

Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko

Shelter

Fri 18 September – Sun 8 November 2026

Shelter is the first exhibition of Sasha Huber and Petri Saarikko in Germany. It brings together key individual works and collaborative projects.

Shelter marks an important step in the development of their shared artistic practice as a form of decolonial knowledge production. This means acknowledging and making visible suppressed histories and forms of knowledge, and preserving them in collective memory. At the same time, art becomes a means of initiating processes of healing.

Huber's and Saarikko's works combine artistic research with long-term collaboration with local communities. Drawing on her Haitian-Swiss heritage, Huber engages with suppressed colonial legacies. Saarikko's works likewise emerge from biographical references. He explores light and electromagnetic fields, the limits of perception, and questions of protection and vulnerability.

Together, they create a space in *Shelter* in which questions of history, memory, and representation are examined from Indigenous, Black, and anti-colonial perspectives. The exhibition thus becomes a site of critical reflection and embodied engagement with contested histories and their continuing material and political consequences.

The works that give *Shelter* its title bring these themes together while expanding upon them. Tents, protective suits, and parachutes become temporary shelters for retreat, self-reflection, and self-determination. Protection does not mean complete isolation; it is continually renegotiated through the experience of exposure and vulnerability.

Within the German context, *Shelter* draws attention to the enduring traces of colonialism in society, culture, and public space.

Gallery I

1. Sasha Huber, *The Firsts–Sylvie Nantcha*, 2026

At the entrance to *Shelter*, visitors encounter Sasha Huber's new portrait, *The Firsts – Sylvie Nantcha*. It depicts Dr Sylvie Nantcha, an Afro-German scholar of German literature and language, politician, and national advocate for people of African descent and those with a migration history. She served on Freiburg City Council from 2009 to 2014 and again from 2016 to 2019, becoming Freiburg's first Afro-German city councillor and Germany's first Afro-German CDU municipal politician. Also in 2009,

she became the first Afro-German member elected to the executive board of a regional CDU organisation in Germany.¹

For more than ten years, Nantcha has advised the German Federal Government through over thirty committees addressing integration, migration, and the fight against racism. She participated in twelve thematic forums of Germany's National Action Plan on Integration, was appointed by the Federal Cabinet to the Expert Commission on the Root Causes of Displacement, and contributed to consultations held by the Cabinet Committee for Combating Right-Wing Extremism and Racism. She is also an entrepreneur, as well as the founder and national chair of TANG – The African Network of Germany.

Since 2017, Huber's series *The Firsts* has honoured pioneering historical and contemporary figures of the African diaspora in Europe and the United States. As the first Black individuals to overcome historical barriers in politics, art, science, and other fields, they opened new possibilities for subsequent generations.

Huber draws attention to biographies that acquired historical significance despite structural racism and exclusionary mechanisms shaped by colonialism. Yet their achievements have often been excluded from collective memory. As a form of decolonial knowledge production, *The Firsts* questions colonially shaped archives and expands them to include previously marginalised figures from Black history.

For the portraits in *The Firsts*, Huber developed a distinctive technique in which both material and working process carry specific symbolic meanings. Using a photograph as her source, she transfers the portrait onto a black-painted acoustic panel. The sound-absorbing material represents the long-unheard histories of Black people. Huber covers parts of the surface with metal staples, fired into the panel with a pneumatic staple gun. The staples refer to the history of violence associated with enslavement, colonialism, and racism, which has shaped the lives of the African diaspora and continues to have an impact today. At the same time, they evoke needlework and beadwork, and thus practices of repair and healing.

Sasha Huber explains: "For me, working with the pneumatic staple gun has become a kind of symbolic stitching together of wounds, creating reflective, three-dimensional 'pain objects'."

2. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Remedies*, Australia, 2015

Remedies is a collaborative body of work that Sasha Huber and Petri Saarikko have been developing since 2010. It began with a Haitian remedy for warts, passed down orally by Huber's grandfather. Since then, Huber and Saarikko have explored traditional knowledge of healing and self-care in different cultural and geographical contexts. *Remedies* centres knowledge that has been devalued and displaced by colonial and Western systems of knowledge. This practice is reparative because it recognises such knowledge and gives it renewed visibility and legitimacy.

¹ In 2011, Dr Sylvie Nantcha received the Helene Weber Award as its principal national prizewinner. The award is presented by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. It is named after Helene Weber, one of the four women regarded as the "mothers" of Germany's Basic Law and herself a political pioneer.

