

BRONZE PAINTINGS

23.11.2019 – 25.01.2019

"Bronze Paintings" is the assertive title of the new exhibition of A Kassen in Maisterravalbuena. The Copenhagen collective draws on this unambiguous description to offer a compelling explanation of what the visitor will see and experience. It is an accurate message which clearly defines its meaning, leaving no room for interpretations that might call its name into question: these are paintings and they are made of bronze. But it is precisely in the language used in the description that the disruption of meaning takes place: can a painting be made of bronze? Is a painting defined as such through the materials it is made of? And, if it is an artistic language is not defined by its materials, what then are the features that distinguish a painting from a sculpture? Can a sculpture be two-dimensional? Can a work be a painting and a sculpture at the same time?

The use of language as a way to disguise processes that conceal contingent meanings has been a strategy used time and again throughout the fifteen years of life of this artistic collective. In the *"Door"* series, 2012, the viewer is presented with delicate glass display cases where he discovers- having viewed the handles, hinges and metal fittings inside – that the materials all belong to a series of doors. In *"Naked Photographer"*, 2015, A Kassen asked a number of artists to create a pile with the clothes they were wearing and take a photograph of it. But it is the series of sculptures entitled *"Pour"*, 2017 – particularly with regard to the process and the use of materials – which can be considered the direct precursor of the works in this exhibition, where the material helps to generate meaning.

"Bronze Paintings", as the name indicates, are exclusively made out of this alloy traditionally associated with sculpture and the genius of great sculptors like Rodin, Henry Moore or Giacometti. Bronze is also related to the concept of copying, as its application in sculpture is done through emptying a casting mould which in turn allows the work to be reproduced. In this regard, the emptying of liquid bronze is dissociated from the artist's hand insofar as it is not used to create the original image but to produce a subsequent representation that perpetuates, both physically and symbolically, the original model created in plaster or clay.

In these paintings, A Kassen subverts the idea of the emptying by bestowing on bronze the role of creator of the original image, rooted in the inherent physicality of the material. The paintings behave as a true memory of the process, showing the accumulation of silhouettes, markings and reliefs created in their gestation. The images are not based on previous drawings or models; neither are they representations of existing ideas; on the contrary, both their form and their meaning owe their existence exclusively to the execution itself. The process begins by laying a smooth layer of soil impregnated with hydraulic oil on which litres of liquid bronze are poured. When they come into contact with the ground, the drops of incandescent bronze react by forming waves, accumulations, crests and hollows that become negative spaces. As the bronze cools down, it solidifies to form the pictorial image.

A Kassen, by applying an 'incorrect' process and use of the material, manages to strip bronze from its sculptural symbolism, giving it qualities and strategies that are inherent to the pictorial process, particularly reminiscent of post-war movements such as the American hard edge or European Informalism.

A Kassen was formed in 2004 by four Danish artists (Christian Bretton-Meyer, Morten Steen Hebsgaard, Søren Petersen & Tommy Petersen). Their individual exhibitions include Sorø Kunstmuseum, Denmark and KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces, Denmark, among other institutions. They have also taken part in exhibitions in Contemporary Copenhagen, Denmark; Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark; Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde, Denmark; and Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark, among others. They have worked in the port of Aarhus, Denmark and in the Kistefos Museet, Norway. The Lund Kontshall, Sweden, has recently commissioned a work from A Kassen for the Gymnasieskolan Spyken.