

# Jutta Fischel, Konrad Stania

## Mindful Observers

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### **Abstract**

The importance of services running in the background is often overlooked. Museum wardens assume such a role. This project focuses on them. It works using the means of photography, interviews and the respectful design of the presentation of the project results in a gallery.

### **Key words**

Documentary. Instant Film. Large Format. Museum. Photography. System Relevant.

Everyday processes, carried out by often invisible people, hold our lives together. We are usually not aware of this. That is why we hardly notice them and these people are often forgotten. But they are indispensable in the background and ensure our well-being and enable our everyday enjoyment...

With this photographic work we would like to make visible those without whom museums, art galleries or other places of artistic creation would not be possible. The works of art shown in the museums are the everyday living environment of the overseers addressed in this project. Many of them are personally known to visitors only as silent individuals but, have professionally acquired or self-taught backgrounds dedicated to the arts. So it obviously makes sense to ask them their position on what they need to protect.

In this work, we approach the wardens in a variety of ways: portrait photographs show them close to the artworks they value most. By using the slow, analogue process of large-format photography with instant photo material, a relationship between the photographed and their technical image is ensured. At the same time, the originality of the image is guaranteed, but this is accompanied by the phenomena of the technical limitations of this process. Furthermore, this project deals with particular personal objects of the photographed. Our experience shows that the employees often bring personal items to their workplace - for example, notebooks, family photos, or other items they like. We asked to be allowed to photograph these objects, taken with deliberate careful presentation and lighting.

Through interviews conducted with the museum guards, we learned a lot about their daily work in the museums and with visitors. One of the recurring themes was that of "invisibility". Museum guards handle the sensitive issue of "invisibility" differently. Some seem uncomfortable with it, while others even enforce invisibility to make visitors as comfortable as possible. How well each individual copes with it seems to depend on factors such as seniority, personality, and their state of mind on the day. Museums have different rules for their museum wardens regarding visitor information, depending on the type of activity and training. For example, some of the interviewees were allowed to provide information to visitors, while others were not.

For the mostly young people working as museum wardens, it is a temporary job in which they want to learn and benefit as much as possible. Many are studying subjects such as art history, art, musicology, or architecture and enjoy having time for their studies during the quieter hours.

Some mentioned in the interviews how valuable it is to their understanding of art to be surrounded by art from different eras and by different artists for many hours each day, and to be able to view and analyze it extensively.

Consistently, all interviewees talked about both good and not-so-good experiences with museum visitors and how difficult it sometimes is to remain calm and friendly in certain situations. It is offensive and hurtful when museum guards are treated rudely while doing their job of protecting artworks and preventing visitors from touching objects or paintings.

However, each individual also spoke of a particularly enjoyable experience and how much they like it when museum visitors enjoy the artworks.

The selection of artworks in front of which the wardens wanted to be photographed was surprisingly diverse, and they all knew exactly why they had chosen this particular work of art. The selection of objects brought in was usually based on very emotional criteria associated with memories of people, places, experiences, or simply homesickness.

Finally, it had to be decided how to display the results of this project at Društvo likovnih umetnikov, Ljubljana. The presentation needed to be cautious and not reveal everything at first sight. Passe-partouts were developed for the Polaroids in order to hide the technical framing of the images from the front view, but still make them visible from the side. The full-length interviews and photos of the selected objects and artworks were printed on art paper and presented in tin boxes that visitors had to open. At the gallery entrance, a projection of animated eyes showed visitors the way.

With these approaches, the wardens - these often-overlooked people - are the focus of an art project and are shown with respect and reference.

*A project by Jutta Fischel and Konrad Stania, Ljubljana 2020  
Supported by avstrijski kulturni forum, Ljubljana, Društvo likovnih umetnikov Ljubljana and Zveza društev slovenskih likovnih umetnikov.  
Museums: Narodna Galerija, Moderna Galerija, Muzej sodobne umetnosti Metelkova (all Ljubljana)*





### **Horvath Marko / Moderna Galerija**

*“My favorite moments are the ones, when people ask about something and when they want to listen and to discuss and are happy to know more about something.”*

*“Gabrijel Stupicas, ‘Self-Portrait with Daughter’, 1956, is a self portrait of the artist while painting in his colorful working clothes and his little daughter by his side. It was new, fresh and different at this time.”*

*“I am an architecture student, so I use my sketchbook to write things down and scribble my thoughts and inspirations.”*







**Nina Osep / Moderna Galerija**

*"Sometimes I have the feeling, that there are people, who feel the need to come here to prove themselves that they are living a special lifestyle and therefore have to visit museums and galleries, but in fact do not seem to enjoy there visits."*

*"The painting 'Peasant Wedding' by Tone Kralj from 1936 becoms darker and darker, the longer you look at it."*

*"This ivory object originally came from Ghana and was in fact a vengeful magic creature. But I decided to stay with my fathers believe, that is a good and helpful ghost."*





**Nastja Uršula Virk / Moderna Galerija**

*"Maybe it's true that working in a gallery makes you more or less invisible. And sometimes I make an extra effort to become invisible, because some people have said to me, that they feel uncomfortable, when they feel watched."*

*"Zoran Mušič's, 'We Are not the Last', 1970 is so strong and meaningful. It came from his very painful experience of being imprisoned in a concentration camp during world war II."*

*"Two old sailormen gave me this coin as a memento in a bookstore in Liverpool, a small gesture, which touched me very much. Since then I have it in my wallet always with me!"*



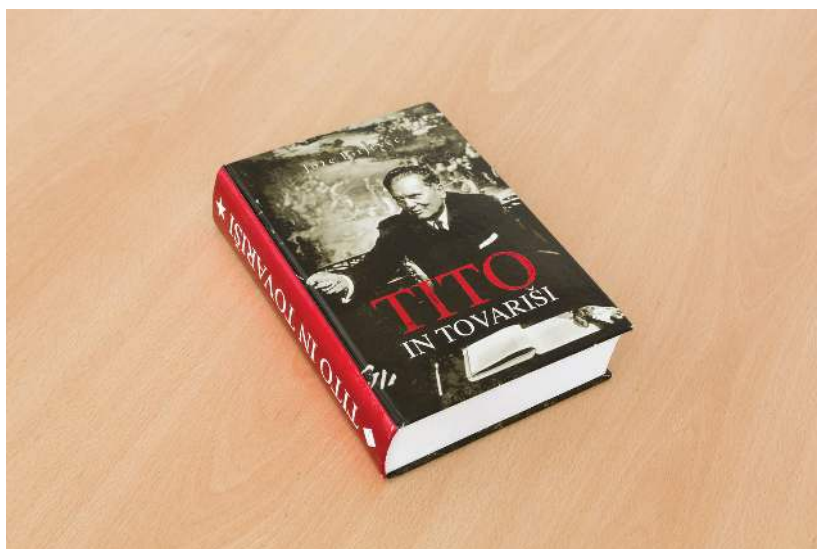


**Tomo Barić Ravbar / Metelkova  
(MG + MSUM)**

*"I work here every day except Saturday and Sunday, but only for 4 hours at a time, because I have to go to dialysis every day because of my kidneys. You don't see it so much, but I'm not doing very well."*

*"I like this film by Charles Chaplin, 'The Great Dictator'."*

*"As my object, I brought a book that I am reading because I am very interested in the history of my country."*



**Manca Borštnar / Metelkova (MG + MSUM)**

*"I remember that Chinese lady, who was very excited about a special project and was jumping like a small kid from joy and it was very nice to see someone so interested in the project."*

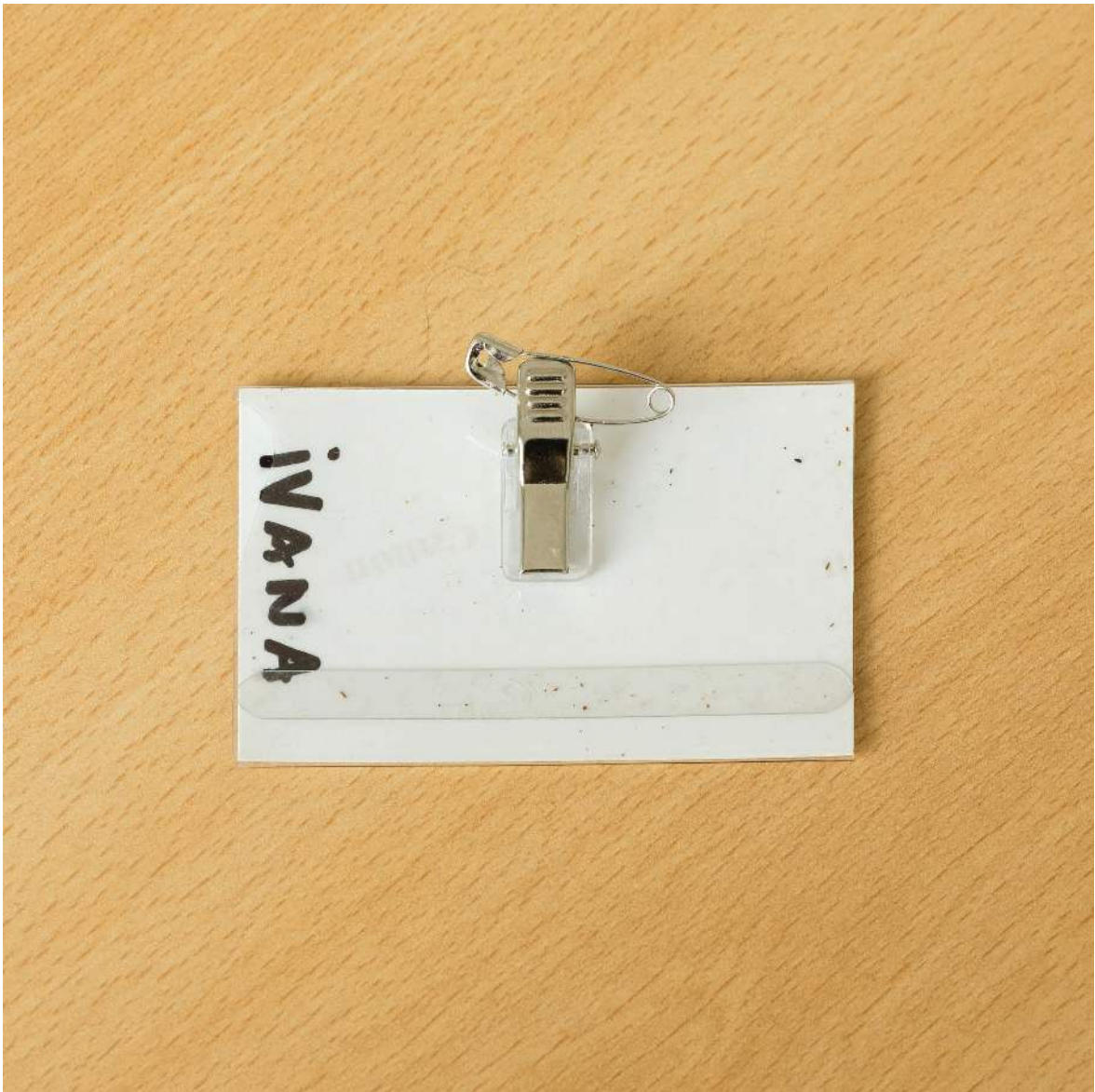
*"The performance 'Rhythmus O, Performance', 1974 by Marina Abramović, was incredibly brave of her, she perhaps underestimated people's willingness to use violence and was always going the hard way."*

*"My sketchbook is brand new, so unfortunately still empty, but in a few weeks it will be filled with sketches, drawings and ideas."*









**Ivana Maričić / Metelkova (MG + MSUM)**

*“My main job is to protect, in a way art pieces from people who come to the museum to touch them, smell them, lick them, take them away or in any kind change them.”*

*“For my photo I have chosen a very strange object. It stands quite lonely in a niche and is illuminated with a light bulb. This installation is a self-portrait. Very quiet and very passive.”*

*“As my object I brought my badge. It’s a badge that every guard has to wear when they’re on duty. And on it it simply says: ‘Museum of Contemporary Art’.”*







**Lara Cervo / Narodna Galerija**

*"We are not allowed to sit or to answer questions from the visitors. The art mediators and guides are responsible for these questions."*

*"For my object I brought a caffetiera italiana. All my childhood in the primorska region we used this to make coffee."*

*"I choose the painting 'Girl in an Armchair' by Ivana Kobilca, who is considered to be the most successful Slovenian woman artist and used for example always her surname to disguise her gender."*



**Sonja Juvan / Narodna Galerija**

*"I like it the most when parents come with their little children. They are so small, the art is so big and they are so impressed. It is all 'Wow' and astonishment."*

*"The sculpture 'Victims' Franc Berneker's from 1906 is made from a large marble stone a shows a pair of apparently desperate lovers. It is a wonderful piece of art, so beautifully executed, so subtle, so touching and so inspiring."*

*"This is a book from Alice Munro. She recently won the Nobel Prize and her style is magic."*



**Tina Murenc / Narodna Galerija**

*"I try not to be upset, when they yell at me and storm out of the gallery, when I am asking them to give their big bags to the cloakroom or do not touch the paintings."*

*"I choose Ivan Travnik's 'The Blind Women'. She's reaching out, as almost trying to feel the world around her."*

*"I really like to write stories in my notebook, when I have time and there are no visitors."*









**Doroteja Kuzma / Narodna Galerija**

*"I like that you can see so many different artworks from different times here and I love to get very close to the artworks to look at the different styles and the used techniques."*

*"My favorite artwork is Elda Piščanec's 'Girl in a Summer Dress'. The picture is small and beautiful."*

*"This necklace was a gift from my cousin, who is like a sister to me. I wear it every day because I always want her near me."*







**Ana Obid / Narodna Galerija**

*"It is a bit like a meditation place for me, outside it's more busy and more louder, so it is nice to be here, in this quiet place."*

*"Zoran Mušič's pictures are a great reminder of what can happen to a society, if we let it happen."*

*"I brought a very unique book, there is only one line on each page and that sentence tells what a special someone likes most about me."*







**Nina Resnik / Narodna Galerija**

*“When I am in the rooms guarding the artworks, I try to write or think about my master thesis when there is nothing going on.”*

*“Gabrijel Stupica’s picture ‘Lucia in an Old-Fashioned Dress’ reminds me of myself, when I was little.”*

*“My object stands for my great passion boxing. It is a key ring in the shape of a boxing glove.”*







**Katharina Richter / Narodna Galerija**

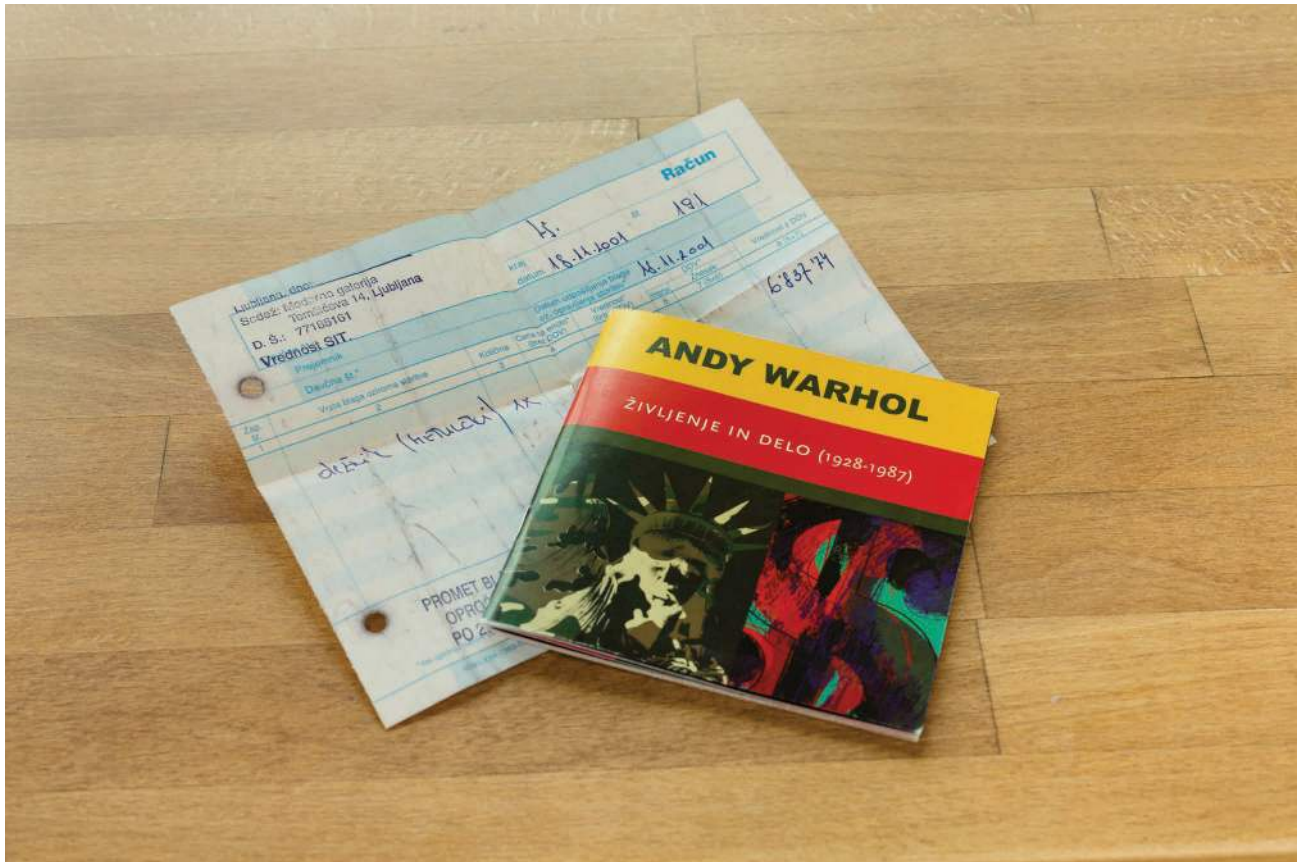
*“In a way I can’t explain, the paintings change their appearance every day for me. It can even happen that I learned to appreciate works of art that I didn’t like before.”*

