

Vera Drebusch

*1986, lives in Hamburg and Cologne, Germany



AWARDS

2016	Dortmund, DE	Grant from the State NRW for Media Artists
2015	Düsseldorf, DE	Young Artists Award of the State of NRW
2015	York, UK	Shortlisted for Aesthetica Art Prize
2014	Düsseldorf, DE	Nomination for Nam June Paik Newcomer Award
2013	Cologne, DE	Winner of KHM Award
2016	Cologne, DE	Winner of German Youth Photo Prize

SCHOLARSHIPS (Selection)

2017	Dundalk, IR	The Corridor, <i>Artist in Residence</i>
2016-17	Los Angeles, US	Ministry of Culture NRW, <i>Travel Grant</i>
2016	Istanbul, TUR	Neola Art Projects, <i>Artist in Residence</i>
2016	Virginia, US	NRW Art Foundation, <i>Travel Grant</i>
2015	St. Moritz, CH	St. Moritz Art Academy, <i>Travel Grant</i>
2014	Linz, A	Studio Salzamt, <i>Artist in Residence</i>
2013	Bogotá, CO	Universidad Nacional de Colombia, <i>DAAD Scholarship</i>
2012	Schöppingen, DE	Artist's Village, <i>Artist in Residence</i>
2012	Montreal, CA	Goethe Institut Montreal, <i>Travel Grant</i>

STUDIES

2010-15	Cologne, DE	Academy of Media Arts Cologne, Media Art, <i>Diploma</i>
2015	Kassel, DE	University of Arts, Textile, <i>Guest</i>
2013	Bogotá, CO	National University, Artes Plásticas, <i>Exchange</i>
2010	Bremen, DE	University of Arts, Sculpture, Class Hörnschemeyer, <i>Guest</i>
2005-10	Dortmund, DE	University of Applied Sciences, Photo Design, <i>Diploma</i>

CURATORIAL WORK (Selection)

2017	Vilnius, LTU	West German Association of Artists at Kunstmuseum
2013-14	Cologne, DE	Curator of GOLD + BETON, Ebertplatzpassagen

COOPERATION (Selection)

since 2014	Bochum, DE	Member of West German Association of Artists
since 2011	Cologne, DE	Working for Art Collective Mühlenkampf/Raumfaltung

TEACHING (Selection)

2017	Paderborn, DE	Faculty of Cultural Studies, <i>Lecturers</i>
2015-16	Cologne, DE	University, Department of Art & Theory of Art, <i>Lecturers</i>
since 2011	Düsseldorf, DE	Kunstsammlung NRW, <i>Art- + Media Education</i>

EXHIBITIONS (Selection)

