

UNTERSCHIEDSWESEN

Curated by Fabian Schöneich

December 28 / 2019 – February 29 / 2020

Unterschiedswesen (Creatures of Difference) is a group exhibition in the Galerie von Bartha, located in S-chanf, and brings together works by Heidi Bucher, Julia Haller, Imi Knoebel, Oliver Laric, Caroline Mesquita, Sam Moyer, Sarah Oppenheimer and Danh Võ.

The title of the exhibition, *Unterschiedswesen*, is borrowed from the 1907 essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life” by German sociologist Georg Simmel. In that text, Simmel describes how people living in the city differ from people in the countryside in their direct perception of their environment. He writes: “Man is a creature whose existence is dependent on differences; that is, his mind is stimulated by the difference between present impressions and those which have preceded.” In this sense, he describes how people who are characterized by the tempo of the city are different from those shaped by the quiet and slower pace of rural life. It is the term “creature of difference” that is interesting. Simply put, the term describes human nature as being different and yet the same; in doing so, it examines the diversity that shapes our world and our societies.

The exhibition *Unterschiedswesen*, however, is less about urban sociology than about the diversity of artistic creation per se. There are connections, of course, with the most basic ones being terms that come from art history: abstraction, fragmentation, corporeality, sculpture, painting. And yet the artists’ works, as well as their working methods, are entirely different from each other. From the fragmentary works and glassworks by Sam Moyer, the shaped canvases of Imi Knoebel, mineral composite boards by Julia Haller, and Danh Võ’s arrangement of painting, photography and writing, an idea of abstract corporeality is developed. We then proceed to the exhibition space via the stylistically disparate sculptures of Oliver Laric, Caroline Mesquita, and Sarah Oppenheimer as the works become increasingly figurative. “Body Shells” by Heidi Bucher merges abstraction and figuration with a video work showing the body sculptures created by Bucher in 1972 in Venice Beach.

Unterschiedswesen can be seen as an exhibition presenting a small selection of current artistic production, while at the same time celebrating the diversity within the contemporary arts. It underlines the importance of looking closely, being curious and open-minded, and reflecting – whether it be on painting, photography, sculpture, or culture, society, and politics.

(Fabian Schöneich)