

English

SERRAVES
MUSEU DE ARTE CONTEMPORÂNEA

Models, 2007-14. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: © Marcellina Sosnowska



EXHIBITION
MONIKA SOSNOWSKA
ARCHITECTONISATION
20 FEB – 31 MAY 2015

'Monika Sosnowska: Architectonisation' is the first exhibition in Portugal devoted to Monika Sosnowska's sculptural oeuvre and reflects the Museum's commitment to artists whose work can respond to the unique context of Serralves. Born in Poland and based in Warsaw, Sosnowska has consistently looked to the language of architecture as an expressive form. Her corridors and pavilions with no end, twisted and compressed shells of standard steel-frame structures and once functional furniture bent into burlesque distress allude to communities and histories and the bodies and ideals that sustained them.

Conceived in dialogue with the architecture of the Serralves Museum designed by Álvaro Siza, the exhibition reveals the elaboration of an artist who thinks sculpture not only as physical object but also in terms of space, time and memory. Free-standing sculptures and sculptural interventions allude to collapse and the fragment while corridors and labyrinthine structures create alternative spatial routes and visual perspectives. If the large-scale wrought steel works composed of structural elements for buildings are melded into suspended, draped and shifting forms in space to monumental effect, smaller-scaled spatial propositions, both abstract and functional, reveal Sosnowska's attention to the details of materials and forms as both investigative and deeply human.

The exhibition's title is inspired by the spatial experiments of Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro, who were among the leading proponents of utopian modernism in Poland and who defined the concept of 'architectonisation' in 1931 to describe the sharing of formal elements between architecture and sculpture.

Presented over seven galleries of the Museum, as well as the atrium and the Pátio da Adelina, outside the building, the works in the exhibition were made between 2003 and 2015.

ATRIUM

Façade (2013) is a suspended steel sculpture suggesting a lightness and fragility that contrast with the object's material and trimmed down appearance. Like many of Sosnowska's works, this construction was conceived as a small paper model which was translated into the large scale sculpture by her fabricators. Inspired by the façades of modern Polish buildings of the 1960s, and formal references to early twentieth century modernist architecture and its internationalisation as the International Style, Sosnowska's sculpture refers to these architectural legacies of the past and their gradual erasure. Across Poland, and most visibly in the city of Warsaw, architectural examples of the modernist period are currently being demolished to make way for contemporary buildings that do not allude to the country's communist past.

GALLERY 1

Stairway (2010) dominates the gallery space with its scale and physical presence. Conceived in 2010 for the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, in Israel, this monumental work was inspired by a visit by Sosnowska to the suburbs of Tel Aviv, where she photographed an old emergency staircase from the Museum of History, whose brutalist architecture reflected the political and social ideals in Israel of the early 1970s. Although twisted and deformed, the sculpture's structural elements, steps, handrail and vertical central axis are immediately recognizable as a spiral staircase. Deprived of its original context and its functionality, its baroque swirls are caught between support and compression of ceiling and floor.

GALLERY 2

The ruin is an abiding theme in Sosnowska's work, and one that is associated with the history of European sculpture since the Renaissance. In **Hole** (2006-08), a literal hole appears to have formed in the ceiling, its rubble of precisely shaped rhomboids scattered on the floor below. The work is one of a body of sculptural interventions in which the space of the museum or gallery is altered. At Serralves, the work transforms the central gallery into a theatre of an invisible act of which we are witness only to its collapse.

GALLERY 3

Market (2012-14) is a set of eight steel sculptures inspired by Jarmark Europa market in Warsaw. The market was developed by a small Vietnamese community and vendors from other post-communist countries who settled in the early 1990s following the collapse of communism around Warsaw's National Stadium, built during the socialist period. As the 2012 Euro Cup drew closer, the stadium was subject to dramatic alterations and in late 2010 it was completely demolished to make room for a new stadium, forcing the relocation of the sellers to other peripheral areas of the city. Resorting to the same materials and colours of the market structures, the artist's fabricators recreated these same structures and then bent and deformed their frames according to the designs of Sosnowska. Dispersed around the space of the gallery, their metal outlines suggest drawings in space, while their distorted forms and seemingly improvised disposition express a history of abandon to which they refer.

GALLERY 4

Antechamber (2011) is a work built on a stellar plan that divides the gallery into a succession of semi-labyrinthine spaces. Conceived for the 2011 Venice Biennale, *Antechamber* functioned as a 'para-pavilion' to house the works of other artists. At the Serralves Museum, the work cuts through the gallery to create a series of receding and intersecting perspectives. Sosnowska's attention to details, using the history of the places she visits as reference, is visible in the choice of wallpaper selected by the artist from a local store in Porto. The visual composition made by the supporting walls of *Antechamber* also draws attention to and interacts with the dynamic structural lines of the surrounding architecture.

