

# WEATHERING



JULIANE TÜBKE



RELATING TO WATER, SPACES, AND OTHER AGENTS:  
ON THE JOURNEY BEHIND JULIANE TÜBKE’S PROJECT *WEATHERING*.  
REBECCA JOHN



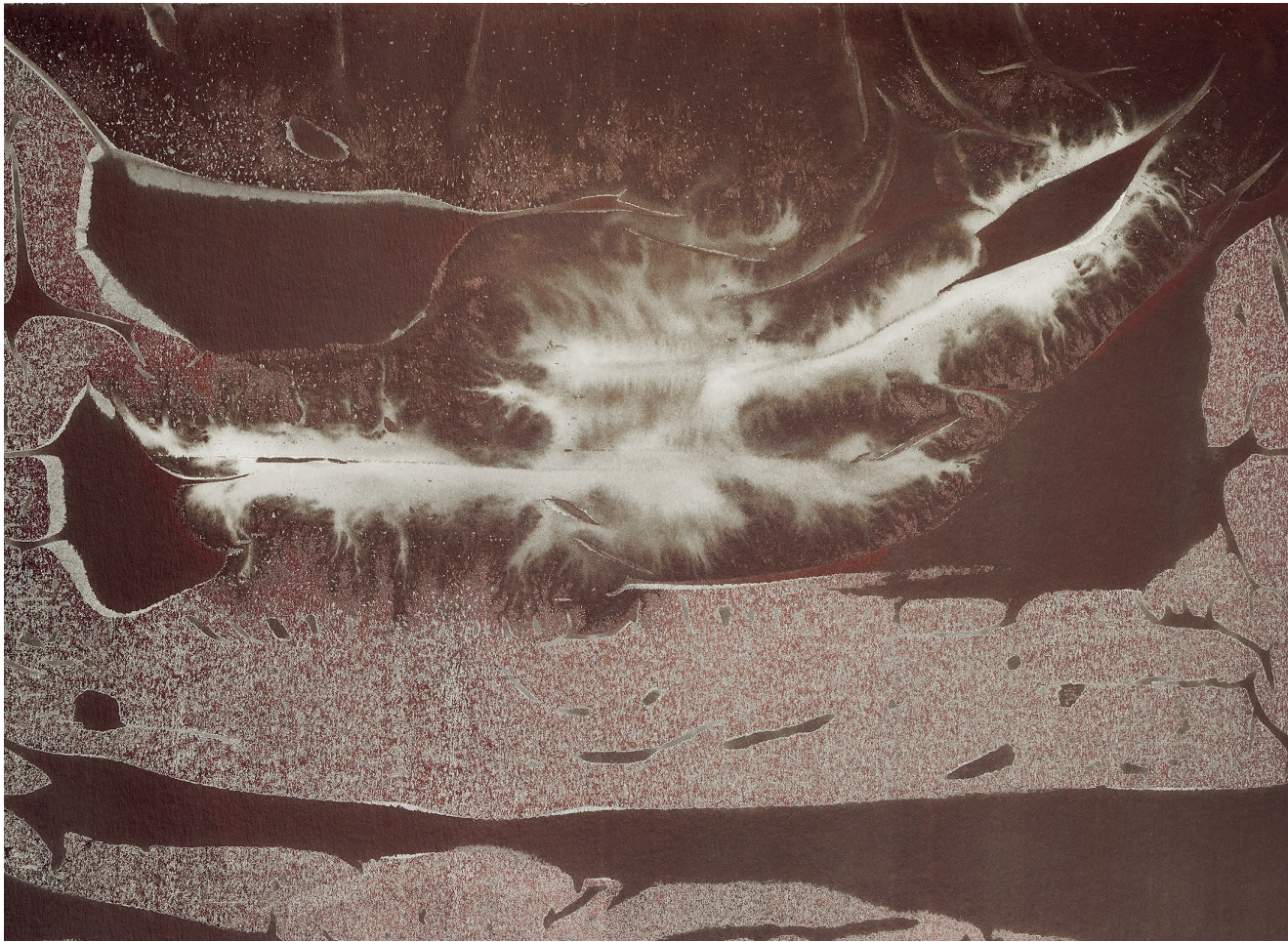
LETTING THE MATERIAL SPEAK

In her previous works *fac simile* (2017/18), *tentare* (2018), and *nota* (2019), Juliane Tübke explored the imprint technique of epigraphy—the study of written remains, for example antique engravings in marble, metal, or clay—by twisting its purpose around: the stones, concrete blocks, and walls that she used for her imprints were no carriers of ancient script; instead, the physical contact of stone and paper was the only moment of “writing,” resulting in the stone’s surface structure leaving its traces on paper. In Tübke’s words, the stone thereby became a “co-creator of the final image,” which consequently told the story of the material itself, its many layers of erosion, leftovers of paint or posters, and other crumbling crusts of time. With Roland Barthes, one could read these works and their semiotic quality as an “emanation of the referent” which makes it possible for the “real body” of the referent, in this case the stone, to touch the viewers despite of their temporal and spatial distance.<sup>1</sup>

Tübke’s new project, *Weathering*, can be seen as a continuation of those thoughts. Moving from the materiality of stone to water, this body of work seems to ask: how can water take the role of an active co-creator of textual and visual works instead of being a passive referent in a representation process? The multipart project, which combines installations, a poem, and a watercolor series, gives us the sense that the artist does not think of representation from its end product; on the contrary, when she uses the agency of water as inspiration and driving force, the project can be understood as a reflection on questions of representation from within.

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), 80.





When the heat increases  
the hot wind will blow  
The wind will be blowing all the time

A

B



C





## LETTING THE JOURNEY BE THE GUIDE

To get closer to ***Weathering***, let us go back to the context in which it started, namely Tübke's artist residency in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala,<sup>2</sup> located at the Malabar Coast, which is flanked by the Arabian Sea. Interested in sculptural qualities of architectural spaces, Tübke initially wanted to produce imprints of urban surfaces in the port city of Kochi for a site-specific installation that could speak of the memory of the city's houses and their aging skin-like surfaces, marked by weather and time.

