

MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA
SALON BERLIN

PRESS RELEASE

'The ecosphere is based on an ecology of the gift, on a constant exchange fed by the energy of the sun, which radiates it for free. Only when we understand this ecology, and also this economy, of give and take, when we understand how much people are part of such a constant exchange, will we be able to find a new basis for a different way of working with nature.' Andreas Weber, *Lebendigkeit: Eine erotische Ökologie*



BACK TO NATURE?

Exhibition: Museum Frieder Burda | Salon Berlin
13 April to 18 August 2018

With works by **Camille Henrot** (b.1978), **Timur Si-Qin** (b.1984), **Tue Greenfort** (b.1973), **Sissel Tolaas** (b.1963), **David LaChapelle** (b.1963), **Laure Prouvost** (b.1978), **Tim Eitel** (b.1971), **Nikita Shalenny** (b.1982), **Flavio de Marco** (b.1975) in dialogue with Georg Baselitz's (b. 1938) 'Eschenbusch II' (1969) from the Frieder Burda collection. Curated by Patricia Kamp.

Preview: 13 April 2018, 7 – 9 pm

Press view: 25 April 2018, 5 pm (please reply by 20 April 2018)

Discussion: 'Re-imagine - towards a new *Definition* of Nature' with **Cyrril Gutsch (founder, Parley for the Oceans)**, **Tue Greenfort (artist)** and **Doug Aitken (artist)**: 25 April 2018, 7 pm (registration required)

New Nature – Super Human? Digitization is demanding its tribute, the Anthropocene has long since begun – and God has served his purpose: mankind shapes the earth, our bodies become modular construction kits. Now, when we humans experience ourselves as the creators of our own reality, will we be able to continue to cultivate our own liveliness and thus keep alive the connection between all life on our planet, as the famous naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) once formulated for our understanding of nature?

From the return to aesthetization to the futuristic vision: The current exhibition at the Salon Berlin reflects a whole variety of artistic strategies that allow us to experience our current alienation from nature and from ourselves. In the age of digitization artists like **Camille Henrot** or **Laure Prouvost** seek contemporary approaches to nature: a longing for unification, for idealization speaks from their works, which resonate with sensuous, almost childlike experience. **Sissel Tolaas** has created an olfactory archive of ocean smells, which awaken quite subjective memories of the sea and represents a snapshot full of geographical, cultural and historical references. She also confronts us with our growing fear of smell, which is causing us to gradually lose one of our most important senses.

Tue Greenfort formulates a firm commitment to nature and the interconnection of all life beyond mere dichotomy, teasing out nature's aesthetic potential not least from scientific approaches. The digitally rendered terrains of **Timur Si-Qin's** *New Peace* series (2017) advance a philosophy of immanence and propose a new "Protocol" for understanding one's place in the vastness of time and space. A faith of the real; a mysticism and meaning for a world in the grip of the Anthropocene to foster a spiritual relationship with the infinite creativity of pattern, matter and energy.

MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA
SALON BERLIN

On the other hand, **David LaChapelle** offers us a speculative look into the future. His petrol stations, overgrown with tropical rainforest and coming across like the artificial settings of mystery films, show human architectures that will be forgotten in a post-human future. **Nikita Shalenny's** virtual-reality work *The Bridge* (2017) takes us into a world at the end of time in which schematic silhouettes of naked people run for their lives through ghostly empty landscapes, dead forests and abandoned oil pumps. Even **Tim Eitel's** figures on a boat no longer sail towards a morbid-romantic island, but into nothingness and at the same time a wall. Both works today inevitably recall global challenges such as the current refugee crisis, repressive totalitarian systems and the ongoing destruction of the environment. The painter **Flavio de Marco** once again takes us on a journey through landscapes of a digitized world in which our perception is characterized by omnipresent screens, filters and stereotyped images, while authenticity and the aura of an original lose their meaning. And through this scenario drifts almost heroically the timeless wanderer, as we can experience him in Georg Baselitz's imagery, fighting his alienation from nature, which he nevertheless considers his home.

