

UN*SCHULD

Innocence, guilt, and everything in between.



We find ourselves living in an era of adversity. The concept of safety has become elusive, leaving us yearning for a sense of normalcy reminiscent of the „good old days“. Deep down, we all acknowledge, or at least sense, that our current treatment of the planet is unsustainable. Yet, we choose to avert our gaze and delay the crucial actions required for change, pushing them into an uncertain future. Our zeitgeist is shaped by the ongoing battle between those who are determined to progress towards a future worth cherishing and those who stubbornly cling to the status quo.

In the year 2020, the fashion industry made a significant contribution to global CO2 emissions, accounting for a staggering 10%—a figure second only to the oil industry. Moreover, it consumed an astonishing 79 trillion liters of water, a valuable resource that humanity will undoubtedly require urgently in the coming years. Despite this, the insatiable demand for „fast fashion“ persists, steadily climbing higher. From 1975 to 2018, per capita production doubled, and projections indicate that it could potentially double yet again by the year 2030.

Our project seeks to capture the dichotomy of today’s zeitgeist, prompting contemplation on the significance of materials, particularly the invaluable resource of water, and fostering a deep reverence for the environment.

In order to symbolize the essence of water, our attention was drawn to its ubiquitous presence in our daily lives: the humble water glass. We gathered a diverse array of water glasses from friends and family, meticulously capturing them at varying fill levels on small wet plates made of aluminum. This artistic process gave rise to a magnificent dress, crafted from these water glass wet plates - a truly distinctive and unparalleled masterpiece, reminiscent of the creations crafted by esteemed fashion designers.

A model gracefully dons the metal dress adorned with rectangles of aluminum and rings of brass – an unconventional and somewhat uncomfortable material. Despite its weight, the dress exhibits a unique property of heating up in hot temperatures and becoming icy in the cold – a singular concession to the inherent discomfort often associated with the world of fashion. This characteristic also serves as a premonition, offering a glimpse of how the impending climate catastrophe will directly impact our very skin. On the other hand, it captivates with its radiant shine and glitter, creating a delightful symphony of tinkling sounds with each graceful movement. The strategically placed gaps in the dress reveal glimpses of the body, transcending the conventional zones of nudity and intensifying the sensual nature of its already subtly unveiled form. By simulating the illusion of fabric, the dress serves as a poignant reflection of our own illusions and our tendency to turn a blind eye to reality.



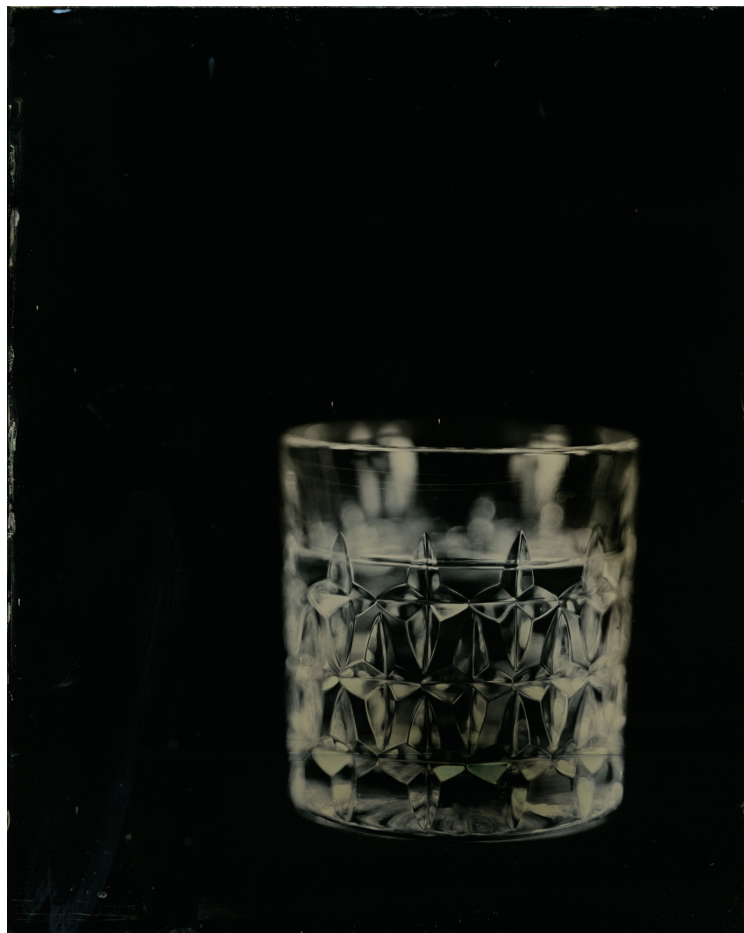
During our research, we came across the fashion designer Paco Rabanne, who pioneered the creation of metal dresses as early as the late 1960s. Back then, he showcased empowered women, adorned in armor-like garments, confidently striding down the runway. Even at that time, he addressed the relationship between fashion and the environment.

