

Mari scha
burckhardt

SWISS INSTITUTE - NEW YORK

Marischa Burckhardt

"TIME TRACKS"

RELIEFS

AND

INSTALLATIONS



SEPTEMBER 13–OCTOBER 21, 1990

SWISS INSTITUTE – NEW YORK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preparing this exhibit was an adventure for Marischa Burckhardt, who had to wait till after the last snowfall to set forth on her long hikes in the mountains. Another challenge was for her to dare to use the stereotyped Swiss landscapes and wittily allude to their forgotten poetry.

The Swiss Institute is very pleased to show the work of Marischa Burckhardt, whose enthusiastic collaboration greatly contributed to the development of this exhibit.

We also want to express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who helped us to compose this catalog: Wolfgang Bessenich, Liliana Baumann, Mary McGlynn, Colette Hugues, Margrit Kaeser, Gertrud Mathys.

Finally, our special thanks go to PRO HELVETIA, Swiss Council for the Arts. Its invaluable moral and financial support is a constant encouragement to us.

A.M.B.



1988
Marischa Burckhardt
on Lanzarote, Canary Islands

All of us, civilized as we are, have placed ourselves in opposition to Nature and are still endlessly inventing new methods of exploitation; however, over time, artists have proven that they are more sensitive to the delicate balance between humankind and nature. There have been, of course, different approaches to achieving harmony with Nature: on the one hand, the violent march directly across open terrain; on the other hand, the Franciscan attempt that embodied careful rapprochement with the intent to embrace.

Marischa Burckhardt chooses the latter, in that she prefers to honor, rather than challenge, her environment. Occasionally she talks of the "small ego in the large landscape," of a "piece of earth that completely corresponds" to herself, of the indignation about the violation, and of "people's yearning for harmony and completeness." She searches for this unity of spirit in such diverse landscapes as the austere Scottish Isles, the barren African deserts, and the herbaceous Emmmental region of Switzerland.

How can the signs of humankind be rendered non-disruptive and harmonious in the existing landscape? Sentimentality, that gives us only unformed emotions, does not hold the answer. Marischa Burckhardt has remained thoughtful and rational. She marks her presence with simple metal ob-

jects that she uses to complete a transitory moment — a changing existential mood of joy or melancholy that ultimately becomes her gracious instrument of expression. Embarking on her design expedition, she senses where her traveling sculpture fits into the landscape and, in a sudden surge of energy, acknowledges that "this is the place."

The Scottish sculpture, for example, encompasses prehistoric stones, arranged as if in a gathering. The stones, with distinct interior markings and strikingly different contours, are contrasted with the immaculate shine of 20kg of polished steel, centered to reflect the landscape. The sheer weight of the plates, at times, made installation and shipping quite difficult; hence, the artist looked toward new interpretations that were more practical. She found several: one, in an arrangement of twelve thin steel plates which, nestled against a riverbank, resembled fish scales on the shore; and another, in twelve folded copper sheets on steel stems, which, depending on their position, reflected the light in different ways, casting grotesque shadows onto the bizarre world of form and folds that shape the desert.

A maximum of simplification and practicality was later achieved with twelve little cone-shaped hats made of microsteel. These

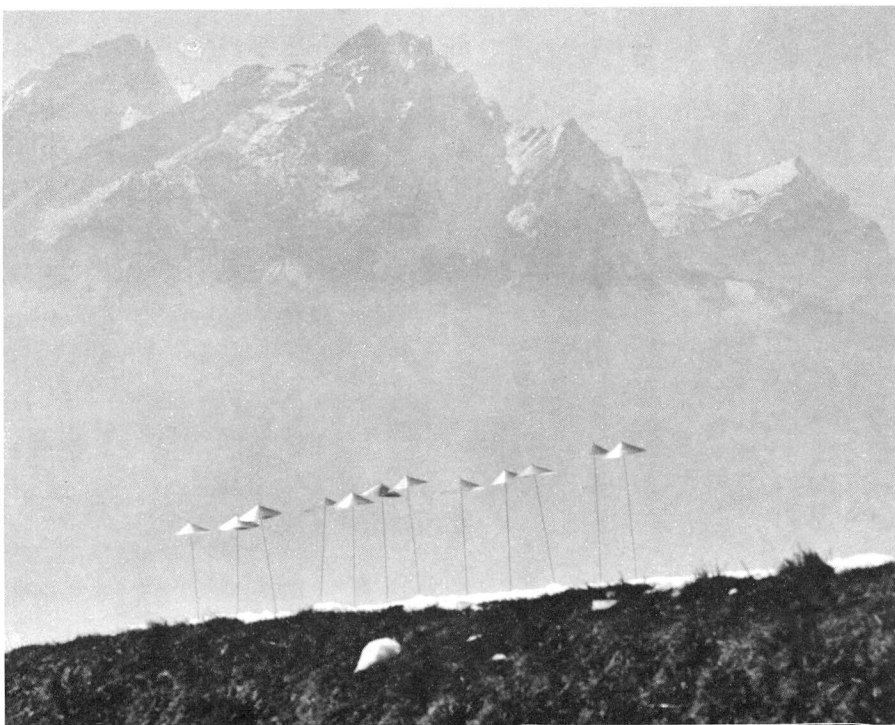


1986
Luggage sculpture
Wüsten-zeichen
for the Sahara

finely drawn metal shapes possessed a diameter hardly bigger than the span of a hand, and were supported by spring steel stilts one meter high. The artist has remarked on occasion that the wind sees them, and that the seed bearers of the dandelion are their relatives.

It should be noted at this point that each new installation is not encumbered by any preordained concept. What counts is that the shapes be free of tradition and, if possible, also independent of any scale. As a rule proportions are not defined; thus, the cone-shaped hats, on their slender stilts, might even assert themselves in front of an Alpine chain. Be advised — Marischa Burckhardt perceives form as a language unburdened by tradition, and she creates this language for herself through technical solutions in which there is no residue of unresolved intentions. Even the suitcase in which she transports her traveling sculptures, together with her accessories, neatly wrapped in bags, is testimony to her ambition to display flawless craftsmanship.

Finally, so they may outlive their momentary existence, all installations are photographed. Point of view, lighting, and relationship to the background are the elements of the composition that lead us back to the main point — the place where ego and nature achieve congruence. *(Cont.)*



1990
Installation *Winterende*,
traveling sculpture "Wir"
Switzerland

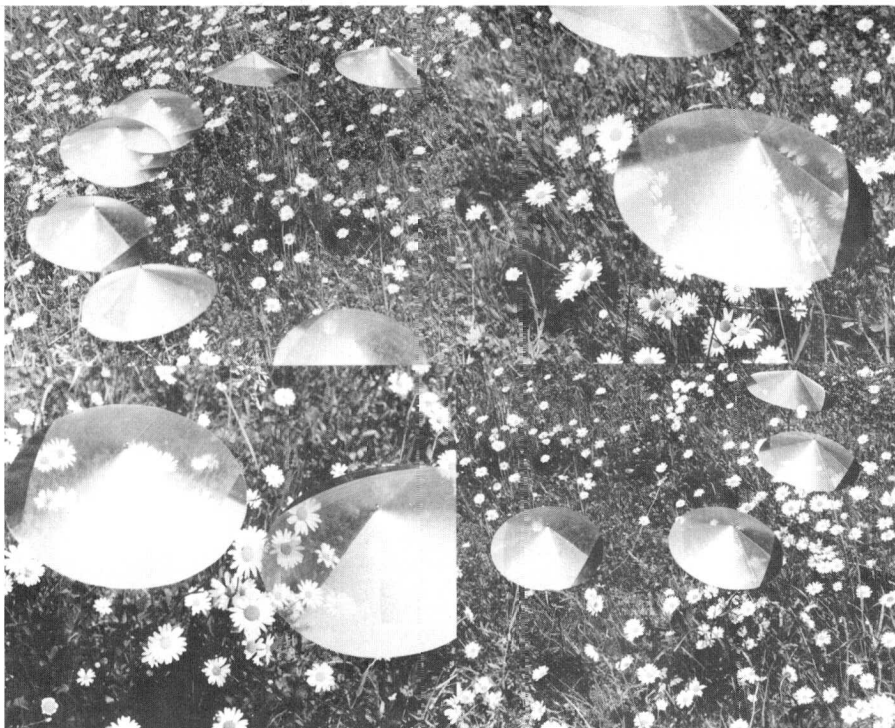
*Last snowfall
muddy slag-heaps
thousands of crushed crocuses
fog steaming from the slopes
"Are you collecting solar energy?"
a passing hiker asks me*





