

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
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office@secession.at, www.secession.at

Tess Jaray

Return to Vienna: The paintings of Tess Jaray

February 19 – April 18, 2021

Hauptraum



Tess Jaray, *Sanctuary Green*, 1964

First day of the exhibition: Thursday, February 18, 2021

For over sixty years, Tess Jaray has made formally austere paintings, dedicating herself to an analysis of the relationships between painting and architecture, between picture and beholder. In England, where the artist has lived since 1938, she is known to broad audiences primarily thanks to her numerous commissioned works in public settings such as her designs for the piazza at Victoria Station, London, and Birmingham's Centenary Square. Major collections including the Tate and the British Museum have acquired her art.

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By contrast, she has remained largely obscure in Austria, where she was born in 1937, a fate that she shares with many Austrian emigrants: in 1938, her Jewish family escaped the Nazi regime for England, where Jaray was raised in rural Worcestershire. She moved to London at a young age to study at the renowned Saint Martins School of Art (1955–57) and the Slade School of Fine Art (1957–60), and where Ernst H. Gombrich, one of the twentieth century's most influential art historians, was among her teachers. In 1968, she was the first woman to join the faculty at Slade; she taught there until her retirement in 1999. She was made a member of the Royal Academy in 2011.

The formative experience that sparked Jaray's lifelong interest in exploring space in painting, which remains the central concern in her work, was a stay of several months in Italy in 1960, where she first saw the painting of the Renaissance in its native architectural context. The interrelation between the architectonic space of the pictures and the real architecture around them, which rests on mathematical and rational principles (which she claims to know nothing about) made a profound impression on her, as did the lucidity of simple lines. Both her paintings and her extensive graphic oeuvre - prints and drawings - reflect the play with basic geometric shapes and lines that engender perspectival depth and space. Besides the painting and architecture of the Italian Renaissance, Jaray also found a prolific source of inspiration in the visual elements and formal abstraction of Islamic art, which she studied on many trips. Geometric patterns, repetition, and the ability to obtain infinitely many variations with minute modifications of the parameters are defining characters of the artist's works, which often require no more than a few lines, dots, or color fields. The iterative aspect and relentless formal reduction as well as the intimation of space and architecture lend her compositions an enigmatic aspect. Jaray's art is an empirical investigation of the effects of space, pattern, repetition, and color on a space and the beholder.

Tess Jaray was born in Vienna in 1937 and lives and works in London.

The exhibition by Tess Jaray is mainly sponsored by Arbeiterkammer Wien.

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Daniel Dewar & Grégory Gicquel

March 26 – June 20, 2021
Galerie



Daniel Dewar & Gregory Gicquel, *Animals and Sculpture*, exhibition view CLEARING Brussels, 2020,
© Benjamin Baltus / Courtesy of the artist and CLEARING New York, Brussels

At first glance, the artist duo Daniel Dewar and Grégory Gicquel's works may seem like anachronisms in this era of the ascent of digital technology: the two have spent years experimenting with a wide range of materials and techniques that they first had to teach themselves and for which they sometimes even needed to make their own equipment such as weaving frames or wood-fired furnaces. They cut stone, carve wood, mold clay and ceramics, and take up artisanal techniques like embroidery and weaving. Both emphasize the importance of executing their works with their own means, using traditional and modern tools and reviving production processes rooted in various crafts that are being superseded by technical automation. They break with tradition by combining their media with incongruous motifs: the entrails, animal parts, or human limbs, for example, that seem to grow from massive oaken chests and cabinets make for a sight that is as amusing as it is disconcerting.

Humans, animals, and plants coalesce into a bizarre and sensual new creation in works that exude the conviction that the same lifeblood courses through all beings and manifests itself even in the cut and dressed wood or marble block. Displacing forms out of their original contexts and assembling them in fanciful hybrids, Dewar & Gicquel produce absurd objects—glimpses, like chimeras or the creatures of legend, of an alternate reality.

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Daniel Dewar was born in Forest of Dean (GB) in 1976 and lives and works in Brussels.

Grégory Gicquel was born in Saint-Brieuc (FR) in 1975 and lives and works in Plévenon (FR).

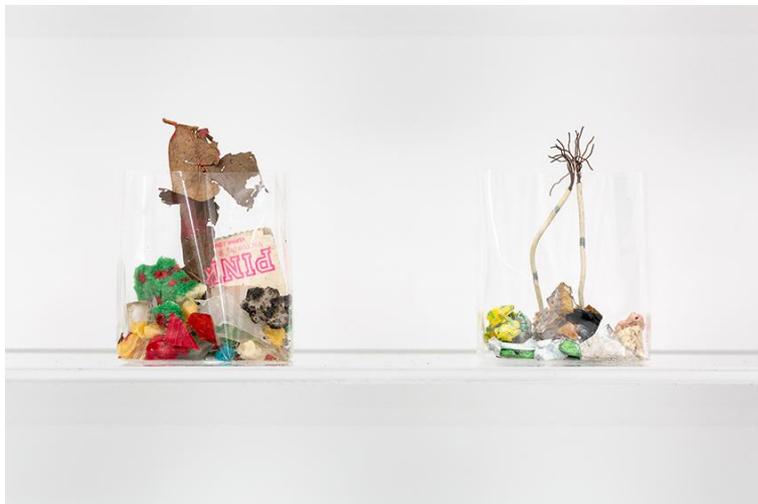
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Yuji Agematsu**2020**

March 26 – June 20, 2021

Grafisches Kabinett



Yuji Agematsu, *zip: 01.01.20 . . . 12.31.20*, 2020,
Courtesy the artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, Photo: Stephen Faught

zip: 01.01.2020 ... 12.31.2020

Yuji Agematsu is a kind of chronicler of our times and, moreover, he can be considered an experimental cartographer and archivist of only seemingly petty findings from the streets of his hometown.

An urban flaneur, Agematsu has taken daily walks through the streets of New York ever since he moved there from Japan in the early 1980s. On this daily routine, which has now been part of his artistic practice for more than a quarter-century, he picks up and scrutinizes litter that attracts his attention—bits of paper, gum, scraps of plastic bags or wrappers, a feather, in short: otherwise overlooked evidence of the hustle and bustle of the city. If found worth collecting, he drops the find into a cellophane sleeve of a cigarette packet (a container the artist names “zips”) and notes date, time and exact location of the item’s discovery in a small diary.

Back in his studio, the found discarded things undergo a process of selecting, composing, securing, organizing and cataloguing: the artist waits and reworks a chosen discovery before fixing it with resin—one micro-sculpture a day—and in doing so accumulates a continually growing collection of miniature

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readymade still lifes that is structured by day, month, year. The objects are dated and presented on acrylic glass shelves or more protective acrylic glass boxes that encapsulate a complete month's findings where they are arranged in orderly rows following the pattern of the related calendar sheet. The strict and discreet presentation format allows all attention to be focused on the idiosyncratic objects, which are—first and foremost—sculptural formations of urban detritus.

Secession is happy to be able to present Yuji Agematsu's day-to-day collection of finds turned into sculptural formations from the entire 2020 calendar year. On show at the beginning of 2021, his 2020 zips will offer a fresh and surely unique review of a most remarkable year.

Yuji Agematsu was born in Kanagawa, Japan, in 1956 and lives and works in New York.

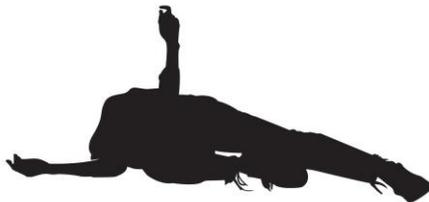
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Maria Hassabi***HERE***

May 14 – June 20, 2021

Hauptraum



First day of the exhibition: Thursday, May 13, 2021

Six dancers move at a measured pace. They morph their bodies at imperceptible velocities, appearing in various constellations amongst one another and throughout the space as they alternate between representation and abstraction. Subtle lighting changes imitating the natural shifts of daylight along with a metrical sound score accentuate the unbroken time. Commissioned by the Secession and the Wiener Festwochen, the live installation *HERE* occurring during the Secession's opening hours invites visitors to share the main exhibition hall with the performers.

Since the early 2000s, Maria Hassabi has carved a choreographic practice that concentrates on stillness, slowness, and the in-betweenness of bodies in motion. Shepherding the strategies and languages of dance into the spaces of visual art across the globe, Hassabi decelerates movement to the point where it touches upon the definitions of sculpture and image, testing the conventional rhythms of viewership. As the 'now' slides into the boundless, the 'here' becomes the focus.

A joint project of the Vienna Secession and the Wiener Festwochen

Maria Hassabi was born in Nicosia, Cyprus, in 1973 and lives and works in New York and Athens.

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Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster
July 2 – September 5, 2021
Hauptraum



Film still of *Cerveau*, by PEREZ, Director: Dominique Gonzalez Foerster, Photography: Jean-Louis Vialard,
Courtesy the artists © Dominique Gonzalez Foerster

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster was born in Strasbourg in 1965 and lives and works in Paris.

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František Lesák

July 2 – September 5, 2021

Galerie



František Lesák, *Waldlandschaft vorne; Waldlandschaft hinten*, 2014

The conceptual draftsman and sculptor František Lesák's work is dedicated to describing and understanding the world of objects and the associated questions of perception. Creating systems of spatial reference, exploring alternating perspectives, surveying and mapping selected sceneries, and toying with shifts of scale are key elements of his creative toolset. Undertaking a kind of basic research, systematically planned cycles of works examine things and their relation to the real space around them as well as the space of media.

One recurrent theme in Lesák's works is the multiplicity of aspects that an object presents to the viewer. Striving to record all its dimensions and the interplay between surface and form, he applies himself to the task of representing motifs he finds in nature, such as a formation of erratic granite boulders, but also in classics of art history. In *Morgen-Mittag-Abend (Morning-Midday-Evening)*, for example, a seminal cycle from the early 1990s, he grappled with Claude Monet's painting *Haystack at Sunset* (1889) and the momentary and subjective quality of the sensory perception that manifests itself in it. As part of his comprehensive and methodical inquiry into the reality of the haystacks in the picture, he also reconstructed the shadowed areas of the original that face away from the beholder.

A defining characteristic of Lesák's art is the combination of meticulous scientific precision with a keen awareness of the limitations of his own perceptions, illustrating the profound ambivalence of mechanical

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accuracy. Insistently probing the interaction between the mind's apprehension of the world and its description, the artist ultimately gestures toward the looming question of the nature of reality.

Lesák's exhibition at the Secession showcases several bodies of work from recent years, including the new *Vermutung und Wirklichkeit (Supposition and Reality)*, a cycle of thirty-six pairs of pictures in which the attempt to capture different postures of his left hand sustains an investigation into the complex interplay between tactile and visual perception.

František Lesák was born in Prague in 1943 and lives and works in Vienna and Neu-Nagelberg, Lower Austria.

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Karimah Ashadu

July 2 – September 5, 2021

Grafisches Kabinett



Karimah Ashadu, *Brown Goods*, 2020, film still

The filmmaker and visual artist Karimah Ashadu's works examine the socio-economic conditions in which West Africans, and Nigerians in particular, live and work. Her films depict farmers working in palm oil production, laborers at a sawmill on the Lagos State Lagoon, the operation of a sawblade sharpener, or portraits of boxers. Without moralizing, Ashadu spotlights the beauty that lies dormant in the everyday and brings her subjects' self-reliance and efforts to rise from the legacy of colonialism into focus; her unusual cinematography, meanwhile, deftly undermines the separation between documentation and art. In her early experimental shorts, implements she constructed using the simplest of means often let her frame unwonted perspectives and challenge the viewer to look closely. *King of Boys (Abattoir of Makoko)* (2015), for instance, captures the bustle at a slaughterhouse. A found plastic canister serves as an analog filter, tinging the camera image or parts of it with a bold red hue that results in a peculiar ambivalence between the violent business of killing and butchering animals and the dreamlike and oddly alluring atmosphere of a setting bathed in red light.

Ashadu's most recent film, *Brown Goods* (2020)—the first one she shot in Europe—engages a more decidedly documentary approach. It tells the story of Emeka, a Nigerian migrant in Hamburg who makes a living by trading used cars and electrical goods between Germany and Nigeria. His merchandise reenacts his journey as a refugee in reverse, and his dream of a better life in Europe hinges, paradoxically enough, on the flow of money from Africa. While working on the film, the artist also created a series of sculptures out of parts of scrap cars and other found materials. The manifest discrepancy between the way that

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technological detritus takes on new value when exported to Nigeria and its sudden value enhancement in the art context adds another layer of significance to the sculptures.

Karimah Ashadu was born in London in 1985 and lives and works in Hamburg und Lagos.

