

Charlene Hahne in conversation with Lisa Seebach

Curated by Katharina Wendler

Zoom, April 21, 2023

KW: To begin with, I would like to briefly state that this project is less of a single conversation and more of an entire marathon of talks. So I'm all the more pleased that we're finally getting down to implementing all the ideas, concepts and possibilities that we discussed throughout last year.

It all started with a visit to your studio, Charlene, in October 2021, when you had temporarily moved your studio from Weimar to Berlin and commuted back and forth between the two cities. During the visit, we talked quite intensely and at length about your work, and while you pulled out one large-format painting after another, I also asked you, among other things, who you would like to exhibit with in a two-person presentation. Then you thought about it for a few minutes and said: "Preferably with Lisa Seebach". Where did you meet Lisa's work for the first time and why were you so convinced that your work would go well together?

CH: I first saw Lisa's work when she was awarded the 2017 International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York. It appeared in some online magazine at the time and I immediately liked the images of her work. I took a screenshot and it has been on my desktop ever since. In some way it got me and kept me interested. Maybe I saw a parallel to my work right there. Lisa, you try to take up graphics with sculpture, and I tried to take up graphics with painting. That's how a connection opened up for me at that time. And it has stuck with me all these years.

In general, I have a hard time showing my stuff together with other paintings. All other media are more interesting for me.

KW: Lisa, how was it in turn for you to get involved with Charlene's work?

LS: I feel the same way as Charlene, I too search for means of translation in many ways, I find this parallel clearly noticeable in our work. What interests me is that I find many of my own approaches in Charlene's work. I also find with you, for example, these flashes of minimal figurativeness, which then withdraw again to be something completely different. I see a connection there.

KW: Now we talked relatively often throughout the last year and especially you two among yourselves. How did this exchange between the two of you go, was it more about content or organizational things? How did you approach this joint project? (Compared to a "classic" solo or group exhibition, this is a rather unusual project, in which you have to engage much more intensively with the other exhibiting person and deal with her work, and also: share a space).

LS: What I found interesting was that our work process was very image-heavy. Maybe that came from the fact that we recognized each other's individuality right away, so we didn't have to explain much more. Instead of exchanging texts, we sent a lot of visual material back and forth. In this way, we were able to give each other a better understanding of how we think about something, how we see something, or how we want to make something visible. I found this interesting because, conversely, people often try to translate art into language. On the contrary, we used visual material from other artworks to exchange ideas about our own work. In the end, this was perhaps a much more comprehensive communication than if we

had explained everything. For me, this kind of communication almost exclusively through images was new and very exciting.

KW: So the images you sent each other were not photos of your own work, but exhibition situations and works by others? Or both?

LS: Both. Of course own works, where one has seen connecting points. But also, for example, exhibition views that have said a lot about how to deal with a space, or a quick sketch on a cell phone drawn with a finger. Sharing images also had a lot to do with developing a trust for whether the other felt the same (about a work, the space, an installative structure). Or rather, whether she can pick up on my thoughts and suggestions, whether she recognizes what is interesting or important about it. Feeling would perhaps be too broad a term.

CH: I think first and foremost it was about developing a shared sense of space. Less about individual aspects of a work, more about a shared vision of what the exhibition should convey. It was less about precise ideas or instructions; it was more subtle and less concrete. In any case, I was surprised how quickly we got on the same level in this regard without talking about it much.

LS: It was an exchange of content without us talking. Nevertheless, it became clear what art means to us, what installation can be, how much painting and sculpture can mix, what we want a space to be or how it can be played.

KW: Ok, you have approached each other through visual material (and one must also not conceal the fact that we have also exchanged verbally a few times with regard to several funding applications, at least with regard to the format and organizational questions); nevertheless: the exhibition shows a strongly site-specific installation, which, however, was not created together or for each other in the strictest sense. On the contrary, we show a new work by you, Charlene, that you actually made for the site and this project, and works by you Lisa that were made in a completely different context. So you have been working separately, each in an individual studio practice, and only meet on site at the Salon am Moritzplatz. I would therefore like to ask you what significance the collaboration has for you. In the end, do you only meet in the exhibition space? Or do you really develop something together?

CH: For us, it was good that there was a certain basis from the start, both in content and in expression. The works simply fit together well, at least in my perception. From that point of view, the adaptation effort didn't have to be that great. How do you see it Lisa? Ideally, would you have worked together on site and developed something completely new?

LS: I don't know. I'm of two minds about it. I found the exchange important, because it showed me that your work provides the place, the landscape, in which my work can happen or take place. At best, my sculptures flesh out your work in those exact places. It's like zooming in on Google Earth: if you were to keep zooming in on your work, mine would show up in it. That's how I understand our exhibition. They complement each other, but they also merge.

