

**SALZBURGER  
KUNSTVEREIN**

# Manners of Matter

1 May – 13 July 2014



## **Manners of Matter**

01.05. – 13.07.2014

“Sculpture is something you bump into when you back up to look at a painting.”

*Ad Reinhardt*

**Manners of Matter** draws upon a few works of art from different epochs of the twentieth century as well as more contemporary positions in order to engage what could be considered the most fleeting and mutable form of materiality in a digital age, the body. The exhibition takes Ad Reinhardt's famous quip as its point of departure and stands it on its head in order to consider issues of materiality and corporeality, transience and presence. Originally intended as a dismissal of the three-dimensional art form, Reinhardt's nonchalant statement here assumes a renewed and perhaps unsuspected relevance vis-à-vis the dominance of the image and the screens they appear on in all spheres of life today. If one considers that painting (the image) is that which disembodies the spectator, it is sculpture, Reinhardt reminds us, that restores the (moving) body to the world, making it fully and phenomenologically aware of its immediate surroundings.

Exploring the relationship between the fleeting materiality of the body and the supposedly stable presence of a sculpture, this exhibition valorizes a dancerly approach toward contrasting these two forms of matter. Despite their manifestly different materialities, one might reason that they each equally withhold their consent to be experienced in any way other than directly and firsthand. And yet, there exists a photography, this exhibition also argues, that is capable of conveying the sculptural texture and fleetingness of a corporeal materiality.

**Artists:** Constantin Brancusi, Ulla von Brandenburg, Michael Dean, Kōji Enokura, Esther Kläs, Bruce McLean, Jean-Luc Moulène, Shimabuku, Alina Szapocznikow

**Curator:** Chris Sharp

**Project assistance:** Susanne Staelin

The exhibition was organized by the Salzburger Kunstverein and co-produced with Musée du château de ducs de Wurtemberg, Montbéliard.

**Constantin Brancusi**, *Florence Meyer posant dans l'atelier*, 1932, 35-mm-film transferred to DVD, b/w, no sound, 35 sec, loop, courtesy Centre George Pompidou and Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle

Constantin Brancusi's *Florence Meyer posant dans l'atelier* (1932) depicts the eponymous American dancer and portraitist striking a series of dance-like poses on a plinth in Brancusi's studio. This classically Pygmalion portrayal shows Meyer's undulating figure surrounded by the typical coarse and sensual matter of Brancusi's sculpture, and in doing so, creates a stark contrast between two different kinds of materiality, that of the fragility of the body and the durability of classical sculpture.

**Ulla von Brandenburg**, *Around*, 2005, 16-mm-film, b/w, no sound, 2 min 44 sec, loop, courtesy the artist and Art: Concept, Paris

The German, Paris-based artist Ulla von Brandenburg (b. 1974) is known for her surreal engagement of theatrical conventions and animated tableaux vivants. Her 16-mm-film *Around* depicts a group of people standing together on an empty, urban street with their backs to the camera. As the camera begins to circumnavigate them, they turn in unison so that their faces remain invisible. Having carried out a 360 degree rotation all the way around them, we still have no idea who they are. Here, the body and a certain movement positively asserts itself in a preventative mode, ultimately blocking and denying access to a visual identification. In other words, the literal materiality of the human body becomes an impediment to traditional iconic recognition.

**Michael Dean**, *Untitled*, 2013, concrete, Ø 16 cm, courtesy of Supportico Lopez, Berlin

In the sculptural practice of the English, London-based artist Michael Dean (b. 1977) language is made to assume a density that both depends on and challenges the fragility and coherence of the human body. *Untitled* consists of a head of cabbage fashioned out of concrete, which is placed directly on the ground. This vegetal representation becomes a surrogate of the human head by virtue of both its size and language. Placed directly on the ground like the vegetable it mimics, this discreet object, which is as strange as it is banal, functions less like a small obstacle than the unassimilable sculptural anomaly that it is, while nevertheless occupying space in such a way that it could easily be tripped over.

**Kōji Enokura**, *Symptom—Sea-Body (P.W. - No. 40)*, 1972, silver gelatin print, 16,1 x 24,5 cm, courtesy the Estate of Kōji Enokura and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

Tokyo-based artist Kōji Enokura (1942-1995) was a key figure of the Mono-ha (School of Things), an anti-modernist movement based in Tokyo from 1968 to 1973, which focused on often ephemeral installations made of rocks, sand, wood, cotton and other basic materials. Avowedly interested in the tension between the body and material, Enokura pursued this in several different modes and mediums. *Symptom—Sea-Body (P.W.-No. 40)* is a perfect portrayal of Enokura exploring the tension between the body and matter. This black-and-white photo depicts the artist supine at the very lip of a break-line on the beach with his back to the camera, as if trying to prevent the break from going any further: Man against matter, or in this case, the ocean.

