

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present These lacustrine homes, a group exhibition curated by Mai-Thu Perret, featuring works by Valentin Carron, Isabelle Cornaro, Karin Gulbran, Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, and Perret herself. On view January 23 through March 6, 2021, the exhibition brings together floor- and wall-based sculpture, painting, and animation and highlights the pronounced materiality and craft-based disciplines of a diverse group of contemporary artists.

The title of the exhibition takes inspiration from "These Lacustrine Cities," a poem by John Ashbery inspired by the geography of Switzerland and the social implications of living in proximity to large bodies of water. Discussing the poem in 1966, Ashbery elaborated that cities, while having distinguishing characteristics, are often defined by a "dream of history" that continuously folds into a liquidy memory on the part of a person's private experience. Formally, Ashbery's deliberate use of language disorients in its shifting of syntax, register, address, and time—creating a slippery account of a particular civilization (albeit writing with Zürich in mind) that dissolves any attempt to define history as linear or absolute.

With the specific line from Ashbery's poem underscored, "But the past is already here, and you are nursing some private project," the artists featured in These lacustrine homes relate to disparate ideas of art history, including a covert conceptualism, and draw loosely from religious iconography and its traditions, as well as European artistic movements. The works converge, however, in their exploration of the tension between domestic materiality on one hand and a biomorphic, dream-like strangeness on the other. This becomes a way for the artists to consider the intrinsic life force of the art object and the evasive past of each form. While the artists in this show hail from different locations, their works all favor aqueous, amorphous qualities that have been typically maligned as overly diffuse by the canon, but which represent a quasi-mystical drive for boundlessness in other cultural contexts.

In a new animation, Isabelle Cornaro develops metaphors for unbridled consumption that are as humorous as they are horrific, showing human bodies evolving into useless commodities and meaningless monuments, ultimately ending in a ruined world. Accompanying this video are

Cornaro's Streams series: wall relief sculptures made from resin loaded with aluminum, created from direct casting of often grotesque tchotchkes. These monolithic-like sculptures resemble sedimentary debris of a riverbed—suggesting perhaps the discarded value of unwanted materials.

Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, meanwhile, envisions leisure as romantic resistance. His large-scale painting depicts nude Lake Geneva bathers embracing and conjures the fin-de-siècle symbolism of Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler. Lutz-Kinoy's pink marble mask wall sculpture—cast from a wheel-thrown ceramic maquette—similarly express pleasure through fleeting physical touch, here in a deepening engagement with earthbound materials.

Valentin Carron's cast-aluminum bathrobe, which resembles the Franciscan robes worn by monks in the region of the artist's hometown of Valais, Switzerland, connotes the presence of the human form precisely by its absence and performs a "dry" reading of the body's abiding "wetness." Building further on references to religious imagery, Carron's two-headed serpent extends, spatially, a mythological emblem of good and evil prominent in the history of art. His iron-cast sculpture is his own interpretation of a window grille on an early 20th century police station in Zürich, turning decorative design from the everyday world into an evocative, autonomous drawing in space.

Perret's ceramic sculptures test the limits of that medium's mutability in physical and formal terms alike. Utilizing elements from the earth, Perret's glazed ceramic dog, basket, and dollhouse envision utilitarian symbols usually associated with domesticity into transformative, surreal, highly individual objects. The ceramic vessels of Karin Gulbran—which take on traditional, bowl- and pot-like forms as well as surreal, animal-like shapes in lush environments like inhabited waters—exude an ensouled warmth that speaks to the transcendental tactility of the natural world.

The works in [These lacustrine homes](#) can be seen as a visual map to the psychogeography of place Ashbery hazily alludes to in his poem. In many ways, the works on view constitute, as the

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poet describes, single monuments whose "disappointments break into a rainbow of tears."
They are material artifacts, in other words, that take into account the watery, fluctuating state of life as it is lived, complete with the fullest range of emotions and desires. Taken together, they define the intersection of symbolism and visceral materiality that is inherent to artmaking.