

HEIMSPIEL 2024 «UNCANNY UNCHAINED: THE POWER OF WEIRD»

14.12.2024–2.3.2025

Faux fur, toast bread, hair, worms, and a lively trash can: welcome to «Uncanny Unchained: The Power of Weird»! This edition of Heimspiel brings together the works of 23 local and regional artists (including one duo) whose creations summon the bizarre, the extravagant, the strange, and the whimsical. Hybrid creatures, eerie silhouettes, hairy textures, and distorted proportions populate the Kunst Halle in a gathering of the curious and peculiar. At times, they leave us unsure: Do we find them beautiful or absurd? Are they sweet or eerie? The exhibition focuses on the fascination these questions create.

A small collection of stolen museum labels sets the stage. Maria Anwander (*1980 in Bregenz, Austria) is known for kissing museum walls in her performances and subtly altering art classics to highlight their male-dominated history. She practices a daring form of institutional critique: since 2004, she has been stealing signs and labels from exhibitions to place them in new contexts. With *The Liberation* (2014-2019), displaced words of warning open the show.

Across from the entrance, a charming grimace peeks over the edge of an unassuming bucket. Beni Bischof (*1976 in St. Gallen, Switzerland), an undisputed master of the absurd, presents us with an eccentric lobby boy in the form of a kinetic sculpture. Part Sesame Street, part body horror, Herr Kübler (2023) welcomes us into the exhibition space – and will keep watching us.

The exhibition revels in the strange and its many effects. We encounter hybrid creatures, such as Linus Lutz's (*1994 in St. Gallen, Switzerland) technoid human-machine made of plaster and egg cartons, delivering a codified declaration of love through simple gestures (*One way to say I love you* (heart), 2024), or a shy deer-leopard hybrid on a sardine tin (*Es ist nicht immer drin was drauf steht*, 2022) by Thomas Anton Rauch (*1964 in Feldkirch, Austria).

What we label as weird is often a combination of things that don't belong together or a bold fusion of opposites. For instance, when Tobias Bärtsch (*1993 in Walenstadt, Switzerland) designs his own grave cross in a cartoonish candy aesthetic, the romance of a Sweet Death (German: *Süsser Tod*) meets bubblegum-blue 3D printing, leaving behind a sugary taste that feels oddly unsettling.

Evolution is full of extravagant combinations. *Tree-Animal II* (2024) by Stefan Rohner (*1959 in Herisau, Switzerland) looks like an amoeba on the wall, reminiscent of coral organisms living in symbiosis with fungi, viruses, bacteria, and other

invertebrates. A similar microbial universe seems to inspire Barbara Signer's (*1982 in St.Gallen, Switzerland) Comfort Zones I-III (2021). Featuring cyclopean plush flaps, these works materialise a moment of transformation, defying clear definition.

In Katharina Biser's (*1998 in Lustenau, Austria) paintings, we slip into the skin of a worm luxuriating as it coils around the roots of a tree. Our kinship with other species is rarely so tangible - let's not forget that our spine and ribcage share a trait with the segmented body of worms, hinting at common ancestors.

Nicolaj Ésteban's (*1992 in Goldach, Switzerland) video work, accompanied by music from Moses Germann, opens a new chapter. Its three parts take us on a journey into the subconscious - a melancholic self-portrait brimming with longing and existential questions. It shows that nothing is stranger than the psyche, and nothing more eerie than the self.

The overlap between eerie and strange is vividly illustrated by Karin Würmli's toast faces. They oscillate between quirky, bizarre, and uncanny, especially when grilled limbs emerge from eyes and mouths. Her multipart work Louis(e) Bourgeois beneath the tablecloth (2024) pays homage to Louise Bourgeois, the artist renowned for exploring the depths of the subconscious in her work.

But when exactly does the quirky tip into the uncanny? Why do certain things make us uneasy, and where does this vague, unsettling feeling come from? In his 1919 essay, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, sought to unravel the concept of the uncanny. He located it in a form of fright rooted in the old and familiar. In the German term *unheimlich* (uncanny), the familiar (*heimelig*, homely) transitions into the hidden (*heimlich*, secretive).

This definition of the uncanny is present in the works of Marlies Pekarek (*1957 in Bern, Switzerland), Felix Stöckle (*1994 in Rotmonten, Switzerland), and Walter Wetter (*1962 in Münsterlingen, Switzerland). In their own ways, all three blend traditional symbols and folkloric figures into curious assemblages. Kitschy folkloric motifs, porcelain trinkets, and antique photographs take on an occult mystique in the objects created by these artists.

