

# KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Berlin, 17th August 2020

Dear Colleagues,  
we are pleased to invite you to the opening of the following exhibitions:

YANG CHI-CHUAN  
*Plastonki*

SHOUFAY DERZ  
*not this, not that*

KATSUHIKO MATSUBARA  
*You have body, I have body*

RIE NAGAI  
*Night*

YURIKA SUNADA  
*ambivalent*

Exhibitions: 21ST AUGUST – 13TH SEPTEMBER 2020  
Tuesday – Sunday, 14 – 19h  
Showroom at Kottbusser Straße 10

ATELIERS UND BÜROS: Kohlfurter Straße 41-43 · 10999 Berlin · SCHAURAUM: Kottbusser Straße 10

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RECHTSFORM: Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH · SITZ: Berlin · AG Charlottenburg

GESCHÄFTSFÜHRUNG: Christoph Tannert · Andrea Boche · HANDELSREGISTER: HRG 8089

# KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN

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## YANG CHI-CHUAN

### *Plastonki*

In her site-specific installations, Yang Chi-Chuan employs storytelling to explore relations between people, places, objects and events. In past works, she has mined her own memories to create site-responsive sound pieces that draw connections between her own personal history and the exhibition space, but more recently she has turned to myths and fables, using these traditional forms of storytelling to address contemporary issues. For *Plastonki*, Yang has created a new audio work that looks at the disruption modern industry has made to the natural world through the eyes of non-human actors. Mixing fact and fiction, science and myth, the exhibition's title refers to the story's eponymous main character who represents not only petrochemical products but also a new species. Alongside this recording, Yang has produced a series of handcrafted ceramic works, which take their shapes and colours from climbing gyms and discarded items of trash, showing the myriad of ways these long-lasting products have infiltrated our lives. As the artist says, "*Plastonki* represents new knowledge and possibility but also an evil force."

**YANG CHI-CHUAN** \*1985 in Taipei, Taiwan explores memory as a source of knowledge. She studied at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris and National Taiwan University of Art, Taipei. Her work has been shown in group and solo exhibitions in Hong Kong, Paris, Singapore, Taipei, and Tokyo. She lives and works in Taipei. <http://www.yangchichuan.com/>

Yang Chi-Chuan would like to thank Prinzessinnengarten Kreuzberg / Common Grounds e.V for their support: "The neighborhood garden at Moritzplatz in Berlin is a place for encounters and an inclusion garden—open to everyone, especially to people whose participation in our society is structurally hampered. We see ourselves as a platform for self-organized neighborhood engagement, public discussions, workshops and conferences. The garden focuses on ecological, social, and urban development issues, such as nature and environmental protection, preservation of biological diversity, food sovereignty, climate protection and adaptation, healthy eating, re-use and waste prevention, displacement and gentrification, environmental justice, urban-rural relationships." Common Grounds e.V

prinzessinnengärten  
kollektiv berlin

## SHOUFAY DERZ

### *not this, not that*

Comprising photography, sculpture and video, Shoufay Derz's exhibition at Künstlerhaus Bethanien has its roots in earlier performances at Gulgadya Muru, the grass tree pathway in the Manly Dam Reserve, Sydney, in which participants were invited to paint themselves green and "emerge" as eels. Titled *Loving the Alien*, the performance has since turned into a major photo and video project featuring analog portraits of friends, family, acquaintances, and strangers who have taken part in Derz's "eel ritual." For the artist, the figure of the alien, conjured in the work's title and her sitters' green faces, stands as a metaphor for transformation and our shared unknowns. This state is also touched on in the show's title, which is taken from the Hindu saying "neti neti," and refers to great mysteries that can only be described through negation.

Derz presents over 24 photographic prints from this project, alongside a new video work featuring those taken in the Berlin locations of Hasenheide and the Botanical Gardens. In chromakey imaging, green is the colour conventionally erased, with the background replaced by a new fictive landscape. Developed for its properties as a colour that is not represented in human skin, subjects are effortlessly recomposited. In this project the people themselves are green. The potentials of disappearance and transformation are shared, mirrored between the landscape and green faces. The video installation is accompanied by a specially designed scent that the artist has blended to smell like her memory of the Australian bush. In addition, she has created a set of sculptures including bronze works. One of these is based on love letters that her father, who was raised in Berlin and later emigrated to Australia, wrote to her mother in Taiwan. The text reads: 'In the beginning', thereby adding a personal layer to the diversity of stories told throughout the exhibition.

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Her work is concerned with the limits and possibilities of language and the ambiguities faced when attempting to visually articulate the edges of the known. Spanning a conversation on belonging, alienation and the potentialities of kinship with others and the natural environment, her work reveals rituals for the end of the world, so that we may collectively imagine other possibilities. For all this gravity, the work conjures a sense of playfulness and humour, for “in darker times,” she says, “expressions of joy can be a radical activity of necessary resistance.”

SHOUFAY DERZ \*1979 in Sydney, Australia. She currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Recent solo exhibitions include *Face of the Deep*, GAG PROJECTS, Adelaide, Australia (2019); *In Memory of Water*, Manly Art Gallery and Museum, Manly, Australia (2018), and *The Wish*, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Australia (2016). Shoufay Derz is a grantee of the Australia Council for the Arts. <http://www.shoufay.com/>

## KATSUHIKO MATSUBARA

*You have body, I have body*

Comprised of thick layers of vibrantly hued oil paint, Katsuhiko Matsubara's largescale canvases often provoke a visceral reaction in their audience. Through his repeated use of pink and red—which brings to mind internal organs and blood filled veins—the artist highlights the physicality of his medium, resulting in surfaces that disgust and delight in equal measure. Drawing heavily on mythology and the concept of Animism, the attribution of a living soul to plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena, Matsubara's paintings attempt to shape creatures such as embryos, animals, monsters or spirits.

