

Dominika Olszowy The Bare Belly
Date: 28 April – 02 July 2023
Venue: GGM1, ul. Piwna 27/29
Curator: Gabriela Warzycka-Tutak

My house, my ass, my rules.

Two years ago, when I was at my friends' summer house, I was looking for a tea mug. I opened a cupboard overflowing with cups, mugs, glasses, wineglasses and whatnot, and noticed a large spider living in one of the wineglasses. In her tiny glass house, the spider seemed like a giant. She looked beautiful and majestic. I remember that I took a picture with my Instax to capture the moment. The photo quality was poor, the picture was blurred and out of focus. You can see the black and grey smudges and the cobalt glass bottle cap. When I looked at the photo again some time later, I thought of Maman¹; only in my thoughts she lived in her private glass house with weird neighbours next to her.

It's good to have tea in your favourite mug².

It's December 2022, the long overdue exhibition is finally going to take shape. Dominika arrives; we have a chance to meet and talk about the upcoming collaboration.

After our meeting, a memory appears of my early days at yoga classes. Lying on a mat, I heard a question: How many toes do you feel? (I felt none, as if all my toes were merged into a single footy mass with no distinctive parts). We then did the soft belly meditation. Not an easy thing, to celebrate your belly fat rolls in public. For the meditation to work, the belly must be relaxed, and this proved to be the hardest: to open yourself and let it go. Belly breathing – at that time it was completely alien to me. Now I wish I had more time to breathe through my belly.

How's the life anyway?

With luxury bought on credit, with shallow and cheap interpersonal relations, we are writing the story of the urban vibes, of our seat in the First World bubble, uncomfortable albeit spacious. You want to fly, move up but you realise that a careless glance of human eyes can make you burst. Dressing up in new colours every time, you put on a show. Is it authentic? It seems irrelevant.

Do you remember when you were still at school? All that roughhousing on the stairs and in the sports hall, that brawler girl always wreaking havoc? What happens to your belly when you think of that? I bet it's not so soft anymore³.

The spirit of the house invites you to come inside.

Knock, knock
Artistic crisis
Should I mention you in my text?
Yes, please, it's important!
You got it.

I recollect all those various memories for they will become the material for Dominika Olszowy's exhibition. Nonconventional, nonverbal, with a unique background story. The Bare Belly turns out to be a story of the illusory sense of safety. As soon as we think that we have figured out this whole mindfulness business, that everything fits perfectly into its place, that the time has finally come for us to lie down and breathe, feel and be yourself... well, little did we know. Things happen on their own accord out of our control. You plan your holidays in hot countries to get some air and clear your head, you think of the actual sunrays, not daily supplementation with vitamin D, when suddenly you find yourself in the middle of an earthquake. Can you really plan for safety?

"It's kind of funny, Gabi, how I always begin working on my exhibition and really want to say something on good emotions, but things somehow get awry and eventually the dark side swallows everything up".
I say that it's like trying to cheat your destiny.

Dominika Olszowy has now embarked on an artistic journey working with stained glass. Gluing together pieces of colour glass, she tells stories of her daily life locked in a Chinese-box format. She puts the laborious craftsmanship to the foreground, leaving behind the scenographic concept. Is that good? Intuition prompts us to say yes. The glued thought creatures are completely autonomic. They need silence and space to tell us about themselves. They don't need the illusion of far-away countries.

The itsy bitsy spider
climbed up the waterspout.
Down came the rain
And washed the spider out.

1. **Maman** – a monumental sculpture of a spider, created by Louise Bourgeois in 1999.
2. Childhood, 7 PM, bedtime cartoon on TV. One thing I know for sure: my mum will bring me hot tea with lemon and sugar, or – and this is the best option ever – a hot chocolate drink from that box with the Dutch windmill on it.
3. **Belly cushion** [*Ventre-coussin*], 1968, Alina Szapocznikow.

Dominika Olszowy's practice is located on the crossroads of various media – including video, performance, installation and a unique mix of truth and fabrication. Olszowy creates works, which she sometimes treats as amulets that swearing and tame reality in crisis. In her works she's often based on personal experience, however, processes them in a universal, full of subtle humor statements about the human condition and time. Founder of ephemeral Sandra Art Gallery (since 2008), co-founder of a hip hop group Cipedrapskuad and a moped gang Horsefuckers M. C. Apart from her individual practice, Olszowy often collaborates with theatre directors creating set design. In 2019 years she was awarded the "Views - Deutsche Bank" for the most interesting young Polish artist last two years. Lives and works in Warsaw.