

In Art Dreams Come True

Since 2003 Katarzyna Kozyra has been pursuing *In Art Dreams Come True*, a project consisting of a series of performances, quasi-theatrical productions, audience-engaging happenings and films. In creating the individual works, Kozyra has consistently acted as their director, chief performer, and as 'raw material' in the hands of her master guides: Gloria Viagra and the Maestro, who assist her to assume various roles. Yet both Berlin-based transvestite Gloria (who the artist sees as a model of 'true femininity') and the Maestro (operatic vocal coach Grzegorz Pitulej) introduce their ward, Kozyra, into worlds saturated with artificiality, convention and posing. These same features come through in each of Kozyra's artistic embodiments – that of opera diva, drag queen, Olympia from Offenbach's opera and Snow White of the well-known tale.

Non so piu

Video installation, 2004

Trailer →

← 9 videos

This was the first piece in the cycle that would become *In Art Dreams Come True*. It is a multi-channel installation that explores the artist's attempts to penetrate worlds both strange and fascinating to her, worlds into which she is guided by Gloria Viagra and the Maestro. Gloria's chief task was to help Kozyra find the 'woman' in herself, which Gloria (i.e. cross-dressed Michel) the artist sees as the ideal example or embodiment of. The Maestro – always artificial in life and on the stage – represents the operatic world of sublime feelings and emotions expressed through a conventionalized singing style that emphasizes a sense of artifice. The artist studies classical singing in an effort to learn how to express her own feelings vocally, mastering the arias the Maestro assigns her, including that of Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* (the character is dressed up as a woman as he sings). The video installation consists of a film trailer projected on a large screen and nine other films (Makeup, Sven, Backstage, Shopping, Clubs, Callas, The Maestro, The Devil, Kitkat) which were initially shown in a labyrinth-like space, curtained-off from each other. The work's title is taken from Cherubino's aria in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* ("I know not who I am or what I do...").

Façade Concert

Clock performance, 2005

Museumplatz, Vienna

Production: Kunsthalle Wien

4:42

Held on July 7, 2005, *Fassadenconcerto* (*Façade Concert* or *The Concert on the Façade*) was an element of the opening of the *Impossible Theatre* exhibition at Vienna's Kunsthalle, located in Museum Square of the city's *Museumsquartier* district. Every hour from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (with an intermission from 2 to 4 p.m.), a blue-striped booth emerged from the portico of the former royal stables at the height of the first floor. The Maestro would then lead Kozyra out of the booth, and the artist, wearing a different dress almost every time (their designs inspired by the geometric patterns of Oskar Schlemmer), would perform the Queen of the Night aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Despite being conducted by the Maestro, Kozyra's performances varied widely in quality. The concerts were witnessed by tourists on their way to visit nearby museums or relaxing in cafes located in the square. The performance's intentional imprecision at once emphasized and subverted the event's mechanical, cuckoo clock logic. The aria sounded different each time, the costumes seemed intentionally 'imperfect' and the 'cuckoo' never emerged from the building on the hour. In this project, the artist freely sampled and mingled elements from various poetics and realities.

Diva, Reincarnation

Performance, 2005-2006

Co-production of the Center of Contemporary Art –Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, and the Barbican Art Centre, London

8:05

While awaiting the artist, the audience saw a projected photo of a pre-war opera diva inside a cage with a lion. An opera overture from a vinyl record was heard throughout this introduction. The image then gradually disappeared and Kozyra was brought on stage in a cage (initially draped with fabric), dressed in a bodysuit making her resemble an obese woman. The bodysuit, made from special foam, was shaped from a mold taken off a real human body. In her review published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Dorota Jarecka wrote, “The artist parodied opera in general and specifically opera divas who squeeze into elaborate dresses to sing the parts of young girls. Here the situation was reversed – the singer's abundant body was on the outside, the girl inside.” Completely ‘concealed’ in this costume and conducted by the Maestro, the artist performed the aria of Olympia — the soulless doll from Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*.