GALLERY 5

Seven small sculptures are shown on a wooden table designed by Sosnowska. With these works, the plasticity of Sosnowska's process is more in evidence. Composed of elements used in the construction of buildings, their utilitarian function is transformed into sculptural gesture to create what the artist describes as 'impossible figures'. In the 1970s and 1980s Poland saw a huge growth in real estate development, with architectural solutions that followed a low-cost model and were repeated all over the country. **Handle** (2007) contrasts with the stereotyped models and uniformisation of building details and features. Here, the artist moulded her hand on a handle suggesting a prototype 'custom made for each person'. Similar gestures of subjective customisation are evident in **L-Profiles** (2008), which bears the imprint of the artist's shoeprint, and **Lead** (2008), whose lumpen form is incised with the impression of the artist's teeth.

GALLERY 6

Untitled (2012) is a large-scale sculpture made of four concrete chunks fixed onto stainless steel rods. The 'concrete slab' was a prefabricated technology that dominated Polish public housing construction from the 1950s through the mid-1980s. The work is part of a series that show deformed constructional elements reminiscent of the many demolition sites encountered by the artist not only in Warsaw but in cities around the world as they adjust to the globalised economies of twenty-first century capitalism. In Sosnowska's hands, the virile matter of concrete and steel are transformed into an imposing figure, at once elegant and clumsy, of misdirected energy.

GALLERY 7

Sosnowska often creates atmospheres reminiscent of Kafkaian literature, or the fictional character of Alice in Wonderland, in which logic is subject to processes of frustrated progression and illogical distortions of perception.

Entrance (2003) is a narrow, six-metre long corridor divided by six pairs of double doors. The cramped scale of each spatial section, enough to accommodate a single person, and the configuration of alternately opening and closing doors is designed to create a sense of confinement and also confusion. While the idea for the work was inspired by Polish Socialist architecture of the mid-twentieth century, Sosnowska's choice of locally sourced door handles and ceiling lighting are of unmistakable 1970s Portuguese vintage.

PÁTIO DA ADELINA

Balustrade (2015) was created for the exhibition and is presented on the Pátio da Adelina, outside the building. Here, the helicoidal steel web, in all its metallic rigidity gives the illusion of lightness and movement. Characteristic of Sosnowska's use of scale and surrounding space as part of the sculptural experience, the spikey contours of *Balustrade* seem to activate the calm containment of the Pátio da Adelina as an occupying force of material and visual energy.

BIOGRAPHY

Monika Sosnowska was born in Poland in 1972. She trained at the Art Academy in Poznan and at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam in 1999-2000. Sosnowska was the Resident Artist at Atelier Calder, Saché, France (2014), Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2004) and S-AIR, Sapporo, Japan (2002). In 2003 Sosnowska was awarded the prestigious Baloise Art Prize in Basel, Switzerland, as well as the Polityka's Passport Award given by Poland's most influential weekly newspaper.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a bilingual (Portuguese/English), illustrated catalogue with new essays by Gabriela Świtek, Professor at the Art History Institute of Warsaw, examining the reference to Eastern European modernism in Sosnowska's oeuvre, and by Suzanne Cotter, situating Sosnowska's sculpture in the history of twentieth and twenty-first century contemporary practices.

'Monika Sosnowska: Architectonisation' is curated by Suzanne Cotter, Director of the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art.

