



**Provocative and poetic:
on the connecting power of art as ritual**
Marien Schouten
November 2 - December 14, 2024

Marien Schouten (1956, NL) shows sculptures from the series *Beads*. They are based on a painting with the same title. In that painting we see a lion with beads in its fur standing by a sea. In earlier paintings the lion was wounded, and now those drips of blood have been transformed into beads. It is the first time that a painting is ‘translated’ into sculpture: the illusory space of the painting is made concrete in the open, curved shape of the sculpture that evokes associations with a mask or even with a cloak. This creates an exciting interaction between the physical and the immaterial of the illusion. The *Beads* are not so much an abstracted variant of the motif of the lion with beads, but the result of the new way in which that motif is brought to physical reality.

Before, it has been written about Schouten that the bold application of the *modi operandi* of painting in his work is rooted in his conflicting relationship with the art of the previous century, from Berlage and Mondrian to Judd and Ryman: “Schouten repeatedly falls back on the aesthetic and stylistic principles that these great modernists developed, but his expression of respect is at the same time a deliberate ‘pollution’ of their purely idealistic views. Functionality and ornamentation, once considered incompatible, are no longer mutually exclusive in Schouten’s work. (...) One is never inferior to the other; everything the painter uses retains its own value. In recent years, however, unconscious figurative associations have increasingly figured prominently in his work, as has colour.”

Various motifs, such as the lion, - a transformation of a vampire-motif Schouten used in the 80s - keep recurring in Schouten's work. In the creative process, the echo of an original unconscious image that nestled in the artist's mind and that repeatedly demands physical definition resonates and with that becomes increasingly more conscious and concrete. In the *Beads* series, the physical gesture is important: the movement of the artist's fingers and fists in the clay are visible in the many cavities that seem to function as eyes, just like in the dynamics of folds and waves in the skin of the work. Experiment is the magic word that marks the idea of transformation in *Beads*.