

## DAYS AT SEA

The works of Yves Scherer construct dream scenes, imaginary landscapes that include ponds, water lilies, and chocolate women that resemble Emma Watson. Personal processes create an alternative past that winds up defining the present, in which romanticism intervenes not only as a patina of reality, but also as a way of determining a path of action.

**Yves Scherer** (b. 1987 in Solothurn, Switzerland) is based in Berlin and New York. His recent and upcoming solo projects include "Honey Moon," Swiss Institute, New York (2015), "Where Is the Love", ExoExo, Paris (2015), "Days at Sea", Carl Kostyal, London (2015), "Little Mermaid", Art Parcours, Art Basel (2015), and "Closer", Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin (2014). Group exhibitions include "Basic Instinct", Seventeen Gallery, London (2015), "Windowlicker", Center Berlin (2015), "Balconia", Swimmingpool Projects Sofia, Bulgaria (2015), "Last Night", Parallel Oaxaca, Mexico City (2015), "New Contemporaries", Institute of Contemporary Art, London, and Spike Island, Bristol (2013), and "Regionale 14", Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel, Switzerland (2014). In 2014, Scherer graduated with an MA in sculpture from London's Royal College of Art. He holds a BA in sciences of culture from the University of Lucerne.

## Yves Scherer

**NIKOLA DIETRICH** Texts, in the form of letters or autobiographical notes, seem to stand at the beginning of each of your exhibitions, and somehow can be read as the momentary state of the artist's mind, reflections from the perspective of a (young and male) narrator on diverse aspects of friendships, relations, life in general. Can you tell me how you relate these short texts to your works/exhibitions? Where do you begin? **YVES SCHERER**

I'm really glad that you are starting with the texts, since I also like to see them as a sort of introduction to the rest of my work. Though this temporal or structural order is hard to keep up in the context of an exhibition, which is usually much more spatially organized. So far I have tried to put them right at the entrance, along with the press release, but appearing as a work on the floor plan too. But this is not the ideal way or channel yet, I feel. Working on a little publication about a series of my works earlier this year, I was really happy to see the texts functioning when they met with the right format, without the material manifestation or objecthood they have when they are prints in a room. Luckily that's probably how you encountered them.

Content-wise, I think you're right that they can be read as a momentary state of the artist's mind or a reflection on certain issues that interest me at the moment. Usually a text is made specifically for an exhibition and sort of collects thoughts, researches and readings I have made or had while preparing the other works for the show. This "collecting" is meant quite literally, since most of the texts are constructed or collaged directly from appropriated texts with different origins; from "classics" or famous novels, movie scripts, but also twitter posts from celebrities or the latest news on Business Insider. Then I try to use the collected words, arranged as a sort of raw material, really to find and then speak the voice of my unconscious, if that makes sense at all. Looking over my recent texts, I think they simultaneously create a narrative that links the different shows and reference many things and authors I have been interested in. But they also follow and express my personal life surprisingly closely, if you look past some codes and artistic strategies. So in a way yes, you could say these texts include autobiographical notes and can be read as the documents of struggles, loves and reflections of a young male, though I still try to see them as fiction and prefer to work with the narrator or speaker behind these lines as a fictitious character rather than myself. This probably applies to most of my other works too, though with the texts it might be more obvious, since it is an actual voice. Looking at some recent works or more precisely the exhibition posters for recent shows, it's interesting for me to see that this persona can have not only my voice but also my face and body, and still be "outside" of me. Even more strongly, I feel that the closer the work gets to my own body or private life, the less personal it feels, somehow.

