

UNI

HANNAH SOPHIE DUNKELBERG

MITCHELL ANDERSON

ROMAN GYSIN

28.10. – 08.12.2023

K A L I
G A L L E R Y

"UNI" is a peculiar word. When you read or hear it, it immediately seems familiar, and usually the context gives a clear meaning to the word. However, when it stands for itself, its meaning becomes intangible. Is it an abbreviation for *"university,"* does it denote monochromaticity, is it the French participle of *"unir"* (to unite)? Or does it even denote an edible Japanese sea urchin or an Etruscan goddess? In its combination of ostensible familiarity and semantic ambiguity, it fits perfectly with the three artists in this exhibition, whose works take familiar elements from everyday life, be they materials, techniques, or image types, and use them to create objects whose possible radius of meaning becomes increasingly unstable and abysmal the longer one looks at them. Seductive at first glance, flirting with the decorative, they turn out to be insidious in the best sense of the word, tilting images that refuse to make clear sense and instead play their games with the viewer.

In his work, **Mitchell Anderson** takes up existing images and objects, restages them, and turns them into emblems of tensions. For example, he takes a depiction of a young man tied up from a cartoon and incorporates it into a painting made with an elaborate technique dating back to antiquity, in which layers of pigmented wax are layered on top of each other. The drawing almost disappears in the lush dark reds and yellows of the wax layers, reminiscent of dusk, and through them experiences an ambiguous charge that oscillates between the heroic and the erotic. Do we see the suffering of a prisoner or a sadomasochistic love game? A balloon in the shape of a rose, from which the helium has escaped and which has now become a hanging drapery, inheres a comparable ambivalence: is it a dreary reminder of a past celebration, an almost baroquely lush vanitas sculpture, or a winking allusion to Jeff Koons' shiny, colorful steel figures?

In her work, **Hannah Sophie Dunkelberg** surfs the crest of the wave between sculpture and painting, analog and digital, handmade and industrial. Inevitably, one thinks of chandeliers when one sees her lamp sculptures. However, if you step closer, they no longer seem lustfully ornate, but harsh and almost threatening, reminiscent of traps and handcuffs. The three-dimensional aplomb gives way, and the flat materiality of the milled metal elements comes to the fore, flawed and irregular, merely interlocked and unstable. The improvised-looking craftsmanship, the refusal of

perfection and permanence undermine the sculptural qualities that actually seem to fulfill prima vista conventional expectations. Her drawings, translated into painted plastic reliefs, also undermine customary attributions. The drawing, commonly the epitome of artistic authenticity and immediacy, is withdrawn and removed by the penetratingly eye-catching technical process of production, is only echoically granted, and thus calls into question linearly immediate ideas of authorship.

Roman Gysin probes the social charges of materials, the "class struggle of taste," as he calls it. The lifeworld of socially upper classes is usually characterized by materials with high-quality connotations, processed in accordance with the rules of "good taste. In less affluent milieus, people must know how to help themselves if they want to create a living environment that appeals to them visually, the impression of a modest abundance that lifts life out of the dreariness. They often resort to imitations, polyester instead of silk, wood laminate instead of veneer. The decoration strategy does not follow "good taste" but longings, just as the imitation is a longing that has become material. There is something rebellious, queer about the imitation, the inauthentic, the semi-authentic, a refusal to accept the normative status quo. The pink lacquered pieces of wood on the floor seem to ironically mock wood as the epitome of dignified naturalness and authenticity. Whether they are "real" or not is not visible to the eye, but their coloration and surface texture immediately reveal them to be products of the petroleum age; it is natural to read them as fakes. Real wood appears here as imitation wood, we see the imitation of an imitation, a completely paradoxical object. The pieces of wood in the wall installation cannot be pinned down either, they are brought into a geometric structure with straps reminiscent of handbags, illusory nature and illusory luxury intertwine in a constellation reminiscent of Minimal Art and Arte Povera - aesthetics that in certain milieus are considered to be the epitome of "good taste" and which appear here as just another look that can be quoted.

Exhibition text by Martin Jaeggi