

## MONICA DE CARDENAS

### Zilla Leutenegger *Ariel and his cats*

#### Opening

Thursday 30 September 2021  
6 pm

#### On view

from 30.09.2021  
to 27.11.2021

#### Hours

Tuesday – Saturday  
11 am – 7 pm

Monica de Cardenas Gallery is pleased to present Zilla Leutenegger's first solo exhibition in our Milan venue: 'Ariel and His Cats'. Leutenegger has installed a thoughtfully curated selection of works, inspired by the distinctive floor plan and domestic character of the four rooms at Via Francesco Viganò. She will show works in a variety of media, mirroring and further developing the entire spectrum of her artistic repertoire. A multi-media installation (*Arco*) with a video and a wall painting will be on view as well as bronze sculptures and a newly conceived cycle of small- and large-format monotypes on handmade paper.

The monotypes in the first two rooms represent a technique that has been the subject of Zilla's artistic inquiry for some time now. Drawings painted in oils are pressed onto the paper with a pressure of up to 16 tons, producing unique, inimitable works, characterized by a delicate play of colour, surface, light and shadow. In this delicate and yet powerful atmospheric light, we see furniture on which cats are sitting and lying, watching, enthroned, majestic and elegant. Leutenegger's cycle can undoubtedly be seen in the context of recent history. Waiting, sitting tight, lolling around, staying at home. The cat, a domestic animal, waiting for its owner – and infusing the space with life in the owner's absence. The monotypes are complemented with bronze cats and real furniture, extending the display into the third dimension. The transition between the second and third dimensions has long preoccupied Leutenegger, particularly with respect to drawings: as if the drawing were entering the room or is if we were entering the drawing.

The soft sound of a piano accompanies *Stoneway*, the installation in the third room. Light from a projector casts the shadow of baby grand piano out of concrete onto the wall, where it is played by the large silhouette of a hand that seems to come out of nowhere, performing Sergei Rachmaninoff's famed, notoriously difficult Piano Concerto N° 3. The ghostly hand actually belongs to Leutenegger herself, who practised the beginning of the concerto although she has not studied piano. Upright and grand pianos are memory machines that transport her back to the instrument her mother played, its sounds floating through her childhood. Perhaps the preference for shadows, so manifest in this work, is related to the artist's first name, for Zilla means 'shadow' in Hebrew.

*Arco*, the installation seen in the fourth room, is on view in Milan for the first time and was designed specifically for this space. It consists of a wall painting, a piece of furniture and a video projection. Typical of Leutenegger, it embodies the poetic experience of passing time. *Spiegelbar* – literally, 'mirrorable' – accompanies *Arco*; here the artist has applied the monotype technique to polished and folded sheets of chrome steel.

And who is this Ariel with his cats? In fact, is there an Ariel? Is he the one who lives in this imaginary flat? Is he present or absent? Has he just left or just come back? Are there even answers to these questions?

Max Küng

Zilla Leutenegger was born in 1968 in Zurich, where she lives and works. Recent solo exhibitions: Bündner Kunstmuseum, Chur (2021); L'Abbatiale, Bellelay (2019); Griffelkunst, Hamburg (2018); Musée Jenisch, Vevey (2016); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2015); Centro de Arte Caja Burgos CAB, Burgos (2014); Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf (2014). Selected group shows: "Fly me to the Moon", Kunsthaus Zürich and Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2019); Sydney Biennial (2014). Her works are in the collections of important institutions, such as Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich / Kunstmuseum Basel / LUMA Stiftung, Zurich / Museion, Bolzano / Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf / Sammlung Goetz, Munich.