



PRESS RELEASE

EX SITU. SAMPLES OF LIFEFORMS

01.09. – 26.11.17

A Kassen
Martin Erik Andersen
Alan Bogana
Tacita Dean
Roni Horn
Lauren Huret
Dominique Koch
Lena Maria Thüring
Keith Tyson
Hannah Weinberger
Pedro Wirz

Copenhagen Contemporary (CC) is pleased to present *Ex Situ. Samples of Lifeforms* in collaboration with CHART and City of Basel: An international group exhibition with artists and works that address the constantly changing conditions of forms of life on planet Earth. At a time of accelerating transformations in global ecosystems, humans and animals leave and lose their natural habitat. The exhibition reflects the unruly state of migrating species trying to adapt to a new world where nature, culture and technology are inextricably entangled and enmeshed.

The expression 'ex situ' means 'off-site' or 'out of place'. It is used by conservation biologists for the preservation of fauna and flora in man-made environments. The show's starting point is to rethink the art space CC, which is housed in a large post-industrial box – similar to a water tank – on the harbour of Copenhagen. During the show the site takes on an appearance that is somewhat similar to an aquarium or, more broadly speaking, a so-called vivarium, i.e. a shelter for an artificially recreated environment, submarine or otherwise.

New and existing large-scale installations as well as smaller, more intimate works explore a variety of organic and inorganic forms, such as the life cycle of jellyfish or the routines of a shipping crew on board a freighter. Other works engage with the necessary conditions of life such as soil and, more prominently, water in an era marked by water reserve depletion, acidification of the oceans, rising sea levels, and mass extinction as well as the migration of people and species. The works in *Ex Situ* put conditions and forms of life on display for visitors to contemplate, similar to the way we look at an aquarium – except that here we are no longer standing on the outside, but inside of it.

Four curators – Alice Wilke and Claire Hoffmann (Basel), Jannie Haagemann and Toke Lykkeberg (Copenhagen) – have created this exhibition in collaboration, which features works by highly accomplished and upcoming artists from Swiss and Nordic contexts.

The exhibition is the result of a cultural partnership between the City of Basel, the Swiss ambassador in Denmark, CHART and Copenhagen Contemporary.

PICTURES, CAPTIONS AND WORK TITLES CAN BE FOUND IN THE PRESS MATERIAL

ON <http://cphco.org/presse/>

SEE BELOW FOR ARTIST BIO

The exhibition will be open to members of the press Thursday 31 August from 15.30–16.45. The artists Dominique Koch, Pedro Wirz, Hannah Weinberger, Lena Maria Thüring, Alan Bogana, Martin Erik Andersen and A Kassen will be present.

The official opening is Thursday 31 August from 17.00–21.00.

Press kit and images are available for download from the CC <http://cphco.org/presse/>

For attendance at press preview or interview request please contact no later than Wednesday 23 August:

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ARTISTS AND WORKS

A Kassen Christian Bretton–Meyer (b. 1976), Morten Steen Hebsgaard (b. 1977), Søren Petersen (b. 1975), and Tommy Petersen (b. 1977), DK, live and work in Copenhagen/Berlin

Ponds (spilling) (2017) is based on an accidental splash of coffee on a piece of paper, which has served as sketch for the carved ponds in the floor, filled with coffee. Coffee is essential to professional life in Denmark, one of the biggest consumers per capita in the world. The plant *Coffea* is native to Africa and Asia, but since the colonial era it has been cultivated on a large scale in plantations in tropical parts of the world. Monocultural production of coffee has amongst others resulted in massive deforestation as well as water degradation. *Ponds (spilling)* attests to the way coffee travels from the tropics to Denmark where it is sold, consumed and poured into a cup which spills onto a floor plan that ends up transfiguring a building in the harbor of Copenhagen.

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Martin Erik Andersen b. 1964, DK, lives and works in Copenhagen

Martin Erik Andersen considers art as the outcome of 'collective' or 'transpersonal' activities. His installations are patchworks of self-made, remade and found objects such as plants that unfold partly under, partly beyond the artist's control. As with his installation *Nut, the Nightsky and the Astrapool (the Obelisk)* (2015), his work bespeaks the way we orient ourselves in space. Whereas our body is subject to gravity and aligns with a vertical axis, our eyes scan and map our field of vision along a horizontal axis, akin to the way lasers sweep Andersen's installation. *The wornout carpets* (2017) are coated with silver on their back – now facing the visitors. The silver surface mirrors ourselves as well as the surroundings, while the patterned surfaces are hidden from view. There is a sense that everything is connected, yet nothing is accessible at the same time.

Alan Bogana b. 1979, CH, lives and works in Geneva

The installation *Crystal fire* (2015) is a three-channel synchronized video projected over a structure reminiscent of a fire place. The computer simulation generates a light phenomenon with flames of a defined volume and the optical properties of quartz crystal. Bogana creates an extended reality, a hybrid between the visions of water and fire, a space of its own, with its subtle, silent but continuous, endless play of light.

This installation is part of Bogana's long-term project *Cave Caustics* on the ephemeral effects of natural focusing of light. Such caustics can commonly be observed at the bottom of swimming pools and are created by the surface of water interacting with the rays of light. The series *Cave Caustics* explores phenomena we are unlikely to observe in the real world and are produced via computer-generated simulations commonly used in the entertainment industry.

High above all the other works, the two lights of *Transmutations I* (2016) circle through the whole space. The undulating water surface and yellow LED-light – evoking a lighthouse and the sun's orbit – create an abstract narrative and a site-specific choreographed composite projection, also inspired by industrial processes of cooling and fusion, as well as the novel *Solaris* by Stanislaw Lem.

Tacita Dean b. 1965, UK, lives and works in Berlin/London

The poetic visual narratives of British artist Tacita Dean often take their starting point in found images. This is also the case in the 6.5 meter long photogravure *Quaternary* (2014), a constructed landscape of post-apocalyptic ruin, composed of found 19th Century prints merged with the artist's writings and drawings. The inspiration for this work stems from theories about the super volcano in the Yellowstone National Park, where magma has been gathering beneath the park's crust for millennia without breaking through. In case of an eventual eruption, speculations include that the explosion could be of such magnitude that the entire region could be wiped out – and even that the world would be covered with an ash cloud so dense that it would block out the sun and cause an ice age. Dean has conceived her work as such a post-megacalderic apocalypse.

Roni Horn b. 1955, US, lives and works in New York City

Since American artist Roni Horn's visit to Iceland in 1975, the volcanic island has been a recurrent starting point for much of her work. From 1998 to 2007 she worked on the photo series *Bird* of taxidermic Icelandic birds. The birds in *Untitled #1* (1998) are photographed from the back on a white studio background in the style of traditional passport photos. The birds seem in every way detached from their natural habitat. They could be anywhere and nowhere. They are dead, yet presented as couples as if they lead a life of their own. Their heads face the wall as if they stare into this blank that may be the outside, yet we do not know if we see what they see.

Dominique Koch b. 1984, CH, lives and works in Basel/Paris

With *Perpetual Operator* (2016) Dominique Koch intertwines two narratives and fields – a biologist research into the surprising existence of the self-regenerating jellyfish, and a philosophical-social discourse on the capitalist-economic system and social structures. Within the ubiquitous topic of Anthropocene and human-non-human-relation, Dominique Koch combines knowledge from both the scientific as well as the philosophical side, mediating this complex content in a stringent and still sensuous installation. In the video we learn about the *Turritopsis dohrnii* jellyfish and its ability to regenerate its own DNA up to 14 times and thus be born again. This phenomenon is juxtaposed to the capitalist system on the verge of collapse, and accompanied by the voice-over with statements by the philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi as well as a sound-work of the poet Seijiro Murayama, whose reading of DNA in the jellyfish transforms this genetic data into an expressive, abstract poem.

Lauren Huret b. 1984, FR, lives and works in Geneva

Deep Blue Dream III (Swamp Version) is part of a series of videos that Lauren Huret realized in various versions from 2015 to 2016, as a result of an extensive research on the metaphorical potential of the ocean, the colour blue and its use in the technological imaginary: the infinity and depth of the WWW are also often associated with the color blue. Not least, the first computer that beat a chess-champion was dubbed Deep Blue. Huret's video is showing a body crushed beneath a glass-plate, caught in a screen. With the blue, greenish and black hues and the slow-motion movements of the body, one is reminded of the movement underwater, also suggesting a dream-like state. Huret's work is deeply informed by narratives around technologies and their development – and their impact on everyday life, how machine/human relations are depicted and narrated, and what ideologies, hopes and fears are linked to it. Observing both the aspect of the fantastic, imaginary and very real technological developments, Lauren Huret intends to critically contextualize these mechanisms and ideologies.

Lena Maria Thüring b. 1981, CH, lives and works in Zürich

Gardien de la paix (GPX) (2011)

Images of an aquarium with floating fish and other sea-life are overlaid with a voice narrating the personal and professional implications of working as a police officer in France. The seemingly unconnected registers of image and sound begin to intersect as the policeman, whose parents are originally from Guadeloupe, reveals how he regularly visits the aquarium at the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration (previously Musée de la France d'Outre-mer and Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie) in Paris, to watch the fish from the French colonies. He does so in order to slacken off his official duty as a policeman, to find a balance between his function for the state and society in a uniform, and his individual identity, his wishes and his present and past. In *Hanjin Palermo* (2015) the view of the backwash of a ship, underlaid with facts on cargo transport and their crew, is juxtaposed scenes of the crew in their leisure-time, singing love-songs in a karaoke bar. We observe a sort of forced community with its own rules, habits, balances and forces. The work both acknowledges the subtlety of the social exchange, such as the temporarily un-hierarchical moments in the karaoke bar, as well as the claustrophobic situation of a being on board a cramped cargo ship in the middle of the ocean, particularly the underpaid Philipinos remain on board for weeks and months. The work also draws attention to the larger picture of the global container shipping industry and in this way the isolation of the crew is connected to the seemingly endlessness of the ocean and the likewise steady flow of goods.

Keith Tyson b. 1969, UK, lives and works in London

The series *Nature paintings*, which Keith Tyson has been working on since 2005, are made by

pouring paints, pigments and various liquids onto a prepared surface. Tyson sees the resulting works less as images of nature than by nature. The works are made in an interplay with gravity, chemical reactions and other forces that the artist does not entirely control. As he puts it himself: “The reason that these paintings resemble rock formations, cells, clouds or satellite images is simply because the same laws that created those phenomena also create the *Nature Paintings*.”

Hannah Weinberger b. 1988, CH/US, lives and works in Basel

Curtains are a recurring element of Weinberger’s installations. Underlining the rhythm and fluidity that can be perceived throughout her acoustic and visual works, the curtains do not function solely as screens for her videos but create their own stage setting within the exhibition space. Weinberger’s works are based on a broad archive of sounds and moving images that she uses to create new compositions dealing with the relations and interactions between memory and time, thus giving rise to new and different logics. Known for her sound pieces – e.g. minimal soundtracks composed out of incidental background noises of social gatherings or mixtures of her own recordings and open-source samples – she deliberately avoids sound in her visual work. Hannah Weinberger’s video *On Air* (2017) consists of a collage of various scenes and sequences: an aquarium in a zoo, cats playing behind a window, boats on a river, people dancing at a festival, traffic in the street or train rides ... sometimes rhythmically overlapped by small floating jellyfish. Inside and outside views interchange constantly. Her videos are based on everyday situations and close observations of spontaneous situations and encounters. This seemingly arbitrary mixture of different spaces and places has one central element in common: movements. It is the rhythm of the various movements composed by Weinberger that takes the viewer in – as if moving silently to waves of sound and being somehow lost in time.

