

Traces of Existence

For the show at Neliö Gallery, Claudia-Maria Luenig's drawings, collages and textile sculptures explore the presence and absence, the physical and metaphorical limitations and trajectories of the body to one's environment. The works do not focus only literally on the vulnerable nature of the body's relationship to its surrounding environment and the individual connections and boundaries among its organs, but they raise deeper questions and concerns of critical importance.

Her imagery, the materials she uses, such as elastic band crocheted and wire, and the titles she gives to her works, such as *Shift*, *Compression*, *Corporeal*, *Body Schema*, address Luenig's persistence with the relationship of the body to its immediate surrounding environment and the human traces left behind in deserted spaces. For instance, the crocheted sculptural body-like forms, titled *Body Schema*, remind us hats, clothes and costumes or even architectural structures, environments where the body can live in. Similarly to other works, they imply the presence or absence of a person, suggesting that human existence plays a central role in Luenig's art. Furthermore, the crocheted sculptural body-like forms 'left behind' or 'abandoned' in the gallery space by someone, their owner, imply the lack or absence of human values and sensibility in present societies. Due to the great condition of the materials, each work could be perceived as an environment (body or skin), which is waiting the human to return, to occupy it and give life to it. The spirit and mind will collaborate with the body, becoming a single entity, which is not opposing to the fluidity and harmony of nature by following structural rules and regulations. This will result to the birth of a new society, based on humanism and rationalism.

Additionally her works and especially her drawings with the title *Shift* and her collages with the title *Body Schema* address the precariousness of our body. The drawings, where lines and points create body-like structures, give the impression that needles penetrate the surface of the skin. Similarly in the collages, images of hearts and other vital organs underline the creation of the inner space of our body, and its dependence on them, as they determine its function, strength and vulnerability. Luenig's images of vital organs reminds us of our own materiality and the inevitable decay or corruption of our own bodies. Metaphorically the vital organs allude to the individual while the body to society as a whole. If each of us (the organs) does not function well, then our activities and behavior will be polluting what is considered 'right' for the common good and will destabilize the sense of certainty and balance in society.

Taking also into consideration other works of hers, which are not included in this present show, one may argue that Luenig's overall art is very anthropocentric due to her engagement with images that have strong associations to the human body. However, in a world, where racism still lurks in democratic nations and the coronavirus pandemic has brought to the surface social inequalities and the annihilation of human life, the artist's focus on the human body and by extension to human nature and humanism acquires new importance, by redirecting the viewer's subconscious to core values. If we learn to understand and acknowledge what we really are and rediscover ourselves, we will act in accordance with true values and reason.