



Kanton Basel-Stadt

Kultur

Kunsthalle Basel
25.9. – 9.10.2022

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version

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Cat's Cradle

Cat's Cradle brings together ten positions, ten independent artistic standpoints, ten different approaches. What they all share is that in 2021 Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt supported them with a grant. Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt promotes the production of art in Basel and the Basel region by awarding annual grants and enabling artists to reach a wide audience by exhibiting their works at Kunsthalle Basel. The Kunstcredit Annual Exhibition thus provides a snapshot of the regional art scene.

Just as cat's cradle, the game that many of us remember from childhood after which this show is named, works only through the interaction of at least two people, so the art on display in Cat's Cradle proves that artists do not operate in a vacuum. The curatorial challenge was how to render visible the invisible threads connecting these very disparate positions. The show therefore asks where the affinities lie, though just as important are the tensions between the different approaches, which crucially should be understood as dialogue. This is how the American theoretician Donna J. Haraway expresses it in *Staying with the Trouble*: "Relays, string figures, passing patterns back and forth, giving and receiving, patterning, holding the unasked-for pattern in one's hands, response-ability." Thus a web arises between – and over and above – the exhibited positions. Threads are picked up, transformed, and sometimes dropped again: Cat's Cradle, Jacob's Ladder, Soldier's Bed, Witch's Broom. Which figures emerge?

Cat's Cradle is not just a curatorial method, but it is also an invitation to visitors to contemplate the works on show against the backdrop of just such string figures, and by doing so to discover how their aesthetic and media strategies intertwine and intersect and their interests overlap.

Barbara Naegelin Dunja Herzog

1 **Membrane**, 2022, video installation with sound through headphones, 15 min.

Barbara Naegelin's work is about the far-reaching significance of quantum physics research for our understanding of the world. Following playful dots of light in space, the visitor listens to a speech by the quantum physicist and philosopher Hans-Peter Dürr, here adapted and spoken by the Belgian artist Ra Tack: while language and concepts relate primarily to objects, what really counts is the potentiality in between – matter as the structuring basis of the world does not actually exist in this sense. The discrepancy between these findings and our everyday apprehension of the world engenders a certain lack of orientation: How can we grasp something that cannot be expressed in any human language? *Membrane* is therefore best understood as an attempted approximation in which Naegelin, instead of rejecting language altogether, works with it, transforming it, and seeking instances of permeability.

2 **HUM II**, 2022, multimedia installation, music by Adey Omotade, Dion Monti, Gugulethu "Dumama" Duma, Elsa M'balala, Grace Kalima N. / Aliby Mwehu, Jill Richard, Rikki Ililonga, Damola Owolade

Dunja Herzog creates multilayered objects that outgrow the traditional concept of sculpture and disregard the hierarchy of genres; for besides being works of art, they are also objects of use, craft, design. *HUM II* grew out of Herzog's collaboration with the beekeeper Thembalezwe Mntambo. Her sculptures derived their form not just from aesthetic factors, but also from the materials used to make them – mud in South Africa, rye straw in Switzerland – and the needs of the bees who will inhabit them. As sculptures, the objects point to their future function as beehives and so remind us of how dependent we humans are on bees. The soundtrack also references this cycle, the instruments having been first modelled in beeswax and then cast in brass salvaged from electric waste in Nigeria. Herzog teamed up with percussionists to record the sounds made by her objects, which she transformed into a soundbank. The music that can be heard here was composed with material from that soundbank.

Elin Gonzalez

3 *Clockwatchers*, 2021, HD video, 23 min.15 sec., in collaboration with Callum Ross

Clockwatchers investigates the paradoxical structures of the world of work in a late capitalist society. Building humorously on the 1997 film of the same name, the 3D-modelled video shows an office worker navigating the world of work at the Global Credit Office. With the clock ticking ominously, inexorably, she is piloted as much through the internal power structures as through external expectations. Gonzalez points to the intersection of body and machine through a whole web of references ranging from anarchist theory to r/antiwork, from Descartes to Lynn Margulis's study of symbiogenesis. She shows how neoliberal sounding, utterly fatuous principles like "flexibility" and "mobility" seek to redefine a worker's physical self-sacrifice. As ineluctable as these mechanisms are, even in *Clockwatchers*, Gonzalez finds a way to subversively undermine the consequences of such sacrifice in the protagonist's metamorphosis.

