

DAYS OF HEARTBREAK



Days of Heartbreak

curated by Nicola Elisabeth Petek

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FOREWORD

Nicola E. Petek

Generally, the term “heartbreak” (also known as a “broken heart”) is defined as a proxy for the intense emotional stress or even physical pain one feels when experiencing a great and deep longing. The term is cross-cultural and is often cited in reference to a coveted or lost lover, though I believe this interpretation falls short.

In my research leading up to the exhibition and through many conversations, I came to realise that there are various types of heartbreak that go beyond the romantic definition. This pain of the heart can occur both individually and collectively: the loss of home, the memory of a moment that can never be lived again, the sudden parting from a loved one, a lack of understanding from one’s family about life choices, dissatisfaction with oneself or with the behavior of others.

Some of the artists I invited to participate in the exhibition confirmed that dealing with the subject was particularly cathartic for them, as they were confronted with the feeling of heartbreak at the moment of my inquiry. Others were unsure whether they had ever suffered from a broken heart, or whether they were even capable of doing so. Of course, I chose the respective participants because I could recognise a certain melancholy in their work that addresses the subject, be it in an abstract or literal way. However, my call for literary engagement with the theme, to whatever extent and in whatever way, posed another challenge for many, but all of them solved it in an impressively personal way. I am deeply grateful to all the artists involved for their openness and trust.

The “Days of Heartbreak” exhibition provides an experiential place to physically discover the artists’ interdisciplinary explorations of the topic. This publication, on the other hand, presents a collection of native-language, personal thought fragments and quotations, folk tales and prose, poems, snapshots, explanations, and searches that are as multi-faceted and diverse as their authors. In her introductory essay, the Sydney-based clinical psychologist Nadine Neukirch gives us an insightful overview of the “Psychology of Breakup Symptoms,” which we have all might have experienced in one way or another.

We are holding in our hands a small study that can perhaps contribute to understanding the influence that subjective circumstances as well as cultural identity can have on the respective ways of dealing with a broken heart.

*“I had no trouble betting on the flood
against the Ark
You see, I knew about the ending,
what happens to the heart.”*

Leonard Cohen

SURVIVING HEARTBREAK. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BREAKUP SYMPTOMS

Nadine Neukirch, Clinical Psychologist

Shock, anger, waterfall of tears, obsessive thoughts of the relationship, blaming ourselves, blaming the other, sleepless, numb, not hungry, too hungry, cannot think, cannot concentrate... pain of the heart. Breakups can be excruciating. A Google search of “heartbreak” in 2021 resulted in 81,200,000 results, with top questions asked including “Why does heartbreak hurt so much?,” “How do I get over heartbreak?,” and “What does heartbreak do to a person?” Heartbreak symptoms can significantly impact mental health, including sadness, depression, anger, and anxiety,¹ and can be akin to those of bereavement.² So why do we experience these symptoms? This text will explore the role of heartbreak symptoms through a psychological perspective, understanding them as survival functions of the body.

Heartbreak can be understood through the evolution of the nervous system, to adapt and survive threats and dangers. Polyvagal theory refers to the vagus nerve, and how different branches of this nerve connect to and affect our emotional, physiological, and social responses.³ The vagus nerve is the longest nerve of the autonomic nervous system; it sends signals from our digestive system and organs up to the brain and back down the opposite way. Polyvagal theory explains three core states of the nervous system and how the body and mind change when we are under stress.

The first nervous system state, “social engagement,” describes when the body signals we are safe. This would reflect stages when we feel secure in a relationship.

“I am on a bushwalk with my partner, I notice the bold blue sky, the shades of green as the leaves rustle in the wind. I feel joy as I look over at my partner, their face looks sad but I feel gratefulness and compassion, I know they are tired from work and it’s not personal to me. I don’t know what this week will bring for us, but I am calm and grounded for whatever comes.”

In “social engagement” we feel more joy, compassion, and creativity. Our thoughts are optimistic, we are in the present moment, and we can absorb new information. Physiologically in the body our heart rate and breathing are relaxed

and restorative; our digestive and immune systems are functioning well; sleep is sound; and we release oxytocin, the hormone that promotes social connection without fear.

The second nervous system state, “fight or flight,” activates when our body signals danger and switches to the sympathetic nervous system. Our thoughts and feelings change to anger or fear to help us approach and attack the danger, or to run away. In the case of a breakup, the nervous system says we are under a social threat and tries to protect us by altering the stories our mind tells us and changes the physiology of the body.

“I’ve checked my phone for the 100th time – still no message from my ex-partner, I’m exhausted, I’m teary, I’m agitated. My friend says, ‘focus on yourself and then you’ll find the right person,’ my stomach drops, my heart pounds, ‘they think I’m doing something wrong.’ ‘It’s my fault it ended.’ I’m under attack from my own thoughts, 98% of the day spent looping in self-blame and re-living memories of ‘what could I have done differently.’”

In “fight or flight” our thoughts are narrowed and focused on threats – compared to “social engagement” – where thoughts are expansive. We focus on worst case scenarios and injustice, such as rumination of what happened in the relationship; intrusive frequent thoughts of our ex-partner; or worry of life being single. Walking down the street we may perceive more angry faces than in “social engagement” or interpret other’s comments in a negative way. The brain also tries to make sense of what happened to try and protect us from future breakup pain. Our thinking becomes more rigid and focused on blame (black and white, all or nothing): e.g., “it’s all their fault, it’s all my fault.” The brain likes to know clear cut answers for safety:

“Is there a snake or not?”

It does not like ambiguity, therefore it can jump to rigid answers of why the breakup happened without taking into account the complexities of context, both people’s circumstances, and other contributing factors. Physiologically we may have difficulty sleeping and eating: the release of stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol disrupts sleep.⁴

“Have you ever woken up at 3 a.m. wide awake with racing thoughts? It wouldn’t be safe to sleep if a snake is around the corner so your body pumps adrenaline at random times.”

Under stress, our appetite is dysregulated.⁵ The body says it is better to shut down restorative functions, such as digestion, and gear all resources to short-term survival. When “fight or flight” is activated, our actions become more impulsive and based on the urge of an emotion, and our prefrontal cortex in charge of complex thinking deactivates.⁶

“If a snake is about to bite me it’s better that fear makes me jump, rather than wait for the thinking brain to say ‘take two steps to the left.’”

Our actions are movements toward the threat, for example viewing photos of the ex-partner or excessive calling and texting, or movements away from the threat, like partying every night and escaping through alcohol.

What happens if the nervous system says we cannot survive this danger by fighting or fleeing? What if we feel powerless to change the situation? The nervous system goes into the third state of survival, “freeze,” activating the dorsal vagal nerve.

“I’m weighted to the floor, every limb sapped of energy, my insides are hollow. It took two hours to get out of bed, I stood up thinking, ‘I should do something,’ I’m clouded, nothing feels worthwhile, I collapse to the floor and cry. ‘No one will understand, I am all alone.’”

In “freeze” the body goes into immobilisation mode, shutting down resources to conserve energy and wait out the danger.

