

EN

14/12/23 – 14/02/24

Curated by:

Jen Kratochvíl / Tjaša Pogačar

Jelisaveta Rapačić

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...and they lived...

björnsonova & Tamara Antonijević, Lucia Kvočáková, Lucie Mičíková, Nik Timková, Zuzana Žabková / András Cséfalvay
Katrina Daschner / Gideon Horváth / Tina Hrevušová
Valentýna Janů / Teuta Jonuzi & Daria Lytvynenko
Ursula Mayer / Isadora Neves Marques / Wendelien van Oldenborgh / Gregor Petrikovič / Agnieszka Polska
Maruša Sagadin / Selma Selman / Natália Sýkorová / Ezra Šimek / Transformella (fed and cared for by JP Raether)

...even though, it's hard to be certain, if it was a question of happily ever after or not. Life is a journey, says a cliché older than capitalism (or an eternal truth made cliché by capitalism), and so is this show. A journey through the riches of storytelling and its endless potentials. Its power to form states of mind, to convince people to create and re-create history, or to put someone to sleep. Our times used to be called the era of post-truth. Others started to doubt if there had ever been any truth to begin with. And so the quantum physicists and comic book heroes gave us the multiverse to get lost in completely (or was it the other way around?). We live next to each other, yet often on parallel planes. And so this international group exhibition offers itself as a stage, as a theater for stories to be unfolded, enacted, re-enacted, performed, and lived. There are no answers at the end of these various rabbit holes, there never were. There is only work, individual internal work, collective reflective work, and work in general leading, possibly, to healing.

In times of need – techniques become tools, weapons and medicine. Coping mechanisms are born out of one's sheer desire to exist, to heal, to beat the odds in a rebellion or lull to a tranquil state of acceptance. Tales older than time are repeated and transformed, adapted to the needs of the fortune tellers, gurus, political leaders, caregivers and listeners, offering different realities, fears, courage, lessons and hope.

It seems that we exist in a state in constant need of myths, gossip, heroines and villains, the ones to condemn and the others to celebrate. These protagonists' destiny and their tales' interpretation is susceptible to constant change, sometimes resulting in more empathic practices and sometimes in more harmful ones. Once scary witches set to burn in flames are turned into wise healers and empowering figures and enchanting legends of how a city rose, can become a baseline for justifying and implementing imperialist practices. Who are stories told by, for whom and for which purpose is in a constant state of appropriation. Tales are nevertheless dismissible in what we are told is a system based on rational thinking, but one cannot help notice how much of seeming rationality is based on a set of beliefs and legends.

If storytelling is a method reserved for dissidents, lunatics, dreamers and children, then what are the methods of a rational (hu)man? And where does its true potential lie? The line between the real and the fake is often drawn by one's own capacities, a placebo of sorts. Somewhere in this mess, exists a refuge base where a particular healing power, or at least, coping power, can be unlocked and deployed to give comfort when needed. The one which is channeled through tarot cards and astrology, or activated through role-playing, world-building, drag, speculation, immersion into augmented realities, altering states and many more...

This exhibition strives to show some examples of storytelling being deployed as a weapon to fight injustice, as a tool to construct new worlds and as a medicine to help cope with the existing one. The physical space of the exhibition doubles as a modular stage mutating to nest performances and interventions that will periodically take a physical form and allow room for different narratives to emerge. These sporadic occurrences will challenge in many ways the stories we are being told and provide potential different readings regarding class, climate, intimacy, healthcare and fragility among other topics. Thus, the very character of the exhibition falls in the same order, constantly evolving and offering a change of plot, landscape and protagonists with the aim of maintaining a state of necessary speculation and liquidity.

