

Material Memories

10.2.–20.5.2024

Sammlung Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst

Curator:
Nadia Schneider Willen

Chapter 1 with works by Heidi Bucher, Yael Davids, Thea Djordjadze, Graciela Gutiérrez Marx, Kris Lemsalu, Liz Magor, Maria Pinińska-Bereś and Vivian Suter.

Curatorial Assistant:
Claudia Heim

«The pictures (...) were marked by water, mud and leaves. The turning point came when I accepted that my pictures were not destroyed, rather changed.» The artist Vivian Suter uses these words to describe what happened when her studio was flooded. It is precisely this idea of material as a repository of traces and memories that serves as the starting point for this exhibition: its approach to the selected works of the collection is via their material quality, and its concern is with how material is charged with meaning, and how raw materials can turn into art.

Physical material is the basic prerequisite for every artwork that manifests itself as an object. Since the 1960s artists have naturally drawn on impermanent or organic materials, have worked with materials from industry or integrated found objects into their works. As part of the artistic work process, these materials are merged, combined, formed, altered, coloured, liquified or solidified – provided they have reached a form that the artist judges to be ready. The first chapter in the collection exhibition thus examines the way in which meaning is inscribed into the material through the creative process – whether actual or symbolic. It may be traces from the work done, or it may be remnants that bear witness to a performative act. In some cases, the material also stores imprints that come about due to uncontrollable factors, but are permitted – and so become part of the work itself. In other cases, a material or an object is charged with new meaning due to an action carried out, or the old one is over-written.

The key work in both chapters is Heidi Bucher's *Skin Room (Rick's Nursery, Lindgut Winterthur (1987))*. The work is a latex 'skinning' of a room in a historical villa, on a scale of 1:1. The layers of rubber are stripped off the walls in a performative action, thereby acquiring new meaning. Bucher's method can be compared with a shedding or skinning process in which – interpreted as a liberating gesture – the outermost layer is removed from the 'old one'. From now on, the past is only inscribed into the material by means of the visible imprints; the shell that remains following the 'skinning' is a carrier of memories that the artist has emancipated herself from.

In Yael Davids' work *Vanishing Point (2020)*, a black strip of fabric which divides the entire back room of the exhibition, the removal of material is given a key role. In meticulous handiwork, the horizontally running threads were removed from the centre of the woven textile: it is not the weaving that creates what is new, rather the 'un-weaving'. The gap enables new points of view in the space, with meaning arising through the play between concealing and revealing new perspectives.

Vivian Suter lets external factors become part of her works. After painting them, the artist often exposes her canvases to the elements: they lie on the ground or hang on trees, where the traces of dust, mud or leaves are left behind. In this way, her painting points to the organic processes, determined by chance, that shape the surroundings in which Suter lives and works, at a secluded location in the tropical climate of Guatemala.

Graciela Gutiérrez Marx cut a piece of material from her mother's work apron and posted it to her socially and politically conscious *Mail Art network* – at a time when the military dictatorship regime in Argentina (1976–1983) made free movement practically impossible. The photographic collage *Material Metamorphosis* (1982/2013) documents the apron's transformation from a domestic, everyday thing into an object replete with meaning. Now it symbolises the overcoming of boundaries and a community based on communication.

The first chapter of the collection exhibition titled *Material Memories* brings together artistic positions from various generations and geographical contexts: common to all, however, is the engagement with unwritten material, onto which they inscribe their own meanings.

Info / Agenda:



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PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS (EN, GER)

Public tours of the current exhibitions in the museum take place at regular intervals on Saturdays from 3 pm and Thursdays from 6.30 pm. The guided tours last approximately one hour and offer an in-depth insight into the themes and backgrounds of the exhibitions. The individual dates are published online on the agenda.

On *Thursday, March 7* and *Saturday, April 6*, the public tours will be accompanied by sign language translation.

The audio-descriptive tour on *Thursday, March 21* from 6 pm offers people with visual impairments the opportunity to get to know various works of art in the exhibition.

NARRATIVE CAFÉ (GER)

Saturday, March 16, 11.30 am–1.30 pm

Life stories connect us. The narrative café offers the opportunity to share events and memories from your own life in a group. The café is led by a moderator and participants can discover commonalities, gain new perspectives or look back.

COLLECTION INSIGHTS (EN)

Thursday, April 18, 6.30–7.30 pm

Who looks after the artworks in the collection? How are the different materials conserved and what are the challenges? During this tour, visitors will learn about the background to the works on display from the collection and will gain a first-hand insight into the working methods of the collection team with Francisca Silva e Sousa (Head of Collection Care).

ART AND HEALING WORKSHOPS WITH LIVING MUSEUM ZÜRICH (GER)

Mondays, 4–7 pm: February 26 (Living Museum), March 18 (Migros Museum), April 8 (Migros Museum)

Public opening: May 6, 5–7 pm (Living Museum)

Art can have a healing effect. The collaborative workshop series takes place alternately at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst and the Living Museum Zurich. We explore the topic of «memories» in both institutions: exploring works of art and creating together is about strengthening our own resources. Finally, we will present the resulting works at a public vernissage at the Living Museum Zurich.

FAMILY AFTERNOON (EN, GER, FR)

Sunday, May 5, 2–5 pm

The Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst is once again opening its doors especially for families. At 2 p.m. we will take an interactive tour of the *Material Memories* collection exhibition. The focus is on the raw material and how it becomes art. Inspired by the exhibition, we use the objects we have brought with us as well as foam, cling film or wood scraps to create objects that carry our own personal memories and tell stories.

ART DETECTIVES (GER)

Once again, young art detectives can pick up our exciting exhibition riddles specifically for *Material Memories* at the reception!

- Available free of charge from 8 March onwards
 - 12 backpacks with the equipment (cannot be reserved)
 - Ideal age: 8 –12 years (also suitable for younger children with the help of adults)
- Duration of the riddle fun approx. 1 hour (can vary individually)

AUDIOGUIDE: MATERIAL MEMORIES (EN, GER)

Discover the current exhibition with Cynthia Gavranic (art mediator): Our audio guide offers visitors an introduction to the multi-layered themes of *Material Memories* and illustrates these in concrete terms using various works of art. Headphones are available at *the* reception.



All events are free of charge, but registration is required for some. Further information will be published on www.migrosmuseum.ch/agenda and in our newsletter. We look forward to your visit!