

Stefanie Knobel

Selection of works 2016-2024

L'OPOPONAX
2022 (2019)







«The title «L'OPOPONAX» refers to the medicinal plant of the same name, the so-called sweet myrrh, which until the 1950s was mainly used in connection with hysteria diagnosed in the uterus and the female sex. From the biomedical present, the diagnosis of hysteria based on stereotypical ideas may have disappeared. Nevertheless discrimination based on binary notions embedded in algorithms is ubiquitous.

The video shows a choreography based on breathing in front of the painting «Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière» (1887) by André Bouillet, which shows the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot demonstrating his patient's hysteria to a group of male medical students. With her work, Knobel presents a counter-design to the image of the disease. In the incessant whispering of hysteria, in connection with the animals, the trees and the water, the clouds and the moon, the performers begin to interact with the painting and in doing so formulate a clear critique - they create a draft for the future and an echo at the same time.
(Text: Katrin Sperry)



Performative intervention
in front of the original of André Brouillet
«Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière» on
18.12.2019
at Université Paris Descartes, Paris

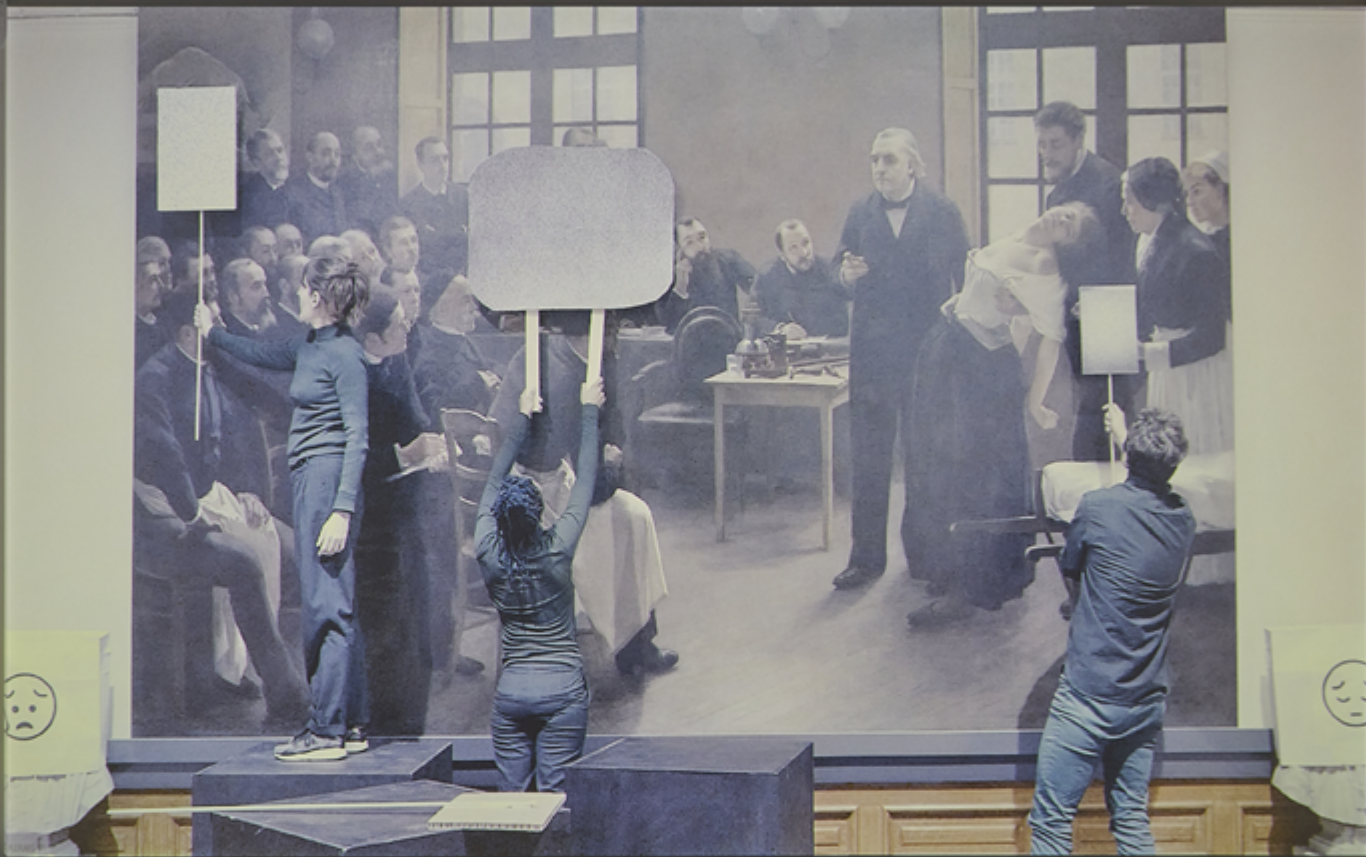
eponymous video work
DESCRIBE YOUR PAIN FROM 1 TO 10
Grand Palais, Bern
03.09.-15.10.2022

