

Cristina Fessler

WORK CYCLE «NAGALAND–TRANSFER 1992—2008»

As part of the current exhibition on the Naga people, the Museum der Kulturen presents works by the Zurich-based artist Cristina Fessler. In her work cycle «Nagaland-Transfer 1992–2008» Fessler deals intensively with Naga art and what her own imagination sees in, and draws from, it. The themes she addresses create a bridge between the viewer here and the people in Nagaland.

It all began when Cristina Fessler's discovered some Naga objects in the National Museum of India in New Delhi. Since her first journey to Nagaland in 1992 the artist has dealt intensively with the region in her work. In the process, the question of how to accommodate trophies and rare finds encountered <out there> and what changes they undergo in the process of spatial, temporal and cultural transfer has become a key paradigm of Fessler's work. The current Naga exhibition now provides the Museum der Kulturen with an opportunity to show works from her cycle «Nagaland-Transfer 1992–2008».

OBJECTS IN TRANSFER

The works on display set out from original Naga artefacts. But the objects are not simply reproduced; instead they reappear in her works in indirect form, as imprints or hollow forms. The physical transfer of the foreign object is thereby replicated on a symbolic level; this implicates a temporal transfer – the original is merely present as an imprint in the new work of art – as well as a cultural transfer in the sense that a traditional sculpture has now become a contemporary artwork.

CLONES WITH AN IDENTITY

A second core theme the artist deals with critically in the cycle is the opposition between the individual and the collective. The artist begins by <multiplying> the Naga object that serves as a model: the individual is cloned and from it a group is formed. In a next step the artist gives the each <fresh> individual a new individuality: each clone is singly shaped, coated with copper dust and encased in a mould of iron meshwork, jute or gauze, and glue. When the mould is

opened and the wax is melted out, each figure attains an impressive, but at the same time eerie individuality of its own.

ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY

The issues that Cristina Fessler deals with in her work cycle – the opposition, occasionally antagonism, between uniformity and individuality, or processes such as uprooting, transformation, return and redefinition – are topics that are currently being discussed in Nagaland just as they are in our own culture. Art and anthropology deal with the universal issue of being human, but both in their own terms. Cristina Fessler's works not only show formal affinities with the ethnographic pieces on display in the exhibition, they go beyond that and actually create a bridge between the <here> and the <there>.

About the artist

Cristina Fessler was born in northern Italy and grew up in Switzerland. She has worked as a freelance artist since 1972. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions, both in Switzerland and abroad: «Schichtungen» (Kunsthau Zürich, 1987), «Nagaland» (Helmhaus Zürich, 1993), «Nagaland-Transfer» (Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta, 1996).

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