

series of seven wood sculptures by Angelika Maria Deinhardt

Angelika Deinhardt calls her colorfully painted sculptures "her young goddesses and gods": three female and four male heads, all gazing into the distance enigmatically and pensively.

The viewer is, at first, drawn to the figures' highly idiosyncratic, exotic-looking headdresses which consist of menacing specimens of flora and fauna draped across their skulls. Yet the heads present their bizarre biotopes with stoic equanimity and sometimes unabashed cheerfulness, as if they were adorned with a crown of jewels rather than wearing arrangements of black rats or a colorful parrot about to devour its prey. She herself, the artist remarks, would not want these creatures on her head. So it is anything but a mythical paradise that is offered to the viewer with the seductively colorful blossoms.

The very material from which the sculptures are made is an expression of the artist's aesthetic program. She begins her work with blocks of seasoned mountain spruce wood. Using mallet and chisel, she creates the sculptural figures in a patient, tentative, open-ended process.

WHAT INSPIRED HER?

Angelika Deinhardt does not have a preconceived vision of what the finished sculpture will look like. The final form is only developed in the course of the gradual shaping process. The artist compares the stage in which she "chips away" pieces from the block of wood with archaeological methods and cognitive strategies such as those developed by Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault, seeking to lay bare what is under the surface. The hidden is exposed and the concealed is revealed and made known.

She therefore sees her work not as a process in which she carves the form into the wood in pursuit of predetermined ideas or concepts. The sculptural form of the arrangements on the heads is not the product of an intentional setting without alternative, but rather the result of a kind of "excavation" of personal and collective memory.

As well as taking inspiration from images of various cult or divine figures, impressions from the artist's narrower or wider circle of life flow into the process of form-finding – such as objects in the house she lived in as a child in Tanzania or the encounter with sculptures in Buddhist temples on her trips to East Asia. Angelika Deinhardt invokes these images to create sculptures that embody the sometimes frightening coexistence of humans, animals and plants. While this deeply affects the viewer, it does not unsettle the young gods and goddesses, who radiate unshakable calm.