

KUNST  
HALLE

4

November

Eva  
Borner

Wirklichkeiten

16  
Dezember



STADT WIL

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www.kunsthallewil.ch

Vernissage: 3. November, 18<sup>00</sup>  
Künstlergespräch: 21. November, 19<sup>00</sup>  
Donnerstag – Sonntag 14<sup>00</sup> – 17<sup>00</sup>

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# Eva Borner

Eva Borner pays attention where others turn away: respectful photography of the sleeping places of the homeless in Athens, tactful conversations with displaced, vulnerable and homeless people throughout Europe or compassionate films addressing the enforced resettlement of local residents in Shanghai are the starting point for her subtle consolidations of human fates. Through poetic or narrative means, her works kindle memories and associations in the viewer. In impressive video, sound and object installations Eva Borner gives the «voiceless» a voice, with the physical absence of the protagonists being a characteristic element of her work. Voyeurism is far from the artist's intention; instead, her cautious productions aim to give us an understanding of the difficult and often grueling reality of those affected.

«Realities» is what Eva Borner calls her multi-piece productions developed for the Kunsthalle and interprets the theoretical term, so often discussed and questioned in philosophy, in very concrete ways: as a current reality, a given condition, an inevitable fact, an unembellished truth both for the individual as well as, on a larger scale, for an alarming number of people today: worldwide, there are 70 million people on the run, more than the population of France. The UN High Commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi, makes the following appeal: «No matter which measure is applied, this number is unacceptable. Louder than ever before it speaks of the need for solidarity and for common goals in the prevention and resolution of crises. Together we have to guarantee adequate protection and care for refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers worldwide, while at the same time striving for solutions.»

**«I want peace on earth – that's all»**

Eva Borner does not want to ignore the brutalization of the world or human distress and has made it a matter of course to pay attention to existentially vulnerable persons as well as to those who have been displaced to the fringes of existence. For her, «willingness to listen» and «taking time» are the impulse and condition for interpersonal relationships. As a volunteer in a refugee camp in the Athens harbor, she gained insight into the difficult situation of the people there. At the same time, she observed the ever-increasing number of the homeless in Athens due to the economic crisis. Sensitized by this homelessness, she did extensive research on the topic and thereby recognized how little it takes for a human being to become homeless and to slip through the social net.

She asked refugees in Greece about their «deepest wishes». The artist collected their personal, touching and shocking answers – not only at the shore of Europe. She later also spoke to the homeless, those without a house or a homeland, migrants and those in exile in the streets of Paris, in accommodations in Leipzig and in various Swiss cities.

These lengthy and intensive inquiries and conversations form the basis for the installation «Realities», shown for the first time in the Kunsthalle: with her production, the artist gives otherwise unheard people a voice.

**«Peace! Neither politics nor religion nor money should rule the world»**

In collaboration with the sound designer Hans Peter Gutjahr, Eva Borner presents a walk-in «sound sculpture» in a «black box». The longings and wishes of the interviewees are presented to visitors of the installation via many small speakers hidden in calyx-like funnels composed of handmade cardboard. In the mind's eye, each voice modulates into an individual with wishes; due to the immediacy of the auditory experience, personal thoughts on the current unstable political situation in and outside of Europe are set free and empathy for the individual fates is evoked. In her creative process – the weaving together of various voices and sounds – the artist falls back on a historical and long-standing tradition and craft

as well as on the weaving of a political metaphor. The method of weaving and connecting into a soundscape creates a polyphonic symbol for global societal questions around the construction of citizenship, cultural identity and belonging. A communal, cosmopolitan and prospering Europe for people from various backgrounds proves to be a work in progress – an ever-changing entity, constantly redefined and continually shaped according to the current historical reality and carried by the visions and convictions of each individual.

**«I wish... I am very aware that I will never see my family, my father and my mother again. I wish I could see them again, even if it were only for one day, for a minute or two...»**

Thoughts and reflections are also a central element of the installation up in the gallery. Embedded in a living-room scene, a bizarre dialogue unfolds between a man and a woman.

