

Alex Heide

the darkroom beams horizons

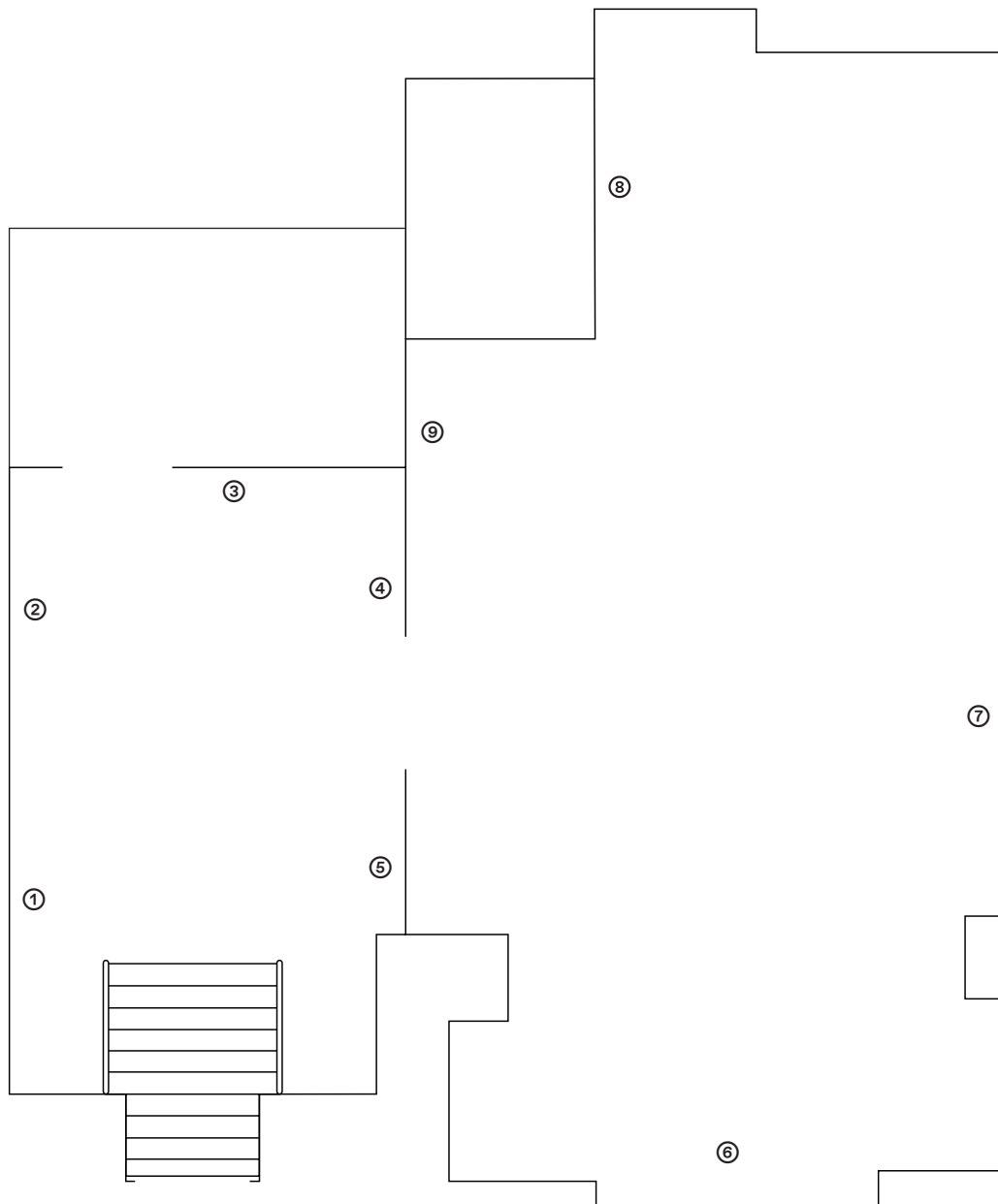
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In Alex Heide's exhibition *the darkroom beams horizons*, the darkroom is conceived as a space for action, imagination and vision. The term carries a dual meaning: it refers to a queer-coded space in which darkness renders interactions anonymous and enables sensual encounters. It also means the photographic darkroom, where practice is defined by physicality, proximity and precise handling of materials. Here, the darkroom emerges as a place where the senses and perception are heightened and visions take shape. In the darkroom, an outlook is not only made visible, but also imagined and materially produced. For Heide, working there is almost like dreaming intertwined with specific actions. Touching, sensing, desiring and repeating are practices through which photographic images are generated. Her body is engaged both in encounters with the apparatus and in the solitary process of image-making in the darkroom. These two moments describe a physical state that is like a dance. The close connection between doing and feeling gives rise to a particular intensity that shapes both the photographic darkroom and the darkroom itself. The boundary between the two meanings begins to blur here, between the work involved in the photographic process and the sexual context of the darkroom.

