

New Language and Perfect for What It Is...

A Private Collection

March 14, 2025 – July 25, 2025

Opening hours: Fridays from 11am - 6pm and upon
appointment

What does it mean to be human in an era of radical and accelerating change? How do we make sense of a world where the boundaries of identity, gender, body, and selfhood are in constant flux? *New Language and Perfect for What It Is...* brings together 38 works by 25 internationally renowned artists from a private collection spanning nearly 40 years. It traces a trajectory from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, reflecting shifting cultural and societal tensions. The title, borrowed from a phrase often used by the collector, sets the tone: an acknowledgment of art's ability to create its own vocabulary — existing on its own terms, both precise and ambiguous in its expression.

These works explore themes that are ever-present in contemporary discourse: the body as a site of transformation, the politics of disguise and masquerade, the performativity of identity, ritual, the gaze, and the underlying currents of violence and intimacy. The artists—**John Armleder**, **Dan Bina**, **Norbert Bisky**, **Marc Brandenburg**, **Olaf Breuning**, **Guillermo Caivano**, **Ross Chisholm**, **Liz Craft**, **Jessica Diamond**, **Jiří Dokoupil**, **Alex Dordoy**, **Peter Garfield**, **Jamey Garza**, **Evan Gruzis**, **Matthew Harrison**, **JOKO (Karin Jost & Regula Kopp)**, **Csaba Kis Róka**, **Erik Lindman**, **Boris Mrkonjic**, **Gianni Motti**, **Steven Mumford**, **Tobias Spichtig**, **Wolfgang Tillmans**, **Alexandra Vogt** and **Katharina Wulff**—create a visual language deeply rooted in the material, conceptual, and emotional concerns of their time. This collection serves as both a time capsule and a mirror, reflecting the fluidity of cultural moments and the urgency of artistic reinvention.

The exhibition opens with **Jamey Garza's** *Goodyear (Bad Day)*, a work that evokes American road culture and the mythology of speed, similar to **Steve Mumford's** oil on canvas. With a pop-art sensibility, Garza sets the stage for the dialogue on nostalgia and iconography that runs through the collection. Nearby, **Liz Craft's** surreal photograph of a “macho female magical child” astride a motorbike blends fantasy and subversion, reflecting Californian countercultures and the utopian aesthetic of the 1960s. Similarly, **Peter Garfield's** *Mobile Homes* series presents hyperrealist photomontages of crumbling American suburban homes, foreshadowing impending collapse.

Jessica Diamond's *Elvis Alive* shifts the energy, distilling urban graffiti and media critique into a stripped-down, bold commentary on pop culture and political rhetoric. Her work resonates with satire, deconstructing the language of media and its performative nature.

In contrast, **Matthew Harrison's** small self-portrait anchors the room in a quieter, more intimate meditation on identity. Harrison, who blurs the boundaries between art and non-art, presents meticulously crafted objects that seem both readymade and handmade, questioning the value and authorship of the art object itself. **Alex Dordoy's** sculpture plays with readymade, but also offers a critique on consumerist society.

Together, these works establish a rhythm, setting the stage for deeper explorations of selfhood, performance, and cultural mythology.

Olaf Breuning's *Woodworld* and *Sybill* expand the immersive experience. *Woodworld*, originating from Breuning's 1998 haunted house installation, blends dark humor with a critique of cinematic tropes, featuring a misty forest and a black Range Rover—a voyeuristic scene of something both familiar and unsettling. *Sybill*, on the other hand, presents a complex, multi-layered portrait in which the subject's body is adorned with references to art history, from Matthew Barney's sculptural forms to Cindy Sherman's performative self-portraiture. Breuning's fusion of influences invites reflection on how identity is both constructed and reconstructed in visual culture.

Alexandra Vogt's works continue this thematic exploration, creating dreamlike scenes that oscillate between sensuality and discomfort. With her white horse and stablegirl, Vogt weaves longing and disillusionment, innocence and desire, blurring the line between fantasy and reality.

JOKO, the Swiss performance collective consisting of Karin Jost and Regula Kopp, deepens this emotional landscape with *Eine Person hat Milch in ihrem Mund*. The photograph captures a ritualistic exchange between two bodies, one cradling the other's head as milk flows from one mouth to the next. This intimate moment explores care, surrender, and the unspoken dynamics of human connection—an exploration of bodily vulnerability and emotional intimacy.

In the adjacent room, **Dan Bina's** *This Is Not About You: Meme No. 13* confronts the viewer with a stark, black-and-white visual metaphor of self-inflicted violence. Drawing from a 2014 photograph of Pro-Russian protesters attacking a pro-Ukrainian protester during a rally in Donetsk, Bina reinterprets the image into a raw commentary on trauma, violence, and the human condition in the digital age.

This dark energy is echoed in **Evan Gruzis's** finely detailed skull. Gruzis, an American artist whose work meditates on life and death through precise lighting and contrasts, transforms his subject into a commentary on fragility and the tension between form and emptiness.

Boris Mrkonjic's *King Urusov* continues this dialogue, merging references to Russian chess champion Sergey Urusov and Da Vinci's *Homo Universalis*, exploring the intersection of intellect, power, and the human form.

The performativity of clothing is brought to the forefront through **Marc Brandenburg's** *Camouflage Series* and **John Armleder's** *Three Piece Wool Suit*. Brandenburg's full-body "camouflage" outfits, referencing racial and cultural stereotypes, critique the politics of disguise and identity. Armleder, a Swiss artist whose practice spans five decades, challenges the very boundaries of performance in art with his conceptual suit, questioning how the exhibition context itself can perform the role of art.

Tobias Spichtig's early conceptual piece referencing Andy Warhol's scars from the infamous shooting by Valerie Solanas delves into trauma, celebrity, and self-referential art. The image of Warhol's wounds, pierced through by Fontana-like slashes, creates an unsettling echo chamber that speaks to the intersection of personal history and public spectacle.

Gianni Motti's *The Artist's Funeral* takes on the absurdity of life, death, and resurrection in his provocative performance piece. By faking his death in a small Spanish village, Motti manipulates the grieving ritual of a Catholic community, leaving them to believe in his holy return. This powerful commentary on the absurdities of belief and the reshaping power of art explores the tension between performance and reality.

A pivotal moment in the exhibition comes with **Wolfgang Tillmans'** raw photography, capturing intimacy, suppressed sexuality, and domesticity. These works offer a moment of repose amid the more intense and charged pieces. Across from Tillmans' works, **Norbert Bisky's** *David Tropical*, a large, figurative painting, channels the socialist realism he encountered in his childhood in the GDR. The piece captures a contemporary hedonism and chaos that mirrors the shifting tides of social and political landscapes.

The grotesque and macabre qualities of painting are explored by Hungarian artist **Csaba Kis Roka** and Spanish painter **Guillermo Caivano**, whose works evoke the intensity of Goya. Their paintings delve into the darker corners of the human experience, offering a raw and unsettling view of mortality and suffering.

Katharina Wulff's large impasto canvas stands as the room's focal point. With its bold, sculptural texture, Wulff's work transcends the traditional boundaries of painting, transforming the canvas into a near-relief. Wulff, also a docent at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf, investigates the physicality of painting, using materiality to communicate both form and emotion.

Nearby, **Erik Lindman** offers a minimalist meditation on space and form. His subtle compositions contrast with the expressive energy of other works in the room, encouraging the viewer to reflect on the essential elements of minimalism.

Jiří Dokupil's seminal piece, created with mother's milk and unprimed canvases, explores themes of identity, vulnerability, and memory. A former docent at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Dokupil uses this deeply intimate and unconventional medium to evoke personal and cultural reflections on the body through pale, watery stains..

A new language, indeed. And perfect for what it is.

The exhibition can be visited every Friday from 11 am to 6 pm and by appointment. For further information and images, please contact Petra Tomljanovic at info@grieder-contemporary.com or call +41 43 818 56 07.