

ROTWAND

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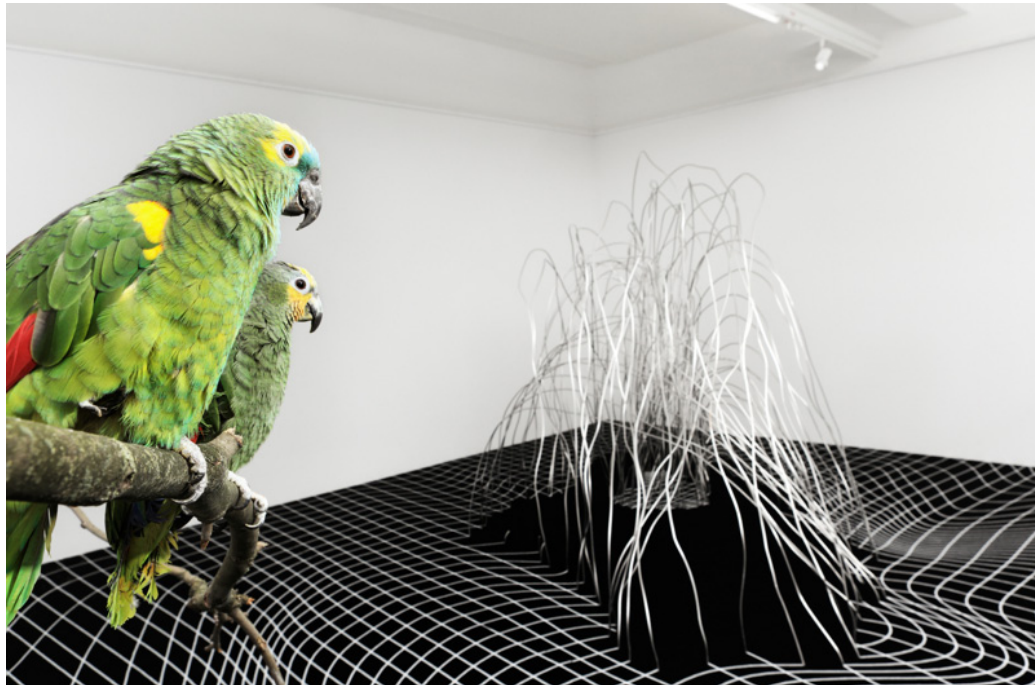
Anetta Mona Chisa & Lucia Tkacova

Selected works

ANETTA MONA CHISA & LUCIA TKACOVA live and work in Prague and Berlin.

In 2000 Anetta Mona Chisa and Lucia Tkacova establish their collaborative practice, deciding to do “a piece on the road together”. Over the course of the years that followed they are to remain a party of two, in which they do not engage with each other as a couple but as a pair. A year after they met they produced a video piece indicatively entitled *Les amies* (*Girlfriends*, 2000), which does not, however, explicitly deal with their own friendship. Instead it offers a feminist look at a liaison between a girlish-looking woman and a doll, a huge Barbie, which suggests the woman as both consumer and consumed (as an image). It also comically counters the notion of femininity as based on the familiar fiction of “diamonds are a girl’s best friend” while drawing on the revamped image of the 1990s “IT-girl.” And even though this piece is technically raw in comparison to their later, more “polished” artworks, it touches on many issues that recur in their art later on: a critique of commodity and the entire spectrum of neoliberal capitalism, the way women are forced into stereotypes, and the role of the authoritative gaze in the consumption of art. Soon they begin to address the mechanisms of the art system to which they belong, asking unpleasant questions about its working processes and impact, as they did in Romanian pavilion at the Venice Biennial of 2011. What has defined and solidified their friendship—in life and in art—is their sense of humor and their unmatched capacity for self-irony. Indeed, in their work laughter functions as critical mechanism, not merely as a source of enjoyment.

