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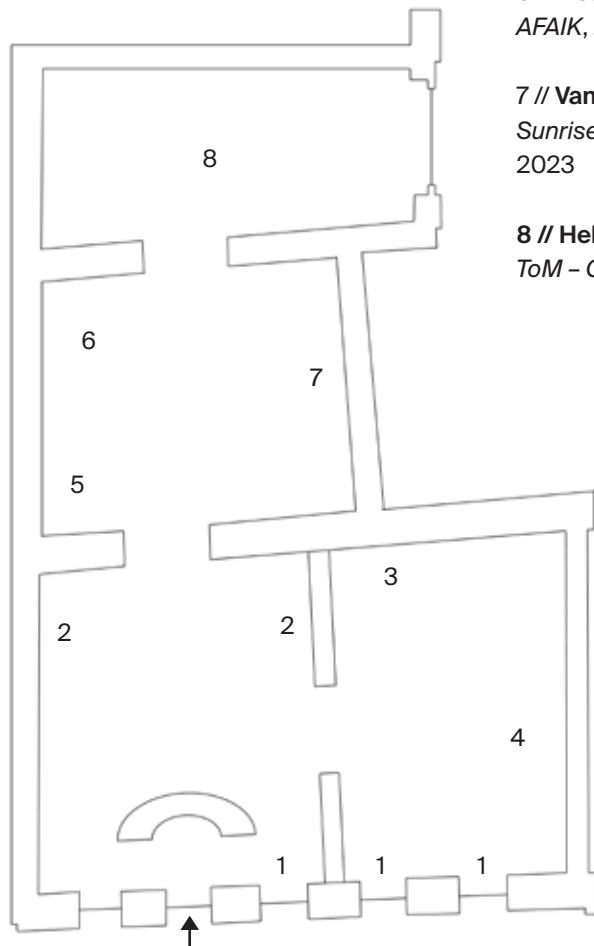
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February 15 – May 11, 2025

NEU
KØLL
KUNSTNER
PREIS 2025

Neukölln is a vibrant and prominent location for Berlin's contemporary art scene. With a large number of studios, art and project spaces, the district has developed into an important center for artistic production. Since 2017, the Department of Culture, in cooperation with Kulturnetzwerk Neukölln e.V. and STADT UND LAND Wohnbauten-Gesellschaft mbH, has been recognizing and promoting outstanding art production in Neukölln by awarding the Neuköllner Kunstpreis.

From a large number of applications, a jury of five art professionals has nominated a total of eight artists who live or work in Neukölln. Galerie im Saalbau presents the works of the nominees in a group exhibition, giving visitors an authentic insight into the diverse art production of Neukölln artists.

The awards are endowed with a total of 6,000 euros:

- 1st prize - 3,000 euro
- 2nd prize - 2,000 euro
- 3rd prize - 1,000 euro

A prize will be awarded by STADT UND LAND Wohnbauten-Gesellschaft mbH in the form of a purchase.

The jury consists of:

- Yolanda Kaddu-Mulindwa* (Director of the Municipal Galleries Neukölln)
- Kat Nowak* (Festival Director of 48 Stunden Neukölln)
- Malte Pieper* (Curator)
- Katharina Reich* (Artist and Prize winner 2023)
- Catherine Rose Evans* (Artist and Prize winner 2020)

The jury was chaired (without voting rights) by *Nora Zender*.

Curated by *Nina Marlene Kraus*

Curatorial Assistance *Diana Nowak & Clara von Schwerin*

Winners

Jurystatements

1. Preis

Asako Shiroki

The installation „Evergreen“ impressed the jury with its complexity and powerful message. Aesthetically and sensually appealing, a variety of materials and objects come together in a subtle and balanced way: a floating flask emitting a gentle pine scent, its distillation process quietly portrayed in a video work, a delicate silver chain on the floor casually tracing a border. Autobiographically inspired, the artist draws attention to the difficult historical relationship between Japan and Korea. Yet the pine tree, visually and olfactorily omnipresent, symbolizes the connection of these two countries, a gentle response to a long-simmering conflict. This subtle statement invites us to look at global border conflicts from a different perspective.

2. Preis

Ida Lawrence

The work „The Shop. The Sign. Particular Folk.“ by Ida Lawrence impresses the jury with its humorous approach to social exclusion. The seemingly everyday nature of signs banning dogs in public spaces provides an accessible introduction to the work, which quickly develops into more complex aspects. Fragmented texts open up a space for further thoughts: how do we exclude others? Who is excluded? How are prohibitions made visible? A visually strong and excellently realized mixture of painting and collage, repetition and expansion. Equally remarkable is the spatial presentation, in which the work itself becomes a leashed object.

