

Introductory speech by Dr. Verena Jendrua at the opening of the exhibition *La Caida* by Viviana Gonzalez on March 16, 2024

I am delighted to introduce this year's first exhibition of the art space kunst [ ] klima today: The exhibition title *La Caida* (German: Der Fall) has its origin in the sound installation with the same name. Viviana Gonzalez-Mañez first installed it at the Aargauer Kunsthau in 2020.

Materiality

The material primarily used is stone. A solid material, one of the basic natural materials of our environment. Each stone, even from different places, has its own characteristics. The texture differs, the visual appearance, but also age and origin. The shape of individual stones ranges from pointed and angular to smooth. The individual shape is largely determined by environmental influences. The solid, supposedly unchangeable material undergoes changes over the course of time. The individual stone not only tells the story of its millennia-old formation, but also the relatively recent history of its movement on the earth's surface such as in rubble, in riverbeds.

For the installation in Stuttgart, Viviana has planned to collect stones at the origin of the river Neckar. Viviana lives in Switzerland, which she uses as an important source of inspiration for her artistic work as she has the image of a spring, bubbling up, in her head. Anyone who has ever been to the origin of the Neckar in Schwenningen knows that this is no small bubbling spring. For the artist, such changes in concept are part of the creative process. Thus, she once again used her stock of stones from Switzerland in the work. The reference to Stuttgart nevertheless appears in her presentation in the art space, to be explained later.

In its materiality Viviana's sculpture resembles classical sculpture. She uses stone. Sculptures were carved out of blocks of stone centuries ago. The materiality of modern sculpture is much more open - almost any material is conceivable even and especially very perishable materials are used. Viviana chooses a very fine material to complement the stone, a textile. It is a thin thread. The individual stones are enclosed like fine spider webs. Delicate and not inflexible do the stones and the thread form a whole. The object is therefore not created in a subtractive process but is an additive process.

Temporality and spatial reference

Neither sculpture nor statuary art are the right terms, the object is also not a permanent object. The form installed by the artist here in the art space has for the most part already been created in the studio. The exact duration of its creation cannot be determined. It is not a work in progress, but crocheting has been part of Viviana's daily process in the studio since she was invited to the art space. She is usually involved in several artistic projects at the same time. This is because working with textiles is a family tradition for Gonzalez-Mañez. This way of working refers to her origins in Colombia. What appears to us to be a lengthy process is for her a contemplative work that can and should take up space and time. The installation in the art space in Stuttgart is merely the final step in the work process.

In the morning Viviana Gonzalez-Mañez has set the yarn winder in motion, the yarn is gradually wound up and the fine shells around the individual stones gradually dissolve, one stone after the other drops down. The process that is set in motion apparently lasts well into the night. The

filigree structure mounted on the ceiling changes relentlessly. The object is broken down again into its individual components. The falling stone gently moves the rest of the object.

At the same time, the components remain a part of the installation, as part of the exhibition in the art space. I talked to Viviana about this very aspect, as it seems essential to me in this work and in her work as a whole! The individual materials remain in their materiality. Through a temporary change, the individual components become a whole, they form the work of art. Her approach makes us aware of our human interaction with the environment: we humans appropriate things, we want to own them. We don't just call things our own, we also dispose of nature and animals. As a result, we place ourselves above other forms of life. But doesn't anything remain itself? Even if Viviana has created a work of art from the collected stones through the process of installation, the individual stone remains a stone, interwoven with the others. The intervention is intended to be temporary, to point out content, but not to fundamentally change it. The stones can be returned at any time. She thus provides a strong artistic symbol of becoming and passing away.

I asked Viviana specifically about the state of her work for the art space. Is the state before the thread winder is put into operation a sculpture or the state of the fallen stones afterwards? When is the artwork finished and which term best describes it? The answer was not easy for her and yet it could not have been better. For Viviana Gonzeles-Méndez, the artwork is a conversation - or rather an interaction. She has not yet thought about the concepts of the object's state. What is important to her is the intrinsic spirit. The energy that is inherent in things, in all things.

I have not yet named another aspect of the installation. Since this morning, the quiet whirring of the motor has dominated the room and circumscribes the temporality of the installation. Added to this is the falling of stones at irregular intervals. It is not the dull thud of a stone hitting the ground or the falling of a stone onto rock and rubble. It is mostly the sound of the stone on the metal plate. Sound after sound after sound - strung together like notes, their intervals determined by the length of the string. This sound is also recorded and played back as an echo. Viviana consciously intervenes into the sound, creating a man-made product, even if it is only briefly perceptible.

#### Site specificity

As an artist, Viviana Gonzeles-Méndez is interested in creating images of landscapes and places. However, not in the sense of a photorealistic image, but in the meaningful transfer and reproduction of sensations. This aspect highlights her awareness of ancient cultures and indigenous peoples. The second work in the exhibition was also created in this transfer of a place into her art. Here, she uses her examination of the source of the Neckar again. She has worked on a branch as an artifact and collected Neckar water drips into the milled channel. The water runs along the chute and finally drips onto a sheet of paper with black pigment. This evolving and independently changing surface is her association with the large, murky and dark water surface of the Neckar's source at the Schwenninger swamp. Once again, chance is part of the artistic process. The water paints uncontrollably and according to its own laws.

The artist plays with the change of places, with the control of time. In her artistic cosmos, she deliberately overrides the laws of nature and alters natural processes. Thereby she changes the way we look at things: we perceive the individual stone as part of a complete, holistic process. This individual stone is thus a symbol of our world. Every living being has its destiny. However, the pre-planned process does not always remain the same – we humans intervene to a particular extent.

The result of our intervention is predictable. We know, for example, that it is only a matter of time before the next stone is released from its cocoon of threads and hits the metal plate with a

metallic sound. At the same time, however, we cannot clearly determine the moment it happens. The falling happens so quickly that we can barely watch. Nor do we know where the stone will hit and even less in which direction it will continue to move. In the small cosmos of the sound installation, Viviana Gonzales-Menez makes it abundantly clear how essential and unpredictable human interventions in nature and the ecosystem are at the same time.

#### Contextualization

My use of different terms to define the sound installation is no coincidence. Defining individual things, individual states is not always easy. Our environment is in a constant state of flux. We humans also change through the culture and nature that surround us. In Viviana's case, her artistic work shows both her origins in Colombia and her current residence in Switzerland: She transfers her closeness to nature and mindfulness into the artwork and teaches us as viewers to observe attentively and perceive the complexity.

For Viviana Gonzales-Menez, the process of falling stones creates an identity for her new home in Switzerland and life there in the mountains and with nature. The constant corrosion stands for the fragility of our entire ecosystem. Individual stones drop down, so people could also fall. In my opinion, Gonzales-Menez creates a symbol of our current times. The destruction of nature is also a destruction of humanity. Each individual stone may seem small and insignificant. It alone does not make the object disappear. But if many stones drop, only the individual components of the intricately woven network remain in an uncertain constellation. Every single falling stone with its impact reminds us of the progression of destruction.

Thank you very much to Viviana for the exhibition and the fascinating pictures about the interplay between man, nature and technology. It is a pleasure to be able to accompany the exhibition with my introductory words. Thanks for the invitation to the team of the art space kunst [ ] klima.