

# MIRKO BASILEGIA LEA GREBE

Conversations  
between Species





MIRKO BASILGIA  
LEA GREBE

paper positions Berlin

25. April – 28. April 2024

# Conversations between Species

The end of the 20th century saw the emergence of anthropological and philosophical research by thinkers such as Bruno Latour and Emanuele Coccia, which demonstrated a desire to transcend the dualism between nature and culture. Contemporary artistic production also investigates the relationship between man and nature from different perspectives and opens the door to the imagination of new ways of living this relationship. Indeed, at a time when the ecological crisis can no longer be confined to an ideological debate or scientific research, this issue naturally also becomes a cultural question. In fact, culture and artistic production can inspire change, shift hearts and minds, challenge dominant paradigms and imagine and create new ways of living. Culture has the transformational power to create the system change needed to tackle the twin climate and biodiversity crises within a framework that recognises the interdependence of all living beings.

Lea Grebe and Mirko Baselgia are among the contemporary artists who seek to overcome the dichotomies between nature and culture, between art and science, and who see the natural world and other forms of life as an endless source of inspiration for specific creative faculties, life-supporting structures and systems and mechanisms of cooperation and regeneration that guarantee survival, prosperity and resilience. For them, the organisation of the plant and animal worlds provides alternatives for imagining and realising new social structures, finding in nature the cues for our own transformation.

Lea Grebe's works from the series *Schwarmstudie* and *Schwarmbewegung* explore the movement patterns of swarms, highlighting the idea of collectivity and of a fluctuating state. The result of a process of abstraction, the drawings nevertheless always belong to a neutral 'non-space', open to a multitude of interpretations. The works of her series *Brut* depict strange forms, reminiscent of cocoons and thus the metamorphic process of pupation. The hatched forms are surrounded by elements that resemble an independent ecosystem. Sometimes they resemble protective shells, sometimes fragments of a hostile habitat. Just hatched, the forms are fragile, breakable and preoccupied with themselves and their metamorphosis. It remains unclear whether they have already found their final form or whether they are still in a state of ongoing change.

The works *Conzentraziun* (2019), *Little White* (2020) and *Green Square* (2020) are part of an ongoing series of works showing Mirko Baselgia's interest in the issues related to skin. Scanning electron microscope (SEM) images of animal skins, such as fishes or butterflies, have served as inspiration to create the dynamic compositions. Baselgia's interest in butterflies is also linked to his reflections on biodiversity, as these insects are increasingly being recognised as valuable environmental indicators. His series *Tartaruga* (2021) – turtle in Romansh – highlights a visible manifestation of the passage of time, showing the turtle shells as the material expression of their biography. The use of old newspapers for the realisation of the high reliefs not only suggests a more judicious use of the resources at our disposal, but also offers the possibility to take a critical look at the world of information and to point out the necessity to foster new narratives.

**MIRKO BASELGA**

„I am fascinated by the idea of translating very complex concepts visually; of giving a certain materiality to abstract ideas and contexts that are not immediately perceptible.“

