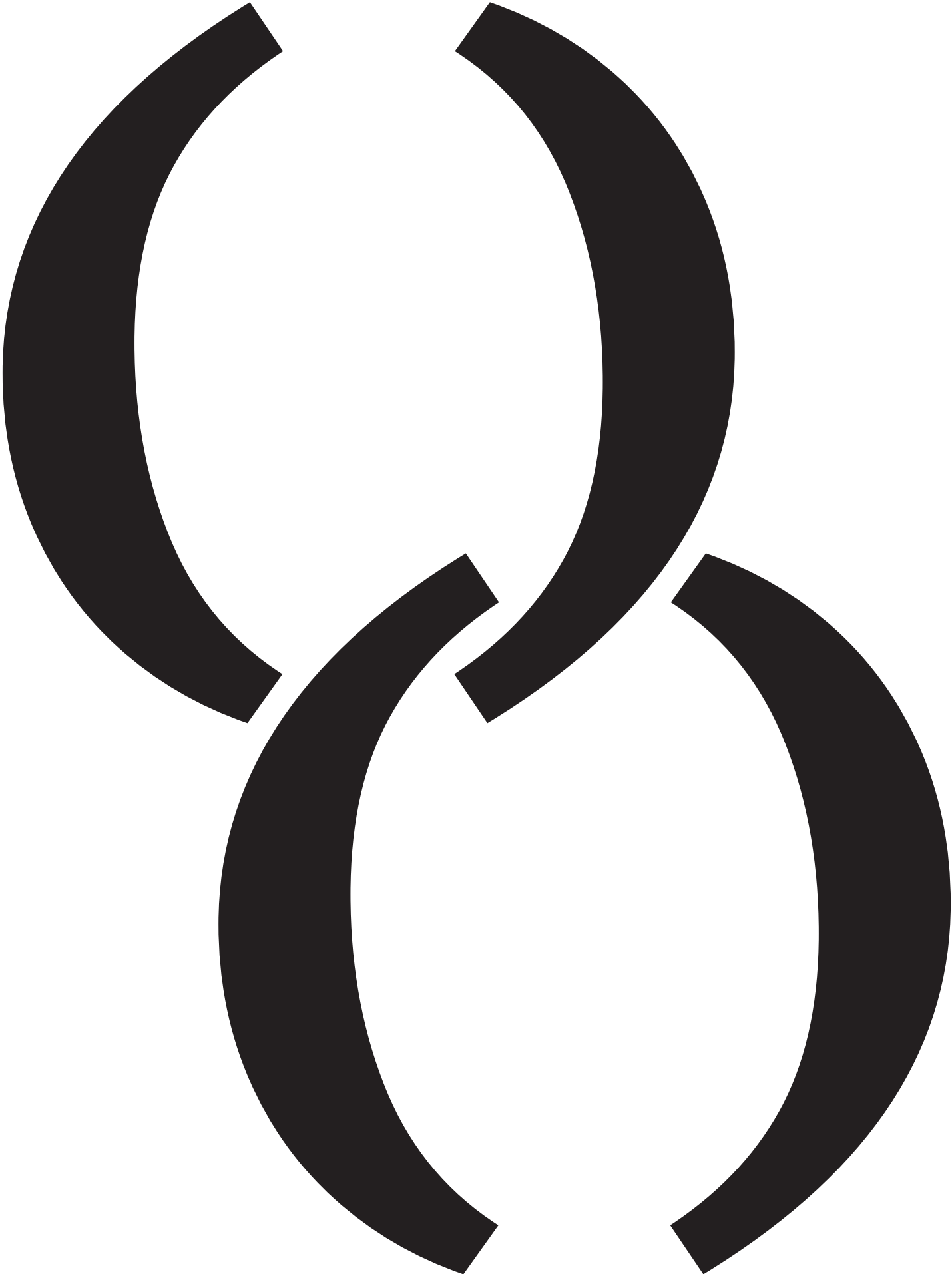


EN



KH

6.6. –
16.8.26

Phoebe Collings- James

Let this be the anchor

With **Let this be the anchor**, Künstler:innenhaus Bremen presents a new body of work by British artist **Phoebe Collings-James**. In her practice, Collings-James engages with the contradictions and tensions of everyday life, treating ceramic sculpture as a site of reciprocity and transformation. The artist works predominantly with installations made of ceramics, brass, and wood. Collings-James describes clay as a material with memory – one that remembers and allows tensions to become visible within its materiality.

Working with clay is a deeply physical process, in which every movement is directly inscribed into the material. Handling clay demands physical presence and constant adaptation, as it responds to pressure and time, and in doing so, immediately raises questions about the duality of support and rupture. Clay is malleable, yet encounters limits during the drying and firing process: it cracks, warps, and can break. It is precisely this instability that makes it an ideal medium for rendering visible load-bearing structures, founded not on permanence, but on process. Collings-James understands these conditions not as constraints, but as an integral part of the process of finding form. The material brings its own logic that co-determines the process and continually influences decisions made during the work. The result is a series of structures that constantly renegotiate their own stability, making visible the tension between control and chance.

For the exhibition **Let this be the anchor**, the artist developed a new series of sculptures that move between architecture and supporting structure. At the centre stands the motif of the tower. Conceptually, it appears simultaneously as a vantage point, scaffold,

or sign, and as a fragile construction, opening onto a condensed field of symbols and references that the artist interrogates in terms of its cultural and formal layers. In doing so, she turns to a method of working with clay that is new to her: rather than building containers through the coiling technique in rounded forms, as in earlier works, she stacks slabs of clay in this new body of work, thereby deconstructing the familiar form. The resulting openings and voids are reminiscent of the structures of masonry buildings, no coincidence, but a deliberate formal principle. Where glaze is absent, the raw clay beneath emerges, exposing what would otherwise remain hidden. The interplay of mass and permeability runs throughout the entire work.

Alongside the techniques used to give clay its forms, she is also interested in the decorative surfaces of the sculptures. She plays with moments of the ornamental and sees in the colours and surface elements an appealing facet, without fully surrendering to the concept of the ornament. Rather, the elements on the surface reference traces of memory that she has absorbed from urban space into her artistic vocabulary.

Both in the process of making and in moving through the exhibition, the tower appears not only as an architectural object, but also as a conceptual figure: one that stands for uprightness and orientation, but equally for fragility and potential disruption. The tower is one of the oldest and most multivalent figures in the collective visual imagination: symbol of power, utopia, and threat alike. As a sign of stability and growth, and as a representation, through its monumental form, in urban space, it simultaneously carries within it the perpetual possibility of collapse.

This reading of the tower as a political figure resonates with artistic positions that consistently understand architecture as a site of social negotiation. In the exhibition *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America* (2021), curators Sean Anderson and Mabel O. Wilson point, on the one hand, to the idea that social and ethnic inequality is spatially organised and that architecture always shapes social orders as well. On the other hand, the speculative force of architectural forms simultaneously opens up the possibility of imagining community, resistance, and new futures. It is precisely this tension that the exhibition interrogates: the foundations of social orders and what becomes visible in moments of potential disintegration. The sculptures function as carriers of memory, in which political and bodily dimensions overlap. The visible and invisible skeletons of systems form the starting point for **Let this be the anchor**.

In luscious colours, raw surfaces, signs and drawings, as well as imprinted elements, the towers in the exhibition always retain something playful. They vary in height – as in *ascensional myth [lower your head]* – in texture – as in *Freeeeee* – they are in motion of collapsing – as in *ascensional myth [collapse]* – or offer shelter – as in *The closer I get to you*. Between construction and collapse, images emerge of a humanity in permanent transformation. In its commercial

form, clay is called a clay-body. Collings-James plays with this ambiguity, shaping the clay-body into new containers whose architectures relate to our own existence. Alongside this ever-present bodily dimension, collapse is a constant structure within Collings-James's artistic practice: as the collapse of bodies and ideas, and as a reconfiguration of emotional residues; traces of a knowledge of feelings, sediments of violence, language, and desire, inextricably interwoven with the lived environment and the power relations inscribed within it. Collings-James speaks of memories of stories still written into the facades of buildings, of new constructions, safety, and shelter, as well as an urban vocabulary found in the form of markings and fragments on facades.

