

Nemo: Epilogue

In the past weeks, I reread the 2017 anthology *Experiments in Ethnographic Writing: Crumpled Paper Boat*—a collection of experiments and adventurous prose that reexamines ethnographic studies and expressions—in an effort to give context to *Nemo* and the six artists (Henrike Naumann, Max Eulitz & Sophia Eisenhut, Irina Lotarevich, Doug Ischar, Julian Van Der Moere) comprising the exhibition that Scherben (an artist-run gallery from Berlin) has organized at Good Weather in Chicago. In addition to the essays gathered in the text, the publication hosts an epilogue written by Kathleen Stewart that is more compelling than all the material which proceeds it. And it is in this epilogue that I found the language to foreground the selection of work that encompasses Scherben’s curatorial conceit: work that offers “rigid structures an unintelligible poetic expression and can be related to the history of the places Chicago and Berlin.”

Nemo is an exhibition of work that travels under the radar of categorical knowledge. It’s work dissolves into the matter of the world, a world littered with cultural objects and images hardened into rock. This is how we could consider the concrete blocks that hold back lake Michigan yet platform the queer bodies in Doug Ischar’s photographic compositions *Marginal Waters* (1980s). Or Julian Van Der Moere’s object *look, jagged shadow from the last standing wall of the castle* (2023) which evokes hardening rock but looks to dissolve it.

The work in *Nemo* does not hide the costs, betrayals, pleasures, violence, returns, and alternatives while it recognizes lived experiences with rigorous conceptual thought and ungrudging perceptions. Henrike Naumann’s *Triangular Stories* (2012) with its vernacular arcs and tableaux examining class and nationality is more dynamic than the unfaltering images of Bernd and Hilla Becher, Thomas Struth, and Thomas Ruff. Naumann’s work is more aligned with the humorous critiques and absurd photography of Anna and Bernhard where “costs, betrayals, pleasures, violence, returns,” are as much subject as its characters.

The works in *Nemo* are a passage, an interval, a bridge, a transitional space, a holding environment for scenes that surround and press on rigid structures. The exhibition’s relational attention to Chicago and Berlin as holding environments and transitional spaces put a muscular and velvety squeeze on rigid social and ideological structures.

The work in *Nemo* sidles up to attunements, hardenings, and investments, identifies engagements and distractions as lessons in striving.

No work here exhibits any excesses that can obscure the poetic. Max Eulitz & Sophia Eisenhut’s *Das Boot* (2024) and its Bob Seger’s “Still the Same” soundtrack is a video that is framed by the repeating maxim “the best comrade is the comradess.” The video is unduly abundant in its war-film references, cinematic effects, and gender politics but its conventionality as a satire of World War II submarine films highlights the poetical potential of clichés via the act of adaptation and translation.

Nemo has fidelity to what is overheard, as in the infrequent male voice that breaks the rhythmic scanning sounds in Doug Ischar’s *Orderly* (1992).

The work in *Nemo* is not frightened by positing a palpable relationship to an otherness.

Nemo is a condensation or a knot of something else that swells with expressivity. (And thus where all of its poetics lies.)

The work in *Nemo* thinks at the limit of what it has to say: nimble, patient, but jumpy.

Scherben (Berlin) at Good Weather:
Nemo with Max Eulitz & Sophia Eisenhut,
Doug Ischar, Irina Lotarevich,
Henrike Naumann, Julian Van Der Moere
April 13–May 18, 2024

Sometimes the work in *Nemo* steals voices, betrays voices, tries to become and remain true to voices, and sometimes lets voices come and go (it is important to hear how voices carry across the works in *Nemo*, between the works in *Nemo*, and beyond the works in *Nemo*).

At times the work slows in on barely legible or the submerged. The submerged is literally depicted in *Das Boot* (2024)—a work whose conceptual foundation is in its performance of ideas that preexist and exceed it. And in Irina Lotarevich’s galvanized steel and aluminum constructions—*The Social Box* (2023) and *Study for Vessel* (2019)—the legible comes into question. The work in *Nemo* often stops at the murky pooling of things: Ischar’s ocular framing in *Orderly*, Julian Van Der Moere’s *look, jagged shadow from the last standing wall of the castle*, and the arching mirrors in Naumann’s *Triangular Stories*.

