

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS "GOSHKA MACUGA: TO THE SON OF MAN WHO ATE THE SCROLL" AT ITS MILAN VENUE FROM 4 FEBRUARY TO 19 JUNE 2016

Milan, 3 February 2016 – Fondazione Prada presents the exhibition "To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll" by Goshka Macuga in Milan from 4 February to 19 June 2016 in the spaces of the Podium, the Cisterna and the Sud gallery. The project was conceived and designed by Goshka Macuga whose artistic practice is often referred to as taking on the roles of an artist, curator, collector, researcher and exhibition designer. Macuga describes these categories that are often attached to her practice, as "predicating her position within, and making her part of, an art historical taxonomy". The artist works across a variety of media including sculpture, installation, photography, architecture and design and explores how and why we remember both cultural and personal events, with a particular focus on how we create our own classificatory systems for producing and remembering knowledge in times of rapidly advancing technology and information saturation.

"To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll", developed by the artist for Fondazione Prada's spaces, brings together reflections on seminal issues such as time, beginnings and endings, collapse and renewal. Observing humanity's concern with the conclusion of mankind, Macuga poses a fundamental question: how important is it to address the question of "the end" in the context of contemporary art practice?

Our ability, as human beings, to conceive the universe abstractly and to imagine ourselves objectively allows us a vantage point from which to view the age we are living in as one of the many in our universe's history, leading us to imagine an existence beyond ourselves, a universe without humanity. In such an end-time scenario, some have speculated on the role of technology and robots as potential contributors to humanity's extinction and successors to its dominance. The perfectly designed "man-made man" might eventually come to be the greatest threat to its own creator and master. Technology's potency is something that humans have imagined, as feared and expressed throughout history with the creation of mythological figures like Prometheus and literary characters like Frankenstein.

Macuga's exhibition is the culmination of a lengthy period of in-depth research attempting to formulate a methodological categorization of material and information around such topics. The artist looked at the art of rhetoric and artificial memory as intricately linked tools for the organization and advancement of knowledge. Originating as a practice in Ancient Greece, rhetoric was celebrated during the Renaissance period not only as a technique bolstering the delivery of speech, debate and argument but also as a tool to organize ideas through the architecture of knowledge and mnemonics. The *Ars memorativa* (the art of memory) set the ground for artificial memory by expanding and developing natural memory through complex visualizations that would aid the recall of specific information.

The influence of this framework resonates through the inclusion of speech and reference to mnemonics systems throughout the exhibition. The ground floor of the Podium becomes the setting for an android created by Macuga and produced in Japan by A Lab. The android recites/rehearses his monologue constructed from numerous excerpts of seminal speeches, claiming himself to be a repository of human speech, though “who this knowledge is preserved for is no longer clear”: in this scenario, in the time known by the robot, the human perspective is no longer valid. The android is surrounded by a selection of large works from the Prada Collection and significant museums around the world that evoke ideas of the cosmos, by artists including Phyllida Barlow, Robert Breer, James Lee Byars, Ettore Colla, Lucio Fontana, Alberto Giacometti, Thomas Heatherwick, and Eliseo Mattiacci, along with a new work, titled *‘Negotiation sites’ after Saburo Murakami*, realized by Goshka Macuga in collaboration with Kvadrat in Denmark.

On view on the upper floor of the Podium is an installation titled *Before the Beginning and After the End* the result of a collaboration between Goshka Macuga and Patrick Tresset. Five tables each present a 9,5 meter long paper scroll covered with biro sketches, texts and mathematical formulas, diagrams and schemas drawn by Tresset's system “Paul-n”. On a sixth and final table, robots of the series “Paul-A” continue drawing in real time for the whole duration of the exhibition. Their intentions are undefinable as to whether they are adding or erasing the anthropocentric narratives they attempt to illustrate. Ancient and contemporary artworks by, among others, Hanne Darboven, Lucio Fontana, Sherrie Levine, Piero Manzoni, and Dieter Roth, rare objects, books and documents are displayed on top of the scrolls to create a juxtaposition related to the evolution of humanity and its possible collapse.

