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Stuart Middleton
Motivation and Personality
08 12 2018 — 20 01 2019

Press Talk
07 12 2018, 9 a.m.

Annual Press Conference
07 12 2018, 9:30 a.m.

Opening
07 12 2018, 7 p.m.



→ The exhibition "Motivation and Personality" of British artist Stuart Middleton (*1987 Crewe, UK, lives in Glasgow) shows an original space-encompassing installation which considers the formative power of social environments and the consumptive potential of relationships. Mashing together ideas from animal behavioral science, meat production-line technology and human psychology, Middleton creates an experimental, sculptural machinery for Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien. Middleton's walk-in-installation touches the audience not only on the intellectual, but also on the physical level and, following the biology of the ruminant, should even "digest" them.

Stuart Middleton works in a transdisciplinary and site-specific way. His interventions, which hover between installation and sculpture, are always conceived in relation to other media such as animation, drawing and fiction writing. For the exhibition in the lower level exhibition space of the Künstlerhaus, Middleton will construct a full scale replica of a "Livestock Handling System" designed by Dr. Temple Grandin, professor of animal science at Colorado State University and consultant to the livestock industry on animal behavior. The replica will use measurements taken from an operational slaughterhouse in the United Kingdom.

Designed to exploit the stock animal's natural defensive instinct to circle, the architecture of the "Livestock Handling System" gradually funnels the herd into a conveyance of individual beasts. Faithful to this logic, a fragile curving corridor restricts the visitors' access to a pre-defined path, which narrows gradually; turning through a series of chambers, eventually permitting single file passage only.

The entire rudimentary structure, made from wood and wire, will be covered in old clothes, uniforms and textiles belonging to the artist as well as gathered from family members, school mates, friends and acquaintances. Each discarded garment is unpicked, flattened out and sewn together into a new continuous fabric that serves to cut off the viewer completely from the exhibition space. Inside this corridor the visitors are faced with toy-like sculptural objects; models or prototypes that interrupt the procession. The installation terminates with Stuart Middleton's newest stop-motion animation "keep going" (2018). Specially made for the exhibition, the film documents the imitated movement of two snail puppets; a parent and child made from latex, wire and papier-mâché, tracing circular, slimy paths across a chequered linoleum floor.

The exhibition "Motivation and Personality" takes its title from psychologist Abraham Maslow's 1954 book of the same name dealing with the nature of human fulfillment and the significance of personal relationships and their psychological and scientific principles. Maslow's theory is widely criticized on grounds of his ethnocentric, ableist and essentialist ideals and is no longer taken seriously in the world of academic psychology. Despite this it remains one of the most popular models for subject-specific variations today across many disciplines, including business studies, management, marketing, pedagogy and – probably unconsciously for many – in parenting.

The exhibition at Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien in Graz will be Stuart Middleton's first solo exhibition in the German-speaking region and presents new works throughout. Middleton graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt on the Main (2016) and Camberwell College of Art, London (2009). On the occasion of the graduate exhibition "Croissant" at MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst (Frankfurt on the Main, 2016), Middleton received the graduate award of the Städelschule Portikus e.V.. His work has been recently exhibited in solo exhibitions at the ICA (London), Tramway (Glasgow) and Carlos Ishikawa (London) and group exhibitions at Camden Arts Centre (London), Kunsthau Glarus and Schiefe Zähne (Berlin).

Stuart Middleton's exhibition "Motivation and Personality" will be accompanied by a diverse supporting program. As part of an artist talk on the December 8, 2018 at 2 p.m., Stuart Middleton and the director of the Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien and curator of the exhibition, Sandro Droschl, will guide through the exhibition and talk about earlier works. On the occasion of Middleton's exhibition, the Künstlerhaus will host two lectures that will enable a deeper scientific engagement with different thematic aspects dealt with in the exhibition: Dr. Judith Benz-Schwarzburg is university assistant at the department of ethics in human-animal-relationships at the Messerli research institute at the University for Veterinary Medicine, the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna. In her research on animal ethics, she deals with questions of culture, consciousness and capacity for morality in animals. In her lecture at the Künstlerhaus on January 10, 2019 at 6 p.m., Judith Benz-Schwarzburg will talk about ethics in relation to the processing of livestock and their implementation in art. Prof. Dr. Anja Ischebeck will deal with the psychological aspect of the learning process in her lecture on January 16, 2019 at 6 p.m.. Ischebeck is professor at the institute of psychology at the faculty of natural science at the University of Graz. Her main research focus lies in the area of speech and number processing as well as other higher cognitive functions. Moreover, she researches and publishes on the area of executive functions and attentiveness as well as processes of memory and learning.

In the online magazine "KM– Journal", a text by British-Indian author Bhanu Kapil will be published. Kapil teaches at Naropa University in Colorado and at Goddard College. She has published numerous short stories, poems and prose, such as "Incubation: A Space for Monsters" (2006). Kapil's writing style is difficult to classify as it oscillates between poetry and fiction. Also Stuart Middleton himself will publish a short story in "KM– Journal", specially composed for the exhibition at Künstlerhaus.

Following the opening: KM– on the Decks – Grrrls DJ Crew

CMRK After Party: Kombüse

Upcycling Workshop: with Stoffwerkstatt, 12.01.2019, 3–5 p.m.

Play Art: with game educator Kathrin Pallauf from Ludovico, 19.01.2019, 3–5 p.m.

Press download: <https://www.km-k.at/en/exhibition/stuart-middleton/press/>

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Stuart Middleton, keep going, 2018. Stop frame animation with sound, 6:24 min.