

MILIEU

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Initiated by MIRJAM THOMANN and JENNI TISCHER

Milieu [mi'liø.]

French milieu

*from: mi- < Latin *medius* = middle*

*and lieu < Latin *locus* = place*

What about your milieu? How would you describe it? Which images, words, commodities, animals, things, and information come to mind? How do you feel, how do you move, how do you communicate with and think about your environment? And how does your environment relate to you?

The interesting thing is that a milieu is something other than a fixed context or an inevitable situation. It is an intertwining and allows forming a theory of living relationships. Living beings and milieu are linked to each other and involved in a dynamic of permanent debate leading to reciprocal adaptations and transformations. This dynamism takes place in small and big things, in biological, physical and sociological terms, and it applies as much to a single cell as it does to a movement or an entire society.

There are milieus on which everyone immediately has an opinion. They are covered in the press and discussed in talk shows, for example: The workers' milieu used to vote for the Communist Party, today it votes for the Front National—a tendency that goes beyond the borders of France, as is known. In this context, Didier Eribon writes that people have lost their historical class consciousness. But inequality is more than the criterion of being left behind. There is no milieu that can be consistently defined based on shared interests and goals, independently of time and place, especially against the background of a world of work that is undergoing constant change. The challenge, according to Eribon, therefore consists in taking the step from knowledge to action, in joining heterogeneous battles and enduring the tensions.

Theories of the environment are always also theories of possible worlds. In this sense, the term milieu describes both possibility conditions and permeabilities. It focuses on what is conceivable or inconceivable under specific conditions, thus raising questions as to the perceptibility and representability of the environment. That is indeed reminiscent of art. The view of humans to their environment is thus a view that is itself determined by this environment, it is a corporeally determined view. Milieu, then, describes the relationship between body and environment, the interpenetration of environment and that which is in the environment. Are you aware that you are simultaneously a component and viewer of a state? That sounds pretty fictive and otherworldly! You inhabit the milieu and the milieu inhabits you. Precisely the engagement with this other makes the milieu conceivable, writes Maria Muhle, thus defining the place where the norm of life develops. It is autonomy and heteronomy, determination and agency, tension and complicity, susceptibility and dissolution of boundaries. Complicated conditions and palm trees in Kreuzberg.

Here, our milieu is that of the exhibition. We are interested in the specifications of this exhibition milieu, the actions that enable it and the interrelations it produces. The relationship established between the living being and the environment is like a debate to which the living being brings its own norms of assessment of situations, in which it dominates the environment and adapts to it, writes Georges Canguilhem. What kind of dynamism unfolds between inside and outside? Where are the boundaries and how do the mutual references of body, material and environment take effect? How are transitions between natural circumstances and artificial ones that mimic a natural process visualized? We observe ourselves in the attempt to create counter-effects, to determine the milieu and temporarily set it in motion. Nice that you can join us!

