

No Use-By Date. Gift and Loans of the Migros Aare Collection

03.05. – 15.09.2019

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1960s the Migros Aare Cooperative has assembled a diverse and high-quality art collection in various stages, and with different levels of intensity, featuring works by contemporary artists from the Bern region. Between 1987 and 1997 art works by outstanding artists were acquired by the then Director of the Kunsthalle Bern, Ulrich Loock, on commission to the former Migros Bern Cooperative, illustrating the state of artistic creating at the time. In 2005 the works from this period of acquisition were donated by Migros Aare to Kunstmuseum Bern. By doing this, Migros Aare ensured that the art works would remain accessible to a wide public. The donation included around 64 individual works and several extensive series by a total of 21 artists.

This gift is now being given its own exhibition for the first time. Not as a retrospective look at positions that are by now historical, but in a multi-layered dialogue with loans of contemporary acquisitions from the Migros Aare art collection. Because since 2016 Migros Aare has intensified its collection activity once more, and given a purchasing commission the task of promoting and exhibiting outstanding regional art with acquisitions.

The new collection strategy differs in that the focus is now on art from the whole region covered by the Cooperative, including also artists with roots in Aargau, Solothurn or Biel. There is a greater diversity in terms of media too. Photography and video are taken just as much for granted in the present day as the classical genres of painting, sculpture and drawing were twenty year ago.

An outstanding work of art enjoys uninterrupted relevance even years after it was made, it can always be read anew and in a different way and, from this point of view, is always contemporary. The exhibition title 'No Use-by Date' plays on this, and it opens up a large new curatorial place: works by artists from different generations and acquisition periods enter into a dialogue with one another in the exhibition. The selection does not follow a chronology, but creates specific experiences in the individual rooms with different thematic or formal connections. Not only differences become apparent however: there are also many connections in terms of content and composition between the different media, genders and generations. Important questions of our time come into play with reference to objects and environments, nature, humanity and its images.

The exhibition 'No Use-by Date' shows highlights from collection activity that has been practised for over 50 years. As we pass through the exhibition we are just as likely to happen upon 'old acquaintances' as we are to encounter as yet unfamiliar and sometimes startling positions. It becomes clear that art has no use-by date, but can always be discussed in new ways from different perspectives.

ROOM 1

Peter Aerschmann (see room 4)

Pat Noser

Migros grün, 2008

For the painting *Migros grün* Pat Noser (b. 1960, Aarau) bought various products from the Migros supermarket next door and arranged them at random yet artfully in a shopping trolley.

The large format of the canvas blows up the dimensions of the real plastic bottles, egg boxes, detergents, shampoo or fresh vegetable – all bathed in green. *Migros grün+* is part of a series in which the Biel-based artist made consumer goods the focus of her still lifes. The first work in the series was *Carrefour rot+* (2007). Noser arranged red products from the supermarket along with objects of cultural-historical importance such as books or wine, but also roses and fruits as Vanitas symbols. Other works in the series show rows of huge white milk-bottles or empty beer cans and other blue objects that Noser found on the way to the studio. With expressive brushstrokes Pat Noser commits consumer products from our own time on canvas. She gives a new meaning to everyday products that we often only perceive in passing. By displaying contemporary consumer goods in monumental formats and with monochrome plays of colours Pat Noser shows a very new form of the still life – in the cult of the 21st century. (EB)

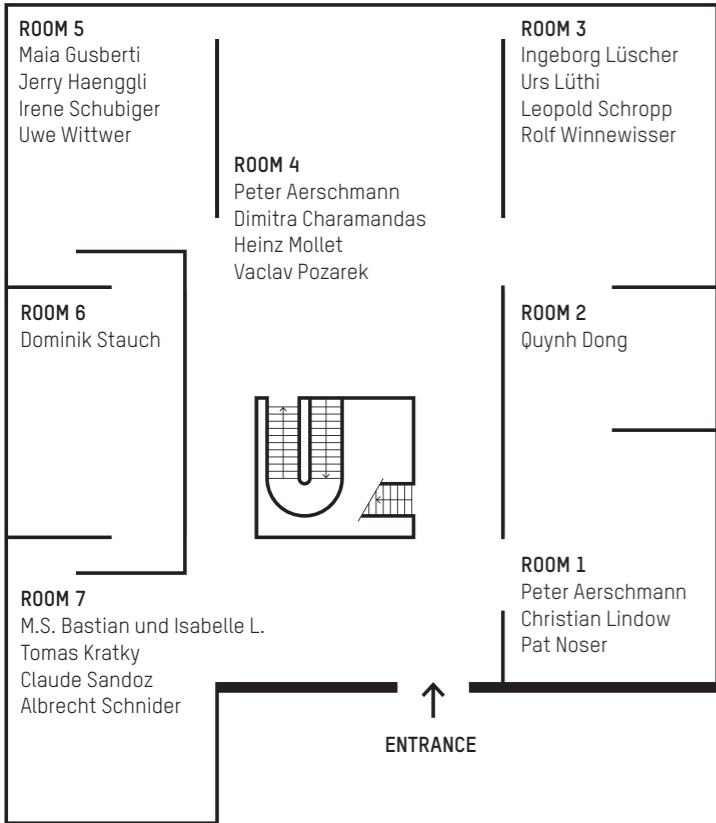
Christian Lindow

Ohne Titel (Äpfel), 1987

Christian Lindow (b. 1945, Altenburg, Germany – 1990, Bern) followed a classical training course as a sculptor in Mannheim. In the late 1960s he moved to Bern, and since the end of the 1970s has devoted himself to painting inspired by the neo-Expressionist style of the time, but with an underlying conceptual interest. Lindow paints banal motifs such as apples or plums, removing them from their origin in several respects. Stylistic, on the one hand, by depicting the subjects of the painting in the style of the Neue Wilde, not realistically but perfunctorily. They look as if they have been thrown hastily on to the canvas, and appear not compact but all the more dynamic. On the other hand Lindow doesn't sit by an apple tree under an open sky, he draws his subjects from photographs on product packaging, for example. The source is not the real object, but a pictorial model. The artist projects this on to the canvas and then transfers it gradually. The supposedly expressive act of painting is

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preceded by a comprehensive piece of conceptual work. The central thing is not the result but the process that leads to it. To some extent Lindow isolates the motif from the object and thus, not least, from its economic and ideal value. [SM]

ROOM 2

Quynh Dong

My Second Paradise, 2013

As in Samuel Beckett’s best-known work *Waiting for Godot*, in her video Quynh Dong celebrates waiting. Two men stand on a brightly coloured, flashing dance floor. It is impossible to tell whether it is day or night and where they are. The younger one looks mostly at his mobile phone. We see the older one sometimes standing, sometimes sitting. Every time he takes a swig from his energy drink his clothes change. Off screen we can hear the sounds of an electric organ. The melody is sacred but far from comforting. The artist found and filmed her two protagonists in the Most Precious Blood Church in Coney Island (New York). They are part of the local Vietnamese community: for the artist (b. 1982, Hai Phong/Vietnam), who came to Switzerland at the age of eight and now lives in Zurich, this Catholic community was of particular interest. Subsequently she edited the two men into a new, digital context. The answer to the question of whether they have already found their paradise in the brightly coloured, flashing consumer world or whether they are still waiting for a second one, seems in this setting, which speaks of sobriety and a lack of perspective, meaningless.[CS]

ROOM 3

Ingeborg Lüscher

Plüschvögel, 1998-1999

For 35 years now, the dominant colours of yellow and black have

defined the artistic work of Ingeborg Lüscher (b. 1936, Freiberg, Germany) Pure sulphur and ashes are the materials that give the German-Swiss artist’s panel paintings or objects their particular character, and are inseparably connected with her art almost as a form of branding. With yellow as the colour of light and black as the sign of complete absence, not only are colour contrasts created in Ingeborg Lüscher’s work, but relationships are represented: between nature and man, light and darkness, life and transience. One such case is the photograph *Plüschvögel* of 1998-1999, in which several bright yellow stuffed toy birds stand out strikingly against the dark background. The toys, larger than life and scattered over the whole width of the picture, cover the naked woman’s body underneath, so that viewers only make out the female form at second glance. The staging plays deftly with the opposites of light – dark, artificial – natural and real – surreal, and reflects central themes in the life of the artist, who lives in the Ticino, such as Eros, childhood and dream. (NZ)

Urs Lüthi

Placebos and Surrogates, 1999

With *Placebos and Surrogates* the Lucerne-born artist Urs Lüthi (b. 1947) refers to a series of works realized from 1996 until into the early 2000s, which includes space-filling installations, prints and objects. In 2001 the artist, who now lives in Kassel and Munich, represented Switzerland with it at the Venice Biennale. So they are world-famous surrogate materials. But what are they used for? Quite simply: the promise a better life! Lüthi suspiciously picks up the promises of advertising and the esoterics of self-realization, and turns them into lapidary instructions for things to do: ‘deliberately smile until you feel happy’, Or more urgently: ‘live slowly.’ These bits of worldly helpful advice are multiplied on coffee cups or, as we can see on a computer collage, via frisbees. The cheap industrial charm of the objects is soon exhausted. But that’s precisely where Lüthi’s promise lies. In his work, in contrast to the fully composed advertising event, everything is laid bare. No comfort through aesthetic pleasure, but the pitiless truth: ‘Fortune’, ‘Success’, ‘Happiness’, repeated umpteen times on posters. And on a cup: ‘You deserve it’. *Placebos and Surrogates* are honest seducers, and Lüthi a wisdom-bringer of a postmodern kind. (GF)

Leopold Schropp

M. XXIII/Farbgruppe R.B..

Work No. 853, 1994

‘... that’s how I etch the painting into my mind, I count up its colours, because these are what, as I see it, chiefly produce the impression.’ For the artist Leopold Schropp, born in Munich in 1939 and resident in the Bern region since 1969, colours in nature are among his most important sources of inspiration, but he is not just interested in reproducing landscapes in a highly detailed fashion. In order to capture the fleeting and, at the same time inexhaustible impressions in nature, Schropp uses a system of his own. He deftly organizes geometrical figures, mostly squares, according to intuitive orders and different colours. When the immovability of the black bar meets the lightness of the rhombus in delicate pastel colours, dynamic structures are formed. Their power is further intensified by the fact that Schropp does not fully cover all the surfaces, but gives the colours their gripping presence through a gestural-looking and slightly transparent application. At the same time the frequent use of a gold ground adds a shimmering, mystical note. The clarity and logic of the compositions are thus not, in Schropp’s work, objective detachment, but an attempt to approach the overwhelming magic of the observation of nature with an idiosyncratic, artistic consistency. (GF)

Rolf Winnewisser

Ohne Titel, 2001

Lamp, wood panelling, curtain: the pictorial language is cypher-like, the painted situation familiar. Perhaps a Hotel room? One is left with the assumption that the place is in the end unnameable. Because if one examines the supposedly unambiguous painting by Rolf Winnewisser for only a little longer, its logic falls apart. How do we perceive paintings and how do we give subjects a meaning? These and similar questions have preoccupied the artist, who lives in Ennetbaden, for many years. With gusto and a painstaking attention to detail he creates works whose central characteristic is an extremely fertile ambiguity. So for example in our painting we identify a clothed torso and two arms. Is a single women lying there? Or must the torso and the woman’s arms be assigned to a body? Either way, in the place where her or his head should be, there is a red oval. As if the throat had been severed with a sharp knife – or simply painted away by the artist. The eye-catching pictorial language recalls comics, suggests a narrative sequence. Except what would the previous painting show? The murder hastily leaving the hotel room, or the painter washing the red paint from his brush? [CS]

ROOM 4

Peter Aerschmann

64 m², 2016

The video works of Peter Aerschmann (b. 1969, Freiburg) are based on a large collection of photographs and short film sequences that the Bern-based artist shot on his travels around the world. From this trove of still and moving images he isolates individual postures, movements, states of people, animals and objects at the computer and places them in new sceneries. In this way he produces short, repetitive stories without a beginning and an end, collages of repeated snapshots. The setting of *64 m²* is Red Square in Moscow. It is one of the most famous squares in the world, and a historically charged place in Russia. In this square, which Peter Aerschmann completely alienates and reduces to a fictional surface of 64 m², the artist brings his protagonists together. They are people he encountered by chance in Red Square and captured with his camera. They are animated in the video and repeat stereotypical patterns of movement. Thus the video tells its own whimsical story of Red Square, away from the mainstream. [EB]

Dimitra Charamandas

Iron, from the series *Split*, 2016

The search for her personal origins drove Dimitra Charamandas (b. 1988, Solothurn) through the whole world and repeatedly back to her second home in Greece. Like travelling, the collection of paintings, impressions and thoughts is a fixed component of her working method. The starting point for her paintings and texts lies in situations documented in drawings, photographs, films or writing. The large-format painting *Iron* is part of the Split series. In this collection of works the artist, who lives in Solothurn and Athens, has examined natural and constructed borders that limit room of movement. In the painting *Iron* Charamandas refers to plate tectonics and translates processes on the earth’s crust into her painting: Charamandas makes the shifts visible through the division of the canvas into three parts. With her figurative and at the same time abstract pictorial worlds the artist wants to prompt questions rather than give answers. She also gives her works titles which – assembled from newspaper cuttings – often produce meaningless or pseudo-concrete phrases, and hence open up space for associations. A glance at the titles of the three works from the series *Die andere Hälfte für das Risiko* (The other half for the risk) confirms this practice. (NZ)

Heinz Mollet

Furkabil, 1989

Heinz Mollet’s (b. 1947, Grossaffoltern) painting is always guided by the process of the act of painting. ‘The essential decisions take place directly on the canvas’, the artist, who works in Spiegel near Bern, said in a 2005 conversation with the curator Susanne Friedli about his work with acrylic emulsion and pigments on canvas. The painting *Furkabil* illustrates the curious properties of this challenging painting technique. Specific over-paintings produce cloud-like flows of colour and moments of blurriness, and in certain areas which have been left blank the underpaintings remain visible. Mollet seldom makes sketches, yet in many of his paintings there is a constant – a vague monochrome background, which is what the artist always works on first. It forms the starting-point for Mollet’s large-format paintings and can be seen as a stage on which the compositions of amorphous forms later come into being. In the work 18 December Mollet has divided this picture ground in two and thus laid a doubly exciting track for the discovery of the painted material. [EW]

Vaclav Pozarek

Migrosgruppe, 1987-88

Vaclav Pozarek, who was born in 1940 in České Budějovice in what was then Czechoslovakia and now lives in Bern, is a great admirer of the concrete art of Richard Paul Lohse. So when he had to leave his homeland in 1968, he chose to move to Switzerland. His work with geometrical sculptures continued in his chosen home, but he developed it further: his interest shifted from the autonomy of the work in the exhibition space to the evocative reality to which the sculpture belongs and which influences it. *Migrosgruppe* is a good example of Vaclav Pozarek’s approach. The geometrical elements were originally models that the artist prepared in his studio for the production of larger sculptures. He had the planks sawn in the Migros do-it-yourself workshop. Pozarek assembled the available parts into an autonomous work. The pieces of wood were given a connecting coat of paint, one element grey, the others green, and also a plinth plate stretched with fabric. The title was obvious and quickly found. But the artist says nothing about how *Migrosgruppe* is to be understood, whether reading it as an architectural model is appropriate, or whether the similarity with a shop for children is intentional. He has become known for his liking of leaving things floating. Ambiguity of content paired with great formal and material clarity are precisely the qualities for which the artist is esteemed and admired. [CS]

ROOM 5

Maia Gusberti

Gravitation – Space in itself, from the series *Terrain Vague*, 2013

The twelve fine art prints in the series *Terrain Vague, Variations of an upside down experience* by Bern artist Maia Gusberti (b. 1971, Bern) are all derived from a single photograph, a shot of the skyline of Johannesburg (South Africa) at night, reflected in a window. The artist further developed this night picture using a printing process over several stages: after a first printing Maia Gusberti folds the model, lays it on the printed image and photographs them again in different arrangements. Gusberti takes the original subject to a new level of composition and meaning. A two-dimensional surface becomes a multi-dimensional space of maps and images. The image becomes a spatial object that folds in and out of itself, casts shadows, spreads and shows new, vague or fictitious dimensions of a terrain. The various printing stages of *Terrain Vague* – gum-print/monotype, photographic reproduction, digital inkjet – were produced in close collaboration with the Tom Blaess studio in Bern. [EB]

Jerry Haenggli

Ohne Titel, from the series *The End of the Cycle*, 2016 by Biel artist Jerry Haenggli (b. 1970, Vevey) was made in 2016 during a studio scholarship from the city of Biel in Genoa. In the 24 India ink drawings whose colour palette is limited to white, black and sepia, the recurring black rectangle shapes form a strong contrast. Now as a blotting pad, now as a screen in the background, one black rectangle or several remain present in each of the 24 works. The artist antithetically refers to its form and significance in the title of the series, and even speaks of the ‘End of the Cycle’. The rectangle does not occur in nature, it is man-made. Haenggli describes it as ‘an invention of man in his ever-repeated frenzy for perfection’. The actually figurative drawings contain great expressive power and partially blur the boundary with abstraction, for example when the artist makes the faces of the protagonists disappear with fluid patches of ink. The diverse motifs draw the viewer emotionally under their spell and subtly address the norms and conventions of our society. (EB)

