SELECTED WORKS

Jérémie Sarbach & Flurina Badel

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Little Sun Back Here a post pheriphery poem   2019, installation, solarium, larch wood,
View Musée d'art du Valais, photo: Florence Zufferey

The sun shapes our lives. Its unceasing movement provides the rhythm of our lives, acting on our bodies and regulating our environments. As it comes and goes, peeking over the horizon and disappearing again, it organizes our days and gives structure to our very existence. On the occasion of the 2019 Manor Art Award Valais, the exhibition of the work of Flurina Badel & Jérémie Sarbach has structured around the theme of the sun. It unfolds in three parts: the first, at the Valais Art Museum in Sion, the second in the village of Binn (June 2020), and the third in the form of a book-object (June 2020).

Our relationship with the land and nature is at the heart of the duo's questions. For this exhibition, the issue is addressed through the meeting of sun and wood. What if the sun's path is thwarted? What if we recreate its light artificially? What if the natural order is turned on its head? What if we lose our bearings in disorder?

The Au Quatrième [Fourth Floor] temporary exhibition space is transformed into a workshop where sunlight is reinvented. In the very heart of the Art Museum, this installation will develop from November 2019 to November 2020 on and around a six-meter-long larch tree. Divided into sections, the tree trunk will be subjected to a solarium's ultraviolet light every day. Under the action of the UV lamps, the freshly cut surface of the wood will take on a patina. Like a fast-forward suntan, the sections will be marked by the passage of time. Like a person in repose, the cutted tree becomes a body in this solarium, now diverted from its usual purpose. However, an imprint, a sort of tattoo will gradually appear in the wood, revealing the still-living organic matter in a state of constant change. The museum space – the space most concerned about preserving heritage, where harmful UV light is particularly feared – suddenly becomes a place of creation, where artificial light shapes the work in real time. An in situ installation that evolves before our eyes, it will reinvent itself throughout the entire exhibition.
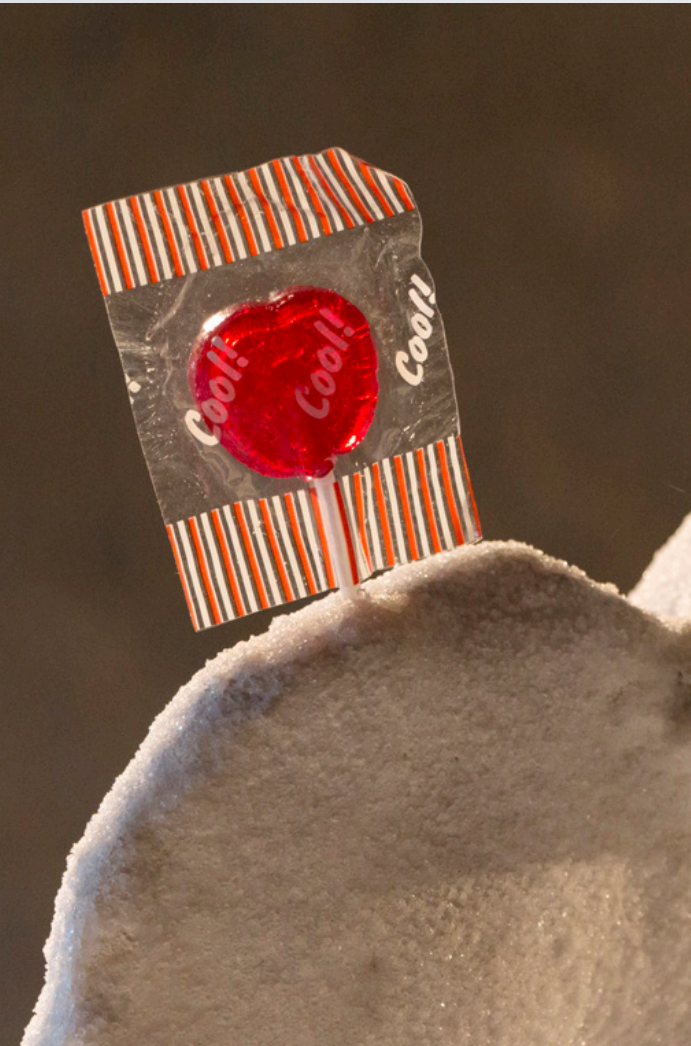
excerpt from the exhibition text

Paravent 2019, installation, wood, glas, metal, 500 cm × 260 cm × 100 cm
View: sic! Raum für Kunst, Lucerne

Cotschen Plants 2019, installation, lollypops, cochineal pigment, various sizes

Streamer   2019, performance installation with fly fisher, various materials, 350 cm × 150 cm × 100 cm

