

A Playground Guide to Getting Lost

Promotion Prize of the Province of Styria for Contemporary Fine Arts 2021

12.12.2021 – 01.05.2022

Curated by Lina Albrikiene

Lithuanian National Museum of Art/Radvila Palace Museum of Art, Vilnius

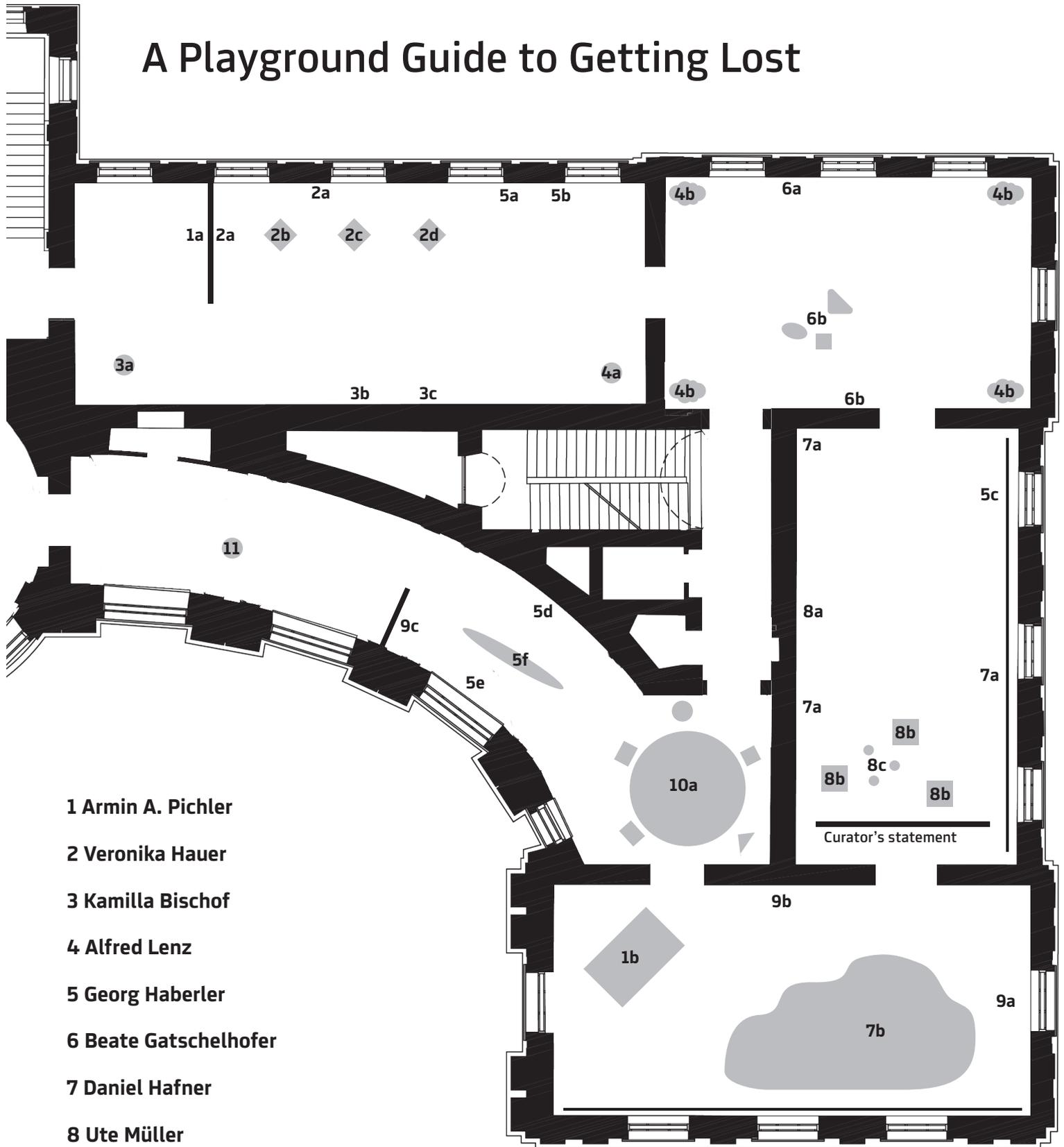
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A Playground Guide to Getting Lost



