

**Anna Perach, 'Spidora' 24 March 6 – April 30, 2022**  
**Edel Assanti, curator: Cleo Roberts-Komireddi**

Edel Assanti is delighted to present *Spidora*, Anna Perach's first UK solo show.

Perach works with an intricate tufting technique to create wearable sculptures and wall-based objects, informed by Slavic folklore, mythologies, fairy tales and psychoanalytic theory. Her sculptures function both as garments that are performed in as well as autonomous works. Through a distinctive medium that bears resemblance to carpet textiles, Perach considers the domestic sphere and how it operates as an extension of the individual, reflecting on personal heritage and gender roles. Her performances reverse this dynamic and exhibit the private domestic carpet as an external masquerade, simultaneously exposing and concealing fragments of the self.

*Spidora* is the exhibition's protagonist: a woman-arthropod hybrid in the form of a wearable sculpture, inspired by a Victorian illusion invented by the American magician Henry Roltair. This entertaining act, which toured America with travelling carnivals, presented a curious beast that had a real woman's head grafted onto the body of a spider, jarring contrast of female beauty with monstrosity. Perach's sculpture and performance elaborates this 'hideous' form. From a vivid tufted body, multiple body parts including heads, hands, breasts and legs, protrude and accentuate the character's contradictions: she is both feminine and grotesque, hidden and exposed, human and animal, powerful but a victim of her condition.

The gallery becomes *Spidora*'s web as Perach explores the overarching archetype of women as virile forces capable of both giving and taking life. Stages of *Spidora*'s reproductive cycle are laid out. A wooden tufting frame hinged to the wall displays the embryonic phase of future deconstructed beings. Flattened body parts are held here, composed of tightly knotted tufts in lurid colours, that appear like an anatomical drawing that simultaneously forms a protective shield for the matriarch. Overhead an ominous metal sack hangs from the ceiling. Through its chainmail bulge fleshy limbs and heads, indicating that this is where *Spidora*'s reproductions gestate.

*Spidora*'s implied laborious act of weaving and Perach's own, is a means of considering the connotations of craft and carpet textiles. The medium is culturally charged, resonating with Perach's early childhood spent in Soviet Ukraine before migrating to Be'er Sheva, Israel. Oriental tapestries were part of her visual culture and an object that spoke of worldliness and commerce as well as conjuring domesticity, intimacy and labour. Transforming the image of carpet into a wearable sculpture, she retains aspects of this interiority. When used to perform, the fabric insulates the performer from their surroundings and constricts their movements to mechanical, jilted actions. The tension of the performance and the claustrophobia of the performer is a way of reflecting on histories of restrictive gender roles. In bringing *Spidora* to life, the exhibition both demonstrates and questions the enduring legacy of mythologies that conjure monstrous women. Evidently compelling and with addictive appeal, Perach asks, who do they really serve?

Anna Perach (b.1985, USSR) completed her MFA in fine art from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2020. She has recently exhibited at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, Rugby, UK (2022); Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Herzliya, Israel (2021); White Cube, London, UK (2020); MOSTYN, Llandudno, Wales (2019); Mimosa House, London, UK (2019). In 2020 she received awards from Sarabande, The Lee Alexander McQueen Foundation and the Royal Society of Sculptors. Perach lives and works in London, UK.