

Text for press release

Alicja Kwade
„Future Past“

8 June – 28 July 2012

Opening times:
Wednesday to Friday 13h00 – 18h00
Saturday 11h00 – 17h00
and by prior arrangement

Grieder Contemporary is delighted to announce the first solo exhibition by Alicja Kwade in Switzerland. Alongside an installation occupying the whole of the gallery's main exhibition space, the artist will be showing a number of smaller works.

The centre stage at the exhibition takes a work which consists of six stones lying in the room. All but one seem to be small and insignificant at first glance, the exception being noticeably larger with the appearance of a massive rock. These are representations of the seven near-earth asteroids Vesta, Lutetia, Mathilde, Ida, Eros, Gaspia and Steins. According to Wikipedia, 584,771 bodies of this nature are known to exist in our solar system (as at 26 April 2012), although the actual figure must run into the millions. Asteroids are not defined as planets, for their gravity is too weak for them to form balls on account of their diminutive size.

That is why they look like irregular stones with shapes that Alicja Kwade has had cloned to the very last detail. She obtained the necessary topographical data from major international centres of space exploration including NASA, the European Space Agency and the German Aerospace Centre. She took the scientific data to create computerised 3D models, which were then used to produce moulds. The cast representations are composed of a blend of materials that includes granite powder and glass.

The relative sizes of the asteroid models are true to scale – but 500,000 times smaller. The outcome is reminiscent of earlier works by Kwade, which involved her taking stones from the road and having them worked by diamond polishers, or *Grosse C*, an oversized black diamond fashioned from lowly lacquered wood. In so doing, the standards the artist was standing on their head were principally social norms and values, which are also embodied in the hierarchy of materials.

Although the 'value' of an object might be hard to perceive, potential dangers are visible with the naked eye. The stones in the exhibition look harmless enough; the originals in space far less so. It has been calculated that the probability of being hit by an asteroid is – at least in the USA – statistically higher than dying in a plane crash. Meanwhile, an impact capable of destroying our planet should be occurring every 60,000 to 100,000 years – again, seen from a statistical standpoint. Probability calculations of this nature with orders of magnitude based on time, which call to mind the 'residual risk' associated with nuclear power, exercise a peculiar fascination on the artist. Her interest in time and its measurement can be seen from the frequency with which she incorporates timepieces in her work. What would happen if time were to run forwards and backwards at the same time – 'future past'? Are there any probability calculations for that scenario?

We can conceive of fictions and supposedly hard facts only if we are able to visualise them. Images of phenomena and processes delivered by science – which often lie beyond our physical perceptive faculties and capacity of comprehension – represent some of Alicja Kwade's most salient sources of inspiration. Yet she is seeking neither to confirm scientific evidence nor refute it. The scientifically inspired precision of her *modus operandi* acts not least as a poetic spark, which finds its way with unerring aim to viewers without actually killing them.

(Text by Ludwig Seyfarth)