

Marion Verboom *Gesh*

The Pill, Istanbul 24 November – 20 January

Marion Verboom's exhibition is an exercise in dismantling narratives of difference. The works are an aesthetic relaying of outwardly unrelated research: from knot theory as it pertains to DNA, to Dmitrij Mendeleev's breakthroughs with the Periodic Table of Elements, to the study of works that span art history. Yet while these topics vary greatly, they are all examples of a search for commonality and continuum. Importantly, they are also analyses reliant on the visual, having to do with humans from an atomic level upwards. Effectively the works represent a partial topography of the products of humanity up until the present moment, albeit without a trace of standard chronological history and its rooted hierarchies.

A move away from a historical chronological narrative is also a move away from written and spoken language. It makes sense, then, that at the entrance of the gallery is the exhibition's sculptural namesake, an oversize, gesturing hand. The thumb and pointer finger of *Gesh* (2016) are angled to create an invisible line between them, denoting a human measure of something: an unspoken, primitive signage. Placed at the start of the exhibition, this work

surreptitiously invites the viewer into communication through the visual and conceptual on a human scale.

Behind *Gesh* sit several columns formed by the stacking of pieces from Verboom's series *Achronies* (all examples 2016). Each is a detailed sculptural copy of a work of art or architecture, the whole spanning time and place, from an ancient Chinese representation of a crab to a Picasso sculpture. The varied colours and materials of the sculptures, meanwhile, relate directly to Verboom's watercolours, also on view. The watercolours are a play on knot theory, and their colouring is akin to Mendeleev's weighing of elements – the basis for what would later become the colour-coded Periodic Table. Therefore the art-historical period from which any one *Achronie* comes is rendered unimportant: rather it is the material Verboom chooses, be it resin or plaster or clay, along with the natural feeling of the thing represented, that colours it. There appears to be no logic or hierarchy; the pieces are equal components of a larger whole. The column titled *Achronie III* consists partly of the feet of a Hittite lion, while another part is reminiscent of brutalist architecture, with its

raw concrete and modernist lines. *Achronie V* is part Archimedes' screw and part replica of a piece from Jean Baptiste Carpeaux's sculpture *Ugolino and His Sons* (1865–7). Combined as a composition, the group of columns reframes art as not bound to the era or civilisation in which it was produced but rather something that reforms visually and contextually throughout time.

While several earlier works are also included, the work that completes the exhibition is another new one, *Cornucopia* (2016), looming from a corner, bridging two walls – a cast-iron and resin sculpture of a wooden beam covered in grains, fruits and leaves, coloured muted brown. This is the 'cornucopia' of Greek mythological origin, depicted throughout art history. An appropriate image and emblem to use, then, in an exhibition that is both contemporary and canonical. Verboom's *Cornucopia* acts as a totem of this exhibition's premise: the language of our shared visual history is abundant and is as ingrained as it is borderless and timeless. Encountered during a time of rampant nationalism, anxiety over borders and the destruction of ancient monuments, it feels like an extremely appropriate proposition. *Nicole O'Rourke*



Cornucopia, 2016, sculpture, resin, cast iron powder, 30 × 235 × 30 cm.
Photo: Nicolas Brasseur. Courtesy the artist and the Pill, Istanbul