

WATERPROOF

Elvira Bach, Holger Bär, Luciano Castelli, Rainer Fetting, Jörn Grothkopp, Xenia Hausner, Markus Huemer, Jay Mark Johnson, Lies Maculan, Sven Marquardt, Salomé, Deborah Sengl, Yukiko Terada, Patricia Waller

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The title of the next group show, "Waterproof", takes its cue from the painting of that title by Austrian artist Xenia Hausner. This being the first new exhibition in the gallery since the reopening after the Covid-19 lockdown, the title resonates with various associations. On the one hand, it alludes to a new feeling of uncertainty concerning the present situation and the immediate and long-term future, caused by the pandemic and its emotional, social, political and economic fallout. We need to be "waterproof" in the sense that we need to brace ourselves, prepare ourselves, for it feels like the rug has been pulled out from under our feet and the world has shown itself to be more fragile than we thought. But at the same time, that there is a way out of this crisis, that we might even emerge from it stronger and with new insights, i.e. "waterproof." And that this might have been a very necessary and helpful wake-up call reminding us to finally and decisively address other, more serious and long-term problems. On the other hand, there are works in the exhibition conjuring up images of summer vacation by the sea, reminding us that for many of us the travel restrictions still in effect in many countries will seriously limit our possibilities in this direction: vacationing at the beach will perhaps only be possible in our imagination. And here, too, we will show ourselves to be "waterproof." The recent weeks and months have been especially difficult for artists and people in the arts in general, and they have received comparatively little support. But even though their work was not deemed to be of systemic importance, it is they, after all, who work with one of our most important human faculties: that of imagination, of vision and creativity. And it is this very power of imagination that not only allows us to dream of far-away beaches and a summer where the living is easy, but that will also ultimately guide us out of this crisis.

■ **Elvira Bach** had her national and international breakthrough in the vibrant Berlin art scene of the early 1980s in the conjunction with the "Junge Wilde" (Young Wild Ones) group of painters. Her neo-expressive paintings and sculptures with their vibrant colors and forceful forms typically depicting strong women—for the most part unmistakably herself—embodied a new immediacy and joy in painterly expression that she has been true to up to today. ■ **Holger Bär** has spent more than thirty years working on the development of computer-controlled painting machines that re-transpose digital images back into the traditional medium of oil painting. In this, he is interested both in the visual-creative process itself, as well as in the ideologies connected with certain artistic techniques, and how they have decisively shaped

and changed our view of the world. He regards his latest works as a form of Neo-Pointillism. The painting "Schwarm 03" shown here demonstrates his interest in group dynamics and swarm intelligence, something that has gained enormously in importance in the age of the Internet and social media and has also played an important part in the collective reaction to the pandemic. ■ From 1978 the Swiss artist **Luciano Castelli**, alongside Rainer Fetting and Salomé, actively contributed to the painting of the so-called "Neue Wilde" in Berlin. He subsequently developed new artistic approach combining painting, photography, film, music, and sculpture. The painting "Cadillac Shoe" shown here ironically combines a high-heeled woman's shoe with the typical prominent fenders of an American street cruiser from the 1950s. ■ **Rainer Fetting**'s international renown is owed mainly to his paintings, which are marked by neo-expressionist painterly expression with bold gestural brushstrokes. In the last decades Fetting has also explored landscapes as subject matter, with numerous paintings of the seascapes of the German island Sylt and of Denmark. ■ The images of Berlin painter **Jörn Grothkopp** effect a decisive metamorphosis and condensation in their translation from subject matter to painting. Actual people or objects are reduced to their essential features and thus transformed into ciphers and visual similes whose smooth surfaces preserve their secrets, as in his series of "Koi", painted in ever new variations. In another extensive series, "Mona Lisa," continued over the span of years, he has taken the famous painting apart and put it together again in countless variations. ■ In her large-format works the artist **Xenia Hausner**, born 1951 in Vienna, combines photographs of women with painting and collage elements. In their continuity the works are a kind of intimate diary in which artistic and real life experiences are interlaced and in constant dialogue with each other. The focus of the paintings is typically to be found in the relationship between the depicted figures and between them and their surroundings, relationships that remain mysterious and leave ample space for interpretation and imagination. ■ The Austrian, Berlin-based artist **Markus Huemer** (born in 1968) has for many years been painting plant shapes in a two-dimensional, schematic manner, reducing his palette to one or two colors plus the white of the canvas. The titles of these works include the names of both biological as well as computer viruses with in an ironic text that could just as well be found on Hallmark cards. ■ American artist **Jay Mark Johnson** uses a modified panoramic camera: by repeatedly recording the same narrow vertical slice his wide images effectively replace the traditional spatial x-axis of the image by a temporal x-axis, thus opening up entirely new and unaccustomed ways of perceiving the world. The work shown here is part of a series of pictures of ocean waves whose cyclically recurring movement patterns appear strangely distorted in his rendering. ■ **Lies Maculan** creates life-sized photo-sculptures, effectively blurring the line between two- and three-dimensionality. It is perfectly fitting that her photo sculpture of a sleeping "Dreamer" is placed horizontally on the floor. ■ Ever since his youth as a rebellious punk in East-Berlin **Sven Marquardt** has been photographing non-conformist people and unorthodox situations of Berlin's counter-culture and alternative scene. With his many travels in recent years he has extended the scope of his subject matter beyond Berlin, as in this series of black&white portraits of Australian surfers ("Stokers"). ■ **Salomé** is without doubt the most flamboyant representative of the Berlin artist group known as the "Neue Wilde". His paintings combine the exuberance of gestural brushwork and expressive color with a propensity for serial work and with a precise conceptual approach. His paintings of water lilies and swimmers refer to Monet, but transform the subject matter into an almost abstract play of colors and gestural brush strokes. ■ Viennese artist **Deborah Sengl**, trained biologist and artist, is best known through the hybrid animals of her series „Ertarnungen“ (Camouflage). In her other works she also likes to replace people by animals, revealing—with the biting irony typical of her work—the absurdities of our everyday normal madness. In her series "Addicted" she juxtaposes the colorful world of advertising with the gray reality of our addiction to potency pills, antidepressants and weight reduction pills. ■ Berlin-based Japanese artist **Yukiko Terada** creates permeable and multilayered objects from textiles, often creating new forms and objects from cut-out pieces, exploring metamorphoses, transformations and the cycle between growth and destruction. She thus illustrates in a subtle but compelling fashion the manifold and fluid interactions taking place between man and his natural and cultural environment. ■ **Patricia Waller** has been working for many years on her crochet objects. By disguising highly explosive topics in homely harmlessness she shrewdly out-tricks our viewing habits by means of the utter inappropriateness of material to subject matter. Her "Tweety" of 2008 is part of the series "Bad Luck" in which a number of well-liked characters from comics and popular culture meet an untimely and gruesome demise. Her carnivorous plant "Dionaea Muscipula" of 2013 is—in true horror flic style—about to devour a human baby. And what about those fishes nailed to the wall? Symbols of climate change? Of the over-fishing of the seas? Of the extinction of species? Of a senseless hunt for trophies? Or just again another example of her black humor?