

**Exhibition Title:** Night Has Broken Refinement

**Artist:** Julie Béna

**Curator:** Péter Bencze

**Venue:** Longtermhandstand, Budapest

**Duration:** 30 May – 27 July 2025

**Photo:** Áron Weber

**Tags:** @juliebena @longtermhandstand @everybodyneedsart

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**Text:** Péter Bencze

### **Night Has Broken Refinement**

Julie Béna's solo exhibition *Night Has Broken Refinement* at Longtermhandstand opens a liminal space, between the personal and the performative, the poetic and the political, the real and the imagined. It is a moment suspended in time, standing on the threshold of her forthcoming major survey at Le Magasin, Grenoble, and gathering works made between 2017 and 2025 into a vivid constellation of material and conceptual exploration. Béna's practice operates as a gate between fiction and reality, where aesthetic languages; often humorous, surreal, and disarmingly intimate, are wielded as tools of critical reflection. Here, she assembles a chorus of media: fragile lace embroideries, black steel sculptures, intricate installations, drawings, and films. Each piece suggests a narrative fragment, a portal, or a persona—together composing a world that is both finely detailed and ideologically sharp. A central anchor of the exhibition is her seminal film *Strakati*, a deeply personal work that unfolds as a polyphonic reflection on identity. Starring Béna's own mother, daughter, and husband, *Strakati* contemplates the overlapping roles of womanhood; mother, sister, wife, artist and the entangled pressures and freedoms they carry. Within this cinematic dreamscape, Béna summons her recurring alter egos, including the mischievous Jester, who navigates complex truths through playful inversion, and other spectral characters who speak in riddles, puns, and poetics. Rather than offering clear narratives, Béna constructs spaces of possibility and ambiguity, where parallel timelines and speculative logics co-exist. Her world is one where objects are actors, symbols mutate, and every gesture is laden with layered significance. This atmosphere of dreamy disquiet urges the viewer to dwell in the unknown, and to confront, with tenderness and irony, the absurdities of contemporary existence.

Julie Béna (b. 1982, Paris) lives and works between Prague and Paris. Her diverse practice spans sculpture, installation, film, performance, and writing. Drawing from literature, pop culture, architecture, and philosophy, she constructs surreal, often humorous worlds inhabited by strange characters and symbolic objects. Béna is a graduate of the Villa Arson in Nice and attended the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. She has exhibited widely, with recent solo shows at Jeu de Paume

(Paris), CAPC (Bordeaux), Plato (Ostrava), and Kunstverein Bielefeld, among others. In 2018, she was nominated for the Prix AWARE. Her works are held in major collections across Europe, including CNAP and several FRACs.

Péter Bencze