

Andréhn-Schiptjenko

STOCKHOLM PARIS



SALLY VON ROSEN

Born 1994, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Lives and works between Gothenburg (Sweden) and Berlin (Germany).

SALLY VON ROSEN

Sally von Rosen's artistic practice spans sculpture, performance, drawing and painting, with a focus on exploring political ecology and the material relationships between subjects and objects. Her sculptures often manifest as hybrid forms, balancing liveliness and morbidity, rawness and refinement, while her performances act as conceptual extensions of these sculptural pieces. A recurring element in her work is the playful yet unsettling quality of her sculptures, which challenge the viewer's perception by suggesting movement and intention.

Inspired by Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*, von Rosen investigates the vitality of materials and their ability to evoke emotional and intellectual responses. Her works explore contrasts between the natural and the fantastical, fostering dialogues about humanity's connection to the unknown and the future. Through materials like bronze, aluminum and painterly surfaces, she creates works that resonate in both urban and natural settings, blending organic and mechanical elements to evoke curiosity and reflection.

Her practice highlights the importance of treating objects as vibrant entities, engaging audiences in narratives that transcend traditional boundaries between the animate and inanimate, and sparking reflections on our shared existence and environment.

Sally von Rosen (b. 1994, Gothenburg, Sweden) lives and works in Berlin. She has presented solo exhibitions at von Der Hoeden Contemporary (Hamburg), Wentrup Gallery (Berlin), MEGA Foundation (Stockholm) and Trauma Bar und Kino (Berlin), among others. In 2023, her installation *MAIN BODY* at Trauma Bar und Kino featured headless sculptural creatures arranged in a frozen tableau, investigating the intersections of absurdity, the unknown and the human condition. von Rosen has also participated in group exhibitions at notable institutions including Kunsthall Aarhus (Denmark), Kunsthalle Recklinghausen (Germany), Kunstraum Bethanien (Berlin), Schinkel Pavillon (Berlin) and Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen (Amsterdam), among others. In early summer, a large-scale outdoor sculpture will be unveiled for a temporary presentation in central Stockholm.

Education

- 2019-21** MA, Media and Communication for Creative Industries, Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden.
- 2017-19** MFA, Umeå Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå, Sweden.
- 2018** Performative studies, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Vienna, Austria.
- 2015-17** Gothenburg School of Art, painting, Gothenburg, Sweden. Graphics, Valand Academy, Gothenburg, Sweden.
- 2013-16** BA, Philosophy and Aesthetics, Gothenburg University, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Recent Solo and Duo Exhibitions

- 2027** Kunstverein Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany (*upcoming*)
- 2026** *On Three Legs*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 2025** *L'ENNUI*, duo-show with Johannes Seluga, Siddiq Projects, Hamburg, Germany.
MAIN BODY excerpts, Soho House, Berlin, Germany.
- 2024** *Sotto Voce*, von Der Hoeden Contemporary, Hamburg, Germany.
- 2023** *AT ODDS*, Wentrup II, Berlin, Germany.
MAIN BODY, curated by Madalina Stanescu and Juliet Kothe, Trauma Bar und Kino, Berlin, Germany.
Trio-solo-utställning, 3:e Våningen, Gothenburg, Sweden.
Auguries of Innocence, MEGA Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 2022** *Surface - Survival Strategies*, Reference Studios, Berlin, Germany.
O Rose Thou Art Stick, Hall Gallery, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Recent Group Exhibitions

- 2026** *Body. Ideal, Gaze, Freedom*, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg, Sweden.
Nightshift, Pace Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
- 2025** *And tell us how to save us from ourselves*, curated by Tessa Praun, Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna, Austria.
Playa!, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden.
Some Degree of Friction, Art Biesenthal, Biesenthal, Germany.
New New Babylon, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Den Haag, The Netherlands.
Skinned and Spined, Constellations, WHOISPOLA, Warsaw, Poland.
FEEL FIRST, THINK LATER, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 2024** *Street Space Banger*, curated by Tick Tack, Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Recklinghausen, Germany.
Rhizome - Network Without Centre Point, curated by Seolhui Lee, Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark.
Do cyborgs dream of electric sheep, Studio Hanniball, Berlin, Germany.
- 2023** *KarmaComa*, Anna Laudel Gallery, Bodrum, Turkey.
Fathers Chariot/THE FALL, curated by Council+, von Racknitz + Baer Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
- 2022** *Infinitude*, curated by Reference Studios, Schinkel Pavilion, Berlin, Germany.
Open your eyes again, curated by The Fairest, Kühlhaus, Berlin, Germany.
Artist Inside Fellowship, C&A Karl-Marx Str., Berlin, Germany.
Sensitive Chaos, Coullisse Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden.
Cum as You Are, curated by The Fairest, Bad Gastein, Austria.
Enchant embrace them you odd peninsula, curated by Zippora Elders, Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Aliens are temporary - a mutating exhibition, curated by Sylvia Sadzinski, Sonia Fernández and Anais Senli, Kunstbruecke am Wildenbruch, Berlin, Germany; Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany.



