

Gimme Shelter. Give me protection. Give me refuge.

In the song by the Rolling Stones, from which the exhibition borrows its title, one hears lines such as “*a storm is threatening my very life today*” and “*war is just a shot away*” .

Lines written in 1969 which, sadly, could scarcely be more current in an era where values and securities once believed to be stable and fundamentally liberal seem to be eroding relentlessly — and at an almost numbing pace — or are being deliberately brought crashing down.

And yet, there remain voices seeking to placate:

„After all, nothing is ever eaten as hot as it is cooked.“

„Moreover, one should not underestimate the resilience of human beings and of liberal societies.“

Personally — and like many others — I confess to being more pessimistic, insofar as the present developments, when coupled with the near-imperial power of influence wielded by new technologies, are capable of unfolding an entirely new dimension.

Above all ideologically, in the service of the so-called “neo-reactionary movements” and their programmatically archaic, anti-enlightenment, anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian, anti-liberal, anti-scientific, anti-cultural, and anti-artistic, indeed neo-feudal agenda. An agenda they are also enacting - unabashedly, and in a manner that is almost exemplary. A current glance at the United States suffices to illustrate this.

The hope that, in the midst of this constellation, we today should be less fearful or more resistant than in earlier times suggests itself — to put it euphemistically — only hesitantly.

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Equally current, inevitably, is the cry, the wish, the need for a retreat, for safety, for demarcation, for resistance.

And scarcely anything has ever offered a comparable shelter of retreat, of resilience, and simultaneously of resistance as has the resilience of artistic practice and artistic expression.

This applies, in principle, to every serious artistic position that does not merely imitate the outward signs of the artistic or symbolize themes superficially.

What particularly distinguishes the artists exhibited here is that in their works they unite two aspects of central relevance to us with regard to the theme — and possibility — of a shelter:

+ On the one hand, self-evidently, by engaging formally with the ciphers of dwelling and of space, by playing with them, reducing them, or further developing them.

+ On the other — and in keeping with *sehsaal*'s annual theme of “Repetition” — by making use of repetitive artistic processes of creation, and thus generating intimate structures through which they create safe and sheltered spaces for themselves and for us, transforming the *sehsaal* itself into a temporary shelter.

And this, with wholly different artistic approaches, media, and levels of meaning.

In this sense, we should like to briefly illuminate the individual positions from our curatorial perspective.

Jürgen Bauer has for years engaged with the geometry of the urban and of architecture, with his focus resting on the simple form of a gabled house. This form, composed of four whole and two half squares, is combined and juxtaposed in seemingly infinite variations and repetitions — painterly, in drawing, in printmaking, or in sculpture.

The house, as a repetitive outline, becomes, not least, a symbol of the origin of a place of retreat, one that nevertheless remains permeable and — as here — through the addition of a ladder, provides something akin to a lookout post toward the outside world.

Katharina Fink is concerned with countering constant sensory overload through simplicity and concentrated repetition, and in this way creating for herself a refuge of reduction and of utmost deceleration. In her formal path of extending drawing into space, she generates through sheer mass — her work-in-progress currently stands at 6,000 black-painted wooden rods — a kind of aura of the possibility of refuge, a scenario of preparedness.

The artistic oeuvre of **Thomas Laubenberg-Pletzer** encompasses drawing in its manifold limitations. He works exclusively with A4 paper, a black fineliner, and the line as a primal, minimal, and immediate artistic means of expression, which on the white ground creates space and, conversely, lends space to the white of the drawing surface itself.

Through the consistency of his exploration of geometric possibilities, structures, and their logically resulting variations, he generates grids, letters, and enigmatic plan-drawings that fuse the formal and the working process into spaces and retreats.

Lisa Reiter conceives space in her artistic practice as something shaped by human interaction, while simultaneously influencing interaction in return.

In the present case, her works take up the form, function, and rhythm of window grilles, fences, or fence gates, addressing them as seemingly permeable boundaries between public and private space.

She regards the grille not merely as a geometrical arrangement repeating in its formal structure, but above all in its psychologically motivated and consequently artisanal repetition — as a symbol of possession, control, and the desire to protect something — or oneself.

Mutual interaction also lies at the center of **Käthe Hager von Strobele's** work — here, however, between nature and architecture.

She understands both as structures of “standardized difference” or of “standardized individuality.”

While plants, though subject to a biological program, nevertheless produce unique individuals, dwellings follow certain fundamental constructive principles, yet also express individual ways of life and personal imprints. In her works she interlaces the two realms, which otherwise often stand in tension between nature and culture. Time and again, she inscribes or folds house forms into leaves, photographing them against black backgrounds in the style of botanical reference works. Conversely, their ongoing staging evokes associations of houses and raises the question of how many architectural retreats are necessary, or permissible, in order to unfold our individual naturalness.

Daniel Amin Zaman, September 2025