

Andreja Džakušič, Keiko Miyazaki

In-between

9 May–1 June 2019

artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor, Slovenia

*I know I was wrong,
When I said it was true,
That it couldn't be me,
And be her in between,
Without you.«
(In Between Days, The Cure)*

AnKo – Andreja Džakušič and Keiko Miyazaki have functioned as an artistic duo since 2017, engaging mainly as performers, but also active in other contemporary media, most notably photography and video, as well as interactive installations. The two artists come from different cultures, which is the basis of their explorations into the possibilities of adapting to conditions in a new environment, where their focus has been on a comparison between different behavior patterns and ways of communication. Communication, of course, does not exist only at the level of verbalization and potential language: bodily communication means that apart from the agreed, general gesticulations, people respond to the environment also by means of body language, which is closely related to our subconscious, if we are to believe, for example, Freud. After all, (according to Freud's student, Lacan) the subconscious is structured like a language, which means first that as such, it can be traced within the structuralist discourse, and second, that language itself is in fact a matter of agreement, it is arbitrary, and depends not only on the speech situation, but mostly on the emergence of specific signifiers, which determine the meaning of signs used for communication.

Following the idea of external communication and body language, the artists find that the code of conduct in different countries is not the same by any means, which is something the communication discourse should confront. Speech in itself falls short many times, dangling in the crack of the civilization difference, which is why we upgrade speech by means of gesticulation, of which body language is a part. The possibility of misunderstanding thus arises already from the mere necessity of fundamentally breaking the barrier of incomprehension: to understand someone, it is not enough to speak their language, but rather, they must be understood holistically. Because language is arbitrary, it depends on the signs that we are to *understand* collectively in order to have a successful communication, therefore it is vital that this unconditionality not be overlooked. The two artists, then, deal first and foremost with socially committed art, with current stereotypes, taboos, and the position of women in society: are women more adaptable already by nature, or is this only an expectation of the society?

In the artistic act entitled **In-between**, Andreja Džakušič and Keiko Miyazaki wish to overcome past relationships and attitudes in a visually poetic, yet still socially critical manner. **In-between** is a moment between before and after, it is in fact that intermediary moment of the proper being, of the earthly reality, which is justified by its temporary emergence, as a surrogate for something, which is yet to take place. The time in-between is not empty time, but a suspense of the future: it is an event between two moments, which falls short of a practical value, because it remains in a state of expectation, postponed, as it were: instead-of-something-for-that. That 'in-between' remains unfulfilled, because the subject rejects it as something eliminated each time: the spirit suspends the work of the mind (to play with Hegel's thought), because it does not really need this 'in-between'. The 'in-between' is there in order to – like an interference, a defect or a vocal tic – preserve the subject in an at least relative relation to reality, which changes.

The artists call attention to the disintegration of relations, which do not only represent interruptions before what is to come, but even a ruined relationship, reciprocally irreparable, which echoes in the future as well, and which has been marked in the past. Although the artists do not wish to specify these relationships, because this is a global problem, they nonetheless ask themselves about the actual limits of each such relationship.

The exhibition opening features a performance that symbolizes the intermediary (in-between) phase of some human relationship. The artists employ visual symbolism of objects, which represent the bond of a mutual relationship between two persons. They put on masks, stretching a red thread to emphasize the integration of individual subjects into a certain relationship, which will acquire, only in the future, a character of suspense, and the fragility of which represents not only the possibility that this bond can be torn at any time, but mainly the fact that a clash in a relationship does not necessarily mean a release of the subject from that relationship. By stretching the thread the artists test limits, physical and psychological, which still hold the fibers together, and through them preserve the relationship, and thereby the whole.

The in-situ performance is designed also as a communication with the physical space, which represents the link between the protagonists and the audience, in which, in some unrepeatable form, they visualize some random moment that acquires, through the presence of the third, a note of voyeurism. The invited observers have the privilege to wait, together with the artists, for that fatal breaking point, which emerges beyond the need for mere pleasure: the relationship we observe is charged with a tragic character, because it always remains (precisely because of the general equality of possibility, both in the economic as well as the biological sense) under the threat of the sword of Damocles; it is always in a just-before-the-end situation. The illusion created in external observers by some random relationship, is really a double one: first, it is about some imaginary external content, which is there only for us, and is covered by language. And until the masks are not down internally in that same relationship, it cannot be understood, which is highlighted by the artists: only the removal of the mask makes it possible for the illusion to make way for the truth, which has now 'become flesh', faithfully and in the rhythm of life's metronome.

The exhibition showcases two experimental videos, designed especially for the occasion of exhibiting at the artKIT Gallery. The screens with two images are positioned one vis-à-vis the other, so that the images are facing one another: through them, the artists thematize the breaking point of some random relationship, when the overabundance or surplus of pleasure is transformed into an empty space, into a repeating vacuum. The videos represent a kaleidoscopic symbolism of impressions or memories, a digital mandala shaped like a spiral, which either devours us or declines us.

In the second part of the exhibition space there is a sound room, which, again, invites us to be voyeurs, this time by means of eavesdropping. The artists use the sound installation to make us participate in a game of "playing phone tag": the sound message cannot be made out, unless we press our ears to the object each time. Every time we move our ears away in order to understand what we heard, we are already missing out on that content, so we always remain outside of the reach of the whole. Particularity as the necessary element in human relationships is what – according to the artists – carries a great deal of responsibility for the occurrence of in-between states, i.e., disruptions in relationships, deterioration of relations and consequently, disagreements between people.

"In our society, a certain type of behavior is expected of women; every overstepping of the agreed boundaries of 'good behavior' is seen as an unwanted disturbance," thus the artists.

The artists, then, lean against the moment in-between relationships, against that limited duration, in which the interruption of some state or habitude resounds; a schism between two persons that can occur as a consequence of the unexpected, because it is always bipolar, and prevents even our best intentions. The artistic exploration of the development of this relationship, which is built out of the internal dualism between the 'before' and the 'after', enables a broad exposition field. We all know that relationships develop and also change. They may be short-term, superficial, or deeper and therefore long-lasting, in the case of both, it is primarily about genuine human contact. Relationships are what makes a life full, and they can only enrich us if we know how to open up to each other, and, only then, truly meet.

Nina Jeza & Artists&Poor's

(translated by Helena Fošnjar)

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Exhibition opening 9 May 2019.

On display until 1 June 2019.

artKIT / Glavni trg 14, Maribor, Slovenia

Tue–Fri: 10.00–13.00 and 17.00–19.00

Sat: 10.00–13.00