These inscriptions have their origins in the artist's immediate surroundings: tower blocks, scaffolding, facades. The urban traces appear in abstracted form as signs on the sculptures. Collings-James's practice of mark-making, the act of leaving traces in material and space, draws on experiences of walking through the city, observing urban structures, and remembering the underlying, load-bearing systems beneath them. Markings such as lines and crosses recur across the surfaces of the sculptures, appropriated as a visual vocabulary of her own, capturing moments of urban development and urban space, as traces held within the material.

This constant tension between collapse and supporting structures, the visible and invisible skeleton of built environments, can be described through Patricia Noxolo's concept of the fractal. The British human geographer uses the term metaphorically in *Caribbean In/Securities: An Introduction* (2018) to grasp complex cultural and postcolonial structures. Unlike "fractured," which implies rupture and destruction, the fractal points to recognisable patterns that repeat themselves across different levels – an order within layeredness and apparent instability. Noxolo describes community as a weave of many interwoven stories and perspectives, complexly entangled and forming a simultaneously strong and fluid image of individual and collective identities. In this sense, **Let this be the anchor** negotiates questions of protection and resistance by setting architectural, material, and emotional fault lines into relation with one another.

Curator: Marie Oucherif
Curatorial Assistant: Johanne Jordan

A project by Künstler:innenhaus Bremen in cooperation with Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland.

Phoebe Collings-James (*1987 in London, GB, lives and works in London) completed her studies in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College in London. Exhibitions: Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, London (2026), Albuquerque Foundation, Sintra (2026), KINDL Berlin (2025), Mendes Wood, Brussels (2025), Sculpture Center, New York (2024), arcadia missa, London (2024), Camden Arts Centre, London (2021), Picture Room, New York (2021), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2020), Ginerva Gambino, Cologne (2020). Her ceramics studio *Mudbelly* began as a personal research project but has since grown into a shop and teaching platform that offers free ceramics classes for Black people in London, taught by Black ceramicists.

ART MEDIATION PROGRAMME:

6.6. 3 pm

In Conversation: Artist Talk with Phoebe Collings-James and Marie Oucherif (EN)

11.6. 6 pm

Curator's Tour with Marie Oucherif (DE)

2.7. 6 pm

Guided Tour in Turkish with Elfin Açar (TR) / Elfin Açar ile Türkçe sergi turu (TR)

11.7. 3–6 pm

Can Art Convey Art? Workshop with Marisa Müller and Clara Kramer (DE)

22.7. 10 am–3 pm

Cast / Slip / Pour / Stack! Tumbling Towers and Unstable Forms. Clay and plaster workshop for children 8–11 years, with Tabea Felicitas Amrei Erhart & Noelle BuAbbud (DE)