JR

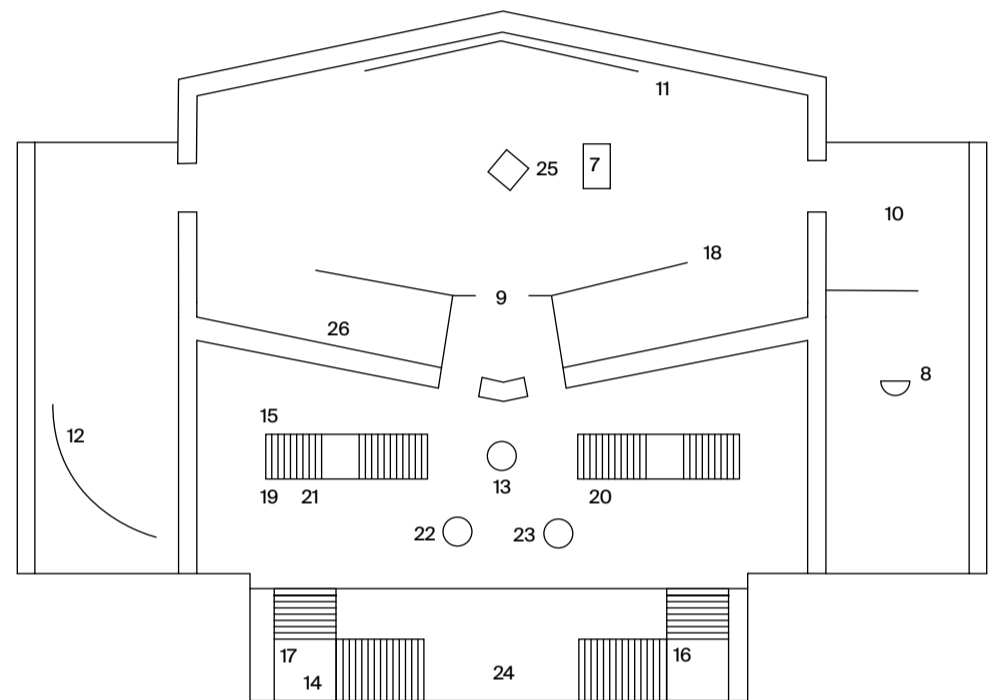
We all, possibly, have our own doppelgängers somewhere in the mirror world, writes author, political analyst, and social activist Naomi Klein in her new book, *Doppelgänger*. These are mirror images of our political beliefs and convictions. Klein elaborates at length on her own double, Naomi Wolf, with whom she has often been confused. While their practices and political consciousness had similar roots, they might have led to the same or analogous outcomes. Yet, at a certain point in their lives, the decisions they made and the directions they took couldn't have carried them further apart. While Klein criticizes late capitalism and corporate globalization, advocates for organized labor, and follows an ecofeminist mindset, Wolf became a straight-up conspiracy theorist, working with Trump's former chief strategist Steve Bannon, and the former Fox News darling Tucker Carlson, denying everything from climate change to Covid-19. Both are still highly regarded in their own circles; through their own different channels, their work resonates on two sides of the mirror. One wonders: how did we arrive at the point in history where contradictory positions exist side by side, in constant struggle, yet flourishing. No wonder popular culture in the last couple of years has literally jumped on the idea of parallel universes, shattered into an endless stream of multiversal possibilities, variations, permutations; lives so far away or so close, yet entirely different. Many theorists blame the pandemic for the outburst of "what if" narratives.. What if world governments would take different decisions and set us on a different path? What if the threat had been contained earlier, or right at its inception, and no global pandemic had ever taken place? What if, instead of forcing everyone back to work as soon as possible, the governments had instead focussed on developing more equitable healthcare systems, and new support structures for workers across the spectrum? What if, what if. With the shattered mirror of possibilities, outcomes, and world views, it became harder to maintain democracy as a system. Suddenly, all the complexity was forcibly narrowed down to universally acceptable political positions. This led directly to a growing radicalism, and at the end of the day, one is confronted with the necessity to vote for a lesser evil rather than a candidate of choice. Conversation is often impossible since the divide between distinct positions is sim-

ply too broad to be bridged. But what holds such distinctly different realities in place? What allows them to grow and prosper? What keeps them together? I dare say that it's the power of storytelling. Its ability to encompass a belief in such an elaborate narrative that it suddenly becomes the "truth." And suddenly, with narratives so contradictory, held simultaneously, it feels that their reconciliation, if it ever comes, will not be driven by judging one story true and the other false. Suddenly, it seems that both stories, and many more, would have to be held and respected at the same time, without asking one to triumph over the others. And so this show asks you to listen to various narratives and give them the space they need. If one can do the same also outside of the exhibition space, that's a completely different question.

JK

A HALL

→ entrance from the first floor of the building



WANDERING:

- 1 björnsonova & Lucia Kvočáková, Lucie Mičíková, Nik Timková, Zuzana Žabková, *Snake* (from the series *Harvested Darkness*), object, soft sculpture, 2018
- 2 Katrina Dascher, *Sister Siren* (Silver-Grey, Lila, Red, White, Blue), concrete, artificial hair, acrylic glass, brass, 2022 (a series of objects in space) Courtesy the artist and Georg Kargl Fine Arts
- 3 Isadora Neves Marques, *YWY, The Android*, video, sound, 7'40", 2017
- 4 Gregor Petrikovic, *Sincerely, Victor Pike*, generative moving image, voice recording, 15', 2023
- 5 Agnieszka Polska, *I am the Mounth II*, HD animation, 6'10", 2014
Courtesy the artist and Georg Kargl Fine Arts
- 6 Natália Sýkorová, *plants littering, eels swelling...*, installation, costume and set design: Frederik Britzlmair, 2023
- 7 björnsonova & Tamara Antonijević, Lucia Kvočáková, Lucie Mičíková, Tanja Šljivar, Nik Timková, Zuzana Žabková, *13th card: I woke up like this*, installation/coloring station, 2022
- 8 András Cséfalvay, *Cosmogony 1: self-similarity of models*, 2-channel video installation, 2023
- 9 Katrina Daschner, *Vagina dentata*, aluminum (laser cut), 2022
Courtesy the artist and Georg Kargl Fine Arts
- 10 Gideon Horváth, *Vase of Virulence and its Offspring*, bee wax, porcelain, metal construction, 2023
- 11 Ursula Mayer, *they all fall*, plant imprints on silk, a series of six, 2023
- 12 Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *of girls*, single-channel film installation with subtitles, 40', 2022
- 13 Maruša Sagadin, *Terra Cotta, Panna Cotta with Lipstick Building*, Wood, concrete, metal, paint, 2016
Courtesy the artist; Christine König Galerie, Vienna; Syndicate, Cologne
- 14 Maruša Sagadin, *Tschumi Alumni (Pink-Yellow)*, Wood, concrete, paint, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna

GROUNDING:

- 15 Maruša Sagadin, *Tschumi Alumni (Pink-Orange)*, Wood, concrete, paint, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 16 Maruša Sagadin, *Tschumi Alumni (Orange/White-Green/Black)*, wood, paint, concrete, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 17 Maruša Sagadin, *Tschumi Alumni (White-Grey)*, wood, paint, concrete, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 18 Maruša Sagadin, *Tschumi Alumni (Black-Green)*, wood, paint, concrete, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 19 Maruša Sagadin, *Schlechte Laune ohne Kiosk und Küche (Bad Mood Without a Kiosk and Kitchen) (Romana)*, wood, paint, 2020
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 20 Maruša Sagadin, *Zehn Zähne (Ten teeth) (Marička)*, concrete, wood, pigment, paint, 2020
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 21 Maruša Sagadin, *Mit Händen und Füßen sprechen (Speaking with Hands and Feet) (Marička)*, concrete, wood, pigment, paint, 2019
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 22 Maruša Sagadin, *Schlechte Laune ohne Kiosk und Küche (Bad Mood Without a Kiosk and Kitchen) (Juliana with Capitals)*, concrete, wood, pigment, paint, 2020
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 23 Maruša Sagadin, *Schnelle Beine (Fast Legs) (Marjetka)*, concrete, wood, pigment, paint, 2019
Courtesy the artist and Christine König Galerie, Vienna
- 24 Selma Selman, *No Space*, virtual reality performance, 360 video, 5'42", 2019
- 25 Transformella malor ikeae (fed and cared for by JP Raether), *Reprodiagrammar*, QR code, AR interface, 2023
- 26 Valentýna Janů, *Under Head I & II*, stainless steel, cherry pit, glass, textile, batting, wood, plywood, 2023

Artists:

BJÖRNSONOVA & TAMARA ANTONIJEVIĆ, LUCIA KVOČÁKOVÁ, LUCIE MIČÍKOVÁ, NIK TIMKOVÁ, ZUZANA ŽABKOVÁ
Healed from 2015

Shapeshifting entity and collective bjornsonova, has been very convincingly managing to bring out the softest parts of us while bluntly addressing radical steps needed for achieving actual change for a better and more mindful environment and coexistence. They have been seducing our intimate thoughts, comforting our fears, building pathways, channeling girlhood, playing nostalgic tunes, performing magic, believing in miracles and composing the soundtrack to their own picture. With the upcoming glossary they will allow for the veil between the tangible and the mystical to be sheer once again, and invite you to join them on a quest for answers about past, present, future, love, loss, victory, money, home, travel, and whatever else your needy heart desires. On this journey we will revisit texts and language assigned to inhuman entities, objects and beings, activated through a glossary combining autofiction, research, quotations and fun facts, channeled by bjornsonova and her counterparts. The glossary, beside the magical stories, anecdotes and confessions, will also function as fortune telling tools by Tamara Antonijević, Lucia Kvočáková, Lucie Mičíková, Nik Timková and Zuzana Žabková who will be guiding us through its pages on a quest for answers. This time, they will be bringing a special guest with them, to be brought to life by our collective efforts on a lucky Friday evening. Until then, the card number 13 will be divided, inactive, and offering herself as a space for gathering, sitting in silence, coloring, doodling, mind mapping, exploring, getting lost and communicating. Bjornsonova invites you to take part in bringing this card to life; the card that represents the ones who invited themselves, whose name is missing from the table with its guests names, the one that lives on the floor that is erased from hotel elevators, the death- that foretells upcoming change.

ANDRÁS CSÉFALVAY

“From the depth of experience, came forth an animal. Another cycle of conformity. A large jellyfish, with a thousand million arms. Contracting and waving its tentacles. Its breadth was space. Its arms: time.”

