

On Heavy Rotation

2 November – 12 December 2020

With works by

Keren Cytter

Panayiotis Loukas

Matthias Noggler

Malvina Panagiotidi

Vasilis Papageorgiou

Lia Perjovschi

Evelyn Plaschg

Socratis Socratous

Nadim Vardag

Gernot Wieland

Curated by

Severin Dünser &

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The exhibition's point of departure is a motion, that is constantly accelerated this year: the rotation on one's own axis. Conditioned by the pandemic and the accompanying limitations, spinning around became a collective experience. Between a steadily repeated mental rotation and a physical reeling off of recurring processes, a dynamic arises, that resembles the experience of a hall of mirrors. Introspection and self-awareness generate a turning point, that affects the individual and – like the dance of a derwish – results in fluctuating between vertigo and contemplative trance. The exhibition follows these rotational movements on the basis of several works and tries to establish intersections between their thematic radii.

For the exhibition, we either invited artists to produce new works, selected works that were made during the pandemic or chose older pieces that gain new layers of significance in the context of the current health crisis' epiphenomenons:

“The Fools” for example were created by Malvina Panagiotidi in 2018. The series of clay figurines illustrates the imaginary creatures haunting on the Greek islands. Symbolically standing for the gaps between what we encounter and what we know, and how these gaps are filled with speculations that can turn into monsters, they represent the things that take on a life of their own in our heads. One of the creatures of Panagiotidi is of special interest: A horned figure with a snake-like lower body-half, that eats its own tail. It resembles the pose of the Ouroboros, that symbolizes autarky and a never-ending cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Also the story of Keren Cytter's film “Der Spiegel“ (The Mirror, 2007) moves in a circular course without a beginning or an end. Set in an apartment, her small drama evolves around a 42-year-old woman facing her aging, being rejected by her crush and not interested in the man who loves her. By blending narration and analyzation of the filmic medium into each other, the protagonists are objects and subjects at the same time - turning the plot into a self-aware perpetual motion machine, that keeps the viewer in a meta-poetic, existentialist loop.

A drastically reduced social life combined with a physical threat induces a continuous reflection of the self as a soul attached to a potentially weak body. This very existence in that one body we own is a point of departure of Evelyn Plaschg's paintings. Leaving imagery of idealized bodies behind, her abstractions of female physicalities are an effort to merge the mental and the corporal. Her self-explorations are self-empowerments, that are backed

by a trust in one's own feelings as a valid basis for joyfull decision-making – and oppose society's normative codes of behavior.

Our relation to society is also addressed in Gernot Wieland's film "Ink in Milk" (2018). In it, the artist is the narrator of various poetic, absurd and tragicomical stories that are illustrated with child-like drawings, diagrams, photos and plasticine animations. They deal with the individual's adaptation to dominant ideologies and structures of power. With his highly subjective monologue, Wieland reveals how our perception of reality, truth and language affect us in constructing our image of the self through our interpretation of the past.

Matthias Noggler employs diverse visual genres and styles to generate figurative and abstract compositions that describe contemporary urban milieus and more intimate domestic settings. The outside world is absent in his new works, that create a somnambule atmosphere of artificiality and psychological tension. The depicted characters are gathered at home, engaged in daily routines or immersed within themselves. The drawings establish the interior as a place of subconscious conflict and silent enchantment, offering an ambivalent view on the complex mechanisms of subjectivity and social self.

Concepts of togetherness, communication and loneliness are the targets of Vasilis Papageorgiou's artistic investigations. He focusses on semi-private and semi-public spaces such as bars, small casinos or football stadiums where people reclaim the idea of free time and the right to be alone together. Creating new narratives which reflect our everyday, he rethinks and rearticulates the imagery of those places. Also his very recent sculptures are abstractions of support structures, in this case chairs. With dolphins on one seat, that symbolize sociability, safety, security and salvation, and the absence of a body manifested in a deposited blouse on the other, they remind us of the stability we are lacking without company or a counterpart.

In his installation, Socratis Socratous also deals with the idea of privacy and seclusion of the interior. Inspired by the US-American poet Emily Dickinson, who spent most of her life in the isolation of her bedroom, Socratous manifests the idea of detachment in one crucial element: a door. It's an aluminium door in the style of the time around 1920 – the time of the Spanish flu. There is a short sentence on the door: "There is no place like home". It refers to a famous sentence in the 1939 movie "The Wizard of Oz", that triggered the homecoming of its main protagonist. In the film, the sentence stays unclear in considering "home" a good or bad situation (that the protagonist ran away from before). Also Socratous leaves it unclear, if it's better to be at home in isolation, satisfy one's desires by escapisms or search for oneself in the company of others. He just wants to let us know, that not everyone has a home to hide at.

For Sigmund Freud, the uncanny locates the strangeness in the ordinary. In German, the 'uncanny' is literally the 'unhomely'. Strangely familiar are also the worlds that Panayiotis Loukas creates. Often characterized as "fairy-tale-like", they mix our common surroundings with the mystical and the imaginary. In "The Visitor" (2015), an object consisting of geometrical forms is about to enter a rural home through a door. An object becomes a subject here, the subconscious takes over reality and turns it into a psychedelic fever dream.

How our reality is shaped is also the topic of Nadim Vardag's works. The technique of drypoint etching is used by the artist as means of a picture language that engages with the conditions of visual systems and the grids and structures that order our world and its images. In his series, the textile-like structures are based on a grid and densify towards knots or diverge into web-like formations. The structuring visual aids – the lines of the grid – thus become the motive of the image themselves. Metaphorically, those images could be interpreted as being entangled in fixed frameworks – or in a situation of insecure balance between order and chaos.

Bringing order into chaos is a quest for knowledge that Lia Perjovschi pursues with a series she started in the late 1990ies. Interested in the accumulation and transfer of information, she creates mind maps that organize and memorize it. Her clouds of keywords and notes simplify complexities by clearly laying out relations and interconnections. The works on display were made in 2020 as a "research from the beginning till the relaxation" and express a subjective history revealing the artist's particular view of the current situation.

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