

Constantin Luser

Music Tames the Beast

26.02.-01.05.2016

Space01

Kunsthhaus Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum,
Lendkai 1, 8020 Graz

T +43-(0)316/8017-9200, Wednesdays to Sundays 10am to 5pm

kunsthhausgraz@museum-joanneum.at, www.kunsthhausgraz.at

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of the exhibition

Constantin Luser

Music Tames the Beast

Kunsthaus Graz

Universalmuseum Joanneum

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Music tames the Beast –Constantin Luser chose this title for his extensive solo show at the Kunsthaus Graz and so demonstrated that music can be an opportunity to participate, to work jointly on harmony or even to tackle one's own, inner beast. In Space01 he has assembled a finely structured, three-dimensional system of thought and ideas that encourages us to join in and try it out.

Curators

Katrin Bucher Trantow,

Katia Huemer

Text

Monika Holzer-Kernbichler

Translation

Kate Howlett-Jones

Graphical Concept

and Design

Lichtwitz – Büro für

visuelle Kommunikation

Layout

Karin Buol-Wischenau

Drawing

Drawing is a daily activity for Constantin Luser. The flow of the lines, the way the forms and thoughts develop automatically, materialising through the pencil, unravelling or coming together into something new: it constantly occupies him. For over ten years now, Luser has steadily been drawing in diaries that he uses as visual storage. In this way they become a highly personal record of the present. At the same time, the diary becomes a filter for the enormous volume of information and the depository of biographical experiences. Day by day, he combines the everyday with the fictitious, shapes ideas for projects, notes down concrete designs, makes sketches, pictures, protocols, documentations, visions and accumulates thoughts. The diary is a kind of pattern-book that becomes the source of his work and in this case also becomes the centre-piece of the exhibition. We find it raised on an accessible platform in the *Akkumulator* (2016), a complex musical instrument made of brass which emits sounds into space and simultaneously pro-

duces sound on its inside. The *Akkumulator* is the cell, the central starting-point for an apparently endless drawing across the floor. Here ideas and thoughts come together into a graphic narrative, intertwining biographical features, thought landscapes or states of mind, circuit diagrams or spatial structures with one another. In Constantin Luser's work, drawing appears to happen automatically and yet not aimlessly. It is for him a solitary process closely linked with an openness towards theoretical development in observation. Working with others is also an important part of Constantin Luser's methods—craftspeople, fellow artists and the people within his personal network.

Floor Drawing

In Space01, Luser uses a marker to create a landscape of images that spreads over the large surface of the floor, concentrating and developing in all directions. The pen cannot be rubbed out—every stroke must remain, at the mercy of visitors' feet. As in all of his space-specific drawings, here

too he is led by the conditions of the site: every blemish in the structure of the floor, every trace of previous artworks is accentuated and interpreted. Luser's drawings are highly complex structures, imaginary landscapes, words, fragments, numbers, symbols, abstract and figurative elements that can sometimes be very concrete while at other times seeming abstract. Luser sees drawing as a process that sharpens awareness and which comes out of everyday experiences. Now and then it evolves, as if organically, into something humorous.

Wire Drawings

Sometimes Luser transforms his interwoven lines into sculptures: mobiles that hover gently in space, their shadows constantly creating new impressions. These wire drawings float freely, hanging from the ceiling. They react to the slightest puff of air or movement in the room, appearing as fragile as the line on the floor. From some angles they become almost invisible, only to suddenly emerge in front of you, their unexpected presence overwhelming.

Clearly the process of bending wire is closely related to that of drawing in Constantin Luser's work, seeming to continue the line into space.

Instruments

The *Rotationsquintett* (2006) is the first large-scale sound sculpture that Constantin Luser worked on with Lukas Galehr and Matthias Makowsky. Various wind instruments are mounted on a second-hand carousel base so that they can be played while you are spinning around. The rotations not only alter your mental state while playing music but also the nature of the sound in space. This piece, and also his later work *Vibrosaurus*, a ten-metre long dinosaur made of brass instruments shown here at the exhibition in the form of a model, or the *Molekularorgel* on the roof of the 'Neue Chemie' building at the Graz University of Technology, reveal Luser's interest in bending and changing instruments, which he tries out with the instrument-maker Alois Mayer. Together they explore new forms, pushing them to the limits of what is possible.

