

BIANCA D'ALESSANDRO

Rikard Thambert
Vegetable

Saturday 17 August - 21 September, 2024

Wax

Wax is this wonderful playful material that the hands can shape into meaningful figures. In the process, the mind disconnects and reconnects, allowing the wax to form bodies that we recognize, such as our own, but which are also hybrid creatures: they can have a budding form with elegant lanky limbs, an inner dance, and the mood of a dream.

Imprint

In earlier times, families had masks made of deceased family members, which were kept in a separate room dedicated to domestic worship. The masks were either shaped based on the memory of the deceased, or they could be death masks, where beeswax was spread over the face to capture every wrinkle of the deceased's facial features. The masks were a living-dead imprint of the final breath.

The mask evolved into the portrait bust, which then became the freestanding sculpture. The bust is a fragment; it is neither a mask nor a body, but the purpose of the bust is related to that of the mask. It is also an imprint meant to reproduce the portrayed person in a recognizable form. However, to understand the portrait, one must master caricature, and therefore the figure may contain distortions, exaggerated features, and twisted bodies.

Engram

Beyond this representative understanding of the mask, there also exists a more vitalistic understanding related to its use. On special occasions, the masks were brought out to be used in performative rituals. Likewise, the bust was created to be inserted into existing bodies, which were mobile and could thus participate in the rituals. Here, they functioned both as a way to remember and acknowledge the ancestors, but also as an animation of the figure. I imagine how the mask, bust, and sculpture partake in dances that simulate dreams and visions for the future. The collective state of trance creates an opening that connects the past with the future, but also an opening where the materiality of the figure implodes. The act is not merely that of remembering but a forceful impression of the memory (*das Prägwerk*), and by virtue of the cultic worship, the memory is absorbed in forms, movements, and emotions.

Vegetable

The purpose of this short text has been to explore our understanding of figurative sculpture in a cultural-historical context. An exploration that expands the analysis to include more than just the representative and recognizable. The text has been written for Rikard Thambert's exhibition *Vegetable* at Bianca D'Alessandro (17 August – 21 September 2024). I have been particularly interested in how a performative reading of his practice can contribute to an understanding of his sculptures, including the busts. I have had a few much-appreciated studio visits—each visit excavated a new layer—and one of the minor discoveries has been our shared interest in trance music, which may or may not be expressed in the works. With this text, I try to create potential for a connection. I have been inspired by the art historian Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) lectures from 1897 and 1923 about his research in North America in 1895. (1)

Rune Finseth
Curator

BIANCA D'ALESSANDRO



Exedra from Casa del Menandro, Pompeii, c. 250 BC. The house was excavated from 1926 to 1932.

(1) Aby Warburg 2018. *Bilder Aus Dem Gebiet Der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika : Vorträge und Fotografien*. Edited by Uwe Fleckner. Berlin: De Gruyter ; Aby Warburg and Michael P. Steinberg 1995. *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.