cv
portfolio
——— Olivia
Abächerli

Art as an archeology of the present, excavating cultural arte-facts, maps and navigational systems –

– how to contextualize ourselves and navigate within a multi-plicity of complex political and historical situations? What are causal networks and repercussions, what narrative leads to which effect, and what is my particular perspective on a thing among others?

I am researching on multiperspectivities and expo-nentialities of political and historical narratives.
By layering documentary material (for example video) with (often animated) drawing,
I am trying to disentangle and tackle complexities on an affective level.

Processes of research mostly stretch over several years and I am developing 'bodies of work' consisting of multiple materializations.

CV

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____EXHIBITIONS / SCREENINGS / PERFORMANCES

2022	Espace libre, Biel/Bienne (global earth powder trace), solo
	Nieuwe Vide & GOLF-festival, Haarlem, NL, collaboration with Harun Morrison
2021	Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel (Smudge, the messenger –),
	DUELL collective (with Amélie Bodenmann), solo
	E-Werk, Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Freiburg, GER (Material Worlds – Storied Matter)
	Nidwaldner Museum, Stans (NOW21)
	Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein, Gotha, GER (Human Remains), online performance
	Galerie Hofmatt, Sarnen (IBU SILLA), solo
	Kunsthalle Basel (...von möglichen Welten)
	Kunsthaus Centre d'Art Pasquart, Biel/Bienne (Cantonale Berne Jura)
2020	PANCH, Nairs in Movimaint, Fundaziun Nairs, Scuol (über/brücken), performance
	Espace 3353, Le Carouge, Geneva (The Stones in our Hands)
	Radio Bollwerk, online (L.O.F./S.T.A.: Lines of the Paralogue /
	Surrounding the abyss)
	Benzeholz – Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst, Meggen, (Riddley, how does one make
	fire again?), DUELL collective (with Amélie Bodenmann), solo
	Sattelkammer, Bern (POLSIMA LAUNCH), solo
	a voice message project, online (The Drexciya concept)
	Kunstmuseum Luzern, (ZENTRAL!)
2019	Stadtgalerie Bern (Cantonale Berne Jura)
	M8 Art Space, Helsinki, FIN (Dialogue Model: I can't hear myself
	without you listening)
	WASBiennale, Berlin, GER (What's with privacy when it's too loud outside?)
	Grand Palais, Bern (Little Boxes)
	Museo Nivola, Orani, IT (curated by Ruth Noack: Peekaboo – Guardare
	la nazione attraverso gli occhi dell'infanzia)
	KEINRAUM, Luzern (Die Nachfahren)
	KEINRAUM, Luzern (Die Nachricht), performance feat. Julian Zehnder
	ExArt, Cagliari, IT (DAI coop summit: Peekaboo – Looking Askance At
	Issues Of Childhood Connected To Nation)
	Silent Green, Berlin, GER (DAI: Aeroponic Acts ~ growing roots in air),
	performance
	Universität Dessau, GER (DAI, The Kitchen: Would you like to invest?),
	performance
2018	Nidwaldner Museum, Stans (NOW18)
	Project Probe, Arnhem, NL (Archipelago)
	Hot Wheels, Athen, GRC (DAI coop summit: How it comes to matter)
	Nidwaldner Museum, Stans (in cavo: Where all the aims cross), solo
	MACBA study centre, Barcelona, ESP (DAI, The Kitchen: If the tools
	fall apart in your hands), performance
2017	ArtStadt Bern (Now on show)
	Lokal-Int, Biel (Empathy Stone)
	Museum Langmatt, Baden (Raumfahrt - wieder hungrig?)
2016	Kunsthaus Langenthal (Diplomausstellung: POST WARM POSITIV)

____AWARDS/SUPPORT

2018	project grant, canton of Berne
	Visual Art Award of the cantons of Obwalden & Nidwalden (Unterwaldner
	Preis für bildende Kunst)
2019	studio grant Berlin (Zentralschweizer Atelier Berlin)
2020	Work grant of the cantons of Obwalden & Nidwalden (Werkbeitrag)

____EDUCATIONAL&CURATORIAL PROJECTS

2015 / 2017	Artist Residency Weidli (initiative with Remy Erismann)
2016 – 2019	Immer Am Achten, Schwobhaus (organisation, curation)
	Schwobhaus is an autonomous and non-hierarchical artist house
	hosting transdisciplinary cultural events like panel discussions,
	readings, exhibitions or screenings.
2017 – 2021	Cabane B project space (organisation, curation)
2019	Workshop, University of the Arts Berne, BA Fine Arts, with Felipe
	Castelblanco (Para-Fictioning)
2021	Workshop, University of the Arts Berne, BA Fine Arts, with Felipe
	Castelblanco and Airi Triisberg (Decolonial Sensibilities)
	Workshop, University of the Arts Berne, Transdisciplinary Department «Y»,
	with Yvonne Lanz (Cartography of Futures)

____EDUCATION

2020	Seminar, e-flux (SUMMA TECH: The Untranslatable, with Ed Keller & Carla Leitao,
	curated by Julieta Aranda)
2019 – 2021	Fellowship Sommerakademie Paul Klee (Tirdad Zolghadr – STATECRAFT)
2017 – 2019	MA of Art Practice, Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem, NL
2017	SpringTime, Sommerakademie Paul Klee (Helmut Batista,
	Julien Bismuth – About Perspectivism)
2016	Workshop, University of Berne, (Rosi Braidotti – Critique, Power, Affirmation)
2013 – 2016	BA in Fine Arts with distinction, University of the Arts Berne
2012 – 2013	Preliminary Course, University of the Arts Lucerne

neutral background

## notational system on neutral background (short)

2017-2021
video
00:10:44, 16:9, HD, stereo
Video link (vimeo)
Sommerakademie Paul Klee, online publication

WERK 1: notational system on neutral background (long)

2017-2021
2-channel video installation
00:56:59, HD, stereo
Video link (Dropbox, 2 files)
works as 1-channel-version, too
"Material Worlds", E-Werk Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Freiburg i. Br. / "Now 21", Nidwaldner Museum, Stans

«Notational System on Neutral Background» evolves from expanded ongoing research on **problematic entanglements of Swiss economic policies**. Swiss mythologies and self-identifications of neutrality and innocence still (partly) persist when it comes to discussions of colonial histories and racism. Strong economic involvements, be it in the transatlantic slave trade, or, more recently, **human rights violations** on behalf of global corporations, have been overlooked. This research focuses on such **global involvements**, and asks how Swiss policy-making is involved. In developing an index or **cartographic vocabulary**, It transforms sheer information into readable diagrams, maps, calendars, or **network structures**. This vocabulary helps render complex facts visually accessible, and makes the said entanglements clearer in terms of structure, form, **pattern and rootedness within the system**.

– text by Tirdad Zolghadr
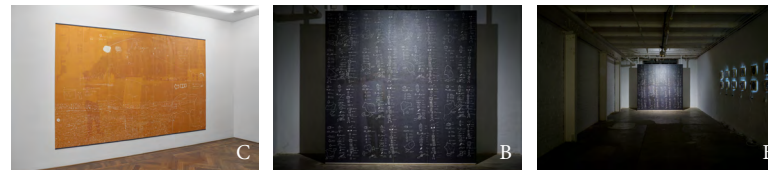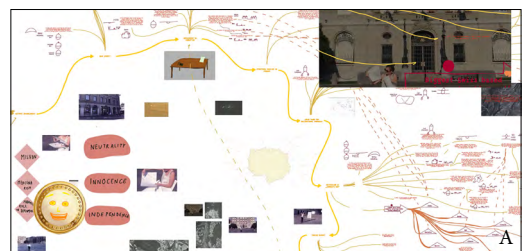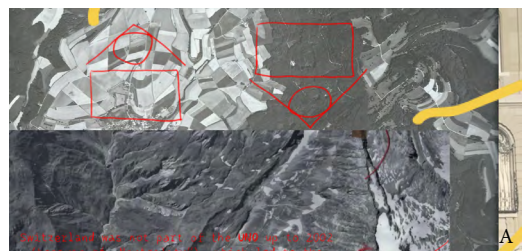

neutral background

2020
wallpapers, series of 3
dimensions mutable
"Material Worlds", E-Werk Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Freiburg i. Br. / "Von möglichen Welten", Kunsthalle Basel

The series of **wallpapers** show the **development** of a **visual vocabulary** in order to render those rather complex facts of economic policies visually accessible. It particularly attempts the **problematic entanglements to become clear in terms of their structure-form, repetition and deep-rootedness in the system**. The repetitive forms of power structures in trajectories of **colonial and post-colonial relationships** become motives for a **reproducible** and **sharable product**: a series of wallpapers, the drawings/maps/network structures being its **pattern**. The patterns use a unified vocabulary **of symbols and forms, but are not directly repetitive as** wallpapers usually are. Instead, the wallpapers expose the **process of getting-a-grasp**, the development of the notational system.
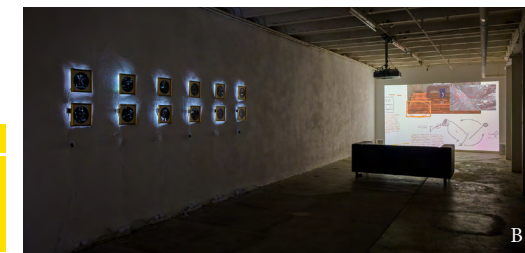
WERK 1: credit of about 420 billion swiss francs (...)

2021
12 lasercuts on paper, LED strips, framed
20 x 20 cm
"Material Worlds", E-Werk Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Freiburg i. Br.
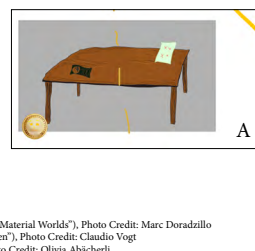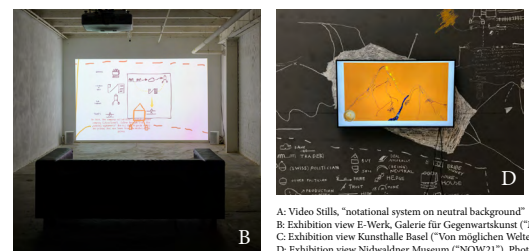
A: Video Stills, "notational system on neutral background"
B: Exhibition view E-Werk, Galerie für Gegenwartskunst ("Material Worlds"), Photo Credit: Marc Doradzillo
C: Exhibition view Kunsthalle Basel ("Von möglichen Welten"), Photo Credit: Claudio Vogt
D: Exhibition view Nidwaldner Museum ("NOW21"), Photo Credit: Olivia Abächerli

IBU SILLA

While researching on colonial entanglements and histories of Central Switzerland I came across the (around 15 boxes full of) diaries of a Swiss mercenary, Alois Wyrsch (also called „Borneo Louis"), in the historical archive of Stans.
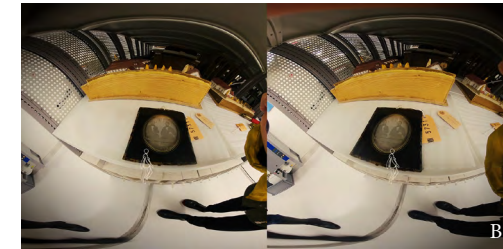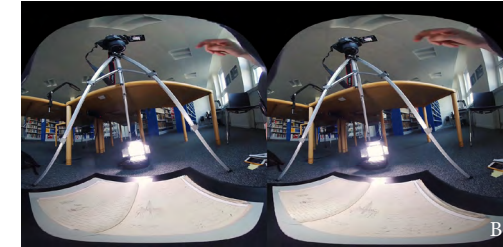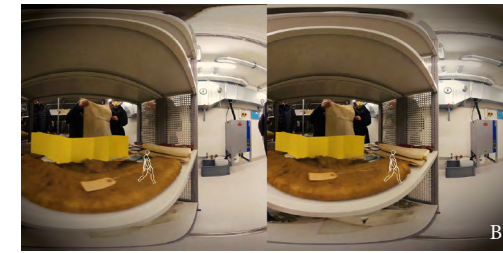
Wyrsch was in Borneo (Banjarmasin) from 1816 and returned to Switzerland in 1832, with two of his children, a son and a daughter, who's mother was indigenous. The mother, called Johanna, Ibu Silla, or Belle was left behind or never arrived to Switzerland. The son, Alois Wyrsch II., became the first Swiss Federal Council of Color in 1871.

All the parts in the diaries where she would be mentioned are censored, cut out or blacked out, probably by himself. The reasons for the censorship can only be speculated about. This is what I'm doing with this project: empathizing the gaps by speculating on possible biographies of „Johanna, Silla, Belle" by means of questions and ‚scraping': subtractive drawing. I'm trying to open up possibilities for her to be recognized as a multiplicity of „potentialities" in the literal and „mental archives". Documentary material from the archives is being more and more revealed thereby.

Given the premise that history is produced and shaped by (white) men, this larger body of work around Ibu Silla attempts to propose counternarratives, hopefully triggering and opening up some space for para-histories and multiperspectives.

Part of the body of work around Ibu Silla, this work thematizes the gaze, the wandering gaze, the subjective gaze. While travelling through different archives via the virtual reality 3D-technology, one sometimes catches a hint of an animated outline of a dancing person "travelling through time and space" with us, looking at us looking at 'her', being constantly reconstructed. The installation reflects on our own gaze and complexity of perspectives.

A: Video Stills, "navigation, speech, (...)"
B: Video Stills, "this is my landscape, (...)"
C: Exhibition view Galerie Hofmatt ("IBU SILLA"), Photo Credit: Olivia Abächerli

If they are a map

WERK 3: I saw convex equatorial deserts and each one of their grainings of sand.
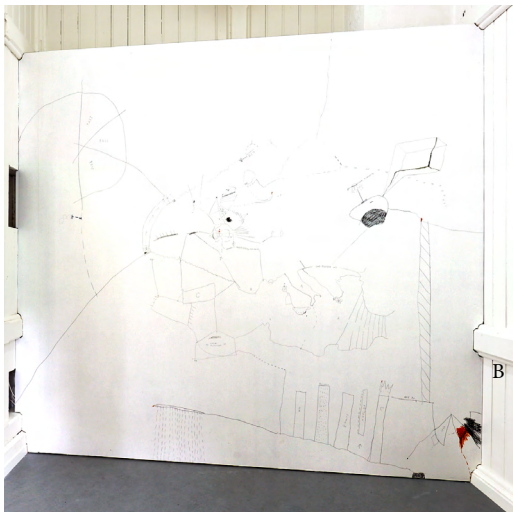
„Now, in order to answer that old question about where you are, it seems one has to leave the ground and travel into space, and more exactly into the cyberspace of a global satellite network. It is said that satellite positioning technology offers a definitive solution to this question, which some claim has troubled us from our origin: Where am I? (…) *Even standing still, we operate at once in a number of overlapping and incommensurable networks, and so in a number of places — at once.* Orienting oneself in this open and ongoing interaction appears all the more imperative and all the more impossible. "Where am I" in what? Where am I, where? In the global market, in the universe, in the family, in a corporate database, in some collective history, in the city or the desert, in the Internet, on the information superhighway?"
- Laura Kurgan

The body of work called «If they are a map» is an ongoing investigation on the matter of orientation and contextualization. How do I, how do we (how does who?) navigate in a multiplicity of parametres of time, space and social contexts? Through the means of large scale drawings, these questions are being tackled by layering a multiplicity of >maps< and thus perspectives.

Short documentary on real lesbianism

What if there was a Swiss indigenous people consisting only of lesbians? Having come of age in a context where right populist politics get most of the votes in Switzerland, a place of lesbian invisibility, a place where the notion of ‹the lesbian› has been used as an insult only; the artist is setting up a thought experiment: the nationalist's fantasy of a «Swiss race» that has never and will never exist, is being twisted: the «Swiss race» is being imagined and ‹explored› as a «lesbian race» living in a forest[1]. The work reflects on fantasies of homogenous societies and identifications and investigates essentialist notions like the ‹indigenous› and the ‹pure›. The essentialism of such identifications is being exaggerated until it is driven into absurdity. It is an attempt of intersecting anti-racist (and anti-imperialist and anti-nationalist), feminist and queer premises through a radical thought experiment.
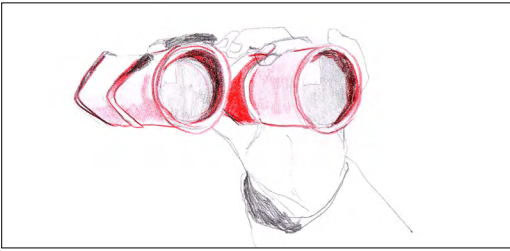
The work has not been exhibited yet. In a (hopefully) future show, I will synchronize it (particularly its stop motion animated parts) with a stroboscopic light effect and thus amplify the works reference to conceptual gaps: to the incompleteness of histories.

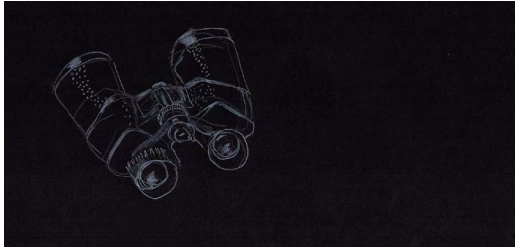Images Film Stills "Short documentary on real lesbianism"
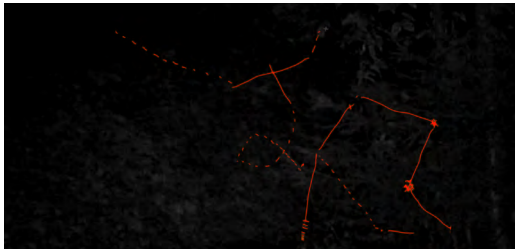
In 2022, ur-lesbians have been discovered in the core : the Kernwald forest.

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1   "Kernwald" ist the mythical forest localized at the place of the artist's coming of age (and of her inner coming out as a lesbian), loosely translated as 'core forest'.

grandfather's face

«Of course Im against it, too» — In 1975, the artist's grandfather has been stating his opinion on the women's right to vote[1] on Swiss national tv. That footage has only been found by the artist in 2021, 14 years after his death.

How to deal with contradictory feelings towards beloved family members with whom one dissents fundamentally about basic political matters, worldviews and urgencies? This piece is an investigation on such tensions: the video works with and through the tv show's footage. Like traces of a letter or a ‹map of thought›, writings and drawings are directly being marked on the grandfather's face, onto the surface of the very moment of his «painful» statements. The image is being repeated and zoomed in excessively attempting to achieve opacity and proximity, an understanding that might never be obtained. Thus, the question processualy shifts from ‹How to relate?› towards: ‹How to deal with non-relating?›

Images: Film Stills "Grandfather's face"
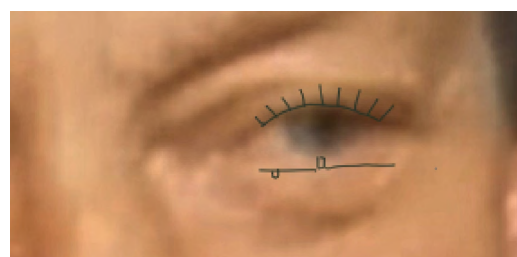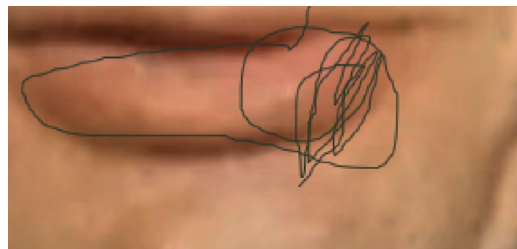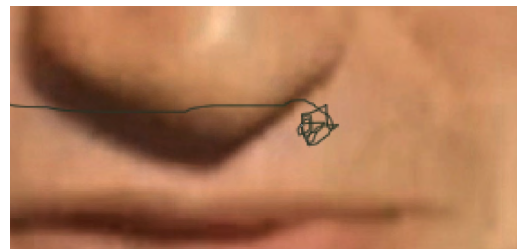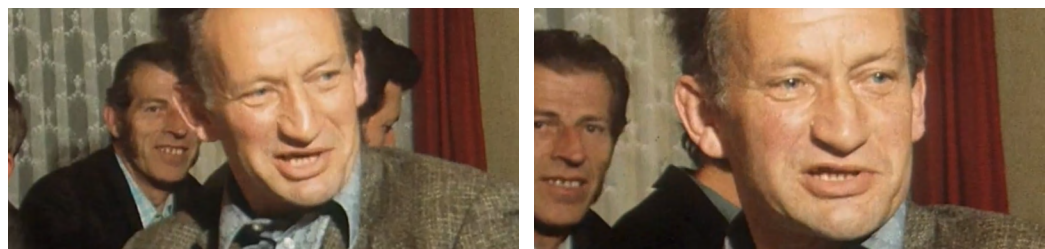
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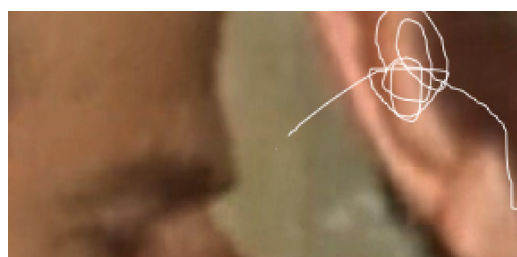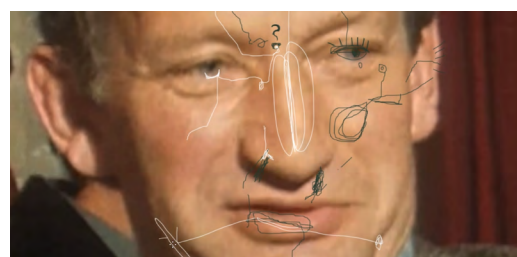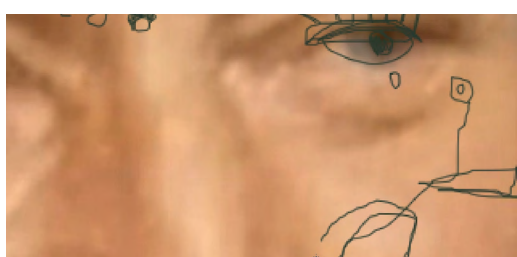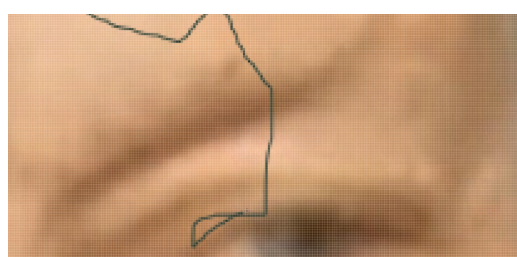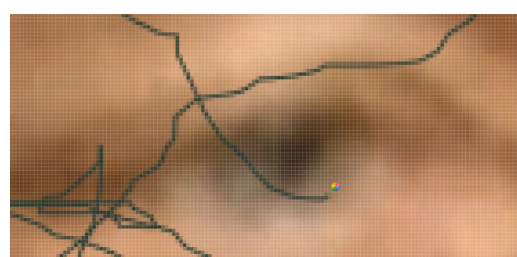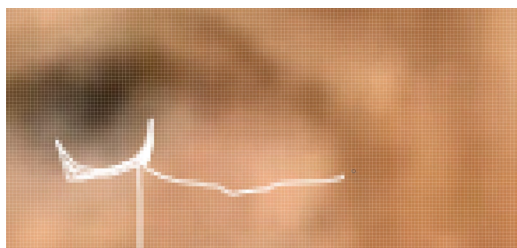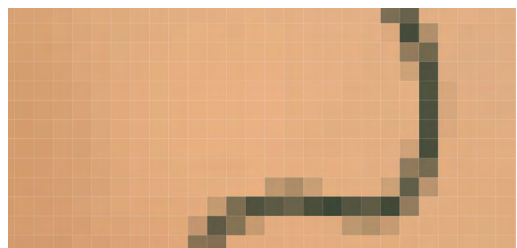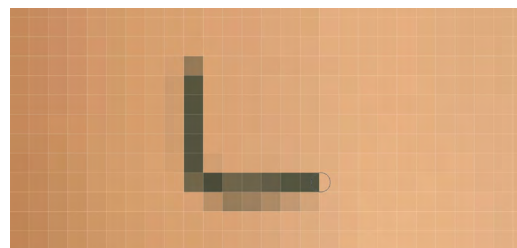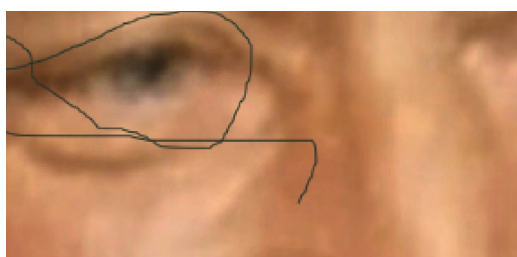
1   on a communal level

2021
Installation
Copper, brick-dust
"Smudge, the messenger –", Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel
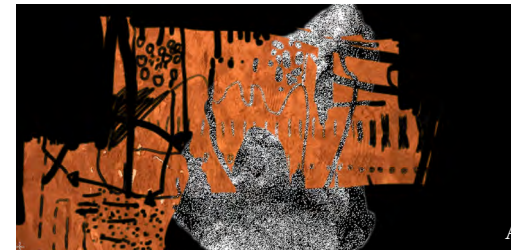
2021
Installation
Copper wire, brick-dust, tin,
soapstone, plasticine, graphite,
Projection 1, HD, 16:9, 00:22:40,
without sound / Projection 2,
HD, 16:9, 00:22:40, without sound
"Smudge, the messenger –", Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel

2021
Installation
Display cases from common beech wood
and glass, brick-dust,graphite
"Smudge, the messenger –", Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel
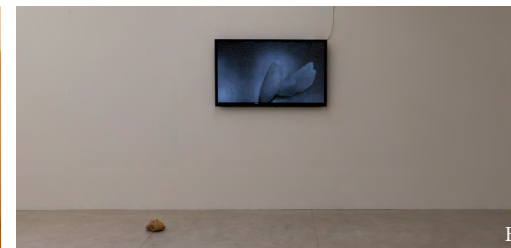
2021
video
HD, 16:9, 00:08:19, stereo
Video link (vimeo)
password: cat
"Smudge, the messenger –", Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel

Smudge, the messenger –
DUELL (collective with Amélie Bodenmann)
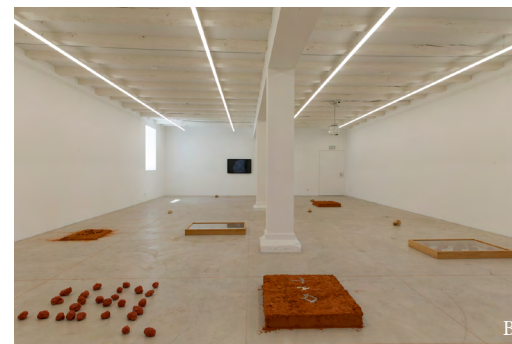
How is a language constructed beyond cultural references? DUELL is playing with the hypothesis that a code for extraterrestrial communication would consist of entropy of material, of distribution of points, of a rhythmic arrangement of objects, of alternating density of mass.

The cat named Smudge is an actor in interwoven experimental arrangements and grids. Smudge, the messenger - attempts a language that is inscribing itself into the environment.

A: Video Stills, "Smudge, the messenger –"
B: Exhibition view Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel ("Smudge, the messenger –"), Photo Credit: Gina Folly

Riddley (How does one make fire again?)

DUELL (collective with Amélie Bodenmann)

"Riddley (How does one make fire again?)", Benzeholz (Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst), Meggen

A: Video Stills, "Riddley (How does one make fire again?"
B: Exhibition view Benzeholz (Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst), "Riddley (How does one make fire again?)", Photo
Credits: Ralph Kühne

With the exbition ‚RIDDLEY how does one make fire again?', DUELL is sketching post climate change landscapes and sciences, envisioning looped space and time.

In the introducory scene between a laboratory and a museum, micro landscapes of natural and technological elements and lumps are to find behind screens, in a filing cabinet and as sketches at the wall. The archaeological set-up blends with Science-Fiction aesthetics.

In Russell Hoban's Sci-Fi novel, Riddley Walker stumbles upon efforts to recreate a weapon of the ancient world by digging iron leftovers, roughly two thousand years after a nuclear war has devastated civilization. What if, after climate change, we are going to arrive back to an archaic future that is emptied of resources, endlessly circling the planet like Mad Max?

In the video installation, Riddley becomes a multi-gendered and multi-shaped prototype character. What if they'll forget how to make a fire? When Riddley tries to speak, objects of clay leave their mouth and grow bigger and bigger.

With Riddley stagnant and exposed to a fast-moving macro landscape, with rough sketches being drawn over their body, the images empathise the brutality of racist colonial ethnological photography and address the questions of primitivity and subjectivity in the writing of history and in the making of science, in the making of space, in the making of time.

On the third floor, micro becomes macro and the exhibition concludes with a room-filling installation of brick powder that people can walk on and leave their traces. Some areas remind of excavation sites, non-identifiable tools of lead being found. Through people's movements, the brick powder is over time distributing on all three floors, as is the soundtrack in the staircase, providing Riddley's future myths as para-histories.

Would you like to have polsima?
2019
4-channel video installation
HD, 16:9, 10:12, loop, stereo
sound: Timon Kurz
Video links (vimeo): 1, 2, 3, 4
password: polsima
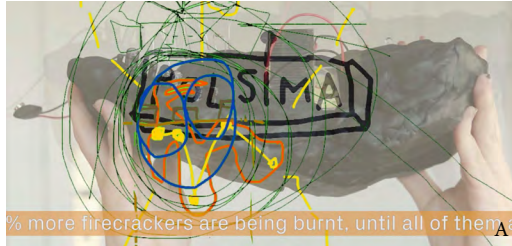"Dialogue Model: I can't hear myself without you listening", M8 Art Space, Helsinki

polsima

"We will be able to **calculate the future** outcome of every tiny decision we take today. We will be able to form the society and the planet we want. Would you like to be part of this movement?"

Polsima, the political-simulator machine, is a highly complex device that can calculate and visually simulate all the future consequences of any political decision. The algorithm is shaped by scientists from all possible disciplines and **promises to end political speculations**, so finally politics can not fail any more.
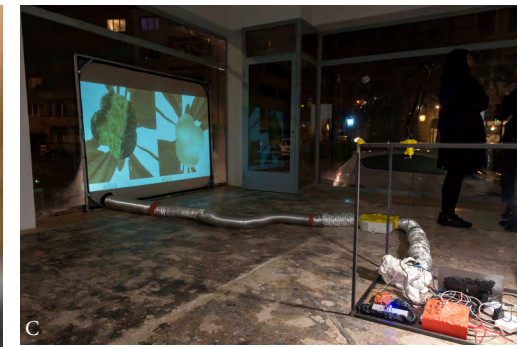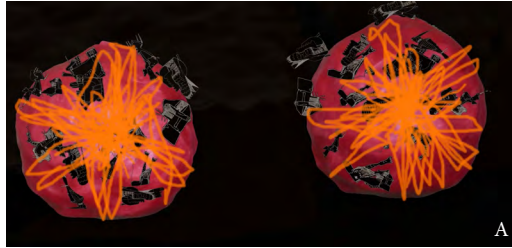
This product's **dream-like handicraft** and intimate aesthetics soon intertwines with our personal affections at some unnoticed yet undeniable point. There is an inherent horror in the prediction of complex networks of causal events with absurdity always looming close, despite its initial intentions will ,polsima' fulfill a utopian purpose or operate as an **object of desire** and a **neoliberal instrument of power**.

– Text: Edel O'Reilly

% more firecrackers are being burnt, until all of them a
A

A

1000 years
A

A

A

A: Video Stills, "Would you like to have polsima?"
B: Video Still, "POLSIMA LAUNCH"
C: Exhibition view Sattelkammer ("POLSIMA LAUNCH"), Photo Credit: Samuel Rauber

C

B

C

C

POLSIMA LAUNCH
2020
Video installation
Table, chair, paper, Polsima pen, Polsima key ring, crayon on window pane, cups, plasticine, resistors, condensers, LEDs, wires, strands, cables, motion detectors, temperature gauge, push buttons, microphone, interface, Arduino modules, ventilation pipes, metal frame, plexy glass, double projection on screen
Videos: X times 17 seconds, HD, 4:3, without sound, activated by pressing a button
"POLSIMA LAUNCH", Sattelkammer, Bern

C

Polsima Launch: the machine is being introduced, **opened up** and tested. The **inner structures** and technical complexities are shown openly, and the panes of the space become a shell; the random videos - Polsimas calculated visions or simulations - **are projected** onto a rear projection screen, so they can be read from the outside as well as the inside. The videos each contain two juxtaposed versions of the future, which, fictitiously, refer to the political question posed and represent an «If No, then:» or an «If Yes, then:». The virtual cameras move like a roller coaster through the cross-section of **animated ropes**, which are located in an empty void surrounded by abstract drawings that derive from **circuit diagrams**. The «content» of the rope is a mixture of animated drawings of our planet and found footage arranged by color. On the second large window, in the office, a similar «circuit diagram drawing» is also visible from the outside and inside. The performer (Alexandra Anderhalden) balances between the figure of a scientist and that of a **fair saleswoman**, oscillating between rational logic and emotional visionary. She guides the visitors through the functions of the machine.

How Do Stones Grow?

'In cavo: where all the aims cross', Nidwaldner Museum, Stans

The personnage of an archaeologist is reporting about **excavations of various utopian societies** in a setup of a documentary interview. The documented utopias are almost about to tip over into imaginations of dystopias – utopia and dystopia, as well as past and future, historiographical aesthetics and elements of science fiction, are on the verge of merging into one another. The work makes use of an irony of Western ethnographic colonial rhetoric in order to explore the question of **how collective visions of the future could merge**, or how they could continue growing together out of individual absurd dreams.

We have found a society that moved along by rolling.

We have found traces of a people that lived without any gravity.

We have found traces of a people where nobody ever needed to work.

We have found traces of a people made of rubber, humans out of rubber.

We have found traces of a people who were able to drink carbon dioxide.

We've come across a people that only ate crisps.

they were always laughing.

We've found traces from a people who walked on their hands.

Images: Video Stills, "How Do Stones Grow?"

DRUCKE DEINEN PERSÖNLICHEN TRAININGSPLAN

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Warum gibt es Konflikte?

WEIL SIE SPASS MACHEN UND WEIL SIE ÖKONOMISCH SINNVOLL SIND

ES IST ZU WENIG PLATZ FÜR ZU VIEL GESCHEHEN

WEIL WIR TIERE SIND

...KE DEINEN PERSÖNLICHEN ...INGSPLAN

A: Exhibition view Nidwaldner Museum, "NOW18". Photo Credits: Christian Hartmann
B: Screenshot Tablet, Web-Application, German Version
C: One of 27 possible personalized workout plans, drawing, felt pen on paper, scanned and digitally printed

Vertical Movement Gym Department Model

2018
multimedia installation
metal, plasticine, rope, carpet, tablet, web application, printer, etc.
4 x 4 x 4 m
"NOW18", Nidwaldner Museum, Stans

„In her multi-part installations, Olivia Abächerli addresses the tension between the individual and the collective as well as between private and political. Starting point of ‚vertical movement gym department model' is the recurring political debate on immigration. Countering the often demanded isolation to the outside, the artist proposes another solution: The boat is just not full if we move our bodies not only vertically, but also horizontally. Transferred into the space, we move accordingly on the vertical instead of on the horizontal. Olivia Abächerli offers in her installation a training center for vertical polarity reversal. In addition to devices, objects and instructions, an individual training plan can be created and printed out through using an interactive questionnaire. The work examines the political potential of fiction, whereby it moves on a fine line between corporate design and rudimentary sketchiness, as well as a concrete proposal for a solution and an intimate dream."
- translated from a text written by Barbara Ruf

P.A.P.

The Ricco Wassmer retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 2015 also showed his childhood butterfly collection from the 1930s. A cabinet full of palm-sized two-winged butterflies, captured by a child in Bremgarten near Bern.

Where have these butterflies, in these sizes and varieties, disappeared? Have they all gone extinct?

This poster series is dedicated to a childhood story: When the artist's mother incomprehensibly planted stinging nettles in their garden in the 90s, despite the danger of people falling in and hurting, the nettle's purpose was to be a brimstone habitat, because stinging nettles help brimstones survive.

The posters advertise a stinging nettles park, an adventure park that is the habitat of the brimstones, and address a double level of the child's idea of the better.

If Tools Fall Apart In Your Hands

Images:
Lecture Performance at MACBA study centre, Barcelona, Photos: Leon Filter

With a tattoo machine arrows are tattooed on about 100 oranges, first gently, later faster and more violently. Each tattooed orange is thrown to the ground and rolls around in the space between the on-floor spectators until it stops. While tattooing, the artist reads a poetic text, which leads to a strong rhythm of both actions.

The text tells of the excavations of an absurd navigation tool called ,Hagelbugel', of a caterpillar-readable code, of the Voynich manuscript. It is talking about the impossibility of a universal cartography, and how the non-goal-directedness of an action gets its justification through its effort.