

Fragmented themes stimulate the imagination

New York artist of international fame exhibits her work at art-st-urban

She has just returned from the Giardini in Venice, where she opened an exhibition of large pieces on 6 June. The New York artist Carole A. Feuerman now also holds her first larger show in Switzerland – in Pavillion E in St. Urban.

Fragments, but no patchwork. Human body parts, perfectly formed in resin or vinyl, with an uninhibited feeling for erotic shapes. The shapes are abruptly interrupted, which incites the viewer to think further, where his fantasy leads him. The fragments are closed in form, and accurate in expression and idea.

Carole A. Feuerman, 62, has always worked with live models and has created classical forms stemming from the range of human passions, which express the intrinsic content of her pieces.

Her work is the result of an intensive process, which originates from a long work on the material (up to six months for one piece), but also from the emotional human experience, in particular in relation to others. Feuerman translates the model's skin tone accurately in her work and she adds clothing she paints realistically. But her realism also exceeds the actual reality to «a love of life in her own physicality» (David Finn, photographer of Feuerman's work).

The artist who lives in New York has been active since the Seventies. Her work is widely distributed in the USA and is represented in famous public and private collections, e.g. in the Metropolitan Museum in New York or in the Clintons' private collection. In the early Eighties, in the days of Hyperrealism, she created the first series of the three Catalinas.

In 2005 she recreated the Grande Catalina for the Florence Biennale. The larger-than-life swimmer has just emerged from the water - full of zest. With water dripping from her skin, she closes her eyes and enjoys the moment. Feuerman was inspired by a real swimmer for this piece: As she emerged from the water in front of her, "I saw, how she stepped out of herself and entered a new reality". The swimmer enjoys the moment, the water seems to run over her face and chest. Feuerman focused on the strong charisma of the model and that single moment of passage from one state to the next, to this sudden fall into a dream.

Catalina has become an icon and that is how she now floats in the cell above the bathtub St. Urban. Directly next to her, in a high, narrow space, which once was used to lock away difficult patients, Angelica sits. The full body figure becomes quite alien and unreal because of the white surroundings. And it is precisely her realistic presence - she too has permanent water drops on her coloured skin - that distances her from her object status and makes her an inaccessible idol in this former men's asylum.

Feuerman's work achieves an unimagined strength in the whitewashed rooms of the former psychiatric asylum for men. Gertrud Aeschlimann foresaw this when she was looking for possible objects for an exhibition in the artist's New York studio. She immediately decided on the «erotic pieces» from 1978, which were hidden

somewhere behind more recent work. Her intention was to play on the bathroom of Pavillion E, which is a document in its own right.

Here, in this room of depraved intimacy, the twelve hip- and bust pieces sit and hang and flash on passionate human dreams, without exposing or accusing them. The reality fragments bring erotic forms and suppressed sexual feelings to full awareness, cool and factual. At the same time, the exhibited body becomes the part needed for completion. It is left up to the viewer to detect this completion.

This series will certainly no longer cause the same outcry, which greeted its first showing in a gallery in Fort Worth. At the time, the exhibition was immediately closed after the opening on grounds of provocation. It will not go that far nowadays, as - in the words of the American art historian Peter Frank at the opening in St. Urban – Feuerman does not celebrate the human body itself in these works, but she celebrates the human mind, which uses the body as an instrument of the intellect. The works of Feuerman bring «new dreams to a place where people used to dream and were cured from their nightmares» (Frank).

In another room, two of her more recent bronze sculptures are shown. With a refined technique, she uses classical forms of antique torsos for an intriguing play of forms and dazzling colours. The bronze is applied in drops and worked while still fluid or cooled in its raw state. The bodies become translucent, porous, and not only in the literal sense. The basic form dissolves, and is brought forward to the borders of abstraction. But the remaining part still means the whole. The antique torso is no longer a torso (piece without limbs), but a finished, new work.

Willi Bürgi

Lust and Desires. Erotic sculptures by Carole A. Feuerman. Pavillion E, St. Urban. Free entrance on request (Tel. 062 752 84 80, www.art-st-urban.com)

CAPTIONS-INFO

FEUERMAN-AESCHLIMANN

CAROLE A. FEUERMAN (RIGHT) AND GERTRUD AESCHLIMANN-KOHLER SIT IN THE BATH-CELL UNDER THE GRANDE CATALINA OF FEUERMAN.

PHOTOGRAPHS: WILLI BÜRGI