

**BY KASIA
FUDAKOWSKI**

For the past year Kasia Fudakowski (1985) has been preoccupied with the philosophy of comedy and joke structure and its potential relationship to the construction of sculptural work.

With her current solo show at Chert gallery in Berlin, the artist draws on the performative techniques of entertainers in an attempt to question the predetermined assumptions and closed circles that exist within artistic interpretation, 'forcing' her, as the artist states, to climb on stage and perform herself. On opening night, she presented her self-written performance piece in a packed gallery.

SMILE, therefore, is the perfectly concise yet ironic title for an exhibition in which the mechanism of the hinge was used as the starting point. The potential movement embodied in this contrivance as well as the inherent violence in the infinite swing allowed Fudakowski to tread the shaky line between kinetic and static sculpture, and to personally explore the relationship between the artist and her audience.

For *Novembre* magazine, Kasia Fudakowski was interviewed by Judith Vrancken, gallery assistant at Chert, Berlin Kreuzberg, Skalitzerstrasse 68.

SMILE was on display between September 9 and October 15, 2011.

Interview by Judith Vrancken

1
*Crazy and sporadic,
though essentially isolated,
acts of violence (1)*
detail
2011
steel, air-dried clay,
gloss paint, magnets, steel, paint,
video documentation *Smile*
performance
48 x 47 x 10 cm





Judith Vrancken: In leading up to this show you've done quite a bit of research on comedy. Could you elaborate a bit on your fascination with this topic and why you decided to bring it so explicitly into the work for the show?

Kasia Fudakowski: Having long been a consumer of comedy, it's something I have recently concentrated on more academically, because I started to recognize it as being the main influence in my work. Simply put, the artists that I am inspired by are mostly comedians. It's difficult to talk about 'comedy' so generally because of course it encompasses a vast range of forms, media, sensibilities, etc. but more specifically I started to be interested in the relationship between joke construction and the construction of sculpture. The language of comic philosophy seemed to me to fit the logic I applied to my own way of working more than anything else, and reflected a much more direct relationship between the artist and audience. What I find incredibly exciting with comedy is, by necessity, it's always morphing and pushing boundaries and defying categorization. There is a disproportionate amount of theory dedicated to it because it's something that's notoriously hard to define or explain, and when touched, often vanishes. I had always had the intention of somehow presenting my 'research', and for this show, the content literally forced me to present it in the form of a performance. Combining it with the sculptures allowed me to attempt a more concrete assault on the techniques shared between joke construction and sculpture without killing it in theory.

Could you elaborate on this? How did the content 'force' you to present your work in a performance, which is something you never did before?

It was the material I was dealing with, that forced me to mirror it in a live form. I started thinking in terms of 'leading the audience here or there' and 'playing with the audience/object/performer relationship'

and so obviously there is no better way than presenting myself as part of that equation. I also felt, (although I found the thought daunting), that I had one great shot at using 'a first performance' to work with people's expectations. It's hard to take risks in a gallery, because we've all learnt such hard earned tolerance, but with jokes you are always risking everything as the expectation of a response is so inbuilt into it's structure, and it's so much clearer whether or not it's 'successful' or not. The whole performance was constructed in such a way as to really walk the line between 'success' and 'failure', which are of course directly related to expectation, and acknowledge the importance of both, without necessarily defining which is which.

As I see it now, the pieces in the show needed to be 'switched on' by the performance; as if it was a catalyst that put the sculptures in motion, sometimes literally and now, next to being sculptures, are also props of a past time work, characters of a story. In what way do you think, do the pieces exist without the performance?

The pieces, in my eyes, exist very happily without the performance... perhaps even more so! They are intrinsically linked to the performance, yes, but in a sense it's more like they were coerced into it, rather than being willing players. They all have some kinetic potential in them through their various hinge systems, but they don't necessarily use it all the time. When they are, as you say, 'switched on' in the performance, it's fairly aggressive, and although they may have been designed specifically for this exhibition, with the performance in mind, I think, if they could, the sculptures would be keen to point out that they have more to offer than the two minutes of interaction that the performance allows them. They become examples, props, references in the performance, but much as you might paste an image into an essay to prove a particular point, that image also exists for many other reasons beyond your point you are trying to prove.

The elephant and the mouse piece, for example, might equally provide a visual footnote to a discussion on fashion display methods or the categorization of the seven deadly sins as scientifically explainable medical complaints. Or *Too heavy for a joke* might simultaneously furnish a debate on the line between art and design as comfortably as it might on the life cycle of the mayfly, *Camouflage* might encourage deep meditation reached through repetitive activity or be used to block out the sun...

Some of your sculptures almost seem to mimic human forms and characters, as the ones in *Crazy and sporadic, though essentially isolated, acts of violence* but also the *The elephant and the mouse* indicates a sort of creature, an individual shape. But this in-betweenness of a recognizable shape and an amorphous structure makes these sculptures almost just as movable as the gate or the ladder in the show; it can go either way. However, their reference to something identifiable is always stronger than their abstraction. Viewing your previous work, this seems to be a consistent topic

How did these pieces come about in relation to this show?

