

eastcontemporary

Agnieszka Mastalerz

no mental scars, no nursed grudges

18/01 – 26/02/2022

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With text by Antonio Grolli

Although Agnieszka Mastalerz's work consists mainly of video and photography, I have always recognized its strongly sculptural side. Sculptural in the sense of perceivable through our gaze and body as if having a three-dimensional presence. This exhibition is an example of that. The bodies are the protagonists of the presented works, the bodies as shapes in space, in meaningful forms and poses.

The white and black analogue photographs present a young woman inside a Warsaw-based building traceable to the Bauhaus period in style. The woman interacts with some architectural elements and her poses are not natural. They remind us of gestures linked to security or medical protocols. They evoke images related to the protection of limbs and sensitive parts such as the neck.

The video, instead, is in color, even though having delicate and muted shades. We see two young acrobats intent on making figures with their bodies, mostly interacting with each other, sometimes with some tools for stunts. The two bodies and the age of the girls vary slightly. In most cases, the older girl acts as the support for the younger and smaller one.

During the days I was starting to write this text, I visited the Possagno Gypsotheca, where many of Canova's plaster casts and sketches are kept, and I felt something akin to Agnieszka's subjects and works. Indeed, I perceive a profound sense of 'classic' in her works. The atmospheres are suspended and detached, the subjects are harmonious and without any sense of guilt in their beauty; I find in her works the same notion of adolescence so beloved by Canova. With their artificial poses, the girls recall neoclassical plastic sculptures, in which the arms and limbs move as if guided by the metaphysical and not-of-this-world feeling.

The same use of the slow motion in one part of the recording accentuates this tension towards something that would potentially like to be eternal. The slowed-down images were in fact captured with a video camera mounted on a large robot, which becomes one of the two "directors" of the video, and which appears "dancing" alongside the two acrobats. Here is, where the cybernetic, robotic, and silicon element of this sculpture in movement meets with a classical aesthetics, contaminating itself with it: it is as if it were a sculptural classicism, more enhanced, apparently perfect, and far away from the disharmony of vulgar human sentiments. It is fluid, Apollonian, unalterable, shiny, and with a sexy surface, as attractive as only the inorganic can be, and as cold as the marble of Canova's sculptures.

Agnieszka Mastalerz's work manages in subtle and very elegant way to reveal the anxieties and frictions inherent to our collectivity and the way in which the individual inserts itself into the social dynamics aimed at his or her control and directing. In recent years there has been a lot of talk about how the robots are always more efficient, and about the day when they will come to look like us. I have an impression that these are not the robots that resemble us more and more, but that we are the ones who are increasingly looking like them. In the moment in which the humanity puts away the soul and the spiritual side of human being, it is inevitable to envy a digital entity, one that is infinitely faster than us in computing and with much better physical performance than ours. Perhaps, because of the exasperated use of technological prostheses and robotic supports in our everyday life and at work, we want to be like them and function like them as we are already convinced

that they work better in a reassuring way and without disturbing surprises that humans are prone to. Furthermore, robots have an advantage and the enviable comfort of having no responsibility, they only follow protocols, no matter what happens. This is also why we entered the era of adoration of big data, our new gospel and horrid abyss in which the sense of the sublime of our time resides.

However, in the artist's work there is an escape from all of this, a potential salvation, a redemptive crack. Indeed, there is always a sort of internal dichotomy to each work, in which a vital and organic element meets with and bumps into something artificial and inorganic, sometimes wanting to direct and control the chaotic part of the organic. And even the atmosphere, that classical and Apollonian construction of the image, always carries within itself a tiny hint of a possible 'decomposition'. Among the exhibited photographs there is an image that speaks perhaps in a more exemplary way: you can see a girl shot from below on a flight of stairs. Everything is perfect, sinuous, suspended, but in the upper left angle of the image you can see that a building has a water leak ruining and corrupting the plaster. It is something small and secondary, but in reality, we are faced with a visual and psychological worm clinging to remain inside those who look. In almost all works of Agnieszka Mastalerz, there is an inkling of failure, something in a state of decay or corruption: it is the human that emerges in its purest essence as a deviation from a norm that would otherwise make everything alienating and inhuman.

