

Press release

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The Princessehof National Museum of Ceramics presents *Human After All: Ceramic Reflections in Contemporary Art*

The Princessehof National Museum of Ceramics in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands will present the wide-ranging exhibition *Human After All: Ceramic Reflections in Contemporary Art* from 10 October 2020 to 5 September 2021. Internationally established artists and up-and-coming talents from both the East and West will exhibit sculptures and installations ranging from the absurdist films of artist duo Djurberg and Berg (1978, Sweden) to the tree of life by Kris Lemsalu (1985, Estonia). All the works revolve around the complexity of human nature: *La Condition Humaine*, humanity with all its limitations, insecurities and self-confidence, beauty or cruelty.

Selected works by the following artists will be exhibited in the Netherlands for the first time: William Cobbing (1974, Great Britain), artist duo Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg (1978, Sweden), Leiko Ikemura (1951, Japan), Klara Kristalova (1967, Czech Republic), Kris Lemsalu (1985, Estonia), Sharon van Overmeiren (1985, Belgium), Liliana Porter (1941, Argentina), Mariken Wessels (1963, the Netherlands) and Geng Xue (1983, China).

La condition humaine

The exhibition, curated by Tanya Rumpff, appeals to primary, almost animalistic traits. The sculptures and installations by a diverse group of artists comment on the difficulties of life, for example, the characters in the video work of Djurberg and Berg, who are either powerful or subservient. William Cobbing's work shows people trying to get closer together, but the clay separates them, obstructing contact. At first sight, Liliana Porter's installation seems endearing. But take a closer look at the havoc wreaked by the cute miniature people and discover a deeper layer of creation and destruction. In the tree of life by the young, up-and-coming artist Kris Lemsalu, smaller characters grow out of the hands of the main character, symbolic of the cycle of life. Just like Lemsalu, Sharon van Overmeiren draws inspiration from folk cultures. At first her sculptures seem familiar, but they are difficult to define.

Interdisciplinary

Artists interpret different facets of this subject – human shortcomings – using the field that is pre-eminently human: ceramics. Throughout the ages until the present day, ceramicists have literally left their fingerprints on their creations. One example is the leading Japanese artist Leiko Ikemura: for her, the material is intrinsic to her philosophy. She reflects on her own femininity with her human figures, a recent painting, two drawings and a film. With her sculptures, photographs and video work local talent Mariken Wessels presents the beauty of the corpulent body in motion.

In addition to ceramics, film and photography are used in surprising ways. The films of Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg are an intriguing mix of clay figures, music and animation. In this

exhibition they screen a new film about greed, among other subjects. Works by this leading artist duo are included in the collections of the Prada Foundation in Milan and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, among others.

Geng Xue, whose work was included in *In Motion* at the Princessehof in 2017, is also creating an international furor with her animated films. The human figures in her work are marked by trauma, struggle or temptation, but also by desire and hope. She exhibits the work *The Name of Gold*, which was extremely successful at the Venice Biennale (2019).

Finally, Klara Kristalova fills the last room with three islands consisting of moss, ferns and other plants. Life-size animal and human figures guard the islands. Together with internationally renowned florist Thierry Boutemy and a company specialised in interior landscaping, Kristalova creates an impressive horticultural design with living greenery. The choice of plants is inspired by the flora in the forest where Kristalova's workshop is located.

Series

Human After All: Ceramic Reflections in Contemporary Art is the second in a series of large-scale international contemporary art exhibitions at the Princessehof. From 2 December 2017 to 6 May 2018, *In Motion: Ceramic Reflections in Contemporary Art* focused on the role of ceramics in the contemporary art world with a variety of installations. Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's (France, 1961) installation was the highlight of the exhibition, consisting of white porcelain bowls floating in a basins filled with intense blue water. Soft water currents created a fascinating composition and an enchanting interplay of sounds.

Princessehof National Museum of Ceramics
Grote Kerkstraat 9
P.O. Box 1239
8900 CE Leeuwarden
T +31(0)58 2 948 958
www.princessehof.nl