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Political Populism

*Political Populism* is the extremely populist title for an exhibition which plays with the power of words; the promise of a simple premise that, in truth, stretches far beyond the limits of its boundaries. In this sense, the title employs the precise rhetoric of many populist parties, however the exhibition itself seeks to undermine this through content: the wide-ranging articulation of issues and responses associated with the complex and contested concept of populism in the political and thereby social realm. The exhibition brings together a variety of international artistic reflections on different populist forces at work today and aims to critically question this phenomenon through artistic means. Both playful and serious, subtle and provocative, the works can be viewed as a commentary on the subject, a subversive second level, an analysis, or a footnote. Above all, they reveal how omnipresent political populism has become.

Curator: Nicolaus Schafhausen

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme

* 1983 in Nicosia, lives between Palestine and New York
* 1983 in Boston, lives between Palestine and New York

The Incidental Insurgents, a project they have been working on since 2012 and is choreographed as a three-part multi-layered narrative, composed of sampled text, objects, images and sounds combined with their own writings and footage. Part one: *The Part about the Bandits* (2012) and part two: *Unforgiving Years* (2014) precede the third and final part exhibited in Kunsthalle Wien: *When the fall of the dictionary leaves all words lying in the street* (2015). The first two parts treat the character of the insurgent, looking to the writings of Victor Serge and Roberto Bolano, alongside manifestoes, memoirs, and testimonies of historical figures, as well as texts written by the artists. Each of the chapters constructs and builds upon an intricate story of resistance, where real revolutionaries together with fictive bandits are recalled and reconsidered, their resonance re-appearing and receding, reconciling our current shared situation and what beckons on the horizon.

Part three is a powerful, poetic and hallucinatory end to the Palestinian duo’s investigations. The multi-channel sound piece pulses loudly and hypnotically while the four screens play intermittently, punctured by the text. Through a framework of what is described in their films as “dreams, nightmares, impulses”, figures are plunged from pitch black into the rising or setting sun, with shadows cast behind them symbolizing the memory and traces of the ghosts they talk of—“those occasional brothers and sisters-in-arms”. The shivering soundtrack falls in and out of sync with the moving imagery and the incredible flux of noise highlights their interests in exploring the abstraction and physicality

Curator: Nicolaus Schafhausen

Saâdane Afif
* 1970 in Vendôme, lives in Berlin

Play Opposite or Ubu Roi
Disseminated, 2015
Performances
Courtesy of the artist

Saâdane Afif’s fragmentary adaptation transforms the already absurd play into a mesh of contradictory voices, grounded on the principle of permanent misunderstanding. Whereas Jarry’s play to some extent remains logical, Afif’s performance is governed by consistent contradiction.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan
* 1985 in Amman, lives between London and Beirut

Contra Diction (Speech Against Itself), 2015
2-channel video installation, teleprompter, 19:25 min.
Courtesy of the artist and Mor Charpentier, Paris

Lawrence Abu Hamdan’s work Contra Diction reverberates with a tension in speech: between the conception of truth and the politics of deception. The immersive and at times destabilising installation is composed of multiple layers of sound, text and visuals which amplify the obscure feature of Islamic jurisprudence that the piece is focused on; the philosophical concept of the Taqiyya.

Abu Hamdan unravels the linguistic, theological and legal conditions—for the ear and the eye—that frame the Taqiyya.

The exploration of listening, and the connection of the freedom of speech with social reality is on the one hand a specific example in the case of the Druze communities in Palestine, Syria and Israel who, subject to persecution or statelessness, inhabit the space between truth and falsehood in their religious declarations. On the other hand, as with much of Abu Hamdan’s work, a broader appeal is made to a wider discourse: concerned with looking, and listening, to the voice as a political instrument, one fundamentally of power and control.

Darren Bader
* 1978 in Bridgeport, lives in New York

The Vagrant
(Video still), 2015, Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; Sadie Coles HQ, London; Galleria Franco Noero, Turin; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo

In The Vagrant, Darren Bader appropriates the popular form of the cartoon and engages the viewer in a wacky journey, imagining the future development of outer space sculptures.
Contemporary issues relating precisely to topics approached in the exhibition, such as representative democracy, globalization, decision making processes, and how the public or individual citizens respond to such forms of governing are also tackled in his work. In particular, the UN scene at the beginning, in which a grievous end to the final general assembly seems at once disastrous and prosperous in the announcement of the “all humankind initiative”. The video parodies voting systems and questions the role of the artist, their work, and the modes of presentation or display their work can bear. The exhibition space is transported to outer space, art thus becomes accessible to all people of the world. The tongue-in-cheek proposal of imagining how future realms of art could materialize, and by who, is metaphorical and conceptually poignant.

**Keren Cytter**

* 1977 in Tel Aviv, lives in New York

Metamorphosis, Video, 11:07 min. Courtesy of the artist

In her video and installations Keren Cytter investigates social realities by pushing the boundaries of representation, sound and narrative structures. In breaking apart numerous elements of filmmaking she reassembles image, monologue, role and narration in an experimental and multi-layered fashion which not only reflects on the influence of the media, but methodologically challenges the constructed nature of media systems and thus manipulative tactics. Much of Cytter’s oeuvre is publicly accessible on her Vimeo channel.