1 Armin A. Pichler

2 Veronika Hauer

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4 Alfred Lenz

5 Georg Haberler

6 Beate Gatschelhofer

7 Daniel Hafner

8 Ute Müller

9 Ernst Koslitsch

10 zweintopf

11 René Stiegler

12 Alfredo Barsuglia

In the rotunda, ground floor: **10b**

Former entrance to the museum, Neutorgasse: **12**

1 Armin A. Pichler

1a | Inbetween 2021 – Installation View, 2021

Video, Full HD, colour, no sound, 6:37 min

1b | Inbetween, 2021

Stainless steel, wood (oak), 3 × 2,5 m, chain 5 m

2 Veronika Hauer

2a | The Animated Alphabet

(H, O, L, I, E, R), 2017–2021

Series von pigment prints, each 100 × 70 cm

2b | I, 2021

Plaster cast, acrylic paint, 32 × 10 × 5 cm

2c | L (left), 2020

Plaster cast, acrylic paint, 31 × 18 × 5 cm

2d | E, 2021

Plaster cast, acrylic paint, 30 × 20 × 6 cm

3 Kamilla Bischof

3a | Elephant, 2020

Oil and acrylic paint on plastic, 58 × 30 × 48 cm

3b | Baba Cool, 2019

Oil on canvas, 200 × 250 cm

3c | Aloe Vera, 2019

Oil on canvas, 150 × 180 cm

4 Alfred Lenz

4a | the cloud dance company extension, 2019

Installation with bike helmet, electric tie holder, table football handle with switch, battery, cable, wire, cotton wool, nylon cord, dimensions variable

→ To put it on, please contact the supervisor!

4b | Fake Clouds, 2021

Wall paint, cotton wool, wooden construction, wire rope, pulleys, motors, electronic, cable, ca. 10 × 6,75 × 3 m

5 Georg Haberler

5a | Seabird fly home, 2021

Acrylic Ink, sewing thread and textiles on canvas, 50 × 40 cm

5b | Hot Dog, 2021

Acrylic Ink, sewing thread and textiles on canvas, 50 × 40 cm

5c | Seaspiracy, 2021

Acrylic Ink, sewing thread and textiles on canvas, 120 × 100 cm

5d | Blind Side, 2021

Acrylic Ink, sewing thread and textiles on canvas, 160 × 120 cm

5e | Duero, 2021

Acrylic Ink, sewing thread and textiles on canvas and IKEA bag, 50 × 40 cm

5f | Crocodile Dundee, 2021

Paint, wood and rope, 70 × 405 × 26 cm

6 Beate Gatschelhofer

6a | The Order of Chance, 2019

Porcelain on paper, 13-piece series, framed, each 50 × 40 cm

6b | it used to be more fun, 2019–2021

3-part series of objects, poem, stoneware, porcelain, tricycle, metal object, wood, faux leather, rope, 79 × 39 × 54 cm, 53 × 40 × 47 cm, 45 × 31 × 70 cm

7 Daniel Hafner

7a | Mosquito Drawings (Observed and simultaneously sketched flight movements of single mosquitos), London,

Vienna, Trieste, 2015–2021

Pencil on paper, each 30 × 42 cm

7b | Three Vacuum Cleaners And Oversize Hoses, 2015/2021

Vacuum cleaners, plastic hoses, dry leaves, cables, lighting control desk, spacefilling

8 Ute Müller

8a | Untitled, 2020

Egg tempera on cotton, 200 × 150 cm

8b | Untitled, 2021

Latex, steel, aluminium, plastic, cardboard, dimensions variable

8c | Untitled, 2021

Concrete, dimensions variable

9 Ernst Koslitsch

9a | The incompetent Dragon, 2021

Acrylic paint, oil pastel and wall paint on cardboard, MDF frame, 110 × 100 × 5 cm

