

Body / Building

September 7 – November 3, 2018

opening Friday, September 7 at 9pm

MADRAGOA is delighted to present *Body / Building*, a group exhibition with works by Augusto Alves da Silva, Werner Feiersinger, Steffani Jemison, Ugo La Pietra and Ree Morton, that will take place in both gallery spaces.

The concept of urban space is not only that of a given space, physically defined; many factors contribute to its configuration, which is always the result of an act of interpretation, the object of a representation. The density of this non-neutral space, which returns a plurality of visions to those who approach it, is the starting point of *Body / Building*, in which the relationship between the human body and the urban landscape is not only the subject of the works gathered in the exhibition, but is also crucial in determining the artist's observation point, and acts as a guide for an intimate approach to the environment.

Ugo La Pietra's *Attrezzature urbane per la collettività* (Urban furniture for society) is a series of eighty drawings, developed in Milan between 1977 and 1979, aimed at overcoming the barrier between public and private space. The project stems from the exploration of the city, and the identification of urban elements – such as road signs, posts and chains, concrete bases – aesthetically inconsistent, with no other functions than being markers of separation and constriction. Reflecting on the motto “living is being at home everywhere”, these elements are photographed, redesigned and converted in La Pietra's tables, with irony and visionarity, into pieces of domestic furniture, transforming a “space to use” in a “space to live”, how the artist himself explained. That is how a no waiting sign becomes a comfortable dressing table with mirror, a bollard is turned into an elegant coffee table in the shade of a tree.

Ree Morton's varied practice, focused on the mutual relationship between inside and outside, is rooted in drawing, a tool she uses to probe and filter the experience of the actual territory, letting signs and fragments emerge, giving shape to an intimate cartography of memory, vaguely reminiscent of the situationist psychogeographical maps in which chunks of the city are connected by lines and arrows. In *Untitled* (1972) some recognizable elements derived from a landscape – a fenced flowerbed, a path, small arcades – are scattered on the paper, connected by lines and dashes, turning them into abstracted diagrams, vibrant depictions of energetic fields. *Untitled (Rudofsky I and II)* (1972) is a diptych inspired by vernacular architecture, in particular by some granaries – a typology present in Galicia and in the Portuguese rural area of Lindoso, another one in some African regions – reproduced in Bernard Rudofsky's book *Architecture without Architects* (1964). The graphic depictions of the granaries, as well as the quotes from the book that accompany them, emphasize the anthropomorphism of these structures which, equipped with a hat and small columns at their base, seem to be able to move around, even to dance.

At the base of Werner Feiersinger's practice is a deep relationship with architecture. His sculptures draw inspiration from architectural models, urban furniture, and everyday objects, whose shapes and surfaces are polished and rarefied to the point of maintaining only a loose proximity with the object of origin. Through this process of abstraction, of reduction in order to reveal the essential geometry or structure of specific urban elements, their functionality is reset while the use of bright colours and smooth materials with no imperfections highlights their aesthetic value, critically pointing to the imposition of the the stereotype, of the canon, of the theoretical model on the utility value. *Untitled* (1992) is composed by two orange steel stakes, each one fixed on a polyester base, that look like a piece of a scaffolding tube structure, almost torn from the road's surface, while the blue grid of *Untitled* (2010) forms a simple volume reminiscent of modern architecture, or minimalist sculpture, made ambiguous by the presence of a cylindrical plastic insert.

«The landscape I photograph fascinates me as something where a wide range of signs of a certain society can be read, or as a place in time where people are and how they build or un-build things, leading me into a reflection on how societies think, organise themselves and function»* Augusto Alves da Silva affirmed in an interview. Far from being a work confined to the genre of the landscape, his triptych *Paradise City* (2017) shows three different views that interplay with each other, revealing the artist's personal imagery linked to the idea of a city: the photograph of Paris, seen from an unusual perspective, is placed next to a female nude behind which one can see the drawing of a landscape traced on the wall with a golden paint, probably evoking the kitsch decoration of certain hotels, and to what seems to be an aerial view of a desert land, whose dimensions and distance can not be clearly perceived, and which seems to be a human settlement. In the photograph *Untitled* (2015), thanks to the particular framing and angle, a cruise ship seems to be parked on the asphalt of the parking lot, or be assimilated to a real building while the human presence, attested by a couple right at the center of the composition, becomes almost invisible.

Steffani Jamison's video *Escaped Lunatic* (2010-11) shows four young men running across the screen and through the streets of Houston as if they were being chased by someone or engaged in a hard training, as they jump, flip and roll on the ground, sometimes to avoid urban furnishings which, rather than defining the route, become obstacles. The frenetic rhythm of their bodies launched in this race, with its unpredictable deviations and sudden turns, is superimposed to the regular flow of traffic, and to the static urban scenario that serves as a background to an action that stages the cliché of the figure of the fugitive, which is still repeated today, as the video suggests by making the point of departure coincide with that of arrival.

**It Is Irrelevant Whether the Matter is Sex or Not. Conversation between Augusto Alves da Silva, João Fernandes and Ricardo Nicolau, in Dead End. An Essay on Optimism, exh. cat. Fundação de Serralves (Porto, 2009) p. 69.*

Augusto Alves da Silva (b.1963, Lisbon, Portugal) lives and works in Tremez, Portugal. He studied in London, first at the London College of Printing, and then he obtained an MFA in Media Studies at the Slade School of Fine Arts. He started showing his works since the 90s and since then he worked with photography and video. He was nominated in 1997 for the Latin Union Prize, he has been a finalist at the Citibank Photography Prize in 1999 and at the BES Photo Prize in 2006. His work has been shown internationally and in particular at MAC, Elvas; MUSAC, Léon; Serralves, Porto; Chisenhale Gallery, London; Museo Berardo, Lisbon; Culturgest, Lisbon; Bozar, Brussels; Culturgest, Lisbon.

Werner Feiersinger (b. 1966 Brixlegg, Austria) lives and works in Wien. After studying at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and at the Jan van Eyck Maastricht Academy, he taught at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and at the École Nationale des Beaux Arts de Lyon. For more than a decade he has exhibited his sculptures and photographs, and has also been responsible for a number of public sculptural interventions. His works have been shown in international institutions such as: Secession, Wien; Galerie Stadtpark, Krems; Kunst Merano Arte, Merano; O&O Depot, Berlin; Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; Antoni Tapiés Foundation, Barcelona; CAC, Vilnius, MuHKA, Antwerp; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville. In October 2018 he will present an extensive sculptural intervention at Belvedere21, Wien.

Steffani Jemison (b. 1981, Berkeley, California) is currently based in Brooklyn, New York. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2009) and a BA in Comparative Literature from Columbia University (2003). Jemison has completed many artist residencies and fellowships, including the Rauschenberg Residency (2016), the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program (2015-2016), the Smack Mellon Artist Studio Program (2014-2015), the Studio Museum in Harlem AIR (2012-2013), Denniston Hill (2012), the International Studio and Curatorial Program (2012), Project Row Houses (2010-2011), the Core Program at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (2009-2011), and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2008). Her work has been presented at Jeu de Paume, CAPC Bordeaux, the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, The Drawing Center, LAXART, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art and others. Her work is in the public collections of the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Kadist Foundation.

Ugo La Pietra (b. 1938 Bussi sul Tirino, Italy) lives and works in Milan where he graduated in Architecture at the Politecnico in 1964. An architect by training, he is an artist, filmmaker, editor, musician, cartoonist and teacher. He has been defining himself as a researcher in communication systems and in visual arts since 1960, moving simultaneously in the worlds of art and design. A tireless experimenter, he has crossed different currents (from Informalism and Conceptual Art to Narrative Art and artist's cinema) and used multiple mediums, conducting research that were embodied in the theory of the "Disequilibrating System" – autonomous expression within Radical Design – and in important sociological themes such as "The Telematic Home" (MoMA, New York, 1972 – Fiera di Milano, 1983), "Real Space / Virtual Space" (Triennale di Milano 1979, 1992), "The eclectic Home" (Abitare il Tempo, 1990), "Beach Culture" (Centro Culturale Cattolica, 1985/95). He has transmitted his work through numerous exhibitions in Italy and abroad, and he has curated several exhibitions at the Triennale di Milano, the Venice Biennale, the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, the FRAC Centre in Orléans, the International Museum of Ceramics in Faenza, the Fondazione Ragghianti in Lucca, the Fondazione Mudima in Milano and the Museo MA*GA in Gallarate. He has always critically maintained the humanistic, significant and territorial components of design through his works and objects, as well as his work in teaching, theory and publishing

Ree Morton (b. 1936, Ossining, New York) exhibited during her lifetime at Artists Space, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; as well as Bykert and Droll/Kolbert Galleries. Morton died in a car accident in Chicago in 1977. Her works are included in numerous museum collections in the United States and Europe. A posthumous retrospective of her work was organized by the New Museum, New York in 1980 and traveled to several U.S. museums. In 1999, the University of Vermont, Burlington organized an exhibition of her sketchbooks and published a facsimile of selected pages. A survey exhibition and an extensive monograph of Morton's work was organized by the Generali Foundation, Vienna in 2008 and an exhibition of her drawings and related paintings and sculpture was presented at the Drawing Center, New York in 2009. In 2015, her work was the subject of a survey at the The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. In the Fall of 2016, Alexander and Bonin held a solo exhibition of her work. In September 2018, the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, will hold the first major solo museum exhibition of Ree Morton's work in the United States in over thirty-five years.