Streamer is a multi-part performance installation consisting of a sculptural object that is temporarily extended by a performance. The object consists of a construction with two steel elements that are connected by a cork-covered pipe and weighted down by cement slabs. During the exhibition, a professional fly fisher adds performative material several times. He/she stands with the fishing rod at a distance of 15 to 20 metres from the object and throws imitations of insects and animals onto the material, using the whip technique typical of fly fishing, until these baits hook into the cork and he/she can pull the line off with a jerk. Then he/she ties the next "fly" to his line and lets it fly back onto the cork. During the performance more and more artificial lures gather on the installation.
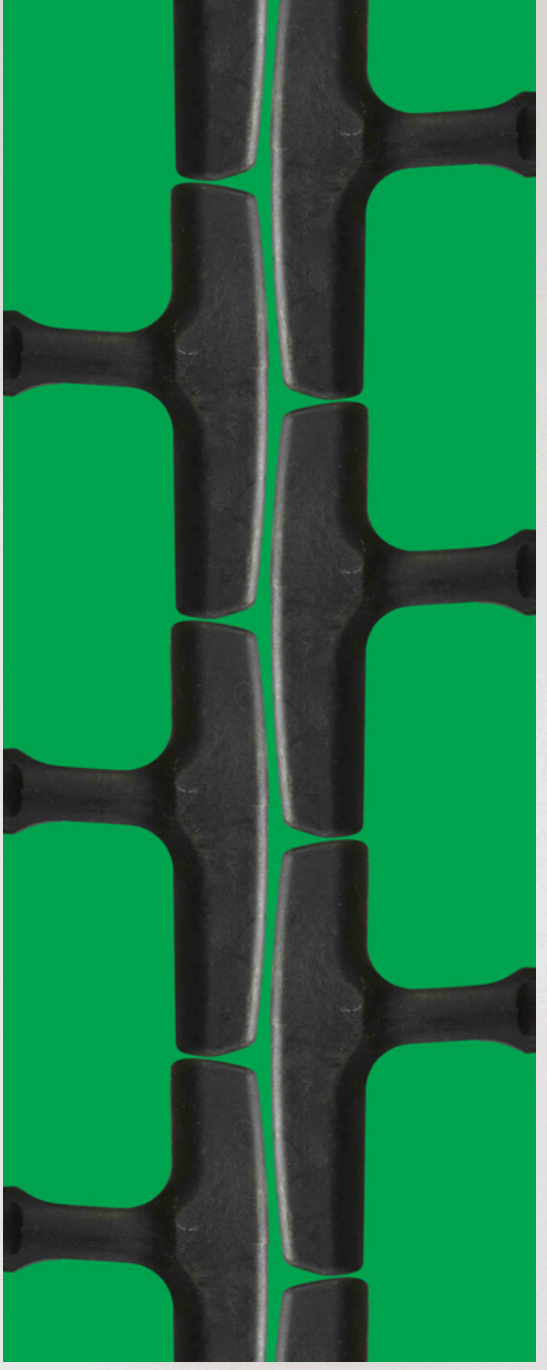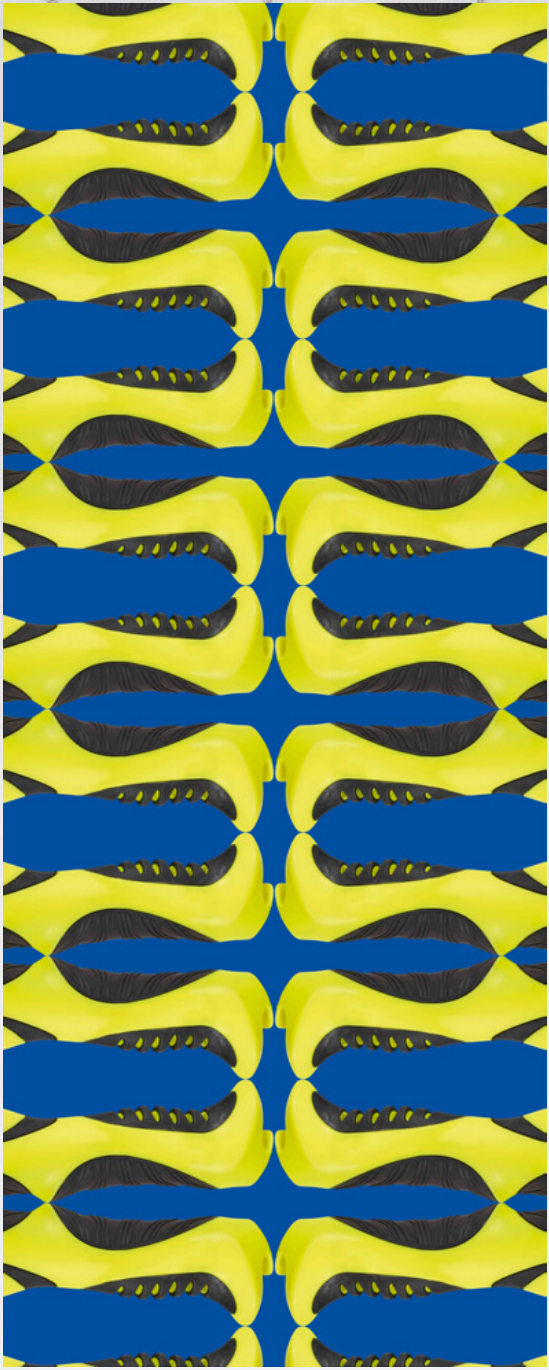
Train to be a Tribe I - IV 2019, sculpture, mixed media
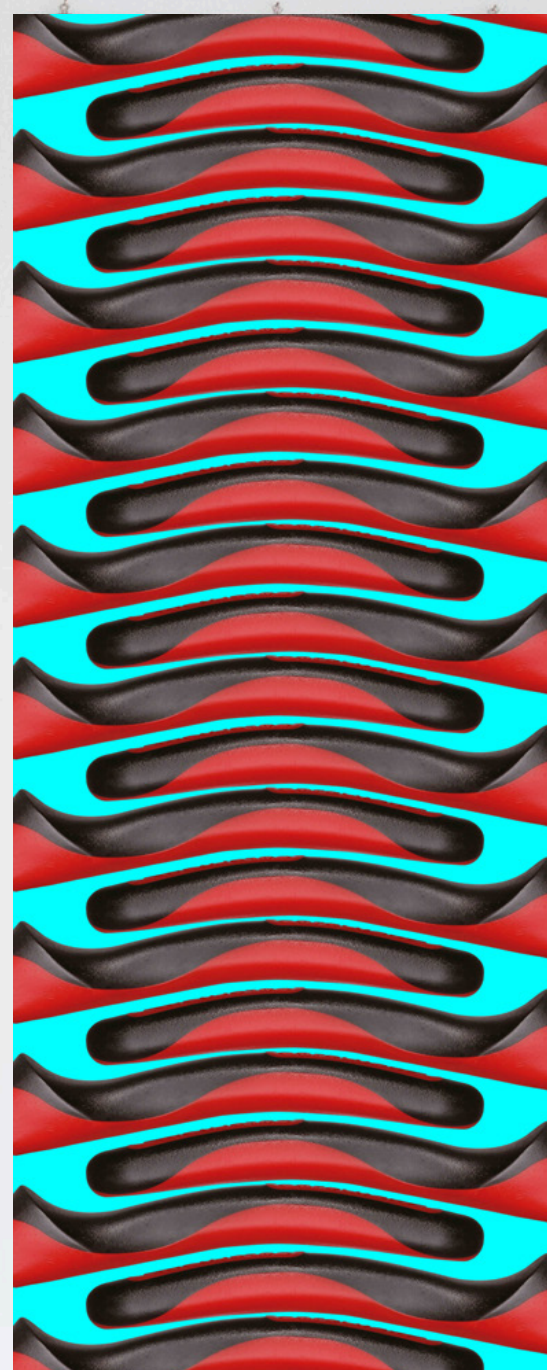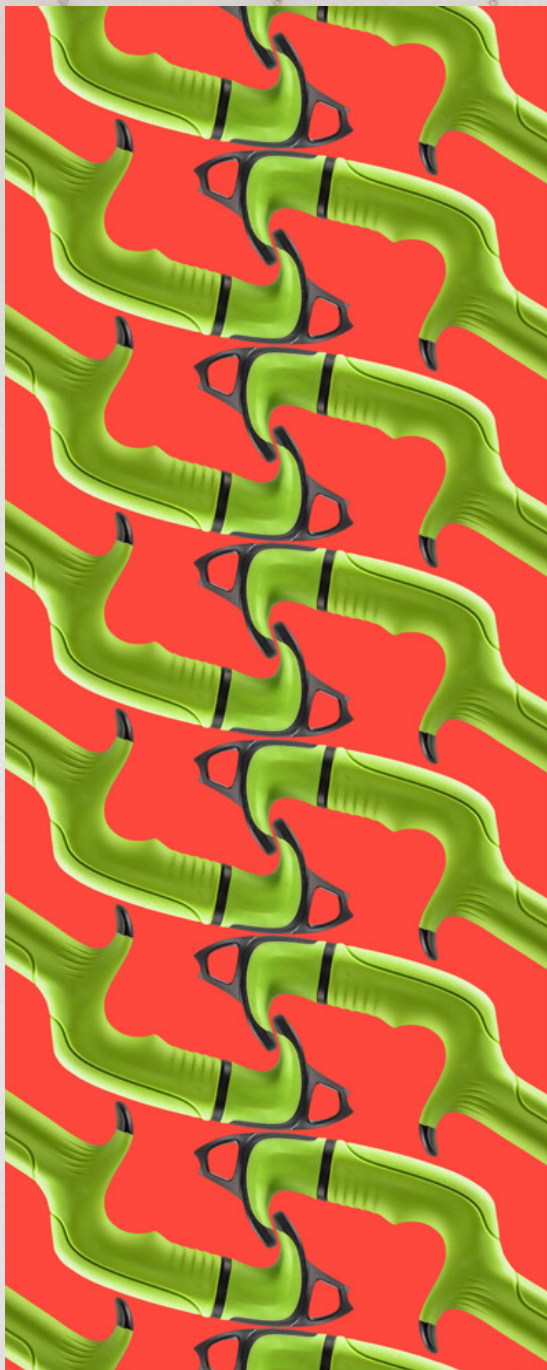
Hands-off I- VI 2019, inkjet-print, 180 cm × 70 cm

