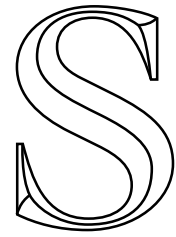


Fridges & Mind Again
 Tobias Spichtig
 Curated by Samuel Leuenberger
 13 June–24 August 2019
 Opening Reception: Thursday 13 June 2019, 6–10pm



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Depending on how the next few decades play out, the art world we know today may be reduced, sooner than we might imagine, to the rubble of a geological age, little more than part of a strata marked by the presence of concrete, plastics, radioactive soil deposits, and chicken bones. Yes, some works—those sheltered in the strong rooms of freeports may remain more or less intact, but the majority of the art world's objects are destined to fuse with their surroundings. First there will be the layer of dust and pollen, cooking oils, vaporized drugs, and vehicle exhaust; then, the inadvertent marks and abrasions of life lived. At some point, the work, packaged in glassine and bubble wrap for transport, will find itself in waiting. What world will it see when it's unearthed, if ever it is?

Tobias Spichtig's installations do not literalize this scenario but there is something of the narrative's energy in their making. In the Berlin-based Swiss artist's deadpan arrangements of paintings and readymade sculptures, the objects often block the painted works from view, sometimes entirely. These objects—refrigerators, tables, couches, always a singular category, in multitude, and procured via a local Kleinanzeigen (eBay-type) listings site—take up the area where the viewer would normally stand, making it difficult for an adult to gain clear access to the works hung on the wall; or as if to say, Sorry, this room is besetzt (occupied)! Here, the human viewer is no longer de facto central. Here, the human viewer, who once imagined the world to revolve around her or him, has lost command of the controls. Instead, another order of intelligence, maybe the neural net of global capital or of biochemical natural processes of decomposition, now rules the land.

Featuring the most iconic motif of Spichtig's 2018/19 production (his sunglasses paintings) this installation at SALT includes three: *Killing me Softly*, höchst entzückt (extremely delighted), and *Wake up, it's a nightmare* (all 2019). Lining the walls, they are arranged behind a mini-landmass of some 38 second-hand domestic fridges, all emptied and unplugged. In the corner there is also a fourth painting, *Die Aura sich aus dem Bild stehlend* (The Aura Sneaking out of the Picture). An image of a setting sun is fixed to this work's large-format black canvas ground at a height just barely visible over the top of the refrigerators' ridgeline. Beside the sunset on the canvas and mostly out of view, a large anthropomorphic tribal tattoo runs down the street, presumably the titular "Aura sneaking out of the picture." The figure has been painted something in the style of *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Classic Spichtig to cut a motif with such tongue-in-cheek memetic cues. The sunglass paintings, meanwhile, are in surveillance mode, the aforementioned sunset reflected in their lenses. They see you looking. But which sun is reflected, really, and for whom exactly is it setting—this painting? the art world? humanity? Both this and where it's rising anew is left an open question. – Caroline Busta, June 2019

List of works:

Killing Me Softly, 2019
 Oil and Vinyl Print on canvas
 195 x 130 cm

Fridges & Mind Again, 2019
 36 used fridges
 installation dimensions variable

höchst entzückt, 2019
 Oil and Vinyl Print on canvas
 195 x 130 cm

Wake up, it's a nightmare, 2019
 Oil and Vinyl Print on canvas
 195 x 130 cm

Die Aura sich aus dem Bild stehlend./The Aura Sneaking out of the Picture, 2019
 Oil and vinyl print on canvas
 185 x 135 cm

All works courtesy the artist & Galerie Bernhard, Jan Kaps

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