Irene Schubiger

Skulptur (ohne Titel), 1991

Irene Schubiger (b. 1948, Näfels) began her artistic training in the applied field, and attended classes in textiles at Zurich College of Applied Arts. So it seems obvious that the artist, who lives in Reichenbach near Bern, should have continued to focus on the body when she moved into visual art, but now as a sculpture in space. *Skulptur (ohne Titel)* is Irene Schubiger’s first sculpture, and in retrospect we can see that it already contains those fundamental interests that continue to shape the artist’s work even today: the development of open forms whose origin is just as ambiguous as what they refer to. It is precisely this openness that allows the sculptures to arouse still more vivid associations – with everyday objects, architectural elements and sometimes also fragmented bodies. *Skulptur (ohne Titel)* recalls a bench or a low table, but its construction and fragile material immediately resist such definitions. We can only say with certainty that the artist’s work since then has moved consistently on territory between simple abstraction and archaic figuration, where familiarity and unfathomability join hands. (SM)

Uwe Wittwer

Stadt, 1993

Watercolour is associated with small formats, with quick jottings in a notebook or the sketching of landscapes out of doors. The man-height paintings of Uwe Wittwer (b. 1954, Zurich) don’t fit in a pocket and unpacked they will survive neither an outing into the country or a longer journey. Even over twenty years after the artist painted them, these watercolours look unusual. Like the format, the subjects are far removed from those customary to the technique. Instead of sublime nature and the beauty of landscape, the artist, who lives in Zurich, paints battleships in gloomy ocean waves or – as in our example – an urban landscape. Prefabricated buildings in pale light, in a format that has a similarly overwhelming effect on the individual picture as Cinemascope on filmic narrative. Are the deserted prefabs still inhabited, or have they already been destroyed? Are they just lying about, or have they just been blown up? The watery paint and coarse structure of the brushstroke lead to blurring. This makes it clear that even in this work, which was produced at the beginning of his career, Uwe Wittwer was not concerned with relating a concrete story about a concrete place. His interest lies in the methods of depiction. How are the threat of destruction and latent violence brought into the picture, and how do we, the public, respond to these pictures? (CS)

ROOM 6

Dominik Stauch

Coast to Coast, 2016

In a rhythmical sequence the colour fields in Dominik Stauch’s (b. 1962, London) video animation *Coast to Coast* move downwards, upwards and from side to side. The colourful forms push their way through the picture in a systematic, through-composed flow, they overlap and constantly create new mixtures of colour and geometric figures. To achieve this the Thun-based artist makes four individual colour planes of equal length run across one another as if in a musical canon. The driving sound backdrop specially composed for *Coast to Coast* by Wolfgang Zwiauer in close collaboration with the artist also consists of six sequences of notes. The merging of the colour planes and the soundtrack into a whole leads to a concentration of the visual and the acoustic. The pictorial language typical of Stauch, with colour planes and geometrical forms, is apparent not only in the video works, but also his space-filling, three-dimensional installations, and in the large and small-format paintings and prints. In his multimedia, multi-layered work music is a recurring point of reference and source of inspiration. Alongside the music theory of the 20th century, in his work Stauch also refers to sources from art history and literature. (NZ)

ROOM 7

M.S. Bastian and Isabelle L.

Garten der Lüste, (Garden of Delights) 2009

M.S. Bastian (b. 1963, Biel) and his partner Isabelle L. (b. 1967, Biel) have worked together since 2004. The artist couple, who live in Biel, are well known for their brightly coloured, richly populated pictorial worlds. All of their paintings are made together, and in the end it is impossible to tell who painted what. M.S. Bastian and Isabelle L. move as internationally successful artists between the comic-book and the gallery, repeatedly blurring the boundary between art and trivial culture. *Garten der Lüste* is part of a series of playful and colourful depictions of jungles and different kinds of paradise. The hidden-object-style picture is full of quotations – Bambi, La vache qui rit, Mickey Mouse, South Park and Godzilla – and also refers, for example with Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Can (Tomato)* to the greats of Pop Art. The title of the painting, *Garden of Delights*, is a homage to the Medieval master Hieronymus Bosch, who made a triptych on this same theme in 1490-1500. In the first transposition of the painting M.S. Bastian and Isabelle L. interpreted the cover of the Beatles record *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*: John Lennon and Co. stand with their instruments and their brightly coloured fantasy uniforms on the edge of the forest in the background. (EB)

Claude Sandoz

Marionetten (Marionettes), 1967

In Naples in the 1960s the Lucerne-based artist Claude Sandoz (b. 1946, Zurich) discovered Neapolitan marionettes, which immediately fascinated him. He reworked the dramatic formulae and typification of the human character which is expressively heightened in masks and costumes in many of his paintings and drawings from this time. One example is the large-format drawing *Marionetten*, which shows a scene with five human figures. The figure in the frock coat and the small figure with the grotesque face doing handstands on his shoulders are flanked by onlookers. The complexity and detail of the drawing allow us to guess how many pens Sandoz used to make it. At any rate the way in which it was made refers to a long and meditative process of its making. *Marionetten* is significant in

a number of ways: it was the first work of art that the then 21-year-old sold in an exhibition. It was bought by the then Migros Bern at the Kunsthalle Bern Christmas exhibition in 1967. For the present-day Migros Aare *Marionetten* is also significant for the history of their own collection: the work is one of the first documented acquisitions for the collection, and had a fixed place in the spaces of the company’s own carpentry workshop. (EB)