Berlin, May 2018

Mirjam Thomann and Jenni Tischer

Sources

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MILIEU

September 14 – Oktober 18, 2018
Opening: September 13, 2018, 7 pm

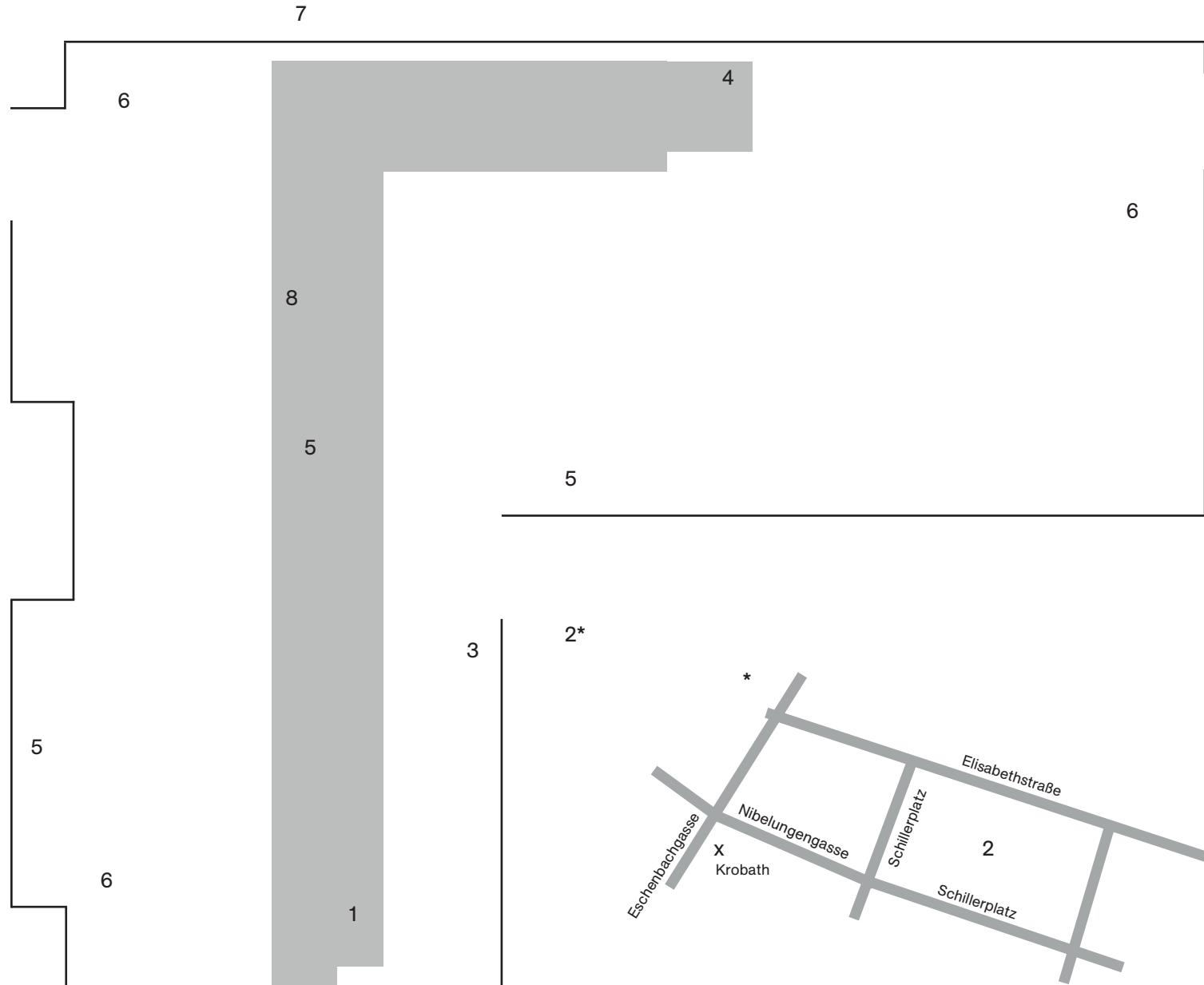
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MILIEU was initiated by
MIRJAM THOMANN and JENNI TISCHER.

Krobath

Eschenbachgasse 9
1010 Wien
www.galeriekrobath.at

Opening hours: Tue – Fri 11 am – 6 pm,
Sat 11 am – 3 pm



The L-shaped arrangement of concrete plates refers to a part of the tiled floor at after the butcher in Berlin-Lichtenberg, where a first edition of the *Milieu*-exhibition took place from May to June 2018. By the layout of the tiles the history and use of the exhibition space can be retraced, which is located in one of the oldest concrete architectures in Europe and formerly housed a butcher.

1 KATHARINA AIGNER

I re-read you, always for another first time, 2018

Books, photographs, prints, accessories, textiles
Dimensions variable

20 rue Jacob, 2018

HD Video, color, silent version, 8min
Courtesy the artist

I re-read you, always for another first time is the prologue of a long-term engagement with a circle of lesbian writers, most of their oeuvre hardly received. They met in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century and gathered around Natalie Clifford Barney, who hosted a salon in her privat facilities in St. Germain for decades. In the backyard of her pavilion with garden one could also spot a temple, Le Temple de l'Amitié. This Temple of Friendship still exists but is entirely shielded from the public. Several attempts by the artist to visit and film the structure failed. For her animation *20 rue Jacob* Aigner, digitally recreated the facade, interior of the temple itself and segments of the property, based on texts and photographs. The video work will be screened in the exhibition space on October 12th at 6pm.

2 MARIA EICHHORN

Nistkasten [Nest Box], 1992

Location of the nest box outside, card with instructions for the locating and care of the nest box, nest box (wood, tar paper), card (offset print on cardboard)

Nest box: 45.5 x 20 x 27.5 cm; card: 14.8 x 10.5 cm
Unlimited edition

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin

On the occasion of the exhibition *Fluxus da capo*, 1992, a nest box was attached to a tree at a height of approximately five meters, visible from the balcony of the Nassauischer Kunstverein, and is

still in use today. Following the exhibition, *Nest Box* was made available as an unlimited edition. For *Milieu*, it was installed in walking distance to the gallery, in a treetop at Schillerplatz. A card on display in the gallery office contains instructions on how to install and maintain the nest box, which will remain installed after the exhibition.

