

Lin May Saeed (b. 1973, Germany) presents *Biene*, a new commission of sculptures that span a narrative of human–animal relationships from the prehistoric, to the present day. This is the first–ever institutional exhibition of Saeed’s work.

Saeed’s new commission includes a pantheon of carved, life–sized animals, alongside a steel gate sculpture, painted reliefs and a large backlit paper cut–out. Saeed’s work generates tensions between themes of oppression and liberation. She directly confronts our conflicted relationships with animals – who are at times characterised as companions, votives, an exploited labour force or food source – and by extension, our impact on and interactions with the environment.

Saeed’s sculptures have a provisional, naïve quality. Distinctly ‘un–monumental’, her works often reveal processes of construction and preservation, both within the forms she produces and in the ways in which they are presented. Her materials more closely recall those used for preliminary models, with alabaster marble exchanged for carved polystyrene blocks. Equally, the slender crates in which her sculptures are suspended for transport and storage recall cages, which are re–purposed as plinths for display.

The artist’s cross-cultural narratives draw from both Western traditions and her Jewish-Arab heritage, traversing references as divergent as the Animal Liberation Front, the Die Brücke movement, and ancient Mesopotamia. Her protagonists include the prophet Yahya, the mythological heroine Brunhilde, and Moschophoros, who Saeed re-casts as masked, chain–breaking animal rights activist. Often displaced in time, Saeed’s subjects gesture to atavistic animisms, yet equally imagine post–human conditions in which delimitations of gender, place and species are fluid, if not dissolved.

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