

HOT/COLD – DRY/WET: ON ART AND LATITUDE

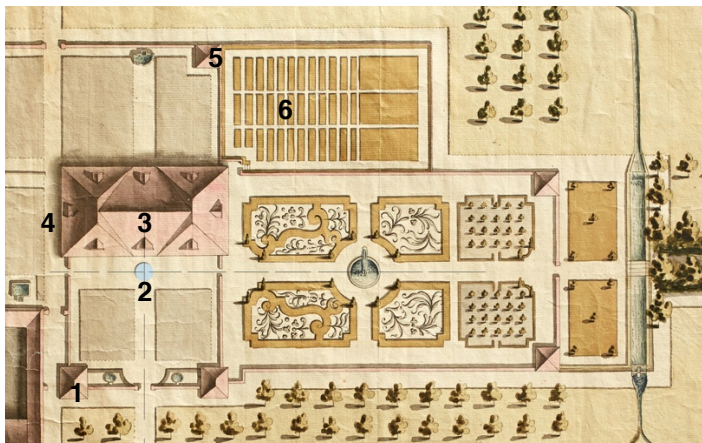
CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE SCHLOSS OBERDIESSBACH

07.08–05.09.2021

Curated by Valentina Locatelli

The Bern-based not-for-profit association art+château is delighted to present *Hot/Cold – Dry/Wet: On Art and Latitude*. The exhibition, which will be on view from August 7 to September 5, 2021 at the Schloss Oberdiessbach in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland, brings together fourteen Swiss and international contemporary artists engaging with different ideas related to the concept of latitude. The works and approaches taken by the artists are wide-ranging, expanding the potential of the subject: while some artists reflect on temperature, climate change, and politics, others develop their work around questions of personal identity, language and geographical origins. Other artists in the exhibition extend the subject to offer a reflection on borders and migrations, displacement and the sense of place and belonging. Multifarious artworks of different genre, medium and size will be presented inside and throughout the castle grounds.

MAP OF THE EXHIBITION GROUNDS



- [1] MAISON DU PORTIER: Immenhauser
- [2] ENGLISH GARDEN: Schönbächler
- [3] NEW CASTLE, GROUND FLOOR
Entrance Door: Danish; Dining Room: Idahor;
Garden Hall: Zimoun
- [3] NEW CASTLE, STAIRCASE: Idahor; Wang
- [3] NEW CASTLE, 1st FLOOR
Grand Hall: Anderson; Cagol; Doherty; Cabinet: Danish; Wang; Painted
Room: Jungerman; Video Room: Mathis
- [3] NEW CASTLE, ATTIC: Mathis; Cagol
- [4] WINE CELLAR: Jungerman; Lovgreen
- [5] ORANGERY: Brodsky
- [6] VEGETABLE GARDEN: Bemberg

The text in square brackets next to the titles of the artworks in this brochure signal where they are located in the exhibition grounds.

The exhibition departs from a reflection on the theories of the Swiss theologian and physician Johann Hasler (1548–after 1602). Born in Oberdiessbach, the small municipality where the castle is located, he is best known for having developed an elaborate scale of temperature, which was used by doctors as a guide when mixing medicines before the use of the modern thermometer was introduced. Hasler’s temperature chart was based on Claudius Galenus’s (129 AD – ca. 199/216) concept of cold and heat. Galenus, whose views of anatomy and medical science shaped and dominated Western medicine until the Renaissance, was a strong advocate of the Hippocratic theory of the bodily humors, according to which human health, moods and emotions are the result of an imbalance in one of the four basic universal elements hot, cold, dry and wet and their corresponding bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile respectively. In his “De temperamentis”, Galenus classified human behavior on the basis of these four components and their different balance, defining a total of nine temperaments (from Latin “temperare”, to mix in correct proportions) or personality types, from the choleric to the melancholic, from the phlegmatic to the sanguine.

In 1578, Hasler published his book “De Logistica Medica” (About Medicine). According to his research it was possible to establish the “natural degree of temperature of each man, as determined by his age, the time of year, the elevation of the pole [latitude], et al.”. His scientific treatise included a chart of human body temperatures built in relation to the latitude under which people lived. In particular, the table linked Galenus’s nine degrees of temperature to latitude. Hasler believed that the inhabitants of the tropics had a higher body temperature than people living in regions with a mild (or temperate) climate. He assigned the neutral temperature zero, which in turn corresponded to Galenus’ perfect mix on hot/cold and dry/wet qualities, to territories between latitude 40° and 50°. The Schloss Oberdiessbach is located at latitude 46°.

