

# FLORIAN GERMANN



# *RINGER*

April 21 —  
June 2, 2018



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The Swiss artist Florian Germann understands sculptural practice first and foremost as a performative process, in which material and body reciprocally shape each other through various stages of attraction and repulsion. At the same time, the artist pursues a deep interest in natural formations, which emerge over long time periods and free from the impact of human activity, so that many of his work groups evolve around geo- and mineralogical explorations. These seemingly opposite creative paths are then woven into more and more autonomous narratives, linking material history with scientific fact, mythological structures as well as motives from popular culture.

The exhibition "Ringer" brings together a new group of sculptural works made by combining traditional sculpting and casting techniques and synthetic materials that transform organic formations into xenomorphic hybrids which open a wide gamut of connotations or references. By selectively spreading out the different stages of transformation, a walk through the exhibition resembles a glimpse behind the scenes of a locus, where narratives are sketched out in entirely material terms.

The intersection of natural form-finding and a classical sculptural approach can be found in Ringer (Positive) – a sprawling figure whose shape is derived from a small fossilized worm. Similar to the organism naturally imprinted in stone, the original styrofoam model of the sculpture is enclosed within the synthetic cast, a compound of epoxy and nylon (in German the idiom "ringer" is used in the technical jargon of mouldmakers to describe a cast that is stuck in the mould). The lightly translucent waxed surface of this protruding body has a greyish-yellow sheen and plays with various formal analogies, ranging from the depiction of flesh tones (particularly in medieval painting) to more popular manifestations, e.g. from the film Ghostbusters. The reversed pendant, Ringer (Negative), a proper casting mould split in two halves, duplicates the shape and material in slight variation and draws attention to the material and technical conditions of its making.

The degree to which a performative exploration of sculpture plays a central role in Germann's work becomes apparent in the series Airbag 1–5, which turn vehicle safety devices into aesthetic objects with distinctly anthropomorphic qualities. Numbers one and three of the series are bulging bodies restrained by steel cables and playing with allusions to bondage (as an aesthetic practice of shaping the organic through restraints), while the others are expanded and bearing a rough imprint of the artist's face. These imprints do not result from immediate, unpredictable contact, but rather from a complex moulding and embossing method using a cast of the artist's face, which is another work in the exhibition and required the temporary submersion in silicone to shape the mould. Dummy oscillates between artist portrait and tool, while reminding of manufacturing processes for prosthetic masks and skin-like props, when the human body has to be transfigured and extended according to various premises in fictional narratives.

Florian Germann has recently been included in the exhibition "Unthought Environments", curated by Karsten Lund, at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, which focused on the hidden networks of elemental and physical phenomena, fundamentally shaping human culture and everyday life. Germann's work is currently on display in the exhibition "Konstellation 9. Alles fließt" at Kunsthaus Thurgau, Switzerland. On May 17, Florian Germann's solo show "Die Stral" will open at the University of Zurich. Taking the correspondence of reformer Heinrich Bullinger as point of departure, the large-scale installation examines the social energies emerging from radical natural phenomena. The five-part exhibition is curated by Luca Beeler.