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A journal about contemporary art

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The Wild Things At Fiberspace

March 29, 2019

"During my schooling we were always asked to contextualize and define our position and belonging in either the sphere of contemporary art or the sphere of arts and craft. I don't think that sort of contextualizing really matters to visitors of my exhibitions. There is a direct encounter with the sculptures and for that all that is required is an emotional life as a springboard to understanding", says Kristina Skantze in our interview relating to the exhibition "Non-Mythological Creatures" on view at Fiberspace in Stockholm.



Pig Person, silk jersey, polyester padding, 80 x 25 x 25 cm

C-P: You were telling me how your sculptures derive from a self-developed technique which also renders them their certain distinctive quality and look. What's the background into arriving at this technique?

K.S: I've been developing this technique over the course of ten years. I wanted to form a working method which allows me to work wherever I am and make sewing an integrated part of my everyday life. All I need is a bit of silk thread and some padding. My sculptures are entirely sewn by hand and are shaped by thousands, perhaps even millions of stitches. Since it takes a fair amount of time for the sculptures to really come into shape I want to seize every opportunity I can to sew. I see it as rendering the figures their fair share of life experience whilst it gives me the feeling of imprinting my own presence, along with giving them care and nurturing which is something I hope to be able to convey to the viewer.



Still, Non-Mythological Creatures, film: 6 minutes

C-P: Your sculptures appear like hybrid creatures with corporeal elements that allude to both humans and animals. Despite this sounding like commonplace I get the feeling that I cannot so easily relate your work to anyone else's, certainly not locally but not necessarily internationally either. On that note it begs the question where you see your work positioning in the contemporary art sphere and what room exists for work along the lines of what you do?

K.S: I think you are right in so far there is no obvious box to pin my work to. My art arguably might not have many close family members but it most certainly has kins and relatives. By working by hand as a cornerstone in my practice, and in light of my background as a textile-based artist, there is belonging within arts and craft. Doll-making is also found within close proximity and reach. The closest kinship is felt to me when I come across medieval sculptures and images. There is a certain obliquity that makes them so spiritually tangible. I aspire towards that and can relate to that quality in all sorts of artistic expressions and existentialist queries. My art I imagine can inhabit various rooms and be placed in a string of contexts which are targeted both towards people in and outside the art spheres. Gallery exhibitions are fun in a certain way. Libraries and other public domains reach broader audiences which is rewarding. Social medias also offer interesting platforms to move through. My sculptures communicate well visually, but ultimately it's something quite else to really encounter them face to face.



Larva Person, silk jersey, polyester padding, 50 x 31 x 20 cm

C-P: What's interesting is of course the way your sculptures bring a child-like or fable-like realm to mind; inevitably some will think of stuffed animal toys and link your work to children's iconography and some perhaps would even write it off as juvenile. What are the considerations that go into contextualizing your work and do you find yourself having to defend your work in various situations?

K.S: I like the linking to toys. I'd like to think of the viewer playing with the sculptures in their mind or in dialogue with others, even if the sculptures are obviously not to be played with tangibly. I also find a connection to puppetry exciting. I think it's entirely the material, and to some extent the form, which links my creatures to dolls. Textile materials and notions found in playful and juvenile realms are as we know often related to a feminine domain, and as a consequence written down in the hierarchies of art. Textile and playfulness are aspects however that make the art more accessible also outside the art world which I see as something positive. Myself, I mostly choose to attribute my work as sculptures or doll sculptures but I'm also prone at the same time to emphasize the sewing by hand. During my schooling we were always asked to contextualize and define our position and belonging in either the sphere of contemporary art or the sphere of arts and craft. I don't think that

sort of contextualizing really matters to visitors of my exhibitions. There is a direct encounter with the sculptures and for that all that is required is an emotional life as a springboard to understanding.



Kristina Skantze

C-P: Do you ascribe personal narratives and identities to your sculptures as you are creating them, or perhaps after, or are they intended for very open reading?

K.S: I have a lot of questions and fantasies revolving the sculptures during the course of the working process. It's all very playful. As I mentioned earlier my own everyday life becomes integrated in the growth of the sculpture. An inherent personality appears increasingly complex as I continue to sew. It's like getting to know another person. My experience of the character of a sculpture is ever changing and in the end I don't really have a specific narrative to tell other than seeing before me a creature bearing an array of secrets about who it is. The sculpture I believe becomes a mirroring surface for the viewer to reflect on their own state of mind with. Sometimes I think it's merely about evoking a sense of empathy, but sometimes the fantasy likely informs an entire world of a before and after.



(Above) Aries Person (Yellow), Aries person (Pink), Aries Person (Blues), silk jersey, polyester padding, 70 x 40 x 35
Pig Person, silk jersey, polyester padding, 80 x 25 x 25, Pig Person (Mini), 25 x 10 x 10

(Below) Bug Person, silk jersey, polyester padding, wood, 85x70x35 cm



C-P: I love how you have installed the exhibition at Fiberspace. It feels very balanced, refraining from creating worlds or scenic or decor-like universes for the sculptures, opting instead for a few organic tree components that accentuate the character of the sculptures rather than really defining them. Tell me more about the show at hand.

K.S: I'm happy you point that out; it's exactly what I've been trying to do. I didn't want to present scenography, just add something simple to the room to prompt the viewer into a natural motion between the works. I enjoy the contrast between the white cube and the organic tree branches. It poses as an open question as to whether these are creatures of the urban cityscape, rural nature or a spatial realm entirely of their own.



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Dog Person, silk jersey, polyester padding, wood, 50 x 50 x 20, Frog Person, silk jersey, polyester padding, 45 x 60 x 45

C-P: What's next in store for you in 2019?

K.S: A project I've been working on for a long time will be compiled into a book. It's about hands, and what sort of experiences, memories and insights they are bearers of. At the same time I will set off a new project where I bring with me and forth the qualities I found in the pig sculpture in this exhibition; 'Non-Mythological Creatures'. This exhibition too will move on to new rooms, although it isn't yet entirely set where the creatures will be making their next appearance.

Kristina Skantze's **Non-Mythological Creatures** is showing at Fiberspace (Katarina Bangata 40) in Stockholm through March 30

www.fiberspace.se

To learn more about Kristina's work:

www.kristinaskantze.se