

**Lin May Saeed.**

**The Snow Falls Slowly in Paradise.**

**A Dialogue with Renée Sintenis**

14. September 2023 – 25. February 2024

Opening as part of Berlin Art Week: 13 September 2023 from 6 p.m.

Press tour: Friday September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 11am

*Styrofoam creatures climb out of their cages and colonise the Georg Kolbe Museum, wire lobsters free themselves from captivity with their claws, and, accompanied by Arabic poetry, figures taken from ancient sagas reflect the close relationship between animals and humans.*

The **German-Iraqi artist Lin May Saeed** (1973, Würzburg - 2023, Berlin) has spent more than 20 years exploring the lives of animals and their role in a world dominated by humans. The Georg Kolbe Museum is showing **her first solo museum exhibition in Germany**. With sculptures, reliefs, expansive silhouettes and drawings, the Berlin-based sculptor creates a new visual language of solidarity and coexistence between species. In the exhibition, Lin May Saeed's work enters into an artistic dialogue with works by **Renée Sintenis** (1888, Glatz-1965, West Berlin). This central modernist sculptor, who created the Berlin Bear, still awarded annually at the Berlinale, also searched for a language and a way of depicting the essence and spirit of animals. Renée Sintenis celebrated her breakthrough in the 1920s with small-format animal sculptures, an array of which Lin May Saeed selected for this exhibition.

With great empathy, a broad cultural-historical knowledge of fairy tales and fables, and also with humour, Lin May Saeed tells old and new stories of the subjugation and liberation of animals and their coexistence with humans. *A Pangolin* (2020) is one of Saeed's Styrofoam animals whose base doubles as a transport crate and now inhabits the former sculptor's studio in the Georg Kolbe Museum. The pangolin, which came to sad notoriety in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, is one of the most traded animals in the world and is threatened with extinction. Although the trade is banned, the black market is flourishing, as the animal is easy prey - it curls up into a ball when in danger and is easily be caught by poachers. In the distant future, however, Lin May Saeed's *Pangolin* will still exist. For unlike the classic materials of sculpture, such as bronze and marble, Saeed's preferred material, polystyrene, is not biodegradable. Thus, the artist sees the petroleum-based material as a warning in view of highly topical environmental problems, but at the same time uses it as an emancipatory means that is easy to work with even without great physical strength. Her works purposefully reveal processes of their construction in their provisional, naïve, graceful quality and with the chosen "poor" materials.

*“One of the most fascinating facts of Lin May Saeed's work is the fact that you cannot identify in the forms, whether these are ancient or highly contemporary forms, (...) it really gets the core of, in our opinion, what distinguishes essentially great art from other works,”*

is how the artists' collective **Slavs and Tatars** comments on some of Lin May Saeed's works in the new format 'Artists on Artists'. In the audio guide created for the exhibition (available from 13 September on the platform [bloombergconnects.org](https://bloombergconnects.org)), the collective explains how Saeed succeeds both thematically and formally in establishing references to the ancient relief art of Mesopotamia, such as with *Mureen/Lion School* (2016), in processing ancient content such as the Epic of Gilgamesh with sculptures such as *Enkidu and Jackel* (2007), or religious content such as the Christian-Islamic story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in *Seven Sleepers* (2020), and translating it into a contemporary reflection on the relationship between human and non-human animals.

The artist's cross-cultural narratives draw from Western traditions and her German-Jewish-Arab heritage, making diverse references which include the Animal Liberation Front, expressionist woodcuts, and ancient Mesopotamia. In terms of content and form, Lin May Saeed spans an arc from prehistory to the present in her critical yet hopeful view of the world today.

In the last 100 years, the social image of animals has changed dramatically. The animal liberation movement that emerged in the 1970s, which influenced Lin May Saeed's approach, mass extinction of species and the role of industrial factory farming in the progression of climate change illustrate the topicality and urgency of rethinking our perception of and treatment of other living beings. Often temporally displaced, Lin May Saeed's subjects reference atavistic animisms while simultaneously imagining posthuman conditions in which the boundaries of gender, place and species are fluid, if not dissolved. It is in these ambivalences that Lin May Saeed's animals arrive at the Georg Kolbe Museum to reoccupy its spaces and announce their world in ours.

The exhibition shows sculptures made of Styrofoam, steel and bronze, reliefs and a video, as well as drawings by both artists, and is accompanied by a [comprehensive educational and supporting programme on animality, animal ethics and animal rights.](#)

The Georg Kolbe Museum houses Georg Kolbe's correspondence with other artists of his time. For the new format 'Artists on Artists', the artists' collective Slavs and Tatars (founded 2006, Berlin) **has created an audio guide with their favourite works by Lin May Saeed for the exhibition**, which you can access on Bloomberg Connects from 13/9/2023.

The museum café **benjamine** will offer changing dishes inspired by Lin May Saeed's publication *Recipes from Iraq* for the duration of the exhibition and is offering a culinary evening with a vegan menu on 14.02.2024.