9b | Hashtag forever, 2021

Found wood, paint, screws, 152 × 160 × 8 cm

9c | Bon Voyage (Holy Stick), 2021

Wood, paint, screws, 135 × 35 × 5 cm

10 zweintopf

10a | Mama & Papa, 2020

Installation with two wooden boxes, painted, with built-in TV simulators, yellow cables, play carpet, concrete lion paw, washed concrete slab, photo of Charles Duke and his family, Houston/Texas, left behind on the moon, Apollo 16, April 16–27, 1972

+

hands today III, 2019

Pigment print, 46,5 × 75 cm, framed

+

safe, 2018

12 metal letters, textile net, carabiner, height of the letters approx. 30 cm

10b | Tam Tam, 2013/2018/2021

8 party tents without skins, 460 × 460 × 300 cm

11 René Stiegler

Scaffolds, 2019

T-shirt (printed), vacuum cleaner, aluminium ventilator, electric motor, speed controller, cable, 80 × 35 × 35 cm

12 Alfredo Barsuglia

The big promise, 2021

Wood, plastic, water, 150 × 200 × 200 cm
Courtesy Nicole Gnesa Galerie, Munich

A Playground Guide to Getting Lost

Lina Albrikiene

The mosquito hovering around the space looked as if it were performing, while its flight trajectory was recorded visually on the white sheet of paper. This sounds absurd, and it is—a process of existing and searching for how to survive, probably for both the insect and the human who recorded the line of life. In each case, their awareness was dedicated to the movement, just that one of them was chasing the dot and simultaneously drawing, while the other concentrated on the purpose but neglected boundaries and possible risks. They both remind us of the actions of a child. The first child: trying to connect the dots in order to write the first letters of the alphabet, the second child: ignoring the limits of the playground.

The title of the exhibition, **A Playground Guide to Getting Lost**, suggests three possible clues to interpret the show. The *playground* signifies childhood and its memories, as well as the experience deriving from that past that leads us to emotions, feelings, primary knowledge; *guide* alludes to possible paths, destinations, as well as the uncertainty and assistance needed, inevitable elements of life, especially nowadays; *getting lost*, a term which is not yet explicit, and which depends on how the two previously suggested concepts are interpreted in each person's mind. It may be that a constructive guide will hint at certain reminiscences and will evoke such diverse emotions as fun or sadness, humour or seriousness. Other visitors might well get lost in the maze of their insight—or find the key to as yet unanswered misery. Ultimately, a sense of absurdity will likely be awakened. The art works exhibited in the show could be considered as sort of playthings inviting you to examine the borderlines of our inner self, our (supposed) sense of supremacy, the intensity of your sensitivity and belief. You may question whether the bicycle suffused with some kind of pastel coloured foam is now safe to drive, even though you may eventually realise it is actually made of porcelain. Is it possible to sway on the swing although the seat is attached to an overlong chain? Is it true that the more money you throw into the fountain, the more luck you will get?

We may perceive the exhibition as an unconventional model of a playground, implying the idea of a utopian world, a fantasy we want to live, or the opposite—repulsion. This exhibition is concerned with the notion of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and the cycles and traps contained within them. The playground shown here can exist only at the subconscious level of each of us.

A Playground Guide to Getting Lost brings together twelve artists born and/or living in Styria. Their art works, presented in diverse media, including (sound)installation, sculpture, video, poster, painting, objects and ceramic works, create the atmosphere of a mutated as well as metamorphosed courtyard, or a playground, one could say. However, this impression of the works is only created by placing them together in the way it was done in this exhibition.

The exhibition also highlights the vital role that artists play in contemporary society through the perspectives they bring, from the critical to the engaged, from the idiosyncratic to the poetic. From A to Z, from metamorphic melting objects to a yellow universe, from elements of absurdity to the absurd narratives of life. Every element of this playground exposes its specific mutation.

