

## Roni Horn "I know what I want, but rarely what that looks like"

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Roni Horn, Photo: Juergen Teller

### **US artist Roni Horn on her Show at Art Basel Unlimited**

From New York to Iceland: US artist Roni Horn has made this journey many times since she got to know the Nordic island on a scholar - ship as a young artist in the late 1970s. Now she is bringing the waters of Iceland to the Unlimited section of Art Basel—in the form of a sophisticated largescale installation created for the 2004 Whitney Biennial. Born in 1955, the artist is known for a diverse body of work that includes photographs, sculpture, and installation. Her daily drawing practice can be seen concurrent with the fair at Hauser & Wirth Gallery in Zurich.

### **Roni Horn, how would you describe your installation "Doubt by Water" (2003–04)?**

The work consisted of thirty two-faced images, each one on a stanchion, and it floated throughout the three floors of the museum. One stanchion was visible from the position of any other, and viewers could follow them like bread - crumbs. I especially liked putting them near the restrooms and the infrastructure of the building, throughout stairwells and into shared spaces. I only showed it as a whole at the Whitney Biennial in 2004. I haven't found the right setting to do that again.



Roni Horn, "Doubt by Water", 2003-04, Detail, Ausstellungsansicht: Pola Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan, 2022, Photo: Konda Takeru, © Roni Horn, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

### **The work is made of two-faced images?**

I am playing with the idea of a two-faced person, like Marilyn Monroe and Norma Jeane Baker or someone with a hidden or shady side to their personality. With "Doubt by Water," one side of each of these paired images is a photo of the Skaftá in Iceland, a glacial river where the water is often heavily colored by minerals. It could be a beautiful anti-freeze green, turquoise, or, as it is in "Doubt by Water," this mysterious, opaque cement color. On one side, the flowing river, on the other, other forms of water, like icebergs. And then you have the picture of a young person, and the heads of birds.



Roni Horn, "Doubt by Water", 2003-04, Detail, Ausstellungsansicht: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2004, Photo: Bill Jacobson, © Roni Horn, Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

### **How do viewers look at it?**

You can follow it, that is one trajectory. You can ignore the pieces, and you'll just come upon them unexpectedly. It will differ for each viewer.

### **Like a river?**

That is the master concept of flow in it.

### **You seem to connect water, space, and form. Can you tell me more about this fascination?**

Who is not fascinated by water? It is in contact with everything out there, and it is still transparent. Water is endlessly paradoxical, and I am drawn to paradox.



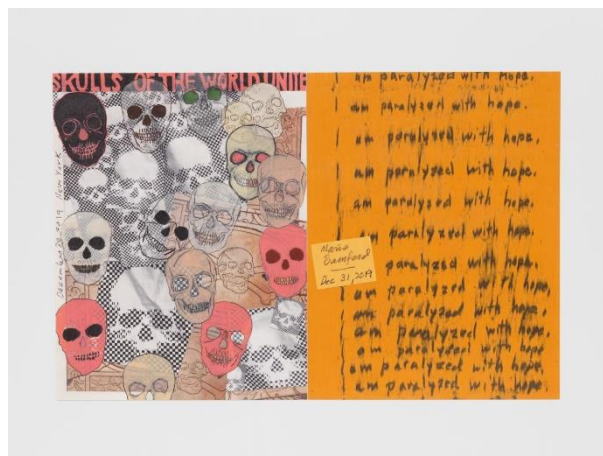
Roni Horn, "Doubt by Water", 2003-04, Detail, Ausstellungsansicht: Pola Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan, 2022, Photo: Konda Takeru, © Roni Horn, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

**I'd like to talk about "An Elusive Red Figure ..." (2022) at Hauser & Wirth in Zurich. It draws on a series called "LOG."**

With "LOG," I paid close attention to my local circumstances every day for almost two years. I drew directly upon this and "LOG" became a palimpsest of me and my sensibility. It ended up as 406 individual sheets of my writing, quotes, printed screenshots or photographs, drawings, and eventually it became a book. Some of the material in "An Elusive Red Figure..." is in fact outtakes from "LOG," some is completely new drawings in the same format. It was a very quiet, perhaps even mundane way of working. Unlike many of my other installations and drawings, I'm not trying to make a big gesture. I like the solitary, daily work.



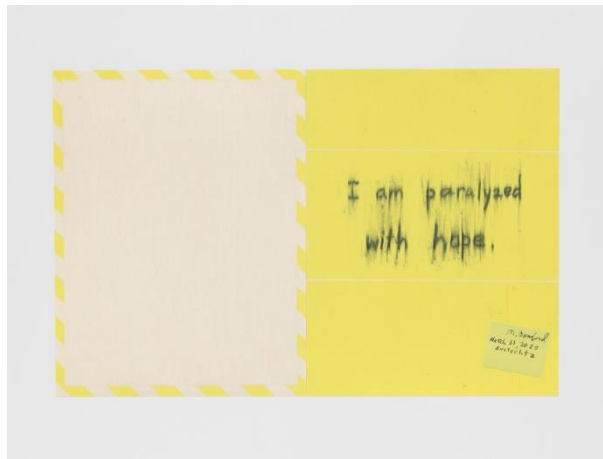
Roni Horn, "Vampire Finches • Araki and Aretha", 2022, Details aus: "An Elusive Red Figure ...", 2022, Photo: Tom Povel Imaging, © Roni Horn. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth



Roni Horn, "Skulls of the World Unite • Orange Hope", 2022, Details aus: "An Elusive Red Figure ...", 2022, Photo: Tom Povel Imaging, © Roni Horn. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

**Some things reoccur: water, the poet Emily Dickinson, misspelled names that destabilize identity. Little texts go with the images. How do you relate them?**

There is no system, I did not lay down any rules. The leitmotifs developed: birds, octopuses, the Empire State Building. I know what I want, but I rarely know what it looks like.



Roni Horn, "Attention – Torrid Zone • Yellow Hope", 2022, Details aus: "An Elusive Red Figure ...", 2022, Photo: Tom Powell Imaging, © Roni Horn. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

**Your work is varied—poetry, photographs, drawings. How are the works connected?**

The idea of a signature style is not particularly meaningful to me. However, conceptually, the work is consistent. Which is not necessarily a visual trait. Formative elements are paradox and ambiguity. That is the basis for pairing and doubling in a lot of my work. But there are also works like the sculpture "Asphere" (1982), which is a single thing. It looks like a ball, yet it is not. But it is not symmetrical. My relationship to androgyny got me to "Asphere." I think of this work as a self-portrait. Androgyny is the integration of difference, it is a gesture of inclusion.



Photo: Mario Sorreni

Roni Horn's work is currently on view at the Centro Botín Santander, Spain, and in group shows in Zurich and Oslo. Born in 1955, the artist lives and works in New York

Roni Horn is shown at Art Basel Unlimited in Hall 1.0, which presents installations by 76 artists. The exhibition show "Roni Horn: An Elusive Red Figure ..." is displayed at Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, June 9 - September 16