

Valentin Sohn

CV & Portfolio

10.09.2025

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CV



Name, Surname: Sohn, Valentin
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Education

2024-2025 **Erasmus** at LUCA School of Arts, Brussels, Belgium
since 2022 **B.A. Artistic Design: Photography and Visual Media** Hochschule Bielefeld
2021 - 2022 **European Studies**, Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg
2012 - 2020 **A-levels**, Rotteck-Gymnasium Freiburg

Work experience

2024/03 - **Content-Production & Social Media - AK Asyl e.V.** (Bielefeld)
2024/07 Complete media production of explainer and promotional videos (concept development, camera, sound, editing) featuring staff from independent refugee counseling.

2023/03 - **Product photography & Website administration - Schlafberatung Scholz** (Bielefeld)
2024/08 Product photography, upkeep of multiple online shops, furniture assembly, and delivery

2021/02 - **Environmental Monitoring - Terra Sylvestris (Conservation-NGO)** (Greece)
2021/05 Independent scientific data collection on local ecosystems

Exhibitions

2025/07-09 **Pluriversum at Satellit Bielefeld** - Exhibited series *Looking for Paradise* as part of the Denken, Fühlen, Handeln festival on the theme of Fabulation & Utopias

2024/08 **Stadt im Wandel at Kunststück e.V. Mainz** - Exhibited series *Urbane Metamorphose*

2024/04 **Zwischenraum with HSBI Bielefeld** - Exhibited series *Warteräume*, a photographic exploration of non-places

Excerpt of attended courses

Documentary photography (Roman Bezjak)
Visual storytelling combined with research and analysis, conception and realization of documentary projects

Landscapes, photscapes, dreamscapes (Kirsten Wagner, Emanuel Raab)
Exploration of the constructed nature of landscapes and their representation through various different imaging techniques.

Analog and Experimental Photography (Katharina Bosse)
Concepts of experimental photography, alternative analog photographic processes, work in the photo lab

Skills

Software: Proficient in Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Lightroom, Premiere Pro, InDesign, Audition), Microsoft Office, and Blender 3D

Creative Experience: Documentary photography, conceptual work, video production, studio photography, and magazine design

Personal Strengths: Organized, curious, reliable, communicative, open-minded

German: Native-speaker
English: C1
French: A2

Driverslicense class B

Since 2023: Member of Fotobus e.V.
Since 2025: Member of Freelens e.V.

Portfolio

How can you ban my existence

05/2025, Istanbul - Portraits and Interviews

Portrait of a young generation of Turkish artists who are seeking new ways to express themselves within a repressive system and, after years of conflict with their own government, are searching for new opportunities abroad.



Handbound hardcover, 96 pages















When they took the mayor of Istanbul,
nobody could do a thing. But there
were protests.
Though the Turkish people are for-
getting so easily. There were boycotts.
There were protests. And now there's no
protests, no one boycotting.

They arrested our classmates. They beat
our classmates. They beat our friends.
They beat me. But our people forget
quickly.



Ekmel

One year ago, Ekmel moved with his girlfriend from Istanbul to Leuven in Belgium. Currently he is doing his master's at LUCA-School of Arts in Brussels. I talked to him about the struggles of adapting to a new life in Belgium, his perspective on Turkey from abroad and his plans for after the master.

I really don't want to go back to Istanbul. Last year I was working in Turkey and especially in my field in animation, the situation is quite bad. The industry, the payments, the work, it's not rewarding. People don't pay you much and they expect you to work unpaid overtime. You don't have any unions - you don't have any rights to defend yourself. Most of the time they don't even give you a proper contract. So, yeah, that's how I worked. Without a contract, I didn't have any guarantee; they could have just fired me. Later, when I earned, let's say, 5,000 liras, they would give me 2,000 officially and 3,000 in cash to avoid paying taxes. They cut on taxes, and on my retirement money, so they also steal from me.

Are you hoping to find a better job in Belgium after your studies?

Yes, as soon as I came here, I applied for studios, and they were quite responsive. Even if they don't have work for me right now, they will still send me a reply, acknowledge my message and put me in their database. In Turkey it feels like they don't consider me as a proper human being, so they don't even care to message me back or they would just wash me off.

I guess you still have family in Istanbul, how often do you get to see them, now that you live in Belgium?

