



# MADELEINE BOSCHAN

## THE RISE OF THE MACHINES IN SCULPTURE, IN FRIEDRICHSHAIN

PORTRAIT — Maxime Ballesteros

Madeleine Boschan's career as a sculptor began accidentally. Unwilling to submit a photographic self-portrait for her first Berlin group show, she created one of her now-characteristic anthropoid sculptures.

Strongly symbolic, her practice appears as a post-apocalyptic amalgam of energy flows, measurement devices, light sources and macabre

agents for the enumeration of death, hovering between anthropomorphic machines and abstract sculpture. Her debt to Anthony Caro and Minimal Art's preoccupation with light and an industrial aesthetic is clear. However, unlike her forebears, the light is not utilised to delineate space, but to illustrate measurement and energy flows.

The 33-year-old's practice bears elements of serialism: her ensembles are comprised of two recurring elements, "Elektromanilen" and "Teknopodes". These have a symbiotic relationship, with the Elektromanilen acting as energy distribution points for the Teknopodes, the key actants. The teknopodes often reference their exhibition sites. Thus, the "Dies ater Teknopode",



**AD FONTES (TEKNOPOD),**  
2012

Aluminium blinds, brass, cotton, lacquers, leather, magnifying lens, military cookware, molleton, neon lights, plastics, plumb sinkers, sand, socket-outlets, steel, thermometers, Verni mou cylinder  
311 x 103 x 131 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Hezi Cohen Gallery, Tel Aviv  
Photo: Stephan Klonk  
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From left to right  
**DIES ATER (TEKNOPOD),**  
2012

Abacus, aluminium blinds, brass, flying insect annihilator, glow lamp, lacquers, lead, military cookware, neon light, plastics, socket-outlets, soil thermometer, steel, telescope mirror  
185 x 88 x 53 cm

**KUPPLUNGSSCHREIN/**  
**DIES ATER**  
**(ELEKTROMANILE),** 2012

Brass, lacquers, neon light, night light, pigeon spikes, plastics, socket-outlets, steel  
130 x 85 x 42 cm

**DIES ATER,** 2012

Abacus, aluminium blinds, brass, comb, flying insect annihilator, glow lamp, lacquers, leather, military cookware, mirror, neon lights, plastics, rubber foam, socket-outlets, soil thermometer, steel  
230 x 106 x 98 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Bernd Kugler, Innsbruck  
Photo: Stephan Klonk  
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**DIES ATER (TEKNOPOD),** 2012

Abacus, aluminium blinds, brass, flying insect annihilator, glow lamp, lacquers, lead, military cookware, neon light, plastics, socket-outlets, soil thermometer, steel, telescope mirror  
185 x 88 x 53 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Bernd Kugler, Innsbruck  
Photo: Stephan Klonk  
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shown in a former bunker for Pershing missiles in Montabaur, incorporated a fly trap as symbol of death. "This is just another way of measuring time," Boschan notes, bemused. While the Manilen – their title refers to Medieval water vessels – are ducked, open forms held in white, their counterparts, the Teknopodes, tower into space and achieve humanoid dimensions.

Her sculptures appear as man-machines, a new breed of cybernetic organism. Traces of Boschan's private passions are incorporated in the work: body, movement, tribal totems, symbolism; one of her key references is African sculpture, which she has been collecting for 14 years. She nonchalantly explains that she used to train as a competitive gymnast, and indeed, traces of a gymnast's suppleness are retained in her works. Meanwhile, she is as much guided by formal concerns as by narrative and the series bear Latin titles referring to their compositional elements. *Dies ater* (literally "The Black Day") is an expression for an inauspicious calendar day,

and *Ad Fontes* translates as "to the sources", a Humanist slogan used by Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Boschan belongs to a young generation of abstract Berlin sculptors working with found objects and assemblage. Her preferred materials include blinds, rods and counting devices such as abacuses and hourglasses. She combines flea-market finds with objects recovered from the Friedrichshain streets (one of her pieces features a discarded clothes airer) and industrial materials such as neon light fixtures. These she assembles through an experimental process to the finished sculpture, using cable ties and temporary bindings until she is satisfied with the final assemblage.

Boschan, a former Braunschweiger who studied under the painter John Armleder, works from a former factory in Friedrichshain, a surrounding befitting her post-industrial aesthetic. Those blinds, cables, clothes airers and dismembered boards hang from the walls in neat stacks. The main floor space is given over to an ensemble

she is currently working on for an exhibition in Innsbruck. Here, she explains, she will be displaying a ceiling installation for the first time, following the principle of Lacan's "klein a" – the object which though sought, remains perpetually beyond our grasp, intimating a sense of loss.

"I work in modular components which are assembled into one piece. This component is supposed to be a type of reservoir, which can be moved between the modules," she says, experimentally slotting a light-wand into a receptacle on one of the Teknopodes. "Does it look like something is missing or absent?" she asks me. "The main theme will be that there will be a sense of loss, a missing piece, and we won't quite know what it is, but we'll know it's not there."

Adjusting another element, she stands back, firmly in control of the surreal, almost life-like anthropoids populating her studio. **JF**