

Poetics of Hospitality. Vol II

09.09-20.10.2023

Artists: Carlos Amorales, Ovidiu Anton, Valentina Avanzini, Matei Bejenaru, Orit Ishay, Zhanna Kadyrova, Renata Poljak

Curators: Cristina Stoenescu, Anastasia Palii

Exploring themes of memory and loss, migration and displacement, the group exhibition opening at Anca Poterasu Gallery on Saturday, September 9th, adopts multiple perspectives from differing economic and geopolitical contexts. Through the works of Carlos Amorales, Ovidiu Anton, Valentina Avanzini, Matei Bejenaru, Orit Ishay, Zhanna Kadyrova, Renata Poljak, the show resurfaces an ocean of communicating experiences across geographies of alienation and violence, timelines of war and peace that leave traces across imaginary borders, but also invisible lines that connect and shapes lines of empathy.

We are delighted to be opening the dialogue on migration with a guest-talk by Dana Diminescu, sociologist, Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor at the prestigious Télécom Paris at The Institut Polytechnique de Paris. Her in-depth research and theories developed on the concept of the *connected migrant* has led to connecting the field of sociological research to art and exhibition making. One of her latest projects includes a focus on hospitality and migration as part of the reopening of the permanent collection of Musée national de l'histoire de l'Immigration in Paris and at the Gaîté Lyrique this year, where she presented her artistic installations and connected research - all of which will spark the conversation your are invited to partake in on September 9th, starting at 18.00.

Taking as reference point Derrida's concept of hospitality, the exhibition *Poetics of Hospitality* reflects the unavoidable ambiguities and contradictions inherent for this term, which is close to meaning has a semantic proximity to the concept of power through the influence exerted on the Other - migrant/stranger, and which implies an ethical and political dimension.

The selection of works is an interplay of various artistic media that reflect the dynamics of power relations surrounding the phenomenon of migration: inter-ethnic conflicts, the abusive effects of neoliberal policies in a global economy, the devaluation of the unaccounted for female labour force in impoverished countries. Helplessness, anxiety and injustice transit the human consciousness and take the form of fluid, almost non-translatable languages of resilience in confronting the imminent war, the media violence or the social inequity. These are artistic endeavors of reclaiming a safe ideal of a "home", but also the right to human dignity in a hierarchical social order. A kaleidoscopic image of an alienating society, filled with insecurity but also with excesses, and a culture of exile within and beyond its borders is thus shaping.

The connections between the artworks emphasize both the loss and the implicit and explicit violence of forced migration, be it from economic, political, or social reasons. Individual images and stories of geopolitical or economic permutations impose new realities felt both across borders and in the home-in-the-past, individual temporal perspectives, but brought together in a chorus of experiences felt at a generational level, as highlighted by

Valentina Avanzini's research centered on the lullabies of women who left for Italy or as presented in Matei Bejenaru's film "From far away", in direct connection with economic migration in the Romanian context, with a focus on domestic work far from one's own families.

The dialogue in the exhibition broadens to a more global scale with the work of Ovidiu Anton, who aptly underlines the permanence of migratory phenomena, but also the constant unreadiness of social and political systems in supporting the pressures of these unavoidable changes. The artist has a long-term focus on retrieving symbols of the formal, ubiquitous system of marking borders and fears, such as border control posts, fences and pieces of wall-building across countries and histories. Through his sculptures, showing enlarged cartridges of bullets or fragments of no-trespassing signaling, the artist allows to reconsider a common visual language of transforming lines on the map in unmovable obstacles. His works allow a context through which the viewer can consider the alienating consequences of current political systems, as well as showing how the world functions as a construct that can hopefully be altered and made more human.

Walking through the exhibition space, one is confronted with the silk-printed editioned work of Carlos Amorales titled "La Lengua de los Muertos" (2010). The pages contain graphic images drawn from the local media in Mexico, of a seemingly unending war, whose language is no longer translatable or understandable. It shows itself as a point of no return, a publication that can be read no longer in this life, but perhaps in the next one, through the alphabet especially developed by the artist. Untranslatable and unreadable, the voices and the stories of the anonymous faces can only carry on a mysterious and silent recording of their end. In stark contrast with these images, yet melancholically so, the research sound recordings of Valentina Avanzini fill in the empty space in the gallery. One selected lullaby is played in the open space from time to time, pertaining to Paraschiva Cioban, with her permission, as one of the thousand Romanian workers, now living and working in Italy since 2005 raising and taking care of children and the elderly in order to provide for her own family back home. In the same breath, the viewer can see Renata Poljak's neon lettering "more, more, more" as a sort of incantation which retrieves multiple associations of longing and missing and being missed.

Across the room, the viewer is confronted with the mathematical reality of underlying exploitative systems that create vicious circles of economic inequalities. In his work, Matei Bejenaru demonstrates through his installation "Enlarged Clothing" (2005) how the salary of a Romanian worker at the time was 8 times lower than the income of a similar worker in Europe, by creating the oversized clothing that would match the wage gap. The oversized sculptural grouping of clothing is presented next to the series of interventions of found embroideries by artist Zhanna Kadyrova, who juxtaposes peaceful-looking sceneries with words announcing warnings against imminent air strikes. A part of the same series is currently on display at the Pinchukartcentre until February next year, in the solo show of the artist in Kiev, the selection within the gallery space further connects to the first show of the Poetics of Hospitality series, the solo show of the artist Orit Ishay who presented a series of pixelated photographs of her own grandmother's embroidery work. The continuity between the communicating shows that marks a year-long artistic and curatorial search on the topics of

migration, memory and home is furthered by Orit Ishay's video work "Chocolat" (2015) included in the present group show. The film scenario plays with the idea of fictional and historical facts, in an uncanny approach to the invisible links between racism, colonialism and war crimes.

Within the same cinematic space of the gallery, the viewer can further see the films "Porvenir" (2020) and "Partenza" (2016) by artist Renata Poljak, which allow the exhibition to come full-circle, with a discrete, yet surreal experience of a quiet presence in the room, looking towards the sea, offering an intimate experience of melancholy, of images that create memory-places, connecting fear with the hope of return, the impermanent with the safety of that which remains. These are images of rootlessness and displacement, calling into question matters of identity and territories, in a metaphor of nomadic spaces, without shelter, utopian or transitory areas interwoven on a shared map.

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