

GALERIE EVA

PRESENHUBER

PRESS RELEASE

Liesl Raff

A Corridor, a Room, and Four Dens

February 7 – March 21, 2025

Vernissage on Thursday, February 6, 6 – 8 pm

Artist talk with Liesl Raff and Michael Birchall, Co-Director at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 6.30 pm

Maag Areal, Zahnradstr. 21, CH-8005 Zurich

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *A Corridor, a Room, and Four Dens*, its debut solo show with the Vienna-based artist Liesl Raff. For this occasion, the artist has chosen to reveal the gallery's long-concealed window front, removing walls to invite natural light into a dialogue with the three distinct series of works.

Liesl Raff's work is not spiritual, but deeply rooted in materiality and process. As a painter and sculptor, she explores the tension between soft, pliable materials and rigid, structural supports. The artificially pungent smell of latex transforms under her hands into an architectural, sculptural gesture. In her studio, Raff spends long hours layering liquid latex on the floor, pushing and pulling it into every contour of a three-by-four-foot asymmetrical frame that she forms by hand from unfired clay. Once the latex solidifies and the strong smell of ammonia dissipates, only natural pigments and materials remain. These finished, semi-translucent sheets, which resemble supple skin, are talcum powdered for durability before being incorporated into her metal frames.

When mounted, the latex sheets find equilibrium—some areas held taut by clamps, others left loose to drape and flow. Sandbags and L-shaped supports stabilise the structures, creating a delicate balance. While Raff's installations can stand alone as monolithic sculptures, their true impact lies in their reciprocity. To step inside them is to enter a dialogue—with the space, with the material, and ultimately, with oneself.

The artist introduces an expansive, corridor-like structure which turns into larger structure dividing the back part of the gallery into a new room. The works are comprised of a series of steel frames, where each sequential panel is enveloped in self-made sheets of latex, squeezed and held around its edges with custom-designed clamps. These two elongated forms intersect in an L-shaped outline, inviting visitors to first walk down first corridor before disappearing behind and into the new space; experiencing what begins as a haptic interplay of colours, scents, and shifting lights. These sensory impressions quickly evolve into something deeper—physical sensations that lead to bodily awareness and emotional introspection. As one navigates Raff's corridors, a sense of tranquility emerges, creating a space for new encounters—with oneself and with others. This sets in motion a collective intimacy, a serendipitous moment of discovery, where attention shifts from the "me" to the "we," from ego to humility.

Raff's installations can be described as social structures because they are transitional and liminal spaces—transformative passages where visitors enter one way and emerge another, subtly altered.

At the far end of the corridor-like spaces, the stage-like nature of the installation becomes clearer, its resemblance to props underscoring the metaphor of turning things inside out. This inversion evokes both playfulness and focus. Raff refers to these environments as *Konzentrationsräume* (spaces of concentration), which can be seen as sanctuaries for selfperformance and transformation before engaging with others. These are spaces for retreat and reflection, but also for connection and growth—individually and collectively.

After this journey of introspection, whether fleeting or profound, visitors returning to the gallery's entrance (re-) encounter the four *Dens*, suspended in a cluster from the ceiling, with a new perspective. The presence of each visitor's body is affirmed as they recognize themselves as performers in Raff's space. Their movements and stillness become part of the work, mirrored along the path of the exhibition. Observing others walking the same route highlights both shared experiences and individual nuances, creating a quiet interplay of similarity and difference. The four dens, in their volume and size, are now recognized as figures hanging from the ceiling, speaking softly and asserting their presence.

Samuel Leuenberger, Founder and curator of SALTS

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Liesl Raff was born 1979 in Stuttgart, Germany, and lives and works in Vienna, Austria. In recent years she has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunstraum Remise, Bludenz, AT (2023); FJK3 - Kunstraum Franz-Josefs-Kai 3, Vienna, AT (2023); and Kunstfenster Gnas, Gnas (2022). Raff's work was featured at the 15th Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, KR (2024); and the 17th Lyon Contemporary art Biennale, Lyon, FR (2024). In 2021, she presented an installation with aluminum castings and latex works at Biennale für Freiburg in Freiburg, DE. She has participated in group exhibitions at institutions including Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, CH (2023); Neuer Kunstverein Wien, Vienna, AT (2023); Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, AT (2022); Belvedere 21, Vienna, AT (2021); mumok, Vienna, AT (2021; 2012); Forum Kunst Rottweil, Rottweil, DE (2020); Westwerk, Hamburg, DE (2018); Shangrila, Joshua Tree, CA, US (2015); and Kunstraum NÖ, Vienna, AT (2014).

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