

KUNSTHAUSBASELLAND

Nature. Sound. Memory

Monira Al Qadiri

Joan Jonas

Sigalit Landau

Maya Schweizer

Hannah Weinberger

10.3.—

9.7.2023

The exhibition *Nature. Sound. Memory* focuses on expansive installation works that explicitly engage with the themes of nature, sound, and memory. Through an approach that is both poetic and immersive, the five invited artists enable the viewer to delve into urgent issues concerning our collective responsibility toward nature and all its living creatures—as well as the behaviors we need to change and the role we all play in achieving this.

Five international artists have been invited to occupy the entire basement of Kunsthaus Baselland. As different as the individual works by Joan Jonas, Sigalit Landau, Monira Al Qadiri, Maya Schweizer, and Hannah Weinberger may be, they come together as an ensemble with the aim of teaching us to be more mindful and to take on a greater shared responsibility for our collective existence.

These five artistic positions will be complemented by a series of evening performances, artist talks, and other events throughout the duration of the exhibition.

US artist **Joan Jonas** has been a leading figure in contemporary art since the 1970s, and she is also one of the most prominent artists to have been consistently and explicitly addressing issues relating to nature, climate change, sustainability, and care in her work for a long time. Through her constant experimentation with performance, video, and installation, as well as using them in combination, Jonas has repeatedly shifted and expanded the prevailing definitions of and boundaries between video, text/sound, drawing, and performance. Several generations of artists have been and continue to be influenced by her.

This group exhibition at Kunsthaus Baselland is the first time that Jonas's work has been represented in Basel and the region in this form. The show features the artist's latest drawings, texts, and videos from her Ocean series. In recent years, Jonas has become increasingly interested in contemporary ecological issues in the wake of climate change, placing non-

human life forms and ecosystems at the center of her artistic approach and practice. At the same time, an ongoing priority in all of her projects is the minimization of their ecological footprint. Jonas will not be traveling to the exhibition herself, but will be present at the installation and opening via Zoom. (For almost all of our exhibitions at Kunsthaus Baselland over the last few years, we have been trying to avoid traveling or transporting works by air wherever possible and to use rail or road instead.)

Joan Jonas was born in New York in 1936 and studied art history at Mount Holyoke College from 1954 to 1958, followed by sculpture at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and painting at Columbia University in New York. With numerous awards and multiple solo and group exhibitions since the late 1960s, Jonas is one of the pioneers of the performance scene and has worked with John Cage, Philip Glass, and Merce Cunningham, among others. She lives and works in New York.

Sigalit Landau is one of Israel's most prominent contemporary artists and is famous for her impressive videos and spatial installations, in which she explores the power of nature as well as questions of remembering, collective (political) memory, and (female) identity. In a series of striking video works—one of which will now be shown in Switzerland for the first time as part of the exhibition at Kunsthaus Baselland—Sigalit Landau places a special focus on the Dead Sea and its (hi)stories. In prismatic refractions and their proliferation and layering over everyday objects, the ever-forming salt become a key to reinterpreting the world—shrouded in a salt skin—in an enigmatic, somewhat melancholy way. The saline sea is both laboratory and studio: the salty second skin enveloping familiar objects makes them seem alien and inaccessible, yet also poetically captivating. For the artist, the Dead Sea becomes a stand-in for exploited, dead nature as well as political violence and issues of female identity. It is also a symbol of the unceasing violence that people can inflict upon each other—with a particular focus on the Holocaust—but also of the political situation worldwide and specifically in her country of Israel.

Sigalit Landau was born in Jerusalem in 1969. Between 1990 and 1995, she studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and the Cooper Union in New York. Her work has been presented in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world, including documenta and the Venice Biennale. Landau lives and works in Tel Aviv.

Monira Al Qadiri will occupy the entire Shedhalle with her comprehensive installation *Holy Quarter*. Consisting of video, sound, and objects, this work marks her largest presentation in Switzerland to date. Raised in Kuwait, Al Qadiri has spent the last ten years focusing on installations, sculptures, and video works that explicitly deal with urban economic development as well as nature in the Persian Gulf. An integral element of these works are the ruptures encountered and occurring there, which can be observed frequently in the media used here in various ways. These fractures are caused by rapid development in the region and allow it to shine on a global scale; at the same time, there are dangers present that are as varied as gender inequalities, petrocultures, and the effects of corruption. The raw material of oil—central to the region's rapid development and its symbolic fuel at the same time—plays a prominent role in Al Qadiri's oeuvre and appears in some of her sculptures (evocations of oil drilling; solidified material such as glass, desert regions, etc.) and video works. The sound that accompanies the video works in particular is pivotal to Al Qadiri's oeuvre: it facilitates an almost total immersion in the worlds presented, and at the same time enables the viewer to comprehend the ecological impact on humans and nature in an emotional way. Language and text merge together with traditional sounds and music (composed by the artist's sister, musician Fatima Al Qadiri) to form a whole.

Monira Al Qadiri is a Kuwaiti artist who was born in Senegal in 1983 and educated in Japan. She received her PhD in intermedia art from Tokyo University of the Arts in 2010; her thesis focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle East stemming from poetry, music, art, and religious practices. Al Qadiri lives and works in Berlin.

The cinematic works of French artist **Maya Schweizer** revolve around questions of history, identity and memory. Both urban and natural spaces—especially oceans—are viewed as interfaces of individual and collective behavior and often form the starting point of her filmic and textual observations. In her perception of these places and spaces, she uncovers social realities, inscribed narratives, and overlapping histories, while adding new narratives of her own that linger as striking images. For her presentation at Kunsthaus Baselland, Maya Schweizer will first show two videos from the video trilogy she has been working on for some time in a separate spatial installation: *L'étoile de mer* (2019) and *Voices and Shells* (2020). From June, the latest work in this series, *Sans histoire* (working title; 2023), is also planned to be shown in a premiere at Kunsthaus Baselland. Schweizer is known for exploring themes relating to

collective and individual memory, particularly from German history. The great power and poetry of Maya Schweizer's works lie in her collage-like set pieces and fragments from literary and film history that mix both the historical and political with the contemporary and natural in images, sound, and text and allow them to become a whole.

Maya Schweizer was born in Paris in 1976 and studied art and art history in Aix-en-Provence, as well as at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig and Berlin University of the Arts, where she graduated as a master student of Lothar Baumgarten in 2007. Schweizer works in a variety of media, with a focus on experimental video works. Her upcoming projects for 2023 include a major solo exhibition at the Jewish Museum Berlin. The group exhibition at Kunsthaus Baselland is the first time her work has been presented in Switzerland. In 2023, Schweizer received the HAP Grieshaber Prize, the most highly endowed art prize in Germany. She lives and works in Paris, among other places.

Hannah Weinberger is known for her distinctive and poetic sound and video works, which she sometimes activates through live performances. She often mixes sounds from private and public sources as well as from everyday and more specific origins over several sound tracks and channels to form a complex acoustic collage. She develops these compositions, which can also be experienced in conjunction with light and video works, in order to emphasize what she refers to as the "social cacophony." The artist rearranges and reassembles her recordings—whether they are taken from the internet, CDs, obtained from friends, or are her own melodies, field recordings, and sound frequencies—to form new compositions. The rhythm of each sound is crucial: sometimes it condenses and gets louder, at other times the tapestry of sound fades slowly, becoming so soft and quiet that you might almost miss it. The artist explores whether this makes visitors perceive the work differently. Weinberger's sound works are predominantly site-specific installations, whose appeal for the artist lies both in their potential transferability and in their uniqueness. For this exhibition at Kunsthaus Baselland, Hannah Weinberger presents her work *Singende Steine* (Singing Stones). To create this multi-part work, which will be expanded for the Kunsthaus, the artist carefully selects boulders from Switzerland, which are then hewn and equipped with a loudspeaker sound system to make them resonate.

Hannah Weinberger was born in Filderstadt (DE) in 1988 and studied media arts at Zurich University of the Arts from 2007 to 2010, before graduating with a

master's degree in 2013. Even as a student her work was presented in both national and international group and solo exhibitions. In 2016, the artist was awarded a prize by the Guggenheim Foundation in Zurich. Since 2016 Weinberger has been teaching at the Art Institute at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel. She lives and works in Basel.

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