

Press release

***Strata*: Mariona Berenguer, Pius Fox, Frank Gerritz, and Andreia Santana**

Exhibition Dates: February 29 through April 5, 2024

Pablo's Birthday examines the abstraction of labor across various artists' practices and a range of mediums in *Strata*, a conversation between Mariona Berenguer, Pius Fox, Frank Gerritz, and Andreia Santana. The artists engage laborious and intense processes and/or dissect them. Ultimately, the work comments on a hidden labor, a minimal presentation with a substantial, complex, and lengthy process. What is layered into a piece may not be seen in its result.

Mariona Berenguer transfers labor from one form into another. Frank Gerritz highlights the minimalist tradition of intricate and complex processes within his practice. Andreia Santana conceptualizes meanings of labor and its relationship to humans into steel and glass sculpture. Pius Fox's practice itself is heavily laborious; one that leaves traces of the artist's effort onto the final composition. Together the practices engage the epitome of line, form, structure, and corporeal physicality as it translates the intersection of abstraction and minimalist approaches.

Berenguer's *Overalls* series are odes to industrial labor and the workers' bodies involved therein. As both a uniform and personal protection, the garments intake energy, labor, and time invested in physical work. To make visible the material and mnemonic traces of these efforts, Berenguer unraveled a series of used worker overalls, donated by artists and other professions, into individual strips of fabric and re-wove them into wall tapestries. Bound in steel, the flat wall formations may seem simplistic, playing into the legacies of minimalism with sparse dimension and isolated color palettes. Yet, each work is embedded with the physical labor ingrained within their original stitchings devised from both Berenguer's physicality of the practice and the workers' labor melded into the fabrics from years of work.

Santana's observations of scaffolding structures in New York City dissect a complex history and relationship between humans and their physical environment. A scaffold—used primarily for construction and safety—is a simultaneously permanent and temporary configuration that passively and actively changes the lives of those in its presence. Santana's shrunken versions of these megastructures are embedded with objects found nearby their actual counterparts; speaking directly to the human presence in their element. A metal frame is the result of a physically laborious artistic practice and a condensed representation of a complex phenomenon that permeates the lives of labor workers, citizens, and their worldly surroundings.

In line with minimalist tradition, Gerritz conveys a rigorous and precise geometrical language wherein each work relates to one another and leads to the next. The refraction and reflection of light against the graphite, paint stick, or aluminum engages the surrounding space; one imagines the work continually evolving as the space's light evolves, but equally as a viewer moves. Simplistic in result and at first glance, and seemingly straightforward in process, Gerritz plays with the foundational concepts of minimalism that require intense laborious processes, engaging a perfectionist quality by meticulously layering, painting, and sketching the material.

Fox's abstractions reflect the physical element process. The layering of paint and color play an important role in the artist's work. Fox scrapes away at the surface, both revealing and hiding layers upon layers of paint. The compositions require intense physical effort in the forms of pressure, movement, and intention. The final object provides visual evidence of Fox's painterly journey; simultaneously revealing and hiding the processes of labor that go undetected at first sight.

From emulations of scaffolding structures and the weaving of workers' physical history, to the meticulous traditions within minimalism and the evidence of labor in an artistic process, *Strata*

explores processes of abstraction within various procedures and materialities. Speaking to a minimalist legacy, the works presented in *Strata* stitch, scrape, sketch, and build intricate concepts into straightforward compositions and aesthetics—hiding a strata of meaning beneath a simple surface.

Mariona Berenguer (b. 1992, Barcelona, Spain) lives and works in Berlin. She graduated with honors from the Massana School in Barcelona and with an extraordinary prize from the University of Fine Arts in Barcelona. Parallel to her studies, she taught sculpture, drawing and modeling in various art centers. With a critical and poetic gaze, Berenguer explores spaces of tension in human existence -desire, loss, identity- and currently focuses on the aspects surrounding artistic labor in our contemporary society. Her works have been presented in national and international exhibitions, including: Kunst&Co (Flensburg, 2023); GROVE (Berlin, 2023); Raccoon Projects (Barcelona, 2022); ChezPlinio (Milan, 2022); Sainte Anne Gallery (Paris, 2022); Gr_und (Berlin, 2021), Felicia Fuster Foundation (Barcelona, 2021); Kunstquartier Bethanien (Berlin, 2019); LOOP Festival (Barcelona, 2019); and XXI Bienal d'Art Contemporani Català (around Catalonia, 2018). For her artistic practice, she received the Felicia Fuster Foundation Grant (2019), the NEUSTARTKULTUR Fellowship for Visual Artists (2022) and the Project funding by the Schleswig-Holstein Ministry of Research and Culture (2023).

Pius Fox (b. 1983, Berlin, Germany) graduated from UdK (University of the Arts) in Berlin with a BA under professor Frank Badur and a master's class under professor Pia Fries in 2010. The Berlin painter has exhibited solo presentations throughout the US, Europe and Asia. Most recently, the artist presented a solo exhibition at Galerie Christian Lethert (Cologne). Fox's work is featured in many international collections across Europe and the US including the Albers Foundation and FRAC Auvergne. He currently lives and works in Berlin.

Frank Gerritz (b. 1964 Hamburg, Germany) is well known for his abstract minimal sculptural works and pencil drawings, in which he has developed a rigorous and precise geometrical language wherein each work relates to one another and leads to the next. Works in the medium Pencil on Paper, Oil Paintstick on paper, Pencil on MDF, and Oil paintstick on Aluminum, all clearly exist within the universe of this language. The refraction and reflection of light against the graphite, paint stick, or aluminum engages the surrounding space; one imagines the work continually evolving as the space's light evolves, but equally as a viewer moves. Frank Gerritz has been exhibiting globally since the late 1980's, more recently a series of institutional exhibitions in Europe confirmed his invaluable contribution to contemporary art discourse. Gerritz currently lives and works in Munich.

Andreia Santana (b. 1991, Lisbon, Portugal) graduated with an MFA in Studio Art from Hunter College in New York. Santana has completed a series of residencies and awarded a number of prizes for her achievements within her practice. Recently, she was shortlisted for the EDP Foundation prize in 2022, and completed a residency at the Artists in Residence, France in 2021 as well as a residency at Residency Unlimited, New York, in 2017. Santana has received several awards and grants for her research-based practice including, The Hopper Prize, 2023; The Fullbright/Carmona e Costa Foundation Fellowship, 2020; and the prestigious Novo Banco Revelação prize which offers a young artist a solo exhibition at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, Portugal and an accompanying catalog. She has exhibited internationally in solo and group exhibitions across the US and Europe. Santana currently lives and works between Lisbon and New York.

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