

Michael Müller Solo Exhibition

***Drei biographische Versuche* [en: *Three Biographical Attempts*]**

Exhibition Period: 15 September – 6 November 2021

Opening Reception: 15 September, 6pm to 8pm

Venue: Galerie du Monde, 108 Ruttonjee Centre, 11 Duddell Street, Central, Hong Kong

Drei biographische Versuche

Kapitel I.: Gefüge – Gefühl und Genauigkeit¹

Kapitel II.: Der Wolkenvermesser²

Kapitel IV.: Das gemachte Ich³

¹ **Einschließlich: Der Versuch unter Hypnose abstrakt zu sein**

² In „Vermessen“ steckt das Maß, kann auch anmaßend bedeuten und dem Maß nicht gerecht zu werden

³ Fehlt der dritte Teil?

[English translation]

Three Biographical Attempts

Chapter I.: Structure – Feeling and Accuracy¹

Chapter II.: The Cloud Surveyor²

Chapter IV.: Self-Creation³

¹ **Including: Trying to be abstract under hypnosis**

² In “measuring” there is measure, it can also mean presumptuous and being not enough

³ Is the third chapter missing?

HONG KONG – Galerie du Monde is pleased to present groundbreaking German artist Michael Müller’s three-chapter solo exhibition series *Drei biographische Versuche* [en: *Three Biographical Attempts*] in Hong Kong from September 2021 to March 2022.

Through stories of his Indian grandmother, Michael Müller (b. 1970) noticed gaps in his identity perception growing up, and he filled them on long expeditions to India and Tibet. The insights gained from these journeys were incorporated into his artistic practice. The constant navigation between Western and Eastern culture influenced the individual and collective identity of Müller. Through his imagination, Müller presents the connections and differences, creating new pathways between intellectual terrains that are diametrically different and yet strangely complement one another. Müller’s work is deeply rooted in art history, and he merges philosophical thoughts with the personal, inviting the viewer to contemplate his larger metaphysical search for the self.

The *Drei biographische Versuche* exhibition series is like Müller’s personal diary from the past three decades. Through each chapter, Müller unveils his journey of self-discovery, embracing change, and self-creation.

On 15 September, the first chapter *Gefüge – Gefühl und Genauigkeit* [en: *Structure – Feeling and Accuracy*] debuts in Hong Kong featuring a new series of abstract paintings entitled *Im Garten des Chán (West-östliche Bewegung)* [en: *In the Garden of Chán (West-Eastern Movement)*], presented with a series of early works which include sets of drawings, two installations and a video.

In the first chapter, Müller revisits his journey to Ladakh in the 1990s – a former kingdom in the high Himalayas, located in the west of the Tibetan cultural area. It was Müller's first time in India, to find his Asian roots. Müller spent a year in the Alchi Monastery in Ladakh, it was a life-defining trip. He was confronted with a dilemma: The Buddhist concept of letting go of one's ego, against developing his unique artistic identity. The pilgrimage to Mount Kailash was instrumental to his self-discovery.



Magnetischer Hügel (auf dem Weg nach Alchi aus Richtung Changspa anreisend) 34°10'16.0"N 77°21'13.8"E (2021)

Series: Im Garten des Chán (West-östliche Bewegung)
Acrylic and lacquer on Belgian linen, 196 x 356 x 4.5 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie du Monde.

The color ranges that surrounded Müller in Ladakh – consisting of browns, greens and greys, are central to the *Im Garten des Chán (West-östliche Bewegung)* series. The paintings represent seven special places that Müller visited in the Himalayas, and he used these locations' GPS coordinates as titles. Mountains have always been places for lowlanders to exercise their imaginations. The complexity and richness of the cultures that developed in the Himalayas over millennia, between myth, religions and reality – were extremely thought-provoking for a young man from the West, who grew up in a German society that emphasizes rational thinking, science and accuracy.



A selection of pencil and ink drawings on green-lined graph paper from 2007-2009 are also on display. Müller was confronted with questions about the self when he created these drawings: What does it mean to be an artist? Yet what remains after that? Can we measure our feelings, our soul? How do we make sense of reality? What is precision? What does it mean to be true to oneself? These questions are directed not only to the artist and to art, but to us all – to the way we try to and want to understand the world.