			2018	DE	Cologne	Glasmooq - Space for Art and Discourse , <i>post-Konflikt</i> '
			2017	DE	Aachen	Kunsthaus NRW Kornelimünster , <i>new talents</i> '
				LTU	Vilnius	Titanik Gallery
				DE	Bochum	Kunstmuseum , <i>Eye to Eye</i> '
				DE	Düsseldorf	Weltkunstzimmer , <i>IN/OUT - The Universe</i> '
			2016	DE	Bielefeld	Kunstverein , <i>Asylum</i> '
				TUR	Istanbul	blok art space , <i>loop</i> '
				DE	Cologne	Kunststation St. Peter
				DE	Cologne	Museum Schnütgen , <i>new talents biennale</i> '
				DE	Düsseldorf	Shelter-Church Heerdt , <i>Contemporary Crises</i> '
				A	Klagenfurt	Galerie3 , <i>Stadt~Land</i> '
				DE	Recklinghausen	Kunsthalle , <i>new talents</i> '
				DE	Essen	PACT Zollverein , <i>Atelier</i> '
			2015	UK	York	St Marys , <i>Aesthetica Art Prize</i> '
				DE	Bonn	Bundeskunsthalle , <i>Kunststudenten stellen aus</i> '
				BE	Brussels	NRW Representation
				DE	Halle (Saale)	Werkleitz Festival , <i>Move On</i> '
				DE	Berlin	Meinblau , <i>we animals</i> '
				A	Wien	VIENNA ART WEEK
			2014	DE	Munich	Kunstpavillion , <i>Full Saturation</i> '
				A	Linz	Salzamt , <i>walks and traces</i> '
				CH	Basel	Kaskadenkondensator , <i>Das Marsie's</i> '
				DE	Cologne	Wallraf-Richartz-Museum , <i>Kunstnacht</i> '
			2013	DE	Essen	Folkwang Museum , <i>Video Folkwang</i> '
				LT	Vilnius	Gallery Akademija , <i>un(a)counting</i> '
				TLD	Bangkok	Culture of Promotion Center
				CO	Bogotá	La Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño
			2012	CA	Montreal	Goethe Institut , <i>Wann sehe ich Photonen?</i> '
				DE	Karlsruhe	Badischer Kunstverein, Kunstraum Morgenstraße , <i>Powerplay</i> '
				DE	Bonn	Bundeskunsthalle , <i>ECHORAUM sechs minus</i> '
			2011	PRC	Shanghai	Madein Space
			2006	DE	Cologne	Photokina , <i>Deutscher Jugendfotopreis</i> '
SOLO + DUO						
2017	Dundalk, IE	The Corridor , <i>Brexit-Fish</i> ' (S)				
	Cologne	MATJÖ (BBK) , <i>Deutschland mon amour</i> ' + F. Egermann				
	Düsseldorf	Walzwerk null , <i>texting while driving</i> ' + T. Shearer				
	Hamminkeln	Schloss Ringenberg				
		, <i>They called this place a stronghold</i> ' + Y. Pappas				
	Düsseldorf	Antichambre , <i>EAST WEST</i> ' + Arseniy Shuster				
2016	Bonn	St. Helena , <i>Interreligious Dialogue</i> ' (S)				
	Cologne	St. Gertrud , <i>Interreligious Dialogue</i> ' (S)				
2015	Bochum	Gallery januar , <i>im Falle des Fallens</i> ' (S)				
	Cologne	ComeTogether Projekt , <i>nothing compares to me</i> ' (S)				
	Cologne	GOLD + BETON , <i>Über-Bild</i> ' (S)				
2014	Cologne	Gallery Nagel Draxler , <i>Zeitschleife</i> ' (S)				

PUBLICATIONS (Selection)

- 2018 Art in Public Space, *Catalog*
St. Open, *Catalog*
- 2017 Schloss Ringenberg | ‚They called this place a stronghold‘, *Catalog*
MOFF - Cologne. Artists in Conversation, *Magazine*
Walzwerk Null - Düsseldorf, Exhibitionspace for Photography and Video, *Catalog*
Caritas Cologne | ‚Fluchten‘, curated by Dr. Johannes Stahl, *Magazine + Catalog*
Kunstmuseum Bochum | ‚eye-to-eye, Identity as art‘, *Catalog*
- 2016 Spex, *Magazine*
new talents biennale Cologne, *Catalog*
Bielefelder Kunstverein | ‚Asylum‘, *Catalog*
a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne, *Catalog*
- 2015 Aesthetica Art Prize, UK, *Catalog*
Bundeskunsthalle Bonn | ‚Kunststudentinnen und Kunststudenten stellen aus‘, *Catalog*
- 2014 Academy of Media Arts Cologne | ‚off topic #5: verlieren‘, *Magazine*
KHM at ART COLOGNE | ‚Eden Was Never So Close‘, *Catalog*
- 2013 Bundeskunsthalle Bonn | ‚Echo‘, *Catalog*
- 2012 KHM at ART COLOGNE | ‚Densification‘, *Catalog*
Academy of Media Arts Cologne | ‚off topic #4: zulassen‘, *Magazine*
- 2011 ‚Im Kontinuum der Bilder. VJing als Medienkunst im interdisziplinären Diskurs‘, *Book (Cover)*
‚Difference and Dialogue‘, *Book (Cover)*

LECTURES, PLATFORM (Selection)

