

Michael Sailstorfer  
01.03–13.04.2024

# Elektron

# st. r. o

# sex

**TACK**

## TICK TACK

### Information

TICK TACK (2019) is a new destination for contemporary art in Antwerp. TICK TACK produces, presents and promotes international exhibitions and video art screenings, complemented with publications and an extensive digital archive.

Housed in the brutalist complex 'De Zonnewijzer', a 1955 key work by architect Léon Stynen, TICK TACK occupies a historic duplex at a vivid city intersection, facing the tram stop and landscape park 'De Harmonie'. The 5-meter-high window functions as an interface between artists and audience and between private and public space.

The TICK TACK program is dual. By day, TICK TACK presents exhibitions, at sunset, the window transforms into a projection screen under the name CINEMA TICK TACK, a new and exclusive platform that brings video and digital art to the public space. Reaching numerous of daily passersby and commuters, CTT serves as a channel, stimulating a connection in its urban setting.

As a result, both day and night, TICK TACK constantly challenges the physical and mental boundaries between inside and out.





**ELEKTROSEX**

TICK TACK proudly presents *ELEKTROSEX*, a radical industrial installation by the celebrated German artist Michael Sailstorfer. The exhibition marks the artist's first solo presentation in Belgium since his retrospective exhibition at the S.M.A.K. Ghent in 2011.

*ELEKTROSEX* reveals an unconventional and daring landscape that, through light, sound and smell, highlights the artist's poetic and witty approach to everyday and industrial materials. Sailstorfer's sculptural practice draws upon the kinetic, minimalist and pop traditions of the 1960s and 70s. He activates these influences by using contemporary objects, de-contextualizing and re-configuring them to trigger subtle yet transformative shifts in meaning.

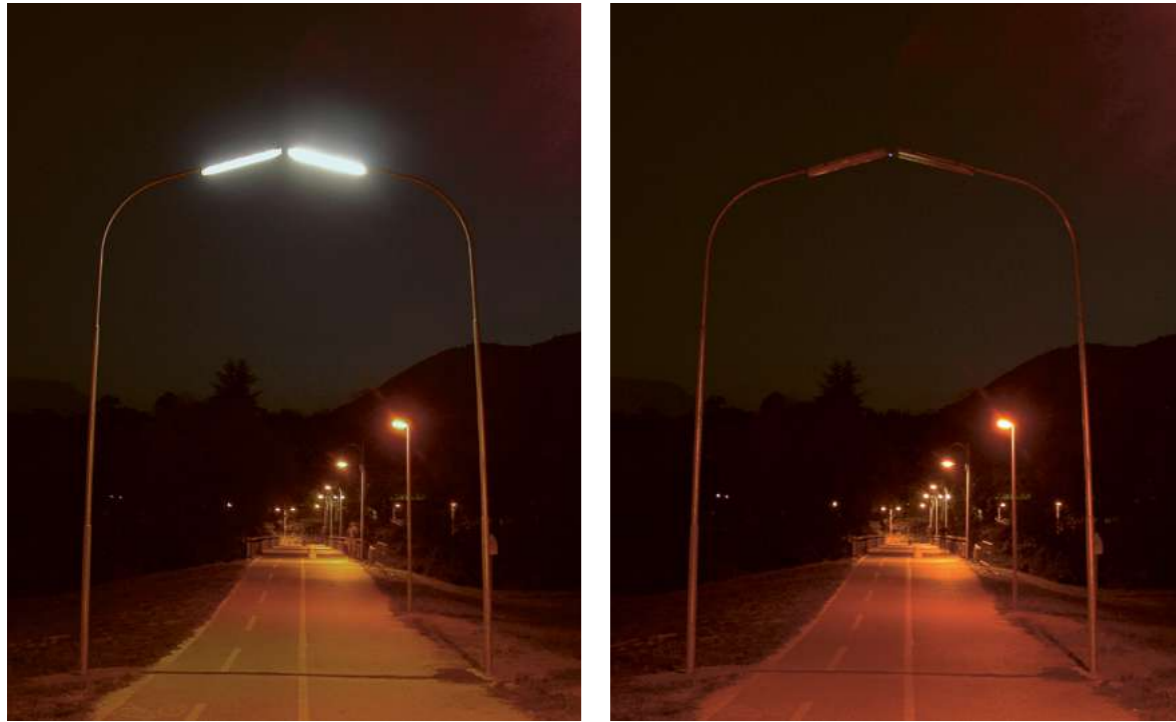
*ELEKTROSEX* is at once solemn and darkly humorous, presenting works infused with a captivating and, at times, erotic tension that alludes to ideas of both destruction and transformation. The bold architectural integration merges various levels of TICK TACK's brutalist exhibition space, challenging the viewer's perception of orientation and scale.

The pounding sound of metal colliding with concrete, electric sparks dancing through the air, and the scent of burning rubber invite contemplation on our relationship with the environment, its resources, and the overlooked poetic beauty within. Pacemakers beware!

