

Becky Beasley

H. S. P. (or Promising Mid-Career Woman)

Opening 27 November, 12 – 19 h

November 27, 2021 – February 5, 2022

Tuesday – Saturday, 12 – 18 h

Potsdamer Strasse 77-87, 10785 Berlin

For the German translation and the collaborative text written by Becky Beasley and Anna Gritz to accompany the exhibition, please scroll down.

Galeria Plan B is pleased to announce the second solo exhibition of Becky Beasley with the gallery.

H. S. P. (or Promising Mid-Career Woman) is a coming-out exhibition by mid-career British artist Becky Beasley. *H. S. P.* expresses the joys and complexities of an entirely autistic life understood only in retrospect. Through the sensitivities of photographic, ceramic, and linen surfaces, the three centrepieces of *H. S. P.* are installations through which the paradoxes of the human need for intimacy manifest in alternatives that have become Beasley's trademark minimal approach to art making. How to live, how to speak, how to be together, how to be alone.

H. S. P. – an acronym for Highly Sensitive Person¹ – is a lyric to sensitive surfaces and to the highly individual process of being a person in the world. The insistence of individual presence is expressed in the reverse printed negative – often present in Beasley's practice, – but here expressed repeatedly, insistently across the exhibition. *BACK!*, she insists. *BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK!*

The reprise of Beasley's last show at Galeria Plan B, '*Depressive Alcoholic Mother*' (2018), in the form of the linoleum floor-work, *Highly Sensitive Person*, is an intentional déjà vu. The slight disorientation therein offers a tangible, uncanny experience of her own experience of late-diagnosis autism in the winter of 2020. Her personal research over the last two years led her deep into the fields of international medical negligence in female and hormonal healthcare and the ongoing misdiagnoses of atypical neurology.

Undiagnosed progesterone intolerance and masked autism. Words are so clean. How do the societal effects of this manifest individually? Debilitating depression, serial burnout, exhaustion, stigmatization, bullying, gas lighting, social death – not being experienced by others as a person – social exclusion and bewilderment². Being endlessly bewildered by others is terrifying. To be bewildered is, etymologically and experientially, to be sent into a wild place without road map. It is to be astray in oneself. Beasley describes her late autism diagnosis as '*possibly one of the strangest of happy endings*' – *not exactly happy and certainly no end.*'

One possible response to, '*Back!*', is, '*From where?*' A pair of small gelatin silver-prints of a striped shirt hang tenderly, *back to back* within the two spaces created by an 'H' shaped curtain structure. A 25-year-old, un-exhibited photograph, *Me as Andy* (1996), made by Beasley at the age of 20, shows her made up, wearing a wig, looking directly at the camera. A photograph of a 1930's ceramic Ilford photographic film processing tank hangs alongside *Me as Andy*, within the intimacy of curved spaces of an 'S' shaped curtain structure. The photographic series, '*BACK!*' is formed of seven life-sized photographs of a German-branded glossy black paint pot – used to paint her early sculptures for photographs made in Berlin in the early 2000's – each of which has been toned a muted colour, creating a uniquely personalized pastel 'rainbow' which circles the walls of the gallery's main room. Beasley's 'over the rainbow' palette comes not from Disney, but from an inter-war watercolour by British artist, Eric Ravilious's, '*The Bedstead*'

¹The *Highly Sensitive Person* by Elaine N. Aron first published in 1996

² For similar, incredible accounts of late-diagnosis autism in those who identify as female, listen to *The Squarepeg Podcast*: <https://squarepeg.community/podcast/>

(1939). *Back*, she insists, is *here*, in all our returns, and the exhibition a celebration of diverse collective recoveries.

Beasley took up ceramics in 2019. Fascinated by the direct malleability of its form in relation to the imaginary and its potential for surface chemistry application – akin in ways to the chemistries of the photographic surface – *H. S. P.* includes her ceramic artwork for the first time in exhibition in the form of small assemblages of books and ceramics. Books – novels, mainly, often in abstracted, ergonomic forms – have been central to Beasley's practice and here they appear as themselves, as a set of influences, whimsical guides and supports.

