

ECHO: Groupshow

July 31–August 28, 2021

Fuschina 79 (Entry Tschuffa), Ardez

Wednesday–Saturday, 3–6 pm or by appointment

Opening: Saturday, August 7, 2021; 4–7 pm

Arranged in the Stalla Tschuffa, a vacant Engadine hay barn, Galerie Urs Meile, based in Beijing-Lucerne-Ardez, presents the group exhibition *ECHO*, bridging the distances between its locations. Suspending time and space, an aesthetic moment inaugurates with echoes of unique voices. Reverberating in the last year's seclusion and downtime, the selected artists—Cao Yu (*1988, China), Ju Ting (*1983, China), Tobias Kaspar (*1984, Switzerland) and Rebekka Steiger (*1993, Switzerland)—introduce their new works. After being thrown back into private and virtual spaces, *ECHO* commits to set these works in motion, thus, inviting us to partake and resonate in a viscerally vital encounter.

The manifold output of the female artist Cao Yu (*1988) is both provocative and self-reflective. She reflects sharply on the role of women and female artists in Chinese society, and her works explore our complicated relationship with the natural world, with each other, and our desires, aiming to seek meaning in our lives. A common denominator in her courageous practice is the use of her body to counterpart an increasingly disconnected, disaffected world. By exposing her own vulnerability, the artist enables us to contemplate upon our own livelihood, questioning gender preconceptions, and what it means to be human in an existence oscillating between connection and separation.

In contrast stand the playful works of the *Pearl* series by Ju Ting (*1983), a female artist who lives and works in Beijing. After graduating in printmaking, she accidentally discovered a new method by pairing the medium of painting and sculpture. On her studio's floor, she found a leftover wooden panel onto which she randomly applied a layer of acrylic paint. Day by day, she added more layers, so that the paint beneath increasingly disappeared and faded away. Once the board was fully covered in countless coatings, she traded the brush with a carving knife, selectively cutting and extracting stripes to reveal the hidden overlays. These openings disclose and close, wafting into a tactile rhythm that captures our curiosity. Her peculiar creations turn into hybrid organisms that seduce and enchant our senses, examining the remains of concealment behind impressions.

Although a different vernacular, the Swiss artist Tobias Kaspar (*1984) also tests appearances through the philosophic-anthropological implications of fashion and branding mechanisms. In 2019, during his artist-in-residency in Beijing, Tobias Kaspar collected birdcages. Originally, they were used for raising and enjoying birds by Qing dynasty elites. Nowadays, however, they can only be found among Beijing's elderly but no longer attract the interest of youngsters. By enveloping them with handmade, painted cotton covers, depicting designer goods and lifestyle motifs from current Asian fashion magazines, he infuses them with new meaning and allure. Through this process, the adaptation forges new needs, rendering them desirable. The glorification of consumer goods illustrates the erratic human striving for belonging and prestige on the everyday stage. How far does the orchestration of the self go—which versions do we wish to present to others—and at what costs when bearing in mind the socio-ecological challenges our world faces?

Rebekka Steiger (*1993), currently working in Lucerne, is a pioneering Swiss artist, who embodies painting as a state of mind, determined to go with the flow and without being restrained by conceptualism and overthinking. Her paintings are natural acts, unfurled by a spontaneous need that combines body and soul, coincidence and theory, intuition and evocation—a field where the familiar grows alien—swaying in an interplay of abstraction and figuration. Inspired by Japanese ink paintings, she experiments with the interplay of ink, tempera, and oil paint that yield unique effects based on the materials' various textures. The blending of forms and colors evokes fascinating landscapes, guiding into fluid realities. Her visual language brings into question whether the perceived is sufficient or develop into a yet unknown.

Cao Yu's (b. 1988, Liaoning, China; lives and works in Beijing, China) work spans a diverse range of media that includes video, installation, performance, photography, sculpture and on-canvas art. With her distinctive interdisciplinary practice, sharp and bold artistic language, she has become one of the leading young artists in the field of Chinese contemporary art. Her works have been exhibited globally at museums and institutions including MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Austria; Palais-de-Tokyo, Paris, France; Konfuzius-Institut Nürnberg-Erlangen, Nuremberg, Germany; Artspace, Sydney, Australia; Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China; Martina Tauber Fine Art, Munich, Germany; Camera Club New York, US; Diskurs, Berlin, Germany; Today Art Museum, Beijing, China; etc. Her works are also in the collections of museums and institutions including the M+ Collection, Hong Kong; Erlenmeyer Stiftung, Basel; Sishang Art Museum, Beijing; and the Central Academy of Fine Arts Art (CAFA) Museum, Beijing, etc.

Ju Ting (b. 1983, Shandong, China; lives and works in Beijing, China) is one of China's foremost young female contemporary artists with a work characterized by coalescing two conventional art media: painting and sculpture, and obscuring the boundary between the two. Ju Ting graduated from the Printmaking Department with a BA in 2007, and with a master in 2013. Her works have been exhibited at Museum and institutions including OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Xi'an, China; Stable Gallery of Lal Lal Estate, Melbourne, Australia; Shijiazhuang Art Museum, Shijiazhuang, China; Xinjiang Art Museum, Xinjiang, China, Taikang Space, Beijing, China; Today Art Museum, Beijing, China; Hi Art Center, Beijing, China. Her works are also in the collections of museum and institutions including National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China; Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China and White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney, Australia, etc.

Tobias Kaspar (b. 1984, Basel, Switzerland; lives and works in Riga, Latvia and Zurich, Switzerland) is an ever-changing and mischievous artist, repeatedly challenging the art system and incessantly rethinking his artistic output. The artist draws on unlimited resources inside art history and organizational structures. His chronic interest lies in the exploration of when and how symbolic meaning adds value to an object, as well as how desires are created and economized. His works have been shown in different institutions including MAMCO Geneva; Kunsthalle Basel; Fondazione MAST, Bologna; Contemporary Art Center Riga; Kunsthalle Bern; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco; CAFA Museum, Beijing; Kunsthalle Wien; Kunsthalle St. Gallen; Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis; Artists Space, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Kunsthalle Zürich; Museum Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Kunsthau Bregenz; and Künstlerhaus Stuttgart.

Rebekka Steiger (b. 1993, Zurich, Switzerland; lives and works in Lucerne, Switzerland) studied art at the Lucerne School of Art and Design from 2013 to 2016. Through a layer-by-layer color rendering, the artist transforms her perception of emotions and atmospheres into mysterious and delicate art pieces, achieving unexpected visual results. The tension between abstraction and representation, the expressive rendering of bright colors as well as the use of non-narrative figurative motifs are key aspects of her work that make the painting not only intriguing, but also unsettling. In 2016 she was awarded two prizes: the Exhibition Prize from the Kunstgesellschaft Luzern and the Advancement Award from the zeugindesign-Stiftung. Among her most prominent solo shows are Rebekka Steiger - *boxing the compass* at the Kunsthaus Grenchen (2020), the *Werkschau Zürich 2020* at the Museum Haus Konstruktiv (Zurich), and the group show *Zentral!* at the Kunstmuseum Luzern.