Text excerpt: Bojana Pejic’



Attention! Here and now, boys! Here and now! (detail), 2015
Installation with carpet, wire, trained parrots, oneida bowls, ropes
Installation view solo show *ah, soul in a coma, act naive, attack*
GAK - Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, 2015
Photo credit: Tobias Hübel





ah, soul in a coma, act naive, attack, 2015
Solo show at GAK - Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, 2015
Installation view
Photo credit: Tobias Hübel



What's What, and What It Might be Reasonable to Do about What's What, 2015
English dictionary, lysergic acid diethylamide
30 x 20 x 20 cm
Photo credit: Tobias Hübel



Things in Our Hands, 2014
Sculptures, melted euro-cent coins
Dimensions variable
Photo credit: Tobias Hübel



From the series *Things in Our Hands*, 2014
Sculptures, melted euro-cent coins



Installation view
abc Berlin, 2013
Parachute, plaster and nail polish
Dimensions variable



Installation view (detail)
abc Berlin, 2013
Parachute, plaster and nail polish
Dimensions variable



In 2011, Anetta Mona Chisa & Lucia Tkacova spent two months at a residency in Ramallah, Palestine, where stones are often used as impromptu weapons by street demonstrators. The stones' role in that capacity is here transformed by the material used to create them, an allusion in itself to the fragile situation in the Middle East, the dichotomy of intended self-defense and escalation.

Fabricated over many days in porcelain by the artists, and hand-painted with acrylic paint these objects take on the appearance of real stones. They are in fact thin, hollow, and eggshell-like thus making them precious and vulnerable objects, as well as uncanny and prop-like.

Accessible to the audience, the stones are quite susceptible to potential damage or even destruction. This is a possible change in the state of their existence that reflects the artists' interest in a dynamic interaction between audience and artwork that triggers precisely the dialectics these objects were intended to represent.

Clash! takes the form of an installation that imitates piles of stones usually found on streets or construction sites. Referencing stones that are often used by street demonstrators with the intention to harm, the stones potential role as impromptu weapons is here transformed by the use of material to create them.

Fabricated over many days in porcelain, and hand-painted with acrylic paint to resemble the appearance of real stones, these objects are in fact very light and thin, eggshell-like and hollow inside, becoming precious and vulnerable objects that are uncanny and prop-like. Able to be touched by visitors to the gallery, the stones are open to potential damage or even destruction over the duration of the exhibition potential change in the state of their existence that reflects the dialectics these stones embrace.



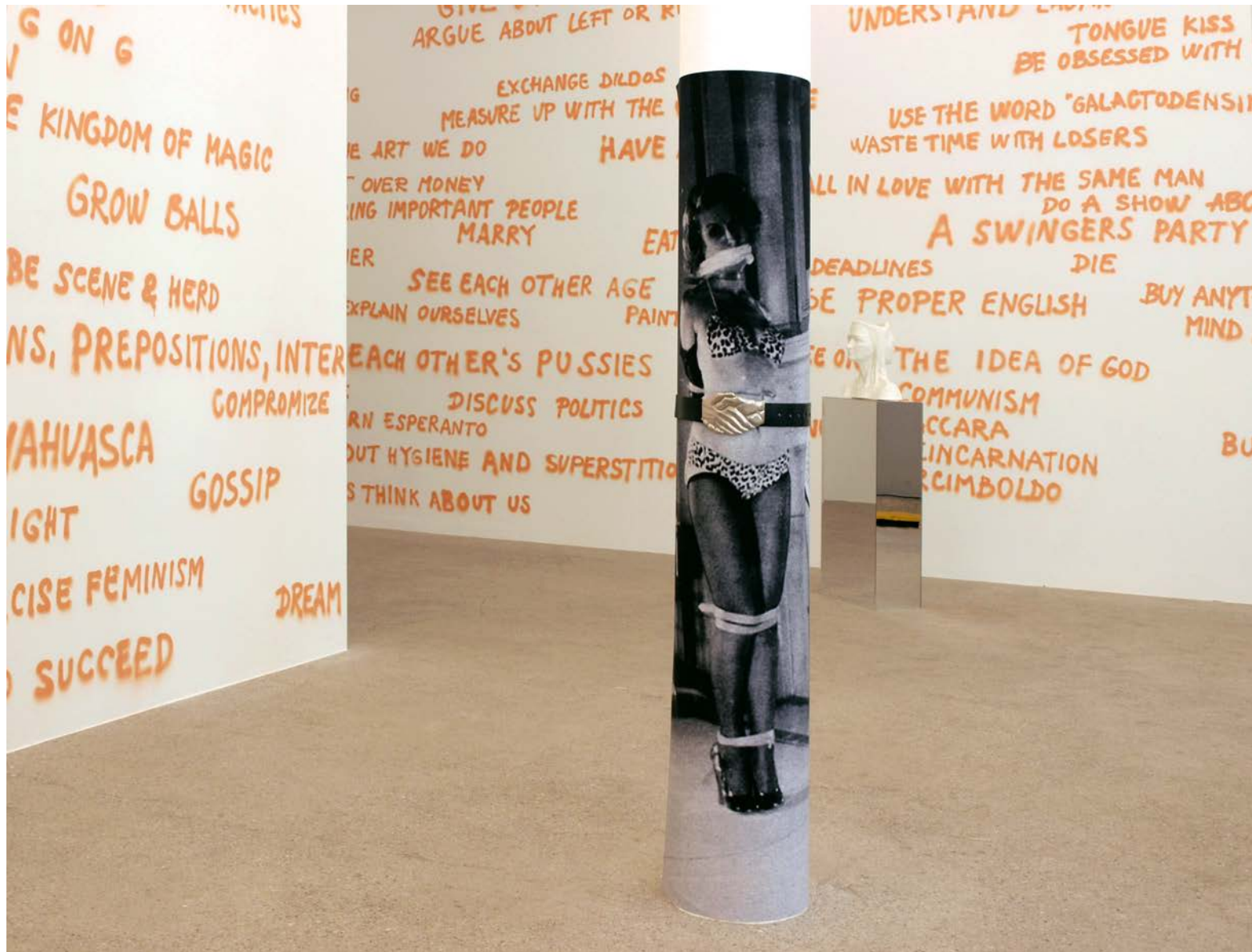
Clash!, 2012
porcelain, acrylic paint
dimensions and number variable
unique pieces



