

**PARC Residency and Exhibition, Summer 2019
Katrin Hanusch, Àngels Miralda, Georgina Sleaf & Lucy Tomlins**

An art exhibition about slow design, life cycles, and the making of sculpture through the presentation of new works of art. Three international artists and one curator demonstrate artistic process and how it connects to social context and nature. This exhibition is part of the International Artists' Residency, Castellón Province, Spain (PARC). The research of the participants and the exhibition will be open to the public in the Ethnologic Museum.

The exhibition's format focuses on transparency of production. For the first few days, the public is invited to join us to see the process of creating artworks on site and setting up an exhibition.

Kindly supported by the Town Halls of Atzeneta del Maestrat and Vall d'Alba.

*Museo etnològic, C/ Estatuto / 12194 Vall d'Alba, Castellón, Spain
Wednesday 28 August – Tuesday 3 September 2019, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Closed in the afternoon on Sunday 1 September and Tuesday 3 September*

More info: pangaeasculptorscentre.com
Social media: PangaeaCentre

Introduction Text by Àngels Miralda

From 28 August to 3 September the exhibition space of the Ethnographic Museum will be used by three invited artists and one curator in residence to build up an exhibition. Themes that connect the three artistic practices include the social nature of sculpture, slow by design, and life cycles. During the build-up, we invite everyone to join us and see the process of creating artworks on site and setting up an exhibition. After the official opening on the 31st, the exhibition will remain open until the 3rd of September.

In the context of the Ethnographic Museum of Vall d'Alba which houses traditional tools used in agriculture and the home, the artists exhibit new considerations of our contemporary relationship with material. The museum which is rarely open to the public, gives a unique opportunity to see the collection of objects housed in the exhibition halls. They create a historical backdrop of how people have used materials and artistic techniques in dialogue with production and the landscape for centuries. From the local tradition of ceramics, to the design of wooden chests and an exemplar of a loom that was used in the area, the exhibition develops in the presence of objects that attest to a sculptural and artistic tradition of the region. The exhibition developed here in Vall d'Alba will evolve and iterate to a new location in the form of an exhibition next February in a local market in Huddersfield, UK.

An artist's residency can have multiple purposes, among them, to give artists a new setting to research and test existing and developing projects, to inform about a new context in regard to its history, culture and different localities, and to meet new audiences. In Vall d'Alba, the artists offer to bring a new perspective into the town, to investigate local phenomenon and create artworks that respond to the regional context. This project has been organised by Pangaea Sculptors' Centre - an initiative started in London to support, nurture and develop artists working with sculpture through mentoring, fabrication, education, commissioning opportunities and public events. In partnership with town halls of Vall d'Alba and Atzeneta del Maestrat, the residency will take place during the Vall d'Alba August festival.

Katrin Hanusch addresses the materiality of sculpture in site-responsive productions that intend to capture potential and unused energies within materials. Working with various mediums that reveal divides between the visible and invisible/present and absent, the materials derive from specific sites and allude to poetics, humour, and spirituality.

Hanusch has collected now-defunct LED laptop screens from computer repair shops around London and stripped them to their bare essentials. Disconnected from their function of computer processing visualisation, they become a raw material that fuses light and optics. These panels will be modified and connected to a solar-powered portable battery and be carried and worn together as crafted garments in public contexts. This meshing of everyday devices and clothing comments on utility and function as much as the long parallel trajectory of sculpture and technology. Much of what we see and experience today is through screens on our portable devices. This “immaterial” image is therefore turned around into artist’s materials in order to enhance its proximity to the human body. In their second-life as an outfit, the screens enact the prosthetic function of devices but this time with their own agency. As it moves around, the screens catch and reflect sunlight through their material properties. The work itself becomes site-responsive, catching rays of light and dispersing them through the landscape.

Other sculptural productions will be produced with local natural and discarded materials found in the environment of Vall d’Alba. A collection of found sticks lies somewhere in the space, part of it has transformed into the clothes hanger that displays Hanusch’s work in progress, chosen for its ideal natural shape fitting to the size of the human body. These gnarled organic formations appear strange, but connect to objects such as natural forked branches which were traditionally used in agriculture like tools visible on the first floor of the museum. These found parts as well as the ephemeral or performative nature of the garment combine notions of value with the essence of time - that art can be a fleeting moment of the meeting of materials and elements that combine and disintegrate in endless cycles.

