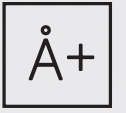
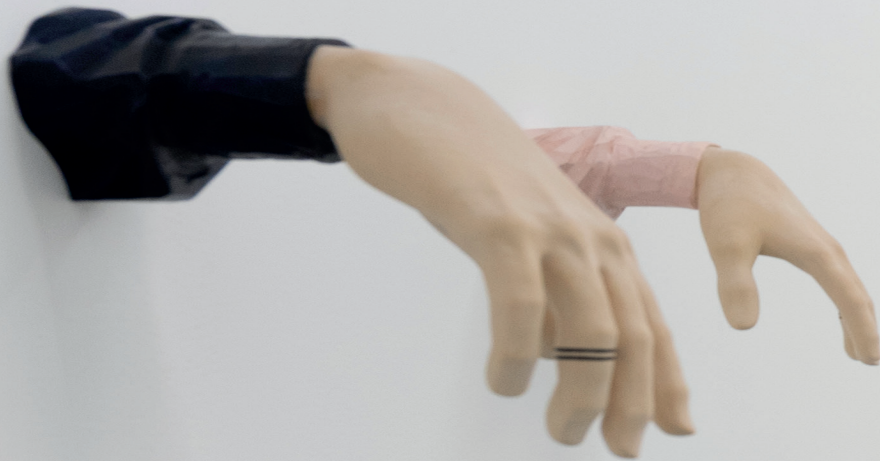


# HANDS DOWN



Nicl Barbro  
Lauren Keeley  
Hannes Mussner  
Merlin Reichart  
Benjamin Slinger  
Manuel Stehli  
Anna Stüdeli



## A BEGINNING

1.

The hands come from the sea, inside the front fins they waited, the right and the left hand, right and wrong, good and evil; they had been there all along with their blood vessels, ligaments, nerves, bones, muscles, and tendons. Just beneath the water surface, close to the shoreline, they moved among oysters, mussels, crustaceans, and aquatic plants.

Long before there was will, the hands were already there; unfinished and free, they could have become anything, but they didn't know that, because they knew nothing, not even that they were hands, they just did what they did, which wasn't very much.

The hands sat on the undersides of meter-long bodies, which had flat heads at the front, with no room for any thoughts, but at least they had eyes to see with. The heads could neither move upward, downward, nor turn sideways, so the only direction the eyes could look was forward, and forward was also where the hands drove the bodies.

Forward could have been in any direction, so they might have moved along the coast, or out toward the open sea, but they didn't, because the bodies were turned toward land, and so it was land they saw and the things that grew closest to the water, ferns and some kind of grass perhaps, it's hard to say, but probably some sort of mangrove-like vegetation, and that was where they were heading, the hands, even if it went slowly, because they had to keep starting over again, swimming and dragging themselves across the slippery bottom, but time and again they lost their grip and slid back out from the shoreline.

2.

There were still no arms to reinforce the power of movement, and what had not yet become hands bent their joints slowly forward and let the body they were attached to sink down toward the bottom. They dug into it, searching for resistance, but they found no hold in the soft mud, so as quickly as they could they pushed upward, forward, before the body had gotten stuck, embedded in the mud, becoming bottom itself. They stirred up the boundary between water and bottom so that everything became one and the same, and the eyes, which were always open, could no longer see, but the body still moved forward, closer to land, lifting toward the surface. The body sank again, the joints bent forward, and what would become hands were embedded once more in the soft, cold mud, moving forward, and the body did not become bottom, it heaved itself up and moved forward again, toward shallower water, toward land, toward new bodies, toward treetops, savannas, and language. Never before had it been this close to land, and the unfinished hands began flailing frenetically, back and forth, until the body spun around; several times it rotated at the water's surface and was then carried off by the currents, out toward the open sea.

3.

The hands splashed in the water. As things looked, one would never believe that the bodies they were attached to could ever make it forward.

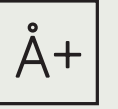
4.

If the human being is in the middle of herself, then the hands and feet are the body parts that are farthest from her. She both begins and ends there, and therefore they don't only belong to her, but also to the ground she walks on and the world she grasps, everything she shapes, consumes, and destroys. Hands and feet are boundaries, which can be crossed at any moment, the world enters there and the human being exits there. But unlike the feet, which only run, walk, or stand, and have never wanted anything else, since they have no will, the hands are never really satisfied; they are constantly changing things, entirely regardless of what we truly want.

5.

