

Scalable Skeletal Escalator

24 September – 8 November 2020

Scalable Skeletal Escalator, 2020, begins in the staff kitchen of the Kunsthalle Zürich. It occupies three levels of the Löwenbräukunst building: the second and third floor and basement. All the materials on display are elements in this composition; dancers, the sound system, objects and outfits all direct the visitor through the exhibition. *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* exists as an organism and, like living things, it evolves over time. Fundamental to *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* is a play on scale: our perspective is shifted from the architecture we inhabit, to the negative space between dancer and viewer, towards the surface of the skin, leading to the interior of the body.

2nd floor

The second floor invites a shifting focus. Modular furniture and paravents fall into temporary structures which host the movements of the dancers and create multiple *mise-en-scènes*. Within this choreography of furniture and screens we hear sounds, voiced and synthetic, of the dancers and from the composers, LABOUR. Artworks stitched together from found and recovered plastics are draped across the walls and windows. These works created by Dirk Bell are painted with fingers and strings; their motifs present densely layered information.

3rd floor

In the hallway, sounds leak out from the exhibition space. Upon entering the room, human dimensions are dwarfed by paintings and a sound system all of which address the massive scale of the gallery. In this crafted space, the speaker system by Dirk Bell and Mo Stern is the weighted centre of the room. The speakers' casings are adorned with hand-made images and drawings. Spiralling outwards, a constellation of un-stretched paintings is tethered to the ceiling, dividing and re-shaping rooms. The references shared between all the collaborators can be read here most clearly from the score of graphic screen-printed images by Matthew Lutz-Kinoy. LABOUR's voluminous algorithmic sonic compositions run through the body. Cracking, popping, reverberating off the walls, spatialised music contours the room, informing our sense of place.

Basement

The basement is a site of decomposition and regeneration. Smell by Sissel Tolaas guides the visitor through the long corridor and into a room of mixed uses. In Dirk Bell's environment, plastic materials are manipulated over time, through stitching, painting, printing and layering. This plastic compost is in a process of transformation, informed by research on the wax moth, an insect that digests plastic material.

The surroundings

Moving between floors, the dancers are agents who make and re-make the exhibition for each visitor each time they perform. Through individual movement research within scores choreographed by Isabel Lewis they act as guides into a reflection upon the body. Dancers are dressed in clothes created by Yolanda Zobel with Marcelo Alcaide. The dancers wear second-hand clothing that has been modified using techniques of melting and tailoring. Referencing 14th century Persian anatomy drawings, zippers outline the contours of muscle and bone. Also circulating between floors are smells created by Sissel Tolaas that evoke the natural and the synthetic. Perspective is shifted once again to an intimate, immediate level as smells enter our bodies.

The dancers are Kewin Bonono (on the occasion of the opening), Lara Dâmaso, The Field (Lucia Gugerli, Pierre Piton, Declan Whitaker and Mirjam Jamuna Zweifel) Isabel Lewis, Rafa Pierzyński, Mathias Ringgenberg and Juliette Uzor.

Scalable Skeletal Escalator is an experimental live art work conceived by Isabel Lewis in the form of a holobiont, a multi-organismic assemblage, like the human body itself, shuddering and shaking into being. This mode of exhibition-making draws inspiration from evolutionary biologist Dr. Lynn Margulis' emphasis

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on cooperative and symbiotic relationships between species as the driving force of evolution. The themes of the work are continuous with its form, reflecting on potential human futures. Continuing in the vein of Isabel Lewis' practice of questioning the disembodied thought systems of the West, which deny the body «livingness» in the deadlock of idealism/materialism, this work invites collaborators and visitors on a participatory epistemological quest to re(dis)cover the body by rehabilitating our human sensorium in order that we might enhance living, rather than alienate ourselves from life.

Reading material

How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human, 2013

by Eduardo Kohn

Thinking Like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy After the End of Nature, 2015

by Steven Vogel

Impressionable Biologies: From the Archaeology of Plasticity to the Sociology of Epigenetics, 2019

by Maurizio Meloni

Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World, 2019

by Jairus Victor Grove

Thinking Through the Skin, 2001

by Sara Ahmed, Jackie Stacey

Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science, 1989

by Donna Haraway

Ecofeminist Philosophy, 2000

by Karen J. Warren

On Being Human as Praxis, 2014

by Sylvia Wynter

Scalable Skeletal Escalator is made possible through collaborative efforts by artists operating in multiple fields. Artist Dirk Bell and sound specialist Mo Stern created a custom-made speaker system, Kewin Bonono, Lara Dâmaso, The Field (a cooperation with Tanzhaus Zürich), Rafa Pierzyński, Mathias Ringgenberg and Juliette Uzor are the dancers, wearing costumes designed by art director Marcelo Alcaide and designer Yolanda Zobel. The music that weaves through the building is by LABOUR and Matthew Lutz-Kinoy created the paintings on canvas. Smells produced by artist and researcher Sissel Tolaas are most evident in the basement of Löwenbräukunst. *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* is conceived by artist Isabel Lewis. The work is created with the support of Tanzhaus Zürich; thanks also to Callie's Berlin and Schauspielhaus Zürich. All works by Matthew Lutz-Kinoy courtesy Kamel Mennour / Fitzpatrick Gallery / Mendes Wood DM.

Talks and events during the exhibition:

01.10.2020, 18:30

Introduction to *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* with Isabel Lewis, moderated by Aoife Rosenmeyer (English)

15.10.2020, 18:30

Curator's introduction to *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* by Daniel Baumann (German)

29.10.2020, 18:30

Curator's introduction to *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* by Daniel Baumann (German)

05.11.2020, 18:30

Introduction to *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* with Isabel Lewis, moderated by Seline Fühlscher (German & English)

Opening Hours Tue–Sun 11 am–6 pm, Thu 11 am–8 pm, Mon closed

Visitors can enter twice with a single ticket; we encourage you to return in order to experience the exhibition evolving.

Please consult our website for up-to-date information on events and workshops:

www.kunsthallezurich.ch

Kunsthalle Zürich receives funding from:



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