Pedro Wirz b. 1981, BRA, lives and works in Porto

We Know What We Learn (2017) are three large hills made of soil (humus) and smaller elements throughout the space. By constructing a whole 'cosmos' or 'landscape' including both natural and artificial elements – such as tools and instruments acquired by the human being, as well as nests or eggs – Pedro Wirz’s new piece directly reacts to the idea of the creation of a hybrid habitat, where contradicting influences and conflicting inhabitants meet and interact. Each of the hills is equipped with a certain attribute, adding a narrative, even mythic layer to the work – linked to Wirz’ interest in the intersection between science and rationality and the deep-rooted influence of legends, myths and oral knowledge-transmission onto human culture.

Even though the installation expands into the space, it is also defined by a fragility and ephemerality: the three hills built from a mixture of humus and plaster, will change and alter during the show – for example depending on humidity, they may even become a habitat for other forms of life, such as mushrooms thereby blurring the boundaries between sculpture and living organisms.

CURATORS

Jannie Haagemann, MA (Comparative Literature and Modern Culture, University of Copenhagen) is senior curator at CC, where she is also part of the management group. She has worked as a curator for more than fifteen years, including at Gl. Strand and Faurschou Foundation.

Claire Hoffmann, art historian and curator, worked at Schaulager Basel and Kunsthaus Zurich and is running the independent curatorial project *deuxpiece* (Basel, New York, Berlin). Currently, she is assistant curator at Kunsthaus Langenthal and working on her PhD at the research center Eikones, Basel.

Toke Lykkeberg is a curator, art critic and director of the exhibition space Tranen at Gentofte Main Library. Previously, he has among others directed the exhibition space IMO and worked as a journalist for newspapers Information og Børsen.

Alice Wilke (MA, Art theory and curatorial studies, University of Art and Design / ZKM Karlsruhe) is curator at *deuxpiece*, an independent curatorial project. She is research assistant at the Art Institute Basel. Previously she worked as assistant curator at the Museum Tinguely and the Kunsthalle Göppingen.

PARTNERS

CHART ART FAIR was established in 2013 by Gallery Susanne Ottesen, Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, V1 Gallery, Andersen's Contemporary, and David Risley Gallery, with the aim to challenge the boundaries and experience of a traditional art fair. The ambition was and remains to further develop the impact and role of a Nordic art event on the international art and cultural scene. Over 18,000 people visited CHART 2016, making it the most popular edition yet.

COPENHAGEN CONTEMPORARY (CC) is an independent institution established to create a new international exhibition space in Copenhagen for installation art and performative works. CC wants to participate in the creation of an exhibition venue in Copenhagen for the large and technically demanding installations of contemporary art. In the 13 months CC has been open Bruce Nauman's Green Light Corridor, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's guitar playing zebra finches, Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree Garden*, Sarah Sze's flickering *Timekeeper*, Anselm Kiefer's monumental lead airplanes and Christian Marclay's 24 hour long *The Clock* have been exhibited among others in the temporary halls at Papirøen.

BASEL lies at the heart of the three-country-triangle where Switzerland, France and Germany meet. The city is nicknamed the "cultural capital of Switzerland". It lives and breathes culture, and promotes and celebrates the arts. Despite its small size, Basel has an exceptional cultural offering. Many of its institutions and events enjoy an international reputation. No other European city has so many top museums in such a small space: 37 square kilometres for almost 40 museums. The range of collections presented covers a wide range of interests, but is mainly focussed on fine art. The prestigious exhibitions hosted for example by the Kunstmuseum (Museum of Fine Art) or Fondation Beyeler draw international attention. Moreover, there are a lively young art scene, many independent exhibition spaces and galleries. One highlight of the art scene is Art Basel, the largest art fair in the world. But art is not limited to the indoors. On a stroll through the city, there is many works of art and a visionary architecture for example from star architects like Herzog & de Meuron to be discovered.

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