

curated by

Untold Narratives

13.09. - 19.10.2023

Charim Wien

curated by Kristian Vistrup Madsen

Artists: Christopher Aque, Richard Hawkins, Evelina Jonsson, Lazar Lyutakov, James Richards, Inge Svensson, Megan Francis Sullivan

Play it as it lays

Play it as it lays is an exhibition that takes its name from Joan Didion's 1972 novel about late twentieth century nihilism, a nihilism of surfeit and ennui. It is a revisitation upon the aftermath of the sixties, that great schism in culture, that sees not – or not only – youthful force, progressivism and unrepression, but confusion, restlessness, melancholy. An empty centre.

“Formalism,” the art critic Robert Hughes wrote in Time Magazine, also in 1972, “is a game not worth playing anymore.” The protagonist in Didion's novel knows this, and yet she keeps going. She is the quintessential California character for a time when California became the metonym for something greater, graver, than itself: Hollywood, Silicon Valley, The Whole Earth.

Some questions follow to the one who sensed “the dream had ended and she had slept on”. Was Land Art the formal triumph over the horizon, or a witness to the smallness of humans, an attempt at anchor? What if what we see when gazing into a lava lamp, into ourselves, is not infinity but precisely its limit: nothing?