Geneviève Morin

4a *Sous-couches*, 2022, oil on canvas

4b *Promenade au Langen Erlen*, 01.07.2021, Coloured pencil on paper

The creatures that populate the worlds created by Geneviève Morin are accepted as a given, like figures in a dream. Despite their obvious surrealism, her scenes come across as strangely familiar. Even if Morin frequently synthesizes very different sources to form a new whole, it is clear that each new work of hers admits us to a personal, and for her specific, pictorial world. The artist constructs layers of symbolic meanings, which are in part legible, in part obscure. *Sous-couches* grew out of Morin's engagement with the long-term consequences of Covid-19 and its impact on mental health, and hence can be understood as autobiographical in many respects. Just as the forest that extends into the darkness tree by tree, so the central figure in this work emerges layer by layer. Far from remaining on the surface, *Sous-couches* dives deeper, roaming between dream and wakefulness, between death and a new beginning, between personal experience and wider social issues.

Kathrin Siegrist

5 Axilla Region, 2022, Paraglider
segments dyed and oil on canvas,
in collaboration with Iva Wili

Kathrin Siegrist works in variable forms of collaboration, producing works in which she reflects on what are often separately conceived, but now interlocking spatial, social, and material situations. For this exhibition she teamed up with Iva Wili to create a site-specific textile work. Taking painting as her starting point and point of reference, Siegrist explores how bodies, materiality, and space intertwined. Like the clothes on a human body, *Axilla Region* moulds itself to the architectural givens, at once concealing them and rendering the interstitial spaces visible. The lightness and resistance of the materials spill over into the surrounding space, making it soft and permeable. The painting that borrows the format of a length of cloth extends the textile inquiry into representative space, in which fabric takes the form of clothing and takes on the appearance of gravity – a property that the physical material seems to deny.

Lea Rüegg

6 Cherrystone Archive, 2022,
Headphones, cherry stones in pillows,
dyed with beet juice

Lea Rüegg's work is an intimate reflection on everyday situations. Their cushions filled with cherrystones create a walk-in environment that is an invitation to visitors to listen and linger. The artist's openness coupled with their voice as a carrier and conveyor of emotion gives rise to a radical intimacy and with it a sense of familiarity between strangers. This moment of sharing has implications that go far beyond individual experience and point to the political dimension of supposedly personal narratives. Building on the artist's own experience, but reaching beyond it, *Cherrystone Archive* can be understood as an attempt to resist social conditioning at least partially: in doing so, the body is not conveyed as a unified self, but is drawn upon as a multilayered archive. It is not a neutral basis, but always already shaped by norms – norms that it can inhabit, but also has the potential to transform.

Manuel Schneider

- 7a Diffusor 1, Das Echoische Gedächtnis, 2022, Anhang Diffusor 1, Was hast du eben gesagt?, 2022, mixed media
- 7b Diffusor 2, Die Echoschwelle, 2022, Anhang Diffusor 2, Lavendel, 2022, mixed media
- 7c Kleiner Diffusor, Grosser Bug, 2022, acrylic on coated MDF
- 7d Ohne Titel, 2022, mixed media

Diffusoren und Anhänge combines materials that conjure up radically different associations. Needles and wire pierce the usually smooth surface of MDF boards, while painting endows them coatings that give them the appearance of having aged, of having a history. These material constellations are strongly suggestive of multisensory perception. The addition of lavender and the figurative-looking paintings, which here are the *Anhänge* – *appendages* – to the larger *Diffusoren* – *diffusors*, extends the referential scope of the piece, supplementing the large boards with remembered or painted sensory impressions. As the individual titles make clear, the boards function as a starting point: the title *Die Echoschwelle*, for example, refers to the time lapse that is necessary for us to register a sound as an echo. As much as our visual perception of the work will probably dominate, we are also invited to apprehend the visible constellations not just as visual constructs, but also as auditory, olfactory, and tactile echoes of the same.

Niels Trannois

- 8a Bird love fish, 2021, oil on porcelain with laser engraving
- 8b Discipline in disorder (liquid LCT), 2021, oil on porcelain paper in a plexiglass box
- 8c Disorder in discipline, 2021, oil on porcelain paper
- 8d JLB/LCT, 2021, oil on exhibition poster, mounted on canvas

The porcelain plates that Niels Trannois uses as supports for his painting seem fragile, but in reality are extremely durable with a potential lifespan of a good 10,000 years. This temporal dimension, which exceeds any one human lifespan by several orders of magnitude, raises the question of the long-term comprehensibility of signs. Trannois uses a range of references, some of which – the acronym “LCT” that stands for the glass artist Louis Comfort Tiffany, for example – are cryptic. While the works are all shot through with specific references, they also call to mind the fleeting meanings of a dream or distant memory. This simultaneity of revelation, obfuscation, durability, and fragility makes loss as an inherent aspect of every attempt to store and transfer information – whether in our own memories, on porcelain, or in the cloud – a palpable reality.

