

Kunst Museum Winterthur

Beim Stadthaus

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Opening hours:

Tuesday 10:00 – 20:00
 Wednesday – Sunday 10:00 – 17:00
 Closed on Mondays

Extension

untill 14 November 2021
 12–14/17
 Charlotte Prodger: Blanks and Preforms

untill 2 January 2022
 15/16/18–22
 Alan Charlton – Richard Long

27 November 2021 – 2 January 2022
 12–14/17
 Dezemberausstellung: Überblick 2021

First floor

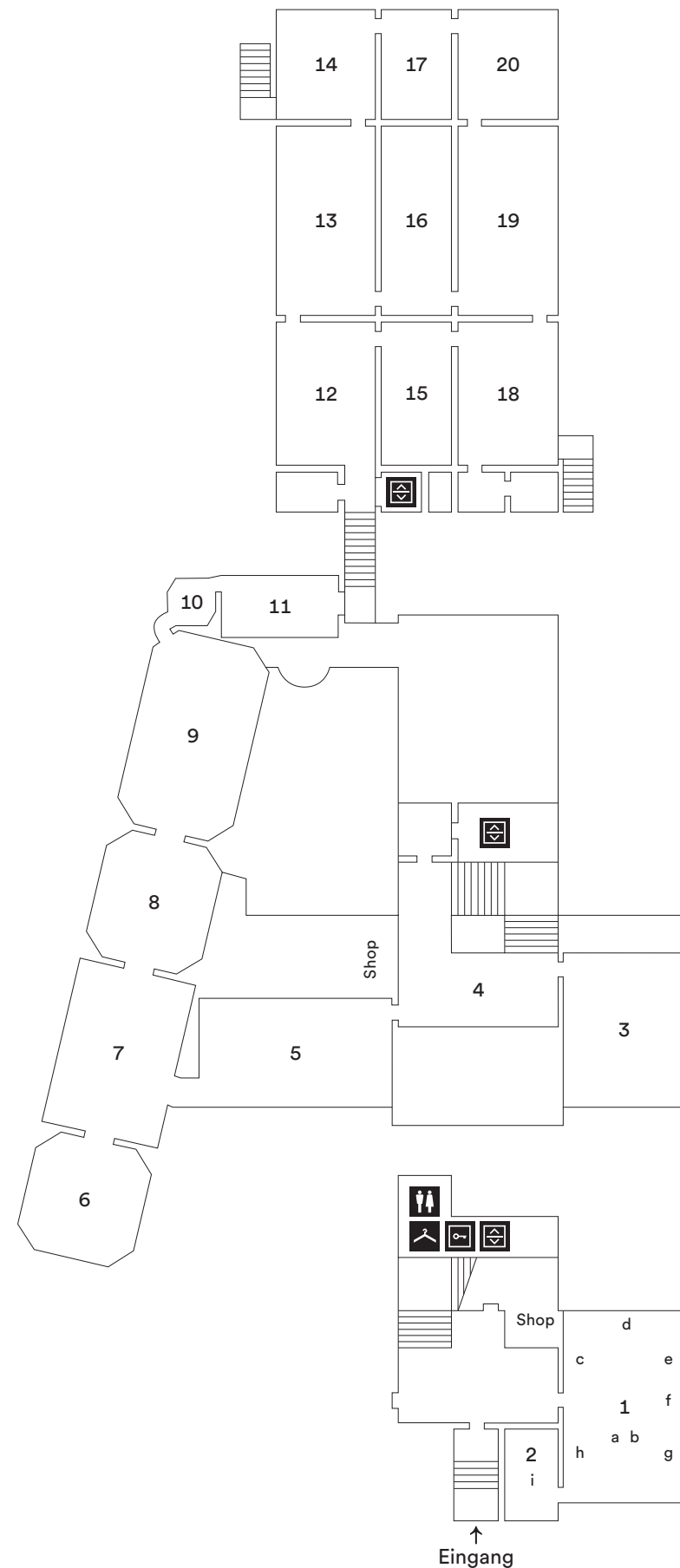
- 3 Picasso, Morandi, Giacometti, Lassnig
- 4 Roussel, Maillol, Genzken
- 5 Monet, Sisley, Pissarro, van Gogh, Rodin, Bonnard, Vallotton
- 6 Degas, Vuillard, Redon, Toulouse-Lautrec
- 7 Picasso, Braque, Gris, Leger, Delauney
- 8 de Chirico, Magritte, Klee, Giacometti
- 9 Mondrian, van Doesberg, Taeuber-Arp, Arp, Brancusi, Calder
- 10 Albers, Chamberlain, Morellet
- 11 Martin, McLaughlin, Baer, Weiner, Mosset

Ground floor

- 1–2 Mathis Altmann: Amalgamate
 12th Manor Art Prize Zurich

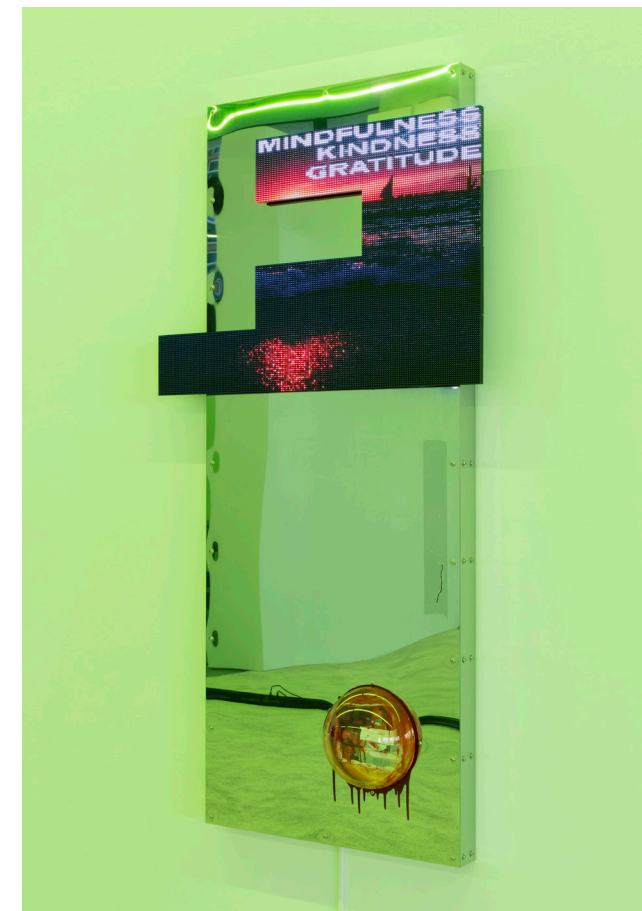
Artworks in the exhibition:

- a *Growth Fetish I*, 2021
- b *Growth Fetish II*, 2021
- c *Berlin Cockroach DNA*, 2021
- d *wewontwork (inhale/exhale)*, 2021
- e *Corpus Oeconomicus*, 2021
- f *Diet of Reclaimed Wood*, 2021
- g *Boutique Issues*, 2021
- h *Powerlifestyles (versions II)*, 2021
- i *Startup Garage*, 2018



Mathis Altmann Amalgamate 12th Manor Art Prize Zurich

9 October 2021 – 2 January 2022



Mathis Altmann, *Corpus Oeconomicus*, 2021

Mathis Altmann (*1987 in Munich, lives and works in Zurich and Berlin) grew up with the promise of the internet and the triumph of cultural capitalism, which is accompanied by rapid changes in city centres. He has developed a keen eye for social and cultural change. In particular, Altmann addresses the recycling of oppositional movements of youth culture into an experience society of aesthetic pleasures and the triumph of digital networking in a critical and ironic way. He is interested in the question of how economic and political forces adopt and exploit ideas of digital innovation and thus shape individual lives. His elaborate miniature worlds made of found objects, toys, trash and building materials allude not only to the widespread DIY (Do It Yourself) culture of the punk era, but also to Generation Z's patchwork lifestyle.

