

MONIKA SOSNOWSKA

Ghosts

May 24 – June 29, 2024

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to present the solo exhibition *Ghosts* by Monika Sosnowska. Comprised of nine sculptural works, this marks her now fifth solo exhibition with the gallery.

Central to Sosnowska's practice is her fascination with the social and psychological dimensions of architecture. She explores themes of urban transformation, memory and the human experience within the built environment. Her sculptures often evoke a sense of disorientation or dislocation as she manipulates familiar architectural elements to create surreal and immersive environments. Often using materials such as steel, concrete or rebar, she employs techniques of distortion, fragmentation and abstraction to subvert the solidity and stability typically associated with architecture and its core elements. While some of Sosnowska's earlier sculptures morph and deconstruct the original functionality of the architectural quotations such as handrails, benches or market stalls, most of these works are delicately alienated from the source material.

Monika Sosnowska's artistic language draws from drastic tensions of discontinuities and chaos in the public realm. Much of her early work was informed by living in Warsaw, experiencing what remained of the utopian vision of the 1960s through the lens of modernist architecture and urban planning, and how a post-communist government in the 1980s would radically alter the cityscape, resulting in obsolete developments and an ever-growing patchwork of demolished and new buildings. Her field of observation has expanded since then, visiting places in Mexico or Bangladesh and reacting to similar social and architectural phenomena, which are unique and universal at the same time. Her work is in part a manifestation of such past systems, of ideals that would never come to fruition, or where time has taken its toll on the remnants of aspiration and prosperity. She appropriates architectural language and transforms it into something eerily familiar, yet fantastical. Sosnowska is inspired by the afterlife of said utopian concepts and what replaces them, rather than the subject matter itself.

Titled *Ghosts*, the exhibition takes its material from an abandoned industrial site slated for demolition, which she discovered during a research trip in eastern Germany near Chemnitz. From her findings she has created an eclectic body of work that is evocative of the abandoned nature of post-industrial sites, re-envisioning an environment where the inhabitants seem to have vanished in an instant, leaving everything as it is and allowing things to take on a life of their own as a result of being left alone. The largest sculpture *Cloud* consists of three concrete pedestals, formed from a tire, a flowerpot and a bowl, from which an undulating thicket of carbon steel grows. The individual 'threads' appear to flail around, almost weightless, and are frozen in their movement but at the same time one is reminded of the brute mechanical force required to transform such materials at will.

Another group of three sculptures, made from same 'strings' of carbon steel are characterized by their verticality, rising from concrete blocks that appear as if they had been plucked from the ground. The way they are draped with a larger cloth made from fiberglass, throws the viewer back to the title of the exhibition - *Ghosts*. Yet another pair of works - *Wallpaper I* and *Wallpaper II* - one installed on the wall, the other rolled up and leaning against it, mimic some loose pieces of wallpaper Sosnowska found dangling from the wall. Even without being aware of the original, one gets the uncanny feeling that the proportions have been changed immensely here. A duo of concrete sculptures are again of different nature, more evocative of an amorphous or aquatic state.

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Oyster, reminiscent of a clam, sits on the floor and is being held open by what appears to be a piece of wood cast from concrete. In contrast, the body of *Ballerina* is perforated with steel rods, perhaps imitating some kind of movement, as if the single corpus was to walk on these rods. While one part of their surface is terrazzo, the other side is a rough block of untreated concrete, which also gives the impression of having been pulled from the ground.

Just as Sosnowska responds to a postmodernist juxtaposition and disorder in the architecture of ubiquitous sites, this new group of sculptures demonstrates her subversive approach and the transformation of found material that she brings to the surface of society. From the ashes and rubble of a collapsed moment in time, Sosnowska finds peculiar details that are unique to her work.

Monika Sosnowska exhibited at EMMA – Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Espoo 2024, Centrum Paul Klee, Bern 2023, Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn 2022, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, both 2020, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto 2015, Ginza Maison Hermès, Le Forum, Tokyo 2015, Aspen Art Museum 2013, The Cleveland Museum of Art 2011, Schaulager, Basel 2008, Museum of Modern Art, New York 2006 and De Appel Centre for Contemporary Art, Amsterdam 2004.

Monika Sosnowska represented Poland at the 52nd Venice Biennale and participated again in 2011 at the 54th Venice Biennale.

Her works are included in the collections of Centre Pompidou, Paris, Fundação de Serralves, Porto, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Tate Modern, London, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Kunstsammlung NRW, Dusseldorf and Museo Tamayo, Mexico, among others.