



PEDRO WIRZ

Selected works

Diplomatic Immunity

Solo show at
Museo d'Arte della Svizzera Italiana

Lugano (CH), June 2023





Installation view, Pedro Wirz, Diplomatic Immunity, MASI, 2022







The 2023 Bally Artist Award has been won by Pedro Wirz, a Swiss-Brazilian artist born in 1981 who lives in Zurich, with a project that questions the privileges conferred by social class, hierarchical power, and the seemingly archetypal, immutable positions that characterize society.

The installation *Diplomatic Immunity* on show in MASI Lugano's Palazzo Reali venue (from 4th June to 23rd July) consists of 12 sculptures and three wall-mounted bas-reliefs. The 12 busts symbolize positions of leadership (king, president, pope, rabbi, etc.), each reflecting a particular hierarchy of power: economic, religious, political or socio-cultural. Produced using scrap materials from the artist's studio, the precarious aesthetic of the busts is an allegory for the hollow, illusory nature of the systems they represent. The box-like bas-reliefs are part of a series the artist began working on in 2019. They evoke television screens or smartphones and represent landscapes invaded by humans in different ways, ecosystems rendered uniform by technological intervention.

The installation leaves visitors just enough space to move around, and the busts are almost like obstacles that have to be bypassed with care. The work thus challenges the dichotomy between competition and cooperation and questions what a „more sustainable“ society would really look like, given that this notion is often only considered in economic terms. „To embark on a more sustainable existence, we have to face up to the reality and difficulties involved in cohabiting on the earth. [...] We must stop thinking as individuals and start thinking like a species, that is, inhabitants of the earth, earthlings, brothers and sisters destined to coexist on this planet side by side, respecting one another,“ explained Pedro Wirz.



Um peso, uma medida

Group Show at
We are AIA

Zürich (CH), March 2023





Untitled (Nests) - Um peso, uma medida , We are AIA, 2023
Installation view

Chrysalide, le rêve du papillon

Group show at
Centre d'Art Contemporaine

Genève (CH), February 2023





Untitled (Haus/Nest/Blume) #6, 2023 - detail

Untitled (Haus/Nest/Blume) #6 - installation view, 2023
 Wood, plaster, textile debris, granit sand, branches, acrylic binder
 33 x 32 x 163 cm



Untitled (Haus/Nest/Blume) #5, 2017 - 2023
 Wood, plaster, textile debris, dirt, metal can, branches, acrylic binder
 26 x 26 x 166 cm



Untitled (Haus/Nest/Blume) #7 2023
 Wood, clay, dirt, metal can, recycled polyethylene, branches
 26 x 26 x 166 cm

sadnest

Solo show at
Kai Matsumiya Gallery

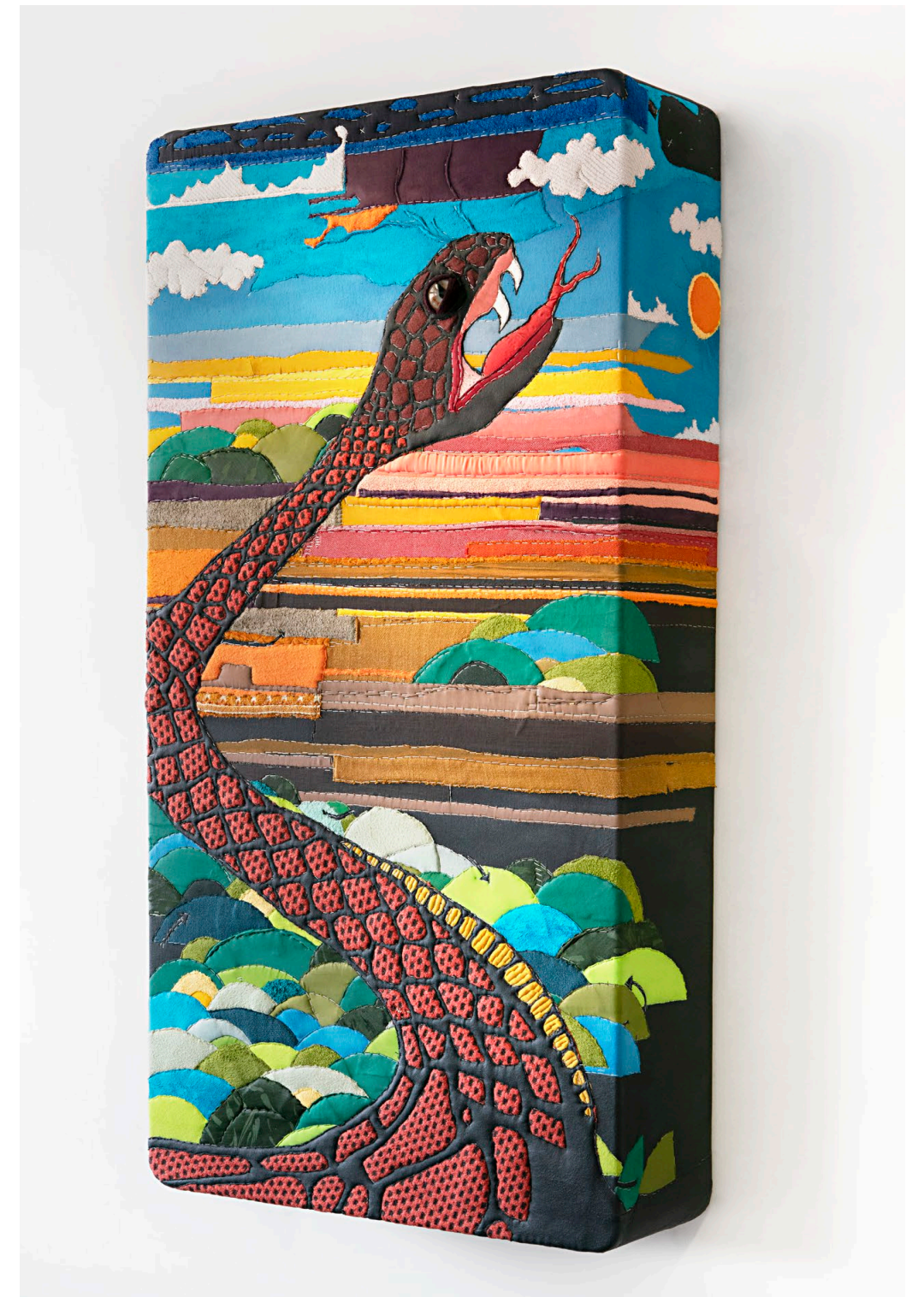
New York City (USA), Sept 2022





Installation view, Pedro Wirz, sadnest, Kai Matsumiya Gallery, 2022
Installation view





sadnest #1 (Cobra/Rua), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, staples, textile debris, wood
 198 x 113 x 26 cm

sadnest #5 (Mutter), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 100 x 97 x 35 cm



sadnest #2 (*Flow*), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 100 x 97 x 30 cm



sadnest #3 (*Curve*), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 100 x 97 x 30 cm



sadnest #4 (*Straight*), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 100 x 97 x 30 cm



sadnest, Kai Matsumiya Gallery , 2022
view on *Bicho-Abstrato* (from left to the right: *Aligator, Wolf, Eagle and Tuna Fish*), 2022 - Glazed clay - Dimension variable



Sphere #3, 2022
Styrofoam, soil, textile debris, tar
81 x 81 x 81 cm.

Pupa

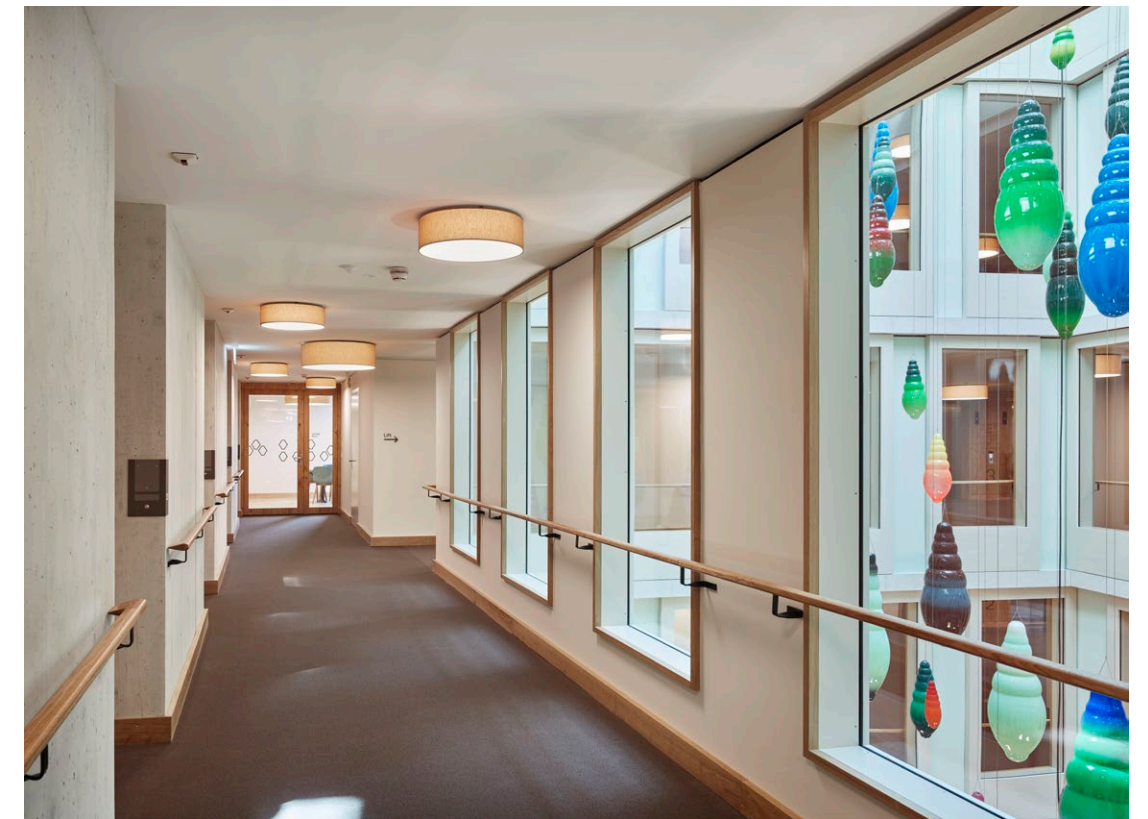
Permanent public installation
at Health Center for the Alter Mathysweg

Zürich (CH), June 2022





Artist Pedro Wirz has taken up the cycle of life for his installation for the Mathysweg Health Center for the Aged. For the atriums above the dining room and above the entrance, he has created 121 glass objects suspended from the ceiling at different heights. They represent butterfly cocoons, a stage in the transformation of the butterfly larva into the adult butterfly. This opens up references to themes of transition, passing and becoming in a coherent and poetic way. As an expression of appreciation for the 121 residents, one of the individually designed and painted cocoons is dedicated to each of them.

