

L'Effet de serre (« The Greenhouse Effect ») (The Deluge)

**With: Benedikt Bock, Emilie Ding & Alizée Lenox,
Richard Frater, Thomas Julier, Max Kriegleder, Claire
van Lubeek, Léa Katharina Meier, Jan van Oordt,
Jean-Charles de Quillacq, Margaret Raspé, Virginie
Sistek, Terre Thaemlitz.**

There was no way things could get messed up. A harmonious order, centred on cultivated Man, a rational being who guaranteed that the universe would run like clockwork. A soul brought to perfection by education, contemplation and action ruled over the flesh, keeping it from slumping into its animal nature. Religion promised beatitude to those who led a just life.

But cracks had been splitting open for a long time. There were attempts to put the pieces back together after each bloody convulsion, but technological “progress” continued to rend the protective fabric. Then protests from the outside began to be heard. Why can't we women, too, warm ourselves in your greenhouse of sovereignty, gentlemen? Why are we colonised people not entitled to your dignity?

Recriminations broke out all around. Likewise, advocates for the animals, plants, forests, rivers and oceans, all mistreated by human exceptionalism, demanded an end to domination. Inside the tattered greenhouse, some could not accept the de-centring and accusations. Instead of stitching it up once again, they decided that the greenhouse had become a hindrance and had to be burned down. They began building high walls to re-establish borders and constructing spaceships to escape.

The Bellelay abbey church was desacralized in 1797 and remains so today. It has been looted, its steeples razed. But even in its diminished and degraded state, the building retains its imposing monumentality and people still sometimes come to kneel and pray. As an historic monument, the abbey church is testament to the civilising role of religion, which seeks to uplift the souls of the faithful through the verticality of its architecture and educate them through the fear of Evil and the pursuit of Good.

The church's undeniable immersive power provides the setting for an exploration of the ways in which human beings are constructed and raised up at a time when humanist culture is collapsing. What new ideal can we project and aspire to? What scenarios - desirable, utopian or more disturbing - could enable us to rethink ourselves and become part of a community of living beings open to all variations and forms of exuberance, caretakers of all species, even our artificial alter egos?

This exhibition in the spiritual colonnades of the church offers the possibility of a whole new function for the site, a mission that is necessarily materialist and utilitarian, embodied in a three-part greenhouse crossing the nave and extending to the choir. Simultaneously an artwork and a theatre, conceived by the artist **Jan van Oordt**, the tunnel-like shape of this composite greenhouse matches the church's vaulted ceiling. It seems to refute the church with its earthly, biological and carnal counter-presence and the ceaseless churning of its renewal and transformation. Yet it allows itself to be enveloped - and contaminated - by the building's diaphanous light. This spectral, limbo-like atmosphere strips the greenhouse of its status as a disciplinary apparatus designed to increase productivity. On the contrary, it offers a vision of an environment where, amidst the corrosion, life could extravagantly reassert its rights.

Under, against and around the greenhouse, in the meadow at the entrance to the site and in the crypt, works by twelve other guest artists put the body and its changiness at the centre of their approach. Visitors are accompanied by a multidiffusion sound piece, *Le paradis n'est que l'horizon de la traversée* by **Émilie Ding** and **Alizée Lenox**. Made up of layers of frequencies, this piece's throbbing baseline comes from a geofon¹ recording in the church basement. The composers used this instrument as a geo-psychological stethoscope to auscultate the church's depths and access its visceral subconscious. Superimposed on these telluric sounds are the more ghostly noises of flapping wings and fragments of conversations. At the topmost of these ascending frequencies are the voices of a queer, trans and non-binary choir from Berlin, singing emancipatory lyrics by the lesbian feminist author Monique Wittig.

In the main span of the greenhouse a series of hybrid devices awaits visitors, ready to spring to life. They explore the concept of robotics as a means to blur the boundary between machines and people. *Itself* (2024), by the Zurich artists **Thomas Julier** and **Max Kriegleder**, presents a massive office filing machine from the 1980s, a mechanical precursor to the digital folders omnipresent in today's computers. The mechanism driving this ridiculously massive automaton was altered by an algorithm that makes it operate at random. This obsolete technology seems to have acquired a life of its own, that expresses itself through a metallic rattle.

Like primitive cyborgs, **Benedikt Bock's** assemblages of strips of wood, cardboard boxes, plaster bells and Roomba robot vacuum cleaners are dressed up with accessories that make them look buffoonish. But these stiff, primitive figures are also a source of embarrassment because their status as commodities and disposable packaging reminds us of how we have become reconciled to our own objectification, commodification and automation.