Field(De Novo) 2018, installation, textile, 1700 cm × 700 cm

De Novo 2018, video with sound, view Zehntscheuer Merdinger

Handiwork

Ultimately what is seen is a video, but the question is whether it might actually be something else despite the use of this medium – handiwork that indeed can be called a video from a technical perspective because it consists of video recordings and animated sequences of sounds and images. But maybe it actually shows something different or more than merely what the images or the content of the images could convey. What is shown attests to more: a testimony to the formation of figures and scenes, a mode of production where what is finally visible is prefaced by letting it become visible. The video is just the last of a series of translations, preceded and overtaken by many others, translations of ideas and ideas for images into three-dimensional entities and stagings that are formed, painted and positioned to be aligned for the camera and play their respective roles. The crafting, tinkering and arranging are present in every frame and emphasize the moment of duplication: the video displays pre-arranged pictures and translates this conception of images into new images. The depiction of images jumps from one frame to the next or shows them simultaneously side by side or above each other. It highlights the synchronicity of four alternating scenes that are interrelatxed while staying tied to their own plot and singularity. Each individual sequence has its own timing, with heterogeneous times and heterogeneous speeds. Their shared time is arbitrary, independent of cause and effect, emancipating itself from a narrative progression or a story meant to be heading towards an end or conclusion. The video is constructed as a loop, circularly linking the synchronism of heterogeneous speeds and scenes. Recurring motifs, such as the fingers which embody the human figure as much as the parts that stand for a whole, remind us that the conception of an image long precedes the various realizations and – perhaps De Novo – rearticulates itself anew in the various scenes.

The fingers touch time in a way that emancipates itself from the length of the video, possibly reaching back to memories of first touches, the desert touching the prairie, fingers touching a breast, a breast that reappears here as a finger, touching that learns to see through fingers, touching as a mode of seeing. In a circular process, the video takes vision by the hand, inducing one to touch the production with the eyes in order to have vision as a mode of touching in the mind's eye, feeling the fingers through sight, which in turn touch the gaze. What appears to the eyes is testimony to a production that anticipates the final image, a process that rather than ending seems to merely pause at this final image, before moving on to the next. The heterogeneous times and settings are linked by a process that maintains an arbitrary relationship with them while passing through them: seeing the video means becoming a passenger, passing by what is happening here and yonder. The gaze is passed onwards - like the stone being passed from one finger figure to the next in a sequence - until it leaves the image, only to pass on to the next. When one sees what had not previously been seen this way, one also realises that the world of the video was created specifically for the purpose of making something visible, a passage that transitions from seeing into amazement, into a kind of seeing that does not and yet does recognize that it does not know what it is supposed to link the visible to. The allocation of the visible to the familiar, to familiar words like finger and figure or fishing rod and antler, leaves behind uncertainty, a hesitation of identification, a leftover that does not quite fit the word, a meaning that passes by the words.