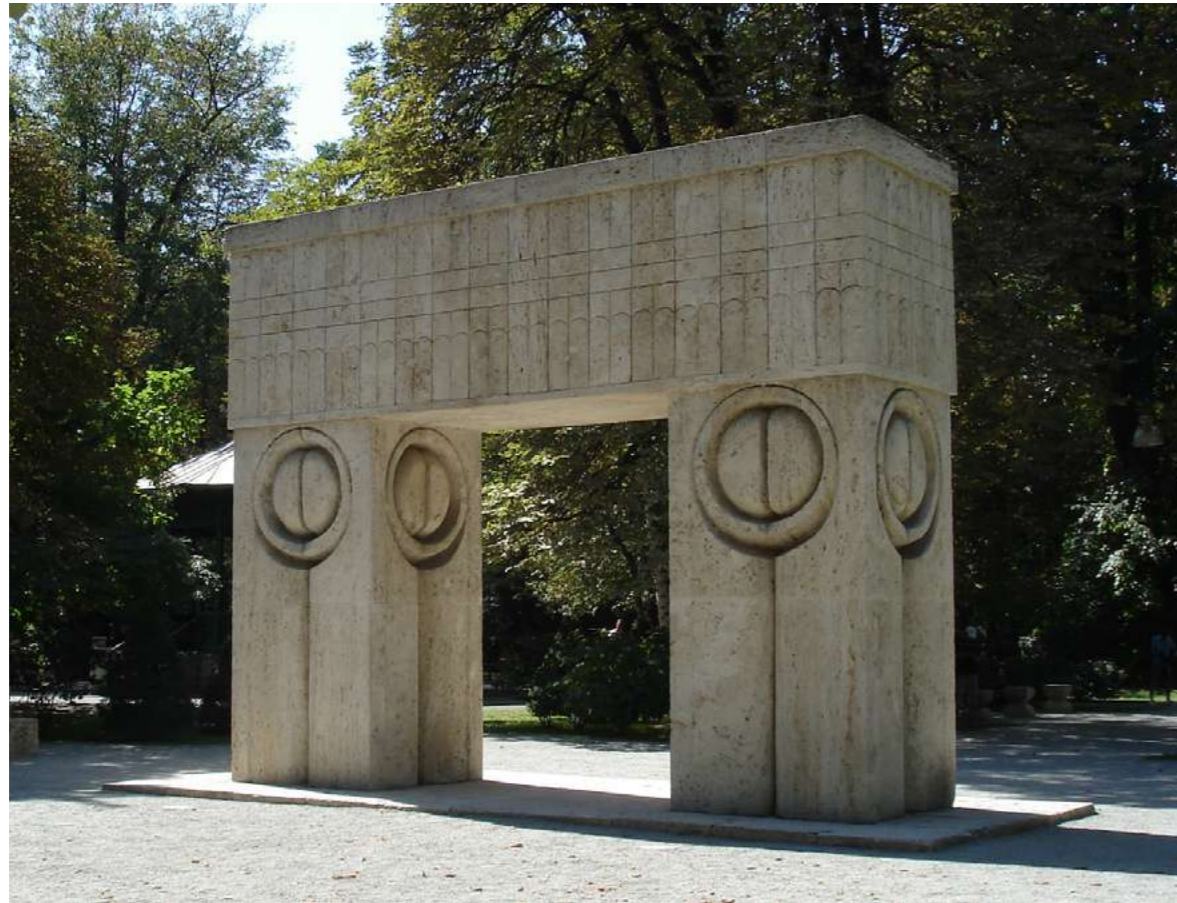
Michael Sailstorfer (1979, DE) lives and works in Berlin. He holds an MA in Fine Arts from Goldsmiths, University of London. He garnered global recognition with exhibitions at prestigious institutions like Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Koenigmuseum and Bundeskunsthalle in Germany, Riga Biennale in Latvia, S.M.A.K. in Ghent, Swiss Institute in New York and Sharjah Biennial 8 in the UAE.

His works are included in esteemed public collections such as Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Fondazione Morra Greco in Naples, MUSEION in Bolzano, Sammlung Boros and Sammlung Goetz in Germany, Vanhaerents Art Collection in Brussels, Belgium, Städel Museum in Frankfurt and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

← *Zeit ist keine Autobahn*  
Stuttgart  
2020  
Tire, iron, electronic engine,  
electric current  
80 × 95 × 65 cm



*Elektrosex*  
2005  
Street lamps, electric components  
700 × 520 × 25 cm



Constantin Brâncuși  
*The Gate Of The Kiss*  
1938  
Stone  
527 × 658 cm

## Interview

**TICK TACK** Tell us something about the starting point of the exhibition.

**Michael Sailstorfer** The starting point of the exhibition was actually a visit by the TICK TACK team at my studio in Berlin about a year ago. That's when we started the conversation about the show. A little bit later we got floor plans, photos of the space and I started to play with different ideas and concepts.

I think we had a selection of four or five possible variants of the show and, of course, ELEKTROSEX was one of them and we went specifically for it.

**TT** Can you describe the various segments of the show?

**MS** ELEKTROSEX is a show in three parts with three sculptures: the main one, *Elektrosex* itself; second one is a wheel *Zeit ist keine Autobahn* - a car tire powered by an electric engine hanging above the entrance door and doing constant burnouts on the wall. And the third piece, shown in the basement of TICK TACK, is called *Berlin Depression*, a video of an iron cloud which is thrown from a crane onto the concrete floor in front of my studio in Berlin, slowly destroying it. I think the show doesn't work without the special brutalist TICK TACK space: ELEKTROSEX is really specifically made for this site, interacts and complements it in all possible ways.

**TT** What experience can visitors expect when visiting ELEKTROSEX?

**MS** I think one can expect a lot of different experiences: when you enter the space you are welcomed by the noise of all three exhibition pieces. Obviously, the *Berlin Depression* video, has the most off-putting impact, it's like a thunder trapped in the basement and gives the whole space a sound ambiance from somewhere beneath the ground. Then you also have the smell of the burnt rubber from the scraping tire of *Zeit ist keine*

*Autobahn*. Definitely the strongest physical experience comes from *Elektrosex*, which is in a way framing and filling the entire TICK TACK space.