However, our approach goes beyond the use of metal (and plastic) like Rabanne did. We amplify the environmental impact of the fashion industry by employing toxic chemicals and consuming extensive amounts of water for wet plate photography. The introspection of our own wastefulness in creating our art and our inherent blindness to it forms an integral part of our work.

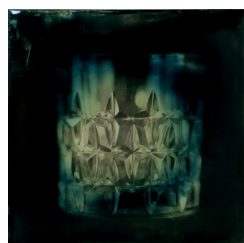
The exhibition consists of large baryth handmade prints of the dress, reminiscent of the grand fashion magazines, as well as individual wet plates featuring various water glasses, forming another significant component of the showcase.

During the vernissage, the „unwearable“ dress is presented by a model who absolves herself of any responsibility for the environmental sins associated with wearing such a garment. The model remains innocent, as the fashion industry, and in this case, the artists themselves, are evidently the ones who have committed these transgressions.

However, can we truly be certain? Aren't the consumers themselves the real issue? The boundaries between guilt, innocence, and assigning blame become blurred.



Tintype 8 x 10 Zoll 20,32 x 25,4 cm



Tintypes 13 x 13 and 13 x 18 cm

Works

The dress

is composed of hundreds of meticulously crafted 6 x 6 cm tintype wet plates, each individually exposed, developed, varnished, trimmed, punched, and woven together with rings to form the dress. Each plate showcases water glasses, varying in their fill levels.

To create these small plates (in the 6 x 6 cm format), we designed a wet plate cassette for the Hasselblad camera, which was fabricated using a 3D printer.

Baryth prints

Fashion photos in the style of prominent fashion magazines showcasing the dress. In the studio, we recreated Vogue-inspired photos from the 1960s, captured on medium and large format cameras. These images were then transformed into meticulously handcrafted baryta prints. (Hand prints, paper size 52 x 61 cm, silver gelatin on baryth paper, glossy finish)

Wet plates featuring water glasses

The dark images showcasing water glasses are created using wet plates on glass and tintypes. These square-shaped plates are crafted on antique glass, measuring 30 x 30 cm. Additionally, tintypes on aluminum are used in various sizes:

20,32 x 25,4 cm (8x10 inch)

13 x 13 cm and

18 x 13 cm

Materials

Hand-blown authentic antique glass.

Coated aluminum plates from various manufacturers.

We personally create the chemistry for the wet plates.

Custom-made metal frames with non-reflective museum glass.

Wooden frames for the glass plates and tintypes, individually handcrafted.





Random selection of tintypes for the dress

6 x 6 cm each

Who we are: a fe-male artistic duo DIE MALEKS: Nicole and Claus-Peter Malek



Nicole Malek

Website: nicole-malek.com

Blog: xara.org

nicole@malek.show

+49 175 181 2977

Claus-Peter Malek

Blog and Website: cpmalek.de

cp@malek.show

+49 160 7138 133

Studio

Website: malek.show

info@malek.show

Siebeneicher Str. 29

74626 Bretzfeld - Germany

In Harmony through Opposition. Stillness and motion, contrasts and similarities, female and male perspectives. It is this tension that guides us in our quest for visual expression. As a duo, we embrace analog photography with an artistic vision. Through project-based works, we explore ourselves, our surroundings, and nature. Together, we reflect upon and share thoughts through our visual language.

Since 1995, we have been creatively working together. None of us exists alone. The tension, familiarity, and serenity that characterize our connection are part of our art. Through our exchange, tension, and collaboration, we inspire each other and crystallize the best possible outcome of what we do. Over the years, our respective roles in a piece have become increasingly blurred. All our projects are collaborative productions. For this reason, we consciously refrain from attributing the works to a single creator.

Mindfulness

We have chosen analog photography. Every technique that reduces and limits us forces us to engage more and more with individual thoughts and photos. Patience and slowness teach us to look even more closely. We use historical photographic techniques such as collodion wet plates or large format cameras. In the darkroom, our negatives and collected objects become unique pieces. Negatives are turned into prints on handmade paper and on baryta paper.

Collected objects are exposed as wet plates on aluminum or glass.

All images are unique.