

VALENTINA

PINI

TEXTS &
REVIEWS

Valentina Pini «curiosity killed the cat»

16. August – 20. September 2020

Vernissage: Samstag, 15. August, 17 Uhr

Magischer Abend und Führung mit der Künstlerin: Samstag, 29. August, 16:30 bzw. 18 Uhr

Öffentliche Führung: Samstag, 5. September, 16 Uhr

Samtene Vorhänge sind Verheissungen. Sie sind Requisiten der Bühne, des Theaters und der Magie, sie geben nicht selten den Blick frei auf Parallelwelten, auf Spektakuläres oder Geheimnisvolles. Valentina Pini weiss um die Erwartungen, die sie wecken, um die Neugier, die sie schüren, und sie macht diese Impulse zum zentralen Thema ihrer Installation für die Kunsthalle Arbon. «curiosity killed the cat» lautet der Titel der Schau – «die Neugier tötete die Katze».

Nebst wenigen Fotografien mit rätselhaften Sujets an den Wänden und einem entfernten, mysteriösen Klang, sind die Hauptakteure in der ansonsten leer belassenen Halle zwei schwere, blaue Behänge, die je einen nicht einsehbaren Raum umschließen. Wenn Besucherinnen und Besucher zuerst den nahe am Eingang gelegenen Raum betreten, werden sie für einige Zeit verschwunden bleiben, um dann – vielleicht – hinter dem Vorhang am Ende der Halle wieder aufzutauchen.

Die gebürtige Tessinerin Pini (*1982), die in Genf und London Kunst studiert hat und heute in Zürich lebt, befasste sich für ihre erste grössere Soloschau im deutschsprachigen Raum unter anderem mit Zauberei. Wie die Physik, die Chemie und die Alchemie – oder die Küche –, von denen die Künstlerin gleichermassen inspiriert ist, beinhaltet die Zauberkunst ein Verwandlungspotential, das die vermeintlich fixen Prämissen unserer Realität in Frage stellt. Solche Erschütterung von Gewissheiten über die Welt haben wir in den letzten Monaten angesichts der Pandemie als verunsichernd und verstörend erfahren. In der Begegnung mit Magie, und auch mit der Kunst von Valentina Pini, liefern wir uns solch destabilisierenden Momenten aber mit einem wohligen Schauder aus.

So steigen wir denn gespannt hinab in die Dunkelheit, nachdem wir den blauen Samtvorhang passiert haben. Die mal perlend glöckchenähnlichen, mal tief wummernden oder gongartig schallenden Töne werden lauter. Auch sie bauen (unheimliche) Spannung und Erwartung auf. Eigens entwickelt vom Komponisten Micha Seidenberg mit einem elektroakustischen Instrument, begleiten sie in der düster verlassenen Atmosphäre des Kellers zwei neue Videoarbeiten von Valentina Pini. Wie so oft bei ihr, wissen wir nicht genau, was wir vor uns sehen – und das obwohl als Ausgangspunkt der Werke meist alltägliche Gegenstände dienen, welche die Künstlerin durch verschiedene Massnahmen bis zur Unkenntlichkeit verfremdet.

Beide Videos zeigen betörend schöne und dabei rätselhafte, skulpturale Formationen. Bei «Water into Wine» sehen wir verschiedene Trinkgläser turmartig gestapelt, je zwei gleiche kopfüber, sodass eine wässrige Flüssigkeit in ihnen eingeschlossen bleibt. Gekrönt von einem weiteren Glas mit farbiger Lösung, posieren die «Glastürme» wie Figuren in einem dadaistischen Theaterstück vor einem kitschig violetten

Zauberhafte Kunst in Arbon: In der Kunsthalle verschwinden Besucher und Wasser wird zu Wein

Die 38-jährige Tessiner Künstlerin Valentina Pini zeigt in ihrer ersten grossen Einzelausstellung in der Deutschschweiz Verblüffendes und beweist, dass uns ein bisschen Magie im Alltag nur gut tun kann.

Christina Genova

04.09.2020, 14.55 Uhr



Was verbirgt sich wohl hinter dem Vorhang?

Bild: Ladina Bischof

Zwei schwere, blaue Samtvorhänge hängen in der Kunsthalle Arbon. Das macht neugierig, man will wissen, was sich dahinter verbirgt. Denn bis auf die von den Vorhängen umgebenen Bereiche ist die Halle auf den ersten Blick leer. Die gebürtige Tessinerin Valentina Pini hat als Titel für ihre erste grosse Einzelausstellung im deutschsprachigen Raum ein englisches Sprichwort gewählt: «Curiosity killed the cat» – Neugier ist der Katze Tod. Ist dies als Warnung zu verstehen, doch besser keinen Blick hinter die Vorhänge zu werfen? Doch der Reiz ist zu gross: Man will erfahren, was sich hinter den sinnlichen Stoffbahnen verbirgt, die man mit den Verheissungen der Welt des Theaters und des Spektakels in Verbindung bringt.



Videoarbeit «Water into Wine» von Valentina Pini.

Bild: Ladina Bischof

Hinten dem Vorhang nahe des Eingangs befindet sich eine Treppe, die in den Untergrund führt. Und schon ist man Teil von Valentina Pinis Inszenierung, denn für jene Besucher, die oben in der Halle zurückbleiben, verschwindet man von der Bildfläche wie bei einem Zaubertrick. Doch wie die 38-jährige Künstlerin richtig sagt: «Wenn etwas verschwindet, muss es auch wieder auftauchen.» Und tatsächlich verbirgt der zweite Vorhang eine weitere Treppe, wo die scheinbar wie vom Erdboden verschluckten nach einiger Zeit wieder heraufsteigen.

Illusion und Magie im Untergrund

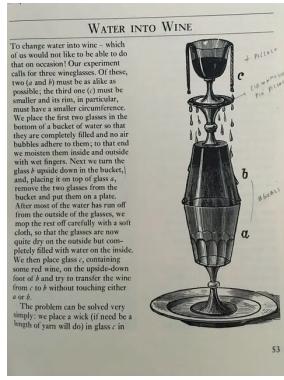
Doch zuvor geht es weiter mit Magie und Illusion. Pini versteht es, die Spannung aufrechtzuerhalten: Sphärische Klänge, eigens komponiert von Micha Seidenberg, und auch das spärliche Licht im Soussol der Halle, versetzen den Besucher in gespannte Erwartung. Nachdem sich die Augen an die Dunkelheit gewöhnt haben, entdeckt man eine Leinwand, wo die erste von zwei neuen, speziell für Arbon produzierten Videoarbeiten zu sehen ist.



