

LUCY SKAER

Day Divider

25 October - 30 November 2019

For *Day Divider*, her first solo exhibition at the gallery, Lucy Skaer is showing a group of works which demonstrate the wealth of her visual vocabulary. Created in a variety of techniques (sculpture, installation, engraving, drawing as well as film), her work is based on a constant reinterpretation of what she sees and discovers in the world around her (spectacles of nature, art history, human meetings ...).

So, in the left-hand room, the work on the floor, entitled *In the Yew Woods, Arrows Rain Down, The Day is Bright and Open, Hare Darts for Cover and the Chord of C Minor Sounds*, emanates from observation of the *Livre de Chasse*, a book of illuminations dating from the 14th century. This book recounts through remarkably detailed paintings hunting scenes, the capture and butchering of animals. Feeding on this delicate yet brutish imagery, Lucy Skaer has converted the motifs or animals into an abstract visual language. By discovering this work and its singular title, we have the impression of being able to interpret it as we would a phrase, as it seems to be governed by a mysterious structure or syntax. Rhythm is important in Skaer's work as it is in spoken language. It may be slow, staccato, syncopated or rapid but it constantly underlies her work.

On the wall, two animal skins fashioned in bronze consist of tree leaves. By making them out of metal, she makes them rotproof; by showing them on the wall, their status changes and these skins become emblems. A fine tribute to the intimate links between the animal and plant world, between mythology and real life, but also a reference to the contrast between wild and stuffed, between natural and artificial, between life and death.

In the right-hand room, two series of works take the abstraction of the images or phenomena even further. Inspired by the atmospheric depiction and the meteorological moods of the *Livre de Chasse*, Skaer shows us two series of works on the wall. When looking more closely at these works, we understand that she is giving new legibility to the visible by making it abstract. The idea of transformation, even translation, of a phenomenon into a shape is symptomatic of her way of working. She works through displacement, association of ideas, distortion. The *Day Dividers*, bronze pieces hung vertically, become physical breaks in space. Three of the four shapes are covered with oil paint, a medium which might seem out of place on this hard, cold surface.

The *Barometers* combine a gestuality frozen in bronze with measuring tools (a barometer and a thermometer) which, each with their own brilliant colour, give an indication of something that is invisible. 'Under the visible, the magic', one could say.

The artist's work uses a working method combining superimposition and burial, evasion and camouflage. We find these concepts in the beautiful association between a yew-wood diamond-shape and an identical shape made of clay frozen in a downward movement. The beauty of the materials is found in the nobility of this wood and the ductility of the clay.

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In the rear room, a group of three ceramics laying on piles of printer pages constitutes a free interpretation of the Pietàs of the Italian Renaissance in glazed ceramics which made the reputations of the della Robbia family or their pupils such as Benedetto Buglioni. Fascinated by a Buglioni Pietà seen at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, Skaer drew inspiration freely from this moment of pathos par excellence to isolate the body of Jesus at the moment when he was taken down from the cross. It is interesting to observe that the character of the Virgin disappears, leaving Jesus alone. We see a fragmented body, open, disjointed, covered with stigmata and cuts, resting on a pile of leaves dating from an obsolete time. Skaer strikes a fragile balance between fascination for the sculpture of Antiquity and modern nostalgia. These abstract recumbent effigies seem detached from the world, and encourage us to consider the idea of suffering rather than the image of a dead Christ in the distraught Virgin's arms traditionally depicted by artists.

On the wall, a work on monumental paper counterbalances the immaculate whiteness of the ceramics in an abstract outline rejecting any realism. Taking a Henry Moore sculpture as her starting point, Lucy Skaer alternates silk screen printing and silver-leaf work for a composition which illustrates her sense of proportion.

Inspired by the fertile links that the real maintains with the sublime, Lucy Skaer endeavours to reveal the very essence of certain objects and materials to give a personal and suggestive interpretation of elements of the past. Through their apparent diversity, all her works explore the mechanisms through which we attribute meaning to things.

Lucy Skaer is an English artist (born in 1975, lives and works in Glasgow) who has quickly gained international acclaim in the artistic scene. On 30 November 2019 she opens a duo exhibition at S.M.A.K. in Ghent.

In 2007 she was one of six artists who represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale and she was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2009. Her recent exhibitions took place at Talbot Rice Gallery, Glasgow (2018), KW in Berlijn (2017), Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2017), Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg (2016), Musée Gallo-Romain, Lyon (2016), Witte de With, Rotterdam (2016), Yale Union, Portland (2013), Kunsthalle Basel (2009).

Skaer's work was shown at Carnegie International, 57th Edition 2018, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, as well as in numerous group exhibitions such as Documenta 14 (2017) met Rosalind Nashashibi, The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2013), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2013), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2010), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2010), K21 Düsseldorf (2010), Tate Britain (2009), the 5th Berlin Biennale (2008).