

Agnė Jokšė (b. 1993, Vilnius, LT) lives and works between Vilnius and Copenhagen, where she recently concluded her MA degree at the Royal Danish Academy of Visual Arts. She has shown work at the Artists' Film International, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2021); Swallow, Vilnius (2021); Baltic Triennial 14 (2021); Mimosa House, London (2020); Publics, Helsinki (2020); NAC, Nida (2020), and Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (2020). Jokšė's work 'Dear Friend,' was awarded the JCDecaux Emerging Artist Award in 2019.

Anastasia Sosunova (b. 1993, Ignalina, LT) graduated from the Vilnius Academy of Arts with BA in Graphic Arts and MA in Sculpture. Notable solo and two-person exhibitions have been presented at SixtyEight Art Institute, Copenhagen (2022), Britta Rettberg, Munich; Screens Series programme, New Museum, New York; Swallow, Vilnius (2021); Kogo, Tartu (2019) and Editorial, Vilnius (2018). She has exhibited work at the National Gallery of Art, Vilnius and Kunsthalle Osnabrück (2022), Prospectif Cinéma programme at Centre Pompidou, Paris; FUTURA Contemporary Art Centre, Prague; the 14th Baltic Triennial, Vilnius (2021). Sosunova won the JCDecaux Award in 2018.

Acknowledgements

Agne Jokšė: Thanks to beloved grandparents and uncle Arvydas, Alen Chicco and LNK television for permission to use captured material, Alexandra Bondarev, music cover by Alen Chicco, original: Minelli - Rampampam.

Anastasia Sosunova: Thanks to production assistant Jūratė Narmontaitė, Eastcontemporary, Einimas Juravičius, Elizaveta Shneyderman, Vaida Stepanovaitė

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Dance As You Wrestle

Agnė Jokšė, Anastasia Sosunova

7th December–26th February 2022

Open 12–6pm Thursday–Sunday

Dance As You Wrestle is the first major presentation of works by Agnė Jokšė and Anastasia Sosunova in the UK. The exhibition title chosen jointly by the artists is taken from *The End of Man: A Feminist Counter-Apocalypse* (2018), by the Polish-British writer Joanna Zylińska. In the exhibition, dancing while wrestling acts as a slippery counter-weight to the 'apocalypses' of the present day. From manga to the Orthodox church and Lithuanian reality TV, the apocalypse pervades pop culture, theory and social attitudes, appearing in a dual form: as fact and as a mood, a state of mind.

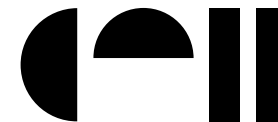
Newly-commissioned site-specific installations, etchings and sculptures by Anastasia Sosunova incorporate copper and polluted water. The former is symbolically 'charged' through electrical impulse, and the latter via contamination. Retracing the inner logic of relics, the artist highlights the Eastern Orthodox church's entanglement with Russian-speaking minority politics in Lithuania and across the Baltics ('this war's against gay parades' proclaimed its patriarch in March 2022). In parallel, Agnė Jokšė's new and modified moving image works feature footage of the artist and her family members, Lithuanian diaspora settled in the UK. Through a queer perspective, they consider intergenerational

emotional bonds constituted in parallel to socio-political changes after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Greeting the visitors in the ground floor space, Jokšė's video installation *Dear Friend* (2019), her film debut, is a cinematic staging of a letter-form text for an estranged friend. Shot in Vilnius' Contemporary Art Centre, an institution criticised in the past for shying away from taking a political stance in a homogenous, normative social context, the work contemplates friendship between queer women as platonic love. The camera tracks Jokšė's movement and voice across the vast, vacant space awaiting an exhibition. As the artist recites her heartfelt letter, the act of writing echoes into the physical spaces it temporarily inhabits – the exhibition hall, the art institution, Vilnius, and eventually this small exhibition room in London.

