

Reverse Homesickness

10.05.2023 - 08.07.2023

with **Kristaps Ancāns, Dunhill and O'Brien**
curated by **Corina L. Apostol**
curatorial assistance: Allison Harbin

Curatorial Statement and Commentary
on the exhibition and the individual artworks

Extra programm
11.05.2023, 3pm
Discussion with the curator and the artists



DAS WEISSE HAUS

Reverse Homesickness

“Reverse Homesickness” or “Das Fernweh” describes a physical, bodily pain that results from the desire for flight when one is unable.

This term’s roots stem from the German Romantic-era poet Goethe, who was among the first to paraphrase it as a “feeling of flight.” In his autobiography, he refers to “a longing for far-off places” and a “reverse homesickness” brought about by the experience of witnessing firsthand the warfare that descended on Europe during his life. Later, the term was taken up in the context of the Industrial Revolution’s influence on Romanticism, where the desire to escape a sense of disillusion with modern realities influenced art and its reception. Today, we live in a world driven by fast-paced, oftentimes absurd, geo-political decisions. A longing for flight to far away places is a universal symptom of our times.

A desire to move from the familiar into another world runs through the sculptural installations in this exhibition. The artists Kristaps Ancāns and Dunhill and O’Brien explore the tension between familiar (be)longing and a longing to be in a far away, unknown, world(s). On this journey through seemingly disparate fragments that repeat, split, and move, we cultivate the ability to navigate between complex, imperfect systems.

The arch appears in these works in the guise of a device that connects different realms or as a series of disassembled and cut geometric forms that remind us of derelict buildings slated for demolition. Kristaps Ancans utilizes the architectural structure of arches to connect both a longing for and a movement towards new worlds, harnessing fernweh to embark on a process of “unbuilding” the monumental.

If the arch suggests a unification, bridging between two realms, it also refers to movement across. The references in O’Brien and Duhill’s works to traversing mountains similarly evoke the experience of setting off into a different realm. Eluding classification and embracing the complexity of collaboration, the duo constructs modified backpacks to transport an unknowable burden, and paradoxical devices to shield and support the body from harm.

Like the title of this exhibition, the artists’ works are in a sense also untranslatable. Although the shapes seem familiar – the works are not documents that try to capture a certain reality, they raise questions but offer no direct answers. The path that leads us across the arch or over the mountain is still being charted.

Bio: Corina L. Apostol

is a curator at the Tallinn Art Hall and a guest lecturer at MA POST, Art Academy of Latvia. She also serves as curator and member of the steering committee of the international practice-based research project „Beyond Matter” (2019–23) which takes cultural heritage to the edge of virtual reality. In this framework, she recently co-edited the exhibition catalogue „Immerse!” (Sternberg Press, 2023).

She was the curator of the Estonian Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale (2022), presented in the “Dutch” Rietveld Pavilion in collaboration with the Mondriaan Foundation. Previously, she was the Mellon Fellow at Creative Time, where she co-edited Making Another World Possible: 10 Creative Time Summits, 10 Global Issues, 100 Art Projects and co-curated the Creative Time Summit: “On Archipelagoes and Other Imaginaries” (2018). She is the co-founder of ArtLeaks, and editor-in-chief of the ArtLeaks Gazette. She won the apexart 2022–23 curatorial competition in New York.

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Bio: Dr. Allison Harbin

is a contemporary art historian specializing in global contemporary art, postcolonialism, and intersectional feminism. In particular, her research examines multi-media installation art from contemporary artists such as Shahzia Sikander, Nalini Malani, and Roshini Kempadoo. She is also a writer and education advocate, and the author of the blog Post-PhD, which began as a personal narrative and turned into a much larger testimony about the abuse of power in academia and the need for more equitable reform. Dr. Harbin completed her Ph.D. in Art History at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

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(1) Dunhill and O'Brien

Dunhill and O'Brien are artists who have been working together since 1998. Their shared preoccupation with making, material and the troubling logistics of sculpture has led to residencies in a range of contexts. Their quest to bypass their individual taste has led to elaborate strategies, kinetic elements, advertising as artists who dig holes for free and working with teams of participants. They have exhibited in a range of galleries and project spaces and their research includes documenting 19th century Fuji mounds in Tokyo, excursions to 'celebrity' rocks in the UK and interviewing dentists, boulderers and others who employ tactile knowledge.



