

## *LAVISH HORN*

LISA BIEDLINGMAIER, CLARE GOODWIN, UNA SZEEMANN

June 5 to 28, 2022

LAVISH HORN brings together three female artists who reflect on the topic of the continuous circle of life and death, the present, and the past. Lisa Biedlingmaier, Clare Goodwin, and Una Szeemann explore the feelings and sensations that bygone days may generate, and investigate our approach regarding matters of life, death, and the subconscious. Each of the three artists explores these themes, and the many associations accompanying them, in their own way. By plunging into the essence of the three accomplished artists' positions, the viewer can grasp the unifying components the individual works bring to the surface.

In her work, **Lisa Biedlingmaier** links her personal experience to the collective's experience. And vice-versa, she analyzes in which way the individual is affected, consciously and subconsciously, by the complex relationships with the outside world. Over the course of her career, Biedlingmaier has gained a vast knowledge of holistic healing practices such as energetic therapies through channeling. To date, she dives into these practices to gain a better understanding of the interdependencies between society and personal upbringing, and our mental, spiritual, as well as physical wellbeing. Lisa Biedlingmaier refers to the human psyche in terms of the widespread psychoanalytical model, saying that the psyche is composed of multiple layers. The latter keep developing throughout a lifetime and are very much connected to societal environments and the personal story of each and everyone. According to Biedlingmaier, these layers that ultimately form our way of thinking, merge into patterns expressing our behavior and dealings with life's challenges. Recently, Lisa Biedlingmaier has become interested to counteract negative impacts by creating conscious caring and loving patterns that then potentially become part of the collective awareness.

By applying Macramé, an ancient knotting technique, Biedlingmaier succeeds in representing the ever-emerging topics within her work: The various knots stand for our life experiences that oftentimes turn out to be a mental baggage we constantly carry around. Biedlingmaier titles her works after energetic codes that aim to offer the viewer the possibility to untie the psychological knots. Complementary materials, such as hard-edged plexiglass, porcelain, mirrors, everyday objects, or iron and wooden bars emphasize the themes Biedlingmaier touches on via a particular work. Rearranged, these same elements can for another topic which is to show that the artist visually illustrates the psychological and energetic ever-changing layers humans are made of.

One of the works Lisa Biedlingmaier features in LAVISH HORN is titled ZULEILABO (2021). The energetic code of this installation is meant to free the toxic load of our emotional emissions and to clear the negative memory stored in our sexual organs. Therefore, ZULEILABO explores sexuality, procreation, as well as mortality. The flesh-colored felt is natural dead matter whereas the black ribbons are a reminder of suspenders symbolizing pulsing life. Simultaneously, the black colored strips

refer to death. The heavy iron bar, used in construction sites, weighs the seemingly fragile macramé structure down. ZULEILABO invites the viewer to think about life's cyclic movements, its joys and burdens. Every emerging life contains a part that is dying off, implying that beginning and end, growth and decay are ultimately one and the same.

**Una Szeemann**, parallel to Lisa Biedlingmaier, also uses dead organic matter such as leather, hair, plaster, copper, bronze, bones, rope, and dried plants. Oftentimes, her large-scale objects dangle from heavy metal chains into the exhibition space which grants them an almost persona-like aura, especially when she uses hair from horse tails. Una Szeemann's practice is based on research within the realms of anthropology, psychoanalysis, including hypnosis, and biology. Through the various materials she strives to bring forth the invisible that doesn't exist any longer but has left traces in the present. Like an alchemist, Szeemann tries to materialize these traces of bodies, thoughts, and the unconscious. In poetic ways that bear an intriguing closeness to modern day witchcraft, she attempts to preserve what otherwise would quickly sink into oblivion and features the transference of bodies and natural materials into different oftentimes intangible states. The dead cow skin placed on top of a curved metal spine represents the body that once inhabited it.

