

EAT THE MUSEUM

September 5 - October 11, 2020

Opening: September 4, 2020

With works by Eduard Akuvaev, Eduard Astashev, Adil Astemirov, Alexey Avgustovich, Yuriy Avgustovich, Srazhdin Batyrov, Fedor Chernousenko, Thirza Cuthand, Zuzanna Czebatul, Magomed Dibirov, Mueddin-Arabi Dzhemal, Omar Efimov, Alirza Emirbekov, Dmitriy Fedorov, Grigoriy Gagarin, Elena Gapurova, Dorota Gawęda & Eglė Kulbokaitė, Vasiliy Gorchkov, Viktor Gorkov, Fedor Gorshelt, Omar Guseinov, Irina Guseinova, Gyulli Iranpur, Zainutdin Isaev, Gadzhi Kambulatov, Dmitriy Kapanitsyn, Arsen Kardashov, Magomed Kazhlaev, Albert Khadzhaev, Murad Khalilov, Isa Khumaev, Vika Kirchenbauer, Yuriy Kirichenko, Zhanna Kolesnikova, Galina Konopatskaya, Khairullakh Kurbanov, Nikolay Lakov, Evgeniy Lansere, Andrey Livanov, Murtuzali Magomedov, Apandi Magomedov, Taus Makhacheva, Alexandra Markovskaya, Ruvim Mazel, Yusuf Mollaev, Anna Molska, Abdulvagib Muratchev, Abdulzagir Musaev, Timur Musaev-Kagan, Khalilbek Musayasul, Raúl de Nieves, Yuriy Nikolaev, Oleg Pirbudagov, Galina Pshenitsyna, Eduard Puterbrot, Zulkarnay Rabadanov, Karol Radziszewski, German Ratner, Frants Rubo, Salavat Salavatov, Bea Schlingelhoff, Magomed Shabanov, Sharif Shakhmardanov, Vadim Skugarev, Mikołaj Sobczak, Aziz Suleimanov, Gasan & Gusein Sungurovs, Ibragim-Khalil Supyanov, Nikolay Sverchkov, Ramaya Tegegne, Viron Erol Vert, Klara Vlasova, Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, and Magomed Yunisilau

The two interrelated exhibitions *Poczet* at the Kunst(Zeug)Haus and *Eat the Museum* in the Alte Fabrik Rapperswil take the exceptional and complex history of the adjacent Polenmuseum (Polish Museum) and its soon expected closure as a starting point to examine the logics and politics of exhibiting and collecting, and to call into question the conception of the museum as a neutral, apolitical, and non-violent space.

Founded in 1870 by Polish émigré Count Władysław Broel-Plater (1808-1889), the Polenmuseum in the Rapperswil castle came to epitomize the ambivalences of cultural belonging and representation within the framework of the modern nation-state ever since: initially conceived as an important social and cultural hub for the Polish emigrant community in Switzerland, the museum evolved during a Polish era shaped by foreign rule, partitions and insurrections, and was modelled in the tradition of the 19th century national museum revolving around the construction of national identity, the rule of the sovereign and the formation of citizenship within emerging liberal democracies. The different phases the museum underwent in the 20th and early 21st century must be understood as a mirroring of and partaking within a larger political framework of significant historical turns, including the establishment of the Second Polish Republic, the Second World War, the rise and fall of communism, and the

installation of neoliberal, neocolonial, and authoritarian rule. After residing in the Swiss castle for 150 years, the museum's residence is anticipated to be terminated by end of 2021. Consumed by the interests of the now merged municipality Rapperswil-Jona and its plans to re-stage the castle with one of its aims being "quality before quantity", the future of the museum and its collection remains uncertain.

Inspired by this local history and current debate and looking into the still-alive and still-hierarchical tropes of traditional art, folk-art, or any minoritarian art, the group exhibition *Eat the Museum* addresses the transnational significance of a constant re-evaluation of the normalizing, classifying, excluding, controlling, and governing violence of visualizing practices perpetuated or constructed by museums and other (art) institutions.

Highlighting situated knowledges and embodied practices and decidedly opposing the neoliberal condition and its impact on cultural institutions as much as the growing xenophobia, the exhibition unites local and international positions who work with a variety of media including sculpture, painting, video or installation, and find their commonalities in the re-negotiation and re-imagination of transnational alliances that serve a collective anti-fascist agency within and beyond institutions.

Eat the Museum is the third of four exhibitions curated by Fanny Hauser and Viktor Neumann as part of the 2019/20 Curatorial Fellowship of the Gebert Foundation for Culture.

Thirza Cuthand (*1978, CA) is a filmmaker, artist and writer exploring queer desires and belongings, madness, and Indigeneity through experimental videos and films. A part of her *NDN Survival Trilogy* (finished in 2020) that investigates extractive capitalism and its impacts on First Nation Indigenous people, the video work *Less Lethal Fetishes* (2019) explores a latent gas mask fetish and links it to the artist's recent experiences around her participation in the 2019 Whitney Biennial—an exhibition that was marked by activists' demands for the resignation of Warren B. Kanders, the then vice chair of the board of the Whitney Museum of American Art and owner of the war-profiteering company Safariland that capitalized on the "less-lethal" teargas used, amongst others, in Palestine, the US-Mexican border and during the uprisings in Ferguson. In this video, Cuthand contemplates on the contemporary relation between solidarity and complicity, agency and exploitation, the desires and demands towards politically engaged art production, and the contemporary condition of toxicity.

Zuzanna Czebatul's (*1986, DE) sculptures dismantle the ideological narratives of the triumphant and heroic to the point of collapse. For this exhibition, the artist was commissioned to produce a new iteration of her large-scale sculpture *Twister* (2018), two tightly embraced obelisks initially proposed as a public monument for the city of Warsaw, whose urban landscape has been shaped by the dominant sculptural and architectural manifestations of the patriarchal nation-state to this present day. In *Daze* (2020), the phallic monuments and symbols of power are still affectionately entangled and have now moved into the horizontal. An homage to Madelon Vriesendorp's painting *Flagrant Delit* (1978, English: *Flagrant Crime*) depicting a post coitus scene between the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building used for the book cover of Rem Koolhaas's publication *Delirious New York* (1978), Czebatul's most recent sculpture has been conceived during a time that sees monuments of colonial violence torn down and demolished across the world, and gives rise to the formation of transnational solidarity opposing

the recent anti-LGBT+ politics in Poland targeting queer activists for putting rainbow flags on public monuments throughout the country. In this light, Czebatul's passionately entangled obelisks become an emblematic symbol for the desire of transmitting and monumentalizing pleasure and sexuality as acts of resistance.

Dorota Gawęda's and Eglė Kulbokaitė's (*1986, PL and *1987, LT) multidisciplinary practice emerges out of their engagement with the historical and contemporary struggles of feminist* discourses and their potentialities. Consisting of a wooden rake and deformed lab glasses, the sculptural work *For when I look at you for a moment, then it is no longer possible for me to speak; my tongue has snapped, at once a subtle fire has stolen beneath my flesh, I see nothing with my eyes, my ears hum, sweat pours from me, a trembling seizes me all over, I am greener than grass, and it seems to me that I am a little short of dying. (I)* (2019) belongs to their longstanding investigation of transcultural and transhistorical signifiers across geographic, temporal, or social boundaries. Borrowing its title from Sappho's fragment 31, the sculpture alludes to the ancient Greek ritual of Adonia during which women gathered at night on withered rooftop gardens—the only public space women could share and claim for themselves in celebration of their female sexuality. Presented alongside the sculpture and diffused in the exhibition space are the wet soil and turf fragrances that refer to both the logics of pre-industrial labor and the politics of territorial claims while creating a molecular imprint of collective memories of belonging and sentiments of a shared history.

Vika Kirchenbauer (*1983, DE) is an artist, writer and music producer. Encompassing video, performance, installation, music, and theoretical writing, Kirchenbauer's practice radically challenges the politics of representation, the semantics of normality and otherness, and the cooptation of the affective dimension through institutionalized mechanisms of power and neoliberal formations of subjectivity. In the context of *Eat the Museum*, Kirchenbauer presents two video works: *WELCOME ADDRESS* (2017) is a reflection on the cultural politics behind rarely intrinsic strives for diversification and the capitalization of difference. The work was originally commissioned for the exhibition *Odardle—An imaginary their_story of naturepeoples, 1535-2017* at Schwules Museum* in Berlin and is performed by its curator Ashkan Sepashvand who was invited by the museum in a first attempt to challenge the hierarchical structures constitutive for the construction of canons. Moreover, Kirchenbauer presents her most recent video *UNTITLED SEQUENCE OF GAPS* (2020), an essayistic contemplation on the affects and effects related to visibility, invisibility, and opacity, and historical and contemporary accounts of both tangible and intangible mechanisms of violence. Kirchenbauer interweaves personal experiences of trauma related memory loss or the revisiting of a witch burning ritual in her home region with reflections on physical phenomena or knowledge production to ultimately highlight the potentially that lies in the gaps of memory or visibility.

