

CHRISTIAN GONZENBACH
LA PLONGE

"La Plonge" is a production unit, a mechanical device that produces works of art. The system dips and dips again clay statuettes in a bath of earthenware slip. With each dip, a layer is added, the figure disappears little by little under a gangue of mud.

We are faced with a form of standardisation, all the statuettes end up looking the same, turning into little stalagmites. The Bodhisattva and the Power Ranger, the Virgin Mary and Mickey Mouse, the Hulk and the Dogon couple, etc. In all, ten statuettes from all over the world, moulded by the artist, will gradually merge into the formlessness. The second stage is drying, the clay skin cracks and splits. Finally, the pieces are fired in a ceramic kiln at 1250° Celsius. At this temperature, the earthenware melts and allows the original figure to reappear, partially revealed by the molten flakes.

The manufacturing processes are automatic, yet the works are all different, they escape us. Variations are created according to small temperature differences during the firing or according to the thickness of the earthenware layer, or the drying time. Each piece finds a form of individuality.

Constantly questioning our material world, our relationship to objects and their manufacturing techniques, Christian Gonzenbach has developed an experimental space closer to the laboratory than to the workshop. He resembles an alchemist looking for that point where suddenly everything is reversed, when values are inverted and we finally see more clearly or nothing at all.

"Through my work I seek to de-familiarise the world by manipulating objects from our material culture, I question known things in order to tip them towards the absurd, the poetic or the zany. My sources come from everyday life, science, art, or simply from familiar objects collected and to which I apply processes of my own invention: transformation, inversion, change of materials, of scale, of substance, to question their status, their value, their function, their very existence. Through my plastic work, I seek paradox, the appearance of unexpected forms or meanings.

Christian Gonzenbach (1975, lives in Geneva) holds a BA from the HEAD in Geneva (1999) and a Master of Art from Chelsea College of Art in London (2005). His recent exhibitions include *BOARISH* at the Galerie Laurence Bernard in Geneva (2021), *Swiss Sculpture since 1945* at the Aargauer Kunsthaus in Aarau (2021), *Goodbye, ArtMôtiers*

2021 in Môtiers and *Wild Water, Sauvage* at the Natural History Museum in Neuchâtel (2020). He is the recipient of the Irène Reymond Foundation Prize (2009) and the Lissignol Grant (2008), among others. His work can be found in numerous public and institutional collections such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Dallas Museum of Art (USA), the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris, the MUDAC in Lausanne, the Kunsthhaus in Aarau, the FMAC and FCAC in Geneva, Pictet & Cie in Geneva and the Julius Baer Collection in Zurich. *Gonzenbook, Monographie 1998 - 2021*, edited by Karine Tissot has just been published by Infolio and L'APAGE.