

NADIA HAURI
UNA SZEEMANN
Tangible Dreaming
04.11.2022–24.11.2022

'A very sad, gray valley. Stony slopes. Cement roads below, built on the slope, like the greenhouses of a plant nursery. From them, like flowers, sprout dried skeletal hands.'¹
– Meret Oppenheim, Dec. 15, 1935

What remains of a dream? Sometimes it's only moments of memory, so-called dream fragments, that vaguely recall what has been dreamt, other times it's rather clear images that will be remembered for long. Instead of keeping a diary, the Swiss artist Meret Oppenheim (1913 – 1985) journaled her dreams throughout the course of her life. The fragments of the night, which she meticulously noted down in a little book, each with their belonging dates, often seem both grotesque and disruptive. At times Meret Oppenheim turned these fragments of dreams and memories into works of art.

Prior to the exhibition, Nadia Hauri and Una Szeemann together visited 'Casa Costanza', the Oppenheim family's residence, which was redesigned by the artist herself. There, Hauri and Szeemann came across a variety of traces from the artist, may it be in the different rooms, in the furniture, in notes or photographs. These impressions stuck in their minds ever since.

In the duo exhibition 'Tangible Dreaming', Una Szeemann and Nadia Hauri explore the phenomenon of dreaming through a combined perspective. Exhibited together for the first time, the two artists are primarily concerned with exploring the complex relationship of the body and mind during the process of dreaming. In the work of both artists, dreams appear as fragmentary, processual, yet in their material form they become tangible as works of art, and through their interplay in space, their reciprocity opens up new references to the theme.

Nadia Hauri's work examines primarily the psychological and physical experiences of the dreaming body – with the process of remembering and sensing. Thereby, the chosen materials and forms play an essential role. In *Eye movements transitioning in soft radiance* (2022), a crystal stick made of lavender quartz is being attributed with a calming and relaxing effect. Contrasting with this are the sculpture's tapered ends, which point into three different directions, inviting the viewer to look around. Here, Hauri draws analogies to the state of REM (rapid eye movement), a phase of sleep in which the eyes move rapidly while the body appears to be at rest. A similar relation emerges with the sculpture *Echo* (2022), suggesting the idea of a bowl. A hypnotic swaying might come to mind, capable of evoking a dreamy state. In *Neighboring states* (2022), silver stains run through three black concrete panels, referencing the moments when states begin to intermingle, reality merging into dreams, or dreams into reality.

¹ Excerpt from Christiane Meyer-Thoss (ed.), Meret Oppenheim. Träume. Aufzeichnungen 1928-1985, Berlin 2010, p. 19.

The unique textures of the three panels are the result of a physical reaction during the casting process, in which the pigment-colored concrete reacts with the liquid tin. Tin is also used in *Hold it to your ear and bend it back and forth* (2022). The work resembles a stuck out tongue, which at first glance appears both grotesque and provocative. If pure tin is squashed or bent when being worked, the so-called 'tin scream' occurs, a sound that refers to the limits of the material. How much can it withstand before it breaks? At the same time, Hauri thus shows the limits of the psyche's ability to process during sleep and demystifies dreaming as a healing process, for example in the case of recurring individual traumas.

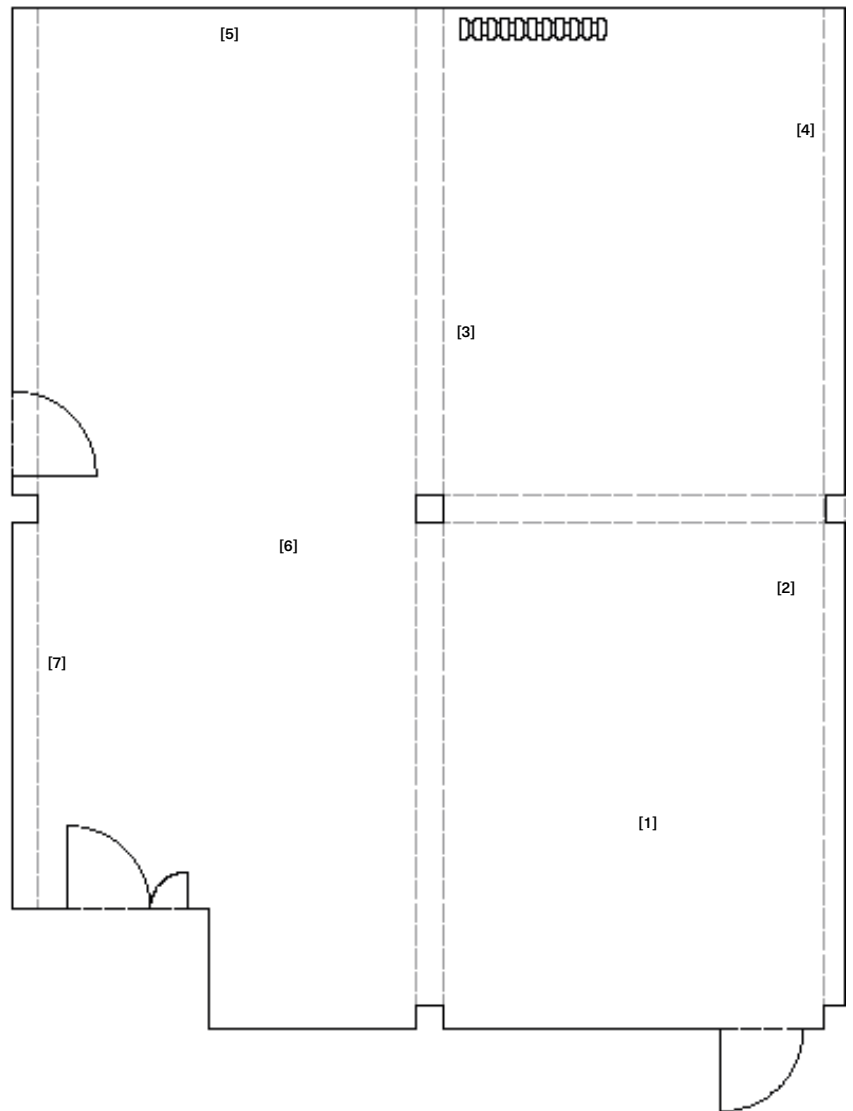
Una Szeemann is primarily concerned with the seeming separation of body and mind during dreaming, which she explores through folkloric fertility rites and symbolisms. For her leather sculpture *Inapt to move, so out they went* (2022), Szeemann drew inspiration from the legends surrounding the northern Italian benandanti ('good walkers'), who were born with an intact membrane and were therefore attributed with supernatural powers and good fortune.² As defenders of the fertility of the fields, in the 16th and 17th centuries they would step out of their bodies during sleep to fight against evil witches and demons (malandanti) to ensure good harvests for the coming season. Szeemann gives form to this transitional moment and makes it tangible by covering copper struts, with a skin of leather. She thereby creates a being that is simultaneously present and absent, and refers to the ambivalence of body and mind whilst dreaming. Organic materials such as leather and hair play a recurring role in Szeemann's work, questioning dualities of vitality and death, reality and dream. This is also the central theme of *E sono cento* (2021), an installation of three long blond horse tails hanging from the ceiling. These heads without bodies continue the narrative of the nocturnal excursions of the benandanti. For the horsehair, now dead matter, evokes in its new form memories of its sensory effect on living bodies. The four split open figs, preserved for eternity only by its bronze casting, stand in reference to the benandanti for a symbol of fertility and its significance for the harvest. Meanwhile, the reminiscence of the formerly red flesh, brought to light by the artist herself when breaking the ripe fruit, provokes an erotic evocation - which, in the context of dreaming, unites disgust and shame, but also lust.

So, what will remain of a dream? In Hauri and Szeemann's work, it is above all the ambivalence of the dreaming body that they make tangible through their sculptures.

Text by Kristin Brüggemann (translated from German)

Curated by Nemo Bleuer

² Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, I benandanti. Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento, Turin 1966.



^[1] Una Szeemann, *E sono cento*, 2021
horse hair, stainless steel
140 x 45cm, dimensions variable

^[2] Una Szeemann, *Le Benandanti (Diana, Rossa, Anna, Lucina)*, 2022
bronze
8 x 8 x 8 cm each

^[3] Una Szeemann, *Inapt to move, so out they went*, 2022
copper, leather, polyurethane, polyamid
427 x 197 x 85 cm

^[4] Nadia Hauri, *Eye movements transitioning in soft radiance*, 2022
steel, resin, lavender quartz, tin
233 x 21 x 6 cm

^[5] Nadia Hauri, *Hold it to your ear and bend it back and forth*, 2022
tin, steel
6 x 6 x 4 cm

^[6] Nadia Hauri, *Echo*, 2022
concrete
80 x 48 x 4 cm

^[7] Nadia Hauri, *Neighboring states*
concrete, tin
91 x 11 x 3.5 cm