

KUNSTLERHAUS BREMEN

Alina Schmuch

The Inner Office

16.09.–18.11.2018

With "The Inner Office", Alina Schmuch presents a new video work that explores the design of internal and external processes in new work environments. How do holistic approaches to work, which are centred on personal development and individuality, manifest themselves in architecture, language and design? With her subtle, distanced view, Schmuch films workspaces in headquarters of companies from the creative and high-tech industries, coworking spaces, as well as workshops and seminars on leadership, storytelling and the future of work. The artist shows visual, architectural and linguistic structures that embrace holistic thinking, spirituality and concepts of empathy and mindfulness, which globalized work cultures have appropriated from the cultural sphere and the countercultures of the 1960s and 70s. Schmuch's work reflects the structures that serve to optimize work processes while the work itself becomes increasingly invisible. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the image of freelancers sitting on their computers in cafés has become more and more familiar. The liberation from the "9 to 5" of everyday office-life and the flexibility to work "where and how I want" made possible by affordable, portable computers, was first celebrated as the ultimate independence, at some point becoming a familiar, sometimes unwanted appearance in the urban coffee shop landscape. Almost twenty years later, the workspaces in the creative and technology sector look like a combination of hipster café, hostel foyer, yoga studio, and communal living space. The work environments are not organized according to organizational aspects, but imitate atmospheres and environments that are connected to life outside the office. The spaces are designed in such a way that workers feel as if they were freelancing and making their own decisions instead of being the executors of orders. There are no fixed work places and the room is not attributed to a fixed function, but flexibly adaptable. Where someone works on a laptop in one moment, a yoga workshop takes place shortly after. Schmuch shows these spaces, where creation and recreation intertwine. Alongside the architecture, Schmuch also examines the discursive structures of these new working cultures. She filmed seminars, workshops and festivals and made field recordings of the speech and terms employed there. The seminars deal with themes such as collective leadership, mindfulness, storytelling and the psychological structure of teams. The ideology of infinite growth here is extended to the personality of the employee.

Schmuck is interested in the ambivalent overlap of spiritual and economic intentions of "more humane" organizational structures, which strive for greater employee satisfaction through meaningfulness and the identification that is caused by this. In the end, the employee's satisfaction is also a concern because satisfied employees are more productive.

So it's important for us that we start feeling who we are trusting, that wisdom – meeting each other there and acting from that. And also, of course, doing that with a compassionate heart in connecting with one another in such a loving, caring way we know that we're not living and working anymore just for money. We know that humanity needs us to change. Humanity needs us to hear from one another if we are going to survive and thrive. And this is what we wanna bring into our work environment, we wanna bring all of who we are, not just our brilliant minds.

Excerpt from "How is your mind?",
part of "The Inner Office"

The exhibition presents Schmuck's new film footage from her extensive research in Germany, California and the Philippines in an installative multi-channel video work, in which the videos combine to form a comprehensive film cut in the space. The individual videos show different nuances of a working culture that tries to shape a future characterized by flexible structures and ever-increasing competition between the individual workforce. The installation reflects design elements and structures from the work environments shown in the videos.

Based on photography and its expansion in the medium of film, Alina Schmuck's work investigates the interaction between image media and reality. What can we see through the camera's eye, which otherwise remains hidden? Recurring themes in her work are the examinations of spatial and discursive structures that serve to improve processes. Schmuck takes on an observational position. The slow shots give the viewer the space to look at everyday situations more distantly, to recognize structures more clearly and to find their own position.

"The Inner Office" is the artist's first institutional solo exhibition.

Alina Schmuch

b. 1987 in Münster/D., based in Berlin. She studied Media Art and Photography at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (2009-2014) and Fine Art at the University of Fine Arts Münster (2007-2009). Researcher grant at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (2015/16); MAK-Schindler Scholarship, Los Angeles (2016); Landesgraduiertenförderung Baden-Württemberg (2017/18), Dokumentarfotografie Förderpreis, Wüstenrot Stiftung/Museum Folkwang, Essen (2015/16); grant at the Arts Foundation Baden-Württemberg (2015).

