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Germaine Kruij's 'Screenplay' delves into the interplay of light and sound

Dutch artist Germaine Kruij, with her minimalistic sculpture art at exhibition *Screenplay* at Axel Vervoordt Gallery, invites the viewers to reaffirm their presence in the built environment.

by Dilpreet Bhullar | Published on : Jun 16, 2021

The **abstract art** laced with **minimalism**, in the world saturated by loud visuals, perceptibly reverses the urgency to resolve the meaning to the contemplative mode of experiencing the work of art at the display. To enable the viewer to comprehend the presence of human existence in the physical world to the lowest common denominator, is pivot to the art practice of the **Dutch artist**, Germaine Kruij. Her latest exhibition, *Screenplay*, at the **Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Hong Kong**, with the abstract sculptures and minimalism is a reaffirmation of the relationship fostered between the audience and the built environment. With the architectural, sculptural and performative interventions, *Screenplay(re)* orients the logics of time, space and perception only to have the audience take cognizance of their presence.



Rhombus, Installation view
Image: Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery

The sculptural percussion instruments *Rhombuses* and traditional theatre lighting techniques of the **installation**, *Cinemascope*, as part of the exhibition, are conduits to achieving the contemplative and the sensorial experience for the viewers. In an interview with STIR, Kruij elucidates, "In the times when surrounded by this constant, fleeting and superficial visual stimuli all around us in our daily lives can overwhelm us, my works carry a certain formal simplicity and slowness to it". The abstract sculptures evoke an immersive

atmosphere that is a result of a careful convergence of music, theatre and **visual arts**. Talking further about the quintessential minimalism in her art practice, Kruij says, "This 'blending' or 'fading' character of my works comes from my belief that art can fully be embraced in reality, that art is not something superfluous but a fundamental part of our



Rhombus, Brass

Image: Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery

In the first room of the gallery, the two monumental *Rhombuses*—one in brass and another in silver and nickel - are hung from the ceiling. Created in partnership with the German instrument-maker Thein Brass, the rhombuses follow the golden ratio (1.618). The viewers are encouraged to activate the instrument with the corresponding brass beaters to produce a deep sound that can be heard from even from the farthest corner of the gallery. The wall connecting the adjacent room has a clock that counts down the minutes from 7 and 30 seconds to zero. The display of the clock resembles the one which is frequently used in cinemas to illustrate the time available before the movie begins. The timepiece allows the viewers to gauge the time spent in the first room of the gallery and time to be devoted in the second space.



Installation view of Rhombus at Axel Vervoordt Gallery

Image: Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery

The exhibition attentive to the vocabulary of cinema equally draws references from the movie-making practice in terms of technology and aesthetic appeal. Kruij delves deeper to talk about her proclivity towards cinema, "Since I started my art career as a scenographer, the language of theatre and film has been my reference. It was the first context in which I started creating and this language of theatre and film never left me. My work deals with the mechanism of how one looks at something, how one perceives and forms an idea of their surroundings. I often refer to my pieces as lenses, frames or optical devices, as it emphasises the idea that you are the author of what you are seeing".

Kruij shared a fond interest in the monochrome painting and slow cinema that informed the installation *Cinemascope*. When seated on a bench in a dark space, the visitors watch a play of monochrome landscapes led by the 10 theatre spotlights. As opposed to **moving images** produced digitally by the projector, this analogically motivated display lets the viewers absorb the gradual movement of the immaterial landscape. The empty film screens invite the viewer to project their vision onto that monochrome light canvas. The light is like a mirror that looks back at you: with this piece, the viewer is the recorder and projector at the same time. It is the gradual movement of the work that gives agency to the audience to experience the tangible spaces and how far they are instrumental to realising the behavioural response to the architecture.



Cinemascope

Image: Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery



Resonance

Image: Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery

To offer a parallel between the current work, *Cinemascope*, and previous installation, *Drop*, Kruijff expounds, "The empty film screens that construct my light installation, *Cinemascope*, start with a square ratio before gradually expanding to reach a six-meter wide-ratio called 'Polyvision'. *Cinemascope* shows how the viewer's eye, perception and narrative can expand while contemplating the light. This work actually communicates with a work I made in 2017 called *Drop*. It is an optical device that enlarges and projects the image of a falling drop of water in motion: the projector doubles up as a camera to make the individual 'live' moments of falling water visible to the human eye. Whilst producing 60 images of drops per second, the illusion perceived by the viewer is that of a single floating drop. Therefore, what you are looking at is an illusion created at the moment, through time and light, by an optical device".

The last set of installation *Resonance*, or the "sonic paintings" as the artist prefers to call it, is an "encounter of the artistic gestures of the two first rooms". Kruijff gives a physical reality of the cinema screen to the work: the bent shape of the screen turns into an acoustic shield with small brass percussion lines. As someone well-versed with sculptural installations and performance art, she mentions, "I often work with hybrid media: a sculpture functions as a musical instrument, a light piece becomes a theatre play, a text-based work constitutes the base of performance". Kruijff gives an example of an on-going work, *A Square Spoken*, to further illuminate on the overlaps of the mediums, "The script for this one-on-one performance is drawn from historical quotes on the concept of the square by artists, scientists and historians including Kazimir Malevich, Josef Albers, Toni Morrison or Carl Jung, among others. In the process, *A Square Spoken* revisits and recontextualises historical and art historical shifts in understanding of the square as a form and concept, as well as the new meanings it has acquired over time. This performance attempts to grasp the fact that an abstract shape does not illustrate anything in itself".

The kinetic sculptures embellished with minimalism invite the viewers to participate in the meaning-making exercise. For Kruijff she is not the sole creator of the work, but the "visitors activate the works alongside myself," to have a subtle rendezvous with self-introspection.

The exhibition *Screenplay* runs at Axel Vervoordt Gallery until July 10, 2021.