Künstlerin Valentina Pini.
Bild: PD

Auf glänzendem Satinstoff hat Pini Türme aus jeweils drei eleganten Weingläsern platziert, die Inszenierung erinnert an eine Zaubershows. Das zweite Glas steht kopfüber auf dem ersten, so dass dazwischen eine farblose Flüssigkeit eingeschlossen bleibt. Das oberste Glas enthält eine farbige Lösung. Doch diese scheinbaren Stillleben sind keine statischen Skulpturen, sondern einer Dynamik unterworfen.

Erst mit der Zeit begreift man, dass sich die zwischen den zwei Gläsern eingeschlossene Flüssigkeit nach und nach verfärbt. Denn aus dem



Zauberexperiment «Water into Wine» aus dem Buch «Columbus Egg».

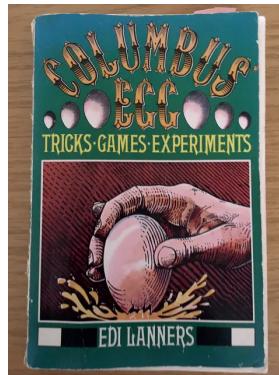
Bild: PD

obersten Glas hängen Fäden, über welche dank des Kapillareffekts langsam

Flüssigkeit herauströpfpt und in die beiden unteren Gläser gelangt. Valentina Pini hat diesen einfachen Zaubertrick im Buch «Columbus Egg» entdeckt, das verschiedene verblüffende Experimente vereint. Der Titel «Water into Wine» verweist außerdem auf eines der berühmtesten der zahlreichen in der Bibel beschriebenen Wunder.

Videoarbeit, bringt Valentina Pini die Betrachter mit einfachsten Mitteln zum Staunen. In einer seltsamen Unterwasserlandschaft steigen Luftblasen auf, nach und nach werden es weniger. Sind es Tiere oder Pflanzen, welche diese Luft absondern? Und wo ist diese surreale Landschaft zu verorten? Man glaubt darin Vertrautes zu erkennen, und tatsächlich hat die Künstlerin für die Ausstattung der Unterwasserwelt Gipsabgüsse von Gemüse – eine asiatische Gurke, Grapefruits oder eine verschrumpelte Aubergine – verwendet. Die ganze Zauberei, die dahintersteckt, sind die Lufteinschlüsse im Gips, die, sobald man das Gemüse ins Wasser legt, aufsteigen. Wieder steckt hinter dem Zauber einfachste Physik – Wasser ist schwerer als Luft. Pini sagt:

Auch mit «Mingling», der zweiten



Buchcover «Columbus Egg».

Bild: PD

«Ich mache sehr analoge Kunst.»



Eine surreale Landschaft wird in der Videoarbeit «Mingling» zum Leben erweckt.

Bild: Ladina Bischof

Die Ausstellung wird abgerundet durch mehrere Fotogramme. Diese werden erzeugt, indem man mehr oder weniger transparente Objekte zwischen Fotopapier bringt und dann belichtet. Auf den Fotogrammen sind scheinbar Quallen oder Schlangenhäute dargestellt. Doch in Tat und Wahrheit sind es Netze von Südfrüchten und geschmolzene Plastikhauben, welche im Garten den Salat vor Schnecken schützen. Valentina Pini verwendet für ihre Kunst bewusst vertraute Materialien und Gegenstände: «Ich will die Wahrnehmung auf Alltägliches verändern.»

Mit ihrer Kunst zeigt Pini die Faszination des scheinbar Unerklärlichen auf, der sich auch rationale Menschen nicht entziehen können. «Wir wissen, dass Zauberei nicht echt ist. Man muss sich aber in den Zustand versetzen, dass man es glaubt», sagt die Künstlerin. Sie sieht ihre Ausstellung als Plädoyer für etwas Irrationalität in einer rationalen Welt: «Zuviel Wissen ist manchmal schade. Ich will nicht die totale Gewissheit.» Denn ist Geheimnis einmal gelüftet, verliert es auch seinen Reiz.

Bis 20. September 2020; öffentliche Führung 5. September, 16 Uhr; Finissage und Saisonabschluss mit Valentina Pini 20. September, 16 Uhr.

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August 31 - September 28, 2019

Valentina Pini *Snake Oil*

In South Africa, if you are suffering from illness or facing problems that you feel powerless to overcome by yourself, people will likely orient you towards a Sangoma. In order to diagnose the causes of your ailment, this respected healer will usually perform a ritual consisting in throwing bones as a way to reach out to the spirit world and ask advice, before recommending you an appropriate muti—a traditional medicine based on plants, animal or mineral extracts—that will appease your ancestors and eventually cure you. In the world of the Sangomas, the empirical and the spiritual are no contradictory forces; the components of the treatments are selected for their chemical properties just as much as they are for their anagogic power. Similarly, the bones used by the healer to access the wisdom of the ancestors subsume their own ontological materiality into a transcendental energy that allows them to become carriers of inaudible voices and occult meaning. This sacred set of fetishes is proper to each Sangoma and may in fact not consist exclusively of actual bones, but also of tokens such as shells, stones, coins, dominos, dices and whatnot. Each of these objects is endowed with a distinct significance which, in configuration with the position of the other thrown “bones,” will allow the healer to interpret otherworldly messages. In other words, in traditional South African metaphysics—like in countless non-Western cultures—, the dialectic of the visible and the invisible is characterized, not by a fundamental schism between these two realms, but by a spiritual bridge that connects them and upon which the meaning of reality is built. Over the course of Western history, our essentialist tradition has misled us into frequently confusing form with matter, consequently wrongly interpreting the appearance of things as their fundamental nature. And so, the day you consult a Sangoma and look at the thrown objects laying on the ground, remember that these things you see are not merely what they appear to be. What you recognise as a few bones, perhaps a vertebra, a couple of shells and, say, a domino or a coin, bear a completely different meaning for the eye that looks at them from another perspective than your own. And these bones, which are not really bones, will all at once become not only a passageway to an invisible reality, but also the very eyes of these otherworldly spirits, looking at you look at them, thus simultaneously blurring the very boundary between the perceptible and imperceptible.

