

## Kunsthalle Lingen

### Intralocutors: Click

Rochelle Goldberg's sculptures are part of a long tradition of interaction between contemporary sculpture and the material remains of the past. In Goldberg's work, processes of conservation and re-use are not just a means to an end, but worthy of attention in their own right. Her rough, fragmented surfaces evoke various, sometimes antithetical, archeological processes such as erosion and excavation. "Intralocutors: CLICK," the artist's first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, comprises newly created sculptures in a broad variety of materials and scales. Although the work on display was created independently, the installation in Lingen allows for unexpected dialogues with the Kunsthalle's remarkable home in a repurposed industrial space. Specifically, Goldberg's precise use of raw materials like aluminum, steel, and weathered bronze recalls some of the same metals that workers once handled in this former train maintenance plant. The relationship between personal, emotional care and certain types of material care like conservation, restoration, and repair has long been a focus of the artist's work. Thus, in a building that was once dedicated to the perpetual upkeep and repair of hardworking train engines, her sculptures invite us to consider the criteria we use to deem something worthy of continued maintenance. Perhaps, these works seem to suggest, our ability to repair the machines and goods in our lives can also tell us something about the types of repair needed to maintain societal, emotional, and human infrastructures.

In the exhibition, an ephemeral sprawl of materials is anchored by several sculptures assembled from figurative bronze fragments of a female body. Goldberg produced the twin works *Intralocutor: someone will always pay* and *Intralocutor: will someone always pay* (both 2022) in a complex, multi-step process of finding, appropriating, and re-combining historically or emotionally overdetermined objects. Many (but not all) of the fragments are casts taken from plastic busts of Marilyn Monroe and other female characters embodying the beauty ideals associated with the 1950s "pin-up girl." Goldberg sourced these objects from internet marketplaces and was often able to purchase them only after lengthy negotiations, which were complicated by the sentimental value these objects held for their owners. Because of their particularly smooth surfaces, the busts lent themselves to the reproductive process of wax-casting over and over again. Those wax casts, in turn, served as the basis for the final bronze objects. In the finished sculptures, Marilyn does not appear as the immaculate incarnation of Hollywood glamour she was once taken to be. With some parts of her body missing and others doubled, she instead emerges as a fragmented hybrid figure, a forgotten ideal that seems to have accumulated layers of patina and sediment over several subsequent eras.

From the atelier to the bronze foundry, Goldberg's production process resembles a time-lapse version of the slow neglect and partial retrieval that is the ultimate fate of so many cultural objects and ideas. And yet, the finished sculptures possess an undeniable presence and contemporaneity in the gallery. The works' seeming ability to exist on several temporal layers simultaneously poses questions about the evidentiary power of historical objects and artworks. How can some objects turn from mere detritus and polluting trash into valuable historical artifacts? Is there a point in time at which a once-titillating erotic image becomes an object of reverence? And if so, does it matter whose body is depicted?

The body types associated with a 1950s "pin-up" have often been credited with a deeply paradoxical set of powers. On the one hand, these bodies have been

stylized as powerful weapons of seduction wielded by dangerous and powerful *femmes fatales*. On the other hand, male-dominated society has also taken their beauty as a marker of absolute passivity, as a standing for the lack of any defences against the incessant fetishization and sexualization of women's bodies. By choosing to work precisely with these overdetermined images, Goldberg forces viewers to consider which bodily representations they themselves might accept as legitimate agents of knowledge and meaning. The sculptures pose such questions without offering the relief of a clear answer. Instead, they invite viewers to challenge their own convictions and desires about the potential value or worthlessness of organic or inorganic matter.

The title of *Intralocutors: CLICK* makes use of a neologism that Goldberg has long used to title a wide range of her figurative works. Whereas an interlocutor is a figure allowing for a dialogue and exchange *between* otherwise stable individuals, her "intralocutor" goes further in challenging even the basic assumption of individual stability. The conversation of the intralocutor is directed inward. It aims to expand, and perhaps even erase, notions of individuality that depend on a clearly defined boundary between past and future selves, between self and other. In *Lingen*, these intralocutors seem to utter a single, onomatopoetic word: "Click." The click of a mouse is the sound we use as shorthand to describe our engagement with digital worlds, a minuscule movement that remains unchanged whether we are, say, liking a friend's holiday snapshot or moving vast amounts of money. A "click" is also the sound of a trigger that is always there but only audible when your gun has run out of bullets. Most meanings of the word "click" thus stand for the mismatch between our actions and their consequences that lies at the very basis of technological society. In the exhibition space, the "click" might thus stand for the subtlety in which Goldberg's sculptures invite our engagement. Throughout the exhibition, small formal elements might remain unnoticed. Or they might send a small impulse to a beholder that then initiates an intense, and almost interactive process of engaging with the entire exhibition.

This is the case, for instance, in one particularly poetic installation, *Bread Garden (ascendant version)* 2020-ongoing, which juxtaposes amorphous forms with hard angular shapes, horizontal grids with vertical lines, and exhumed root vegetables with shimmering cans of cat food. Everything is connected through adjoining wires and steel cables that create an intense, yet partially deceptive, sense of lightness and harmony. This dispersion of goods appears as if suspended in an ongoing process. Still rough around the edges, it appears ready to either be further preserved or torn down again. Viewers become more than just a passive witness to this event. In the exhibition, they may move through materials that are obviously lifeless but charged with emotions and desires. In encountering re-emergent bodies that have undergone imperfect processes of decay and restoration, they may consider the degree to which their own bodies and body images are also subject to perpetual change over time.