

Exhibition Guide

Loretta Fahrenholz

A Coin from Thin Air

September 19, 2024–February 16, 2025

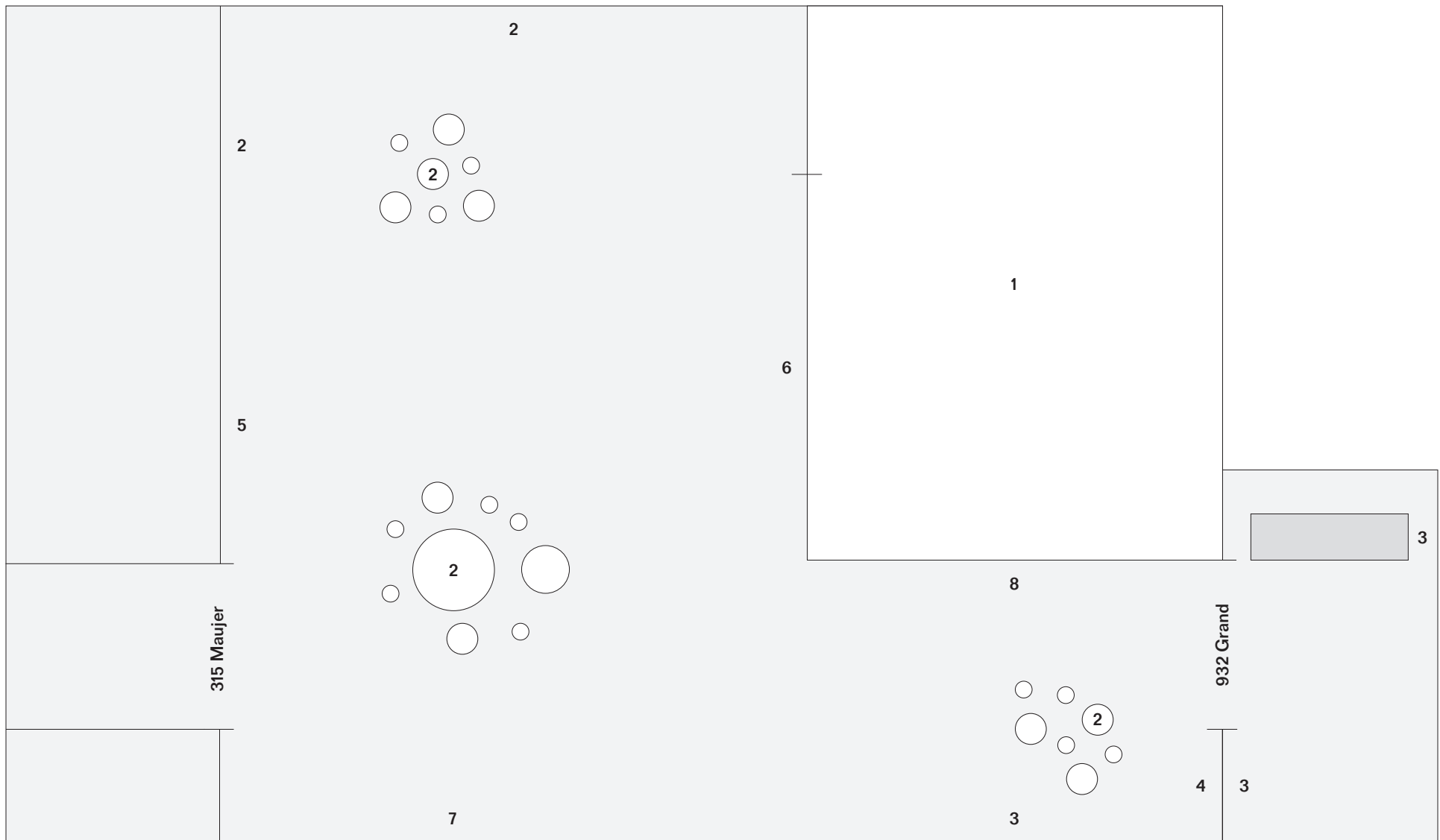
Gathering recent works in film, photography, text-to-image AI, 3D scanning, installation, and assemblage, *A Coin from Thin Air* foregrounds Loretta Fahrenholz's exploration of human and technological value creation and self-actualization.

Loretta's work addresses the status of photography and film in a post-digital age. Merging post-cinematic, post-photographic, and documentary approaches to image-making, Loretta provides a platform for her subjects to "perform" themselves, taking individual circumstances and social milieus as opportunities to explore the various entanglements of people, objects, and technologies. Through the purposeful misuse of various tools of mediation, her work both examines the most urgent questions arising from contemporary image culture and explores its intersection with social, sexual, and cultural hierarchies.

The center of *A Coin from Thin Air* is Loretta's latest film *Trash The Musical* (2023), made in collaboration with LA-based performance artist Alicia McDaid. Following two years of correspondence by phone, Alicia sent Loretta several gigabytes of video data capturing herself cleaning out decades' worth of paintings, self-help books, and other detritus from her aging uncle's Philadelphia home while simultaneously producing the absurdist and often scandalous performances she shares on social media. With Alicia's constant, churning production of data paralleled in the piles of analogue material collected by her uncle, the 37-minute film places the virtual and the real in swirling juxtaposition. At once immersive and alienated, *Trash The Musical* demonstrates the range of Loretta's filmic influences, from the early twentieth century avant-gardes to the "No Wave" cinema of 1980s New York.