Valentina Pini's artistic practice is articulated around the perception of matter. Through her multimedia work, she questions our positivist conception of material reality and the immutability of things. In this regard, she activates the transformative power of the elements and resorts to the illusionist properties of the mediums she works with. During a recent residency in Johannesburg, she focused her research

on the paraphernalia characteristic of divinatory practices in South Africa, and more particularly on the magical essence these everyday objects acquire as a result of their so-to-say non-standard use. Quite literally, the video *Snake Oil* on the large screen shows the gradual submersion in a thick liquid of a still life-like arrangement of a set of bones acquired by the artist over the course of her exploration of the stalls at the Faraday Muti Market in downtown Johannesburg. Most of the elements of this set, however, have been uniformly cast in lead and are in fact reproductions of the original objects that compose the set, thus pointing out at the functional ambiguity of these tokens beyond their explicit nature—an effect reinforced by the close up filming that somewhat hinders the identification of the individual pieces. The seashells out of which the liquid is slowly oozing are reminiscent of eyes, with their ridges and protrusions alluding to eyelashes. They hint at the divinatory virtue of these objects that allow the healer to see beyond the ordinary material realm and penetrate into the spirit world. Playing along with the filmed image, the sound piece that pervades the whole room is a special composition by Micha Seidenberg that is resorting to an algorithmic program in order to generate a sonic piece that responds to the narrative configuration of the video.

Sound is a central element in the second room, too. Voices are heard, those of two Sangomas, invisible yet audible, speaking about their healing and divinatory practice. One of them could be identified as a “traditional” Sangoma, while the other is a sort of “digital” Sangoma who focuses on doing business consulting for start-ups. The contrasting approaches and experience of these two very distinct contemporary shamans tell the tale of the enduring relevance of spiritual practices in Southern African culture in spite of the globalizing dynamics and standardization of economic, relational and medical protocols. Their testimonies demonstrate the possibility of a syncretic society where multiple beliefs and worldviews can cohabit, and appropriate—even contaminate—each other.

The short 3D animation, back in the main exhibition room, creates a bridge between Pini’s newer works after her residency and her previous research. Initiated last year, this body of work departs from a visually familiar object which, through a process of material alteration, becomes alienated and begins to evoke other possible meanings and interpretations. This object, spinning and moving, seemingly floating in an abstract liquid, could be a sea creature, with its tentacle-like extensions, or maybe an organ—the slice of a brain. It surely looks organic, and yet, the texture applied in the animation makes it appear particularly solid and hard. Two lead casts of the same object are hung, somewhere else in the room. They are an edition specially produced for the show at DIENSTGEBÄUDE. Again, the material used frustrates the exact identification of this nevertheless not-so-foreign thing. Hung this way, one next to one another, they suddenly become like eyebrows, which, like the seashells in the video, refer to the sense of sight through an evocative mechanism that purposely keeps the actual eye invisible.

Throughout the exhibition, Valentina Pini constantly plays on the verge, not only between the visible and the invisible, but also between the recognizable and the indeterminate. What are those red, glossy objects on the two large pictures? Some kind of mineral? How big are they, actually? What seems at stake here, is the way in which we tend, on the one hand, to only believe what we see and, on the other, how sight is de facto a standard factor of empirical truth. The artworks in the show frustrate the attempts at identifying with certainty the nature of what is on display. And in this sense, they challenge the logical relationship between the eye and an absolute sense of truth, thus reminding us that reality

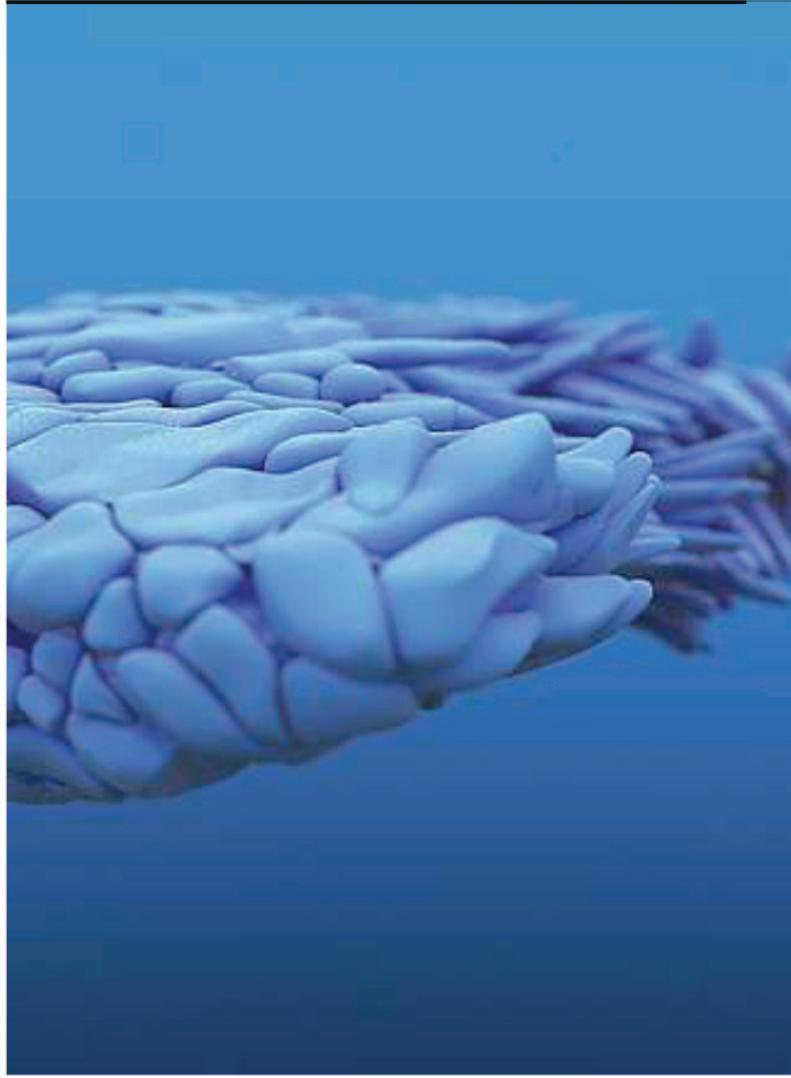
always exceeds the realm of the visible. By the way, the object on the 3D animation is a slice of grapefruit and the photographs show two peeled watermelons.

Text by Simon Würsten Marin

The exhibition of Valentina Pini is kindly supported by Cantone Ticino, Dr Georg und Josi Guggenheim Stiftung and Curt Burgauer Stiftung

DIENSTGEBÄUDE Art Space / Töpferstrasse 26 / 8045 Zurich / info@dienstgebaeude.ch / www.dienstgebaeude.ch

Valentina Pini — Profondo blu



«With two naked eyes watching slime on the ocean floor», animazione 3D, 2 min., loop, audio stereofonico a 2 canali, 2019. Suono: Micha Seidenberg. Animazione: Marcin Jeż.

