

PRESS RELEASE

Berlin, Dec 12, 2024

SILVIA ROSI

Protektorat . C/O Berlin Talent Award 2024

C/O Berlin is pleased to present the exhibition **Silvia Rosi . Protektorat** of the winner of the **C/O Berlin Talent Award 2024** from **1 Feb to 7 May 2025**. The **opening** will take place on **Friday, 31 Jan 2025**, at **20:00** at C/O Berlin at Amerika Haus, Hardenbergstraße 22-24, 10623 Berlin.

„So, who gets to speak? Whose voices are legitimized? Who is the intended audience? By means of intricate sign systems—both verbal and nonverbal—Silvia Rosi’s *Protektorat* articulates postcolonial critique across multiple dimensions.“

– Katrin Bauer, C/O Berlin Talent Award 2024—*Theorist*

The Italian-Togolese artist Silvia Rosi (*1992) explores post-colonial themes such as migration, identity and collective memory from a diasporic perspective in an interplay of staged photography, video, performative elements and edited archive material. Her works, which often have autobiographical references, question the constructions of identity and belonging and create a dialogue between past and present.

In *Protektorat* (2022–2024), Rosi sheds light on the complex history of language under colonial occupation in Togo. Based on archive material from the Togolese National Archives in Lomé, she thematizes the mechanisms of power and resistance that are anchored in colonial language policies. Administered as a German so-called protectorate from 1884 to 1914 and later placed under British-French military administration, the languages German, English and French still shape the West African country today. At the same time, the indigenous languages Ewe and Mina have been preserved through oral tradition despite systematic suppression.

The exhibition presents video works and staged studio shots inspired by the aesthetics of West African studio photography of the 1960s and 1970s as well as archive images that Rosi deliberately alienates in order to question colonial pictorial logics. Textiles play a central role in Rosi’s artistic practice: wax prints with alphabet patterns refer to colonial influences and at the same time to the history of the Africanization of such fabrics by Togolese market women (Nana Benz). Some portraits are printed on this very cotton fabric, giving an additional material layer to Rosi’s exploration of Togo’s history.

A new, multilingual video installation adds a playful element. In it, four Togolese protagonists play the board game *Ludo*, similar to the game *Mensch ärgere dich nicht*, which is familiar in Germany. Originally created during the British colonial period in India, the game serves as a metaphor for the arbitrariness with which the Togolese population had to navigate colonial language policies.

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In each round, it is decided at random which language will be spoken – only the person who speaks Ewe remains silent. The suppression of indigenous languages and the absurdity of colonial power relations are thus made tangible in a subtle way.

In *Protektorat*, Silvia Rosi interweaves postcolonial criticism with personal and playful moments. She questions archives as supposedly neutral places of collective memory and at the same time offers new perspectives on the culture of remembrance in a diasporic context. C/O Berlin presents the artist's first solo exhibition in Germany, accompanied by a comprehensive publication.

Since 2020, the C/O Berlin Talent Award has been made possible by the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung.

Silvia Rosi (*1992, IT) is an artist based in Lomé (Togo) and London (United Kingdom). In her practice, she uses photography and moving images to explore the space of memory, oral history and (self-)representation. She received a B.A. in Photography from LCC, University of the Arts London in 2016. She has been exhibited in international institutions such as Collezione Maramotti, Brooklyn Museum (2024), Camera - Italian Centre for Photography (2023), MAXXI (2022), MA*GA (2022), LACMA (2021), Les Rencontres d'Arles (2021), Autograph ABP (2021) and the National Portrait Gallery in London (2020).

C& Book Residency

As part of the exhibitions *A World in Common . Contemporary African Photography* and *Silvia Rosi . Protektorat . C/O Berlin Talent Award 2024*, which are presented in parallel at C/O Berlin, the C& Book Residency is being created in the foyer in collaboration with ContemporaryAnd (C&). Designed as a reading room, this central space offers a carefully curated selection of books from the C& library. The publications respond to the themes of the exhibitions and offer visitors a stimulating opportunity to engage more intensively with the content of the works in both exhibitions.

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Exhibition Feb 1 – May 7, 2025
Press tour Jan 31, 2025 . 11:00
Opening Jan 31, 2025 . 20:00

Opening hours Daily . 11:00–20:00
Admission 12/6 euro
Organizer C/O Berlin Foundation

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Book Residency
In cooperation with ContemporaryAnd (C&)