'Yes, please cut up the pieces for me,' he said, 'but don't chew them.'

The Notebooks of Joseph Joubert, 1797

The installation of four low, tabular sculptures, *Me & You (1975-2021)*, in the final room of the gallery, were conceived in connection to a print edition by Christopher Williams for Koenig Books, which Beasley bought in 2018. At nearly two metres wide, the print was always going to be too big for her small home and she spent time imagining cutting it into pieces that would *fit* better. Of her decision to cut the print into four equal parts and incorporate them into sculptures, Beasley has written:

I like it best like this, not mine, in four pieces, inside a table, under my small sculptures, in a room, with other people around it, people I don't know. This is ideal now.

The ceramic and photographic assemblages which sit under glass atop each of the table structures were created over time as a result of overhearing a yoga instructor refer to 'the back of the heart'. For Beasley, this is an image which continues to fascinate her imagination.

Finally, in response to Beasley's polite communication to Christopher Williams' gallery regarding her intention to cut and exhibit his print edition, Williams responded generously by also sending her another print, a poster this time. The work, *'Me & You 1975-2021'*, is her response to this gift, engaged through a series of light, yet decisive gestures: she rotated the poster 180 degrees, erased all the text content with a black marker pen, and framed the print in a rosewood frame under pale green glazing. The work is hung on the third, 'P' shaped, curtain structure.

A collaborative text written by Becky Beasley and Anna Gritz to accompany the exhibition will be available from the gallery.

Special thanks from the artist to Christopher Williams.

Becky Beasley (b. 1975, UK) is a mid-career artist who has participated in numerous international exhibitions, among them 80WSE Gallery (NYU), New York; Towner Gallery, Eastbourne; South London Gallery, London; Leeds City Gallery, Leeds; Spike Island, Bristol; Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, London; Tate Britain, London; Stanley Picker Gallery, London; Whitworth, Manchester; Bluecoat, Liverpool; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Kunstverein Freiburg; Kunstverein Munich; Kunsthalle Bern. She received a Paul Hamlyn Award in 2018.

For more information, please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro and +49.30.39805236.

German translation:

Galeria Plan B freut sich, die zweite Einzelausstellung von Becky Beasley ankündigen zu dürfen.

H. S. P. (or Promising Mid-Career Woman) ist die Coming-out-Ausstellung der in der Mitte ihrer Karriere angekommenen britischen Künstlerin Becky Beasley. In *H. S. P.* kommen die Freuden und die Komplexität eines gänzlich autistischen Lebens zum Ausdruck, das nur in Retrospektive verständlich ist. Dank der Sensitivität fotografischer Oberflächen, aber auch jener von Keramik und Leinen, manifestieren sich in den drei zentralen Werken von *H. S. P.* die Paradoxien des menschlichen Bedürfnisses nach Intimität – und zwar in Form von Beasleys typischem minimalistischem künstlerischem Zugang. Wie soll man leben, wie sprechen, wie zusammen sein, wie alleine?

H. S. P. – ein Akronym für „Highly Sensitive Person“^[1] – ist eine Lyrik über sensible Oberflächen und den hochgradig individuellen Vorgang, ein Individuum in der Welt zu sein. Die Beharrlichkeit der individuellen Präsenz kommt im invertiert gedruckten Negativ zum Ausdruck, das in Beasleys Praxis des Öfteren eine Rolle spielt. In dieser Ausstellung taucht es wiederholt und nachdrücklich, an mehreren Stellen auf. *BACK!* [dt.: *ZURÜCK!*], insistiert sie. *BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK!*

Die Linoleum-Arbeit *Highly Sensitive Person* ist als Reprise von Beasleys letzter Ausstellung in der Galeria Plan B mit dem Titel *Depressive Alcoholic Mother* (2018) als Déjà-vu-Erlebnis angelegt. Die leichte Desorientierung und die vorübergehende, besinnungslose Verwirrung, welche diese Arbeit auslöst, ist eine handfeste, unheimliche Erfahrung dessen, was sie selbst erfahren hat, als bei ihr sehr spät, als Erwachsene, im Winter 2020 Autismus diagnostiziert wurde. Ihre persönliche Recherche führte sie tief hinein in das Feld der international zu beobachtenden Vernachlässigung der weiblichen und hormonellen Gesundheitspflege und zu den fortlaufenden Fehldiagnosen neurologischer Auffälligkeiten.

