

Dan Lie

Remains Remembering

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Gallery Weekend Opening:
Friday, April 26, 6–9pm

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PRESS RELEASE

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Galerie Barbara Wien is delighted to present **Remains Remembering**, Dan Lie's first solo exhibition at the gallery, which comprises drawings and sculptures.

Lie, who was awarded both the 2024 Ars Viva Prize and the 2024 National Gallery Prize, lives and works in Berlin. For the past ten years they have been developing a practice that comprises drawing, sculpture, and large-scale installations based on long-term research into topics around time, our fraught understanding of death, and its underlying binaries and taboos. For their site-specific installations, which have most recently been exhibited at the New Museum, New York, and the 35th Bienal de São Paulo, Lie collaborates with "other-than-human" entities: bacteria, fungi, and insects which transform the organic matter that constitutes their installations.

The works showcased in **Remains Remembering** were developed during a residency at Callie's, Berlin, and are characterised by a reciprocal relationship, where developments in the drawings influenced the forms of the sculptures, and conversely, elements of the sculptures found their way into the drawings. Having access to a large-scale studio space for the first time made this mutual exchange possible as it enabled Lie to work on multiple drawings and sculptures simultaneously.

Lie was heavily influenced by their grandparents' comic book publishing house, Toko Buku Liong, which translates from Indonesian to "The Liong Book Store" and was active in the 1950s in Semarang, Indonesia. Having trained in drawing since childhood, Lie transitioned away from this background towards the end of their university studies and began favouring site-specific installations. This shift was sparked by their involvement in hosting and art directing parties in off-spaces, where they created one-night-only installations. The resurgence of drawing in Lie's practice is closely tied to their arrival in Berlin in 2020 during the pandemic lockdown when – confined by the physical constraints of domestic space – they started drawing again. While sketching had still been a tool for Lie in developing their installations, the drawings from 2020 onwards are stand-alone works, decidedly different in their visual language.

In their drawing practice, Lie employs a variety of mediums on paper, including oil stick, charcoal, watercolour,

diluted gouache, and various pastels – oil, soft, and dry. The shapes of the non-human protagonists and primary forms of **The Subtle** and **The Four Urns** (both 2024) are simplistic and sketch-like, reminiscent of comic drawings, which allow for the creation of images with minimal gestures. Contrastingly, the backgrounds are characterised by multiple layers, providing depth and solidity to the objects in the foreground. Lie likens their drawing practice to writing a letter or playing chess. The process begins with an ordinary scribble to activate the paper, leading to an intuitive back-and-forth of adding elements, pausing to let them sink in, and waiting until the desire to add something arises again. This process unfolds without strategic planning, often culminating in a surprising endpoint for Lie, as the need to add something new suddenly ceases.

Their process in making sculptures, from the non-perishable remains of their decaying installations, is similarly intuitive. Lie reassembles these materials – all of which carry their own history – and thus allows different layers of time to converge. **Bi-sac**, **Heritage**, and **Untitled** (both 2024) all incorporate *sambe* (삼베), a traditional South Korean hemp fabric used in grieving rituals. These works developed out of research into South Korean mourning rituals conducted for Lie's solo exhibition, *36 Months of Loss*, at Art Sonje Center, Seoul, which opened earlier this year. **Untitled** further incorporates elements derived from the installation *Them*, which was created for the Geneva Biennale – Sculpture Garden 2022. Brownish marks on the fabric bear witness to the friction between the sculpture and the bark of the giant sequoia trees from which it was suspended. Likewise, **Remain** (2023) is made using branches of the same sequoia tree.

The Unloved (2023/2024) is a reincorporation of a sculpture which was part of Lie's 2023 exhibition *The Unloved Ones* at Zwingli-Kirche in Berlin, the title pondering questions of othering within religious communities. Likewise, **Member 8**, (2022) was originally part of the installation *Grieving Secret Society* at the 58th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh. Meanwhile, **Regarding Yellow Thoughts** (2023/2024) directly refers to the shades of yellow which have become a signature trait of Lie's work since 2018. Having experimented with different natural dyes, Lie ultimately settled on turmeric because fabrics dyed using this vibrant, yellow spice would return to

their original white when exposed to sunlight. Lie's works thus evoke different associations when changing from bright yellow to white over time, with spectators from various cultural contexts assigning different meanings to the colours in turn. Hence, the symbolic meaning of the works can transform and move around.

Contrary to Lie's approach to artmaking, which aims to decenter humans, their fabric sculptures can elicit the semblance of wearable pieces of clothing. For Lie, however, these works resemble something ghostly, akin to how fabric is placed atop of furniture in abandoned houses, giving the objects underneath a new corporeality. This notion becomes particularly apparent in *Here* (2024), which bridges Lie's fabric and ceramic works. Here, two vases (remains of their 2021 installation *Non-Negotiable Condition* at *Metabolic Rift*, Berlin Atonal Festival) are stacked on top of each other, covered with a hood-like cloth. The second ceramic sculpture in the exhibition, *The Whole* (2024), centres around a historic vessel that remained from the aforementioned installation *Them*. The vessel has been filled to the brim with the liquid residue from the fabric dyeing process, which includes vinegar, salt and turmeric, creating a dark reflective surface that will begin to change over time. The mighty knotted rope, which once suspended the vessel, has been partially cut open and has started to unravel.

Attempts to deal with movement, change and impermanence, coupled with insights gained from these efforts, have guided Dan Lie's practice and led them to develop a protocol of non-accumulation. In the case of creating sculptures and drawings, they consequently had to confront the fact that these mediums do not decay at the same speed as ephemeral installations. Since 2023, they have thus begun to apply an approach of impermanence to their drawings and sculptures, establishing a deadline of five years, counting from the date a work is shown for the first time. If acquired, the work will remain under the collector's custody indefinitely, and the deadline will be voided. Otherwise, the work will return to Studio Dan Lie, where it will either be transformed into other artworks or destroyed once the five-year period has passed. The deadline for the works in *Remains Remembering* – all presented in this form for the first time – will be in 2029.

Text: Olympia Contopidis

Dan Lie (b. 1988) lives and works in Berlin, Germany. They are a fellow of the Berlin Artistic Research Programme 2024-25. Lie has had solo exhibitions at venues including Art Sonje Center, Seoul, South Korea (2024); Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany (2023); Zwingli-Kirche, Berlin, Germany (2023); New Museum, New York, USA (2022); Casa do Povo, São Paulo, Brazil (2019); and Jupiter Art Land, Edinburgh, Scotland (2019).

Dan Lie has participated in group shows including the 35th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2023); the Singapore Biennale 2022, Singapore Art Museum; the 58th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, USA (2022); Geneva Biennale – Sculpture Garden, Geneva, Switzerland (2022); *Composições para tempos insurgentes*, Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2021); *Metabolic Rift*, Berlin Atonal Festival, Berlin, Germany (2021); *Park Platz*, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany (2021); *Bouge B Festival*, De Singel International Arts Center, Antwerp, Belgium (2018); the 14th Yogyakarta Biennale, Yogyakarta National Museum, Indonesia (2017); and CCBB Música Performance 4, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo (2016).