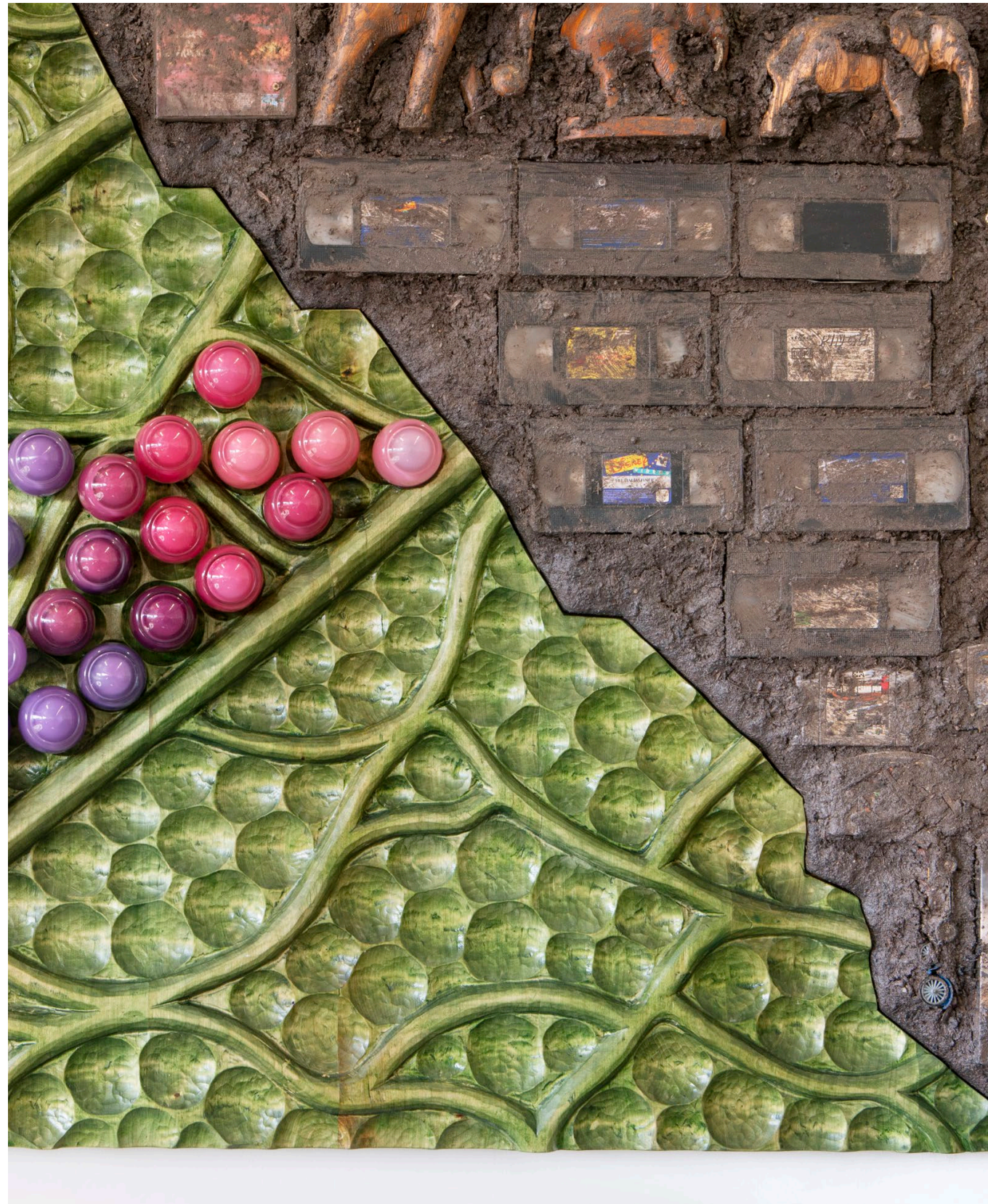


„Pupa“, 2022 (detail)
Glas, paint
Dimension Variabel









Welche Spuren hinterlässt der Mensch auf der Erde? Und wie werden spätere Generationen auf unsere Zeit schauen? Das Thema Erbe ist für die Arbeit von Pedro Wirz zentral. Seine Kunst ist ein Versuch, die Komplexität der Dinge zu verstehen und das opake Durcheinander der menschlichen Akkumulation mit kritischen Augen zu durchleuchten. Der brasilianisch-schweizerische Künstler schichtet bestehende Materie um, bearbeitet sie und schafft durch dieses Umformulieren multiple Bezüge. Mit seinem Werk schreibt Wirz neue Geschichten und etabliert dadurch gleichsam eine neue Ordnung.

Das ist auch bei seiner Auftragsarbeit für die Stiftung für Kunst Kultur und Geschichte (SKKG) nicht anders. Das grossformatige Triptychon nimmt Bezug auf die Erfassung der umfangreichen Objektsammlung der Stiftung. Zu diesem Zweck wurden unzählige Kisten geöffnet. Abertausend Gegenstände aus allen Epochen wurden gereinigt, dokumentiert und wieder verstaut. Bei dieser Arbeit tauchte in einem Register der Name eines fehlenden Objektes auf: «Brixie». Doch was bedeutet dieses mysteriöse Wort und welchen Gegenstand aus der gewaltigen Sammlung bezeichnet es? Pedro Wirz beschloss, dieses fehlende Teil selber zu erschaffen. Die Arbeit steht stellvertretend für das abhanden gekommene oder verschollene «Brixie». Sie erinnert an etwas, das es womöglich gar nicht gibt und rettet es zugleich für die Zukunft. Der Akt des Findens und Festhaltens manifestiert sich im Kunstwerk ganz konkret. Es besteht nämlich aus einer Summe von geordneten Fundstücken – menschengemachte wie Spielzeug oder natürliche wie Muscheln –, die der Künstler gesammelt hat.

Diese Objekte sind zwar fein säuberlich nach Kategorien klassifiziert, doch sind sie nur teilweise sichtbar, denn über ihnen lagert eine Schicht Erde. Der Künstler betätigt sich quasi als Archäologe der Zukunft; das Reflektieren der zeitlichen Dimension unseres Daseins ist Wirz ein wichtiges Anliegen. Zwischen diesen beiden heterogenen Strukturen ist ein unregelmässig geformtes Element aus geschnitztem Holz befestigt, das an ein Blatt erinnert. Die Venen des Blattes sowie die Einbuchtungen haben etwas von einer Landkarte. Auf dem Holzblatt verstreut ist eine Gruppe von bunten «Insekteneiern» aus Glas. Das Ei ist ein wiederkehrendes Motiv im Werk des Künstlers. Es verweist auf Zukünftiges und richtet den Blick auf die Handlungsspielräume des Menschen. Dieser mittlere Werkteil kann neben der dystopisch wirkenden Bildklammer aus Schlamm und Dingen als positive Botschaft an die menschliche Spezies gelesen werden. Ist darin gar die Lösung des «Brixen»-Rätsels zu finden?

Susanna Koeberle

„Brixie“, 2022 (detail)
Holz, Kunststoff, Metall, Glas, Erde, gefundene Gegenstände, Harz
202,5 x 357,0 cm x 40 cm

Environmental Hangover

Solo show at
Kunsthalle Basel

Basel (CH), January 2022



Standing at the entrance to Pedro Wirz's exhibition, the view is blocked. Obstructing one's line of sight is a giant spherical sculpture whose craggy surface is covered in asphalt petroleum by-product primarily known as material used for paving and roofing. Emerging from it like a serpent's shed skin is a path of strewn clothing soaked in the once-liquid bitumen that was left to dry and harden in a shape roughly following the route of the BR-230, the Trans-Amazonian Highway. Inaugurated in the 1970s under Brazil's military dictatorship, the circa 4,000 km-long highway runs through the middle of the world's largest contiguous tropical forest and has, directly or indirectly, caused vast deforestation with immense ecological consequences. Further into the space, wall sculptures flaunt wild abstractions that upon closer inspection reveal themselves to be representations of flora and fauna. They are crafted from scraps of discarded blankets, towels, and other textiles combined with large glass eyes; the whole upholstered onto wooden frameworks shaped like larger-than-life smartphones whose rounded corners and oblong shapes are ubiquitous in contemporary urban landscapes. Notice as well the placement of the glass eyes, for example at an edge where a camera eye or volume button might be placed on a digital device. These details, like the strangely ominous orifices (Nest entrances? Wounds? Mouths? Anuses?) that puncture most of these works, tethers their imaginary equally to the organic and to the technological.

As an opener, the works in the first room serve as both an allegory of a profit-driven planet smothered by an ecological crisis and as a warning about the contradictory nature of "progress." It sets the tone for an exhibition that deploys a complex materiality and elaborate craftwork to evoke a world that desires purity in nature, but also covets technological "advancements;" a world aspiring to eco-responsibility, but also relishing its branded take-out coffee and latest-model digital device. For this, Wirz's largest institutional exhibition to date, the Brazilian Swiss artist has created an impressive number of new sculptures and installations, their materiality and motifs drawn equally from organic matter and consumer culture. The clash of the two being the dominant preoccupation in his life trajectory. Before leaving behind a communications job in a toxic landfill to attend art school in Basel, Wirz spent most of his youth in the tropical region of the Paraíba Valley, Brazil. And he often locates his inspirations in the region's massively changing ecologies, demographics, mythologies, and superstitions. Raised by an agronomist who worked with soil substrates and a biologist who conducted research into the effects of polluted water on the DNA of amphibian life within the region, the artist is fascinated in equal measure by hard science and by folklore. The latter uses fear, awe, and mystery to articulate those aspects of the natural world that cannot be answered to by way of rational knowledge. What Wirz has constructed from these twinned interests, then, are materially dense unravelings of time and space, each built up from intricate backstories that trace the interconnected trajectories of colonialism, extractive economies, technological advancement, social codification, climate change, species extinction, and the myths that attempt to make sense of them. Wirz puts his finger into these wounds and sculpts from them. The result is a commentary as fantastical as it is sobering regarding the current state of the world.

Leave the Trans-Amazonian Highway to approach a maze of brick walls made of rammed earth, a method of construction that has been in use for thousands of years. Like geological strata, the uppermost layers show this earth mixed with miniature cars, trucks, planes, and rocket ships—playfully visualizing the start of significant human impact on the earth's ecosystems known as the Anthropocene, and naturally including our present. Sedimented in them are toys that initiate children's (principally boys') socialization

to value mobility, power, and consumption. Larvae-like forms hang on the room's deep orange walls, each sculpture made from plastic infant dolls wrapped in clothing before being encrusted in a mixture of soil and acrylic paste. More relics of childhood (these rather connected to girls' identity formation), which in this case initiate socialization to value reproduction and caretaking. The series title hints at the need to rebalance our social order: Sour Ground refers to acidic pH levels of soil exacerbated by pollution that thus becomes a hostile habitat for the growth of certain lifeforms.

Anchoring the third room, a large egg-like sculpture built from strands of the fibre cement known as Eternit evokes a wasp's nest or swollen womb. Or, alternatively, an alien sleeping pod, a resemblance underscored by its glistening, almost metallic grey color. A smaller wall work, yet again in the form of some sort of cocoon or refuge, is similarly constructed from the building material made famous by Swiss industrial designer Willy Guhl in the 1950s and '60s in his attempt to bring futurist looking mid-century modern design to the masses. Overhead, the artist uses an expanse of cut and torn plastic to conjure the phenomenon of the "flying river," an airborne vapor mass that floats above the Amazonian Forest and is integral to the whole planet's climatic regulation: the lifeblood of nature. Spare and almost solemn, the fourth space features a series of ceramic wall sculptures that represent endangered (or likely soon to be endangered) species of the Amazonian rainforest, biological and mythological. Their sliced, dismembered bodies lament the decline of biodiversity in the natural and supernatural world. The artist hangs these works like decorative wall trophies, a gesture at once critical, devastating, and poignant.

Central to the last room of Wirz's exhibition is an installation based on Curupira, a mythical figure of Brazilian folklore. This spirit of the forest whose feet point backward (leading the ill-intentioned astray) here also confuses categories with its combination of male and female sexual characteristics. The creature stands, with a tree in place of its head, its branch-like extensions seemingly reaching upwards through and across the skylit ceiling of the space. These limbs are made out of recycled clothing and textile waste, while the body of the sculpture is built out of agricultural waste and a mycelium culture, fungus that researchers hope will become a viable natural substitute for concrete in the future. The piece is, like so much in Wirz's oeuvre, a marriage of legend and science, nature and culture, materiality and imagination.

Like a coda to the dire world in which he has immersed us, the final work in the exhibition bears hinged winged elements that close around a central convex mirror, recalling at once a technoid exoskeleton, an extravagant flower, a baroque altarpiece, and, perhaps most directly, Jan van Eyck's iconic The Arnolfini Portrait of 1434. It is said that the fascination for convex mirror devices in 15th century paintings was to establish a moral comparison between the imperfect world of the viewer and the idealized world of virtue reflected in the painted mirror. Having reached the end of the exhibition, you stand before and are reflectively captured in the work's curvature. It is the companion piece to the blackened globe that you met at the entrance; if that one blocked your view, by the time you get to the end of the show, your horizons have broadened. And while there is nowhere to hide from the all-seeing eye of Wirz's mirror, there is also no contrasting world of virtue. And yet, with hope, humor, and warmth, the artist has reminded us all along that everything is not yet lost. As his exhibition title Environmental Hangover hints, with any hangover, we must pay for the toxins we've ingested, but at least our livers are still doing the work to clear them out of our system. Yes, a hangover hurts, it reprimands, but it is also the body's appeal for us to do better.



Installation view, Pedro Wirz, Environmental Hangover, Kunsthalle Basel, 2022
Exúvia, 2022 - Bitumen, soil, styrofoam, ø 3 m (left) / Bad Transa, 2022 - Bitumen, plastic, textile debris, Dimension variable (floor)





Coro de Princesa (Amarelão), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 198 x 113 x 26 cm

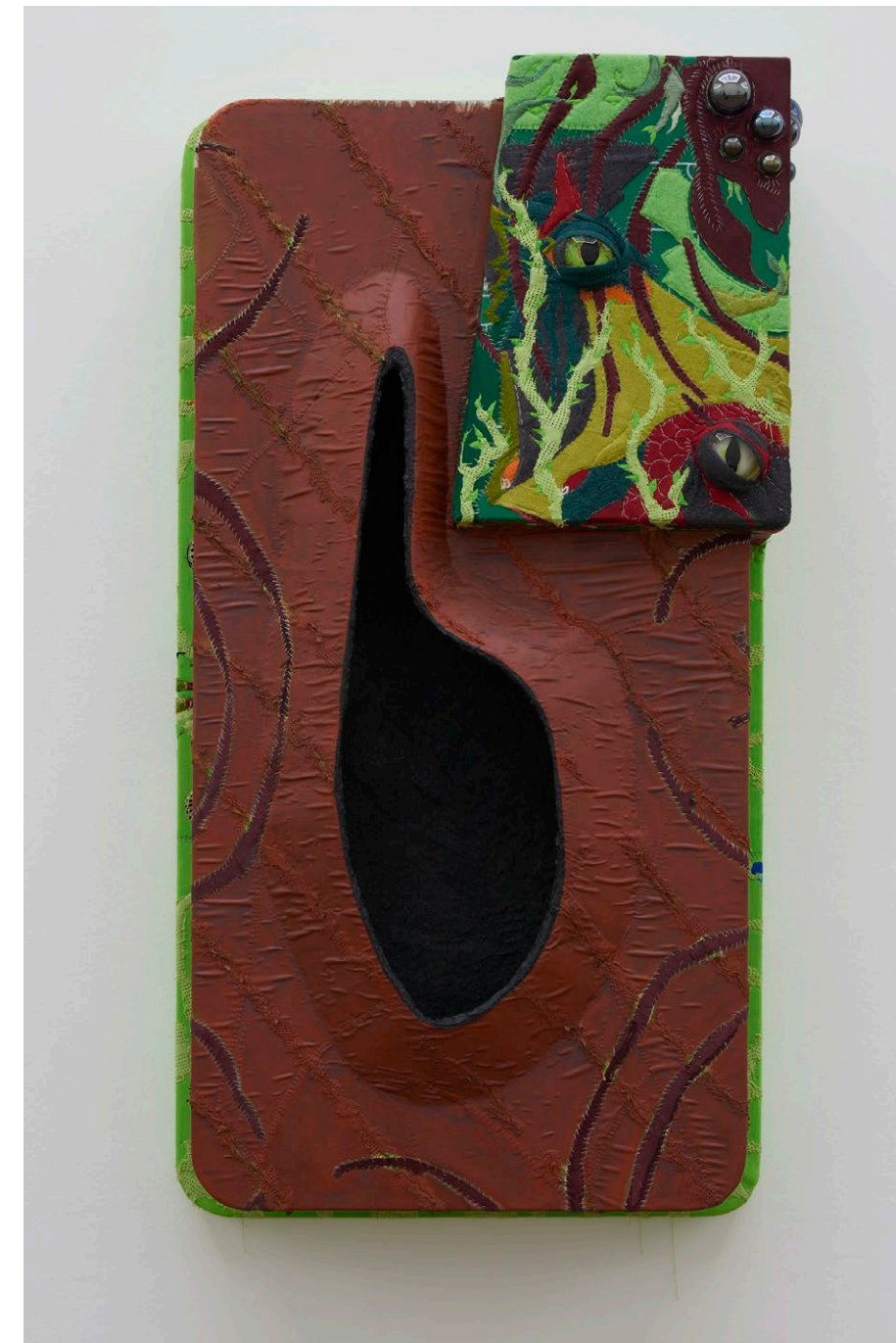
Coro de Princesa (Sumaúma), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 180 x 97 x 37 cm



Coro de Princesa (Jarana), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 180 x 96 x 40 cm



Coro de Princesa (Seringa), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 190 x 102 x 40 cm



Coro de Princesa (Matamatá), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 190 x 103 x 42 cm



Environmental Hangover, Kunsthalle Basel, 2022
view on *Our cities were built to be destroyed*, 2016-2022 - Mortar, mudbricks, old toys - Dimension variable





Installation view on the series Sour Ground, 2020



Environmental Hangover, Kunsthalle Basel, 2022, view on Untitled (Nest), 2022 (left), Bela Peça, 2022 (right), Corpo Seco, 2022 (ceiling)



Environmental Hangover, Kunsthalle Basel, 2022, view on Bicho Abstrato (Tamanduá), 2022 (left), und Bicho Abstrato (Onça), 2022 (right).





Bicho-Abstrato (Iara), 2022
Glazed Ceramics
88.5 x 37 x 29 cm



Bicho-Abstrato (Boto-cor-de-rosa), 2022
Glazed Ceramics
39 x 32 x 12.5 cm

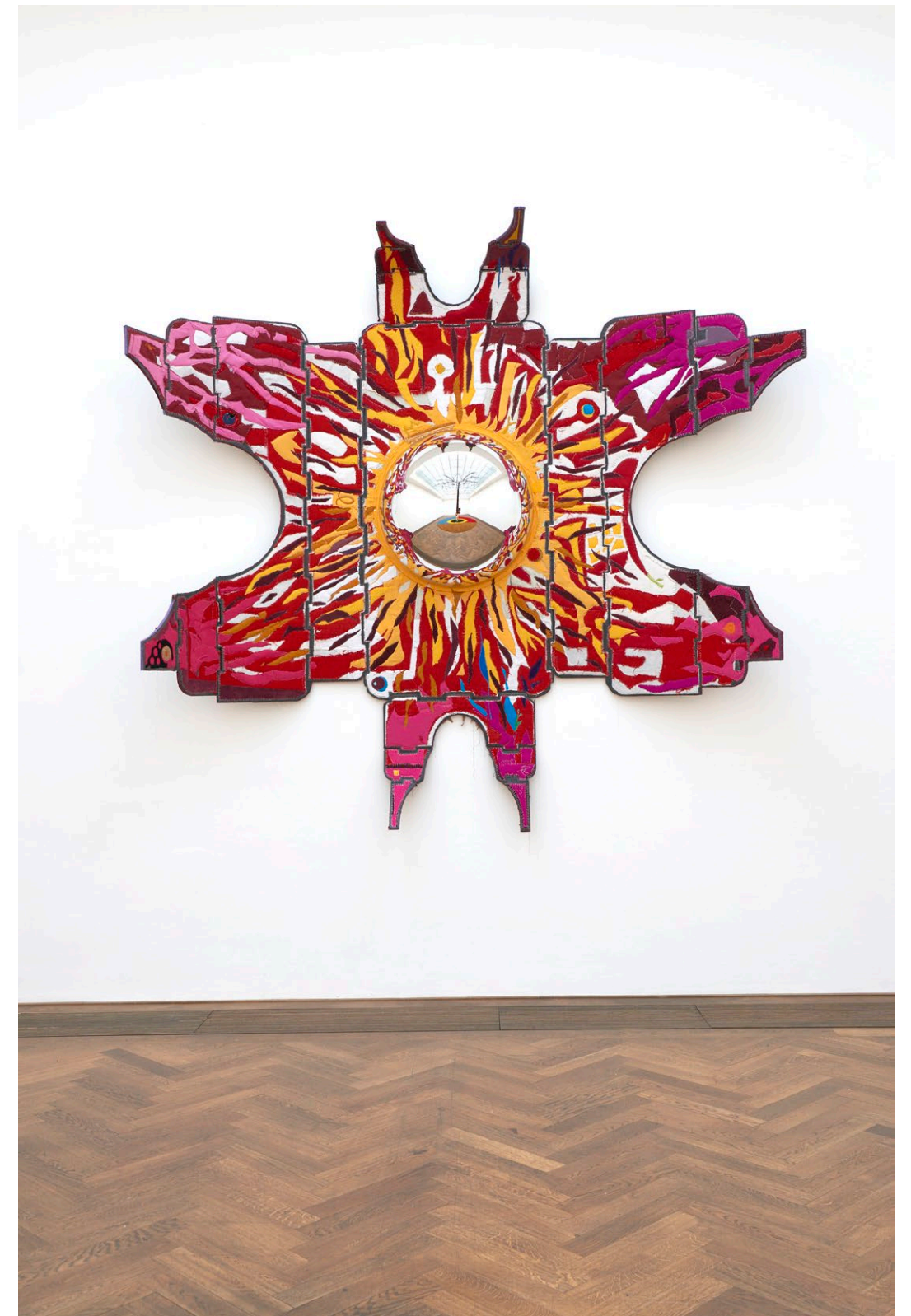


Bicho-Abstrato (Saci), 2022
Glazed Ceramics
49 x 23.5 x 17 cm



Bicho-Abstrato (Tamanduá), 2022
Glazed Ceramics
45 x 45 x 20 cm







Flor Satélite, 2022 - Mirror, plastic waste recycling board, staples, textile debris, wood - 365 x 342 x 35 cm



Coro de Princesa (Amarelão), 2022
 Bitumen, glass, soil, staples, textile debris, wood
 198 x 113 x 26 cm

Chapéu Telúrico, 2022
 Beeswax, mycelium-bound composite, textile debris, wood
 Dimension variable, sculpture 155 x 58 x 39 cm

Surra

Presentation at
Art Basel PARCOURS

Basel (CH), September 2021







Surra, 2021
 Wood, wire, textiles debris, soil, acrylic binder, bitumen glue
 120 x 60 x 80 cm

Tooth of a Giant

Solo show at
PHILIPPZOLLINGER Gallery

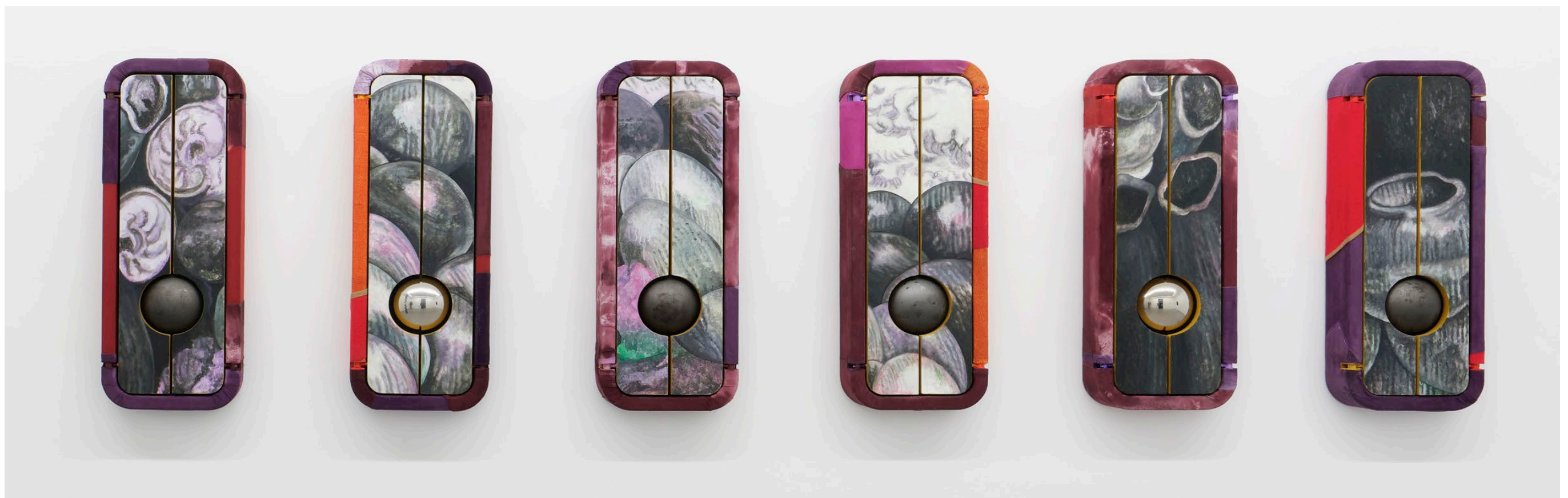
Zürich (CH), November 2020



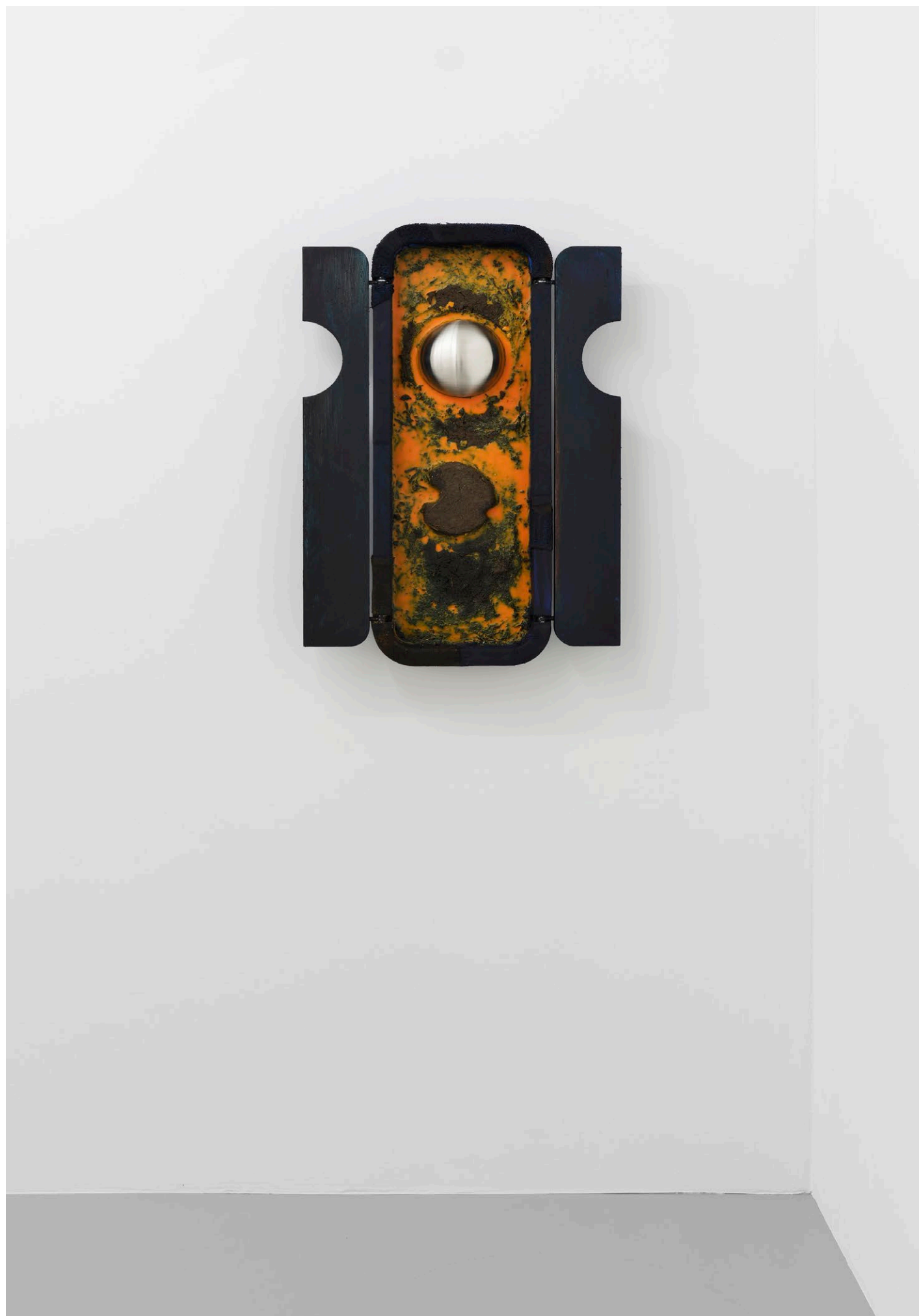




„Knowledge Unit #1 to #6“, 2020, beeswax, textile debris, concrete cast, iron, acrylic on wood, each 100 x 53 x 9.5 cm (open)



„Knowledge Unit #1 to #6“, 2020, beeswax, textile debris, concrete cast, iron, acrylic on wood, each 100 x 30 x 9.5 cm (closed)



„Bridges (Blue)“, 2020
Beeswax, textile debris,
soil, iron, acrylic on wood,
100 x 30 x 9.5 cm
(closed)

„Bridges (Blue)“, 2020
Beeswax, textile debris, soil,
iron, acrylic on wood,
100 x 53 x 9.5 cm
(open)



„Tooth of a Giant“, 2020,
Chrome steel, clay, humus,
hay, acrylic binder
248 x 35 x 35 cm



„Columns #1“, 2020
Lithography,
29.7 x 21 cm, Ed. of 4

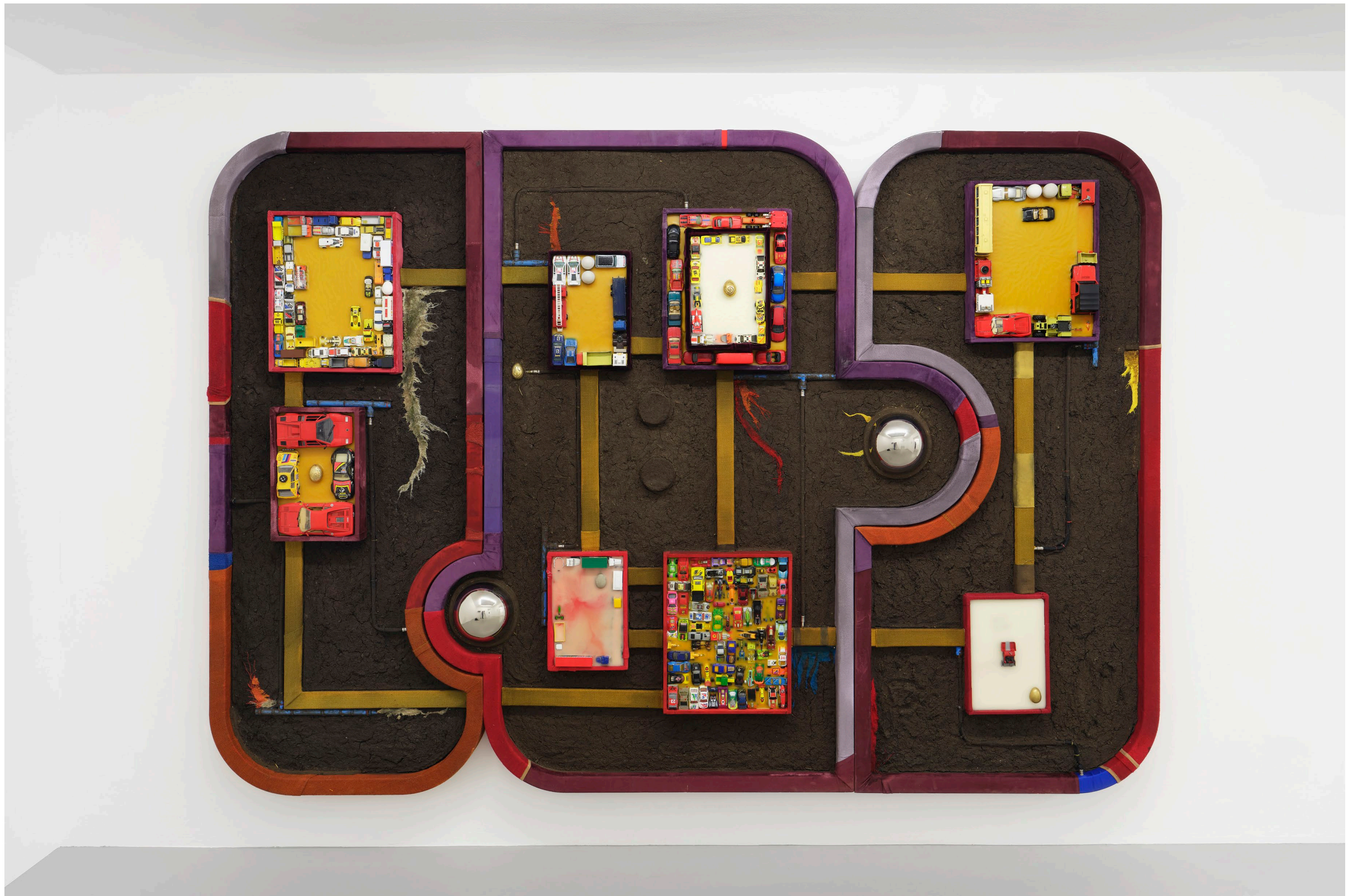
The exhibition title is drawn from a description given to an isolated mastodon molar transported from New York to London in the early 18th century. The label given exemplifies a moment of scientific study when something unfamiliar was dubbed with a familiar concept, albeit a fantastical one. The study of the history of life would in fact only emerge decades later, at the end of the 18th Century, after a lengthy dispute debating if life possessed a history at all. At the time of the mastodon molar in London, it was confounding to consider nature as something that altered course or trajectory, but the emerging field of Paleontology warranted the veracity of this new knowledge.

In 1914, Austrian paleontologist Othenio Abel suggested that the ancient Greek myth of the Cyclops might be tied to ancestral farmers unearthing dwarf skulls of another extinct proboscidean species, the large nasal opening being mistaken for a single eye socket. There is something tenable and formidable about how turning soil, a story, and a bone can be woven together by generations to retell the story of the world as it was (and to signify a world as it is). The two episodes are examples of how we cannot think of our social, cultural or even linguistic domains lying outside of natural history, and this argument clearly reverberates with present-day interpretations of that history referred to in the exhibition. As an example, Wirz has developed a contemporary take on the folklore of the griffin; re-imagined with the head as a monolith, and the body and legs of a frog. Amphibians are today the fastest disappearing class of creatures and representative of what scientists have begun to designate as the sixth mass extinction in the Earth's long history.

The focal point for Pedro Wirz is the significance of extinction as a process in the modulation of planetary life. This is a wide spanning subject matter, topical, and in tandem with the crises we face today. And yet, the group of works in the exhibition touches upon more complex perspectives such as: can humanity assign equal value to a world it's existing in and a world it's not existing in?

We amplify our participation in our geological age, we uphold our dominance over multiple biomes and note the astounding control we have achieved over the physics and chemistry of the natural world, but in a sense, it is limiting to bolster an anthropogenic lens over these activities. The theoretical aspect of the exhibition expresses that the practice of living is alike to all species, it is tied to forms and outcomes. The efficient cause of every biological activity is change.

