

# VITRINE



## Press Release

# The Hindsighters' Children Sophie Jung

13 October 2021 - 9 January 2022.

Preview: Tuesday 12 October 2021, 6 - 9pm

VITRINE, London. Daily 24/7 from public square.

'The Hindsighters' Children' is a solo show of Basel-based artist Sophie Jung. The exhibition is based on the Basler Totentanz mural, translated as 'The Dance of Death in Basel' and comprised of a new, 10-metre-long drawing alongside smaller drawings, paintings and clay sculptures and a sound work.

Jung takes her lifelong fascination for the Totentanz as a questioning alternative to the unforgiving dichotomy between the states of existence-or-not: alive and dead. The Basler Totentanz mural was painted in the late Middle Ages in Basel, on the inside of a cemetery wall near the Predigerkirche Basel during the time of the black death. It showed different people of varying social classes and professions of the period next to one another, each being led by a dancing skeleton in ragged, a reminder that Death dances with all of us, regardless of class and status.

Across the gallery's main space, the artist's 10-metre-long drawing, on one roll of paper, depicts a number of other-shaped gnarly figures with a soft jittery line connecting and continuing them to the horizon and to each other, ambiguous in their poses, dancing, hunching, accusing, cradling and searching for something in the sand underneath their feet. Having subtle figurative features – arms, legs, heads, eyes – the gelatinous bodies are lonely creatures, trying their best to remain upright under the circumstances. They are, however, not guided by a skeleton as externalised mortality, instead they incorporate the binary within the fine container of their outline. They unite the contradictory in neither fear nor joy, neither misery nor malice, but in a numb state of searching presence.

The parade of persons is turned into abstract notation by the darker areas being visible from a distance. Black ink patches nestle themselves against the corners and turns of the outlines. With this aspect of the work in mind, the artist invited violinist Matthias Müller to put the drawing to sound in her studio with a musical interpretation of its forms. Leaving it up to Müller to read the abstract marks and interpret the scenes depicted in the drawing, or both, the resulting sound piece is played with an almost continuous bow-stroke on the note of E – the quint of A-Minor – the "key of grief". The violin, not always easy on the ear, being at once offensive yet somehow ordered, fluctuates between screams, deep sighs, high whispers and barely audible string strokes. At times it is almost danceably melodic yet often uncomfortably visceral, the strings fragility alluding to stretching tendons, gasping breaths and brittle bones.

The defiantly depressed ensemble is partially framed with a reflective chrome decal, which Jung has used in previous exhibitions, as well as black sand spread over the gallery floor, creating an otherworldly theatrical setting for the drawing to sit within. In the far corner, a series of watercolour paintings are lined up, dancing into their mirror image, forming a macabre parade with their own reflection.

A number of porcelain sculptures watch this scene, almost as a historic frieze or a portrait of themselves. In their appearance they are not unlike those drawn figures. Their characters can be imagined from the abstract markings of the artist's hand on clay; blobs and curves in the loosely figurative forms, which have then been glazed mostly monochrome with some areas of colour or crackle glaze mirroring the areas of detail in the drawing. They occupy an anti-binary existence, happy, desperate,

dead and alive, wound-dwelling idlers not past not future, never going anywhere. The artist describes a process of speaking to these characters as her hands work back and forth between observation and mediation. She tries to understand them as they come into being, to help them into their accidental shape.

This practice is both necessary and ideological. Jung has often spoken against “the act of concluding”, against the figure of the artist as the knowledgeable genius, the omniscient originator. For Jung, making art is always a collaboration with pre-existing material conditions, always a plural response. During the past year and a half where there was little chance to come across found objects and very little external stimulation, she began to make use of the often challenging specificities of her neurodivergent mind, dissociating fully from intent, and sat in moments of mental limbo to observe her hand move, as undominated extension of her line’s imminent desire.

The corner space of the gallery continues the exhibition with a presentation of smaller ink drawings on paper selected from an ongoing series of currently 25 works on paper. Jung uses an old-fashioned framing technique for sketches, using glass, cardboard or sheet MDF and medical tape. For Jung’s works museum glass is intentionally combined with the economical framing process.

