



Exhibition text / Olivia Abächerli - the center and the other

For her first institutional solo exhibition in Central Switzerland, Olivia Abächerli site-specifically explores the historical building with the Bourbaki panorama. The panorama is an art form emblematic for Enlightenment philosophies: thereby, the omniscient human being as a 'neutral subject' stands in the center and gets full overview of the world. This Enlightenment worldview is being questioned in current debates in science, philosophy or social anthropology, and instead a 'multiperspectivity', the existence of many perspectives, is being acknowledged. It is precisely this multiplicity of perspectives - and the contextualization of one's own position among others - that is a core topic of Olivia Abächerli's artistic work and is alluded to in the exhibition title "the center and the other".

"How are we being socialized, formed, shaped, in what context are we positioned and what does that mean? Where do I stand in relation to you, to family, to the climate crisis, in relation to a piece of cake or a pebble? It's only when I recognize the specific to my position and perspective that I can deeply grasp that someone else inhabits a different position."

Cabinet: video works

The three video works in the cabinet inaugurate the exhibition. In "Meeting at the border (Les Verrières)" the artist visits the village Les Verrières in the canton of Neuchâtel, which is the scene of the internment of the Bourbaki Army in 1871, with a 360-degree camera. The historical event depicted on the Bourbaki panorama is referring to Switzerland's nimbus as a humanitarian helping nation. The video shows a transcribed conversation with an elderly resident. The ideological conflicts within the community - which houses an asylum center nowadays - become palpable and the slogans *Humanité - Hospitalité - Neutralité*, visible everywhere in the village, are critically questioned. The work is mixed with video sequences that the artist shot behind the scene at the Museum Bourbaki Panorama. The views behind, in front of and on the backdrop of the historical circular painting reflect the degree of romanticization regarding the historical treatment of fleeing people.

Symbolically, a caterpillar with a white peace flag flits through the projection before the video work "Sketches on loving a family" focuses on political differences within families. After the animated scene of a forest cinema - in which excerpts from the U.S. *Daily Show* refer to processes of political polarization - people from diverse contexts talk about their personal experiences with the different political attitudes of family members. The graphically alienated people - in places deformed or distorted - reflect in the short interviews on their strategies for dealing with conflict situations as well as the fine line between loving family affiliation and political otherness.



Main room: subjective cartography as a section of a horizon of thought.

"What does intersectional feminism or the principle of property have to do with the difficulty of shopping seasonally? Or why do I tend to think I'm right?" For her exhibition, Olivia Abächerli has developed a subjective cartography using chalk pens on four wall segments. The wall drawing - dimensionally a quarter of a panoramic painting - has an index of 120 terms, explanations, symbols, and questions that either concern or are of concern to the artist herself. This section of a contemporary horizon of thought presents itself as a very personal, exposed reflection of the artist's inner self. This kind of cartographic drawing with its respective correspondences of content is significant for her artistic works. Thus she explores and maps contexts from the fields of sociology, culture, history or environment.

In addition to the wall drawing, the exhibition includes other video works, etched copper plates, milled MDF boxes, soapstones, printed carpets, or tattooed oranges. Works from collaborations with Amélie Bodenmann, with Line Rime and Isabella Beneduci as well as objects by artists from her network - who shape her work and thinking - are integrated into the exhibition as symbolic artifacts: "Stone with Directions of Use" by Karen Amanda Moser or "Wir wir, nehme ich an. Wie deine Freunde mit Fell, wie die Salamander drunten oder die Vögel drüben. Im Besitz von Sprache." by Lulu & Whiskey. In a video, Olivia Abächerli talks with her sister, animated as a cat, in a half-hour philosophical 'nerd talk' about human acquisition of knowledge, ethical-moral principles, global political conditions, neutrality, right-wing populism, etc. The tattooed oranges, whose surface closely resembles human skin, act as movable, multi-perspective signposts, while the engraved soapstones act as fixed points.

Her multimedia work, consisting of texts, video, sound, animation, installations, and objects, is marked with a graphic handwriting that refers to rapid, processual, personal, or intimate sketching. Drawing is used as a tool to find intimate views of what has been researched or to access sensual approaches to complex contexts. Thus, Olivia Abächerli's work can be read as an attempt to develop navigational systems for orientation in a complex reality, or rather: in a multiplicity of realities. Ultimately, however, Olivia Abächerli's exhibition "the center and the other" is not only an attempt to make order in the world, but it also speaks of a feeling of being overwhelmed: of a contemporary dizziness that assails us when we stand very close to a panorama - or when we want to see the entirety of the world. The exhibition is an example of thinking about the singularity of the individual and locating oneself within the complexity of the world.

*Olivia Abächerli is cis-female, lesbian, able-bodied and white (*1992 in Stans NW, grew up in Kerns OW, lives and works in Bern). She completed the preliminary course at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts - Design & Art. In 2016 she completed her Bachelor in Fine Arts at the University of the Arts in Bern (HKB). From 2017 to 2019 Olivia Abächerli completed the Master of Arts Practice at the Dutch Art Institute in Arnhem NL. Subsequently, she was a Fellow of the Paul Klee Summer Academy from 2019 - 2021. For her artistic work and research, she received awards and grants from the cantons of Obwalden and Nidwalden, Basel-Stadt and Bern, such as the 2022 Aeschlimann Corti Scholarship. Since 2018, she has formed the collective DUELL together with Amélie Bodenmann - in addition to her individual practice, which is, however, always influenced by the social network and context. From 2017 - 2020 she co-directed the offspace Cabane B in Bern and since 2021 she organizes FLINTA raves in the Queerfeminist space of the Reitschule Bern.*