

G2 #21

**SOPHIA SÜSSMILCH UND
DAS LEBEN NACH DEM TOD**

G2

Sophia Süßmilch

Soloexhibition

June 2–September 10, 2023

Opening hours:

Wed. 3–8 pm / Fri – Sun 12 am–5 pm

The exhibition, SOPHIA SÜSSMILCH AND LIFE AFTER DEATH, offers a broad insight into the complex and diverse work of the artist. In addition to painting and sculpture, textile, photo and video works occupy the space of G2 Kunsthalle to introduce Sophia Süßmilch's pictorial cosmos.

Its title opens up associations with titles of stories and narratives in literature or film, where the main character is named first and is supplemented by the context of the episode. In this case, the artist is the heroine, who conquers death through her art and contests life after it. Süßmilch works here through grand, existential questions of human existence, such as the question of origin, what happens after death, and the meaning of life.

In the first room (>3), the viewers encounter an apparent newborn living being. Pinned up in vaulting harnesses, it hangs in space on four ropes. The creature is defenseless, appears lifeless, and would not be viable on its own at this early stage of life. Süßmilch shows here the strangeness of the origin of life, which, through the fetishization of the applied materials and the scaling of the format can trigger disgust, repulsion, but also an attraction in the sense of displaying the different. The animal is exhibited as if it was in an incubator and forces the viewer into a voyeuristic situation.

In the same room of the exhibition, Süßmilch presents the viewer with a choice (>4): To contest the life after death that she proclaims in the second room of the G2 Kunsthalle, an appeal is made to choose a fighter as companion. Through the illusionistic choice, Süßmilch opens up associations to video games. The fighter characters remain however very vague and do not correspond to the imagination of fictional heroines or warlike figures of history, who are often characterized by an overly heroic and stereotypical portrayal. The choice, which initially seems lite, irritates the act of looking at the offer and leaves a puzzling, as well as humorous aftertaste at the same time.

In the second room, we then fully immerse ourselves in Süßmilch's version of life after death. Three large leather flags dominate the space (>5; >6; >8). Like tapestries, they occupy the entire wall and stretch down to the floor. Cow skins are attached to the flags, which serve as carriers of figurative elements in a simple visual language.

The quotes at the foot of the flags are directly related to the images. The first flag (>5) presents a quote from the animated film *An American Tail* (1986): "There are no cats in America and the streets are paved with cheese." The film tells the story of a Russian-Jewish mice family which emigrates to the United States. Süßmilch manifests here in a monumental, archaic and yet subtle way the hope and promise of a better life outside of the familiar environment. This can be related both to religious and profane visions of a better life after death, as well as to an improvement of one's circumstances during one's lifetime.

On the second flag (>6) is a quote from the American singer Prince (1958-2016): "I only wanna hear you Laughing in the purple rain." The musician described the mixing of red and blue colors of dawn or dusk into purple as a symbol of apocalyptic end-of-the-world scenarios that not only refer to the end of the world, but also to the end of relationships or friendships and that, despite the loss, enable a new beginning. On the third flag (>8) in the room the quote is written: "I don't believe in dinosaurs." It comes from a child who, upon seeing a dinosaur skeleton in the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, doubted the existence of the animals and the credibility of the scientific evidence. The artist Moritz Frei (*1978) took up this quote in a light work that could be seen on the roof of the Hamburger Kunsthalle.

Two large stylized eggplants rotate comfortably in the room (>7). These become personified characters through an opening in the belly of the plants and the exclamatory appeals "Eat me!" and "Call me mother!". Inside the stomach real aubergines are stored, whose skin over time shrivels and wrinkles and contrasts the smooth surfaces of the aubergine sculptures. Simultaneously, the rotating movement of the sculptures is an indicator of time, and therefore a seismograph for the process of transience and decay which is progressing at every moment.