Behind the chain curtain (normally used to repel flies), one can hear the sound of Pascale Grau's (*1960 in St.Gallen, Switzerland) video-documented performance. In the participatory Tintoy Orchestra (2020), filmed tin toys were given live soundtracks by an improvising audience.

Interestingly, mechanical devices and automatons are among the first examples Freud lists as quintessentially uncanny in his essay. According to Freud, one root of the uncanny lies in the uncertainty of whether something is animate or inanimate - a boundary that this work cleverly exploits.

Another profoundly uncanny moment is the gaze of the Other. We encounter this in the third room, where we suddenly face the ancestral archetype of the jester. The Bregenz-based duo Ebony Tylah works at the intersection of sculpture and fashion design, drawing inspiration from medieval aesthetics (an era long referred to in art history as the Dark Ages).

Already in the first room, Ray Hegelbach (*1983 in Flawil, Switzerland) explored the biology of the gaze in three unconventional lamp works. Using blue and black light, these pieces incorporate contact lenses, sand, and corrective glasses – elements that inscribe themselves into our sight and shape both our view of the world and the way others view us.

In the paintings of Francisco Sierra (*1977 in Santiago de Chile, Chile), we may feel vulnerable to the gazes of strange others. His subjects hover between dreamlike fantasy and deceptive hyperrealism. What kind of eyes are staring back at us from these canvases? Who are these figures? Do they mean well for us? The 23 paintings are all works that the artist gifted over the years to his recently deceased mother. They are being shown together here for the first time and span several creative periods: from a large painting Sierra made at 17 in his childhood room in Herisau, to a 2023 piece that later became the image for the obituary. *Fallen from the Nest* is the title of this deeply personal collection, condensing an experience that often remains unspoken.

When we attempt to comprehend the strange and the uncanny, we move along the threshold between the ordinary and the unknown, where the uncertain and the familiar blend together. Things that deviate from the norm provoke discomfort. It is along this fragile line that Vanessa Heer (*1989 in St.Gallen, Switzerland) works, questioning the centuries-old tradition of *Silvesterchlausen* with her *nSchuppel*. Her multi-year project suggests rethinking the mask-rich Appenzeller tradition not exclusively as a male practice, but as one open to diverse groups. The braided natural fibers in Heer's installation remind us that «fallen» girls – those who did not adhere to societal norms – were once forced to wear shame braids made of straw.

Femininity as deviation also plays a role in the works of Isabelle Krieg (*1971 in Fribourg, Switzerland) and Anna Zimmermann (*1994 in St.Gallen, Switzerland): Krieg's *Hair Cocktails* (2023) stand in solidarity with women in Iran, tipping from the doll-like to the explosive, while Zimmermann's sensually hard objects point to the erotic and taboo.

The weird can captivate, repel, fascinate, or make us wrinkle our noses. In any case, it rarely leaves us untouched. Its fascination lies in the fact that it exists beyond our usual perception and throws us off balance. It marks the presence of something new, which can be as uncanny as it is inspiring.

EVENTS & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

PRESSE PREVIEW

Friday, 13 December 2024, 11.15 a.m.

OPENING

Friday, 13 December 2024, 5.30 p.m.
with a performance by Domingo Chaves

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

On site: Tuesday, 17 December 2024,
6 p.m.

Online: Thursday, 19 December 2024,
7 to 7.30 p.m.

GUIDED TOUR ON TUESDAY

Tuesday, 17 December 2024, 6 p.m.

WORKSHOP INSPIRED BY HEIMSPIEL:

WEIRD MYSTERY BOX!

Sunday, 12 January 2025, 3 p.m.

Admission: CHF 5

Register via rsvp@k9000.ch

ART SNACK

Thursday, 16 January 2025, 12.30 p.m.

Short guided tour and a snack

Admission: CHF 10/members CHF 7;

No registration required

ART LUNCH

Thursday, 13 February 2025, 12 p.m.

Guided tour and lunch

Admission: CHF 25/members CHF 22

Register via rsvp@k9000.ch

TANDEM-TOUR WITH KULTUR FÜR ALLE

Friday, 14 February 2025, 6.30 p.m.;

No registration required

FINISSAGE WITH GUIDED TOUR AND PERFORMANCE

Sunday, 2 March 2025, 3 p.m.

With a performance by Markus Goessi

WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOL CLASSES

From 17 December 2024 to 28 February
2025. For more information, see
www.k9000.ch.

Information on events at the other
venues of Heimspiel can be found at
www.heimspiel.tv.

PRESS

You can find high-resolution images in
the press kit on our website under Info/
Press. For further questions contact
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Tue-Fri 12-6 p.m.

Sat/Sun 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

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