**TT** Could you share the story behind each piece in the show?

**MS** I would say this show is very easy to interact with, all the pieces are evoking certain universal feelings. The sculptures can be read from an emotional perspective but also from an ecological point of view as they deal with resource depletion and the destruction of our surroundings.

The video *Berlin Depression* for sure has a psychological aspect to it, heavy and dark like a Berlin winter, it hits you to the core. *Elektrosex* has this emotional aspect, a metaphor for two people getting together, maybe even kissing each other. Of course, it also references Constantin Brâncuși's *The Gate Of The Kiss*.

The concept of *Zeit ist keine Autobahn* came to me during my residency in LA: it's a metaphorical description of life itself, time that passes unnoticed while we are, for example, stuck in traffic and things are just not pushing forward. I also made a new edition for TICK TACK called *DNA*: nine unique works (50 × 40 cm) made from car tire prints on canvas. The structure of the tire profile looks like a DNA helix and I marked a pattern on each piece with acrylic paint in a different color. In a way, car tires interacting with the biological side of it all can be seen as the DNA of ELEKTROSEX.

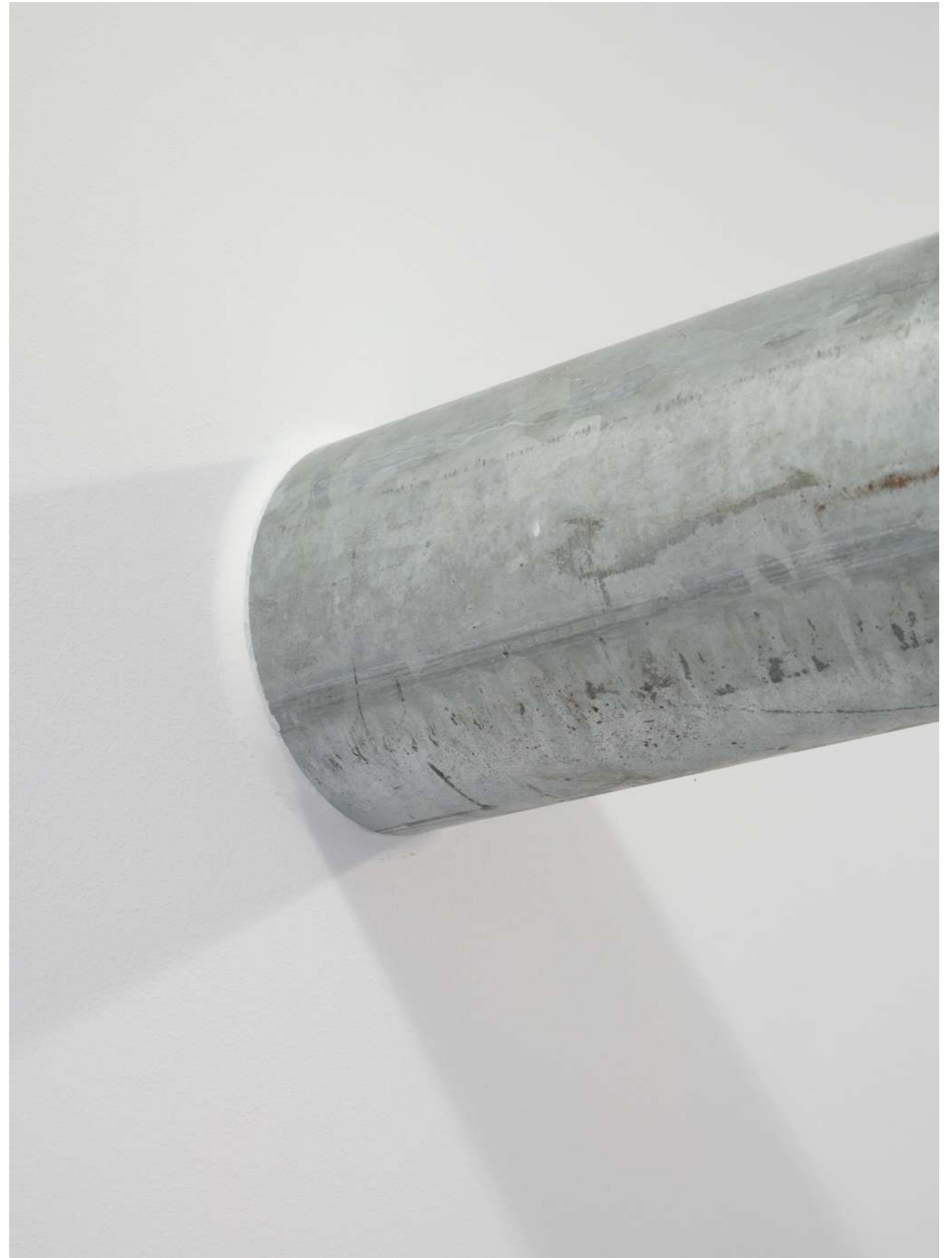


*Elektrosex*  
2005  
Street lamps, electric components  
700 × 520 × 25 cm





10



11

*Elektrosex*  
2005  
Street lamps, electric components  
700 x 520 x 25 cm

I was going round and round the hotel garage

You have to think through rhythms. You enter the space to a set of rhythms, which are working in perpetual counterpoint. Or do you encounter those rhythms even before you enter? It's surely loud enough. But there's more. There's a counter-counter-rhythm that you carry with you from the outside as you enter. So the installation brings more than its constituent elements into play. It draws more space and events towards it. It forces the street inwards, its semblance, its motion.

