

Press Release

Mai-Thu Perret
Beast of Burden

September 7 – October 20, 2012
Opening Thursday, September 6, 6–9 pm
Gallery hours, Tue–Sat, 11 am – 6 pm

Galerie Barbara Weiss is pleased to announce the exhibition *Beast of Burden* with new works by Mai-Thu Perret. As an internationally acclaimed Swiss artist who has won many important awards, her multifaceted practice ranges from sculpture, installation, painting, video and textile works drawing from a wide array of art and art historic references. Since 1999, as a basis to her oeuvre, Perret has been writing a fictional, non-linear report known under the title *The Crystal Frontier*. It recalls a group of women that founded a commune in New Mexico, who live their lives secluded from patriarchal and neoliberal structures. This defined narrative space makes room for recurring questions addressing ideas of the avant-garde, the history of feminism and twentieth century forms of utopia and modernism.

In the exhibition *Beast of Burden*, Mai-Thu Perret shows new ceramic works, watercolours and a life-sized woven donkey sculpture made out of rattan. The donkey, (different to a horse which represents the proud male figure), suggests hard physical labour and in Christian tradition stands for the poor and for women. The subject of the work and its proximity to handicraft and design -to traditionally female occupations- is not only mirrored in the materiality of the rattan-donkey, but also in the new ceramics which have been produced for this exhibition; these playfully move between boundaries of formalism and functionality. The textiles that have been immersed in liquid clay resemble the creasing of a baroque skirt, which after the firing and glazing of the clay, have suddenly solidified and transformed into ornamental reliefs on the wall. Different to the ceramics, the modestly scaled watercolours present a very reduced expression of form, in which Perret has merged influences of constructivism and tantric painting to open up or even break and continuously expand the form vocabulary of modernism.

Barbara Preisig