

**Nicholas Micros**

***Foolish Monuments***

**January 22 – February 21, 2026**

**Curated by Samuel Haitz and Julia Künzi**

Opening Thursday 1/22/2026, 6–8 pm

Saturday 2/21/2026, 4 pm: Tour with Nicholas Micros

A young artist who had moved to Zürich some time ago found himself drawn to a sculpture in the semi-public urban space during his walks through the city. Again and again, he shared photos of the sculpture online: in the summer sunlight, half-covered in snow, or in the rainy night. *Strummer* (2009–2012) is part of the series *Lullaby*, a musical portrait that artist Nicholas Micros (\*1960) made of his family. Nicholas' daughter plays the drum, his wife sings, the cat purrs, Nicholas himself, as the *Husher*, puts a finger to his lips, and his son, immortalized in the sculpture that now stands in Zürich, and that so fascinated the young artist mentioned above, plays the guitar. In total, eight casts, one of them only a fragment; Nicholas arranged the guitar-playing sons in a circle. I remember the time when this sculpture was created: I was somewhere between child and teenager. I also remember going with my father and Nicholas to a meadow in Ottenbach, the village where I grew up, to look at the completed series, listening to Nicholas speak about the works, and how they seemed to come alive even more as he did. This presentation on a piece of land owned by a local farmer was half exhibition, half practical storage. Nicholas has an impressively pragmatic approach to his practice.

That this young artist shared this work, that he even noticed it at all, felt like a glitch in the matrix. Nicholas' art was a kind of insider knowledge for me, a well-kept secret, a hidden storage in the countryside. I liked Nicholas' practice as a child, and I noticed that the feeling didn't go away as I learned more about art, studied it myself, became an artist. I suspected sentimental bias. At some point, I began sharing my secret with others, pulling out my phone at dinners and in bars to show them what this sculptor was producing, far from our circles of the art world. Often, I found agreement with my assessment of the work's quality. Eventually, I brought Julia, who curated this exhibition with me, and two other friends to Ottenbach to see Nicholas' studio. In 2001, Nicholas moved to Switzerland with his family, to this village where his wife had grown up. Until then, they lived in New York City, where he worked as a sculptor, but also as a restorer, and where he assisted artists such as Louise Bourgeois.

*Foolish Monuments* now brings together works Nicholas has made in Switzerland over a little more than the past fifteen years. Moving here came with new impressions but, above all, with a clearer view of his former home. In a country, not directly involved in wars in its recent history, the absence of war memorials and of the concept of honoring personal sacrifice, specifically that of men, became apparent. „There were very few war monuments to be seen. Because of my conceptual interest in these, and also through my work as a restorer of sculpture in NYC, I noticed this absence right away.“ In his work, Nicholas twists and complicates the definition of a monument, from a permanent expression of dominance and hegemonics to something more fragile and subjective.

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Early in his sculptural practice, Nicholas worked primarily with stone. “In contrast to the work of many of my contemporaries, I purposely gravitated toward the “traditional” materials of the sculptor or statue maker. These seemed to be out of favor, which made them curiously attractive.” Soon, he began exploring other materials, including plaster, ceramics, and fabric, additive techniques that allowed him to realize his many ideas at a steady and rigorous pace. Between 1992 and 2010, plaster was his material of choice, not only for its speed but also for its historical significance as the preferred medium of 19th century academic sculptors. The works from the *Rifleman* series, all 2009, demonstrate the versatility of the material, which Nicholas toned using shellac and pigment and, in one of the sculptures on view here, *Cake Walk*, even with a fresco painting. These works, hybrids of cowboy, tragic hero, and foot soldier, all bear the same face, a cast taken from a bust of the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, which Nicholas purchased in New York after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Another table displays four works titled *Trophäe*, all from 2015; an elongated football cast in cement and brass. Nicholas was a football player, and his father a coach, so it comes as no surprise that sports and the ideals of masculinity they reproduce are a recurring theme in his work. Next to them, we placed three sculptural sketches for large-scale works; two versions of *Multitudes*, 2015, and *The Anointed One*, 2017. Nicholas’ approach is process oriented, models and sketches are on equal footing with finished works. Series developed over extended periods of time lead into successive bodies of work, and similar sculptural forms reappear in different materials. The practicalities of storage, in the garden next to the studio for example, patinate works such as *Nagasaki Pile (The Jaunty Tomb)*, 2025 and *Stack*, 2020.

In the late 1980s, while Nicholas was assisting Louise Bourgeois in her Brooklyn studio, she advised: “You have to keep faith with your work.” “I am not sure if she was talking to me or herself, maybe both, but I heard it loud and clear and I was able to take the hint. I say it to myself often these days.”

I asked Nicholas how growing older, and thus more experienced, has influenced his practice: “The deep past comes closer again.” he says. „There is a chronology, for sure, but time compresses, and it seems that no time has passed between now and the earliest memories. You see more clearly how themes repeat and weave through the fabric of life. An early work can exist next to a work made today without any discrepancy. This realization helps to relax the working process. It all feels like a reward for many years of staying at it. In the studio, things are less fraught, more natural, and there is more faith that things will come out right ... maybe that was what Louise was realizing?“

– Samuel Haitz