

ACTING IN THE NOW

Exhibition featuring the nominees for the Ö1 Talent Scholarship for the Visual Arts 2022
4th November 2022–11th December 2022, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Adina Camhy's artistic practice covers a broad spectrum between artistic-scientific research, media art, sound, and performance. As an astute observer of our times and of contemporary history, she researches the field of tension between the public and the private, the near and the far. Her essay film *Crater* (2022) is a case in point. Its titular leitmotif is a geographical depression located in Israel's Negev desert, which also has an extra-terrestrial counterpart on the Moon. Its origin is explained in the narrative style of a nature documentary, which, underlaid with stunning aerial views, provides meticulous descriptions of geological formations while also touching on the political ambitions of Israel's space travel. The beginning and end of Camhy's cinematic narrative lie neither in the far distance nor in the geopolitical entanglements of recent history, but directly at our feet: more precisely, on a private terrazzo floor where one night the film's narrator spots a small but no less mysterious crater. By means of an associative dissolve, Camhy takes us from this scene up into space, where the vivid clusters of the small stones embedded in the terrazzo floor give way to a dense starry sky, and the smooth cement to an impenetrable black.

Thus the artist executes a narrative movement from the domestic and individual to the general and societal, a strategy that generally underpins her artistic statement. Her short film *Mensch Maschine [Man Machine] or Putting Parts Together* (2019) embraces the style of commercial films and educational broadcasts. Presently, Camhy's rhythmic remix of found footage – from the American channel PBS for example or the commercial promo clip for a kitchen appliance – blends into an intoxicating flow of associative images, demonstrations of high-tech and instructions for domestic gadgetry in a capitalist affluent society. More than the sum of its sources, it amalgamates into an artistic analysis founded in cultural studies that characterises Adina Camhy's practice. The artist, who repeatedly sounds out social utopia for their real foundations, adapted a 3D sculpture implemented using augmented reality specially for the exhibition. The starting point for *Luftbad* (2022) is the 10 m high-diving tower in Vienna's Kongressbad built in 1928, one of the symbolic sites of 'Red Vienna'. In keeping with the social ambitions of the city of Vienna at the time, it demands far more than the space allotted to it, with its actual height extended to ten times its original height.

Philippe Batka (curator)