

Five Shows in November

Here's a selection of five shows we recommend to check out in November.

Marguerite Humeau at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich



Courtesy Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Photo: Peter Baracchi

Marguerite Humeau's practice could without a doubt be subtitled with the sentence "a gift that keeps on giving." Her unique sensitivity, both aesthetic and conceptual, has led her to produce a body of work that feels highly contemporary in its ability to link ancient histories with current phenomena. Her exhibition at Zurich's Museum Haus Konstruktiv – the result of her winning the 2017 Zurich Art prize – is another chapter of her project *Riddles*. In this long-term artistic-scientific exploration, Humeau seeks to link modern technology with mythical creatures, focusing on notions of protection and danger. The Sphinx occupies the center stage of her research: according to the legend(s), the riddles (ding ding ding) it posed people crossing its path were as complicated as its reaction was radical should they fail to answer them: you'd simply get eaten alive. Humeau's hypothesis here is that software and hardware used for protection – and potentially destruction – are the direct, technological consequences of the Sphinx legend. What might seem ludicrous at first will quickly feel plausible in the show; additionally, the sheer beauty of Humeau's sculptures might achieve to convince even the most skeptical visitors.

Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Selnaustrasse 25, 8001 Zurich

Michael E. Smith at KOW, Berlin

The concrete-heavy premises of Berlin's KOW seem like the perfect environment for Michael E. Smith's work to unfold. If your Seasonal Affective Disorder has already kicked in, we suggest visiting with a cheerful friend, as this show is as dark as it is good. Each one of Smith's sculptures – if you can call them that – has the combined effect of a mean joke and a swift backhander. Most of them are composed of animal remains and some piece of utilitarian machinery, like a laser machine or a steamer. Sometimes, textile is also included (chiefly, a pair of fuming pants) which only makes the work more creepily relatable. One might look at one of those visual zingers and suddenly feel overtaken by their nihilistic qualities before being done with one's internal laugh. Questioning the imploding dynamics between nature and technology, Michael E. Smith's show conveys pessimism without the sort of "I can't be bothered" detachment, so many artists currently use in their work.

Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings at Arcadia Missa, London

Statistics related to Britain's queer community converge into a depressing landscape. Funding for HIV prevention has been cut, resulting in an increase of infections; community spaces are being massively closed, leaving those seeking support and safety more lonely; and mental health and addiction issues are on the rise. In their show, "We Lost Them At Midnight," Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings explore the somber consequences of austerity on queer British life. But while their conclusions are as bleak as reality itself, they refuse fatalism and instead, explore the possibilities of resistance to these violent politics. The artists have shaped the gallery into a stage in which "stories and queer mythologies may be enacted." Back to basics, one might think, but it actually requires gestures such as the ones taken by Quinlan and Hastings to keep us aware of what we often tend to forget: tolerance isn't acceptance. Ignoring the struggle, so many LGBTQ individuals face on a daily basis means handing those in power the tools to erase the progress achieved so far swiftly.

Louise Bonnet at Half Gallery, New York

The work of Louise Bonnet induces both amusement and anxiety in the viewer. Most of her drawings and paintings include an instantly recognizable type of character. Their extremities are mostly blown out to gigantic proportions, and their noses, in particular, expand to titanesque proportions. While all those mastodonic organs – hands, feet, noses – definitely indicate a certain confidence in the precision of our senses, Bonnet's protagonists usually don't have eyes, and so one imagines them navigating whatever environment they're in with an intuitive clumsiness. The comedic aspect of her work is undeniable; simultaneously, the formal hints at Philip Guston are hard to ignore, which also presupposes a keen interest in the politics of the (female) body. The pieces at Half Gallery have all been realized in the artist's Rhode Island summer retreat – the title indicates the very location where they were produced. Yet, their summery feeling is pervaded by an urgent question surrounding each one of her droll protagonists: how to retain agency over a body so clearly off the mainstream aesthetic conventions?

Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme at Kevin Space, Vienna

With every new exhibition, the Viennese kunstverein Kevin Space establishes a more solid, reliable and frankly exciting reputation as a place where radical artistic practices are being mediated successfully – to artsy audiences and neighborhood kids alike. After presenting artists by the likes of Yuri Pattison, Marianne Vlaschits and Marina Sula, as well as the excellent group exhibition "Amazing Girls / It's Complicated," Kevin Space is at it again with a show by Basel