As you said earlier, Katharina, there are several forms of working together. I have never done this form before and I find it very interesting because it contains both: A common view of how to bring something together and dovetail it, but on the other hand also individual formations of artistic views. For example, I don't know yet what Charlene's canvas will look like, but I know we'll be able to work well with it because my work will rise up from it and add another dimension to the whole thing. For me, that has to do with both trust and freedom.

- KW: That's really interesting, because for me it also describes very well the curatorial process of an exhibition, or rather the collaboration with artists and the engagement with their work. It's basically similar there: trust that the works of the artists you've chosen are good and will work. And freedom to express and implement one's own view of these works.*
- But for me this project was also special from a curatorial point of view, because it was never about simply taking works from your two studios and installing them next to each other, but because we all said from the beginning: If we do this, then it should combine into something new on site (without merging, I still find that important, that it is still recognizable that there are two different positions present).*
- For me, the connection of the two-dimensional with the three-dimensional and your shared interest in drawing and landscape (two absurdly broad terms in art, but nevertheless applied here) are at the center. The exhibition title soft island hard edge takes some aspects of these terms into consideration as well, the island, the edge, the supposed opposition of soft and hard. What do you associate with this title, also in relation to your work?*
- LS:** I always first associate "soft" with a materiality. In my work, for example, in the form of hand imprints in clay or curved material. In Charlene's work, it is expressed for me in the billowing, cloudy surfaces, where areas of the image become blurred. But I also like to call systems "soft" that (continue to) develop from circumstances, such as the situation in the Salon am Moritzplatz, where we first have to see on site what we do with the situation, where there is no fixed setting. For me it has to do with approach and change, there is room for maneuver.
- My first association with "hard" was the clean lines in my sculptures, especially in the steel, but the longer I think about it, the "softer" they actually become. They end up being totally imperfect, curved lines full of bumps, same with Charlene's lines: The closer you zoom in, the softer they get.
- KW: That's a nice phenomenon anyway, that supposedly clear lines, dots, etc. fray out if you only get close enough.*
- LS:** Exactly. "Island" for me is completely the inner mental space where works can emerge and make sense, where they open up. "Edge" describes an outline, a contour.
- KW: The term "soft" is not entirely foreign in both of our work, Lisa. You did an exhibition and catalog called Soft Architecture in 2017, and funnily enough I curated an exhibition called Soft Power in the same year. Of course, these are different terms, but at the heart of both projects, I would say, the "soft" stood for a certain flexibility, on the one hand in materiality, and on the other hand also as an attribute that one might not immediately associate with both architecture or power.*
- What are your associations with the terms, Charlene?*
- CH:** "Soft" for me is the canvas, the unprimed fabric, soft, raw and vulnerable. That's how I prefer to use it. From the beginning, the "island" for me was the moment where our works meet in the space. The exhibition. We are the island! And that brings us right to the "edge", the edge to the outside space. This separation of inside and outside is essential, the works are so peculiar and meet in this unique constellation in a limited (time)frame, which definitely results in a special situation that works like an island for me.
- KW: The island is a recurring theme in your work, at least there are quite a few paintings that have "island" in the title.*
- CH:** Yes exactly, but mainly because they were made in 2019 during my residency on Fogo Island.
- KW: I suggested the title, among other things, because for me it unites precisely these aspects of your work: the island as a mental space, but also as a metaphor for a physical state that is accessible for a short time*

and then becomes inaccessible again. The whole Gallery Weekend is basically also like an island that is washed over once a year by mass tourism aka art people.

CH: By the way, "island" also made me think of my studio, where I can retreat and which is quite essential for what can be seen in the exhibition space at the end. There I am always isolated; it also needs this retreat and the focus on what can only happen there.

KW: *In that sense, you both actually have quite a classical studio practice. You need this place to be able to work, produce, and store. Although, of course, Lisa, you still work in a very exhibition-specific, i.e., site-specific way. What about a work as site-specific as the one you just produced for Salon am Moritzplatz, Charlene? Have you done something like this before?*

CH: No, actually this is the first time for me in this form. But I think it's really great, because I'm always looking for ways to show painting in a different way than the "classic" way. Of course, that can only work if you get to know the space beforehand and can work out appropriate ways of thinking about and presenting painting in a more sculptural and installation-like way.

KW: *Is that something you want to focus on more in the future as well?*

CH: Absolutely.