Artist **Beate Gatschelhofer** used antiquated play equipment to create the installation *it used to be more fun (6b)*. These children's toys have grown an outlandish sort of colourful moss or foam. It feels like the moss is still slowly expanding around the objects, as if trying

to merge with the memories of childhood. It also leads to the sense, the idea that the toys are like monuments, forgotten in the past. The truth is that the moss is actually made from porcelain the artist has created to look like a metamorphic, melting organism.

Another work by the same artist titled *The Arrangement of Chance* **(6a)** displays research into random patterns which emerge from dropped porcelain hoops—segments cut from the moulded object. The dropped porcelain adopts shapes of decorative forms like sailor knots assembled in picture frames. They are the trophies combined from more than 1000 random pieces. So fragile, so unique.

An installation **(8b)** by artist **Ute Müller** also recalls metamorphic or volcanic substance. Three little black sculptures rest on plinths. These objects have a chance to change their form due to the softness of the latex they are made from. The artist uses the opportunity of *chance* in many of her art works. Randomness, layering, multiplication, and imprints are employed, and finally deliberateness and decision when the object is completed. To reveal these objects, Ute Müller used the same stone and made with it different latex imprints, three varied states. Another installation **(8c)** was likewise done by using mould, but in this case, the artist weaved a huge basket and cut it into several segments, filling them in with concrete. The so-called skin was then peeled from the top by burning the basket pieces. The columns that remain are marked with sears and resemble the chimneys or fragile pillars of a village long ago burned down.

In the paintings **(8a)** Müller reveals even more layers. Wrapped together, her figures softly dissolve in the vastness of narratives that plunge into the depth reminding us of an illustrated stained-glass window with a few transparent parts that invoke our attention. From close up, it seems as if the figures are mutating into one unconventional organism that constantly moves and changes its appearance.

Artist **Alfredo Barsuglia** presents a diverse concept of mutation in his installation *The big promise* **(12)**. He also uses stone, though in this case a fake one. Made from plastic to shape the little fountain surrounded by plants, water and snails, it offers a bench to enable the viewer to feel exactly as they would sitting at a city fountain. Yet along with providing visitors with a calm resting place, the fountain has a further purpose: 'The more money you throw into the fountain, the more luck you will receive.' This sentence written next to the installation recalls childhood times when throwing coins into fountains abroad signified belief: both that I will return, and that I will be lucky in the near future. The artist presents the idea of value, happiness and wealth, yet the question remains: doesn't it sometimes feel as if all this is just a fake? Barsuglia suggests throwing one coin or several into the fountain, and seeing what will happen next. Just take a seat in front of the museum and delight in your memories and wishful thinking.

The installation *Three Vacuum Cleaners And Oversize Hoses* **(7b)** by **Daniel Hafner** implies transformation of a household item, here a vacuum cleaner—what our parents asked us to use every weekend with the promise of an ice-cream or new toy. Here the vacuum cleaners are constructed with oversized hoses and surrounded by piles of dry leaves. In their mutation the devices appear inconvincible, as the vacuum cleaners fail to function, standing there without sucking in the leaves. Instead, they assume a role as instruments of sound, revealing noises from the engines and pipes. Daniel Hafner quite often uses elements of nature in his works. In the art piece titled *Mosquito Drawings* **(7a)**, he followed with his eyes an insect flying in the swarm, simultaneously sketching its flight trajectories without looking at the sheet. When the artist lost track of the mosquito, the *blind* drawing was finished. Yet now we see the great solo performance of the mosquito on the stage of the white sheet. The drawings achieve the status of a monument to the insect after its death.

