

# Presse Kunsthalle

Bielefeld

In Spring 2015 the Kunsthalle Bielefeld presents an exhibition featuring the works of two young sculptors, Esther Kläs and Johannes Wald. The exhibition will be shown under the unusual title of *Whatness*. It enumerates a list of materials, from aluminum to zinc. Coined by James Joyce, the word "whatness" translates the philosopher's Thomas Aquinas's concept of *quidditas* into English. It deals with the essence of a thing, its nature, as opposed to the existence of a thing. Consequently, it inquires into what an object is.

As the title for this show, *Whatness* emphasizes the commonalities shared by the works of the two young sculptors Esther Kläs and Johannes Wald. Their sculptures reflect their material qualities of sculpture and the processes used to make them, as well as the essence of a sculpture and its effect upon viewers. They formulate the question: what is this three-dimensional thing there?

The works of art by these two artists shift back and forth in their own ways between figurative motifs and abstraction, the interplay between form and material, and the objects' rejection of interpretation. It is only through active participation and an indeterminate space for imagination that they are revealed to the viewer: "Beauty . . . is beheld by the imagination," says Joyce.

Johannes Wald and Esther Kläs are collaborating on the show at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, creating an installation that allows their sculptures to enter into a dialogue with each other.

The artist Esther Kläs is often described as a "born sculptor." Even though most of her sculptures are abstract, they evoke anthropomorphic physicalities or ancient ritualistic sites. They radiate dignity and personality, while developing a beguiling sense of naturalness in the space. They oscillate between a mysterious presence and projections of poetic imagination. The close connection between the works and the artist who makes them is always present. Kläs accentuates the process of making her sculptures by leaving the traces of her physical work on the material. The charm of improvisation is as much an effect of her works as the tendency toward the absurd is.

Esther Kläs was born in 1981 in Mainz, Germany; she now lives and works in New York City. Her most recent solo show was in 2014: *Girare con me* at the Marino Marini Museum in Florence; others include *Esther Kläs: Better Energy* at MoMa's PS1 in 2012, and *You and the Dance with the Tortoise* in the Parkhaus Düsseldorf in 2009. Her works have been seen in a series of group exhibitions, including *Playing by Heart*, KOLUMBA, Kunstmuseum des Erzbistums, Cologne, 2014; *Kölnskulptur #7*, Stiftung Skulpturenpark, Cologne, 2014, and in the sixth Prague Biennial, *Flow*, in 2013.

Johannes Wald formulates questions for sculpture. For Wald, primarily sculptural qualities such as texture, material, and three-dimensionality are of secondary importance. He is mainly interested in revealing conditions, methods of making sculpture, and the process of transforming an idea into material.

He takes various approaches to his search for the perfect sculpture and a sense of naturalness as a sculptor. In

**Whatness**  
**Esther Kläs**  
**Johannes Wald**  
**28 03 15**  
**21 06 15**

**Press Conference**  
**26 03 15**  
**11 h**

**Opening**  
**27 03 15**  
**19 h**

*studying the greeks' grace* he examines the essay "Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst" (Thoughts on imitating the works of the Greeks in painting and sculpture) by the archeologist and art critic Johann Joachim Winckelmann, written in 1755. It considers Greek sculpture to be the most perfect, and the author recommends that his contemporaries imitate it. Wald takes this advice more than 250 years later and applies it to his own works of art. The result, however, is not a modeled sculpture. Rather, through the medium of photography it refers to the subjectivity of the personal experience of grace, and the imaginary space for an extremely beautiful figure.

In a similar way, his *Ekphrasis* uses words to create a linguistic presentation of an idealized sculpture, while *Pedestal for a Muse* has an empty space that provokes an attitude of expectation toward the appearance of a muse.

Johannes Wald was born in 1980 in Sindelfingen; he now lives and works in Berlin. His most recent exhibitions were in 2013: *Kontrapost* at Sox Berlin, and *in the shade of absence* at the Albertinum, Galerie neue Meister in Dresden. Wald's works of art have been seen in other shows, including *Kölnskulptur #7*, Stiftung Skulpturenpark, Cologne, 2014; *Kölnskulptur #6*, Stiftung Skulpturenpark, Cologne, 2012; and in the exhibition *Ein blinder Fleck - die Unbeobachtbarkeit der Welt*, at the Hans-Peter-Zimmer-Stiftung in Düsseldorf, 2013.

The show is sponsored by the Kunststiftung NRW and the Kulturstiftung pro Bielefeld.

Exhibition curator: Friedrich Meschede  
Assistant curator: Meta Marina Beeck

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