

Sophiensæle

Additional Notes

Isabel Lewis & Dirk Bell: Kantine
Open daily with a changing program from December 7-17, 2023
free of charge. Marked events are excluded.

Isabel Lewis, Berlin, 2023: Thoughts on Kantine

I've been hosting occasions for ten years. Creating hosted occasions has been and continues to be a practice of dreaming and rehearsing in public and with a public alternative ways of relating toward one another beyond transactional, competitive, or exploitative forms of interacting from within our imbricated-with-all condition of being human. Fundamental to my thinking/feeling is an acceptance of how essentially non divisible human society is from an earth system that now has our social and economic systems deeply embedded within it. This inescapable entanglement with geopolitical and socio-economic systems that produce horrific injustices and costly consequences for all planetary life and human mental health is hard to bear for some and literally impossible to bear for many. Within these ten years the world has borne witness to and suffered the consequences of increased divisiveness, cultish individualism, and dangerous disregard for the long-term impacts of violence and forced displacement. Things are not good. My dreams and likely yours are hard to sustain at the moment.

How do I cultivate and maintain critical habits towards reconsidering my tools for navigating my political commitments? Which concepts, which vocabularies, which practices am I using and how do I stay sensitive to not assuming we share the same meanings of them? How does the change we want in the long-term differ from the change we achieve now and how to cope with that? How do I maintain and cultivate my many relationships in the multiple spheres I operate in? How do I stay connected to my feelings while feeling with another? Can I remain accountable for all of my actions and be ready, courageous, and humble enough to take in criticism? How do I deal with the fear of inadvertently harming others? How do I cultivate trust that others will hold me accountable compassionately

These are the kinds of questions that will be held in the Kantine. These are the anxieties that will reverberate in a space that has been lovingly arranged by Dirk Bell and the technical team of the Sophiensæle. The Kantine will for these ten days be a space opened to the public to be used by the public to meet, to discuss, to transmit information through the body, to analyze difficult affinities, to perceive one's own and one another's complex personhoods interacting, to seek forms of partial healing and repair, to feel, to feel differently, to form temporary community, to test out fragile unities on uncommon grounds, to negotiate togetherness.

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Additional Notes

The Kantine is not a stage, it is not a platform for career-making, it is not an exhibition or an installation. It is a hosting place. It is a place to hold space for encounters with hot soup available for free. Dirk and I are cooking. We have invited people we know personally since a long time to contribute something to the ambiance of the Kantine over the ten days. We invited loads of people and these are the ones who had some time to spare. They are mostly Berliners. They are people with whom we've worked before, with whom we have shared intimacy and with whom we have disagreed bitterly. They are people we admire for some reason or another.

Dirk and I are joined by co-hosts Yann Slattery and Juli Frodermann (aka Jiji Hopelezz). Yann and Juli are younger than us and worldly. They inspire us toward re-considering what we think we know. Hosts invite guests to "make themselves at home." It's a reflexive action, an invitation for one to act upon oneself in finding a degree of temporary comfort or ease. We look forward to hosting you, to offering you a provisional home, a contingent dwelling place at the Kantine.