

AXEL LIEBER
EMPTY PROMISES

14 March - 10 May 2024

AXEL LIEBER. EMPTY PROMISES

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Axel Lieber, *Empty Promises*, MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2024

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Drawing a Universe (TinTin page 17), 2022

stampa fine art, cornice, legno, smalto

fine art print, frame, wood, enamel

121,5 x 91,5 cm (47,83 x 36,02 in)

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***Empty Promises*, 2024**

legno, plastica, cartone, carta, metallo, gomma
wood, plastic, cardboard, paper, metal, rubber
340 x 300 x 150 cm (133,86 x 118,11 x 59,05 in)

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Mein konstruktiver Alltag (2.4.2021), 2021

cartone, legno
cardboard, wood

110 x 87 x 35 cm (28,74 x 16,53 x 13 in)

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Happy Endings (Second Life), 2014
stampa diasec su dibond, legno, smalto
diasec on dibond, wood, enamel
70 x 60 cm (27,56 x 23,63 in)

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Cogito Ergo Sum, 2024

legno, smalto

wood, enamel

57 x 88 x 5 cm (22,44 x 34,65 x 1,97 in)

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Private Architecture (Dude lightblue), 2014

tessuto, legno, acciaio, sneaker, lacci

textile, wood, steel, sneaker, laces

200 x 35 x 25 cm (78,74 x 13,78 x 9,84 in)

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Without Title (Sweater in Box), 1990

maglione a collo alto, legno

turtleneck sweater, wood

45 x 48,5 x 44 cm (17,72 x 19,09 x 17,32 in)

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14 marzo - 10 maggio 2024

L'artista berlinese Axel Lieber (Düsseldorf, 1960) ha immaginato, per la sua seconda mostra personale in galleria, un playground immaginario dove il visitatore è invitato a compiere un percorso tra oggetti enigmatici ed evocativi, talvolta smaterializzate apparizioni, che interrogano la percezione e mettono in scacco aspettative e luoghi comuni.

Empty Promises è non solo il titolo della mostra ma anche quello dell'installazione posta al centro della prima sala. Qui campeggia una nuda struttura lignea che ricorda quelle usate per sostenere i cartelloni pubblicitari, privata però della sua funzione e animata da una miriade di frammenti colorati. L'opera, se da una parte ammicca ironicamente al rigore costruttivista e minimalista, dall'altra ricorda che non è più il tempo delle grandi narrazioni o di un credo forte capace di supportare il mondo, mostrando invece che quel che rimane sono solo frammenti e promesse disattese.

Quel che sopravvive al naufragio contemporaneo delle idee forti e delle grandi narrazioni che hanno orientato le generazioni del secolo scorso, sono i vuoti simulacri che trovano un'eco nelle opere di Axel Lieber presenti in mostra, che sono rielaborate, metabolizzate e trasformate nella loro forma in modo da racchiudere allo stesso momento un richiamo al passato e uno sguardo disincantato sul mondo attuale.

È così che l'artista fa magicamente apparire aloni colorati che si sprigionano

da mensole in apparenza vuote, presenta complesse costruzioni di volumi compenetrati il cui profilo è accennato da esilissime strutture ricavate dalle scatole delle medicine o degli alimenti, scava filoni di pane che per metamorfosi diventano estranianti pantofole, tramuta felpe e indumenti nelle sembianze fantasmatiche di curiosi individui che occupano lo spazio della seconda sala, spettatori anch'essi oltre che opere in mostra. L'ambivalenza e la capacità di provocare diverse possibilità di lettura abitano queste opere, dove le stelle dell'universo sono in realtà bottoni, dove le cancellature con il pennarello aprono mondi, dove gli assemblages di ceramica, di cartone, di legno, sono galassie collassate, orizzonti degli eventi di un presente che è anche futuro e insieme passato.

Una nuova definizione dell'umano dall'infinitamente grande all'immensamente piccolo, sardonica, paradossale e visionaria, appare dalle opere in mostra, in cui il gioco e l'assurdo si mescolano all'utile e al familiare, avanzi di modi di pensare ormai desueti che attraverso le nuove forme date dall'arte di Axel Lieber aprono inediti spiragli di senso.

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For his second solo show at the gallery, the Berlin-based artist Axel Lieber (Düsseldorf, 1960) has conceived an imaginary playground where visitors are invited to follow a path among enigmatic, evocative objects, and sometimes dematerialised apparitions, which question perception and confound expectations and commonplaces.

