

Hede Bühl

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DC Open

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5.9–1.11.25

„Make a start, then something resists  
you, and you have to find your way  
forward. My sculptures reflect that.“

– Hede Bühl



Head (Large Urn), 1987

Cast bronze, polished

27 × 38 × 26 cm

Hede Bühl has been exploring images of human beings as a motif, concentrating on the human head, since the 1960s. While studying at the Academy of Fine Arts under Joseph Beuys, a fellow student gave her a skull. Fascinated by the archaic elliptical forms and the traces of the sensory organs, Hede Bühl abstracts the theme of „humanity“ predominantly in sculptures made of bronze, plaster, stone, lead, and aluminum, as well as in her expressive drawings. Her works echo the history of modern art, reaching far back into antiquity and archaic cultures. At the same time, Hede Bühl's works are impressively contemporary and point to the future in the search for how „being human“ might be defined. „Hede Bühl, a sculptor of mankind“ is the apt title of Uwe RÜth's text on the occasion of her solo exhibition at the Glaskasten Sculpture Museum in Marl in 1981.

The current exhibition showcases sculptures and drawings spanning five decades from the 1970s to 2024. „Colossus“, the bronze sculptures from 1973 and „Guardian“ the lead-plaster sculpture, together with „Head“ the monumental bronze sculpture from 1985, are among the pioneering sculptures in Hede Bühl's early work. Inspired by her residency at the Villa Romana in Florence in 1973/74 and the Villa Massimo in Rome in 1979/80, Hede Bühl abstracted the depiction of the human body toward „centered force fields.“ At the same time, she created large expressive drawings that show the thought process of becoming and changing within the paradoxical tension between colour and line. Hede Bühl's smaller heads in the exhibition are covered in monochrome lacquer and use this materiality to play with technological aspects of our present. Hede Bühl's 'heads' reflect our subjective thoughts and collective socialization.

Kadel Willborn

Birkenstraße 3 & 20  
D – 40233 Düsseldorf  
[www.kadel-willborn.de](http://www.kadel-willborn.de)

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Blick, 2009

Distemper on paper

118,9 x 84,1 cm

Biographical Note:

This “timeless dialogue” is what makes Hede Bühl’s works so relevant. We are reminded of the monumentality of the “Moai” sculptures on Easter Island, of the Memento Mori as we encounter it in Baroque churches in Western culture, the “Man-Machine” from the 1927 film Metropolis, and also the knowledge of digitally generated bodies. Hede Bühl’s works show an infinite ‘becoming’ of something that could be us and society. Humans and their bodies are at the centre of her work, and Hede Bühl ‘embraces’ the historical aspects of human life as well as the uncanny and hopeful aspects of an uncertain future. Hede describes this field of tension as follows: „On the one hand there are the constraints, the bands and trusses; and on the other the material bulges out, revealing a strength that comes from within, from the figure itself. I see that as a play of forces, between expansion and inhibition. So to that extent the bands enclosing many of the sculptures have something controlling about them too. It is precisely at this point that a contest has taken place all my life: between desire and abnegation, between an urge to act unimpeded and rules imposed from outside.

Hede Bühl was born in Haan, Germany in 1940. She lives and works in Düsseldorf. After studying as a master student of Joseph Beuys in the 1960s, she was awarded the Villa Romana Prize in 1973 and the Villa Massimo Prize in 1979. In 2007, she received the prestigious Käthe Kollwitz Prize. Her works are represented in museum collections such as the Nationalgalerie Berlin, Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, Wilhelm-Hack Museum Ludwigshafen, Museum Beelden Aan Zee Schebeningen, Kunsthalle Mannheim and the Cragg Foundation, Skulpturen Park Waldfrieden, to name a few. In the 1970s and 1980s, her works were shown at the Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Biennale di Bronzetto Padua and solo exhibitions at the Kunstverein Düsseldorf, Städtische Galerie Nordhorn and Skulpturenmuseum Marl, among others. Recent exhibitions have been at the Akademie der Künste Berlin (E, 2006), K20 Kunstsammlung NRW (G, 2012), Cragg Foundation Skulpturen Park Waldfrieden (E, 2019) and Villa Zanders Bergisch Gladbach (E, 2019).

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