

BORTOLAMI

Lena Henke creates objects that respond to the social and architectural constructs of a given space. The artist's two new sculptures, *R.M.M. (Power Broker Purple)* (2020) and *R.M.M. (Organ, Organ, Organ Red)* (2020), produced for Frieze Sculpture New York and presented at Rockefeller Center, combine her interest in New York City's history of urban planning with personal history.

Henke, who was raised in an equestrian family in Germany, consistently employs horse motifs in her work. As amalgams of her own visual lexicon with that of architect and urban planner Robert Moses, Henke's new sculptures examine both New York City's pre-automotive transportation as well as Moses' controversial designs. Moses was notable for his quasi-totalitarian views on mass transit and city planning, and infamously bulldozed entire communities in order to erect highways. As Simon Baier writes in his text for Henke's 2020 solo exhibition at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen in Germany¹, her sculptures exist, "scattered about in various colors, materials, and sizes: hooves or entire horse feet appear again and again. These body parts often fuse with other forms, things, and environments, merging in surreal combinations. They cast themselves into archways, interface with walls, with entire city boroughs, streets, landscapes, or plants."²

In their new context, set before Rockefeller Center's formal Art Deco-influenced complex, the large, colorful hooves become objects of irrational, organic flux. They are an ode to the many equestrian symbols in and outside of the Rockefeller buildings; the horse motifs in Carl Milles' three-part work *Man and Nature* (1937-41); Attilio Piccirilli's glass block panel *Youth Leading Industry* (1936), installed over the Fifth Avenue entrance at the International Building North; and Robert Garrison's fantastical stone bas-relief, *Morning, Present, Evening* (1932) including the head of the mythological horse at the 1270 Avenue entrance.

R.M.M. (Power Broker Purple) (2020) and *R.M.M. (Organ, Organ, Organ Red)* (2020), are composed of cast fiberglass and covered with a soft rubber granulate normally used for flooring on athletic fields or playgrounds one might find throughout an urban landscape. The sheer size of these new works was based on Henke's own height, and determined with the help of Le Corbusier's, Modulor,³ an anthropometric scale of proportions, placing her own body in direct relation to the Rockefeller Center's canonical architectural space. Utilizing the same mold as *Robert Moses' Mother Drives Through Wallis* (2018), which Henke originally exhibited at her solo show at the Kunsthalle Zurich in 2018⁴, she presents these hybridic building-cum-horseshoes in a new urban context.

¹ Lena Henke – *My Fetish Years*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, Germany, 2020.

² Baier, Simon. "The Anti-Family of Man." LENA HENKE: *My Fetish Years*, SPECTOR BOOKS, 2020.

³ Corbusier, Le. *Le Modulor*. Editions De L'architecture D'aujourd'hui, 1948.

⁴ Lena Henke: *An Idea of Late German Sculpture; To the People of New York*, Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland, 2018.