

# UBERMORGEN — Domneva krivde [Presumption of Guilt]

Opening, April 27, 2023, 7 pm

Exhibition, April 28 – June 2, 2023

“Does the best of subversions not consist in disfiguring codes, not in destroying them?”\* With his question, Roland Barthes pointed to a loophole for undermining existing ordering systems at the beginning of the 1970s, which has lost none of its relevance today. As individuals, we cannot help but become active in the midst of a system, a network, in order to remain capable of action and resist if necessary. That there has never been an outside, something like a neutral ground, becomes all the more clear in times of global entanglements of politics, economy, and media. Appearances are deceptive—always. The artistic oeuvre of UBERMORGEN demonstrates this contradiction at the intersection of art, performance, media activism, exhibition space, and digital environments. “our work is curiosity driven research,” reads the manifesto by artist duo Luzius Bernhard and lizvix, active since 1995: “sampling is our basic principle of production. it is visual. it is textual. we code recombinations. we modify your plain-text. ... We analyze system configurations and we then recombine our findings, the facts and the fiction into false originals, original stories. we contextualize technology with pseudo-politics, social messages with commerce.”\*\*

The tactics of UBERMORGEN can be characterized as both productive subversion and subversive production: decentralized in networks, their artworks are often ephemeral by nature, condensing in the duo’s exhibition projects as pixels printed on canvas or settings with crowded layouts reminiscent of early Internet-based graphics. As installations, the image and object worlds staged by UBERMORGEN maneuver between the documentary and the fictional, across the gamut of the real and the mediated, through the fields of politics and art. Not only have the duo nimbly infiltrated everyday mass-media life and media coverage; they catapult traditional means of expression such as painting, photography, installation, and performance into the digital age, transforming them into an independent aesthetic pursuit. Their game plan unflinchingly oscillates between scripting stories of alternative worlds and the performative documentation of hard facts in society.

With *Domneva krivde* [Presumption of Guilt], UBERMORGEN present a new series of works at Kunstraum Lakeside. Based on actual political events in Austria, they unfold a real dystopia of post-democratic tendencies that goes far beyond Austria’s local milieu. It is a piece about a democracy that is merely flaunted by the people involved and has degenerated into phrasemongering; it is about the fire of corruption that is downright stoked up by neoliberalism; about the cunning circumvention of the law and the corrosion of public information by media companies willingly instrumentalized by special interests. The starting point for *Domneva krivde* is the so-called “Ibiza affair,” the scandal that led to the collapse of the then ÖVP-FPÖ government and to early elections in Austria in 2019 because of a secretly recorded video. The footage—excerpts went viral on all media worldwide—shows two high-ranking political representatives with the alleged niece of a Russian oligarch in a several-hour conversation about political quid pro quos for the financial support of their own party. Caught in the act—a virtual performance, as it were.

In their staged installation, UBERMORGEN focus on one figure within this real-life spectacle who exemplifies the ambivalence of the entire event like no other: Julian Hessenthaler, the suspected mastermind behind the video, arrested more than a year after its release not for recording it but for drug trafficking and document forgery. Hessenthaler, a former private detective who unleashed a political earthquake, epitomizes the very figure of the trickster, that mythological-literary figure who breaks the rules in order to bring good to humanity for moral reasons. Hessenthaler—convicted in court of being a dealer on the basis of controversial evidence, according to critical media reports—also personifies the dark side of the trickster, an essential trait to be able to break with order in the first place. Changemaker of conventions or provocative counterfeiter, anonymous whistleblower or turncoat, hero or villain—at any rate, a fluid double being that plays a central role in UBERMORGEN’s *Domneva krivde*, a performance in which the artists expose parafictional realities and uncover elusive entanglements with the means of installation art.

The installation at Kunstraum Lakeside takes the form of a newsroom where visitors can take a look from a hypothetical future to the present. Fashioned to the exhibition venue, the scenery is accompanied by various images, objects, and displays that illustrate methods of knowledge transfer from scientific, economic, or cultural fields, for example, to that of politics: restructuring political systems, modernization of infrastructures, networking, and the development of popular programs and the corresponding media campaigns. Everything and nothing is developed here, everything and nothing is reported here. “we are not activists. we are actionists

in the communicative and experimental tradition of viennese actionism—performing in the global media, communication and technological networks, our body is the ultimate sensor and the immediate medium.”\*\* Thus, *Domneva krivde* has less to do with a political art action—activism in the sense of an act with a purpose—rather an artistic intervention in politics, in its social mechanisms and media logics. And of course, the presumption of guilt applies. For all involved.

\* Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 123.

\*\* UBERMORGEN, “manifesto,” 2010, <https://www.ubermorgen.com/manifesto>.

## UBERMORGEN

lizvlx (b. 1973 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna, Cologne, and St. Moritz.

Luzius Bernhard (b. 1973 in Switzerland) lives and works in Vienna, Cologne, and St. Moritz.

[www.ubermorgen.com](http://www.ubermorgen.com)

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