My girlfriend and I both would love to see our family, of course, see our friends, we miss them, they miss us. But the thing is, we have to get our

money to finance our next year. So, this summer is the only time that we can work full time to get enough money. So, if both of us get an opportunity to work in Belgium, then it might not be the best time to visit Turkey, because that's our priority right now. We're just trying to build a new life here in a way. Right now it's the hardest part, the hardest year. I would say, this first year we are trying to adapt financially and culturally. Also mentally, you know, we have to adapt to all the changes.

For example, a couple of days ago, I went to a supermarket. The store was pretty empty, and I was about to pay, when there was this old guy behind me who grabbed my shoulder. He was trying to teach me that I had to use my shopping cart in a certain way. You know, he was very aggressive with his sharp hand movements, and I just felt kind of guilty and really bad about it.

I mean, the guy was quite old, maybe he was just trying to teach a young kid something. But at the same time, I was like, what if I had, you know, blue eyes and blond hair? Would it be the same thing? It just made me wonder, maybe this guy wasn't racist or maybe he was just impatient. I don't know, maybe he wasn't racist at all. Maybe it wasn't about my skin tone, my hair colour, my eyes, but that question, it just, it just popped into my mind, you know. And if I was in Turkey, I would not have this topic. It was the first time I came across something like that and it was kind of a shocking moment for me. Like okay, this kind of stuff can happen here. I'm not at all in my Country. I did this choice to make a better life, but there's something that will always haunt me back. You know, wherever I go...

Some Turkish citizens living abroad got into trouble when visiting their family at home, and the police checked their phone-contacts and social-media posts when crossing the border. Is this something you worry about?

I don't consider myself as really threatened, but

you never know. I mean, they recently jailed lots of students so maybe at the airport, they would look at me, my posts and Emails and so on. Though I never really thought it would be the case for me because you never think that it will be the case for you. But it's Turkey so you never know.

My main concern would be my family, if you for example come up with a cartoon that criticises Erdoğan, you might get problems and when you get into Turkey, maybe you'll get detained, or maybe your entry would get refused by the government. In that case, you have to seek asylum. I was considering seeking asylum in the EU. But then you won't be able to go back to Turkey for like five years, which is a quite long time for me because my dad is sick. He was diagnosed with cancer a couple of years ago. So, in this situation I would not want to take a risk of not being able to be with him for so long.

I guess also lots of your friends are still in Istanbul. Do you keep in contact with them?

A week ago, I talked with one of them. We had a long phone call. We talked about the job market in Turkey and Belgium. And eventually it comes to the political and economic situation in Turkey, and how people are not happy at all. How it affects people in daily life, culturally, financially. And even though I'm here, far away in Belgium, it still affects me.

Overall, the momentum in Turkey has changed a lot. After the 19th of March (day of Imamoglu's arrest), people were doing protests, and there were boycotts. The government was quite harsh against people. The government is scared, because the people are protesting. And even some old conservative supporters of the government are kind of changing their opinions. Especially people who are retired, they are worried. Their savings, their retirement money is losing its value. It directly affects them as a person. But I don't think the governmental situation will change for

a while. It will take quite some time because Erdoğan doesn't want to back up, he doesn't want to step back at all. He just plays it hard all the time - that's how he works.

I still feel the need to watch the news and to keep up with what's going on. But it's pretty hard to keep track of what's happening. One day Imamoglu gets sent to the jail and the other day you open the news and it's all about a guy having a relation with his mother-in-law. There's something serious happening about the Turkish democracy - or whatever it's called. I don't even know if it's called democracy at the moment. And then all they show is random gossip. They're trying to distract from what's going on with Turkey. At some point it's so hard to inform yourself and you just lose the sense of reality.

It makes you depressed. My girlfriend, she was quite emotional throughout that time, especially after the 19th of March, after Imamoglu got sent to jail, she just wanted to go back to Turkey and protest there. I understand the need; I understand the frustration. In the end we just went to protest in Brussels, but it felt like shit, you know, we were there - like how many? Like just 100 people protesting in Brussels - for what? It doesn't really make sense, but we did what we could do from here. On one hand it's great to be in Belgium now with a better perspective, but it's also strange to leave Istanbul behind like this...