All the hands ever wanted was change. As soon as they came into being, yes, even before they became what they are, before the fingers were complete, they began dragging themselves towards land, and even though it was essentially impossible, they eventually managed to get up on land, because hands are such that they never give up. Once on land, they wanted to climb up into the trees that grew here and there, maybe ginkgo trees, and even though this too was fundamentally impossible, they eventually climbed up into the treetops, though how it happened is hard to say, since it was impossible. And once they had come up, they immediately wanted to go down again, to reach all the places they had seen from up there, and once they had been to all those places, they began to reshape them, because such are hands—they cannot stand it when nothing happens.

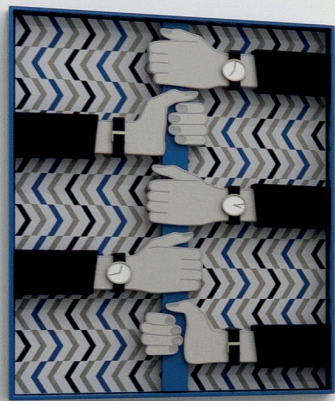
*Jens Soneryd, September 10, 2025*



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Lauren Keeley  
Next Stop, 2019  
Linen, leather, aluminium, screenprint on board  
65 x 48 cm



Nicol Barbro  
Puls, 2025  
Colored pencil and pencil on paper (framed/oak)  
37 x 30 cm





Manuel Stehli  
untitled (pair of hands, 1/6/25), 2025  
oil on wood panel  
40 x 50 cm



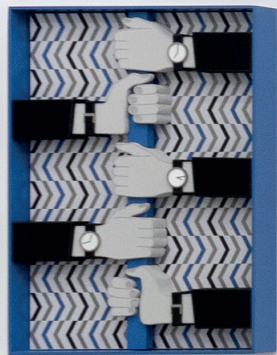
Manuel Stehli  
untitled (pair of hands, 2/6/25), 2025  
oil on wood panel  
40 x 50 cm



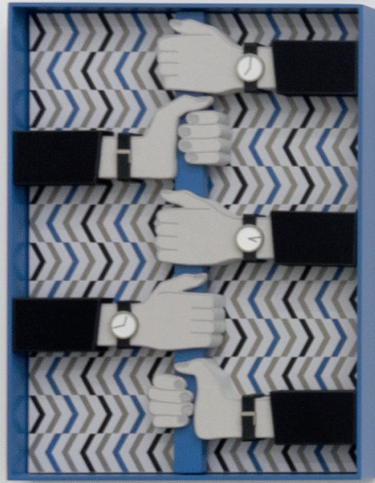


Hannes Mussner  
Twain, 2025  
Limewood, acrylic paint and beeswax  
installation: 23 x 51 x 21,5 cm / female: 20 x 11 x 20,5 cm / male: 23 x 12 x 21,5 cm

















Merlin Reichart  
Trace Fossil (AR-08272432-AMS45), 2024  
Xyrarock plaster, chalk varnish, medium-density fibreboard, anodized aluminium, acrylic glass  
27 x 37 x 6 cm



Merlin Reichart  
Trace Fossil (NF-08132482-AMS45), 2024  
Xyrarock plaster, chalk varnish, medium-density fibreboard, anodized aluminium, acrylic glass  
27 x 37 x 6 cm





Nicl Barbro  
Tokyo Hand, 2024  
Lime wood, aluminum, chalk emulsion, combustion  
63 x 29,5 x 6,5 cm





Benjamin Slinger  
C Enchanted, Well Lit, Aspirational Dungeon - FT, 2023  
'Financial Times' mug, polymer, shirt, cufflink, acrylic paint, varnish, flame shaped LED bulb

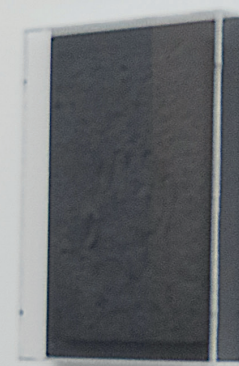




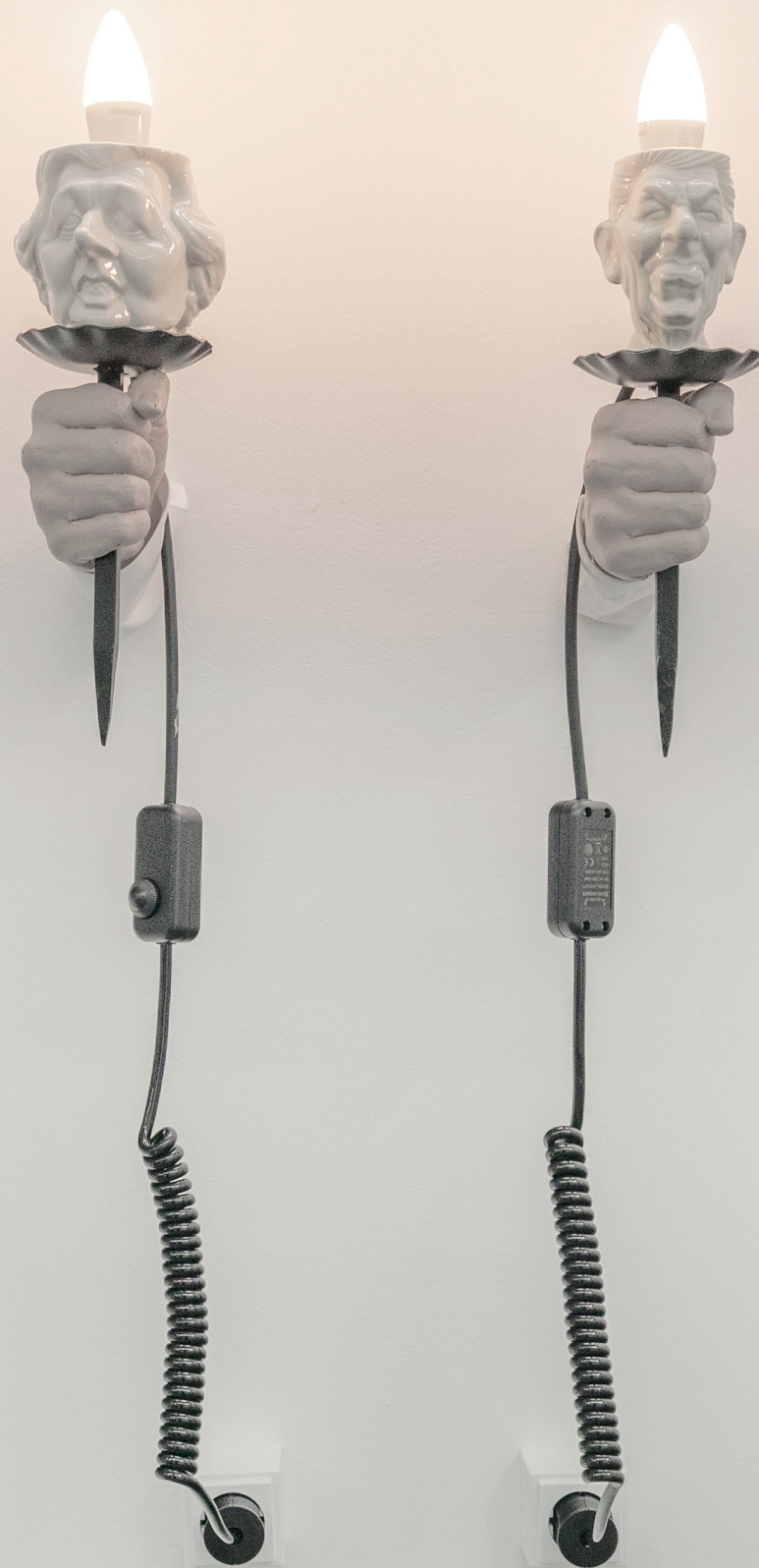












Benjamin Slinger  
Free Dungeon Economics - Thatcher, 2025  
'Spitting Image' portrait mug, polymer, shirt, acrylic paint, bulb

Benjamin Slinger  
Free Dungeon Economics - Reagan, 2025  
'Spitting Image' portrait mug, polymer, shirt, acrylic paint, bulb





Anna Stüdeli  
Yogi, 2024  
Latex prints on blueback paper, aluminium  
91 x 131 x 2 cm



Merlin Reichart  
Trace Fossil (AN-08312481-AMS45), 2024  
Xyrock plaster, chalk varnish, medium-density fibreboard, anodized aluminium, acrylic glass  
27 x 37 x 6 cm







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**Anna Stüdeli** (b. 1990) has been exploring the visual language of advertising for over a decade. Her photographic work dissects the surfaces of commercial imagery, exposing the clichés, sexualization, and consumerist aesthetics embedded within. In *PRIMAL*, she reveals the tension between desire and decay, beauty and disgust. After completing her MA at HFBK, she began working directly with original poster materials, as seen in her *Yogi* series developed during a residency in Paris. There, the emotional and political traces left on public poster sites—rips, tags, declarations—became central to her investigation. Her work questions photography's role in a world oversaturated with images, aiming to reclaim surface as a site of resistance and reflection.

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**Benjamin Slinger** (b. 1990) is a visual artist whose interdisciplinary practice examines how ideology, class, and power are embedded in cultural artefacts and material histories. Drawing from science fiction and fantasy as both aesthetic and methodological tools, Slinger reconfigures objects to expose the narratives they carry.

In recent sculptural works, including a series of lamps resembling medieval dungeon lanterns, Financial Times mugs, Republican memorabilia, and faux candle bulbs are repurposed to evoke a quasi-feudal aesthetic. These hybrids fuse the décor of neoliberal boardrooms with anachronistic fantasy, collapsing corporate iconography into speculative forms of critique. Through this material overload, Slinger reveals how design and symbolism reinforce systems of authority—inviting a deeper reading of the objects that shape our cultural and economic imagination.

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**Hannes Mussner** (b. 1989) explores the human body as a vessel of memory, intimacy, and time. His sculptural work *Twain* shows the right hand of a man and the left hand of a woman emerging quietly from a wall—fragments of human presence carved in wood. The material, rich with natural growth and fiber, lends the work a quiet vitality. Subtle tattoos on both fingers symbolize unity and endurance, transforming the restrained gesture into a meditation on connection and permanence.

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**Lauren Keeley** (b. 1986) creates intricately layered works that blur the boundaries between painting, sculpture, and collage. Combining wood, fabric, printed elements, and digital design, she constructs precise compositions that play with perception, depth, and narrative. Her work often draws on domestic scenes and architectural details, rendered in a reduced, graphic visual language—yet infused with a handcrafted, contemporary sensibility.

Keeley's aesthetic merges clean figuration with subtle material contrasts. In the piece shown, disembodied hands—cut from wood and clad in watch straps and suit cuffs—grip a blue bar, arranged in rhythmic succession against a background of directional chevrons. The graphic clarity and repetition recall corporate routine or public transport choreography, yet the materials and careful assembly give the work a quiet, uncanny tactility.

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**Manuel Stehli** (b. 1988) is a painter whose work centres on the life-sized depiction of the human figure, both alone and in groups. Now based in Berlin, he graduated from the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig in 2014.

Stehli's paintings stage moments that appear specific yet remain unmoored from place and time. Rather than depicting events, they present psychological states—carefully composed constellations of bodies caught in a quiet limbo. There is a tension between their physical presence and their emotional muteness: they suggest intimacy yet hold it at a distance, inviting the viewer to project meaning into their stillness. These figures seem to inhabit spaces just out of reach, like echoes of encounters rather than encounters themselves.

His restrained compositions are marked by an economy of gesture and a subtle choreography of proximity, absence, and pause. They resist the urgency of narrative, operating instead as placeholders for perception and memory. The works do not reach out to the spectator but simply are—silent, self-contained, yet profoundly charged.

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**Merlin Reichart** (b. 1991) is an artist working across sculpture and time-based media. He holds an MFA from the HFBK Hamburg (2022) and studied at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris and the École de recherche graphique in Brussels.

Reichart's practice is informed by political theory, environmental research, philosophy, and science fiction. He translates contemporary social phenomena into intuitive, symbolic forms, exploring the collective unconscious through themes such as the entanglement of culture and nature, the aesthetics of internet culture, and shifting mentalities in the age of climate crisis. His works probe the emotional undercurrents of the present, making visible the often intangible tensions that shape our shared condition.

In his relief series *Trace Fossils* (2024), Reichart casts hand imprints from black plaster, inspired by the glue residues left behind when climate activists fixed their hands to asphalt in acts of protest. Echoing prehistoric footprints, these works translate fleeting gestures of dissent into fossil-like objects. By reframing such traces as future relics, the series reflects on activism, erasure, and how our present moment might one day be remembered—preserved in the shadow of ecological crisis.

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**Nicl Barbro** (b. 1986) lives and works in Soest and Berlin. Her practice moves fluidly between painting and sculpture, often manifesting itself in the form of bas-reliefs or hybrid sculptural objects, as well as drawings. Rooted in the exploration of personal and external experiences, Barbro pursues a largely intuitive approach, drawing on everyday images to reveal moments of vulnerability, hidden depths, and emotional contradictions.

Her works are created through processes of overlapping and recombination that reflect the associative logic of the human mind. The result is compositions that remain in limbo—their elements never fully connect, but instead stand in a fragmentary, often contradictory relationship to one another. Nevertheless, certain motifs reappear, such as physical and mental overload, but also moments of overcoming. These themes relate to experiences arising from accidents, (involuntary) changes of location, or the structural pressure to be spatially and professionally flexible. In this space, Barbro captures the unpredictability, brutality, and fleeting joys of life.







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