PRESS RELEASE

Not Fully Human, Not Human at All
24.10.2020 – 24.01.2021


Press Conference
23.10.2020, 11 am

Opening@Home
23.10.2020, 7 pm
Speakers: Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Bettina Steinbrügge, Christoph Seibt

Performance
23.10.2020, 6 pm
Ke glutéi Tégui – Origins

Artists Guided Tour and Talk
24.10.2020, 3 pm

Curator’s Guided Tour

Online Assembly
Session I, 3.11.2020, 5–8 pm
Session II, 10.11.2020, 5–7 pm
Session III, 17.11.2020, 5–7 pm
Session IV, 24.11.2020, 5–7 pm

The online assembly brings together various artists, partners and scientists to discuss the key aspects of the exhibition. Every Tuesday in November live on Zoom and subsequently on our website.
Screening
26.11.2020, 14.1.2021, 6.30 pm
Pedro Neves Marques – A Mordida, 2019

You can find the continuously updated additional program on our social media channels and on our website.

NOT FULLY HUMAN, NOT HUMAN AT ALL


This exhibition looks into processes of dehumanization that are taking place in Europe. Dehumanization is generally understood as the degradation of human life, performed by human beings upon one another. A number of recent occurrences have lead to stricter policies of immigration, new forms of nationalism, limits on universal access to healthcare, neo-liberal pressure on state economic policies, the erosion of rights for foreign workers, and the consecration of what defines Europe both culturally and geographically. These occurrences are coexistent with an implicit reevaluation of who decides who is considered human at all, and are part of a historically recurring process. This exhibition happens at a time when various world-wide states of emergency related to COVID-19 have exacerbated the lack of access to health services as a basic human right; and is concurrent with a rise in extremist Right-wing politics which is inspired by dehumanizing acts of violence. In these current circumstances, it seems urgent that we, cultural workers, keep aware of these trends and make our objections visible in our artistic production and in our cultural institutions.

Not Fully Human, Not Human at All takes its name from Donna Haraway’s essay “Ecce Homo, Ain’t (Ar’n’t) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Others”, a text which challenges the “universal” claims of Enlightenment Humanism in order to propose conditions of what she calls “non-generic” collective humanity. In this text, Haraway refers to Hortense Spillers’ description of the levels of dehumanization faced by slaves in the United States, their treatment of being disposable, and their lack of any legal subjectivity—conditions that we can find in Europe today. We might enhance this position with some words by poet Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, from her poem This is Not a Humanizing Poem which demands: “if you need me to prove my humanity, I am not the one that’s not human”. In stating this, Manzoor-Khan points to art’s refusal—and by extension the artist’s refusal—to speak from a position demanded from the outside—to play the role of the Other. It is by narrativizing her act of refusal, of not-not writing a humanizing poem, that she truly humanizes her work. It is in this semantic play, that we are lead to think about by who, by what, in which circumstances and by what processes someone might be determined not human. The artists in this exhibition set out from similar positions as both Haraway, Spillers and Manzoor-Khan in order to propose new ways of thinking through our collective states of humanity.
Monira Al Qadiri’s sculpture evokes a dystopian view on the effects of the fossil fuel economy. By depicting a body drowning in a bath of oil, an anthropomorphic treatment of the effects of extractivism evokes the human cost of our resources. Following this, it can be read as a consequence of the exploitation of nature, that for some human cultures proceeded from a conceptual split between nature and culture. Nilbur Güres’ series of collages and paintings are informed by her Kurdish-Alevi roots, an indigenous minority in contemporary Turkey which has undergone sustained oppression. She portrays portrays the inhabitants of a village and their landscape in a poetic way. This area is cut off from the metropolises in infrastructural, social and political terms. Central themes of this series are cultural identity, internal and external migration, questions about the concept of home, as well as the organization of minorities in relation to ruling power mechanisms. Ibro Hasanović’s video delicately depicts the intimate moments shared by families when they say goodbye to a family member; when individuals leave their homes; and when the future of a migrant remains unknown. As the bodies of the passengers assemble and stumble upon each other, anxious to take a spot on the next departing bus, the film implores the viewer to acknowledge how and why people seek refuge. Daniela Ortiz’s video Empire of Law proceeds from considering the Palais de Justice in Brussels and its imitation in Lima, Peru as sites that are linked, not only through their architectural resemblance, but in the role that these institutions played in the implementation of colonial law. In addition to this, Ortiz shows a series of acrylic paintings titled The Rebellion of Roots, which imagines how tropical plants imported from European colonies might rebel against European architecture by engulfing buildings in Brussels, Hamburg, and Lima. Lala Raščić’s installation EE-O recontextualises the Greek myth of Arachne, combining it with anecdotes sourced from field research in and around Prizren, Kosovo, to produce a speculation about the myth from a feminist perspective. In her video, Raščić presents notions of repressed ancient female knowledge and local urban myths alongside current sociological, ecological and cultural phenomena. This is enacted by a performer, who presents a text composed of these elements as she gradually transforms into the spider-character of Arachne. Reacting to the specific site of production in Kosovo—Europe’s youngest nation-state—this noting of becoming is explored through the symbolic presentation of genesis, transformation, and metamorphosis. Doruntina Kastrati presents Public Heroes and Secrets, a series of cast resin sculptures presented on construction scaffolding that represent isolated body parts. Their evocative charge relies on their uncanny reproduction of human bodies which Kastrati has produced through a slip-mould technique. The source of these shapes are in-fact the bodies of construction workers in Kosovo who face inhumane conditions of work for the benefit of the public. Their lasting implication is that the construction of heroes is based on elements of human sacrifice. Kengné Téguia’s video-installation proceeds from the experience of his deafness. He augments this experience of disability by pursuing the construction of new non-normative identities. For instance, he approaches this through the concept of the cyborg, where the human relationship with technology is reconsidered from a post-human standpoint. Saddie Choua’s installation and related workshops are informed by experiences of racism and the overcoming of its traumatic effects. In these salons, she invites a series of guests to discuss their experiences, the framework of each of these sessions is dedicated to the memory of a notable woman from the past—for instance, previous sessions have focused on Fatima Mernissi (feminist writer and sociologist), Lina Bo Bardi (modernist architect), or Frida Kahlo. The sessions at Kunstrvein in Hamburg will focus on novelist Toni Morrison, they will continue the impetus of previous sessions, producing new encounters in overcoming experiences of racism. A large installation by Valentina Desideri, Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arely Amaut is a poetic document of their ongoing Sensing Salon project. Sensing Salon looks to the
The transformative potential of the healing arts. It facilitates tarot, astrology, political therapy and reiki workshops with the public to articulate possibilities for intellectual and political agency through alternative, non-scientific knowledge systems.

