

The Big Rip, Bounce, Chill or Crunch?
Vernissage 17.5.19 ab 18:00
17.5.19 – 20.7.19

Alfredo Aceto & Adolf Wölfli
Patricia Bucher & Klaus Lutz
Jessica Diamond & Gina Proenza
Marc Elsener & Urs August Steiner
Esther Mathis & Kirstine Roepstorff
Robert Smithson & Aline Zeltner

Der Künstler Leon Golub äusserte einst eine Vorliebe für Bücher aus der Popkultur über Kosmologie: „Multiple Universen, das ist jetzt das grosse Ding!“ * Im Laufe der Jahrhunderte haben Künstler und Kulturschaffende immer wieder Gedanken an imaginäre und mögliche Welten heraufbeschworen, sowohl von kosmologischer als auch von mythologischer Art. Verschiedene künstlerische Praktiken haben sich im Zuge dessen intensiv mit Phänomenen jenseits des Vorstellbaren beschäftigt oder sich von komplexen wissenschaftlichen Themen zu übernatürlichen und paranormalen Aktivitäten inspirieren lassen. Mit der richtigen Dosis Ambiguität funktionieren solche Momente oft bemerkenswert gut, indem sie traditionelle Muster und Modelle des rationalen Denkens auflösen.

Ein Beispiel hierfür ist das Werk *Le discours aux animaux* des Schriftstellers und Essayisten Valère Novarina, welches mit folgendem Satz endet: „Eines Tages, ganz allein in einem herrlichen Wald, spielte ich das Horn und die Vögel zu meinen Füßen wurden ruhig und zahm, als ich sie einen nach dem anderen mit ihren Namen benannte“**, woraufhin er die Namen von 1.111 imaginären Vögeln vollständig aufführt. Beispiele von imaginären Artennamen, die Novarina dabei aufführt, sind etwa: «Die Limnille, der Fuskel, der Hippling, der Ventis, der Löchler, der Fiegel, der Lipptaucher, der Rackloh, der Tintel, der Furist, die Narcillis, der Olk, die Gymnister, die Luhse, der Drangel, der Gintling, der Hützspirl, die Drolle, der Kibbutz, der Flüchz, der Tölpler ...»***

Als weiteres Beispiel können die aufwändigen Konstrukte der Kosmologien des Schweizer Art Brut-Künstlers Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930) betrachtet werden. In den *Geographischen und Algebraischen Heften* begeben sich Wölfli und seine Freunde als „Riesen-Reise-Avantgarde“, auf eine Reise zu den Sternen unter der Leitung „Gott-Vaters“, des „Riesen-Flugzeugs“, welches auch „Der Riese reist transparent“ genannt wird. Eine Wölfli's Visionen war die Umstrukturierung der Schweiz, ja, der ganzen Welt: „Eh bien! Meine eben genannte, überaus geschätzte Heimatgemeinde Schangnau soll nun endgültig auf den Namen St. Adolf Zuhause umgetauft werden.“****

In dieser Ausstellung, welche Künstlerinnen und Künstler präsentiert, die mit inspirierten Ansichten über Mythenbildung und Visionen künftiger Möglichkeiten ausgestattet sind, wird geschickt mit der Darstellung idealisierter und nicht-idealisierter Welten gespielt. In diesem Spiel kreieren die Kunstschaffenden

potenzielle, neue Ideen und hoch individualistische Mythologien zu den Polaritäten zwischen Schöpfung/Zerstörung, Harmonie/Disharmonie und zwischen Dystopie/Utopie oder aber sie brechen gänzlich mit solchen Dualismen. Die zwölf Künstlerinnen und Künstler dieser eigenwillig kuratierten (oder halluzinierten, Vorsicht sei geboten!) Ausstellung navigieren durch eine Breite von Ideen, die von Makro vs. Mikro, von alternativer Theologie, über Fabelwesen, außerirdischen Begegnungen und erfundenen Bildsprachen zu Dunkelheit vs. Leichtigkeit, Entropie bis hin zum unaufhaltsamen Lauf der Zeit und seinen persönlichen Ahnengeschichten und Mythologien reicht.

