

Davina Semo, 'Agora'

November 29, 2019 - February 9, 2020

Opening reception November 28, 2019, 6-8 pm

RIBORDY THETAZ is pleased to present, 'Agora', the third solo exhibition by Davina Semo at the gallery.

Stéphane Ribordy: I recall you came up with 'Agora' as a title, right after coming back from your trip to Greece last summer.

Davina Semo: I want the title Agora to bring to mind a public square, a gathering place, a place to talk about art, politics, to share news, observe strangers, and pass time.

SR: How did your experience in Greece impact your sense of temporality?

DS: I've been wanting to visit the ancient ruins in this part of the world for years. After looking at images in books and online, the physical experience of seeing this place in real life was incredible. For example, in the part of the city that is called the Ancient Agora, we could see many buildings and structures of the classical agora—including some areas like the "speaker's platform," which were only denoted by a carved block sitting on an otherwise overgrown flat rock area. For me, these notations spread across the landscape and ruins, allowed me to feel really free and creative in this space—imagining people from another time living in the then-current technological world.

SR: Since the beginning of the series, the bells were activated by the viewer. Now they have gained an additional meaning throughout temporality, is that right?

DS: I thought a lot on this trip about our civic lives, and the ways in which our participation as citizens might be similar and different from people in the past. I've been making bells for a few years now, and I saw and heard many bells across Greece. Like the architectural ruins, these bells are survivors from the past. I thought about my work more generally in relation to the weathered textures of stones, ruins, and surfaces. In our time on the islands, surrounded by water, I thought a lot about the water and the waves, the smooth stones, the ripples in the water, the distorted reflections, the light that emanates from material itself.

SR: The bell itself as a sculpture is in fact not only a work of art but also a functional object..

DS: I'm interested in the bells creating a call to attention and call to action, a space for people to come together and alone to think about primal core issues, like time, nature, climate change, togetherness, beauty. I am

interested in the personal relationship one can have with a bell, through activating it, and through the body resonating with the sound.

SR: I perceive the wall works reflect and distort the bells but also the viewer's perception. What was your primary idea of including these sculptures in the show?

DS: The sculptures you are referring to are small scale polished bronze wall works, that came out of studio discoveries made while working on other sculptures. I am drawn to the surfaces and marks I've been able to create, and I use those tools to create compositions. The polished surfaces are interesting to me for the way in which they distort and warp a viewer's reflection. This wild reflection feels consistent to me with our experience living amidst anxieties large and small –daily and personal challenges and joys set against a backdrop of the world waking up to climate change, animal extinctions, food and resource insecurity, poverty, violence and so on.

The final work in the exhibition is a cast bronze sculpture entitled 'Twisted Stick'. This piece is cast from a relatively straight 5' section of a twisted vine. The form exudes both intimacy and suffocation. This tightly bound intensity is the tone I bring for the exhibition.

Davina Semo (b. 1981, Washington, DC) earned her BA at Brown University in 2003 and her MFA from the University of California, San Diego in 2006. Semo has shown extensively throughout the United States and Europe, including solo exhibitions at Jessica Silverman Gallery (San Francisco) and Marlborough Gallery (New York). Semo has an upcoming exhibition at the di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art in Napa, CA, and she has been selected for the Public Art Fund in Brooklyn Bridge Park, May 2020. Group exhibitions include a two person show with Deborah Remington at Part & Labour Beacon, TOUCHPIECE at Hannah Hoffman Gallery (Los Angeles) and Show Me as I Want to Be Seen at The Contemporary Jewish Museum (San Francisco). Semo has also been featured in shows at San Francisco Arts Commission, Greene Naftali Gallery (New York), and the Bridgehampton Biennial, curated by Bob Nickas. Davina Semo lives and works in San Francisco, CA. Semo is represented by Jessica Silverman Gallery (San Francisco), Marlborough Gallery (New York) and RIBORDY THETAZ (Geneva).