

**THOMAS FEUERSTEIN, JULIA HAUGENEDER, MICHAEL KIENZER,
ANTONIO ORTEGA, MAI-THU PERRET, PETER SANDBICHLER, TAL R,
ELMARTRENKWALDER, PALOMA VARGA WEISZ, KERSTIN VON
GABAIN, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER *Sculpture***

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The sculptures “Flesh for Fantasy” by the artist **Thomas Feuerstein** (*1969) condense spheres into monstrous anatomical models. Oscillating between baroque and science fiction, they refer to an image of man that transcends biological boundaries and forms hybrids. While Franz Xaver Messerschmidt’s character heads were influenced by physiognomic conditions, “Flesh for Fantasy” is inspired by biotechnological phantasms. The cellular accumulations of the sculptures refer to methods of organ and tissue cultivation and combine *creare* (Latin for „to create“) with *kréas* (Greek for „flesh“): creativity in the molecular age means turning something into flesh.

Kerstin von Gabain, (*1979) in Palo Alto, USA, studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (1998–2003). Her artistic work ranges from space-specific installations and ensembles to photography, drawing and sculpture. Her complex artistic position is currently dedicated in a special way to the theme of vulnerability. “Stump” (2019) is an object between a sugary pink seduction and the frightening irritation, that generates feelings of unease and fascination at the same time. The work makes clear that the integrity of human existence cannot be taken for granted. Precarious life situations, injury, loss are motifs visualised by Gabain in the form of waxy limbs, plastic bone parts and images of mutated consumer goods.

Julia Haugeneder (*1987), develops her objects in the process of working, in constant „response relationship“ with the material and its external conditions. She is interested in exploring and exhausting the possibilities of the material and in the same way examining the content of what we call „object“.

Haugeneder works without sketches or preliminary drawings. She pours out a coloured mass of bookbinding glue and pigment on the floor of her studio, which, dried as a thin rubbery skin, forms the material of her works. Depending on the specifics of the surface obtained, the decision of the first folding is made, which in turn influences the further ones. In this way, Haugeneder folds three-dimensional objects out of a thin layer. Her folds (*Faltung*) are equally reminiscent of everyday objects as they are associative of new things. „And because my perception is usually ignited by relationships and not individual phenomena, I produce groups.“ (Julia Haugeneder)

Michael Kienzer (*1962), uses found objects, but they do not become art by being declared so, but by the comprehensible connection he develops between the parts. Through the casual choice of materials, Kienzer certainly alludes to the aesthetics of the readymade, but on closer inspection it is always about sculptural issues such as exerting pressure, balance, posture, lying down, opening, closing, stacking, standing or clasping. His objects also move between the categories of assemblage and construction. In assemblage, the history of the object used plays a major role; in construction, it is completely subordinate. The fact that Kienzer’s work also allows us to reflect on the history of these two art-historical categories, and that relationships can be shown in each case, points to the range of problems that are touched on in his sculptural works. (Arie Hartog)

Antonio Ortega (*1968), began his artistic practice in the field of extended performance and installation settings. He developed individual projects such as Faith and Enthusiasm (2004) at Espai 13, Fundació Joan Miró, “Antonio Ortega and The Contestants” at The Showroom London (2002), “Opfer sind wir alle” at Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach (2003) or “I Hope Alice Cooper Does Not Become A Vegetarian” at Scottsdale Museum for Contemporary Art Phoenix (2007). He is currently living in Barcelona, where he teaches at the Escola Massana. Centre d’Art i Disseny in Barcelona.

“Trad as I” (‘traditionally as I am’) is a hybrid work between an object and a sculpture made of ceramic, which is reminiscent of liturgical vessels (monstrance) due to its ornamental halo. The portrait attached to the base of the object depicts Chris Smith, a well-known English politician and cultural manager. Smith, who was the first official member of the British Parliament to come out of the closet in the 1980s, came out publicly in 2005 and has been an HIV activist ever since. Ortega and Smith were working in several collaborations, including the founding of an institution in Catalonia modelled on the British Council of the Arts.

The circulation of water visible in the ornament is meant to suggest the blood circulation. While the obvious fragility of the material is again a reference to the human body and its weaknesses. In reference to the collaboration, Ortega had the work produced twice, one of which was donated to the Germans Tries i Pujol hospital in Barcelona.

The Swiss artist **Mai-Thu Perret** (*1976) works with a wide variety of formats such as painting, sculpture, ceramics, tapestry, film, performance and text. In her works, the artist is dedicated to feminist and spiritual discourse, which she combines in a singular way with art-immanent questions about materiality and form. Her use of different techniques within one medium also points to Perret’s interest in the Arts and Crafts movement as an alternative form of artistic expression. For example the glazed ceramic objects created as recently as 2020, whose witty titles Mai-Thu Perret borrowed from a Zen manual, are the result of the artist’s direct physical interaction with the material clay, which in turn is based on a millennia-old tradition in the field of arts and crafts.