Taus Makhacheva (*1983, RU) uses the mediums video, photography, performance, and installation to challenge traditional forms of historiography and the normativity of culture and gender by reflecting the role of traditional heritage in the present. Informed by her Daghestani-Russian origins, Makhacheva's work pays particular attention to the structures of Caucasian society and the politics of collective memory while functioning as mediator of the complex cultural history of Dagestan—a culture torn between modernizing and Westernizing tendencies, remnants of Soviet modernity, Islamic models and local indigenous traditions. In the context of this exhibition, Makhacheva presents the installation *Selection of works from Dagestan Museum of Fine Arts named after P.S. Gamzatova, Makhachkala* (2015). Touching upon issues of selection

processes, ownership, preservation, censorship and representation, the installation consists of 68 paintings and works on paper selected from the Dagestan Museum of Fine Arts named after P.S. Gamzatova. Presented both on the walls of the exhibition space and stored inside a storage frame, the reproductions of these collection pieces—selected in an attempt to construct a “canon” of Dagestani art history of the 20th century—are now liberated of their traditional national museum context and are transmuted into a mobile museum, introduced into different settings and contexts whenever exhibited.

Anna Molska’s (*1983, PL) semi-documentary video *The Mourners* (2010) examines the social construction of communities through local traditions and folklore and confronts them with the institutionalized art world. Filmed in the Orangery of the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, the video features seven elderly women and members of the folk choir “Jarzębina” from Kocudza, a village in the Zamość region of Poland. As professional mourners, these women perform songs at funerals that have been passed on over generations since the 12th century. Taken out of their familiar environment and dressed in beige winter anoraks in contrast to their traditional costumes, the women spend their time in the empty exhibition space by engaging in ordinary chatter, jokes and conversations about tradition, encounters with the devil, sickness and the nature of life and death, and introduce a broad repertoire of traditional Polish songs that mark different festivities and customs. Here, the women’s voices conjure a century-long tradition that evolves into a lament for long-gone times and people and, perhaps, their very own exclusion of the modernist project itself.

Raúl de Nieves (*1983, MX) is a multi-media artist, performer and musician whose works encompasses decadent and ornate sculptures, lavishly decorated installations, painting and multimedia performances. His aesthetic and material choices often include traditional Mexican color combinations, the handicrafts of sewing, crocheting, knitting and beading, references to indigenous, spiritual and cosmological rituals and symbolism as well as the integration of cheap, found or donated materials paired with the aesthetics of DIY production. For this exhibition, de Nieves was commissioned to produce the site-specific installation *The Stories of the past rejoice through Children's skies* (2020), four multicolored faux-glass stain windows that directly reference the stained-glass window in the Rapperswil castle (produced by Edy Renggli, 1922–1997). Situated at the entrance of the Polenmuseum, the window image illustrates the founding myth of the city of Rapperswil and its castle. The legend revolves around the mercy of a count’s wife who saved a doe and her fawns from being hunted down, and the count’s founding of the city as sign of adoration of his wife’s act of compassion. De Nieves’s seemingly ecclesiastical faux window fronts amalgamate his contemporary reading of this myth with the negotiation of both the instability of the dominant order and a concern around the vulnerability of traditional forms of storytelling. Laboriously handcrafted and gradually shifting away from the artist’s formal trajectory of geometrical orders in favor of a more whimsical style and airiness in quality, the windows emphasize the intuitive, forms of cyclic orientation in and to time and space, and a deconditioning towards progress-centrist capitalist demands.

Karol Radziszewski (*1980, PL) presents one of his most recent paintings, a portrait of the physicist, queer activist and former member and eminent figure of the Solidarity movement *Ewa Hołuszko* (2020) that echoes the artist’s current exhibition *Poczet* in the adjacent Kunst(Zeug)Haus in Rapperswil. The artist’s employment of the classical genre of portraiture functions as a means to paraphrase and inquire the aesthetics of a variety of historic artistic movements and practices, thus adding another perspective to common visual codes and

historical narratives. While Hołuszko's large-scale portrait at Kunst(Zeug)Haus serves as a powerful declaration of a queer historiography and future, her portrait presented in the context of this exhibition is reminiscent to Radziszewski's portrait gallery "Poczet"—an attempt to establish a genealogy of queer ancestry through the means of portraiture.