Clash!, 2012
Installation view



i aM a venus, A conch, a kiT, a Cat, a Lot
Installation view
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, June 2012



i aM a venus, A conch, a kiT, a Cat, a Lot
Installation view
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, June 2012



&, 2012
Installation of 5 TV sets, 5 DVD players, cables
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, June 2012



Vessel, 2012, Clay
Sculpture 40 x 38 x 27 cm (15 3/4 x 15 x 10 5/8 inch)
Pedestal 26.5 x 47.5 x 100.5 cm (10 3/8 x 18 3/4 x 39 5/8 inch)

Vessel (i aM a venus, A conch, a kiT, a Cat, a Lot) is a double head vase, that we modelled together and simultaneously, looking at each other as if in the mirror. i aM a venus, A conch, a kiT, a Cat, a Lot - an anagram of our names - is a short sentence composed on the fundamental principle of our collaboration as such - mixing and merging our individual selves in order to create a new temporary entity (to create an ephemeral I from WE). The mutual reflection crops up as a continuous questioning and mirroring of the self in the other one.



i aM a venus, A conch, a kiT, a Cat, a Lot
Installation view
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, June 2012



We used an altered self-bondage technique to bond ourselves together in order to create a palindromic creature - one being characterised by mirrored symmetry. In an attempt to lose personal traits and individual freedom we put ourselves into a situation of discomfort, loss of control and painful interdependency.



Never odd or even, 2011
video still
Video, 13 min. 40 sec.
Edition of 5 (+2AP)



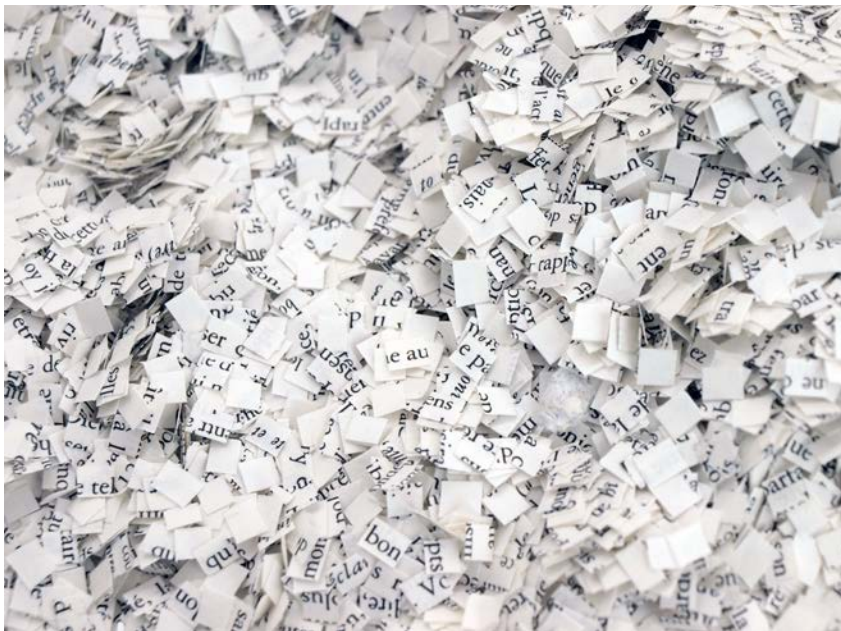
Death defeats, creates, repeats, 2012
video still
Video, Double projection video, 21min 40 sec
Edition of 5 (+2AP)



