

Eglė Kulbokaitė and Dorota Gawęda *Mouthless*

01.02 – 29.03.2020

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For their first monographic exhibition in a Swiss institution, Eglė Kulbokaitė and Dorota Gawęda transform and inhabit the spaces of Fri Art and WallRiss to create a fragmented fiction in which eco-feminism theory, urban legends, witches trials, concrete geographical landmarks and impending ecological drama are mixed.





Portrait of Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė. Courtesy of the artists

Eglė Kulbokaitė (*1987 Kaunas / Basel) and Dorota Gawęda (*1986, Lublin / Basel) are occupying both Fri Art and the independent WallRiss art space in Fribourg at the same time.

In dialogue, two space-times that can however never be experienced together, a process of reconstitution is launched, starting with the construction of a place where the action has already taken place (WallRiss) and moving on to its fictionalised recreation (Fri Art). The interplay between WallRiss and Fri Art suspends geographic coordinates, taking the exhibition onto a speculative plane.



Hexanol (IV-V), 2020, 230 x 50 x 50 cm. Steel, aluminium, hay, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, WallRiss
Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle

Introduction

Mouthless, then, serves as a station, a hub that makes the rhizomatic tangible. The relationship between form and content is deliberately a-hierarchical. Nothing comes first. There's no vantage point between matter and information, event and fiction, narration and theory, the body and its environment, the landscape and whoever perceives it. Order is dissolved, the frontier always already contaminated.

Mouthless aims at dismissing the concept of point of view, of the division of the world into subjects and objects. The exhibition therefore stages a critical fabulation of our idea of nature, our way of understanding and framing it, our ways of conceptualising it as distinct objects, the body, on one hand, and the landscape on the other.

Rather than observing from one's respective distance, we're advised to listen to that which calls out dispersion: of autonomous bodies, of natures and of the exhibition. In the in-between, objects, contributors and images become receptacles of multiple fictions, ghost vehicles of counter-stories. Eastern European legends stand side by side with archives of local witch trials, eco-feminist texts merge into performance of transformed bodies, mutant landscapes call for your attention.



Exhibition view, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *Mouthless*, Fri Art, 2020. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle

At WallRiss

An opening in the flat surface of a pane of glass allows them to feel, come into direct contact with, suck in, the material from a space kept sealed. Here, sense of smell offers an alternative form for capturing or making contact with that other side that sight transforms into representation.

It is said that a film was once made in the WallRiss space. It staged performers of hybrid status: people passing through, a reading group, living actors, those with deft or deviant bodies, which were prepared so as to be registered in the digital code, take on the role of navigators, inflections and orientations sent and received by their outer skin. They became the site of predilection for the transmission of an exhibition's sign-matter, vehicles of stories that imploded in on themselves, exploded onto the surface of outer garments. In the mannered aesthetic of horror, these bodies hold our gaze. This gaze that approaches them from a rational distance or turns them into a spectacle.

Obstructed by a window, this sealed box, we are told, housed these scenes. In this flattened décor, nature is enclosed in an agricultural conception, sedentary, a productive relationship to the earth. This representation is locked in a 19th century diorama. A surveillance camera establishes real time, the data of an ecological paradigm. In this space, ways of framing nature overlap. The successive layers of this story correspond to the spread of a landscape.

wallriss

<https://wallriss.ch>



Exhibition view, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *Mouthless*, Fri Art, 2020. Photo Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle

At Fri Art

In the first room, a piece of stained glass accommodates an imagery produced by artificial intelligence solicited to recognise a scene. Not far away, a muffled noise reaches us. It makes its way between stuffed animals that children of the former communist block shared with each other beyond the borders of their respective homes. The sound of a tapping at a window, the same window which, at the WallRiss art space, blocks access to the site and divides the scene into two distinct sides: the observer and the observed. In the distance, the cluster of animals forms a planet. From it emanates the continuous murmur of another story to which we do not pay any attention.

In the large square room, stylised strands of story are looped on a series of screens. They refer to heterogeneous sign systems: fiction, legend, making-ofs, digital images. On-screen, real time is just another version of the virtual. Fragmentation, manipulation, confusion, and falsity. The ten screens highlight the blurring of attention spans, constant interference, in which noise replaces the self-evident.



Exhibition view, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *Mouthless*, Fri Art, 2020. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle



Exhibition view, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, *Mouthless*, Fri Art, 2020. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle

On the ground, a series of spectator seats highlight the behaviour required to transform a body into a viewer. By means of the seats, the senses are aligned, structuring the perspective, designating the goal and demarcating the target within the landscape. To become spectator, is to drive out nature.