Exhibitions (selection): 2018 *Dokumentarfotografie Förderpreise 11 – The Voids*, Museum für Photographie Braunschweig; *Stockholm Syndrome*, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg / 2017 *Resonanzen*, ZKM Karlsruhe; *The Voids*, Museum Folkwang, Essen; MAK Center, Los Angeles / 2016 *Reporting from the Front*, 15th Venice Architecture Biennale, *Reset Modernity!*, ZKM Karlsruhe; *Schaufenster/Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen*, Düsseldorf / 2015 Arts Foundation Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart / 2014 gta exhibitions, Zurich / 2013 *HAUSEN – Konkrete Substanz und die Möglichkeit einer Sitzgruppe*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden / 2012 DAZ, Berlin / 2009 Kunsthalle Münster.
alinaschmuch.de

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Information on the works:

Dedicated Desk, 2018

Brochure

The brochure, placed in the gallery's entrance, shows photographs of coworking spaces: still-life interiors recreating familiar living environments and imitating natural materials.

Coworking Spaces are shared work spaces for self-employed and start-up entrepreneurs that can be flexibly rented on a monthly basis and offered by – in some cases, globally active companies.

Deliberately human, 2018

Video, 11 min

The video documents a workshop in which young people from various fields such as design, film and anthropology discuss their visions of the future of work. The conversations revolve around buzzwords such as basic income, freelancership, artificial intelligence and self-actualization. Terms are jotted down on Post-Its, future scenarios formed with plasticine or visualized in diagrammes. How do we imagine our work in the future? Are we becoming more human through the possibilities of technology?

Virtual Assistant, 2018

Video, 19 min

The video researched by Schmuch in the Philippines focuses on outsourcing and virtualizing work in the form of outsourcing companies offering augmented staff or virtual assistance. Complex work processes are being adopted by companies in the Philippines that allow companies in Australia or the United States to save on staff and office overhead costs. The images in this video show this infrastructure for flexible work relationships: work spaces of outsourcing companies in Manila with lined office chairs; flashing servers that enable virtual collaboration; a conference call that connects different places and time zones internationally. In a seminar on "Home-based Careers for Engineers," a woman talks about the pros and cons of flexibility in space and manpower.

Hello, my name is Mystique and Power, 2018

2-Kanal-Video, 33 min

The video shows silent interior studies of headquarters and coworking spaces of technology companies, along with footage from workshops on topics such as storytelling, the psychological structure of teams, and "Purpose and Belonging" in management approaches and businesses.

How is your mind?, 2018

Video, 16 min

In this video, the artist focuses on how the self is brought into work relationships. She observes a range of approaches on personality development, mindfulness and compassion, mental health and bodywork that are incorporated into work processes.

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME:

Sunday, 16 September, 3-5 pm

Heute: Mein Arbeitsplatz für morgen (DE)

Workshop for children and adults with Jana Katschke und Mara Ryser

Wednesday, 10 October, 6 pm

Guided tour with Undine van Elsberg (DE)

Wednesday, 31 October

6 pm Curator's tour with Nadja Quante (DE)

7 pm Reading by Timo Hinze: *Die flüssige Fabrik* (DE)

In the artist's book „Die flüssige Fabrik“ Timo Hinze asks for the relation between work and subjectivity. He is wondering about what connects a person to his or her work, about the qualities of those connections and also about individual experienced burdens that may result.

Wednesday, 7 November, 7 pm

*Zeitgenoss*innen – Gespräche zur aktuellen Kunst* (DE)

Tour through the exhibition with Julia Bulk (Wilhelm Wagenfeld Stiftung), Janneke de Vries (Weserburg) and Nadja Quante (Künstlerhaus Bremen)

Wednesday, 14 November, 7 pm

Artist's talk with Alina Schmuch (DE)

The artist Alina Schmuch will talk together with curator Nadja Quante about her new work “The Inner Office” and about her previous works.

Address:

Künstlerhaus Bremen, Am Deich 68/69, D-28199 Bremen,

www.kuenstlerhausbremen.de

Wednesday to Sunday 2–7pm

Free Admission to all exhibitions and events

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