

Press Release

GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen

13.01.2020



Kristina Buch

*You can't walk unless the word runs.*

Solo exhibition, curated by Regina Barunke

Duration: 01.02–19.04.2020

Opening: Friday, 31 January, 7pm

Press talk: Friday, 31 January, 11am

*Press contact*

Sarah Maria Kaiser

E [presse@gak-bremen.de](mailto:presse@gak-bremen.de)

T +49 421 500 897

# Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst

Teerhof 21, D 28199 Bremen +49 421 500 897 [office@gak-bremen.de](mailto:office@gak-bremen.de) [www.gak-bremen.de](http://www.gak-bremen.de)

*Exhibition*

Kristina Buch

*You can't walk unless the word runs.*

01.02–19.04.2020

We are pleased to present the first comprehensive solo exhibition of the German artist Kristina Buch (born 1983 in Meerbusch).

In the exhibition “You can't walk unless the word runs.”, which, with the exception of a multi-channel video projection (commissioned for the Istanbul Biennial 2015), consists exclusively of new works, the artist explores the semantic patterns of language. This is based on comprehensive research into the phenomenon of speech and the inexpressible as well as the origin, continuities and fragmentation of language and its inherent power. In earlier works, Buch literally dissected language and partly transferred it to other contexts. For the exhibition at the GAK, she had flags woven, on which stylized tongue motifs are depicted. In addition, video loops show close-ups of human mouths opening and closing to incomprehensible, glossolalic sounds. The question of “speaking with different tongues” arises at a time when language is becoming an increasingly powerful and tendentious political instrument.

Buch became known in 2012 through her contribution to dOCUMENTA (13), a butterfly garden. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev invited the then 29-year-old to Kassel as the youngest female artist to date. Buch studied biology and theology before moving on to the Royal College of Art in London and Rosemarie Trockel at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Since then she has exhibited internationally. With installations, video, text, objects and "life gestures", as she calls her performative works, she tests rituals that repeatedly set people, things, materials and living beings into unexpected dialogues.

The exhibition is accompanied by a program of events. Below you will find the announcement text by New York author and art critic Aimee Walleston.

# 40 J.G AK

*The practice of glossolalia, speaking in tongues, is tied to the common understanding of religion, yet it reflects the very inverse of religious practice. Where religion is realized through fixed rituals and overseen by an institutional fear of loss of control, glossolalia breaks through this seemingly safe choreography, galloping unharnessed and free. The tongue begins to speak independently of its owner, uttering the language of undiluted spirit.*

*Who are we, independent of the language we use to communicate with each other? If written text and spoken word are the constructs that assemble our reality, there is an ongoing stirring to reverse-engineer an understanding of the phenomena of Derridian logocentrism. Postmodernism promised to reveal the illusion through deconstruction, yet the castle still stands and the moat grows ever deeper. And so we look for ways around these edifices. By cutting words into pieces and allowing them to grow into new forms, like flatworms ever regenerating, Kristina Buch shapes a nuanced understanding of the syllables that bridge knowing to the known, and the unknown to the yet-to-be-knowable.*

*You can't walk unless the word runs. Here, the ear picks up the sound of layered utterances. We are invited into the space beyond the rigid didacticism of both the religious and the postmodern, far past our tongue-tied faith in that which can be constructed and deconstructed. A series of videos, shown on flat screens, share the exhibition's title. As though the walls have anthropomorphized and grown a garden of human mouths, each screen presents a close-up curtain of lips that open and close, revealing tongues that press delicate and fiery messages against walls of teeth.*

*An installation of eight jacquard-woven tongue flags hang from the ceiling, lapping away the viewer's extant associations. The front and back sides of a jacquard weave—a textile technology which figures prominently in the invention of computer code by Ada Lovelace—present a positive and negative image. When rendered into flag-forms, we are invited to consider the ontology of flags in and of themselves, so important to nations, armies, politics and sports. Are they trying to speak, and must they always play two sides against each other? The origin story of the tongue is one of protection. All reptiles, birds, and mammals have tongues, as do most amphibians. These appendages arrived in our mouths not to speak words and phrases, but to taste. Specifically, to identify poison. To discern. That Homo sapiens developed a language facility that relies on the tongue—our danger detector—is an evolutionary adaptation.*