Yağmur

Yağmur is in her early 20s and studies Italian Literature at Istanbul University. She writes lyrics for other musicians and has recently also started to sing her own songs. We talked on the phone about strategies of dissent under the Turkish government and her future plans to leave Turkey:

The current *political situation* in Turkey has a big impact on my life. Sometimes I feel like our future is uncertain and it is in someone else's hands – that can be really discouraging for us. Things like freedom of speech and access to independent information are limited and sometimes forbidden for us, especially in the last weeks. It can be very difficult to stay informed or to express our opinions freely, openly.

Often, we feel like we have to find metaphors or symbols or humour to express our thoughts and to convey messages that might be too risky to say openly. That makes it harder for me to express my thoughts, because I have to think about these codes before sharing something. It inhibits my creativity.

But even though there are restrictions, people find ways to speak up and resist through their art, using metaphors. Social media plays a big role for us in this regard – For example, last week we decided to make a boycott in our country, and on the boycott day influencers made videos like “today I don't have any money”. Because it is forbidden and banned for us to say directly that we are doing boycotts. Other influencers said “we have to stop using alcohol because it is so not healthy for us” because when you buy alcohol, half of the price goes to the government in taxes. People say things like “half of it goes to becoming fat, so if you want to lose weight, you have to cut away alcohol”. People also use other codes like the *one, three, one, two* code and so on...

Not everyone will fully understand it, allowing them to express dissent or critic without direct confrontation. Additionally, the underground art scene and the private gatherings become more

important spaces for free expression. People organize secret exhibitions, performances, or poetry readings where they can share their work safely. Many artists see their work as a form of resistance. They believe art can inspire change and keep hope alive during these times.

In our country, young people don't know anything else. Especially the recent generation always lived under this political system. We are used to hiding, but it makes everything harder. And for me as an artist and as a bisexual person, I have to find new ways to reach my people, especially from the LGBTQ community.

After all of that, I'm afraid to create. Not because of critics, but because of my life and future. My dad has a job with the government, which makes it more difficult because I'm afraid that he might lose his job because of it.

How do people in turkey exchange information about what's happening in the country? What systems are used organize and inform each other?

Right now, we don't have any trustworthy sources for informing ourselves. Because the government controls the media and people find it increasingly difficult to access accurate live information. This creates confusion and mistrust. We can use our WhatsApp groups, our Instagram accounts and maybe Twitter but other people are also in these communities. And when a person writes some information in that group, we can't be sure who wrote it or who else will read it. For example, in the last weeks people organized in a group to protest in a location and meet up somewhere.

Everybody went there, but then there was the police waiting, and they got caught by them. Thus, it is getting much harder for us to have conversations and to get information – it is so difficult for us to get truthful information.

We turn more and more individual. They want us to not trust each other, so that we won't get together, because when we are just by ourselves, we are not strong in their eyes.

How do you look into the future?

As for planning my future, it's a bit challenging living here, because my opportunities feel quite limited, also due to the increased costs. I will drop out of my university in Istanbul. I will move to Italy and find a job there. I speak some Italian already and I am planning to move there with my two friends – we have the same plan for our future.

A different friend of mine moved to Serbia this winter. She had nothing – like no money, no job, no title, nothing. But she is so happy right now. She works there on her art, she's a painter. So yeah, I thought about it, and I said, I have a title, I have education, I have a bit of money. So yeah, I can do that maybe. Perhaps if I move to Italy, it will also be easier for me to get to know other artists to work with.

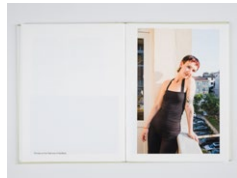
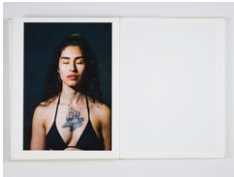
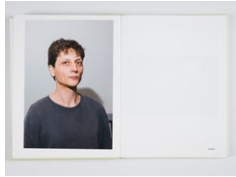
What are your hopes or dreams for moving out of turkey?

It might not sound very realistic, but I really want to be part of the Eurovision Song Contest one day whether as a contestant or even just as an audience member. Yes, it may seem like a small wish, but since 2012, Turkey has banned participation in the contest, citing reasons like “LGBTQ promotion” and “the bearded woman.” It's not just that we're not competing – the event isn't even broadcast on national TV anymore.