Auswahl 22
video installation with Opoponax scent
Aargauer Kunsthhaus
3.12.2022-2.1.2023

Concept, Choreography, Staging: Stefanie Knobel
Performer*s: Carisa Bledsoe, Christine
Bombal, Kai Simon Stöger
Camera: Christin Berg, Lena Mäder
Soundsources: Pharmakon
Fotos: Hugo de Almeida Pinho

Photo credit following page: Exhibition Views
Aargauer Kunsthhaus,
Foto: David Aebi

[Videolink](#)



A heavy, heavy duty - where the cotton lies
2023





«A heavy, heavy duty - where the cotton lies» enters into a dialogue with the former cotton magazine on the factory site of the former Schönau Spinning mill . The free-standing building, which will be rebuilt in the near future, was used to store unprocessed cotton. The orientation of the building to the street, its facade and the design of the storage itself bear witness to its original function. With these traces and reminiscences, A heavy, heavy duty – where the cotton lies enters into an uncanny dialogue: the persona of cotton evoked in the work activates the stories that are inscribed in the building and refers to what is absent today: the sheer amount of cotton that was waiting to be processed, but also the ongoing process of coming to terms with the exploitation of socially and economically marginalized classes in pre-industrial outwork or under the strict regime of factory work as well as Switzerland's involvement in colonialism.

The installation is an attempt to make existing relationships between the Zurich Oberland, India, Iran and Indonesia negotiable and to evoke new, speculative relations. With the help of associations, transitions, breaks and connections, the work creates a narrative that establishes cotton as an agent for economic, ecological and social change. A booklet brings together historical references, research, interviews, diary entries and notes.

Intervention, Installation (with Angela Wittwer)

Installation, Audio-loop,,23 min.

Booklet,

Voice: Anna Katharina Müller (Deutsch)

Schönau, Wetzikon

29.10.23 - 22.12.23

www.heavyheavyduty.com



The Soaking Space [der Einweichraum]
2022

Soaking is a softening process that is done by adding water or liquid. Water causes a change in consistency. What happens when you soak the past?

*Site-Specific installation and intervention in the
former Spinning Mill of Adolf Guyer-Zeller and
later weaving factory now the Neuthal Museum*

Silicone on Cotton
Neuthal Museum
2.10.-30.11.2022

Photos: Eugenia Mashenko





Technotropies of the otherwise
2023





HOW ARE WE GOING TO BE
WHEN WE GET THERE?

WIE WIRD ES UNS GEHEN,
WENN WIR DORT ANKOMMEN?







and the cut outs will be s
onto your skin.



Can we imagine living in one of the many places in the world that are underwater due to rising sea levels caused by global warming?

«Technotropies of the otherwise» takes as its starting point the Sundarbans mangrove forest in the Bay of Bengal, which extends over large parts of Bangladesh and India. According to climate forecasts, it will be completely flooded in near future. Today already, as a result, thousands of people are forced to migrate. Sundarban's plants and animals are well adapted to its marine environment and can breathe underwater.

But what about humans? Can humankind imagine to migrate in the future into the Ocean? The work develops a training among 4 performers to prepare for a co-living under water. They prepare gills and learn how to breathe under water.

