

**Westfälischer  
Kunstverein**

**Sonia Kacem**

**“Between the  
scenes”**

**19.10.2019—**

**02.02.2020**

**/English**

## IMPRINT

## PUBLICATION

Westfälischer Kunstverein,  
2019

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## EXHIBITION

Sonia Kacem  
"Between the scenes"  
19 October 2019-2 February  
2020  
Westfälischer Kunstverein

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Lighting: Johann Crne

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to stammer a pattern, 2019  
(detail)

Tunisian-Swiss sculptor, Sonia Kacem's (b. 1985) practice is characterised by a sensitive examination of materials from which she develops process-oriented sculptural stagings that, despite their abstract form, invite a rich host of associations. In a large installation that takes up the entire exhibition space of the Westfälischer Kunstverein, she presents for the first time the outcome of her art research undertaken during a six-month working visit to Cairo at the beginning of this year. Based on her own North African roots and fusing Arabic cultural space with a vague sense of home and belonging, Kacem intended to devote herself to Islamic art in Cairo in order to develop an appreciation for its approach to non-figurative art predicated upon wholly different parameters from those at play in modernist abstract art in Western culture.

In order to document her impressions whilst she was there, Kacem used photographic snapshots and small segments of video footage, arranging her thoughts with the aid of numerous sketches. This research material can be viewed in the small exhibition space and serves as "visual notes", as a kind of invitation to trace Kacem's findings and experience her impressions in order to approach the works in the exhibition in a visually intuitive and associative way. The sketches illustrate Kacem's interest in the transitions from abstraction to figuration, from surface to volume. They also detail the experiments that led to the installation in the main exhibition room: the formal development of the "half spheres" made of honeycomb cardboard was achieved by referring to the main features of Islamic patterns. Starting from a single point that expands into two-dimensionality in the form of a circle, any conceivable pattern can arise in the combination and modification of geometric shapes. Using the circle as her fundamental structural form, Sonia Kacem developed a system to harness its ability to unfold from identical individual parts into three-dimensionality.

Sonia Kacem's collection of photographs of Cairo contains many images of the colourful façades of various buildings with balconies and fabric hanging from them (one of which adorns the invitation card). For Kacem, this seemed like a rare expression of individuality and freedom in what is otherwise heavily regulated public space<sup>1</sup>, which made her especially aware of herself as a woman. Consoles supporting balconies, pillars positioned in and at the corners of buildings crop up in her sketches and influenced the design of her installation at the Kunstverein. Here, too, the corners of the room are concealed and at the same time accentuated, again highlighting the quadrant as a recur-

1 In January 2019, Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi issued a decree to unify the colour scheme of all façades in Egypt to counter "visual deformity", specifying "dusty" shades for Cairo and northern cities and blue for coastal towns, such as Alexandria.

ring and versatile geometric motif. Sonia Kacem has been working with heavy (awning) fabrics on a regular basis since 2010. She is attracted to them because of their formal similarity to canvas, but also on account of their potential for volume, their classic colours, as well as the host of (mainly positive) connotations.

Here too, this feeling is undermined or at least confused by the protuberances of the fabric that otherwise extends parallel to the wall. And, of course, by the sheer size and the unfamiliar proportions, which confront one as a viewer when inside the installation. Sonia Kacem has developed a substructure to this end, which enables her to determine in situ - both flexibly and spontaneously - the exact curves and three-dimensional extrusions of the material. Thus, despite its dimensions, "two curved angles and three walls" remains, above all, an artistic gesture that has ultimately been gigantically magnified. The same applies to "to stammer a pattern" in the foyer, where Kacem transfers her studies of form and pattern from her sketchbooks to the room. Here too, the meaning of the gesture becomes apparent as she repeats the same strokes and flourishes that she did in early calligraphy exercises when learning a new alphabet.



to stammer a pattern, 2019



Installation view, 2019



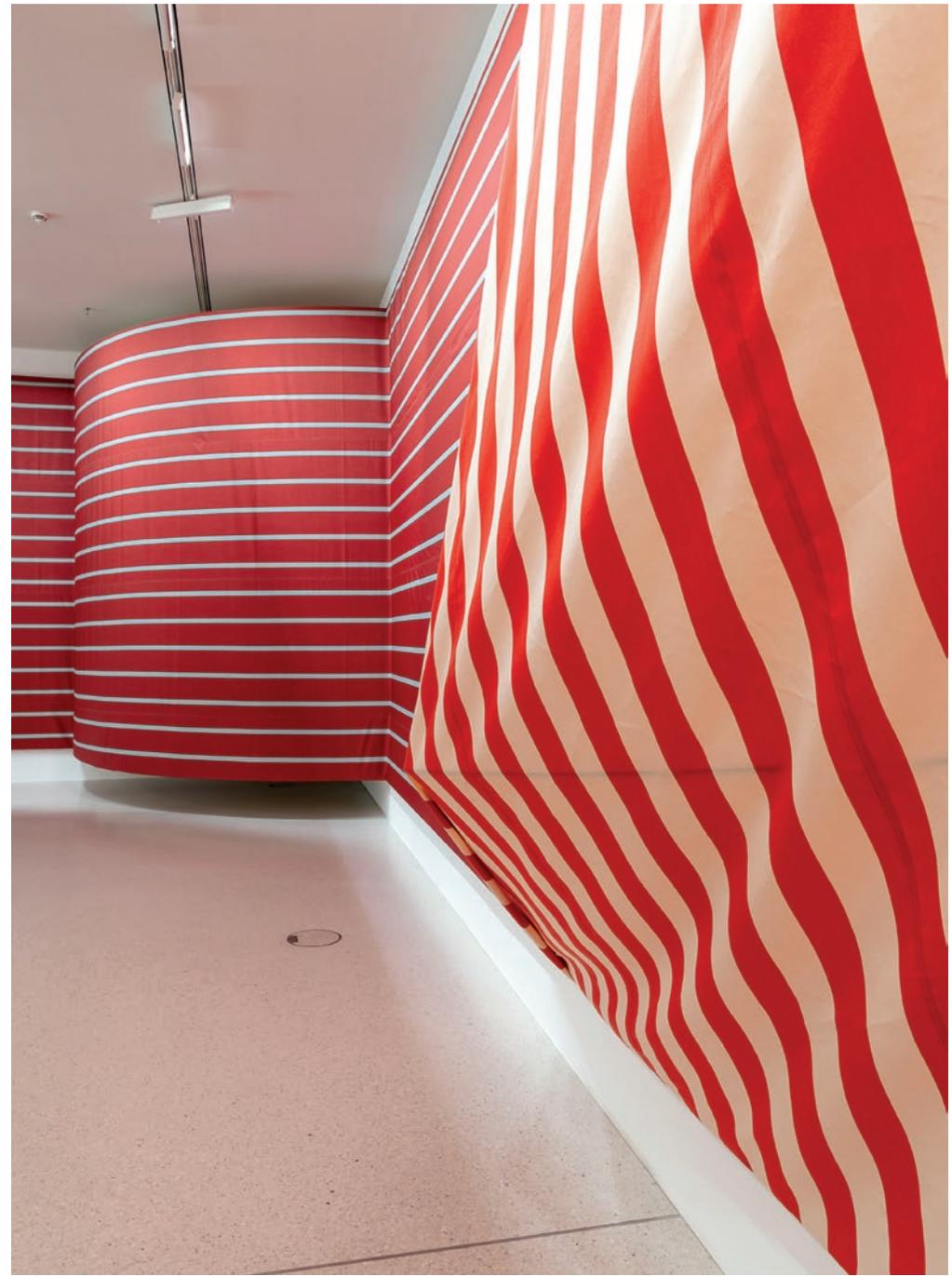
Installation view, 2019



Installation view, 2019



half sphere, 2019



two curved angles and three walls, 2019 (detail)



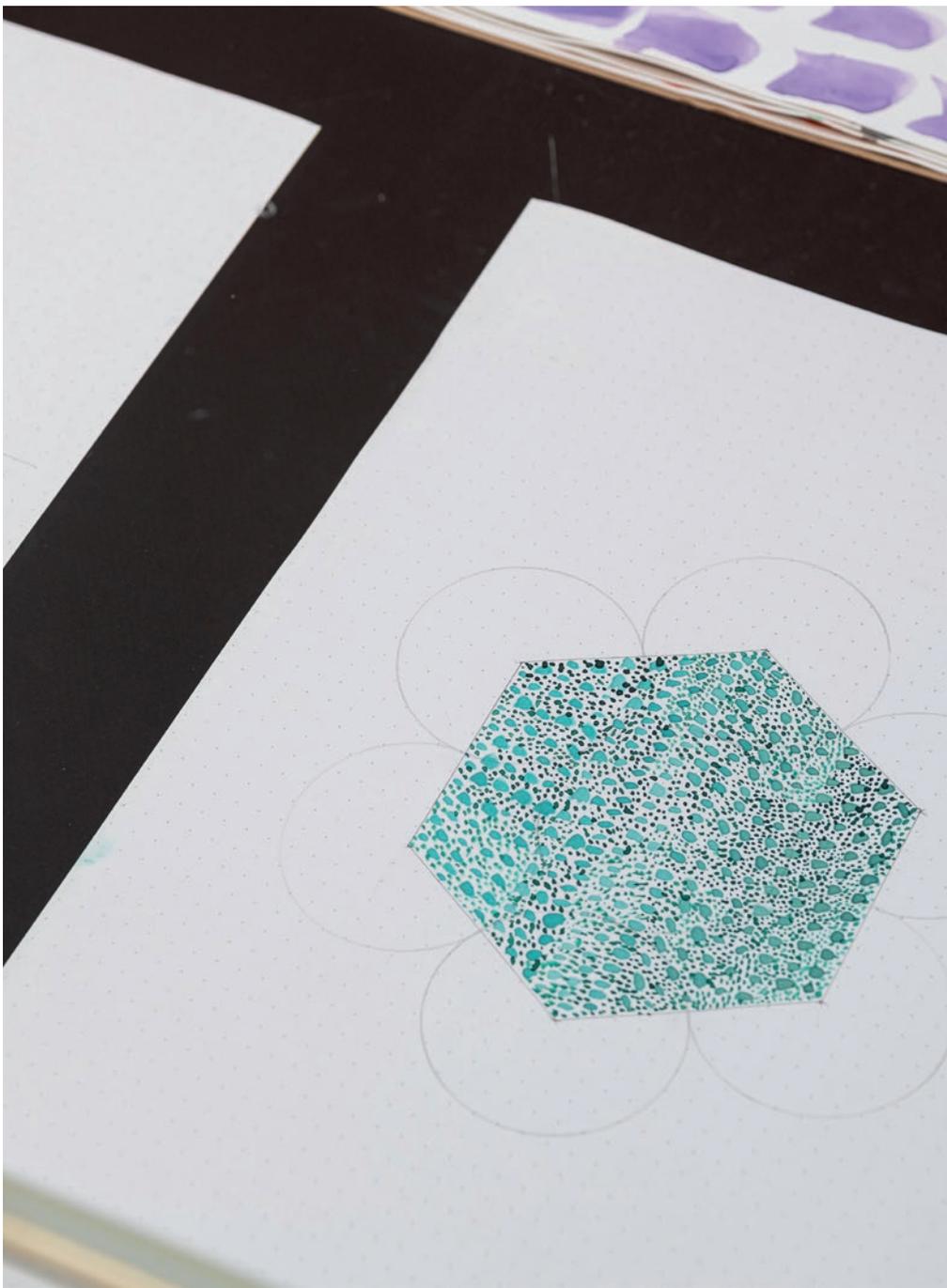
Installation view, 2019



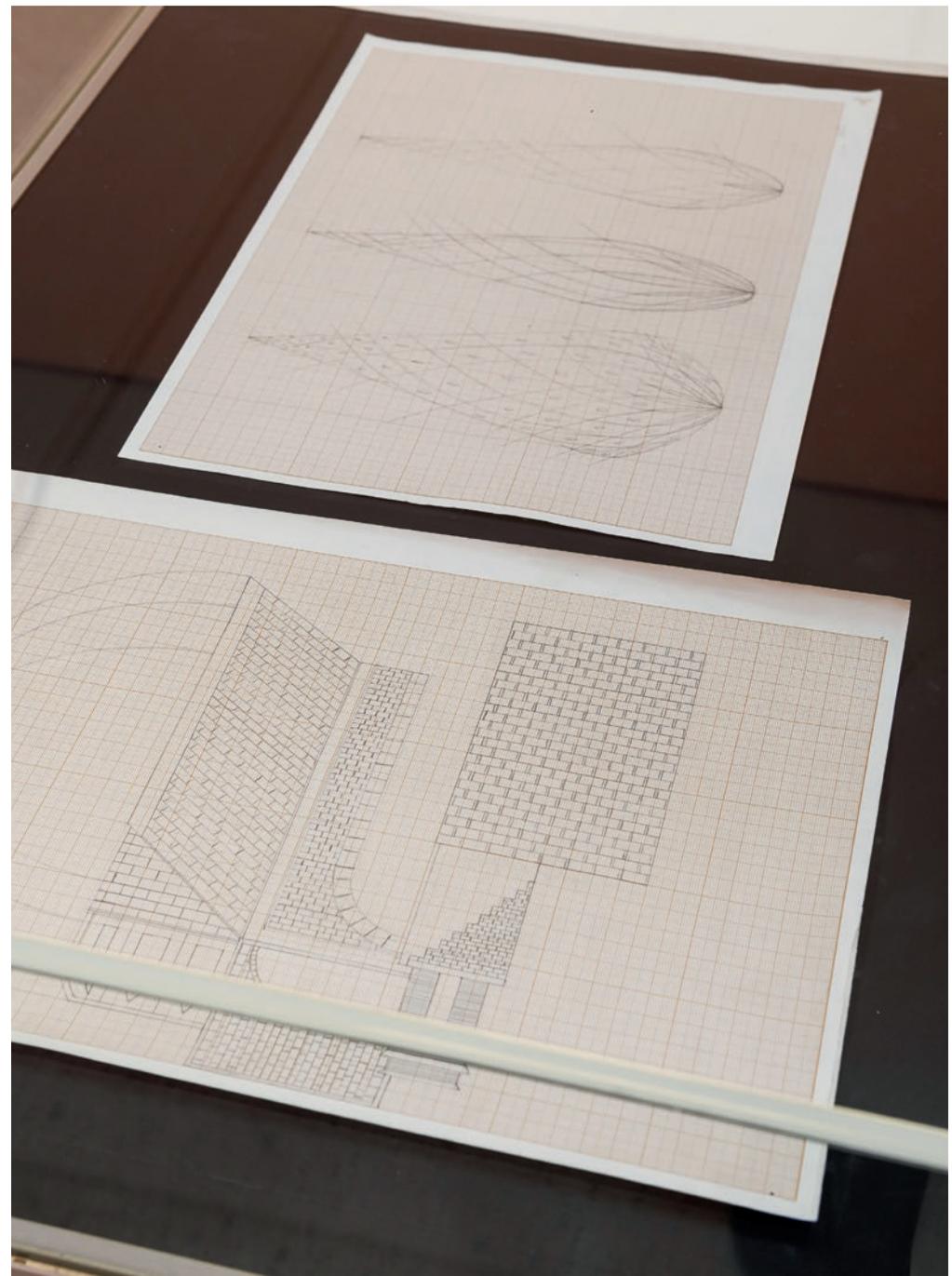
Installation view, 2019



Cabinet, 2019



Cabinet, 2019 (Detail)



Cabinet, 2019 (Detail)



visual notes, February to  
August, 2019



visual notes, February to August, 2019



visual notes, February to August, 2019



Jahresgabe (Edition)  
"Sphere", 2019

Jahresgabe (Edition)  
"Sphere", 2019

## PUBLIC PROGRAMME

## JAHRESGABE (EDITION)

## LIST OF WORKS

## OPENING

- Friday, 18 October 2019 at 7 pm

The artist has produced an edition available exclusively for members of Westfälischer Kunstverein.

01: to stammer a pattern, 2019  
Water colour  
app. 3×12 m

## EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH

## WITH SONIA KACEM

- Saturday, 19 October 2019 at noon

Sonia Kacem  
“Sphere”, 2019  
Water colour on wood  
19×19×19 cm

02: two curved angles and three walls, 2019  
Fabric, wood, metal  
app. 4×38×1 m

## CURATORIAL TOURS GUIDED BY

## KRISTINA SCEPANSKI

- Saturday, 30 November at 12:30 pm
- Thursday, 5 December at 6 pm
- Friday, 17 January at 5 pm

Edition of 8 similar unique copies  
signed, dated  
€ 700

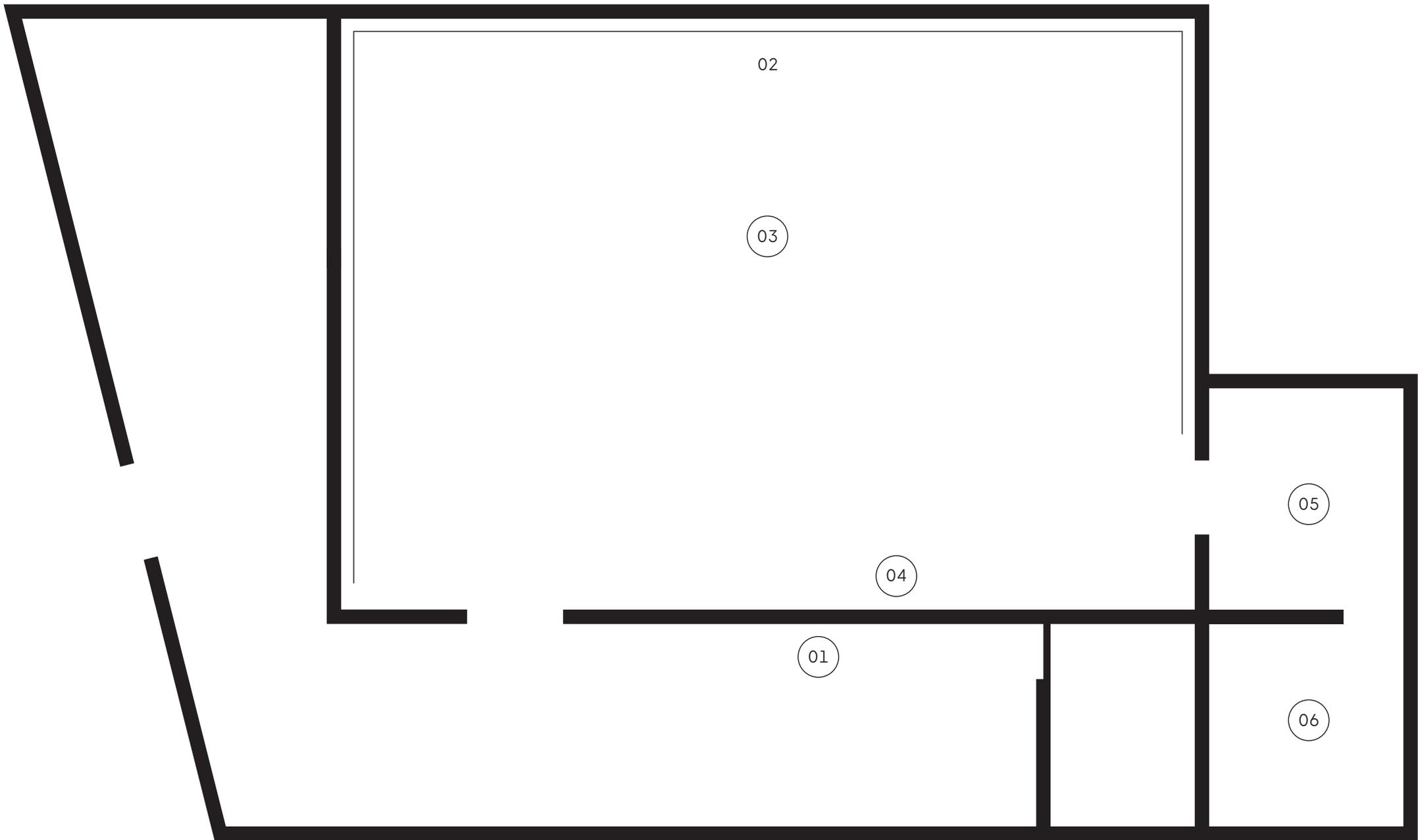
03: half sphere, 2019  
Honeycomb cardboard,  
bolts, tubular bandage  
3.6×3.6×1.8 m

04: half sphere piled, 2019  
Honeycomb cardboard  
1.8×1.8×2.9 m

Additional guided tours in German or English on request.

05: Cabinet, 2019  
Sketches, sketchbook

06: visual notes, February to August, 2019  
Projection of digital photographs and video,  
looped, 16:13 min



02

03

01

04

05

06