*William James posited that, "If the grace of God miraculously operates, it probably operates through the subliminal door". If that door is a language, it is not one that we yet know how to write or speak. Thus, as philosopher Simone Weil stated, "Impossibility is the door of the supernatural. We can but knock on it. It is someone else who opens." It is answered by the countercultural, eternally untamable. Through image and language,*

# 40 J.G AK

*Buch directs her viewers toward this level of intuitive discernment, but not for the facile goal of understanding.*

*We might ask: what do tongues—reminiscent of the moist and vulnerable corporeal; a guard at the door, securing our opening to the world—do? They move in time with the politics of the moment. Or perhaps they refuse those safe and cozy moves and become missiles, or targets. In this way, they taste history. —Aimee Walleston, 2019*

*With the generous support of*

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Der Senator für Kultur  Freie  
Hansestadt  
Bremen



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## *About the artist*

Kristina Buch

born 1983 in Meerbusch, Germany, lives in Düsseldorf and Cambridge

### Education and Academic Career (selection)

2019 –	Research Associate, Institute for Art and Art Theory, University of Cologne
2015	Visiting Lecturer, Next Society Professorship, FHNW Basel
2012 – 2014	Assistant Professor, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main (with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev)
2011/17/18	MSc Biology, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
2007 – 2011	Tutor/Visiting Researcher, Imperial College London
2009 – 2013	Master Student, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (with Rosemarie Trockel)
2007 – 2009	MA Sculpture, Royal College of Art, London
2002 – 2007	Protestant Theology, Université Strasbourg II, France
2003 – 2006	BSc Biology, Imperial College London

### Solo Exhibitions and Actions (selection)

2016	EXECUTION SEMANTICS for a necessary criminal, Kunsthalle Bremerhaven, scholarship
2014	untitled (holes), Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, action Two Monks and A Rabbit, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York City
2013	Sole Marie Sits, Temporary Gallery, Cologne, action
2009	Come dear art, come. Hockney Gallery, Royal College of Art, London

### Group Exhibitions (selection)

2019	Großer Hans-Purrmann-Preis, Kulturhof Flachsgasse, Speyer, Germany
2018	The Playground Project, Bundeskunsthalle Bonn Welcome to the Jungle, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf
2017	Dixit: rro, ArteBA, Buenos Aires Urban Lights Ruhr, Marl, Germany
2016	Art&Nature, BAU, Merano The Animal Mirror, ISCP Gallery, New York City Gastmahl, Museum der Brotkultur, Ulm, Germany
2015	14th Istanbul Biennial Regionale, Kunsthalle Basel
2014	Urbane Künste Ruhr: This is not Detroit, Schauspielhaus Bochum Outside, Index The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation and Moderna Museet Stockholm

# 40 J.G AK

2012	dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel Manifesta9, Parallel Events, Kasteel Oud Rekem, Belgium Art by Animals, The Grant Museum, London
2011	Waiting For Suicidal Hares, International video festival, Moon Event Organhaus, Chongqing, China
2010	New German Art, German Embassy, London Diving for Pearls, Lothringer13, Munich You can leave your hat on, Gallery Hasen at Schmela Haus, Dusseldorf
2009	Impromptu, FRED Gallery, London
2008	Hopeless, The Beznadziejna, Warsaw Spectrum, St. Mary's Old Church, London
2004	Blyth Gallery, London

## Awards and Scholarships

2019	Grand Hans Purrmann Award Einstein Fellowship (Shortlist) PhD Scholarship, German Academic Scholarship Foundation
2015	Bremerhaven-Stipendium
2012	Young European Artist Award
2002	Carl-Steins-Preis

## *About our guests*

### Robert Logan

Robert Logan is an Emmy Award nominated composer and producer. He has created multiple critically acclaimed solo albums, with newest full-length "Flesh" having been described as "a musical object so radical and daring it seems not to belong to this time." His film credits include, with Ivor Guest, music for Alex Gibney's Oscar winning "Taxi to the Dark Side", the Oscar nominated "Semper Fi: Always Faithful", and multiple Prime Time Emmy Award winning "Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God", among others. He has collaborated musically with Grace Jones, Brian Eno, Ivor Guest, Brigitte Fontaine, Morcheeba and Steve Roach, and his live work includes performances at The Royal Festival Hall, The Royal Albert Hall and Glastonbury.

