

MUTOPIA 5

CLAUDIA CHASELING | SPATIAL PAINTING

Curated by Rachel Rits-Volloch

Design by Emilio Rapanà

At the Australian Embassy Berlin

30 June – 30 October 2020

Splashes of bright colors in biomorphic forms. Shapes and hues redolent of crackling, explosive energy. Large format works overflowing the gallery walls. Visitors to an exhibition of Claudia Chaseling’s work are confronted with a psychotropic saturation of visual information interlaced with occasional text and the URLs of source materials for Chaseling’s research. For, what seems initially to be pure abstraction, is in fact so much more. Chaseling began her “*mutopia*” series in 2011, honing her technique of Spatial Painting to focus on visualizing the nuclear chain that leads to radioactive contamination and its mutative effect on living things. Chaseling’s inquiry into the ways that abstract, non-representational painting can communicate narratives with a socio-political meaning - namely, the radioactive contamination of depleted uranium munitions – became the subject of her practice-based PhD, awarded by the Australian National University in Canberra in 2019. That she is now able to show the body of work resulting from her research at the Australian Embassy in her home city of Berlin, is a tribute to the 21 years Chaseling has been living between Australia and Germany, as well as to the Embassy’s commitment to culture, even in these precarious times. This exhibition was realized during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and resulting lockdown, at a time when most other cultural institutions were canceling or postponing their programs. And while the eyes and hearts of the world were focused on the viral threat and aftermath of COVID-19, Claudia Chaseling, working in her studio throughout the lockdown, was addressing another kind of insidious invisible killer: radiation and its repercussions.

“*mutopia 5*” is an exhibition of Spatial Painting featuring 16 works, 2 of which are new site-

specific works made for the Australian Embassy Berlin. Ranging in media from painting to watercolor, sculpture, print, and video, and encompassing a decade of Claudia Chaseling's artistic practice, this body of work takes us on a psychedelic journey through the nuclear chain leading to depleted uranium and its toxic aftermath. In developing her technique of Spatial Painting, Chaseling's intent is in "transforming perception, distorting it to disseminate political content." Chaseling's preoccupation with depleted uranium and the mutations it causes is somehow rendered even more relevant now, in the time of Corona, when suddenly we are all seeming experts on the mutations of viral strains. It took a global pandemic to stop the world in its tracks beneath the threat of an invisible killer which pays no heed to national borders or political will. Yet Claudia Chaseling has been painting another such invisible killer for over a decade. Why is it that no amount of media coverage and political protest - no amount of outrage at dirty bombs and weapons testing - can stop the invisible killer of radiation poisoning our planet? Why could not the global tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Chernobyl or Fukushima also stop the world in its tracks? This exhibition is a warning, a wake-up-call exploding onto our retinas in poison pigments, and invading our consciousness with information we should find as terrifying as any pandemic. As the artist maintains, "mass destruction is enabled by mass distraction". Using her visual language of Spatial Painting to both inform and protest about the fatal status quo of global energy and arms industries, Claudia Chaseling has for over a decade persevered in focusing our attention on the pernicious weapon of mass destruction which is depleted uranium. Yet in designating this body of work "*mutopia*", she does so with hope for a better future. "*Mutopia*" - Claudia Chaseling's verbal paradox, comingling the terms mutation and utopia, is perhaps not the oxymoron it first appears to be. Mutations in the DNA of living things caused by radioactive isotopes is the stuff of sci-fi horror. Yet, from the very beginning of life on this planet, genetic mutation has also been a survival mechanism. Without such mutations over the course of millennia, we would not exist. If we enable our planet to survive long enough, perhaps we too may change into something better.

Together with the Australian Embassy Berlin, MOMENTUM is proud to present Claudia Chaseling's solo exhibition "*mutopia 5*" as part of its 10th Anniversary Program, celebrating the foundation of MOMENTUM in Sydney, Australia in 2010.

[Rachel Rits-Volloch, Founding Director of MOMENTUM]



About The Artist

Dr. Claudia Chaseling is an international artist, born in Munich and living and working in Berlin and Canberra, Australia. She received a Masters degree in Visual Art, from the University of the Arts in Berlin (UdK), and in 2019 Chaseling completed her studio-based PhD in visual arts, with a focus on spatial painting, at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. Her work has been exhibited in over sixty solo and group exhibitions, notably in the United States, Australia and Europe. She has been featured in the X-Border Biennial, Finland; the Lueleå Biennial, Sweden; and the Lorne Biennial, Australia. Recent projects include solo exhibitions at Art Gallery Nadezda Petrovic, Cacak, Serbia; Wollongong Art Gallery, Australia; Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany; Krohne Art Collection, Eifel, Germany; Yuill Crowley Gallery, Sydney, Australia; Kunstverein Duisburg, Germany; Art-in-Buildings, New York City and Milwaukee, US; among others. Chaseling has taken part in international artist residency programs, including: Art Omi and the International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York, USA; Texas A&M University, USA; and the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. The Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst und Theorie Berlin published her first extensive monograph in 2016.

About The Curator & Designer

Dr. Rachel Rits-Volloch and Emilio Rapanà are the Directors of MOMENTUM, the Global Platform For Time-Based Art (www.momentumworldwide.org). MOMENTUM is proud to celebrate its 10th Anniversary in bringing together its Australian and German roots with Claudia Chaseling's exhibition "*mutopia 5*" at the Australian Embassy Berlin. Launched in 2010 in Australia as a parallel event to the 17th Biennale of Sydney, MOMENTUM moved to Berlin in 2011, establishing its base at the Kunstquartier Bethanien Art Center. In its first decade, MOMENTUM has made over 200 exhibitions, events, and artist residencies worldwide, showing more than 600 artists. MOMENTUM's program is composed of local and international Exhibitions, Artist and Curator Residencies, Video Art in Public Space Initiatives, complete Archives of the Performance and Education Programs, and a growing Collection. Positioned as both a local and global platform, working on a model of international partnerships and co-operations, MOMENTUM serves as a bridge joining professional art communities, irrespective of institutional and national borders.