The voices of the protagonists in the chamber piece by author Dmitrij Gawrisch, which has been staged by Eva Borner and set to music by Hans Peter Gutjahr, are carried to us through headphones. As the plot develops, what at first seems like a trivial conversation in time blurs into a surreal exchange of phrases. For the onlooker, it soon becomes clear that the two are a couple that have all they want materially and in fact own everything they wish for. Yet in their relationship, like the heroes and heroines in the Greek tragedies, they are fatefully entangled with one another. There does not seem to be a way out, a catastrophe looms. The oppressive hermetic is optically supported by a film loop showing the endless ebb and flow of the waves at a lonely coast in Normandy. Though the ceaselessness of this natural phenomenon is enchantingly beautiful and has an almost meditative effect, the endlessly recurring and constant movements together with the diametrical dialogue become monotonously oppressive and hopeless. By the precise staging and production that includes image and sound, Eva Borner lets us perceive the couple, who are perhaps a symbol for aspects of

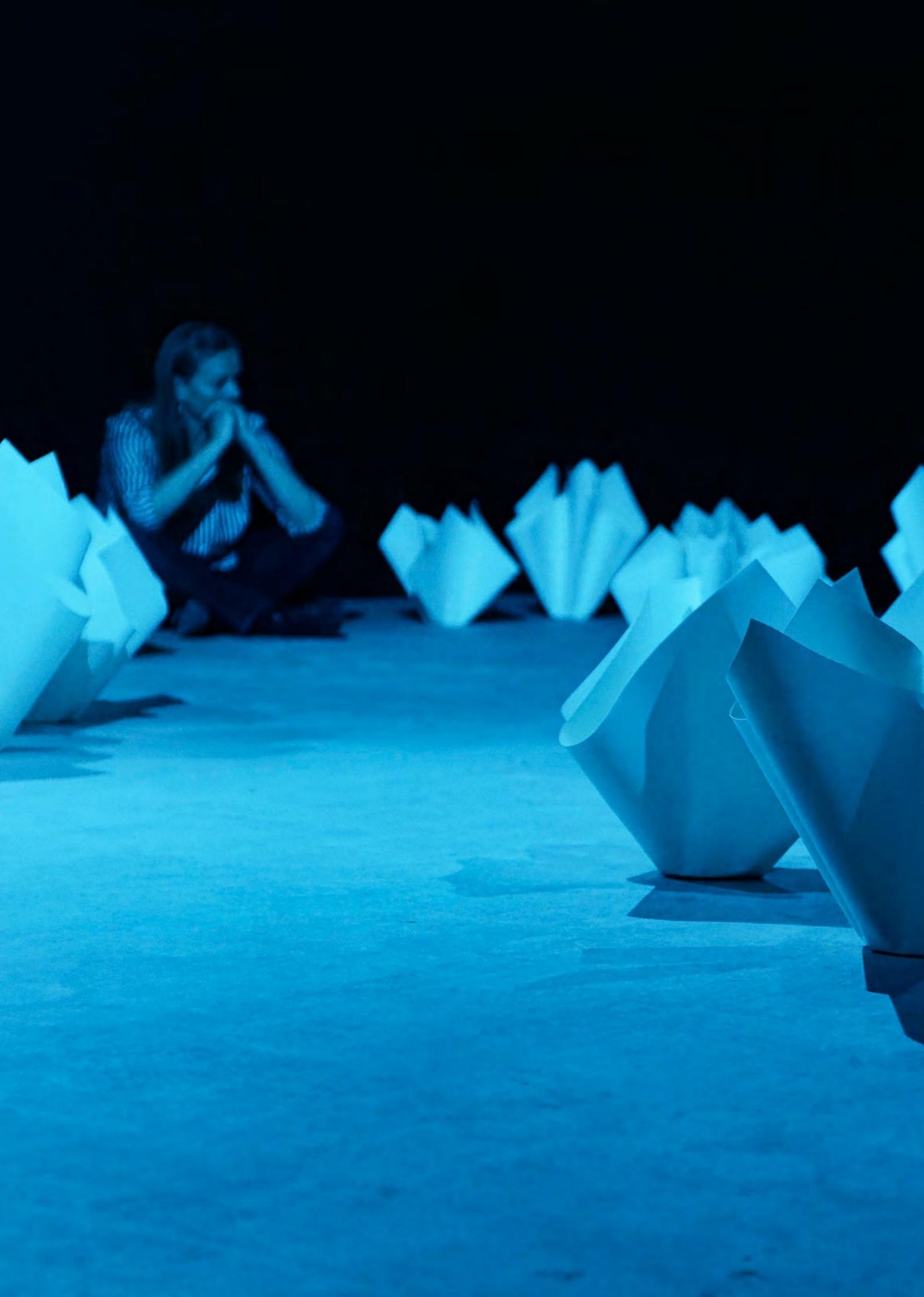
our western society that is lacking in vision, as «trapped in themselves» and «disoriented».

