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Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

Mimesis of Domesticity

26 May – 11 August 2024

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano
Venue Palazzo Reali

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 16 May 2024

26th May sees the opening in Palazzo Reali of the exhibition "Mimesis of Domesticity" by Monika Emmanuelle Kazi, winner of the 2024 edition of the Bally Artist Award. For the occasion, the artist has created a new group of installations that evoke a domestic interior, presented in the historical Sala Mattoni on the ground floor. As characterizes her practice, in the project for MASI Kazi uses the domestic setting as a device to kindle memories linked to her personal experience of the diaspora, and the broader panorama of colonial history.

Born in Paris in 1991, Monika Emmanuelle Kazi grew up between France and the Republic of Congo, before moving to Geneva where she currently lives. Her artistic practice, which reflects her diasporic identity, explores the imprints and memories that bodies leave in domestic environments, understood as both private and political spaces. This focus on living spaces is also informed by Kazi's training as an interior designer: her observant gaze calls into question the constructs and ideas contained in built environments. In her works, which alternate writing, performance, video and installations, everyday objects and familiar places thus become a field of inquiry, holding traces that can reveal people's roots, intimate beliefs and views of the world, and ultimately, stories that repeat themselves or change over time.

There is minimal furnishing in the room in Palazzo Reali. As the title of the exhibition, "Mimesis of Domesticity", suggests, visitors encounter a domestic setting which is suggested by everyday items: compositions of vases, a lamp, plates and crystal glasses, sitting on the ground or on old pieces of furniture. The artist has engraved these found objects using silver nitrate, meaning that the glasses, cups and vases are thus filled not with water, but images of bodies and snapshots of life that, as often happens in Kazi's practice, intertwine her personal story with broader historical and political issues.

The scenes chemically etched onto the glass show images from the artist's personal archive, mingled with mythical elements and collective events, with a particular focus on iconography regarding the Goddess Fortune and the motifs reproduced on French "CFA" banknotes. This acronym, which originally stood for "French Colonies of Africa" and later for "African Financial

Community", represents the currency of the Republic of Congo. The old banknotes on show are mementos of the artist's childhood, but they are also instruments of colonial domination, used to impose a lifestyle and a precise system of codes. As the Indian postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha put it: "The intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions".

"Mimesis of Domesticity" also intertwines two apparently conflicting elements, grafting a fluid element like water onto the concept of home as a space for the production and perpetuation of identity. Water is, in fact, a constant presence in the exhibition space: both in site-specific interventions on the floor and in the soundtrack *The Seed* (2017). The sound of running water alternates and overlaps with the artist's voice as she tells the life story of a plant, through the everyday gestures of care devoted to it. The looped soundtrack reflects the cyclical, inexorable flow of time, while also offering an antidote to it: the act of paying attention to and taking care of the objects that surround us. It is the same meticulous, painstaking commitment to conservation that characterizes Kazi's artistic practice. In "Mimesis of Domesticity" the artist explores issues of sustainability, conservation and care, not only in the intimacy of the home, but also in our social, cultural and political milieu as a whole. This is an overarching idea of sustainability that can be framed as striving to preserve an authentic identity, capable of withstanding the fluctuations and vicissitudes wrought by the Wheel of Fortune.

The artist

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi was born in Paris (France) in 1991 and grew up between Pointe-Noire (Republic of Congo) and Paris. She now lives and works in Geneva. After studying interior design, she studied fine arts at HEAD-Genève, graduating with honours in 2021. Her most recent solo and joint exhibitions include: PHILIPPZOLLINGER (Zurich, 2024); TunnelTunnel (Lausanne, 2023); Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg (2022); Villa du Parc (Annemasse, 2022); PHILIPPZOLLINGER (Zurich, 2022); WallStreet (Fribourg, 2021); sic! Elephanthouse (Lucerne, 2021) and HIT (Geneva, 2019). She has taken part in numerous group shows including FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (Reims, 2024); AlteFabrik (Rapperswil, 2024); Publiek Park (Antwerp, 2023); Forde (Geneva, 2022); Centre d'Art Contemporain (Geneva, 2021); Futura (Prague, 2021); Limbo Space (Geneva, 2020) and Le Kabinet (Brussels, 2018). In 2021, Kazi received the Kiefer Hablitzel award and the HEAD-Galerie prize. In 2022 she completed a residency at La Cité des Arts in Paris.

Bally Artist Award

The Bally Artist Award was established in 2008 by the Bally Foundation, and recognizes artists who are Swiss or living in Switzerland, whose work has a particular focus on the intersection between human know-how and the natural world. In 2021 the Foundation renewed and augmented its partnership with the Museo d'Arte della Svizzera Italiana, and the Foundation now purchases the winning work each year for MASI's collection, and hosts a two-month solo exhibition for the artist in question in its Palazzo Reali venue.

For the 2024 award, the Bally Foundation and MASI asked five renowned figures from the art world to nominate the participating artists: Céline Kopp (director of Le Magasin - CNAC, Grenoble), Noah Stolz (independent curator), Marc-Olivier Wahler (director of the Geneva Musée d'art et d'histoire), Pedro Wirz (winner of the Bally Artist Award in 2023), Maja Wismer

(head of contemporary art at the Kunstmuseum in Basel), and. The artists nominated presented a portfolio which was examined by a jury comprising Nicolas Girotto and Vittoria Matarrese, president and director of the Foundation respectively, Tobia Bezzola, director of MASI, Julian Fronsacq, head curator of Mamco Geneva, and Valentine Umansky, curator at Tate Modern, London. The jury unanimously awarded the prize, while noting the high quality and variety of the applications.

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Exhibition venues

LAC
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Palazzo Reali
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Founders



Institutional Partner



Main Partner



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Press images

01.

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

© Monika Emmanuelle Kazi



02.

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

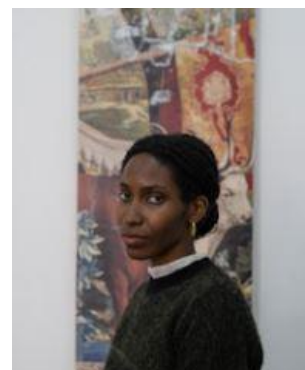
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03.

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

Photo by Pauline Humbert



04.

Installation view "Monika Emmanuelle Kazi.
Mimesis of Domesticity" MASI Lugano,
2024

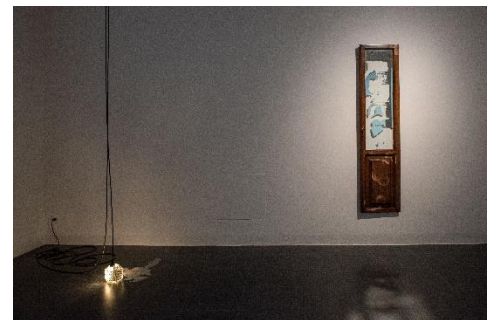
Photo: Sabrina Montiglia © MASI Lugano



05.

Installation view "Monika Emmanuelle Kazi.
Mimesis of Domesticity" MASI Lugano,
2024

Photo: Sabrina Montiglia © MASI Lugano



06.

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

Le souper interrompu

2024

Installation view "Mimesis of a Domesticity",
MASI Lugano, 2024

Photo: Sabrina Montiglia © MASI Lugano



07.

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

Le goût du sublime (detail)

2024

Installation view "Mimesis of a Domesticity",
MASI Lugano, 2024

Photo: Sabrina Montiglia © MASI Lugano



08.

Monika Emmanuelle Kazi

A still life

2024

Installation view "Mimesis of a Domesticity",
MASI Lugano, 2024

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