The three spaces in the Cisterna host a large new sculptural work conceived by Macuga, consisting of 73 bronze heads representing 61 historical and contemporary figures such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Martin Luther King, Karl Marx, Mary Shelley, and Aaron Swartz, connected by long bronze poles. The work is reminiscent of a large molecular structure and arises from Einstein’s proposal of an intellectual leadership to replace the model of political authority that we are used to today. This work can be seen as a realization of an imaginary encounter between thinkers of different historical periods and geographical and cultural backgrounds, whose ideas reflect on the complexities of human nature and its history.

Goshka Macuga’s contribution continues in the form of an intervention in the *studio* within the exhibition “An introduction”, on view in the Sud gallery and in the Deposito until 25 April 2016. Since the Renaissance, the design of the traditional *studio* has been inspired by the relationship between architecture and the art of memory. This intervention, titled “Al la filo de la homo kiu manĝis la skribulaĵon”, highlights the connection between the *studio* as a space for practicing knowledge, the architecture of one’s mind as a container for memory, and the exhibition set-up or artwork as a space of contemplation. Macuga will animate the *studio* as a stage setting for a series of readings of significant texts in Esperanto, which

play out a troubled relationship with the practice of knowledge, evocative of both the utopian intentions of the constructed vernacular and the collapse of the idea of a universal language and a common human culture. The readings will take place on Saturdays and Sundays at 5pm from 6 February to 17 April 2016.

The volume "Before the Beginning and After the End", published by Fondazione Prada, is organized as an atlas and retraces Goshka Macuga's career from 1993 to the present day in more than 350 pages. The volume includes original essays by Rosi Braidotti (philosopher, Center for Humanities, Utrecht), Elena Filipovic (art historian and curator, Kunsthalle Basel), Ariane Koek (art consultant, CERN, Geneva), Lawrence Krauss (physicist and astronomer, Arizona State University), Dieter Roelstraete (curator, dOCUMENTA, Kassel) and Michael Taussig (anthropologist, Columbia University, New York), along with an anthology of texts published for former projects by the artist.

Press contacts

Fondazione Prada
T +39 02 56 66 26 34
press@fondazioneprada.org
fondazioneprada.org
#fondazioneprada

Information for the public

Fondazione Prada
Largo Isarco 2
20139 Milano
T +39 02 56 66 26 13
visit.milano@fondazioneprada.org
fondazioneprada.org

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Goshka Macuga

Goshka Macuga was born in Warsaw and lives in London. She works across a variety of media including sculpture, installation, photography, architecture and design. Her artistic practice is often referred to as taking on the roles of an artist, curator, collector, researcher and exhibition designer. Macuga describes these categories that are often attached to her practice, as “predicating her position within, and making her part of, an art historical taxonomy”.

Her recent solo shows include “Public Address: Goshka Macuga Tapestries” at Lunds konsthall, Sweden (2014); “Exhibit, A” at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2012); “Untitled” at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2011); “It Broke from Within” at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2011); “The Nature of the Beast” at Whitechapel Gallery, London (2009); “I am Become Death” at Kunsthalle Basel (2009); and “Objects in Relation, Art Now” at Tate Britain, London (2007). She has realized new commissions for internationally acclaimed shows such as dOCUMENTA (13) (2012), the Venice Art Biennale (2009), the Liverpool Biennial (2008), the Berlin Biennale (2008 and 2014), and the Bienal de São Paulo (2006). In 2008, she was nominated for the Turner Prize. In April 2016 the New Museum in New York will present a solo show devoted to her work, curated by Margot Norton and Massimiliano Gioni.

Patrick Tresset

Patrick Tresset is a French artist based in London who creates performative installations in which robotic agents are actors. Tresset also develops robots and autonomous computational systems to produce series of drawings, paintings and videos of traditional subjects such as portraits, nudes and still lifes.