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Garage, Rotterdam.
Foreground: Daniel
Albuquerque, background:
Vanessa Safavi

'It does not always have to be political' - introducing Garage Rotterdam's new curator Marina Coelho

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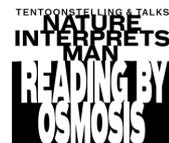
How much time do we actually spend thinking and caring for the mass of flesh and blood in which we spend our lives? Not enough, according to curator Marina Coelho. That is why *The House Where You Live Forever*, Coelho's first group exhibition at Garage is "a homage to the body."

Marina Coelho tells me that her initial idea of curating an exhibition on the body came from society's current obsession with the performance of the body: "women always have to be skinny, everyone is obsessed with the gym." But at the same time, she notes, people often forget that they even have a body, neglecting it and forgetting to take appropriate care of it. "It is not something we should take lightly, as it is the only thing we will carry around forever, hence the 'forever' in the title of the exhibition. Yet, it is also meant poetically: we have to reinvent ourselves every day with the same amount of matter."

Is the exhibition a critique on us taking the body for granted? "Yes, we should be thankful every day for having it. We have to take care of it, eat well, exercise, take vacation. But I think that people



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often don't realize that and the ones who do, tend to overdo it. It is a tool with which we unthinkingly live our everyday lives. The body is the most precious thing that we have, but we take it for granted. In a way, you could see the exhibition as an homage to the body.”

A wide range of artists with different approaches to and understandings of the body are gathered together in *The House Where You Live Forever*. After conceiving of the idea of an exhibition on the idea of the body, the first artist that came to Coelho's mind was, not coincidentally she admits, Berlinde De Bruyckere. Like De Bruyckere's work, the majority of the works on show are sculptural, making use of materials related to skin and tactility such as leather, clay and wax. There are works that deal with the body in relation to architecture (Piotr Lakomy), bodies that fall apart (Robin Kolleman), the body as a means of oral communication (Heide Hinrichs, Daniel Albuquerque), the deindividualized body within the metropolitan mass (Vanessa Safavi), the body as a tool for sexual pleasure and intimacy (Vanessa Safavi, Heide Hinrichs), the body in relation to absence and presence (Guillaume Leblon, Sophie Dupont). In contrast to these largely sculptural works,



two 'flat' works are important to Coelho as they "suggest the idea of the exhibition without being tactile:" Julia Dahee Hong's *Series of Dynamic Compositions* (close-up photographs of colourful energy drinks reminiscent of Jan Dibbets' *New Color Series*) and *Dangstars of China* by AJ Ghani (a documentary series of a group of young Chinese dancers who emancipated themselves through dancing).

"We have to reinvent ourselves every day with the same amount of matter."



Exhibition overview.
The House Where
You Live Forever,
Garage, Rotterdam.
From left to
right: Guillaume
Leblon, Julia Dahee
Hong.



Exhibition overview,
The House Where
You Live Forever,
Garage, Rotterdam.
From left to right:
Julia Dahee Hong,
Guillaume Leblon,
AJ Ghani

Some of these artists Coelho has met since she started living in Gent a couple years back, but some she has worked with before in Brazil. It was there that she founded Kunsthalle Sao Paulo in 2012: “creating a space in Sao Paulo that was called Kunsthalle was already something. It was very small, unlike an European Kunsthalle. Naming the space Kunsthalle was in line with a trend of curators opening spaces and naming them Kunsthalle as a statement, saying we do the same as big Kunsthalls do, but in a smaller format. After five years, I stopped the programme to move to Belgium but I have always wanted to reopen it here. When the founders of Kunsthalle Gent heard about my plans they

immediately invited me to participate as they wanted to have different entities to be part of the programme. And we all liked the wordplay of having a Kunsthalle inside a Kunsthalle. In the future, the plan is to have a white cube in the building for Kunsthalle Sao Paulo to make the distinction between the two clear as we run our own programme, at our own pace, but within the same space.”

Back to Rotterdam. When I ask Coelho why pressing discussions on the way bodies operate in society in terms of skin colour and gender are strikingly absent from her exhibition, she admits that those had not even crossed her mind, but she also finds these discussions quite forced, and does not feel the need to discuss these as she personally takes no issue with them. “As if art needs to talk about social issues, it does not always have to be political.” She stresses that we also need to talk about things that we often don’t talk about, such as spirituality. “I am a very spiritual person, but not in a religious sense. This show is about art in terms of sending a message about sharing, and not about defending a position in society.”

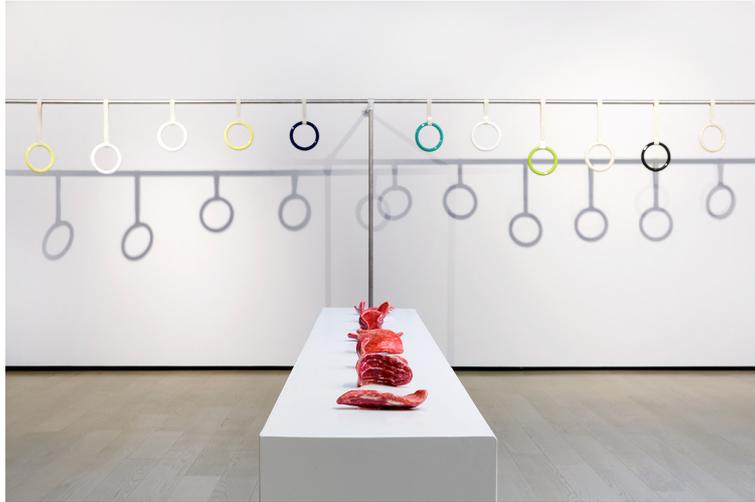
For her next exhibition at Garage, Coelho is planning to curate a show with work by Bangladeshi artists that she encountered

during a recent research residency in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi art is not part of the international art infrastructure, Coelho tells me, but thanks to the Samdani Art Foundation this is now slowly changing. Her show would be an attempt to introduce their work to the European art scene. “I want to focus on the younger generation of artists in the country. It is Americanising quickly now, embracing capitalist values and they are the generation that can tell us what exactly is going on.” As the (political) histories of Bangladesh are quite complex and largely unknown in Europe, Coelho will, besides showing the work that is being made in response to those histories and political situations, discuss those. “That show will probably be more political.”



Exhibition overview.
The House Where
You Live Forever,
Garage, Rotterdam.
Foreground: Piotr
Lakomy,
background:

Vanessa Safavi



Exhibition overview.
The House Where
You Live Forever,
Garage, Rotterdam.
Foreground: Daniel
Albuquerque,
background:
Vanessa Safavi



Heide Hinrichs
in The House Where
You Live Forever,
Garage, Rotterdam.



Exhibition overview.
The House Where
You Live Forever,
Garage, Rotterdam.
From left to right:
Vanessa Safavi,
Berlinde De
Bruyckere, Heide
Hinrichs, Guillaume
Leblon

All photos by Aad Hoogendoorn.

The House Where You Live Forever, with work
by Daniel Albuquerque, Berlinde De
Bruyckere, Julia Dahee Hong, Sophie Dupont,
AJ Ghani, Heide Hinrichs, Robin Kolleman,
Piotr Lakomy, Guillaume Leblon, Vanessa
Safavi, curated by Marina Coelho, Garage,
Rotterdam, on show until 14.04.2019

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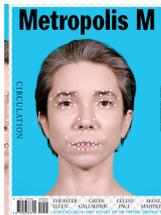
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