

Mischa Leinkauf
*Fiktion einer Nicht-Einreise*September 06 - October 19, 2019
Opening: September 06, 2019 | 7-9pm

In his works, Mischa Leinkauf deals with the limitations of spaces through boundaries, borders, rules, architectures and barriers. Through interventions in quasi-natural systems of order, he provokes situations that create temporary confusion and open up spaces for a possible reconfiguring.

For the exhibition *Fiktion einer Nicht-Einreise* (Fiction of a Non-Entry) Mischa Leinkauf deals with borders as a structuring element of present times. Despite the general hope that German reunification would also dismantle borders worldwide, the construction of national barriers has been experiencing an unanticipated renaissance for two decades. Whereas in 1989 there were 16 border fortifications in the world comparable to the Berlin Wall, today more than 70 barriers separate states and cities. Where borders are secured with military force and privileges of national identity are organised hierarchically, they reinforce the feeling of social separation and exclusion. Wars, struggles and conflicts are legitimised through national isolation. Walls, fences, passports and security agencies cement the spatial order and the power relations associated with it.

A radical renunciation of this structure, however, does not transcend the mere dismantling of its material artefacts: the totality of borders has been anchored as a paradigm in the mind, although countless areas of human relations have long since been unaffected by territorial limitations.

Against this background, Mischa Leinkauf deals both with the territorial limitations between nation-states and with their symbolism. The title of the exhibition refers to the expression „fiction of a non-entry“, which stems from German refugee policy. While the term refers to an enclave of territorial disenfranchisement - so-called transit centres - Leinkauf uses it to raise fundamental questions about the norm and practice of territoriality and identity. Under the title *Fiktion einer Nicht-Einreise*, Leinkauf scrutinises whether identity today can be limited by territorial allocation and nationality or instead defined by far more differentiated characteristics of belonging to social groups.

The video work of the same title shows Leinkauf crossing the invisible borders on the ocean floor between Israel and Jordan or Egypt in the Red Sea and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and Morocco in the Strait of Gibraltar. The respective regions are militarily guarded and secured by border fortifications, some of their fences protrude 30 metres from the banks into the water. Behind them, a landscape opens up to which visual separation has to surrender: the sea. With a research period of over a year, Leinkauf travelled into these regions and crossed their borders whilst diving. By leaving the overland routes, Leinkauf traces the national interspaces. Where systematic gaps arise, he reveals the absurdity of control systems in a performative way. The recording shows him at the bottom of the sea. Instead of tearing down the architectures of isolation, Leinkauf overcomes the borders of the regions by walking in the dystopian-looking tranquillity and expanse of the sea and opens up a space of absolute freedom.

The Han River connects the parts of Korea that have been separated since 1945. One branch has its source on the east coast of North Korea, the other in the South Korean mountains. After they connect, the river flows through the South Korean capital Seoul and pours into the Yellow

Sea in the northwest. Shortly before its estuary, the Han River marks the border area between North and South Korea - the Northern Limit Line. By land, the border is one of the best-guarded fence systems in the world. The demilitarised zone is four kilometres wide and manifests the spatial and social isolation of the two Koreas. The 2-channel video work shows the border crossing from a bird's eye view: with a drone, Leinkauf crosses the border of the Han River and refers to the river's water as the connecting element of the two ideologically opposing systems. While the hermetic isolation of the two territories by land seems insurmountable, Leinkauf breaks open the human-drawn borders with the nature-based reference to air and water.

In another work, Mischa Leinkauf deals with the symbolic power of national flags. They manifest the idea of territorial affiliation and national identity. Against the background of political conflict, nation-state symbols become catalysts for the symbolic separation of 'own' and 'foreign'. In sculptural form, Leinkauf opposes the symbolic similarities of national territories that are increasingly isolating themselves from one another. The installation shows the burned flags of Israel and Palestine. At the moment of destruction, the process of unification begins: the colours, forms and materiality of the flags slowly resemble each other; only the proportions preserve the difference between them. While the disintegrating surface transcends, the common foundation of social ways of life beyond national affiliation is revealed.

The newly created works in the exhibition *Fiktion einer Nicht-Einreise* set politically motivated border demarcations visually out of action and bring a critique into play that is directed against topographical and symbolic barricading. In recourse to Situationist theory and practice, Mischa Leinkauf reveals the permeability and absurdity of border fortifications. Neither the natural resources of water, air and earth nor social lifestyles, solidarity and intimate relationships suggest spatial demarcation. Against this background, his works put the objectification and naturalness of boundaries up for discussion. Leinkauf's works refer to the commonality in what is separated visually. Where hermeticism seems oppressive, he peacefully infiltrates. Through practices of physical appropriation, he visualises the dichotomies of violence and peace, use and abuse, and fundamentally questions subjectivity against the background of territorial classifications. His body becomes a body of resistance in the sphere of borders: by withdrawing himself, walking, circling and roaming, Mischa Leinkauf resists the architectures of isolation and subtly opens up a limitless space of possibilities for connection. Previously self-evident perspectives are broken up, and the underlying structures of demarcation are radically exposed as an artificial order.

Text by Almut Poppinga