

Kathi Hofer

‘Arbeiterinnen verlassen die Fabrik’

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kunstraum pro arte, Hallein

‘Arbeiterinnen verlassen die Fabrik’ (‘Women Workers Leaving the Factory’) – the title is a slightly modified quote of the famous first moving image in the history of photography: ‘Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon’ (1895) by Auguste and Louis Lumière. The sensation of this one-minute film consisted in its ability to demonstrate movement itself. It shows male and female workers rushing out of two gates of the Lumière factory, leaving the film frame along with the physical building.

Women workers leaving the factory: In Hallein, they are employed at the local tobacco plant, where they work together in teams of two, rolling their 600 cigars every day, standing up for each other in solidarity, informing and educating themselves and one other, organizing in unions, and fighting for their labor rights: the right to pensions and wages, for example, that will subsequently exceed by far those of their male colleagues in the nearby paper factory. These women workers leaving the factory are, perhaps, about to go home to their families; probably to do more work as there was plenty. Also maybe, they are leaving on a strike or because they were laid off. Some will pursue further education, or engage in political or creative activities in their free time. In leaving the factory building, their collective identity dissolves and each one of them enters a new space on her own. They form new groups bound by friendship. And so they walk, stroll or rush past the houses of Hallein's old town. This is how I imagine it had happened. And I leave my apartment to go for a walk around the block.

Kathi Hofer works across media. She is interested in the relationship between artistic work and biography. In her conceptual installations she integrates on-site materials, found objects, images or practices, which she charges with new meanings in order to transform a certain idea of value which they reflect. On display at kunstraum pro arte are objects and photographic works created in a state of immobility in Berlin in 2020 and 2021, along with site-specific interventions and a collaboration with master painter Ernst Muthwill, who colored the Hallein-born artist's childhood bedroom many years ago.