
AMBRA CASTAGNETTI
COMPOST G♀RLS

« *Body is reality. I want to change my reality. That means I have to change my body.* »

David Cronenberg

New Galerie is pleased to present Ambra Castagnetti's first solo exhibition in Paris. Between performance, video, painting and sculpture, her work thinks and disarticulates bodies - living and dead - and the way they are charged with power and meaning. In *Compost G♀rls*, she presents a new series of five sculptures, paintings on silk, cotton and ceramics (presented at the last 59th Venice Biennale) activated in a video from her performance *Dependency*.

Do the disparate elements come from animist rites, neo-pagan ceremonies or an obscure sect founded on Reddit? One could not classify what were the activities of these decomposing but strangely flourishing bodies. Difficult to date, they could belong to a mythological past, an ossuary but also to a ruin of raves or e-girls out at dawn.

Ambra Castagnetti's body parts are partially recomposed, resulting in subjects that are both defective and powerful. If bones or vertebrae constitute the base, it is mysterious flesh that completes them. By metamorphosing her body matrices, the artist lends them magical attributes. Her sculptures resemble these transitional objects, these amulets of passages ensuring the continuity between world and beyond world. Continuity is also a question when the artist is inspired by her friends and her community to mold their bodies of the future. Each containing the same number of bones, they seem to belong to a larger community, a species in the making that would be animated by a higher energy.

Influenced by medical anthropology studies that gave her a taste for augmented anatomies and by a tradition of radical epistemology (Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway) Ambra Castagnetti rethinks the dichotomies of the living and insists on our interdependencies. Thus, the artist proposes experiments of decentering of the human experience and inhabits biological and spiritual perspectives still unexplored. Will the beings of the future develop exoskeletons like insects, mollusks or arthropods? Will they hybridize with other species? Will they be endowed with a hyperconsciousness that escapes our cognitive standards? In her work, everything proceeds from a stratification, from superimpositions of elements, from multiple and entangled worlds, which continue to manufacture themselves with each other.

For this new series of sculptures, she uses wax: a ductile ointment and plastic substance that is unfairly thought to be fragile. The latter was used in the Middle Ages to create ex-votos. In a way, Ambra Castagnetti perpetuates this tradition of votive offering (ex-voto) from a material that stretches, evolves, breathes ex-novo. The latter gives birth to new bodies whose members and functions are undetermined. What looks like ancient vertebrates are thus reconfigured into semi-creatures and chimeras with unexpected extensions. Each new span of bodies is an opportunity to strengthen beings that were once in danger, to compensate for their vulnerabilities by inventing their new body envelopes. In her series of portable brushed aluminum sculptures *Dependency* (2022), ceramic snakes mate with BDSM instruments in an interspecies rite. Whether fluid or augmented, Ambra Castagnetti's neo-bodies participate in a new landscape devastated and in recomposition, ultra-modern but primitive, cannibalized by technologies but animated by beliefs: a prehistory of the future where Ambra Castagnetti invents her own theory of evolution.

Pierre-Alexandre Mateos, Paris, avril 2023