3. Preis

Rita Adib

Rita Adib's work „CARE IS A POLITICAL ACT - A POLITICAL ACT IS CARE“ impressed the jury with its direct accessibility. The window installation extends from the gallery space out onto the street, engaging passers-by without being intrusive. Inclusive and trilingual, the work activates the gallery front as a space for political questioning and makes an important statement about current developments in social services and culture. The artist draws attention to the question of who provides care and who has the capacity to do so, skilfully playing with different interpretations of her message. The visual interplay between inside and outside also reflects the dependence of private care on external circumstances.

1// Rita Adib

Why is the lettering on the windows facing towards the street?

By placing the text on the windows to be read from outside, the work primarily addresses passers-by on Karl-Marx-Straße. The positioning of the work on the windows thus opens up the gallery space to a broader public context. In this way, Adib dissolves the usual separation between the protected, but therefore also restricted, gallery space and the public space. The lettering blends discretely into the daily activity on Karl-Marx-Straße. The work nonetheless leaves a lasting impression and encourages the readers to reflect on the connections between care and political work.

How does Adib combine political work with her artistic practice?

The Syrian-Canadian artist Rita Adib often works with interventions in public space, questioning social norms and calling for a broader discussion about social and political injustices.

CARE IS A POLITICAL ACT emphasizes the political dimension of care work and being a caregiver—activities that are still predominantly performed by women or marginalised people. Often unpaid, socially necessary, but invisible. Adib understands care not simply as an individual, personal activity, but rather as a form of resistance and a collective, political and artistic practice in a structurally unjust society.

The work references the feminist slogan “The Personal is Political”, which questioned patriarchal role models as well as the separation between private and public during the Second Wave of Feminism in the 1970s. Adib expands this idea by continuing her mantra CARE IS A POLITICAL ACT until it reverses itself to A POLITICAL ACT IS CARE—highlighting the connection between social and political change.

The continuation of the sentence highlights the political action of demanding equal rights through protests as a form of care for ourselves and others, redefining care as a strong transformative force for change rather than an apolitical act.

CARE IS A POLITICAL ACT – A POLITICAL ACT IS CARE

2024, Vinyl lettering, each window 109.5 x 212 cm

Jurystatement

Rita Adib's work *CARE IS A POLITICAL ACT – A POLITICAL ACT IS CARE* captivates through its immediate accessibility. As a text installation in the window, it projects its compelling message from the gallery into the street, dissolving the boundary between inside and outside. Like a word puzzle, the piece invites both horizontal and vertical readings, leaving room for new interpretations and statements. In this play, the words shift in meaning, much like political promises.

Neukölln in three words
by Rita Adib

**parallels,
community,
resilience**

2// Tra My Nguyen

How do the textiles and the motorcycle relate to each other?

In the mixed-media sculpture *Riders' Arc*, typical sun-protective clothing from Vietnam is draped over a motorcycle. Motorcycles are the main means of transportation in Vietnam and symbolize not only everyday life, but also the beginning of the country's capitalist transition since the 1980s.

German-Vietnamese artist Tra My Nguyen explores in this work how female bodies in particular are perceived in a society shaped by consumerism and social conventions. Unlike Western motorcycle culture, in which riding motorcycles and the associated clothing are often coded as masculine, this sun protection clothing, designed for motorcycling with its floral patterns and bright colours features a distinctly feminine aesthetic.

However, the full-body protective coats not only provide practical protection from dust and sun in traffic, but are also a response to social beauty standards and racial prejudices: The protection against intensive sunlight is intended to prevent the skin from darkening.

How are the artist's personal experiences reflected in her work?

Nguyen's starting point is her childhood experience in Vietnam. Riding a motorcycle evokes a sense of freedom and independence for her. At the same time, these memories prompted her to explore gender politics, colourism, consumer culture, and mass production in today's Vietnamese society.

Due to her background in fashion design, Nguyen is not only interested in the materiality of the textiles—with their generic patterns, plastic fibers and quick-to-process cuts indicative of fast fashion products—but she also understands the garments as social and political elements.

What aesthetic style characterises the sculpture?

The fabrics are stripped of their original functionality as they merge with the shape of the motorcycle, creating a new aesthetic between body and machine. The textile transforms the rearing motorcycle into a dynamic sculpture. The draped cloths are sealed with textile silicone, fixing the shape and giving them a shiny, techno-organic surface at the same time.

