

Paloma Varga Weisz

Labor

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Lisbon

Where does a thought go when it is forgotten?

In its quiet whispers, where fleeting possibilities travel freely, a perpetual scatter of the subconscious is assembled. Paloma Varga Weisz's intricate assortments of crafted objects, *kunstkammer*-style arrangements of no particular time and space, decipher a world of the unknown: disperse snippets of suddenly lost and found memories, a visual repository of boundless chances providing clues into the unsettling processes of the self. Varga Weisz's second exhibition at Pedro Cera offers a symbolical reading to the inner conflicts and ambiguities of the subjective mind, here portrayed as traces within an abstract flux of a shared existence: *Labor*, translating from German as "laboratory", signifies a metaphor for the instinctive working methods of the human psyche, as it deciphers a layer of autobiographical approach, inspired by the artist's mother's wine-making laboratory.

Equally derived from this backdrop are the cabinets, reconstructed from a previously existing model, originally kept at the same workroom. Appearing as a consistent and continuous paradigm of display throughout Varga Weisz's oeuvre, they house sculptures and objects reflecting a compulsion to collect both things and thoughts, acting as shelters for the physical manifestations of one's innate desires and vulnerabilities. Each structure is crafted as an enigmatic and poetic expression of the unconscious, cabinets of curiosities and wonders containing versions from earlier works, like "Birth" and "Twin-headed", and memorabilia gathered from the artist's individual archive, intertwining references of Varga Weisz's artistic practice, with elements of biography. Through their unsettling presence, these cabinets suggest a place to confront suppressed impulses, inviting the viewers to peer into their depths. Laden with symbolic resonance, they become portals to the intricacies of the self, as obscure fantasies to which we are drawn to.

The body appears as a theme of particular focus, blurring the line between the subjective and the collective experience. As fluid entities oscillating within interchangeable processes, the sculptures become subject to suggestion and possibility, embracing relentlessly existential themes. "Man, bent" (2017/2024) resembles a life-size limewood jointed figurine, positioned in a way that invokes psychoanalytic notions of authority and submission. As part of the Freud Museum collection, the sculpture subtly suggests a hint of perversion, depicted bent over, exposing the back. Providing an insight of masochism within Freudian theory, the work conducts a modality of sexual fantasy directly associated to the Oedipal desire. By translating abstract thoughts into visual narratives, Varga Weisz exposes vulnerability as a representation, transforming viewers into active observers of a suggested scenario. Consequently, a sense of uncanniness pervades when encountering this life-size body waiting for punishment, laying bare its inner fantasies, as well as the depths of human impulses.

The "Wilde Leute" sculptures, on the other hand, inhabit the space as ambiguous embodiments of primal essence and transformation. Arranged in small groups or "families", these figures possess a haunting allure, with simplified features reminiscent of Piero della

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Francesca's faces. Seeking to transcend any boundary, they exist in a state of ambiguity between the anthropomorphic and the zoomorphic, symbolizing a primal freedom from societal norms, each one unique in its color. As glass objects, their medium also echoes this non-pre-determination of meaning, sculpted intuitively by gestural expressions where light and color coexist, transitory materials shaping the metamorphic fluidity of bodies seeking to escape hierarchization. Unique in their individuality, each "Wilde Leute" figure serves as a testament to the inherent diversity of human experience, capturing the essence of existence in its raw and unfiltered state.

The translucent quality of glass is extended to the group of watercolor drawings spreading throughout the space, with representations existing on the edge of reality and fiction. Focusing on concepts of identity, the untamed and the non-defined, the works expressively portray transgression as well as reclusion, over forms hiding the real intricacies of the self, to raw depictions of the uncontrolled states of being. As an invitation to contemplate the mysterious boundaries between the known and the unknown, a lingering sense of wonder and introspection is created.

On the edge of expectation, trauma, naivety and possibility, Varga Weisz frames an open space of introspection regarding what it means to be: silent allusions to invisible journeys. Capturing an essence rather than a specific intention, intimacy and strangeness come together within a narrative awaiting association, where each object and sculpture unravels the Freudian idea of the "uncanny", delivering the viewer the task to rewrite and reorder an explanation. Removed from a specific milieu, the elements determine different places of origin, hybrid trajectories of new beginnings, oscillating needs, and unrelated moments. As unexpected as life's detours and bumps, the exhibition reveals a place to nourish associations, to remember what was once forgotten; to dream as if asleep, in a slumbering nightmare that haunts us into its depths. As a glass house built from emotional inventories, all that remains is the visual idiom of existential fragility.

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The work of Paloma Varga Weisz (b. 1966 in Mannheim (Germany), lives and works in Düsseldorf) is internationally recognized, being included in the collections of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen and Kunstmuseum Kunstpalast (Düsseldorf, Germany), the Bonnefanten Museum (Maastricht, The Netherlands), the Israel Museum (Jerusalem), the Museum Kurhaus Kleve (Kleve, Germany) and the Museum of Modern Art, MoMA (New York, USA), as well as other private collections. Major solo exhibitions include *Glory Hole*, Le Consortium (Dijon, France, 2021); *Bumped Body*, Henry Moore Institute (Leeds, England, 2020); *Bumped Body*, Bonnefanten Museum (Maastricht, The Netherlands, 2019); *Skulpturenhalle*, Thomas Schütte Foundation (Holzheim, Germany, 2017); *Root of a Dream*, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea (Turin, Italy, 2015); *Glory Hole*, Salzburger Kunstverein (Salzburg, Austria, 2015); *Krummer Hund*, Kabinett für aktuelle Kunst (Bremerhaven, Germany, 2013); *Maison de Plaisance*, Museum Morsbroich (Leverkusen, Germany, with Rosemary Trockel, 2012) and *Spirits of My Flesh*, Chapter (Cardiff, England, 2011), among other. Her works have also been included in numerous group shows, at Kunsthalle Museum Bremerhaven (Germany, 2023); The National Gallery (London, England, 2021); Museum Kunstpalast (Düsseldorf, Germany, 2017); Hayward Gallery (London, England, 2014); Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (Düsseldorf, Germany, 2015; 2005); Museum of Modern Art (New York, USA, 2012); Kunsthalle Krems (Krems, Austria, 2010); the Berlin Biennale (2006) and the Venice Biennale (2005), to name a few.

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