For each bell section the cutting sequence must be calculated in order to ensure a particular sound when they are played together. In their new form the instruments become a living sculpture, a playable object and at the same time an instrument that stretches out into space.

Trommeliglu (Islam erreicht Nordpol) (2007)

Two hundred tambourines, a timpano and three tablas form the work *Trommeliglu (Islam erreicht Nordpol)* ('Drum igloo, Islam reaches the North Pole'), which can be played from all sides. As a protective shell, the stretched animal skins of the membranophones become a resonating space, as it were. On entering, you yourself become part of the large sound box. Kettledrums such as timpani were brought to Europe in the 12th century by the crusaders, while tablas spread from Muslim-Arab countries to India and from there across the world. Tambourines have also been common in Europe since the Middle Ages. Constantin Luser builds them together into a

dwelling whose archaic shape is reminiscent of a primal form of habitation. At the Kunsthau Graz the *Trommeliglu* also refers to some extent to the exhibition space, whose Skin becomes a temporary shell with each time it is used for a show.

Bandoneon Intensivstation (2012)

The bandoneon is a reed-organ instrument designed by Heinrich Band as a development deriving from the concertina. The pulling and squeezing of a bellows produces sounds using various valves. Here Luser has put together eight bandoneons into a sculpture of an 'intensive care unit' and installed it in space. They are played via a common, central air supply. The history of the bandoneon is also interesting. Developed in Germany, this difficult instrument became very popular during the 19th century in many clubs as the 'piano of the ordinary people'. Although it was considered by the Nazis a worker's instrument and banned, the bandoneon survived thanks to many emigrants, mainly in Argen-

tina. The bandoneon became famous above all through its use in tango music.

Der Baum (2013)

Der Baum is also an instrument. Constantin Luser designed it in 2013 as a playable Christmas tree for the Belvedere. When you pluck its strings, the sounds of an electric guitar are produced by small music boxes laid out around the base of the tree like Christmas presents. The electronic sound installation has pickups that transmit the sound from the string and distribute it in space.

Hofstätter Projekte

Hofstätter Projekte was an exhibition space for contemporary art in Vienna. It was founded by Anton Hofstätter in 2014 as an extension of the Hofstätter art dealership and private collection. In a dedicated project room artists were given the opportunity to reflect on a collection including objects dating from the 14th to the beginning of the 20th century. Constantin Luser chose frag-

ments from the art dealer's stock, transforming, for example, fragments of a Baroque sculpture and a clarinet.

Films

The film *Das Rote Seil* is based on a series of collages that Constantin Luser took from the 8th edition of *Meyers Konversationslexikon* (1936-42). It is also known as the 'Nazi Meyer' or the 'Brown Meyer' and copies are extremely rare. *Das Rote Seil* was made in 2011 with Stefan Arzmann in Zagreb. The graphic material was animated into a film that becomes gradually denser and gets further and further away from its starting-point. Constantin Luser has collaborated a number of times on making music videos, such as in 2005 for the Pumali Panthers in *Speak Easy*, or for Peter Kruder in *Maybe April* (2010).

Constantin Luser

Born in 1976 in Graz, lives and works in Vienna. In 1999 he graduated in Industrial Design from the Fachhochschule in Graz. From 2004 he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. He has participated in many Austrian and international exhibitions and has already been awarded numerous prizes and scholarships.

<http://www.constantinluser.net>

We would like to thank the network:

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Supporting programme

(in German language)

01.03.2016, 3.30pm

Constantin Luser. Music Tames the Beast

Free special guided tour for teachers

with Monika Holzer-Kernbichler

17.03.2016, 6pm

Choreography of Chance

Concert, catalogue presentation and artist's talk

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Friday, 04.03.2016, 3.30pm,
with Christof Elpons

Sonntag, 06.03.2016, 3.30pm,
with Christof Elpons

Friday, 10.04.2016, 3.30pm,
with Gabi Gmeiner

Friday, 29.04.2016, 3.30pm,
with Gabi Gmeiner

Cost: 2.50 € (excluding admission)

Further information can be found on our Kunsthaus app or on www.kunsthausgraz.at