

CAROLINE MESQUITA

CuCO & CO



EXHIBITION
MAY 17 — SEPT. 29 2024

PRESS KIT

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Caroline Mesquita, *The Ballad* (2014) © Caroline Mesquita

Caroline Mesquita

Caroline Mesquita is one of the most fascinating sculptors to emerge out of France in recent years. After graduating from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts de Paris in 2013, and studying at the Mountain School of Arts in Los Angeles in 2014, Mesquita now lives and works in Marseilles. The work she has featured in many solo shows has often gone on to be the subject of major new productions.

By seeing sculpture as more than just sculpture, and by always seeking to push the envelope of her artistic practice, Mesquita invents brand-new situations within each of her exhibitions.

Using her own figurative vocabulary, she creates immersive sculptural installations that are specifically scaled to each venue. Every show offers her a chance to invent a new situation and surpass the simple framework of a sculptural exhibition, offering human-scale environments that seem to merge with the exhibition space – sometimes to the point of not knowing where one begins and the other ends ■



Caroline Mesquita, *Astray (Prologue)*, 2018, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon © Bruno Lopes

In her quest to find formal and technical solutions allowing her to design her large-scale spaces, Mesquita uses paper, cardboard, stone, and often metal (primarily brass), to mimic a certain reality and create scenes with strong fictional and narrative potential.

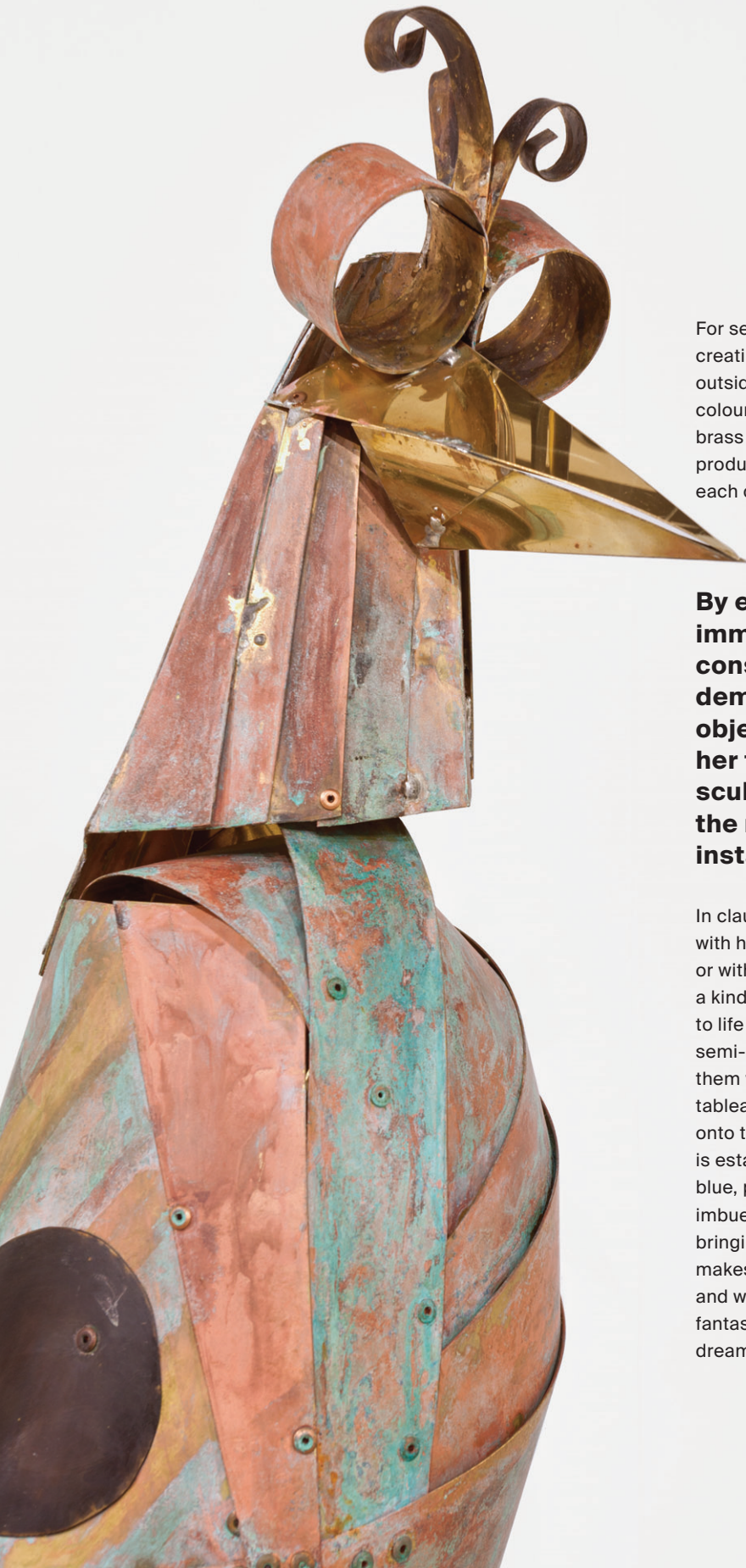
Each of these stories challenges visitors, pushing them to wander through these spaces – sometimes even questioning their origin – and leaving them on the threshold twixt two states. Between dream and reality, pleasure and strangeness, solemnity and mischief, Mesquita's situations never leave viewers indifferent: they become curious intruders in situations where reality is distorted, and are left to confront these enigmatic architecture-sculptures. Visitors mingle with figures that are colourful, metallic, anthropomorphic, animal, and mechanical, walking amidst the protagonists of improbable archaeological discoveries, disaster scenes, carnivalesque dance rituals, and quixotic explorations ■



Caroline Mesquita, *Le Festin* (2020), Centre d'art Passerelle © Aurélien Mole



Caroline Mesquita, *The Ballad* (2017), 221A, Vancouver © Dennis Ha



For several years now, Caroline Mesquita has been creating her own iconographic vocabulary and technique outside the conventions of classical sculpture, creating colourful, figurative works – characters, cats, birds – in brass leaf, the same way one might use paper, to quickly produce groups of metallic figures that can interact with each other, with herself, and the viewer.

By extending her practice into immersive installations, Mesquita constantly explores new avenues that demystify our relationship to these objects. Her stop-motion videos allow her to experiment with setting her sculptures in motion, and to pursuing the narratives explored in her installations.

In claustrophobic scenes, the sculptures rub shoulders with humans who are embodied by the artist herself in drag, or with people resembling her, adopting multiple identities in a kind of romantic anthropomorphism. The sculptures come to life and attempt to resuscitate, heal, or awaken these semi-conscious bodies by clumsily touching and caressing them with their dry, jerky movements. In these animated tableaux, their metal surfaces (coloured by oxidation) sweat onto the skin of the human characters. As sensual contact is established with the sculptures, the characters' skin turns blue, pink, or gold, as if these foreign bodies suddenly imbued and contaminated them with a fluid or energy, bringing them to the verge of metamorphosis. In these makeshift cardboard decors, these micro-fictions write and weave together connections between real and fantasized worlds, where doubt hovers over these dreamlike, humorous stories ■





Caroline Mesquita, *CuCo & CO* (2024) © Jean-Christophe Lett

For her exhibition at HAB Galerie, Caroline Mesquita has crafted a hybrid, physical landscape that spreads throughout the concrete architecture of this former banana warehouse.

***CuCO & CO* is a vast and generous exhibition where Mesquita offers a boundless, imaginative panorama.**

This *in situ* architectural installation features new sculptures, a series of brass tableaux, and stop-motion videos, offering a one-of-a-kind immersion into the artist's world. Like a frozen daydream after a tear in the space-time continuum, the HAB Galerie is transformed into a sort of factory, where every element feels both familiar and foreign.

A character greets the visitor upon arrival, while drops of some golden substance drip from the taps of a black monolith, like a spring of some unknown source. Further in, a buoyant, white structure appears like an oversized scale-model to be explored. This series of structures is like an upturned interior, forming a workshop that seems temporarily at a standstill. It has taken over the space, raising questions about its origin in relation to the site, which itself becomes an envelope blurring the notion of inside and out. At first glance, its function remains elusive and mysterious. It seems impenetrable and forbidden. Golden drops glide down the walls and, peering through them, the visitor's inquisitive eye will discover off-limits rooms where a whole world is at play.

In this universe, where fiction flirts with mirage, anthropomorphic animals and metallic characters come and go as they please. Their numbers increase and they occupy the space with their curious looks and perplexed expressions. In this enchanted atmosphere, hierarchical relationships dissolve, and animals and humans coexist in harmony, strutting about as if after a strange party ■



Caroline Mesquita, *Noctambules* (2021) © Caroline Mesquita

Scattered throughout the space, the composition of the brass tableaux are reminiscent of posters, like so many colourful signs or clues to a mystery that needs decoding. Caroline Mesquita appeals to our desire to know more. By walking around these structures, we enter the crucible, where we discover the different stages of fabrication, from the first metal vat to the colour chart and the assembly line. This architecture-sculpture becomes an organism from which astonishing creatures are born.