Hyperion schläft bei den Himmelhebern (2007/2017)

Series: Wolkenvermesser
Pencil and graphite on different types of paper, 48.2 x 34.1 x 3.5 cm

While trekking through the highlands of Himalaya, Müller developed a fascination with observing clouds, and the ever-changing shapes of clouds. For Müller, clouds are “shifters” – like everything in life, including the “I” that we try to discover. Müller firmly believes that the self is **fluid** – our mindset, identities, emotions, realities, everything. How do we make sense in this fluid state? This is a key question for Müller in his artistic practice, which will be elaborated in the second chapter of the exhibition series: *Der Wolkenvermesser* [en: *The Cloud Surveyor*].



Gebeine (2012)
Clay, wax and ink, 28 x 50 x 45 cm

Two installations are presented in the first chapter. *Gebeine* (2012), which means “bones”, features a pair of sculpture made of clay, wax and ink in the form of legs – refers to the practice of sky burial. It is a funeral practice in which a human corpse is deconstructed into parts by a monk and placed on a mountaintop to decompose or to be eaten by birds. Tibetan Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and sky burial is a teaching on the impermanence of life.

The second installation *Innen und Außen, unbekannt* (2013) [en: *Inside and Outside, unknown*], features two archaic rocks and a set of stone-like looking objects made of ceramics and sponges. Sponge is an absorbent material and could be cut into various shapes. Müller uses sponges as a symbolism for humans. What is fueling our soul? What is the tension between our inner self and outer self? How do we present our “self” to the world? We learn, we read, we experience – throughout life we “absorb” different elements and self-create our unique and fluid self.

The re-forming of materials and the recoding of assumptions are viable instruction manuals for accessing Müller’s work. His work also draws out how abstraction is related to agency and logic. With multi-part work *The Attempt to be Abstract Under Hypnosis (1) / to breathe (5)* (2007), the video documents the process of producing the drawings, which Müller did under hypnosis, having set himself the task of reproducing the first drawing as true to the original as possible. Throughout his artistic practice, Müller tries to dismantle prevalent repertoires of thought. He generates resistance and reassembles them.



The Attempt to be Abstract Under Hypnosis (1) (2007), Video and sound on DVD, 105 min (screencap)
to breathe (5) (2007), Pencil on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm each, 11-part work

Questions of self, and of art’s possible modes of action simultaneously lead through Müller’s oeuvre and produce connections between works that seem quite far-removed from one another in terms of both content and time. Müller believes one must first undergo a process of self-deformation in order to develop a new way of seeing through shifting perspectives. He aims to enable the viewer to develop an individual position in relation to the work, expanding on the approach of radical openness to potential and different modes of looking – which leads us to “self-creation” that he will explore in the final chapter of the exhibition series.

About the artist Michael Müller



Michael Müller (b. 1970, Ingelheim am Rhein, Germany) is an artist with a German-Indian background, whose manifold, proliferating oeuvre cannot be ascribed to any one-way interpretation. He continuously broadens the methods of his artistic expression, combining works on paper with painting, text-based work, sculpture, found objects, music, and performance. Müller studied sculpting and fine arts at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with Magdalena Jetelová. From 2015 to 2018, he was a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts. In 2018, he was nominated for the Kunstpreis der Böttcherstraße, Bremen.

Recent solo exhibitions include “Drei biographische Versuche” (3-chapter series), Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong (2021-2022); “Schwierige Bilder”, Sammlung Wemhöner, Berlin (2021); “Stripping the Force – The Self and the Other”, Spotlight by Art Basel, Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong (2020); “Anton in a Bast Skirt”, Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin (2020); “An Exhibition as a Copy”, Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong (2018); “Stripping the Force”, Kunsthalle Bremen (2018); “SKITS. 13 Exhibitions in 9 Rooms”, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2016). Müller’s works belong to many prominent museum collections including the Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany; Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, USA; among others. Müller lives and works in Berlin.

About Galerie du Monde

Founded in Hong Kong in 1974, Galerie du Monde has been specializing in modern and contemporary works by internationally established Chinese artists for 47 years. The gallery also nurtures and promotes emerging talent, presenting a varied program of solo and group exhibitions with a strong focus on works of art on canvas, paper, sculpture, photography and new media. To celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2014, Galerie du Monde introduced the GDM Project series to strengthen the gallery’s support to a wider group of artists from different geographical regions, providing them the opportunity to exhibit outside of their own areas.

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Galerie du Monde opens from Monday to Saturday, 10am to 7pm