

Beyond Nuclear *Family* Recipes for Happiness

Fighting the family regime might thus look like several different things: prising the state's boot off the neck of a "legal" family of "aliens," for instance, and at the same time offering solidarity to a queer kid in that same family, should she need it, against her parents.

Sophie Lewis, Abolish the Family

The word "family" typically evokes (or at least we are used to thinking it should evoke) things such as closeness, mutuality, care and the warmth of the family hearth. For some, this is indeed what family means, but for many others it is just a kind of desired ideal by which they judge their own, often much harsher, reality. The family has also become a very strong foundation of capitalism. The nuclear family unit is the ideal site for the fulfillment of the imperative of progress, the division between paid or unpaid and better or worse labor, and the rise of the associated gender, class and other inequalities. After all, mom, dad and their children need to live in their own apartment or house, own a washing machine, a dishwasher, a car, a bunch of clothes and toys and a number of other "necessities" that, for the most part, match what the family next door also owns. And if there is a mismatch, it's often a driving force for greater productivity, so that we can also have everything that those living next to us have and which hopefully makes them happy. It seems that many of us now feel that this is unsustainable. That the economic and consumerist model associated with the ideology of the nuclear family is not beneficial to our planet and carries with it many potentially negative consequences on the social and

psychological level. But if happiness is not to be found in the accumulation of commodities and we cannot rely on the nuclear family formula promoted by media and marketing, along with its many gender-based and other stereotypes, where do we, then, look for that happiness or what should we even imagine when we hear that term? And what should we do with our own understanding of family, so that care, happiness and togetherness aren't just empty words from a butter commercial?

The exhibition *Beyond Nuclear Family* seeks to provide a critical revision of the modern Western concept of the family and, through the works of more than forty exhibitors, explore the alternatives – historical and contemporary, geographically and culturally specific, utopian and fictional. Although a large segment of society lives in other arrangements, the nuclear family – defined as a married union of a man and a woman living together with their biological children – currently represents the unwritten status quo of our cultural context. At the same time, in a number of non-European cultures and, at the end of the day, even in Christian Europe, family and cohabitation have long been characterized as intergenerational or even outright communal. The short-lived triumph of the nuclear family was ultimately just the period of economic growth and unique socio-cultural conditions of the 1950s and early 1960s in North America. Later, due to economic and cultural reasons, the “ideal”, where it was possible to support a family from the salary of a single “breadwinner”, began to deteriorate fairly rapidly. The nuclear family had shown its darker side. The rise of feminism and the LGBTQAI+ movement and, more generally, the differentiation of society led to a gradual transformation of established roles and entire family systems. Nevertheless, the image of the happy little nuclear family has become a kind of global prototype, a yardstick by which we measure all other (family) constellations. It has also become a dominant paradigm on the political, social and educational level as well as from the point of view of the rule of law, especially in the European and American countries. In recent years, populist and neo-liberal politicians in Central Europe have adopted the term

(traditional) family as a dog-whistle to push for restricting human rights related to the issues of reproduction, gender, equal marriage, etc.

Beyond Nuclear Family therefore delves into the various ways of creating and naming the family along with the relationships and roles that its members hold within it, while also aiming to deconstruct the dominant image of the family, which is all too often a source of frustration and a tool of manipulation. The subtitle of the exhibition uses the established phrase “recipe for happiness”, which usually functions as hyperbole commenting on the impossibility of finding a single universal guide for achieving a happy life. By transforming this phrase in the plural form of “recipes”, we wish to express the plurality of forms that different family arrangements – as well as systems that go beyond the very concept of family – can have. In the spirit of Sophie Lewis’s recently published book *Abolish the Family*, we consider what might emerge from the void left behind at the end of “family history”. We do not wish to dismiss those who have genuinely found their happiness within the nuclear family – or those still searching for it there – we wish “only” to undermine the pyramid of social values, on the top of which sits the idealized image of the nuclear family.

Thanks to the installation by the art collective Mothers Artlovers (in collaboration with the Berlin-based collective MATERNAL FANTASIES), visitors to the exhibition will encounter specific recipes and dishes related to the critique of social institutions (which also include the idea of family) and relationships. The audience will be able to reflect on the issues in question at a triangular table reminiscent of Judy Chicago’s iconic feminist work *The Dinner Party*. Just like this performance-installation, works by Eva Kořátková, Maria Lukáčová, Markéta Magidová, Vojtěch Radakulan, Jirka Skála and Martina Drozd Smutná were also made directly for the *Beyond Nuclear Family* project. They explore the family through the dreams of children and parents, escaping the gender binary, utopian family revolutions, architecture governing or determining coexistence models, lack of (cultural) capital and the interconnectedness, fragility and ambiguity of relationship patterns. These works as

well as those from a host of international artists – whether paintings, photographs, videos, texts, textiles, sculptures, performances or outputs of artistic research – can be loosely interpreted as possible recipes or (missing) ingredients for family, or more broadly, interpersonal happiness. Taken together, the exhibition thus represents a comprehensive and diverse “cookbook”. The exhibition is also made unique through the exhibition architecture and the unifying artistic intervention of Vojtěch Radakulan.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the plan for a one-off exhibition became a three-year project and, in a way, a work of love for the curatorial collective of the Jindřich Chalupecký Society. In 2020, we organized a performance and exhibition pop-up at the Center for Contemporary Arts Prague, which was followed by an online residency on the DGTL FMNSM platform. In the spring of 2022, we presented the exhibition *Beyond Nuclear Family: Around the Family Table* in Berlin’s alpha nova & galerie futura. The current exhibition at the Display Gallery in Prague, subtitled *Recipes for Happiness*, will be followed by a final iteration at the EFA Project Space in New York in November of this year. Although each of the exhibitions takes a slightly different angle, they follow up on each other both conceptually as well as in terms of the exhibiting artists, who are often represented by different works throughout the project.

Beyond Nuclear Family represents the third chapter in the Jindřich Chalupecký Society’s long-term project *Islands: Possibilities of Togetherness*. It is also part of the international platform *Islands of Kinship: A Collective Manual for Sustainable and Inclusive Art Institutions*, co-financed by the European Union.