Empty Promises is not just the title of the exhibition but also of the installation in the centre of the first room. It is dominated by a bare wooden structure reminiscent of the ones used to support advertising billboards, stripped, however, of its function and enlivened by a myriad of coloured fragments. While on the one hand the work nods ironically towards constructivist and minimalist rigour, on the other it reminds us that this is no longer the age of grand narratives or strong belief systems able to underpin the world, showing instead that what remains are just fragments and empty promises.

What survives the contemporary foundering of the powerful ideas and grand narratives that guided generations of people in the last century are empty simulacra. These find an echo in the works shown by Lieber, which are re-worked, metabolised and modified in their form in such a way as to encapsulate at one and the same time a reference to the past and a disenchanting view of today's world.

And so the artist magically conjures up colourful auras, released from apparently empty shelves; he presents complex constructions of interlocking volumes, the profile of which is outlined by very delicate structures made from medicine or food packages; he hollows out loaves of bread which, through metamorphosis, become estranging slippers; he transmutes sweat-shirts and other items of clothing into the ghostly semblance of curious individuals, who occupy the space of the second room – spectators themselves besides being works on display. Ambivalence and the ability to suggest various interpretive possibilities are intrinsic to these works, where the stars of the universe are actually buttons, where erasures with a felt-tip pen open up worlds, where assemblages of ceramic, cardboard and wood are collapsed galaxies, horizons of events of a present that is also future and past.

A new definition of the human – from the infinitely large to the incredibly small, sardonic, paradoxical and visionary – emerges from the works on show, where playfulness and the absurd combine with the useful and the familiar, remnants of now outmoded ways of thinking which, through the original forms offered by Lieber's art, open up new threads of meaning.

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AXEL LIEBER

Born in 1960 in Düsseldorf, Germany
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Stockholm, Sweden

EDUCATION AND TEACHING

2016

Member of the royal Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm, Sweden

2006-2007

DAAD guest professor at bauhaus university Weimar, Germany
Public Art and new Artistic Strategies, MFA program

2004-2005

Guest professor with Inges Idee at bauhaus university Weimar, Germany
Public Art and new Artistic Strategies, MFA program

1999-2016

Workshops at the Art Academy of Malmö, Sweden and at several European
Art Academies

1995-1999

Lecturer for sculpture at the Art Academy of Malmö, Sweden

1992

Founding of the group Inges Idee (Art in Public Space) with Hans Hemmert,
Thomas Schmidt, Georg Zey

1978-1984

Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, sculpture class, Master of Fine Arts

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

2024

Empty Promises, MAAB Gallery, Milano

2022

Light in the Attic, Galleri ping pong, Malmö

2021

Kopf und Kragen. Galerie Mark Müller, Zurich
Asservatenkammer, Hengesbach Gallery, Wuppertal

2018

Illicit constructions, Thomas Taubert Gallery, Berlin
primo piatto, MAAB Gallery, Milano

2016

Teil und Ganzes, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Berlin

2015

SOLLBRUCHSTELLEN. Hangesbach Gallery, Wuppertal

2014

Pop up, Galerie Dina Renninger, Munich
Night on Earth, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Paris
Role models, schwarze löcher und andere Petitesse, Galerie Mark Müller,
Zürich
Silent Movie, Hengesbach Gallery, Berlin

2013

Point of view, Galleri Ping Pong, Malmö
private architecture, die Raum, Berlin
WEITWINKEL, Institut für moderne Kunst, Nürnberg

2012

Silent Movie, Hengesbach Gallery, Berlin

2011

Geometrie und Alltag, Hengesbach Gallery, Berlin

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Pari, Galerie Vincenz Sala, paris

2009

Szenenwechsel, Museum für Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt

2008

Spelplan 2, landskrona Konsthall, Landskrona

Verderb und Gedeih, loop-raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin

out of inside, skulpturi.DK, Copenhagen

2007

“Draußen”, Galerie rolf Henegesbach, Köln, Germany

Dina4 Projekte, Munich, Germany

2006

Kabusa Konsthall, Kabusa

2005

Galleri Magnus Åklundh, Malmö,

Kunsthalle, Wintherthur

2004

Karaoke, Dina4 Projekte, München

Feel Free, Philip Feldman Gallery at PncA, Portland

release, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle

2003

Verbraucher, loop raum für aktuelle Kunst, Berlin

25 Jahre Führerschein, Galerie Mark Müller, Zürich

Galleri engström, Stockholm

Räume für neue Kunst rolf Hengesbach, Wuppertal

release, Art unlimited, Art Basel, Basel

2002

elvis, bremerhaven und ich”, Kunsthalle, Bremerhaven

uppfyllelse, Malmö Konsthall, Malmö

beef Anatomico, torreao, Porto Alegre

Dieerfüllung, Artunlimited, Artbasel, Basel

2001

Räume für neue Kunst rolf Hengesbach, Wuppertal

2000

Zimmer mit Frühstück, Galerie Mark Müller, Zürich

FÅGel FiSK eller MitteMellAn, Konstföreningen Aura, Lund

Abnehmen, loop - raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin,

basis und Überbau, Kunstmuseum Villa Zanders, Bergisch-Glad- bach

Galleri engström, Stockholm

Galerie Schneiderei, Köln

1999

Abstraktes Plastik, Kunstverein, Bochum

Karlsruhe, Galerie Haus Schneider - with Jochem Hendricks

Ettlingen, Galerie Heinz-Martin Weigand - with Jochem Hendricks

Palais Thurn und Taxis, Künstlerhaus, Bregenz

Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco

1998

UNDERGROUND, Städtische Galerie, Bern

Räume für Neue Kunst Rolf Hengesbach, Wuppertal

1997

Gross und klein ist beides unten, lagerraum, Frankfurt am Main

Private function in progress, Kulturforum Alte Post, Neuss

organische chemie, Förderverein für aktuelle Kunst, Münster

ich brauche keinen Winnebago, Pavillon an der Volksbühne, Berlin

1996

Make my day, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Bruxelles

Pool, Kunstmuseum, Heidenheim

thousand island, Galleri engström, Stockholm

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1995

Mellanrummet, Konsthall Malmö, Malmö
Heimarbeiten, Kunstverein, Freiburg im Breisgau
Galerie terbrüggen, Heidelberg

1994

im Aussendienst, Galerie Schneiderei, Köln
ordentliche Verhältnisse, institut für moderne Kunst Schmidt bank Galerie,
Nürnberg
Skulpturen (u.a. mit 1 u. 3), Räume für neue Kunst rolf Hengesbach, Wup-
pertal

1993

Galerie Vincenz Sala, Berlin
Daheim und unterwegs, Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund
Kunstverein Heinsberg, Heinsberg

1992

Galleria Raucci/Santamaria, Napoli

1991

Galerie Schneiderei, Köln
Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin
Berlin Galleri Wallner, Malmö

1990

Galleri Engström, Stockholm

1989

Galerie Christa Schübbe, Düsseldorf

1988

Stockholm, Galleri Engström
Malmö, Galleri Wallner

1987

Galerie Christa Schübbe, Düsseldorf
Auswärtsspiel, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

2023

Relief, Loop, Berlin

2022

ONEONONE, Thomas Taubert Gallery, Berlin
Sommarutställning 2022, Gubbängstorget, Stockholm

2021

Zu Einem Neuen Ganzen, Loop, Berlin
SCHAU....7, Kunsthaus Kollitsch, Klagenfurt
Long time no see, Thomas Taubert Gallery, Berlin

2020

XL/XS, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Berlin
A-Z. a memento, Thomas Taubert Gallery, Berlin
XXX die II., Galerie Mark Müller, Zürich
Anziehend- Kunst, Kleider und textile Objekte, Städtische Galerie, Pader-
born

2019

Tra il caso e la necessità, MAAB Gallery, Milano,
Blue is the Color of Your Eyes, Moderna Museet Malmö, Malmö

2018

OPEN SOURCE, Flutgraben Atelierhaus., Berlin
Standard Internationala. #5 Spatial Manifestation, Glint, Berlin
Aufzeichnen, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Berlin
whodunnit, Thomas Taubert Gallery, Berlin
Flashback, MAAB Gallery, Padova,
Berlinzulage, Künstlerhaus bethanien, Berlin

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2017

reViSion, new Presentation of the collection, Kunstmuseum, Bonn
DiSlocAtion 2017, Hengesbach Gallery, Wuppertal

2016

Tango them basel, Galerie Mark Müller, Zürich
Simple Dinge, neue Galerie Dachau, Dachau
Dubbel DutCH, hangmen Projects, Stockholm

2015

Minimal extensions - sixties versus contemporary, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Paris

2014

picks & pearls, Galerie Møller Witt, Århus
bearbeitungen des Wirklichen, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Berlin

2013

*SPAcE*S, Kunstraum Alexander bürtle, Freiburg im Breisgau
Salonstücke-reloaded, Villa Zanders, bergisch-Gladbach
Within the World – the World Within, Konsthall, landskrona
Dobbel, illums bolighus, copenhagen, Denmark

