

AWST & WALTHER

Pretty Destructive

21. 05. 2014 – 10. 08. 2014

kunstverein
nürnberg albrecht
dürer
gesellschaft

Opening: Tuesday, May 20, 2014, 7 pm

Performance by Awst & Walther on the opening night at 8 pm.

With Philipp Weigand and Thomas L. Dietz, in cooperation with the Schauspiel Staatstheater Nürnberg.

The Kunstverein Nürnberg - Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft is pleased to present *Pretty Destructive*, a solo exhibition by **Manon Awst & Benjamin Walther** (b. 1983, Bangor, Wales, UK / b. 1978, Dresden, Germany).

Awst & Walther collaborate since 2006, bringing together their experiences from architecture and theatre directing, in which they have been originally trained. In their artistic practice, they work with industrial or raw organic material to create new site-specific situations that strongly engage the viewer both physically and mentally. The viewer is encouraged to take a position in relation to the works, which pose questions regarding the relationship of the individuals to their spatial and social environment. Deploying cool, smooth surfaces like mirrors, neon glass, aluminum or processed gelatin, their bold sculptural gestures have resemblances to minimal art. However these works are not silent, stable objects within the white cube, but rather forcefully intervene with the existing architecture or prompt active participation of the viewer. The materials and methods used for their sculptures resist aesthetic fetishization, as they are joined with narrative elements or are executed to deliberately fracture perfection.

In *Pretty Destructive*, Awst & Walther focus on different models and notions of 'natural' forms and matter, that have been established as fragmented and engineered in our cultural memory. Awst and Walther reflect on the relationship of human beings to nature and to the technologies at their disposal, which oscillate in form and content between moments of control and experimentation. Based upon a drawing of a snowflake's hexagonal structure, they conceptualized a large-scale sculpture built of fragile transparent neon tubes that artificially retrace the natural crystalline shape. The glass tubes are filled with argon gas, its constant movement made visible by the light. Equipped with thirteen electrical transformers, the sculpture becomes an elaborate technical instrument, transforming the immaterial and transient substance of the ice crystal into a monumental representation.

While the sculpture of the snowflake presents a synthetic and idealized imitation of nature, in another work Awst & Walther deal with two physical objects directly found in nature. One of the two granite boulders has been hollowed out with a borehole, testing the limits of the stone's endurance and stability. Using a diamond drill method usually employed in concrete reinforcement or pipeline construction, the rock's natural material quality is examined in a manner closer to the fields of archeology and geology. The second boulder's surface has been engraved with different segments containing the words *Invigorate*, *Transform*, *Nourish* and *Energize*. Juxtaposed with the lifeless stone, the stimulating spirit of these statements and their call for improvement and optimization is further re-enforced. The engravings are reminiscent of surgical incision drawings, animating the stone and turning it into a subject which is culturally appropriated and inscribed by language.

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As with the stones, Awst & Walther scrutinize the theme of dissection in their mirror piece. The upper half of the wall mirror has been sandblasted, presenting viewers solely with the reflection of the lower part of their bodies. The denial of a complete mirror image operates similarly to an earlier work by the artists from 2013, consisting of a wall-sized mirror with a large engraving of the word *Applause* that throw the viewers back on themselves as passive spectators.

On the opening night, Awst & Walther will stage a performance with the actors Philip Weigand and Thomas L. Dietz from the Schauspiel Staatstheater Nürnberg, questioning the domestication and control of nature by ongoing technological possibilities. The fascination as well as the violence of irreversible interventions will be reflected through actions and words within the performance. The ambivalent relationship between human beings and their environments will be renegotiated in the main hall of the former dairy administration building that houses the Kunstverein — amidst the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' architecture that embodied a striving for modern and industrial efficiency.

Alongside the solo exhibition by **Awst & Walther** the Kunstverein Nürnberg presents a solo exhibition by **Aude Pariset**.

Minutes (7): 10.06.2014, 7 pm

Exhibition talk with **Thomas Thiel** (Director Bielefelder Kunstverein) and Simone Neuenschwander

Public guided tours:

05.06.2014, 17.07.2014, 07.08.2014, respectively at 7 pm

For the generous support of the exhibition we would like to thank:



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Opening hours:

Tuesday to Friday, 2 – 6 pm; Saturday and Sunday, 1 – 6 pm; and by appointment.

Entrance fee: 2,50 €; reduced: 1,50 €, free for members.