This passing by began well before the video, during the preparations for the production of the scenes
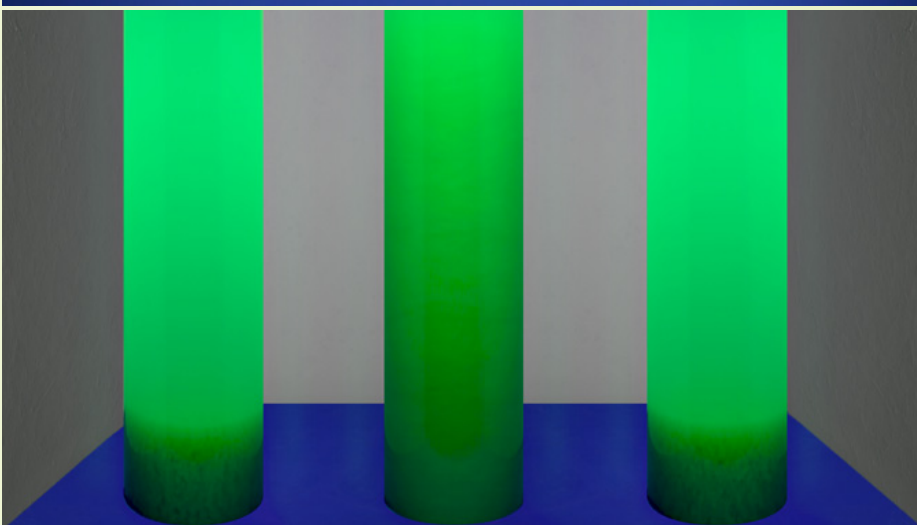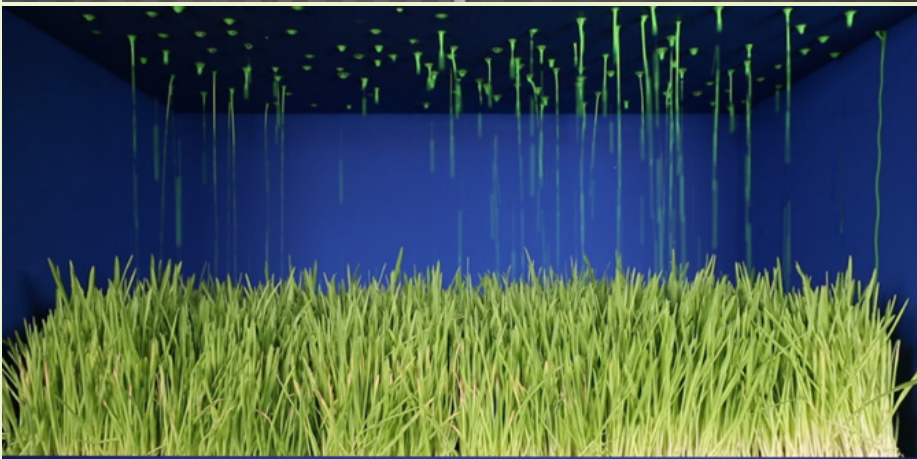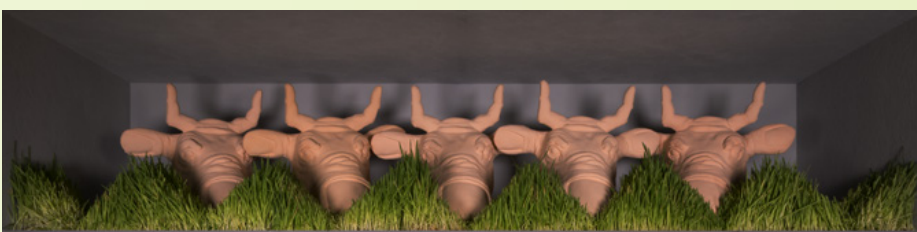
and probably long before the preparations started, in a readiness to begin a process with an indeterminate outcome, a readiness to embark on a journey of finding and generating images that new images can grow out of and in turn generate new ones. The duration of the video marks only an artificial border in this respect, a line imposed by the medium, which on one side suggests a finished product and on the other side is perforated by the willingness to attend to the generation of the next image. The loop is simply a means to perforate the very idea of a beginning and an ending. What could then technically be described as repetition would simply conceal the practice that the work passes through and passes through the work, without itself having begun or ended with it. What ultimately appears as a video seems to be an excerpt, the translation of an arbitrary time into the duration of a product. The times that are expressed in the sequences - the seasons, the primeval times and the ice age, the time to fish, to find and to shed something - traverse the duration.

The meaning that traverses the sequences and their significance balances the question of content on a fingertip. The significance that one would like to attribute to the figures and scenes always touches just one point, just the fingertip of content that becomes visible as it is pushed forward and out of the interpretative space to open a gap, a void for meaning that does not fit the picture, but rather passes by it with a question mark trailing behind as an echo, an appeal for the enigmatic. By doing so, De Novo balks at stipulating or determining its completion. The putative product of creation and completion resists finalization: the perfecting and perfection in the design of the figures and scenes are aimed at the imperfect – a contemporaneousness, a present ‚with a past', a present that perfects a trace leading beyond the present while simultaneously generating itself as the future in a loop, a present that will return as a past future and a future past. Where the meaning is balanced, the teleological coordinates oscillate, and cause and effect begin to swing to suspend causality. The underlying reason, which leads from one image to the next, turns out to be groundless, an event rather than a consequence and congruousness. How does one explain the image in which a stone is literally standing in the landscape, a stone that is not lying on the ground, but lingers, waiting and surrounded by others waiting, resting and surrounded by resting stones, on which that one stone stands? At the fingertip of meaning, a moment of monstrosity materializes, a monster that consists merely of showing itself without stating what it stands for, what it is standing up for, what word would best describe it, monstrous only in its appeal to speechlessness that speaks of amazement. What the image captures at the same time permeates and bursts its boundaries. What the image captures this way is a thimbleful of freedom, the readiness to take the fwreedom to detach oneself from conceptualizations in order to explore meanings, to touch what touches.

What ultimately appears as a video reveals itself to be an artistic practice, an action that goes beyond the idea of the product, only depicting in images what transcends images, in order to provide a handbook for the omnipresent possibility of taking the order of things into one's own hands while thereby being taken by the hand. In this sense, the video is ultimately the hand.

Andreas Spiegl (born 1964) studied art history at the University of Vienna. He teaches and conducts research as a Senior Scientist at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where he was Vice-Rector for Teaching and Research from 2003 to 2011 and has been Head of the Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies since 2016. His research focuses on media theory, cultural studies and contemporary art.

