

24/04/19 - 29/06/19

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Zoë Paul's work consists of elements and motifs that—whether at the personal or communal scale—convey an essence of belonging. She employs timeless, general-purpose, low-tech materials and techniques, such as ceramics, weaving and drawing, that pertain to a small-scale economy and are used to meet daily life needs. Her work aims to examine our relationship with tradition and explores shifts in perception around the value of an object according to time and context.

In Despina Zoë Paul explores the impermanence of life through the lens of ancient mythologies, fertility and femininity. Invited by La Loge, she constructs a narrative through new works and material experiments that depict scenes from both the lively territories above the earth's surface and, below it, the divine yet obscure underworld. Paul underlines the interdependence of these two spaces through the use of symbols and allegories. Taking a more holistic approach to nature, Paul emphasizes tradition and femininity over more modern forms of relating to the world, and highlights the bounties provided by nature when handled with attention and care.

The exhibition approaches the multiple facets of Despina, daughter of Poseidon and Demeter, as the mistress of the house and the underground deity of nature, birth and death. In Greek the word also refers to "lady", unfolding a series of associations made by the artist around the notion of femininity. Guided by the mythological figure of Despina, Paul addresses craft as something that has long been considered a feminine and domestic preoccupation, predominantly associated with the confined space of the household. Rather than seeing craft as a way of controlling women within a biased image of femininity, Paul examines how communities and affinities are produced through craft and reproductive labor.

Despina is also the goddess of the grain, harvest, growth, and the fertility of the earth. She is an apt protagonist in the narrative of permaculture and natural farming as alternatives to patriarchal modes of production, including industrial farming and manufacture. Permaculture encourages communities to be resourceful, sustainable and self-reliant, while maintaining a balanced and healthy relationship with the earth. In order to be able to do this, according to Japanese farmer and philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka, we need to know "what unadulterated nature is, so that we can instinctively understand what needs to be done—and what must not be done—to work in harmony with its processes." This intuitive way of handling resources and materials is reflected in her use of elements that are older than humanity itself, such as clay, water, mud and goat manure. Paul evokes an economy associated with daily life needs, in which craft has the further function of transferring knowledge and ideas, and which cannot be separated from performances of gender.

The exhibition is composed of two different realms: the living world and the underworld, connected by thresholds as spaces of transition. In the main space of La Loge, Paul invites the visitor to experience the territory of the living and decaying. Hanging from the ceiling, a large bead curtain (*Zargana*, 2019) adorned with the image of a fish alludes to the lively atmosphere, which can be experienced from the earth's surface. The beads are made manually, stained different colors with raw oxides and ground-up minerals. *Zargana*, the title of the piece, is the Greek name for the fish but also common slang to refer to women in general. A recurring element in Paul's practice, the bead curtain functions as a medium: a lo-fi cinematic technology enabling movement within still images. It refers to the permeable shades that veil the thresholds of Greek village homes, separating public and private spaces while also embodying a transitory state impersonated by Despina. A tile piece (*The way we walk apart*, 2019) composed of locally sourced terracotta tiles reminiscent of vernacular architecture evokes a sense of community and domesticity.

On the walls of the main space, a series of herb paintings made out of handmade paper, whitewash and herbs (*Flower Paintings*, 2018) expand the artist's conceptual and material research on the aesthetics of life and death. Depicting flowers and plants through the genre of the still life, Paul evokes the sense of nature's transience in images of daily existence, while the recurrent application of whitewash or limewash on houses refers to care for the home and the community. In the center of the room and on stage, seven ceramic pots (*The Breathing Pots*, 2019) evoke a bodily quality in their torso-like organic forms with air-filled lungs. The figures and fish reinforce the idea of flow: water appears again as a metaphor, an element from which life springs. In aquatic environments, forms of life sprout and decay. Nevertheless, the water leaks through the cracks, marring the base. It trickles downwards into the depths of the underworld, emphasizing the dichotomy as well as interdependence between these two states of being.

