

## WET RESISTANCE

13 August – 30 October 2022

DORTMUNDER KUNSTVEREIN

curated by José Montealegre & Rebekka Seubert

**with works by Hanna-Maria Hammari, Julian Irlinger, James Krone, Tetsumi Kudo, Darling Lopez-Salinas, José Montealegre, Berenice Olmedo, Anna Solal, Zoe Williams**

The exhibition “Wet Resistance” creates a fictive world of moisture repelling technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in which wet resistance emerges in defence of natural, humid, human qualities. The works in this exhibition feature the wet, mossy, growing, overgrown and irrational, contrasted with the dry, clean, rational, technical and broken. The human body, with its high water content, is conceived as an organism entangled with the world in which it lives and which it constantly co-creates.

While AI has long since overtaken the moist human neuronal network in the areas of logic and efficiency (first in chess, then in mahjong, in driving, flying, controlling large industrial machinery, etc.), today’s smartphones are fitted with so-called Gorilla Glass to guard against human clumsiness. The conflict between humans and machines, which began in the 19th century in the course of industrialisation, has become more acute in the 21st, as clean dry technology is making humans seem incomplete. This supposed lack can be confronted through the wettest of all human qualities: love and humour (etym. Lat humor = moisture). The human being develops in liquid, is more than 50% water and is indistinctly delimited from its surroundings by its damp respiration. The body is in continual interchange; liquids flow into, through and out of it, connecting it with the world.

The large-scale installation by José Montealegre (\*1992 in Tegucigalpa, HON) of loose tiles and three plants sprouting from the ground becomes a landscape that creates its own physical laws, making visitors’ steps uncertain and transmitting them audibly into the space. Montealegre’s metal sculptures imitate the flora of the ‘New World’ as described in the *Nova plantarum animalium et mineralium mexicanorum historia* (1628/49), by Francisco Hernández et al. This about 1,000-page encyclopaedia of the plants and animals then ascribed to the New World contains, on page 295, the depiction of a ‘tomatillo’. Like all *Physalis* species, this original tomato grows in a protective husk. Montealegre’s tomatillos are made of delicate copper, a metal mined in South America and elsewhere today and used worldwide for technology and domestic infrastructures.

This landscaped environment contains works by eight artists. “Cup with Stains” (2018), by Anna Solal (\*1988 in Dreux, FR, lives in Paris), has left traces in various places: bird-shaped cup marks of shattered smartphone screens and other industrial remnants. The water pistol by Darling Lopez-Salinas (\*1987 in Managua, NC, lives in Managua) also consists of found material, and contains the toxic water of the Lago de Managua in Nicaragua, poisoned by corruption, urban sewage and adjacent industries. The work of Tetsumi Kudo (\*1935 Hyogo, JP–1995 Tokyo JP) is informed by the experience of the atomic bombing of Japan and the possibility of the obliteration of human existence. “Souvenir de la mue” (1970) belongs to a series of birdcages exemplifying the post-nuclear effects on the human body. The phallic worm is a recurrent motif in Kudo’s work, and can be read as scepticism about the power of human beings over nature and about unequal social relations. “before time” (2022), the new series by Julian Irlinger (\*1986 in Erlangen, lives in Berlin), also refers to the possible obliteration of species with its plastic dinosaurs – a favourite children’s toy since the 1980s – bathing in milk. This nourishing liquid produced by female mammals to ensure the survival of their own species is juxtaposed with the extinct species of the dinosaurs. The traps by Hanna-Maria Hammari (\*1986 in Tornio, FIN, lives in Frankfurt) distributed about the space look dangerous but are actually fictive, fragile ceramic objects. The form of the trap always refers to the quarry it’s waiting for, and aims to damage a soft, moist body with a hard material. The processual Waterhome Series, by James Krone (\*1975 in Chicago, USA, lives in Berlin), has two parts: the aquarium was filled with tap water

several years ago, leading to a growth of algae that renders the aquatic microcosm visible; this inspired an ongoing series of paintings created by layering, some of which are attached to the frame in reverse to reveal the stains of paint seeping through. The drawings by Zoe Williams (1983 in Salisbury, UK, lives in London) have their starting point in performative actions and play with contradictory feelings of repulsion and attraction. The artist's work examines the change in meaning and practice of rituals in contemporary societies, and the influence on our actions of the urge to power, of sex and production conditions. It deals playfully with gender, eroticism, handicraft, magic, hedonism and excess. Williams' video and ceramic busts draw visitors into an intermediary world ruled by a lady of the wetlands. Her performance *Liquid Currency* was co-devised with the costume designer HYDRA and the musicians Katie Shannon and Susu Laroche. "*Homonyme*" (2018) and "*Askésis*" (2019), by Berenice Olmedo (\*1987 in Oaxaca, MX, lives in Mexico City), are a reflection on living environments and what they need to ensure survival. They are made up of medical devices such as orthopaedic prostheses, ventilators and alternating-pressure mattresses. The quiet air noises of the inflating and deflating mattresses can be clearly heard at close range. Like the neighbouring photographs by Julian Irlinger, they lead to questions about living environments, about our interactions and connections with the world.

The human body is more than a vessel; it's an accumulation of moist matter in continual interchange with the environment. This fact casts doubt on the category of the individual, which is not quite as separate as socially established legal descriptions would have us believe. In *Bodies of Water* the author Astrida Neimanis theorises from this in order to fundamentally reconceive the world and the human body within it.