Coming from the final room and spreading subtly through the exhibition space, the smell of wet soil has been synthetically reproduced. On contact with it, we are reminded of the singularity of a place.

This is only artifice, playing on the virtual nature of the present experience, and the threat of its disappearance in reproduction.

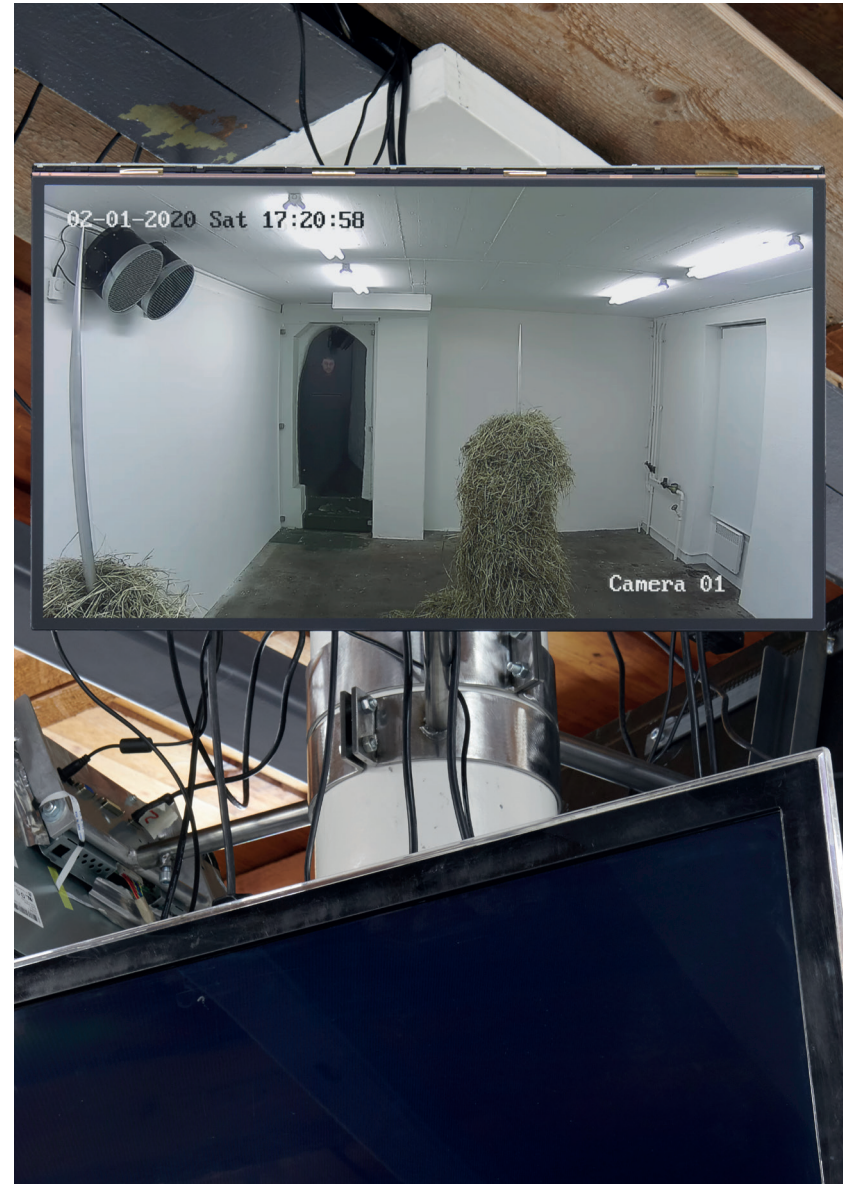


Spectator (I-V), 2020, 80 x 36 x 12 cm. Steel, print on leather, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, Mouthless, Fri Art
Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle

What kind of thing is it that emits such an eerie cry? Mouthless says nothing. Its porous body escapes this dual narrative to invade the town and its digital networks with its murmur. We listen to it address the senses, a fragmented subjectivity. Beyond our articulated perceptions commanding the faculty of judgement. A point of friction. An imminent point in the future. The crossroads of a decision without object.



Dorota Gawęda and Eglé Kulbokaitė, *Mouthless*, Fri Art, 2020. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle



Mouthless (And when the ax came into the forest, the trees said: the handle is one of us), 2020, dimensions variable, ten screen looped video installation, steel, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė, Mouthless, Fri Art. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle

Ketty La Rocca

Dal momento in cui...