Similar to the videos, which use overlays and glitch aesthetics to create visual alienation, the sculptural form of the motorcycle is also rendered abstract.

Riders' Arc

2024, Motorcycle, sun protection clothes, textile silicone,

140 × 185 × 75 cm

Day

HD, colour, loop, 0:45 min.

Night

HD, colour, loop, 1:28 min.

Jurystatement

Tra My Nguyen's installation *Riders' Arc* stands out through its striking contrast of materials. It references the traditional "equestrian statue" as a form of public monument but reinterprets this outdated symbol of commemoration in a contemporary context. What once covered the body, now covers the machine. The rain-coat, a symbol of fleeting "fast fashion," sealed with silicone, is being elevated into something lasting and monumental. The work ultimately asks how memories can be preserved over time.

Neukölln in three words
by Tra My Nguyen

**diverse,
creative,
changing**

3// Ida Lawrence

What is written on the painting?

The Shop. The Sign. Particular Folk.

The shop displays a sign on the door, the door supposed to welcome.

The sign excludes particular folk, precisely at eye level.

Particular folk wait outside the shop, facing the sign,

seething.

What role does text play in Ida Lawrence's paintings?

Inspired by everyday experiences and observations, Ida Lawrence combines image and text to create playful narrative paintings that deal with bizarre interactions, surprising situations and (mis)understandings.

The story of the exclusion of particular folk in this work revolves around „no dog“ signs that Lawrence observed around Berlin, including on the facades of stores on Karl-Marx-Straße, some of which are positioned at the dogs' eye level.

Vibrant colors and patterns reflect the rhythm of this short narrative. Lawrence uses a process she calls “decomposing repetition”: Starting from a specific template—in this case the photograph of a dog - she first paints a version of the original—here in the bottom right-hand corner of the painting. She then copies and enlarges the painted version again and again until only the dog's feet protrude into the picture at the upper edge. The construction process (or the illusion of it) remains visible; however, the copy ultimately exceeds the original.

How does the narrative extend beyond the canvas?

Inspired by her observations of bizarre or amusing everyday occurrences—such as the „no-dog“ signs at the dogs' eye level—Lawrence fantasizes about potential backstories and imaginary connections. She invites the audience to join her in imagining how the story continues beyond the canvas.

The Shop. The Sign. Particular Folk. sparks thoughts about inclusion and exclusion, unwritten rules and social norms that often have strange or absurd effects on everyday life. Who, or what groups, might the painting's excluded dogs symbolise? Are these signs addressed directly to the dogs? Are the dog owners supposed to imagine themselves from the viewpoint of their dogs? And would dogs hang „no-human“ signs at human eye level in their stores?

The Shop. The Sign. Particular Folk.

2021–2024, Acrylic on unstretched polycotton, hand stitching, cotton strap, metal parts, 219 × 165 cm

Jurystatement

The mixed media work *The Shop. The Sign. Particular Folk* by Ida Lawrence is rooted in the tradition of story painting. The artist takes everyday objects and deconstructs them through a collage-like repetition, transforming them into an artistic context that is striking in the simplicity of its presentation.

Neukölln in three words
by Ida Lawrence

**Fatayer,
Retramp,
friendship**

4// Asako Shiroki

How do the different elements of the installation relate to each other?

Combining sculpture, photography, video and scent, the installation *Evergreen* creates a multi-layered and poetic sensory experience.

In the center, a custom-made heart-shaped glass vessel is suspended, containing exactly 21 grams of essential oil—the presumed weight of the soul. This oil is a blend of distilled Japanese and Korean pine needles. The video *Invisible Yet Still Green* shows the distillation process in which solid matter turns into liquid. The scent of the oil spreads invisibly and subtly throughout the room. A silver chain, which traces the border between Japan and Korea on the floor, encloses the scent both spatially and symbolically.

Two blurred photographs frame the installation. Both photographs, one of which was taken in Japan and one in Korea, depict a Japanese and a Korean pine tree—the abstracted shades of green melting into one another.

What does the symbol of pine tree represent?

Pine trees—native to both Japan and Korea—hold deep symbolic meaning in both countries: with their evergreen needles, they represent resilience, strength, hope and overcoming difficulties. Furthermore, Koreans understand the pine as a symbolic representation of themselves. Using the symbol of the pine tree, Asako Shiroki explores the cultural connections between these two countries and the challenges of assimilating into a new society.

Created during a three-month residency in Korea, Shiroki's installation reflects both her personal history and the complex cultural relationships between Japan and Korea, particularly in the post-war period. The artist herself is Japanese, her husband is Korean; his grandmother was Korean, yet was born in Japan. However, after the end of Japan's colonial rule following World War II, his grandmother returned to Korea with her father, but the rest of the family was unable to return to their homeland, leading to their separation.

Just like the identities of Koreans living in Japan and Japanese living in Korea, the installation repeatedly intertwines the two pine trees: within the essential oil invisibly emanating from the heart-shaped glass or in the photographs, whose shades of green no longer reveal which tree they originate from.

What inspired the artist to work with the transient medium of scent?

Shiroki's interest in non-visual media was influenced by a collaboration with visually impaired artists, which sparked a critical examination of her own concept of beauty. She further developed these observations after losing her sense of smell following a

Evergreen

2023, Glass jar, 21 gramm essential oil, silver chain, variable size

Melting Into Color

2023, Pigment print, 89.5 x 126.5 cm each

Invisible Yet Still Green

2024, Video, 6:43 min.

COVID-19 infection. The suggested treatment to regain her sense of smell involved smelling essential oils, which led her to explore the quality of scents.

As fleeting and ephemeral substances, scent eludes visual perception yet immediately evokes emotions and memories. Shiroki thinks of scent not only as a physical phenomenon but also as an emotional and intellectual experience offering a new, inclusive perception of art that transcends the visual and creating a more accessible approach to aesthetics.

Jurystatement

The installation *Evergreen* by Asako Shiroki shifts between different media and materials. Delicately and with great sensitivity, the artist imagines a poetic world in which borders also offer opportunities and categorizations are potentially reversible. The blurred, evergreen photographs allow for a universal interpretation.

Neukölln in three words

by Asako Shiroki

**duality, pulse,
resilience**

5// Fernanda Figueiredo

How is the painting composed?

In her work, Brazilian artist Fernanda Figueiredo combines elements of modern painting with AI-generated cartoons, children's drawings and pre-Columbian artifacts. These seemingly disparate components represent different cultural and artistic forms of expression that blend into a large-format, multi-layered composition.

Figueiredo draws from a continually growing archive in which she intuitively combines image fragments from art history and current events. Following the idea of appropriation art, a painting by Le Corbusier serves as a backdrop for *Technofeudalism Automation*. This icon of masculine modernism is overlaid with a scribbled child's drawing of a monster, a pre-Columbian female figure and several smooth, neon-colored elements generated by artificial intelligence.

What does the title *Technofeudalism Automation* refer to?

Figueiredo's picture archive is based on a theoretical examination of socio-critical concepts. With *Technofeudalism Automation*, she refers to the concept of technofeudalism, which describes a modern social order in which a few large tech companies exercise immense power and control over economic and social structures. These "cloud principalities" profit from the exploitation of digital resources, while the majority of the population remains in precarious, dependent conditions.

For her current series, Figueiredo takes advantage of the latest technologies from these tech companies using AI image generators. By exposing the flaws and shortcomings of these tools, she humorously questions the claims and promises of technological development—creating a dialectical tension between creative appropriation and the critical deconstruction of technical power structures.

How does the work interact with the larger series "Barbaric Protopia"?

In the ongoing series "Barbaric Protopia", Figueiredo addresses the inherent tensions between progress and regression. The title of the series refers to the term "Protopia", which describes a sustainable utopia achieved through gradual, continuous progress. A barbaric protopia, in contrast to the traditional utopia, contains the ambivalences of our time: Is our progress sustainable, or is it an illusion?

Figueiredo's works reflect a reality that is equally characterized by regressive structures and hopes for social change. She repeatedly refers to contemporary sources such as internet memes or pop cultural phenomena in order to capture the cultural complexity of today's world.

"Barbaric Protopia" demonstrates that progress is neither linear nor perfect, but rather an ongoing, dialectical process.

Technofeudalism Automation

2024, Acrylic on canvas, 160 × 220 cm

Anthropogenic Anxiety

2024, Acrylic on canvas, 60 × 48 cm

Jurystatement

Fernanda Figueiredo's work *Technofeudalism Automation* is captivating in its complexity. The artist skillfully explores analogue and digital techniques such as collage, painting and artificial intelligence. By juxtaposing carefully selected, partly distorted and partly AI-modified objects, she creates unexpected intercultural references.

Neukölln in three words
by Fernanda Figueiredo

**kebab, shisha,
hairspray**

6// Bea Targosz

What does sonification mean and how does Bea Targosz apply it in her art?

Sonification refers to the conversion of data into sounds in order to convey information acoustically. Similar to visualization, which displays data graphically, sonification makes patterns, values or correlations audible.

Bea Targosz started exploring sonification during the pandemic. The constant exposure to a wide variety of data and statistics, such as infection figures, aerosol numbers per square meter or intensive care unit occupancy rates, suddenly dominated everyday life and influenced political, social and ecological measures. The overwhelming amount of public data inspired Targosz to artistically investigate how this influx of data affects our perception and decisions. In her work, Targosz reflects the challenge of forming opinions or decisions within a constant flow of relevant information. Sonification enables immediate access to these complex interrelations and thus makes the dynamics of rapidly changing realities tangible.

What are we hearing in the sound installation?

The installation is based on data concerning changes in air pollutants (CO, NOx, PM₁₀, PM_{2,5}, SO₂) between 1990 and 2015 in European countries, as well as collected data from Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA.

High pollutant levels are reproduced alternately as high or particularly low tones. Bright tones convey hope, yet too high tones quickly turn shrill, which in turn triggers discomfort. Low tones, on the other hand, have a calming effect, but can also appear threatening. Targosz uses sound to make abstract values such as air pollutants audible and at the same time questions the uncertainty and limits of our knowledge, which is based on data. *AFAIK* (As Far As I Know) also alludes to the fact that we as humans can only hear a certain frequency range. We are not aware of many sounds, even though we perceive them physically.

How does the presentation in the space influence the work?

The sound source of the installation, an industrial speaker as used in factory halls, lies on the floor, making the sonified data physically and emotionally tangible.

The spatial dimension is central to the work. By placing and situating new sound qualities in the space, Targosz creates a new context inviting the audience to experience sound structures physically and spatially. The recorded sounds enter into a dialogue with the specific acoustics of the space, giving each installation a unique dynamic. In this way, the space becomes not just a backdrop, but an active element of perception.

AFAIK

2024, Sound installation, various time intervals, horn diameter 52 cm

Jurystatement

While at first the audio installation *AFAIK* appears to be an irritating, disturbing and overlapping sound, the underlying artistic concept is carefully thought through and captivating: the artist converts hard data into soundscapes, offering a physical experience of it. The work explores how data can be made accessible and what conclusions can be drawn from a sensory reading.

Neukölln in three words
by Bea Targosz

**open,
dynamic,
diverse**

7// Vanessa Opoku

How is landscape depicted in the work?

Vanessa Amoah Opoku used a 3D laser scanning app, originally developed for the construction industry, to measure landscapes in Ghana and Carinthia. In Ghana, she documented cocoa fields that are increasingly threatened by the climate crisis and its consequences, such as droughts and plant viruses, as well as by ever-expanding gold mining areas. In Carinthia, she took photographs of the border region between Austria and Slovenia, a historical site of partisan actions during the Second World War. These two very different landscapes each tell stories of resistance, self-empowerment and fragility. Opoku takes a critical approach to the surveying of landscapes as an imperial gesture of appropriation and superimposes these geographical and historical references to create new landscapes of memory and dreams. The differently enlarged point clouds of the laser scan merge into new, digital formations. The artist creates hypothetical worlds of resistance, with the digital transformation of the real landscapes remaining clearly visible through the granular structure.

What is covering the landscape images?

A thin layer of silicone with small particles and residue from the places where the scans were made overlays the landscape scans. With the help of artificial intelligence, the artist generated the shapes of the silicone layers based on the Adinkra symbolic language. Adinkra symbols are commonly used in Ghanaian culture and are applied to textiles, house walls and other objects of everyday use to provide symbolic protection. The symbols have different meanings and are each associated with a specific proverb from the Ashanti language, which is deeply rooted in collective memory.

Based on the traditional Adinkra symbols, Opoku used artificial intelligence to create new symbols. She inscribes herself in an ongoing process of transformation of cultural symbols shaped by migration, diaspora and historical change.

Who are the so-called Tricksters?

Thin acrylic glass panels with finely engraved outlines of various figures are mounted above the landscape images. Like digital screens, they superimpose the scenes below and reinterpret them. Opoku understands these figures as mythological tricksters—cunning figures who use small tricks to disrupt the order of the universe, question norms, and challenge power relations.

Opoku chose figures that are directly interwoven with the underlying landscapes and reinterpreted them. These figures combine historical and mythological narratives, and illustrate how resistance is a transnational practice.

