

Exhibition Title: Venus Mount - Matrial Art Club

Artist: Dorottya Vékony

Curator: Péter Bencze

Venue: Longtermhandstand, Budapest

Duration: 17 September – 2 November 2025

Photo: Áron Weber

Tags: @dodi.vekony @longtermhandstand @everybodyneedsart

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Text: Flóra Gadó

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How does Dorottya Vékony relate to combat sports, which are mostly associated with masculine energies? How does she appropriate and recontextualize boxing and open up space for others within it? What kind of boxing club could the gallery host? And how can this space—both in art and in real life—become a supportive space for collaboration and (female) community building?

Dorottya Vékony has long been concerned with transitional life situations, the act of letting go, and various coping mechanisms and “survival” strategies, most of which are related to the female body, the taboos associated with it, and reproductive rights. In connection with trauma and grief work related to female infertility, her attention has increasingly turned to supportive female communities and gestures that help women get through and survive difficult periods.

For this exhibition, she uses the women’s boxing club she founded as a starting point, which is a form of “training” where the emphasis is on the diversity of the participants, their different life experiences, and being together, holding space, and practicing, rather than defeating each other.

Of course, this approach is not unfamiliar in classic combat sports, but in Vékony’s case, boxing becomes almost an excuse for women to feel liberated together, to relax in their bodies and realize that they are not alone with their anxieties. Here, there is room to lose, to fall, to be fragile and vulnerable—and this is when the space opens up for empathy, solidarity with others, and sisterhood. And it is just as important to practice together what it means to be resilient and to move forward in situations that often seem unimaginable.

The current exhibition of new works opens up this safe space to a wider audience. The photograph titled EMPOW Club reveals the members of this half-real, half-fictional

boxing club: the various female characters (the bodybuilder, the “witch,” etc.) present different female perspectives and strategies with the emphatic humor of the artist. At the same time, this opening image can also be seen as a multiple self-portrait of Vékony: it may refer to how the roles and “masks” that individuals wear in different life situations try to balance each other out.

In the gallery space, which has been transformed into an “alternative” gym, visitors encounter perhaps the most striking objects in the exhibition: the porcelain boxing gloves representing the fragility of resistance (Protector for Fragile Resistance, nos. 1–3.) as well as the inscribed bandages (Boxing Wraps, nos. 1–10.), all of which are familiar tools of combat sports while here they emphasize the strength that lies in embracing our vulnerability.

The gloves appear either in pairs or alone, sometimes evoking a woman’s breast, other times broken and chipped—paradoxically, as if to suggest that until we accept these fragile situations, we cannot build an adequate resilient coping strategy around them. The difficult-to-read, almost invisible inscriptions alternate between stereotypical statements about the female body and encouraging phrases, which are then echoed on the bandages, expanding them into a caring tone. Their power lies in the fact that they are both combative and supportive—once again evoking the female community and protective field of the boxing club.

This protective field appears in the photo collages consisting of fragmented figures, yet highlighting togetherness (Playground, nos. 1–4.), as well as in the video work (Internal Dynamics of Fight I.). In this piece, a simple “exercise” unfolds: from a bird’s-eye view, we follow the movements of two combatants, which are then taken up by those moving behind them, creating a collective choreography. Here, it is no longer individuals who clash with each other, but rather groups and views that interact. At the same time, we can also see that combat sports, however much they take place between individuals, provide an incredible amount of support during the preparation process: the constant presence of training partners and coaches is indispensable. In this sense, we can perhaps consider them as team sports.

Dorottya Vékony integrates her former identity as a professional athlete (kickboxer) into her current exhibition, making it tangible for others. From this perspective, she discusses both the sustaining power and supportive structures inherent in women’s communities.

Flóra Gadó