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L'Harmonie du Personnel

Annika Kahrs

Bac à sable
#4



EXCERPT FROM THE FILM *L'HARMONIE DU PERSONNEL*, ANNIKA KAHRs, 2026. DURATION : 22MIN. PRODUCED BY THE 19, CRAC. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND PRODUCTENTGALERIE HAMBURG.

L'Harmonie du Personnel

A solo show from Annika Kahrs

***"I took a deep breath
and listened to the old brag of my heart.
I am, I am, I am."¹***

L'Harmonie du Personnel is both the title of Annika Kahrs' first solo exhibition in France and that of her latest film, shot at the Peugeot Archives in Hérimoncourt in the Pays de Montbéliard with the musicians of the Harmonie de Sochaux in the spring of 2026. These few elements already offer some clues to an artistic practice that has, for several years, situated itself at the intersection of the visual arts, music, and a situated approach through which the artist, with a sort of irreverent elegance, breathes new energy into specific places or situations.

Since 2024, Annika Kahrs has been exploring the role of brass bands in Europe within various political, social, industrial, and demographic contexts. The project in Montbéliard brings this research to a close, taking the form of a trilogy of films brought together here for the first time.

¹-In Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, 1963.

"With an ounce of bloody hope left. they can knock out a bloody good tune. matter?"²

In Annika Kahrs's work, music and sound function both as subjects and as pretexts. Subjects because they are omnipresent in her films, installations, and performances. Pretexts because they are the vehicles or instruments through which she brings together different communities, memories, histories, and societal codes each time: "in that sense, music can function as a kind of metaphor for social or political structures"³.

La Banda (2024) follows the parade of an intergenerational orchestra in the Italian village of Olevano Romano. In the film, the musicians perform an experimental parade through the alleys, streets, and squares of their village. This procession reveals a shared complicity among the musicians and their deep emotional connection to their home. The work also reflects the importance of musical practice within rural communities deeply affected by demographic changes.

Les Fanfares (2025), filmed in Sion in the Swiss canton of Valais, features an ensemble composed of members from various groups. By reworking scores⁴ inspired by their usual repertoire to give them a more experimental form, the newly formed collective delves into the intimate yet complex relationship that musical ensembles have long maintained with local political parties in this region of Switzerland. At the same time, this work draws parallels with the equally complex dynamics of political positions and their influence on our daily lives.

Music, then, serves as a revelation of the invisible patterns that structure our spaces and ways of life. For it is not simply a matter of involving professional and amateur musicians, but also of showing how these forms "take root in specific communities"⁵ and are an expression of a specific context and its influence on people.

When invited to work in Montbéliard, Annika Kahrs was therefore primarily interested in the region. She explains: "a place will spark my interest if it provides more questions than answers, and if it is undergoing a process of transformation - no matter what direction this will take it in"⁶ This moment of transformation, which she also describes as "potential," is what the Pays de Montbéliard is currently undergoing. Starting from the exhibition venue itself, the 19, Crac, located in a former Peugeot repair shop dating from the early 20th century, she thus chose to focus—in contrast to her two previous films—on the working-class communities that developed in connection with the local industrial history and, more specifically, on a company marching band for the third installment of her trilogy.

2-Quote from *Brassed off*, scenario and filmmaking by director Mark Herman, Channel Four Films, Miramax Films, Prominent Films, 1997

3-Excerpt from the interview with the artist for the exhibition. Cahier du 19, Crac.

4-The composer Louis d'Heudières, a longtime collaborator of the artist, is usually the one behind these new scores.

5-Quote from Jeremy Deller about his project Acid Brass which began in 1997 as a collaboration with the the Stockport-based Fairey Brass Band and the composer Rodney Newton who created all the brass arrangements. Deller saw a connection between the Historical worker brass band form and the acid house from Detroit as "two authentic forms of folk art rooted in specific communities".

6-Interview with the artist in the *Annika Kahrs, OFF SCORE* catalog, an exhibition on view at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin from November 2025 to May 2026. Interview conducted by Philipp Lange.

"There is no art without criticism."⁷

Indeed, in the Montbéliard region as elsewhere, large companies encouraged social and cultural engagement to foster a sense of community among their workers and present a different public image of their operations. The creation of a marching band was part of this broader initiative. The Harmonie des Automobiles Peugeot association was founded on May 13, 1930, under the leadership of Ernest Mattern, technical director of the Société des Automobiles Peugeot. The founding objective was to "provide a setting for cultural enrichment for employees and to enhance the brand's image through events combining prestige and musical excellence." This band has had an epic and prestigious history marked by the presence of prominent conductors and musicians in its ranks. Known today as the Harmonie de Sochaux, it continues to offer multi-generational music education thanks to the determination of a few individuals. Freed from the mission of corporate communication and visibility, it is now exploring other avenues for development and thus supports the potential for transformation that characterizes the region as a whole.