**ND**

Another text of yours starts with the line: "We have just arrived

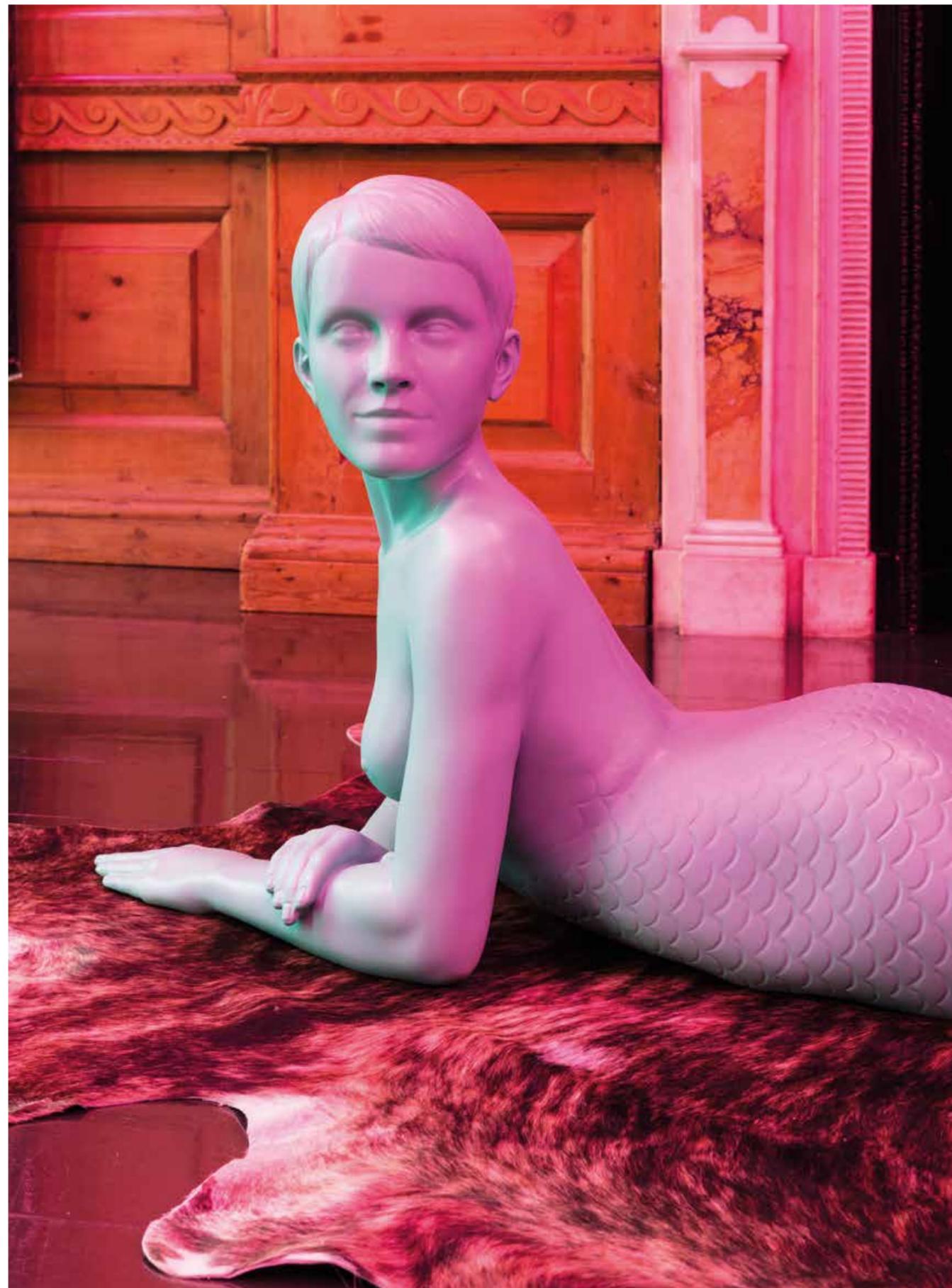
in a rather curious land." And continues... "Do you remember those patient explorations in bed at night when, just as you were about to fall asleep, your leg suddenly relaxed and you almost fell who knows where?" When we look at your latest exhibitions—especially "Days at Sea" at Carl Kostyal in London, and "Closer" at Guido W. Baudach in Berlin, we encounter dreamlike scenery from a fantasy world: imaginary landscapes with birds, ponds, water lilies, as well as mermaids, cat and chocolate women (we read that the female figures are representing the female actress Emma Watson, digitally modeled), juxtaposed with photos and video works from celebrities or female friends of yours in their leisure time.

Can you describe that place on which we are landing? **YS**

In a way the place we're landing is my home, whatever that means, exactly. Birds leave from here and this is where they come back to. It's a lonely place and what you see is a mix of fantasia, real and virtual. None of the female figures are actually women, but constructions from gossip, literature and myths, which take on the female counterparts of the inhabitants of these realms. They're both dreams of a collective consciousness and my own personal projections.