Metamorphosis is a meditation on fear, paranoia and self-importance. Using found-footage from YouTube videos, documentaries and widely recognizable clips from Hollywood cinema and films such as James Bond and Scream, Cytter looks at the figure of the villain, and how nightmare and terror can descend into everyday—and historical—realities. Edited with newly filmed footage, a confounding tale exploring transformation unfolds. Auto-tuned voice-overs mixed with the Kush’ n Money instrumental rap beat by Browski Music endow the video with a sinister undertone. Intentionally kitsch, the often low budget style recalls amateur video diaries and home movies—perhaps low in fidelity, but rich in critical provocation. The atmosphere of intrigue she fosters around the characters in her stories, entangled by plots of jealousy, murder, revenge and love, cut to the core of classic cinema or literary templates and encourages a questioning of meaning and the logic, whether chaotic or ordered, that supports it.

**Simon Denny**

* 1982 in Auckland, lives in Berlin

Secret Power Highlighted, 2015

Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of Imagery from NSA TREAURED MAP Slides, 2015

LED strips, 255 x 100 x 100 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Petzel, New York

Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of Imagery from GCHQ ROYAL CONCIERGE Slides, 2015

UV print on Revostage platform, powder coated 19” server rack, Cisco Systems WSC2948G switch, LAN cables, Bachmann power strip, HP Proliant 380DL G5 server, steel trays, Fisso steel spacers, UV print on Aludibond, laser cut plexiglas letters, powder coated steel components, customised stuffed toy penguin in coloured laser cut plexiglas, collectable Lord of the Rings Crown of Aragorn with display case, UV print on sandblasted laminated safety glass, LED strips, 255 x 100 x 100 cm

Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of Imagery from NSA TREAURED MAP/PACKAGED GOODS Slides, 2015

LED strips, 255 x 100 x 100 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne

Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of Imagery from GCHQ SQUEAKY DOLPHIN Slides, 2015

UV print on Revostage platform, powder coated 19” server rack, Cisco Systems WSC2948G switch, LAN cables, Bachmann power strip, HP Proliant 380DL G5 servers, steel tray, laser cut plexiglas letters, powder coated steel components, spray paint on wooden chest, UV print on laser cut plexiglas, UV print on sandblasted laminated safety glass, LED strips, 255 x 100 x 100 cm

Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of Imagery from GCHQ ROYAL CONCIERGE Slides, 2015

UV print on Revostage platform, powder coated 19” server racks, Cisco Systems WS-C2948G switch, LAN cables, Bachmann power strip, HP Proliant 380DL G5 servers, steel tray, UV prints on Aludibond, Fisso stainless steel spacers, anodised aluminium panels, laser cut plexiglas letters, novelty shamrock hat, collectable Blarney stone and packaging in plexiglas column, powder coated steel components, UV print on sandblasted laminated safety glass,
The role that technology plays in moulding global culture and national identities is diligently emphasized in Simon Denny’s information-dense, research-based artworks. In Secret Power Highlighted Denny explores state symbols of knowledge and power. It is the second iteration of an installation titled Secret Power which was exhibited in Venice for the 56th Biennale at two locations: the Marco Polo Airport and the Marciana Library.

Under focus is the visual culture and representation of complex intelligence systems, whether by the sixteenth century world power Venice, or powerful present day states. The “Five Eyes” intelligence alliance between the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, is unveiled through visual imagery leaked from the Snowden archive and probed further by the case study of one particular figure of the NSA—former Creative Director of Defense Intelligence David Darchicourt. Both elements constitute the installation: the floor and wall vinyls of the Venetian Marciana Library signifying a ‘hub’ of humanist knowledge and commissioned prestige, and the server racks which double as glass vitrines containing sculptural interpretations of graphics used by these elite intelligence agencies, are presented together to provide an investigative and expanding allegory on how the world is imagined and depicted.

Denny’s work brings into question elite state powers of the 16th and 21st centuries, the commissions made by them to collate and represent powerful data, and how this relates to expressions of authority and of nationhood.

### Christian Falsnaes

* 1980 in Copenhagen, lives in Berlin

![Christian Falsnaes, Front (Video still), 2014, Courtesy of PSM, Berlin, Photo: Bielefelder Kunstverein](image)

**Front, 2015**

Performance at the opening

Courtesy of the artist and PSM Gallery, Berlin

Just as the politician has a public, the artist has an audience, and it is this relation—between artist and audience, between the speaker and the listeners—which the Danish artist Christian Falsnaes has become most engaged. Many of his performative pieces have involved him questioning social convention and human relations, what it means to be a leader, or to follow instructions, exploring authoritarian and collective group behaviors and body language. Concepts of free will, democratic structures and individuality are raised in the sometimes absurd or magical situations which take place during his performances. Falsnaes takes a seemingly simple approach (and simple rhetoric) to open up a box of issues that uniquely touch the individual taking part, as well as raising universal problems that face society as a whole. His work raises consciousness on how individuals conduct themselves, and the many ways in which the power of collective will reveals itself and can be manipulated.

### Evgeny Granilshchikov

* 1985 in Moscow, lives between Moscow and Bangkok

![Evgeny Granilshchikov, Unfinished Film (Video still), 2015, Courtesy of the artist](image)

**Unfinished Film, 2015**

2-channel video, 14 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Evgeny Granilshchikov is first and foremost a video artist, who also employs installation and photography practices to interrogate what it means to be living in Moscow today. His films touch on the influence politics has on society and more specifically, the pressures of the current political situation in Moscow. The effects of state control, censorship and the media are addressed through the indirect connection to the individual’s everyday life. The protagonists of his videos are almost always young Muscovites; artists or activists who are trying to make sense of their world, their historical heritage and their contemporaneity. Blurring the lines between fiction and documentary, Granilshchikov creates scenarios that manipulate classical narrative structures forcing together a rich array of associations.

