

CHRISTINE KÖNIG GALERIE

WiR | WE

a hybrid in progress

curated by Marina Fokidis

Jimmie Durham
Peter Friedl
Penelope Georgiou
Christian Nyampeta
Sina Moser
Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons
Gerhard Rühm
Nancy Spero
Anna Tereshkina
Sislej Xhafa

As this text is being written, we are in the middle of July in 2020. All we have heard from mainstream media, the last five months – besides statistics tracking the spread of the disease and national death counts, as well as confused strategies of prevention and crisis management – is that “we are all in this together.”

For some time now we have been living in and out of the so-called lockdowns, due to a virus, which is, at present, our most familiar stranger; almost a close relative, with a peculiar and unpredictable temper. Covid19, a mythical hybrid of sorts, cannot be easily defined or de-codified. It develops, it regresses, it mutates, unstoppably, and this is what makes it strong. It is an amalgam of vices, such as greed and the need for destruction, among others. At the same time, it is our last chance – as a collective body – to give an end to a long – lasting ecocide, for which we are the sole responsible.

*But who are **we**? And what is this?*

Cities have morphed into unfamiliar landscapes, the daily routine is not the daily routine we knew anymore; the politics are not the politics we can recognize anymore; our belongings do not belong to us anymore; the public space does not belong to us either, and even private space is negotiable. We are living through a rapture and as we are experiencing this inevitable change, where everything is in flux, the space loses its shape and transforms into nothingness, an immaterial place: the space for the impossible.

*Can **we** identify a set of new queer capacities that might be emerging, and go beyond the hysteria of hyper-connectivity and navigate the turbulence within the demanding super-territorial terrain in which we all live?*

*How can **we** bring the past into the present and how can “the future” again become plausible within our lives?*

*Can **we** transform this uncontrollable oscillation from here to there and elsewhere within a space where “everything” might – again, or at once – be “possible”?*

With hindsight, it could be a dynamic transition. In his book, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*, Michel Serres, describes this place in the following manner: When a brave swimmer swims a wild river or rough sea passage, the route contains three passages. As long as the swimmer maintains contact with the point of departure, or when the swimmer sees the point of arrival from far away, the swimmer inhabits the object of desire. However, somewhere in the middle of the course, the swimmer encounters a very decisive and at the same time painful experience. Far away from the two shores, the swimmer goes through a neutral and gray territory, a time of transition that is not one place

or the other but both of them at once. Distressed and trying to find balance in this moment, the swimmer encounters an undiscovered place, one that does not exist in any map and which no traveler has described before.

To inhabit a moment/place like this – unfolding metaphorically between the Aristotelian notions of actuality and potentiality – needs patience and care, as well as a sense of bittersweet tenderness; a set of qualities that are lost within the busy courses of our lives, where, bombarded with unfiltered information, in full discontinuity with the natural environment, we run headlong into fulfilling the “obligations” of naked capitalism. It is, perhaps, time to accept the nature of transition per se – the “and” instead of the “or” – and to find the paths to a series of inclusive spaces where the keys to the entrances are not pre-cut, but are discovered endlessly in the process, through mere interaction.

Instead, for now, the fragile continuum of our planetary coexistence — **our wishful appeal to “we”** — had begun to irreversibly splinter and fragment.

All of a sudden, the travel of one can jeopardize the safety of another. One country’s success in mitigating the effects of the virus suggests the incompetence of another. The world had entered a survival-of-the-fittest phase, vocalized unashamedly as necessary. The lurking course of de-globalization that had been developing over the past few years now takes on new meaning. The supremacy of northern/western reasoning against all other “savagery” once again shines gloriously, momentarily overshadowing a huge reservoir of critical knowledge that exists outside its constraints. Yet everything is connecting with everything and everyone. Indigenous cosmologies and traditional communities have been arguing about the interconnectedness of humanity in every possible sense. We now can feel this inside our bodies, our throats, our lungs.

Is there still time for a universal recovery?

Art can always foresee a future, usually a “timeless” one. Prompted by this year’s curated by thematic focus, HYBRID, I decided to pursue a “dig into the future”. Specifically, a dig into the “vaults” of Christine König Galerie. By pairing older and newer artworks /accounts, that go beyond fixed (historical) times and geographies, the aim is to instigate a hybrid space that invites not only the reassessment of diverse certainties but also their cross –contamination and their cross-fertilization. It is perhaps in this narrow gap, between the two or more conditions – the “heres” and “theres” that have been partially separated –where inconsistencies, flaws, and scarifications can be reconfigured and harnessed with sensitivity and affection. *Yet, how can a hybrid coexistence and its entanglements be manifested in the form of an exhibition?*

Inspired by the work of artist, poet, conceptualist Gerhard Rühm who challenges the boundaries of traditional gen-

res and linguistic – meanings, and in particular by his typo-collage *Wir* the idea was to open up a space where unexpected sisterhoods might throw light on a third space – or a series of third spaces where people could meet to imagine the possibility of other ways of being in the world

Rühm's work *Wir* refers to an expanded (disproportionate even) understanding of one's own-self within the collective we. Through the complexification of the notions of collectivity as well as the process of coexistence, as it is attempted in this display, we might be able to arrive at the formation of vocabularies that encompass risk but also promise new forms of solidarity and interconnectedness, beyond the hegemonic relation of the "middle" and the "margin", the "I" and the "We" and many other binaries.

Unfolding between pairings of artworks that go beyond fixed (historical) times and geographies, such as:

an anti-monumental sculptural installation by Jimmy Durham, which shakes the foundations of our belief in Europe, and Sislej Xhafa presenting a set of white (empty) revolutionary flags that commemorate the betrayed hopes for a better world,

a filmic account by Christian Nyampeta, juxtaposing false claims of unity and community to colonial histories, and the earlier films by Penelope Georgiou which examine the sensitive balance of human relationships through a rather psychoanalytical quest of oneself,

a set of watercolors by Magda Campos Pons depicting humans, spirits and everything in-between in a delirious symbiosis, and three uneven monochromes by Peter Friedl alluding to the difficult task of painting nothingness,

a rousing work by Nancy Spero referring to the vicious circle of sociopolitical destruction: search and destroy... search / pacification body count and a very recent set of sketches by Anna Tereshkina which uncover the abuse of legislative power as it exercised through absurd laws of censorship and the abolition of the freedom of speech,

And finally, the introductory or concluding “television-aesthetic” commentary by Sina Moser, which reproduces parts of recent political attestations about the condition of the current pandemic in the form of a hip-hop improvisation set.

this exhibition invites to reflect upon our perplexed togetherness and to add on its different interpretations that occur when it is approached by diverse vantage points.

You are welcome to join us.

Marina Fokidis, 2020

C H R I S T I N E K Ö N I G G A L E R I E

Schleifmühlgasse 1A, A-1040 Wien
www.christinekoenigalerie.com