Sunrise to Sunrise (Tricksters), 1-7

2023-ongoing, Mixed media, UV print on Aludibond, acrylic glass, magnets, silicone, organic and inorganic material from Ghana and Carinthia, various sizes

One trickster character, for example, portrays Helena “Jelka” Kuchar, a Carinthian partisan. As a member of the Slovenian minority, she joined the partisans during the Second World War. Her story represents active resistance against oppression and is deeply linked to Carinthia as a historical site of resistance.

Another plate depicts Anansi, a figure from Akan mythology who is often depicted as a spider. Anansi is known as the god of wisdom and cunning. In Creole lore, Anansi even survives apocalypses and transatlantic enslavement, emphasizing his symbolic importance as a survivor and an agent of resistance.

► *This interactive artwork invites you to choose a blessing, engage with the landscape of resistance, and release it into the water. As it dissolves, the act symbolizes the ongoing transformation and flow of defiance.*

Jurystatement

Vanessa Opoku's mixed media work *Sunrise to Sunrise (Tricksters)* creates a poetic connection between memory and reality. Using various imaging techniques, she alters and deconstructs images and figures, developing multi-dimensional digital spaces that serve as sites of memory. These spaces are neither temporally nor geographically aligned, yet they form surprising connections within her work. Viewers are invited to question what they are looking at: Is it the future? A memory? Or a place of desire?

Neukölln in three words
by Vanessa Amoah Opoku

**inspiration,
diversity, home**

8// Helin Ulas

Who or what is *ToM*?

ToM or *Tides of Memories* is a partly fictional, partly fact-based creature that dreams of becoming water. This hybrid creation is based on digital processes, machine learning and artistic design.

Disguised as a real-time audiovisual installation, the work invites the audience on a journey through *ToM*'s dreams and nightmares. In a speculative environment, with real-time digitally generated sketches, algorithmically chosen video compositions, and slowly moving robotic creatures, Tom tells a story from the perspective of the water. The machine grapples with its identity and is exposed to memories left in the water. *ToM*'s journey unfolds within her own ecology formed through the sculptural objects—creatures, who act as both observers and participants, responding to her dreams and echoes.

What does *ToM* dream of?

ToM dreams of the ability to transform itself in the flowing and infinite form of water. From the perspective of water, *ToM* reflects on migration, movement, and the incessant flow of water across borders—while it remains trapped in the impossibility of reaching its desires.

ToM's story unfolds in five acts inspired by the myth of the Minotaur and the Aegean Sea. In the first act, *ToM* recalibrates and decides to dream. In the second act, it dreams of memories and creates images of digital water. In the third, climactic act, *ToM* falls in love with its memories without realizing their true meaning. It then creates compositions from the echoes of its memories in the fourth act, only to realize in the final act that it can never be the water itself. Instead, *ToM* takes on other forms before the cycle starts all over again.

How does *ToM* work?

The installation uses machine learning to generate a real-time composition, integrating text, audio, and video into a time-based format, with *ToM* selecting and recomposing elements in each cycle. The machine learning algorithm grants the installation an agency over a pre-written score, enabling her to choose from different variations in real-time. Alongside *ToM*, the installation creates a networked system that informs the creatures, who respond, observe, and critique each selected composition through audio selection and movement.

ToM – Creatures

2024, Sculpture, audio, video

In collaboration with Célestin Meunier and Karolina Sobel

Creative Tech & Video: Célestin Meunier

Video & Field Recordings: Karolina Sobel

Creative technology: Alex Wenger

Sound Design: Sevki Argalioglu

Voice Actor: Pauline Payen

Realized through UNESCO City of Media Arts, Production Partner ZKM Karlsruhe

ToM has access to an archive of texts, which starts the process algorithmic process. Based on the artist's research, these texts, deal with hydrofeminism, non-human perspectives, and collapse of reality in digital spaces, the work explores the relationship between water, memory, migration, technological hallucinations, and context collapse—where meaning dissolves across digital and physical spaces—transforming into a new audiovisual form.

Jurystatement

ToM – Edition: Creatures by Helin Ulas presents a machine that aspires to become water. The multimedia installation resembles a science fiction narrative, where machines increasingly behave like humans, blurring the lines between the two. The work makes a very timely statement about the rapid technological advancements of our era. What is real? What defines thinking and feeling? And can machines learn these human traits?

Neukölln in three words
by Helin Ulas

**home,
collective,
improvised**



ToM's story:

NEU KØLL KUNSTNER PREIS 2025

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