Bea Schlingelhoff's (*1971, DE) multidisciplinary practice engages with the traditions of institutional critique, conceptual art and feminist theory. Informed by the artist's striving for structural changes and alternative historiographies, Schlingelhoff's interest in revealing the political, economic and social conditions and power relations at work within (art) institutions lies at the core of her practice. For *Eat the Museum*, the artist was commissioned to develop a new typographical font, now dedicated to the Polish feminist activist and writer Irena Krzywicka who, in the 1960s, briefly lived in Switzerland before moving to France. The typeface is available for download during the runtime of the exhibition. Schlingelhoff's endeavors to acknowledge female figures that have been excluded from history and its institutional frameworks and engrain them into a public memory, further unfolds in the *soft mime win*, an artist-authored written agreement advocating for anti-misogynist and anti-violent structures within art institutions. The contracting parties—usually the exhibition curators or the directors of the respective institution—are free to sign the agreement or propose amendments to be included in the document.

Mikołaj Sobczak's (*1989, PL) paintings, ceramics and performances simultaneously examine political and social-historical events, recent global socio-political developments, and their visual repertoires. Inspired by and reinterpreting existing historical paintings and graphics found in history books, Sobczak's work calls into question the politics of memory. In this exhibition, the artist presents two of his ceramics, displayed with white lilies and staged on the wooden library shelf of the Polish painter, set designer and theater director Tadeusz Kantor, also bringing to mind the *Smoleńsk Air Disaster Monument* in Warsaw that commemorates Poland's former right-wing president and 95 other passengers who died in the 2010 plane crash. Using the techniques of Delft Blue Pottery that was brought to Poland by the Olędrzy (Mennonite settlers from Münster that have been persecuted for their revolutionary views and religious beliefs) in the 16th century, the ceramic vases oppose historical images of tortured women accused as witches, and homosexual couples taken from medieval illustrations with portraits of marginalized historical and contemporary personalities, many of them crucial figures for the emancipation of the LGBTQ+ community in Poland and elsewhere: the Russian journalist and activist, Yelena Grigorieva, the Turkish transactivist Hande Kader, the gay liberation and transgender activist Silvia Rivera, as well as Polish activist Ewa Hołuszko.

Ramaya Tegegne's (*1985, CH) multidisciplinary practice functions as a means to challenge predominant mechanisms of art by observing its economy, circulation, historicization as well as the power structures that constitute the field of art. By quoting, borrowing, and reworking the practices of other artists, Tegegne's work reflects on the various social, historical, and economic contexts that make and unmake the dominant narratives of art history and its current model. The sculptural work *Genzken/Wilson* (2019) references Isa Genzken's body of work around Nefertiti (since 2010) as well as the work *Grey Area (Brown version)* (1993) by American artist Fred Wilson, first presented in the seminal 1993 Whitney Biennial—the first biennial of its kind to be emblematically diverse in regard to both the participating artists as well as the contents of the show. Tegegne's work readjusts and situates the image of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti between notions of cultural appropriation, restitution, economic politics within art institutions and black feminist interests. A symbol of pride and empowerment for Afro-descendant communities and

black women, the sculpture of Nefertiti is exhibited in the Ägyptisches Museum Berlin and “belongs” to the collection of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz. The subject of ongoing discussions between Germany and Egypt for almost a century, the bust of Nefertiti moreover raises the central question of cultural spoliation in favour of imperialism and colonisation, and becomes emblematic in the context of current debates of restitution and provenance research.

