

CRITICS' PICKS



COLOGNE

Violet Dennison

GALERIE JAN KAPS

Jülicher Straße 24A

January 20 - April 8

Bacteria are the scary, invisible monsters of the public sphere. They cover the earth and, even though some do good, many can be harmful. Violet Dennison's second show at this gallery examines these microorganisms to develop a narrative around the rituals of washing, cleaning, and scrubbing, which can range from healthy body treatments to ecologically damaging routines.

In *HIDE Succession* (all works cited, 2017), a short video presented on a flat-screen television, the artist walks through a New York subway station following a mass of people. Shooting with a body camera, Dennison moves like a silent specimen through the hectic crowds until, apparently having no destination, she slowly says aloud, "Bacteria is a careless creature it reproduces without consequence." The floor installation *Pipe Re-Route* extends the drainpipe from the gallery's sink into the exhibition space, where it suddenly leaks soapy, dirty water onto the floor after anyone washes her hands. "Rub and rub," comments writer Mark von Schlegell in the press release. "You'll never wash your hands of the public chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and sea-gluten, scum, cum, scales from shining rocks."

The show extends into a second gallery space, on the opposite side of the street, where the artist presents the wall work *Transcend*, a fragile installation made from found bent-aluminum piping and eel grass, the latter collected in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and from the Lido in Venice. Contaminated with toxic waste, the shimmering black sea-grass-clad metal is turned into wall-mounted flotsam. Beautiful and uncanny, her works point to ecosystems beyond the surface of the sea or wall-hidden plumbing and toward the unseen.

— Vivien Trommer