01.02 – 29.03.2020

The artist Ketty La Rocca occupies a singular place in the landscape of Italian art of the 1960s. Her exhibition at Fri Art focuses on a selection of collages she made in affinity with the Poesia visiva, a movement that sought to rethink the impact of art on society by borrowing certain forms from mass media. In her collages, a sharp irony emerges from the clash between images and text. She lays bare links between a supposed emancipation of women through and the actual objectification of the body in consumer society. Stunned by an environment that too often reduced her to her femininity, and progressively disillusioned as to the transformative potential of art, the artist deploys a powerful and solitary reflection around communication and its impossibility. *Dal Momento in cui...* focuses on the use of language and nonsense as a poetic strategy that runs through La Rocca's work.

Ketty La Rocca's (La Spezia, 1938 - Florence, 1976) works are included in collections such as Centre Pompidou in Paris, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Museum Ostwall in Dortmund, Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence or Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (GNAM) in Rome. Her work was presented in the recent exhibition KETTY LA ROCCA 80. Gesture, speech and word at the 17th Biennale Donna, Ferrara and at Amanda Wilkinson Gallery, London (2018); at the Galerie Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf (2014); in Centre d'Art Contemporain, Genève (1992) or at the 28th Venice Biennale (1978).



Nervi distesi, 1964-5, 66 x 48 cm, collage on paper, Ketty La Rocca, Fri Art, 2020. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle and Ketty La Rocca Estate

The Program

Friday 28.02.2020

On Ketty La Rocca

One day of thinking from the exhibition and the work of the artist

In order to put into perspective the exhibition dedicated to Ketty La Rocca, Fri Art organizes a day to think about the re-actualization of a work still too little known. This day of thinking is part of the current resurgence and rediscovery of the richness of artistic and feminist practices in post-war Italy, a society dominated by a family model and a conservative patriarchal Catholic social organization.

Three researchers, curators and specialist artists will take turns discussing the current state of her work. In which areas of tension do radical feminist subjectivities emerge? What are the problems of her current presentation, how and where does it address us?

Ketty La Rocca's work will be placed within the multiple forms of engagement in Italy at the time. The relationship between art, public space and feminism then forms a complex fabric. Some artists chose to leave the field of art that was structurally inadequate to the emergence of the female subject. Some opposing separatist groups withdrew from the structurally inadequate public space. How do these positions dialogue with the artist's position?



Exhibition view, Ketty La Rocca, *Dal momento in cui...*, Fri Art, 2020. Photo: Guillaume Baeriswyl, Courtesy of Fri Art Kunsthalle and the Ketty La Rocca Estate

Barbara Casavechhia, writer, independent curator and teacher at Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera based in Milan, will contribute to this day by presenting new reflections on Ketty La Rocca's place in the artistic field, on the difficulty of being a committed artist without being reduced to feminist discourses alone. The strategies of silence, withdrawal and illegibility present in the artist's work will be evoked.

Camilla Paolino, writer, independent curator, CCC HEAD, Genève, will talk about the tensions between the separatism of self-awareness groups and the rejection of artistic production considered then as participating at the structural level of the reproduction of hetero-patriarchal culture. These questions of the fragmentation of the space of democratic speech resonate in the current moment, which sees the resurgence of identity questions at the heart of reactionary policies and consequently of artistic practices.

Sally Schonfeld (artist, Zürich) will discuss with us her important research on the artist, presented at the Swiss Institute in Rome in 2016 in her exhibition *The Ketty La Rocca Research Centre*.

Next Events

Sa 15.02.2020, 17:00

Guided parcours

Start at Fri Art (Petites-Rames 22) › Funiculaire › WallRiss

The Program

Fr 28.02.2020

On Ketty La Rocca

with Camilla Paolino (writer, independent curator, CCC HEAD, Genève)

Barbara Casavecchia (writer, independent curator, teacher, Academia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milano)

Sally Schonfeldt (artist, Zürich)

Sa 29.02.2020

On Reception

organized with Geraldine Tedder (writer, independent curator, Zürich)

videos by Chantal Kaufmann (artist, Vienna)

Lecture by Ian Wooldridge (artist, Zürich)

Concert by L'Acte pur (Andreas Hochuli and Tristan Lavoyer; Lausanne, Genève)

Su 22.03.2020, 10:30 – 13:30

Brunch du FIFF

No Club Sunday

Su 22.03.2020, 16:00

presented by Strecke

Fri Bar II

Sa 28.03.2020, 22:45 at Cinéma Rex (Fribourg)

Final Screening *Mouthless* by Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė

Thanks to

The artists - eikon - anyma (Michael Egger) - Ferme de La Fayel, Granges-Paccot - Fritz Schiffers
- Erik Raynal - Juliette Ruetz - Julia Moritz - Juno Moritz - Azur Sabic - Amadeus Vogelsang -
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