

Zurich, 8 September 2020

Press Release

Helmhaus Zürich
25 September–15 November 2020

Press preview: Thursday, 24 September 2020, 11 a.m.
Please email or phone (see contact details above) to register your attendance at the press preview.

Vernissage: Thursday, 24 September 2020, 6 p.m.

/Nature/Art/Animals/Bodies/Machines/Humans/Feelings/

With: Vanessa Billy, Leda Bourgogne, Stefan Burger, Florian Germann and Mélodie Mousset, curated by Simon Maurer

An exhibition about Nature, Art, Animals, Bodies, Machines, Humans, Feelings? These buzzwords or hashtags are even more pertinent now than they were this spring, when the exhibition was originally planned, bringing together the work of five Zurich-based artists of the younger and middle generations – each one a specialist in connectivity. Their works show hybrids between the technoid and the organic, between the humanoid and the animalistic, leading us into post-apocalyptic oases, and offering visions that get right under the skin.

We live in an age of connectivity. Sometimes more so than we might wish. Artists, versed as they are in connectivity, create objects that appear strange and new, yet at the same time somehow familiar, tapping into the connections that shape our era, such as the connection between man and machine.

Nature and art, too, have a complex relationship. Nature is so inventive, diverse and perfect that art can quickly seem outdated by comparison, and so has to come up with some very special strategies to vie at all with nature, by deploying methods that range from imitation to alienation and even to outright satire. What emerges as a result is something new that challenges viewers by questioning their hybridity. What we see is something between nature and art, between human, animal and machine. The resulting artworks challenge us because they are so hard to pin down. They elude our grasp. They defy conventional categorisations. They force us to re-orient our thoughts and to recalibrate and question conventionally accepted criteria.

This is how art keeps us on our toes. Art keeps confronting us with new questions and new entities. Art is the driver of new ways of thinking, stimulating our minds and our perceptual senses. The materials deployed here are, as a rule, *artificial*, with the emphasis on *art*. They are not natural. They do, however, often refer to the natural. We cannot help forming some relationship to these partly strange and partly familiar bodies – which clearly have something to do with us. They attract us, seduce us; we even identify with them – even if, now and again, we do feel a sense of repulsion, which might even enhance the appeal.

Body and mind deceive each other; they err and regroup, forming new transparencies, transitions and fusions that generate new relationships. Having to change my attitudes in the face of the new means that I am also renewed. That is why, on leaving an art exhibition, in the best-case scenario we tend to feel refreshed. Enriched. Renewed. Because the mind and the emotions are set in motion – or into “circulation” – by the theme that Helmhaus is presenting in this very special year 2020.

Events (for dates and details, see the enclosed invitation card)

For once, we would like to give our visitors an insight into an exhibition that is essentially still a work in progress, in order to demonstrate the processual and developmental side of setting up an exhibition. So, one week before the opening, while everything is still being installed, the participating artists will be on hand to answer questions about their works, as part of the discussion round **“Welcome to the Problem Zone”** (Thursday, 17 September 2020).

The exhibition offers points of reference that reach out into the realms of science.

Prostheses as Intimate Foreign Bodies, which are constantly renewed, and their functionality perfected, have long existed as extensions of the body. We ask Simon Oschwald and Fabian Engel, both industrial designers, as well as Andre Frei, a prosthesis wearer who is himself involved in the development process, about the new Circleg prosthetic system (discursive workshop on Thursday, 5 November 2020).

The fact that nature is a source of not only visual but also acoustic inspiration for art, is evidenced in the Wasserkirche, where the **200 Kettles** of the “Bittersweet Tea Symphony” by Rio Wolta and Piet Baumgartner are transformed into an orchestrated body of sound. Violist Frantz Loriot pits his instrument, in a live performance, against this massive sea of sound (Thursday, 8 October 2020).

In the exhibition, with its occasionally apocalyptic glimpses, Nicola Genovese joins guest performer Magda Drozd in confronting the **Theme of Masculinity with Doomsday-Prepper Tales**, cutting through our feelings – hot, cold, pleasure, pain – between romantic nostalgia and visionary dystopia (Friday, 30 October 2020).

As ever, our exhibition opens up an opportunity for dialogue between visitors, informed amateurs and professionals alike, within the framework of our now well-established “Rederei” discussions as well as through the guided tours and the workshops for children and school classes offered by our art mediators.

We would be delighted if, through your media contributions, you were to take an active part in our exploration of the in-between realms that connect nature, art, humans, animals and machines. We thank you in advance for that. For further information and press photos, please contact Nathalie Killias, tel.: +41 (0)44 415 56 77, email: nathalie.killias@helmhaus.org.

Information on the exhibition and visual materials are available for download on our website: helmhaus.org.