

## *Search Yourself*

What are we looking for when we want to see art, even though we haven't adequately finished our daily work tasks? Can art distract us without judging our limitations in pretending that a life with time for art is possible for everyone?

Art and life might be one, and it might offer a very free form of expression, and its appearance may empower our will and aspiration. In one way or another, we only enjoy art that builds bridges to our own skills and knowledge.

During Museumssonntag (a German initiative where museums are open to the public for free) or at an exhibition opening, the encounter with art must surprise us in order to truly capture our attention. The work of Michael Marman, Sigmar Polke, and Dylan Spaysky binds cultural distraction to the almost flopsy way it experiments with. Material comes to them, and it looks as if instinct is used to accentuate their current interest in creating. It remains unclear what role perfection or mastery plays - there's a sense of responding to coincidence.

Instinctual is where we lose conscious thought or learned knowledge. When we search for distraction, we often find it in the fertile hunting grounds of foreign cultures, where instinct becomes more present. One of the most expressive, idiosyncratic, and instinctual European artists to investigate photography in the late 1960s, Sigmar Polke had a deep fascination with the medium and its metaphysics. His photographs include stains, intentional processing errors, and crafty technical mistakes. Documenting distractions on the way to exhibition openings or while traveling to Afghanistan, his images don't appear particularly staged - a notable difference from traditional exoticism in art depicting life in foreign cultures.

The rhythm between outgoing moments of capturing new impressions and the retreat into a hermit-like existence feels natural and productive for constructing and reconstructing thought. The work in the show is outspoken in how it processes and digests culture in its own way. Real life matters are instinctual again, a perfect distraction.

Mickael Marman's paintings present a controlled chaos: spray paint merges with acrylics, geometric color fields collide with earthy grounds. Though rooted in abstraction, his works are embedded with referential materials, newspapers from Miami, Spain, Jamaica or Torino, an image of dancehall legend Echo Minott, collected during his travels. Through layering, deconstruction, and reworking, Marman articulates a tension between visibility and obscurity. By investigating different ways of looking, of reading, of being seen, the work reveals the transmission of knowledge in our media-based culture and shows how words and images shape culture, politically, socially, and artistically, inevitably raising the question of how cultural production is intertwined with official, hegemonic representations of history. Observing the world and particularly how the world observes back becomes a recurring motif in the contemplation of Marman's work. Here, painting becomes a not only travelogue, but a mediation on authenticity, image perception, and meaning-making.

Sigmar Polke's photography is also deeply shaped by travel and social context. From the late 1960s on, he explored photography's metaphysical potential through deliberate misalignment, blurring, and experimental processes, multiple exposures, solarization, reversal effects, embracing chance and error. The result: hallucinatory, disorienting images that blur realism and abstraction. The photographs shown at Scherben reflect his fascination with the ritualistic and the foreign, recalling 19th-century Orientalist photography while subverting its topoi. He documented his surroundings, friends like Achim Duchow in front of his own work, and the motifs from his travels with a delight in the unknown, but detached from the voyeuristic gaze. His photos appear mystical, but never arranged — in clear opposition from exotic depictions. The foreign, like the familiar, dissolves in the image's fog. Polke creates confusion about what images actually are: dream or reality. His manipulated prints shift perception, offering glimpses into psychic states, turning documentation into dreamlike speculation.

Detroit artist Dylan Spasky presents an arrangement of his diverse sculptural practices at Scherben: a meagerly bubbling fountain consisting of a standard drinking bottle, a dachshund made of wickerwork, and foam carvings of more or less well-known animals from pop culture. The majority of the objects on display depict animals, or more precisely, cultural distortions of their natural appearance. In animalistic assertion, the objects thus refer to narratives whose cultural significance is playfully jeopardized. Spasky allows commercially available consumer goods to appear as talismans or personal artifacts without losing their origins as remnants of a Western world. He sources his materials from secondhand stores that deal in the surplus of comfortable suburban life. At the same time, Spasky's treatment of the material makes the objects appear more like ethnological objects; like speculative totems that claim a historicity and authenticity that they simultaneously undermine in cheerful incompetence.