2012

Woodstock, Växjö Konsthall, Växjö
only a part of, Galerie Vincenz Sala, berlin
20 YeArS, Hengesbach Gallery, Berlin

2011

OVERLAP – an exhibition on art & design, Den Frie centre of contemporary Art, Copenhagen
Galerie Mark Müller, Zürich
Simply the best, loop – raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin
Schwarz war immer die Farbe der anderen, Dina4 Projekte - Galerie Alexandra Sahe, Berlin

2010

Berlin transfer, berlinische Galerie, Berlin
Site exercises, Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto
Modernautställningen 2010, Moderna Museet, Stockholm
Uch Wicht, Kunstraum Potsdam, Potsdam
Facon, plads og kulør, rundetårn copenhagen
Das Fundament der Kunst, Gerhard Marcks Haus, Remhagen

2009

Zeigen. eine Audiotuor durch berlin von Karin Sander, Temporäre Kunsthal-
le, Berlin
*Das Fundament der Kunst - Die Skulptur und ihr Sockel seit Alberto Gia-
cometti*, Städtische Museen Heilbronn, Heilbronn
Vortexhibition Polyphonica, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle
boDenStÄnDiG, Kunstraum Alexander bürtle, Freiburg im Breisgau
Ferne nähe / natur in der Kunst der Gegenwart, Kunstmuseum, Bonn
Spridd isolerad konst, Kalmar Konstmuseum, Kalmar
First choice, Galerie Mark Müller, Zürich

2008

As it Seems, Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto
Spelplan 2, Landskrona Konsthall, Landskrona

2007

Architektur-Kunst?, Galerie reckermann, Köln
Bodycheck, 10. triennale Kleinplastik, Fellbach
Hotel van de Velde, Weimar

2006

Globus Dei, Der ball und die Kunst, Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Bottrop
Camp Kamp, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf
Faites vos jeux, Kunstmuseum Siegen
Cobra Museum, Amsterdam
Besökarna, Västra Hamnen, Malmö
Seitenwechsel, Öffentlicher raum, Seitenwechsel, Hannover

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2005

Kunstraum Alexander bürtle, Freiburg im Breisgau
Faites vos jeux, Akademie der Künste, Berlin
Tapko-the Museum, nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Alborg
Faites vos jeux, Kunstmuseum liechtenstein, Vaduz
Der HocKer der Schemel, Mehrzweckhalle, Berlin
Wer Visionen hat soll zum Arzt gehen, Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen
Berlin/Toronto Gallery exchange, Loop – Raum für aktuelle Kunst, Berlin

2004

EUROPEAN SPACE, Sculpture Quadrennial, Riga

2003

Kunsthistoriens lange naese no 1, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen

2002

Now is the time, Dorsky curatorial Projects, New York
Artists imagine architecture, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
September Horse, Künstlerhaus bethanien, Berlin
ReLoop, Loop - Raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin

2001

Bignothing, Staatl.Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden
Berlin-london 01, ICA, London
Achrochage, Galerie Schneiderei, Köln

2000

Mysliwska, Kunstraum Kreuzberg/bethanien, Berlin
Engström light, Galleri engström, Stockholm
Temp, con inges idee, Konsthall linköpings, Linköpings
Wash & wear, Kunsthaus Hamburg, Hamburg
Randori, Loop - Raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin
Book & body, Konstmusem Ystads, Ystads

1999

Die innenwelt der Außenwelt der innenwelt, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg
Euro ride, transmission Gallery, Glasgow
Hitchcock, Headlands center for the Arts, open House tirol, Kunsthalle, San Francisco
Wash & wear, Kubus, Düren; Leopold-Hösch-Museum, Hannover

1998

Sehen sehen berlin 98, Loop - Raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin
Heimat, Kunstverein eislingen, Eislingen
The Pineapple goes Goody bar, Malmö
M.i.e.l., Château d'Orion, Orion; Stadtgalerie, Bern; Stadtgalerie, Malmö

1997

Holz, nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden
Fishing for shapes, Künstlerhaus bethanien, Berlin
Sitzen, Hygienemuseum, Dresden
Schuhwerk, Neue Galerie, Dachau
Privat absurdities, Galerie Gebauer, Berlin