Yes, I guess there is that theme running through the work. I've always used our human keenness to recognize ourselves in everything and anything to play with form juxtaposition. It's another one of those tricks with sculpture, as with comedy, to put two things together that alone might not trigger anything, but by their forced proximity, compel a third image to appear. If you take one stick, you have one stick, but if you add another stick, you see that the first one is thicker and longer than the second, and suddenly it's a father and son, or Peter Cook and Dudley Moore or a hypnotized snake and a pencil... The easiest and shortest of all imaginative leaps is of course to see genitalia in everything, we're pre-programmed to do this, and so it takes very little effort to point to that image in someones mind. It's a cheap trick, but one that

never exhausts, so it remains very competitive! The small figures that populate the wall pieces come from an ongoing series that I work on for a blog, which comprises of quite clinical glossy auction-catalogue style photographs of these little sculptures, where the scale is often not apparent, and then with their titles, are linked to a comedy clip. In these wall pieces, their pitiless appropriation serves to pollute the formal geometric qualities of the rusted steel. It's like a little nod to the heavy

history of sculpture, while putting alphabet fridge magnets on the side of a Richard Serra. It's this idea of a joke, while being a huge risk, an attack, can also be used protectively as a defense..."It was only a joke"... allows us to get away with saying things that might be disrespectful or shocking or in very bad taste. A joke is a little like an invisibility cloak, it can be used for good and evil, and laughter can be both redemptive or corrective.



2
The Elephant and the mouse
2011
Steel, brass, fabric,
wood, resin, rigid foam
Video documentation
Smile performance
171 x 52 x 105 cm

3
*Crazy and sporadic,
though essentially isolated,
acts of violence (1)*
2011
steel, air-dried clay,
gloss paint, magnets
video documentation *Smile*
performance
48 x 47 x 10 cm

4
*Crazy and sporadic,
though essentially isolated,
acts of violence (1)*
2011
steel, air-dried clay, gloss paint,
magnets, video documentation *Smile*
performance
48 x 47 x 10 cm

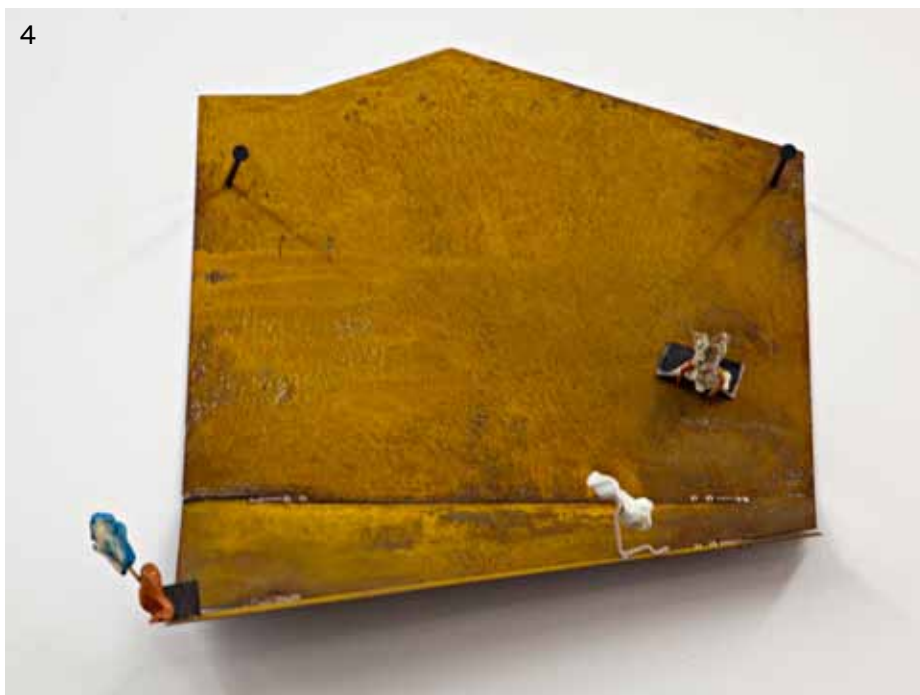
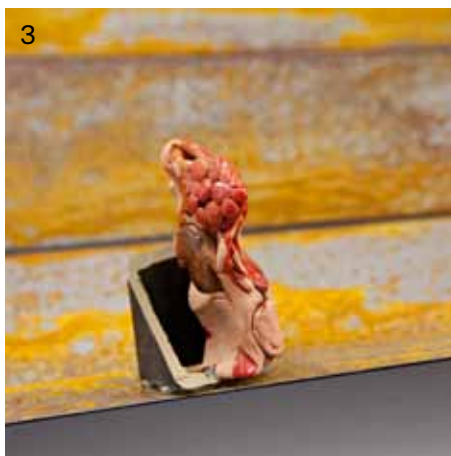
5
*Crazy and sporadic,
though essentially isolated,
acts of violence (1) (detail)*
2011
steel, air-dried clay, gloss paint,
magnets, video documentation *Smile*
performance
48 x 47 x 10 cm

6
*Crazy and sporadic,
though essentially isolated,
acts of violence (1)
(installation view)*
2011
steel, air-dried clay, gloss paint,
magnets, video documentation *Smile*
performance
48 x 47 x 10 cm

7
*Crazy and sporadic,
though essentially isolated,
acts of violence (1)*
2011
steel, air-dried clay,
gloss paint, magnets,
video documentation *Smile*
performance
50 x 74 x 10 cm

9
Too heavy for a joke
2011
Oak, brass, steel
Video documentation *Smile*
performance
20 x 20 x 188 cm

10
Nothing is easy
2011
Steel, paint
Video documentation *Smile*
performance
92 x 360 x 12 cm



8



9





