

# Franz Wanner

## Mind the Memory Gap

24.3.24 – 14.7.24

Curator:  
Kathrin Becker

In his work, Franz Wanner addresses topics such as Germany's secret service and arms industry, their past and current structures, and how National Socialism affects Germany's drive for prosperity without acknowledging its history. His debut solo exhibition in Berlin, *Mind the Memory Gap*, delves into the ongoing impacts of Nazi-era forced labour exploitation. Through photographs, texts, films and objects, Wanner highlights the lingering social effects and gaps in Germany's culture of remembrance.

Plexiglas safety goggles mark the start of this exhibition. They were discovered during archaeological excavations at the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp site. There is no information about the imprisoned person forced to labour in the arms industry who used these glasses for protection. The Nazi camp system stripped them of their name and history, but this object still bears witness to their will to protect themselves. The material used for these goggles was introduced in 1933 by the German company Röhm & Haas under the brand name Plexiglas. By 1936, most of the production of Plexiglas was dedicated to war efforts, particularly for making aircraft windows for the Nazi Luftwaffe (air force), often using forced labour.

The opening motif of the safety goggles is part of a text-image constellation (*Musterfolien* [roughly meaning specimens], 2024). The accompanying short descriptions on the walls explain how forced labour was a key aspect of Nazi society, citing specific examples such as the studios of the artists Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, the Zurich armaments company and art collection Bührle, and the Kindl brewery. Visually, the photographs document the present-day architecture of those production sites used for forced labour under the Nazis. Within this frame of reference, Wanner also reveals connections between Nazi-era forced labour and his own family history in Germany, his current place of residence in Switzerland, and his professional field as an artist.

With the series *Schatten I–III* [Shadows I–III] (2024) in the rear exhibition room, Wanner presents discarded Plexiglas objects from present-day Germany. These include research specimens shot into space where they were ignited to test their material properties, worn-out riot police protective shields, and transparent covers used by museums to protect artworks. Under the Nazi regime, "art protection" in museums also involved using forced labourers to evacuate artworks during air raids.

The photographs in the series *Eintragungen* [Inscriptions] (2024) show notes left on the walls of an air-raid shelter at the GBI camp in Berlin-Schöneeweide by Italian military internees who were forced labourers there in 1944–45. GBI stood for "General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital", the authority under Albert Speer that oversaw the forced labour camps in Berlin. The photo series *Akteneinsicht* [File Inspection] (2024) outlines connections between companies and structures of the Nazi state and those of postwar West Germany.

The six films in the exhibition deal with the enduring impact of Nazi-era forced labour on the present day and attempts to sanitise or downplay this history. *Mind the Memory Gap* (2022) satirises, in an exaggerated, fictional form, the strategy em-

ployed by many German companies to whitewash their past involvement with National Socialism to maintain a business-friendly public image. In *Talking Children* (2024), Øystein Sørbye, the son of Norwegian resistance fighter Haakon Sørbye, discusses the forced labour his father endured in Nazi camps at Natzweiler and Otterbrunn. *Berlin-Lichtenberg* (2024) is a montage of private 16mm film footage from 1943. The original filmmaker's intent to capture moments of everyday family life is undermined by unintended visual content. The film illustrates the constant presence of forced labour in everyday life under the Nazi regime and adds a fictional layer to the silent images. *From Camp to Campus* (2019) and *Bereinigung I-II* [Decontamination] (2024) address the demolition of a former Nazi forced labour camp in Otterbrunn, exemplifying how authorities control and appropriate historical narratives.

#### Discursive Programme

4.5.24, 14:00

Guided tour with Franz Wanner through the exhibition

In German

Free admission

Registration required

30.5.24, 19:00

*Kritische Vermittlung: Kunst und Erinnerungsarbeit*

Franz Wanner in conversation with Nora Sternfeld

In German

Free admission

The accompanying programme will continue in the summer.

Franz Wanner (\* 1975 in Bad Tölz, lives in Munich and Zurich) developed the exhibition *Mind the Memory Gap* for the KINDL during his residency at the Harun Farocki Institute, Berlin, with the support of the Farocki Forum at the Department for Film Studies at the University of Zurich, and the Erwin and Gisela von Steiner Foundation, Munich. The exhibition will be shown at Kunst Meran from October 2025 to January 2026.

Select solo exhibitions: Platform, Munich (2015); Rathausgalerie | Kunsthalle Munich (2015); GEDOK Stuttgart (2015); Forum für zeitgenössische Fotografie, Fotomuseum Munich (2014); GFLK Halle Süd, Galerie für Landschaftskunst, Hamburg (2014); basis e.V., Produktions- und Ausstellungsplattform für Gegenwartskunst, Frankfurt am Main (2014); Museum für Photographie Braunschweig (2013).

Select group exhibitions: Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (2023); Goethe-Institut, Paris (2020); Museum of Moscow (2018); Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau, Munich (2017, 2016); galerie KUB, Forum für zeitbasierte Kunst und politische Kultur, Leipzig (2013); Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Ekaterinburg (2010); Spektre Gallery, New York (2010); Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai (2007).

The artist would like to thank the exhibition venues that provided the protective covers: Lenbachhaus, Pinakothek der Moderne, Gropius Bau, Hamburger Bahnhof, Gemäldegalerie, Palais Populaire, KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art.



**KINDL**