

Yalda Afsah

Every word was once an animal

25.6. – 4.9.2022

(EN)

The human relationship with animals, and the agency surrounding that interaction is critical to the work of the German-Iranian artist Yalda Afsah. Together with Kunstverein München, HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark presents her first institutional solo exhibition, focusing on questions of power, care, and control in relation to domestication. Using three examples – bull-fighting, horse dressage, and pigeon breeding – she examines the blurred boundaries between affection and identification with animals on the one hand, as well as submission and human domination on the other.

In the conditioning of animals, anthropocentric power relations become evident. Afsah's works reveal the ambiguous character of the forces that operate at the center of these relationships. She directs our gaze to the moments when the bodies of humans and animals are marked by an uncanny closeness: the camera lingers on the aesthetic yet unnatural movements of a horse, focuses on the concentrated aggression of a bull, or follows the gazes of men searching the sky for pigeons performing falls.

In ancient eurocentric definitions of social space, exclusion has long been inscribed. As philosopher Fahim Amir writes: "a place to which neither animals, plants, slaves nor women had access, but only the free anthropos loitering smartly," while the others struggle at the edges. It is precisely these margins that Afsah focuses on in her work, for that is where we decide who cares for or subjugates whom, and who is even defined as an independent subject in the first place. The animals themselves appear in Afsah's works as protagonists and as living beings – not only under the gaze of their human companions.

Every word was once an animal is also a reference to the collapsing divide between "nature" and "culture." It takes place during an ongoing pandemic of which the origins remain a mystery, but the prime suspect is a bat. Such zoonotic influenzas are frequently the result of a disturbed relation between the species and usually caused by the intensive breeding, slaughter, and trading of animals. This crisis is forcing us to rethink the concept of the political: nature is not merely a passive object of political influence, but a resistant agent of the social. In the works, viewers are confronted with an intimate portrait of the mutual interdependence of human and non-human protagonists. Afsah never suggests a return to "nature" is possible, but asks us to consider other ways in which we co-habitate.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Afsah's first comprehensive catalog was published by DISTANZ including contributions by Fahim Amir, Maurin Dietrich, Cathrin Mayer, Gina Merz, and Filipa Ramos.

Every word was once an animal is initiated by Kunstverein München where the exhibition was on view from January 15 to April 3, 2022, and realized in cooperation with the HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark.

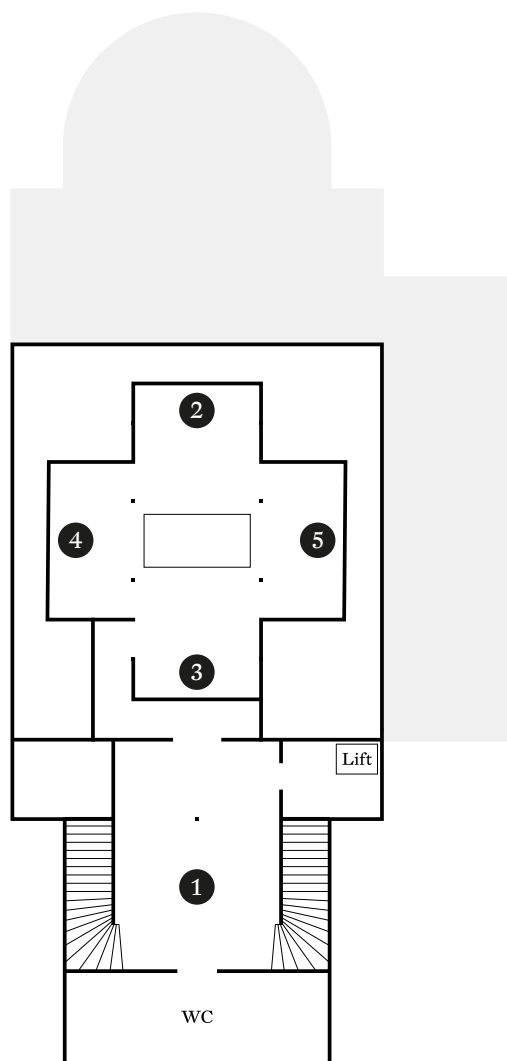
Curated by Maurin Dietrich & Cathrin Mayer

German-Iranian artist and filmmaker Yalda Afsah (b. 1983, Berlin, lives in Berlin) has presented her work at various exhibitions and festivals including Manifesta 13; Locarno Film Festival; New York Film Festival; Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur; Institute of Contemporary Arts London; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and Neuer Berliner Kunstverein. In 2018, she received the Karl Schmidt-Rottluff scholarship and from 2019–2021 she was a fellow at the Berlin University of the Arts' Graduate School. She is currently a mentor for the Berlin program for artists (BPA).

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, +43 316 740084, info@halle-fuer-kunst.at, halle-fuer-kunst.at

Floor plan, Level 2



(1)

Research material and video stills for
Secret Society Roller Club (2022)

(2)

Secret Society Roller Club, 2022

HD film, color, sound
20:08 min.

(3)

Centaure, 2020

HD film, color, sound
12:53 min.

(4)

Videourle, 2019

HD film, color, sound
09:59 min.

(5)

Tourneur, 2018

HD film, color, sound
14:23 min.

All works courtesy the artist

The films are shown one after the other. Start of the run of the films every hour on the hour.

Program

Artist Talk

Yalda Afsah, Maurin Dietrich,
Cathrin Mayer
25. 6. 2022, 4 – 5pm

Curator's Tour

Cathrin Mayer
30. 6. 2022, 6 – 7pm

ANIMAL; ANIMAL LOVE; ANIMAL PAIN

Mara-Daria Cojocaru (University of Philosophy,
Munich)
14. 7., 21. 7., 28. 7. 2022, 6 – 6:15pm
Series of discursive videos (online)

Gošogaoka, 1997

Sharon Lockhart, film, 63 min.
11. 8. 2022, 6:00 – 7:03pm
Film screening

TGIF (Thank God it's Friday)

Cat Gadget
12. 8. 2022, 6 – 8pm
Concert

Father State and Mother Nature

Vera Hagemann (zweite liga für kunst und kultur,
Graz)
17. 8. 2022 6 – 6:30pm
Performance

Gladiators of Beauty in South Central, Los Angeles

Fahim Amir (philosopher, writer, Vienna)
1. 9. 2022, 6 – 7pm
Lecture

Online-Guide

Auf unserem Online-Guide für Ihr Mobilgerät
erfahren Sie mehr über die Kunstwerke.
Benutzen Sie dafür bitte ihre Kopfhörer.



halle-fuer-kunst.at/guide

halle-fuer-kunst.at

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, +43 316 740084, info@halle-fuer-kunst.at, halle-fuer-kunst.at