

18 December 2021 – 26 February 2022

## **THE LONG TAIL**

Philip Wiegard

The Island Club is pleased to present *The Long Tail* by German artist Philip Wiegard. The exhibition comprises a wallpaper installation and a series of polymer clay paintings, including works produced in collaboration with local polymer clay artists following a workshop hosted by the Cyprus Polymer Clay Association in November 2021 in Nicosia.

I.

**Mrgymtowels:** *I don't know what it is or what it means.*

*But now I'm hungry..*

**benfcknten:** *is it edible?*

**Cheesegollam:** *Thought you were pushing the cheese out of a hot dog.*

**bythefae:** *SOO THATS HELLA IMPRESSIVE*

**hannaharleman:** *forbidden taffy*

– Comments under one of Wiegard's tutorials on his TikTok channel [@phimo\_tutorials]

II.

"I want to destroy Philip Wiegard's polymer mosaics with my mouth. First my incisors, then my molars, havocking the careful boundaries between colors and shapes, then I'd like to move on to clawing, enjoying the growing pressure of clay under the crescents of my fingernails as I tear them apart. What is this material rage? This want to ravage? To eat. To consume.

[...]

When I first saw Philip Wiegard's works, I didn't realize they were made out of polymer clay. I thought they were simply oil paintings made with lots of blue painter's tape and anal precision. Then I came across Wiegard's Instagram and understood what they really were; not painted or printed, but essentially baked, made with the same widely commercially available clay we all squished in grade school to make brightly-colored beads for mom and swollen-hearted BFF necklaces. But Wiegard works with extreme precision, borrowing from the tradition of mosaic, or intarsia, assembling his images from slices of three dimensional "canes"—logs of polymer clay in which a design runs through the entire length ... Back on Instagram, Wiegard's entire grid, and presence, is devoted to the production of these clay works; he talks to the camera with startling earnestness, describing the process, providing tips and tutorials to his viewers, the camera cutting to his hands as they build up the squishy graphic blocks of cane that eventually form his mosaics ... Due to Wiegard's willingness to share his process without paywalls, something which is not always common, he seems to have firmly established himself within the polymer community, developing a healthy following and engaged fan base with his videos receiving thousands of views.

[...]

If you look through the comments on any of the socials, or dig into the history of polymer clay, it is clearly a nearly all-female sport. Polymer clay was invented in the 1930s and first used by Käthe Kruse, the famed German doll-maker, who tested out a new waste oil by-product called iglett. Käthe loved it as a material, but it didn't hold paint, so she abandoned the leftover drum in storage. A decade later, Käthe's daughter Sofie ("Fifi") discovered the remaining iglett, and immediately recognized its potential, and thus FIMO clay was born, just as the term "D.I.Y." was taking off. What made FIMO clay so unique was that it required no kiln or specialized training—it was advertised as "oven clay," and anyone could use it from the comfort of their home. This domestication of production cemented FIMO as a medium for kids and moms, which over time became an image that has stood in the way of the polymer clay community being taken seriously. There is a clear, almost desperate, desire for polymer clay to be recognized as a real craft or real art, and not just a hobby ...

[...]

Wiegard's polymer practice is a melding of many worlds—art and kitsch, product and process, commercial and craft ... [His] mosaics move across the slippery terrain of digital performance, online identity, and attention economies—yet the works only refer back to their ecstatic origins with a stoic nod. They may be made of absurdist material, brightly colored and meant for children, but the mosaics take themselves seriously—not unlike Wiegard's own demeanor in his videos. While sitting with Wiegard in his Berlin studio I asked him how he bakes his larger pieces. "In a commercial oven across the street. It took two years to figure out how to get the process right" ... I was immediately hit with the image of Wiegard carefully crossing Skalitzer Strasse with a massive pan, like some sort of artisanal Keebler Elf. This procession to the bakery means he figured out how to industrialize the domestic—transforming it into something fit for a museum. And isn't this what the polymer community has wanted all along?"

– Selected and edited extracts from Calla Henkel's "Oddly Satisfying" (2021). In *Illiberal Arts*, edited by Anselm Franke and Kerstin Stakemeier and published by Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.

**Philip Wiegard** (b. 1977, Schwetzingen, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. His work investigates forms of creative expression and collaborative work against the backdrop of production and labor conditions. He studied art at the University of the Arts Berlin (1998–2003) and Hunter College, New York (2001–2002). He won a fellowship from the Berlin Senate of Culture (2019 and 2020), the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes (2001–2003), and the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2007), and participated in the Spring Workshop residency program in Hong Kong (2014).

Selected solo and group exhibitions include: *Illiberal Arts*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, 2021); *These Are the Only Times You Have Known*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (Berlin, 2020); *In the Name of Talent*, Between Bridges (Berlin, 2018); *Beehave*, Fundació Joan Miró (Barcelona, 2018); *Show Me the Money!*, Museet for Samtidskunst (Roskilde, 2017); *Nine to Five* (with Christodoulos Panayiotou), Kunstverein Nürnberg (Nuremberg, 2016); *When Fashion Shows The Danger Then Fashion Is The Danger* (with Bernhard Willhelm), Museum of Contemporary Art–Pacific Design Center (Los Angeles, 2015); *Funeral Charade of Poses*, HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin, 2011); *TopHane*, Depo (Istanbul, 2010); *Rooms without Walls* (with basso Berlin), Hayward Gallery (London, 2009).

**DURATION** 18 December 2021 – 26 February 2022.

**OPENING HOURS** Thursday to Saturday, 12:00–18:00.

## **CONTACT**

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