I've been fascinated by Eurovision since I was a child; not only because it's fun, but also because it's a multicultural event centered around music. It always inspired me. Seeing our country's achievements and culture represented on that stage used to fill me with pride.

Now that we've lost that presence, it makes me really sad. Honestly, one of the biggest sources of motivation for my dream to move to Europe is this contest and everything it represents.



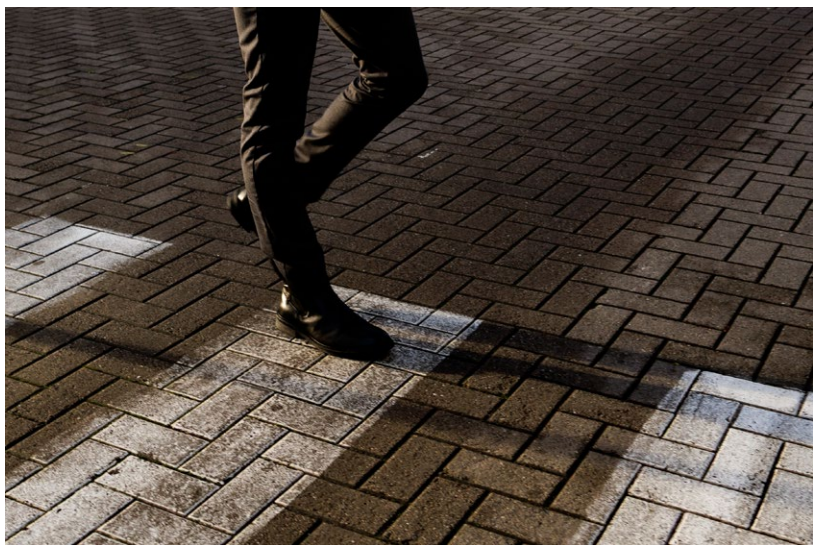




Travailler dans le quartier européen

Between the Trône metro station and Ambiorix Square lies the European Quarter, directly adjacent to one of Brussels' poorest neighbourhoods, St. Joose. Many of the people who live and work here describe the European Quarter as a parallel world to the rest of Brussels.

The photo project accompanies an arms lobbyist, embassy interns and employees of the EU institutions through their everyday lives in a highly competitive, career-oriented working environment. Who are the ambitious people trying to gain a foothold here in the power centre of Europe?

















Collecting?

The series *Collecting?* takes a close look at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, and its colonial heritage.

The museum has a collection of 120,000 ethnographic artefacts from Central Africa, most of which were captured under Belgium's brutal colonial rule – parts of which are on public display in the museum on the outskirts of Brussels.

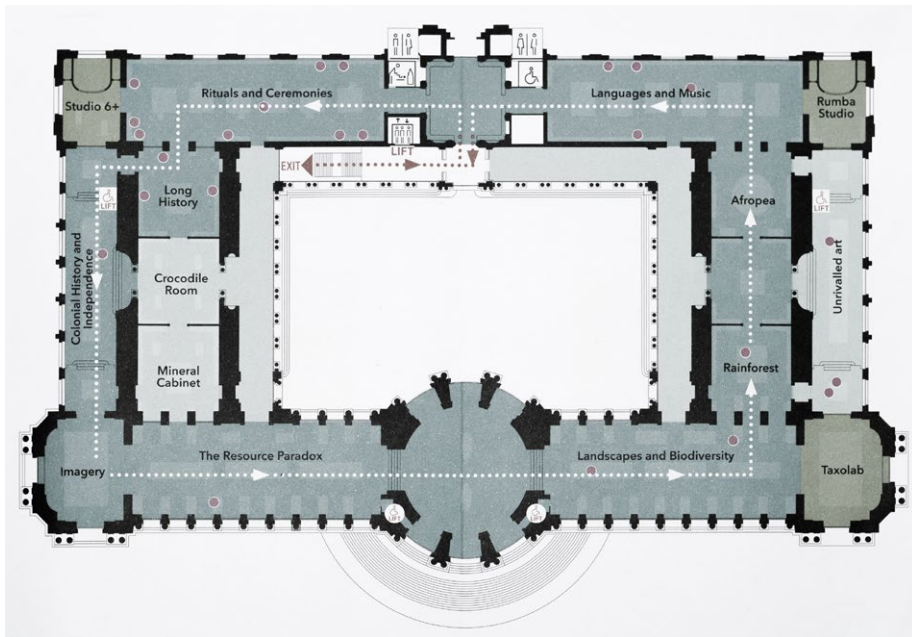
The project addresses the question of what goals today's ethnographic collections pursue and how they deal with their own colonial history.









