

PRESS RELEASE

Liesl Raff

Wallpapers, Gathers and Mirages

30. April – 24. Juli 2026

Opening on Wednesday, 29. April, 6 – 9 pm

Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Wallpapers, Gathers and Mirages*, its second solo show with the Vienna-based artist Liesl Raff. It is the gallery's first exhibition with the artist in Vienna.

Raff's latest exhibition takes the opportunity to once again work through the essential basic elements and arrangements of her practice from recent years, almost like a spatial model case, and to bring them together within an exhibition space. However, this "space" refers less to the conceptual framework often implied by the term, and instead describes the exhibition space itself in a concrete and almost prototypical manner. The cascading sequence of gallery rooms is completely restructured through the precise interventions of Raff, generating a comprehensive program that is even more effective than the exhibition title might suggest. The title is not to be understood as a mere juxtaposition of the titles of individual groups of works, nor as a simple enumeration, but rather as an arrangement whose essential elements lie in the plural.

Gathers, understood as the folding accumulation of material—and thus as a process that, through the dual meaning of gathering and assembling, also considers the material component of social negotiations in its production—stands at the center.

A key shift appears in the fact that a main feature of this practice—the interest in and the question of the (co-)production of social contexts—seems here to have been transformed into an experimental setup in which interaction is directed entirely toward the viewers. Unlike Raff's earlier exhibitions, where the works oscillated between display, object, and indirect social catalyst for actions, and where artistic production was primarily situated in the creation of defining spaces for action, in the arrangement of settings for performative and social practices, and (not without biographical context) in forms of "staging," the clear positioning of elements within the gallery spaces here seems to propose a model that is more directive. Given the intimacy and zoning of the rooms, it follows a much more direct, almost immediate logic of address.

It is particularly significant to view the exhibition as a compilation of discrete objects—serially arranged groups of works—which in turn seem to constitute a stage space in which visitors to the gallery are both spectators and actors at the same time.

This is achieved with great economy, which is initially surprising given the formal abundance of the objects, whose visual languages—ranging between associative (blind) mirrors, theater curtains, festoons, and garlands—follow a strongly functional component. This function does not lie in the illusionistic breaking of spatial boundaries, but rather in the clear assignment and zoning of spatial arrangements. The enumeration thus appears all the more logical, as it assigns clear representational tasks to the individual objects and series, distributed distinctly across them: concealing, revealing, condensing, fixing, redirecting.

Raff focuses on a limited number of materials—here, textiles, latex, and formed steel—which exist in technical and formal interdependence. Together, they operate with considerable variation in shaping each object and their interplay. Despite this division of labor, a striking tension emerges: although the exhibition emphasizes objects more than installation structures, it is precisely through this division that they become even more space-forming and interlock closely in their interaction.

As the arrangement of elements unfolds within the space, the production of the individual objects is handed over to a structured process. It is as if Raff asks herself which elements and which calculations are required in the formation to arrive at an essential aspect of the performance of this "theatrical" setting. The elements are

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deployed in slight variations—not so much a calculated process as an orchestrated one. With only a few additive elements—such as subtly varied surface treatments, changes in the steel profile, or alternating seams in the textile—the working steps allow for only a minimal degree of post-production.

The objects derive above all from a clearly defined set of rules, the definition of working steps and procedures, and their deliberate transfer into a structured production process. It is not insignificant that latex, as a milky natural material, can only be worked in the moment of pouring and immediate arrangement. After that, the process can hardly be influenced or controlled—it depends entirely on the production setup. Once the material begins to solidify shortly after casting, decisions are largely irreversible. Hanging, form, solidity, and surface are determined at that stage, allowing neither subsequent adjustment nor trimming. The material itself must also be considered as organic, aging, and variable in structure, weight, and size. Adjustments due to shrinkage and drying must be anticipated as variables within the production process.

Wallpapers, *Gathers*, and *Mirages* are series of objects in which something archetypal is enacted or simulated, and whose formal variations cast shadows of social operations and relationships. The space of these objects thus remains readable as a social space, whose parameters are derived just as carefully from material-technical and production-aesthetic questions. To observe oneself while observing occurs with the same disbelief as watching one's own hands writing lines or working on casting molds from a distance—witnessing oneself acting, and yet still identifying as the one who acts.

Robert Müller

Liesl Raff was born in 1979 in Stuttgart, DE, and lives and works in Vienna, AT. Recent solo exhibitions include Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Vienna, AT (2026); Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, CH (2025); Austrian Pavilion at the 15th Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, KR (2024); Kunstraum Remise, Bludenz, AT (2023); fjk3 – Contemporary Art Space, Vienna, AT (2023); Kunstfenster Gnas, Gnas, AT (2022). In 2021, she presented *Schwindel*, an installation of aluminum castings and latex works, at the Biennale für Freiburg, DE. Her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including *BOW*, Austrian Cultural Forum London, London, UK (2025); *Gekauft! Und dann?*, musa – Wien Museum, Vienna, AT (2024); the 17th Lyon Contemporary Art Biennale, Lyon, FR (2024); *MELENCOLIA*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, CH (2023); *Hier und Jetzt II*, Neuer Kunstverein Wien, Vienna, AT (2023); *“How exactly like the object, how beautiful!!”*, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, AT (2022); *Avantgarde und Gegenwart*, Belvedere 21, Vienna, AT (2021); *enjoy*, mumok, Vienna, AT (2021); and others. In 2026, Liesl Raff will have a solo exhibition *Slant* at Kunstverein Braunschweig, DE, as well as two duo-presentations *Hybrid Pleasures. Helen Chadwick supported by Liesl Raff*, at Kunsthaus Graz, AT; *Closer. Heidi Bucher – Liesl Raff*, at Kunst Museum Winterthur, CH. She will also participate in the group exhibitions *Lebt und arbeitet in Wien*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, AT; *Stellprobe. Sammlungszugänge der letzten Dekade in einem Display von Heimo Zobernig*, Belvedere 21, Vienna, AT. She is also nominated for the 2026 Pauli-Prize. Her work is held in the collections of institutions, including Belvedere 21 (via Artothek des Bundes), AT; evn sammlung, AT; Kunsthaus Bregenz, AT; Kunst Museum Winterthur, CH; mumok, AT; and Sammlung Hoffmann-La Roche, CH.

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