

# Exhibition Concept Text and Reading List

## The Tower (Agustín 2025)

We come to the Galerie im Turm (EN: gallery in the tower) at Frankfurter Tor (EN: Frankfurt gate). Two towers mirror each other across Karl-Marx-Allee, symbolically conjuring the eponymous gate to the customs wall of Medieval Berlin. Constructed in a beginning moment of East German modernism, the towers are a counterpart to the apartments below, which were constructed as 'palaces for workers', displaying the idealism (or propaganda?) of the young country. Today, the top dome of the tower is available to rent for private parties, and the prices of the apartments are unaffordable for most. They are now dominated by the Amazon Tower just down the street, looming over Berlin despite all protests against it.

We see a third tower on the glass of the gallery door, with images from the Tarot Tower card (illustration by Pamela Colman Smith, England, 1910). A lightning bolt strikes a crown down from its top, as smoke and fire billow out. Entering the gallery, we are in some kind of glitch or loop: another three towers stand in front of us, drawn with the exaggerated, grotesque lines of German expressionism. A king, in his robes and crown, can be seen falling. The imagery is almost campy in its melodrama.

As we approach the towers again, we peer into a hole, a kind of window, where we can see a video of the artist. She is moving, dancing in a balancing act in front of a maze of towers. We hear her repeating apocalyptic phrases in a sunny, U.S.-American voice: phrases from social media influencers who give Tarot readings for their followers, their energy seeping out of the feed. We are caught in the recursive flow of the algorithm, transmitting simple, bright messages of doom.

In the Tarot, the Tower card is often associated with the sudden crumbling of structures. The image depicted is said to be God striking down the Tower of Babel. This card can foretell a breakup, getting fired, loss of security. But it is also the card of revolution. Towers are architectural manifestations of uneven power, often hoarded or stolen. Agustín's work can be seen as a comedic reflection of our present moment, where fascism pours out of our screens and our politicians sell us out like little kings. Or it can be seen as a call to burn it all to the ground.

Agustín references that history repeats itself, perhaps to the point of meaninglessness. The jarring TikTok Tower messages repeat themselves so much they start to blur together. Modern fascism has been degraded through its repetition to the point where we can hardly recognize it as it. We like to think of it as something strange and new, but it's as familiar and ever, and it must be destroyed, down to its foundations.

## 101011 (Costa 2023)

We enter through a curtain in the corner of the room, pulled in by the quiet sound of sand running through an hourglass. The sound leads us towards a pillar with a figure from the Tarot card depicting Death (Pierre Madenié's Tarot Deck, France, 1709). A skeleton reaps a field with a scythe, harvesting a bounty of souls, signifying the coming of winter. The heads of two crowned figures lay on the ground, echoing the fallen kings in *The Tower*. Light emanates out of the skeleton, radiating onto a floor of rock salt, charcoal, and water. The salt dries over small charcoal skulls, giving them an ancient quality, like old bones.

Salt can literally kill bacteria and remove stains, charcoal is used in water and air purifiers, and water is our main way to keep clean. In the ritual Costa enacts through their artwork, these elements' physical cleansing properties take on a metaphysical aspect, interplaying with the symbolism of Death and the sound of the hourglass. Through the circles of light and shadow, Costa creates a portal which "promises to transport you through the veils of time, space, and consciousness, if you so wish" (Costa, 2023).

## The Southern Butthole Manifesto (Costa 2021)

In a video behind the Death, we see a warm, clean, wet, pink interior, and hear the artist's small sighs as the camera tunnels deeper down a dark tunnel. This work opens a very different kind of portal: the butthole. In a video overlaid with their text *The Southern Butthole Manifesto*, Costa inserts a dildo camera into their anus. Manifestos can be read as spells: manifesting with your words that which you desire. Costa's manifesto is sharply anticolonial. It examines colonisers' obsession with the anus of sex and gender dissidents, such as under the Inquisition's sodomy laws. Costa draws a link to the colonisers of Abya Yala/South America and their

colonial fantasies of Indigenous peoples as cannibals, and contemporary fascinations with Brazilian butts.

Costa proposes that the power of the buttohole is magical, and that those that come from the Global South, or as they call it, “the buttohole of the body”, are “sorceresses, witches, and healers”. Costa’s spell calls on the power of the earth’s buttohole to eat colonisers up and to shit them out. This global message is countered by the artist generously bringing us into their most private site of magic, the deep inner body, ending with our excretion.

