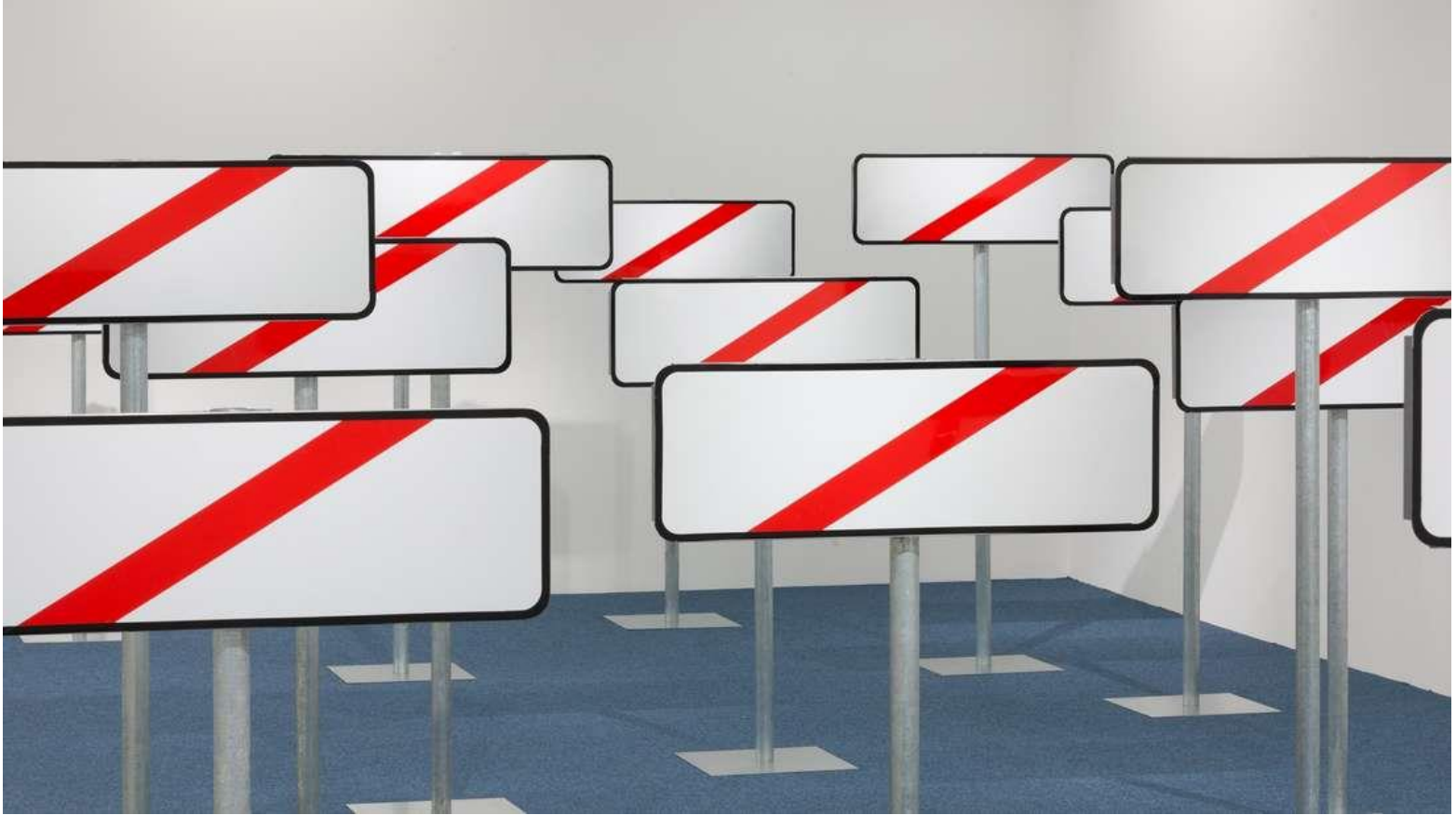

Frankfurter Rundschau

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“Undermining the Immediacy” at Tower MMK – When Home is Crossed Out

By Sylvia Staude



Olia Fedorova, “We Are Now Leaving”, 2025. © Olia Fedorova/Photo: Axel Schneider

“Undermining the Immediacy”, a diverse, world-reflecting exhibition of young art in the Tower MMK.

