

Sandra Mujinga
Seasonal Pulses
30. 3. – 4. 5. 2019

Sandra Mujinga plays with economies of visibility and disappearance, and negotiates questions of self representation and –preservation. In her interdisciplinary practice she often reverses traditional identity politics of presence.

Seasonal Pulses, Mujinga's first solo exhibition at Croy Nielsen, features four austere-looking, larger-than-life sculptures seemingly guarding the gallery space, while two others are cowering on the floor. The glossy, reddish inside of their prolonged hoodies (made of tinted glycerine encased in transparent plastic) resembles the internal flesh emerging to the outside, as if their hard and callused skin has been inverted with their soft insides. Idioms like "pouring your heart out" or "wearing your heart on your sleeve" come to mind, pointing to exaggerated vulnerability, when the protective cage of skin and bones are gone. Here, however, the flesh seems to have gained its own agency or adaptability in their absence, as the inside of the bodies merge with the denim fabric that the garments are made of.

Standing firmly on two legs, each of the sculptures clearly refers to the human body, but their animal-like trunks, tentacles, and ears make them defy categorisation. Mujinga departs from a purely anthropocentric approach to understanding the transient world we are living in, not the least because it isn't a given that humans will be the species surviving the inevitable environmental crisis we are heading at. Her work points towards different survival strategies developed by animals: for example, elephants have proven to gradually become nocturnal as a result of increased poaching. Or the fact that the – from a human perspective – helpless jellyfish (transparent and soft! Not even able to move on their own!) represents one of the planet's oldest species:

These different animals help me make thinking maps around questions I have about what projections and expectations we have of the human body. Avoiding projecting human emotions on them is a battle I constantly lose, and also a point of reminder that there are living creatures that have existed before me and will continue to exist after me.

Octopuses, for example, are fascinating creatures that we recognize as intelligent since we think we can break their codes. Intelligence at large is always measured up against human intelligence, and I find something very solipsist and thought-provoking in this.

– Sandra Mujinga

Proceeding from the four creatures and the image of their fleshy but firm appearance, Mujinga addresses today's representational politics: on the one hand the body is constantly scrutinized, analyzed and valued in terms of the properties of its parts, separated from the whole. At the same time the face, as the expression of the individual self, is obscured and transformed by technology in an endless series of filters. On the other hand, in an inverse subversion of this hegemonic system, the body becomes the surface on which self-representation is projected, while the face is what

is to be hidden in order to escape recognition or exploitation of the self.

Mujinga works with a possible, transient body situated between the static and the dynamic futurity of the sculptures. She points to a place that is in the process between starting point and destination which is exactly where the building of worlds can take place.

Sandra Mujinga (b. 1989, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo) is a Norwegian artist and musician, living in Berlin and Oslo. She graduated from the Malmö Art Academy and currently has a residency at Cité internationale des arts in Paris. Solo exhibitions include Bergen Kunsthall, No. 5 (upcoming), Atlanta Contemporary, and UKS, Oslo (both 2018), as well as Tranen, Copenhagen (2017). Her work is currently on view at Hasselblad Foundation in Gothenburg, and other group shows include The Approach, London (2018), Magenta Plains, New York, Kunstverein Braunschweig, and Malmö Kunsthall (all 2017). Upcoming group shows include Kistefos-Museet, Oslo.