**Esther Kläs**, *Rama 1*, 2013, concrete, pigments, 197 x 40 x 43 cm, courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia and *Rama 1b*, 2013, concrete, pigments, 223 x 40 x 26 cm, courtesy Collezione Privata, Milano

German-born, New York-based sculptor Esther Kläs (b. 1981) makes works that exist on the border of figuration and abstraction. Working primarily with pigment inflected resin and concrete, her sculptures seem to hail from some distant past, evocative of so-called primitive forms, like ancient stele, pre-Colombian architectural models or the figures of Easter Island, while remaining thoroughly contemporary in their use of material and timeless in their engagement of the human figure. *Rama 1* and *Rama 1b* consists of a pair of free-standing sculptures, made of concrete, pigment and metal, which resemble long, narrow windows. Readable as empty faces, their size and pairing also renders them reminiscent of the human figure, as if they were a couple.

**Bruce McLean**, *Pose Work for Plinths*, 1971/2011, fifteen b/w-photographs, 10 x 15,5 cm each, courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin

Scottish, London-based artist Bruce McLean (b. 1944) is a sculptor, performance artist and painter, known for his wit and humour, and for establishing Nice Style, billed as “The World’s First Pose Band” in 1971. That same year, he carried out the performance *Pose Work for Plinths*, which was intended to be a send up of “the pompous monumentality” of Henry Moore’s plinth-based sculptures. He later re-created the performance to be photographed, which is presented here. In the documentation, his body seems to tumble across the plinths, investing the whole affair with a distinctly dancery quality.

**Jean-Luc Moulène**, *Régulier / Barneville, 24 janvier 2008*, bromide paper, b/w on aluminium, 69 x 69 x 3 cm, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

The French, Paris-based artist Jean-Luc Moulène's (b. 1955) eclectic practice consists of photography, sculpture, and drawing. Hailing from a background in advertising, a large part of Moulène's practice critically revolves around how the media constructs the body, to which he himself responds by attempting, in his own words, to 'construct his own body' with his work.

*Régulier / Barneville, 24 Janvier 2008* is a b/w-photograph of a plastic bottle crushed between two rocks. Full of a dry and perverse humour, this photo is so frontal and direct that it is hard not to empathically identify with the bottle, as if it were a stand for the human body.

**Shimabuku**, *Passing Through the Rubberband*, 2000, circular wooden platform, boxes, rubber, Ø 90 cm, courtesy the artist

The disarmingly simple practice of Japanese, Berlin-based artist Shimabuku (b. 1969) fondly engages with the most basic and fundamental aspects of the everyday. Known to work with fruit and sea life (or potatoes and fish, as in his film *Fish and Chips*, which depicts a fish following a potato underwater), Shimabuku's work subtly militates for a slower pace and greater attention to the everyday world. *Passing Through the Rubber Band* is an interactive work in which the artist invites viewers via a wall text to "Please feel free to take a rubber band and pass your body through it." This the viewer can do by taking a rubber band from a nearby box of standard size rubber bands, through which, believe it or not, with a little wiggling, it is possible to pass one's body. At once performative, sculptural and dancerly, this radically simple and powerful work manages to carry out a multitude of functions while placing a singular emphasis on the materiality of the body.

**Alina Szapocznikow**, *Fotorzeźby [Photosculptures]*, 1971/2007, twenty gelatin silver prints, collage and text on paper, 30 x 24 cm und 24 x 30 cm each, Photo Shooting: Roman Cieslewicz, courtesy the Estate Alina Szapocznikow / Piotr Stanislawski / Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

The Polish artist Alina Szapocznikow (b. 1926- d. 1973) was a sculptor long based in Paris and known for abject representations of the human body using unorthodox materials such as latex, plastics and wax. Her stunning series of *Photosculptures* (1971) manages to succinctly embody virtually all of the stakes of her practice. For this work, which consists of twenty photographs, the artist photographed a wad of masticated chewing gum in a series of positions that is strangely reminiscent of the human body. The human body is here in a state of abjection and exultation that is markedly dancerly. It's as if the piece of chewing gum was itself dancing.

Salzburger Kunstverein  
Künstlerhaus  
Hellbrunner Straße 3  
5020 Salzburg, Austria

T. +43 662 84 22 94-0  
F. +43 662 84 22 94-22  
office@salzburger-kunstverein.at  
www.salzburger-kunstverein.at

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Tue-Sun noon-7 p.m.

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Text: Chris Sharp  
Translation: Alexa Nieschlag

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Jean-Luc Moulène, *Régulier / Barneville, 24 janvier 2008*, 2013  
Bromide paper, b/w on aluminum, 69 x 69 cm  
Photo shooting: Jean-Luc Moulène / ADAGP  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris