

## The artist platform YOU ARE HERE:@///cloud.cuckoo.land

### # 1. Mountains, Grasslands and Woods

#### A showroom visit

The large-format colour photographs from the cycle *Mountains, Grasslands and Woods* by conceptual photographer Julian Kirschler show at first sight exactly what the title says: photographs of nature. In their digital elevation by the artist, however, these landscapes revisit places with romantic connotations: Kirschler's visual language removes the dust off access to home, location, inwardness. And at the same time visualizes being on the move itself: In the flowing, fleeing moment of a FLOWshot, as the photographer calls his landscape photography from a moving position. The familiar perspective he bases on universally valid childhood memories: "It's the same perspective as when we watched the landscape fly past us on vibrating windows in cars, buses or trains."

The Pforzheim native dynamically captures these views of nature blurred in motion: He takes pictures out of a helicopter, from a boat, a paraglider, through the open roof of a car traveling at up to 100 kilometers per hour, or from a pedelec, on which frame the 56-year-old designed a device for his GFX 100S medium-format mirrorless camera, so he can still trigger the shots via the Fuji app on his cell phone while pedaling.

What is shown is a nature that makes something sound in the viewer. And not only through the motifs, but also in the literal sense. For the project Mountains, Meadows, Forests, Julian Kirschler collaborates with the musician Stefan Kling. Through headphones, the viewer hears Kling's soundscapes, i.e. soundscapes that incorporate music, natural sounds, and language and additionally transport and unfold the image's message. This immersive, synesthetic art experience is completed by a subwoofer, which, worn by the viewer as a backpack, picks up the bass from Kling's composition and causes low-frequency sound waves to throb and vibrate through the body.

The result is a highly concentrated, stimulating, and suction-like art experience that directs the eye to the photographs with renewed alertness. The scenic motifs are - especially in the FLOWshots - intoxicating and fast-paced. Then again - taken from a standstill - reduced and lost in dreams. The craggy, sharply jagged massif of a Dolomite giant meets the softly drawn mountain lake reflection, which the stroke of an oarsman ripples. Sometimes the viewer's gaze seeks a foothold in the exaggerated plasticity of what is shown, such as the filigree foliage of a river landscape bending deeply over the water. Then again, the detail is lost in the flow of blurred color - in the trembling autumn leaves or the abstract white monochrome of a snowdrift. Always, in all their stylization, these paintings seem familiar without ever being formulaic.

For the picture's titles, Julian Kirschler uses the British location coding system what3words, which lays a grid of 3 x 3 meter squares across the globe and identifies each of them with three words.

"Often they are quite banal places," Julian Kirschler explains the search for motifs. For example, his photograph of the Salzach river hymnen.hühnchen.heimweh (2020), which was raging after a heavy rain, was taken directly at a parking lot for truck drivers: "Almost no one sees this place because everyone drives past it," says the artist. And further, "Often you don't think that such pictures can be created at all in such places."

By using multiple gray filters on his camera for a slow shutter speed, he was able to transform the "gray broth of tree trunks and debris" he saw in front of him into a milky, mousing, mystically charged body of water: "To me, this photograph has the feel of a jungle - just looking at it, I hear bird calls."



*///hymnen.hühnchen.heiweh (hymns.chicken.homesickness)*

Julian Kirschler, however, also has his sights set on tourist landmarks. The 3 Zinnen (welterbe.rotweine.ersetzen, 2020), for example, are among the best-known landmarks of alpinism. Or the Biberkopf (aufuhr.ikone.felder, 2019) on the border of Bavaria and Tyrol, whose intensely folded Dolomite, however, did not seem "harmonious enough" to the artist looking through the lens, the reason why he digitally adjusted the shot by mirroring it until the mountain met his aesthetic standards and the hikers descended the ridge in perfect symmetry to the left and right in a "turning away from the cross," as the photographer ironically put it.

This constructed image finding brings Julian Kirschler's work closer to romantic landscape painting, even if the photographer emphasizes: "Since I am virtually illiterate in drawing, painting as an art form is ruled out for me." Yet to add: "To my own astonishment, I have nevertheless succeeded over the years in acquiring methods of painting for my medium of photography."



*///welterbe.rotweine.ersetzen*

*(world heritage.red wines.replace)*



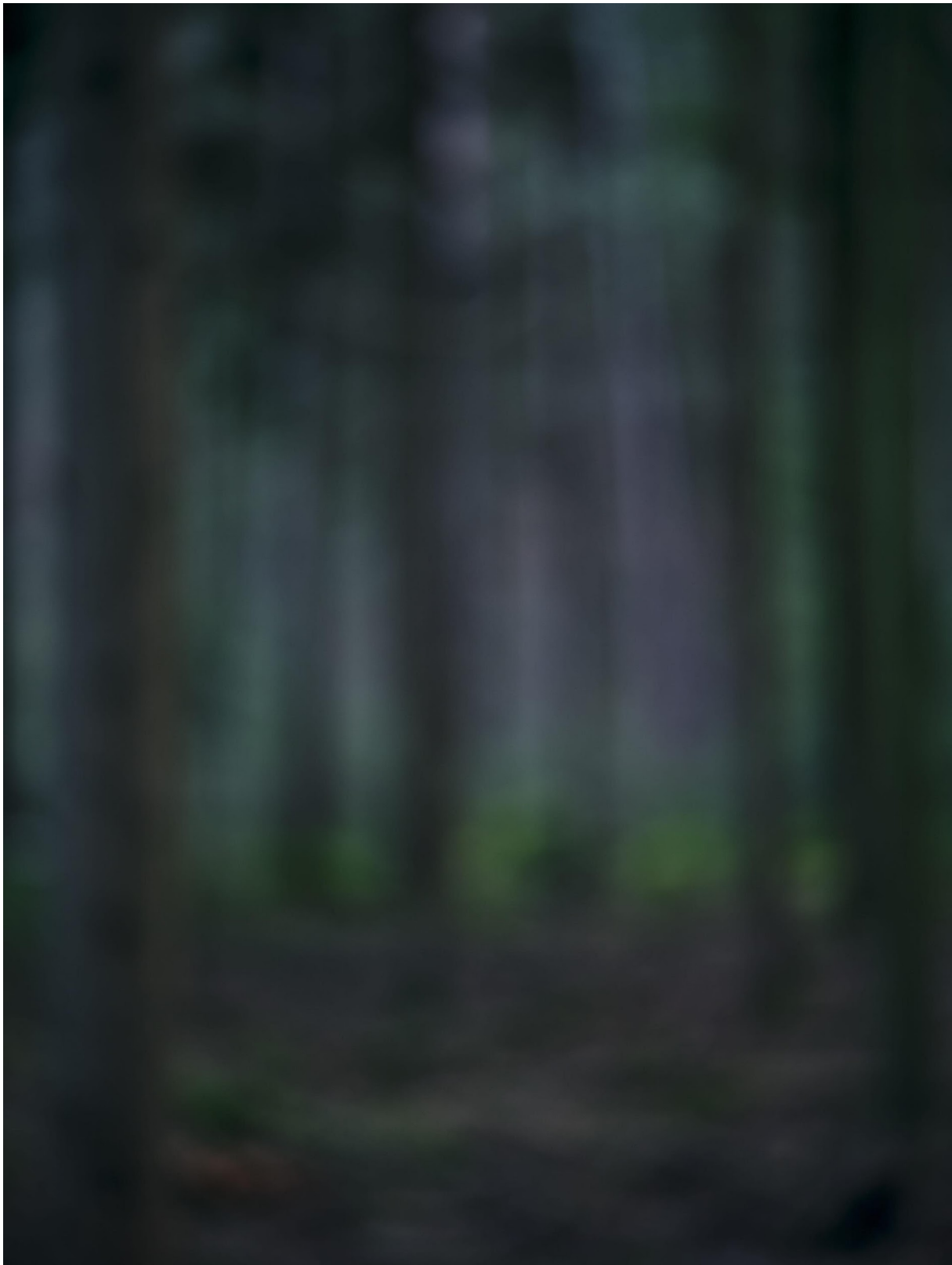
*///aufuhr.ikone.felder*

*(riot.icon.arrays)*

Because until a RAW file becomes a large-format silver halogenid print depicting the mountains, meadows, forests cycle, it is a long process. To achieve this, according to the artist, he has to "repeatedly add certain properties to the image in different layers 'painting' or remove others." For his hybrid images, the artist creates up to three varying source files of the same image, which he then merges digitally, layer by layer.

In order to be able to finally implement his visual language, Julian Kirschler explains, it is therefore important to take a picture in which he subsequently has every creative freedom, because "a digital picture is soulless to start with. You first have to breathe soul into it", the photographer specifies - among other things "by changing color values or partially over-sharpening the details." And thus achieve that a photograph reflects the emotionality and personality of the author. To evoke warmth. Perhaps even magic. With his work, the artist also consciously wants to counter the recent developments of the flood of images controlled by social media, the "banalization of photography into a self-staging backdrop" and the "'dead-photographing' of popular motifs." If he were to draw a personal insight from his many years of photographic work, Kirschler says, it would be that "photography requires a sense of responsibility."

The forest piece *unendlichkeit.vergnügen.weinen* (2020) shows Julian Kirschler's homeland, the Black Forest, as a fabulously transfigured, blurred undergrowth in diffusely thinning emerald and purple hues. It is not at all easy to photograph the region in which one lives and which one knows like the back of one's hand, the artist sums up. The blur is more than a stylistic element for him here. It is a strategy for perceiving the all too familiar in a new way.



*///unendlichkeit.vergnügen.weinen (infinity.pleasure.crying)*

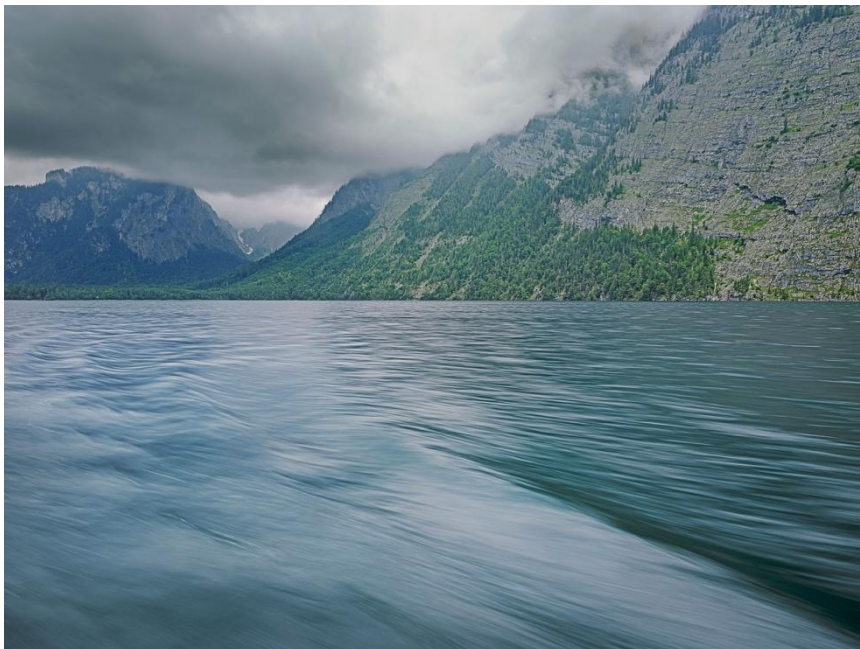
The musician Stefan Kling also grew up in the Black Forest. And he, too, names the vague, ambiguous and blurred as an artistic characteristic. In his composition, he has a child call out the "cuckoo" of the game of hide-and-seek into the forest, thus heightening the magic of the scenery. "Only through the blurriness of the forest," Kling explains, "is it possible to perceive the forest as a whole." The less you focus on details, he says, the more intense this connection becomes: "You feel at home."

