Antonia Nannt
PETITE MAISON (divorced from function)
GROTTO, Berlin, 26.04.-06.06.2024

*„At last, the Marquis challenged Mélite to come to his little house, a petite maison. She answered that she would come, and that she would not fear him there, nor anywhere else. So they called it a wager and there she went, knowing not what a petite maison was, only the name.“ ***

At the same moment that Mérite enters the foyer of the Petite Maison - a pleasure palace? - of the Marquis de Trémicour, she falls into the trap of architectural seduction. The Marquis patiently presents his estate to the object of his desire and guides her through every single room of the house. The visitor becomes more and more upset by the detailed description of the interior of the Petite Maison. However, when she realizes that she is becoming increasingly seduced by the exquisite furniture and works of art, she seems to be increasingly succumbing to the Marquis' seduction hoping to resist the architectural temptations. As soon as they re-enter the house, Mérite soon capitulates and the Marquis de Trémicour wins his bet.

*"I was very curious: it was no longer Madame T*** - that I desired, but her cabinet." ***

As a hybrid of two literary genres of the 18th century (erotic libertine novella and architectural treatise), „La Petite Maison" by Jean-François de Bastide is an architectural-erotic treatise that served as a social examination of architecture through romantic encounters. By imagining the interior of the Petite Maison as a pleasure house, the interior becomes a space of power and the individual pieces of furniture, decorations and works of art bearers of a bourgeois social idea. The targeted use of the interior's iconography empowers the aristocratic bachelor to appropriate the sphere of the feminine and the Petite Maison, together with the conquest it seduces, becomes the trophy of its owner. In the middle of the 20th century, Playboy founder Hugh Hefner created the multimedia modern equivalent of the Petite Maison - the Playboy Mansion. In his erotic utopia of the Playboy universe, Hefner succeeded in constructing a specifically male domestic interior.
By iconographically overwriting pieces of furniture and rooms classically associated with the suburban home, the domestic was transformed into the playground of the metropolitan bachelor.

In her sculptures, Nannt also makes use of symbolically charged, historical subjects, which are often of architectural origin, and uses the seemingly decorative as a contextualized motif. As Symbolic Furniture, the Table Skirts series combines both form and materiality: the decorative (frilled) skirt with the functional (steel) table. Nannt's metallic objects, some of which are lined with weld seams, also point to an intersubjective interior symbolized by motifs of nostalgia, power relations and desire. In her PETITE MAISON, externalities thus refer to internalities and vice versa, sometimes the form follows its pure function, at other times they prefer to go their separate ways (divorced from function).

*La Petite Maison (The Little House), Jean-Francois de Bastide, 1879
**Point de lendemain (No Tomorrow), Dominique Vivant Denon, 1777

Text by Esther Ahr

Antonia Nannt (*1995, DE) lives and works in Berlin, she studied art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna and graduated in 2021 at the Berlin University of the Arts in the class of Manfred Pernice. Her work has been exhibited at Roman Road Gallery, London (2023), Holden Garage, Berlin (2023), Galerie Anton Janizewski, Berlin (2021), WAF, Vienna (2022) and June, Berlin (2022), among others. PETITE MAISON (divorced from function) at GROTTO, Berlin (2024) is her first solo exhibition.

Esther Ahr lives and works as an architect in Berlin. She studied at the TU Darmstadt, TU Berlin and the EPF Lausanne. In her own work, she deals with the role of architecture as an instrument of power and tries to reveal seemingly hidden power structures.