MOTHERS ARTLOVERS

1

Dinner Party, installation and performance, 2021–2022

Mothers Artlovers is a group of mothers – visual artists, theoreticians, curators, and activists – responding to the specific experience, problems, and needs of mothers and

caregivers involved in the art world. In addition to providing support and mapping the issue of parenting in the arts, the group also addresses the political and institutional level of the issue. The goal of *Mothers Artlovers* is to create a world of art that is more responsive to the needs of parents and caregivers.

As part of the exhibition *Beyond Nuclear Family*, *Mothers Artlovers* presents its long-term project reflecting various forms and expressions of love, its visibility, but also social and institutional criticism. The authors were loosely inspired by the now iconic work of Judy Chicago from the 1970s, and here, too, the triangular table serves as a site of feminist visions. As presented by *Mothers Artlovers*, each side of the table represents one form of love: Self-love, self-care and self-worth; Love as partnership; Love at the institutional level, institutional care. A multi-layered installation of ceramic objects, recipes, and actual food takes place on the table, changing over time. For this occasion, each of the participating artists has created a dish in which she communicates her opinion on the aforementioned aspects of love. Personal experience is often a reflection of society, so these stories also serve as a form of social criticism. The key to understanding the individual dishes is the accompanying printed material in the form of the *Dinner Party Menu*, which also describes in detail the thoughts and considerations that led the authors to create the project. An integral part of the work is a performance program that highlights this installation as a “safe space” for a diversity of perspectives and approaches.

Mothers Artlovers participating artists: Darina Alster, Eliška Fialová, Hana Hillerová, Hana Chmelíková, Petra Janda, micinka_kk, Tereza Kerle, Karolína Kohoutková, Libuše Vendlová, Kateřina Olivová, Iva Růžičková, Veronika Slámová, Zuzana Štefková

Ancestors' Assembly: The Dinner,
augmented reality sculpture, 2022

Maternal Fantasies is an interdisciplinary group of international artists and cultural producers based in Berlin. They shape the discourse on motherhood through collective artistic processes while enhancing the visibility of contemporary feminist positions addressing motherhood(s) in the arts. From writing autobiographical responses to classic feminist texts to devising performances using children's games, their art practice favours inclusive community-oriented experiments as alternatives to traditional structures of art production. Bridging theory and practice, their strategy transforms research on motherhood(s), care work and representation in the arts into frameworks for immersive modes of critique.

Ancestors' Assembly: The Dinner is an augmented reality sculpture consisting of audio-visual inputs from the individual members of the feminist artist collectives *Mothers Artlovers* and *Maternal Fantasies*. The project traces "generational lines" reflecting on the work of the artists with (art) historical feminist "ancestors", in reference to the piece *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago. The artwork takes form of a virtual collage of moving shapeshifting images and a multitude of voices gathering the collectives' thoughts. The essence of this project is the processuality and the collecting of the individual contributions of all members of the collectives. The augmented reality, which directly responds to the situation of the installation and performance *Mothers Artlovers* called *Dinner Party*, will therefore change above this table during the exhibition.

3 ELLIE HUNTER & ANNI PUOLAKKA

Eyes Jr., video, 19 mins, 2022

The video *Eyes Jr.* (presented for the first time at a duo show of Ellie Hunter and Anni Puolakka in Cordoba Gallery, Spain) follows a group of five siblings on the day of their mother's funeral. Over a continuous conversation set around a table, the siblings cut cake and discuss their relationship to their deceased mother, debating their varying opinions about continuing the lineage and engaging in reproduction. The characters are portrayed by hand-sewn dolls controlled like marionettes from outside the shot. The mother of these sculptures was herself also a sculpture, though she herself was large-scale, metal and covered with multiple eyes. She was made by a particularly well-known French artist who died in the early 21st century. One of the children in the film speculates: "I remember you saying once that you wanted to live inside as many bodies as possible, Mother, not just the five bodies that came from your belly. Art is a non-linear form of reproduction, moving forwards and backwards in time. I want to be part of something like that. I want to be pregnant with your legacy, Mother. To decompose and birth you with the others. Maybe then we wouldn't all be so lonely."

Anni Puolakka is based in Helsinki and makes performances, videos, installations, drawings and texts in which autobiographical or documentary materials are incorporated into fictional worlds. Their works play with the boundaries and potential of human animals as they seek meaningful and vibrant – sometimes drowsy or dirty – involvement with other beings, objects and surroundings. They experiment with theatrical and cinematic traditions as well contemporary methods.

Ellie Hunter is a visual artist based in NYC. Hunter locates her work inside spaces where bodies are heavily scrutinized. She explores the ways in which societal expectations are absorbed by our bodies and impact our everyday lives and anxieties. She infuses institutional scaffoldings with fantastical scenarios to propose new realities.

New Labour 1,

photography, glued print PVC, 51x83 cm, 2022

New Labour 2,

photography, glued print PVC, 51x83 cm, 2022

Charlotte Jarvis works at the intersection of art and science. Charlotte's practice often utilizes living cells and DNA: she has grown her own tumor, recorded music onto DNA, seen her heart beat outside her body and is working on a long term research project *In Pose* aiming to disrupt the patriarchy by making semen from cells of AFAB persons.¹

Her project *New Labour*, developed in collaboration with writer Lucy Kirkwood, asks "what if all the people on Earth with a uterus were wiped out or could no longer have children?" The series of fictitious photographic portraits imagines a world where science had to find a way for the rest of the population to bear children. The artist explains the backstory behind the work thusly: "A mutated HPV virus becomes transmissible through touch, causing a pandemic. It not only completely prevents uterus from functioning, but also causes a much more aggressive form of cervical cancer, which is fatal in a large percentage of the AFAB population. We imagined that, under these circumstances and with artificial wombs still being a very long way off, global society would need to very quickly find a way for people who were not born with a uterus to bear children through a form of ectopic pregnancy and ultimately a cesarean section. We imagined that they would be doing this while caring for and grieving

1 "Assigned female at birth" (or AFAB, for short) is a term that includes all people who were labelled as "female" at birth by state and medical institutions. Alongside cis women, this category also includes people of other genders born with uteri, such as a trans men and some non-binary people. Correspondingly, the category of "assigned male at birth" (AMAB) includes cis men, trans women and some other non-binary people. These classifications also oftentimes include intersex people, as doctors often try to classify them within the sexual dichotomy (even through non-consensual surgeries on infants).

their loved ones. In the pictures, you see the traces of the virus, the cancer treatments and the ultimate pregnancy.”

