

## CONDITION: UNCANNY

Antonia Christl, Laura Fröhlich, Suah Im and Jakob Tyroller  
April 25 - May 19, 2018



Exhibition view (Suah Im), *CONDITION: UNCANNY*, 2018

“Many are the wonders, none / is more wonderful than what is man.”  
—Sophocles, *Antigone*

Various attempts have been made to translate the above quoted lines from Sophocles' *Antigone*. According to some translations it is understood as: There are many wonders, none is greater than man. At the same time, it can also be read as: There are many wonders, none is more *wondrous* or bewildering than man. The word “wonderful”, therefore, seems to hold a certain ambiguity in its disparate implications. The passage from *Antigone* has, especially in its translations into German, undergone a fundamental shift in meaning. Hölderlin, for instance, in his 1804 German translation, chose “monstrous” instead of “wonderful”. Heidegger, in turn, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953), settled for “uncanny” (“*unheimlich*”): “Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing beyond the human being prevails more uncannily.” Notably, the word “wonderful” does not only have a much darker undertone in the German language, but also “wonderful” and “uncanny” lay closer together than one would initially assume.



Exhibition view (Laura Fröhlich, Suah Im), *CONDITION: UNCANNY*, 2018

The uncanny, according to Freud, describes the psychological experience of perceiving something as familiar, yet at the same time strange. In opposition to being simply mysterious, the uncanny refers to a state in which a common event or object is encountered in an eerie or disturbing setting. Similar to the idea of words not merely having one precise meaning, the things that we encounter in our surrounding can be ambiguous and obscure. Nonetheless, every culture is based on distinctions. We differentiate between, for instance, nature and culture, human and divine, life and death, good and bad. In addition, the human brain tends to decipher, categorise and order what it perceives. That which does not fall into any of the preconceived categories – that which cannot be distinguished – is “uncanny” or “unheimlich”.

The selected works in *CONDITION: UNCANNY* by the four students from Klasse Brenner, Kunstakademie Stuttgart, Antonia Christl, Laura Fröhlich, Suah Im, and Jakob Tyroller all create a state of familiarity that gradually reveals itself to be utterly deceiving. Playing with our visual habits, at first glance the works produce a feeling of ease and homeliness. One might, for instance, notice the impeccable tropical beach landscapes in Tyroller's *Land of Dreams* (2016); Fröhlich's mundane, sterile turnstile entitled *Personenschleuse* (2015); Christl's *Punctum saliens* (2017–18) that assembles audio recordings of her surroundings and the nostalgic use of gramophones; lastly Im's use of and reference to banal everyday day objects seem to inform her works *Begegnen* (2018) and *Stecke mich hier ein* (2017). Certain aspects of these works are instantly relatable and classifiable, and might therefore seem ordinary and self-evident.



Exhibition view (Jakob Tyroller), *CONDITION: UNCANNY*, 2018

Yet, it is precisely this familiarity that soon develops into a strong feeling of unsettlement. Tyroller's landscapes unmistakably resemble the over-saturated images of commercials. At the same time, the panoramas start to glitch, the distortion developing the "land of dreams" into some sort of simulated dystopian holiday destination. Fröhlich's turnstile – if it were to be used – does not lead anywhere but exactly back to the point of departure. Christl's ever so familiar yet frightening sound of a heart beat drowns out the rest of the recording leaving the listener confronted with his/her own mortality. Finally, Im's curtains simply exist without further purpose. Her use of and reference to everyday objects is what makes the deformed images that she creates through her sculptures seem truly grotesque.

Ambiguous and alienated: what unites the selected art works is a condition that could be described as uncanny, one that is manifold and strangely human.

*Text by Anna Siebold*

<sup>1</sup> Sophocles. *The Antigone of Sophocles*. Edited with introduction and notes by Sir Richard Jebb. Sir Richard Jebb. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1891



Exhibition view (Antonia Christl), *CONDITION: UNCANNY*, 2018