Alongside the film, Amant's 932 Grand gallery hosts three of Loretta's recent series of works made with experimental photographic techniques, as well as several sculptural installations. *I need to make mistakes just to learn who i am* (2023) consists of ten images depicting groups of people in forests, imitating the classical painterly trope of the picnic, alongside twenty-four mushroom-shaped lamps and wooden sculptures. The images were created using early text-to-image AI, a technology whose ability to create naturalistic images has improved dramatically in the past year alone. This series zeros in on the brief moment, circa 2021, when the limitations of AI image-making accidentally created an unsettling, avant-garde potentiality.

The other series represented here likewise explore image-making as an interface between affects and values: Loretta's *Court Society* photographs document the activities of Baroque-era historical reenactors and three large-scale, site-specific vinyl prints depict the interior spaces of a mental health clinic as seen through the "eyes" of a 3D point scanner. These works adopt the logics and image-accumulating strategies of recent technologies, sifting through the archive in the manner of an algorithm. At the same time, they also reflect the classic tropes of late 19th century academic European painting, in particular its discourses around verisimilitude and artifice—as reflected by the "still life" sculptures, depictions of *plein air* leisure, and various modes of figurative abstraction on display here. Together, this assemblage of overlapping references, layers of artifice, and manifestations of literal and metaphorical "data" trace technology's often delirious ideological and visceral implications through a social imaginary.



Works in the Exhibition

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|--|---|--|
| <p>1. <i>Trash The Musical</i>, 2023
4k video, color and sound, 37:24 min</p> <p>2. <i>i need to make mistakes just to learn who i am</i>, 2023
10 Fine Art Prints on Hahnemühle Torchon, mounted on AluDiBond, framed; 28 mushroom-shaped lamps and wooden sculptures</p> | <p>3. <i>Court Society</i>, 2024
Pigment prints on paper</p> <p>4. <i>Eleonore Fürstin zu Schwarzenburg</i>, 2024
C-print</p> | <p>5. <i>kbo-Isar-Amper-Clinic, Central Lab</i>, 2015/2024
Print on clear vinyl film</p> <p>6. <i>kbo-Isar-Amper-Clinic, Clay Therapy</i>, 2015/2024
Print on clear vinyl film</p> <p>7. <i>kbo-Isar-Amper-Clinic, Sensory Room</i>, 2015/2024
Print on clear vinyl film</p> <p>8. <i>Champagne Galop</i>, 2024
Plastic boxes, water, food dye, artificial fruit, and imitation luxury goods</p> |
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1. *Trash The Musical, 2023*
4k video, color and sound, 37:24 min

With: Alicia McDaid and Brooke Bundy, Vanessa Craig, Ben Ditto, Dorothy Dubrule, Michelle Levine, Murphy Maxwell, Denise Love McDaid, Moses McDaid, devika wickremesinghe
Cinematography and Social Media Content: Alicia McDaid; Additional Cinematography: Jessica Calliero, Katie Stenberg, Murphy Maxwell, Vanessa Craig; Editing: Abdulmonim Twebti, Loretta Fahrenholz, Leonie Nagel; Color Grading: Abdulmonim Twebti; Visual Effects: Jak Ritger & K8 Howl; Production: Loretta Fahrenholz, Alicia McDaid, Leonie Nagel; Sound Design: Steffen Martin; Costumes and Makeup: Alicia McDaid; Additional Wardrobe: Dream Body Press by Jason M., Genevaz World by Geneva Fabry, Gianna Gianna, Gillis, Maggie Dunlap, Void Realm, Wacky Wacko by Seth Bogart; Foley: Kayla Elrod, Taiga Trigo; Sound Mix: Jochen Jezussek; Music: Alicia McDaid, Dead Elm, Steffen Martin, TRJJ; Titles: HIT.

2. *i need to make mistakes just to learn who i am, 2023*
10 Fine Art Prints on Hahnemühle Torchon, mounted on AluDiBond, framed; 28 mushroom-shaped lamps and wooden sculptures

Many of the prints in this 10-part series uncannily mimic the format and content of family photographs, while others seem to depict company retreats or crowded bacchanalian fêtes spanning from the 1950s to the 2000s. To create these images, Loretta used early versions of AI text-to-image generators. Text-to-image models cannibalize the vast archive of existing visual data on the Internet, using key words to synthesize them into “new” images that can only ever regurgitate existing aesthetics and methods of depiction. It is only a matter of time until text-to-image platforms will simply re-synthesize images that were already created by other AI. The software used

here is therefore representative of the brief moment when image generators had established a uniquely grotesque and perhaps accidentally avant-garde approach to figuration while digesting and interpreting pre-AI human visual culture. The early technology’s limitations and glitches are precisely what allow it to serve as an accidental witness to the vast archive of human image production and the lived history it represents.