5 MARY MAGGIC

Egstrogen Farms, video, 1:09 mins, 2015

Mary Maggic is a non-binary Chinese-American artist currently based in Vienna, Austria. Their work spans amateur science, public workshopology, performance, installation, documentary film, and speculative fiction. Since 2015, Maggic’s research has centered on hormone biopolitics and environmental toxicity, and how the ethos and methodologies of biohacking can serve to demystify invisible lines of molecular (bio)power.

The artist explains their project *Egstrogen Farms*, which is presented in a form of a video commercial like this: “*Egstrogen Farms* is a fictional company that raises genetically modified chickens that produce ovulation hormones in their egg whites. The eggs are marketed towards women who are either trying to get pregnant, or work as egg donors for the fertility industry. The slogan reads, ‘One egg a day is the fertility way.’ The project highlights a connection between women and chickens as raw commodities for the biotech industry, performing ways in which women are targeted for bio-consumerism. What is the rhetoric and imagery used in birth management products? Moreover, as avian transgenic technologies become further developed, is it possible to imagine a confluence of the poultry industry with the pharmaceutical health industry? The project is inspired by subRosa’s *Cultures of Eugenics* document made in 2009. In the pamphlet, the cyberfeminist art collective compared women and chickens, the harvesting of their eggs as raw commodities for biotech research.”

Releasing Spell, 3D CGI animation, 10:46 mins, 2020

Commissioned by the Jindřich Chalupecký Society and supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic

Markéta Magidová is a Czech artist and director working in the field of media installations, digital painting and animated film. In her work, she explores the patterns and norms of collective behavior, thought and emotion. She reflects on social topics mainly through the lens of gender. The environment of her films and art installations is made up of personal and ideological narratives as well as cultural references.

Releasing Spell is a short 3D-animated sci-film depicting an imaginative ritual celebrating the transformation of the patriarchal world and its manifestations into a society based on feminist values. The central location of the film is an abstracted mountain range in the middle of a desert where, in a sort of timelessness, historical monuments to family relationships meet. Representatives of the society of the future, free of biologically predetermined reproductive options and the associated stereotypical roles, transform these statue groups along their journey. The materiality of the statues is altered and challenged, the figures are freed from their fixed forms, creating alternative situations and groupings. They release themselves from and abandon the seriousness upon which the civilization of their ancestors was built. The colorful festivity of the future transforms the universe of predetermined relationships into living matter, a collective organism. The society of empathy, care and closeness is the new utopia. Its structure, however, unwittingly creates a new narrative.

The film was created in collaboration with the curator Karina Kottová, the 3D animator and artist Sybil Montet and the musician and producer Ai Fen specifically for the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition.

7 ADAM RZEPECKI

Project of the Father Pole Memorial,
photography, 35x46 cm, 1981

My Family, digitized VHS video, 9:48 mins, 1990

Adam Rzepecki is one of the most important Polish artists of the 1980s and one of the first to tackle gender issues. His art is politically marked and, at the same time, full of bitter humor of the sad decade of the '80s in Poland.

He presents two works at the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition. One is a photograph entitled *Project of the Father Pole Memorial*, which was created as a response to the cult of the Mother Pole, spread by the propaganda of the former Communist regime. The breastfeeding father became an iconic work that inspired many contemporary artists, researchers and members of the public.

In the short film *My Family*, Rzepecki demonstrates his strategy of merging art and daily life, presenting several scenes from the life of his family. At the beginning, all of its members are sleeping in one bed, which serves as a bitter commentary on the miserable housing situation in Poland. Subsequent scenes follow from the life of the Rzepeckis' and are equally absurd in their character. Each of them is introduced by a title in a different language. At the end of the day, the members of the family get back into their bed. Images of family life serve here to prompt a more general reflection on the lives of Polish people at the time of political transition.

8 MAJA SMREKAR

K-9_Topology: Hybrid Family,
mixed media, stand 50x100x140 cm,
vitrine 120x50x20 cm, cushion 85x85 cm, 2017

Hybrid Family Album, photoalbum, 33x24 cm, 2022

The work of the Slovenian artist Maja Smrekar has established itself within the international art and science milieu. Her practice is based on deep collaborations

leading to the development of cross-conceptual productions that include performances, installations, site-specific art, videos, workshops, lectures, talks, and texts. She has been using her artistic voice to speak about ecofeminism, inter-species relationships, technology and ideological structures in society.

The project *Hybrid Family* is related to the theory of becoming-animal by rethinking the social and ideological instrumentalization of a woman's body and breastfeeding. Overcoming the classical distinction between private life and political existence, Smrekar felt the need to perform with her own body and the bodies of her dogs in order to re-gain their position of power by staging a public performance with the puppy Ada. The artist's own economy of emotions became a molecular process: during a three-month period of seclusion with her dogs, she stimulated her pituitary glands with systematic breast-pumping to release the hormone prolactin and followed a diet rich in galactogogues to promote lactation. A side effect of this was the increase in oxytocin hormone levels, which led to an increase in empathy and a personal resistance to the cynicism of the zeitgeist. By being pregnant with meaning, and thus becoming (m)Other, she was further drawn to explore her "decolonial reproductive freedom in a dangerously troubled multispecies world" (see Donna Haraway, 2016). The myth of humanity, which is based on its supposed uniqueness, has always excluded some of those that don't correspond to the ideal, such as animals with regard to parenthood and gender.

KRISTINA FINGERLAND

9

Oikos, site-specific wall-painting, 155x100 cm, 2022

The multi-layered project *Oikos*, which started off as Kristina Fingerland's master's thesis continues to develop and expand into various exhibition forms. The story of the living house and its inhabitants of myth whose life stories intersect with the real family history of the artist is manifested at the *Beyond Nuclear Family*:

Recipes for Happiness exhibition in the form of a wall painting of oikos, the house itself.

