

EMPTY PROMISES

AXEL LIEBER

For his second solo show at the gallery, the Berlin-based artist Axel Lieber (Düsseldorf, 1960) has conceived an imaginary playground where visitors are invited to follow a path among enigmatic, evocative objects, and sometimes dematerialised apparitions, which question perception and confound expectations and commonplaces.

Empty Promises is not just the title of the exhibition but also of the installation in the centre of the first room. It is dominated by a bare wooden structure reminiscent of the ones used to support advertising billboards, stripped, however, of its function and enlivened by a myriad of coloured fragments. While on the one hand the work nods ironically towards constructivist and minimalist rigour, on the other it reminds us that this is no longer the age of grand narratives or strong belief systems able to underpin the world, showing instead that what remains are just fragments and empty promises.

What survives the contemporary foundering of the powerful ideas and grand narratives that guided generations of people in the last century are empty simulacra. These find an echo in the works shown by Lieber, which are reworked, metabolised and modified in their form in such a way as to encapsulate at one and the same time a reference to the past and a disenchanting view of today's world.

And so the artist magically conjures up colourful auras, released from apparently empty shelves; he presents complex constructions of interlocking volumes, the profile of which is outlined by very delicate structures made from medicine or food packages; he hollows out loaves of bread which, through metamorphosis, become estranging slippers; he transmutes sweatshirts and other items of clothing into the ghostly semblance of curious individuals, who occupy the space of the second room – spectators themselves besides being works on display. Ambivalence and the ability to suggest various interpretive possibilities are intrinsic to these works, where the stars of the universe are actually buttons, where erasures with a felt-tip pen open up worlds, where assemblages of ceramic, cardboard and wood are collapsed galaxies, horizons of events of a present that is also future and past.

A new definition of the human – from the infinitely large to the incredibly small, sardonic, paradoxical and visionary – emerges from the works on show, where playfulness and the absurd combine with the useful and the familiar, remnants of now outmoded ways of thinking which, through the original forms offered by Lieber's art, open up new threads of meaning.

Axel Lieber was born in Düsseldorf in 1960, where he gained his MFA in sculpture at the Staatliche Kunstakademie.

Besides working as an individual artist he is a member and co-founder of the Berlin based artist-collaboration "ingesidee", which, since 1993, operates in the field of public art and has realized projects in, amongst others, Sweden, Germany, Japan, Canada and Taiwan.



Since 1991 he was teaching at several nordic and european Art Academies. He worked as a lecturer at the Malmö Art Academy between 1995-1999 and was a DAAD guest professor at the Bauhaus University Weimar in 2006.

In 2016 he became a member of the Royal Academy of Art in Stockholm.

He shares his time between Stockholm and Berlin.

Hard Facts

MAAB Gallery

via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From March 14th to May 10th 2024

Open from Tuesday to Friday, 10.30 am – 6 pm

Opening: Thursday, March 14 | 6 pm – 8 pm

Information

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