

# The Cycle of Transience

## An Interview with Daniel Hölzl

by Karenita Haalck

All that is, is determined by the cyclical clock of nature. This describes the worldview of Austrian artist Daniel Hölzl. According to his view, this cyclical clockwork entails endless, everlasting states of constant change. Hölzl, who graduated in Fine Arts from the art school Berlin Weißensee in 2021, translates this change into his work by using fleeting materials that stand in contrast with materials that convey permanence. Hölzl’s work centers around the dynamic between the individual components of his installations, the exhibition space and the art observer. By creating mind games that critically question system structures, Hölzl creates intriguing occupations of space in which every moment becomes a fragment of a grander scheme. His installations represent microcosms that are called into existence by the interplay of separate elements. Within these microcosms, the individual components experience a shift of perspective, in which they become the main character of their system instead of taking on a supporting role. This shift of perspective continues with the subjective perception and interpretation of the viewer. The entanglement of the art object, time and space, as well as the role of objectivity and subjectivity, is immanent to Hölzl’s artistic process.

**Karenita Haalck: The common ground of your works revolves around an idea of an all-underlying transient nature. Where does this idea of an encompassing transience stem from?**  
Daniel Hölzl: The main idea behind the temporality and transient nature, or the cycle of nature, is closely tied to the materials that I use. Partly, it stems from what the material offers by itself and also what happens to it depending on when and where I put it into context, I work site-specifically. I also recycle previously used material into other works and I strongly believe that any matter has a cycle in its own way, that is of course temporary. If you look at even the most monumental buildings, the concrete structures are technically crumbling at the very moment you look at them, at a very slow pace – which can’t be witnessed with the naked eye. Seen from a theoretical point, minuscule erosion is constantly happening. Similar to how mountains erode into their smallest cores over time and become compressed to stone again, the whole cycle happens like clockwork, unnoticed. Change is a general, constant thing, everything is always moving and shifting. This applies to

exhibitions too; they constantly change, depending on the thinking of the viewer. With my work, I try to underline this, the constant change, often in a way that allows the work to unfold and constantly evolve, underlining the transient nature.

**KH: How does this notion of transience relate to the selection of material in your artwork?**  
DH: I work with materials that have a certain potential and sometimes they might be very contrasting, bringing together total opposites. There are structure positions and combinations that point towards specific ideas. It is important to me that materials bring their own language, their own power, that they have the potential to contribute to the installation autonomously. For example, in my exhibition you would see wax as part of an installation, melting away and moving around throughout the duration of the show. Despite melting, the wax always remains in some shape or form, so it acts as a reference to all possible variations and in-betweens of the two extremes. There are no such things as poly-present or poly-vanished. I also have other

installations that are transient under the influence of the surrounding: with wind, water or the reaction of the viewers themselves. I try to provide a frame for the installations and within that frame, the material performs.

**KH: Does this evanescent mise-en-scène influence how you experience art yourself, whether it is your own or in general?**  
DH: I see art as an endless cycle. At the right moment, I am only able to experience a small keyframe of it. Whether it is my own exhibition or art in general, I am aware and inspired by how there is only a certain amount of feeling that can be conveyed within a certain amount of time. Therefore, I am always open to perceive art in this temporal way – a way where it is meant for the very moment instead of being meant to last. I do not have the urge to create strong structures that last hundreds of years. Seeing a marble sculpture from antiquity definitely speaks about time as well, but personally, as an artist, it is not my destiny to create a preserved version of something that is intended to last an eternity.

**KH: According to your artist profile, your work touches upon critical thinking and questions about system structures. Can you explain in what way this expresses itself in your art?**  
DH: My works volume no. one, two and three feature the architectural potential of minimalist sculptures. Three frames, or cages so to speak, are built from a metal structure and combined with a very contrasting material: parachute silk. Although the cages look identical, the silk fabrics in the cages interact in three different ways. One of them is twice the volume of the others; it now and then expands through the cage structure and gives an illusion of breaking free. Another one is also programmed, but this time the 1:1 volume moves up and down, constantly inflating and deflating, and at times it fills the cage entirely. One interacts with the viewers themselves, responding to the airflow in the room. This example is trying to show a visual proof of the cascading nature of all systems in general. There is one entity, but it is an illusion. Let’s say the parachute silk inside the metal frame is one element, but this volume is also part of the installation, which is part of the room, which is part of the house, the streets, the cities – so on and so forth. It’s like a reverse Russian doll concept, these systems operate within other systems, all systems are therefore interconnected. This structural connection might not be the first association when you see these works. For me, my work is a way of personal research, I think and read about these ideas and I hope it gives room for all kinds of interpretations. I see my work as a volume or a surface that gives space for these projections that we all carry within us. Everybody will see, read and question it differently, especially because it constantly changes.

