



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA: STILLE VEKST / QUIET GROWTH

26. January – 3. April 2019

The Norwegian Sculptor Society is proud to be able to present an exhibition featuring works by Sonja Ferlov Mancoba (1911–84), one of Denmark's most significant and uncompromising sculptors. This is a unique opportunity to get to know an artist who is little known in Norway and the Nordic countries, but who this year is being commemorated with a large retrospective exhibition at Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, and thereafter at Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, in Paris.

Here in Oslo, our exhibition's title *Stille vekst / Quiet Growth* is borrowed from one of the most remarkable sculptures in the show. The title is also a fitting description of Ferlov Mancoba's whole life and artistic practice: each sculpture she made was the result of a long yet intense and immersive process that involved quiet development.

Sonja Ferlov Mancoba believed art could contribute to changing the world by mediating trust, social equality, tolerance and humane values. She thought the task of an artist was to connect the art world to the socio-political world, analogous to how a shaman in a nature-religion creates connections between the spirit world and the community. She thought spiritual values were a crucial foundation for human life, yet experienced the society in which she lived as increasingly materialistic and polarizing.

Ferlov Mancoba's interest in non-Western cultures was kindled in her childhood, when her parents introduced her to the Danish art collector Carl Kjersmeier, who owned a large collection of African art and objects. She drew inspiration from the non-Western practice of communally seeking after spiritual content. A global perspective runs throughout her entire artistic practice and life, for along with African art, she drew much inspiration from Egyptian, Greek, Indonesian, Mexican and Nordic art and history.

The definition of a successful sculpture, for Ferlov Mancoba, was to use an abstract form drawn from the subconscious as her starting point – one which represented its own era but also managed to express generally human and universal experiences and expressions from other eras and cultures. A recurring theme in her production is the mask sculpture that unites the body and the face. In the exhibition we can also see the work *Le Combattant / The Fighter*, which represents another prominent theme in her oeuvre: an isolated, spindly figure with three or four legs. A third sculpture type consists of more-or-less human forms that are fused together or embracing each other. The work *Vogtere af vår / Protectors of Spring* is an example of this latter type, and it was intended to represent brotherhood and solidarity between people – a crucial theme for the artist.

Early in her career, Sonja Ferlov Mancoba became part of the Danish avantgarde artist group *Linien*, which published a journal with the same name. At 25 years of age she moved to Paris and rented a studio next door to that of Alberto Giacometti. She started out as a painter but switched to working with plaster and clay. These became her main artistic media. The exhibited work *Fugl med unge / Bird with Chick* (1935) is one of two extant sculptures from this early period in her career. After World War II, in 1947, she left Paris and returned to Denmark. Through Asger Jorn, she became associated with the international artist group COBRA. Over time, however, she experienced a lack of human and artistic tolerance in Denmark, and she felt isolated from the rest of the world. After five years she broke away from the group and returned to France, together with her husband, the South African artist Ernest Mancoba. There she remained for the rest of her life, dying in Paris in 1984.

In 1962 Asger Jorn commissioned a bronze sculpture from Ferlov Mancoba, intending it for his own collection at Silkeborg in Denmark. After this, more and more Danes became aware of her art. Today her works are found in several large collections, including those of Carlsberg fondet, Louisiana Museum for Moderne Kunst, Sparebankstiftelsen, and the Groth and Laursens samling at Stavanger Kunstmuseum.

We would like to extend much thanks to the Tangen Collection / AKO Kunststiftelse, which has generously loaned us the works in this exhibition.



JENNIE BRINGAKER: PILLOW TALK BESTIARY

26. January – 3. April 2019

The Norwegian Sculptor Association is proud to present the solo exhibition Pillow Talk Bestiary by Jennie Bringaker. The exhibition features a series of recently-produced figurative sculptures in cast cement, fired clay and stone. Also on show is a video work which Bringaker has made in collaboration with Erlend Hogstad.

A bestiary is a medieval collection of moralizing fables about real or imaginary animals. The animals act according to human modes of reasoning and judgment, and the aim of the fables is to teach what is right and wrong, good and evil.

In Bringaker's exhibition, the public enter a kind of tableau containing a swarm of beings whose poses are frozen, like forest animals who hear a sound and stop suddenly, keeping perfectly still. The adult beings appear passive and expectant, while their offspring are active and creep around on the parents' bodies. We do not know the time period these beings exist in: Are they remnants of an ancient society, or are they part of a future scenario in which humans have adapted to a new environment and become human-animal hybrids, like the fabled animals in a medieval bestiary?

There's something uncanny about this scenario, for it seems both well-known and alienating at one and the same time. The stylized figures balance between being in a situation, and being a representation of the situation itself.

Bringaker has a background in experimental theatre. In the last decade she has worked primarily with performance, not only in her own artistic practice but also as part of the artist duo Trollkrem, which she established in 2013 with Tor Erik Bøe. The works in this exhibition belong to a new direction in her art, inasmuch as the sculptures are allowed to stand alone in a room without being linked to physical and performative actions. There is nevertheless still something theatrical about the bodies she has manipulated; it's as if they tell a story or are part of an unspoken story that points far beyond itself.

Bringaker works mainly with sculpture, drawing and performance. Her art is often the result of an exploratory process involving materials that, in different ways, bring out new sculptural aspects in the presentation of the female body. Her sculptures develop out from her work with performance and her interest in the performative body as a tool and an expression. The scenic and theatrical aspects in the exhibition build on her experience with theatre and scenography.

Jennie Bringaker (b. 1978) studied scenography at the Akademi for Scenekunst in Halden (2000–03) and earned an MFA from Studio Art, New York University (2008–10). In recent years she has shown her works at (a selection) Tenthaus in Oslo, Nasjonalmuseet in Oslo (section for national touring programmes), Paris Internationale, and Hacienda in Zurich. As part of Trollkrem, she has exhibited at (a selection) Momentum 9, Sandefjord Kunstforening, Fotogalleriet and New York Art Book Fair. In 2016 she organized the performance festival Soppen at Ekeberg Park in Oslo.

We are deeply grateful to Vederlagsfondet for financially supporting the exhibition.