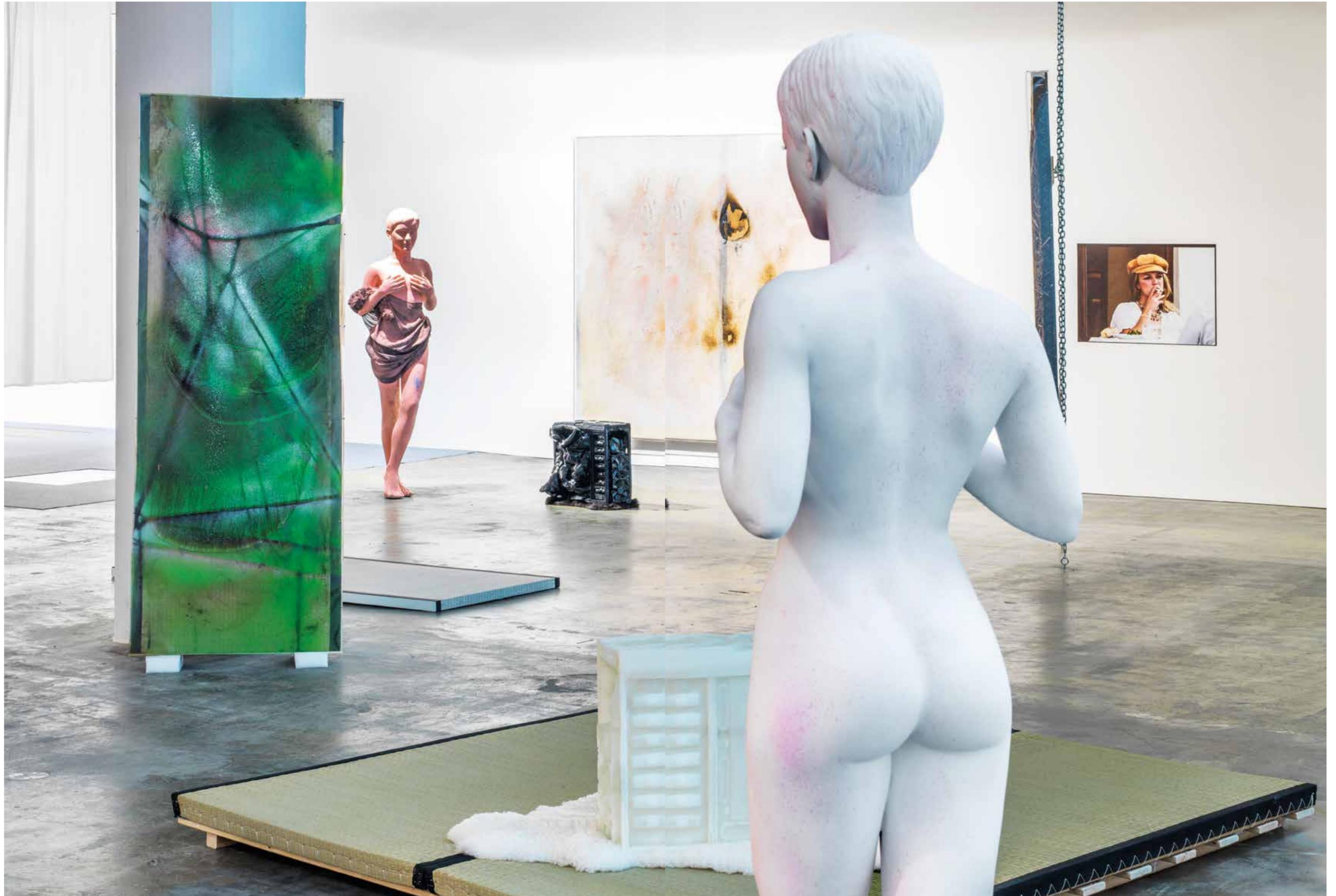
But there are male figures too. For "Closer" it was a down jacket stuck in computer towers inhabiting the space and a series of images showing Leonardo DiCaprio with his Dad-belly on the beach. As much as the female figures are society's projections of the female, these male characters are a reflection on the image and the possibilities of the male. "Days at Sea" could be on a boat, a sailor moving over the ocean dreaming of life on the shore. *Closer* is more a hybrid between a modernist building with the Mies van der Rohe reference of the pond, a Berlin "Plattenbau" with cheap gray carpet, and the loft the space at Guido Baudach actually is. At the same time these spaces are taken over by the virtual world, paparazzi or Google search images of celebrities for *Closer Magazine* pasted on wall and ceiling, the video *Almost 20min of cigarette fun* as a YouTubeish compilation of smoking clips, and the mentioned Leo at Beach images for "Days at Sea". And at some point these places are art exhibitions, with references to masters like the water lilies of Monet etc. etc.