- 2018 KYOTOBAR Cologne | Löcher im Konzept, *Platform*
- 2017 K20, Kunstsammlung NRW | Artist Talk with Akram Zaatar / ARAB IMAGE FOUNDATION / ‚Against Photography‘
- 2016 Arts Foundation NRW | ‚Art between Aesthetics, Market and Society‘, *Platform*
K20, Kunstsammlung NRW | Artist Talk with Andreas Gursky / ‚not abstract‘
Bielefelder Kunstverein | ‚Asylum‘, *Artist Talk*
blok art space Istanbul | ‚loop‘, *Artist Talk*
Dialograum St. Helena Bonn | ‚Interreligious Dialogue‘, *Platform*
- 2015 Bundeskunsthalle Bonn | ‚Kunststudenten stellen aus‘, *Artist Talk*
a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne | *Artist Talk*
Urban Art Festival Cologne | ‚City Leaks‘, *Artist Talk*
blicke Filmfestival Bochum | ‚Art and Business‘, *Platform*
- 2014 Rautenstrauch Joest Museum/VHS Cologne | ‚Fetish weapons and traditions, Colombia and Germany‘, *Lecture*
GOLD + BETON Ebertplatzpassagen Cologne | Artist Talk with Elizabeth McTernan & Timothy Shearer
- 2013 Academy of Media Arts Cologne | ‚What happens in the arts?‘, *Lecture*
GOLD + BETON Ebertplatzpassagen Cologne | Artist Talk with Sina Seifee & Jan Goldfuss
GOLD + BETON Ebertplatzpassagen Cologne | Artist Talk with Evamaria Schaller & Pia Schauenburg
Baustelle Kalk Cologne | Artist Talk with Yasmin Angel
- 2012 Hexagram-Concordia Montreal | ‚When do I see photons?‘, *Artist Talk*

“Wars, refugee drama, environmental catastrophes - some problems of this world are so large and complex, that one can hardly register it as an individual. The art of Vera Drebusch assesses exactly this point of powerlessness. She is engaged with global systems and developments of historical proportions, yet scales these back to a human dimension.

The artistic mode of working is aggregation and visualization. Drebusch's objects and utilizations are sparse, yet highly economic in their narrative efficiency. The tragedy of warfare and subsequent story of a displaced person becomes crystallized in a single line, projected onto the artist's skin. Maritime oil contamination becomes transformed into colorful, appealing motifs for pillows. Three marmalade jars speak about the soil of their origin - the bitterly contested region of the Middle East. If correctly surveyed, these laconic artifacts say a great deal. They are the catalysts of a reflection, encompassing the questions of politics and world history.”

Dr. Emmanuel Mir

The Aspect of Conservation

A carpet rolled up in bubble wrap, cushions single packed and piled up in the corner of a room, and on the other side, a canvas stretched over with shiny silk has in its centre an abstract paint daub – on the one hand stowed away artworks primed for their upcoming transportation and on the other an experiment that is put on hold. I am in the flat and studio of Vera Drebusch in Cologne, home to her intriguing textile works, and the site that enables her creation of new work via a trial-and-error method. In our talk, I wanted to learn more about her approach and what drives her fascination in textiles.

Curator Franziska Wilmsen in discussion with artist Vera Drebusch on her textile-based and other works, April 2017.

Franziska Wilmsen: Already in your early works, such as Premium-Kissen (2014), or the carpets Enjoy the Silence (2016), and Nichts als die Wahrheit (2015), you have worked intensively with textiles. How do you engage with such materials in your work, and how far does the choice of material generate or play into the works' meaning?

Vera Drebusch: Actually, I come from a background in photography, but I find textiles very versatile. It is all about surfaces and contact. It combines many different aesthetics and materialistic intensities. In contrast to photography and painting, one is able to encounter textiles by touch and not just by sight. As fabrics come into close proximity with, and up against, our very skin, the border between everyday object and sensual medium begins to dissolve. This level of meaning is highly appealing to me at the moment. For me, textile as a medium provides the perfect vehicle through which to encounter traces, signs, and other parts of our everyday imagery. It's this very connection to everyday life that also attracts me to work with fabrics. I find fashion exciting in how we communicate through our choice of clothing – textiles appeal to me in their flexibility: they can be engaged with to achieve functional and aesthetic ends, or to convey political content.

