arp Museum Remagen (Katalog)
2013 Ausstellung der Wettbewerbsarbeiten Kunst am Bau, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg (Schuh / Volkmer)
LAPSUS - Skulpturenufer Arp Museum Remagen, Kunst im öffentlichen Raum
komm zu mir – (SCHUH / VOLKMER), Galerie Strümpfe und Galerie Stadtpark, Mannheim
FIAT LUX – es werde Licht, Ev. Stadtkirche Frankfurt- Höchst
2012 *LAPIDARIUM*, Konnektor - Forum für Künste Hannover
SEMPER ILLUSTRIS, Peterskirche Grünstadt
2011 *LAMINA SACRA* – Konkordien Kirche, Mannheim
2010 *drink, drive and pray* – Kunstverein Mannheim (K)

Mannheim sagt – Europäische Kulturhauptstadt Istanbul
2009 The Eleventh Supper, Galerie Strümpfe, Mannheim
2008 Stachel der Arbeit, Ernsr Bloch Zentrum, Ludwigshafen
2007 Mannheim sagt, Studio Alte Feuerwache, Mannheim
Club 69, Atelier contact, Mannheim
2005 Ministerium für Kultur, Mainz
2004 Spontan, Stuttgarter Kunstverein
2003 Laden Nr.5, Künstlerhaus Schloß Balmoral, Bad Ems
2002 Paar-Cam, Liveprojektion, Mannheim
Deutsch-Französische Augeblicke, Maison de France, Landtag, Mainz
Plage, Stadtgalerie Mannheim
2000 Jessikartoffel, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen,
Ludwig-Museum, Koblenz
Tugend, Galerie Ackermann, Worms
Künstlerbund Speyer
1999 Droge, Kunsthaus Essen
1998 Jeder Punkt zählt, Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern (K)
Galerie Hartmannstr.45, Ludwigshafen
1997 Raum 404, Heidelberg
1996 Handle with care, Forum Kunst-Fabrik, Worms
1995 Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen
1994 Ehemalige Synagoge, Sandhausen

Group shows (selection)

2015 *Helden und Legenden* - Casado | Schembs | Volkmer - Kunstverein Germersheim
2014 *DELTABEBEN* Regionale 2014, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen und Wilhelm-Hack-Museum (K)
2013 *Hommage to Asia*, Chinesischer Pavillon zu Dresden
Spektrum Videokunst, Stadtgalerie Mannheim
2012 *Tafelrunde*, Museum Kamen
2000 Jahre Krise, Rudolf Scharpf Galerie des WHM Ludwigshafen
Hangen und Co, Haus Metternich Koblenz
Nachhaltigkeit, Ostpark Nürnberg (catalogue)
Nader tot U / Closer to Thee, Galerie Transit Mechelen, Belgium
2011 *Heilig!* Kunstpreis der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Regierungspräsidium Karlsruhe, Augustinermuseum Freiburg, Kloster Hegne, Bodensee
2010 Welde-Kunstpreis, "Die 10 Besten", Kunstverein Schwetzingen
André Evard Preis Auswahl, Messmer Foundation, Riegel
Fremde Heimat – Kunsthalle Mannheim (catalogue)
Oase als Phänomen – Kunstpreis der Kulturstiftung der Sparkassen, Karlsruhe
2009 *Miles and More*, Galerie Strümpfe, Mannheim
Eins von allen, Landtag Mainz
Sickingen Kunstpreis Auswahl, Kaiserslautern (K)
2008 EHF- Stipendiaten, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Berlin
Stipendiaten- Ausstellung 800-Jahre Dilsberg, Kommandantenhaus
2007 *100 Tage-100 Videos*, Kunstverein Kopenhagen
abgebrannt!, Galerie Zephyr, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museum, Mannheim
2006 *Die Rheine Wahrheit* – Eine Bootsfahrt mit superart.tv
Bella Italia, Stadtmuseum Ludwigshafen

- Kaldonia*, Blickachse 2006, Worms (K)
100 Tage-100 Videos, Kunstverein Heidelberg
- 2005 *Internationale Fototage*, Ludwigshafen (K)
Baden gehen, Collini-Center Mannheim
Jahresgaben, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen
- 2004 *About Video*, Mannheim
- 2003 *Heroes*, Galerie Rainer Wehr, Stuttgart
Beziehungsweisen, E-Werk, Freiburg (K)
Streetlevel, Simplonpaß, Switzerland (K)
- 2002 *Videoachse*, Worms-Herrnsheim
Klinikum LU – Mitte – die Soap zur Kunst, Projekt Haus E, Klinikum
 Ludwigshafen in cooperation with MMK Frankfurt, Wilhelm-Hack
 Museum, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen (K)
- 2001 *Final Cut (at Night)*, Espace Public, Paris
Lutopia, Utopieprojekt, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen (K)
- 2000 *Purmann Preis*, Auswahl, Ratssaal Speyer
Echt und Falsch, Gutenbergpavillon, Mainz (K)
Extremanta, Kolno, Poland
- 1999 *Kunstpreis der Sport-Toto GmbH (K)*
Volksbank Kunstpreis, Auswahl, Speyer
Emy-Roeder Kunstpreis, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen (K)
Forum Franco-Allemand, Colombey les deux églises
Traffic, Art Phalanx, Vienna (K)
come home, John Doe Gallery, New York

Publications (selection)

- 2014 *Deltabeiben*, catalogue, Kunstverein and Wilhelm Hack Museum
 Ludwigshafen, texts by Barbara Auer and René Zechlin Verlag für
 zeitgenössische Kunst und Theorie, ISBN 978-3-944295-08-4
 SCHUH / VOLKMER, catalogue on the exhibition *vertraue mir*,
 Kunstverein Bellevuesaal Wiesbaden, texts by Dr. Peter Forster, ISBN
 978-3-939236-15-3
Atelier und Künstler Kompendium mit 15 monografischen Katalogen
 Editor: Landratsamt Rhein-Neckar-Kreis
 ISBN 978-3-932102-29-5, 15,- Euro
- 2013 *Heilige Kunst*, Kunstverein der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart Schwa-
 benverlag AG Ostfildern ISBN 978-3-7966-1570-2
 Michael Volkmer *LAMINA SACRA – heilig's Blechle* Projekte zeitge-
 nössischer Kunst im Kirchenraum texts by Peter Annweiler and Götz
 Diergarten 36 S., A5, Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst und Theorie,
 Berlin ISBN 987-3-944295-01-5
- 2012 *Michael Volkmer – RAL 1015* Texts by Eva Mayer, Peter Annweiler, Eric
 Carstensen, Thomas Schirnböck 76 S. HC A4, Verlag für zeitgenös-
 sische Kunst und Theorie, Berlin ISBN 978-3-9813021-7-2
Deltabeiben – Regionale 2012 Editor: Kunsthalle, Kunstverein, Stadtga-
 lerie Mannheim ISBN 978-3-89165-223-7
Hangen & Co. – Künstlerförderung auf dem Asterstein Ausstellungs-
 katalog, Editor: AKM Koblenz
Nachhaltigkeit – 2. Große Kunstausstellung Nürnberg exhibition catalo-
 gue, Edition +kunst, Barthelmesaurach
Außerhalb – Projekt zur Vernetzung und Förderung von Projekträumen in

BaWü Kunstbüro der Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg ISBN 978-
 3-932679-22-3

- 2011 *Kulturkirchen – Eine Reise durch Deutschland* Texts by Petra Bahr,
 Klaus-Martin Bresgott and Hannes Langbein Evangelische Verlagsan-
 stalt Leipzig ISBN 978-3-374-02906-8
Ostrale '011 – Slaughterhouse Five Ausstellungskatalog, Editor: Ostrale
 Dresden
heilig! – Kunstpreis der Erzdiözese Freiburg 2011 exhibition catalogue,
 texts by Dr. Isabelle v. Marschall, Erzbischof Dr. Robert Zollitsch,
 Weihbischof Dr. Paul Wehrle, Prof. Magnus Striet and PD Dr. Jo-
 hannes Stückelberger, modo Verlag Freiburg ISBN 978-3-86833-079-3
- 2010 *drink, drive and pray* exhibition catalogue, texts by Dr. Martin Stather
 and Thomas Schirnböck
 Verlag Das Wunderhorn ISBN 978-3-88423-357-3
Alles fließt – Großer Welde Kunstpreis der Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar
 2010 exhibition catalogue, texts by Dr. Dietmar Schuth, Editor:
 Kunstverein Schwetzingen

Grundriss, 2015 | PVC floor, varnish, exhibition view



Thanks to

The exhibition *Graue Passion* was kindly sponsored by:



further thanks to:

Eva-Maria Clemens; Götz Diergarten; Richard Schimanski; Benjamin Walter; Mainz
 (calculations for the cupola construction) and Stefanie Werner

Impressum

- Editor: Sibylle Feucht, Das Esszimmer – Raum für Kunst+ gUG
 (haftungsbeschränkt), Mechenstrasse 25, D-53129 Bonn,
www.dasesszimmer.com | 2015
- concept/design: Sibylle Feucht, Bonn
- photos: Sibylle Feucht, Bonn

