

JOHN RYANER

KURT COBAIN WAS AN ENERGY VAMPIRE

23 JANUARY - 2 MARCH, 2025

For this exhibition, John Ryaner presents artworks which make suggestions about humans' relentless engagement with the 'natural' world, in the form of drawings and sculptures. The sculptures are made using repurposed plastic plants. Art historically speaking, they are 'found objects'. The plants, reforged through melting, are stacked up high, each one on top of another, then displayed on plinths. The materiality of the unearthly plastic is rendered visible after the melting process, though the artwork keeps some semblance of being-a-plant. The plastic, once moulded into a nature-like thing, is deformed but only partially. Frozen polymers stemming from petrochemicals sling in-between snippets of fake flora. On the adjacent walls are laboured drawings. Made in various studio and apartment sublets in Berlin between 2018 and 2024, the drawings, more than questions, are inquisitions into natural objects—prolonged meditations on the numbing trauma that accompanies powerlessness in the face of eco-awareness. Speaking artistically, they are impressions of flora. Specifically, naturalised European bonsai trees. Inspired by social and economic dimensions of how craft cultures exist online, the drawings' source material are photos downloaded from online seller websites: eBay, Craigslist, Gumtree, etc. Anonymous users' cultural appropriation has been further appropriated for artistic ends. The drawings assert how, on a phenomenal level, an image possesses a different quality when experienced materially rather than digitally.

The title for the exhibition was inspired by a 1993 text by the American art critic Hal Foster, titled '*Cult of Despair*', originally published in The New York Times. The text is about abjection, trauma and failure in what was then contemporary culture. It questions the popularity of artists, including Kurt Cobain and Mike Kelley, who take a downtrodden position as a means of artistic production.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a text from Mark von Schlegell.

Founded in 2021 The Horse is an artist run contemporary art gallery in Dublin 1 that seeks to provide a platform for emerging, experimental and underrepresented art practitioners. For sales, viewings and programming in general, please email Matthew Wilkinson – mw@thehorsedublin.xyz

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John Ryaner is a graduate of the Städelschule.

He is the recipient of significant international awards and prizes, including the Roger Pailhas Prize (Marseille, 2024), the Städelschule Film Prize (Frankfurt, 2017), and the Gilchrist Fisher Award (London, 2012). Additionally, he has received minor awards from the Stiftung Kunstfonds, the Frankfurt Kulturamt, and the Arts Council of Ireland.

His work has been exhibited at Art-o-rama, Marseille; the Wroclaw Art Festival, Poland; the Berlin Project Space Festival, Berlin; Sangt Hipolyt, Berlin; Feux-Pales, Brussels; Printed Matter Inc., New York; David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; the Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius; the Städel Museum, Frankfurt; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Ashley Gallery, Berlin; Swimming Pool Projects, Sofia; Portikus Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; Darmstadt Kunstverein, Darmstadt; Voidoid Archive, Glasgow; and Basic Space, Dublin.