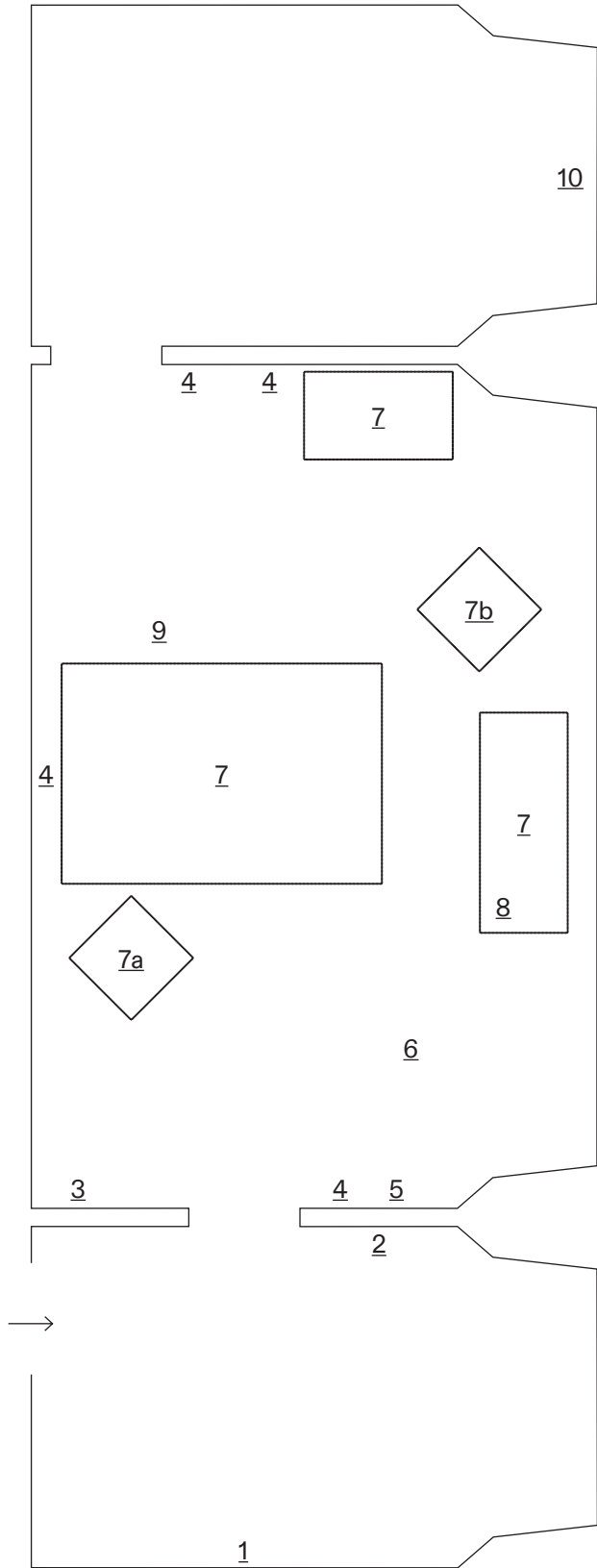
The exhibition confidently skids into the usual but always against the endless incantations of the difference between fact and fiction. And against the anachronistic, and the habit of detouring into the tired critique of representation mode. Yet at the same time, critique is not disparaged in the work or in the idea of the the exhibition.

Nemo flattens and spreads. It folds and unfolds, expands and contracts, like these paragraphs separating into sentences and then forming back again into paragraphs. This happens in all of the work, in the fullness of exhibition, through the idea of Chicago, and hypothetically in Berlin. The work in the exhibition is not weighed down by its own assumptions and dispositions. It is attuned to and responsive to actualities and potentialities, and to poetic enclosures and traps. *Nemo* is a pause against the usual nervous gestures to foreclose. The work is solid and flighty; varied and scripted. Rolling thresholds and intellectual pleats abound. *Nemo* slants into telling the horrors and beauties of affective-material-social-political registrars of living.

Michelle Grabner (2024)

Scherben (Berlin) at Good Weather with artists Doug Ischar, Irina Lotarevich, Henrike Naumann, Julian Van Der Moere, and Max Eulitz & Sophia Eisenhut is on view until May 18, 2024 with gallery hours on Saturdays from 1–4 p.m.

