

Violent Holes

Approaching the unspeakable **Introduction by Duscha Kistler**

'I want people to know what happened to us, so that they understand.' Attal, refugee from Afghanistan

How does one find the words to describe traumatic experiences? How can one make them tangible so that we may learn to understand one another through them? What effect do these countless traumatic experiences of war and flight have on our society? What traces do they leave behind? And how do they become inscribed in our body-mind-soul systems?

In his artistic exploration, Raphael Perret focuses on what he calls these 'trauma zones shrouded in silence', which, since time immemorial, have been multiplying and transforming day by day, becoming ever larger, untouchable voids. 'Violent holes' – caused by wars, persecution, the loss of one's homeland and flight. Mostly they are invisible, well concealed or hidden. Yet occasionally they manifest as physical traces. Just like the bullet holes from the Second World War in Berlin's building façades and walls. Raphael Perret cast moulds of them in silicone – even before they were filled with fresh plaster and covered with paint – and is now exhibiting them at Kupper Modern.

The exhibition begins where Raphael Perret's artistic process currently stands, and ends in the topmost exhibition space, where much of it all began: at 'Club La Fafa' (colloquial French for 'family'), which Raphael Perret and Nadja Baldini founded in 2018 to mark the exhibition 'Refaire le Monde' at the Helmhaus in Zurich. It is an attempt to learn through a community of people with and without migration experience, and to explore living together through artistic practice.

Attal is a member of 'Club La Fafa'. So are Ali and ██████████. All three have decided to break their silence and seek a voice for their experiences. Raphael Perret accompanies them, exploring their stories of origin, flight and the struggle to settle. He draws closer. He sets himself apart. He ventures into visualisations, visual translations, formal proposals and cross-references. In doing so, he employs various media, materials and degrees of abstraction, offering a wide range of approaches. He leaves it up to us to decide at what level we wish to engage, immerse ourselves or allow our own experiences to be touched upon – without judgement, without condemnation. And at the same time, he does not impose himself on us; he becomes neither moralising nor dramatic. Rather, he welcomes us into the spaces at Kupper Modern with empathetic points of connection, intellectual stimuli and, right at the start of the exhibition, two practical opportunities for action: these cleverly and playfully appropriate the mechanisms of the justice system and the asylum system – and turn them into money for those affected.

Raphael Perret channels his artistic practice into the service of transformation with a precise and authentic lightness, creating connections and interactions. At the very latest when, in the exhibition, we encounter a correspondence between his great-grandparents and his great-aunt from the period following the Second World War, a personal touch is added that evokes a sense of familiarity. Just like the map of Zurich, which becomes a cartography of back roads and evasive manoeuvres. A brief shift that suggests that both the bullet holes from Berlin and the stories of Attal, Ali and ██████████ have more to do with us and affect us more than might be apparent at first glance.

'Impact – Transformation – Expression' is not only Raphael Perret's guiding theme in this exhibition, but also the title of the work on the mezzanine level. At the same time, this triad encapsulates the fundamental principle of artistic creation itself – as well as the eternal movement of all living things. Everything influences everything else. We are a system, a vast circle, in a state of constant resonance and change.

«In the great Circle, everything is in everything else.»
Eduard Glissant, 1993