With these thoughts in mind, the exhibition BACK TO NATURE? deals with the changed concepts, perceptions and images of nature in contemporary art. The exhibition, curated by **Patricia Kamp**, also explores the question of what contribution art can make in the context of social, political and ecological debates. **BACK TO NATURE?** is the first exhibition of an ongoing interdisciplinary workshop, which also includes a publication in progress. In collaboration with **Parley for the Oceans**, the Salon Berlin has initiated a series of conversations in which artists such as **Doug Aitken** and **Parley for the Oceans** founder **Cyrrill Gutsch** discuss the need for a more complex understanding of nature. Some core points of the contents of **BACK TO NATURE?** relate specifically to the important intellectual foundations of **Parley for the Oceans**.

Patricia Kamp, curator of the exhibition, on her approach: 'I am not concerned with a pessimistic farewell to nature, with the lamentation of a deformed relationship to nature, with an essential fear of change. In the artistic approaches shown and in the confrontation with a new understanding of nature, I also see the possibility of reflecting our own, human nature. How do we continue to cultivate our own inner liveliness? With art, we connect again and again with the world: what lasting impact does this have on our imagination and creative energy?'

Partner of the event: Parley for the Oceans (www.parley.tv)



Parley is the place where creatives, thinkers, and leaders come together to raise awareness of the beauty and vulnerability of our seas, and to collaborate on projects to protect and sustain them.

Further information and pictures: www.museum-frieder-burda.de

Opening times Salon Berlin, Auguststrasse 11 – 13, 10117 Berlin

Thursday to Saturday 12 noon to 6 pm

Concurrently at the Museum Frieder Burda:
America! America! How real is real? (until 21 May 2018)

Press contact:

Kathrin Luz +49 (0)171 3102472
presse@museum-frieder-burda.de

ON THE INDIVIDUAL WORKS:

BACK TO NATURE? begins with current positions that radically challenge the traditional view of a contrast between culture and nature. One such position is represented by the French artist Camille Henrot, whose fresco of a pair of pelicans forms the title motif of the exhibition. It is from Henrot's series *Untitled (11 Animals that Mate for Life)*, which she realized in 2016 for an installation at the Berlin Biennale. The basis was a BuzzFeed list from the internet, in which supposedly 'monogamous' animals are listed, including species such as the pelican, which does not in fact live in permanent one-on-one relationships. Henrot addresses the ideological and sentimental outlook society is adopting in times of increasing digitization, projecting ideal images onto animals and anthropomorphizing nature in order to justify social norms.

Swallow, the 2013 video by Turner Prize winner Laure Prouvost, is superficially a reflection on the sensory perception of nature: accompanied by Prouvost's breathing and her voiceover, naked young women bathe in a sun-drenched lake, birds fly, fish steal berries. But at the same time, Prouvost's seductively constructed film is a meditation on technology, about the artificial images and concepts that we make of nature and project onto it.

Like Prouvost's film, the works of Berlin artist **Timur Si-Qin** also address the materialistic thinking that no longer seeks to reflect on objects, materials or 'nature' from a hierarchical perspective but fundamentally criticizes the alleged opposition between civilization and nature. 'I feel,' says Si-Qin, 'that this dualism, deeply rooted in Western thinking, really prevents people from understanding our role and our relationship to the material universe. It separates us from all other life, other animals and the ecosystem.' In his exhibitions, the artist has already designed logos for a future religion of New Materialism; with his 'New Peace' campaign he takes this idea a step further: man, like everything else, is and remains 'only' matter.

Tue Greenfort from Denmark was one of the first artists not only to criticize the subjective, civilizing view of nature, but also to combine actionism with new aesthetic strategies in their art. His artefacts of 'living fossils' - such as his sculptures of horseshoe crabs cast from concrete and fly ash, an organism that has not changed for 400 million years, his 'sea surface', a glassily fragile snapshot of water in motion, as well as his microscopic views of carbamide crystals at the moment of their crystallization, combine with extensive site-specific research and concrete criticism of production conditions and social relationships that exploit and destroy both humans and nature. Of the exhibition in the Salon Berlin, the artist himself says: 'The standard dichotomy between life and other things seems to me to be a problematic perspective. My works question and challenge this, while at the same time developing a kind of study of the entanglement of life and other things and the related role that humans play in addressing the ecological crisis of our time.'

David La Chapelle's photographs of petrol stations in the middle of the rainforest in Hawaii look artificial, like the settings of mystery movies. At the same time, they are reminiscent of famous icons of twentieth-century art – Ed Ruscha's gas-station pictures from the 1960s or Edward Hopper's night scenes from the 1920s and 1930s. The rainforest plays an ambivalent role here: it is the source of fossil fuels millions of years old. But it also symbolizes natural forces that re-occupy their terrain. So **La Chapelle's** series offers a speculative look into the future. The tropical forest could overgrow the human architectures that will be forgotten in a post-human future.

The Norwegian artist, olfactory researcher and professor **Sissel Tolaas** has collected and synthesized smells for her *Ocean Smell Scapes* at various points in the oceans. On the basis of a map, she can assign the smells in her installations to the world-wide localities where they were found, and also note her thoughts on them. Tolaas has created a kind of olfactory archive that awakens quite subjective memories of the sea and represents a snapshot full of geographical, cultural and historical references. She confronts us with our growing fear of smell, which is causing us to gradually lose one of our most important senses. But how can odour be used as a source of information? That is the central question the artist poses. At the same time her scent atlas proclaims the placelessness and transience of sensory experiences.

Tim Eitel's painting *Boat* (2004) also comes across as strangely placeless. Inspired by Arnold

MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA SALON BERLIN

Böcklin's *Island of the Dead*, Eitel has moved this, probably the most famous motif of Symbolism, to a stage-like interior. The figures on the boat no longer sail towards a morbid-romantic island, but to nothing and at the same time to a wall. Asked about the surreal scenery of the picture, Eitel himself emphasized his real references in an interview in 2007: 'This nothingness into which the boat is sailing is at the same time a wall. Some time ago, for example, the "Palace of the Republic" was flooded here in Berlin and people could paddle around in it, or bunkers were put under water, or water reservoirs were used for recreational purposes.' While the painting deals with death and transience, it also touches on one other topic: staged experiences that replace 'authentic' experiences of nature.

Already in 1999, the Italian painter **Flavio de Marco** began to deal with the format of the screen window on the computer monitor in wall-mounted installations – as the epitome of a digitized world in which our perception is characterized by omnipresent screens, filters and stereotypical images. While in the past, touristy landscapes formed the primary basis of his work, de Marco now increasingly interacts with art history, albeit at the same time still understands himself as a landscape painter. His site-specific wall installation *Mimesi.05*, which was specially designed for the Salon Berlin, enters into dialogue with two original works by Georg Baselitz from the Frieder Burda Collection: *Adler* ('Eagle', 1982) and *Eschenbusch II* (1969). In an overlapping composition of painted computer windows, he installs a version of *Eschenbusch II* painted by a Chinese copyist, which looks like what you would find by googling on a smartphone. The authenticity, the aura of an original is intentionally lost. And this corresponds to our smartphone optics, and a mechanically calibrated perception of art as well as of reality. Baselitz's view of a symbolically and heroically charged, upside-down nature finds a new analogy in the 'media' version.

Based on the artist's watercolours, *The Bridge* brings the virtual-reality work of Ukrainian artist **Nikita Shalenny**, created in 2017, into a world at the end of time. Schematic silhouettes of naked people run wild for their lives, through ghostly empty landscapes, through dead forests, past abandoned oil pumps, factories and churches over which snow or ash rains down. The flight leads to death, while a huge black sun appears over the lifeless bodies. **Shalenny's** dystopian film inevitably recalls the current refugee crisis, repressive totalitarian systems, and the ongoing destruction of the environment.