

KUNSTHALLE
BASEL

BACK WALL
PROJECT

YOAN MUDRY

THE FUTURE
DOESN'T
NEED US

For twenty-five years now, Kunsthalle **EN** Basel has presented specially commissioned art projects on the exterior rear wall of the institution, with the intention to activate and enliven public space with contemporary art. For 2021/2022, Yoan Mudry has been invited to develop a new project for this wall.

Mudry has, in a few short years, created an impressive array of performances, installations, and paintings. Despite working in such diverse media, the Swiss artist has quickly become known for his vibrant, hyper-realist paintings whose imagery draws from the visual language of contemporary pop culture. In them, he mixes high and low cultural references, freely deploying emojis and quoting advertising copy, lines from a film or the title of a novel, a comic-strip scene, or an internet meme. The result is often humorous, playful, and always technically accomplished. Yet Mudry's jarring combinations of text and image and his instrumentalization of commercial marketing strategies have a certain bite to them. This approach is also central to his back wall project, the artist's largest artwork in public space to date.

Entitled *The Future Doesn't Need Us*, Mudry's project combines snippets of text and imagery painted directly onto the wall, interrupted by framed black and white prints (these feature Mudry's drawing practice, shown here for the first time). Considering his back wall a kind of summary or mapping of his current interests and artistic research, Mudry admits that he is striving to make something "not easily digestible." What, after all, does the drawn depiction of an open mouth, a stylized palm tree, movie lines ("Today is Monday..." inspired by a film of Roy Andersson), and the title of an incendiary 1970s novel imagining a working-class revolution (*Vogliamo tutto*, by Nanni Balestrini) have to do with each other?

Done with sly wit, his incongruent juxtapositions and layers of information demand time to understand. This fact is nothing less than political for Mudry: "The underlying message for me is critical—a commentary, however subjective, on the functioning of our societies, on our behaviors, on the things we do as societies, and on what we accept and foster for economic, political, or cultural reasons, all of which seems to be making the world go very wrong." Indeed, in a climate that he describes as favoring "mind-numbing oversimplification, which teaches us not to use our brains and encourages us to blindly follow advertising, politicians, or social media gurus of all kinds," Mudry knows that

11.9.2021–
7.8.2022

the ability to make connections between different kinds of information and to create one's own idea about a subject in an informed way is not innate. But there is hope. Because, according to the artist, a critical faculty can be acquired and practiced. And in a world overloaded with information that, as he admits, is "more or less true and more or less useful, this ability is essential." What he creates, then, is never didactic or illustrative, instead, it attempts to incite people to think and draw their own conclusions.

It could be, as the project's title suggests, that "the future doesn't need us," but we, on the other hand, might need someone like Mudry. Because the whole of his practice, epitomized by his back wall, is an effort to respond to the world and help us navigate our future in it with open eyes and an inquisitive, critical mind—and while we might cry as we do so, Mudry will have us laughing, too.

Yoan Mudry was born in 1990 in Lausanne, CH, and lives and works in Geneva, CH.

Yoan Mudry
The Future Doesn't Need Us, 2021
Paint, mixed media
5.5 × 33.25 m
Courtesy the artist; Nicolas Krupp, Basel;
and Union Pacific, London

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Kanton Basel-Stadt

Kultur

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AVEC LE SOUTIEN
DE LA
VILLE DE GENÈVE



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MEDIATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAM

Comic, Pop und Collage, workshops

for adults, in German

21.10.2021, Thursday, 6–8 pm

28.4.2022, Thursday, 6–8 pm

Inspired by the work and methods of Yoan Mudry,
humorous or ironic commentaries on current world
events will be created. Registration at:
kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch

Comic, Pop und Collage, workshops

for school classes, in German

By request at: kunstvermittlung@kunsthallebasel.ch

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