3 HANNAH HÖCH

Untitled, 1950

Aquarell, framed 28.5 x 33 cm

Courtesy Sammlung Artothek des Neuen Berliner Kunstvereins

To escape political pursuit and defamation Dadaist Hannah Höch withdrew to her property in Berlin Heiligensee during Second World War. Here is where she hid her own and her friend's artworks in the garden and under the roof of the former gate-keeper's lodge. The drawing shown in the exhibition might refer to the passionate engagement of Höch with garden design. Translucent colors, thin lines, floral forms and bright aquarelle marks overlap as if several floor plans mesh to one environment. They form proximities and routes that also surround the border of the image itself.

4 TITRE PROVISOIRE

Some things in common perhaps, 2017

HD Video, 18 min.

Courtesy the artist

In the film *Some things in common perhaps*, the four figures "Language," "Body," "Voice," and "Someone" perform text passages from, among others, the Caoba cycle by B. Traven (1930–40), who used a pseudonym undisclosed until today to write against fascism from his exile in Mexico. Confronted with the political and socio-economic reality following the elections in the United States in 2016, the work deals with the tension discharged by the bodies, the language, or the speechlessness in regard to a location: the abandoned, former Goethe-Institute in New York.

5 STEPHANIE TAYLOR

Rosángela, 2012

Audio, 4:16 min.

Broom and Rum, 2009

Cast aluminum

165 x 50 x 50 cm

'Gumes

, 2016

Cast aluminum

Various dimensions

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nagel/Draxler, Berlin/Cologne

Rosángela tells the story of a girl who leaves her hometown of Los Angeles and travels to England.

Although she winds up in a friendly environment, she feels lost. She can find neither her musical instrument, the banjo, nor her way home. Based on the words "Los Angeles," the audio piece develops two rhythms: "Banjoless" (based on the English pronunciation of "Los Angeles") and "Rosángela" (based on the Spanish pronunciation). The work was commissioned in 2012 by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and performed by pupils of the Charles E. White Elementary School. The aluminum casts *Broom* and *Rum* were made based on the rhythm of the English word "aluminum." The two objects are connected by a story about a drunk janitor, who is a cowboy at heart, but forced to clean floors to make ends meet.

'Gumes was also created based on the rhythm of the English word "aluminum." The work consists of 100 aluminum casts of peanuts and five marshmallows.

6 MIRJAM THOMANN

Revolving Knots in a Room, 2018

10 revolving displays (here: 6), colored rope each ca. 23 x 25 x 25 cm

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nagel/Draxler, Berlin/Cologne, and Krobath, Wien

Revolving Knots in a Room is made up of a series of flesh-colored knots on revolving displays that mark the exhibition space in a rotating pattern. Number and placement of the revolving knots depend on the given power inputs of the exhibition space, thus change with each installation of the work. The work goes back to the eponymous installation *Knots in a Room* by the American land art artist Mary Miss from 1969, and is here connected to the invisible electric circuit of the exhibition space. The displays are usually used for the presentation of wares and have been reduced in speed to the minimum of one revolution per minute.

7 JENNI TISCHER

Dirty work is divided down the lines of class, race and gender, 2018

100 Ceramic tiles (here: 57), diverse cleaning agents, pigments

Variable dimensions

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Krobath, Vienna

Dirty work is divided down the lines of class, race and gender is a wall installation composed of 100 tiles treated with cleaning agents arranged to a black-and-white grid. "Cleaning is a continual activity, yet not something everybody does. In fact the doing, or not, of dirty work is divided down the lines of class, ethnicity and gender. Paying others, or not, to deal with the most intimate forms of dirt reinforces social status and signals it to others. Dirt and cleaning exist within and constitute social relations both within and outside domestic environments." (*Gender, Work and Migration. Agency in Gendered Labour Settings*, ed. Megha Amirth, Nina Sahraoui, Routledge 2018)

8 MARINA VISHMIDT

'The Unwillingness of Shorter Technicians to Sample in Deeper Water': Crashing Around in the Milieu
Text, Folder for take away

In her text writer Marina Vishmidt continues her engagement with the relationship between art, value and labour. She states that "the observer is in the milieu and the milieu is money," thus naming the operational character of the milieu within the speculative relations that link processes of financialisation and subjectivation. The layout of the folder was designed in collaboration between titre provisoire and Vishmidt: a landscape rendering is shown against the backdrop of a blown-up re-photograph of a Xerox-grid. In the foreground one can see a combination of lines and compartments as used in diagrammatic models in Statistics or Cybernetics, e.g. to visualize and mechanize complex social interrelations.