

Luca Süss

Portfolio

2020-2023



*To me, art is something that you join, rather than something that accompanies you. It's somehow like the arms of a jellyfish. These metaphorical morphing tentacles are always around, but it's up to you to be with the ones that suit you well.*

*I'm with roughly stitched art, with art that is being held together by duck tape, glue and rubber. I'm with colorful art, loud art, bright art and art that slaps you right in the face, as much as I'm with grim art that makes your eyes water. I'm with art that you smear on your bread. I'm with the art of stolen things, found things, sprayed, dusted, outsourced and broken things. I'm with art that laughs and screams. I'm with handbag art, wooden art, shell art, balcony art, flower art, railway art, crafted art, small art and styled art. I'm with queer art.*

*I'm with art that is denying after being caught stealing grocery products from a big corporation and with art that catches itself chewing fingernails in every slightly stressful situation. I'm with art that returns the wallet that someone dropped on the street as much as I'm with art that is disappointed for not getting the finder's reward afterwards. I'm with art that has a problem and with art that wants to be alone.*

*I'm with the art of unbelievably weird events, historical facts and strange stories. I'm with the art of cringe moments that feel like you should never go out in public again. I'm with art that rushes through the subway because the alarm on the phone did not go off. I'm with art that feels uncomfortable in its body, and sometimes wants to escape it. I'm with art that uses semiotics, archetypes and stereotypes in order to make a point. I'm with the art of relationships that make you feel like you don't have to be anywhere else than right here where you are right now.*



## *Specific armour for protective solitude*

These works address the phenomenon of armour as a protection and defence of queer people in a heteronormative binary society as well as the cultural anthropological question of the influence of toys on the formation of children's gender identities and the theories encompassing a queer ecology.

In their form, the sculptures are reminiscent of weird, armoured life forms. Life forms that exist outside the dual worldview. Creatures of a „queer-logic“. A logic that views nature not only in heteronormative terms such as „natural - unnatural“, „alive - not alive“ or „human - not human“. Nature exists in a continuous state and the notion of „natural“ only arises from human perspectives on what we call nature, not from „nature“ itself. Through the lens of queer ecology, all living things are seen as interconnected and interrelated, while children are born into a world that is already organised in gendered and heterosexist ways.

After birth, we go through a socialisation process that is unfortunately mostly determined by heteronormative patterns. Toys are a big part of this, they can be seen as text that, among other things, conveys messages about gender and sexuality. From this point of view, it is obvious that toys play an important role in the formation of gender, sexuality, and identities. However, as mentioned above, today's toys generally convey only heteronormatively defined messages, and there are few gender-neutral or non-gender-specific toys. The toys most likely differ depending on whether the children are socialised as „girls“ or „boys“. In this sense, the toys that are often given to children are generally designed to reproduce socially created, heteronormative, gendered characteristics and stereotypes. The problem here is that providing children with different types of toys based on a constructed gender identity may cause them to develop different gendered characteristics. Furthermore, this might teach children that some toys are for „girls“ and others for „boys“, which in turn can lead to children drawing clear symbolic boundaries between „male“ and „female“ already in their play.

These works oppose this. By swallowing these normative toys, the sculptures give them a new context and make them the substance of a queer object - a queer logic. For example, the ubiquitous use of hair, even reminiscent of fur in its density, is a very clear allusion to body dysmorphia of gender-queer people, as well as a situatedness in pop culture and contemporary fashion. This situatedness can also be seen in the way the materials are sourced; in targeted missions these objects are hunted down in second hand shops. These „transshipment points“ for used and consumed materials are not only an indispensable part of our capitalist society, but also a kind of railway station for all the objects that end up there. Some only have to wait for a few hours, maybe even minutes, before they get taken away, but others will never see the light of day again. Once found, the objects are brutally dismantled into their usable individual parts to be immediately processed further. They are melted, cast, sewn, broken, painted, bent and glued. This does not happen randomly, a meticulous selection has to be made to decide which elements give the sculpture what it needs. Thus the trainer fragments, which appear in almost all the works, are another reference to our over-styled world, in which such a pair of shoes can be a source of identity.

Meanwhile, the armour elements, in the materiality of the surface, alludes, among other things, to an essay by philosopher Paul B. Preciado entitled ‚Who defends the queer child‘. This title struck me, and it was the initial inspiration for this series of works. Preciado says it is impossible for a child to politically rebel against adult discourse: ‚The child is always a body whose right to self-government is not recognised. Who defends the rights of the gay child? Of the intersex child? Of the trans child? The rights of the little boy who loves to wear pink? Of the little girl who dreams of kissing her best friend who happens to be female? The rights of the differently-abled child? The rights of the non-binary child? Who defends the rights of children to change gender if they want to? The rights of the child to free self-determination of gender and sexuality? Who defends the rights of the child to grow up in a world without sexual or gender violence?‘

I wanted to create objects that try to do exactly this. They should defend. Not only children, but every queer body they can get a hold of.

Armour is a ubiquitous part of queer people's lives, it is more than just protection, it is often what makes it possible to maintain an identity in the first place. Clothes become armour, make-up becomes a helmet and high heels become steel toecaps. But this kind of „everyday armour“ is needed above all to feel alive and like a human being. Unfortunately, this armour is not able to offer the true protection that Preciado demands - more than that, it can even act as a target under certain circumstances. What happened to become the ‚modern armour elements‘ in these objects is mostly sportswear gear. The reason for this material choice lays in their very gendered and uncomfortable nature. Sportswear embodies a certain vibe that is, and I can't help myself to find better words for it, tough. But why is this toughness so strongly linked to masculinity and has such a patriarchal feel to it. As it is the case with the gendered toys that I mentioned above, these works take these uncomfortable things up into themselves and make them their own. They situate them in a queer context and use their rough qualities against themselves. Connected to this paradox is the discrepancy between these hard, armoured- and the soft, hairy, fabric elements of the works. A discrepancy that is based on tension and aims to underline the ambivalent character of these objects. For the sculptures are indeed defenders, they are armour. But not for combat, but to protect themselves and others from it. They are seemingly held together by longing, and the disparate nature of their surfaces is about enduring, embracing and highlighting many tensions. This surface, which is mostly made of found materials, carries histories of different times and places as well as a situatedness in contemporary pop culture. By incorporating the objects into new relationships without giving up their former voice, the situated material illustrates the multiplicity of contingent encounters, temporary partial connections and creates a seemingly living queer organism in the first place.

*Spiky hearts flickering in impatient  
obviousness, 2L8 2 W8*

2023  
stuffed toy, shoes, faux-fur,  
metal, tin, tether  
50 x 68 x 20 cm



*Partial feeling of brand new hopes,  
you know it's gona be okay*

2023  
faux-fur, shoes, metal, tin  
back-guard, horns, twinkles  
33 x 36 x 20 cm



*rushing down the riverside,  
w8 2 know where 2 belong*

2023  
fabric, stuffed toys,  
tin, metal, plastic, skids  
45 x 38 x 20 cm



*Highly frightened promise provider  
fidgeting in eternity awaiting infinity*

2023  
faux-fur, stuffed toys, tin, twinkles,  
metal, plastic, shoes, stickers, spikes  
32 x 80 x 27 cm



*firty little crystal crumbs trembling  
over sparkling grounds*

2023  
faux-fur, stuffed toys,  
tin, metal, leather, plastic  
36 x 50 x 22 cm



*overpriced heart shaped promises  
riding towards being ok.*

2023  
fabric, stuffed toys, tin, twinkles,  
metal, plastic, shoes, tether  
42 x 90 x 25 cm



*encountered counter-convincer,  
the thing you h8 and the one that's gr8*

2022  
Asics shoes, fabric, toys  
40 x 44 x 25 cm



*rejected sadness flagship, out and  
about the reasons for reasonable hugs*

2022  
Asics shoes, fabric, toys, paris-souvenir  
85 x 45 x 25 cm

*specific armour used against tears, please stand by*

Hand in hand with the treatment of the theme ‚Attitude‘, the work deals with childhood, idealization and the construction of protective- and coping mechanisms. In a playful way, the boundaries between childhood archetypes and areas of tension in personal behaviour are explored, while in the technical field a blurring between processed ready-mades and self-made objects happens.

Attitude is not something that you just have, it is something you work for, something you create. Attitude is what makes us who we are and what we want.

Inner attitude is the term used in psychology to describe the attitude with which people react to their environment and how they evaluate it. This inner attitude expresses itself in views of the world, feelings and actions. Values and norms, preconceptions and postconceptions, activity or passivity, commitment or lethargy interact with inner attitude. Attitude is a mental and nervous state of readiness which, organized by experience, exerts a directing or dynamic influence on the individual's responses to all objects and situations with which he is associated.

All too often, being a child is romanticized and idealized, with adults longing for the innocence and ‚pure life‘ they believe children lead. However, it is often forgotten that children have not yet developed this ‚attitude‘ that makes us who we are as humans. Through naive learning, through mistakes and above all through play, children acquire what we call an inner attitude. The idealized image of childhood is therefore deceptive, because basically one wishes to live without a moral ‚self‘ or: without an attitude.