CuCO & CO uses the chemical formula of verdigris and combines it with other hues to colour this landscape. In this mystical, intriguing, and playful exhibition, Caroline Mesquita combines humour and poetry, inviting us to explore the perpetual cycle of matter and the enigma of parallel realities where sculptures come to life.

In an alternative afterlife, where the boundaries between life, time, and space become blurred, and where mysterious forces suddenly render them autonomous and conscious, are we perhaps unaware of their existence, while they secretly develop and evolve in our world without our knowing? ■







Caroline Mesquita

was born in Brest in 1989.

She lives and works in Marseilles.

She is represented by Carlier Gebauer (Berlin and Madrid), T293 (Rome), and Union Pacific (London).

www.carolinemesquita.net

Caroline Mesquita graduated from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (2013) and the Mountain School of Art in Los Angeles (2014). She was awarded the Joseph Ebstein Sculpture Prize (2013), and the 19th Prix de la Fondation d'entreprise Ricard (2017).

Her work has been featured in several solo exhibitions. Some of the most recent ones have been: *Portraits – Art Club #37* at Villa Médicis (Rome, 2023), *The Ballad* at La Bourse du travail de Valence (2023), *Noctambules* at CAN Neuchatel (2023), *Mundi de ideis* at Parvis (Tarbes, 2023), *Portraits* at T293 (Rome, 2022), *Mid-Way*, a duo show with Hans Schabus at Kunstforum Montafon (Austria, 2022), *Humans and animals* at Statement Art Basel with Union Pacific (Basel, 2021), *Noctambules* at Blaffer Art Museum (Houston, 2021), *In vivo* at Pivô (São Paulo, 2020), *Le Festin* at Passerelle (Brest, 2020), *La Casa dell'Eremita sul Naviglio* at Fondazione Pomodoro (Milan, 2019), *Night Engines* at Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2018), *Astray* at Kunsthalle Lissabon (Lisbon, 2018), and Galeria Municipal (Porto, 2019), *The Ballad* at Fondation Ricard (Paris, 2017).

Caroline Mesquita has also taken part in several group shows, including at Museo de Arte de Zapopan (Guadalajara); Bonniers Konsthall (Stockholm); Schirn Kunsthalle (Frankfurt); Palais de Tokyo (Paris); Folkwang Museum (Essen); La Loge (Brussels); Monnaie de Paris (Paris); Astrup Fearnley Museet (Oslo); FRAC Ile-de-France (Paris); Flax Foundation (Los Angeles); Arsenal Contemporary (New York).

CAROLINE MESQUITA

CuCO & CO

17 MAY TO 29 SEPTEMBER



La HAB Galerie du Voyage à Nantes

General director: Jean Blaise

Curator: Marie Dupas, Le Voyage à Nantes

An exhibition catalog for *CuCO & CO* will be published by Éditions 303 in June 2024, with images of the exhibition.

Located at the westernmost tip of Île de Nantes, Hangar 21 is better known by its moniker, *Hangar à Bananes* (aka, the “Banana Hangar”) due to its unique history: designed in 1949-50, it was built to receive exotic fruit from Africa – like bananas and pineapples – which were then unloaded and stored in this air-conditioned hangar. As property of the port of Nantes Saint-Nazaire, it was renovated to host the first edition of the *Estuaire Nantes <-> Saint-Nazaire* art biennial in 2007, where it was used as a vast exhibition space. Dubbed the HAB Galerie in 2011 – and managed by the public corporation Le Voyage à Nantes, which promotes Nantes and the surrounding region as a travel destination using culture – this permanent space is dedicated to contemporary art. Exhibitions here offer an opportunity to explore an artist’s work, which is planned and completed in-situ, whether it features videos, sculptures, paintings, installations – or all the above.



Caroline Mesquita, *Portraits*, 2022 © Luana Rigolli



Opening times:

Exhibition from 17 May to 29 September

17 May to 5 July and 11 – 29 September:

Wednesday to Sunday, 1:30 pm to 7 pm.

6 July to 8 September: 7 days a week, from 10 am to 7 pm.

FREE ENTRANCE



The HAB Galerie bookshop is open:

During exhibition period: Wednesday to Sunday, 11 am to 7 pm.

Between exhibitions: Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am to 7 pm.



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