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Monika Zawadzki

Der Keller

11 03 – 11 06 2017

Press talk

11 03 2017, 10 am

Opening

11 03 2017, 7 pm



BUNDESKANZLERAMT  ÖSTERREICH
KUNST

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"Der Keller" is the a first solo survey show of Monika Zawadzki (*1977 Warsaw) outside Poland featuring new commissions, as well as seventeen abstract and figurative works from different periods realized over the last ten years, showing the consequence of the artist's path.

Zawadzki creates sculptures, wall paintings and videos using simplification displaying an economy of form. Her openly socially engaged art practice has a meaningful and profound content. The main topic of Zawadzki's works is the functioning of individuals and groups within ethical, biological and political orders. The artist raises questions on violence, domination, and exclusion, as well as the relationship between corporality and spirituality. Her realizations ranging from small-scale objects to monumental pieces use a visual language of expression based on repeating motifs, limited to black color. The formal restraint and truth of the material are inscribed in this artistic practice.

The monumental wall painting "Minuet with Cows," installed on the outer facade of the apse at Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien, invites the visitors to enter the building's inner space and introduces the exhibition "Der Keller." This pair of human figures and four animals referring to the theme of "Danse Macabre" call attention to the location of the show—namely the basement with a black floor.

A cellar besides its utilitarian function is often linked with the dark, unconscious aspects of human personality. The space in the exhibition "Der Keller" is a conceptual framework for displaying the topics, which were present in Zawadzki's works, such as "Human and Animal Rights" or in works from the exhibition "Cattle" (Zachęta, National Gallery, Warsaw 2014) and "Anyone" (CCA-Ujazdowski, Warsaw 2010). The two sculptures "Potatoes" and "Shame (The Purpose of Art is Innocence)" (both 2017), created especially for the Künstlerhaus Graz are added to the exhibition. It is the latter consisting of three elements, on which Zawadzki comments: "I'm ashamed that I am human." In her works, the subject of shame and broadly understood human self-awareness which can transform into a disdain towards the surrounding world and oneself is expressed in abstract and figurative bas-reliefs resembling a reredos or tombstones. The artist has proclaimed information as the highest "being" of the future and for the first time the "posthuman" takes shape of a "cyberape" in her work "Shame (The Purpose of Art is Innocence)". The anti-totalitarian meaning of this sculpture is a continuation of her earlier anarchistic works.

Zawadzki easily rejects anthropocentrism. Her stance is socially engaged and directed against violence without attempting to judge the actions of humankind. Her works are ambivalent in their message, full of dark humor and seriousness at the same time—rather accepting the existing scheme of things, a world where more than one catastrophic scenario might become real. The value ingrained in Zawadzki's artistic practice is humility, understood as accepting the limitations of human beings.

Zawadzki's ambivalently implicit, both abstract and figurative works, are in a way lofty and mystical, and open to various, often contradictory interpretations. Recurring issues in the artist's work are transformation and circulation of matter and energy. Fluid processes lead to both, physical and the spiritual transformation, the loss of shape and meaning, and subsequently to obtaining a new identity. Zawadzki is a proponent of natural decay, deconstructing and questioning academic discourse in favor of spiritual experiences, both individual and communal.

Zawadzki's realizations are models of concepts, elaborated in succession, resulting from and complementing each other, finally being arranged in larger groups of well-orchestrated works.

Monika Zawadzki studied Graphic Art at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. She has shown her work in solo exhibitions, e.g. at the CCA-Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw (2008, 2010), Pinchuk Art Centre in Kiev (2012) and Zachęta, National Gallery of Art in Warsaw (2014). She participated in group exhibitions, e.g. Museum of Art in Łódź (2011, 2013, 2014), The Museum of Odessa Modern Art (2013), The National Art Museum of China, Beijing (2015). Her sculptures and murals are in the collections of Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Zachęta, National Gallery of Art, CCA-Ujazdowski Castle, both in Warsaw, and the city of Auroville in India. She is also involved in independent projects. She received her PhD from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 2011. Dr. Monika Zawadzki is an assistant professor in the department of visual communication at the Academy of Fine Arts in Szczecin.

Press download: <http://www.km-k.at/en/exhibition/monika-zawadzki/press/>

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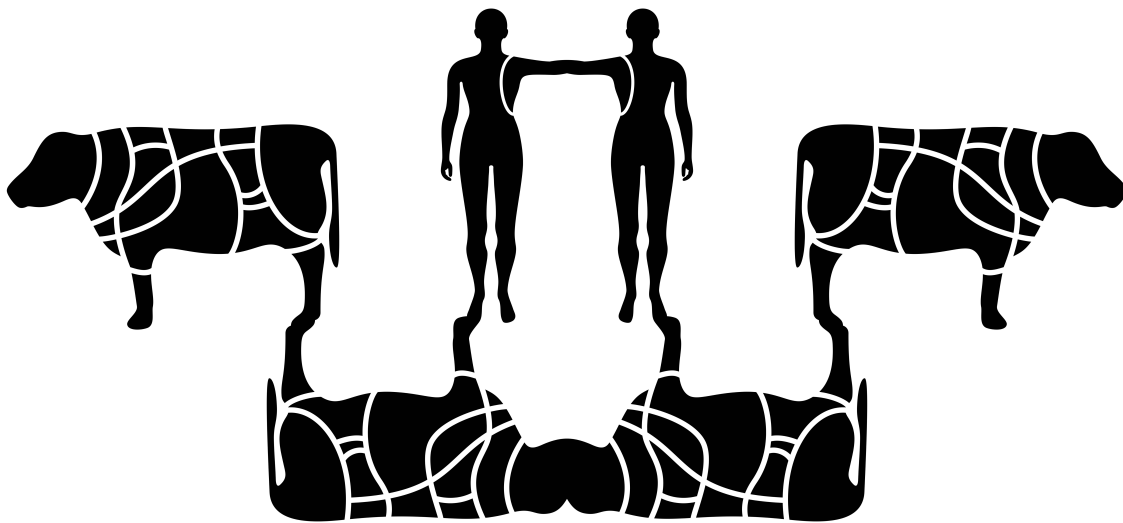
Curator: Michał Jachuła, Warsaw

Curator's guided tour: 16.03.2017, 6 pm

Michał Jachuła is curator in residency, supported by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs and the Austrian Cultural Forum in Warsaw.

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Monika Zawadzki, *Minuet with Cows*, 2006, acrylic paint on wall, 580 x 310 cm



Monika Zawadzki, *Nursing Mother*, 2014, epoxy resin, acrylic paint, 150 x 100 x 214 cm