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Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat

29/11 2023—14/4 2024

PRESS CONFERENCE: Wed 29/11 2023 • 10 AM

OPENING: Wed 29/11 2023 • 7 PM

ARTISTS: Nina Beier • Misleidys Castillo Pedroso • Lucia Dovičáková • VALIE EXPORT • Bruno Gironcoli • Elisa Giardina Papa • Andrea Éva Györi • Trulee Hall • Monia Ben Hamouda • Šejla Kamerić & Aleksandra Vajd • Maria Lassnig • Claudia Lomoschitz • Tala Madani • Sarah Margnetti • Radha May • Marlie Mul • OMARA Mara Oláh • Abdul Sharif Oluwafemi Baruwa • Laure Prouvost • Christina Ramberg • Adam Rzepecki • Toni Schmale • Maja Smrekar • Mariya Vasilyeva • Dorottya Vékony • Marianne Vlaschits • Rafał Zajko

KURATORIN: Laura Amann

CURATORIAL SUPPORT: Hannah Marynissen (ASSISTANT CURATOR) • Hana Čeferin, Lara Mejač and Anyla Kabashi (CURATORIAL INTERNS)

EXHIBITION VENUE: kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

The international group exhibition *Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat* looks at the meaning of the human breast in culture, society, and art history. It brings together artists of different generations, new commissions, and previously exhibited works that (in one way or another) explore the breast, the tensions and conflicts it creates, but also its sensuality and its playfulness. Breasts—especially women's—are in many ways omnipresent in our lives: in advertisements, the portrayal of women in films and video games, and casual references in all kinds of conversations.

As the title of the exhibition suggests, breasts as well as nipples come in a variety of forms: some larger, some smaller, some flatter, some darker, some lighter. For some they are a source of shame and unease; for others they are something to proudly display in public. Whatever our individual experiences—we all have them.

It is against this backdrop that the exhibition looks at the topic of breasts and why they still seem to be the subject of so much scandal and dispute. In a society where we face so many urgent, manmade humanitarian and ecological catastrophes of devastating proportions, why is it that a bare nipple has the power to disrupt algorithms, scandalize onlookers, or be deemed worthy of a lawsuit? Why is being topless at the swimming pool regarded as unseemly for some and others not? Why is it offensive to breastfeed in public, or (beware!)



Laure Prouvost, *The Hidden Paintings Grandma Improved, Looking at you looking at me*, 2023, © LAURE PROUVOST • COURTESY LISSON GALLERY, PHOTO: TODD-WHITE ART PHOTOGRAPHY / © BILDRECHT, WIEN 2023

to breastfeed an animal? Why is it newsworthy to have or want bigger breasts, smaller breasts, or no breasts at all?

So why are we still talking about boobs?

Apart from this overarching question, another line of inquiry in *Darker; Lighter; Puffy; Flat* is the historical and, more specifically, art-historical gaze upon breasts; in recent times they have undergone a transformation from wholesome religious symbol to secularized and sexualized object: breasts embody a striking duality as symbols both of nurturing motherhood and the eroticized female body. This dichotomy gives them

considerable influence in shaping our perceptions of gendered bodies.

Thirdly, the exhibition therefore examines how radical, queer, feminist discourses—discussions surrounding top surgeries, including breast enhancement and removal—are marked by their historical implications, too. In a world where certain bodies are not meant to exist, their visibility is an act of resistance but also of exposure. The proud display of nipples and breasts of all shapes, sizes, and colors is an act of normalization but potentially also of sexualization or objectification.



Adam Rzepecki, *Project of the Father Pole Memorial*, 1981 • COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAWID RADZISZEWSKI GALLERY, WARSAW

Of course, the male breast has also been scrutinized, albeit not to the same degree as its fleshier counterpart in our still-prevailing binary system of man and woman. Nevertheless, the pressure for men to look a certain way, to have a body that reflects the vision of an athletic, strong, healthy potential partner, has increased, creating a market for surgical enhancement on the one hand and severe mental health issues such as bulimia or anorexia on the other. In a world with a more fluid understanding of genders, roles, and bodies in general, there may be new opportunities for the once-male breast to be a nurturer; caregiver; and sensual, sexual object alike.

In a similar vein, interspecies bonding and caring (through breastfeeding, for instance) seems unheard of, if not taboo; yet both the practice of humans breastfeeding domesticated animals and domesticated animals nursing infants has been identified by anthropologists all over the world. At times it is a practice of survival, medical necessity, or religious meaning, but often it merely symbolizes great love and the close bond between humans and other species.

