

Lou Masduraud
Wet Men
5.11.–18.12.2022

Mayday

A John Schmid Project

Performance by Antoine Weil:
Sunday, 18.12.2022, 4 pm

Silver glazed pipes and taps hang in rows from the ceiling. They drip and run, the water pools in the barrels below and is pumped back into the pipes via hoses. Dripping muscle shirts dangle limp from the taps. The overflow of a barrel collects in a hollowed-out torso made of ceramic, flows as a trickle over the tiled floor and is swallowed by the drain. A streetlamp bathes the space in a diffuse light and blurs the boundary between indoor and outdoor space.

With "Wet Men", Lou Masduraud presents a new site-specific installation that creates multi-layered references to the history and former use of the exhibition space as a changing and shower room for dockworkers. The associated projections range from the sweaty smell of proletarian physical labour, the puddles of urine from boozy nights, to the erotic fantasies surrounding sailor life on the docks. Lou Masduraud is interested in the culturally still strongly male connotated images of work, equipment and machines as well as the socially little represented aspects of male intimacy and vulnerability.

For the design of the hand-modelled tubes, Lou Masduraud was inspired by drawings by the American artist Lee Lozano (1930–1999), who depicted objects and tools as bearers of normative masculinity and exaggerated them with sexualised forms. Through the formal proximity of body parts and tools - both are made of glazed stoneware - Lou Masduraud shows the body as something (in the Marxist sense) that has been put to work, used, deformed and damaged in the service of its function as a labour force.

In juxtaposing these two forms of objectification of human bodies, sexualisation on the one hand and alienation as labour power on the other, Lou Masduraud questions heroic images of the worker and the impactful male gaze on human bodies that dominates (art) history.

She creates a self-dynamic scenery that can be understood as an alternative to prevailing lifeworlds and power relations and opens up political as well as fantastic readings: Water flows through the objects and feeds each other. Small living beings grow inside the torso; they resemble cells, bacteria or sea creatures. And on the socks hung over the radiators as if to dry, a pearl shines unexpectedly.

Lou Masduraud (*1990, lives and works in Geneva) studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Lyon and the Haute école d'art et de design, Geneva. She has had solo exhibitions at CAN, Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Maison populaire in Montreuil and Hard Hat in Geneva. Her works have been presented in group exhibitions at the Muzeum Susch, the Istituto Svizzero in Rome, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Lyon Biennale, the Kunsthalle Basel, the Moscow Biennale, the Kunsthau Hamburg and the Kunstmuseum Luzern. From 2021 to 2022 she resided at the Istituto Svizzero in Rome. In 2022 she was nominated for the Swiss Art Awards and in 2023 she will be awarded the Geneva Manor Art Prize. Mayday is showing her first solo exhibition in German-speaking Switzerland.