This photograph reminded him of a childhood feeling, he tells us: "I used to - in a positive sense - not see the trees for the forest." Back then, when the forest was more of a sensation than a place, "With the cuckoo, the forest is defined - and yet preserved in its indefiniteness. And everyone can remember the feeling of hiding, but actually wanting to be found."

For his soundscapes, Stefan Kling sometimes accompanies Julian Kirschler on his photographic forays to record local sounds, which he then incorporates into the music. There, these noises then meet computer-generated sounds, but also all percussion instruments, the musician's main field, or his recordings of piano, guitar, bass and experimental vocals. "My recording studio serves as a playground and gives me a neutral space without a value system. Everything that happens, happens." And sometimes sound just tips over there into noise or silence.

"Most of the time, the ideas don't come from the instrument," the composer explains. "I see the image and the music is there, intuitively." Then, after a few seconds, he puts the image away and tries to musically implement this basic feeling - in unendlichkeit.vergnügen.weinen, for example, of home and basic trust. So that it can remain universal, collective: "And so intense that everyone has felt it once," says the musician.

The FLOWshot carries.tief.ikone of 2019 shows the ominous swell of the Königsee in front of the Watzmann shrouding itself in gray-soaked absorbent cotton.



*///trägt.tief.ikone (wears.deep.icon)*

In Stefan Kling's soundscape, too, densely interwoven sound masses pile up ecstatically. The wildly puffing bellows of an accordion and its erupting chords. The drums and plucked guitar strings, Kling's hypnotic voice and the rhythmic thumping of the subwoofer in the background leads back to the photographic motif. You imagine to hear the bubbling of the leaden water and the underwater songs of the sirens of the Königsee.

And to feel the pull into the depths, in a way that is as threatening as it is beguiling. And what emerges is the core of art, addressing itself to human being: Receptivity. Many people, Julian Kirschler fears, are no longer able to answer questions about their own inner longings: "We become numb," the artist thinks: "External impressions no longer seem to do much with us. My question is how photography can still touch us." It seems that Julian Kirschler and Stefan Kling have found an answer to this question.

Evelyn Pschak von Rebay

## **Evelyn Pschak von Rebay**

The author studied art history and cultural management in France, Germany and Finland. Today she lives near Munich and writes about art, design, architecture and travel for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Salon Magazin*, *Emons Verlag* and others.

## **Julian Kirschler**, born 1964 in Pforzheim, photographer



Graduate of the Bavarian State School of Photography, Munich. Assistantships with several photographers, including the renowned photo reporter for international racing series Rainer Schlegelmilch. According to the artist, the experience he gained back then photographing moving cars from a moving car continues to shape his method of FLOWshots taken from helicopters, paragliders, boats, cars or pedelecs to this day. Since 2018, he has dedicated himself exclusively to the realization of a novel, immersive art and exhibition concept. For this purpose, he initiated the artist platform *YOU ARE HERE:@///cloud.cuckoo.land*, which realizes photographs, videographies and digital installations with specially composed soundscapes.

## **Stefan Kling**, born 1985 in Pforzheim, musician



The self-taught musician from a family of musicians already played "7 or 8 or 9 hours of music a day" during his school years. At the age of 17, Kling founded his first music school Percutio in Pforzheim with a focus on improvisation, composition and the playful approach to music, and at the age of 22, the second in Birkenfeld. Both schools are continued today by his former partner. He now publishes under the names *PHCK* and *FLOWERS ON MONDAY* on the internationally renowned electronic music label *ALL DAY I DREAM*, founded in New York in 2011.