

BLOW-UP (#MeToo)

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BLOW-UP (#MeToo)

Installation consisting of: film poster in white maple frame under UV60 anti-reflective glass, white 1960s chair, lambskin, 2018



The Way We Are 2.0, Weserburg Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen
Photo: Lukas Klose



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“A poster for Antonioni’s iconic film *BLOW-UP* hangs upside-down over a white 1960s lounge chair draped with a lambskin. The movie *BLOW-UP* shows objectifying portrayal of women and sexual harassment. The film poster shows a key scene in which the fashion photographer kneels over a model lying on the floor. The 180° rotation fundamentally alters this constellation – now the woman with outstretched arms overpowers the man.”

Janneke de Vries, director, Weserburg Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen



Janneke de Vries talking about *BLOW-UP* (#MeToo) in the exhibition *The Way We Are 2.0*.

Photo: Claudia Christoffel



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artist book, 80 pages plus booklet and postcard, Argobooks, an edition of 400, 2022
Photo: © 2023 www.document-architecture.com



The book uses an iconic key sequence from the movie *BLOW UP* by Michelangelo Antonioni to address objectifying portrayals of women and sexual harassment. The book is a “blow-up” of the four-minute scene in which a photographer is working with a model

(Veruschka) in his studio. He turns up late, shows no interest in the fact that her time is limited due to an already booked flight, makes sexual remarks, and tries to kiss her several times during the shoot. The transcript includes all of the lines spoken during the scene, “blown up” to 80 pages and set in the font used for the movie poster. The artist’s book also contains an A5-format postcard, views of my installation *BLOW-UP (#MeToo)* (2018), and a booklet containing a synopsis of the film by Björn Schmitt (who works in the cinema department at the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum in Frankfurt) and an art-historical essay on my installation by Gabriele Jutz (who lectures on film and media studies at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna).

