

CA' PESARO - GALLERIA INTERNAZIONALE D'ARTE MODERNA VENEZIA
SOPHIE KO - TEMPORAL GEOGRAPHIES
OPENING :THURSDAY OCTOBER 10 AT 12 PM
ON VIEW FROM OCTOBER 10 TO DECEMBER 15 2019

The Temporal Geographies by Sophie Ko, a Georgian artist born in 1981 in Tbilisi and now based in Milan, are like two-dimensional boxes of compressed matter, pure pigment ranging in shade from green, to pink, to blue, to deepest black, scored at times by slashes of red or electric blue.

On a visit to Art Verona in October of 2018, Sophie Ko's works caught my eye not only due to the power that radiates from their compacted, changeable substance, but above all their relationship to the concept of time. Some of them resembled cross-sections of the Earth or moon, with layers from different geological eras; in others one could sense the slow passage of time, through an hourglass dribbling minutes, days, and even memory itself.

All of Sophie Ko's works contain not just an intimate, individual kind of time, but the time of History: in some cases the powdered pigments are ashes that come from burning images of works by great artists of the past, and in others they are natural elements of the world we move through and that will remain—ashes to ashes—even after we are gone.

In Sophie Ko's works, History, memory and the past are closely bound to the present and to the constant flow of things: the color shifts and moves, the work is transformed by a random physical process imbued with magic, and never stays the same. With its effects of depth and flakings of pigment, accidental rifts and infinite self-structurings of matter, Sophie Ko's work is something to be savored at length and returned to again and again, over the course of its ongoing mutation.

It was with all this in mind that the artist was invited, as part of ArtVerona's Level 0 project, to propose a work for Ca' Pesaro – Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna in Venice. Sophie Ko got the chance to explore Longhena's majestic palazzo on the Canal Grande close up and discover its past and its present, forming a direct rapport with the museum collections. And so the magic of matter has inspired an encounter, alliance and dialogue with one of the masters of modern sculpture, Auguste Rodin.

Rodin took part in the Venice Biennale on two occasions, both of which left their mark in the form of magnificent works now in the museum collection. The first, in 1901, was for the fourth edition of the festival, when the City of Venice acquired for the Galleria d'Arte Moderna—then under construction—a monumental plaster *Burghers of Calais*, 1899; the second, in 1907, was when the mayor of Venice, Count Filippo Grimani, gave Ca' Pesaro a painted plaster version of the extraordinary *Thinker* that the French master made between 1880 and 1904. These sculptures were part of the gallery's history from the very beginning, with none other than Rodin getting it off to a glorious start.

Just as *The Thinker* seems to sit outside of time—a massive body buckled over in thought, nude and virile, slashed by slanting rays of pitiless light—so, too, Sophie Ko's pigments “implode,” buckle, are consumed. Sophie Ko feels a strong affinity between her *Temporal Geographies* and the timeless man depicted in *The Thinker*. Rodin's masterpiece is an abiding image of a human being reflecting on himself, within himself, caught between the memory of the past, the restlessness of the present and the anxiety of the future. A deep melancholy pervades this dialogue between the contemporary artist and the master of modern sculpture. In Sophie Ko's eyes, the *Thinker* is not just a symbol of eternity, but the image of a man who has come to the end of his allotted time, a man who, as he re-examines his past, realizes History is already behind him, that it's all over and done, and perhaps he never even noticed.

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