

*(un)forgiving, surprising, blessing*

Emmanuel Awuni, Won Cha, Ndayé Kouagou

In collaboration with LC Queisser, Tbilisi & Sundry, London

10.09. - 30.10.2022

In collaboration with the galleries LC Queisser from Tbilisi and Sundry from London, Nir Altman presents three artistic positions whose highly personal practices subtly complement each other on a poetic level. The exhibition with works by Emmanuel Awuni, Won Cha and Ndayé Kouagou takes place in the framework of Various Others.

Emmanuel Awuni rethinks and questions the structures underlying established systems of power. Drawing on diasporic traditions, the Ghanaian-born and London-based interdisciplinary artist explores the relationships between non-hierarchical and non-linear sounds found in hip-hop, pidgin English and Patois. He translates these elements into a structured, highly individual visual language. Awuni's practice encompasses sculpture, painting, and installation, in which hip hop and rap become analytical vehicles for processes of deconstruction and reconfiguration. A general sense of resistance can be felt in his artistic practice, at the same time the possibility of spiritual reflection seems possible, the transcendence of lived experiences. A recurring motif in Awuni's work is the dandelion, a plant often only degraded as a weed, yet this plant manages to thrive and blossom like a flower under the most unwelcoming conditions. In the exhibition at Nir Altman, Emmanuel Awuni presents a large-format painting, a specially produced audio work and one more small-format piece.

The material collected from different sources in the works of Won Cha captivates through its complex layering. The Philadelphia-based artist and author uses processes of fragmentation and composition of preserved cultural traces, which he transforms into complex installations. The historical and political artefacts gathered from different cities, spaces and archives are deconstructed in the process and change their form and texture in each incarnation. With each assembly, disassembly, and reassembly of an installative space, new forms, colours, signs, gods, symbols, and nodes are thus created, Cha's artistic vocabulary is continuously expanding. In the exhibition in Munich, Won Cha is showing a series of works that draw on the artist's personal experiences of migration, assimilation, and migrant labour in the US. The works draw on the story of an unknown Korean plantation worker who was stripped of his identity on a Hawaiian sugar plantation and dehumanized as "LAIE379".

The performances, paintings, and sculptures by French artist Ndayé Kouagou are always based on text fragments, written by him. He approaches themes such as identity, individual legitimacy, freedom and love in a poetic, laconic and thoroughly humorous way, intuitively combining everyday experiences with existential thoughts. For the current exhibition, he has produced six new works, each consisting of a framed textile composition and a poem. Text fragment and image complement each other, acting like a translation or corresponding transformation. The artist himself describes the relationship between the two elements in the context of fashion: for him, the artwork is a beautiful dress, and the poem is an even more beautiful purse, so the art piece is wearing the poem.

Text: Quirin Brunmeier