

JUDITH HOPF

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Judith Hopf's works centre on social structures and issues and how to reimagine them. Drawing on the stylistic devices of the comic and grotesque, the artist turns established rules on their head and, playfully tongue-in-cheek, provokes us to think again.

Hospital Bone Dance (2006) A young woman is gruffly turned away at a hospital emergency unit. Strange things then begin to happen. Patients start jiggling down the corridors, mummies hop out of bedrooms and wander about, skeletons perform a surreal bone dance. A no-nonsense nurse moves about between them, half-heartedly attempting to restore order but making no impression on the growing anarchy. Judith Hopf portrays the hospital management as a metaphor for social functionality, undermined by a community of damaged, supposedly dysfunctional and undisciplined souls.

Doors (2007) is set in an apartment hallway. Judith Hopf and Henrik Olesen stage it as a space of psychological transit, where people with very different backgrounds – friends and unwelcome guests alike – share a brief moment together before vanishing back into their own worlds. The hallway is also patrolled by “internal police”. Here and there the work cites Luis Buñuel's film *The Phantom of Liberty*, and it is an artist's interpretation of the controlling society, where individuals have become so accustomed to keeping themselves in check that the social authorities designed to exercise this role are no longer required.

In **Counting (2008)** a grotesque jury set a horse arithmetical tasks to perform. Judith Hopf is referring to a phenomenon known in psychology as the “Clever Hans effect”, whereby animals used in experiments adapt to the expectations of their observers. Rather than doing the sums itself, the animal can tell from the tension in the audience how often to stamp its hoof.

Some End of Things: Conception of Youth (2011) A person dressed as a huge egg walks stoically through an office architecture and is thwarted when trying to pass through a door. The egg does not really fit into this serious environment, and in the end it sits down defeatedly on a stool. *Some End of Things* illustrates Hopf's masterful

command of minimalist slapstick, exploring themes such as exclusion or the pressure to conform in an unconventional, often metaphorical manner. Hopf frequently portrays her characters with affection as being too “awkward” to adjust to the customary ways.

More (2015) begins with a zoom-in. Within a few seconds, the viewer has crossed the universe and is following Hopf out of the cosmos and into the Berlin park Tiergarten, advancing towards the suggestion of a microcosm. Before the gaping emptiness, words appear, like “possibilities”, “exhausted” and “new”. They vibrate nervously, dance up and down a sinus wave, constantly merging and networking in new ways. From the matrix of available words, there is only one logical combination that makes semantic and grammatical sense: “exhausted by the new possibilities”. Hopf has created an image for the web of data in which we are becoming entangled as we seek to grasp and measure the world completely. From this digital surfeit and the apparently unlimited possibilities it offers, we derive neither contentment nor freedom nor greater knowledge. The final conclusion is: “This emptiness is normal.” It is both a criticism of the principles underlying the information society and a meditative personal reassurance.

Judith Hopf (*1969 in Karlsruhe) lives and works in Berlin. Since 2008 she has held a professorship at the Städelschule, Frankfurt (Main). Apart from dOCUMENTA 13 (2012), she has taken part in many international group exhibitions, including at the Liverpool Biennial in 2014 and the Museum for Contemporary Art in Basel in 2013. She has exhibited individually at, inter alia, the Museion in Bolzano (2016), the Kunstverein in Graz (2012), the Portikus in Frankfurt (Main) (2007) and the Vienna Secession (2006). Her works have also been shown at film festivals such as the Berlinale and the International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen. Judith Hopf received the Ruth Baumgarte Art Award for 2014.