Once she reached Kochi in July 2019, she was welcomed by the monsoon climate typical for this region and time of the year: a few hours of rainfall followed by interludes of sunshine, with an average high temperature of 29°C. Only when the weather allowed it, Tübke could explore the area and go on motorbike excursions along the coast, together with Jith Joseph, a member of the Biennale Foundation who became the assistant for her project on site. One day, when they made it to Kumbalangi, which is an island village in the outskirts of Kochi situated amidst the backwaters, they met several families from local fishing communities who invited them to their homes. With the help of Joseph who could translate between English and Malayalam, Tübke got into a conversation with Lakshmi, an older woman who told her about the village and its changing climate over the last 50 years. Like in many other conversations that the artist had in Kochi, one of the central themes was the weather, especially the clouds over Kerala and the predicted rainfall. For most people, the severe floods of August 2018, which had devastated large parts of the region, were still very present. This was also the case for Lakshmi whose house is situated in a rather isolated location, on a small strip of land surrounded by water.

<sup>2</sup> Tübke was part of *bangaloREsidency* at Pepper House in Fort Kochi, an artist residency program initiated by Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore and carried out in collaboration with Pepper House Residency which is part of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale.





## LETTING CONVERSATIONS DEVELOP & GIVING RELATIONS A SPACE

Tübke sensed that this encounter with Lakshmi could be the first of a series of conversations guiding the way for the project. Leaving behind the architecture of the city, the artist instead visited Kumbalangi several times, conducted interviews, roamed around the area, and took photographs. When she explored the surroundings of Lakshmi's house and the places that played a role in her stories, she also took clay imprints of these places which showed marks of the last monsoon rains. The imprints became a basis of the works she later called *Shells* (2020). Like a fingerprint on paper or a hoofprint in earth, these imprints follow a comparably semiologic method as her earlier works with stone: carrying traces that speak of the exact moment of contact with house walls and tree trunks in Kumbalangi, the surfaces of the work series *Shells* also transport a history of repeated rain and erosion.

