



## viennacontemporary

Video: Where Do We Find Ourselves...

Curator: Jen Kratochvil

"Where Do We Find Ourselves..." aims to present contemporary and historical artistic positions from the field of time-based media, zooming in and out through threads of causalities and influences leading to our current uncertain moment and further on, out of sight. Grim as it may sound, there always remains space for laughter.

\* Films will be shown every day in a continuous loop, with each film introduced by Spejbl, an old Czech puppet from the 1920s, animated by the artist Hynek Alt. You can also watch all the films online, presented in a curated daily selection throughout the duration of the fair at <https://c.viennacontemporary.at/video/>

With the kind support of the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport.

The screening order:

**Hynek Alt**

*Untitled (Spejbl, ketamine)*, 2020  
Segments of the work appear before the beginning of each film

**Jan SágI**

*UNDERGROUND*, 1972, 22:41 min

**Patrick Fabian Panetta**

*Cafe Durban*, 2020, 3:50 min  
E X I L E

**Anetta Mona Chisa**

*Tell me, dust, about your complicated matter*, 2020, 9:59 min

**Agnieszka Polska**

*Perfect Lives*, 2019, 14 min  
Georg Kargl Fine Arts

**Max Vajt**

*Up in the Sky*, 2020, 10 min

**Sidsel Meineche Hansen**

*Maintenancer*, 2018, 13:05 min  
In collaboration with Therese Henningsen

**Gusztáv Hámos & Katja Pratschke**

*Cities (Potential Space)*, 2014, 30 min  
Ani Molnár Gallery

**Liam Gillick**

*Critchley and Simmons, The Lovers Room*, 2020, 4:51 min  
Meyer Kainer

**Kinga Kielczyńska**

*10 millions + 1 (The Hermit)*, 2019, 7 min  
E X I L E

**Katrina Daschner**

*Pferdebusen*, 2020, 9:01 min  
Georg Kargl Fine Arts

**Clemens von Wedemeyer**

*70.001*, 2019, 16 min  
KOW

**Ursula Mayer**

*Atom Spirit*, 2017, 20 min

**Liam Gillick**

*Pelin Tan: A film by Liam Gillick*, 2019, 28 min  
Meyer Kainer

**Marie Lukáčová**

*Skuzomeetzah*, 2019, 16 min

**Martin Kohout**

*Frogless*, 2019-2020, 2:21 min  
E X I L E

**Hynek Alt (\*1976, Czech Republic)***Untitled (Spejbl, ketamine)*, 2020

Motion capture controlled CGI animation

Spejbl is a puppet conceived by Josef Skupa in 1920. The character of Spejbl is created to resemble a smart-aleck townie willing to preach about anything yet truly knowing very little. Spejbl is dressed in a formal shirt and a tail-coat, a fashion statement worthy of the 19th century, declaring lack of any will to work. His dimwitted pride allows him no reflection. During the 20th century, Spejbl became the protagonist of many theatre pieces, which sometimes traveled throughout Europe; he spoke German, French or Spanish. Eventually, other playwrights worked on plays, casting Spejbl, as well as his son Hurvinek, together with other characters. Yet, his basic psychology has hardly ever evolved. In *Untitled (Spejbl, ketamine)*, Hynek Alt uses a 3D scan of the original puppet, which is animated with the aid of motion capture technology, recording his real movements after heavy intoxication with ketamine (recreational drug originally used for animal anesthesia). The artist becomes the puppeteer even though he's too high to know it. Spejbl moves, gazes, waits. There are no jokes, there is no ridicule, no need to react, no one is laughing. Spejbl is freed from the script, his puppeteer lost control. A domesticated entity is a wild animal now, a wild animal confused about its regained freedom, blankly staring at the hollow opening where, just recently, the bars of the cage cut the view into strips.

**Jan SágI (\*1942, Czech Republic)***UNDERGROUND*, 1972

Analog film transferred to digital, 22:41 min

*Underground* is a recording of a quotidian situation in the centre of town. The camera, on a tripod, recorded women, men and children coming up an escalator from the then still non-existent underground station at Wenceslas Square in Prague. Their faces reflect everyday commonness and their passive bodies are brought up to the surface in a continuous stream. Through those people, SágI showed the resignation of Czech society during "the normalization" period.

In April 1969, Gustáv Husák became the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and a new era began in the political development of Czechoslovakia, during which almost all achievements of the liberalization process of the mid-60s were abolished. In the late 1960s, SágI was able to take photographs for various art periodicals, but in the 1970s he had to go underground.

**Patrick Fabian Panetta (\*1977, Germany)***Cafe Durban*, 2020

HD video, 3:50 min

Dense layers of sci-fi fantasy graphics, collected by the artist over the years, scramble the screen with the sound of the Death-Core band The Overmind. The simple layering of a song and images results in something that feels like an algorithm created by a juvenile eruption, an evolving preliminary step analyzing the complex sensory perception of imagery and music. 'Language is a Virus' and 'Words beget image and image is virus'. The question is: What happens if the host becomes immune to its illness? What if creativity is just a synonym for "well-employed-strategic-decisions"? It should become clear that the terms creativity, innovation, ingenuity or originality have been successfully assimilated by commercial and managerial practices, effectively nullifying their role in art.