Animal Remains   2018, video/installation, sound, 11 min, loop, view Dock, Basel
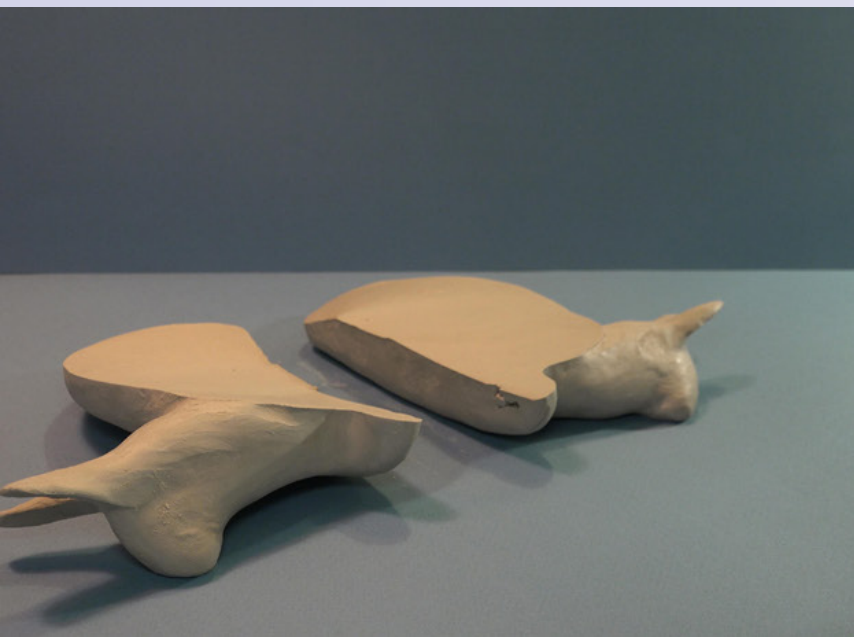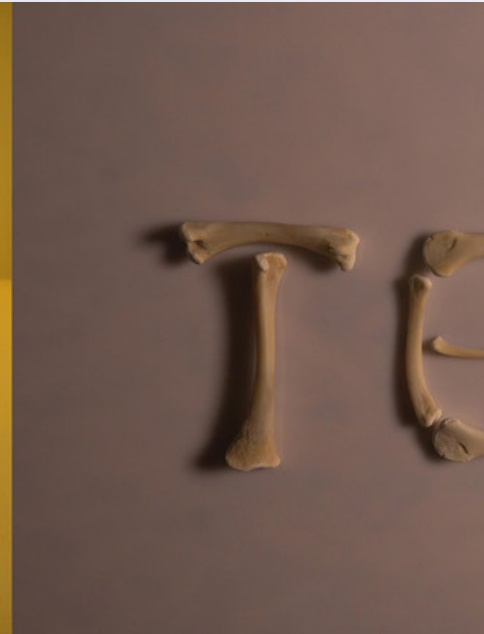
Snooze(Aggregation)   2017, Installation, variable size

The installation **Snooze (Aggregation)** consists of at least three big-sized PET water-bottles, stucked in modelled and casted tables (epoxy resin). The liquid in the bottles ferments and produces gas. The gases evoke an irregular sound (bubbling and farting) when leaving the bottleneck through the little hole in the plastic cup filled with water. The sound is amplified by small microphones and fixed at the edge of the plastic cups.

Video documentation: https://vimeo.com/202519106

Bite I-X 2019, sculpture, mixed media, life-size

Miner(De Novo)I/III/IV/V   2016, Laptop-photogram, 28 cm × 36 cm, framed

(...) Die Materialität und Medialität, wie sie Flurina Badel und Jérémie Sarbach in Fotografien, Bildschirmen, Skulpturen und Installationen präsentieren, reagiert, wie mir scheint, auf einen allgemeinen Paradigmenwechsel, den Timothy Morton auf die prägnante Formel »Ecology without Nature« gebracht hat. Gemeint ist, dass sich eine Ökologie der Umwelt, in der wir heute leben, nicht mehr primär an der Idee der Natur orientieren kann, sondern vielmehr die ökonomischen, biopolitischen und theologischen Implikationen anerkennen muss, die diese Idee hervorgebracht oder irreversibel kontaminiert haben. Durch diese ökologische Verfransungstendenz lässt sich auch die klassische Relation von Natur und Kunst nicht mehr in gleicher Weise halten: Zum einen, weil Kunst an eine Kulturindustrie gebunden ist, die es kaum gestattet, die Genese und Geltung ihrer Artefakte ohne eine Politisierung ihrer Produktionszusammenhänge zu rezipieren; zum anderen aber, weil in dem Wunsch, ›Natur‹ zu schützen oder zu regenerieren, die kultur-bedingte Absonderung im globalen Zusammenhang übersehen wird. Botanische Gärten, Naturparks und Zoos gehören in diesem Sinne zu einem viel umfang-reicheren Paradigma der ›Gated Communities‹.

