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Media Release

Helmhaus Zürich

GOLD – Mining the Unconscious / Leitmedium ins Unbewusste

11 February–10 April 2022

Opening day: Friday, 11 February 2022, 11 am–6 pm
(with sign language translation/DSGS)

An exhibition with:

Barbara Diethelm, Heinrich Eichmann, knowbotiq

All four artists featured in the new Helmhaus exhibition have at some point in their artistic career struck gold. *GOLD – Mining the Unconscious / Leitmedium ins Unbewusste* reveals just how differently they have handled their finds.

You might not expect to find gold at the Helmhaus. If anywhere, then more likely in the institutions encircling it, which trade in gold and even hoard it – whether or not the rumours of a huge stash of gold under Paradeplatz are true – or at any rate have gilded doors. And yet we have indeed struck gold in the course of our exhibition history. Nearly fifty years ago, in 1974, Helmhaus Zürich staged a posthumous retrospective of Zurich painter **Heinrich Eichmann** (1915–1970).

He began experimenting with gold leaf in the early 1960s and towards

the end of his life created a whole series of gold leaf paintings that continue to shine brightly even today. Of course, we view them rather differently now, but that is precisely why we wanted to take a closer look at them. Gold has since forfeited even more of its luxurious innocence and has become a conductive medium for mobile phones (whereas for Heinrich Eichmann it was still a conductive medium into the unconscious). The COVID pandemic, moreover, has once again made it popular as a fail-safe investment.

Barbara Diethelm has been familiar with the works of Heinrich Eichmann since childhood. Following in his footsteps, she, too, has struck gold, even if in the lab rather than in the ground. As director of Lascaux, a Swiss manufacturer of artists' colours, she has applied her know-how to developing – as if by alchemy – a paint that comes very close indeed to gold. Yet she herself uses this high-tech paint spiritually – which may or may not be a paradox – and apprehends her oscillating paintings as “portals” to a spiritual world such as perhaps only art opens up to us.

knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm and Christian Huebler) first chanced upon the absence, rather than the presence of gold. While around half the gold mined worldwide – some of it in horrendous conditions – passes through Swiss refineries, this incredible fact remains unknown and largely invisible. After investigating the lifecycle of gold – sometimes in person, standing in front of the security fences surrounding the refineries – the duo began work on their *Swiss Psychotropic Gold* project. This complex of works consisting of videos and installations is constantly being augmented, most recently in collaboration with partners in Colombia. What knowbotiq have ultimately rediscovered is gold as part of the ongoing, collective metabolism of our emotions.

As different as these three positions by Heinrich Eichmann, Barbara Diethelm and knowbotiq are, both artistically and in the time of their creation, what *GOLD – Mining the Unconscious / Leitmedium ins Unbewusste* reveals is their shared conception of gold as not just an accessory of our existence but also as a conductive medium for existential issues. Searching for gold – or “mining,” to use Bitcoin terminology – inevitably means grazing our own subconscious.

Events (see the enclosed invitation for details)

Helmhaus is hosting a range of events that explore aspects of the works on show: Heinrich Eichmann’s works will be the subject of various tours as well as being discussed at the book launch of *path of gold – Barbara Diethelm, Heinrich Eichmann*. Barbara Diethelm will be offering meditative tours of the exhibition, and knowbotiq will devote an evening to their compendious publication *Swiss Psychotropic Gold*, presented in all its many aggregate states. Finally, the photographer Christoph Oeschger is to deliver an interim report on his long-term project about gold mining and trading.

Helmhaus Zürich’s long-standing series – the 5 O’Clock Thesis and Crash Course – will address the physicality of gold and seek to minimize the abstraction that afflicts so much artspeak about contemporary art.

Helmhaus Annual Programme 2022

Helmhaus Zürich’s annual programme 2022 kicks off with the exhibition *GOLD – Mining the Unconscious / Leitmedium ins Unbewusste*. This year’s leitmotif is “trust”. Please see the enclosed leaflet for more information.

For information on barrier-free access to Helmhaus Zürich, please consult our website, www.helmhaus.org, call us at 044 415 56 77 or write to us at info@helmhaus.org

Further information on our exhibition and photos for downloading are available on the [Presse](#) page of our website.