

**Marion Verboom**

*Megaron*

**Opening:** Friday, 27 October 2023, 6 – 9 pm

**Exhibition:** 27 October – 2 December 2023

Marion Verboom's practice is rooted in an intimate understanding of materials. Navigating through a diverse spectrum from wood to resin, plaster to acetate, and more recently glass, over the years her composite sculptures have marshaled a wide exploration of texture, transparency, resistance and color. The artist's practice revolves around a profound relationship with materials in their raw state, as she scrutinizes their histories, techniques, and intrinsic properties. This quest led her to a captivating approach, one that views materials as collaborators, rather than mere tools in a sculptural process.

In fact, Verboom's practice could be seen as a negotiation of the role of the creator, an ongoing compromise in which she almost abandons her demiurgic control over narration and form, allowing the materials to suggest her the steps of the process and the forms. In this near abandonment of her authorship in favor of materials, she assigns them specific shapes while also enabling them to inform both technical strategies and theoretical contents.

In both recent and previous works, exhibited together in her new solo show "Megaron", the artist's choices have been guided by a fascination with artisanal professions, as well as chemical, geological, and historical questions. All these interests converge in compositions made of both familiar and enigmatic iconographies, such as in *Clito* (2022) or *Madone 2* (2021), in which organic shapes borrowed from natural and anatomical realms interlock with cryptic forms, giving birth to multi-shaped and multi-material totems. The sculptures indeed possess a mystical charge, recalling that of ritualistic objects. While traditionally totems embed elements from the natural world, acting as sacred emblems for protection, these sculptures can be seen as modern totems that encourage questioning our human gaze on the empirical world.

Not coincidentally, the title of the show is "Megaron," a Greek word that refers to a dwelling that has undergone various evolutions over time, always characterized, however, by a rectangular shape and columns surrounding the centerpiece of the room, the fireplace. The "Megaron" is echoed not only in some fragments reproduced in the exhibited sculptures, but also in the gallery space, where its

iconic columns formally and semantically interact with Verboom's column/totems, creating a space that can suggest a temple-like atmosphere.

Despite this, both the process and the overall appearance of Verboom's sculptures also possess a whimsical component: the artist engages in a procedure of mimesis, deconstruction, and reconstruction that has a certain ludic quality. This is also reflected in the vibrant color palette, particularly in some sugary colors and soft textures.

As previously noted, for Verboom the material not only dictates the form, but also orchestrates the rhythm of creation. The choice of the word 'rhythm' is deliberate, as it emphasizes an important aspect: Verboom's experiments with the joints between elements is subordinate to the material's response to various forces: gravity, heat, pressure. Verboom does not tame materials, but rather follows their tempo and story. Therefore, her process is marked by an atypical temporality, one that is no longer human. This is where Verboom's production takes a significant turn: a new idea of time comes into play, forging uncanny creations.

In fact, for the new series of *Achronies* Verboom has explored time as a living matter, in a vision that is, almost paradoxically, deeply anthropological and at the same time detached from the human perspective. The starting point for the *Achronies* is indeed the inspiration from man-made artifacts and architectural elements from different eras. But after a meticulous selection, a kaleidoscopic approach emerges: Verboom deconstructs traditional and linear temporal hierarchies, allowing materials to define form, and thus content. Marion Verboom's sculptures can be likened to core samples delving deep into the expanse of time. However, the sequence that emerges in the *Achronies* presents a distorted order, dictated no longer by history or geological stratification, but by other factors with which the artist broadens her vocabulary.

For this exhibition, the artist delved into History within the city that hosts her works: in Berlin's museums she has sought forms, colors, and materials. In *Achronie 42* (2023), for example, we find the molding of the iconic Berlin Golden Hat (a Bronze Age hat displayed at the Neues Museum), which bears mystical meanings and celestial motifs related to how man has grasped the measurement of time, like the cycles of the sun and the moon. The way the artist incorporates it in the sculpture visually prompts a renegotiation of the human approach to time. If we observe the

material and position chosen for this portion of the sculpture, it seems to subvert the aura of the hat, as well as its role in the composition.

In light of this, gravity and position are pivotal in Verboom's works. By experimenting with the weight of materials, she transforms the weight - both tangible and symbolic - of figures, myths, and emblems, consequently suggesting a redefinition of their significance in history. The notion of weight is manifest in the sometimes mysterious way materials interact and fit one upon the other, creating a play of pressures and tensions - but is also suggested by the images. In *Achronie 44* (2023) the idea of balance is evident: the feet we see are inspired by a seated Greek statue, at the Altes Museum, whose center of gravity seems to be placed entirely on those delicate feet, while in reality its weight is distributed on a pedestal on the hidden rear.

Marion Verboom's lexicon encompasses physical forces, textures, and balances, with which the artist, as a modern demiurge, creates a new cosmogony and a new temporality. This approach draws the artist closer to contemporary theories that move away from anthropocentrism, challenging historical foundations as we've understood them. Verboom delivers a multiplication of perspectives through a cross-sectional, diachronic, multifaceted observation of history and a passionate experimentation with old and new materials.

Marion Verboom's sculptures bring together a syntax of minimalism with methods of hybridization and a culture of sampling. Inspired by architecture, urbanism, mythology, ancestral crafts as much as forms of logosyllabic writing, Verboom's sculptures and installations operate through iteration, by stacking contiguous or disjointed fragments in modular combinations that are adaptive and context specific.

Upon graduating from the Paris École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts (2009), Verboom joined the De Ateliers artist-in-residence programme (Amsterdam, 2009/2011). Her recent solo exhibitions include "Chryséléphantine," La Verrière - Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, (Brussels, 2023); "Peptapon," Le Carré Centre d'art contemporain (Château-Gontier, 2021); La Vitrine, FRAC Ile-de-France (Paris, 2020) and "Lectio Difficilior Potior," MASC, Museum of the Abbaye de Sainte-Croix (Les Sables, 2015). Her works are present in several public collections, including Fonds national d'art contemporain, Fonds municipal d'art contemporain de la Ville de Paris, FRAC Bretagne, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo Madrid and MAC VAL. Marion Verboom (1983) lives and works in Paris.