“Hans Josephsohn & Loredana Sperini”
April 7 – May 5, 2022
Opening: 07.04.2022

The exhibition “Hans Josephsohn & Loredana Sperini” brings together two prominent positions of Swiss sculpture, whose shared interests are not necessarily obvious at first. In collaboration with the Ursula Hauser Collection, this is already the fourth exhibition at NEST, conceived and realized by students from the context module “Art & Exhibiting”. The juxtaposition of Josephsohn and Sperini serves, on the one hand, as a precise (art historical) examination of their practices. On the other hand, insights into questions of art handling, conservation and collecting as well as the various steps on the way to an exhibition were discussed in relation to their works. Responsible for the exhibition are: Jacob Aars, Pelagia Dalduris, Linda Olivia Frei, Ramon Iten, Till Kadler, Hanna Köpfle, Ricardo Meli, Laura Nan, Tobias Oderbolz, Oana Popa, Bea Rossi Cafari, Rahel Spiess, and Elaine Wang.

Beyond their generational gap, Hans Josephsohn’s and Loredana Sperini’s oeuvre is united by a shared fascination for the human body, which often serves as a starting point. Both of their works move between abstraction and figuration, exploring the visible and the hidden. To a certain extent, their conception of humankind is reminiscent of the discourse around the middle of the century, which questioned whether the abstracted human figure was perhaps indicative of the fears and shared experiences of a wartime generation. Thus, the artworks figuratively as well as literally evoke the discovery of the rough, the uneven, and the brittle. The removal and addition of material is characteristic for both artists: Sperini often pursues a puzzle-like game in her practice, for example in her artworks with porcelain dolls, which she found at flea markets in Berlin and which she “deconstructs” and assembles into hybrid-like sculptures. In contrast to Sperini’s eagerness to experiment and create with different materials, Josephsohn remained faithful to modeling with plaster: the material was an expression of his specific method of addition and removal as well as his manual traces. In his later years, Josephsohn was able to cast the resulting works in traditional sculptural materials such as bronze or brass. Both of their artistic practices self-assertively determine the exhibition’s display, which is true for Sperini’s free-standing shelf as well as Josephsohn’s pedestals. Despite their strong individual presence, the two artists seem therefore intertwined.

Loredana Sperini (b. 1970) grew up in Lichtensteig in Toggenburg (CH) and set an important foundation for her practice with an education in textile design well before the further development of her artistic career. In 1996, she entered her studies in fine arts in Lucerne. Sperini's breakthrough then came with linking her two passions: textiles and art. In elaborate work processes, she created portraits of her friends, using black thread and meticulous precision, she embroidered them on white cotton fabric. Sperini skillfully removed embroidery, which was believed to be a "mere woman's craft", from its decorative purpose and put it to new uses. As early as her textile works, the subject of the vulnerable body as a site for memory and trauma already became apparent. From her haptic embroideries she then moved increasingly into three-dimensional realm. With the use of mirrors, she introduced a further layer to her works, allowing the viewers and the surroundings to become a part of them. Relics of the human body can still be seen in her subsequent works, whether in her relief-like wax paintings or in her partly abstract, partly figurative objects with casted body fragments. Porcelain figures are joined and scarred together. Sperini follows an experimental approach, incorporating and combining a wide range of different materials, such as fabric, wax, concrete, mirrors, porcelain, and bronze. Her works are part of renowned collections, including the collections of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Kunstmuseum Bern, the Kunstmuseum Olten, the FRAC Auvergne, the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, the art collection of the City and Canton of Zurich, and the Credit Suisse Collection.

The Swiss sculptor **Hans Josephsohn** (1920–2012) was interested in the representation of the human figure throughout his life. At the beginning of World War II, he was forced to flee Germany. After a brief stopover in Italy, he moved to Zurich, where he studied sculpture under Otto Müller. It was only after 60 years of continuous artistic work that Josephsohn achieved his international breakthrough. His practice is invariably based on plaster, as the material enabled him to work on sculptures over a longer period of time, continuously removing and adding something to them. His specific process remains (visually) present in the rough, cracked surface of his sculptures. The sculptures were then cast in bronze or brass, but due to financial constraints Josephsohn was only able to commission casts in later years. The castings were however merely the final stage of a much more extensive sculptural process that was explored through plaster, with a clear vision of the product's final surface texture. As a result, it was not unusual for Josephson to reject the casts as unsatisfactory. Yet only his casted sculptures are considered to be genuine works for sale. Throughout his work, he followed a consistent repertoire that can be divided into standing, seated and reclining figures, as well as half figures and reliefs. In the process, they were subjected to various degrees of abstraction, however, the focus always remained on the sculptural qualities of volume, form and surface. Over the course of his artistic practice, Josephsohn alternated back and forth between reliefs and fully sculptural figures. The half-figures, which increased in mass and volume, played a significant part in his artistic development. They enabled him to achieve spatialization by means of material accumulation, placing the viewer's body in closer relation to the corporeality of the sculpture. Josephsohn continually

oscillates between figuration and abstraction, tradition and modernity, without ever having to settle. His sculptures are characterized by their heaviness and rawness, which give them monumental but also archaic features. His sculptures are part of major collections and are on permanent display for the public at the Museum La Congiunta in Giornico and in the Kesselhaus Josephsohn in St. Gall. Many of his works can be found in a number of public locations, including the HSG in St. Gall or on the terrace of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin.

The context module “Art & Exhibiting” was led by Laura Bechter (curator of the Ursula Hauser Collection), Dr. Gabrielle Schaad, and Elsa Himmer (curators of the exhibition space NEST).

Translated by Marlene Bürgi.

1. Hans Josephsohn
Untitled, 1965
Brass
41 x 95 x 29 cm

2. Loredana Sperini
Untitled, 2012
Acrystal
86 x 49.7 x 24.5 cm

3. Loredana Sperini
Untitled, 2011
Porcelain, paint, wax, glass, metal, fabric, light bulbs, cables, wood, and mirrors
225 x 145 x 63.5 cm

4. Loredana Sperini
Untitled, 2007
Porcelain, wax, and paint
9 x 9 x 12 cm

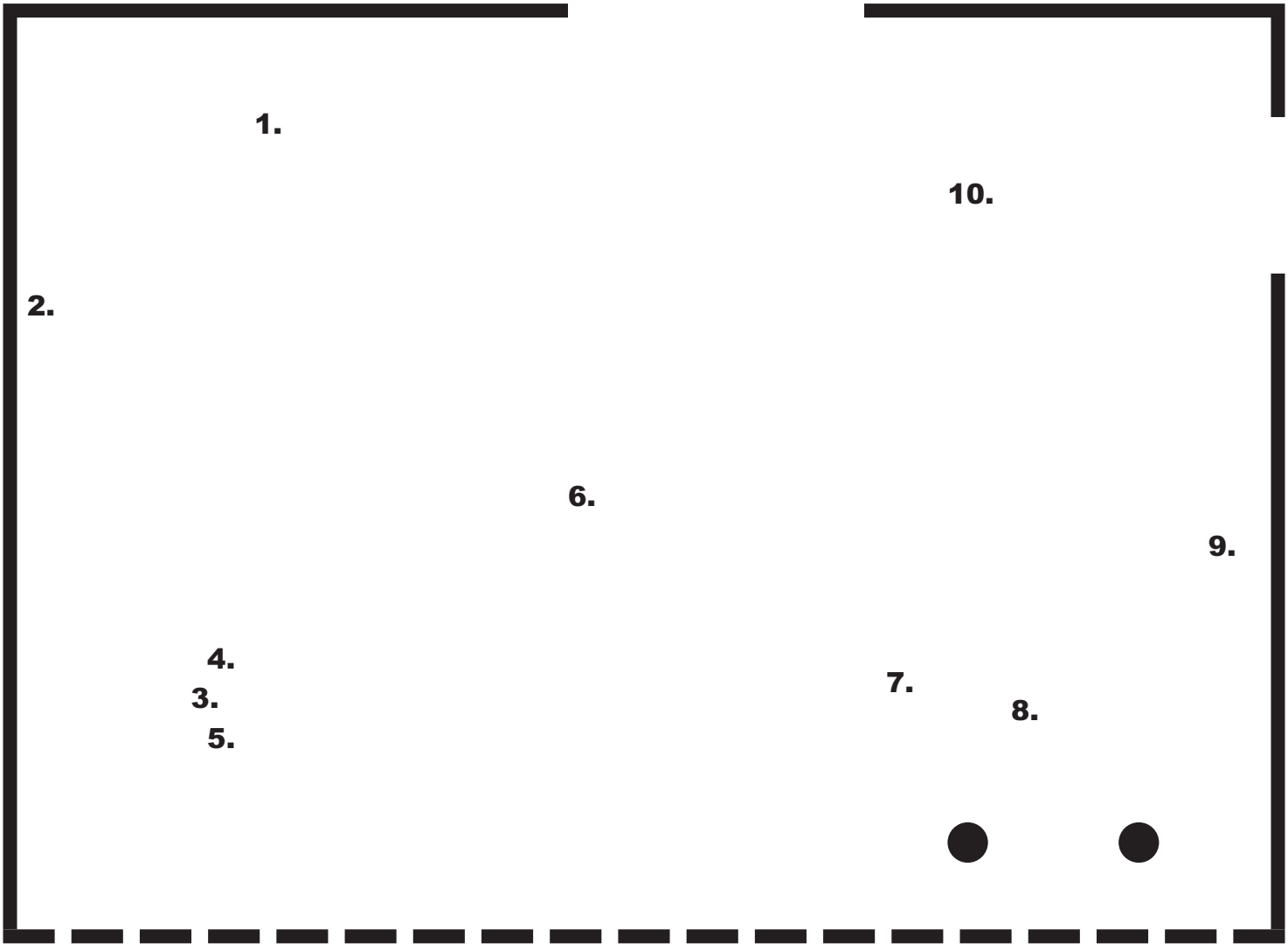
5. Loredana Sperini
Untitled, 2007
Porcelain, wax, and paint
18 x 13 x 22 cm

6. Hans Josephsohn
Untitled, 1968
Bronze
70 x 36 x 29 cm

7. Hans Josephsohn
Untitled, 1949
Brass
79 x 11 x 13 cm

8. Hans Josephsohn
Untitled, 1952
Brass
89 x 21.5 x 18.5 cm

9. Loredana Sperini
Untitled, 2012
Bronze
32 x 125.5 x 2 cm

10. Hans Josephsohn
Untitled (Vreni), 1981
Brass
122 x 80 x 80 cm

All works:
Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland