

# Katarina Zdjelar

## *Selected Works*

For more information, preview links,  
additional textual and visual material:

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Stills Katarina Zdjar, *Gaze Is a Bridge*, 2023/24



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## Gaze Is a Bridge

— single channel video, 23', 2023/24

Katarina Zdjar's evocative film *Gaze Is a Bridge* draws inspiration from the painting *Self-Portrait with Rifle* (1912) by Nasta Rojc (1883–1964), one of Croatia's most intriguing yet long-marginalized artist. Rojc's work defied normative heterosexual conventions and was also a pioneer beyond her paintings: she founded the Club of Croatian Women Artists in 1927 and was an active anti-fascist during World War II. Her contributions were largely erased from Croatian modern art historiography after WWII – a consequence of entrenched structural misogyny and widespread homophobia that persisted until recent times. Zdjar's film explores Rojc's legacy through a dialogue with the life and work of artist Ana Opalić, who, along with her partner Martina Zvonic (also featured in the film alongside their child Meri and Zdjar's child Niru), co-founded the Croatian queer pop band "U pol' 9 kod Sabe."

Set across two distinct eras nearly a century apart, *Gaze Is a Bridge* intertwines the personal histories of these two women, both united by their pursuit of freedom, self-expression, and love. Zdjar crafts a deeply emotional tapestry of associations, imagery, and music, creating an intimate space for reflection within the home. The film explores multiple dimensions of the gaze: a gaze that connects autobiographies and fosters understanding, a gaze that invites us to bridge the divide between the known and the unknown, between past and present. It challenges us to forge connections – between "us" and "them," "me" and "you" – and to find ourselves in our shared fragility, alienation, and resilience.



Europe, repeat after me: Willkommen, bienvenue,  
welcome Freunde, étranger, stranger. Glücklich zu sehen.



je suis enchantée Happy to see you, bleibe, reste,  
stay. It occurs to me that I will never be  
come Europe. I am talking to myself again.  
Mina and Bahar have left, I don't  
think they will come back.



*Reading "Europe Where Have You Displaced Love?", Exhibition view Post-Opera, TENT Rotterdam, 2019. Photo: Aad Hoogendoorn*



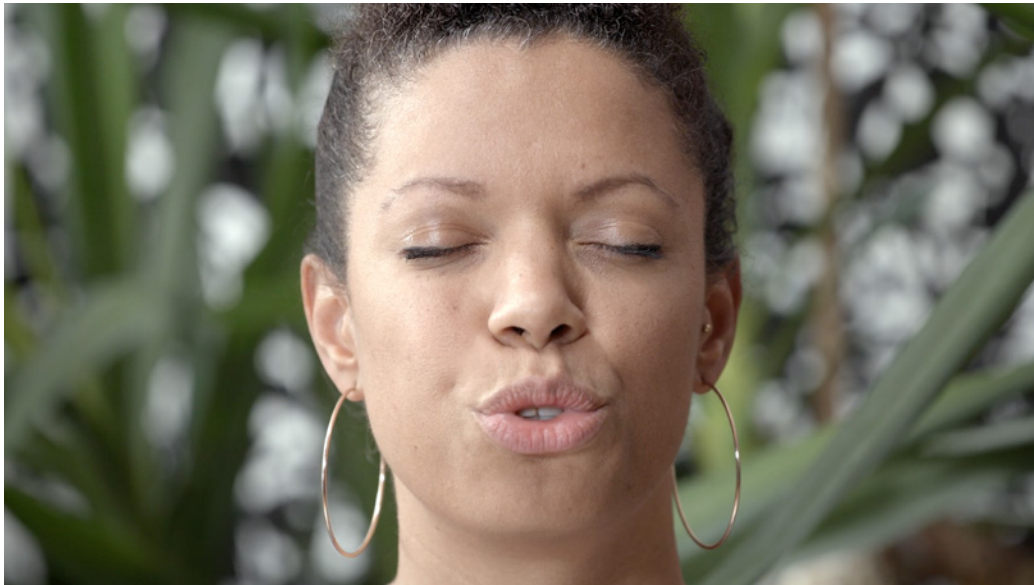


*Reading "Europe Where Have You Displaced Love?", Exhibition view Post-Opera, TENT Rotterdam, 2019. Photo: Aad Hoogendoorn*



## Reading “Europe Where Have You Displaced Love?”

— single channel video, 29’26”, loop, 2019



Stills Katarina Zdjar, *Reading “Europe Where Have You Displaced Love?”*, 2019

Katarina Zdjar often employs the rehearsal as a working method to explore the voice as a subject and substance. For this film she brought together four musicians for an improvisational interpretation of a text written by poet Athena Farrokhzad, *Europe, Where Have You Misplaced Love?*. The aim of the improvisation is not so much to arrive at a final performance, but rather to keep the range of possibilities open. One by one the musicians take control and then let it go again just before arriving at a common melody, at which point doubts or another voice steer the process in a different direction. It becomes a continuous search in which a multiplicity of interrelating voices coexists. This approach adds a layered interpretation to Farrokhzad’s reflections: <https://lithub.com/athena-farrokhzad-europe-where-have-you-misplaced-love/> (accessed 01.02.2019).

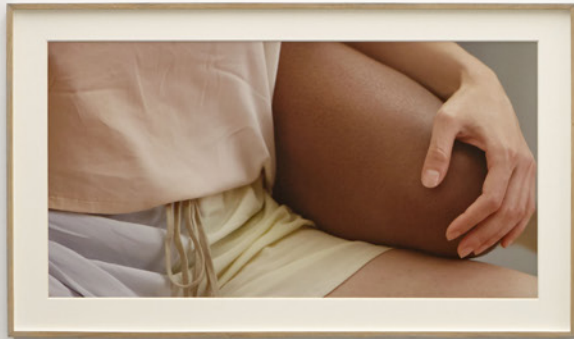


*Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer).*  
Exhibition view *Katarina Zdjelar*, Galleria SpazioA, Pistoia, 2018



*Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view Katarina Zdjelar, Galleria SpazioA, Pistoia, 2018







*Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view Katarina Zdjelar: *Proximities, a rehearsal, an archive*, Oregon Center for Contemporary Art, Portland, 2021–22.  
Photo: Mario Gallucci

## Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)

— 4 channel video installation and a floor sculpture, loop, 2017 – ongoing

Zdjelar's works bring forward ideas around (female) solidarity, resistance, the importance of art in the face of political oppression. Starting from her ongoing work *Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Tanz für Dore Hoyer)* premiered at *Prix de Rome* exhibition, and later shown at venues such as Berlin Biennale a.o., Zdjelar is interested in a kaleidoscopic approach to female relationality as a state of moving one another in passion, purpose and politics. Her research includes historical elements into these models and experiments as well as contemporary potentials.

*Not A Pillar Not A Pile* is inspired by archival documents from an all-women's dance studio founded in 1945 in post-war Dresden by Dore Hoyer, a choreographer and expressionist dancer, whose choreographies took the graphic works of artist Käthe Kollwitz as their departure point. Zdjelar's new film installation departs from this artistic meeting between Kollwitz and Hoyer as a manifestation of shared affinities with (proto)feminist pacifism, solidarity and collective transformation across the barriers of time, class and social difference. Drawing the past into the present, Zdjelar has gathered an international group of dancers and activists to create this filmic work. Their costumes and the film set bear a pattern created by women workers of Pausa textile factory in Germany, whose anti-facist resistance resonates with that of Hoyer and of Kollwitz, whose graphic works are in turn echoed in the wood cut floor panels. In the resulting film installation one body encounters another as a site of resistance and possibility, pointing to the fragile agency of collective action in the present.



*Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view *Katarina Zdjar: Proximities, a rehearsal, an archive*, Oregon Center for Contemporary Art, Portland, 2021–22. Photo: Mario Gallucci