**Anetta Mona Chisa (\*1976, Romania)***Tell me, dust, about your complicated matter*, 2020

Digital video with sound, 9:59 min

Dust is a hyper-object that measures all processes. The video is exploring the endless declinations and agencies of dust while revealing humanity's ambiguous relationship to it. Dust is an unclassifiable singularity, resistant to conceptual appropriation. It is the place where matter and meaning coalesce in various narrative potentialities of the physical world. Each particle of dust carries with it a unique vision of matter, movement, collectivity, interaction, affect, differentiation, composition, and information — a solidified data-base or a plot ready to combine and react, to be narrated on and through something. Dust is an event continually modulated in time with multiple stories of cosmology, geology, history, ecology, and life embodied in it. A declarative materiality, dust here becomes a means to ponder forms of coexistence between animals, plants, humans, the planet and the cosmos. It narrates itself as a sort of mythical creature, the parent material, and also as planetary memory.

**Agnieszka Polska (\*1985, Poland)**

*Perfect Lives*, 2019

HD video, 14 min

In *Perfect Lives*, Agnieszka Polska reflects on a 1990 control experiment, which took place when the spacecraft Galileo was passing Earth on its way to Jupiter. In the experiment, scientists wanted to determine if data sent from Galileo would confirm the existence of life on Earth. The film is constructed as a dense, hypnotic essay, in which dynamically edited multiple layers of stock footage and music composed in similarity to video-game music create a melancholic atmosphere. The material used to create this poetic collage is a collection of hundreds of short stock videos presenting various scenes of human life covering a number of themes such as: business meetings, enjoying nature, group therapy, marriage, loneliness, crime. These highly artificial and unlikely situations seem to question the very existence of life: they are evidence of the fact that the western idea of life is an illusion.

**Max Vajt (\*1997, Czech Republic)**

*Up in the Sky*, 2020

CGI animation with sound, 10 min

The third episode of Vajt's docu-fiction series *Up in the sky* refers to an aircraft interior expo, the video itself is set in the aesthetic of early 2000s video games. While the first two episodes were an introduction to a utopian community living aboard a never ending flight followed by a crisis, the third episode can be considered a "comeback to normal". However, it's a new normal, perhaps one of many, where the airplane itself isn't a mere living space, but an actor, perhaps a god-like figure, with its own rules and requirements. So-called ghost flights, which made headlines during the current covid-19 pandemic, are the basis for the narrative. The author uses them as an allegory for the absurdity of globalized neoliberal economy with its (not only) ecological consequences.

**Sidseleine Meineche Hansen (Denmark)**

*Maintenancer*, in collaboration with Therese Henningsen, 2018

Digital video with sound, 13 min

The video work *Maintenancer*, which was produced as part of Meineche Hansen's 2018 *PRE-ORDER I-III* exhibition series, focuses on the use and maintenance of sex dolls in the context of a German brothel. The work documents the transition into post-human prostitution – where sex work shifts from the physical body of the sex worker to the sex doll or robot. The video highlights the aspect of emotional labor present in the sex industry and its inherently gendered and commodified character. Since sex workers in Germany lack a proper social security structure, the post-human transition might allude to the thought that the implementation of dolls and robots in the industry would remove these problems. Nevertheless, a doll or a robot can't facilitate the increasingly requested emotional services. The core of the video goes back to Marxist-Feminist political theories of reproductive labor from the 1970s, bringing them into the context of the currently highly present topic of caregiving and the potential problem of re-naturalizing it as work inherently provided by women.

**Gusztáv Hámos (\*1955, Hungary) & Katja Pratschke (\*1967, Germany)**

*Cities (Potential Space)*, 2014

HD video with sound, 30 min

*Cities (Potential Space)* provides a thematic context to potential spaces in the city; it is concerned with the opening up of urban spaces in which to act, and the extent to which life can be shaped. The city is unaware of stillness; it changes, perishes, emerges anew, is always in a state of becoming. The possible can also be regarded as the reverse side of the necessary or actual. The shape which the city could have assumed, how the city will appear in the future – these are the aspects the film explores. Hámos and Pratschke investigate urban visions and city models, spatial and temporal passages, borderlines, places of transition, and thresholds.

**Liam Gillick (\*1964, United Kingdom)**

*Critchley and Simmons, The Lovers Room*, 2020

Digital video with sound, 4:51 min

The music of the imaginary love children of David Bowie & Jacques Derrida, layered on top of Gillick's imagery of daily entrapment in precarious labor. A joyful music clip, a horrid depiction of one's fingers drowning in the swamp of mirrored keyboards.

**Kinga Kielczyńska (\*1972, Poland)**

*10 millions + 1 (The Hermit)*, 2019

Digital video with sound, 7 min

Chris Knight, the 'last true hermit', lived in isolation for 27 years. He retreated to the woods, yet was never able to fully cut his ties with humanity. To survive, he committed numerous burglaries. The staged footage is accompanied by passages from a book by Michael Finkel about him. Kielczyńska started to work on her film during a residency in Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada, unaware of Knight's story. Only at the very end of her stay, she bought the book and felt as if she had been unknowingly reconstructing situations from Knight's secluded life, even though some believe that the story may be a fabrication. Yet while watching the film, one can easily relate to many open-ended readings; be it a reference to our personal isolation during the pandemic, to the blurred lines between fact and fiction, the relationships between human and nature - hiding in a camouflage suit.