From the many portfolios that were viewed, completely different exhibitions could have been put together than this one, which has now opened under the title "Undermining the Immediacy" in the Tower MMK, the Museum of Modern Art's secondary venue. This is what Susanne Pfeffer, director of the MMK, who curated the show together with Julia Eichler, said. 14 artists are involved, most of them are only in their twenties and they come from different parts of the world. But their concerns are global: war and displacement, environmental destruction and climate catastrophe, the exercise of power and powerlessness. And yes, they all undermine immediacy: the visitor cannot take what he or she sees at face value. This art challenges you to get to the bottom of it.

The tour begins with "You are now leaving II", a work by Olia Fedorova, who was born in Kharkiv in 1994. When you drive out of towns, there are crossed-out place names on the side of the road, not only in Germany but also in Ukraine. Fedorova has put up these signs without place names; the red slash on a white background is intended to tell of a double erasure, of the places themselves and the memory of them. The artist now lives and works in Graz, Austria; she mourns the loss and destruction of her homeland.

The American Jason Loeb, born in 1981, takes us far back in human history with his "grain pictures", seven of which are on display at the MMK. According to the artist, it was the storage of grains that made settled life possible. And settled life brought trade - and money. Finally, the formation of nations. Loeb formed rectangular blocks of four different types of grain, including rice and corn, and then marked them with traces of his hands or abrupt hand movements. The three-dimensional, rough works hang on the wall at eye level.

Atiána R. Kilfa, a French artist born in 1990, studied at the Städelschule. Her black and white film "Rotor Vector" shows an older man in a white shirt, black jacket and bow tie sitting behind an executive desk. Behind him is a night sky with trees. The camera

seems to move slowly back and forth in front of this man - he could well be a mafia boss - he remains motionless, grave. Only after a while does Kilfa show that the man is stunned - the artist cast an actor and then had a life-sized cardboard figure of him made. "Rotor Vector" is an invitation to look behind things (and people and expectations).

Australian Hamishi Farah, born in 1991, paints individual black chess pieces in an almost photorealistic manner. The series "Pawn" is about the game and the fact that these pieces can only move according to certain rules. Paintings by American Taína Cruz, born in 1998, are also on display. Unlike Farah, she changes what she finds on the Internet, for example, and then stores it in her memory. So that faces look at you that have something ghostly, zombie-like about them. They turn towards the viewer as if they could detach themselves from the canvas.

Two films in the exhibition tell of environmental devastation and CO2 trading in different ways and with different focuses. Elom 20ce, Musquiqui Chihying and Gregor Kasper filmed at the large Agbogbloshie electronic waste dump in Accra; it is intended to be the start of a long-term research project. Elom 20ce captured sounds at the dump, which were processed into a soundtrack with additional music. In the film you can see a lot of black, very toxic smoke, but also cows resting on the scrap and people working there. "The Currency - Sensing 1 Agbogbloshie" exudes an apocalyptic atmosphere.

In contrast, Norwegian Eline Benjaminsen and Kenyan land rights activist Elias Kimaiyo filmed trees covered in moss and lichen in "Footprints in the Valley" - when you watch this film, you think you can breathe the clean air. But the old trees and the oxygen they produce are traded, air trade, as the two discovered. A trade for the benefit of Europe, with no consideration for farmers who have no title to property but have lived there for a long time.



Taína Cruz, "Look'ere I picked this up on 125th", 2023. © Private Collection Stephanie & Patrick Majerus/ Photo: Axel Schneider

The Frenchwoman Christelle Oyiri, born in 1992 and also known as a musician, has printed tables like those you might find in a cafeteria with found footage. "Choose Your Fighter" has the individual themes of emo, goth, punk, rasta, rave, skate - once underground cultures, today no longer a niche refuge for young people because of the Internet. The American Coumba Samba, born in 2000, has painted various radiator variants for "Radiator" - in the colors that she saw in a photograph of Putin shaking hands with Macky Sall, the increasingly authoritarian president of Senegal until 2024. The idea is to bridge the gap from the radiator, which is familiar to most people, via heat, to oil and climate change. The installation "Reservoir" by Alexandre Khondji, born in Paris in 1993, reflects water shortages on the one hand and the devastation caused by too much water on the other. It is a flexible water reservoir of the kind used in agriculture, for example.

Now the large plastic part, which has an inlet and outlet, rests large and heavy in the MMK Tower. And one wonders whether one will soon encounter such water cushions and their silent warning everywhere.