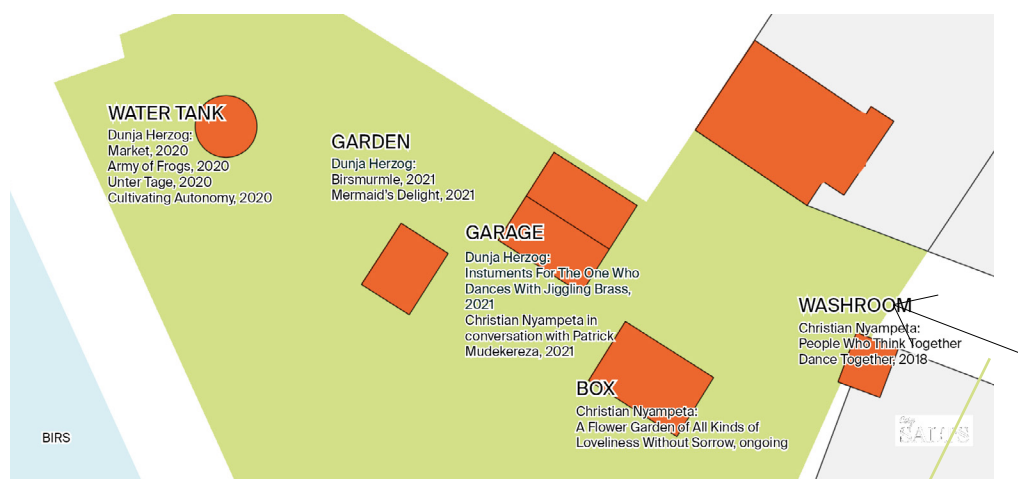


Opening 23 September 2021, 6 pm
7 pm Stone organ concert by Beat Weyeneth, afterparty at club Rouine
Exhibition until October 10: Wed/Fri 2–5 pm, during Art Basel Fri-Sun 2–6 pm

With Dunja Herzog, Christian Nyampeta and more
Curated by Samuel Leuenberger and Benedikt Wyss
Presented by SALTS in collaboration with Waza art center, Lubumbashi/DR Congo

City SALTS
Hauptstrasse 12
CH-4127 Birsfelden



Together with Lagos-, Pretoria- and Basel-based Swiss artist Dunja Herzog and New York-based Rwandan artist Christian Nypeta, City SALTS launched the transcontinental collaborative project “Power to the Commons” with the Waza art center, Lubumbashi/DR Congo, on the question of how cultural centers, artists, and all of us can grow from the idea of the commons.

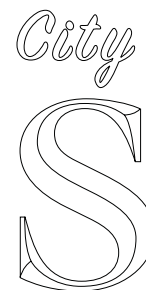
Commons are resources that emerge from self- organized, needs-based production and use. Collective management of commons (nature, housing cooperatives, open source software, sharing communities, etc.) is particularly challenging because our habits are deeply rooted in the structures of everyday life, the market, and the state.

With the long-term project “Power to the Commons”, SALTS is attempting to open up its sphere of activity – starting with the symbolic tearing down of the fences surrounding its exhibition spaces on the banks of the river Birs. Further concrete measures followed the active exchange about the relationship between the commons and art with the participating artists and various commoning actors from the region.

The exhibition presents among others a new series of objects by Dunja Herzog – made by the artist in collaboration with the City SALTS’ garden’s bees (wax) and the river Birs (drift wood) –, and film contributions by Christian Nyampeta including a conversation with Waza’s director, Lubumbashi-based curator Patrick Mudekereza.

The project’s roots:

The title of the exhibition «Power to the Commons» is borrowed from the project of the same name by the Waza art center, Ker Thissone (Senegal) and Platohedro (Colombia), all being part of the Arts Collaboratory network. It also refers to the book «Free, Fair, and Alive: The Insurgent Power of the Commons» by David Bollier and Silke Helfrich.



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About Dunja Herzog

Dunja Herzog (born 1976 in Basel, studied art in Basel and Glasgow) lived in Cameroon for two years as a child and has been working regularly as an artist in West Africa for almost twenty years. In her art, Herzog creates spaces in which we as visitors can approach global economic cycles through the individual memory of natural materials, which the artist relates to the common history of Europe and Africa, and always to herself. Usually, there is a healing process at the center of her work.

Dunja Herzog: Army of Frogs, 2018–2020
Brass, MDF-board

Produced by the artist with e-waste in Benin City. Dried frogs are used in traditional medicine in Nigeria to treat a wide variety of diseases, and the African clawed frog was used in numerous countries around the world until the 1960s as a test to confirm pregnancy. Frogs, hybrid creatures that live equally in water and on land, have been repeatedly associated with «witches» and magic in Europe. Produced at the «Phil Omodamwen Workshop», Benin-City, Nigeria

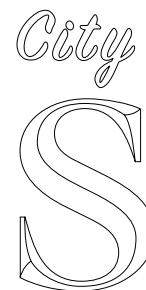
Dunja Herzog: Market, 2020
Copper, palm wood

The baskets are made of copper wire from electronic scrap, created with basket makers in Lagos, a city that contains one of the largest electronic dumping sites in West Africa. Herzog detaches the material from one value chain, transposes it into another, and simultaneously pays homage to the women of Nigeria and Zambia, who made significant contributions to the independence of both countries. The production took place in collaboration with a family on the site where the artist lived for a year. Questions about (art) production and sustainable creation are woven into the work. Produced with the Alagbon community (Amoussou Anago, Issac Hounnou, Omotoso Itunuoluwapelumi, Anne Selim, Celine Rose, Theodore Lasisi), Lagos, Nigeria

Dunja Herzog: Unter Tage, 2020
Video, 1:28 min, loop

In the video Unter Tage, 2020, a geographic and temporal arc is drawn from the Copperbelt in Zambia (a region with the most important copper mining area in Africa, where the Swiss company Glencore also operates mines) to a copper mine in the German Harz Mountains, where the largest copper deposit in Germany once existed. At a depth of 165 meters, a film has been produced in Harz, showing the ceiling of a tunnel illuminated by light whilst driving out of the mine – a retreat from the mine and the overexploitation of both nature and labor that was once practiced there.

Produced at the Rörigschacht Wettelrode, Sangerhausen. Video taped by Claudia Schröder. With the support of Rührigschacht Wettelrode



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Dunja Herzog: Cultivating Autonomy, 2020
Copper, wood

Dunja Herzog travelled to Zambia's Copperbelt for research on the copper trade and to deal with the issue of land appropriation and the exploitative conditions of multinational corporations, in particular copper corporations that force the population to leave the country. (Swiss multinational Glencore owns one of the largest mines.) Herzog's interest focused on the connection between copper and spirituality. She hoped to gain insights into this from the Lemba people living there. The Lemba produce hoes from the local metal for agriculture, which they also trade and sell. With Cultivating Autonomy, 2020, a metaphor was found: The object contains an aspect of copper mining and refers to agriculture and to the fact that «the reappropriation of land and the creation of alternatives to the economy of money and the market all over the world is not only a precondition for personal and collective autonomy, but also for physical survival.» (Silvia Frederici) Produced at the "Phil Omodamwen Workshop", Benin City, Nigeria

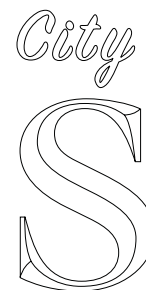
Dunja Herzog: Birsurmle, 2021 (edition: 100)
Water from the river Birs, glass bottle, label with printed drawing

Commons are often located «beyond market and state» (Silke Helfrich), which means that other logics of action dominate in their contexts. By filtering, Dunja Herzog makes the non-potable water of the Birs accessible as a resource, as a commons. She leads the river as a neighboring source of energy first into the exhibition space and finally into ourselves. Drawings by the artist on the labels of the bottles embody the voice of the river and introduce us to a crucial attribute of the commons: communication. Which perhaps allows us to better understand water as a being – encouraging us to sit there, to listen, to «take our time». Co-produced by City and Country SALTS.

(Dunja Herzog's work texts are partly drawn from the catalog of «Dunja Herzog, Meanwhile, 2020» at Kölnischer Kunstverein, curated by Nikola Dietrich.)

Dunja Herzog: Instruments For The One Who Dances With Jiggling Brass, 2021
Bienenwachs, Schwemmholz

Dunja Herzog created this group of sculptures in the garden of City SALTS in the summer of 2021 in collaboration with the bees that live here (wax) and the neighboring river Birs (drift wood from the floods in July 2021). As in her jewelry collection «Red Gold Import Export», the artist uses the technique of lost wax casting in the first step of her work, then casts the sculptures in brass to create a series of new instruments whose sound vibrations touch living beings on a subtle level. This multi-layered group of works is dedicated to the river goddess Oshun. Thanks to the beekeeper in the garden of City SALTS, Olaf Petersen.



