

City SALTS: Garage and Watertank (see exhibition map)

Opening Friday, 11 April 2025, 6 PM

Exhibition until 1 June 2025

City SALTS, Hauptstrasse 12, 4127 Birsfelden/Basel



Uninhabited Spaces – Adrien Chevalley

Curated by Samuel Leuenberger and Benedikt Wyss

Adrien Chevalley (b. 1987) lives and works in Vevey, Switzerland. A graduate of the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD), where he completed a Master's in Fine Arts in 2012, his artistic practice is rooted in ceramics—a medium he discovered early on in his parents' pottery studio in the Pays-d'Enhaut.

Over time, his approach evolved from traditional craftsmanship to a more experimental, contemporary use of clay. His recent work merges ceramics and drawing through the technique of bas-relief, giving rise to hybrid creatures and fragile forms that oscillate between technology and nature, body and industry. Often joyful at first glance, his pieces reveal an underlying unease—a reflection on future scenarios and a desire for renewed harmony with our environment. The architectural and social contexts in which he creates and exhibits have a direct influence on the form of his work.

Chevalley's work has been presented in numerous exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad, including at the Centre d'art contemporain in Geneva, DUVE Gallery in Berlin, and La Becque | Artist Residency in La Tour-de-Peilz. He was awarded the Kiefer Hablitzel Prize and the Leenaards Foundation Cultural Grant, and has undertaken several international artist residencies, including in Buenos Aires, Mexico, the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, as well as in Berlin and the Netherlands at the EKWC (European Ceramic Workcentre). Chevalley is also the founder of PANO in Vevey.

No title, 2025

Installation (glazed stoneware, hemp rope, raw clay on nylon, lamps)

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist



Upon entering the Garage, visitors encounter a large flower sculpture extending across the floor, attached to a long hemp rope. The rope originates from a school in the artist's neighborhood, where it was once used in physical education – held over the years by countless children's hands, evoking bodily memory and collective use. In the background, a softly glowing fabric wall spans the entire back of the room. The hard, almost stone-like bloom contrasts with the soft, handcrafted textile architecture. The moment of the flower's opening, rarely depicted, appears frozen here – neither closed nor fully unfurled. A suspended state emerges between the familiar and the unfamiliar, inviting reflection on transitions and transformation.

Portrait (Trompette), 2025

Grey stoneware, oiled cherry wood

18 x 14 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist



Portrait (Spire), 2025

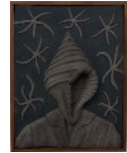
Grey stoneware, oiled cherry wood

18 x 14 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist



Portrait (Murex), 2025
Grey stoneware, oiled cherry wood
18 x 14 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Portrait (Coque), 2025
Grey stoneware, oiled cherry wood
18 x 14 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Portrait (Parasola), 2025
Grey stoneware, oiled cherry wood
18 x 14 x 2.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



In the back room, near the large window to the garden, five portraits hang. Following the classic conventions of portraiture, each depicts a nonhuman form dressed in human clothing. The characters evoke heroes from various science fiction stories, emerging from a broader, more complex narrative—like the beginning of incredible tales. The use of science fiction codes allows the artist to imagine other worlds, shifting the focus from us to them or it. This captivating, ongoing series showcases the artist's extraordinary craftsmanship with precious materials—precise, dense, and executed with meticulous attention to detail.

Green Fog, 2025
Mural (mat glazed stoneware, screws, acryl paint)
285 x 232 cm
Courtesy of the artist



We turn and encounter a large mural. Opposite the large window to the garden, it reflects the natural surroundings of the exhibition space—yet foggier, darker, and dirtier. The specific green gives an immediate impression of a toxic environment. Upon closer inspection, we see both wilting organic elements and upright, smooth plants. The latter appear artificial, human-made, suggesting a modification of natural elements. Everything seems arranged; everything seems meant to be here. Harmonious, yet unsettling, it evokes a sense of unease.

B.B.B., 2024
Stoneware, Ash glaze, gas firing
112 x 60 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist



We enter the water tank and face a large *big belly bug*, hanging with its back to the wall. This is not how we typically view insects. We usually see them from below when they're either dead or struggling for survival. This creature, however, doesn't seem to be in agony. Dead, perhaps, as it stands so centrally in the light, almost sacred. But somehow, it feels more present, fixating us. It seems like a creature with purpose—waiting, ready to ignite? Does it wear an astronaut helmet? Are we inside its rocket? Insects are pure high tech. The artist has been fascinated by them since childhood. This particular being is an invention, a fusion of many insect observations, created at the EKWC research center for ceramics.

Texts by Benedikt Wyss

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