On 19th January 2023, midway through this exhibition, the Orthodox believers will celebrate Epiphany. On that day one is to jump into icy rivers and lakes, take cold showers, and replenish any containers at hand, such as Sprite bottles. All water is recast as sacred, even if, physically, it remains as clean or dirty as it was before.

This custom is a point of departure for



Anastasia Sosunova's sprawling site-specific installation *Express Method*. Extending outside the gallery onto the roof of the next building, it comprises a half-empty water tank, plastic bottles, acrylic baths and polluted river Lea water. Interested in the capacity of religious or otherwise enigmatic beliefs to shape behaviours of individuals and communities, Sosunova describes *Express Method* as well as newly-commissioned copper works as 'coping' or 'impossible' assemblages. They amalgamate techniques, materials, iconographies and, in turn, social norms that should not belong together – kawaii stickers, precious friends' gifts and damning letters to the artist written by her mother, now fossilised in resin.

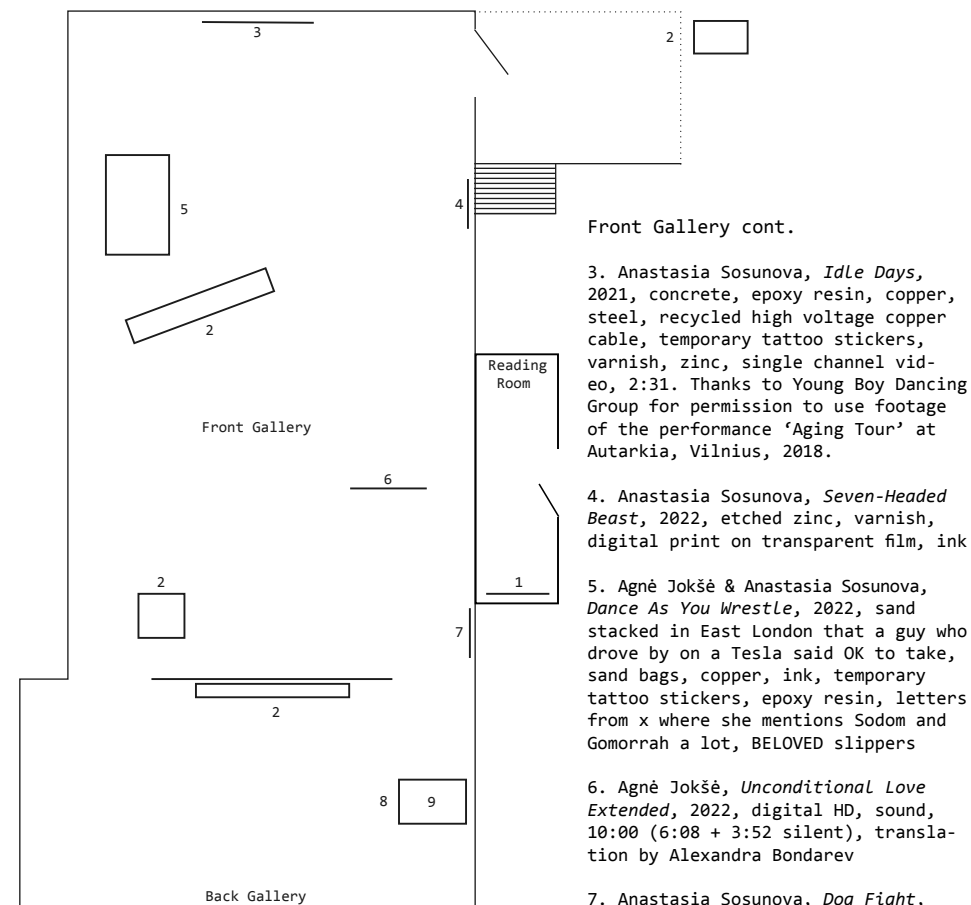
For the artist, raised in a devout Eastern Orthodox family, works including assemblages *The Visitation* and *Dance As You Wrestle* are arenas for conflicting belief systems and feelings to co-exist as they are taken out of the unconscious and reconfigured. Appropriating the performative 'charge' of symbolic transformation they may lose their repressive agency, and gain another, to act as 'counter-relics'. On 19th January 2023, the pools in *Express Method* will likewise alter, following the ritual it wrestles. Here, through contact, water may contaminate bodies, and bodies might clear the muddy, venerated water.

