

CAROLINA SERRANO

Carolina Serrano (Funchal, Portugal, 1994) lives and works in Cologne, Germany. Serrano finished the Masters in Sculpture at the Faculdade de Belas-Artes of the Universidade de Lisboa in 2018, with the dissertation “The spiritual dimension of Sculpture through the work of XIX artists”. In 2017, Serrano completed the Post-Graduation in Art Curatorship at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas – Universidade Nova de Lisboa and in 2015 the Degree in Sculpture at the Faculdade de Belas-Artes of the Universidade de Lisboa.

Carolina Serrano presented two solo shows in 2020: *Entre o polegar e o indicador*, text by Alexandre Melo, UMA LULIK_ Contemporary Art Gallery (Lisboa, 2020) and *Para sempre prestes a terminar*, curated by Mattia Tosti, Galeria FOCO (Lisboa, 2020). Among the group exhibitions in which Serrano participated, the following stands out: *Grão—Residência Artística de Investigação*, Capitania do Museu de Aveiro (Aveiro, 2020); *XV Edição do Prémio de Pintura e Escultura de Sintra D. Fernando II*, MU.SA- Museu das Artes de Sintra (Sintra, 2020); *Tarimba apresenta a ESQUINA*, curated and produced by Tarimba Coletivo and BECO, Esquina Atelier (Lisboa, 2019); *Estouro*, curated by Beatriz Coelho, Francisca Gigante and Inês Espada Vieira, Espaço Cultural Mercês, (Lisboa, 2019); *5a Bienal Internacional de Arte de Espinho*, Museu Municipal de Espinho (Espinho, 2019); *I will take the risk*, curated by Carolina Trigueiros and TH Studio, Tomaz Hipólito Studio (Lisboa, 2019); *Singular Pace*, curated by Helena Mendes Pereira, Zet Gallery (Braga, 2018); *Inside/Outside*, Palácio do Marquês de Pombal (Oeiras, 2015). In 2018 Serrano received the SHAIRART G-ABA Award.

COVER ARTIST

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Carolina Serrano’s work and research revolves around the temporal dimension of sculpture. The artist sculptural thinking collapses, recurrently, with the notions of light and shadow; with the ideas of destruction and appearance; and with the duality between interior and exterior and between full and empty space. Serrano is interested in the concept of the restricted, inaccessible and therefore unknown “place”, and in the uncertainty of the extent of it.

In recent years Carolina Serrano has been working almost exclusively with paraffin wax because of its plastic possibilities, as is the reflection of the light, but above all because of the theoretical and conceptual possibilities that this material can originate in the field of the observer’s imagination. Serrano is also interested in the idea of a potential spiritual transmutation and transubstantiation of the sculptural object.

Um momento de trégua CAROLINA SERRANO
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Hello Carolina, you are our featured Cover Artist for ISSUE08 magazine. First of all, describe yourself in 3 words.

(to) Feel, (to) Think, (to) Try.

Now, let's go a little deeper. How did you start making art? And when did you first get interested in sculpture?

In a more considerate way, I followed my studies in a secondary school in Lisbon, which specialized in art education. I discovered that my artistic thoughts were happening through images of three-dimensional objects when, as a 17-year-old student in that school, I was asked to make a figurine for a play. I decided to make a grotesque-looking full-body sculpture for the actress to wear on her back and head as if she were carrying her own weight on her back, the weight of her existence. There was the presence of two bodies, that of the actress seen from the front and that of the sculpture/figure seen from behind. The question of duality-suffering as an intrinsically human characteristic and sculpture as the thought was already present in my work without knowing it.

In your recent works, you use paraffin wax "because of the theoretical and conceptual possibilities that this material can originate in the field of the observer's imagination." Can you explain this a little further to our readers?

One of those possibilities - and the one that interests me the most - is the temporal dimension of sculpture. For, I ask myself if time can be used as a material. Paraffin (usually used as fuel and recurrently used in the making of candles) together with fire (as a living element in the imagination and memory of the observer) is what, until now, has allowed me to come closest to building a sculpture with "time". When we think of the idea of a flame consuming a candle, this inert object "gains" time; that is, it acquires a temporal dimension because it becomes extinguishable. The object starts to exist in the 'time' that is ours by acquiring, as we acquire at birth, a death sentence. In my work, by using paraffin and sometimes the candle-wick, this act of 'receiving life'

through self-destruction is, however, hypothetical; it occurs as a possibility in the observer's imagination. The action, by being 'activated' by the viewer's mind, occurs both in the sculpture he sees but also at the same time within himself.

Paraffin also comes as a substitute for the physical and spiritual body. Sometimes when I visit Cathedrals, I like to look at the holders for placing devotional candles because all those trembling flames are of people who have been there to lit them and who are now somewhere in their own affairs. But when I look at those holders, those people are there in front of me, present in those various spots of light. Something like transubstantiation happens. And with the sculptures the same.

Your sculptures are minimal objects that convey contrasting ideas, such as light and shadow, destruction and appearance, interior and exterior, and full and empty. Why do you use this visual language? And what does your art aim to say to the viewers?

Who knows, that may be the viewers see themselves by seeing my work that they see themselves in the mirror. Just like the flames in the cathedrals that, deep down, are absent presences of various people. If I wish sculptures to be extensions of ourselves, knowing that we are beings that wander and oscillate in time without being able to control it or pacify ourselves with it (because time is finite to us and escapes us), then they must seek to be true mirrors. Since we are beings of antagonism and contradiction, since we are beings of error and, at the same time, of glory, the sculptures must be reflections that are exact and simultaneously dubious, complex, and at the same time simple. However, it is also necessary to know that polishing that mirror to its sharpness - that is, understanding what it is to be human - is a task possibly doomed to have no end.

What do you see as the strengths of your project, both visually or conceptually?

Perhaps aiming to create works that have in themselves formal dispossession, an irremediable simplicity. I try not to add or take more away to the

Faz. Af A Tua Casa CAROLINA SERRANO
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point that, in one extreme, by wanting to remove more, one can see the bone.

The energy of work is often channeled in the space between two polarities: between the emptiness and the fullness, the internal and the external... It is necessary that the works are in that space "in-between" so that we, in them, can recognize ourselves in the reflection of a mirror, seeing at the same time both the error and the glory.

The idea of the possibility of self-destruction, the destruction of the body (paraffin/ours), and the idea of ascension through vanishing, and the temporal dimension that is somehow present in my sculpture are deeply human. Basically, it's an attempt to blow or even scratch the little hole that each of us has open in our chests and just won't close, won't close.

Tell us about the process of creating your work. What is your artistic routine when working? Any aspects of your work do you pay particular attention to?

Usually, the "unborn" sculptures first appear in my mind as an idea in the form of an image. Sometimes I see their figures on the walls, on the ceilings, in the corners of the room. Sometimes I retain images that I see on the street: a metal fence, a dark window, two half-closed curtains, and which can later become a drawing of work

if a mental image appears from that.

I transfer those images of sculptures that I see in my mind to my notebook. I usually write down a few words, or half sentences, which are basically what the image suggests to me in verb form or even technical aspects of it.

Later, sometimes much later, I review my notebooks, flip through them all, and in the middle of the pages, there is an image (an unborn sculpture) that stands out for some reason. As I see it, this one is ready to come into being, and the next step is to materialize it, to make it exist in the world. The others are still there in the notebook, waiting. Maybe many will never be born. Then things become more technical, and I have to think about how to build it and engineer it. I have to think about the measurements, the cuts, the quantities. When I work for an exhibition or trace a specific intention of work production, usually my working rules and my discipline are strict. I like to work during the day, from early morning until late afternoon. Every single day, After this, after everything is ready, there is a resting period for me, and later on, everything repeats itself.

Is there one thing you have discovered, or a lesson you have learned, over the last year due to the pandemic you will keep with you in the future?

Be even more attentive, be even more aware.

Onida era e tu estavas CAROLINA SERRANO
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Os Amantes CAROLINA SERRANO
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You work with a lot of galleries and have exhibited extensively over the past years. What do you think about the art community and market today?

I work with two galleries: UMA LULIK_ Gallery in Lisbon and, more recently, with a new gallery in Cologne, Galerie Alex Serra, which will open very soon, dependent on the pandemic situation in Germany. Regarding the art market and the art community, I try not to think about it too much.

What is one thing you hope to achieve in 2021?

"Mehr Licht! Mehr Licht!"

Finally, What are you working on now, and what are your plans for the future? Anything exciting you can tell us about?

After I participated in the online format of Artissima 2020, with UMA LULIK_ Gallery, it seems that finally, in this year of 2021, presential fairs are starting to happen. So, regarding art fairs, as far as I know now, I will participate with the same gallery at Drawing Room Madrid that will happen in the last week of May. I am also starting the project for a solo exhibition in Germany at Galerie Alex Serra, which will take place this year if the pandemic situation stabilizes. I also have on my agenda a possible exhibition with a public institution in Berlin for 2022.