**Katrina Daschner (\*1973, Germany)**

*Pferdebusen*, 2020

HD video with sound, silent, 9:01 min

Since 2012, Katrina Daschner has been working on a short film series loosely based on Arthur Schnitzler's novel *Dream Story* (1926). Each film elaborates on fantasies of a queer couple in a long-term relationship. Additionally, Daschner also focuses on the relationship and power dynamics between an audience and a performer. In a surreal montage of fragments of animal and human bodies, *Pferdebusen* intensifies to a sensual-metaphoric discourse about psychosexual ambivalence, models for femininity, fantasies of fear and lust, desire and the repression of urges. Exchange and touching via an exchange of glances. Then the eruption: out of the picture, into freedom.

**Clemens von Wedemeyer (\*1974, Germany)**

*70.001*, 2019

Digital video with sound, 16 min

*70.001* is a reconstruction - in the digital realm - of the Monday-Demonstrations that filled the streets of Leipzig in October 1989. But two key differences set the computer simulation of the mass movement apart from the historic events: The crowd is flowing through the digital Leipzig of today. And it doesn't disperse in the evening as people go home. The algorithms don't need a break and, day after day, add new protesters to yesterday's crowd. Soon enough, the streets are packed as far as the eye can see with animated clones, turning the demonstration into a viral sea of stereotyped bodies. Is there actually a will that propels them? And if so, what do they want? Is their behavior preprogrammed?

After the long months of quarantine, the video raises another question: Will we one day send our digital avatars out to demonstrate in virtual streets while staying at home ourselves? Will the digital political public of the future organize Monday-Demonstrations in the data space? And has this future maybe already arrived?

**Ursula Mayer (\*1970, Austria)**

*Atom Spirit*, 2017,

16mm on HD, 20 min

The film *Atom Spirit* is a speculative narrative set in a near future of increasing biomedical innovation. The film, set in Trinidad and Tobago and made with members of the local LGBT community, follows the work of a group of evolutionary geneticists studying and collecting DNA from all forms of life in order to create a cryogenically frozen Ark. The video presents a cyborgian future of techno-science in which the residual resonances of extinct civilizations are still felt. By blending science and mythology, *Atom Spirit* ruminates upon the effects of computational and biological technologies, future iterations of humanity, and the environment.

**Liam Gillick (\*1964, United Kingdom)**

*Pelin Tan: A film by Liam Gillick*, 2019

Digital video with sound, 28 min

*Pelin Tan* is a sociologist and art historian, the sixth recipient of the Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism (2019 - 2020), and research fellow of the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research in Boston. Tan is involved in artistic and architectural projects that focus on urban conflict, territorial politics, and conditions of labor. For Matera European City of Culture 2019, Pelin Tan researched labour conditions and the new sense of place and community that began with the Riforma Agraria in 1950: from the exodus from Matera's Sassi to the newly built neighborhoods in the decades that

followed, to the re-occupation of the Sassi by left-wing activists in the 1970s, and the contemporary arrival of migrants via the Mediterranean today. Gillick's film grows around an interview with Pelin Tan, during which she elaborates on the research and experiences while working on the Matera project. A series of sequential shots of the landscape, cityscape, and the exhibition grounds located in a former quarry of the city are in essence static. Yet, the fact that each of them is taken by a hand held camera gives the film a fragile character and a potential for maneuvering in various directions.

**Marie Lukáčová (\*1991, Czech Republic)**

*Skuzomeetzah*, 2019

Digital video with sound, 16 min

*Skuzomeetzah* is kind of a „video musical“ or „rap operetta“. Insects, or rather parasites, dressed up as humans reflect on the power and profitability of the image at a time when the digital world is getting less and less distinguishable from reality. The pixel is becoming the basic unit of the power system. It is not clear whether it is still on the monitor or already behind it. It can be used as proof of „fake news“ and can create brand new realities while its value is rapidly increasing and power over it is falling into the hands of the wealthy. The bugs (which can also be read as programming errors) have a potential to become the physical counterpart of the pixel, using the technology that is getting out of control for their own emancipation and return to corporeality: to be able to believe their own eyes again: that is, if they are faster than the burning planet and the rising curve of extinction their own species is facing.

**Martin Kohout (\*1984, Czech Republic)**

*Frogless*, 2019 - 2020

4K video loop, 2:21 min

*Frogless* might, at first, seem comical and like slapstick, yet very soon it shifts into an anxious display of a disturbing Sisyphian task of an animated frog trying to escape a minimalistic natural landscape by leaping against the surface of the screen separating it from the surrounding space as if it was a digital window. The only sound represents the clashes of the frog's body against the glass, and the rest is just silent. This video loop can be understood as an animated still-life in which duration is undermined and time stands still.