

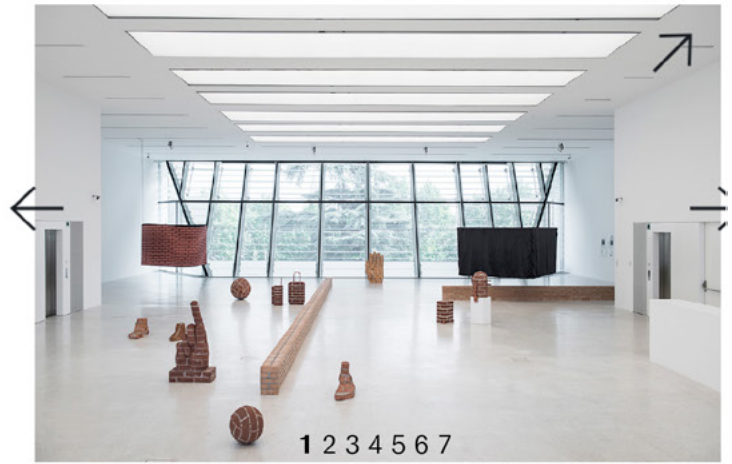
CONVERSATIONS

Judith Hopf "UP" at Museion, Bolzano

by Nicola Ricciardi

NICOLA RICCIARDI: Your first solo show in a major Italian museum, *UP*, opens at Museion, Bolzano, on September 30, 2016. If I understand correctly, the show will be a mix of old works and new ones.

JUDITH HOPF: When Letizia Ragaglia, the director and curator of Museion, invited me to do the show, she asked for several existing artworks—from sculptures such as *Birds Looking Back* and *Flock of Sheep* to videos like *Lilly's Laptop* and *Some End of Things: Construction of Youth*. It is anyway a habit of mine to connect older works with new ones. It's like rewriting a text or a poem: the pieces are all embroiled with each other, like a woven textile. I don't think one can reduce the process of art to a straightforward progression—like having



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Judith Hopf "UP"

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one good idea followed by the next good idea, and so on. Ideas may come from a journey, or from reading, but in the end they are inevitably interconnected with prior thoughts. In Bolzano in particular I'll try to connect some of my older pieces with my new body of works, which mainly consist of brick stone sculptures.

NR: Like those exhibited at kaufmann repetto gallery in Milan earlier this year at the show "*! Hear Rings !*"?

JH: Precisely. In Milan I was trying to represent different stages of limitations occurring through the imagination of oneself being in a constant state of flux—some sort of self-portrait with, as backdrop, a world (our own!) of self-management, self-organization, self-control. This so-called *Self-Portrait with Problems* will be completed in Bolzano with other body parts and further developments. My hope is that these new brick stone sculptures will look like ruins rolled into the exhibition from the surrounding city. Furthermore, the museum's galleries will also host a long brick wall, going from one end of the exhibition space to the other, two cinema tents hanging from the ceiling, and two groups of animal sculptures: *Flock of Sheep* and *Bird Looking Back*.

NR: You mentioned a possible link between the exhibition and the landscape that surrounds the museum. Is this part of the "rewriting" process you were talking about—like adapting an old work to a new context? How important is it for you to establish a connection with the venues of your shows?



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JH: Of course, when I'm invited to do a show, I always relate to the context, to the architecture, to the stories and histories I learn about the venue. But I would not say that my work is site-specific in any way. It rather has to do with the fact that my works inevitably tend to include the so-called outside world, all the things that surround me, and us. In Bolzano, for example, besides the aforementioned ruins, I hope to draw a connection between the animal sculptures and the natural landscape that filters in from the two giant windows on the fourth floor. To be honest with you, to be confronted with such magnificent scenery, such as that of the Dolomites, can trigger some fear in an artist. One chance to avoid being overwhelmed by the background is to include it in the show. We will see how it works out.

NR: Local context is not the only thing that "rolls into" this exhibition. In the texts that accompany the show I find frequent allusions to literature, anthropology, the natural sciences—I'm thinking of references to the likes of Herman Melville or Claude Lévi-Strauss. What's the borderline for you between art and other fields of knowledge?

JH: It of course depends. Sure, one could easily say that all the aforementioned sources—and also many others—inspired my work, but purely because all these different knowledges are somehow touching the field of art anyway. I also do not see any hierarchies between the different fields. As said before, I don't go around looking for ideas; I just try to get a deeper understanding of the different things that move and evolve around me. Finally, when it comes to connecting contemporary art with other sciences, I am quite aware that we are only

dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. Yet I'm keen to find a way to somehow communicate together, in order to learn something from each other.

NR: Speaking of the social sciences, your practice has often been read through the lens of critical theory. What do you make of these references? Is the critique of society in any way a point of departure in your work? Or is it rather a landing place? Or just something that happens along the way?

JH: Since I'm a social being, on a daily basis I am confronted with—and hence involved in—social circumstances. In my life as in my practice, I try my best to understand and interpret the power systems that I am included in or excluded from. I've learned a lot from poststructuralist thinkers, and I am a close reader of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. But, just as I said before, I don't start from a good reading or theory in order to make an artwork; I just try to do my best to pay extra attention to the interactions between different spheres of society. You can say that I am extremely interested in the perception of one's own perception of the world, and that my goal is to communicate the most thought-provoking aspects around those issues.

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at Museion, Bolzano
(<http://www.museion.it/?lang=en>)
until 8 January 2017