

Press Release

Monica Ursina Jäger

“Future Archaeologies – Your Assumptions Are My Memories”

Exhibition: 14 November until 23 December 2015, Opening: Friday 13 November, 6 to 8 pm

The artist will attend the opening.

Of course, writing novels about the future doesn't give me any special ability to foretell the future. But it does encourage me to use our past and present behaviors as guides to the kind of world we seem to be creating. The past, for example, is filled with repeating cycles of strength and weakness, wisdom and stupidity, empire and ashes. To study history is to study humanity. And to try to foretell the future without studying history is like trying to learn to read without bothering to learn the alphabet.

From: Octavia E. Butler: “A Few Rules for Predicting the Future”

The utilitarian new sculptures at the centre of Monica Ursina Jäger's (*1974, Thalwil) third solo show with Christinger De Mayo evoke a strange longing for the Brutalist past. The concrete elements, which are stacked on top of each other, have the form of a misshaped star, a reference to the low-cost housing structure built by French architect Jean Renaudie (1925–1981) in Givror, with its star-shaped cluster of apartments, each one unique, and each one equipped with a garden terrace. The goal of Renaudie's architecture was social exchange among the socially weak, which he weighed much more than the pure functionalism favoured by so many of his contemporaries.

The sculptures also evoke (quite ironically one must add) the images of the “Bosco Verde” towers in Milan, which were shared widely on social media over the last two years, and which are considered to be pioneering in their relations between aesthetics and ecological sustainability. “this is the day to shape the days upon” (the title of the sculptures) could be read as questioning the sustainability aspect of the ecology of architecture. The mural at the back wall of the gallery, executed with differing concentrations of chlorophyll, seems to be a faint echo of the green façades of the Bosco Verde towers while the rest of the exhibition is held in stark black and white. In the monumental ink drawing, nature and man-made architecture become geological strata in a multi-layered and multi-perspective hyperimage.

The idea of the Anthropocene challenges our notion of “deep time” on several counts. It describes a speculative turn of events wherein we humans catapulted ourselves through technology into a position where we change factors of our environment instead of the other way around. Furthermore, the idea of the Anthropocene proposes a superacceleration of evolutionary history, as the events do not cover millions or trillions of years, but merely a few decades or a few centuries at most. Yet we fail to recognize this consciously. We seem to ignore the daily traces of our cultures, histories, and technologies, the myriad signs and sluggish disturbances that can be discovered by the naked eye in tectonics, waters, soil, in animals and plants alike. We know, but we don't want to see.

With accelerated globalization, the concomitant influence of digital culture and its accessible worlds of knowledge, disparate cultures, knowledge and art worlds have become interconnected and contemporaneous with each other. There are many coexisting ways of being in time and belonging to it. Thus, while being increasingly aware of being in the present, we are becoming attentive to other kinds of time. As a consequence, we seem to be living in an expanded present. But how far back – and forth – in time does the durational extension of our present reach? For a future generation, in not so much time, for future archaeologies, our assumptions are their memories.

Monica Ursina Jäger:

Born 1974 in Thalwil, Zurich. Master of Fine Arts at Goldsmiths College, London. Different solo and group exhibitions in various museums and art spaces, e.g., Kunstmuseum Thun, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Haus für Kunst Uri, Galeria Pilar Sao Paulo, Kunstmuseum Chur, Sammlung Essl Klosterneuburg/Wien, Haus Konstruktiv Zurich, Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Kunstverein Pforzheim. Winner of the Swiss Art Award 2007. Monica Ursina Jäger lives and works in London and Zurich.

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