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *On Three Legs*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden, 2026

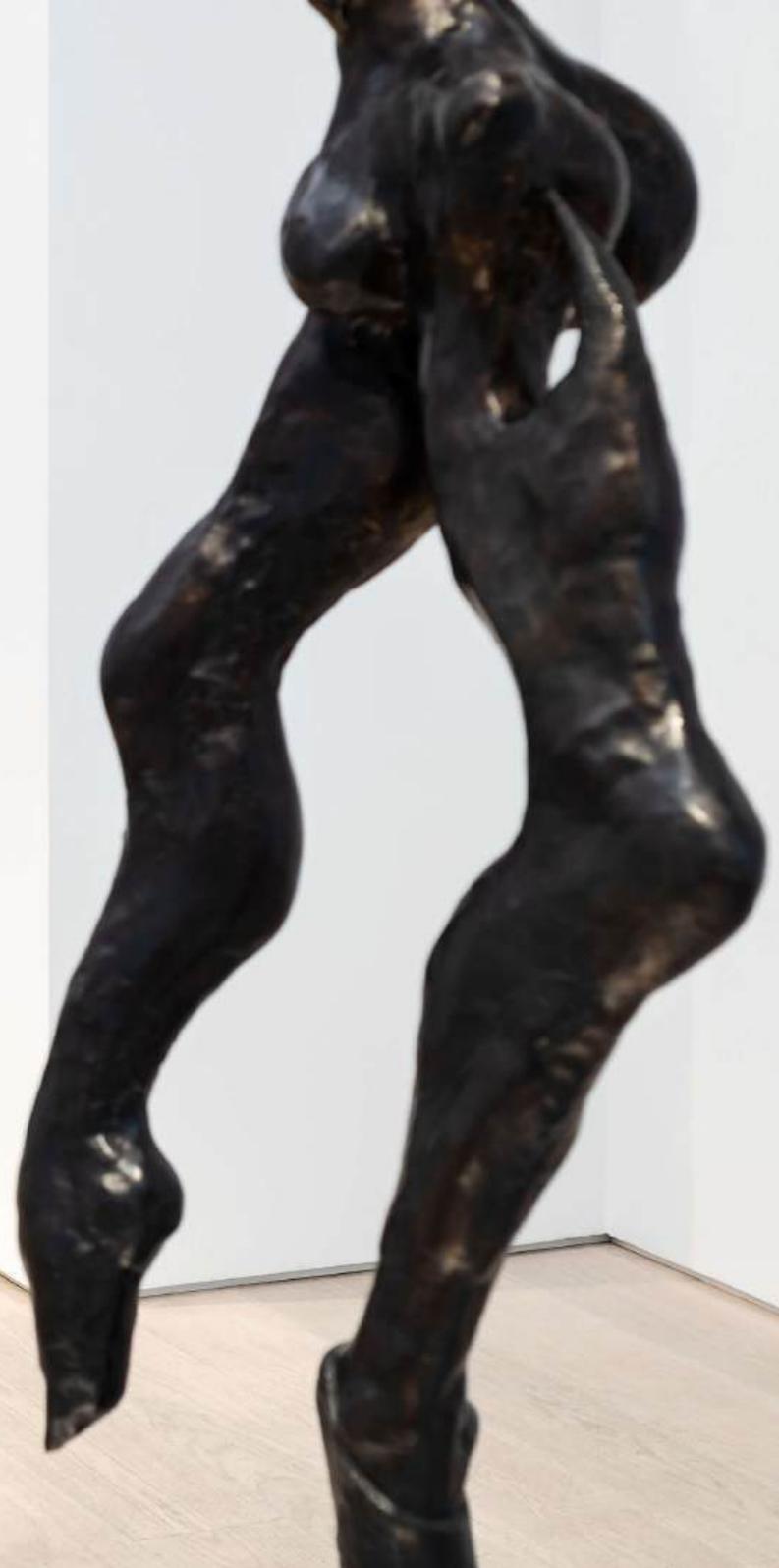


Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *On Three Legs*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden, 2026



Sally von Rosen

Installation view, *On Three Legs*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden, 2026



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *On Three Legs*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden, 2026



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *On Three Legs*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden, 2026

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Sally von Rosen
Motherform I (2025), installation view, Art Basel Paris, Paris, France, 2025





Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *Playa!*, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden, 2025



Sally von Rosen

MAIN BODY Excerpts, Exhibition and Artist Talk in conjunction with Art Week Berlin 2025, Soho House Berlin, Germany, 2025