A seguito di un'immersione di una decina di giorni nei locali di zwanzigquadratmeter, l'artista ticinese Valentina Pini investirà lo spazio berlinese con il suo universo enigmatico. A programma un'animazione 3D e degli interventi installativi che disorientano la nostra percezione visiva. *Laura Giudici*

A fine ottobre Valentina Pini farà una breve residenza a Berlino con l'obiettivo di realizzare una mostra nello spazio d'arte indipendente zqm, com'è comunemente chiamato, fondato nel 2007 dall'artista e curatore Eric Emery e situato a Friedrichshain, nell'ex Berlino Est. Grazie alla dedizione del suo fondatore, la giovane scena artistica può beneficiare di una piattaforma che offre una dinamica di scambio unica tra artisti, curatori e scuole d'arte. Da Svizzero installato nella metropoli tedesca, Emery ha inoltre per vocazione di costruire dei ponti tra il suo paese natale e la Germania.

Secondo il formato elaborato dal curatore, Pini vivrà una decina di giorni nell'appartamento nello stesso palazzo di zqm, immersendosi negli spazi e impregnandosi dell'atmosfera del luogo al fine di concepire un progetto in interazione diretta con lo spazio. L'artista si lascerà guidare dalle idee sorte sul posto in relazione ad un punto di partenza già definito. Ha infatti deciso di presentare un'animazione 3D che si addice al piccolo spazio quadrato di 20 m², attualmente privo di luce naturale. Fin dai primi secondi dell'animazione, una visione ravvicinata di una massa proteiforme in movimento cattura il nostro sguardo e provoca in noi un certo smarrimento. È un cervello? Cosa rappresenta lo sfondo blu? Man mano che la prospettiva si allontana, si profila il movimento armonioso di piccoli tentacoli che subito evocano in noi l'immagine di una creatura acquatica. Siamo assorti nella sua danza sinuosa, quando la proiezione s'inscrive. L'immagine ricompare e rivediamo la stessa creatura, questa volta frontalmente. Poi appare una seconda creatura quasi uguale. Viste una accanto all'altra, la loro forma a mezzaluna e la struttura filamentosa in evidenza, queste masse non appaiono più come organismi marini. Esse sono in realtà un'elaborazione di scansioni 3D di spicchi di pompelmo ingrandite che Pini ha precedentemente utilizzato per creare delle sculture in resina. I movimenti dei due spicchi allineati suggeriscono dal canto loro un inarcamento delle sopracciglia causato dal gusto acido del pompelmo. La composizione elettroacustica che accompagna l'animazione, realizzata con suoni creati da un sistema algoritmico che rispondono ai movimenti dell'immagine, rinforza il suo alone di mistero.

Con «With two naked eyes watching slime on the ocean floor», la riflessione multimediale dell'artista sui fenomeni percettivi e sulla materialità si è estesa anche all'animazione 3D, un medium che offre una dimensione immersiva ulteriore ad un approccio che attribuisce particolare importanza all'esperienza sensoriale.

Laura Giudici, storica dell'arte, vive e lavora a Ginevra. lauragiudicig@gmail.com

→ «With two naked eyes watching slime on the ocean floor», zwanzigquadratmeter, Berlino, 1.-30.11.
↗ www.20qmberlin.com

PRO HELVETIA: Stories from artists in residence

2020/01/27



Valentina Pini: “Objects of great banality that little by little become loaded with meaning and acquire a magical value”

Between February and April 2019, Swiss artist Valentina Pini spent three months in Johannesburg on a Pro Helvetia studio residency. Valentina works across mediums, and is interested in the evolution of materials, alchemy and phenomenological experience. Here, almost a year after arriving in the city, Valentina reflects back on her residency and the work that came out of it, as well as the impact the experience has had on her artistic practice.

When I decided to apply for a residency in Johannesburg I was undertaking research in the field of popular magic — entertainment, magic tricks — with the aim of integrating elements from these domains into my artistic practice. My previous work has been shaped by questions around how the use of illusions and fictional magic can change our perception, and whether magic tricks can be used to understand cognition. In South Africa I wanted to look at the material culture surrounding traditional healers with particular interest in the paraphernalia and symbols used during rituals and consultations. At the same time, I was reading a lot about ethnological study of witchcraft and its impact on African societies and individual person. One of the most important authors has been David Signer, his book *Économie de la sorcellerie*, was a great source of inspiration and the starting point for my research. Converging the two topics, witchcraft and traditional healers, led me to South Africa.

I knew about Johannesburg being one of the world's most unequal and segregated cities, but I never expected such a “divide”, especially in term of separation between black and white, rich and poor. Despite the dangerousness of the CBD, and the fact that you have to be constantly vigilant, for me this area was really inspiring, alive and authentic. While in the city my main activities involved meeting Sangomas (traditional healer), having consultations, visiting the Faraday Muti Market, collecting healing objects and conducting interviews with all sort of traditional healers.

One of the main ways I connected with healers was through conversations with taxi drivers. Every time I took a taxi/Uber to move around the city (at least twice a day) I would look inside the car to see if any sort of fetish was visible hanging from the rear-view mirror or hidden somewhere else. In a very spontaneous way I would ask the driver about the origin or meaning of those objects or how they protected themselves against accidents if they didn't possess any amulets.

Drivers were sometimes surprised by my questions but after a little chat they enjoyed explaining anecdotes and the origin of the wooden stick hidden in the dashboard, the goat hair bracelet that they were wearing or the little bottle containing unidentifiable liquid. Over time I gained a certain familiarity in asking the right questions and I received a significant number of contacts for Sangoma, Inyanga (traditional herbalist) and prophets with whom I could arrange consultations. In a bar in Johannesburg I had the opportunity to meet a very particular Sangoma who focuses on doing business consulting for start-ups. His story and voice I later integrated in a sound installation titled *The Calling*.

My set of bones, which I keep guarded in my studio, is composed of four goat bones, one vertebrae of a hippopotamus (or so I've been told), a domino numbered 1/5, an unidentified black animal horn, a twig that is usually burned to bring luck, a porcupine quill, two perfect halves of nutmeg, a piece of wood shaped like a sling with three black marks, a small branch of white coral, a shell shaped like an eye, a large rounded shell with spotted pattern, a giant flower seed that I can't identify, a piece of the carapace of an armadillo (probably a big one), the skin of a wateranimal, a big reddish-brown sleek spherical seed that looks like a giant chestnut and some kind of lizard's tail.

In Johannesburg I decided to set up my personal set of bones according some Sangomas' advice but also in a very spontaneous way, choosing objects according to my personal feeling. Bones are a set of particular objects used by Sangomas to communicate with ancestors. The bones are “thrown” and the configuration of the way they fall carries specific meanings

I was drawn to these objects for different reasons. I knew for example that every set of bones needs four goat bones which symbolise one's four ancestors. I remember choosing them very carefully in a Muti shop with the help of the seller who explained the difference between bones used for a male or a female ancestor. The bones were still covered with remains of flesh, so I had to soak them overnight in bleach in order to clean them. Other objects I chose based on my personal interpretation or analogies, like a shell, which looks like an eye, or a nut, which reminded me of a brain, or a horn, which is strongly related to sexual power. Some objects I just bought because I was intrigued by them and because I couldn't classify them, not even their materiality. I remember one day rummaging through various things at the Faraday Market and coming across a very small monkey hand in my hand. For a brief moment I had the idea to add it to my set of bones. I was already negotiating the price with the seller when suddenly I was literally overcome by an uncanny feeling, much stronger than a simple feeling of guilt; something frightful. I intuitively let the little hand go. The salesman laughed and told me that the hand is really good for healing people with epilepsy, you just need to mix the hand with herbs and other liquid and drink it.

I used the objects that I collected, bought or that were given to me in South Africa for a video called Snake Oil in my exhibition that took place in Zurich in September 2019, All objects were cast in lead so that the heavy metal gave them a sort of uniformity but at the same time highlighted their specific texture. The video, in a close up, shows a gradual submersion of the bones into a thick liquid, which has an unusual viscosity. While working on this project in Johannesburg I was very attracted to big shells with opalescent colouring. These have a dominant presence throughout the video. Their shape is reminiscent of an eyes and the grooves allude to eyelashes. The shell is the source of the thick liquid.

Taking time to observe these objects I was able to see them anew; often they are objects of great banality that little by little become loaded with meaning and acquire a magical value. Now, I find myself being intrigued by an object, which leads me to try extract it from its basic function and try to understand the small element or detail, which alters my perception and the way I look at it.

This has influenced my process of working. For a recent exhibition that took place in Berlin in October 2019 I made casts of eels. The process of choosing, treating and positioning the eels in clay before covering them with various layers of silicone and plaster became ritualised and created new awareness for the eel that I manipulated.

SCHENA DA VEDRO KUNST AUS DEM TESSIN ARTE TICINESE

NINA HAAB, AGLAIA HARITZ, GIAN PAOLO MINELLI,
ALDO MOZZINI, FLAVIO PAOLUCCI UND VALENTINA PINI

29. AUGUST BIS 29. OKTOBER 2017



Valentina Pini, *Forkedtongue*,
Fotoprint, 2016

VALENTINA PINI (*1982 in Sorengo TI, lebt in Zürich)

Tessin Ganz allgemein ist es schwierig, das Konzept «Identität» zu erklären. Wenn ich an das Tessin denke, glaube ich, dass die Tessiner versuchen ihre Identität zu stärken, indem sie sich von Italien abwenden. Das finde ich absurd, wenn man an die gemeinsame Sprache und ähnliche Kultur denkt.

Persönlich identifizierte ich mich nicht mit einer einzigen Region; ich finde eine Verbindung zu allen Orten, in denen ich wohne. Ich habe in Genf, Wien und London gelebt und im Moment wohne ich in Zürich. In jeder Stadt habe ich andere Sachen absorbiert. Das hat in meiner künstlerischen Arbeit auch Spuren hinterlassen.

Kunstszene Seit einigen Jahren gibt es im Tessin eine junge Kunstszene, eine neue Künstlergeneration, die neue Ort für Ausstellungen und Experimente ins Leben gerufen hat. Ich beziehe mich hier besonders auf die Sonnenstube und den Projektraum Morel in Lugano. Diese zwei Räume wurden von den Künstlern gegründet, um eine Verbindung zwischen der Tessiner Kunstszene und dem Rest der Schweiz sowie Italien zu schaffen. Die Räume verfolgen einen interdisziplinären Ansatz und fördern experimentelle Musik, visuelle Kunst, aber auch die Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Off-spaces.

Themen Meine künstlerische Arbeit geht oft von einer Befragung des Materials aus, von der Alchemie und ihrem Vermögen, Dinge zu verwandeln. Ich stelle industrielle, häusliche und intime Materialien natürlichen, durch Zufall und zeitlich unabhängig entstandenen Stoffen gegenüber. Meine Arbeit ist das Resultat dieser Eingriffe. Ich fange selten mit einer vordefinierten Idee an, vielmehr entwickelt sich mein Vorgehen aus unzähligen Versuchen, die sich im Feld zwischen Experiment und Kontrollverlust bewegen. Inspiration finde ich in der Physik und der Chemie, aber auch in der Küche, der Magie und vor allem den Parawissenschaften.

Während meines Masterstudiums Skulptur in London hat sich meine Arbeit stark verändert. In diesen zwei Jahren bekam ich Lust der Forschung und dem Experiment als Methoden in meiner Arbeit mehr Gewicht zu geben. Ich fing an zu hinterfragen und Risiken einzugehen, ohne mich zu sehr um das Endresultat zu kümmern. Die Skulptur rückte in den Vordergrund, die Lust etwas zu verstofflichen, was früher als Zeichnung zweidimensional blieb. Auch die Farbe, die ich früher nur selten eingesetzt hatte, schlich sich auf ganz natürliche Weise in meine Arbeit ein.

Heute/Zukunft Am 30. August eröffnet die Gruppenausstellung «Carnage» im Museum Rietberg Zürich, im September werde ich in Tel Aviv an der Ausstellung «Transmission» mit Künstlern aus London teilnehmen, und danach am CAC (*Centre d'art contemporain*) in Genf im Rahmen der «Bourse de la Ville de Genève». Im Oktober zeige ich meine Arbeit im Projektraum Morel im Tessin für eine Ausstellung mit der Künstlerin Nastasia Meyrat.