After a long winter, the Oikos house slowly awakens from its sleep. Timidly, the ground softens under the brunt of warm sunlight. Its dry cracks become filled with young springs that grow stronger. The walls of the house joyfully expose their faces to the sun.

The membrane walls seemingly fill with new breath. While hibernating, their breath was barely perceptible, they breathed simply out of obligation. Now they can finally go all out. They take in all the fresh things they perceive.

The roots of the house feel around the changes in the sediment and go on farther than they've dared to go before. This ensures the stability and balance of our household. The roots sustain all the goings on in the house, the membranes quietly pulse, and everything purrs with joy. Oikos is headed on a journey and its inhabitants come with it.

Those of us who live in Oikos regularly come together for a shared meal. This is the basis of our mutual understanding. Everybody is involved in its preparation, in one way or another, and the seating order at the grand old table is fixed.

The relationships between the different cells are varied. Before the great confusion of languages, everything was simpler and easier to understand. Even relationships were nicer and clearer. Now, we strive to re-discover harmony, something for which Alma has high expectations.

We are now in the 46th cycle of the Siam dynasty.

10 BINELDE HYRCAN

Cambeck, video, 2:36 mins, 2011

Binelde Hyrcan is an Angolan artist who combines themes of power, poverty, migration and inequality in his painting, sculpture, design, film and performance practice. He often

treats difficult topics with humor while simultaneously confronting the viewer with the disturbing reality of developing countries, especially Angola. In recent years, he has been actively speaking out about issues related to the refugee crisis and providing an important perspective on the path to a better life.

Titled *Cambeck*, the video shows four boys on an Angolan beach playing in a car made out of sand. Against the background of a seemingly ordinary game of chauffeur and limousine passengers, a number of essential themes which define the reality of these four children outside the safe world of imagination are captured over a relatively short amount of time. We learn about families separated by migration and the “good life” in the United States, which is, however, unattainable for them, about unemployment and education, poverty, the dream of living in a house that doesn’t have walls of corrugated metal, or about the luxury that comes with good transport infrastructure. The boys express their hopes and fears, which also reveal the unfulfilled ambitions of their parents, pointing to the transgenerational transmission of trauma (the video was filmed nine years after the end of the twenty-six-year-long civil war in Angola). It is also worth noting how the boys practice the internalised norms of masculinity, which is evident from the hierarchical relationship between the “driver” and his “passengers”. The “car” is highly symbolic in and of itself, as it is made up of a hole in the sand. Its absence points out to us the lack of multiple different kinds of capital that the children face. *Cambeck* is a bittersweet testament to the limitless territory that is a child’s imagination, and the obstacles created by adults that prove unavoidable – even at play.

ANASTASIA SOSUNOVA

11

Another Dinner Ruined,
mixed-media installation, 100x251 cm, 2021

Anastasia Sosunova is a Lithuanian artist, creating narrative works in diverse media, from video, through drawings and objects, often ending up with profound multi-layered

installations or entire habitats. She creates and recreates powerful mythologies, touching (or mocking) upon the somewhat twisted realities of social media, gated communities or traditional rituals and folk art history.

In the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition, she presents her installation entitled *Another Dinner Ruined*. The table presents a symbolic center of the household, a potential sphere for both sharing, enjoyment, and discussion or dissonance. In this work, the artist refers to the Eastern European myth of Samobranka and stages a magical tablecloth which, according to tales, provides an abundance of food out of thin air, but which might also offer spoiled or oversalted meals if it is mistreated. Employing this symbol as a metaphor of invisible domestic labor, Sosunova sets the tablecloth with a series of Karavai bread sculptures which magically materialize on the table. Traditionally symbolizing the act of acceptance to the community and a heteronormative family, the Karavai bread here reveal a rather toxic metallic core with monstrous etchings. The table assumes a collective audience, but who is actually welcomed to join the buffet rests unclear.

12 JONNE SIPPOLA

Tarja, Berndt and I,
installation of 37 photographs, 10x14 cm, 2022

Jonne Sippola is a photographer working in Finland. As part of *Beyond Nuclear Family*, they present a highly personal project dedicated to their relationship with their parents, which had been through many rocky times since their adolescence. As a result of Jonne realising their sexuality and non-binariness, them and their family had to talk about the depth and nature of their relationships – topics that had not been discussed in their household up until then.

Tarja, Berndt and I tells a story about a relationship between parents and their child.

For several years, I didn't have any support from my

parents after I came out as gay. As a teenager, their lack of acceptance made me feel anxious, lonely and distant from them. We barely had any connection to each other during the worst times.

It has been a long road for us trying to get to know, understand and accept each other. As the years have been passing by, we have learned to narrow the gap between us.

Some years ago, I came out to my parents as trans. I asked my mother what she thought about it. She said “This is not about my opinions. It is about your choices and happiness in your life. And I am supporting you.”

The pictures of Tarja, Berndt and I were taken during the years 2006-2022 by me and my mother.

KAROLINA BALCER

13

Family Treasure, tufting, yarn mix, 110x100 cm, 2021

Psycho Pillow (from *Stigma* series),

knitted object, yarn mix, 42x42 cm, 2022

Karolina Balcer works with painting, video, installations in public space, and more recently tufting (carpet technique) and textile. Many of her projects begin with observations of people and social issues, including within her own family.

In the exhibition *Beyond Nuclear Family*, we present objects (a carpet/tapestry and a knitted jumper) that are part of a broader project called *Happy Family* which the artist has been developing since 2020 in collaboration with her family members, social workers and psychotherapists. The starting point for the project was the saying ‘sweeping problems under the rug’ – a process that is harmful and only multiplies problems. By this, the artist metaphorically refers to mental health issues – in her own family, but also in a broader society – and to the connection between mental health and homelessness. The impetus to create the project was the situation that the artist’s older brother Filip repeatedly found himself in. Although nothing was lacking in the family home, he periodically ended up homeless. In a broader sense, the works by Karolina Balcer refer to the

difficult aspects of family bonds, family secrets and hidden traumas that are not necessarily caused by a lack of mutual love, but can stem from communication issues and misunderstandings, from genetic heredity and predispositions or unconscious repetition of behavioral schemes and patterns.

