



Claudia COMTE - *Bunnies and ZigZag*

17.05 – 29.06.2019

Joy de Rouvre and König Galerie, Berlin, are delighted to host *Bunnies and ZigZag* on the occasion of Quartier des Bains common openings.

Bunnies and ZigZag presents new sculptural work and a monochromatic vinyl wall painting that snakes through the gallery. Comte's work draws together architecture, design, nature and popular culture through motifs and patterns that morph in space. The exhibition foregrounds the artist's fascination with mutating forms that oscillate between the material and the digital. As a starting point for her work, Comte often begins with wood sourced from sustainable forests in her hometown of Grancy, Morges. Her hand-carved sculptures retain the marks and inflections of her signature tool – the chainsaw – one not known for its precision, but rather for its expediency and force. This approach links Comte's work to her wider interests in forest ecology and biodiversity, which she evokes through play, connection and touch.

The work at Joy de Rouvre comprises seven new ceramic sculptures from Comte's ongoing series *Italian Bunnies*, which she began in 2016. The original wood bunnies have been 3D scanned and cast in ceramic with a pink glaze that pools in the recess between the ears. Each has undergone several stages of softening and hardening through a technological sequence of carving, scanning, molding and firing. The characteristic quirks, 'gifts' from the kiln and micro-decisions that shape the work is of great interest to the artist. Bearing names such as Michelangelo and Leonardo, the bunnies call to mind Italian artists from the Renaissance period. Others may recognize the names as characters from the crew of vigilante crime-fighters Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, a characteristically cheeky riff on the sincerity of art history by Comte. With their ears reminiscent of the shape one might make with their fingers behind someone's head or the wavering legs of a lopsided handstand, it's clear this band of bunnies play tricks on us.

At the heart of this work lies a playful take on anthropomorphism and the characterization of animals within cartoon worlds. From the Swiss grid system to comic book typologies, Comte has long been interested in the graphic wall painting as a structural conceit designed to install order and clarity. The concertina-like painting at Joy de Rouvre produces a pathway through the space that appears to corrupt its own legibility. Several 'shadow' bunny ears produced from profile renders of the sculptures are embedded in the wall painting approximating where the shadows of the *Italian Bunnies* should fall. The effect is disorienting and requires that we adjust our stance in relation to the work in order for them to line up. As with prior works, Comte draws on a comic glossary of speech bubbles and exaggerated outlines to denote rapid movements in time and space. In *Bunnies and ZigZag* objects are compressed and stretched out to build a trickery of the imagination whereby we can never gain the upper hand, rather, they run around us in circles.

Gabriella Beckhurst