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *Some Degree of Fiction*, Wehrmühle, Art Biesenthal, Germany, 2025



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Sally von Rosen

Installation view, *Feel First, Think Later*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden, 2025



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *New New Babylon*, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Den Haag, Netherlands, 2025



Sally von Rosen

Installation view, *Skinned and spined*, Constellations at WHOISPOLA, Warsaw, Poland, 2025



Sally von Rosen

Installation view, *SOTTO VOCE*, Von der Hoeden Contemporary, Hamburg, Germany, 2024



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At birth
androids
were flesh
not wires

1921

metabolic
carbon-based
beings
of flesh
and blood



Sally von Rosen

Installation view, *Rhizome - Network Without Center Point*, Aarhus Kunsthall, Denmark, 2024



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *STREET SPACE BANGER*, Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Germany, 2024

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Sally von Rosen

Installation view, *STREET SPACE BANGER*, Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Germany, 2024



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *MAIN BODY*, Trauma Bar und Kino, Berlin, Germany, 2023



Sally von Rosen
Installation view (Detail), *MAIN BODY*, Trauma Bar und Kino, Berlin, Germany, 2023



Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *AT ODDS*, Wentrup Gallery, Berlin, Germany, 2023



Sally von Rosen
Installation view (Detail), *AT ODDS*, Wentrup Gallery, Berlin, Germany, 2023





Sally von Rosen
Installation view, *Tar & Yvi*, Kunstbruecke Wildenbruch, Berlin, Germany, 2022



**SALLY VON ROSEN
PRESS**

ELEPHANT

In Conversation
1 Feb 2024

Species Lost and Found: The Evolution of Sally von Rosen



MAIN BODY, Trauma Bar und Kino, installation view, 2023. Documentation by Joe Clark.

Sally von Rosen jokes that she is “a bit like a bad archaeologist”. She’s explaining how she sculpted ‘Twin I’ (2023) and ‘Twin II’ (2023) – two headless creatures with globular bodies, bony limbs, and claws, which appeared to crawl up the walls of Berlin’s Wentrup II gallery as part of her latest solo show, AT ODDS. The Swedish artist created these foetal forms in a plaster mould, casting them with fibreglass and translucent resin before “violently” wrenching them out. “It felt like they were fossils or something,” she says. “You’re supposed to use a small brush and knives to extract them, but I was literally trying to hammer them out.”

Archaeology might feel like a funny field of reference for an artist as contemporary as von Rosen, whose abstract sculptures have crept and climbed through the most experimental of Berlin’s art spaces over the past few years. Equally renowned for her performances, her participation in Anna Uddenberg’s laser-sharp critique of consumerist culture, Continental Breakfast, at Meredith Rosen Gallery in New York last spring became a viral sensation.



ODDS Twins I & II, 2023. Documentation by Joe Clark.

von Rosen’s imagination reaches as far into the past as it does into the future, and themes of excavation are deep-rooted in her practice. Her hybrid creatures seem at once like a lost species – dug out from some dark primordial depths of the earth – and an entirely novel one, beamed down from an intergalactic realm. Taken together, the scope of her work can be seen as an evolution of that species, from the reptilian eggs she began sculpting in 2021 to svelten, long-legged creations like ‘Reh’ (2023) and ‘Mrs. Sphere’ (2023), who prowls gracefully on stiletto-sharp fangs. New stories are built upon old, futuristic upon familiar, alien upon ancient.

“It all feels so double. I love it when art can stretch between two things that we feel are so far apart from each other,” von Rosen says, speaking from her studio in Mitte. Doubleness is a dynamic element of her production process too, which begins with a constant stream

of images so hard to get rid of she struggles to sleep. When it comes to translating those images onto her materials (aluminium and bronze are her latest interests), she describes a push-pull between control and release.



AT ODDS April II, detail, 2023. Documentation by Joe Clark.



AT ODDS April II, 2023. Documentation by Joe Clark.

“You have to be so intuitive with the material, really feel it and let your body go and just create,” she explains. “But at the same time, it’s heavy work, so you need to be physically fit and disciplined to be able to wrestle with it.” So much so, that she emerged from an intense period of hand-carving last summer with her right bicep noticeably bigger than her left (an imbalance she sought to rectify at the gym).

Von Rosen’s process is such an intimate one that she affectionately refers to her creations as her “newborns”, sleeping alongside them in the studio, staring at them for hours as she brings them into being. But while her sculptures are all about the visceral – “you’re supposed to feel first, think later” – they’re informed by layers of literature and academic theory stemming from her background in philosophy. “During my bachelor’s studies in Gothenburg, my hometown, I specialised in aesthetics: How do you feel when you look at art? But the problem with philosophy is that all the rules are already made up, mostly by dead men, and if you don’t follow their rules then you’re out,” she says. “I realised that if I was ever going to understand art, I needed to make it myself. I needed to create my own system, my own worlds, and not get stuck within theirs.”

like, if an object can do that, it can't be that dead. Sometimes I feel like my creatures are so alive.”

