

Vera Kox ...into deliquescence

07 Nov 21 to 23 Jan 22

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7 Nov 2021 – 23 Jan 2022

Vera Kox's sculptural practice deals with the direct and indirect effects and implications of the modern man-made age. In her work she explores unconventional techniques and materials in relation to various conceptions of ecology, in particular the relationships between humans and the environment.

The Australian cultural and gender theorist Astrida Neimanis has coined the term 'hydrofeminism', which invites us to conceive of water – with its symbolic power, familiarity, and unique physical and chemical properties – as a living substance that “understands our bodies as being fundamentally part of the natural world and not separate from or privileged to it”. As a significant part of our body substance consists of water, it reveals itself as a form of being and a medium at the same time.

For her first large-scale solo exhibition in an institutional context, Kox explores the concept of deliquescence, wherein solid matter absorbs the humidity of the atmosphere to the point of dissolution. Through playful material experiments and multi-room installations, the artist visualises this idea of a melding of matter/body and environment, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior in order to generate an idea of an amorphous, interdependent organism. In doing so, she probes the properties of the materials as much as their social and ecological attributions, thus shifting attention to the notion of 'symbiocene' – a concept drawn from emergent fields of ecological research that speculates upon a mutuality and interdependence between objects, people, and the environment.

In the series of works ... into deliquescence, which was specifically conceived for the exhibition, layered ceramic elements have been combined with unusual techniques or materials – paired with hand-blown glass, adorned with foaming glaze, or covered with liquid aluminium that has solidified in the process. Oversized drops and liquids appear to seep out of the heavy organic-shaped bodies. Resting on speckled rubber mats or pastel-coloured insulation panels, the overlapping, finely textured bodies open up a wide spectrum of associations from volcanic eruptions and melted ice cream to reptile skin, conjuring a multispecies universe in which unusual forces are at work.

The compositional unity of the exhibition and the minimalist vocabulary of its individual components combine to create a sensual experience that eschews common physical ascriptions: soft objects turn out to be hard, what appears sticky is solid, and what looks damp and cold is in fact dry and warm. In the artist's installations, mass-consumer materials are used contrary to their intended properties: here, raw building materials such as aluminium and plaster, but also industrially manufactured semi-finished products such as chains, act as a natural habitat for strange organisms.

By testing the intrinsic properties and connotations of everyday materials and exploring the relationships between objects and ecosystems, the artist suggests a world of constantly repeating cycle of metamorphosis and renewal.

Vera Kox has exhibited in numerous art centres and galleries, including KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art in Berlin, Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée in Sérignan, Mudam Luxembourg and Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain in Luxembourg and Palais d'Iéna in Paris, as well as Ribot arte contemporanea in Milan, 22.48 m2 in Paris, Exgirlfriend in Berlin and Galleri Opdahl in Stavanger. In 2013, she took part in the International Studio Programme at Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin. In 2020, she was an artist-in-residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

The exhibition is generously supported by the Fonds Culturel National Luxembourg & the Ministère de la culture Luxembourg and by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung. The artist was supported by a working grant Neustart Kultur // Stiftung Kunstfonds.