

PRESS RELEASE

Berlin, June 16, 2022

C/O BERLIN TALENT AWARD 2022

Karolina Wojtas . *Abzgram*

C/O Berlin is please to announce this year's **C/O Berlin Talent Award** in the category **Artist** to the Polish multimedia artist **Karolina Wojtas**. Her award-winning work **Abzgram** will be presented in a solo exhibition from **Jan 28 to May 4, 2023**, at **C/O Berlin** in the **Amerika Haus** at Hardenbergstraße 22–24, 10623 Berlin. The four artists **Lucas Leffler** (b. 1993, Belgium), **Irene Antonia Diane Reece** (b. 1993, USA), **Alina Schmuch** (b. 1987, Germany) and **Lisandro E. Suriel** (b. 1990, St. Martin) were selected for the **Shortlist 2022**.

The **C/O Berlin Talent Award 2022** in the category **Theorist** goes to **Matthias Gründig** who will write the first theoretical essay on the work **Abzgram** by Karolina Wojtas. The essay will appear alongside an interview with the artistin in the upcoming monograph published by **Spector Books**.

The jury was captivated by the dark irony of the project *Abzgram* by multimedia artist Karolina Wojtas (b. 1996), which examines the rigid Polish school system that subjects children to militaristic rules verging on fascism. The 'Classroom Entry Procedure', for example, stipulates that children stand still without touching one another, placing their backpacks on the floor next to their right leg, with their hands at their sides, their gaze straight ahead, silent, and motionless. Does this echo the current shift to the right in Polish politics?

Wojtas's project, which has continually grown since 2017, consists of videos and photographs that the artist compiles, rearranges with found footage, and consolidates in the exhibition space as walk-in installations that invite the audience to reclaim the carefreeness of childhood. Seen from the perspective of adolescents, things get slightly and surreally out of balance, with kitsch, games, eccentricity, and nonsense staged in bright colors. Due to the experience of tension that is fed by their personal resistance against their own education, Wojtas uses reenactment to return to the world of children—and invites visitors to join her. The project fits perfectly into the theme of the *C/O Berlin Talent Award 2022*, which this year is again *New Documentary Strategies*. If silence and stance are revoked as means of respect, will creativity and experimentation still be possible?

The *C/O Berlin Talent Award 2022* in the category *Theorist* goes to Matthias Gründig (b. 1989). As a historian of photography who focuses on the use of images in society and on game theory, Gründig stood out from nearly thirty international entries. Alongside his profile, which matches the content of this year's winning art project perfectly, his writing samples persuasively demonstrated his capacity for analytical abstraction. This ability enables Gründig to draw on his broad historical knowledge of contemporary artistic photography and thoroughly examine complex content.

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Since 2018, the overarching theme of the C/O Berlin Talent Award has been *New Documentary Strategies*. The aim of the award is to promote the critical examination of traditional documentary narratives and to make these perspectives visible in exhibitions and publications. C/O Berlin is the only institution in Europe to offer a funding program aimed at the next generation of artists and art theorists. The C/O Berlin Talent Award is awarded each year in the categories of *Artist* and *Theorist* to individuals under thirty-five years of age. The award carries a cash prize for both winners as well as a solo exhibition and an individually designed publication. A joint talk rounds off this union of theory and practice.

The expert jury in the category *Artist*, consisting of Bruno Ceschel (Publisher and founder of *Self Publish, Be Happy*, London), Eli Cortiñas (Artist and professor for Media Art, HGB, Leipzig/Berlin), Dr. Eva-Maria Fahrner-Tutsek (Chairperson, Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung, Munich), Jane'a Johnson (Artistic Director, Foam, Amsterdam), Dr. Kathrin Schönegg (Curator, C/O Berlin) and Lars Willumeit (Curator, Musée de l'Élysée, Zurich) selected this year's winners and shortlist. The works of the shortlisted artists will be presented in the autumn issue of the C/O Berlin Newspaper and online in cooperation with the magazine *Der Greif*.

