Wilde

Charlotte Herzig
Stefanie Kägi
Andrea Mastrovito
Tobias Nussbaumer
Olga Titus

"Objects in a mirror may be closer than they appear" is a text found on the rear-view mirrors of cars in several countries, including the US, India, and South Korea. It asserts or warns that our perspectives are skewed and do not reflect reality. The artists in the second part of this two-part exhibition question their role in creating ever-shifting views.

Reflective surfaces shimmer in the latest paintings by **Charlotte Herzig**. Using silver leaf, the artist has framed one work in this light-catching material while using it sparingly in another to create one of her signature motifs, which itself resembles a leaf. Her visual language, one that's dreamlike, fantastical, full of subtleties, neither too organic nor too geometric, is again found in these two works and their small counterpart on the upper floors of the gallery. They bring their viewer to an enchanted place, a fluorescent, techno-colored garden that is hard to imagine as being real and if so, can only be found under the sea.

Across from Herzig's work hangs **Olga Titus**'s painting. The artist digitally draws two paintings and then prints them on both sides of a sequins-lined canvas. The works shimmer in the light, and depending on which side of the sequins is visible, the painterly line of the artist becomes more prevalent. As the artworks can be gently touched, one can, in the privacy of their own homes, work on the piece themselves, finding a moment that speaks to them, colors that evoke memories, or an emotional response. Uniquely, the work on the gallery's first floor contains figurative imagery, unusual for the artist but reminiscent of her video work. They reflect more directly her Malaysian of Indian descent roots on her father's side, with bold colors and Hindu iconography dominantly shining through.

Layered fields of color move between the fore and backgrounds in the Vessel paintings of **Stefanie Kägi**. The Berlin-based, Winterthur-born artist mixes the digital and the analog, drawing the forms on her computer and then extracting a negative of the image, which she then transfers onto the canvas. The result is an interplay of controlled and accidental elements, with a background that flows into a subtle gradient, dark at the top and light at the bottom; the objects seem to float. Like the vessels themselves, which are about filling and emptying, the paintings, too, are about overlaying layers and partially erasing them again.

The layering and combination of artistic techniques are essential to the oeuvre of **Andrea Mastrovito**. "Mastrovito's entire quest is aimed at retrieving the germinal component, and, in this age of hyper-technology, he prefers simple elements that are reminders of school days: rulers, desks, and blackboards, or ancient techniques such as intarsia, stained glass, collage, frottage, and animation film."[1] The collage-drawing-frottage works in the exhibition all center on the theme of melancholia; every flower is a frottage of a book about melancholy, war, and spleen. Two (*The*

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[1] Fiz, Alberto, *To Draw is to Know*, Città di Castello, Perugia, Italy, Magonza, January 2023

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Stranger and *The Rebel*) contain direct references to the French existentialist Albert Camus, while *The End of the Night* (2022) borrows inspiration from Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving *Melencolia I* (1514). Upstairs are two precious blackboard works engraved in repurposed school abacuses. The works, showing moments in a protest when police are hosing down demonstrators, do not reference any particular event. Instead, they are about the precariousness of life and the fact that it can easily disappear - be erased - in one second. In *The story of Melancholy* (2022), again an ode to Dürer, one can see that culture/thought and fight/revolt is the only answer to erasure.

Iconic imagery such as these is forever engrained in our collective consciousness. Just as for Mastrovito, memory, and erasure is also of paramount interest to the Basel-born and based artist **Tobias Nussbaumer**. Nussbaumer continues to push the boundaries of what AI can do for us and art. At a time when ChatGPT is threatening and reinventing our most beloved search engines, the subject seems ever more topical. For Nussbaumer, however, this has been the subject of his artistic practice for over a decade. He starts by creating virtual worlds, then runs them through a generative adversarial network (GAN), a form of machine learning[2]. The AI returns some version of it, and a back-and-forth ensues. Through this process, Nussbaumer trains the GAN on thousands of images, which at this point consists of a blending of other GAN-generated images and those from his virtual worlds. The two have become so entwined it's no longer possible to distinguish the source. A riff between artist and AI forms an ever-evolving virtual world, in video format, that morphs between input and output, but which is which becomes moot. Once Nussbaumer is satisfied with their collaboration, he finds a moment from the video, reinterprets its composition, and meticulously draws it in ink and black pencil. The result is a combination of reality, discernable moments in the image, and recognizable elements overlaid with unexpected architectural settings. The artist thus questions our perspectives, prejudices, and the connotations we make. Reflections continue to infinity, much like the infinity sculptures popularized by many contemporary artists. However, even though the movement appears static, our eyes continue to make the journey, using the one thing that AI will struggle to successfully emulate, our imagination.