Andras Csefalvay, in his newly developed work for *...and they lived...* tackles the endless,eternal genre of origin myths. As many cultures or conspiratorial cells have roamed the Earth, or the Internet throughout history, we have many more origin myths. Ritual sacrifices, descents from heaven, murders, old, bearded men turning on the light, big bangs, spacetime continuums, matrixes, aliens; basically the whole proverbial science/faiht/ fantasy imaginary. As narrator, Csefalvay evokes a personified Higgs Bosun Field, a field of energy that is thought to exist in every region of the universe. And the Cosmic Jellyfish as the foundational element of existence, as the primary mover, as the shape of all things, as the first form out of which all has been created, and made in its image. The two-channel video literally emits its message from a model of a deep space satellite dish on a background of passing time, somewhere in the galaxy’s outer reaches. The narrator’s story is followed by a conversation between the creator and their creation.

JK

KATRINA DASCHNER

Katrina Daschner’s storytelling has a direct yet beautifully diversifying, fluidly evolving, and warmly embracing path, exploring the endless riches of queer and feminist lives and their potential for political action. Daschner’s multimedia practice encompasses performance, singing, sculpture, drawing, collage, embroidery, crocheting, and last, but definitely not least, film. The work developed when the traditional media of painting and sculpture were occupying the spaces of art academies and institutions in Vienna, which led Daschner and the community of her fellow queers, peers, friends, and colleagues to test boundaries of other types of spaces, public spaces, bars, clubs or burlesque theater. No wonder the glittery glam employed throughout her practice until now – is a confident, joyful glamor, overpowering the dull normativity of hetero-patriarchy.

Daschner’s work has always been community-based, engaging, welcoming, and dialogical, allowing for the cherished nurturing of her queer-feminist peers, approaching kinship not only as a model of political resistance but also simply of living. Such are Daschner’s works in the exhibition – even if not actively performing – they offer performative actions through their simple act of presence. One enters the main exhibition hall, the main stage, through Daschner’s *Vagina dentata*, an eternal symbol of the fear of womxn’s bodies, linked to the castration fears of cis men, understood by Freudian and later psychoanalysts as manifestations of the survival instinct. In this case, there is nothing to fear; on the contrary, walking through the toothed vagina is understood as a form of empowerment, as a way of recognizing collective unity and the inclusive nature of Daschner’s practice. When the main space opens up to the visitor’s senses, a selection of theatrical elements provide building blocks for various types of performances orchestrated by other artists; these elements are Daschner’s proposal for each of them, an offering to activate, negate, use, or ignore. Witnesses to all this fervor are five slender, elongated objects, suspended in space, yet still bound by gravity, pulled to the ground by their own weight, resisting the pressure of any potential oppression. These are five sisters, five comrades, five sirens. “Sister Sirens.” Not necessarily the sirens from ancient myths, even though their postures are drawn from there, but bodies of sisterly bonds, liberated yet constantly fighting, on an endless journey to defy patriarchy.

JK

GIDEON HORVÁTH

An inherent and indisputable warmth runs through the veins of Gideon Horváth’s objects and sculptures. Yet they are forced to constantly contradict this foundational and existential, essential warmthness to stay cool, sustain their form, and overcome their natural tendency to melt, liquidity, and shapeshift. Horváth’s material of choice is beeswax for its properties of existence in a state of constant tension

between solid and completely fluid. This binary of sculpted and liquified forms, and all on the scale in between the two, translates to a contradictory essence of queer visibility and invisibility, between safety and danger. Especially considering the fact that Horváth lives and works in Hungary, where queer lives are being directly targeted by the official state representation and his own works are regularly censored. Mimicry and chameleon-like properties are, therefore, natural elements of the work. A carefully constructed image of normality, almost a ballroom-style realness, becomes a daily armor, a tool of resistance and survival. Horváth adopts elaborate metaphors and analogies to queer existence, referencing ancient mythologies or the language of an art historical canon. Utilizing existing narratives and reiterating them through a queer lens or discovering their original presence, yet, historically erased queerness is another tool of resistance while confusing oppression by maneuvering on the margins of visibility through codes decipherable on a need-to-know basis.

JK

TINA HREVUŠOVÁ

Human babies are most helpless in their first hours, days and weeks, and compared to other species, are solely dependent on the care of others to sustain their life and development. Other mammal babies can stand on their feet in their first hours. Some bird mamas push the newborns out of the nest before they are ready to fly, for the sake of their safety, as nests full of helpless babies are easy prey, but also as a catalyst that will determine whether the newborn is ready for the world and can embody their supposed nature. To be born is believed to be the first trauma, one suppressed, forgotten, and accepted as a necessary evil, the story of being born can never be told from a first-person perspective.