This exhibition marks the start of the curatorial program of Dr Kathleen Reinhardt, director of the Georg Kolbe Museum since December 2022. Curatorial assistance: Eva da Silva Antunes Alves and Emma Borwieck.

The exhibition was created in close collaboration with Lin May Saeed.

Georg Kolbe Museum, Sensburger Allee 25, 14055 Berlin / ph 030 304 21 44

[www.georg-kolbe-museum.de](http://www.georg-kolbe-museum.de) / [info@georg-kolbe-museum.de](mailto:info@georg-kolbe-museum.de)

Wednesday to Monday 11am–6pm / closed Tuesdays

Entry €8 (reduced €5), free entry for under 18s and for Friends of the Museum

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*The exhibition opens as part of Berlin Art Week 2023 and is financially supported by:*



**Freundeskreis  
Georg Kolbe Museum**

### Artist Biographies

**Lin May Saeed** (1973, Würzburg - 2023, Berlin) was a German-Iraqi artist who lived and worked in Berlin. She studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy and for more than 20 years focused her work on the theme of animal justice. In her sculptures, reliefs, drawings, and expansive murals, she created narratives that refer in a variety of ways to the Animal Liberation Front, expressionist woodcuts and ancient Mesopotamia, often executed in Styrofoam. In 2000 she received a scholarship from the Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes and in 2011 the Peter Mertes Scholarship from the Bonner Kunstverein. Her recent solo exhibitions have been at the Clark Institute, Williamstown (2020); Studio Voltaire, London (2018) and Lulu, Mexico City (2017). She has been included in group exhibitions including Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden (2023); Museo Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Fondation Carmignac, Porquerolles; Aspen Art Museum (all 2020); Palais de Tokyo, Paris; 33. Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, Slovenia and Villa Merkel, Esslingen (all 2019); Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; mumok, museum moderner kunst, Vienna (all 2018); Köln Skulptur (2017) and the Bonner Kunstverein (2012).

**Renée Sintenis** (1888, Glatz-1965, West Berlin) was one of the most successful sculptors of the Weimar Republic. In 1915 she exhibited for the first time at the Berlin Secession. Among her early patrons was the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. In the 1920s she was omnipresent in art and society and her Berlin gallery owner Alfred Flechtheim was able to sell many of her small-format animal bronzes to public and private collections. Sintenis counts - also due to her androgynous appearance and her height, which was surprising for the public at the time - among the most dazzling figures of the Berlin art scene of those years. In 1931, she was one of the first women to be appointed to the Prussian Academy of Arts. In 1934, she was forced to resign by the National Socialists due to doubts about her "Aryan" origins. In 1947 was appointed one of the first female professors at the Hochschule der Künste and was readmitted to the Akademie der Künste in 1955.

Sintenis was known as an animal sculptor, and her designs included the Berlinale Bear, a larger version of which welcomes travellers at the former Dreilinden border crossing, as well as at the northern and southern entry points of Berlin. The artist was a model for Georg Kolbe and the Georg Kolbe Museum looks after a partial estate of the artist including some of her work and parts of her extensive photo archive.

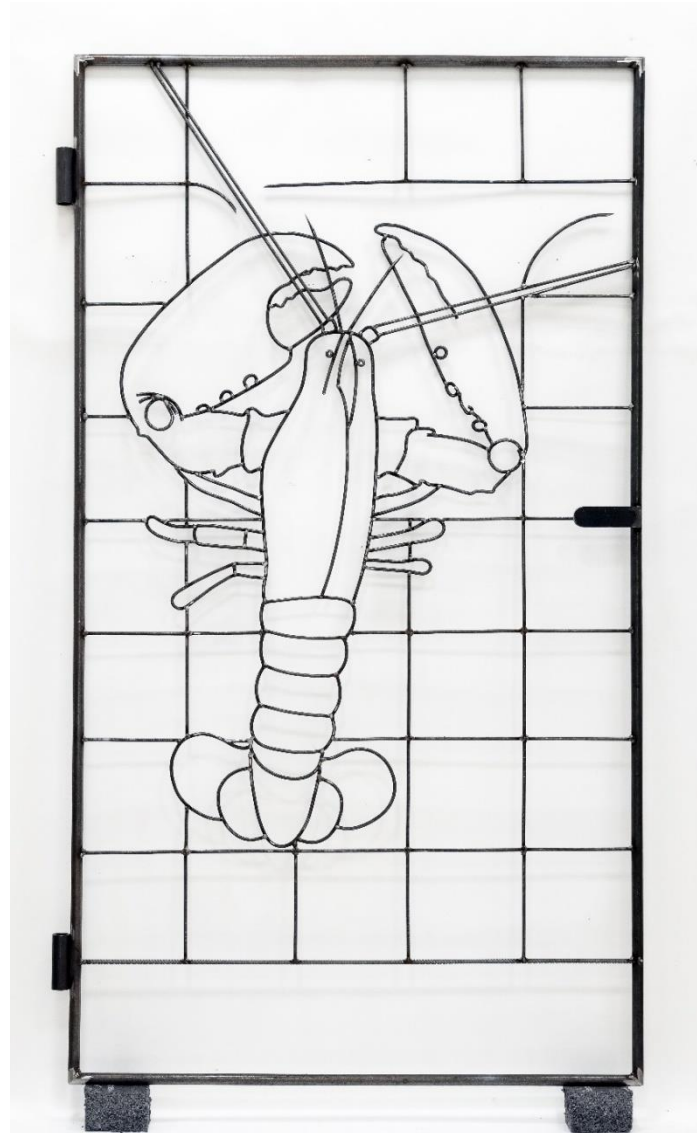
**The Georg Kolbe Museum** in Berlin's Westend is located in the heritage listed artists' house of the sculptor Georg Kolbe (1877-1947), a unique Bauhaus-influenced ensemble from 1928 with an interior sculpture garden. With exhibitions and educational offers on Modern and Contemporary art, the museum promotes a lively dialogue that connects the past with the present. The museum houses an important collection of modern art from Georg Kolbe's circle and is currently concentrating strongly on coming to terms with the artist's work during National Socialism. Research on women sculptors of the modern era is particularly important to the museum's work. Other core topics of the museum besides the modernist period, its criticism and sculpture are dance and photography, as well as the architecture of the New Building style. Solo exhibitions in the field of contemporary art in recent years have been dedicated to Leiko Ikemura (2023), Mona Hatoum (2022), Thomas Schütte (2021) and Lynn Chadwick (2019), among others. Exhibitions in the field of Classical Modernism included "Tilla Durieux. A Witness to a Century and Her Roles" (2023); "The Absolute Dance. Dancers of the Weimar Republic" (2021) and "Tender Men in Modernist Sculpture" (2018).

