

⑨ Björn Nussbächer, *If I Cannot Dance, I don't Want to be Part of Your Revolution*, 2020

私が踊れないなら、私はあなたの革命の一部になりたくありません

Nussbächer's work deals with transformative and transgressive processes that expand perception and consciousness. In *If I Cannot Dance...* we see short sequences of the festivities of the „Bombing Master Handan“. They take place annually at the end of Chinese New Year in Taiwan's Taitung province and stand for new beginnings. Volunteer, courageous young men are carried through the streets on a bamboo throne and bombarded with fireworks by bystanders. Nussbächer says about this: „Apart from the fact that I imagine it totally crazy to be shot at with fireworks all day, I was attracted by the energy of the festival and the resilience and resistance that Master Handan exudes.“

Nussbächer chooses and edits the shots in such a way that we participate in the transgression that the festivities unleashes. First, we witness the preparations. We see men on the backs of small trucks playing percussion instruments to heat up the atmosphere. The procession soon begins to move. The second shot shows a group of simple costumed men in the city park arming themselves with firecrackers. Other groups and tourists stand by observing. Then the fireworks start. In the next shot, the bare-chested Master Handan, wearing only red shorts and a blindfold, is lifted up on the bamboo chair. Suddenly, the bystanders set off their firecrackers. It pops and smokes. Stoically, Handan endures the attacks. Immediately everything is fogged in and we seem to be in another world. And so it goes on. The scenes of the fire, bang and smoke spectacle largely filmed with handheld cameras increase their apocalyptic effect as night falls. The large-format projection intensifies the immersive, multisensory dimension of the film.

His short film *If I Cannot Dance...* is part of a video archive that was created during the artists research trip to Taiwan and Japan. Nussbächer's experience of unfamiliar and contact with transgression formed the starting point. He filmed performative events in which people produce energy in mutual exchange. Based on *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, the artist is concerned with capturing energy visually. For Bachelard, fire was able to spark imagination and scientific interest like no other phenomenon.

⑩ Julian Salinas, *Car Chimp*, 2019

The video work *Car Chimp* by Julian Salinas also deals with a future narrative in a tongue-in-cheek manner. In bright sunlight, treetops pass by the viewer in an unusual perspective to uplifting music. As the setting changes, it becomes clear that the images are reflections on the windscreen of a car with a Chimpanzee at its wheel. Cross-fades, light and sound amplify the hallucinatory effect of the scene, especially when the Chimpanzee drives the road bends. Are we in the near future where hybrid beings populate the planet? Or do intelligent Chimpanzee rule as in the Hollywood blockbuster *Planet of the Apes*?

„This ape, doing the most human thing by driving a car, and nature shining beautifully in the sun ... reflected in the glass, transmits a great tension, between something natural, paradisaical and a very technoid civilisation.“ (Johann Diel)

⑪ Paula Mierzowsky & Johann Diel, *MUDAFI, \_IN DIE LEERE GEHEN\_*, 2020

Mental-acoustic session for one person

Duration: 15 minutes

Multi-channel audio track, remains, illustrations, cabin with seating for 1 person, light

Heidi Brunnschweiler, February 2021

# Regionale 21

## 18 March 2021 – 23 May 2021



E-WERK  
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regio  
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Emeka Udemba,  
*#Another day in Paradise*, 2020

At Regionale21, Emeka Udemba is presenting a new installation titled *#Another day in Paradise*. The starting point of this installation is the artist's experience of living as a black person in Germany and often being labelled as the Other, as a stranger who does not belong, because of his skin colour. Out of this background, he wants to draw attention to identity attribution and creates an opportunity for a conversation about perception.

At the entrance of the exhibition there are two stamps. Visitors can use them to print the question "Where are you from?" ① on a piece of paper. Stamped sheets with „Where are you from“ ① can also be found on the wall opposite. Black people and people of colour encounter the question of origin particularly often when they live in white majority societies. The question is perceived as discriminatory because it is based on a fictitious idea of a normative identity into which the other person does not fit. This process is called „othering“. It marks a difference that does not accept the other person as equal.

In the second part of Emeka Udemba's installation, there are ten hooded pedestals with glued-on mirror shards attached *The Gathering, No.2, 2020* ②. Their shape is reminiscent of the covers of certain racist groups. In the mirror fragments, the viewers only see themselves and the others incompletely. Depending on one's own point of view, the perceived identity narrows and shifts. The mirror fragments, which constantly create new reflections in the light, epitomize identity as being in flux and multiple.

In the **third part** ④-⑧ we encounter a multitude of painted and collaged portraits of Black people. The artist wants to give them a visual presence. He has gathered their models from the media, from magazines, television or the internet. First he sketches the outlines of the figures on the canvas. Then he works out their appearance in a lengthy, multi-layered process. Layers of collaged scraps of newspapers and magazines alternate with acrylic paints. The colourful paper pieces create an intense glow, similar to that of the mirrors of the hooded objects ②.

Under the title *Short Stories / No.1-No.15* ④, 15 children's portraits are arranged to a large picture wall. Compared to the adults in the full-body portraits next to them (5-8), the children look directly at us as we observe them. The mutual gaze at eye level is central to the postcolonial debate. The white supremacy was claimed, among other things, in the power structure of the gaze.

Small pieces of paper cover in particular the **full-length portraits** ⑤-⑧ with a veil. As a kind of filter between our gaze and the portrayed, they distort or block our view. This can be observed, for example, in the picture *Attractors* ⑥. Two young men look at us jauntily. How are we to understand their gaze? How can we approach them? With the newspaper fragments, the artist refers to the influence of the media, which make a direct perception of the other person often difficult because of biased reporting. In the full-body portraits, the figures are related and communicate with each other through their gestures. In *Getting to Know You* ⑦, for example, the woman in the white dress includes the viewer in their conversation through the gaze. These pictures thus open up for the viewer a space to enter into a conversation about identity attribution.

## GALLERY II

### *Songs From the End of the World*

Nadine Cueni (CH), Daniel Dressler & Lynne Kouassi (CH), Jasper Simeon Mehler (CH), Paula Mierzowsky & Johann Diel (DE), Björn Nussbächer (CH), Julian Salinas (CH), Lea Torcelli (DE), Florian Thate (DE), Jodok Wehrli (CH)

Achille Mbembe, the Cameroonian historian, political scientist and theorist of postcolonialism, combines postcolonial thought with an ecological imperative. For Mbembe, the exploitation of people through slavery, colonisation and today's forms of neocolonialism goes hand in hand with the plundering and destruction of the planet. Both were prerequisites for industrialisation and a capitalism that strives for limitless growth. For a long time, humanity has been concerned with the origin of life, the conditions of its development and its continued existence on Earth. Increasingly, debates about the future of human existence are determined by conditions under which life ends. In the face of this looming destruction, Mbembe vehemently advocates the concept of „planetary habitability“. It is inseparable from a politics of care, repair and reparation.

The artistic works shown at Regionale21 revolve around questions of habitats, their habitability and the future of man in an increasingly inhospitable world. Some works create a space for reflection whereas others attempt to show possible paths in to the future.

## GALLERY II B

### ① Florian Thate, *Two Lines*, 2020

The starting point of the exhibition is Florian Thate's spatial drawing *Two Lines*. It is a reduced gesture that the artist has made on site. By spatial drawings, Thate refers to markings that he also finds in real space. During his walking tours, he collects them for his pictorial memory.

Later, an idea is formed in his head for a specific place. While being realised, this idea is changed by accidental effects of the material properties and the surfaces. In *Two Lines*, the material layering of the yellow paint has surprisingly expanded the line into a material image.

Thate's minimalist gesture emphasises the action. It is related to the body, its length being dependent on the perimeter of movement of the artist's arm. The work marks the dimension of the human body. In contrast, other works in the exhibition create post-apocalyptic scenarios without people. Tate's simple gesture works with reduction. This is contrasted by **Lea Torcelli's** multimedia work *Phyto\_Lotis (3031)* ⑦ with its abundance of materials and media. One of the challenges of artistic creation today is to handle an exponentially growing complexity of the world.