The expert jury in the category *Theorist*, consisting of Dr. Steffen Siegel (Professor of Theory and History of Photography, Folkwang University of the Arts) and Dr. Kathrin Schönegg (Curator, C/O Berlin), made their decision unanimously.

Since 2020, the C/O Berlin Talent Award has been made possible by the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung.

Karolina Wojtas (b. 1996, Poland) draws from the imagination of children and transforms this material into walk-in installations. After studying at the Institute of Creative Photography in Opava, Czech Republic, she graduated from the Film School in Łódź, Poland. She was nominated for the reGeneration Prize of the Musée d'Élysée in Lausanne and the Plat(t)form of the Fotomuseum Winterthur, and was awarded the ING Unseen Talent Award 2019 in Amsterdam. Her works have been shown at the Fotofestival in Łódź (2021), the Kraków Photomonth (2020), and the Noorderlicht International Photo Festival (2020). C/O Berlin will present her first solo show to be held in an institution and will also publish her first artist book.

Matthias Gründig (b. 1989, DE) studied history of art and visual arts (BA), followed by history of art and film studies (MA) at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. From 2015 to 2022, he taught theory and history of photography as an assistant lecturer at Folkwang Universität der Künste Essen, and is currently completing his PhD thesis, titled "Photographic Portraits as Commodity and Currency". Gründig has co-edited several exhibition catalogs as well as a special issue of *PhotoResearcher* on the subject of photography and play (2017). His work has previously been published in journals including *History of Photography*, *Fotogeschichte*, and *EIKON*, among others. Matthias Gründig lives in Essen.

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Shortlist 2022

Lucas Leffler (b. 1993, Belgium) impressed the jury with his project *Silver Creek*. Centered around the story of the Belgian photography manufacturer Gevaert, which unintentionally disposed of tons of silver during the production of photographic films in the 1920s, it questions the ecological footprint of the medium of photography. Based on archival research, photographic traces, and experimental image-making with the silver-contaminated mud of a formerly polluted creek, his project impressively reenacts history and questions processes of industrialization and mass production.

In *Home-goings*, contemporary artist and visual activist **Irene Antonia Diane Reece** (b. 1993, USA) draws on the role of the Black church as a sanctuary for Black folk. It is an homage to Black Liberation Theology, by using the church as a tool to celebrate, protect, and preserve Black life. *Home-goings* creates original photographic images while engaging family archives, iconic church objects, gesture, and performance. The jury was especially impressed with the layered nature of the project, which evokes the politically subversive nature of Black funerary traditions to celebrate black life, deftly mixing text and image.

The project *Amphibious Paths* by **Alina Schmuck** (b. 1987, Germany) and the scenographer Maria Ebbinghaus (b. 1986, Germany) looks at ways of adapting to future sea-level rises caused by climate change. The mixed-media project, made in collaboration with various scientists, impressed the jury both with its sound artistic research methodology and the proposal to activate the exhibition space with simulation exercises run by the scientists over the course of the exhibition.

The practice of **Lisandro E. Suriel** (b. 1990, St. Martin) is of an exquisite ephemerality while maintaining a deep-rooted process of research and critical fabulation. His works of the project *Ghost Island* are a consciously woven tapestry of stories, oral history, and the gaps that convey identities fractured by the commonly known colonial enterprise. Suriel's spectrum is that of a fundamental knowledge production outside western-centric and anthropocentric beliefs, one that celebrates the unbroken history of a rich culture, resistance, and interdependency, and defies common expectations on Caribbean identities. Through the tools of magic realism, his work aims to document the subconscious and the collective, reclaiming its own agency and historical recollection.

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Exhibition Jan 28 to May 4, 2023

Press Tour Jan 27, 2023 . 11:00

Opening Jan 27, 2023 . 20:00

Opening Hours Daily . 11:00–20:00

Admission 10 euro . reduced 6 euro

Organizer C/O Berlin Foundation

Amerika Haus . Hardenbergstraße 22–24 . 10623 Berlin

Tel +49.30.284 44 16-0 . www.co-berlin.org

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Press Contact Magnus Pölcher

T +49.30.284 44 16 41 . press@co-berlin.org

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