

Joachim Bandau

30.8.24–19.10.24

“(...) what is a human figure, what is a human being, what happens to people, that’s what interests me.”

The intersection of body and technology is the starting point of Joachim Bandau’s sculptures from the 1960s and 1970s. Joachim was born in Cologne in 1936 and studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in the late 1950s and 60s. During his studies, he was influenced by the socio-political echoes of the Second World War, technological advancements in medicine namely the first heart transplant in 1967, political events such as the war in Vietnam, but also the focus on the glamorous consumer world in what was then Germany’s economic boom that informed his exploration of the relationship between body and technology. The “interior elements” of Joachim Bandau’s sculptures from this period are dismembered body parts of mannequins, which he wrapped in polyester, a highly innovative material at the time, and transformed into abstract “beings”. A “new figuration”, as he put it. Bandau’s sculptures as new “bodies in space”, which were already an expression of longings, fears and hopes at the time, are still very much relevant today. While the 1960s and 1970s were still mainly characterized by new technical „developments“ for the “body of the future” in the analog world, today it is digital developments and AI, as well as the current global crises, that influence our vision for our bodies and the bodies of others.



Wasserwerfer, 1974

mannequin segments, glass-reinforced polyester, PVC-pipes,
lacquer, C-hose couplings, malleable cast iron rollers

223 × 55 × 85 cm

The exhibition shows three major works by Joachim Bandau from 1967 to 1974. Großes weißes Tor (1969/1970) is one of Joachim Bandau’s most striking sculptures with passageways and thresholds, which, however, elude any functionality due to their proportions. In a subtle process, Joachim Bandau reflects the physical condition and visionary optimization of the body, both beautiful and uncomfortable. In fact, the modular parts are shaped from dismantled mannequins, which are then coated with a smooth polyester and lacquer surface. The “beautiful” manipulation of body, space and material refers to the idea of industrial reproduction and perfection, although all of Joachim Bandau’s sculptures were produced by hand. The Wasserwerfer (1974), which has its counterpart in the “Späher” sculpture in the collection of the Centre Pompidou, conceals the thighs of a mannequin under its black surface, which has now become “ready-to-fire” pipes.

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Created in the context of a post-war Germany, which from today's perspective took unbelievably harsh action against the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and whose democratic structures were still young, „Wasserwerfer“ is highly relevant with current world events.

At the time, an art critic described Joachim Bandau's sculptures as „organoid-technoid hybrids“. This interest in the interaction between man and machine is impressively demonstrated by the sculpture Fingerbank II (1970), which play directly with the utopias of „new bodies“ and at the same time coexist in a captivating way with the smooth aesthetics of Bandau's surface materials: polyester, lacquer, Plexiglass and silver ready-made objects.

Joachim Bandau's works were produced as a consequence of the contemporary and artistic events of the time. And it is remarkably interesting to see the radiance with which Bandau's work remains thematically and formally relevant today.



Fingerbank II, 1970

Shower hoses, fiberglass-reinforced polyester, mannequin segments, lacquer, plexiglass, tire inner tube

Height 120-160 cm, Diameter each 20 cm, width varies

Biographical note:

Joachim Bandau was born in Cologne in 1936. He lives and works in Aachen. He was invited to documenta 6 in Kassel in 1977. Solo exhibitions (selection): Centre Pompidou (2024), Kunsthalle Basel (2021), Neues Museum Nürnberg (2016), Ludwig-Forum Aachen (2001), Jewish Museum Berlin (1996), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (1994), Kunsthalle Winterthur (1992), Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst (MuHKA) Antwerp, Kunsthalle Kiel (1979). Museum collections (selection): Kunstmuseum Basel, Centre Pompidou Paris, SculptureCenter New York, M HKA Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, Folkwang Museum Essen, DeYoung Museum San Francisco or the Museum Ludwig Cologne.

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