Coisas International

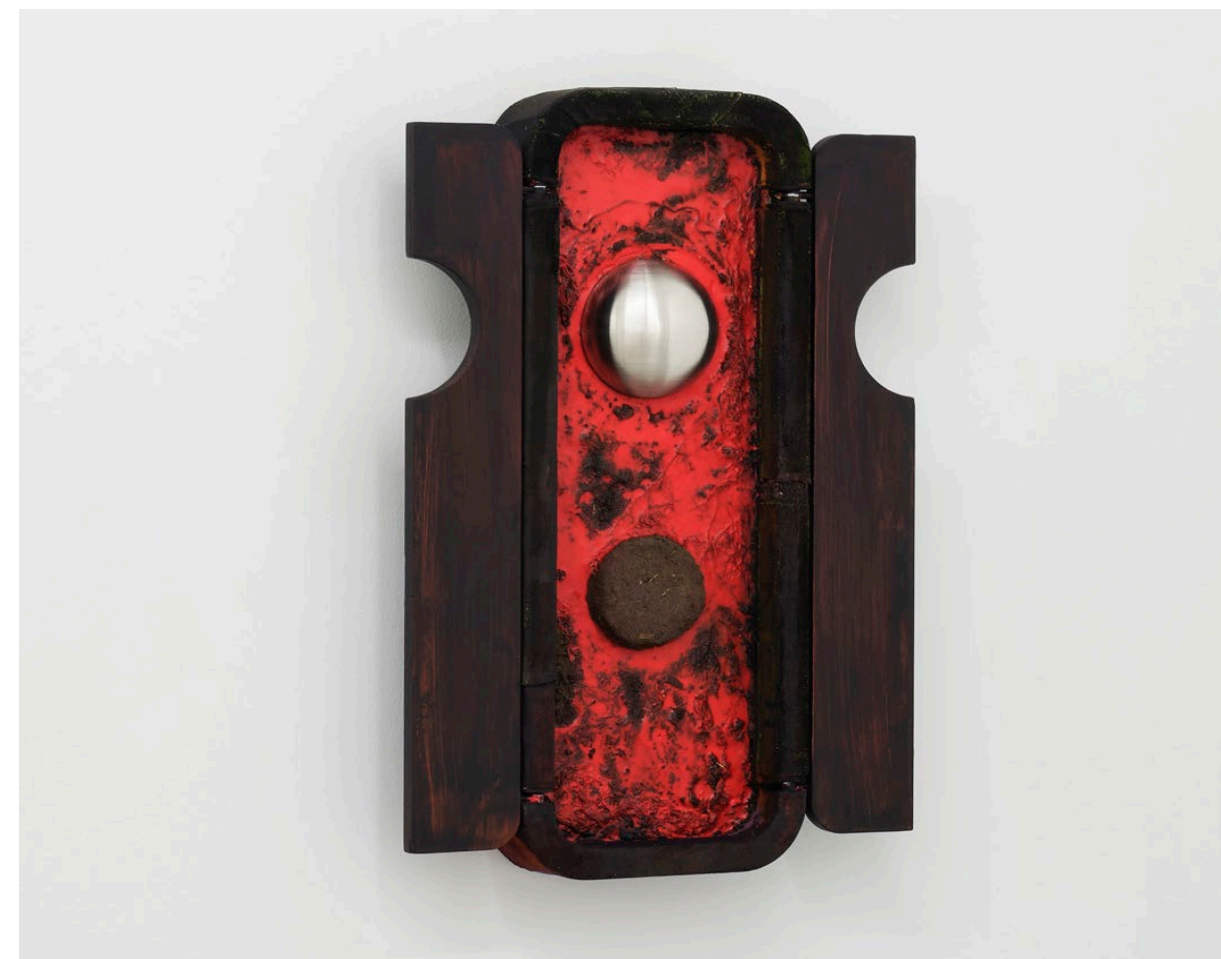


„Soil's Memory“, 2020, beeswax, textile debris, concrete cast, bronze cast, plaster cast, iron cast, toys, acrylic on wood, 200 x 355 x 17 cm





„Birds are Books“, 2020
 Chrome steel, clay, humus,
 hay, acrylic binder,
 17.5 x 63 x 32 cm, Ed. of 3



„Bridges (red)“, 2020
 Beeswax, textile debris, soil,
 iron, acrylic on wood,
 100 x 53 x 9.5 cm
 (open)

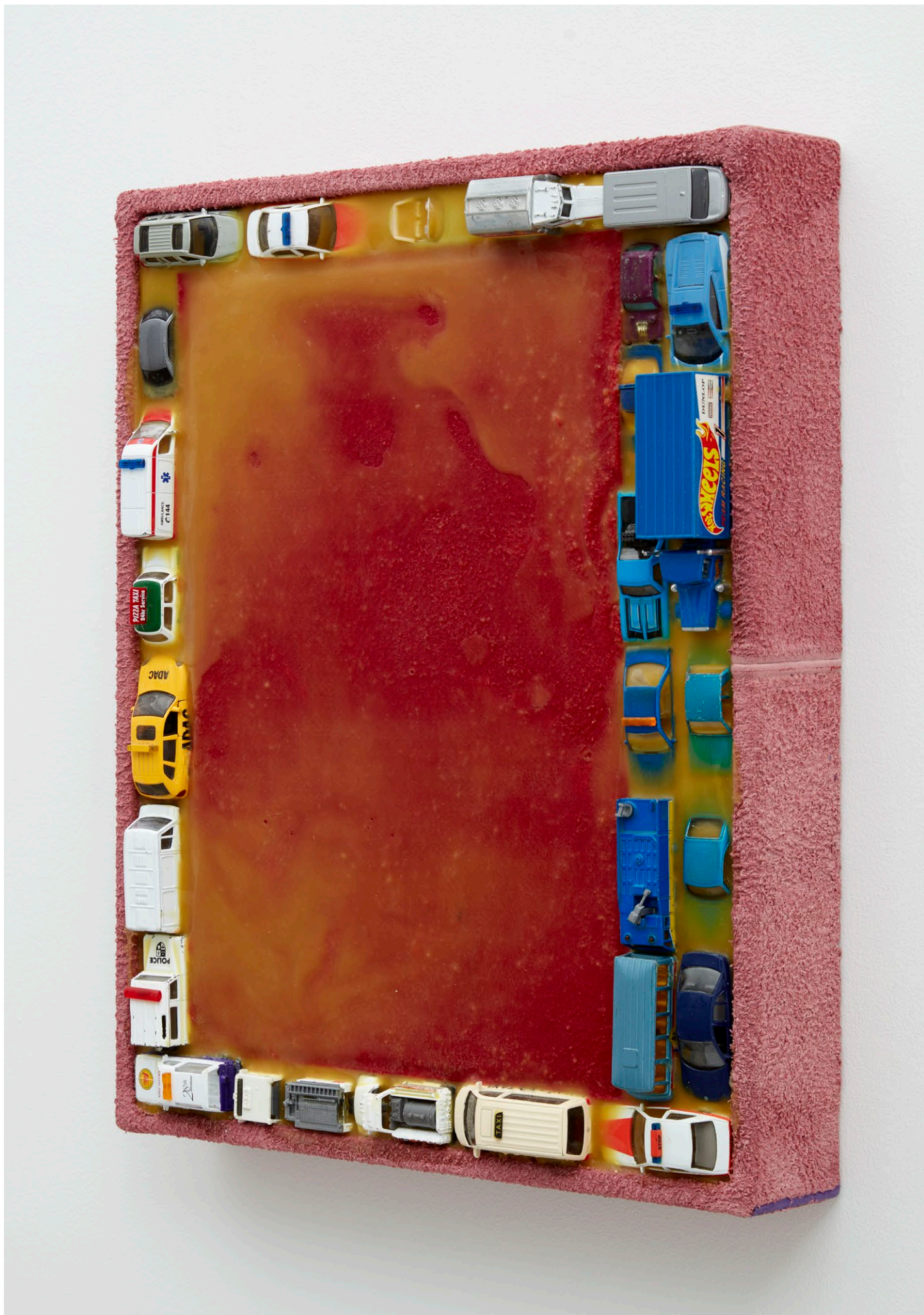
Termite Terminators

Solo show at
Marc Selwyn Gallery

Los Angeles (US), August 2020







„Termite Terminators“, 2020
Beeswax, old toys, textile debris
on plywood construction
52 x 40 x 8 cm



„Trilobite“, 2020
Bronze cast, rock, car lack
ca. 65 cm ø x 60 cm



„*White Swarm*“, 2020
 Beeswax, old toys, textile debris and
 cast concrete on plywood construction
 52 x 40 x 8 cm

Termite Terminators

Beeswax is a particularly long-lasting material. Samples recovered from thousands of years ago are nearly indistinguishable from fresh beeswax. If it decays, its decay is imperceptible. Insects don't seem to want to eat it. Kept from excessive heat, the lifespan of beeswax is indefinite. These works by Pedro Wirz (Brazilian, born 1981) feature a few different objects—mostly toy cars, but also toy airplanes and cement casts of eggs and other shapes—set in beeswax. Wirz frames the works using scraps of wood wrapped in fabric rags.

Beeswax is an ideal material for Wirz, whose works emerge from a nexus of natural history and ecological catastrophe. Wirz has worked extensively with organic materials including rocks, dirt, hair, and twigs. Wirz uses these materials to explore the conceptual implications of deep time beyond the human capacity for understanding, reframing human experience as a fragment of a larger scientific and supernatural history. Beeswax, with its *longue durée*, reveals in these works the presence of multiple timescales—the eternity of the wax, the lifecycle of the toys, the limited lifespan of the vehicles they represent, and the potential futures embodied by the enigmatic cement eggs that have been scattered throughout the compositions.

One of Wirz's Trilobites (2013/2017/2020) sits in the middle of the gallery—a rock topped by a bronze-cast fried egg. Wirz's trilobite, sometimes shown outdoors, provides a canny joke at the center of the exhibition. Named after an ancient fossil, the sculpture immediately brings the viewer into another timescale and confuses our perception of time itself. Is it the fried egg that has been fossilized? Or has it just taken millions of years for the egg to fry on top of a rock?

Around the trilobite hang the beeswax works. At first glance, the whimsy of these compositions is most striking. The choreography of the toys embedded in the wax—whether dryly hugging the frame, claustrophobically docked together, or playfully annular—combined with their glossy finish appears gleeful and boyish. But upon further reflection, one comes to realize the varying temporalities Wirz has contrasted. The longevity of the beeswax makes it ideal to hold onto these toys and fragments. But have the cars been preserved or abandoned? Are they victims of a great flood or simply resting in a variety of parking lots?

Looking closely, it is apparent that the toy cars are branded with symbols for police and fire departments, as well as other fictional businesses. One of them has inspired the title of the exhibition: Termite Terminators. Termites, finding delicious wood, will eat and reproduce until the condition of their existence—the wood that sustains them—has been totally devoured and disappeared. Then they enter a crisis of dislocation until they can find another source of food and shelter. Termites, in their ravishing hunger, terminate the condition of their existence.

Cars, like termites, are doggedly engaged in wasting the reserves of oil and gas that allow them to function. At what point will toy cars themselves become obsolete? When the resources by which they are fueled are decimated? When cars have been subsumed by the very climatic catastrophe they have helped ignite? Once trapped in wax, the joyous life-cycle represented by these toys becomes an avatar for the more sinister and destructive implications of history's deep time, of which they are agitators and victims at the same time.

Yet even in this vision of ecological catastrophe there remains a seed of optimism and hope. Wirz's cement eggs are sprinkled throughout the compositions. Something, it appears, is waiting to hatch here. What creatures will be born in the world we leave behind, in the wreckage of abandoned automobiles and unfinished construction sites? Will they, too, fall into the same circular trap of the Termite Terminators? Or will their history take a different direction, a different shape? Only time, Wirz knows, will tell. And perhaps only the beeswax will bear witness.



„Honey Bees“, 2020
 Beeswax, old toys, textile debris
 on plywood construction
 52 x 40 x 8 cm



“Snowflake“, 2020
 Beeswax, old toys, textile debris
 on plywood construction
 52 x 40 x 8 cm

Sour Ground

Solo show at
Kai Matsumiya Gallery

New York (US), March 2020





„Sour Ground III“ and „VI“, 2020
 Soil, toy (doll), acrylic paste,
 textile debris on pliwod board
 100 x 50 x 25 cm



Soil simultaneously portends the emergence and burial of culture, technology, politics, art, everything, until it starts all over again in never-ending cycles. Kai Matsumiya presents *Sour Ground*, a solo exhibition of Swiss-Brazilian artist Pedro Wirz's latest work consisting of nascent life and soil, literally.

In the face of environmental decline, the artist advances his investigations into the interwoven realms of the organic, synthetic, and technological, as each combat fundamental battles between renewal and extinction. In the exhibition, forms manifest through information, imagination, wonderment, often all residues of storytelling from the vantage point of children seeking exegesis on a crumbling landscape.

Wirz was born and raised in the tropical region Paraíba Valley, Brazil, and he often discusses his influences from the region's massively changing ecologies, demographics, mythologies, and superstitions. Populations consisting of industrialists, farmers, royalists, slaves, would come and go, indigenous people would stay, emigrate, settle, and leave. Political governances would radically alter. Raised by an agronomist who specialized in soil, and a biologist who conducted research on the influence of polluted water on DNA alteration within the region, the artist attributes this upbringing in which, in his own words, "traverses these territories and seeks to merge the supernatural with scientific realities."

Increasing earthquakes, tsunamis, massive forest fires, rising waters, intra-state conflict, pandemics, unsuccessful resistances, bear the footprints of man-made darkness and nature's wrath. "*Sour Ground*" may be argued to be based on the intuitive observation that world-wide disasters, natural and unnatural, beg an expression of universal human solidarity; collective reflection on the proper relation of the human being to his aesthetic environment; and the renewed alternatives for what could emerge from the imaginations of new life.

The title '*Sour Ground*' refers to the pH levels of sourness (acidity) or sweetness (alkalinity) of soil samples. While different ecosystems maintain certain pH ranges, unnatural developments often occur under the influence of pollution, the degree of which is often indicated by the sourness, or acidity of the soil. However, the title is not "soured ground" because it is possible to regenerate pH when compost topsoil renews the chemical balance for other forms of life as a result of acid's decomposition potential.

