

an exhibition by Diogo Pinto

15 Oct - 26 Nov

The walls and cabinetry of grandparents homes are reserved to a special kind: the very best. I'm talking about photos of grandchildren, weddings, vacations and all things family (pets included). They're the archetypical shrines that achieve the seemingly impossible task of framing a lifetime worth of pride, tenderness and warmth. In between loved ones we sometimes find the odd inanimate exception: house portraits.

Circa 1950s onwards¹, the practice of hiring a photographer to take a picture of your home from a bird's-eye view seems to have taken off². Before drones and Google maps, it became popular among an older generation that could actually afford to buy or even build a house. I guess it makes sense. To be proud enough to hang a photo of a life-long achievement, like the house you had built from the ground up, really comes as no surprise. My grandparents had one, right by the doorway, and the more I ask around the more I hear of similar decorative choices. Growing up, I never really gave it much scrutiny, if anything, it scratched an itch I never knew I had: "what do we look like from the sky?". The aerial photographers perspective of choice was usually 3/4 with a super tight zoom, focusing on said building and leaving out any reference points. By almost completely shrinking the house down to an abstracted group of oblong rectangles and tilted squares, it made for a very "boxy" and "tiny" rendering of homes. And well, being inside the house you now see depicted in such a way, felt weird – sort of as the "this-can't-be-my-voice" estrangement one has when hearing a recording of yourself talk for the first time; or when you have a dream of seeing yourself asleep in bed. I suppose they were made considering their future exhibition inside the spaces they portray. It's all very meta, yet very loving. As all photos that are dear enough to make it onto our walls, they're terrifically endearing.

Paul Bättig was a biochemist who worked in the laboratories of the Biozentrum (Basel) for 40 something years. Paul had two big pursuits outside of his lab work: jewellery and photography. At some point, he opened Ai-Ping Silber on Erasmusplatz, a jewellery store named after his wife. In there, he combined all sorts of objects of his affection: stones, silvers, pendants, paintings. He was also a self-taught photographer, even winning some local newspaper contests. He would

take pictures of his co-workers at the Biozentrum, and the Biozentrum building itself. Furthermore, in the '90s, Paul decided to hire a helicopter and take his own aerial shots of the Biozentrum. Following on the house portrait tradition, such pride and attachment usually reserved to homes and property were, in this way, also dedicated to this office building, his workspace, the concrete apple of his eye. But Paul didn't frame and place the photos in his laboratory, as the story usually goes. He commissioned a painter (Oswulf) to take the aerial photos, and some from street-level, and make them into oil paintings; not one, not two, but a dozen of them. This conversion of mediums — the care to repeatedly have these images rendered methodically into paint — acts as a metaphor of the enormous attention and emotion surrounding this one place; true ownership and desire of its representation, curiosity about its unseen angles, appreciation for its fortitude.

I first saw these paintings in 2021, hanging pretty high on the walls at Ai-Ping Silber, now ran by Ai-Ping Bättig, where I sometimes go to look at beautiful jewellery.

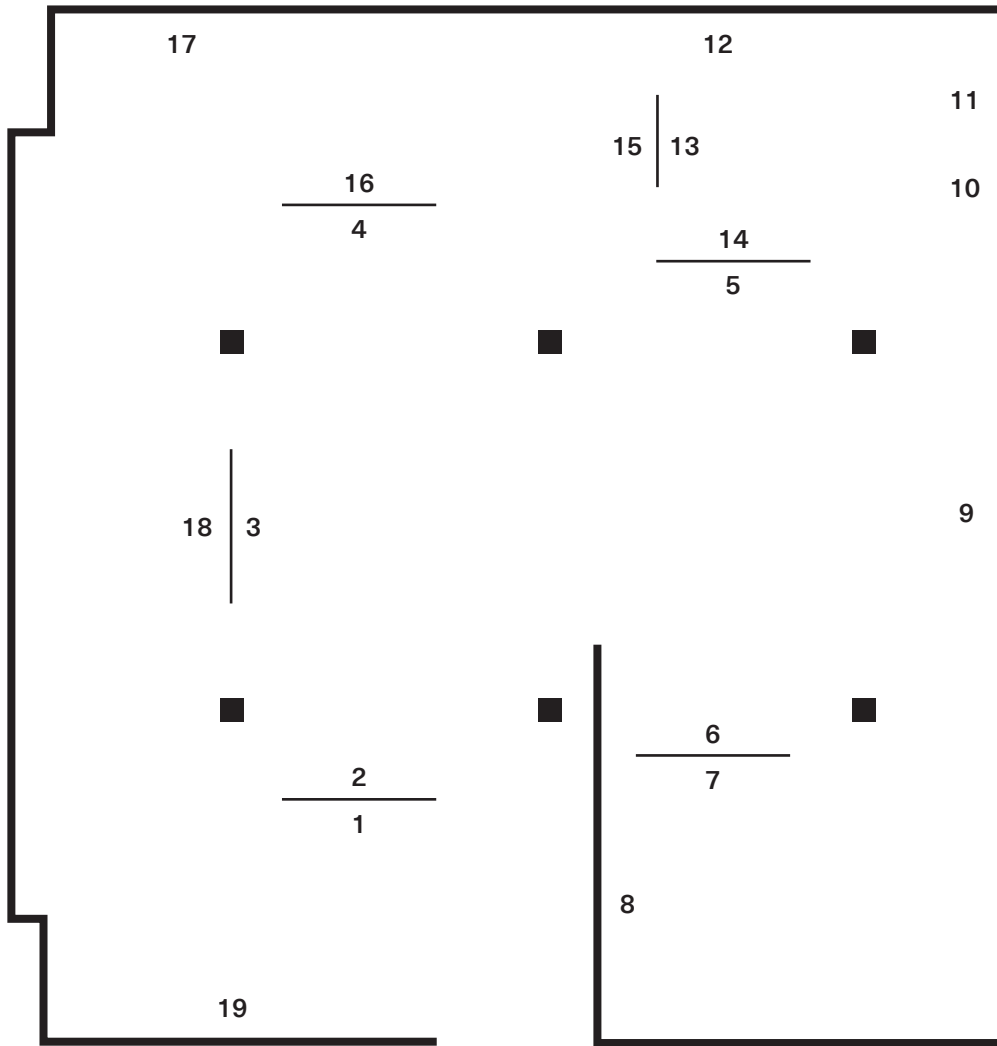
Now, we are in an office building in Silbern, the industrial area of Dietikon, in a refurbished '00s office building which now seeks to cater the needs of young start-up companies. In room 2.01, alongside Oswulf/Paul's, we find my paintings, equally representing bird's-eye views of all sorts of latitudes, coordinates and heights. They are, as Oswulf did, a direct conversion of the several images City Plaza, Biozentrum and Paul Bättig have stirred up in me.

¹ My data collection here is totally informal and based mostly on my Portuguese upbringing – German and Spanish friends find it also a past common practice in their respective countries.

² Well, pun intended. Helicopter seems to have been the transportation of choice for these flying photographers.

text by Diogo Pinto

Dietikon Projektraum is supported by:



1. Oswulf (commissioned by Paul Bättig)
Biozentrum 1507-120-22, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

2. Diogo Pinto
The Lunch Break, 2023
Acrylic on paper mounted onto canvas, 90 x 190 cm

3. Diogo Pinto
Lunar Panting, 2023
Oil on canvas, 90 x 190 cm

4. Diogo Pinto
Decaf Ballads, 2023
Oil, acrylic and decaffeinated coffee on canvas, 90 x 190 cm

5. Diogo Pinto
Autumn, 2023
Oil on gobelin, 90 x 190 cm

6. Diogo Pinto
My First Last Briefcase, 2023
Oil on canvas, 140 x 160 cm

7. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
BIOZ PHARMAZ 0129-08 1361
2009, Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

8. Diogo Pinto
These gates of mine, 2023
Oil and acrylic on paper mounted onto canvas, 48 x 56 cm

9. Diogo Pinto
Through the looking glass, 2023
Vinyl on window, dimensions variable

10. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
Biozentrum 0105-16 5862, 2008
Oil on canvas, 42 x 52 cm

11. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
Biozentrum 1502-0105-01 7563, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 42 x 52 cm

12. Diogo Pinto
A heart of opal, 2023
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

13. Diogo Pinto
8 O'clock Respite, 2023
Oil on canvas, 160 x 90 cm

14. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
0105-14 6275, 2007
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

15. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
0123-27 5941, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm

16. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
Untitled, 2007
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

17. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
0123-31 2765, 2007
Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm

18. Oswulf (comm. by Paul Bättig)
BIOZ 0123-28 2169, 2007
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

19. Diogo Pinto
The Bird Paradox, 2023
Oil on canvas, 38 x 46 cm