MIRKO BASELGIA

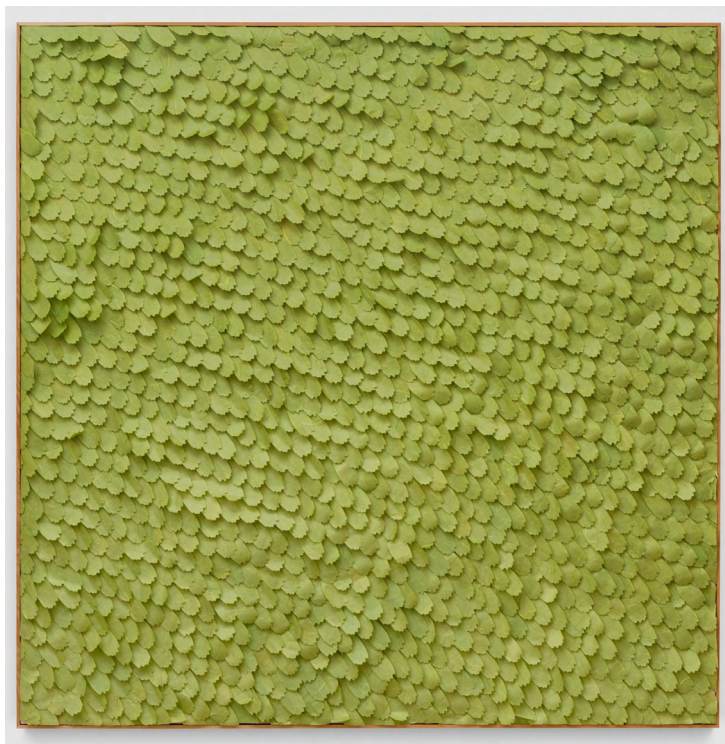
**MIRKO BASELGIA**

Green Square, 2020

paper sewn on linen with larch wood frame

110 x 110 x 3.3 cm

16.800 €





**GREEN SQUARE** is an abstract relief made of overlapped green paper shingles sewn on linen. Scanning electron microscope (SEM) images of butterflies' wings have served as inspiration to create the dynamic composition. The wings of these fascinating insects are actually covered with minute scales providing a number of functions, which include for example insulation, thermoregulation, and aiding flight. Amongst these functions, the most important one is the large diversity of vivid or indistinct patterns they provide, which help the organism protect itself by camouflage, mimicry, and to seek mates. Reproducing the kind of scales with jagged ends, Green Square's light paper scales have been sewn onto the canvas creating diagonal lines on the surface, which give dynamism and a certain three-dimensionality to the composition, effects that can be further enhanced if the scales are exposed to different kinds of air displacements. In fact, these movements can give the impression of a living surface, animated by a gentle breath. This relief is part of an ongoing series of works of variable dimensions and realized with paper scales of different colours. Moreover, it is one of the many works of the artist showing his interest in the issues related to skin, such as *Self-portrait - Reflecting on my inner dragon* (2019) or *Little Black* (2019). Baselgia's interest in butterflies is also linked to his reflections on biodiversity. In fact, these insects are increasingly being recognised as valuable environmental indicators, both for their rapid and sensitive responses to subtle habitat or climatic changes and as representatives for the diversity and responses of other wildlife. Many studies are therefore investigating and developing the role of butterflies as indicators of the state of biodiversity.

**MIRKO BASELGIA**

Little White, 2020

silk paper with mulberry tree fibers sewn on linen, larch wood frame

77 x 55 x 2.2 cm

13.650 €



**MIRKO BASELGIA**  
Concentraziun, 2019  
cardboard  
77 x 55 x 2.2 cm  
15.750 €



**CONZENTRAZIUN** is part of an ongoing series of works showing Baselgia's interest in the issues related to skin. Scanning electron microscope (SEM) images of animal skins, such as fishes or butterflies, have served as inspiration to create the dynamic composition. The artist uses different materials such as cardboard, lead, and wood and scales of many shapes in order to obtain a variety of reliefs that also differ from one another in the density of their surface and their pattern.

**MIRKO BASELGIA**

My self is made up of cells V + VI, 2023

indigo ink on paper, mounted on wood, framed with larch wood

15 x 10 x 2 cm

each 1.470 €



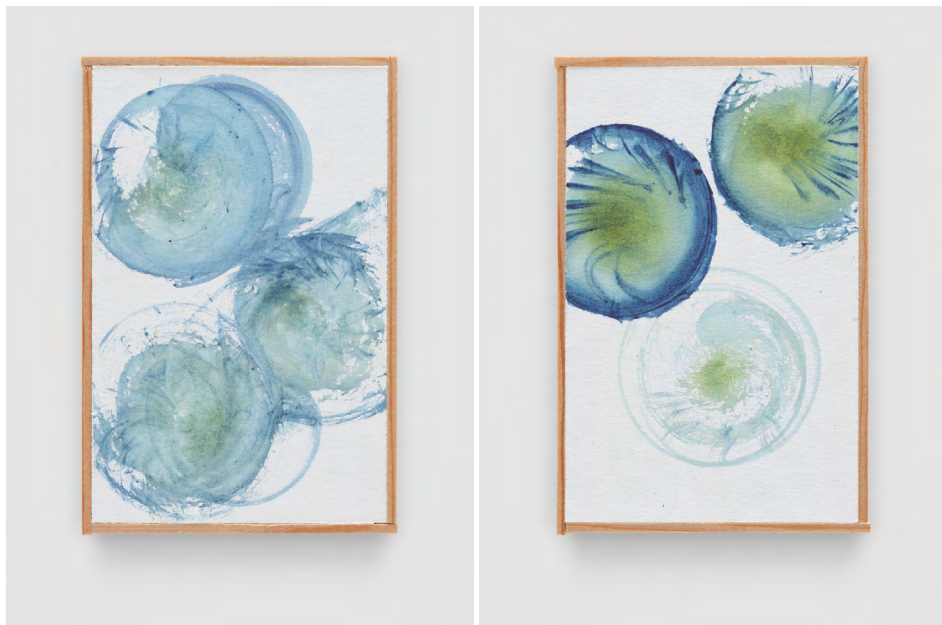
**MIRKO BASELGIA**

My self is made up of cells IX + X, 2023

indigo ink on paper, mounted on wood, framed with larch wood

15 x 10 x 2 cm

each 1.470 €



**MY SELF IS MADE UP OF CELLS** is a new series of small works on paper made with natural inks produced in Mirko Baselgia's studio. These blue drawings with water droplets explore the world of molecules and align with previous works on vitamins. They are also influenced by a Buddha quote reflecting on the transient nature of human life.



