

## PRESS INTERVIEW

**With Laurie de Chiara, founder and director of ArtPod and curator of PLAY, about the concept of the exhibition and selected works.**

## PRESSE

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*Laurie de Chiara, what is the concept of art education behind PLAY?*

ArtPod believes art needs to be experienced not explained, thus exploration is the basis of the PLAY exhibition. Visitors are invited to engage with the artworks in a variety of ways; hands-on play, self-initiated reflection, non-directive response, imagined or con-structive.

*As a rule, visitors are not interactively involved in the museum. How do you rate that?*

Perhaps this would be considered a »non-traditional« museum encounter but it provides new avenues for understanding. Not providing answers but rather an encounter to make one's own associations.

*What is essential to the concept of exploration?*

Play is universal, crossing cultures, there is a human need to play.

While children learn to interact in the world through play at a very early age, many adults need encouragement to let loose to fuel the imagination, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional well-being. PLAY is no foolish game – the opposite – it is the best we can do to open ourselves for what will come.

*In what ways can one approach contemporary art in PLAY in a playful way?*

PLAY embarks on the task to challenge the museum visitors alike, as Jennifer Dalton asks visitors to reflect on their state of being/mood and to select a sticker to wear announcing your feeling to everyone around you as you walk through the museum. Stefan Saffer allows for the thrill of throwing a ping pong ball at his mobile to activate the sound and movement of each individual drum to hear the different tones. Have a quiet moment to test one's balance as they walk along the driftwood log piece of Olafur Eliason. Each of these activities are calling for our inner child to come out.

*But that wasn't all, was it?*

In reflection on our current world pandemic, (which could not be ignored), Dustin Schenk has painted a mural of an over-sized virus monster with masses of invasive tiny viruses all over the wall. Visitors are allowed to take action and erase away the virus as we all wish it was that easy in reality. Courtney Childress encourages visitors to leave their markings and try out the giant melted crayon blobs by rubbing it on the textured walls.

*In some works, visitors also enter into direct exchange with each other through their interaction. How does that work?*

Leni Hoffman's, piece »PLAYTEX« takes a conceptual approach to follow the story of transformation of her colorful plastine balls on the journey from the artist's studio in Dusseldorf to Stuttgart. Hoffman requested different people from the Museum; administration, cleaning and out of house to each throw or roll the balls onto the museum floor. The work then takes on a new life when visitors walk over the balls creating different-sized colour planes, creating

color fields. It is an ever changing, kaleidoscopic colouring, remains visible for only a limited period of time.

*Some works of art challenge us not only physically, but also mentally. What are the approaches to this?*

By telling stories some artworks offer wide interpretation allowing the imagination to take off in an open-ended entertainment. Guy Ben-Ner takes a playful point of view toward staging the action of Herman Melville's classic novel Moby-Dick. This low-tech improvisational approach gives him the freedom to explore themes of both humour and humility by telling stories, they are accessible and funny. Anna Anders video projection »Intruders« one sees young people playfully trying to climb into the picture from all sides - yet they are constantly interrupted and must take cover. In times of closing borders, we might consider them as undesirable refugees or intruders, not allowed to enter. Frank Matter's documentary film of Klaus Lutz, »The Beauty of My Island« captures the magical essence of Lutz's world. It is a window into this mysterious utopia of this solitary figure and his adventures. The endlessly creativity of making a producing behind the scenes is fascinating.

*PLAY promotes interaction between people and art. Does it also reflect the interaction between people and the environment?*

Matthias Garff's giant playful bird-like creatures tell their own stories, creating a sense of awe as they Hoover above with their grandeur. These fantastical figures assembled from recycled elements, each found object is transformed to reflect the relationship between humans and animals. Maxine Leu's, »The Eco Wanderers«, made from recycled paper pulp are busy Zwerges cleaning up the littered streets across the world in a nomadic installation that reminds people of the environmental problem of pollution caused by overconsumption and disregard for the environment. The gravity defying animated dancing ping pong balls of Egill Sæbjörnsson appear to fly in and out of two buckets as they converse, sing and make loud sounds as they hit each and play. Outside the Museum one can discover Stefanie Pöllot special chewing gum dispenser that offers a plastic capsule of magic to take away with you.

*Thank you for the interview.*