backdrop of the process of preservation and physical connection with a family member whose value lies in shared experiences, emotions, knowledge passed on and time spent together. At the center of the project is a documentary film. The series also consists of photographic documentation of tooth enamel, archival photographs created by the artist's father during her childhood, family archives, orthopans and documents.

The works of **Matej Zupan** belong to a large series of works entitled *In Collaboration with the Deceased* (2023–), a kind of collaboration with a deceased grandfather, based on the principle of discovering and creating old memories through the objects left behind, which the artist perceives as artifacts. In this way, he creates a tribute with works whose motifs come from found objects that belonged to the deceased grandparents. The first or actual title of all the works in this series is "In Collaboration with the Deceased (and consecutive Roman number of the work)", with which the artist marks the passage of time. The order in which the works are exhibited or their size is not important. What is important is the passage of time they mark, beginning with the burial of the grandfather. At the same time, it is impossible to escape the influence of his son, the artist's father, with whose help the artist now acquires secondary memories and inevitably incorporates him into the works. The works therefore vary in techniques and motifs, depicting everything from boxes, stamps and badges to the garden and his house, thus linking three generations united in the exploration of their origins. Through the personal story of his grandfather and his involvement in his father's life, and ultimately his own, Zupan shows the importance and influence of even the smallest gestures and objects that shape the course of life.

– Sara Nuša Golob Grabner

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FACE UPON FACE
25 July–23 August 2025

MMC KIBLA/KiBela, Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor
Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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The group exhibition ***Face upon Face*** is a socially committed project in the field of visual arts. It presents artists of the younger and middle generation who, in their individual projects, deal intensively with social attitudes towards aging and invite critical reflection on the differences, similarities and challenges between the generations. The exhibition aims to stimulate constructive conversations on topics such as the impact of dementia on the individual and the family, traditions, transience, friendship in old age, building and maintaining relationships with older family members, (trans)generational trauma, intangible heritage and bridging generational divides.

At a certain point in their creative process, many artists turn to their personal past, which actively shapes their present, as this coincides with introspection as a crucial part of the creative process. Despite the relative frequency of exploring life stages in art history, in contemporary art we can see a move away from the simple depiction of older people and a consideration of aging as a general constant of life. Furthermore, projects on the theme of generations are becoming increasingly common and are characterized by a distinctly personal and emotional touch. The reason for this is that the system is becoming less and less responsive to people who no longer fit into the rigid parameters of productivity, beauty and progress within the framework of systemic usefulness. Our existence is externally prescribed and based on individualism or, in the extreme, solipsism, which would have us believe that the only solid thing we can cling to for successful survival in a given society is our consciousness and that the people around us exist only to the extent that their reflection extends to ourselves – their existence is valid to the extent that we depend on it and it affects our needs. If we dissociate from the fact that aging is a process that is inevitable for all of us, we can quickly come to believe that it is just an unpleasant part of life that we are often unable to cope with on either a personal or interpersonal level. Poor social security and care also contribute to this, adding an air of dread and uncertainty to the third stage of life. In the face of existential concerns, youthful beauty standards, a false understanding of the diversity of our fellow human beings and an obsession with productivity as a measure of value, a compassionate and nuanced approach to the older generations and the impact our ancestors have left on us is all too often lost. Despite the dictates of the system, our lives do not exist in a box. Like ecosystems, they are interconnected by numerous invisible roots and processes that require interdependence, responsiveness and consideration. One of the factors that prevents us from deepening intergenerational contact is the fear of confronting transience, because it also requires us to confront our own mortality, vulnerability and mutability and, in the case of family ties, a difficult sense of (anticipated) grief, an exploration of the cultural and generational influences on our personalities and lives and, more generally, ways that would allow us to fully engage with the complexity of inextricable entanglements. While we are used to perceiving older people in terms of positive or negative stereotypes (backward, naïve, weak,

dependent, kind, wise, experienced, etc.), we forget that the core of our personality does not change drastically over the years and remains multi-layered. People of all ages love, learn, enter into and break off relationships, seek new experiences, want to participate in events, remember, forget and expect, help and harm, make good and bad decisions and try to understand change. Against the backdrop of stereotypes, it is impossible to understand and develop empathy for the human stratification that never disappears at any point in life. Even though it seems that humanity is constantly going off track and society is constantly heading towards destructiveness, it is these oppressions that highlight the clear voices that do not surrender to ambiguity and reliance on binary thinking and, precisely because of the unfriendly environment, turn their gaze to the hidden stories, their origins and the empathetic but critical deconstruction of the imposed mentality.

Blaž Gutman develops his extensive photo project *Seventy Years Ago It Was Seven Minutes Ago* through the lens of therapeutic photography and chooses his stepfather Janez, who suffers from dementia, as his main subject. Dementia is one of the most common diseases of advanced age, but also one of the least understood, as it is very complex and the symptoms manifest themselves very differently from person to person depending on their circumstances. Gutman's recordings of home life through photographs and occasional textual and drawing interventions emphasize the dignity, distress and emotion of the family member photographed. The series offers a valuable perspective on dementia without fear, distancing from the person or the burdens that often accompany an individualistic view of the disease. Although the disease robs the person of a linear perception of time and memories, the photographer emphasizes the person behind the disease. He tries to see the world through his eyes and adapt to the rhythm of a different perception in order to be close to Janez, to accept him in all processes and times full of challenges and the unknown, and to give meaning and respect to transience as an important part of existence.

