

ARTFORUM



BRAUNSCHWEIG

Richard Sides

KUNSTVEREIN BRAUNSCHWEIG

Haus Salve Hospes Lessingplatz 12

December 7, 2019–February 16, 2020

In “Dwelling,” Richard Sides plays with both meanings of the exhibition title as *home* and *thinking*. In the venue’s main room is a wooden pavilion, all internal surface and covered with untreated tongue-and-groove paneling. Inside is a newly commissioned hour-long video, *Midnight in a Perfect World*, 2019, which stages two sets of conversations in a dark comic parody of self-help jargon and “alternative” living practices. One character, awake for fourteen days, recounts his escape from a cult-like “parasite pod” community in which the leader, Mark, “introduced us to a sort of vicarious . . . telepathy where he started thinking for us.” Later, pointing to the corporate intrusion of interior dwelling space, another character sits, eyes closed, listening to an introductory session of Headspace, one of the best-known meditation apps.

A sodium outdoor floodlight beams over the structure and leaks outside to illuminate the courtyard, complicating the sense between indoors and out. On the gallery lawn is a freestanding, featureless wedge, clad on all sides in plywood,

paint, and concrete. The structure is defined as a “folly”: a decorative building with no accessible inside or practical purpose. In an inversion of the structure’s traditional use, Sides’s offers no ornamental embellishments, but instead functions as a punctuation and contrast to the Kunstverein’s classicist architecture while infringing on the communal green space and blocking the exterior view. Sides makes clear that attempts at reworking structures or stripping elements away are only ever rearrangements of forms of enclosure, whether in social space or within the self. Both the video and architectural units wryly convey contemporary anxieties around the commons, while collapsing the internal and external, public and private, and individual and communal ideas of dwelling.

— *Tim Steer*

Richard Sides, *Untitled*, 2019, site-specific mixed-media sculpture, dimensions variable.