

ALICJA KWADE ABOUT HER NEW EXHIBITION AT BERLINISCHE GALERIE

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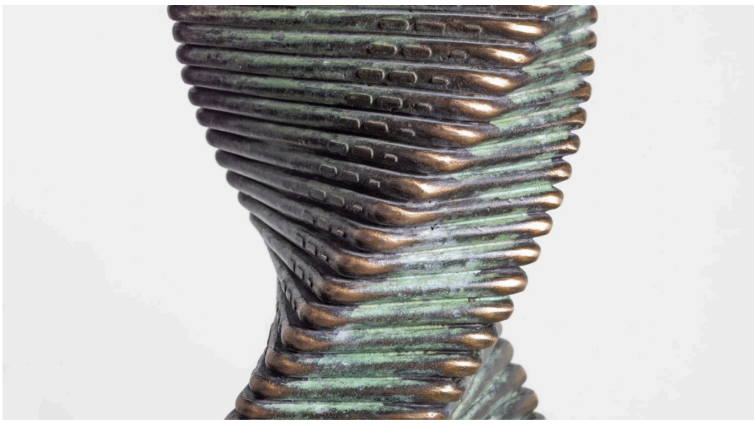


The *Berlinische Galerie* is known for their crowd attracting exhibitions on art, photography, and architecture. This weekend, as part of Berlin Art Week, the museum presents the new exhibition of Alicja Kwade. „In Abwesenheit“ (In Absence) is based on recent works by Kwade, known for her philosophical, scientific and social approach to art.

Most works in the exhibition can be read as self portraits, very broadly thought. One installation broadcasts Alicja Kwade's heartbeat live, a central work of the exhibition dealing with physical location of humans in time and space. Alongside her artworks, Kwade also presents historic and current depictions of her theories she used for research.

In the interview below, the artist herself tells more about the development process, what insights she has gained, and how this exhibition reflects the universe.





Alicja Kwade, Principium, Detail, 2020, Courtesy of the artist; KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin/ London/ Seoul/ Decentraland, Foto: Roman März

For „In Abwesenheit“ you analyzed yourself very carefully – was this process rather pleasant or unpleasant?

Neither nor. It is interesting, for me this is not about psychological aspects of my personality or biographical events, I consider myself soberly as an object, one of approx. 7,948,118,519. But yes, to be honest, the work that broadcasts my heartbeat live is actually a bit uncomfortable for me because it feels as if everyone can read my mind. There is something strangely intimate about it, even when it happens “in my absence”.

What new things did you learn in the scientific examination of the body?

I learned something disturbing that I suspected – there are hardly any differences between us, I find that very reassuring, everything is everything and very closely related. The differences are insignificant and nothing is lost, the elements do not leave our atmosphere. But I ask myself: why do we create so much suffering and injustice, racism, chauvinism, misogyny – I wonder where this false self-confidence comes from? I have also learned to recognize the absurd state that nothing can be seen. You can know and present everything and do not learn anything about a person. That just directs the thought to this secret, which you cannot solve, because you can only try it within your mind, even if you can explain the consciousness with neurological impulses. But it is so strong that it is not possible to see it from the outside. One is and always remains trapped in oneself.

The work „Self-Portrait“ consists of the pure forms of the chemical elements of the human body – do you have a favorite from the 24?

Hmm ... I like hydrogen because it is the beginning. With helium, probably formed shortly after the Big Bang, very wise, hydrogen has seen everything. And of course the heavy elements, such as copper, which were formed in stars. There is something romantic and comforting about them.

How do you manage to develop a self-portrait without becoming too physical?

Well, what does body actually mean? If you look very closely, there are atoms lined up in a row; if you look at abstract patterns even more closely, there is only a vacuum, and a bit of matter, a few electrons and atomic nuclei and a lot of space. I don't see a body at all.

Who is represented in your self-portrait, just you or is it universally legible?

It is the universe.





Alicja Kwade, Detail Installationsansicht Clout-Count (2018), GLANCES at Blueproject Foundation, Barcelona, 2018. Courtesy of the artist, Foto: Roman März

You often use unambiguous symbols without wanting to give an interpretation; your works of art encourage questioning of reality. Which reinterpretations of the self are presented in the current exhibition?

I don't try to reinterpret it, anyone can read it the way they read it. We are all everything and everyone, simultaneously and again and again, events in space and time, coincidences, causal chains ... information.

How neutral can you judge yourself, how do you create distance?

By trying not to take yourself too seriously.

Your fully read out genome is mainly rational information, how can one still have an emotional experience when looking at this work of art?

Perhaps by noticing that the bold letters are the mutations that are what makes me me. And that's so little, so there is somehow a bigger connection between everything. And you can hear the heart beating, but that are a lot of hearts, and fast and slow, the constant clock, the beat. And an absurd mixture of "human" – 24 elements and so much trouble. It's kind of tragicomic.

The human genome in the digital age – to what extent has it changed?

We are moving more and more towards a dematerialized world. Everything is information, and illusion, there is no reality, only interpretations. And like us, they are only information.

In many of your installations, geometric solids such as spheres and cuboids appear. What is their fascination?

They are fascinating basic geometric structures, spaces, direction, for me they stand for the abstract, and that is the universe, and everything we do not understand. The infinite amount of all points and the space limited in 6 directions.

„In Abwesenheit“ is on show at Berlinische Galerie 18. September 2021 until 4. April 2022, [book tickets here.](#)

Title image: Alicja Kwade, Selbstporträt, 2020, Courtesy of the artist; KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin/ London/ Seoul/ Decentraland, Foto: Roman März

Interview: Hannah Sulzbach