

# 198 PORTRAIT DAIGA GRANTINA

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199

Born in Riga in Latvia in 1985, Daiga Grantina studied sculpture and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and the University of Fine Arts Hamburg. It was experimental film, however, that first caught her interest and defined the features of her sculptural work to come. “I started by doing Super 8 films. They were abstract films, centered around energies and light effects. Discovering Tony Conrad’s Yellow Movies was a big inspiration to me.” Gradually, she started to extract elements from the videos that she would materialize in physical space. The light cone, however, stayed a fixture in her practice, enabling her to delineate a suspended space where the mind could project itself. Not quite real, not quite imaginary either, this was a space where linear time as well as terrestrial gravity seemed to have waned, enabling a collection of potentialities to unfold in several, non-exclusive spatio-temporal dimensions. Somewhere in the process of going from 2D to 3D, a fourth dimension had appeared.

One of her first solo shows, *Legal Beast Language* (2014) at Galerie Joseph Tang in Paris, built on this tension. Hung from the ceiling or stranded on the floor, silvery sculptural elements mixed with translucent shapeless masses, radiating with intensities manifesting themselves via a diffuse, magenta hue. Melted plastic, crumpled aluminum, tangled wires as well as various plastic trinkets were combined, giving birth to nomadic singularities resembling post-nuclear organs without bodies. At that time, a generation of artists that she has frequently been shown alongside were inventing a renewed way of approaching science fiction, conceived not so much as a narrative as an abstract texture infused with a speculative transformation potential. Feeding on dystopian tales of dark glamour, they merge polluted particles with glimmering post-nuclear waste to produce eerie concretions, chrysalides or microcosms.

Daiga Grantina’s work acknowledges the changes happening in our ecosystem. Science fiction, however, if applied to describe her work, should not so much be

understood as an impulse towards the future than as a confrontation with something radically unknown. As she puts it herself: “Ursula K. Le Guin once said that people use science fiction when they can’t come up with another term. This would be the modality I am working towards.” In her last shows, *Pillars Sliding off Coat-ee* (2017) at Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany, or *Toll* (2018) at Palais de Tokyo in Paris, her palette has taken on a more subdued quality. The hard, metallic tones have developed into eggshell beige, burnt orange or withered greens. The shimmering surfaces now coexist with plaster, knobby wood or coarse fabrics. The contrast between various moments of production, organic spontaneity and meticulously built structures, have become more visible. “I start with a sketch or a model and I restart with a work which is more spatial. It stays a sketch somehow,” explains Daiga Grantina.

When we meet in her studio at DOC, a former school turned into self-administered artist ateliers in the neighborhood of Belleville in Paris, she is preparing for the Venice Art Biennale where she has been chosen to represent Latvia. Several parts lie scattered on the floor, waiting to enter into a larger composition. Like the smaller pieces, the bigger installations also derive from finding a satisfying connection—the unexpected, intuitive one—between two parts. She then moves on segment by segment to gradually solidify an initial, defining intensity or rhythm. In Venice, projected light will once again play a central role. Its spectrum, however, does not conjure up other worlds as much as it induces an exercise in expanded vision. From her early experiments with film, Daiga Grantina has kept a time-based practice that favors an exploration of the here-and-now. What appears in the light cone is a non-linear pluriverse, where microscopic and macroscopic scale overlap and intersect. Everyday material, shapes, objects become alien to us. Walking around Daiga Grantina’s sculptures, we experience how our daily environment might look through a non-human perception system.







TOLL, 2018 (details), installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris Photo: Toan Vu Huu (p. 204)

Omelamella, 2018 (p. 205) All images Courtesy: Galerie Joseph Tang