Exhibition coordination: Marta Moreira de Almeida

Registrar: Inês Venade

Curatorial intern: Maria Eduarda Duarte

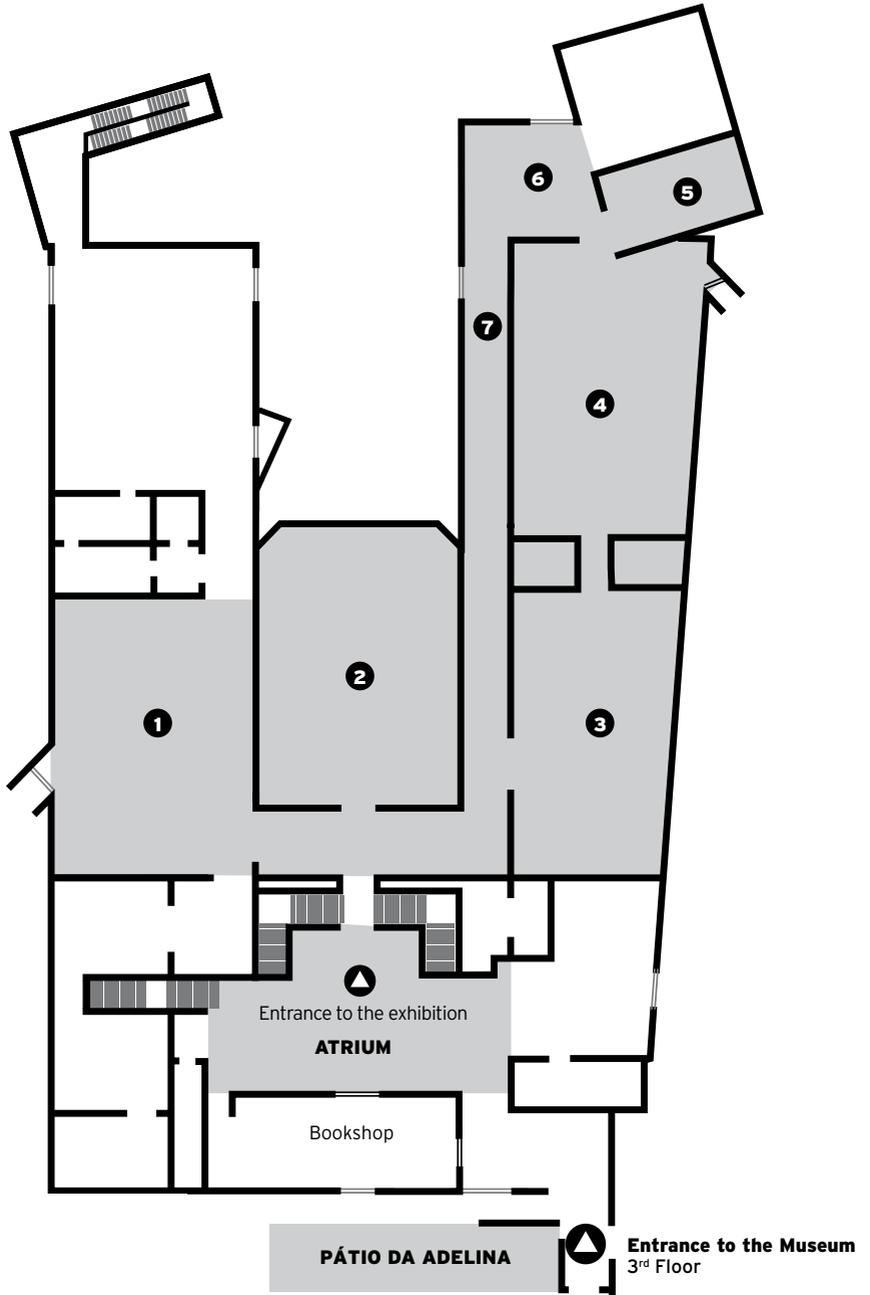
Artist's assistant: Marcin Kapała

Artist's installation team: Andrzej Marek Kaczmarczyk, Sławomir Wiesław Krajewski, Ireneusz Wartałowicz

Museum's installation team: João Brites, Ricardo Dias, Carlos Lopes, Manuel Martins, Adelino Pontes, Lázaro Silva

Craftsmen: Ricardo Barbosa, Rui Barros, João Carneiro, Telmo Carneiro, Agostinho Dias, Flávio Ferreira, Pedro Ferreira, Jorge Moreira, José Francisco Neves, Hugo Neves, José Rocha, Pedro Rocha, Vicente Santos, Miguel Vidal, Pedro Vieira

Education: Liliana Coutinho (Head of Education), Diana Cruz, Cristina Lapa



GUIDED TOURS AND TALKS

Museum galleries

Conversation between Monika Sosnowska and Suzanne Cotter, Director of the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art

28 FEB (Sat), 16h00

Library

Guided tour by Rita Faustino, Museum Educator
22 MAR (Sun), 12h00-13h00

Guided tour by Rute Rosas Sculptor and Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto
11 APR (Thu), 17h00

Guided tour by Luís Silva, Curator and co-director of Kunsthalle Lissabon
25 APR (Sat), 17h00

Guided tour by Rita Faustino, Museum Educator
03 MAY (Sun), 12h00-13h00

Guided tour by Ana Tostões, Architect and President of Docomomo Internacional
09 MAY (Sat), 17h00-18h00

Readings at the Museum, a partnership with the cycle 'Readings at the Monastery' and São João National Theatre, Porto.

Additional information at www.serralves.pt

21 MAY (Thu), 21h00

FAMILY WORKSHOPS

TWIST, RE-TWIST AND DESTROY!

11 APR (Sat), 15h00-17h00

Workshop by Rita Faustino, Museum Educator

ABSURD MODEL

01 MAR (Sun), 10h00-13h00

Workshop by Rita Faustino, Museum Educator

SWINGING CONSTRUCTIONS

03 MAY (Sun), 10h00-13h00

Workshop by Joana Nascimento, Sofia Santos, Museum Educators

Every weekend the Educational Department of the Serralves Museum offer a programme of guided tours to the exhibitions at the following hours:

Saturdays: 16h00-17h00 (in English)

Saturdays: 17h00-18h00 (in Portuguese)

Sundays: 12h00-13h00 (in Portuguese)

The guided tours are conducted by Museum Educators or guests.

Institutional support



Support for the presentation of *Balustrade*, 2015

Fosksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw

Exclusive Sponsor of the Museum and Exhibition



Official Insurance Provider: Fidelidade – Companhia de Seguros, S.A.

Fundação de Serralves / Rua D. João de Castro, 210, 4150-417 Porto / www.serralves.pt / serralves@serralves.pt / Information line: 808 200 543

PARKING Entrance by Largo D. João III (next to the École Française)