The daily drudgery of woman's work is the throughline in the videos of the German artist **Margaret Raspé**, who died last November at the age of ninety. Finding herself the sole caregiver for her three children after a divorce in the 1970s, Raspé dealt with the fact that housework left her no time for making art by attaching a Super-8 camera to a construction hardhat so that she could film her daily hustle and bustle. Augmented by this prosthetic device, she won her emancipation as an artist and a woman, able to expose and transcend her condition as a "Frautomat" (automated housewife), a term she coined to describe a lifetime circumscribed by the mechanical and repetitive daily tasks necessary for human sustenance, such as, for example, whipping cream, doing the dishes or slitting a chicken's throat and cooking it. Although she never explicitly associated herself with the women's movement, her artistic practice during this period can be read in light of the critical thinking of materialist feminism, with its denunciation of the double exploitation of women, in the workplace and through their unpaid domestic labour.

The pastoral mission of education and moral guidance, which the Church has long assumed, and more broadly the question of the relationship between the individual and the group, are at the heart of **Virginie Sistek's** concerns. The artist examines the (apparently purely historical) problem that arose when the sixteenth-century composer Manfred Barbarini Lupus tried in vain to teach polyphony to Saint Gall Abbey monks accustomed to singing in unison. Sistek transcribed a short extract from a score by Lupus onto a long strip of knitted fabric. Repeated many times, this short musical phrase becomes a territorial ritornello expressing a desire to appropriate a space by encoding access to it and determining the right path. In the science fiction video *Pâtis Tidiness*, the figure of an orchestra conductor trying to get a choir to sing in harmony gives way to that of a shepherd faced with a rebellion by their non-binary flock.

Beneath the fresco in the church's choir, **Thomas Julier** placed multiple green fragments resembling the remains of an archaeological dig. The perfect finish of each piece, the absence of any visible clues as to their composition and origin, and their arrangement in what was once the most sacred part of the building, all suggest a mystical interpretation, a reference to an extra-terrestrial afterlife. In reality, they are the remains of a broken round bird feeder. This object has been a recurring mo-

¹ An instrument made to capture noises produced deep underground, the geofon is a kind of omnidirectional geophone suitable for field recordings

tif in Julier's work for several years now, and he has modelled its fall and remnants. Using 3D printing, he recreates the real aftermath of an event that only ever existed virtually, and thus contrasts auto-genesis with the god-driven Biblical version.