She recalls a moment at a show last year when someone came up to her and tried to explain how they felt about her sculptures. “They said, ‘Oh, it’s kind of scary, and I kind of want to run away from it, but I also really want to take care of it’. And then you have those two emotions, these conflicting things – how you can feel fear and protectiveness towards an object at the same time.”

Her most recent body of work, AT ODDS, is also deserving of that reaction. Several of her sculptures appear in pairs or having been split in two, drawing on the ideas of one of the dearest male philosophers of all time: Plato. In the Symposium, Plato proposes a myth about the origins of human love, suggesting that humans were originally spherical beings with two faces, four arms, and four legs. These beings were powerful and attempted to challenge the gods, so in response, Zeus split them in half, separating each person into two distinct entities. From then on, these separated halves were condemned to wander through life in search of the other in order to feel whole again.

Von Rosen’s ‘Split’ sculptures conjure this myth with emotional immediacy. They look like butchered limbs locked in a warped embrace – straddling one another on a table with an almost erotic intensity or trying to fit together like puzzle pieces on the floor. Despite bearing the texture of raw meat, there’s a romantic pathos to these figures, as though they’ve crawled through the white cube space in desperate search of one another and are attempting to merge again. Sealed shut by epoxy, their hardened surfaces prevent them from doing so. The scene feels both parodic and poignant, a satire of the soulmate ideal that has persisted to the present day.

Von Rosen welcomes this collision of romance and brutality. “The way those sculptures came about, it was also like a brutal act. I created them as one body and then sawed them in half by hand, so it’s like they still belong to one another, but they’re totally split,” she says. “And when you think about soulmates and human relations today, it resonates. They embody a human desire to find someone in life. For a sculpture to do that, it’s scary and beautiful at the same time.”



Mrs. Sphere, 2023. Documentation by Joe Clark.

AT ODDS plays with the human urge for connection and wholeness and also toys with essential questions of origin. Lining the walls of the exhibition are four dark panels coated with epoxy and different types of resin. The tactile quality of their surface is strongly reminiscent of the “skin” of the sculptures surrounding them, rendering them a portal or point of origin for von Rosen’s creatures and also an unlikely reflection of the artist herself. “I realised that with all of these creatures, I’m trying to find out where they come from, but they also come from me – so maybe these wall pieces are a self-portrait in some weird way,” she muses.



AT ODDS, Wentrup II Gallery, installation view, 2023. Documentation by Joe Clark.

The dark panels are also a stepping stone between AT ODDS and von Rosen’s previous installation, MAIN BODY, which exhibited at Berlin’s TRAUMA BAR UND KINO last autumn. Her biggest solo show yet consisted of a towering skeletal sculpture mounted on a square black stage. Balanced on top of one another, intertwined as a herd, 57 headless bodies rose from that black panel, clambering towards the light.

Viewing these two shows in sequence, it becomes apparent that themes of splitting extend beyond Platonic reference points and individual sculptures in AT ODDS, to the progression of von Rosen’s practice as a whole. “In MAIN BODY, my creatures became this flock of bodies for the first time, created individually, then linked through this shared structure. They entered this massive existence, so then came the question of what next?” von Rosen

explains. “What’s their next step? Grow them even bigger? In another formation? That’s possible, of course, and will probably happen at some point, but to go further, I felt I had to break it all down. AT ODDS was this moment of radical cut.”

Von Rosen’s self-awareness is striking. She’s an artist who goes deep and deeper still and then surfaces for air to consider each claw of each limb of each creature of each collection within a broader history of her own making. Her ability to sculpt and sustain a narrative over months and years while keeping it sharp with radical departures like this one is what makes following her career so rewarding.

Written by Madeleine Pollard

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<https://elephant.art/species-lost-and-found-the-evolution-of-sally-von-rosen/>

Wohin soll es gehen? Sally von Rosen bei Von der Hoeden Contemporary

REVIEW
18. November 2024 • Text von Katrin Krumm

In der Ausstellung "Sotto voce" in der Hamburger Galerie Von der Hoeden Contemporary präsentiert Sally von Rosen ihre neueste Werkgruppe. Ausgehend von den Überlegungen der US-amerikanischen Philosophin Jane Bennett untersucht sie die Handlungsfähigkeit von Materie – unabhängig vom Menschen.



Sally von Rosen, sotto voce, Exhibition view, Von der Hoeden Contemporary, 2024.

Verbunden durch einen in sich gedrehten Torso läuft ein Körper in vier Gliedmaßen aus. Jeweils zwei vermeintliche Körperteile zeigen in gegenüberliegende Richtungen, nur an wenigen Punkten berühren sie den hellen Steinboden der Galerie. Von der Hoeden Contemporary betritt und der Skulptur näher kommt, lässt sich lediglich die Vermutung anstellen, dass hier zwei zielgerichtete Bewegungen um die Vorherrschaft des nächsten Schritts kämpfen.

Sally von Rosens Skulptur "Sinuous" umgibt die Aura einer kurz bevorstehenden Handlung, die das rätselhafte Wesen zum Leben erweckt. Die Suche nach einem Gesicht, welches Aufschluss über eine Empfindung oder Absicht geben könnte, bleibt erfolglos. Dennoch – oder besonders deshalb – fordert es von den Betrachtenden eine sinnliche Bezugnahme ein.



Sally von Rosen, Sinuous, 2024, fiberglass, styrofoam, acrylic resin, plaster, metal, epoxy clay, epoxy, Unique

In ihren Überlegungen zu nicht-lebendigen Objekten bezieht sich von Rosen auf die Theorien der US-amerikanischen Politikwissenschaftlerin und Philosophin Jane Bennett, die sich in ihrer Publikation "Vibrant Matter" mit den Beziehungen des Menschen zur Natur, Technologie und Umwelt auseinandersetzt. Indem sie Materie als aktiv handelnd anerkennt, plädiert Bennett für eine Dezentralisierung des Menschen als handelndes Subjekt und fokussiert sich auf die Rolle von Dingen als Akteur*innen.

Die Arbeit "Sinuous" ist umgeben von vier gerahmten Reproduktionen von Skizzen des niederländischen Malers Hieronymus Bosch. Die Skizzen galten als Vorlage

seiner Malereien. Von Rosen traf auf die Originalzeichnungen im Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin und ließ sie mittels einer Zeichenmaschine und Tintenstift in Originalgröße auf Archivpapier reproduzieren. Sie zeigen verschiedene Szenarien sowie Wesen, die sich in fantastischen Stadien der Transformation befinden. Im Zentrum einer seiner Zeichnungen steht ein Baum auf einem Hügel. In einem sich dahinter befindenden Laubwald lehnen menschliche Ohren an den Baumstämmen, während sich im Feld im Vordergrund vereinzelte menschliche Augenpaare wiederfinden, die die Betrachtenden anblicken. "Das Feld hat Augen, der Wald hat Ohren" ist die Visualisierung eines mittelalterlichen Sprichworts, das zur Vorsicht im Umgang mit Worten in der Öffentlichkeit mahnte. Andere Zeichnungen zeigen eine Reihe unterschiedlicher Fabelwesen, die menschliche wie tierische Züge in sich tragen und sich in verschiedenen Stadien der Transformation befinden.



Sally von Rosen, MAIN BODY drawing V (after H. Bosch, Two fantasy creatures), 2023, Automatic drawing on paper, academic framing with linen passepartout // Sally von Rosen, MAIN BODY drawing III (after H. Bosch, The field has eyes, the forest has ears), 2023, Automatic drawing on paper, academic framing with linen passepartout

Flankiert werden die Reproduktionen von einer Malerei, die sich auf der gegenüberliegenden Seite der Glasfront befindet. Sie zeigt die Skulptur "Sinuous" als Motiv im Zentrum, dieses Mal jedoch in einer liegenden Pose, drapiert auf einem mit Stoff überzogenen Sessel. An den Seiten des Rahmens tritt eine organische Masse hervor, die sich wie eine wabernde, lebendige Schicht um das Gemälde legt.

Von Rosens Umgang mit den Wesen ihrer Arbeiten lässt sie als Erzeugerin in den Hintergrund treten. Vielmehr stellt sie ihnen Werkzeuge zur Verfügung, mit denen sie sich die Mittel zur Reproduktion selbst aneignen können. Im Schnelldurchlauf unterlaufen sie verschiedene Stadien der Geburt, Reproduktion und Evolution, während von Rosen begleitend und mit minimalen Berührungspunkten sie anzuleiten scheint.



Sally von Rosen, Sotto voce portrait, 2024, oil on linen, polyester putty frame, varnish.

Der Ausstellungstitel "Sotto voce" ist dem gleichnamigen Begriff aus der Rhetorik und des Theaters entnommen: Er beschreibt den Effekt, einer Aussage bewusst Nachdruck zu verleihen, indem sie in einer unterdrückten, leisen, fast unhörbaren Tonlage getätigt wird. Ein leises, nachgeschobenes "Und sie bewegt sich doch" (im Original: "E pur si muove") ist eine Aussage, die dem italienischen Mathematiker und Philosophen Galileo Galilei zugesprochen wird.

Dieser soll es nach einer Anhörung der Inquisition behauptet haben, nachdem er zuvor gezwungen wurde, seine Aussage zu widerlegen, dass die Sonne sich um die Erde drehte – im Gegensatz zur damals weit verbreiteten Ansicht der Kirche, dass die Erde im Zentrum von allem stünde. Ein vorsichtiger Vorschlag, den von Rosen auch in ihrer Ausstellung präsentiert.

WANN: Die Ausstellung "Sotto voce" von Sally von Rosen läuft bis Donnerstag, den 24. November.

WO: [Von der Hoeden Contemporary](#), Colonnaden 72, Hamburg.

English translation

Where do you want to go? Sally von Rosen at Von der Hoeden Contemporary

In the exhibition 'Sotto voce' at the Von der Hoeden Contemporary gallery in Hamburg, Sally von Rosen presents her latest group of works. Based on the ideas of US philosopher Jane Bennett, she examines the agency of matter - independently of humans.

Connected by a twisted torso, a body extends into four limbs. Two supposed body parts point in opposite directions, only touching the light-coloured stone floor of the gallery at a few points. Even when you enter the exhibition space of the Von der Hoeden Contemporary gallery through the wide shop window and approach the sculpture, you can only surmise that two purposeful movements are fighting for dominance of the next step.

Sally von Rosen's sculpture 'Sinous' is surrounded by the aura of an imminent action that brings the enigmatic being to life. The search for a face that could provide information about a feeling or intention remains unsuccessful. Nevertheless - or especially for this reason - it demands a sensual reference from the viewer.

In her reflections on non-living objects, von Rosen refers to the theories of the US political scientist and philosopher Jane Bennett, who explores human relationships with nature, technology and the environment in her publication 'Vibrant Matter'. By recognising matter as an active agent, Bennett argues for a decentralisation of the human being as an acting subject and focuses on the role of things as actors.

The work 'Sinous' is surrounded by four framed reproductions of sketches by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch. The sketches were used as models for his paintings. Von Rosen came across the original drawings in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin and had them reproduced in their original size on archival paper using a drawing machine and ink pen. They show various scenes and creatures in fantastic stages of transformation. At the centre of one of his drawings is a tree on a hill. In a deciduous forest behind it, human ears lean against the tree trunks, while in the field in the foreground there are isolated pairs of human eyes looking at the viewer. 'The field has eyes, the forest has ears' is the visualisation of a medieval proverb that urged caution when using words in public. Other drawings show a series of different mythical creatures that bear human and animal traits and are in various stages of transformation.

The reproductions are flanked by a painting on the opposite side of the glass front. It shows the sculpture 'Sinous' as the motif in the centre, but this time in a reclining pose, draped on a fabric-covered armchair. An organic mass emerges from the sides of the frame, wrapping itself around the painting like a billowing, living layer.

Von Rosen's treatment of the creatures in her works allows her to recede into the background as the creator. Instead, she provides them with tools with which they

can appropriate the means of reproduction themselves. In fast-forward, they undergo various stages of birth, reproduction and evolution, while von Rosen seems to guide them with minimal points of contact.

The exhibition title 'Sotto voce' is taken from the rhetorical and theatrical term of the same name: It describes the effect of deliberately emphasising a statement by making it in a suppressed, quiet, almost inaudible tone. A quiet, delayed 'And yet it moves' (in the original: 'E pur si muove') is a statement attributed to the Italian mathematician and philosopher Galileo Galilei.

He is said to have claimed it after a hearing of the Inquisition, having previously been forced to refute his statement that the earth revolved around the sun - contrary to the then widespread view of the church that the earth was at the centre of everything. A cautious proposal, which von Rosen also presents in her exhibition.

WHEN: The exhibition 'Sotto voce' by Sally von Rosen runs until Thursday 24 November.

WHERE: Von der Hoeden Contemporary, Colonnaden 72, Hamburg.



FASHION PERSPECTIVES NEWS OPIATES ABOUT SEARCH

"Feel First, Think Later": Sally von Rosen on contradictions, her creatures, and the power of objects

Written by Natalia Muntean

Sally von Rosen's work is a study in contradictions - beauty and grotesque, violence and tenderness, familiarity and alienation. Her sculptures, often described as "creatures," evoke visceral emotions, inviting viewers to feel first, think later. "I want people to experience contradictory emotions," she says, "to feel both the desire to care for the work and the urge to run away." Drawing on her background in philosophy and aesthetics, von Rosen explores the political ecology of objects, treating them as active participants in human interactions. "Objects have their own intentions, their own 'thing power,'" she explains, referencing Jane Bennett's theories. From her early egg-like forms to her latest bronze sculptures, von Rosen's work is a continuous evolution, blurring the lines between the past, present, and future.

