

## Judit Villiger's Miniature Museum

Judit Villiger's "Musée imaginaire" brings together masterpieces which are scattered throughout a number of museums all over the world. The artist's intention here is not really to reinterpret the landscape or objects. Nor are Villiger's miniatures really meant to be quotations from or commentaries on the originals. The artist wants to have time and allow them to interact with each other. She wants to recall the atmosphere of the works in order to be able to allow her mind to immerse itself in these remote worlds. With their small format – each sculpture would actually fit in a 35-mm film case – they form a counterbalance to large-format representative paintings. The intimate character of the miniatures predestines them to be objects of private consumption. As the artist herself says: "By implementing details of artworks plastically, you can journey beyond them and/or into them in your imagination. New perspectives on well-known subjects come into being. The film-case rooms become stages. Imaginary places come alive."

The subjects have been carefully chosen by the artist: they all come from major works of art. You may therefore discover the famous, unreal, dream-like Florentine landscape which Leonardo da Vinci painted as the background to the portrait of the Mona Lisa around 1503. Another sculpture represents the volcano of Mount Fuji on a windy day as seen by Japanese painter Katsushika Hokusai. A landscape with a solitary tree is taken from the German romantic, Caspar David Friedrich. A row of trees on a sandy bank on the Loire is painted by Felix Vallotton. The tree from the "The Empire of Light" has been "borrowed" – to use the artist's words – from a masterpiece by Belgian artist René Magritte.

Judit Villiger reproduces the details of landscapes and cities with the accuracy of a camera. The artist uses the same procedure to make the sculptures as she does to produce a bronze. She produces a wax model, then a negative mould which is cast in epoxy resin. The cast is then painted using acrylic paint. It is fascinating to watch how the original mood of the image is preserved in the small sculpture. Thus, the panorama painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the famous *sfumato* technique now reproduced as a sculpture takes on the atmosphere of a landscape steeped in mist and sodden with dampness. The miniature sculpture has as many secrets as the painting. The lines of the houses from the picture "Early Sunday Morning" (1930) by American realist Edward Hopper is copied so accurately that the buildings immediately allow us to experience something of the desolation, the human isolation and unmoved stillness of that era. This is the feeling which is also portrayed, for example, in the artist's paintings. Moreover, at the same time you have to remember that the landscape of German painter Caspar David Friedrich arose out of empathy and imagination. The portrayal of the tree renders tangible not only the romantic's oneness with nature but also a magical attraction because, paradoxically, behind the realistic portrayal of the tree, reality appears at the same time puzzling and wonderful.

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