

Pedro Wirz

Termite Terminators

August 15 – September 19, 2020



Pedro Wirz "Ant Dorm," 2020

Marc Selwyn Fine Art is pleased to present our first exhibition with the artist Pedro Wirz, *Termite Terminators* on view from August 15 through September 19, 2020. We invite you to experience the exhibition in person by appointment. To schedule a visit please contact andy@marcsewlynfineart.com.

Born and raised in the tropical Paraiba Valley in Brazil, Wirz is influenced by the region's massively changing ecologies, demographics, mythologies, and superstitions. In the face of environmental decline, Wirz investigates the interwoven realm of the organic, the synthetic, and the technological, as each become forces for both extinction and renewal.

Wirz, who lives and works in Zurich, was awarded the Gramercy International Prize for his exhibition at the New York Armory Show in 2020 and was the 2018 recipient of the ProHelvetia Cahier d'Artistes Prize. The artist's sculptures were also included in KölnSkulptur #9 at Skulpturenpark Köln in 2017.

An essay by Giampaolo Bianconi written for this exhibition may be found below.



Pedro Wirz "Trilobites," 2018

Termite Terminators

by Giampaolo Bianconi

Beeswax is a particularly long-lasting material. Samples recovered from thousands of years ago are nearly indistinguishable from fresh beeswax. If it decays, its decay is imperceptible. Insects don't seem to want to eat it. Kept from excessive heat, the lifespan of beeswax is indefinite. These works by Pedro Wirz feature a few different objects—mostly toy cars, but also toy airplanes and cement casts of eggs and other shapes—set in beeswax. Wirz frames the works using scraps of wood wrapped in fabric rags.

Beeswax is an ideal material for Wirz, whose works emerge from a nexus of natural history and ecological catastrophe. Wirz has worked extensively with organic materials including rocks, dirt, hair, and twigs. Wirz uses these materials to explore the conceptual implications of deep time beyond the human capacity for understanding, reframing human experience as a fragment of a larger scientific and supernatural history. Beeswax, with its *longue durée*, reveals in these works the presence of multiple timescales--the eternity of the wax, the

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lifecycle of the toys, the limited lifespan of the vehicles they represent, and the potential futures embodied by the enigmatic cement eggs that have been scattered throughout the compositions.

One of Wirz's *Trilobites* (2013/2017/2020) sits in the middle of the gallery--a rock topped by a bronze-cast fried egg. Wirz's trilobite, sometimes shown outdoors, provides a canny joke at the center of the exhibition. Named after an ancient fossil, the sculpture immediately brings the viewer into another timescale and confuses our perception of time itself. Is it the fried egg that has been fossilized? Or has it just taken millions of years for the egg to fry on top of a rock? Around the trilobite hang the beeswax works. At first glance, the whimsy of these compositions is most striking. The choreography of the toys embedded in the wax—whether dryly hugging the frame, claustrophobically docked together, or playfully annular—combined with their glossy finish appears gleeful and boyish. But upon further reflection, one comes to realize the varying temporalities Wirz has contrasted. The longevity of the beeswax makes it ideal to hold onto these toys and fragments. But have the cars been preserved or abandoned? Are they victims of a great flood or simply resting in a variety of parking lots?

Looking closely, it is apparent that the toy cars are branded with symbols for police and fire departments, as well as other fictional businesses. One of them has inspired the title of the exhibition: *Termite Terminators*. Termites, finding delicious wood, will eat and reproduce until the condition of their existence--the wood that sustains them--has been totally devoured and disappeared. Then they enter a crisis of dislocation until they can find another source of food and shelter. Termites, in their ravishing hunger, terminate the condition of their existence. Cars, like termites, are doggedly engaged in wasting the reserves of oil and gas that allow them to function. At what point will toy cars themselves become obsolete? When the resources by which they are fueled are decimated? When cars have been subsumed by the very climatic catastrophe they have helped ignite? Once trapped in wax, the joyous life-cycle represented by these toys becomes an avatar for the more sinister and destructive implications of history's deep time, of which they are agitators and victims at the same time.

Yet even in this vision of ecological catastrophe there remains a seed of optimism and hope. Wirz's cement eggs are sprinkled throughout the compositions. Something, it appears, is waiting to hatch here. What creatures will be born in the world we leave behind, in the wreckage of abandoned automobiles and unfinished construction sites? Will they, too, fall into the same circular trap of the *Termite Terminators*? Or will their history take a different direction, a different shape? Only time, Wirz knows, will tell. And perhaps only the beeswax will bear witness.

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This exhibition was coordinated in conjunction with Kai Matsumiya, New York.

Recent solo and two person presentations of Wirz's work include exhibitions at Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin and Cologne; Kai Matsumiya, New York; Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo and at Murias Centeno Gallery, Porto. His work has also been presented at the Kunsthalle Langenthal, Switzerland; Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris; Tinguely Museum, Basel; CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart; Dortmunder Kunstverein; Palais de Tokyo, Paris and at Kunsthalle Basel. In 2016, he was the artist in residence at the Swiss Institute Rome, and he has recently completed a residency at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Wirz has been awarded the ProHelvetia Cahier d'Artistes Prize in 2018 and had his first monographic book presented during Art Basel in 2019. Born in 1981 in Pindamonhangaba, Brazil, Wirz currently lives and works in Zürich, Switzerland.