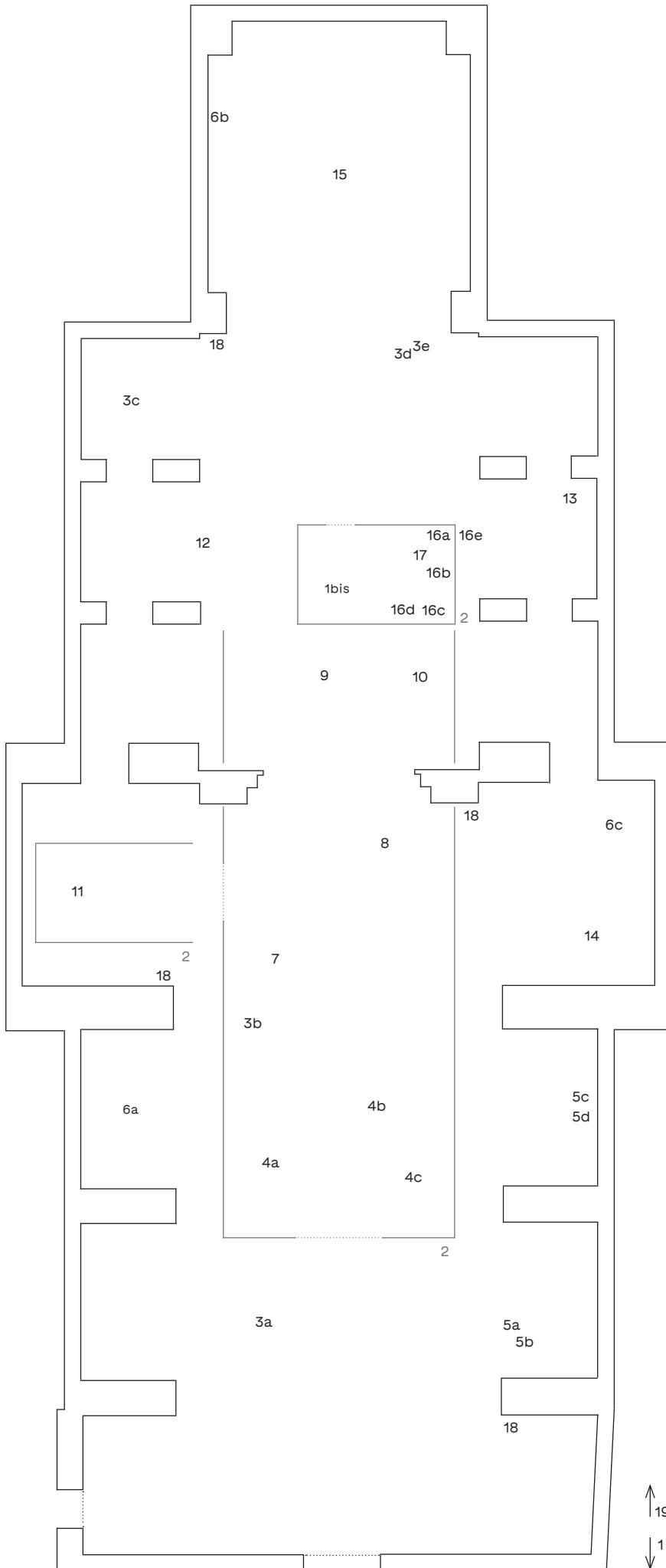
The sheer physicality of the body is foregrounded in **Léa Katharina Meier's** brightly coloured carnivalesque drawings and the metal and resin sculptures of **Jean-Charles de Quillacq**. The way the latter's subjects seem to offer up their bodies in this churchly context may also suggest acts of penitence. A powerful fetishism emanates from their nether regions - which is all we see of them - through the insistence on certain body parts moulded in fine detail. Quillacq's video *Fmaily Work Travail Fmailial* is an exercise in the film genre of an artist's studio documentary. Shown on two screens back-to-back, there's no place to hide and viewers become voyeurs whether they like it or not. A sequence of self-satisfying actions confounds work and procrastination. In an impossible sublimation, the creative act is dissolved into an external economy that makes bluntly visible our manipulation by incessant appeals to our impulses and desires. The artwork becomes a receptacle for, and a recycling of, the material production of the body yielding to the market's drives. In Léa Katharina Meier's work, manifestations of female desire pour all over everything. Her characters drip bodily fluids that fertilize the city, the earth and the libraries, to liberate women, educated to be modest and servile. Old books, with their sexist stories, are rewritten for this great regenerative and emancipatory festival.

The same exuberance inhabits the assemblages of **Claire van Lubeek**, with their climbing plants made up of brooms, feather dusters, brushes and sponges. Referring as much to the universe of domestic toil as to that of witches, her works embody what the hierarchies of both the church and art try to erase: the knowledge and actions of all those whose work contributes to making life possible rather than just making unique art.

Two keys to understanding this exhibition are provided by the photos of **Richard Frater** from his series *Invitation Dilemma*, and the video *Soulnessless* (2012) by **Terre Thaemlitz** - the latter on view in the crypt. Frater, an artist passionate about bird-watching, is haunted by the common phenomenon of birds fatally smashing into the glass facades of modernist buildings. Not simply forensic documentation nor entirely an elegy, he shoots the point of impact where we can make out clues to the tragedy that has occurred. While having or lacking a soul has long been considered the essential distinction between humans and animals, that assumption can be radically contested. In *Soulnessless*, Thaemlitz's semi-autobiographical work comprising several chapters devoted to religion and superstition, this U.S. musician and artist who self-defines as a "cultural producer" takes issue with the injunction to authenticity so common in the music world, often said to pertain to what's known as "soul music" or expressed in lyrics that assert «not everyone understands house music, it's a spiritual thing.»

In this video the deeply materialist Thaemlitz proclaims «the absolute non-existence of the soul». This exhibition takes that position as its starting point in seeking to rebuild something, perhaps not free of clumsiness, handling errors and climatic misfortune, but with the certainty that life is to be cultivated in compost.

Sylvain Menétrey



1. **Margaret Raspé**, *Fünfundneunzig blau blühende Säulen*, 1982. Buckets, compost, mesh, seeds, 10 m. diameter, (by the parking lot).

1bis. Polaroid documentation relating to the aforementioned work, 1982.