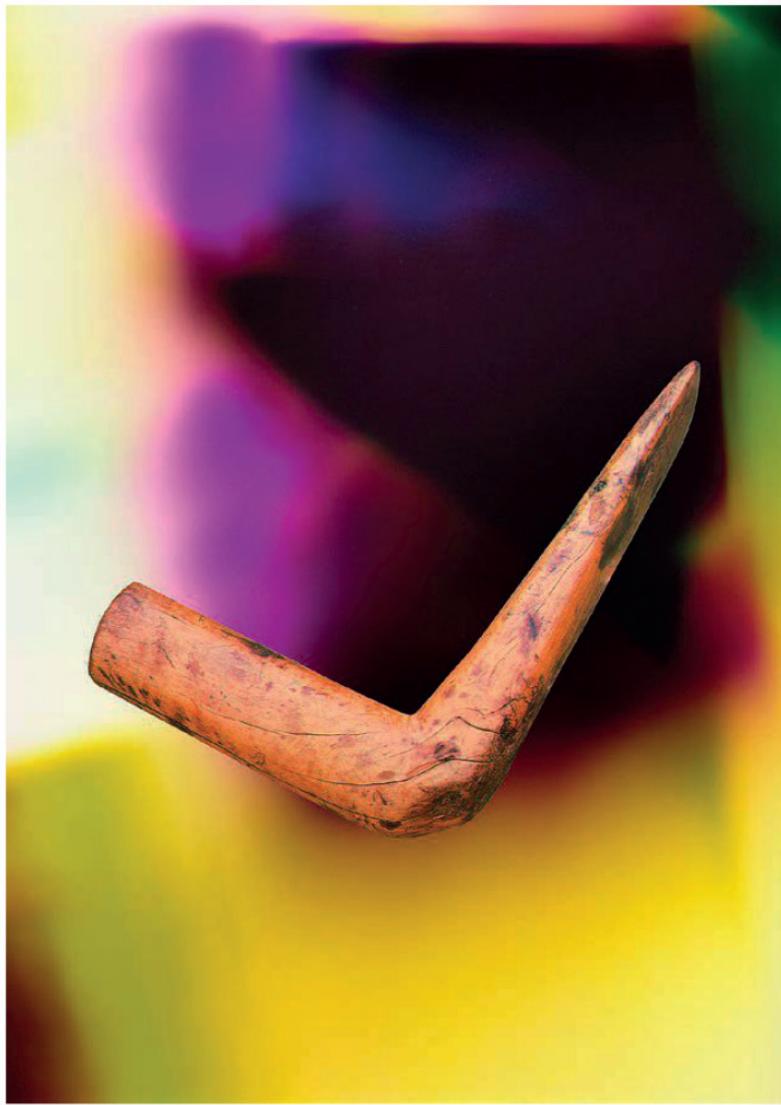
Die Tessiner Künstlerin hat an der Genfer Hochschule der Künste (HEAD) und an der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien studiert. Im Jahr 2015 schloss sie das Royal College of Art in London mit dem Master ab.

In ihren Arbeiten lässt sich eine Faszination für das Zusammenspiel verschiedener Materialien erkennen. Auf ihre eigene Weise verbindet sie mit Humor Illusion und Realität. Sie arbeitet dabei hauptsächlich in den Medien Skulptur und Installation.

2016 nahm sie an der Gruppenausstellung «A Journey From A Sweeping Gesture To A Lasting Effect» in der Vitrine Gallery in Basel teil. Ihre Einzelausstellung «Tonic Immobility» fand in der Deptford X Gallery in London statt (2017), die Doppelausstellung «Twin Twist» mit Aloïs Godinat im Le Labo in Genf (2017).

Im Kunst(Zeug)Haus zeigen wir eigens für die Ausstellung entstandene Bodenobjekte («Ohne Titel», 2017), Fotoarbeiten («Finger Stretching», 2017) sowie die Videoarbeit «Tagadà» (2016), die in Zusammenarbeit mit Musiker Adam Maor entstanden ist.

Twin Twist — Sinuose distorsioni



Valentina Pini · To be returned, 2016, collage su fotogramma

Valentina Pini e Aloïs Godinat condividono il gusto per materiali e oggetti familiari, dei quali si appropriano per offrirne una visione rinnovata e insolita. Lo spazio ginevrino Le Labo fa dialogare i due artisti evidenziando il loro fascino comune per i processi di trasformazione. *Laura Giudici*

A Le Labo le sperimentazioni sono più artistiche che scientifiche, ma le arti e le scienze sono più vicine di quanto si pensi. Le creazioni di Valentina Pini, esposte in questo spazio in occasione della sua riapertura, sono degli ottimi esempi a riguardo. L'interesse per la sperimentazione e l'universo scientifico dell'artista ticinese rispecchiano lo spirito eclettico del nuovo Le Labo. La mostra è infatti completata da un intervento del Ginevrino Aloïs Godinat, una selezione di pubblicazioni e una programmazione video.

Perno del contributo di Valentina Pini è il libro d'artista «Finger stretching», pubblicato dalle Editions Ripopée, una casa editrice artigianale e innovativa nel contemporaneo. Vere protagoniste della pubblicazione, le immagini occupano l'intera superficie delle pagine. I titoli, suggestivi, appaiono solo in calce e senza riferimenti. Sta a noi ristabilire i collegamenti per orientarci in questo universo misterioso. Collages su fotogrammi, queste composizioni ricordano le enigmatiche atmosfere del surrealismo. Gli sfondi sono costituiti da fotogrammi realizzati ponendo sulla carta degli oggetti in gran parte del quotidiano e lasciando agire la luce attraverso dei filtri colorati. Gli effetti di movimento e trasparenza ricercati – per esempio attraverso l'utilizzo di liquidi o sacchetti di plastica – creano paesaggi fluidi e vaporosi, di colori spesso vivi e con un non so che di psichedelico. In questi scenari intriganti aleggiano degli oggetti misteriosi. Assemblaggi di fotografie estratte dal volume «L'outil» (1970), questi strumenti arcaici assumono un aspetto volutamente antropomorfo; a volte sembra persino che si animino di vita propria. Non stupisce quindi che alcuni di loro investono lo spazio espositivo sotto forma di stampe fotografiche. A queste immagini dalla presenza quasi scultorea fa inoltre eco la reale tridimensionalità di altre opere.

La selezione di lavori riflette le preoccupazioni attuali di Valentina Pini. Costante è la questione della metamorfosi continua della materia, che l'artista osserva, decomponendo e manipola con un interesse particolare per i fenomeni fisici e chimici, tra cui quelli luminosi e cromatici, che la alterano costantemente. L'intento è di proporre uno sguardo personale e innocente sui fenomeni scientifici, tradotti in un linguaggio artistico in cui materiali semplici e oggetti del quotidiano subiscono la magia di forze invisibili ed esercitano sulla percezione dello spettatore il poter dell'illusione.

