

Press Release

Lea Guldditte Hestelund. Soft Utopias

Curated by Irene Campolmi

Date | October 20th – December 21th 2018

Exhibit Hours | Monday – Saturday/ 10:00 AM – 1:30 PM & 2:30PM – 7:00 PM

There are different ways to contrast the global political dystopia threatening contemporary society. One strategy is to resist by creating protest forms that denounce the dangers of noxious political visions. Another is to radically imagine alternative utopias that only exist as futuristic projections into an extraordinary spatial and temporal dimension. Utopias are ambiguous by nature: they propose a structured alternative vision to oppose dystopias, but because they are still 'in fieri', they have a soft, sleek 'consistency' recalling that of the dreams. In historical times where the future is under threat, envisioning utopias is an exercise – or rather, a survival strategy - to conceive a different world and to shape new sensorial and ideological structures that give form to alternative socio-political visions. Throughout her practice, Lea Guldditte Hestelund imagines soft utopias by giving form to both architectures and sculptural bodies that investigate new sensorial and political dimensions. By using science fiction as a means to access radical utopic imagery, Guldditte Hestelund creates environments inspired by the visionary novels of Ursula Le Guin's and Octavia E. Butler's and by science fiction films such as "2001: A Space Odyssey" or "Alien", among others. In her research, she develops spaces and surfaces to navigate and experience new gendered subjectivities. Her installations represent what architect and architectural theorist Mark Wigley defines as 'masquerade architectures', as the masquerade operates by 'masking the absence' of the very identity it seems to hide. The illusion of a presence behind the representational mask is the illusion of space itself. Identity theory is necessarily a spatial theory. To rethink identity spatially – and gender, consequently – means to interrogate the textures of the surfaces of the various subjectivities inhabiting the environment. The creation of these gendered subjectivities is connected to the multiplicity of the mechanisms of representation. To imagine areas where new gendered subjectivities imply to reread the spatial arguments inscribed within gender and identity, and vice-versa. Lea Guldditte Hestelund creates sculptures that embody the intrinsic correlation between space and gender. She develops hybrid environments where the shapes, textures and colours of her marble entities camouflage with the surrounding area. By using different materials – from leather to fur, to marble pieces of various kinds and provenance (Carrara, Japan etc) – the artist establishes a fluid relationship between the entities that occupy the space. Lea Guldditte Hestelund's sculptures destabilise conventional notions and norms, addressing new physical and conceptual spaces to inhabit sexuality and identity by entering the sleek, fluid and ambiguous correlations between organic and inorganic matter; masculine and feminine gaze; utopia and dystopia vision.

Lea Guldditte Hestelund was born in 1983 in Esbjerg in Denmark. She is graduate at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen in 2015 and at Kunstakademie of Düsseldorf in 2013. In her artistic work, Lea Guldditte Hestelund is fascinated by the history, narratives and potentials of materials, and how these can be released and processed – whether by cutting into marble, or by shaping and transforming her own body. Lea Guldditte Hestelund's artistic practice unites a sculptural investigation of materials with an interest in how we perceive and attribute meaning to the body. Based on classical antiquity's idolisation of the perfect body, in earlier works the artist has explored contemporary fitness culture, recreating exercise equipment in classical materials like bronze and marble. She has exhibited her works in The Compensators for Polynorm, Øregårdsparken, Gentofte (2018); Consumed Future Spewed Up as Present, Overgaden, Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2018); Somebody put baby in a corner, Værelset, Copenhagen (2016); Inhabited space transcends geometrical space, Fifth Floor, Copenhagen (2013). Lea Guldditte Hestelund has participated in a wealth of group exhibitions in Denmark and abroad including: The object is to change the soul, Heartland Festival, Egeskov (2018); SuperSet, Fused Space, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco (2018); How to Start an Apartment in our Gallery, Les Gens Heureux, Copenhagen (2018); Cool, Calm, and Collected, ARoS Art Museum, Aarhus (2017), The Encounter of Bodies, Ystad Art Museum, Ystad (2017), The Tabulator Project, Kunsthal Aarhus, Ystad (2016), Thingness, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Dortmund (2016), Public Intimacy, Parallel Vienna, Wien (2016), Oceans Breath Salty, CompleteBody, New York (2015); The Open Source Way, the exhibition place Q, Copenhagen (2014).

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