

Christine Vuegen in Glean nr 1, 2023

An explosion of colour and life. Anyone who has never paid attention to what Maen Florin (1954, lives near Ghent) does will be surprised by this new development. The Strange Paradise exhibition at ISELP in Brussels shows the evolution of his sculptures from 2007 to the present day.

In 2007, Paul McCarthy's exhibition at S.M.A.K. in Ghent encouraged her to loosen the brakes further and experiment with a mixture of materials.

The article she read at the time about an autistic man who communicated through dolls he made himself also played an important role. His 'dolls' are often sculptures of children or jesters. They look tormented, although the colours are cheerful.

Since 2015, she has mainly been making ceramic sculptures: heads and busts, sometimes oversized. Evoking deep emotions is what she does.

Something changed after the 2020 retrospective *Playing at being Human*, presented in three venues in Mechelen. Since the pandemic, nature has become involved.

The colourful ceramic sculptures are imaginative organisms, a symbiosis between humans, animals and plants. It's a new ecosystem, a strange paradise from which the gloom and oppression of the previous works have largely dissipated.

The soundtrack for one of the rooms is the album *Eldorado* (2021) by Brussels-based violinist and composer Catherine Graindorge, a source of inspiration for Maen Florin. Another Graindorge fan is punk legend Iggy Pop, who recorded an album with her last year.

In dialogue with *Strange Paradise*, the film *Re-claiming Vision* (2018) by Marjolijn Dijkman & Toril Johannessen will be screened, an underwater spectacle seen through the microscope of micro-organisms and algae necessary for life on Earth.

Maen Florin has long been concerned with what remains invisible, with what lies deep within us. And today, this concerns both humans and the future of the planet.

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