## Lady in White (Costa 2015)

Another screen plays a video filmed by Costa at Ponta Negra Beach in Natal, Brazil. Costa is seen wearing a white, long heavy dress, impeding their movement as they walk along a beach. Some onlookers notice, others purposefully ignore. A fisherman refers to them as “the lady in white”, barely heard offscreen. With some effort, Costa drags themselves into the sea. We hear the sounds of the wind and seagulls, as Costa floats in the waves. They then bring themselves, now weighed down by the dripping dress, to dry on the salty rocks. Costa writes that the dress itself is hand-sewn from geriatric diapers, “leftovers from when their parents had a serious car accident.” (2023). Costa brings plastic objects meant to be disposable, dirty, and for some, shameful out into the beauty of the natural world in a ritual of grief and release.

## Echoes & Whispers (Costa 2024)

After the *Lady in White*, *Echoes & Whispers* plays on the same screen. Filmed 9 years later, we see another of Costa’s rituals in nature, this time taking place in Nida, Lithuania. Costa comes to a circle of clay vessels, dressed in white. They undress themselves, methodically scoop up the earth, pour it onto their naked body, then lie in the soil. Covered in dirt, naked, and tired, they close their eyes and feel the sun on their face. Costa’s works offer us earnest purification, sardonic critique, erotic subversions, and a glimpse of the divine in nature.

## Tarot Reading for the HOLE\*Y MAGIC exhibition, 19.02.2025

Once we exit back through the portal of Costa's curtained circle, we come to a video tucked away behind a column. There, Costa and the exhibition's curator, Frances Breden, sit at Breden's kitchen table, with Costa's Tarot cards (deck by Fyodor Pavlov). In preparation for this exhibition, Breden asks Costa about how the exhibition and its concepts will unfold and what its impact on its audiences will be. This video was an idea of Costa's to bring out the voice of the curator, often an invisible figure who nevertheless holds much of the institutional and conceptual power in the creation of an exhibition. They do so in an intuitive, conversational way, giving insight into her worries and hopes for the show.

## Whispers of Our Temple (Collectively Authored, 2025)

On the first weekend of May 2025, artist and researcher Mary Maggic facilitated a 'workshopology' resulting in a co-created installation with Yedam Ann, Augusto Gerardi Rousset, Hara Shin, Alungoo Xatan, and Hyejeong Yun. The installation consists of sold commodities and found trash materials from Dong Xuan Center, Europe's largest Vietnamese market in Berlin's Lichtenberg district. Dong Xuan has expanded to include a wide range of imports from across Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, geographies perceived as oriental from the West.

In an open call sent to specific Asian artistic-activist networks in Berlin, Maggic addresses the West's distorted stereotypes of Asia as 'cheap labour' and 'polluted hands' when the ecological crisis of wastefulness is a symptom of a global spiritual malady. The two-day collaborative workshop expands the idea of where a Temple lives - in the body, the home, and the land, and how its transformations can be narrated in today's deluge of debris and overconsumption. Maggic writes: "By returning to animistic relation-making, we can re-make the idea of belonging centered on planetary wounds. This approach is not about purity or seeking to cleanse ourselves from contamination, but rather about recognizing the porosity of our bodies and seeing oneself as integral part of chaos" (2025).

By fate, all the artists who answered the open call happen to work with themes of undocumented and unseen labour, migration as identity, and subversion of state-

owned monuments and narratives. In the resulting installation, a video monitor displays the 45-minute blind-sensing exercise from the workshop, where the artists explore the anxieties, uncertainties, and intimacies of our trash-covered realities.

## Milik Bersama Rekombinan (*EN: Recombinant Commons*) (Maggic 2019)

Projected on the wall in the midst of *Whispers of our Temple* is *Recombinant Commons*, a highly saturated collage of colours, spinning and whirling. From afar, we can see the form of a mandala: a geometric assemblage of symbols used in religious iconography, notably Hinduism and Buddhism, to create order out of chaos. On a closer look, we see the rotating elements are all plastic waste: water bottles, spoons, food packaging. Created by Maggic at the Code River in Indonesia in 2019, the work reflects on a people living with, drinking from, and disposing waste in a river deeply affected by the plastic pollution crisis.

