

Afterlight. Afterglow
Video Installations and their Pioneers
23.1.—24.5.2021

Georg Faulhaber
Karl Gerstner
Julio Le Parc
Zilla Leutenegger
Roy Lichtenstein
Gustav Metzger
Oscar Muñoz
Nam June Paik
Sergio Prego
René Pulfer
Pipilotti Rist
Teresa Serrano
Keith Sonnier
Nevet Yitzhak

Curated by Ines Goldbach
and Käthe Walser

Experiencing Video Art within the Body

On the Afterlight of Images within Us

Ines Goldbach

This exhibition seems to come at just the right time. After over a year of pandemic and the reopening of museums and exhibition halls having just recently become possible, it provides a space for amplifying current experiences; for new readings of what has been happening and for what has become newly readable.

This group show seeks to trace the development of the medium of video and expansive, immersive installations using representative examples. It also demonstrates how within one year there has been a transformation in our understanding of key (interpersonal) moments such as communication, digital (world) connectedness, intimacy and distance, corporeal experience, and places of longing have shifted as we look out onto the world from the confines of our own four walls. The works, even those created some time ago, may even be more comprehensible for us today. Without the experiences of recent months, we may have needed a few more emotional attempts; we may, for historic, geographic, and political reasons, have viewed them in a more distanced way. In our present moment, we all know what it means to be within our own four walls, feeling cut off from the world.

Afterlight. Afterglow—a large group exhibition with works by 14 artists from Switzerland and abroad, jointly curated by me and Käthe Walser. For the selection, it was important to us to achieve a representative overview of contemporary video installations and their precursors since the late 1950s—through, for instance, proponents of (light) kinetics and initial experiments with TV monitors—as well as show international artists alongside Swiss ones, present various generations, and at the same time to give the individual works enough space for them to be experienced physically.

But how can the development of video installation be traced in just a few strokes? The 1960s was an era of rupture and upheaval, leading to social changes, youth protests, anti-war movements, generational conflicts, and scientific and technological progress. The enormous developments in art and culture did not happen in isolation: they fundamentally and sustainably fuelled those moments. The great innovation of trying to bring art closer to life—to include the viewer spatially, without pedestal and without distance, to use new technologies and materials, and to integrate everyday themes—has a lasting influence to this day.

Several years from now, it may be possible and necessary to speak of our present day in the same way: a time when the pandemic instigated severe demographic, economic, social, medical, and even cultural upheavals, but despite the negative impacts also kindled new ideas and new forms.

The observation of the present in real time via new media such as (handheld) video cameras, monitors, and recorders has opened up new possibilities up for artists, especially since the 1960s. One technological milestone for a number of artists was the analog Portapak video recorder of 1965. It offered a way of producing moving images, without having to rely on film or a broadcast camera.

One of the era's visionary artists to use this technique in mass media was **Nam June Paik** (1932–2006), who worked in locations such as Düsseldorf, Tokyo, Seoul, and New York.

In much of the South Korean artist's work, he characteristically combine elements of the past with (then) new technology as well as Eastern and Western ideas. During his time in Düsseldorf in particular, he was associated with Fluxus. He consistently combined live performances, experimental music, and modern technology—everyday, advanced, and full of new possibilities—with ideas from Zen Buddhism and traditional East Asian philosophy. With *TV Buddha* from 1974, for example, he created the first closed-circuit video installation. It is today an icon of media art: a Buddha statue meditating in self-reflective juxtaposition with its own visual representation.

Equally significantly, Paik also paved the way for today's physical-sensual understanding of video art.

Swiss Clock (1988), shown here at Kunsthhaus Baselland, continues this exact line of thought. A CCTV camera is pointed at the moving pendulum of an old French striking clock. The filmed material is shown immediately on three TV monitors in real time—a classic closed circuit. Paik points the video camera at a mirror mounted on the pendulum of the clock. The camera thus becomes visible in the mirror—as does the person standing before the work. It would almost be possible to speak of a closed circuit within a closed circuit; an infinite meditative loop. Placed in different directions on their consoles, the monitors display the movement of the same pendulum from three different perspectives. It thus elegantly creates a moment of meditation alongside the visible wiring and the sounding out of the old wall clock. With this combination of a clock and a moving pendulum, and likewise via a circular relationship between video image and reality, Paik's work succeeds in creating a striking view of how time is understood—not purely linear, and rather in all its complexity.

