

# VIENNA

## DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES

**"... OF BREAD, WINE, CARS, SECURITY AND PEACE"  
KUNSTHALLE VIENNA  
8 MARCH – 4 OCTOBER 2020**

Something is rotten in boggy Denmark. We sit around in virtual tunnel vision while trauma and creepy technocratic statecraft abound. Musket wants a brain-machine interface, and workforces are obsolete as the old model of mechanised production exponentially morphs

into its AI otherness. Blinking dust wafts down the air, blink goes the APP. There are no complaints departments in the hallowed marbled halls of power. Merely lust for its aphrodisiac pull, and the siren call of Minerva born from the head of Zeus. As goes the culture, so goes the course of its algorithm.

Feel the levers; see the physical graffiti fill the rafters of the Kunsthalle's push-pull see-saw installation – it's the good ship lollypop. Note the crystallisation of the affair is a bookend of elaborately produced videos that push a hellish discourse of animal purgatory and the illuminating cube of quantum computing. To be more banal about its content: destabilising moving images – bread, wine, cars, security and peace

– make a case for potent docunarrative mythology. There is dystopian earthly pallor and entropy in one video (Tuan Andrew Nguyen's *My Ailing Beliefs Can Cure Your Wretched Desires*, 2017); time travel, Ayn Rand, transhumanism and lysergic acid in another (Zach Blas's *Contra-Internet*, 2018). Choose your poison. Take your trip. Put your tin hat on. Follow the jagged brick road from the Far East to the distressed West.

The Kunsthalle's new three-headed regime, the curatorial collective What, How & for Whom (WHW), has landed safely on solid if familiar ground. They know their slogans well and ride the wild horse of its message. By a quirk of fate, life, and art have dovetailed with the emotional hot-button issues of 2020.



Phil Collins  
*Home to You*, 2019, still from a music video



View of "... of bread, wine, cars, security and peace"

The vision is clear. But will the programming expand beyond activist art, and the magma of their disillusioned Pasolinis? What of the transcendental and sublime? Order ab Chao. Beauty never dies.

One only has to visit this molten puzzle to see the emblazoned adornment in the current simultaneity. Thankfully, the exhibition has secured a neat package of grounded works on the currents of the tide – some look way better IRL, sorry Zoon and VR platforms! The three-dimensional use of the imposing hall is even-handed; you can move around freely from artist to artist, juxtaposed well. Point, counter-point; the whole is a neon-lit ping-pong dialectic and one can greatly appreciate the one tactile offer in some hanging, craft-based felt sculptures (Hana Mileti with Globe

Aroma's *Felt Workshops I–X*, 2018–20). Trenchant wordplay, comic asides, and absurd digressions sound the bullhorn of its horn of plenty. Hyenas circle around, and money falls from the sky.

The loop of its media is a fixed constellation yet well-paced from piece to piece. That vintage-look Phil Collins music video for Cate Le Bon's *Home to You* (2019) sets the tone well – the buoyant pop song gets the juices flowing before seeing red inside. The discrete crushed hubcap sculptures of Monika Grabuschnigg's *Crash (Simulation)* (2019–2020) are mega-plastic rad, and melted as a Salvador Dalí clock. You could scribble on a table, but please not anymore, put the pencils away. Happy is Vlatka Horvat's sculpture *Balance Beam #0616* (2016).

It owes to Fischli/Weiss, but holds its own and retains its precarious object-specific special effects. The curators were wise to gather that Horvat's work grounds the install here, and provides a whimsical element, too.

Mercurial as things are, the ultimate penultimate semiotician knows the artist temperament can range from cool diffidence to emotional brutality. Then there are the nodal clock-watchers of tyrannical despots who know what has hijacked the consensus of reason. Their morning glories grow on the genesis of the trellis of time as witnesses and survivors. Heroism is not dead. Their blood is sanctified.

In the annals of epochs before and aft, true poets everywhere never lose control of their winged chariots in

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Monika Grabuschnigg, *Crash (Simulation)*, 2019–20  
Glazed earthenware, dimensions variable

the firmament, though they sometimes hit wind turbulence. This era is made for the heavens with tacitly bold artistic statements, impervious to illustrating demoralisation as a strategy for art's self-immolation. Some make their presence known with theatrics as grating as an Artaud scream. Others are soothing as elevator music and record-players. Some can know elation in the midst of sorrow and a strange vapour. The night vision still works, so note that the star gate of the circled square has been breached. No matter what happens in the bread and circus, in the far reaches of the neural world order, in memory – our days of wine and roses will be forever.

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Photo: Jorrit Aust

Photo: David Schöner; courtesy the artist & Carbon 12, Dubai