A winged postpartum creature pushes a membrane-like sachet. The birther has decided it is the right moment to let nature take its course in the form of an almost religious surrender to a process over which one has little control. Density fills the room, and your skin becomes almost sticky to the touch as the slimy membrane rolls over the barren terrain; the visual sensation is enough to smell the mucus. There is nothing intuitive about taking first steps in a completely new world. Kristina’s performance is an ode to a forgotten moment, stuck in a time-vacuum that slowly develops before us, a story that departs from the known.

JR

VALENTÝNA JANÚ

Valentýna Janú’s practice continuously strives for a 90s-rom-com happy-end with a golden sunset in the background. Yet, the obstacles and perils of late capitalism and the painful naiveté of the early era of our newly developed digital lives renders this sweet goal barely attainable. Therefore, she tries to help us define navigation marks for our journey through the boiling waters of the intersection between the millennial and Gen Z trauma. Should the pending climate catastrophe hiding right around the corner be the main drive of this generation, or is it more urgent to re-focus on internal work and figure out who we are, to be able to fight another day? Or is existential anxiety forcing us to do both simultaneously? Most likely, actually, and more. Valentýna is a dancer, but also a filmmaker and performer, someone who can transform a room into a dream-like landscape of fluidly dripping cushions where words fly around your transforming body, and it is up to you to grasp them, or not. She’s obsessed with language, but not only the one which allows for verbal or textual expression. Her latest performance, eloquently titled Snap, which will close the show, offers an overview of such a language, a language of gesture, movement, facial expression, and expressively coded fashion styles. There are no genre distinctions anymore (or gender ones if you thought of a potential typo), yet their boundaries live deeply ingrained with complete clarity somewhere in our gray matter or maybe instead in our veins. What is a movement? How do we recognize it, analyze it, gender it, grasp it, and chain it to a category? And how do we break free? When does a move become a part of your body so inseparably that it reconstitutes your identity? This is a choreographed situation, carefully curated. An articulated message spoken by movement. There is glamor, and there is spectacle, which we were told, back in the day, were just instruments of capitalist oppression. Still, no longer, no, my dear, these hyper-fem moves are emancipatory as fuck, burning the patriarchal gaze to the ground. Glitch, glitch, move. Snap.

JK

TEUTA JONUZI & DARIA LYTUVYENKO

In a delicate score the two bodies push, pull, support, carry, lay each other down gently; there is a lot of trust and very little resistance, the uncertainty comes from within. Daria and Teuta help each other ascend, and secure the safe landing of their limbs. The physical, almost dance-like performance is nonetheless emotionally charged, evoking feelings of surrender, camaraderie and trust. In a repetitive downward motion, the artists emphasize and play with the rhythmic nature of collapse, followed by an action that suggests a rebuilding, using the staircase as a stage. The act of drawing shapes around their limbs, between transitions, which initially seems childish, but now resembles a forensic practice of mapping the body. Although Daria & Teuta’s performance isn’t directly addressing this, the times in which we live evoke associations accordingly. This performance is nevertheless a story about partnership and malleability, the two artists communicate their boundaries non-verbally, support each other physically and emotionally, they stumble and fall, but always pick each other up.

JR

URSULA MAYER

“What will survive of us,” states one of Ursula Mayer’s recent works in a digital text. This message blurs the line between a question and a statement, reflecting Mayer’s exploration of the unknowable, ungraspable, speculative, and elusive aspects of existence. These enigmatic elements are shaped by both past events and future possibilities, blurring the lines between what has been predetermined and what remains to be unraveled. Mayer’s focus on the fluidity of gender naturally extends into an exploration of non-human forms of life, living, and interactions. Be it plant life or artificial intelligence, be it located within the realm of theoretical quantum physics or

science fiction and fantasy. Her avatars stand as guardians of knowledge, ultimately revealing that the treasures they protect are scattered all around. Her ongoing aim is to dislocate the prevailing dominant anthropocentric narrative from its place to open up the endless possibilities for the post-human. Building upon an existing imaginary formulated by authors such as Donna Haraway, Paul B. Preciado, or Octavia Butler, Mayer keeps exploring trajectories between science and mythologies, allowing each to inform and enrich the other, using myth to tackle scientific knowledge and vice versa. In her latest body of work, *Parliament of Plants* presented for the first time here in *...and they lived...*, Mayer blends ancient fabric-dyeing techniques with an exploration of plant intelligence, organizational structures, and imaginary societies that remain beyond human comprehension.

