

"A River sings a beautiful song. It says,
Come, rest here by my side.
Each of you, a bordered country,
Delicate and strangely made proud,
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.
Your armed struggles for profit
Have left collars of waste upon
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.
Yet today I call you to my riverside,
If you will study war no more. "
-Maya Angelou

Every June, we gather in Basel by the Rhine, convening for the arts, for community, for connection. Money through Art may create a momentary suspension of borders for some, but, in turn, creates a new border of exclusion. Can art really connect us beyond these imposed cartographies? The Rhine, through its constant flux and seasonal fluctuations, defies these imagined lines drawn on our minds. The river meanders through the land, leaving traces like veins on our hands. It cares not for borders, dissolves the separations imposed by states. And so we turn to the river to remember. The Rivers of Life exhibition, the fourth edition of Wild at Art, is a gathering of artists from across the earth. As river waters their voices come babbling, rippling, splashing, and roaring, each a unique channel of our shared time on earth.

"Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river"

-Jorge Luis Borges

Separation, cracks and fissures. We unleash wars in an attempt to grasp at immortality. Despite what our human hubris may lead us to believe, this suit of flesh will be worm food one day, a part of the richness of the humus from which acorns will spring forth into oaks. Carried by a river, perhaps, deposited as alluvium in a wheat field, harvested to feed the human flesh again. This Perpetual transformation is not only the essence of **Petra Keinhorst's** practice but is also deeply embedded in her choice of material, paraffin wax. She melted her first public paraffin wax sculpture in 1999 and has been remelting it ever since, carving, casting, forming, dissolving, beginning again. The fragility of her sculptures is in many ways similar to the fragility of the disappearing glaciers, the sources of many rivers. Corals and cans coexisting, the life we endanger by the traces we leave. For **Judith Nussbaumer**, the river is not a source of beauty but of transformation. She works with the processes of decay and transition; the fleeting forms that appear in her paintings exist between states, hybrid forms that are leafy and fleshy, existing at the edge of what can be classified. Missing links. Her paintings dissolve the boundaries between nature and fantasy.

As each drop makes a river, looping strokes make the enigmatic forms of **Kathryn Vogt-Häufelinger's** works. They could be entangled cells or colliding planets. Kathryn has developed a practice of guided chance, allowing ink to find its own path across paper and canvas, watching what emerges when control is surrendered to the process. Reminding us, always, that something living is in the process of becoming. **Joanna Layla's** '*The River's Kiss*' also echoes the beauty of life's delicate impermanence. Her surrender to the flow of watercolours and her willingness to abandon control are what viscerally carry the stories of rivers and interconnectedness in her images.

Like a trickling stream, **Ingeborg TUTU Eglin's** wandering eye chases the fleeting moment. Her paintings hold the river in many ways, what floats, what reflects and what sinks. The same leaf caught in all three.

The river doesn't flow indifferently through terrain. It is both shaped by and shapes all it touches, carrying, collecting, and transforming elements along its way. It is a beautiful embodiment of situated knowledge; nothing exists in a vacuum. **Maruee Pahuja's** works from inside the diagnostic gaze. Her '*Cartographies of Perception*' are made from retinal imaging, which is the biological infrastructure through which sight becomes possible, rendered as an image. What the clinical instrument captures and what the eye makes of it are not the same thing; her work lives in that gap, asking where observation ends and interpretation begins.

On the Banks of the Broken River, fossilized tracks mark the first reptile to leave water for land, 356 million years ago. What drove these pioneers? Was it liberation, curiosity, or a mutation of desire? Has that urge to explore now been twisted by control and exclusion? This is what occupies scientist-turned-artist **Koshika Yadava**. In *Lulu and Nana*, she voices deep ambivalence about the gene technologies she once developed herself, questioning scientists' motivations, ideas of perfection, and social exclusion. Her drawings in the '*mmm*' series weave microscopy and mythology into stories of rebirth and persecution. The questions we are left grappling with are who flourishes, who is discarded, and who decides? These are not abstract questions; we can find the answers in the bodies being seized on lands and on waters.