Tomas Kratky

Ohne Titel, 1987

A childlike figure, lying stiff and unprotected, with a huge, empty speech bubble above its delicate face, with a large plant sprouting beside it. The untitled painting by Tomas Kratky (1961-1988) works with symbolic elements, showing tenderness and growth but also emptiness and other-worldliness. A dark shadow is visible on the right edge of the picture, a dissolving void. Only a few schematic suggestions of a body can be made out in it. Everything else is covered up with baleful black. At the time when the painting was made Kratky was already incurably ill. His life, still young, was trickling away. The portraits that he also produced during his advanced illness, most of them self-portraits, are blurred, they are figures that do not really want to be in the picture. At the same time, many of the paintings reveal a huge, luminous lightness in terms of their colours, which are rich in tone and convey a vitality that immediately trips the viewer. ‘The better you get technically, the deeper the emotional response to the vision should be’, Kratky once said. In *Ohne Titel* he manages to report upon the searing pain of existential uncertainty with gentle, forbearing softness. (GF)

Albrecht Schnider

Ohne Titel, 1987

The sacred connotation of the painting is impossible to overlook. The painter – he has the artist’s features – holds his brush raised in a kind of gesture of blessing. The bent leg gives him an almost floating lightness, but defies the rules of anatomy. The colour palette, which is reduced to red and green, also conveys a rejection of the logic of external reality in favour of a purely painterly kind. Albrecht Schnider (b. 1958, Lucerne) – who recently moved to Lake Thun after years in Berlin – was still right at the start of his career when the painting was made. He took up the figurative model of the painting to investigate it for its validity in the modern age. The artist’s hand-painted gestures are not as strongly reduced as we know from his later works with their smooth-looking surfaces. But reduction as a principle of representation is still clearly apparent. Albrecht Schnider did not address the religious subject in order to treat it ironically. On the contrary, in the act of appropriation he expresses the longing and the wish of an artist very seriously in search of a pictorial language appropriate to his character and his time. (CS)

ROOM 8

Adela Picón

Alfonsina, 2016

With *Alfonsina*, the artist Adela Picón (b. 1958, Melilla, Spain) looks into the long connection between poetry and visual art. The video work is devoted to the poet and author Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938). A dual citizen of Argentina and Switzerland, she was seen as one of the pioneers of modern Latin American women’s literature. Her poem *Frente al mar* (Looking at the Sea), here recited in Spanish by Picón herself, forms the soundtrack to the work *Alfonsina*. It is a dramatic lament about being human, connected with the profound desire to be as strong as the raging sea, to avoid succumbing. The

demand for primordiality and the artistic means chosen by Picón clearly contradict one another. At the same time the video collage thoroughly absorbs the symbolic and formally simple language of the poem. The meanings of motifs such as the blossoming white bush blowing in the wind or the brightly coloured butterfly that flutters past remain open. Dark night falls over the landscape, still warmly lit by the sun at the beginning. The moon, which moves horizontally across the screen, begins to shine brightly. Shortly before her suicide Alfonsina Stormi wrote the poem *Voy a dormir*. (I’m going to sleep). She drowned herself in the sea. (EW)

ROOM 9

Heinz Brand

Whites + Geistkugel (2. Fassung) (Whites + Spirit Sphere (2nd Version)), 1985-1989

Whites + Geistkugel (2. Fassung) is a two-part photoplastic by Heinz Brand (b. 1944, Biberist), consisting of a photograph behind canvas and a prepared pile of marble dust. Photoplastic, that term coined by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in 1922, refers to the combination of artistic photographic works with additional compositional elements. ‘Plastic’ is used in the sense of a ‘shaping’ of the area of tension that is produced by the interplay of the elements. With *Whites + Geistkugel* the artist, resident in Zollikofen, addresses the subject of the coexistence of absence and presence in both a temporal and a spatial dimension. The pivot and hub is a sphere which is simultaneously absent and present both in the marble dust and in the photograph. The sphere has left an imprint in the dust and is no longer present as an object. It becomes the ghostly body of the image. Absent in three-dimensional space, the sphere appears in the photograph in the middle of a milky-pale rockery. There it is the depiction of a volume, frozen in two-dimensionality. Different white values support the magical, ethereal effect of the photoplastic. (SM)

Vincent Chablais (See room 12)

Marianne Engel

Digitalis, 2006

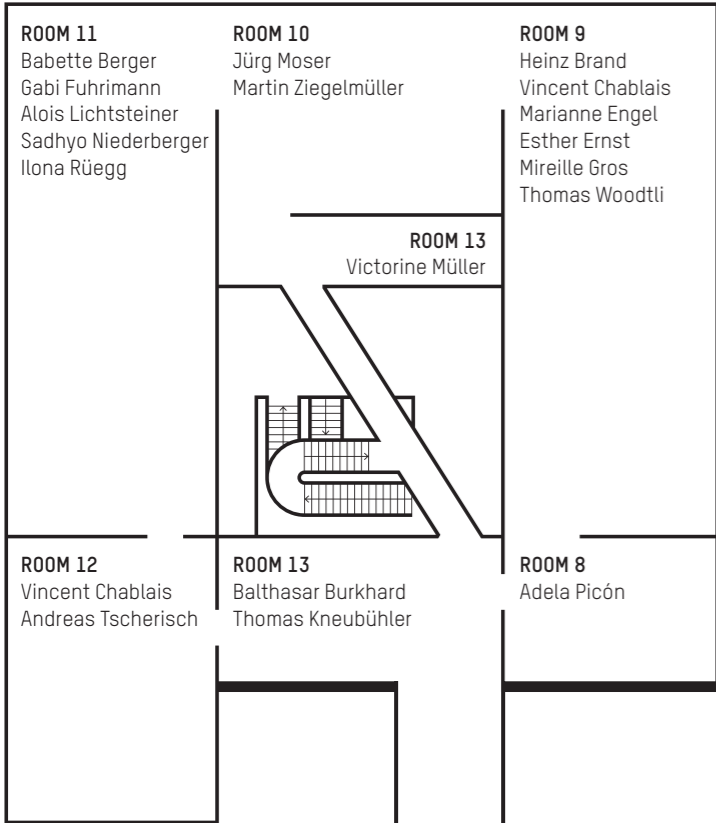
The photographs of Marianne Engel (b. 1972, Wettingen, Aargau, Switzerland) are chiefly made at night – in landscape, forest or garden. As her light source she uses residual daylight, moonlight, a hand-held flash or torches. Taking photographs in darkness assumes experience and great technical ability. Sceneries show pictures out of darkness, as the eye cannot perceive them. The artist sketches nature beyond our experience; it is a mystical intermediate world, inspired nature as the result of a spiritual and creative process.In Etwil in the Aargau she lives on an old farm with rabbits, chickens and ducks. Here, in a long-term project, she allows nature and culture to grow gradually together into a total art work. Photography is only one part of her artistic activity, because amongst other things Marianne Engel breeds bright green glowing fungi in Petry dishes, or makes phosphorescent casts of plants and dead animals in epoxy resin. She is a biochemist, and taught herself photography in parallel with her studies. The interconnection of two only seemingly remote worlds, those of precise science and art, creates insights that expand the viewer’s horizon. (EB)

