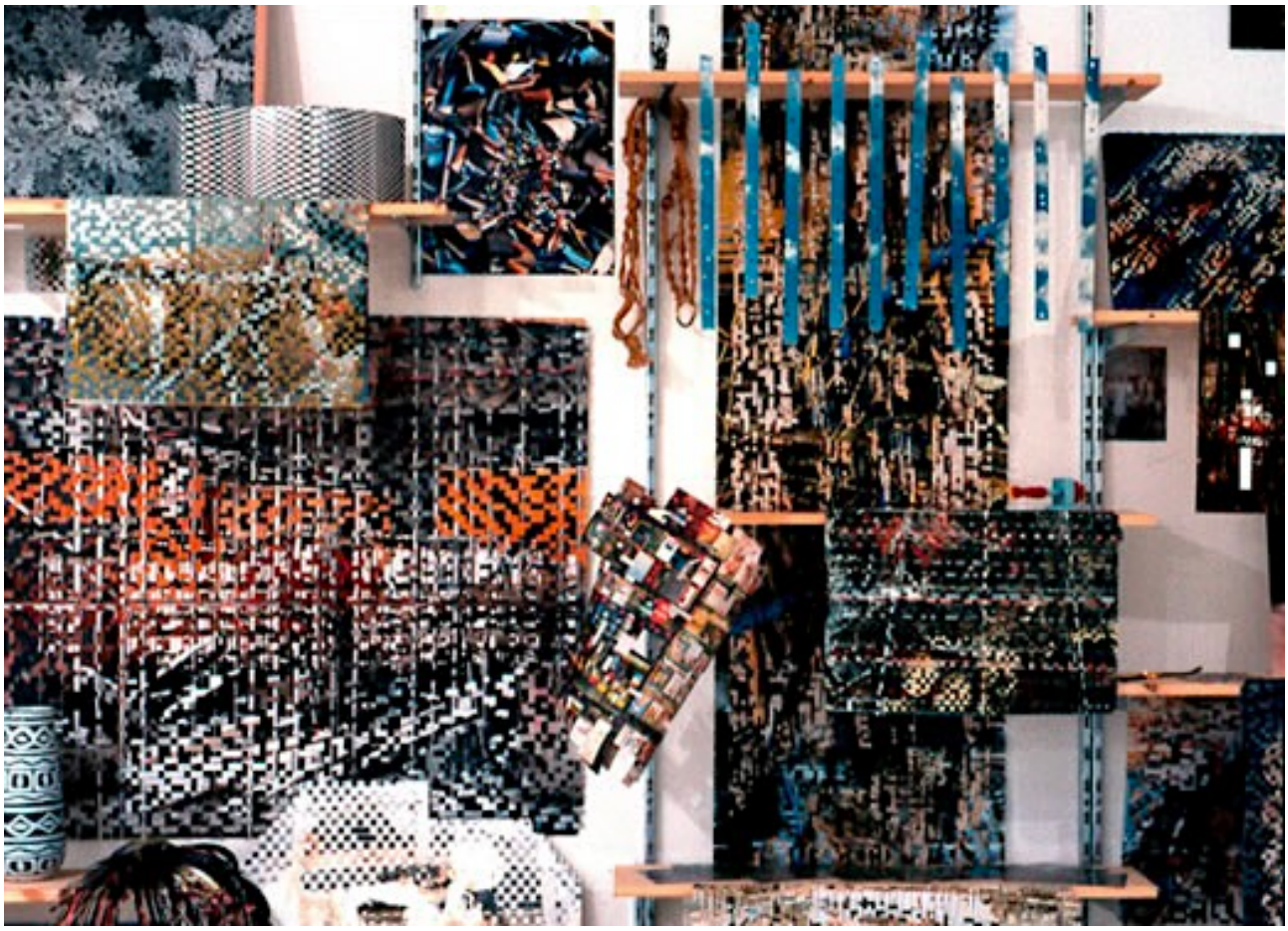

Installation UKS, detail. 1999.

## The woven expression - Aage Langhelle´s woven pictures and objects

**Icelandic Moss**
Icelandic moss (Centraria islandica) grows in scattered or dense patches on heathlandor in mountain areas and in "acidic" forest areas in Northern and Middle Europe. This moss belongs to one of the few species of lichen with a German name. Most of the lichens only have Latin names. Why is the plant called moss when it´s really a species of lichen?

**Moss and lichen (flechten)**
In herbal books up to the mid-nineteenth century, lichen was considered a species of moss. The word flechten first turned up in connection with hairdressing - plaited hair. Later it came into use as a plant name. And finally it was used to describe an illness or rash.

**Fungi and algae**
The Swiss botanist Simon Schwendener (1829-1919) established in 1869 that lichen consists of two independent living organisms, fungi and algae. This symbiosis enables them to grow in places they would not have made it on their own. In this way they can survive even in the most extreme biotopes.

**Lichen (flechten) and photographs**
We know that the fungus in lichen draws organic nutrients from the algae, but it is

uncertain whether the algae get water or salts from the fungus in return. Aage Langhelles ´s interwoven pictures and objects are a symbiotic connection between object and picture. They do not unite picture and object, but the symbiosis of two different photographs results in a picture-object or object-picture. These consist of two photos which are both cut in long, narrow, parallel strips and then woven together. Their distinct identities are not manifested in the material, but in the motif: heads of living and dead people, walls of houses, building sites, scaffolding. Decay, reconstruction, building and restoration. Human decomposition can be delayed by means of a preservative. Result: a shrivelled head, a mumie. Into this decelerated decay Aage Langhelle weaves a building site, a skeleton of a body that is still being built. A photograph also mumifies the object as a reproduction. Long after the motif has been laid to rest in its grave, the photographic paper turns yellow of its own accord. Is skin the basis for make-up? Or is it the skull? In Langhelle´s interwoven pictures and objects, opposites flow together in a mould. Inside becomes outside, outside becomes inside, above and below, behind and in front, past and future, construction and deconstruction. Divided into uniform squares, space collapses, time, and thereby also the certainty by which the observer could have got his bearings.

**Inside and outside**

Where in the lichen can one find the fungus and where are the algae? In Aage Langhelle´s object-pictures the motifs are combined in such a way that it is hard to distinguish the basic substance. The amalgamation of the motifs does not lead to their mystification, but rather to them drifting into the unfamiliar. The result of this construction is on the one hand a very open, free and multi-interpretive form. On the other hand a strict, fixed set of rules, which doesn´t provide the observer with a way out. He must find his own.

**Skin on skin**

Weaving is a laborious and time-consuming occupation. Basket-weaving is an ancient craft which today has few practitioners. In the Berlin Blindenanstalt´s workshop, one can still buy woven household articles that have been made by blind workers. They make among other things brushes and brooms out of horsehair and sisal. A brush also turns up in one of Langhelle´s installations. A brush with a coating of skin where you grip it, a photo of a skin surface where you grasp the wood.

**The expression brought to conciousness**

What is visible in the woven pictures and objects is always the external features, the skulls, the protective wrapping that corresponds with their antithesis: the naked inner being, the skeleton, the scaffolding, the brain, i.e. everything that the layers cover up. This connection is expressed in invisible picture strips, invisible because they are hidden, nevertheless they can be reconstructed on the basis of the information they contain.
In their indeterminability, in their multi-level flicker, the eyes are no longer in the front. They are no longer instruments of vision, but look ahead through the hair on the back of the head, into oneself and through oneself.
Wolfgang Müller

Wolfgang Müller (born 1957 in Wolfsburg) is an artist, musician and writer. He was a member of the band Die Tödliche Doris (80-87). Müller has participated in a number of exhibitions at home and abroad; amongst others at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Dokumenta 8, Kassel (framework performance). Educated at Hochschule der Künste, Berlin. In 2001 Müller was visiting professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg. Lives in Berlin.