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- | | |
|---|---|
| <u>1</u>
Doug Ischar
<i>Untitled (from Marginal Waters)</i> ,
1985
Color photograph
Edition of 5, 2 AP
26 × 40 in | <u>7</u>
Henrike Naumann
<i>Triangular Stories</i> , 2012
Installation of Furniture
(American Dew), 2024
Dimensions variable |
| <u>2</u>
Doug Ischar
<i>Destination Tokyo (from Orderly)</i> ,
1993
VHS transferred to digital video | <u>7a</u>
Henrike Naumann
<i>Triangular Stories (Terror)</i> , 2012
VHS transferred to digital video
15 minutes 24 seconds |
| <u>3</u>
Julian Van Der Moere
<i>Show me fear in a handful of
dust</i> , 2024
Inkjet print on rice paper
4 × 5 in
12 × 16 in (framed) | <u>7b</u>
Henrike Naumann
<i>Triangular Stories (Amnesia)</i> ,
2012
VHS transferred to digital video
15 minutes 24 seconds |
| <u>4</u>
Max Eulitz
<i>Untitled 1-5 (Energy)</i> , 2024
Photographs in acrylic | <u>8</u>
Sophia Eisenhut
<i>i wanna be daylight</i> , 2023
Thermal print on EC paper rolls
with SEPA debit
Dimensions variable |
| <u>5</u>
Julian Van Der Moere
<i>Show me obsequy in a handful
of dust</i> , 2024
Inkjet print on rice paper
4 × 5 in
12 × 16 in (framed) | <u>9</u>
Julian Van Der Moere
<i>Look, jagged shadow from the
last standing wall of the castle</i> ,
2023
Bottle, jar, 4 × 5 in negative,
fresnel lens, water
Dimensions variable |
| <u>6</u>
Irina Lotharevich
<i>The Social Box</i> , 2023
Steel, aluminum, metal residue
12.25 × 30 × 11 in | <u>10</u>
Sophia Eisenhut & Max Eulitz
<i>Das Boot</i> , 2024
Single-channel video
12 minutes |

Douglas Ischar (b. 1948 Honolulu, Hawaii) is an openly gay, American artist known for his work in documentary photography, installation art, sound art, and video art addressing stereotypes of masculinity and male behavior. He currently lives and works in Chicago. His artwork from the mid-1990s emerged at a moment when the exploration of media, and cross-disciplinary practices, were critical actions further complicating the then-peculiar state of semiotics. Ischar's editing of appropriated moving image and static objects addressed the practical and visual boundaries for definitions of masculinity, sexuality, violence and secrecy.

Irina Lotarevich's (b. 1991 Rybinsk, Russia) lives and works in Vienna. Her sculptural practice is shaped by the intersection of her own subjective experience with larger systems. Materially, she works with wood, metal, and casting techniques, frequently combining both high and low or de-valued materials with sophisticated fabrication techniques and a sensitivity to building spatial narratives. Lotarevich also interweaves her own writing and use of language into her work. The minimal yet complex and specific forms of her sculptures reference architecture, bureaucracy, labor, and parts of her body. Lotarevich studied at Cornell University, Hunter College, and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

Henrike Naumann (b. 1984 Zwickau, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. Her installations of furniture and designed objects are composed as scenes that question the relationship between design and ideology. Inflected by her own formative years growing up in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and then a unified Germany, Naumann's work often considers the social transformations initiated by Western consumer capitalism as it reached former socialist states, and ideas of the "good life" that have arisen globally.

Julian Van Der Moere (b. 1995 Houston, Texas) lives in Chicago. He is an artist and curator working with a variety of materials and collaborators. He received his BA from DePaul University in 2018 and his MFA from University of Illinois at Chicago in 2021. In 2017, he co-founded Apparatus Projects.

Max Eulitz (b. 1987 Leipzig, Germany) lives and works in Frankfurt am Main and New York. His artistic practice is based on a conceptual approach that often focuses on the cultural activities and products of the *petits bourgeois*. The formal focus is on sculpture, photography, and book projects. He studied under Peter Fischli at the Städelschule.

Sophia Eisenhut (b. 1995 Regensburg, Germany) is an artist and author who lives and works in Vienna. In 2019, she was awarded the essay prize of the literary magazine *Edit*. Most recently, her book *EXERCITIA S. Catarinae de Manresa: Anorexie und Gottesstaatlichkeit* (2021) was published by Merve Verlag.