

Paris + by Art Basel

20 - 23 October 2022

Nile Koetting

Upcoming events

Over the past few years, Koetting's works have developed into large-scale performative and immersive installations that include performance and video as well as extra-visual materials such as air, scents, light, and sound.

Koetting's new work for Paris +by Art Basel entitled "Upcoming Events" reflects his ongoing research and experimentation with the social scenography and set design he has been exploring.

Influenced by his experience as a theater performer, he explores different ways of preparing for crisis situations and other anxiety-provoking events that punctuate our time, and invites us to reflect on the type of dramaturgy adapted to the hyper-(in)secure space-time in which we live. There is in Koetting's work a dimension of engineering of perception that can be found on several levels.

On the one hand, a recurring motif unfolds subtly in his practice: that of strategies for managing crowds, their reactions, and their states of consciousness. This is a major issue for governance systems and their capacity to direct human behavior.

On the other hand, he re-enacts from his installations the moment of encounter with work as an ordeal where the outcome is always uncertain: he provokes contradictory emotions in the viewer by confronting him with works whose seductive and artificial aspect contrasts with the seriousness of the subject addressed.

In the exhibition, Koetting's video sculpture titled "Leap Timetable - Epochalypse" occupies a position of central importance. A dollhouse-like video monitor projects a schedule of the upcoming leap year (calendar year that contains an additional day added to stay synchronized with the astronomical year), day, and seconds. It resembles a cinema and theater timetable that is endlessly updated. This artificial and natural state of leap moments reflects Koetting's core interest in ambiguous time-space where artificial and natural states melt down into a social foundation.

A seating sculpture entitled "Corner for Upcoming Events" which developed from his performative installation "Remain Calm" (2019 - ongoing) which has been presented internationally including Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum (Shanghai), and Tai Kwun Contemporary (Hongkong). This seating sculpture piece was inspired by a piece of equipment that doubles as an emergency food storage cabinet and toilet, and was designed for placement inside elevators in Japan for use in emergencies such as earthquakes. The unit looks like a glowing plastic bin, and can store some necessities such as water and dry food. It can also be unfolded and transformed into a simple toilet. Koetting calls such articles "life-props."

A tatami-like sculpture titled "Ground Breaking Stage (継)" is a large scenographic sculpture appear like a theater stage module. The acrylic glass surface is purposely broken into pieces by laser cutting, and resembles broken pottery mended by the "kintsugi" technique (traditional technique for mending Japanese pottery). A sculptural series entitled "E-motional flower network" is a chain of hydrated flowers connected via glass beads and cables with animated LEDs spreading throughout the exhibition space like an amoeba, transforming the entire exhibition space into a landscape of a stage after applause with thrown flowers.

What kind of role could we imagine for a never-ending planetary theater piece? By materializing theatrical motifs and structures, Koetting deconstructs the ideas of social choreography into a sensible scenography that is in constant movement, where viewers are transformed into actor, director, and audience all at the same time.

Nile Koetting was born in Japan in 1989. He lives and works in Tokyo and Berlin. His work has been exhibited in Palais de Tokyo, Centre Pompidou x Westbund Museum, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Fondation Hermès Tokyo, Somerset House, Kunstverein Göttingen, Moscow Biennale, ZKM Karlsruhe, Hebbel Am Ufer Theater, Western Front, Mori Art Museum, and Kunstverein Hannover.