

What Were You Expecting, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot? presents works by Vittorio Brodmann, Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff, Sanya Kantarovsky, Liz Magic Laser, and Ola Vasiljeva. The exhibition brings together artists who focus on the place production and present artworks in a contingent state, susceptible to change from the outside.

The title of the show is borrowed from The New York Times review of a 2008 staging of Peter Handke's 1966 play *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (Offending the Audience). The actors in the play mock audience members, addressing them as, "milquetoasts" for example. They don't assume a "role" in any traditional sense, opting out of illusion or plot. In line with epic theatre, Handke's aim was to make viewers self-aware by laying bare the mechanism of theatre. What Were You Expecting, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot? questions the thematic group exhibition. Instead of forcing artworks into a preconceived theme, this exhibition can be seen as a setting for both artists and viewers alike.

By stepping into the spotlight as a novice stand-up comedian, Vittorio Brodmann offers the audience the "private, anxiety-fuelled little hell" that also figures in his paintings. Sanya Kantarovsky confronts the viewer with a series of hanging theatrical flats dressed in oversized shirts. These serve as a display system for his paintings, which adorn them like jewellery or a pocket handkerchief. Depicting characters in the middle of something (waiting for inspiration, walking down the stairs, looking at art), the paintings do not only make the viewer aware of the artist at work, but also of his/her own role in the production of meaning. Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff present a mix of documentation from their so-called Shitty Archive: mostly invaluable paper loaded with personal value from their artistic practice, their personal lives and the two spaces they run in Berlin so far, the bar Times and the recently opened New Theater. For another work in the show, Henkel and Pitegoff photographed their artist friends as they went through their production receipts from the year. The receipts become stand-ins for the actual works. Liz Magic Laser's video installation chase is a re-staging of Bertolt Brecht's 1926 play *Mann ist Mann* (Man Equals Man) which recounts, in Laser's own words, "the dehumanizing metamorphosis of an ordinary man into an instrument of authoritarian and capitalist design". Performed and filmed in bank vestibules throughout New York City, ATM machines and their users become actors in the play and an audience for it. Ola Vasiljeva presents a new site-specific installation, combining sculptural pieces, video, found and modified objects, printed matter and poetry. Vasiljeva creates an ambiguous environment, in which objects are arranged to be in dialogue with one another.

Besides presenting individual works of the four artists and the artist duo, What Were You Expecting, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot? brings new and existing collaborations. Coming out of a generation of

artists who frequently open up the isolated process of artistic production, they also adopt collective strategies in this show. For example, Ola Vasiljeva founded OAOA (The Oceans Academy of Arts), which collects and shows art with an absence of hierarchy between the work of art, the site of its exhibition and the roles of those involved in its production and presentation. The printed matter that comprises Vasiljeva's installation in the exhibition is published by OAOA. Vittorio Brodmann shows a painting that he originally made as the backdrop for the first play of Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff at the New Theater (Farming in Europe, co-written with Pablo Larios and Dena Yago). Sanya Kantarovsky and Liz Magic Laser stage a new performance, theatrically interpreting statistical data related to politics, popular culture and science. The performance premiered at the opening on January 23 at 9 pm, and lives on as a video installation for the duration of the show.

The finissage event for the exhibition "What Were You Expecting, Mr. Milquetoast, a Plot?" has been composed by the Oceans Academy of Art (OAOA). Ola Vasiljeva founded OAOA while at the Rijksakademie Amsterdam in 2008. It shows and collects art with an absence of hierarchy between the work of art, the site of its exhibition and the roles of those involved in the production and presentation. The finissage takes the form of something between an intermission and an actual play – with some visuals, some talks, some drinks, some art. Staged inside of Vasiljeva's installation "Fin", the objects now function as the décor for this closure of the exhibition. In the heart of the play lie a translucent man, a long distance call, a cigarette break and the final fatigue. The backdrop of this event consists of various videos: an animated tribute to Robert Ashley, an interpretation of the works of Adrian Marthaler and a sequence of OAOA video intermissions. At the green piano bar drinks and soup will be served.

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