

Kupfer

Headless

13 November - 18 December 2021

Kupfer

Monday - Friday: 10 am - 6 pm

Saturday: 2 pm - 6 pm

Kupfer is pleased to present Brazilian painter Maya Weishof's first UK exhibition in partnership with Galeria Millan in São Paulo. Titled *Headless*, the show is the result of a two-month residency at Kupfer studios, and it brings together a new series of works that explore the architecture of the gallery to establish a dialogue between painting, set design, ornament, and space. At Kupfer, Weishof freely experimented with new possibilities of display, emphasising the scenographic qualities of the work to create a layered environment that invites viewer to move through and project their gaze beyond the paintings.

The starting point of the exhibition is *The Headless People*, a large-scale work that hangs from the gallery ceiling. Constructed with several strips of painted canvas sewn together, creating a portal-like structure, this is the only work completed by the artist before arriving in London. As is typical of Weishof's work, the whole of the pictorial surface is covered with luxuriant imagery of naked bodies, animals, and abstract motifs that blend together in a field of vibrant colours. Produced in Brazil during the most despairing months of the pandemic and under government policies driven by scientific negationism, the work draws on the iconography of medieval and Renaissance apocalypse manuscripts to create a non-linear narrative where ecstasy, fear, joy, and disquiet are blended together in a complicated tableau that speaks of contemporary anxieties whilst offering an escape route (a portal) into a better world.

Amongst the many images that fascinated Weishof's imagination in the lead up to the exhibition were the mythological creatures known as the Blemmyes, headless people with facial features on their chest. References to these mythical beings appear in different civilisations since Antiquity, with mention to headless people also appearing in legends and literary sources from ancient Greece, China, Persia and India. In the so-called 'age of discovery', however, several reports from European colonisers started to spread rumours about tribes of headless people spotted in the South American continent, including the artist's home country. Although Weishof is likely drawn to the monstrous qualities of the Blemmyes and the historical narratives and contexts that underpin their existence, it is their allegorical potential as beings who are not primarily ruled by reason (headless) that seems to attract her the most. In the artist's view, they may signify a way of being or a state of mind where instinct and emotion predominate. Indeed, it is probably no coincidence that this state

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of mind appears to mirror the mesmerising gush of images and colour that materialise in Maya Weishof's intricate and lavish paintings.

In the space of almost two months, the artist's studio was gradually taken over by a multitude of drawings, paintings, and reference images from old masters' works ranging from Bosch, Uccello, and Brueghel, to works by relatively less popular figures like the Italian painter Carlo Crivelli, whose exquisite *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1480) is decorated with *trompe l'ceil* details and framed by cucumbers and apples that symbolise, respectively, redemption and sin. While some of the motifs that populate Weishof's work are taken from historical sources, they are combined with images that spring from personal memories and everyday life. Importantly, her work deliberately avoids the moralising messages conveyed in most classical art; on the contrary, they seem to be a celebration of earthly delights that acknowledges heaven and hell as indistinct aspects of the one thing we can call 'life'.

Kiki Mazzuchelli

About Maya Weishof

Maya Weishof (b.1993, Curitiba, Brazil) lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil. Weishof's practice is interested in expanding figurative visual possibilities in painting. She conceives of images through fragments, distortions, caricatures and hybrid creatures, often revealing bodies and landscapes that begin and end in one another.

Weishof graduated with a BA in Visual Arts from Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) in 2016. She was selected for the artist residency program of Zaratán Arte Contemporânea in Lisbon, Portugal, and also for the Novas Poéticas, program that included Visual Arts students from all over Brazil. In 2017, Weishof participated in a group of practical investigations in painting under the guidance of artists Regina Parra and Rodolpho Parigi in São Paulo and at the SESI Visual Arts Center, oriented by artist Ricardo Basbaum. In 2018, she participated in the exhibition project Confluências Poéticas at SESC Paço da Liberdade in Curitiba. In 2019, Weishof was selected for the artist residency program Pivô Arte e Pesquisa, in São Paulo. In the same year, she was invited by Cisterna Galeria in Lisbon to participate in the C-Lab artist residency program.