

Exhibition review

TERRITORIES OF WASTE. ON THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

Curated by Sandra Beate Reimann and postponed several times due to the pandemic, the group exhibition on display from Sept. 14, 2022, to Jan. 8, 2023, inside the Tinguely Museum in Basel aims to visualize the issue of the treatment of the Earth's resources, drawing attention to the landscapes originated from the extraction of raw materials and the incessant spread of microplastics, forever chemicals, radioactivity, greenhouse gases, etc. The major theme of the excesses of Western civilization becoming hidden or visible waste that poisons the earth is here materialized tangibly through the efforts and positions of the 25 local and international artists involved in the exhibition.

The exhibition space is accessed directly from the collection on artist Jean Tinguely's LE DÉFINITIF C'EST LE PROVISOIRE. The motorized scrap sculptures that distinguish Tinguely's art are thus the background of TERRITORIES OF WASTE, the ideological starting point of the show.

Some works were requested and created specifically for this exhibition. The sculptural installation *Nomol* (2022) by Eric Hattan is composed of the museum's accumulated installation and dismantling waste accumulated throughout the year that would normally be discarded. *Ennui Public Haze (Stream Plays)* (2022) by Romy Rüeegger replays images of a walk on the theme of the hidden presence of waste and its colonial interweavings in Basel's urban space. *Ro/AlCuTaAu* (2022) by Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen is a new mineral created using electronic waste and equipment from F. Hoffmann-La Roche AG. The exhibition's effectiveness thus lies in its ability to talk about a global problem while also referencing the local context, the one that visitors find and recognize as they leave the museum – where, in the garden, Diana Lelonek's installation (*Center of living things*, 2016) shows hybrid human-natural artifacts from abandoned urban areas in and around Basel.

The dynamically mixed nature of waste becomes the concept of the exhibition setup, which is divided into a gathered but bright open-space with a couple of enclosed spaces, where the quite heterogeneous range of works testifies to an artistic investigation that began as early as the 1960s, when the masses of waste were beginning to be visible due to the emerging consumerist culture. Today these have become invisible in Western areas: the pollution and movement of waste reproduce colonial trajectories and the history of exploitation. Multimedia and static works, files documenting the physical and biological world

of biosocial water systems, fragments of electronic devices lying on pedestals like soulless statues, fishing nets and hooks (Carolina Caycedo, *Cosmotarrafa Watu (Rio Doce)*, 2016), installations on pesticide pollution and in the seas in the Antilles (Julien Creuzet, *pourquoi nos chemins / se sont croisés / à une névralgie si chaotique/ Kepone Merex Curlone / écotoxique exotique / épileptique / fuck you (...)*, 2019), poetic dances on garbage heaps outside the Indian city Pune (Tejal Shah, *Between the Waves - Inner*, 2012 film), a docufiction filmed in Gadani confronting humanity with waste (Hira Nabi, *All That Perishes at the Edge of Land*, 2019) display just a few of these realities.

Life and death are linked like land and sea as the voice of the dying ship becomes the lament of the earth in front of this spectacle that in 25 different facets shows the great pile of waste behind every wealthy Western life. A frightening and looming prospect, like the installation designed by Pinar Yoldaş for the exhibition (*An Ecosystem of Excess; Metabolising Plastics*, 2022) that shows a new ecosystem where new hybrid life forms feed on junk.

Waste succeeds in becoming art, in a great little manifesto that is TERRITORIES OF WASTE. The action of each artist is an appeal and a complaint to an unbalanced, dysfunctional, and persistent global system that continues in its intent of inequality and disparity, of oppressed colonized countries, metaphorical containers of the exuberance of the colonizers. A spectacle of a nature that is no longer even contaminated but has become a hybrid of soil and toxic waste.

The fragments of our world made of garbage on display in the exhibition are as diverse as they are multiple that we no longer know where to start from – cities, plantations, the sea, mines, suburbs, forests, exploitation, and accumulation. Nature and waste blend together playing the authority of creation, where the artist is the one who observes and conducts a diagnosis of these new realities and communicates it to the world in his language.

The curatorship of TERRITORIES OF WASTE has succeeded and effectively rendered the concept of *waste* in all its senses, of the world's problem and the artists' interventions through different types of works that finally allow this exhibition space, in which people sensitively perceive the confusion and feeling of loss about the degradation of the Earth, the multitude of problems that seem to nullify the sense of any intervention and at the same time amplify it and make it stronger and more effective. TERRITORIES OF WASTE catapults the visitor into a world that reminds one that the earth's garbage and pollution are protagonists, a world that reveals the illusion of our reality and our misguided power mechanisms.