

# Yves Netzhammer – *Two Cool Dwarf Elephants Eat Peach- Flavored Empathy Surplus*

## June 2 – Sep 11, 2022

MEDIA ORIENTATION  
Oct 25, 2022, 11 am

OPENING  
Oct 26, 2022, from 6 pm

curated by Sabine Schaschl and Evelyne Bucher

Museum Haus Konstruktiv is exhibiting Yves Netzhammer (b. 1970 in Affoltern am Albis, lives and works in Zurich) – one of the highest-profile Swiss artists of his generation. For this solo exhibition, Netzhammer has developed an installation setting that precisely embeds itself in the existing architecture. His works are based on computer animations, which he presents together with objects, drawings, 3D prints and murals, creating sophisticated multilayered environments. The resulting visual worlds are rooted in both figuration and abstraction: They contain anonymous figures with no face or gender, animals, insects and various items, as well as reduced formal elements that enable references to surrealism and constructivism. This artist is always concerned with moments of empathic perception, which his peculiar creatures' actions trigger in the audience.

For the presentation at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Netzhammer has transformed the large columned hall on the fourth floor into a poetic visual system that evokes various moods and associations. An array of painted shafts, sporadically protruding upward, are spread out on the ground like a floor plan. Some are linked by hinges to form small figures, others exhibit colorfully painted elements comprising disassembled and reassembled wooden fragments. Embedded in this grid structure, there are object assemblages reminiscent of human beings and body parts, as well as architectural elements: here an upper arm, a hand, a torso or a doll-like wooden skeleton, there a tent or two seemingly folded doors that bring origami to mind. Most of these objects are connected to presentation media, such as LED rotors, projectors and small monitors displaying Netzhammer's computer-animated video sequences. Some of the black-painted columns

become supports for Netzhammer's figures and thus integral components of the installation. The two end walls appear in a warm peach hue, and the brownish overhead lighting bathes the room in atmospheric twilight.

A peculiar evocative image is conveyed by the very title of the exhibition: *Zwei kühle Zwergelofanten fressen Einfühlungsüberschuss mit Pfirsicharoma* [Two Cool Dwarf Elephants Eat Peach-Flavored Empathy Surplus]. What reads strangely at first, nevertheless provides some reference points, which are addressed in various exhibits that are interlinked in a network-like manner. Elephants, peach flavoring, dimensions and absurdities are mentioned. As is empathy. Netzhammer's works always revolve around human action and perception. In his artwork, he is primarily concerned with sociopolitically relevant events and their accompanying new thought structures – and he always strives to find a visual implementation that is not too illustrative or too narrative. The image of the elephant turns out to be a recurring motif in the exhibition; for example, it appears as a large projection on the peach-colored wall. From time to time, the trunked animal comes into contact with various objects: an oversized dandelion, a small fighter plane, or the skeleton of one of its own kind, for instance. These moments of contact, which appear gentle at times, and threatening at other times, trigger transformation processes: The pachyderm slumps down, then rises again in a flowing movement, as a faceless and genderless human figure. The animal thus becomes an extension of the human body's surface and a carrier of perception, representing ourselves. Netzhammer's works often question the relationship between the body and the surrounding space. This is exemplified by a floor piece with a flat monitor, within which a figure with no identity rotates around its own hand. The far-too-narrow dwelling, defined by the boundaries of the display, triggers discomfort when the scene is viewed. Here, it becomes possible to directly experience the feeling of confinement.

In the left-hand cabinet, playfully arranged at various heights on simple peach-colored tabletops, a multitude of small white 3D prints can be seen. In the run-up to the exhibition, Netzhammer intensively explored how this medium, which is new to him, can be handled. The artist considered it important to take his symbolic visual language, developed on the computer, and keep transferring it to new image carriers, while also expanding it. The result is a number of small, poetic-looking miniatures that are closely related to the exhibits in the columned hall. What appears to be left raw and model-like at one place reappears elsewhere almost life-size, supplemented by color and a presentation medium.

In the right-hand cabinet, the video work *Biografische Versprecher* [Biographical Slips], realized in 2018, is restaged. Netzhammer's alter ego, a figure dressed in yellow and green, wearing a red jester's cap, does strange things on five small displays. The coloring of the jester's costume refers to Aromat, a seasoning developed in Schaffhausen. The ram that appears several times, the emblem of Schaffhausen, also refers to the artist's roots in that city, as hinted in the title. Unlike in earlier presentations, the five small computer-animated projections are reflected on horizontally and vertically arranged Plexiglas brackets, which leads to additional shifting and intertwining of the perceived.

In the beamed hall, which is divided in two, Netzhammer's motifs and figures fragmentarily reappear – now reformulated. This is where the exhibition finds the densest form of intertwining. While a circling vacuum-cleaner-cum-dragon with accompanying sound hangs from the ceiling in one half of the room, a chair is in the other. Both sections of the room are filmed, each by a separate camera, and the recorded footage is played back with a slight delay, also on the opposite side of the room from time to time. Netzhammer superimposes various computer-animated video sequences on these recordings. The visitors, who previously played the role of silent observers, now become protagonists themselves. This gives rise to strange, sometimes even uncomfortable encounters and moments of contact between the museum guests and the digital visual creations – between reality and fiction. Anyone engaging with this undergoes a densification of multiple levels of existence.

After training as an architectural draftsman, Yves Netzhammer attended the one-year preliminary course at what is now the Zurich University of the Arts, in 1990. From 1991 to 1995, he then completed further training there, in visual design. He has been exhibiting regularly in Switzerland and abroad since 1998, including several solo exhibitions, e.g.: in 1999 at Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen; in 2003 at Helmhaus Zurich and Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart; in 2005 at Kunsthalle Bremen; in 2006 at Museum Rietberg, Zurich; in 2008 at SFMOMA, San Francisco; in 2009 at Kunsthalle Winterthur and Palazzo Strozzi, Florence; in 2010 at Kunstmuseum Bern; in 2011 at the Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; in 2013 at MONA, Hobart, Tasmania; in 2016 in the atrium at LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur, Münster; in 2017 at the FOSUN Foundation, Shanghai; in 2018 at Museum zu Allerheiligen; in 2019 at Frankfurter Kunstverein; and in 2020 at the ETH Zurich Collection of Prints and Drawings.

In 2007, Netzhammer exhibited in the Swiss pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale, together with Christine Streuli. He participated in the 2010 Liverpool Biennial and had a large room-filling installation at the 2015 Kyiv Biennial. He has been realizing art-in-architecture projects on a regular basis since 2014.

In parallel to his artwork, Netzhammer is currently working on his animated film *Reise der Schatten* [Journey of Shadows], which is coming to cinemas in 2023.

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## MEDIATION PROGRAM

### NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

November 2, 6.15 pm

A special kind of guided tour: we turn off the lights and explore the museum together with you. Please bring your own flashlight! (in German)

### ARTIST TALK

November 9, 6.15 pm

Evelyne Bucher in conversation with Yves Netzhammer (in German). Limited seating, registration required: [info@hauskonstruktiv.ch](mailto:info@hauskonstruktiv.ch)

### PUBLIC GUIDED TOUR IN ENGLISH

Sunday, December 4, 11.45 am

Further guided tours in German: Wednesdays at 6.15 pm and Sundays at 11.45 am

For more information and events, visit: [hauskonstruktiv.ch](https://hauskonstruktiv.ch)

The digital program and the mediation offered on site are constantly being updated and adapted to the current situation.

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