

HOLLYBUSH GARDENS
1-2 WARNER YARD
LONDON EC1R 5EY
TEL: +44 (0)207 837 5991
WWW.HOLLYBUSHGARDENS.CO.UK

RETO PULFER: LIVINGTHINGS

Preview: Thursday, 1 December, 18:00 - 20:00
Exhibition: 2 December 2022 - 21 January 2023

The Fortified Nettles

Who doesn't know the stubborn death rhizome?
it grows underground without a phone
it waits patiently, out of sight out of mind
it suddenly appears like a winged horse, the fast kind

the creature punches heroically through the layer of humus
later, richly leafed stems follow with purpose
the fine, crushed tips of the leaves want to be exposed to the light
it looks like several plants, but is only one sprite

those who furiously mow down the green at great speeds
have simply sown the healthy seeds
your weeding just teased it out
because the livingthing hid itself in the ground

those who think they have to just do-do-do-do
the deadly nettle leaf buds will laugh evilly at you
the death rhizome hides under the soil
the nettle is perfect, is it perhaps extra-terrestrial?!

Hollybush Gardens is pleased to present *Livingthings*, Reto Pulfer's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery. Pulfer's multidisciplinary practice incorporates textiles, paintings, fictional writing, soundscapes, performance, found objects and natural material. These intuitive environments embody conceptual states which Pulfer refers to as *Zustand*, variously defined as a state or a situation. A *Zustand* is the very tension between transformation and fixity, as Anselm Franke notes: 'A *Zustand* may be a situation that has become transfixed or even permanent [...] an eternal present, having spatialised time. But the concept also inevitably invokes transitions from one state to another [...] and a liminal realm between them.'

For Pulfer, this embodied networking of conceptual and material systems constitutes a means of relating to the natural world. *Livingthings* features new and historical textile installations, collections of natural elements and discrete works of embroidery on plant-dyed fabric. Often influenced by his immediate surroundings, Pulfer frequently uses materials which are close at hand to examine human and non-human relations. Continuing Pulfer's immersive and synaesthetic installations, *Livingthings* stages a sensorial environment which probes the mutability and porosity of biology, materiality and cosmology:

Livingthings are tragic things. And dead
things make good fertiliser. And some have
a compassionate pumpingheart.²

The exhibition serves as a material continuation of Pulfer's ecological science fiction novel *Gina* (2022), which imagines a realm of post-apocalyptic and post-human conditions navigated by a multispecies system. By turns sensorial, magical and distinctly ecological, *Gina* posits a speculative imagining of an interdependent world that decentres anthropocentrism. Adhering to this logic through material and form that integrates organic matter and found material, Pulfer expresses sensitivity to a multiplicity of life

¹ Reto Pulfer: *Gina—a Zustand novel*, 2022, trans. Jen Calleja

² *Ibid*

forms both visible and invisible. Organic dyes permeate fabric paintings and suspended fabric sculptures, appearing in a state of emerging. These evoke, as Pulfer describes, a kind of 'garden architecture [...] landscaping across centuries and styles, referencing ancient and postmodern architecture with a material as simple as textile.' Swathes of patchwork textile shroud the ceiling as a fluid vista embroidered with rhizomes, worms and hieroglyphs. Collectively, these floating structures manifest a hybridised space between environment, sculpture and nomadic architecture. A large vermiform table displays geometric compositions alongside wood, dried flowers and seeds as though readying raw material for concrete experimentation. Within this provisional installation, sensorial qualities and emotive details conjure a philosophical and constellatory poetics, tracing the generative potential of symbiosis and infinitude, metamorphosis and impermanence.

Reto Pulfer (b. 1981, Bern, Switzerland) lives and works in Uckermark, Germany. Pulfer's practice investigates various conditions of mutability, combining textile, painting, botanical life and natural material to create immersive installations and performances. Recent solo exhibitions include *Blitzzustand*, Kunstverein KunstHaus Potsdam, Germany (2022); *edrerde*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2021); *Reto Pulfer: Gegenwartsgewächse*, Fundaziun Nairs, Switzerland (2020); *Angiozustand*, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2020); *Tincti*, Art Basel Parcours (2019); *Bourgeon purin pur*, Centre culturel suisse, Paris (2019); *Die Loci Der Ortie*, Centre international d'art et du paysage de l'île de Vassivière, France (2015); *Gewässerzeiten*, Spike Island, Bristol, UK (2015); *Dehydrierte Landschaft*, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Switzerland (2015); *Les chambres des états*, Musée régional d'art contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon, Sérignan, France; and *Zustandseffekte*, Swiss Institute, New York (2013).

Selected group exhibitions include *Soil to Soil*, Gebert Stiftung für Kultur, Rapperswil, Switzerland (2022); *The Stomach and the Port*, Liverpool Biennial 2021 (2021); *You - Oeuvres de la collection Lafayette Anticipations*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2019); Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt, Kunsthalle Basel (2018); *Metamorphoses – Let Everything Happen to You*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2018); *100 Jahre Gegenwart. Der Auftakt*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2015); and *Animism*, Kunsthall Extra City Antwerpen and M HKA - Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2010). His work is held in the collections of FRAC Limousin, France; Centre national des arts plastiques, France; Collection Lafayette Anticipations, Paris; Sammlung Kunstcredit Baselland, Basel; and David Roberts Art Foundation, London.

For press enquiries and further information, please contact: alex@hollybushgardens.co.uk

Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm; or by appointment.