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Danh Vo

September 17 – beginning of November, 2021

Hauptraum



Studio Danh Vo Güldenhof, photo: Nick Ash

“When you examine the present you must understand your past:
the past that has identified your own present. I also believe you must look into the future.
That’s definitely a philosophy of life that I live with and hopefully that shows in the work that I do.”
(Danh Vo, untitled, exhibition booklet, South London Gallery, 2019)

Danh Vo’s conceptual works and installations often build on personal experiences to address larger historical, social, and political concerns. Born in Vietnam and raised in Denmark, the artist is fascinated by the ways in which objects and histories become intertwined, serving as projections of national anxieties and personal identities. While the erotic and violent power plays of colonialism are a recurrent theme, so too are the sacred and profane dances of religion, and the manner in which administrative systems seek to shape (even curtail) personal intimacy and expression.

Vo’s installations present a plethora of artistic strategies, including documents, photographs, found objects (of historic or emotional significance), textual fragments in the form of ornate calligraphies executed by his father, and sometimes works by other artists. As an artist, Vo encompasses multiple roles —curator, collector, historian, auction scout— allowing him to deftly play with objects and contexts. Grappling with

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artifacts that are fraught with symbolic or emotional meaning, the artist resets their signification from project to project.

Vo will often pluck objects purchased from the estates of significant figures (or otherwise sourced) and present them unaltered within his oeuvre. Other times he dismantles and reassembles them with incongruous additions making for striking hybrids. Since 2015, he has created new works by combining fragments of sculptures taken from antiquity with contemporary objects or Medieval Madonnas. Often the original works are defaced or forever altered—an act of cultural vandalism that mirrors colonial expansion, but that also creates a provocative splicing of cultural empires across time and space.

Fragmentation and creative alteration are also key stratagems in what is probably Vo's best-known work: *We the People* (2011–2016). A full-size copy of Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty manufactured in China, it consists of ca. 300 separate copper segments. Correctly assembled, they would form an accurate replica of the New York landmark; the artist's project instead calls for the pieces to be dispersed across the globe.

Enigmatic and poetic, Vo's work sidesteps didacticism while also arriving with a strong political ethic. Probing questions of identity and belonging, legal status, property, and the role of personal relationships, he shines a light on the power structures behind the façades of liberal societies and the fragility of our ideas about life in the nation state.

Danh Vo was born in Bà Rịa, Vietnam, in 1975 and lives and works in Berlin and Mexico City.

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Carlos Bunga

September 17 – beginning of November, 2021

Galerie



Carlos Bunga, *Kursaal Project*, 2004, Performance, Manifesta 5, Sala Kubo Kutxa, San Sebastián, photo: Alberto Martinena

Working with basic staples such as cardboard, masking tape, and wall paint, Carlos Bunga creates sculptures, objects, and monumental installations that attach themselves to the architecture of the site. His flexible handling of these versatile materials allows him to realize his ideas without assistants. As Bunga sees it, cardboard in particular is recommended by connotations such as impermanence, memory, and fragility.

The dialogue with architecture, the interplay with the human body and its scale, and the function of the site—be it a chapel or a museum—are factors that inform the conception of his works. The artist's own body is integral to the art: Bunga is interested in the process, in change—to his mind, there is no such thing as stasis.

Bunga's formal vocabulary is modular and repetitive and lets him respond to existing elements: he often mirrors and replicates characteristic architectural features such as pillars, grid floor patterns, or other formal particulars, creating a sort of echo that overlies the existing architecture. His interventions engender interferences and "disturbances," disrupting the smooth functioning of buildings to direct our attention to things as they are in themselves. Grappling with the objects, he alters them and is changed in turn. His goal is to create a plane of consciousness that enables us to grasp the essence of things.

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Bunga began his career in painting, from which he literally stepped out into the third dimension: he shattered what he felt to be the cramped confines of the canvas by building pictorial objects from which he broke free in performative actions. Key sources of inspiration for these early works were the art of the Japanese Gutai Group, which sought to devise new forms of creative expression in the wake of the Second World War, and Gordon Matta-Clark, whose splitting buildings slated for demolition signaled a novel sculptural radicalism.

Deconstruction is almost as salient in Bunga's works as construction: some of his elaborately crafted installations are short-lived, meant to be smashed to pieces in his performances. His approach to creation and destruction vividly illustrates the continual process of becoming and disintegration. In the performances, the artist becomes one with his work in an almost mystical union.

Drawings accompany the large installations, but they do not serve as aids to construction; the artist makes them after the main work to which they relate, as a medium of reflection in which thought processes become manifest.

