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Throw of the dice

Lukas Hoffmann & Sophia Mainka

In collaboration with GiG Munich

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Throw of the dice – down a slippery slope

A standard game of dice is not a game of chance. At stake is probability, the odds of throwing this or that number, easily calculable. This is why we often lose, as the fable famously forewarns.¹ The young man inherits an estate and quickly gambles it away. In one sweep an entire forest is laid low. Is bad luck to blame? No, replies Fortune to an angry Pan. Just the foolishness of man.

A game of chance takes place on a far more slippery slope, like the round of croquet played in *Alice in Wonderland*, a game of cards of sorts.² Flamingos are mallets and a hedgehog is a ball. Whenever Alice wants to hit the hedgehog with the flamingo's head, the bird turns floppy and spins round to look at her so comically that she laughs. And when she finally gets the flamingo's head down, the hedgehog crawls away. In this game, cards move away from us and the players play all at once, quarrelling and fighting while the queen screams, "Off with their heads! *Off* with their *heads!*" For in a real game of chance, anything can happen. This would be the challenge: throwing the dice without knowing the rules of the game. To continue throwing the dice while accepting that each time the rules of the game change.

This is Nietzsche's divine game, played across two tables, the earth and the sky.³ Each time the dice is thrown the earth trembles, because the dice returns to us as divine. At that moment when the dice hover briefly in the air, they belong to the gods and all is possible. Our task is to affirm the entirety of possibility, any fate the gods prepared for us, cooking all of chance in one pot.⁴ In this forest, we must wander bewildered and wild.⁵

In the exhibition, Sophia Mainka shows a series of wall mounted works made from silicone paste. Heavy and solid, yet curiously slippery, they are based on a Tarot deck of cards. It is peculiarly appropriate that the largest is the wheel of fortune, usually interpreted as standing for change or becoming. Fortune can be good or bad depending on the game, the question asked of the cards, open to interpretation. In Tarot, one card can mean many things and then change meaning at different times. In contrast, destiny is the thread woven through the image and cut by the three mythological sisters. The turn of the card is always fateful. Whatever the outcome of the roll of dice, this outcome is necessarily so: sky back to earth, slide and snip. Perhaps then, we wander not quite so bewildered in this forest, as we necessarily follow our fate. But we wander on a surface without ground or depth, because free of cause. Everything in Mainka's work takes place on the surface, like the hybrid creature scuttering around the ornate interiors of the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in her video. It imitates not animals, but depictions of them. The two talking dogs

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are not half-human but half-sculpture, their head and paws the same silicone as Mainka's wall pieces. In Nazim Bakour's music score, they do not bark, but whoop with the sound of the cuica drum.

Lukas Hoffmann too stages a fictional world that has something of Lewis Carroll's unsettling absurdity about it. There is a wooden castle with ears, eyes, a wide-open mouth and a nose, and it is both too big and too small. Drink me, eat this, nibble both sides of the mushroom circle. As Alice grows bigger, her initial self also becomes smaller, pulled in both directions at once. With components jutting out and sliding in, the body both outside and inside, the castle too grows small as it becomes big. "Becoming without measure, a veritable becoming-mad."⁶ Observing this madness is the upside-down head of Pan, the mischievous god of the wild. A mascarón fallen from its pediment. Run away in panic, it urges us – run away in chaos, it smiles.

Magdalena Wisniowska

¹ John Gay, *Pan and Fortune*, Fable XII, "Yo a young Heir" see <https://kalliope.org/en/text/gay2005052971>

² Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, for a replica of the original first edition see https://www.adobe.com/be_en/active-use/pdf/Alice_in_Wonderland.pdf

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book III, "Before Sunrise", trans. Kaufmann, p.166cd and "The Seven Seals" 3, p. 258. See also Deleuze's reading in Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, (London and New York: Continuum, 2002) p. 25-7.

⁴ *Zarathustra*, Book III, "The Bedwarfing Virtue" 3, p. 189.

⁵ See blog by Corry Shores, <https://piratesandrevolutionaries.blogspot.com/2009/05/dicethrow-II-in-deleuze-nietzsche.html>.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 3.

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The works by Lukas Hoffmann (b. 1990, Aalen) are developed using a comprehensive approach that includes intuition, impressions from daily activities such as shopping, a rich visual memory, and the memory of muscles and tendons. This involves calculations, knowledge of masses and forces, familiarity with art discourses, and awareness of material costs. The aim is to create space for self-dynamic development that produces a convincing result. The production process is not characterized by intense spontaneity but by careful and attentive inquiry into the emerging work. Each step in the process sets conditions for subsequent decisions. Through their interplay, shape, and positioning in space, the works acquire a narrative character, often appearing like a snapshot from a scenario.

Sophia Mainka (b. 1990, Munich) works with various media such as drawing, sculpture, and video, which she usually combines in expansive installations. Her work engages with philosophical discourses and current social trends, as well as artistic research and production in an analysis of a middle-class aesthetic. Doing so, the artist raises questions that the structure and reality of life in a supposedly posthuman age inevitably raise. Relationships between human beings and objects are called into play, as is the movement of the body. She abstracts, enlarges, reduces, manipulates everyday objects, playing with interpretations and reinterpretations. (Maurin Dietrich)