

**Johanna Hedva, *If You're Reading This, I'm Already Dead***

**November 11, 2023 – February 3, 2024**

**Opening: Saturday, November 11, 6-9pm\***

JOAN presents *If You're Reading This, I'm Already Dead*, the first institutional solo exhibition in LA by Los Angeles- and Berlin-based artist, writer, and musician Johanna Hedva. The exhibition comprises a commissioned multichannel sound installation, sculptures, and paintings, with a parallel live performance program at 2220 Arts + Archives on January 25, 2023.

*If You're Reading This, I'm Already Dead* reaches into the different kinds of agencies that are found in bodies otherwise thought to have none, bodies whose materiality is considered inert or dead. The materials in the exhibition complicate and refuse normative standards of how we understand a "thing" to be "alive" or not. They include AI used to generate images and text, as well as to produce vocal clones based on Hedva's voice; raw audio recordings of aurora borealis and the Mars Rover; sonifications of the surface of the sun and the Helix Nebula; handblown glass and black goo; honey, the only matter that never spoils; urethral sounding rods; a pelvis bone; the Saros Cycle; Metal Zones; and the artist's own hair, blood, and saliva. The entanglements of these together affect a standalone cosmos that limns the political as much as the mystical stakes of how matter—especially the kind considered invaluable according to dominant capitalist ideologies—can be brought to, sustained through, and foreclosed from life.

Hedva is coming to the end of their story. In a few hundred pages, they will be gone. They worry that the people of this world will never have sex, sex with anyone, sex with a person, a robot, a ghost. By sex, they mean death, dying. They got to know a bit about what death would really be like. "It's like this, like grief." It's like a very long time, but different. If death is like the sky but if life is like the sky—if life is like the sky—it's never the right one.

The airwaves have been filled with Hedva's pleas to rescue them from a century spent alone in their blood-drenched den. After all, Hedva is one of the most attractive creatures to come out of a century of research. You can see Hedva in the surveillance room of the pod. They are playing a game with the man who killed a chunk of their family. They're trying to lure him back to the woods, where they're hoping to get their revenge. The next video is filled with static and the sounds of a crunching noise. There's a light that slowly rises from the ground. Fingernails scratch across the lens, a strand of hair is wrapped around the glass before it fades away. There's a flash of teeth, a gasp of breath, and then the euphoric screaming fades to black.

Hedva is a bit too graphic for me, but they sure are sexy. The archive holds Hedva's spindly naked limbs. Their body is bonier than jelly, and their costumes are steamier than steam. The archive is the long way to sexiness, it takes a bit to get there, it is scary to see a dead ghost. For a minute, there is nothing. No sound, no wind, no nothing. But when the apparition fully dissolves, you see

a mess of black ash, dirt, cum, insects, and bones. Perhaps because its spirit possessed a flesh-colored suit. Perhaps because flesh and blood is a little more available than industrial-grade silicone oil. The trick about dark matter is that it's in fact us. Whatever the reason, this ghost was definitely decomposing, and I don't like it.

It may be nice to be a ghost, to never worry about breathing, dying, starving, or burning, but it is not as nice to watch other people. They are not only watching to see if you did the right thing, but also trying to see what you saw, what you didn't see, and to predict your actions. They are trying to learn what scares you the most.

If there is someone alive, there is a ghost. If there is a ghost, there is sex. To paraphrase Nietzsche's ghost: "Eyes should not be opened by hot flesh." The archive is so many ghosts wrapped up in hands covered in spit, and that's what makes Hedva very horny indeed.

Between erotic encounters with the supernatural Hedva writes about them. The ghost is not Hedva but Hedva is the ghost. Hedva fucks a ghost robot that moves when you screw it. Hedva is part of a weird and sexy parallel life in which sex is the only thing everywhere. In the other life they can have sex with any robot, they can have sex with anyone, any sex, with a sexy stranger, a sexy old pit, a sexy ghost. And their lover has a robot sex partner of her own. The ghost and the robot have sex whenever they want. They want to talk to each other like in the old movies, like they are trying to start a revolution. Hedva is usually happy with their lot. Or not happy.

