

Caroline Mesquita

Verdet Bath

7.12.2024 – 23.2.2025

Press talk: 6.12.2024, 10 am

Opening: 6.12.2024, 6 pm

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

Burgring 2, 8010 Graz (AT)

Artist talk

7.12.2024, 10 am

Curator:
Jan Tappe

Press contact:
Helga Droschl
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The French artist Caroline Mesquita is regarded as a key interpreter of contemporary sculpture and its performative qualities. She creates sculptural bodies reminiscent of humans, animals and various hybrid creatures. These bodies are formed from brass and metals, and, despite the durability of the materials used, are characterized by a lightness and playful potential that animates them – almost as if they were living puppets. For *Verdet Bath*, Mesquita creates a bathing spa consisting of a swimming pool, changing rooms and drinking fountains, in which a multitude of her creatures and their audience cavort.

Caroline Mesquita's work encompasses sculptures, murals, large-scale installations with integrated architectural elements, as well as film and video works. She creates her sculptural works from copper and brass sheets, using various oxidation techniques. Mesquita is particularly drawn to metal, a traditional sculptural material, but she brings her unique approach to it. While she works with the material through intentional processes, she also allows it to transform naturally in terms of its composition and design, giving it a life of its own. She thereby ties it with figurative tendencies in modernist sculpture, reminiscent of positions such as Sophie Taeuber Arp or Emmy Hennings. Moreover, the material of copper and brass sheets also played a key role in American Minimal Art, from which she also draws inspiration. Through her remarkable style and stage-like arrangements, she animates her otherwise inanimate metal figures. In doing so, she humorously tackles pressing contemporary issues, such as the relationship between humanity, nature, and technological progress.

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HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark is delighted to present the artist's first solo exhibition in Austria, featuring expansive interventions of both existing and newly produced sculptural works. The exhibition creates a scene filled with numerous metal bodies that, like in a triadic ballet, interact in a setting reminiscent of a thermal or steam bath. In total, approximately 40 works will be displayed in the exhibition rooms, adapted to the building's late modern architecture with the result that they are woven into a new narrative. Mesquita also introduces moments that play with themes of intimacy, nudity, and voyeurism, adding a dreamlike quality to the entire installation.

For *Verdet Bath*, the artist has designed an exhibition arrangement that includes new and existing sculptures along with paintings and film works, all used to create a stage-like atmosphere. Thereby, she tells stories and builds interactive moments between the figures. The title refers to the older alchemical term *Verdet*, which is another name for *vert-de-gris* (green patina), a key focus of the exhibition. Mesquita reimagines this color, typically associated with the aging of sculptures in public space as the color of water in a bathing landscape where human figures and animals come together to explore a universal sense of togetherness. The recourse to alchemy describes both the chemical process of coloring as well as a reference to the magical or fairytale-like characters of the figures, while the sculptures carry a utopian potential, and it remains ambiguous whether the scene depicts a dream or reality.

As part of the side program, Lisa Le Feuvre, director of the Holt/Smithson Foundation (Santa Fe, New Mexico), will give a guest lecture on female sculptors from both the past and present.

Caroline Mesquita (*1989 Brest, lives in Marseille)

Solo exhibitions (selection): T293, Rom (2024, 2022, 2017), HAB Gallery, Nantes (2024), Bourse du travail Centre d'art, Valence (2023), Villa Medici, Rome (2023), Le Parvis Centre d'Art contemporain, Tarbes (2022), CAN, Centre d'art Neuchâtel (2022), Blaffer Art Museum, Houston (2021), Statement, Art Basel, with Union Pacific (2021), Pivô, São Paulo (2020), Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain, Brest (2020), carlier / gebauer, Berlin (2019, 2015), Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan (2019), Galeria Municipal de Porto (2019), Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2018), Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Centre Pompidou, MAM, Paris (2018), SALTS, Basel (2017), 221A, Vancouver (2017), Kunstverein Langenhagen (2016), MOT International, Brussels (2016), SpazioA, Pistoia (2015), Union Pacific, London (2015).

Group exhibitions (selection): Contemporaine de Nîmes (with Laure Prouvost) (2024), Mucem, Marseille (2022), Fondation Vasarely, Aix-en-Provence (2022), Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Guadalajara (2021), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2019, 2012), Folkwang Museum, Essen (2019), Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2019), Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main (2019), Parcours Art Basel (2018), La Loge, Brussels (2018), Fondation Ricard, Paris (2017, 2015, 2013), Sans Titre, Paris (2017), The Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2014).

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