**MIRKO BASELGIA**

Tartaruga – The Canberra Times  
newsprint paper on CNS panel  
50.6 x 39.7 cm  
33.600 €



What does our body tell about ourselves and our life? Can growth also in a figurative sense be made visible? In Mirko Baselgia's artistic practice one can see a recurring concern for both the visual transcription of the passage of time and the natural laws that underlie the growth of the most diverse organisms.

After the first series *Tartaruga* (2018), which consists of wood sculptures, these questions are also the central themes of the series of high reliefs in **TARTARUGA** (turtle in Romansh), which highlights a visible manifestation of the passage of time, showing the turtle shells as the material expression of their biography. The scales covering the shell have a series of concentric striations, each roughly corresponding to a year of the animal's life.

The artist's choice to create the shells by superimposing 88 or 100 layers of newspaper whose title contains the term "time" is dictated by the desire to further emphasize the fact that these surface striations are visual records of the passage of time. The layered structure of the high reliefs is also reminiscent of the linear sequence of layers in rock formations that allows us to reconstruct the history of our planet.

The series currently consists of more than ten turtle shells made with newspapers from all over the world: for example *The Canberra Times*, *The New York Times*, *Die Zeit*, *Cape Times*, *The Times of India*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Financial Times*. The size of each work corresponds to the size of the different open newspapers. Each work therefore tells diverse stories, linked to specific realities and cultures. These works contain individual, regional, and national stories, but also broader ones, such as stories of colonization, cross-cultural exchanges, and migration. Finally, they tell the universal story of the inexorable passage of time, which touches us all, without distinction.

The use of old newspapers for the realization of the high reliefs not only allows us to reflect on a more judicious use of the resources at our disposal, but also offers the possibility to take a critical look at the world of information and the media. In light of the importance that the media plays in our understanding of the world, it is desirable to promote narratives that take into account the complexity and diversity underlying life on Earth and society. Fragmenting and reassembling newspaper sheets to create turtle shells becomes a symbolic act that expresses the need for a restructuring of the dominant narrative in favor of a worldview in which each individual can find his or her rightful place, while taking into account the interdependent relationship that binds different forms of life and different realities to each other.

**MIRKO BASELGIA**

cobalamine III, 2024

indigo blue and violet logwood ink on paper

70 x 50 x 2.2 cm

5.800 €





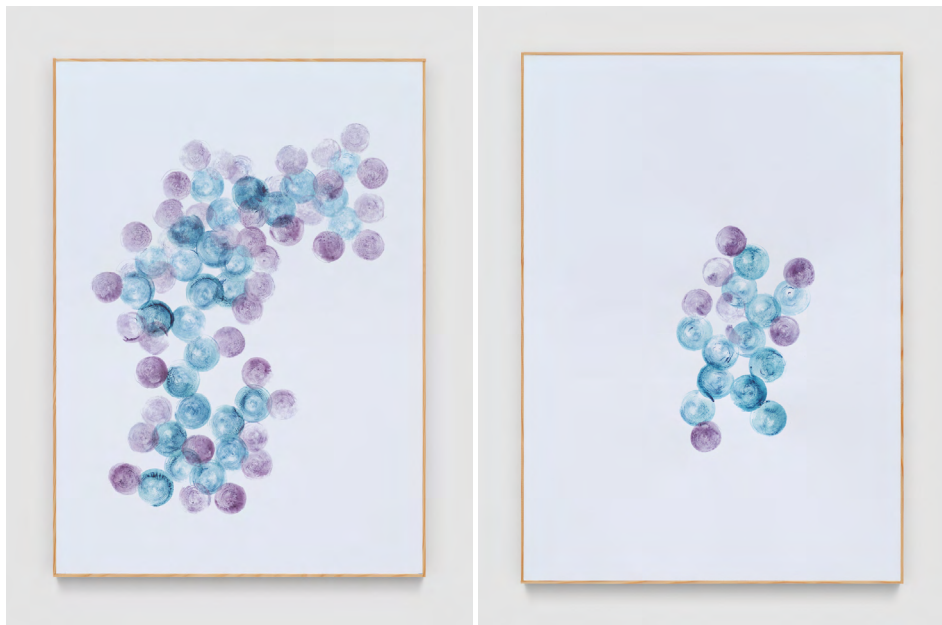
**MIRKO BASELGIA**

cholecalciferol III + ascorbic acid I, 2024

indigo blue and violet logwood ink on paper

70 x 50 x 2.2 cm

each 5.800 €



The drawings **COBALAMINE III**, **CHOLECALCIFEROL III** and **ASCORBIC ACID I** are part of a series of works on paper made with natural inks produced in Mirko Baselgia's studio. Using a handmade wooden stamp, the artist has created organic compositions of small deep blue and blue-tinged violet circles by alternating the use of indigo blue and violet logwood ink. In these and other works in the same series, Baselgia elaborates an abstraction of the chemical structure of nutritional elements that are important for our organism, which offers the cue for a reflection on our lifestyle and its effects on our body and health.

# BIOGRAPHY

**Mirko Baselgia** (\*1982, lives and works in the Swiss mountains) graduated from the Zurich School of Art with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Visual Arts. Amongst other awards, he has been awarded the Kiefer Hablitzel Scholarship (2012) and the Manor Cultural Prize (Chur, 2013). Recent solo exhibitions include *Pardis* (Curzoin) at Bellelay Abbey (2018), *)in(out) till sundown* at Kunst(Zeug)Haus in Rapperswil-Jona (2021), *materia viva* at Galerie Urs Meile in Lucerne and *inner desert* at museumbickel in Walenstadt (2022) as well as *INTERVENZIUN AVIEUL / Intervention Biene* at KOENIGmuseum in Landshut and *structura / system* at Galerie Urs Meile in Ardez (2023). His works are regularly featured in group exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad and found in numerous public and private collections, such as the MUDAC in Lausanne, the Kunstmuseum Olten, the Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur, the Muzeum Susch, the Swiss National Bank, the Credit Suisse Collection, the Zürcher Kantonalbank, the Roche Art Collection and the Burger Collection.

LEA GREBE

„The idea of metamorphosis already contains the possibility for change, a central aspect and empathic appeal for future human action.“

LEA GREBE

**LEA GREBE**

Brut\_V, 2022

acrylic spray on paper, framed

70 x 100 cm

3.400 €



**LEA GREBE**

Brut\_VI, 2022

acrylic spray on paper, framed

70 x 100 cm

3.400 €



The seemingly abstract drawings from the series **BRUT** are based on precise observations of the insect world. Organic forms, reminiscent of cocoons, leave their colourful protective shell and undergo an ongoing transformation as they float through space. In entomology, the term pupa refers to a transitional stage between the insect larva and the later insect. By moulting, this animal brings itself from the one stage (pupa) to the then formed other full insect, as science calls it. During this pupation, a physical transformation takes place, which is known as metamorphosis. In some of the drawings in the series, these organic appearances enter into a dialogue with multicoloured, geometric forms.

**LEA GREBE**

Schwarmbewegung (groß) II, 2023

charcoal on paper, framed

84 x 114 cm

4.400 €





For the series **SCHWARMBEWEGUNG** and **SCHWARMSTUDIE**, Lea Grebe explores the movements and patterns of swarms.

The charcoal drawings from the series *Schwarmbewegung* show hundreds of small dots that trace paths on the surface of the sheet and evoke a movement that is both random and coordinated. Through slight blurring, these dots suggest movements that oscillate between an organic composition and a geometric organisation.

In contrast, undefined forms created by more or less closely spaced curved lines characterise the works of the series *Schwarmstudie*. The coloured shadows of various insects rest on these black shapes.

**LEA GREBE**

#054, Schwarmstudie, 2015

screen print, ink acrylic spray on paper, framed

42 x 59 cm

2.400 €



**LEA GREBE**

#059, Schwarmstudie, 2015

screen print, ink acrylic spray on paper, framed

42 x 59 cm

2.400 €



# BIOGRAPHY

**Lea Grebe** (\*1987, lives and works in Munich) studied art education, art history and modern German literature at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich. Between 2012 and 2018, she studied painting and graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich and has been working there as an artistic collaborator since 2017. In 2020/21 she received, among others, the Debutante Grant of the City of Nuremberg, the working grant of the Stiftung Kunstfonds and the grant of the Freistaat Bayern for Cité internationale des arts Paris. Her works are regularly shown in group exhibitions throughout Germany, for example in the exhibitions Flügelschlag at Museum Sinclair-Haus (2019), RESET at Kunstmuseum Ahlen (2021/22), and Das Insekt – zu Darstellung in (Zeichen-)Kunst und Wissenschaft at Kunsthalle Mannheim (2023), as well as at the Biennale Lindau In situ Paradise (2022). Furthermore in 2020 the catalogue Holometabolie – Lea Grebe was published by Hatje Cantz Berlin. Her works can be found in numerous private collections and in the Contemporary Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany.



## IMPRINT

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Prices are subject to change.  
Dimensions: Height before width.

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Proofreading: Gabi Kämpken, Bad Zwischenahn

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