

KÖNIG GALERIE

ALICJA KWADE | MEDIUM

KÖNIG WIEN | 23 SEPTEMBER – 30 OCTOBER 2022

KÖNIG WIEN is pleased to present MEDIUM, a new exhibition of works by Alicja Kwade. The show comprises sculptures, a multi-media installation, and new hanging mobiles, each of which deal in their own ways with aspects of the perspective of humans vis-à-vis the universe. Kwade continues her investigation of the nature and substance of the world both as it is, and as we experience it, measuring impossible moments of equilibrium between the two. What passes between planetary motion and immediate perception is an entire field that Kwade's work both alludes to and itself produces, all of which depends on the radical contingency of human experience – that which is could just as well be otherwise.

MEDIUM MEDIAN (HOMO-MENSURA) is an immersive installation rendering in concrete forms the planetary forces of time, space, and gravity that are in constant motion in and around us and yet manage to allude our perception. Hanging from black metal structures affixed to the ceiling of the exhibition hall are twenty-four iPhones that display GPS images of outer space that correspond to the locations in the gallery, each playing Siri (the iPhone assistant) recordings reading passages from "Genesis", concerning the creation of the world, putting contemporary technology in direct dialogue with one of the oldest texts on the history of the universe's formation: both examples of the nearly thousand versions of understanding and explaining the world. The voices are not in sync with one another, so the effect of standing in the middle of the work is that of a cacophony of language swirling around like the mobile itself. Is man the measure of all things, as the ancient mathematician Pythagoras once claimed, referred to in Kwade's title (homo-mensura)? Measuring is but one of many modes of trying to put the world into a comprehensible system.

The PRINCIPIUM sculptures demonstrate the migration of elements that connect through MEDIUM, as they are spiral columns composed of bronze casts of iPhones; essentially, a modern medium for constructing and understanding reality roughly portioned to the height of specific persons. The shape of these sculptures recalls the double helix form of human DNA that was discovered in the 1950s, but their spirals are also spatial demonstrations of an infinity of time, without a clear origin or destination, no clear beginning or end. With their patina, the stacked phones recall ancient artefacts, the encrusted, layering of time transposed into the casts of a modern device, the technological apparatus a fitting analogue for the DNA of a particular culture, predictors of a future, like genetic code, that is geared toward a horizon determined by their programmed protocols.

Kwade's continued investigation into the self-culminated in the earlier installation GEGEBENENFALLS DIE WIRKLICHKEIT, 2019, in which the artist printed her entire genome on 259.025 sheets of paper. Her debut NFT collection SELBSTPORTRAIT (10361 × 25p), 2020, followed, spreading globally with the use of blockchain technology. While 99,9% of all human DNA is identical, Kwade highlighted her individual and unique profile in bold text. In SELBSTPORTRAIT, 2021, Kwade isolated the twenty-four chemical elements that make up the human body and positioned them in circular arrangements affixed to a wall, highlighting yet another iteration of a self-portrait, no truer or falsier than the history of reproducing the self through likeness and imitation.

HEAVY SKIES is a new series of mobiles that feature hanging rocks suspended by gold-plated structures and wires that float within and above the exhibition space, bringing acute attention to the operations of gravity and the precarity of its states of equilibrium. Achieving this balanced state, where even the slightest change to a particular element's weight would cause the entire system to fall apart, is directly present within the mobile. Each piece of the kinetic sculpture is dependent on another, connected through a grid of horizontal and vertical lines, creating the impression of things falling,

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EXHIBITIONS

KARL HORST HÖDICKE
KÖNIG GALERIE
14.10 – 20.11.2022

NORBERT BISKY
Taumel
KÖNIG GALERIE
15.09 – 16.10.2022

MATTHIAS WEISCHER
Mirrors And Things
KÖNIG SEOUL
01.09 – 23.10.2022

KÖNIG WIEN
Kleines Haus der Kunst
Friedrichstraße 7
1010 Vienna

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Opening Hours:
Wed – Sat 11 AM – 6 PM

from above to the ground below, and again relying on the stone as a structural fundament. The gravity that is affecting the objects suspended is momentarily halted, frozen in an impossible state whose very suspension depends on gravity in order to function. The rocks appear to be falling on viewers' heads, a fitting metaphor for human attempts to take hold of the world and make sense of it.

Kwade accepts the immaterial givens of the world around us without ever taking them for granted, locating in the very long history of sculpture a place that puts the ground on which objects exist on unstable footing. Sculpture's brute materiality, its sharing space with us as three-dimensional beings, was for many a burden, or a limitation that it had to defeat in order for it to continue to assert its relevance alongside the arts of representation. For Kwade, however, her questions are not those of medium as genre but as matter, of the world as it is, not as we know it. In German, the Gegenstand (English for object), is that which literally stands against us (gegen + stand), thrown in our way (this is what the Latin root of the word, obiectum means), and once sculpture loses the capacity to disrupt our ways of being and understanding the world around us, for Kwade, it can no longer object.

Alicja Kwade (b. 1979 in Katowice, Poland) lives and works in Berlin. In 2019, the artist has been selected for the Roof Garden Commission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. She participated in the Helsinki Biennial (2021), Desert X, Coachella Valley, California (2021), the Setouchi Triennale (2019), the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), and the 3rd Aros Triennale in Aarhus (2017). In 2015-2016, Public Art Fund commissioned AGAINST THE RUN, an installation in New York's Central Park. Important recent solo shows of the artist took place at Berlinische Galerie - Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Berlin (2021), Langen Foundation, Neuss (2020), MIT List Visual Arts Centre, Boston (2019), Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Helsinki (2018), Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2018), Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2018), YUZ Museum, Shanghai (2018), Whitechapel Gallery, London (2016-2017), Kunsthalle Schirn in Frankfurt/Main (2015), Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (2008). Kwade's works are part of numerous private and public collections worldwide, such as the Centre Pompidou, Paris, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC, LACMA - Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, MATE - Mario Testino Museum, Barranco, Mudam - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg, mumok - Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, and Yuz Museum, Shanghai, amongst many others.

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