

# SI

# SPIKE

Spike Magazine  
Harry Burke  
Mathis Altmann: *Foul Matters*  
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Mathis Altmann  
"Foul Matters"  
Swiss Institute  
23.6. – 24.7.2016

The leading image for Mathis Altmann's exhibition "Foul Matters", the German artist's (\*1987) first solo show in the United States, is a sixteenth-century woodcut that depicts people swerving in the street to (just) avoid buckets of shit thrown out of windows above. In this coprological vein, a series of miniaturist wall-mounted sculptures lined one side of the gallery, presenting the artist's interest in waste management in the domestic sphere. A miniature door, with stained-glass windows and enticingly ajar, serves as the entrance to a plastic trash can. A pair of immaculate beds are couched by immaculately tidy turds. A carpeted room is empty save for rolls of tiny toilet paper, a PVC drainpipe its dominant architectural feature. At first pass, these seem to offer a miscellany of one-liners: shit is exhausting. Yet the indelicacy of the subject matter finds

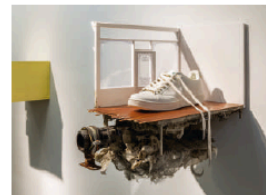


Untitled, 2016  
Sofa, mealworms, resin  
200 x 83 x 86 cm

a contrast in the precision of the artist's hand, suggesting a deeper tension in these dioramas of home life, where the scatological provides the only trace of the living body. There's humour in Altmann's humanism, as well as a cool defiance.

Switching scales, a life-size sofa was angled against the opposite wall, populated by a colony of resin-coated mealworms. Mealworms are the larval form of the mealworm beetle, which is known for breeding rampantly, hatching five hundred eggs at a time. They have been found to survive off Styrofoam, turning this significant waste source into compost. Here, occupying a couch built for humans, these larval allies provided a blithely realistic corrective to the vanity under attack throughout this show.

Harry Burke



LO'KUS LAB, 2016  
Wood, sneaker, plastic, cotton, metal,  
paper, acrylic glass  
48 x 29 x 44 cm