14 SOPHIE UTIKAL

Sterile Soil, Poison Sky,
textile, embroidery, 160x210 cm, 2020

Sophie Utikal is a textile artist, living and working in Berlin, Germany. She was born in Tallahassee and grew up in Mainz, Germany. Utikal dedicates her textile works to experiences such as pain, transgenerational trauma, and the alienation from one's own body with regard to white normativity. At the same time, her embroidered textile images also offer poetic answers for the possibilities of healing, security, other forms of knowledge and empowerment through participation in community and through connecting with other people (especially women) as well as non-human beings.

As the artist describes: "In my work we often see groups of women who have walked to the ends of the world together. There they are now building a new life for themselves with their environment. They all know that they have already left one (or many) behind. Even if one of the women lives alone on a piece of fabric, they all belong together. Whether I actually mean different people by that, or different species or maybe even myself in the diversity and inconsistency of my character, is actually not that important. It's about the encounter with - in each other, to oneself and our surroundings - it's about encounters quite fundamentally, together" (Source: <https://sofiutikal.net/about/>). Her piece *Sterile Soil, Poison Sky* shows exactly this - a circle of women, a community of brown bodies (all resembling the artist herself) in a landscape without any vegetation. They seem like some sort of grassroots deliberative body, contemplating on how to act against the exploitation of human and natural bodies and their reproductive abilities.

Puppy Play, video, 4:56 mins, 2020

Signa Johannessen is a Norwegian artist based in Gnesta, Sweden, where she founded Art Lab Gnesta. In her work, Johannessen speculates on hybrid bodies, historical paraphrases and the potential of the posthumous. Playfully combining episodes from her own biography and historical archives, her work continuously renegotiates the traumas and pleasures of intimate relationships between women, children and other animals while expanding the notion of family and kin.

In the video work *Puppy Play*, interpersonal and interspecies relationships are tested in a forest clearing. In the film's initial sequence, we encounter a group of children in the woods, dressed in furs. The piece elicits a sense of ambivalence and toggles between sweet romance and a scene of terror, as if it were following on the heels of a catastrophe where the children have been forced to fend for themselves. *Puppy Play* prompts questions concerning belonging, disaster, and trust with regard to biology and propagation. The voyeur's potentially threatening gaze is addressed in relation to the power imbalance between children and adults, as well as between humans and animals. The work springs from the artist's interest in the limitations of biology and belonging. It is also a work developed from two deeply personal experiences that coincided in time. Under dramatic circumstances, the artist became mother to an infant whom she didn't give birth to. Her body responded immediately by initiating lactation. At around the same time, her dog gave birth to stillborn puppies. In these challenging circumstances, the definition of family and belonging was radically expanded for both the artist and her dog. (source: <https://signejohannessen.se/>)

16 ZOË CLAIRE MILLER

Reproductive Justice (in Lavender),

glazed stoneware, sterling silver, 23×40×13 cm, 2020

A Whisper Network, glazed stoneware, 22×40×15 cm, 2020

Zoë Claire Miller is an American-born sculptor and activist living in Germany who deals with the relationships between animals, humans and plants as living beings that have the ability and right to act freely and make their own decisions. Her work is closely tied to feminist theories and body politics, with women's identity and embodiment serving as central themes.

Zoë Claire Miller's major work is *Reproductive Justice (in Lavender)*, which depicts the reproductive organs of the uterus and fallopian tubes. However, the fallopian tubes do not lead to the ovaries, but to the bowls of a scales, and the system of organs thus takes on the form of a scales – a symbol of (legal) justice. *A Whisper Network* depicts a group of hybrid figures with pointy breasts whispering to each other. The name refers to the informal, private transmission of information, which in this case is has to do primarily with the way of communication in women's circles. The author thereby points to the sharing of experiences related to sexual harassment and violence, as well as to mutual protection outside the biological or nuclear family. In the context of the exhibition, this work relates to solidarity (feminist) structures and the concept of chosen family.

17 ANNETTE HOLLYWOOD

[ANDERKAWER],

video installation, work in progress since 2020

annette hollywood is a Berlin-based artist and filmmaker. In her work, she critically and humorously examines social and political issues of our times, such as constructions of power and gender or the distribution of resources and attention. Employing her performative appropriation strategy 'Performing Found Footage', through which

she interact with pop and mass-cultural phenomena, her works represent deconstructions of mass media formats and offer new perspectives.

The project *[ANDERKAWER]* shines light on the situation of non-heteronormative families through the prism of biographies and social-historical events of the past hundred years, bringing changing ideologies of family and motherhood into focus. The search for traces of these families who often, as result of discrimination and fears of punishment, lived covertly, leads into queer and historical archives and is being filmically enacted. Annette Hollywood presents her cases as time-travelling private detective, starting out with the first wave of homosexuals becoming visible in 1920s Berlin. Not an easy investigation as lesbian mothers stayed well hidden until the 1980s for fears of losing custody after divorce. Archival documents and found footage tell a story of gradually increasing discussion, social acceptance and legal change towards more visibility of queer families. The vulnerability and social discourse come into focus, producing knowledge about the history of queer families, in particular lesbian mothers, in Germany. The author presents three chapters of her long-term research project *[ANDERKAWER]*, each focusing on one decade of the last century, from the 1920s to the 1940s.

MARTINA DROZD SMUTNÁ

18

Daddies Don't Cry, pastel on paper, 67,5x50 cm, 2022
Commissioned by the Jindřich Chalupecký Society

Martina Drozd Smutná's paintings reveal her holistic attitude towards the questions of gender, class, social inequalities, power structures and the related landscape of relationships and emotions. Her artworks are informed by deep research (especially on the historical construction of so-called female painting) and analysis of the working and social conditions of Martina's own role as a contemporary artist.

