

Artdaily, Ofelia Zurbia Betancourt, Feb. 17, 2025

artdaily.com

The First Art Newspaper on the Net

Established in 1996

Monday, February 17, 2025

Grace Schwindt's "A History of Touch" unveils human vulnerability at M Leuven



Installation view. Photo: Elias Derboven for M Leuven.

LEUVEN.- Grace Schwindt's solo exhibition 'A History of Touch' runs at M Leuven from 14 February to 16 November 2025. The presentation is the culmination of a creative dialogue between Schwindt and the museum's collection, marking a significant turning point in her artistic journey and relationship with M.

MULTIFACETED ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Grace Schwindt (b. 1979, Offenbach) is a captivating figure in the contemporary art world. She weaves together various disciplines, including drawing, performance, film, sculpture and painting. For Schwindt, all media are equally important. Her artistic research delves into the complexities of human vulnerability and the influence of capitalism on our physical and mental being, as well as on our collective memory.

Schwindt examines how the interplay of bodies, language, and objects shapes the fabric of history and memory. Running throughout her entire oeuvre, like a common thread, are the concepts of 'vulnerability' and 'care'.

A HISTORY OF TOUCH: A CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE VULNERABLE

For her solo exhibition at M, Grace Schwindt combines existing works, such as sculptures, drawings and paintings, with new creations, some of which are inspired by the historic artefacts in M's collection. In 2023, Schwindt was a guest researcher at M's depot, delving into the collection and inner workings of the institution. She was captivated by how the collection managers took care to preserve even the most deteriorated historical sculptures. The new works, including drawings, paintings and sculptures, partly derive inspiration from the sketches and photographs that she made in the depot.

"This exhibition perfectly aligns with M's transhistorical ambitions, which aim to connect art from the past and present, thereby generating new meanings," states Bert Cornillie, alderman for culture in Leuven, with pride. "Grace Schwindt was fascinated by the objects in M's storage facilities and the exceptional care with which they are treated. She was inspired by these works and brings her reflections to bear in the series of new watercolours and sculptures that are at the heart of this exhibition."

Grace Schwindt was fascinated by a 16th-century sculpture in the depot, known as 'Christ on the Cold Stone.' Only two legs, a torso with a head, and the stone itself have survived. These fragments were not enough for a restoration, but they ignited her curiosity. This classic late medieval motif depicts Jesus sitting partially clothed on a stone, on the verge of his crucifixion, in solitary suffering. Schwindt observed a special kind of choreography in how Benedicte Dierickx, depot manager, handled both this and other sculptures. Schwindt has created a brand-new sculpture that serves as a kind of support for the preserved fragments, but which also stands alone as an autonomous artwork. This piece delves into several crucial topics for Schwindt, including the representation of the human body, overcoming trauma, and the power of touch and care in the healing journey. The exhibition will include a fragment of the 16th-century sculpture: a leg.

New works, produced and supported by M, enter into a dialogue with 20 new drawings, 11 recent sculptures (2018–2024) and five monumental paintings that herald a new trajectory in Schwindt's oeuvre.

GRACE SCHWINDT

Grace Schwindt (b. 1979, Offenbach, Germany) divides her time between London and Sicily. She was raised in an artistic household near Frankfurt at a time when the Frankfurt School and Baader-Meinhof Group were at the forefront of political discourse.

She studied photography at the University of Westminster and fine arts at the Slade School of Fine Arts, both in London. Her work has been exhibited at the Peter Kilchmann Gallery (Zurich and Paris), Zeno X (Antwerp), Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, Kunsthal Gent, Rozenstraat (Amsterdam) and MARCO–Museum of Contemporary Art Vigo, among others.

Schwindt has completed several residency programmes. In 2012, she was the artist-in-residence at WIELS (Brussels), presenting the film *Tenant* and a sculpture in two group exhibitions. She has also participated in residencies at CCA Glasgow and the Gershwin Foundation in New York.

Grace Schwindt is represented by Galerie Peter Kilchmann (Switzerland/Paris).

RETURN TO M LEUVEN

Grace Schwindt is no stranger to M Leuven. She performed *Clean Air*, an exploration into assigning significance to landscapes, during the 2013 edition of the city's Playground Festival. In 2018, she revisited the event with a group of sculptures and a video installation in the gallery spaces dedicated to the collection.

She collaborated with Eva Wittocx on these projects, who has also curated *A History of Touch*. Wittocx says: "At M, we have closely followed Schwindt's work for over a decade. How she thinks about the human body, and society's expectations, results in a unique artistic language, which is both visually captivating and has many substantive links. M is delighted to present her first solo museum show as part of these exhibitions."

A short documentary was made about Grace Schwindt's journey – from conducting research in the depot and creating new works, to preparing the exhibition – which will be presented both online and in the museum.

A History of Touch is also on the programme for International Women's Day at M Leuven on Sunday 9 March 2025. Literary creators Mel(anie) Asselmans and Stefanie Huysmans-Noorts, both members of writers' collective *Hyster-X*, are immersing themselves in Schwindt's oeuvre. They will perform their poetic creations, inspired by the work, in the exhibition space.