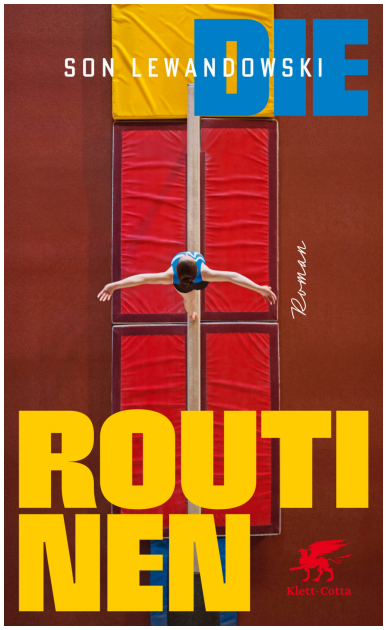
new books in german



by Son Lewandowski
Klett-Cotta
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Fiction

Shortlist J&N David Bellos Translation Prize 2026 for Alex Roesch's sample translation

Shortlisted for the Harbour Front Debut Prize 2026

The Routines

Die Routinen

review

Son Lewandowski's debut novel *The Routines* is a hard-edged, hybrid look at women's elite gymnastics. Reading like narrative non-fiction, it maintains the pressure and intimacy of fiction. It opens at a breaking point: at the 2023 European Championships in Antalya, Amik watches her younger rival Izzy fall from the bars and end up in intensive care. The shock of that moment starts pulling the whole system into focus.?

Lewandowski deploys the daily grammar of the sport like a grim metronome: weigh-ins, repetition, hunger, and the constant recalibration of pain. The training hall is a closed world of ritual and threat, where a 'routine' is both a set of moves and a method for blocking out feelings.

The narrative moves back and forth between Amik's vigil at her friend's bedside and the long years that brought her here, from the talented child singled through an adolescence of discipline and erasure to the adult who begins to name what happened to her. Amik's relationships give the book a highly human charge: her fraught, shifting bond with Izzy, braiding jealousy with tenderness, and her dealings with her trainer Wolf, who is both anchor and threat, blurring loyalty, dependence, and violation.

Threaded through the fiction are real-world testimonies and historical set pieces that widen the frame without turning the book into a

lecture. Lewandowski sketches the glamour of televised perfection alongside the machinery behind it, from the ‘production’ of child stars to the long aftermath of abuse scandals and institutional cover-ups. The effect is cumulative, with prose that is deliberately patterned, full of accumulations and returns, showing the reader how politics, sponsorship, national prestige, and voyeurism sit alongside taped wrists and chalked hands, in the same ecosystem.

The book refuses to provide easy redemption. Its claustrophobic repetition mirrors how systems train bodies to comply and how memory can loop when the body is treated as expendable. By the end of the narrative, the focus shifts from judges’ scores to the language of accountability, and to the harder question of what care might look like after extraction.

The Routines sits squarely in current conversations about safeguarding, spectatorship, and the need for participant protection when a sport becomes an industry. It will appeal to readers of Lauren Fleshman’s *Good for a Girl*, and Maggie Nichols’s *Unstoppable!*

Find out more:
https://www.klett-cotta.de/produkt/son-lewandowski-die-routinen-9783608967166-t-9356

press quotes

> *Lewandowski often employs plain, unadorned language, sentences that gain a particular power from their very simplicity […] The result is a fragmentary mosaic of voices and impressions that cries out to be performed, to be given a stage, to be spoken aloud.*

Lotte Löhausen, Stadtrevue,

> *A book that dares greatly, in literary terms, and succeeds.*

Cornelia Geißler, Berliner Zeitung am Wochenende

> *Die Routinen is also a magnificent novel because it asks questions that are far more than documentary. Son Lewandowski deploys insistent and high-precision language, surveying the space between closeness and distance.*

Paul Jandl, Neue Zürcher Zeitung

about the author



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Son Lewandowski lives in Cologne, where she works as an author and curator. In 2023, she was invited to the Klagenfurt Literature Course and the LCB's Writers' Workshop. That same year, her work *Die kurzen Karriere* ('The Short Careers') was shortlisted for the Edit Essay Prize. She received a grant from the Jürgen Ponto Foundation in 2024, followed by a working scholarship from the Arts Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia in 2025.

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