During the summer months, the migros museum für gegenwartskunst sculpture project *The Garden of Forking Paths* will be a guest on the Froh Ussicht estate, owned by the Blum family in Samstagern, Zurich. The project alludes to the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo (Italy), the enchanted Renaissance garden, which features sculptures shrouded in mystery, and eccentric architecture that over time became overgrown (so-called “follies”). The invited artists will create their own fantastic narratives. The project title refers to a story by Argentinean novelist Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), indicating the analogy between imagination and spatial structures, in which he described the labyrinth as possibly the most fundamental human experience. Entwined with the ideas from the enchanted garden of Sacro Bosco, the project yields a mythical, cerebral cosmos, in which the artists integrate their work in their own ways.

The garden as a primordial form of the confrontation with nature has always been a human preoccupation. Its design reflects each societal organisation in all its political, sociological and psychological aspects. Whether we talk of paradise itself, monastic implementation, the Baroque pleasure garden, post-Enlightenment primeval landscaping, the landscaped park, public parks or urban oases, the garden is a place of harvest, but also of contemplation, rendering peace and happiness. It bewitches the senses and serves the escapist desire to flee the world, while still remaining a material means for cultivation, ensuring the provision of real sustenance. In 1522, Prince Orsini created the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo, which symbolises an extreme in the conception of the garden: lacking any inherent function it exists as a locus of pure enchantment. These words greet its visitor: „When you enter here contemplate one by one and then tell me if so many wonders are affected by deception or simply through art.“ Round each corner are new fantastic figures of gods, animals, monsters and architectures that present a puzzle to be deciphered. In following the intricate paths the visitor opens up a story of human passions and follies. When Salvador Dalí visited the garden he declared it anticipated Surrealist art.

The sculpture project *The Garden of Forking Paths*, refers back to the idea of such an enchanted garden full of “follies”, but in contradistinction to the Sacro Bosco, it is incorporated into a productive farming estate. This – in spite of its rational and economic logic – is often charged with romantic associations. It stands for a transfigured contemplation of origins, for authenticity and honesty, and provides the framework for this artistic confrontation with the garden and the “folly”.

*The Garden of Forking Paths – An outdoor sculpture project on the Blum family estate in Samstagern (Zurich)*
The Garden of Forking Paths –
An outdoor sculpture project on the Blum family estate in Samstagern (Zurich)

1 Pablo Bronstein
2 Liz Craft
3 Fabian Marti
4 Peter Regli
5 Thiago Rocha Pitta
6 Ida Ekblad
7 Geoffrey Farmer
8 Kerstin Kartscher
9 Ragnar Kjartansson
In his drawings, models and installations, Pablo Bronstein (born 1977, Buenos Aires, Argentina) takes on architectural history and brings architectonic ideas from previous eras – in this instance, those of the 18th century – into the present. It is not only stylistic questions concerning the façade and construction that play a role here, so too do the mechanisms of power, emotion, longing and interaction that, in architecture, can also be manifested in an absurd manner and become points of reference and investigation. Bronstein’s constructions become stages for their user, and through performative moments extend the architectonic into the human.

The Pavilion, which has been created for the sculpture project, serves as the performance venue for the aria Qui del Sol gl’infausti lampi from the opera Agar et Ismaele Esiliati (1684) by Italian composer Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725). With his pavilion offering space for just a few spectators, Bronstein highlights the exclusivity and “absurdity” of the Baroque garden design and, in a way quite his own, demonstrates how far “decadence” and here architecture too, always contains exclusive moments. Standing on the pavilion balcony the spectator has an overview of the landscape and can feel like the “lord” of all he/she surveys.

Children under 12 years only accompanied by an adult.
The cosmos of forms and figures by Liz Craft (born 1970, Los Angeles, USA) are derived from symbols and allegories covering various subject areas such as Californian hippy culture, Walt Disney films and Christian iconography. Art historical motifs experience their rebirth in pop cultural references – high and low art fused.

Craft’s newly created habitation on the farm takes the phenomenon of the garden house as its subject: within functional aspects, only partially useable and liveable, a round of symbols and references are presented, occasionally reminiscent of the fantastic architectural designs of M.C. Escher (1898–1972). Exterior and interior spaces become blurred; the “interior” appears natural. A mermaid made of shells is on the roof of the house, whose aesthetic takes on the appearance of artificial grottos featured in garden designs of the 18th and 19th centuries. Furthermore, an antique pillar represents a fragment of memory. Together with a stairway leading to heaven, a story is being told, that is just alluded to here, and must be “dreamed to its end” by the observer.
Ida Ekblad

How to Fall Off a Horse

2011

Steel, paint

182.5 x 296.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Karma International, Zurich

Ida Ekblad (born 1980, Oslo, Norway) combines painting, sculpture and poetry. In a Situationist manner the artist “roams” through the cultural landscape, collects and brings together already created works or used things that can either be a text fragment or an object. Her sculptures and collages are fabricated from fragments of found objects. In all of this she grates against the “isms” of art history: her painting refers, for example, to the informality of the late 1940s Cobra movement and the language of forms of Abstract Expressionism.

For The Garden of Forking Paths the artist has made a gate out of steel, whose intertwined decorations appear to have emanated from a surrealist act of Écriture automatique. The only figurative symbol featured is the eye. This figurative symbol, already a memorable feature of Egyptian hieroglyphs, carries significations of divine wisdom and omnipotence, and profound knowledge, and can also be regarded as the mirror of the soul. Attached to the gate it is a guard and a notice which describes a future world that may be opened by passing through the gate.

The Garden of Forking Paths –
An outdoor sculpture project on the Blum family estate in Samstagern (Zurich)
The artistic working methods of Geoffrey Farmer (born 1967, Vancouver, Canada) are situated in art-historical collecting and researching. Following intensive researches he develops collections that unite aspects of the visual arts, literature, music, politics, history and sociology. These the artist then presents in installations that appear theatrical and spatially-encompassing.

In his work *The Invisible Worm that Flies in the Night* (2011), the artist merges various personalities, ideas and phenomena of spirituality and psychology. He refers to the principle of synchronicity developed by Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). According to this principle, separate incidents that occur in sequence close to one another seem, at first glance, to have absolutely no causal connections. In spite of that, in their constellation, they can be experienced as meaningful. Thus, in his preparation, for instance from research carried out in Switzerland, the artist connects a complex network of allusions and references. He makes a costume for cows, reminiscent of traditional Indian but also Swiss or Bavarian festive decorations. In the small, wooded area of the estate, he has placed pictures which reference American poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997). He places a sound piece in the hayloft of a barn that refers to a lecture American philosopher Terence McKenna (1946–2000) – a specialist in mind-expanding drugs and shamanism – hold in 1992.

Subtitles of the single works:
*Meditating Ruminating Cows. They Contemplate the Metamorphosis of the Light from Distant Cosmic Texture into the Matter. But the Cow did not Keep this Knowledge to herself. She Delivers the Benefits with her Milk. (Zurich, Switzerland, in the Spring of 1919)*
2011
Blankets, paper, lamp, decoration

*If you Want to See Something Look at Something Else. (Allen Ginsberg, 1926–1997)*
2011
Color photographs mounted on perspex, framed

*Imagine this Phoenix Bookstore. (Terence McKenna, 1992)*
2011
Sound installation
In her installations and drawings, Kerstin Kartscher (born 1966, Nuremberg, Germany) engages with formal aesthetic considerations and spatial concepts, but also collective viewpoints and subjectivity. The orbiting around housing and the “being at home” as a cultural historical phenomena carries through her work. As a consequence, through noting the exotic and alien, the notion of home and the personal is extended.

The artist has made four over-sized aluminium parasols for the garden project. All have different paintings in black: chains and thorns as well as magical symbols which recall filigree plant seeds, the radiant spray of sparklers, and creatures with tentacles. Appearing like Chinese paper parasols, used in miniature as decoration for ice cream dishes and cocktails, the parasols rise up three metres in height. Looking equally like psychoactive “magic mushrooms” they transform the meadow into a magical wonderland. This seems to offer a life in the middle of an idyllic landscape, free from arduous work and social pressure. At the same time, this dream of a “carefree” life is put into question by the artist through the aggressive drawings found on the parasol surfaces.

Subtitles of the single works:
Reserved Shade
2011
Aluminium, paint

Administration of Shade
2011
Aluminium, paint

Gentle Shade
2011
Aluminium, paint

That Nonchalance of Shade
2011
Aluminium, paint
Ragnar Kjartansson (born 1976, Reykjavík, Iceland) is a visual artist, performer and musician. In a melancholic, but also absurd and funny way, he engages with moments of memory. In his works he humorously replicates role-models, “overacting” their poses and attitudes. He repeats specific, in fact unique – and thus memorable – activities ad infinitum; for instance singing a cycle of songs by composer Robert Schumann (1810–1856) for several hours daily over a period of two weeks, or making the portrait of a friend each day for six months.

For the project *The Garden of Forking Paths*, the artist has positioned three human-sized stele or pillars in the grounds of the estate. The stele are draped with cloths fashioned of marble. The manner in which they are draped is borrowed from the works of Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844), who created the Lion Monument in Lucerne. Each stele bears the inscription “Deine Augen” (Your Eyes) and the years 1989, 1994 and 1997. They appear to be lugubriously commemorating a loved one and a special moment from long ago in the artist's personal history. In this work, Kjartansson is addressing a specific commemorative culture: monumental pillars were often placed in gardens, with inscriptions of a historical or personal nature, thus imbuing them with narrative components.
In his sculptures and photographs, Fabian Marti (born 1979, Freiburg, Switzerland) frequently harks back to mystical and in part esoteric symbols. As far as the technological production side of his work goes, he often uses the most modern reproduction technologies, like a high-tech scanner or image processing programmes. Christian cult objects are combined with the most functional elements of the modern to create a richly tense graphic work.