Unfinished Film could be thought of as a “film collage” where fragments of seemingly unrelated pieces are pasted or stitched together. As if by chance banal conversations, personal dialogues or actions are placed under intense focus, highlighting the details of everyday occurrences such as surfing the net, meeting up with friends, getting ready to go somewhere, and walking or driving to unknown locations. Granilshchikov’s journalistic style observes the movements and relationships of the people followed by the camera, their habits and rituals, and slowly builds an atmosphere of intrigue. The viewer never fully finds out where the figures end up or why they fall under the circumstances they find themselves in. Much is left open to the imagination of the spectator. What seems clear however is the implicit sense of apprehension hidden in the simple actions of the young men and women that feature in the film. The growing feeling of alarm is not only fostered by visual mystification but by the fluctuating tempo of long, static shots interspersed with shorter episodes in mostly direct point of view, medium-shots.
Flaka Haliti

* 1982 in Pristina, lives in Munich, Pristina and Vienna

The motif pairing of blue and yellow symbolizes the colors of the European Union, projected as a place of longing that remains for many unreachable. For Haliti, blue is also the color of the horizon; a metaphor for something constantly in mind which may continue to be forever out of reach. For centuries the horizon has often ideologically connoted the future: principally a better future in terms of movement and progress. However the idea of the horizon is also frequently linked to an understanding of limitations – what can only be imagined but not yet experienced. Small figures made of wire, inspired by stick-figure drawings by children lend these metaphors a human perspective.

Rosemary Heather

* 1963 in Toronto, lives in Toronto

Kosovo born artist Flaka Haliti’s videos and installations address questions of identity, migration and mobility. Her yellow bags filled with blue sand are positioned in the exhibition space as a reference to uprooting and the loss of possession, both consequences of leaving your home behind. The motif pairing of blue and yellow symbolizes the colors of the European Union, projected as a place of longing that remains for many unreachable. For Haliti, blue is also the color of the horizon; a metaphor for something constantly in mind which may continue to be forever out of reach. For centuries the horizon has often ideologically connoted the future: principally a better future in terms of movement and progress. However the idea of the horizon is also frequently linked to an understanding of limitations – what can only be imagined but not yet experienced. Small figures made of wire, inspired by stick-figure drawings by children lend these metaphors a human perspective.

The picture shows a metal bench titled “New Theater bench (pink)” by Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff. It is described as having a pink color and dimensions of 409 x 137.5 x 82 cm / 614 x 141 x 82 cm. The bench is part of the exhibition “New Theater,” which is hosted by artists, writers, and musicians between 2013 and 2015. The exhibition explores the concept of performance and the role of the individual within society, discussing themes such as competition for attention and success, and the way in which an individual expresses him-or-herself within society through ordinary, everyday actions. The photographs on view in the exhibition depict the New Theater and the traces left there by its visitors. The benches furnished this theater project and stood in the space that radiated the atmosphere of the various participants’ collaborations. The art world is frequently dominated by competition for attention and success. On closer inspection, the romanticized bohemian lifestyle reveals itself as a self-centered, tenuous existence within the so-called creative class. Henkel and Pitegoff oppose the neo-liberal model of self-promotion.
that has invaded the art world by bringing together like-minded people for temporary cooperation, creating plays for themselves and others, and realizing them beyond any claims to perfection.

Anna Jermolaewa
* 1970 in St. Petersburg, lives in Vienna

Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2015. After advertizing on a Russian website roughly one hundred people were hired to demonstrate both for and against the international art event. The agitators were offered a small fee—following the reported practice of some recent political demonstrations in Russia. By selling their political bodies the protesters became mere symbols of purchased media manipulation under the guise of a democratic form of protest.

Johanna Kandl
* 1954 in Vienna, lives in Vienna and Berlin

Political Extras, 2015

2-channel video, each 20 min. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kerstin Engholm, Vienna

Mainly working with photography, video and installation, Anna Jermolaewa analyzes social relations, social structures and stereotypical roles manifest in democratic and totalitarian power apparatuses. Control mechanisms in political systems are frequently addressed, challenged or revealed to highlight the abilities of the authorities to manipulate, sway or assert force in connection to various political circumstances, which emerge in everyday life.

Political Extras is a two-channel video documenting a paid-for mass demonstration organized by Jermolaewa for the 6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2015. After advertizing on a Russian website roughly one hundred people were hired to demonstrate both for and against the international art event. The agitators were offered a small fee—following the reported practice of some recent political demonstrations in Russia. By selling their political bodies the protesters became mere symbols of purchased media manipulation under the guise of a democratic form of protest.