As the water is chemically transformed by plastic, so are the bodies of those in relationship with it, as microplastics and xenohormones disrupt 'natural hormonal' cycles. Maggic asks how we can build a spiritual relationship to a 'nature' that is so deeply changed by capital-colonialist systems. They propose that to address the plastic crisis, we need to grow our spiritual relationship to polluted, wounded, unnatural nature: and to extend that same kindness to ourselves, as contaminated as we are. The *Recombinant Commons* is "the multiplicity inside all of us, only because we are porous, radically." (2019)

Mary Shelley; Fawning; 'Here's one promise of a bruise: it heals. A bruise is evidence that one has endured a blow and survived'; & 'I was drawn to the mix of beauty and pain, like watching the way butterflies settle on a carcass to taste the blood' (Youden 2024)

Spanning across the gallery's corners, walls, and pillars are Youden's four sculptures. For fans of modern furniture design, the shape of the LC4 lounge chair designed by the architect Le Corbusier in 1928 jumps out, hanging strangely suspended, uncomfortable. The chairs are wrapped tightly with medical bandages,

as if someone is trying to keep their guts from spilling out, or they are in a fleshy cocoon, contrasting with the septic stainless steel of their structure. The cushion counterparts to the chairs are pinned to the wall with cartoonishly large nails like a stretched hide or a pinned butterfly. Their luxury leather is pinched and sewn together like wounds with stitches forming scars.

Across each sculpture are collages of medical, magical, sexual, and memetic objects: the book *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, a box of Lorazepam, a handwritten note from a fellow artist with a handmade mask, a pink steel stability cane, a black rope horse hair tail, a steel self-defence weapon, patches with screenshots of anime memes and Kate Moss from her indie sleaze era, a lock of the artist's red hair, various ribbons, ceramic pharmacy spoons, a hand-stamped moon calendar, a stainless steel butt plug. Each seem carefully stitched onto the chairs and cushions, like a charm, or curse.

Youden's work intervenes into the history of modernist architecture and design and its relationship with disease. They relate to architects' vision of their task as medical professionals: many modernist forms evolved out of designs for sanatoriums. Youden confronts and subverts the "fascist and ableist ideologies embedded in these furnishings and the broader principles of modernist architecture" (Youden, 2024) through a Crip Queer lens.

Youden's work struggles against the modernist structure it finds itself in, forming webs of tissues or scars around it, surrounding it, 'babygirl'ifying it, binding it. She questions which systems of healing make us better, dominating pain with their BDSM whip, turning the institutional and antiseptic into something esoteric and bimbo-fied, cute and grotesque.

## Further Reading

### New Age Magic, Nature, and the Internet

- ◆ Boast, H. (2022). Theorising the Gay Frog. *Environmental Humanities* 14 (3).
- ◆ Ward, C., & Voas, D. (2011). The emergence of conspirituality. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 26(1), 103–121.
- ◆ Miller, Chris (2022), 'How modern witches enchant Tiktok: Intersections of Digital, consumer, and material culture(s) on #WitchTok', *Religions*, 13:2, 118.

### Tarot and cultural appropriation

- ◆ Jewitches. (2023). *The jewish history of tarot*.
- ◆ Farley, H. (2009). *A cultural history of tarot: From entertainment to esotericism*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- ◆ Stevens, P. & Von Thiele, J. (2025). *Secrets of Romani fortune-telling: Divining with tarot, palmistry, tea leaves, and more*. Weiser Books (ADS).

### „Western“ Esotericism

- ◆ Asprem, Egil, & Strube, Julian (2021). *New approaches to the study of esotericism*, Leiden; Boston: Brill.

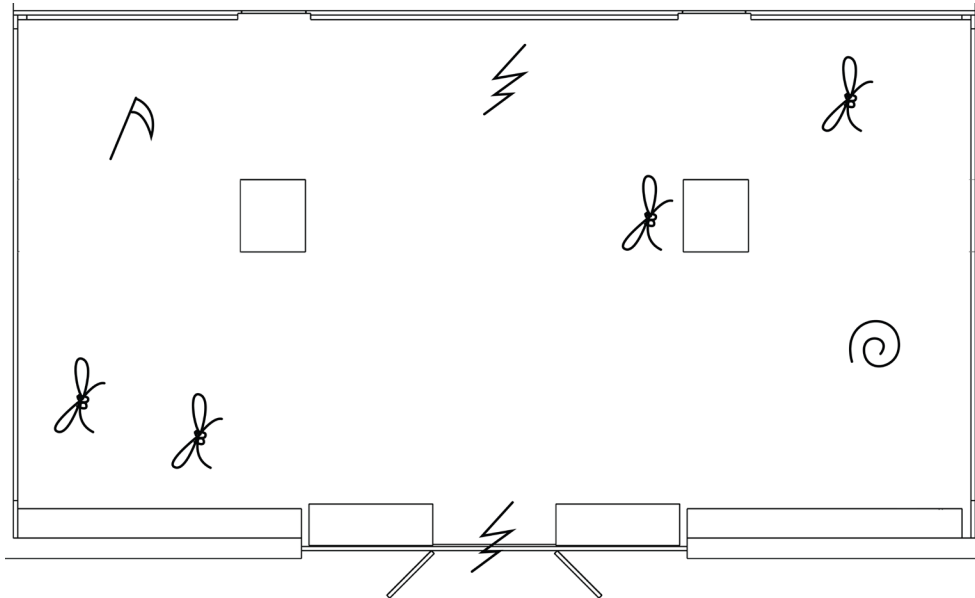
### New-Age Magic and Cultural Appropriation

- ◆ Lee, C.J. (2022). Solace in the Stars: Queer Astrology, Capitalism, and Colonialism. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 9(3).
- ◆ Thom, K. C. (2022, April 13). My white friend is calling themselves a “shamanic” healer. Should I tell them to stop? *Xtra Magazine*.
- ◆ Cornum, L. (2018, February 5). White magic. *The New Inquiry*.

### Fascism and Esotericism in the German Context

- ◆ Strube, J. (2018). Esoterik und Rechtsextremismus (Handbuch der Religionen). *Handbuch Der Religionen*, 55, 1–20.
- ◆ Bargel, V. (2024). Ist Diese Astrologin Eine Terroristin?: Reichsbürger-Prozess. *stern.de*
- ◆ Felder, T. (n.d.). Erik Jan Hanussen's Berliner Wochenschau: An occult weekly in Weimar Germany. Leo Baeck Institute - New York | Berlin for the Study of German-Jewish History and Culture.

# FLOOR PLAN AND LIST OF ARTWORKS



The Tower by Alicia Agustín (2025)

Paint on stretched fabric, wood, cardboard cutouts of illustrations from Pamela Colman Smith's Tower Tarot card (1910), paint on glass window. 7:03 video, EN with DE subtitles, sound on headphones.



101011 by Pêdra Costa (2023)

Print from Pierre Madenié's Death Tarot card (1709), light, sea salt, charcoal, water, sound on speaker.

The Southern Butthole Manifesto by Pêdra Costa (2021)  
3:54 video, EN with EN and DE subtitles, sound on headphones.

The Lady in White by Pêdra Costa (2015)  
8:17 video, no subtitles needed, sound on headphones.

Echoes & Whispers by Pêdra Costa (2024)  
19:29 Video, no subtitles needed, sound on headphones. Created in an art residency at Nida Art Colony, curated by Vidisha-Fadescha.

Tarot Reading for the HOLE\*Y MAGIC exhibition, 19.02.2025 by Pêdra Costa  
34:37 Video, EN with DE subtitles, sound on headphones.  
Filming & editing: Dani Hasrouni



Whispers of Our Temple co-authored with Yedam Ann, Mary Maggic, Augusto Gerardi Rousset, Hara Shin, Alungoo Xatan and Hyejeong Yun (2025)  
Sculptures with bought and found objects from Dong Xuan Center. Carpet lent from Sickness Affinity Group. 45:00 Video with no sound.

Milik Bersama Rekombinan (Recombinant Commons) by Mary Maggic (2019)  
6:00 video with EN sound on headphones and DE transcript.





Mary Shelley by Lauryn Youden (2024)

Sculpture with LC4 lounge chair structure, book: Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, gems, 1 box of Lorazepam, hand written note from Ebb Bayley with handmade mask from 2020, pink steel stability cane, various bandages, pill case, 3 x heart crystals, patches, doctor business card, blister pack of Myopridin, pink medical mask.

Fawning by Lauryn Youden (2024)

Sculpture with LC4 lounge chair, various bandages, black rope horse hair tail, steel self defence weapon, patches, prescription slip, book: Gossip Girl Fan Fic Novella by Charlie Markbreiter, black rope.

