

The Finnish Institute in Germany presents

CRUSH

March 11 – April 2 · 2022

An exhibition about desire and queer social exclusion

Art works by Witalij Frese, Marianna Ignataki, Atis Jākobsons,
Artor Jesus Inkerö, Laura Könönen, Alana Lake, Barbara Lüdde, Janne
Räisänen, Anne Tompuri and Aki Turunen

About CRUSH

Crush is an exhibition about desire and queer social exclusion while the multiple meanings of the word are explored. Crush is not only about feeling lustful and passionate, but also about feeling crushed, rejected and outcast – a narrative so often lived by LGBTQI+ identifying groups.

Interestingly, the pain of rejection is experienced in a very similar way to how we encounter physical pain, and research shows that pain receptors are activated in the brain when we face moments of rejection. These feelings of pain can also be reactivated whenever we recall emotionally challenging experiences. It's even argued by evolutionary psychologists that this function is partly related to our ancestry and tribal behaviors; they suggest that this pain serves as a survival warning – a person outcast from their tribe had a lesser chance of survival alone.

As we know, rejection also affects our self-esteem, and can lead to a range of overwhelming feelings like hurt, anger and disappointment as it destabilises our need to belong. It comes then as no surprise, that formerly derogatory terms like fag, dyke or queer have been

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reclaimed and are used to identify groups of individuals, creating a sense of belonging and community in a stance against intolerance and prejudice.

Queer, broadly speaking, has become a term that defines a different way of life or living from the norm. It celebrates diversity and moves to stand against conservative structures embedded within our society.

In this sense, Crush navigates some queer perspectives born from a place of fear and anxiety, and in the face of rejection and in adversity, continues to look towards a future of connectivity. It is an exhibition about desire – a desire to connect and to be accepted.

Crush reflects multiple journeys and speaks through more than one voice as the works in the exhibition examine freedom, identity, sex, sexuality, power and control as well as the complex array of emotions triggered by these structural narratives.

The Artworks

Studio 1

The Faces | In Studio 1 you are confronted by Anne Tompuri's monochromatic paintings – *The Faces*. A grouping of images set the tone for exploring one of the exhibition's themes of social exclusion. The works can be seen as portraits of faceless and oppressed people who experience a feeling of an unseen existence, a lack of acceptance. The faces look at us and see us, knowing their own worth. The identity of these faces is unknown as well as their gender, race or cultural background. Thus, the interpretation of the works remains open.

The Only One and All | Another work in this room that creates tension is Laura Könönen's sound piece *The Only One and All*, a record player with a record carved of stone. As the turntable spins, a grating sound gives a strong contrast to the title, which starts to make you think about the relationship between the two.

You are the Crack Like Haze in my Brain | Alana Lake's *You are the Crack Like Haze in my Brain* also talks about relationship dynamics and this work likens the effect of desire to something of a drug-like experience with a functionless hand blown glass bong standing before a painted sky.

Ceramic installation | In the center of this room is Witalij Frese's ceramic installation of handmade pots and vases depicting genitals and phalluses elevated like icons to be worshiped.

Magdalena; Head of Juan; Bleeding Gianni | On the far wall and hung high looking down are three of Atis Jākobson's queer portraits. These works are generated through intimate but non sexual encounters with the subjects that he meets and as they undress he photographs and studies the body. The results are charged with an erotic and mysterious energy skillfully captured on canvas.

Studio 2

Short Reach | In Studio 2 we have Artor Jesus Inkerö's *Short Reach*. Inkerö is non-binary and this performance by them explores Westernised notions of masculinity through small gestures and poses they procrastinate over their own role and position in society.

Dead Weight | In the middle of this room we have Laura Könönen's *Dead Weight*, a glass palette, a fragile foundation that has become more of a burden opposed to a functioning object or strong working foundation. In the words of the artist: "Life is logistics. In the end the weight carried disappears, the structures slowly fade away."

The Victorian Yellow | Aki Turunen describes his painting *The Victorian Yellow*, as defending 'values such as sensuality, privacy, sensitivity, enjoyment, diversity and the poetic'. The painting also reminisces about the beauty of the historical photographic techniques. The Victorian era represents a complex time in history where homosexuality was open but also specific acts became illegal and 'queers' were targeted and imprisoned. Thankfully times have changed - but not for all of us.

Portrait of a man in gold | This *Portrait of a man in gold* is another piece from Atis Jākobsons. Jewelry can be a symbol of power and authority, but it can also be a symbol of protection. The Egyptians attributed magical powers to jewelry and they were used as protective amulets. In other cultures, a headdress can be associated with ceremony or a rite of passage, another interesting connection to belief systems and feelings of belonging.

The Lost Souls – Jane | Another artist with queer qualities in her work is Marianna Ignataki's anthropomorphic sculpture *The Lost Souls – Jane* this comes from her own subliminal world and mythology where familiar entities (*Josh*) engage in perverse pleasures. Using irony and black humor, she explores themes of gender identity and eroticism gesturing towards hidden instincts and subconscious desires.

The Inner Circle | Barbara Lüdde's installation *The Inner Circle* is a piece about cliques and exclusion. Her work is often influenced by subcultures and marginalised groups represented by detailed monochromatic drawings loaded with cultural signs and signifiers.

Sad Day for Cloud | *Sad Day for Cloud*, a painting by Alana Lake encapsulates the feeling of sadness by painting a crying cloud amidst a color palette of emotion. A simple gesture that unites the universal feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Pohjalaiset homohäät (Isontalon Antti ja Rannanjärvi) | Janne Räisänen's painting *Pohjalaiset homohäät (Isontalon Antti ja Rannanjärvi)*, means 'Nordic gay wedding (Antti Isotalo and Antti Rannanjärvi)' and depicts the wedlock of two gang members. Although this is funny in

the context of matrimonial promises like 'till death do us apart', in the setting of *Crush* there is a more serious undertone as gay marriage is not legal in every country, where people literally fight for their rights of freedom and equality.

Crush is curated by British artist Alana Lake who currently lives and works in Berlin. Lake studied at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and *Crush* is an extension of her ongoing research project *Pleasure Drive* that explores the relationship between art and psychoanalysis.

The exhibition is organised by the Finnish Institute in Germany in collaboration with FELD+HAUS Projects and Frontviews, kindly supported by Blue Planet.

The Organisers

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Finnland-Institut in Deutschland | The Finnish Institute in Germany | is a forum for Finnish culture and arts, academia and business in German-speaking Europe. The Institute promotes the networking and counseling of actors from different disciplines and also offers, in cooperation with its partners, a diverse programme providing insights into Finland's culture and society. <https://finnland-institut.de/en/>

Frontviews | is a group of international artists and theorists. Based on flexible collaborations, Frontviews develops concepts of contemporary art in Europe. The initiative was founded in 2012 and is registered in Berlin as a non-profit association for arts and culture. <https://www.frontviews.de/>