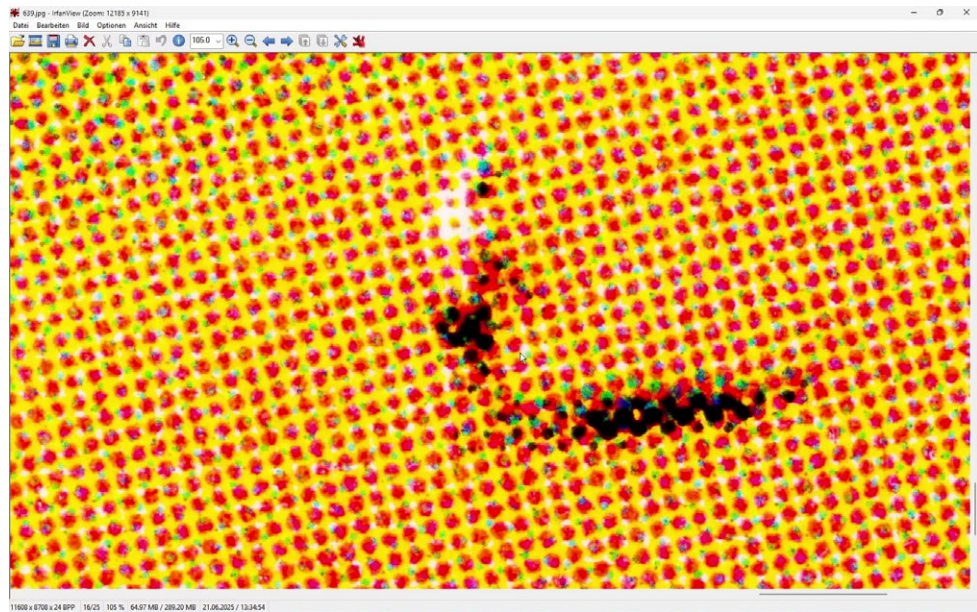
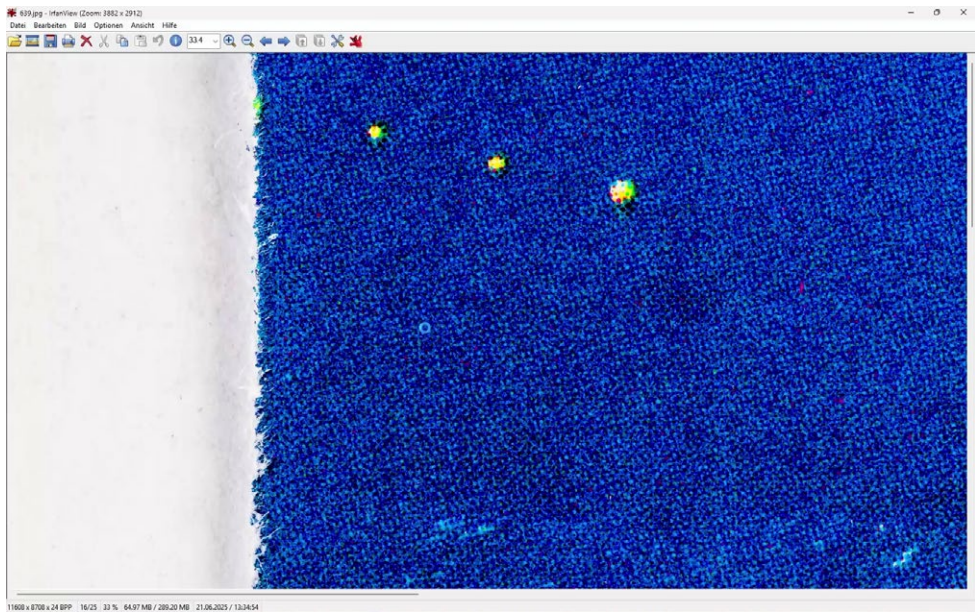
