

## *Staging nature – Fabian Knechts Isolation*

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Fabian Knecht is this year's winner of the Workshop Award of the Erich Hauser Art Foundation and is showing a site-specific work in the Sculpture Park entitled *48°08'51.4 "N 8°38'08.8 "E*. By means of these mere factual coordinates, the location is clearly designated.

In his *Isolation* series, which he began in 2016 and is continuing in Rottweil, the Berlin-based artist makes use of clearly visible markers by putting a frame around a "piece of nature" with a closed white cube. These pictorial spaces, which are only temporarily accessible, ennoble the respectively selected site as an object of display. Instead of transferring organic material from nature into the museum, Knecht shifts the exhibition space to the outside and isolates the selected spot of earth together with its flora and fauna: a riverbed in the Ukraine (*Isolation (Riverbed)*, 2016), the frozen sea in Vladivostok (*Isolation (Eismeer)*, 2016), a wasteland in Berlin near Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart (*Isolation (Rasenstück)*, 2016), a patch of forest in Arnsberg in North Rhine-Westphalia (*Isolation (Dead Tree)*, 2017), a tree trunk in Baden-Baden (*Isolation (Stamm)*, 2018) and a forest area in Märkische Schweiz near Buckow (*Isolation (52°33'44. 1 "N 14°03'12.8 "E*, 2019).

For the Erich Hauser Art Foundation, he has designed a two-part room (20 x 6 x 3.80 m), the architectural framing of which juxtaposes Erich Hauser's cylindrical steel sculpture *15/73, 197* (1973), which is slightly larger-than-life, partially opened and pierced by a wedge, with a blooming piece of meadow. For three weeks, Fabian Knecht lived and worked with his team on the Foundation's premises, in the workshop hall and the park. Relocating the studio to a new, temporary site for the collective production of a time-based sculptural situation and the subsequent stay was an essential part of the genesis of the work.

The visitors enter the installation through a room with a concrete floor and directly step unto the meadow to the right. This somewhat institution-critical arrangement of the abstract sculpture on the one side and a section of the surrounding park on the other side enhances and emphasizes what actually belongs to the decorative accessory, to the framing "accessoriness", the context, the *parergon* (Jacques Derrida) of an *ergon* which takes center stage (para - near, ergon = work). If one translates "para" with "against", the parergon even becomes the counterpart.

In the art museum, too, canonical confinements and exclusions take place, testimonies of bygone eras are preserved and classified, which is why the artist Allan Kaprow demanded in 1964: "The modern museums should be transformed into swimming pools and nightclubs".

For the meadow, too, the White Cube can become a mausoleum, despite installed lamps to enable growth, as soon as the “framing” exceeds a certain duration. Depending on the perspective and angle of view, the framing oscillates between ennoblement, protective shell, and the imminent danger of isolation.

In his staging of nature, Knecht not only addresses the system aesthetic connections and growth processes, but also the gesture of framing itself; he makes nature visible through a section he has chosen and highlighted architecturally as an artist and acoustically isolating it in its silence - sometimes only for the duration of a day. In Knecht’s works, observation is dominant. He does not intervene further in this area, which in its function could be compared to a ready-made, he only carries out the mounting, without directly influencing the framed place or making long-term climatic changes. According to the artist, nature in its complexity is so great that it cannot be transported and imitated in the exhibition space. Knecht aims for a different form of monumentalization of landscape, like a monument to nature: Protected by a surrounding temporary case; as if through a magnifying lens, attention is directed to details that are otherwise often overlooked or do not seem worthy of being depicted.

In addition to the visit of the site, there are also photographic images that bear witness to the *Isolation* work, such as the urban wasteland in the center of Berlin, which is now covered with buildings, traces of past use can be found, old cobblestones for instance, sand from a beach bar, remains of waste, and scattered pioneer plants. The photographs capture this moment of the urban environment in a snapshot; it is not an embellished, romantic image of the way we often imagine nature, but one that is marked by signs of man-made exploitation and manipulation.

In the large workshop hall, documents of the development of this work are presented, including photographs, drawings, handwritten notes and a film about the *Isolation* work ( $52^{\circ}33'44.1''N$   $14^{\circ}03'12.8''E$ ) in Buckow 2019. Small Format pictures (not included in the exhibition) focus on individual details, such as an ice floe, a section of sandy soil or a piece of the riverbed with swamp grass. What is striking is the diffuse light situation and lack of locatability in contrast to the large-format pictures, which show the inner contours of the white cube and the light reflections of the neon tubes mounted on the ceiling. Through the visible framing and disclosure of the context, the character of a classical landscape picture is relativized in the photographs. Comparable to a pictorial compositional approach, with each *Isolation* work Fabian Knecht creates a walk-in painting or a sculptural situation, which disappears after the end of the exhibition and reappears in another place.