

Kannenfeldplatz 6
CH-4056 BASEL
+41 61 322 10 00

Pasteursvej 8
DK-1799 COPENHAGEN
+45 31 66 86 96

info@vonbartha.com
vonbartha.com

Design for a Garden von Bartha, Basel

April 22 – July 15, 2023

A group show, curated by Andrew Bick, with works by Christian Andersson, Andrew Bick, Jeffrey Bligh, Elena Damiani, A K Dolven, Marianne Eigenheer, Athene Galiciadis, Tanya Goel, Sara Haq, Anthony Hill, Armin Hofmann, Emma Kunz, Mike Meiré, Landon Metz, Karim Noureldin, Sarah Oppenheimer, Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, Jeffrey Steele, Gillian Wise, and Claudia Wieser.

“A garden is by contrast a generous space. Things in it compost in order to create new growth. Growth itself is both seasonal and evergreen, all things at the same time bound to a cycle controlled by the arc of the sun. The garden has a gate, a glove, a curtain, furious waves, an arcadian fire, vessels, botanical studies, mirrors, a blind, design, voice, theatre, and walking through, it has you...”— Andrew Bick, curator of the exhibition Design for a Garden

Imagine time has been dissolved and that there is a sequence of meetings in bars and cafés across various cities in which conversations are partaken in or overheard. Those conversations are between artists, and a mechanism that has dissolved time means that seniority and established context no longer count. Every artist in this exhibition has a place in these conversations and therefore, originality, like time, no longer dominates understanding of their work. Everyone shares, overhears, gossips... Everyone makes art that connects to anecdotes, each underlines the other’s presence in their own way of being an artist. In this way, the exhibition proposes that the solution to inclusivity, diversity, and lack of fluidity, lies in how artists are given space to communicate with each other more than it does on the institution or gallery.

Entering, the work *Im Schatten Dessauer Birken* (2014–2023) by Mike Meiré invites you into a process of wandering, where artworks echo each other, and visions mingle. This is the exhibition’s central purpose: to walk into a garden, a place of dreaming, of sensory release. Meiré takes the game of associations literally, placing his bronze cast of a gardening glove on top of a copy of Hermann Mattern’s *Garten und Gartenlandschaften* (1960), a classic modernist approach to garden design. From here, the exhibition twists and turns. Claudia Wieser’s reapproach to modernist perception, a curtain (2023) of punchy color on one side, a ghostly echo on the other, leads to Athene Galiciadis’ architectural intervention (2021), a fresco-like response to the artistic practice of Emma Kunz and *XRL (expanding, revolving line)* from 1966 by Gillian Wise. Ursula Reuter Christiansen’s *Furious Waves* (2020) reminds us that nature is not simply a tranquilizer. Sarah Oppenheimer’s spatial installation *P-01* (2014) engages us, like Wieser’s work, in the process of looking through, taking us to a juxtaposition of *Werk 364* by Emma Kunz and Elena Damiani’s *Blind (After Bertolia)* from 2016. Both remind us that numbers, measurement, and proportion are also a part of growth and form.

VON BARTHA

In three parts of the show, a sound piece, *so long ago* (2021) by A K Dolven, softly repeats the phrase that is its title. This work of spoken words, by the artist herself, breathes like music and simultaneously makes the idea of the past literally present. To the right, Dolven's *Still Life II* (2022) sits with one of Galiciadis' *Empty Sculptures*, a painted ceramic vessel. Sara Haq's *Things I did that nobody noticed (but that changed everything)* from 2018 reaches to the roof apex. It is an improvised 35-part drawing that the artist describes as 'soul work,' part object, part residue of a performance. Here, two works by Andrew Bick, *WWLAN-AH/GW (compendium)* from 2023 and *Gate/Grid* (2018), mirror aspects of Gillian Wise's preceding work and *Linear Formact 2* (1978-1979) of his tutor Anthony Hill next to it.

In the smaller cube, twenty-one experimental sculptures by Jeffrey Steele are on display. These were private activities in his studio and are being exhibited here for the first time. Steele, whose paintings were based on a rigorous understanding of mathematical systems, uses these sculptures to venture into free speculation.

A second wall work by Elena Damiani and ceramics from the series *Naq* (2023), painted by Karim Noureldin, meet two sets of botanical studies by Tanya Goel in the second cube. Her approach to watercolor, described as being between body and mind, science and spirituality, is a lyrical counterpoint to the urban grit of New Delhi. Goel grinds up building waste as pigment to use in her larger-scale paintings.

Two works by Christian Andersson, *Marrow*, and *Rift*, (both 2022), play with ideas of sculpture in the public garden, perhaps as memento mori, perhaps as a playful reprise of Emma Kunz's geometrical vision of humanity.

In the reading room, a vitrine of Armin Hofmann studies and the final poster for *125 Jahre Stadt Theater Basel*, remind us of the roots of the gallery. Hofmann taught not only the founders, Miklos and Margareta von Bartha, but also Barbara Staffacher Solomon, whose drawings are punctuation points in various parts of the exhibition. The title drawing for the show is tucked away in one of the cubes.

Facing the work of Sara Haq, Ursula Reuter Christiansen's *Feministic Attack* (2001) has in its approach some of the same energy found in the work of Marianne Eigenheer, which is installed in the back of the gallery. Next to this, Jeffrey Bligh's two large-scale paintings, text, and sound installation, *Where is Home*, and *Who Thought* (both 2023), are responsive to the same urgent questioning of identity. Landon Metz's untitled floor piece from 2018 subtly reprocessed his painterly ideas as material, working as a sequence of mirrored forms, as a visual path, and as a counterpoint to Mike Meiré's *Arcadian Fields, Burning* (2023).

Conceptually and visually, this exhibition is a garden of unexpected viewpoints, juxtapositions, and pairings, where relationships between artists' work and with each other remain continually in play.

VON BARTHA

Artists

Christian Andersson (* 1973, lives and works in Malmö, Sweden)

Andrew Bick (* 1963, lives and works in London, England)

Jeffrey Bligh (* 1947, lives and works in London, England)

Elena Damiani (* 1979, lives and works in Lima, Peru)

A K Dolven (* 1953, lives and works in Oslo and Lofoten, Norway)

Marianne Eigenheer (1945–2018)

Athene Galiciadis (* 1978, lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland)

Tanya Goel (* 1985, lives and works in New Delhi, India)

Sara Haq (* 1976, lives and works in London, England)

Anthony Hill (1930–2020)

Armin Hofmann (1920–2020)

Emma Kunz (1892–1963)

Mike Meiré (* 1964, lives and works in Cologne, Germany)

Landon Metz (* 1985, lives and works in Brooklyn and Manhattan, USA)

Karim Noureldin (* 1967, lives and works in Lausanne, Switzerland)

Sarah Oppenheimer (* 1972, lives and works in New York, USA)

Ursula Reuter Christiansen (* 1943, lives and works in Møn, Denmark)

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon (* 1928, lives and works in San Francisco, USA)

Jeffrey Steele (1931–2021)

Gillian Wise (1936–2020)

Claudia Wieser (* 1973, lives and works in Berlin, Germany)

VON BARTHA