Between her excursions, Tübke not only reviewed the photographs and experimented with the imprints, but she also worked on the interview transcripts which she would later turn into a poem of short fragments, both in the original language Malayalam and its English translation. The poem, titled *Puthenthodu Bridge* (2020), can be seen as a co-creation of the artist and Lakshmi. It speaks about the many shapes that water can take: salty water of the sea carrying goods and people in boats; fresh tap water nurturing families; rain-water essential for farming; dangerous water of the floods washing away whole landscapes and villages; as well as mystic stories of water changing color and deciding over life and death of people as well as animals.





## പുത്തൻതോട് പാലം

അന്ന് വഞ്ചിക്ക് പോകുമായിരുന്നു വെള്ളത്തിന്  
അവിടെ ആ പാലത്തിന്റെ അടുത്തൊരു പൈപ്പ് ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു  
അവിടെ നിന്നാണ് വെള്ളം കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നത്

ഇവിടെ അന്ന് ഉപ്പ് വെള്ളമായിരുന്നു  
എന്നാൽ മഴ പെയ്യുന്ന മാസം  
വെള്ളത്തിന് ഉപ്പുണ്ടാവില്ല

ഇന്ന് മഴ കുറവാണ്  
വേറെ വ്യത്യാസം ഒന്നുമില്ല  
ഇപ്പോൾ മഴ കിട്ടുന്നില്ല

കഴിഞ്ഞ വെള്ളപ്പൊക്കത്തിൽ ഇവിടെ അങ്ങനെ ബാധിച്ചില്ല  
വെള്ളം കയറി  
എന്നിട്ട് ആ ഏറ്റത്തിന് ഇറങ്ങിപ്പോയി  
നിന്നൊന്നുമില്ല വെള്ളം

പണ്ടൊരിക്കൽ സൂര്യഗ്രഹണം ഉണ്ടായ സമയത്ത്  
എല്ലാവരും പേടിച്ചു

വയസായ ആൾക്കാർക്കൊക്കെ നല്ലവണം ബാധിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടാവും പക്ഷെ  
ഞങ്ങൾ ചെറുപ്പം ആയിരുന്നല്ലോ ആ സമയത്ത്

വെള്ളമൊക്കെ നീല നിറമായി  
വെള്ളത്തിലെ സാധനങ്ങൾ ഒക്കെ ചത്തുപൊങ്ങി

ചൂടുകൂടുമ്പോൾ ഒരു ചൂട് കാറ്റുണ്ടാകും  
എപ്പോഴും കാറ്റ് ആയിരിക്കും

അന്യന്റെ മുതൽ ആഗ്രഹിക്കരുത്  
എന്നും പണി എടുത്തു തന്നെ തിന്നണം

## Puthenthodu Bridge

We used to take the boat  
There was a tap near the bridge  
We used to take water from there

Here the water was salty  
Only during the rainy season  
we got fresh water without salt

The rainfall has decreased  
There is no other change  
Now we don't get rains in time

The last flood did not affect this place  
The water rushed  
and it went down immediately  
The water didn't stay at all