**KH: The dynamics between your installations, the object, the room and the exhibition visitors is a recurring theme in your work. Which role does the art viewer take on in these dynamics?**  
DH: The viewer is part of this entire art machinery. You can go into an art gallery, stroll through it and be touched in a very emotional way without diving deep into the research behind the works because it evokes something in yourself. This way of viewing the art might feel amazing on one day but on other days you might want to learn more about the background and work your way through understanding an idea, or a culture to get more out of the experience. Viewing art is always a mix of both, and it should be. I think the beautiful thing about these moments and interactions is that people will bring their own disposition and experience into the room. So, therefore, they all have different reactions – one artwork might touch one person immensely, whereas the same might not do much for another person. Both reactions are entirely equally interesting to me, seeing how these people then interact with that space. I had one show in London, where I somewhat replicated columns that were already in the room. I re-modeled them from recycled bin bags, they looked almost the same as their original counterparts. They were inflated with air and were programmed to all of a sudden fall over and rise again, constantly dividing the space into different sections, unpredictably falling to the left or the right. Depending on when people entered the exhibition, they would not even notice them at first. In this scenario, they were looking at the paintings, conversating, having their drinks, casually leaning

on the columns – and then being surprised by these inflatable columns collapsing out of the blue, nearly hitting them. Sometimes they were shocked, although they are only made from plastic, so they cannot harm anyone. In this sense, it was quite humorous. But it can also make you think of the whole present structure, the whole group dynamic we have at an opening for example, with the socializing, drinking and chatting. I think it is interesting that the art divides those groups. Some people would walk around it or jump away from it, it brings out interesting reactions. It can be childish, curious and fun but at the same time, you can think about it critically – which leads to a different, not least interesting viewpoint. If a viewer is very engaged with the art, they might get in touch with the material, and thus get from one to another, asking questions like “Why is he using recycled bin bags, or why is he using carbon fiber, parachutes, and packing chips from cornstarch?” The visitors can engage fragmentally or holistically, depending on how much they choose to take in at that very moment.

**KH: You have recently graduated with a degree in Fine Arts. How did you stipulate being in art education and being a student with the artistic development that you experienced in those years?**  
DH: It was an interesting journey for me, I went to an art school at the age of 14 for the following four years – until I was 18. So, instead of going to high school, I went to this particular art school. There are only two of these in Austria, my home country. I had the honor of going there with 10 other kids, although, at that time, I did not think much of it, being a typical 14-year old, you know. The subjects were very technical, a lot of sculpture education. After school I worked as a restorer, restoring art and monuments for four and a half years. After that time, I finally started studying art in Berlin,

which I set as my goal years prior. This offered completely new answers of what it means to be educated as an artist, or whatever that is labeled, and it was a really interesting time for me. I had to unlearn a lot of ways and approaches that I had internalized at school and at work, especially since I spent time restoring the art of others. When I got to Berlin to study Fine Arts, it was my very own thing with minimal guidance and the practice being left to the individual person. I thoroughly enjoyed this part, it was like, “Here is your studio, you can now do whatever drives you, create whatever interests you”, and it took some time to dismantle the previous more limited ways of approaching art. For me, starting my studies was a relief. It felt more like my own journey, having my own studio, relying on my own mind, rather than being educated and formed in a certain way by an external corpus. Then, it comes naturally to want to show the creations, and through university, I had opportunities to show with fellow students. It felt very natural, this step further into the art world.

**KH: You work with a broad selection of materials, including carbon fiber, plastics, wax and many others. What are the challenges behind working with these different textures and structures?**  
DH: I mainly use light materials, like the inflatable bags mentioned earlier, parachute silk or bio packing chips made from cornstarch that get moved by wind and eventually dissolve in water, pieces of wax that melt and transform. Movement, by air, by electricity, often impacts my work. I try to give the space to the installation, in a sensitive way. Sensitivity to me is more important than having monumental structures. They can still have a daring character to them, like the delicate inflatables, my so-called soft architectures that stretch or nearly explode when being blown up to