Für die Kunst bringt ein ökologisches Denken ohne Naturbegriff den Vorteil mit sich, dass hoffnungslose Verwüstungen und ruinöse Topologien nicht mehr melan-cholisch bedauert werden müssen. Kontamination braucht nicht moralisiert zu werden. Die Darstellung genügt. (...) Verblüffend sind bei Badel und Sarbach die Synergien zwischen Analogem und Digitalem, On- und Off-Line-Lebenswelt, der Erinnerung an die ›alte Natur‹ und der Parodie ihrer irreversiblen Kontaminie-rung. Die Appropriation der idyllischen Landschafsfotografien Albert Steiners im Engadin wird so buchstäblich neu belichtet, nun aber dank einer ›Sonne‹ im meta-phorischen Sinne, die nicht am Himmel steht, sondern gemeinsam mit der Toolbar auf dem Interface des MacBooks erscheint. Nach der Nacht des Screens führt die erste Stufe der Sonne zum Erscheinen der künstlerischen Idee. Dieselbe Lichtquelle kehrt in den Fotografien der Bergarbeiter als Grubenlampe wieder. Die dargestellten Mineure bergen wiederum die sogenannten Konfliktmineralien, wie sie die Chipindustrie benötigt, um überhaupt das Innere des MacBooks funktionsfähig zu machen. Der fototouristische Blick auf die idyllische Berglandschaft ist aber nicht einfach der Ausbeutung ärmerer Länder gegenübergestellt. Denn ob Albert Steiners bukolische Sujets »Ausdruck einer tiefen Naturverehrung, einer unermüdlichen Suche nach zeitloser Schönheit und metaphysischer Wahrheit sind«, wird auch den im Bild romantisierten Schäfer in seinem Alltagsleben eher wenig beschäftigt haben. (...)

Mit Schäferstock und Toolbar schlagen Badel und Sarbach also förmlich eine vertikale Achse von der Sonne im Zenit in die dunklen Tiefen der Mienen. Schliessen wir den Laptop mit seiner digitalen Sonne, bleibt nur das biblische Schuld-Symbol im Standby des angebissenen Apfels auf dem Deckel. Das restliche Silbergrau panzert die Konfliktmineralien und das Interface gegen Einblicke ab, wie eine plattgedrückte Black Box: flächig, horizontal und transportable.

Abstrakte Flächenformen eines geologisch Unbewussten kehren noch ein zweites Mal wieder, nun in den Überblendungen von Tastaturen und Keyboards, fast ein wenig wie in den Frottagen von Max Ernst. Mikrozellen werden sichtbar. Bisweilen erscheinen Buchstaben im Bergmassiv. Oft verlieren die Zellen ihren funktionellen Status als Taste. Fragen stellen sich ein und verschwimmen wieder: Was ist eine Tastenkombination? Wo ist das Leerzeichen und wo Escape? Nach welcher Ordnung sind die Buchstaben und Symbole auf dem Keyboard verteilt? (...)

Auszug aus dem Text von Toni Hildebrandt zu den drei Fotogramm-Serien Shepherd, Miner und Land in der Ausstellung De Novo, Idea Fixa, Basel, 2016

Shepherd (De Novo) I-V and **Miner (De Novo) I-V** are two series of laptop-photograms (analog screenshots), made in the darkroom. Sensitiv photo-paper was exposed to the light of the laptop-screen (contact print). Therefor pictures from the internet where downloaded, inverted and placed on the desktop of the laptop. The screen was dimed out with the function key for the brightness, the photo-paper laid on it and exposed by reactivating the brightness. On the developed photo-paper the complete desktop is visible, so is the toolbar and the sun-icon of the screen-brightness.

Shepherd(De Novo)I-V
2016, Laptop-photogram, 36 cm x 28 cm

Pictures of historical postcards by the photographer Albert Steiner (*1877- †1965) where downloaded from the internet for this series of laptop-photograms. Each postcard shows a shepherd with his flock of sheep in the Upper Engadine, Switzerland. For the laptop-photograms the pictures of the postcards where placed on the desktop that the sun-icon of the screen-brightness fits with the source of light chosen by Steiner.