*“The light in Ivana Kobilca’s ‘The Goose Herder’ is quite unusual and there is something like a haze over the picture. I think the painter used to take photographs before painting, like a lot of painters did, which had often an influence on the composition.”*

*“When I saw this pocketwatch, I knew it was just the right color, size and everything. So I bought it and now I carry it in my pocket and I don’t have to look on my phone to tell the time.”*







### Kaja Rožman / Narodna Galerija

*"I love this job, I love it to learn as many facts as possible about the artist, their time and the artworks."*

*"Zoran Mušič was 89 years old and almost blind when he painted his 'Self Portrait, 1998:'"*

*"This catalog of an Andy Warhol exhibition from 2001 fueled my interest in this great artist."*







**Gaja Triglav / Narodna Galerija**

*“Most of the time it’s nice to go around, look at people, listen to them and hear what they are thinking about the paintings and the art.”*

*“The picture ‘Oak Trees in Mestni Log’ by Anton Karinger from 1869 makes me feel very warm inside and I can imagine lying there under the trees in the summer reading a book listening to music.”*

*“The book ‘The Little Prince’ by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. I haven’t read it a very long time. But I should.”*



Documentation of the Exhibition











### Jutta FISCHEL

Born in 1961 in Vienna, in the 1970s she got into photography through a birthday gift, a Yashika analogue camera. Since then, she has never lost interest in this medium. Her main interest is staged photography. She is a lecturer at the Prager Fotoschule Österreich, *prager-fotoschule.com* Linz, a contributor and curator for *www.fineartgalerie.at* Traismauer and a member of the Künstlerhaus Wien.

### Individual and Collective Exhibitions and Projects (Selection)

**Since 2016** annual facilitators of *Mailüfterl*, an open-air weekend for contemporary art in an apricot orchard in Krems der Donau (Konrad Stania, Jutta Fischel and numerous guest artists), AT

**2012-22** Animations for multiple Children's musicals directed by Renate Kastelic at Raimundtheater and Stadthalle Wien (Konrad Stania, Jutta Fischel), AT

**2021** *Mindful Observers*, Galerija DLUL, Ljubljana und Avstrijski kulturni forum Ljubljana (Jutta Fischel, Konrad Stania), SLO

**2018** *Beobachte / oglej si*, Avstrijski kulturni forum, Galerija BALA, Kranj, (Konrad Stania, Jutta Fischel), SLO

**2017** *Stadt-land sichten*, an exhibition dealing with art and architecture, Higher Technical Institute, Krems

an der Donau, (Daniel Domaika, Johannes Dobner, Jutta Fischel and Konrad Stania), AT

**2016** *Zweite Blicke*, second glance, how to have a close look, pool 7, Vienna, (Jutta Fischel, Konrad Stania), AT

**2015** *Go West*, photo, interviews and videos covering issues of migration, Austrian Cultural Forum, Washington DC, (Jutta Fischel, Markus Kupferblum, Konrad Stania), USA

**2014** *Nachtgeschichten*, night stories, within eyes on, month of photography, Vienna (Jutta Fischel), AT

**2013** *Die Ästhetik der Hässlichkeit*, the aesthetics of ugliness, Kunstraum Sonnensegel, Vienna (participation Jutta Fischel), AT