In addition to these works, five films form a viewing program in the Kunstverein’s lower gallery. Pedro Neves Marques takes the struggle against the Zika virus as a starting point, addressing the complexities between politics of nature, technology, and gender in a film that blurs the lines between documentary and fiction. Doruntina Kastrati continues her investigations into the labor conditions of Kosovo construction workers, and their struggles towards empowerment. Kaltrina Krasniqi’s documentary film also takes the citizens of Kosovo as its subject. It tells a story of the classical guitarist Etrit Çoku’s attempt to reach Spain to record his personal take on Johann Sebastian Bach’s unaccompanied Cello Suites. Through travel and music analysis, Krasniqi hints on the discrimination that Kosovars, as well as many other citizens of Europe, face in regards to mobility and travel.

Christian Nyampeta’s film narrates the meeting of improbable friends gathered to watch one of the six films Swedish cinematographer Sven Nykvist made in the Congo between 1948 and 1952, forming a slow meditation on restitution, reparation, and the roots of the colonial present. Finally, in her film Jelena Jureša makes a plea to break the collective silence in Europe, to speak of the crimes of colonialism, the Holocaust, of the atrocities that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, she asks for us to look to the blind spots that commonly obfuscate these truths arguing that these points are a fundamental part of the European identity. Three of the presented works in this exhibition developed from a three year project initiated by KADIST and curated by Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez that focuses on Europe as a geographic and conceptual framework, while reflecting on the dehumanisation that characterises many of the activities that humans have been doing in the name of “humanity” Within and beyond its borders. The focus of this project has remained on countries and territories within Europe, considering places that are undergoing processes of economic, social, and political shifts. Coming from three different European localities—Kosovo, Portugal, and Belgium—its institutional partners developed from the frame of these commissions, and have become consultants for the public programme of this exhibition as well as contributors to its publication.

Curators: Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Bettina Steinbrügge

Curatorial advisors: Bruno Leitão, Monica de Miranda, HANGAR (Lisbon, Portugal), Donjetë Murati, Ares Shporta, Lumbardhi (Prizren, Kosovo), João Mourão, & Luís Silva, (Kunsthalle Lissabon), Emilie Villez, KADIST (Paris), Pieternel Vermoortel, Netwerk (Aalst, Belgium)

The exhibition is kindly supported by the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

The exhibition is organized in collaboration with KADIST, and an adaptation will be presented in Paris in 2021.
For further information please contact:
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Press material and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from our website. You can register under the following link: https://www.kunstverein.de/presse

KUNSTVEREIN
IN HAMBURG

Klosterwall 23
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Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday 12-18 hrs
Admission: 5 Euro, concessions 3 Euro