In October 2021, Una Szeemann set out to dry impressively large banana flowers she had gathered from Tegna, her second domicile located in Ticino (CH). Following a slow drying process, Szeemann handed the dried strongly diminished plants to the foundry to transform them into long lasting bronzes. After the casting was completed, the foundry smelled of banana, as if the banana flower's ghost was still hovering in proximity to its dead shell.

In LAVISH HORN, Una Szeemann lays four cast bronze sculptures, titled *The Birds said you move I-IV*, on a plinth bearing the character of a table on which presents are laid out. Thus, the banana flowers not only underwent eternalization through the foundry process, but they are also presented like offerings. The formerly lavish organic banana flower, meant to perish after florescence, has become a valuable symbol for both abundance and fertility. There is evidence that the banana was already part of the human diet in the seventh century b.c. According to an old legend from the Myanmar region, the humans mimicked the birds' habit of eating the fruit. Hence, one of the earliest names used for the banana, to which the title of Szeemann's sculptures alludes, was: It was the birds that told it.

In terms of botany, the first florescence, known as the banana heart, is also the last as the pseudostem of the banana plant dies. Although offshoot will normally have developed from the base so that the plant as a whole survives. However, the fact that the pseudostem, or corm, dies after only one reproductive cycle somewhat sanctifies the banana flower and underlines Una Szeemann's sublimating foundry procedure.

The banana flower turned bronze has taken on an almost otherworldly appearance. The stem below the banana fruits leading to the massive banana flower that now resembles the knob of an ancient weapon, looks like a backbone. By turning blossoming organic matter into a dead but ennobled

material, Una Szeemann has shifted the viewers' focus. It is no longer placed on the loss of past beauty but on the new attributes meant to last forever.

At first glance, **Clare Goodwin's** practice appears to be located within a purely abstract minimalist as well as constructivist tradition. This seems to be the case throughout the hard-edged geometric painting compositions, whether materialized as large-scale wall painting installations, on clay, wood or paper. However, the meticulously painted elements in her body of work are in fact based on a deep interest in the human soul, nostalgia and formal image building. The viewer gets a glimpse of the more intuitive side of Goodwin's work as underneath the neatly applied geometric features in her paintings there appear floaty pastel like washes that partly prime the canvas. Clare Goodwin depicts her reality and her past through abstract representation.

Her motives and color compositions are triggered from a British working-class upbringing in the nineteen seventies and early eighties. Goodwin falls back on gathered materials from these eras along with her own personal memories and lived experiences, enabling narrative possibilities with a future presence. Goodwin titles all her paintings with names of people associated with a generation of people from bygone days.

According to Clare Goodwin, nostalgia can be defined as an absence, one being the lingering smells that hang in second-hand objects. It is the aspect of nostalgia, and the melancholy embedded in it, that acts as a bridge between her practice and the work of Lisa Biedlingmaier and Una Szeemann. Like Biedlingmaier and Szeemann, Clare Goodwin transfers traces and notions of her memory, like layers of the past, onto her work.

In 2022, Goodwin set herself as a goal not to exceed the total of twelve small paintings (40 x 30 cm) per year, evoking the annual cycle. In *LAVISH HORN*, Clare Goodwin shows the six small scale paintings she created during the first half-year period, January to June. In addition, Ruettimann Contemporary features several ceramics titled *Whispers*. With this series of clay works, starting in 2018, Goodwin opened up a new chapter by inviting different techniques and materials into her predominantly painterly oeuvre. The ceramic whispers are single fragmented elements implying extracted forms from her paintings and thereby becoming paintings in their own right. As she applies her hand, used to paint meticulous hard-edged shapes, to glazed ceramic, her painterly language enters another field of the unknown, hybrid sensibility and craft traditions. With these forms and shapes, conjuring bits and pieces of her paintings, Clare Goodwin seems to render her basic motives more palpable. The suitably titled *Whispers* appear to act like an additional psychological layer as they are a reminiscence of an already existing memory. Sometimes, Goodwin playfully combines the elements into wall-based installations and creates ever-changing relationships between the ghosts and whispers from the past.

Text by Judith Opferkuch