

## **JULIUS VON BISMARCK**

**born 1983, Breisach am Rhein, Germany**

**lives and works in Berlin, Germany and in Zurich, Switzerland**

### ***Two heads with one stone 2026***

Jesmonite sculptures, motorised sensors, rock  
dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

*Two heads with one stone 2026* is a newly commissioned kinetic spatial installation in which three objects swing in synchronised movements from long pendulums suspended from ACCA's ceiling. As the title suggests, the objects include a locally sourced rock, alongside two sculptural heads. Weathered and aged, seemingly carved from stone, the heads appear like ruins from ancient monuments.

Each object moves in a particular choreography, their mathematically computed motions setting them in varying relationships with the other objects in the work. The triangulation of these elements creates a palpable sense of tension and anticipation – sequences where they all move in synchronicity are offset by others in which one is inevitably privileged or excluded. Their mesmerising movement evokes an expanding catalogue of relations, shifting from moments of gentle intimacy to episodes of violent separation, from flashes of lively collaboration to periods of forlorn isolation.

*Two heads with one stone* is the latest instalment in a series of suspended kinetic sculptures that Bismarck has been developing since 2012. Previous iterations have utilised lamps, tables, chairs, fire extinguishers and other office furniture sourced from the institutions in which they were presented. The series is born from the artist's interest in the way in which the constantly evolving choreography of selected objects can produce a multitude of relations and readings. *Two heads with one stone* is the first time that figurative elements have been introduced into these kinetic works by Bismarck. Set in motion like this, all things – human and non-human, organic and inorganic forms – are seen to possess equal agency. The work invites us to contemplate the various ways that these elements inform and affect each other.

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### ***Punishment #7 2011***

single-channel video, stereo sound

51min:41sec (looped)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

*Punishment #7 2011* shows Julius von Bismarck, dressed in a full suit, doggedly lashing the sea with an extravagantly long leather whip. This strange portrait of the artist engaged in this impassioned but futile act is part of the broader *Punishment* series of photographs and films, in which he travelled to parts of Switzerland, South America and the United States to whip iconic landscapes, including mountain peaks, gorges, pristine lakes and the sea. Each location evokes the classic Romantic vision of nature as a majestic and untameable force. In *Punishment #7*, the figure is dwarfed by crashing ocean waves, his repetitive action bringing him to the point of exhaustion but making no visible impact on the landscape itself.

The *Punishment* series is based on a story from 480 BC, when the Persian king Xerxes had two pontoon bridges built to enable his army to cross the Hellespont. The bridges, which were held by ropes of papyrus and flax, were destroyed in a storm. Xerxes ordered the two men who constructed the bridges to be beheaded. Still not content, he also had the sea itself – representative for Poseidon, the god of the sea – whipped with three hundred lashes as punishment. Bismarck's adaption of this story suggests the folly of humanity's effort to master the natural world.

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### ***Geh aus mein Herz! (Go forth, my heart!) Swiss Alps, 2023***

single-channel video, stereo sound

55min:37sec (looped)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

The video installation *Geh aus mein Herz! (Go forth, my heart!) 2023* presents us with a bird's eye view of stretches of lush Alpine scenery swirling with air currents as the camera gently glides above the landscape. Based on the nature film genre, the work continues Julius von Bismarck's inquiry into the construction and staging of nature. The calming imagery of rustling grasses and undulating treetops is accompanied by a choir singing the hymn *Go forth, my heart, and seek delight*, sung by the artist's relatives. A family favourite, the hymn celebrates the beauty of the natural environment and the joy in contemplating it, revealing a socially constructed understanding of nature as a gift from a benevolent God, to be enjoyed by humanity.

The singing family alternates with a German choir and an organ concert. The beatific soundscape shifts in tenor from a sacred atmosphere to eerie quiet and then to forceful gusts of wind. The source of the air currents twirling through the landscape remains concealed, yet it directs our attention. It is as if the breath of the choralists is animating the scenes below. The movement of the trees and plants is actually caused by the downdraft of the helicopter from which the artist captured the video footage. The beauty and reverie of the imagery is undermined by the fact that it is the helicopter's toxic emissions that animate the countryside. The mere act of looking at the landscape has inevitably brought about a change to it.