2. **Jan van Oordt**, *Pépinière*, 2024. Metal pipes, plastic panels, tarps, 700 x 500 x 2400 cm.

3. Benedikt Bock

3a. *What People Want is Not What People Need (Rebekka)*, 2023. Cardboard, plaster, clay, wood, wig, glasses, 175 x 35 x 35 cm.

3b. *What People Want is Not What People Need (Günther)*, 2023. Cardboard, plaster, clay, wood, wig, glasses, 160 x 43 x 43 cm.

3c. *What People Want is Not What People Need (Kim)*, 2023. Cardboard, plaster, clay, wood, wig, glasses, 175 x 40 x 40 cm.

3d-e. *What People Want is Not What People Need (Rob and Lizy)*, 2023. Cardboard, plaster, clay, wood, wig, glasses, «Life is Happening» cap by Leefwerk, 190 x 100 x 40 cm.

4. Margaret Raspé

4a. *Oh Tod wie nahrhaft du bist*, 1972/3. Super-8 digitalized video, 13'25".

4b. *Der Sadist schlägt das eindeutig Unschuldige*, 1971. Super-8 digitalized video, 5'40".

4c. *Alle Tage wieder - Let them swing*, 1974. Super-8 digitalized video, 19'58".

5. Richard Frater

5a. *Invitation Dilemma (Robin, Fågel museet, Ottenby)*, 2022. Archival print; Digital scan of 35mm color film, 26 x 40 cm.

5b. *Invitation Dilemma (Wood pigeon, Akademie der Künste, Hansaviertel)*, 2022. Silver gelatin print from 35mm film, 18 x 25 cm.

5c. *Invitation Dilemma (Wood pigeon, Akademie der Künste, Hansaviertel)*, 2022. Archival print; Digital scan of 35mm color film, 40 x 60 cm.

5d. *Invitation Dilemma (Robin, Fågel museet, Ottenby)*, 2022. Archival print; Digital scan of 35mm color film, 20 x 30 cm.

6a-b-c. **Claire van Lubeeck**, *Household Haunters*, 2024. Various cleaning tools and sticks, variable dimensions.

7. **Thomas Julier & Max Kriegleder**, *itself*, 2024. Automated filing cabinet, 60 x 80 x 100 cm.

8. **Virginie Sistek**, *Foutue foule*, 2024. Wool, wood, beeswax, 150cm x 400 cm.

9. **Virginie Sistek**, *Church Parties*, 2023. Wooden bench, 250 x 50 x 30 cm.

10. **Virginie Sistek**, *Pâtis Tidiness*, 2023. Video, 15'03".

11. **Jean-Charles de Quillacq**, *Fmailly Work:Travail Fmailly*, 2023. Video, 20'30".

12. **Jean-Charles de Quillacq**, *Bébé*, 2021. Painted metal, silicon, 92 x 81 x 52 cm.

13. **Jean-Charles de Quillacq**, *Father Polysexual*, 2019. Aluminum, father's work pants, paper cigarettes, plastic, 73 x 80 x 25 cm.

14. **Jean-Charles de Quillacq**, *Bi-bi*, 2023. Epoxy, tarbender, urine, 230 x 35 x 40 cm.

15. **Thomas Julier**, *Aftermath*, 2024. Laquered PLA, 400 x 400 cm.

16. Léa Katharina Meier

16a. *Les livres des douleurs qui peuvent s'évaporer*, 2023. Pastel on paper, 42 x 59,4 cm.

16b. *Avant que la langue nous tombe de la bouche*, 2024. Pastel on paper, 29,7 x 42 cm.

16c. *Enseintexs de nos strap-onexs*, 2023. Pastel on paper, 29,7 x 42 cm.

16d. *Ta bouche comme un coeur malade*, 2023. Pastel on paper, 29,7 x 42 cm.

16e. *Paysage baigné de sueur*, 2023. Pastel on paper, 42 x 59,4 cm.

17. Léa Katharina Meier

17a. & Mat* Avogadro, *La grande bibliothèque mouillée à la cyprine humide*, 2024. Publication, 21,5 x 29,7 cm.

17b. & Serge Teuscher, *La grande bibliothèque mouillée à la cyprine humide*, 2024. Sound piece, 19'35".

18. **Emilie Ding & Alizée Lenox**, *Le paradis n'est que l'horizon de la traversée*, Multichannel sound piece, (various speakers).

19. **Terre Thaemlitz**, *Soulnessless*, 2012. Video SD 4:3, 80'.

