



transatlantische impulse
akademie der künste / berlin / 2010
exhibition documentation

Transatlantische Impulse.

15 Jahre Villa Aurora

Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2010

Curated by Sabrina van der Ley and Markus Richter

Commissioned by Villa Aurora Forum Berlin / Villa Aurora, Pacific Palisades

Artists:

Colin Ardley, Heike Baranowsky, Rosa Barba, Marcel Bühler, Jörg Bürkle, Peggy Buth, Eva Castringius, Frauke Eigen, Anna Faroghi, Thomas Florschuetz, Gerhard Friedl, Eva Grubinger, Romeo Grünfelder, Carla Guagliardi, Sabine Hornig, Laura Horelli, Christian Keinstar, Thomas Körner, Dagmar Knöpfel, Veronika Kellndorfer, Takehito Koganezawa, Bettina Krieg, Via Lewandowsky, Wiebke Loeper, M+M, Agnes Meyer-Brandis, Isa Melsheimer, Simon Dybbroe Moeller, Andrea Neumann, Olaf Nicolai, Tilman Peschel, Miguel Rothschild, Albrecht Schäfer, Kai Schiemenz, Hans-Christian Schink, Andreas Schulze, Maya Schweizer, Albert Weis

Curatorial statement

"Like earlier generations of English
intellectuals who taught themselves
Italian in order to read Dante in the
original, I learned to drive to read Los
Angeles in the original."
Reyner Banham, 1971

Many Europeans continue to view Los Angeles as an urban-design catastrophe of the first order - as an overgrown conglomeration of cities and towns connected by a bewildering network of gigantic freeways, a dystopian non-place remote from the ideal of a measured, humane city. Yet when the English architecture critic Reyner Banham arrived in L.A. in 1965 with a grant from the Graham Foundation, he was enchanted by the city. His 1971 book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* is a veritable declaration of love, not only to the outstanding architecture of Schindler and Neutra but also to the anonymous everyday buildings, the gas stations and drive-ins, the culture of surfboards and muscle cars - and not least the freeways.

Although till then he had never sat behind the steering wheel of a car, he was immediately able to enjoy the freeway intersections as an aesthetic-kinetic experience: "The Santa Monica/San Diego intersection is a work of art, both as a pattern on a map, as a monument against the sky, and as a kinetic experience as one sweeps through it."

Banham's *Los Angeles* of the late 1960s and early 1970s has long ceased to exist; the city has changed profoundly over the last forty years. His once controversial book has become a classic, recently reissued by the University of California Press, but his fascination with the phenomenon of L.A. is as relevant as ever and is echoed in the work of the artists

awarded grants to stay at Villa Aurora, the former home of Marta and Lion Feuchtwanger in Pacific Palisades. The experience of the freeways is as much a part of this sometimes ambivalent fascination as the continual confrontation with cinematic images, so characteristic of Los Angeles. Here too Banham expresses the European experience of the city precisely: "Visiting houses in Beverly Hills or Bel Air can be a hallucinating experience; an overwhelming sense of déjà-vu mingles with an overwhelming desire to sidle along corridors with one's back to the wall and to kick doors wide open before passing through." Banham himself contributed to L.A.'s filmic hagiography: in 1972 he appeared in the BBC documentary *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*.

Cinematography and the film industry are a significant point of reference for the exhibition *Transatlantic Impulses*. Central to it are the artists' approaches to the present and the past, to myth and reality, society and urban space in Los Angeles and California. Just as they are reflected in their function as cinematic icons, the themes and locations are also subjected to social and ecological interrogation. Issues such as strip mining or L.A.'s water shortages play an equal role alongside the glamour of Hollywood. Unlike Banham, who was still forced to counter European intellectuals' unquestioningly negative image of L.A. as disturbing and alien, the work of the Aurora artists shows a noticeable ambivalence towards the city and its outlying areas. It is significant that any of the artists have shifted the focus of their interest from the metropolis to its immediate and wider surroundings. The L.A. River and the city's water problems, exposed to a wider public through Roman Polanski's film *Chinatown*, are repeatedly reflected in the artists' work. Their gaze reaches way beyond L.A.'s wider catchment-area however, extending to the Mojave Desert, Zabriskie Point, Death Valley and even the airplane graveyard in the Sonora Desert in Arizona.