O. T. (It’s the economy, stupid!), 2002
Tempera on canvas, 150 x 115 cm
Museum of Contemporary Art (GfzK), Leipzig

O. T. (Ich wähle die Zukunft), 2012
Tempera on wood, 60 x 80 cm
Private collection

O. T. (modernize or die), 2002
Tempera on wood, 150 x 115 cm
MUSA, Vienna

O. T. (success in global...), 2002
Tempera on wood, 80 x 56 cm
Boris Marte, Vienna

O. T., 2011
Tempera on wood, 170 x 243 cm
evn collection, Vienna

(heavy artillery), 2007/15
Tempera on wood, 170 x 250 cm
Courtesy of the artist

O.T. (this ambitious...), 2001
Tempera on wood, 170 x 250
Vienna Chamber of Labour

Have you chosen, Mr. Keynes, 2005
Tempera on wood, 35 x 50 cm
Collection of Sigismund and Gitti Huck, Vienna

Repeat your message, 1999
Tempera on wood, 30 x 40 cm
Courtesy of the artist

O. T. (Who’s got the big Picture?), 2006
Tempera on canvas, 270 x 360 cm
M HKA, Antwerp

O.T. (success in global...), 2002
Tempera on wood, 80 x 56 cm
Boris Marte, Vienna

O. T., 2011
Tempera on wood, 170 x 243 cm
evn collection, Vienna

(heavy artillery), 2007/15
Tempera on wood, 170 x 250 cm
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Collection of Sigismund and Gitti Huck, Vienna

Repeat your message, 1999
Tempera on wood, 30 x 40 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Eine Reihe von furchtbaren Attentaten muß die Mächtigen erschrecken, 2014
Tempera on wood, 30 x 42 cm
Courtesy of the artist

A critical observer of the world around her, Johanna Kandl expands her outlook through frequent travel, including to former Eastern bloc countries. Her paintings, which are usually based on photographs, focus on people, places and events. Employing processes of abstraction and alienation she places her subject matter within a broader socio-political context. She frequently incorporates quotations or slogans in her paintings—forming a layer of commentary that transforms concrete situations in time into diagnostic snapshots of contemporary critique. In particular, the billboard-like quotations she uses provide connections between divergent social realities while emphasizing the effects that the globalized economy has on everyday life or the impact that political decisions have on society.

The process of painting is, for Johanna Kandl, a process of slowing down—one that induces an intensification of memory. In contrast to how the act of paying attention has become economized through increasingly sped-up visual media, she embraces figurative painting, a medium that may seem almost anachronistic, to reflect her individual perspective on society and politics. In this manner, she is responding to media reporting (with its simplifications that often echo advertising) by presenting paintings that promote a hard look at a reality that, instead of offering slick solutions, points out the complexity of the given situation.
Erik van Lieshout

* 1968 in North Brabant, lives in Rotterdam

**Dog, 2015**

2-channel video, HD, colour, sound, 12:04 min. / 11:20 min., various materials and dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin

Erik van Lieshout’s video works, drawings and installations address a social realism that takes up real circumstances, to then alienate them through commentary. Often referencing concrete examples from his native country—the Netherlands, van Lieshout applies a mode of address that is as engaged as it is confrontational. The focal point of his contribution to *Political Populism* is a two-channel video installation, integrated in construction-site fencing. The metal fencing is not intended as a barrier, but denotes a place for contemplation and debate. Taking the tragic death of the Russian rocket scientist and opposition politician Aleksand Dölmatov, the film *Dog* addresses the practical consequences of European policies on refugees and asylum. The well-known critic of Putin, who had been seeking asylum in the Netherlands, committed suicide at a reception centre for asylum-seekers near Rotterdam airport, after being told that his application for asylum had been rejected and that he was to be sent back to Russia. As it later transpired, the rejection had been the result of a computer error and caused a political scandal in which the Dutch interior minister was compelled to tender his resignation. Shortly after this incident van Lieshout was approached by a group of human rights activists to design a memorial to Dölmatov. The artist attended several of the activists’ meetings and got in contact with refugees. A commemorative performance for Dölmatov would have to reference Oleg Kulik’s 1995 performance *Pavlov’s Dog*, in which the artist lived like a dog for a month. At around the same time van Lieshout had started to work on his contribution to *Manifesta 10* in Saint Petersburg. It was from his raw footage for his contribution *Basement*, a video installation featuring the cats of the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, that he produced the video installation *Dog*: a memorial to Aleksand Dölmatov and an artwork that questions the influence of the artist in society.

Minouk Lim

* 1968 in Daejeon, lives in Seoul

**Navigation ID, 2014**

HD-video, 38:31 min.

*from x to a, 2014*

HD-video, 41:04 min., Installation: various materials and dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Missing gaps in the representation of national identity occupy South Korean artist Minouk Lim. Her works *Navigation ID* and *from x to a*, deal with two massacres that the government of South Korea committed against its own people. In the midst of war in 1950, and on the 18th of May in 1980 during a demonstration for democratic rights, two massacres took place, each directed against South Koreans accused of being supporters of the communist regime. These citizens came under suspicion of supporting the Korean People’s Army and the North. Only recently has reflection on these tragic events taken place, slowly reaching the communities that had repressed this history for so long.

Lim ventures into engaging with the past in her artistic practice, in this case the past which the government omitted, ignored and failed to deal with. She collected documents from witnesses and families of the bereaved to pinpoint this wound in Korean history. In a country that bases its identity on enthusiasm for technology and economic development, the historical research of the nation’s own identity has been neglected. The installation, and the initial performative intervention is part of a continuous effort to provide orientation for a society in which against the will of many the unforgettable is being forgotten.