Marti has created a hothouse constructed from painted glass cubes in an aesthetic that references the new-age period of the 1960s, but also that of Modernism (as in a Kandinsky or a Mondrian). The hothouse – an invention dating from the end of the 18th century – imitates and optimises the climate needed to cultivate non-indigenous plants. Arising from this functional background, its exterior goes through a persistently enriching aestheticisation that blends with the overall design of the garden. When Marti cultivates poisonous plants in this construction, he is referring to the crossing of boundaries of “madness” in garden design as well as by new-age disciples. He uses functional architecture ad absurdum, even regarding the plant pots he is taking up as a “psychedelic vocabulary of forms”.

Fabian Marti

*Heroic Dose*

2011

Plants, glass, steel, fired and glazed clay

250 x 300 x 400 cm

*The Garden of Forking Paths –*
An outdoor sculpture project on the Blum family estate in Samstagern (Zurich)

*Attention: toxic plants – do not touch, do not ingest.*
*Children only accompanied by an adult.*
Peter Regli (born, 1959 Andermatt, Switzerland) became known for his interventions in existing settings, which he himself titled *Reality Hacking*. Right up to the present, each one of these interventions is painstakingly numbered serially. *Reality Hacking* can be described as a form of interventionist strategy that seeks to make clear-cut correlations ambiguous, and to break open that which is normalised and taken for granted. Confronting existing environments with bizarre sculptures, performances or minimalist gestural interventions, the artist aims to provoke the observer to reflect and rethink: everything can be material, everything can be the starting point and serve as the stage for his “performances”.

In the middle of the farm landscape stands a disproportionately large snowman made of white marble. The snowman refers to the childish happiness of playfully interacting with nature, and he has built this to serve as its own monument. The snowman’s “ perishability”, due to the properties of his materiality, is displaced and he stands as a huge somewhat clumsy reminder of something that becomes lost or even unthinkable in the summery landscape.
 Works by Thiago Rocha Pitta (born, 1980 Tiradentes, Brazil) – whether films, photographs, sculptures, drawings or installations – can be situated within the tradition of Land Art, for they attempt to demonstrate nature and its phenomena, and transpose them artistically. In contradistinction to classical Land Art and its frequently megalomaniacal-brute gestures, the artist's works distinguish themselves through a subtle and poetic way of working.

In the context of this project, Rocha Pitta has created a sculpture which suggests that a long time ago a sailing ship capsized in the grounds, and all that is still visible is its petrified sail. With this sculpture embedded in a picturesque landscape, the artist not only plays with pictorial convention – with the run aground ship serving as a symbol of existential failure and standstill (a frequently used motif in Romanticism) – and makes of it a travesty. Rocha Pitta also questions classical Land Art and its formal problems.

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**Thiago Rocha Pitta**

**Monument to the Continental Drift**

2011

Cement, canvas, mast

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist and Andersen's Contemporary, Copenhagen

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*The Garden of Forking Paths – An outdoor sculpture project on the Blum family estate in Samstagern (Zurich)*
Lectures/Book launch
On 4 September 2011 from 2–6pm there will take place three lectures by Patrick Eyres (editor New Arcadian Press), Lars Bang Larsen (art historian) and Heike Munder (director migros museum für gegenwartskunst) followed by the presentation of the publication that accompanies the project. This detailed anthology is published by JRP|Ringier and contains contributions by Lars Bang Larsen, Michael Bracewell, Horst Bredekamp, Brian Dillon, Patrick Eyres, Heike Munder, Anthony Vidler and Catherine Wood.

Performance by Pablo Bronstein Performance of a Single Aria by Alessandro Scarlatti
At the opening and on the following days:
Sunday, 4 September, 14 August, 2 and 30 October.

Public guided tours
The tours are free of charge.

In English: Sunday, 18 September, 3pm.

In German: Sunday, 7, 14, 21 and 28 August, 9, 16 and 23 October, 3pm and 5pm.

In French: Sunday, 25 September, 3pm.

Family guided tours
The tour lasts two hours, and includes practical work, its content is geared for family consumption and it is free; registration is not necessary. Sunday, 11 September and 2 October, 2pm.

School workshops
The museum is offering teaching workshops for school classes. They are free. For information and registration please contact kunstvermittlung@migrosmuseum.ch

Departure

train from Grüenfeld via Wädenswil to Zurich main station:
S13 to Wädenswil
S2/EC7/IR91 to Zurich main station
half-hourly

ferry from Horgen to Meilen across the Zürichsee
duration of the passage about 10 minutes
every 10 minutes, during rush hour every 6 or 7½ minutes

bus 170 to Richterswil
half-hourly

The Garden of Forking Paths –
An outdoor sculpture project on the Blum family estate in Samstagern (Zurich)