For *Beyond Nuclear Family* Martina Drozd Smutná created a series of paintings and drawings with the common denominator of family bonds as mirrors of social and

cultural norms as well as fragile layers of family symbiosis and mutuality. A family based on equal relations and emotional satisfaction seems to be more utopian in today's society than bizarre sci-fi scenarios. Several larger-scale paintings will be presented at the New York iteration of the exhibition. At Display, this series is represented by a powerful drawing, where a stereotypical depiction of a mother figure, tired and exhausted, doing her best and yet failing over and over and over again, is replaced by a male character. The reversal of roles also shakes up the ways that parents of different genders are commonly depicted in the media as well as in art, thus also questioning the reproduction of patriarchal order through imagery.

19 **MARIANNE VLASCHITS**

Threesome, acrylic on canvas, 100x120 cm, 2018

The work of Marianne Vlaschits is often inspired by astronomy and it deals with extra-terrestrial life and outer space. Her works are also reflections on gender, utopia, human existence, and the future. Her painting *Threesome* presented in the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition belongs to the series *A New Home* which speculates about multiple sexualities, future worlds and parallel universes ruled by powerful femininity. Vlaschits strongly references classical feminist sci-fi literature – in *Threesome*, the reference is to Octavia Butler's trilogy *Lilith's Brood* (1987-89). In her sci-fi novel, Butler develops an alternative concept to binary reproduction mechanisms in a post-apocalyptic age in which human relationships have expanded to include liaisons with migrating Oankali aliens and reproduction has become a question of genetic exchange. In the first part of the trilogy, *Dawn*, we can follow the main character Lilith as she becomes comfortable with the alien method of reproduction: "She jumped when Nikanj touched her with the tip of a sensory arm. She stared at it for a moment longer wondering how she had lost her horror of such a being. Then she lay down, perversely eager for what it could give her. She positioned herself against it, and was

not content until she felt the deceptively light touch of the sensory hand and felt the ooloi body tremble against her.” As curator Nada Schroer wrote: “In taking up this story’s motifs [Vlaschits’ work] becomes a strategic site for the representation of love, sex and forms of life outside patriarchal, heteronormative worlds of imagination.” (source: http://www.mariannevlaschits.com/items/uploads/fileman/A%20New%20Home_English.pdf)

ROBERT GABRIS

20

Memory 1, drawing, pencils on cardboard, 100x70 cm, 2012

Memory 3, drawing, pencils on cardboard, 100x70 cm, 2012

Robert Gabris: *Alternative Methods of Education*,
Vienna, 2013

“These drawings are a record of my childhood. They are proof that I was also a child, because, in the orphanage, no photographs were made for and by us. The orphanage was an institution without love, it embodied a loveless space full of violence, where it was not allowed to experience affection and tenderness. Instead of care, punishment was practiced for harmless acts. Thus, we learned to apologize to adults for things without understanding why they were wrong. This institution taught us that Roma children did not need to be loved – we did not deserve it. Our caregivers represented the violent white dominant majority society. They made us feel that we did not have the right to be loved. I was looking for affection, longing for an unknown feeling that I was not allowed to experience. We grew up in fear and insecurity because it seemed that we had no hopeful future ahead of us. It became both proof and a warning that we will never make it out there. This was also how I viewed my own future – there were no other models for me. Drawing saved my childhood. It was my escape and, later, my obsession. Creating a safe space with a future was the hardest challenge for many of the children.

Orphanages are prisons for innocent children. Many misunderstand this institution and claim that it saved us

from our parents. I vehemently argue against this misinterpretation and draw my real experience of a “supposedly functioning lifeboat” full of harassment, violence, grief and pain that we never would have experienced from our parents. Orphanages are white spaces that try to re-educate us because they believe themselves to be more competent than people in Roma settlements. Instead of helping these people to get out of absolute poverty, they take their children and steal our biographies. They do not educate us – they merely tolerate us. Our existence in this house has an expiration date, after which we are erased from the system, removed and forgotten. We form our own families, and we try to do better, we learn to recognize and practice love.

It was suggested to us that the orphanage is a big family offering better chances for a future. Slovakia offers no statistics that prove this view, but you can easily see how much these systems fail. Nobody is interested in verifying the truth, because that would mean showing that the “rescue concept” is completely dysfunctional. *Beyond Nuclear Family* embodies in us the traumatic memory of Slovakia, its racist systems and institutional violence against those who cannot defend themselves.”

21 **EVA KOŤÁTKOVÁ**

Daydreaming workstation,
interactive installation, audio, textile, dimensions vary, 2022
Commissioned by the Jindřich Chalupecký Society

In her work, Eva Koťátková explores the forms of power, manipulation, discrimination and control exercised by institutions upon those who, for various reasons, deviate from the norm (or what is perceived as such). Through various media, she then pursues other models of functioning, communication and sharing that would allow individuals and groups to function in more liberated, equal and empathetic ways. She works with marginalized stories and emotions, often inviting children to participate.

As part of the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition, the artist reflects on the influences that affect interpersonal

relationships, whether within families or institutions, with an emphasis on the child's perspective. She points out the frequent misunderstandings as a result of, among other things, social mechanisms and unwritten rules as well as the forcing of certain roles. She made the installation out of a series of objects made from pillows and duvets, into which the visitors can climb and listen to recordings of dreams. They are also provided with instructions for daydreaming, which for the artist is an important tool for emancipation. The dreams that Eva Kot'átková has collected from the personal narratives of children and adults take many forms, sometimes humorous, sometimes very distressing and full of frustration, but their common feature is the personal conflict of external and internal impulses. The *Daydreaming Workstation* is a space for imagination as a radical force that brings us back to ourselves.

CHIARA NO

22

(No comfort in silence), 00:00:11

(Birth Rites), 00:00:15

(Centaurides), 00:00:05

(Not Pregnant), 00:00:04

(My clock never tock), 00:00:10

(No Body is a Crime), 00:00:13

(36 years), 00:00:05

(Solidarity), 00:00:05

2016–2022

Chiara No is an American artist, currently living in Johnson, Vermont. She works in various media, targeting topics such as confrontational humanism, sex positivity, kink, Herstories, feminizing language and literature, ecofeminism, Goddess Powers, re-contextualizing heroines in Greek Mythology and history, folklore, witchlore, anti-capitalism, anti-patriarchy, anti-racism, pro-Others, demonology, abjection, feminist horror theory, nihilism or Heavy Metal. On this exhibition she presents a thematic selection of short videos addressing women's choice not to have a child, created for and previously shared on social media platforms.

23 MARIE LUKÁČOVÁ

Chosen, video, 25 mins, 2020-22

Commissioned by the Jindřich Chalupecký Society

Marie Lukáčová studied panting, although she focuses primarily on the medium of video, combining elements of music video, live-action film and different styles of animation. Her work has long been permeated with the issue of emancipation and challenging gender stereotypes.

The video *Chosen* was made directly under the *Beyond Nuclear Family* project in collaboration with the curator Tereza Jindrová. In the dream-like collage using a mixture of vehicles of expression, we encounter the main character, the non-binary person Ariel and their chosen family, including their beloved snake El Koko, which represents family ties that extend beyond the human species. When we encounter them, Ariel's family is meeting at a shared table, with the artist taking us into the protagonist's past and future. The film aims to celebrate chosen families which often play a crucial role in queer communities while also being an almost fairy-tale-like expression of the fluid nature of (not just) gender identity.

24 NINA PASZKOWSKI

Kribbelkrabbel, acrylic on linen, 35x27 cm, 2018

Sacrum, ceramic, 25x20x15 cm, 2020

Herzschwall, ceramic, 15x17x13 cm, 2020

Latawica, ceramic, 20x14x18 cm, 2020

Nina Paszkowski was born in Switzerland, and currently lives and works in Cologne. Many of her paintings, drawings or ceramic objects are exploring alternative forms of relating and bonding, queer desire, interspecies solidarity and alignment with natural entities such as waters or forests.

At the Display gallery, she presents an installation which includes a painting entitled *Kribbelkrabbel*, which explores the topic of interspecies motherhood while using

the beetle in the pregnant woman's body as a metaphorical element. Three ceramics are shown together with the painting in an altar-like atmosphere, alluding to cyclical procreation, or perhaps rather co-creation, being and becoming that happens beyond the nuclear family ties.

JIŘÍ SKÁLA

25

In Process, Without Prospects, audio installation, black and white photograph, inkjet print on paper, wooden frame, 90x 60cm, Ed. of 1/3, Inv. Nr. JSk135, 2020
Commissioned by the Jindřich Chalupecký Society

Jiří Skála uses various media, but does so in a very economical way, often working with text or the gallery space itself. His works demand the full attention of the viewer, but at the same time they are characterized by their willingness to communicate. They use various sign systems and literary methods through which the author discusses personal relationships and analyzes societal ties.

For the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition, artist Jiří Skála wrote the short story *In Process, Without Prospects* dealing with a family the background of which causes issues especially for the father trying to provide for his children. Determination by one's social background, lack of cultural capital and the value-centric system of raising children in a capitalist society are topics which weigh on the minds of people even outside of the presented fictional family. The main figure of the story – the father – decides after an outburst of rage that he is going to get his children easy access to the capital so important in society.

26 SOPHIA SÜBMILCH

Everything will be beautiful and nothing is broken, photography on textile, lightbox, 200x200 cm 2020
Warum wollen Sie keine Kinder / Why don't you want children (Claudia und Henriette), photography on textile, lightbox, 200x200 cm, 2020
Sophia Süßmilch with Lukas Runge: *Warten auf die Rentnerschwemme / Waiting for the glut of pensioners*, photography on textile, lightbox, 200x200 cm, 2021

Sophia Süßmilch was born a German citizen in the last millennium and will die in this one. Süßmilch works in several media; she paints in oil as a means of calming herself and enjoys being nude in her photography and her video works. Her artworks generally oscillate between ironic distance and aggressive proximity, which matches her personality. Süßmilch understands the body as a toy and as a place of childishness. Her works are always quirky and witty, creating matriarchal worlds in which the male gaze no longer seems to play a role. In her photographs – such as the ones selected for the *Beyond Nuclear Family* project – Süßmilch often stages herself with her mother.

27 VOJTĚCH RADAKULAN

Visitors, PC game, 3D model of the Ďáblice housing estate with an audio track based on interviews from the publication *Sídliště Ďáblice: Architecture for People* (Society of Friends of the Ďáblice Housing Estate, Prague, 2019, ISBN 978-80-270-3525-0), 2020 – 2022
Commissioned by the Jindřich Chalupecký Society

For the *Beyond Nuclear Family* project, visual artist and architect Vojtěch Radakulan teamed up with curator Veronika Čechová to create a new work showing the ways of life in different geographical and cultural environments. Using examples of specific housing types from different parts of the world, it addresses the influence of the architectural design of a house – in the broad sense of the word

as a family living space – on the formation and dynamics of the relationships between the people living in this space and the quality of (family) life.

Based on photo and video documentation and authentic interviews with people living in homes from different corners of the world, the interactive application links personal narration with a virtual tour of the depicted places. Thanks to this simulation, together with a sculpture in the form of an architectural model with an accompanying audio piece and drawings, the viewers will learn about family life in a yurt in Mongolia, a standardized high-rise building at a socialist housing estate in Prague, or get to know some of the ancient urban utopias as well as the ideas distilled from the iconic publication *Delirious New York – A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* by Rem Koolhaas

JANEK ROUS, KAROLÍNA KRIPNEROVÁ AND VOJTĚCH SIGMUND (ARTYČOK.TV AND ARCHITECTS WITHOUT BORDERS)

28

Architecture of coexistence (exhibition cut), 2022

Subject and Conception: Karolína Kripnerová, Janek Rous, Vojtěch Sigmund

Director: Janek Rous

Camera, Sound, Edit: Janek Rous

Music: Federsel

Animations: Alexey Klyuykov

Architecture of coexistence introduces different possibilities of solving social problems. The starting point for this documentary series was the demythisation of terms such as social housing, socially excluded localities, excluded and disadvantaged.

The series focuses on Central European examples of the so-called good practices, where local communities try to create, usually without help, a functional social and material background for a decent and dignified life. The key to the selected localities was the important role of architects and artists, who actively participate in these projects and belong to the principal initiators of changes. The series aims to bring a new perspective on social sustainability in cities.

ALANIS OBOMSAWIN

Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Métis Child, video, 29 mins, 1986

Alanis Obomsawin is an Abenaki American Canadian filmmaker, singer, artist, and activist primarily known for her documentary films. She has written and directed many documentaries on First Nations issues. Obomsawin is a member of Film Fatales independent women filmmakers, and her films often focus on women and children.

Her documentary film *Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Métis Child* (1986) tells the story of the suicide of Métis youth Richard Stanley Cardinal, who had been placed in 28 different homes over the 14 years he spent in Alberta's child welfare system, and who killed himself in 1984 at the age of 17. Obomsawin offers Cardinal's life story as an expression of the plight of thousands of native children are wards of the provinces.

„The removal of children from indigenous homes has been a part of Canadian life since its early days as a European colony. By the late 19th Century, it had become government policy. Beginning in the 1880 s, some 150,000 First Nations, Métis, or Inuit children were taken away from their families to be placed in residential schools. The last of these institutions closed in 1996. [...] As the residential school system was wound down in the middle of the 20th century, new child welfare policies were enacted that allowed government officials to take thousands of indigenous children into care, with little or no warning to their families. Although it was curtailed with new regulations, and a greater emphasis on indigenous-led child welfare agencies, the disproportionate flow of indigenous children into the foster care system has continued. [...] After decades and decades of families being torn apart by systems of residential schooling and later foster care, it is so important that we provide circumstances in which families can stay together, and learn about indigenous

culture and language,' says Jeffrey Schiffer, the executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.“ (source: Why Canada is reforming indigenous foster care, BBC News, 11 July 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57646170>)

LIZZA MAY DAVID AND CLAUDIA LIEBELT

Cycles Of Care, video, 51:06 mins, 2021

The documentary *Cycles of Care* traces five women who have returned to Manila after having migrated Israel, where they took care of children and the elderly in private homes. As caregivers, they were part of the large exodus of Filipinas, who leave their country to gain access to strong currencies and search for 'greener pastures' within a highly gendered global economy. Back in Manila, they struggle to make a living and reintegrate into the families they left behind many years ago. Against the background of the humdrum of their everyday lives in the capital, they reflect on the outcomes of their journeys and remember their lives in Israel. Speaking Hebrew and indulging in memories of pilgrimages to holy sites, Kibbutz life and employers in the midst of homes that bear testament to their vast journeys, these women speak of a crossing of boundaries that goes beyond the geographical sense. Taking care of their elderly mothers and the children of their daughters, who have now replaced them as breadwinners of the extended family, they are part of an ongoing cycle of care. (source: <http://www.lizzamaydavid.com/index.php/project/collaborations/>)

MINH THANG PHAM

Bố ơi / My Dad and Me, video, 5:50 mins, 2019

Minh Thang Pham, born in Hai Phong, has been living in the Czech Republic since he was two years old. He focuses on the issue of uprootedness and loss of one's original ethnic identity, which he feels most keenly in family relationships.

He deals with the topic of interpersonal relationships and cultural clashes most often through the media of video and performance, often involving the members of his family.

At the *Beyond Nuclear Family* exhibition, Minh Thang Pham presents the video *Bố ơi / My Dad and Me*, in which the author invites his father for a joint performance. During the ritual in which the father and son cut each other's hair and nails in order to symbolically become again a "single body" in the middle of the table, they talk about the importance of language in their relationship. Because Thang's Vietnamese is flawed and his father's Czech is limited, the two have essentially no shared native language. The short discussion nevertheless shows that love, understanding, closeness and belonging exist in family relationships regardless of language and that their essence – tình cảm – is something entirely different.

AGNĖ JOKŠĖ

Dear Friend,

single-channel HD video, color, sound, 24:17 mins, 2019

Cinematography: Odeta Riškutė

Sound (ADR): Kata Bitowt

Co-produced with curators Monika Kalinauskaitė, Adomas Narkevičius and Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius

Agnė Jokšė grew up in Vilnius, Lithuania and currently lives and works between Copenhagen and Vilnius. Her main practice lies in writing, which she develops through non-linear, poetic films and videos. Several of her works address the topics of family relations, friendship and kinship, questioning the related gender-based and social stereotypes. Although her works are to a large extent text-based, she is interested in the unsaid, untellable, felt and experienced.

Dear Friend is a video work performed by the artist and based on a letter-form text written in contemplation of friendship as platonic love between queer women. The work openly speaks about various forms of love, affection and care as well as the fragility of relationships and how it can be determined by physical distance and the passage

of time. In a highly sensitive, yet engaged and charged manner, the video addresses not only the intimacy of a (potential) relationship of the writer and the recipient of the letter, but also touches upon the themes of co-living, displacement, coming-of-age, hidden hierarchies of the LGBTQIA+ communities, closeness and the difference between friendship and kinship.

Texts: JCHS curatorial collective
(Barbora Ciprová, Veronika Čechová,
Tereza Jindrová, Karina Kottová)
Translation: Jamie Rose
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Beyond Nuclear Family: Recipes for Happiness
13/10–27/11/2022
Display, Dittrichova 9, Praha 2

Exhibiting artists: Karolina Balcer, Lizza May David and Claudia Liebel, Kristina Fingerland, Robert Gabris, annette hollywood, Binelde Hyrcan, Charlotte Jarvis in collaboration with Lucy Kirkwood, Signe Johannessen, Agnė Jokšė, Eva Kořátková, Marie Lukáčová, Mary Maggic, Markéta Magidová, MATERNAL FANTASIES, Zoė Claire Miller, Mothers Artlovers, Chiara No, Alanis Obomsawin, Nina Paszkowski, Minh Thang Pham, Anni Puolakka and Ellie Hunter, Vojtěch Radakulan, Janek Rous, Karolína Kripnerová and Vojtěch Sigmund (Artyčok.TV and Architects without Borders), Adam Rzepecki, Jonne Sippola, Jirka Skála, Maja Smrekar, Martina Drozd Smutná
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Visual identity: Terezie Štindlová & Oriol Cabarrocas

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