

PUSHING GROUND

Ruettimann Contemporary is pleased to present *Pushing Ground*. The group show takes place at the soon-to-be renovated patrickson.studio, formerly known as King Kong, a vintage store at Weststrasse in Zurich Wiedikon. The exhibition includes three established Swiss artists and two international newcomers. Simon Ledergerber, Alexander Bühler, and Thilo Hoffmann are joined by Aoife Dunne, a young post-internet artist from Dublin, and Hannah Parr from Bournemouth, UK. Aoife Dunne's installations have already been shown on a broad international scale. Hannah Parr lived and worked in the Dominican Republic before moving to Switzerland in 2018 and has since gained steadily more recognition for her humorous and critical oeuvre. Simon Ledergerber's on-site installation *Menschenwerk* is the central part of the show.

Simon Ledergerber (*1977 in Seelisberg, Canton of Uri, Switzerland) focuses on the inclusion of found and organic substances into his work. The oeuvre of the trained wood sculptor includes installation, sculpture, art-in-architecture, paintings, and works on paper. Ledergerber has received several awards within Switzerland and participated in various group exhibitions. In 2018, he had a solo show at Kunsthalle Arbon.

The artist makes use of his immediate environment and its palette of materials. By means of experimenting with our sense of perception, and by mixing different materials, he perfects his technique and draws ideas for future works. The artist allows chance to have an impact on his work during those experiments. However, during the entirety of the production process, Ledergerber keeps control over the end result due to his previously acquired knowledge about chemical reactions and the different materials' characteristics. His work is deeply ingrained in organic processes which humans can only govern to a certain extent. The resulting work is a mixture of coincidence, technical craftsmanship, and the artist's philosophical and conceptual foundation. The fermented, oxidized, and decayed elements of Ledergerber's sculptures and paintings open up aspects of a hidden beauty in the natural processes that surround us.

The in-situ installation Ledergerber created in collaboration with Ruettimann Contemporary additionally refers to the artist's immediate surroundings: a soon-to-be abandoned shop. The work with the emblematic title *Menschenwerk* gives the space a highly sculptural dimension. This is due to Ledergerber having moved the parquet floor as one piece in a seemingly simple yet very complex technical manoeuvre to the opposite wall. The artist moved the wooden parquet without any technical equipment and crafted, in-situ, a fragile yet solid support structure. Like a mole he worked his way to the rear underneath the floor, ever conscious of the parquet's heavy weight above him. On several levels, *Menschenwerk* refers to human perception and questions allegedly taken for granted facts. Although Ledergerber built an exact model of his undertaking prior in his studio, he repeatedly reached his limits when executing the work on site. He therefore experienced with his own body the discrepancy between a perfect plan and the deceitful reality.

The work raises the question how the impossible is made possible. Throughout construction Ledergerber was continuously forced to adapt and reorient with regards to the various challenging issues that arose. In the end, despite many obstacles, he literally pushed forward his project. Hence, a major part of *Menschenwerk* deals with new insights the artist gained from this physical feat.

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To the outside viewer, the exhausting work behind the seemingly playful gesture *Menschenwerk* emanates is rather elusive. The inherent philosophical component of the work gradually develops by engaging with it more deeply: The frailty of an existing condition, the constant reorientation when things do not go according to plan, ground pulled from under one's feet, or the invitation to view familiar surroundings from a different vantage point. On the geological-physical level, the installation evokes the shifting of tectonic plates or refers to the inertia of matter. During this tedious installation process Ledergerber himself underwent a remarkable transformation which drove him both as a person and as an artist.

Ledergerber completes the room installation with a series of new large-format canvases that share a distinctive coloration due to materials he applies such as iron dust, wood chips, or soil. The artist uses acid and oxidation to give the paintings a rich patina that radiate a deep tranquility and invite the viewer to ponder. Ledergerber thus refers to the natural materials present in the earth's crust, such as iron, which often determine the tonality of the landscapes of our planet. This new series expresses to a large extent the artist's perception of artistic work. At the same time, they act as a snapshot of the continuous processes our surroundings are naturally prone to and which leave their mark in our visual space.

Aoife Dunne (*1995 in Dublin, Ireland) is a digital installation artist who studied Fine Art Media at The National College of Art and Design in Dublin. She has been awarded an artist residency at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) where she is currently working.

A fearless purveyor of fusing all manner of creative medium – sculpture, technology, sound, performance, costume, and video – she creates large-scale immersive environments submerging audiences into phantasmagorical, detail-driven physical and virtual worlds.

Dunne's multi-hyphenate background working as a professional dancer, art director, musician, stylist, and digital creator, has greatly influenced her multidimensional approach to creating large-scale experiential work. Her multidisciplinary practice also had a huge impact on her creative thought process and educated her about the technicalities involved in making work from the perspective of both the performer and the observer. The experience she gained from working in the fashion industry over the past ten years has been crucial to the development of Dunne's artistic practice, which is heavily focused on using costume as a vehicle to explore, express and define notions of identity.

With language that is rooted in post-pop and post-internet, Dunne creates immersive, multihued environments that conflate the two-dimensional moving image with the three-dimensional arrangement of objects in a space. At once dazzling and ominous, her surreal amalgams chart the psychological complexities, desires, and illusions that haunt late-capitalist culture, providing a critical yet also exuberant and absurd take on contemporary realities.

As an introduction to Dunne's visual reality Ruettimann Contemporary shows two works from the series KINETIC COMPULSIONS, exclusively produced for the current show. The digitally created images reflect the artist's mental state after several months spent in lockdown due to Covid Restrictions. Feelings of overwhelming, chaos, hyperactivity, and surreal imagery characterize the works. They comprise up to 450 digital layers – a technique Dunne has used since the beginning of her practice. The decimation of human contact due to the state-imposed lockdown led the artist to put more emphasis on the self. The works radiate in Aoife Dunne's characteristic color spectrum and exhibit a remarkable density of highly complex sensations.

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Alexander Bühler (*1977 in Zurich) studied painting at the Chelsea College of Art and Design, London. Following his education, he worked in London, Tokio, Berlin, and Mexico City where, in 2014, he settled down permanently. In spring 2021, Bühler was featured at Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich with a monumental installation entitled *Billboard Nostalgia*.

The main body of works shown at Ruettimann Contemporary focuses on the lockdown which reigned in Mexico City in the Spring of 2020. Following the strictly imposed curfew, Alexander Bühler escaped his studio to work in rural San José Villa de Allende in the greater Mexico City area. The series consists of paintings and works with mixed media and were created under most modest conditions. It is an amalgamation of Bühler's previous work and the wealth of multicultural experiences he collected over the years living abroad. At the same time, they are an expression of a climate which was subject to strict conditions. Similar to Aoife Dunne, Alexander Bühler experienced an unexpected confrontation with himself due to external factors. He incorporated this introspection into his creative output. In Zurich, where he lives temporarily, Bühler pursued the technique he had developed in Mexico. Unlike their predecessors these new works also contain figurative elements, found objects, and hand painted dotted areas which remotely evoke pointillism in French modern painting.

Ruettimann Contemporary also features a large painting, entitled *Elements*, which was part of the aforementioned installation *Billboard Nostalgia* at Haus Konstruktiv. Bühler's deep interest in architecture was a major source of inspiration for the monumental work. The artist applied color fields in acrylic on plywood and separated them by tearing off tape strips he had previously fixed – a technique well known from the American Expressionist Barnett Newmann among others. The work consisting of a multitude of such panels is a reference to the urban landscape of Mexico City observed from a bird's eye view. A series of small-scale sketches formed the basis for *Billboard Nostalgia*. With the present work *Elements* Bühler not only refers to architecture but also to the four elements earth, water, air, and fire symbolized by a golden hue. The pronounced regularity and empty caesuras give the work a spatial quality with a meditative aura.

Hannah Parr (*1984 in Bournemouth, UK) holds a BA in Graphic Design from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. In 2014 she was an artist-in-residence at Altos de Chavon in the Dominican Republic and then lived and worked in Santo Domingo (DR). In 2018 she moved to Switzerland to do a master's degree in Fine Arts at ZHDK in Zurich. Currently, Parr is a studio assistant to Swiss artist Beat Zoderer and works on her own primarily sculptural art. Her practice entails working with wood, ranging from gracile, mosaic-like structures to large-scale wooden sculptures. Parr questions social stereotypes by touching on diverse subjects from a playful and ironic vantage point evoking ever-present artistic movements such as Fluxus and Surrealism. Working as an artist and with heavy materials and the associated tools is still perceived as a male domain. Parr works against such tenacious preconceptions and trends with her Hair Pieces which consist of MDF-wood panels covered with meticulously combed blonde hair elements. The embedded irony strengthens the peculiar presence and harmony Hannah Parr's works emanate, allowing for a variety of interpretations.

The social disparities Parr experienced up close in the Dominican Republic have had a considerable impact on her creative process and reinforced her humanitarian beliefs. Since 2017 Hannah Parr has been volunteering on the Island of Chios, supporting people based in Vial, one of the largest migrant camps in the Aegean region. She salvaged leftover rubber boat materials from the coastline on these numerous trips. Subsequently, she presents the deep blue material

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as paintings by reframing and thus decontextualizing the frayed fabrics. This diptych arouses associations with encountering the deep blue sea while at the same time bringing up a highly sensitive topic.

Thilo Hoffmann (*1964 in St. Gallen, Switzerland) provides the protagonists of his projects with plenty of room for their own creativity. This is exemplified in the video series *30 SECONDS* consisting of brief performances with members and staff of MoMA in New York and of Kunsthaus Zurich. In *PORTRAITS* the Swiss multimedia artist photographed more than 50 contemporary artists from all over the globe and gave them free license to choose the setting to be featured in. Hoffmann lives and works in Zurich.

Hoffmann new work series in the current show bears the title *How do you map the world?*. Alluding to the circumstance that we need world maps to navigate and to orient ourselves. Thilo Hoffmann's maps, however, cause the exact opposite: they confuse the viewer on purpose and on different levels.

The artist used a variety of aerial photos and satellite images of the earth and had each of them fractured into 200 puzzle pieces. Additionally, every photograph has the same puzzle grid which makes the puzzle pieces interchangeable throughout the different aerial and satellite views.

Looking at the maps, it appears not apparent at first glance that Hoffmann has conceived a completely new world which often seems to be upside-down. The alternative universe can only be accessed by taking a closer look. Thereby, one discovers on the one hand that the Louvre emerges in Central Park. On the other hand, one notices that the geography of Panama has been swapped with Israel. Islands seemingly disappear on one side of the planet and reappear elsewhere.