Carlos Bunga was born in Porto in 1976 and lives and works in Barcelona.

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Rana Hamadeh

September 17 – beginning of November, 2021

Grafisches Kabinett



Rana Hamadeh, *The Destiny Project/The Soft Measure Fables*, 2020-202X, Videostill

Rana Hamadeh undertakes artistic research in discursive projects that grow and evolve over several years and take manifest form in theatrical performances, sound compositions, interactive audiovisual installations, and system designs as well as pedagogical setups. In thematic terms, her work is dedicated to an ongoing scrutiny of the epistemologies and technologies of justice, examining tropes of violence that find their genealogies in both spectacular and mundane instances in history and contemporary culture.

Since 2016, Hamadeh has been developing an “operatic practice,” experimenting with writing and composing and testing out models for collective thinking and study. Her works are rooted in interdisciplinary research and operate at the interfaces of various fields such as theater, theosophy, epidemiology, legal theory, translational practices, and technology. Constantly shifting and reframing the theoretical and aesthetic categories that she engages with, Hamadeh deliberately trespasses the logic of classificatory systems by pursuing the implications of different and even contradictory arguments and unfolding expansive webs of associations and constructs.

Hamadeh often reuses the titles of her works, realizing different media formats at successive exhibition venues. Her opera project *The Ten Murders of Josephine* (2017–18) grew to encompass a reading circle, a theatrical performance, and a series of sound-based exhibitions. The series of works journeyed across a web of narratives that explored the conditions of “validity” within legal discourse and probed the concept of testimony and testimonial subjecthood in relation to histories of property, labor, and documentality. To adapt her 50-minute composition to the form of a sprawling installation, she designed an ensemble of

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cacophonous interactive acoustic zones extending through several exhibition rooms. The score interwove texts, interviews, chants, telephone conversations with live machine translations, and interventions; the operatic register throws into sharp relief the harrowing violence beneath the surface of the legal administrative jargon.

In her most recent venture, *The Destiny Project / Soft-Measure Fables*, Hamadeh revisits Sophocles' famed tragedy *Oedipus Rex*. Rather than re-narrating the distressing misfortunes of Oedipus, king of Thebes, whose grievous journey of self-discovery unfolds at the height of the Theban plague, the work conducts a reading of the play itself—that is, a reading of Sophocles' "figuration of tragedy." In its endeavor to think through what constitutes tragedy, the work follows the play's dramatic construct, examining its inner workings as an extended "technology of endurance." In this project, Hamadeh is particularly interested in the notion of destiny and in the journey of privatization of grief. In a first stage, she created three computer-generated film sequences that suggest a videogame, visualizing scenarios that are as dreamlike as they are sinister, the action propelled by cogwheels and prostheses.

Rana Hamadeh was born in Beirut in 1983 and lives and works in Rotterdam.

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Nairy Baghramian

Mid-November 2021 – end of January, 2022

Hauptraum



Nairy Baghramian, *Privileged Points*, 2017, installation view Minneapolis Sculpture Garden & Wurtele Upper Garden, Walker Art Center Minneapolis 2017, Courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, Galerie Buchholz, kurimanzutto, photo: Timo Ohler

In art that typically takes the human body as its point of departure, Nairy Baghramian grapples with the fundamental questions of plastic art, although her sculptures and installations propose a pointed antithesis to the traditional conception of the genre. Her formal idiom, choice of materials, and approach have as much in common with post-minimalism as with conceptual art; the artist harnesses the potential of abstraction to address complex sets of questions and frame a suitable response in terms of aesthetic form, forging what Baghramian herself has described as “ambivalent abstraction.” Her works interrogate political and social power structures, weaving together themes in art history and literature as well as references to fashion, architecture, and interior design.

Her sculptural creations for interior as well as exterior settings often consist of multiple elements and disparate materials such as aluminum, glass, pigmented wax, marble, porcelain, styrofoam, epoxy resin, and paint. Organic shapes that are densely packed or imbricated, that buttress, support, or lean on one another subtly yet unmistakably evince their mutual dependence. Props and clamps that hold the various elements together further underscore the objects’ “frailty,” reflecting the artist’s determination to reveal rather than try to conceal supposed flaws or defects. “My sculptures are supposed to help articulate the doubt concerning their viability.” This stance lays her works open to challenge and assault, while the auxiliary constructions also suggest their conceptual temporariness and alterability.

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Baghramian's installations and sculptures always engage with the architecture, history, and institutional context of the site for which they were created, though they retain a certain agility. In 2017, for example, she chose a highly prominent location for her contribution to Skulptur Projekte Münster: called *Beliebte Stellen / Privileged Points*, it occupied the forecourt of a baroque palace in the city's center. In 1987, Richard Serra had installed a towering nineteen-foot-tall vertical steel structure on the same scene. Baghramian's take on the setting stayed closer to the ground. Her bronze sculpture traced a delicate line, almost a doodle, that approximated an open horizontal circle. Though given a generous paint coat, it had a provisional air to it, propped up in no more than a few spots, its unwelded seams stapled together by visible brackets. The associated installation in another courtyard, meanwhile, consisted of loosely stacked elements treated only with primer that awaited assembly into two more sculptures in the series.

Another defining characteristic of her works is that they tend to inscribe themselves in an environment or to mark a particular point in it rather than to dominate the space around them; others, lingering in a seemingly unfinished state, indicate that their presence in a given place is merely temporary. In making sculptures that often appear fragile, in need of support, dependent, Baghramian always also takes a stand against the conventional (masculine) pose of self-confidence, the dominant creative gesture and its claim to perpetual validity.

Nairy Baghramian was born in Isfahan in 1971 and lives and works in Berlin.

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Sarah Rapson

Mid-November 2021 – end of January, 2022

Galerie



Sarah Rapson, *Love is everywhere (Stuart)*, 2020

For a forthcoming exhibition in the basement galleries of the Vienna Secession the works of art will have mainly originated somewhere in between the houses of Sigmund Freud and John Keats in London. Recently described as practicing a form of 'Romantic Conceptualism', Rapson was born and raised in north London during the 1960s and 1970s and moved to New York in the 1980s, returning decades later to England where she has continued to edit her material.

Sarah Rapson was born in London in 1959 and lives and works in Bridport, Dorset, England and Rome, Italy.

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Nora Turato

Mid-November 2021 – end of January, 2022

Grafisches Kabinett



Nora Turato, photo: Sabina Bösch, Zurich, Courtesy: the artist & Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich

Nora Turato was born in Zagreb in 1991 and lives and works in Amsterdam.

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EXHIBITION PROGRAM 2021

February 19 – April 18, 2021

Tess Jaray, Hauptraum

b. Vienna, 1937; lives in London

March 26 – June 20, 2021

Daniel Dewar & Grégory Gicquel, Galerie

D. Dewar b. Forest of Dean, UK, 1976; lives in Brussels
G. Gicquel b. Saint-Brieuc, FR, 1975; lives in Plévenon, FR

March 26 – June 20, 2021

Yuji Agematsu, Grafisches Kabinett

b. Kanagawa, Japan, 1956; lives in New York

May 13 – June 20, 2021

Maria Hassabi, Hauptraum

b. Nicosia, Cyprus, 1973; lives in New York and Athens

A joint project of the Vienna Secession and the Wiener Festwochen

July 2 – September 5, 2021

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Hauptraum

b. Strasbourg, 1965; lives in Paris

July 2 – September 5, 2021

František Lesák, Galerie

b. Prague, 1943; lives in Vienna

July 2 – September 5, 2021

Karimah Ashadu, Grafisches Kabinett

b. London, 1985; lives in Hamburg and Lagos

September 17 – beginning of November 2021

Danh Vo, Hauptraum

b. Bà Rịa, Vietnam, 1975; lives in Berlin and Mexico City

September 17 – beginning of November 2021

Carlos Bunga, Galerie

b. Porto, Portugal, 1976; lives in Barcelona

September 17 – beginning of November 2021

Rana Hamadeh, Grafisches Kabinett

b. Beirut, Lebanon, 1983; lives in Rotterdam

Mid-November 2021 – end of January 2022

Nairy Baghramian, Hauptraum

b. Isfahan, Iran, 1971; lives in Berlin

Mid-November 2021 – end of January 2022

Sarah Rapson, Galerie

b. London, 1959; lives in Bridport, UK

Mid-November 2021 – end of January 2022

Nora Turato, Grafisches Kabinett

b. Zagreb, 1991; lives in Amsterdam

secession

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Tuesday – Sunday 2 – 6 p.m.

Permanent Presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*
Beethoven – Painting and Music in cooperation with Wiener Symphoniker

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