In the corridor on the ground and upper floor, the walls are decorated with voluptuous figures and legs (*Wall painting*, 2019) in clay and oxides, the same materials used in the bead curtain. Painted directly onto the walls, these paintings are ephemeral, the colors inconstant. The figures imply another temporality: they are spectral spirits that tie the exhibition together, creeping across the walls and crevices of the building. In the hallway, visitors pass through a zone that slows them down, where herbal teas (*Tea Ceremony*, 2019) are served to reinvigorate the senses – a common motif in Paul's work. Presented in cups and vases sculpted by the artist, the tea (supplied by Greek herb company Daphnis and Chloe) refers to an ordinary human activity, underlining the value of objects and the experience of shared time. Finally, two black dogs (*Dogs*, 2018) reside in the triangular corridor of La Loge. These slender animals are symbolic figures of the underworld, associated with the subterranean and the goddess Despina. Together with the corridors of La Loge, the space assumes the status of limbo.

In *Despina*, Paul underlines the building's circulation by emphasizing its vertical axis. If the main space on the ground floor symbolizes the terrain of the living, the basement presents a humid, mossy environment where divine figures reside. In this dark, subterranean world, godly feminine forms (*Reclining Figures*, 2019) protrude from a carpet of earth. Carved from marble, their reproductive organs are highlighted as round silhouettes, emphasizing the fertility of nature and land.

About the artist

Zoë Paul (b. 1987, London) grew up between the Greek island of Kithira and Oxford, with South African origins. She now lives and works in Athens. After receiving her undergraduate degree at Camberwell College of Art, she completed her MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art, London. Past projects and exhibitions include *La Perma-Perla Kraal Emporium*, a collaborative work that invites visitors to sit around a long table and make clay beads (SPIKE Island, Bristol, 2018 and *The Breeder*, Athens, 2017); *Equilibrists*, organized by the New Museum, New York and the DESTE Foundation, Athens in collaboration with the Benaki Museum, Athens; *Solitude and Village*, an exhibition exploring social relations and indebtedness in the village (*The Breeder*, Athens, 2016), and *Unorthodox* (Jewish Museum, New York, 2015). Paul was in residency at Hospitalfield in Scotland where she was commissioned to create a body of work entitled *wild wolf, man and fish*.

List of Works

Hallway and corridor

Tea Ceremony, 2019
Pots, cups and tea

Dogs, 2018
Ceramics
45 x 85 x 45 cm

Wall Paintings, 2019
Clay
Variable dimensions

Temple

Zargana, 2019
Hand rolled fired clay beads and raw oxides
470 x 140 cm

The way we walk apart, 2019
oil paintings on reclaimed terracotta tiles
Variable dimensions

Flower Paintings, 2017
Herbs and flowers, brass frames, handmade paper with whitewash

100 x 140 cm

The Breathing Pots, 2019
Ceramics on found stone pedestals
100 x 60 x 50 cm

Basement

Reclining Ladies, 2019
Resin, goat manure, whitewash, clay, papier-mâché, chicken wire,
straw and marble
Variable dimensions

Second floor

Wall Paintings, 2019
Clay
Variable dimensions

Edition

On the occasion of the exhibition *Despina* (24 April - 29 June 2019), a limited edition of 15 was produced. For more information contact La Loge via info@la-loge.be

Zoë Paul
Platters, 2019
Glazed ceramics
Variable dimension (from 15 x 15 cm to 24,5 x 23 cm)
Edition of 15
Price: 550 euros

Acknowledgments

Our gratitude goes to Zoë Paul for her generosity and enthusiasm, and for the close dialogue with La Loge in the development of *Despina*. All works (except *Dogs* and *Flower Paintings*) have been specially made for the occasion of the exhibition at La Loge.

Thank you to Bourgondisch Kruis in Harelbeke and Rotor DC.

The team at La Loge

Staff: Laura Herman, Laila Melchior, Anne-Claire Schmitz
Visual identity: Antoine Begon, Boy Vereecken
Translations: Maarten Mertens, Juliane Regler
Installation team: Amaury Daurel, Benjamin Jaubert, Nicolas Moreau, Ugo Zanin

Opening hours

Thursday - Friday - Saturday, 12:00 to 18:00
Free entrance.

Visit our website for more details about our programme and events.

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La Loge is a privately initiated non-profit association founded by architect Philippe Rotthier. La Loge is supported by Philippe Rotthier Foundation, Flanders State of the Art, and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged individuals and organisations.