

Unruly Relations

Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda, Selina Grüter & Michèle Graf, Birgit Megerle, Stuart Middleton, Stefan Tcherepnin, Ramaya Tegegne, Jan Vorisek
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Friendships are determined by their ambiguous nature. In the context of art, they form social frameworks, are theme of the artworks themselves, are an (un)productive factor of artistic work and a determining element for models of community authorship. At the same time as they are invested with romantic notions of a bond freed of purpose, the possibility of failure is always inherent; they are fractious, uncontrollable, hardly calculable from scratch. This essential ambiguity of friendship also determines the relationship between objects, materials and narratives that encounter each other in any group exhibition and that are, at best, engaged in a dialogue. Unruly relations are self-willed social constellations that play completely different roles in the works displayed. The group exhibition *Unruly Relations* addresses the ambivalent nature of friendship as a social construction but also as part of artistic practices. Invested with romantic notions, the concept of friendship is a much discussed social model of the present, a principle that is both co-opted economically as well as publicly. The exhibition is not based on any specific theories of friendship but instead poses questions: What are the productive and unproductive possibilities of failure and success that friendship or more general social constellations and communication provides? What is the relationship between friendship and authorship?

Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda and Selina Grüter & Michèle Graf make their friendship or the wider community generated by it both the subject and material basis of their work. The conceptual practice of the artist couple **Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda** (born 1976 in Madison US and 1977 in Nagoya JP, live and work in Berlin) focuses among other things on mechanisms of artistic authorship and social conditions of artistic production and is based on their friendship, which dates back to the time they studied together. The series of flags displayed in the exhibition was produced to mark the tenth anniversary of their collaboration, for whose celebration both artists appeared as the main sponsors of a horse jumping contest in Ladeburg. The constellation of ten horse pairs always wears the same hats, but different ones on each flag. *Some Made Up Names* (2015) was produced in connection with the short film series *The Sixth Year* (2013), created by Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda in collaboration with other artists. It is a series on artists' careers and the New York art world, whose screenplay is based on real interviews, which are, however, reproduced in the film without references and as anonymized anecdotes and observations. The panel with arbitrary, possibly fictitious names suggests a social space of artistic production and reception.

The performance practice of **Selina Grüter & Michèle Graf** (born 1991 and 1987 in Zurich, live and work in Zurich), ever reflective of the aspect of performing, is based on the involvement of individuals from their immediate surroundings and examines the role of the individual within different communities and relationships. The two-part performance *Cyber and Victory – An Incorporation for 11 Characters and Voice* (2016) results in two videos each presenting a different subjective perspective on the respective live events that are shown in the exhibition. A group of performing individuals—drawn from the network of both artists—recites in a complex system of repetition and overlaying a short dialogue from Ken Russell's film *Gothic* (1986). The vocal space generated in the moment of reciting not only embodies the two characters of Cyber and Victory, but forms through the transcendent, yet individual voices an unique <voice> detached from the dialogue. The second monitor is only activated after the second performance takes place.

Birgit Megerle (born 1975 in Geisingen, lives and works in Berlin) portrays friends in her paintings but also well-known figures she doesn't know personally. A private network is presented in artificial, stage-like paintings and juxtaposed with media codes as well as decorative symbols. The difference between reality and artificiality, between public and private is blurred in a form of painterly <reduction>. Through her practice Megerle questions not only issues concerning painting but also the imperative of the artist's particular social mode. *Backdrop for New Theatre 2* originated as a stage set for the musical *Hotel Moon* (2015) for the New Theatre in Berlin, founded by artists Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff, where artists, musicians, actors, and curators developed collaboratively conceived plays, musicals, and performances.

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Stuart Middleton's (born 1987 in Crewe UK, lives and works in Frankfurt am Main) sculptures, films, and models suggest communities and living environments defined by <sociologies>, without naming or evaluating these more precisely. The sculpture *sad sketch for Raoul Moat* (2016) belongs to a group of works of explicit yet ambivalent representations of interpersonal contacts. Knotted together limbs of multiple bodies form table legs on which simple round table tops are mounted. Conceived as objects in the process of falling over, created in papier mâché in a true-to-detail fashion, the outside and inside, above and below suggest social and public spaces encountering one another. The title *Sad Sketches* is a reference to the title of a series of drawings by the serial killer Dennis Nilsen making it possible to read them as metaphors for the visibility and invisibility of certain social structures. In the animated film *I am just going outside and may be some time* (2016)—a kind of interior monologue without text—being alone is a potential (or perhaps exemplary) form of sociality.

The two figures *Protagonist From the Learning Movie* (2016) and *Fat Frog (Phantom Twin)* (2016) by **Stefan Tcherepnin** (born 1977 in Boston, lives and works in New York) also make an attempt at socializing and retreating while traveling. The Cookie Monsters rise from his film *Learning Movie* (2014), where the Sesame Street protagonists wander through deserted landscapes and an equally empty restaurant in the form of a Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome in order to become, in the exhibition space, monumental, monstrous sculptures whose communication is monitored by the *Committee* (2016). Allusions to the Buckminster Fuller Dome are present in the lamps, which cast large shadows on the walls. The installation is a continuation of *Hypocrisy Ladders* (2014), an installation whose title is a reference to the Stendahl novel *Black and Red* (1830), which describes hypocrisy as an ambivalent social practice that contributes to identity formation in a highly productive manner. The works of Stefan Tcherepnin refer loosely to literary or other linguistic and cultural references. The artist moves between different communities of collaborators as a musician and artist and deals not least with the question of how forms of collaboration or the eschewing of such influence their own authorship.

Ramaya Tegegne (born 1985 in Geneva, lives and works in Geneva) explores the intangible factors of art production in her work often based on text and art historical references. She examines, for instance, the function of rumors and the role of friendships in artistic networks. *Ménage à trois* (2016) consists of furniture from her studio not currently in use. The studio is not only the location where artistic production takes place, but is also one of social interaction as a component of artistic practice. The book *Reynaud-Dewar* is a reprint of an out of print book by Guillaume Dustan. Originally published in French the novel *Dans ma chambre* (1995), is based on autobiographical experiences and reveals the intimate life of the author, which takes place here in a <closed> yet exposed space. *Ménage à trois* is not only an homage to Dustan, but also to the artist Lili Reynaud Dewar, with whom Ramaya Tegegne maintains a close friendship and professional relationship. Dewar uses the same text for her installation *I Am Intact and I Don't Care* (2013), where she reads scenes from the book in a bedroom installation.

Jan Voriseks (born 1987 in Basel, lives and works in Zurich) subtle spatial installations are created for specific exhibition settings and are therefore temporary. With these assemblages, consisting of used and found materials, as well as sound-producing devices, the artist reflects on the fluctuation of (recycled) materials and sound, in which fragile compilations of materials can be read as physical analogies and where a social use is inscribed in each material. Continually reappearing in material from *terrace* (2016), organized into collages, are popular symbols such as the hurricane emoji. These are recycled, openly interpretable (linguistic) signs, changing and circulating in various operating systems, which serve individualized, albeit standardized, ostensibly universal communication. In the pond in front of the Kunsthaus, objects reminiscent of miniature cocktail tables for smokers are transformed into elegant figures situated somewhere between minimalist abstract sculpture and the no longer decipherable functional object, stripped of its function.