

Mandla Reuter

Water Talk Dirt

10. 11. – 16. 12. 2023

In the following lines I will provide an overview of the exhibition; out of an abundance of caution I will dispense with judgments or prognoses, though not with any affinities for the ideas discussed in it. This is the artist Mandla Reuter's first exhibition in the current premises of this formerly Berlin-based gallery. The interventions in the spatial structure are minimal, no locks were replaced, no floors above were flooded, though a glass barrier positioned in a passageway can result in a complete loss of distance. The main room shows the artist's long-standing addressing of a property in the north of downtown Los Angeles, a metropolis in and of itself receptive to prospering projections of all kinds, which the artist acquired in 2011. If I were to place this text in an envelope and send it to the property address, it would be returned to me posthaste. The fact that the situation is no different for Reuter, the property's owner, is eccentrically poetic and can be verified by means of the five returned envelopes exhibited in *Water Talk Dirt*. The fact that one of these envelopes fits perfectly between the wall and the window niche is one of many precise details within the spatial transfer and presentation of the traces, ephemera, and evidence from fallow Californian land to this five-story residential and commercial building on Vienna's Parkring. A shipping box with samples of the soil placed on the ground, together with a framed zoning map of the district sprayed with ground marking paint representing the respective utility connections, assure us of the physical existence of the property without traveling the roughly 9,817.9 kilometers linear distance and without entering it. This exercise in the area of perceiving an unfamiliar property is accompanied by a transparent epoxy cast of the widely known architecture of Neuschwanstein Castle. The observation of the clear resin cast contrasts with one's own colorful memory of this major 19th century castle building project—one of the most significant examples of European historicism in Bavaria—triggered and reinforced by the information that this is the casting template. Rough contrasts also characterize a series of galvanized stainless steel pictures, in which the additional refinement of the raw material creates a patina effect, while painted refrigerator magnets affix fiberglass thread motifs to the surface. A further test along the lines of questioning the materialities, functions, but also possibilities for abstraction in the relationship between art and reality, the fraying and overlapping of one into and onto the other. Because behind the simplicity, the a fortiori sensual results, and between infrastructural informel, pure concept, and environmental critique, there is always the lurking presence of the deeply intricate, transparent overall context: "NOTHING TO SEE, NOTHING TO HIDE."

Christian Egger

Christian Egger is a vienna based writer, artist and co-editor of the art magazine ztsrpt.net.

