

Frauke Schlitz & Leonie Weber
COLLAGE / CONSTRUCTION
Curated by Dara Meyers Kingsley

May 2 - June 7

Opening Reception & Artist / Curator's Talk: Saturday, May 2, 4 - 6pm

A two-person exhibition of new and recent works by German artist Frauke Schlitz and German-American artist Leonie Weber, curated by Dara Meyers-Kingsley.

Frauke Schlitz and Leonie Weber: Collage/Construction

Collage reflects a facet of our lived experience since our relationship with the world is always under construction. As we negotiate layers of information, history and relationships, the realities we face are inconsistent and fragmented. In this age of endless streams of content, how do we parse out what's meaningful in all the noise and select the elements through which we build our subjective realities? Collage is a construction of order and a kind of world-building. It feels particularly poignant now at a time of intense fracture and division.

Pivoting from construction to deconstruction and back, collage-making is organization and reorganization of layers and themes. For the two German women artists in this show, Frauke Schlitz and Leonie Weber, this might be in the form of digital photographs, trashed boxes, painted paper shavings, or bits of newsprint, but what results is an aggregation of materials, colors, and ideas that manifest as complete works. Whether on paper or as sculptures, panels and installations, they address the themes of abstraction and representation, the built environment, and the concept of labor.

Frauke Schlitz builds abstract collages and constructions that refer to urban structures: to buildings and rooms with distinct features that become a sign of the space rather than a replica. Since architecture and topography help us navigate the world, they also reflect our consciousness: they are themselves constructed mindsets. Schlitz shared her affinity for the German word "Gedankengebäude" which loosely translates to "the building of thoughts" in one's mind. Looking at Schlitz's works over the past two years, one can see that the artist's Gedankengebäude has shifted in telling ways.

In a series of paper collages on panels entitled *Met-Shacks* (2024) Schlitz was inspired by the temporary structures she discovered in early Renaissance paintings that she saw at the Metropolitan Museum during a New York stay – think of the manger in paintings that depict the birth of Jesus. Schlitz's allusion to the "shacks" comes from the artist's interest in the improvised construction and temporary nature of the buildings. While it was during this period in art history that the concept of linear perspective on a two-dimensional plane was basically invented, Schlitz instead plays with perspective and constructs illusory spaces.

In *Met-Shacks*, and in the newer *Open City* (2026) frieze, the spatial illusion created is ambivalent. We are not sure where we are – inside or outside the structures to which they allude. Are we seeing through to an exterior, a sky? Or are we caught in a closed-off space? This trickery is achieved by the artist's variation of vertical and horizontal planes as well as the use of transparency and opacity in the painted paper strips. Schlitz is a painter first. Her collage works are created with hand-painted strips of paper where you can see the evidence of brush stroke and still some transparency. Materiality is important. The colors Schlitz uses, the pastel palette, is certainly inspired by Renaissance painting – think of Fra Angelico and Giotto, for example. The color-scape creates an ethereal fresco-like space offering a feeling of uplift and spirituality and conjures otherworldly landscapes.

More recently, the "here and now" have found their way into Schlitz's work. *Broken Dwellings* (2025), a series of watercolors, are her most representational works. After seeing the endless images of mangled, nearly destroyed buildings in the newspaper, she created these small-scale paintings and decided to include the source of the imagery – the *New York Times* – into two new large-scale collages entitled *Tangled Times* (2025) and *Turning Times* (2026). The word "times" in the titles refers to both the use of the newsprint in the works as well as to the time that we are living in right now.

Schlitz believes that "architecture translates personal and social states of mind and is also a cultural expression of the inner structures of the individual." (1) In *Tangled Times* and *Turning Times* we find ourselves and the artist navigating a different moment in history. And, given the formal design of the

new works, we can intuit that Schlitz's Gedankengebäude has been shaken, rendered into a state of disorder and possibly falling apart. Here, rather than a stable geometric structure as in the *Met-Shacks*, we have the paper strips moving in multiple directions aiming towards a center. This work is not so much architectural as tectonic. The colors provide a kind of musical rhythm that peppers the surface. And we are swept up in a vortex of moving planes and migrating lines. Again, we don't know where we are, but we have a sense of somewhere out of control. There is a density to the composition but also an openness where seemingly self-generated lines and colors create a reverberating topographical space.

If Frauke Schlitz is an artist who privileges the mind in her work, for Leonie Weber, the body is central. The female body, sometimes the artist's, is the subject, catalyst and literal tool used in Weber's work.

Domestic labor is the subject of Weber's black and white photo collages that are part of the installation *The Heart Is a Muscle that Works for You* (2022). We see the artist's own hands and arms reach across the images to bind the photographs together, linking acts of caring and the labor that goes into domestic life: tending the garden, playing UNO with her kids, carrying groceries in an Ikea bag. It is all about touch and holding together. The artist's arms become like tools, as well as bridges, between the figures and the interior and exterior spaces in the photographs.

Drawing inspiration from the work of sculptor Louise Nevelson, Weber also builds hand-painted cardboard constructions, made from collected shipping boxes that retain some traces of their former function, as containers for shipped goods, mostly from Amazon. To make the work, the artist physically interacts with the malleable material: she stomps on the boxes, crushing them and folding them, nearly destroying them in the process. Seeing the misshapen boxes forces us to recognize the labor inherent not only in the creation of the sculpture, but also in the packing and shipping of our purchased goods, and our complicity in the mass consumption of items we have delivered to us daily.

One of these cardboard constructions, *Dark Real Estate (Tower)* (2024), is based on architectural and constructive principals where the grid pattern and the structural shape of the work evoke modern architecture. "These works draw on the visual language of grids, stacking, and modular construction echoing systems of building and development while simultaneously exposing their instability." (2) The title for the work comes from the "go dark" clause in commercial real estate leases where a commercial tenant—typically in retail—ceases business operations and closes their location, while continuing to pay rent and maintain control of the "dark" space. The tower, while imposing in presentation given its black color and size, still looks like it might possibly come undone, "caught between accumulation and collapse." (3)

This notion of near collapse also appears in Weber's most recent body of work entitled *Bodies* (2025). The forms and materials came directly from the artist's physical and mental state of exhaustion. One can see that the rounded, biomorphic sculptures have basically collapsed. They are deflated and folded into themselves. While keeping the grey palette consistent in the work between the sculpture and its pedestal, Weber places the rather soft-looking forms onto the more rigid architectural cinder block bases, creating a juxtaposition between hard and soft materials, biomorphic and rectilinear forms, and handmade versus manufactured materials. The contrasts reflect a tension central to Weber's practice, namely, "the intersection of bodily and emotional vulnerability with systemic structures of organization and control." (4)

For both artists, the built environment serves as inspiration and referent in their collage and construction works. Seeing these works vacillate between solid and loose, rigid and blown apart, we recognize the effect that the state of our world imposes on the artists and on ourselves, the beholders.

- **Dara Meyers-Kingsley** is a curator and educator. She is currently a distinguished lecturer at Hunter College where she also directs the Muse Scholar Program, teaching and mentoring arts undergraduate students and building bridges to NYC cultural institutions through the Office of the Arts, which she founded for the college in 2016. Her exhibitions as an independent curator have been presented at the Brooklyn Museum and the New Museum in NYC, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and Chicago, and the Andy Warhol Museum and Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh. This is her second show for Kentler International Drawing Space.

Footnotes:

1. Frauke Schlitz in conversation with the curator, March 2026

2. Leonie Weber, artist statement Spring 2026

3. Ibid

4. Ibid