The audience, that is placed at the middle of the space, is surrounded by a four channel performance video with moving light objects and an immersive musical experience. For the ocean to take us into every movement, head and body grow together and swallowing and breathing become one. We will find ourselves in a surging, breathing, rhythmic forest where frequencies reach us from the aquatic future.

Film, Installation, Performance

Gessnerallee, Zürich

Premiere: 30.3.2023

Performances: 31.3., 1.4., 5.4., 6.4.2023

Two 2 Channel Video installations

wooden boards , audio

Khanri - A Tapestry of Ebb and Flow,

Chander Haat, Kolkata, India

17.1. - 21.1.2024

Concept: Samrat Banerjee and Stefanie Knobel
Choreography, Video direction: Stefanie Knobel

Performance and Co-Choreography:

Uma Banerjee, Clarisa Bledsoe, Malika Khatir,

Shatakshi Nandy

Music: André Veigas Pereira

[See full Credits](#)

[Critique](#)

[Documentation](#)

[Trailer](#)

Photos: Kai Simon Stöger, video stills

SPEIS UND TRANK

2425 m.ü.M.

46° 34' 34.417" N 8° 25' 17.803" E 46°

2023



I spent the summer of 2023 preparing food and drinks for the restaurant of the Institute Furkablick on the Furka Pass, 2425 metres above sea level. Right from the start, it felt like the mountain was plunging towards the sea, the wind and the weather changes passing through my body and the food. SPEIS UND TRANK is a language work in the form of single piece menu card that creates an interface between the human bodies and the larger environment .



Language work
Foil embossing on SBR rubber,
metal rings, tassels
Institut Furkablick
Hotel Furkablick, Realp

SPEISEN

AUSGETROCKNETER SEEFISCH	4000.-
LUFTANHALTENDES LUNGENFLÜGELI	2.-
ZÄHFLÜSSIGE BLUTWURST IM GORE-TEX MANTEL	30.-
SONNENWARME FLEISCHBACKE	6.-
DÜRRE WALDSPINAT	0.50.-
TIEFSEEEMMEL	1'000'000.-
LÖCHRIGE GELENKE IN REGENWASSERSUPPE	5.-
SONNENBLEICHTER BLÄTTERTEIG	4.-
BEHAUCHTE GLASNUDELN	8.-
ÜBERSCHWEMMTE PLATTE	28.-

GETRÄNKE

RÜHENDES HITZEWASSER	1.50.-
DURSTIGE KUHMLICH	80.-
SCHWER ATMENDER KISTEE	6.-
SCHWEISSBIE	1.-
EISGROTTENTROPFEN	3000.-
GETROCKNETE SPEICHELFLÜSSIGKEIT	0.20.-
SAURE MERRAIDE	0.80.-
ABGAS SCHLUCKERLI	0.20.
MANGANKNOLLENTEE	400.-
GLETSCHERACHWEISS	10.-



... .. 100.-
... .. 10.-
... .. 7.-
... .. 50.-
... .. 2.-
... .. 18.-

SPEIS UND TRANK
2425 N.O.M.
40° 34' 34.417" N 6° 25' 17.803" E

Writing the body with the body
2020



52

Du gehst fünf Schritte, bis du deiner eigenen Silhouette im Spiegel begegnest. Du bleibst nicht ganz stehen, dann kippst du in das Bild hinein.

You take five steps until you face your own silhouette in the mirror. You stand almost still, then tilt into the image.

53



78

vom fließband werden die verstorbenen wurmfäden ausschwärmen, die aus den bereits bereitgestellten maschinen weitere maschinen produzieren. maschinen werden sich einfach so verkuppeln und verschalten können.

from the assembly line, the threads of dead worms swarm out, producing more machines out of the already-available machines. machines can simply combine and connect with each other.

79



Now, they manifest themselves. In the air.



und eine schnur werde durch die scheibe geführt, woran sich weitere scheiben reihen werden.

and then a string is pushed through the disc, on which other discs are strung.

