

LEONOR ANTUNES, HARIS EPAMINONDA, BETHAN HUWS *the astonishing reality of things*

June 25–September 3, 2016

*The astonishing reality of things*

*Is my discovery every day.*

*Each thing is what it is,*

*And it's hard to explain to someone how happy this makes me,*

*And how much this suffices me.*

These lines from a poem by Fernando Pessoa (written under his heteronym, Alberto Caeiro, in 1915) comprise the starting point for the exhibition at the Barbara Gross Galerie. Three sculptors, Leonor Antunes, Haris Epaminonda, and Bethan Huws, show us their view of supposedly everyday items from their immediate surroundings. In the process they very carefully shift things that have been taken for granted over time. Their works share a lyrical, conceptual approach; they are reduced, sensual and fragile, full of allusions, connections, and quotations.

Leonor Antunes finds inspiration in Modernist geometrical patterns, primarily in the works of female designers such as Eileen Gray, Clara Porset, Lina Bo Bardi, Greta Grossmann, and Anni Albers. Antunes's sculptures are based on architectural structures or details from objects. The piece *Chão*, which she is re-creating in a site-specific version for this show, refers to a pattern on a floor in the Villa Serralves in Porto; *random intersection #4* alludes to details from a Modernist house by Flavio de Carvalho in São Paulo and a Paris apartment by Robert Mallet-Stevens. Antunes plays with the dimensions of her "measurements," shifting them into new spaces, overlapping them without changing the original proportions. Thus, space is not only a starting point, but also an integral part of her works. The material qualities of her sculptures are always in accordance with their content. Besides organic materials such as cork, bamboo, leather, or rope, Antunes also consistently relies upon handiwork, while reviving techniques from traditional crafts.

Haris Epaminonda deals with the topic of memory; her works seem to be far from the present, in terms of both space and time. "I try to create a mental and physical space, where the individual elements relate to each other and result in a kind of non-linear narrative," Epaminonda says. The artist doesn't limit herself to a specific medium, but arranges existing images, artifacts from non-European cultures, vases, and pages from books, with her own films and sculptures in order to create surprising constellations that are open to a variety of interpretations. "Regardless of whether these objects come from Asia or Africa, they are somehow all connected with each other, and therefore connect the people who made them thousands of years ago with the people who hold them in their hands today," she states. This leads to three-dimensional installations that one can walk through, in which the archaic remains of everyday culture are condensed to form poetic images of memory.

The works by Bethan Huws oscillate between emotion and reason, humor and seriousness, between existential questions and the art discourse. For more than a decade she has closely linked her work to Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), having studied his oeuvre and his ideas in depth. In the process, language has become the artist's primary medium of reference, along with the readymade. In her linguistic explorations—done in Welsh, English, and French—Huws discovers delicate, yet weighty differences. Her plays on words, ambiguities, and contradictions not only allow us to imagine the artist's train of thought, but this type of metacognition is also the basis for meaning and hence, for the work of art as such. Besides a "word vitrine" and a new set of her reed boats, our show features a Venus Comb Murex snail that Huws calls *Le porte-bouteilles*, in an allusion to Duchamp. In this selection can be seen the entire spectrum of Huws's complex oeuvre that is not simply *l'art pour l'art*, but also always comprises sensual, intellectual stimuli.

**Artists**

**Leonor Antunes** (\*1972 in Lisbon, Portugal; lives in Berlin)

Antunes's works are in museum collections such as the Museo Reina Sofía, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and the Museum Serralves, Porto; they're also regularly exhibited internationally, most recently at the newly reopened SFMOMA in 2016, and at the CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, in 2015. Other solo shows (selected): New Museum, New York, 2015; PAMM Pérez Art Museum, Miami, 2014; Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, 2013; Kunsthalle Lisabon, 2013; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 2013; Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg, 2012; Kunstverein Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, 2011; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2011; Serralves Museum, Porto, 2011.

**Haris Epaminonda** (\*1980 in Nikosia, Cyprus; lives in Berlin)

In 2007 she (and Musafa Hulusi) represented Cyprus at the 52nd Venice Biennial, and in 2013 she took part in the dOCUMENTA 13 (with Daniel Gustav Cramer). That same year she was nominated for the Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst. Solo shows (selected): Le Plateau, Frac-ile-de-France, Paris, 2015; Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, 2014; Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, 2013; Kunsthaus Zurich, 2013; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, 2012; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2011; Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2011; Tate Modern, London, 2010; Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, 2009; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 2007.

**Bethan Huws** (\*1961 in Bangor, Wales, UK; lives in Berlin)

The works of Bethan Huws can be found in many museum collections. Currently, her work is showing at the Kolumba, the art museum of the archdiocese of Cologne, and last year the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe devoted an extensive solo exhibition to her work. Other solo shows (selected): Kunstmuseum Bern, 2014; Kunsthaus Zug, 2013; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2012; Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2011; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2010; Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover, 2010; Tate Britain, London, 2010; Serralves Museum, Porto, 2009; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, 2007; Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht, 2006; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2003; Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2001; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, 2000.

Curated by Christian Ganzenberg (\*1980, lives in Munich/Berlin)