2 In the Basel context, it is natural to highlight **Karl Gerstner** (1930–2017), who worked in this city and is known as an important Swiss artist and innovator. In a video work made for the DAAD in the early 1960s, Gerstner concisely identified an artistic desire shared by him and many other artists: using the possibilities opened up by computer technology for art and in doing so creating striking, novel images. It was against this background that Gerstner developed his pioneering works—especially *Auto-Vision*—that count among the first video sculptures of the early 1960s. Gerstner mounted a mix of optical lenses in front of running TV images, thus distorting the moving image behind them and simultaneously highlighting zero-mediality and a critical attitude towards TV schedules.

Together with other historical works included in the exhibition, *Auto-Vision* represents a key intellectual starting point and is—to our best knowledge—being exhibited in Basel for the first time. The work reflects a vital step taken by a number of artists in those years: detachment from the materiality of the TV box, the surface structure of the screen, its technical peculiarities, as well as developing a thematic and media-critical approach in space. With this turn toward space, the intention was to involve the viewer, both physically and without mediation.

It is striking that in this piece from 1965, broadcast on Swiss TV in 1968 (and also being shown in this exhibition), Gerstner quotes 3 colleagues such as **Julio Le Parc** (born 1928) alongside artistic pioneers such as Marcel Duchamp. Born in Argentina and now based in Paris, Le Parc is a pioneer of light kinetic art. Four of these important works, the concept for which dates back to the early 1960s, appear in the current exhibition: *Cercles Successifs*, *Ligne-losange*, *Lumière visualisée A—Variation sur thème*, *Lumière visualisée B—Variation sur thème*. Resembling CRT TV sets and with light rays refracted and reflected on acrylic glass objects set up in various ways, these large structures have an almost hypnotic effect. This enrapturing quality is derived from the artificial beam of light which Le Parc moves without moving the light source itself. To achieve this, he utilizes film technology and the properties of light—specifically, its reflectivity. In three of the works shown, he uses slotted cylinders, similar to rotary

disc shutters used in film projectors. (Rotary disc shutters are slotted plates or cylinders that cover the transition between two frames of a film, thus preventing image flicker). The segmented and thus “moving” light beam first hits a pinhole aperture or slit diaphragm. Le Parc here uses a principle of the cathode ray monitor, where an electronically generated light beam senses the pinhole aperture in order to create the individual pixels. The light beam then hits reflective, variously arranged panes of acrylic glass. The resulting effects thus move away from the static image and also from a static understanding of observation. With light-kinetic works of this kind—simple in their choice of media, complex in result and impact—astonishing spaces of perception were created even in the 1960s, later becoming key precursors to contemporary light and video installations and paving the way for televisual experimentations. Parallel to this development of a mediating aesthetic experience, there is a nuanced critique of the medium itself and its mediality, which was seen to be devoid of content.

Keith Sonnier (1941–2020), who worked in the USA, made a significant but too-little known contribution to the genre. Sonnier, whose light sculptures in particular—lightbulbs combined with neon light—had a groundbreaking effect on art developments of the early 1960s, increasingly focused on the medium of video in the subsequent decade. As European firsts and in some cases as world premieres, early Keith Sonnier video works were presented at Kunstmuseum St. Gallen in a 2019 solo exhibition. Three of those works are being shown here in the Kunsthaus Baselland exhibition. They impressively document the ways in which artists of the time used the new technological possibilities available to them.

In a series of works, Sonnier began by addressing the then-emerging issue of satellite systems, specifically posing questions about people’s rights to use this new technology and the technology’s political use. Primarily used in the military, surveillance, and space travel sectors at the time, satellite technologies were neither broadly available nor practically usable for regular consumers. It was however through these specific types of use that these technologies first made significant, rapid progress. Even then, the question arose as to who governs

access to this newly acquired information. A major question even today, even if the technologies may have changed substantially. The goal of a Keith Sonnier work from this time would have been to connect artist groups from the East and West Coasts of North America via public satellites—one of the very first projects of this nature. In the video work *Dis-play* (1969), Sonnier reproduces a spatial setting in which two mirrors of just under two meters are placed just across from each other. Comprising wall, mirror, and fabric hanging from the ceiling, the artist's setting here uses a slide projector that beams white light and scenes from earlier video sessions onto the wall in half-second intervals. In this Kinescope display, Sonnier uses gauze as a form of light shutter that opens and closes as the performer moves within the space. With this work, Sonnier introduces tele-recording, in which the TV screen is recorded through the lens of a photographic film, in turn focused on the screen of a video monitor. In *T-Hybrid-V-I* (1971), Sonnier—again using a kinescope technique—combines a several studio recordings with short, sometimes randomly chosen sequences from 1970s TV programs. Tension is created alongside a visual back-and-forth in the image via various means: splitting the monitor image in two and filming only one half of the screen, interjecting into the studio footage with sound, and counting down in different languages. The absence of content in the diverse range of programs is juxtaposed with an artistic production that seeks to generate content.

Experimentation with recording devices and monitors, the distortion of TV images and also their exposure and deconstruction into individual parts were key artistic approaches of the era and also vital to rethinking and newly comprehending what was then still a young medium for art. A reminder: as a medium, the camera was initially extremely cumbersome for artistic use. Alongside the associated recording device, the camera weighed orders of magnitude more than today. With the latest mobile phone technology, however, we always have on hand a high-quality recording device both for longer and shorter video sequences.

In the Swiss context, specifically in Basel and Geneva, there were animated, seminal debates among a number of artists about the new medium of video. Born in Basel in 1949 and based his whole professional life here, the artist and creator **René Pulfer** is in many ways an exceptional figure within videomaking in Basel, Switzerland, and beyond. As early as 1985 and together with Enrique Fontanilles, he launched the video class—the Class for Audiovisual Art—at the Basel School of Design (SfG Basel), teaching there until 2000 in what was then for Switzerland a unique department which had, among other things, its own editing suites and studios. Its graduates included Muda Mathis, Pipilotti Rist, Käthe Walser, Sus Zwick, Christoph Oertli, and many more. In 1984, 1986, and 1988, Pulfer and Reinhard Manz launched Video Weeks in Wenkenpark. Via workshops, lectures, and discussions about productions and presentations of video art, it created a forum for exchange with Swiss and international artists, students, and other figures from the video art world. Gary Hill, Terry Fox, Roos Theuws, Rémy Zaugg, Nan Hoover, Dara Birnbaum, Dan Graham, and others were also involved.

Parallel to his role as lecturer and head of the Art Institute the HGK Basel (until 2014), Pulfer developed his own video work.

Swiss National Bank Security (2002–08), shown in the present exhibition, belongs to a group of works from 1994 onwards in which he experimented with disused surveillance monitors.

At the Kunsthhaus Baselland exhibition, it enters into a dense coexistence with the spatial architecture to form a large installation. The six small deactivated monitors are mainly drawn from sensitive points inside bank buildings' surveillance systems: the entrances and exits. Over the course of several years and even for up to a decade, the single image of a static, non-changing camera position was burned into the light medium—the phosphor layer of each monitor. Only under UV black do these burned-in images become just about visible. What is astonishing in these images, clearly recognizable upon close inspection, is that no kind of movement—the opening or closing of a lift, not to speak of human movement—has left any visual trace. What remains is an architecture without people, but also a memory of a time that would take years to overwrite if the monitors were reactivated.

Works like these and those of Karl Gerstner as discussed above impressively demonstrate artistic efforts from that time to utilize the medium of video and television and in a certain sense to hijack them to deliver new, autonomous content. The aim was to manipulate the structure of TV from the inside out, so to speak, to recognize it as productive material able to give the impression of a comprehensive, worldwide being-informed while also operating on all registers of manipulation. In light of contemporary discussions on and use of social media and online channels, this desire and the misconception of being connected to the entire world seem to be even more widespread, leading to the formation of filter bubbles and manipulability, even in the face of the wealth of apparent enlightenment.

6 The complex work of **Gustav Metzger** (1926–2017) is likewise key to the development of video work, comprising painterly aspects alongside linear observation and an interpretation of time. His five-channel slide projection *Liquid Crystal Environment* (1965–66) dates back to a live performance that formed part of his 1965 show *Liquid Crystal* at London's Royal Festival Hall. It was a performance in which the artist used a self-developed technique: in place of film, he applied a thin layer of liquid crystal gel between the glass surfaces of the slides. When the slide projector's bulb heats up, the liquid crystal's shape and color changes. In addition, Metzger mounted a rotating polarizing filter in front of the slide projector's lens, lending another influence to the form and color of the projection and generating psychedelic-seeming color surfaces. In 1998, the first automated version of the work was created for Modern Art Oxford. It now in part of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zürich collection; in 1995, another version was created and is now housed at Tate Liverpool.

Metzger expanded both versions into multi-channel projections, thus retaining the effect of live performance. This generated slowly changing visual landscapes able to serve the artist as a visual accompaniment to music shows by artists such as Pink Floyd and The Who. The 2005 remake shown in the Kunsthaus Baselland exhibition is accompanied with an electric control system.

The program regulates temperature, light, and the 30-minute-cycle rotation of the polarization filter. Metzger based the work on the physical properties of liquid crystal and on its optical properties: Newtonian rings and polarization. According to Metzger, the continuous (and non-predictable) transformation of the material makes it possible for the recipient to react in various ways to the arising forms and thus to receive new aesthetic stimuli as time progresses. Known for his wide-ranging concept of “auto-destructive art and monuments,” work complexes such as Liquid Crystal Environment are founded on Metzger’s central ideas of visualizing, demonstrating, and experiencing time, which enable the viewer to engage with the phenomenon of time.

Metzger also combined the work with music and dance. From a contemporary perspective, the artist’s use of liquid crystal is groundbreaking and thus a natural addition to the exhibition, given its use as an image-creating material on and in contemporary screens and video projections.

Although the Pop artist **Roy Lichtenstein** (1923–1997) would not necessarily be the first thought for this display of (light) kinetic, video-based works, the American artist did create a series of works in the early 1960s that lucidly visualize that exact desire for a moving image. With *Kinetic Seascape*, Lichtenstein created a small number of seascapes from 1965–66, mounting special film—Rowlux in translucent, opaque, and colored forms—onto a panel he equipped with an electric motor. For some of them, he also added fragments of silkscreens that clearly bear his formal signature. The translucent Rowlux film he deployed in the work shown here, *Kinetic Seascape #10* (1966), opens up onto another colored film behind it that splits the image into two horizontal levels, with the film slowly undulating up and down depending on the action of the electric motor, thus evoking a shifting horizon line. As in his large silkscreens that rendered comics, advertising, and even cartoon-like landscapes in immense sizes while emphasizing their pixels and print rasters, Lichtenstein’s choice of film material emphasizes the artificiality of his landscape representations.

One of the younger generations of artists represented in the exhibition opts for the video medium primarily for expansive installations, sometimes utilizing the actual space or other materials to realize political (or culturo-political) and even performative works.

7 Soon after completing his studies at Academia de Bellas Artes in Cali, Colombia in the early 1970s, **Oscar Muñoz** (born 1951) turned toward illustration. Despite the wide variety of media he has always used—photography, installation, and video—illustration, and the portrait in particular, play key roles in his work. Muñoz’s engages with the portrait as a form of documenting reality, which is embedded in specific social and urban contexts as well as their transformations.

His idiosyncratic rendering of faces, which are individually striking but also represent collectives, are distinguished by techniques such as submerging charcoal portraits in water baths, which almost brings the image to the point of disappearing. In another series, the delicate outlines of faces are rendered on mirrors on which the viewer also sees themself, while the outlines of the image only become when the viewer breathes on the mirror.

Influenced by the socio-political situation in Colombia, Oscar Muñoz works on the memory of a country—one where, according to Muñoz, the individual is not marked by any characteristic identity or special feature; a country in which the individual is excluded from collective memory; a country in which the dead are not remembered, as they remain nameless and faceless. This is the precise point his persistent interest in portraits and names comes from; to give the faceless back what they have lost, even if those faces drawn are addressed not to the individual but to the collective.

At the Kunsthhaus Baselland, the work *Re/trato* (2003) thus addresses the issue of desire for visibility, duration, and memory, while also evoking the simultaneous inability to permanently preserve the created image. The drawing hand repeatedly draws similar portraits onto warm stone via a brush soaked in water. From the creation of the image through to its dissipated and evaporated form through the influence of water and heat, there is a continuous movement. Set up within a loop, this tender, poetic, and at the same time politically powerful work thus also narrates the frustration of being unable to maintain that definitive

image that is able to manifest itself in the memory of the other person; simultaneously, however, it also conveys a longing to look more closely and to see much more.

The two **Sergio Prego** (born 1969) videos presented in the exhibition, **9** *Anti-* and *Para-* (both 2005), are drawn from the 2004 project *Anti- (after T.B.)*, shown at Sala Rekalde in Bilbao. The renowned Spanish performance and video artist began with a form of reenactment or reactivation of Trisha Brown's iconic 1971 choreography *Walking on the Wall*. For this, a 120-meter long interlocking steel pipe was installed along the surrounding walls of the exhibition space. The pipe functioned as a rail for a number of small trolleys from which performers were suspended as they moved their bodies perpendicular to the wall. This action was shot on a camera tilted 90 degrees, meaning that in the video image the walls became either the floor or ceiling—a mixture of performance documentary and action film. For the exhibition, the uncut video documentary *Para-*, filmed in Spain several days before the opening of the original exhibition, was shown on video monitors around the space. Alongside the monitors, the pipe, rail equipment, and traces of steps taken were present on the surrounding walls of the exhibition building. The moment of recognizing the exhibition space in the video contrasts with the actual experience of walking through the same space. The aim was to create a form of discontinuity in spatial perception and how the viewer grounds themselves within it. Dissatisfied with initial attempts to document events during the exhibition, the artist made a second video. Entitled *Anti-*, it was not shown in the exhibition. While the video of the first attempt depicted a wide view of the transit to and occupation of an abnormal space by the group of performers, the second video affords a subjective view of the performance. In *Anti-*, the walking movements of the individual performers alternate, creating a tension between the characters, with the structure of the film edit recalling the escape film genre. For presentation at Kunsthaus Baselland, a new immersive installation was created in collaboration with the artist, where it is now possible to walk around the two projections *Para-* and *Anti-* via a film laid out across the floor. With the floor's new materiality also creating uncertainty, a physical relationship is created between the viewer and the exhibition space shown in the video.

The tension arising from the video work *Boca de tabla* (2007) seems tangible at every moment. Switching between film noir and the refinement of experimental film, the video by **Teresa Serrano** (born 1936), who grew up and lives in Mexico City, casts a spell over the viewer. Positioned as a rear projection in the middle of the sculptural-seeming architecture of the Kunsthauus and as such visible from several points, the video facilitates a unique view of events. The camera follows a middle-aged woman as she walks through a house, performing actions in a seemingly normal way: climbing stairs, setting the table, looking in a mirror, opening and closing doors, sitting down. Only the woman's footsteps and the doors are audible as she moves—not her voice. From several perspectives, some close-up, some distorted, some multiplied, some filmed from a moving camera, the viewer joins the woman in her activities. Through targeted camera work, editing, shots, and settings, Teresa Serrano uses minimal means to create a video sequence that lasts only around 13 minutes and which, looped, seems to repeat itself endlessly and brings with it an astonishing moment: a powerful sense of trepidation is mixed in with tender poetry and a persistent expectation of resolution. The domestic labyrinth of loneliness—being at the same time the sole possible protection and one from which the woman cannot escape—becomes a metaphor in a fine, precise political language. Serrano uses this repeatedly in her video works to speak out against violence against women in Mexico and especially in Mexico City, where girls and women disappear without trace, are tortured and tormented, and where the home can potentially be both a place of protection and a place of domestic violence. In our current times of global pandemic and lockdown, the video also echoes themes of loneliness and introspection.

14 For several years, the Tel Aviv-based artist **Nevet Yitzhak** (born 1975) has been creating installations primarily consisting of animations which poignantly addresses her own Arab-Jewish background and life in Israel. Narratives and stories are key elements in her work—including myths, the historical, the personal, and the collective. *WarCraft* (2014), the 3-channel video installation being shown at Kunsthauus Baselland, exemplifies this. The work is based on the tradition and history of Afghan war carpets. Weaved by women, these carpets evoke issues

of identity while at the same time processing the traumatic history of Afghanistan, which has in recent years been characterized by conflicts and foreign military presence, notably the Soviet occupation that began in the late 1970s. The impacts of war found their way even into the patterns of the carpets, which can manifestly be related back to war experiences and the witnessed vocabulary of war. Created in an act of resistance, the carpets are a form of visual historiography. Initially brought home by Soviet soldiers as quasi souvenirs, they were later commercialized and became collector's items. In Nevet Yitzhak's multi-channel video installation, the animated carpets refer back to that aspect of the war carpets, developing on that form of processing the brutality and senselessness of war, so often concerned with the domination of territory. In her works, the artist interrogates the Arab-Jewish duality of her own identity. The ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict is a daily presence in her immediate living environment, a part of daily life, in the form of national defense measures and, for example, in the constant circling of helicopters and heavily armed persons in the cityscape.

The three animated war carpets subsequently also herald senselessness and incomprehension in the face of violent conquering of territories—often flanked by conflicts in which it is unclear who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor. No sign of people or lives, of victims, victors, or the defeated. Continual detonations and bullet holes persist as black holes in the digital fabric, as the loss of material and image, accompanied by an illusionistic audio spectacle. A society entrapped in war and violence.

The three-channel video installation *passing traced landscapes* (2020–21) by **Georg Faulhaber** (born 1994) occupies the entire space and is able, like a panorama, to fully capture its viewer, using a unique tracking shot to guide them through areas of destruction. As with a slow car journey, we encounter people and scenes on the street, seeing how they act and try to live. Digitally slowed down, the video sequences become images that seem to only move in slow motion; each detail becomes visible, each glance, each gesture, every step of what is shown become full of significance and depth.

Faulhaber shot the footage around Makhmur, Mosul, and Sinjar—supported by Anina Jendreyko and Volksbühne Basel—on the border between the autonomous region of Kurdistan and Iraq to its south. Territories are marked out, defended, destroyed, controlled, self-administrated. For the people living there, conflict, war, and danger are everyday issues; they try to live half-normal lives in contested crisis areas.

The video narration lasts around one hour and was developed by Faulhaber based on his 2020 Bachelor's thesis. It is accompanied with a sonic background by artist Gerome Gadiant, who reacts to the images in sequences of varying intensities and at times with silence. Alongside this, Georg Faulhaber inserts a track of text that, rather than seeking to explain what is seen, instead tries to put the crisis-ridden spaces of conflict and the violence of land surveying into words. Equally significantly, the video installation raises questions and looks back at those among us who, from a European perspective, often enough allow images of supposedly distant war and crisis zones to pass by as if they were irrelevant to us; without us becoming active agents.

- 11** Multimedia artist **Pipilotti Rist** (born 1962) is represented with two works, essentially transforming Kunsthaus Baselland's large Shedhalle. The 1994 work *Alice (from the Yoghurt On Skin—Velvet On T.V. Family)* is seductively immersed in red light. From inside a stylish, slightly opened handbag sounds the shrill, French-speaking voice of an answering machine, with the image, lightly distorted via a glass semi-sphere, showing the face of a young swimmer under water—a monitor so small it fits in a handbag. This is thus an appropriate mechanism to provide an introduction to the artistic work of Pipilotti Rist, who is based in Zurich. In the 1980s, she was among the first to attend René Pulfer's video classes in Basel, at a (then still early) time when video as a material did not yet seem so overwhelmingly dominated by men. Rist quickly adapted the new visual language of video to create clips of feminist, female imagery, with references to nature, the body, and reality itself, usually in association with immersive sound or text. The question of where the viewer is, where they can anchor themselves in Rist's cosmos, is a recurring theme:

Are they in front of, beside, or underneath what is being projected? And do they become a part of it by lying, standing, or walking? With *Apple Tree Innocent On Diamond Hill* (2003), Rist does not only allow space—its architecture—to disappear somewhat under the sprawling projection: she also connects another key element with technology by incorporating real nature in the form of a six-meter-plus branch.

This highly poetic, silent work is seductive in its inherent tenderness. Having grown since the mid-1980s, the Innocent Collection includes used objects both white and translucent: the medical tubes hanging from the branch, the white cloths and doilies, and the countless PET plastic objects. The video is projected above and on top: a tracking shot across water, sky, and coast in changing light and color conditions. The branch is covered in a painterly manner, with objects hanging from it and the corners and edges of the architecture in changing ranges of color, radiating, casting shadows and reflecting light in turn radiated onto the transparent plastic PET objects. In the same way a prism, the adjoining walls are also caught—as is, most importantly, the person who in observation becomes a part of the whole. After times of distance and distancing, it appears to be precisely the right work to bring about physical anchoring and awareness of the body—without any kind of physical contact. Simultaneously, it unpretentiously but unambiguously demonstrates that packaging material and that which has been carelessly discarded can become extraordinarily sensuous when penetrated by light—when presented in the right light, so to speak.

Zilla Leutenegger (born 1968) probes spaces, especially those in which we move, which form us, and from (or into) which we want to escape. The Zurich-based artist creates expansive spaces with her precise, delicate, and humorous video installations, often combined in complex manners with static objects or even illustrations. For the exhibition at Kunsthaus Baselland, Leutenegger has combined two works—*Forum Hotel* (2002) and *going home* (2003)—into a large-scale installation. Both works are part of the moon cycle, on which the artist has been working from the early 2000s until the present day.

The viewer thus immediately enters into a large, computer-animated moon landscape—a double projection that occupies the Kunsthaus wall, over ten meters long. As with a tracking shot, craters and illusory surfaces are flown over before a high-rise hotel is reached, rising in the middle of the barren landscape—the Forum Hotel. Leutenegger connects the projection with four monitors placed on the floor in front and surrounded by a pile of cables, making it possible to get something of a close-up view of the hotel: a young woman (the artist herself) becomes visible at various intervals, interrupted by image disruptions as she sits on the roof of a hotel looking toward the ground or as she, hands held in a cone in front of her mouth, cries “mama.” *going home* is projected onto a helmet and is thematically linked to *Forum Hotel*, once again showing the young woman seemingly making her way home, to Mother Earth. Her call is out to Mother Earth, becoming a place of longing at a moment of great remove. Places of longing, of dreams, of interiority are continuing themes in Leutenegger’s work, and ones that seem currently to be experiencing a shift in all our imaginations: where homesickness once afflicted those far from home, hotels and distant places are becoming places of a stronger longing in times of pandemic and quarantine—the longing for outside, the distant, the crossing of borders, for moving in freedom.

That this exhibition has been possible and that it is able to feature such unique works and loan items is due to the efforts of a number of people. I would first like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the co-curator, Käthe Walser, herself an exceptional video artist who personally knows many of the other artists from a number of different contexts— as a fellow student, as a pupil, assistant, as a source of influence, and in many other ways. Her wealth of experience has been key to the success of this exhibition. We would also like to profusely thank all the artists from near and far who have contributed with enthusiasm and important works, and also Yasmin Emmenegger for her valuable support as exhibition assistant. We would like to express our deepest thanks for the prominent loans we received from participating artists and from private and public collections, made possible by Muriel Gerstner and the Karl Gerstner estate, Kurt Aeschbacher, the Daros Latinamerica Collection, Sammlung Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Olympia Sonnier and the estate of Keith Sonnier, Esther Grether Familiensammlung, Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt, Hauser & Wirth, Luhring Augustine, Galerie Peter Kilchmann and the following donors that have been so important to this exhibition: Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Merian Gärten, Hans und Renée Müller-Meylan Stiftung, Asuera Stiftung, artis, Videocompany, die Mobiliar, and Novartis.

Participating artists:

Georg Faulhaber (born 1994, Arlesheim), lives and works in Basel

Karl Gerstner (1930, Basel–2017, Basel)

Nevet Yitzhak (born 1975, Jerusalem, Israel), lives and works in Tel Aviv

Zilla Leutenegger (born 1968, Zurich), lives and works in Zurich

Julio Le Parc (born 1928, Mendoza, Argentina), lives and works in Cachan and Paris

Gustav Metzger (born 1926, Nuremberg, Germany–2017, London, UK, stateless)

Oscar Muñoz (born 1951, Popayán, Colombia), lives and works in Cali

Nam June Paik (born 1932, Seoul, South Korea–2006, Miami, USA)

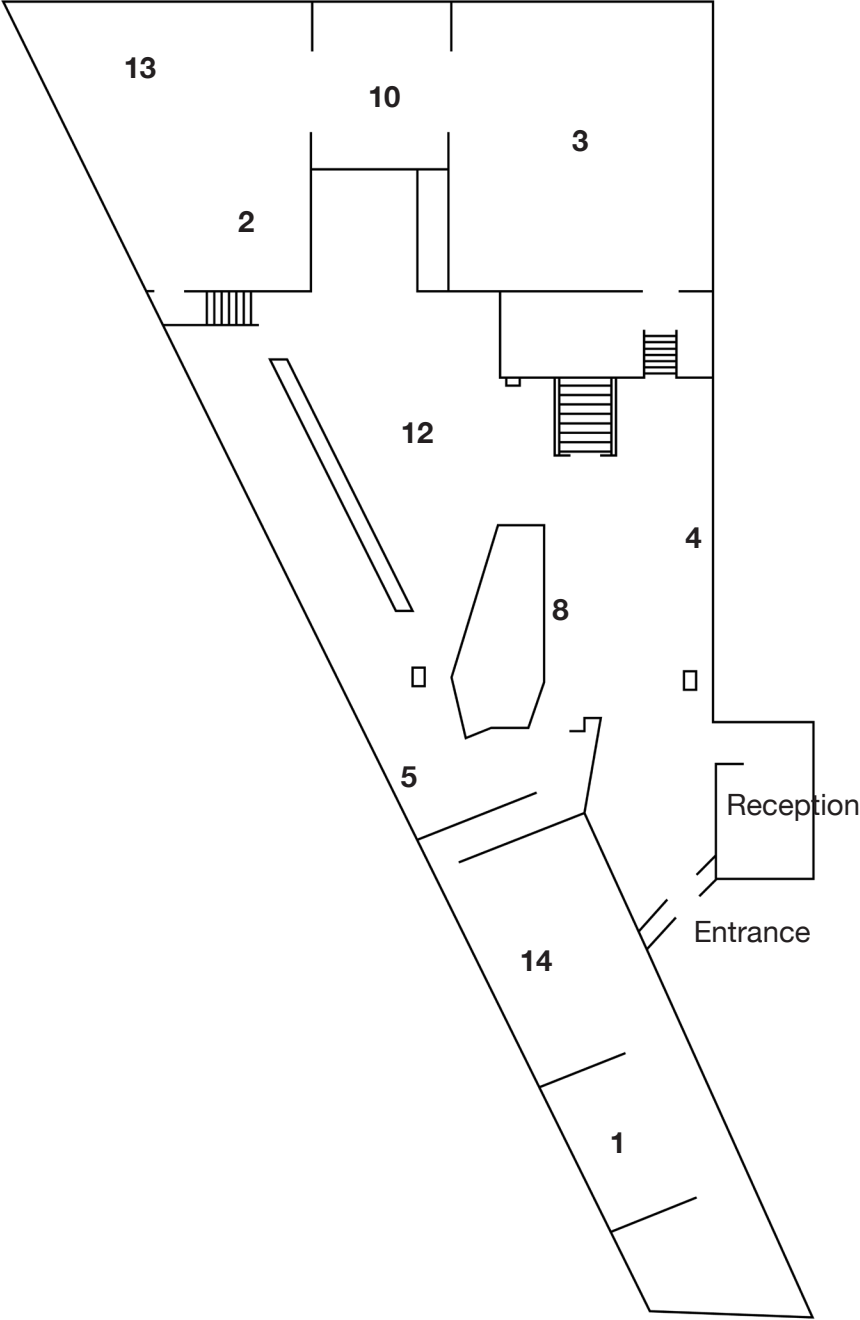
René Pulfer (born 1945, Basel), lives and works in Basel

Sergio Prego (born 1969, San Sebastián, Spain), lives and works in Spain and New York

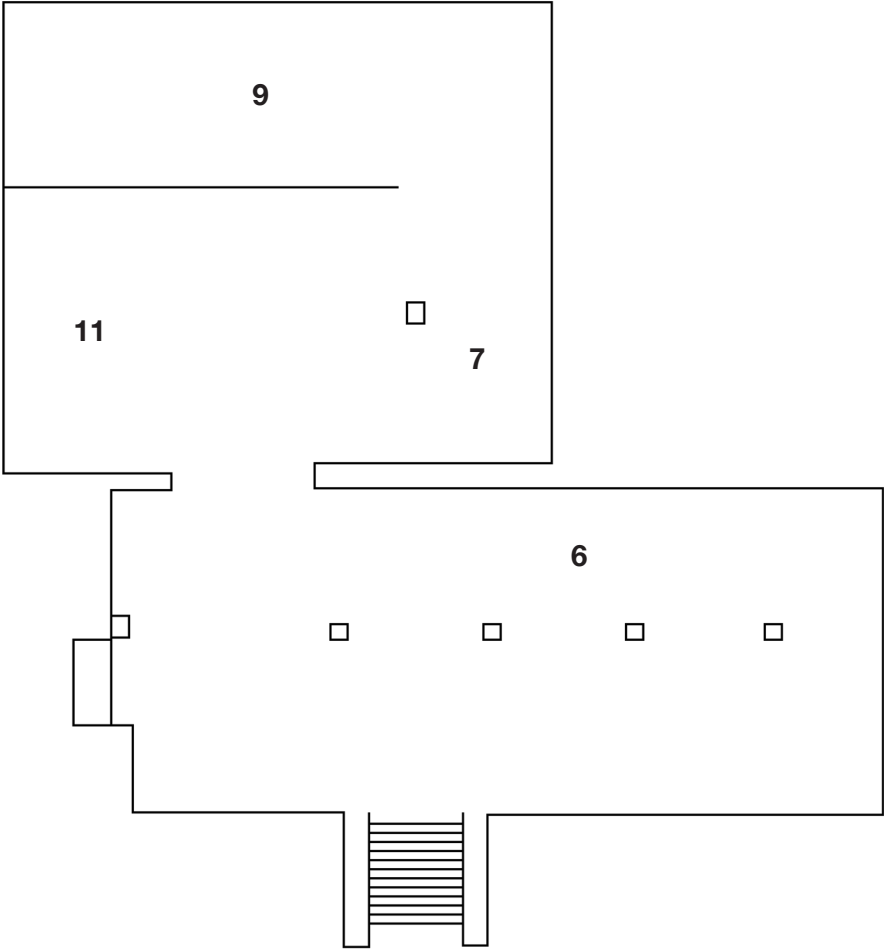
Piplotti Rist (born 1962, Grabs), lives and works in Zurich

Teresa Serrano (born 1936, Mexico City, Mexico) lives and works in Mexico City

Keith Sonnier (1941, Mamou, USA–2020, Southampton, USA)



Groundfloor



Basement

KUNSTHAUSBASELLAND

Many thanks to the partners of the Kunsthau Baselland, the sponsors of the exhibitions, as well as to the supporters who wish to remain unnamed.



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