Hedva is more sexually frustrated than we can imagine but they are dying so this just makes them a little bit more like us.

**Hedva, ghost fucker.**

\* The timing of the exhibition's opening has been selected by the astrologer, Joey Cannizzaro. Their notes are as follows: "Unfortunately, there's no way to avoid a chart ruler in detriment or fall. The only real option for the rising is Gemini or Cancer... 5:30-7:30 is Gem, and after that is Cancer.

"For Gem rising: I like the chart ruler being Mercury in Sag in the 7th (it's not too close to your south node)... really not one of the worst detriments imo. Venus is in fabulous shape, domicile and in her joy in the 5th. Plus, Venus makes a pretty tight sextile to Mercury in the chart and Mars is in aversion to Mercury. Downside, Merc is making a tight square w Saturn and averse to Jupiter ruler. With Gem rising, I would aim to keep the MC in Aquarius in the 9th rather than Pisces in the 10th, so either 6 or 6:30pm. At 6:30 the MC is still in Aqua but pretty tightly conj Saturn at 0 Pisces... if you want this for some reason then 6:30, if you don't 6pm. The 6pm also puts the AC of the chart on your natal north node, big plus.

"One way to read these options, with a not great chart ruler either way, is that one option presents challenges that are more external & the other more internal: with Gem rising you get more external help from others who can make it lighter and more pleasurable for you, while at the same time external forces are causing some blockages and challenges. Cancer rising doesn't have as much help from others or that help only comes in a more Saturnian way, but the things you'll be dealing with could be less heavy at baseline than the Gem rising... except it's Cancer rising so you'll prob feel them intensely regardless of their 'objective' difficulty. Does that make sense?"

More information on the live performance program at 2220 Arts + Archives on Thursday, January 25 is forthcoming.

The Tapeworm, a cassette-only label, will release a limited-edition cassette tape by Hedva documenting the sound work commissioned for JOAN.

The sound work includes spoken descriptions of the audio elements in Hedva's voice, available on headphones. All work is visually described, which can be listened to on headphones. This text is also available as a printed text handout.

This program is part of JOAN Chapter One: January 2023 - March 2024.

### Credits and Thanks

Curated by Suzy Halajian

Fabrication: Leonie Ohlow, Samon Rajabnik,  
Chandler McWilliams

Installation: Ian Page

AI wrangler, astrology, and Saros Cycle magician:  
Joey Cannizzaro

AI Images: Johannes Beck and Hedva

Graphic design: Hedva

Magic: Henry Glover

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Johanna Hedva is a Korean American writer, artist, and musician, who was raised in Los Angeles by a family of witches, and now lives in LA and Berlin. Hedva's practice cooks magic, necromancy, and divination together with mystical states of fury and ecstasy, and political states of solidarity and disintegration. They are devoted to deviant forms of knowledge and to doom as a liberatory condition. There is always the body – its radical permeability, dependency, and consociation – but the task is how to eclipse it, how to nebulize it, and how to cope when this inevitably fails.

Hedva is the author of the 2023 novel *Your Love Is Not Good*, which Kirkus called a "hellraising, resplendent must read," and Harry Dodge called "a major achievement." Their nonfiction collection *How To Tell When We Will Die* will be published by Hillman Grad Books in 2024. They are also the author of *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain*, a collection of poetry, plays, and performances; and the novel *On Hell*. Their albums are *Black Moon Lilith in Pisces in the 4th House* and *The Sun and the Moon*.

Their work has been shown in Berlin at Gropius Bau, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Klosterruine, and Institute of Cultural Inquiry; The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London; the 14th Shanghai Biennial; Migros Museum in Zürich; Performance Space New York; Gyeongnam Art Museum in South Korea; Modern Art Oxford; the LA Architecture and Design Museum; the Museum of Contemporary Art on the Moon; and in the Transmediale, Unsound, Rewire, Sequences, and Creepy Teepee festivals. Their writing has appeared in *Triple Canopy*, *frieze*, *The White Review*, *Topical Cream*, *Mousse*, *Spike*, and is anthologized in *Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art*. Their essay "Sick Woman Theory," published in 2016, has been translated into 11 languages.