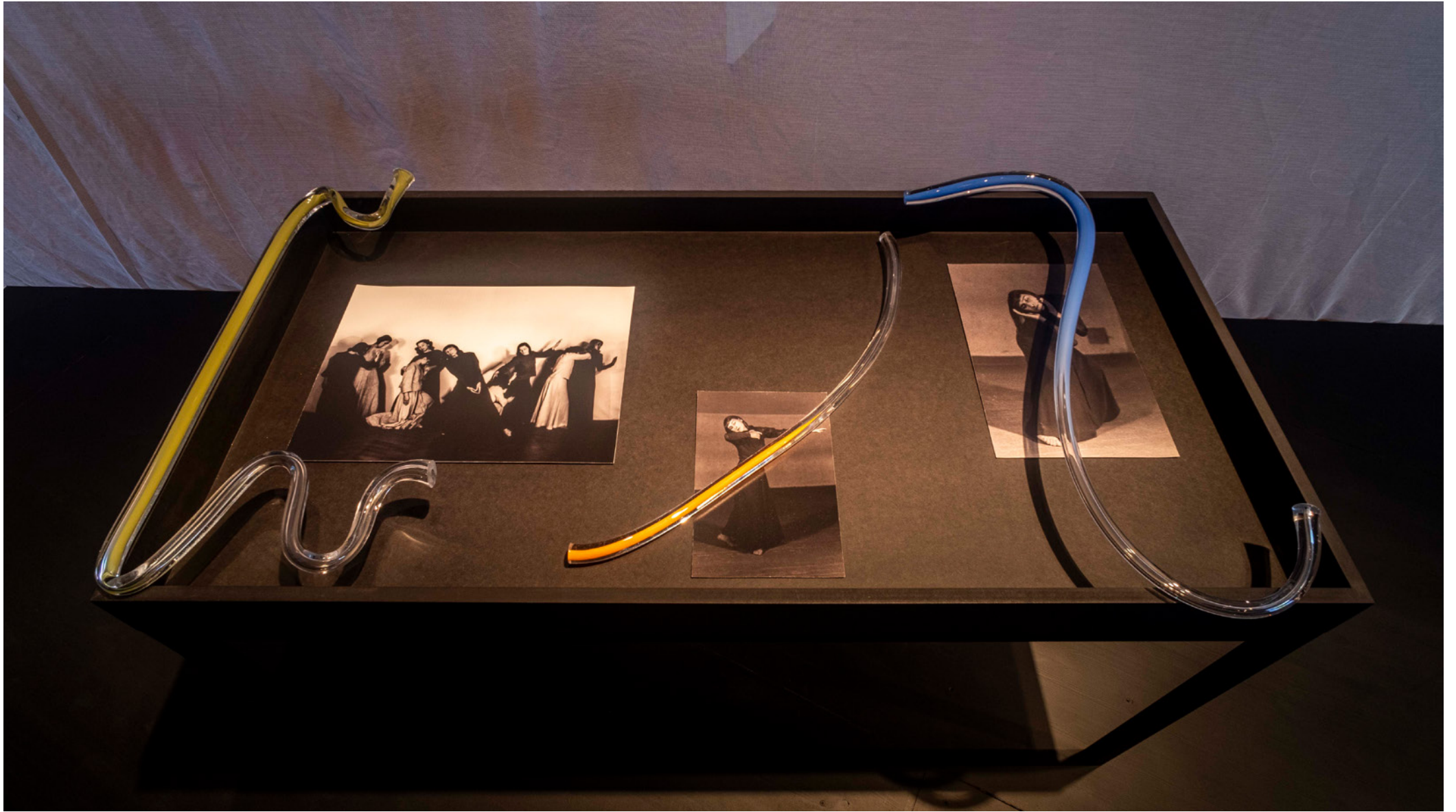
*Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view *Katarina Zdjelar: Proximities, a rehearsal, an archive*, Oregon Center for Contemporary Art, Portland, 2021–22. Photo: Mario Gallucci





*Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view *Radically Naïve – Naïvely Radical*, Kunsthall Extra City, 2021. Photo: Léonard Pongo





*Becoming Alphabet* and archival materials of *Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view Berlin Biennale, Gropius Bau, 2020. Photo: Mathias Voelzke





*Becoming Alphabet*. Exhibition view *The Last Terminal: Reflections on the Coming Apocalypse*, Rib Art Space, Rotterdam, 2023. Photo: Lotte Stekelenburg

## Becoming Alphabet

— mouth-blown glass, unique, variable dimensions, 2021

The sinuous glass pieces in *Becoming Alphabet* evoke the sense of an alphabet being created or rediscovered – perhaps representing forgotten or unknown forms of expression. These forms resemble a dance or fragmented sentences composed of “orphan signs” – symbols or letters that stand alone or lack connection to established systems. In Zdjelar’s Berlin Biennale installation of *Becoming Alphabet*, these glass tubes were placed in dialogue, as punctuation marks within videos and archival materials of *Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)* installation. *Becoming Alphabet* has been shown together with or independently from this work in different contexts and iterations. It invites viewers to imagine collective engagement in the “unknown,” proposing this as an open-ended, speculative question about togetherness as something that is in the making.