As it was easily established after the invention of the first true thermometer and appears obvious today, in normal conditions all human beings have the same average body temperature, regardless of the latitude where they live. However, even if Hasler’s theories were completely wrong, in the framework of this exhibition at Schloss Oberdiessbach his work offers an intriguing starting point to reflect on the relation existing between art (or artists) and latitude in the current, global age. Presenting artworks by both Swiss and

international artists dialoguing with each other and with the historic architectural spaces of the castle, the exhibition will attempt to provocatively raise these questions: Is art influenced by latitude? What happens when art conceived at one latitude is exhibited at another? Does the latitude of the exhibiting venue dictate how art is displayed and interpreted? Does the way we assess art change in relation to latitude? And, if so, is the same artwork perceived differently by the public if it is exhibited in an internationally acclaimed venue, like an important museum in a major capital city, or in a more peripheral location outside of the art circuit? Is there still a scale according to which we measure art today and can we identify it?

Hot/Cold – Dry/Wet: On Art and Latitude does not seek to provide definitive answers to all these issues, but rather to engage the public in an open and thought-provoking conversation with contemporary art and history vis-à-vis these themes. By bringing together a heterogeneous collection of works by artists from different latitudes and at different stages in their career, the exhibition joins a rising discussion on resistance against those simplistic categorizations which for too long have considered the dominant Western artistic discourses and its canon as “neutral” and shaped the understanding of art. Multifarious artworks – paintings, videos, photographs, sculptures and installations – will be presented outside of an institutionalized art space, yet within a traditional historic setting located at the center of what a past European elite considered to be the perfect “neutral” latitude. VL

ARTISTS

ALICE ANDERSON (Born 1972 in London, UK. Lives and works in London, and Paris, France)

Anderson’s artistic practice is at the nexus of the natural and the scientific realms. The artist examines ancestral cultures and traditions, while also conducting research focused on the world of science and technology. Departing from ritualistic dance-performances capable of activating in the viewer the entire spectrum of the sensorium, the artist creates paintings, drawings and sculptures of vibrating beauty and meditative character. The so-called “Memorisations” are among Anderson’s most iconic performances during which she weaves an object with copper-colored wire, a symbol of the natural human synaptic and neurological connections and of the digital web we are all entangled in. The result is totemic yet minimalistic work like *Graph 4: CO2 1975 – 2020, Greenpeace [3: 1st Floor, Grand Hall]*, in which Anderson “memorized” a graph representing the variation of the data of carbon dioxide emissions collected between 1975 and 2020. These sculptures are the artist’s attempt at preserving the memory of a world that is rapidly changing and dissolving in front of our eyes. They are reminders of our intrinsic need to live in harmony with our environment and at the same time a warning of the rapid and dramatic changes brought by our civilization. VL

PHILIPPE BEMBERG (b. 1979 Lausanne, Switzerland; lives and works in Dieppe, France). Philippe Bemberg’s work is the result of an exploration of and an interaction with his surroundings. From the metropolis of Buenos Aires and then Paris, where through a mix of drawing, painting, and installations his art sought to grasp with convoluted graphisms the business of life, he moved to Normandy and began exploring a newfound communion with nature. His artistic practice

today is a vivid expression of the three domains that occupy his mind and thought process: art, nature, and the social dimension. Shortly after moving to Normandy, Bemberg started working as a landscape designer and through this work he discovered and became fascinated with mistletoe, “a plant that is absolutely one of its kind in the botanic and cultural world”, as he explains. It is neither of the earth or of the sky, but rather exists in-between. Shaped like a perfect cosmos, mistletoe has been venerated as a magic and healing plant from the ancient Celts onward. The Druids (Celtic religious leaders) used to have a ritual by which the plant was cut on a certain night and brought down on a white sheet so it would not touch the ground (they believed it would lose its power if it touched the earth). In his installation, *Fracas [6]*, conceived for the exhibition at the Schloss Oberdiessbach, Bemberg reproduces part of this ancient ritual to awaken our forgotten connection to the sacred aspect of the natural world. The involvement of members of the von Wattenwyl family in preparing the grounds and cutting the lawn following a specific design, together with the work of a local pruner was for the artist a perfect outcome of his desire to engage people with nature and local resources. The title of the exhibition, *Hot/Cold – Dry/Wet: On Art and Latitude* speaks of contrasts, of the opposite poles of temperature and humidity, but within those opposites there is also the ‘unspoken in-between’. By reproducing this sacred ritual Bemberg would like to remind us that we are also in-between: latitudes, temperatures and above all, like mistletoe, in-between sky and earth. CH

MARCELO BRODSKY (Born 1954 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Lives and works in Buenos Aires)

Brodsky’s biography and career are situated at the crossroads between visual arts, poetry and human rights activism—he is one of the co-founders of the Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires. His practice is rooted in his personal history and direct dramatic experience of State-sponsored terror in Argentina: during the Military Dictatorship (1976–83), his best friend Martín Bercovich and his younger brother Fernando were abducted, disappeared and never found again. In response to these events and fearing for his own life, Brodsky went into exile in Brazil, followed by Spain where he became a photographer and he published his first book of poetry. He did not return to Argentina until after the end of the dictatorship. Over the past five decades Brodsky has developed a unique poetics based on the interaction of photographs and written annotations to activate personal and collective memory and to communicate a message of resistance. Selecting photographs collected in documentary archives around the world, the artist manipulates them: by adding handwritten comments and highlighting meaningful details with the help of bright and vivid colours, he stimulates a dialogue between the pre-existing narratives conveyed by the original sources and his own interpretation of those texts and images.

Shortly after the 1 February 2021 *coup d’état* carried out against the democratically elected government in Myanmar (known also as Burma), Brodsky began working on his new series *Stand for Democracy: Myanmar [5]*, which relies on photographs taken in Myanmar by activists and photojournalists. The series directly addresses the youth-led Civil Disobedience Movement and celebrates Myanmar’s peaceful protesters who risk and give their lives for freedom. Brodsky is particularly committed to speaking to younger generations and believes that his artistic practice can help to effect

positive change by promoting awareness. The exhibition at Schloss Oberdiessbach is the world premiere of the first 12 works from Brodsky's series. All the photographs are exhibited in the "orangerie" of the castle (greenhouse for lemon and orange trees). This decision was taken by the curator in conversation with the artist for its strong symbolic connotation. The protesters are mostly young people and represent the future of Myanmar. As such, like orange trees from other latitudes who require protection from the cold Swiss winter in order to later blossom and give their fruits, the young protesters in Myanmar also need to be shielded from a hostile environment. They will grow strong only with the support of the international community and its refusal to legitimize the military junta. VL

ARTIST STATEMENT: "When a bloody coup was staged in Myanmar against democracy, I immediately reacted and created work in solidarity with the tenacious resistance of the younger generations of Myanmar. At least 700 young people were murdered in the streets by the Army in the first weeks of the coup. [...] In Argentina it took us 40 years to judge the military, but they were judged for their crimes and they are now in prison. I believe the same will happen in Myanmar, as long as the resistance remains alive and gets the support it deserves from the rest of the world. Art is a powerful tool to express solidarity and to spread the word, Resistance is beautiful, Resistance is Life."

STEFANO CAGOL (Born 1969 in Trento, Italy. Lives and works in Trentino/Südtirol, Italy)

Since the beginning of his career spanning 25 years, Stefano Cagol has centered his artistic practice in the medium of video. At Schloss Oberdiessbach, the artist will employ it to make visible the invisible energy present in nature, in the exchanges between people, and also in museums, which he considers to be "factories of cultural energy". Through three video works and a participatory site-specific performance conceived for the exhibition at the Schloss Oberdiessbach and which will take place on August 6 and 7, 2021, the artist-researcher continues his ongoing project *The Body of Energy (Of the Mind) / TBOE* for which he has been travelling over the past seven years across Europe, from the Arctic to Gibraltar. In particular, Cagol's video *The Body of Energy (Of the Mind). The Invisible Village [3: 1st Floor, Grand Hall]* draws attention to temperature as a manifestation of energy, capturing thermodynamic interactions and thermal portraits of individuals using an infrared camera: a technological device developed by the military to destroy its enemies – and which became familiar during the current pandemic crisis – has been adopted by the artist to evoke life and its traces. "I'm interested in the social and political aspect of the landscape," Cagol explains. In his "activist aesthetics" (Jeni Fulton), he investigates the overwhelming impacts humans have made on the lived environment. For example, in the video *The Time of the Flood. Antagonismus [3: Attic]* the artist underscores the irresolvable opposition of man and nature, symbolized by an unexpected reaction of water and fire, in which the fire "attacks" water instead of being extinguished by it. Finally, the reflection on the consequences of our actions on the environment takes the form of a participative performance in the video *The Body of Energy (Of the Mind). Museum Folkwang [3: 1st Floor, Grand Hall]*, for which Cagol asked the visitors of the institution in Essen to "give energy to the museum" by touching its walls, demonstrating that after all "we are global warming", as he explains. GB