In a canny parallel to machine learning algorithms, the variety of mushroom-shaped lamps and wooden sculptures from across decades of interior design that accompany the images embody a type of life that grows from biodegrading organic matter. While responding to the virality of mushroom-related imagery and products circa 2021, the installation also suggests a correlation between mushrooms’ psychedelic properties and the hallucinatory aspect of AI.

Technical production with Jak Ritger
Production with Leonie Nagel and Sarah Rosengarten
Grading: Philipp Ruh, Das Foto

3. *Court Society, 2024*
Pigment prints on paper
4. *Eleonore Fürstin zu Schwarzenburg, 2024*
C-print

This series of photographs focuses on history enthusiasts who recreate the dress, customs, and manners of the aristocratic courts in the German-speaking regions of Europe during the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. Between the 12th and 17th centuries, the courts of the Holy Roman Empire developed a highly refined culture and etiquette characterized by a complex system of manners, rituals, and social hierarchies that governed interactions among nobles, knights, ladies, and their retinues. In the present day, the “Höfische Gesellschaft” (“Courtly Society”) in Berlin—which is specifically inspired by

the Prussian court state under Friedrich the Great—holds meetups at castles, medieval fairs, or dedicated gatherings where participants live out a shared nostalgia for the traditions of chivalry, heraldry, courtly love, feasts, and dancing. These gatherings mix contemporary value systems with the aesthetics of a bygone era to experiment with social circumstances, codes, and hierarchies; an “analogue” performance of history that parallels the way historical imagery is repurposed by current technologies.

Camera and Effects with Abdulmonim Twebti
Production with Sarah Rosengarten
Grading: Philipp Ruh, Das Foto

5. *kbo-Isar-Amper-Clinic, Central Lab, 2015/2024*
6. *kbo-Isar-Amper-Clinic, Clay Therapy, 2015/2024*
7. *kbo-Isar-Amper-Clinic, Sensory Room, 2015/2024*
Print on clear vinyl film

These large-scale vinyl prints were made using industrial 3D point scanning, a technique usually used to map the planes of an empty architectural interior. Loretta repurposes the technology in two ways: first, she captures moving subjects, which the scanner cannot fully register. Second, she retains the 3D dot maps that are used by the architecture software as reference points for measuring relative distances before being discarded.

The depicted spaces are the interiors of a Munich clinic specializing in psychiatry, psychotherapy, psychosomatics, and neurology, including an art therapy room, where patients can engage in creative activities; a sensory room with soft lighting, tactile objects, and soothing sounds and aromas intended to pacify patients with sensory processing issues or severe anxiety; and the lab where pharmaceutical “cures” that chemically act on the body and brain are fabricated. Representing different institutionalized

methods for bringing the deviant subject back to “normal,” these semi-abstract renderings also employ a method that Loretta has elsewhere referred to as “junk photography,” using visual data that would otherwise be deleted. The act of turning clinical spaces into abstractions as perceived by a machine mimics the way affects and somatic experience are translated into data for the purpose of monetization.

At the same time, the vinyl images refer to 20th century European painting and the history of abstraction in Western art, particularly with such formal languages as Pointillism and Cubism, albeit in this case resulting from, rather than stylistically echoing, the use of technologized “vision.”

Technical production with Rebecca Johnson

Special thanks to Mago Marquard

8. *Champagne Galop, 2024*
Plastic boxes, water, food dye, artificial fruit, and imitation luxury goods

Loretta’s newest series of found-object assemblages are composed from inexpensive plastic storage boxes filled with dyed water and adorned with replica jewelry and fake food. While the prior are cheap imitations of expensive luxury items, the latter are meticulously crafted and elaborately produced lookalikes of inexpensive produce. *Champagne Galop* demonstrates how artifice can be deployed to scramble, or even reverse, traditional value hierarchies.

The series references the Western art historical mode of the still life painting, a form that has been employed across centuries to show off the painter’s skill in rendering naturalistic textures and light effects, to demonstrate the wealth and cosmopolitanism of its patrons by including exotic fruit and vegetables, or to symbolize the fleeting nature of

mortality through carefully chosen objects, among other aims. Revisiting this painterly symbology via the mediation of mass-produced Internet consumerism, *Champagne Galop* points to the desire for a class status beyond one's reach, questioning the limitations of substituting authenticity with aesthetic verisimilitude: as realistic as a fake piece of fruit may appear, you still can't eat it.

Loretta Fahrenholz is a filmmaker and visual artist based in Berlin. Fahrenholz's work has been shown internationally, including solo exhibitions at Bergen Kunsthall (2023); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2022); n.b.k.–Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (2021); mumok–Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna (2018); Fridericianum, Kassel (2016); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016), and Kunsthalle Zürich (2015), as well as film screenings at CPH:DOX, Copenhagen (2024), Ann Arbor Film Festival (2019, 2020, 2021), and Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen (2014, 2020), among others.

All works courtesy of the artist; Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York; and Reena Paulings, New York/Los Angeles.

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GALLERIES

Thursday–Sunday

12pm–6pm

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