Left: *Becoming Alphabet*. Right: *Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*. Exhibition view *Chemical City*, MIMA, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough, UK, 2022. Photo: Rachel Deakin



*Becoming Alphabet*. Exhibition view *Chemical City*, MIMA, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough, UK, 2022. Photo: Rachel Deakin



*Becoming Alphabet.* Exhibition view *The Last Terminal: Reflections on the Coming Apocalypse*, Rib Art Space, Rotterdam, 2023. Photo: Lotte Stekelenburg





AAA (Mein Herz). Exhibition view 20.24 Katarina Zdjelar: AAA (Mein Herz), ajh.pm Bielefeld, 2024. Photo: Philipp Ottendörfer





*AAA (Mein Herz)*. Exhibition view 20.24 Katarina Zdjelar: *AAA (Mein Herz)*, ajh.pm Bielefeld, 2024. Photo: Philipp Ottendörfer

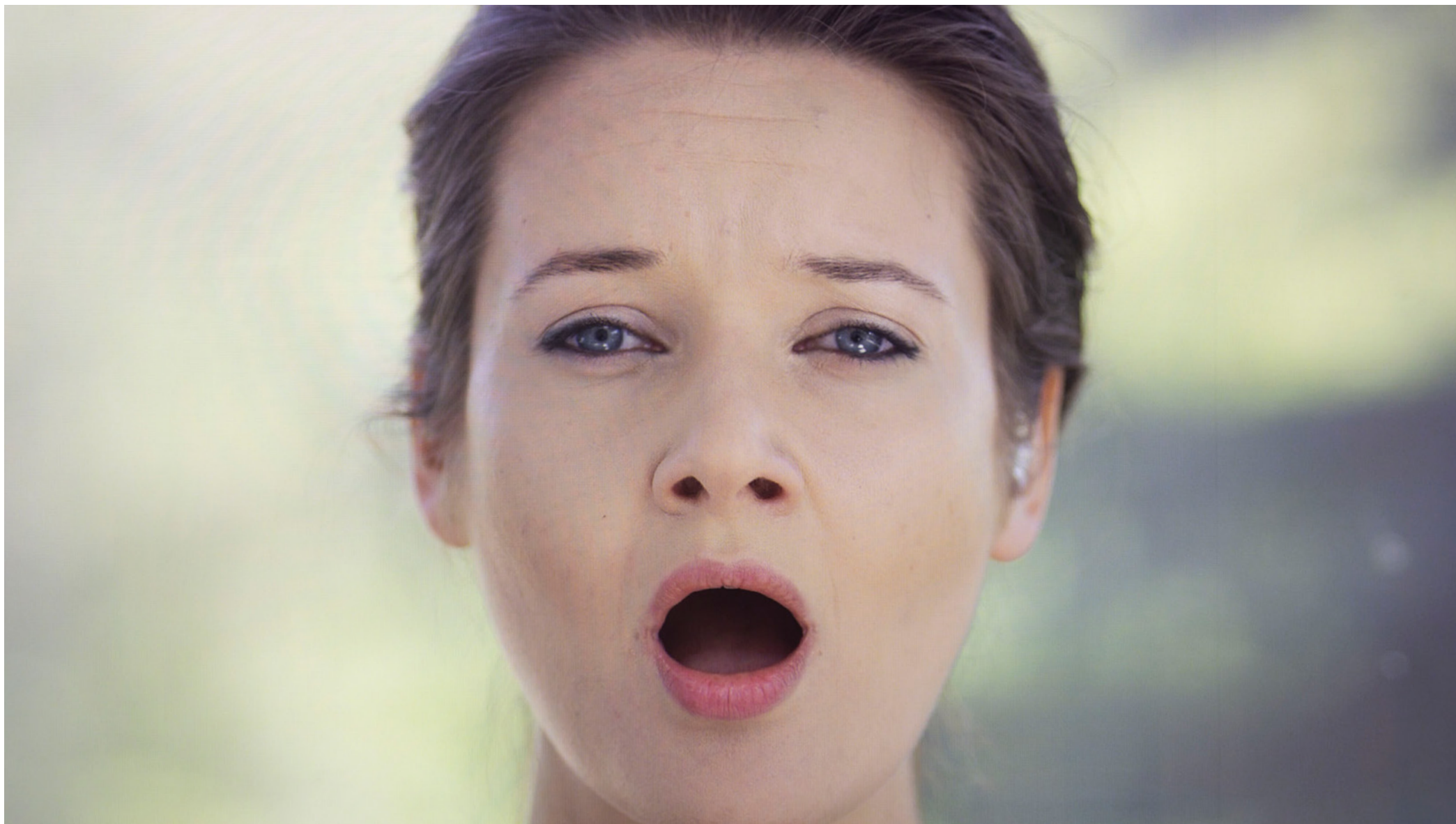
## **AAA (Mein Herz)**

— 4'30", loop, 2016

*AAA (Mein Herz)* is a single-shot work showing a young woman simultaneously performing four compositions. While preserving the original style, tempo, and rhythm of the individual works, she maintains the key of the different music pieces. Silence, music, sound and words alternate and collide. The female protagonist's face and vocal chords serve as a battleground for the jerky transition between the different tracks. As if the sounds have been continuously torn out of their sockets putting an emphasis on the multiple, fragmented yet simultaneous temporalities which run the economy of her voice and of the composition. As often in Zdjelar's practice, it is the interruptions that speak, this time in the corporality of the performers voice.

While her singing is as much about managing the gaps between the tracks as it is about accuracy of performance of such historically, stylistically and linguistically distinct compositions.



