

Portmanteau

DAS INSTITUT, Michael Estorick, Rachel Koolen, Silke Otto–Knapp, Charline von Heyl, Camilla Wills, Students from United Nations Relief and Work Agency schools in Gaza, Palestine and Chelsea Community Hospital School in London.

Curated by Allison Katz

Johan Berggren Gallery, Malmö
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The spirit is this: two worlds clashing on a single surface. By worlds I mean gestures, instincts and aesthetics. That is temporal locations, inner lives, spatial dimensions, hands. A collection of works that wear their dissonance proudly. The clashing is their reasoning; the merging is their mark; the unpredictability of process is their inventive sound.

The impetus for this exhibition was chancing upon a series of ceramic plates from 2012, made in blind collaboration, across time, cities and concepts, between adolescents from Gaza and London, and the energy of their two–worlds–merging. Contrasting elements became a point of contact between two realms, which could only exist as an experience once they were combined.

How is it possible for something to become more than the sum of its parts? There are textual equivalents. Portmanteau words. Pieces of different words brought together to form a new, combined meaning. Lewis Carroll developed this process, and named it after a French suitcase that opened into two equal sections. His nonsense words always emerged perfectly balanced. They communicated new conditions. Convention shrank with inadequacy. Or the invented, prescient words of Baroness Elsa Von Freytag–Loringhoven, micropoems in themselves: phalluspistol, kissambushed, imagecirculate, memorymazed, tearsea.

Around the plates developed a room, an intimate space with all the amenities one needs (chair, bed, window, rain cape, menu.) Offness, oddness, lumpen beauty. Elegance, despite everything. It is not the mere fact of combining; it is *what* is being combined, what is at stake in this activity. Each element cannot be fully seen until it is paired with something deeply not–itself. A contemplation of chaos, one object at a time.