DANIEL HÖLZL  
AUSHANG, 2021  
parachute silk, digital mixed flow fan & electronic components  
Berlin



their maximum capacity, then they deflate and crumble again and move loosely in the wind, they rub on the walls or on the floor or even on the visitors, which leaves traces as well. My site-specific work cycle no. two was made out of a 100% recycled carbon fiber veldt, which I have been extracting pieces of material from ever since. I picked up the carbon fiber based on the fact that most airplane shells are made from more than 50% of carbon fiber, the other material being aluminum, working together to create this light but incredibly stable frame. This was the inspiration behind the *Grounded* series made from carbon fiber, wax and aluminium frame. Carbon fiber is a very tricky material, it is similar to fiberglass, so it is very sharp and can sting you if you treat it wrongly. It is everlasting and never weathers, so it serves as the structural contrast to temporal material, like wax. Carbon fiber tells a whole story, from it still being commercially produced out of plastic and oil, which are limited resources, to becoming this undestroyable material that needs to be treated with a purpose so it can save fuel, energy, concrete and other recourses. Technically a pure carbon fiber object could last nearly forever. So, I try to combine it with other materials, that are light and temporal such as wax or even packing chips made of cornstarch, which are a bio-alternative to styrofoam and plastic packing material that companies use. I play around with these combinations; for example, I would use the carbon fiber as a canvas and then layer wax on top of it, also taken from a previous installation. I recycle materials and integrate them into new works, whatever scars and marks they already have. These elements get transferred into new works and are continued as a thing of their own, while carrying these scratches and marks and tie them to the previous installation.

**KH: With all these different materials playing a role in your process, how do you experience the technical and crafty steps that lead up to the resulting art piece?**

DH: For me, that process is a solution-solving one and I do enjoy that process very much. I try to solve the difficulties I encounter during the process and it gives me a lot of joy to see an exhibition space and think of how I could technically install an object in there. "How can I react to this space, this building, these walls?" is what I ask myself. Often, I am in close contact with the architectures of the spaces during the process of making things work, while trying to leave enough room for the materials and visitors to perform as well.

**KH: One of your series is called *Grounded no. Three*. This work poses questions about staying grounded in times of temporality, technology and globalization. What was the inspiration behind this series?**

DH: *Grounded no. Three* is part of an ongoing series of works, which poses questions about temporality, contrasting revolutionary technologies and materials, globalization and how we occupy spaces of movement especially in times like these. Considering forms of transportation as well as the zeitgeist issues around pandemic mobility, the apparent question becomes: what and who stays grounded? Analogue photography of aeroplanes shot in 2017, which is then digitally scanned, edited and reframed, forms the basis for the monochrome paintings and underlines the dualities of these new

works of mine. Not only does this series inherit conceptual ideas from the installations cycle no. one (2018) and cycle no. two (2019), but-it sources all its materials from the two same site-specific works. By extending the new series, the former slowly but surely vanishes. The recycled carbon fiber from cycle no. two enters yet another phase and fuses with the melted wax from cycle no. one. Layer by layer, the hot wax is applied onto, what is initially, a fragile carbon fiber fabric, which bears marks from its previous use. Once cooled, another labor intensive process begins, wherein the wax is remelted and, whilst strictly following the characteristics and contours of the now hardened carbon fiber canvas, the image is rendered by hand with a modified soldering iron. Line after line the wax is melted away again, but some lines are stopped instinctively creating a glitch-like effect. The final image, that of the plane detail, is created through a reverse process with a likeness to binary code, as equal value is given to both the negative and positive space. If you were to hang that painting outside, in the summer, at a surface temperature of 45 degrees it would immediately melt away. I love this perception of the paint being the opposite in terms of longevity from the structure that carries the paint. In 2020, I found myself looking at the Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin through my windows. The field itself already has this temporality in it, it was built as one of the first ever commercial airports, then it was a building for the army during the National Socialism times in Germany, then there was the Berlin Airlift – paradoxically now it has become a park. It has these structures, there is a refugee camp, a police station, playgrounds, urban gardening areas and many more. It is vibrant and different, inspiring all-kinds-of-things place, but it still used to be an airport, and it still feels like one. While this was on my mind, I also thought about not being able to travel and everyone literally staying grounded during the pandemic. I was thinking about these topics, looking onto this place that had now become an area of retreat. It got me thinking, so I made several paintings in my room right next to it. These paintings also revolve around questions of limitation. The airplanes standing there on the tarmac, unable to move, people being unable to move, loved ones not being able to visit each other, all these kinds of things. My family lives in Austria and I wasn't able to go there, all these things played a role. During this process, I always had in mind that everything is a constant change and therefore it will change again. The process of applying these layers on the canvas and melting a lot of it away again was a meditative state, mechanical almost. For me, this ongoing back and forth of structural positions, slowly rendering this whole image and what it means was all part of the process.