When there was the solar eclipse  
everyone got scared

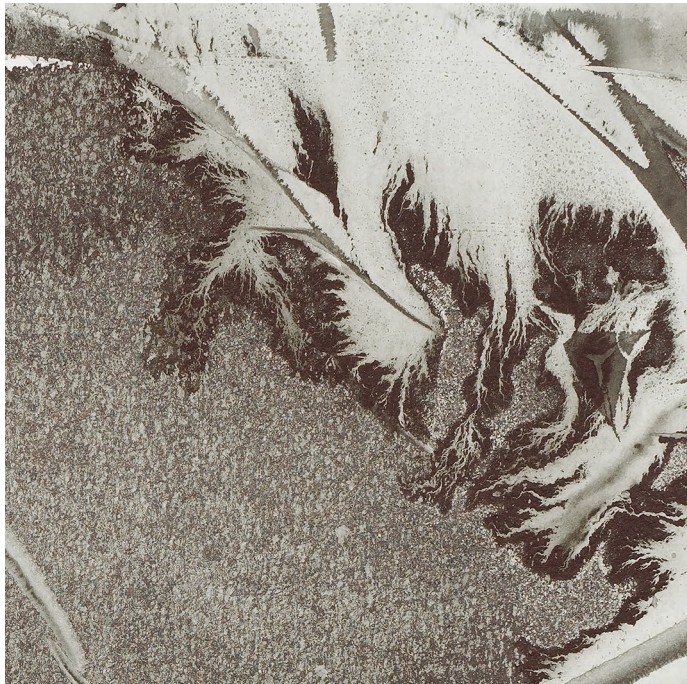
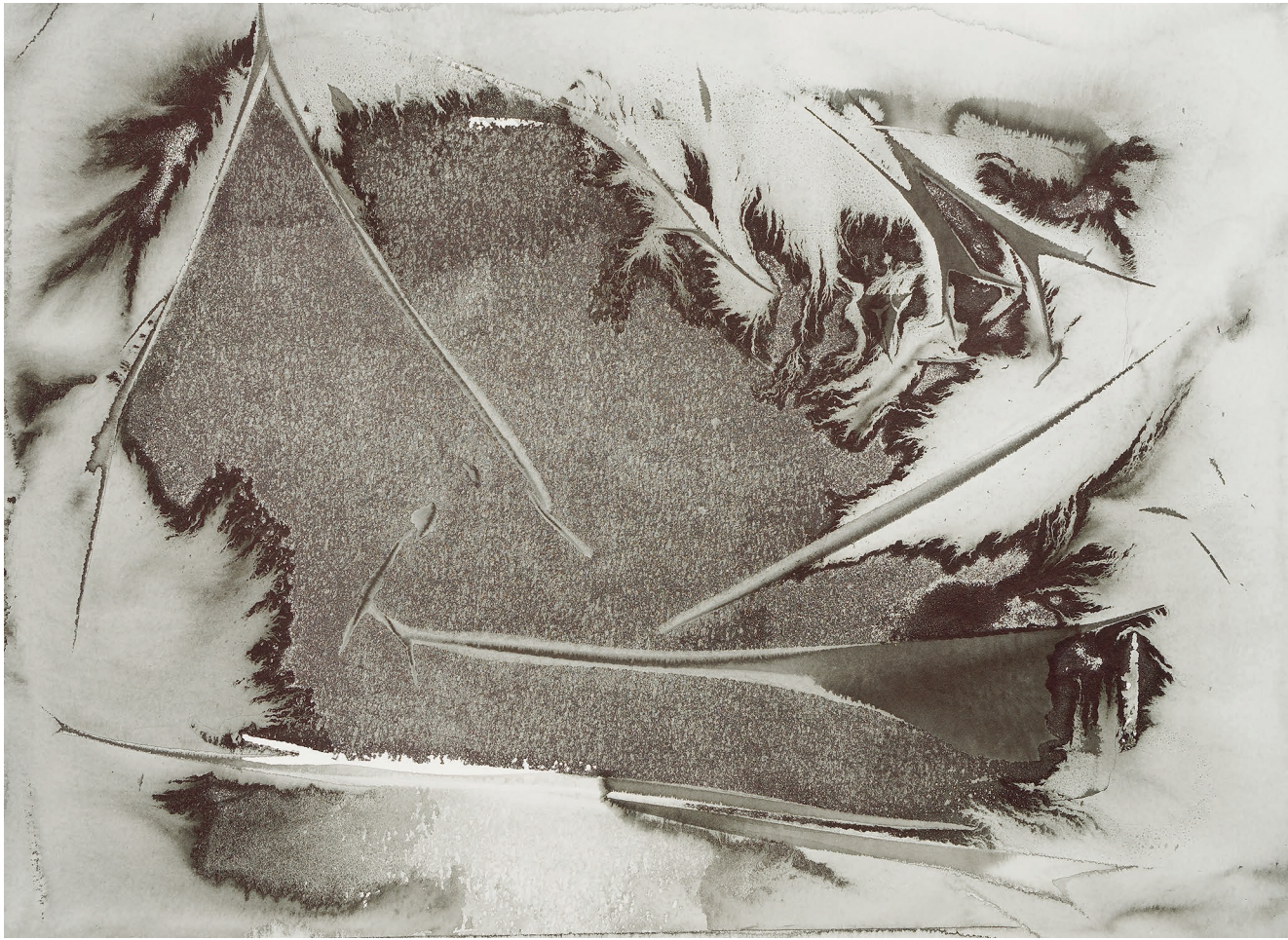
It must have affected the older people  
but we were young at that time

The water turned blue  
Everything under water died

When the heat increases  
the hot wind will blow  
The wind will be blowing all the time

Don't covet someone else's wealth  
You should work hard and eat





To call *Weathering* an interactive or “relational” art-work, to borrow a term from Nicolas Bourriaud, would be a clumsy reading of both Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* and Tübke’s practice. The main part of her artistic journey did not use “being-together as a central theme”<sup>3</sup> in the sense of Bourriaud’s idea of human inter-subjectivity. Instead, it is worth thinking of aesthetic practices like Tübke’s through an extended idea of “material relationality,” seeing the work as a sensuous interplay “involving diverse agents.”<sup>4</sup> In this case, the artist’s journey developed between the agents of weather/water, architectural/natural surroundings, and human beings. It is the relationality of these agents that she decided to give space for so that it could form the outcome of her artistic process.

### LETTING WATER SHAPE FORMS

Back in her studio in Fort Kochi, Tübke felt that she had to give space to the dynamic momentum of water—this “agent” which took such a prominent role in the conversations. She therefore experimented with a watercolor series later called *Cochin Tides* (2020). Tübke first coated the paper surface with a thin film of water so that even a slight point of contact with an ink tintured brush would result in a dynamic color flow. The water thereby became co-creator of the image, deciding upon the final shades and forms. Tübke also experimented with found material from her excursions such as fishing nets and plastic foils that left traces on the wetted and colored paper surface. Here as well, the amount of water decided if the traces would either show with sharper contrasts or would dissolve with the rest of the colors. The results of this watercolor series are abstract visuals in sometimes subdued, sometimes shimmering colors, activating the imagination of the viewers who cannot know how exactly these mysterious color gradients and fine white contour lines in between were created.

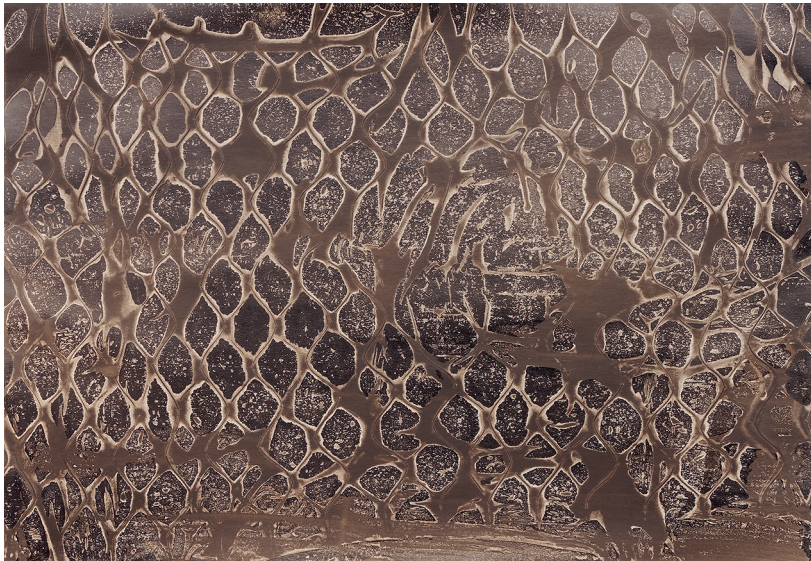
This is where the drawings of *Cochin Tides* bring us back to the question of representation. The series is not only evidence of the dynamic agency of water, but the composition and dissections of these watercolors also remind us of the ways in which topographic maps represent riverbeds and delta regions: they recall fields or landscapes with streams of water, seen from above. To use Michael Taussig’s analysis of the magic of mimesis: here, imitation and contact are blending so intimately with each other “that it becomes impossible to separate image from substance in the power of the final effect.”<sup>5</sup> This magic of mimesis continues even after the watercolors have dried, since the water can still be seen as image and substance, as reference and referent at the same time.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presse Du Reel, 2002), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Christoph Brunner, Ines Kleesattel, “Aesthetics of the Earth. Reframing Relational Aesthetics Considering Critical Ecologies,” *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, volume 11 (2019), 106-173, here 107. To develop a concept of “Earthly Relational Aesthetics,” they refer to Nicolas Bourriaud as well as to Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity. A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 53.





