

KASIA MICHALSKI

Seven Sisters

June 1st – July 27th, 2017

*You walked in, laughing, tears welling confused, mingling in your throat.
How can you be so many women to so many people, oh you strange girl?*
Sylvia Plath*

How to forget this haunting image? It was on a rainy Monday last October. Dozens of thousands of Polish women, many dressed in black and brandishing dark umbrellas, took the streets of Poland's major cities to protest a ferocious law criminalizing abortion and, ultimately, to defend their essential right to have control over their bodies.

Inspired by such an unprecedented women's march, *Seven Sisters* brings together the work of six international female artists whose practices of installation, sculpture, photography, film and performance evoke and deconstruct—with distance, humor and a recurring sense of poetry—the omnipresence of the feminine body in the public realm, and the mystified notion of interior and intimate space.

The sculptural practice of **Liz Craft** humorously takes apart logic and replaces it with her own visual narrative, subverting the dead-ends of Californian subcultures, blurring the boundaries between high and low, 2D and 3D, masculine and feminine. Her surrealist sculptures playfully confront the everyday with fantasy, conveying a particular attention to the grotesque, entropy, and formal constructions. This approach is expressed here in a set of speech bubbles and a ceramic table decorated with a sensual pair of lips acting as a coin dish. In a comparable way, the crude eroticism behind **Nevine Mahmoud's** carved-stone sculptures of a blossoming lily, an open peach and a pair of lips evoke the representations and materials developed by artists such as Eva Hesse or Alina Szapocznikow. Witty and straight-forward, yet poetic and sensual, her "feminine-meets-rock" forms in alabaster, marble and calcite challenge the practice of carving—traditionally reserved to men—with a contemporary approach entirely rid of complexes and inhibitions.

Scenes of modern life, anxious characters, and emotional situations featured in **Mélanie Matranga's** films, sculptures and installations create staged environments that are activated by visitors and communicate the emotional value of their production. Her latest film *YOU* (2016) is an erotic feature in which the artist, influenced by the French New Wave and filmmakers such as Eric Rohmer or Jean Eustache, defines love as a system of communication, suggesting possible ways of reinvesting in authenticity by laying bare our economies, object relations and emotions. Similarly, in her choreographic work, **Dragana Bulut** is interested in relationships of power, and in creating tension within the performance space in relation to bodies, timing and expression. Her piece *30 Ways* is performed as an "item" at the gallery on the opening night, and part of a larger performance, *Pass It On*, presented the next day at KEM—a performance space located in the Praga district of Warsaw, run by choreographer Alex Baczyński-Jenkins. The latter is conceived as an auction dealing with the question of authorship, the relation between the material and the immaterial, and the value of an artistic object. **Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili's** approach to photography puts in perspective its superficial, two-dimensional distinctiveness with its three-dimensional, sculptural potential. Here, she has conceived a "room of one's own," delimited by floating cotton curtains on which she has printed abstract patterns. Inside this room, three photographs taken as analog selfies and representing parts of her face and body are disposed to reveal her diaristic practice, playing around the seen and the hidden.

Lastly, **Barbara Leoniak's** elaborated sculptural compositions, such as Moebius strips or human heads, recall a ritual of mummification. Throughout this creative process, her sculptures, like skeletons of artistic expression, come to life. For *Seven Sisters*, the artist has produced a series of three double-headed busts of idealized women, assembled with wood and *papier collé* and evoking an undeniable, feminist surrealism, whose history and visual legacy are crucial to this exhibition.

Martha Kirszenbaum

* *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-62*, ed. Karen V. Kukil, New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

Ketuta Alexi-Meskishvili – born in 1979 in Tbilisi, Alexi-Meskishvili holds a BFA from Bard College, Annandale, New York. Utilizing a variety of techniques both analog and digital, she addresses the physical complexity of photography while simultaneously questioning its representational functions. Going beyond the classical two-dimensionality of the medium, she plays with its scale, layering virtually abstract images on sheer, translucent textile installations or revealing her work tools in quirky collages featuring intimate scenes marked with purposeful imperfections. Based in Berlin, she has exhibited, among others, at Galerie Micky Schubert, Berlin, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, and Andrea Rosen Gallery 2, New York. Her works have been included in the New Museum Triennial, 2015, the October Salon, Belgrade, 2016, and the Krakow Photomonth, Krakow, 2011. She lives and works in Berlin.

Dragana Bulut was born in 1983 in Mostar/Bosnia-Herzegovina, former Yugoslavia, currently based in Berlin. She graduated from the Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin (HZT), Universität der Künste Berlin, with an MA in the field of Solo/Dance/Authorship. Since 2005, she has been developing her own choreographic style appropriating different social formats and exploring the configurations of esthetics, labor and economics within the theater space. Her work was presented, among others, at the Sophiensaele Berlin, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Tanzquartier Vienna, Laban Dance Center London, and Balkan Dance Platform. Bulut has also performed for Meg Stuart, Tino Sehgal, Ivo Dimchev, Charles Linehan, and others. She was awarded with the Prix Jardin d'Europe 2010 European Prize for Young Choreographers, and received the 2004 and 2008 DanceWeb Europe Scholarship. In 2016, she received the CAA scholarship Berlin. Dragana Bulut is a member of Station-service for contemporary dance, Belgrade.

Liz Craft – born in 1970 in Los Angeles, she graduated from the University of California, and lives and works in Berlin. Best known for her whimsical sculptures – surreal figures representing marginalized and countercultural groups, including expressive female nudes, and cartoon-like dialogue bubbles crafted in glazed ceramic, framing pictorial motifs rather than words – Craft has exhibited her works at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Migros Museum, Zurich, Ballroom Marfa in Marfa, Texas, and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, among others.

Barbara Leoniak – born in 1948, she graduated in 1977 from the Department of Sculpture, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, workshop of Jerzy Bandura. Her figurative sculptures, playing with symmetry and mirrored images of idealized human heads, are made using materials such as *papier collé* or plaster. The artist's recent exhibitions include *Miejsce* [The Place] at the Foksal Gallery, Warsaw, 2016, *tegenboschvanvreden*, Amsterdam, 2014 and *Disclosures* at the Bortolami Gallery, New York, 2013 (with Anna Ostoya). She lives and works in Cracow.

Nevine Mahmoud – born in 1988 in London, she lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her BA from Goldsmiths, University of London, and MFA from the University of Southern California. Her sculptural installations exploring the qualities of different materials – from precious alabaster to popular plexiglass, and evoking sentimental or erotic associations have been presented, among others, at Ballroom Marfa, Texas, 2016, MOCA Los Angeles, 2016, and with the Miroslaw Balka studio at the School of Fine Art in Poznan, 2012. In June 2017, Mahmoud will be part of *Dreamers Awake: Women Artists After Surrealism* at White Cube in London.

Mélanie Matranga – born in 1985 in Marseille, she graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where she lives and works. In 2014, she received the inaugural Frieze Artist Award and realized a series of online videos, *From A to B through E*, presented at the Frieze London art fair. Following the unfolding of a romantic relationship of a couple of young artists, the works discussed 'the proper functioning' of both the art world and their being together. Reminiscent of the French *nouvelle vague*, Matranga's videos construct an intimate portrait of the young generation. Matranga has exhibited, among others, at Karma International, Los Angeles, 2016, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2015, and Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, 2014.

Martha Kirszenbaum – born in 1983, Vitry-sur-Seine, France, she is a curator and writer based in Los Angeles, where she was the Director and Curator of Fahrenheit, an exhibition space and residency program (2014-16). She graduated from Sciences Po in Paris and Columbia University in New York, and worked at Media Department of MoMA in New York (2006-07), the Photography Department of Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (2007) and at the New Museum in New York (2008-10). Additionally, she collaborated with the Center for Contemporary Art in Warsaw, the Belvedere Museum/21er Haus in Vienna, the Marrakech Biennale, Palais de Tokyo in Paris and the Kunsthalle Mulhouse. Kirszenbaum is a regular contributor to Flash Art, CURA, Kaleidoscope and Mousse, and has led seminars on curatorial practice at the Université Paris VIII and Parsons, Paris.