In the cabinet of the exhibition *Amalgamate*, the work *Startup Garage* (2018) can be seen. Even the title reflects

an element that was characteristic of this generation. Those who sought professional prestige and self-fulfilment in the 2000s founded a start-up company. The business model is built on an innovative idea that promises high growth rates. Most of them come from the tech sector, the industry with the greatest nimbus at the moment. The principle of innovation and the promise of the future is to be understood as an intensification of the modernist concept of progress; it contrasts in the work with a trash aesthetic typical of art in a punk context.

Since the 1960s, technological development has accelerated exponentially; in the meantime, it is progressing so fast that the future has to be reinvented at increasingly shorter intervals. There is growing uncertainty as to whether technology can solve the overwhelming ecological, demographic and economic problems. This is because the problems have been exacerbated also by progress and the unshakeable belief in such progress. But especially in the tech sector, the influence of the modernist credo is unbroken. It is in this field that the structural shift from standardised industrial labour to so-called immaterial labour is most evident. 'As labour practices are no longer oriented towards standardised goods and services, but shift towards the production of increasingly new (or old) singular, attractive goods, work advances essentially to cultural production and becomes creative work.' (Andreas Reckwitz) These changes affect the organisational structures of companies as well as the skills and desires of employees. They emerge as entrepreneurs in their own right, offering their uniqueness, which has striking parallels with the established thought and work patterns of visual artists. The dishwasher career has been replaced by the narrative of the college dropout who through innovation 'out of the garage' has become the wealthiest person on the planet – from nerd to guru and lifestyle icon. The word fragment EVOL enthroned above the work *Startup Garage* refers explicitly to the idea of evolution, which has positive connotations in creative economics and suggests a perfect ultimate goal. The fact that this crown – EVOL is incidentally the title of an album by the American cult band Sonic Youth – is emblazoned on a collection of discarded furniture suggests that the foundation may be rotten. It also indicates that in Altmann's case the socle, which usually distinguishes sculptures in an exhibition context, has not a nobilising but a grounding function. The *Startup Garage* encloses

miniature rooms that in different configurations give us an insight into a contradictory universe of consumption and promises for the future. At the centre is a mirrored room full of maggots in which a model-sized diesel generator is infinitely reflected, opening up an abysmal access to the social drama that unfolds around the upgrading plans of a creative hub. For the artist, who sees the speculative construction activity in the service of tech companies and creative industries every day, the combination of maggots and construction equipment in their infinite multiplication in the mirror takes on a critical note, pointing to the fact that the art and creative scene is being instrumentalised globally as a driver of profit-oriented real estate development.

In the main exhibition space, this theme is deepened in an aesthetically stringent way with the work *Berlin Cockroach DNA* (2021). The altar-like work is composed of replicas of the artist's own works. Inside, there is a collage of products that are assimilated in the globalised world and highlighted by Altmann in their fetish character. Dutch bicycles, craft beer, sourdough bread, standardised multi-layered board (Baltic Birch) for interior fittings and the Euro-pallet as the king of standardisation virtually erupt from the interior of the work. They demonstrate the paradoxical interchangeability of goods, even though uniqueness is meant to be suggested. Mathis Altmann mixes elements from consumer, pop and subculture. His works fascinate through a formally clever play with modernist traditions - the assemblage and the collage - which, in terms of content, goes hand in hand with the depiction of an increasingly



Mathis Altmann, *Startup Garage*, 2018

complex world. Altmann created a new series of works especially for the exhibition *Amalgamate* at the Kunst Museum Winterthur. He combines stainless steel mirrors and LED matrix screens with recycled material. The resulting wall objects appear greatly reduced in form compared to the exuberant assemblages. The works incorporate today's need for self-realisation, driven by the desire to experience the authentic. Altmann pursues this striving ad absurdum by incorporating phrases and logos of tech, pharmaceutical or food companies into his works. With such multi-layered references and his combinatorial wit, he succeeds in addressing the audience directly and triggering a reflection on the changes in their consumer, work and leisure behaviour. In this way, the audience looks at itself as it reads internet reviews of gallery and restaurant visits on the LED screens of a mirror work. The ratings alternate on the screens with Street View-like exterior shots of Berlin-Mitte. With his iPhone, the artist mapped the public space without seeing it. This makes visible how this accumulation of information violates privacy. Viewers oscillate between voyeuristic amusement and shameful self-knowledge.