Agnė Jokšė's new video installation *Unconditional Love Extended* (2022), cuts across multiple cultural, temporal and geographical distinctions. Jokšė's grandparents visit her uncle, and their son, in need of urgent care. The artist comes along to help them negotiate the bustling city as well as the inevitable language barrier. In the evening grandparents sit

down to rest and watch Lithuanian TV. As the country's trailblazing drag queen Alen Chicco performs, the viewers, enthralled and confused in equal measure, begin to pose each other earnest questions as they appraise the act. Minimal in form, the artwork captures a web of 'minor' events that mark fissures in belonging, feelings of endearment and changes in relationships before they fade out of memory. Filmed in Romford, London, over Spring and Autumn of 2022, the work is a continuation of *Unconditional Love* (2021), Jokšė's feature-length film on love, care and compassion between generations across emotional and physical distance.

Dance As You Wrestle brings the artists into the close-knit format of a two-person exhibition for the first time. Through moving images, text and sculpture, Jokšė's and Sosunova's art practices share a deep affinity in imagining queer 'Eastern' European identifications and imagery to come. Often through a personal lens, the artists explore stories of the past which have led to a fraught and undecided present.

Curator Adomas Narkevičius



Reading Room (Downstairs)

1. Agnė Jokšė, *Dear Friend*, 2019, digital HD, sound, 24:17, new translation by Alexandra Bondarev, 2022

Front Gallery

2. Anastasia Sosunova, *Express Method*, 2022, contaminated River Lea water to become holy on the night between January 18th and 19th, water tank, zinc, wood, scrap yard wires and plastic tubes, cardboard packaging, PETG plastic, epoxy resin, recycled Sprite bottles, aluminium cans, copper, steel, temporary tattoo stickers, digital print

Front Gallery cont.

3. Anastasia Sosunova, *Idle Days*, 2021, concrete, epoxy resin, copper, steel, recycled high voltage copper cable, temporary tattoo stickers, varnish, zinc, single channel video, 2:31. Thanks to Young Boy Dancing Group for permission to use footage of the performance 'Aging Tour' at Autarkia, Vilnius, 2018.

4. Anastasia Sosunova, *Seven-Headed Beast*, 2022, etched zinc, varnish, digital print on transparent film, ink

5. Agnė Jokšė & Anastasia Sosunova, *Dance As You Wrestle*, 2022, sand stacked in East London that a guy who drove by on a Tesla said OK to take, sand bags, copper, ink, temporary tattoo stickers, epoxy resin, letters from x where she mentions Sodom and Gomorrah a lot, BELOVED slippers

6. Agnė Jokšė, *Unconditional Love Extended*, 2022, digital HD, sound, 10:00 (6:08 + 3:52 silent), translation by Alexandra Bondarev

7. Anastasia Sosunova, *Dog Fight*, 2022, recycled AC filter, polyurethane foam, plywood, steel

Back Gallery

8. Anastasia Sosunova, *The Visitation*, 2022, Copper, varnish, ink, cable, temporary tattoo stickers, burnt styrene disposed after the fire in a warehouse, steel, epoxy resin, small concrete piece from a barricade next to the parliament in Vilnius which has a writing 'heart of Lithuania' on it, a hose from the national museum air conditioning system (a worker who gave it to me called it 'lungs of the institution')

9. Anastasia Sosunova, *Messed Up Terrains*, 2019, single channel video, sound, 7:18