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Lena Henke

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT
Römerberg
April 28–July 30

Lena Henke has made a walk-in artwork out of the rotunda, a space neither interior nor exterior, illuminated by the light from an approximately sixty-five-foot-tall glass dome. A sculptor by heart, Henke works with the architecture to make the crowds passing through—often to reach the cathedral from old town—aware of the typically overlooked space, interrupting their flow and diverting their attention.

Two oval-shaped glossy aluminum boxes, in the tradition of Donald Judd’s specific objects, stand in the pathways, blocking the two opposing entrances. From the mezzanine one story above, grains of dry sand trickle through the rolling grilles that have replaced four floor-to-ceiling windows and down to lower floors, landing on the sculptures or on the heads of passersby. Looking up, visitors find men walking on piles of the sand, constantly pushing heaps through the grids’ holes. Like Carl Andre’s *Grave*, 1967, for which he poured a bag of sand down a stairwell, Henke’s work speaks about gravity, evanescence, and the devolution of sculpture. A material fundamental to bronze casting, sand, as it functions in Henke’s work, shape-shifts while forming the artwork. Seen from the mezzanines above, the two aluminum boxes on the ground floor become stand-ins for eyes and the architecture’s columns form a skeleton, and it becomes apparent that Henke has transformed the rotunda into a giant sculpture of a head.

In homage to architect Luis Barragán, magnificent pink, blue, and yellow hues mark the rotunda’s walls and columns. Throughout the day, these delicate tones take on beautiful shades in a compelling public intervention that engages light, form, and color.

— Vivien Trommer



View of “Lena Henke,” 2017.







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