

## BACK TO ATHENS 8 C'EST TOUT?

July 1–4, 2021

‚C'est tout?‘ is the Swiss contribution of widmertheodoridis for Back to Athens. The eponymous neon work by Ursula Palla serves as a starting point for the buildup of the positions. The outbreak of the pandemic coupled various and in parts contradicting measures that caused a situation which had massive implications on all levels of human co-existence. After more than a year full of uncertainty and fear of contagion and illness, the discovery of the vaccines against the corona virus infection opened the path for a new ‚old‘ freedom. Will life will be same as before? What remains from all the new insights and experiences during the lockdowns? Will it lead—as often articulated and anticipated—to a new consciousness for human coexistence and for our relationship with nature? Or will mankind return to the agenda? That was it? C'est tout?

During the last months people had developed different strategies that should make life easier, safer or just comfortable. Curfews and restrictions lead to the rediscovery of man's best friend, the dog. Animal shelters were emptied and many dogs found unexpectedly a new home. In her work, Elisabeth Nembrini puts the intersection ‚man-animal‘, representing the topic ‚art-nature‘, at first.

Sandra Kühne's drawings show the short paths in the Park Schloss Wartegg, her studios at lake Zurich or at the Red Sea and confirm the restricted spatial conditions during the pandemic. Her paper cuts are three-dimensional structures that revoke a comprehension as a topographic map. And yet they are cartographic verifications of her routes during the study stays.

Focusing on what is essential and the ability to slow down time are key factors in the work of Othmar Eder. His ability to create drawing images that serve as findings of elapsed time is proof of his power to temporarily undock in ‚normal‘ times from the world around. Despite picturing a quietness and reserve, the works are intense moments of life in which Othmar Eder shows compressed layers of time. His overexposed drawings with soft contrasts are characteristic and distinctive.

Victorine Müller's work ‚Le mouvement végétatif‘ creates a somnambulistic feeling of transition and immersion into an other world. Despite the sheer size of the airy sculpture, it creates an intimate situation full of stillness. Her organic objects made of transparent foil, fabric or bronze depict beings in the process of growth without any indications of the species.

‚Pitch Drop‘ by steffenschöni is a series of new video works in which viscous bitumen flows almost in slow motion across the screen. Its black, glossy, highly aesthetic surface evokes images of lacquer or latex and sensually conflicts with the dangerousness of this environmentally incompatible substance which once was life. The thermoplastic material which is obtained from crude oil liquifies when heated and hardens when cooling down. During the lockdowns, the shipping traffic almost collapsed and gave nature an unexpectedly chance to recover from all the world's pollution.

Nicolas Vionnet's work delight with witty allusions. His objects assembled from found objects are amusing and odd at the same time. An oxymoron so to speak. During the pandemic certain everyday items gained a sad importance: soap and thermometer. Just like a caricaturist Nicolas Vionnet holds up the mirror and gives us a closer look to how the hygienic measures were implemented.

Werner Widmer works with cube sugar, one of the most unusual substances in the art business. Despite its ostensible lack of qualities the viewer can perceive the sugar in a new way and context. His new work ‚Me Myself I‘, made by round sugar and set in Braille on mirrors appears visually unreadable for most people. The self-portrait in the mirror—nowadays called a selfie—remains on the other hand invisible for the blind. The topic of the self-image remains questionable for all.