

Hunter Longe & Paulo Wirz

Opening: 15.09.23 at 18:00

15.09.23 – 11.11.23

Hunter Longe and Paulo Wirz make us cognitively hungry in their capacity to get us pondering about some of the quintessential enigmas of life, be it the (in)finity of one's own existence, the interconnectedness of things and the creative power of language and its symbolisms. In other words, both practices propose an alternative to the dogmas of humanism and anthropocentrism. One of the common denominators in the work of the two artists are relics of the past. Wirz having researched on life after death rituals, pre-modern shamanism, mummification or the history of board games and Longe's long-standing interest in evolution, the intersection between geology and biology, minerals and their prismatic qualities be they esoteric or technological. Through different registers of information—audio, scale, visual and tactile—we discover estranging moments be it the synesthetic experience of hearing warmth (fire) through light or the illusion of boundlessness of an infinity mirror. By revisiting our ancestral pre-modern times (Ancient history, Prehistory and Stone Age) there is a desire to give value to holistic approaches to knowledge making and sharing. An ode to our star-sun-moon-earth-animal-spirit oneness. In Longe's words: "We discover that which our ancestors subjectively knew: that we are of the earth, that the Earth is us." Wirz's note on spirituality is also key: "I have been looking into our urge to reach spirituality via the material world, our need to preserve material objects in order to be connected to the past, and the fact that faith and technology will develop simultaneously. Whether this will be political or poetic, I don't know yet."

Using strategies of accumulation, sedimentation, transmutation and reflection the artists are interested in material processes, be they mineralogical or symbolic. Longe's small scale sculptures are composed of fossils, calcite, selenite, vivianite, quartz, granite, gypsum, magnetic sand and electric light which he manipulates so that they undergo various chemical transformations. Longe works outdoors, casting in salt mines and riverbeds, scouting for wonderstones to then alchemically experiment on in the studio. The familiarity sensed through Wirz's sculptural forms are informed by the domestic: windows, cabinets, and moving boxes, for example. He creates what he calls an "ordered messy" where vegetation, cables, and a variety of everyday objects are placed inside the structures. Parts of these structures which he calls "extended architectures of the self" are burnt, others covered with mirrors or sealed off with colored glass, making their contents barely visible in a gesture of hiddenness/revelation.

Both practices are rooted in a new materialist mindset. They engender an oneiric contemplation, one that tries to answer the existential question once posed by Robert Smithson in his writings on entropy: What could happen when past and future collide into an objective present?