Death defeats, creates, repeats, 2012
video still
Video, Double projection video, 21min 40 sec
Edition of 5 (+2AP)



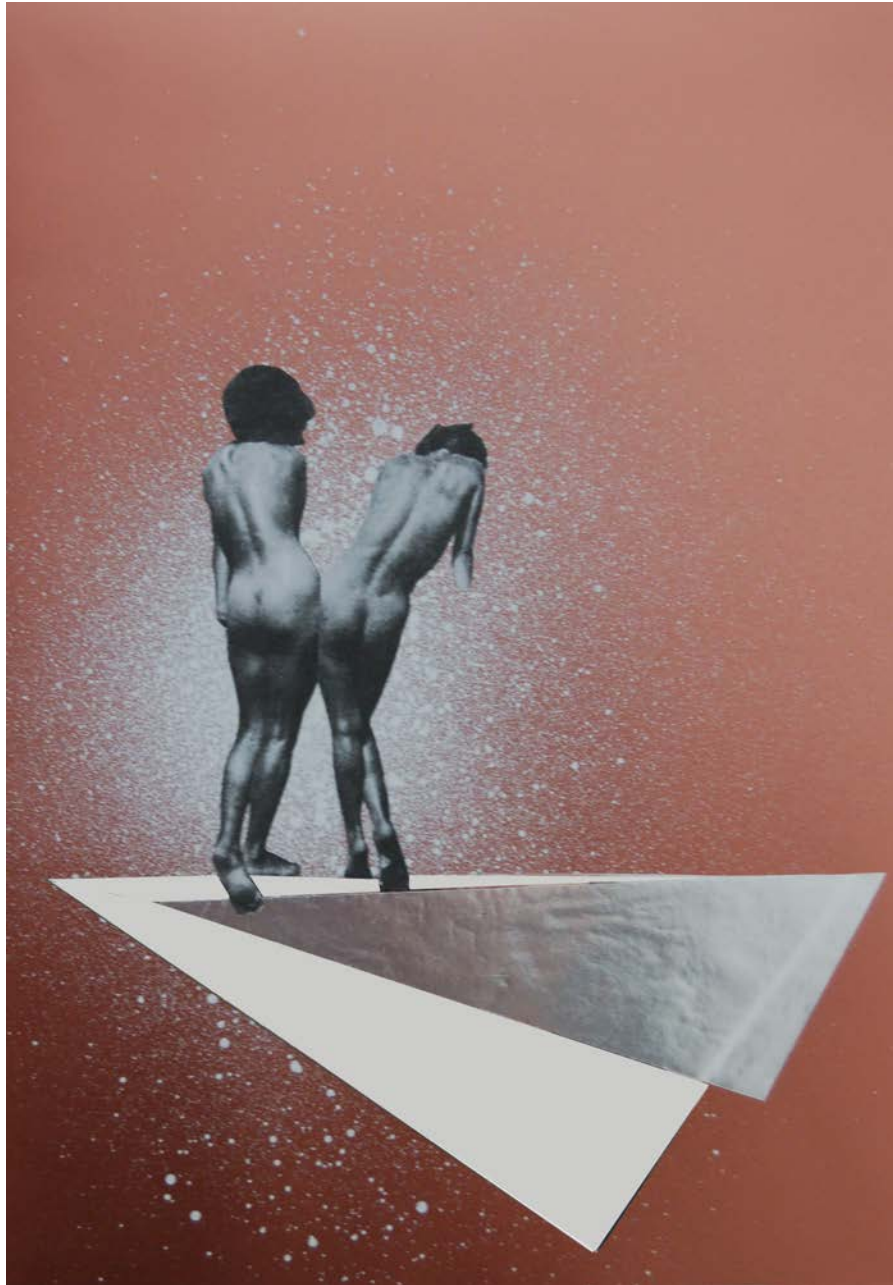
Politiques de l'amitié, a book by Jacques Derrida (Galilee, 1994, 423 pages) cut by hand into confetti. The obtained confetti are a sculpture to be carried out by throwing it in the exhibition place.



