

# HOŠEK CONTEMPORARY

— EST. 2016 —

## NATASCHA FRIOUD & GAËL EPINEY - UNSICHTBAR

Opening reception: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025, 6 - 10 pm

Exhibition period: 2<sup>nd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> May 2025

A headless Orpheus, the frog king and a couple of playful bears... Berlin's parks and streets are home to numerous public sculptures, scattered throughout its districts. Created in different periods, they preserve traces of the past, recalling historical events or displaying decorative features in the public space. While external conditions and pollution gradually alter their appearance, time fades them into oblivion.

Despite their intended glory, there is nothing as invisible in this world as a monument, wrote Austrian philosophical author Robert Musil in the 1920s. He claimed that since monuments are built to be seen and remembered, they eventually become unnoticeable while people pass by without giving them a single thought. "They are impregnated with something that repels attention, causing the glance to roll right off, like water droplets off an oilcloth, without even pausing for a moment." In their collaborative project *Unsichtbar*, Swiss artists Natascha Frioud and Gaël Epiney question why certain sculptures are forgotten, no longer considered or looked at, and if they could somehow be reconsidered.

The twelve sculptures chosen for the exhibition vary from public art pieces to monuments, each blending into the landscape, growing moss or serving as impromptu benches. The project in its current form is focused on Berlin and thus city-specific, but the concept could be transferred to any urban setting. Its relevancy stems from extensive research within the neighbourhoods and thorough engagement with the daily surroundings. By seeking out these static structures standing in plain sight yet unseen, the artists acknowledge and give new meaning to unobvious elements.

Guy Debord's "dérive" theory offers an interesting lens to the concept, as it invites for an aimless wander, without the usual everyday motives for moving around a city. In dérive, the participant is encouraged to drift through a familiar urban space on an unplanned journey, observing and receptive to new ways of seeing or interpreting the environment. According to this playful technique, a dérive is a useful experiment in a somewhat blasé capitalist society, where the monotony and predictability of quotidian life have taken over.

For *Unsichtbar*, Frioud and Epiney start by photographing the backdrop and surroundings of selected sculptures in Berlin. The photos are printed on large bath towels, each draped on the corresponding statue. The printed towel partially conceals the statue, which camouflaged then optically disappears in the space, almost suggesting it never existed. In the following stage of the process, the artists photograph the statues with their respective covers and these images are again printed on new towels. Together, all the prints are installed in a

gallery space, illustrating the disappearance and recontextualisation of these forgotten objects. Moreover, through the act of rendering invisible, *Unsichtbar* is unsettling our perception of the environment.

Choosing to print on bath towels is also significant, the spongy material serving as a filter between the sculpture and the background. The artists explain how their process transforms the nature of such a mundane and accessible item: "It's an everyday object of no importance that anyone can easily replace or throw away. Once printed and installed on a sculpture, the towel changes its status as an object by becoming a central element that modifies the urban scene."

While public sculptures preserve the collective memory, they also convey societal values: which monuments or sculptures do we remember, and why did they get erected in the first place? Whose memories are kept alive, whose stories are worth to be told? Both the subject matter and the sculptor reflect the politics of memory specific to an era, determining the exposure and remembrance but also the erasure of certain events and people.

Although physically present, the sculptures and their original purpose are often forgotten, turning them into some form of non-places void of interaction, identity and experience. *Unsichtbar* is mindful of the unnoticed and by deconstructing the process of becoming invisible, it restores value to the neglected silhouettes of the urbanscape.

Text © Linda Toivio

The exhibition is kindly supported by the city of Lausanne.

Hošek Contemporary

Established by Petr Hošek in 2016, Hošek Contemporary is a gallery and art residency located on a historical cargo ship anchored near Märkisches Ufer in Mitte, Berlin. The gallery focuses primarily on site-specific pieces, performing arts and experimental sound works co-curated by Linda Toivio. During the spring and summer months, the gallery is hosting weekly improvised and experimental music installations, with local and international musicians.

PETR HOŠEK  
MOTOR SHIP HEIMATLAND  
MÄRKISCHES UFER 1Z  
10 179 BERLIN  
+49 1525 7486496  
INFO@HOSEKCONTEMPORARY.COM  
WWW.HOSEKCONTEMPORARY.COM