

Shifting

Pop-up Art Parcours Ardez

August 8–29, 2020

Wednesday–Saturday, 3–6 pm or by appointment

Opening: Saturday, August 8, 2020; 4–7 pm

Shifting is a pop-up art tour initiated by Galerie Urs Meile Beijing–Lucerne in Ardez, Engadin, Switzerland. In otherwise inaccessible rooms — such as the disused village cheese dairy, a historic cow barn, or a private coal cellar — visitors will encounter site-specific works by artists and be able to explore the historic village at the same time. The gallery owners' private home will serve as a pop-up exhibition space, where a cross-section of the gallery's program will be on display.

The gallery represents established artists such as Wang Xingwei, Xie Nanxing, Qiu Shihua, Shao Fan, Not Vital, Marion Baruch, Tobias Rehberger (in Asia), as well as emerging artists such as Cao Yu, Mirko Baselgia, Li Gang, Hu Qingyan, Julia Steiner, Rebekka Steiger, and Zhang Xuerui.

Chasa Crusch 118

Ai Weiwei's (b. 1957 in Beijing, China) art, regardless of medium and context, always brings an impression of a profoundly poetic turn of mind, engaging an ambiguity that lies not only in the work itself but also derives from being rooted simultaneously in Chinese and Western thought and culture, with both sides implicated in the pitfalls of perception and predication.

Marble Chair is part of Ai Weiwei's practice that is inspired by antique Chinese furniture, the systematic destruction of Chinese culture and its legacy that began during the Cultural Revolution. He likes to sculpt everyday objects out of marble, contrasting and ennobling the ordinary object by using the precious material. *Marble Chair* (2008, No. 5, marble, 125 × 52 × 50 cm) is carved from a single block of marble to resemble a traditional yoke back chair which was one of the few objects his family was allowed to keep when they were sent into exile. He has collaborated with and outsourced his work to highly skilled artisans. Their knowledge of marble carving is employed as a means of conserving traditional skills. As a superb piece of craftsmanship, *Marble Chair* has become a poignant symbol for China's position as the world's largest manufacturing center and labor force, which includes the continuities and disruptions of cultural tradition and memory in the country today.

Porcelain is another favored material by Ai Weiwei. He has taken on the vast history of China's porcelain art, broken it apart, turned it upside down (literally) and reassembled it in fresh ways. *Bamboo and Porcelain* (2008, porcelain, bamboo, 2 white/blue vases: 36 x ø 28 cm; 2 white vases: 30 x ø 35 cm, bamboo stick) is composed of a bamboo pole that is fixed at each end by two white and/or blue-white vases. The two vases withstand respectively the ceiling and floor. The whole work comes across the space vertically, reminding us of the bamboo scaffolding used on building sites that creates a temporary structure wrapping around the building. Anchored at each end by a porcelain vase, the long bamboo pole appears as supports, as if serving as a form of infrastructure. The use of porcelain vases is nothing rare by Ai Weiwei, but here for the first time, they are placed in conjunction with bamboo, an association between the most basic and widely applied material and the most refined 'china' in China. Through the interaction of materials, Ai Weiwei built an orchestration of space, a structured environment.

Chasa Plazzetta, Plazzetta 67

Mirko Baselgia (b. 1982, lives and works in Lain, Switzerland) observes the dynamics and structures that shape our world in order to redefine them in a personal and intriguing way, indicating the essential interdependence connecting human beings and their activities with the rest of the natural world. Many of Baselgia's works are directly inspired by a natural structure but which has been reworked in an unexpected medium, giving it new aesthetic value. In all his creations the sensorial experience, and a subtle investigation of materials play a central role and have a tangible impact on one's perception of the surrounding space and the world in general. To do this he likes using a variety of mediums (like sculpture, installation, video, painting or drawing), and exploring their potential thanks to the collaboration with craftspeople and other professionals that allows him to take advantage of their specific knowledge for the materialization of his ideas, even the most demanding and eccentric ones. Philosophical and existential reflections are combined with craftsmanship and scientific knowledge to create poetic and evocative works. The connection between visible and invisible, real and imaginary, and material transformation processes are recurring motifs in his artistic practice.

