

HOŠEK CONTEMPORARY

— EST. 2016 —

HILDUR HENRÝSDÓTTIR - CHRYSALIS

Opening reception: 29th April 2022, 6 - 10 pm

Exhibition period: 30th April - 14th May 2022

Curated by Linda Toivio

Referring to a transitional state, a chrysalis is also known as the hard cocoon protecting a developing moth or butterfly. Similar to moulting, i.e. the shedding of a skin or shell commonly associated with the life cycle of invertebrates, it is a process of transformation from one form to another, into an alternative and often more evolved creature.

Approaching a thematic through the concept of arthropods is common in Hildur Henrýsdóttir's artistic expression, as she frequently uses insects in her works, where they represent her inner realm, that repulsiveness and shame she believes to carry. However, within this exhibition, the focus is no longer the repellent nature of an insect, but its capacity for growth and transformation. *CHRYSALIS* is site-specific, consisting of a performative video work and a series of sculptures and photographs.

Addressing topics such as vulnerability and the temporality of human existence, the large-scale sculptures are created with found objects and materials; plaster and iron assemble with the softness of skin-coloured fabric in humanoid forms, unnervingly challenging artificially constructed power structures. Crawling on unnaturally long insect-like limbs, one of the sculptures is on the verge of shedding its cocoon, its flesh bulging through every possible extremity. The emerging creature is unapologetic, twisting and arching to take up its space, spreading out like a smaller and softer version of a Louise Bourgeois spider.

Vacuum Venus (2019) is a series of three photographs mounted on an aluminium support. Borrowing recognisable elements from Henrýsdóttir's older works, in particular her painted self-portraits, they renounce any attempt at seduction or flattering angles. Instead, they reveal the grotesque reality of human physicality, shoving it in the face of the viewer with such vigour, that it seems to burst out of the frame. The tormenting presence of the triptych is palpable, despite the protagonist being immobile and silenced, trapped inside a cellophane chrysalis.

Realised in collaboration with Icelandic sound artist Sigurlaug Gísladóttir (aka Mr. Silla) and two performers, Vilhjálmur Vilhjálmsson and Borghildur Indriðadóttir, *Chrysalis* (2022) is a video work shot and edited by film maker Álfgerður Malmquist. The piece is activated through the performance of Henrýsdóttir, filmed in the process of herself becoming a sculpture; gradually covered in plaster, she is slowly disappearing under layers of the white paste. In this context, the statue, a symbol of classical beauty and often associated with Greek and Roman art, acts as an ideal but suffocating mould, which the artist eventually shatters and breaks out of.

Initially a passive being, who allows things to happen or a mere passenger in her own life, the newly emerged artist is reinventing herself through a radical transformation. Although the video might suggest that she has to change or become someone else to fit into an unattainable mould, in this case a figure of Alexandros of Antioch's Venus de Milo, she eventually steps back from all expectations. The death of the old body or the old self grants space for a new one to form, while similar to an insect's life cycle, some of the tissues and cells

remain, passing onto the creature's new body. A remnant of the shedding process, *Skin* (2022) has been discarded and left to hang, evidently purposeless for the organism which it once enveloped.

The exhibition's newly commissioned pieces can be understood as a step further from Henrýsdóttir's previous work, as she seems to enter a new phase, by explicitly comparing her own evolution to a metamorphosis within a chrysalis. The exhibition is part of an ongoing process of personal transformation, self-realisation and growth. Henrýsdóttir examines these intimate mechanisms through her artistic work, shamelessly, but full of self-doubt.

Text © Linda Toivio

Hildur Ása Henrýsdóttir

Hildur Ása Henrýsdóttir (b. 1987) grew up in Þórshöfn in Langanes peninsula, Iceland. In 2016 she graduated from the Fine Art department in the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Hildur Ása Henrýsdóttir's practice gives an honest insight into the feminine world, deconstructing the idea of perfection, exploring the personal connections humans establish with their bodies and their emotions. Her work depicts intimate moments free of taboos and embraces imperfection, blurring the line between what is meant to remain personal and what is socially accepted to be shown in public. Hildur Ása portrays herself in most of her works, exploring her body and undertaking an introspective journey into the relationships between her inner self, her body and others. She lives and works in Berlin, Reykjavík and Þórshöfn.

Hošek Contemporary

Established by Petr Hošek in 2016, Hošek Contemporary is a gallery and art residency located on a historical cargo ship next to Fischerinsel in Mitte, Berlin. The gallery focuses primarily on site-specific pieces, performing arts and experimental sound works. During the spring and summer months, the gallery is hosting weekly improvised and experimental music installations, with local and international musicians.

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