For example: we cannot outrun the snake, so freeze, play dead, and hope it slithers away. In a breakup we can experience feelings of shame, guilt, helplessness, depression and numbness. The stories our minds tell us may be of bleakness and self-blame, “That was my last chance for love,” “I will never meet anyone again,” “There is something wrong with me.” The brain says it is not helpful for survival to have hope and optimism now. It is safer to shut down thoughts of the future. If we blame ourselves, then that is an easy solution: “If

I am the issue, then all I need to do is ‘fix’ myself, then I will be safe from future heartache.” This is the brain’s way of trying to get control of a situation. Physiologically we will experience a decrease in heart rate, blood pressure, social awareness, and our behaviours: e.g., low motivation and fatigue, difficulties initiating tasks, cancelling social plans, or oversleeping yet not feeling energetic.

By understanding the body’s survival responses, we can make sense of the painful and intense symptoms of heartbreak. “What does heartbreak do to a person?” “Why does heartbreak hurt so much?” When a relationship ends, our nervous system believes there is a serious imminent threat to our survival, and it activates an equally intense physiological survival response. Our nervous system tries to protect us, by triggering anxiety or anger – “fight or flight” – or depression – “freeze.”

“How do I get over heartbreak?” Next time we are heartbroken on the floor, with puffy eyes, surrounded by soggy tissues, numb, and confused – instead of blaming ourselves and saying “What is wrong with me?,” we can reframe and ask ourselves “how is my nervous system currently trying to protect me?” and “what can I do right now to help it feel safe?”

1 Field, T., Diego, M., Pelaez, M., Deeds, O., & Delgado, J. (2011). Breakup distress in university students: A review. *College Student Journal*, 45(3).

2 Field, T. (2011). Romantic breakups, heartbreak and bereavement—Romantic breakups. *Psychology*, 2(04), p. 382.

3 Porges, S. W. (2001). The polyvagal theory: phylogenetic substrates of a social nervous system. *International journal of psychophysiology*, 42(2), p. 123–146.

4 Han, K. S., Kim, L., & Shim, I. (2012). Stress and sleep disorder. *Experimental neurobiology*, 21(4), p. 141.

5 Ans, A. H., Anjum, I., Satija, V., Inayat, A., Asghar, Z., Akram, I., & Shrestha, B. (2018). Neurohormonal regulation of appetite and its relationship with stress: a mini literature review. *Cureus*, 10(7).

6 Lyvers, M., Makin, C., Toms, E., Thorberg, F. A., & Samios, C. (2014). Trait mindfulness in relation to emotional self-regulation and executive function. *Mindfulness*, 5(6), p. 619–625.

MARJAN BANIASADI

* 1993 in Tehran, Iran



Narratives of interlacing time, 2020
Porcelain
variable size

تجربه ای از زمان و مکان نو

An experience of a new time and space.

GÖKSU BAYSAL

* 1975 in Ankara, Turkey



Gönül Yarası, 2021
Installation
variable size

Die Arbeit bezieht sich auf das gleichnamige Stück des Sängers und Komponisten Neşet Ertaş (1938–2012). Er gilt als einer der bedeutendsten Vertreter der türkischen *Aşık* (Volksdichter). Mit dem Anwerbeabkommen von 1961 zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Türkei zog Ertaş nach Deutschland und lebte in Berlin und Köln. Durch seine Musik hegte er stets eine enge Verbindung zur türkischen Community. Der Wunsch, dem Heimatgefühl musikalisch Ausdruck zu verleihen, kulminierte ab den 1960er Jahren in dem Genre *Gurbet Türküleri* (Türkische Lieder aus der Fremde).

Das Setting entwirft eine Schrein-ähnliche Situation, in der das Gefühl von Nostalgie und zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen auf der einen Seite, aber auch die Collagen-artige Überlagerung von Materie auf der anderen zu einer neuen Form finden.

The work refers to the piece of the same name by the singer and composer Neşet Ertaş (1938–2012). He is considered one of the most important representatives of Turkish *Aşık* (Turkish: folk poets). With the *Anwerbeabkommen* (German: Labor Recruitment Agreement) of 1961 between the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey, Ertaş moved to Germany and lived in Berlin and Cologne. Through his music, he always maintained a close connection to the Turkish community. Giving musical expression to this sense of home culminated in the genre *Gurbet Türküleri* (Turkish: Turkish Songs from Abroad) from the 1960s onwards.

The setting creates a shrine-like situation in which the sense of nostalgia and interpersonal relationships on the one hand, but also the collage-like superimposition of matter on the other, find a new form.

Gönül Yarası

*Hasret düştü gönlüme
Gönülden yaralıyım
Tabipler derman vermez
Bir bahtı karalıyım
Gönül bilenim nerde
Gönül alanım nerde
Bu devasız derdime
Derman olanım nerde
Gönül derdi yar dedi
Hasret yaman zor derdi
Onu çekmeyen bilmez
Çekenlere sor dedi
Garibim gönül arar
Gönül bileni sorar
Bu gönül yarasını
Gönlü bilen sarar*