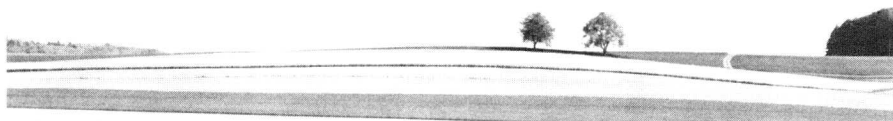
1990
Installation *Wald*
traveling sculpture "Wir"
Switzerland

*Scents of the forest, of fox and deer
time is moving backwards
fairytales
increasing quiet
mushroom threads hidden in the wintered leaves.
An earthtoad has frightened me.*



1990
Installation *Marguerites*
traveling sculpture "Wir"
Switzerland

*The future entices
"he loves me, he loves me not,
a little, from his heart, passionately, he loves me . . ."
Childrenrhymes. Grown-up games?*



1990
 Installation *Seeland*
 traveling sculpture "Wir"
 Switzerland

*Spring breeze
 to sail, to hover, to soar
 over the quiet meadows
 over the bright yellow
 wind rustling through the stalks. Longing*



1990
 Installation *Postenkartenve'ter*
 traveling sculpture "Wir"
 Switzerland

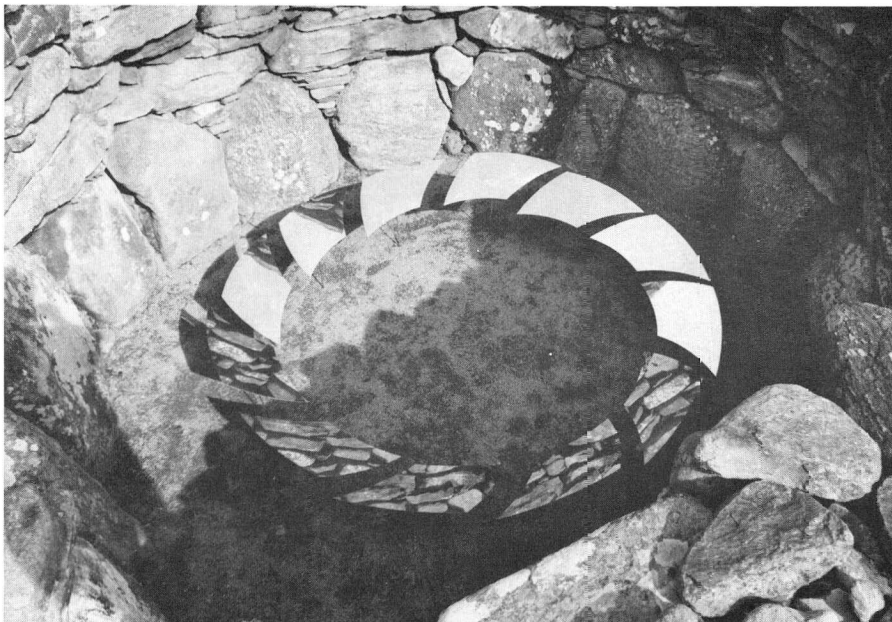
*Thundering waters of glaciers and snow
 wind squalls and shuffling clouds
 shrilling birds
 black and white wings slashing the bright light.
 A stone in my hiking boot*