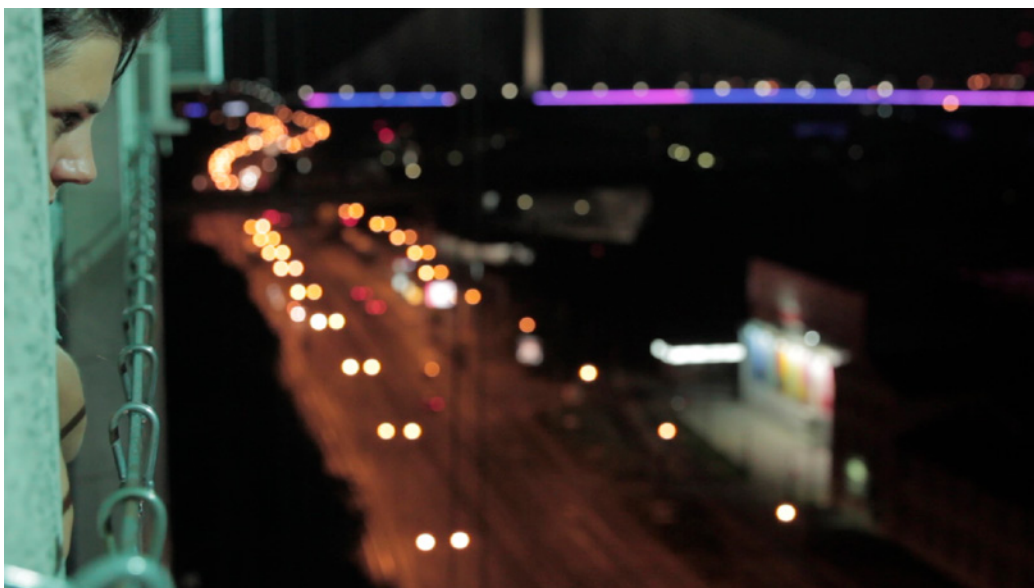


Still Katarina Zdjelar, *AAA (Mein Herz)*, 2016



AAA (Mein Herz). Exhibition view 20.24 Katarina Zdjelar: AAA (Mein Herz), ajh.pm Bielefeld, 2024. Photo: Philipp Ottendörfer





Stills Katarina Zdjar, *Untitled (A Song)*, 2016

## Untitled (A Song)

— single channel video, 10'45", loop, 2016

As it typically happens with Katarina Zdjar's videos, we are engaged in the placid duration of a self-enclosed and orchestrated situation. Bound by the tones and rhythms of the music or the spoken word, a temporal vacuum and a sense of expectancy are shaped, which take place in the social space of an extended in-betweenness. Zdjar's films work as some form of backstage to the ideological imaginary of these changing, dynamic, and accelerated times of ours. The artist consistently deals with alternative chrono-geographies, denouncing the flaws of the ideological acceleration, while unearthing its unrepresented realms. (Excerpt from Branko Dimitrijevic)

In her observations of the band at rest or at play, Zdjar captures something we struggle to maintain, even in artistic practice – namely, inactivity, the freedom to inhabit an atemporal space as a necessary condition for creation, which is more than only production. Through the inactivity of waiting, through the temporary suspension of production, we stumble on “pure, disinterested play”, or more precisely “a space in which calculation and play appear to blur into each other”. It is precisely in its playful humming of possibility that *Untitled (A Song)* prompts us into action, or, more precisely, non-action, which we feel instinctively, is the only way forward, if action is to have consequence. (Excerpt from a text by Lucy Cotter)



*Untitled (A Song)*. Exhibition view *Islas Nuevas*, Galeria Macchina, Santiago (Chile), 2016. Photo: Benjamin Matte





*My Lifetime (Malaika)*. Right: *Not A Pillar Not A Pile (Dance for Dore Hoyer)*.  
Exhibition view *Katarina Zdjelar: Vladimir*, Salzburger Kunstverein, 2018. Photo: Andrew Phelps

## **My Lifetime (Malaika)**

— single channel video, 5'37", loop, 2012

*My Lifetime (Malaika)* features Ghana's National Symphony Orchestra recorded in the National Theatre in Accra. The musicians play *Malaika*, originally a cheerful and empowering post-colonial composition that was famously performed by musical celebrities like Miriam Makeba, Harry Belafonte, Boney M. and many others. The orchestra was funded in the late 1950s when Ghana, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, had become independent from the United Kingdom. Nkrumah's government introduced new cultural structures in order to establish and enforce national consciousness and accomplish the shift from colonial rule to independence.

As in Zdjelar's other works never fully comprehend a whole stage, but are only provided with some fragmented clues through details and close-ups. Again we are almost haunted by the rhythm of a temporal and social in-betweenness. It is as if we could discern traces of events that have already happened, but somehow remains and resonates with the music – an undecided waiting room for some delayed future or possibly a suspended one.



*My Lifetime (Malaika)*. Exhibition view *Towards a Further Word*, Kunstverein Bielefeld, 2014





*My Lifetime (Malaika)*. Exhibition view *An Anticolonial Museum*, The Museum of African Art, Belgrade, 2022. Photo: Marijana Jankovic





*Stimme*. Exhibition view *Towards a Further Word*, Kunstverein Bielefeld, 2014

## **Stimme**

— single channel video, 17'00", loop, 2013

*Stimme* records a session between a voice coach and her client, in search of the client's "natural" voice. The phonetic iterations are punctuated by the two bodies touching hands – as if the young woman's body was a musical instrument to be played or experimented with by the coach. Where is voice actually located? Katarina Zdjelar is interested in those moments when the voice is perceived as personal property, while at the same time it acts as a public agency. Her work interacts with the instances when the dialectical interactions between the socio-political and the personal stage and shape the voice through the materiality of the body. Communication between the women is set as a repetition of voice games played through different parts of the body. This is mirrored in the manner in which the camera keeps returning to parts of the body coming in and out of darkness. If this is a vocal game, playing it involves a choreography of minimal muscular responses.





Still Katarina Zdjelar, *Stimme*, 2013



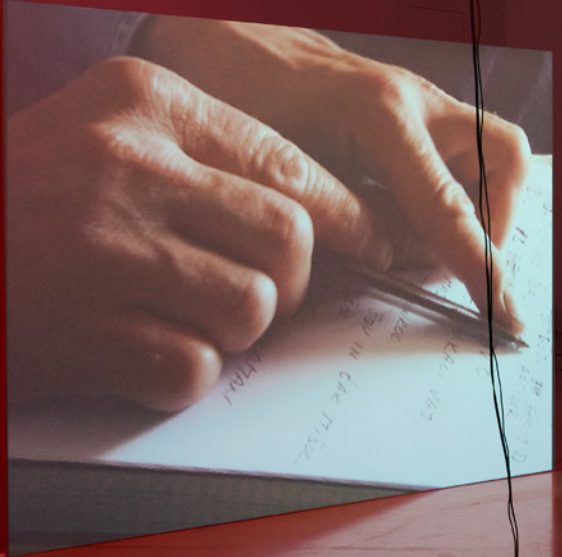
Still Katarina Zdjelar, *Stimme*, 2013



# WAKE WORDS

10.11.2021 — 27.11.2021

Eine Ausstellung von und mit The Golden Pixel Cooperative



Ausgangspunkt der Auslegung ist der Begriff "Voice Recognition", der auf technologische Systeme der Sprachassistenten und Spracherkennung Bezug nimmt, die sich allmählich in unseren Alltag einschleichen. Die Ausstellung bezieht sich auf die Formulierung - Rezeption - darauf hin, dass dieses Phänomen bereits ein bestimmtes Konzept von Stimme voraussetzt, die erkannt werden soll. Welche Stimme werden gehört und welche nicht? Und liegt nicht ein Potential darin, umgekehrt zu handeln?

