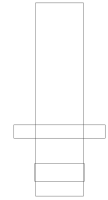


*eoad*

Sam Cottington  
10.09. – 26.10.2025  
Obelus, Berlin



It must be fate that to get to Sam Cottington's show at *Obelus*, I have to pass by the gym at the end of my street. Walking towards the road, trying to cross the canal to get from Kreuzberg's posh 61 to the scruffier 36, I see two guys waiting for the light to turn green, one of them wearing the skimpiest shorts with the thickest thighs I've seen all year. It makes me think of Sam's Instagram account, aptly named *y35dqddy*, of course echoing the yes daddy that's been so pervasive in internet porn cultures, especially the gay variety, these past years. The grid's a mix of screenshotted stories, pictures of men (often coasting full nudity), archival images of anything from dance history to *Sex and The City*, snapshots of daily life, and other posts that escape my ability to describe them. There is a dada-cum-brainrot sensibility to it that crawls inside your consciousness along its most animalistic parts using hot boys, ass, and other pictures that regularly make me wonder "how hasn't this been removed yet?" in combination with a tumblesque mix of obscured pop culture. It is with this in mind that I walk into *eoad*, as the show is titled. Emphasis on vowels, something like a primal scream, or a sigh, the d an abrupt end to it. It all ends with the D, right?

Walking into the space hosting *Obelus*, a partially renovated flat on a first floor in Forster Strasse, I am greeted by A4 papers laying on a makeshift table typical of an artist's studio. A fitting image, since artist Clemente Ciarrocca, who runs the nomadic project across Berlin, considers this curatorial work an equal part of his material practice. The papers are strewn around, all reading just a single word, printed so as to almost fill the entire page: *some*. It's Cottington's choice, and picking this as the only accompanying text pretty much exemplifies the way in which the show as a whole operates: objects as agents opening up meanings, not devoid of them, but not representatively pointing towards a clear interpretation either, even negating the need for such a thing in the first place. This is an invitation to sense, rather than understand—never all, but *some*.

Featured in the exhibition are four works. In the order in which they appear on the floor plan, one can see: two simplified farm gates along opposing walls, one painted white, the other exposing the wooden beams they're both made of; one taxidermy of a pigeon in the far corner of the room positioned towards the window; and in another room, centered on the wall, an 'F' in black paint of almost the same dimension as the gates.

Within the choreography of the space, the gates stand open. As you walk into the room, you pass along them, not kept from entering, their function disabled, or at least transformed. They appear as haphazard structures, recalling cattle ranches, horse farms and the hugeness of prairies, accentuating the vacated aura of the space. In this little room with some cat stickers on the door left over from the previous tenant and renovators, I wonder if what they are doing is opening up the floor space, or rather closing off the walls, their white brick and mortar turning into an endless horizon that I can't even begin reach for. I feel like the pigeon, sat on the floor with one of its brown-feathered wings half stretched out as if trying to take flight, looking out the closed window into the sky framed by the courtyard. There's an irony to the anti-pigeon-spikes on the window sill, meant to keep them out, now keeping this one inside. I feel a melancholy, looking at one of its feet hovering above the ground, full of desire, or better the untranslatable German *Sehnsucht*, addiction to longing. Like the conceptual opening of the works towards meaning and connotations, there's a physical presence of both openings and closings all across the show. Thresholds, barriers, horizons - visiting the space is an experience textured by these structures that expand over themselves, over the rooms, into what is or might be "out there". Consider the open window in the last room, next to the painted F, letting in waning daylight and the natural sounds of Forster Strasse, in the middle of Kreuzberg, opening towards foliage and trees, some of them only a few years old as I can tell by their thin trunks. The soft evening light trickles into the otherwise unlit space, making a soft breeze hover over the end of the show. Less of a climax than an encore, the simple painted lines in the middle of the wall both recall the look and size of the gates, while literally putting them on their head (or ass). This F is less a present object than a further clue, delineating

space, heightening the awareness one might offer to everything that makes up the exhibition and is often not considered part of it.

Every aspect of the show is work, and as such, has been labored. I overhear a conversation in which Cottington says he himself will know the exhibition better as it will go on and amplify, functioning similarly to a theatre play fed by its connection to an invisible audience, utilizing its temporal, spatial, and medial economy in a visual arts context, extending the ways in which experience can be textured by a show that, like its parts, is performing. Detaching this labour from deterministic productivity and an essentialism of meaning, Cottington configures work that one could connect to the general methods of artists working about a hundred years ago, making sense of the sense lessness within a-rising fascisms, now with tech-bro anarcho-capitalism and an extra serving of hyper-death. Blurring logics that prioritize understanding, the works and their relations escape the trappings of classification, to allow for a much-needed difficulty in thinking the multiplicity of identity.

*ead* eschews interpretation in the hermeneutic sense; this work (as in the show, the practice, the singular works themselves, the space, the context and the entire whole) doesn't point, it doesn't center, it expands. Bouncing off the floor and the walls right across your eyes and into your brain, nestling itself in your grey matter, everything Cottington offers the visitor (a word that seems more fitting than 'viewer' in this case) isn't so much something to understand, but rather a network that you find yourself traveling along, taking paths that are inexpressibly specific to you, sometimes meeting others, embarked on their own specific paths, sometimes coming to a stand, looking out the window.

Jakob Urban  
September 2025