A further theme of the exhibition stems from an interest in the architectural manifestations of the 'project of modernity' shared by many of the artists. In L.A. this interest means an encounter with the history of emigration. Between the 1920s and the 1940s a series of German and Austrian architects moved to California, including Erich Mendelsohn, Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler. Neutra who, together with Mendelsohn, had already created one of the earliest flat-roofed houses, 1923 in Berlin, provided the impetus for the development of the Californian Case Study Houses. These buildings, both austere and filigree, have been an inspiration to contemporary artists for years, but artists' interests have now shifted from early modernism to the architecture of the 1960s and 1970s. There the focus is less on distinctive buildings than on the anonymous urban and suburban structures so characteristic of Los Angeles' cityscape. This paradigm shift also corresponds to the history of emigration; in 1964 the Austrian emigrant Bernard Rudofsky published his epoch shaping *Architecture Without Architects*, accompanying the eponymous exhibition at New York's MOMA. Both show and book were instrumental to the critical revision of modernity - which included the work of Reyner Banham - and the artists who have worked at Villa Aurora in recent years have repeatedly addressed the issues it raises.



From left to right:

Heike Baranowsky

Racetrack, 2010

3-channel video installation, stop motion animation, , colour, sound, HD, 4:20 min. loop

Agnes Meyer-Brandis

Lying On Dimensions / first draft, 2010

Objects, documentation and video sketches

Eva Castrangius

K-PAX, 2010

4 channel-photo projection on wooden box, paintings (inside)

