

# Nicolle Bussien

## *Keys*

10.11.–09.12.2023

A key blank opens no doors. Only when cut does it work with a specific lock and thus a specific property. Is any other object so imbued with symbolism and metaphor as the key? An uncut key could be a utopia or simply a promise for the future middle class. Artist Nicolle Bussien is interested in keys as technology; as a set of various ideologies, policies, and processes of bureaucratic and legal authentication.

*Keys* is the first institutional solo exhibition by artist Nicolle Bussien. The video works in the exhibition were developed from research, interviews, or workshops with various communities. Using documentation, documentary fiction, and speculative narrative, she calls into question the dominant society and its representations. In Nicolle Bussien's video productions, settings are created that give rise to the artistic work through dialogue and exchange between a plurality of actors, identities, and experiences.

Nicolle Bussien's artistic research is not passive observation, but rather a form of community-based work. The protagonists of her videos are invariably co-producers of knowledge. Identity plays a key role in the artist's work, but it serves as the lens through which she explores the workings of power, not the goal.

The exhibition centers on the video installation *Aboutaroundabout* (2023), created in collaboration with artist Giorgia Piffaretti. The social, local, and cultural-political dynamics of a community play out around a sculpture located in a roundabout in the Ticino border town of Mendrisio. In workshops and interviews, the residents debate the sculpture's racist and patriarchal connotations and its impacts on everyday coexistence.

In the video essay *Act privileged!* (2021), the camera focuses on the hands of the actors as they reproduce a nightclub entry stamp using a felt-tip pen and adhesive tape. In a voice-over, barriers to cultural participation in (night) life are discussed and analogies drawn to exclusionary practices in society as a whole. The dialogues were created during working groups, discussion rounds among participants, and in scenic reenactments of their own experiences.

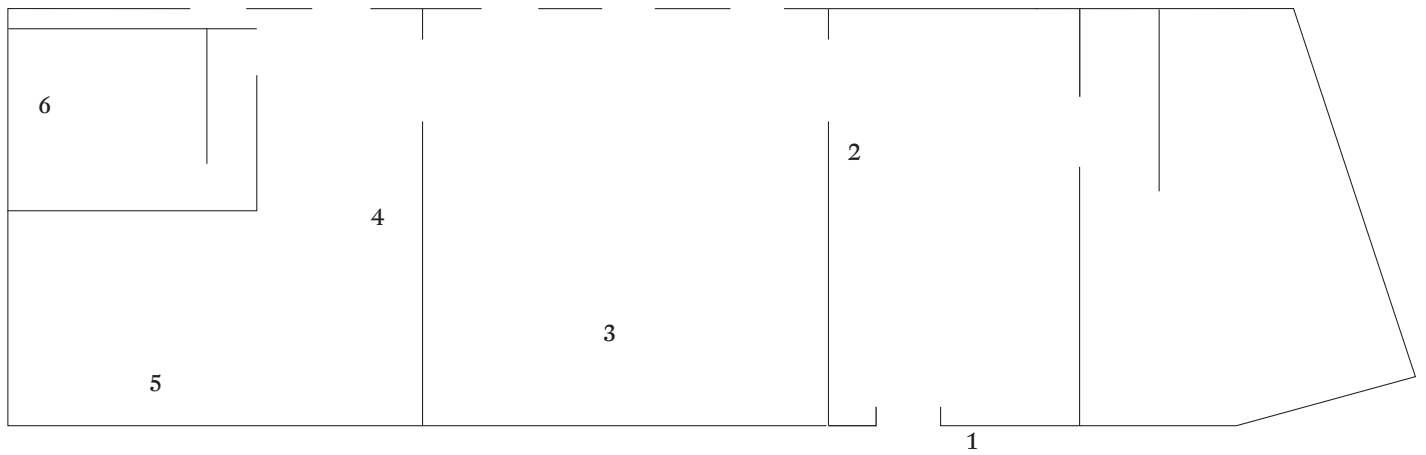
The video *Als ob* (As if, 2023) is part of a series of works in which Nicolle Bussien addresses the topic of theft. Hands in contour can be seen making various gestures. Directives appear as subtitles: "Act as if..." The precondition of a successful theft is that the act must go unseen. The imperative of the directives generates tension between the possibility and impossibility of conforming to the dominant society as its precondition of non-visibility.

In *Copy* (2023), the artist documents key makers copying keys. The video relates to the work *Schlüssel ABC* (2023), a series of five posters of unique, uncut key blanks displayed in public space for the duration of the exhibition. One version can be seen on the placard wall next to the Stadtgalerie entrance.

In the first part of the exhibition, the text work *Vermögensumverteilungsgesetz* (Wealth redistribution act, 2022) is available as a hand-out. The fictitious legal text is based on an unconfirmed legal tradition that ostensibly legalized the theft of foreign property in ancient Egypt. Together with a lawyer and in consultation with two legal experts, the artist adapted this ancient legal tradition into a form consistent with today's Swiss penal code.