The exhibition concludes with the triptych *Aftermath* (>9). Süßmilch shows here the moment of death, her version of heaven and hell. The middle part of the triptych depicts the moment of death of a spider, located at the lower edge of the picture, from whose abdomen a web of pairs of words that form dualities unfolds. The right part shows Süßmilch's version of hell. In a multitude of lines, whose division reminds of hieroglyphs, she depicts various objects and creatures that are buried underneath the earth. The top line of this world, in which humans and animal-like creatures live, can however hardly be distinguished from the underworld. On the left a depiction of the sky complements the triptych. Concrete structures dissolve here,

dematerialization and a decrease in individual characteristics gesture towards a collective, open, and abstract system that serves as a fertile breeding ground for vegetation and thereby symbolize a new beginning.

Translation: Dr. Lisa Moravec

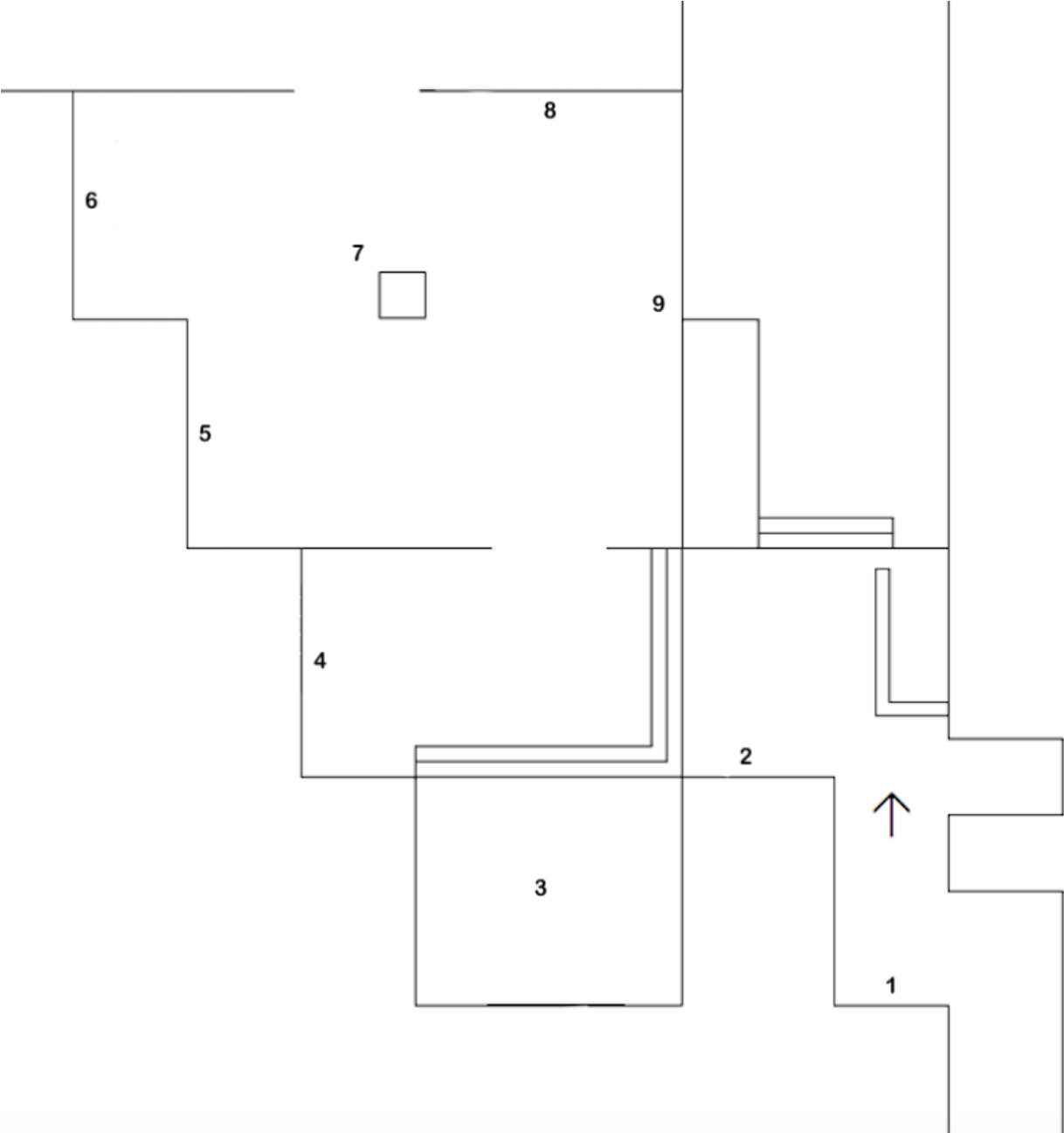
Sophia Süßmilch

Sophia Süßmilch (*1983 in Munich) studied from 2006 to 2015 in the sculpture class of Prof. Stephan Huber at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich and from 2011 to 2013 contextual painting with Prof. Hans Ashley Scheirl at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In 2015 she graduated as a master student of Prof. Stephan Huber in Munich. In 2011 she received a research fellowship from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in the USA, in 2018 she was awarded the Bavarian Art Promotion Prize and in 2020 the Art Prize of the City of Munich. Between 2022 and 2023, she was a recipient of the Marianne Defet Painting Fellowship.

Solo exhibitions (selection): 2023, Institute for Modern Art Nuremberg DE; 2022, MARTINETZ, Cologne, DE; 2020, Neue Galerie Graz, AUT; 2019, Salon no 6, Vienna, AUT; 2018, Belvedere21, Vienna, AUT; 2017, Ateliertheater, Vienna, AUT.

Group exhibitions (selection): 2022, Waldburger Wouters, Brussels, BE; 2021, OÖ Kulturquartier, Linz, AUT; 2021, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, DE; 2020, Kunstverein Munich, DE; 2020, Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, DE; 2020, Textilmuseum Augsburg, DE; 2019 Galerie der KünstlerInnen, Munich, DE; 2016, Kunstarkaden, Munich, DE; 2013, Rathausgalerie, Munich, DE; 2012, Gesellschaft für christliche Kunst, Munich, Leipzig, DE; 2011, Kunstpavillon, Munich, DE.

