

CLUB LIAISON

Press Information

Austrian Pavilion at the 15th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea

Club Liaison

Liesl Raff with Luca Bonamore and Lau Lukkarila, Stina Force, Haepaary, Hyeji Nam, Danielle Pamp, Karolina Preuschl, Alex Franz Zehetbauer

7 September – 1 December 2024

Opening: 5 September 2024, 6 pm

with a performance by Alex Franz Zehetbauer

For Austria's first national participation at the Gwangju Biennale, Liesl Raff presents *Club Liaison* at the LEEKANGHA Art Museum – an expansive sculptural installation and performance space inspired by cabaret stages, fringe theatres, underground clubs and ,speakeasies‘.

For years, Liesl Raff has pursued a sculptural practice in which the internal and external, the subjective and the objective, and the sensual and the rational become entangled to form an inextricable whole. Her work deals with the beauty and fragility of physical togetherness. The Austrian-based sculptor has become known for her works in latex, which she uses for its versatility, stretchability and ability to adapt to different surfaces, appearing almost like a second skin. The natural material that is harvested from rubber plants as a cloudy milk-like liquid perfectly accommodates Raff's artistic approach oriented toward the body, process and action.

For the Austrian contribution at the LEEKANGHA Art Museum, Raff transforms the minimalist exhibition space into a sensory experience that opens realms and protective spaces of community and conviviality and serves as the setting for a performance programme. Hand-cast latex curtains in shades of purple are lavishly draped around the room in different lengths and layers, with an atmospherically lit stage at its centre.

AUSTRIAN PAVILION AT THE 15th GWANGJU BIENNALE, SOUTH KOREA

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Liesl Raff's works create both intimate spaces and transition zones, blurring the distinctions between on- and off-stage, retreat and performance area. While reconfiguring and playing with the codes and infrastructures of theatrical and social spaces, Raff's objects form a *liaison* with a soundscape composed by Austrian artist Karolina Preuschl.

On selected evenings during the Biennale, *Club Liaison* will open its doors and hand over the stage to the live arts. The invited Austrian-based and Korean artists have different backgrounds – from contemporary dance to performance art to experimental music – but share an interest in practices where popular genres and forms of entertainment meet a conceptual and experimental approach. In a nod to *Club Liaison* being inspired by cabaret stages, they will explore the subversive potential of the absurd, the dramatic or the sensual. The performances investigate how the stage can be a place to push boundaries, insert subtle shifts and offer new readings destabilizing expectations and norms. As a central element of *Club Liaison*, the performance programme aims to highlight the transformative power of collective experience.

Liesl Raff's exhibition in the Austrian Pavilion reinterprets and builds upon her project *Club Liaison*, which took place as part of her exhibition *Liaison* at fjk3 – Contemporary Art Space, Vienna, from May – September 2023 and in cooperation with Wiener Festwochen.

The Austrian contribution to the 15th Gwangju Biennale 2024 is curated by Fiona Liewehr (artistic director, fjk3 – Contemporary Art Space, Vienna). Carolina Nöbauer (Tanzquartier, Vienna) is responsible for the performance programme.

The Austrian Pavilion is commissioned by Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art and co-financed by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport. Additional support is provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs.

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The Austrian Pavilion at a Glance

Club Liaison is situated in the Austrian Pavilion at the LEEKANGHA Art Museum. The exhibition space has a metal grid ceiling that is used for hanging sheets of latex. The latex sheets are placed roughly 80 centimetres from sleek black walls, forming a U-shaped corridor around the room. The latex curtains in shades of purple are lavishly draped around the room in different lengths and layers and divide it into three zones. At its heart is the atmospherically lit stage, inviting exploration into the corridor and its accompanying installation.

The curtains are hung using ropes, with integrated connecting materials always tied securely. Liesl Raff incorporates the jute as reinforcement and the rope as a suspension directly into the work, so they are permanently connected, as both the jute and the rope absorb and become encased in the latex. These ropes, embedded in sequence in the latex, create a sort of visual rhythm and ornamentation.