Esther Ernst

Tuvalu, from the series *Anlandungen* (Landings), 2016

In the series *Landings*, produced in 2016-17, Esther Ernst (b. 1977, Basel) shows mapped islands in the form of collapsible drawings. Overlaying and interconnecting them, the artist, who lives in Solothurn and Berlin, puts typographical details, historical facts,

Upper floor



travel reports, mythological stories, memories and inventions on paper. *Cyprus* shows the Mediterranean island with the border running diagonally between the Greek and Turkish parts of the island, as well as the divided capital of Nicosia. Ernst draws references to Greek mythology and traces of the historically charged past in highly detailed images on rice paper. *Tuvalu*, an island state in the Pacific Ocean, is particularly affected by global warming, because at their highest point the islands are only five metres above sea level. It is feared that Tuvalu will sink under the sea in the foreseeable future. With her delicate, filigree depiction of the group of islands Ernst does justice to this threat. In the glittering light, and surrounded by deep blue, the island already seems on the point of disappearing. Esther Ernst constantly brings narrative levels and information from a great variety of sources together with new ideas, thoughts and pictures that appear as accretions in her works – or indeed as landings. (EB)

Mireille Gros

Conte de Fée, 2003

Mireille Gros (b. 1954, Aarau) commutes between her two studios in Basel and Paris. It was along this stretch of track that she shot the footage for the video work *Conte de Fée* (Fairy Tale) in the year 2000. The stretch was not yet electrified at the time, but carried a locomotive that ran on diesel. No pylons interrupt the image, the view of the passing landscape is free – an experience with scarcity value. Between Chaumont and Troyes, in the middle of the French no-man’s-land, a rainbow spontaneously appeared. The rainbow landscape – now with blossoming trees and bushes in the foreground, now with hills on the horizon – was subsequently processed and reversed on the computer, and allows viewers to immerse themselves in a magical fairy-tale landscape. Mireille Gros assembled the film in 2002, immediately after staying with the Atelier Mondial in Bamako, Mali, as evidenced by the sweet melody played on the Kora, a West African lute-bridge harp. Mireille Gros explores her surroundings alertly, always ready to absorb what she has seen into her art and at the same time to cross the boundaries of reality and fiction. In this

way, without resorting to concept or theory she produces paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, objects, installations and video works. (EB)

Thomas Woodtli

Schmutzige Gläser 2014

When Thomas Woodtli (b. 1956, Dübendorf) is travelling – abroad or in his everyday life – he captures the subjects for his art with his camera: shop windows, windows on building sites or industrial estates, shattered and dirty windows, and windows with things stuck to them. Woodtli prints the digitally prepared subjects on the back of glass plates with a UV printer and creates a kind of reverse glass painting. With a wink it refers to the fact that we are seeing photographed glass on glass. In *Schmutzige Gläser* (*Dirty Glasses*), the reflection of trees is captured in a shop window and the window of a cultural centre. The windows are dirty, smeared and even painted over, and the subject only becomes apparent on closer inspection. The reflecting medium of glass as a picture support, in the superimposition of the subjects of the picture, from the glass and its painted surface to the tree, open up a further level of representation to the viewer: its reflection of itself. Woodtli concentrates photography, reflection, subject and object into a complex pictorial system with overlapping pictorial worlds. Woodtli lives in Witterswil (Solothurn), and self-trained as an artist in different printing techniques and painting on glass. He learned photography from his father, and was influenced by the precision of his photographs. (EB)

ROOM 10

Jürg Moser

Schattenschlag, 1993

Jürg Moser’s sculptures are the result of a complex production process, in that they are the negative of a positive form or, as the title of one of the works has it: absent sculptures. The Zurich-based Bern artist (b. 1950) uses beeswax as the cast for a liquid graphite-cement mixture and creates unique works which, when the beeswax is melted again after the rigidification of the graphite mixture, work as imprints, traces or residual shadows. But in spite of that ‘negativity’, all of the works emanate a strong, impenetrable and natural presence. The five-part work prompts associations with something growing, an unfolding growth, and reflects Moser’s keen interest in material transitions and processes of transformation. Earlier wax sculptures, made using the lost-wax technique, in spite of their temporary stabilization, embody fluidity or suggest constant dynamism. And if Moser’s graphite casts are in some respects close to industrial forms, in their presentation they are often leaned against the wall in such a way that their stasis is like a reluctant persistence. Seeing stasis as motion, Moser’s works are fundamental reflections on the possibilities of sculptural formal invention. (GF)

Martin Ziegelmüller

Gestirn I, 2014, from the series *Teilchenbeschleuniger*

Fascinated by the fact that our knowledge is becoming more and more remote from what we can see or grasp, Martin Ziegelmüller (b. 1935, Herzogenbuchsee) the series *Teilchenbeschleuniger* (Particle Accelerator) was inspired by research in CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) in Geneva. Here the ‘[...] craziest craziness is made plausible’, says the artist, who lives in Vinelz. The engravings, over thirty in number, in this series are part of a cycle in several parts with a total of 115 etchings, complex both technically and in terms of their content, and in different formats. The artist, at the age of

almost 80, made the series in a few months. It pursues questions of space, time and perception, and produces witty and also apocalyptic visions of man, machines and the cosmos. The images of the particle accelerator reveal the whole of Ziegelmüller’s virtuosity as an engraver: finely drawn constellations, atoms, black holes, physicists surrounded by their equipment, free-floating astronauts, breakdowns and the consequences of breakdowns as well as, of course, the particle accelerator itself, the titular hero of the series. (EB)

ROOM 11

Babette Berger

Teppich, 1995

With cherries, handbags, Mikado sticks, knitting patterns, in acrylic or oil the Bern-based Babette Berger (b. 1964, Bern) creates paintings of things that everybody knows. In the 1990s she painted series of carpets. Her models were large and valuable Persian carpets, but also shabby, industrially produced carpets like those used as doormats or in cars. Oriental carpets have accompanied Berger from childhood onwards: as patterns and lines stimulating play, and later as sound absorbers in the rehearsal room of her own rock band. In *Teppich* (Carpet), Berger paints the big Persian carpet from her studio, fascinated by the misappropriation of this precious home accessory. *Teppich* is a duplication of a motif, because in it Berger is repeating an already existing painting, the pattern of the carpet, and thus calls familiar things into question. She frees herself from the task of reinventing reality through painting, falls back on already existing material, and allows herself a certain freedom within this undertaking. She renounced precise symmetry in favour of a compositional autonomy of line. For *Teppich* Berger received the Louise Aeschlimann and Margareta Corti Scholarship of the Bern Art Society in 1995. (EB)

Gabi Fuhrmann

Ohne Titel, 2018

Figures of women stand at the centre of Gabi Fuhrmann’s (b. 1958, Zurich) paintings in the exhibition. She draws her figures from a rich archive: they are women from art history, women from magazines, women from memory. Sometimes the painter also depicts herself. Her protagonists always stand as individuated and isolated figures, they barely have individual features, they are charming, strong and vulnerable at once. Because of their lack of individualization, the figures are an ideal backdrop for the histories and dreams of the viewers. What is the woman waiting for, where is she directing her gaze? Gabi Fuhrmann leaves everything open in her works. The artist, who lives in Ennetbaden, uses wood as the ground of her painting and extends the two-dimensional picture plane by a third dimension: they are painted objects, moulded paintings, object pictures. Wood has a life of its own, a patina, and is thus the bearer and starting-point of memories. The wooden plaints are often reworked several times, often with a painting on both front and back. The small format is central to Gabi Fuhrmann’s work; she can show big things on a small scale. (EB)

Alois Lichtsteiner

Baum (Tree), 1986

The painting of Alois Lichtsteiner (b. 1950, Ohmstal) is neither committed to depiction nor to abstraction, but is concrete in a twofold sense. On the one hand the ‘medium of painting’ is made visible in the agile brushstroke, and the often generous application of paint. Lichtsteiner’s painting does not hide behind the material. It

does not want to conceal the fact that paint is applied to a ground, but rather stresses that act. This makes Lichtsteiner’s painting self-referential, referring to itself with its own means. On the other hand, the artist, who lives and works in Murten and Paris, always also stresses the evolution of the painting as an idea, as a concrete potential of painting. In *Baum* both principles are apparent. We see part of a tree-branch and hence only a fragment of the subject put forward by the title. The tree as a whole is produced as a vision in our own head. So it remains a pure idea which even the bluish green surroundings do not give mimetic support. Because it does not open up a deep space, it is neither background nor foreground but one thing above all: paint on canvas. (SM)

Sadhyo Niederberger

Schiff, 2017

The painting *Schiff* by the Aargau artist and curator Sadhyo Niederberger (b. 1962, Muri/Aargau) shows the outlines of a ship defined by what is missing, the void, the undrawn. It was produced for the site-specific installation ‘Zwischen Fiktion und Wirklichkeit’ (Between Fiction and Reality), in the cabinet of Rosana Cecilia Gurtner y Gonzalez in Gurtner’s restaurant on Bern’s Gurten mountain. There Sadhyo Niederberger grouped six selected works from the art collection of Migros Aare (by Otto Grimm, Alois Lichtteiner, Max Matter, Claudio Moser, Meret Oppenheim and Hugo Suter), but her own works are attributed to the fictional artist Rosana Cecilia Gurtner y Gonzalez, involving visitors in a deliberate confusion of art and authorship. With sketches, notes and letters she confirms the many artist contacts of her alter ego Rosana Cecilia, and she herself makes contact with the participating artists. This applies to Alois Lichtsteiner, whose *Ruhende Zunge* (Resting Tongue) particularly fascinated her and inspired her to make *Schiff*. In *Schiff* Niederberger refers in both form and content to *Resting Tongue* and in a letter to Lichtsteiner she wrote: ‘The tongue rests on a dark ground like an inflated sail’. (EB)

Ilona Ruegg

Doppeltes Scharnier, 1990

Ilona Ruegg’s (b. 1949, Rapperswil, lives in Zurich) work *Doppeltes Scharnier* (Double Hinge), consists of four individual picture panels. The oil paintings barely differ in terms of their content. In the top half of each we see a geometrical shape – an elongated spheroid, better known as a rugby ball or an American football. Each painting is dominated by a single colour tone. The non-bright colours black and white form a pair of opposites. The two other panels are in red – each in claret, changing to orange. Looking at *Double Hinge* our eye moves tirelessly back and forth among the four paintings shown in a cross. That is also because of the triviality of the subject of the painting, which directs the eye towards its painterly features. Do the white lines belong to the football or are they blank spaces in the painting? Is any logic discernible in the differences between the paintings? What is model, what copy? ‘Comparative seeing’, ‘oscillating gaze’ or ‘ambivalent spaces’ are concepts that often arise in the discussion of Ruegg’s works. Her painting revolves around questions of appearance more than problems of the things depicted. Perception also becomes an intellectual experience. (EW)