Politiques de l'amitié, 2012
Book transformed into confetti
Dimensions variable
Edition of 3 (+2AP)



Siamese twins, 2012
Collage on paper
18.8 x 25 cm (7 3/8 x 9 7/8 inch)



Siamese twins, 2012
Collage on paper
29.5 x 20.3 cm (11 5/8 x 8 inch)

Press release, Solo exhibition, Rotwand 2012

i aM a venus, A conch, a kiT, a Cat, a Lot

June 1 – July 14 2012

Opening: Friday, June 1, 2012

In his esteemed work, *Politiques de l'amitié*, Jacques Derrida elaborates on the social bonds developed over the course of the Western tradition, which he identifies as forms of loving and desire, quest and promise, consensus and respect for the Other that are not determined by familial ties or ideological solidarity: friendships. However, in our culture the “philosophical paradigm of friendship” reflects “the *double exclusion* of the feminine ...that can be seen at work in all the great ethico-politico-philosophical discourses on friendship, namely, on the one hand, the exclusion of friendship between women, and, on the other hand, the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman.” In the non-hierarchical schema of male friendships, where the figure of the father is excluded and the figure of the brother privileged, the feminine is (made) absent, so Derrida, much in the way that Nietzsche—adhering to this familiar heteronormative and misogynic framework—asserted that woman is “not yet” capable of friendship since she “only knows love.”

This does not mean that in our culture women are incapable of establishing a politics of female friendships but merely that relationships between women have “not yet” been given proper theoretical framing. On the one hand, recent scholarship has begun to focus on couples who share a sexual (primarily heterosexual) and creative partnership, in which women appear as “significant others;” feminist authors often theorize the complexities enmeshed in lesbian and gay creative couples; and feminist film and media theories address the “minimal communities” consisting of two women engaged in doing-something together, such as the “female buddies” that have emerged since the early 1970s in “low” mass media, motion pictures, and television—promptly labeled “bitch media.” On the other, it is almost impossible to find any truly relevant piece of writing that would theorize female buddies who make “high” art together. As throughout history, today female art-buddies are a quite seldom phenomenon.

In 2000 Anetta Mona Chisa and Lucia Tkacova establish their collaborative practice, deciding to do “a piece on the road together.” Over the course of the twelve years that followed they are to remain *a party of two*, in which they do not engage with each other as a couple but as a pair. A year after they met they produced a video piece indicatively entitled *Les amies* (Girlfriends, 2000), which does not, however, explicitly deal with their own friendship. Instead it offers a feminist look at a liaison between a girlish-looking woman and a doll, a huge Barbie, which suggests the woman as both consumer and consumed (as an image). It also comically counters the notion of femininity as based on the familiar fiction of “diamonds are a girl’s best friend” while drawing on the revamped image of the 1990s “IT-girl.” And even though this piece is technically raw in comparison their later, more “polished” artworks, it touches on many issues that recur in their art later on: a critique of commodity and the entire spectrum of neoliberal capitalism, the way women are forced into stereotypes, and the role of the authoritative gaze in the consumption of art. Soon they begin to address the mechanisms of the art system to which they belong, asking unpleasant questions about its working processes and impact, as in they did in Romanian pavilion at the Venice Biennial of 2011. What has defined and solidified their friendship—in life and in art—is their sense of humor and their unmatched capacity for self-irony. Indeed, in their work laughter functions as critical mechanism, not merely as a source of enjoyment.

One could parallel their relationship with similar confidential bonds between women, for example the “epistolary romances” between Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy. It was based on solidarity, mutual commitment, and occasional creative cooperation, but before all on tenderness.