Goshka Macuga

* 1967 in Warsaw, lives in London

**Notice Board, 2011**

Various materials, 120 x 12000 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

**Model for a Sculpture (Family), 2011**

Polystyrene, fabric mesh, plaster and cement, 700 x 500 x 400 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

*Of what is, that it is; of what is not, that it is not 1*, 2012

Tapestry, 520 x 1740 cm

Courtesy of Prada Collection, Milan

*Of what is, that it is; of what is not, that it is not 1, 2012*

Goshka Macuga, *Of what is, that it is; of what is not, that it is not 1*, 2012, Courtesy of the artist and Prada Collection, Milan
Jumana Manna

* 1987 in New Jersey, lives in Berlin

Blessed, Blessed Oblivion, 2010
HD-video, 21:24 min.
Courtesy of the artist

Jumana Manna employs investigative strategies; at once an anthropologist, historian and political commentator, she absorbs her present moment to pose questions for future political and social memory. The video Blessed, Blessed Oblivion treats delicate subjects such as desire and projection, power structures, nationalism and historical narratives in an altogether intimate way. Close and personal shots of Palestinian men at a barbershop, hanging out at an automobile repair shop or flexing, straining, pumping and pushing weights at a bodybuilding gym are set to lively pop music. The inspiration of Scorpio Rising, the 1963 cult film by Kenneth Anger, is most strongly felt by the sexually symbolic tools of the mechanic, and the importance of the soundtrack. The hyper-sexual, fast-paced almost Eisensteinian montage episodes are interjected with calmer encounters where the music is cut when in dialogue with individual men—discussing personal stories of love and life, or professional elaboration on the business of a car-washing. The work that goes into the washing, waxing, and polishing of a car maintenance is mirrored in the male grooming habits featured. Point of view perspectives of the different protagonists are incorporated, scanning the wall of the barber’s one sees a framed image of President Mahmoud Abbas, in another—one scans the picture of a muscular bodybuilder, in another—one sees rebel icons with guns.

Poetic with a humorous twist, the film is a fiery rumination on the poet Abd Al-Rahim Mahmoud and his poem The Martyr written in 1936. Hands (either smoking, busy at work, or clasped together) are a recurrent motif perhaps referencing the first lines of the poem “I will carry my soul on my palm.” Fragmented and focused on theatrics, Manna drives the camera head first into the spaces of the thug subculture in the east of Jerusalem where male image and identity constructions are placed under close scrutiny.

Mián Mián

* 1970 in Shanghai, lives in Shanghai

Mián Mián, Photo: Simon Schwzyer

Fishbowl Talkshow, 2015

Performance at the opening
Courtesy of the artist

A “Fishbowl” is a method of conversation used for discussing topics within large groups. The name derives from the seating arrangement: participants take up their position around an inner circle that resembles a fishbowl. The inner circle consists of a small group debating on a topic and is observed by the rest of the participants seated in the outer circle. If someone from the outer circle wishes to contribute to the discussion, he or she may take a seat on the “guest chair” within the inner circle and join the debate. Author Mián Mián from Shanghai is known for her novels on Chinese popular culture and youth culture that have often been threatened with censorship. On the occasion of the opening of Political Populism, she has initiated two “Fishbowl” discussions, inviting anyone who is interested to participate. As a social medium, the open format of the debate highlights an essential part of public life. The availability of information and processes of direct communication to a wider audience not only plays a large role in establishing publicity, but serves as the basis for classical
democratic theoretical concepts. In this sense, a “Fishbowl” contributes to a culture of discussion not determined by experts alone but open to everyone, encouraging individuals to speak up and at the same time enforcing differentiated argumentation.

Marcel Odenbach

* 1953 in Cologne, lives in Cologne

Stadt der Helden, 2015
Drawing, 146 x 150 cm
Ich bin ein Berliner, 2013
Collage: photocopy, pencil and ink on paper, 151 x 182.5 cm
Private collection
Deutsches Symbol (Bundesadler), 1994
Deutsches Symbol (Deutsche Bank), 1994
Deutsches Symbol (Reichskriegsflagge), 1994
Deutsches Symbol (VW), 1994
Collage: photocopies, watercolor and graphite on paper, each 70 x 100 cm

Marcel Odenbach is regarded as one of the leading German video artists, though he has also produced an extensive number of works on paper. Dealing with the “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”—a composite German word generally associated with Germany’s process of coming to terms with the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust—Odenbach’s works reflect on how National Socialism resonates into the present day. At the same time, his works offer a universal outlook in response to a specifically German line of inquiry. Odenbach incorporates different cultures and political constellations into his work after extensively observing them. Reflections on the familiar and the unknown, his own biography and other people’s, are important themes for the artist, whose work makes its point as much aesthetically as it does politically. Odenbach’s drawings are actually collages, in which close-up and zoomed-out views converge in a dialogue of entanglement. While the zoomed-out view presents a clearly recognizable motif, the close-up shows countless single images that form the motif, similar to single pieces of a jigsaw puzzle making up the whole. The easily recognizable large image seen at first, crumbles into fragments when looking at it closely. These fragments, which seem subordinate to the greater whole, ultimately unfold their own message. Once spotted, it is impossible to imagine the original motif without them. Even the collages’ titles function as extended layers of interpretation, which channel the visual interpretation in a specific direction.

