

Christoph Weber

Touch fragments

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Galerie Jocelyn Wolff

(...) All life comes from a single material, the biosphere

Lynn Margulis

Christoph Weber has extended the concept of sculpture to include modern and contemporary architectural design, and the potential to deconstruct materiality. With *Touch fragments*, the artist explores haunted and *spacetime-mattering* landscapes, as described by Karen Barad, an American physicist and a feminist theorist of "agential realism": "Touch is never pure or innocent. It is inseparable from the field of differential relations that constitute it."¹ The world is made up of a convolution of "social" and "natural" organisations.

Whilst the starting point of this exhibition is a set of samples, of surfaces which have been "stolen" by taking prints from walls of limestone and mouldings from concrete columns, it is mainly concerned with the existence of matter and its properties. The artist dissects and carves out the "local realities" of the city of Vienna, where he lives and works. Constantly on edge, tactile and technical, organic and sedimented, his works are part of a policy of matter that literally disarms concrete, the raw and living mass which Christoph Weber incorporated into his sculptural practice as a result of a reflection on the geopolitical crises in the Middle East. Concrete, which is made up of natural silica or limestone aggregates, cement and water, is a material that bears witness to our time. It has colonised our urban landscapes in the name of efficiency and progress with a standardised, globalised habitat that reproduces and destroys itself ad infinitum.

The forms produced simultaneously embody authority, subversion and emancipation: they are connected to power relations and the possibility of resistance.² Christoph Weber elaborates this counter-history of matter, or a secret history of concrete, at the crossroads between geology, quantum physics and political philosophy, between optics and tactility, between naturalness and artificiality. The limits of sculpture are pushed back in a reformulation of conceptual and minimal art: they accentuate a fragility, a fault,

repeatedly contradicting the physical and chemical characteristics of concrete. At the threshold of their fall, their disappearance or their spectral form, the friction between abstraction and reality manifests itself with full-scale photographic copies of silicone prints. An anthropology of contact and resemblance³ is redesigned and experimented with using contact prints on photo paper, a large beeswax moulding, limestone rocks propelled on concrete blocks laid on the ground. These works are the relics of an absent referent, one which has disappeared. The dialectic between the form and the counter-form, between solids and hollows, takes on its full weight here: matter acts and becomes politicised by narrating itself from within. Its almost ghostly existence is troubled by the reversible interplay between negative and positive, between resemblance and difference. Tension emerges from this scopic desire to enter into matter.

Everything shifts into this contact zone, which materialises a geography of domination (David Harvey). Under the influence of major construction lobbyists, concrete has become a “capitalist weapon of mass construction,”⁴ according to the philosopher Anselm Jappe, with disastrous consequences for health and ecology: mass extraction of sand and gravel, overconsumption of energy and CO2 emissions,⁵ damage to human health and soil sterilisation. The concrete urban towers of the 1950s-1970s inspired Achille Mbembé, an historian and philosopher, to borrow the concept of brutalism from architectural theory. With this weight of raw materials, he took a new approach to the question of a *machine-future*, a *matter-future*, and advocated a recasting of the human community in solidarity with all living things.

The processes for the production of cities emerge from a back-and-forth between interiority and exteriority, placing these works by Christoph Weber in relation to the social realities of the city of Romainville, as a vibration, an energy, a geological or even a cosmic force. Nevertheless, between attraction and repulsion, we will only achieve an affective ecology by repairing what has been broken.

Text by Marianne Derrien

1. Karen Barad, *On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am (v1.1)*, *Differences*, volume 23, Issue 3, 2012

2. Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2021

3. Georges Didi-Huberman, *La ressemblance par contact: Archéologie, anachronisme et modernité de l’empreinte*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 2008

4. Anselm Jappe, *Béton, Arme de construction massive du capitalisme*, Paris, Éditions L’Échappée, 2020

5. The technosphere, a concept coined by the American geologist and engineer Peter Haff, professor emeritus at Duke University in the United States, includes the mass of CO2 emitted by industrial activity and refers to the physical part of the environment affected by anthropogenic changes.



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