It was “a friendship that border[ed] on romance, not sexual romance, but not entirely platonic either” since they both longed for each other’s physical presence (Carol Brightman). Given that Chisa and Tkacova do not live in the same city, they are inevitably forced to carry on an “email romance,” but apart from being “just friends”, they need each other’s presence in order to make their art. Physical togetherness and the joy of working together come through in many of their (video) works, which convey close-

ness, nearness, and tenderness, as if the camera were not there—as in the conversational videos *Dialectics of Subjection # 21* (2004), *Dialectics of Subjection # 2* (2005) and *Dialectics of Subjection # 4* (2006), in which they size up male artists, curators, and politicians according to their sex appeal.

Making art together and, in particular, exhibiting together necessarily brings about “the institutionalization of friendship,” a term which Victor Misiano applies solely to collaborations between male artists. In joining the institution of art as a female duo, Chisa and Tkacova have introduced a politics of female friendship: it is a politics of difference not because it implicitly alludes to the overt presence of “boys-clubs” in the art system (today as in the past), but it also implies difference as did the notion of “feminisance,” which hit the art world during the 1990s. On a global scope, one has a hard time finding a female duet continuously engaged in cooperative work in today’s art scenes. Presumably fearing “ghettoization”, women artists of Chisa and Tkacova’s generation are often heard claiming: “I am not a feminist, but ...”

In contrast, the politics of friendship introduced by Chisa and Tkacova is informed by their feminist positioning, which follows two basic trajectories viewed by Theresa de Lauretis as central to (the history of) feminism. The first is a narcissistic drive for self-representation. This may imply taking on the identity of “disorderly” and “unruly women” (Russo), using the strategy of “womanliness as masquerade,” subversion and excess, as in their *Porn* series of posters (2004–2007) and *Porn Video*, 2004 (where they are, however, decently dressed). Here they work with the stereotypical equation of women with sexuality, playfully but ironically replaying a scene in which they as women assume the stance and appearance of “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey). At the same, in acting out this scene they reject powerless, victimization, and subjugation.

The other feminist trajectory is the ethics of working together, sharing, and trust. Chisa and Tkacova obviously denounce the production of “monologic” art on which the entire framework of the Western (art) tradition of individualism is based. Instead they opt for what Mikhail Bakhtin calls a “dialogic work.” A dialogic matrix runs through all their works, although it is always differently articulated. A primary element of dialogue is evident in the fact that they engage with each other as artists-friends who jointly make art. The second is manifested in their examination of female traditions and historical women’s movements, thus establishing a kind female genealogy, in which the radical socialist and anarchist tradition of rebellion is informed by an anti-capitalist stance. Finally, as in their current exhibition, they refer to a “tradition without tradition,” that is the alliances between two women buddies as developed in popular culture, film, literature, rock music, and comics, such as Thelma and Louise, Xena and Gabrielle, Anabel and Midge, Marie Corrençon and Jeanne Salève, or Baccara. Finally, the dialogic element to their work has a literal component, since many of their works are staged as conversations between the artists.

Since twelve years Anetta Mona Chisa and Lucia Tkacova have been engaged in a politics of friendship that requires an ongoing negotiation of their artistic identities as well as the narcissism that this implies. It demands the constant restraint of their otherwise strong individualism (without which the cooperation would not be possible) and a balance in the power relations that inevitably resurface in every collaborative process.

Such cooperation always implies a vacillation between “I-for-myself” and “I-for-another,” which they address in the recent work *The Others* (2011), where they appear wearing masks of each other’s faces. This visual blending of “me” and “you” plays on the common significance of the photographic portrait as a visual sign suggesting an individual’s unique identity, but undermines it, since the photographic portrait is itself a mask.

