

"Austerity is a very conscious aesthetic decision of mine. I usually build the pieces with lavish backstories but I give the works a simple form to divert from the rather baroque references and bring the viewer to a different state of perception and feeling of trust. I don't want viewers to fight the form – they should surrender to the seemingly harmonious structure, which may ultimately irritate and distress them once they find out the story behind it." – Maria Loboda

Maria Loboda (born 1979 in Cracow) has a penchant for encrypted messages and meanings. The beautiful and the harmless in her sculptures, installations and collages conceal the partly uncanny, partly threatening essence of things. In the process Loboda develops a very special form of contemporary archaeology in which she creates completely new interpretations and associations by rearranging signs and restaging old symbols. Her pieces consequently reference enigmatic legends and protagonists as well as historic circumstances, whereby they likewise join together to form a new, constantly changing narrative. In her contribution to dOCUMENTA 13, *This Work is Dedicated to an Emperor* (2012), for example, Loboda exposed nature's romantic beauty to be an incalculable camouflage: 20 potted cypresses on the Karlsplatz simulated military formations from old written documents, rearranging themselves daily as if by magic.

Loboda not only takes up the relationship to nature in her art but also the spiritual comprehension of space and interior from the early 20th century. In complete accordance with Sigmund Freud's statement that "The ego is not master in its own house", the unconscious and long forgotten in Maria Loboda's Braunschweig exhibition *Dead Guardian* take possession of the spaces in the Villa Salve Hospes. The early classicistic residence built in 1808 becomes an enraptured place where objects and fragments seem to lead a hidden life of their own. But lacking human presence, nature has also already recaptured its territory. The otherwise so sublime and proud villa is subtly brought out of balance; the shelter almost unnoticeably comes apart at the seams and a wondrously tension-filled silence dominates — the proverbial "calm before the storm". Maria Loboda's art turns to the viewer in this silence with the languages and forms of mysticism and alchemy, of classical antiquity and ancient Egypt.

At the core of the exhibition is the dichotomy of culture and nature, order and chaos, reason and instinct, high culture and the archaic. There are signs and omens in both worlds that condense and connect with each other before untamed nature takes over complete control in the end. The patron saints as they are repeatedly to be found before and in the Villa Salve Hospes in the form ancient symbols seem to have lost their effectiveness long ago and mirror at the moment the human primal fear of the collapse of his arduously created cultural bastion.

The prophesy equating the consummation of culture with its end formulated by Oswald Spengler in his 1918 book “The Decline of the West” finds an impressive image in her works and their assembly. The signs indicating an approaching downfall are increasing and an old archaic culture is on the rise again.

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