Neşet Ertaş

PETER BÖHNISCH

* 1977 in Waiblingen, Germany

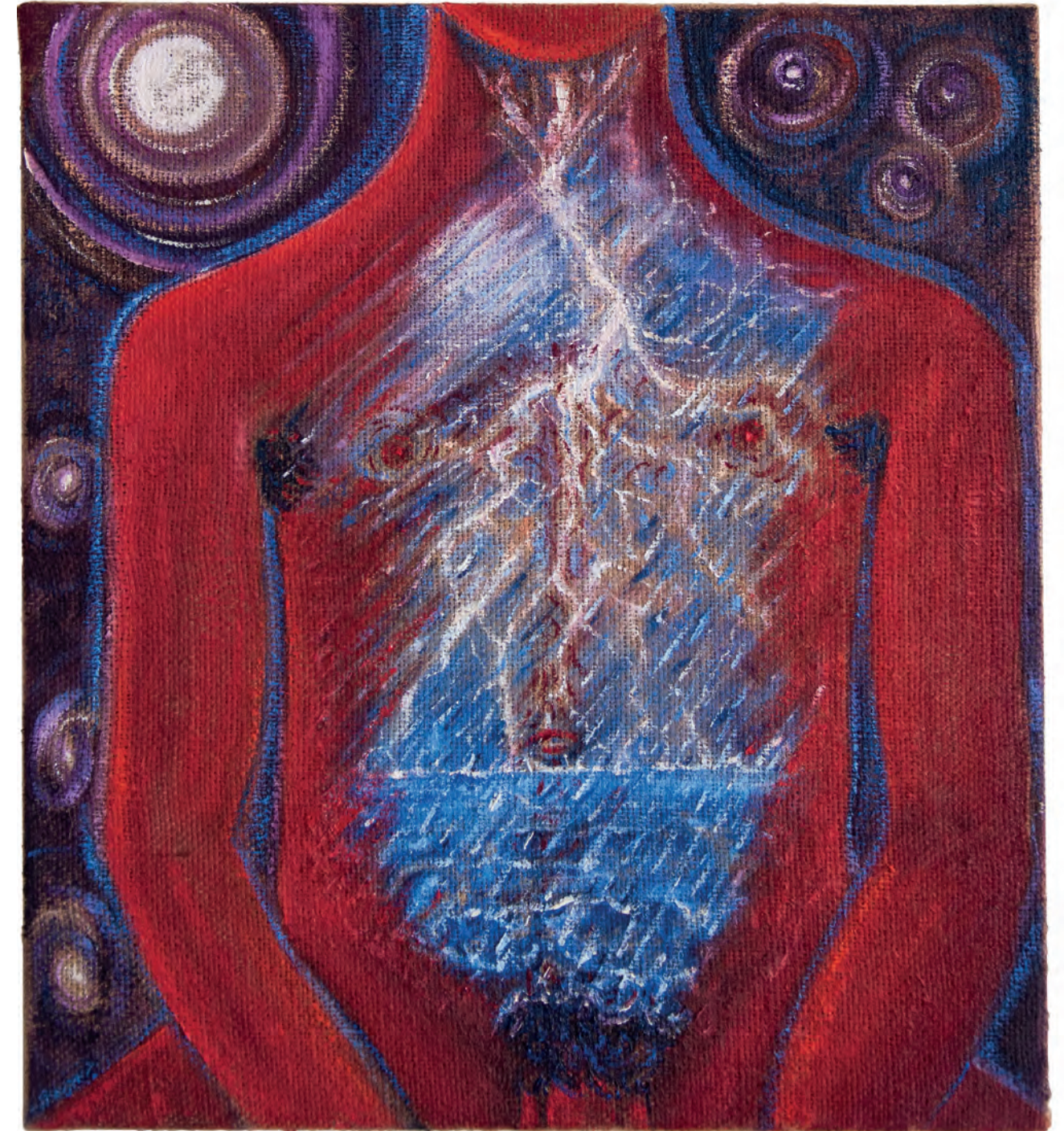


Beyond the lightning, 2021
Corundum
50 x 34 cm

Beyond the lightning.

DANIEL CORREA MEJÍA

* 1986 in Medellín, Colombia



Si te pierdo / If I lose you, 2021
Oil on jute
55 x 50 cm

Ay naturaleza, ¿Qué hago contigo?
¿Cómo te entrego el poder y mando de mi camino?
Es un lance al vacío,
es perder mi control,
entregar el colchón.

Sólo pido, tenme toda la paciencia,
que los cambios no sean tan dolorosos
y aunque te cueste,
entiende a este chico asustado:
carga la piedra de su razón,
le pesa tantísimo a sus manos
y le es imposible de esculpir.

Ay naturaleza, tú en cambio eres agua,
fluyes y cambias constantemente.
Sin adherirse andas por el mundo,
en los aires, en las tierras,
y todas las profundidades.
Entras por donde nadie cabe
y sales transformada
hacia las tantísimas realidades
tan verídicas que nunca comprenderé.

Naturaleza, únete a mi,
riega este cuerpo,
y llévate parte de Él.

Oh nature, what do I do with you?
How do I give you the power and command of my path?
It is a jump into the void,
it is to lose my control,
To give up the mattress.

I only ask you to have all the patience with me,
make the changes be not so painful
and even if it costs you,
understand this scared boy:
he carries the stone of his reason,
it weighs so much in his hands
that it is impossible for him to sculpt it.

Oh nature, you are instead water,
you constantly flow and change.
Without clinging, you walk through the world,
in the air, in the land,
and all the depths there is.
You enter where no one fits
and you come out transformed
towards the many realities
that are so true, that I'll never understand them.

Nature, join me,
water this body,
and take part of him with you.

ALEXANDER DENKERT

* 1985 in Pirna, Germany



strange bird x, 2021
Pencil, varnish, and oil on paper
42 x 30 cm

- *Don't theorise heartbreak*, hat man mir gesagt
- *Romanticise* vielleicht
- Im Bezug auf ästhetisieren der Leidenden und des Leids
- Im Bezug auf romantische Beziehungen
- An irgendeinem Moment davon, vermutlich vorher
- Ja
- Danach vielleicht auch, man kann das nicht wissen
- Ja
- Filme
- Schuldig
- Musik
- So was von schuldig
- Aber haben sie nicht gemacht, dass du es auch fühlst
- Die offene Wunde tief in dir, die du nicht betäubt bekommst, die immer weiter pocht und pulsiert und die dich den Unterschied zwischen tiefster Traurigkeit und Depression spüren lässt, wie zum Beispiel, wenn die zwei Katzen nicht mehr da sind und das Bewusstsein dafür allein durch das Ändern des Blickwinkels jedes mal neu und frisch einsetzt, weil der Blick nicht die Katzen findet, sondern nichts als Leere
- Ja
- Nein

- *Don't theorise heartbreak* I've been told
- *Romanticise* perhaps
- In terms of aestheticizing the sufferer and the suffering
- In terms of romantic relationships
- At some moment of it, probably before
- Yes
- Afterwards, too, perhaps, it is impossible to know
- Yes
- Movies
- Guilty
- Music
- So guilty
- But did they not make you feel it too
- The open wound deep inside you that you cannot get numbed, that keeps throbbing and pulsating and that makes you feel the difference between deepest sadness and depression, such as when the two cats are no longer there and the awareness of that just by changing the point of view each time is new and fresh because the view does not find the cats but nothing but emptiness
- Yes
- No

EMILY ELDRIDGE

* 1982 in Michigan, USA



Big Girls Don't Cry, 2021
Acrylic and Posca on found cardboard
60 x 80 cm

In the words of Pat Benatar:

*You're a heartbreaker
Dream maker, love taker
Don't you mess around with me*

In personal struggles of the past year (amidst the pandemic, a break-up, and otherwise), creating art has been my primary outlet for staying afloat; for making sense of things; and for getting through each day. In my work, my characters take on my emotions as their own – or perhaps release them into a more physical plane. They are a reflection of an inner voice; wordless but expressed in imagery.

DANIELA ELORZA

* 1989 in Bogotá, Colombia



Growing From Within, 2021
Oil on jute
55 x 45 cm

Creciendo desde dentro

Existe una forma de crecer que tiene que ver con las entrañas de nuestra alma y no con la cambiante forma de nuestros cuerpos.

Un crecer que ocurre en el profundo reino de nuestra esencia para acercarnos a lo que genuinamente somos.

Nos transforma de tal manera, que nos hace más conscientes de lo que existe en nosotros y en todo lo que existe.

Este crecimiento trae su propio dolor. Un dolor que llega a ser insoportable, intenso:
Como si un árbol estuviese creciendo desde la semilla de nuestra alma. Nos duele en lugares que siquiera podemos señalar con precisión. Un dolor abrumadoramente ardiente que nos palpita en el ombligo.

Para nutrir este crecimiento hay que confrontarse a sí mismo. Hacerlo posible significa aceptar la totalidad que somos: la luz y la sombra de nuestro árbol-alma.

Este crecimiento es el más doloroso de todos, pero así mismo, es esencial para construirnos una vida íntegra y hermosa, arraigada en una presencia consciente, amable y agradecida.

Growing from within

There is this kind of growth that has more to do with the core of our souls than with the changing shape of our bodies.

This growth happens in the essential realms of ourselves. It occurs within, but only to bring us closer to what we genuinely are.

A kind of transformation that makes us more aware of what it is in us, and in everything there is. It is growing to become ourselves.

