

April in Paris

Conduit House

Curated by Jennifer Teets

September 17 – December 17, 2023

Anne Bourse, Sarah Fripon, Nöle Giuliani, Mitchell Kehe, Zarah Landes, Brianna Leatherbury, Irina Lotarevich, Ester Partegàs, Laurence Sturla, Michael Van den Abeele, Helen Verhoeven

April in Paris, Aerdenhout is proud to present *Conduit House*, a group exhibition curated by American curator and writer based in Paris, Jennifer Teets. The exhibition features the work of eleven international artists working across formats and mediums.

The word conduit comes from the Old French meaning "escort, protection, pipe, channel" and from the Latin conductus "a leading, a pipe," from *conducere*, "to lead or bring together; contribute, serve." The use of the compound word conduit house applied here takes us to the unique nature of the venue, the home gallery in Aerdenhout, a residence, but also a space for artistic engagement. *Conduit House* features artistic positions engaging the body as a liminal space and architecture, conducive to private transactions. Sheaths, skins, and surfaces meet in the exhibition to reflect on dwelling, energy expenditure, appliance and utility in the context of domestic space. Formally this is a show with artworks piped in—processes are embedded in material substrates, at times sheltered within the work.

True to its name, some of the first "conduit houses" were medieval wide circular cisterns in the ground, with pipes running in several directions. These houses gathered water from hillsides and protected shallow wells. They connected monasteries, piping and feeding water towers in abbeys and into smaller tanks, serving kitchens and infirmaries. Material history has a long history traced to the use of the river as a metaphor for permanent change in the world. Up until the eighteenth century, only liquids such as bodily fluids and blood were described as flowing, as science historian Barbara Orland has written. Today material flow comprises the movement of almost every raw material, overstretched and busting at the seams. Conduits cover electric lines installed over surfaces of walls; run within, offer holding, and deduce thermal stress. In an age of canals and channels, pipes, tubes, wires, locks, valves, streets, tracks, ramps, networks, and so on, thinking through what a number of thinkers call "affective infrastructures" allows for multiplicity and difference and to be with each other in common, moving beyond relations of sovereignty. Reading these questions as provocations to imagine, *Conduit House* reunites work interested in such interrelations, but also heeds attention to ordinary domestic life, and utilitarian things hanging around the house.

Anne Bourse (b. 1982 in Lyon, France. Lives and works in Paris) makes drawings and sculptures enlivened with sensuality and psychedelic fantasia. The undulating lines in the drawing *Seul sur le sable* (2021) signals movement. *Sxxx scx xsc xs c s xs xs III* (2022) is a handmade mattress created by laboriously drawing repetitive stripes across the hand stitched silk fabric. Through the course of its fabrication, leaky discharges bleed onto the surface, emulating bodily fluids.

Sarah Fripon (b. 1987 in Zeitz, Germany. Lives and works in Vienna) makes works attuned to everyday life, with specific attention to crisis, hinged on the brink of a mood. Fripon sources her images in mail order catalogs, stock photos, screenshots, phone snapshots, and advertising layouts, some from her childhood. In *Personal Relations* and *Sound of Music*, both 2023, the artist's airbrush strokes detail stately furniture and an ornate cuckoo clock documenting a time bygone. The cuckoo clock suggests an unchanged world of controlled nature in the shape of an ornament. Paired next to the pipe sculpture *Esoteric Pipe 4*, there is a subtle evocation of hegemony and failure; a contingency perceived through a crystal ball.

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Nöle Giuliani (b. 1958, Heidelberg, Germany. Lives and works in Port Townsend, Washington) has been working for the last three decades on brittle brown kombucha, a biomaterial that the artist began using prior to its resurgence in sustainable fashion and ecological circles. In the mid-1990s, a slippery and smelly Kombucha membrane became the ultimate relational conduit for the artist, a personal inquiry that they call “Culture”. *Untitled (The Instrument)* (2005) dates to the artist’s extrusion series where the material is shaped by rubber bands around the membranes and forces them into particular shapes. Over time, this entity has aged and generated a gelatinous pellicle, a solid barrier membrane that retains and insists on its own aliveness.

Mitchell Kehe (b. 1984, USA. Lives and works in Berlin) makes paintings and sculptures around phenomenological expression, analogies of the self that conjure both anatomical and abstract bodily systems. Kehe plays with visibility and sheathing, unconventionally using polyester synthetic fabric in a layering process with painting. The figure of an amoeboid is a recurring motif in the artist’s work; in this case it is displayed as a liver under scrutiny. *Bigger Inside* and *Building II*, both 2023 hint to the somatic and psychological –the innards of a body, enclosed, unveiled, like the bare bones of a house.

Zarah Landes’ (b. 1987 in Frankfurt am Main. Lives and works in Paris and Berlin) works are sensitive skins absorbing energy and translating invisible processes diagrammatically onto canvas. Landes uses ink-soaked canvas as a flexible entity, which temporarily attaches itself to a surface. The three paintings on view form part of the series *Heat*: energy diffusing from an object (in this case the artist’s studio radiator) has been put to work, with another energetic force, air. The process of their making resembles a photographic process, where an image is generated not through light exposure but touch. The interactions of heat and air manifest in the fabric, leaving burn marks as compositional elements.