FW: Your carpet work Enjoy the Silence (2016), which you made from taffeta, is not used in its traditional sense; rather, it is separated from its original function. The carpet presents to us uncomfortable contents in an abstract form: a satellite image of the tank training area in Munster. However, one is tempted to sit down on it as it does look comfortable.

Furthermore, the piece becomes an exhibit that shall not be touched. Is it that very interaction that you are aiming at within your works?

VD: I believe that because people are aware of a carpets multi-sensorial function. On the one hand, its decorative function, on the other, its functioning to facilitate warming effects, for example. It responds to other senses but the eye – it is not only an image carrier. Although the carpet could also be mounted on the wall, I decided to lay it on the floor to alter the perspective of the viewer. When a work of art is attached to the wall, it is usually somehow above the beholder's perspective, or at least becomes a counterpart. On the floor, it becomes something one encounters from above. The viewers' area of movement becomes limited, as the carpet they are denied to touch claims the space. In contrast to photography, it is exciting to see that despite intended rules, the materiality leads people to touch the piece anyway and to engage with it differently. Perhaps this raises a contentious point for anyone potential buyers: its intervention within a space as part of the interior rather than as the classic image to go up above the sofa. Actually, I am not driven by what would be attractive for collectors or buyers, but I am excited by the idea of the path a piece of art takes beyond my creating it. The use of a carpet as image carrier for the motif of the tank training area was also interesting for me as, similar to photography, a carpet also works to conserve. In general, the aspect of conserving plays a major role for me in my use of materials.

FW: Do you already know what your new textile works will be about? For your exhibition at Schloss Ringenberg you create two parts: on the one hand, you work with silk and on the other, with towels, which have been made at the textile mill in Bocholt.

VD: As exhibition spaces, the castle and its Wappensaal have a very strong character that call to be confronted. The wood panelling with its painted arms and the sheer size of the rooms are very attractive features, which play into the work. What struck me when I inspected the castle were all those different components combined in one place, for example, the traditional flag in the registry office against the backdrop of nature. One literally only has to take a few steps before encountering animals and landscape, which is quite a romantic idea to me.

I am going to make three flags which will deal with the formation of flocks of birds. The motifs will be embroidered onto shimmering silk.

Driving the piece for one part, my aim is to create a strong contrast, and for another, I expect the embroidered formation to appear abstract. I think the viewer will recognize the flock of birds at some point but it is not immediately legible what all this is about. In fact, that corresponds to a flock of birds in reality: the moment one does recognize the formation, it changes and vanishes, making it barely possible to encounter any such formation in the same way again. Further, I am curious about the different materials. However, it is not yet clear how the combination of silk and embroidery will contribute to the way in which the textile falls, how the soft fabric will react to the close embroidery. The flags will be installed on classic flag stands, in place of the usual show of national flags or flags of the country.

FW: For both scientists and artists, swarm intelligence, the technical term for collective or group intelligence like a flock of birds, remains a continuous source of fascination. How do you conceive such topics?

VD: Well, there are many topics that have occupied me over the years; swarm intelligence and the formation of birds stands as an example of this in particular. I have created a large archive of photographic and graphic material, and I gradually conduct material research in connection with the particular subjects. I have dealt with embroidery before and also worked with silk. When I am invited to an exhibition at a specific place, much previous work and the various contexts from which they derived come together in the creation of a new piece. All the strands become total, if you will. It just so happens with my second work for Ringenberg. For quite a long time, I was thinking about working with textiles and screen prints. Screen printing, instantiated as a medium of reproduction, enables printing endless copies of the chosen motif. I am planning to employ that technique in an absurdly 'elitist' manner, by making simply one single copy of each mesh. To this end, and in striving to achieve a certain aesthetic, I am printing on cotton towels. When the sleek colour film encounters the dull towels, the ink is somewhat soaked up; here, the material and technique perfectly assimilate the topic of flooding.

I wonder what happens if nature does what it wants? What kind of aesthetic charm could lie in a natural catastrophe like a flooding? Using images of water or nature as templates for screen prints works well for me. And, of course, the realisation that the Schloss Ringenberg region had been hit by extensive flooding a few years ago greatly played into shaping that that specific place.