«Writing the body with the body» consists of fragments taken from performance texts by Stefanie Knobel, which are juxtaposed with a series of pictures created for this volume.

Performance as a book
text, images
400 pages
Edition Fink/Primeur, 2020

A manifestation for the quasi-public #1- #5
2018, 2019

By doing a breathing performance,
life itself becomes the object of
added value.

The air will not accumulate, not
reproduce itself,
not be air-conditioned.

The air is wrong. The air is bad.
The air is dead.

It will be scorching.



The performance, «A manifestation for the quasi-public», proposes to put one self in the perspective of their lungs. An audio composition of analogue textile noises fills the exhibition space, in which there are spectators*, a microphone on stands and a video projection. A breathing score, interrupted by sequences of spoken text, leads the performer to the floor, and makes her stand up again and again.

The breathed air creates a loose, but urgent, narrative in which the non-living—such as the CO2 emissions from Indian cotton factories—stands less in opposition to the breathing body than creates a new composition. The non-living breaks into the humanly displayed spaces, and changes from a background noise into something desiring, something that demands. The performance actively situates a process of degeneration by making it clear that breathing, in particular, is not something that is simply taken for granted when it is put on display.

Soloperformance, 35 min.

breathing score, spoken and projected text,
textiles noises

Performances #1–5:

6. International Moscow Biennale for Young
Art, 11.09.2018

Living Room by Pro Helvetia at
Art Basel,
Basel, 15.06.2018

My grammer and (y)ours?,
OnCurating Project Space,
Zurich, 04.10.2018

Auswahl 18, Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau,
06.01.2019

Digital Ecologies, Center for Contemporary
Art 'Ancient Bath', Plovdiv (BL), 5.5.2019

la molécule (in the screen)
2017, 2018, 2019



The flickering of the screen transfers you into a kind of twilight state.

Your movements accord entirely with hers,
your arms are driven by the same rhythm.



The video «la molécule (in the screen)», was based on a performance filmed on January 18, 2015, at Tanzhaus in Zurich. In the video, several persons work together to create a sequence of shared gestures. Inspired by Yvonne Rainer and her famous performance, Trio A (1968), the artist incorporates simple, fragmentary movements that explore action and examine their own performativity. Dressed in identical outfits, the bodies are interchangeable, and their way of moving is reminiscent of the regularity and systematic character of a machine. The rhythm, however, is disrupted by the uneven ground that makes it difficult to shift body weight. The symmetry, initially established by a set of mirrors, is unsettled by the entrance of several similar bodies, diffracting the first entity. The words spoken by a voice off-screen contribute to the difficulty in identifying a subject, thus creating an opaque first person. Here, Knobel references Roland Barthes and his research on the “neutral”. The neutral allows us to let go of the binary habitus for the sake of a zone of conflict or undecidability. The neutral undermines both the notion of identity and the search for meaning. (Text: Fanny Gonella)

Video/Video-Installation
 HD 16:9, Farbe, Stereo, 18 Min.
 2 colored basket balls
 Concept, Choreography, Text, Editing:
 Stefanie Knobel
 Performer*s: Désirée Meul,
 Eirini Sourgidiaki, Stefanie Knobel
 Voices: Marie-Theres Hölig
 (german version),
 Marion Aeschlimann
 (french version)
 Camera: Gabriel Studerus

Wie werden wir uns wiedererkennen,
 Künstlerhaus Bremen,
 Bremen 8. 11. 2017 – 28. 1. 2018

Vous me rappelez quelqu'un, FRAC
 Lorraine,
 Metz, 22. 3. 2018 – 17. 7. 2018

Auswahl 19, Aargauer Kunsthau,
 Aarau, 16. 11. 2019 – 15. 1. 2020

Foto: Fred Dott | Künstlerhaus Bremen

Video (german version):
[Vimeo](#)





geomythic opera
2020



«geomythic opera» is a performance with two grappling dummies. The martial arts dummies do not simply function as objects of submission, but hybridize with the human body and the well-rehearsed voices, which are inserted between the choreographed sequences. There is the figure of the earth, for example, which threatens to extinguish humanity, or that of the geneticist who wants to heal body politics, but in the end, prefers to take the money that is offered to him. The dialogues refer to a plot by the playwright, Sylvia Wynter, and were actualised for the performance.

Solo poerformance, 25 min.
2 Grappling Dummies with Polyester
embroidery
Voices: Samrat Banerjee,
Stefanie Knobel

Vebikus Kunsthalle Schaffhausen/
Das feministische Kapital
14.06.2020
Fotos: Axel Crettenand

Audiodokumentation:
[Soundcloud](#)

TipTui - Performance Undercover
2019



If performance is the power that, in contemporary society, legitimizes knowledge and social relations (Jon McKenzie), then Tuis (for Telekt-Uell-In, Bertolt Brecht's anagram for intellectuals) are those performers that link art with business, morality and freedom. This they do on tiptoes, perhaps in a similar fashion to the way in which one enters this performative exhibition. Polyester fabric (with conspicuous digital prints), envelopes, veils—they hide the material, which is actually at stake, from the visitors. It remains undercover. Steady, gentle coming and going breathing noises make the windows vibrate.

Delving deeper, the artist engages with a dialogue pertaining to her long-term research on cotton, and its inextricable colonial entanglement with the phantasms of modernity. The narration refers to Brecht's play, *Turandot, or the White-washer's Congress*, written in 1953. In a state which holds a monopoly on cotton, the Tuis secure their own profits, as they deprive the populace of the yield generated by the primary commodity; the cotton is kept concealed from the eyes of the people so as to hide from them the great wealth now held by the state. The criticism put forth by the installation starts with the assumption that we have been forced to maintain an abstract system of value in which racism is inextricably embedded as an agent. Through the artist's own entanglements, the exhibition opens an ambivalent space of memory that connects us to the endurance of the otherwise, while, at the same time, giving the visitor an impression of the performative effects that legitimize our social relations.

tip toe, tip tip tip toe

tip tui, tip tip tip tui

The Tuis are convinced that the denial of cotton to the people through white washing is by far the best strategy.



Solo Exhibition
Installation, 5 Channel-Audio, Polyester
(Polyester woven in Bangalore,
printed in Surat)
Audio: 11 Min.
Voices: Anna-Katharina Müller, Stefanie
Knobel
Raum: Station, Zurich, 25. 4. – 12. 5. 2019

Cité Internationale des Arts Paris,
6. – 7. 10. 2019 und 29. 10. 2019

Fotos: Esther Nora Mathis

Audiodokumentation:
[Soundcloud](#)

Interfacing the non-
2018, 2019



I stay nowish.

I will stay hereish.

I remain hereish.

«Interfacing the non-» is a gesture of resistance against the dominant narrative in the dichotomous structure of nature/culture, digitality/humanity, technics, and all other materialities. The mixed-media installation is based on research on the place and significance of cotton, its inextricable colonial entanglements, as well as the phantasms of modernization and technological development to which cotton is subject as a production factor. Weaving, text and textile, breathing and cotton are the threads of this performative practice, which continues in three parts and anticipates a new subject-form. In *Interfacing the non-*, the white cotton fabric from the installation, warp and weft, is covered by transparent silicone, which glistens on the surface. With the silicone-cotton as background, three hand-choreographies on flat-screen monitors seemingly reflect our daily movements, yet the perseverant gestures manifest the being in progressive time and space dimensions. The relations created here are seeking transitions, formulating an unfinished self.



Mixed Media Installation
Silicone on cotton and windows, 3 videos
with hand gestures on monitors, text

my grammar and your(s)?,
OnCurating Project Space, Zürich,
21. 9. 2018 – 13. 10. 2018

Digital Ecologies,
Center for Contemporary Art
'Ancient Bath' and SKLAD, Plovdiv (BL),
05. 05. 2019 – 30. 06. 2019

Einzelausstellung Kunstkasten Winterthur
(auf Einladung der Kunstkritikerin
Najrin Islam),
05. 10. 2019 – 10. 10. 2019

warp and weft
2017



The Singing Voice: It is a loom, Merchant.

«warp and weft» is an installative textile-technology-fiction.
Here, a figure has a loom in her body and collects „other
stories“ in order to resist the „one story“ about the ongoing
Capitalocene.

Merchant: I want to use this technology for my own purpose.
I will take this loom from your body.

Installation

Text: „Oh my silly, silly, silly mind! (co-written
with Samrat Banerjee)

Lasert on cotton
(Cotton woven in Bhagalpur, Bihar, India)

Eine Ausstellung für Dich / An Exhibition for
You, Helmhaus, Zürich, 21. 9. – 19. 11. 2017

Auswahl 18, Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau,
1. 12. 2018 – 6. 1. 2019

Fotos: Esther Nora Mathis

hereish and nowish
2017





There is something inside my body that hinders the process of immunization.

«hereish and nowish» is a live installation. A choreography of five performative breathing techniques demonstrates a pronounced corporality that one cannot escape. The structural openness of the seven-hour long performance (running in 60-minute loops) allows visitors to decide for themselves when they wish to enter and exit. Over time, communities, liaisons and accomplices occur among the visitors that come, go and stay.

The performative breathing techniques are based on the idea of a loom. Where body and technology can no longer be separated from each other, life gains a real material force. It is what places this live installation beyond work and reproduction.



Live-Installation

Choreography: 60 min.

Performance: 7 hours

Dramaturgy: Désirée Meul Performer*innen:
Anna Lena Lehr, Tabea Magyar, Désirée Meul,
Nina Tshomba

Eine Ausstellung für Dich / An Exhibition for
You, Helmhaus, Zurich, 21.9. – 19.11.2017

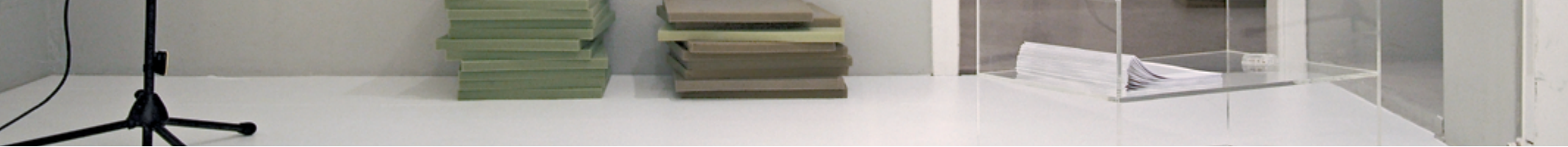
Fotos: Esther Nora Mathis

Video/Performancedokumentation:

[Vimeo](#)

A heavy, heavy duty
2016





the machine and above all the cotton fibre is on hand always ready to go, soaked impregnated, compressed, prepared, narrowing to a thread.

«A heavy, heavy duty» is a textile-fiction in the form of an installation that merges strands of global cotton production with the omnipresence of synthetic and chemical substances. The work creates a science-fiction landscape in which fertilizer, dry ice and hormone preparations either produce, optimise, devitalise and cure bodies, or get incorporated as means of resistance.

The installation assembles sound recordings of and with textiles, interconnecting them with a selection of lists, historical references, interviews and legends—of the cotton producing Vegetable Lamb of Tartary, of farmers and cotton activists from Nagpur (India), of disused textile factories at Zurich Oberland, and of the first industrial spinning frame, “Spinning Jenny”. A future timeline of a heavy, heavy duty lets resonate the past with the present, and enables a revision of Switzerland’s colonial entanglements in the frame of an expanded textile history. A part of the exhibition is a textile-disco and textile walk; in the rhythms of textile-sounds and looms of Lodikeda, Santipur and Neuthal, we invite you to dance and create your own version of the “Spinning Jenny”.



Exhibition
(with Angela Wittwer)
Installation, Audio-loop, 49 min.
Booklet, diverse materials
Voice: Anna Katharina Müller (Deutsch)

Les Complices*, Zurich,
11. 11. 2016 – 03. 12. 2016

Fotos: Angela Wittwer

Audiodokumentation:
[Soundcloud](#)

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<https://heavyheavyduty.com/>