

ANDRIU DEPLAZES
Nasse Augen (Wet Eyes)
January 25 – March 15, 2025
Opening: Friday, January 24, 6pm – 8pm
Rämistrasse 33, Zurich

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present *Nasse Augen (Wet Eyes)*, the fourth solo exhibition by Swiss artist Andriu Deplazes (*1993 in Zurich; lives and works in Marseille and Zurich). The title references his solo exhibition *Rote Augen (Red Eyes)* at the Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur in 2019. While *Rote Augen* represented raging anger, wrath, and a loud outcry, *Nasse Augen* symbolizes letting go, liberation, and the courage to finally cry. The sense of powerlessness, as a reaction of the individual to seemingly insurmountable, complex issues in our present moment, reverberates. The exhibition embodies the artist's development: his work has matured, solidified, and he convincingly demonstrates his quality as an outstanding painter.

Through his works, Deplazes explores the three floors of the Rämistrasse with themes that reflect political, global, and personal processes: human beings and their connection to nature, family constellations, protection, exclusion, and precarity—motifs already familiar from his previous body of work. Water appears in many of his pieces as a unifying element, while another central theme is the search for mechanisms of protection, security, and intimacy, or, conversely, the act of liberation—a dynamic interplay between the inner and outer realms. The exhibition features new paintings on canvas, works on paper, ceramic sculptures, and paintings on glass, some of which are presented in light boxes. In his use of colors and atmospheres, the artist has drawn inspiration from Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Lucian Freud, Maria Lassnig, and other artists of classical modernism.

A grayish-colored fabric, a glacier cloth, flows from the ceiling to the floor, wrapping the stair railing and preserving the remaining glaciers in the monumental painting of an alpine panorama, adapting to the contours of the exhibition space: Our glaciers are melting, they are crying. The synthetic fabric, reminiscent of a curtain, helped protect 80,000 square meters of the Titlis Glacier (Engelberg, Switzerland) from sunlight last summer. Now, it shields the visitors from observing eyes on the staircase. What is the value of a ski trip in early December to us? Can or will we forgo it in the future? In the foreground of the alpine panorama, a figure gazes upwards, holding a summit book—similar to a diary—in which one can inscribe their name. While the glaciers in the background are disappearing, enormous dams collect meltwater for energy production. This helplessness, this inability, is emotionally reflected in Deplazes' work on paper featuring two *pleureuses* (mourning women): Two female figures in pale pink, red, and yellow, painted in oil paint and ink, whose liquid bodies merge into one another from tears and color. These figures evoke the traditional iconography of the Passion of Christ, especially depictions of mourners, of "weeping women," as seen in the scenes of the Lamentation of Christ. Deplazes employs various techniques for his works on paper; in the most recent, he first applies ink and oil and then prints the medium using the monotype process. This technique imparts striking depth and luminosity to the works, without the white remnants of the paper.

Under the protection of the cloth, the visitors ascend to the upper floor. The first room is dedicated to interior scenes and various family constellations, questioning societal and familial role models. In front of an idyllic mountain panorama, for example, a family of three sits at a table, or a stage scene is presented, leaving it unclear whether the viewers are positioned in front of or behind it. The figures, characteristic of Deplazes' work, are human, yet generic, estranged, and androgynous with vague facial features, portrayed in an isolated manner. Another oil painting depicts two naked bodies in bed, directly gazing into the eyes of the spectator. The duvet, glowing in the light of the setting sun, shimmers in violet and rose hues, evoking a mountainous landscape gently enveloped by drifting clouds.

In the next room, the perspective expands to encompass parallel destinies, with which we are constantly confronted, through our ongoing media consumption. In the large-scale oil painting *Körper hält Kinderwagen (Body holds baby stroller, 165 x 290 cm)*, Deplazes unveils a dreamy, surreal, and lush floral landscape. In the foreground, a garden is depicted, with vibrant green grass and a variety of flowers in white, salmon, orange, red, violet, aubergine, and violet-blue. Shrubs in rich green tones have been carefully planted and are accentuated by grey stones. Behind, a vast green field stretches out, merging into a mist-covered mountain range. Alone and abandoned, almost dystopian, a figure with a bare torso stands in the garden, barefoot, dressed in royal blue trousers. The figure holds the red frame of a stroller, and is weeping. On the horizon, against the misty sky, a chain of people—families with children in motion—becomes visible. *Körper im Kampf (Bodies in combat, 180 x 270 cm)* tells of life in war and mechanisms of protection. In the background, interceptor missiles flash. In the

midground, two figures are boxing on a meadow; despite the war, they pursue their hobby, playing out a fight. In the foreground, a family of foxes approaches their den. Both the boxers and the foxes exist within an artificial bubble, in safety. In the final room on the upper floor, the figures in the works confront us with their resignation. Without resistance, they accept their respective fates. A painting on glass, mounted in a lightbox, depicts two people crouching with a candle in front of a house entrance. From above, we look into the eyes of two homeless individuals. How could we help them in a lasting way? A sense of helplessness spreads, as fates like these cannot be quickly resolved. We empathize with them; their plight touches us. Yet, moments later, we turn our gaze away, returning to our lives, to our everyday routine. Deplazes thus places us in a hopeless situation, where we experience empathy, but simultaneously fail to act. Opposite this work, in a niche, small ceramic sculptures of reclining and seated figures, at peace within themselves, are positioned in front of a work on paper depicting an empty reservoir: the glacier has completely melted, and thus, the water to be stored is absent.

In the basement—the underworld, the inferno—no rules apply. The viewer encounters several different paintings with eclectic subjects such as a female boxer, a falconer with his bird of prey, which, due to a lack of food, relies on carrion, and a romantic unicorn. The mythical creature stands before a rosy sunset, and the world appears paradisiacal; yet the animal is stressed and uncertain of its direction—an example of the subtle humor in Deplazes' work. His humor manifests subtly, combining tension with absurdity, as the familiar is distorted in a surreal manner, prompting reflection on the boundaries between reality and imagination. Another stained-glass artwork depicts two kissing, tightly entwined figures in the style of Bacchanalia—the wild Bacchic festivals of ancient Rome. A large-scale painting, inspired by Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, focuses on the scene of Charon on his boat. The naked, tormented souls, who recently arrived in hell, are retained by the artist, as is the ferryman, whom he depicts with two firearms. However, this scene only becomes visible upon a second glance, as the first view reveals an idyllic coastal landscape with a gentle ocean breeze. Through *Nasse Augen*, Deplazes thus creates a journey through five rooms that reflects on our contemporary reality and privileges, immersing us in realms of thought filled with depth and irony.

About the artist: Andriu Deplazes (*1993 in Zurich) has been living and working in Marseille and Zurich since 2018. He draws inspiration from the styles of late and early modernist artists such as Ferdinand Hodler, Giovanni Segantini, Pierre Bonnard, and Nancy Spero, yet reinterprets these influences in a distinctly contemporary manner. In doing so, art-historical references once again find their way into his work. The artist has had several solo exhibitions, accompanied by monographic catalogues, including at Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia (2023); Bündner Kunstmuseum, Chur (2019); Kunstverein Friedrichshafen (2018); and Aargauer Kunsthaut (2018). He has also presented works in numerous group exhibitions, including *Apropos Hodler* at Kunsthaut Zürich (2024); VFO in Kunsthalle Zürich (2024); Centre Pasquart, Biel (2023); Museum Gertsch, Burgdorf; Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen (2022); the Bregaglia Biennale, Val Bregaglia (2022); at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2020); at Pully Museum (2020); at the Centre for Contemporary Art Futura, Prague (2020); Alte Fabrik, Rapperswil (2019); Helvetia Art Foyer, Basel (2017); at CC Strombeek, Brussels (2017); and at Kunst(Zeug)Haus, Rapperswil (2016). From 2015 to 2018, Deplazes lived in Brussels and studied at the Sint Lukas LUCA School of Arts. In 2016, Deplazes completed his studies in Fine Arts at the Zurich University of the Arts, and since then, he has received several awards, including the Helvetia Art Prize (2017), the Prix d'Art Manor (2019), and the Visarte Atelier Cité des Arts Fellowship, Paris (2021).

About the gallery: Galerie Peter Kilchmann was founded in 1992 by Peter Kilchmann in the emerging Zurich-West district. Between 1996 and 2010, it evolved into an internationally renowned gallery representing artists from Switzerland, the United States, as well as various European and Latin American countries. The gallery gained recognition for exhibitions that challenge established narratives and highlight critical, non-Western perspectives. In 2011, the gallery moved to larger premises at Zahnradstrasse 21 in the Maag district of Zurich-West. Continuing its expansion in 2021, the gallery opened a second location at Rämistrasse 33 near the Kunsthaut Zurich in the heart of Zurich. The most recent milestone in the gallery's ongoing growth was the inauguration of a branch in the Parisian district of Le Marais in October 2022.

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