Along the walls, ambient lamps interspersed among three layers of latex sheets adorn the periphery, serving both as decoration and as a sanctuary for presence. This passageway offers not only a spatial journey but also a theatrical experience, transforming with each interaction, much like the performers themselves.

Transitional spaces, embodying the essence of performance art with bodies in motion through space and time, are integral to *Club Liaison*. Here, specific performance dates hold pivotal significance, infusing the space with a dynamic, ever-changing energy.

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Layers of latex hang like curtains, inviting you to walk between them and providing an intimate space where the feeling of skin is almost tangible. This area, like being backstage, welcomes anyone seeking refuge. The design is similar to a traditional stage, hiding the actual edges of the room and creating a contained world. At *Club Liaison*'s stage in Gwangju, this illusion is revealed, with ghost lamps lighting up the boundary between the set and the structure.

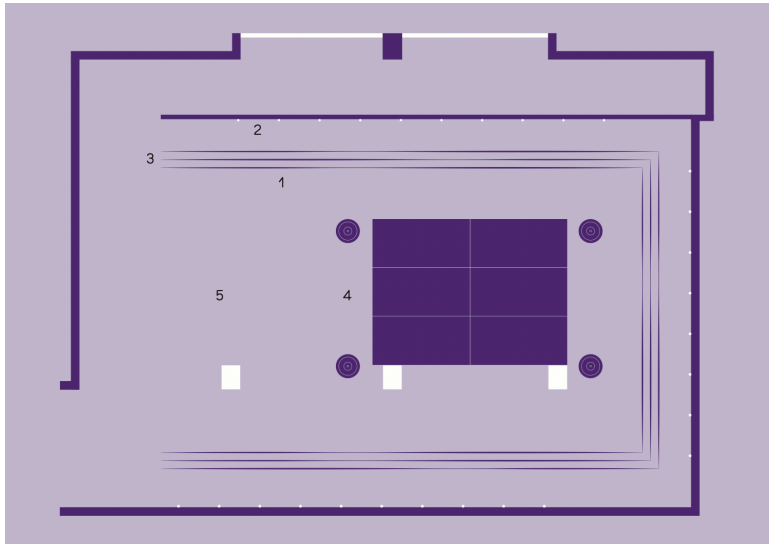
This liminal space, shared by protagonists and technicians alike, bridges reality with the enchantment of theatre. The stage itself, merely a platform hovering centimetres above the ground, fosters an intimate rapport between performer and audience, blurring the lines between participant and observer.

When no performances are happening, the space is filled, acoustically, with a newly commissioned experimental sound piece entitled *Zeitgeist*, created by sound designer and vocalist Karolina Preuschl. This piece responds to the Gwangju Biennale's theme of Pansori, emphasising timeless vocal expression and storytelling.

Text excerpts by Cathrin Mayer from the catalogue Club Liaison, published by DISTANZ Verlag, Germany, 2024.

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List of Works



- 1 Curtains, 2023/2024
Latex, pigment, jute, rope, silicone oil
Dimensions variable
- 2 Snake (variations), 2023/2024
Metal, latex, nylon, yarn, pigment, talcum, cable, lamp
Dimensions variable
- 3 Light, 2024
LED strip, aluminum profile, diffusion filter
Dimensions variable
- 4 Stage, 2024
Metal, spotlight, stage elements
Dimensions variable
- 5 Zeitgeist, 2024
Sound
Composed by Karolina Preuschl

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Biographies

Liesl Raff (b. 1979 in Stuttgart, Germany) is an Austrian-based sculptor who is interested in the tactile quality of materials, and how to draw attention to them. In her installations, she creates niches, shelters and protective zones that offer places of retreat and a feeling of security. Raff's work does not seek to impose a new function on materials or surroundings, but rather opens up a space for conversation.