DINA DANISH (Born 1981 in Paris, France. Lives and works in Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Danish's artistic research focuses on the role played by language, semantics and translation in the definition of the self and the space we occupy (our coordinates) in the physical world. The works selected for the exhibition exemplify the artist's ironic and humoristic approach and are thought-provoking reflections about linguistic differences and similarities between people from diverse cultures and latitudes. In *You've Crossed the Line [3: Entrance Door]* the artist puts us in the awkward position of being reprimanded by an authoritarian voice for trespassing a border – the door threshold marking the separation between one space and the next – before even actually doing so. The text is placed in such a way that it can be read only when leaving the room and it is not written in the imperative mood expressing an order, but in present perfect, implying that the action of crossing the line has actually already taken place – as it has indeed, when we first entered the room we now want to exit – and cannot be reversed. Kurt Schwitter's *Ursonate* (or *Sonate in Urlauten*, literally "sonata in primordial sounds", 1923/32) is a well-known phonetic poetry composed following a four-movement structure directly inspired by the idea of absolute music. The German Dada artist, who also directly performed his piece many times, wanted the letters applied to his *Ursonate* to be pronounced in German but left plenty of room for imagination and interpretation. As a result, what is actually a nonsensical text sounds like real German to non-native speakers. Reflecting on this idea of a text transformed into pure music and deprived of any semantic meaning, Danish asked herself the question: "how do you translate a German sounding text or sound into an Arabic one?" *Ursonata in Arabic Pronunciation [3: 1st Floor, Cabinet]* is her original answer to this question, a translation of Schwitter's German-sounding text into an Arabic-sounding one devoid of all meaning that takes us on an acoustic journey across different languages and cultural geographies. VL

ARTIST STATEMENT: "What is most fascinating to me, is when this very moment in which we try to make ourselves understandable, turns into complete miscommunication. Reasons tend to vary and are almost endless; but they can be caused by the wrong wording, the unclear sentence structure, the gestures or the tone. Interestingly, throughout history, certain notions have tried to solve this complicated problem through attempting to liberate language and gestures from the burden of communication itself. These ideas have driven me for the past few years, to play with language and structures, while incorporating humour and misunderstandings."

WILLIE DOHERTY (Born 1959 in Derry, Northern Ireland. Lives and works in Donegal, Republic of Ireland)

Willie Doherty's work begins as a response to place - the consequences of a geographical position and the impact it has on those who occupy it. His work has its roots in the politics and topography of his native city Derry. He witnessed Bloody Sunday at the age of twelve, and, although in recent times his work has responded to alternative locations, Derry and its environs continues to be a primary point of reference. Its histories of politics and conflict has shaped the terrain physically and psychologically. The walls of Derry and the river Foyle dividing the city between an east bank and west bank as well as the proximity of its county's border with the Republic of Ireland is, as he says, "a perfect theatre of war".

Focusing on this territory of conflict and military surveillance where an objective perspective is impossible, Doherty sets up contradictory points of view often layering image with text loaded with alternative interpretations such as “Protection”, “Surveillance” or “Shrouding”, “Pervading”, thus revealing the prejudices and assumptions that such words carry. This disconnect is an inherent tension in Doherty’s work as he subtly presents situations which challenge received perceptions and fixed ideas. Through compelling imagery, the viewer is obliged to address issues and situations which are uncomfortable and unsettling. This is the case in the two photographs included in the exhibition, *Enduring, Elmwood Road, the Bogside Derry* and *God Has Not Failed Us [3: 1st Floor, Grande Hall]*. The Catholic Bogside district and scene of the Bloody Sunday tragedy in January 1972 borders the Protestant district The Fountain. Here Doherty questions what victories have been achieved by the opposing sides as the dismal streetscapes speak of loss of hope and social decline. Installed in the Grand Hall of the Schloss Oberdiessbach opposite each other, these two works create a spatial tension catapulting the viewer beyond the walls of the castle to the contentious environment of Derry where these two neighborhoods uneasily reside side by side.

Doherty has in recent years moved his focus to other terrains redolent with social tension from displaced migrants to contested borders both real and conceptual and examines the impact such shifting landscapes or ‘borderisation’ has on the individuals and communities who live there. Although sometimes identified, his locations are never quite settled, always hovering on a cusp, on a borderline, and questioning what that means. Whatever the focus of Doherty’s work, the crucial position the Irish landscape and in particular the environs of Derry play in his oeuvre is evident. It is an oeuvre centred on the duality of interpretation and of memory. Derry in itself exists as a complex duality having two names Derry/Londonderry, an inner and outer city and is divided into two parts. Strategically located it is a repository of social and political histories, conflicts and resolutions. It remains an enduring influence on Doherty’s oeuvre, an oeuvre which is a provocative, powerful and subtle commentary on contemporary social and political issues. BD

TAIYE IDAHOR (b. 1984 in Lagos, Nigeria. Lives and works in Lagos)

At the core of Idahor’s multidisciplinary artistic practice resides an ongoing investigation of her identity as a woman living in Lagos. Departing from personal memory and family histories, she explores the spaces and questions the roles occupied by women in Nigerian society as well as their progressive transformation over the course of history in order to “excavate women’s realities” (T. Idahor). The exhibition at the Schloss Oberdiessbach makes Idahor’s debut in Switzerland. The artist is represented with a selection of ink and collage drawings from two distinctive body of works. In the *Ivie Series [3: Staircase]* Idahor portrays faceless women, ghostly figures wearing the so called “ivie”, which in the Bini language of Benin City (Edo State) means “precious beads”. The “ivie” is a symbol of royalty generally worn by the “Iyoba”, the “Mother of the King”, who is also one of the highest-ranking titleholder in the political hierarchy of the kingdom. Idahor started working on this series back in 2014, when the role of the Iyoba was left vacant. The void left by the physical absence of the protagonists of these portraits is the artist’s way to manifest the absence of women from positions of power

and give voice to their struggle for equality, not only in Nigeria but also globally. It is also a subtle commentary about the urgent need for African women to engage with their own history and value their powerful role models instead of searching for inspiration at other latitudes.

