

MEDIA INFORMATION

30.11.2024 16.02.2025**Mahtola Wittmer**
Back to Back
Manor Kunstpreis Zentralschweiz Luzern

Mahtola Wittmer (*1993) is being awarded the Manor Art Prize, one of the most important Swiss promotional prizes for the fine arts. For *Back to Back* she has created a completely new group of works. Up to this point, she has presented performances and used drawings primarily to develop and reflect on her work. With *Kopf an Kopf* (Head to Head), she is showing an extensive series of works on paper for the first time.

In *Kopf an Kopf* Mahtola Wittmer combines a reduction in colour and theme with a diverse range of media and a desire for experimentation. She deploys graphite dust, spray paint, gouache, charcoal or pencil, and works with monoprints. Using special printing plates, Mahtola Wittmer transfers structures and motifs, such as hair curls or hands. Furthermore, the artist uses numerous everyday objects from the household, garden and studio as negative forms and with them generates the eyes and mouths, wrinkles, scarred skin, or the tempest of thoughts and associations that seems to flash through their mind. On more than a thousand sheets and large-format canvases the artist has created faces. An oval shape defines practically all the work in the series and its volume is easily readable as a head. Some have a dot for an eye, a line for a nose, or the imprint of a strand of hair – a sassy curl crosses the face, while a swift curving brushstroke forms a laughing mouth. The heads appear to be amused, perplexed, frightened, solemn, bored or dazed. They are mostly bald, sometimes veiled and consistently damaged.

In the *Back to Back* exhibition, Mahtola Wittmer presents these heads close together, staring from the wall outwards. Table-tennis training machines are mounted on plinths in the space in such a way that they can be associated with a human counterpart. The balls which these machines spit into the room become words with which the audience is bombarded. The training robots resemble automated protagonists whose performance is imbued with a certain futility: they start over again and again, emptying themselves, depleting themselves. The machines can also be seen as a surrogate for the artist, who expends herself in a performance, while simultaneously facing the audience and its positive and negative reactions. Every appearance or presentation is imbued with the pressure to perform and the possibility of failure. The demands placed on women today, particularly the pressure to be constantly available in all areas of life, are a significant theme in Mahtola Wittmer's work. The background to this is provided, among others, by the publications of feminist author Franziska Schutzbach, such as *Die Erschöpfung der Frauen. Wider die weibliche Verfügbarkeit* (The Exhaustion of Women. Against Female Availability) or the theories of political scientist Katharina Debus, who speaks of «the universal responsibility of women».

In the for her new medium of graphic art Mahtola Wittmer's work is always figurative; the focus is on the human body, its facial expressions and emotions, its relationships and interactions. The artist produces clear, striking images that convey emotion and tell of fears or anxieties. Her pictorial inventions address uncomfortable situations or convey all-too-human failings, yet always with a blithe lightness.

curated by Eveline Suter

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DATES

Media Preview

Friday, 29.11., 10.15 am

Opening Day: free entry

Saturday, 30.11., 11 am–6 pm

Greeting, Introduction and Prize Presentation

Saturday, 30.11., 11.30 am

Andi Scheitlin, President Kunstgesellschaft Luzern

Fanni Fetzer, Director Kunstmuseum Luzern

Pierre-André Maus, Member of the management board of Maus Frères SA, Representative of Manor Art Award

Eveline Suter, Curator *Mahtola Wittmer. Back to Back*

Sound-Performance

Wednesday, 11.12., 6 pm

The musician Remo Helfenstein reacts to Mahtola Wittmer's works

Book Launch

Wednesday 22.01.2025, 6 pm

Reading by the author Tine Melzer and discussion with the artist Mahtola Wittmer, moderated by the curator Eveline Suter, followed by drinks

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *Mahtola Wittmer. Back to Back*, with texts by Felizitas Ambauen, Svenja Gräfen, Tine Melzer, Eveline Suter, Maja Wismer, ed. by Kunstmuseum Luzern, Mousse, ISBN 978-88-6749-664-8, CHF 30.–, for members CHF 25.–

Opening hours Opening hours over the public holidays
closed on 24., 25. and 31.12.

open on 26.12. and 01.01., 11 am–6 pm

exhibition and publication have been initiated in context of Manor Art

MANOR^{by}

supported by Manor, Casimir Eigensatz Stiftung, Hulda und Gustav Zumsteg-Stiftung, SoKultur, Swisslos-Fonds, Kanton Solothurn, Däster-Schild Stiftung, Gemeinde Adligenswil, LuzernPlus, Sunflex-Sport