

Mai-Thu Perret

My sister's hand in mine

Opening, Thursday March 17, 2022, from 6 to 8 pm

Exhibition from March 18 to April 29, 2022

Nuit des Bains, Thursday March 24, 2022, from 6 to 9 pm

From film to performance, by way of painting, sculpture and installation, Mai-Thu Perret has a multiple artistic practice. As a graduate of English literature at the University of Cambridge, she perfected her artistic technique by taking part in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Narration plays a major role in her work, which combines both literature and the visual arts.

In 1999, Mai-Thu Perret developed *The Crystal Frontier*, a fictional story about the life of an autonomous group of women based in New Mexico. *New Ponderosa*, the micro-society imagined by the artist, makes reference to the utopian movements of the early twentieth century, which inspired the currents of the avant-garde. Mai-Thu Perret multiplies the latter's aesthetic references, notably to abstraction, constructivism and the Bauhaus. Narration creates a space conducive to the creation of material and textual objects specific to this community – manifestos, letters and diaries, embroidery, ceramics and other works – and supports the staging of utopian feminist narratives that characterise a number of the artist's productions.



In 2016, Mai-Thu Perret presented *Les guerrières Féminaire* (Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas), an installation staging a group of mannequins inspired by the Women's Protection Units, a female militia belonging to the People's Protection Units, the armed wing of the Syrian Democratic Union Party. Like the community of *New Ponderosa*, *Les guerrières* ("the warriors") are fighting to build a free and egalitarian society. In 2019, she explored the relationship between the emergence of capitalism and the figure of the witch in the exhibition entitled *The Blazing World* (Spike Island, Bristol). Women accused of witchcraft, now feminist icons, were violently oppressed for centuries by a society whose codes they did not share. In addition to her sensitivity to gender issues and radical feminist policies, Mai-Thu Perret has developed various broad themes in recent exhibitions based on human beings (bodies, sexualities, the medical dimension), intimate spaces (furniture, common objects, decorations) and childhood (drawings, games), by means of a practice that combines modernism, the Arts and Crafts movement or, more recently, Oriental spiritualities.

Mai-Thu Perret's exhibition presents a series of mittens in the pointed shape specific to the Latvian tradition, which the artist discovered during a stay in Riga as part of the collective exhibition, *Survival Kit 10.1: Outlands*, at the Centre for Contemporary Arts. For centuries, these mittens, endowed with a magical and spiritual meaning, have been used as wedding gifts with both utilitarian and symbolic dimensions. Still today, they are mainly created by women who possess a rare know-how. This secular practice unites them around a common identity, whilst offering them great autonomy. From an aesthetic point of view, the patterns adorning the mittens in Mai-Thu Perret's edition are reminiscent

of both Russian abstraction and the Bauhaus “style”; we are also reminded of the grid compositions of Anni Albers' embroideries, whose importance is currently being rediscovered.

The edition, entitled *My sister's hand in mine*, includes a screen-printed maple box with sliding lid that contains a pair of knitted mittens with the pointed shape specific to the Latvian tradition. Each pair is unique, made of pure Shetland wool, and their patterns reproduce one of the five patterns designed by Mai-Thu Perret: four geometric designs and a foliage motif inspired by the Latvian Latgale regional tradition. Each box also contains ten screen prints reproducing the five patterns, available in two different colours, as well as a colophon, printed on rough natural Lessebo paper 400 g/m², 45.6 x 17.5 cm. Each silkscreen is numbered (from A to J) and signed by the artist.

This edition has been produced in 12 copies, 2 e.a. and 2 H.C., numbered, dated and signed by the artist on the colophon. The mittens were knitted by Santa Leimane, Riga, the screen prints were printed by Sabrina Peerally, Madame (screen printing workshop, Geneva), the boxes were made by Atelier Casai SA, Geneva. Graphic design: Niels Wehrspann, Lausanne. Edition by the Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva, 2022.

BIOGRAPHY

Mai-Thu Perret was born in 1976 in Geneva where she lives and works. Recently, she has presented several solo shows, including exhibitions *Real Estate* and *Untitled* at the Instituto Svizzero, Rome (2021 et 2022) ; *Les Étangs* at the Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain du Havre (2020) ; *Mai-Thu Perret* at the MAMCO, Genève (2018). She has also participated in numerous group shows: *The Universe of Emma Kunz, A visionary in dialogue with contemporary art* at the International Centre for Contemporary Culture, San Sebastian (2022) ; *Les Flammes* at the Musée d'art moderne, Paris (2021) ; *Kosmos Emma Kunz* at the Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau (2021) ; *It Never Ends* at the KANAL Centre Pompidou, Bruxelles (2020) ; *Homo Faber: on the use and effect of handcraft in contemporary sculpture* at the Asia Cultural Center (ACC), Gwangju (2019) ; *New Age, New Age: Strategies for Survival* at the DePaul Art Museum, Chicago (2019).

Mai-Thu Perret's exhibition is supported by Erna und Curt Burgauer Foundation, Zurich.

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Opening hours: Tuesday – Friday, 2 – 6 pm



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