Antonio Grulli

Agnieszka Mastalerz (b. 1991, Łódź, Poland) lives and works in Warsaw.

Agnieszka Mastalerz is a Polish video artist and photographer graduated from the Studio of Spatial Activities led by Professor Mirosław Bałka at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (2013 – 2018). In her artistic practice, Mastalerz puts the main focus on mechanisms of control and processes influencing and exploiting an individual. Through the use of photography, video, performance and installation, distinguished by poetic visual language, she analyses restrictive rules established within intimate relationships, social structures and towards the natural environment. She has recently exhibited at FabbriSchenker Projects in London, the Center for Contemporary Art Luigi Pecci in Prato, MAXXI in Rome, Wschód Gallery in Warsaw, Starak Family Foundation in Warsaw, Deichtorhallen in Hamburg, Fondation Hippocrène in Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. In the last months, Mastalerz participated in the residency program Temporars Susch at Muzeum Susch in Switzerland, Artists Development Programme by the European Investment Bank Institute in Luxembourg and the residency at Futura Gallery Prague in Czech Republic. Her works are in the collection of Fondazione In Between Art Film by Beatrice Bulgari, Ergo Hestia Group, European Investment Bank Institute and private art collections.

"No mental scars, no nursed grudges" was realised with and thanks to: 3-channel video - Marcin Gołąb: director of photography, Kuba Gryżewski: assistant director, Zuzia Ćwikła, Magda Wróblewska: performers, Bartłomiej Ptasznik: focus puller, Olaf Jurdyga: gaffer, Anna Słowińska: make up, hair, Mirella Panecka: backstage, Bites Studio: studio, staff (Michał Raczyński, Łukasz Mergner), robot, cameras, Black Photon: color-grading, Fast Media: lenses. Series of analogue photos - Agnieszka Kryst: performer, Ewa Ledóchowicz: location owner, Pracownia Obrazu, Jerzy Łapiński: photo scanning, banda printshop: photo scanning.

The exhibition is produced thanks to the support of the Consulate General of Poland in Milan, the Polish Institute in Rome and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute:





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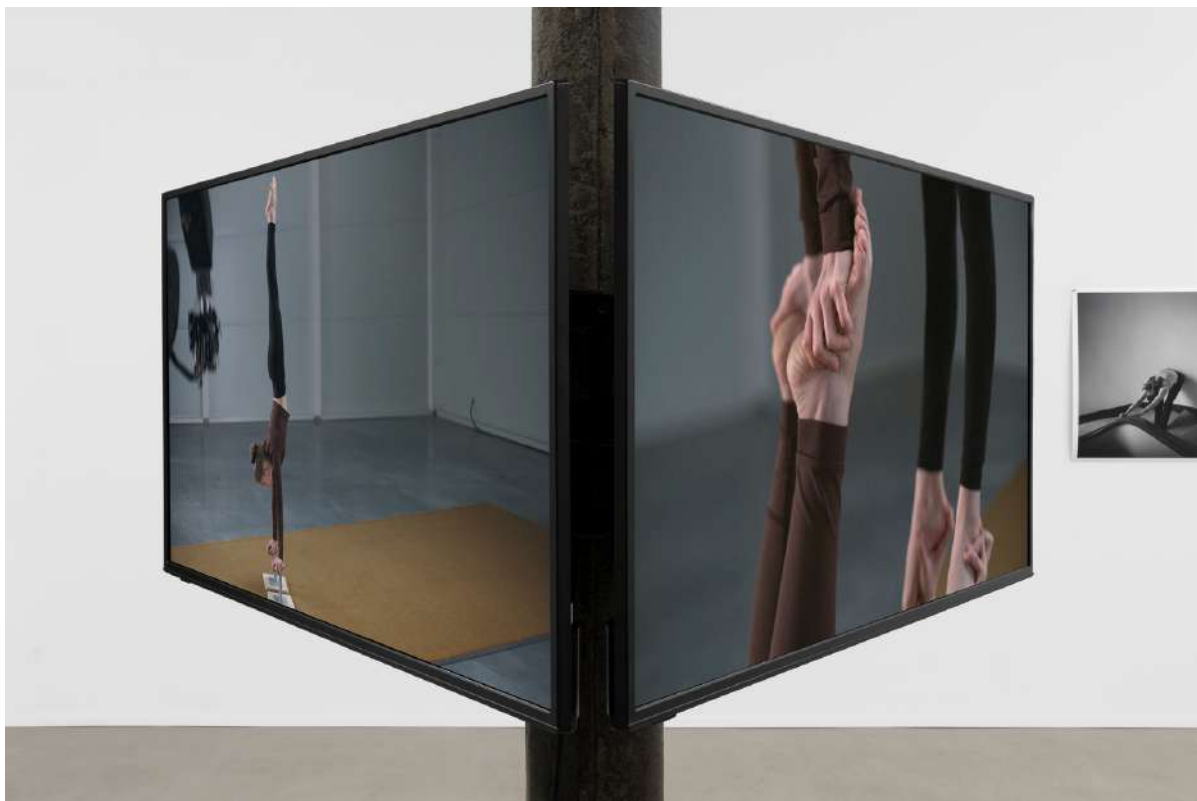
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Agnieszka Mastalerz (b. 1991, Łódź, Poland) lives and works in Warsaw.

