

In a society shaped by rules on the one hand, and conventions on the other, it requires places that subvert every-day norms. Monster Chetwynd creates such spaces through her performances, images, and installations. She plays with masquerades, twists social rituals, diverts energies, creates hybrid beings and juggles visual cultures from the Middle Ages to science fiction. The monstrous, the carnivalesque, and the grotesque are ever-present in her worlds and always associated with exaggeration, absurdity, horror, and humour. However, they are invariably committed to positivity. Monster Chetwynd’s art exudes the courage to find honest engagement in the creative act and to stage rehearsal spaces for inclusive alternative worlds.

The exhibition “Head-Less-Ness” brings together masks, corporeal fragments, bricolage furniture, textile prints and paintings in the Artists’ Bar of Cabaret Voltaire. Originally opened in 1916 as the “Künstlerkneipe Voltaire”, art and life were to go hand in hand here and expand the concept of art. In this sense, the exhibition can be seen as a collection of theatre props itching to be used, challenging notions of the familiar and beautiful: an oversized bench, chairs too low to sit on, paintings as uncomfortably placed wallpaper, free-standing sculptures on tables, moths, grimacing faces and masks.

In the grotesque-carnavalesque it is always unclear where the body ends and where the world begins. This fits in with the sociotope “bar”, which as a closed community space can both level and reverse social connections. Both the carnival and the bar are associated to rituals in which the individual dissolves within the group, their surroundings or conversely retrieves themselves. “Never drink alone” is therefore the name of the drink that accompanies the exhibition and can be drunk amidst the countless props of heads and bodies. A puppet accompanies the cocktail – an opportunity to enter into a “Puppet Slam” with other guests.

As always in her practice Chetwynd draws inspiration from a variety of sources, including film, literature, art history and philosophy. Mikhail Bakhtin, who draws on readings by François Rabelais to explore how the popular laughter culture of the Middle Ages subverted power relations, is just one of the many references Monster Chetwynd works with. The exhibition also showcases her ongoing exploration of faces and masks, for example from John Boorman’s film *Zardoz* (1974), in which ancient and futuristic worlds collide, or Federico Fellini’s film *Satyricon* (1969), based on the satire of the Emperor Nero.

The isolated props in the room are reminiscent of the game “Cadavre Exquis” or the children’s game “Head, Body, Legs” with a folded paper, in which the players

complete a drawing or sentence without seeing the previous contributions. A method also used by the surrealists to collectively connect freely associated words and images.

Monster Chetwynd often uses the Dadaist-Surrealist strategy of “cut-ups” in her work, a process that creates new images and texts through montage. The artist works with materials she encounters in everyday life, which she develops, upcycles and recycles in a collaborative process. Chetwynd’s fondness for assemblage and reuse is grounded in the fact that they are handmade and collaborative. At Cabaret Voltaire, this sustainable approach emerged primarily in cooperation with Gabi Deutsch, Dimitrij Stockhammer, Social Fabric, Natascha Madeiski, and Esther Schena.

Chetwynd’s practice is not about an ironic play with set pieces, but a contemporary perspective that maintains “radical laughter” as an essential component of resistance. Chetwynd does not promise redemption, but she continues to find pleasure in boosting morale and spirit as well as releasing the Dionysian. The medieval allusions and science fiction analogies offer a way to create fantasies that are inclusive in dystopian times. Now Monster Chetwynd’s artistic universe can be experienced in a bar for the first time that invites participation, and is activated performatively several times over the course of an entire year.

Monster Chetwynd (*1973, London) lives and works in Zurich. She received a Bachelor’s degree in social anthropology and history from University College London in 1995 and a Master’s degree in painting from the Royal College of Art in 2004. She has performed and exhibited internationally, including at SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT (2023); Konsthall C, Stockholm (2021); De Pont, Tilburg; Studio Voltaire, London (2021); (2019); Villa Arson, Nice (2019); Tate Britain, London (2018); CCA Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (2016); Bergen Kunsthall (2016); and Bonner Kunstverein (2016). In 2012, she became the first performance artist to be nominated for the Turner Prize. Playing with expectations and norms in art is also reflected in the artist’s name: formerly known as Spartacus and Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, she has been known as “Monster” since 2018.

The exhibition is supported by: City of Zurich, Canton of Zurich, Albert Huber Foundation. We thank you very much!

