

Middle Times | Moyen Âge

Sally Krysztal

Curator: Meital Katz Minerbo

In her solo exhibition **Middle Times | Moyen Âge**, Sally Krysztal creates a multidisciplinary installation that brings together ceramic sculpture with free-form embroidery and ancient legends with a contemporary narrative.

The exhibition weaves a dialogue between the past and the present, which serves Krysztal as a platform for a personal exploration of fraught issues that resonate with the local experience. The exhibition's title, **Middle Times** ("Moyen Âge" in French, the artist's mother tongue), is of course a play on The Middle Ages – a period spanning more than a thousand years in Western history, defined not in and by itself but as an in-between period, flanked by two formative events – the fall of the Western Roman Empire and Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas. These days, the ever-increasing hectic pace in which events chase one another feels like a thousand years compressed into a single week, exacerbating our inability to grasp historical changes in real time. Remarkably, despite the sense of unrelenting acceleration, the time between events feels like intervals, a waiting period for the unexpected and the unknown. With the subtle shift of **Middle Times**, Krysztal situates the exhibition in the intervals – between the chaotic present and a premodern, awkward, and carnivalesque past, where the high is low and the donkey is king.

Krysztal spends this interim period by painstakingly producing another urban space, conjured by a handful of objects charged with cryptic meaning. At the heart of the exhibition stands a fountain crowned by a donkey's head that spouts wine vinegar. The enigmatic hybrid object fills the space with sounds of trickling liquid and the pungent smell of vinegar, creating an intense sensory experience. In our cultural context, this type of fountain is associated with an ancient European street, while in the installation space it functions as a "piazza" that connects the works and the time periods. Beside it, lace embroidery is spread on the wall, delineating a map of the city Lutetia – the ancient Roman name of Paris. In the large-scale map, the urban space is transformed into a dynamic tapestry where the houses and alleyways are demarcated by the density of the threads. Another lacework created in the same embroidery technique is float mounted on the wall across the space, depicting an anatomical drawing of an eye socket. The use of lace as an anatomical visualization device bestows the scientific-physiological knowledge with a layer of finesse and spirituality, evoking the "Eye of Providence" (identified in popular culture with the Illuminati), which watches over the alley. In the exhibition, this is a dead-end, smelly, and suffocating alley that echoes a mental state of frustration in the face of an impenetrable and alienated reality.

Shadows and the Negligible Truth

Shadows have a significant presence in the exhibition, with different manifestations in different materials, replicating the objects and adding to the sense of place they create. Every object – the thin lace map as well as the massive fountain – has its own distinct shadow. Sometimes it appears as a flat, black silhouette devoid of details and with a marginal presence, like a specter. At a certain moment, the shadow is exposed as distorted and artificial, for instance, in the misshapen shadow of the donkey's

head fountain, sewn from parchment paper and stained with the vinegar that flows from it. Another iteration is the dancing shadow cast by the lacework of the eye. In contrast to the static shadow of the other objects in the exhibition, the shadow of the Illuminati produces distorted and duplicated focus. The doubling of objects as shadows takes on additional meaning as it echoes the ancient proverb: “To wrangle for an ass’s shadow,” revealing how our attention sometimes wanders from the essence to the reflection, from what is in front of us to the imagined, and from the main thing to the trivial. The fountain is the body, the source, the reality; the shadow is the struggle over what is but a trace, an echo.

In an exhibition populated by shapes and their shadows – by the thing itself and an empty silhouette which, while similar to the original shape, can be infused with different contents or meanings – Sally Krysztal presents a near-far view of a disintegrating reality, on the verge of the end of an era and the birth of a new one.

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