The Tatami mats in *Perspex*, or "Sirens," tell us more about the actual places that are mentioned in the quote—I see them as the sort of places, shelters or more literal night's lodgings where I rest my head. There are fake fur, I Love NY jumpers, kimonos and bed sheets. In their object-ness or -hood they are condensed places at the same time, like the exhibition or another fictitious place archived and displayed in *Perspex*. Insofar they are like places of the past, stored on the wall, while the exhibition is much more the articulation or the actualization of one of these places in the present, like looking at someone's house or home while he's away a bit. People have also asked me about the frequent use of



*Mermaid II*, 2015.

Courtesy: Carl Kostyal, London and Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin



"Closer" installation view at Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin, 2014.  
Courtesy: Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin. Photo: Roman März

references to the sea or water in my texts, and I'm curious about that myself. But maybe the answer is in your question already, or more precisely in the word "landing" which implies arriving at a place that is not sea or air but land. This sets an end to a travel of sailing or flying or whichever other way of transport is possible in these elements. In a way I feel that maybe this "arriving" aspect is even more important to me than the actual place of arrival. Probably that lies in the nature of an art exhibition itself, that it is an arrival or sets a temporary end to a period of travel or work. More personally, I feel that I might just be looking for some place that is home after quite a long time in transit, and that's exactly what my exhibitions offer and present, for a limited period of time. **ND**

Your description oscillates between the very personal and the collective awareness of the past versus the present. Re-member is a term that comes to mind, in the sense of re-collecting what was there, what there is, and how to connect oneself with the social states/relationships, so to speak. You very aptly articulate something that can be felt in your work, this variation of quality between realism and romanticism, the fluctuating nature of some things, while others are to be stored. Is there a method there? Something you are particularly absorbed by at the moment? **YS**

Yes, maybe there is a method to this actually. I feel that romanticism comes in as a certain layer added over my actual reality, which adds sense and meaning but in the other direction also acts as a guide for my actions. This doesn't happen very consciously, but thinking about it I feel that this analysis of the present moment—like taking an imprint of where I'm at exactly—is very much part of my practice. More precisely, I would say that this reflection on my past and the present moment happens in the work only, like I'm trying to make exactly these "private" or personal processes productive. Recollecting or remembering I then tend to think of as actions that are bound forward, which move forward to come to something that lies behind, like creating the past again. This moment of inventing a new past that then also defines the present moment is definitely something I do in my work. As I tried to explain regarding my writing, this is quite an unconscious and material-based process, which results in a piece of work that is a reflection on myself or "what there is," so it's making this process of reflecting productive. Obviously if I speak about myself here again I mean a sort of self which is different from my actual self, which if the work is successful touches on the idea of a collective self or collective consciousness, too. Like it touches on something of importance to the people around me, too, or something that is sort of universal to my generation, even.

I spoke about the imprint before, a term that implies a broad field, but I feel that my reading or interpretation of it is quite specific. That's maybe where I see romanticism coming in, as a tool for reducing complexity and focusing on central aspects of this life only; and in my case this is probably very much looking at the close social relationships or, more specifically, my love life. I think having had some criticism from the feminist side has really raised my awareness of the audience, but at the same time it has gotten me interested in the nature and the specifics of my position—Yves Scherer, the 27-year-old white male, Swiss, artist, etc. It has taught me that if I put a work out in the world it's me speaking and it's not just the work speaking. This is something I've gotten quite interested in lately. At the moment I'm staging a fictitious honeymoon with Emma Watson for a show in New York, and it's interesting to think about what my work would be like if I actually was in this situation, what my options/works would be if I really was her lover, and what I would talk about rather than talking about being Emma Watson's lover and being on a honeymoon with her.

In a way, you can look at a practice a little bit like an Instagram profile where you're trying to make interesting posts, so you go to interesting places, you try to meet interesting people, and so on. But there's the info outside of it as well, the fact that not every post is interesting for everyone. For instance, if people think I'm really the lover of Emma Watson, they might be interested if I post some random feet, because they might think those were Emma's feet. This really makes me want to change my position, to work on this in the same way that you produce work, using your background, body, etc. as material in a narrative bigger than life.