### ② Jodok Wehrli, *Close Enough*, 2019

*Close Enough* is also captivating in its simplicity, but nevertheless condenses the topic of the exhibition conceptually. We see a simple, battery-operated plastic clock with red hands. In front of it, a red cord hangs from a plumb line attached to the ceiling. It points in the wrong direction, not following gravity but defying it. The work seems like a symbol of human ambitions to overcome the laws of nature. It also exemplifies a world turned upside-down. The clock and plummet as measuring instruments for time and space point to the Anthropocene and to the expiring human time.

### ③ Nadine Cueni, *When Species Kiss*, 2019

In the video *When Species Kiss*, Nadine Cueni deals with the relationship between humans and animals. For this purpose, the artist has collected stories, real and invented, and combined them with videos from Youtube or filmed by herself.

In Donna Haraway's writings, storytelling is considered an essential method for overcoming the hierarchisation of living beings for the benefit of new imagined, equal relationships.

Cueni's image-text montages are funny, sentimental and brutal. They display diverse power structures and ambivalent relationships. In the title story, for example, a canary is fervently kissed by his owner. The episode is commented by highlighting the mixing of human and animal viruses into a multispecies. This story refers to Haraway's notion of hybrid creatures that dissolve the categorical separation. The current pandemic, however, also shows the dangers of such fantasies of amalgamation.

### ④ Nadine Cueni, *Before the Written World*, 2019

For the wall piece *Before the Written World*, Nadine Cueni uses the ancient technique of pit firing. She kilned the hand-formed clay shapes in a hole in the ground of her garden. The work points to the origin of the characters from ornamentation and to a world before logocentrism. „In its fragmentary and enigmatic nature, however, the work also refers to things we cannot decipher or express, through ignorance or lost knowledge.“ (Paula Mierzowsky)

### ⑤ Jodok Wehrli, *Commodification*, 2019

In the three-part video *Commodification*, Jodok Wehrli works with image archives from so-called stock video providers such as Pond 5 or Shutterstock. These platforms sell documentary as well as staged documentary videos to public users. They appropriate these images by inserting them randomly in new contexts of their own videos.

In his montage, the artist does not distinguish between real and pseudo-documentary images. He thus challenges us to train our eye. Especially in times of Fake News and Deep Fake, the work impressively shows that representation always creates reality, which influences our behaviour and thinking. At the same time, it becomes clear that there is no pure representation of reality. Reality is always co-constructed by the medium and its use.

Wehrli's work, however, also poses the question of whether this historically unique flood of images makes us more sensitive to certain topics or rather dulls us. The drumming, propulsive sound reinforces the restless, endless generation of images as an end in itself.

On the other hand, the loop creates a repeated appearance of certain images. In doing so, *Commodification* exposes rubbish dumps, plastic-polluted seas, war operations or migration flows as signatures of our time comparable to the pathos formulas of Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas.

## GALLERY II A

### ⑥ Jasper Simeon Mehler, *Dance*, 2020

The video *Dance* shows two pairs of legs dancing. Due to the unusual perspective and the limited image detail, it is difficult to locate the scene spatially. The front edge of the picture is bordered by shadowy poles. In the background there is a wall with thin tubes and a valve hanging from it. Are we in a basement room or in a prison? Is the camera looking through a window?

The cinematic images of the dancing shoes overlap through superimposition. They seem like shadowy afterimages of couples who have ever been in this room. The tonality of the images with their fine colour gradations between black, brown and beige supports the impression of the dreamy. The atmosphere of lightness, however, is disturbed by an aggressive clicking noise on the soundtrack.

### ⑦ Lea Torcelli in *Interaktion mit Inga Kummernuß, Phyto\_Lotis (3031)*, 2020

In Lea Torcelli's work, the aspect of the habitability of the planet is central. Her multimedia installation *Phyto\_Lotis (3031)* addresses different knowledge systems and approaches to the world. According to Torcelli, they all stem from the human need to explain and influence things. But what can these different explanatory systems achieve in view of the impending climate catastrophe? This topic comes into play with the films found on Youtube of the September 2020 forest fires in California. On **three small monitors** ⑦.1 with original sound, they evoke a kind of apocalyptic hellfire.