There's a simple premise at work. You set more than one repetition in motion with another, and the scene will never repeat itself. *Always Crashing...* It's a narrative, a metaphor, a mantra, a rhythm... You can't shake the song from your head.<sup>1</sup> The materiality of repetition. The helplessness of it all which ends up producing something in its wake, despite itself, despite its best/worst intentions.

All the senses; sight, sound, even smell. Affects set in motion by something triggering something. Equally, 'foundness' as a game of chance or opportunity. MS sets parameters in motion, in order that the work seems to make itself. Or churn through its possibilities.

*Berlin Depression* won't go away. "Permanent aggression," MS calls it. You can't avoid it. It's the heartbeat, the backbeat. Downbeat. A sound from nowhere, but it's everywhere. You can't define it or describe what type of sound this is.<sup>2</sup> So it draws you towards it, as you seek out its source. You *look* for sound. The crashing object as sculpture in motion; an absurd ritual of simultaneous making and unmaking.

You might read this as a literal rendering of every object MS touches. They're about *making do* with materials, and making materials *do*. How to test things to their limits. And what the residual effects of that testing might look like. On the surface of things (you must always be wary of the surface of things) it's about duration and durability. There's always a toughness of stuff, often set against a vulnerability of purpose. You can see mass, measure its substance by eye. But at the same time the object wears itself away, wears away your patience, almost as if it resists your attention. An ideological precariousness, despite all that mass, as if the processes of *making* set up the work's potential for conceptual collapse. And the work comes into focus at a moment or locus of *material* failure.

<sup>1</sup> It's about more than the song. There's a tone to that whole body of work made around David Bowie's years in Berlin, especially *Low* (1977) and Iggy Pop's *The Idiot* (1977). Ironically, these two albums began life in the French countryside, but they're saturated with the concrete grime of Ig and Zig's time in Schöneberg. They're deeply interconnected, and can be understood as essentially one entity. Songs or rhythms would emerge without a clear resolution in sight. Often chance decisions

meant a song ended up on one album or the other. It's perhaps helpful to see them as part of a continuity of collaborative practice. They sound like they're from nowhere and are simultaneously anticipating the industrial and are nostalgic for it. (Brian Eno described *The Idiot* as "an experience akin to being encased in concrete.")

<sup>2</sup> When David Bowie asked Tony Visconti how he achieved the extraordinary drum sound

Every chance, every chance that I take

You get the sense that MS rewires the internal logic of materials that are quite recognisable from their external *use*. You know how he found them, where he found them. But you suspect that there are 'autobiographical' criteria - choices beyond form - that are always occluded. You can't extrapolate the emotional source from the material.

The 'foundness' is important. It's a point of access; it renders the work immediately readable. Democratic, in a way. But at the same time, it's always about the conjunctions. Things brought together that shouldn't come together. There's a strong contrast between the hard materiality he brings to the work set against the potential instability of the object. That perhaps things shouldn't be holding together the way that they do. It's a visual contradiction that keeps you looking.

Illusion plays only a small part, but it's there. Making objects that are not mimetic, because they are, for the most part, the thing itself. But familiarity, recognition, is only part of this. Uncanny objects, perhaps? You think you know them, but they're no longer quite doing what you thought they were supposed to do. Context changes the object, but not by much. The object's materiality is central to the encounter. It's persistent. Wherever it lands.<sup>3</sup>

What does a sculptor do? Reconfigure an object in relation to their own body, to its limits? To the limits of its execution? In this sense the object's response to the body, belongs to the body, even if it rarely resembles it. At times prosthetic, but mostly independent of it. The making body is not so much handling, but rather negotiating the object with their whole being.

Jasmine, I saw you peeping

MS's objects reveal less of what the body did to them than why they might be in the world for that body. He often finds things that are already ergonomically mediated. They're in a constant relation to the maker and the viewer who are, in turn, in a reciprocal relation to the object, while they move around it, adjusting themselves to get a better take. And they, in turn, are both in a reciprocal relation to the object, while they move around it, adjusting themselves to get a better take. You need to be in two places at once. *Elektrosex* is configured from impossible or distorted perspectives. It's a manifestation of the outside brought inwards. But where can you look? Aren't you too close to the thing? What happened to the clarity of perspective? No single take on what's there is remotely possible. You move around looking for sight lines.

<sup>3</sup> Repetitions constitute their own logic. Repetition or looping out of self-defining necessity. Continuity. During the *Low/Idiot* recording sessions, for example, Iggy's *Mass Production* was built upon a complex loop of overlaid repetitions of industrial sounds. In a pre-digital era, the loop was a physical one and spooled from one tape

deck to another. It existed in time and space. According to Laurent Thibault, who engineered the structure, Bowie was so fascinated by the loop that he stared at it in inscrutable silence for an hour.

## Michael Sailstorfer: Always Crashing in the Same Car

In a sense it's all about sight lines. How you manage all the information that the object is offering. On the other hand, the object itself is the means of observation. This is explicitly enacted with *Elektrosex*. The street lights brought inside. It's about viewing from at least two perspectives. Where is the optimum position? Where should you place yourself? There's no ideal position from which you can view the work.

If you're inside the installation you are literally inside it. That is, the object demarcates the space, but somehow as a whole it resists assimilation. Unseeable while you are totally immersed in it. Because sculpture always demands more space than it takes up. That is, it's about mass and dimensions and limits and form, but it's also about the spaces through which it cuts and the spaces which surround it.

