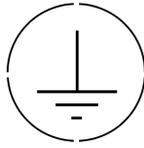


GROUND  
NINETTY-NINE



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## NINA E. SCHÖNEFELD



With influences ranging from the early-20th-century avant-garde to urgent contemporary crises, Nina E. Schönefeld's cinematic works confront the seductive aesthetics of consumer culture with a sharp political edge. Rather than offering escapism, Schönefeld's immersive narratives expose the cracks in the glossy surface of capitalist modernity. Her work grapples with the most pressing dilemmas of our hyper-mediated, hyper-consumerist culture - where environmental collapse, authoritarianism, and algorithmic control are too often obscured by distraction and spectacle. Central to her practice are stories of abrupt societal rupture: digital surveillance, nuclear threat, ecological devastation, and the fragile illusions of freedom under neoliberal systems. Her protagonists - frequently women - navigate dystopian near-futures where rebellion becomes survival, and where the cost of complacency is laid bare.

While her works borrow the visual grammar of science fiction—futuristic technologies, speculative environments, and cinematic spectacle—the futures she imagines remain unsettlingly close to the present. Schönefeld positions her narratives at the threshold between fiction and reality, where speculation collapses into recognition, and where dystopia feels less like a distant projection than an extension of conditions already taking shape around us. In doing so, her films function as cautionary allegories: reminders that the forces shaping tomorrow—technological control, political extremism, ecological neglect—are deeply rooted in unresolved histories. By

staging futures that echo the ideological fractures of the past, Schönefeld warns against the cyclical return of authoritarian impulses and collective amnesia, suggesting that the dystopias we fear may emerge not through sudden catastrophe, but through the quiet repetition of patterns we have already witnessed before.

Within the context of GROUND 99 and the broader framework of the Malta Biennale 2026, Nina E. Schönefeld's cinematic works extend the exhibition's inquiry into how contemporary life is shaped by invisible systems of power, technological acceleration, and ecological precarity. Her films resonate with the exhibition's call to *clean, clear, cut* by stripping away the seductive surfaces of progress to reveal the fragile infrastructures beneath. While GROUND 99 situates artistic practices within the historically layered environment of Malta - where past and present continually collide - Schönefeld projects this tension into speculative yet eerily recognizable futures. Her dystopian narratives mirror the exhibition's central concern with the consequences of globalisation and environmental neglect, exposing how that the crises we perceive as looming ahead are already embedded in the political and ecological realities of the present. In this way, her work contributes to GROUND 99's broader reflection on historical repetition and collective responsibility, serving as a stark warning that the futures we fear are often the direct continuation of conditions we have yet to confront.



**Nina E. Schönefeld, TRILOGY OF TOMORROW (*D A R K W A T E R S // S N O W F O X // L.E.O.P.A.R.T.*):**

***D A R K W A T E R S* (2018), HD video, b/w & color, sound, 15'55"**

***S N O W F O X* (2018), HD video, b/w & color, sound, 10'03"**

***L.E.O.P.A.R.T.* (2019), HD video, b/w & color, sound, 17'13"**

In this haunting trilogy of speculative video narratives, Schönefeld excavates futuristic landscapes that are, in fact, echoes of our present ecological and political crises - turning cautionary prophecies into embodied cinematic warning signs. Schönefeld's films unfold in futures close enough to feel imminent - visions that are not fantastical, but unsettlingly plausible. Her video series, TRILOGY OF TOMORROW (*D A R K W A T E R S // S N O W F O X // L.E.O.P.A.R.T.*), created between 2018 and 2019, was set in the imagined tomorrows of 2023, 2029, and 2032. Now, one of those projected futures has already become our past - transforming what was once fiction into a lived reality. In its convergence of past prediction and future condition, Schönefeld's work is a meditation on the ways that imagined futures, and experienced pasts, inevitably loop back to define our present landscapes - political, environmental, and psychological.

*D A R K W A T E R S* (2018) unfolds in 2029, in oceans rendered into death zones by plastic pollution. Following the exploits of Silver Ocean, its protagonist, the work becomes a visceral investigation into hidden environmental collapse: a poetic reckoning with seas that once promised life but now are deadly.

*S N O W F O X* (2018) projects us into 2023, a world manipulated by corporate “weather engineers” whose tampering sows neural disease. Snow Fox, its titular heroine, joins a resistance group of women struggling to reclaim Earth’s vanishing landscapes and seeks sanctuary in the last vestiges of wild nature — a terrain made political and personal by their struggle for survival.

*L.E.O.P.A.R.T.* (2019) leaps forward to 2032, where mutated crops and a monolithic seed corporation have monopolized life itself. In an insurgent narrative of human agency against engineered ecological futures, L.E.O. establishes a self-sufficient camp where she leads a revolt of survivors who have refused genetic entrapment.

Like a time machine, this trilogy collapses future dystopias and present realities into one liminal space. Schönefeld’s cinematic landscapes - polluted seas, weather-scarred wastelands, genetically controlled fields - simultaneously act as prophecy and memory to evoke what future generations may well look back upon as our unheeded environmental reckoning. Visually rich and emotionally resonant, these video works compel viewers to confront the consequences of our collective inaction. Each layer of the trilogy lives in the shadow of warnings once dismissed, reminding us that for today’s landscapes to avoid becoming tomorrow’s nightmares, our choices must build upon firm knowledge of the past in order to transform the future.



**Nina E. Schönefeld, *W H Y D O W E K I L L* (2022), HD Video, b/w & color, sound, single-channel version of 3-channel video installation, 6'39"**

This video collage of found online footage was created in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine, which is still ongoing at the time of this exhibition. This work is a visually and aurally striking reflection on mankind's oxymoronic capacity to combine beauty and violence, strength and frailty, humanity and inhumanity.

#### ARTIST STATEMENT:

W H Y D O W E K I L L is a video project that is a direct reaction to the situation we are facing in times of war. It is about the feeling of constant insecurity and a panicky, invisible threat. Images of a dancer and various quotes from different sources on the subject of violence are condensed into a kind of collage to create a feeling of our worst nightmares.

Violence is the use of force to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy. It is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation."

Alternatively, violence can primarily be classified as either instrumental or reactive and hostile. Unlike the other two broad categories, the subcategories of collective violence suggest possible motives for violence committed by larger groups of individuals or by states. Collective violence that is committed to advance a particular social agenda include crimes of hate committed by organized groups, terrorist acts and mob violence. Political violence includes war and related violent conflicts, state violence and similar acts carried out by armed groups. Slow violence is a long-duration form of violence, which is often invisible, such as environmental degradation, pollution and climate change.

The complex theme of violence is connected to a systemic problem of the world. The principle of constant economic growth, combined with globalization, is creating a scenario where we could see a systemic collapse of our planet's natural resources.

Capitalism is inherently exploitative, alienating, unstable, unsustainable, and inefficient and it creates massive economic inequality, commodifies people, degrades the environment, is anti-democratic, and leads to an erosion of human rights because of its incentivization of imperialist expansion and war. W H Y D O W E K I L L ?

- Nina E. Schönefeld



**Nina E. Schönefeld, *B.T.R. (BORN TO RUN)* (2020), HD video, 16:9, color, sound, 20'03"**

**Courtesy of the MOMENTUM Collection**

Video and installation artist Nina E. Schönefeld critiques the contemporary social and political climate, exploring the relationship between art, popular culture and mass media in the present digital age. Her stories imagine a near future of all too possible dystopias where, due to drastic political shift, we need to fight for our basic democratic rights. *B.T.R.* is set in the year 2043 in a dystopian future of authoritarian autocracies and restrictions on journalism, where data is the most valuable asset on earth, and authoritarian right-wing governments have implemented youth education camps to gain power and influence. The film's hero, SKY, grew up in one such education camp. Knowing nothing about her parents she begins to research her heritage, getting in touch with a group of independent journalists and publishers, the most persecuted people on earth, threatened by prison and death every day. In this allegory of a not far-distant future, it seems that freedom of speech is lost forever. The video *B.T.R.* is intended as a preventative measure against such dystopias. It was created as a film of the future but has its roots in the present. It is based on detailed research on Julian Assange and Edward Snowden; on Cambridge Analytica and the pervasive power of data mining; on the crucial role of investigative journalism and the need for freedoms of the press; on the stories of deserters from the far-right; and on the growing strength of far-right movements around the world, which leads Schönefeld to draw frightening parallels with conditions which led to the rise of Fascism in Germany in the 1920s. The script of the film is chillingly composed largely of quotations from historical and contemporary politicians and leaders. For example, "Think of the press as a big keyboard for the government to play on" (Joseph Goebbels).



**Nina E. Schönefeld, *RIDE OR DIE* (2024), HD video, 16:9, B&W/color, sound, 30'13"**

ARTIST STATEMENT:

*R I D E O R D I E* is a film that calls for relentless, radical resistance and discourse in response to our increasingly disillusioned times. It is about a crucial question of principle in the private and political life of every citizen. Ride or die?