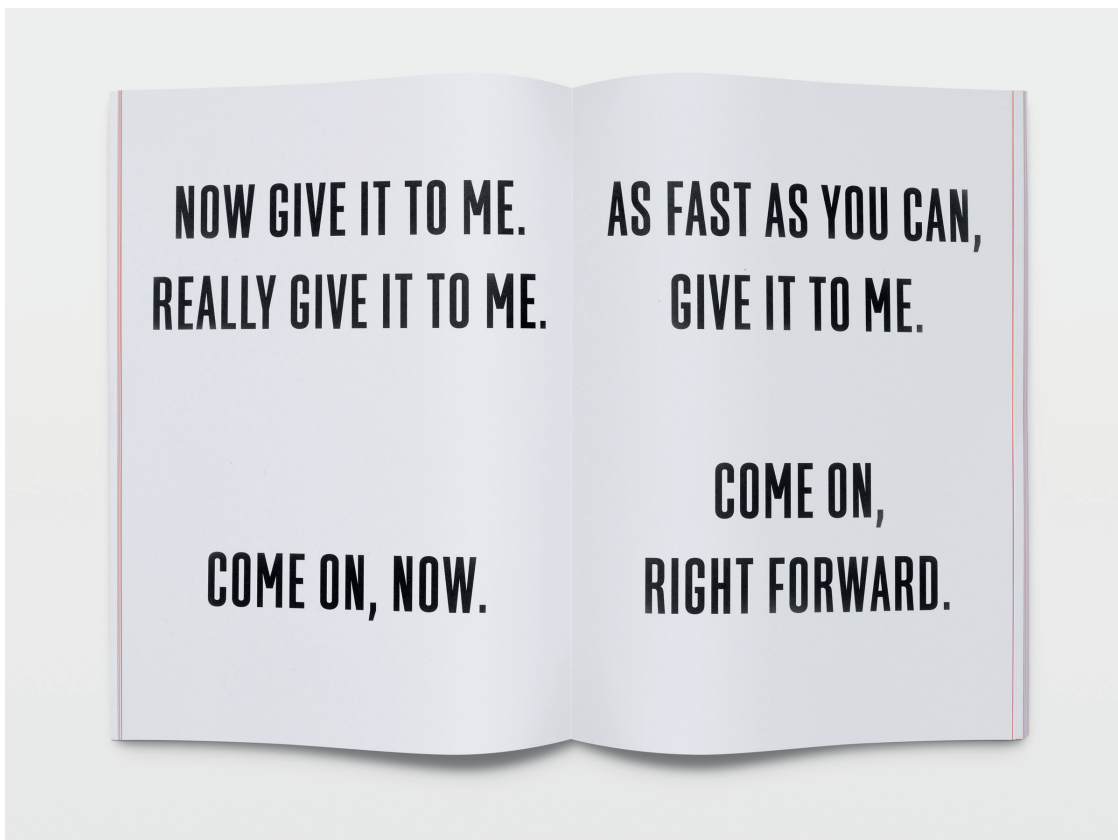
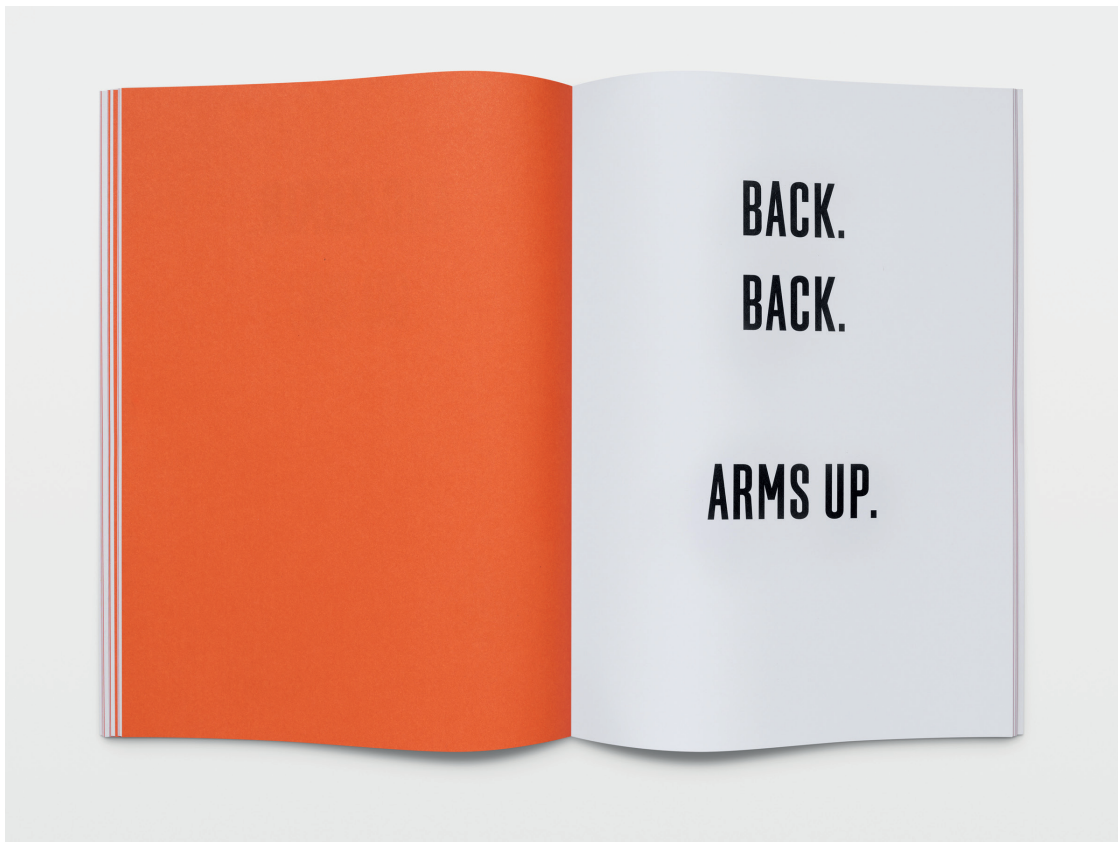
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artist book, pp. 58-59 and pp. 24-25, Argobooks, an edition of 400, 2022
Photo: Tobias Hübel



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Book launch, Galerie Mitte, Bremen, 2023
Photo: Lukas Klose



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Book launch, Galerie Mitte, Bremen, 2023
Photo: Lukas Klose



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Reading Performance with Maxwell Stephens during the book launch, Galerie Mitte, Bremen, 2023
Photo: Lukas Klose



BLOW-UP (#MeToo)

Book launch, Galerie Mitte, Bremen, 2023
Photo: Tobias Hübel



BLOW-UP (#MeToo)