On another screen we see Berlin's superstructures, which are no different than other urban developments in the globalised western world. The film sequences are accompanied by a fragment of birch plywood, as it determines the supposedly individual aesthetics of co-working spaces worldwide. For a while, the coworking company WeWork was the epitome for providing cool workspaces. For the artist, the company WeWork also stands for 'Rise and Grind', an expression that is used to describe how life consists of nothing but sleeping and working. Influenced by this work ethos that is shaping youth in the 2000s, a separate identity must be built within working hours and thus through the choice of company or work environment. The furnishing of the WeWork coworking spaces became the benchmark for the aestheticisation of work. A workplace, well visible also to the outside world and other co-workers, in attractive architecture and functional design, became a highly desirable commodity. It is no coincidence that WeWork moved its locations to prime locations and to the ground floor, where they were set up behind huge glass facades. With the artwork *wewontwork (inhale/exhale)* (2021), Altmann refers to the refusal of a perfect self-staging, as called for virtually constantly by the achievement-oriented society. It is of course hardly by chance that the work, as a neon sign, cites the aesthetics of advertising and is reminiscent of the hippie movement in its floral pattern. The artist refers to the search for transcendence and a fulfilled life. Concomitantly, he incorporates references from the recent music culture of IndieRave, when bands like Primal Scream and the Stone Roses revived the 1960s in a form of hedonistic escapism and drug use. The boundaries between leisure and the work environment are disappearing and the search for the meaning of life in a meritocracy often goes hand in hand with drug use. Legally prescribed painkillers have sedated whole regions of the USA and led to a veritable pandemic. The pharmacist's cross

is found in the work *Powerlifestyles (versions II)* (2021) in combination with bones as a classic memento mori.

The large installation in the centre of the room consists of junk that the artist found in Berlin-Neukölln. It is both a light and sound sculpture. The material 'symbolises' the demographic change that literally ends up on the street in discarded furniture. The mixing of influences, genres and styles characterises Altmann's work throughout. In its trashy aesthetics, it echoes earlier works. The light bathes the room in an aggressive pink. Altmann calls this colouring of the room an immaterial gesture. The UV lamps are growth lamps, such as those used for cultivating marijuana. For humans, UV radiation is used therapeutically in dosed form. Unfiltered, however, UV is harmful and increases the speed of skin ageing. The artist compiled the music that sets the mood of the entire exhibition space from set pieces - sampled as it is called in music jargon. He combined existing samples of music from Spotify theme playlists: Cloud Rap, but also new interpretations by a very young Generation-Z producer, which nostalgically switch back and forth between trance, chillout, trip-hop, jungle, shoegaze or indie. Trance and chillout music of the 1990s also stand for the last great youth movement, summarised under the generic term techno.

In the exhibition *Amalgamate*, Mathis Altmann takes the audience on an exciting journey through the world of today with its complex problems ranging from belief in the future to fear of the future. He treats the topics critically, but at the same time shows with exuberant pleasure that only a reconciliation between past, present and future allows for meaningful development. In this way, he keeps the modernist promises of the future at a distance and demands a self-examination not only of the audience in the steel objects reflecting like mirrors, but also of the visual arts.

Publication

To accompany the exhibition, a monograph by the artist with numerous color illustrations and texts by Kathrin Bentele, Lynn Kost and Dena Yago will be published by Lenz Press, Milan. Softcover, 140 pages, German/English

Events accompanying the exhibition

Artist talk

Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

Matthias Altmann in conversation with curator Lynn Kost

Book vernissage and artist talk

Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

Matthias Altmann in conversation with Melanie Ohnemus, Director Kunsthaus Glarus

Public guided tours in the evening (in German)

Tuesday, 6.30 p.m.

19.10., 9.11., 23.11.2021

Public guided tours on Sunday (in German)

always at 13 o'clock

10.10., 31.10., 21.11., 26.12.2021

more events at

www.kmw.ch

With kind support:

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