In an alpine landscape, in place of an artificial lake intended for the production of electricity, lies a boat (*Greinaboot*, 2004, moss, metal, geomat, 77 x 330 x 121 cm) covered with moss. This work is a hymn of praise to a victory of political ecology. It also underlines the transformative power of natural phenomena and the passage of time, as well as symbolizing the starting point of the artist's career and the evolution of an appropriate way of working. In his quest for simplicity, for an extreme reduction, he has streamlined his work to one object, one colour, one material, resulting in a central point where scientific and political issues meet surreal poetry.

Initially conceived to be surrounded by a vast mountain panorama, *Greinaboot* is now recontextualized in the intimacy and darkness of the Chasa Plazzetta's cellar. Thus the recurring reflection in Mirko Baselgia's work on the relationship between exterior and interior, visible and invisible, emerges once again. In this underground space, the encounter with the work takes on the adventurous character of an archaeological discovery and the boat is transformed into a find in which we can recognize the memory of a distant past.

Chascharia, Quadras 52

Hu Qingyan (b. 1982 in Weifang, China) follows a conceptual approach in his understanding of sculpture. The work of his is far from what we traditionally conceive as sculpture, but it is a reflection on the language of sculpture when considered as space at large, and on how sculpture and space, in and out—entities that are often deemed complementary—interact with each other, nurturing and inspiring each other. A group of carbon steel sculptures *Idiots No. 2* (2016, carbon steel, air, 7 pcs, height from 79 cm to 188 cm) specifically address "air" as an essential component of the work. Through the narrow-mouthed yet open ends, interior and exterior spaces of the sculpture are connected with each other. A game with space is produced by the welding together of industrially manufactured carbon steel segments which were found and employed directly by the artist.

The *Idiots* suggests literally its title: remnants, hollow husks, hollow vessels deprived of any specific function other than being air containers about to be processed or informed once again. They have no aura or majesty other than that of being living, expanding organisms; this is because of the internal circulation of air, not what the artist's hand has created, a mere shell whose signs of assemblage are still visible. This prompts the viewer to think, or at least doubt, that the real sculpture is not the exterior, but what is invisible and being "shaped" inside the shells.

Brölet 45 (Access from Veia da Quadras)

Over the last two years Rebekka Steiger (b. 1993 in Zurich, works in Lucerne, Switzerland, and Beijing, China) spend an extended stay as artist in residence at Galerie Urs Meile in Beijing. While she continued working in her distinctive style, her extensive stay in a foreign country allowed her more freedom of mind and openness to surprises and chance encounters. Through a layer-by-layer color rendering, Rebekka Steiger transforms her perception of emotions and atmospheres into mysterious and delicate art pieces, achieving unexpected visual results. The tension between abstraction and representation, the expressive rendering of bright colors as well as the use of non-narrative figurative motifs are key

aspects of her work that make the painting not only intriguing, but also unsettling.

The artist explains her recent paintings: “My newest paintings have been developed mostly in two phases. To begin with I work quickly, often on the floor using mainly ink and water. I set a rough composition with ink first, in case of *béngdok* (2020, ink, oil and tempera on canvas, 240 x 200 cm) or 山花 (*shanhua*) (2020, ink, oil and tempera on canvas, 240 x 200 cm) spreading it along a large metal ruler in rhythmic stripes on the canvas to then add water in certain spots. By lifting the canvas the more fluid parts connect to each other and let the pure ink colors merge. I adjust the outcome as long as the painting is still wet until I sense the overall rhythm of the paint provides a good starting point. After the canvas dried, a more slow and considerate process starts. Undertaking a close inspection of what has happened on the canvas, I work my way across it inch by inch. Trying to discover the most beautiful, if ever so small detail and emphasizing it, either by over-painting distractive parts or filling in the blanks to bring out even the finest traces of the dispersed paint. The challenge is not to lose track of the overall composition when being this focused on details.”