‘Here’s one promise of a bruise: it heals. A bruise is evidence that one has endured a blow and survived’ by Lauryn Youden (2024)

Sculpture with LC4 lounge chair leather cushions (cream and black), book: Story of the Eye by Georges Bataille, lock of red hair, patches, Leather Whip Horse Training and Taming Whip with Rose, various ribbons, black hair braid locket.

‘I was drawn to the mix of beauty and pain, like watching the way butterflies settle on a carcass to taste the blood’ by Lauryn Youden (2024)

Sculpture with LC4 lounge chair leather cushions (black), ceramic pharmacy spoons, hand-stamped moon calendar, stainless steel butt plug and leather demon tail whip, various ribbons, white bow, black bow, stainless steel labia separator.

# Exhibiting Artists' Biographies

**Alicia Agustín**, born in Ibiza, Spain, is an artist working across immersive performance, mixed media installation, video, and text. Her practice bridges art, theory, and spirituality. She explores the human drive for admiration, science, and the cult of genius, with a focus on power structures embedded in social rituals and communicative systems. At the same time, Agustín strives to understand power as a concrete process in which we are always implicated, and develops formats that allow the audience to acknowledge their own involvement.

Agustín co-founded the queer-feminist collective Talking Straight, with whom she has been creating immersive performances since 2014. In 2020 and 2021, she collaborated with the collective Guerilla Architects on the trilogy *1km<sup>2</sup> Berlin*, a tragedy about contemporary urban development. Her 2024 installative-performative exhibition *Funny Yes but not Funny Haha* examined the affective register and interventionist potential of internet memes, translating them into the analog space of Kunstverein Hildesheim.

**Pêdra Costa** (they, b. 1978, Nova Iguaçu) is a Brazilian-German performer, visual and urban anthropologist, inter- and antidisciplinary artist, and Tarot reader based currently in Vienna. Their work harnesses intimacy as a tool for cultivating collectivity, blending art with activism, spirituality, and academia. Pêdra's artistic practice centers the body as a primary vehicle of expression. They investigate the complexities of queer epistemologies, particularly within the enduring frameworks of colonial legacies, seeking to decode violence and transform failure into creative potential. Through their mentoring practice, Pêdra developed the concept of Anti-Analysis, a methodology rooted in discussions around artistic and/or academic work, primarily aimed at young and emerging artists. This approach supports artists in navigating themes such as experience, creation, the art market, aesthetics, and critical discourse.

**Mary Maggic** is an artist whose practice revolves around workshopology as critical sites of care and knowledge production that can move us beyond ecological ruins. With this collecting world-making practice, Maggic collaborates with wounds of the land for embodying our permeability, alienation, and stickiness. Maggic facilitated the workshop *Whispers of Our Temple* with the participants Yedam Ann, Augusto Gerardi Rousset, Hara Shin, Alungoo Xatan und Hyejeong Yun which led to the co-creation of the sculptures on view in the HOLE\*Y MAGIC exhibition.

**Lauryn Youden** is a sculptor, poet, performance, and installation artist based in Berlin, Germany. Her practice derives from her research in and navigation through

the medical industrial complex / colonial medicine, 'alternative' healing practices and traditional medicine for the treatment of her chronic illnesses and disabilities. By publicly presenting her personal experiences and re-evaluations of history, she illuminates and advocates for repressed, marginalized, and forgotten forms of care and Crip knowledge. Recent exhibitions include Kunsthalle Zurich, Migros Museum (Zurich), Pogo Bar – KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin), and Rochester Art Center (USA). They are currently a participant in BPA// Berlin program for artists.

## Exhibition Team

Curation: Frances Breden

Exhibition Design Lead: Carolina Redondo

Exhibition Install Team: Carlos Busquets, Felipe Monroy & Juan Saez

Curatorial Assistance: Gina Ruhlandt

Graphic Design Lead: Dani Hasrouni

Lead Invigilator: Daniela Schoepe

Research Assistance: Estela Braun Carrasco

Support: Stéphane Bauer, Melina Gentner, Milena Leto,  
Sofía Pfister, & Karyna Yarmolynska

German Sign Language Invitation: Dana Cermane

Braille Text: Medienzentrum Zeune-Schule

Exhibition Invigilators: Dilara Buzoglu, Antonia Döb, Jennifer Fink,  
Josepha Holdenried, Lara Jablonski, Maximilian Kaiser, Tetiana Kornieieva,  
Luca Kramer, Hannah Papendieck, Polina Piddubna, Marlene Risse,  
Luise Sandberger, Laura Seif, & Fides Stürmann.

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