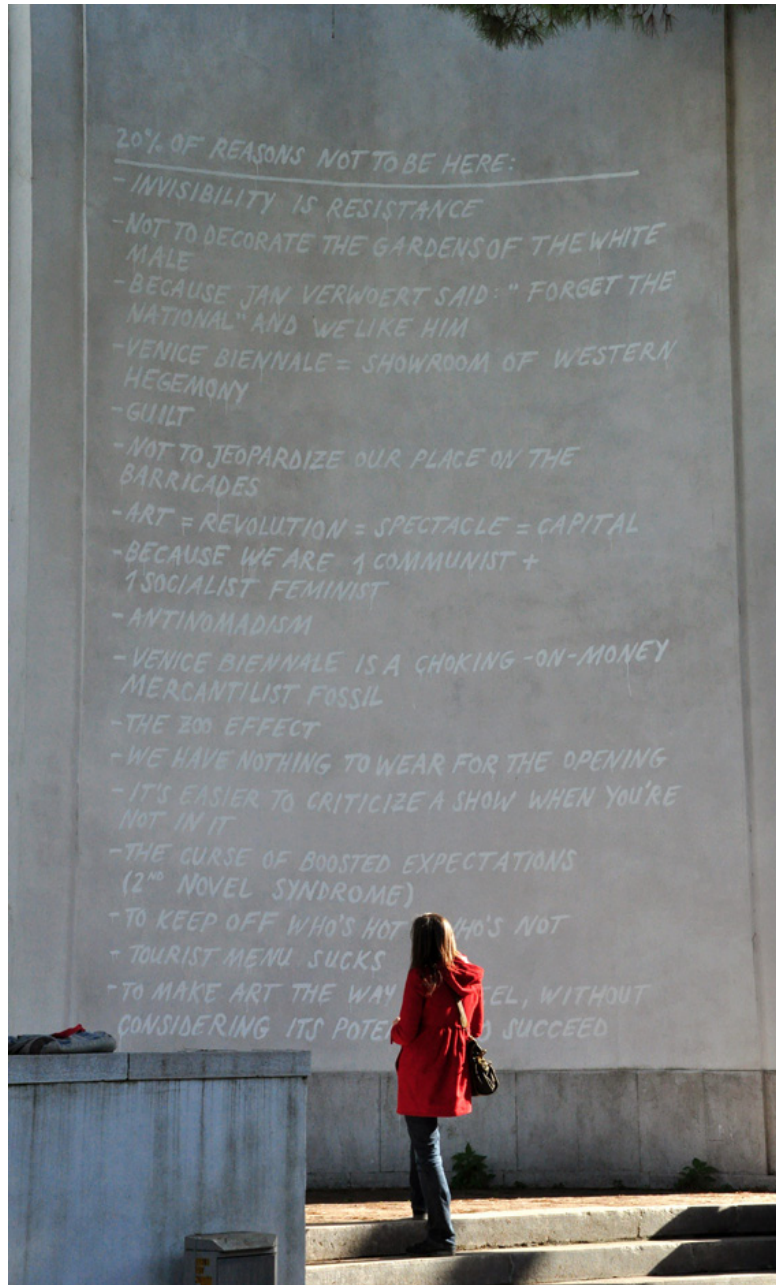
The video *Never Odd or Even* (2011) explores the desire for and fiction of complementarity in a quite different manner. Using the technique of self-bondage, the artists perform the notion of “intercorporeality” (Merleau-Ponty), which is here enabled through the sense of the touch (and not by the authoritative eye, as in photography). In this performance, the symmetry inherent to the number two—two artists, two women, two selves, two touching bodies made immobile and even subjected to physical pain—appears to be tested and even called into question. This testing scenario results in what could be called the third, a central idea for Chisa and Tkacova’s politics of friendship in general: “The ‘third’ is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge.” (Marjorie Garber)



Try again. Fail again. Fail better., 2011
video still
Single Channel HD Video Projection
07:57 min
Ed. 3 + 2 a.p.

A raised fist is a universal symbol of protest, used by various (even contradictory) groups throughout history, emblematic for struggle, resistance, anger and the yearning for change. The clenched fist pointing to the sky is an archetypal image of human disobedience, a symptom of the Babylon complex, an image of the power of the weak, of courage and vanity. We re-created this symbol as an ephemeral inflatable sculpture, a huge „harmless“ toy. Reminding an object made for mass amusement, it reveals the unfortunate fate of revolutions and their potential to entertain, to sell well, to become an attraction, a free-time activity, a hobby.

The performance is conceived like a puppet show, a play in which the object is controlled by strings. In our case the strings establish a relation of interdependency, a mutual control ruled by (physical) force. The action turns into a reversed play, in which the „marionette“ is at the same time the hand that moves the strings, whereas we become a sort of living puppets. The interplay of idolatry and iconoclasm emphasizes the slippery area between control and subversion, hopes and resignation creating a paradoxical relation between the followers and the transcending power of the idea. The question we want to raise here is how to free resistance and protest from their own representations, from their ideologically reified and commercially fetishized effigy. Could there be a revolution without an image?



The equilibrium of the universe lies in the paradox that most things in life are not distributed evenly and the „just“ balance of things, the 50:50 ratio does not exist. Following the Pareto Principle, we try to trace this asymmetry in our lives and balance various aspects of how we live, think and act.