**KH: What do you think is the importance of an event like Gallery Weekend Berlin and what can visitors expect from your upcoming exhibition at DITTRICH & SCHLECHTRIEM during the Berlin Gallery Weekend \*Discoveries?**

DH: At DITTRICH & SCHLECHTRIEM, my contribution is a site-specific work. I will install a group of works on the outside of the building, the facade and on the ground, also reaching into the entrance a little bit. I am very excited about it; it is always interesting to see how objects perform in a brand-new environment. I learn so much through

the exhibition itself, only once the work is installed, I will know how it unfolds. The material I use revolves around potential as well, and of course temporality and a kind of an in-between state. The installation addresses the topic of bait. It is about hierarchy, the relation between hunting and being hunted. I am working with two different elements, one already familiar to me, parachute silk and the other one something I have never worked with before – which is fishing rods. Fishing rods made from carbon fiber, bent through the space as if they are stuck in time, onto the facade and reaching from window to window. The structures created are these shifting boat-plank like walls out of many individual poles. The installation is very influenced by the space of the building since the masonry determines the pressure points that eventually decide the bent shape of the object. At the same time, also referring back to the title *Bait* the installation speaks of this extreme in-and-out, the above-and-underneath hierarchy of the underwater world. As far as the meaning of an event like Gallery Weekend goes, I think that especially right now, these events are very important. Any time people can gather and experience something together, or when they rejoin each other in a cultural setting is especially valuable right now. Personally, I am very thankful for the trust and support I am currently getting from the whole Team of DITTRICH & SCHLECHTRIEM and I am looking forward to this event. Having just graduated from art school, it also represents an important step in my career. I am very grateful for that and I want to share this with all the people who support me.

**KH: Thank you for your time, Daniel.**

*Bait* by Daniel Hölzl is exhibited at DITTRICH & SCHLECHTRIEM, during the Gallery Weekend "Discoveries, Berlin, from September 16<sup>th</sup> to September 18<sup>th</sup> 2021.

[www.hoelzldaniel.com](http://www.hoelzldaniel.com)  
[www.dittrich-schlechtriem.com](http://www.dittrich-schlechtriem.com)  
[www.gallery-weekend-berlin.de](http://www.gallery-weekend-berlin.de)



# Sight and Perception

by François Malget

After the likes of artists like Cao Fei and Ryoji Ikeda, Audemars Piguet Contemporary is delighted to announce its latest commission by artist Aleksandra Domanovic. Domanovic is a Berlin-based artist, who, in her multi-layered artworks, combines not only the history and the latest developments in technology, but also other aspects such as the social and political histories of her native Yugoslavia, as well as a re-evaluation of the role of women in technology and science. At the core of her practice lies a very unique take on very complex questions about the increasingly digitally driven world we currently inhabit. Regarding this choice, Denis Pernet, Art Curator of Audemars Piguet Contemporary, said the following, "We have been following Aleksandra's work for many years and we greatly admire her timely practice and diversity of positions. We are delighted to support her in the development of this new body of work that will contribute to the wider contemporary art discourse and raise questions about our future as we begin to emerge from the past year." The new site-specific artwork, which marks the beginning of a new body of work, will be presented during Gallery Weekend "Discoveries in Berlin in the former print house of the German magazine *Der Tagesspiegel*. It is a large-scale installation, specifically conceived for the vast height of the space and at its core lays the tension between what we see and what we perceive. She achieves this through the duality of the installation; sculptures featuring rotating LED fan-displays, contrasting physical presence within the space with the visual created by the rotating fans.

Aleksandra Domanovic's *Becoming Another* (2021) commissioned by Audemars Piguet Contemporary, will be presented during the Gallery Weekend "Discoveries in Berlin at the former print house of *Der Tagesspiegel* at Potsdamer Straße and will be on display for the public from September 17<sup>th</sup> 2021 until October 10<sup>th</sup> 2021.

[www.audemarspiguet.com/com/en/about/audemars-piguet-contemporary.html](http://www.audemarspiguet.com/com/en/about/audemars-piguet-contemporary.html)  
[www.gallery-weekend-berlin.de](http://www.gallery-weekend-berlin.de)