Karin Hatwagner
wo Wasser war/where water was

04.09. — 25.09.2026
new jörg wien

Working with and on relics and fragments is the common thread running through the installations and performative interventions Karin Hatwagner has been creating since the 1990s. She integrates found objects into their respective exhibition spaces, which alters both the impact of the objects and that of the spaces themselves: a museum room, a gallery or even a disused factory thus acquires an additional layer of meaning and evokes history and stories.

The fragments, to which Karin Hatwagner attaches equal importance, stimulate the imagination of her viewers and give rise to diverse connections in the here and now. The found objects – table legs without a table, drawers without a cabinet, window panes without frames – form new contexts whose meanings are deliberately left open-ended, never coalescing into a definitive whole. Rather, Karin Hatwagner keeps the content of her works open and in limbo, leaving it to the viewers to develop their own stories and interpretations.

In contrast to the synchronicity of the fragmentary, the relic-like quality in Karin Hatwagner’s works appears diachronic: the past is evoked, and the found objects begin to tell many small stories – fragments of history. At the same time, this relic-like quality allows visitors to glimpse the future and encourages them to reflect on their own mortality, vulnerability and transience. In this respect, Karin Hatwagner’s artistic approach aligns with certain positions in photographic theory. In her publication *On Photography* (1977), Susan Sontag describes photographs as *memento mori*, in which the material capture of a moment simultaneously reveals its transience. Something similar can be observed in the fragmentary relics: as soon as Karin Hatwagner incorporates them into an installation, even panel paintings acquire an additional layer of meaning alongside their status as art objects. They then begin to tell of their former use and their disappearance from their original functional contexts. The objects become visual symbols of their own process of decay.

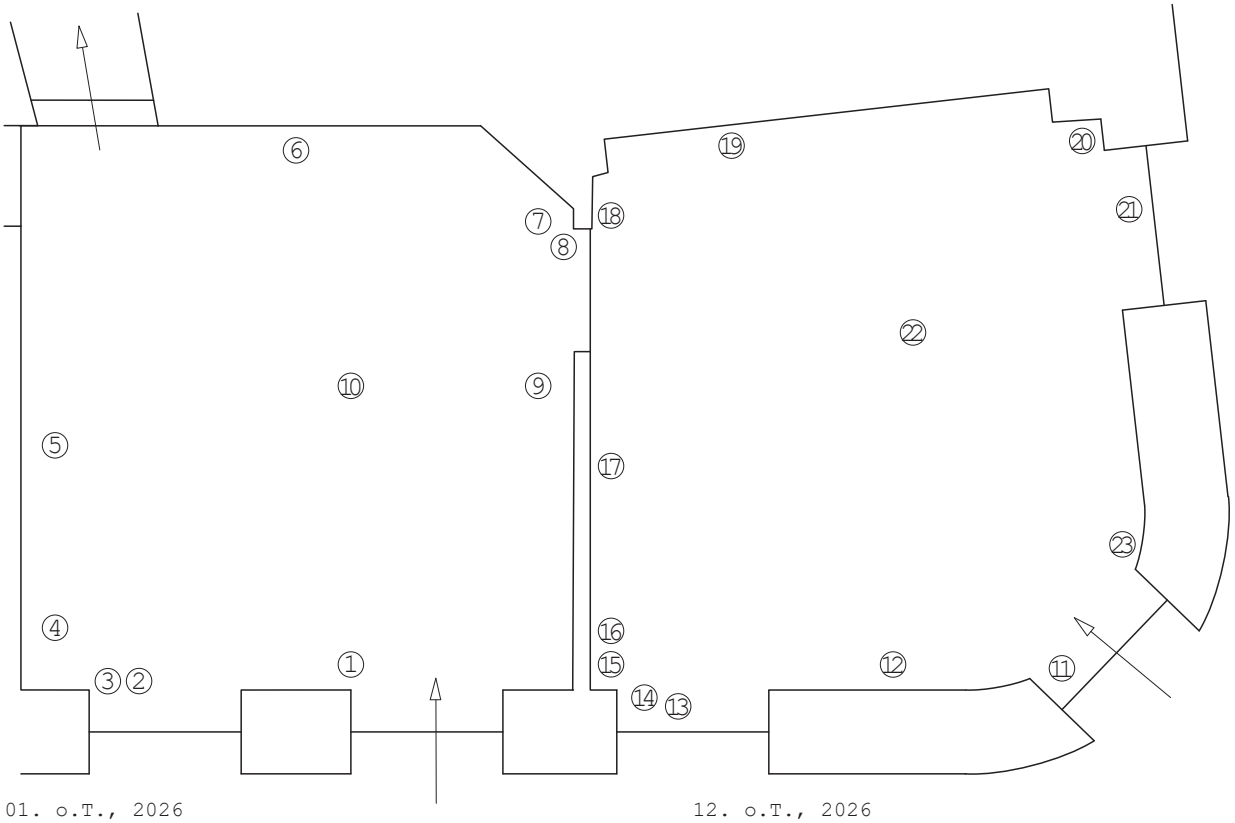
For New Jörg, Karin Hatwagner makes the climate crisis tangible and open to reflection through her installations. Droughts and heatwaves are addressed through the lens of her artistic approach. An empty water container situated in the immediate vicinity of a television screen evokes the image of a mirage. Horn-shaped collages of branches can be interpreted as skeletons and, in some cases, as memento mori. The installation does not present a pessimistic vision of the future, but rather employs allusions that encourage reflection on possible alternatives.

Text: Iris Julian

(Translation: DeepL)

Karin Hatwagner
wo Wasser war/where water was

04.09. — 25.09.2026
new jörg wien



01. o.T., 2026
Wood, horn (found in 2017 and 2020)

02. o.T., 2026
Mirror (round)

03. o.T., 2026
Plant lamp, wax paper

04. o.T., 2026
Blue lacquer, Plexiglas parts (found in 2019)

05. o.T., 2026
Textile (cotton, plastic), reed, bug

06. o.T., 2026
Paper, masking tape, glass bottle

07. o.T., 2026
Wood, glass, metal, chipboard, Resopal, reed, paper, wax

08. o.T., 2026
Dried plants

09. o.T., 2026
Mirror box, wood veneer (found in 2011)

10. o.T., 2026
Dried plant parts, cardboard, gold foil, rubber, leather, mirror, glue

10. o.T., 2026
Dried plant parts, cardboard, gold foil, rubber, leather, mirror, glue

11. o.T., 2026
Wood, textile, insulating foam

12. o.T., 2026
Screen, metal container (found in 2020)

13. o.T., 2026
Metal part, wood, filler (object 2020)

14. o.T., 2026
Gesso, wood

15. o.T., 2026
Mirror box (2009), dried plants

16. o.T., 2026
Reed, adhesive tape, plastic netting/wood

17. o.T., 2026
Wood, varnish, metal, ink, water bottle/glue, cellulose, wire, grasshopper

18. o.T., 2026
Dried plants, wood, rubber, snail shell, glue (object 2017), reed

19. o.T., 2026
Wooden box (object 2005), metal parts, dried roots, piece of wood, clay, shell

20. o.T., 2026
Dried kombucha pieces, plastic sheet, UV lamp, foam, wood, metal part

21. o.T., 2026
Kombucha, glass, cardboard, white paint, wire, glue (object 2022)

22. o.T., 2026
Reed

23. o.T., 2026
Metal vessel (found in 2022)

The found objects mentioned above come from the lower Kamptal valley in Lower Austria, and from the banks of the Wien River and the Danube in Vienna.