

Valentýna Janů

*Leaving Home, Going Out*

17/7—28/8 2022

Kunstverein Dresden

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Valentýna Janů's installations and films are narratives full of hope and reflective essays in one. They address elementary questions and problems of life from a very personal perspective, taking on the world with the greatest possible optimism and verve. Hence the delightfully charming and approachable appeal of the works themselves. Building scenic arrangements in which she sometimes also embeds videos, Janů stages fabrics, glass objects, and small pieces of furniture as precious treasures. The combinations of elements in these assemblages invariably engender multiple symbolic layers and gesture toward larger concerns.

A characteristic example is Janů's site-specific installation *Leaving Home, Going Out* for the Kunstverein Dresden's display window, in which she deftly toys with objects and spheres of activity that carry connotations of femininity. In the window on the left, she lets us espy an extravagantly shaped dining table; a row of empty vases is on display on it, set at such precarious angles that they might tip over at any moment. The piece of furniture itself is paneled with mirror facets of the sort typically used for disco balls. With a few nonchalant gestures, the artist has designed an interior open to the gazes of outside beholders, an aesthetic intersection of the private and public realms.

The window on the right is fitted out with a textile composition whose possible readings are carefully calculated. What we see from above may be a curtain, a light blanket, or perhaps a tablecloth concealing a kitchen table. Inlaid into the suggestive collage of checkered fabric is a cutout, a kind of window that once again guides our gaze as well as our musings into the interior.

In staging domestic fabrics in a grand scene behind the gallery's glass façade and employing simple symbolism to endow her sketch of a residential setting with disco opulence, Janů accomplishes two things at once: she interweaves inward experience and outside world, domesticity and adventure, and confounds our ideas and—gender-specific—associations bound up with these different spheres of human existence and social life. What Valentýna Janů has constructed in *Leaving Home, Going Out* is a space unto itself to which only the characters in the display window, drawn by Martin Groch, have access. It is a space that, for now, we are physically barred from, but if we try we can find it within ourselves: a place of letting go and being ourselves, a place where we can achieve consonance with the world around us, that is discotheque and home in equal measure.

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The presentation at Kunstverein Dresden is Janů's first exhibition in Germany and accompanied by a playlist that is available from Apple Music and Spotify. Valentýna Janů (b. 1994) studied photography at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) and then intermedia work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. Selected solo exhibitions: Lítost Gallery (Prague, 2021); National Gallery, Prague (2018); Fait Gallery (Brno, 2018). In 2021, Janů won the Jindřich Chalupecký Award. She lives and works in Prague.

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Links/Playlist: <https://msha.ke/goingout/>

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