

GROTESQUE REGION
HELEN MIRRA

ABOVE THE SEA OF CLOUDS
TOMAS SARACENO

December 1, 2007 to January 27, 2008
Opening: November 30, 7 p.m.

November 30 sees the opening of the second instalment of the Gebert Cultural Foundation's assistance programme KURATOR 2007/2008. This time, a twin exhibition will present the works of two globe-trotting artists. American Helen Mirra will be exhibiting some of her most recent works in the exhibition space of the Alte Fabrik building. She will be joined in Rapperswil by Argentinian-born Tomas Saraceno and his *Museo Aero Solar* project. The latter involves a huge solar-powered balloon that will evolve in the course of the exhibition through the participation of visitors before finally taking to the skies in January.

The general titles of the two projects are in turn taken from two drawings from the book *Alpine Architecture* by German architect Bruno Taut, which provides the overall theme for the entire KURATOR exhibition year 2007/2008. The collection of utopian drawings published by Taut in 1919/20 was a visionary counter-concept to reality after the First World War. It was also, however, a call for the joint creation of a better and more beautiful world – for collaboration on the realisation of a utopia. Taut's drawings portray otherworldly buildings made of glass and crystal, which he planted in the Alps. Entitled "Grotesque Region" and "Above the Sea of Clouds", the two projects comprising the exhibition can be seen in terms of heaven and earth as two opposing bodies that at the horizon do after all find points of contact.

Helen Mirra's (*1970) works concern the experience of a place, of a landscape – they relate to travelling, the act of roaming, and to nature. The layers of meaning of a location – be they geological, historical or philosophical – are systematically exposed by Mirra. This involves the arrangement of different materials that are easily available (wood, stones, plants, fabric). Mirra's selection of colours and materials reflects her extensive interest in ecological problems. In the minimalist composition of things, she creates a wonderfully subtle poetry.

In addition to a range of pieces created since 2000, Helen Mirra's show in the Alte Fabrik will also include a new group of works produced in Norway during her residency at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway in Oslo from May to September 2007. During excursions that took her as far as arctic regions, Mirra discovered a wide variety of moss-covered stones, lichens and plants. Focussing on ancient rock or lichens that are considered sensitive indicator organisms (especially as regards air pollution) gives a new meaning to the perception of time and place. The sensitive composition of the works and their interaction with each other and the room enables Helen Mirra to communicate these observations.

Finally, 2001's floor-based work *Sky-wreck (Southwestern 1%)* turns our gaze from the earth to the sky. A composition of 12 triangles made of blue fabric, it is based on the geodesic model that was primarily introduced to us by architect and utopian visionary Buckminster Fuller. Following this type of construction, Helen Mirra projects a part of the sky onto the floor.

While Helen Mirra brings a piece of heaven to earth, **Tomas Saraceno** (*1973) uses his works as a vehicle with which to approach the former. The artist has for many years been pursuing and investigating the idea of architecture in the skies. Saraceno's means of accessing his visions of *Air Port Cities* or *Flying Gardens* are balloon sculptures, some of them physically accessible. All of his projects also contain the notion of global cooperation, a fusion of the forces and energies for realising utopias. *Museo Aero Solar* – the work planned by Saraceno for this exhibition – works through the involvement and participation of as many people as possible. *Museo Aero Solar* is the first flying museum, an enormous balloon assembled from recycled plastic bags that grows at each stop on its journey, changing in form and colour. Thus far, it has been expanded at four different locations across the globe: at the Isola dell'Arte, Milan; as part of the 8th Sharjah Biennale in the Arab Emirates, at the Encuentro Medellin, Colombia, the Tirana Art Center in Albania and finally at the Lyon Biennale in France.

Residents of Rapperswil and environs are now likewise invited to bring along used plastic bags and drop them in a specially provided *Museo Aero Solar* collecting bin in the foyer of the Alte Fabrik. They can also write their names on the bags or decorate them with a drawing. A balloon will then be created from the bags in the final week of the exhibition (for details on the workshop: rekade@kurator.ch). An accompanying workshop will be organised."The *Museo Aero Solar* flies from one city to the next, from country to country, from continent to continent, from our solar system to unknown systems, and grows with the help of solar and human energy (...) On a quest to find new boundaries, every ascent to the skies sees it questioning the existing military division of the airspace." (www.air-port-city.org) As such, Tomas Saraceno's visions are not far removed from the pacifist ideas of Bruno Taut.

Helen Mirra lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her most recent solo exhibitions include shows at the Galerie Nelson, Paris (2006), the daadgalerie Berlin (2006), the Dallas Museum of Art (2004) and the UC Berkeley Art Museum (2003).

Tomas Saraceno lives and works in Frankfurt am Main. He currently has works on show at the Lyon Biennale and the UC Berkeley Art Museum. Solo exhibitions include the Centre d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona (2006),,, the Barbican Art Gallery, London (2006) and the Portikus, Frankfurt (2006)

FURTHER EVENTS

Franziska Furter

Presentation of the Series produced for the program booklet

For the booklet which Gebert Stiftung für Kultur publish every year to communicate the exhibition program, Swiss artist Franziska Furter has produced five watercolours. Her delicate, almost transparent crystalline structures, bright red explosions and fractals create the link to Taut. Furter's series will be featured in an exclusive publication for the Alte Fabrik. The works involved will be presented at a matinee event on December 9 and will be available for purchase.

Matinée, Sunday, December 9, 11 am

Public Tour with Birgit Frisch and Ursula Meier

Thursday, January 10, 7 pm

Information: kunstvermittlung@kurator.ch

Museo Aero Solar

Workshop with Tomas Saraceno

January 21-27, 2008

Opening times:

Wed.- Fri. 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. / Sat.-Sun. 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Closed for Christmas: December 22 - January 2, 2008

For further information please contact Christiane Rekade, rekade@kurator.ch; www.kurator.ch

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