

press release
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five | rindon johnson
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max goelitz is pleased to announce the exhibition *five* by Rindon Johnson as part of Berlin Art Week in September. The artist's first solo exhibition at the Berlin gallery is based on his science fiction novel *Clattering* and presents an expansive installation. Originally created on the occasion of Johnson's nomination for the Future Generation Art Prize 2021, this work was already on view at the PinchukArtCentre in Kyiv. For the exhibition *five*, the multimedia installation will be embedded into an expanded exhibition concept with new works by the artist. The exhibition is accompanied by a publication that includes the first 40 pages of the novel and thus provides an insight into Johnson's literary work. *Clattering* will be presented for the first time as part of a reading by the artist at the gallery.

The novel *Clattering* is created in collaboration with writer Rainer Diana Hamilton and is a proposition for open-mindedness, multiplicity and opposition to the organizational states of our world, which is mostly built on various forms of dualism. The authors challenge our accustomed view of relationships, hierarchical structures, systems of reproduction, and resource control. Johnson and Hamilton elaborate subtle but important differences between humans and human-like characters in the novel, where there is no gender, hunger, war, or physical violence.

Against this backdrop, the conventions of our real world are juxtaposed with this fictional world. The main plot of the narrative develops as the characters discover that the original inhabitants of their planet were immortal until their longstanding knowledge of it was taken from them. The thematic attention to a diverse spectrum of stories and realities runs throughout the exhibition, with the number *five* being a recurring element. It stands for collectivity beyond binarity, for multiple possibilities, and in the science fiction novel it forms the number needed to create descendants.

At some point I became very interested in what it might actually take to make a person. I wonder-ed what if it took more people. What if we didn't replicate based on a binary but on a grouping of more people. I told Rainer Diana Hamilton and she began to wonder too. We thought best to write it as we both wanted badly to see it. We settled on the unruly number five, a favorite of mine. In the writing, the alternative universe clad itself in our minds. We started to see how our lives and the lives of our characters wound around each other into this zone of possibility which deepened into its own world quite quickly. Mostly, we answered questions befitting designing a reality: Where are all we? Who is governed? What is maintained? Where are the mountains? Can you eat all the grasses? What's money? Who has access to a long life? How long can you build a bridge? How close are the neighboring planets? When does everything fall apart so that things can come back together again? – Rindon Johnson

In *five*, Johnson conceives a procession through architectural interventions that opens multiple realities and can be experienced spatially, visually, linguistically, and performatively. This way, the artist positions the visitor inside an exhibition architecture in which one is confronted with constantly changing perspectives, the reflection on demarcation and belonging. A handrail based on the number *five* leads into the exhibition, in which fictions and realities continue to overlap. A curved brick wall separates the space and leads to five monitors showing live footage of planes taking off and landing, documenting the ongoing operation of our social structures. Johnson's work references socio-cultural structures expressed through the use of language, as well as

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through various media and materialities. Thus, *The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass (happiness writes white, planespotting)* is a depiction of hierarchical and historical systems with exploitative impulses towards our environment, fed by the narrative of constant growth. This is continued by the window installation *Clattering*, backlit by daylight, it depicts a landscape from the novel in stained glass, forming a direct link to the science fiction narrative in which a different temporality exists. Wooden seating objects designed by the artist invite to observe the fictitious time levels, which can also be experienced through a permanent opening in the wall that marks the connection between interior and exterior space.

The presentation is complemented with wall works and free-standing works made of leather, through which Johnson establishes a connection between object, language, and the viewer in order to question social hierarchies and complex power structures. For the artist, leather as a by-product of industrial processing chains reveals a broader historical and conceptual condition that highlights the treatment of other living beings and can be applied to the colonialist legacy of Western states. For his physical, object-based works, he mostly uses cowhide, which he exposes to various weather conditions for up to a year, allowing the environment and climate to imprint the hide's surface. The aspect of temporality and constant change follows the entire exhibition. The artist creates a journey into different temporal planes in which live streams, narrative times and times of day run without hierarchy and simultaneously, with *five* forming its own time capsule in which fiction and reality blur and the idea of parallelism and the existence of multiple worlds becomes possible.

Rindon Johnson (*1990 in San Francisco, US) is a multidisciplinary artist and author whose works are rooted in language and move between sculptural and virtual spheres. Johnson explores how physical and digital spaces are interwoven and how language shapes these realities by failing, contradicting, or empowering. Text is one of the numerous media that the artist appropriates and assembles into new combinations, raising the question of autonomy and power. In addition to his art publications, however, text is only visible in the form of the work titles, which resemble poems. Johnson examines the effects of capitalism, climate and technology and how we see and construct our personal realities. By combining word, technology and object, the artist creates multi-layered works. His forms of expression range from publishing, virtual- and augmented reality to working with materials such as leather, wood and stone.

In 2022, Rindon Johnson was awarded the Ernst Rietschel Art Prize for Sculpture. His work has been shown in international exhibitions, most recently as solo presentations at the Sculpture Center in New York (2021), the Museum of American Art in Washington (2021) and the Julia Stoscheck Collection in Düsseldorf (2019). Johnson has written several books, given lecture performances and readings, including at MoMa PS1 (2018) and KW in Berlin (2019), and published works and texts in collaboration with museums and magazines, such as the New York Times.

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