

# Poetics of the Everyday

with Helene Appel, Nina Beier, Alexandra Bircken, Talia Chetrit, Alex Da Corte, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, FORT, Isa Genzken, Gilbert & George, Nan Goldin, Andreas Gursky, Alicja Kwade, Konrad Lueg, Annette Messenger, Alexandra Metcalf, Lukas Müller, João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Pipilotti Rist, Wilhelm Sasnal, Andreas Slominski, Florian Slotawa, Wolfgang Tillmans, Mara Wohnhaas and Thomas Zipp

**Opening: Oct 10th, 6–9 pm**  
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**Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf**

The turn towards the private sphere is a contemporary social phenomenon that is increasingly reflected in contemporary art. In times of political and social upheaval, the private realm is often seen as a strategy for coping with or escaping external conditions. Yet this is far from a new development: since the advent of modernity, artists have drawn inspiration from domestic life—whether as a place of retreat, a mirror of social structures, or a stage for subtle acts of resistance. Today, digital routines and social media are fundamentally reshaping this constellation. What was once a protected space now enters the public stage: intimate gestures and personal artefacts circulate widely, and the act of showing and being shown creates a dynamic tension between self-presentation, observation, and intimacy.

With Duchamp's readymades, the everyday became a key instrument of artistic provocation. Pop Art radicalised this gesture by placing mass production and consumer goods centre stage – and since then, artists have continued to expand the definition of art through the use of banal objects. Gerhard Richter's *Loo Paper* (1994) depicts a roll of toilet paper – arguably the most banal of subjects – yet his blurred brushwork lends it an almost monumental gravity. Konrad Lueg, captivated by found patterns on wallpaper and fabrics, declared a checked tea towel to be art. Fischli and Weiss painstakingly reconstructed quotidian objects in polyurethane – “fake readymades” that deceive their viewers. In a similar trompe-l'œil spirit, Helene Appel paints images of mundane details such as cleaning water so precisely that they appear real. Artists have long been drawn to the truth and authenticity that reside in the everyday. For *Mannheimer Bestandsaufnahme*, Florian Slotawa photographed his entire possessions, meticulously sorted and arranged. Wilhelm Sasnal, whose minimal oil paintings depict a Pantone chair and a piece of wrought-iron fence, describes the poetics of the everyday as deeply rooted in his practise.

Another artistic approach to the everyday is the manipulation of the familiar. Slight alterations can tip ordinary objects into the uncanny or absurd: Andreas Gursky's photograph of a cooker with glowing red knobs transforms its technical surface into an eerie tableau. Thomas Zipp's painterly installation shows a marionette engaged in gardening, rendered in a dark, surreal atmosphere, while Alexandra Metcalf paints a violet-tinted, toxic-looking landscape complete with headphones – once can almost hear the soundtrack. Sigmar Polke conjures a face from a light bulb and a pair of glasses. Alicja Kwade's broom seems merely to be resting, leaning lazily in an arched bow against the wall. Slapstick humour animates Gilbert & George's collapsed gin bottle as much as Andreas Slominski's mousetrap disguised as a children's toy. With a bronze television, Gusmão + Paiva take on the impossible task of turning moving images into sculpture; Mara Wohnhaas stacks unreadable books made of wood; and Isa Genzken silences modernism's optimism with a *Weltempfänger* radio cast from concrete in the shape of a detergent bottle.

For women artists, the everyday has long been a site of critique – a lens through which to examine social structures. The private sphere has traditionally been synonymous with unpaid labour and invisible oppression. Annette Messenger's installations of bras, Talia Chetrit's photographs, and Pipilotti Rist's illuminated bathing suit all address the body, sexuality and gender roles within domestic contexts. Nan Goldin's self-portrait in the bathroom confronts intimacy with vulnerability. Alexandra Bircken's photograph of a sewing-needle case, titled *Heavy Metal*, and Nina Beier's double washbasin fitted with cigars as plugs both question traditional gender clichés and associations. These works make plain that the private remains a political space.

Everyday objects can also become vessels of memory, capable of telling stories. FORT's fictional shop window displaying wigs invites speculation about their potential wearers and alternative identities – much like Alex Da Corte's hair dye box *Just For Men*. Lukas Müller paints familiar scenes – spaghetti, a kitchen chair, a place to sleep – which turn out to be fragments from the lives of homeless people. Wolfgang Tillmans portrays himself twice over: directly in a mirror, though partly obscured by his camera, and indirectly through a collection of

personal items and artworks arranged on a mantelpiece. In these works, the everyday becomes charged with stories that reach far beyond the sum of their objects.

*Poetics of the Everyday* brings together artistic strategies that engage with and question the everyday – whether through the provocation of the banal, subtle shifts into the uncanny or absurd, social critique, or the evocation of memory. The exhibition unites perspectives across generations, showing that the everyday remains, to this day, a vital field of resonance for artistic practice.