

MAI 36 GALERIE

SPECIES

featuring HR Giger, Maren Karlson, Berenice Olmedo and Hiroki Tsukuda

Mai 36 Galerie is pleased to present *SPECIES*, a group show featuring legendary Swiss artist HR Giger, alongside works by Maren Karlson, Berenice Olmedo and Hiroki Tsukuda.

Hans Ruedi Giger (1940-2014) was a Swiss artist whose work had a lasting effect on the popular imagination of the latter half of the twentieth century. In cultural history, Giger is particularly known as the creator of the monster in Ridley Scott's sci-fi film 'Alien'. However, his dystopian vision has influenced pop culture far beyond that: Through surreal sculptures, paintings and designs, he created a dark, psychedelic-looking world of figures that oscillates between dream/reality, life/death, man/machine. Today, the themes or genres that Giger dealt with over several decades are more topical than ever among artists: in a world dedicated to progress and therefore machine development, an examination of existentialism is almost inevitable – the utopia of underworlds, human/physical decay and the sovereignty of machines, can be perfectly located in Giger's fantastic realism.

The exhibition *SPECIES* demonstrates how influential Giger's work was and still is: the works on view not only confirm his pioneering existence, but also illustrate his extraordinary relevance in contemporary art.

Maren Karlson (b. 1988, Germany) Inspired by the tension between the alien and the divine, the uncanny and the harmonious, biome and machine, organism and grid, chaos and order, Maren Karlson's visual language evokes something extraterrestrial: Blurred, distorted constellations of abstract shapes are revolving around a central locus of energy, an elusive void, opening up a portal into an unknown realm where inner and outer worlds become one. For Karlson all works inevitably pass through their creator's organism – they absorb, incorporate, take apart, compost, until an essence is created – a transmutation is taking place. According to the artist, transmutation in painting happens by making a body (matter) spiritual, and spirits corporeal. In this sense, Karlson understands painting as a method to practice being in a place of constant change, a collapsing of boundaries and a dissolution, digestion or composting process. Painting itself therefore becomes an attempt to learn how to sit with the unknowable and to endure the void.

Berenice Olmedo's (b. 1987, Mexico) indeterminate, corporeal and technological sculptures look neither human nor animal, perhaps insectoid, yet not quite organic. Through her work the artist argues for a reconsideration of what defines the human in order to finally and fully include those who do not match the white, Western, masculine, able-bodied norm. She dispossesses the human of its claim of wholeness and foregrounds the political dimensions of disability, illness, and care. Olmedo's recuperation of forms and materials from the arsenal of medicine aims to transform the prosthesis from a mechanical solution for a supposed bodily defect into an existential technology that unveils the nature of what it is to be human now.

Hiroki Tsukuda's (b. 1978, Japan) two-dimensional works, rendered entirely by hand and set on yellowish paper, are often conceived via a process of digital collage that combines a collection of his own drawings and snapshot photographs. Tsukuda often chooses motifs that are symbolically beautiful: alluring landscapes, sculptures that are considered historically attractive or sexy images that can be found online. In producing his work, the artist initially manipulates various aspects such as the color, orientation, and resolution of each image that serve as his

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source material, thereby destroying their existing context. By transforming the imagery, a sense of awkwardness is created, that broadly speaking creates a feeling of being abducted into another world or to an expanding parallel universe for the viewer. Created with meticulous detail, Hiroki Tsukuda's intricate, not completely monochromatic works illustrate collapsed spaces, in which mechanized worlds merge with sci-fi mythos in states of controlled chaos and organic mutation.

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

Opening: Thursday, January 19, 6pm
Exhibition duration: January 20 – March 18, 2022
Opening hours: Tue-Fri 11am to 6.30pm, Sat 11am to 5pm

Mai 36 Galerie
Victor Gisler