A  
*COCHIN TIDE 19*, 2020  
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER  
29 × 41 CM

B  
*PUTHENTHODU BRIDGE*, 2020  
FRAGMENT OF AN INTERVIEW  
WITH LAKSHMI T.K.  
(6. AUGUST 2019)

C  
*SHELL 4*, 2020  
CLAY, SPRAY PAINT  
16,5 × 6 × 1,5 CM

D  
*COCHIN TIDE 25*, 2020  
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER  
29 × 41 CM

E  
*COCHIN TIDE 7*, 2019  
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER  
20 × 29 CM

F  
*SHELL 3*, 2020  
CLAY, SPRAY PAINT  
26,5 × 13,5 × 1,5 CM

G  
*SHELL 8*, 2020  
CLAY, SPRAY PAINT  
10,5 × 10,5 × 1,5 CM

H  
*SHELL 9*, 2020  
CLAY, SPRAY PAINT  
9 × 13,5 × 1,5 CM

I  
*SHELL 5*, 2020  
CLAY, SPRAY PAINT  
6 × 9 × 1,5 CM

J  
*PUTHENTHODU BRIDGE*, 2020  
FRAGMENTS OF AN INTERVIEW  
WITH LAKSHMI T.K.  
(6. AUGUST 2019)

K  
*COCHIN TIDE 26*, 2020  
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER  
29 × 41 CM

L  
*COCHIN TIDE 8*, 2020  
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER  
20 × 29 CM

**JULIANE TÜBKE** studied Art History in a Global Context at the Free University of Berlin before completing her studies at Berlin University of the Arts with Prof. Monica Bonvicini. Upon graduation, she was awarded the President's Fine Arts Award. For her mostly site-specific projects, she has repeatedly been invited to participate in international residency programs, most recently she was a fellow at the Goethe-Institut's bangaloREsidency. Tübke's works have been shown in numerous exhibitions, including at Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, Pepper House / Kochi Biennale Foundation, India (both 2019), and District Berlin (2018). The artist lives and works in Berlin.

**REBECCA JOHN** is an art historian, researcher, and curator invested in transnational perspectives on art. She studied Art History, Literature, and Media Studies at the University of Konstanz, University Paris Diderot, Humboldt University of Berlin, as well as at the School of Arts and Aesthetics of Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. In 2019, she joined the DFG graduate program Cultures of Critique at Leuphana University in Lünen-burg, where she is currently writing her PhD thesis on archival critique in contemporary art in the context of Lebanon and Palestine/Israel.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Lakshmi T.K. for the interview  
Translation during the interview (English / Malayalam):  
Jith Joseph  
Transcription of the audio files (Malayalam): Bobby Mohan  
Translation of the interview (Malayalam / English):  
Dhanya Vijayakumar  
Copy Editing (Malayalam): Gautam Das



**Imprint**  
*Juliane Tübke – Weathering*

**Published by**  
Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt, Goldrausch Frauen-netzwerk Berlin e. V., Herzbergstraße 40–43, 10365 Berlin.  
A professional development programme for female visual artists.

**Project Director** Hannah Kruse  
**Project Coordinator** Kira Dell  
**Graduate Trainee** Jil Zepp  
**Staff Accountant and Administration** Theresa Strebling

**Text** Rebecca John

**Design** Lena Wessel

**Copy Editing** Chloe Stead

**Photography** Juliane Tübke

**Image Editing** Eberle & Eisfeld | Berlin

**Production Management** Red Cape Production, Berlin

**Printing** tbc

© 2020 for this publication: Juliane Tübke and Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt

Published in conjunction with the exhibition  
*Sirene – Goldrausch 2020*  
7 November 2020 – 10 January 2021  
Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien  
Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin

[www.goldrausch.org](http://www.goldrausch.org)

The Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Senate Department for Health, Long-Term Care and Gender Equality.