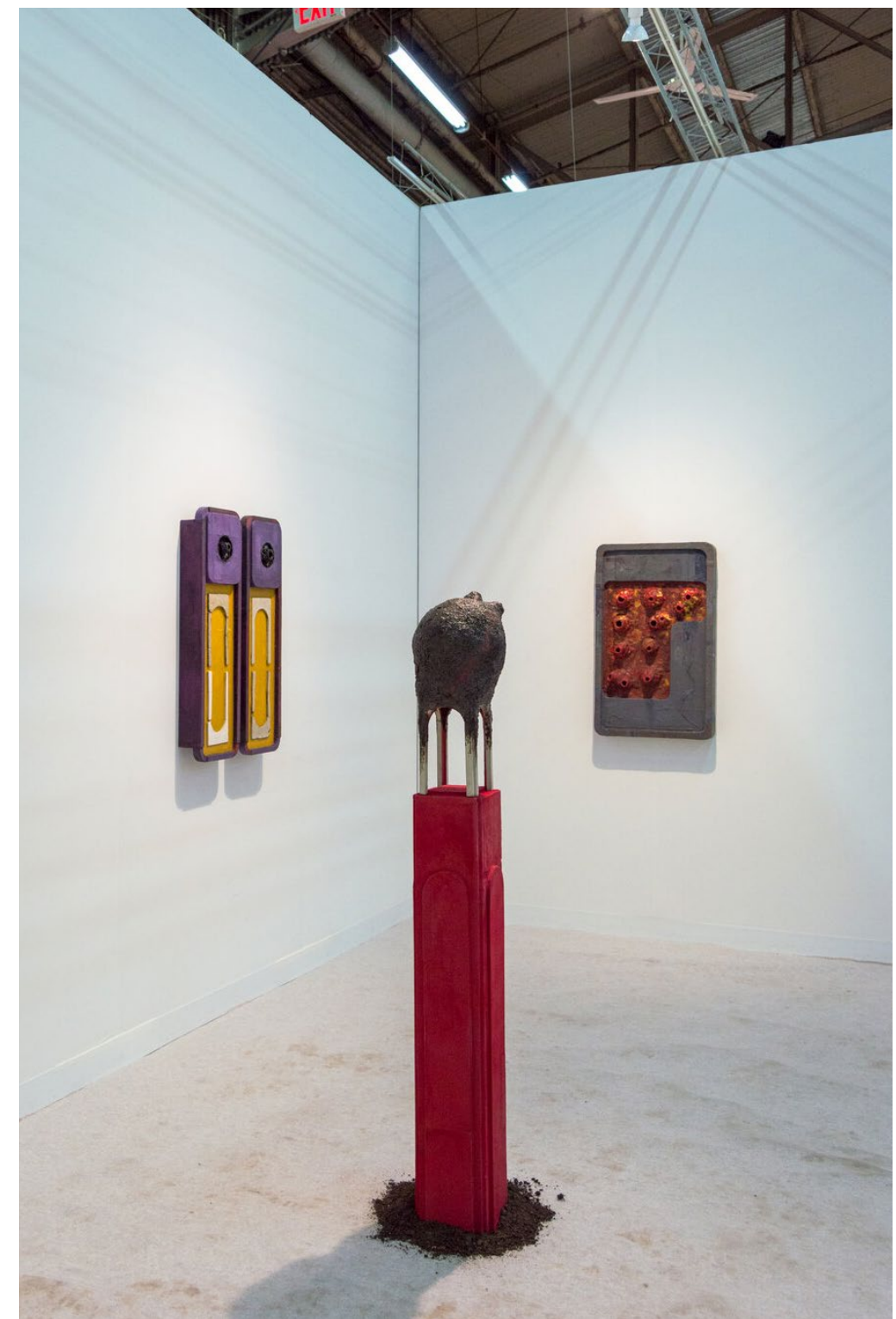
The full expanse of the gallery will be painted a deep orange based on the pH spectrum, indicating a range of acidity between lemon juice (pH = 2) and bleach (pH = 1). Around a dozen forms consisting of infant dolls-- universal relics of sociocultural identity--first wrapped in chicken wire and clothes, then smothered with an admixture of soil and acrylic paste, will be displayed in varying configurations around the gallery walls.

Gramercy International Prize

Solo presentation with
Gallery Kai Matsumiya at Armory Show

New York City (US), March 2020





Untitled (Haus/Nest), 2020
 Acrylic paste, acrylic paint, concrete cast,
 textile debris, varnish on plywood plinth
 152 x 21 x 21 cm



Period, 2020
Beeswax, pigment, textile debris, old
toys on plywood frame
38 x 25 x 5 cm



Entsprechung VII, 2020
Acrylic paste, epoxy resin, parafin, textile de-
bris, varnish on plywood board
90 x 53 x 14 cm



Entsprechung VI, 2020
 Acrylic paste, acrylic paint, old toys, textile debris,
 varnish on plywood board
 116 x 61,5 x 10 cm



Entsprechung VII, 2020
 Acrylic paste, epoxy resin, parafin, textile debris,
 varnish on plywood board
 90 x 53 x 17 cm

Verwaschen

Solo show at
Nagel Draxler Gallery

Berlin (D), September 2019





on the left:
"Entsprechung IV", 2019
 Beeswax, electronic junk, animal fur, textile debris,
 and plastic pipes on wood construction
 100 x 50 x 25 cm

on the top:
"Entsprechung II", 2019
 Soil, beeswax, and textile debris on wood construction
 80 x 60 x 20 cm



„Entsprechung V“, 2019
Bleached beeswax, soil, styrofoam, old clothing,
and synthetic wool on wood construction
198 x 100 x 40 cm



„Entsprechung III“, 2019
Bleached beeswax, soil, styrofoam, old clothing,
and synthetic wool on wood construction
198 x 100 x 40 cm



„Aquecedor (Heater)“, 2019
Soil, eletric cabel, styrofoam,
chickenwire
Dimensions variable



“Wet Transistor IV”, 2019 (right)
Blown glass, cast bronze, textile debris,
beeswax, wire, and soil on iron support
aprox. 170 x 80 x 80 cm



"Wet Transistor I", 2019 (left)
Blown glass, cast bronze, textile debris,
beeswax, wire, and soil on iron support
aprox. 170 x 80 x 80 cm

"Wet Transistor II", 2019 (right)
Blown glass, cast bronze, textile debris,
beeswax, wire, and soil on iron support
aprox. 170 x 80 x 80 cm



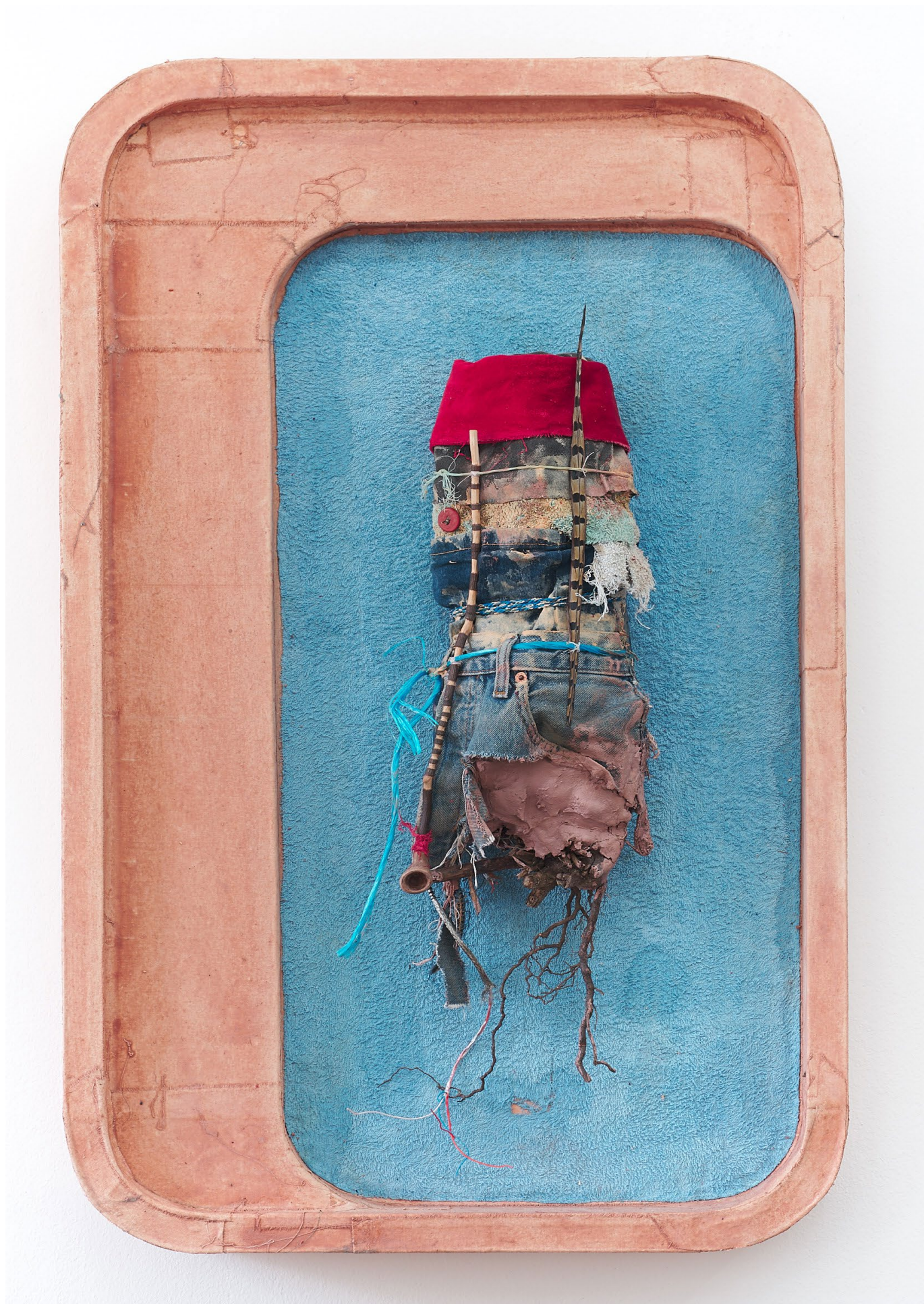
A curbing wall of debris \landfilling

Solo show at
Kunsthaus Langenthal

Langenthal (CH), May 2019



„Ministério Morto (Dead Ministry)“, 2019
Soil, red clay, twigs, chicken wire, paper mache
27 x 24 cm (90 cm - plinth)



„Saci Baldio“, 2019
Mix media on wood construction
100 x 60 x 25 cm



„Leihmutter (Surrogate mother)“, 2019
 Cast beeswax, fabrics debris on wood construction
 200 x 100 x 55 cm

A curbing wall of debris \nesting

Solo show at
Centre Culturel Suisse

Paris (F), February 2019





For his first solo show in France, Swiss-Brazilian artist Pedro Wirz has imagined an immersive installation set in an indeterminate time. Are we immersed in a primordial past, bearing witness to the present evolution of life on earth, or catapulted into a future in which living creatures and inanimate matter will fuse to form unforeseeable hybrid life forms?

Wirz's installation presents a warm, earthy habitat, a cocoon or nest that could give rise to life. The life form that could emerge from this breeding ground would break down the boundaries we've constructed between nature and culture, between human and animal architecture, and literally embody a balance between the two within an ambiguous aesthetic. Wirz's towers call to mind termite nests or a skyline of highrise buildings battered by the elements and encrusted by the ages. The eggs, made of rags, plastic and debris, draw attention to their material substantiality even though they're wholly composed of refuse. And the froglike creatures are endowed with distinctly anthropomorphic features.

Wirz uses images, forms and materials that evoke ancient myths while asking what new narratives, born of contemporary fears and hopes, might emerge from the fertile soil of the present day and age.

The philosopher Michael Marder notes a striking disconnect between our idealized discourse about nature and the real makeup of the adulterated elements we consume daily: when we think about water, we envision a pure transparent liquid and do not associate it with the traces of heavy metals and plastic micro-particles that tap water is likely to contain. The purity we associate it with water is more the exception than the rule, and yet our mental representation of the signifier is slow to adapt to this change in the signified.