## Photo Material

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The Liberation of Animals from their Cages XXI/Lobster, 2018

Steel, lacquer

194 x 110 cm x 8 cm

Courtesy Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt/Main and the artist

Photo: Andy Keate



Seven Sleepers, 2020  
Sculpture group with 7 figures, 215 x 450 x 100 cm  
Installation view: The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA  
Courtesy Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt and the artist



Mureen / Lion School, 2016  
Styrofoam, acrylic paint, steel, plaster, wood  
170 x 245 x 19 cm  
The New Institute



Bee Relief / The Liberation of Animal from their Cages VII, 2018  
Relief, Styrofoam, acrylic paint, steel, transparent paper, wood  
135 x 179,5 x 22 cm  
Private collection



Teneen Albaher Relief / Sea Dragon Relief IV (V2), 2018  
Styrofoam, steel, acrylic paint  
37 x 52 x 17 cm  
Courtesy Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt and the artist  
Photo: Wolfgang Günzel



Pangolin, 2020  
Styrofoam, steel, plaster, acrylic paint, wood  
136 x 106 x 37 cm  
Courtesy Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt/Main and the artist  
Photo: The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA

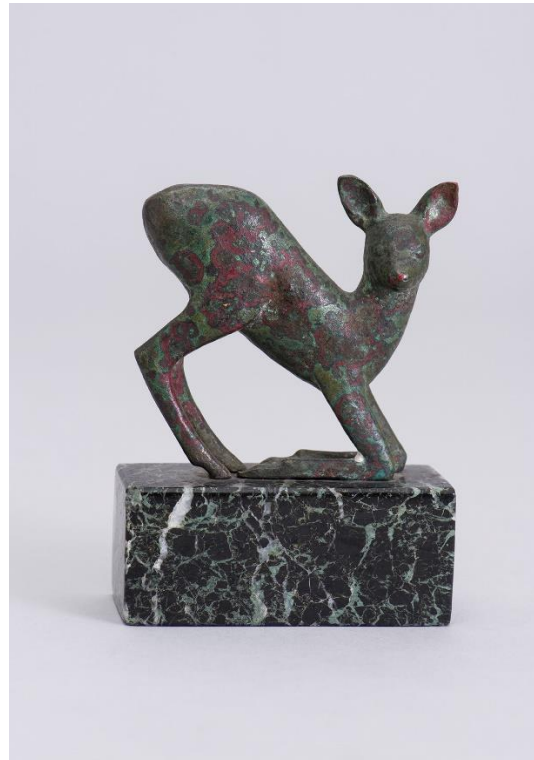


Hawr al-Hammar/Hammar Marshes, 2020  
Cardboard, paper, wood, fluorescent lights  
260 x 508 x 50 cm  
Courtesy Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt/Main and the artist  
Photo: The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA





Erntedank Relief mit Affe / Harvest festival with ape, 2008,  
Styrofoam, acrylic paint, steel, jute, transparent paper, textile chord  
176 x 252 x 36 cm  
Courtesy Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt/Main and the artist  
Photo: Eric Tschernow



Renée Sintenis  
Knieendes Reh, 1915  
7.6 cm  
Georg Kolbe Museum  
Photo: Markus Hilbich



Portrait von Lin May Saeed  
Studio Lin May Saeed



Installation View  
"Lin May Saeed. The Snow Falls Slowly in Paradise. A Dialogue with Renée Sintenis", 2023  
Georg Kolbe Museum  
Photo: Enrich Duch



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2023, Georg Kolbe Museum

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