

Yannic Joray

The Elect

22.05.–10.07.2021

In his solo exhibition *The Elect*, Yannic Joray (b. 1986 in Bern, lives and works in Zurich) reduces the spaces of the Stadtgalerie to a narrow corridor, arranging seven illuminated reliefs in display cases along one side. These afford us an aerial view of swaths of land, state infrastructures, and inside homes. The exhibition setting reminds one of the windowless, narrow corridors of bureaucratic administration buildings or dioramas in a provincial museum. *The Elect* is about ufology, which is more than a mere pseudoscience. Joray treats it as a specifically Western, Christian form of religion. In the eponymous publication, a central component to the exhibition, Joray describes how Protestant and Reformed faiths are intertwined with beliefs in UFOs and extraterrestrials, New Age practices, and the history of violent capitalist expansion. Ufology is in continuity with the Reformed and Puritan belief in predestination, in being called, in being elect. A credo also intended to underpin the ideology of the supremacy of the West, e.g. in the sense of “American exceptionalism.” At the same time, ufology and reports of alien abductions resonate with what’s repressed and inexpressible. Here the strains and stresses of contemporary liberal democracies are construed in individual narratives and religious exaggerations: tensions produced by the conflicting concepts of freedom and self-determination, expansive geopolitics and repressive security policies, and experiences of inequality and discrimination.

It is no coincidence that the history of ufology appears to be closely interwoven with the clandestine security apparatus of the US. Joray presents seven display cases dealing with this history, which correspond to sections in his publication. The cases share the aspect that viewers see these locations from above. The technical development of reconnaissance satellites during the Cold War, which expanded the militaristic and invasive view of the world, coincides chronologically with the psychedelic and neo-religious enthusiasm for the “expansion” of consciousness. An interest that the Californian New Age movement of the 1960s and ’70s shared with the military. Out-of-body or near-death experiences were further analyzed under the concept of “remote viewing.” In government-financed experiments, so-called

“psychics” embarked on imaginary journeys to pre-determined coordinates—akin to human satellites—and sketched their observations on paper. Researchers involved in the experiments at that time are now active members of the UFO community. They are demanding more government transparency regarding allegedly concealed UFO contacts. As critical of the state as most ufologists are, they remain closely tied to governmental authorities in a relationship of mutual recognition and dependency.

Like a satellite, the pupilless eyes of the Greys, the eerie visitors from another world, zero in on us from above. But through this all-seeing, paralyzing gaze, the “elect” are ultimately looking back at themselves, since “the eyes of all people are upon us.”¹

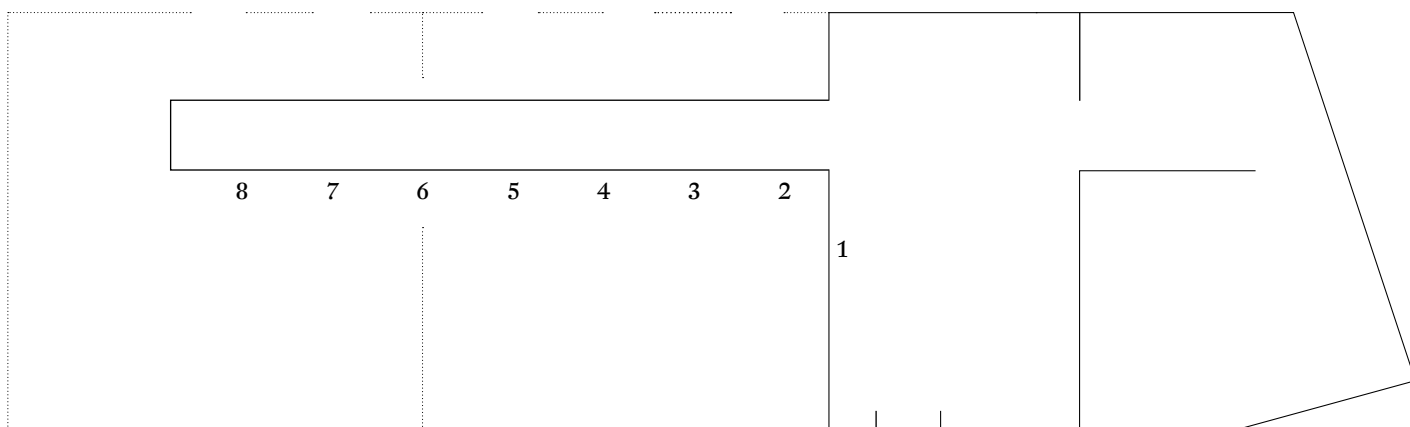
Benjamin Saurer, artist and organist from Berlin, has composed for the exhibition a work for organ based on the works of Jean Langlais and Johann Pachelbel, New Age meditation music, and drone.

Susan Lepselter, associate professor of American studies and anthropology at Indiana University Bloomington and author of *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny* (2016) will accompany the exhibitions with a podcast.

¹ John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*, 1630.

YANNIC JORAY (b. 1986, Bern) lives and works in Zurich. Solo exhibitions: Galerie Bernhard, Zurich (Sept. 2021); *Name the Fool*, 21st, Zurich (2018); *Corporate Winter*, Dold Projects, St. Georgen im Schwarzwald (2017); *Am grossen Kanal*, Im Archiv, Zurich (2016); *Securitas*, The Duck, Berlin (2015). Group exhibitions (selection): *Grand Miniature*, Sentiment, Zurich; *Sommer des Zögerns*, Kunsthalle Zurich (2020); *Lampen*, Francesca Pia, Zurich; *C.R. McBerny*, Studio Veit Laurent Kurz, Berlin; *Sancho Panza*, Oracle, Berlin (2018); *Hütli*, Ludlow 38, New York; *Zur Rebschänke*, Weiss Falk, Basel (2017); *Raw and Delirious*, Kunsthalle Bern (2015).

FLOOR PLAN



1
The Elect, 2021
Publication
Ed. 400

8
Book of the Damned, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

2
Wright Field, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

Benjamin Saurer
The Elect, 2021
Composition for organ, 16:25

3
Holloman AFB, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

4
Groom Lake, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

5
The Pentagon, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

6
Murphy's House, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

7
Kapteyn's Temple, 2021
65 x 62 cm
Plaster-cast, plexiglass, LED

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Opening hours
Wednesday–Friday
2–6pm
Saturday
12–4pm