Viron Erol Vert (*1975, DE) is a transdisciplinary artist who creates objects, environments, and situations that explore the transmuting cultural heritages and migration of traditions, its linguistics, symbols, and myths, the affective tensions between dominant and subjugated visual und cultural tropes, as much as the fragility of masculinity. Predominantly working context-specific and research-based, Vert investigates the traces of visual memories and material cultures of people, affiliated groups and cities, as much as his autobiographical background of belonging to an Istanbulian family lineage with further Greek-orthodox, Arab, Levantine, Armenian, and Sephardic roots. For this exhibition, Vert presents two sculptural works of drastically differing scale: The bronze sculpture *Ykhalili Baydatak! / Long live your balls!* (2017), refers to the little known 1964 expulsion of Istanbul Greeks under the slogan “20 dollar-20 kilo”, a cruel and torturing decree that, in a lottery style selection process via the daily morning newspaper, forced non-citizens of Greek descent to leave Turkey within 48 hours with an allowance of 20 dollars and 20 kilos of luggage. By bronze casting his own feet as prostheses-like ashtrays, the artist pays tribute to his grandfather who was both effected by this eviction and tortured by Turkish secret service by putting out cigarettes on his face as means of interrogation. The castings include the artist’s tattoos on each of the feet, the Greek words *zōē* on the left and *thanatos* on the right foot: Life and Death. The second sculpture is titled *Pearls’ Passage* (2017) and consists of a handmade double head leather sling combined with traditional Anatolian handwoven carpets and alludes to the entanglements between sexual and cultural domination and subjugation as well as the longstanding traditions of fetishization and objectification of the Orient within and beyond exhibition spaces and cultural institutions.

Evelyn Taocheng Wang (*1981, CN) works in performance, video, and traditional Chinese and contemporary styles of drawing and painting. Through delicate aesthetic maneuvers, Wang poetically confronts experiences of globalized conditions, often signaled through autobiographical details. In her video series *Reflection Paper* (2013-14), the artist reflects upon the work of the Chinese modernist author Eileen Chang (1920-1995) and a selection of her fictional writings made during her time spent in isolation in Japanese-occupied Shanghai during the 1930s. Shot in a deliberately off-the-cuff style, the here presented *No. 4* intercuts images from Wang’s studio with those of a multichannel video piece by an unidentified author that depicts blossoming flowers, as well as with footage shot by the artist in Amsterdam’s Artis Royal Zoo, the oldest zoo in the Netherlands (established 1838) and a testament to Dutch imperialism. Superimposed onto the grainy and at times out-of-focus imagery are three lines of English-language titles that appear onscreen simultaneously. Scrolling along the bottom of the screen are direct quotes from a telephone conversation between the artist and a friend about Wang’s experience living as a Chinese immigrant in the Netherlands, and her attempts to navigate the prohibitively bewildering and expensive bureaucracy in order to obtain an artist’s visa. The wistful middle line borrows seemingly unrelated observations and expressionistic memories from Chang’s essay *On Music* (1945). The top line translates an inner monologue that Wang synchronously speaks aloud as an unbridled stream of consciousness. Interweaving various histories of economic, cultural, and ecological domination with personal experiences, the texts rhythmically oppose the brutal weight of post-colonialism and (hetero-)normativity.

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa (*1976, UK) is a multidisciplinary artist and scholar whose practice examines the visible and invisible, materialized and ephemeral traces and representations of colonialism within and beyond the institutions of art and knowledge production. Belonging to the body of work *Uganda in Black and White* (since 2010), the artist presents a newly produced iteration of her light box installation *Paradise* (2012) that combines landscape photographs of contemporary Ugandan savannah with a poetic yet drastic textual account of her findings. Wolukau-Wanambwa retraces the little-known history of the settlement of thousands of Polish people from Siberia to the Uganda Protectorate under the British rule (amongst other East African countries including Kenya, Tanganyika, and Northern Rhodesia) and of the refugee camps that existed from 1941 to 1952 in Koja near Lake Victoria. Entirely dismantled after its closing by the British and neither included into any major Polish nor Ugandan historical account, Wolukau-Wanambwa's work revolves around the question of how to articulate memory in the absence of both objects and architectures. Through means of archival research and oral interviews the artist reconstructed a narrative that entangles the erasure of history with the violent techniques of dehumanization, and of the relation between sexuality and desire, miscegenation and eugenics within the colonial and patriarchal order.

EVENTS

Guided Tours with the Curators on:

Wed, October 7, 2020 at 5 pm, with Fanny Hauser and Viktor Neumann

Sun, October 11m 2020 at 4 pm, with Fanny Hauser and Viktor Neumann

Kulturnacht Rapperswil

Sat, September 19, 2020, with Fanny Hauser and Viktor Neumann

Address: *ALTEFABRIK, Klaus-Gebert-Str. 5, 8640 Rapperswil-Jona

Opening Hours: Wednesday 12–6pm / Saturday–Sunday 11–5pm and on request

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