

# FRANCIS UPRITCHARD

## A LOOSE HOLD

18.9.–20.11.2022

**Francis Upritchard's (\*1976, New Zealand) sculptures are situated between realism and fantasy; whilst flamboyantly theatrical, they are also keenly observant of human nature. Made from a wide variety of materials, such as rubber, bronze, stone and glass, they explore both material and aesthetic aspects of human and anthropomorphic forms. Upritchard's work draws on craft traditions and design, combining references from science fiction and folklore to ancient sculptures and the animal kingdom.**

In *A Loose Hold*, the artist creates a sculptural and spatial installation to which she imbues human and anthropomorphic forms, carefully arranging them into mysterious environments. Often hand-woven blankets, tie-dyed silks, and custom-made garments adorn the deftly crafted sculptures, which are sometimes combined with found objects. The varying scale of the sculptures, which can be tiny or monumental, in interplay with their presentation, challenge the viewer's gaze.

Upritchard's works are characterised by curiosity and an exploration of the human form. The most expressive reflection of the human-like qualities can be found in the group of clothed figures, which are modelled by hand in polymer clay and are about one metre high. The face, arms and feet are painted in a palette of monochrome colours or with a geometric pattern. The artist's figures, which transcend culture and time, resist easy categorisation and allow for multiple readings. For example, no one wears a uniform so that they could be assigned to a particular profession. Instead, the clothes are strange.

More recently, Upritchard has experimented extensively with form and material, creating a group of dinosaurs and other creatures from extracts of wild rubber trees. They appear natural, but at the same time monumental and brutal in execution. Some of the rubber works are cast in bronze, which makes them less pliable and implies a different perception of materiality. The wild rubber gives the exhibition its name – *A Loose Hold*. It comes from a description about working with the material: it needs a certain speed and looseness to feel supple or authentic.

Another inspiration for the exhibition was the fantastic novel *Piranesi* (2020) by British author Susanna Clarke. The narrative is set in a house that represents a parallel dimension consisting of an inexhaustible number of corridors and atriums, which gradually causes the loss of memory in those who arrive. It is a very visual book, detailing many gigantic statues as well as other attributes of the house, such as its steps. In the exhibition we find traces that evoke a sense of Clarke's fictional house. The sculptures in the large Salle Poma are not archetypal representations, but objects that everyone, regardless of gender and age, can read in their own meanings. Frightening or friendly; that can depend on the mood of the viewer.

*A Loose Hold* is the artist's first solo exhibition in Switzerland. It includes over 100 works, all of which – with a few exceptions – Upritchard created especially for the solo presentation in Biel.

The exhibition is displayed on the two floors of the new building; it begins in the Galleries and ends in the Salle Poma.

## **Publication**

The exhibition will be accompanied by a monographic publication in three languages (eng/dt/fr) in cooperation with the publishing house Dent-De-Leone, London, with texts by Stefanie Gschwend and the 12-year-old LPPL.

## **Curators of the exhibition**

Stefanie Gschwend and Felicity Lunn

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## **Artist's talk**

Sat 17.9.2022, 4pm (eng) Francis Upritchard in conversation with Stefanie Gschwend

## **Guided tours**

Thurs 6.10.2022, 6pm (fr) Laura Weber, exhibitions assistant

Thurs 3.11.2022, 6pm (dt) Joana Kunz, art educator

## **Art at noon**

(dt/fr) Short guided tour followed by lunch snack from *Batavia*, CHF 15.- regular admission without snack, registration: [info@pasquart.ch](mailto:info@pasquart.ch)

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## **Balata Rubber**

The extraction of Balata (a wild rubber) for exportation began in the Monte Alegre region of Brazil in the 1940s, alongside the “rubber soldiers government program”, an incentive for workers to extract rubber to provide raw material for the Second World War. In the United States the material was imported for use in machinery belts, golf balls, underwater cabling and other products. Due to the invention of synthetic rubber in the mid-1950s, export of Balata halted and the last shipment of 150 tons was sent to the United States in 1965. As industrial export had begun to tail off, João Boi a local from the Monte Alegre region, began using the material for craft purposes which continued to provide a steady income to his team of Balata extractors.

Darlindo Jose de Oliveira Pinto, a former apprentice under Boi, now manages the extraction process which takes place every two years. He has a special permit to send several extractors from Monte Alegre at the beginning of January. They begin the several-week trip by car, then by boat and hike up to 1800 metres with their equipment, clearing a path and setting up camp so they can extract the rubber for the next two months.

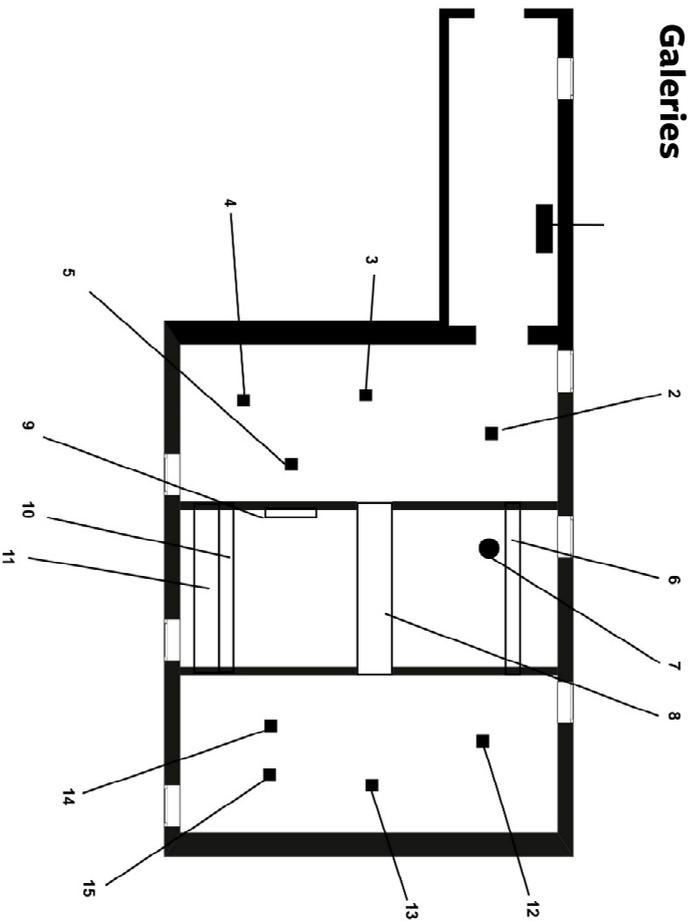
The trees grow on the equator line and can only be harvested every four years, specifically during the rainy season. De Oliveira Pinto ethically harvests trees from several plots so they have time to recover, the extractors alternate between 2 stands of trees. V-shaped burrows are carved into the tree, leading into a single line to the bottom of the trunk where a bag is strapped to collect the latex. Each 15-metre tree gives approximately 18 litres of latex. This liquid is then boiled in water and cast into solid rectangular blocks. Since the blocks are transported by river, they wait until the end of the rainy season in June to avoid the risk of losing the blocks in the high water.

De Oliveira Pinto and his team collect approximately one ton of rubber during each expedition which is shared between the local artisans, with Francis Upritchard and a local dentist being the only other people he sells to beyond the Monte Alegre community. De Oliveira Pinto makes and sells his Balata crafts in the local markets and a few artisanal stores in Belem, Brazil. He makes small 2-20cm sculptures of local animals and Amazonian mythical creatures. In 2012, UNESCO awarded him a recommendation of excellence for his Balata modelling.

In his studio, de Oliveira Pinto heats and massages the Balata five times to remove any insect or bark debris. As natural rubber is not vulcanised (the water is not removed) it is perishable. Before use, the rubber is soaked in water, which is then heated to around 80 degrees Celsius. At this heat it becomes pliable and modelling begins – most of the forming takes place under water in a cold-water bath. The water atmosphere cools the Balata and slows the effects of gravity.

Upritchard has been working with this material since meeting de Oliveira Pinto in 2004 in Belem during an artist residency.

## Galleries



- 1
- Study Face**, 2007  
4.8 x 5.4 x 8.8 cm  
Clay / Argile / Ton
- Dead Head**, 2005  
8 x 7 x 7 cm  
Modelling material; foil, paint / Pâte à modeler, aluminium, peinture / Modelliermasse, Alufolie, Farbe
- Socks Feet**, 2014  
Each / Chacun / Je 7.5 x 22 x 9 cm  
Modelling material; foil, paint / Pâte à modeler, aluminium, peinture / Modelliermasse, Alufolie, Farbe

- Three Snails**, 2022  
Each / Chacun / Je 1.5 x 3.5 x 2 cm  
Thermo plastic, snail shell / Matière thermoplastique, coquille d'escargot / Thermoplast, Schneckenhaus
- Three Men Waiting**, 2022  
18 x 13 cm  
Glass / Verre / Glas
- Two Hot Men**, 2022  
17 x 11 cm  
Glass / Verre / Glas

- Nasurtium I**, 2019  
4.3 x 9.3 x 3.0 cm
- Heavy Head**, 2019  
4.5 x 6 x 3.2 cm
- Janus with Cavity**, 2019  
9.3 x 5.5 x 2.3 cm
- A Stomach Full**, 2019  
9.2 x 4.2 x 2.2 cm
- Small Worried Effigy**, 2019  
7.3 x 2.6 x 2 cm
- Tiny Dino Pile**, 2021  
4.5 x 2.8 x 1.8 cm,
- Ye Ha Centaur**, 2018  
8.5 x 7.4 x 2.3 cm
- Slow Flood**, 2018  
5.9 x 5.9 x 1.9 cm
- Week Centaur**, 2018  
3.6 x 4.2 x 1 cm
- Mermaid Swims Towards the Surface**, 2021  
9.4 x 4.9 x 1.8 mm
- Mermaid with Vase**, 2021  
8.3 x 4.8 x 1 cm
- Model for Two Tooth, Long Tooth and Ram**, 2022  
4.5 x 2 x 2.8 cm; 3.7 x 2 x 2.7 cm
- Model Laughing Man Pile**, 2022  
16.2 x 7 x 2 cm
- Model Off for Lunch**, 2022  
5 x 9 x 2.5 cm
- Model Swamp Creature**, 2022  
18.5 x 11.5 x 7 cm
- Model of Dangerous**, 2022  
9 x 4.3 x 2.3 cm  
Bronze
- Janus Head with Tongue**, 2019  
4 x 3.4 x 3.4 cm
- Mask Bulge Eyes**, 2021  
7.1 x 3.6 x 1.7 cm
- Janus Head Squashed**, 2021  
5 x 5.1 x 3.8 cm
- Janus Head 2 Pile**, 2021  
4.6 x 4.4 x 2.7 cm
- Janus Head Side**, 2021  
3.8 x 4.7 x 3.3 cm
- Robot Janus Head**, 2021  
3.6 x 3.5 x 2.6 cm  
Materials include: bronze, thermal plastic, bone / Matériaux utilisés: bronze, matière thermoplastique, os / Verwendetes Material: Bronze, Thermoplast, Knochen

- 2
- Car Queen**, 2020  
110 x 40 x 30 cm  
Steel and foil armature, acrylic padding, paint, modelling material, fabric, leather, crystal, earrings / Armature en acier et en aluminium, rembourrage en acrylique, peinture, pâte à modeler, tissu, cuir, cristaux, boucles d'oreilles / Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Acrylpolsterung, Farbe, Modelliermasse, Stoff, Leder, Kristalle, Ohrhänge
- 3
- Purple and Yellow Diamond**, 2016  
129 x 39 x 32 cm  
Modelling material, steel and foil armature, paint, fabric, hair / Pâte à modeler, armature en acier et en aluminium, peinture, tissu, cheveux / Modelliermasse, Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Farbe, Stoff, Haare
- 4
- Buoy**, 2017  
98 x 34 x 30 cm  
Modelling material, steel and foil armature, paint, fabric / Pâte à modeler, armature en acier et en aluminium, peinture, tissu / Modelliermasse, Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Farbe, Stoff
- 5
- Flock Hill**, 2020  
83 x 28 x 25 cm  
Steel and foil armature, acrylic padding, paint, modelling material, fabric, leather, porcelain buttons, found plastic clasp / Armature en acier et en aluminium, rembourrage en acrylique, peinture, pâte à modeler, tissu, cuir, boutons en porcelaine, fermoir en plastique trouvé / Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Acrylpolsterung, Farbe, Modelliermasse, Stoff, Leder, Porzellanknöpfe, gelundeter Kunststoffverschluss
- 6
- Moon Face**, 2020  
30.5 x 24 x 4.5cm  
Fabric, paint, leather, acrylic stuffing / Tissu, peinture, cuir, rembourrage en acrylique / Stoff, Farbe, Leder, Acrylfüllung
- 7
- Heavy Earrings**, 2021  
Variable dimensions / Dimensions variables / Variable Dimensionen  
Bronze
- Crying Effigy**, 2022  
152 x 53 x 45 cm  
Wood, crystal beads, glass, bronze, padding over steel armature / Laine, perles de cristal, verre, bronze, rembourrage sur une armature en acier / Wolle, Kristallperlen, Glas, Bronze, Polsterung über Stahlgerüst

- 8  
**Gumpy, Gumpy, Gumpy**, 2019  
 52 x 35 x 50 cm  
 Modelling material, steel and foil armature, paint, fabric, hair / Pâte à modeler, armature en acier et en aluminium, peinture, tissu, cheveux / Modellermasse, Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Farbe, Stoff, Haare
- Moustache Jar**, 2018  
 23 x 18,5 x 17 cm  
 Ceramic / Céramique / Keramik
- Frog with Spaw**, 2022  
 55,5 x 29,5 x 23 cm  
 Papier-mâché, wood, plastic, steel armature / Papier-mâché, bois, plastique, armature en acier / Pappmache, Holz, Kunststoff, Stahlgelüst
- Frog Reunion**, 2022  
 67,5 x 41 x 22 cm  
 Papier-mâché, wood, plastic, steel armature / Papier-mâché, bois, plastique, armature en acier / Pappmache, Holz, Kunststoff, Stahlgelüst
- 9  
**Polypheumus Carpet**, 2022  
 66 x 62 x 10 cm  
 Wool carpet, glass, fabric, beads, crystals, sheep skin, coral, shell / Tapis en laine, verre, tissu, perles, cristaux, peau de mouton, corail, coquillage / Wolleppich, Glas, Stoff, Pelten, Kristalle, Schatteil, Korallen, Muscheln
- 10  
**Foot Ball Face**, 2022  
 43 x 31 x 13 cm  
 Fabric, paint, velour, acrylic stuffing / Tissu, peinture, velours, rembourrage en acrylique / Stoff, Farbe, Samt, Acrylpolsterung
- Orange Creepers Gloves**, 2020  
 3,5 x 6 x 12 cm; 4,4 x 5,2 x 11,5 cm  
**Mouse Mole Gloves**, 2020  
 5 x 7,4 x 20,5 cm; 4 x 6,5 x 22 cm  
**Rich Relative Gloves**, 2020  
 4 x 7,8 x 20 cm; 5 x 7 x 19 cm  
**Baron's Glove**, 2019  
 4,2 x 6,7 x 12,8 cm  
**Natural Peru Glove**, 2019  
 3,4 x 7 x 15,4 cm  
**Zig Zag Gloves**, 2019  
 3,8 x 6,2 x 12,5 cm; 4 x 5,5 x 13 cm  
**Green Peru Glove**, 2019  
 3,8 x 6 x 5,5 cm  
**Triple Face Gloves**, 2020  
 3,7 x 7,1 x 12,5 cm  
**Rainy Gloves**, 2020  
 4,4 x 6,4 x 29,2 cm; 2,9 x 7 x 30 cm  
**Bolder Face Gloves**, 2021  
 5 x 7,4 x 16,4 cm; 5,8 x 7,5 x 15,7 cm  
**The Funny Digits**, 2021  
 4 x 5,8 x 24 cm; 4 x 6 x 24 cm  
**Blue Nights Gloves**, 2020  
 8,6 x 4,2 x 11,8 cm; 3,5 x 8,5 x 11 cm  
**Rich Farmer's Gloves**, 2020  
 5,6 x 7 x 15 cm; 5,8 x 7,0 x 17,2 cm  
**Winter Gloves**, 2019  
 3,8 x 7,8 x 14,8 cm; 3,8 x 6,5 x 14,3 cm  
**Orange Peru Glove**, 2019  
 4,5 x 8 x 22,5 cm  
**Purple Peru Glove**, 2019  
 4 x 6,2 x 4,4 cm  
**Wall Paper Gloves**, 2019  
 3,2 x 5,3 x 10 cm; 3,4 x 4,5 x 9,5 cm  
**Silver Peru Glove**, 2019  
 3,2 x 6,5 x 13 cm  
 Materials include: leather, paint, silver, bronze, gems, enamel / Matériaux utilisés: cuir, peinture, argent, bronze, pierres précieuses, émail / Verwendetes Material: Leder, Farbe, Silber, Bronze, Edelsteine, Email
- Debangle Debarde**, 2021  
 Variable dimensions / Dimensions variables / Variable Dimensionen  
 Thermo plastic, paint pigments, glass beads / Matière thermoplastique, pigments de peinture, perles en verre / Thermoplast, Farbpigmente, Glasperlen
- Nasturtium Book**, 2022  
 28,5x 57,5 cm  
 Watercolour on paper / Aquarelle sur papier / Aquarell auf Papier
- 11  
**Fig Branch**, 2022  
 26,8 x 19 cm  
 Watercolour on paper / Aquarelle sur papier / Aquarell auf Papier
- Winky**, 2022  
 7 x 18 x 5,5 cm  
 Bronze
- Leaf Glass**, 2022  
 62 x 15 cm
- Two Men Waiting**, 2022  
 33 x 13,5 cm
- Allen Waiting**, 2022  
 47 x 16,5 cm
- Red People Pile**, 2022  
 28,5 x 13,4 cm
- Man and Nasturtium**, 2022  
 4,3 x 16 cm  
 Glass / Verre / Glas
- The Piggy Back**, 2017  
 92 x 32 x 28 cm  
 Papier-mâché, metal armature, bone / Papier-mâché, armature métallique, os / Pappmache, Metallgerüst, Knochen
- Pebble on a Sausage, On Pebbles**, 2021  
 14,5 x 23 x 6 cm  
 Glass, bronze, bone plastic, stone / Verre, bronze, os, plastique, pierre / Glas, Bronze, Knochen, Kunststoff, Stein
- Lineup: Eight Pebbles**, 2021  
 10,8 x 26,5 x 10 cm  
 Glass, bronze, bone plastic, stone / Verre, bronze, os, plastique, pierre / Glas, Bronze, Knochen, Kunststoff, Stein
- Monkey with Rocks**, 2021  
 40,3 x 19,3 x 9,5 cm  
 Bronze, stone / Bronze, pierre / Bronze, Stein
- 12  
**Long Gone Glove**, 2019  
 4 x 5 x 24 cm  
 Leather, bronze, sapphires / cuir, bronze, saphirs / Leder, Bronze, Saphire
- Ram Head**, 2022  
 24,8 x 10,5 cm  
 Glass / Verre / Glas
- 13  
**Camouflage**, 2020  
 10,4 x 3,4 x 25 cm  
 Steel and foil armature, acrylic padding, paint, modelling material, fabric, synthetic hair, earrings / Armature en acier et en aluminium, rembourrage en acrylique, peinture, pâte à modeler, tissu, cheveux synthétiques, boucles d'oreilles / Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Acrylpolsterung, Farbe, Modellermasse, Stoff, Kunsthaar, Ohrringe
- Mock Tudor**, 2020  
 9,4 x 38 x 26 cm  
 Steel and foil armature, modelling material, paint, fabric, bronze, glass beads, cow bone / Armature en acier et en aluminium, pâte à modeler, peinture, tissu, bronzes, perles en verre, os de vache / Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Modellermasse, Farbe, Bronze, Glasperlen, Kuhknochen
- 14  
**No-Face**, 2020  
 50 x 34 x 34 cm  
 Steel and foil armature, acrylic padding, paint, modelling material, fabric, fossils, enameled copper / Armature en acier et en aluminium, rembourrage en acrylique, peinture, pâte à modeler, tissu, fossiles, cuivre émaillé / Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Acrylpolsterung, Farbe, Modellermasse, Stoff, Fossilien, emailiertes Kupfer
- 15  
**Skull Eye**, 2020  
 89 x 28 x 16 cm  
 Steel and foil armature, acrylic padding, paint, modelling material, fabric, synthetic hair, cow horn, bronze / Armature en acier et en aluminium, rembourrage en acrylique, peinture, pâte à modeler, tissu, cheveux synthétiques, corne de vache, bronze / Stahl- und Aluminiumgerüst, Acrylpolsterung, Farbe, Modellermasse, Stoff, Kunsthaar, Kuhhorn, Bronze

# Salle Poma

- A** Stone table with / Table en pierre avec / Steintisch mit:  
*The Cure Elephant*, 2021/22  
 25 x 28 x 29,5 cm  
 Balata rubber / Gomme balata / Balata-Gurumi
- B** Stone table with / Table en pierre avec / Steintisch mit:  
*Rubber Plant*, 2022  
 80 x 200 x 80 cm  
 Balata rubber / Gomme balata / Balata-Gurumi
- C** Stone table with / Table en pierre avec / Steintisch mit:  
*Guardian*, 2021  
 61 x 20 x 40,5 cm  
 Balata rubber / Gomme balata / Balata-Gurumi
- D** *A Loose Hold*, 2022  
 76 x 134 x 64 cm  
 Bronze, glass, stone / Bronze, verre, pierre / Bronze, Glas, Stein
- E** *Swamp Creature*, 2022  
 350 x 174 x 230 cm  
 Balata rubber, wood and metal armature / Gomme balata, armature en bois et en métal / Balata-Gurumi, Holz- und Metallgerüst
- F** *Laughing Man Pile*, 2022  
 258 x 80 x 37 cm  
 Balata rubber, stone base / Gomme balata, socle en pierre / Balata-Gurumi, Steinsockel
- G** *Dangerous*, 2022  
 105 x 64 x 47 cm  
 Balata rubber, stone base / Gomme balata, socle en pierre / Balata-Gurumi, Steinsockel
- H** *Off for Lunch*, 2022  
 44 x 140 x 44 cm  
 Balata rubber, stone base / Gomme balata, socle en pierre / Balata-Gurumi, Steinsockel
- I** Stone base with / Socle en pierre avec / Steinsockel mit:  
*Head-dressed Ram*, 2022  
 100 x 97 x 33 cm  
 Balata rubber / Gomme balata / Balata-Gurumi
- J** *Brilliant Italian Idea*, 2022  
 72 x 42 x 63 cm  
 Balata rubber, stone base / Gomme balata, socle en pierre / Balata-Gurumi, Steinsockel
- K** *Two Tooth, Long Tooth*, 2022  
 60 x 26 x 29 cm  
 Balata rubber / Gomme balata / Balata-Gurumi

