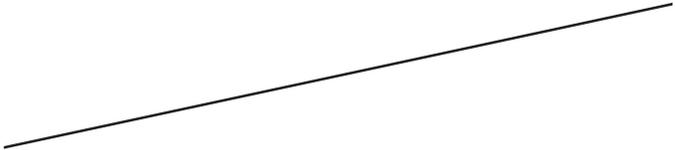


KUNSTMUSEUM THUN



APPLE. AN INTRODUCTION. (OVER AND OVER AND ONCE AGAIN).

A project by Antje Majewski and
Paweł Freisler. With Brigham Baker,
Jimmie Durham, Agnieszka Polska
and Didier Rittener

4.9. – 28.11.2021

ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition is all about the apple – the fruit we think we know best. The apple is the perfect example of the infinite diversity that nature can produce from one basic form. Humans have also played their part, and the many different varieties cultivated throughout history represent a cultural achievement that is worth preserving, and which is threatened by today's agricultural practices. Studying apples can therefore tell us a great deal about how we produce our food, shedding light on debates in breeding and genetic research. This topic challenges us to reflect on our relationship to the natural world we have domesticated and on which our very lives depend.

Initiated by the Berlin-based artist Antje Majewski and the Polish conceptual artist Paweł Freisler, this project with its artistic, scientific, cultural-historical and political dimensions has been realised at various locations since 2014, involving additional artists, local stakeholders, schools and cultural institutions while also reaching out into the urban community with a planting activity. The exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Thun is the largest and most comprehensive component of the apple project, assembling works from all previous project stations. Works by Majewski and Freisler are displayed here alongside exhibits by Agnieszka Polska and Jimmie Durham that relate to them in terms of content.

The exhibition in Switzerland explicitly includes as well works on the subject of apples created independently, which now enter into a fruitful dialogue with the project. Swiss artists Didier Rittener and Brigham Baker have long been exploring our perception of the apple and its symbolic power. Selected works from the collection of the Kunstmuseum Thun will also be integrated into the show.

Paweł Freisler's apples, Antje Majewski's paintings, Brigham Baker's large-format photographs and Didier Rittener's dense drawings show the apple as an object of meditation that provides food for thought about nature, time and appearance. The apple is part of the natural cycle of decay and regeneration but also has a long history of human cultivation.

The project includes an apple tree planting at the Thun Hospital and a wide-ranging art education programme. The local public in Thun will for example be invited to contribute their own apple paintings to the exhibition.

ANTJE MAJEWSKI

(b. 1968 in Germany, lives and works in Berlin)

Antje Majewski's artistic practice draws on intense conversations with artists, cultural workers, humanities scholars and scientists, activists and other figures. With her curatorial and documentary formal language based on extensive artistic research, Majewski brings to light an ecology of aesthetic and social relationships while lending the process a place and an occasion rather than a definitive conclusion. Majewski's paintings of new and old apple varieties display a kaleidoscope of colours and shapes that convey an impression of their rich diversity. The paintings are based on food photographs and thus revisit the tradition of the *nature morte* (still life) by way of a detour. Among the novel varieties pictured here are the first genetically modified apple and a new apple with red flesh.

In her film *Wild Apples*, Majewski undertakes a fascinating case study of biodiversity. She uncovers the mechanisms behind the genetic reduction of this fruit, using the apple to illustrate the complex relationship between the global food economy and technological progress. To learn more about the origin of our apples, she travelled as far afield as Kazakhstan, where the fruit's ancestors, the wild *Malus sieversii*, still grow in wild apple forests.

Despite being cultivated from China to South America, the apple is also a very local fruit. Each region has its own special varieties, its own recipes and memories associated with the apple. The local anchoring of the theme is therefore a very important aspect for Majewski. For the exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Thun, the artist produced a new video work in collaboration with Marc Schlotterbeck from the organic farm Biohof Fruchtwald in Homberg near

Thun. In the video, she asks the farmer, for example, what it means to plant a grassland orchard with old apple varieties and discusses with him the joys and travails of apple production.

Another new video work features a conversation with Markus Kellerhals on the efforts made by the association Fructus to preserve old apple varieties in Switzerland and to exploit their genetic diversity for the breeding of new varieties.

