

Material Memories



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The exhibition lasts from Saturday, 10 February to Monday, 20 May 2024.

Every piece of art is made of one or several materials. What is the story behind these materials? This is what we show with our exhibition called «Material Memories».

An exhibition is an art show. Its title «Material Memories» is a play on words. It means two things: «what the material remembers» and «important things to remember».

The exhibition has two parts. The parts are called «chapters».

«Material Memories» is a collection exhibition. In other words: the exhibition shows artwork from a collection. In this case, the art is from the collection of the Migros Museum of Contemporary Art.

We are showing artwork by 8 artists:

Heidi Bucher

Yael Davids

Vivian Suter

Graciela Gutiérrez Marx

Kris Lemsalu

Liz Magor

Maria Pinińska-Bereś

Thea Djordjadze

What is the exhibition about?

Works of art, such as a sculpture, are usually made of a material. In the past, artists used materials that live long, for example: stone or metal.

Since the 1960s, artists have been using materials that do not live long. Or the artists have used materials that change over time. For example: the artists use materials made of plants. Or they take things they found somewhere.

In the first chapter of the exhibition, we are showing artwork from different times and from different countries. But you will see: all these pieces of art use material that changes when artists turn it into art.

- Sometimes, artists want the material to change. For example: They give it a colour or a shape. Or they cut it in pieces. Or they put two or more materials together.
- Sometimes, the material changes by chance.

This way, the object or material is given a new meaning. The change is a part of the artwork.

Here is a closer look at some of the artworks:

Heidi Bucher

Heidi Bucher's piece of art is called «Skin Room». She used latex to make a copy of a room.

Latex is a soft material, like rubber. Rubber is also called «caoutchouc» and is made of the milk of the rubber tree.

The room is in the old «Lindgut» villa in the Swiss town of Winterthur. How did Heidi Bucher make the copy? She «painted» the walls with liquid latex. Then she waited until the latex was dry. After that, she took down the dry latex, which now felt like a skin. This way, the room had peeled off its skin like a snake. The latex skin shows a copy of the room. The skin has stored the memories of the room. This was Heidi Bucher's way to say goodbye to her past. She lived in a similar house as a child. The artwork was made in 1987.

Yael Davids

Yael Davids' piece of art is a large black strip of fabric hanging in the back room of the exhibition. The fabric splits the room in two parts. In the middle of the cloth, some of the threads of the fabric have been taken away. So, you can see through the cloth. The fabric does two things: It covers parts of the room, but it also uncovers parts of the room. Yael Davids made something new by taking some material away. The artwork was made in 2020.

Vivian Suter

Vivian Suter lives in Guatemala in Central America. She lives in the middle of nature. The climate is tropical: it is hot and wet. At one point, her workshop was flooded. All paintings were covered with water, mud and leaves. Vivian Suter understood: the paintings were not destroyed. They were just changed. Since then, she has taken her paintings outside often. For example: she hangs her paintings on a tree or puts them on the ground. The paintings then become dirty or wet. Or they get covered with stains and scratches. Or maybe some leaves fall on the paintings. Vivian's paintings show how nature changes everything. Nature becomes part of her paintings.

Graciela Gutiérrez Marx

Graciela Gutiérrez Marx lives in Argentina. From 1976 to 1983, Argentina was a dictatorship. If someone stood up against the dictatorship, this person was put in jail or was murdered. During that time, Graciela Marx cut a piece of material from her mother's work apron. She sent the piece to the «Mail Art» network.

What is the «Mail Art» network?

In many countries, artists cannot show their work in galleries or museums. If they do, they are put in jail. But they can send their art via mail to a network. Other artists can then see this art.

Graciela Marx was very brave when she sent the fabric via mail. By doing so, she stood up against the dictatorship.

Her work of art is called «**Material Metamorphosis**». Metamorphosis means: Something changes into something else. The artist uses photos to show how she turned a simple work apron into political art.

The artwork was made in 1982.