Nicht-diagnostizierte Progesteron-Intoleranz und versteckter Autismus. Worte sind so rein. Was sind die manifesten Symptome? Jahrzehnte zehrender Depressionen, serielle Burn-outs, tägliche krankhafte Erschöpfung, Isolation, erbarmungslose Stigmatisierung, Mobbing, Gaslighting, sozialer Tod – von anderen nicht als Person wahrgenommen werden, soziale Ausgrenzung und Verunsicherung.^[2] Von Anderen unaufhörlich irregeleitet zu werden, ist furchterregend. In die Irre geführt zu werden bedeutet etymologisch und erfahrungsgemäß, in die Wildnis geschickt zu werden, ohne eine Landkarte bei sich zu haben. Es bedeutet, in sich selbst verloren zu gehen. Beasley beschreibt ihre späte Autismus-Diagnose als „wahrscheinlich eines der seltsamsten Happy-Ends – nur es ist nicht wirklich ‚happy‘, und ganz bestimmt ist damit nichts zu Ende.“^[3]

Beasley beschäftigt sich seit 2019 mit der Töpferkunst. Sie ist fasziniert von der direkten Formbarkeit des Materials im Verhältnis zum Imaginären und von der Möglichkeit, die Oberfläche chemisch zu bearbeiten – darin besteht eine Ähnlichkeit zur fotografischen Oberfläche. Im Rahmen von *H. S. P.* zeigt sie ihre Keramiken zum ersten Mal. Zu sehen sind kleine Assemblagen aus Büchern und Keramik. Bücher – vor allem Romane, oft in eine abstrahierte, ergonomische Form gebracht – sind von großer Bedeutung für Beasleys Praxis, und hier tauchen sie lebhaftig auf, als ein Set von Einflüssen, skurrilen Ratgebern und Stützen.

Eine mögliche Antwort auf „Back!“ [dt.: Zurück!] lautet „Von Wo?“. Die 25 Jahre alte, noch nie zuvor gezeigte Fotografie *Me as Andy* (1996), die Beasley im Alter von 20 Jahren aufgenommen hat, zeigt sie geschminkt, eine Perücke tragend, direkt in die Kamera blickend. Eine Fotografie von einer Ilford-Entwicklerdose aus Keramik aus den 1930er Jahren hängt Rücken an Rücken mit *Me as Andy*. Die Fotoserie *BACK!* besteht aus sieben lebensgroßen Bildern eines Eimers glänzender schwarzer Farbe,

deren Etikett besagt, dass sie in Deutschland produziert wurde. Beasley hatte damit ihre frühen Skulpturen angemalt, die ihr zur Anfertigung von Fotografien dienten, die Anfang der 2000er Jahre in Berlin entstanden. Jedes dieser Bilder wurde mit gedämpften Farben getönt, was einen eigentümlichen, pastellfarbigen „Regenbogen“ ergibt, der sich über die lange Wand des Hauptraums der Galerie erstreckt. Beasleys „over the rainbow“-Palette stammt nicht von Disney, sondern von einem Aquarell des britischen Künstlers Eric Ravilious mit dem Titel *The Bedstead*, das in der Zwischenkriegszeit entstand.

