

Press Release

Ana Lupas

Intimate Space – Open Gaze

1 November 2024 – 16 March 2025

Opening: Thursday, 31 October 2024

Press conference: Wednesday, 30 October 2024, 10.30am

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Skylight Galleries

Experimental, profoundly spiritual and radically humanist – Ana Lupas (*1940 in Cluj, Romania) has been an outstanding figure in Eastern European art since the 1960s. With *Intimate Space – Open Gaze*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein is presenting the most comprehensive solo show thus far on the artist, featuring works from different periods of her production from the 1960s to the present. One focus is on two series of works being shown for the first time: *Eyes* (1974–1991) and *Self-Portrait* (2000). Spanning six decades, Ana Lupas's career is an impressive testimony to her resilience and her indefatigable commitment to art in difficult political circumstances.

In an environment characterised by a lack of freedom and oppression, Lupas created an oeuvre that is as impressive as it is radical, never leaving her Romanian hometown. The communist regime that ruled for over four decades (1945–1989) co-opted art for its dehumanising, totalitarian ideology, massively hindering free experimentation and exhibitions. Nevertheless, Ana Lupas consistently went her own way, undeterred.

Her early, experimental work comprises textile works, sculptures, environments, installations and action art. Often, she uses materials that are easy to procure, such as grain, wool, wax or fabrics, drawing her inspiration from folklore and ancient traditions. From a Western European perspective, similarities can be observed to the avant-garde movements of the late twentieth century, including conceptual art and land art. Although often forced to work in hiding, Ana Lupas managed to realise various large-scale participatory projects with local residents and promote the local artistic community.

In addition to producing new works, reprising and reworking existing works is a key concern for the artist. Her aim is to question both herself and her practice by restaging it continually.

Ana Lupas has revisited the theme of cloths hung up to dry from her impressive *Humid Installation* (first studies 1966; first realised in Mărgău, Romania, 1970) a number of times over the course of

several decades. It illustrates her passionate commitment to linking art with local rituals, with history and identity.

The exhibition at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein places the emphasis on two previously unexhibited series: *Eyes* (1974–1991) and *Self-Portrait* (2000).

The sculptural porcelain eyes allude to the climate of surveillance in Romanian society, and in all totalitarian regimes, but can also be viewed beyond this context. In Vaduz, more than twenty eyes focus their gaze on works from the Kunstmuseum's collection selected by Lupas. Letizia Ragaglia, Director and curator of the show, remarked: 'Until now, the artist has kept these highly fragile sculptures safe in her studio in Cluj. We are all the more pleased to be the first institution to have the opportunity to present these *Eyes* to the public at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein.'

In the *Self-Portrait* series, the eyes of the artist herself are trained on the exhibition space and the audience. Depicting a screenprint of Lupas's portrait, the series consists of 200 posters created in 1998 to promote her exhibition in Székesfehérvár, Hungary. Like entries in a diary, Lupas has been modifying and overpainting one of these posters almost every day. The self-portraits not only testify to the artist's ongoing, almost obsessive dialogue with herself, but also to her will to overcome (state-) imposed standardisation by means of individuality.

The exhibition *Ana Lupas: Intimate Space – Open Gaze* was developed by Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in close collaboration with the artist and is a co-production with the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (*Ana Lupas – On This Side of the River Elbe*, 9 May – 15 September 2024).

Lupas played a key role in creating the exhibition. At her request, the installations were tailored to the exhibition spaces and collections of the two museums. Complementing each other, together they convey a comprehensive picture of an extraordinary artist.

Curated by Letizia Ragaglia for Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive publication with texts by Tanja Boon, Leontine Coelewijn, Marina Lupas, Ramona Novicov, Letizia Ragaglia, Christian Rattemeyer and Mechtild Widrich.

Ana Lupas, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Cologne, softcover, German/English, 160 pages and numerous illustrations, 2024. Price: CHF 35.–

Short biography

Ana Lupas (*1940 in Cluj, Romania) studied at the Academy of Plastic Arts Ion Andreescu (today: Art and Design University), Cluj. She initiated and directed the entire avant-garde collective *Atelier 35* having a lasting influence on the young generation of Romanian artists (1980–1989). Deliberately shying away from the limelight of the gallery scene, she always remained deeply rooted in her rural environment. Her oeuvre is being discovered by international audiences and acknowledged by renowned museums such as the Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou Paris; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Museion, Bolzano. She continues to live and work in Cluj, where she lives in the same street where she was born. She is currently focusing on preserving her works and organising her archive.

Works from the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein collection in the show:

Frans Hals, *Flötespielender Jüngling (Werkstatt)*, c. 1645–1650

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Bergbach mit Steg im Wald*, 1921

Willem de Kooning, *Untitled XVII*, 1976

Herbert Zangs, *Reliefgemälde (Verweissung)*, 1953

Bernardo Licinio da Pordenone, *Portrait of a Young Man*, 1600–1650

Jan De Bray, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, after 1670

Isidore Isou, *Untitled*, 1952

Alexej von Jawlensky, *Stilleben mit blauer Kanne*, 1913

Giulio Paolini, *Copia dal vero*, 1976

In addition, as a tribute to Ana Lupas' grandmother Livia Pop:

Livia Pop, *Still Life*, 1905

Press contact

Franziska Hilbe

+423 235 03 17 · franziska.hilbe@kunstmuseum.li

Barbara Wagner

+41 78 236 34 84 · barbara.wagner@kunstmuseum.li

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