

Ivana Bašić

Metempsychosis: The Passion of Pneumatics

June 6–September 1, 2024
Schinkel Pavillon

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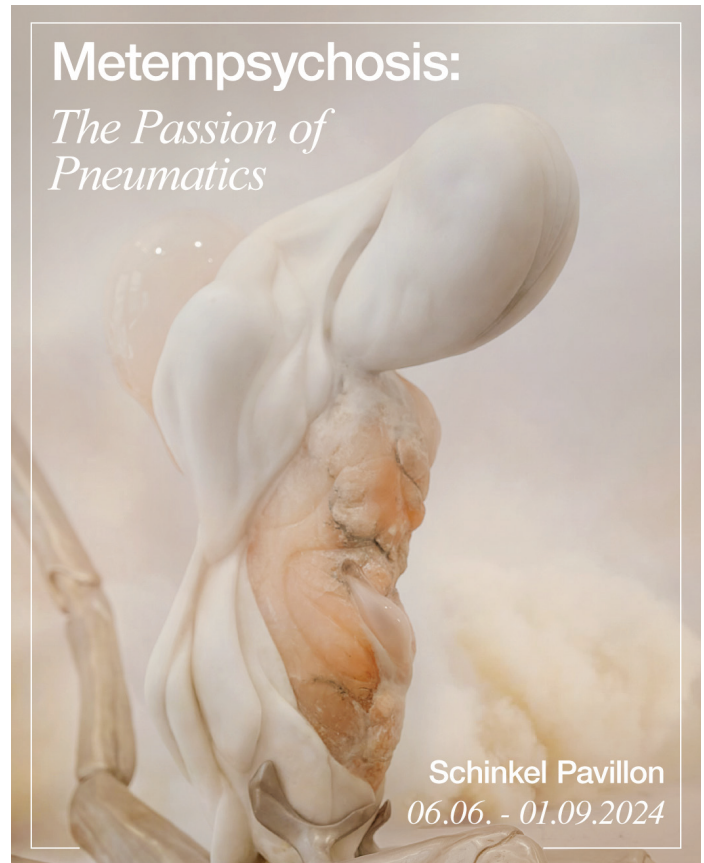
Berlin, Germany — From June 6 through September 1, 2024, the Schinkel Pavillon presents *Metempsychosis: The Passion of Pneumatics*, by New York-based artist Ivana Bašić (b. 1986, Belgrade, Yugoslavia). Debuting more than 20 new objects, the exhibition weaves sculptures, drawings, video, and a 23-foot-long animatronic altarpiece into a surreal journey that contemplates the disintegration and dissolution of the body and material world, not as a loss, but as a moment of radical potential.

Charged by the artist's childhood experiences of war, violence, and brutality brought on by the collapse of her native Yugoslavia, Bašić's sculptures investigate our most pressing ontological fixations: the fragility of the human condition; the breakdown of self and other; the reimagination of life and death; and the quest for immortality, but these far-reaching subjects are refracted through the disarmingly tender gestures and fragile bodies in her work.

Approximately human in scale, each of Bašić's sculptures combines vastly different materials—wax, glass, bronze, stainless steel, and alabaster—into a symbolic material language consistent across the artist's practice. Evoking womb fluids, and insectile bodies, the figures are at once violent and tender, suggesting primordial forces of the underground and unseen. Bašić's hybrid bodies contemplate metamorphosis as a substitute for physical flight, both on an individual level and collectively as a society. Can transformation be the way out, when there is nowhere left to retreat or hide?

Significant objects include a chimeric half-insectile, half-machine sculpture reminiscent of a praying mantis, which in Ancient Greek and Egyptian cultures was seen as a prophet and a guide into eternal life. Another sculpture seems to give birth to itself, pressing its own amniotic-hued glass head through its loins. Two biomechanical figures emerge from either end of an eight meter long, altar-like centerpiece. Their flesh-coloured folds of skin surrounded by shiny plates of armor—seemingly to protect the soft figures as they blossom and dissolve their human shells.

The Passion of Pneumatics refers to the exhibition's altar-like centerpiece, inspired by Italian Renaissance images of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Here the sun-like rays of the Immaculate Heart are replaced with pneumatic hammers that gradually pound a stone to dust at the sculpture's core. Using the force of compressed air, the hammers' repetitive movements are timed to the cadence of the artist's breath, evoking the Gnostic idea of the Pneuma, "breath". In the teachings of Gnosticism, the Pneumatics were the highest order of beings—those powered by the "breath of life"—the "spirit" that transcends the material realm.



Bašić's exhibition design utilizes the Schinkel Pavillon's peculiar octagon-shaped rooms that underscore the surrealist, utopian ideas inherent in Bašić's sculptures, while using the floor-to-ceiling windows of the main hall to provide a panoramic view of Berlin's historic center—itsself a place of generational trauma that has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt through violent acts of ideological metamorphosis.

Ivana Bašić was born and raised in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1986. Lives and works in New York City. Recent exhibitions include: Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2023); Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2023); National Gallery, Prague (2021); Museum of Art+Design, Miami (2020); Het HEM, Amsterdam (2020); Contemporary Art Museum Estonia, Tallinn (2019); Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn (2019); NRW Forum, Düsseldorf (2019); Athens Biennial (2018); Belgrade Biennial (2018); Künstlerhaus, Graz (2018); MO.CO Panacée, Montpellier (2018); Hessel Museum of Art (2017); Kunstverein Freiburg (2017); and the Whitney Museum of American Art (2016). Bašić's work is in the collection of the Whitney Museum.

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