

# SANNÉ MESTROM

(born Netherlands 1979)

Can something be at once a celebration and a critique? This is the question posed by the sculptures of Sanné Mestrom. Born in the Netherlands and now based in Australia after years in New Zealand, Mestrom makes sculptures that allude to a legion of male modernists, and yet are gently counter-canon.

Such ambivalence is rare. Take *Me & you* 2018. The original form that inspired the final sculpture was found, not in Constantin Brancusi's atelier annexed to the Centre Pompidou in Paris as its appearance may suggest, but at a flea market in the inner-city Melbourne suburb of Prahran. Mestrom has repeated the found forms and imbued them with features reminiscent of Brancusi's sculptures of Hungarian painter Margit Pogany—large eyes, a strong brow and curled hair. As the Romanian sculptor's muse, Pogany recurred as a subject in Brancusi's work for decades—made first from memory in marble before being made in plaster and metal.

Mademoiselle Pogany has visited the work of Mestrom more than once. Made in casting foam and plaster, *Soft kiss* 2011 from the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, prefigures the bronze sculpture *Me & you*. Doubled and yet distinct, Mestrom's heads in *Me & you* crown a pair of very tall columns comprising repeated spheres. Just as Brancusi evolved his plinths into sculptures in their own right, with his *Endless column* made variously in wood, plaster and metal representing the pinnacle of this ambition, Mestrom's totemic plinths become bodies. Cast from a simple child's ball, the artist collapses the space between the formal and the familiar.

Mestrom also collapses the space between the self and other, an idea presented not only through the mirroring of the figures but also suggested through the work's title. As parents, friends, siblings, children and lovers we are but mirrors of each other. As Mestrom explains:

*Me & you* refers to the idea of the self and the other being indistinct. In many cases those closest to us are the most difficult for us to see: we are merely mirrors to each other. This indistinction is important to me, because we are so dependent on those closest to us for definition. Without the mirror of another we may cease to exist.<sup>1</sup>

In the hands of Mestrom, art history is an endless (reflective) column that offers infinite opportunities for play and conversation. Without taking the past and turning it upside down and inside out, it too may cease to exist. In her words, 'the past is restless: always changing, being reinscribed, never still. And like water, it runs through the present and into the future'.<sup>2</sup>

## LISA SLADE

1. Sanné Mestrom in correspondence with Lisa Slade, November 2019.
2. As above.

Sanné Mestrom *Me & you* 2018, bronze, 230 x 65 x 65cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2019 [IRN 343487]

