

PRESS RELEASE | Berlin, April 18, 2023

f³ – freiraum für fotografie presents

HAPPY PILLS

Exhibition: May 13 – June 25, 2023



The definition of happiness has long been left to religions, philosophers, or even politics. Today, the answer to the universal quest lies more and more in the hands of the pharmaceutical industry. It uses all the instruments of the modern age – science, marketing and communication – to offer each and every one of us a standardized and automatic solution for our well-being, our health and our performance. It seems to have become a duty to constantly feel and radiate happiness.

For five years, photographer **Paolo Woods** and journalist **Arnaud Robert** investigated the consumption of »happy pills« around the world: those medicines that can heal an invisible wound, those substances that make people get active, that help them work and pick themselves up, those preparations that enable people with mental health problems to avoid a total breakdown. The global interconnections of the pharmaceutical industry with social media-influenced notions of modern lifestyles are ubiquitous: from Niger to the United States, from Switzerland to India, from Israel to the Peruvian Amazon, pills offer short-term solutions to the seemingly eternal problems of everyday life.

Paolo Woods was born to Dutch and Canadian parents. He grew up in Italy, lived in London, Paris and Haiti and is now based in Florence. He is dedicated to long-term projects that combine photography and text. In 2003, together with award-winning writer **Serge Michel**, he published *Un Monde De Brut*, a book about the oil industry in twelve countries, including Angola, Russia, Kazakhstan, the United States, and Iraq. In 2015, together with photographer **Gabriele Galimberti**, he published *The Heavens*, a photo/text documentation of the global financial world and its international interconnections.

Arnaud Robert is a Swiss journalist, director and writer. His work has been published by *Le Monde*, *Le Temps*, *La Repubblica*, *Néon*, *Les Inrockuptibles*, *Vibrations* and many other international publications. He is the author of several books, including *Hors-Bord*, a seven-volume series he co-



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authored with painter **Frédéric Clot**; *STATE*, co-authored with *Paolo Woods*; and *Journal d'un Blanc*, a compilation of his columns from the Haitian newspaper *Le Nouvelliste*.

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

OPENING: Friday, May 12, 2023, 7 p.m.

Talk: Curator **Miriam Zlobinski** and photographer **Paolo Woods** introduce the exhibition.

Free admission!

FOTO-FÜHRUNG | GUIDED TOUR (English): Saturday, May 13, 2023, 1 p.m.

Photographer **Paolo Woods** will guide you through the exhibition. Admission: 8 € | 5 €.

Tickets at: <https://fhochdrei.org/tickets>

FOTO-FÜHRUNG & DRINKS | GUIDED TOUR & DRINKS (German):

Wednesday, May 24, 2023, 7 p.m.

With a glass of wine or a non-alcoholic drink, curator **Miriam Zlobinski** will give you exclusive insight into the exhibition *HAPPY PILLS* as well as the work of photographer **Paolo Woods**.

Admission: 15 € | 10 €. Tickets at: <https://fhochdrei.org/tickets>

FOTOBUCH-PARTY | PHOTOBOOK PARTY: Wednesday, June 7, 2023, 7 p.m.

The participants of the **f³-MASTERCLASS BÜCHER MACHEN!** of 2022/23 supervised by lecturer **Nadine Barth** present their books. Free admission!

SALON ReVue: Fotografie und Demenz | Photography and Dementia (German):

Monday, June 12, 2023, 7 p.m.

Photography and memory seem directly connected. But what happens in the mind of a person suffering from Alzheimer's disease? What does it mean when a person no longer recognizes themselves in pictures? Discussing: **Heike Rindfleisch** (co-author *Stolen Moments*) and **Prof. Dr. med Torsten Kratz** (Head of Gerontopsychiatrie, Ev. KH Berlin), Moderation: **Zora del Buono** (ReVue).

Admission: 8 € | 5 €. Tickets at: <https://fhochdrei.org/tickets>

Sponsored by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL with funds from the



f³ – freiraum für fotografie | Waldemarstraße 17 | 10179 Berlin

Opening hours: Wed – Sun, 1 – 7 p.m. | **Admission:** 5 €, red. 3 €

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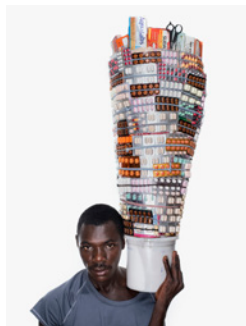


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Street vendors on the streets of Haiti act as pharmacists. They sell a mixture of pills made in China, counterfeit pills developed in the Dominican Republic for the Haitian market and expired medicines left behind by NGOs. The presentation of their assortment plays a big role: "If my tower is not beautiful, people don't buy," says Berthony Mélord. Haiti 2016. © Paolo Woods



The question of happiness and, by extension, the question of pleasure have become a central area of medical research. At the University of Freiburg, a team of researchers is trying to localize the exact area in the brains of rats that is responsible for laughter. Biologist Diana Roccaro stimulates the rats by tickling them. In some of her study subjects, a part of the brain called the hypothalamus is destroyed; this is where the laughing center is said to be located: the parva fox. When the rats lack the parva fox, they lose their ability to laugh. The idea of chemically stimulating this area in humans raises hopes for the pharmaceutical industry sooner or later. Switzerland, 2016. © Paolo Woods



Roy Dolce is an Italian gigolo, photographed here in Montecatini Terme, a spa town in Tuscany. Roy takes stimulants before every professional meeting, mainly Viagra and Cialis. Every year, a total of four billion Viagra pills are sold in seventy countries around the world. And of all the counterfeit drugs seized by authorities, 80% are erectile dysfunction drugs. Italy, 2017. © Paolo Woods



Addy, 15, has been taking Adderall pills, an amphetamine used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), every day for two years. In the state of Massachusetts, where Addy's family lives, children diagnosed with ADHD receive special school support, classroom adjustments, and medication monitoring. In the U.S., 10% of children (ages 2 to 17) are diagnosed with ADHD and three-quarters of them receive medication. Massachusetts, USA, 2019. © Paolo Woods



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Bodybuilders in a building shell in Mumbai, India. India is a nation of bodybuilders and the local pharmaceutical industry provides the local athletes with growth hormone or steroids in abundance. "There are no competitive bodybuilders who can do without steroids. And nowhere else in the world," explains Vishal, a coach from Mumbai. These drugged bodies are projection screens for a paradoxical masculinity. The muscles are only made for looking at, they have no strength. India, 2017. © Paolo Woods



Arnaud Brunel and his wife Candelita in their home in Lausanne; in front of them their medicine collection. Mr. Brunel is the owner of a company that produces luxury garden furniture. He also collects photographs. This image is part of a series created by Gabriele Galimberti for the Happy Pills project entitled *Home Pharma*. For this, families from all over the world were asked to present their medicine cabinet. Switzerland, 2016. © Gabriele Galimberti



Louis Bériot and his wife Domi on their last trip to Portugal. Louis Bériot, journalist, writer and former head of state television, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He opted for an assisted suicide in Basel because this practice is illegal in France. He died on April 15, 2019 after a barbiturate injection. On the obituary he wrote, he stated: "To you! I leave with no regrets, happy with the rich life that has been given to me; insatiably curious about the journey that lies ahead of me. As Chateaubriand said: "One must end sooner or later". Don't worry, don't mourn for me. Laugh, love and live on my health". Portugal, 2019. © Paolo Woods.