

CONTAINER



Since 2011, the German Kunstvereine and the ADKV, in cooperation with the Center for German and European Studies (CGES) at the University of Minnesota, have participated in a summer exchange program called "WorkART", where students from three different Universities in the Twin Cities are able to work as interns for various Kunstvereins' throughout Germany. Since then the connection between the two partners has grown, and in 2014 Gudrun Thiessen-Schneider, art director of the Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim in Neuenhaus, Germany visited the Regis Center for the Arts at the University of Minnesota. After her visit, Thiessen-Schneider invited 8 Master students studying at University to participate in an exhibition called „Container". The idea was that all the artwork was to come "out of a suitcase", as in the artists could only bring what they could ship or carry on a plane. Five of the eight students were able to come to Neuenhaus and make art directly in the Kunstverein, so the location also became a "container" for creative experimentation.

The following text was written by Macey Mayer, a student at University of Minnesota - Twin Cities during her stay at the Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim in Neuenhaus, Germany in July 2016.

CONTAINER / May 22nd through July 17th 2016

WorkART Connections graduated students of the University of Minnesota Eight students show work in relation to the theme ,CONTAINER'

Room I / Entrance

Kevin Obsatz is a film and media artist who works with 16mm film and digital video installation. He has a BA in Film Production from the University of Southern California and is currently working towards a MFA in Experimental Media at the University of Minnesota, where he also teaches a class called Experimental Media.

Closer to my Father is a two-channel, digital video installation projected from the ground onto two adjacent walls. The projectors sit in a toppled-over suitcase, and "electronic clutter" appears to be spilling out onto the ground. The suitcase belongs to the father of the artist and was the means by which the work made it's way over to Germany. The two corresponding videos capture similar features of skin, pores, and hair follicles. The difference is one video shows Obsatz's skin and the other shows his father's.



The skin and hair, as seen through a microscopic camera, is like a foreign landscape, and the viewer becomes an examiner of this seemingly alien environment. With background information, we learn that in order to obtain this video Obsatz asked his 74-year-old father to undress and lay on the couch while he closely filmed his body. It was an intimate experience for a grown son and his father, and further more, an attempt to know his father on a deeper level - beneath the skin. After this experience with his father, Obsatz turned the microscopic camera on himself and explored the landscape of his own body and perhaps more importantly, his being - comparing his external and internal self to that of his father. The adjacent videos of father and son, like the adjacent walls they are shown on, share more in common than different.

Chris Groth graduated in 2010 from St. Olaf in Northfield, Minnesota with a BA in Studio Arts. In 2015 he completed his MFA in Sculpture through the University of Minnesota. Groth is currently an instructor at *Leonardo's Basement* in Minneapolis. Groth often tries to approach his artwork with the "...sense of awe he felt as a child," because he feels he is better able to make and then break rules.

John Fleischer is a multimedia artist interested in investigating movement, language, and embodied experience through sculpture and performance. He completed his MFA in Sculpture through the University of Minnesota in 2016. At the heart of John's practice lies an inquiry into art's potential role in the transformation of consciousness.



Groth and Fleischer worked together to create *The Dead Guess: Pupil Elbow Tongue Skin (Directive Thresholds)*, which was a performance that takes final form as a 7-minute video for the exhibition. The video was produced in the attic of the Kunstverein, but a 45-minute long performance happened in the gallery during the opening of *Container*. In the opening performance the two artists are seen communicating with one another via walkie-talkies. One man gives a directive through coded language, and the other responds with a corresponding movement or body position. Coded language is a container of knowledge or meaning, and suggests a boundary between those that know the code and those that do not. We use code in everyday life, especially in relation to technology, but language itself is a code. A word is a signifier for an actual object or an understanding of an abstract concept. When watching the *The Dead Guess* video, the viewer may catch on to how this "coded information" corresponds to body position and therefore, cross a boundary into understanding the layer and form of the performance artwork. >

Next to the video sits a curious black box, and there are three sets of black cane-like objects (called markers). The markers were positioned throughout the gallery space and used in the making of the video and during the live performance. The box is the container of these markers, which can be broken down and stored for easy shipment back to Minnesota.

Room II

Amber White grew up in Little Falls, Minnesota, a small town near the center of the state. Her relationship to her hometown and rural Minnesota seems to influence a lot of her artwork. White was the Exhibitions Director at *Altered Esthetics* in Northeast Minneapolis from 2011 to 2013. She completed her MFA through the University of Minnesota in 2016. Her work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and in Beijing, China.

Trailing/Containing Home is portion of tanned deer hide hung on the wall that appears to be unravelling and creates a twisted path that ends (or starts) with a cast-iron wasp nest. White's family owns land in the iron range area in northern Minnesota, and it was there that she hunted the deer. Her family treated the body and ate the meat. In attempt to use the entire animal, White processed the deer hide as well. One could look at the deer hide as the container or vessel of the deer's life, and the wasp nest as a symbol of home - the container of family. Perhaps the two materials together represent, for White, the memory of her time spent with her family at the iron range. The iron-casted wasp nest could represent something in our life that seems very stable and durable - something we hope will never change. Maybe it represents our destination and the twisted path could be representative of the obstacles we must overcome in order to get there.

White describes her artwork as, "... an attempt at honoring and accepting impermanence, [while also being] an engagement in ecological thought." *Trailing/Containing Home* is possibly an attempt at preserving life and nature, but yet also serves as a reminder that we cannot contain it - time is not on our side.



Jasmine Peck received her BFA from the University of Wyoming in 2014, and is a first year MFA candidate at the University of Minnesota. Her art focuses on examining "...constructed layers of conscious and unconscious thought, memory, and experiences that cumulate into a singular version of reality," most often through printmaking, drawing, and ceramics.

In insignificant I-V Peck investigates memory "...by preserving impressions of past actions" through 5 callographs featuring remnants of old cardboard boxes. The cardboard boxes used to make *insignificant I-V* came from Peck's friends when they moved at the end of the school year. Moving is especially common during college years when students are often living somewhere for only a year or less. People often feel a considerable amount of instability during a move, however boxes serve as an (often underappreciated) container of our possessions. They help us to move on to a new home, a new job, or even a new country; they become an integral part of major and minor life transitions. While boxes can hold our valuables, they can also be a space for the forgotten items in our life: old business documents, old family photos, childhood toys, etc. The callograph prints can be looked at as different boxes or as the same box over time. Perhaps they represent one person's movement over a lifetime - the packing and unpacking of our "life". Either way, the cardboard boxes are familiar and yet ambiguous enough that the viewer is able to project their own understanding or relation to "the box" and what can be contained within.



Jessica LaRotonda completed her BA in Art Education in 2005 at Hope College in Michigan, and has now completed two Master degrees. She got a MFA in Figurative Sculpture from New York Academy of Art in 2013, and recently completed her MFA in Sculpture from the University of Minnesota in 2016. She is currently teaching Sculpture at Regis Center for the Arts at the U of M.

Envase is a completely self-contained art piece in several forms. Firstly, it is a wax cast of a lily bud prior to opening up into a flower, but it is empty on the inside. The bud of a flower can be symbolic as a beginning or the container of life. Without the wax, the unopened flower would be withering and dying by the end of the exhibition. This small wax lily bud sits on top of a wooden box - the same box used to ship it to and from Germany. This small box functions as the means of transportation and also the pedestal for the art piece - a complete container. The wax lily bud symbolizes the ephemeral aspect of life, especially that of a flower. It seems to have stopped time, but in attempt to "pause" the death of the flower, it also seems to cease life.



Nooshin Hakim Javadi is an Iranian artist currently completing her MFA through the University of Minnesota. Her subject of research has specifically emerged from socio-political issues. She shows the reflection of social environment on generating borders and gaps through installation and performance. She has exhibited internationally in Iran, U.S.A., Germany, and Turkey.

The work **Violet diaspora** suggests themes in relation to the 21st-century diaspora, immigration, cultural identity, and perhaps, even loss of identity. This artwork takes the form of the mirrored-image of the world map in a large area of dirt on the gallery floor. Javadi drew the lines of continents and borders of every country in sand and then planted grass seeds within the lines. *Violet diaspora* is alive and is therefore ever-in progress, changing depending on when someone visits the gallery. In the early stages, one could clearly see the borders of every country defined with sand, but soon the grass seedlings took root, grew, and covered all the borders. With the loss of borders and the same grass growing across all the land, *Violet diaspora* can be representative of the earth's capability to support life all around the planet.

In the "ocean" area of the map lies an open backpack with grass growing from within. The backpack is symbolic of travel (specifically refugee travel) and how we carry some "bits of home" everywhere we go. If the grass is read as "home", and the grass is all over the planet, one could conclude that "home" could be found anywhere in the world. The world is without literal borders, and without our country borders man would be able to migrate freely, like the grass. This artwork questions the separation and differentiation people and countries insist upon each other when fundamentally, we are one.



Raum III

Dawn Schot Klotzbach works and lives in the twin cities of Minnesota where she has worked professionally with audio and video her entire adult life. She is an Engineer at a recording studio in Minneapolis and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Minnesota. She completed her MFA from the U of M in 2016, where she developed her individual practice as an audio and visual artist. Her current work involves site-specific video and audio recordings that explore the *mise en scène* and acoustics of the installation space.

Play. Space. Time. is an audio and video installation that resides in the back room of the Kunstverein gallery. The installation was recorded and is shown in the same room of a very important wall mural made by a Syrian artist, Khaled Al-Saai. (The mural was from a prior exhibition, *Away From Home*, which tells the history of the current war in Syria and the relationship between Germany and Syrian refugees.) Within this physical setting, Klotzbach's *Play. Space. Time.* takes on a more serious undertone, and the space becomes a 'container of context' for the installation. The low audio, which came from sounds and echoes of the room when the video was made, gives an almost eerie glow to the space. The video features a woman crossing the screen several times during the 10-minute video. Everything this woman does appears to be difficult for her. Sometimes she is bent over and dragging a lamp; other times she is pushing another person in a chair guided only by the small light of a flashlight. Most times the woman is moving into the darkness with the light behind her, perhaps symbolizing the unknown path ahead for the Syrian refugees.

The only other thing in the gallery space is an old, empty chair that can also be seen in the video. A chair seems to be inherently inviting for people, (especially for a viewer of video art) but this chair is alone in the gallery space and doesn't appear to be in good condition. One could read this chair as "home," perhaps the literal structure of a house, or the idea of home back in Syria. "Home" is a place most Syrian refugees long for, but their physical home is no longer the safe haven it once was. The chair in the video is only sometimes highlighted by the dim light - or the passage of time; it waits in silence for its people to return home



Nooshin Hakim



Kevin



John, Chris, Nooshin, Jasmine, Dawn