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## **JULIAN CHARRIÈRE**

**born in 1987 in Morges, Switzerland**

**lives and works in Berlin, Germany**

## **FELIX KIESSLING**

**born in 1980, Hamburg, Germany**

**lives and works in Berlin, Germany**

### ***Joe is dead 2016***

fan, roly poly (saltwater bush), treadmill

dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

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### ***In the real world it doesn't happen that perfectly 2019***

6 screen video installation: 5 part channel video loop plus one live news channel, stereo sound

17mins:32sec (looped)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

### ***Island in the sky, we must ask you to leave (vertical viewpoint) 2018***

archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta

221 x 155 cm (framed)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

***Grand staircase escalante, we must ask you to leave (mountain view drive) 2018***

archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta  
155 x 236 cm (framed)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

***Canyonlands, we must ask you to leave (scenic viewpoint) 2018***

archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta  
155 x 281 cm (framed)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

Julius von Bismarck co-authored the series of works presented here in a variety of constellations with Julian Charrière and Felix Kiessling. The kinetic installation *Joe is dead* 2016 forms an anchor point, with a large tumbleweed endlessly rolling along a treadmill's conveyor belt. A classic cinematic trope of the Western film genre, the tumbleweed has come to symbolise resilience in the face of the harsh conditions of the American frontier. The plant ensures its species survival by spreading its seeds as hot winds blow it along the surface of the ground. Set in perpetual motion in this otherwise lifeless and automated space, the tenacious tumbleweed in *Joe is dead* seems set to outlive all of humanity's follies.

Alongside this installation are a series of three large-format photographs from the *I am afraid I must ask you to leave* series, which document the simulated explosion of natural monuments in US national parks. Bismarck and Charrière had replicas of several striking rock formations built to original scale, then blew them up and leaked the videos, causing a media storm. Monitors on the opposite wall, show real-life TV news coverage and social media comments sensationally debating the veracity of the orchestrated events.

This series explores how some aspects of nature are considered to be more valuable and worthy of protection than others, and are co-opted into broader nationalist and political narratives. In playfully inserting the work into the delirium of the 24-hour new cycle, Bismarck and Charrière demonstrate how mediated our relationship to the world around us is and just how easy that is to distort.

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### ***Irma to come in earnest* 2017**

video, stereo sound,

51min: 41sec (looped)

Courtesy the artist; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf;  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, Paris, Seoul

*Irma to come in earnest* is a video portrait of Hurricane Irma and its aftermath. Julius von Bismarck presents close-up images of the destruction caused by the category-five hurricane, which moved through the state of Florida in 2017. In an effort to comprehend the essence of a hurricane beyond the media spectacle, he slows the black-and-white footage down to one fiftieth of real-time speed, repeated in an infinite loop. The video draws viewers into a shared space of contemplation set within the furious gale-force winds, flooding and desolation – a space normally prohibited by the urgencies of the situation itself. A haunting, viscerally charged soundscape has been pieced together from news reports slowed to the same pace as the moving image, rendering it unintelligible.

The first section of *Irma to come in earnest* captures the powerful force of the hurricane, the camera impassively surveying rain and debris coursing through evacuated streets, houses in disarray, cars submerged. There is no distance, no overall view; the camera is positioned in the middle of the action. In the second part, the storm has subsided, leaving eerie devastation in its wake. The film concludes with images of TV camera crews on the scene, busily reporting on the events that have unfolded.

The pleasure of watching the constructed image collides with the perverse implications of witnessing a catastrophe up close. By altering the speed of image and sound, the film attempts to transcend familiar images of disaster, capturing both the nature of the storm and the media presentation of the catastrophe. Bismarck's highly aestheticised approach is used to foreground and counter news media's role in constructing sensationalist images of natural disasters.