

Zsófia Keresztes

Bad Milk

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Press Release

*“[...] attain a different kind of beauty,
achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords;
showing all the traces of the mind’s passage
through the world; achieve in the end, some kind of
whole made of shivering fragments; to me this seems
the natural process; the flight of the mind [...]”*

Virginia Woolf(1)

There are some artists that develop incredible narratives, or delve and bring us deep down into histories and ideas that have shaped the contemporary world we live in. Their art often uses and bends age-old media to their language, making us ignore the medium itself to venture deeper into what is they want us to meet on the other side. There are also artists who are innovators and proceed in a different way: instead of speaking a common pre-existing language to communicate an innovative or personal idea, they choose instead to invent their own language and grammar. They take pieces and bits of the languages we know to craft something new, that revolutionises the experience we have of the world and of the semantics connected to it. Zsófia Keresztes is among these.

Coming from a background in paper and textile sculpture, early after her studies, she picked up glass mosaic, a technique as ancient as the Mesopotamian civilisation,(2) a medium developed for flat surfaces and architectonic structures, and re-invented it, mixed it with new materials, and declined to create instead a kind of three-dimensional sculptures where anything about the ancientness and history of the material is as forgotten.(3) Imposing and goofy, elegant yet somehow askew, the Hungarian artworks and installations seem like stemming from a hyper-contemporary AI generated landscape, they are digital, or better otherworldly by definition in their sometimes illustrative approximation of reality, in their pastel tones, in the bright and loud ways in which they occupy the space, often humongous in size. Symmetry and relations are fundamental in these works, as a literal and metaphorical action mirrored by the painstakingly long process involved in the creation of these mosaic laden forms, in which thousands of elements are joined together to form a unity. But what we find looking at these sculptures, from their massive presence, to their minute details, is not easily explained in words or ideas: so much of what Keresztes does in fact escapes that possibility of expression. Is it possible that to force an explanatory aspect to them would be actually wrong? Maybe it is instead in the desire to explore architectonically an idea, in the drive of expanding a fairly simple yet so powerful spatial invention into the halls of museums or the pavilions of biennials, the desire and excitement of *speaking* this language she has created, maybe there lays the most impressive declination of this practice which has righteously been already elevated to one of

the most relevant voices of a generation.(3) It is sculpture by definition, these sinuous and often sensual forms, are made to occupy and change the space they are in, and our perception of it, they defy the need of other narratives because the experience, tactility, physicality they imbue surpasses the need of words. They express physically the concept of being left *speechless* by art, and they are great because they are indeed one of the most literal reifications visual art: a language that cannot be understood if not by experiencing it visually, bodily. With mosaic as the common trait, until today Keresztes has been mainly mixing this material with other, often industrial, products with existing functions, such as steel shelves, copper pipes, or spirit levels with their vials. These cold, industrial materials grounded the flowing forms in the present and framed them, setting boundaries. Sometimes, they acted like skeletons, not as actual support, but as symbols of seeking stability and balance. With *Bad Milk*, Keresztes abandons these cold elements to add and include a new one: shaped textiles, a soft, fragile, temporary material. “This change brought a more personal process and experience”(4) and the textile parts, completely hand-sewn, “helped bring back a sense of intimacy to the sculptures” that she had felt she was losing, and it is together with this newly discovered intimacy that she found herself produce probably one of her most intimate bodies of work to date. Recently become a mother, Keresztes found herself facing the difficulties of any woman in her position, measuring her feelings with the societal expectations, meeting the often very tough impossibility to meet them “which often lead to guilt” and trying “to maintain my identity as an artist while also fulfilling my role in the

family, but I often feel that I can't do both well, and that I'm making sacrifices at the cost of something or someone, which points to a personal crisis.”

Mattia Lullini

(1) Virginia Woolf, *Travel and Literary Notebook* (1906-09).

(2) It's believed that mosaics find their origin starting in Mesopotamia in the 3rd millennium BC.

(3) See for example the just published anthology: *Great Women Sculptors*, Phaidon (2024).

(4) This and the following quotes are extracts from a written conversation with the artist.

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Zsófia Keresztes (b.1985, Budapest) graduated from the Painting Department at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in 2010 and was chosen to represent her native Hungary with a monumental solo presentation at the 2022 Venice Biennial. She has recently exhibited at Cassina Projects (Milan, 2024), acb Gallery (Budapest, 2024), KÖNIG GALERIE (Berlin, 2023), Pera Museum (Istanbul, 2023), Ludwig Museum (Budapest, 2022), Centre Pompidou-Metz (Metz, 2022), Baltic Triennial 14 (Vilnius, 2022), Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts (2021), Elijah Wheat Showroom (New York, 2020), Karlin Studios (Prague, 2020), Lyon Biennale (2019), and Gianni Manhattan (Vienna, 2018) among others. Keresztes lives and works in Budapest, Hungary.

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