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Elizabeth Jaeger

KLEMM'S



itself & else, 2022, Klemm's, Berlin



The work of Elizabeth Jaeger explores the perceptual and psychological implications of sculptural space, engaging the unconscious processes of the imaginary through enigmatic objects whose uncanny presence re-calibrates both their surrounding environment, and the conditions of their viewing. In her exhibition itself and else, seven large blackened steel rectangles hang on two walls of the gallery in a spaced-out sequence of vertical planes low to the ground, their width progressively increasing in subtle increments. A taxonomy of black clay vessels and bowls of varying sizes hang, float, or rest on thin shelves or step-like forms attached to the surface of each, in compositional sequences resembling interior psychic diagrams, or the flow of musical notes across a score.

This transformation of static objects into a dynamic field is intensified by the optical fusion of each vessel with the blackened surface of its steel support, sublimating the industrial modernist logic of the rectilinear metal forms into a painterly grisaille that appears as alternately flat and volumetric.

This produces a condition of anamorphosis, activating what Rosalind Krauss has described as "the experience of 'eclipse,' as one term (painting) is displaced by another (sculpture), and vice versa, so that the gravitational field of [both] is always experienced as shifting."⁽¹⁾ This de-stabilizing of both the painterly and sculptural gestalt is increased by a faint aura of pale yellow light emanating from behind each rectangle from its yellow-painted back, both diffusing and emphasizing its three-dimensionality in relation to the wall.

In this continual alteration of our perception, each panel generates an image of itself in space almost like a shadow, introducing a temporality that is both corporeal and architectural in its projective cast. The dark silhouettes both flatten and intensify their volumetric forms, the absence of light gradually revealing subtle details that appear as the viewer comes close to the sculpture and their eyes adjust. The narrow shape of the first panel appears like a sliver or void out of which a vertical row of metal shelves appears, holding an ascending sequence of black cup-like vessels, whose size and shape determine the height of, and intervals between, each shelf. The language of industrial modernity – serial production, repetition, standardization, the mechanized cut – is internalized and transformed into a symbolic space that also holds the quietly asser-tive presence of larger anthropomorphic vessels evoking the body.

These corporeal forms, elongated amphorae with absurdly extended handles, necks, rims, bellies, and sloping shoulders whose surface holds the trace of the artist's fingers, introduce a sensual tactility that has five aspects: archeological, anthropomorphic, musical, filmic, and domestic. A group of three, rendered in black clay soaked in black ink and placed one above the other on the second narrow panel, one suspended from its neck by a cut-out gap in an open box, read as archeological specimens doubly de-contextualized, first by Jaeger's extension of their handles into curved shapes that drape across and loop into each vessel's mouth, and then by the sublimation of that erotic gesture into a larger composition whose rectilinear framing and grisaille flatten the vessels into an almost cinematic representation, in which each loop appears to represent the same curved handle at three different moments, raised, falling, and fallen, softening the clay's rigidity into an implied corporeal pliability, and freeing that temporality into a still sequence, like frames in a film.

This sequential iteration of form becomes multiplied into a rhythmically dynamic composition in the fourth, wider panel, where eight amphorae of different lengths, placed horizontally in a tall steel box open at the sides, protrude through a series of holes puncturing the front panel, tracing a serpentine line vertically across its surface. The faint anthropo-

morphic trace evoked by the double curve's art historical connection to both figure drawing and dance, and by the vessels' mouths, shaped like open flowers, poking out through each hole, is countered by the vessels' evocation as musical instruments, or notes, when viewed sideways. Each vessel extends through the holes and into the room in a pattern that manifests shape, volume and length as sounds of different tone, pitch, and octave, rendering the holes as a diagram of musical notation, marking the rise and fall of the notes in an undulating horizontal line that has been flipped to vertical.

In the final three of the seven panels, the narrow slivers widen to become planes, shifting the dynamic field from a score to a portal. The rise of the domestic interior in the nineteenth century paralleled the appearance of window and museum displays, manufactured furniture, photography, film, archeology, and the modern artist's studio. Traces of them all are present in this installation, and the three portals loosely contextualize them within the psychological frame of gendered domestic space, staging it as a site of both projected anxiety, and subversion. The patriarchal distancing of art from domesticity, home, and values associated with a private, familial space is dismantled in Jaeger's collapsing of the boundaries between private, creative, domestic, industrial and public space. In the sixth and second widest panel, three large vessels that Jaeger refers to as milk jugs are attached to the metal surface at an oblique angle. Their flattened shapes and cast shadows position them as related to, yet independent of, their support, whose haptic surface reads not as painterly, but as photographic.

