

GAFFA

Garten 4 ever

Solo exhibition

9 July to 1 October 2021

BELETAGE's exhibition on GAFFA is the third solo exhibition after Berne and St Gallen dedicated to this Swiss artist collective. It presents a spatial intervention in three rooms in addition to the foyer adapted to the venue's functional givens of a chiropractic practice. The exhibition will be accompanied by an Instagram-takeover from 5 July to 15 August 2021 and an artists' zine reflecting the collective's multi-disciplinary channels of actions.

Gaffa

When the English singer-songwriter Kate Bush was releasing her single *suspended in gaffa*, recorded in 1982, questions arose about the made-up word „gaffa“. In a review of her song, Bush revealed that she was referring to the gaffer tape, a thick industrial tape often used to tie up a large number of electric cables or leads.

In our case, „Gaffa“ is not only referring to a made-up word but also to a certain artistic practice. „Gaffa“ stands for Freddie's surname. Freddie Gaffa is a quirky fictional character, who lives in Tenerife. Since 2016, he has been publishing a zine called *GAFFA* on monthly basis. The zine gets produced and distributed with the help of his four nephews, who are the artist collective behind this character: Dario Forlin, Wanja Harb, Lucian Kunz, and Linus Lutz. *GAFFA* is also a platform for exhibition projects, all sorts of merchandise, and an edition for which artists and illustrators outside the collective get invited to realize a zine.

Zine

A zine (short form of magazine) is an affordable, fast, and easy to produce publication format. The term was originally used in the 1970s for non-commercial music brochures reporting from events of each scene. It used to be mainly a subcultural form of communication. Today, the zine is a respected form of art often produced in small editions with the help of an alternative printing process such as risograph, photocopy, or silk screen. It articulates the in-between of fine art and design, and is easy to distribute through postal mail.

GAFFA's latest coup was an interactive live video-show, a digital zine workshop, during the Kulturlandsgemeinde in Teufen this May 2021. A presenter was describing in detail a certain image he received beforehand through an open call. The audience in Teufen and at home translated what was heard into a new image they could give / send via mobile transmission to the host. After the video-show, the new pictures were laid out as a first zine proof by *GAFFA*, which will be properly published this fall. The format was called „*GAFFA-TV*,“ and could be read as a reference to legendary Bob Ross' *The Joy of Painting*, an instructional television program aired from 1983 to 1994 on PBS, by using the simple aesthetics of live shopping television channels, where the audience can interact with the television host via an inserted telephone number. The found format reflects the artist collective's modus operandi: highly skilled and professional but intentionally low key. A popular television format is here paired with a state of the art internet broadcasting technique.



When Freddie's four nephews meet, they tape collages and photograph as well as draw sketches or sculpt to find the newest issue of the zine. The process is spontaneous and uncensored. The found materials often sourced from different popular print media is freed of original context, partially rearranged in an intentionally childlike manner and always exaggerated for surprising tongue-in-cheek comments. The clash of high and low is making one laugh. Here comes the word „gaffa“ into play again. For putting together an analog layout of a zine, you don't need much more than a paper, glue, or tape, but not the strong gaffer tape. An exaggeration to the absurd is being used as an artistic strategy of reflection.

Artist collectives

Artist collectives - a group of artists working together, usually under their own management, towards shared aims - have occurred throughout art history. Early forms gathered around ancient sculpture workshops in Greece and Italy. In the beginning of the 20th century, artist collectives, such as the Futurists or Dadaists, followed a common and often cultural-political goal, but usually retained their artistic individuality. Over the past five decades, the number of artists working collaboratively has increased remarkably. In addition, the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous group of feminists and female artists formed in 1985, put it: “There are many collaborative practices [...] in film, theater, and music. The concept of the individual genius is outdated.”

Freddie Gaffa is a wildcard and an understatement to surprise with a professional self-publishing entity as well as a multi-faceted body of work. Nothing is real, but everything is very authentic. It is a collective alter ego. In addition, art history is full of aliases, alter ego, and imposters, such as Marcel Duchamp, who used Rose Sélavy to expand the traditional definitions of art and artist. Freddie Gaffa's fictional identity is bourgeois by choice, and allows the four artists to morph into a new superhuman uniting different skills. He is impersonalizing certain clichés and incorporating Swissness. Gaffa promotes his work in broken English with the aid of (Swiss) German words. He is socially compliant. For Freddie, a leather jacket symbolizes a rebel and long hair a revolution. Tenerife stands for the dream coconut island of a retired working-class, mainly of German speaking countries. With Freddie Gaffa, a character was formed, which is playing with our expectations. You would never expect Freddie to be an artist. He is the living proof of everybody can do it. You just have to send your four nephews your ideas, and they do it for you.

Short biography

GAFFA has been given a work grant by the city of St Gallen in 2018 and by the canton St Gallen in 2019. Previous solo exhibitions included *Get rich or die tryin'* at the Pausenraum in Berne and *Sluglife* at the Architektur Forum Ostschweiz in St Gallen, both in 2020.

BELETAGE

BELETAGE is a non-profit exhibition space founded in 2018. It is based in Zurich's Seefeld. The art space is a guest in a chiropractic practice and is supported by the art association of the same name.



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Opening with zine release

9 July 2021
5-8 pm

Instagram-takeover

5 July to 15 August 2021
www.instagram.com/beletageartspace