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AUSTRIAN PAVILION
BIENNALE ARTE 2022
WEBSITE LAUNCH

The 59th international art exhibition La Biennale di Venezia will open exactly one year from now. Today marks the launch of the website www.biennalekneblscheirl.at.

"My decision for Jakob Lena Knebl and Ashley Hans Scheirl is based on the topicality and particular relevance of their themes, which they deal with through sensuous works and with wide impact. Their works are characterized by manifold entanglements of art, performance, design, fashion, and architecture and draw attention to current discourses that are generating a lot of international interest," says Karola Kraus, director mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien and curator of the Austrian contribution.

"I am so happy that the creative process and the thorough organization that have been going on behind the scenes for many months is now finally given a public platform with this website. It provides first insights into what the Biennale Arte 2022 has in store for us: verve, zest for life, adventure, humor, and many surprises. It is a signal of confidence and joyful expectation for the days after the pandemic. I wish the team around curator Karola Kraus and the artists Jakob Lena Knebl and Ashley Hans Scheirl continued success on their journey to the Giardini della Biennale," states Andrea Mayer, Secretary of State in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport.

From dandy to camp to bohemian, from flamboyantly staging the self to being the solitary, introverted romantic: At least since the invention of modernism, artists have had a role to play within the operating system of art. These social role allocations are always also attached to gender, sexual orientation, skin color, and status.

Jakob Lena Knebl and Ashley Hans Scheirl have set up their stage within the coordinate system of this construct that employs desired as well as forced identities, undermining it—and rehearsing their own play by mixing up systems and producing hybrids that deal with the identities of styles, media, materiality, and movements throughout the history of art and design.

In all this, the artists don't want us to see their work as indoctrinations but rather as joyous sensory invitations to join them in their journey to utopian spheres, thus making alternatives imaginable. Devoid of any sense of morally didactic superiority, their approach creates three-dimensional multimedia installations that extend well into both everyday life and the virtual space.



JAKOB LENA KNEBL, born in Baden near Vienna in 1970, worked in elderly care for ten years before studying Fashion under Raf Simons at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and Textual Sculpture under Heimo Zobernig at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In 2017, she conceived a rearrangement of the collection of modern and contemporary art, which she—always daring to be eccentric—presented in conjunction with new works of her own on two levels of the museum. *Oh... Jakob Lena Knebl and the mumok Collection* was also her first comprehensive museum exhibition, and opened to rave reviews. That same year, Jakob Lena Knebl was awarded the Austrian Federal Chancellery's Outstanding Artist Award in the category Fine Art. In 2019, ArtNet News listed her as one of the "Most Influential Curators of the Decade." In 2020, she had solo exhibitions at Lentos in Linz and at Galerie Kargl Fine Arts in Vienna. In her show *Marcher sur l'eau* at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva, Jakob Lena Knebl is currently working on creating a dialog between exhibits from the museum collection and her own installations.

The jumping-off point of her spatial strategies is often a photographic staging that puts the body as well as constructions of identity and desire in relation with sculptural objects and spaces both material and social. With this approach, she creates three-dimensional—at times walk-in—installations, settings, and dramatizations that are characterized by different aesthetics, media, materials, and intense atmospheres. She takes her references from the histories of art and design as well as the movements that have connected the two fields.

ASHLEY HANS SCHEIRL, born in Salzburg in 1956, studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna from 1975 to 1980 and received a Master of Arts degree in Fine Arts from the Central Saint Martins College in London in 2003. Over the past years, she_he has presented large solo shows, most recently in 2020/2021 at Kunsthaus Bregenz together with Knebl and before that at Kunstverein Salzburg and Künstlerhaus Graz in 2018. She_he participated in several international group exhibitions such as 2017's documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel.

Scheirl's artistic practice began in the late 1970s, for which she has employed a multitude of different media. She went on to dedicate the next twenty years to the moving image. With more than fifty films and the transgender cult classic *Dandy Dust*, she_he has been one of the pioneers of the queer movement in the arts. Since the mid-1990s, painting has taken center stage in her_his practice, a type of painting that viewers experience as installations—which is to say in its incorporation of architecture, contexts, objects, video loops, and, not least, by the way the visitors move through them. Since 2006, Scheirl has been Professor of Contextual Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In 2006, she_he received the Austrian State Grant for Fine Art, in 2012 the City of Vienna Prize for Fine Arts, and in 2019, Ashley Hans Scheirl was awarded the Austrian Art Prize in the category Fine Arts by the Federal Chancellery.

JAKOB LENA KNEBL and ASHLEY HANS SCHEIRL work on solo projects and as an artist duo. Most recently, they presented fiery three-dimensional installations at the Lyon Biennale and at Kunsthaus Bregenz. They have been invited to put on a solo show at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2023.

The two artists share a deep interest in the ways in which identities are constructed and deconstructed. Analogous to the deliberate, active say in the development of their own personalities, their artistic work calls into question the identities of media, styles, disciplines, and gender constructs, which are set in motion, hybridized, transformed, and (de-)contextualized through "trans- . . . operations." In the process, two generations—as well as two different approaches—are merged.

NOTE

If you are interested, please follow [Jakob Lena Knebl's Instagram](#) for an exclusive peek at the preparations and artistic projects of both artists.



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