

## Layers in Complexity

**14 September – 26 October 2025**

With: Julie Batteux, Yaël Kempf, David Reiber Otálora, Simon Wienk-Borgert

Curated by Lara Bader and Marlene Kurz

From 14 September to 26 October 2025, the artists Julie Batteux, Yaël Kempf, David Reiber Otálora and Simon Wienk-Borgert will present current works created during their one-year scholarship period (2024/2025) at the residency in Münster. The exhibition is curated by Lara Bader and Marlene Kurz, who are curators of the programme from April to September 2025. Every year, residence NRW+ brings together a juried, diverse group of artists and curators - with different backgrounds, approaches, and thematic references.

The title *Layers in Complexity* is an invitation by the two curators to explore the exhibited works through the idea and concept of *layers*. Layering thrives on the plurality of individual elements and their relationships to one another – a quality evident not only within the individual works, but also in the nature of the fellowship programme. Although the artists share a living space, their artistic work follows its own paths and not a common theme. *Layers in Complexity* is inspired by the philosopher Donna Haraway's metaphor of onion layers: an onion has no fixed core but consists solely of its layers. Haraway illustrates that knowledge and interpretation are always context-dependent, multi-layered, and never final. Any insight thus remains limited, situational, and in flux – Haraway's image makes multidimensionality visible. This also reflects the initial concept of the residency, where different artistic and curatorial positions coexist and the focus lies on open, situational exchange.

Thinking about *layering* can make the processes of creation and thematic overlaps tangible, as well as differences and gaps within the artworks. Across a range of media – from figurative painting, photography, installations and sculptures to collages and video – these overlaps emerge as conceptual, material, temporal, and thematic strategies. The artists explore material layers – such as layers of posters in the sculptural works of Yaël Kempf, glazed layers of paint in the works of Julie Batteux, and paper collages by David Reiber Otálora – to layers of different logics in the works of Simon Wienk-Borgert. Engaging with multiple metaphorical layers through their motifs, the works open up complex art-historical references, personal memories, and connections between material, spaces and time, both within each work and in dialog with one another.

Referring to the paintings of **Julie Batteux**, the term *layers* points to her painting technique: her works emerge through glazed layers of paint, which interweave in a multi-layered way with the striking shape of the canvas and the dense imagery. A complex image structure unfolds that only reveals itself upon closer inspection – not only within the individual works, but also in the *Schattenbock(sen)* series

and in dialogue with the viewers as well as with the other works in the space. The starting point of many of her series is the naked female body, which in the *Schattenbock(sen)* series, as in others, is always her own. She shows her body in provocative poses, sometimes from mercilessly strong low angles, but also kneeling frontally facing the viewers, gazing at them sometimes challengingly, sometimes appraisingly. Standing in front of the images, we assume the camera's perspective, and thus perceive the self-reflective, but also self-forgetful gaze of the protagonist in confrontation with the selfie camera. Body images, the relationship to one's own sexuality, and objects of desire are staged here. The autobiographical object of fear from sports class in school, the vaulting horse, is partially reversed, as it seems to merge with the body almost like in an act of love, becomes the support for it, or enters into conflict with it. Within the series, the German expression „Bock haben“ a synonym for „to feel like“ or „to desire“ unfolds in a multi-layered way and is extended by the connotation of the rebellious, stubborn animal goat [Ger.: Bock]. By staging vulnerability, anger, and resilience on the one hand, and pleasure, self-confidence, and self-empowerment on the other, Batteux develops a sensitive, autobiographically influenced examination of the female body, its attributions and evaluations.

In the foyer of the Kunstverein, visitors encounter the installation *Problem of God* by **Yaël Kempf**. The sculptures consist of thick layers of former poster walls found on the street, whose milled, bark-like surfaces reveal fragments of past advertising messages. These remnants of consumption and the urban landscape, detached from their original purpose, become raw sediments of a contemporary urbanity. Standing archaically in the space, the forms resemble sharply struck flint tools from the Stone Age. An iPhone is embedded between the layers, playing a video and soundpiece that refers to the film on the upper floor, in which the suggested narrative continues.