"Mine is the wave, snatched by the seagull"

- *Mahmoud Darwish*

For **Roya Noorinezhad**, the river waters aren't just about connection but can be made into tools of oppression, marking borders, drowning witches. When she was residing temporarily by the Rhine, she looked from her window at the Middle Bridge in Basel, the place where women accused of witchcraft were once thrown into the river. Her project *Komm rHein*, shown here as *Surface Shapes*, a photograph of the Rhine waters, maps the geometry of danger and refuge.

A river can be unpredictable, avulsing, abandoning its established channel and carving a new course for itself. In a similar way, **Parvez** co-opts the language of capitalist profiteering to disrupt the landscape of power. In '*Eat This*', created during 'Disrupt the

Performance 4', the negative space occupied by money is etched into spray-painted canvas, the labels attached to bodies, and the colonial logics that present themselves as objective, rational, and the only way are suddenly made visible by their absence. Woman, Life, Freedom is embodied in **Tarlan Lotfizadeh's** works, connecting memory, love and resistance. In this exhibition, her video work turns the politeness of English culture into a mirror. The repeated phrase "I'm sorry", so ordinary, so automatically produced, is placed against the weight of colonial entanglement, immigrant identity, and the violence that polite society looks away from.

Can art capture the essence, the truth of resistance? **Brendhan Dickerson** and **Ana Vujic's** works do. **Brendhan Dickerson's** sculpture 'River' is at once tributaries and driftwood. Like a river encountering bedrock, his work is shaped by the force of resistance itself. **Ana Vujic's** bold charcoal lines trace trees, their roots, their underground connections, like tributaries of another kind, in dialogue with the spaces they inhabit. The lines coalesce into a watershed of relationship, drawing from her lived experience as a woman, mother, and immigrant to unravel the knotted constructions of personal and social identity. For many living in the West, the chasm between rising inequality and relative privilege is an abyss they cannot confront. **Eva Borner** confronts it. In *Zwischen Der Stille*, she merges photographic layers on cotton paper until a coherent image with atmospheric depth emerges. Water surfaces and shimmering reflections speak to the fragility and transience of the spaces, and simultaneously to the viewer's own inner world. Like the river that carries what the land would rather keep buried, her work brings what has been submerged back to the surface.

"You are a stream flowing onto my dry breast
My bed of my veins with your water is blest"

-*Forugh Farrokhzad*

Where do we place desire as we continue to witness a flow of the persecution of the people fighting for liberation and self-determination? We call it a live 'stream'. Desire becomes a springboard for possible realities, for hope rooted in solidarity. It is the yearning for a different world. **Sofia Rossi Bunge's** painting and installation pay homage to the women who disappeared during Argentina's dirty war, thrown into the Rio de La Plata, the river made a graveyard, and to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who have never stopped walking, never stopped asking where. Where rivers became instruments of state terror, these women insisted the disappeared would not be forgotten. Sofia's work is a testimony to their resilience.

Like the river longing to meet the sea, **Dunia Idoya Eglin's** work is grounded in our desires for connection. But it also questions what our modern technologies of connection deliver. In her painting, the historic St. Johann tower is superimposed onto a Google Maps route, the lived, storied place laid over the flattened, surveilled world. To create is to be human. In a world where commercial and technofascist forces urge us to abandon our impulse to shape the world with our hands, we must hunker down on our humanity. Where handwork and intellect are cast as separate, the mind and hand estranged, Art is the longing for acting as a whole.

“May what I do flow from me like a river, no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.”

-Rilke

It's the attention to being whole, hand, mind and heart that emerges in **Sibylle Laubscher's** works. Her painting *Hope* questions the gendered norms of masculinity, finding in the space beyond their constraints a possibility of vulnerability and connection. Her tenderness of touch harkens to the mythical rivers of stories and dreams. **Emmanuel Henninger** bears witness to the Alsatian landscape, its forests, rivers, mountain meadows, and open-pit mines. He oscillates between romantic attention to untouched nature and the documentation of a reckoning with what industry has carved from it. In *Found a Cure for Being Sure*, an ideal human form holds an emergency mylar blanket, the kind distributed to refugees and disaster survivors, draped as decoration rather than protection. The river witnesses in the background what we pour in and what we take out. Order or chaos, predetermined channels or changing courses? The river flows through both. This is also the space from which **Nadine Bitterli's** work emerges. She draws line after line, stitches thread after thread, building from simple gestures: ordering, weaving, spinning. Most recently, she has turned to the shed hair of her pets, documenting each day in a slow and loving archive. Each hair a trace of shared time petting, caressing, the quiet intimacy of sharing space with another being.

In our gathering of voices, **Barbara Peyer** is attuned to the feeling of a ripple before it becomes a wave. When the white gesso she had used to shield the textile underneath was set aside, her practice opened into a dialogue with the material itself. In *Shelter* and *Loving into the Void*, colour moves freely on the canvas and in the abstraction; if you look closely, you can see a coat, a tree, an angry face, and small animals. Nature omnipresent. Like river waters, **Daniela Beck** explores what happens when material is allowed to wander, where it settles, where it tears, and what it remembers. She begins with the body and follows it into space. Through mixed media, she investigates the inner and outer territories the body inhabits, moving between controlled gesture and chance.

As artists lose themselves in the process and their sense of self dissolves, what emerges is a glimpse of the unknowable force that was here before us and invigorates all that is alive. The river was here before the path. Before the nation, the border, the price tag. What we call progress, the river has watched come and go. In **Sivasankaran Thambi's** own words, "Every river carries a memory of its source. Every painting carries a memory of the unseen." He moves through what he calls Psycho-Surrealism, a journey into the unknown territories of the human mind where images arise not from conscious planning but from a meditative encounter with the subconscious. Working with found surfaces, weathered textures, and spontaneous forms, his painting reveals the hidden rivers that flow beneath memory, identity, and collective experience.

Water in **Saba Niknam**'s works is both myth and memory, a presence not a symbol but the living force itself. Her practice moves through Persian miniature, shadow puppetry, textile, and installation, tracing the bonds between artists and shamans, between water spirits and sacred rivers, between the mythologies that persist beneath the surface of the modern world. In *I'll Tell You a Story About Polar Bears and Winter Before They Become a Fairytale*, she draws a line between myth and disappearance, wondering whether the dinosaur became the dragon in the fairy tale, and whether the polar bear is already becoming one. She wants to tell their story before the ice is gone and only the story remains.

Expressions of memories and lived experiences flood **Juliette Lepage Boisdrion**'s works. Created in ink on rice paper, a medium that cannot be corrected, each stroke threads femininity, childhood, and the living world into hybrid figures that combine human, animal, and plant forms. The eyes in the 'Yeux fleuris' series are prominent and a quiet acknowledgement of the gaze under which we all move through the world, seen and seeing simultaneously.

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

-*Rabindranath Tagore*

We are alive. As leaves breathe, opening their stomata, as a hydra somersaults to move, as a sloth yawns in daylight hanging on a branch, as a whale breaches the ocean, as glaciers flow down valleys. To be human is to be one more form of this aliveness, no more and no less extraordinary than the others. In this estuary of being, **Karin Bussmann** asks whether order and wilderness are opposites at all, or simply different speeds of the same river. In *Verwoben*, she draws the line and follows where it leads, graphite and colour pencil works beginning from tight geometric grids and moving outward into organic worlds, the contrast between human monoculture and the complex underground networks of forests, the secret life of roots that connect what appears separate on the surface. In *Punkt*, a river is built from pixels, small boxes each carrying braille points, readable by touch as much as by sight.

As curator and artist, **Rama Kalidindi** has gathered us by this river. Her metal sculpture *Eglisee* imagines a bather, holding a yogic pose, releasing a fish back into the water as a kiss of life, a counter-intervention against humanity's endless harvesting from the natural world. Her ceramic work, *The Princess on the Pea*, questions how we seek to elevate ourselves through the mechanisms of capitalism, placing a price on what cannot and should not be owned. Her practice is grounded in a Sanskrit mantra: *lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu* ; may all beings everywhere be happy and free. It is both a prayer and a curatorial principle.

Every edition of Wild at Art is an act of faith that the river flows toward creating a better world. Let the false dams of containment burst and the rivers of life wash over us completely.

Yours mindfully,
Koshika Yadav and Rama Kalidindi