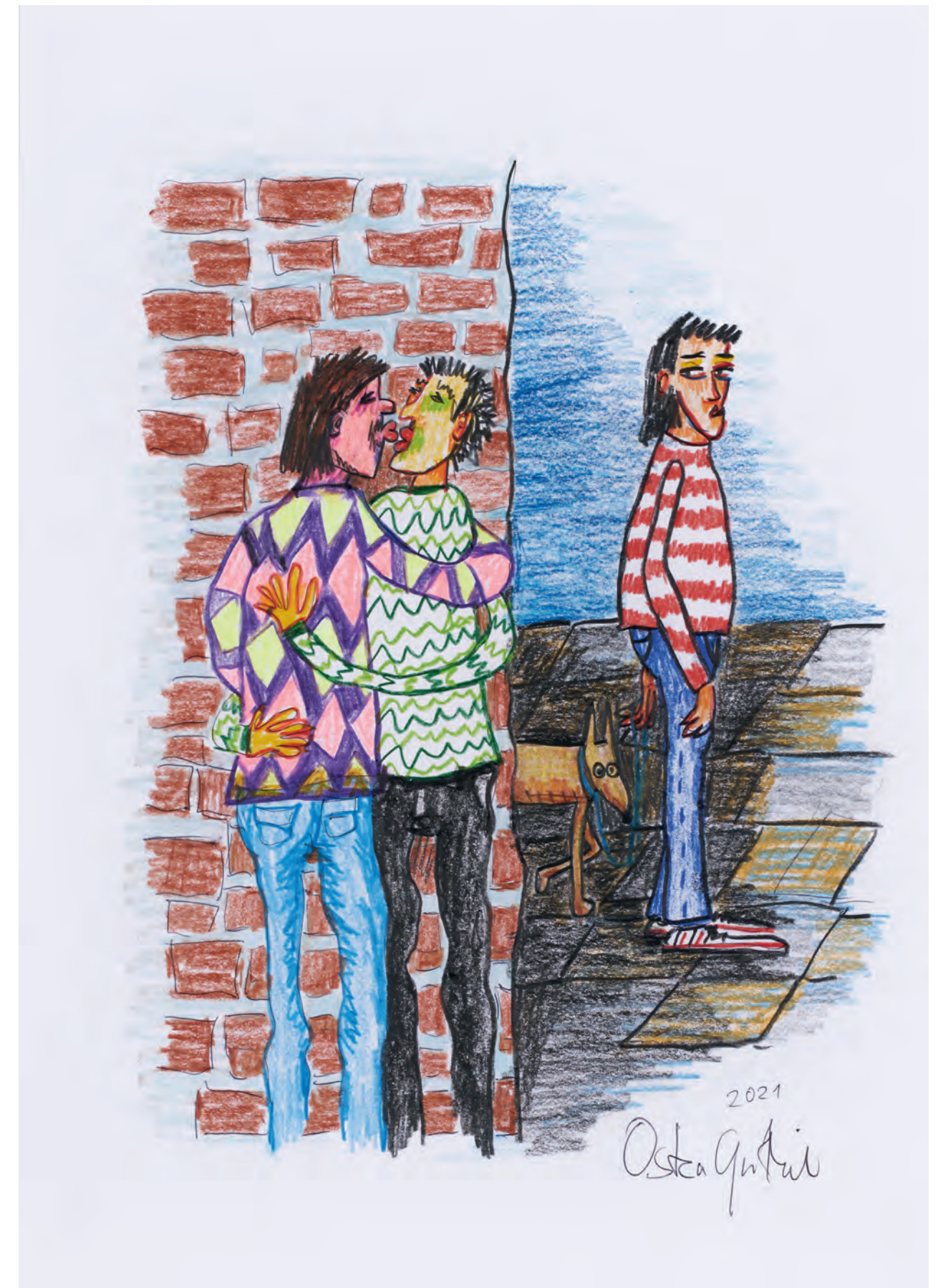
This growth brings its own kind of pain. A pain that can be unbearable at times: Like if a tree was growing from the seed of our soul. It hurts in places we cannot even pinpoint. An overwhelmingly burning pain that throbs in our navel.

One must face oneself to nurture this growth. To make it possible is to embrace the whole of us: both the bright and the dark side of our soul tree.

This kind of growth is the most painful of all but also, the most essential to building a wholesome and handsome life for ourselves. A life rooted in awareness, kindness, and gratitude.

OSKA GUTHEIL

* 1980 in Ravensburg, Germany



That Moment, 2021
Colored pencil on paper
42 x 29.7 cm

The moment when you know it will end...

HORTENSIA MI KAFCHIN

* 1986 in Galați, Romania



God, Charles and me, 2021
Oil on wood
49.8 x 69.7 cm

When faced with heartache, how do you decide what is the right thing to do?

I usually force myself to keep my ship on the map. To say I am using my studio days as a “painkiller” is too much, but maybe as a shield for my life problems.

I am remembering myself as a kid, looking at Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and, I don’t know, for me that was a blast. And I always said to myself, “I want to do that.” So I think this is my main directive until I will die. No doubt. Of course, my life is full of meteorites and unexpected things, good surprises, bad surprises, good luck, bad luck. You never know about the nature of what is happening to you. So, my way of coping is to keep the lines, like a Trojan Formation.

Life is suffering. It is suffering if we have a plan, it is if we have no plan. It is suffering if we are winners, and it is if we are losers. Keeping this in mind is good, just know your plan and stick to it.

Do you think making art can be a tool to work through emotional pain?

Yes. Naturally, any positive activity that trains neuroplasticity organizes our emotions. Even cleaning your room. I think in the end it is not important what we do, as long as it gives us structure. Structure is like the boat on which we float every day. In my case, because I am predisposed to creativity, making art is sometimes not that therapeutic. It is if you are a person who does not express their feelings too much, if you work in finance, or medicine, or astrophysics. Of course, you have to be excellent in your field to stand out. Your story will count if you make history but being creative is not important for the final formula.

But when you are an artist you have this pressure of doing something with nothing. And then you cross that therapeutic line at some point. It’s therapeutic when you never expressed yourself before and it’s the first time you splash a big canvas with colors, or when you find out it is healthy for you to draw your traumas and your fears, to see what your monsters would look like. When you have to do this in competition with a couple of thousands of years of art and creation you understand that painting is not just color on a surface. It is the representation of the moment.

If you look at ancient painting, there is so much information there, and as an artist you are in battle with so many years of experience that it can be overwhelming. And that is not therapeutic anymore. But this is the difference: anything can be therapeutic if it frees you, in that moment. Even the dark things, like sometimes sex, drugs. So, it is a balance of things.

When you are going through a heartbreak, how is it reflected in your work?

I work more. I am actually most grateful for my heartbreaks, because they gave me all this power to stay alone, and work, and to reject society because I was too damaged. At the same time, it is somehow a privilege to love more than to be loved. I try to see the glass half full instead of half empty. It’s character development. It’s destiny. I think we need suffering in order to be awake. We don’t need suffering nonstop, just like we don’t need pleasure nonstop — then we get bored. If you are in pain nonstop, at some point it breaks your soul and you don’t get anywhere. Again, it is about finding a perfect balance where you can function and have this contrast.

How is a heartbreak reflected in my work? It is nonstop reflected, because I always have heartbreaks. That the work exists is already the first reflection. Because as soon as I am meeting somebody, I am losing my skill. If you want to be happy, and love, and want good sex, and good travels, and good sunsets... Vaya con Dios! Bye metaphysics, bye truth, bye God. Because it is impossible to be profound being happy. But at the same time, it is cooler to be happy than to be profound.

What would you say was the biggest mistake you made while trying to get over a broken heart?

Of course, I did what any human does. This is the shortest and the simplest answer of all. We all did it: jumping immediately into another relationship. Using that human, that soul, that other destiny in a narcissistic way, internally speaking. You know, we could be saints on the outside, but our intentions can be very evil and narcissistic in fact. But if you really love, you use yourself to make that person feel better. You don’t use them for your own healing.

