

Press Release and List of Works

The Swiss artist Judith Kakon is interested in the history of forms, their circulations and uses. Her work explores the question of reuse and displacement, between public space and exhibition space. In *GRAND AIR*, the artist's first solo exhibition in France, she offers us a new perspective on Christmas lights, here taken out of their context and accompanied by a collection of images.

The installation in La Criée's central space, *Recess and Incline (s'arrêter et s'incliner)* is composed of hundreds of Christmas lights, presented unlit as if asleep. They are arranged on metal supports inspired by warehouse shelving, custom-designed by the artist, artifacts somewhere between minimalist sculptures and utilitarian objects. Their presentation is also inspired by "Schaulager" (a melding of the words "Schauen" and "Lagern", which mean, respectively, "seeing" and "storing").¹ The installation takes the form of open storage, guaranteeing the public's access to the works when they are not being exhibited. Judith Kakon's installation blurs the boundaries between the storeroom and the gallery, as well as between interior and exterior, the beautiful and the useful.

Taken out of their usual context, visitors now see these objects, part of the city's heritage, in a new light. Through this game of displacement, Judith Kakon transmutes their forms and uses. Maybe some of us have already wondered what happens to the Christmas lights once the holiday season is over?

This shift also reconfigures the art centre and the expectations of an exhibition: here it is not the art that leaves the walls to occupy the public space, but the city centre's streets that infiltrate the white cube. This reconfiguration lead us to question what we are looking at: Can a shelf be a sculpture? From which models do they borrow and what do they tell us about the circulation of forms?

Judith Kakon is fascinated by the emotional and political charge of Christmas lights. By choosing to present them unlit, rolled up and suspended, she forces us to take another perspective on what we think we know. The installation invites us to change our point of view and to consider a formal reading of the lights. Certain patterns, such as scrolls and arabesques, are universal in nature, while others are inspired by local culture, such as Breton embroidery. Their forms evoke each element's visual culture and give space to varied interpretations: here a windmill for a child, there a helicoidal tower like the Tower of Babel or Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* (1920), the most recognisable of the Russian Constructivist's projects.² The history of Christmas light designs is testament to the

¹ The idea of a storage-exhibition can be found, for example, in the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation in Basel, Switzerland, at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, Netherlands, or currently, at FRAC Bretagne in Rennes with the exhibition *En coulisses*.

² Constructivism is an artistic movement dating from the early 20th century in Russia, coinciding with the period of the Revolution, which broke with figuration, concentrating on simple geometric forms, in architecture, painting, dance and theatre

globalisation of cultural exchanges and society's secularisation. The lights have gradually taken on a more "worldly" character, embodying a more familial and more commercial spirit.

The installation *Recess and incline* resonates with our current era in two ways: the project is produced eco-responsibly, using local resources. The lights from Rennes Métropole's lighting division are redeployed and thus "shine" with a forceful symbolic charge, against the backdrop of today's energy restrictions. They also highlight the shifts in the production methods of public lighting: incandescent and halogen bulbs have been replaced by LEDs. Certain lighting installations have been tested over time, while others are new and have never been installed in the city. This evolution of the lighting, destined to be shown temporarily, resonates with that of artworks. The shelves Judith Kakon designed can be modified and used in other places, with lights or for other purposes.

In the second room, the entire surface of the wall is covered by a collection of images, installed like a Salon hang. The different series exhibited echo the main room and reflect the artist's concerns: archiving, the circulation of images, and the transformation of a standardised form (an umbrella, a scan of a mailed parcel, or an email) into a singular artistic object. In all these images, Judith Kakon shines a light on the paradoxes of capitalism, intertwining personal, intimate experiences with standard modes of production (online shopping platforms, advertising). Her works are inspired by the concept of "emotional capitalism", as theorised by American sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild³ and developed by the social scientist Eva Illouz. This concept describes the way capitalism produces standardised modes of interactions and transforms emotions into commodities.

With *GRAND AIR*, Judith Kakon's subtly political art invites us to look at the objects, movements and relationships of our globalised world by shifting our usual points of view and localisation. Her work questions the cultural value of mass-produced images and products. By moving them from one space to another, from one temporality to another, these objects shed their everyday casualness to access, temporarily, the status of artwork. With her keen photographer's eye and sense of framing, Judith Kakon challenges us to question what we take for granted, what is behind or alongside the representations that surround us.

Judith Kakon was born in 1988 in Basel, Switzerland, where she lives and works. In 2022, she spent a year in residence at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris.

³ See Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*, revised ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) or Pascale Molinier and Sandra Laugier, "Capitalismes émotionnels", *Multitudes* 1 no. 52 (2013).

She received her MFA from Bard, New York in 2016 and her bachelor's degree from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem in 2013. Her work has been shown at the Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen (2021); Kunsthalle Basel (2020); COAL MINE, Winterthur (2020); SALTS, Birsfelden (2019); and Ventilator, Tel Aviv (2019), among others

In 2021 Judith Kakon was awarded the Manor Kunstpreis Schaffhausen and published her book, *Stolen Language*, featuring contributions from Simone Neuenschwander, Sadie Plant, Boaz Levin, and Quinn Latimer.

List of Works :

Recess and Incline (Rennes FR), 2023

Steel, powder coating, Christmas lighting

Dimensions vary

production: La Criée centre for contemporary art, Rennes and
Centre culturel suisse, Paris

Disparate Images, 2019

22-parts,

Inkjet prints

48.3 × 32.9 cm each, framed

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

Parcel scans (PostPac) (I–XV), 2022

Heliogravure on handmade paper

65 × 45 cm each, framed

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

Untitled (Alibaba, Corona), 2020

4-parts

Digital print on stretched canvas

105 × 75 × 3 cm each

MR BAMBA, 2019

Inkjet print

100 × 75 cm

LA MADONNA DEL BEL RAMO, 2020

Inkjet print

100 × 75 cm

SAMARITAINE, 2022

Inkjet print

100 × 75 cm

Swiss-li, 2019

4-parts

Blueback poster prints 118.9 × 84.1 cm each