In the artist’s work the idea of void is also strictly related to a spirituality rooted in the concept of reincarnation and multiplicity. If the *Ivie Series* manifests and comes to term with the absence of the woman’s body, the *Hybrid Series [3: Ground Floor, Dining Room]* explores the idea of “transitioning and moving within spaces”, it “re-occupies” the woman’s body and thinks about it “as a reincarnation of a genealogy” (T. Idahor). Cutting out the faces of anonymous women from the posters of hair salons the artist composes them into new hybrid identities, empowering them with the faculty of moving through time and space. VL

VERENA IMMENHAUSER (b. 1939 in Männedorf, Switzerland. Lives and works in Bern, Switzerland)

Verena Immenhauser’s career spans almost five decades, over which time she has worked both as an artist, an art historian and a curator, experimenting with different techniques and media. Yet, unquestionably, photography is Immenhauser’s favorite medium. Engaging the viewer in a creative conversation with her work, the artist triggers our attention for details which might otherwise go unnoticed, fragments of life capable of revealing the hidden patterns of the world we live in and its beauty. Immenhauser’s work is about perception. It does not tell us *one* story but rather offers a point of departure, the potential of infinite stories and diverse narratives which are entirely up to us to unfold. For the exhibition *Hot/Cold -Dry/Wet: On Art and Latitude* the artist presents an installation conceived in dialogue with the space of the Schloss Oberdiessbach and its centuries-long history. Her work *Mauer-Gespräche [1]* brings together 140 photographs printed on canvas of as many fragments of walls which the artist has been collecting over the years and at all latitudes during her numerous travels around the world. Abstract images and portraits of different cultures at the same time, each one of her photographs enters in conversation with the other ones and with the space where they are exhibited. Each photograph in the installation is like a brick; all together they build an alternative, immaterial wall which is meant to unify rather than separate. The audio recording of the artist’s voice whispering incomprehensible sounds reverberates in the room, like the memory of conversations lost through time and space. VL

ARTIST STATEMENT: “Since 2003 I have been interested in the narrative of walls worldwide, which can be read on their external surface. Their layers and colours reflect the faces of those who built them, sometimes over the centuries, had them repaired, painted over, renewed, destroyed or crumbled. As a result, they each have their own history and aesthetics. In the close-up view, they become like human sculptures. Walls are elementary components of civilisation and bear a wide variety of meanings, for example the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, the Great Wall of China or the Berlin Wall. They are often ambivalent: they divide, exclude or include, offer protection. Today more than ever, the question arises as to what purpose a wall serves. They are important when they preserve historical districts and monuments for posterity, but they are fatal when their purpose is to exclude and separate. These ‘walls’ must first be dismantled in the mind.

But they can also be a stimulus to one's own creative vision. That would be the task of art.”

REMY JUNGERMANN (b. 1959 in Moengo, Suriname. Lives and works in Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Jungerman is a descendant of the Maroons who escaped slavery on Dutch plantations and settled in the rainforest in Suriname. In his work, the artist investigates the cross-fertilization of patterns and symbols in Surinamese Maroon culture, the larger African Diaspora, and 20th Century Modernism. *Hot/Cold – Dry/Wet: On Art and Latitude* is Jungerman's first-ever show in Switzerland. In the works selected for the exhibition, the artist mixes patterns and materials typically used in the African diaspora with other more characteristic of Western traditions, hence bringing the visual vocabularies of different latitudes into unexpected and bold dialogues. Jungerman's *Nobody is Protected.Comm [3: 1st Floor, Painted Room]* parodies the setup of a press conference. The wooden stand, which has been carved by the artist with traditional Maroon designs, is presented in the “Gemalte Stube” of Schloss Oberdiessbach, an exquisite small living-room in baroque style located on the first floor of the castle. The room is not only characterized by its superb wall decorations and painted ceiling representing a romantic encounter between Venus and Mars, it also displays four interesting overdoor paintings by Albrecht Kauw (Strasbourg, 1621–1681, Bern) dating from ca. 1668. One of them is a naval battle scene probably portraying the Second Anglo-Dutch war (1665–1667), at the end of which a treaty stipulated that England would keep sovereignty over the colony of New Netherland, on the East Coast of the United States, including the island of Manhattan, while at the same time Suriname – where Jungerman's family is from – would become a colony of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In the backdrop of this historic setting, Jungerman's work acquires a new meaning and offers a sharp criticism of the communication system in a globalized world which, while it offers more opportunity for connections it does not improve the quality of real human relations. Not only the microphones are unplugged, but they also point at an absent speaker: who is going to speak behind all these microphones? Are they going to address the subject of the paintings and the history they tell? Will they explain us why these paintings are hanging here? Which public will they address? And, most importantly, will their message be listened to and understood by everyone regardless of their background?