Interviewed by Nicola E. Petek
Berlin, 10 August 2021

EKIN SU KOÇ

* 1986 in Istanbul, Turkey



A Mountain at Nowhere, 2021
Fabric collage
67 x 72 cm

...Bir varmış bir yokmuş, uzaklarda bir adada bir genç kız ve karşı kıyıda bir genç çocuk yaşarmış, bu gençler birbirine aşıkmiş. Ancak aynı dinden de aynı kültürlerden de değillermiş. Çevrelerinin bu aşkı onaylamayacağını bildikleri halde gizli gizli geceleri görüşürlermiş. Çocuk her gece adaya yüzer, kız da yolunu bulabilsin diye ışığını açık bırakmış. Derken bir gece kızın babası bu ilişkiyi farketmiş, kızı karanlık bir yere kilitleyip eline bir fener alıp sahile gitmiş, bir o yana bir bu yana gidip gelmiş. Çocuk bütün gece ışığa doğru yüzse de yolunu kaybetmiş, en sonunda takati kalmayan genç boğulmuş. Son nefesinde sevgilisinin adını söylemiş:

“Ah, Tamara”...

Bu hikaye benim kimden öğrendiğimi hatırlamadığım, Van şehrindeki bir kilise ve adaya adını verdiği inanan eski bir hikaye.

Bu hikayeyi, Beuys’un önerdiği gibi her bilinçli üretimin sanat olduğunu düşünerek ya da Kiefer’in, kendi topraklarının kültürü ile semboller ve nesneler üzerinden yüzleşmesini düşünerek, nomadik kumaşlarla ve dikişlerle işlenmiş/ resmedilmiş hayali bir dağ/ada mazarası üzerinden paylaşıyorum ve bu dağın kendimizi günlük politik haberlere, ekonomik kararlara ve coğrafi sınırlarımıza nasıl gömdüğümüzü hatırlatmasını diliyorum. Sanat politik bir yarayı iyileştirebilir mi, bilmiyorum, ama bir tedavi olarak kişisel bilince ve kültürel sembollere, objelere, hikaye anlatılarına, bunların hatırlanmasına inanıyorum.

...Once upon a time there was a young woman who lived on a small island and a boy who lived on the other side of the shore. They were in love, but they did not belong to the same religion or have the same national origin. Although they knew that society would not approve of this love, they met every night. The boy swam to the island, while the girl left the lights on so he could find his way to her. But one night the young woman’s father had noticed what was going on and locked her in a dark room, then took a lamp and went to the shore. While the boy swam in the supposed direction of his beloved’s light, the father kept changing his location so that the boy swam all night until he finally drowned, completely exhausted. In his last breath he whispered the name of his love:

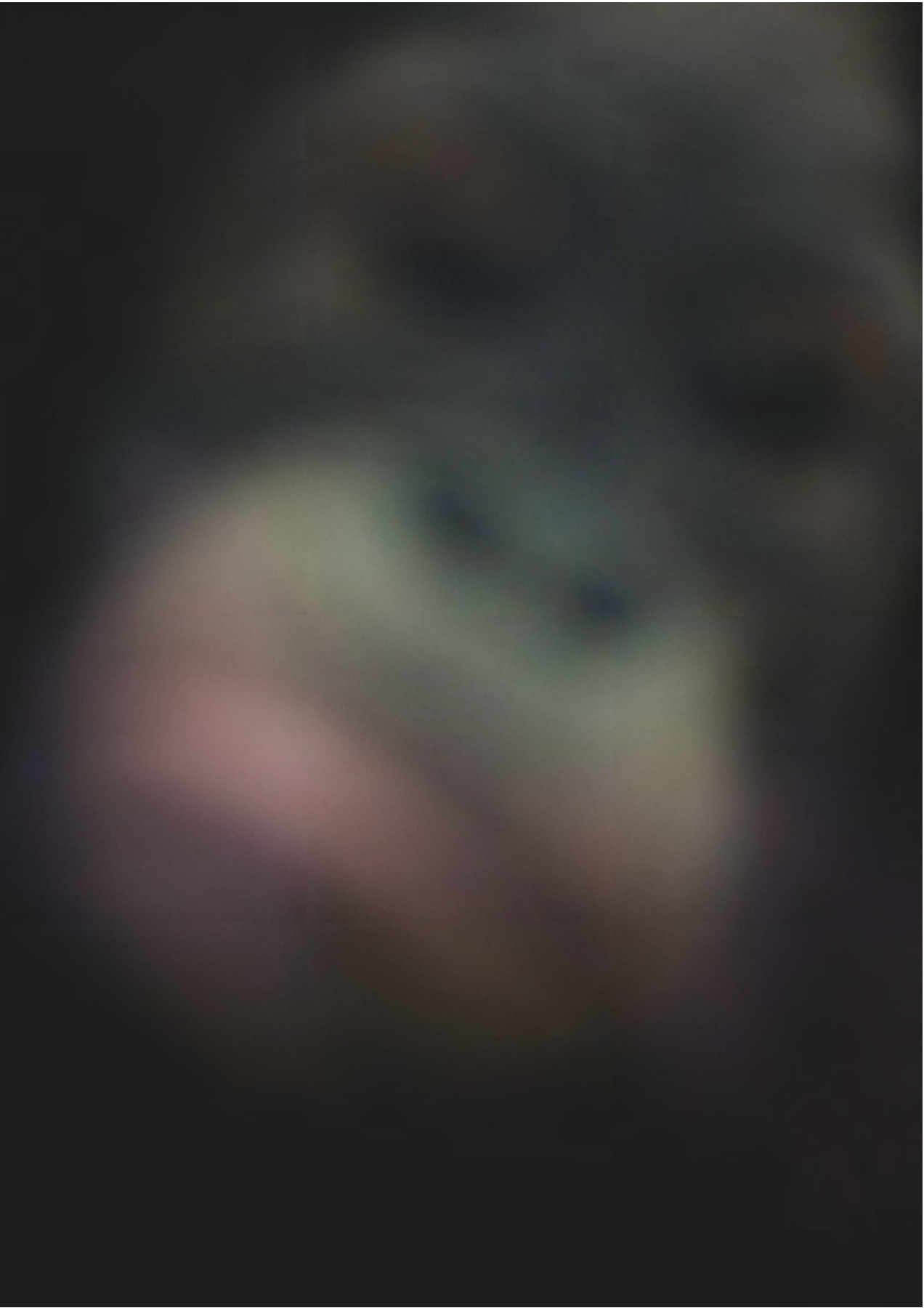
“Ah, Tamara”...

This is a little tale that I can’t remember who I first heard it from. The people of the area around Van, where the incident happened, named the small island in the lake and the house on it – which later became a church – after this story.

Just as Beuys suggested that anyone with a conscious approach can create art, or like Kiefer who confronts the history of his country through symbols or found objects, I share this story with a representation of the symbolic mountain/island as an engraving/patching/drawing on a nomadic fabric, just to remind us of how we are immersed in the daily politics, economic decisions and geographical lines of our countries. I don’t know if art can ever heal a political wound, but I believe in individual awareness and remembering the stories that cultural elements, symbols and objects tell as a cure.