JK

ISADORA NEVES MARQUES

An android, YWY, positioned in the Brazilian agricultural, invites us to listen in on a heartfelt conversation with genetically modified corn crops. As listeners we are filling out the blanks of the conversation, left by the inability to hear the other voice. The setting is familiarly analogue and organic, though set in a present-future, offering a closeness and distance simultaneously. It seems that Isadora harbors the power to manipulate time perception like no other, which is further confirmed in her other works, she allows the viewer to feel as if they are an observer from the distant future, with a sense of nostalgia for a time that we, as a human species, have yet to experience. This time vacuum that Isadora places us in, is a perfect speculative map for a journey to many ifs, possibilities, and realities that might come to exist, or have been around all along, undetected. The time kaleidoscope is a very subtle prop in the storytelling we find here, but none the less very powerful. The potential distance allows us to consider the inconsiderable, to empathize with GMO crops, to feed the android within ourselves. In these moments of closeness, the fieldworker and the crops engage in conversations about fertility, bodily rights, reproduction, mutations, labor, monocrops and transgenic plants, opening up a whole new imaginative path.

JR

WENDELIE VAN OLDENBORGH

Wendelien van Oldenborgh is a master storyteller. Not only because her film works employ a variety of intertwining or parallel-flowing narratives, but also because of her interest in the deconstruction of the established canons of history. With almost archeological precision, Oldenborgh focuses on uncovering long-lost elements of our collective memory and imagination and reintegrates them into a fluid dialog with the most contemporary of issues and pressing socio-political topics. Her intentions are fully feminist. The research she conducts, which also functions as a process-driven composition of temporary communities,related to the subject at hand. She focuses on female figures marginalized by the dominant historical narrative. Womxn lost and overshadowed by the main characters in the hetero-patriarchal story. Each participant in Oldenborgh’s films is carefully curated into the resulting network of relationships, and connected narratives; this working method actively participates in the script development, its intersectionally formulated research. One of the participants in Oldenborgh’s work is architecture, often canonic, modernist architecture, with all its integral foundational dreams and visions for better futures, and of its failures and disillusionment. The characters in the films move around, through, and inside their conflicting histories, analyzing them and relating the expectations of their era to the current state of things.

In her latest film, presented at *...and they lived...*, entitled “of girls”, is set in the Tokyo house designed and lived in by Fumiko Hayashi, a Japanese writer, in the first half of the 20th century. Hayashi made her name as the author of semi-autobiographical novels and poetry, in which she openly expressed a sense of class solidarity and sexual desire. During the wars, she was sent by the Imperial Army and the Japanese newspapers she was working for, to occupied territories and colonized lands, among them Indonesia. Hayashi reported from these travels extensively. The other protagonist is Yuriko Miyamoto, also a writer, whose life is tied to Hayashi not only by political convictions but also by a seemingly random fact that they both died in the same year, 1951. Miyamoto is remembered for the political rigor of her writing, with which she pursued ideas of social equality and women’s liberation. Born into a privileged background, she used the resources at hand to travel extensively, was married twice, and lived in a long, openly lesbian relationship. Stories of these women are narrated and discussed by an intergenerational group of people in Tokyo, contextualizing their life, work, legacy, and public memory in the light of today’s struggles around gender, politics and love.

The film is presented in a specifically designed setting, referencing Hayashi’s domestic architecture, and challenging the relationship between the role of text and image in the multilingual character of the film.

JK

GREGOR PETRIKOVIC

Gregor Petrikovic’s new work for *...and they lived...* channels a community. A disparate, multifaceted, geographically, chronologically diverse, and diverging community. A community of queers, yet not only. Strangely it is a queer community also in the original sense of the word, since none of these people really met, either in time or in space, only in Gregor’s memory and extended memory, but more of that later. What constitutes a community? How is it framed and formed? And most importantly, how is it maintained and cared for?

Gregor’s practice is thoroughly informed by the history and language of early cinema, by 20th century photography, by automatic writing. But what is history, and how do we work with it? In this case, the events behind a narrative we call history are not as important as how we perceive them in hindsight, not only through a lens of personal subjectivity, but also through a collective imagination of what is perceived as a historical canon. Gregor uses references to such histories, through the aesthetics or media and technology of a given period, combining imagery that we associate with a particular era, genre, or trend. If

cinema is the language here, performativity provides the content. Gregor invites diverse bodies into a dialog through the physical composition of forms, movements, gestures and mannerisms, letting them simply exist within the film frame while overcoming its formal boundaries. In his new work, the multiplicity of voices plays a lead role, voices of that strangely unhinged community manifested only through Gregor himself. Gregor started to collect audio recordings of conversations with friends, dates, or acquaintances in 2016; since then, he composed an extensive archive of conversations, monologues, and simple voice notes of various characters. To keep the memory of those particular moments intact, cutting off the process of deterioration and subjectivization in his recollections. No unnecessary nostalgia or tech savviness was evoked, basic equipment used, and voice memos on an iPhone sufficed. With this evolving content, the unavoidable question of how to organize it all was raised. For *...and they lived...*, Gregor makes his first attempt at systematization and curating his archive, while employing machine learning and generative algorithms to translate personal memory into a body of abstract imagery and multi-channeled soundscape. It is notable that Gregor thinks of his archive in relation to the writings of Diana Taylor, as of a “repertoire”, which in this case enforces the position of the work in the space, orienting, or disorienting the visitor in their passage through the exhibition.