Noemi Pfister

9 *Border Sunset*, 2022, acrylic and oil on canvas

Border Sunset shows a group of figures leaning against each other on the ground. The figures are difficult to identify and remain ambiguous in terms of such standard categories as sex or even species. But there can be no mistaking the collective that they form, for despite gazing anxiously in different directions, they seem to know each other well. The painting is shot through with references that Pfister connects and endows with additional layers of meaning. Thus the figural group builds on a photograph by Douna Lims and Theo Pessos, which in its turn takes up a work of the Bernadette Corporation. Pfister extends this referential chain still further by adding Edward Hopper's *Railroad Sunset*. While she borrows the melancholy hues of Hopper's painting, she transforms his signal box into watchtowers. At once both hopeful and dreary, the work seems torn between utopia and dystopia and evokes the possibility of togetherness even while reminding us of the reality of borders.

Sofía Durrieu

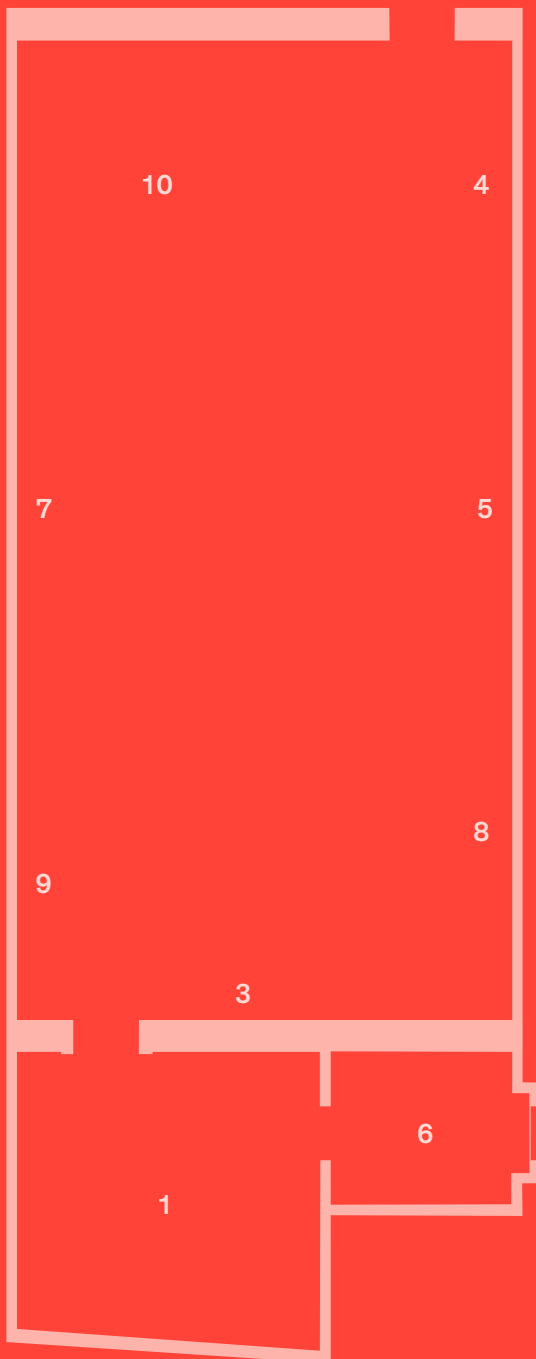
10 *Mise-en-abyme I*, 2022, Performative sculpture/situation

Mise-en-abyme I turns on hysteria in nineteenth-century France. Taking the Hystérique as her subject, Durrieu analyses how Otherness is classified in order to rationalize and isolate it. Her study is not confined to hysteria, however, and should be understood against the backdrop of contemporary constructs of Otherness. Starting with a portrait, which she reproduces and then fragments, she alerts us to the mechanisms underlying such images as gauges for the classification of typologies of Otherness. Eschewing any simplistic allocations, Durrieu emphasizes the ambiguous position of the Hystérique as an intentional subject and collaborator, but also an object of manipulation. Instead of "consuming" the body of the Other from a safe distance, and hence flattened and reduced, viewers are invited to insert their own body into that of the Other, to take up its contortions and with them the place of a body that has been exhibited and consequently condemned.

Kunsthalle Basel

1. OG – Entrée

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Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt

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