FW: In addition to your textile works and book projects, we are also showing two projections of *Repetitives Element* (2010), a series of video loops that show the flowing motions of water in abstract patterns. What is the idea behind this series and how did you develop the work?

VD: I can't say exactly when I started the series, maybe around 2010. *Repetitives Element* results from the time when cameras became cheap given the rise of the smart phones' allowed for non-stop filming and taking pictures, no matter where you were. I really liked the fact that I was able to buy used, 'bad' cameras with a low number of pixels, which for me provided an interesting aesthetic I could play around with. They've been pushed further into the background of our consciousness, in line with water, a natural part of our daily life. At the same time, water always stands as an indicator for its immediate surroundings and local particularities. It reflects weather, light, and wind. It literally copies its environment and, in doing so, becomes a portrait of that place. Thus, *Repetitives Element* deals with various aspects of movement, temporality, and surfaces.

FW: When speaking about the portrait of a place, or the copy or print of that place, are your videos, then, an aesthetic means to explore the ways of water?

VD: Primarily, it is a structure survey - not in a natural scientific way, but more in how it works as an image. That is relevant to me. The design of the loops is, however, almost sloppy. I admit that to myself. It is refreshing to break out of that self-constricted conceptual corset and to experiment a little with the spontaneous moment. The significant work happens when the projection is adjusted to the exhibition space. It requires some time on site to see which video works out best with regard to place and dimensions.

Interview featured in:

Herbert Ploegman and Franziska Wilmsen (2017). They called this place a stronghold. Accompanying publication within the plugin programme at Schloss Ringenberg. Hamminkeln (DE).

The Aesthetica Art Prize: Interview with Shortlisted Artist Vera Drebusch

Vera Drebusch has been shortlisted in this year's Aesthetica Art Prize. Her performance pieces Preservation and Chocolates can be seen in the Art Prize exhibition, currently on display at York St Mary's. Something as simple as a jar of jam or a box of chocolates can become entangled in questions of political and environmental conflict. Through the use of a medium as homely and familiar as marmalade, the artist is able to stimulate an inquiry into the arbitrary division of territory and seek out the point where global events impact ordinary life. In Preservation, Drebusch presents jam made from fruits grown in Bonn, Germany, but on the grounds of the embassies of Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, which legally remain the territory of those countries.

A: Your recent work explores politically-charged locations around the world. Where did the idea for Preservation come from?

VD: Before I moved to the Rhine area, I was pretty curious about Bonn as the former capital of Germany. I was never there before and when I came there by chance I was quite affected by the former embassies. Some of these buildings are located quite prominently in Bonn. My initial idea was to document the embassies as a video or a photographic piece. However, I soon realised that the myth and the aura surrounding the buildings were much more interesting; each embassy assuming the role of some sort of Zeitgeist.

A: Preservation uses food to explore themes concerning international law and ownership of land. What draws you to this alternative, yet everyday material?

VD: I noticed that plants within the grounds of the embassies of Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia were growing over the delineation of what could be called borders. Through my research I knew, that an embassy and its grounds loses its status as extraterritorial ground on the occasion that it be sold. I came to the conclusion that the fruits which grow there are of the nationality of these countries, and I wished to challenge this perception of division. This is when I started to collect fruit from the embassies in order to produce marmalade.

A: The jam created is contained within minimal and intimate vessels. In your opinion, how do small-scale pieces compare to larger works?

VD: I do not think that the scale of a work should define its worth. In my opinion the scale of a work comes out of the topic it is dealing with.

A: Your shortlisted works are performances. Why is this medium important?

VD: To make performances is a vivid type of practice. I am interested in several kinds of disciplines, but sometimes I realise, that a performance can include the audience in a very direct way.

A: Can you talk about your projects for 2015?

VD: At the moment I am working with themes of public space. I am creating a LED-Display for an empty store-front window which shows 122 synonyms for the word 'pattern'. Alongside this work, I have conducted interviews with refugee children who live in Germany. As a result, I chose citations from their statements, created billboards of those statements and installed them in an area of Dortmund known for its active Nazi scene.

The Aesthetica Art Prize 2015, until 31 May, York St Mary's, Castlegate, York

