

Mirko Baselgia works with a variety of mediums and materials, and looks deeply into the dynamics and structures that characterise our world in order to highlight the interdependent relationships that bind all living organisms to each other and to their environment. Notions of territory, natural resources and impermanence are at the heart of his artistic practice. With his subtle investigations of materiality, the multi-sensory experience of art plays a central role in many of his creations. His works explore and suggest new possibilities for shaping the way we interact with our environment and other forms of lives.

This exhibition includes a new set of paintings and an older drawing from the *Coprinus Comatus* project, which currently consists of four series and is still ongoing. The artist's fascination with the *Coprinus comatus* is at the origin of this project. This common fungus, also known as the 'ink cap', uses an unusual method to distribute its spores. In a process of self-digestion - autolysis - its cap and gills dissolve and turn into a black, slimy ink in order to spread the spores. Self-destruction here acquires an unexpectedly positive meaning, allowing the next generation to grow. Intrigued by this particular phenomenon, the artist went to look for these mushrooms in the meadows. For the creation of the first series, he first made drawings on the spot and then picked the mushrooms to extract the ink following an ancient recipe. Made with pencil and fungal ink, the drawing on display, *Autolysis - Coprinus Comatus* (2018), is part of this series and is an analogue enlargement of an original sketch. The fungi are depicted in their natural environment to emphasise the strong connection between these organisms and their surroundings.

After this first series of more figurative drawings and the second series showing abstract ink stains left by the hairy coprins laid on the paper after their disintegration, the third series only represents the mushrooms in an abstract way through their ink. Drops of ink were placed on the paper and Baselgia dripped them along its surface in different ways to create more or less geometric compositions with the help of the natural force of gravity. The unusual situation we have been experiencing since March 2020 was one of the inspirations for this series. As the ink extracted from the *Coprinus comatus* was commonly used to write letters since the 18th century and its spores were therefore disseminated wherever mail was sent, the artist sees in the planetary expansion of this fungus a metaphor for the dynamics of global interconnection characteristic of our society.

Produced in the autumn of 2020, the paintings on display make up the fourth series. During the short season of the hairy coprin - more or less two weeks - Mirko Baselgia and his assistants picked the mushrooms and hung them on top of the blank canvases in different configurations in order to orchestrate the appearance of ink stains following

their disintegration. In doing so, the artist could only partially control the final composition of the image, and the shape, intensity and materiality of the stains are directly determined by the process of self-digestion and gravity.

While the composition of *Coprinus Comatus - Four in the field* and *Coprinus Comatus Five in the field* reproduces the configuration of the mushrooms as they were found in the field, the composition of the other paintings was orchestrated by the artist. In *Coprinus Comatus - Circle*, for instance, the arrangement of the spots suggests a group of people gathered in a circle to exchange, share life experiences or simply be together. However, the possibilities of interpretation are endless and the image opens up to the variety of individual perceptions, as well as to the possibilities offered by the phenomenon of pareidolia, which refers to the natural tendency of the human mind to give form to the formless, to see, for example, shapes in clouds, faces in inanimate objects or abstract patterns. If one looks closely at the paintings, one can also see slight traces of insects, which in turn have contributed to the spread of the spores. These works thus represent the visible manifestation of cooperation between species.

The title of the exhibition, *Imagine a white surface with irregular black spots*, refers to a central passage in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) by the philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein and, in short, to his thoughts on human perception. The central theme of this treaty is the investigation of the nature of language and its ability to depict reality. In the quote under review, Wittgenstein uses the image of a black spot on a white sheet of paper to explain the concept of truth. He suggests that the shape of the stain can be described by saying for each point on the sheet whether it is white or black, but that in order to do this we must first define under what circumstances a point is white and under what circumstances it is black. This analogy raises, among other things, the question of perception as a complex phenomenon, which not only varies from one individual to another, but also depends on the grid of reading we use. The black spots in Mirko Baselgia's paintings, with their varied contours, their materiality, with their sometimes intense, sometimes ghostly presence, take us into the complexity of human perception.

Laura Giudici

Mirko Baselgia (1982, Swiss, lives and works in Graubünden) graduated from the Zurich School of Art with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Visual Arts. Amongst other awards, he has been awarded the Kiefer Hablitzel Scholarship (2012) and the Manor Cultural Prize (Chur, 2013). Recent solo exhibitions include *Pardis* (Curzoin) at the Bellelay Abbey in 2018, *Habitat* at Galerie Urs Meile in Lucerne in 2019 and *GIUSTRAR*, currently on view at Galerie Stalla Madulain in Graubünden. This year, his work will be shown in the group exhibition *LandLiebe* at the Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur and in a major solo exhibition at the Kunst(Zeug)Haus in Rapperswil. His works are found in numerous public and private collections, such as the MUDAC, the Kunstmuseum Olten, the Bündner Kunstmuseum, the Swiss National Bank, the Credit Suisse Collection, the Zürcher Kantonalbank, the Roche Art Collection and the Burger Collection.