In his work, Wirz explores often invisible material transformations of the environment and the relationship between human beings and altered or adulterated nature. His sculptural works often make use of soil, humus – a dense, black, fertile, dirty-looking mass. While carrying idealized associations of intact nature, humus is actually an industrialized product that is heavily treated, enriched and – paradoxically – cleansed of impurities (cf. Aquecedores ("Heaters")). And Wirz has an intimate knowledge of this particular material, having grown up in Paraíba Valley in Brazil, where his parents (a biologist and an agronomist) produced, among other things, humus-rich soil.

In *Consoantes líquidas*, frogs, creatures associated with metamorphosis and fertility, are enthroned on earthy pedestals, reclaiming their realm, reusing debris and waste for their "nests" and incorporating beeswax into their own bodies, with wires in lieu of webbed toes, and wearing lace made of used fabrics on their backs. Wirz's *Consoantes líquidas*, or "liquid consonants", are hybrids, creatures in transition. The title is from a poem by Brazilian poet Manoel De Barros, who imagined a frog dialect called *Dialeto Rã* that contains a wide range of liquid consonants – i.e. phonetic sounds between "l" and "r" – and would enable humans to communicate with animals.

Pedro Wirz for years has been exploring the form of the egg, one of the most suggestive and universal symbols of life and fertility. For *Ovo por Olho* ("An Egg for an Eye"), Wirz has put together an array of the various typologies and subspecies of his eggs, each of a different material, color and size, each providing shelter for another potential life.

Claire Hoffmann





Wip Ymbe

Solo show at
PHILIPPZOLLINGER Gallery at Stalletta

Madulain (CH), February 2019





on the left
Untitled (Cocoon), 2018
 Fabrics debris, chicken wire, beeswax
 30 x 10 x 10 cm





„Trunfas“ (Detail), 2019

Humus (soil), epoxy resin, electric cabel, lamp, braid (human hair, animal hair, vegetable fiber, wire)

Dimensions variabel



Venture on a journey into a reawakening world, full of surprises, revelations and mythological beings. Existing in their own ecosystems, these creatures germinate simultaneously, in both natural and artificial environments: whilst mutually influencing one another, they bond in a complex interrelationship and thus shift into a gradual equilibrium. It unveils that everything man-made decomposes and ultimately becomes a part of the natural environment, as every closed system eventually devours itself and starts to break apart.

Wirz's sculptures display an unusual aesthetic and sense of otherness. These fantastical installations are underlined by a complex craftsmanship and a careful combination of organic and artificial materials. Personal items and found objects, drawing reference to identity, cultural history and their behavioural patterns, are fused with 'findlings' from nature. Transformed by the alchemy of artistic labour, the materials are alienated. However, whilst the original identity of the natural and unnatural appears virtually lost, new hybrids (ethnically and historically diffused entities) emerge.

Wirz grew up in the Paraíba Valley, in Brazil, and he draws his inspiration from the region's mythologies, folklore and popular superstitions. As the coffee industry flourished in the 19th century, the valley experienced a huge demographic shift, thus paving the way for industrialists, merchants, slaves and indigenous people to settle. As a result, a myriad of cultures collided and, over time, fused together. Regrettably, the population's mass exploitation of its once fertile land ultimately caused the breakdown of the region and its industry.

Drawing reference to our current collapsing ecosystems and the alarming extinction of biodiversity, Wirz titles the exhibition: *Wip Ymbe*. It alludes to an ancient Anglo-Saxon magical spell, intended to keep honeybees from abandoning their hive and swarming into nearby woods. The charm is performed in order to control nature for humanity's own personal sake. Consequently, the spell refers to the fact that unlike wildlife, humankind has lost its instincts, its sense of belonging and therefore, its orientation. In our attempt to control the environment against all odds, we become ignorant that we, human beings, also emanate from Mother Nature. Notably, our Earth is a complex, self-regulating and synergistic system, with the ability to reclaim its offspring and the capacity to inject new meaning into everything synthetic.

Wirz's work embodies the Gaia principle, proposing that organisms, collectively interact, adapt and perpetually evolve. The cocoons and eggs, born from this antagonistic cycle, present themselves as 'interbeings', whom having risen from the Earth's essence, fully embrace the unpredicted.

Philipp Zollinger

„Ovo por Olho (Azul)“, 2016
Fabric debris, latex, palm fiber, silicon
27 x 24 cm







Installation Views
Untitled (Nests) - 2015 to 2019 and on going
mixed media and dimensions variabel

Terra Quente

Solo show at
LongTang

Zürich (CH), February 2019





Previous page
„Torradeira” (Toaster), 2019
300 cm ø
Black soil (humus), wood structure,
chicken wire, wood glue

this page:
Installation view at LongTang



Matter out of place

The most recent works of Pedro Wirz are assembled in his solo show named Terra quente. Upon arrival at the shows host (and incubator) one is faced with a looming chimney of one of Zurich's waste treatment facilities, a fitting coincidence for Wirz's re imagination of contamination, disturbance and most simply the dump through a series of sculptural interventions.

In Terra quente Wirz draws our attention to the contaminated diversities that proliferate in the dump, where dirt is longer defined as matter out of place. The locus of a viral city emerges from inside one of the frogs in Chão seco. This allusion to the ultimate weedy invader, humans, conjures an enchanting spell. Mysticism and Science are playfully mixed knowledge systems throughout his works and recall Wirz's childhood in the Paraíba valley, Brazil a place with rich mythos that coupled with his scientist parents led to this fruitful syncretism that is palpable throughout his career. Wirz at times carefully treads this line (secularism/enchantment) but ultimately his works demonstrate a unique sensitivity to the presence of enchanted and otherworldly forces.

The cauldron viewed from the side is contamination in its most essential representation -for the elixir and its power depends on this very alchemy, to fuse, to cast as one. The work evokes the time Wirz spent working at one of Brazil's largest waste management facilities. The lining of large excavations with a thick sheet of plastic and the dumping of waste to be left behind for millennia to come- the constipation of the earth, undigested to-be-shit is mimicked by the styrofoam lined humus.

The heaters frame the exhibition providing the first allusion to the specters of technology. These humus spheres are plugged in, alluding to two forms of energetic harnessing- the more contemporary understanding of energy- electricity, and the original source- the eternal, rich, nourishing, vitality of compost-ing. The ninhos perched on the walls made of mostly synthetic material provide refuge, for Wirz knows congregation and rest are needed for the journey ahead.

Terra quente casts the elements as mutating, and purity as a relic of the ancient past, a past done away with when those that lied beneath were rattled. Slumber is interrupted and thus their journey of decomposition -halted. The compost becoming in the underground faced our impatience. The acceleration of a becoming, that mutated, with the extraction of its most crucial ingredient, time. In Terra quente impurity is the not only the lens but the very experience of existence. There is no return, only further becoming, further absorption, metabolization of the xeno and as the disintegration of the elements once distinguished as earth, air, water and fire continues.

The question remains, can we sense the vitalism emerged from this contamination?

Alice Boudreau

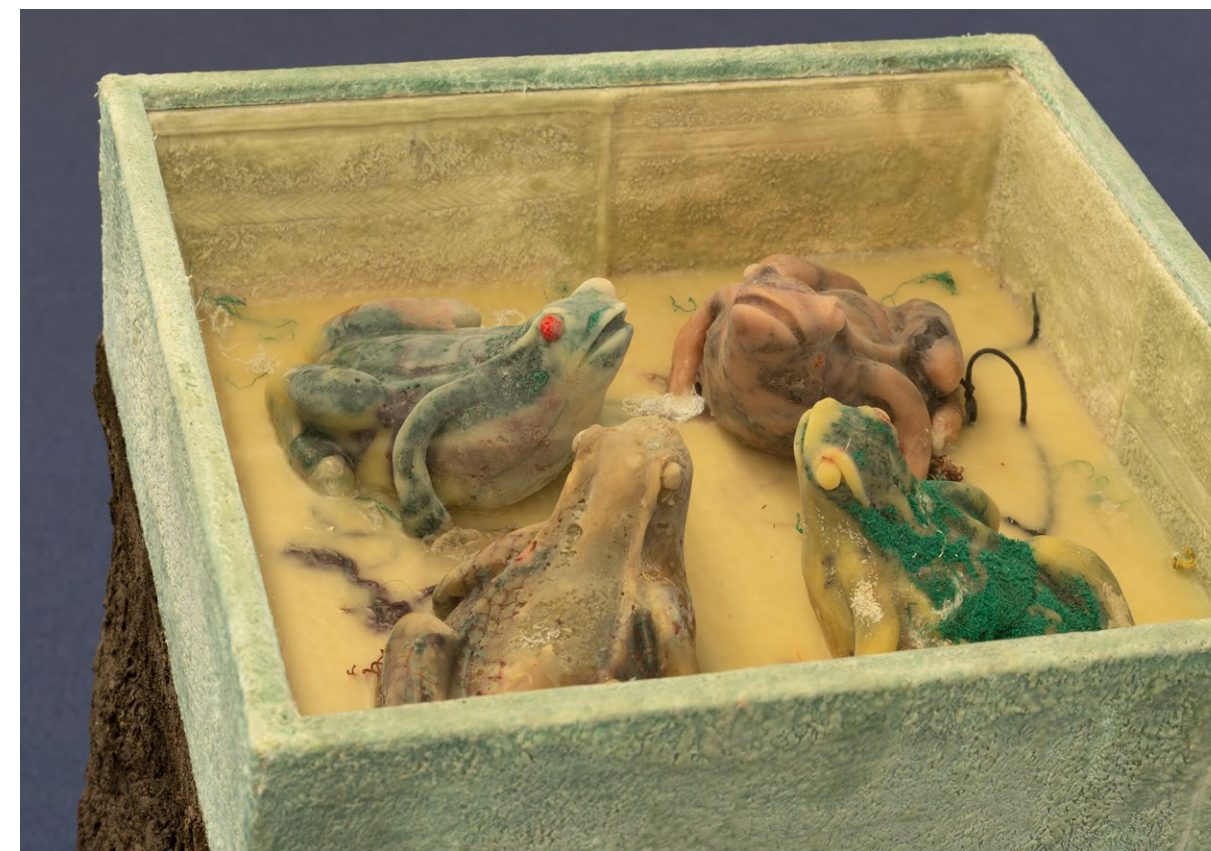
„Aquecedores“ (Heaters), 2019
Soil, Eletric cabel, styrofoam , chickenwire
Dimensions Variable



„Chão Seco (mãozinha)“, 2018
Glazed ceramic, metal plinth
36 x 27 x 5 cm



„Chão Seco (ocidente)“, 2018
Glazed ceramic, metal plinth
36 x 27 x 5 cm



„Caldeirão“ (Cauldron), 2019
 Humus, styrofoam, chickenwire, wood glue,
 twigs, fabric debris, beeswax
 85 x 50 x 50 cm

Breastfed Tadpole

Solo show at
Kai Matsumiya Gallery

New York City (USA), September 2018





On the left:
„Apple Pie“, 2018
 Humus (black soil),
 wood glue, old toys
 36 x 27 x 5 cm



Top
„Ovo por Olho“, 2018
 Latex, fabric, soil,
 organic material
 Dimensions Variable

„Ocean Blue“, 2018 (floor)
 Gallery floor covered with soil;
 soil covered with nylon carpet
 Dimensions Variable



"In the nights of annihilation of the last war, the frame of mankind was shaken by a feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And the revolts that followed it were the first attempt of mankind to bring the new body under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its convalescence. If it is not gripped to the very marrow by the discipline of this power, no pacifist polemics will save it. Living substance conquers the frenzy of destruction only in the ecstasy of procreation". – Walter Benjamin, excerpt from "to the Planetarium" from "One-Way Street".

"Art does not reproduce the visible, rather, it makes the visible" – Max Ernst, excerpt from "The Creative Credo".

Pedro Wirz continues his second solo exhibition, titled "breastfed tadpole", at Kai Matsumiya. Consider the world enveloped with office carpet where it serves as the chief nutritive source like soil. In such a world, nature, culture, and technology integrate not as separate entities but as a cohesive ecosystem. Office carpet serves as the soil for twigs. Frog like critters with mammalian components reveal themselves as neither living or dead. Letters represent nothing else but the end of language. Inorganic materials are expected to birth something unwitnessed. Technology itself finally bleeds alongside nature as if both are intertwined as one. Animalistic and insect-like architectures resembling nests, cocoons, and eggs fuse with human cultural practices. Raw new cosmic life abounds.