Georgina Sleaf has developed a body of work at Fayoum Art Center, in an Egyptian village called Tunis. Egypt’s consistently hot dry climate is allowing her to make a series of paper mâché sculptures over many months. The many hours spent building up each sculpture with gluey scraps are punctuated by embraces, attentively working towards the point when her hugging arms are filled to capacity. The elaborate contours of the forms that emerge would have been impossible to predict.

The dimensions of the pieces respond to the length and reach of the artist’s arms and fingers. The limbs and shapes of human organs and the negative space that they create constantly influence and shape the production of things even when we think of the large ceramic vases for water-collection within the museum. Sleaf is investigating a matrix to extract new reactive shapes that emerge not with any specific use or purpose, but purely from this formal relation between the body and materiality.

The sculptures have gradually been influenced by the local cultural and climatic conditions in Egypt. Ancient ceramic methods still practised in the nearby Egyptian village of Nazla have helped develop methods, while the sun bleaches the sculptures a desert yellow. In this sense, slow-by-design is a recognition of time as a crucial ingredient in the production of sculpture. In Vall d’Alba, Sleaf is showing not only the papier mâché works, but also a new project which has emerged from it.

Like ceramics, textiles are a craft that follow human civilisation across continents and centuries. Studying the textiles of nomadic communities led Sleaf to the idea of making a portable, or “backstrap” loom. She adapted the design used by Guatemalan women - a simple wood construction with cotton threads held in tension by her backward-leaning body. However, the method she’s using evolved from what she learnt from weavers in Egypt. In the ethnographic museum of Vall d’Alba, a loom typical of the town in the recent past is found on the second floor. The development and technology of weaving changed Valencian society – increasing industrialisation changed the economic structure and led to demographic shifts from the country to urban centres.

Adapting methods gleaned from repeat Youtube binges and afternoons of hours spent sitting between weavers, textile’s universal application in human societies attests to its societal function and creative potential. Over these months of close entanglement with the weaving and the sculptures, Sleaf is lifting, pulling, and knotting little bits of matter to create objects that are decided by her bodily geometry.

Lucy Tomlins works with everyday materials and the re-making of common objects. Historical and monumental sculpture relies on the reproduction of objects, Tomlins consciously uses the process of mimesis to question why certain objects need to be copied. When placed in new locations and contexts, these familiar forms change their symbolism and meaning.

Tomlins' newest project involves experimentation with the direct casting of an olive tree and reinvents our connection to this locally ubiquitous being. Vall d'Alba is surrounded by fields of olive trees which are an essential part of the agricultural economy. While they are a familiar visual reference in the town, to the British artist they are more a symbol of something mythological or exotic. In an initial stage, Tomlins prepared the bark of a tree to create a sculptural cast. Using silicone, the form was pushed into the material and removed from the tree. This imprint captures the roughness and texture of the bark in a gelatinous and moving substance that begins to look more animal than vegetable.

The tree becomes a hide-like object and produces an uncanny form in this material transformation. This silicone is paired with a stone and metallic structure whose process takes methods from construction, concrete casting, and the production of decorative floors. Arranged on scaffolding above the blue concrete, the structure creates a dialogue between baroque forms, a closed composition of movement and interaction, and dialogue between the organic and synthetic. The two materials (silicone cast and concrete steps) try to imitate natural materials (olive tree and sedimentary rock) but their process of production is man-made elaboration. This asserts that these materials have an inherent value that legitimates their reproduction and relates sculptural thinking to the industrial.

Like Slep's project dealing with weaving, the tactile knowledge of an object is significant for the development of our minds and lifestyle of interaction with materials. If normally this knowledge comes from working the land or in this case, replicating a tree's bole, maybe sculpture is a useful thought process in order to keep contact and conviviality with our environment. The work is an output of juxtapositions that signals a material shift between the hard, rough, living matter, and the pink, soft, sinuous texture of the rubber with characteristic dents of bark permeating through.

The fiberglass cocoon of the tree is found in the outer courtyard. This beige object is called an "outer jacket" and normally acts as a brace or exoskeleton for the silicone reproduction. In this case, it is displayed as a fallen form that recalls another agricultural theme. The open composition returns us to the pastoral tradition exemplified in the "horn of plenty" mythologised in art history as cornucopia – a conical form filled with the goods of harvest. Transmogrified into a semi-abstract form, it appears as a symbol of bountifulness and abundance whilst the original trees' olives mature for picking.