In der Ausstellung erleben wir, wie Künstler die vermeintliche Genialität des Menschen neu beleuchten oder diese vielleicht sogar ein bisschen karikieren. Oder aber sie stellen Fragen zu unserem aktuellen Modus Operandi und inspirieren uns möglicherweise zu einem Nachsinnen über das, was jenseits unserer eigenen Welt liegt. Um es mit den Worten Mike Kelleys auszudrücken: „Die Kunst ist ein Spiegel – automatisch zeigt sie uns Falschheit - ich denke, Kunst ist viel besser darin ist, etwas abzureissen, als etwas aufzubauen.“*****

Mit dem Titel *The Big Rip, Bounce, Chill oder Crunch?* wird auf vier hypothetische Ideen angespielt, wie das Universum endgültig untergehen könnte. Zwar wird angenommen, dass wir noch zwischen 2,8 und 22 Milliarden Jahre zugute haben, doch das Schicksal unseres Universums ist ein Thema, das Kosmologen und Physiker nach wie vor als grosses Fragezeichen erscheint. Es ist ein Fragezeichen, welches uns, angesichts der kritischen ökologischen und klimatischen Situation, in der wir uns heute befinden, alle gleichermassen betrifft.

Für Presseanfragen wenden Sie sich bitte an Linda Jensen unter lindajensen@lasttango.info

* Golub, Leon. *Cabinet, Trippelgänger*, Frühling 2003

** Novarina, Valère. *Hörspiel: 1111 Vögel übersetzt von Leopold von Verschuer*, Zweisprachige Radiofassung, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 2018

*** Ebd

**** www.adolfwoelfli.ch/index.php?c=e&level=4&sublevel=2 Aufgerufen am 25. März, 2019 übersetzt von Sophie Huguenin

***** Kelley, Mike im Gespräch mit Archer, Michael. *Speaking of Art: Four decades of art in conversation*, London: Phaidon, S. 131

***** Gemäss Wikipedia: „Der Big Crunch (englisch etwa für „Das große Zusammenkrachen“) ist in der Kosmologie – neben dem Big Rip („Das große Zerreißen“) und dem Big Chill („Die große Abkühlung“, die ewige Expansion) – ein hypothetisches zeitliches Ende des Universums. Dabei kollabiert das Universum unter der Wirkung der Gravitationskraft immer stärker, bis es schließlich in einer Art von umgekehrtem Urknall, dem „Big Crunch“, endet und somit völlig verschwindet.“

Mit herzlichen Dank an Kunsthalle Zurich, , Christoph Schifferli, Sabina Kohler, Barbara Zürcher and Estate of Klaus Lutz

The Big Rip, Bounce Chill or Crunch? Individual Work Texts (see more detailed captions in the Exhibition Map)



Jessica Diamond (b. 1957, New York City) & Gina Proenza (b. 1994, Lausanne)

Deeply Felt Connections: Language and the Relics of Discovery

A Jessica Diamond, *Is That All There Is?*, 1984 / 2019

Jessica Diamond has been painting murals since the 1980s. Here we are confronted with a simple existential question. The clip-art-like roughly sketched world hints at something a bit caustic, delivered in a deadpan manner. The vainness of mankind and its „civilized“ & „globalized“ world is challenged. It strangely brings to mind the „overview effect“ that astronauts feel when seeing the Earth from space. This cognitive shift in awareness, but experienced in an emotional positive way of the world as a fragile entity, oftentimes bringing about an urge to protect it. The world (map) as something contested and territorialized, with us beings as earthlings that most of the time are navigating through the ebb and flow of life, which might not stop to profoundly ponder on such existential questions. Ralph Rugoff has commented on her text-based practice: “the lettering appears animated, full of quirky passion and life... It is undoubtedly handwriting, yet when magnified on the wall it evinces an uncanny quality—it seems at once disorienting, confrontational and oddly familiar, a visual irritant that hounds us long after we have digested the sense of her actual words.” (Kunsthalle Bern catalogue *Am Rande der Malerei*, 1995).

B Gina Proenza, *o a o*, 2018 & *a a e o* (1) (2) (3), 2018

Presented last year at Liste as part of the exhibition for the Helvetia Art Prize, Gina Proenza's *o a o* plays on language's power of dissimulation (and enunciation). *o a o* was developed after an anthropological research of a small Columbian village Palenque hidden for three centuries by contemporary Columbian society. Founded by slaves coming from Africa, the inhabitants of this small village were able to invent a new language, one that would perform concealment through bricolage. This new language incorporated grammatical elements from many different African dialects while adopting a Spanish phonetic system. This guardian figure pays homage to the 17th century figure Lallekönig which at the corner of one building in Basel's old town bluntly protrudes his tongue. *o a o* is also a totem of an in-between culture, the African and Spanish. With the work *a a e o* the artist looks at the specific connotation of the word Palabrereros. Used in Spanish to depict a charlatan, a faker, within the Columbian tribe of the Wayuu this word acquires a different meaning. Considered as an integral part of human nature, conflict is treated by this community with the aid of palabrereros. These mediators facilitate the resolution of such conflicts by valuing communication as a sort of spiritual and personal aid. By means of connection between people, dream reading and negotiation, these palabrereros are peacemakers of the community. In the show this little brigade of tongue in cheek kinetic sculptures, use satire and exaggeration as visual triggers to open up the discussion on linguistic ambivalence and Wittengstein's inspired preoccupation with language's connection to human activities and actual life (language-games).

Robert Smithson (b. 1938, Passaic, New Jersey – d. 1973, Amarillo, Texas) & Aline Zeltner (b.1980, Biel)

A Matter of Perspective: the Act of Looking and Shifting Values Systems

C Robert Smithson, *Torn Photograph from the Second Stop (Rubble)*, 1970, Offset lithograph and various Ephemera

Robert Smithson was an avid fan of science fiction and as a teenager created his own museum of reptiles, fossils and artifacts in his suburban home of Clifton, New Jersey. A pioneer in land art, he was to become known for his radical ideas of dislocation and entropy moving art beyond the confines of the gallery space, in which he redefined the language of sculpture and questioned photography's position in art. The site-specific ephemeral gestures in nature prompted a visceral experience as opposed to the stillness of photographic representation. The photograph presented here is part of *Artists and Photographs* a portfolio of artist multiples set up by Multiples, Inc., an initiative by Marian Goodman which she started in 1965, and that was later to allow for the financial start up of her gallery. Janae McHugh spirals in on the specific photograph and writes: „Land artists' contentious relationship with photography takes a humorous turn in Smithson's contribution, entitled *Torn photograph from the Second Stop (Rubble)*. A primarily brown, red, and gray snapshot of dirt and rocks—“general rubble,” as he calls it—is ripped into four square pieces. In keeping with his *Earthworks* focus, Smithson highlights the impossibility of containing and exhibiting earth. Additionally, the torn image of an inconsequential yet ubiquitous subject is a strong interrogation of landscape photography, debunking its traditional pictorial function and bringing it literally down to earth.“

D Aline Zeltner, *Sound Object*, 2010 & *Looking at the Sea*, 2016

Playing with the way human perceive and experience the world, Aline Zeltner looks at our inclination to tirelessly search for focus. Aline Zeltner lives with synaesthesia. Looking is for her at once a visual and a sonic experience. This condition has affected her practice as an artist, which has brought her to create a special viewing instrument, one that would turn looking into a generative soundscape. In the tradition of avant-garde, fluxus and contemporary music, in this piece Zeltner articulates some of the conceptual music threads of that period with a special inkling of LaMonte Young's adoptions of principles of indeterminacy and non-traditional sounds incorporations likes noises and actions. What we hear is the artist looking at the sea. Her eyelashes touching a violin cord through her crafted sonic-viewing device. The sound of the sea waves shattering against the shore are merged with the sound generated by each movement of her eyelashes.

Alfredo Aceto (b. 1991, Lausanne) & Adolf Wölfli (b. 1864, Bern d. 1930, Waldau)

The Hallucinatory Punctuality of Time

E Alfredo Aceto, *Untitled LEFT (Punctuations)*, 2018 & *Untitled RIGHT (Punctuations)*, 2018 & *Zephyrus*, 2017

In his practice, Alfredo Aceto questions the notions of time and personal mythologies. Inspired by the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, the work *Zephyrus* reactivates an anecdote from Walter Benjamin recounting a point during the French Revolution when Revolutionaries would shoot at the clocks of Paris to break the continuum of History. „During the evening of the first skirmishes, it turned out that the clock-towers were shot at independently and simultaneously in several places in Paris.“ Using the Alessi Momento clock designed by the famous post-modern architect cum designer Aldo Rossi as the target of his shooting, the artist poses questions on post-modernity belief systems and their relevance in today's society. The three bronzes, directly opposite to *Zephyrus*, can be seen as abstract gestural archetypical signs that punctuate the space. Suspended between fiction and reality, these objects are a portrayal of a certain kind of obsessive discipline that Aceto has developed throughout the years. The cast bronzes find their origins in very specific luxury automobile vehicle interior details (such as the Audi A7 and Jaguar). After a tedious process of formal abstraction, material and chromatic alterations, these diacritical marks have become ornaments; three dimensional independent objects that punctuate and distort perception whilst creating a metamorphic ‚aesthetic‘ experience.

F Adolf Wölfli, two letters (1929 and 1930) and a publication with transcriptions of his writings

Artist Adolf Wölfli was admitted into Waldau, a mental asylum near Bern, Switzerland, at age 31, where he spent the rest of his adult life. His some 25,000 works are comprised of texts, drawings, collages and musical compositions, fabrications of an altered recreated childhood (having been molested as a child and later convicted of the same offence). During his own lifetime Wölfli came to encounter growing interest in his work and already by 1921 he had sold or given away some 400 drawings to doctors, visitors, and employees. The Morgenthaler monograph on Wölfli details: „His production can be divided in two big groups according to their purpose: one of which can be called Bread Art. This consists of drawings which he makes for others in order to get colored pencils, paper, tobacco, etc. . . . The other group on which he himself places a much greater value comprises his gigantic autobiography.“ His personal mythology takes on another register, forming elaborate cosmologies. In the seven *Geographic and Algebraic Books* Wölfli and friends embark on a trip to the stars guided by the “God-Father,” the “Giant-Airplane,” also named “The Giant-Travel-Transparent” with the “Giant-Travel-Avant-Garde.” One of his fabrications was the restructuring of Switzerland and the world: “Eh bien! My last mentioned, most cherished home community Schangnau is now to be rebaptized conclusively with the name St. Adolf-Home.”

Esther Mathis (b. 1985, Zurich) & Kirstine Roepstorff (b. 1972, Copenhagen)

Reaching into Darkness and Prismatic Light

H Esther Mathis, *Isolated Systems Vol.2*, 2016 - ongoing

Esther Mathis's practice has been continuously looking at the relationship between chaos and rules, oftentimes aesthetically studying and researching nature's processes and cycles. Her recent study of light through the medium of sculpture and of seasonal light variations and its atmospherical impacts (*Der Mittlere Himmel*, 2017-8) have been manifested through large-scale installations and video having photographed and studied many museums and their lightspaces and infrastructures. *Isolated Systems* is a landscape of individual glass towers. They are erected by means of layering and stacking hand-cut sheets of glass using drops of glue. Each has its own height, each has its own materiality. "Rather than producing a perfectly transparent sculpture – what Michel Foucault, referencing Bentham, might call an 'omniscient' and 'panoptic' space—Mathis chooses to play with variables of density, volume and orientation, exploiting the chromatic and intervallic principles of prismatic light. (...) At each tower's centre, a distinctive vertical shaft appears in the negative space of the glue drop but vanishes at the slightest shift in the viewer's perspective—an elusive riddle of hard and soft, visible and invisible at play at the heart of Mathis' design." (Erik Morse, 2016)

G Kirstine Roepstorff, *Illustration #Awareness & Illustration #Simmering*, both 2017

Roepstorff's immersive intervention at the Danish pavilion during the 2017 Venice Biennale saw the site transformed into a theatre of renaissance. Therein she explored darkness as a positive force of strength and rebirth, through a story of recreation. The release aptly set the tone: "Darkness dissolves form and can be seen as the void out of which all things arise." And as we know it before the break of dawn is darkness, seeds germinate in pitch dark... In Roepstorff's insight into darkness there is a similitude to the ideas of 17th century astrologer, mathematician and cosmologist Robert Fludd. In his drawings he tried to conjure what existed prior to the creation of the universe, and what he defined as a "pre-universe." One of such illustrations was of a black square. Its formlessness was key in understanding the concept. It was ultimately depicting the formless realm that is all encompassing. Roepstorff's "waterings" bear traces of the labour that went into them. A small amount of pigment is mixed with volumes of water and is applied onto the canvas; a layered process that is repeated and which can take months in its production. In this veil of shadows and translucent sedimentations of murkiness we come to experience a delightful instability of interpretation, but also the shiftingness of memory, almost as a direct reflection of the process.

Klaus Lutz (b. 1940, St. Gallen – d. 2009, New York City) & Patricia Bucher (b. 1976, Zurich)

Utopian/Dystopian Views and the Grunge of Grammar

I Klaus Lutz, *Neun Schrift-Stücke*, 1975 & *Moviscop*, 2006 & *Meteor Lecture*, ca. 1997/1998

Primarily working with film, performative practice and works on paper, Klaus Lutz left behind an extensive interrelated oeuvre. As an attempt to fathom a potentially new universally understood language his world sparks wonder and is inspired by sources as far as the Kabbalah and the stories of Robert Walser. After abandoning his architectural studies at ETH Zurich, he pursued an education as a primary school teacher. He gave up teaching in 1972 and devoted himself entirely to his art from then on. Having been strongly inspired by Robert Walser's literary work he started illustrating the stories in a collection of Leporellos which were first published in 1972. Later in the late 1980s, Lutz started to create his cinematographic oeuvre in 16mm. Lutz's world of signs are enigmatic and intriguing. He himself studied hieroglyphics, early and classical Chinese characters and was consumed with developing his own unique linear vocabulary. Lutz moved to New York in 1993 and stayed there until the end of life. As New York Times writer Ken Johnson describes: „Mr. Lutz acted the part of the protagonist, appearing as a miniature figure clad all in white, jerkily traversing terrestrial and cosmic spaces. He created all props and sets and used low-tech methods to achieve effects of hectic, dreamlike delirium, including double and triple exposures, stop-action animation, rotating turntables and various lenses.“ Presented is a *Moviscop* with an excerpt of *Arabia I*, a pulsating film alternating between what appears at times to be a microscope-view, as if viewing psychédlic bacteria, zoning out to the black hole of the eye, perhaps an allegorical interpretation of our galaxy. Other instances include drone-like shots from the Gulf War from *Der Spiegel*, hand-drawn camels oscillating in (a) space, shots of a character pleasuring himself dressed in latex in front of a TV. One of the big questions he was grappling with at the time was how does one overcome collapse and move on to the next point?

J Patricia Bucher, *Untitled*, 2013 & *Untitled (series)*, 2018

Patricia Bucher's nuanced and explorative formal imageries are based on existing writing systems, symbols, signs or pictograms, which she then changes, transforms or reassembles. She opts to use craftsmanship techniques such as weaving or woodworking as her formal language. Kelims, watercolours, murals and objects incorporate a sparing, geometrizing design language, both abstract and representational, modern and archaic. Large and small in composition, the works featured in the show depict an often times unintelligible scenario. Commas, colons, parentheses and known signs are mixed and re-arranged in such a way to create a dystopic and bare scenario where perspectival lines are completely flattened and animals (e.g. a giraffe, bull, scorpion, and horse and in the large kelim) mingle with totemic structures and CCTV cameras. There is an almost apocalyptic sense of urgency, one that is tinted by a strong comic relief. We are exposed to the limits of communication, or rather to the building blocks of communication, the topical social and cultural conventions that create our landscape of signs. As the world changes, so do the forms of expression. Bucher's work stimulates the imagination and invites for a contribution to new sign-making where mythical past is merged with contemporaneity.

Marc Elsener (b. 1971, Zurich) & Urs August Steiner (b. 1980, Uznach)

The Future is Near: Unidentified Objects and Beings Galore

K Marc Elsener: 101 works dating between 2006-2019

Marc Elsener paintings are reminiscent in style of the historical genre of the miniature, naïve art, Renaissance painting, landscape painting and art brut. They are bewildering and captivating with eccentric characters and imagined worlds and creatures, juxtaposing historical sources and myth with sometimes a tongue-in-cheek dimension of realism. We experience a light-heartedness with a comic awkward presence of Swiss famers and conservatives, bearded men, oversized moles, Jesus and Hippies. We are presented with 101 paintings, presented in a church-like candle lit cavern. 101 is a number oddly related to two narratives in popular culture be it "Room 101" in George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Walt Disney's *101 Dalmatians*. There is a sense of journeying, with men on a quest or humans beset in nature. Odd situations and elaborate comical fantasies merge the contemporary world with that of wondrous worlds of unicorns or musical symphonies. Painted on the economical format of wooden panels, they allow Elsener to work on several works at a time in his humble studio. Or to altogether discard the idea and paint over. His inspirations or favored artistic subjects are far-reaching and include vinyl records, his children, Yoko Ono's work and discarded family photographs.

L Urs August Steiner, *S01E04 Fading*, 2019 & *Untitled*, 2019

A stage serves as a display for a formation of green rocks. There are traces of fire being lit, a stone suspiciously suspended mid air on a car tire. There's a flickering light protruding behind the thick plastic curtain. The atmosphere is aseptic and dramatic as if entering in a proto post apocalyptic Sci-fi movie set. Urs August Steiner is fascinated by science fiction and especially by the way some of these imagined meta realities are somehow finding their own path in the world of science. „Chlorella Vulgaris“ is an algae powder whose chemical fingerprint is part of a MPIA funded research which has been cataloguing the chemical fingerprint of 137 different species of microorganisms, some of which come from the most extreme environments on Earth. The objective of such research is to create a colour map which could help future astronomers to recognize life on the surface of planets outside our solar system and estimate of the diversity of biological colors on planets other than the Earth. The artist has sourced this powder and colored the stones with it, creating a glowing and alien-like lunarscape. Immortality is another important entry point in Steiner's practice. He has been researching cryogenic projects, such as Alcor, an afterlife service which freezes bodies or, rather, enables the cryonization of bodies in Arizona. While these bodies await their resurrection from cold dream states in a distant future, Steiner exposes human existence as a race; in a constant state of denial, denial of bodily limitation and time: chessboard patterns, fuses and car tires become the formal vocabulary of his questioning.