

Viktoria Draganova: Only a couple of days ago, you told me that Jenifer Nails has been surprisingly kicked out of the space without any advance warning whatsoever. What happened? How do you feel about the changes, and about your future? Also, could you tell us a bit about Jenifer Nails, your beginnings and what was happening until now?

Gislind Köhler and Daniel Stempfer: At the end of 2013 we, Gislind Köhler and Daniel Stempfer, started to collaborate under the name Jenifer Nails. At the beginning of 2014, our collaboration took the form of a project space of the same name. We found a vacant space at the Kaiserpassage, a shopping mall in Frankfurt's city center, and made an agreement with the landlord allowing us to renovate and use the room for non-profit purposes. At that time there weren't many spaces in Frankfurt showing younger positions – and we wanted to fill this void with our curated exhibition program. In April 2014 we opened our first show. From then on we had exhibitions on a regular basis. We are interested in close collaborations with the artists we do projects with: almost all of the works we showed at Jenifer Nails were created specifically for the individual exhibitions. We are also interested in working with other curators, our show with Amy Granat and Annina Herzer was a first step in this direction.

Anyway, this was what was happening until a couple of weeks ago, when things suddenly changed. After our summer break and in the midst of our preparations for what we thought would be the upcoming show, we found we couldn't enter our space because somebody had changed the locks. It was a Sunday, so no one was around but we saw that the inside of the space resembled a construction site. Later that day we finally got hold of the guy who had changed the locks and met him at the scene of the crime, so to speak.

What had happened was that for some reason the landlord decided to give out the space we were using a second time. Without giving us any notice whatsoever. You would think this was the absurd part of the story but, sadly, it was just the beginning. Apparently the new tenant didn't question the landlord's decision and somehow failed to see the subtle signs of use in the space: such as a one-meter-wide lightbox above the door saying "Jenifer Nails", a sign behind the door saying "Summer Break", some artworks in the storage room, our press materials, drinks in the fridge, all of our tools... Well, to be fair: he saw the tools – and used them to remodel the place. So we were sitting in his/our place,

trying to understand the situation. We were offered some drinks (our drinks – luckily, we had left a full fridge behind) and talked. We listened to some plans he had for the space. Art-projects concerning the changing city, gentrification and dislocation. No kidding – you couldn't make this stuff up if you had to. The irony was lost on him and it became clear we had to talk to the person responsible, i.e. the landlord (this was still Sunday, so we had to wait until the next day)

Talking to the landlord sounds easier than it was – in our case it's a big real estate management company in which the responsibility for the "cultural spaces" seems to change on a weekly basis. But we found out through other channels that a lot of spaces in the area were being taken over by some initiative to prettify this part of the city. Basically, a collaboration between conservative politics and local gastronomy, whose aim is to draw some young-professional, after-work audience to the district and to "reclaim the block" (from whom? for whom? we don't know). The idea is not new though, especially in Frankfurt where art as a backdrop for cocktail-events is the modus operandi for most places. There's probably no real villain in this story, just a couple of people trying to increase their sandwich-sales. But there's a lot of carelessness and ignorance, and within two weeks it destroyed what we had been working on for almost two years. (It's important to note here that while we're the first to go, we're not the only ones.)

Recently, the local press started to question this pretty outspoken gentrification project and our landlord's role in it. And when journalists began to investigate – after all our failed attempts to find out who was responsible and not getting any answers – we finally got a call with a promise to clarify the whole issue. Apparently in terms of publicity the whole thing has started to backfire on some people. While this doesn't really change things for us, we don't think anyone can blame us if we're not exactly sad to see it happening.

There might be some silver lining to all of this. We're forced to "pivot", to use a term from the startup world, but it might lead to new things. For the near future, we'll be running the project in a nomadic fashion. We've just found a space for an upcoming show as we speak. However, the whole situation is all new to us – until very recently we had our own space, so it will take us some time to adjust and recover, but we're optimistic. Let's see what the future holds.



Jenifer Nails is a collaboration between Gislind Köhler and Daniel Stempfer founded in 2013. From 2014 until September 2015 the curator and artist team ran a project space by the same name in Frankfurt/Main. Jenifer Nails presented works by Artun Alaska Arasli, Tina Braegger, Cédric Eisenring, Katharina Fengler, Dominik Gohla, Elisabeth Greinecker, Lanny Jordan Jackson, Brendan Jaks, Sam Korman, Pakui Hardware, Carlos Reyes, Edo Rosenblith, Daniel Stempfer and Federico Del Vecchio.

www.jenifernails.com

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SWIMMING POOL

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SWIMMING POOL is a space for art in Sofia. It hosts artistic and curatorial projects as well as readings, screenings and performances. Its premises are located on a rooftop in the city center of Sofia. Built in 1939, they consist of inner spaces as well as a terrace with a swimming pool situated in the middle. Director of Swimming Pool is Viktoria Draganova.

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