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Vivian Suter
'Worm in a Water Glass'
Curator: Roos Gortzak
29.01.22 – 24.04.2022

Press kit

Vleeshal

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For more information or installation images, please contact:
office@vleeshal.nl

'Worm in a Water Glass'

From: Vivian Suter

Date: Wed, 29 April 2020, at 23:51

Subject: Rain started

To: Roos Gortzak

Dear Roos, I hope you are well.

I want to thank you for the invitation.

Please tell me if you have any thoughts.

Love from Panajachel, Vivian

On Fri, Roos Gortzak wrote:

Dear Vivian,

It's nice to read your words! I'd be curious to hear your thoughts. Do you have works in mind when you see Vleeshal's space that you'd like to bring together there? I'm very open to all your suggestions. I remember coming to your Basel studio in 2011 and we picked many works, brought them all over and decided in the space what we were showing. Perhaps this is how you'd like to work for Vleeshal too?

On another note, I've just finished Vivian Gornick's book 'The Odd Woman and the City' and I really liked it. Perhaps you know it? I found this quote in an interview with her in The New Yorker that reminded me of you:

"I asked Gornick how she knew that literature was something worthy of study. She looked at me as if I had asked how she knew that clean water was good to drink. I felt ashamed. Like her mother, I was thinking in terms of the market, and she in terms of the soul."

Much love,

Roos

On Thu, Vivian Suter wrote:

Dear Roos, yes I feel like an odd woman and clean water is not always as you would like it from a spring. We have to use bottled water. Once, really only once since Covid, I had one visitor for lunch. And then, the invited woman saw a worm in my carafe with water that I was about to pour into our glasses. Since then I haven't had any visitors anymore, I just couldn't do it. If you dare, you are welcome. All my best, Vivian.

WORM IN A WATER GLASS

We dared, we went and selected 89 paintings for Vivian Suter's show at Vleeshal, which we dedicated to the worm in the water glass. It is impossible to consider the paintings of Swiss-Argentinian artist Vivian Suter (b. 1949) without discussing where and how she lives and works. Since 1983, Suter has resided on the grounds of a former coffee plantation just outside Panajachel, Guatemala. This small village is situated along the shores of the breath-taking and incredibly deep Lake Atitlán, which is enclosed by volcanoes. Here, in her own refuge just outside the village, the incredibly productive Suter paints whenever she can, in a life guided by recurring rituals.

Each day, for example, she decides where to paint: down by the mango tree, which is covered by the shade of tall tropical greenery, or in and around her studio further up the hill. From up there, you could once admire an incredible vista of Atitlán and the surrounding mountain range. In the present, you can only see a dense labyrinth of branches and foliage from trees that the artist planted on the slope of the mountain. Over the years, Suter observed how the view gradually changed, letting it happen, and enjoying every stage of the process equally. This approach also characterizes Suter's work. The natural environment, her direct surroundings, have become part of the painterly process. Tropical rains wash away new brushstrokes, leaves and mud stick to drying paint, and

her three beloved dogs leave their footprints on the canvases, whether she likes it or not. For Suter, life and making art are not only intertwined, but also possess a certain inevitability.

There is a risk of exoticizing and romanticizing Vivian Suter's life-work in Guatemala. A repeated version of this story goes as follows: by leaving the vibrant Basel art scene in the 1980s, the Swiss-Argentinian Suter chose a reclusive life in Panajachel, turning her back on the rest of the world to focus solely on her art. In many ways, however, Suter is in fact very much connected with the world. She exists at an intersection where countless axes of global displacement and struggle come together—be it her family history shaped by migration, recurring natural disasters in the tropics, or histories of colonialism and civil war that determine her conditions in the present. But above all, Vivian Suter is in a constant and reciprocal relationship with her surroundings, being as near to them as possible, by attempting to put them *into* her paintings, as they exist for her in that very moment. Painting is a liberating act for Suter. At the same time, however, it is also a necessary one.

Considering the above, it is not surprising that Suter has no interest in linear chronology. When her paintings are made, they continue to live. Nature continuously intervenes as co-author, during the making itself but also in the different stages of piling, hanging, drying, moving and nailing. Most importantly, Vivian's works do not exist as individual entities. Each time she installs her paintings together in a space, collectively, they establish a new work of art, formulating other relationships, meanings and perspectives in that present. An exhibition by Suter is much like a unique ecosystem, made up of climatic, sensorial and emotive experiences that are all interconnected.

'Worm in a Water Glass' is an echo of the specific context in which Suter makes her paintings. At the same time, it enters into a dialogue with

Vleeshal's exhibition space. While painting is a solitary act for Suter, installing an exhibition is a collaborative one. The artist and curator spent days at Vleeshal to select the right places for her canvases. Slowly but surely, a cosmos of panoramamic views, a painting corridor, and different colourful confrontations arose. We invite you to lose track in this cosmos and find recurring motifs such as the plants from Suter's garden, the veranda at her studio, and her dogs. We also invite you to find new and familiar emotions. As Nabila Abdel Nabi has once written: "Entering the universe of Vivian Suter's paintings shifts one's sense of being in time."

