

Bojan Šarčević's "L'Extime"  
by Tomas Weber  
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View of Bojan Šarčević's "L'Extime" at Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Frank Elbaz. Photo by Claire Dorn.

Bojan Šarčević's aloof, unyielding mixed-media sculptures skirt the boundary between glacial reserve and slushy poignancy. In his first exhibition at Paris's Frank Elbaz, he delivers frostiness and emotion in a single blow.

Three works in the first room, all titled *Homo Sentimentalis* (all works 2020), involve immense, magnificently polished marble blocks, ranging from ivory white to deep grey, that are carved with ridges, indentations, and geometrical notches. Muscular plastic mannequins wearing

## ART AGENDA

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perhaps running or dancing, at the back of the room. The legs and feet of these vaguely alarming, hybrid forms are all neatly bound with jute bondage rope.

Two of the marble blocks have been hollowed out to contain readymade ice chests, the lids of which are open. Switched on and fully operational, they release cold air into the space; empty of products, ice and frost build up inside. On top of one block sits an ice-maker that regularly spews out cubes onto the gallery floor. Each block is equipped with a sound system emitting an assortment of glitchy noises. The empty freezers, humming in their ultramodern marble units, have a contrastingly sad and retro feel, like an outdated dream of the future—a mood enhanced by the blouses' vintage prints.

Often described as a fuzzy longing for an idealized past, nostalgia is also a spreading chill, a freezing of time. That the Cold War never really thawed is perhaps a familiar idea, but it is a topic on which this artist, who was born in Belgrade and grew up in Sarajevo at the time of the Bosnian War (1992–95), can be assumed to have some thoughts. More immediate contemporary resonances are found in everything from empty supermarkets to the Arctic's failure to fully freeze over. The latter especially is hard to ignore in light of the open freezers' profligate consumption of electricity.

“L'Extimé” is a neologism coined by Jacques Lacan that translates into English as “extimacy”: an intimacy that has little to do with interior states of mind, but which takes place out in the world amongst its objects, in full view, in the cold, or in supermarkets. It's a fitting concept for a sculptor whose work conveys both remoteness and intimacy. In Šarčević's sculptures, materials contrast and correspond in understated ways. Marble, for example, is crystalline; so is ice. The exquisite material of classical sculpture is here used to house industrial freezers, while the task of representing the muscular human form is delegated to plastic mannequins. A prospect of connection, even an erotics, is raised by the knotted rope.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, extimacy refers both to how our innermost feelings can seem strange to us, and how, conversely, we can project those feelings onto external objects in ways that render them unnervingly intimate. Šarčević makes strange familiar material processes such as freezing or melting, while hinting at—but never quite evoking explicitly—sensations such as desire and nostalgia. These sculptures propose that even the most commonplace emotions are so densely woven, so oddly composed out of the most incongruous materials, that if they were to be taken apart and scrutinized, really seen, they would barely be recognizable.

Šarčević's interest in freezing has been evident since his 2018 show at Modern Art, London, called “Sentimentality is the core,” as well as his show earlier this year at BQ, Berlin, “Thank you for pointing to your perineum,” which respectively featured freezers and an ice-maker. In this exhibition, however, the web of references is denser and the experience of occupying the space is more intense. The humanoid figures, set off against colossal marble blocks, offer a sprightly physicality in a time of social distancing. Open and supple in its associations, this exhibition resists easy interpretation. An eerie chill dominates the space.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Tomas Weber** is a writer based between London and France. His writing on art and culture has appeared in *Artforum* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

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