

Hélène Fauquet *Phenomena*
Rodeo, London 25 April – 25 May

Rodeo's London space, a single rectangular room of white-painted brickwork and cracked, unevenly coloured tiles, looks simultaneously like a shrine and a dungeon. Four tables are arranged around the gallery, onto which Paris- and Vienna-based artist Hélène Fauquet has placed groups of photographs depicting bubbles, water drops and, in some, photos and film stills of animals, all of which are housed in gaudy, mass-produced picture frames decorated with silver roses, crystals and bronze ribbons. The images look like those dummy photographs one might find in the frames' original packaging. These arrangements resemble a votive offering, a home-decor section at a cheap department store or a kitschy display at a grandparent's house. They are at once paranormal and ultramundane.

In the group *Delicate and sensitive* (all works 2023), closeups of hemispherical bubbles delicately nudging together trigger a sense of touch, reminding us how they might pop if we were to prod at them. The array of bubbles and water drops, seen against greyish, neutral backgrounds, invites us to meditate on the

textures of these fragile, transient entities. This haptic evocation is echoed in its baroque-looking frame. Studded with plastic ornaments and fake pearls that look light and sleek, they are meant to contain pictures of loved ones, but these contextually ambiguous bubbles and their vanitaslike ephemerality only hint at the absence of any intimate associations, as well as the futility of expecting the bubbles to last. The results are terribly nostalgic, but ultimately indifferent and cold.

The exhibition's title, *Phenomena*, references Italian movie-director Dario Argento's eponymous cult 1985 psychological horror film, set in Switzerland. In Argento's work, a teenage girl capable of telepathically communicating with insects stumbles upon a murder-in-progress while sleepwalking. A general atmosphere of conspiracy prevails amid the film's intermittent closeups of bugs and its constant gesturing towards what's unknown and unknowable. Arranged like a domestic collection where memories of precious moments are displayed, Fauquet's installations are haunted by a similar unease, as if what's being

shown obscures stories with some larger conceit. In *Mechanica*, one frame holds a still from Argento's film depicting one of the killer's victims pitching head-backward through a window, shards of glass flying away from the impact. An adjacent, translucent frame is filled with a swarm of flies. Amid the water bubbles of the other frames, these suggest an anxious chaos waiting behind what's seemingly placid and contained. *life-world* gathers pictures of a sitting mandrill, a slithering blue-tailed skink and two mating nautili – illustrative photographs such as those you might find in a science magazine – among other framed images of clusters of bubbles and clouds. Framed in glistening metallic and cut-glass frames, the indifferent wildlife at once disrupts the homeliness of the setting and starts to produce an eerie sense of inhuman subjectivity and attentiveness. As one circles around Fauquet's tables, the apparently transparent bubbles and picture frames become more and more opaque in meaning, meshed in a melancholy that seems only to evade and suppress what's not being said. *Yuwen Jiang*



life-world, 2023, prints, frames, table, 75 × 85 × 135 cm.
Photo: Gina Foly. Courtesy Kunsthaus Glarus