Apuku Return.Comm.I and *Apuku Return.Comm.II* are presented in the wine cellar of the castle [4], in a crypt-like space with vaulted ceilings where wine and spirits are kept. The title of these two works reference the Ampuku (also known as Apuku), anthropomorphic forest spirits. According to the beliefs of the Winti Afro-Surinamese religion developed in South America during the time of the Dutch Empire from the encounter of Christianity with the religious practices of slaves, Ampuku can possess people and transfer themselves into other gods. From the empty bottles of spirits containing images taken both from traditional Maroon culture in Suriname and its Diaspora and Western culture to the nails and colored yarn, all the elements used by Jungerman in his works speak of the artist's curiosity towards diverse cultural codes which he syncretizes in order to develop his own peculiar transnational language. VL

ARTIST STATEMENT: “My recent work is intrinsically related to Afro-traditions and the western modernist art

tradition, which embodies my personal relation with the country I was born (Moengo, Suriname) and the country I have been working and living from for the past twenty-odd years. I have a strong fascination for the esthetics and underlying values of Afro-religion and ritual elements of the traditional Maroon culture in Suriname and its Diaspora. At the same time I'm fascinated by contemporary western art traditions and forms of communication. Therefore, a part of my work also focuses on global citizenship, 'glocal' issues and the effects of globalization on today's society. Traveling around the globe contributed to develop my work: some of the main themes are trans-nationality, belonging and the way knowledge exchanges between cultures.”

MATHIAS LØVGREEN (b. 1991 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Lives and works in Copenhagen)

Mathias Løvgreen's work focuses on political and humanitarian topics, investigating the situation of everyday life and its idiosyncrasies. Trained as an artist, a photographer and a journalist, the artist's approach is fundamentally interdisciplinary and reveals his interest for the interaction of art, science and psychology. The project *How to Boil a Frog [4]* is Løvgreen's response to the growing political tensions and consequent social upheavals registered during the past years at different latitudes throughout the Western world. To produce his video, Løvgreen has used a thermographic camera capable of capturing and visualizing the temperature of the human body with a color scale ranging from blue to yellow and red colors. As the artist explains: “Expressions such as ‘I'm boiling with anger,’ or ‘a heated debate’ did not come from nowhere, because if men feel threatened or get into a debate, the body will react on this by activating the muscles and pump blood faster around the veins. The contemporary Western world is going through an ideological change. Normally the eye cannot see this change, but through thermographic photography, the rising of human tension is visible. (...) Seeing how people behave during elections, clashes and in protests the anecdote about the boiling frog is brought to life: If you have a pot of boiling water and put a frog in it the frog will jump out. Instead, do this: Place a pot of temperate water in front of you. Put a frog in the water. Slowly heat the water. The frog will not feel the rising of the temperature and will stay in the pot. The water will reach its boiling point. You now have a boiled frog.” Løvgreen's critical yet ironic approach to the threatening and widespread current scenarios of social unrest points at the fact that human beings share the same response, at least at a mere physical level, to discontent, fear and anger, regardless of the geographical latitude where they are. VL

ESTHER MATHIS (b. 1985 in Winterthur, Switzerland. Lives and works in Zürich,)

Esther Mathis's artistic practice is driven by her interest and curiosity towards natural phenomena such as heat and cold, atmosphere and void, light and darkness. Her work, which spans from video and photography to sculpture, from large-scale installation to art in architecture, is characterized by a profound sensibility towards the equilibrium of diverse ecosystems and by a pronounced attention to detail. Two works from her series *Isolated Systems* are presented at the Schloss Oberdiessbach and were selected in dialogue with the artist for their specific correlation to the idea of temperature and latitude investigated by the exhibition. *Isolated System Vol. 2 [3: Attic]* presents a 101.5 cm tall tower made of

sheet of float glass glued together and stacked one on top of the other. Depending on the density of the individual glass layers, the orientation of the sculpture, and the position of the viewer, the sculpture offers everchanging and multifarious radiating effects generated by the interplay of the transparent material with the light filtering through the sculpture and reflecting on it. The effect is that of a liquid and mutating rather than solid and stable structure, a reminder of the natural origin of the material, since at high temperature glass is structurally similar to liquids, while it behaves like a solid once at room temperature. In the video *Isolated System Vol. 3 [3: 1st Floor, Video Room]*, on the other end, Mathis investigates in real time the freezing process of water. The eye of the camera is fixed on five glass bottles containing water and standing in the snow near a frosty riverbank in Iceland. In less than five minutes, the viewer witnesses how their liquid content progressively solidifies and turn into ice, a process that in the case of water takes place when temperature descends below 0°C (or 32°F). The freezing of water, however, doesn't happen at the same time for all the five bottles, nor it seems to follow any apparent logical pattern, leaving the viewer wonder at the role played by chance and variables into the laws of physics. VL

