

The title chosen by Ryan Gander for his exhibition claims an unimaginable temporal dimension. A collaboration over 500 million years? Between man and earth? Is it a look into the past or into the future? "Stone on stone on fallen stone" Lawrence Weiner wrote in 1983 on the building of the Kunsthalle. The hundred years of history at the Kunsthalle Bern seem like nothing in view of such dimensions.

Ryan Gander rarely shies away from addressing universal themes in his artistic practice. Many of the works shown in *The 500 Million Year Collaboration* revolve around notions of time and the perception of the self. It is the artist's most comprehensive institutional exhibition so far, in which, above all, new or barely shown works are related to one another. Sculptures of his series *Potent motif of ambition (Dramaturical framework for structure and stability) can be seen*, which he started in 2018. Their protagonists are life-size skeletal figures made of metal, which occupy various poses. Although they look like robots because of their technoid appearance, their origin seems more like the stick figure. They astonish because they express feelings without having faces and facial expressions, only through their different attitudes. Also part of the exhibition is a series of ink drawings titled *Embrace your mistakes ... your mistakes are the markers of your time* (2019). Gander has tried on every picture to capture the fleeting moment with calligraphy ink, in which the flame of a candle goes out. With the traditional ink technique, which demands precision, this fraction of time, in the middle between flame and smoke, can hardly be captured. This breath of the almost impossible Gander stood unperturbed, because it is usually not the faultless that leads to captivating results.

Gander does not make it easy for an audience that wants to condense artists and works to a clearly identifiable artistic identity. His work can not be defined in any style, his works are often unidentifiable, because Gander has not just one practice, but several. As an artist, he searches for the necessary form and visual language for his wealth of ideas. Over the years, a highly complex system has emerged in which his work can be repeatedly moved into new contexts.

For Gander, what he himself calls "Culturefield" is an imaginary, dream-like parallel world, a kind of playing field on which exemplary mental images are tried out and proposed. In the Bern exhibition, many of the works revolve around the economy of attention, which adapts to ever-changing technologies. Contrary to today's many-sided complaint, the concentration of attention and concentration would have been shortened by the Internet and the new media, Gander's works claim silent consideration. His works often lack information, they are statements of reality and sometimes contradictions in themselves. They are characterized by silence, even if they sometimes speak.

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