Sarah Margnetti. Supportive Structures

Manor Art Prize 2022 Vaud

30.9.2022–23.4.2023

Exhibition leaflet

With a sure mastery of the trompe-l'œil technique, Sarah Margnetti has developed a pictorial style that combines optical illusion and abstract forms. Deployed in monumental wall paintings or on canvas, these motifs represent body parts whose functions are often reappropriated (an ear, for instance, becomes an entire body, a body a brain, and entwined fingers a kind of fence or grating) or worked out in multiple variations. They spring from or melt into elements of the architecture or setting drawn from the world of the theater (curtains, balustrades, theater seats, etc.) in a play of inside and out, dream and reality.

Among the sensory organs, the ear is a recurring motif. It merges with the knots in the wood of a trompe-l'œil setting, is transformed into an artist's palette, or replaces the eyes in a face. The artist's work then seems to emphasize listening over speech and vision, playing with and undermining art history's traditional motifs, notably that of the female body.

For her solo exhibition in the Espace Projet, Sarah Margnetti has mounted a selection of artworks especially created for the show, along with wall paintings done on site that borrow from, extend, or revisit elements that are central to her body of work. On the glass façade, the artist plays with a curtain motif. Like glass, the curtain is that element which both separates and connects inside and out. While curtains indeed obstruct our view, they also allow us to feel, hear, even touch what is found directly behind them, whereas glass makes it possible to connect visually what it physically separates. All of Sarah Margnetti's work focuses on porosity, passage, and the intermediary, the in-between state, whether in architectural designs and their decors (curtains, brick walls, holes in the wood), or in the body and its sensory organs (nose, mouth, ear). Bodies and architecture are joined and fused – a knot in a piece of wood assumes the shape of an ear, an ear becomes the capital of a column, and a column sprouts arms, while the veins of painted marble conjure up skin.

Originating in her interest in the link between the body and architecture, a recurring element in the artist's repertoire of visual tropes is the figure of the caryatid. In ancient Greece, the caryatid (literally "maidens of Karyai," a town in the Peloponnese) was a sculpted female figure often draped in a long tunic; supporting an entablature on her head, the caryatid often took the place of a column or pillar in buildings. By reappropriating this figure, Sarah Margnetti interrogates the historical fusion of female bodies and architecture. She uses the caryatid to lend visual form to the question of the invisible effort put in by women to uphold the stability of the economic and social edifice of our world. Indeed, as Camilla Paolino writes in a fine essay published in the catalogue accompanying the present exhibition, "the caryatid's functionality depends on her ability to do as if the feat of carrying the weight of the system were effortless, that is, on her capacity to keep the labor she performs concealed: an unfathomable, unthinkable arcane. In order to preserve the arcane, the caryatid must remain still and silent. If she speaks, the building trembles. If she makes a move, the building collapses […] However, Sarah Margnetti's caryatids are not only a tribute to women's disregarded labors. They are also meant to address the work deployed to support the world of art and culture, which thrives on the unrecognized labor of populous ranks of invisible workers."

Biography

Sarah Margnetti holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Visual Arts from the École cantonale d'art of Lausanne / ECAL (2005-2009) and a Master's in Visual Arts HES-SO, Work.Master from the Geneva University of Art and Design / HEAD (2013 – 2015). She also completed a practical training course at the Institut Van der Kelen-Logelain in Brussels, one of the first schools devoted to the study of decorative painting. She is the recipient of the Manor Art Prize Vaud (2022) and a Swiss Art Award (2018). Her work has been exhibited in a range of institutions and venues, including Le Commun, Geneva; CAN, Neuchâtel; La Villa du Parc, Annemasse; Last Tango, Zurich; SALTS, Basel; and Stems Gallery, Brussels.

Publication:
Nicole Schweizer (ed.),
Sarah Margnetti. Sintonia, with
a text by Camilla Paolino,
co-published by Musée cantonal
des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne
and art&fiction publications,
Lausanne, 2022 (Fr./Eng.),
144 pp., 80 ill.
Price: CHF 35.– / CHF 30.–
at the MCBA Book- and Giftshop
during the exhibition
→ shop.mcba@plateforme10.ch

Events:
Guided tour for the Ami·e·s
du Musée (in French)
Tuesday, 11 october 2022
at 12:30pm
By Nicole Schweizer

Guided tour (in French)
Tuesday, 6 december 2022
at 12:30pm
By Nicole Schweizer

Performance by Julia Perazzini
Waves on
Thursday, 26 January 2023
at 7:00pm

Limited capacity.
Register online:
→ www.mcba.ch

Manor Art Prize Vaud:
Created in 1982 to promote young
Swiss talent, the Manor Art Prize
is awarded every two years by a
jury – for the Manor Art Prize Vaud,
the artists are selected from a
short list drawn up by MCBA.
Coming at a key moment in the
career of emerging artists, the
prize makes it possible to offer
winners a decisive show of
support for their work. It is in this
way that the Manor Art Prize Vaud
helps to foster and promote the
regional contemporary art scene
in the Canton of Vaud.

The Jury of the Manor Art Prize
2022 Vaud:
Aloïs Godinat, artist, Lausanne;
Claire Hoffmann, curator,
Centre culturel suisse, Paris;
Elise Lammer, freelance curator,
Basel; Pierre-André Maus, Maus
Frères SA; Chantal Prod'Hom,
director of mudac – Musée
de design et d'arts appliqués
contemporains, Lausanne

MANOR

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