

CARLONE CONTEMPORARY

LENA HENKE

ALDO ROSSI'S SLEEPING ELEPHANT

Upper Belvedere

17 February to 28 August 2022

On the floor of the Baroque Carlone Hall, a yellow elephant appears to be sleeping— or, on closer inspection, this could be a toppled row of arches. With her diverse sculptural work, Lena Henke has long established her position as a leading contemporary artist. Her object *Aldo Rossi's Sleeping Elephant* now adds a sculptural dimension to the illusionistic trompe l'oeil architecture and ceiling painting in the Carlone Hall at the Upper Belvedere. The work was given to the Belvedere by a private collector in 2021. It is exhibited as part of the series *CARLONE CONTEMPORARY*.

Architecture, city planning, public space, urban existence, and a dialogue with the lived-in world are recurring themes in Lena Henke's sculpture. The artist alludes to preexisting structures in her works and forges a connection between interior and exterior. By placing *Aldo Rossi's Sleeping Elephant* in the Carlone Hall, the work absorbs the symbols and instrumentalization of the Baroque frescoes and architecture and links this space to present-day issues. The elephant's sleep is simultaneously the allegorical sleep of modern sculpture and its own dream of its utopian realization as architecture.

The series *CARLONE CONTEMPORARY* is curated by the Belvedere's CEO Stella Rollig: „*In both form and content, Lena Henke's work interacts in a tongue-in-cheek way with the Baroque ambience— originally created as a demonstration of power and*

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might–by poking fun at hegemonial claims and, with a bold gesture, effectively toppling them.“

The Carlone Hall is named after the north Italian frescoist Carlo Innocenzo Carlone (1686–1775). Its allegorical pictorial program alludes to the patronage of Prince Eugene of Savoy. Originally this was a space for conversation and repose on hot summer days. And Lena Henke's elephant also seems to be resting. However, at the same time it acts as a parable of trompe l'oeil painting, grounding this with sublime simplicity.

The work's title alludes to twentieth-century Milanese architect, architectural theorist, and designer Aldo Rossi. In his book *L'architettura della città* (The Architecture of the City, 1966), Rossi advocated abandoning modernist dogmas, adapting historical architecture to new roles, and viewing urban planning as an ongoing process.

Lena Henke's diverse sculptural work highlights and challenges existing social and architectural power structures, sexuality and fetishism, the body and animals in ways that critically and humorously subvert the patriarchal canon of art history. Her works open up a highly enjoyable imaginative space in which sculpture itself expands to encompass feminist and biographical perspectives, thus gaining a new relevance. The artist experiments with both innovative techniques and traditional skills, connecting them thematically with the here and now. A preoccupation with materiality, surface, molding and modeling as creative processes is intrinsic to her art.

„I am interested in the tension between the humble ambitions of domestic interiors and the boldness of large-scale urban planning. The sculpture presented here is covered with colorful agglomerated rubber, a material for tennis courts that is also used to protect municipal furniture. The form not only resembles a resting elephant or

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an oversized tool but could also be used as a module for a children's playground and could activate the physical space of the Belvedere's Carlone Hall as a 'replacement for a public space', " the artist said.

The artist

Lena Henke, born in Warburg (D) in 1982, studied at the Glasgow School of Art and the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main under Michael Krebber. She lives and works in Berlin and New York. This year she won the Marta Award from the Wemhöner Foundation at the Marta Museum in Herford. In 2019 Henke was awarded the Siegen Rubens Prize and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. In 2015 she won the GWK Art Prize in Münster. Lena Henke has exhibited at Kunsthalle Zürich, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, CCS Bard Hessel Museum, New York; the New Museum, New York, and Kunstmuseum Luzern in Switzerland, among other museums. Her works are in acclaimed collections, such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; ICA Miami; the Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, New York; Sammlung Verbund, Vienna; Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl, and Kunsthalle Bielefeld.

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CARLONE CONTEMPORARY is a biannual exhibition series that showcases contemporary artworks in the Carlone Hall at the Upper Belvedere. Artists engage with the Baroque pictorial program of the frescoes and build a bridge between the classical world of Apollo and Diana and the present. The series has so far included work by Uli Aigner, Renate Bertlmann, Ines Doujak, Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler, Volkmar Klien, Walter Pichler, and David Zink Yi.

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