

# balzer projects

Press Release

## **The End is Where We Start From. On Tsunamis, Nuclear Explosions and other Fairy Tales**

Artists: Marjolijn Dijkman, Brian Duggan, Vera Isler, Anne Duk Hee Jordan, Susanna Hertrich, Monika Niwelińska, David Rickard and Kirsten Stolle.

Curated by Pauline Doutreluingne

In collaboration with NOME Gallery, Berlin

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In 1983 the *Human Interference Task Force* was convened to determine whether reasonable means exist (or could be developed) to reduce the likelihood of imagined future humans unintentionally intruding on radioactive waste isolation systems.

Suggestions ranged from starting something like a religious cult around the waste to restrict and control access - to genetically engineered cats, which would glow in radioactive sites. Making up fairytales and children's songs around the glowing cats would further ingrain the idea of staying clear of the animals and thus, the radioactive waste sites.

In fact, fairytales are very much in line with how environmentalist theorists, and climate change deniers alike, are trying to mold human thought on the issue. Myths and mysteries are created around the issues.

The exhibition **The End is Where We Start From. On Tsunamis, Nuclear Explosions and other Fairy Tales** brings together works of eight international visual artists whose work navigates on the intersection of art and long-term scientific research. While examining the relationship between nature, time and human intervention, and translating this in strong visual work, these artists generate new readings of our surroundings and possible perceived futures.

Through research and experimentation **David Rickard's** (born in New Zealand, lives and works in London) works attempt to understand how we arrived at our current perception of the physical world and how far our perception is from what we call reality.

The Doomsday Clock represents the likelihood of a man-made global catastrophe, with the hypothetical catastrophe set as midnight. In January 2018, the clock was adjusted to two minutes to midnight, the nearest it has been to doomsday since the clock began in 1947, similar to 1953, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union began testing hydrogen bombs. *THE END* is a collection of predicted end dates for global catastrophe, combining secular, scientific and fantastical predictions, with 180 chronologically ordered endings from 634BC to the current hypothesis of the 'Big Rip' when everything will end in 22 billion years (when scientists currently calculate the sun will consume planet Earth).

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**Kirsten Stolle** (born in the USA, lives and works in North Carolina, USA) aims to bring awareness and raise questions about the influence of chemical companies on our food system through her body of work. A large part of her studio practice is uncovering information that has been concealed or distorted, often at the expense of public health. She uses the mediums of collage and text-based work to shed light on troubling histories and hidden agendas. In the *Animal Pharm* collages, Stolle makes a powerful public commentary on the controversial use of genetic modification in animals by the pharmaceutical industry. Playing off George Orwell's 1945 allegorical and dystopian cult novel *Animal Farm*, these collages critique the role of corporate and government influence. Through images of everyday domestic objects, blood cells, animals and animal parts, blueprints and scientific instruments, the artist fabricates strange retro amalgamations of experiments gone haywire: fascinating but strange.

The work of **Marjolijn Dijkman** (born in the Netherlands, lives and works in Brussels and Saint Mihiel) often uses tools of science fiction, taking on scientific matters and bringing them into the realm of projection and speculation. *That What Makes Us Human* consists of a titanium 3D printed titanium facsimile of a metal meteorite that fell down from space, and is shaped similarly to the flint tools we used at the time of impact around 50.000 years ago. The meteorite fits ergonomically perfectly in a human hand and can be used as a weapon or tool. The impact happened at a moment in human history, which for a long time has been marked as the period when we became 'human' and suddenly more rapidly started to develop modern cognition and behavior according to some scientific theories.

Berlin-born Polish-Swiss artist **Vera Isler** (1931-2015, lived and worked in Switzerland) left a complex and diverse, yet complicated and idiosyncratic oeuvre. She was an inspiring and enthusiastic artist and a political activist. A trained lab technician, she keenly followed the rapid progress in genetic engineering and the accompanying heated debate over the ethics of cloning and genetic manipulation. Isler's work was controversial, not only visually, but also thematically. In her series *Genetics* (1978-1984), the artist highlights the aesthetics of genetic engineering. What fascinated her was a meaningful representation of the X and Y chromosomes and the political, moral and ethical discourse around genetic engineering at the time. On view in this exhibition are embossed lead reliefs from 1982/83 and chromosomal studies.

**Anne Duk Hee Jordan** (born in South Korea, lives and works in Berlin) looks at sexuality from the perspective of marine life in a wholehearted environmental consumption where many causalities influence each other. Through pollution, traffic, oil spills, oil platforms, the sea began to change. The climate change in the hydrosphere determines the sexuality of the ocean animals. An almost invisible, yet undeniable change in the environmental and sexual world occurs. Jordan shows in this exhibition a series of drawings and two videos dealing with the topic of adaptation, extinction and her overall interest into changing sex in ecology.

**Brian Duggan** (born in Australia, lives and works in Dublin) concerns himself with more or less dramatic events in crisis, in a prosaic, subtle, but no less disconcerting way. He plunges the viewer into a realm where seemingly casual navigation of space bespeaks chilling histories.

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*Atmospheric, Underground, Exoatmospheric, Underwater* (2054 test sites, ongoing, digital print on Cotton 2016-2017 – ongoing) when completed will map all 2054 nuclear test sites. It is expected that this project may not be finished in the artist's lifetime. Working chronologically from the very first test in 1945 the artist is using multiple mapping software programs to find and record each site. Each map is then printed on hand stitched cotton cloth.

**Monika Niwelińska's** (born in Poland, lives and works in Krakow) current research interests and artistic practice are in the areas of memory and perception, especially the internal recording of place and time and its visual translation into a tangible image.

*Tsunami* (2007) is a sequence of six photo-intaglio etchings based on photographs of a tsunami wave. The series of photographs taken by John and Jackie Knill, a Canadian couple, forms a compelling record/photo diary documenting the last minutes of their lives.

*Sensorium of Animals* (2016- 2018), a collaborative artistic research project by **Susanna Hertrich** (born in France, currently lives and works in Berlin and Basel) with **Shintaro Miyazaki**, Ph.D. in Switzerland that is inspired by the sensorial ecology and biology of the elephant-nose fish. This species is capable of electrolocation and -reception, sensorial abilities which allow these fish to sense their electromagnetic environment. The sensorial ecology of the elephant-nosed fish here operates as a vehicle, which allows intertwining the world of animals and its non-human sensorium with seemingly immaterial non-human worlds of signal-based information technologies. *Sensorium of Animals* operates as a conceptual device that embraces the complexity of our knowledge about the protected designs of our critical digital infrastructures.

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