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Heinrich Dunst, *The Hand*, 2015/2016 (video still), © Belvedere, Vienna

Vienna, December 1, 2016

21er Haus
Museum of
Contemporary Art

Quartier Belvedere
Arsenalstraße 1
1030 Vienna

Opening Hours:
We: 11 am – 9 pm
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Open on Public Holidays

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The Grasping

December 1, 2016 to January 22, 2017, 21er Raum

The term “grasping” describes the process of realizing something intellectually, and is used as a synonym for “understanding.” Etymologically, the word is derived from the physical and haptic activity of touching. The exhibition revolves around the relationship between manual action and intellectual cognition, and thereby retraces the shaping of thoughts. All works in the exhibition involve *the hand* – which serves not only as an object for perception but as a tool for action.

Featuring works by Heinrich Dunst, VALIE EXPORT, Franziska Kabisch, Barbara Kapusta, Peter Weibel, Tina Schulz, and Javier Téllez.

VALIE EXPORT’s work *Sehtext: Fingergedicht* is devoted to the subject of visual language and makes sign-language-like use of hands and fingers as a means of expressing immaterial matters. Regarding the intent behind her videos, the artist explains: “The body can therefore be used to communicate both mental and physical content. The body as a carrier of information. Man is inserted into the social structure via the body.”

Heinrich Dunst, in his work, also plays with the hand’s fields of action, in which the hand can serve as both a means of expression and of production. In a monologue that he directs equally to the hand, the viewer, and himself, he assigns functions to his body parts that they don’t normally possess.

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Tina Schulz's video work *Hand Catching Lead Without Lead* reconstructs a video by Richard Serra from 1971 in which a hand tries to catch and deform pieces of lead. Serra's film is about the process of doing, not the result. Tina Schulz adapted the gestures of the film and repeated them – but without the lead. What remains are the empty, seemingly aimless movements of the hand.

Social communication around hands is also featured in Franziska Kabisch's *Declinations (Can I Inherit My Dead Parents' Debts?)*. Starting from professors' pulpits found at many universities, her cinematographic work is concerned with how knowledge production and scientific norms manifest themselves in attitudes and typical mannerisms.

Javier Téllez's video work demonstrates the influence perception has on human behavior. Based on a centuries-old Indian parable, six blind women and men touch different parts of an elephant in order to describe it. Each of them perceives a different reality, which produces dissimilar interpretations. In this case, their subjective perceptions do not lead to any objective reality. The video, entitled *Letter on the Blind, For the Use of Those Who See*, shows for the exhibition's duration at the Blickle Kino.

This experience of "seeing" with the hand is also at the center of Barbara Kapusta's work. In one of her videos, a rope is seen that the artist blindly explores with her hand, while she sketches out her impression of the process in the form of a poem. This emotionalized mode of presentation demands the viewer be more mindful during everyday life.

Peter Weibel, on the other hand, questions with his word games whether or not it is sufficient to write the word "hand" by hand to prove the existence of the hand. He speaks, thereby, of the existence of things, processes, and relationships.

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Catalogue

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The Grasping

Curator

Severin Dünser

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Venue

21er Haus

Museum of Contemporary Art
Quartier Belvedere, Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Vienna, Austria

Museum Hours

Wednesday 11 am – 9 pm
Thursday through Sunday 11 am – 6 pm
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Tickets

General Admission | 7 Euro
Jahreskarte Belvedere (inkl. 21er Haus): 39 Euro
Reduced | 5.50 Euro
Under 18 | Free

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