**2013** *Leidenschaft...was uns antreibt*, Passion... what drives us, collective exhibition of PFSÖ, Oö Landesbibliothek, Linz, AT

**2009** *4 Photographers*, private gallery Zollergasse, Vienna (participation Jutta Fischel), AT

### Konrad STANIA

Born in 1961 in Krems at the Danube, he came into contact with photography while studying today's "Environmental Sciences, Civil Engineering and Water Management" at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna. His work includes

animations for theatre, photo projects and exhibition design. Themes of human life, migration, the analysis of landscapes and time, always shaped by the attempt to overcome the limits of traditional photography, are the focus of his interest. He is a contributor to the *www.fineartgalerie.at* Traismauer and a member of the Künstlerhaus Wien.

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**2019** Animations for *Mareike spinnt - Sang mat* directed by Markus Kupferblum, Philharmonie Luxembourg (Konrad Stania), LU

**2018** *Beziehung / Bindung*, relation / bonding, collective exhibition, pool 7, Vienna, (Konrad Stania), AT

**2018** *Beobachte / oglej si*, Avstrijski kulturni forum, Galerija BALA, Kranj,

- (Konrad Stania, Jutta Fischel), SLO
- 2018** Animations for *Der Kleine Wassermann - Sang mat* directed by Markus Kupferblum, Philharmonie Luxembourg (Konrad Stania), LU
- 2018** *Kitsch? Echo der Kunst?*, collective exhibition, curated by Hannes Etlzstorfer, forum Schloss Wolkersdorf (participation Konrad Stania), AT
- 2017** *Stadt-land sichten*, an exhibition dealing with art and architecture, Higher Technical Institute, Krems an der Donau, (Daniel Domaika, Johannes Dobner, Jutta Fischel and Konrad Stania), AT
- 2016** *Zweite Blicke*, second glance, how to have a close look, pool 7, Vienna, (Jutta Fischel, Konrad Stania), AT
- 2016** Images and animations for *Eisemann, der Tänzer, der vom Himmel fiel*, text Bernd Watzka, director Markus Kupferblum (Konrad Stania), AT
- 2016** Go West participates within *Transitions and Approches* at FINE ART Galerie, Traismauer, AT
- 2015** Go West, photo, interviews and videos covering issues of migration, Austrian Cultural Forum, Washington DC, (Jutta Fischel, Markus Kupferblum, Konrad Stania), USA
- 2015** *Wieder einmal zu Hause*, home again, extension of *Nocheinmal*, Bibliotheksgalerie museumkrems, Krems (Konrad Stania), AT
- 2014** *Nachtgeschichten*, night stories, within eyes on, month of photography, collective exhibition, Vienna (Jutta Fischel), AT
- 2014** *Vermessungsarbeiten*, surveying the hometown, pop-up exhibition, Krems (Johannes Dobner, Konrad Stania), AT
- 2014** *WTEARGK*, a day of work, every days work, pool 7, Vienna (Konrad Stania), together with *Kehrseiten*, rear sides, by (Georg Oberweger), AT
- 2013** *Die Ästhetik der Hässlichkeit*, the aesthetics of ugliness, Collective exhibition, Kunstraum Sonnensegel, Vienna (participation Jutta Fischel), AT
- 2013** *Leidenschaft...was uns antreibt*, Passion... what drives us, Collective exhibition of PFSÖ, Oö Landesbibliothek, Linz (participation Jutta Fischel), AT
- 2013** Images and animations for *Böhmische Bibel - Eine Strenge Kammeroper*, Text: Lydia Mischkulnig and Sabine Scholl, Director Markus Kupferblum, Porgy&Bess, Strenge Kammer, Vienna (Konrad Stania), AT
- 2013** Animations for *Einmal Erde und zurück*, by Gernot Kranner, directed by Markus Kupferblum, Theater Akzent, Vienna (Konrad Stania), AT
- 2011** *Nocheinmal, Bilder aus der Gegenwart*, again, images from the present, a work covering small scale businesses in Stein an der Donau, pool 7, Vienna (Konrad Stania), AT
- 2009** *4 photographers*, collective exhibition, private gallery Zollergasse, Vienna (participation Jutta Fischel), AT

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/ejmap-23-02-01>

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