

Almost Alive: Hyperrealistic Sculpture in Art

edited by Otto Letze and Nicole Fritz. Hirmer Publishers, February 2019. 144p. ill. ISBN 9783777431178 (pbk.), \$34.95.

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Hyperrealist sculpture emerged alongside photorealism and pop art in the late 1950s in response and opposition to abstract art. Renewing realistic traditions in sculpture that extended to antiquity, artists working in the hyperrealistic pictorial idiom used long established processes including modeling, casting, and painting, reinvigorating the realistic figurative tradition considered outdated by a contemporary audience.

This bilingual German and English publication is the catalog for the exhibition by the same name, presented by the Kunsthalle Tübingen in Germany from July 21 to October 21, 2018. Surveying the past fifty years of the hyperrealistic sculpture movement, the publication documents the first exhibition focusing on this sculptural genre's development. It is a record of thirty-four works by twenty-six

artists including American mid-century modern pioneers George Segal, Duane Hanson and John DeAndrea. The international movement is represented by Juan Muñoz, Maurizio Cattelan, Berlinde de Bruyckere; and current stars Ron Mueck, Sam Jinks, Evan Penny and Patricia Piccinini, among others, that are asking new questions, using new technologies, and evolving this idiom in the twenty-first century.

At first glance the length of this volume can be deceiving. A double-page spread - half of its one hundred and forty-four pages in German and half in English - results in less original content. But this is not to suggest a dearth of information. Within three illustrated essays accompanying the catalog is the history of the artistic journey to replicate corporeal authenticity. The literal, living presence of the human body is seamlessly discussed, contextualized, and presented along with

such topics as pigmentation in the ancient world, Renaissance exhalation of the body, use of polychrome, monochromatic sculpture and its implications throughout the modern era, as well as digitization and robotics. The preface to the catalog, written by curators Nicole Fritz and Otto Letze, is followed by three essays: “Conditio humana: the image of the human being in the mirror of hyperrealist sculpture,” by Otto Letze; “Metamorphoses in hyperrealist sculpture: realist, classic, romantic, surreal,” by art historian Franklin Hill Perrell; and “Hot-wired to reality. Hyperrealistic sculptures as a receptor for our inner and outer life,” by Nicole Fritz. The exhibition catalog with fully illustrated entries is followed by the appendix, catalog of works, acknowledgements, photographic credits, and imprint.

With its accessibility, organization, and currency of scholarship, this volume is highly recommended for both the average reader and for academics, who may pair it with the 2018 catalog accompanying the Metropolitan Museum exhibition *Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body (1300–Now)* with its scholarly and informative essays. This new publication gives an overview of the hyperrealistic movement while contextualizing and documenting its antecedents.