

#onlineart #meettheartist

**PETER WÜTHRICH
MEETS
ALBERTO FIZ**

Will the memory of the pandemic last in time?
Will it be handed down in the future's poems and novels?

Always focused on a constant research on the object-book, artist Peter Wüthrich in conversation with critic Alberto Fiz, describes the book as a mirror of human being, capable of conveying through its contents but also its physicality, the time present we are going through.

The dialogue is part of the initiative **"Meet the Artist"** by Galleria Fumagalli: a series of virtual meetings between a gallery's artist and an invited curator.



Photo: courtesy the artist

Alberto Fiz: «How did you spend the lockdown period? Has your relationship with time changed?»

Peter Wüthrich: «Fortunately, we weren't completely locked up here in Switzerland. I was always able to left my house and work in my studio, which is located in another village. That was certainly an important point.

The peculiar situation even helped me in a sense to fully concentrate on my work. So far, it has been a "positive aspect" (for myself) of the worldwide crisis. Having more time for working, I felt able to search for and try out lots of different new ways and paths, since I usually don't find this calm easily. As a result, my relationship with time changed and I almost went back to childhood, the period time when you can still daydream. I think that this rediscovered "dreaming" was also a nice experience. Nevertheless, the constant feeling – always in the back of my mind – was definitely: for what am I doing it?»

A.F.: «You wrote that "books are symbols and metaphors for human beings. They are our past, present and future. I can see them in almost everything, as mirrors". What can we learn from the pandemic?»

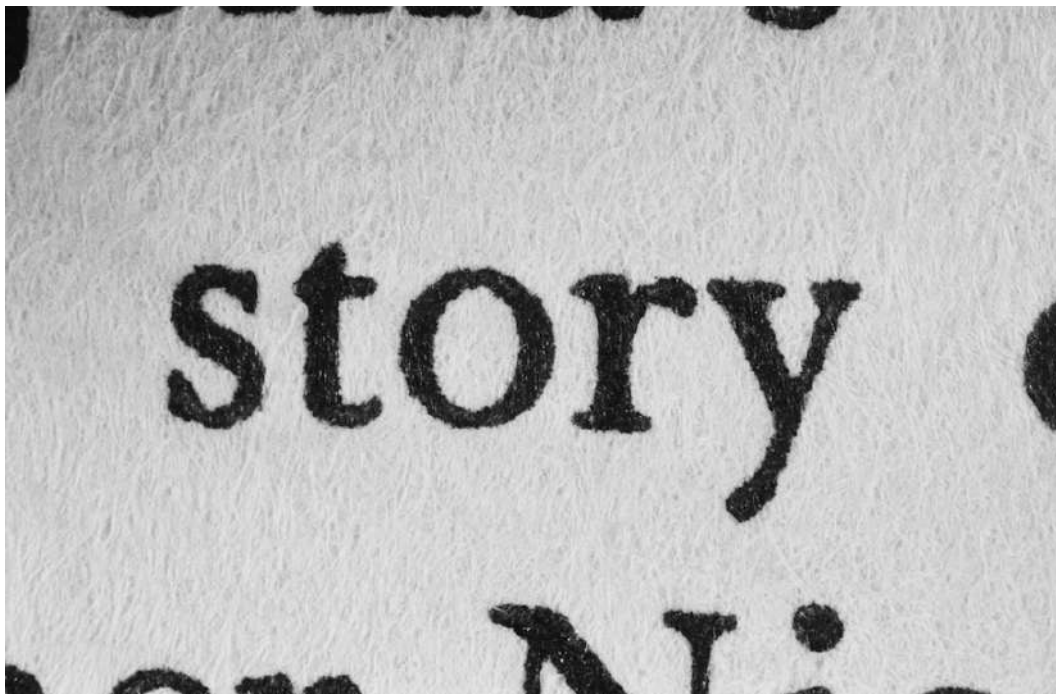
P.W.: «I really don't know what we can learn from it... or I should say a lot, without being able to put it into words. In relation to the medium of book and its symbolism as a mirror, I think that the current worldwide "horror trip" has been often described in books or movies, in one way or another. And certainly there will be books about it in the future, and next generations will probably read about it in novels, as we read in Orwell's *1984*. That was, definitely, a vision of the future or – let's say – a real fiction. We should live a more calm life, filled with meditation, stress free, and in a dream way – which is actually quite normal for artists. We can also learn that we live in a world of fear. And fear is not a good teacher at all. But again, from books we can learn that they resist, they are facts, maybe similar to each other like the *Holy Bible*, or Dante's *Divina Commedia*, and many others too...»

A.F.: «What have you read in this period?»

P.W.: «In the very beginning of the lockdown, the book *Les Fleurs du mal* by Baudelaire came up into my hand by chance and, once again, I started working with it and reading it at the same time. This resulted in a kind of series of drawings, "drawn" using as outlines single printed lines, cut out from the poems. I also read a *Maigret* by Georges Simenon for the first time and found it very exciting and, somehow, similar to a drug that could distract me from reality. Since I mostly read several books in parallel, there were also *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman and others.»

A.F.: «Surrounded by an ever-growing digital system, books seem to be surprisingly resisting. While newspapers appear to be in deep crisis, readers still prefer the object-book and the e-book is not taking over. How do you explain it?»

P.W.: «We all prefer a really good and tasty meal, which consists of delicious different dishes, rather than eating only a few pills, which would be theoretically possible. We all also like a nice bottle of wine on the table, rather than a plastic bottle. Cannot be replaced the feeling that we have when we hold a book in our hands, leaf through it, and drink a coffee while reading it. Somehow there is something erotic about it, and we all need it, in one way or another. On the other hand, an e-book is, in my opinion, "dead and lost". Unless you have to reduce weight on plane, travelling to an island with 50 books to read...»



Peter Wüthrich, *Verbum-Story*, 2007, photograph on wood, plexiglas, 16,5x25 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

A.F.: «What was your last installation and what new works are you thinking of?»

P.W.: «The last exhibition that ended just a few days before the lockdown was at a gallery in Bern (Bernhard Bischoff Gallery) entitled *Literary Ghost*. It was about the first steps of a new body of works. They are “houses”, built from books, which I get from my free inspiration, based on novels – in which the house theme is of great importance, such as Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, Capote’s *In Cold Blood* or Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, then painted in a single colour (mostly beige or grey-white). Of course, I worked on this series during the lockdown period even more intensively than usual, since we were (almost) all kept in our own houses... The other show, which I was concentrated on, was *Tales* at a gallery in Lugano (DIP – contemporary art), and which was not even open, because the opening was scheduled the day after the lockdown. So now, the exhibition has been reopened... and is still to visit. Furthermore, there was a project for a show in Turin at NOIRE Gallery, entitled *Literary Pharmacy and two books*. I hope this installation and show will be done soon.»

A.F.: «Don't you think that big epidemics can be a fitting subject for an installation of yours? After all, from *The Plague* by Albert Camus to *Spillover* by David Quammen there are several sources of inspiration. Not to mention Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* [*The Betrothed*]...»

P.W.: «Yes that’s true. I think there is a lot of potential here, and actually it makes all creative artists deal with it – or maybe not, depending on how each individual’s reaction is focused. Again here, I guess, we will find it in the future’s books and novels, as I said before. It is a never-ending story: the novel describes the past, followed by a new reality, which later appears in the form of a book, of a novel, and so on...»

A.F.: «Your project *The Angels of the World*, which started in 2000 in Los Angeles, seems particularly topical right now. What will be the next step? And how will it evolve?»

P.W.: «I can only say that the last trip took place in Armenia, but actually I am not sure where the next venue will be. Bangkok is scheduled for 2021, as well as Marrakech. But actually nothing is sure... The project *Angels of the World* is also very important to me personally. I feel part of it, as well as all participating people around the world. I meet them almost everywhere, greet them, and show their “true” identity. It is a never-ending story, which, as I said earlier, has to do with the fact that without people there would be no books, and therefore without books there would be no people. So we are forever knotted together, we and our past, present and future. The Angels of the World are more important than ever – we should see us like Angels, because we all are Angels – everybody in a different way...»

To learn more about the artist → [Peter Wüthrich](#)

To discover the other artists invited by Galleria Fumagalli to dialogue with curators → [Meet the Artist](#)