Raff has presented her works in solo exhibitions at fjk3 – Contemporary Art Space, Vienna; Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna; Nicolas Krupp Gallery, Basel; NEVVEN, Gothenburg; Biennale Freiburg, Freiburg; and Sharp Projects, Copenhagen, among others. She has participated in group exhibitions, including *MELENCOLIA* at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; *Avantgarde and the Contemporary* at Belvedere 21, Vienna; *Enjoy – the mumok Collection in Change* at mumok, Vienna; *Resentment* at Kunst Meran, Merano. Upcoming exhibitions include the 17th Biennale de Lyon, France and a solo presentation at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland in 2025.

Fiona Liewehr is an art historian, curator, author and editor and lives in Vienna. She studied art history and economics in Vienna, Salzburg and Hamburg. Liewehr is the artistic director of fjk3 – Space for Contemporary Art, Vienna. Before she worked for the Belvedere and mumok as well as gallery director of Georg Kargl Fine Arts in Vienna. In her curatorial practice she is interested in the intersection of media and disciplines, the phenomenology of perception and expanded forms of spatial existence and imagination as a result of social relations.

Carolina Nöbauer is a curator for performing and visual arts. Based in Vienna, she is currently a curator at Tanzquartier Wien. From 2019 to 2023 she served as a programme dramaturge at Wiener Festwochen festival. She is co-founder of the independent art space Kunstverein Kevin Space in Vienna.

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Performance Programme

Alex Franz Zehetbauer

Thursday, 5 September, 6 pm

Friday, 6 September, 3 pm

Alex Franz Zehetbauer (b. 1990 in Brooklyn, US) is a sonic choreographer, performance artist and singer. Critics have called him an angel, a swamp monster and a red-eyed demon. At *Club Liaison* he transports us to the classic setting of a piano bar: a singer at the piano and his repertoire punctuate the gathering of guests. Sometimes rousing, sometimes bizarre, the performance investigates the multiple roles and cultural impacts of songs and plays with an intimacy that is both strange and familiar.

Hyeji Nam + Stina Force

Saturday, 7 September, 7 pm

Hyeji Nam (b. 1993 in Seoul, South Korea) is an interdisciplinary artist and musician focusing on themes such as technology, body politics, social taboos and digital culture. For *Club Liaison* Hyeji Nam orchestrates a sensory performance on the intersection of dance and experimental sound piece. Through gentle yet powerful movements and vocals, Hyeji Nam's body functions as the live conductor activating AI-generated sounds. This intimate duet between the performer and an artificial intelligence explores the rich interface of music technology and the innate mechanisms of the human body.

With a certain taste for the absurd and strange, choreographer, performance artist and self-taught drummer **Stina Fors** (b. 1989 in Gothenburg, Sweden) crafts unique performances and tours with her one-woman-punk-band **Stina Force**. No recordings of her music exist, and no two shows of Stina Force are ever the same, as everything is unfolding in the moment.

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With voice experiments, grotesque monologues and the raw beating of the drums, she first pins her audience Force-fully to the wall, then has it eating out of her hand. Toying deftly with stable and unstable state, Stina Force's performances are full of wit and nerve-racking energy.

Haepaary + Danielle Pamp

Saturday, 19 October, 7pm

Haepaary is an alt-electronic duo, consisting of Hyewon Choi (b. 1988 in Busan, South Korea) and Minhee Park (b. 1983 in Seoul, South Korea). They have reinterpreted the melodies and lyrics of Jongmyojeryeak, the royal shrine music of the Joseon dynasty, and Namchang Gagok, a traditional vocal genre that has always been performed exclusively by men. Haepaary's tracks demonstrate their brilliant disentanglement of the formality and discipline of Confucian music with their rearticulation of rave and trance. Haepaary's soundscape of refinement will invite intimate strangers to its secluded party.

Danielle Pamp (b. 1991 in Stockholm, Sweden) is a painter and performer. Her performances invoke a bygone era through songs from cabaret, operetta and the hits of the 1930s. Combining enchanting melancholy and pride, her singing represents identities and personalities whose existence and life stories have all too often been forgotten. Through historical references, queer narratives unfold and, along with them, a new writing of history and new-found prominence.

