



VERONIKA SEDLMAIR & BRYNJAR SIGURÐARSON

MYSTIC GARDEN

31 January - 24 February 2024

The German-Icelandic artist duo Veronika Sedlmair and Brynjar Sigurðarson present a series of new works that materialise an uncanny revival of romantic ideas.

As if escaped from a German Romanticism painting, where the artist's role was mediating between the creative and the divine, a series of mushroom shaped objects are installed on a platform at Galerie kreó in Paris. Their glossy surfaces and fleeting colours make for a ghostly scene inside the exhibition space. To constitute 'Mystic Garden', the duo Sedlmair and Sigurðarson worked with a skilled glass blowers community to reach the limit that large scale blown glass can take and that can be handled by a persons lungs within the little time one has to (re)work the hot material. Having similar sizes to our human upper bodies their light emitting volumes could be interpreted as materialisations of souls, or characters even. Reminiscent of the Romantic movement and their philosophy which referred to the German words 'Körper' and 'Leib'; describing the body you have, and the body you are as complimentary entities. These glass objects also look alike but vary in unique colours and each radiates their own aura into space. They toy with our imagination in manifesting household items as beings.

The appreciation of the body goes up and down throughout history. The revival of the flesh in paintings, sculptures and literature followed after the dark ages, a medieval era focussing on the soul and the inner world of a human being rather than on their body and skin. Under the growing influence of social media and touch phones leading to new forms of digital selves, our bodies and how they relate to things has long been the focal point of Sedlmair and Sigurðarson. The duo developed their collaborative practice over the last decade during which politics surrounding natural preservation arose, a more ethical physicality of what we

have in our homes is considered, and a period of time in which we allow space for spirituality in cosmopolitan daily lives. The duo started working together by translating the regional values and folkloric aesthetics from the coastal environment of Iceland into contemporary objects, and nowadays use their storytelling powers to react to visual elements found in a peripheral zone of the German alps, where their studio is based since 2019. In their latest work at Galerie kreó, his 'Hermit Sveinsson', a fictional character performing rituals in a river with carefully designed props, seems to meet her breathing and colour therapy skills derived from the forest. Their intertwined interests into past, future and present ways of living leads to a series of soulful objects that borderlines between the natural and the technical.

Switched on and off the works illuminate stacked glass elements showing new gradients and overlapping coloured surfaces that make apparent the translucency of their surfaces. Although having a somewhat technological appearance 'Mystic Garden' objects are actually hand made during an extensive working period at Cirva, The International Glass and Visual Arts Research Centre in Marseille, France. For 'Mystic Garden' to reach the sensitive form of physical presence and lively characteristics, the artists decided to undertake a research and development period over multiple years to find ways of transforming two volumes of liquid glass into colourful objects. The presented glass volumes have an inner and outer colour and different gradients, merged during the glass blowing process. The colour spectrum it resulted in is best described as fleeting, colours that are captured just before turning into other colours. A sort of supernatural moment that occurs when rainbows just arise or lights travels through a dense pack of trees in the early mornings of fall. The work could easily be mistaken for props from a science fiction movie set, found on the attic of retired film set maker.

As their practice often links to anthropology and geology, 'Mystic Garden' fits right into the oeuvre of Sedlmair and Sigurðarson that is driven from theatrical and natural references. Following projects like a ceramic Set of Stones for t.e. (Thomas Eyck) in The Netherlands, Crystal Blinds with Swarovski in Austria, their

Circle Flute that toured the world with musician Björk and their first public art work on a river side in the Northern Black Forest of Germany as part of cultural programme Ornamenta set to open this summer. In all of these works becomes apparent that for the artist duo, the sublime is not beautiful but rather intense and stirring. Repurposing some of the ideas of the Romantics as once more the tension between the factual and the irrational and supernatural projections of creative genius are brought up, seen by some as a danger and others as an opportunity. Who ever might own one or more of these soulful objects from 'Mystic Garden' is offered the possibility to live and work amongst in a futuristic landscape filled with romantic ideas.



Veronika Sedlmair and Brynjar Sigurðarson at Galerie kreO, 2024

Jules van den Langenberg

EXHIBITION IN COLLABORATION WITH CIRVA, MARSEILLE

The International Glass and Visual Arts Research Centre (Cirva) is an art centre that places creation at the heart of its project. Occupying a unique position on the world stage since 1983, it invites artists and designers to work with a precise material, glass, in an atmosphere of total freedom. At the Cirva's studio, they are met by a team of very high-level glass technicians with whom a dialogue begins. This exchange unfolds over the course of time, through repeated visits. It is instrumental in allowing the artists to undertake bold experiments during which unlimited avenues of thought encounter a material with a complex and unpredictable reputation.

CIRVA