The story of the video work revolves around a young couple who experience the political upheaval in their country, as it undergoes the change from a democracy to a right-wing populist autocracy. In the young couple's reality, total surveillance by CCTV has become normal. They keep asking themselves how a political upheaval and the abolition of the separation of powers could have happened in their home country in the first place.

This video work is about the slow processes of change that are taking place – in our lived reality, as well as in the not too distant future setting of this film - almost silently in society and politics, and which are supported above all by an educated, almost fearful elite. The film's capitalist future society is characterized by a lack of transparency, the soft simplification of political discourse, fear through surveillance and the distraction from debates on justice, providing a fertile breeding ground for populist autocrats in the increasingly complex political arena.

The young lovers quickly reach the point where they have to decide whether or not to go underground, which is dangerous for their lives. Based on a personal love story, it deals with aspects such as unconditional radical resistance, solidarity at all costs, justice and absolute love, right up to the possibility of death together.

The film *R I D E O R D I E* confronts viewers with the need to look in the mirror in the event of a radical political upheaval and ask themselves, as responsible citizens, the all-important question: "LOOK AWAY or STAND UP?"

- Nina E. Schönefeld

ARTIST BIO:

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**NINA E. SCHÖNEFELD (born 1972 in Berlin, Germany. Lives and works in Berlin and Ibiza, Spain.)**

Nina E. Schönefeld is a Berlin-based interdisciplinary artist of German/Polish descent, and PhD scholar in art theory, whose practice spans video, installation, sculpture, light, electronics, and AI-driven media. A selection of Schönefeld's recent major museum and institutional exhibitions includes: 2025 – *Landscapes of Futures Past*, Jiayuanhai Art Museum, Shanghai, China; *Art from Elsewhere: Deep Throat*, MOMENTUM at Valletta Contemporary. 2024 - *RIDE OR DIE* (solo), KINDL Center for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; *NO FUTURE* (solo), Lothringer 13 & Münchner Kammerspiele & Habibi Kiosk, Munich, Germany; MSU Museum (CoLab Studio, Michigan State University), Michigan, USA; GDM Contemporary Gallery, Ostrava, Czech Republic. 2023 - *FUCK THE SYSTEM* (solo), Diskurs Berlin, Germany; Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Germany; Ikono TV, COP28, Dubai; Gong Gallery, with Goethe-Institutes Prague & Bratislava, Ostrava, Czech Republic; Aleš South Bohemian Art Museum, Czech Republic; GDM Contemporary Gallery, Ostrava, Czech Republic; Kultursymposium Weimar, Goethe-Institute & Galerie Eigenheim, Weimar, Germany; LAGOS Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico. 2022 - *Enemy Within* (solo), Berlin Weekly Gallery; Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, Germany; Ikono TV, COP27, Egypt; Diskurs Gallery Berlin, Germany; Artspring-Festival, Berlin, Germany. 2021 - Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany; MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; Alte Münze, Berlin, Germany; CICA Museum, Gyeonggi-Do, Korea; Kunstverein Familie Montez, Frankfurt, Germany; Seoul International ALT Cinema & Media Arts Festival (NeMaf), Seoul, Korea; Art Life Foundation, Hong Kong, China; ARTSPRING-Festival, Berlin, Germany; Roppongi Art Festival, Tokyo, Japan. 2020 - Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany; Weltkunstzimmer, Düsseldorf, Germany; Kunsthalle Bratislava Museum, Slovakia; Galerie la Pierre Large, Strasbourg, France; MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; Contemplatio Art, Germany. 2019 - Aram Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea; Alternative Culture Making Art Space, Shenzhen, China; Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia; MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; Anima Mundi Festival 2019, Palazzo Ca' Zanardi, Venice, Italy; Bamhaus Luxembourg, Luxembourg; Mitte Media Festival 2019, Berlin, Germany; Made In NY Media Center by IFP, New York City, USA; Villa Heike, Berlin, Germany. 2018 - Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany; Goethe Institut, Beijing, China; Kühlhaus, Berlin, Germany; BBA Artist Prize 2018 Berlin, Germany; Ex Pescheria Centrale, Trieste, Italy; Mitte Media Festival, Berlin; Palazzo Ca' Zanardi, Venice, Italy; THE ROOM Contemporary Art Space, Venice, Italy. And many others.