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**Formen des  
Ungehorsams  
Cornelia Herfurtner**

**09.02.–04.05.2024**



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**Mi–Fr 12.00–18.00 | Sa 11.00–15.00**

# Formen des Ungehorsams

## Cornelia Herfurtner

*“Protest has risks and side effects because capitalism, expectations and the idea that there is something that everyone wants and that is good for everyone do not work so easily. And it is precisely because of these ambivalences of democracy that protest remains so indispensable.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Yasmin M‘ Barek

Visitors Text

For her solo exhibition *Formen des Ungehorsams* [*Forms of Disobedience*] at the Kunstpavillon, -displaying works from a period between 2021 and 2024 - artist Cornelia Herfurtner continues her research into the history of the right of assembly and social movement strategies for self-protection and the use of public space, which has been ongoing for several years. Using wood carvings and complex multi-part installations, the Berlin based sculptress works on the history and present of freedom of assembly and civil disobedience.

The philosopher John Rawls defines civil disobedience as a non-violent but unlawful political act that takes place in public space and aims to draw attention to abuses of the law or government policies that are considered wrong. Furthermore, civil disobedience expresses conscious and deep convictions; it can warn and admonish, but it does not threaten.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yasmine M‘Barek, *Protest: Über Wirksamkeit und Risiko des zivilen Ungehorsams* (Graz: Leykam, 2023), 85. Original quote translated from German to English by the author of the exhibition text.

<sup>2</sup> cf. John Rawls, *Eine Theorie der Gerechtigkeit*, übers. von Hermann Vetter, 23. Auflage, Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch-Wissenschaft 271 (Frankfurt am Main, 2021), 401-403.

**Visitors Text**

Just as the two main themes of protest and civil disobedience in Cornelia Herfurtner's work are practised predominantly in public space, the reliefs, as a central aspect of her artistic work are an art form of public space as well. The figurative relief was and still is often to be found in places of religious (churches, etc.) or civic (town halls, etc.) gatherings. The individual wooden reliefs were preceded by intensive research by the artist on the criminalization of passive armament according to §17a of the German Assembly Act:

*§ 17a*

*(1) It is prohibited to carry protective weapons or objects that are suitable as protective weapons and are intended under the circumstances to ward off enforcement measures by a holder of sovereign powers at open-air public assemblies, processions or other open-air public events or on the way to such events.*

*(2) It is also prohibited to*

*1.*

*participate in such events in an outfit that is suitable for and, under the circumstances, intended to prevent identification, or to travel to such events in such an outfit.*

*2.*

*carry objects with one at such events or on the way to such events which are suitable for and in the circumstances intended to prevent identification.*

*(3) Paragraphs 1 and 2 shall not apply to events within the meaning of § 17. The competent authority may allow further exceptions to the prohibitions in paragraphs 1 and 2 if there is no reason to fear a threat to public safety or order.*

(4) *The competent authority may issue orders to enforce the prohibitions in paragraphs 1 and 2. In particular, it may exclude persons who violate these prohibitions from the event.*

“... protective weapons [Schutzwaffen] or objects that are suitable as protective weapons ...” are precisely the objects that Herfurtner is interested in. According to the German online dictionary Duden, a protective weapon [Schutzwaffe] is that part of combat equipment which serves to cover and protect the body or head. The dictionary also adds “especially in the past” in the section on use<sup>3</sup>. The German executive and judiciary, on the other hand, testify to a broader understanding of the term “protective weapon”. Any object that could contribute to personal protection against physical violence and identification can be reinterpreted as a weapon. On a meta-level, this raises questions about the meaning of identity and identifying features in relation to a surveillance state and the identities it constructs.

The series *Protective Shields* depicts a wide variety of objects and items that are not criminal in themselves or even generally associated with a criminal act, but whose function as a protective weapon has nevertheless been argued in court: Swimming goggles, umbrellas, caps and scarves, especially in combination with sunglasses, ... . The title of the work ***Shield of Protection*** (“***Without the weather giving any reason to***”) (#13) is a quote from such a court case in which the status as a weapon of an umbrella was litigated. (In the end, by the way, the umbrella was declared to be a protective weapon because, according to the court, the weather on the day of the demonstration did not call for an one).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Schutzwaffe>

## “Without the weather giving any reason to”

Arranged and constructed as still lifes, the individual works look like glimpses of theatrical scenes and go far beyond a simple illustration of the depicted objects. Herfurtner uses photographs as a template, some of which were published by the police themselves and collaged by her. The photographic aspects of the reliefs give contemporary quality. The use of police photographs refers to a critique by civil rights initiatives of this form of PR used by executive power, that spreads the perspective of the police, which is very staged and can be misused for instrumentalization.