The installation is set up as a science fiction story. Torcelli thus takes up Donna Haraway's idea that any kind of explanation of the world, whether mythology, natural science or a novel about the future, is at its core a narrative. For Haraway, science fiction is a means by which people imagine alternative notions of the future. Mythology and science fiction as two basic narratives of world access and knowledge production are addressed on the **two screens on the wall** ⑦.2.

The **left screen** ⑦.2.1 shows images of the asteroid 429 Lotis. It is named after the nymph Lotis from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Its size corresponds to the asteroid that fundamentally changed conditions on Earth with its impact, causing the extinction of the dinosaurs.

On the **right screen** ⑦.2.2, Torcelli's framing science fiction story appears. It is her vision of our future in the face of climate disaster. Torcelli imagines a dystopian scenario in the year 3031. The asteroid 429 Lotis has hit Earth and largely changed life there. Humans have transformed into hybrid beings through a strange symbiosis with plants, like the titular nymphs Phyto and Lotis in Greek mythology. In this way, Torcelli wants to demonstrate how mythological stories involve futurology and anticipate possible futures.

In the **display case** ⑦.3, materials from different approaches to knowledge are laid out. Alongside found objects from nature such as dried bark, lichen or plants, there are eroded and destroyed mobile phone displays, a dictionary, a book on the magic of plants or a tarot card. By placing the different objects on one level, the artist is concerned with creating relational structures between nature, technology and culture, thus abolishing categories of order introduced by Enlightenment.

The **third part of Torcelli's installation** ⑦.4 is a hybrid between an archaic witch's kitchen and a high-tech laboratory. In each of the three **glass jars** – under a trunk of branches – is a seed placed in a water-storing granulate liquid. Together with the UV lamps it is supposed to enable growth. In front of the largest glass a **direct camera** is positioned that observes the unfolding of the seed into a plant and transmits it to the website of the *Phyto\_Lotis (3031)* project. Torcelli associates potentiality with the seed. She imagines that the dreaming seeds will one day become persons again. They will then possibly remember the last loop before they turned into symbiotic hybrid beings.

With the image of the witch's kitchen, Torcelli also wants to remind us of women's knowledge that was suppressed in the course of the Enlightenment. She draws on the work of the political philosopher and activist Silvia de Frederici, who has reappraised the lost knowledge of women. With her book *Caliban and the Witch*, Federici made a central contribution to the history of witch hunts and shows how it is connected to the emergence of capitalism.

### ⑧ Daniel Dressel, Lynne Kouassi, *Habitat*, 2019

The question of what constitutes a habitable environment is posed in the two-channel video installation *Habitat*. In the videos, two different bird species are filmed in their different habitats. On the right side we see a pair of robins nesting in the Palm House of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew near London. On the left, we encounter green parakeets in English front gardens.

This choice of habitats is irritating, as one would expect the parakeets, whose habitat used to be in Africa, between Senegal and Guinea, in the tropical house. The robins, native to Europe, on the other hand, would have been more expected in the front garden. The six-channel soundtrack with original sounds from both habitats adds to the irritation, as image and sound partly cross over.

If one were to exchange the birds, i.e. put the parakeets in the tropical landscape and the robin in the London environment, the stereotypical image would work. But reality looks different, the artist couple emphasises. The world has changed. For example, parakeets, which were abandoned or escaped as pets from the 1970s onwards, have spread throughout London, the South of England and to other European cities. The tropical birds have thus learned to survive in a habitat that was once alien to them. The pair of robins, on the other hand, chose the tropical house and could leave it at any time through the open windows.

The work poses the overall question of how to build a habitat, to create a self-chosen living space in which one feels secure and comfortable. The utopian moment of the work is that it does not suggest building natural or ancestral habitats, but enabling environments in which people can develop and flourish.