On the left: **Agnes Meyer-Brandis**

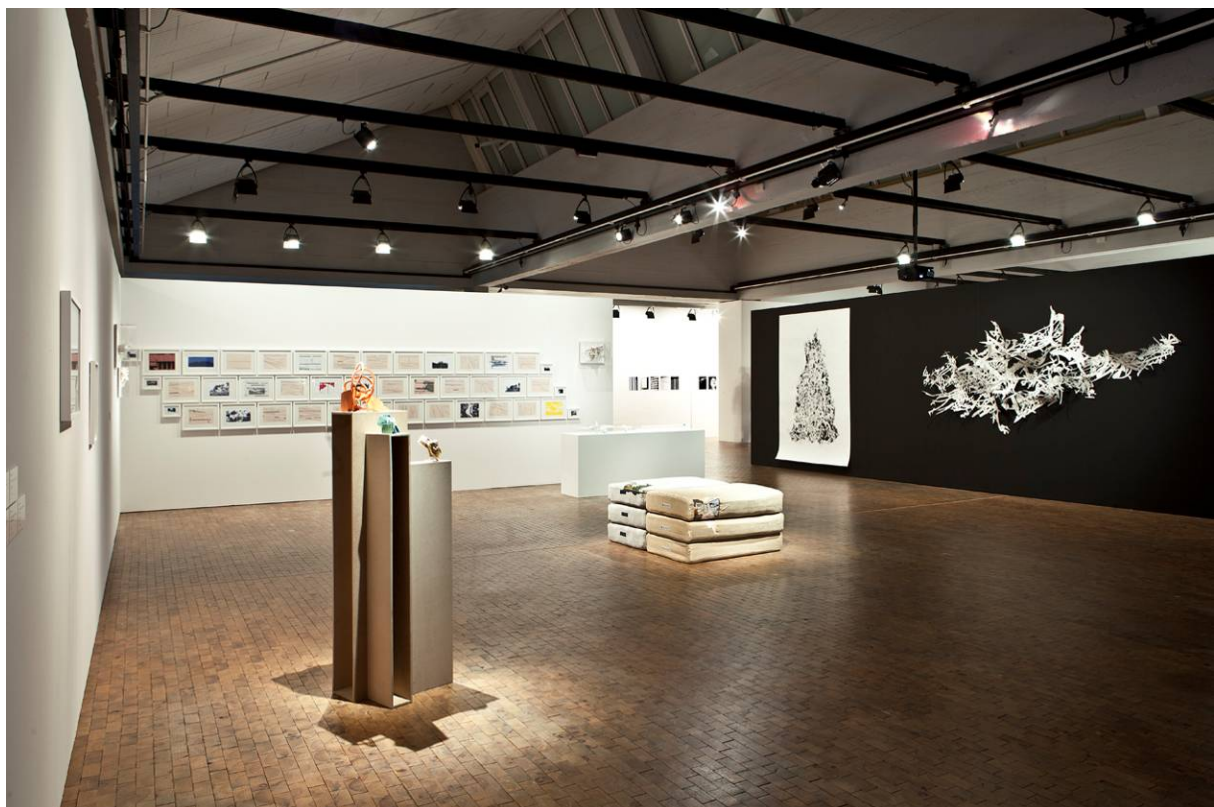
Photos: Eva Castrangius, MR







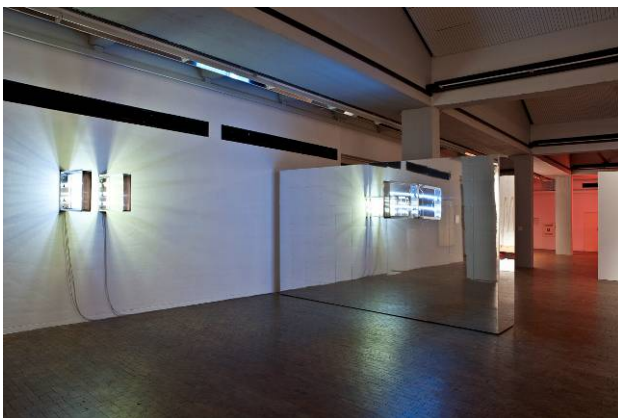
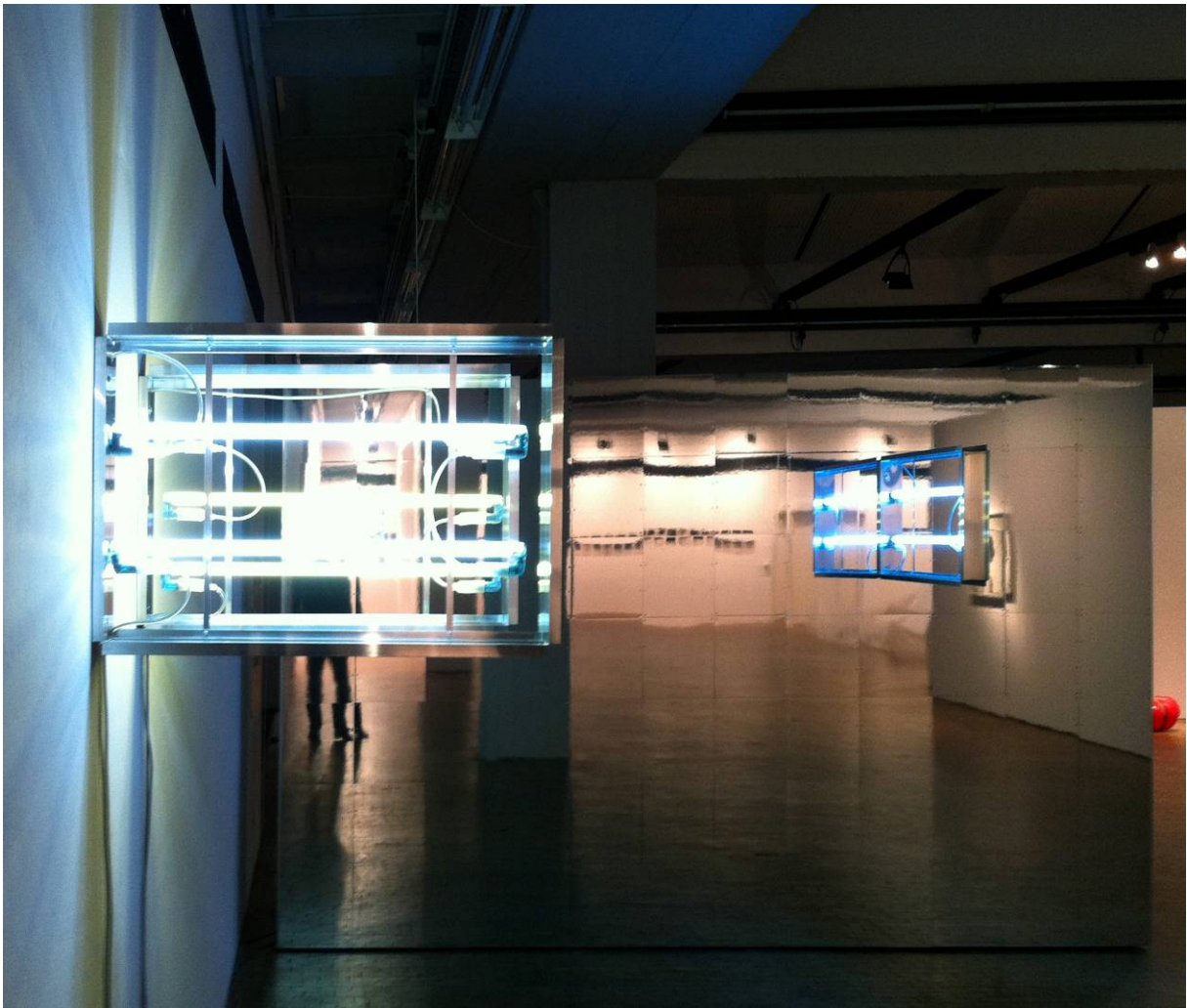
Bettina Krieg
Untitled, 2010
 Ink and pencil on paper
Takehito Koganezawa
Cream + Aluminium, 2008
 Video on DVD, loop
Untitled (soft sculpture sunset), 2008
 HD Video on DVD, loop



