

Caroline Schattling Villeval
Carences et toute-puissance

From January 19 to March 1, 2024

Opening, Thursday, January 18, 2024, from 6 to 8 pm (Rentrée des Bains)

At the bottom of an almost dry lake, frogs are gathered around a puddle. Their movements, slowed down and almost imperceptible, bring life to this deserted landscape. A dog appears. Imposing, his body extends beyond the frame. His walk sets off a panoramic, moving shot.

Thus begins Caroline Schattling Villeval's video *When a frog meets a dog*, produced for her exhibition *Carences et toute-puissance*¹. This new piece functions as a continuation of her installation *good boy* (Hasch, Marseille, 2023) which revolved around the fictional text *Vie/Chienne*, that explores the question of domination arising from a non-consensual interaction between a person and a dog with a wandering tongue². Once again, the animal is one of the main protagonists of Caroline Schattling Villeval's video *When a frog meets a dog*, this time alongside a group of frogs.

With his massive, slender body and golden fur, the dog, animated by Caroline Schattling Villeval, moves forward in a menacing manner. He appears to be indifferent to everything, including the amphibians which have come together to stop his march. Piled up in the shape of a column, they form a mass in front of this manifestation of almighty power. The counter-power embodied in the group's strength is swept away, pushed aside by a paw. It's not strong enough. A crushing failure even: it's raining frogs. They splash into the exhibition space, contaminating the room. The almighty power triumphs over the collective strength. End of the story. However, in Caroline Schattling Villeval's work, the power dynamics also manifest themselves in an underlying manner through the technical process. A dog, frogs, a 3D-modelled bestiary bought online like one would adopt a pet: an act of domination. Then comes the computer, far from functioning autonomously as the artist manipulates her virtual puppets through an animation software. Finally, the dog, never fully visible, dominates the frogs as well as the space. The dog, the first animal species domesticated by Man – its « best friend » –, that Caroline Schattling Villeval has trained to perform its own dance. The image is replayed in a loop, but who's calling the shots? *When a frog meets a dog* is a picture onto which power dynamics are superimposed in infinite layers.

When the dog and the frogs meet, bodies blend and collide. Objects of power, they gain, or attempt to gain, the upper hand over those who oppose them. In the video *No, no no healthy trust*, the question of the body remains, in this case individual as well as biological. The theme of power is approached through the topic of well-being. For Caroline Schattling Villeval, the interest in *care* as a concept emerged through the discovery of the feminist *self-help* movements of the 1970s. The movement was initiated on one hand as a reaction to the masculine domination in the health system, and on another hand as a set of contemporary artistic practices which were articulated around said movement. In Europe, the Feminist Health Care Research Group, formed in 2015 in Berlin by Julia Bonn, Alice Münch and Inga Zimprich took inspiration from the West German Health Movement in order to create spaces to welcome collective research around exhibitions, workshops or zines as tools to think about and construct a more radical health system. As an empowerment process, individual education notably revolves around learning DIY practices within a communal setting, as a way to propose a collective alternative to the dominant health system.

In the video *No, no no healthy trust*, a small green plant agitates itself in a jerky trance. Is it the result of drug consumption within a festive setting, or maybe dietary supplements consumed to provide a daily energy boost? Regardless of whether it's one or the other, the specter of the neoliberal economy seems to loom

¹ In parallel with her exhibition at the Centre d'édition contemporaine, Caroline Schattling Villeval presents *StéréoMimicry* at the Salle Crosnier, Palais de l'Athénée, from January 12 to February 10, 2024.

² *Vie/Chienne* was written by Caroline Schattling Villeval in 2023 for [SWISS] *Weird & Magic #1*, forthcoming publication by éditions Clinamen.

large. Caroline Schattling Villeva's characters are often offbeat, submerged by a world which overflows with possibilities to get better, always better. They seem to be in a perpetual well-being quest, an investigation of happiness. Happiness, as it was formulated by Martin Seligman, co-founder of positive psychology next to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, follows a hyper-individualist logic; To reach happiness depends on one's will to undertake a series of important actions as a way to achieve a sustainable blissful state. How convenient for capitalism! Supported by the *good vibes only* slogan, the wellness industry takes off in the beginning of the 2000s: happiness can be bought. Yoga, pilates, diets, detoxes, *miracle morning*, beauty care, meditation, self-development, spiritual retreat: so many practices that guarantee a better life, evolving at the pace of supply and demand, standardising bodies and minds while detaching them from any kind of collective commitment. Health is no longer limited to fighting diseases, and now encompasses attempts to perform better, self-optimise, compensate hypothetical deficiencies³. For one's own sake?

Last convulsions: a wellness overdose. Nothing left from the little plant in *No, no no healthy trust* but a glass skeleton, similar to a relic. A safety pin and chains are used to suture the wounds on this damaged body. The remains of a life in search of happiness.

Christine Glassey (trad. Flavia Vuagniaux)

Edition

Caroline Schattling Villeva
No, no no healthy trust, 2023

A box containing a safety pin that joins together an object made of Murano glass and two or three silver-plated brass chains, wrapped in tissue paper, variable dimensions, black print on a white box, 9.2 x 9.2 x 5 cm. On the bottom of the box is printed a QR-code that gives access to the animation video, *No, no no healthy trust*, color, 2', 2023. Edition of 100 copies, including 3 e.a. and 2 H.C., numbered, dated and signed. Editorial assistantship: Ilana Winderickx; video modeling: Sara Bissen and Caroline Schattling Villeva; graphic design: Niels Wehrspann, Lausanne. Edition of the Centre d'édition contemporaine, 2023.

Edition offered to the members of the Centre d'édition contemporaine association for the year 2023.

Born in 1995 in Zürich, Caroline Schattling Villeva lives and works in Geneva. Her work has been exhibited in various venues in Switzerland and abroad in solo shows such as: *StéréoMimicry*, Salle Crosnier, Geneva (12.01–10.02.2024); *good boy*, Hasch, Marseille (2023); *No firing*, with Paul Paillet, Espace 3353, Carouge (2021); *Chiara Chiara Chiara*, Zabriskie Point, Geneva (2020); *Being fucked*, Lokal-int, Biel (2020). She has also taken part in several group exhibitions, including: Basel Social Club with *Joyfully waiting*, Basel (2023); *MINIMIRACLES*, Sonnenstube, Lugano (2023); *Bourses déliées – Arts Visuels*, Halle Nord, Geneva (2022); *Prix Kiefer Hablitzel*, Art Basel, Basel (2022); *L'Esprit d'escalier*, with Paul Paillet, Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva (2022); *Plaisirs Minuit*, Forde as part of the Fesse-tival, Geneva (2022); *Peeping through the looking glass*, Set Space, London (2021); *Fotoromanza*, Le Commun, Geneva (2021); *Silicon Malley*, Prilly (2020); *Weaving home*, Limbo Space, Geneva (2020).

Zsuzsanna Szabo, production manager, is in charge of digital transformation projects for the CEC (2021-2024).

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³ According to the WHO Constitution, which came into force in 1948, « health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. »