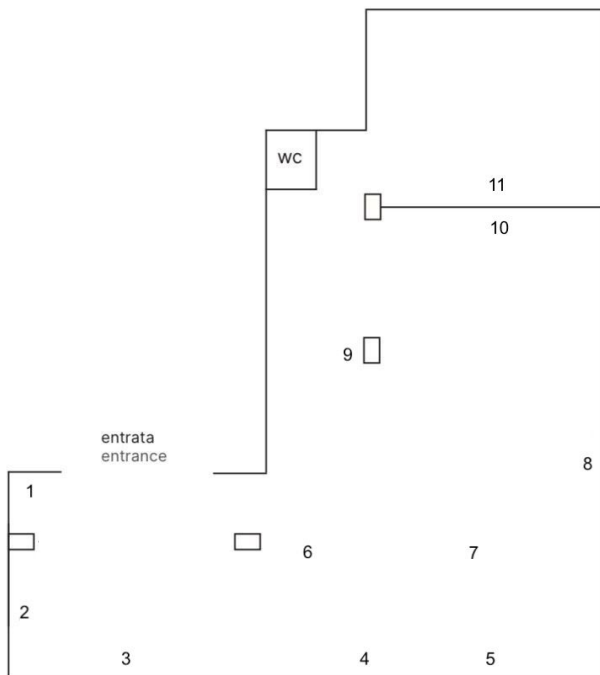


Tales of Resistance in the Valley of the Disenchanted

20.09 — 01.11.2025

Jonathan Vidal, Manuela Morales Delano,
Noemi Pfister, Sabrina Fernández Casas,
Sophie Conus, Vicente Lesser Gutiérrez
a cura di / curated by Julie Marmet



Faced with the current state of the world, we ought to recognize that violence is not limited to a series of isolated crises; it is no longer external, marginal, or accidental.

It seems to have become the very fabric of our society. It is now structural, deployed in organized ways. It hunts down dissident bodies and subjectivities, organizes land grabbings, the limitless exploitation of resources, and programmed impoverishment. It seems inherent to globalized capitalism, which turns life into a commodity and existence into competition.

In this context, the so-called modern state is the only “legitimate” holder of violence. This monopoly, far from protecting, consolidates the established order. The state decides who deserves security, who will be defended, and who can be abandoned. What is called “protection” is often just another way of reproducing domination.

So, what does it mean to live in a world where security is a privilege rather than a shared right? How can we think about the future when the present is saturated with systemic violences that condition

and organize our existences down to the most intimate details?

In building this exhibition, I am inhabited by these questions. To approach them, I am accompanied by two texts, which I allow myself to bring into the conversation.

Octavia E. Butler, in her anticipation series *Earthseed: Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*, describes a post-catastrophic society devastated by inequalities and the collapse of institutions. In this world, violence is omnipresent but it does not exhaust the horizon; From it emerge sharing abilities and visions capable of refounding a spiritual and political project of transformation. Butler does not glorify violence: she conceives of it as a material with which communities must compound and from which new forms of life may arise.

Elsa Dorlin, in *Se défendre, une philosophie de la violence* [Self-defense, a Philosophy of Violence], analyzes how, throughout history, certain bodies have been systematically denied the right to self-defense. For them, defensive violence becomes a vital practice. Rethinking the legitimacy of

1. Sophie Conus, *no peace* 2025, sound

2. Noemi Pfister, *Happily Aging* and *Dying*, 2022, oil on canvas

3. Manuela Morales Delano, *Heavy bag (silver)*, 2025, stones, silver chain, faux leather & Heavy bag (chandelier), 2025 stones, brass, leather

4. Jonathan Vidal, *Death to the fascist insect that preys upon the life of the people!*, 2025, acrylic on canvas, print, ink and graphite on acetate, glass

5. Noemi Pfister, *Everybody needs a friend*, 2021, oil on canvas

6. Vicente Lesser Gutierrez, *El Diablo va a la Pega (We Don't Need No Education)*, 2023, aluminium, screens, 3D video, metal

7. Jonathan Vidal, *Profits are best seen from the top (when they tell you you must make it and you think hell no)*, 2023, glass, aluminium, Udine Solari clocks, cupboard cups

8. Vicente Lesser Gutierrez, *Rejillitas*, 2025, aluminum, watercolor on paper

9. Sabrina Fernández Casas, *Torchère*, 2025, stoneware ceramics, photogravure plate

10. Manuela Morales Delano, *Manito de Guagua: Economics of the Clock*, 2023, bread

11. Sabrina Fernández Casas, *Rondes à Chaînes*, 2024, video 16mm, HD, Stereo 11'20" (loop), english subtitles

violence thus means rehabilitating the very possibility of protection and survival. Violence here is understood as a last resort, when all institutional protections have failed, or were never offered. Violence is no longer only destruction, but becomes a condition of life itself.

If we refuse to see chaos solely as a destructive force, we may then recognize it as a catalyst for change. Periods of disorder and collapse also open spaces that enable the reinvention of collective imaginaries. Violence and rebellion, understood as response, as strategies of defense and survival, can then become the starting point of a politics of reclaiming life. They do not aim at domination but at transformation, outside of the logic that made violence a universal language.

Tales of Resistance in the Valley of the Disenchanted proposes a reflection on resistance and the exploration of new forms of engagement and response to today's political and social urgencies. Rather than a simple critical statement, it inscribes itself in a

practice of counter-narrative: it is not only a matter of commenting on the world, but of reshaping it, creating cracks in the established order, and imagining escape routes.

The artists gathered in the exhibition choose to inhabit instability. By immersing themselves in a state of trouble, they reveal its emancipatory potential and reclaim the position of the outsider.

Rather than acting as a simple mirror, their work operates as a call to deconstruct and recompose contemporary realities. Their proposals can thus be read as attempts to formulate responses to violence: neither denial nor fatalism, but an active tension, a field where destruction, rebellion, and re-invention contend.

At the entrance, *no peace* of Sophie Conus is conceived as a portal: invisible, it acts as a threshold that guides visitors into the exhibition. The soundpiece presents a troubled atmosphere. Sonorities, at one human, organic and electronic, intermingle and seem to come from a space

where the relation to the living is unfamiliar. The piece starts as an ambient soundscape in which it is difficult to distinguish what is programmed from what breathes. Slowly, it becomes the soundtrack of a land where protesting seems to be a proper form of life. The piece envelops space and body like an organism that unfolds slowly. Like nature infiltrating the cracks of architecture, the sounds act as parasites, constructing an unstable yet undeniably inhabited territory.

If the atmosphere of *Happily Aging and Dying* seems to announce the imminence of catastrophe, the characters painted by Noemi Pfister wander, smoke, and observe the surrounding chaos with indifference. Although one might be tempted to read her work as dystopia, as a premonitory vision of the earth after centuries of necro-capitalism, Noemi Pfister rather suggests the apocalypse as a paradoxical form of liberation. It becomes almost hopeful: not the end, but the possibility of resolution, a step aside toward other ways of living together, without hierarchies or injunctions. Although monumental, her painting glorifies neither heroes nor epic tales. On the contrary, it acknowledges chaos and violence but chooses to see in them a force of proposition, letting collapse happen and inventing, alongside, other forms of community-making.

The brick is a recurring motif in the work of Vicente Lesser Gutierrez. At the base of any construction, it is taken as a democratic symbol: both utilitarian, fabricable by anyone, and an immediate tool of urban self-defense. In Chile, *El Ladrillo* [the brick] is the founding text of the ultra-liberal reforms developed by the Chicago School during Pinochet's dictatorship, whose effects still mark today's social, educational, and environmental fabric. In the installation *El Diablo va a la Pega (We Don't Need No Education)*, the brick and pavestones are paired with the crowbar, taken here as a double symbol, both tool and means of defense, and associated with a Mapuche legend

in which two serpents, earth and ocean, clash as a metaphor of revolution and counter-revolution.

Jonathan Vidal's installation *Profits are best seen from the top (when they tell you you must make it and you think hell no)* forces us to look from above. Two petrified clowns, with melancholic, exhausted gazes, lean against clocks showing a deranged time. They come from the former offices of a multinational commodity trading firm, where they once regulated the employees' daily lives, until someone chose to steal them, thus liberating them from the disciplinary order they embodied. In a new sterile environment, cups mechanically repeat the ecological slogans of the commodity trader, revealing the never ending abyss between discourse and practice. In this assemblage, laughter freezes into a mask, the clock spins out of control, and productivist rhetoric falters under its own weight.

Manito de Guagua: Economics of the Clock takes the form of a wall clock whose sixty time markers are replaced by clenched fists. In Chilean Spanish, *manitos de guagua* [baby hands] refers to the gesture of a baby grasping, and colloquially designates those characterized by greed. Here, the hand is as much that of those who colonize and hoard without ever letting go, as it is that of the raised fist. A universal symbol of resistance, it is repeated and frozen in a material suggesting that although made of a technique and substance accessible to all, these gestures belong to the living, and can thus be altered and disintegrate. The circle evokes both the cyclical nature of appropriation and domination, and the necessary reactivation of movements of revolt and opposition.

In her video *Rondes à chaînes*, Sabrina Fernandez Casas connects a Swiss metallurgical factory specialized in the production of files to a militant brigade in Galicia, engaged against the invasion of eucalyptus. The camera follows the *brigadistas*, chainsaws in hand, into a forest caught between exploitation and resilience.

Felling the trees introduced for industrial purposes, their work is both ecological resistance and territorial reappropriation: an effort to free the land from its economic submission. In rediscovering the landscape, they relearn ancestral gestures of rural life and rehabilitate a contemporary form of *mancomunidad*, a model of shared governance, where territory is conceived as a collective resource, beyond logics of property and exploitation.

* * *

What are we to do with the violence that runs through and around us? How can we acknowledge it without collapsing? And how can we turn it into a force for transformation?

Tales of Resistance in the Valley of the Disenchanted does not propose a definitive answer, but rather a space in which to experience the complexity of these questions. It invites us to recognize that in a world saturated with violence, self-defense is no longer optional: the call to react and resist must be understood as a politics of life. Here, rebellion, even if it may borrow the tools of violence, is not that which destroys, but that which resists, interrupts, and prevents the continuity of domination.

Oscillating between lucid observation and desire for transformation, the exhibition stages proposals of response and rebellion:

- where radicality and violence can be admitted as ultimate legitimate responses to systemic destruction and exploitation,
- where radical expressions of emancipation and freedom are the conditions for reenchantment.

Julie Marmet
Geneva, September 2025

Sonnenstube è un offspace fondato nel 2013, itinerante, con base a Lugano, che offre una programmazione regolare, flessibile e a volte inaspettata. Sonnenstube è diretto da Giacomo Galletti (1993, curatore), Giada Olivotto (1990, curatrice), Sandro Pianetti (1987, artista e interaction designer), Gabriel Stöckli (1991, artista), Gianmaria Zanda (1985, artista and musicista). / Sonnenstube is a Lugano-based, itinerant offspace founded in 2013 that offers regular, flexible and sometimes unexpected programm. Sonnenstube is run by Giacomo Galletti (1993, curator), Giada Olivotto (1990, curator), Sandro Pianetti (1987, artist and interaction designer), Gabriel Stöckli (1991, artist), Gianmaria Zanda (1985, artist and musician).

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Tales of Resistance in the Valley of the Disenchanted rests on a dialogue between existing works and new pieces created specifically for the exhibition. The series of five new works is offered for sale during and after the exhibition, with the objective that all proceeds be donated to an association engaged in supporting those directly affected by the ongoing genocide in Palestine.

This approach seeks to prevent the exhibition from profiting from political discourse. It is about refusing that the project merely thematize violence while feeding an art system that too often participates in reproducing the status quo.

Here, the economy of the exhibition establishes and claims continuity between artistic gesture and concrete engagement. The works are not only bearers of counter-narratives; they produce resources that can be reinjected into the resistance.

The following pieces are part of this gesture. Prices have been deliberately adjusted to ensure greater accessibility, and the artists renounce any personal profit so that the entirety of the proceeds can be directed towards the Sameer Project. The association is led by Palestinians in the diaspora, working to supply aid to displaced families in Gaza.

Manuela Morales Delano

Heavy bag (silver)

2025, stones, silver chain, faux leather &

Heavy bag (chandelier), 2025 stones, brass, leather

1750 CHF each

Jonathan Vidal

Death to the fascist insect that preys upon the life of the people!

2025, acrylic on canvas, print, ink and graphite on acetate, glass

900 CHF

Noemi Pfister

Everybody needs a friend

2021, oil on canvas

2000 CHF

Vicente Lesser Gutierrez

Rejillitas

2025, aluminum, watercolor on paper

1200 CHF

Sabrina Fernández Casas

Torchère

2025, stoneware ceramics, photogravure plate

700 CHF