1985
Installation traveling sculpture, *Feld-Wald-Wiesen*, Switzerland



1987
Installation traveling sculpture, *Für Himmel, Wasser und Fels*, Switzerland



1988
Installation *Reflections on Stone Age Man*, Scotland



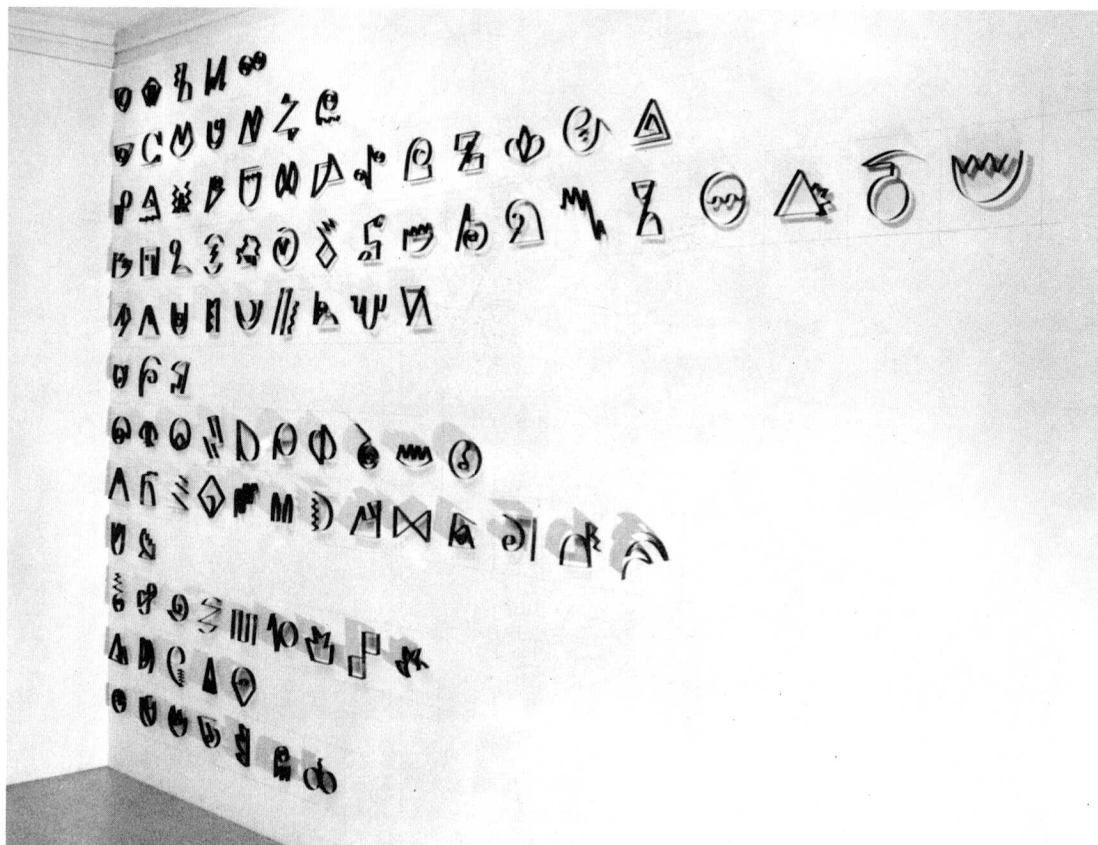
1988
Installation *Montaña Negra*, Lanzarote, Canary Islands

(Cont.)

In addition, some earlier pieces entitled "Signs on the Wall," consisting of a precisely determined number of ciphers — abbreviations on the border between image and writing — also echo the artist's process of a precisely defined craft. The individual "Signs" consist of a band of crate steel of equal length, and each cipher fits perfectly into a plane. Short stems hold the "Signs" at equal distances from a wall; and once again, a disarmingly simple technical solution yields a complex impression. Prejudices and overly analytical solutions are avoided; instead, rules are recognized as the imagination's protection against arbitrariness.

So that there be no doubt how much strictness and significance is to be attributed to the pieces discussed above, there are also the "Sketches"— small airy bouquets of pliable material, not meant to be isolated, but rather to be experienced as groups — lyrical lines, more humorous than deep.

