

Press Release

Victor Hugo Was Here

Jean-Baptiste Maitre & Dina Danish

RITA URSO artopiagallery
Via Lazzaro Papi 2, Milano

Opening Thursday October 1, h 12 a.m. – 8 p.m.

October 1 | November 12, 2020



Dina Danish and Jean-Baptiste Maitre, *Winged Sandals, Moses and a Cocktail* (carving), 2019, carved linoleum mounted on wood, 150 x 210 cm

RITA URSO is delighted to open the new exhibition season 2020 - 2021 with the show *Victor Hugo Was Here* by **Jean-Baptiste Maitre** and **Dina Danish**. The title recalls a 19th century graffito found in Luxor, Egypt, in which French writer Victor Hugo engraved his name on the wall of an ancient temple, in order to presumably eternalize that he was once upon a time here in this temple.

The main nucleus of the exhibition project consists of works created during two artist residencies in Italy in which the couple has recently participated. In these institutions Dina and Jean-Baptiste had the opportunity to share the suggestions linked to the territory, the environment and the peculiarity of this experience.

The synergy between the two artists has developed a working method that combines the systematic nature and study of the space-time relationship, that characterises Maitre's research, with the irony, misunderstanding and plays on words often used by Danish in her artistic practice, giving rise to a series of works that re-appropriate and transform expressive forms acquired from different histories and cultural traditions.

The gallery exhibition on the first floor presents three large embroideries produced in 2018 at the Sandra Natali Residence in Bologna, an important space connected to MAMbo, and some smaller works created in the studio during the last year.

In the artworks on voile they have reproduced, and mixed with coloured threads, some images drawn from ancient graffiti along with doodles made on writing pads of the kind that are used in stationery shops to try out new pens. The embroidery decontextualizes the simplicity and spontaneity of the original messages by placing them on the soft surface of the tulle. The signs from which they are inspired, "engraved" on stone or paper, have now turned into three-dimensional forms that float on the walls of the exhibition space. Using embroidery realizes a visual process of "tearing" a layer of architecture and time, which are placed into our present, in real time, and delivered to that eternity to which they seem to aspire from the beginning.

The two large works, located on the second floor of the gallery and realized during the couple's stay at the American Academy in Rome in 2019, tell the context of the city and its casual layering of time: from the ancient architectural elements seen during the walks, to the busts with the famed 1990s "topsy tail" hairdo, inspired by a Roman copy of the Greek Dionysus at the Palazzo Massimo, to the evil eyes of a printed tote bag purchased at the Danish chain store Flying Tiger.

The two artists create a matrix of colliding imagery, where formal and temporal elements abound, and are transposed on two different surfaces, linoleum and velvet, through engraving and embossing.

Dina Danish and **Jean-Baptiste Maitre** – who both have a well-developed and clearly defined individual practice – began to work as an artist duo in 2015. The French-Egyptian duo reappropriate linguistic and figurative expressive forms acquired from the most diverse cultural traditions and turns them into images that contain and condense centuries of history. Their collaborative works have been exhibited at Tyson Raum in Cologne; PuntWG in Amsterdam; Institut Für Kunstgeschichte in Munich; Martin van Zomeren gallery, Amsterdam; Stigter van Doesburg gallery, Amsterdam; Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna and the American Academy in Rome.

In 2009, Danish and Maitre met at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam where they were both artists in residence.

The artworks of the exhibition have been realized with the support of

MAMbo (Bologna)



American Academy (Roma)



Mondriaan Fonds (Amsterdam)



Website

www.artopiagallery.net

Opening times

Monday–Friday / 3 – 7 p.m. / Saturday by appointment

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