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[2] GAN was created by Ian Goodfellow, who interestingly also worked for OpenAI from 2016-1017

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Charlotte Herzig
Charlotte Herzig was born in 1983 in Vevey, Switzerland. She holds a Bachelor's in Visual Arts (2007) from École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) and a Master's in Painting from the San Francisco Art Institute. In 2021, Herzig mounted a major solo exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Luzern (Switzerland). Her work has been featured at exhibitions including those at the Kunsthaus Pasquart (Biel, Switzerland), Tarmak22 (Gstaad, Switzerland), Swiss Institute (Rome, Italy), and Kunsthaus Langenthal (Switzerland). Charlotte Herzig was the first artist to win the Nestlé Art Prize in 2016. That same year, she presented a series of five new paintings at the Swiss Art Awards. She lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

Stefanie Kägi
Stefanie Kägi was born in 1987 in Winterthur, Switzerland. She studied at the École Nationale supérieure de Beaux-Arts in Paris and completed her training as a master student with Friederike Feldmann at the Weissensee Kunsthochschule Berlin. In 2017, Kägi received the City of Winterthur's Sponsorship Award. Kägi's recent solo shows include those at the Kulturhaus Villa Sträuli (Switzerland) and Kunstraum Engländerbau (Vaduz, Switzerland). Other exhibitions featuring her work include those at the Kunstmuseum Singen (Germany), Kunsthalle Schaffhausen (Switzerland), Kunstmuseum Winterthur (Switzerland), Haus Konstruktiv (Zurich, Switzerland) and Bundeskunsthalle Bonn (Germany). She lives and works between Langenhard, Switzerland and Berlin, Germany.

Andrea Mastrovito
Andrea Mastrovito was born in 1978 in Bergamo, Italy. He received his M.F.A. in 2001 from Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti in Bergamo. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded Mastrovito the New York Prize in 2007 and the Moroso Prize in 2012. In 2011, he became the first artist to have a solo show at Museo del Novecento in Milan. His works have been included in many institutional exhibitions such as those at Musei Civici di Pistoia (Italy), Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (Rome, Italy), Fondation Bullukian (Lyon, France), MAXXI National Museum of the 21st century (Rome, Italy), Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto (Italy), Manchester Art Gallery (UK), and M.A.D. (New York, USA). He lives and works in New York.

Tobias Nussbaumer
Tobias Nussbaumer was born in 1987 in Basel, Switzerland, where he lives and works. He received his M.A in Fine Arts from the Academy of Art & Design Basel in 2017 and his BA in Illustration fiction from HSLU Hochschule Luzern in 2011. His work has received numerous prices such as the Kunstkredit Basel-Stadt Project Award in 2018 and the Kiefer Hablitzel Art Prize in 2015. Nussbaumer's solo exhibitions include those at Union Pacific (London, UK), Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf (Switzerland) and Kunstraum Baden (Switzerland). His work is in the permanent collections of the City of Zurich (Switzerland), the Kunstmuseum Olten (Switzerland), the Helvetia Versicherung (Switzerland) and the City of Baden (Switzerland).

Olga Titus
Olga Titus was born in 1977 in Glarus, Switzerland. In 2006 she graduated from her Masters in Fine Arts at the Lucerne School of Art and Design. She received the Adolf Dietrich Promotion Prize of the Cultural Foundation of the Canton of Thurgau in 2009 and the Art Prize of the Bündner Kunstverein in 2022. Recent solo exhibitions include those at the Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur (Switzerland), Kunsthalle Darmstadt (Germany), Kunsthalle Wil (Switzerland), Whitebox (New York, USA), Kunstraum Kreuzlingen (Switzerland), Kunsthalle Luzern (Switzerland), and Kunsthalle Winterthur (Switzerland). She lives and works in Winterthur, Switzerland.