DANIELA SCHONBACHLER (b. 1968 in Zug, Switzerland. Lives and works in Zug, London, UK, and Venice, Italy)

Trained both in art and architecture – after studying architecture at the Paris-Belleville École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture, she collaborated with the architect Mario Botta in Lugano and with sculptor Luciano Vistosi in Venice – Daniela Schönbachler's artistic practice expands across multiple disciplines and is situated at the crossroad between art and architecture. While she explores the physical qualities and functionalities of a variety of media, her conceptual and minimalist work focuses primarily on the theme of installation. In particular, she is interested in generating different and new perceptions through the use of glass, a substance that she explores for its qualities, such as transparency, light absorption and reflection.

“Consisting of four mirror segments arranged in a large circular flat floor surface with a diameter of 3 meters, *Pièce d'eau* [2] invites the viewer to experience the distance between the firmament and the earth by means of the mirror reflection and specifically captures the inversion of the dimension: the reflection of the sky and the nearest surroundings lies directly in front of our feet. In this way, multi-dimensional spaces are created; they merge into one another at the intersecting edges of the glass, as visual quantities and mixtures, generating an expanded view of the visible as the creation of a world within the world and a metamorphic mixture of verticality and horizontality, of space and time, as if it was an ‘in-between world’. Absorbed by the perceived effects, the observer soon forgets his own presence and concentrates completely on the interaction between work, environment and nature.” (Peter Stobbe). Playing with an inversion of perception, Schönbachler's artwork conveys a reflection on both real and imaginary geographies in which the idea of presence and absence is constantly shifting, triggered by the interaction of the viewer and of the nature surrounding the installation. *Pièce d'eau* is born out of the always new encounter of a mirror glass surface and the sky above the exhibition venue, bringing the elements water, air, earth and fire – since glass is made from sand, soda ash and limestone melted at very high temperatures – into dialogue in a strong relation

of dependency to the specific geography in which the artwork is presented. “Looking into the mirrored surface reminds us who we are and raises questions about our connection to the space”, says the artist. “The work is not meant to be narcissistic but humbly calls out to the visitor to integrate nature and the environment.” VL

WANG ZHIBO (b. 1981 in Zhejiang, China. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany)

Wang Zhibo's artistic production is among the most interesting outputs of the post-1980s generation in China. Her canvases do not only reveal the artist's debt to Soviet socialist realism and to Western art – from the Italian Renaissance to French Surrealism and American New Realism – but also her interest in new technologies, from film and virtual reality to algorithm-based images. A graduate from the internationally renowned China Academy of Art Oil Painting Department in Hangzhou, since 2019 Wang has been living and working in Berlin, Germany. Even if she maintains that her art is not influenced by the context where she lives and is always the same, whether she is in Hangzhou, Mexico City or Berlin, the paintings she has been producing while in Germany emanate an even more meditative and enigmatic character, when compared to her earlier production. This might be the result of the isolation she experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, which started shortly after she moved to Berlin, but it is probably also linked to the idiosyncrasies and cultural dichotomies that the artist encountered in her new surroundings. If in the earlier stages of her career she mostly painted landscapes devoid of all human presence, her more recent production has elected the human body, whether hyper-masculine or -feminine, as her preferred subject. In particular, the artist has been focusing on the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity as a strategy to investigate identity (or the lack of it) and the relationship between the self and the other, the wild or intuitive and the rational and logical component of human nature. Addressing her sentiment of being an outsider in Berlin and questioning what the “boundaries of civilization” are, the paintings which Wang produced for the exhibition at the Schloss Oberdiessbach express her sense of geographical displacement, the distance from her origins and her “otherness”. Exhibited where Old Masters portrait paintings of the von Wattenwyl family normally hang, Wang's works add a new layer of identity (and alterity) to the palimpsest of life written by the long history of the castle. Who are the women (or men) she portrays in *Day Course [3: Staircase]* and *Spelling [3: 1st Floor, Cabinet]*, who seem trapped in the wooden surface painted in the *trompe-l'oeil* technique? Are they spirits inhabiting objects, giving them new life? Is their hearth beating and pulsating, is the temperature of their bodies hot or cold? Also with her works *Sway* and *Firewalker (Winter Tales) [3: Staircase]*, the artist offers another playful and ironic interpretation of the topic of temperature investigated by the exhibition: infusing life and personality into the inanimate snowmen who populated her garden and kept her company during the ‘long Covid winter’ and who eventually melted down and disappeared at the first rise of temperature, Wang underscores the fugacity of life and the transient character of all things, circumstances and relationships. VL