1996

Auch wenn keiner was sagt, es wird gespielt, Podewill, Berlin
Noch nie gezeigt, berlinische Galerie im Gropiusbau, Berlin
Disneyland after dark, Kunstamt Kreuzberg, Berlin
Missing links, Galerie Klaus Fischer, Berlin
Northstate, Galleri engström, Stockholm
Efterårsudstillingen, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen
Fishing for shapes, Projektraum Voltmerstraße, Hannover
Sternkarte, Städtische Galerie, Bern

1995

Under i Juni, Galleri engström, Stockholm
Disneyland after dark, Konstmuseum Uppsala, Uppsala
Synthetic Art, iD Galerie, Düsseldorf; Galerie Klaus Fischer, Berlin
Seid spontan, Städtische Galerie Schwaz, Tirol

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internoii, Galleriaraucci/Santamaria, Napoli

1994

Arthuts, baltic Jubilee, Malmö

Schnittstellen - 125jährige Jubiläumsausstellung, Heidelberger Kunstvereins, Heidelberg

Multiples, NBK Berlin Galleri engström, Stockholm

5 berliner Künstler zwischen objekt und Skulptur, Galerie Diehl, Berlin

1993

Privat, Kunstwerke, Berlin

A billion trash, Galerie Gruppe Grün, Bremen; Brandenburgische Kunstsammlungen, Cottbus

Exchange 2, Shedhalle, Zürich

1992

Z.b., Galerie Schneiderei, Köln

1986, Galerie Vincenz Sala, Berlin

InterVIEW, the Artists Museum, Łódź; Saarland- Museum, Saarbrücken

1991

CALCULI, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin

1990

Museum für das Fürstentum, Lüneburg

Jetzt Berlin, Konsthall Malmö, Malmö

1989

Kunstpreis Junger Westen, Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Recklinghausen

Fußball in der Kunst, Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren; Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Kaiserslautern

1988

6 richTiGe, Katakomben Monumentenstraße, Berlin

1987

Haus Waende – memory, Salon am Burgplatz, Düsseldorf

1985

Ars viva/ farbige Plastik, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main; Kunsthalle Wilhelmshaven, Wilhelmshaven; Kunstverein Flensburg, Flensburg; Skulpturen- Museum, Marl

Die sich verselbstständigenden Möbel, Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal

Wiedereröffnung Haus Waende, Altes Museum, Mönchengladbach

Sculpture now, Wandelhalle Galerie Wintersberger, Köln

ForumjungerKunst85, Städtische Galerie, Wolfsburg; Kunstmuseum, Bochum

1984

Galerie Gugu Ernesto, Köln

Haus Waende, Münsterstr. 446, Düsseldorf

Ars viva/ farbige Plastik, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln

Treppen, Galerie Gugu Ernesto, Köln

Ausstellung der Förderpreisträger der Stadt, Düsseldorf

1983

Wachsfabrik, Köln

Kurt Schleuder-Giesser empfiehlt, Münsterstr. 446, Düsseldorf

1982

Skulpturenpark Seestern, Düsseldorf

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

2024

Folding – Unfolding, two artistically designed bathing jetties for Ekerö beach walk, Ekerö, Sweden

public commission for the Ekerö municipality – in collaboration with Andreas Piontkowitz

2018 – 2023

Akademiska sjukhuset, ingång 72, staircase, corridors, galleries

public commission for the Academic hospitals, Uppsala – in collaboration with Mari Rantanen

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2023

22Tango, public commission for Bromma gymnasium, Bromma, Sweden

2022

Take Away, Gubbängstorget, Stockholm, Sweden

2021

Big Molecule, public commission for the Academic hospitals, Uppsala, Sweden

2017

Luftslott (Castle in the Air), public commission for Norrberga school, Sturefors, Sweden

2016

Rymden och Rytmen (Space and Rhythm), public commission for CAST, Karolinska Huddinge, Stockholm, Sweden

2014

Universum (Universe), public commission for Mullegården förskola, Älvsjö, Sweden

2006

Alfabetet, bubblan och horisonten (The Alphabet, the Bubble and the Horizon), public commission for Hammarby sjösstadsolan, Hammarby, Sweden

1999

Idealmodell, public commission for Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, USA

Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany

Brandenburgische Kunstsammlungen, Cottbus, Germany

Bundesministerium des Inneren, Germany

IFA Institut (with Inges Idee), Germany

Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

Schyl Donation, Malmö Konsthall, Sweden

Konstmuseet, Göteborg, Sweden

Konstmuseum, Uppsala, Sweden

Statens Konstråd, Sweden

Museum für Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt, Germany

City of Copenhagen, Denmark

Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany

Kunstraum Alexander Bürkle, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany