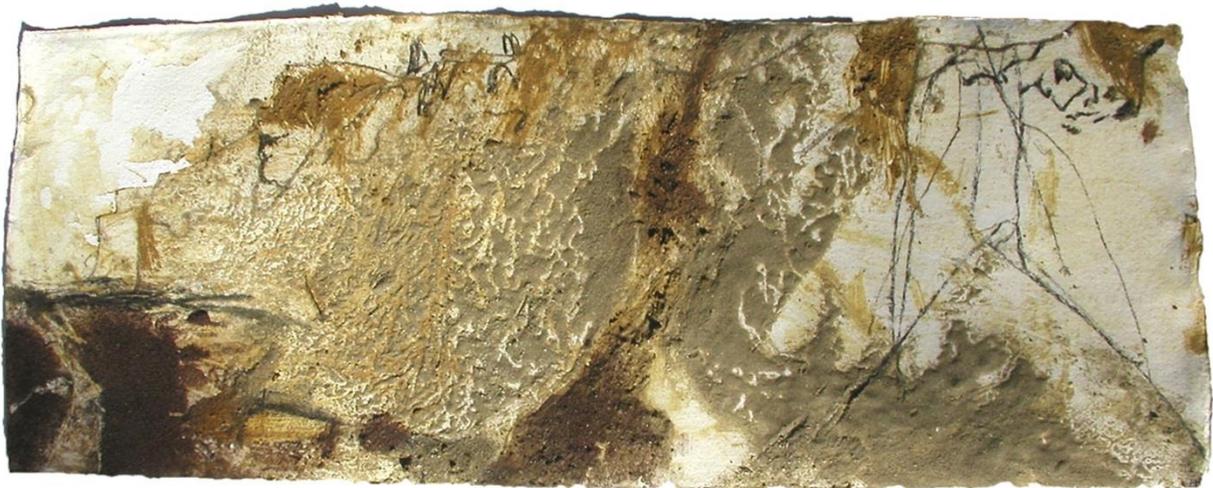


# Frances Hatch and Philipp Valenta

In conversation with Jean-Christophe Godet  
Elizabeth College Performing Arts Studio  
Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 7.00 - 8.00pm



**Frances Hatch**

*Low Waters Long: New Fall*

beach and cliff materials on Khadi paper



**Philipp Valenta**

*Writing Lines*

video still

## Information about the artists

### Frances Hatch

Frances Hatch studied visual art at Cambridge, Aberystwyth and Goldsmiths and has an MA in printmaking from Wimbledon College of Art. She has always painted outdoors. Her work has grown in strength and confidence following a trip to Antarctica in 2005 followed by a Research Bursary from DVA/ExLab which supported her study of the history and craft of making and consolidating pigments. She has been a senior tutor at West Dean College since 1995, has published books about her projects and contributed to other books both as an illustrator and practitioner. She has exhibited throughout the UK and in London.

She developed her plein air practice – not only to make work outdoors but to involve the materials she finds around her in the landscape, collecting earth, rocks, minerals and litter to use as her palette. Wild fruit juices, puddle mud and raindrops bespeckle her sketchbooks. Armed simply with paper and a portable toolkit containing some gouache, watercolour or acrylic paint and a binding medium, Frances heads off to beaches and headlands in Dorset, Devon and the North West Highlands of Scotland to create her response to the time she spends in these wild places using materials she finds there.

### Artist Statement

Direct work in the landscape is central to my practice.

The environments within which I work currently include Devon, The Isle of Purbeck along The Jurassic Coast and the North West Highlands of Scotland. Antarctica holds enduring significance.

Each site suggests and often offers its own palette and demands something particular of me... at times I integrate colour (gouache, acrylic or watercolour) with what is available in the landscape and at others the found material offers all.

When grubbing around for tools and pigments in each environment, I make discoveries about a place that I might otherwise miss. If I return, even a day later, a different set of possibilities arise because I'm different and I'm encountering matter, water, light and air that continually fluctuate.

<http://www.franceshatch.co.uk/>



## Philipp Valenta

Philipp Valenta studied Fine Art at Bauhaus University Weimar graduating in 2012. He is a Conceptual artist interested in ideas around financial systems, wealth and luxury. He has exhibited widely in Germany including most recently at Deutsche Bank Weimar, Ludwiggalerie Schloss Oberhausen and Museum of Diocese Regensburg.

He works in a range of media that includes printmaking, sculpture, video and installation. Philipp was artist in Residence at the Gate House Gallery in 2015 and the resulting exhibition 'Financial World' opens in the gallery on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March.

### Artist Statement

In my artistic body I work with commensurabilities and processes of creating value. Definitions of luxury and money, exclusivity and precious goods as well as their questioning are hubs in my work.

In different media, ranging from painting and drawing to objects and installations I work on questions that find their origin in the financial world, the economy or royalty and fashion - the life of keeping up appearances, the "glow" of luxury trigger in me fascination as well as animosity. Performances are also part of my work which are often developed site-specific.

The allurements and poetry of "forbidden", unusual and sometimes rare and expensive materials fascinate me. This corresponds to the topic of commensurabilities - do expensive materials lose their material value when used in a work of art? Things have changed since the medieval times when paintings were paid according to the value of the applied colour.

Values disappear rather quickly today - or are created equally fast. It seems like a game we all play without resisting - but despite all difficulties that come with it, it is still fun.

At last we are all hunters and gatherers - searching for money and happiness.

<http://www.philippvalenta.de/>

### VALUE AND FAITH

#### The works by Philipp Valenta

In his conceptual works, artist Philipp Valenta deals with the formation and the measurability of financial, cultural and societal values. With his work **A Perfect Match (2014)** he invokes multifaceted references. Silver paint is applied to Ginkgo leaves and then printed on a sheet of paper. In Weimar, a whole museum is devoted to this old type of tree that originally comes from China. The resilient and legendary tree is worshiped throughout Asia, and in Europe it is known as an all-purpose medicinal plant. Its name derives from the words gin for silver and kyo for apricot, as its silver-white seeds are coated with an orange covering. The relationship between the Japanese words for ginkgo and Bank (ginkō) refers to the fact that in ancient China, the fan-shaped leaves and the ginkgo seeds were used as currency. Not only with **A Perfect Match** but also with the work **Fen-Fan (2014)**, Valenta combines finances with Chinese cultural history. Made of one, two and five Fen-banknotes (the smallest unit of Chinese currency), the artist cuts out the

ornamentation on the bills and rearranges it to create yellow, blue and green fans. However, even the material value of the notes seems to exceed the face value. Therefore the bills' worth appreciates by transferring them into an artistic context. Fans are firmly grounded not only in Asian but also in European culture and history. In Japan, they are a part of traditional dances as well as a common and popular gift. Particularly in the south of Spain, fans are essential to the traditional flamenco dance yet are also sold by the millions as tourist kitsch. Further, fans were an essential accessory for women in the European courts of past centuries. With both works *A Perfect Match* and *Fen-Fan* the artist refers to phonetic connections as well as to traditional connotations of European and Asian culture, the banking sector in particular. Philip Valenta reveals a similar approach with the work **Mit Geld spielt man nicht (English: You don't Play with Money) (2011)**. Here, the artist combines the idea of money with another item from Chinese heritage, the tangram. In Valenta's version, the surface of the quadratic puzzle depicts a large portion of the five euro banknote. Contrary to the title of this work but in the spirit of the game, the artist calls for the viewer to form as many possible combinations out of the seven parts, as to discover that the world's beauty (and its money) lies in variety and diversity.

With his series of prints and drawings called **Wertpapierzeichnung (2014)**, the artist refers to the issue of shares and securities of companies. The German word Wertpapierzeichnung is a word play, as Wertpapier means security paper and Zeichnung means both drawing and purchase or bargain with securities. Valenta listed only the identification numbers of these papers. Using the shares of the thirty best-selling German DAX companies, the frames of the works are in black and white, similar to a badger's head (German: Dachs, pronounced like DAX). Philipp Valenta ironizes the meaning and the value of these commercial shares when he points out that it is just a numbered piece of paper. Further, by transferring the pure numbers in the context of art, another value is added to the numbers: the value of an artwork. This in turn is also questioned via the simple listing of numbers as a kind of found object.

The subject of money plays an important role in many performances and actions of the artist. One example is when "**money laundering**" is taken literally, and he cleanses bills not only from dirt but also from its colour as it is put into the washing machine with a colour absorbing cloth. Further, the topic of counting money forms a part of Valenta's work. However, he does not—like Scrooge McDuck - count his wealth. He counts his debts, with borrowed coins. He alludes to the era we live in where television advertising seduces us to take debt with micro credits. Instead of securing out livelihood, we live a life of luxury with fancy cars and expensive vacations!

The artist deals with extensive and complex subjects like the financial, monetary or capitalist system. He uses coins and banknotes as material in his works. Art dealing with money is a relevant subject of art today. For centuries money, especially coins, served as a means to illustrate mythological or religious subjects or as an attribute of wealth, for example on Renaissance merchant's portraits. In the 20th century, artworks dealing with money became an independent subject for art. George Grosz used a dollar sign in his critical painting *Sonnenfinsternis* (English: Solar Eclipse) (1926). In the 1960s, the use of everyday materials and finally bills and coins found their way into art, accompanied by a content dealing with the monetary, economic or financial system. Alongside Andy Warhol, Öyvind Fahlström or Klaus Staeck, Swiss born artist Anne Jud was one of the first to consider dollar bills. Jud as well as Valenta create fans out of these banknotes.

In the site-specific work **sub rosa (2014)**, the artist placed long-stemmed white roses in glass vases in a bank's consultation rooms and played on location-applicable notions of bank secrets. The Latin-derived phrase of the work's title ("under the rose") was used in humanistic circles to announce that statements following were confidential and secret. Even the ancient Romans knew the phrase and in the centuries that followed, some confessional booths were even decorated with roses for this reason. Philipp Valenta also deals with the history of ancient Rome in other works such as **Gold (2012)** or **Bed of roses (2014)**. With the latter work—pillowcases made of empty money bags—the artist plays on the fact that rich Romans filled their luxurious mattresses with rose petals. In **Gold**, Philipp Valenta used a quote from Ovid's *Art of Love (Ars Amatoria, 2,277)* "Aurea sunt vere nunc saecula: plurimus auro Venit honos, auro conciliatur amor." (These are truly the Golden Ages: the greatest respect goes to gold: love is procured with gold). The slogan is emblazoned as a golden mural on a door lintel from the 1970s "At the Golden Rose" hotel in city of Halle in Germany.

With his works Philipp Valenta is interested in a combination of everyday culture of past centuries with present-day reality of life. In the work **Upgrade (2014)**, the artist presents faux debit cards varnished with gold nail polish. Only the gold-coloured chip remains uncoated. Already in the series of **Monochrome Hollywood Character Portraits (since 2013)**, the artist used nail polish to paint cow horn disks. Horn references both human fingernails, for which the paint is actually intended; on the other hand, the material is generally associated with ivory. Thus, the artist also recalls one of the oldest materials for jewellery, art and daily articles which was already in use by the Phoenicians and ancient Egypt. Yet in Valenta's work it is completely covered with a layer of glittering nail polish whose name refers to famous characters of Hollywood. Valenta plays with horn as a material of high art, but covers it with an everyday commodity—nail polish—and in the combination transfers both to an artistic context. This approach is reminiscent of the artist Anselm Reyle who covers cast bronze sculptures with car paint thereby creating a link between popular culture and high art. Both in this work as well as in Valenta's series of **Monochrome Hollywood Character Portraits**, the nail polish is used not a cheap product from the drug store, but instead as a luxury item. In the colour gold, it is aptly named "Precious", "Be My Millionaire" or "It Rains Money". The works in the series are named accordingly. Philipp Valenta asks the question about the actual value of the plastic card, whose low material value is increased by expensive nail polish, turning them not only figuratively into a "golden card." As the artist integrates nail polish—a trashy everyday commodity yet also a version of a luxury item—into the context of art, he points to the absurdity of some moral concepts in today's society.

The high value gold is given seems, however, to have remained stable over the past millennia. The biblical story of the worship of the golden calf as a symbol of a misguided, quasi-religious worship of wealth plays an important role in money art and is also addressed by Philipp Valenta. So as part of his participatory art project **Art Competition (since 2011)** done in collaboration with Cosima Göpfert, the artist designed a one-euro-disco ball, which makes it possible to bask in money's reflections and pay homage to the glittering DJ-God as an absurd Golden Calf.

When the artist formed a new cross for an altar from wax residues of votive candles in **Relic (2012)** and thereby created a new object for worship out of waste, the artist questions the contrast between the material and intrinsic value of such traditional cult objects. Alluding to the power of faith and the Christian transformation of water into wine, the artist also refers to the importance of water as a luxury item. In his performance **Water and Bread** at the opening for the Art Prize Ennepe-Ruhr 2013 for the municipality Witten, the artist entertained visitors with fine varieties of

bread and the world's most expensive waters that obtain prices that even some champagnes do not reach.

The work **Sweets**, which was exhibited in 2012 in a solo exhibition at the Belvedere Castle Museum of Arts and Crafts of the Weimar Classical Foundation, consists of "gems" optically transformed into sweets. Here, a contrast between a mass consumer item and an expensive luxury item is suggested yet is not the case. The supposedly valuable "Indian rubies", wrapped in standard transparent candy wrappers, are also just the cheap commodities often used for jewelry that you can buy at flea markets. However "true" sugary sweets were for centuries very expensive and were eaten as luxuries in European courts.

Philipp Valenta draws from the rich repertoire of global cultural history and our daily lives. In his works, the artist combines unusual and found materials from different situations together. With the works **A Perfect Match**, **Fen-Fan**, **Don't Play with Money**, **sub rosa**, **Securities Drawing** and **Upgrade**, the significance primarily of banking and finance is questioned and integrated into a cultural, historical and contemporary setting. In particular, the transfer of materials and objects such as plastic cards, nail polish or roses in the context of art reveals the absurdity of today's consumer society between luxury and poverty, money and power. With multi-layered symbolism, Valenta recalls the discrepancy of pure material worth and the value beyond by which an object is measured; gold paint itself is not expensive, but it symbolizes a high value. A list of stock numbers is also not valuable. It refers, however, to another piece of paper, which in turn is supposedly of high value. So the price of an artwork is nowadays not tethered to material costs but to an underlying idea or concept. On many levels, the artist reveals the contrast between material and intrinsic worth and raises the question of the origin, development and creation of values. In Valenta's works, it becomes clear that in addition to all kinds of factors such as the shortage of goods, it is belief in particular which generates value. This applies not only to religion but also to art and money.