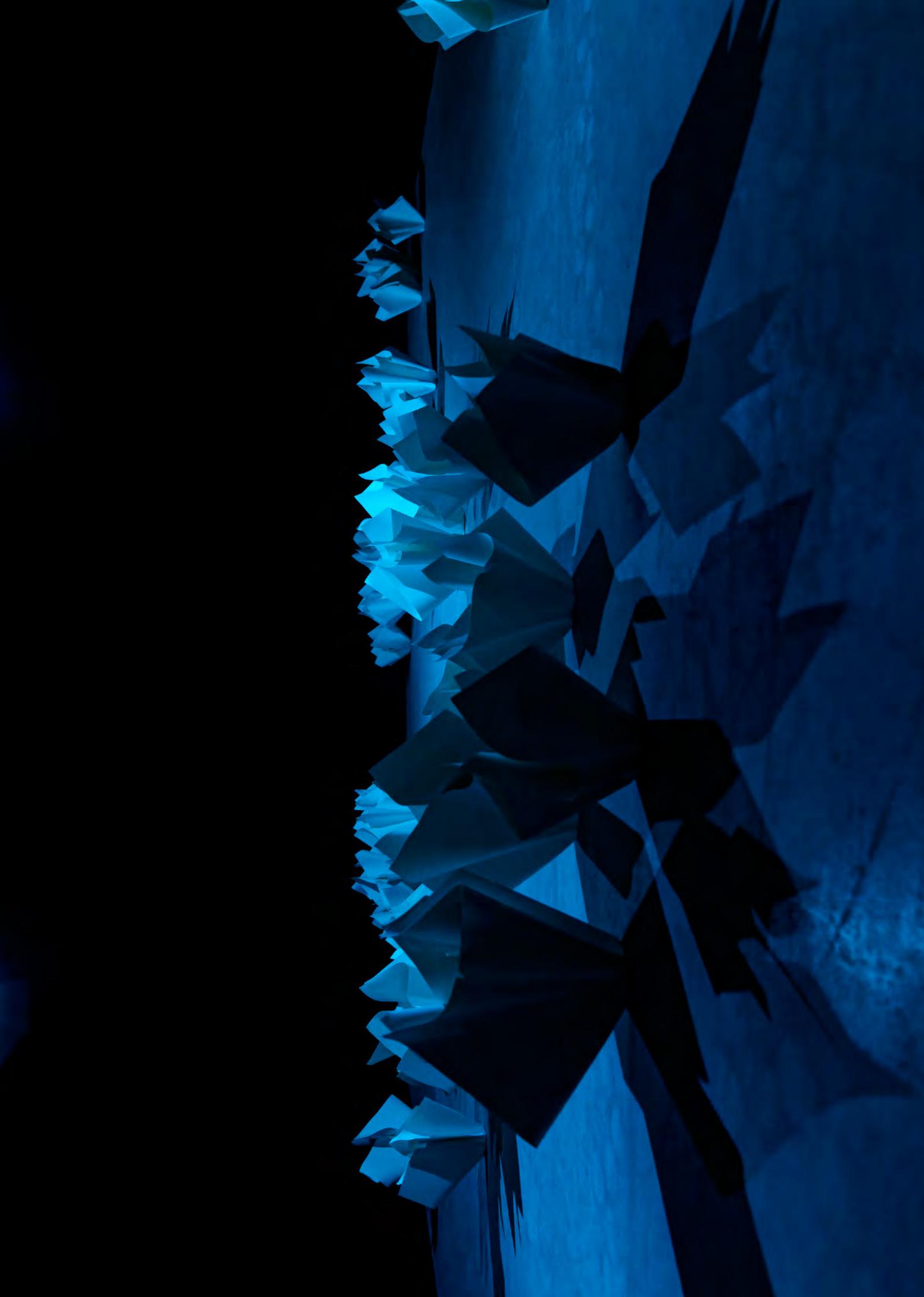
In the back part of the gallery, greenish-shimmering hand-sized cuboids are precisely laid out in a geometric ground sculpture. The characteristic fragrance as well as close inspection allows us to identify the blocks as olive-oil soap. In their surfaces, Eva Borner has stamped key words: freedom, equality, fraternity. Terms that as slogans during the French Revolution of 1789 spoke of profound societal transformation and since 1948 are secured in Article 1 of the UN Human Rights Charter.

