



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE Work Comments Multimedia Guide

DEEP GOLD, 2013/14

1-channel film installation, b/w, loop, 18 minutes

DEEP GOLD, the first film installation on this exhibition circuit, was created as part of the anthology film *The Scorpion's Sting* (2013/14) initiated by the artist duo M+M. It brings together six different artists' positions in a reinterpretation of Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *L'Âge d'Or*, which caused a scandal in 1930 due to its radical and provocative challenging of social and religious norms and repressive sexual morality. The initial spark for Rosefeldt's contribution DEEP GOLD was a scene from the Spanish director's classic film in which, as Rosefeldt explains, "Buñuel completely liberates the woman in her lust." In an act of feminist liberation, Buñuel's protagonist unexpectedly turns away from her bourgeois lover and passionately turns to a much older man, which drives the rejected man insane.

DEEP GOLD picks up at this point as a fictional insert in *L'Âge d'Or*. After his suicide, the lovesick man finds himself in a grotesque-surrealist version of the "Golden Age" in Berlin during the Weimar Republic, where elements from Buñuel's world and present-day events collide. Richard Wagner's mad romance *Tristan and Isolde*, the feminist electropop icon Peaches, Salvador Dalí, and Femen activists exist simultaneously in this bizarre scenario full of lust and desire, simply overwhelming the protagonist with its licentiousness, promiscuity, and omnipresent female sexuality.

The Occupy Wall Street slogan "We are the 99%" seen on posters and other interspersed topical references point out parallels between the economically and politically highly explosive situations of the 1920s and the present. In this way, DEEP GOLD sets the basic tone for the Berlin-based artist's works on display at the World Heritage Site and – with the collage of historic images that make up the homage to Max Beckmann *MEINE KUNST KRIEGT HIER ZU FRESSEN* – which marks the starting point for a timeline that extends far into the distant future, with stops in the present-day inventory of EUPHORIA at the centre of the show to IN THE LAND OF DROUGHT and PENUMBRA at the end of the show. Beyond the direct references to Luis Buñuel, DEEP GOLD poses fundamental questions that permeate the entire WHEN WE ARE GONE exhibition and the work of Julian Rosefeldt: Who were we? Who are we? Who will we become?



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE Work Comments Multimedia Guide

MEINE KUNST KRIEGT HIER ZU FRESSEN – HOMMAGE À MAX BECKMANN, 2002

(in cooperation with Piero Steinle)

4-channel video installation, loop, 25 minutes in total

This homage to the painter Max Beckmann is the oldest work in the exhibition. It was created in collaboration with Rosefeldt's former artistic partner Piero Steinle for the exhibition *Max Beckmann, un peintre dans l'histoire* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

The work consists of four black-and-white film collages made up of historical found footage, each of which introduced a chapter of the show in Paris on Beckmann's work. Via repetitive visual motifs, the scenes offer associative and emotional access to stations in Beckmann's turbulent biography: the First World War, the horrors of which he experienced as a volunteer medical orderly; the frivolous cabarets of the 1920s; the bombing raids in the Second World War; and the post-war period in New York, where Max Beckmann died in 1950. The title of the work quotes Beckmann's famous saying about his experiences on the front lines of the First World War: "My art gets something to devour here."

Moving beyond Beckmann's life and work, the film collages vividly evoke the dramatic tableaux of the first half of the twentieth century, which were also crucial for the Völklingen Ironworks. Furthermore, they allegorically reflect our present, characterised by great uncertainties.



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE Work Comments Multimedia Guide

UNKNOWN SOLDIER, 2007

1-channel video installation, mute, loop, 1 minute

UNKNOWN SOLDIER relates directly to the monuments dedicated to unknown soldiers, yet Rosefeldt's work is more of an anti-monument film.

Against a dark background, a flickering stroboscopic light reveals a body. The faint and brief flash of light is just enough to be able to glimpse a man in a soldier's uniform who seems to be strangely falling or floating. The reduced illumination prevents the facial features of the soldier, who is embodied by a professional trampolinist, from becoming visible, thus he is and remains an unknown soldier.

The flashing light and the absolute silence confront viewers with a paradoxically disembodied body that becomes a moving image devoid of comprehensible, meaningful action. The unknown soldier seems helpless, thereby contrasting with stereotypes commonly associated with soldiership, especially heroic images of male strength and power. At the same time, this image of a lone soldier lost in space points out the absurdity of continually recurring wars.



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE Work Comments Multimedia Guide

THE SWAP, 2015

1-channel film installation, loop, 15 minutes

Filmed in Westhafen, Berlin's largest inland port, THE SWAP initially seems to be an action-heavy gangster film, but it can also be read as a commentary about the rampant increase in trade around the globe and impenetrable financial transactions.