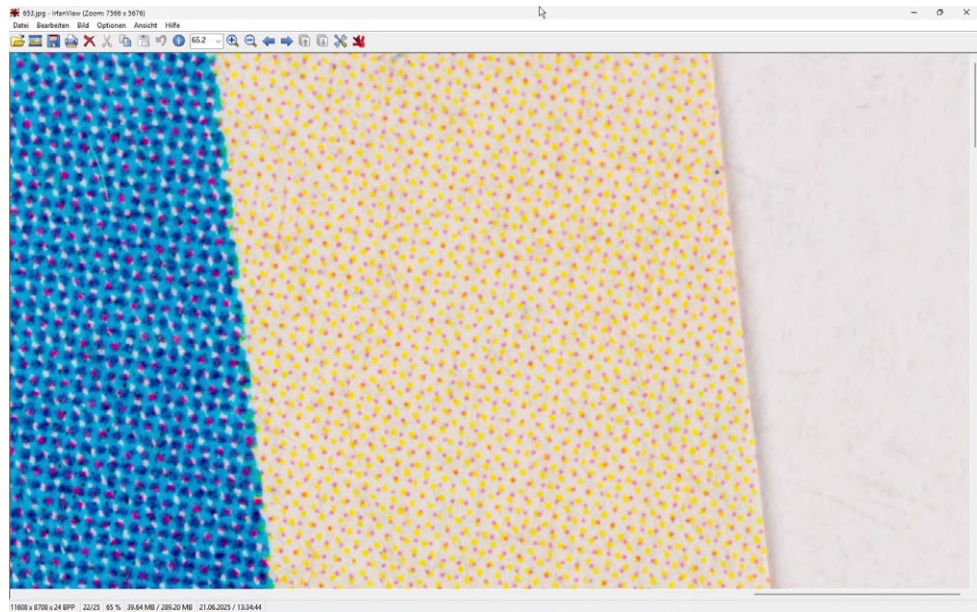
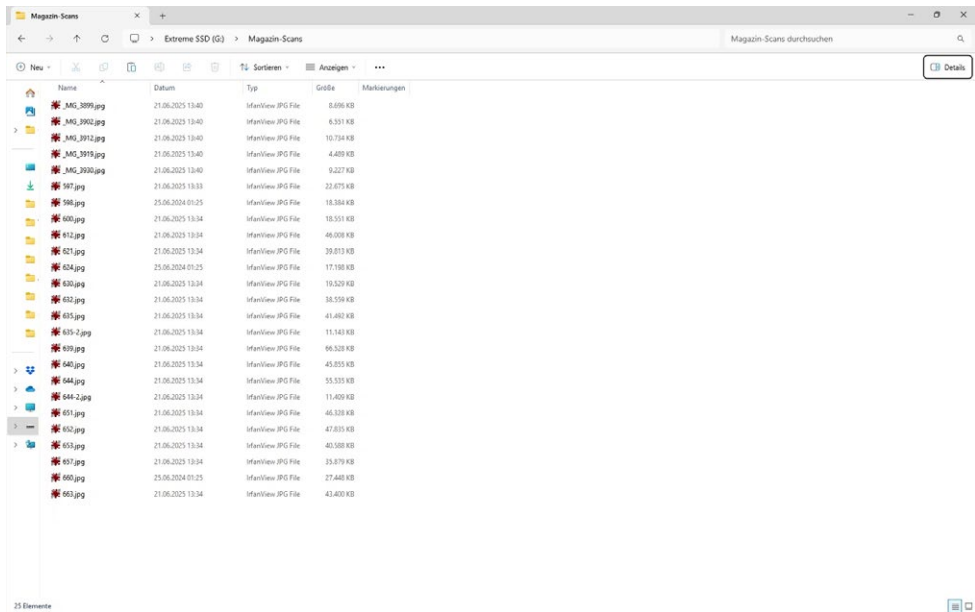