Getting back to the "Honey Moon" show, for the moment it ends up being a show about me wishing to be on a honeymoon with Emma Watson, if that makes sense. Which is maybe even more interesting than the real thing, with some of the process feeling like a rehearsal...

For example I have bought a beautiful piece of jade at a market in Hong Kong, which a friend of mine has now taken to New York, and in his role as my best man he will take it to a jeweler in Chinatown to make the ring the sculpture will wear in the show. Here this idea of constructing the past comes in again as the ring will then speak of something that has supposedly happened in the past. This idea of the habitus, or of all actions from the past inscribed in your body and on your body and performed in every action, has always interested me. The thought that all the past gets actualized in every single moment, and it only exists as long as the world keeps operating.

by Nikola Dietrich

di Chris Sharp

**Il lavoro di Oscar Enberg si nutre di distrazione e instabilità. Le sue sculture crescono come narrazioni erratiche, rimescolando la realtà, e attraverso l'uso di un vocabolario ibrido, un linguaggio minore che si fa dialetto materiale.**

**CHRIS SHARP** Le tue sculture/installazioni multimediali sono insolite, fortemente evocative, e non sembrano rientrare in nessuna delle tendenze attuali dell'arte contemporanea, eccetto, forse, per il modo in cui utilizzi la narrativa letteraria e la cultura pop. Potremmo partire proprio da qui: in che modo integri questo aspetto nell'elaborazione del tuo lavoro?

**OSCAR ENBERG** Per me la narrativa rappresenta un generatore scultoreo – un insieme di storie già esistenti e accomunate da temi simili o da una storia condivisa che si riversano in una sorta di crogiuolo di contenuti. Per costruire un nuovo progetto m'ispiro, il più delle volte, alla città o al sito dove esso farà il suo debutto. Credo sia importante, quando si lavora, capire i valori fondanti di una comunità, e come questi si

sovrappongono – le storie agiscono da barometri culturali e come tali riflettono la politica del momento e del luogo in cui sono prodotte. In passato, mi è capitato anche di adottare modelli narrativi specifici per dare forma agli allestimenti; le qualità formali della poesia, delle parabole e della narrativa breve, o la struttura episodica delle sitcom, sono tutte modalità che ho utilizzato come dispositivi strutturali.

**CS** Questa tua descrizione rimanda alla figura di un antropologo culturale. Ma le tue indagini non si formalizzano certo come commenti critici lineari di quelle storie, che spesso sembrano provenire non tanto da lontano quanto da percorsi accidentati prima di finire in uno dei tuoi allestimenti. Come accade tutto ciò? E poi, cosa ci puoi dire del tuo vocabolario materiale? Legno di rovere, vimini, manufatti artigianali, vetro soffiato e altri materiali chiaramente domestici mi fanno pensare a una matrice decisamente borghese.

**OS** Hai detto bene: il mio modo di digerire ed elaborare i contenuti è tutt'altro che lineare. In genere è un processo molto difficoltoso attraverso il quale le informazioni

diventano oggetti e allestimenti; forse è uno strano processo alchemico. L'anno scorso ho realizzato un progetto a Basilea: si chiamava *The Good Father and The Rich Uncle* ed era formulato come una specie di parabola distorta; era un tentativo di sviluppare una conversazione sulla moralità o, quanto meno, sui valori familiari, intorno all'opera. Il progetto proponeva diversi spunti: mi ero ispirato al percorso del Monopoli e a *Rich Uncle Pennybags*, ovvero il Signor Monopoli; alla stagione conclusiva della sitcom americana *Roseanne* (nella quale Roseanne sogna che la sua famiglia abbia vinto alla lotteria); all'acquavite alle pere Bon Père William, e ai disegni automatici di Hans Arp. Ho usato la struttura del nucleo familiare: un cast già pronto di personaggi prototipo con ruoli prestabiliti, una dinamica facilmente comprensibile, universale. Mentre elaboro questi contenuti in una forma, le narrative crescono e regrediscono – alcuni dettagli o forme diventano consueti, ricorrenti, assumono le qualità dei personaggi o se ne impossessano. Quindi posso utilizzarli per rianimare, interpretare alcune parti nell'ambito di una pantomima scultorea... In questo momento mi interessano



A



B



C

A *Sirens (Uptown)*, 2015.  
Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Roman März

B, C *Rain*, 2014. Courtesy: Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin. Photo: Roman März

D *Honey Moon*, 2015.  
Courtesy: the artist



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