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Luca Bonamore and Lau Lukkarila + Karolina Preuschl

Saturday, 30 November, 7pm

Luca Bonamore (b. 1996 in Rome, Italy) and **Lau Lukkarila** (b. 1987 in Oulu, Finland) are choreographers and performers that share an interest in kitsch, expressive play and make-believe as performative strategies for queer resilience and bliss. As they move through a choreography of tender intimacy and dramatic embodiment of their childhood icons, their stunning performance conjures personal as well as interpersonal memories and fantasies, tapping into the infinite potentials those might hold in store.

Karolina Preuschl (b. 1991 in Vienna, Austria) is a musician, writer and visual artist. Fusing sound art and performance art, her work is characterised by the use of analogue synthesizers and voice to interpret self-written texts. Her performances are raw, witty and full of surprises. The playful punk improvises with electronics, noise, onomatopoeic sounds and vocal experiments at the very boundaries of the frequency spectrum to fuse different layers of meaning and interpretation in an uncompromising way.

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Statements

Liesl Raff, Artist

“*Club Liaison* is inspired by notions of cabaret, vaudeville or ‘speakeasy,’ and underground clubs, but also *pansori*, and the transformative power that lies in these social spaces, storytelling, and collective experiences. In my sculptural practice, I take great joy in creating encounters and encouraging interaction between people, my works, and the space they occupy. I hope my works evoke the experience of entering a warm, cozy and calm state and feelings of security and freedom. I am very excited to create that kind of atmosphere at the Austrian Pavilion at this year’s Gwangju Biennale.”

Fiona Liewehr, Curator

“I feel honoured to curate the first Austrian Pavilion at the Gwangju Biennale. The exhibition *Club Liaison* goes beyond a pure art installation. We want to create a lively meeting place that links pulsating life, music, performing and visual arts and international communities. Following the collaboration with the artist in the course of the exhibition at fjk3—Space for Contemporary Art, her presentation at the Austrian Pavilion is yet another example of Liesl Raff’s sensitive intuition for concrete communal experiences, for her ability to help people unfold and appear, and to appreciate them in their diversity.”

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Carolina Nöbauer, Curator Performance Programme

“Liesl Raff’s art has always been seeking intimate connection. Between the different materials that form her sculptures, with the viewers when they find themselves gathering around or under them, and towards collaborators and their practices. It comes as no surprise that Raff is drawn to the performing arts as a genre that in its very core is defined by the co-presence of bodies in one place, dependent on collaborative efforts and aimed at creating collective experience. *Club Liaison* is a project in which disciplines and scenes blur and move closer together, and I am particularly pleased that the first Austrian Pavilion at the Gwangju Biennale is not only the solo presentation of an outstanding visual artist, but also offering a platform to artists from dance, performance and experimental music.”

Andrea Mayer, Austrian Secretary of State for Arts and Culture

“I am delighted that, marking the 30-year anniversary of the Gwangju Biennale, Austria features in this renowned art festival for the first time with its own pavilion. This participation represents an important step towards ensuring the presence of contemporary Austrian art in Asia. The Gwangju Biennale is not only a forum for the encounter and exchange with international fellow artists but also a window into this dynamic region, and an opportunity to present the diversity and innovative strength of Austrian art to a global audience. With ‘Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art’, which is committed to raising the profile of Austrian contemporary art worldwide and to opening up new exhibition opportunities, we want to increase the visibility of our local artists. This participation is a significant move towards strengthening Austria’s cultural presence in Asia, towards providing new impulses and enriching the intercultural dialogue.”