Ahmet Öğüt

* 1981 in Diyarbakir, lives in Istanbul, Amsterdam and Berlin

Ahmet Öğüt, Anti-Debt Monolith (Installation view), 2014, part of “Day After Debt” – A long-term counter-finance strategy initiated by Ahmet Öğüt in collaboration with Debt Collective/Strike Debt/Rolling Jubilee, commissioned by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and Mari Spirito, Protocinema, 2014 – onwards

Anti-Debt Monolith, 2014
Coin operated sculpture & sound, as part of “Day After Debt” – A long-term counter-finance strategy initiated by Ahmet Öğüt in collaboration with Debt Collective/Strike Debt/Rolling Jubilee, commissioned by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and Mari Spirito, Protocinema, 2014 – onwards

Pleasure Places of All Kinds; Yichang, 2015
Medium: 1/75 scale model, acrylic paint, sand & soil, polystrene, wood, 150 x 150 x 70cm, Courtesy of the artist

Pleasure Places of All Kinds; Qingdao, 2015
Medium: 1/75 Scale model, acrylic paint, sand & soil, polystrene, wood, 150 x 150 x 70cm, Courtesy of the artist

Ahmet Öğüt’s Anti-Debt Monolith is a black, towering sculpture that—when activated by coin donations—announces the steady and worrying growth of student debt that has occurred over the past ten years in the United States. The work is Öğüt’s contribution (alongside other artists such as Natascha Sadr Haghighian, Dan Perjovschi, Martha Rosler, Superflex, and Krzysztof Wodiczko) to a wider project entitled Day After Debt. The long-term counter-finance strategy, initiated by Öğüt in collaboration with The Debt Collective, enlisted fellow contemporary artists to raise awareness of the debt crisis through their work and imaginative responses to the current situation that hinders American higher education. The minimal monolith references the mysterious featureless monolith in Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey. All of the proceeds raised by the specially designed “fundraising machine” will go to The Debt Collective, the debt-cancelling initiative launched by Strike Debt’s Rolling Jubilee.

Pleasure Places of All Kinds is the title for a series of scale models of well-known nail houses produced by Ahmet Öğüt and his brother Suat. A “nail house” is a relatively new term derived from China to express a “holdout” property or building in which the owner refuses to abandon to make way for large construction or modernization projects. There are two nail houses on display in this installation: one from Yichang, and another one from Qingdao. The “stubborn nails” are stuck in wood, and cannot be pounded down with a hammer. They are a symbol of resistance. Addressing the expulsion of people from their residencies, the scale representations show the “scale” or strength of individuals’ actions against the might of corporate interests.
Trevor Paglen

* 1974 in Camp Springs, lives in Berlin and New York

Blurring the distinctions between artist, journalist, scientist, photographer and geographer, Trevor Paglen boasts a multi-valent practice coupled with an exhaustive research working method. Committed to exploring how we view our shared geopolitical and historical moment, Paglen’s oeuvre observes both what can be seen and what cannot. Well-known for his immense photographic output over the last decade; he has taken thousands of photographs of secret locations, flight paths, or other confidential activities of the United States defense enterprise by using specially produced devices. With remarkable focus on the invisible networks that map our world, his academic and artistic concerns go hand in hand.

*89 Landscapes* is a dual-channel video installation, which draws from material included in the Academy Award-winning documentary *Citizenfour* by Laura Poitras. The film follows encounters with Edward Snowden and his public exposure of the mass indiscriminate surveillance schemes run by the government of the United States of America. Not dissimilar to Snowden’s standpoint, believing in the rights of American citizens to know the extent to which they can be and are monitored, Paglen also believes in the rights of the people—to see otherwise invisible systems of control. His work makes visible the hidden workings of the American and British intelligence organizations. Namely, the covert operations and the secret high security sites of the National Security Agency (NSA) of the United States, and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) of the United Kingdom. The often hazy atmosphere of his photography, and almost romantic, impressionistic blurriness witnessed in his cinematography, performs both an aesthetic and metaphorical function. On the one hand, the bleary form, compositional rigour and warm tones of his pictures underlines how he not only tests the limits of vision but works towards producing visually arresting images. On the other hand, the fuzzy, indistinct character of his work—including this installation—acts as an allegory for the hardship to uncover the truth about government activities.

89 Landscapes, 2015

2-channel video installation, color, sound, 24 min.
Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

Hito Steyerl

* 1966 in Munich, lives in Berlin

Factory of the Sun, 2015

Video installation: single-channel video, 23 min., HD video pro rez.MOV file. / Motion Capture Studio; blue, illuminated grid in space, freestanding projection architecture, sun beds, and deck chairs
Courtesy of the artist and KOW, Berlin

An illuminated grid of neon lights transforms a black space into a Motion Capture Studio, which turns human motion into light pulses, thereby providing the basis for the figure’s movement within a computer game’s virtual reality. As in a 3D rendering, the visitors become part of the setting. Lying on sun beds, they watch a 23-minute long film that resembles both a technodance film and 3D computer games. A cross between film and virtual reality, the video presents an array of images, producing an online world under surveillance by drones and the NSA that appears real but feels like science fiction. Hito Steyerl’s *Factory of the Sun* resorts to the sun as a metaphor for the Age of Enlightenment, whose power to make all things visible is replaced by the “deadly transparency” of the internet and transformed into a potentially dystopian reality. The priority today is to sound out the remaining freedom of action that political individuals hold in the face of digital information overload, economic interests, and various social distortions. As a driving force of the Factory of the Sun, light and it’s immateriality changes bodies, information, and values into equally fluid entities. Similar to the various modes of a computer game, the film switches between different levels of reality that continually overlap: the narrator is at the same time also the programmer of the game, whose protagonists in turn perform forced labour in a Motion Capture Studio. Dancing becomes the actual form of resistance against the invisible, immaterial energies in an allegedly hopeless hyperreality.