David Bailey taking a photograph of Veruschka, VOGUE, 1964, Sketch 1
(2022, lightfast on acid-free paper, 30 x 21 cm, in black maple frame under UV60 anti-reflective glass)
Photo: Tobias Hübel



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BLOW-UP (#MeToo)

David Bailey taking a photograph of Veruschka, VOGUE, 1964, Sketch 2
(2022, lightfast on acid-free paper, 30 x 21 cm, in black maple frame under UV60 anti-reflective glass)
Photo: Tobias Hübel



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Text by Gabriele Jutz from the booklet of the artist's book

Of all the various motifs featured on film posters for Antonioni's *BLOW-UP*, one is especially striking: a still of Veruschka von Lehndorff's session with the photographer, played by David Hemmings, who shoots her obsessively. Before filming the scene, Antonioni gave the actors a single instruction: "Whatever you do is fine, as long as you both end up lying on the floor." (Jörn Jacob Rohwer, Veruschka. *Mein Leben*. 2011, p. 121). By the end of the session, the model is writhing on the studio floor, her arms stretched high over her head, while the photographer sits astride her to shoot his pictures. Although, as Veruschka herself confirms, it was by no means normal for "model and photographer to end up on the floor" (*ibid.*, p. 170), in the context of the current #MeToo campaign the scene takes on a new relevance, linking the photographic act (pressing the shutter release) with the sexual act. The hashtag, created to encourage women in particular to draw attention to the extent of sexual abuse, has been spreading worldwide since the end of 2017. Although the campaign was sparked by allegations of sexual assault against American film producer Harvey Weinstein, more and more women from all social backgrounds have been joining the campaign, proving that the problem of sexual assault extends far beyond the creative sector.

At the centre of Claudia Christoffel's installation *BLOWUP (#MeToo)*, a prominent position is occupied by a reproduction of a *BLOW-UP* poster featuring the scene described above against an orange background. However, Christoffel has hung the poster upside down, turning the situation on its head. This minor gesture of inversion achieves a major shift in meaning with regard to traditional gender relations. Now, rather than the photographer pressing himself on the woman, it is she who floats over him like a Fury bent on revenge. Behind glass in a thin frame (stressing its quality as a picture), the poster hangs at eye-level on an immaculately white wall whose texture and colour are set off by the shiny silver-blue of the floor. Right under the poster, the artist has positioned a large round stool upholstered in white synthetic leather, topped by a fluffy sheepskin rug, inviting visitors to sit or lie down – in any case to leave their vertical stance. With their overblown



eroticism that recalls popular furnishings of the 1960s, the stool and sheepskin rug contrast with the installation's otherwise low-key elements. The meticulous hanging, the poster's lower edge running exactly parallel to the line between wall and floor, can be read as a reference to the predominance of such linearity in the photographer's studio in *BLOW-UP* where prints are carefully hung at right - angles – something explicitly mentioned in the film by Vanessa Redgrave's character during a visit to the studio. In 1964, American commercial photographer Bert Stern took a famous picture entitled *Taking a Photograph of Veruschka*. Unlike in Antonioni's film, the photographer in Stern's picture (David Bailey, the inspiration for David Hemmings' character in *BLOW-UP*) is lying on the floor while a standing Veruschka seems to dance over him with outstretched arms. It can be assumed that Antonioni was familiar with Stern's photograph and that it found its way – albeit in inverted form – into his film. In the light of this genealogy, Christoffel's renewed inversion inscribes itself as a subversive feminist intervention into a tradition of male gestures of inversion. What sets her work apart from that of her male colleagues, however, is the markedly socio – and gender – critical position, as expressed not least by the addition of “(#MeToo)” to the title.

Gabriele Jutz, Professor of Film and Media Studies and Head of the Department of Media Theory at University of Applied Arts Vienna



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Postcard, DIN A5, pp. 23 artist book, 2022

THAT'S GREAT.

THAT'S GREAT!

THAT'S GOOD.

MORE OF THAT.



BLOW-UP (#MeToo)

The artist's book *BLOW-Up (#MeToo)* at the Bücherbogen bookstore on Savignyplatz in Berlin
Photo: Sven Wahlers



The book can also be purchased in Berlin from Pro qm and Buchdisco.
Purchase online through www.argobooks.de and www.malenki.net
For signed copies, with a dedication if desired, please contact the artist:
info@claudia-christoffel.de 17 euros plus postage and packing



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