Agnieszka Mastalerz is a Polish artist graduated from the Studio of Spatial Activities led by Professor Mirosław Bałka at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw (2013 – 2018). She was also a visiting student with Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg (2017 – 2018) and she studied at Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig (2019 – 2020) in the class of Candice Breitz and Eli Cortiñas.

In her artistic practice, Agnieszka Mastalerz puts the main focus on mechanisms of control and processes influencing and exploiting an individual. Through the use of photography, video, performance and installations, distinguished by poetic visual language, she analyzes restrictive rules established within intimate relationships, social structures and towards the natural environment.

Mastalerz has recently exhibited at FabbriSchenker Projects in London, the Center for Contemporary Art Luigi Pecci, Prato, MAXXI, Rome, Wschód Gallery, Warsaw, Starak Family Foundation, Warsaw, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Fondation Hippocrène, Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. She participated in the residency program Temporars Susch at Muzeum Susch in Switzerland, Artists Development Programme by the European Investment Bank Institute in Luxembourg, and the residency at Futura Gallery Prague in Czech Republic.

EDUCATION:

2019 – 2020	Candice Breitz/ Eli Cortiñas' studio, Hochschule für bildende Künste, Braunschweig, DE
2013 – 2018	BA, MA - Media Department, Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw (diploma in the Studio of Spatial Activities of Mirosław Bałka), PL
2017 – 2018	Photoclass by Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg (Erasmus scholarship), DE
2012 – 2015	BA - Cultural Studies, University of Warsaw, PL

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

2021	<i>Hollow Vessels</i> , Fabbri Schenker Projects, London, UK <i>HER Docs</i> Film Festival, Warsaw, PL <i>Supports</i> , ROD (Realny Obszar działań), Warsaw, PL <i>After Us</i> , MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts, Rome, IT. Curated by Julian Rosefeldt <i>Primary Swarm</i> , The Room Projects and LUX London, UK
2020	<i>Where Art Thou?</i> Gen 3:9, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, PL <i>Pandemic consequence: dreams</i> , Serce Człowieka, Warsaw Gallery Weekend <i>Джутта (Jutta)</i> , Stroboskop Art Space, Warsaw, PL <i>Symcha Trachter, 1894-1942</i> . Light and Color, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, PL <i>The Word That Troubles</i> , Temple University, Rome, IT <i>Wasteland</i> , Survival Art Review, Wrocław, PL <i>I guess I die another day</i> , Berlin Art Week, DE <i>Effort</i> , GAMU, Prague, CZ <i>I do not share with anyone</i> , Kraków Photomouth (main exhibition curated by Adam Mazur) <i>Proposals for a show</i> , Wschód Gallery, Warsaw, PL <i>Primary Swarm</i> , MOS, Gorzów Wielkopolski (duo with Michał Szaranowicz) <i>Rundgang</i> , Hochschule für bildende Künste, Brunswick, DE
2019	<i>below zero</i> , Industra, Brno, CZ <i>auf_begehren</i> , Städtische Galerie, Hannover, DE <i>New Translation</i> , Kasárne/ Kulturpark, Kosice, SK