Two groups of armed gangsters meet at a container terminal to swap suitcases, but the scene, familiar from film and television, takes a turn towards the absurd in Rosefeldt's work: the crooks are played by professional dancers and behave like robotic automatons, performing tasks under predetermined conditions, moving in fixed patterns and paths. They seem to be part of a system of repetition and exchangeability. The suitcase swap devolves into a choreographed parody. The confusion grows such that it's impossible to tell whether the swap has actually taken place – delivery and reception become one. The abstract character of the action is underlined by accentuated sound effects of squealing car tyres and slamming doors, while at the same time nothing is said at all, not to mention high-angle shots of circling cars and geometric arrangements. Everything seems to be subjugated to some higher order.

Rosefeldt describes THE SWAP as “an allegory of the contemporary online transfer of funds at the speed of light, a film about the impossibility of being able to understand, as an individual, what actually happens with our money in the contemporary age of global turbo-capitalism.”



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE **Work Comments Multimedia Guide**

EUPHORIA, 2016-2022

24-channel film installation, loop, 1 hour 54 minutes

The immersive film installation EUPHORIA, the exhibition's centrepiece, questions the credo of endless economic growth and reflects on the manifold historical and social implications of capitalism and its most radical form – an unbounded neoliberal market economy. Using the thoughts and musings of over one hundred economists, writers, musicians, and philosophers, Rosefeldt has put together text collages that he has placed into the mouths of the most marginalised people of our present day. As monologues and dialogues, the text fragments take on new meaning in real and imagined scenarios: a bank lobby that fills with surreal dance choreographies and acrobatics, five homeless men discussing economic theory, and an empty supermarket savaged by a singing tiger. In his digression through the history of human greed, Rosefeldt explores the question of why the economic system in which we live and operate remains so seductive and successful, despite our criticism of it and despite its obvious fatal consequences – for instance as regards social justice and our environment.

To an original choral score by Samy Moussa created especially for EUPHORIA, and with an additional composition by Cassie Kinoshi, renowned jazz drummers Terri Lyne Carrington, Peter Erskine, Yissy Garcia, Eric Harland, and Antonio Sanchez play in time to the capitalist machinery and accompany the churn of an assembly line, symbolise the rise and fall of the stock market, and set the chaotic buzz of New York City to music. The life-size projections of the members of the Brooklyn Youth Chorus in the arena-like setting of this cinematic installation serve as a new version of the ancient Greek chorus – as the voice and conscience of society.



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE Work Comments Multimedia Guide

IN THE LAND OF DROUGHT, 2015/2017
1-channel film installation, loop, 43 minutes

IN THE LAND OF DROUGHT opens up a perspective onto planet Earth after the human era. The work is a focused version of a cooperative project with the Ruhrtriennale, for which Julian Rosefeldt interpreted Joseph Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* on film in 2015. It is closely thematically related to PENUMBRA (2019–2022), which is shown next door, and also invites contemplation about how people treat the Earth and what this means for the future of the planet after the Anthropocene.

The relics of humanity's cultural and industrial accomplishments are shown from the drone perspective – symbolic of the great past civilisations as well as the Industrial Era. Deserted film sets in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, industrial wastelands in the Ruhr region of Germany, and an open-pit mine in the Rhineland served as locations. In contrast to the barren scenery, scientists in white protective suits seem to have returned to an Earth devastated by mankind and are exploring the legacies of past cultures.

The elegiac images shot from a drone unfold a meditative-hypnotic effect in combination with the atmospheric, pulsating soundscape that Rosefeldt describes as "music from the future". The explorers, gradually increasing in number, swarm out over abandoned stretches of land and decaying structures. Finally, they all gather for a choreography reminiscent of the process of cell division in an amphitheatre that seems to return the drone's gaze, like an eye. It's a strange and reconciliatory ritual that suggests the existence of an overriding, higher meaning for human knowledge.



JULIAN ROSEFELDT. WHEN WE ARE GONE Work Comments Multimedia Guide

PENUMBRA, 2019-2022

1-channel film installation, loop, 1 hour 27 minutes

Julian Rosefeldt's work PENUMBRA marks the finale of the exhibition. The film imagines a distant future on a fictional planet colonised by humanity after leaving Earth and seems to be working towards its own extinction once again.

In an ever-slowng tracking shot, we approach humanity's planet of refuge: abandoned megacities cover large parts of the desolate landscapes like parasitic structures. A few artificial circular oases provide livelihoods for the last survivors. The drone camera then at last dives into one of the islands in the desert and finds itself in an ecstatic rave in a forest glade. Young dancers perform a sort of last escapist ritual there, filmed in extreme slow motion accompanied by the elegiac sounds of Robert Schumann's musical-theatrical piece *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*.

PENUMBRA is based on a film work that served as a backdrop for Rosefeldt's staging of Schumann's Faust scenes at opera houses in Antwerp and Ghent. For Rosefeldt, the character of Faust in his roles as scientist and entrepreneur represents a "visionary protagonist" who, with Goethe, "anticipated the big issues of our time: capitalism, post-colonialism, the exploitation of nature, and environmental disasters." In *Faust II*, Goethe had "a clairvoyant vision of our time," anticipating "the destructive power of greed, capitalism, and globalization" and evoking "an utopian vision of a better world."