FLO MAAK

* 1980 in Fulda, Germany



Sad, 2020
Pigment print in artist's frame
42 x 29.7 cm

Vor vielen Jahren war ich im Affenhaus des Frankfurter Zoos. Es war während der Ferienzeit. Viele Kinder waren mit ihren Eltern dort und es war laut. Ich fiel auf mit meinen langen Haaren, meiner pinken Jacke und Perlenkette. Um die Aufmerksamkeit der Affen zu bekommen, klopfte ein Kind gegen die Panzerglasscheibe. Die Bonobos ließen sich davon kaum beirren und fuhren mit ihren jeweiligen Beschäftigungen fort. Sie reinigten sich gegenseitig das Fell, dösten vor sich hin oder hangelten sich an einem Seil quer durch ihren Raum. Hin und wieder blickten sie dabei auf das wilde Treiben jenseits der Glasscheibe. Nach einer Weile hockte ich mich hin und suchte den Blick eines jungen Bonobos. Als dieser meinen Blick erwiderte und näherkam, lehnte ich mein Gesicht gegen die Scheibe. Er näherte sich mir auf Höhe meines Kopfs bis er auch das kalte Glas berührte. Ich konnte ihn nur noch verschwommen sehen. Einige Kinder sahen uns zu und wurden für einen Moment ruhig. Nachdem sich mein Gegenüber wieder distanzierte, stand ich auf und sah einen Fettfilm auf der Glasscheibe genau da, wo wir uns fast berührt hätten. Wenig später drückte das erste Kind sein Gesicht gegen das Glas. Ich verließ das Affenhaus gebrochenen Herzens.

Many years ago, I was in the Monkey House of the Frankfurt Zoo. It was during the vacation season. Many children were there with their parents and it was noisy. I stood out with my long hair, pink jacket and pearl necklace. To get the attention of the monkeys, a child knocked against the bulletproof glass. The bonobos were hardly distracted by this and continued with their respective occupations. They cleaned each other's fur, dozed off, or shimmied across the room on a rope. Every now and then they looked at the wild goings-on beyond the glass pane. After a while I squatted down and sought for the gaze of a young bonobo. When he returned my gaze and came closer, I leaned my face against the glass. He approached me at the level of my head until he also touched the cold glass. I could only see him in a blur. Some children watched us and became quiet for a moment. After my counterpart distanced himself again, I stood up and saw a greasy film on the glass exactly where we almost touched. A little later, the first child pressed its face against the glass. I left the Monkey House with a broken heart.

KATE MCCGWIRE

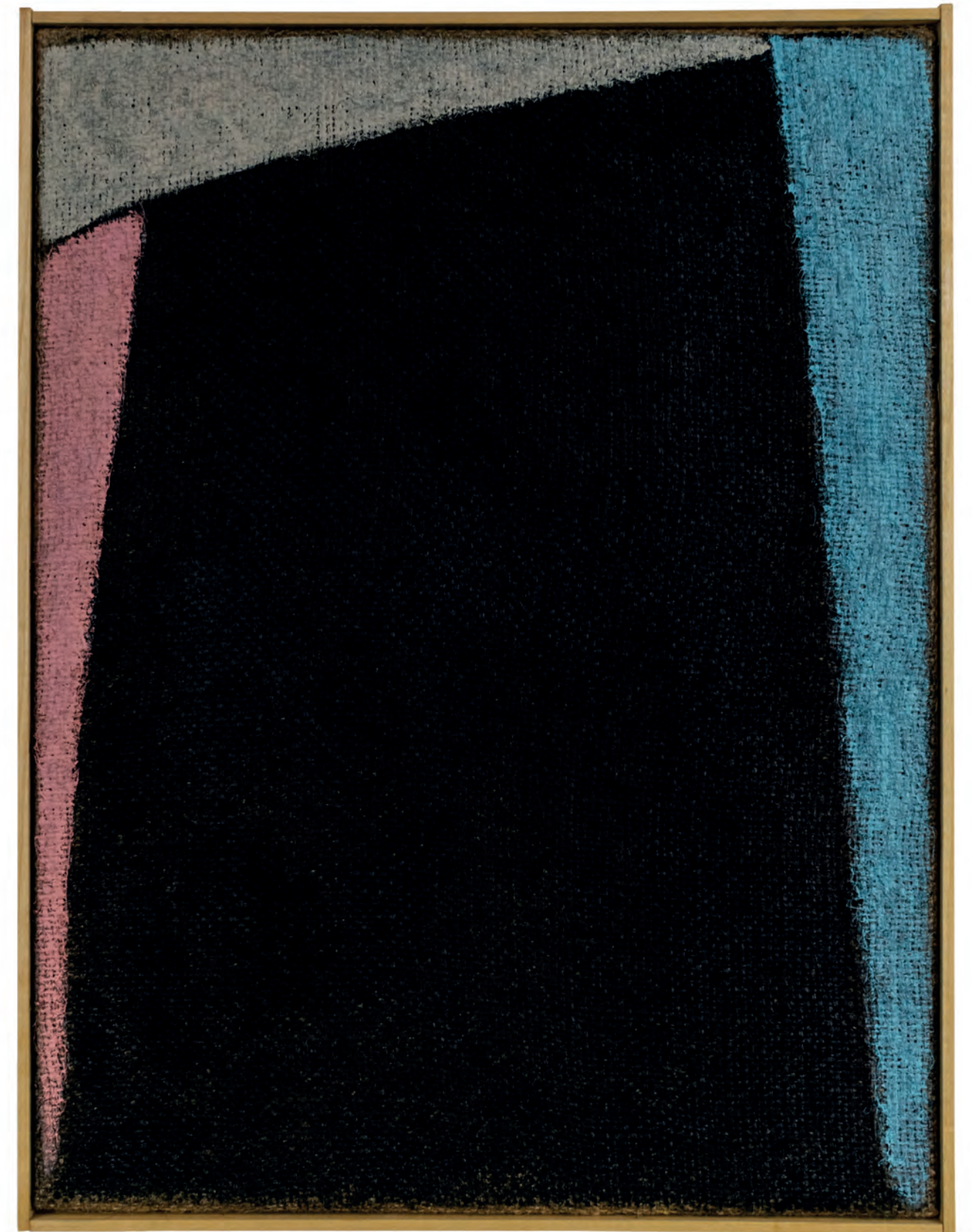
* 1964 in Norwich, England



I AM LOST

CHRISTOPHER COLM MORRIN

* 1980 in Dublin, Ireland



Untitled (Pink, White, Blue and Black), 2021
Acrylic on unprimed jute
43.5 x 33.5 cm

Of What Once Was

*Sinking ship on ceilings pound
With tired thoughts and tears
Slow masses of whispered shame
There is a timelessness
Grasping onto nothing
Holding and forging a deal with air
Gaps slash through
Awaiting corners, with no turn given
Short attempts of comfort
That takes the weight from perverse ruins
A numbing feeling near the core
And a soft tune whistles, fading now
Muted, with no shape
Yet one can still descry decay
Of what once was.*

It is like the leftovers of a building in ruins: seemingly tall in structure, slowly crumbling, fading, yet still seen. Nothing is moving when one feels like this; continuously constant. Every day wishing for it to pass. Wishing for the building to disappear, to rebuild, to renew fresh feelings, as fast as possible.

It's pain that can be seen as the best friend of the soul. It is there for us to have a chance to grow within, to let go of it all, to heal what came before us, and to whitewash our vision so we can see again. It's a hole in the structure.

One must see it as a crucial ingredient towards the development of being a more meaningful human, and to take a moment to truly love one's heart no matter what it feels and how self-destructive it may seem. One must not fear it. It has the power to unfix us into something else through pure imagination. After all, the unknown is a deep teacher in allowing things to be.

DENNIS SCHOLL

* 1980 in Hünfeld, Germany



Die Falten im Wort des letzten Abends, 2021
Watercolor on paper
51.2 x 38.4 cm

Ganz von selbst zieht es den Körper hinab zum Fluss. Die Kapelle bleibt zurück auf dem Hügel. Eine Krähe schaut vom Dach ihm nach. Durch den Wind bewegt, streichen die langen Gräser über die unbedeckten Stellen der Haut. Ein Strahlen ergießt sich aus der klaffenden Wunde in der Brust, kräuselt sich an den Rändern, legt sich in Falten, verbirgt dort Galaxien. Es erhellt Boden, Weißdorn und Hasel im abnehmenden Licht des Abends. Mit jedem Schritt öffnet sich eine Vielzahl von Poren, die Epidermis mit ihren Millionen Toren, das Sich-Weiten und die gelösten Schichten des Schutzes.

Am Fluss angelangt flackert auf dem Wasser von Westen her letztes gebrochenes Gold und Karmin. Der Kopf ist geneigt, immer tiefer, Tropfen quellen, fallen mit einer Schwere in die Hände um sich von dort, gesammelt und mit erneutem Anlauf, in die Münder der Fische zu werfen. Die Kraft weicht. Lediglich Sinken ist möglich, immerwährend, unendlich nach unten in die Erde.

Zwei Wildschweine, aus dem Wald gekommen, schmiegen sich an den Körper, bedecken die Stelle des Herzens mit Schlamm. Eine Ricke lässt Moos und Flechten darauf fallen. Bergmolche kriechen aus dem flachen Wasser, zärtlich tastend die Glieder hinauf und bilden eine glänzende Decke. Drei Seidenreiherr breiten ihre Schwingen aus. Ganz in der Nähe, auf einem gefällten Baum – eine Rohrdommel, heimliche Stimme der Einsamkeit, weitet den Hals und vibriert.

All by itself the body is drawn down to the river. Observed by a crow from the roof of the chapel on the hill. Moved by the wind, the long grasses brush the uncovered parts of the skin. A glow pours from the gaping wound in the chest, ripples along the edges, folds, hides galaxies within. It illuminates soil, hawthorn and hazel in the waning light of evening. A multitude of pores opens with each step, the epidermis with its millions of doors, the self-widening and the secreted layers of protection.

Having reached the river, last broken gold and crimson from the west flickers on the water. The head is inclined, deeper and deeper, drops swell, fall with a heaviness into the hands to throw themselves from there, collected and with renewed effort, into the mouths of the fish. The force recedes. Only sinking is possible, forever, infinitely downward into the earth.

Two wild boars, coming out of the forest, nestle against the body, cover the location of the heart with mud. A doe drops moss and lichen on it. Mountain newts crawl out of the shallow water, delicately groping up the limbs, forming a shiny blanket. Three egrets spread their wings. Nearby, on a logged tree, a great bittern, secret voice of solitude, widens its throat and vibrates.

ANNA STEINERT

* 1983 in Krefeld, Germany



Thought machine, 2021
Oil and oil sticks on canvas
60 x 50 cm

„Ein ruhiges Herz wünsche ich dir.“
Ami, meine Großmutter,
bei unserem letzten Abschied
vor ihrem Tod.

“A quiet heart, I wish for you.”
Ami, my grandmother,
when we said our last goodbyes
before her death.

JULIETTE STURLÈSE

* 1989 in Paris, France



Shifted, 2021
Oil and beeswax on canvas
25 x 20 cm

“Le souvenir d’une certaine image,
n’est que le regret d’un certain instant.”¹

Marcel Proust

“The memory of a certain image
is only the regret of a certain moment.”¹

Marcel Proust

¹ Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Du côté de chez Swann, 1913 éditions Grasset.

SONGWEN SUN-VON BERG

* 1968 in Shanghai, China



Nothing is new tonight 2, 2018
Ink on paper
45.7 x 70 cm

所有的希望和悲伤都是照亮生命的一束光！

All hope and all heartbreak are a ray of light to illuminate life!

ÖZER TORAMAN

*1989 in Van, Turkey



The light of the heart, 2021
Oil on canvas
40 x 60 cm

Ez dixwazim bi çarçovên ku ez li ser teşeyên
xwe hildigirim û balê bikişînim ser xewn û
xeyalê. Ji ber ku em dikarin di jiyana xwe
de bibînin ku xewn sêwirana pêşerojê ye, bi
zanebûn an nezanî, ku ew jiyane rêve dibe.
Xiyal rastiya mirov bi xwe ye. Di vê gerdûna
xeyalan de, ku tenê ya rastî û ya virtual lê
di nav hev de ne, ya ku em lê ne, rastiya me
ye. Mirovek dikare bi xwe-xewn-kêfxweş be
bêyî ku kesek din wê qebûl bike. Theertên
bi êş ên rastiya derveyî dikarin bi xewnan
derbas bibin. Ji ber vê yekê xeyal girîng e!
Xiyal xweserbûn e. Ew wateya dilxweşiyê
ye ku dikare hemî tawanan ji holê rabike.
Xewn, xewn û xeyal ramanên cîhana me
ya hestiyar in. Ez temaşevanan vedixwînim
serpêhatiyek xewnê, wan bi hest, raman û
daxwazên xwe tenê dihêlim. Wêneyek bê
sînor xeyal bikin! Dibe ku temaşevan di vê
rêwîtiya xewnê de tabûyên xwe bişkinin,
an jî dibe ku ew ê bi rastiya xwe re rû bi
rû bibin. Ez dixwazim balê bikişînim ser ku
xiyal mirovan dihêle ku wateyê bidin jiyane.

Within the four sides of my canvases I
want to draw attention to dreaming and
imagining. Because we can see in our
lives that the dream is consciously or
unconsciously the blueprint of the future,
that it directs life. Imagination is the reality
of the human being itself. In this universe
of illusions, where only the real and the
virtual are intertwined, our reality is where
we are. A person can be happy with
themselves without the intervention of anyone
else. The painful conditions of the external
reality can be overcome by dreams.
That is why imagination is important!
Fantasy is self-sufficiency. Dreams, images
and imaginations are reflections of our
emotional world.

ABOUT

the artists

Marjan Baniasadi
* 1993 in Tehran, Iran

Marjan Baniasadi’s surfaces are tactile, delicate and sensitive. Their visual subtleties and complexities envelop the viewer, just like the experience of stepping onto a carpet that welcomes you into its softness and comfort. The artist incorporates fragments of these very carpets into her works. She explores the components of the handmade, woven product, which is not just a formal convention but a way of looking at the world. Baniasadi ties her observations into her own knots, strands, hues, shapes and motifs. On canvas or porcelain, the artist engages with her memory, tearing, fragmenting and dismembering the scraps, then carefully reassembling them to allow for new narratives.

Göksu Baysal
* 1975 in Ankara, Turkey

Photography, sculpture, film and installation are central elements in Baysal’s artistic practice. The interrelationship arises from an interdisciplinary engagement with the material that Baysal collects on his travels and through research. In his expansive installations, these findings are brought together in ephemeral and narrative constellations.

Peter Böhnisch
* 1976 in Waiblingen, Germany

With his sand paintings, Peter Böhnisch explores the possibilities of painting beyond oil on canvas. In his enigmatic scenes, the artist combines traditional pictorial themes with contemporary elements. The beauty of the motifs often contrasts with the coarseness of the surface, while humor and meaningfulness keep each other in balance. The images refer to dreams and tales, thus documenting visions and thoughts. Böhnisch examines various inner and outer states in order to assemble individual considerations into new ideas.

Daniel Correa Mejía
* 1986 in Medellín, Colombia

Through a poetic honesty, Daniel Correa Mejía allows us to participate in the innermost part of himself. We witness intimate dialogues and deeply hidden thoughts, set within a delicate universe of knowledge. Laid out on rough jute canvas, the painter moves through a spiritual sea of ultramarine and red. By glowing from within, the paintings radiate a mysterious allure that remains intangible. The figures depicted are vulnerable and strong at the same time, merging masculinity and femininity into a sacred balance.

Alexander Denkert
* 1985 in Pirna, Germany

Over time, Alexander Denkert found his very own range of chromaticity, which he uses again and again in his paintings. The same applies to the artist’s special geometric vocabulary of forms consisting of stars, jags, and other elements, which extend in multitude across the canvases and papers. Denkert’s large-format oil paintings, most of which were created in the same dimensions, thus function both on their own and in the context of a group.

Emily Eldridge
* 1983 in Michigan, USA

Emily Eldridge’s creative work is diverse — from murals to street art, editorial illustration, graphic design and more. She finds inspiration in fashion, pop cultural references and her everyday life. Her visually bold images are strong in their message and, even when the artist tackles difficult subjects, always contain humour and wit. Eldridge has created murals in the United States, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, China and other countries.

ABOUT

Daniela Elorza
* 1989 in Bogotá, Colombia

Daniela Elorza grew up in between different countries in both South and North America, mainly in the Peruvian capital Lima. Ever since she was a child, her passion for art was almost second nature, and still is to this day. Elorza's (academic) experience in South America fuelled her deep interest in pre-Colombian Latin American art, echoes of which can be discovered again and again in her paintings.

Oska Gutheil
* 1980 in Ravensburg, Germany

The basic theme of Oska Gutheil's practice is the examination and questioning of social norms in society and our role in it. The artist always works in series. These usually begin with an idea that then leads to a new cycle in which Gutheil continues to explore the theme. His work is usually about the issue of gender and uniformity, which he tries to overcome or address through painting.

Hortensia Mi Kafchin
* 1985 in Galați, Romania

While having been part of the Cluj Paintbrush Factory from 2009 to 2016, Hortensia Mi Kafchin has developed her distinctly imaginative and philosophical paintings. Her unique canon of motifs fragments, devours, and mirrors the symbolisms of both science fiction and ancient myths. In her meticulously constructed images, humans and machines meet in mysterious and sometimes ambivalent ways. The artist uses this vocabulary to express her own journey, personal experiences, and visions of possible modalities of existence.

Ekin Su Koç
* 1986 in Istanbul, Turkey

Ekin Su Koç's works derive from nature and human psychology. In her recent works she focuses on cultural heritage and environmental issues. Collage is her main medium and the cut and paste approach is visible in her sculptures, paintings and epoxy works as well. The artist uses traditional motifs, maps, daily magazines or sometimes laces, dried flowers and images of animals to refer to multicultural contrasts and coexistence on earth.

Flo Maak
* 1980 in Fulda, Germany

Flo Maak's works are thematically diverse, with questions of autonomy, sovereignty and interdependence, especially in animal-human relationships, as well as the destructive consequences of human economic activity. Starting from photography, he usually develops installations in which the images are extended into the space through architectural interventions and sculptural elements. Furthermore, text plays an important role in this work as, for example, part of the picture, title or accompanying wall text. Maak always emphasises the visual aspect of his concept-based works.

Kate MccGwire
* 1964 in Norwich, England

Taking feathers as her primary medium, Kate MccGwire goes through labour-intensive processes of collecting, sorting and cleaning her materials to create muscular, writhing forms reminiscent of Classical sculpture and creatures from mythology. These abject structures explore dualities of aesthetics, being simultaneously seductive and repulsive; form, being simultaneously organic and abstract; and movement, appearing fluid yet being static. Through her practice, MccGwire celebrates feathers, which are commonly shed or discarded, as the medium through which she articulates enigmatic anatomies that explore physical and introspective space.

Christopher Colm Morrin
* 1980 in Dublin, Ireland

As a spiritual reflection on human sensuality, Christopher Colm Morrin's painting can be understood as an investigation into the vastness of the unknown. The artist is inspired by a daily routine of meditation and the analysis of his dreams and the unconscious. His latest works are direct attempts to come face-to-face with and understand one's emotions and a willingness to openly express them. One major aim of Morrin's art is to create a healthy discourse about the vulnerable nature of the human psyche but he is also keen to explore the liberating power of truth within the soul of the individual and the collective.

Dennis Scholl
* 1980 in Hünfeld, Germany

Dennis Scholl's meticulously executed images often describe sceneries reminiscent of classical visions of Arcadia. Paying as much attention to the smallest details as to the overall composition, the artist's dreamlike perceptions are recalling German Romanticism and the excessive opulence of the Baroque. Scholl's images are undergirded by a subtle sexuality and violence which seems paradoxical given the naïvety of the artist's subjects. The tension between beauty and violence, youth and death persists throughout Scholl's oeuvre.

Anna Steinert
* 1983 in Krefeld, Germany

Through her work, Anna Steinert taps into the dark and light aspects of life. The artist has a strong ability to find visual expressions for inner states. Melancholy meets the courage to face life, figuration faces abstraction. The interdisciplinary artist explores these conditions in painting as well as in sculpture and film.

Juliette Sturlèse
* 1989 in Paris, France

Juliette Sturlèse's paintings move confidently between figuration and abstraction. The titles often tempt the viewer into an interpretation predetermined by the artist. In doing so, the splashes of colour are transformed into people, landscapes and complex sceneries. Sturlèse is always concerned with capturing the essence of a moment: the colour of the light, the movement of the people, the sensory impressions of a place and the emotions associated with it.

Songwen Sun-von Berg
* 1968 in Shanghai, China

Songwen Sun-von Berg studied Machinery Engineering at Shanghai Jiaotong University (B.Sc.). Since 1991, she has lived and worked in Berlin, Germany. She studied Sinology at Freie Universität Berlin (M.A.) and Fine Art with Professor Hans Schiller (private) and with Professor Heinz Jürgen Kristahn at Berlin University of Arts. Sun-von Berg is a member of Professional Association of Visual Artists Berlin. In 2018, she was nominated for Losito Art Prize Berlin. Numerous of her works can be found in private and public collections, including the Museum für Asiatische Kunst Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Hurun Art Foundation Shanghai.

Özer Toraman
* 1989 in Van, Turkey

Özer Toraman attracts attention with his portraits developed against imposed identities and gendered politics. While Toraman questions a singularity outside the dualism of male/female with his figures far from gender-specific contours, he invites the audience to see things differently by leaving them to their feelings, thoughts and desires.

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Days of Heartbreak
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curated by Nicola E. Petek

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Eli Freitag

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