*teenage dreams of sunny hills and mushy towers,  
sinking in the past as we cry over our deeds*

2022  
shoes, childrens 's knee-guards, wood, kauri-shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo  
29 x 25 x 12 cm



*safety guard's deepest desire for love,  
today's my lucky destiny*

2022

*childrens's shin-guards, wood, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric  
19 x 25 x 8 cm*



*protective visor by special appointment,  
only use when young, wild & free*

2022

*shoes, hildrens's shin-guards, wood,  
shells, metal, toys, Fimo, fabric  
15 x 25 x 15 cm*

*crawling castles grow the wildest  
thicket, who am I to slip away your fears*

2022

*shoes, childrens's shin-guards, wood, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric  
34 x 22 x 15 cm*



*born to ride, but oxello was always  
scared so they grew some leaves instead*

2022

*childrens's shin-guards, wood, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric  
30 x 30 x 16 cm*



*vibrating fibers pointing towards the colors of serenity, racing along side the beaches stumble over our laughter*

2022  
shoes, wood, shells, metal, toys, Fimo,  
fabric, wire  
33 x 37 x 9 cm



*pebble on pebble, brick on brick, riding a horse into the sunset catching chlamydia*

2022  
children shoes, pebbles, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric, wood  
25 x 30 x 10 cm



*c'est beau la vie dans la poche,  
fly high and catch the stars  
before we reach the clouds*

2022  
childrens' s knee-guards, shoes, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric, glove  
29 x 20 x 29 cm



*tenderly snuggling a lucky heart,  
but meanwhile everything  
exploded - happy till the end of time*

2022  
childrens' s knee-guards, shoes, wood,  
shells, metal, toys, Fimo, fabric  
23 x 25 x 12 cm



*taming escalating skybulls,  
step by step,  
up to the point of rapture*

2022  
childrens' s knee-guards, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric  
12 x 24 x 13 cm



*spiky hearts talking to the taxman  
about poverty, awaiting infinite bliss*

2022  
childrens' s wrist-guards, wood, shells,  
metal, toys, Fimo, fabric, wire  
25 x 27 x 10 cm

## *Whimsical truthiness aching for slippy ease - On queer ecology and the things that are in between*

The non-binary philosopher Timothy Morton proposes the concept of ‚dark ecology‘ as a means of expressing the „irony, ugliness, and horror“ of modern ecology. In their theory, Morton describes a very beautiful ‚pathway‘ which proposes a direction in which our feelings towards the ecological catastrophe could go. This imaginary path starts with guilt from where it goes down to shame, and from there down to disgust, whence horror; from there begins ridicule, which dies out in melancholia, whose enabling chemistry is Sadness; in turn, sadness is conditioned by longing, which implies joy. So according to this, we might find ourselves filled with joy at some point, and maybe this will be a turning point in our collective understanding of nature. But at the moment we're stuck in the horror-phase.

To question our understanding of the world surrounding us, and to show how weirdly weird it is, Morton brings up the ‚sorties logic‘. The sorties paradox is a logical paradox concerning things like heaps (or parking lots or forests). It's about how vague things are. When does a collection of things become a heap (or when does an assemblage of trees become a forest). And if you take a single rock away from a heap of rocks, is it still a heap? What if you take ten rocks away? Where does the heap start and where does it end? As you can see, this creates a lot of vagueness, and some philosophers don't like vagueness, so they just don't believe heaps exist at all. But, as Morton puts it; if you think about it global warming is a heap of actions: one car doesn't cause global warming. Two? Three? No. You can work your way to one billion, and the same logic will hold. So global warming doesn't exist - or (Drumroll) this logic sucks. Why does it suck? Because this logic has no time for things that are in between true and false. Ecological beings like lifeforms or global warming require logics that allow for some degree of ambiguity and flexibility. Sentences can be kind of true, slightly false, almost right. It requires a whimsical truthiness. A queer logic. A logic that does not only regard nature in terms of dualistic notions like „natural and unnatural“, „alive or not alive“ or „human or not human“. Nature exists in a continuous state. The idea of „natural“ arises from human perspectives on nature, not „nature“ itself. Through the lens of queer ecology, all living things are considered to be connected and interrelated.

