



Galerie Gregor Staiger  
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## HOOKS & CLAWS

Curated by Alexis Vaillant, with Vittorio Brodmann, Elaine Cameron-Weir, Bruno Gironcoli, Max Hooper Schneider, Judith Hopf, Kulisek / Lieske, David Musgrave, Richard Rezac, Raphaela Vogel, February 21—April 18, 2020

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Some artworks grab our attention in the blink of an eye, others hook us decades after their creation. Most of them pass under the radar completely and are destined for a digital limbo. But artworks have numerous lives and, as Dave Hickey put it, “as orphans in the storm, works of art are ready to be adopted, nurtured, and groomed to the needs of any astonishing new circumstance.” Today, in the rigged democracy of images, everything vies for visibility or risks obsolescence. The fact that in this context there is an unprecedented amount of art produced seems to indicate that in an era of saturation only the visibility in the present moment matters. As anticipated by David Lieske in 2008: “Everything that doesn’t happen today, doesn’t happen.”

In this battle for visibility, “to hook” appears to be a necessity. What used to be an asset of historical art has, in our time of overproduction, become an indicator of survival for an artwork. By hooking us, the artwork escapes the flux of images. Whether this is related to the immediate attraction it exerts on us, or to its capacity to highlight new forms of adaptation to climate change, violence, or current dystopias, for example, this type of experience simultaneously takes us away from our comfort zone, refreshes the distance we have with art and images in general, and conveys new realities. The works in this exhibition are based on such a mechanism. Today, art reaches us digitally 24/7. This contributes substantially to accelerating the programmed obsolescence of images, while at the same time allowing “eye-catching” works to stand out decisively from the rest. The image that hooks us instantly stops our incessant scrolling and makes the receiver a kind of hostage. Yet in an age when we wonder what might happen if images supplanted the artistic “form” and the “digital” replaced art itself, being held hostage by a work of art is tantamount to testing one’s own addiction to art.

The exhibition includes 16 contributions by ten artists from three different generations. The exhibited works all interact with the radical aesthetic changes taking place in our technological present. They have been selected for their ability to take the art from what it physically represents to the claw effects it aims to produce physically and metaphorically in relation to our context: a big brick ball (Judith Hopf), fish hooks mounted on pens (Kulisek / Lieske), a damaged titanium head hanging from a grey plastic rope (David Musgrave), a painting that turns its back on us (Vittorio Brodmann), an aluminium colossus (Bruno Gironcoli), bronze casts inspired by extremophile organisms (Max Hooper Schneider), a visceral amalgamation of leather and polyurethane (Raphaela Vogel), a cast bronze with organised cavities (Richard Rezac), parts of a garment made of stainless steel, aluminium, tin, parachute silk, parachute harness clips and ripcord mechanism, laboratory clamps, orthopaedic jaw fixation material, leather, shells (Elaine Cameron-Weir). This exhibition reflects on how art, conceived as a positive source of social and visual interaction, is consumed, as well as why it is produced in a context that is becoming saturated.

Alexis Vaillant, February 2020

Alexis Vaillant is a curator, writer, and editor. His work focuses on the intersection of art, politics, and new realities: where intelligence and instinct become one. He is currently based in Lisbon where he is developing ‘Cabinet for the Unknown’. Prior to this, he was chief curator at the CAPC, Contemporary Art Museum, Bordeaux (2009-2016), curator at Toasting Agency, Paris (1999-2009), and Assistant Curator at Mamco, Geneva (1995-2000). Over the last fifteen years, his landmark group projects included the IXth Baltic Triennial ‘Black Market Worlds’, ‘Voyage Intérieur’, ‘Rock Opera’, ‘BigMinis: fetishes of crisis’, ‘Dystopia’, ‘Secret Societies’. He has curated the retrospectives of a.o. Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Robert Breer, Sylvia Sleigh, Michael Krebber, Tomoaki Suzuki, Aaron Curry, Franz Erhard Walther, Mark Van Ytter as well as the solo presentations of Allan Kaprow, Michael E. Smith, David Lieske, Pauline Boudry & Renate Lorenz, Philip Newcombe, Carter Mull, Raphael Hefti, Mark van Ytter. His recent and forthcoming publications include: “On Things as Idea,” (2017); “You May Also Like: Robert Stadler” (2017); “Marc Camille Chaimowicz: Anthology of Texts (1971-2020)” (2020); “The First Time I got Paid For It” (2020); “Sylvia Sleigh” (2020).