There, a bench made of the same layered material invites visitors to linger. Mushrooms grow from it, like on a felled tree. It forms the starting point for the short film, in which mythical images meet a brittle, post-industrial urban landscape. Together with a group of young people from the Glückauf School in Essen, the video was created based on an improvised scene script that transforms their living environments and fantasies into poetic fictions. It was filmed on the grounds surrounding Richard Serra's monumental sculpture *Bramme*, located on a former mining dump in the north of Essen. The relic of a coal mining becomes the backdrop for their story. In wide shots, the young people run over huge pipelines, the camera movements are reminiscent of the free dynamics of open

video game worlds. In other scenes, they play soccer, filmed from a player's perspective, so that the boundary between digital aesthetics and real presence oscillates. A feeling of summer, youth, freedom, and inertia emerges, interspersed with thoughts of the future. Scenes merge into a state of lightness and uncertainty. Violence, crime, and unspoken desires flash up – the young people drift between past, present, and new possibilities.

**David Reiber Otálora's** artistic work investigates the impacts of colonialism that continue to affect society today. He is particularly interested in the tropics, their exoticist representation and exploitation, but also in the question of how common Western perspectives can be questioned and expanded through new, alternative viewpoints. Green, oversized plant leaves made of metal hanging on the wall play with the Western tradition of using tropical plants and their motifs as purely decorative elements. The viewer's gaze is directed to the form, the material, and the size of the leaf. But only the knowledge that this is an enlarged representation of real models from nature, showing damage caused by leafcutter ants whose colonies are mainly found in the South American rainforest, opens up another dimension of the work. Reiber Otálora is interested in the production aesthetics of nature, as shown in the cutting traces of the ants on the leaves.

The decision-making process of these insects resembles Reiber Otálora's artistic approach, especially in his collages, which can be seen on the first floor of the exhibition. Here he processes copies of scientific text excerpts and schematic drawings from essays like *Plant chimeras: The good, the bad, and the 'Bizzaria'* (Margaret H. Frank, Daniel H. Chitwood, 2016) as well as photographs from online forums dealing with the technique of plant grafting – the joining of two plants so that they grow together. Reiber Otálora sews these materials into large-format collages. Similar to the botanical technique itself, multilayered image surfaces emerge: leaf elements are cut out – as by the ants – reveal other layers and join together to form new shapes that can be infinitely expanded.

The photographic series *Emotional Budgets* by **Simon Wienk-Borgert** captures interior rooms from an elevated perspective, similar to a surveillance camera. He directs this observing gaze to his own studio in Düsseldorf, a multifunctional place: a former greengrocer's shop that has evolved into an artist-run exhibition space, studio, and living space. This can also be read as a reference to Residence NRW+, where work and living spaces merge. The inverted black-and-white photographs reverse everyday spaces: light becomes dark, private becomes public, shop architecture becomes exhibition display. Architectural, social, and emotional boundaries emerge and are renegotiated in an overlaid space between production, exhibition, and everyday life. This is also evident in the placement in the exhibition, where the works extend into the office of the Neuer Aachener Kunstverein – a transitional and passageway space.

With pedestals and window coverings from the Kunstverein's inventory as well as other material, Wienk-

Borgert develops the installation *Untitled Constellation*, whose elements are arranged on site. He collects, dismantles, and condenses his own and external materials in a temporary installation. The arrangement follows neither a hierarchical logic nor a clear narrative, but creates a visual, net-like structure. Books of different genres – such as an instruction manual or a collection of botanical illustrations – meet publications such as *A Man Asleep* (Georges Perec, 1991) or *Pamphlet Architecture 28: Augmented Landscapes* (2006), which refer to the nature, history, and instability of spaces. *Untitled Constellation* unites the objects into a field of tension that allows for sometimes familiar, sometimes irritating combinations and associative or ambiguous connections and references.

**Short Biographies:**

**Julie Batteux** (born 1996 in Aachen) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg from 2014 to 2022, among others with Prof. Susanne Kühn and Prof. Jürgen Teller. Her project *Spiegelschatten* was awarded the graduate prize. Julie Batteux's paintings primarily explore the aesthetic guiding cultures of social networks in relation to body images and their impact on the psyche of the user. She has participated in various group exhibitions, among other at the Kunstpavillon München and the Kunstmuseum Erlangen. In 2023, she presented her first solo exhibition *Leibeigen* at the Kunstverein Kohlenhof in Nuremberg, followed in 2025 by the exhibition *Safer Space* at the Kunstmuseum Heidenheim. Her work has received several awards, including the Förderpreis des Bezirks Mittelfranken, the Bayerischer Kunstförderpreis, and the Bayerische Atelierpreis.

**Yaël Kempf** (born in Geneva) is a French artist. She completed her studies at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 2020, where she currently lives and works. Her film and sculptural works combine poetic strategies with political research, revolving around questions of migration, ecology, and identity. In 2022, she deepened this focus during a residency from the NRW Art Foundation in Tel Aviv. In 2024, she presented her solo exhibition *Annunciation* at the Kunsthaus Essen and received support from the Visuelle Kunst Junge Szene program for *La Faim du Tigre*. In 2023, she was awarded with the studio-fellowship of Deutsche Bank. Her works have recently been shown at Museum Ludwig (Cologne), Kai 10 | Arthena Foundation (Düsseldorf), Weltkunstzimmer (Düsseldorf), and Villa du Parc (Annemasse), among others.

**David Reiber Otálora** (born 1992 in Münster) completed his studies at HFBK Hamburg in 2020 and now lives and works in Berlin. His artistic practice engages with the many afterlives of colonialism, particularly as they inform the representation, imaginary and ongoing destruction of the tropics. Through atmospherically dense and speculative works, Reiber Otálora resists the epistemic violence of a world reduced to the real. He had his first solo exhibition *Tropical Frenzy* at Kunstverein Gießen in 2019 and has participated in various group exhibitions, most recently at *Britzenale 5* in Berlin, as well as in 2024 at the Dortmunder Kunstverein, Hamburger Kunstverein, Klosterruine Berlin, and with Urbane Künste Ruhr.

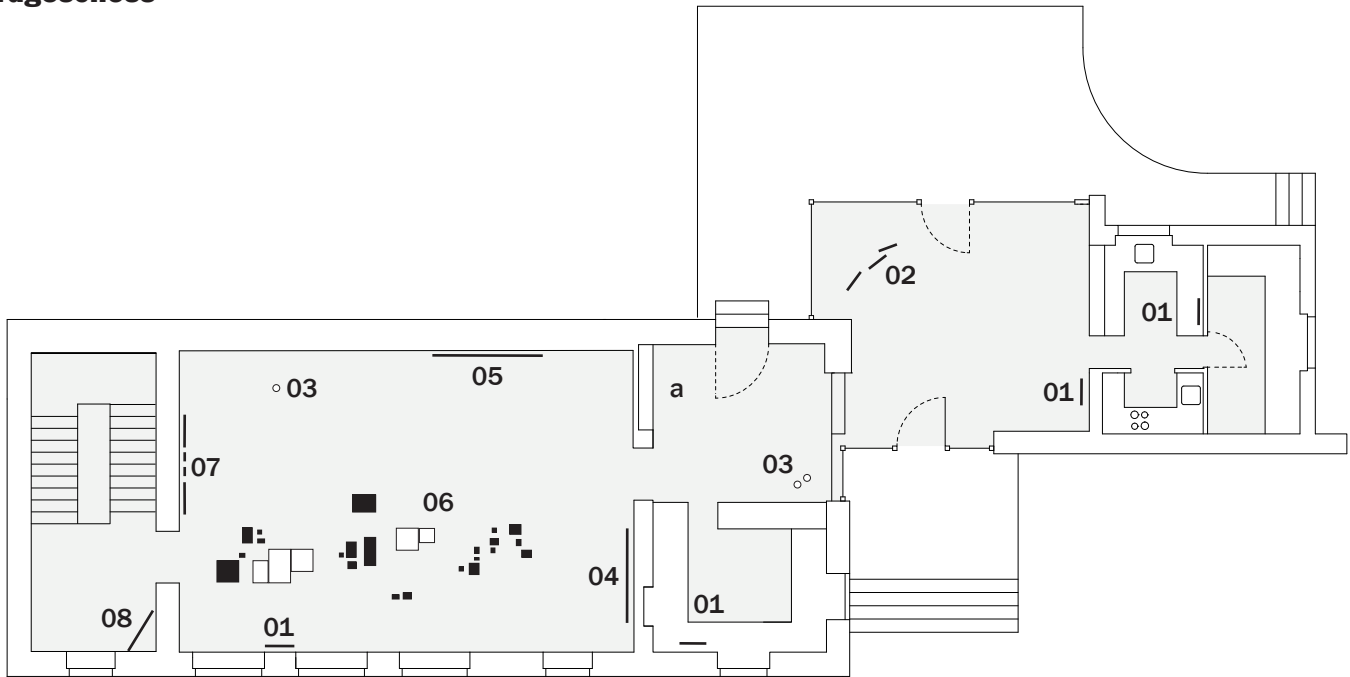
**Simon Wienk-Borgert** (born 1988 in Baden-Baden) completed his studies at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 2023 and lives and works in Düsseldorf. In his artistic practice, he develops a responsive archive of time-based work fragments and invariants through an ongoing process of collecting, decomposing and densifying own and third-party materials. Since 2018, he has explored his own involvement and the parameters of what art can be for him within exhibition formats. Most recently, he published *visualsnow* (2023), the first edition in his own publishing house SOLBATEMIM (together with Johanna Terhechte and

Ludwig Kuffer). Since 2024 Simon Wienk-Borgert has been part of the artist-run space Linienstrasse in Düsseldorf.

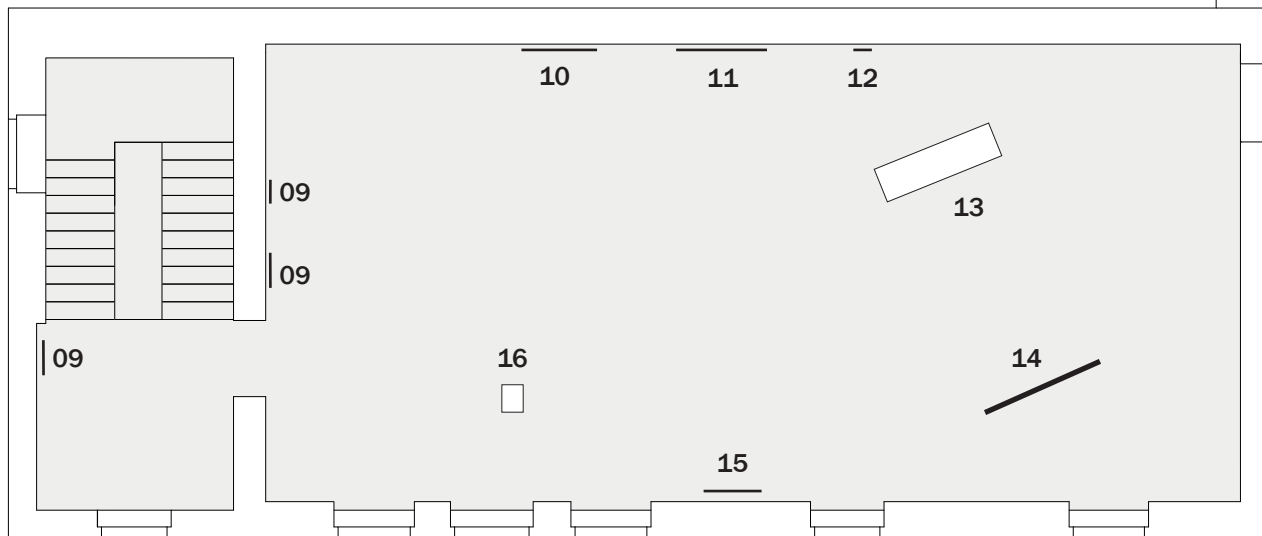
**The curators:**

**Lara Bader** (born 1991 in Bielefeld) studied Art-Media-Aesthetic Education (B.A.), Art History (M.A.), and Museum Management at the University of Bremen, the University of Oldenburg, and the University of Hamburg. She works as a freelance art historian, curator, and art educator in Hamburg and the surrounding area. Her research focuses on modern and (political) contemporary art, the practice and theory of collections and exhibitions, as well as provenance research. She has contributed to exhibition projects at institutions including the Weserburg Museum of Modern Art in Bremen, the Böttcherstraße Museums, and the Hamburger Kunsthalle. From 2020 to 2024, she served as the first chairperson of the off-space gallery nachtspeicher23 e.V. She is a founding member of the curatorial collective das kurativ e.V.

**Marlene Kurz** (born 1992 in Pirmasens) studied Art History and German Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt and completed her Master's degree in Art History and Curatorial Studies at the University of Bern. She lives and works in Zurich. Her research has focused on the concept of repair in contemporary art, understood both as a craft-based practice and as a postcolonial strategy of resistance. She has worked for institutions such as the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, the Institute of Art History at the University of Bern, and Hauser & Wirth, and has participated in workshops at institutions including the MET in New York and the Kunsthaus Glarus. In 2023, she co-curated an exhibition project on the ambivalent aesthetics of cuteness at the Kunstverein Last Tango in Zurich and at the Fundaziun Nairs in Scuol.



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| 01 | Simon Wienk-Borgert, <i>Emotional Budgets</i> , 2025, ongoing series, inkjet print on cotton paper, 50 x 35 cm, edition of 3  | 05 | Julie Batteux, <i>Verbockt</i> (from the series <i>Schattenbock(sen)</i> ), 2025, oil on canvas, 180 x 252 cm   |
| 02 | Yaël Kempf, <i>Problem of God - Installation 3 Silex + Stein + iPhone/Video</i> , 2025, installation, layered and sanded advertising posters, stone, iPhone, dimensions variable, with video/audio: <i>Radio Rheinland International – Pilotfolge #1</i> , concept & script: Yaël Kempf, production & tracks: Mustafa Khalaf, track <i>Rauche wie ein Schlot: Wenn einer lügt dann wir</i> , voices: Noémie Lewest, Mustafa Khalaf, Alexander Liedtke, 12:23 min., loop   | 06 | Simon Wienk-Borgert, <i>Untitled Constellation (Space, Light, Heat, Combustion, Reproduction)</i> , 2025, <i>Minor Infrastructural (Shoulders)</i> : 5 painted pedestals from the Kunstverein's inventory, primed MDF panels, spacers and hanging device; <i>Untitled Constellation</i> , Figurine, wedge, 1-cent coins with enameled glass inlay, fabric, hard drive sled, <i>Keramik</i> by Nura Afnan-Samandari, watercolor on exhibition sheets printed on colored paper, clips, hollow-core panel, museum glass, inkjet and laser prints on paper and projection foil, felt; <i>Untitled Constellation</i> , pencil, ballpoint pen on paper, notepad, inkjet prints on paper and projection foil, 2 drawings, various laser prints on paper, dimensions variable |
| 03 | Simon Wienk-Borgert, <i>Repositories</i> , 2025, ongoing series, acrylic glass tube, cable ties, heat shrink tubing, stickers, rubber, corrugated cardboard, cellophane, <i>bemalte Blume</i> by Hanna Kuster, printed materials: Sigma Catalog, 2025; <i>Augmented Landscapes – Smout/Rose/Spiller</i> , 2006; <i>Zwei Dekaden – W. Guyton</i> , 2020; <i>Paywall No. 2 – Device</i> , 2025; <i>Ein Mann der Schläft – G. Perrec</i> , 1991; Museum Wax processing instructions; CONTROL Magazine no. 17, 2007; <i>Die Offene Bibliothek – Clegg &amp; Guttman</i> , 1995; PROXXON user manual, each Ø approx. 10 cm, height approx. 32 cm | 07 | Julie Batteux, <i>Im Auge des Bock's</i> (from the series <i>Schattenbock(sen)</i> ), 2025, oil on canvas, 240 x 50 cm (2 pcs.) & 23 x 69 cm (2 pcs.)   |
| a  | <i>Layers in Complexity - Between Traces and Sediments</i> , publications by former fellows of Residence NRW <sup>+</sup> and its predecessor format at Schloss Ringenberg (see separate list)  | 08 | Julie Batteux, <i>Bockender Blick</i> (from the series <i>Schattenbock(sen)</i> ), 2025, oil on canvas, 250 x 120 cm  |
| 04 | Julie Batteux, <i>Bockiges Duell</i> (from the series <i>Schattenbock(sen)</i> ), 2025, oil on canvas, 130 x 175,5 cm   |    |   |