Hands carry out work and communicate, commit theft, or sign contracts and forms. In the exhibition *Keys*, the artist is interested in the gestures of institutional authentication that promote access or exclusion, as well as gestures of their subversion and self-empowerment.

## FLOOR PLAN



1  
*Schlüssel ABC*, 2023  
Poster  
89.5 x 128 cm

5  
*Act privileged!*, 2021  
HD video  
10 min

2  
Nicolle Bussien, Cora Schmid  
(Lawyer)  
*Vermögensumverteilungsgesetz*,  
2022  
Text, brochure printing  
A5

6  
*Als ob*, 2023  
HD video  
7:21 min

3  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien  
*About a roundabout*, 2023  
3-channel HD video installation  
28 min

4  
*Copy*, 2023  
HD video  
6:31 min

## CREDITS

1  
*Schlüssel ABC*, 2023

*Graphic Design*  
Kornhaus Atelier

*Thanks to*  
Youssef Zaoui  
Luca Beeler  
Søren Berner

2  
Nicolle Bussien, Cora Schmid  
(Lawyer)  
*Vermögensumverteilungsgesetz*,  
2022

*Thanks to*  
Jessica Jurassica  
Melanie Aebli  
Tarek Naguib  
Demian Hübscher

3  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien  
*Aboutadroundabout*, 2023

*Concept*  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien  
*Research*  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien,  
Dolores Piffaretti  
*Lead Production*  
Giorgia Piffaretti  
*Production*  
Nicolle Bussien  
*Camera*  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien,  
Vanni Moretti  
*Editing*  
Giorgia Piffaretti  
*Editing Assistant*  
Nicolle Bussien  
*Lead Workshop*  
Giorgia Piffaretti  
*Sound*  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien,  
Vanni Moretti  
*Sound Design*  
Merlin Modulaw  
*Subtitle*  
Giorgia Piffaretti, Nicolle Bussien  
*Roundabout Driver*  
Lorenzo Piffaretti

*With Voices by*  
Kids of 3. and 4. grade  
Primarschule Rancate  
Local Artists of Mendrisio and  
Lugano  
Residents of the Mendrisio  
region  
Politicians from the Mendrisio  
region  
Residents and employees of the  
Casa Astra emergency shelter,  
Mendrisio  
Head of the Economic Develop-  
ment Office for the Municipali-  
ty of Mendrisio

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Pro Helvetia

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Rachele Piffaretti  
Al Fadhil  
Donato Di Blasi  
Daniela Carrara  
Juan Gabriel  
Roberto Rippa  
Alberto Croci Torti  
Luca Beeler  
Oliver Galfetti  
Oreste & Gabi Rossi  
Agnès Pierret  
Marco d'Erchie  
Mariano  
Anna Mirella Ardid Ciscar  
Michele Battaglia  
Matteo Terzaghi  
Floris Paalman  
Nadica Denic  
Valentina Bosia  
Alica Capretti  
Djainaba Taal

4  
*Copy*, 2023

*Thanks to*  
Youssef Zaoui

5  
*Act privileged!*, 2021  
HD-Video

*With*  
Titilayo Adebayo  
Izabel Barros  
Mardoché Kabengele  
Mbene Mwambene  
Timo Righetti  
Anelis Kaiser Trujillo

*Production*  
Nicolle Bussien

*Camera*  
Alain Guillebeau

*Sound*

Carole

*Postproduction*  
Nicolle Bussien

*Subtitle*  
Rachele Piffaretti

*Catering*  
Medina

*Thanks to*  
Yoftahe Efrem  
Mohamed Hassan  
Mayo Irion  
Vanja Ivana Jelic  
Mardoché Kabe'engele  
Giorgia Piffaretti  
Malana Rogers-Bursen  
Schlachthaus Theater Bern

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Burgergemeinde Bern  
Kultur Stadt Bern  
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SoKultur  
Steigi (filming location)  
Swisslos - Kultur Kanton Bern

6  
*Als ob*, 2023

*Performance*  
Dustin Kenel, Loris Aregger  
*Sound*  
Søren Berner & Pawel Pomes  
*Proofreading*  
X Schneeberger

*Exhibition Installation*  
Verena Dietze, Zoé Knapp,  
Lorenz Gurten, Philip Ortelli,  
Hervé Thiot, Paula Thomaka,  
Luca Beeler

## Events

Exhibition opening  
Thu, November 9, 6–9pm

Talk and guided tour with  
Nicole Bussien  
Thu, November 20, 6pm



**SWISSLOS**  
Kultur Kanton Bern

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PROGR  
Waisenhausplatz 30  
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stadtgalerie@bern.ch  
www.stadtgalerie.ch

Opening hours  
Wednesday–Friday  
2–6pm  
Saturday  
12–4 pm