### Natascha Sadr Haghighian

is an artist based in Berlin. She is professor for sculpture at the HfK University of the Arts, Bremen. Her research-based practice encompasses a variety of forms and formats, including video, performance, installations, text and sound. Exhibitions include: 2019 German Pavilion (curated by Franciska Zólyom) Biennale di Venezia, Venice; 2012 dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel; 2007 Manifesta 7, Trentino - Alto Adige, Italy; 2002 Manifesta 4, Frankfurt am Main.

### VALIE EXPORT / Ingrid Wiener / Oswald Wiener

Oswald Wiener wrote the screenplay for "Das Unsagbare sagen" (1992), which was produced together with Ingrid Wiener and VALIE EXPORT and commissioned by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF. VALIE EXPORT and Ingrid and Oswald Wiener had previously worked together on the film project "Yukon Quest" (1986), also a video documentary for ORF. / VALIE EXPORT born 1940 in Linz, lives and works in Vienna, is considered one of the most important international pioneers of conceptual media, performance and film art. / Ingrid Wiener, born 1942 Vienna, is an artist and cook and her work mainly comprises experimental weaving works (together with Dieter Roth and VALIE EXPORT, among others), but also singing and cooking performances, video letters, watercolours and film. / Oswald Vienna, born 1935 in Vienna, lives with Ingrid Wiener in Styria, is a writer, cyberneticist and language theorist. In the 1970s he coined the "Wiener Gruppe", a Viennese association of writers who sought to overcome the classical literary genres and experimented with visual and acoustic components of language, among other things.

## *Events*

*Friday, 31 January, 7pm*

Double opening of the exhibitions of Kristina Buch  
and Esther Adam (GAK Projekte)

*Thursday, 27 February, 7pm*

VALIE EXPORT, Ingrid and Oswald Wiener:

The Unspeakable Speaking, 1992

45 min (de, enUT)

Courtesy: the artists and sixpackfilm, Vienna

Film screening (de)

“The Unspeakable Speaking”, a video essay made in the early nineties by VALIE EXPORT and Ingrid and Oswald Wiener, is dedicated to the phenomenon of glossolalia or speaking in tongues, of speaking without an audible sense. The film shows, among others, people with speech disorders and psychoses, sound poets and infants. The production of unfamiliar speech sounds and neologisms is found in shamanic traditions; today it is mainly practiced in communication rituals of US-American Pentecostal churches. The research trip therefore took the filmmakers to Louisiana to various congregations of this movement, in which glossolalia is exercised as an universal religious practice of the enthusiastic-ecstatic vocal expression of being filled by the Holy Spirit. “Language, as a tool of thought, essentially supports human expression. What happens, however, if, due to illness, this function is suspended through the loss of the ability to speak or to comprehend, through automatisms of the speech apparatus or conscious artistic interventions?” (O. Wiener)

*Sunday, 15 March, 11am*

Public guided tour with Sarah Maria Kaiser, curatorial assistant, and Anne Storm, trainee

*Tuesday, 7 April, 7pm*

Bremer Atelier IV: Natascha Sadr Haghighian

Studio visit (for members only)

*Saturday, 18 April, 4pm*

Kristina Buch & Robert Logan: Proto-lexicon

Concert and conversation (en)

# 40 J.G AK

Logan and Buch will invite to orbit around questions of speech and language – its vast as well as more narrow territories; its formation, continuities and fragmentations, the unspeakeable and the power structures implied.

*Sunday, 19 April, 11am*

Curator's talk

with Regina Barunke, curator of the exhibition

For more information on our events please check:

[www.gak-bremen.de](http://www.gak-bremen.de)



### *About us*

The GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst was founded in 1980. On the occasion of its 40th anniversary as a non-profit art association (Kunstverein) in Bremen in 2020, numerous events and projects are planned throughout the year, which are dedicated to the topic of “Remembering Exhibitions”.

Over the last four decades, the GAK has presented changing exhibitions and events with a strong international focus and high artistic quality. Today it is considered one of the most important institutions of contemporary art in Northern Germany, and its special profile to exhibit aspiring and rediscoverable artists and to stimulate current discourses in the field of current art theory. It cooperates regularly with art institutions and universities, art academies and other partners. The institution is located in a prominent location on the Weser Island, in the immediate vicinity of the Weserburg | Museum of Modern Art and the Center for Artists' Publications. Since 2001, the GAK has been a member of the ADKV (Association of German Art Associations). In 2001, its curatorial program was awarded the ART FRANKFURT AWARD (former Adam Elsheimer Prize) and in 2012 and 2013 it was nominated for the ADKV-ART COLOGNE Prize for German Art Associations. Since 2019 Regina Barunke is the Director.

GAK  
Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst e.V.  
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office@gak-bremen.de  
www.gak-bremen.de

### *Opening hours*

Tue–Sun 11 am–6pm

### *Admission*

Exhibition: Euro 3.– / reduced 2.–

Event: Euro 2,50

GAK members free

Combined ticket with the Weserburg Museum: Euro 10.– / reduced 6.–

### *Public transport*

Stop: Am Brill

Tram 1, 2 und 3

Bus 25, 26, und 27

By car, please use the car park Am Brill

Press Release

GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen

13.01.2020



40 Years GAK

January–December 2020

GAK Projekte: Esther Adam

Duration: 01.02–01.03.2020

Opening: Friday, 31 January, 7 pm

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# 40 J.G AK

40 Years GAK

*January–December 2020*

The GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst was founded in 1980. On the occasion of its 40th anniversary as an art association in Bremen this year, numerous events and projects are planned that are dedicated to its exhibition and institutional history.

For the anniversary year, the GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst will receive a temporary project space, titled "GAK Projekte". Just below its current entrance there will be a small room in which young artistic positions and projects will be presented. The prelude will be made by the Bremen artist Esther Adam.

GAK Projekte: Esther Adam

*01.02–01.03.2020*

For her site-specific work "Perspectives" (2020) Esther Adam draws linguistic and graphic analyses on the wide glass front of the GAK project room using transparent window colour. This hardly visible, subtle artistic work is a message intended exclusively for attentive observers. For at first only a physically empty exhibition space can be seen. In order to recognize that it is at the same time full of thought fragments, it is necessary to reposition oneself in front of the glass surface and thus also the work of art itself, to change perspectives again and again – otherwise what is seen will disappear or become an illegible trace. This dynamic relationship, which encompasses the movement and spatial engagement of the viewer, finds its parallel in what is depicted. In word and image, Esther Adam explores the relationship of the individual human being to his/her world or environment. Circles, arrows and other diagrammatic signs are repeatedly found between the terms "I" and "We", between personal thoughts and universal themes, indicating a relationship of dependence: the relationship of the individual with his fears, his vulnerability, his existence in the face of the influences of collective processes and social situations, of media and cultural phenomena, and in the face of their own codes and power systems.

Esther Adam was born in Reutlingen in 1988. Since 2014 she has been studying at the HfK University of the Arts in Bremen (master student of Natascha Sadr Haghigian).

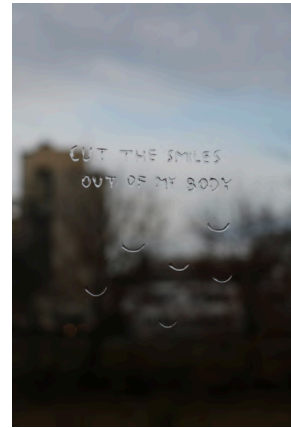
*With the generous support of*

Beate + Hartmut Schaefers Stiftung

Press Images  
GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen  
13.01.2019



Kristina Buch, Untitled, 2016



Esther Adam, Perspectives, 2019

Kristina Buch  
*You can't walk unless the word runs.*  
01.02–19.04.2020

GAK Projekte:  
Esther Adam  
01.02 – 01.03.2020

*Press contact*  
Sarah Maria Kaiser  
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For receiving printable images, please contact us.



GAK\_20KB\_01\_Untitled\_2016.tif

Kristina Buch

Untitled

2016

Lambda print, framed in acrylic glass

25 x 14 cm



GAK\_20KB\_02\_word\_2019\_Still1.tif

Kristina Buch

You can't walk unless the word runs.

2019

10-channel video installation

HD video (loop), film still

Colour, sound

Dimensions variable



GAK\_20KB\_03\_word\_2019\_Still2.tif

Kristina Buch

You can't walk unless the word runs.

2019

10-channel video installation

HD video (loop), film still

Colour, sound

Dimensions variable



GAK\_20KB\_04\_gravity1\_2017.tif

Kristina Buch

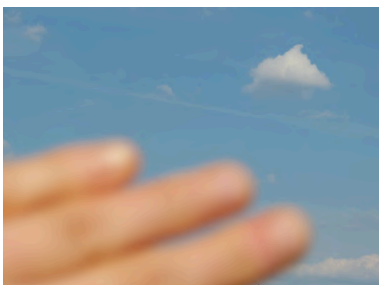
How would you argue with gravity?

(No vacancy! No rival! You never saw  
a triangle in your life!)

2012–2017

Lambda print, framed in acrylic glass

35 x 26 cm



GAK\_20KB\_05\_gravity2\_2017.tif

Kristina Buch

How would you argue with gravity?

(No vacancy! No rival! You never saw  
a triangle in your life!)

2012–2017

Lambda print, framed in acrylic glass

45 x 34 cm

# 40 J.G AK



GAK\_20KB\_06\_prophecy\_2015.tif

Kristina Buch

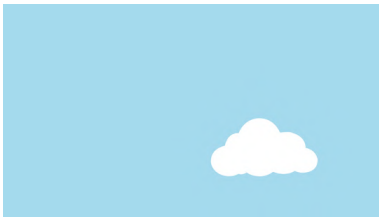
Such prophecies we write on banana skins. (triangulation of criminal grace)  
2015

2-channel video installation

HD video (scope, loop), film still

2:35 min., colour, sound

Commissioned for the 14th Istanbul Biennial, 2015



GAK\_20KB\_07\_character\_2020.tif

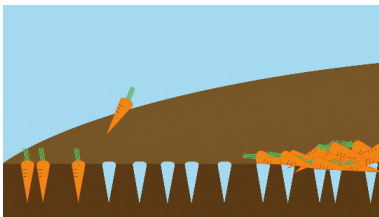
Kristina Buch

Character assassination (failure guaranteed). Dead yesterday? Seen today. Sneaked out your narrow living room, I guess.

2020

2-channel video animation

HD video (loop), film still



GAK\_20KB\_08\_character\_2020.tif

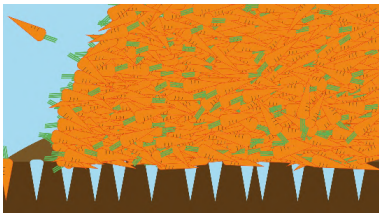
Kristina Buch

Character assassination (failure guaranteed). Root canal (picking our own pockets)

2020

2-channel video animation

HD video (loop), film still



GAK\_20KB\_09\_character\_2020.tif

Kristina Buch

Character assassination (failure guaranteed). Root canal (picking our own pockets)

2020

2-channel video animation

HD video (loop), film still

Copyright/Courtesy (all):  
the artist, Dusseldorf

Installation shots by  
Simon Vogel, Cologne, will be available  
from 10 February 2020.



GAK\_20EA\_perspectives\_2019.jpg

Esther Adam  
Perspectives, 2019  
Window colour on glass  
Dimensions variable

Photo: Esther Adam  
Copyright/Courtesy: the artist, Bremen

Installation shots by  
Simon Vogel, Cologne, will be available  
from 10 February 2020.