The uncanny presence of these domestic objects also evokes Edward Olszewski's description of the sixteenth century studio practice of drawing the cast shadows of clay table models in changing angles of artificial light,⁽²⁾ reinscribing the studio and the home as intertwined, non-hierarchical spaces.

Flatness is nuanced differently in the seventh and widest panel, where volume, line and space are understood through the viewer's mobile position in relation to a shallow open rectangular form attached to the lower half of the panel, within which three thin metal steps are set, attached at the top and the right of the rectangle to create an image of a staircase, cast in shadow. Two large amphorae, their flower-topped handles resting on their rims, stand on top of the rectangle, looking towards a third, smaller amphora positioned at a distance on the far edge, its flowered handle drooping meekly. The psychodrama of the family is rendered as an outdated archetype in clay, anthropomorphically staged in a tableau constructed as an abstracted projective geometry of domestic architectural space.

The ambiguity of scale and form in these enigmatic compositions signals an unfixed meaning, articulated in the subtle monochromatic tones of grisaille which, as Briony Fer argues, "stands as a kind of shorthand for the blurring of binary oppositions and the undoing of prevailing systems of thought."⁽³⁾ This undoing is further indicated by Jaeger's use of the word 'else' rather than 'other' in relation to 'itself' in the exhibition's title, opening up a space for multiple identities and readings; and by her inclusion of the changing shadows cast on the floor by the gallery's windows and pillars as part of the installation. This inclusiveness is extended outside to the street, where the viewer first encounters the slivers of black through the windows of the gallery and begins to perceive their relational forms unfolding across the wall, as a haptic experience in which sculpture proposes itself as a non-cinematographic cinematic form, creating new models of itself as else.

(Chrissie Ilies, New York, March 2022)

(1) Rosalind Krauss, quoted by Mignon Nixon in 'Eva Hesse: A Note on Milieu,' in *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis*, Brandon Taylor ed., Routledge, 2016, p. 165.

(2) Edward Olszewski, 'Distortions, Shadows and Conventions in Sixteenth Century Italian Art,' *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 6, no. 11, 1986, p. 101.



Untitled 7 (Where have you been?) 2022
ceramic, blackened steel
160 x 80 x 12,5 cm



Untitled 6 (Organ Jug Airplane) 2022
ceramic, blackened steel
160 x 65 x 10 cm



Untitled 2 (this, that, them) 2022
ceramic, blackened steel
160 x 20 x 12 cm



Elizabeth Jaeger, presentation at FIAC 2021, Paris



Americans 2021
ceramics
25,4 x 17,78 x 10,2 cm



Lost dog 2021
ceramic
17,78 x 17,78 x 20,32 cm



Arthur 2021
ceramics
11,5 x 30,5 x 6,3 cm



With her sculptures, ceramic objects, and installations, Elizabeth Jaeger succeeds in exploring the relationship between corporeality, perception, and consciousness, between sensation and emotion. Often beginning with the feel of a personal experience, something consciously lived through or an observation of a situation, her works conjure a "bigger picture" with a phenomenological quality. Her materials are simple, but haptic and auratically charged: clay, ceramics, plaster, steel, silk and glass show and "preserve" the "imprint" that the artist considers elementary and manual.

If earlier series by the artist focused on a direct engagement with the representation and (socio-) cultural gaze on the female body and figuration, Elizabeth Jaeger has recently been working with an ambivalent formal language all her own. Borrowed from amorphous shapes and fantasy, abstract forms based on flora and fauna are combined with strictly geometric steel constructions and thus given a psychological dimension: they are physical objects and at the same time vessels for the "soul" and the world of thoughts. In this way, Jaeger opens a gaze on complex structures between organic objects made with the human hand and questions material and ideational binaries. Her sculptures become organic, viscerally treated between "material," existential intellectual games on thingly truths and the possibility of embodying an emphatic and critical spirit.

