

Fold

Curated by Damian Lentini

Susi Gelb, Kapwani Kiwanga, Ndayé Kouagou, Joanna Louca, Stefan Ludes, Charlotte Posenenske, Stefan Reiterer, Sung Tieu, Ben Wadler and Hamid Zénati

September 9 till October 11, 2025
Opening weekend Friday to Sunday,
September 5 to 7, 2025

We are very pleased to present the exhibition *Fold* at our Vienna gallery. It takes place within the framework of *Curated by* and was curated by Damian Lentini, deputy director of the Ludwig Forum Aachen.

The exhibition examines the idea of the fold and folding as one of the key theoretical and material focal points that unifies the work of a diverse range of artists. Recalling Gilles Deleuze's concept of Baroque architecture as an endless process of enfolding that works across and within a multitude of states and references, the various folds that constitute the current exhibition will similarly be situated within a dynamic of excision and excess; reproduction and extension. In so doing, it hopes to foreground the manner in which contemporary artists construct and produce folds between a rich miscellany of forms, images, objects, texts, indices and writing; a process of addition and grafting from which a further series of folds can be generated.

Deleuze's text is an important reference point in this regard, as it foregrounds the notion that folding is not simply a physical act of connecting two elements of matter via an inflection point, but is also part of a wider metaphysics that attempts to conceive the interconnectivity of all matter. In this regard, folding and enfolding is not dissimilar to other ideas of the energies that constitute perceptual reality, such as the Aztec concept of *Teotl* or the Sinospheric idea of *Qi*. This peripatetic notion of forms shifting into and across one another is similarly supported by the unique architecture of the Galerie Crone itself, which is itself characterized by a series of unfolding spaces and perspectives.

Characteristic of this play of interior and exterior, forwards and backwards is the work *Untitled* by the German minimalist sculptor **Charlotte Posenenske**, which functions as a sort of leitmotif for the entire exhibition.

Comprising a single smooth curved piece of sheet metal, painted in a uniform RAL matt blue that neither absorbs nor reflects the light, *Untitled* (n.d) sits in the very epicentre of the gallery like a sort of silent monolith that refracts and disperses the gaze of the viewer to the other acts of folding taking place throughout the galleries, as well as further out onto the adjacent Eschenbachgasse and Getreidemarkt. Similarly, the exhibition itself can be seen as a smooth curve or vector that occurs within both physical and conceptual spaces; a play of concealing and revealing, as well as absorption and refraction. This in turn evident in many of the works that are characterised by moments of uncertainty or multiplicity with respect to their potential decoding, or the manner in which others evoke shifting or transcendental forms of aesthetic reception that in turn questions the primacy or mastery of the gaze.

Such notions are, for example, manifest in the first two works that one encounters, both of which play on the innate human desire to transcend our contemporary moment. In **Joanna Louca's** almost ephemeral *Soul Clouds* (2025), delicate congregations of fine luminous thread are transformed into glowing balls during the evening thanks to their ability to absorb light; evoking an unseen force that connects life with afterlife; form and spirit. Hanging from the ceiling of the gallery and perceptible from both the ground and the second floor, the *Soul Clouds* take the shape of a celestial landscape, a pathway through the unknown that does not constitute an end so much as a continuation of a journey from the tangible to the transcendent. Adjacent to this work, **Stefan Reiterer's** triptych *Tangent (III-V)*, (2025) similarly points to space that exists just exterior to our tangible reality. Occupying a region between real and virtual spaces, as well as between experiential and intuited modes of perception, the three panels depict amorphous, bright yellow elliptical forms that are situated in an almost cosmic pictorial space. Permeated by dark, swirling colours – which hints at fire, nebula or galaxies – these yellow ellipses simultaneously appear as both three-dimensional and flat. When seen from afar, their smooth surfaces recall both digital renderings, as well as the fastidious painted surfaces of transcendental abstractionists such as Hilma af Klint or Piet Mondrian. Close up however, one perceives the detailed, expressive brushstrokes that shift their reading more towards gestural abstract painting. In both Louca's and Reiterer's works then, the fold operates as a vector and a vortex, delineating the perceptual horizon within given two- and three-dimensional forms and yet simultaneously evoking the possibility of a beyond.

Leading into the subsequent galleries, **Ben Wadler's** ceramic works also point towards a potentially limitless

unfolding of forms and materials. Each of the ceramic vessels appear to exist at the threshold between various times and spaces. From one angle, their rough surfaces recall a sort of antediluvian cache, and yet the fine grey and turquoise glazing that is evident at other angles – along with their subtle references to the architecture of Viennese Altbau, seen through the windows of the gallery – disrupt any neat indexical reading. Here one recalls Deleuze's observations about Baroque architecture when he notes that it "refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait. It endlessly produces folds. It does not invent things: there are all kinds of folds coming from the East, Greek, Roman, Romanesque, Gothic, Classical folds [...] Yet the Baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other".

This notion of the operative, quotidian nature of folding and layering is also evident in the works that are displayed in the next room, which explore the interplay forces that directly (de)form an object – causing ripples, craters or dents – as well as the more passive forces that are innate to a specific material. Thus **Joanna Louca's** hanging sculpture *Silent Worship* (2023) is defined, in contrast to the *Soul Clouds*, by the manner in which it reflects light, which in turn results in moments of fleeting luminosity (perceptible as one walks around the object, or photographs it with a flash). Furthermore, the monolithic structure of the work contrasts with the almost weightlessness of the clouds, invoking a sense of rootedness to the earth, all-the-while suspended above it. Seen from up close, the double weave of the four surfaces recalls a sort of syntax, acting as a reminder that thread (which is itself comprised of the folding and weaving together of smaller threads) was used as one of the earliest forms of language.

The idea of textiles as repositories of both language and memory is further unpacked within the complex quotidian work of **Hamid Zénati**. Replete with references to a life lived between both Europe and North Africa, Zénati transformed many of his brightly-coloured creations into articles of clothing whose interplay of pattern and colour intermingled with the idea that they would be worn (and therefore in motion). The complex scenography of form and pattern that would unfold across these ambulatory surfaces were therefore predicated on the idea of fleeting and fragmented glances, moments in which certain elements were exposed, while others were concealed. This is further exemplified within the current exhibition by the rotating display of several hooded pullovers, whose colloquial associations with the concealment or erasure (consider the current discourse around the wearing of hoodies and criminality/protest) are contrasted with their bright, and eye-catching surfaces.

This interplay of expose and concealment within the act of folding is also evident in the two works of **Kapwani Kiwanga** hanging on the wall opposite. The larger photo-collage stems from her *Subduction Studies* series, which investigates the overlapping physical and psychological spaces that exist between Earth's continents; specifically, Africa and Europe. After reading about the speculation of Pangaea Ultima – which suggests the reformation of a supercontinent, resulting in Europe slipping underneath Africa – Kiwanga visited the National Museum of Natural History in Paris and took photographs of the rock specimens from the Northern coast of Africa and Spain. Folding together photographs taken of these rock specimens, the resulting work not only alludes to this new form, but also to a new geopolitical perspective, where two continents and their migrants would be geographically connected. This idea of the geographies and communities folding into and through one another is similarly evoked by a work from her *Greenbook* series hanging on the adjacent wall. The title of the series alludes to the 1961 edition of the *Negro Motorist Green Book*, which served as a guidebook for African American roadtrippers and listed restaurants, service stations and lodging throughout the United States that were known to be safe for travellers of colour during the Jim Crow era. Kiwanga deliberately deploys a parred-back aesthetic within *Greenbook, Indiana (1961)* (2019), as each page only displays the name "Indiana" and a handful of addresses. Such topography of absence stands in contrast to the usual documentary tendency of many conceptual practices: rather than providing us with a comprehensive itemisation of certain spaces and services, one is struck by the paucity of information and options available. Deploying a minimalist aesthetic that would only be decipherable to a select few, Kiwanga's work demonstrates the manner in which information is folded into the gaps and caesuras between language.

