

KIKI SMITH RED STANDING MOON

CURATED BY PETRA GILOY-HIRTZ

GALERIE THOMAS SCHULTE, 17 SEPTEMBER ^{TO} 22 OCTOBER 2022



GALERIE
THOMAS
SCHULTE

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Kiki Smith, *Red Standing Moon*, 2003, Painted aluminum and patinated bronze,
190.5 × 185 × 190.5 cm | 75 × 73 × 75 in, Courtesy Kiki Smith and Pace Gallery, New York

Over the course of her career, iconic American artist Kiki Smith (*1954) has produced a multi-layered body of work exploring the sociopolitical, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions of human nature. Her investigations of the body, the female body in particular, propose discourses of the human condition—the *conditio humana*. Her works address core themes from aging, death and dying, to wounding and healing, reanimation, pregnancy, birth, sexuality, gender, identity, and memory. While largely sculptural, Smith's oeuvre employs a range of mediums, most notably drawing, etching, and lithography, as well as photography and video. Her early works were influenced by the sudden shifts in political, social, and cultural conditions—brought on in part by the AIDS epidemic, changing discourses on sexual identity and social gender, and the impacts of feminist activism. Since the early 1990s Smith's work has also incorporated themes referencing history, mythology, legends, fairy tales, and religious traditions. Her pictorial interventions, her radicalism, and the magic of her materials not only make her work unique, but continue to influence a younger generation of artists.

In its first exhibition with Kiki Smith, Galerie Thomas Schulte presents a selection of works created in the last twenty years, showcasing the artist's signature use of an abundance of materials: sculptures in patinated bronze and aluminum, paintings on glass with gold leaf, ink drawings on Nepalese paper, copperplate intaglio with collages. Kiki Smith's focus has broadened during this time to include a perception of a larger context: her works now address human relationships to animals, nature, and the environment. Thus, the exhibition reveals an entire universe: floating celestial bodies made of aluminum, including works like *Moon, Stars and Cloud* (2011) and *Spiral Nebula* (2017), or bronze stars (*Sungrazer*, 2018); an over six meter long collage of celestial constellations *Noctua*, the owl, *Corvus*, the crow, *Hydra*, the water snake, *Felis*, the cat (2013); bronze birds, as her animals of choice (39 *Standing Birds*, 2006; *Eagle in the Pines*, 2017), and trees, drawn and printed. Included in this cosmos is the Woman, seen as a painting on glass, *Reminiscent* (2011), and as a standing nude figure in aluminum, supported by bronze „crutches,“ which inspires the title of the exhibition: *Red Standing Moon* (2003).

Smith's works contain dualities between themes of lightness, beauty, balance, and harmony, and those of endangerment and vulnerability. As she describes, “we are part of the natural world, and our identity is completely attached to our relationship to our habitat and animals. I am making images for things I think merit attention“. She speaks of the possibility of “resurrection” and “regeneration”: “I think hope can only have meaning or be realized through action. Consequently, hope requires action, otherwise it's just a static idea.“

— Petra Giloy-Hirtz

Kiki Smith was born in 1954 in Nuremberg, Germany. In 1955, the family moved to the United States. Kiki Smith had her first solo exhibition at the Fawbush Gallery in New York (1988), and her first one-person museum show at the Dallas Museum of Art (1989), followed by her first European exhibition at the Centre d'art Contemporain in Geneva (1990). In 1991, she was included in the Whitney Biennial in New York for the first time. Many exhibitions followed, especially in the United States, a prominent one among them being the retrospective *Kiki Smith: A Gathering, 1980-2005*, which opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, then traveled to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston and the Museo Jumex, Mexico City, New Mexico (2005-06). In New York, the Museum of Modern Art presented *Prints, Books and Things* in 2003; in 2001, *Telling Tales* was on view at the International Center of Photography, and *Sojourn* was shown at the Brooklyn Museum in 2010. The great appreciation for Kiki Smith's work in Europe is demonstrated by exhibitions such as that at the Kunstverein Bonn (1992), Kestner Gesellschaft in Hannover (1998), Ulmer Museum (2001), Museum Haus Esters in Krefeld and Kunsthalle Nürnberg (2008), the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice (2005), the Palais des Papes in Avignon (2013), Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich (2019), Monnaie de Paris (2019/2020), Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne (2020/21), or Modern Art Oxford (2020/21). Her retrospective *Procession* was first shown at Haus der Kunst, Munich in 2018, traveling to Sara Hildén Museum, Tampere (2019) and Belvedere Vienna (2019). Her work has been part of the *Viva Arte Viva* exhibition at the 57th Venice Art Biennale (2017).

