

Klara Kristalova

Emelie Sandström

Anna Schachinger

Il Sorriso Degli Dèi

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Press Release

*«I wonder if it's true that they really saw them.»
«Who knows? But yes, they must have seen them. They only told their names and nothing further – it's all here the difference between fables and truth “It was that one or the other,” “They did this, they said that.” Who's sincere, is satisfied with it. They don't even suspect that somebody else will not believe them. We're the ones who are false, that never saw these things, but still know every detail of the Centaur's mane or the colour of the grapes in Icaro's vines.»(1)*

The pale head of a female figure sits on the ground and looks towards us with dark eyes. She is surrounded by branches and we cannot ascertain if we are looking at a metamorphosis, or someone hiding from us in the deep of the woods. In a similar way this circular composition of small and large sculptures by the Swedish artist Klara Kristalova invites the public to a narrative interpretation. The figures for which she has become famous, mostly young girls and animals, most often dealing with the loss of childhood or dark mysterious events, are half fables and Nordic myth, half feminist re-appropriations from a way too exiguous terrain left by

ages of objectification of women in art history.

Symmetrically, on the other end of the room, we find another circular composition of lathe sculptures by the Swedish Emelie Sandström. Simple and austere, they bring forward one of the most known and long lasting series by the Malmö based artist, a series that she has presented in very different proportions(2) and that she interprets as shapes with magical and protective powers. Sandström's art transforms a pantheistic, animist and animal-rights credo, into incredible objects. Often in wood, as in this exhibition, but also in metal, glass and resin, her artworks are mystical presences, which for her are deeply and idiosyncratically religious. These two islands of sculptures are conceptually and physically linked with the wall-based artworks by the Austrian artist Anna Schachinger. Caught in the middle between colourful paroxysms and minimalist delicate pen drawings, between abstraction and figuration, the exhibited works exhaustively epitomise the practice from which Schachinger achieved international recognition. Resulting from a cultured research, albeit based on an instinctive use of materials and shapes in a free and expressive process, her artworks find their strength in multiplicity of interpretations and an organic indefiniteness. This queerness that we find in the materiality of her very practice expands physically what she has defined conceptually as a «queer feminist discourse.»(3) They are profound and witty works, similar to much of the mythology from which Cesare Pavese draw inspiration for the book after which this exhibition is entitled, the *Dialoghi con Leucò*. There is where we have found the common ground of these three very different art practices: in a mixture of irony and

fable, myth and humanism through a feminist perspective. As in many of the dialogues by Pavese, and the pan-European mythology, the protagonists are women, and, as Medea, Helen and Calypso did at the time of our ancient ancestors, Kristalova, Sandström and Schachinger's art brings us far from reality and at the same time closer to our own self, in a magical world filled of powerful symbols, where we would like to reimagine a more feminine world. Could it be the near future? A sun with a human face smiles and gazes at us. It reminds of another passage from Pavese's book, where Circe, herself an enchantress, as maybe, in their own ways, also the three artists on show, ponders on her experience with Ulysses and tells to Leucothea (the eponymous *Leucò*): «[...] He never knew what the smile of the gods was – of us that know destiny.»(4)

Mattia Lullini

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**The Smile of the Gods*

(1) C. Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò*, Giulio Einaudi Editore (1953), p. 207. (Our translation)

(2) Which she presented in bronze for monumental public commissions in Malmö, Stockholm and Jonköping, as much as in large installations including dozens of single pieces in wood.

(3) *Sabeth Buchmann in conversation with Anna Schachinger*, Galerie Sophie Tappeiner (2022), p. 3 (<https://www.sophietappeiner.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Exhibition-Text-Anna-Schachinger-Aneinander-E-1.pdf> accessed on 16.03.2024).

(4) *Dialoghi con Leucò*, p. 147. (Our translation)

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The art of Czech born Swedish artist Klara Kristalova (b. 1967, Prague) has quietly revolutionised the art world of the past 30 years by bringing a practice based on what used to be considered a lesser and too crafty material like ceramic and a too personal and private discourse to their current acceptance in nowadays contemporary art. Her art focuses on myths and fables, but even more in a representation of the natural world, animals, plants and objects which channels and expands an idiosyncratic and private experience, connected to her childhood as the daughter of Czech refugees and fascination in eerie and dark atmospheres. “[D]epicting people generally, not women, but they are always women [...],” her work is also powerfully attempting a response to the still current question of the objectification of women in art history. With a degree at the Royal Institute of Art (Stockholm, 1993), Kristalova was already one of the most prominent contemporary Swedish artist at the time of her international recognition in the early 2000s. She is now represented by intercontinentally established galleries such as Galerie Perrotin, Lehmann Maupin and Galleri Magnus Karlsson, and was exhibited in museums such as SFMOMA in the US, Hayward Gallery in London, and Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm as much as she is represented in public collections such as Broad Art Museum, US, FNAC, Paris and Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

Emelie Sandström's (b.1986, Stockholm) practice stems from a research into traditional techniques and materials, and a fascination in the timeless way in which religion and mysticism use enchantment and fear to construct faith and induce social stability. Producing sculptures with hard materials like wood, bronze, and stained glass, she brings these considerations from the social to the psychological, and takes advantage of these structures to tell a very different story, a story of coping with mental health, obsessive behaviours and anxiety, which is at the source, and often reenacted, by the enchanting objects she creates. Sandström graduated with an MFA from Malmö Art Academy in 2015 and has exhibited at NEVVEN (Gothenburg, 2023), Salgshallen (Oslo, 2022), Ravinen kultur (Båstad, 2021), Galleri Pina (Vienna, 2018), Galleri Thomassen (Gothenburg, 2018), Galerie A.M.180 (Prague, 2018), Malmö Konstmuseum (Malmö, 2017), Ystads Konstmuseum (Ystad, 2017), Galleri Ping Pong (Malmö, 2016), Galleri Riis (Stockholm, 2015), and Galleri Nicolai Wallner (Copenhagen, 2015) among others. Her work is included in the public collection of Malmö Konstmuseum, Bror Hjorts Hus, Region Skåne, Jönköpings Kommun, Lunds Kommun, Uppsala Kommun, and Uppsala Läns Landsting. Sandström lives and works in Malmö, Sweden.

At the crossover between genres, techniques and materials, Anna Schachinger (b.1990, Vienna) has a practice which constantly crosses borders and intuitively develops materially queer ideas into feminist queer representations. Often starting from drawing and proceeding into figurative painting and abstraction (and ceramics at times too), her art embraces an intuitive process which is savvily stirred into forms capable of being both conceptually fertile, narratively enticing and colourfully captivating. After completing her studies at the Art Academy of Vienna (2018), she went on being represented by Galerie Sophie Tappeiner (Vienna), and has exhibited at Encounter Contemporary (Lisbon, 2023), Chris Sharp Gallery (Los Angeles, 2022), Belvedere 21 (Vienna, 2022), X-Museum (Beijing, 2021), STANDARD (OSLO) (2021), Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2019), Herald Street (London, 2018), and Lulu (Mexico City, 2017) among others. Schachinger lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

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