Quote; „The aesthetic experience is about solidarity with what is given. It's a solidarity, a feeling of alreadiness, for no reason in particular, with no agenda in particular - like evolution, like the biosphere. There is no good reason to distinguish between nonhumans that are ‚natural‘ and ones that are artificial‘, by which we mean made by humans. It just becomes too difficult to sustain such distinctions. Since, therefore, an artwork is itself a nonhuman being, this solidarity in the artistic realm is already solidarity with nonhumans, whether or not art is explicitly ecological.“ - Timothy Morton, All art is Ecological

„We live in an age of mass extinction“ is the statement underlying this project. Actually, we all know exactly what is meant by this; everywhere on the planet we can feel the causes of the destruction of our environment. But at the same time we experience festive seasons like Christmas that are marketed as contemplative, relaxing, festive and mystical. But in fact these are times of ecological disaster like any other, that are additionally marked by stress, responsibility and obligation :) Be it the stress of finding gifts, visiting friends and relatives, living up to the festive spirit, or simply that of mundane worrying about the planet we call home. All in all, these last decades were not a particularly happy ones, but every effort is made to delay the onset of realisation and the cold sadness that it brings.

And yet, every year, as soon as the lights and Festoons of the illusional Christmas time are taken down, the cold comes down with it.

But these decorations and conversations often have something unreal, even fake about them. Quite as if they don't belong here. It is the reflection of those efforts to distract from the impending catastrophe and to transform these weeks into something magical and extraordinary, all with the help of plastic and light. Undoubtedly, there is something to be said for it, in that the obfuscation tricks certainly seem to work. But if you look twice, it's just plastic and light. Plastic and light everywhere. It is human-made magic, just like it's human made nature that surrounds us in this time (actually not only in this time, nowadays every nature is human-made to a certain extent?) And yet this nature is real. In any case, it is real the moment we walk under the reindeer lights and see it with our own eyes. Who knows if it would exist if nobody was there.

The work tries everything to create a space of tranquility, sensuality and, above all, contemplation. The work needs light as an important element. So, in a way, it depends on the electricity pulsing through the wires - just like your relaxation and denial, which also cannot function without technology.

Luminous, transparent hands, overgrown with flowers, shells and other organic shapes, rise from the sockets. Human hands, the hands of the species that is responsible for all this nature. But the hands were reproduced in plastic to serve as an advertising medium for clothing or jewellery, whereupon they were now plastered with plastic flowers and fake shells only to be then reproduced again in plastic. To top it all off, there is a slight glow coming from the hands - a bit melancholic (literally) but also because these glowing objects are reminiscent of those night lights found in children's rooms to protect them from darkness and fear. It makes you think of a time when you needed this waste of energy to fall asleep peacefully. And to close this weirdly strange loop, all of these processes are done by human hand. Timothy Morton talks about similar loops, or „strange loops“ in their book dark ecology. Morton argues that a strange loop is one in which two levels, that appear utterly separate slip into another. „A strange loop is weirdly weird: a turn of events that has an uncanny appearance.“ Timothy Morton further argues, that the strange loop metaphor defines emerging ecological awareness occurring to „civilised“ people at this moment.<sup>3</sup>

A lamp turns slowly and casts soft shadows on the walls. Two indoor fountains stand watch over everything. Everything about the work cries out for relaxation and recreation. For closeness to nature and becoming one with it. For plants, for water, for the perfect spa moment. Which is oh so urgently needed in the midst of all the stress and uncertainty of the time we live in. This aesthetics of relaxation and the often associated walk into a ‚wellness program‘ is a phenomenon that I hereby call „Work-Party-Consumption-Shame-Guilt-Spa-Rinse& Repeat - Culture“. Against this stands the undeniable fact that all these things take place in an exhibition space. In an impersonal room. A room in which dozens of people have already spent a few minutes trying focus. A place that is not necessarily the epitome of relaxation and recreation. But nevertheless this room is supposed to fuse human and nature, this ultimate of relaxation and rest. And in this room, nature is made of playmobil, light and plastic - literally a fake recreation and a fake nature. But how is this fake plastic nature different from the fake nature that surrounds us at all times?



*marvelous withdrawals of serendipity,  
more2hear&more2see4me*

2022  
epoxy cast, nightlight, metal  
13 x 60 x 17 cm  
out of the series: Whimsical truthiness  
aching for slippy ease





*retreat-slippers to fire up the stream of conscious  
air-conditions and pink tiles, good night sleep tight*

2022  
room fountain, wood carving, toys, epoxy resin  
40 x 50 x 30 cm  
out of the series: Whimsical truthiness  
aching for slippy ease



*the grasses grow and the waters flow,  
weirdly biting their own behind,  
in a free and easy way*

2022  
room fountain, wood carving, toys,  
epoxy resin, metal, cardboard  
35 x 25 x 17 cm  
out of the series: Whimsical truthiness  
aching for slippy ease

The video, that I will now call „Ballad of Zen“ for the sake of simplicity, was created for a group exhibition called „Racing for Serenity, be easy be kind“ which took place in Zurich in the summer of 2022.