*Elektrosex* enacts the tension of the spaces in between. These spaces are as marked as the materials of the object, perhaps more so. That is, the work becomes the whole space. But it's crucial to understand that this spatial grab is not to do with the work's scale, or verifiable dimensions, but rather its configuration. The object is always about setting up tensions between materials and the spaces, perceptible or otherwise between. In *Elektrosex* the two components are touching, not quite touching, almost touching. All desire is all but consummated here, at this point of focus and attention. Those centimetres between are everything.

It's a love story.<sup>4</sup>

### I was always looking left and right

To what extent does *Elektrosex* become a different work between one presentation and another? There are formal configurations at play which might insist on this being a different work entirely. The axis has shifted ninety degrees. But the work remains, conceptually at least, the same. It anticipates different modes and experiences of perception because it's a work about that perception itself. It has to respond to where it finds itself, to where it inserts, asserts itself. For all its nod to monumentality, it's solving problems of space.

More than a formal pragmatism, the exhibition situates objects and the street from a new perspective. The vitrine as a transitional plane which operates crucially in both directions. You don't just see through the window, you also can't unsee the window itself to some degree. You're implicated. It reflects you and what's behind you. It means that the street is always part of this. It's just a question of degree.

<sup>4</sup> *Always Crashing in the Same Car* is also a love story, perhaps with a nod to the erotics of Ballard. Lyrically sparse, like so many of the songs on the first side of *Low*, there's a sense of incompleteness. They set up an idea only to fade out, often before they really get going. An unfinished story. Apparently, there was an additional, unsatisfactory verse that was abandoned in the production process. There are anecdotes about the missing verse, but what it might have said

is less important than the sense of its absence. You can't get over that *marked* absence.

## Those kilometres and the red lights

*Zeit ist keine Autobahn Stuttgart*. Is what's happening here a simulacrum of the road? It's not as literal as that, but there's nevertheless an adjacent activity, that evokes it. The road that's just there. Or something darker, something more intensified? Road to nowhere, but still the need to keep moving. Movement as a phenomenological imperative, even as you stand still. A perilous absurdity of the wheel's turning, turning, against itself. A drive (no pun intended) towards its own destruction.

An evocation of what the work is not. (But you can't get the association out of your head.)<sup>5</sup>

Andrew Renton  
London, June 2024

<sup>5</sup> Bowie, Iggy, Tony Visconti, Eduard Meyer and his wife listening to a mix of what will come to be called *Weeping Wall*, at Hansa in Berlin, late 1976. Bowie asks them all to draw on a piece of paper what the music suggests to them. When they reveal their drawings, each has made an almost identical image - a jagged-edged wall with a moon or sun above. Bowie is the only one to

draw something different. His image was of a lizard-type creature, mouth open, eating the sun. What to make of this? It's important not to overdetermine what is a mostly tangential story. But everyone in the studio is inside the story. Something to do with the possibilities of association. Unconsciously, they can't not reflect the materiality of the moment.

