

Mixed Double: Ute Essig & Henrik U. Müller

October 10 – November 14, 2026

Artist Talk & Booklet Launch: Samstag, 14. November, 15 Uhr

This is already the third time that Ute Essig and Henrik U. Müller have exhibited together in the gallery spaces. Their last exhibition, *It happened tomorrow*, took place in 2024, and *Sunny to Cloudy* was held in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both artists will be showcasing newly created major works in the main gallery space. In the back rooms, additional works fresh from the studio will be on display, complemented by works from earlier creative periods.

Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room is an ensemble of transparent, fluorescent yellow webs. The ‚balls‘—knitted by Ute Essig from lightfast fishing line—are strung vertically in varying sizes on the yellow nylon threads that hold them in place. A forest of ‚flakes‘ (one might also think of colored bath foam flakes) fills the center of the room while still leaving enough space to view the artists' other major works. The play of the neon-yellow color in the sunshine—as well as its stark contrast to the dark evening streetscape—invites visitors to enter the gallery space. Depending on the angle of the light, magical shadows are cast onto the floor and walls. *It Smells Like Snow* playfully transports this installation into other realms—such as the musical one. Fresh and youthful, light and airy, yet so relaxed, it offers a charming backdrop to the beautiful, eponymous song by Nirvana, breathtakingly interpreted by Patti Smith.

The dark circle, titled by the artist *Memento*—measuring about 175 cm in diameter and precisely positioned on the wall—is composed of countless individual black shapes and draws visitors in to examine it more closely. Like torn black paper, the individual shapes gently curve and stretch out into the space. Each one is nailed to the wall. It's hard to believe: It is black high-fired stoneware.

The deliberate impression of paper fragments that appear charred may, according to the artist, refer on the one hand to humanity's traditional memory, captured on paper (i.e., books and scrolls), and on the other hand to the personal nature of a diary entry, likewise reduced to a torn and burned fragment. *Tempo fugit*—though not necessarily in the way we would wish: intact!

The circle, as an absolute form, represents the universe, infinity, wholeness, security, and hope. In this work, it simultaneously unites its opposite: the fragmented and the destroyed. It signifies a destruction that gives birth to something new—a subtle reference to life in general and, in particular, to the paradoxes of our time.

And then there are the new embroidered pieces featuring poems written on fabric ribbon. They serve as a counterpart—yet firmly woven into their texture—to the well-known embroidered works, in which the words of wisdom and wishes close to our hearts are captured on paper like a three dimensional drawing and painting.

The gallery space is filled with what might be called “clutter”—or, at first glance, even “trash”—the remnants of our fast-paced consumer society: disposable coffee cups carelessly tossed into the urban landscape and trampled underfoot—but here, in the gallery, they are made of unglazed white, high-quality porcelain!

On the opposite wall, the two large magnolia paintings by Henrik Urs Müller stand out in stark contrast with their dominant ultramarine hues. Here, too, the fragmentary nature of the works is immediately apparent. Effectively arranged in counterpoint to one another, the magnolia blossoms—each with its own unique form and bloom, ivory in color and partially highlighted with composite gold—radiate powerfully into the room. They have a presence that is impossible to ignore. Visually striking and powerful, they also exude a sense of inner calm. And they are simply beautiful!

The *Tile Paintings*—even though these are not, in fact, ceramic tiles, but rather layers of photographs transferred onto film and mounted on plywood panels, interplaying with composite gold and lacquer, bound together and protected by a transparent, UV-resistant film—emphasize the fragmentary nature of Müller’s work and create its captivating visual beauty. Although they are not deliberately arranged in a strict composition to form a picture, the individual panels still rise and fall ever so slightly into the space in their own unique way. The spacing between them also creates that touch of chaos that breaks up the rigidity of a one-dimensional image and heightens the tension of the subject. It is a group of works that, once seen, becomes forever associated with the artist Henrik U. Müller. It is his *signature artwork*.

Another flowering plant, the peony, reveals its beauty—stylish and balanced—in the sculptural vase form favored by Müller. This vase is a creation by his studio partner, Ute Essig, whom the artist artfully references and paraphrases. (Some of the vase sculptures are on display in the exhibition warehouse.) A recently created piece is

dedicated to Mars Gomes, a fellow artist who passed away far too soon and was a very close friend of both of them. A wallpaper pattern she designed, featuring countless houseflies as an ornament, is incorporated into this work.

A completely new body of work—even though the subject matter has long been familiar to us, namely ,his' cherry blossoms—enriches the exhibition. It is no longer possible to determine whether this technique could still be called experimental photography, as one might with the *Tile Paintings*. The painterly character of his large-scale applications of lacquer paint, applied in ,patches', is simply too pronounced. The outlines of the monochromatic forms alone might bring to mind cherry blossoms—or at least some kind of blossoms. The subject matter fades away, leaving behind a transition to an abstract image (or space). The matte sheen of the lacquer paints on the paper creates a distinctive, shimmering flesh tone. Here, there is a shift toward the painterly—an element that, in his previous works, was merely part of his painting technique. We can look forward to seeing what comes next. This reorientation of yet another body of work certainly seems promising!

Once again, Ute Essig and Henrik U. Müller have succeeded in staging a cohesive joint exhibition featuring impressive new works. One could also say that it is the natural manifestation of what they develop and experience day in and day out as fellow artists and as a couple in their studio work. Each remains true to themselves, yet they complement one another to form a unified whole.

Semjon H. N. Semjon
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