From left to right:

Kai Schiemenz
 Drawings and maquettes, 2007-10
Colin Ardley
 Drawings, collages, objects
 and an architectural model, 2010
 Photos: Eva Castringius

Isa Melsheimer
Umzug, 2008
 6 mattresses, embroidery thread
 On the black wall
Bettina Krieg
Untitled, 2010
 Ink and pencil on paper



Albert Weis
register, 2010
Aluminum profiles, neon,
automatic switch, cable,
mirror, aluminum
Photos: Eva Castringius



Top:

Thomas Körner
la barca, 2009
Audiovisual live performance
transferred to DVD,
7 min, loop, sound
Photos: Eva Castringius

Below:

Maya Schweitzer
Shifting Time, 2009
Digital slideshow on DVD
Sylmar, 2009
Video on DVD, 16 min., colour, sound, loop

Left: **Wiebke Löper**
Welcome home, 2006/10
 Offset on wallpaper
 Back: **Eva Grubinger**
The Trial of Henry Kissinger, 2009
 Painted MDF
 Right: **Sabine Ercklentz/**
Anja Weber, *Homeland*, 2007
 2-channel video installation,
 sound, loop

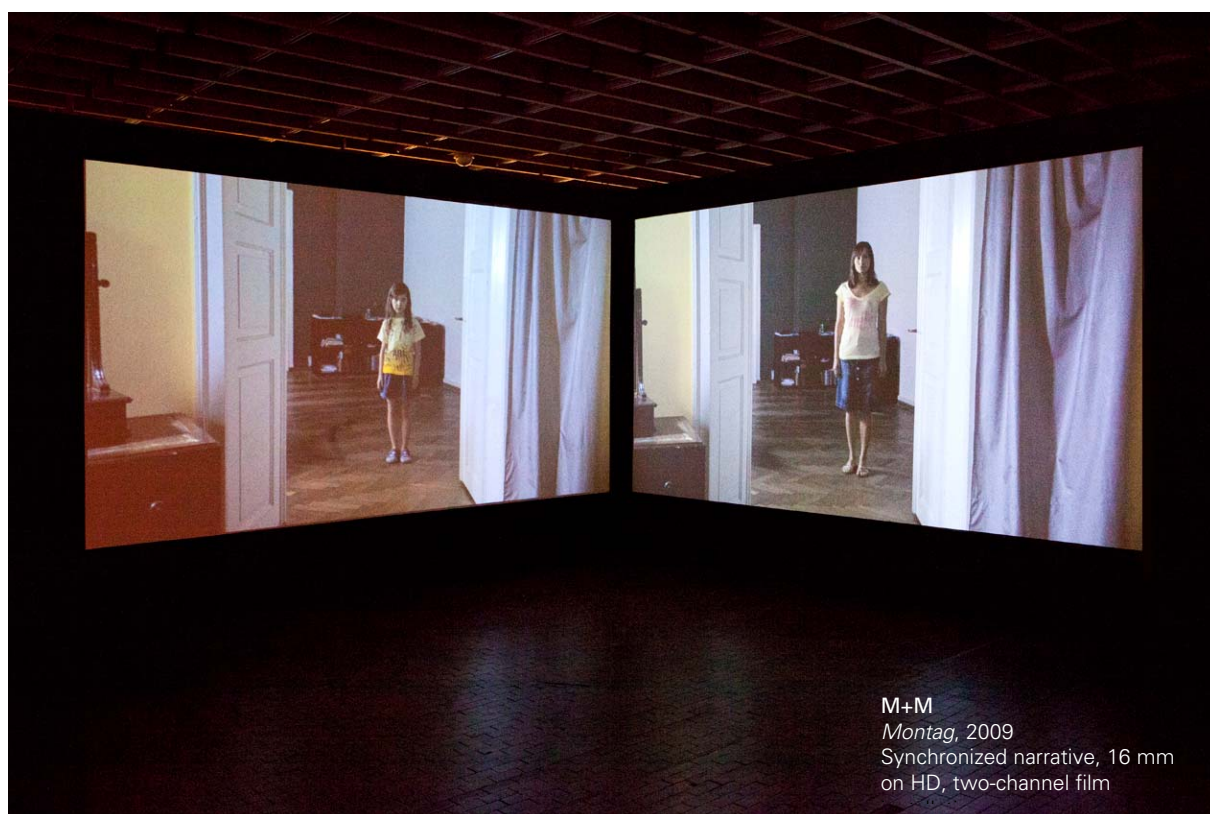


Left: **Carla Guagliardi**
1,2,3,4, 2007
 4 rubber balloons, rubber bands,
 air and time
 Back: **Thomas Florschuetz**
Ohne Titel (Jet) 35 & 38, 2008/09
 C-print, diasec
 Right: **Frauke Eigen**
 5 Gelatin silver print, 2005/07



Left: **Dagmar Knöpfel**
Strukturen Los Angeles, 2009
 18 C-prints
 Right: **Marcel Bühler**
Not Done Yet, 2005/07
 MDF, lacquer, diamond cap lights,
 cable, chase light generator
 Photos: Eva Castringius





Left: Anna Faroghi
Drawing Casablanca, 2009/10
Xerox copies, 400 sheets,
2-channel stop motion projection
Right: Laura Horelli/Gerhard Friedel
Shedding Details, 2009
Single channel video, 25 min, color, sound
Photos: Eva Castringius



Left: **Miguel Rothschild**
4 Photo collages, 2010
Pierced C-prints, loose confetti
Right: **Tilman Peschel**
4 C-prints, 2006/07
Photo: Eva Castringius

