

SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

LISA TIEMANN - *Gaia*

September 6 - October 12, 2024

It's 2024: our very existence is under threat due to the climate crisis, conflicts are simmering around the world, love in Europe is more free and yet more frail than ever and at every level, our co-existence must and should be redefined. But how?

'We are, constitutively, companion species.' notes science and gender theorist Donna Haraway. 'Solidarity is the tenderness of the species,' writes philosopher Fahim Amir in his manifesto on cohabitation. So, what does art have to say?

Looking at Lisa Tiemann's *Couples*, produced as a series since 2016, art says: snuggle up!

Born in Kassel in 1981, the sculptor creates social chimaeras, solidary sculptures, fragile creatures of abstraction in the need to nestle. The contrasting materials, colors and forms wind and push against each other. Do they recline? Are they in dispute? Are they seeking protection, affection, conflict or dialogue? Are they hiding something?

Mostly formed from clay ceramics and papier-mâché, Tiemann models her friendly sculptures with her hands – the body's cleverest natural tool. Every millimeter of the works bears the artist's touch, every bend and refraction, every curve and edge. And yet the materials are stubborn, they dry and tear open, expand and contract, create gaps and overlaps, as if they wanted to evade clarity. Proving to the hands that they wouldn't have to bend if they didn't want to.

Previously rather linear, in Tiemann's current exhibition *Gaia* we encounter a new, round, rather organic form of couples: the line without neither beginning nor end. The dot becomes a line, becomes a rectangle, becomes a circle – a fusion of the basic design elements into infinity. *Gaia*, the personified earth, the bearer, the mother. *L'origine du monde*, aesthetically, but also in meaning, the V in the title of the works does not appear by chance. The vulvae hang neatly in the room, apparently strung together on an invisible string of pearls. Solidary, tender, relaxed and unproductive. Modest nearly and yet very sensual.

The volatile relationship between form and meaning runs through Tiemann's artistic exploration as a unifying theme. Are they vulvae, couples, edges, holes, beings? Or simply sculptural snapshots of a dynamic system of body and material, head and hand, thought and execution? Perhaps it is the sculptural metaphor of the fragile balance of coexistence.

This becomes particularly clear when you enter the second room of the gallery. While the works in the main room are presented in a regular and structured manner, here the pairings proliferate as if in a laboratory, formations are tested and diluted. A printed banner refers to the origins of the couples: the artist grows out of the moss, the ligneous plant of the woods, she could be partner, accomplice or part of the whole. The vulvae crawl mimetically up the wall. Or did they just slid down?

Cress-ceramic-couples gather on a pile of earth, another sculpture bears traces of moss trying to mate with the smooth surface. The irrigation drips quietly. Like an octopus tentacle, an elaborate system of ceramics and botany spreads out along the wall. Although these are still two different materials, the duality is softened. The artist's floral companions can be found in the pots. Biographical weeds, collected from her parents' garden, the backyard of the studio, the balcony. Here, the couple becomes rhizome, system, process. And thus subtly adds to the nestling the caring, the caring towards connectedness, the connectedness to the world: *Gaia*. Snuggle up.

Text: Hilka Dirks

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