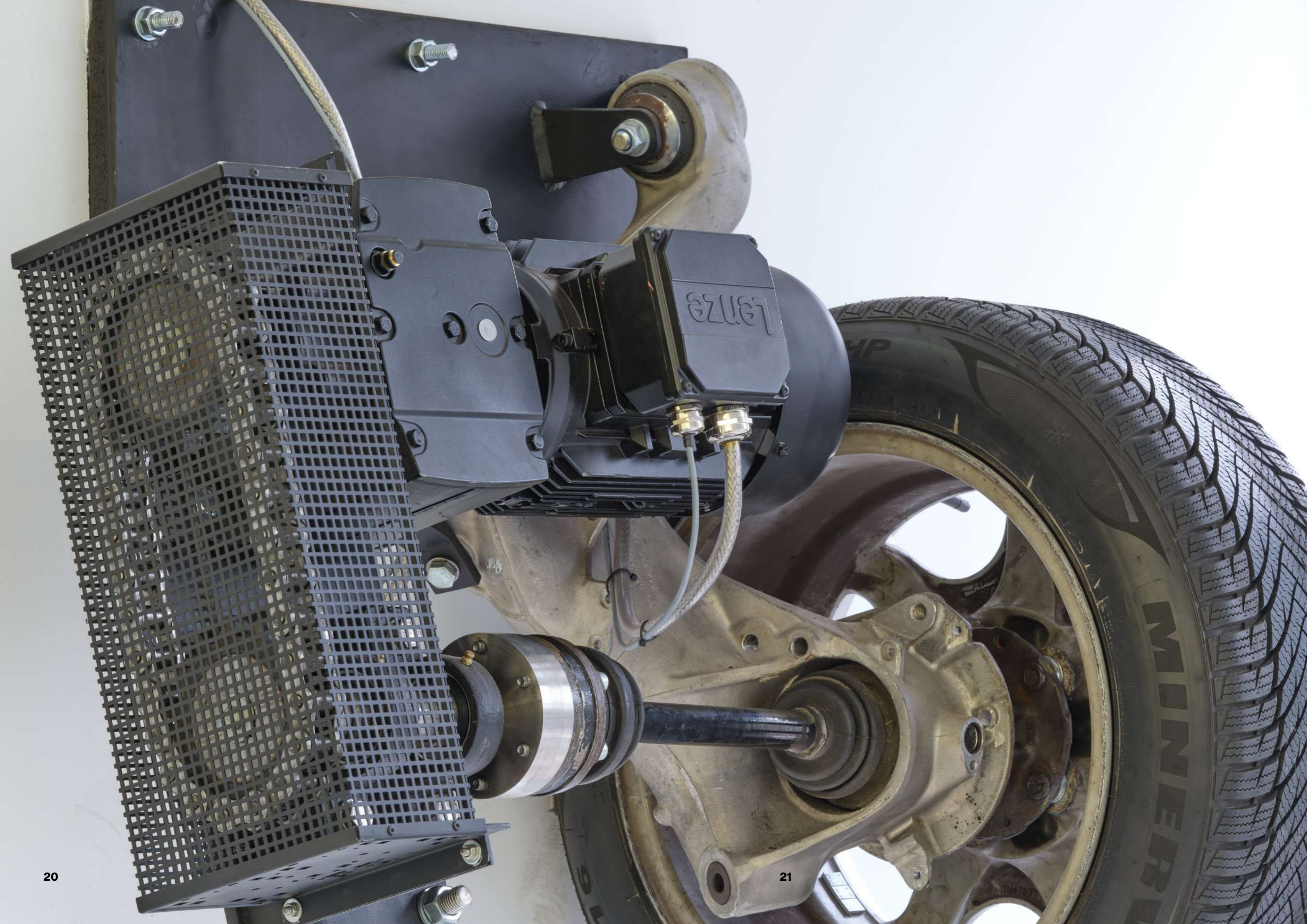


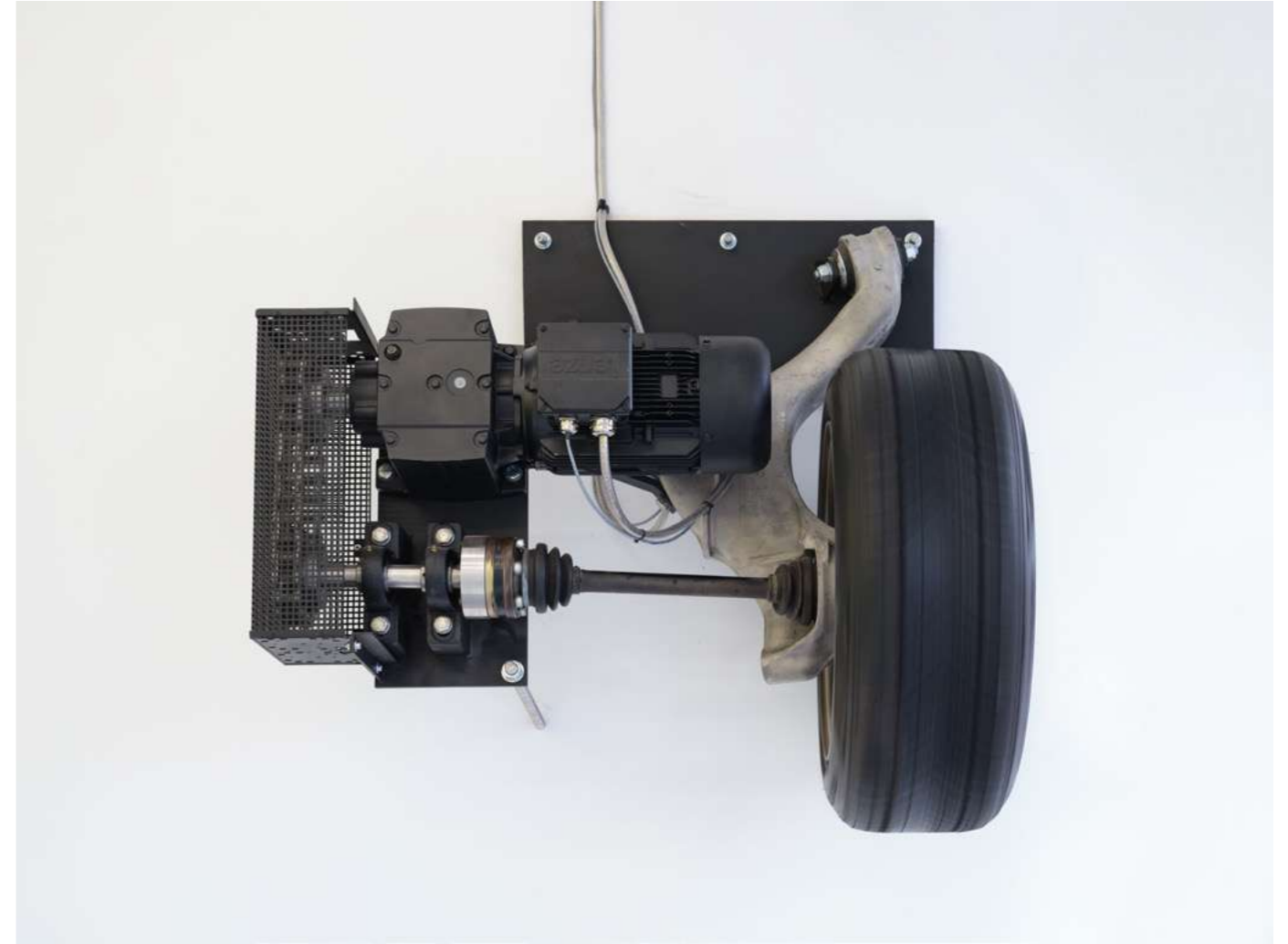
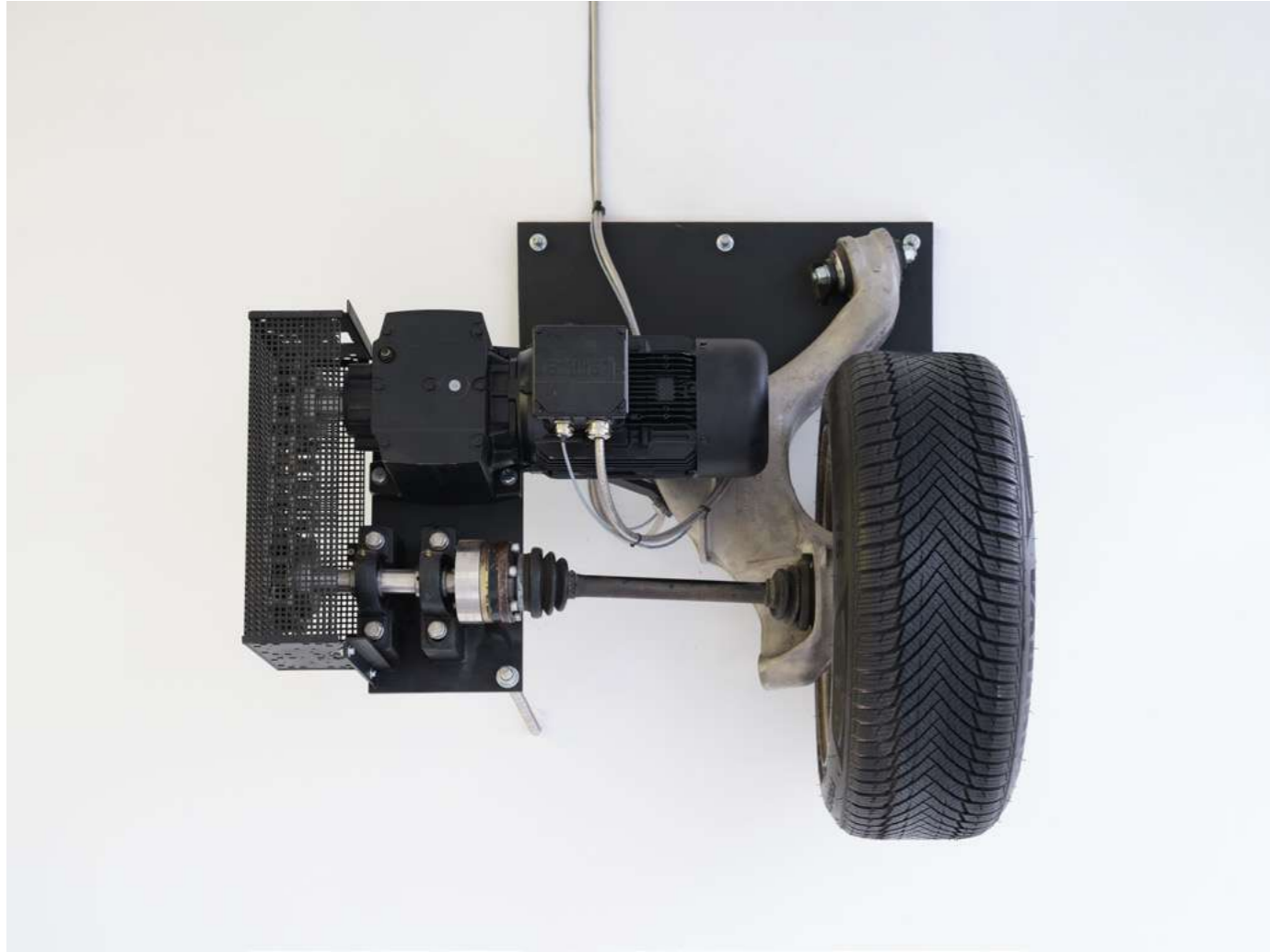




*Elektrosex*  
2005  
Street lamps, electric components  
700 × 520 × 25 cm







*Zeit ist keine Autobahn Stuttgart*  
2020  
Tire, iron, electronic engine,  
electric current  
80 × 95 × 65 cm  
Courtesy Private Collection



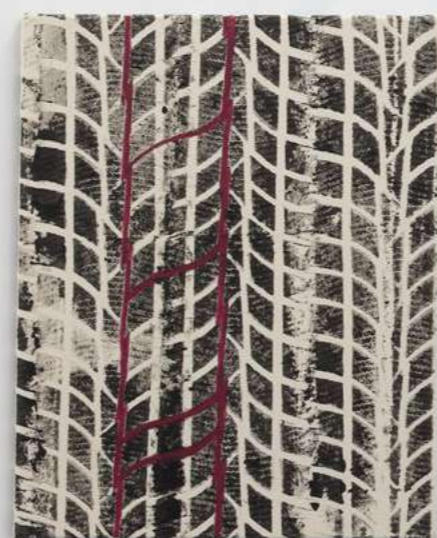
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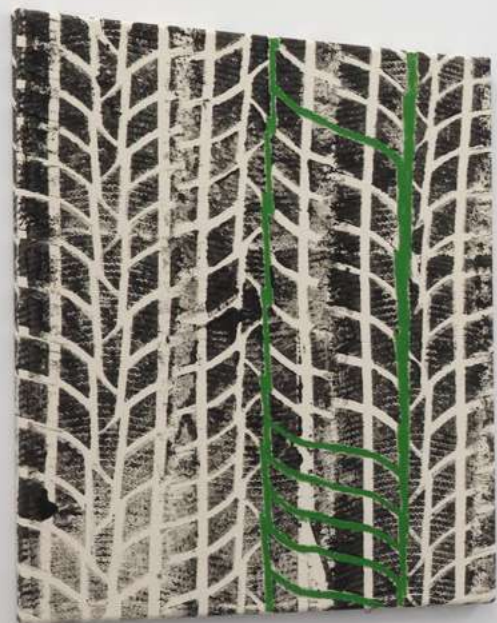
*DNA 1-9*  
2024  
acrylic on canvas  
50 x 40 cm





