



fluentum.org/guide

This emphasis is not in contradiction with the visual quality that is no less characteristic of speaking images. Yet a disconnect often runs between image and language, a rift, and this gap is where the work's true space comes into being, a space that we confront and that needs us to give it substance. It is a fertile space, and the images and speculations, the knowledge and ignorance it engenders merit a dedicated consideration. Proposing to survey this space, the exhibition comes at a time when both images and words are too

But moving images do not just show—they also speak. It hardly needs to be said that films are essentially works of auditory art as well; everyone knows that, from documentaries to computer games, spoken and written words are virtually indispensable components of the sound and video tracks. Still, there are moving—and deeply moving—works of art that give far greater weight to the word, the sentence, the narrative than is customary practice in the various filmic genres; works in which language is at the heart of the action and a genuine material of art. The phrase “moving images” does not do these works justice; they are speaking images. Images of language and writing in motion, addressed to the ear or presented to the reading eye.

Moving images are the principal medium of the present. Videos, films, 3D animations, virtual worlds are also the defining formats of contemporary art. The political dimensions of our own lives, social challenges, cruelties ancient and recent, the great questions of who we are and who we might yet be—all these manifest themselves with unrivaled lucidity on the screens and monitors that are the visual signature of this time of wrenching changes.

# SPEAKING IMAGES

WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION

SEPTEMBER 11 — NOVEMBER 16, 2019

FLUENTUM

Seen in a close-up shot, a young man wearing a cap and a thick down jacket with a fur-lined hood talks about the purchase of an unspect-fied piece of hardware. The tone of his voice and his rapid-fire speech are reminiscent of hip hop. The quest for the perfect object and the almost existential doubt whether what he bought was indeed the best possible choice reflect the questionable role that consumerism plays in our media-saturated globalized world.

STEFAN PANIHANS, 2005, 5'23"



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## SIEBEN BIS ZEHN MILLIONEN

often and indiscriminately taken at face value; when the political conversation tends to pin them down on a single message, a single meaning, that can never be theirs. For this first presentation of works from the collection, Fluentum asked the Berlin-based galleries and curators Alexander Koch and Nikolaus Oberhuber to compile a thematically focused selection. Titled *Speaking Images*, the exhibition they put together presents a dense and tightly organized sequence of works, in which language and text play a prominent role. It encourages the visitors to immerse themselves in the art and does not shy away from audiovisual-al clashes between works.

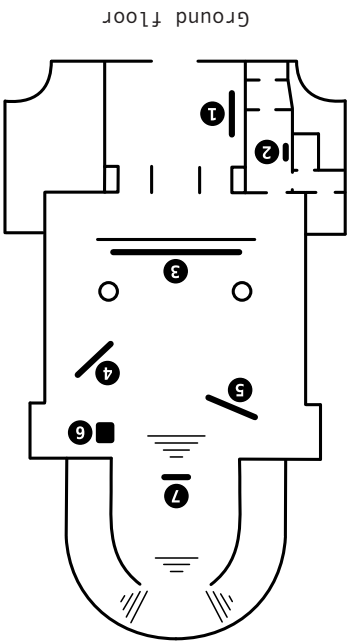
We hear the musician Blixa Bargeld repeatedly enunciating the letters A S D F G H J K L Q. Alternation between different rhythms and intonations transforms the string of letters—one row of keys on a German computer keyboard—into an abstract narrative that evokes associations with the arc of a dramatic plot, but also with steadily recurring patterns such as the routines of an ordinary day.

IGNACIO URIARTE, 2011, 33'

## ASDFGHIJKLO



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Fluentum is a platform for the production, collection, and presentation of contemporary art with a strong focus on time-based media such as film and video. Fluentum is located in the former main building of a military facility built in 1936-38 for the Luftwaffe, which served as the headquarters of the U.S. Army from 1945 to 1994. The Berlin Airlift was organized here. Over the past three years, the historic building on Clayallee has been extensively redesigned by the Berlin architects Sauerbruch Hutton for use as an exhibition and private space, so that seven areas spanning over 600 square meters can be used to exhibit art and host discussions with artists.

Clayallee 174  
14195 Berlin

Opening hours during the  
Berlin Art Week 2019  
Wednesday, September 11 -  
Sunday, September 15  
11 am - 06 pm

Opening hours till November 16, 2019  
Saturdays 11 am - 02 pm

FLUENTUM.  
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CONTEMPORARY  
TIME-BASED  
ART

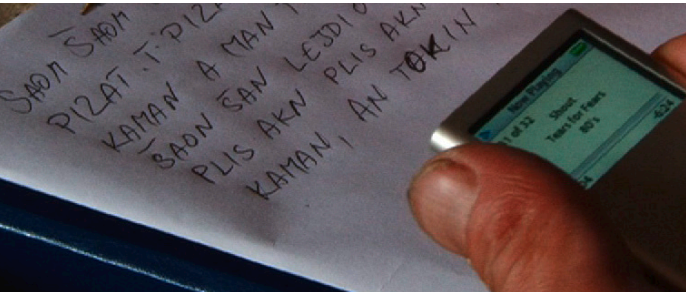




FRANK HEATH, 2016, 12'14"

## THE HOLLOW COIN

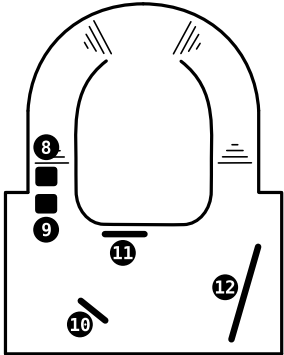
Espionage or practical joke? Frank Heath shrewdly intertwines true history with a plot of his own imagination: a man has hidden an SD card inside a hollow coin and claims that he accidentally dropped it into a pay phone in New York. In the dialogue between the man in the phone booth and the telecom company’s customer service representative, the story of a Soviet spy who, in 1953, mistakenly paid for a newspaper with a hollow coin that contained a microfilm grounds a critical reflection on the question of authority and agency that is both very funny and incisive.