The reliefs are contained in/on a wooden structure that holds itself in place under tension. Due to the positioning, the individual reliefs are visible from all sides and allow different perspectives on the individual works from every angle. In addition, the installation in the room enables a physical confrontation with the reliefs, which reveals the relief's shield character. The mint green color of the wooden beams documents the expansion and continuity of the installation.

Like the wooden structure, the title of the exhibition also testifies to the development of Cornelia Herfurtner's artistic work. *Formen des Ungehorsams* does not aim to focus again on the aspect of repression, but to develop from this into disobedient practices: passive becomes active. The title is inevitably based on the wording of “civil disobedience”; the term “form” has a double meaning for Herfurtner as a sculptor, but also signifies „forms“ as “practices”. Practices of protest on an international scale can take many different forms.

Herfurtner, who is herself organized in Germany, also experienced how differently forms of protest and resistance are expressed. In New York City, where her residency experience in 2020 was shaped by the Black Lives Matter protests against police violence and the murder of black people, indigenous people and people of colour, which also took place at the time as a direct reaction to the death of George Floyd. In New York, the first series of city handles (***New York City Handles 4 - #17a, New York City Handles 3 - #17b, New York City Handles 1 - #17c, New York City Handles 5 - #17d***) were created in the form that can be seen here in the front side room. The first handles were created as carving templates for the relief work. These assemblages, which served as templates, were ultimately more interesting for the artist and became a series in their own right, for which the collection of garbage was elevated to an artistic practice. In the series *City Handles*, the artist no longer uses objects explicitly declared as weapons of protection, but since objects that could be interpreted as such are often left behind or thrown away at the place of protest when leaving the demonstration so as not to be carrying any incriminating objects (or those that could be interpreted as such) on them in the event of a check, this collection of garbage and its assembly as a handle (as with a shield) also has a direct reference to protest culture.

Similarly, the straw draped in the corner, which is regularly used in more rural regions as a straw-filled potato sack cushion, both against beating and protection against moisture. Although the artist is not aware of any court case in which straw was discussed as a “passive weapon”, she refers to the confiscation of straw by the police during *Ende Gelände* protests in Rheinland.

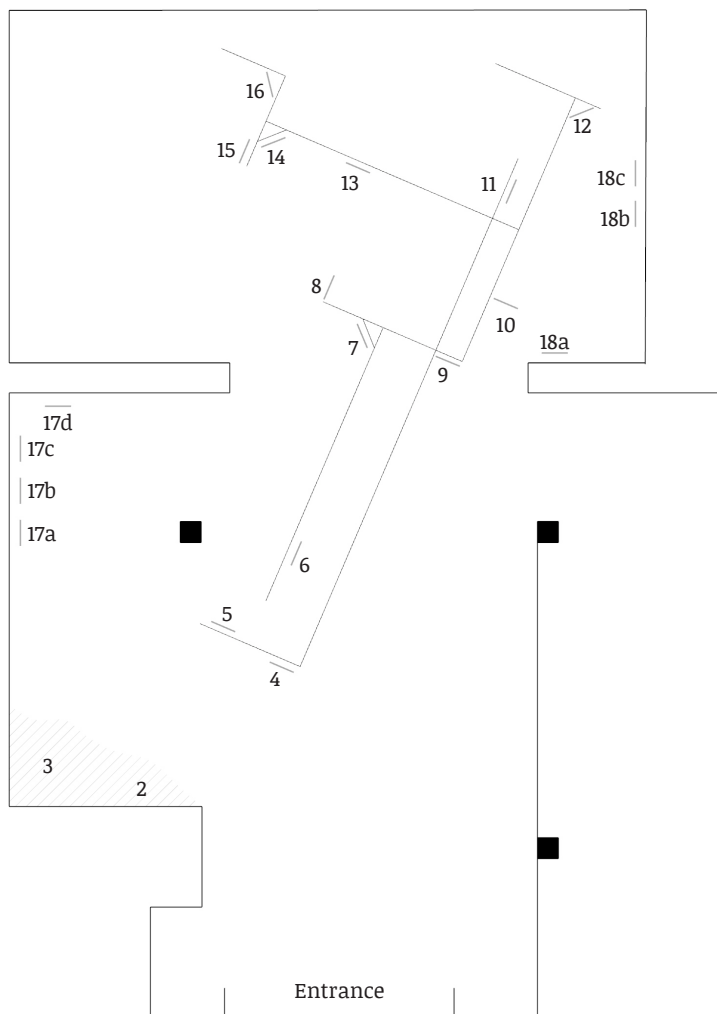
Visitors Text

A further work is located outside of the gallery.

The aluminum cast, ***Protective Shield (Hoodie) (#1)***, which is based on a wooden relief presented in the exhibition space, is a logical consequence detached from the exhibition space and transferred as a resilient object to public space, the place where protest and civil disobedience originate.

Bettina Siegele





Room Plan

# List of Works

- List of Works**
- 1 *Protective Shield (Hoodie)*, aluminium, 110 x 110 x 30 cm, 2023, Produced in cooperation with the company ASAS and the Neuer Kunstverein Mittelrhein (Neuwied)
  - 2 *Protective Shield (Glove)*, lime wood, 61,6 x 7,5 cm, 2024
  - 3 *Protective Shield (Whose Streets?)*, lime wood, 62,8 x 6,5 cm, 2023
  - 4 *Protective Shield (Smash Capitalism)*, lime wood, 50 x 70 cm, 2021
  - 5 *Protective Shield (Garland)*, lime wood, 61,2 x 12 cm, 2023
  - 6 *Protective Shield (Mouthguard)*, lime wood, 55 x 82,8 x 9,8 cm, 2021/22
  - 7 *Protective Shield (Overalls)*, lime wood, 40,2 x 49,8 x 11,1 cm, 2022
  - 8 *Protective Shield (Diving Goggles)*, lime wood, 39,9 x 49,9 x 9,1 cm, 2024
  - 9 *Protective Shield (99%)*, lime wood, 39,8 x 50 x 10,2 cm, 2021
  - 10 *Protective Shield (The absolute Bourgeois)*, lime wood, 39,5 x 50 x 11,4 cm, 2023
  - 11 *Protective Shield („Then suddenly some of the participants started to put on protective goggles“)*, lime wood, 39,7 x 58,8 x 9 cm, 2021
  - 12 *Protective Shield (Balaclava)*, lime wood, 61 x 12 cm, 2023
  - 13 *Protective Shield („Without the weather giving any reason to“)*, lime wood, 50 x 75 x 12,5 cm, 2023
  - 14 *Protective Shield (Sunglasses)*, lime wood, 40 x 50 x 11,1 cm, 2022

- 15 *Protective Shield (Bike Helmet)*, lime wood,  
40,5 x 50 x 10,2 cm, 2020/22
- 16 *Protective Shield (Medusa on Metropolitan Avenue)*,  
lime wood, 59,1 x 25,3 cm, 2024
  
- 17a *New York City Handles 4*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2023
- 17b *New York City Handles 3*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2023
- 17c *New York City Handles 1*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2023
- 17d *New York City Handles 5*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2023
  
- 18a *Berlin Handles 3*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2024
- 18b *Berlin Handles 4*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2024
- 18c *Berlin Handles 5*, different materials on plywood,  
60 x 95 cm, 2024

# Biography

## Biography

**Cornelia Herfurtner** is a visual artist living in Berlin. She works both under her civil name and in various collectives.

Since summer 2020, she has been working on the subject of passiven Bewaffnung [passive armament]. This is a valid legal construct in the Federal Republic of Germany that allows the wearing or carrying everyday and other protective objects at demonstrations to be criminalized. Besides repressive court judgements, she has come across a wide range of practices for self-protection at demonstrations that are used worldwide. For this cycle of work, she has learned wood carving and sculpts primarily in lime wood.

From September to November 2022, she spent time in New York researching social movements and the history of engaged art practices from Heartfield to Decolonize this place.

Politically, the artist is organized in the alliance Rheinmetall Entwaffnen, which campaigns to stop arms production and export from the Federal Republic of Germany.

<http://www.corneliaherfurtner.net/>

# Credits

**Curatorial Support:** Bettina Siegele

Credits

**Exhibition Technique:** Paul Irmann, Lukas Klestil

**Production:** Cornelia Reinisch-Hofmann

**Exhibition Booklet:** Milena Thurner

**Exhibition Booklet Editorial:** Bettina Siegele & Cornelia Reinisch-Hofmann

**Grafic design Booklet:** Marille. Büro für Grafik und Text

*Formen des Ungehorsams* is part of the annual programme *The Resistance of Nothingness* curated by Bettina Siegele.

**Jury for the programme 2024:**

The jury consisting of **Didem Yazıcı**, curator and director of the gallery at Yapı Kredi Culture Arts and Publishing, Istanbul, **Michael Strasser**, artist & board member of the Künstler:innen Vereinigung Tirol, and **Bettina Siegele**, artistic and managing director of Kunstpavillon & Neue Galerie.

## Dates

### Dates

#### **Opening:**

Thursday 08.02.2024, 19.00

#### exhibition tour **Art & Coffee:**

17.02.2024 | 27.04.2024, 11.30

#### **Artist Talk** with Cornelia Herfurtner & Bettina Siegele:

21.03.2024, 19.00 Uhr

#### **curator's tour** with Bettina Siegele:

11.04.2024, 17.30 Uhr

Current information on the events and outreach in the realm of the exhibition can be found on our website:

**[www.kuveti.at](http://www.kuveti.at)**



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Funded by  
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öffentlicher Dienst und Sport

Impressum: Künstler:innen Vereinigung Tirol, 6020 Innsbruck. ZVR: 302478180  
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