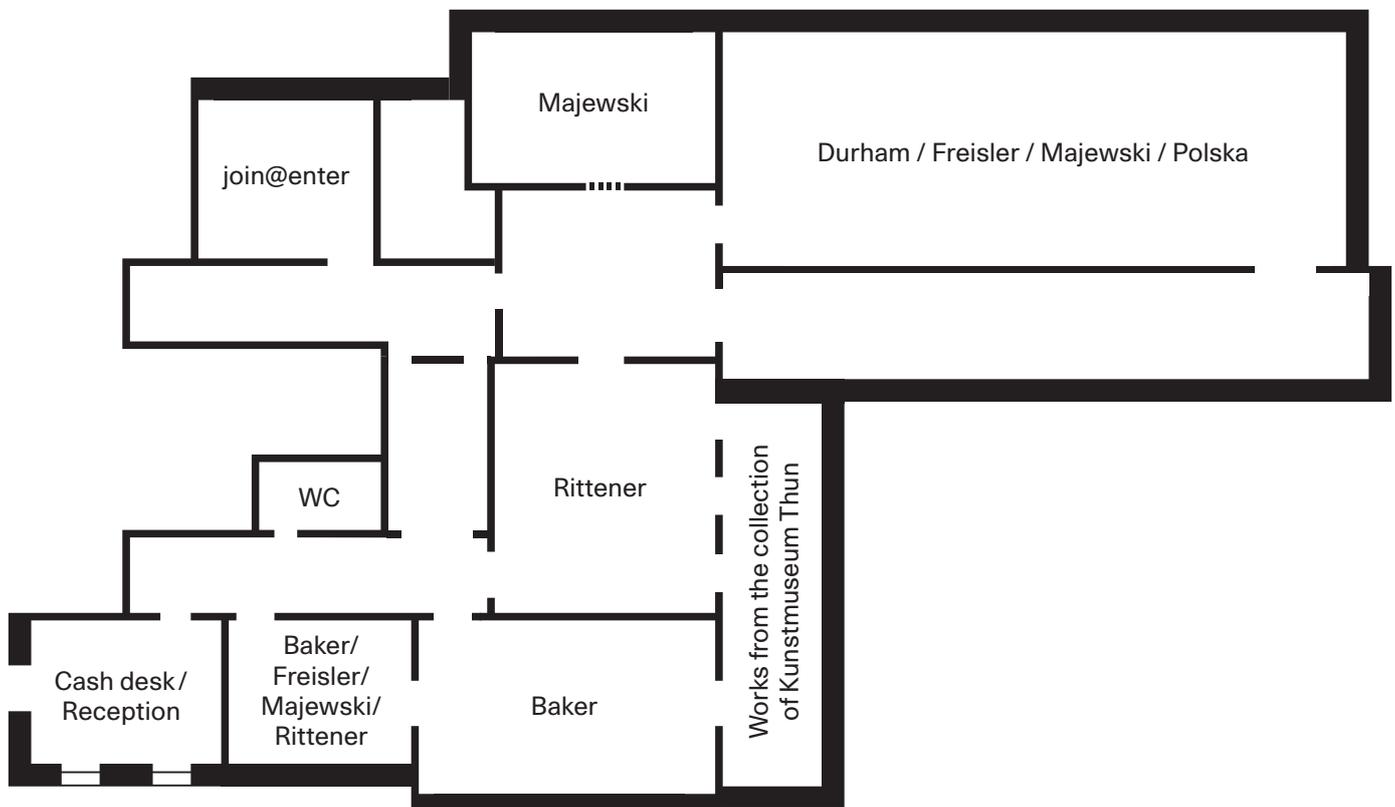
PAWEŁ FREISLER

(b. 1942 in Poland, lives and works in Sweden)

Paweł Freisler has been working with apples for many years, carving ornamental motifs into their skins and then preserving them in an elaborate and lengthy process. The exquisite small objects that result are half sculpture, half nature, at once beautiful and fragile. Their form is the result of collaboration between the artist and the apple but also due to the micro-organisms and insects that shape the decomposition process, which the artist halts at various stages. The sculptures thus elude any long-term museum preservation and are ultimately ephemeral.

The dialogue between Antje Majewski and Paweł Freisler dates back to 2010. She was particularly interested in his situational, conceptual practice. Freisler's *Stalowe Jajo* (The Egg), 1967, made of stainless steel, which humorously defined the "standard" for a chicken egg, was meant to be carried by various people on their person rather than being presented in an exhibition. It was then shown in a museum for the first time in 2011/12 in Majewski's exhibition *The World of Gimmel: How to Make Objects Talk*. Acknowledging the performative aspect of the work, Majewski had secretly had a copy made, which she and others took turns

OVERVIEW



carrying around with them. Finally, the egg was ceremonially buried in Majewski's garden. In subsequent correspondence, Majewski confessed to her unauthorised action and obtained Freisler's consent. He told Majewski that she should now plant an apple tree atop the egg as the next step, following the Roman proverb *Ab ovo usque ad malam* (From egg to apple), meaning "from beginning to end". From these beginnings there developed an ongoing philosophical and poetic email conversation and artistic collaboration between Majewski and Freisler, who in 2013 revealed more about his engagement with apples and agreed to a joint exhibition project. In 2014/15, this project came to fruition in the first edition of *Apple. An Introduction. (Over and over and once again)* at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Poland. Freisler stipulated that the show should be exclusively about apples, that the two artists should never meet, and that after the first apple tree in Majewski's garden, 1,001 additional apple trees should follow. Otherwise, he gave Majewski a free hand. *Apple. An Introduction. (Over and over and once again)* has since been realised by the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, Kunst Haus Wien, the Kunsthalle Lingen, the Museumsverbund Worpswede, the Galerie im Turm in Berlin, and Sandro Parrotta Fine Arts/ Burg Ledeburg.

The story of how the project came about, along with its conceptual background, accompanies it to each exhibition site. Instead of being peeled away, this story is thus developed further. With each iteration, new conversations are initiated, apple trees are planted, and elements are added or transformed. The project responds to each new setting, expanding or narrowing, and documentation and text material is produced, overlaying what came before like sediments to form a kind of humus, a nutrient-rich soil that serves as a starting point for research and makes encounters and new apple trees possible.

AGNIESZKA POLSKA

(b. 1985 in Poland, live and works in Berlin)

Agnieszka Polska has dealt in her works with various fellow artists, focusing especially on colleagues from the conceptual avant-garde while also inventing fictional characters. Her animated video collages interweave historical artworks with the present day. As she spoke with Antje Majewski, they realised that they share an interest in the legendary artist Paweł Freisler, who emigrated to Sweden while Poland was still under communist rule.

Agnieszka Polska's video work *Ogród* (The Garden), takes us to Freisler's garden. A man there, of whom we see only one hand, explains to us how carefully the rare flowers are cultivated, tells us their complicated names, and explains the sprinkler system and the precautions taken against pests. Almost incidentally, Freisler's Egg can be seen resting among the plants.

JIMMIE DURHAM

(b. 1940 in the USA, lives and works in Berlin and Rome)

Jimmie Durham's work has multiple connections to natural elements, such as the stones seen in his installation *The History of Europe* for documenta 13, 2012. His works often call into question assignments to national borders or identities. The vast scales and time spans of nature make such human categorisations appear absurd.

In Antje Majewski's video work, Durham explains in a conversation that similar tree varieties can be found in Europe and North America since they were once both part of the same continent. There are thus wild apples in North America, too. He tells the story of European settlers

laying claim to the land by planting cider apple trees, and he recounts how the *Black Arcansas* apple tree came to be planted in the Karlsuae Park in Kassel for documenta 13.

During documenta 13, apple juice bottles with a label designed by Jimmie Durham were sold, becoming in this way a multiple. The apple juice contained homeopathic doses of the juice of the *Black Arcansas* apple. Some of these bottles are on display in the exhibition.

BRIGHAM BAKER

(b. 1989 in USA, lives and works in Zurich)

The series *Apples* shows a long-term photographic study by the artist Brigham Baker. Although the apple is the central motif, the photographs can also be seen as a reflection on the interplay and duality of nature and culture. Some of them convey a sense of transience and may recall *vanitas* still lifes, because the artist shows not only ripe, well-formed apples but also fruit in a state of decay. Baker's artistic practice is marked by a fascination with observing natural processes. He discerns in them an intriguing push and pull between diversity and the ability to adapt and change versus logical-mathematical and functional systems. His activities as a beekeeper and urban gardener also inspires his artistic research. Baker visited the tree that is shown in the photographs daily at different times of day.

DIDIER RITTENER

(b. 1969 in Lausanne, where he lives and works)

The artist Didier Rittener devotes himself mainly to drawing and conceptual works. In addressing the theme of contemporary image production, he avails himself of motifs from art history and other domains. His work *Les pommiers ou indécente forêt* (The Apple Trees or Immoral Forest), for example, contains a number of references to historical artworks that evoke the primal Western/Christian theme of the Fall of Man by illustrating the story of Adam & Eve and the Apple. With references dating from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century, the styles and techniques displayed in Rittener's condensed Garden of Eden are accordingly diverse. Humans and animals have deliberately been omitted. Over a period of two years, the artist worked meticulously in graphite on paper on his forest landscape, creating a monumental panoramic tableau.

Rittener has in addition created a new work for the Kunstmuseum Thun: *Donnez-vous la peine* (Make the Effort), 2021, an installation of 300 copies each of twenty-eight offset prints laid out on pallets made of papier-mâché and wood putty, with a pallet of 500 sheets of paper as packaging. The twenty-eight reproductions were made from grey crayon drawings from the series *Libre de droits – dessins 2001–2021*. The artist extracted the apple motif from various historical artworks depicting the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Knowledge and the Forbidden Fruit. This project followed after the drawing *Les pommiers et indécente forêt* exhibited here. The reproductions of the drawings zoom in on the apples depicted in the original works, bringing to the fore the fruit we encounter everywhere today in (super)market displays: standardised apples that are practically identical, with some varieties are even sold under a registered trademark. Here the apple has become a unit of measurement like the franc.

The pallets were made by hand from the plainest of materials, their production a measurable and quantifiable gesture. The ensemble thus raises the question of the relationship between economic and symbolic power, with the

museum taking on the role of greengrocer and the work that of the non-speculative, commercial object.

If you are interested in purchasing a print, please take the print, mark its number on a piece of paper, wrap it in the packaging paper and pay at the museum cash-desk. (The price of the print is according to the number of apples in it: 1 apple = 1.- CHF)

ART EDUCATION PROGRAMME

As an apple variety can only survive if it is grafted onto a new rootstock by humans, i.e., cloned, the preservation of the incredible diversity of colours, shapes and tastes of apples is a cultural achievement. Therefore, an important part of the project takes places beyond the exhibition in the form of public events, cultural education programmes and an artistic-ecological project in the urban space.

EVENTS/APPLE TREE PLANTING /enter ART SPACE

A varied programme of events accompanies the exhibition (see the exhibition flyer for details). The Kunstmuseum Thun offers not only a place to view art but also a location for obtaining information and meeting and learning from others. Seats are provided so that visitors can linger and engage in conversation with the exhibitors and each other, for example as part of the programmes accompanying exhibitions. For the current exhibition, the *enter art space* that has been created for art education activities invites painting enthusiasts and visitors to do a painting on the theme of apples. A selection of these works will be on display in this room as part of the exhibition. You are also cordially invited to participate in the exchange platform for apple recipes.

An important element of the exhibition project is the planting of apple trees in public space in the towns where the project is being realised. In Thun, three high-stem apple trees varieties will be planted on the grounds of Thun Hospital.

For the overall project, a catalogue called *Der Apfel. Eine Einführung (immer und immer wieder)* and its English edition *Apple. An Introduction (Over and over and once again)* has been published by Sternberg Press, edited by Aleksandra Jach, Antje Majewski, Joanna Sokołowska and Susanne Titz. With contributions by Jimmie Durham, Anders Ettinger, Paweł Freisler, Fundacja Transformacja, J.K. Gibson-Graham and Ethan Miller, Antje Majewski, Agnieszka Polska, Joanna Sokołowska and Susanne Titz.

Another catalogue was published in 2018 by Kunsthalle Lingen: *Der Apfel. Eine Einführung. (Immer und immer und immer wieder)*, edited by Maike Behm and Antje Majewski, with texts by Maike Behm, Paweł Freisler and Antje Majewski.

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