At that time the works were not presented in a white cube, but in an old, long abandoned pedestrian underpass. The forced relaxed ‚vibe‘ that emanates from the video stood in strong contrast to the dirty and musty environment. The basis for the work, was the desire to include an absurd spa moment within an Mp4 file. The video alternates between moving images, collages, animations and drawings, always accompanied by birdsong and violin playing. All these elements together should give the viewer a feeling of lightness and relaxation, which is however blocked by the place where the video is shown. Be it a white cube, a cave, a club room or a bus stop.

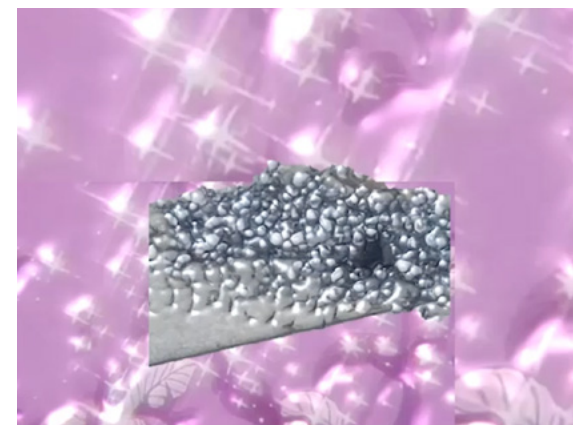
This aesthetics and the often associated walk into a ‚wellness program‘ is a phenomenon that I would like to call „Work-Party-Consumption-Shame-Guilt-Spa-Rinse& Repeat - Culture“.

Besides the examination of these absurd feel-good moments and the spa culture, the work is also based on a certain ecological component. All sequences show nature, be it human or non-human nature. What emerges from this is the thesis that everything, whether man-made or not, is nature. The question is how to deal with it.

***Ballad of Zen crawling through streets made out of materials that resemble comfy grocery products and cotton, the sun burnt the hi-fi plastic and the stars kissed my cheek***

2022  
Animation, found footage, drawings  
HD, 4:19‘

vimeo link  
[https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/713245316?embedded=false&source=video\\_title&owner=136565213](https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/713245316?embedded=false&source=video_title&owner=136565213)





***Batter My Dough 1-5***  
2021  
*fabric stuffed with cotton*  
NEST, ZHdK



***Batter My Dough 1***  
2021  
*fabric stuffed with cotton*  
50 x 80 cm



***Batter My Dough 2***  
2021  
*fabric stuffed with cotton*  
50 x 80 cm



*picturesque disposal,  
but we're just trying to dance*  
2021  
Oil & spraypaint on Shaped canvas  
100 x 70 x 5 cm



*picturesque disposal,  
but we're just trying to dance*  
2021  
Oil & spraypaint on Shaped canvas  
140 x 100 x 7 cm



*Fragmented Years And Joyful  
Sun-Flowered Framings (Orange)*  
2020  
oil on ready made oil painting  
53 x 68 cm



*Fragmented Years And Joyful  
Sun-Flowered Framings (Yellow)*  
2020  
oil on ready made oil painting  
52 x 62 cm

# Luca Süss

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## Biographie

Born 1998 in Winterthur

2020 - 2023	Bachelor of Fine Arts - Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
2016 - 2019	Gestalterische Berufsmaturitätsschule Zürich GBMS
2015 - 2019	Gestaltung Werbetechnik EFZ - Schule für Gestaltung Zürich

## Exhibitions & Awards

2023	Akut Mag - <a href="https://akutmag.ch/specific-armour-for-protective-solitude/">https://akutmag.ch/specific-armour-for-protective-solitude/</a>
2022	Hotel Noel - B2 Hotel&Spa Zürich Show first, tell after - Genesis Space Zürich CoEx II - Zentralwäscherei racing for serenity - Underpass Wipkingen wanted you to know that everything is alright - 4redehyes, Zürich ,Attitude' Annual report show - Zhdk Orbit Zürich - Zhdk
2021	Niarchos Award for young art NEST Zürich - Zhdk Trasticube - Zhdk OXYD Online Kreissaal - Winterthur
2020	Layers of Filth & Perspective - Zhdk ,Oo' - Grimmselstrasse Zürich Strömung - Provitreff Zürich
2019	Booster - Zürich
2018	Winti macht Kunst - Salzhaus Winterthur