

GALERIE MARIA LUND

BENTE SKJØTTGAARD

Look at me!

10. 11. 2018 - 5. 01. 2019

. OPENING

Saturday November 10th, 5pm-8pm - with the artist present

. LATE NIGHT OPENING

Thursday December 6th, 7 pm-9.30 pm

. ANNUAL CLOSING

December 24-26 and January 1st 2019

. *100 ans de céramique danoise*
(100 years of Danish ceramics)

29. 11. 2018 - 3. 03. 2019

Maison du Danemark 142 Av. des Champs-Élysées, Paris 8th arr.
with the participation of Bente Skjøttgaard

At the risk of sounding narcissistic - *Look at me!* - the title of Bente Skjøttgaard's new exhibition is not the epitome of discretion, for two reasons: First of all, because of the source of inspiration, the subject matter itself: a particularly reflective species that ineluctably catches the eye because of its luminous beauty. It is the so-called *Sea walnut*, a Comb jelly referred to as *Mnemiopsis leidyi* in Latin. Second of all, because of the great damages that this small auto-fertilising hermaphrodite has been causing since its accidental introduction in the Black Sea by the water spillage of cargos in the 1980s: a preoccupying biological and environmental reality that requires attention.

This invasive "beauty" with astonishing survival and adaptation capacities spreads at an exponential rate across seas, which are - however - not its regular environment. It catastrophically reduces the fish populations and other species, which it feeds off in order to create sufficient energy for its vibrating paddles and its very intense gametogenesis.

Incredible predators, these creatures are touching nevertheless because of their particularly smooth, soft being and their gracious presence. Bente Skjøttgaard has studied them closely and her new sculptures are inspired by their shapes, their changing colours and their movements. Looking at them, the submarine ballet and its regular rhythm - that of the profound breathing of an original large lung - come to life... and this in the static matter of stoneware.

a story about Nature

Nature and its phenomena are recurrent sources of inspiration for Bente Skjøttgaard: The tree and its roots, the rock and its shaping, the clouds, the tornadoes and their never-ending transformations have been what triggered many of her works for over a decade.

The matter of ceramics itself, clay, comes from nature and inherently bear the history of geological movements. It takes form through pressure and shock. The firing exposes it to the force of flames that hardens, shapes, and deforms it. Then comes the glazing, whose movements and mass adds skin to a clay body.

For a long time the artist's works were essentially vessels that allowed for the glazing to develop - spreading flatly or in vertical drizzles. Today, the glaze not only brings colour and texture but is also, because of its density, an integral part of the shape.

Mnemiopsis leidyi

The sea organism *Mnemiopsis leidyi* can be identified mostly by its luminosity and the outlines of its lobes and their combs made of thousands of small lashes, which impulses allow it to move in currents. Bente Skjøttgaard's new sculptures come from these outlines. They shape as wide-open structures, like organic stems attached to a center and carried by a thin circular support. Even the most "tranquil" of these artworks stun by their catchy suppleness, their breath and the illusion of a movement, despite the fact that the dynamics of their matter have come to a standstill by hardening in the kiln. These sculptures strut by showing off their *eye-catching* enamel garments

between pastel discretion and gaudy carmines, crimsons and cobalt blues or dressed in darker hues matching the secrets of the depths...

These secrets also inhabit the mural reliefs on which the profiles of the ctenophores stand out or disappear in dark backgrounds next to plants with thin stems and a few luminous points - maybe the rays of sun from above or beams from a curious scrutinizer's torch.

With this new body of sculptures, Bente Skjøttgaard gives visibility to yet another example of the ambiguous relationship between Man and Nature and the disastrous imbalances that happen in natural habitats. In an age where the power of human impact is growing faster and faster, seeing beauty but also reality, seems more necessary than ever: *Look at me!*

background

The Galerie Maria Lund has presented six exhibitions (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013 and 2016) of Bente Skjøttgaard (born in Denmark in 1961), which were all warmly welcomed by the public, the press and institutions.

Her sculptures have joined the *Fond national d'art contemporain*, Paris and the *V&A*, London, the *Musée National de la Céramique*, Sèvres, the *Musées de Châteauroux* and number of public collections in Northern Europe (Designmuseum Denmark - Holstebro Kunstmuseum - Grimmerhus, Museum of International Ceramic Art, Middelfart - Vejen Art Museum - Trapholt Art Museum, Kolding - the Danish Art Foundation and the Copenhagen Cultural Foundation). Additionally, she has received many awards for her work.

Bente Skjøttgaard often exhibits in Europe. She was presented in the United States in *From the kilns of Denmark*, (travelling exhibition 2002-2005: The Museum of Art and Design, New York, Fitchburg, San Diego, Sacramento, Racine as well as at La Maison du Danemark, Paris and the Nordic Embassies, Berlin), in fairs and in South Korea (*KIAF* in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011), *Gyeonggi International Ceramics Biennale, 2009 and 2011: Adventures of the Fire - World Contemporary Ceramics*). Her sculptures have also been exhibited at the *Biennale de Châteauroux* (2009 and 2011), at the *Biennale de Vallauris* (2010 - sculpture section), for the *Parcours Carougeois* (2015, exhibition on *The Line*, Halles de la Fonderie), in *Climats artificiels* at the Espace Fondation EDF, Paris, in the show *Nuages* at the Centre Céramique de Giroussens and at *WCC-BF, Mons, Belgium* (2016), as well as in the 2016 and 2017 editions of *Une partie de campagne*, Chassagne-Montrachet.

In 2012, the artist created the exhibition platform *Copenhagen Ceramics* in collaboration with artists-ceramicists Martin Bodilsen Kaldahl and Steen Ipsen. During its three-year existence, it was a recognized platform for cutting edge exploration of ceramics.

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