



David Bielander, Jörg Boner, Frédéric Dedelley, Katalin Deér, Cécile Hummel,
Lütjens Padmanabhan Architekten, Cornelia Trösch, Nora Wagner
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“Nature’s a temple where each living column, / At times gives forth vague words. There Man advances / Through forest-groves of symbols, strange and solemn, / Who follow him with their familiar glances”: thus begins the poem “Correspondences” by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) from the collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857). As the title suggests, this exhibition is also about correspondences: similarities and analogies. Or to put it more poetically: spaces of resonance. Our perception often works by way of comparison: we perceive things and always have their surroundings in view. Creating references results in a fine web of meaning. This takes place without our own intervention. The emotional charge takes place as it were on the stage of our unconscious.

Baudelaire’s words provide a kind of thought-image that can inspire us to think about the relationship to our environment, nature, culture, or technology. For the team of curators, consisting of Frédéric Dedelley, Jörg Boner, and myself, Baudelaire’s poem formed a kind of matrix on the basis of which individual interests can be articulated and explored in more depth. An additional point of departure for the conception of this exhibition was the work of the artist Fabian Treiber, which is presented parallel to “Correspondances” in the larger space of the gallery.

How do these correspondences arise? And where do they take place? Let us turn first to Baudelaire’s words. The statement that nature is a temple already grabs our attention. Here, by way of the analogy of the tree (the word forest follows) nature is compared to a cultic architectural form (temple). And its components, the columns, even speak! Immediately thereafter, these trees become symbols—with eyes. Sounds like a hallucinogenic experience. To point out the correspondence between material (that is, visible) and intellectual (invisible) reality is not only an achievement of Baudelaire’s. This idea is rooted in a long, literary, philosophical and in part mystical tradition. As Walter Benjamin explains in his essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” the shock of modernity (phenomena like the crowd, the growing city or the machine) were formative for the work of this French poet. In his poetry, Baudelaire expresses his mourning for the loss of the past. I don’t want to take the analogy too far. But we are currently now too living in a kind of permanent state of shock.

How do designers and artists respond to the many crises and challenges of our time? How do they translate their engagement with the state of the world in their objects? In what ways can objects become surfaces of projection for our longings? At issue here are objects and works that explore the intellectual dimension of the material world beyond a concrete use. But they do this in very different ways.

David Bielander’s way of working is unusual. The trained goldsmith possesses enormous abilities as a craftsman. At the same time, his work is very conceptually rigorous. His pieces are often conceived for the human body, but Bielander doesn’t see jewelry as ornamentation, but as a form of communication. This can also include unsettling the beholder. Is that a real snail? Is this bracelet really made of cardboard? And why is this person wearing a Pinocchio nose around his or her neck? Here, analogies are revealed on a formal level on the one hand, because the jewelry “looks like” other things, while at the same time corresponding with cultural attributions and questioning them at the same time. Does a snail have to be disgusting? And a tire dirty? And what does lying exactly mean (the the nose of Carlo Collodi’s Pinocchio grows when he fibs)? The jewelry artist introduces a level through the rear door of the familiar that can unsettle us quite decidedly.

Jörg Boner was also interested in a familiar object: the ladder. He made a ladder



using larch wood that he found while taking long walks in Ticino. Since the pieces of wood had been exposed to the elements for some time, various pests had their fill of the wood under the bark. This is revealed by a trail on the branches that looks like writing from a long past era. It is as if a human being actually walked through a forest of symbols. Jörg Boner treats the trace and the surface with an indigo-blue water stain and then sanded it down in part. The designer emphasizes the traces left by the animals without romanticizing nature. The special color recalls something washed out, used, and thus reminds us how old the branches are. The object opens a hybrid space between the natural and the cultural artifact. Does the ladder come from the temple mentioned in "Correspondences"?

By transferring packaging and protective material used for electronic devices to a new materiality, Frédéric Dedelley engages in an archaeology of the future. This is also emphasized by the patina of the material he chooses: bronze. His *Vestiges du jour* (Remains of the Day) are, as it were, signs from a distant future: ruins of themselves. Ruins are structures that have been robbed of their original purpose. In this way, they become scenes of new levels of reality. From these ruins, confusing words can emerge. But who says that we always have to decode and name everything precisely? The emotional power of many objects inheres precisely in their ambivalence. Originally these "vestiges" were in fact refuse, but thanks to their material de-familiarization we now see them again in a new way. The loss of the device that was originally packed up reveals itself as a gift: a void becomes a fullness.

In photography, the relationship between reality and image is made manifest in an especially striking way. Katalin Deér has decided to trace out this ghostly occurrence in her work. Her work *Moment* combines photography and sculpture and takes both disciplines to their limits. The surface of the cement panels is a photograph, but in its make-up it looks much more like ceramics. A "correspondence" is also created between the object represented (architecture) and the material (cement) that forms a unity with the photograph. Through the special way in which this photographic object is created, the material used as a point of departure takes on a new physical presence. The work thus creates an intersection between material and intellectual reality.

An interpersonal and artistic form of correspondence was created in the encounter between Katalin Deér and the artist Cécile Hummel. The latter was this year's resident at Sitterwerk in St. Gallen, where Deér also has her studio. Both artists work in the medium of photography. While visiting an old industrial building in Arbon, the two artists were struck by the glass bricks typical of this architecture. They decided to focus on just a few visual elements for their joint photographic work *Dazwischen zwei Augen* (Two Eyes in Between): a glass brick, a carafe, and colored glass. They handed the glass brick and the camera back and forth between them and photographed how they held the architecture-like object in their hands. In this action, which left its mark in the photographs, the gestures of the astonished observers play a key role. This results in a confusion of surface and depth, where the tactile and the optical combine to form a meaning. At the same time, the changing roles of the artists fuse to form a single entity. In between, there are two eyes, not four. But who is looking at whom?

During her residency at Sitterwerk, Hummel, who had already dealt with the subject of self and other in her work, engaged in a deep study of the library. Her research led her to the Silk Road and the material exchange between East and West that was associated with that. The fact that it worked both directions was an important aspect for the artist. She was not interested in our Eurocentric point of view, but how objects could be witness to a conversation. In her work *Bronze Stein Glas Messer* (Bronze, Stone, Glass, Knife) she brings together different worlds and eras. Renderings of objects that she found in books, some of them older, formed the point of departure of her drawings. In addition, she became aware of the wide array



of devices at Sitterwerk, which is also a site for producing art. The objects drawn on thin paper with a multi-colored pencil are thus given an additional dimension. By placing two drawings on top of one another, the one beneath shimmers through the one on top creating a kind of shadow image. The vitrine-like framework generates an additional space that refers to the museum presentation of exotic exhibits, and thus to our one-sided view of culture. Culture in Hummel's work always takes place in a resonance chamber.

Oliver Lütjens and Thomas Padmanabhan jointly run an architectural firm. Their buildings are marked by everyday materials and pragmatic solutions, but always possess an element of sophistication and a touch of humor. In their view, good architecture is created not primarily by the use of valuable materials and their fetishization, but through subtle displacements. At issue is not the grand gesture; instead they cultivate an art of discreet references. For a multifamily residential building in Zurich, they created a mailbox that is transformed by the mere addition of "ears" into a friendly creature. They then designed small lights for the pathway with little feet. The lights begin to mutate from abstract objects to figures. How does such a transformation take place? The two architects asked themselves how to generate an "animate" object from dead material. With their three lamp designs, they continued their research a step further. Are these functional objects or can these animals make themselves autonomous? Does design have something to do with magic? Or are these objects "just" a surface for our projections?

Sometimes we think we know what our world consists of. But we are hardly aware of the fact that this is increasingly less and less the case. In examining the works of Cornelia Trösch, we find answers. Her porcelain vessels reveal their construction openly, we become astonished witnesses of their process of emergence, although the piece has already been completed. By exploring the limits of a material, she allows us to partake in their creation of an object. What happens when fragments come together before our eyes to a "whole"? Why are we moved by viewing these irregularly shaped vessels? Do they demonstrate our own vulnerability?

Exploring the contrast between control and chance is also the focus of the work of one of Cornelia Trösch's students, Nora Wagner. Despite her initial skepticism, Wagner engaged in a special experiment that brings various issues into her work. On the one hand, her 3D-digitally printed ceramics question the cliché of the incompatibility of analogue and digital creation, on the other hand her *lake/reflection* pieces reflect the primeval opposition between nature and technology. The objects modelled on reservoirs direct our attention to these artificially generated landscapes. Elements of polished steel appear like foreign bodies, but also refer to water reflections. The objects thus also pose the question of our view of the natural environment.

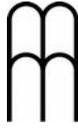
The principle of analogy generates bridges between apparently incompatible polarities. The works shown here work use this tension productively and thus seem virtually auratically charged.

Susanna Koeberle

Correspondances

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,



**Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.**

**Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
- Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,**

**Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens**