

SHEELA GOWDA. IT.. MATTERS

March 31–July 26, 2020

Sheela Gowda (b. Bhadravati, India, 1957) lives and works in Bengaluru. The Lenbachhaus presents her first solo exhibition at a museum in Germany. For her sprawling installations, Gowda uses distinctive materials from her country whose consistencies, colors, and scents endow her works with an air of narrative as well as metaphorical force. The creative use of cow dung, kumkum powder, coconut fiber, hair, needles, threads, stones, tar barrels, or tarpaulins blends connotations of manual craftsmanship and practical application with poetic intensity for a meditation on both urban and rural life in India.

Gowda started out as an oil painter, making works that already anticipated the themes of her mature oeuvre: the everyday life of the Indian middle class, the conflicts that women confront in their working and private lives, and media images of political and social tensions were early subjects of her critical engagement with her society. Her exploration, in the early 1990s, of the potentials of cow dung as a medium, initially in pictures, then also in three-dimensional pieces and installations, eventually set in motion a broader shift toward new materials in her art. The use of cow dung in Gowda's work reflects her consciousness as a political artist: India's current government has harnessed the Hindu worship of the cow to whip up nationalist sentiments and reinvigorate a populist program that first emerged onto the scene in the early 1990s. In this situation, Gowda has seized on the excrements of holy cows, a ubiquitous sight in India, as a symbol of her country's idea of being itself, to which she lends novel and urgent relevance. For her exhibition at the Lenbachhaus, she has created the first new work involving cow dung in several years.

Sheela Gowda participated in the São Paulo (2014), Gwangju (2014), Kochi (2012), Venice (2009), Sharjah (2009), and Lyon (2007) biennials as well as documenta 12 (2007). Selected solo exhibitions: BombasGens, Valencia, and HangarBicocca, Milan, 2019; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 2017; Para Site, Hongkong, 2015; daad Galerie, Berlin, IMMA, Dublin, and Centre international d'Art et du Paysage, Vassivière, 2014; Lunds Konsthall, Lund, and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2013; and Office for Contemporary Art, Oslo, 2010.

Sheela Gowda is the winner of the 2019 Maria Lassnig Prize, awarded by the Maria Lassnig Foundation. *It.. Matters* is the solo exhibition held in conjunction with the award and hosted by the Lenbachhaus. Curated by Eva Huttenlauch

SAINT LUKE

"Collateral," Sheela Gowda's contribution to documenta 12 (2007), will be on view at St. Luke's Church, Thierschstraße 28, from April 4 until April 25, 2020. The artist has adapted the work for the church setting. The presentation opens on April 3 at 7pm.

On Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020, at 10am, the congregation invites the public to a prayer service that will celebrate art.

PUBLICATION

A richly illustrated artist's book, with essays by Eva Huttenlauch and Janaki Nair, will be published by Steidl in conjunction with the exhibition.

FILM

"XXXXXX" (2020), a documentary film by Friedrich Rackwitz and Stephan Vorbrugg, ca. 25 mins. With interviews with Ute Meta Bauer, Sheela Gowda, Eva Huttenlauch, Zehra Jumabhoy, and Hans Ulrich Obrist.

Shot during the preparations for the exhibition, the film will be screened inside the rotunda at the Kunstbau during the exhibition's opening hours