



Angelika Loderer

Animate

24 September – 27 November 2016

(Kabinett)

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Angelika Loderer, born 1984 in Feldbach, lives and works in Vienna

Angelika Loderer. *Animate*

Text by Séamus Kealy

*And agarics and fungi, with mildew and mold,
Started like mist from wet ground cold,
Pale, fleshy, as if the decayed dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!*
Percy Shelley, *The Sensitive Plant*, 1820

The fields were spotted with monstrous fungi of a size and colour never matched before—scarlet and mauve and liver and black. It was as if the sick earth had burst into foul pustules.
Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sir Nigel*, 1906

The Elf-king sits under a great toadstool.
Brothers Grimm, Traditional Irish fairy tale, 1883

Austrian artist Angelika Loderer explores matters of sculpting. Her work is often characterized by experimentation and playful testing of materials and forms within traditional and more inventive sculpting techniques. Alongside these explorations she also has a concern for stability and fragility, as well as permanence and ephemerality. These concerns are palpable in her handling of the material in her sculptures, as well as their final presentation. Whether the artworks are permanent or temporary, as the case may be, one senses her careful eye and attentive hands shaping form into gestures on the nature of the fragility of life and form and the delicate relationships we form with them. In short, the artist examines classical materials and techniques for their contemporary use. Her poetic experiments have included quartz-sand pressed into layers and unusual casting techniques, which broach issues of absence and presence of sculpture. Whether she builds sculptures from sand or makes bronzes from the holes in trees made by woodpeckers, her work oscillates from negative space into positive space with ease, as if to make a conjoined expression on the nature of the universe. This is on the one hand a poetics of form, and on the other, it is akin to a cosmological tenderness. As we are aware of the existence of dark matter in the universe, and we have no real sense of what it actually is, we might still ponder it. Alongside our lack of understanding we might sense the very human feeling of yearning and wonder in the very face of not knowing. One can argue that the artist's work has some kinship with these sentiments.

For her current exhibition, Angelika Loderer was invited to develop an exhibition specifically for the Kabinett exhibition space. As a result, and in keeping with her continued experiments with different materials, the artist has developed a new process, which results in a play on form as it alters and unfolds during the two-month duration of the exhibition. Namely, the artist uses mushroom or fungal material in classical techniques of sculpture. The title *Animate* refers to the act of giving life, as something that unfolds each moment on our small, finite planet. The reference above to Percy Shelley draws upon the magnificence and wonder of what is animate, from the time of the romantics and their imaginings of a terrible and beautiful early modernity. And the fact that Percy Shelley's wife, Mary Shelley, who kept faithfully in mind the Jewish folktale of the Golem, wrote the ultimate modern-romantic novel on the giving of life (with all its perverse and ethical ramifications), is not to be missed

here as well. This is what the artist sets about doing: developing sculptures from living material, and then deciding upon the fate of this living material. Incorporating living forms into contemporary art is not a new gesture. In fact, a legacy of modern art that utilised and instrumentalised living animals is perhaps even wittily and delicately referenced here. Birds, fish, dogs or even coyotes are immediately memorable animals used by artists in exhibitions. Moreover cows, lambs, pigs, goats and other animals sourced for food have even faced dramatic and violent circumstances constructed by artists. Whatever one's feelings about the so-called sacrificial slaughter of animals by the Viennese Actionists, for example, there is no question that an ethical approach to those forms of performance art, ritual and art production is not only necessary but inevitable.¹

However Angelika Loderer is likely not directly taken with this kind of reference, as these forms of ritualistic, violent artwork were a thing of their time, which we might assert has indeed passed. Moreover, the artist is more concerned with questions of the future, and how humanity is already adjusting itself for re-imagining resources, progress and urban expansion. She is curious, for example, about the possibilities of mass nourishment through new forms of food production (whether fungal or not). Further, she notes how mushroom material is being used to replace Styrofoam and indeed building material. Mushrooms today can be used to produce packaging, home insulation, fiberboard for furniture, even surfboards. Different environmentally friendly materials that perform like plastics are made by mushrooms through their thread-like roots, known as mycelium, which consume crop waste. These materials can be grown and recycled, as opposed to being discarded after a single use.² Rather than simply as a return to our "roots" or the wild imaginings of hippiedom, the world must indeed adjust creatively in order to keep up with the incredible speed and needs of mass production and the finite resources that remain on our already raked planet. This is something we all should be concerned with.

