

# MAI 36 GALERIE

## **PUSH + PULL**

featuring Pia Fries, Kentaro Kawabata, Sam Bakewell and Natasza Niedziółka

The group show brings together four artists that explore the expansive formal possibilities of their respective medium, dissecting crafting methods and interlacing studio practices with a shared curiosity for experimentation. In their diverse investigation of texture, perception and colour, their abstract works often give rise to organic forms and a sense of nature and vitality. By disclosing traces of artistic processes, the works inherently unearth questions of domestic handwork, traditions, cultural value systems and art history.

### **PIA FRIES** (\*1955, Beromünster, Switzerland)

Pia Fries' colorful abstract paintings often show a juxtaposition of paint and printed engravings that through her varied means of applying color, coupled with unpredictable layers of imagery and the viscous materiality of her medium, form a complex visual unity. Colour functions as an essential element in her painting. It can be a dense mass, a fluid trace or a play of textures, fractures and repetitive forms. Fries often manipulates the paint to emphasize its material and physical properties, using various tools such as spatulas and knives to apply and sculpt. For several years, Fries has integrated silkscreened motifs into her works that create a compelling dialogue with the paint. The artist allows her constellations to float in space, leaving white areas that are not to be mistaken for simple voids but constitute structural elements that claim their own presence in the painting. It is this captivating interaction of figure (paint and form) and ground (unpainted surface) that lets the viewer wander in different color compounds and energy currents. Pia Fries lives and works in Düsseldorf. She teaches as professor of painting at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich. Her works are internationally represented in many renowned collections, including the Kunsthaus Zürich and the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris. In 2017 she received the Gerhard Altenbourg Prize of the Lindenau Museum in Altenburg.

### **KENTARO KAWABATA** (\*1978, Saitama, Japan)

Working in porcelain sculpture, Kentaro Kawabata creates forms through a fine balance of complex hand modeling and volatile alchemical processes. Ranging from larger scale to diminutive, the works to be discovered in the exhibition are sometimes graceful and exquisite, other times somewhat earthy and clumpy. From submerging silvers in sulphuric water to firing embedded glass in porcelain, Kawabata invented a unique manufacture, that is deeply material and visual at the same time. His artworks are characterized by a vibrant and organic vitality, evoking nature's own regenerative processes and endless recompositions of matter. Kentaro Kawabata graduated from the Tajimi City Pottery Design and Technical Center in 2000. He received multiple awards, including the Kamoda Shoji Award in 2004 and the Paramita Museum Ceramic Award in 2007. His work has been subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions in esteemed ceramic institutions, such as the Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum and the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu.

### **SAM BAKEWELL** (\*1983, Somerset, England)

Sam Bakewell is a London based artist working predominantly in clay. Through a practice investigating the substantial formal possibilities of the medium, as well as its healing, meditative impact on the maker, Bakewell is interested in how working with clay can mirror the subconscious. Through repetitive, laborious working methods where the mind starts to daydream and wander, Bakewell enjoys the dead space this can create, allowing the material to push back and to 'think for itself'. His current series of mostly abstract wall works explore process, waste

# MAI 36 GALERIE

(material/time/emotion) and the weight of colour. A new emphasis is put on the language of painting, focusing on both the substance of brushstrokes and the complexity of colour combinations, to consider both what it feels like to paint and what paint feels like. Taking the re-naming of the days of the week by Angus MacLise in his pataphysical poem 'Year' as a manifesto for daily creative renewal, the works mark the passing of days played out in clay whilst contemplated through the eyes of past artists. Sam Bakewell received his master's degree in Ceramics and Glass from the Royal College of Art in 2011. He won the British Ceramic Biennial Award in 2015, and was Ceramic Resident at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2018.

## **NATASZA NIEDZIÓŁKA** (\*1978, Miedzichod, Poland)

Natasza Niedziółka's artistic output moves along the interface of drawing, painting and textile art. For nearly ten years, Niedziółka has been working with needle and thread, applying abstract embroidery on stretched canvases. Characteristically the stitchings she weaves are set closely together in a repetitive manner and vertical alignment, forming remarkable pieces that range from boldly expressive to quiet and enigmatic. While her techniques are traditional and domestic, Niedziółka's colorful, haptic work is distinctly contemporary, merging modernist abstraction with textile tradition. Her latest works are grounded under the name *Zero*. Longing for a new simplicity and clarity in her work, the artist drew inspiration from ZERO, a group of artists from Düsseldorf who translated the paradigm of purist aesthetics and artistic new beginnings into oscillating images that appear to consist of fields of single, almost monochrome colors. Natasza Niedziółka lives and works in Berlin. She studied painting with Tal R at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. In 2018 she received a residency at the Gyeongju Art Centre in South Korea and in 2020 she became a scholar of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

We're happy to send you visual materials on request ([news@mai36.com](mailto:news@mai36.com)).

Opening:	Friday, September 9, 2022
Exhibition duration:	September 10 – October 30, 2022
Opening hours:	Tue-Fri 11am to 6.30pm, Sat 11am to 5pm

Mai 36 Galerie  
Victor Gisler