Biography Vivan Suter (short version)

1949, Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires

Born in Buenos Aires in 1949 to exiled European parents, Suter was later raised in Basel, Switzerland, where she studied painting.

Shortly after her first big group exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel In 1981, she left Europe for Guatemala where she has lived ever since.

Alongside her mother, Austrian artist Elisabeth Wild, who lived with her in Guatemala in the past years until her death, Suter exhibited at documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens in 2017. She has had solo exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Luzern, Tate Liverpool, ICA Boston, Camden Art Centre, London, Jewish Museum, New York, Kunsta and was featured in the 11th Taipei Biennial, Taiwan, on the High Line, New York, as well as in group shows at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Museo Tamayo, Mexico, amongst many other institutions.

Curriculum vitae (short version)

Recent exhibitions, projects and awards

Solo exhibitions

2022

- GAMEC, Bergamo, IT
- *Art on the Underground*, Stratford Station, London, UK
- Secession, Vienna, AT
- *Frank = Panchito*, Karma International, Zürich, CH
- *Worm in a Water Glass*, Vleeshal, Middelburg, NL

2021

- *Vivian Suter. Retrospektive*, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern, CH
- *Vivian Suter*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía Madrid, SP
- *Wolf's Hour*, Gladstone Gallery, Brussels, BE

2020

- *Vivian Suter. Bonzo's Dream*, Brücke Museum, Berlin, DE
- *Storefront Gallery*, Karma International, Zürich, CH
- *Vivian Suter: Tintin's Sofa*, Camden Arts Centre, London, UK

2019

- *Vivian Suter*, ICA Boston, Boston, US
- *Vivian Suter*, Tate Liverpool, UK
- *Vivian Suter. Nisyros*, Mudam Luxembourg Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, LU Vivian Suter, Gladstone Gallery, New York, US

Group exhibitions

2022

- High Museum of Art, Atlanta, US

2021

- *Nina's Wishbone*, Proyectos Ultravioleta, London, UK
- *Breathing one's breath*, Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, FR
- *Earth Beats: Naturbild im Wandel*, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, CH
- *Painting Stone*, Villa Lontana, Rome, IT
- *Desert X*, Coachella Valley, US

2020

- *All of Them Witches*, Deitch Projects, Los Angeles, US

2019

- *En Plein Air*, High Line, New York, US
- *Contemporary Art: Five Propositions*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, US

2018

- *Taipei Biennial – Post Nature: A Museum as an Ecosystem*, Taipei, TW
- *Art Basel Cities: Buenos Aires*, Ex Cervecería Munich, Buenos Aires, AT
- *Spiegelgasse*, Hauser & Wirth, London, UK
- *Mothers of Men*, House of Gaga, Mexico City, MX

2017

- *GT from 33,000 km: Contemporary Art, 1960 – Present*, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, US
- *Documenta 14*, Athens, GR and Kassel, DE

2016

- *Lanzarote*, Union Pacific, London, UK
- *X Bienal de Nicaragua*, Managua, NI
- *Raum 1 + 2*, Galerie Stampa, Basel, CH

2015

- *Blocking*, Martos Gallery LA, Los Angeles, US
- *Zürich & Elsewhere*, Carlos / Ishikawa, London, UK

2014

- 31st Sao Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, BR

2013

- *Concepción 41*, Fundacion de arte contemporáneo, Antigua, GT
- *Olinka or Where Movement is Created*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, MX

2011

- *6 Künstler aus Basel x2*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, CH

Awards

- Golden Pineapple, La Gran Bienal Tropical 2, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2016)
- Swiss Grand Award for Art/Prix Meret Oppenheim, Switzerland (2021)

Selected articles about the artist

2020 & 2019

- [Artforum](#)
Critics' picks: Vivian Suter at Camden Art Centre
- [Hyperallergic](#)
The Untamed Jungles of Vivian Suter's Abstract Paintings
- [The Guardian](#)
Vivian Suter: the rainforest-dwelling artist who paints with fish glue, dogs and mud
- [Financial Times](#)
Artist Vivian Suter: from remote Guatemala to Tate Liverpool
- [ArtReview](#)
Vivian Suter: Forces of Nature
- [The Art Newspaper](#)
'I mix the paint with rainwater, mud and fish glue': Vivian Suter on being back in the limelight after 30 years in rural Guatemala
- [The New York Times](#)
A Painter Who Left the Art World in Order to Actually Make Art

2018 & 2017

- [Documenta 14](#)
Moyra Davey on Vivian Suter, from documenta 14: Daybook
- [Contemporary Art Review](#)
Vivian Suter and Elisabeth Wild at Karma International
- [Tablet](#)
Vivian Suter Exhibit Enlivens Jewish Museum Lobby

- [Mousse Magazine](#)

Time Exists Differently Here: Vivian Suter and Elisabeth Wild

Exhibition booklet

See separate attachment

Invitation

See separate attachment