

*No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.* (John Donne)

*After Nature*, an installation Sabine Kuehnle presented for the first time at the Kunstverein Brackenheim, revolves around themes of origin and identity, home and the search for home. Places of our childhood and youth, a region, the family, friendships made early in life – we tend to associate all of these with the notion of home. Apart from this outer home there is also an inner home, something we first have to find. It lies in our way of thinking, and in the things we like to engage in. It turns each of us into the inhabitant of our own island, whereby the latter's distance to the continent and to home pastures, to other islands and archipelagos can shift.

There is always longing at play when we leave our outer home in order to get closer to our inner one: a longing to be at home in the world – and then again there are the pangs of homesickness we sometimes feel when we are out in the world. Sabine Kuehnle, who was born in Brackenheim, took the invitation to exhibit at the local Kunstverein as the occasion to take an intensive look at the thematic field of origins, identity and the search for home. For Kuehnle, the thoughts of poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), who grew up not far from Brackenheim in Nürtingen, and who was only too well aware of the longing for being at home in the world, played a central role. Hölderlin set off time and again to make his fortune in the world, and time and again he returned to Nürtingen – sometimes like a castaway. He was not able to make a home for himself in the big wide world. Yet he carried something with him at all times that kept him safe in his hunger for the world and for home, kept him from starvation: poetry and the inner need to write it.

Three of Hölderlin's poems were silently present in the exhibition: "Heimath" (Home), "Heimkunft" (Homecoming) and "An die Parzen" (To the Parcae). Sabine Kuehnle burnt these verses (in part read by Martin Heidegger) onto CDs together with select pieces of music and hung these up using pieces of string. In this way she created an image that stands for the presence of that which is absent, but also of something that can be found in some woodland areas, where the reflecting light is used to deter wild animals from going onto the roads.

*After Nature?* The word 'nature' is derived from 'natus' meaning 'born'. Hölderlin's deep-rooted connection to nature and the general question of what constitutes your *natural* character meld here. *After Nature* transport us into a narrative space between inside and outside worlds, into a narrative that does not need words: Two large tree roots ripped out of the earth by a storm were placed on the gallery floor, while a magpie sat on a branch affixed to the wall. Over and above the mythological meanings associated with the magpie Kuehnle also links the bird with a personal experience she had as a child: When she was little and in her grandparents' garden, a magpie stole from her. She was both incensed and fascinated. The paper objects on the walls, saturated with liquid clay and covered in pigments, appeared like skins that lay on the forest floor, that had blended with it, grown into it. And then there were the four identical, carefully cast pairs of plaster feet, aligned with the four cardinal points. Kuehnle placed one of them on a mirror lying on the floor – creating a connection between heaven and earth, ether and abyss.

"Understanding the world requires you to take a certain distance from it." This quote from the work of writer Karl Ove Knausgård can also be applied to Sabine Kuehnle's sculptural oeuvre: It is based on an intense effort to sound out the right distance to things and between them in order to arrive at an overall picture, an understanding.

Each of the objects and materials the artist uses in her work in order to give shape to her insights is selected with a great deal of precision, each is like a word, and altogether they form a sentence. The sentences Kuehnle formulates never revolve around ephemeral matters, but always pertain to existential, timeless questions. She finds answers in literature, mythology, poems – and sometimes also in the life stories of people who dedicated themselves to art with everything they had, because art nourished them. The four bronze slices of bread that Sabine Kuehnle placed in her installation symbolise more than provisions for hungry rambblers. Art, it could be said, is nourishment for those seeking answers to the big questions.

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