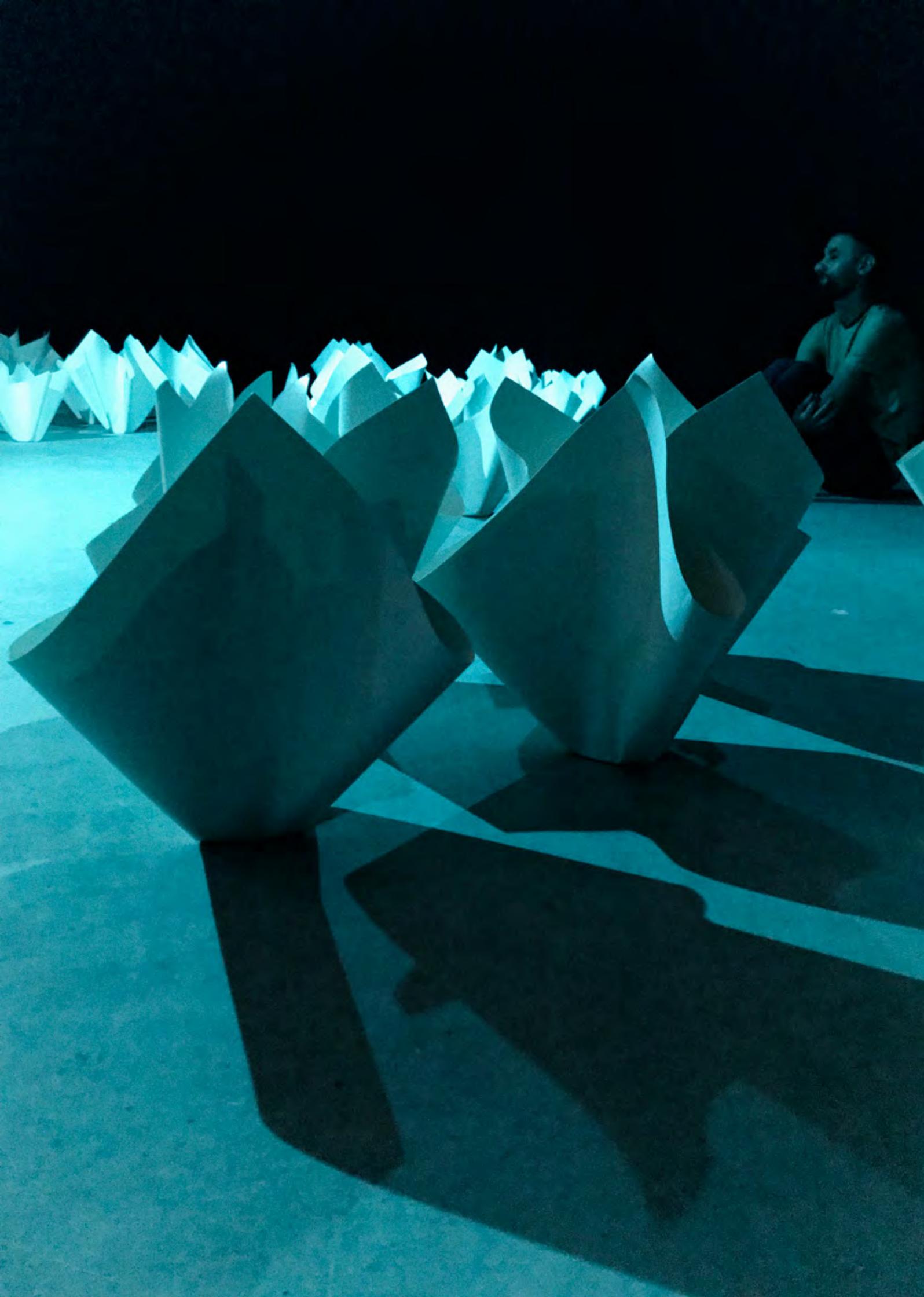
On the soap pieces, the artist has captured the human rights that are disregarded most worldwide. Cross-references to «washing one's hands of something» or «one hand washes the other» are of course intended. The production is touching in its simplicity: order and play define the aesthetic expression. The quiet concision of the display emphasizes the solidity of the ethical principles and needs no further interpretation for clarity.

Gabrielle Obrist and Claudia Reeb











7  
Gleichheit  
vor dem Gesetz

1  
Freiheit,  
Echtstaatlichkeit, Ererblichkeit

3  
Recht auf  
Leben und Freiheit

9  
Schutz vor Verhaftung  
und Ausweisung

18  
Gedankens-, Gewissens-,  
Religionsfreiheit

2  
Verbot der  
Diskriminierung

Freiheit  
Kultur

28  
Soziale  
Sicherheit

22  
Recht auf  
soziale Sicherheit



**IDEAL**