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Virginia Russolo

27 April – 8 June 2024

And then the Arrows of Desire rewrite the Speech

Exhibition text

'And then the arrows of desire rewrite the speech' is a line from a song by Kate Bush, *The Sensual World* from the eponymous album (1989). Under the spell of these words the exhibition forms around a central feeling: the erotic as a disruptive and infinitely generative force.

The artworks take on the role of wordless interlocutors in the search for how it feels to experience a sensual communion with the world. The erotic, released from the confines of the sexual realm, becomes a way to experience more deeply the stirrings of life within oneself. Eroticism, now set free, is recognised as an expression of the unbound force underlying everything and which enlivens everything.

There's a profound contradictory tension in an all-encompassing form of eroticism. It's a feeling of eternity, echoing in the prehistoric caves where human's first metaphysical understandings took form and echoing in the darkness of wombs where alchemical mysteries transform two into one. But as the senses open to the eternity of the flow of life they simultaneously sharpen the finality and impermanence of the sensual receptor we call our body. In the words of Georges Bataille 'Eroticism, it may be said, is assenting to life up to the point of death'.

In *And then the Arrows of Desire rewrite the Speech*, beeswax, sheep horns, animal and plant fats, silks, propolis, and resins give shape to an exploration of the role of death in sexual reproduction, prehistoric burial practices, and the burial feast.

By Virginia Russolo

About the artist

Virginia Russolo investigates how communication with the sacred is mediated through materials. Beeswax, animal fats, silk, propolis, amber, animal horns, bones, and fur are recurring materials in her paintings and sculptures. Russolo seeks, what anthropologist Tim Ingold calls, a 'correspondence' with materials, treating them as forms of intelligence to partner with over a long period of time. Mysticism, myth, and an archeological longing underpin Russolo's work.

Artist biography

Virginia Russolo (Oderzo, Italy, 1995) lives on the island of Crete, Greece. She grew up in Italy, the USA, Japan, the UK, and the Netherlands. Her work has been exhibited at Basel Liste 2023 (Basel), CLC Gallery (Beijing), Westbund Art Fair (Shanghai), Mediterranea 19 Young Artist Biennale (San Marino), T293 Gallery (Rome), Rupert (Vilnius), Podium Gallery (Oslo), The Address Gallery (Brescia), Galleria Nicola Pedana (Caserta), Fondazione Spinola Banna (Turin), Procida Capital of Culture (Procida), 7th Thessaloniki Biennale (Thessaloniki), Modern Art Oxford (Oxford), Tate Modern (London), Pitt Rivers Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Oxford) amongst others. Russolo was selected for Fondazione Spinola Banna artist residency in partnership with GAM in Turin (2019) and for the Alternative Education Programme at Rupert in Vilnius (2021). In 2017 she received a BFA from The Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. In 2023 Russolo was a Visiting Art Scholar at Shanghai Jiao Tong University in Shanghai.