Wake Words verwendet grafische Bewegtbilderfolgen und ist thematisch um vier Begriffe strukturiert, die das Funktionieren von Spracherkennungssystemen betreffen: Resonanz, Echo, Nachschwingen und Transparenz. Das Dokumentationsobjekt ist The Golden Pixel Cooperative die auditive Wahrnehmung. Der im Ausstellungsraum verteilte Open Social basiert auf den Audiotracks der gestrichelten Arbeiten und wurde von der Kuratorin, Rahn Shariq gestaltet, die begleitende Audio-Publikation "resonant" künstlerisch-wissenschaftliche Beiträge in Form von Hörspielen.

The departure point for the exhibition is the term "voice recognition", in other, on the one hand, to technological systems for language assistance and detection, which are already creeping into many parts of our everyday lives. On the other, the second part of the formulation "recognition" - indicates what this phenomenon already assumes a certain concept of a voice that is to be recognized. What is the basis of this "recognition"? Which voices are heard, and which not? And isn't there a potential in reversing concepts and acting in a more impetuous state?

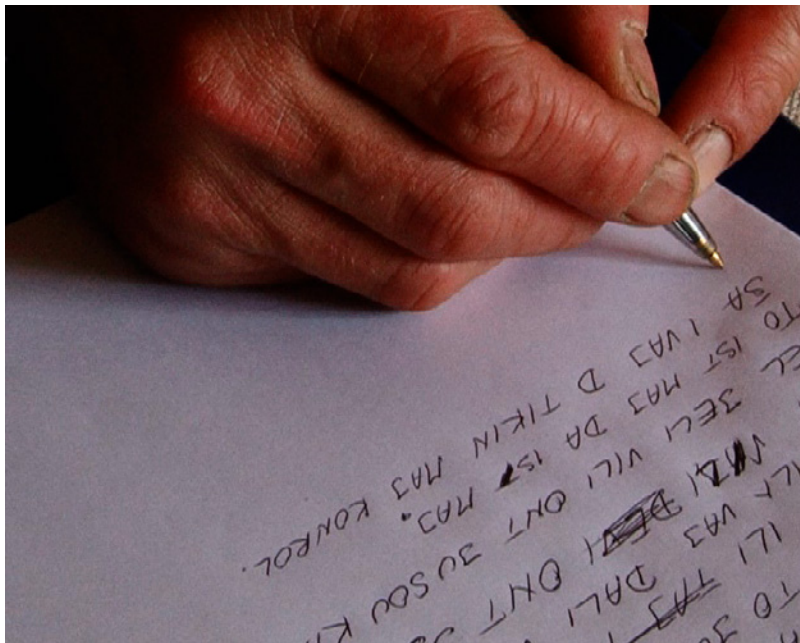
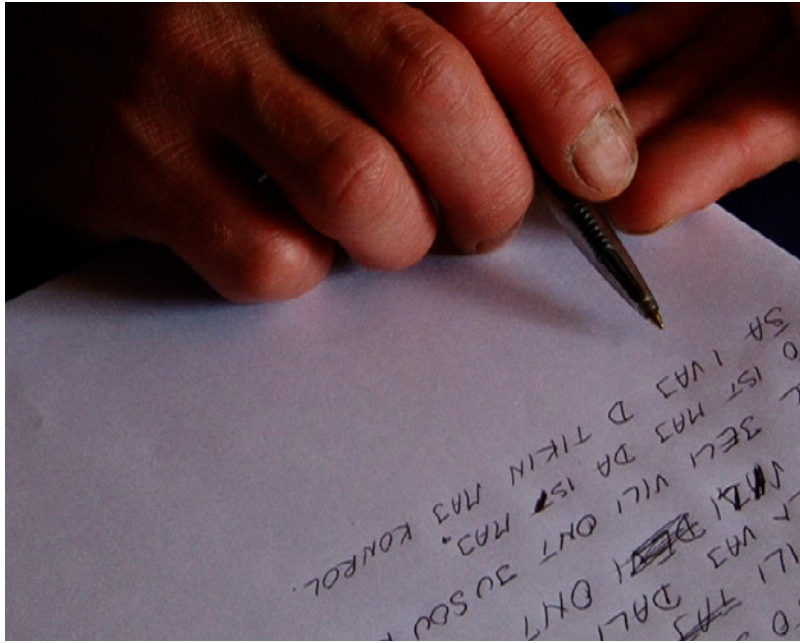
Wake Words predominantly presents moving image works and is thematically structured around the following four terms that obstruct the "correct" functioning of voice recognition systems: noise, echo, machine error and impression. Consequently, The Golden Pixel Cooperative activates the visitor's auditory perception in this project. The open sound audible in the exhibition was curated by composer Rahn Shariq and it's based on the audio tracks of the works on display. The accompanying audio publication gathers artistic-scientific audio pieces.



