

Olga Balema, *Computer*

21 May – 29 August 2021



Olga Balema *Threat to Civilization 3*, 2015. Images courtesy of Croy Nielsen, Berlin

Camden Art Centre will present the first solo UK institutional exhibition by New York-based artist Olga Balema (b. Lviv, Ukraine 1984), with a major new commission responding to the iconic architecture of Gallery 3. Balema's work has gained increasing visibility in the US and Europe over the past five years, having been included in the 2019 Whitney Biennial alongside a critically acclaimed exhibition at Bridget Donohue Gallery, New York.

Speaking of a sense of vertigo and untethered coordinates, this new, primarily floor-based, work will create an encounter with the surrounding space that is unstable, porous even, inviting the play of digital image and flatness into the physicality of her sculpture, and integrating light, movement, structure, rhythm and tone as mark making devices to engage the artwork in a form of indeterminate communication.

Balema's installations often engage very directly with the spaces that contain them, antagonising their boundaries and disorienting their coordinates. In 2017, she partially clad the internal architectural features of the Rococo gallery at HIGH ART in Paris with modular foam-and-vinyl sculptures, obscuring areas of ornate moulding and at times shuttering-over areas that wouldn't conventionally be used to hang work - the highest reaches and corners of the walls or slanted roof panels. In her 2019 solo exhibition at Bridget Donohue Gallery, Balema created a complex network of stretched elastic ribbons suspended slightly above the ground, obstructing the horizontal plane of the floor and causing visitors to tread carefully through the exposed areas to traverse the gallery. Painted in a reduced palette of reds, blues, brown, green and black the elastics formed an abstract composition of line and colour across the horizontal axis of the gallery - a work of expanded painting, quite literally coming off of the

walls, where breakaway fibres began to climb upwards, as if reaching for the sun. Titled *Brain Damage*, the exhibition bore a relationship, like many of Balema's works, to the human body and to a natural system in entropy - broken, injured, damaged. In an earlier series of work, she filled transparent sculptural lozenges with water and objects condemned to decay and erode: lying low, supine, like convalescent bodies surrendered to the floor. At Kunstmuseum St. Gallen in 2018, Balema again addressed the floor with a large sheet of printed vinyl opening up an illusory vortex, inviting the play of digital image and flatness into the physicality of her sculpture.

Balema's practice is dynamic, inventive and constantly developing, and her language of forms and materials has included latex, water-filled soft PVC, foam, wire, agricultural feeding troughs, and most recently stretched elastic ribbons. Whilst her earlier work experimented with metaphor to approach topical subjects, more recently she has moved towards a highly formal language that allows fractured and incomplete narratives to emerge. Her exhibitions demonstrate a remarkable deftness and sensitivity to materials and forms - how they hold not just histories, but narrative and meaning - producing highly activated and intelligent environments that animate complex concerns with both gravity and lightness, authority and humour, ambiguity and immediacy.

Notes to editors

For further information, interviews and images please contact:

Sam Talbot, sam@sam-talbot.com // +44 (0) 772 5184 630

Mary Doherty mary@sam-talbot.com // +44 (0) 771 6701 499

Olga Balema (b. Lviv, Ukraine 1984) lives and works in New York. She received her MFA in New Genres from the University of California Los Angeles (2009), her BFA in sculpture from the University of Iowa (2006), attended the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2016) and was a resident at the prestigious Skowhegan School of Art and Design, Maine (2010). Balema's solo exhibitions include Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles (2017); Swiss Institute, New York (2016); and Kunstverein Nürnberg, Nürnberg (2015). She has participated in national and international group exhibitions including The Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2018); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (2018); The Baltic Triennial 13, Vilnius (2018); High Art, Paris (2017); Croy Nielsen, Vienna (2017); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2016); Surround Sound Triennial, New Museum, New York (2015). Balema is the 2017 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant.

Camden Arts Centre

Camden Arts Centre in north London (Registered Charity Number 1065829) is a place for world-class contemporary art exhibitions and education. Founded by artists in 1965, it continues to be a space for the most vital and diverse mix of practices and ideas, with an international reputation for supporting artists at key points in their careers, championing excellence and fostering an open and inclusive environment of ambition, innovation and risk. Through a regular programme of exhibitions, artist residencies, off-site projects, performances, talks and educational projects, we ensure that Camden Arts Centre remains one of the UK's most dynamic and respected spaces to see, make and talk about art and ideas.

Camden Arts Centre has a long and proud history of nurturing talent, supporting a remarkable cohort of emerging artists in recent years from both the UK and the rest of the world, including Emma Hart, Christian Nyampeta, Ruth Ewan, Jennifer Tee and Haroon Mirza. Often providing their first institutional show in London, Camden Arts Centre offers the necessary space, flexibility open-endedness and support for emerging artists to develop their practice; providing an environment in which risk-taking is encouraged within an ethos of learning and debate.

Camden Arts Centre – January 2021