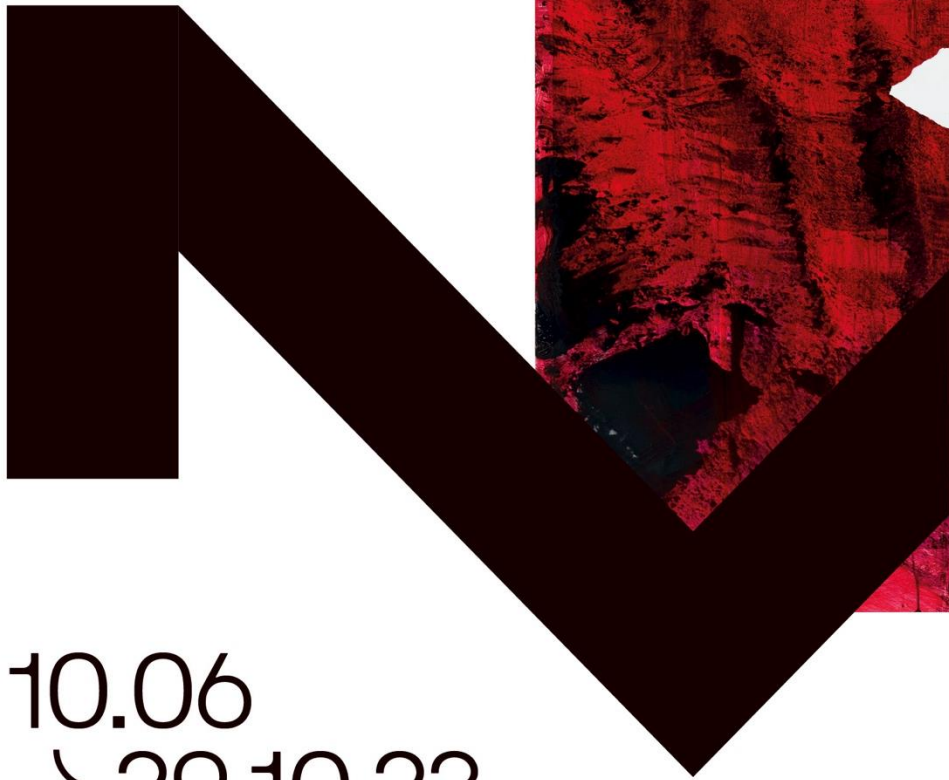


Museum
Leuven



10.06
→ 29.10.23

HUMA BHABHA

LIVIN' THINGS

Untitled, Huma Bhabha, 2021, private collection.
Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: Adam Reich



Vlaanderen
verbeelding werkt



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MO.CO.MONTPELLIER
CONTEMPORAIN

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M LEUVEN PRESENTS FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION BY INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED ARTIST HUMA BHABHA

M Leuven presents the first solo museum exhibition in Belgium by Pakistani-American artist Huma Bhabha. Huma Bhabha is known for her distinct visual language, which focuses on the human figure in all its expressive potential. She draws inspiration from ancient sculpture, modernism and contemporary popular imagery. Bhabha's monumental sculptures in striking material combinations hover between the recognisable, human or animal and the otherworldly. In powerful and sometimes unsettling works, she explores themes such as colonialism, war, displacement and memories of place.

Bhabha draws on a wide range of references such as Ancient Greek, early African, Egyptian and Indian sculpture, modernism and expressionism. But her work is equally steeped in contemporary inspirations such as science fiction and horror films, current events and memories of her birthplace Karachi. Bhabha questions man's position in the world. She interweaves her works with allusions to environmental collapse, disasters of war, mass extinction and subsequent regeneration and transformation.

Huma Bhabha's practice consists of sculpture, photography and drawings with ink, pastel and collage. Bhabha uses everyday materials such as Styrofoam, found wood, paint, clay and cork in her sculptures. She also makes works in bronze.

M shows a selection from her oeuvre, including her well-known androgynous totem figures and monumental drawings. The works are presented in a custom-made installation by M. Huma Bhabha will inaugurate the opening of the exhibition on Friday 9 June 2023 with an artist talk, where the artist will give a unique insight into her work.

The exhibition is a collaboration with [MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain](#), where Huma Bhabha's work will be on display from November 2023. MO.CO is preparing a publication on the occasion of the exhibition.

Curator: Eva Wittocx

HUMA BHABHA

Huma Bhabha lives and works in Poughkeepsie, New York. She moved from Karachi to the United States in 1981 to pursue her studies at the Rhode Island School of Design, and then Columbia University. She garnered international acclaim in 2018 for 'We Come in Peace', two colossal bronze figures that she installed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's roof garden. In Belgium, Huma Bhabha is represented by Xavier Hufkens.

Bhabha has, amongst others, exhibited at the Sydney Biennale (2020), ICA Boston (2019), the Venice Biennale (2015), MoMA PS1 (2012), the Whitney Biennale (2010) and the Gwangju Biennale (2008). In 2020, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art organised her first major retrospective in Europe.