The choice of the title, *L'Harmonie du Personnel*, refers to the ensemble's history, but it also deliberately departs from it by no longer specifying the company's name, instead focusing on the group that is now breathing new life into it. The film presents the ensemble in the context of a former factory now converted into an archive. At once scattered and united, the ensemble appears in various scenes accompanied by props, objects, documents, photographs, a car, sheet music, and musical instruments. The performers' bodies embody various situations related to music, but also to work, learning, and discovery. Tasks that might be perceived as absurd are carried out with profound seriousness, while more serious tasks are performed with a kind of joyful absurdity. These shifts between harmony and disruption create a work that is both humorous and critical.

7-Quote from Lawrence Weiner. The American artist shares with Kahrs a sense of humor as well as a certain conception of the score. In Weiner's case, this takes the form of protocol-poetry.



"Language tells us nothing about what we have no words for."⁸

In her work, Annika Kahrs does not view the role of music as communicating emotions or a message. Rather, it is about creating a listening experience that, by extension, becomes "an act of composition."⁹

"By questioning performance practice, space/time structures and hierarchies of reception, new realms of possibility are opened up for musicians, actors and audience members"¹⁰ Thus, virtuosity gives way to spontaneity, to individual and collective expressions that in turn generate "open interactions"¹¹ and open the door to emancipatory forms of experimentation with other potentials.

Unlocking the potential of a place, a community, or a situation can only be achieved through hypotheses. Music and the medium of video thus offer the artist a unique method: that of play in all its imaginable forms and interpretations. Her works are conceived as scores in which interpretation, improvisation, structure, chaos, and repetition make visible and audible the awkwardness, doubt, discomfort, vulnerability, joy, and curiosity. What emerges from the body of work is a fragile humanity that takes on the qualities of gentleness and humor despite the often jarring or serious subjects raised by the history of the places that transpires through the image. Within this collective dynamic thus captured, each work reminds us that "groups are not entities endowed with a predetermined essences, but tumultuous relational processes that exist only through their own contestation and negotiation—ongoing processes, made up of uncertain, fragile, controversial, and constantly evolving bonds."¹²

8—A phrase inscribed on the wall of Eva Lootz's sculptural and sound installation, *Lágrimas negras* (1997), addressing the exploitation of landscapes and the destruction of ecosystems. Since the 70's ecofeminism is addressing the link in between worker bodies exploitations and nature ressources exploitations.

9—In John Cage *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, Wesleyan University Press, 1961 « The act of listening is in fact an act of composing ».

10—From the exhibition text *Annika Kahrs. OFF SCORE* by exhibition curator Ingrid Buschmann. Op. cit.

11—Interview of the artist in the cahier du 19. Op. Cit.

12—In Ethan Philbrick, *Group Works – art, politics, and collective ambivalence*, Forham University Press, New York, 2023.

13—In Pauline Oliveiros *Quantum Listening – Sounding the margins*, 2010 first edition. Ignota.org, 2022



Annika Kahrs' work thus captures the hum of the world with wit and generosity. The Work invites us to listen deeply, allowing us to "see and hear life as a great improvisation— [to] stay open to the world of possibilities for interplay in the quantum field with self and others—community—society—the world."¹³

Adeline Lépine, Exhibition curator

Annika Kahrs' exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of Pays de Montbéliard Agglomération through the project Les couleurs de l'agglo for the production of the film L'Harmonie du Personnel, and IFA - Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen for the production of the exhibition; the Plan Fanfare program of the DRAC Bourgogne-Franche-Comté for its support through the close collaboration between composer Louis d'Heudières and the Sochaux Wind Band; and the Liebelt Stiftung in Hamburg for the entire project. The film L'Harmonie du Personnel also benefited from the generous hospitality of the Centre d'archives de Terre Blanche / Fonds de dotation Peugeot pour la mémoire de l'histoire industrielle in Hérimoncourt.

➔ TO GO FURTHER

Annika KAHRS (born in 1984 in Achim, Germany) lives and works in Hambourg and Berlin.

Annika Kahrs is a visual artist working with installation, video and performance. Her research and the subjects it addresses always involve sound or music in their entanglement with social or political issues, and in connection with professional or amateur performers. She holds degrees from the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg and the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna.

Her work has been recognised and supported through grants and awards on several occasions, including the Villa Aurora, VILA SUL, Max-Pechstein-Förderpreis, Stiftung Kunstfonds and the George-Maciunas-Förderpreis. In recent years she has been in residence in Rome, Tokyo and Istanbul; her works have been exhibited both nationally and internationally, notably at the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart in Berlin; the 5th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art; the Bienal Internacional de Curitiba; the Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art; and the Biennale Son de Sion.

Annika Kahrs is one of the artists selected for Manifesta 16 Ruhr in 2026 and is represented by Produzentengalerie in Hamburg.

<http://www.annikakahrs.com/>



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[Persistances](#)

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* The Crac Alsace in Altkirch

[Glowing, flaring, lurid, loud](#)

A solo exhibition from Yuyan Wang.

[The world](#)

A solo exhibition from Rafael Moreno.
From April 3 to August 30 2026.

Le 19, CRAC

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