Kiki Smith's works have been included in the public collections of some of the world's most important museums: Centre Pompidou in Paris, Museum of Modern Art in New York, Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Tate Gallery in London, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, among many others. She lives and works in New York City and Upstate New York.

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Kiki Smith, *Red Standing Moon*, 2003, Aluminium, Farbe, Bronze,
190,5 × 185 × 190,5 cm, Courtesy Kiki Smith und Pace Gallery, New York

Die US-amerikanische Künstlerin Kiki Smith (*1954), eine der herausragenden Künstlerinnen unserer Zeit, hat ein vielschichtiges Werk geschaffen, das sich mit den politischen und sozialen wie den philosophischen und spirituellen Aspekten der menschlichen Natur befasst. Ihre Untersuchungen des Körpers, insbesondere des weiblichen Körpers, stellen die *conditio humana*, die Bedingung des Menschseins, zur Diskussion. Sie thematisieren Alter, Tod und Sterben, Verwundung und Heilung, Reanimation, Schwangerschaft, Geburt, Sexualität, Geschlecht, Identität, Erinnerung. Die Skulptur ist ihr bevorzugtes Medium, darüber hinaus Zeichnung, Radierung und Lithographie, aber auch von Anfang an Fotografie und Video. Entstanden ihre frühen Arbeiten unter dem Eindruck eines brisanten Wandels der politischen, sozialen und kulturellen Bedingungen – geprägt durch AIDS, dem Diskurs über sexuelle Identität und soziales Geschlecht sowie feministischen Aktivismus –, so schöpft Kiki Smith seit Anfang der 1990er Jahre auch aus der Geschichte, aus Mythen, Legenden und Märchen sowie aus religiösen Überlieferungen. Ihre Bilderfindungen, ihre Radikalität und die Magie des Materials machen ihr Werk einzigartig und beeinflussen eine jüngere Künstlergeneration.

Die Galerie Thomas Schulte zeigt in ihrer ersten Ausstellung zu Kiki Smith Arbeiten aus den letzten zwanzig Jahren in der für die Künstlerin typischen Fülle von Materialien: Skulpturen aus patinierter Bronze und Aluminium, Malerei auf Glas mit Blattgold, Zeichnungen in Tinte auf Nepalpapier, Kupferdrucke mit Collagen. Kiki Smiths Konzentration auf das Subjekt hat sich in dieser Zeit um die Wahrnehmung eines größeren Zusammenhangs geweitet: Ihre Arbeiten thematisieren nun das Verhältnis des Menschen zum Tier, zur Natur, zur Umwelt. So entfaltet die Ausstellung ein ganzes Universum: schwebende Himmelskörper aus Aluminium wie *Moon, Stars and Cloud* (2011) und *Spiral Nebula* (2017) oder bronzene Sterne (*Sungrazer*, 2018); eine über sechs Meter lange Collage der Himmelskonstellationen von *Noctua*, der Eule, *Corvus*, der Krähe, *Hydra*, der Wasserschlange, *Felis*, der Katze (2013); Vögel aus Bronze, als ihre bevorzugten Tiere (*39 Standing Birds*, 2006; *Eagle in the Pines*, 2017), und Bäume, gezeichnet und gedruckt. In diesen Kosmos eingebunden ist die Frau, als die sich Erinnernde auf Glas gemalt, *Reminiscent* (2011), und als stehende nackte Gestalt aus Aluminium, gestützt von „Krücken“ aus Bronze, die der Ausstellung ihren Titel gibt: *Red Standing Moon* (2003).

Mit ihren Werken umgreift Kiki Smith immer beides: Leichtigkeit, Schönheit, Balance und Harmonie und zugleich Gefährdung und Schutzbedürftigkeit. „Wir sind mit der Natur aufs Engste verflochten“, sagt sie. „Wir sind ein Teil der Natur, und unsere Identität ist eng verbunden mit unserer Beziehung zu unserer natürlichen Umgebung und zu Tieren. Ich schaffe Bilder für Dinge, die meiner Ansicht nach Aufmerksamkeit verdienen.“ Kiki Smith spricht von der Möglichkeit der „resurrection“ und „regeneration“ – der Wiederauferstehung und der Erneuerung. „Ich denke, Hoffnung kann nur durch Handeln eine

Bedeutung haben oder verwirklicht werden. Folgerichtig erfordert Hoffnung Handlung, sonst bleibt sie eine statische Idee.“

— Petra Giloy-Hirtz

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