The last version of 80:20 that we developed especially for Venice Biennale, comments on the mission, structure and potency of this institution. We confront 80% of reasons to be in the Venice Biennale with 20% of reasons why not to be there. The slippery aspect of these lists is that the reasons „against“ can be seen as the reasons „pro“ and vice versa. In these listings we want to speak out for ourselves as artists, as women, as easterners, but also to tackle the conscience of the depraved artworld. Furthermore we intend to create a situation of solidarity (with both those included and not-included in the Biennale), to uncover the skeletons of the power structures, to form a Temporary Autonomous Zone, to confess without expecting absolution. And, after all we want to pussify this choking-on-money mercantilist fossil.

80:20, 2011

(80% of reasons to be at the Venice Biennale / 20% of reasons not to be at the Venice Biennale)

Venice Biennale, Romanian Pavilion, 2011
wall, paint



After the Order, 2011
cake
60x180x60 cm



The Others, 2011
C-print
58 x 43 cm (22 7/8 x 16 7/8 inch)
Edition of 5 (+2AP)



Within our imaginations and the popular collective memory of the feminist movement, the act of demonstrative burning of the „instruments of torture“ (brassieres, high-heeled shoes, cosmetics, ...) in the improvised freedom trash can has an important position. How disquieting for us to find out that there are doubts and disputes whether the burning actually happened! In 1968 about 100 women gathered to demonstrate against the Miss America pageant at the Atlantic City convention center. A centerpiece of their demonstration was the so-called „freedom trash can“ in which protesters dropped brassieres, girdles, high-heeled shoes, and copies of playboy and cosmopolitan magazines. Surprisingly, the organizers of the protest have long insisted that nothing had been set ablaze and the fire is a media myth. On the other hand, there are eye-witnesses who claim to remember some protestors putting their bras into the freedom trash can and setting the can on fire. This blurred situation of collective remembering and individual forgetting - the burning can myth - was extended and materialized here as an image of the eternal flame that used to burn next to monuments, a mythological „vestal fire“. The fake burning can becomes an offspring of the spectacle, a collective illusion/dellusion or the wishful thinking of several generations, as well as a home decoration or a functional lamp.

Freedom Trash Can, 2011
barrel, paint, lights, fan, silk, bricks



Manifesto of Futurist Woman (Let's Conclude) depicts a group of majorettes marching across an urban space, apparently performing a generic choreography. However, the majorettes, instead of following the usual terpsichore, actually broadcast a message coded in Semaphore, an outdated naval signal language. The message performed by the majorettes is the concluding part of Manifesto della donna futurista, written in 1912 by the French poet, playwright and performance artist Valentine de Saint-Point as a response to Marinetti's infamous call, in the 1909 Manifesto del Futurismo, for the 'scorn of woman'. Saint Point's manifesto proposed a strong woman as a role model who would re-appropriate her instincts and vital strength in spite of a society which condemned her to weakness. Saint-Point desires „to annihilate the categories of men and women, the bipolar subdivision that predisposes a master/slave dialectic. Yet she recognizes that futurism is right. Its emphasis on force, on strength, and on destruction of the past fits within the female futurist's worldview. [...] Like male futurists, de Saint-Point follows the heroes, becoming warrior or nurse [...] She must create children, not only for herself but as warriors for the nation. In effect, de Saint-Point here attempts at times to break from the female stereotypes, but ultimately succumbs to Marinetti's virile propaganda. She tries to inscribe female futurism within the male paradigm.“ (Clara Orban).

Manifesto of Futurist Woman (Let's Conclude), 2008
video still,
video, 11 min. 13 sec.
Edition of 5 (+2AP)



All periods in Capital consists of 22 591 hand-made clay globules, painted black and put into a generic white plastic bag. These globules represent the materialisation of all periods of Karl Marx's Das Kapital (Das Kapital, Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie, Verlag Marxistische Blatter, Frankfurt am Main, 1976, vol.1), that were counted and rolled one by one.

One clay marble took an average time of 14 seconds to be finished, meaning all 22 591 pieces were done by the two of us in 316 274 seconds, that makes 5271 minutes, which equals 87,8 working hours.



All Periods in Capital, 2007
clay, acryl paint, plastic bag