For his exhibition at Kuenstlerhaus Bethanien, Matsubara has brought together 15 of these works for the first time. By hanging his canvases side by side without gaps, he keeps the autonomy of the individual images and at the same time creates a temporary Gesamtkunstwerk that likens to a womb or a cave. Based on his attempts to evoke an emotional and physiological response in his audience, Matsubara compares entering the exhibition room to the feeling of “slipping into a warm bath”. Everything, human and animal, life and death, organic and synthetic material, becomes fluid and exchangeable. The show's title "You have body, I have body" further underlines the importance of the viewer's physical presence.

KATSUHIKO MATSUBARA \*1986 in Tokyo, Japan. He lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Recent solo and duo shows include *Lost in Transformation*, Japanisch-Deutsches Zentrum Berlin (2020); *Designare*, Dana Feirer Galerie, Berlin (2020), and *Serendipity System*, Raum Linksrechts, Hamburg (2019). Matsubara is currently studying at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg in the class of Anselm Reyle. He is a grantee of the Yoshino Gypsum Art Foundation. <https://katsuhikomatsubara.com/>

## RIE NAGAI

*Night*

In Japan, "Kuuki wo yomu," which loosely translates as “reading the air,” refers to the custom of adapting one's behavior according to the mood of any given situation. Bound up in ideas of social conformity, this concept is central to the work of the Rie Nagai, whose emotionally charged indoor landscape paintings explore the cultural imperative, dominant in Japanese culture, to prioritize the needs of a group over one's personal interests.

For her exhibition at KB, Nagai has created an entirely new body of work based on her experiences of living and working in Berlin. As the starting point for this project, the artist visited a number of well-known nightclubs, including Berghain, Tresor, Watergate, and Sisyphos, which she sees as cultural symbols of the German capital as well as spaces of intense social pressure. Working from memory, Nagai then translated her observations onto paper in a series of paintings collectively titled *Night* followed by the geographical coordinates of the individual locations.

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Using color to express feelings of repression and suppression, Nagai's distinctive palette stems from her avoidance of warm shades like vermillion, which has positive connotations in many cultures, in favor of cooler tones like magenta, pink, and violet to engender feelings of tension in her audience.

In the wake of the disruption to Berlin nightlife wreaked by Covid-19, the series has taken on unexpected new meanings, with the empty spaces in Nagai's paintings coming to stand for an experience that is no longer possible. As the artist puts it, "With clubs closed, the situation inside them is as obscure as Schrödinger's cat. It's a fantastic fantasy, but I sometimes imagine it's possible to hear music blaring by itself in an empty nightclub."

RIE NAGAI \*1990 in Gunma, Japan. Recent solo exhibitions include *Area*, Galerie Suiran, Gunma (2017), and *The rising generation 13* (with Yuki YANAGISAWA), The Museum of Shibukawa City, Gunma, Japan (2015). She is a grantee of the Pola Art Foundation. <http://www.rie-n.com/>

## YURIKA SUNADA

### *ambivalent*

Interested in mechanisms of perception, Yurika Sunada creates installations that incorporate movement, light, and sound. Having studied space design with scenographer Nobutaka Kotake before switching her focus to sculpture, Sunada is attuned to the ways in which these elements can be manipulated to give form to abstract thoughts, feelings and processes. Her most recent project, for example, looked at how memory is stored in the brain through a series of geometrically shaped steel sculptures that each represented different stages of this procedure.

In her solo exhibition *ambivalent* at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Sunada continues her interest in visualizing how the brain functions—something scientists still know very little about—by attempting to portray the feeling that gives the show its title. Described as the state of having contradictory thoughts or ideas about something or someone, ambivalence has been a reoccurring sensation for the artist during her stay in Germany, particularly during the Covid-19 lockdown. Comprising a spot-lit sphere made from curved lengths of shiny steel, the sculpture's slow movement and its resulting shadows, which move at different speeds, can be seen as reflective of Sunada's differing experience of time throughout her stay in Berlin. "Perception of time is not consistent or universal", the artist says. "Time is very elastic. I experienced the duality of time while I stayed inside my studio here day in and day out during the pandemic. I started to notice the remarkable difference in the speed of time between the interior and exterior of my studio, although, in reality, the physical time was very much the same. I was experiencing both a slow and a fast speed of time simultaneously."

Geometric forms have fascinated the artist since childhood. "My installations are rooted in personal experience, while simultaneously sublimating their forms into universal geometric shapes," the artist says. "The inclusion of two different ambivalent elements is a hallmark of my work. Perfection and acceptance, time and silence, space and emptiness."

YURIKA SUNADA \*1989 in Tokyo, Japan; lives and works in Tokyo. She worked as part of an artist duo under the name "ritmico" from 2009 to 2018. Recent solo exhibitions include *Engram*, TOKAS-emerging, Tokyo (2019); *Intersection*, Gallery 58, Tokyo (2018), and *TOKYO artcrossing BERLIN*, Haus Schwarzenberg neurotitan, Berlin (2015). She is a grantee of the Pola Art Foundation. <https://www.yurika-sunada.com/>