

Prada Presents “What was I?” by Goshka Macuga at Prada Rong Zhai in Shanghai

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An exhibition view of “What was I?” by Goshka Macuga at Prada Rong Zhai in Shanghai
(Courtesy: Prada)

Prada supports the exhibition “What Was I?,” conceived by artist Goshka Macuga, with the support of Fondazione Prada. On view from March 23 to June 22 2019, the exhibition will take place in the premises of Prada Rong Zhai, a 1918 historical residence in Shanghai restored by Prada and reopened in October 2017, stated an official release by the brand.

The exhibition is a kaleidoscopic journey in the post-Anthropocene epoch, after the collapse of humankind due to the effects of technological overdevelopment. The protagonist of this unexpected voyage is an android created by Macuga and produced in Japan by A Lab for the

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exhibition presented in 2016 at the Milan venue of Fondazione Prada. The android recites/rehearses his monologue constructed from numerous excerpts of seminal speeches, claiming himself to be a repository of human knowledge, according to the release.

“In this futuristic scenario, where the human perspective is no longer valid, the android is the only inhabitant of Prada Rong Zhai and a discrete presence in the residence. The key and dramatic question: "What was I?", that closes his enunciation and gives the title to a Macuga's neon piece and to her new project, was originally pronounced by Frankenstein's monster in the gothic novel written by Mary Shelley in 1818,” says the release.

In artist's fictional and post-apocalyptic universe, the android occupies the rooms of the historical house, revealing his personal art collection and belongings: 26 works from the Prada Collection, including several Italian art masterpieces, from 1958 to 1993, as well as 3 recent paper collages by the artist, part of the series Discrete Model, as per the release.

A few of the works by artists related to the German Zero group and the Italian and French Programmed and Kinetic Art movement ³/₄, such as Jan Schoonhoven, Luis Tomasello, Grazia Varisco, and Nanda Vigo, explores the complexity of computer-like patterns and geometric shapes and creates an autonomous alphabet of forms. The android is surrounded by a constellation of works by Italian artists: Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni, who attempted to reach a zeropictorial language; Alberto Burri, Lucio Fontana, Francesco Lo Savio, Salvatore Scarpitta, Turi Simeti, and Giuseppe Uncini, who experimented in their works new ways to overcome the physical and symbolic limits of the canvas and employed unconventional materials that connected art to reality. Two unusual portraits by Walter De Maria and Llyn Foulkes remind the human body and its absence, while a painting by Vincenzo Agnetti evokes a “language beyond language,” as per the release.