

FRIEZE

Aleksandra Domanović

Tanya Leighton, Berlin, Germany

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BY KIRSTY BELL IN REVIEWS | 13 MAY 16



A rash of photography shows opened across Berlin for this year's Gallery Weekend, including one by Aleksandra Domanović, who is better known for her futuristic sculptures. Occupying both of Tanya Leighton's spaces, Domanović's 'Bulls Without Horns' pairs two disparate bodies of work. In the smaller of the two spaces, a trio of person-sized sculptures – somewhere between ancient Greek votive statues and cyborg post-humans – builds on the artist's recent sculptures of 3D-printed, robotically articulated hands and arms. But in the gallery across the road, a series of large-scale photographic prints – glossy depictions of farmyard scenes starring two photogenic black and white cows – seems wilfully at odds with both her work to date and the sculptures they accompany.

Frieze, May 2016

Tanya Leighton



Aleksandra Domanović, *Bulls Without Horns: Making Of*, 2016, Diasec mounted c-type print, 1.1 x 1.5 m

There is something off-kilter about the images, despite their slick presentation. In one, a cow's furry hide is being lathered with soap in close-up; in another, a woman in shiny leather boots parades the animals towards the camera. These are no ordinary cows; they are the titular 'bulls without horns': Spotigy and Buri, the first two such genetically devised specimens. The photographs are seeded with clues to the unusual provenance and meaning of their subjects – a strategy typical for Domanović, whereby the works seem part of a sequence of references to be unravelled, leading to a deeper body of research. The documentary format she adopted for her film *From .yu to .me* (2013–14), charting the rise of the internet in and concurrent dissolution of her native Yugoslavia, has since given way to object-making. But her research-oriented approach remains the same, its information now translated into three dimensions. Domanović herself often appears obliquely, introducing a splinter of subjectivity. In one of the photographs, we see her crouching in the foreground, directing the photo shoot but trying to stay out of shot (*Bulls without Horns: Making Of*, all works 2016). This self-conscious chink demonstrates the artist's role as an interloping presence but also the director and crafter of narrative.

The show's elliptical nature sent me groping for a press text, which proves a vital source of information: a transcription of an interview between the artist and animal geneticist Alison van Eenennaam, responsible for Spotigy and Buri's genetic alteration. Punctuated with a technical vocabulary of alleles, nucleotides and CRISPR (the 'Model T of Genetics'), the interview plots the direction of the artist's research. The point is not the scientific developments in and of themselves, but rather their intersection with Domanović's ongoing interests – the role of women in technological advancement, the infiltration of economics into biology, the ethical component of genetic advancement and the ways our material environment comes to be determined by all of these things.

Tanya Leighton



Aleksandra Domanović, *Votive: Partridge*, 2016, laser sintered PA plastic, polyurethane, Soft-Touch, aluminium, copper and Kevlar-carbon fibre coating, Corian and foam, 176 x 63 x 38 cm

The question remains, however, how the photographed cows relate to the elegant sculptures derived from classical votive figures from the Greek island of Samos. The latter's slick combinations of materials and robotics contrasts with the stasis of their classical poses and the spiritual offerings they make. One pair of arms holds a hare; the second, a bird; and the third, a pomegranate – a reference to Hera, the ancient Greek goddess of women and marriage. The checklist of high-tech materials, such as 'laser-sintered PA plastic', is equally important. Stone carving becomes 3D printing, marble is replaced by Kevlar-carbon-fibre coating. These sculptures are all about a dynamic process of updating: their columnar bodies are even stamped with the artist's initials: 'AD' updating the originals' BC provenance. Seen in this light, the cows, as genetically edited products, become another material, and the photographs the most literal and descriptive means of presenting them.

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Tanya Leighton



Aleksandra Domanović, *Votive: Pomegranate*, 2016, laser sintered PA plastic, polyurethane, Soft-Touch, aluminium and Kevlar-carbon fibre coating, Corian and foam, 176 x 63 x 40 cm

The trail of clues in Domanović's work does not necessarily suggest a rounded narrative, à la Simon Starling but, rather, leaves ends hanging or paths opened up. It reflects the nature of internet-driven meanderings, the coincidental routes of subjective enquiry, where accessibility enables the self-generation of narratives, for good or for bad. The intersections of science and history that Domanović's work describes are always explicitly individual, human endeavours – and these, despite their post-human manifestations, are what the artist is seeking.