

## Sies + Höke Galerie

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### Press release

#### FORT: Sweet Sickness

16. November 2018 – 12. Januar 2019, Opening: Freitag, 16. November 6-9pm

With *Sweet Sickness*, Sies + Höke presents its second solo exhibition of the artist duo FORT, consisting of Alberta Niemann and Jenny Kropp. Thematically, all new works revolve around different states of being in love, the irrational, and illusion.

FORT is interested in the fine line between the rushing euphoria, loss of reality, and exquisite pain that is involved in the feeling of budding love. Staged objects and adapted readymades are primarily used to unfold these stories.

In a number of works, the sweet delusion of being in love and the longing it entails take center stage. An oversized seashell sings dreamily on a wall, a soap bubble occasionally rising from it that quickly bursts again.

*Ariel's Dreaming* draws on references to Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the little mermaid, an iconic story of unconditional and unrequited love. But the work also speaks of the delusion and blindness to reason that almost irrevocably accompany the early phase of being in love, which is just as fragile as the soap bubble dreams that the wall piece is constantly producing.

Next to it the work entitled *The Visit* also plays with the suspense of a mysterious visitor. The toe caps of two shoes peek out from behind a curtain, moving almost imperceptibly. It remains open who is hiding here, if it is a real or imagined guest and whether a threat or a pleasant anticipation are at play. The work builds suspense in the style of film noir but does not disperse it, leaving the viewer in the dark instead.

Interconnected telephone pairs deal poetically with aspects of partnership communication. For *Liaison*, FORT has arranged telephones of the most disparate origins into twos. The handset cables are connected in a variety of ways and carefully staged in small gestures. The everyday objects become meaningful portraits of imaginary persons in relationships and whose degree of harmony, intimacy, or even distance can only be seen in the selected telephone models and their interaction with each other.

*Second Floor Temptation* is a game of seduction. Temptingly arranged chocolates lie along a bannister, the trail of which one would only too gladly follow. The railing leads nowhere, however, eliciting a feeling of ambivalence that couples joyful expectations with emptiness and disappointment.

The works *Guilty Flowers* manifests a small but expressive gesture as a quasi-readymade: A bouquet of fresh carnations protrudes from a public garbage can. As a token of love, the flowers speak of disillusion and guilt while the actual course of events remains unclear.

The series *Symptoms of the Universe* visualizes the drive to gain clarity about the parameters of one's own romantic situation. Oversized playing cards contain messages reminiscent of vague fortune-teller interpretations and the projections with which one searches less for a real answer than a confirmation of ideas, desires, and hopes.

The artists have mounted the bricked-up front door of a house in the basement of the gallery that conveys something eerie. With *Ghosting*, FORT creates a physical parallel to a phenomenon that has become particularly prevalent with the rise of the internet. The title is taken from a term that describes an abrupt and one-sided termination of all communication in a partnership. Any attempt to establish contact is a waste of time. The title of the work refers not only to the contemporary communication phenomenon, but also to the spook in one's own head when confronted with such a sudden end.

Next door, hearts are confined behind the grate of a setting sun. FORT's ongoing series *One in a Million* also functions as a stand-in or projection screen for untold stories. These are replicas of real-life windows that have caught the artists' attention in everyday life. As an interface between the inside and the outside, the details of their designs provide information about the life that lies behind them while at the same time conveying a feeling of abandonment and alienation when detached from their context.

Likewise, the back walls of shooting galleries with the title *Crush* are taken out of their original context. As a perennial fairground favorite, they are mainly used by young men to shoot a rose in order to impress their latest date. The widely dispersed bullet holes on the wall testify to more than a few unsuccessful attempts and the clumsiness of conquest. FORT is interested here in the contrast between the rose as a traditional token of love and the militant act of shooting, something the duo also conveys through the ambiguity of the work's title: The word "crush," lest we forget, is used to describe both a process of obliteration as well as commonly standing for the special person who's caught our eye.

Text by Tobias Peper

FORT consists of the artists Alberta Niemann (\*1982) and Jenny Kropp (\*1978). They have created objects, installations, performances, and video installations since 2008 (until 2013, also working with Anna Jandt \*1980). Niemann and Kropp live and work in Berlin.

Previous solo exhibitions include *Night Shift*, Kunstverein in Hamburg (2018), *Limbo*, Langen Foundation, Neuss (2017), *Night Shift*, Casino Luxembourg (2017), *SHIFT*, Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (2015), and *Morgen letzter Tag*, Kunsthaus Dresden (2013). Group exhibitions have included *Letztes Jahr in Marienbad. Ein Film als Kunstwerk*, Kunsthalle Bremen (2015), *Im Inneren der Stadt(Inside the City)*, GAK Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst Bremen (2015); *Krankheit als Metapher*, Kunsthaus, Hamburg (2014), *Fremd & Eigen*, Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck (2013), *Risc Society*, MoCA Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (2013), and *One On One*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2012).

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