

Zilla Leutenegger

Hotel Bellevue-Terminus, attic / Tunnel to the Hotel Terrace / Ticket booth at the mountain station of the historic funicular / Hotel Engelberg, former bowling alley / Tal Museum, 2nd floor, old part / Pfisterhuesli, ground floor

Ambivalent feelings can annoy and sometimes even frighten us. For example, not knowing how to decide in a situation or whether we like something or not is often interpreted as weakness in our society. But ambivalence can also be a strength that we should use. Ambivalent feelings can be a signal. Like a subtle alarm bell, they remind us that we can move out of our beloved comfort zone.

The artist Zilla Leutenegger deals with precisely such themes: feelings, atmospheres and observations of ambivalence. And with the possibilities of looking behind the facade and uncovering what drives people at their core. With several works, spread across different locations, she weaves a fine red thread through the *Backstage Engelberg* exhibition. Four of her works were created especially for this occasion, and she has rethought older works.

Multifaceted, clever and cunning, Zilla Leutenegger's art often revolves around the search for the origins of fantasy. In the attic of the Hotel Bellevue-Terminus, she shows the video work *Lost Moon*. At the very back of the attic, we discover the projection of a wandering moon. The moon is a recurring motif in the artist's work. It stands for reflection, for thoughtfulness. The moon symbolizes a melancholic and beautiful attitude to life, in which we do not shy away from our deep feelings, but use them for our inner richness.

Leutenegger developed the second work, *85 Steps*, for the tunnel leading to the elevator in the Hotel Terrace. We hear the artist's voice counting our steps as we walk through the tunnel. Counting steps is reminiscent of childhood games. This work also seeks a connection to our inner self, this time carried by the rhythm of walking and breathing.

The new work, *The Counter*, at the former ticket office of the historic funicular station, continues the experience in the tunnel: as if by magic, the lines for the 85 steps we heard in the tunnel appear on the glass pane, and once again the artist's voice can be heard. This time, however, she is not counting our steps, but the lines on the glass. As so often in Leutenegger's work, a magical moment is created.

At the fourth station, in the former bowling alley of the Hotel Engelberg, Zilla Leutenegger reinterprets her video work *ZillaGorilla*, using the intimate situation of the narrow cellar. The artist has long been interested in gorillas—for her, the gorilla has become a kind of alter ego; she has already slipped into a corresponding costume. In an interview, she once said that it is frightening that you can also be very strange to yourself. Her video work *ZillaGorilla* tells of the inner dialogue she keeps having, representative of the inner dialogue in which each of us finds ourselves.

The fifth work can be seen in the Tal Museum. During her first visit to the museum, the artist noticed a spindle wheel in the historical part of the museum. She then created another new work, *Die Spinnerin* [The Spinner]. Only the shadow of a spinning wheel can be seen through a slightly open door. The door cannot be fully opened. Fairy tales, fantasy, legends and our curiosity: Leutenegger combines very different resonance spaces in this poetic installation.

Zilla Leutenegger's works create an atmosphere in which we can ask ourselves what exactly we need to walk through the world with open eyes. Is it secret desires for which we have no words? Is it the ability to endure boredom until we discover our true feelings? Is it the willingness to admit feelings at all? With her drawings, video works, objects and installations, Zilla Leutenegger develops fascinating settings for such questions.

This is also the case with the sixth work on the first floor of the Pfisterhuesli: in her video work *Filled with Tears*, water seems to drip onto the floor. Real containers filled with water such as plastic buckets, pots and bowls stand in the room, as if they had been set up in a makeshift manner to prevent something worse from happening.

Leutenegger's artistic language repeatedly draws on everyday life. Sometimes she tells wondrously absurd stories, sometimes she stages seemingly trivial situations in such a way that they become symbols for the search for the meaning of life. She often mixes different realities, as here in the combination of a video projection with tangible objects. In this way, she manages to sneak her works out of the art context and straight into our lives, playfully making us think. (*ds*)