

Suzanne Wallinga - Monumental Zodiac

Somewhere in between the Whale, Crane, Phoenix and the Oven, there is a place in the heavens for the Sculptor. The French astronomer Nicolas-Louis de Lacaille described this constellation in the southern sky for the first time in the 18th century, when he mapped the stars from the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. The Sculptor's form is derived from a stone head, placed on a table with three legs. Beside it we see instruments from the artist's studio. From a distance of about 500 million light years, the Sculptor is comprised of a number of galaxies. One of the more renowned of which is the Cartwheel Galaxy — a ring galaxy that is shaped by a smaller galaxy that manoeuvres through the centre of the larger galaxy.

While I pass through the impressive solo of Leyla Aydoslu at P////AKT, I'm reminded of a girl crush I had around 10 years ago. The astronomer from Leiden Mariska Kriek won in 2008 the Christiaan Huygens Science Award for her research into distant galaxies. Since then Kriek has moved to the United States where she teaches at prestigious universities like Princeton and Berkeley. With large astronomical telescopes, among others the Gemini Telescope and the Very Large Telescope in Chile — one of the best places on earth to study distant galaxies at the limits of the perceptible universe — she conducted a considerable amount of discoveries and was the first in the world to measure the radiation of distant galaxies. She consequently developed models that can account for different colours of galaxies. Our universe has the unique quality that it can be studied at different moments in time. This is possible because light has a finite speed. Often the light of stars that we see has been traveling for years in order to reach us. One glance at the above can reveal various times in history at once. Old stars emit mostly red light, while young stars do so in blue.

Upon the floor of the exhibition space Aydoslu has applied a layer of a rust-coloured plaster, that functions as a socket for a sedentary, circular sculpture — the form reminds me of the Cartwheel Galaxy. Aydoslu's work is situated in between painting, sculpture, installation and assemblage. The artist deconstructs architectural elements, often found materials, which she subsequently adapts according to the exhibition space and the human body. She surrenders herself to the process and allows herself to be surprised by the characteristics of the materials she has collected. She is constantly in search of a certain tension that arises through playing with scale, continuity, stability, balance, and spatial contrasts. For years she has been working on a constant development of her own artistic practice; one that carries a certain sculptural immediacy within it that shows.

At the opening I mention to her that the round sculpture amazes me. It seems to have emerged from a completely different era than the twining 'branches' further on

in the space that are supported by a structure of wooden slats. Multiple eras appear to co-exist. Aydoslu's galaxy resembles a Medieval astronomical clock that shows different kinds of time at once, often the local time, the place of the sun within the zodiac, the sidereal time and a distribution in hours between sunrise and sunset that varies from day to day. Since the fifteenth century, we can identify ingenious examples of such measurements from various cultures: from the Prague astronomical clock to the Intihuatana of the Machu Picchu. Aydoslu's sculpture contributes to the sensation of a distortion of time. Is it not the ultimate goal of artistic production to transform our understanding of time?

The Spanish curator Chus Martinez wonders how art can change our experience of the history of time at a time in which we agree that multiple histories co-exist contiguously. There is not one modernity, but many modernities that supplement each other, challenging, and upending each other. Art can contribute to the experience of a new form of time, that if it were up to Martinez, would be of an anachronistic nature.

Anachronism points according to Martinez to a situation in which *rhythm* takes the place of *duration*. Rhythm is tempo: power, vibration and movement. Duration is the melody of history and signifies a certain order. Rhythm follows intensity. How can we leave the melodic way of understanding history? Using anachronism as a method does not offer a solution to our problems, but it can offer the opportunity for the experience of a tension, a discontinuity, a warped time as an understanding of time in which no objection is made against repetition, or against the imitation of what has already happened. Anachronism implies an acceptance of the importance of rhythm as fundamental for understanding the relation between matter and energy. According to Martinez, in relation to art we should, just like Gaston Bachelard, speak of a rhythmic realism: the introduction of material and conceptual parameters that are directed at discarding the need to construe cultural identity in terms of the philosophy of history.

Aydoslu's work is abstract, she avoids recognizable shapes or references to reality. While I am reminded of galaxies and zodiacs, it is mostly the sense of corporeal bewilderment that is foregrounded in the relations between the elements of the work. 'Your body becomes a sort of slat upon which the large grey branching or the red, angular clay figure of the sculptures can measure their size', is how Marsha Bruinen put this in words in Metropolis M. With Aydoslu's show at P////AKT, however, she has cut across the melodic experience of space, which if you ask me is the first time it is phrased as such. She remains modest about it herself. The sculptor is a slightly inconspicuous constellation that is not very visible from the northern hemisphere. It is not visible to those observing from Belgium and the Netherlands. But, the next time I'm traveling, I'll look for Leyla Aydoslu in the stars.

Translation by Daniel Vorthuys