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## A THOUSAND AND X LITTLE ACTIONS

8 October – 27 November 2016

Liz Johnson Artur (GHA/RU)  
Jacob Holdt (DK)  
David Hartt (CAN)  
William E. Jones (US)  
Jason Larkin (UK)

The American philosopher and civil rights activist W.E.B. Dubois wrote in 1903 in "The Souls of Black Folk", a collection of essays about communities and identities: "It is, in fine, the atmosphere of the land, the thought and feeling, the thousand and one little actions which go to make up life. In any community or nation it is these little things which are most elusive to the grasp and yet most essential to any clear conception of the group life taken as a whole." In October and November, Lothringer 13 Halle pulls out the magnifying glass and observes some of these supposed "little" things and countless normalities. The focus is less on the beautiful surface of skin color and more on the complex connections that arise in categorizing and differentiating.

For "A Thousand and X Little Actions," Jörg Koopmann has invited artists, whose work is shaped by a critical, sensitive confrontation with existing relationships and whose attitude reflects a curiosity towards humankind and an openness toward their subjects: Five artists, working across borders, who closely examine diverse identities and their stereotypes and expand upon

them, without romanticizing anything in the process. The starting point is the recently published book by Liz Johnson Artur, informed by her Russian-German-British-Bulgarian-Ghanaian upbringing. In Lothringer 13 Halle, Liz Johnson Artur lays out her "Black Balloon Archive" for the first time, a dense compendium of her work over the last 30 years, full of empathetic examinations of her environment. Liz describes her motivation regarding her archive as follows: "I'm interested in normality. I observe the basic things that are individual yet common to us all – for example, gestures, body language, emotions. I know that sounds clichéd. You could say, normal is boring, but normal is what a lot of people need in order to simply be a part of something. Because if you take that away from them and always put them in the cool, the colorful, the poor or the religious corner, then they are simply there, and the entire picture will never really change."

With the early photography of the legendary Dane, Jakob Holdt, the exhibition calls attention to the unique opus and impact of this tireless lover of humanity, who hitch-hiked through the US in the early 70s, forging friendships and assembling an incomparably intense picture of poverty and racism. The photos were the starting point for thousands of slide shows that, to this day, the experienced mediator and socially critical activist uses to inspire and affect the public.

David Hartt, a Canadian, living in Chicago, shows a different, sovereign, inner life. As an attentive observer, he uses video to document the interior decor and the day-to-day reality of work in the elegant headquarters of the largest African American publishing firm. Since 1942, JPC in Chicago has published such magazine



titles as Negro Digest, Black Stars, Hue, Jet and Ebony, thus offering a unique archive of American society.

William E. Jones from Los Angeles works with governmental, institutional, archived materials. He edited, among other things, the unknown part of the most famous documentary photo project of the 20th century, the "Farm Security Administration (FSA) Project." Fragments of photographic icons of the American depression become a hypnotic short film about the black spaces and omissions in social history. The work "Shoot Don't Shoot" by William E. Jones analyzes material from a 2012 police (aka po-po\*) training video. The description of the threatening scenarios and the typical suspect that could, according to the video, confront officers follow a pattern that is disturbingly timeless: "A black man, wearing a pinkish shirt and yellow pants."

Posture, position and clothing are also details of a subtle study from South Africa, the country that only 22 years ago granted the black majority political enfranchisement. The Briton Jason Larkin, who also lives in Johannesburg, displays a series that patiently dedicates itself to one of the almost forgotten "little actions." Waiting. A narrative that speaks volumes about a widespread phenomenon that, beyond the individual situation of the protagonists, reflects a dilemma within a societal structure.

PS:

We, for obvious reasons, are also waiting: One month after the exhibition, on 7 November 2016, the successor to the first African American president of the US will be chosen. One is reminded of a question from Barack Obama to his recent visitor to the White House, Kendrick Lamar: "Can you believe that we're both sitting in this oval office?"

PPS:

Yes, we can.

\* Kendrick Lamar – "Alright" / To Pimp a Butterfly

Curated by Jörg Koopmann in cooperation with Lene Harbo Pedersen.

Framework program and current information:

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Opening hours:

Tuesday – Sunday 11:00 - 20:00

Admission is free and the entrance to the gallery has barrier-free access.

Public Transport:

Tram 15, 25, S-Bahn: Rosenheimer Platz

Bus 54: Orleansstraße

10 min. walking distance from Ostbahnhof