Substances from the amazon forests, Swiss parks, junk yards, soil, latex manufacturing, and discarded toys and ornaments comprise the materials of Wirz's art works. A large degree of the artist's research for his practice is also informed by his upbringing in the Paraiba Valley, Brazil. The region's layered, primordial, modern and contemporary landscape has been the site of massive demographic shifts as European royalty, slaves, indigenous people, merchantmen, and industrialists collide within its varied multifarious histories. As a result, the region has produced art, architecture, and culture that appear as if all had been undergoing the process of beginning, mixing, and resetting. Part of Wirz's impetus, then, originates from the adopted spirit and perspective of a child reconfiguring, completing, and beginning anew lost objects, dying landscapes, and incomplete mythologies of post-apocalyptic and dystopian environs.

„Entropie“, 2018
Bronze, beeswax,
wood twigs, soil
Dimensions Variable





„Rat King“, 2018
Found letter glove, beeswax, twigs
36 x 27 x 5 cm



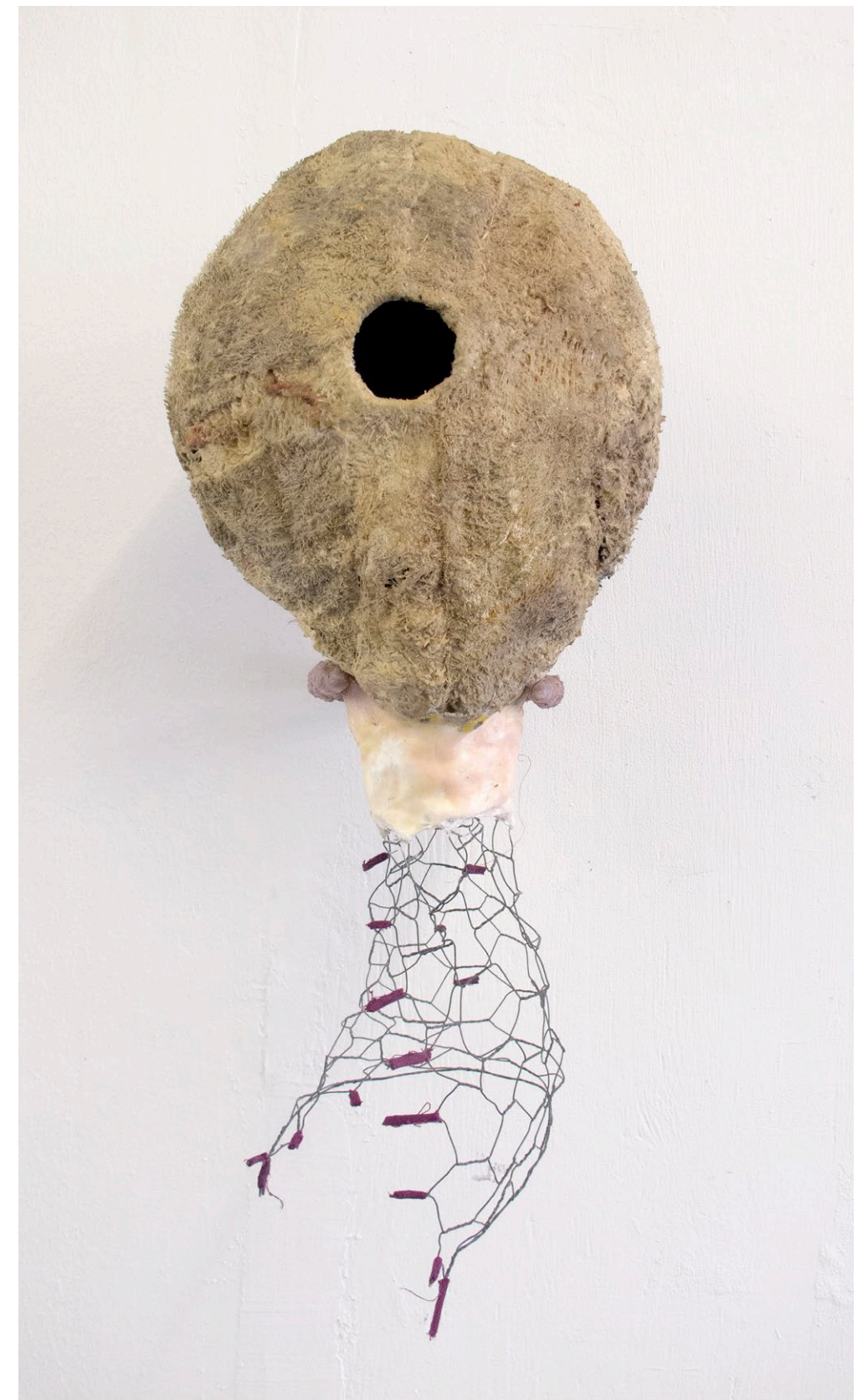
„Death of Design“, 2018
Beeswax, wood, soil, plaster, bronze
27 x 24 x 5 cm



„Frog Milk“, 2018
Beeswax, old fabric, paraffin wax
27 x 24 x 5 cm



„Frog Milk (end of language)“, 2018
Beeswax, old fabric, paraffin wax, soil
27 x 24 x 5 cm



„Bondade (Kindness)“, 2018
 Old fabric, chicken wire, beeswax, soil, human hair,
 watercolor, plaster, wood glue
 49 x 26 x 23 cm

ZEITSPUREN - Power of Now

Group show
at Kunsthaus Pasquart

Biel (CH), August 2018





„Guard'águas (Terracota)“, 2017
Glazed Ceramic, beeswax
29 cm ø x 4 cm



„Guard'águas (Azul)“, 2017
Fired clay, plaster, acrylic paint
26 cm ø x 4 cm

„MÃE DO OURO“

Solo presentation
at Swiss Art Awards

Basel (CH), June 2018







„Mãe do Ouro” (Gold’s Mother), 2018
Humus (black soil), wood glue,
fired clay, plaster, twigs, wire.
120 x 50 x 50

Jan Kiefer, Pedro Wirz, 2018

Two-person exhibition together with Jan Kiefer at
Nagel Draxler's Diko Reisenbüro

Cologne (D), May 2018





Installation View

Walls: „Ovo por Olho“, 2016/2017, Latex, Fabric, Organic Material, ca. 20ø x 15 cm

On the tabel: *Untitled (Haus/Nest/Tail)*, 2018, Paper mache, humus (black soil), animal tail, ca. 35 x 35 x 35 cm



There's no such thing as culture

Myths are narratives that in the complex human process of adopting to specific environments have proved culturally pregnant. By believe they become efficient, not true. As it has been repeatedly demonstrated by critical cultural sciences since the first half of the 20 th century, myth and culture are not "primal", but "constructed". Critique of culture is therefore possible.

The artistic approaches of Jan Kiefer and Pedro Wirz could not appear more different, since they create imaginary cultures with completely different visual codes and connotations.

Wirz sculptures seem to bespeak a culture of earthy myths of origin and fertility and a primitivistic closeness of prehistoric man and animal. Animal architectures, termite or nest-building, cocoons and eggs merge with human cultural practices (house-building), or serve as their models. In a laboratory practice founded in pre-historical imaginaries, Wirz creates images of beings inhabiting cycles of pre-capitalist economies. In his artistic practice, evoking memories of Art Brut and primitivism, he creates moments of constructed authenticity. An aura of origin emerges, that at no time was fact, and that relates to "cultivated" worlds like, in Artaud's sense, its "double".

Other than that, Jan Kiefer in his sculptural arrangements and serial paintings addresses myths of the achievements of a currently well to do middle class, that, caused by the ongoing redistribution of resources to the 1 %, already faces social decline. Viewed from the front the bottles in the stylish designed wine shelves form a pattern of letters: JA, JA... The voice of Joseph Beuys soundlessly meanders through the sterile space of material wish fulfilment, ja, ja, ja, ja, ne, ne, ne, ne, ne.... The ne, ne, nes are missing in Kiefer's image. They are replaced by dots. In a consumer culture informed by tautologisms, the opposite poles remains void. In Kiefer's work one hears the no (ne) as an echo, in which a counter world still resonates.

While one could describe the artistic practice of Pedro Wirz as transgressive materialism, with Jan Kiefer one deals with transgressive conceptualism. Both artists create an ambiguous aura of culture, that questions the validity of predominant cultural forces.



Fábula, Frisson, Melancolia

Solo presentation at
Instituto Tomie Ohtake

São Paulo (BR), September 2017





Glyphsetters (No(s)z), 2017 / Cast bronze / 70 cm ø x 45 cm



„Guard'águas (NORA)“, 2017
 Adobe (soil, sand, hay) on wood and wire construction
 (body); towel, plaster and latex (cocoon)
 400 cm ø x 80 cm

The most recent work of Pedro Wirz, marks a significant point of reflection on his artistic research since he rebuilt contact with the legends and myths of the region of the Paraíba Valley, where he spent his childhood. It is more than just the curiosity about the peculiarities of the São Paulo folklore, Wirz's interest in such legends arise from the understanding that they combine fear, awe and mystery in a manner of explaining aspects of the relationship between man and science. Questions that technical and scientific knowledge can not answer are deeply rooted in his practice.

Guard'águas (Nora) presents itself as a mythical allegory of multiple meanings. A giant snake coiled around itself, a spiral - a typical allusion to the cyclical character of time and history. At the same time, using mass produced elements such as wood and wire structure - a process that depends on human work and begins and ends with processing and manipulation of soil - highlights the technical approach to nature cultivated by man.

The large snake, 4 meters in diameter, is also a potential object of enchantment or fear. In the place of its head is a cocoon, which for some people refers to the Boitatá: A spirit that protects the forest of hunters and explorers, commonly represented by a large snake with a flame in place of the head. The head made out of fabric, which reiterates the paradox of something natural but still processed by man; an artificial and yet natural thing. Besides, it should be remembered, that the textile industry is one of the most harmful environmental polluters in the world.

Therefore the piece seeks to retake the atavistic ability of the man of the field to fear what he does not understand and to fancy explanations that guide his behavior; while at the same time questioning the ability of the civilized man to connect with something without beign entirely and irreversibly consumed.

Paulo Miyada



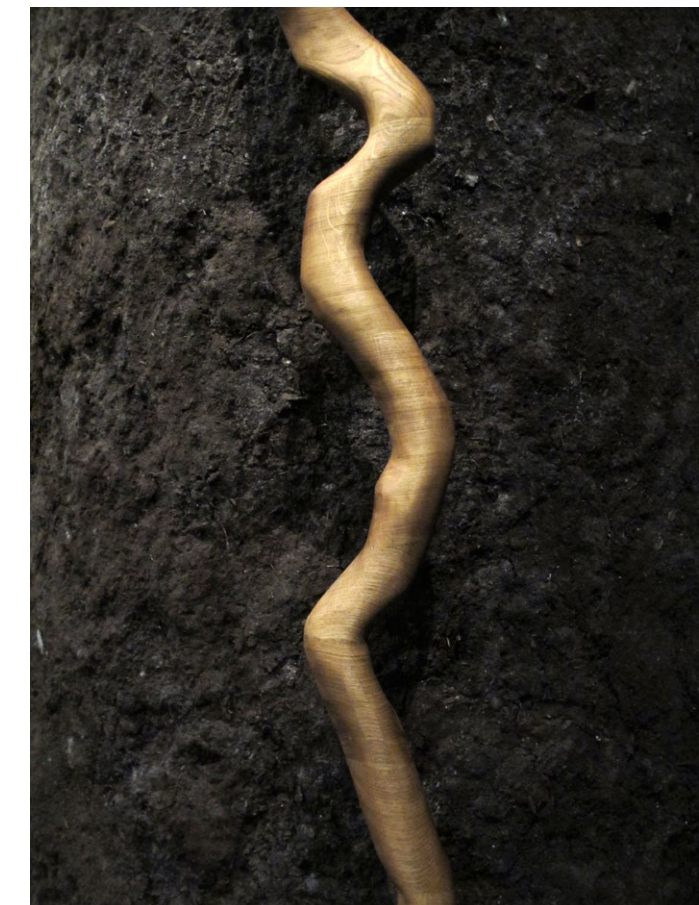
EX SITU. Sample of life forms

Group exhibition at
Copenhagen Contemporary

Copenhagen (DK), August 2017







(previous page)
„We Know What We Learn“, 2017
 Húmus (black soil), water, plaster,
 wood construction
 120 cm ø x 400 cm

„Pau-Sério (Serious-twig)“, 2017
 Handmade branch
 (Oak, metal screws, synthetic wax)
 ca. 350 x 30 x 20 cm