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MARIA CEPPI
Chimera

It is always a bit of a test of the imagination when you access Maria Ceppi's works from the Hybrid Shapes group. Almost like a Rorschach test. What is required is free association of what you see. At first glance, they appear either surreal and alien, somewhat peculiar, or you recognise familiar objects. This also depends on your own cultural background. The object, the sculpture, will therefore immediately say something about you, the viewer. Have you ever been fishing? Do you know what a float is? Do you remember how it feels to squeeze your parents' already porous pipette between your fingers? Were you in the military? Then you may immediately recognise that the cartridge case in the work *Pulp* does not belong to a firearm? Do you have children? Then you know what you have to use to brush their teeth at the beginning. Is that a breast with a red nipple growing out of the bra? Or are you just falling for a cliché? The game is deliberately driven by Ceppi. Objects interlock and create a harmonious new whole. A hybrid creature consisting of different original biological and artificial materials that unite to form an organism. As with the ancient Greek mythical figure Chimera, attraction and wondrous awe are evident when approaching it.

While the creation of chimeras (hybrid creatures) would be ethically unacceptable in medicine, art allows the creation of such multilayered, charged objects. Originally very small and made from real organic material and found objects (*Objet Trouvé*), the *Hybrid Shapes* have been recreated in an oversized format using the most elaborate craftsmanship. Bronze, silicone, 3D printing, aluminium – depending on the nature of the original material, the most suitable material is chosen to recreate faithfully the small original on a large scale.

Everyday consumer goods are paired with decayed plants. The one was once alive, the other we may have attributed an aura to, depending on the personal and particular history we associate with the object. What was previously private – the hair clip, the shoe sole, the ceramic shard found on the beach at Wunderbar – is now large and present. Public.

The objects in their fullness and their potential connections tell the story of consumption, capitalism, object -obsessions or -love. But they also speak of small personal, often unconscious, subtle stories – of feeling, touching, sensing. The idiosyncrasy – the "totality of personal characteristics, preferences and aversions" – is closely examined. The size of the sculpture is perhaps also a physical manifestation of the emotional importance that is secretly attributed to the original object, or the actual metaphorical weight of the object as it occupies our everyday lives from a bird's eye perspective. The larger it is, the more significant it is, or at least as large, because it is at least as important, in fact.

However, the game that Ceppi plays so well lies in the interplay between beauty, perfection and interpretative power. Who would think of the devastating allure of drugs, smuggling, illegality, prison, border control and immigration when looking at the work *Opiumfence*? The dried poppy flower sits in a ring velvet cushion, which in turn is embedded in a wire mesh fence tensioner. Or is it in fact a *memento mori*?

Everything revolves around the twistedness and absurdity of our interconnected global world and our own behaviour. And at the same time, everything is so beautifully and longingly designed. The criticism on the object, on consumption, is on the same level as an ode to the object, a love for the tool, and the hidden joys that come with it. Just think of the work *Afterwork*, in which a pink rose was created from a reusable rubber glove turned inside out – presented on a silver powder box.

The object as a sceptre, full of personal references and stories to which we are attached or which we have attached to it. Ceppi's works bring to mind the vastness of the world and its interconnectivity. Here, what is private, and yet shared by us all, becomes a cultural asset. Her works lead the viewer to realise how similar we "individualists" really are.