The great, almost inexhaustible potential of the artist **Tal R** (*1967), becomes clear in the multiplicity of work categories in which he plays. Tal R makes use of many different possibilities. Collages, objects, painting, graphics as well as bronzes and ceramics are forms of expression in his artistic work. With The Cloud and The Sailor, it is no coincidence that one is reminded of concepts that are also important in nautical science. The motif of the journey, sailing from place to place, from thought to thought, from work to work, is a recurring subject in Tal R’s oeuvre. The two figures cast in bronze serve us in this exhibition as stair and door guards as well as friendly porters.

Considerable energy has been expended by **Peter Sandbichler** (*1964) in his studio in the past few years on the creation of the templates for the numerous works that he ironically entitles “Alte Schachteln”. These are structural elements that can be used as seats or simply as surfaces which support the human body as it strikes a range of poses. As suggested by their name, these “Alte Schachteln” are created from old cardboard boxes which the artist deforms with his entire body weight during a performative act in his studio to such an extent that their original form and functionality become lost. Alongside the process of deformation, central roles are explicitly

played in this work by such subjects as materiality and practical value and the meaning of surface and form. The result of this is that the question of the connection between image and content can be constantly asked anew. (Sabine Gamper, April 2018, from: Peter Sandbichler, Recent Works)

Elmar Trenkwalder (*1959, lives in Innsbruck. He studied with Max Weiler and Arnulf Rainer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. As early as 1986, in addition to his main medium of drawing, he turned to the medium ceramics and over the years developed virtuoso technical skills within it. Today he conceives works of unbelievably large volumes. Trenkwalder cast the sculpture WVZ 0147-S, that is mounted in the courtyard of the gallery in Innsbruck, from a plaster model in aluminium and painted it red.

Trenkwalder's sculptures testify to vertical verve with vegetal and sexualised forms, from across the spectrum, ranging from ornamental systems, animate and inanimate objects. They inhere in corporeal and dynamic moving and are achieving architectural expansiveness.

"I feel like someone who siphons off the images and feelings of the world. As in dream work, I transform these images and these feelings..." (Elmar Trenkwalder)

Paloma Varga-Weisz (*1966) started her formal artistic training by studying traditional woodcarving in the Bavarian Alps – a place that has its share of fairytale castles and ancient forests. She then received a more classical education in fine arts at the Academy in Düsseldorf, but the magic of European folklore, childhood memories, pastoral magic and the uncanny never seems to have left her practice. She is a laureate of the Marianne-Werfkin Prize, Berlin and received the Holbach Prize of the Foundation for the Promotion of the Arts Palatinate in 2017. Her most recent major solo exhibition "Bumped Body" was shown at Henry Moore Foundation in Leeds, UK in 2020.

"Model I (Rug People)" is one figure of a series of sculptures, that are all representing personal as well as collective motifs, whereas the odd thing is omnipresent. Anthropomorphic figures, hybrid forms or figures border on the grotesque.

Johannes Wohnseifer (*1967) currently lives and works in Cologne and Erftstadt and is teaching as a professor at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne. His video works, photographs, sculptures and installations contain many references to design, art history and are at the same time an analysis of our everyday life shaped by mass media, in which the hierarchies of the intellectual and unpretentious have become obsolete.

„This is the former parquet floor from my current studio. The wooden floor had to be removed. I collected the parquet pieces and used them for this series of sculptures. Parquet is a high-quality and long-lasting floor covering, which for me is mentally associated with time and work.

Particularly condensed depicted in the famous painting „The Parquet Grinders“ by Gustave Caillebotte. The layering of the parquet elements behind Plexiglas results in soles like in a mine.

„Mine“ is also used as a code word borrowed from M.W. for the studio. To make the hard work, whether in the mine or in the studio, bearable, the prospect of a find or yield is important, for which, however, a lot of material must first be moved at great expense of time.“ (Johannes Wohnseifer)

„For more than 20 years I have been painting most of my pictures on aluminium sheets and have studied the conditions of the material in depth. Aluminium is a material that stands for an almost brutal efficiency. It is rust-resistant and is used equally for aeroplanes, cars, house facades, bombs and window frames. It thus contains metaphors for movement and speed as well as for lightweight construction (efficiency) and destruction.

For this new series “Black Swan” (2020) of small format works, I wanted to create images, that are treated more like sculptures in the production process. I designed these images on the computer with the help of a 3D programme. They were then exposed with a CNC milling machine from a solid aluminium block. So it is a subtractive process, not an additive one like painting.

The colouring through anodising is equally important. Through a chemical process (acid bath), the surface of the aluminium forms a solid bond with the anodised layer. The colouring hardens the surface of the aluminium and makes it more resistant. For me, this is an important element, that the surface structure of the carrier material is changed by the colour. Here, too, there is an analogy to (monochrome) painting in which the attempt is made to combine material and colour to form a unity.

I have been pursuing the conditions of combining or exchanging sculptural and painterly methods and processes in various forms for a long time. Basically, for me every painting is also a sculpture, because even the flattest painting on the wall is a three-dimensional object. All these questions are to be negotiated in this new series, whose title refers to the book by Nassim Nicholas Taleb.” (Johannes Wohnseifer)