Konzipiert von Enur de Dios Rodriguez, Diana und Marlies Pöschl

Künstler:innen: Iris Blauensteiner & Rahn Shariq, Enur de Dios Rodriguez, Eva Giello, Nathalie Scaglia Mirza, Joana Moll, Diana Nowkryta & N. Pedro Oliveira, Bárbara Palomino Ruiz, Marlene Misa Sen, Katharina Sweboda, Lisa Truttmann, Behrouz Hae, Diana Vidovic, Clemens vom Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, Katerina

Shoem. Exhibition view Wake Words, Kunstverein Niederoesterreich, 2021. Photo: Markus Gradwohl



## Shout

— single channel video, 7'00", 2009

*Shout* starts with a blank, we see no image, but hear the sound of the 1984 Tears for Fears mega hit *Shout*. Then we see an iPod, a sheet of paper and the hands of two men from Belgrade, holding pens. Over the course of the next seven minutes we witness the two attempts of deciphering the lyrics of *Shout* as though they contained a coded message. Given that these men speak no English they phonetically transcribe what they hear, based on their own vocabulary and capacity to vocally interpret the unfamiliar. Cut off from the lingua franca of a globalized world, these two men preserve in creating something of their own, something that lies between the foreign and the familiar.





Left: *One or Two Songs*; right: *Shoum*. Exhibition view *One or Two Songs*, CIRCUS Galerie, Berlin, 2010



*Shoum*. Exhibition view *Katarina Zdjelar – Parapoetics*, TENT Rotterdam, 2010. Photo: Frank Hanswijk





*The Perfect Sound. Exhibition view Katarina Zdjelar – Parapoetics, TENT Rotterdam, 2010. Photo: Frank Hanswijk*



*The Perfect Sound. Exhibition view Katarina Zdjelar – Parapoetics, TENT Rotterdam, 2010. Photo: Frank Hanswijk*





Stills Katarina Zdjelar, *The Perfect Sound*, 2009

## The Perfect Sound

— single channel video, 14'30", 2009

In *The Perfect Sound* we see a grey-haired man chanting mono-syllables, over and over, and a young man mimicking him simultaneously. The sing-song that we hear is captivatingly primal and intensely humane. What we see is an accent removal class for an immigrant conducted by a speech therapist in Birmingham (UK), a city which is paradoxically known for its strong accent. With *The Perfect Sound* Zdjelar looks at the phenomenon of cultural integration through the erasure of difference in pronunciation and the production of neutrality; obtaining the (voice) mask, which allows a misfit to shift between different modes of appearances and enables him or her to blend into the environment – to become unnoticeable. As Mladen Dolar notes in his text on this work in the catalogue for Zdjelar's participation at the Venice Biennale: "It inevitably brings to mind the tribulations of Eliza Doolittle and the haughtiness of Professor Higgins, transposed into an aseptic environment of a rarefied abstract space, with the colorful Covent Garden flower girl now replaced by a host of nameless immigrants."

## Rise Again

— 11'23", loop, 2011



*Rise Again* focuses on a number of men, asylum seekers from Afghanistan. Discovering and inhabiting the wood proximate to the asylum center in which they live, they step outside of their prescribed roles as refugees and engage in voluntary (social) activities within this oasis, surrounded by highways at the edge of town. By combining allegorical imagery with martial arts elements, played and documentary scenes, the video develops a narrative structure in which these men appear in enfolded transformation. Moving between these registers, they resonate different roles and meanings, connect and articulate different historical and geographical scenarios, rather than embodying any in particular. Swinging between familiar media and cinematic imagery, bringing to mind soldiers, refugees, victims or adventurers on a group expedition the process of de/familiarization takes place. Except perhaps for 'Bruce Lee', being one of the Afghan refugees himself, whose likeness with the Hollywood hero is embraced (rather than staged) thus leaving the viewer wonder whether he is acting a role or pursuing his daily training routine.





Still Katarina Zdjelar, *Rise Again*, 2011