

Anna van der Ploeg  
*Cooler air holds the smoke together*  
06.06 - 12.07.2025

BEIGE is pleased to present new works by Anna van der Ploeg a South African artist residing in Brussels. Her work uses different mediums like sculpture, painting and writing and is driven by an interest in societal imagination and finding new perspectives on the idea of 'community'. Van der Ploeg's sculptures engage with ideas of authorship by the public, the human impulse to find concrete forms for speech and the representation of democratic order in objects.

In *Cooler air holds the smoke together*, Anna van der Ploeg invites us into a space where language takes shape, not just as meaning, but as movement, form and weight. The exhibition unfolds as a meditation on the physicality of speech, boundaries between self and collective. Here, language is not a fixed structure but a drifting body — inhaled, fractured, passed from hand to hand.

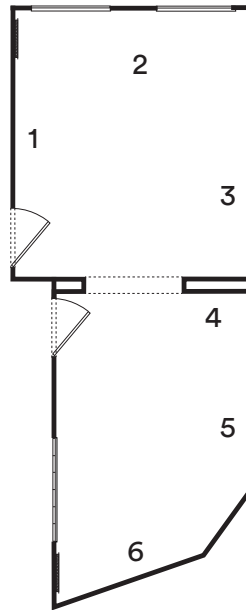
Van der Ploeg's practice draws on linguistic theory, particularly the idea that language is not only spoken but performed, inhabited. Her sculptures echo this philosophy, referencing idiomatic expressions and communal utterances that carry social, political and economic histories. Through embodied material poetics, she offers objects that behave like sentences: layered, elusive, charged with the residue of shared meaning.

Her practice is inextricably influenced by the experience of coming of age in South Africa as it renegotiated its national identity after the end of Apartheid in 1994, sensitising her towards the imperative of finding oblique narratives and the importance of critical dialogue, mess, rejection and embrace.

The exhibition's title suggests something provisional and fragile: a condition held in balance, suspended rather than fixed. In this way, *Cooler air holds the smoke together* gestures toward a poetics of containment that is not about closure, but about proximity. It is the coolness of air, not the will of the flame, that allows the smoke to hold. In a similar spirit, van der Ploeg's work resists resolution, instead lingering in the spaces where expression falters, where the body remembers what the voice cannot say.

Anna van der Ploeg (°1992, South Africa) obtained her Bachelor's Degree with Honours in Fine Arts at the Michalis School of Fine Arts, University of Cape Town and Master's degree at KASK Royal Academy of Art in Gent, where she was awarded the Leu de Legaat Award for Fine Arts. She has held solo exhibitions in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Brussels, Leuven, Melbourne and New York and participated in numerous group shows internationally. In 2023 she was the artist in residence at Museum M, Leuven; in 2024 at Reservoir Projects in Cape Town and in 2025 at La Cambre, Brussels.

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1. *Dents II*  
2025  
Carved plywood, acrylic paint, glass, linnen, varnish  
34 x 57 cm
2. *Lucky Groan*  
2022  
Wood, acrylic paint, varnish  
64 x 64 x 98 cm
3. *Wishbone*  
2025  
Carved plywood, acrylic paint, varnish  
60 x 190 cm
4. *Runaways*  
2025  
Carved plywood, acrylic paint, studs, varnish  
32 x 23 cm
5. *Without a face, the sky declares, there  
can be no ethics, no narrative, no communicable reality*  
2025  
Carved plywood, acrylic paint, varnish  
65 x 120 cm
6. *Proof of Life*  
2022  
Carved plywood, acrylic paint, varnish  
125 x 105 cm