

balzer projects

1 November to 21 December 2019

Gianin Conrad: Hortus Cognitionis Tangentis

Vernissage: 31 October 2019, 18h to 20h

Finissage: 21 December 2019, 16h to 18h

Gianin Conrad about his work:

"The exhibition claims a state of bliss that can be achieved by exploring the world with one's hands. The material is key here. In the context of the Garden of Knowledge, the exhibition explores what can and should be done with material, i.e. the consistent analogue! At a time when we are about to interconnect our brains directly with the computer, our physical body and its analogue abilities seem completely obsolete. In my exhibition at Balzer Projects, I explore subjects such as cognition and knowledge through tactile "comprehension". A grip explains the world, makes things comprehensible. Even if this claim is not absolutely intended, the handling of the material speaks its own language.

After the brain, the hands are our most important organs because the second most nerve endings come together there. Activities with the hands often promise to be good for you and make you happy. Thus, a healthy contact with the world, in the sense of experiencing and recognizing it, is equated with physical activity and productivity. Perhaps because manual labor has lost much of its reputation in art, and is even synonymous with hobbyism and dilettantism, I have taken up the work with my hands with clay and dirt. My rather classical training as a stone sculptor certainly plays a role here. "Learning things to forget them afterwards" - in order to understand them again and again. This reads as a rule how knowledge and skills are built. For me as an artist, this is apparent every time I visit the Acropolis, for example.

But it is not about romanticizing manual labor, but a philosophical attitude. It questions the value of our physical existence in a world where neuronal and electronic interfaces already exist. If one could live one's life in a completely digital world in the near future, what would be the value of our physical being? What can physical material still do today? What is our relationship to our body in a digital world in which we glide without resistance across ergonomically shaped screens? No resistance, no effort, just the smooth surface... I address such questions in this series of works. Here, I work with the material clay in different aggregate states. On the one hand, it is pliable moldable or rigidly dried as if time had stopped. Wetted again, it becomes pulpable again.

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Clay is a traditional material that crosses cultural and national borders and has been used for thousands of years. As vessels, for example, to store and keep food fresh. Clay comes in different forms, referring to different aspects of art and history. The material becomes a time machine. People cherish, care for, react and act as accelerators of a material's process.

The human never appears directly in my work, but is always a formative and determining element. The body is the measure of all things. The exhibition even demands to be actively maintained and cared for by a person. For example in the work "Handapparat", where this maintenance and adherence to forms is also the content of the work. The Latin title of the exhibition underlines the fundamental philosophical dialogue about equally fundamental philosophical questions; those that are more important today than ever before and define our lives.

Gianin Conrad (*1979, lives and works in Zürich and Domat Ems) studied fine arts at the Zürich University of the Arts, the University of the Arts Berlin (Bachelor) and the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (Master). He is also a trained stone sculptor. Conrad works mainly in the fields of installation, sculpture and sculpture and realizes large-scale, situational projects. He has exhibited at the Kunsthalle Winterthur, the Kunsthalle Engländer Bau in Vaduz and the Kunsthalle Basel. He participated in exhibitions in galleries in Athens, Vienna and Switzerland. His works are represented in various private and institutional art collections and he has received several awards and scholarships.

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