Moments of reflection play a secondary role in the darkroom. It is only in the light that images are examined and assessed. The counterpart to the darkroom is the shadow play: a presentation of signs or symbols created by positioning them in front of a light source. One of the oldest examples addressing the question and derivation of reality is Plato's Allegory of the Cave, which is repeatedly invoked in photographic discourse. For Heide, both darkrooms represent imagination and materiality respectively, whereas the shadow play represents projection and indexicality. The two contexts are important, yet they are in opposition to one another. In the shadow play, the space is illuminated, and cut-outs appear almost iconic, requiring light to cast shadows. In the darkroom, darkness allows light to be precisely directed. While the shadow play possesses a level of abstraction, the darkroom is always physical, providing a tactile encounter of skin and material. The photographic discourse is often characterised by a language that falls short of capturing that physical, sensory level. As an extension of indexicality or sign systems, Heide introduces the concept of the horizon — a place that can never be reached. This impossibility of arrival is central to her work, not least because it challenges the idea that a photograph is an 'imprint' of reality.

In the context of her work as a photographer, the darkroom is a particularly interesting space in relation to the idea of the photograph as a representation of reality, as well as questions of interpretive authority, authorship, and ownership. I took a picture, so I own it, and now I'll show you what it was like. Heide contrasts this attitude with an explicitly queer context that is strongly linked to vision, including her own. However, in her photographic practice, the act of taking the photograph itself has increasingly receded into the background. For example, she sometimes no longer looks through the camera herself and simply passes it on to others. Rather than dictating what something is, her aim is to create together with others. The exhibition at *klix* marks a departure from the classic photographic situation and the act of taking or showing images.

These oblique conditions are reflected in the specially developed exhibition architecture. There is no longer a point zero or a single horizon. Instead, the focus is framing her own work by engaging with boundaries and developing strategies, stars and sign systems. For Heide, invention itself plays a central role. Equally important are impermanence and fluidity, which serve as a counter-narrative to origins. Drawing on established photographic concepts such as the latent image, Heide creates works in which visitors cannot identify who is depicted, when or where. The technical process also remains unclear. Her images are highly photographic yet simultaneously abandon what is commonly understood as photography. *the darkroom beams horizons* thus describes alternative futures and ideas, as well as a state of perpetual non-arrival: a constant searching and sensing; a dance, a performance or perhaps a game.



① *you steer the sun / blitz*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 74 x 47 cm
Unikat

② *you steer the sun / orbit burn*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 74 x 49,7 cm
Unikat

③ *you steer the sun / override*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 74 x 51 cm
Unikat

④ *you steer the sun / maze*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 74 x 43,2 cm
Unikat

⑤ *you steer the sun / shadow lord*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 74 x 48,9 cm
Unikat

⑥ *body is a mass media / 2nd attempt (Auszug 199/17)*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 122,4 x 197,7 cm
Unikat

⑦ *body is a mass media / 2nd attempt (Auszug 210/16)*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 98,8 x 148 cm
Unikat

⑧ *body is a mass media / 2nd attempt (Auszug 205/25)*, 2022
Analoger Color Handabzug, 225 x 119 cm
Unikat

⑨ *body is a mass media / 2nd attempt (Auszug 212/36)*, 2026
Analoger Color Handabzug, 128,5 x 88,6 cm
Unikat