Under the title *boxing the compass* Kunsthau Grenchen (Switzerland) is currently presenting Rebekka Steiger’s first institutional solo exhibition in Switzerland (until September 20).

Bröl 62

Tobias Rehberger (b. 1966 in Esslingen/Neckar, Germany) lives and works in Frankfurt am Main, where he studied from 1987 to 1992 with Thomas Bayerle and Martin Kippenberger at the Städelschule, where he has been Professor of Sculpture since 2001. As one of the most influential artists of his generation, Rehberger has held numerous museum and gallery exhibitions worldwide. He is known internationally as an important figure in the field of conceptual art. His sculptures are at the crossroads between architecture, design, fashion, advertising and sociology, conferring a contemporary dimension to the modernist project of creating both functional and beautiful objects.

In the artistic practice of Tobias Rehberger, perception is a leading element of the playful manner in which he approaches themes, motifs, and materials. His series of works made of neon lights takes on the aesthetics of giant neon Las Vegas signs complete with purposeful hints of wear and tear. *自由 Freedom gone Fishing* (2017, metal, paint, neon tubes, sockets, light bulbs, control system, 129.1 x 133.3 x 19.5 cm), the work on display, in which the Chinese characters 自由 (“Freedom”) and the English words “Gone Fishing” show up in an alternative or interferential manner, as the neon tubes of different parts light up intermittently. Only one who has knowledge of both Chinese and English can process the full picture of the meanings.

CHASA Bröl 63: Galerie Urs Meile

In the gallery owners’ private home works by the following artists are presented:

Marion Baruch
Cao Yu
Michel Comte
Tanya Goel
Ju Ting
Li Gang
Qiu Shihua
Shao Fan
Julia Steiner
Not Vital
Wang Xingwei
Xie Nanxing
Yang Mushi
Zhang Xuerui

Gallery Statement

Since its establishment in 1992, Galerie Urs Meile has contributed to the presentation and dissemination of contemporary art, from painting and sculpture to photography, installation and video. The gallery is working from two locations: Lucerne (Switzerland) and Beijing (China). While its center of operations is based in Switzerland, the Beijing gallery has established itself as an international meeting place for collectors, curators, artists and aficionados of the arts.

Galerie Urs Meile was one of the first international galleries to focus on the Chinese art scene and has been working on an international level with Chinese artists since 1995. The gallery represents established artists such as Wang Xingwei, Xie Nanxing, Qiu Shihua, Not Vital, Tobias Rehberger (in Asia), as well as emerging artists such as Cao Yu, Chen Fei, Cheng Ran, Li Gang, Zhou Siwei, Hu Qingyan and Julia Steiner. The opening of Galerie Urs Meile's new space in the 798 Art District in Beijing in May 2017 marks a further stage in the expansion of the gallery's activities. The new space is located in one of 798's historical buildings that once made up the Dashanzi factory complex. The former warehouse has been completely renovated under the guidance of the Japanese architect Mitsunori Sano. On 520 square meters, it contains generous exhibition and reception areas, offices, and storage rooms. Offering perfect conditions for exhibitions and events featuring its diverse roster of contemporary artists, the new venue represents Galerie Urs Meile's commitment to the city's vibrant art scene.

The artist-in-residence program supported and run by Galerie Urs Meile in Beijing offers Western artists the opportunity to work in China for several months and establish a network within the Chinese art scene. In the frame of this cooperation, emerging and established artists present projects that have been specifically made for the Beijing gallery space.

Please note the current exhibitions at Galerie Urs Meile in Lucerne and Beijing:

GALERIE URS MEILE LUCERNE:

Marion Baruch, *Letting go endless blooming*

June 25 – August 29, 2020

GALERIE URS MEILE BEIJING:

Li Gang, *Nude Colour*

June 13 – August 9, 2020

We look forward to your visit at our Pop-up Art Parcours in Ardez, Engadin, Switzerland, or to one of our exhibitions in Lucerne or Beijing.

For further information please contact:

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