In the project *Zahida Is a Feminist*, **Đejmi Hadrović** shows her family environment and focuses on the intimate stories and experiences of Balkan women, who are often perceived as subordinate to patriarchy and traditionalist within the framework of white Western feminisms, or equally harmful as mystical, exotic and difficult. In the project, based on a combination of photographs and written stories, the artist highlights the overlooked, everyday emancipatory practices of Balkan women who have carved out their independence and power through consistent acts of self-respect and resistance. This is not always visible on a widely recognized level, but it decisively shapes the course of each individual woman's life, her descendants and ultimately the mentality of several generations. Through the project, Hadrović traces the family lineage and influences that led to individual and hereditary emancipations, and most importantly, the inner strength that encouraged women to live outside the prescribed systemic framework and act spontaneously within the core feminist principles, even before the general knowledge of feminism was widespread. The series presents the Balkans as a gray area of research in Western feminism, illuminating the culturally conditioned derivatives of a movement that cannot exist as a generic generalization if our goal is to understand the specificities of women's stories everywhere.

Luka Hernet presents the photo project *Terracota Happiness*, which was inspired by his desire to commemorate the garden gnomes that his grandfather Jože Leskošek designed and colored for many years. The photographer did not have a particularly close relationship with his grandfather for a long time, but in the last year of his life he became closer to him precisely because of the mystery surrounding the creation of the gnomes. He was fascinated by the possible reasons for his grandfather's creation and the symbolism behind the object, which in principle is considered a simple garden decoration, kitsch and cliché. The photographer endeavored to understand every detail of his grandfather's motivation. When his grandfather died, the series, which was originally intended to demystify the garden gnomes, took on a new meaning. Suddenly it was no longer just a story about mysterious garden gnomes and his grandfather's unusual obsession with them, but has evolved into a personal story between the artist and his grandfather, especially about their reunion in the last year of his life. Most of the photographs do not feature the artist's grandfather, but capture his surroundings, objects and the way his life has shaped space and the stories of others.

Klara Kracina stumbled across the photos of elderly friends on a trip to the botanical garden. The strangeness of the find and the authentic depiction of the friendship of unknown women encouraged her to transform the found photos into brightly colored silkscreens that lend playfulness to the images and emphasize the importance of female friendship at every stage of life. The silkscreens include text elements from discarded shopping receipts that were also found. Short lists of responsibilities are reminders that are particularly useful in old age, when people begin to have memory problems. In this way, the artist draws parallels with the daily duties and challenges of older women and at the same time shows that they too can still appreciate the almost girlish, carefree get-together with friends on an outing. The theme of memory runs like a red thread through the series and emphasizes the contrast to the apparent banality of life, which nevertheless usually awakens the need for recording and preservation and becomes a valuable document of the past. The small moments of life ultimately become the central axis of our existence. With her project, the artist reminds us of the immutability of the dynamics of important life relationships and of the eternal need for closeness, intimacy and lightness.

The film *Quadragenarian* by **Keiko Miyazaki** speaks of the strengthening of the cult of youth, the transformation of aging and the aging body into a consumer category and the rise of the ideology of agism, which attacks the dignity of the individual through a disparaging and discriminatory attitude towards older people. The film shows a close-up of a woman's face in slow motion as she moves her head to shake off the anti-wrinkle mask. The skin and muscles, which have lost their perfect youthful firmness, move slowly from side to side, emphasizing the lines and movements of the face, sometimes to the point of grotesqueness, refusing to look at the face in the light of crushing beauty demands. The barcode on the face speaks of modernity, which has objectified and taken to extremes the difficult confrontation with aging through the imperative of youth and a young body and the intensification of the desire to preserve youth. We follow the dialog with the artist's mother, who describes her own experiences with youth, aging, arranged marriage and the small acts of emancipation, highlighting the differences between her generation and that of her daughter. The leap in mentality between the two generations and the progress in choices come to the fore. The film is accompanied by Maurice Ravel's *Boléro*, a composition he composed during his rapidly progressing dementia, which reminds us of the passing and changes that can be observed between two successive generations.

With the project *Babiščina (Grandmother's Inheritance)*, **Lucija Rosc** reverses the traditional, male-centered notion of inheritance from the title (the Slovenian word for inheritance, dediščina, contains the word grandfather) and directs her research towards the life of her grandmother Marija Kobala (Mica). The starting point of the series is her grandmother's tooth, which was damaged in the 1960s and which she subsequently gilded. Sixty years later, her granddaughter melted down the tooth in question and covered her own dying tooth with gold, filming the entire process and turning it into a broader photographic project. The transfer of gold from one generation's tooth to another functions as a symbolic act of transferring experiences, memories and family dynamics, culminating in the artist's dedication to her grandmother's dynamic life. Although a physical object is at the forefront of the story, it serves only as a marker for the core idea of legacy. All content that has meaning and is worth passing on is revealed against the