ROOM 12

Vincent Chablais

1994.7, 1994

A facade, in cool tones and shown in a strictly frontal view, covers the entire surface of the painting. The image, which depicts the

front of a building structured out of identical elements but with different painterly accents, arouses the curiosity. The obvious placelessness and indeterminacy of the internal spaces that lie behind the balconies unsettles our habits of seeing and runs as a common theme through the group of façade paintings that Vincent Chablais (b. 1962, St-Maurice), from the Valais, made in the early 1990s. The painter, who became known through his large-format depictions of uniform architecture facades, organically flourishing walls of leaves, larger-than-life urban pigeons or dominos, usually addresses his subjects in series of works over several parts. His works are distinguished by photographic precision and an almost serial structure in their treatment of the individual pictorial elements. If the early window-based works display a meticulously detailed working method, today this has made way for a freer painterly gesture. Chablais places abstraction and representation on an equal footing: as a result viewers can see the façade paintings either as the front of a building or as an arrangement of colour fields from blue-green to grey. (NZ)

Andreas Tschersich

Peripher 495 (Biel/Bienne), 2005/2016

Andreas Tschersich (b. 1971, Biel) takes his home town as the starting point for his artistic work. First in Biel, then all over the world, Tschersich goes in search of places that convey a certain urban atmosphere. He seeks out the emptiness of the suburbs, the faceless district, the banality of an urban zone, spaces that we normally bypass or drive through. Tschersich has been capturing these urban landscapes in the series of photographs *peripher* since 2004. Whether in Biel, Stockholm, Manchester or Detroit, the squares, streets and groups of buildings that he shows look familiar and yet strangely alien. In his works people, qualities and uses remain concealed. This lends his subjects a universal character, and at the same time makes them appear detached: the viewer imagines him- or herself in a familiar place, but since they are deserted the urban structures look faceless, empty and unfamiliar. For his large-format prints Tschersich combines several mid-format negatives into a large picture. He uses this digital montage technique, invisible to the viewer, to remain as close as possible to reality, avoid perspectival distortions and convey the essence of urban zones with as much reality as possible. (EB)

Balthasar Burkhard

Bernina, 2004

The photographs of Balthasar Burkhard (1944-2010, Bern) have found their way into cultural memory, not only in Switzerland. Burkhard's interest in the autonomy of the medium leads him to make monumental photography. Since the 1980s he has focused some of his work on the world of mountains, making impressive portraits of the Bernina range in the border area between Switzerland and Italy. As in many of his megalomaniac city views, here too Burkhard photographs the impassable mountain landscapes from the air. This bird's-eye view allows him to produce a panoramic view of the topography of the mountains, in which any sense of proportion is lost. Burkhard reproduces this landscape in over-sized picture panels. Because of the even depth of field the masses of snow, ice and rock appear in all their details. The black-and-white photographs are characterized by an almost incalculable number of painterly grey tones. The artist's decision to divide the overall view into three drives *Bernina* still further towards painting and its history. Particularly in the late Middle Ages triptych panels were a favourite form of Christian devotional paintings or altarpieces. With his work Burkhard confidently crosses the border between painting and photography. (EW)

Thomas Kneubühler

March 2nd, from the series *Days in Night*, 2015

The video work *March 2nd* by Thomas Kneubühler (b. 1963, Solothurn) is part of the series *Days in Night*, produced during a stay in the Canadian Forces Station Alert (CFS Alert), a military and research station in the Arctic. CFS Alert is the most northern permanently inhabited place in the world, some 800 km from the North Pole. From October until March darkness prevails here, and no direct sunlight reaches the station. In spring all the inhabitants of CFS Alert wait excitedly for the return of the sun, for the end of the 5-month polar night. On 2 March the time comes: the first rays of sunlight strike the inhabited area for a brief moment. Thomas Kneubühler captures this significant day in time-accelerated video. The artist, who lives in Montreal, Canada, engages in poetic, artistic and also documentary form with ecological and social themes such as industrialization and globalization. With an intensified eye for the economic interplay of landscapes and infrastructures Thomas Kneubühler shows the appropriation of nature by man, and visualizes the politics of natural resources and land distribution. (EB)

Victorine Müller

Durchströmung III, 2016

For the video works *Farn*, *Farn II* (Fern) and *Durchströmung III* (Perfusion), the artist Victorine Müller (b. 1961, Grenchen), best known as a performer, put on a moving dress of leaves rather than her usual transparent plastic shell. Away from the urban hubbub and pace of Zurich and Berlin, the cities between which Müller lives and works, during repeated stays thanks to a studio scholarship from Kunstdepot Göschenen she had access to inner and outer nature. From the studio she walked through the forests, looked for places with a mysterious atmosphere and performed without an audience, following a clearly defined sequence, alone in front of the camera. The actions performed are sparse, and show Müller making contact with nature and establishing a connection: dressed in a costume of leaves, now sitting motionless in a stream, now skipping below tall trees or waving large fern fronds. The flow of time and rhythm – defined by time jumps and cuts, time-accelerated and slow-motion movements – are different in all three sequences. And they emphasize the simplicity with which Victorine Müller once again creates dreamlike moments full of poetic atmospheres that invite us to linger. (NZ)

Kunstmuseum Bern

Hodlerstrasse 12, CH-3011 Bern

T +41 31 328 09 44

info@kunstmuseumbern.ch

www.kunstmuseumbern.ch



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