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Margherita Belcredi, Deputy Director, Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art

“We are proud to have initiated the Austrian Pavilion in Gwangju, establishing it as the second permanent national pavilion alongside Venice. This important step strengthens Austria’s presence in Korea’s vibrant contemporary art scene, a region that is increasingly influential internationally. ‘Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art’ is committed to raising the profile of Austrian contemporary art on the global stage by identifying and supporting exhibition opportunities worldwide. We’re thrilled to inaugurate the Pavilion with *Club Liaison* by Liesl Raff, which invites audiences and artists of different backgrounds to connect, engage, and create shared memories. The Austrian Pavilion at the Gwangju Biennale will continue to serve as a platform for Austria’s ongoing dialogue with both local and international art communities.”

Publication

In conjunction with the artist’s exhibition at the Austrian Pavilion of the 15th Gwangju Biennale 2024, the catalogue *Liesl Raff – Club Liaison* is published by DISTANZ Verlag, Germany. The publication reflects the collaborative and experimental work of Liesl Raff and includes texts on her works by Marianne Dobner, by the curators Fiona Liewehr and Carolina Nöbauer, an introspective production diary by Cathrin Mayer, as well as contributions from the performers Luca Bonamore and Lau Lukkarila, Stina Force, Haepaary, Hyeji Nam, Danielle Pamp, Karolina Preuschl, and Alex Franz Zehetbauer.

www.distanz.de/en/liesl-raff/club-liaison

CLUB LIAISON

Project Team

Artists

Liesl Raff with Luca Bonamore and Lau Lukkarila, Stina Force, Haepaary, Hyeji Nam, Danielle Pamp, Karolina Preuschl, Alex Franz Zehetbauer

Curator

Fiona Liewehr

Curator Performance Programme

Carolina Nöbauer

Sound Design

Karolina Preuschl

Production Management and Curatorial Support

Christina Bartosch (Recollect Art Care Asia Ltd.)

Artistic Production Management

Florian Mayr

Production Performance Programme

Jinyoung Shin and team (apparat/us)

Press

Catharina Cramer

Graphic Design

Hannah Sakai

Film

Kevin Ferdinandus

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Commissioner

Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art supports artists, curators, galleries and institutions in Austria and works to strengthen their presence within the international landscape of contemporary art. Through long-term partnerships with biennials and institutions around the world, it enables the production and exhibition of new artworks and their donation to public collections. Founded in 2014, Phileas – The Austrian Office for Contemporary Art is funded by the contributions of its private members and by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport.

About the 15th Gwangju Biennale

French curator Nicolas Bourriaud will curate the 15th Gwangju Biennale in 2024 under the title *Pansori – A Soundscape of the 21st Century*. Built as a narrative, the Biennale tells of the spaces we live in. Bourriaud draws on the Korean pansori tradition: a lyrical or epic chant by a single artist accompanied by a drum. *Pansori – a soundscape of the 21st century* presents itself as a visual symphony composed by international artists at various locations in Gwangju. For the duration of the Biennale, the city will be orchestrated with madangs, ‘individual songs’ of pansori, as musical or sonic projects that mix sound and visual elements.

“From social distancing due to the pandemic to climate change, including flooding, desertification and rising sea levels due to global warming, humanity’s relationship with space has changed dramatically over the past few years.”

Nicolas Bourriaud

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Download **press information and images** at

www.austrianpaviliongwangju.com

www.phileas.art/lieslraffpress

Visitor Information

Club Liaison

Austrian Pavilion

15th Gwangju Biennale 2024, South Korea

7 September – 1 December 2024

Opening

5 September 2024, 6 pm

Venue

LEEKANGHA Art Museum

광주광역시 남구 3.1 만세운동길 6 이강하미술관 (양림동)

3.1manseundong-gil 6, Nam-gu, Gwangju, South Korea

Opening hours

Tue – Sun, 12am – 6pm

Closed on Mondays

and 16 – 18 September 2024 (Chuseok)

Free admission

AUSTRIAN PAVILION AT THE 15th GWANGJU BIENNALE, SOUTH KOREA

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www.austrianpaviliongwangju.com

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www.phileas.art/austrian-pavilion-in-gwangju/lieslraff

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gwangjubiennale.org

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