Beauty Pre-view

Cryptoperformance, 2005

Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin

5:34

About Beauty, a group exhibition at Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt, included Kozyra's *The Rite of Spring* projection. During the exhibition opening, the artist appeared with her teacher and mentor – Berlin-based DJ and drag queen Gloria Viagra. The duo were dressed

and styled as clones or identical twin sisters. Kozyra's appearance and behavior confirmed that she had been a dutiful student of the 'real femininity' lessons she took from Gloria Viagra, which were an element of the project *In Art Dreams Come True*. Almost no one recognized Kozyra as herself, as the artist. She posed for photos with Gloria and gave a number of interviews, treating her appearance in this new role as a kind of 'artistic event.'

A Winter's Tale

Film, 2005-2006

Production: BWA, Jelenia Góra; BWA Wrocław

The film *A Winter's Tale* is another piece in the series *In Art Dreams Come True*. It is simultaneously the first work of the series in which Gloria Viagra and the Maestro appear in a single setting and in equally important roles, vying for the body and soul of their student, Kozyra. The artist is transformed into someone like Snow White, who inhabits a strange forest inn with a company of dwarves. The film, whose narrative seems hazy and lacks closure, combines and blends various myths and stories as well as diverse film styles: horror

with melodrama and comedy, contemporary fable with period film, musical with opera and operetta. It simultaneously constitutes 'documentation' of a setback, a record of the artist's struggle to insert herself and all those around her into a given convention with a view towards exploding that convention from the inside.

Il Castrato

Performance, 2006

Teatro San Leonardo, Bologna

Production: Gender Bender Festival

15:59

The *Gender Bender* Gay Culture Festival co-produced the twenty-odd minute long performance *Il Castrato*, which took on the all but theatrical form of a one-act Baroque opera. In the opera's finale, the Maestro and Gloria Viagra plucked the Drag Queen (Kozyra) from the audience and castrated her. Stripped of dresses and wig, the Drag Queen 'recovered' her androgynous appearance with the help of an artificial little body and genitals that granted her all the characteristics of a young boy. Following this scene, 'carried out' by those who were to

teach her 'femininity,' the artist sang Schubert's *Ave Maria* before riding off on a white steed upon whose back she assumed an unnaturally rigid pose. While in the previous projects of the series Kozyra sought to become, transform into, dress up as a woman/princess/star, in this episode she reverted to her boyish looks and endured nearly literal castration. Thus, her gender once again proved to be a costume. The shooting of the film *// Castrato* coincided with preparations for the performance in the altogether unique space of the Teatro Settecentesco di Villa Mazzacorati, a Baroque theatre featuring period illusionist scenery.

Cheerleader

Music video, 2006

Production: Zachęta National Art Gallery

4:30

Part of the *In Art Dreams Come True* series, this piece was conceived as a pop music video cover of Gwen Stefani's *What Are You Waiting For?* Playing with clichés of femininity and masculinity, this time Kozyra takes on the role not of an opera diva but of a pop-rock star playing a cheerleader in a music video set in a men's locker room. Engaging in the kind of dancing and acrobatics (choreographed by Anna Godowska) customarily performed by cheerleaders, Kozyra, waving pom-poms and wearing a white miniskirt, tries to draw the attention of male athletes changing in the locker room after practice. Backup singers include members of the Zachęta's curatorial staff and management. In this brief music video telling a rebellious story, Kozyra incorporates numerous references to her previous works.

In Art Dreams Come True

Film, 2006

Production: DAAD, Berlin

20:34

This quasi-documentary film tells the story of the project that is *In Art Dreams Come True*, following Katarzyna Kozyra from her fascination with Gloria Viagra, through her first singing lessons with the Maestro and her lessons in 'femininity' with Gloria, to her stage appearances in clubs, theatres and finally in the castration scene on the stage of the San Vitale Theatre in Bologna. Staged scenes form the film's narrative structure and are inter-cut with documentary interviews with the artist's collaborators, who participated in different stages of the project and took on various roles. They range from the Maestro and Gloria ("without them it would have been as if without sound and picture" – as the artist states in the project catalogue), through curators, to stage and technical crew members. Kozyra summarizes the entire film in a cocky statement she makes directly into the camera: "Anyone can dance, sing and act. And from my omnipotence comes a certainty that I will succeed at whatever I choose to focus on, because I'm potentially talented in every area."

Lou Salome

Appearances as Lou Salome

Film, 2005

Production: Kunsthalle Wien

3:30

A photo of artists' friend and femme fatale Lou Salome driving a buggy drawn by Nietzsche and Ree inspired Kozyra to create a video performance and photo series using Vienna's Schwarzenberg Palace and Gardens became the backdrop. As rendered by Kozyra, Nietzsche and Rilke (another of Lou Salome's acquaintances) – or more precisely actor-dancers masked as dogs strongly resembling the philosopher and poet – are subjected to animal training. Kozyra devised her Lou Salome project while working on the project *In Art Dreams Come True*, and an interweaving of these projects is clearly perceptible. With *In Art...* Kozyra became a material/doll/toy in the hands of Gloria Viagra and the Maestro, who shaped her. In *Appearances...* she is a dominatrix who exercises complete control over her men-dogs. The closing credits scroll by with Kozyra softly humming the aria of the Queen of the Night from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Lou Salome a Roma. Teatro di Cani

Performance, 2005

Teatro Universale, Rome

Production: Romaeuropa Festival

5:22

Kozyra's appearance at the Teatro Universale took place under the auspices of the Romaeuropa Theatre Festival and was titled *Lou Salome a Roma...* Audience members above all consisted of dog-owners and their dogs. As honorary guests, dogs and their keepers were offered free entry and given the best seats at the front and center of the house. The audience was first shown the film *Appearances as Lou Salome*, made earlier in Vienna, which on this occasion included a sequence showing Lou, Rilke and Nietzsche visiting Rome's great tourist attractions. The screening was followed by a live stage show during which Rilke and Nietzsche underwent dog training with Salome issuing her commands in Italian. The performance was periodically interrupted – by waiters bearing silver trays circulating in the audience and tossing treats to the dogs, by camera people recording the action on stage and in the auditorium, and by the dogs themselves, agitated by the noises and abundance of aromas. The canines' excitement was amplified by the anxiety of their owners, dividing their attention between watching the performance and calming their pets. The performance played out both on stage and in the auditorium.

MIDGET GALLERY

The Midget Gallery

Action in progress

Berlin Biennale, Frieze Art Fair 2006; Art Fair Basel, 2007; Midget Biennale, Berlin, 2008

After squatting Budapest bathhouses, after studying operatic singing, striptease and the art of makeup, after performing at a night club and playing a princess in a filmed fairy tale, Kozyra decided to make yet another of her dreams come true, this time one related to her career as a professional artist. Specifically, she decided to take part in the world's trendiest contemporary art events of 2006-2008: the Berlin Biennale, the Frieze Art Fair, the Art Fair Basel and the Midget Biennale. Uninvited to either, she crashed each of these events as the Midget Gallery, a group of midgets in Bavarian garb wearing small screens on their backs showing *A Winter's Tale*, one of the works in the series, and distributing postcards offering Kozyra's works for sale over the Internet. Dreams come true in art. While art institutions have come to include provocations and artists' attacks in their profiles, the art market continues to treat itself with deadly seriousness. That is probably why the Midget Gallery was ejected from Art Frieze after only 20 minutes, though it had the honor of being thrown out by the fair's general director himself.

www.midgetgallery.com

Richard Jackson

Midget Duck

Courtesy of Houser and Wirth

