

ERIKA VERZUTTI

Two Eyes, Two Mouths

13 OCTOBER -17 DECEMBER 2015

PRIVATE VIEW: MONDAY 12 OCTOBER, 6-8PM

'It is initially amazing that, from a few operations with ordinary elements, these pieces take on a suggestive power capable of articulating what categories and classes separate in the domains of art, nature and social life. They are experiences with weights, consistencies, textures, contours, colours, sheen and temperature that contribute to induce contradictory stimuli and require viewers to use a tactile and possibly gustatory gaze for an almost synesthetic perception. (...) Put in another way, the work is succulent and acid and sweet and sour and bitter, in several senses.'

-José Augusto Ribeiro, *Erika Verzutti* monograph published by Cobogo in 2013

Alison Jacques Gallery is delighted to present our first solo exhibition of new works by Erika Verzutti. Fluctuating between materiality and absence and between social structures and formal structures the artist sees sculpture as something that can exist as easily in domestic and public spaces as it can in phone screens or embedded in human gestures. Verzutti's works are at once painting *and* sculpture, challenging preconceived notions of both practices. While many works in the exhibition focus specifically on the human form, the artist's interest also lies in the way colour interacts with these forms.

In 'Bikini' the artist illustrates the female form with four distinctly coloured marks. The two different shades of red function like a highlight on a darkly lit painting, working alongside a green and blue stroke to articulate a precision only amplified by the contrast of the velvety matte acrylic against the shiny bronze. 'Cobra Goodnight' also outlines the female form, yet in this case with dimensional chords of white bronze (resembling whipped cream), inspired by an image posted by Japanese young artist Cobra. Likening the idea of pornography to a dangerous chemical not to be touched, the artist transforms vulgarity by creating a work that is purposefully childlike in nature. The lines of 'Chantilly' are imperfect, yet Verzutti resists the urge to retouch. Such truthfulness is apparent throughout her work, which resonates with the mid-twentieth century Brazilian movement Neo-Concretism in its intuition, and exposure of the process of making. In 'Turtle' an organic cartoonish shape is composed of oval depressions – indentations that could have been created by the impression of an egg or scoop of a spoon.

Verzutti's dismisses social hierarchies to glorify form. Beauty and make up feeds have inspired many works in the exhibition such as 'Cold and Medium'. Beginning with lines the composition became subtler and subtler on one side whilst sharp lip-like edges emerged on the other. Simultaneously becoming more bodily and more painterly the sculpture's colder, yellowish colour contrasted the warmer temperatures of flesh and caused the surface to rise and recess. 'Two Eyes Two Mouths' was also influenced by a makeup tutorial and features a square sculpture containing a grid-like formation of mouths and eyes - parallel to each other, yet diagonal within the square. The shapes Verzutti employs (a mouth, an eyelid, an almond shaped eye) are all rounded forms. Each mark, each line, indentation or curve holds a wealth of references, yet the elegance in the work lies in its simplicity, the honesty in its making and the truth to materials. Verzutti embraces the questions and insecurities that allow her to realise when a work begins to become something else entirely, a sensitivity she articulates in the description of 'Star without Makeup'.

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'I first made a lump, then an indentation to it and stopped, terrified. This was eye number 1. Then I made an outline with a tool to determine an area to carve, but decided not to carve it - that became eye number 2 (the "Egyptian"). I went for another outline - with my finger - to realize eye number 3 looked like parted lips. I stopped. There was no room for more eyes. No room for more gestures. When the bronze cast came out the foundry I learnt that I preferred to keep the piece naked, without patina, my first time showing bronze this gold. I added some touches of coloured wax to some areas, but it hard to tell. It felt like applying concealing make up, a trick to charm.'

Erika Verzutti was born in 1971 in São Paulo and her work has been exhibited in numerous international exhibitions. She was included in group exhibitions such *Cruzamentos* as at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Ohio (2014), *34º Panorama da Arte Brasileira*, Museu de Arte Moderna de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo (2015); *Alimentário, arte e construção do patrimônio alimentar brasileiro*, OCA São Paulo (2015); *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014); the 56th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art (2013); the Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2013); and the 11th Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France (2011). In 2012 Verzutti had a solo exhibition at the Centro Cultural São Paulo and participated the following year in the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, curated by Daniel Baumann and Tina Kukielski. In 2014 Verzutti was the focus of a solo exhibition curated by Ian Berry, at the Tang Museum at Skidmore College, New York. In May 2015, Verzutti had a solo exhibition at The Sculpture Center, Long Island City, curated by Ruba Katrib. Private and institutional collections of her work include the Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, the Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo, and the Colección Cisneros in Caracas, among others. Erika Verzutti lives and works in São Paulo.

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