Laura Giudici, storica dell'arte, lavora come assistente di ricerca all'Università di Friburgo.

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→ «Twin Twist», Le Labo, Ginevra, 21.1.–3.3.2017 ↗ www.espacelabo.net

by Rebecca Jagoe

*To whom does the lamp communicate itself?
The mountain? The fox? What if things could
speak? What would they tell us? Or are they
speaking already and we just don't hear them?
And who is going to translate them?*

Walter Benjamin [1]



**Cone/red, Cone/
yellow-green** – 2015,
Glicée print on aluminium,
MDF frame, 2015

1.

Cone/green-yellow, a photograph of an object. It is a strange, beautiful cone with bands of yellow that bleed into vivid green then sea-blue. A chipped-off end seems to float in midair, except that I can just see the thin wire holding it if I look hard enough. There is a potency to the object I cannot quite put my finger on: it is charged with something that I cannot identify, as though it is vibrating: it is not mute, but it speaks in a language that I cannot fully understand. Plaster has created the object by casting it in plaster then leaving it to stand in ink: it seeps into the surface, creeping up the object as it absorbs more and more colour. I know this is how they are created, so I see it is a vibrant testament to the porosity of the object and the suggestion of change. Before I learnt of the chemistry behind the work, these were still beautiful, vibrant objects, but – as I say – there was an air of mystery to them, an ‘aura[2]’, dare I say it, that is retained even when their evolution is told to me. Perhaps it is because of this contrast between precise geometry and nebulous surface, testament to a process that allows the materials to interact autonomously without human intervention. Perhaps it is because, with the bands of colour that creep up its form, there is the suggestion that this is an object not in stasis but in change, that what I am seeing is but one moment in its lifetime, yet at the same time I am afforded a glimpse into both its history and its future. Perhaps it is because, even knowing how it is made, it still feels that I cannot fully understand it:

Yet we must entertain the possibility that *what is being said* is outside our comprehension, that it shows up as dumb matter in this exchange.

2.

In the field of geological surveying, a borehole is a cylinder of earth or rock extracted from the ground in order to map the geological history of the terrain. To look at a borehole is to see stratified and condensed layers of time that tell a story of place and how it came to be created: it is a literal cross-section of natural history. I think that to see the world through the eyes of the geological surveyor must be to see the ground not as a fundamental end point, but instead a thin skin of the present sitting atop multiple layers of the past.

I am not a geological surveyor. I see the earth as a solid and impenetrable mass: I have no clue as to how this upper layer, this surface, came to be, and I have no idea what came before it. Perhaps it is conventional to see a work as I see the ground: appreciating the aesthetics of only the upper skin. The practice of producing a piece of art of course falls beyond the structure of a manufacture line. There will be experimentation, there will be process, but these are usually concealed. Yet to look at Valentina Pini’s work is not to look just at the top layer, the final result. The borehole functions as a cross-section of time, and to look at Pini’s work feels too as though I

am looking at a cross-section of experimentation and evolution that is manifest in the final work, and, beyond this, the possibility that the work will continue to change and evolve beyond this moment. If I look at a borehole I know that it charts a change, whilst I cannot read it: similarly, to look at Pini's work is to know that it shows something in transition, a transition that I cannot fully comprehend. There is of course a basic formal similarity between the geological cylinders and the plaster cylinders or cones that Pini creates, the bands of coloured ink finding assonance with layers of rock and soil. Parallels can be drawn beyond this, though. For while there is a pleasing ambiguity in these objects, still the process of creating the objects and, in addition, the process of creating this image are manifest in the result. And so this flattened image of an object becomes a cross-section of evolution, change and process. Somewhere between chemistry and magic, where the creation is not confessed flagrantly but disclosed subtly.

3.

The video *DIY* begins with two heavy-duty black rubber gloves appear through two holes in a sheet. They are redolent of the gloves used to conduct experiments in contained environments, allowing the chemist and the chemistry to remain separated either side of the glass. It seems apt, then, that the holes are too big for the gloves, an imperfect seal that affords occasional glimpses of what is happening behind. Another wall becoming permeable. As I watch, the shadow of a rod emerges at crotch-height: clearly not the body part you are thinking of, but the allusion remains. The gloved hands wrap the rod in bands of thread, then dip it in a vat of fluid. I am watching the process of tie-dye, the result an acid-yellow smear across the mid blue sheet. There is a connection to urination, to the waste of bodies, to bodies acting on objects, yet this remains not stated but implied.

While much of Pini's work remains abstract, certain moments or objects become visual snags of familiarity. Such snags act as reminder that the chemistry that she so celebrates is not isolated to a so-called separate domain of Science, but instead takes place every day in small degrees with or without by intervention. The process of tie-dye is something I recall from early teenage experiments in decorating clothes, but it is, too, a process of transformation that relies on chemical reaction. Separations between art, science, everyday, are not solid walls but permeable membranes. The coffee cup becoming pulp. The madeleines. The drawstring rucksack eroded and eaten into. Tie-dye.



Sitck – S, M, L – Glicée
print on paper, 2015

4.

The key-label wrapped around the Diastix jar looks almost like a paint chart from a tasteful decorating company. Diastix are plastic rods with pads infused with chemicals. When dipped in urine, it seeps into the pads, they change colour, and –depending on the colour, and the type of stick used – can be used for a number of diagnostic differentials. The label tells you what each colour indicates: kidney disease, diabetes mellitus, haemolytic disorders. The test-strip for ketone levels turns a particularly lovely couplet of turquoise and ochre. Really, it is quite beautiful as a colour combination, a bit like the yellow stain on blue in *DIY*, and I feel a slight snag as I throw it away.

[1] 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man', in *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock & Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2004)

[2] 'Exclusive focus on aura as remaindered or otherwise by technological change overlooks another sense of aura in Benjamin: aura as an aspect of experience in general' TC McCormack, Martin J. Gent & Esther Leslie *Dumb Fixity: The Impossible Question* (London: Artwords Press, 2010)

A ARTISTRY

Equilibrium Risk



Still from The Brain That Wouldn't Die

During her first chemistry lesson with Professor Allio, who has a huge angioma covering much of his face in a way that made it difficult to guess which was the birth mark and which was the unblemished skin; she learnt the transition of water in different phases.