Jun Yang

* 1975 in Qintian, lives in Vienna, Yokohama and Taipei

An illuminated grid of neon lights transforms a black space into a Motion Capture Studio, which turns human motion into light pulses, thereby providing the basis for the figure’s movement within a computer game’s virtual reality. As in a 3D rendering, the visitors become part of the setting. Lying on sun beds, they watch a 23-minute long film that resembles both a technodance film and 3D computer games. A cross between film and virtual reality, the video presents an array of images, producing an online world under surveillance by drones and the NSA that appears real but feels like science fiction. Hito Steyerl’s *Factory of the Sun* resorts to the sun as a metaphor for the Age of Enlightenment, whose power to make all things visible is replaced by the “deadly transparency” of the internet and transformed into a potentially dystopian reality. The priority today is to sound out the remaining freedom of action that political individuals hold in the face of digital information overload, economic interests, and various social distortions. As a driving force of the Factory of the Sun, light and it’s immateriality changes bodies, information, and values into equally fluid entities. Similar to the various modes of a computer game, the film switches between different levels of reality that continually overlap: the narrator is at the same time also the programmer of the game, whose protagonists in turn perform forced labour in a Motion Capture Studio. Dancing becomes the actual form of resistance against the invisible, immaterial energies in an allegedly hopeless hyperreality.

Jun Yang, Chopsticks / how to do that? (Installation view), 2000, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna
Chopsticks / how to do that?, 2000
Neon light installation, plexiglas boxes
3 parts, each 48 x 84 x 8 cm
Paris Syndrome (Indoor Plants), 2007 – ongoing
Cardboard, paint, adhesive tape, wire, dimensions variable
Wiener Paravent, 2015
Plywood, wood, glaze painting, brass
4 panels, each 200 x 49 x 2.5 cm
Wiener Sitzgruppe, 2015
Plywood, glaze painting, dimensions variable
Becoming European or How I grew up with Wiener Schnitzel, 2015
Video, color, sound, 12:54 min.
All works courtesy of the artist and Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna

The work of Jun Yang treats the natural and the artificial in a reflective and critically challenging way. His far-ranging practice includes film, performances, installations, and projects in public space. By exploring individual and collective identities his films often touch on the ways one acts in society, and how the ‘we’ and ‘I’ overlap or collide. When considering the hopes and dreams for a better future—through social agendas or individual ideas—the friction between ideal life and reality becomes visible.

Eat Drink Art Business and Chopsticks / how to do that? both connect Yang’s concerns with the intersection between economical projects and contemporary art. Chopsticks / how to do that? was created when Yang was working on the first concept for the Viennese restaurant ra’mien. Since 2002 he has been working on a number of gastronomical projects and in Eat Drink Art Business these are visually reflected, provoking the relationship between art institutions and business enterprises.

The ornamental wallpaper entitled Goldenes Zimmer is a repeated pattern in golden-yellow of an icon of Viennese cuisine: the Wiener Schnitzel. The print references the myth that gold leaf was originally used to ornament the infamous dish. The golden breadcrumbs which coat the cutlet are just one formal layer out of many conceptually to be found in the wallpaper—described as pure surface and decoration. Transformed and depicted in this fashion the Schnitzel serves as an optical homage to an Austrian success product. The work seems to point to representation, and perhaps the packaging of products. Essentially, it raises national and international symbolic constructions and permutations.

Authenticity is most prominently addressed in Paris Syndrome (Indoor Plants), Wiener Paravent and Wiener Sitzgruppe. With his sculptures dealing with reproduction and representation—by simulating wood grain or recreating exotic houseplants grown everywhere today—Yang triggers responses to the “fakes” which fluctuate between expectation and desire with reality and disillusionment.

Populism has many faces, and more than one meaning. The usefulness of a term with different meanings resides in the fact that it may hint at family resemblances between different phenomena called “populism”. Therefore, in any debate on populism, it might soon appear that the contributors—artists, academics, writers and other intellectuals—will use the word in many different ways.

The affects and desires that characterize populist politics do not necessarily differ from those that find expression in the sphere of art. The question is how forms of populism—whether left-wing or right-wing, progressive or reactionary—promote themselves in their quest for mass appeal through stylistic consciousness and aesthetic strategies. Ultimately, this is about an economy of signs and desire that can also be found in the political imagination of visual arts, which create spaces and images that shape our idea of democracy.

The philosopher, critic and curator Dieter Lesage is director of the RITS School of Arts (Erasmus University College Brussels), where he also works as a researcher.

The lecture is part of the Vienna Art Week.

Program
Wed 18/11, 6 pm
Dieter Lesage
On Art & Populism. Lecture for a Small Audience

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The lecture is part of the Vienna Art Week.

Wed 25/11, 7 pm
Steffen Möller
Viva Warszawa – Polen für Fortgeschrittene Cabaret (in German)

The current book of the author and cabaret artist Steffen Möller Viva Warszawa – Polen für Fortgeschrittene was released in March 2015. At Kunsthalle Wien he will present his stage show also titled Viva Warszawa.

Steffen Möller says about the show: “It will NOT be a reading, but a photo-sightseeing tour of the allegedly ugly and arrogant Warsaw. However, as a precaution we will begin in the romantic city of Krakow to make it easier for the newcomers to Poland. Along the way, the audience will learn more than fifty Polish words that are not in the basic vocabulary, but have the advantage that they can be remembered very easily.”