Brianna Leatherbury (b. 1995, USA. Lives and works in Amsterdam) makes work attuned to perpetuation, value, and legacy. *Degrowth* (2022) and the works *Burden (Compressed)* and *Burden (Parent or Vessel)* made specifically for the exhibition, form part of the series *Insiders’ Grave*, sculptures made from personal objects borrowed from several stock market investors. Leatherbury inquires with each shareholder asking the same question: “What is an object that you would take to your grave?” Later these shareholders’ possessions are borrowed and subjected to a copper coating process otherwise known as a plate. The works use the electrical process of plating and the performative process of borrowing, to question the value relationship between shareholders’ material objects and their immaterial shares, equally as possessions.

Irina Lotarevich (b. 1991, Rybinsk, Russia. Lives and works in Vienna) sculptural practice is shaped by the intersection of her own subjective experience with larger systems. The background of *Interface* (2023) shows a texture achieved by enlarging casts of the artist’s skin from the area of the palm of her hand. This texture is embedded with a grid of locks, a motif often used by the artist in her series *Housing Anxiety*. The dimensions of the vertical rectangular form suggest something like an intercom or a lockbox which would hang in the entryway of a building (hence the title). The piece was made using the lost wax bronze casting process, which allowed the possibility to join these varying forms and textures into one solid, unified surface of metal.

Ester Partegàs’ (b. 1972, La Garriga, Spain. Lives and works in Brooklyn and Marfa) work seeks, discovers, and produces questions about worth, loss and renewal through close observations of the familiar. In the series titled knead, penetrate, let go (2022-23), Partegàs uses tracing paper and hand drawn charcoal stains to compose the pores of a piece of bread, which are in turn playfully piled on top of other pores of bread revealing their spongy, seductive entrails. The faint, delicate paper is supported by children’s stickers, those mundane and seemingly unimportant, domestic “little things” that speak of care and everyday life.

Laurence Sturla (b. 1992, Swindon, UK. Lives and works in Vienna) makes technically sophisticated ceramics sculptures that are part industrial, mechanical, part engine, part architecture. With notions of failure and reconstruction being somewhat a backbone to their practice, the series *Office Notebook (daily bouquet)*, consists

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of broken shards, detritus and other sludge made into standardized ashtray forms. This series emerged from Sturla's attempt to teach himself how to throw pottery on the wheel, in an homage to ceramic history. Like fossilized remains, or archeological deposits, they are glazed with different materials incorporating variations of iron oxide, an idea of something rusting, being disused or left barren.

Michael Van den Abeele (b. 1974, Brussels. Lives and works in Brussels) works with diverse media and recurring narratives. The sculptures *What's for Dinner* and *Ethics Gradient*, both 2022, are bed miniatures that continue the artist's concern with the shapes and the organizations of desire, our singularity and our sequence. Family, gangs, lovers, solitude and societies or domestic animals to name a few. In the creation of these institutions, forms have to be found and reflected upon: single, double, doubting. The bed is first a structural negotiation, between a body and the un-even earth.

Helen Verhoeven's (b. 1974, Leiden. Lives and works in Berlin) works explore the theme of ceremonial gatherings and intimate encounters. For *Conduit House*, Verhoeven has made two paintings that encircle a set of commands and details given to AI, as a fictitious collaboration and therapy. In *The Room 2* Verhoeven has described a room where the painting actually is hosted. Various appliances and ordinary domestic objects appear in one painting and disappear, or are less predominant in the other. The artist reworks the images in her customary photo reference and collage technique, resulting in a free and associative painting.

Conduit House was conceived as a preamble to the curator's upcoming exhibition at the Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, Texas, opening October 27, 2023.

Jennifer Teets is a Houston, Texas born curator and writer based in Paris (since 2009) working at the intersection of science studies, cultural analysis, and the visual arts. She is currently Visiting Curator at the Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston working towards *Intimate confession is a project* opening in October 2023. Through the work of ten multifaceted artists spanning generations and geographies, the exhibition thinks through infrastructure as an intimate holding cell, capable of affective and affirmative power. It includes a forthcoming publication by Inventory Press.

Aside from curating, she convenes and directs *Matter in Flux* (MiF), a mentorship circle tied to themes concerned with artistic inquiry, philosophy of science, and ecology (www.matterinflux.org). MiF emerged as an activity connected to the late, self-led initiative *The World in Which We Occur* (TWWWO) that Teets co-directed between 2014-2019. She is editor of *Electric Brine*, published by Archive Books in 2021, with contributions by Dionne Brand, Barbara Orland, Sophie Lewis, Esther Leslie, Hannah Landecker, and Lisa Robertson.

Teets writes extensively on art and curating in international art magazines and other publications. She is a graduate of SPEAP (Sciences Po Experimentation in Arts and Politics, directed by Bruno Latour), SciencesPo Paris, 2014.