KATARINA ZDJELAR, 2009, 5'23"

## SHOUM

Two Serbian men try to transcribe the lyrics of the hit song “Shout” by the band Tears for Fears on paper. Neither speaks any English, and so the acoustic transmission blends alien and native ingredients to yield something completely new, a text that is phonetically connected to the language of the original while being graphically rooted in their mother tongue. “Shoum” explores the question of belonging in our globalized world; the artist conceived it as an antithesis to Mladen Stilinović’s statement “An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist.”



First floor



PATTY CHANG, 2009, 9'49"

## RATHER TO POTENTIALITIES

Between 1928 and 1933, before feature films were dubbed, entire movies were shot separately in several languages. Chang collages selections from the English and German versions of *S.O.S. Iceberg* (1933) and the French and English versions of *The Mistress of Atlantis* (1932), juxtaposing corresponding scenes. The impossibility of performing a visually identical duplicate of an action is reflected by the superimposed soundtracks, where divergences of pacing lead to intervals of silence on one that allow us to understand the other and vice versa, between stretches filled with a virtually unintelligible babel of voices.



HIWA K, 2017, 11'23"

## VIEW FROM ABOVE

The camera’s gaze slowly pans over a model of a city while a man’s voice relates the fictional story of the Iraqi asylum applicant M. The conjunction highlights an ambivalence at the heart of the asylum procedure: when cities or countries are divided into safe and unsafe zones, eligibility for asylum is limited to those who have fled unsafe areas. An asylum seeker’s place of origin is often verified by testing his knowledge of the local topography, which an official compares to the information in a map. Applicants who know this can memorize geographical facts as they appear in the view from above; those who don’t may be rejected because they haven’t learned to see their first home from such a lofty vantage point.



HITO STEYERL, 2012, 20'12"

## GUARDS

Two men from the Art Institute of Chicago’s security team explain the facility’s safety arrangements, offering practical demonstrations of how they would fend off criminals and would-be attackers. They also recall memorable deployments from before their time at the museum. Drawing a connection between national security concerns and the protection of cultural assets, Steyerl’s video was shot in an upright format to mimic the aesthetic of ego-shooter videogames. In the footage, the scene of the presentation of art is filled with an atmosphere of ever-present danger.



MARTIN SKAUEN, 2011–2013, 1'20"

## SLIDESHOW JOHNNY, WATERPROOF

The video is one in a series of portraits of the fictional artist Johnny, in which Skauen probes phenomena of media culture and our engagement with it. Stringing together still shots, he combines them with a running soundtrack: Johnny plays the guitar and sings a heavy metal song. His words are almost unintelligible because he sticks his head in a bucket filled with water. Subtitles reveal the intended critique: the final line of the lyrics is “Mute the words that tell the truth.”



SVEN JOHNE, 2016, 10'16"

## THE LONG WAY HOME

The soundtrack of Johne’s work is a concatenation of the captions that accompanied World Press Photographs published between 2001 and 2015. The texts succinctly describe scenes of tragedy: someone is notified of a relative’s death; news arrives of the 2001 terror attacks in New York. We see a man in his car, driving through a nocturnal city. Haunted by the succession of dispatches he keeps hearing, he makes several abortive attempts to sing a lullaby to himself. Like taking “the long way home,” it is a strategy his doctor has recommended to silence the voices in his head.



ADELITA HUSNI-BEY, 2014, 39'20"

## AGENCY

In 2014, thirty-five students of the Manara High School in Rome participate in a program inspired by a group exercise developed in Great Britain: divided into five groups (politicians, activists, bankers, journalists, and workers), they discuss issues in Italian politics that are currently in the news, such as unemployment, snap elections, and natural disasters. They workshop their views and ideas before presenting them in panel debates. But the goal, they have been told, is not to come up with the best possible solution, it is to gain power—an objective that inevitably sparks conflict and prompts unexpected coalitions.



FERHAT ÖZGÜR, 2009, 9'49"

## METAMORPHOSIS CHAT

Ferhat Özgür stages an encounter between his mother, who wears traditional attire, and her neighbor, who prefers the modern style. Shot in the aesthetic of Turkish soap operas, the video shows the two women chatting about ordinary concerns: their families and friends and how to dress. Then they start trading clothes, raising the subject of culturally fraught symbols such as the headscarf; their humorous exchange defuses any hint of conflict and suggests that minds can always change.



VIBEKE TANDBERG, 2014, 19'42"

## MUMBLE

Tandberg combines footage from movies with an edited version of her poem “Mumbles.” 145 pages long in the original, it is an extended meditation on the position occupied by her own body. The acoustic search for a place where she belongs enters into a dialogue with images that show individuals, landscapes, and a variety of spaces. The work teasingly leads the viewer to expect some action, yet the narrative remains fragmented and never goes anywhere.