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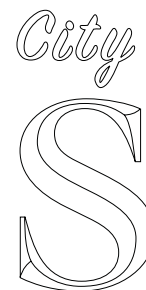
Dunja Herzog: Mermaid's Delight, 2021
Filtered water of the Birs, bee honey, oranges, cinnamon, salt, wood, aluminum,
printed sticker (edition of 96).

Also with her ice cream Dunja Herzog refers to the common representation of Oshun, the river goddess of the Yoruba, as a mermaid: water of the river Birs, bee honey – a favorite food of Oshun, and oranges – Oshun is assigned the colors gold and yellow. The logo on the packaging, created by the artist, is based on a 15th-century embroidery from eastern Switzerland discovered in the Basel Historical Museum. The erotic image of a 'fishwife' with two fish on her legs shows a powerful medieval representation of the relationship between women and nature and opens up a new perspective on the figure of the mermaid that is so popular today. The ice cream, like the work Birsmurmle, 2021, allows exhibition visitors to pleasurable absorb the artistic work. The Yoruba faith is practiced today in much of West Africa, the Caribbean, and South and Central America.

Stone Organ Concert (Orgalitho) by Beat Weyeneth
on September 23, 2021, 7pm

For the bees native to the performance site and the neighboring river,
by invitation of Dunja Herzog:

Beat Weyeneth sets his polished sound stones vibrating by rubbing them with his wet hand (playing technique as with the glass harp or singing bowl). Weyeneth's repertoire includes stone instruments for single tones, for pairs of stones with certain intervals and for whole tone series up to chromatically tuned instruments with one and a half to a good two octaves.



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About Christian Nyampeta

New York-based Rwandan artist, filmmaker, and writer Christian Nyampeta (born 1981) creates sites for collective feeling, cooperative thinking, and collective action in his work. Nyampeta explores how to re-imagine the earth as a whole and as a sanctuary for all who inhabit it.

Christian Nyampeta: A Flower Garden of All Kinds
of Loveliness Without Sorrow, ongoing
Video, 27:36 min, loop

Fragments of dialogues in art and philosophy. Artist Christian Nyampeta conceives and organises screenings, performances, pedagogical tools, and publications as hosting structures for collective feeling, cooperative thinking, and mutual action. He calls these experiments «école du soir», a phrase coined by Sembène Ousmane to describe the role of cinema (and art in general) in creating a space for dialogue and sharing.

Recorded in the context of École du soir, the evening programme of the work-week, international meeting and exhibition of Another Roadmap School for Art Education, 27 August 2018–1 September 2018 in Huye, Rwanda. Convened by philosopher Isaie Nzeyimana and artist Christian Nyampeta of the Nyanza Working Group, Another Roadmap School for Art Education, Africa Cluster.

Christian Nyampeta: tukiwaze pamoja tucheze pamoja #5 / People Who Think Together Dance Together, 2018
Video, 04:24 min, loop

People who think together dance together is a phrase that serves as a motto for the Africa Cluster of the Another Roadmap network. It expresses the desire to define models of sharing that go beyond formal education frameworks and integrate various modes of exchange and community living. It is an invitation to consider arts education as an embodied and joyful practice. In practical terms, it is a mix of critiques, performances, DJ sets, talks and dances where intellectual affinities, bodily rhythms, physical and spiritual jostling are put into forms and music.

The 5th iteration of its activation was organised in December 2019 at the Waza art center in dialogue with Andrea Thal and Rana El Nemr from Contemporary Image Collective CIC in Egypt as well as working groups from Kampala, Maseru, Nyanza and Johannesburg as part of the MITAANI #class MOMENTS programme. Christian Nyampeta has produced a video for this manifesto using its Swahili translation Tukiwaze Pamoja, Tucheza Pamoja.

Christian Nyampeta in conversation with Patrick Mudekereza, September 2021

In this conversation, Christian Nyampeta talks about his academic research, artistic creation and educational work, which starts with Roland Barthes' question: How to live together? Nyampeta turns it into a critical space where he confronts the issues of the commons, the painful history of Rwanda where he was born, but above all the concept of Ubuntu (I am because you are) which structures the collective imagination in Central and Southern Africa.

The project is kindly supported by kulturelles.bl, Pro Helvetia and SüdKulturFonds