This ethos is central to the group exhibition *Feel First, Think Later* at Andréhn-Schiptjenko Gallery in Stockholm, where von Rosen's hybrid creatures take centre stage. Alongside works by Annika Elisabeth von Hausswolff, Dev Dhunsi, and Minh Ngọc Nguyễn, the exhibition explores how intuition and emotion can precede intellectual interpretation. Von Hausswolff's *The Blind Woman* (1998) serves as a symbolic portal into the act of letting go and trusting one's senses, while Dhunsi and Nguyễn examine themes of tension and cultural identity. Together, the artists create a space where materiality and emotion converge, challenging viewers to engage with art on a deeply intuitive level.

From von Rosen's early egg-like forms to her latest monumental outdoor sculptures, her work is a continuous evolution, blurring the lines between the past, present, and future.

Natalia Muntean: The title *Feel First, Think Later* comes from one of your quotes about how you want your work to be perceived. Could you expand on this idea and how it ties into the exhibition?



Sally von Rosen: It's about the transference of emotions - from me spending time with the object to someone else experiencing it in an exhibition. I remember a visitor in 2021 who looked at one of my creatures, the ones with claws and sharp tips, and said, "I want to take care of it, but I also want to run away from it." That's exactly the point. It's about feeling contradictory emotions first, before intellectualising them. Art becomes interesting when it comes from intuition: the shapes, forms, and materials that feel right. Then, of course, there's theory to apply. I have a background in philosophy and aesthetics, and I grew up surrounded by art - my mother was a ballet dancer, my father was an opera singer, and my grandfather a painter. Art has always been part of my life.

NM: You mentioned the transference of emotion. Can you tell me about your emotions while making *O@springs* and *Ananke's Playbunnies*?

SvR: These works are part of an evolution. The first ones were like eggs with claws, but they weren't standing on their tips. At the time, I didn't think much, I just worked with the material. Later, I realised I made these eggs during a time when my body wasn't functioning well - I didn't have my period, and it felt like these eggs were locked in my body. I only realised it a year later when my period returned. These creatures started as eggs, then grew bigger, and I flipped them so they had legs. They started to look more like creatures, part human, part animal. They evolved into a herd, and in 2023, I created a large installation with 60 sculptures climbing on top of each other during Berlin Art Week. The sculptures in *Feel First, Think Later* refer to that exhibition. My work often evolves in steps, like the evolution of a species. It's about something that looks like it's from the future or the past, raising questions about time and existence.

NM: Do these creatures have a life of their own after you create them?

SvR: Yes, once I've done my part, they exist on their own, often in exhibitions. This ties into the title *Feel First, Think Later*. I also research theories that resonate with my work, like Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*. She writes about how objects can have their own intentions, their own "thing power." This idea gives

meaning to how I think about my sculptures.

NM: Do you work intuitively, or do you have a plan when creating these creatures? Do connections emerge during the process, or do you start with a clear vision?

SvR: It's different each time. It often begins with an image - shapes or forms. I start experimenting and realise, "Okay, this means that." The visual aspect usually comes first, and then I tap into my mental library, thinking about how things relate. It all makes sense in the end. Sometimes, I dig into my foundation, like a "bad archaeologist," as I once called myself. For example, I made some fragile sculptures that looked like they were sleeping, but the material was strong. I cast them in fibreglass and resin, then broke the mould to get the sculpture out. It's a violent process, but something beautiful comes out.

NM: It sounds cathartic in a way - hammering it down and then having this newborn, so to speak.

SvR: Sculpting can feel violent sometimes. You have to use a lot of power, especially with certain materials. For example, when I work with bronze, I use heavy tools and a 1000-degree flame to shape the surface. Then I throw acid on it. It's all very violent and uncomfortable, but something beautiful comes out. It's interesting how that process works.

NM: Tell me more about you playing with the duality of things. Like beauty and grotesque, or violence and creation? And how do you balance them?

SvR: I think those contradictions are where it gets interesting. How can a sculpture be both of these things? It's not about balancing them intentionally. It's about the tension between contradictions, something can be both beautiful and grotesque, familiar and alien. I'm interested in how these contradictions coexist and create meaning. But I believe we don't need a clear answer. It's just like that - we have complex emotions.

NM: So you don't necessarily expect viewers to get a clear answer.

You just want to shake up their feelings, to leave them in a kind of limbo?

SvR: Yes. When people encounter the sculptures, it's nice to hear their interpretations. Someone might say, "I think it looks like this," or "I was feeling this." I can't decide what they should think, and I don't want to. That's not art, you know? If I decided that my work is only one thing and that my answer is the right one, I think that's unfair.

NM: Unfair to the viewer?

SvR: Yes, to the viewer. It's about giving them an experience, whatever that experience might be. Of course, it starts with me because I made it, but later, it's not about me anymore. It's about the meeting between the sculpture and the spectator.

NM: Can you tell me about the titles? Offsprings - I guess it's because you called them your children?

SvR: Yes, that's part of it. Offspring can mean children, but in Swedish, if you separate the words - "off" and "spring" - it sounds like something jumping off or springing out of order. And that's exactly what they're doing, they're jumping on top of each other.

NM: And Ananke's Playbunnies?

SvR: That one is a bit more complicated, a little more existential. The titles sometimes come from what feels right. For Ananke's Playbunnies, I sculpted them from the silhouette of bunnies, though some people see them as hellhounds or something else. That's fine, but the shape is from a bunny without the head. Bunnies are also a symbol of fertility, so it all comes together. Ananke is a name from mythology—a Greek primordial goddess of necessity or compulsion. In some stories, she's the one who gave birth to the cosmos with Chronos, the god of time. She represents the beginning of something big that we're all part of. There's also a story somewhere about her and bunnies, which I find funny. The title Playbunnies brings in ideas of necessity and compulsion, and it also plays with the idea of Playboy magazine, joking a bit about human

necessities and compulsions. It has a little background in that. These two sculptures link to my earlier work, Main Body, where I had 60 sculptures climbing on top of each other. People often ask, "What are they doing?" Some say they're in compulsive or sexual positions, or that it's animalistic. It's all about human ideas and thoughts coming into play. So the title ties into that and connects to my previous work.

NM: How important is humour in your work, and do you think about it too much or plan it intentionally?

SvR: If humour comes naturally, I invite it into the work. Sometimes, during the process, things look really funny, like sculptures in strange positions, one jumping and another upside down. It's these unexpected moments that I find great. While I don't always plan for humour, if it appears and feels necessary or makes sense for the work, I'll lean into it. For instance, last year, I created a sculpture for an exhibition in Germany at a World War Two bunker with huge ceilings, called Miss Universe. It featured a torso with a butt, a spine, and three legs walking in an extreme, odd way. It was beautiful yet funny, playing with our ideas of beauty and what Miss Universe represents. It's absurd, but it also comments on body image and societal norms.

NM: So you're challenging ideas of what's considered normal or accepted by society?

SvR: Yes, those are questions I find very interesting. I call my works "creatures," but people project their own interpretations onto them. Sometimes they see an elbow or an animal, and they associate it with vulnerability or something else. One person might say a sculpture looks vulnerable, while another sees it as something completely different. I find that fascinating and it's a conversation starter.

NM: How do you see your work in dialogue with the other artists in the exhibition at Andréhn-Schiptjenko Gallery?

SvR: The exhibition brings together visual works that evoke emotions first, then thoughts. Even though the visual expressions are different, photography versus

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STOCKHOLM PARIS

bronze sculptures, the common thread is the emotional response. For example, my sculpture stands in front of Annika von Hausswolff's photograph of a blind woman being led by a dog. There's a connection there, the woman feeling her way forward, and my sculptures often feel their way into existence.

NM: Can you walk us through your creative process? How do you choose materials or themes?

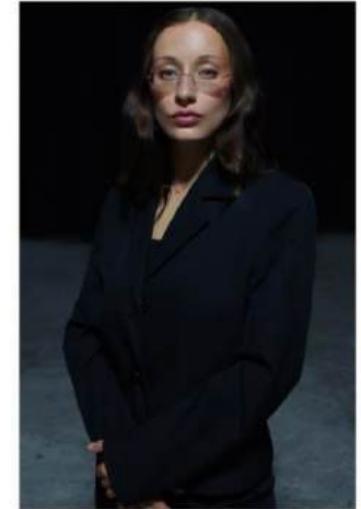
SvR: It's an evolving process. For example, I started with Styrofoam, then used fibreglass and resin for larger installations. The material choice depends on the function, and what works for the form. Recently, I've been working with bronze, which gives the sculptures weight and durability. I'm now exploring outdoor sculptures, seeing how they interact with different environments.

NM: How does your performance art influence your sculptures?

SvR: Working with Anna Uddenberg taught me a lot about materials and production. Performance art is about being present in the moment, which is different from sculpture. But there's a relationship between the performer and the sculpture, a connection that I think about a lot. It's about the interaction between the human body and the sculpture.

NM: How do you see your work evolving in the future?

SvR: I'm currently exploring monumental outdoor sculptures. I want to see how my creatures evolve in different environments. I also have several exhibitions coming up, so it's a busy year.



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<https://www.odalisquemagazine.com/articles/2025/03/23/feel-first-think-later-sally-von-rosen-on-contradictions-her-creatures-and-the-power-objects-written-by-natalia-muntean>