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Mai-Thu Perret at Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas

May 16~2016



Mai-Thu Perret installation views at Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, 2016

Courtesy: the artist; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas.

Nasher Sculpture Center announces the first "Sightings" exhibition of 2016: "Sightings: Mai-Thu Perret", featuring sculptural works and paintings, as well as two performances that will be part of the Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger Family SOLUNA International Music & Arts Festival.

Swiss-born Mai-Thu Perret has spent the last 16 years making work based on a fictional feminist art commune she created called *The Crystal Frontier*. The imaginary women of New Ponderosa live in autonomy in the New Mexican desert and make work that runs the visual gamut, from the painterly to the sculptural, often employing the aesthetic tropes of Modernism and aligning the work with utopian Modernist movements. For "Sightings", Perret will build on this project, installing recent ceramics and paintings, along with a new body of work that relates her interest in utopian societies to the recent development of the secular Kurdish community in the Syrian region of Rojava—a place that has been described as a utopia for its championing of women as leaders and practice of democracy among its inhabitants in the middle of war-torn territory.

In collaboration with the SOLUNA International Music and Arts Festival, Perret will also present a recent performance entitled *Figures* at the Nasher Sculpture Center on June 2 and a newly commissioned world-premiere performance on June 4.

"We are excited to bring Mai-Thu Perret's multifaceted work to the Nasher Sculpture Center," notes Nasher Director Jeremy Strick. "While Perret's practice encompasses a range of mediums and modes, it is united by a keen and questioning intelligence and produces works that are nuanced, enigmatic, and arresting. The new body of work she is producing for Sightings has special importance and could not be more timely in its inspiration, while the performances she presents as part of SOLUNA will offer new experiences to our visitors that are at once provocative, compelling, and illuminating."

Building on the objects and texts born from the women of New Ponderosa, for "Sightings", Perret will make several life-size figures in a variety of media—papier-mâché, ceramic, latex—and outfit them in uniforms and gear appropriate for soldiers. Perret's figures represent the women fighting in all-female militia groups known as the Y.P.J. or Female Protection Units, a branch of the Kurdish People's Protection Units who represent the first line of defense against ISIS in the region of Rojava in northern Syria. Unlike the women of New Ponderosa, the women fighting in the Y.P.J. are real and echo the utopian feminist ideals Perret imagined. The artist hopes to honor their actions as well as bring attention to their efforts to build a society based on freedom and equality.

Perret frequently collaborates with musicians, dancers, and singers to create performances that are referenced in *The Crystal Frontier*. Most recently, she staged the performance entitled *Figures* for the 2014 Biennale of Moving Images in Geneva, which she will restage at the Nasher as part of the SOLUNA International Music and Arts Festival on June 2. Featuring a life-sized marionette whose body is animated by a dancer—Anja Schmidt—with vocals and music provided by a singer and musician—Tamara Barnett-Herrin and Beatrice Dillon, respectively—the performance cycles through an elaborate narrative that involves an Indian mystic, a 19th-century American Shaker, a 1950s computer programmer, an artificial intelligence, and a journalist. The staging of the piece recalls the Japanese style of puppetry known as *bumraku*, in which the manipulators appear on stage alongside the puppets, providing a parallel performance of real and artificial bodies in motion. In *Figures*, Perret ties together the seemingly disparate identities of women throughout history through the different characters that both dancer and puppet embody during the course of the performance.

at Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas
until 17 July 2016