ARTIST STATEMENT: “I tried to imagine, to me, the unknown small commune of Oberdiessbach in Switzerland, the bizarre history about Hassler's understanding of human body temperature ... The snowmen are ‘psychic objects’ for me in this sense. In some winter tales they dance, tell stories, act

and even do evil things. They are just like us ... The same applies also to my wood grain paintings. The patterns on the skin of the protagonists remind me of the tattoos that indigenous people adorn themselves with. Are the patterns on their faces and bodies being used to make them disappear, camouflage themselves or melt into nature? Or are these patterns used to communicate and issue a call for something?"

ZIMOUN (b. 1977 in Bern, Switzerland. Lives and works in Bern)

The Bernese artist Zimoun presents an immersive installation specifically conceived to dialogue with the grand architectural space of the "Gartensaal" (the garden hall) of Schloss Oberdiessbach [3: Ground Floor]. Departing from common everyday industrial materials such as cardboard boxes and cotton balls, the artist has built a large-scale installation composed of 80 modular structures stacked in a quadratic and slightly arched formation. Its title, *80 prepared dc-motors, cotton balls, cardboard boxes 35x35x35 cm*, enumerates with precision all the materials used by Zimoun for the production of the artwork, and reveals the artist's work process and his attention to detail. Each module of which the installation is composed is set in motion by a direct-current motor, which activates the pendulum-like drumming of the cotton balls, transforming the cardboard boxes into sounding bodies. As the artist explains "each of these mechanical systems follows its own rhythm, resulting in a dense sound structure and a chaotic overall behavior. A simple system brings together complex visual and acoustic structures and confronts us with simultaneously existing opposites such as simplicity and complexity, order and chaos, mass and individuality." The rhythmic and persistent drumming sound produced by Zimoun's installation generates in the viewer entering the "Grosser Saal" an unexpected and strong acoustic impression similar to the natural sound of a heavy and persistent rainfall. In the exhibition, the immersive experience is strongly influenced by the surrounding space. The exquisite Aubousson tapestries (ca. 1770) hanging on the walls of the historic room act as unconventional absorbing panels, softening the sound produced by the installation while also dampening the noise coming from outside and hence improving the soundproofing and the overall acoustic experience of the audience. At the same time, the picturesque and sunny pastoral scenes depicted on the tapestries create a strong contrast with the impression of rainfall produced by the installation. Finally, the three large windows facing the installation and opening on the garden of the Schloss Oberdiessbach confront the public with always mutating weather conditions, shifts of temperature and humidity throughout the duration of the exhibition enhancing the contradictory experience of the artificially generated sound of rain. Zimoun's installation combine the artist's interest for concrete and minimalistic industrial materials, the everchanging relation between movement and sound (or noise) and an engagement for nature thanks to a sustainable production of his artworks. VL

TEXTS: Giulia Busetti [GB]; Barbara Dawson [BD]; Chelsey Henderson [CH]; Valentina Locatelli [VL]

SCHLOSS OBERDIESSBACH

Schloss Oberdiessbach is a Swiss heritage site of national significance. The construction of the so called *Neues Schloss* (new castle), where the exhibition unfolds, was started in 1666 by Albrecht von Wattenwyl (1617–1671), a former

commander of the Swiss Guard in service to the French king Louis XIV. Von Wattenwyl commissioned the Neuchâtel architect Jonas Favre with the erection of the building. The castle has remained mostly unchanged until today and is still the home of the von Wattenwyl family. From Bern, the Schloss Oberdiessbach is located 30 minutes away by car (A6, exit Kiesen) or by train (direction Luzern, change in Konolfingen).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The exhibition takes place at the Schloss Oberdiessbach



SCHLOSS OBERDIESSBACH

**Schloss-Strasse 48,
3672 Oberdiessbach
Switzerland**

Opening Hours: Saturday and Sunday: from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Admission to the exhibition at every hour on the hour. Last admission at 5:00 p.m.

Children are admitted inside the castle only under strict supervision of their parents.

To ensure the safety of your visit, the maximum number of people present at the same time in the building will be controlled. Please remember that masks are compulsory throughout the exhibition and distance rules must be observed at all times.

Entrance Fee: During the opening hours the access to the exhibition is free. **Donations are warmly welcomed. Recommended minimum donation CHF 10.-**

GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours of the exhibition (min. 15 max. 20 people) can be booked outside of the regular opening hours (CHF 25.00 per person). Please make a reservation by e-mail to artandchateau@gmail.com or by phone 076 496 53 38

CONTACTS: **art+château:** Lorrainestrasse 6, 3013 Bern, Switzerland / www.artchateau.org
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