

## MARGARETHE DREXEL Making Love After Life

Galleria Doris Ghetta -  
Milano

25. May –  
30. June 2022

### Opening hours

Thursday – Saturday  
3 – 7 pm  
and by appointment

Via Ventura 6  
20134 Milan, Italy

**Margarethe Drexel** (Ehenbichl, 1982) comes back to Italy to inaugurate *Making Love After Life*, her first solo exhibition in Italy at Galleria Doris Ghetta Milano. Through organic installations, embroidered textiles and resemantised objects, Drexel continues her research previously presented in the group show *The Missing Majority* at the gallery's venue in Ortisei.

Margarethe Drexel's practice unfolds around the symbolic apparatuses of the past that still persist in the contemporary world, where they are reprocessed and newly presented. In particular, it is the symbols associated with the passage from life to death that vividly portray how religious beliefs, popular traditional knowledge and devices of control and fear are intertwined. Transmitted over time by both conquering hegemonic powers and subordinate communities, the symbolic discourse is based on a common and shared vision of life after death, a perspective that inevitably conditions and orients life time.

Fascinated in particular by the rituals following a death, Drexel focuses on the present neo-liberal regime where collective rituality has shifted into a private and individual dimension, going back to macabre dances and late-medieval folk traditions in which frescoes and visual representations bear witness to joyful and irreverent forms of popular resistance.

*Making Love After Life* evolves around the organic installation 'Good Spirits. In Transformation', where a series of bottles filled with a fermenting liquid led to the swelling of white balloons attached to the necks of the bottles. The liquid within consists of a mixture of St. John's Wort, a plant also called Blood of Our Lord, St. John's Blood or Witches' Wort. Its scientific name, *Hypericum perforatum*, refers to the small holes in the leaves of the plant that were said to have been made by the devil with a needle, as revenge for the herb's power against evil spirits. The oil extracted from St. John's Wort was also used against sunburn, drunk as an infusion to overcome depression or interrupt a pregnancy, representing both a regenerating divine gift and a destructive and transformative power. Hypericum in fermentation catalyses processes of transformation of matter and tells of a silent battle between symbolic belief systems.

The duality between light and shadow, divine and demonic, good and evil are intertwined in the works on display, such as in 'Man sieht die Sonne langsam untergehen und erschrickt doch, wenn es plötzlich dunkel ist' (One sees the sun set slowly and yet is surprised when it suddenly gets dark) where layers of resin and wax recall the light of candles that illuminate the right path of the believer; or as in 'Morgen gibt es kein heute' (Tomorrow there is no today) and in 'Fürchte dich nicht' (Fear not), which depicts a Valais Black-necked goat, with a clear line between the front part of the body being black, while the back remains white. In contrast to the sheep and its symbolism, the semantic sphere of the goat moves away from the domain of the divine and docility to embrace the demonic, the unknown and the uncanny. Looking at the black void in front of her or represented through the words of the Apocalypse of St. Joan, the goat is capable of a sublime experience and a glimpse into another dimension.

Margarethe Drexel moves from the history of her home community in the Austrian Tyrol to explore all those underground practices that have developed within subaltern groups as forms of resistance to the hierarchies of power. Drexel pursues an investigation into the history and culture of a community that can be analytical and scientific and at the same time intimate, spiritual and loving.