Wolfgang Bessenich

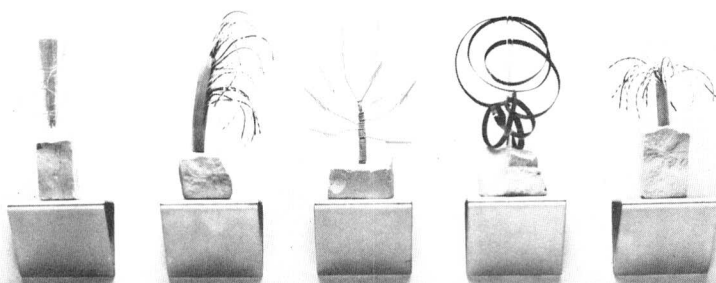


1988

100 Zeichen an der Wand

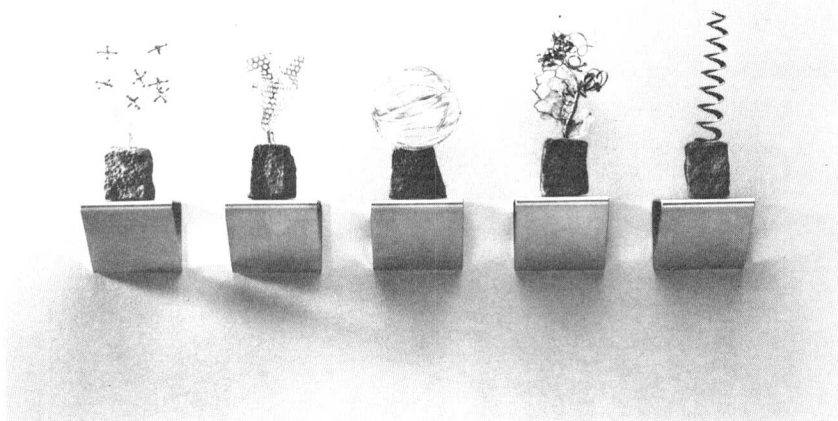
Shaped crate steel, each 20 inches long (50 cm),
pin mounted over a pencil grid.

Original installation 95 × 134 inches (240 × 340 cm)



Skizzen No. 2, 1990

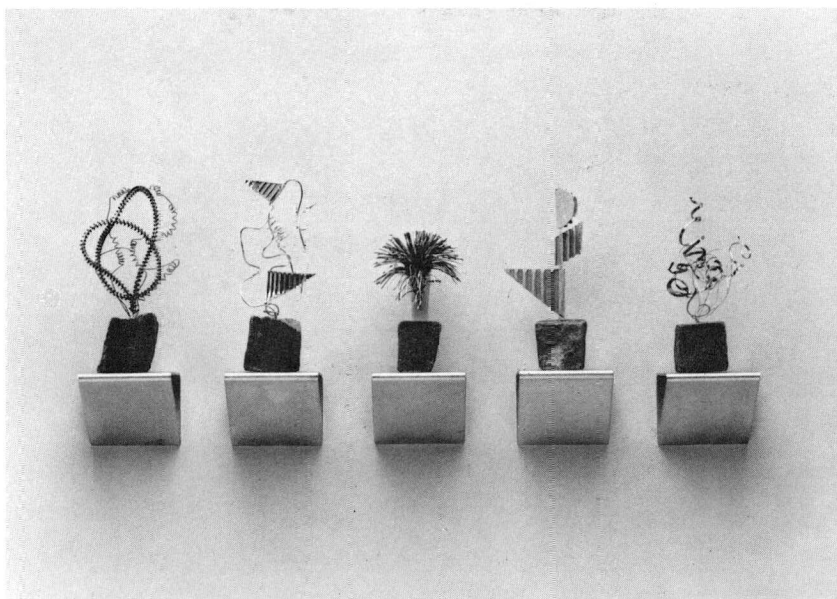
Light gray cobblestones and industrial waste on aluminum consoles



Skizzen No. 11, 1990

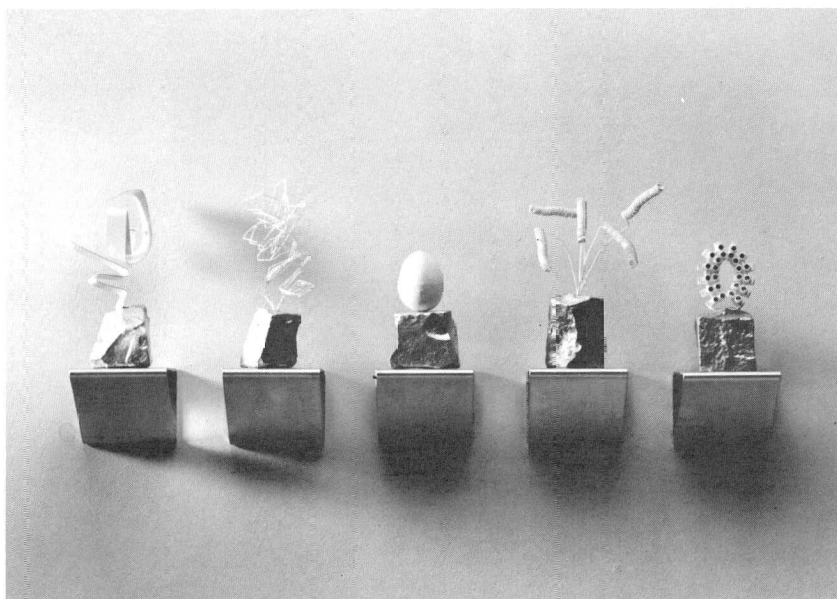
Red cobblestones and industrial waste on aluminum consoles





