

GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER

CHRISTOPH WEBER
Facing the Technosphere

8 JUL – 2 SEP 2023

Opening: Saturday, 8 July 2023, 2 p.m.
Vienna 1, Domgasse 6

How can one put an economic system and its consequences for the planet and for the global climate into artistic form? How can something be represented that, according to cultural studies scholar Eva Horn, is not an event but a set of increased probabilities for certain scenarios?¹

In order to represent what eludes attempts to picture or imagine it, Christoph Weber employs materials from three different spheres that overlap in the world of our lived experience: concrete as the global building material that shapes the human-made technosphere; fossil rock as the material of the earth's crust, the so-called lithosphere; and various mixtures of beeswax as a material representation of the biosphere. For his fourth solo exhibition, Weber has created a dense system of references to the horizons of meaning inscribed within these materials. On display are two groups of current works, the first of which symbolizes the direct confrontation of the three spheres, while the second attempts to feel its way toward the calculation of complex transformations.

A massive, floor-standing concrete slab splits under its own weight along the bearing edge of a piece of limestone, the fossil material whose stored CO₂ is released in large quantities during the production of cement. Dark brown slabs on the wall cast from wood tar, beeswax, tree resin, and paraffin display the impressions left by a jagged fragment of a piece of concrete taken from a landfill. Finally, the latter presses into a geometric stone block, deforming it and almost causing it to burst. The forms of these sculptures result from the weight and malleability of the various materials. In each case, the encounter of the fragments with technically produced molded parts freezes a moment of direct confrontation between the two spheres; fractures, breaches, and contusions speak—to borrow the language of Achill Mbembe—of the brutality of anthropogenic processes.²

The transfer of a form also takes center stage in the second group of works, albeit within a more multilayered process. Christoph Weber uses cast portions of the surfaces of concrete infrastructures – a Viennese oil tank bunker and an Autobahn bridge – to generate representations in three different media. Thus, the cast surface becomes a photographic contact print of the translucent cast material, as well as a cast-iron relief stamp that impresses a negative form into beeswax. In complex transformative processes, sections of the surfaces of preexisting structures are turned into emblems of the technosphere's imprints on the biosphere.

Confrontations, ruptures, and resistances are the defining aspects of the artist's exhibited works. He succeeds in finely balancing the play of physical forces in order to challenge and invite us to imagine what cannot actually be represented or depicted.

CHRISTOPH WEBER born in 1974 in Vienna, Austria; lives and works in Vienna.

He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig, Germany, the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Germany. Weber participated in the ISCP, International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York City (2010 und 2003) and the Artist in Residence Program, Cité des Arts, Paris (2008). He was awarded the Förderungspreis for Fine Arts, BMUKK, Vienna (2008).

Selected Exhibitions: Vienna Biennale for Change 2021, MAK – Museum for applied Arts, Vienna (G) (2021); The Galaxy Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing (G) (2019); Sculpture Festival Ping Yao, China (G) (2018); Marta Herford, Herford (G) (2016); Belvedere 21er Haus, Vienna (G) (2016); Merzen, HEAD, Geneva (G) (2014); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen (G) (2014); Austrian Cultural Forum NYC, New York City (G) (2013); Vleeshal – Center for Contemporary Art, Middelburg (G) (2010); Lille3000, Lille (G) (2009).

Selected Collections: Centre Pompidou, Paris; Belvedere, Vienna; EVN Collection, Austria; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna; Wien Museum, Vienna; Collection Alexandra und Rolf Ricke, Berlin; Collection Isabelle and Pierre Bertiaux, Paris; Collection Anderl Weber, Vienna; Artothek des Bundes, Vienna; Speyer Collection, New York; Frac île-de-france, Paris.

¹ Eva Horn, *The Future as Catastrophe: Imagining Disaster in the Modern Age*, trans. Valentine Pakis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

² Achille Mbembe, *Brutalisme* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2020).