A similar notion of the malleability of negative or unseen linguistic and geographic spaces is also at the forefront of the two works by **Sung Tieu** displayed in the next room. Both revolve around the concept of fracking, a source of potential energy that involves drilling into deep layers of rock and injecting a mixture of water, sand, and chemicals to release invisible methane gas. *Broken Words, False Measures* (2023) displays a three-page black marbled letter from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) addressed to residents living in the immediate vicinity of one such fracking site. After receiving complaints about the quality of drinking water in the vicinity of the site, the DEP conducted an investigation and sent this letter out to report on the results. However, from its contents, it remains unclear whether the DEP will in fact take any action to protect citizens from the water contamination; it uses the

porosity of official jargon to elide rather than transcribe meaning, and leaves them with no actionable information to address the issue at hand. On an adjacent wall, *Per Square Meter (Natural Gas Storage Rehden)* (2024) explores the materiality of fracking, this time within Germany, where the practice has been banned since 2016. In spite of this however, locations such as Rehden continue to be talked about as potentially sites for such energy extraction, regardless of the general ambiguity concerning what such a process would entail. In this case – and in place of further (empty) words – Tieu chooses to exhibit a plaster cast of the site, including the tire marks of heavy machinery. Although one cannot perceive the processes of fracking, nor the gases themselves, one can get a sense of the traces in the gaps they leave behind.

In both of these works, objects are given form and supposed discretion through a process of linguistic and material folding; what Deleuze would call “pleats of matter”, which in turn engenders a fractalesque sequence of further folds that continue into infinity. This notion of an almost subterranean compacting and layering is similarly seen in the small sculptures by **Susi Gelb**. Composed of earth and clay with a froth glaze, each of these works imply a knotted form or coiled snake, but could also allude to archaic forms of writing such as Mayan glyphs, which similarly took the form of three-dimensional stone carvings. These objects could thus constitute artefacts from an ancient culture (where snakes often represented newel and transformation) or instead be markers of an near-future civilisation. Furthering their ambiguity, the coiled forms could imply a sense of imprisonment, security or, recalling Reiterer’s triptych, a sort of vortex or slipstream.

As already mentioned, this sense of time folding around and through itself is evident in **Charlotte Poseneske’s** *Untitled* (n.d), also on display in this room. Formally, the work recalls – and contrasts with – both Louca’s light-absorbing monolith in the previous room, as well as the various ventilation and air conditioning pipes that flow throughout the galleries; one of which is glanced through the window leading into the upstairs spaces. The groups of works in this upper level are grouped around Deleuze’s concept of the “cords or drapery” that connect the “pleats of matter” (represented by the works downstairs) to the “folds of the soul” – a transcendental dimension inaccessible to perception. As the words “cords or drapery” imply, these forms are necessarily predicated on notions of imperfection or incompleteness; they are not representations so much as they indicate the impossibility of efforts at achieving said transcendence. Emblematic of this are two sculptural works from **Stefan Ludes**, whose titles (*Rise Up*, 2024 and *Icarus*, 2025) encapsulate this ever-present yearning for – yet ultimate failure to achieve

– transcendence. Similarly, a confluence of desire (and ultimate failure) could be seen as a constituent part of contemporary subject formation, and in particular the late-capitalist notion of perpetual “self-improvement”. This in turn finds a correlation with the adjacent works of **Ndayé Kouagou**, which recall both stained-glass windows as well as the screens of mobile phones (from which one receives the bite-sized edicts of Tiktok and social media influencers). However, in contrast to these motivational pronouncements, Kouagou’s bold texts – emblazoned across brightly-coloured fabrics encased within resin – take a decidedly reticent tone as they ask the viewer: *Why is it hard for me to talk about love?* and *Are we always looking for the best?*. As opposed to providing any sort of definitive answer or attempting to conceal meaning in some form of linguistic niche, Kouagou’s questioning instead hint towards a sense of uncertainly and capriciousness that surely accompanies all forms of metaphysical enquiry.

Rounding off the exhibition are several small sculptures from **Stefan Reiterer’s** Formant series. Comprising a collection of organic shapes, these works are grafted onto or emerge from several nooks and crannies throughout the spaces. Further emphasising the ouroboros nature of the show itself, several of these sculptures along with several in the first room are in fact best viewed from the vantage point of this final space; a prime example of the exhibition itself as a sort of enfolding Möbius strip.

Damian Lentini