The transition takes form between solid, liquid and gaseous states of matter, and in rare cases, plasma. Those different states of matter suggest the process of creativity typical of an artist, where ideas often start as blurry images and finish with a solid body of work.

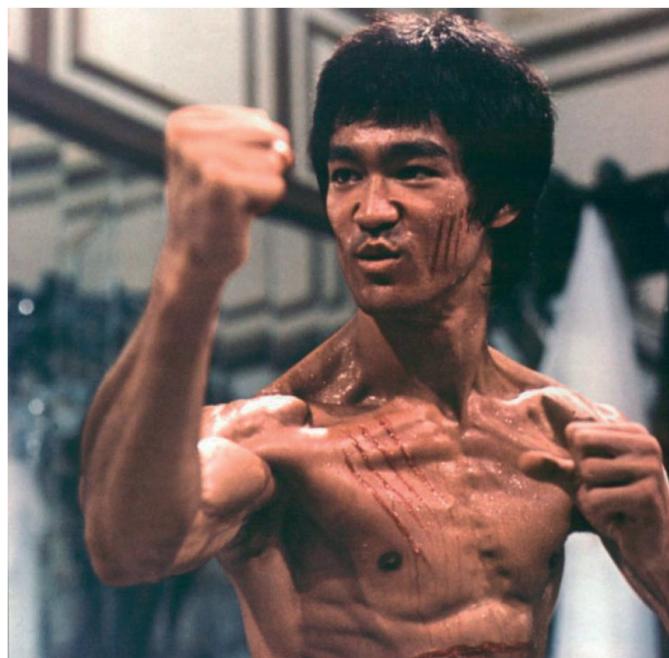
This blurry image, roughly organic, can be compared to an intangible substance almost with the consistence of plasma, in terms of a unique condition of matter, which doesn't have a definite shape or a definitive volume unless in a container.



In the paranormal field the ectoplasmic phenomena is associated with hauntings and it is understood that it has been a slime-like substance excreted by mediums during trances.

All those transformations from one matter to another could have several affinities with the gestation of an idea until its materialization: during the process of creativity, an artist passes through several complex stalemates: she gropes, she calls herself to question, she can get obsessed, she can switch back and forth between several ideas and she can get truly confused. Exactly during those transitions, the work starts to take form, even if it's just a rough sketch. This itinerary, which fluctuates through several states of mind, gives an essential mobility to the concept.

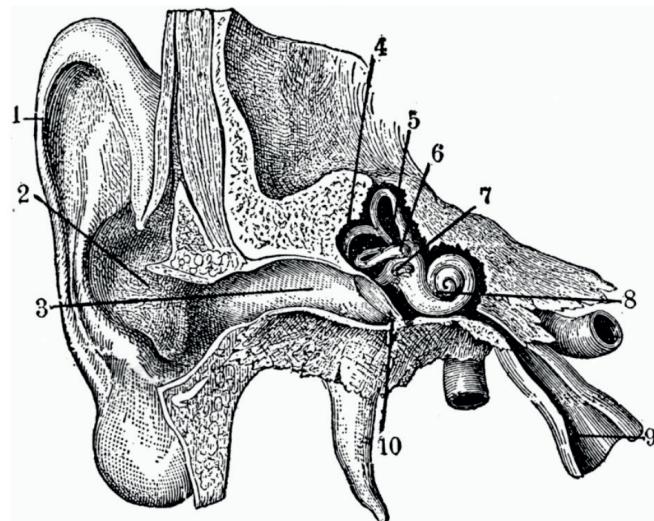
Nevertheless each artist has her/his own way of experimentation and unfortunately, what it is visible is always the final stage and a final body of work rather than the uncertainty and the confusion. The backstage of most of the artist's studio is hermetic and makes it almost impossible to deduce any linear theory about the experimentation. Can we therefore say that maybe artists and mediums have something in common because neither have any rational explication that can explain their conception?



Bruce Lee says "Empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend."

Being shapeless means for her not being stuck on a fixed point, position or protocol but rather avoiding the safest places and resisting formalisation. Bruce Lee's words makes her pensive. As an artist, she feels that she has in her hand a double-edged sword that sometimes she doesn't know how to handle. She feels split between a certain free form daily life and the duty to follow a strict discipline. She knows that she needs some routine to progress in her work but at the same time she is afraid of

unnecessary repetitions. Nevertheless she repeats in her mind, almost as a mantra, some statement in which she wants to believe: make mistakes, make risks happen, learn in a wrong way, be convertible, don't care about ending points, use your non-knowledge as a starting point, use raw feelings and affirm you are an artist, even if people don't truly trust you when you say that you are an artist without being a painter.



She wonders, are they the advantage points of not belonging to any pre-packaged society category? She wants to believe in this freedom in a conscious manner by cleaning up all stereotypes, a desire which recalls the opposition repeatedly mentioned between Scientific's rationality and artist's irrationality. When she is falling asleep this feeling becomes almost a vertigo, especially if she is sitting in a chair trying to resist sleep. When she is in this state, between being awake and falling asleep, she experiences a certain floating sensation that is like being physically in a place, which is not completely a real place. From her chair, her wall looks too aseptic, almost like that greenish tone typical colour of a waiting room. She feels strange, balancing like the bubble in the tube of a spirit level that is trying to stay straight.

This uncertain condition of reverie between a state of being and state of non-being, has been a crucial stage in the history of chemistry. In the early 1860s, the German organist chemist Friedrich Kekulé awoke suddenly being able to discern the ring structure of benzene because he dreamt of a snake swallowing its own tail. Similarly, Dimitri Mendeleev, chemist and inventor who created his own version of the periodic table of elements, after three days and three nights without sleep, fell into a profound slumber, from which he awoke eventually able to see the pattern in the form of a table of regular properties.



Valentina Pini, Stick, 2014,

Liquid, equilibrium and dream are three mysterious elements indirectly connected. A transparent liquid can hide a strong invisible power, a poison, a drug or a magic fluid. Equilibrium is highly related to our consciousness or awareness consider that in medical terminology we experience and talk about as labyrinthitis, an infection that can affect our physical equilibrium, which is in turn regulated by a special liquid in our ear. It is a mechanism that can be compared to the functioning of a spirit level. Dreams are dreams and they don't have any limits, and it is interesting to remember that for a long time, alchemists speculated about what material dreams consisted of and without any evidence, they thought, "dreams were made out of some kind of gas, cloud, or superfine fluid, subject to rapid diffusion, but also capable, as is a gas, of gathering and lingering."