23.7. 6 pm

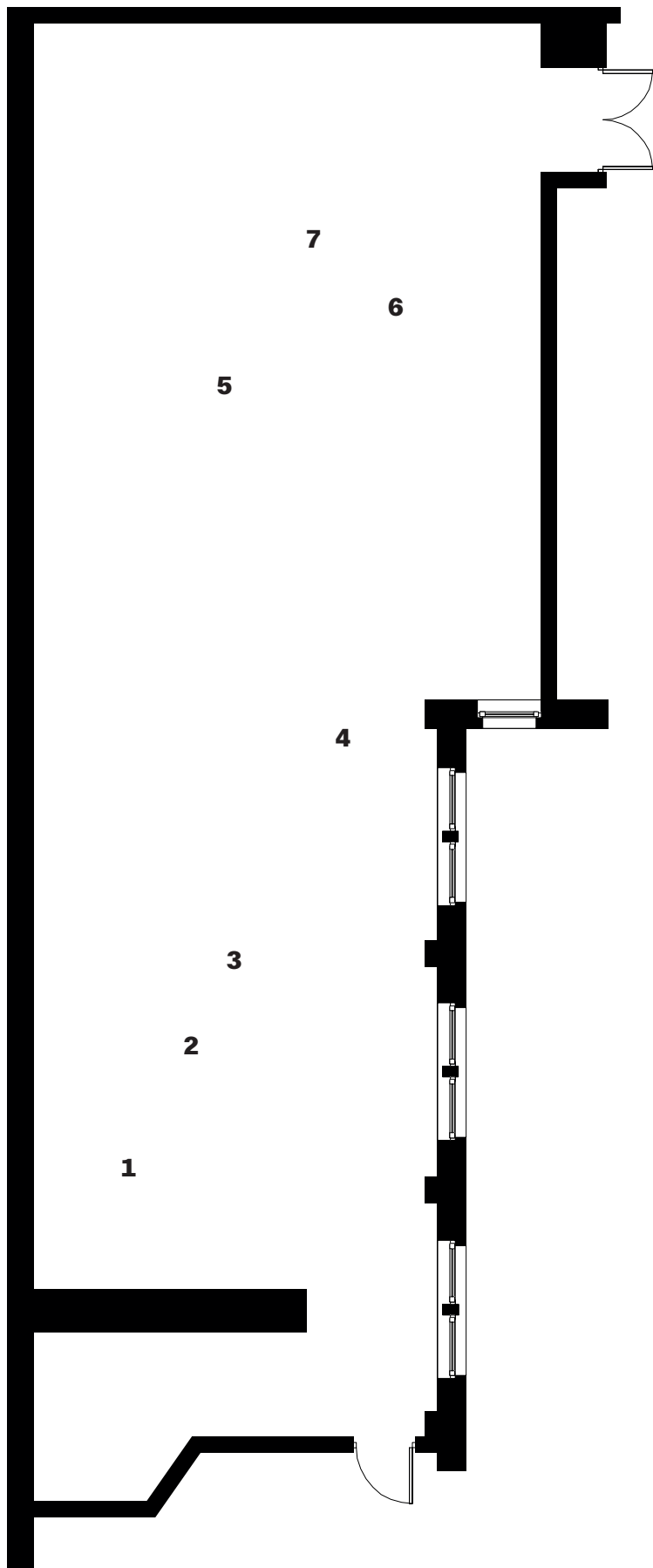
Guided Tour with Johanne Jordan (DE)

More info at www.kh-bremen.de/en/events

Thanks to

Christopher Eperjesi, Rózsa Farkas, Peter Hammonds, Meli Ulkumen Ardila and Takiaya Reed;
Exhibition display: Martin Wilmes; Installationteam: Florian Geisler, Nicolas-Friedrich Hohlt, eghbal joudi, Anne Krönker, Annemarie Schiemenz;
Exhibition graphics: Bureau Sandra Doeller.

FLOORPLAN



- 1 Phoebe Collings-James**
The closer I get to you, 2026
Glazed ceramic, sapele wood

Wooden stand produced by
Martin Wilmes Möbelbau, Bremen,
after the artist's design.

- 2 Phoebe Collings-James**
Freeeee, 2026
Glazed ceramic, meranti wood and
brass sheet

- 3 Phoebe Collings-James**
Let this be the anchor, 2026
Glazed ceramic, sapele wood

Wooden stand produced by
Martin Wilmes Möbelbau, Bremen,
after the artist's design.

- 4 Phoebe Collings-James**
ascensional myth [lower your head], 2026
Glazed ceramic, meranti wood and
brass sheet

- 5 Phoebe Collings-James**
In square circle, 2026
Glazed ceramic, meranti wood and
brass sheet

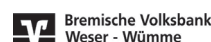
- 6 Phoebe Collings-James**
black tower, 2026
Glazed ceramic, sapele wood

- 7 Phoebe Collings-James**
ascensional myth [collapse], 2026
Glazed ceramic, sapele wood and
brass sheet

All Works:
Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

Produced with the kind support of
KH Künstler:innenhaus Bremen

Kindly Supported by



Beate + Hartmut Schaefer's
Stiftung

Arcadia Missa

The art mediation programme is supported by

VGHV Stiftung

Künstler:innenhaus is supported by