Steffen Möller studied philosophy and theology in Berlin, and after enrolling in a Polish-language course in Krakow out of curiosity he moved to Warsaw in 1994. At first he was a German teacher at a Gymnasium and at a University. From 2002 to 2008, he starred in the popular telenovela M jak miłość (L for Love). At the same time he was a regular guest of the comedy show Europe could be liked and in 2005 he moderated the first season of the Polish edition of Wetten, dass … ? Since 2008 he has been on tour with solo programs throughout Germany and Poland. In Vienna, his most recent appearance was at the stage of the Rabenhoftheater in 2012.

Wed 9/12, 7 pm
De Rijke / De Rooij: Mandarin Ducks
Film screening and conversation with Willem de Rooij

Mandarin Ducks is a stylized group portrait, whose dialogue is composed of quotations from politicians and friends of the artists, recycling common clichés from the art world as well as the patterns of populist argumentation. The film, produced in 2006 for the Venice Biennale, brings together ten people in a typical apartment, where they talk about love and dependency, corruption,
politics and psychological ambivalence. Through the decidedly artificial performances of their actors and the film’s overall contrived atmosphere, de Rijke and de Rooij exhibit a distance to the proceedings, exposing in the end the ideological foundations of a strata of society condensed into a cliché.

The film screening and conversation with Willem de Rooij are being presented in co-operation with mumok cinema at mumok.

Tue 15/12, 7 pm
*Becoming European or How I grew up with Wiener Schnitzel*
Jun Yang in conversation with Nicolaus Schafhausen (in German)

Individuals and society are in a permanent process of negotiation, where aspirations and reality collide. Hopes, desires and utopias on the one hand, pressures to adapt and expectations on the other hand lead to latent conflicts, which every subject has to argue with—either with themselves or their environment.

The films, objects and installations by Jun Yang reflect this tension between subjective and collective identity in different cultural contexts. The dream of a better future thereby forms a constant, which always has to undergo new challenges.

Jun Yang will also introduce a number of his video works during the conversation with Nicolaus Schafhausen.

Thu 17/12, 7 pm
"sieben Jahre später"
Marcel Odenbach in conversation with Vanessa Joan Müller (in German)

Marcel Odenbach is considered one of the most significant German video artists, though he has also produced a large number of works on paper in addition to his prolific video oeuvre. In their intense investigation of the issues involved in coming to terms with the past, Odenbach’s works reflect how the legacy of National Socialism reaches into the present, while at the same time attempting to expand a specifically German line of inquiry into a universal perspective. Odenbach observes different cultures and political configurations and lets them influence his work. Reflections on the familiar and the foreign, on his own life story and that of others, are also important motifs in his work, which pursues its line of argumentation in an equally aesthetic and political manner.

28/1 – 30/1 2016
*On Art and Populism Symposium*
A three-day symposium will take place at the end of the exhibition and will be dedicated to the meaning of contemporary art and its challenges within this context: contemporary art is often viewed as elitist, inapprhensible, and heavily based on references. Facing this is the demand for exhibitions that appeal to the public and address broad sections of the population, as well as a demand for a general popularization of art. Which role can and should art take on this scenario? And is it at all art’s mission to have a mission?

**Thursday Tours in Turkish and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian**
We will introduce you to the Kunsthalle Wien and take you on a tour through the exhibition *Political Populism*. The exhibition assembles artworks by over 20 international artists and deals with issues such as migration, asylum and refugee policy, surveillance and spying. Everyone is welcome to join, no registration necessary.

*We speak your language: Today in Turkish*
With Dilan Sengül
Thu 12/11, 26/11, 3/12 & 17/12, 3 pm & 7 pm

*We speak your language: Today in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian*
With Selma Abdic
Thu 15/11, 10/1 & 31/1, 3 pm

*We speak your language: Today in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian*
With Selma Abdic
Thu 19/11, 10/1 & 31/1, 3 pm

**Sunday Tours**
We are happy to answer all of your questions! Our art educators will discuss current political issues and place them in relation to particular readings or interpretations of the artists represented in the exhibition *Political Populism*.

We will answer all of your questions: Today on the topic of…

**Curators’ Tours**
*My View*
Members of the curatorial team of the Kunsthalle Wien will take you on a personal tour through the exhibition

Sun 8/11 & 7/2, 3 pm
*Capitalism*, with Martin Pfitscher

Sun 15/11, 10/1 & 31/1, 3 pm
*Populism and it’s codes*, with Michael Simku

Sun 22/11, 20/12 & 17/1, 3 pm
*Globalisation*, with Maximiliano Kostal

Sun 29/11 & 13/12, 3 pm
*Media*, with Daniela Fasching

Sun 6/12, 27/12 & 3/1, 3 pm
*Censorship, surveillance and conspiracy*, with Wolfgang Brunner

**Political Populism and reflect on the topics, backgrounds and significance of the artistic positions.**

Tue 10/11, 6 pm
With Eleanor Taylor (in English)

Tue 1/12, 6 pm
With Anne Faucheret (in German)

Tue 15/12, 6 pm
With Luca Lo Pinto (in English)

Tue 19/1/6, 6 pm
With Nicolaus Schafhausen (in German)

Tue 2/2/6, 6 pm
With Vanessa Joan Müller (in German)

**Colophon**

Exhibition
Kunsthalle Wien GmbH

Director
Nicolaus Schafhausen

CFO
Ursula Hühnel-Benischek

Curator
Nicolaus Schafhausen

Curatorial Assistance
Juliane Bischoff
Eleanor Taylor
Theresa Dettlinger (Intern)

Exhibition Management
Veronika Floch
Karin Haas

Construction Management
Johannes Diboky
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