

for immediate release

Laura Pientka

ROYAL FLUSH

April 18th – April 21th, 2024

Olfactory Art Keller, 25A Henry Street, New York City

opening reception April 18th 5pm to 8pm; artist talk April 20th 4pm



Photo: Bernadette Haffke

Olfactory Art Keller is honored to bring the German ceramicist Laura Pientka's *Royal Flush* to New York. Consisting of a ceramic colon, which is refined with gold luster and connected to a chocolate tempering device, *Royal Flush* continuously pumps liquid chocolate through the colon. The artist will be present for the experience and guide visitors in exploring her installation gustatorily by covering the fruits she will provide with the liquid chocolate emerging from the colon. An olfactory component is added to the experience by *Shame*, a scent created for the installation by Rachel Barfield, an olfactory artist born in Panama with German/African-American roots.

Laura Pientka presents a handmade ceramic sculpture whose artistic processing traces constitute an important formal aesthetic level. In terms of content, it can be identified with little anatomical-medical knowledge as a large intestine. Nobly glazed in gold, this ceramic sculpture is connected to a supply line, which in turn is part of a chocolate fountain. Thus, liquid chocolate flows incessantly from the sculpture or is pumped out in short bursts. Accordingly, the entire work smells tempting and thus actually invites enjoyment, for which the audience can dip dried fruit into the chocolate and consume it. On the other hand, it cannot be avoided that disgust is generated on the visual level, because the association with human excrement is so clear. Laura Pientka plays with this sensual discrepancy and clearly asks what is actually socially desired and permitted, or what art is allowed to do in this context, and how much such a work must resort to a humorous-ironic level in order to address something very natural but occupied with taboos. The valence of the work of art becomes directly visible in the gold of the sculpture, in the combination with the blue of the base as a reference to old altarpieces (even if at the same time it was only derived from the reference to the controls of the chocolate fountain) and in the stimulant chocolate. It is to be read not only as an opposition to the “disgusting” subject, but rather as a clear appreciation of a central human organ and as an indication that a de-tabooed occupation is important.

Dr. Ingmar Lähnemann



about Laura Pientka:

In an age where sanitized images reign supreme, as an artist she tackles social taboos surrounding intimate bodily aspects and excretions, challenging viewers to confront these discomforts head-on. She prefers ceramics as her medium of choice, allowing her to create interactive installations that require both finesse and strength in their creation. Despite the conventional association of ceramics with beauty, she deliberately disrupts this notion while preserving its physicality, which holds profound meaning in the tactile nature of the artistic process. Looking at art history, she notes gender differences in the interaction between the body and the material, with women often taking a more esoteric approach, while men tend to be rougher. Through her artistic endeavors, she seeks to challenge these entrenched gender norms and stereotypes.