Glossary of the individual exhibits

- 1
Monster Chetwynd
painting, cardboard sculptures
Frederich, 2023
acrylic painting, cardboard, glue
120 x 173 x 10 cm
- 2
Monster Chetwynd
cardboard sculpture
Big Doggy Mask, 2023
cardboard
90 cm diameter, 60 cm depth
- 3
Monster Chetwynd
painting, cardboard frame and sculpture
Beards only, 2023
acrylic painting, cardboard, glue
128 x 188 x 25 cm
- 4
Monster Chetwynd
pillows
Dada Süssigkeiten, 2023
textile and foam
40 cm diameter, 7.5/ 12.5 depth

- 5
Monster Chetwynd
furniture and ceramics
Luscious lips, 2023
bricolaged furniture and glazed
ceramics
130 x 90 x 90 cm

- 6
Monster Chetwynd
furniture
Drinking game, 2023
dricolaged furniture, glazed ceramic
mask
70 cm diameter, 80 cm height

- 7
Monster Chetwynd
furniture, ceramic and carton sculpture
on the back
Party Time, 2023
bricolaged furniture, cardboard,
ceramic
dimension variable

- 8
Monster Chetwynd
ceramic mask
AHA, 2023
ceramic
34 x 28 x 10 cm

- 9
Monster Chetwynd
multiple edition of ceramic masks
flat head, 2023
glazed ceramic
dimension variable

- 10
Monster Chetwynd
multiple edition of ceramic masks
my opinion, 2023
glazed ceramic
dimension variable

- 11
Monster Chetwynd
cardboard sculpture
Statue, 2023
cardboard
50 x 58 x 25 cm

- 12
Monster Chetwynd
furniture
Obscurity, 2023
bricolaged furniture, glazed ceramic
mask, candles
69 cm diameter, 79 cm height

- 13
Monster Chetwynd
furniture
The flute player, 2023
bricolaged furniture, glazed ceramic
mask and candle holders
74 cm diameter, 90 cm height

- 14
Monster Chetwynd
furniture and ceramics
Frau Monster, 2023
bricolaged furniture and glazed
ceramics
54 cm diameter, 70 cm height

- 15
Monster Chetwynd
chairs
Consequences, 2023
bricolaged furniture, glazed ceramic
masks
dimension variable

- 16
Monster Chetwynd
cardboard sculpture
Signora, 2023
cardboard
64 x 60 x 30 cm

- 17
Monster Chetwynd
Multiple edition ceramics
midlife crisis, 2023
glazed ceramic
dimension variable

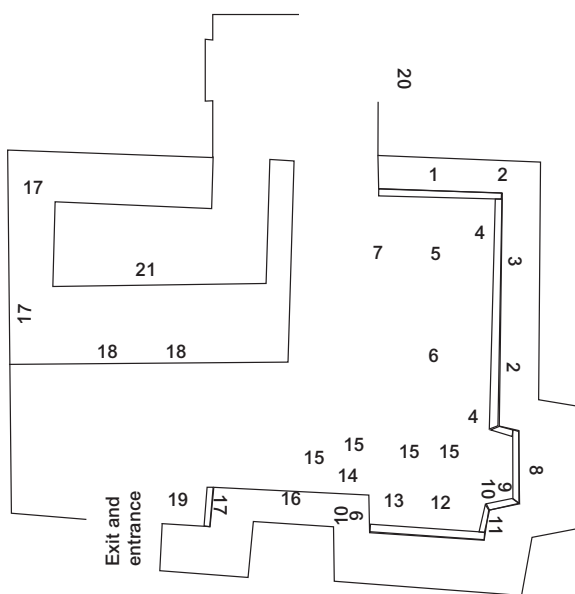
- 18
Monster Chetwynd
moths
Garden tiger moth and friend, 2023
cardboard, paint, glue
dimension variable

- 19
Monster Chetwynd
Multiple edition ceramics
Gertrude, 2023
glazed ceramic
dimension variable

- 19
Monster Chetwynd
Multiple edition ceramics
Robin bantam, 2023
glazed ceramic
dimension variable

- 21
Monster Chetwynd
cocktail
Never drink alone, 2023
Rum, apple, sugar, egg white, cider,
puppets

Künstler*innenkneipe /Artists' Bar



Erdgeschoss/Ground Floor