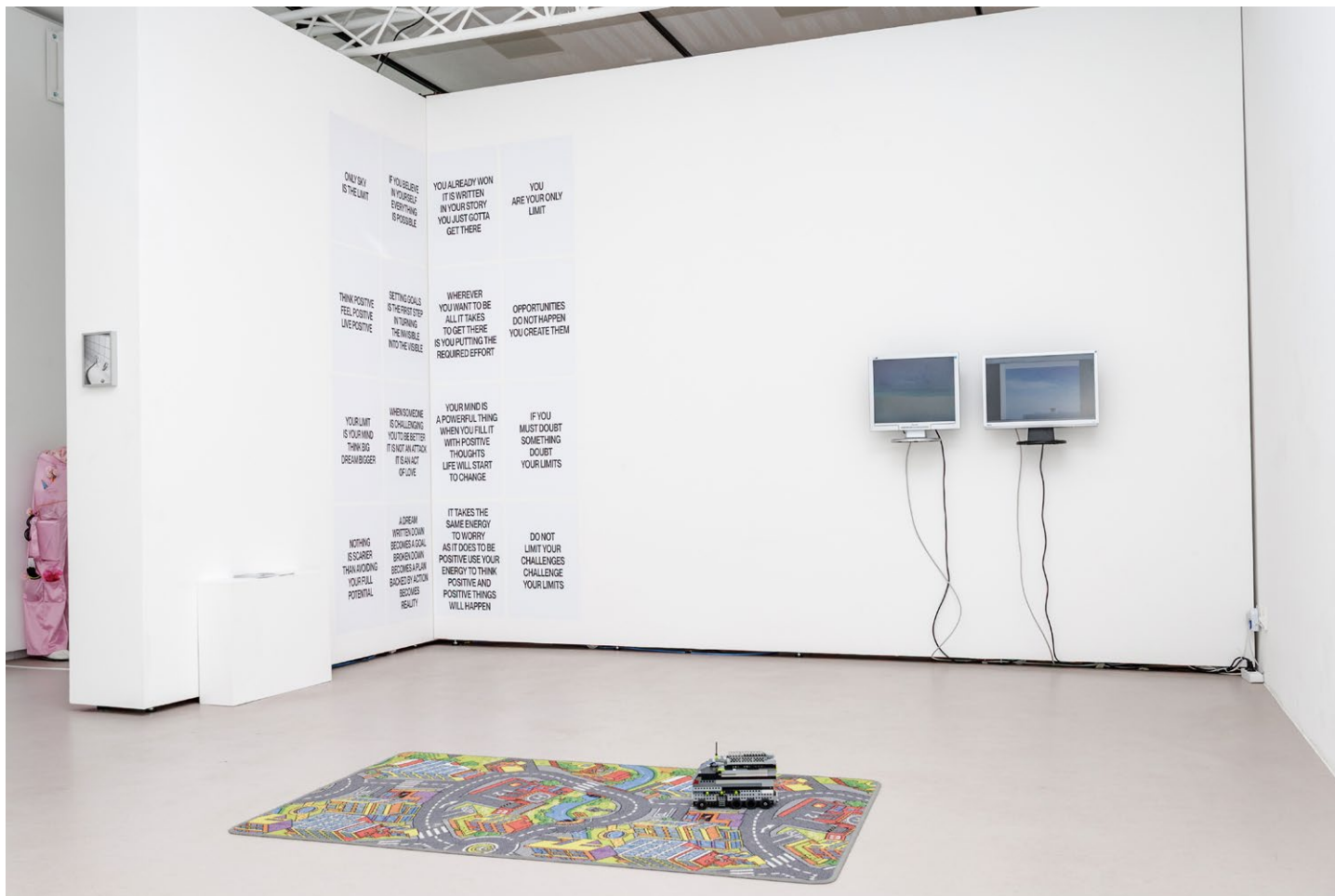
Looking for Paradise

The work *Looking for Paradise* deals with the perception, reproduction and construction of reality through visual media. It also addresses the colonial tradition of exoticising and fetishising supposedly unknown places. *Looking for Paradise* consists of a two-channel video installation in which the interaction with an archive and a digital, utopianised version of a hypernatural tropical beach can be seen. The installation is intended as an invitation to critically reflect on image production, reception and consumption.



On display as a part of the *Pluriversum* exhibition (*Satellit*, Bielefeld, 07-09/2025)





Thank you so much for taking the time to
look at my portfolio!
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