JK

AGNIESZKA POLSKA

Agnieszka Polska’s work is strongly informed by the experience of growing up in post-89 Eastern Europe, walking the uncertain terrain of a painful transformation to a regional variation of turbocharged capitalism. Witnessing an ongoing reinterpretation of history and the formulation of new narratives and foundational myths for a developing political system, attempting to mirror its original Western image; the artist gains a particular sensitivity to the course history takes and how it is molded in real-time. A focus on history and memory, but also archive, which the artist understands as a living organism subject to incessant change, forms the backbone of Polska’s practice, manifest mainly through the media of film, installation, and object. *...and they lived...* presents a short video entitled *I’m the Mouth II* (2014) in which animated, half-submerged lips describe how words in the form of sound waves spread through space, and via the bodies of the audience. The video has an almost ASMR quality; its hypnotic properties move the viewer, or rather listener, outside the realm of meaning to show how fragile and malleable words, meanings, memories, and histories can be.

JK

MARUŠA SAGADIN

Maruša Sagadin populates the gallery space with a diverse group of characters. They might be an audience running late for a performance, or family members of one of the artists coming to see what strange craft their relative is practicing, or governmental officials trying to find their bearing within an art institution’s spatial and conceptual maze. Someone said that they could be related to Le Corbusier’s Modulor, the anthropometric scale of a human body in relation to its surroundings, following the tradition of Da Vinci’s Vitruvius. But considering that both Vitruvius and Modulor were actually old-fashioned, self-centered men, it feels more appropriate to speak of different entities, be they womxn or simply people.

Sagadin’s visual language draws on lessons in postmodern art and architecture; often, her objects and sculptures live outside, rather than within the confines of a museum or gallery space. Their material qualities allow them to maneuver between inside and outside freely and according to their wishes (and the inclinations of the artist, their creator, of course). The modular character of each piece gives the impression of a randomly assembled block puzzle, where individual pieces and colors follow some mysterious logic. Upon closer inspection, one recognizes patterns and shapes emerging from the abstract into a concrete representation. But these are neither ducks nor decorated sheds (as Robert Venturi would have potentially wanted to categorize them; if to reference someone from the family, it’s rather Denise Scott Brown one should focus on). These are the tools of daily survival: moderately high-heeled boots, lipstick, baseball caps...legs, hands, lips...moving, talking, kissing, standing, waiting, leaning, walking, gesturing, falling, jumping, drowning, flying, flirting and seducing each other, holding hands or keeping their distance. They all came for the show, but we all came for them.

JK

SELMA SELMAN

Selma Selman satirically and convincingly utilizes her body and voice to maximize the capacity of her occupying power. Using the intuitive skill of making herself appear bigger, she tries to intimidate her counterparts and claim land, or in this case, the very globe we share, posing questions of entitlement, ownership, migration and displacement. If not brilliant, the reappropriation of colonial rethorics is almost itchyngly obvious and mockingly empowering. She mocks, she chases us out and warns our little pathetic selves that we are not welcome, that there is simply no room for our small bodies in the space that she proclaims her own. “Ish Ish” (Iš Iš) she hisses in Bosnian, translation isn’t needed as the very sound describes the intention.

The tantrum-throwing bully, embodied, plays on the tired tropes of past experience and encounters, familiar to many; the foreign authority, the overly confident scholar, the gatekeeper, the racist, the expansionist, the megalomaniac, the ones that have so much to lose, the greedy that never have enough and always want more. By reappropriating such experiences in a non-harmful environment, without reproducing further trauma, this type of exposure therapy can be beneficial in abstracting the source of trauma, thus taking away its power. Role playing and improvisation are powerful tools. Selma uses these to draw attention to issues that are difficult to grasp, to potentially manage one’s experiences and their consequences.

JR

NATÁLIA SÝKOROVÁ

Four performers are meeting for the first time before

the larping session begins, you are invited to join them or observe their journey as they form partnerships with one another and with the objects found on their quest to overturn a spell of climate calamity cast by the evil entity. The performance *plants littering, eels swelling...*, is an adaptation of the original five-hour long performance with an altered script in a different environment and set of circumstances, nevertheless the protagonists participate in a series of games, exercises and conversation involving different avenues of complicity between the human and non-human protagonists, climate and objects. The sensation is somehow familiar yet unworldly, the uncertainty is allowing the plot to develop and the props are being activated in magical ways, giving epic fantasy tactics, deployed in ways to solve or mend our world's current burning crisis. The performers, which are in this case the main participants of the session, are given instructions, suggestions and tasks to complete, which are tailored to help them navigate this environment and find or build more favorable climactic conditions. During this transformative choreography and sonic experience, which strives to form a story of collective survival, we are invited to join the larp, speculate about teleportation, legends and myths about contamination, generative stories about silence, extraterrestrial help, healing, solidarity and kinship.

JR

EZRA ŠIMEK

Ezra Šimek takes us down the queer internet rabbit hole, placing themselves in a position of a commentator, activist and educator. The "Ted Talk" setting allows the narrator to build upon and play with several narratives and incarnations involving both physical and digital versions of themselves. Ezra bases the performance on their experience of navigating society as a queer person, which can be difficult in itself, especially in times of great interest in identity without much understanding. In a storytelling manner, incorporating charming meme appropriations, painful reminders and intimate confessions, we are taken on a journey of self-explaining, coping and educating; some of the practices, familiar to many queers, especially those growing up with the internet and social media, and the fraught traffic of scare tactics and community support, all mashed up together. The piece sheds light on the ongoing anti-trans laws that are creating legal obstacles to healthcare for trans people, making their lives resemble a battlefield, but also offering solace, warmth and support. The stories you will hear are not just harvested from voices far away, but incorporate many of the local realities, aggressions and difficulties one has to live, explain and encounter on a daily basis. By debunking far-right rhetoric and demagoguery, by presenting actual data, Ezra draws us back and forth between the positions of learners and a familiar empath, trying to find group ways of coping and existing with our identities.

JR

TRANSFORMELLA MALOR IKEAE

"REPRODIAGRAMMAR"

Transformella is an artificial identity, fed and cared for by the artist JP Raether. Along with Protektorama, Schwarmwesen and many more, they weave a web of dazzling and subversive entities – that evoke drag characters as well as shamanic figures – each with their own appearances, vocabulary and agendas. Transformella research biotechnical and sociopolitical reproductive technologies. They question normative reproductive models, imagine reproductive futures beyond the nuclear family concept, and prototype forms of kinship forged in affinity and queerness rather than naturalism and essentialism. They talk about in-vitro fertilization, the global market of human reproduction, "ReproReality" and the coming "Reprovolution". One of the recent Transformellae, Transformella malor ikeae (Transformalor) go to the spiritual home of the industrial and globalized family, its shrine and its factory – a stack of stores that is organized as elaborate labyrinths, scattered across the entire planet, weaving an interconnected networked system of diorama lifestyle cubicles. They inject their own otherworldly body into what they call "Ikeality". As a consequence, they are an eternally journeying entity, as they have to diligently follow their recursive and algorithmic ritual to appear in each and every local Ikeality. One after the other, until all global stores are visited – 433 times. There they re-narrate the familiar shopping experience through stories, anecdotes, myths and theories of Reprovolution.

The QR code in the Kunsthalle Bratislava opens up a mixed reality containing four diagrams presenting actual, potential, and speculative Repro Architectures. See this delicate QR ornament as a seed – a part of Transformella's data body, a code carrying core instructions of their existence and mission. A stem cell planted in the middle of A Hall, of the Kunsthalle building, of Bratislava, of Slovakia... waiting for a potential community to activate it in their fight to shift the repressive climate.

Transformella's journeys into Ikeality manifest that the potential for another real is already present in the common reality, here and now. Building resistance against hegemonic ReproNormality could not be more critical in the context of increasingly violent attacks on reproductive rights and non-heteronormative bodies, identities and relationships. A tiny trace which Transformella offer at this show and at this time, holds the building blocks of an alternative story to help us fight the normative narratives shaping our present, and reimagine the future in which we are headed.

TP

PROGRAMME:

14.12.2023 Thursday

19:00, A HALL, *The ballad of an invisible place that existed*, Performance by Tina Hrevušová with guest Anna Marie Mahdíkóvá
19:00, The Staircase, *Down to the Top*, Performance by Teuta Jonuzi & Daria Lytvynenko

20.12.2023 Wednesday

13:00 - 20:00 A HALL
Winter Market

14.1.2024 Sunday

18:00, A HALL
plants littering, eels swelling..., Performance by Natália Sýkorová with guests Teuta Jonuzi, Saro Gottstein, Kodiki, Juraj Bileny and sound by Lenka Adamcová

2.2.2024 Tuesday

18:00, A HALL, *Healed from 2015*
Performance by Björnsonova & Tamara Antonijević, Lucia Kvočáková, Lucie Mičíková, Nik Timková & Zuzana Žabková

14.2.2024 Wednesday

19:00, A HALL, *"No offense, but"* vol. 2
Performative lecture by Ezra Šimek
19:30, A HALL, *Snap*, Performance by Valentýna Janů with guests Monina Nevrlá & Zizoe Veselá
Music by: NEW MAGIC MEDIA



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