

Europa

Cinematic Relief by Alexander Maß

Europa is an art installation featuring a carved relief on black steel, measuring 107 × 60 cm and weighing 25.8 kg. The relief was created through freehand engraving using a combination of diamond grinding discs and other handcrafted metalworking tools, including chisels, brushes, and drills. The surface was treated with various acids to produce a rust patina, resulting in a contrast between the polished and corroded areas of the steel. Visually, the textured surface is a sculptural interpretation of Europa, the icy moon of Jupiter, whose fragmented crust of deadly frozen water is believed to conceal a vast subsurface ocean, possibly containing more liquid water than Earth itself.

An experimental video is projected onto the carved steel surface, featuring natural and abstract imagery, alternating with periods of time for viewing without projection. Acting performances recorded on a theater stage interact with the visual patterns on the relief. The dynamic interplay between the shifting film projections and the textured surface creates new light-reflecting effects that change with the viewer's perspective. The installation is designed to evoke a sense of disorientation and instability through these visual contrasts and kinetic effects.

The art installation visually reinterprets the myth of the Abduction of Persephone through the intersection of sculpture and filmic performance, exploring themes of environmentalism in relation to authoritarianism in contemporary society. In its first presentation, subtitles beneath the relief staged a short play that poetically examines authoritarian character traits. The work is first and foremost a visual, time-based installation and stands on its own without text; however, an extended 30-page poem can optionally accompany the installation. As with the moon Europa, what lies beneath the surface may be more valuable than what is visible. The work, accordingly, raises questions about how easily judgment, mental well-being, and freedom can be held captive in a world shaped by destructive, narcissistic behaviors. It asks: Will our spring return, or will it remain held captive? How vulnerable are we and our environment to the authoritarian personality, a character defined by rigid thinking, intolerance, and domination?

Technical Specifications

Year of Production: 2024 (relief and video)

Project Type: Metal Relief, Experimental Video Art

Dimensions: 107 × 60 cm (42.1 × 23.6 in)

Weight: 25.8 kg

Material: Raw black steel

Technique: Freehand engraving with a diamond grinding disc (Flex) and other handcrafted metalworking tools

Surface Treatment: Acid-induced rust patina (hydrochloric acid, acetic acid, gypsum)

Finish: Sealed with Zapon lacquer

Mounting: Screw hanging with 2 cm spacers (wall offset)

Film Projection: Europa (2024), Experimental Video Art, Short Film

Projection Surface: Engraved black-steel relief, with partial projection on the exhibition wall

Shooting Format: Digital (Color)

Aspect Ratio: 16:9 / 4K

Runtime: 30 minutes (looped), with breaks allowing time to observe the relief without the projection

Relief, Text, Direction/Choreography, Film, Editing: Alexander Maß

Movement / Body Performance: Aurora Mitsiani and Alexander Maß

Text Language: English

Country of Origin: Germany

Filming Locations: Canada, Spain, Germany

For inquiries or exhibition opportunities, please contact: contact@alexandermass.art