



Jungle I, 2011
Carborundum Print, 19 Plates
176 x 248 cm, Edition: 1
Left: Detail

EXOTIC LIGHT PRINTS

The IG Halle Rapperswil is pleased to present the first appearance of the artist Bernadette Gruber on the Swiss art scene. Experimenting for many years with different printing techniques and spending periods in Mexico, Africa and Asia has enabled Bernadette to discover and develop her medium. Since her childhood she has had a strong desire to travel, to go beyond the boundaries of her country and her culture and get to know other ways of living and thinking. This wish has been fulfilled, intensively so, and has brought with it many challenges. Wherever she spent longer periods, she sought tutors and it was this, more than her official training at the Textilfachschule Zürich, which has shaped her career. Familiarizing herself with the local art forms in a practical way was the foundation on which she built up her own work.

LIFE IN OTHER CULTURES

One stop on her artistic journey of discovery was Mexico. There too she cultivated an intensive exchange with other artists, practised in groups, sketched regularly and learnt different techniques, for example working with clay. She was also fascinated by large-format murals, whose weight made them less suited for exhibition. Ultimately it was print techniques, which most appealed to her. During her five year stay in Mexico she learnt printing techniques from Gerardo de la Barrera and other techniques from Roberto Parodi in the Casa de la Cultura, Oaxaca.

In the studio Aquaforte in Lausanne she learnt the carborundum printing technique, in which many current works have been produced. The look-and-feel of these prints is markedly painting-like and draws the eye, as does the special surface, which is embossed with carborundum sand. The secret lies in the technical complexity and the multiple dimensions of the artistic process.

Starting with photographs which she treats, simplifies and reduces, the artist applies the motif to the transparent printing plate with a mixture of sand and adhesive. She also creates her own combinations with sand of different grain sizes and shells. Colour is applied to the emerging relief with a brush, which produces the effect of painting and makes every print unique. There is always a moment of surprise.

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PLAY ON LAYERS

Bernadette draws her motifs mostly from nature, and she is particularly inspired by the diverse aspects of light. Patterns of light and shadow on the leaves of plants, on water and in movement and from diverse perspectives. The underlying photography is separated into degrees of luminosity. Every degree receives its own printing plate and surface which, when printed on top of one another, produces the effect of depth. Depending on how many plates are used, the motif appears as a whole or as individual parts of the visual impression.



In her work “light and rustling in a lotus pond”, which fills an entire wall, Bernadette takes an underwater perspective. Looking into the light she allows the surface of the leaves to appear in intensive colours. She showed this work, composed of 27 parts, in her exhibition “elemental” in Saigon. The size of the work (2.3x5 metres) means that the observer can lose himself in the diversity of blue tones, while the motif dissolves into form and structure. Bernadette seeks in many of her pictures this effect of the dissolving of the original image. Her work is the interplay of recognisable content and dissolution into patterns of light and colour.

Lotus Pond, 2007
Carborundum Print, 4 Plates
112x152cm, Edition: 1

EXOTIC LIGHT

Bernadette lived in Saigon for seven years. She was engaged in local art projects and in cultural exchanges. As printing techniques in Vietnam are not a widespread medium Bernadette conducted courses and workshops for art students and young artists. She ran the *alpha gallery* next to her studio in Saigon – for her own works but also for those of other artists.

During several stays in Scuol in the Engadin, Switzerland, she experienced the clarity and depth of the mountain sky as an enormous contrast to the strong but diffuse light in the tropics. Her mountain pictures therefore capture another kind of intensity. These were exhibited in 2009 in an exhibition in the Hotel Belvedere in Scuol together with her pictures of palms.

Bernadette has been back in Switzerland since 2009 and now has an artist's studio in Hombrechtikon near Zürich. In her studio and also at the *Kupferdruckwerkstatt Gentinetta* she is further developing her techniques with carborundum, but is also experimenting with other media, for example the photopolymer technique (*Atelier Handpresse*, Christina Rall) in which relief, intaglio and digital processes are combined. The theme in the new works is also light, especially autumn light with tree motifs against the sky. However the view of the tropical forest remains present in her work.

Tiger Prawn, 2011
Photopolymer Print
39 × 53 cm, Edition: 1