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| 09 | David Reiber Otálora, <i>Bits and Pieces (hormigas) I, II &amp; III</i> , 2025, powder-coated steel sheets with welded seams, 200 x 50 cm  | 14 | Yaël Kempf, <i>Problem of God – Kurzfilm</i> , 2025, HD video, in partnership with Glückauf-Schule Essen, actors: Abdullah Barhol, Raimund Barotti, Elias Bouyraaman, Abdulrahman Elkouwed, Angelika Erkens, Isabel Erkens, Johny Ghotra, Dennis Saado, Violetta Sveredenko, director & editor: Yaël Kempf, assistant director: Léonard Ferguen, camera: Till Bödeker, color grading and VFX: Till Bödeker, sound design & music: Mustafa Khalaf, casting & sound recording: Christoph Kammer, costume design: Jamie Barkhofen and Tsvetelina Nenova, educational coordinators: Kristina Wolf and Christoph Kammer, 7:18 min., loop |
| 10 | David Reiber Otálora, <i>o.T. (chimaera)</i> , 2025, laser prints on A4 paper, stitched together, dimensions variable  |    |   |
| 11 | David Reiber Otálora, <i>twintwin</i> , 2025, laser prints on A4 paper, stitched together, 240 x 160 cm  |    |   |
| 12 | David Reiber Otálora, <i>o.T. (Vielfraß)</i> , 2025, laser prints on A4 paper, stitched together, 29,7 x 21 cm   |    |   |
| 13 | Yaël Kempf, <i>Problem of God – Bank mit Pilzkulturen</i> , 2025, layered advertising posters, organic mushroom cultures (grown for 6 months), wood, metal, industrial paper rolls, cords, tools, 95 x 180 x 75 cm | 15 | Yaël Kempf, <i>Problem of God – Wandskulptur</i> , 2025, layered advertising posters, engraving, lacquer, metal, 45 x 85 x 15 cm  |
|    |  | 16 | David Reiber Otálora, <i>o. T.</i> , 2025, fired ceramics, plastic bag, plastic stool, dimensions variable  |

The exhibition is part of Residence NRW\*, a fellowship programme for artists and curators. Residence NRW\* is a programme of the Kunsthalle Münster, an institution of the City of Münster. [www.residenzenrw.de](http://www.residenzenrw.de)

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