Floorplan



1. *mother love*, 2020, video, sound, 15,13 min, edition 2/5 + III AP, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
2. *tricolore of the unicorn (welcome to paradise)*, 2022, C-print on Dibond , 150 × 225 cm, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
3. *guinea pig of death*, 2023 , styrofoam, lacquer, plaster, dragon skin silicone, acrylic paint, leather, metal, fabric, rubber , 220 × 80 × 80 cm, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
4. *choose your fighter* (four-part), 2023 , oil on canvas , each 40 × 40 cm, featuring Julie Bender Herdina & Nouchka Wolf, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
5. *satan's calling card (There are no cats in America and the streets are paved with cheese)*, 2023, leatherette, leather, acrylic binder, oil paint, wooden sticks, 800 × 500 cm, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
6. *satan's calling card (I only wanna hear you Laughing in the purple rain)*, 2023 , imitation leather, leather, acrylic binder, oil paint, wooden sticks, 800 × 500 cm, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
7. *the testicles of god* (two-part), 2023 , styrofoam, varnish, plaster, velvet, brass, porcelain, eggplant, sound installation, 240 × 150 × 130 cm, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
8. *satan's calling card (I don't believe in dinosaurs)*, quote Moritz Frei, 2023, imitation leather, leather, acrylic binder, oil paint, wooden sticks, 800 × 500 cm, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne
9. *Aftermath* (triptych), left: *It is an eternal becoming and passing away. Welcome to heaven*; Middle: *Shocked at how at the exact moment of your death the last dualisms shred the neural pathways. Welcome to real life*; Right: *POV You are dead and lying under the ground. You are slowly decomposing. You are bored to death. Welcome to hell*, 2022, oil on canvas, 220 × 180 cm each, Courtesy of the artist and MARTINETZ, Cologne

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