Another artist whose artistic practice emerges within the elements of nature and their metamorphosis is **Alfred Lenz**, who often shows charming humour in his art. In the exhibition he installed two small clouds which move around at the ceiling with the help of a mechanism he has created. The space is partly covered in blue, reminding of rooms for baby boys. At first you might believe the work *Fake Clouds* (**4b**) to be the visualised memory from the artist's childhood of carefree summer holidays in Greece. But behind the dancing clouds lie critical ideas. The artist's intention is to reveal the falsity of political news and the disinformation disseminated on social media, and to question our consumption of media. The other work, *the cloud dance company extension* (**4a**), is interactive, inviting the audience to participate as well. Viewers can put their heads inside the artificial hat-cloud, which has a remote control. Press the button and the little cloud-like elements move around your head and suddenly everyone is cheerful.

The installation by artist's duo **zweintopf** called *Mama & Papa* (Mom & Dad) (**10a**) mirrors the subject of this exhibition. The installation consists of five segments. One part: two fake TVs in front of each other showing nothing but a flashing RGB coloured light. These simulated TVs are used to pretend the presence of people in the house and so to distract burglars. But the simulated TVs in the installation context could be also interpreted in the way the title suggests—both screens represent mother and father who are separately watching their TV shows without any contact, so while being together *here and now*, they are mentally far apart. One object which connects them is the round children's carpet lying in between the TVs and possibly signifying a child. Another element of the installation is the photo which is mounted on a tripod with animal's paws at the end of its supports, showing three fists: two human and a sculptural one made from stone. This may be a reference to the idiom *from hand to hand* in this context. It suggests two different meanings: either the strong belief in a family ethos—to keep all under control or to remain at close quarters in a conflict. The fourth element of the installation titled *safe* is directed much more at the second meaning: the metal letters taken from the facade of an insurance company and placed into a net from which the letter *U* is falling out might indicate the collapsing family model. But next comes the fifth segment of the installation which brings back the optimistic meaning of the family order. This segment is a photo found on the Internet. It represents the family picture of the astronaut Charles Duke who left the photo on the surface of the moon when he landed there in 1972.

In the rotunda on the ground floor there is a second work by zweintopf with the title *Tam Tam* (**10b**). You might think it is made out of specially prepared metal pieces—but not from this artistic duo. Most of the time in their art practice they use ready-mades. *Tam Tam* is a sculpture made from metal tent frames. The artists call it 'eight party tents without a skin'. The structure loses its real function. The artists used it for several performances, for instance, by pushing it from a hill. The object itself acquires the function of an enormous toy—an irregularly-shaped hollow ball fit for a giant.

Armin A. Pichler shows a swing that no longer serves a purpose. The seat of a swing is hooked on a overlong chain (**1b**). In the exhibition space the swing is empowered with the status of a monument. A monument declaring impossibility, and within the concept of the exhibition, representing the culmination of childhood—the presence of borderlines which encompass adulthood instead. The second part of Pichler's work is a video documentation with the artist swinging in a specially made pit where the same swing regains its function, revealing a wider range of interpretation, as well as the title *Inbetween*. There are choices given to the child and the adult. Firstly, the swing is a symbol of a careless childhood. But if we look at this object as an adulthood game, then it remains a metaphor for life and existence. Moving up and down, forwards and backwards, rising and falling... As humans we all experience that. As the artist quotes: 'Man is only fully a human being when he plays.' (Friedrich Schiller)

The conceptual mutation of the ready-made object is presented by **René Stiegler** in his installation *Scaffolds (11)*. The title of the work sounds fallacious but it is meant metaphorical instead. The artist is interested in exploring human connections within technology and its constant development. He claims that technological inventions are part of being human. They pump satisfaction through bodies, triggering desires and imitating humans. The installation consists of a vacuum cleaner and a t-shirt with a printed image of a masculine body. The 'body' gets its shape when the vacuum cleaner is turned on and inflates the body. The work raises questions about sexuality, fragility and technology as well as male control—subjects which are essential for youngsters today.

