

Dafna Maimon "Family Business: Power Failure"

Venue: Kim? Contemporary Art Centre

Dates: 20.4.2018 - 20.5.2018

*Family Business: Power Failure* is the fourth in a series of exhibitions and performances inspired by autobiographical and micro historical research into a family-owned business—Finland's first kebab and falafel restaurant Orient Express, which introduced Finns to the delicacies of the Middle East and was opened by the artist's Israeli father in 1985. For Riga's edition the artist is producing an onsite performative space generated by voices and memories about the roles of female family members and power dynamics that will include local stories and performers. The reconstructed Orient Express installation at Kim? will be activated weekly by a group of performers, or rather restaurant staff, who will take the function of the business into their own hands. In this rebellious and playful state of operation, the women's past is reimagined and reenacted in liberating ways suggesting a future of new power dynamics to come.

*Family Business: Power Failure* is the culmination of a long-term working process; some years ago Maimon found a rather strange high-budget video ad from 1986 that her father had produced, which used his own exoticness in a high-paced narrative to market kebabs in Finland. Starting from this video-relic and her childhood memories, the artist began reworking the commercial and reimagining the restaurant. Now, *Orient Express* exists in a world beyond capital. The restaurant was first reconstructed in Lilith performance Studio as the performance *Orient Express Yourself*, where it was equipped with a functioning kitchen, complete with trained "restaurant workers" whose task was to sell falafel in exchange for the audience's own words. The customers paid prices ranging from 15 to 299 words, and answered questions relating to memories of family and gender roles, as well as the effects of destructive patriarchal structures. Their amplified recollections enabled a semi-shared and intimate space between strangers.

A few months later, *Orient Express* expanded its operations to Galerie Wedding in Berlin, where the installation functioned as a ghostly memory of the long-gone restaurant. There it sold falafels to the audience only on the opening, where the word-payment was recorded into an old tape recorder. For the finissage the restaurant catered to people again with the performance *After Hours*. Maimon scripted an absurd movement score based on restaurant chores a worker performs when closing up for the night. One chore was to count the takings; the words collected at the opening were played back within the performance as further fragmented memories to a new audience.

The exhibition is coproduced by Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Lilith Performance Studio, Galerie Wedding, SIC Space. Special thanks to Zane Onckule, Solvej Ovesen Helweg, Jonatan Habib Engqvist.