

Hélène Delprat “WITH MY VOICE I’M CALLING YOU”

Curated by Dr. Nadia Ismail
Duration: 07.03.2020 – 24.05.2020

Press event

04.03.2020 11 am
In the Kunsthalle Gießen
With Hélène Delprat (Artist) und Dr. Nadia Ismail (Director Kunsthalle)

Opening: Friday 06.03.2020 7 pm, Kunsthalle Gießen / Hermann-Levi-Saal

Official greeting
Dietlind Grabe-Bolz, Mayor of the City of Gießen

Introduction
Dr. Nadia Ismail, Director Kunsthalle Gießen

The artist is present.

Quoting is central to the work of the French artist Hélène Delprat (*1957 in Amiens). She develops her own cryptic and excessive cosmos, in which the humorous merges with the dark and the ornamental with the figurative, from literary, (art) historical as well as filmic and pop cultural references. Her work, which includes not only paintings but also objects, videos and scenographic elements transcends established art historical boundaries.

After a successful career as a painter, Delprat retired from the public eye for a decade in order to experiment with video, radio projects and writing. She draws on a practice that is rooted in the tireless collection of images and texts. To do so, she makes use of image and museum databases as well as magazines, notes down things she hears by chance in the Metro or records fragments of radio reports. Her Radiophonic Drawings arose from these recordings. Her work deals with appropriation, memory and identity, in other words the images, references and stories that permeate us without us always being aware of them.

Delprat's highly visual works are rich in diverse references. They comprise cartoons, as well as the *Metamorphoses* by the Roman poet Ovid and Gustave Flaubert's unfinished novel *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, published posthumously in 1881. Cinematic references of the American director Joseph L. Mankiewicz as well as the grotesques of the Renaissance and the working methods of the surrealist Claude Cahun are also a part of her work, into which a dash of self-irony is always mixed. The diverse artistic originals act as a catalyst for the French artist's own

pictures and objects, in which the references are constantly reassembled according to the principle of collage or montage, but also deformed and alienated, intensified or multiplied. Accordingly, the titles of her exhibitions are mostly quotations. "WITH MY VOICE I'M CALLING YOU" is taken from the chorus of the melancholic song *Jesus Alone* by the band 'Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds', in which the Australian vocalist sings about both life and death. The line seems to be a luring call from the afterlife as well as an invocation of the dead.

Delprat's use of a variety of media testifies to her boundless curiosity, including not only the visual arts but also theatre and film. Thus the artist not only adopts the magic lantern as a precursor of cinema projection, but also constructs a theatrical space with scenographic elements that seems to suggest entering a mysterious world of its own. Just like her detailed paintings, it is populated by comic-like characters, hybrid figures, eerie beasts, grinning smileys and terrible grimaces, but also by floral or organic-looking creatures. Even the artist herself appears as a person again and again. She playfully lets the ornamental and the figurative merge into one another, combining the beautiful and decorative with the ugly and tasteless. She undermines fixed categories, making use of parody and comedy.

A number of different patterns appear repeatedly in Delprat's work. Particularly prominent is the grid, which can be seen both in the exhibition space and on objects and paintings. It becomes a highlighted sign on a flag entitled *Étendard de mon territoire autonome* (engl. flag of my autonomous territory), with which the artist declares the Kunsthalle her realm, her own fantastic empire.

Hélène Delprat (*1957 in Amiens) lives and works in Paris. She studied at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris. From 1982 to 1984 she was a fellow of the French Academy at the Villa Medici in Rome. Her work has been exhibited in numerous international solo and group exhibitions, such as the Museu Picasso in Barcelona (autumn 2020) and at La maison rouge, among others. Furthermore, her work is represented in various significant collections such as the Centre Pompidou and the Pinault Collection in Paris, the MoMA in New York and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

With many thanks to Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris and carlier | gebauer, Berlin and the Verein Ehrenamt Gießen e. V.

Accompanying Programme

Guided tour by the curator

with Dr. Nadia Ismail (Director Kunsthalle Gießen)

Tuesday 24.03.2020 5 pm

PLAN B

Art / Sound / Drinks

with DJ Homunkulus + guided tour by Sina Berger and Mara Unger at 8 pm

Saturday 25.04.2020 8 – 11 pm

10 questions to...

Thursday 07.05.2020 7 pm

Art education

Mysterious beings

Workshop for ages 7 and above, with parent supervision

Sunday 05.04.2020 2 – 4 pm

Registration by 02.04.2020: kunsthalle@giessen.de

Guided tours

Sat 4 – 5 pm: 07.03. + 02.05.

Tue 2 – 3 pm: 07.04.

Art education in individual conversations

Tue 2 – 4 pm: 10.03. + 24.03. + 21.04. + 05.05. + 19.05.

Sat 3 – 5 pm: 21.03. + 04.04. + 18.04. + 16.05.

Art and Coffee

With the art historian Fabian Stein and Ehrenamt e.V.

Wed 18.03. 3 pm

Tue 12.05. 3 pm

registration: kunsthalle@giessen.de

Participation Fee 2.50 €

Opening Times

Tuesday to Sunday 10 – 6 pm

Closed: 10.04. – 12.04. + 01.05.