But let's go back to the point of primary knowledge I mentioned at the beginning of the text. Learning the alphabet and speech is one of the exploratory elements that viewers will experience in the show. Artist **Veronika Hauer** exhibits posters and sculptures. All of them represent letters in a conceptual approach. Hauer designed posters **(2a)** with elements inspired by three historic primers: one of these sources of inspiration is an illustrated page from Tom Seidmann-Freud's book *Hurray, we are reading, Hurray, we are writing* from 1930; secondly, her own poems/alliterations written for each letter which are inspired by British artist Walter Crane's book *The Absurd A.B.C.* from 1874; thirdly, her own drawings of embodied letters, the idea for which came from *An Animated Alphabet*—made by another Walter Crane, this one an American artist. The performativity of the body is essential for the artist's work. She declares that letters can be found in the silhouettes of the body. In her sculptural works Hauer unifies letters and body parts, for instance, the leg and the ear **(2b-d)**. In an ironic and critical way, she introduces a sculptural letter—a gesture showing the fig sign which symbolises an insult or the denial of a request. Nowadays evoking humour, this gesture brings us back to our experience as children.

Seemingly archaic, cave painting-like images appear in the works of **Georg Haberler (5a-e)**. He uses an unusual method for the genre of painting. Haberler stitches on the canvas with a sewing machine, applying Acrylic Ink on the threads from the back of the picture. The style of his paintings recalls the drawings we used to do in our childhood or reminds of fanciful medieval atlases. Remarkable, humorous narratives are balanced with depictions of animals both underwater and on land, plants and mobile structures. Subjects range from ancient Greek-like columns to modern inventions. His imaginative world is full of motion, ceaselessly so. The pink strap wrapped tightly as a frame around the paintings reflects coloured light on the wall and emphasises narrative continuity. The titles that the artist gives to his paintings often have an infantile, naive or nostalgic flavour: *Hot Dog*, *Seabird fly home*, *Seaspiracy*. Apart from the paintings in the exhibition space, Haberler has created the huge wooden *Crocodile Dundee (5f)*, the character that already appears as a signature in all of his paintings.

Ernst Koslitsch opens up his *Yellow Universe* to the public. His imaginative world arises from the yellow painted wooden panels he finds on construction sites. Diverse figurative creatures are blended into one cosmos recalling a family tree that displays the significance of all the folks depicted on it—the folks who lived on the nowhere island which has probably been colonised by now. His works also bring into mind sacred altars. One of the works shown in the exhibition, *Holy Stick (9c)*, even implies the idea of sanctity—the untouchable, fragile little universe within the sacred yellow colour. The work *Hashtag forever (9b)* brings us to the present—the social media era, specifically Instagram, which displays little images of each of our worlds: imaginative or real ones which in all honesty nobody questions at all. One of the missions there is possibly to emphasise one's distinctiveness and, at the same time, to reveal how you remain an *incompetent dragon (9a)*, as the artist suggests in the title of one his paintings.

Other types of universes and imaginable figurative scenes are revealed by **Kamilla Bischof**. She paints female-like figures, animals, organisms. Her narratives are often inspired by a mythological context. Bischof also integrates everyday objects: cocktail cherries, screw drivers, side tables, car tyres etc. In the painting *Baba Cool* (**3b**), for instance, she shows a bath tub with an unfathomable creature inside, or it might be the bath tub that is the bubbling organism itself, exposing its uncovered heart which is pulsating water so impressively. The title requires some interpretations, too. Translated, *baba* means grandmother. In another translation *baba* is also the name of a small cake usually soaked in rum-flavoured syrup. All in all, Bischof's paintings are open for a wide range of interpretations. The painting *Aloe Vera* (**3c**) represents a female-like figure with the aloe vera plant instead of the head lying underwater above a jelly fish-like organism. Aloe vera as a plant is an invasive species. I leave this one for your interpretation. In the exhibition the artist also presents an object—an inflatable rubber animal. It is an elephant (**3a**) which could be filled with water or sand and its function is for children to bounce on it. The toy is painted with tattoos—images found by the artist on the internet. And here as in all the other artists' works, childhood and adulthood are interconnected by bringing chaos to our thoughts.

In the end, the Playground Guide to Getting Lost has accomplished its mission.