	<i>VISI0. Moving Images After Post-Internet</i> , Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, IT. Curated by Leonardo Bigazzi
	<i>Young Polish Video Artists</i> , Festival Mondial des Cinémas Sauvages, Brussels, BEL
	<i>Three Plagues</i> , Labirynt Gallery, Lublin, PL
	<i>Concealed</i> , Survival Art Review, Wrocław, PL
	<i>Night Flight</i> , Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, PL
	<i>Atmosphere</i> , Stary Browar, Poznań, PL
	<i>Bloodstream</i> , SOON_ by Starak Family Foundation, Spectra Art Space, Warsaw, PL
2018	<i>SLUICE</i> , Komputer Gallery, Warsaw, PL
	<i>We Could Be Heroes</i> , Królikarnia (National Museum), Warsaw, PL
	Phototriennale, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, DE
	<i>Immobilized</i> . Focus on the emerging art scene in Poland, Fondation Hippocrène, Paris, FR
	<i>ICH - Intangible Cultural Heritage</i> , Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg, DE
2017	<i>Landscapes of the Anthropocene</i> , Baltic Gallery of Contemporary Art, Słupsk, PL
	Exhibition of the finalists of the 7. Grey House Foundation Competition, Cracow, PL
	<i>Art Future/ Future Revolution</i> , Art Academy of Latvia, Riga, LV
	Exhibition of the finalists of the 9. Polish Biennale of Young Art, Baltic Gallery of Contemporary Art, Słupsk, PL
	<i>Breathtaking</i> , TRAF0 Center of Contemporary Art, Szczecin, PL
	Exhibition of the finalists of the 16. Hestia Artistic Journey competition, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, PL
	<i>Nothing Happens</i> , The Fort Institute of Photography, Warsaw, PL
	Tarnów, BWA Gallery of Contemporary Art, Tarnów, PL
	<i>Deep Water</i> , Gdańsk City Gallery, Gdańsk, PL
	<i>M D M</i> , projection in Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, PL
2016	<i>S1_92537</i> , Otwock Studio, Warsaw, PL. Curated by Kasia Redzisz

RESIDENCIES:

2021 / 08	Museum Susch, CH
2021 / 06	EIB Institute in Luxembourg, LU
2020 / 01	AiR FUTURA, Prague, CZ

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

2020	Visegrad Artist Residency Program - Visual & Sounds Arts
2019	DAAD Scholarship for Foreign Graduates in the Fields of Fine Art for 2019/2020
	Made in Art Foundation Scholarship Program for Young Polish Artists
	Scholarship from Polish Society of Authors and Composers (ZAiKS)
2017	Scholarship of the Marshal of the Masovian Voivodeship
	Polish Biennale of Young Art Fish Eye (finalist)
	International Contest for Experiment in Visual Arts Attempt (laureate)
	Inspirations Festival, TRAF0 Centre for Contemporary Art (grand prix)
	Hestia Artistic Journey competition (laureate)
2016	Scholarship from the Capital City of Warsaw

COLLECTIONS:

Fondazione In Between Art Film by Beatrice Bulgari
Ergo Hestia Group
European Investment Bank Institute and private ones

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Tue – Sat, 3–7 PM and by appointment

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