Skizzen No. 9, 1990

Dark gray cobblestones and industrial waste on aluminum console;



Skizzen No. 8, 1990

Gold painted cobblestones and industrial waste on aluminum consoles



MARISCHA BURCKHARDT

Born in 1927 in Dresden, Germany, of Russian emigrant parents. Important friendships with Dubuffet and Agnès Martin. Currently resides in Basel, where she is married with children.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1976 Trudelhaus, Basel, Switzerland
- 1977 «Arbeiten im Atelier», Rosshof, Basel, Switzerland
- 1978 «Squares, folded and cut», Parsons-Dreyfus Gallery, New York, U.S.A.
- 1982 Galerie von Bartha (catalog), Basel, Switzerland
- 1983 «Suter & Suter Recycled: Papier-Objekte», Generalplaner Suter & Suter, Basel, Switzerland
- 1985 Ausstellungsraum der Basler Künstler, Kaserne, Basel, Switzerland
- 1986 «Feld-Wald-Wiesen-Steckskulptur», Michèle Zeller Gallery, Bern, Switzerland
- 1987 «Faltbilder und Installationen», Fabian Walter Gallery, Basel, Switzerland
- 1988 Michèle Zeller Gallery, Bern, Switzerland
Ausstellungsraum der Basler Künstler, Kaserne, Basel, Switzerland
- 1989 Occurrence Gallery, Montreal, Canada
«Sculptures, Reliefs, Photographic Works, Drawings and Etchings 1985–1989», Zofingen, Switzerland
- 1990 «Neue Arbeiten», Fabian Walter Gallery, Basel, Switzerland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1976 «The Line», Parsons-Dreyfus Gallery, New York, U.S.A.
- 1977 «Féminie Dialogue», U.N.E.S.C.O., Paris, France
- 1981 «New Works», Fruitmarket, Edinburgh, Scotland
- 1982 «Contemporary Art», Dublin, Ireland
Kaserne, Basel, Switzerland
- 1983 «La Femme et l'Art», Triennale, Le Landeron, Switzerland
- 1984 G.S.M.B.A., Helmhaus, Zürich, Switzerland
- 1985 G.S.M.B.A., Kaserne, Basel, Switzerland
- 1986 «Made in Switzerland», McKissick Art Museum, Columbia, U.S.A.
Kaserne, Basel, Switzerland
Basellandschaftliche Kunstaussstellung, Arlesheim, Switzerland
I.C.A.F., Olympia, London, England
«Räumliches aus Zürich und Basel», M.U.B.A., Basel, Switzerland
«Basler Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert», Theaterturnhallen, Basel, Switzerland
Atelier Fanal, Edition «ao» und Grafik, Basel, Switzerland
- 1987 F.I.A.C., Grand Palais, Paris, France
Galerie Labyrinthe, Basel, Switzerland
- 1988 «Féminie Dialogue», Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 1989 Jahresausstellung, Kunsthalle, Basel, Switzerland
- 1990 Basellandschaftliche Kunstaussstellung, Oberwil, Switzerland
«Art 21», Basel, Switzerland
«Time Tracks: Ueli Berger – Marischa Burckhardt», Swiss Institute, New York, U.S.A.

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Design: Kaeser and Wilson Design

Photographic Credit for the "Skizzen" pp. 12, 13:
Humbert, Leu, Vogt

Printed by Alex Printing, New York

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