One might also briefly journey historically into cultural references around mushrooms. The evolution of popular perceptions of fungi is discernible throughout contemporary European and American cultures. They are commonly referenced in multiple forms of folktales, including Irish fairy tales, where they are indeed often represented as a supernatural entity, and associable with portals to another world through fairy forts. In German fairy tales, *Hexenrings* are often referenced, which equate mushrooms with the activities of witches. In much European, especially German folklore, witches were also always held responsible for the growth of obscene fungi in people's gardens. Mushrooms were naturally also used for potions (called *Hexenpilz* in Austria, for example).³ An image of elves dancing on the tops of mushrooms asserts itself all the way to the time of Lewis Carroll and his own use of mushrooms in *Alice in Wonderland*. These more hallucinogenic references naturally equate magical and hallucinogenic properties of mushrooms with a lightly mystical experience, as if the reader or listener

¹ My personal distaste for the artwork by Hermann Nitsch or Otto Mühl aside, I have always felt that the use of animals who have no agency (or voice) in their own ritualistic slaughter is, at least, conceptually and indeed ritually insufficient. If one wants a proper sacrifice, one could employ knowing and willing victims—that is, human beings. In this capacity, the Viennese Actionists were cowards. Anyone can kill an animal and bathe in its blood.

² Marc Gunther. "Can mushrooms replace plastic?" *The Guardian*. Tuesday 22 October 2013. Also, more recently, a contemporary anthropologist examines the global routes of matsusake mushrooms to both understand capitalism and offer a portrait of our times. See Anna Tsing. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. 2015.

³ Frank M. Dugan. "Folkways and Fairy Tales: Mushrooms & Mildews in Stories, Remedies & Rituals ..." *North American Fungi*. December 1, 2007. Issue 3 (7): p. 23-72.

is himself/herself high on something. On the other side, references to witches and evil spells might then assert a fear of being high or losing one's self to a darker side.

Flowers are commonly the muse or material for artists. Angelika Loderer has instead chosen and forms her craft through this more mysterious, ambivalent living substance. The material mycelium produced within the mushrooms is used by the artist as a binding material, like natural glue. At its heart, this exhibition is an experiment around the nature, purpose and possibility of sculpture itself. Needing lots of care, as a gardener attends to his or her garden; each work has been painstakingly nurtured and shaped. During the course of the exhibition, Kunstverein staff takes over this responsibility, seven days a week. But the fate of the living substances has been decided by the artist. Some will continue to live; some have already dried out and ran their course.

