

Press Release

**Mathis Gasser**  
***The Dark Forest***

13 May – 01 July, 2017  
[Private View: Friday 12 May, 6-9 pm]

Open: Thu – Sat, 12-6 pm  
or by appointment

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Mathis Gasser's *Inhabitants (Spaceships)* – oil on canvas, 270 x 200 cm – takes as its source a meticulously constructed 'starship size comparison chart,' uploaded as a jpg to the underground animator's forum deviantart.com by a German science fiction pundit, username: DirkLoechel. The vast diagram catalogues against a black field, widely appropriated images of several hundred space vessels which have appeared throughout the canon of science fiction (a narrative mass incl. literature, film, cartoons, video games, board games). Over the course of several years, the chart was published in drafts, which DirkLoechel's enthusiastic online community would collectively edit, providing detailed queries regarding the identification of various vessels, and strings of requests for additions to be made. Now finished -- and freely available to print in high resolution -- its captions, which can be read in close-zoom, include, for example: 'Sonic the Hedgehog, Doctor Eggman, Egg Carrier, 789 meters'; *Independence Day / City Destroyer Invasion Mothership / 24,000 meters (approximate)*; and, at the edge of the image, beside the legend ('1 pixel = 10 meters'), appears one 'Real World' vessel, the 'International Co-Operative Project / International Space Station ISS / 100 meters.'

A monochrome plaster sculpture – also titled *Inhabitants* – features an erect stone slab, salvaged from a deserted courtyard near the artist's studio in the outskirts of London, collaged with a model ship (resembling a quintessential British imperialist clipper, e.g. Cutty Sark), buried into the base of the work, at ground level. The slab's façade – a simple carving in low relief, typical of much public sculpture which populated 1950s postwar community centers – depicts a congregation of women, in robes and sandals, standing atop a cluster of clay huts, palms outstretched, gazing stoically towards the heavens.

Ships embody a driving human necessity to chart spatial frontiers – not just carriers of people, explorers, but also of ideas. Ships are roaming microcosms of grounded societies (that often threaten the explored). Cixin Liu – in the second volume of his *Three Body Trilogy* – describes the universe as a 'Dark Forest,' a parable in which countless discrete civilizations exist, huddled around fires, shrouded in black, communities of silent hunters; according to Liu's 'Cosmic Sociology,' these civilizations can exist in peace, so long as they remain ignorant of each other; the moment they trace evidence of other life in the forest, it is inevitable that the civilizations will feud, attempt to eliminate the other.

A catalogue accompanying the exhibition, featuring an essay by Samuel Luterbacher is forthcoming.

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Mathis Gasser was born 1984 in Zurich. He lives and works in London. He received an MA in Fine Art from The Royal College of Art, London and Hunter College, New York in 2012 and a BA from Geneva University of Art and Design, Geneva and Tokyo Institute of Art and Design, Tokyo in 2010. Gasser's solo exhibition *In the Museum* is currently on view at the Kunsthauus Glarus, Switzerland (closing 14 May 2017); copies of the exhibition catalogue for this show are available at CHEWDAY'S. Gasser's upcoming solo exhibitions will take place at Cordova, Vienna, 2017; Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris, 2017; and Cell Project Space (w/ Angharad Williams), London, 2018. Recent-solo exhibitions include *Sept sont tombés vers le ciel*, Centre d'édition contemporaine, Genève, 2016, for which a large catalogue is also available; *Hergest: Haid* at Wallriss (w/ Angharad Williams), Fribourg, 2016; *From Mast to Mast* at Piper Keys, London, 2016; Xippas, Paris 2016; *Seven Fell from Earth*, Hester, New York, 2015; *Regulators 1*, Union Pacific Projects, London, 2015; *The Zond Mission*, with Pierre Vadi, Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich, 2014; *In the Museum 1 & 2*, Piper Keys, London, 2013; *Works 2010-2013*, curated by Yann Chateigné, Live in Your Head, Geneva, 2013; *In the Museum*, curated by Fabrice Stroun and Tenzing Barshee, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, 2013; *space*

# CHEWDAY'S

*soap strange hypnosis opera*, curated by Jill Gasparina, La Salle de Bains, Lyon, 2013; *In the Museum 2*, ribordy contemporary, Geneva, 2013. Recent group exhibitions include *Parkhaus*, Düsseldorf, 2016; *Art in Film*, Swiss Institute, New York, 2016; Glasgow International, Glasgow, 2016; *National Gallery 2: Empire*, CHEWDAY'S, London, 2015; *The Futurists*, curated by Samuel Leuenberger, Les Urbaines, Espace Arlaud, Lausanne, 2015; *Ligne Aveugle*, curated by Hugo Pernet, Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Besançon, 2015; *Prix Vordemberge-Gildewart*, Centre Pasquart, Biel, 2015; *Hoy Hoy Hoy*, Stoke Newington Church Street, London, 2015; *Last Survivor of the Nostromo*, Plymouth Rock, Zurich, 2015; *Works on Paper*, William Arnold, New York; *Signal Failure*, curated by CHEWDAY'S, Pace, London, 2015; Joshua Sex (only curated), 53 Beck Road, London, 2015; *Inventory*, 3236rfs, London, 2015; *Involvement Requires Perception (In the Museum 1 and 2)*, invited by SALTS, Gasthaus zum Bären, Zurich, 2015; *Cu Chulainn Comforted*, curated by Joshua Sex, Basic Space, Dublin, 2016; *Work Hard: Selections by Valentin Carron*, Swiss Institute, New York; *A Form is a Social Gatherer*, Plymouth Rock, Zurich; *Futurologics 1: Swiss Science-Fiction*, Screening organised by Mathis Gasser, Confort Moderne, Poitiers, 2015; *Turibulum Game Plan*, with Mary Hurrell and Cedric Eisenring, Lychee One, London, 2015; *Nimm's Mal Easy*, Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel; *Monstrous Horizon*, ASC Gallery, curated by Phillip Allen, London, 2015; *National Gallery*, curated by CHEWDAY'S, Grand Century, New York, 2014; *A Least Random Number*, curated by Lola Bunting, 53 Beck Road, London, 2014; *Bond Bar*, curated by Darren Flook and Oliver Robb, Max Wigram Gallery, London, 2014; *Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement*, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, 2014; *Associations New*, SALTS, Basel, 2014; *East London Painting Prize Shortlist*, Strand East, London, 2014; *Vortex Ghost Engine*, Lecture/Screening, Fri-Art, Fribourg, 2014.