KW: *Lastly, I'd like to ask you what else you're working on right now, or what projects are coming up next.*

CH: I've just arrived in Berlin with my family and will spend the next few months settling into my apartment and studio, getting all the work here and getting the working process rolling again. Luckily I found a great studio in Lichtenberg on the grounds of the Fahrbereitschaft, so things can finally get going again. In the summer, I will participate in an exhibition at the Schiller-Museum in Weimar, which will bring together the recipients of the *born to be bauhaus* graduate prize of the Bauhaus-Universität. I received it in 2017. I am looking forward to it.

LS: I've been working for months on a quite elaborate catalog, which I hope will be finished very soon. In June, I'm doing a solo exhibition entitled "We would provide complete darkness" at the Kunstverein Friedberg, to which my artist colleague Arthur Löwen has invited me, who will curate the exhibition. Apart from that, I am now already preparing an exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bremen, which is scheduled to open early next year. There I will exhibit together with the video artist Julia Charlotte Richter. I can already reveal the title: "Aren't you the one who can remember the future".

KW: The titles are very promising in any case. Many thanks to both of you and best wishes for everything to come!

Charlene Hahne (*1988 in Magdeburg) studied cultural studies at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg from 2008-09. In 2009, she began studying free art at the Muthesius Academy of Fine Arts in Kiel and transferred to the Bauhaus University Weimar in 2010, where she received her diploma in 2016 under Sven Kroner and Prof.

Dr. Frank Eckardt did. Following her studies, she received the Thuringian Graduate Fellowship in 2018/19. In 2018 she was shortlisted for the Ars Viva Prize and in 2019 spent 3 months in Labrador/Newfoundland, Canada as part of the Fogo Island Arts residency program. In 2020/21 she was a fellow of the Artist-Inside-Fellowship. As part of this, her work was part of the Artist-Inside showcase for Artweek 2021. Other exhibition participations included Pictura Montreal, Canada (2020), Kunsthau Erfurt (2019), Galerie Jarmuschek und Partner (2018), and Villa de Bank Enschede (2017). She lives and works in Berlin.

<https://charlenehahne.tumblr.com/>

Sculpture and installation are at the center of Lisa Seebach's (*1981 in Cologne, lives and works in Potsdam) artistic approach. She graduated from the Braunschweig University of Fine Arts as a master student of Prof. Thomas Rentmeister. Since then, her artistic work has received numerous awards and grants, including the Gustav Weidanz Prize for Sculpture, the Stiftung Kunstfonds project grant (in collaboration with Julia Charlotte Richter), and a one-year residency in New York at the International Studio & Curatorial Program. Lisa Seebach's work has been included in national and international institutional solo exhibitions such as Kunsthalle Bremen, Entrée (Bergen, Norway), Meliksetian / Briggs Gallery (Los Angeles, USA), TURN Gallery (New York, USA), Kunstverein Braunschweig, or the Rudolph Scharpf Gallery of the Wilhelm Hack Museum (Ludwigshafen, Germany), as well as group exhibitions at the Haubrok Foundation (Berlin), Galerie Cité Villa Arson (Nice, France).

<https://lisaseebach.de/>

Katharina Wendler (*1988 in Hamburg) studied Cultural Studies and Business Psychology (Bachelor) at Leuphana University Lüneburg and Art History (Master) at Humboldt University Berlin and the University of Iceland. After assistant positions at Daniel Marzona, Berlin, Konrad Fischer Galerie Berlin, i8 Gallery Reykjavik, and Contemporary Arts Museum Tampa, Florida, among others, she directed the exhibition space SAFN Berlin in 2013-2017 and Karin Sander's studio in 2016-2018. Currently, as a research assistant at the Faculty of Art and Design, she is responsible for the curatorial direction of the University Gallery at Bauhaus University Weimar and works as a freelance curator and writer. In early 2018, she initiated the dialogue-based exhibition series in conversation with.

<https://www.katharinawendler.com/>

in conversation with is an exhibition format that aims to bring people into conversation and practical collaboration. Artists are invited to enter into dialogue with curators, writers, other artists, art historians, journalists, or scientists and to develop an exhibition from this. The conversations are written down and serve as text material accompanying the exhibition. They enable visitors to develop a deeper understanding of the artists' working methods and their artworks. in conversation with is based on the basic assumption that artists themselves can best provide information about their works, their working methods, their ideas and inspirations. You just have to ask them about it. The project was initiated by Katharina Wendler in Berlin in early 2018 and is hosted in various (project) spaces.

Exhibition

Charlene Hahne & Lisa Seebach

soft island hard edge

April 27-30, 2023

Opening: Thursday, April 27, 2023, 6 p.m.-2 p.m.

Salon am Moritzplatz, Oranienstr. 58, 10969 Berlin