

Press release

Caroline Mesquita | *ASTRAY*

8 June – 03 August, 2019

Opening: Friday, 7 June 2019, 6–9pm

carlier | gebauer is pleased to present a solo exhibition with the French sculptor and video artist Caroline Mesquita. *ASTRAY* will be the artist's second exhibition with the gallery.

With the introduction of video into her practice several years ago, many of which have depicted the artist herself engaged in various encounters with machines or her own metal sculptures, Caroline Mesquita's works have increasingly examined the reciprocal exchange between humans and objects. Alternatingly tender, violent, and funny, such encounters show how objects shape us as much as we shape them. The poet Wislawa Szymborska once wrote, "you can find an entire cosmos lurking in its least remarkable objects." Likewise, the capacity of objects to make worlds animates Caroline Mesquita's current exploration of the vital energy that lurks both in and between all things.

ASTRAY is an adaptation of a two-part project initially exhibited at Kunsthalle Lissabon and Galeria Municipal do Porto. Although its mise-en-scene departs from the figurative, humanoid forms that marked her early practice, with her current exhibition Mesquita nonetheless retains her focus on the ensemble – and the charge that sparks the fluid, dynamic relations between the human and non-human entities depicted in her stop-motion videos and sculptural installations. The central works in the exhibition at carlier | gebauer are two, ambiguous coiled forms crafted from oxidized steel entitled *Engine Worm I* and *Engine Worm II*. Surrounding them are bones sculpted from plaster and wax, each displayed within a plexiglass vitrine on slender pedestals. This mode of display recalls traditional museum conservation, which seals away delicate artworks or precious remains in an attempt to preserve them. Yet, in this case, the function of the vitrines seems to be to contain a latent, disruptive charge emanating from its contents – as if the plexi could act as a buffer to stop the bones from contaminating their surroundings or conversely serve as a kind of forcefield that enhances their power. At once organic and industrial in character, both the "machines" and the bones are of uncertain origin: they seem like they could hail from either the past or the future – or, in a bizarre kind of temporal collapse, somehow from both at once.

The end of each tubular machine simultaneously recalls a camera shutter, the propellers of a jet engine, or a bodily orifice. As if tumbling forth from an industrial birth canal, a collection of bones emerge from the depths of this enigmatic machine in a stop-motion video entitled *ASTRAY*, which accompanies the sculptures. The video opens with an everyday accident, a cleaning woman slips while working and lands in a hole in the floor. As she leaves the scene, water drips from her bucket down the tiles of the broken marble floor onto a collection of bones lying scattered in the dirt. The bones rattle, shake, and dance in this strange crater, which appears to have been made by *Engine Worm I*, awakening yet another woman who lies sleeping in their midst. Reminiscent of old, slapstick animations, a choreography of osseous matter, origami-like animals, and humans ensues. Whether human or non-human, living or dead, the actors depicted in Mesquita's video seem propelled by an agential force, gathering energy and meaning through their communion and entanglement with one another.

Caroline Mesquita (b. 1989, Brest) lives and works in Marseille. She won the 19th Fondation d'entreprise Ricard Prize in 2017. Selected solo exhibitions include Galeria Municipal do Porto, Porto; Kunsthalle Lissabon; Lisboa; Centre Pompidou, Paris; SALTS, Birsfelden; 221a, Vancouver; Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris; Kunstverein Langenhagen, Langenhagen; SpazioA, Pistoia; Centre d'art du Parc Saint Léger, Pougues-les-Eaux; Le Bains-Douches, Paris; and 1m3, Lausanne.