

Lena Henke

Ice to Gas

September 19–October 31, 2020

Determined to create a piece of brutal realism, I decided to sculpt my toddler self. A cyborg mini me; a sculpture to get comfortable with being uncomfortable in the face of the potential versions of events that could have taken place. Let's put the branches back on the tree instead of chiseling them away. Let's open ourselves to counterfactual histories. Fuck with my perspective, transmogrify my nostalgia. Nostalgic longing can manifest as a desire to return home. But according to some psychoanalysts, it is caused by the traumatic experience of removal from the mother's womb. Let's turn the roof into the floor. *We're all leads in our own stories; no one is an extra.*

The exhibition unfolds around a "Hills Hoist," a square outdoor drying rack. First manufactured in Australia a hundred years ago, it was an attempt to modernize labor. The hoist as mother, the pole as the father and the baby will always be me. Lisbon has always suffered from water scarcity. I once heard that traditionally, you only took three baths here. The first when you were born, the second when you got married, and the last one after you died. I want to focus on these three states. The holy trinity. Three points in time. Three stage cues. Just three. *The end is built in the beginning. What can you do? God you're just perfect. I'm a mess.* Memory can be manipulated, memory isn't static. It's in between states. For the very first time, a large metal pole is bringing my holy trinity together in Portugal. What else have we neglected? How can I make folk wisdom speak again? Can I think with my heart, my brains, and my genitals at the same time and place? And what would that even look like if I were completely honest with myself?

Do men and children go together in your portfolio? Where is your lifeline, your support line, your telephone line? And then which Baby to feed first? *Where is my little girl, where is my little girl?* The baby talks, the baby sings, what is the baby saying? *It's everyone's dreams in all those apartments, all those thoughts I'll never know.*

During Pandemic lock-down New York, I had to wash my clothes at home, hand wash only. The washing machine is the most important item produced in the last 50 years. Water gushing through the drain, like my rent. Our objects and nostalgia don't need real memories. Our childhood towns, our bygone moments don't have to be true or truly ours. Nostalgia is just as real when it is imagined. Implanted cultural detritus.

I know exactly how I want to be buried. My ashes will be scattered on the field by our cemetery in north-western Germany. My name will be written in bronze.

*= Text in italic; Excerpts from the movie script "Synecdoche, New York" by Charly Kaufman. A film on the essential strangeness of existence, time and mortality.*

– Lena Henke, September 2020