The exhibition "Brine" evokes associations of emptiness, rotting, death, hollowness. In her new series of sculptures Elizabeth Jaeger explores in an almost archaeological fashion the dead and live essence of things, spanning an arch from the phenomenon of the ancient lacrymonies or tear vessel through natural observation to the human condition against the backdrop of current global problems. The artist presents fragile, vase-like glass vessels, hand blown, glittering, beautiful and yet otherworldly, in an expansive and yet concentrated fashion. Dark steel constructions allow the smooth, semi-transparent glass creatures to hover, revealing sharp copper sets of teeth—sometimes right at eye level. The title of the exhibition has a virtually climatic effect on the atmosphere of the space: brine as a substance used to preserve, to shock freeze, but also as a byproduct of industrial manufacturing processes—the gallery space as an abandoned place of refuge. The fragile, mutated animal objects seem to epitomize exhaustion and escapism, the hollow body as a social statement. At the same time, their emphatic beauty and absolute dignity is manifest. As if they had a capacity to persevere and an inherent knowledge that goes beyond their (momentary) stillness.

The objects and sculptures in Brine rely on the dynamism of their materialities and the play between familiar form and abstract refraction on the other. In the process, they openly express their political content and their emotional urgency. Their special quality lies in this very immediacy, in corporeality, perception, and consciousness, between sensation and emotion.



Fish stand with fish,2019, hand-blown glass, copper, blackened steel, 123 x 60



Fish stand with fish,2019, hand-blown glass, copper, blackened steel, 120 x 70 x 22 cm



Fish stand with fish,2019, hand-blown glass, copper, blackened steel, 190 x 73 x 22 cm



Fish stand with fish,2019, hand-blown glass, copper, blackened steel, 190 x 80 x 22 cm



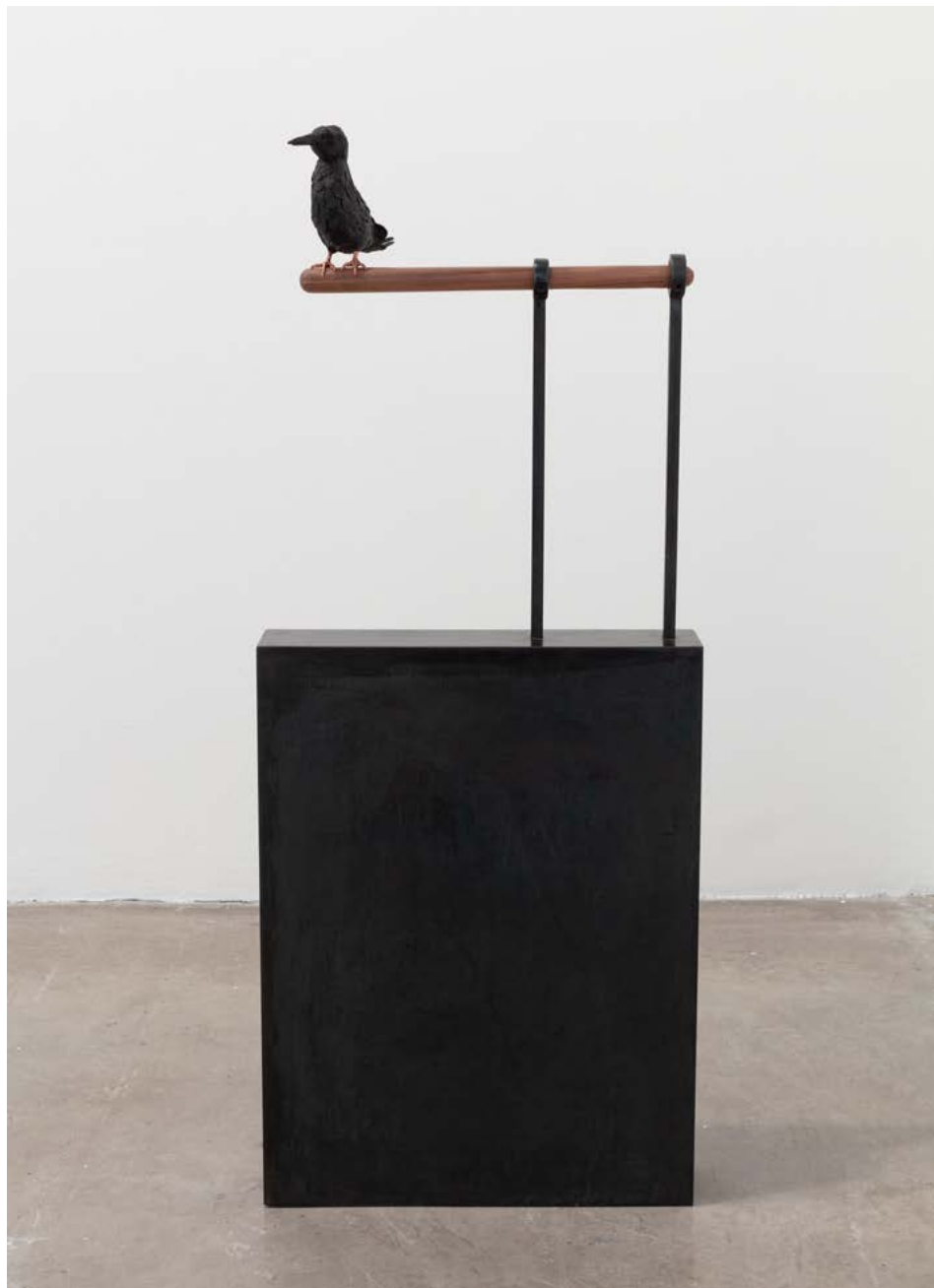
Fish stand with fish, 2019, hand-blown glass, copper, blackened steel, detail



Brine, 2019 exhibition view Klemm's, Berlin



Bird (10), 2018, ceramic and copper, 11 x 19 x 8 cm



Birds, 2018, ceramic and copper, dimensions variable



installation view of Pommel (Saddle, Towel, Wrapper, Throw, Sheath, Cloak, Sleeve, Blanket, Carapace, Hull, Pommel, Shell) , 2017, ceramic, blackened steel



Saddle, 2017, ceramic and blackened steel, 114 x 48 x 20cm



installation view of Pommel, 2017, ceramic, blackened steel



Blonde Pots, 2017, ceramic



Bookcase 3, 2016, ceramic, MDF, blackened steel, handmade books



Portrait of a Man (Jack Jaeger), 2016, ceramic, blackened steel, magnetic sand, installation view Whitney Biennale, New York



Portrait of a Man (Jack Jaeger), 2016, ceramic, blackened steel, magnetic sand



Odalisque, 2016, ceramic, granite, steel, human hair



Odalisque (detail), 2016, Ceramic, granite, steel, human hair



8:30, 2015, hand dyed silk and hand bent aluminum, ceramic and hair, italian sourced leather, peas, foam, steel



8:30, 2015, hand dyed silk and hand bent aluminum, ceramic and hair, italian sourced leather, peas, foam, steel



6:30, 2014, Ceramic, plaster, steel, animal hide, granite



6:30, 2014, Ceramic, plaster, steel, animal hide, granite



Serving Vessels, 2013, ceramic, hydrocal, steel, glass, synthetic wig



Conch, 2014, ceramic, hydrocal, wig, found Jamaican shell

Elizabeth Jaeger's (b. 1988 lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) sculptures embed common figural elements in existential concepts of reality and perception. Sculptures like elongated human bodies with mask-like faces, truncated torsos, greyhound dogs, empty furniture or vases typically start with a personal experience or event. From there, they unfold a larger picture of phenomenological concerns. Despite a seeming familiarity with the objects' figurativeness there is a sense of disquiet and subtle uncanniness inherent in Jaeger's work which challenges the viewer's relationship to their own physicality, their surrounding and their consciousness



Platinum Musing, 2011, Five free standing sculptres made of hydrocal, ceramic, synthetic wigs, gold lamé, welded steel

biography

1988

born in San Francisco, USA, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

2011

BA, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, USA

2009

École Nationale Supérieure des Arts, Nancy, FR

2006 – 2008

School of The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA

exhibitions (selection)

2019

Klemm's, Berlin, Germany (s)
Hours, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, USA (s)

2018

Zombies: Pay Attention!, Aspen Art Museum, USA / Housewarming, Third Floor, New York, USA / Silent Transformations, Deli Gallery, New York, USA / Beside Myself, JTT Gallery, New York, USA / People, Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, New York, USA / Pine Barrens, Tanya Bonakdar, New York, USA / At Large (Part II), Reyes Projects, Detroit, USA / Wading in a Puddle, Motel, New York, USA / Eye to Eye, Arsenal Contemporary, New York, USA / The Pain of Others, Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

2017

Pommel, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, USA (s) / Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, UArts, Philadelphia, USA (s) / The Sun and the Rainfall II, Galleria Zero, Milan, ITA / Personae, KLEMM'S, Berlin, DE Elizabeth Jaeger, Moris, Giorgio Andreotta Calò, Galerie Rolando Anselmi, Berlin, DE / Sticky Fingers, Arsenal Contemporary, New York, USA / Dreamers Awake, White Cube, London, UK / 99 Cents or Less, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, USA / Katy Cowan, Sara Cwynar, Elizabeth Jaeger and Willa Nasatir, Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, USA / Lentils, Ramiken Crucible, New York, USA

2016

30th Anniversary Exhibition, Attics of My Life, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, USA (s) / It Started With A Rose, 315 Gallery, New York, USA / An Idle Visitation, Plaza Mercado, Santa Fe, USA / Too Much of a Good Thing, Hudson Basilica, Hudson, New York, USA / Summer Reading, Fortnight Institute, New York, USA / Cool Memories, Occidental Temporary, Viellejuif, FR / Garden Memories, Regards, Chicago, USA / In The Making, SIGNAL, New York, USA / Onion By The Ocean, Underdonk, New York, USA / In Practice: Fantasy Can Invent Nothing New, SculptureCenter, New York, USA / Mirror Cells, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA / Watermark, SIGNAL, Brooklyn, USA / Fear of a Blank Pancake, White Flag Projects, St. Louis, USA

2015

8:30, And Now, Dallas, USA / Greater New York, Museum of Modern Art PS1, New York, USA / Finestra Aperta, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, NY / He Put a Hot Fish in Her Navel, Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico / Elizabeth Jaeger, Ann Greene Kelly, Aidan Koch, And Now, Dallas, USA / The Figure 8, Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GRC / Sublime, Auto Body, Bellport, New York, USA / Freedom Culture, curated by Graham Collins, Journal, Brooklyn, USA / Weird Science, curated by Aniko Berman, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY / Close to the Skin curated by Lumi Tan, Company, New York, USA / Le Musée Imaginaire, Galerie Lefebvre & Fils, Paris, FR / Dirty Linen, DESTE Foundation, Athens, GRC / Night Shade: Dean Levin, Eli Ping, Elizabeth Jaeger, KINMAN, London, UK / Vessels, Blackston Gallery, New York, USA / Stirring Still, The LeRoy Neiman Gallery at Columbia University, New York, USA / Vis-a-vis, curated by Michael Mahalchick, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, USA / Elizabeth Jaeger, And Now, Dallas, USA

2014

Six-Thirty, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, USA (s) / Got Tortilla with Butter on Phone. Think it's the End? curated by Mikkel Carl, Rod Barton, London, UK / Buying Friends: The Kortman Collection, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts (UICA), Grand Rapids, USA / Zero Point, Jackie Klempay Gallery, New York, USA / NIGHT TIDE, Gallery Diet, Miami, USA / Border Food curated by Jesse Greenberg, Loyal Gallery, Malmo, SWE / Former Models curated by Merckx & Gwynne, BRIC, New York, USA

2013

Music Stand, Eli Ping, New York, USA (s) / Internet Protocol, Pa-trellas Imports, New York, USA / Snail Salon, curated by Adrienne

Rubenstein, Regina Rex, New York, USA / Bedfellows Club, curated by Jess Hirsch, Patty Healy McMeans, Minneapolis, USA / That Being Said, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, USA / Where the Sun Don't Shine, 247365, New York, USA

2012

Rock Lobster, Shoot the Lobster, New York, USA

2011

YESWAY, Carhole, Portland, USA / Vis a Vis, Backyard Projects, New York, USA / Fountain Art Fair with Hungry Man Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

2010

Next Art Fair with Hungry Man Gallery, Chicago, USA

2009

Devout Sacrilege, Galerie Studio St., Berlin

2007

L'Art Sain, Gallery Neuf, Nancy, FR / METZBAU, Galerie de l'ENSA de Metz, Metz, FR

Selected Performances

2010

Very Large Array, Nationale, Portland, USA (cat.)

Publications

2017

Vitamine C: Clay & Ceramic in Contemporary Art, Phaidon, New York, USA

2013

L'Eros C'est La Vie, Totem, New York, USA

2011

How Other People See me, Publication Studio, Portland, USA

2010

Very Large Array, Nationale, Portland, USA