

KISSING IN MY SUBARU

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Who remembers that first, shy kiss in the backseat of a Subaru? The straw in your hair after a secret date in the stable? Who knows the regret of not having found themselves sooner?

The group exhibition *Kissing In My Subaru*, curated by Alizé Rose-May and Eva-Maria Knüsel, examines how the geographical and social environment we grow up in shapes our identity and self-image. The exhibition brings together artists who explore this question from a queer perspective and based on their own biographical ties to rural areas or the Alpine regions. Their works tell of first intimate encounters, of role models outside the norm, and of resistant practices. At the center is an investigation of traditions and rituals that are often taken for granted. They critically reflect on who has access to the myths and symbols that define a nation shaped by rural, agrarian life, such as Switzerland. How can these narratives and aesthetics be redefined and interpreted in more diverse ways? And how can belonging be reimagined when it doesn't follow familiar patterns?

The artists participating in *Kissing in My Subaru* use the artistic strategies of archiving, appropriation and storytelling. In doing so, they question the authority to define who feels a sense of belonging to certain places, or which practices, histories, and aesthetic forms of expression are theirs to claim. They fill the gaps in the historical narratives of their families and communities. They investigate hierarchical structures of agriculture, question gender roles, and discover queer elements in traditional customs. This creates a polyphonic space between longing, rebellion, and new beginnings.

A diverse performance and educational program will accompany the exhibition, exploring aspects of voice, body, and landscape in greater depth.

Room 1

Läufer#1 by OZ ODERBOLZ welcomes visitors at the entrance to the exhibition space, drawing attention to the transition between exterior and interior. The floor work combines the perforated patterns of rubber scraper mats from stables with the ornamental elements of Persian carpets. The agricultural function and industrial production of means for dirt protection meet domestic interior design and displays of wealth. In the stable, traces of soil, labor, and animal movements collect in the perforated mats, while in the gallery, visitors leave their own footprints from walking across the rubber runner. They thus inscribe themselves into the history of the object. Upon closer inspection the floral-looking patterns reveal further ways of reading the rubber mat in the context of fetish and queer culture.

These Boots Are Made for Walkin' takes the fetishization of materials and valorization of this mundane everyday object a step further: Oz Oderbolz transforms the classic rubber boot into a high-heeled cowboy boot by adding a spur. Oderbolz questions the boot's status as a sex symbol and the associated images of masculinity—situated between the iconic figure of the cowboy and the archetype of the farmer. Evoked here in particular is a more fragile, more fluid form of masculinity which, through cross-dressing and wearing clothes associated with the other gender, aims to break the conventional gender binary.

Room 2

Knitted textiles are attached to organically shaped chrome-steel holders with sharp needles. The textiles have a strong physical presence and feature sign-like patterns. Mysterious and exuding a peculiar scent, they occupy the exhibition space. *MARCE NORBERT HÖRLER's* work *charivari* references the various meanings of the term as well as the occult idea of protective magic: in the Eastern Alps, the charivari served as a protective amulet for hunting or as a status symbol for farmers. Gemstones, coins, or animal teeth were strung together on a necklace and worn. In this case, Hörler uses marten teeth as a design template for the metal fasteners. The term also denotes noise or a tumultuous jumble of sounds.

hörler draws on various senses to access to the history of witch hunts: inscribed into the knitting patterns of the textiles are texts that hörler has translated into geometric forms using binary code.

The text passages are taken from the records of witch trials in Appenzell Innerrhoden. These records document the violence against people who were condemned as witches because of their knowledge or otherness. For the scent of the textiles, hörler recreated the smell of old paper on which the records were recorded. With charivari, hörler examines how archives of documented violence can be re-explored and draws references to the current political and social marginalization of queer identities.

A white shirt with hair and larch needles, mint-flavored chewing gum stuck to the window, a fragrant car air freshener, a crumpled note with a phone number. *Did You Know That The Edelweiss Isn't A Flower, But A Set Of A Thousand Florets Gathered Into Several Heads?* by ALIZÉ ROSE-MAY comprises a collection of objects accrued over time: letters, items of clothing, text passages, or photographs that document the tracing of a personal biography and the process of establishing a queer identity. Included are codes of lesbian and gay history, such as a white tank top, the hanky code, Calvin Klein underwear, or (faux) leather. The series alludes to various memories from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Alizé Rose-May presents an intimate vocabulary for interpersonal relationships and aspects of everyday queer life.

In doing so, Alizé Rose-May is situated within the history of empowering archiving practices, as described in the recurring passages from Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings*. The archive serves as a method for visualizing marginalized experiences and their emotional dimensions. In this way, the archive can contribute to a collective culture of remembrance. Other passages that have shaped the artist's own identity are from Monique Wittig, Susan Sontag, and Julietta Singh.

In addition to what's visible, the collection also points to the gaps and voids in the documentation. Certain things remain hidden, others are invented or cast doubt on their authenticity. Alizé Rose-May employs Saidiya Hartman's method of "Critical Fabulation" to illuminate gaps in memory and historiography and to create new narratives through storytelling.

Room 3

Sounds of nature, cowbells, and yodeling emanate from the last exhibition room. Oversized braids grow out of cracks, wrap around speakers and radiators, and curl on the floor. *VANESSA HEER*'s strands, woven from hemp, wool, straw, or sisal, recall "shame braids," which were used in the Middle Ages and early modern times to mark individuals

who did not conform to social norms or moral standards. Wearing a straw braid of shame was a form of public punishment and humiliation, mainly targeting individuals perceived as female. Heer's braids remind us of the social exclusion and discrimination these women experienced. The braids take on an empowering presence of their own, joining together to form a woven web of solidarity that occupies both the exhibition and public space.

In the video and audio installation *Von Schand und Schuppel*, Heer explores the Appenzell tradition of New Year's Eve yodeling known as Silvesterchlausen—starting with the question of why only men are allowed to practice the custom to this day. For the work, she organized a group of female yodelers, Chläus*innen, into a "Schuppel," a group that traditionally goes from farm to farm on New Year's Eve wishing people a Happy New Year. The five yodelers named themselves 'nSchuppel, rehearsed regularly, and met for group hikes through the Alpstein region. Created out of this were unique compositions and polyphonic natural yodels, whose voices, sounds, and tones resonate with the landscape. Also inspired by the Silvesterchläusen were carefully designed costumes breaking with the classic roles of the Chläuse—the Schöne (beautiful), the Schö-Wüeschte (beautiful-ugly) and the Wüeschte (ugly). The video documents the group's exploration of tradition, its contemporary interpretation, and internal discovery processes: How can vulnerability be embraced, suppressed voices be heard, and traditionally male-dominated customs be subverted through artistic means?

Text: Alizé Rose-May & Eva-Maria Knüsel