DNA 1-9  
2024  
acrylic on canvas  
50 x 40 cm





*DNA 1-9*  
2024  
acrylic on canvas  
50 x 40 cm



*Minteeth*  
2022  
Vendor  
56,5 x 28 x 21 cm





















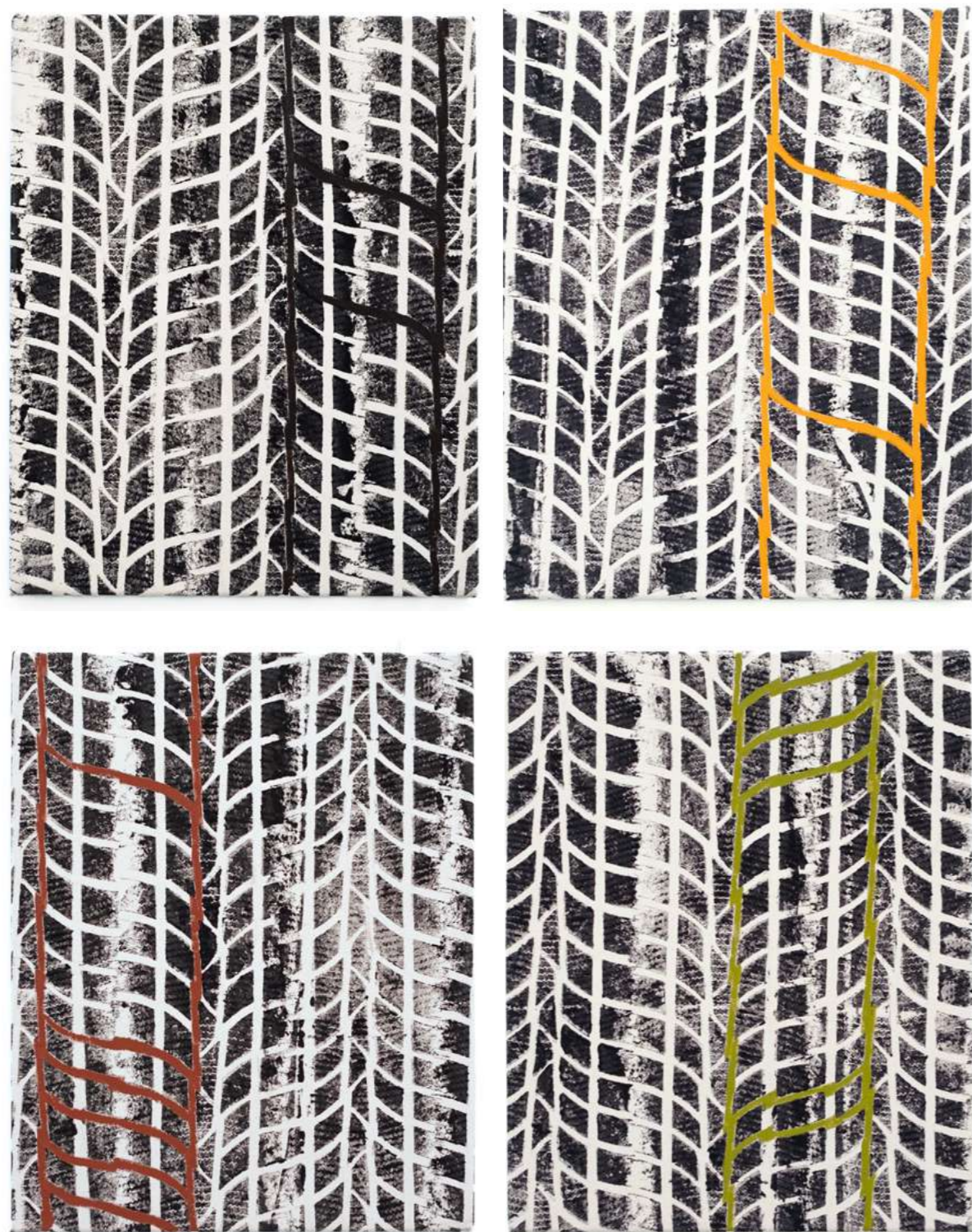




*Berlin Depression*  
2016  
Video  
1 min  
Edition of 5



*Berlin Depression*  
2016  
Video  
1 min  
Edition of 5



DNA 1-9  
2024  
acrylic on canvas  
50 x 40 cm







## Colophon

TICK TACK is a new destination for contemporary art in Antwerp, founded by Tijs Lammar, Vincent Lemson, Patrick Vanden Eynde, Arne Jennard

TICK TACK staff:  
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Christophe Clarijs & Robin Vets

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Max Finger  
Viktor and team  
Jan Vanbriel  
Carlo Westdorp  
Gerrit Vandenbosch

Thanks to the support of our partners



Scheck art logistics for the installation



the players of the Nationale Loterij  
for making this project possible





The logo for TICK, featuring the letters 'T', 'I', 'C', and 'K' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter 'I' is replaced by a stylized vertical line with a horizontal bar at the top, resembling a tick mark or a vertical bar.

**Two-monthly catalogue  
July–August 2024**

*ELEKTROSEX*  
Michael Sailstorfer  
01.03–13.04.2024

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**TICK TACK**

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