For *Remedies, Australia*, Huber and Saarikko filmed encounters with people from the Mildura region, including members of the Mutthi Mutthi and Barkindji First Nations. Eucalyptus is central to the work as a bearer of knowledge that has evolved over millennia through the relationship between people and the land.

Against the backdrop of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous communities and the suppression of their cultures, the participants speak about personal experiences, inherited healing traditions, and the ritual uses of eucalyptus. They also address the Western classification and global distribution of eucalyptus by European scientists. Between the portraits, earthbound actions involving clay objects connect the individual narratives.

The Elders Mary Pappin (Mutthi Mutthi) and Ivan Johnson (Barkindji) emphasise the significance of the markings on eucalyptus trees, which identify their territories and burial sites. To this day, these markings bear witness to the ancestral rights of both First Nations to land taken from them through colonisation.

3. Sasha Huber, *Land, Back, Now* (· · · · · / · · · · · · · / · · · · ·), 2024

The question of who owns land and who has the authority to determine its use is further explored by Huber in *Land, Back, Now*. The words LAND BACK NOW appear in monumental Morse code across two walls.

Huber deliberately selected the installation's materials and symbols. Through Morse code, she appropriates a communication technology that was also used to control colonised territories. The burned lines refer to the clearing of Australian forests and to bushfires, while the golden dots echo the sun motif of the Aboriginal Flag. Skulls formed from metal staples represent colonial violence; the raised fist stands for resistance and solidarity.

Land, Back, Now thus connects the history of colonial dispossession with the ongoing Land Back movement and its demands for land rights and self-determination for Aboriginal communities.

4. Sasha Huber, *Tlingit Glacier & Lakes – A Reparative Intervention I*, 2024

In *Tlingit Glacier & Lakes – A Reparative Intervention I*, attention is directed towards the colonial inscription of history into the landscape. It asks who is remembered, who has the authority to name places, and whose history remains visible.

Huber developed this reparative intervention together with the Indigenous Tlingit community in Alaska. Its aim is to rename the Agassiz Glacier and Agassiz Lakes, located on the territory of the Kwáashk'ikwáan, a Tlingit clan community from the Yaakwdáat region of Alaska.

Together with Tlingit hunter, fisherman, and artist Khaách Jeremiah James, Huber travelled to the lakes and the glacier. There, James collected glacial water for a future potlatch ceremony in which the sites are to receive new names chosen by the community.

The video documents this journey.

The intervention acknowledges historical injustice and uses artistic means to initiate a process of reparation. It is reparative because it returns the authority to interpret and name the landscape to the Tlingit community.

The glacier was named after Louis Agassiz (1807–1873) by the American geographer William Libbey during an expedition in 1886. The expedition aimed to explore and map Alaska, which the United States had acquired from Russia only a few decades earlier.

Supported by Alexander von Humboldt, the Swiss-American Louis Agassiz was regarded as a leading nineteenth-century naturalist and glaciologist. His scientific prestige led to approximately eighty places around the world being named after him.¹ His activities as a racial theorist, however, remained largely overlooked. The racial theories Agassiz developed as Professor of Zoology and Geology at Harvard University from 1847 onwards subsequently influenced Nazi ideology and the Ku Klux Klan and continue to resonate among white supremacists today.

Tlingit Glacier & Lakes forms part of Huber's long-term project *Demounting Agassiz*, through which she has artistically confronted the long-suppressed legacy of the racial theorist Louis Agassiz since 2008.

Gallery II

5. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Remèdes Remedies*, 2016

The work documents a communal, Vodou-inspired performance held at Le Centre d'Art² in Port-au-Prince on 29 January 2016. It brings together traditional healing practices, spirituality, and Haiti's social reality. The participants contributed remedies for physical ailments, everyday problems, and spiritual misfortune. During the performance, these were translated into gestures, song, and spoken word.

At the beginning, the participants gather around a woodpile. A young man reads aloud the ailments they had previously written down, ranging from eye problems and heartbreak to testicular cancer and epilepsy. Accompanied by drums, guitar music, and singing, Papa Loko—the spirit of trees, plants, and healing—is invoked. The participants then receive remedies and advice ranging from plant knowledge and home remedies to spiritual practices. Hunger and cholera are identified as consequences of precarious living conditions. At the end, the trees are celebrated as a source of healing and life, and Papa Loko is honoured once again.

Healing emerges as a connection between plant knowledge, spirituality, social experience, and community.

² Sasha Huber's grandfather was one of the founders of Le Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince in 1944. Le Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince.

6. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Perejil*, 2017

In *Perejil*, Huber and Saarikko commemorate the thousands of Afro-Haitians murdered in the Dominican Republic during the 1937 Parsley Massacre. In a multidisciplinary collaboration with young artists from Le Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince, they developed the script and staging for a performance that presented the historical events as a pared-down reenactment. The reenactment was performed publicly and filmed in late January 2016.

Using simple means, young men recreate scenes of a marketplace, persecution and murder: men wielding stylised wooden machetes attack workers wearing straw hats; the wounded and dead are subsequently carried away by others. Sasha Huber also appears in the performance. Using her staple gun, she works on a portrait of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, under whose rule the Parsley Massacre was ordered, confronting him with a symbolic act of resistance. Banners displayed at the end of the reenactment call for justice and peaceful coexistence between Haitians and Dominicans: "Nous sommes des frères, essayons de vivre ensemble" ("We are brothers; let us try to live together").

Perejil functions reparatively by recalling suppressed violence, making its victims visible and retelling history from a Haitian perspective. Remembrance itself thus becomes a form of decolonial knowledge production.

GII a: *Shelter Works*

The main exhibition space brings together shelters that Huber and Saarikko developed within the framework of *Remedies* for different contexts. The artists conceive of them as spaces in which people can feel free from judgement and, for a moment, "simply be". They temporarily limit external demands and allow for retreat, reflection, and self-determination.

Here, protection does not mean withdrawing from the world. Rather, it creates the conditions for engaging with it autonomously from one's own position.

7. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Remedies SOMATIC SHELTER*, 2026

With *Remedies SOMATIC SHELTER*, Huber & Saarikko extend the holistic question of healing and protection to the technologically exposed body. The tent-like installation is made of a transparent fabric that shields against electromagnetic waves. Like a second skin, it protects against radio waves used to transmit digital signals.

However, the artists turn the tent's protective function into a paradox by inviting visitors to enter it with their smartphones. Instead of shielding themselves from the signals, they bring their source into the protected space. A sensor detects the electromagnetic signals emitted by each smartphone and translates them into a buzzing sound played through a loudspeaker outside the tent. What is left when the technologies of surveillance and connectivity are inverted and turned inside out?

8. Petri Saarikko, *Lightfield Echo I & II*, 2026

On two large-scale black panels, Saarikko has applied countless layers of white phosphorescent paint with his fingers. At intervals, the panels are exposed to UV light and subsequently glow blue-green. In the darkened space, the rhythmic patterns of dots evoke bioluminescent marine organisms such as plankton or jellyfish.

Saarikko is interested in light as a carrier of information. The paint stores the previous exposure to light as a temporary trace. Saarikko therefore compares the paintings to touchscreens: an action produces an immediate visible response that slowly fades. The title *Echo* refers to this aftereffect of light, where the ephemeral duration thus the speed of light becomes visible. He traces the concrete space darkness visible as an othered perspective towards the Notion and idea of what painting is.

9. Petri Saarikko, *Veils, Inlight Confession*, 2015-2026

In *Veils* (2015–2026), Saarikko explores the relationship between the body, light, and protective enclosure. The vertically oriented cube is made of phosphorescent fabric. Hood-like openings covered with perforated material evoke beekeepers' veils or fencing masks. Inside, there is a protective suit made from the same material.

At regular intervals, the fabric is exposed to UV light and subsequently glows. Visitors can enter the cube and put on the suit. The intense glow completely surrounds the body, reversing the function of the protective enclosure: rather than shielding the body, it exposes it to an intensified experience of light.

The title *Inlight Confession* reinforces the impression of a confessional. The installation becomes a secluded space for retreat and self-awareness. Yet the "confession" does not take place in darkness, but in light.

10. Sasha Huber, *Star Constellations*, 2026

With these small discs, reminiscent of shimmering stars in the universe, Sasha Huber commemorates people who have fallen victim to political, racist, and colonial violence. In Freiburg, she dedicates the work to the victims of the German colonial genocide in Namibia.

11. Petri Saarikko, *Dials*, 2024-2026

Infinity Dial (ID ETA) is an expanding, earthbound time and light energy harvesting monument. Dials are located in critical geographical sites to illuminate their temporal relationship with the surrounding natural environment.

The biological human species has previously applied self-illuminating mineral-based technologies, for instance, to ritualistic and time managerial purposes. The handleless circular dial is similar to a sundial (1500 BC) drawing cosmic light energy from the sun. Dial timescale is set to display an abundance of invisible nontime, in parallel with, and beyond human time.

12. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Lullaby*, 2025

At the far end of the large lower exhibition space, a beige parachute dating from the Cold War hangs upside down from the ceiling. Illuminated from within, it appears like an oversized cocoon in the darkened room.

For Huber and Saarikko, parachutes embody an elemental form of protection: in an emergency, they are designed to catch a falling body and ensure its survival. In *Lullaby*, the parachute is removed from its military function and transformed into a suspended shelter. Yet its ambivalence remains: an object associated with war and danger becomes an image of rescue, safety, and vulnerability.

The title *Lullaby* extends the idea of the parachute as a protective shell. Lullabies soothe and shield us from external stimuli. Like *Remedies SOMATIC SHELTER*, *Lullaby* thus becomes a temporary shelter from an environment of constant stimuli and signals.

13. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Afterlife*, 2017

Next to *Lullaby*, another parachute, *Afterlife*, hangs upside down from the ceiling. Made of pink synthetic fabric, the parachute forms an oval, cocoon-like shape. Illuminated from within, it appears in the darkened space like a glowing body.

The work was originally created in the context of Saarikko's exhibition on palliative care. The parachute thus becomes a metaphor for protection and care at the threshold between life and death. As in *Lullaby*, an object originally designed for rescue is transformed into a soft, suspended protective structure. While *Lullaby* associates protection with soothing and retreat, *Afterlife* focuses on the vulnerability of the body and care at the end of life.

14. Sasha Huber & Petri Saarikko, *Remedies Sanctuary, Mist*, 2023-2026

Remedies Sanctuary, Mist continues the *Remedies* series in Finland, extending the question of healing to the landscape itself. The work leaves open whether human intervention in the landscape enables healing or itself becomes part of the threat to it.

The site-specific installation was conceived by Huber and Saarikko for the 2023 Helsinki Biennial. On an artificial pond on the island of Vallisaari, they installed a floating apparatus that generates water mist using ultrasound. The Freiburg exhibition presents the work in its filmic form.

In the video, we see the artificially generated mist drifting across the pond from a floating apparatus. Wind and light shape it into constantly changing formations. Set against the dark backdrop of trees, they create a spectacular, almost Romantic landscape. The electronic sound lends the idyll an undercurrent of menace.

The artificial mist creates a poetic natural phenomenon while simultaneously revealing its artificiality. In this way, the technological intervention mirrors the history of the site. Vallisaari was used for military purposes from the late nineteenth century onwards. The pond was created as a freshwater reservoir. Explosives left behind later led to restricted access. At the same time, the area developed into a nature reserve and the pond into an ecosystem in its own right.

The apparent natural idyll thus overlays a landscape shaped by human intervention. It is precisely this ambivalence that connects the work to the *Remedies* series: the landscape itself appears as the patient.

15 a. Petri Saarikko, *Crepuscular Veils*, 2015-2024

Crepuscular Veils was created in the Aoraki Mackenzie International Dark Sky Reserve in New Zealand. Over two nights, Saarikko filmed three performers wearing luminous suits made of phosphorescent material. In the darkness, their bodies appear and disappear, dissolve into abstract forms of light, and merge with the landscape.

As in *Veils* and *Lightfield Echo*, Saarikko explores the threshold between visibility and disappearance. In this nocturnal environment protected from artificial light, the bodies themselves become sources of light. Their glow makes them visible while simultaneously eluding clear perception: bodies transform into fields of light and afterimages. Darkness appears not as emptiness, but as a condition for heightened perception.

15 b. Petri Saarikko, *Traps*, 2024

In the adjacent bunker space, eight nets of varying sizes made of phosphorescent material hang from the ceiling. Saarikko commissioned them from women in Finland who practise a traditional knotting technique used for crayfish and fishing nets. At regular intervals, the nets are exposed to UV light. They absorb its energy and continue to glow in the dark. The luminous nets oscillate between protection and entrapment, visibility and disappearance.

15 c. Petri Saarikko, *Nests*, 2026

Inside the upside-down drogue parachutes are fluorescent veils worn by the performers in Saarikko's video *Crepuscular Veils*.