- 1.1 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Shielding“, 2023
- 1.2 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Double Rest“, 2023
- 1.3 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Solo Crystal Unit“, 2023
- 1.4 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Double Pull“, 2023
- 1.5 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Double Beam“, 2023
- 1.6 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Compact Double“, 2023
- 1.7 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Double Shield“, 2023
- 1.8 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Double Block“, 2023
- 1.9 Dunhill and O'Brien, „Stone Appreciation“, 2012-2019.
- 2.1 Kristaps Ancāns, „device that can transport your bis as well as small dog to the other side“, 2019
- 2.2 Kristaps Ancāns, „part“, 2023
- 2.3 Kristaps Ancāns, „wired 1“, 2023
- 2.4 Kristaps Ancāns, „wired 2“, 2023
- 2.5 Kristaps Ancāns, „wired 3“, 2023
- 2.6 Kristaps Ancāns, „wired 4“, 2023
- 2.7 Kristaps Ancāns, „rewired“, 2023
- 2.8 Kristaps Ancāns, „not yet titled“, 2023

* „Cracking the Code of Fernweh. A Vocabulary Lesson for Overcoming Reverse Homesickness“ by Corina L. Apostol and Allison Harbin, 2023

Bio: Mark Dunhill and Tamiko O'Brien

Some of their projects include solo shows at Airspace Gallery, Stoke on Trent for the British Ceramic Biennial; White Conduit Projects, London and Kunstvereniging Diepenheim. They have worked on group projects including the Setouchi Triennale and Room Art Space, and have shown in group shows including at Tallinn Art Hall Estonia; The Estorick Collection, London; Danielle Arnaud Gallery, London and the Limerick City Museum and Art Gallery, Ireland.

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Double Happiness Collection (1.1-1.8)

“Double Happiness” utilizes a series of blue sculptures to symbolize the baggage that individuals experience when coping with the absurdity of “reverse homesickness”. Its modernist sculptural style presents a sense of progress and forward movement. The work not only prompts the viewer to contemplate the emotional and physical weight of travel but also invites them to ponder the struggles to find humor in the absurdity of life’s complex and difficult circumstances. Rejecting predefined roles and embracing spontaneity in their creative practice, the artists blend elements of sculpture, philosophy, design, and literature to craft works that are defined by the successes and pitfalls of collaboration.

1.1, „Shielding”, 2023, blue Back’ wall paper photo print.

„Shielding”, is a life-size photograph of an existing sculpture of a pill-shaped sheet of board of the same name that is depicted being worn by the artists. It explores the paradoxical nature of protection as a means of both safety and confinement. The pill-adorned artists represent the human desire for safety amidst a pandemic, yet also symbolize the limitations and restrictions imposed by such measures. Evoking the yearning of fernweh when travel is not possible, the work represents a yearning for exploration through a humorous approach to the mind-body dualism.

1.2, „Double Rest”, 2023, Wood, polystyrene, styrofoam, fabric.

Evoking a longing for faraway places, Double Rest is a blue modernist twist on a palanquin is a symbol of a journey shared by two people. The work draws inspiration from a purposely misinterpreted Japanese palanquin, which is carried by two people, who can both rest in it and enjoy the view. Paradox is embedded in the work through the burden of carrying an object intended for rest. Double Rest playfully invites viewers to experience the journey of the two carriers and their shared burden, creating a sense of community and togetherness.

1.3, „Solo Crystal Unit”, 2023, wood, fabric.

„Solo Crystal Unit”, is an upholstered ‘crystal’ that rests on an upholstered plinth, representing sustenance and solid, dependable support. Together, these artworks create a powerful statement about the human journey towards recovery and what support you might find along the way.

1.4, „Double Pull”, 2023, fabric.

„Double Pull” is a striking work that explores the relationship between tension and connection, reflecting the complex themes that have fascinated artists throughout history. The piece is composed of two “strong man” style waist straps that have been custom-made to fit Dunhill and O’Brien. These straps hang from two hooks that have been upholstered in a symbolic blue, a color that connects the artwork with the German Romanticists’ use of the hue. The artists’ use of waist straps and hooks creates a sense of physicality and tension that is reminiscent of the work of many great artists who have explored the nature of struggle and progress throughout history. This dynamic interaction between the viewer and the artwork invites contemplation on the challenges of moving forward, and the nature of connection in a world that is often fraught with tension and discord.

1.5, „Double Beam”, wood, rope, pulleys, fabric.

Consisting of an upholstered beam suspended from the ceiling, Double Beam features two shoulder-supports that evoke the feeling of carrying a heavy load. The beam’s upholstery adds an element of comfort to the weighty object, creating a fascinating paradox of duality, where the object can be either a burden or support, depending on how one approaches it. Double Beam is a thought-provoking and visually striking work that invites the viewer to consider the complexities of carrying a heavy load, both physically and metaphorically.

1.6, „Compact Double”, 2023, adapted wood, styrofoam, fabric.

“Compact Double’s” vivid blue sculptural backpacks examine the role of the absurd and humor in the experience of “das fernweh”. The work invites viewers to engage with multifaceted themes to reflect on the importance of resilience, mutual support, and humor in facing life’s challenges. Infused with irony and playfulness, the duality and collaboration between the backpacks suggest the importance of mutual support and partnership during difficult times. The use of wheels emphasizes the possibility of mobility and the need for resilience. Their blue material evokes the German Romanticist symbolic representation of “fernweh” in the form of vivid blue flowers.

1.7, „Double Shield”, 2023, wood, styrofoam, fabric.

Double Shield’s sleek upholstered blue shield contains sleeve

holes that allows the viewer to wear and carry the piece along whatever journey they may choose. The work evokes a sense of protection and resilience through mutual collaboration and support. The work's sleek modernist design adds a layer of sophistication and contemporary relevance while inviting viewers to approach the work with a sense of playfulness and curiosity. The artist duo's signature brilliant blue connects it to fernweh, symbolized in blue flowers which inspired the pursuit of transformative journeys.

1.8 „Double Block”, 2023, Adapted cycle helmets, polystyrene, wood, cardboard, fabric.

„Double Block” is a sculptural work that features a block that has been upholstered with two head cavities, each lined with helmets and chin straps. This playful yet thought-provoking piece invites viewers to engage with paradoxical concepts, while also emphasizing the importance of multiple perspectives. The dual nature of the head cavities suggests a metaphorical blindness, which can only be overcome by seeing things from different vantage points. The block imbues the work with an ironic undertone, as it both symbolizes obstacles and references the human experience of reverse homesickness.

1.9 „Stone Appreciation”, 2023, video and TV monitors.

„Stone Appreciation” is a series of 8 videos, where Dunhill and O'Brien measure and draw large boulders in various British landscapes showcasing the beauty and complexity of these often-overlooked natural objects. Highlighting the paradox of Western culture's negative view of stones and the veneration of rocks in some Eastern cultures, this work evokes the duality of the burden and beauty of stones. This work invites viewers on a journey of contemplation and appreciation, encouraging a reverse homesickness for a culture that more profoundly values the natural world.

(2) Kristaps Ancāns

Kristaps Ancāns utilizes the architectural structure of arches to connect both a longing for and a movement towards new worlds, harnessing fernweh as a starting point for his process of deconstructing and reconstructing the symbol of the arch across the sculptural pieces included in this exhibition. The technological advances of arches made previously unimagined monumental forms of architecture. The engineering of arches has always pushed towards an expansive understanding of civilization. Ancient arches were composed of stone, bricks, and the Roman invention of concrete. Modern arches made of steel are highly rigid and lightweight and thus are even more expansive in size. This idea that there is no limit to what you can build with arches captivates Ancāns.

Bio: Kristaps Ancāns

is an artist and educator whose practice spans installation, sculpture, language and moving images. Ancāns explores the confusion in the relationship between humanity, nature, and machines through an evolving conceptual game with its own artificial intelligence. K. Ancāns has exhibited, lectured, and taught at venues internationally, including Time Square Arts, apexart, Publiek Park/ S.M.A.K Museum, Riga International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Code Art Fair Copenhagen, domobaal, Tate Exchange/Tate Modern, Museum of London, Royal Academy of Arts London, Central Saint Martins/UAL, PEER, Vienna Contemporary, Tallinn Art Hall, Setouchi Triennale, Tokyo University of the Arts. He was awarded the 'Cecil Lewis Sculpture Scholarship'(UK) and the 'Latvia State Culture Capital Foundation Scholarship'. He is a laureate of the 'Helen Scott Lidgett Studio Award 2016/2017'(UK) and the 'Pauls Puzinas Grant'(LV/USA). Ancāns is the co-head of POST MA Program at the Art Academy of Latvia.

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2.1, „device that can transport your bis as well as small dog to the other side", 2019, Steel, 220 V motor, motor reducer, time relays, cables.

This artwork positions dogs, big or small, to traverse an arch, following the Roman architecture's monumentalization. In a playful and ironic adaptation of structures such as The Arch of Titus, this work signals not a ruler's deification through the process of crossing over an arch, but that of your dogs. The work commodifies the deification of Roman arches, inviting viewers to place their dogs on a spiritual journey to the other side. This work avoids straightforward didacticism to instead encourages a playful engagement with the absurd in order to provoke a new perspective.

2.2, „part", 2023, powder coated steal.

The spaces between the curved arches in this artwork form a mesmerizing network of pathways, inviting us to imagine the possibilities that lie ahead. Arches have long been symbolic structures that connect two points and have been prominent features of Roman architecture and other monumental building projects of the ancient world. This piece sparks our curiosity by visualizing the potential collective journey that these arches can take us on. As we contemplate the modern materials the artist used to construct these arches himself, we are left to wonder how they might inspire us to embark on new journeys, driven by a desire to explore new worlds.

2.3-7, „wired 1, 2 3, 4 and rewired", 2023, rusted steal.

Arches made from rusted and discarded metal are connected through a wire comprised of printed architectural interiors. In a playful juxtaposition between the ornate and the discarded, the hard and the soft, Ancāns calls into question what constitutes civilization itself. His use of materials is significant: in taking materials used for advertising and combining them with another cheap and discarded material of rusted iron, Ancans charts a new visual language that is deeply engaged with the acute longing of fernweh.

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All texts in the booklet were contributed by the curator themselves.

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