

Exhibition Title: Ways of Being

Artist: Réka Lőrincz, Róza El-Hassan

Curator: Sonja Teszler

Venue: Institute of Contemporary Art - Dunaújváros

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Photo: Áron Weber

Tags: @rekalorincz_ @roza.elhassan @ica_dunaujvaros @tulipankocso
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Text: Sonja Teszler

Ways of Being

The duo exhibition *Ways of Being* at ICA-Dunaújváros brings together two artists united by method, ethics, and friendship: Hungarian artist Réka Lőrincz and Hungarian-Syrian artist Róza El-Hassan, whose practices treat artistic process as inseparable from lived political and emotional realities.

The exhibition foregrounds making as an ongoing, evolving activity. For both artists, process, and “simply being”, is a way of thinking and feeling with others. Both practices are grounded in DIY improvisation, repetition, and the translation of internal emotional and cognitive states into material form. These processes echo the use of automatism by women artists associated with Central and Eastern European Surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s—we can think of Czech Toyen or German Unica Zürn—who turned to intuitive, non-rational forms of making in response to the rise of fascism and war, as well as to process personal and collective trauma. Their embrace of automatic drawing and improvisation was not an escape from politics, but a way of resisting the internalisation of authoritarian norms by working through the personal as a political terrain, beginning with the liberation of subconscious feeling and imagination.

In the practices of El-Hassan and Lőrincz, a related politics crystallises in the present. Rooted firmly in acts of witnessing, protest, and solidarity, El-Hassan’s work is widely recognised for its long-term engagement with war and displacement, with a particular focus on Middle Eastern and post-socialist Eastern European regional contexts. Her works in *Ways of Being* foreground a more subtle, personal dimension to her politics and activism. Lőrincz’s intuitive visual language—across drawing, painting, and sculpture, often emerging directly from her quantum (within that, mainly energetic) healing practice—responds to the emotional and cognitive strain produced

by life under late-capitalism: the demand for constant productivity, “usefulness,” artificially prescribed roles of identity, and the imperative of self-optimisation.

By the entrance, we first encounter Lőrincz’s looping video *Camping Peace* (2024), hovering near the doorway. In it, the artist sits on a plastic chair, enclosed within a large plastic bag, “smoking” a flower. The work condenses her material language—drawing on everyday consumer objects, with a hint of humour—while also articulating her broader philosophy. It stages a resistance to the pressure in Western society of constant productivity and the pervasive fear of “not doing anything.” What Lőrincz embodies here instead is a form of deliberate stillness: an actively inhabited attention to being rather than producing.

This language continues in *Practical Peace* (2026), a mixed-media sculpture combining a vase, woven corn husk breasts, a motorcycle helmet, and clear mountain crystals. The work is a proposition in a form of cognitive lightness: a way of maintaining clarity of mind amid the constant influx of external stimuli—images, information, violence. The vessel, a recurring form in Lőrincz’s practice, suggests both containment—holding past impulses, experiences, and trauma—and the possibility of release. Similarly, the helmet serves as a dual symbol of confinement and protection. In a characteristic vein of Lőrincz’s sculptures, the composition combines soft, organic forms and the artificial debris of everyday life. These gestures flatten hierarchies between natural and artificial, interior and exterior, while grounding the work in the material conditions of contemporary existence.

Lőrincz’s protest—against the pressures of productivity, against accelerated information overload, and towards lightness—is echoed in El-Hassan’s work installed opposite, *Protest Sign (Electromagnetic Signal Transmission in the Living World)* (2022). This collaged wooden protest object is constructed around a found book on electromagnetic communication in animals. The artist’s fascination with these signals—how animals transmit and respond to invisible frequencies—extends into a broader ecological thinking that resists hierarchies between humans and non-humans, since humans also share these resonances with animals. The work simultaneously operates as a warning, hence the format of the protest sign – prompting a reconsideration of how technological systems disrupt fragile interconnections, organic rhythms and choreographies of life.

These waves—or connecting strings—reappear across El-Hassan’s later pencil and graphite works on paper in the main exhibition space, expanding on her interest in transmission and relation. In *Smile* (2026), two faces rendered in a deliberately naïve, almost childlike style are connected by a wavering line. Both figures carry a gentle joviality—something the artist has increasingly sought to foreground. Next to it, *Facing* (2026) is a sketch for a sculpture that is yet to be realised, designed to reveal a landscape inside a human figure, with the artist’s handwritten notes surrounding it.

A shared investment emerges in a kind of lightness, as well as in conceiving of making as a “contribution”—a term Lőrincz explicitly uses, but which also becomes evident in El-Hassan’s articulation of the importance of the gentle, jovial aura of her figures. This logic of contribution becomes particularly clear in Lőrincz’s *Energetic Scores* (2021–), installed along the internal pink wall section and composed in fluid lines of graphite, ink, and watercolour ink. The term “score” is crucial: these works

function as individual portraits and records of encounters rather than as self-contained art objects. They emerge directly from the artist's attempts to attune to and support others' emotional and cognitive states in her healing practice, as direct after-effects of specific sessions. Lőrincz has described them as maps—documents through which she can later trace what she perceived in the energetic landscape of a given person.

These fluid, swirling scores find resonance in El-Hassan's neighboring early computer animation from 1990—the earliest work in the exhibition—in which pulsating digital forms, generated through a program she coded, intersect with footage she recorded in her father's Syrian village of a woman making bread. The work stages a tension between older and newer technologies and forms of labour: the tactile, archaic tradition of breadmaking by hand, and the more mediated, abstract process of writing digital code. The two sequences, repeatedly folding into one another, both follow a cyclical or spiralling movement, producing a hypnotic, almost psychedelic effect. It reveals how El-Hassan's sustained interest in cycles and repetition is already present in this early work and continues to reverberate throughout her later practice.

This kind of movement and form is mirrored in Lőrincz's *Healing Drawings* (2020–), which emerge from an intuitive, self-reflective process grounded in her own momentary emotional states and thus close to automatic methodologies of making. These works are characterised by recurring, loosely and generously drawn spiralling breasts, symbolising vitality, nourishment, and a life-force once received. The pink, abstracted, overlapping forms—primarily in pencil—are surrounded by a gentle, pulsating yellow light, supporting and wrapping them with a luminous life-energy. In the largest work to date from this series, *Healing Breasts* (2026)—incorporating pastel and thus taking on a more painterly quality—this motif extends into space: two pink plastic buckets form protruding breasts with apricot kernel nipples. This gesture recalls a playful Dadaist impulse, or a DIY sensibility that asserts a kind of non-preciousness toward the object—treating it instead as part of the fabric of the everyday, an extension of internal emotion and consciousness into external space.

This impulse extends into El-Hassan's two large-scale canvas works, *Autumn Forgetfulness* (2024) and its earlier pair, *Spring Forgetfulness* (2008), which combine gouache, graphite, and collaged mixed-media elements. Installed opposite at the other end of the space, they attempt to represent the peculiar state of forgetfulness itself from personal, intimate experience: a kind of poetic, elliptical space in which porous forms of information appear and then slip away. The Dada influence in both works takes the form of fresh flowers, potted within the lower pockets of the canvases, introducing a living element that gestures to ephemerality and cycles, opening the work beyond itself to the passage of time and to physical decay. In the later work, two front-facing figures share the same gentle, naïve expression, echoing those of her drawn faces in other works on paper. A stream of graphite half-moon shapes curves across the surface, mapping an internal space. The figures are surrounded by small spiral motifs, also resembling suns or spinning toys, rendered in “life-force yellow,” suggesting both consciousness and cyclical movement, and echoing similar shapes in Lőrincz's work.

In El-Hassan's *Couple* (2020–2023), positioned nearby, this desire for liberation—both collective and internal—emerges through an intuitive, rough assemblage of

wooden elements, furniture fragments, a book about Van Gogh, and a newspaper cut-out. The sculpture brings together multiple perspectives, informed in part by Cubism. One face takes the form of a silent scream—the initial motif around which the sculpture was built—while the other, more block-like, resembles a smooth screen. Two small found figurines, leaning on one another and placed on the back, echo this strange co-dependent couple. The handsaws resting on the two legs of the supporting wooden frame suggest a violent breaking of constraints—a cutting through imposed structures or confinement. This work, alongside *The Laughing Fool* (2020), installed on the wall on the far opposite side of the space by the window, was produced by El-Hassan following a difficult period following involuntary psychiatric treatment. In *The Laughing Fool*, the artist adopts an uninhibited, intuitive way of making—working “as if mad.” The carved face, fixed in a silent laugh, oscillates between joy and pain, positioning intuitive making as both a means of processing personal struggle and a conscious strategy for reclaiming agency over narrative and practice.

The collaborative site-specific mural *Camping Peace*, designed to be seen from the outside by passers-by and cars—and thus encountered unexpectedly beyond the gallery space—stretches along the long window-facing wall. It functions as a shared motto: the phrase combines Lőrincz’s “camping,” understood as both a DIY approach to material and artmaking that can be realised anywhere spontaneously, with El-Hassan’s “peace,” which captures her long-standing engagement with anti-war protest and solidarity.

Around this mural, Lőrincz’s other playful works extend her commitment to art as a form of contribution. *Abundance on Four Wheels* (2026) consists of a basket fixed onto a remote-controlled car, containing a laced blanket of paper-cash and intended to be filled with fruits, vegetables, and other forms of nourishment. The work conceives of abundance as an energetic offering articulated through sculptural form. Hanging from a hook in the ceiling, *Tudatszárító* (2026)—an assemblage of writing on paper suspended from a small pink clothing dryer structure—foregrounds the importance of automatic writing and note-taking in the artist’s practice, an aspect not often exhibited in relation to her work. Lőrincz continuously produces notes in the studio that document and inform both her artworks and her healing practice, as well as her broader way of being in the world. These notes often take the form of strategies or questions emerging from her engagement with consciousness-technology and spiritual practice. One example is a printed list of virtues, each associated with specific energies, intended as a point of encounter through which visitors might receive or internalise these qualities. Much of her work operates through this expansion of psychic possibility, supported by a generous, accessible visual language that opens the work outward.

The exhibition’s overarching spiral motif finds its subtle epilogue within the joint installation on a small side wall adjacent to the mural, through Lőrincz’s found ammonite fossil shell, above which hangs El-Hassan’s pencil drawing *Shell Face* (2026), turning simultaneously inward and outward.

Across the exhibition, a shared vocabulary emerges: an attention to internal movements of emotion and consciousness, to cyclicity, and to forms of lightness that manifest as anti-monumentality—an openness to impermanence across material, form, and method, and an understanding of art-making as contribution.

Echoing a Surrealist use of automatism as a means of resisting the internalisation of authoritarian structures, their intuitive processes of “bringing the inside out” operate here as a politics in their own right: loosening externally imposed regimes of control and opening space for other, collectively entangled ways of sensing, relating, and surviving within a present marked by ecological, political, humanitarian, and spiritual crisis.

The exhibition has been realized in collaboration with Longtermhandstand.

Sonja Teszler