

Stine Deja

HEAVY RENDER

28 September – 28 October 2023

OTP Copenhagen is proud to present *HEAVY RENDER*, a solo exhibition by the Copenhagen-based artist Stine Deja (b. 1986; DK), marking the artist's first presentation with the gallery. The show features a new series of bronze and granite sculptures and explores ideas relating to optimisation of the human figure, and the ways in which technological development continually impacts our understanding of bodily form and functionality.

Composed inside 3D modelling software using a variety of commercially available renders, Deja's sculptures combine familiar elements according to a semi-absurd and futuristic logic. The bodies that appear in *HEAVY RENDER* have been assembled from a mixture of anatomical models, medical devices, prostheses, jewellery and household electrical fittings. Structured according to the artist's aesthetic preferences, traditional medical rationale is upended as small intestines attach to flex-foot running blades, noses come unplugged to save energy (or for easy storage), and heart valves are accessorised with elegant pendant earrings.

In one work, an enlarged contact lens balances precariously underneath a hearing aid at the end of a free-floating spinal column. In a gesture that seems to parody ambitions of corporeal efficiency, sensory organs have been bypassed to channel sensation directly into the spine, with the help of seeing and listening devices. Is there a foreseeable future where human intelligence is redundant, where our brains and fleshy bodies become expendable, but human bodies live on, sustained solely by concentrated nervous stimulation?

Each of Deja's sculptures has been fabricated in bronze, a durable alloy that has played an essential role in the development of transport, engineering, weaponry, money and countless other forces that have shaped our current social reality. Also a classical sculptural material, bronze is associated with commemorative practices across cultures, having been used to depict deities, rulers and other figures of power, in public spaces for millennia. Deja harnesses these connotations and uses them to position uncanny and futuristic but recognisably human figures in the same elevated context. Stripping away gender expression, ethnicity or other external signifiers of identity, as well as personality, Deja focuses instead on a sense of basic personhood as it is facilitated by internal organs and the bodily functions that they perform.

This overwhelming sense of non-specificity is compounded by each of the sculptures' highly reflective, mirror-like finishes. Reminiscent of the chrome architectural fittings you see in airports, hospitals and other sterile, built-to-last, non-places, Deja's sculptures seem to register and reflect the entirety of their environment, whilst also occupying space inside of it. In this respect the sculptures appear somewhat like gazing balls, prophesising a future that appears within them, just as they make up part of the material reality that is shaping that very future now.

The artist's preoccupation with registering time also extends to the rock bases that the sculptures are fixed to. With a density of 3.3 tonnes per cubic meter, these slabs of Swedish granite appear like something from another world. One could imagine them as pieces carved from the rock face of a giant mountain, or as artefacts collected from an alien planet. In any case, these rich geological forms feel like concentrations of time and history that have borne witness to all forms of change on Earth, from life-altering shifts in climate, to the minutiae of changes in behavioural codes. In this respect *HEAVY RENDER* meditates on both our changing attitudes towards bodily existence, and the immense potential that this change brings, as well as the fixed aspects of life as it surrounds us, outside of the realm of human social structuring.