Our reality is such that the (predominantly female) breast has time and again been fetishized to an extent that it could easily be said, from a contemporary perspective, to be reductionist; revealing of patriarchal, heteronormative narratives of domination; and ultimately simply ridiculous. So perhaps what remains to be asked, in a world where pornography is readily at hand and the promise of



Marianne Vlaschits, *The Deluge*, 2023 •
COURTESY LA BEAST GALLERY / © BILDRECHT,
WIEN 2023

pleasure can be bought, is: What is still, or could again be, erotic?

Rather than offering one clear response to all these questions mentioned, *Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat* offers a variety of works, practices, and voices that utilize the seemingly light-hearted, sensual, and wanton motif of breasts to speak to the burningly relevant—and occasionally dark and complex—issues of our era, teetering at the edge of sensuality and discursiveness alike. ●



Monia Ben Hamouda, *Venus as a River (Gymnasium)* & *Venus as a River II (Gymnasium)*, 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST AND CHERTLÜDDE, BERLIN

Exhibition guide

The comprehensive, free exhibition booklet features essays by Kathy Acker, Jules Gleeson, Aziza Harmel, and Audre Lorde and a curatorial intro by Laura Amann. ●

Short biographies of the artists

- Nina Beier** Born in Aarhus in 1975. Lives and works in Berlin and Copenhagen.
- Misleidys Castillo Pedroso** Born in Havana in 1985.
- Lucia Dovičáková** Born in Slovakia in 1981. Lives and works in Košice.
- VALIE EXPORT** Born in Linz in 1940. Lives and works in Vienna.
- Bruno Gironcoli** Born in Villach, Austria, in 1963, died in Vienna in 2010. Lived and worked in Vienna.
- Elisa Giardina Papa** Born in Medicina, Italy, in 1979. Lives and works in New York City and Palermo.
- Andrea Éva Győri** Born in Budapest in 1985, died in Rotterdam in 2022. Lived and worked in Rotterdam.
- Trulee Hall** Born in Atlanta in 1976. Lives and works in Los Angeles.
- Monia Ben Hamouda** Born in Milan in 1991. Lives and works in al-Qayrawan, Tunisia, and Milan.
- Šejla Kamerić & Aleksandra Vajd** Šejla Kamerić was born in Sarajevo in 1976. Lives and works in Sarajevo and Berlin.
Aleksandra Vajd was born in Maribor in 1971. Lives and works in Prague.
- Maria Lassnig** Born in Kappel am Krappfeld, Austria, in 1919, died in Vienna in 2014. Lived and worked in Vienna.
- Claudia Lomoschitz** Born in Austria. Lives and works in Vienna.
- Tala Madani** Born in Teheran in 1981. Lives and works in Los Angeles.
- Sarah Margnetti** Born in Monthey, Switzerland, in 1983. Lives and works in Brussels.
- Radha May – Elisa Giardina-Papa, Nupur Mathur, Bathsheba Okwenje** Radha May is a global artist collective working under a single female identity. Her members come from Sicily, New Dehli, and Kampala.
- Marlie Mul** Born in the Netherlands in 1980. Lives and works in Brussels.
- OMARA Mara Oláh** Born in Monor, Hungary, in 1945, died in Szarvasgede in 2020. Lived and worked in Monor.
- Abdul Sharif Oluwafemi Baruwa** Born in London in 1975. Lives and works in Vienna.

Laure Prouvost

Born in Lille in 1978. Lives and works in Brussels.

Christina Ramberg

Born in Kentucky in 1946, died in Chicago in 1995. Lived and worked in Chicago.

Adam Rzepecki

Born in Kraków in 1950. Lives and works in Kraków.

Toni Schmale

Born in Hamburg in 1980. Lives and works in Vienna.

Maja Smrekar

Born in Slovenia in 1978. Lives and works between Ljubljana and Berlin.

Mariya Vasilyeva

Born in Kyiv in 1993. Lives and works in Vienna.

Dorottya Vékony

Born in 1985. Lives and works in Budapest.

Marianne Vlaschits

Born in Vienna in 1983. Lives and works in Vienna.

Rafał Zajko

Born in Białystok in 1988. Lives and works in London.



Misleidys Castillo Pedrosa, *Untitled*,
ca. 2017 • COURTESY CHRISTIAN BERST ART
BRUT, PARIS

PUBLIC PROGRAM

Sticks and stones may break my bones but thread will tell my story

Embroidery Workshop curated and led by Jelisaveta Rapačić
Sat 16/12 2023 • 3–6 PM • **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier
Sat 20/1 2024 • 3–6 PM • **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier

A workshop dedicated to slowness, patience, tactility, precision as well as softness under the guise of arts and crafts, with embroidery as a byproduct. We invite you to take part in a group session of creating new images inspired by the exhibition and its narratives, stitch by stitch, by concentrating on simple, small-scaled, repetitive movements, slowly building and controlling the outcome. The workshop will take place in the exhibition space itself.

Participants will learn basic and advanced stitches and techniques, while immersing themselves in the imagery of the exhibition. You are welcome to bring your own tambours, threads, fabrics, or personal textiles.

For beginners as well as more advanced crafters. The workshop will be held in English.

Workshop fee: € 5 / materials and tools will be provided.

Please register at vermittlung@kunsthallewien.at.

Old Masters Meet Contemporary Art

Combined guided tours at Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna and **kunsthalle wien**

Thu 25/1 2024 • 6:30–8:15 PM

Thu 29/2 2024 • 6:30–8:15 PM

Thu 28/3 2024 • 6.30–8:15 PM

MEETING POINT: 6:30 PM in the entrance area of **Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna**

The breast has an important symbolic significance in the art of the old masters and its depiction still has cultural, social and political meaning today. Using selected works from the collection of Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna and the exhibition *Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat* at **kunsthalle wien**, you will learn how breasts have been depicted throughout history and which cross-connections, parallels, and shifts can be discovered.

Admission tickets and annual passes for both museums are valid in both institutions.

GUIDED TOUR FEE: € 6

Please register at besucherservice@kunsthallewien.at.

It Comes in Waves

Pleasure Writing Workshop with Helen Palmer

Wed 31/1 2024 • 6:30–8 PM • **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier

Wed 21/2 2024 • 6:30–8 PM • **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier

Wed 20/3 2024 • 6:30–8 PM • **kunsthalle wien** Museumsquartier

How is pleasure connected to writing? What is a writing flow? How do we embody pleasure in words? How is writing connected to the body?

In these workshops we will do a series of simple writing experiments, working with constraints (and their removal) in order to break down writers' block, free ourselves from grammatical undergarments and feel the sensory pleasure of language. We will work with the sound, shape and feel of words as sensory objects with moods and textures, exploring the vital and immediate relation between language and the body.

No writing experience is necessary!

The workshop will be held in English.

Please register at vermittlung@kunsthallewien.at.

Ballet performance by Sonia Dvořák

Date to be announced

Professional ballet dancer **Sonia Dvořák** (Vienna State Ballet) invites us to join an intimate dance performance especially commissioned for the exhibition and reacting to its themes and display. The young and naïve ingénue is still the most common female leading character in ballet and—unless one's body looks convincingly adolescent—being cast in these roles becomes much less likely. Breasts are consequently either hidden for most repertoires or hyper-sexualized for the roles of sex workers.

In her new performance, **Dvořák** builds her choreography upon a repertoire of movements subconsciously made by dancers when feeling insecure or embarrassed of their bodies during rehearsal. Movement is overlaid by spoken stories of **Dvořák's** personal experiences as a professional and as a student, bringing this issue to the fore for an audience beyond the ballet world.

Curatorial tours with Laura Amann

Dates to be announced

Guided tours

Thu 7/12, 21/12 2023 • 4/1, 18/1, 1/2, 15/2, 7/3, 21/3, 4/4 2024 • 5:30 PM •
kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

Every first and third Thursday of the month at 5:30pm you can discover the exhibition with our art educators and discuss the contexts and backgrounds of the exhibited works.

The guided tours are free of charge and are held in German.

My View

My View is a program series in which experts, non-experts, and interesting people are invited to present their personal view on the exhibition. Dates and further information will be announced on our homepage kunsthallewien.at.

Die Ausstellung auf einen Blick

Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat

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- EXHIBITION VENUE: kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier
- EXHIBITION DATES: 29/11 2023—14/4 2024
- OPENING HOURS: Tue–Sun 11 AM–7 PM • Thu 11 AM–9 PM
- PRESS MATERIALS: <https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/darker-lighter-puffy-flat/press/>

The exhibition project *Darker, Lighter, Puffy, Flat* is kindly supported by the Danish Arts Foundation, the Italian Council (2023), Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity, Italian Ministry of Culture, Flanders State of the Art, Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council and by Slowenisches Kulturinformationszentrum SKICA, Vienna.

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