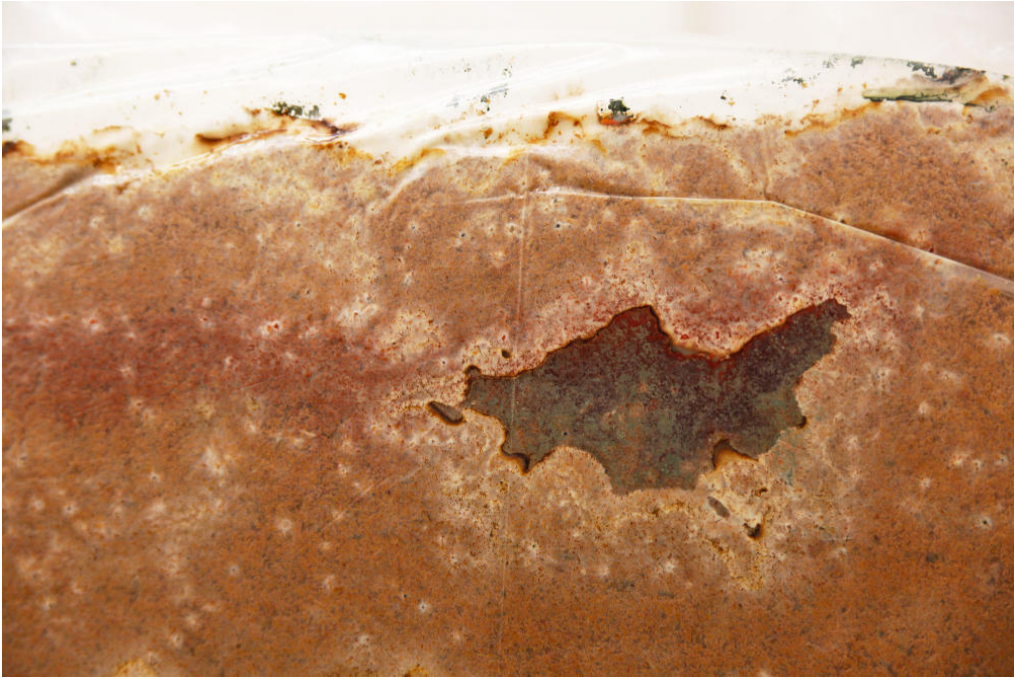
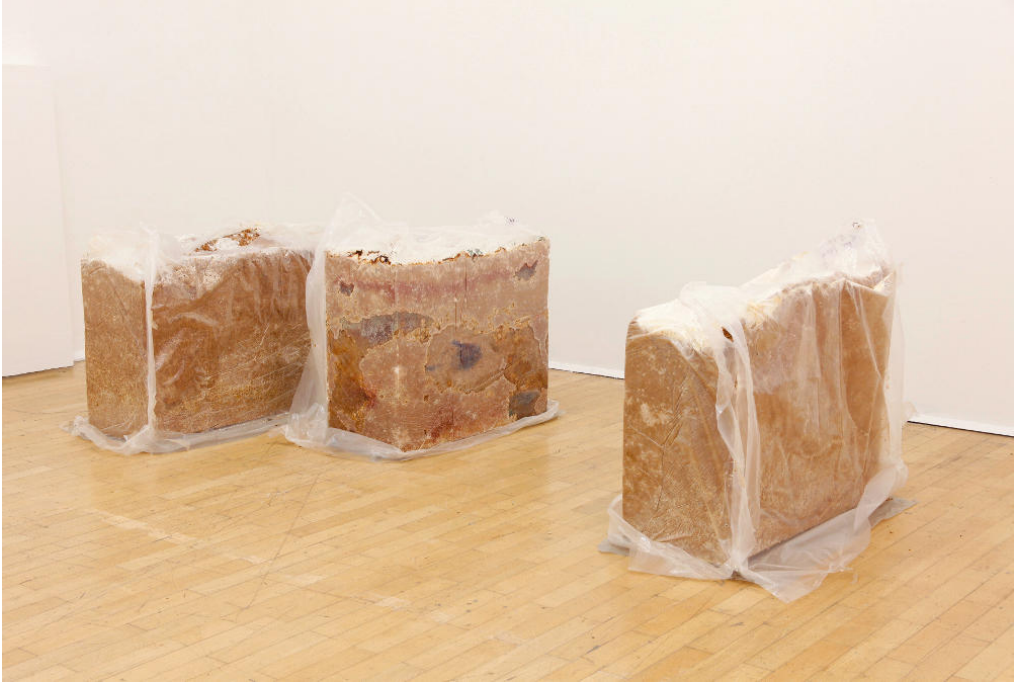
Although the more brooding, romantic references of Percy Shelley or Arthur Conan Doyle later seemed to supplant the folklore references, the earlier ones are indeed imbedded within these later writings. As indeed, they are imbedded in this exhibition, which ponders on our collective future on the one hand, and offers a micro-cosmos for our reflection and enjoyment on the other.

Biographie

The artist Angelika Loderer is in the process of developing basic research on objects and space. Her process-oriented methods are derived from classical sculpting.

For her sculptures she often uses materials from daily life, taken from the vocabulary of domesticity. Through a special amalgam of materials, forms and objects, the resulting work yields a new, metaphysical outcome, often playing with presence and absence. In transience, fragility and failure she sees formal expressions which she quotes in her works and which seem to offer the framework for her work process. From the overabundance of offerings, yet fragile and vulnerable in their composition, the elements – some of which become worthless again after the works are deconstructed – come together as a whole.

Angelika Loderer studied sculpture and multimedia with Erwin Wurm at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Her works have been shown in solo exhibitions at Dortmunder Kunstverein in Germany and Galerie Clemens Gunzer in Zurich and were presented by Erwin Wurm in Limberg/Maissau a.o. Her work have been shown in group exhibitions at Basis in Frankfurt/M., Künstlerhaus Dortmund, the Austrian Kulturform Berlin, at Kunsthau, Künstlerhaus Halle für Kunst und Medien and Kunstforum in Graz. She was awarded with stipends and prizes, including the Förderpreis of the county of Styria. She lives and works in Vienna and Feldbach.







Photos: Exhibition views Salzburger Kunstverein 2016, © Angelika Loderer

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www.salzburger-kunstverein.at, Hours exhibition: Tue-Sun 12-7 pm
Café Cult: Mon-Fri 9 am-11pm