„Ja, bitte schneide Stücke für mich“, sagte er, „aber kaue sie nicht.“^[4]

The Notebooks of Joseph Joubert, 1797

Die Installation *Me & You (1975–2021)*, bestehend aus vier niedrigen, tafelförmigen Skulpturen, findet sich im hintersten Raum der Galerie. Die Skulpturen wurden auf Grundlage von Drucken konzipiert, die Christopher Williams für Koenig Books im Jahr 2018 entworfen hat. Als Beasley erfuhr, dass ihr der Paul Hamlyn Artists' Award verliehen werden würde,^[5] machte sie sich zur Feier des Tages ein Exemplar selbst zum Geschenk. Der beinahe zwei Meter breite Druck war fast zu groß für ihr kleines Heim. Sie phantasierte darüber, ihn in Stücke zu schneiden, die besser reinpassen würden. Über ihre Entscheidung, den Druck in vier gleich große Teile zu zerlegen und diese in Skulpturen einzuarbeiten, schrieb Beasley:

„Ich mag es so am liebsten, nicht meines, in vier Stücken, in einem Tisch, unter meinen kleinen Skulpturen, in einem Raum, rundherum andere Leute, Leute, die ich nicht kenne. So ist es jetzt ideal.“^[6]

Die keramischen und fotografischen Assemblagen, die unter einer Glasscheibe und jeweils auf der tragenden Struktur der besagten Tische ruhen, entstanden im Laufe der Zeit, nachdem Beasley zufällig gehört hatte, wie sich eine Yogalehrerin auf die „Rückseite des Herzens“ bezogen hatte. Das war für sie ein überraschendes Bild, das ihr noch nie zuvor in den Sinn gekommen war und das sie nach wie vor fasziniert.

Und schließlich, in Reaktion auf Beasleys höflichen Austausch mit der Galerie von Christopher Williams bezüglich ihres Vorhabens, seinen Druck zu zerschneiden und auszustellen, schickte ihr Williams großzügigerweise einen weiteren Druck, dieses Mal ein Poster. Beasleys Arbeit *FRONT!* ist ihre Antwort auf dieses Geschenk. Sie ist das Ergebnis einer Reihe maßgeblicher Entscheidungen: Sie hat das Poster um 180 Grad gedreht, hat sämtlichen Text mit einem schwarzen Marker übermalt und den Druck in einen Palisanderholzrahmen mit fahlem grünem Acrylglas gesteckt.

Becky Beasley und Anna Gritz haben gemeinsam einen Begleittext zur Ausstellung verfasst, der in der Galerie erhältlich sein wird.

Ein besonderer Dank geht an Christopher Williams.

Becky Beasley (*1975 in GB) ist eine Künstlerin, die sich in der Mitte ihrer Karriere befindet. Sie war an zahlreichen internationalen Ausstellungen beteiligt, die unter anderem in der 80WSE Gallery (NYU) (New York), in der Towner Gallery (Eastbourne), der South London Gallery (London), der Leeds City Gallery (Leeds), im Spike Island (Bristol), im Serpentine Gallery Pavilion (London), in der Tate Britain (London), der Stanley Picker Gallery (London), bei Whitworth (Manchester) und Bluecoat (Liverpool), in der Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool), der Whitechapel Gallery (London), in den Kunstvereinen Freiburg und München sowie in der Kunsthalle Berlin zu sehen waren. 2018 wurde ihr der Paul Hamlyn Award verliehen.

Weitere Informationen erhalten Sie unter contact@plan-b.ro und +49/30/39805236.

^[1] Elaine N. Aron, *The Highly Sensitive Person*, New York, 1996.

^[2] Dutzende ähnliche, unglaubliche Fälle von spät diagnostiziertem Autismus bei Menschen, die sich als weiblich identifizieren, siehe *The Squarepeg Podcast* (<https://squarepeg.community/podcast/>).

^[3] Übersetzung aus dem Englischen: Good and Cheap Art Translators.

^[4] Übersetzung aus dem Englischen: Good and Cheap Art Translators.

^[5] <https://www.phf.org.uk/artist/becky-beasley/>

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What person? I need an outline.

Some years ago, someone came up to me at an opening and said that they had thought I was a man, by my work. I didn't know what they meant, but I liked that there was some confusion. Hello, person. As a child they called me sweet, shy, creative, smart, sensitive, too sensitive, a tomboy sometimes, a smarty-pants, a know-it-all. They said I'd need to toughen up, to thicken up my skin, not to take things so personally, to relax, to cheer up, to pray, to meditate, to take more drugs, to drink less, to be more grateful, to speak up, to shut up. As a teen and in my twenties, they said I was an odd ball, a bit weird, unusual. I was also called unstable, needy, obsessive, demanding, intense, scheming, a monster, a witch. I learnt about the terms weathering, tone policing and gas lighting in 2020 when I was studying structural racism so I could be a better person. Oh, I thought, that's what that is.

The severity of some consequences can take us by surprise, as Rita Valencia's protagonist learns the hard way in her short story, *"Indecency"* (1992). She knew right away that something irreversible had occurred when she accidentally uses the word "bag" in place of the word "back," an error that she calls "a leak of rotten soul juice," a carelessness that condemns her to live her slip of the tongue. "Bag—back—back—bag. It was impossible to escape the unbearable significance of the transposition. My back would henceforth be a bag." A hollow container, with no shape of its own, but easily malleable by the contours of its load. A back bag cluttered by the disarray that is caused by the lack of a spine. Left with a weak, thin, malleable, leaking receptacle in place of what had provided her with strength and support – burden had become her backbone.¹

You can't cut that, it's not yours. It is mine. I bought it. Who made it? Christopher Williams. Why do you want to cut it up? It's too big. I couldn't afford to frame it in one piece. Then I couldn't afford to frame it in four pieces. Now it is part of the show. I like it best like this, not mine, in four pieces, inside a table, under my small sculptures, in a room, with other people around it, people I don't know. This is ideal now.

Wanda the wanderer. She is often lost in the frame, hard to keep track of, not the personality, not the material that can easily be captured by the frame or hold the attention of the lens. We tend to find her only after the shot has been established, almost part of the backdrop, the context. A woman drifting, abandoning her parental and marital duties, and doing so is no longer legible to society. Doomed to become an outlaw, living aside from society, not transparent, but described by negative space, handing herself over to the will of others.²

What did we need, to be called needy? What did we ask for, to be called demanding? What did we know, to be called witches? What was so enormous in us, to be called monstrous? How do we fall so fast? How is there no credit? I tried to not ask too many questions. What did you do to this sweet, shy, kind, sensitive child? You told her to drink like a lad and fuck like a man, to have no needs and to make no demands. So, she complied. When she died in pain of breast cancer at 48, she was crying, "Shit, shit, shit."³

Her limited grasp on the space that shapes Wanda's surrounding becomes a physical challenge that leaves her consistently threatened to escape the margins of the frame and the camera makes a show of the struggle to keep her in view. How do we establish ourselves against the background or alongside it?

¹ Valencia, Rita: "Indecency," in Helter Skelter: *L.A. Art in the 1990s*, Catherine Gudis, ed. (Los Angeles, CA: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), p. 153.

² Wanda, Barbara Lodon (1970) film; see also Anna Backman Rogers, *Still Life: Notes on Barbara Loden's "Wanda" (1970)*, Punctum Books (Imprint: Dead Letter Office), 2021

³ Kazan, Elia, *A Life*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1988, pp793

As Piper recollected in an interview with Lucy Lippard, *"Initially, it was really hard to look people in the eye. I simply couldn't overcome the sense that if I was going to keep my own composure and maintain my own identity, it was just impossible. I would have to pretend that they weren't there, even though I needed them. Then something really weird happened; it doesn't happen all the time. Something I really like. It is almost as if I manage to make contact in spite of how I look, in spite of what I'm doing."*

I have always been quite quirky, queer, quer is the Germanic root. I am odd, oblique, off-centre. As I said, quirky. It turns out - could you even believe it? - I am actually autistic. Oh, and progesterone intolerant.

A Slight Nausea is what you called it. I thought I knew what you meant back then, identified that sensation as an internal...well, a physical reaction to a space, the authority of a construct in which to work, with which to work, while not being able to play according to the rules. Rules that appear to stem from another game. Yet it was so much more. It was Mollino, it was you. When you told me about your plan you quote Joseph Joubert's diaries, *"When?, you say. I answer: When I Have Circumscribed My Sphere."* Quer. Neither vertical, nor horizontal, both aerial and panoramic. Demanding two perspectives to be inhabited simultaneously, maybe also two biographies.

On the opening night of *Opening Night* in 1977, Gena Rowlands went mad with joy. They said, *What a performance! Look at her. She's crazy.* She thought, *'Yes, you're all right. I have known joy and we are all of this. Everything is so tender now'*. She smiled and said, *'Thank you all for coming. We are all so sensitive, aren't we'*.

Christopher Williams just replied to my letter. He's into it and wants to send me a different print so I don't have to cut mine up. It's not the print from the edition. It's another image. I had already cut mine by the time he replied. My gallerist texted me to let me know. Did you cut yours already? she wrote. Yes, I replied, I cut mine already.

Film director, Barbara Lodon came across Alma Malone's story in a newspaper article that described her as an accomplice to a bank robbery, who upon sentencing thanked the judge for sending her away for 20 years. In his autobiography Elia Kazan reported that Lodon died in a lot of pain - from breast cancer at the age of 48 - crying "shit, shit, shit!"⁴

I did my best for the art labour pay movement and asked several times during 'negotiations' for a five grand fee but he kept saying, *'No, Becky, you can maybe have four.'* So, in the end I said, *'Thank you.'*

Chantal Akerman, *La Chambre* (1970): A loop, once around the room, she is lying in her bed looking at the camera, the act of filming becomes the act of holding the gaze while resting. Lazy artist, lazy woman. *Portrait d'une Paresseuse* (1986), the portrait of a lazy woman. Again, the artist is in bed. "I'll get up in a minute" she lets us know. "Get up, lazy one. Get up, get dressed." The time is both 12:12 and 5 pm. "I will have a cigarette, then I will make the bed." Or not.

When I entered the room, I felt dizzy, disoriented, nauseous, already exhausted. Then someone asked me a question and I thought, *I'm going to collapse.* I smiled and said *'Yes, thank you. Of course, that's fine.'*

Yesterday, G. and I played this game where you lay down on a large piece of paper and draw around the outer border of the other's body. We then hung G.'s lumpy and empty body outline up on the wall to fill it in with markers. The silhouette reminded me of how I felt

⁴ Ibid.

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H. S. P. is a lyric to sensitive surfaces and to the highly individual process of being a person in the world. The insistence of being is expressed in the repetitively reverse-printed negative - something often previously present in Beasley's practice - but here expressed clearly and insistently across the exhibition. BACK!, she insists. BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK! BACK!

Becky Beasley (b. 1975, UK) is a mid-career artist who has participated in numerous international exhibitions, among them 80WSE Gallery (NYU), New York; Townner Gallery, Eastbourne; South London Gallery, London; Leeds City Gallery, Leeds; Spike Island, Bristol; Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, London; Tate Britain, London; Stanley Picker Gallery, London; Whitworth, Manchester; Bluecoat, Liverpool; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Kunstverein Freiburg; Kunstverein Munich; Kunsthalle Bern. She received a Paul Hamlyn Award in 2018.

Anna Gritz is a curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, where she has realized solo exhibitions by Judith Hopf, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Steve Bishop, Amelie von Wulffen, and Michael Stevenson, as well as group exhibitions including *The Making of Husbands: Christina Ramberg in Dialogue and Zeros and Ones* (co-curated with Kathrin Bentele and Ghislaine Leung). Previously she held curatorial positions at the South London Gallery (SLG), the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) and the Hayward Gallery, both in London. Gritz writes for catalogues and regularly contributes to art publications. She served as a curatorial attaché for the 20th Biennale of Sydney in 2016, and since 2019, she has been a member of the acquisitions committee at the FRAC Lorraine in Metz.

Becky Beasley

H. S. P.

(or Promising Mid-Career Woman)

Opening 27 November, 12 – 19 h

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