She received the Emerging Artist Award from The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut (2008), the Guna S. Mundheim Fellowship (2013) and was elected National Academician in 2022 by The National Academy of Design, New York.



© photo: Lauren Lancaster

HUMA BHABHA. LIVIN' THINGS - 10.06-29.10.2023

With Huma Bhabha, M Leuven programmes an artist of international reference and a major influence on the current contemporary art field.

"M is committed to offering a platform to important and established international artists," says Eva Wittocx, curator of the exhibition. "Huma Bhabha's work is also in line with the transhistorical and international framework in which M Leuven profiles itself. Her sculptures make us reflect on how we look at the tradition of images in different cultures, from antiquity to contemporary imagery."

"When I start a new piece, I often go back to the same influences which I then revisit over and over again," says Huma Bhabha. "Images of ancient sculpture, African sculpture, German expressionism, Picasso, Giacometti... Also Gandhara art, a sculptural style that originated in the first centuries of our era in the region where I come from – a mixture of Greek and Buddhist influences. Gandhara sits at the crossroads of the East and the Near West. Viewed from Pakistan, Greece is not that far away. That is where travellers and traders encountered each other. Back then, they were better at embracing the meeting of cultures, and how new things emerge from that. You had less of an idea of 'this is us'. I think nationalism is one of the worst things there is. It kills everything else."¹

This exhibition is Bhabha's first institutional solo show in Belgium and, over five rooms, presents a selective overview from the past 15 years of Bhabha's artistic practice. It is a collaboration with MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain, where Huma Bhabha's work will be on display from November 2023.

The exhibition brings together 35 works, including sculptures and drawings in ink, pastel and collage. These include loans from institutions and private collectors from France, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK.

Sculptures

Huma Bhabha's sculptures are born out of a mixture of different materials where everyday products such as cork, Styrofoam, clay and wood are intuitively assembled into powerful, totemic figures. The monumental sculptures fascinate and repel. At the same time monstrous, animal and deeply human, they are in a state between ruin and repair, recalling cycles of growth and decay.

Expressive drawings

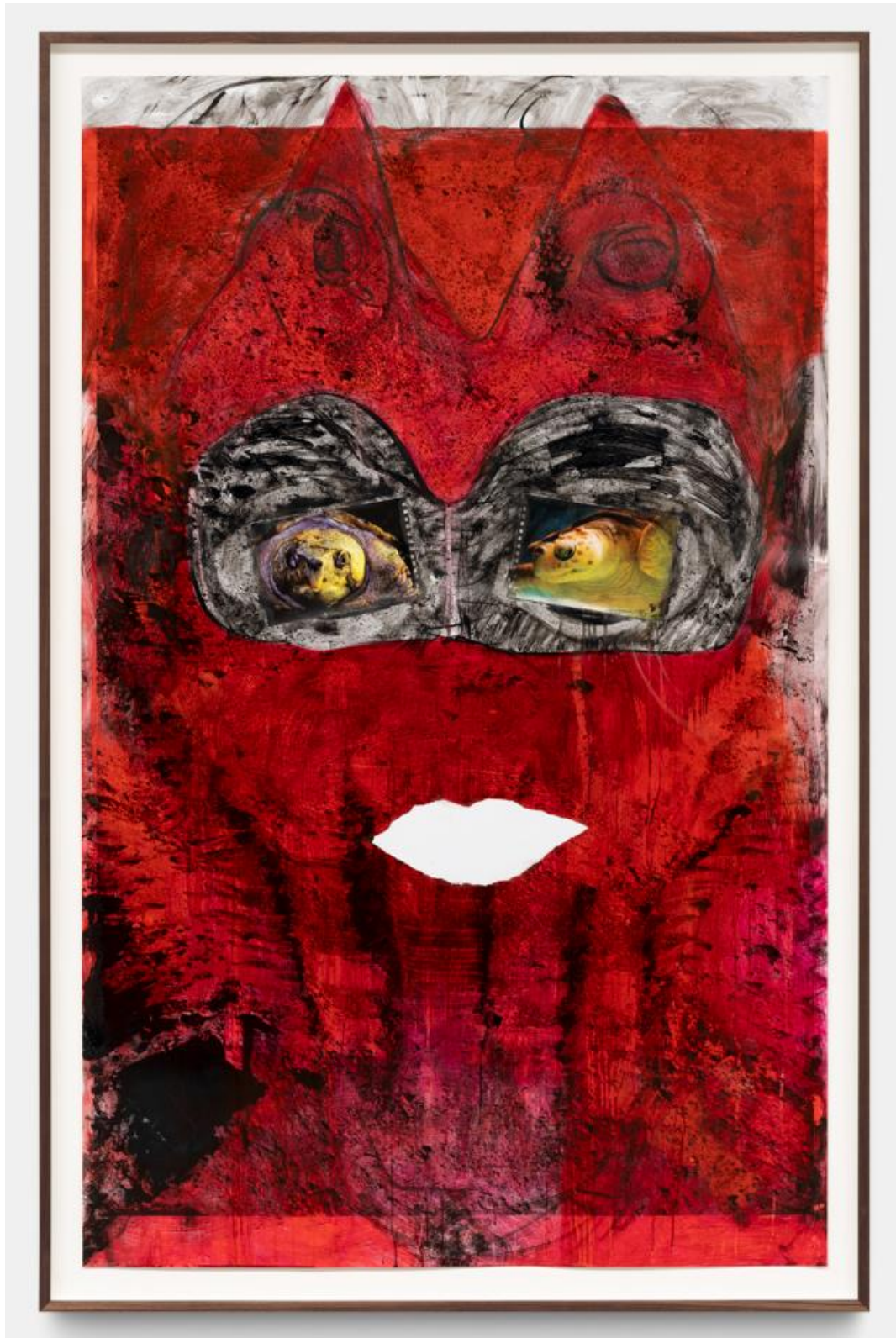
In her expressive drawings, Huma Bhabha combines ink, paint and pastel crayons with collages of photographs and images of animals. The artist incorporates images of wild and domesticated animals in the mask-like faces. This combination charges the menacing portraits with humour. The emphatic presence of eyes gives the depicted forms anthropomorphic features. They form a mirror for the viewer and lets them see the reflections of their inner demons.

¹ Source: <https://www.mleuven.be/en/even-more-m/huma-bhabha-at-m>

Bhabha in M's collection

Not only in the exhibition, but also throughout the collection presentation of M, works by Huma Bhabha have been displayed. They enter into unexpected relationships with the historical works. In this way, the distinctive qualities and contradictions of Bhabha's works become even more apparent: from the past yet referring to the future, contemporary yet timeless, terrifying yet humorous, earthly yet otherworldly. The four art works are presented in the collection presentations 'Moved', 'Maria' 'Lactans' and 'Form First', all on floor 0.

WORKS



Untitled, Huma Bhabha, 2021, Collection Mario Testino. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: Adam Reich



'The Ambitious One', Huma Bhabha, 2021, private collection. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels



'The Ambitious One' (detail), Huma Bhabha, 2021, private collection. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels



Untitled, Huma Bhabha, 2021, private collection. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: HV-studio



Untitled, Huma Bhabha, 2022. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: HV-studio



Untitled, Huma Bhabha, 2021. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: HV-studio



'Impossible' (detail), Huma Bhabha, 2021. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: Adam Reich



'Present', Huma Bhabha, 2022. Courtesy of the artist & Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, photo: HV-studio



'Castle of the Daughter', Huma Bhabha, 2016. Courtesy of Private Collection, photo: Mark Blower



'I was Invited', Huma Bhabha, 2020, T&C Collection. Courtesy of the artist & David Kordansky Gallery, photo: Adam Reich



'I was Invited' (detail), Huma Bhabha, 2020, T&C Collection. Courtesy of the artist & David Kordansky Gallery, photo: Adam Reich



'Mask of Dimitrios', Huma Bhabha, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, photo: Dan Bradica



'The Ancient and Arcane', Huma Bhabha, 2021, Collection Michel Urbain. Courtesy of the artist & David Zwirner, photo: Dan Bradica

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Artist talk

During this lecture, Bhabha will take listeners through her work and process. Rooted in Romanticism, she draws on a wide range of references from art history and contemporary culture.

This lecture offers a unique opportunity to hear the artist herself speak prior to visiting the exhibition. This lecture kicks off the opening festivities surrounding the exhibition at M.

Practical info

When?

9 June 2023

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Where?

M Leuven

Language?

English

Price

Free

Tickets?

[Reservation required](#)

PRACTICAL

M LEUVEN
Vanderkelenstraat 28
3000 Leuven
+32 (16) 27 29 29
info@mleuven.be
www.mleuven.be

Plan your route to the museum

By bike

Cyclists are welcome! Parking is easy. Just use the secure underground bicycle parking at Rector de Somerplein. From there, it's just a two-minute walk to the museum.

Via public transport

The museum is a ten-minute walk from Leuven Station. Rector de Somerplein is the closest stop if you're coming by bus. Use Google Maps to plan your route.

By car

Leuven's new circulation plan leads you into the city and car parks via a series of rings. Would you prefer to avoid the city's traffic? Just park your car at one of the car parks on Leuven's outskirts and catch a free bus to the centre. Prefer to park nearby? The Ladeuze car park is only a two-minute walk from the museum. There are also 18 spaces for disabled passengers (higher clearance: 1.90 m). Click [here](#) for more information on the circulation plan and parking options (Dutch only).

CONTACT

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Web page link:

<https://www.mleuven.be/en/programme/huma-bhabha>

Prezly link:

(High resolution images are available for download at the bottom of this page)

<https://mleuven.prezly.com/en/media>