

Ludovica Carbotta

(Turin, 1982)

There is a city in the world with a sole inhabitant: it's called *Monowe* and it was designed and built by Ludovica Carbotta. Ever since her debut, the research of the Turinese artist has revolved around the exploration of urban space, frequently relating its physicality to the architecture of places so as to investigate the connections that are established between individuals. Her works, which include installations, sculptures, drawings and texts, have a strong performative dimension, often drawing inspiration from utopian and science-fiction literature. Operating on the edge between reality and imagination, Carbotta deploys a practice of 'fictional site-specificity' in which she lets the real space interact with that produced by the mind.

Monowe is an ideal living model which towers above existing cities, an exclusive fortress available to only one person. The project, begun in 2016 and growing over time with the addition of various distinct chapters, started out from a reflection by the artist on self-isolation induced by life in contemporary metropolises. Radicalising this condition of solitude and individualism, what comes out is a city which is everywhere and nowhere, and the only human presence embodies all the functions of the modern society. *Monowe* appeared for the first time in Bologna with *Entrance to the City*, an installation made up of a ladder and a supporting structure coated in white plastic, the flimsy and precarious aspect of which is reminiscent of those found in open-air building sites. *The City Museum*, set up in the MAXXI in Rome, is instead a museum of the mind for a single visitor, housing reproductions of a number of works from the recent past, the inexact forms of which are rebuilt by delving into memories.

Inside the home of the mayor, a number of devices are to be found which are useful for overcoming paranoias and weaknesses. The works in the collection, all from 2018, belong to this very family of safety devices. *Essen Zadime* is an instrument of reassurance to inhale into so as to find oneself again; *Lifehi Jack* is reminiscent of a life jacket that may be worn in a state of excessive agitation; *Handle Barry* is an object-amulet with a phallic protuberance and an open hand at the end, the purpose of which is to remind the body of its functions and its needs; lastly, *Hanna Dle* is a handle made of knotted cords which the inhabitant may hold onto in order to experience a further sense of protection. The presence of a private dwelling in a city where nobody else lives is the first paradox of *Monowe*; the second is represented by the need to develop defence mechanisms against an enemy that does not exist, insofar as the city does not have a precise position nor borders to protect. This state of uncertainty is examined by Carbotta also through the unstable structure of *The Terminal Outpost*, 2017–2019, which brings to mind the solitary and ultimately pointless Bastiani Fortress in *The Desert of the Tartars*.

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