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BERLINARTLINK

ONLINE MAGAZINE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE
(<http://www.berlinartlink.com>)

Claudia Chaselings's Spatial Paintings: On Mutants in a Post-Nuclear World

Article by Elizabeth Schippers // July 06, 2020

When I enter the space where Claudia Chaselings's solo exhibition 'mutopia 5' is held, I am first asked for my name and intentions and then escorted through the metal detector. It is not every day that one visits an embassy building to see an art exhibition, but there's a first for everything. The Australian Embassy, a representative tells me, has been showcasing artists with an Australian connection for over 10 years. The Embassy is committed to supporting Australian-German artistic links and has provided a platform for a diverse range of exhibitions. For this particular exhibition, the Australian Embassy Berlin worked together with MOMENTUM (<https://www.momentumworldwide.org/exhibitions/mutopia5/>) in celebration of the 10th anniversary of their foundation in Sydney, Australia in 2010.



Claudia Chaseling: Mutopia 5, 2020, gold leaf, pigments, MDM and oil on canvas, 290x910 cm // Photo by Ruppert Bohle

Claudia Chaseling is a German-Australian artist and currently living and working in Berlin and Canberra. Chaseling's 'mutopia 5' is an explosion of colour spreading over the floors and walls of the building. The sleek, modern look of this official building is disrupted by bright, neon patterns and splashes of white negative space covering the walls. The colours are almost painful, a strange impression that is reminiscent of that which is man-made and that which is dangerous, venomous, like the skin of those small, deadly frogs in tropical forests.

Large canvases span the entire room and fill the space with various aspects of visual information, combined with the occasional text and the links that lead to different websites of source materials that Chaseling used during her research for this project. These abstract Spatial Paintings are part of an intricate, well-researched commentary on radioactive contamination, from various institutions and decisions that make this nuclear chain possible, to the mutative effects it has on the living things it comes into contact with. The artist describes Spatial Painting as being a specific way of applying perspective to distort the space optically. From one particular viewpoint the large biomorphic abstract paintings turn visually to a plain like a single two-dimensional canvas. After watching a documentary about the abuse of depleted uranium munitions in 2005 and its consequential effects on our environment, she has taken up this topic as the primary subject

matter of her practice. While the artist uses abstract forms in her Spatial Paintings, the abstracted atom bombs, mutated plants and radioactive explosions do not lose any of their visual impact. 'mutopia 5' functions as a wake-up call from the "mass distraction" that has enabled this mass destruction.



Claudia Chaseling: 'mutopia 5', 2020 // Photo by Ruppert Bohle

'mutopia 5' was realized during the Corona crisis, and communication between the Embassy and the artist was mostly via video. In this exhibition Chaseling shows the viewer her graphic novel, 'Murphy the Mutant' (<https://vimeo.com/339389327>). The artist tells the story of this seven-legged mutant, the sole survivor of the Third World War and the destruction of humanity, as he tries to find any sort of life on the destroyed, radioactive planet. The video functions almost like a bedtime story, with the voice of the artist guiding you through the pages. And though the subject of the novel is anything but soothing, there is also a hopeful message that shines through. Genetic mutation made Murphy immune to radioactivity, which is how he survived this nuclear attack. We, too, are the products of generations and generations of mutations. We, too, are capable of change.

Virtual Tour: Claudia Chaseling's exhibition 'mutopia 5' at the Australian Embassy...



The exhibition is showing at the Embassy until the end of October. Due to current COVID-19 guidelines, public access to the Embassy is restricted. The Embassy will update its website and social media channels (<http://facebook.com/AusEmb.DE>) once it's possible to view the exhibition in person. Those who are not able to come in person, however, can watch the virtual launch video of the exhibition above, with the artist speaking about her works and a greeting from the Australian Ambassador H.E. Lynette Wood.

Exhibition Info

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY <https://www.momentumworldwide.org/exhibitions/mutopia5/>

Claudia Chaseling: 'mutopia 5'

Curated by Rachel Rits-Volloch, Momentum

Exhibition: June 30–Oct. 30, 2020

Wallstraße 76–79, 10179 Berlin



Claudia Chaseling: 'mutopia 5', 2020 // Photo by Ruppert Bohle