Miner(De Novo)I-V
2016, Laptop-photogram, 28 cm x 36 cm

Pictures of miners found in the internet where the primary material for this series. The miners prospect for tantalum, tin, gold or wolfram, those conflict-minerals, constituent parts of computers and mobile phones, wich enable the access to the internet at all. The sun-icon of the screen-brightness is visible in the middle of the headlamps of the miners.
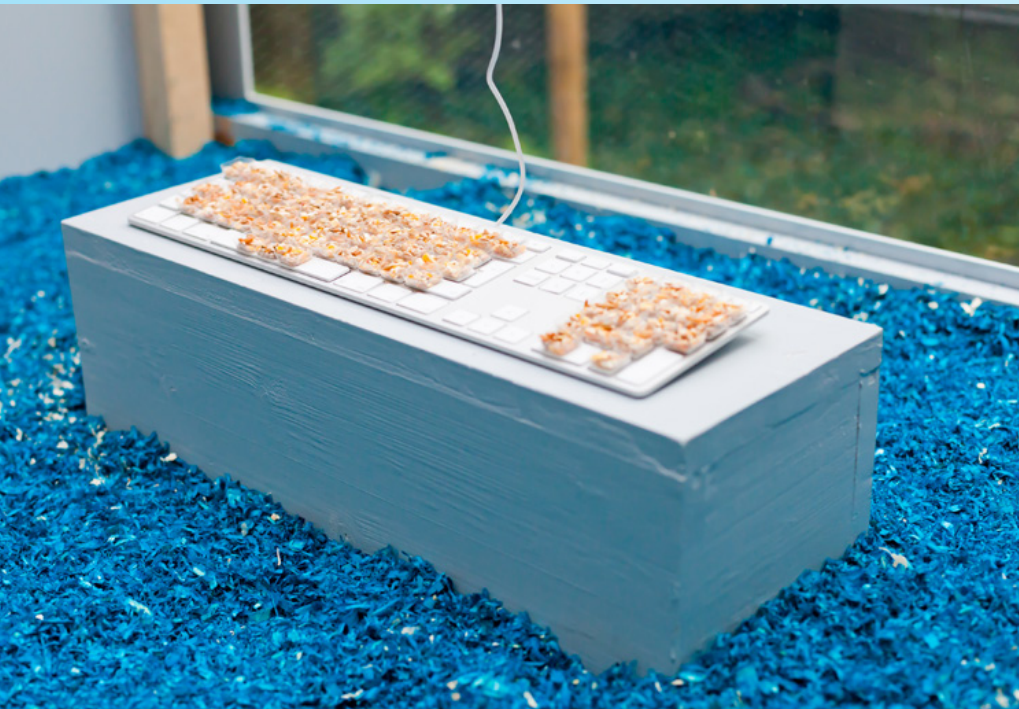
Shepherd(De Novo)I-V   2016, Laptop-photogram, 36 cm x 28 cm, framed

De Ovo (De Novo)   2016, installation, variable size, three chicken, henhouse, keyboard, usb-wire, laptop

This installation consist of two parts: the henhouse in the garden and a laptop inside of the gallery. In the henhouse the chicken pick grains from a keyboard, thereby they generate a text. This text is shown on the laptop in the gallery formatted as a panorama of a mountain chain. The more the chicken eat and write, the more the mountain chain grows.

Scythe(Aggregation) 2015, sculpture, 190 cm x 40 cm x 50 cm

This sculpture consists of a scythe, a laptop, an USB-powered grinding wheel and a flesh-coloured pedestal. The screen shows an edelweiss stuck in a penis. The grinding wheel polishes the scythe blade, which causes it to sing.

The video-installation shows an animation of several hundreds of cut views generated during a whole-body MRI. Therefore, the artist-couple Flurina Badel and Jérémie Sarbach laid embraced and motionless during several hours in the tube of the MRI apparatus.
The other elements of the installation reveal auditive aspects of the MRI examination. The sound is created with the different beating noises inside the tube originated by the MRI apparatus. This work was realized in collaboration with the Merian Iselin Spital, Basel.
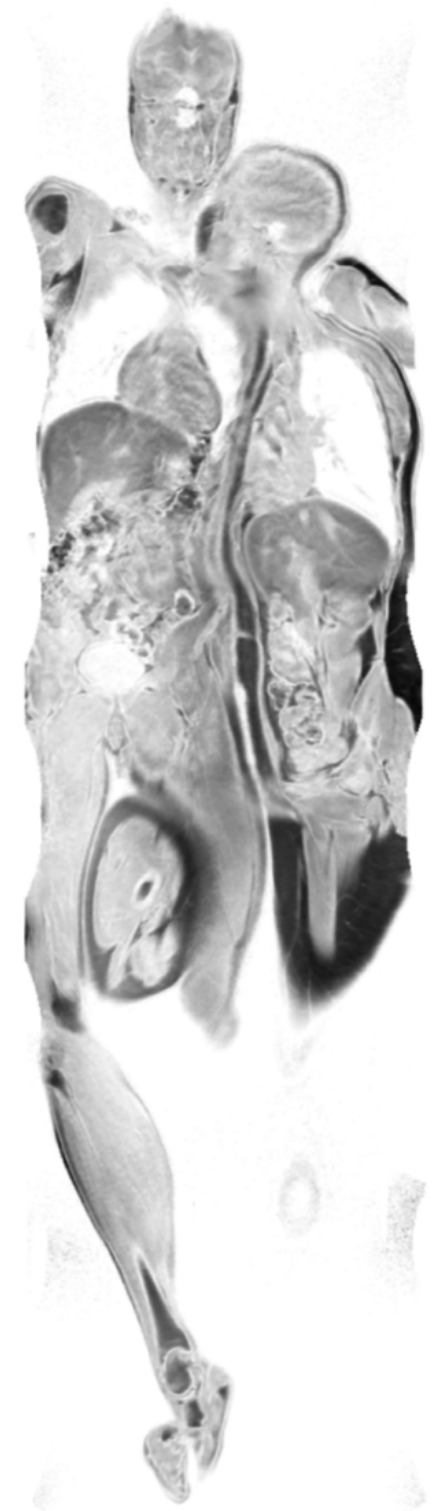
Lithified Glow(Our Bedroom)   2015, video-installation with sound, 200 × 200 cm, view Kunsthaus Basellandx