Jung describes her process of working on this show akin to her writing methodology, the line being the imagined voice of the performer, whose sound and rhythmic needs pulls and pushes the text against its potential intention. She is the careful observer, maybe the facilitator, gauging at each moment what is being uttered and gently steering the uttering into as of yet unknowable shapes with the dynamics of the text’s rhythms, the formal allegiances of rhyming vowels and chattering consonants taking the lead and her editing hand being the subtle responder. The drawings follow this same process, with the artist watching her own line as it moves, often shaky with hesitation, bring forth a shape with only very gentle interventions of intent.

VITRINE’s panoramic glass space is the ideal setting for a reimagined Totentanz; where the caring stability of a chain of bodies keeps the group’s fading presence alive: a picket-line of defiant others.

Generously supported by Swiss Cultural Fund and Swiss Embassy London, UK

**Sophie Jung (born in 1982, Luxembourg, LU)** lives and works in Basel, Switzerland. She received her BFA from the Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam (2011) and her MFA from Goldsmiths, London (2015). In 2015 Jung spent 6 months in New York at ISCP, courtesy of the Edward Steichen Award Luxembourg; she was a recipient of Matt’s Gallery’s BlackRock residency 2018. She won the Swiss Art Award in 2016 and the Manor Art Award in 2018.

She has had solo exhibitions internationally at museums, galleries and festivals including: Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, CH; Blain Southern, London, UK; National Gallery Prague, CZ; Block Universe, London, UK; Istituto Swizzero, Milan, IT; Swiss Institute, Paris, FR; Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna, AT; Primary, Nottingham, UK; Casino Luxembourg, LU; Kunstraum London, UK; Nosbaum Reding Projects, LU; Temnikova & Kasela, Tallinn, ES; Ruine München, Saarbrücken, DE; Ceri Hand Gallery, London, UK; Cabaret Voltaire, Zürich, CH; JOAN, Los Angeles, US; Galerie Joseph Tang, Paris, FR.

She has been included in group exhibitions at galleries and institutions internationally including: Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; Kunsthalle Basel, CH; Wying Arts Center, Cambridge, UK; Kunsthau Pasquart, Biel, CH; David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK; Municipal Gallery, Lisbon, PT; Supplement Gallery, New York, USA; Galerie Barbara Seiler, Zürich, CH; SALTS, Basel, CH; ICA, London, UK; Hester, New York, USA; Oakville Galleries, Ontario, CA; Galerie Tatjana Pieters, Ghent, BE; Caustic Coastal, Manchester, UK; Jupiter Woods, London, UK; VITRINE, Basel, CH; Kunsthall Extra City, Antwerp, BE; Rabouan Moussion, Paris, FR.

Current exhibitions include a solo exhibition at E.A. Shared Space, Tbilisi, GE until 21 November 2021 and the group exhibition ‘Freigeister’ at The Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art, LU until 27 February 2022.

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VITRINE is focused on artistic experimentation and emerging interdisciplinary practices. The gallery was founded in London in 2010, with a second space in Basel opened in 2016 and a third digital space launched in 2020. Over this decade, we have established a reputation as a selector and nurturer of new talent and our continued aim is to support artists’ careers and the growth of their ideas.

**Our programme** is focused on interdisciplinary approaches in a variety of media, concentrating on artists working in installation, sculpture and performance. We are committed to support experimental practices that flourish site-responsively, in alternative environments to the traditional white cube, and are often underrepresented in the art market.

**Our spaces** are transparent: In London, glass windows cover the entire 16-metre-long, panoramic space; In Basel, our space – custom designed by Swiss architects PanteraPantera - offers a 360 degree ‘in-the-round’ viewing experience. This transparent architecture allows all exhibitions to be viewable 24/7 from the surrounding public squares. Both VITRINE London and Basel are wheelchair accessible. Our office and viewing spaces are hidden inside, allowing for an incredibly flexible contemporary exhibiting and working space.

**Our business model** is a hybrid. We operate an expanding commercial gallery; representing a core group of artists and advising international clients. Our work in the public realm and commitment to supporting artists with ambitious experimental exhibitions has allowed us access to public funding, which we have carefully used over our 10-year history for specific large- scale non-profit projects.

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