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# Galerie Peter Gaugy

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We are all members of the 'Burnout Society,' as described by philosopher Byung-Chul Han. In this system, where time seems to pass faster than it should, we are compelled to create 'the best version of ourselves,' compete with others, and live a life oriented around success and performance.

As a consequence of patriarchal mechanisms, the current situation has a deeper impact on women\* due to the tasks assigned to them and their naturalized roles. Women\* often have the burden of carrying two conflicting personas: one is an aggressively productive, goal-oriented self, where there is no space for contemplation, slowing down, or self-reflection. The other is the woman, who society expects—caring, vulnerable, and empathetic. The tension and crisis created by this dichotomy lead many women to seek support through popular New Age spirituality that preaches to reclaim the so-called 'feminine energy'.

'Feminine energy' is a concept that attributes 'the being mode', receptivity, intuition, fluidity, and creativity to a distinctly feminine essence. In contrast, 'masculine energy' is associated with qualities such as focus, determination, and goal orientation, which respond to the demands of the capitalist system.

The essentialist narrative around feminine/masculine duality made

me think about how 'feminine energy' relates to the concept of time. Living in a rush to keep everything together, do women have any 'time' to reclaim their so-called feminine side? Can we speak about a feminized concept of time that counterpoints the dominant masculine values of productivity, and progress, which erase women's reproductive labor? Is it possible to conceptualize an alternative perspective of time to its modernist interpretation, centered on growth, and profit through a linear trajectory? How is time gendered and how does this gendering often lead to marginalization?

A cyclical conception of time is an alternative to a linear progression from past to future, associated with Western modernism. It is in accordance with the natural rhythms of the body, hormonal cycles that repeat every month. It is process-oriented in contrast to the goal-driven approach of linear time. This perception of time views the past as a palimpsest of juxtaposed memories rather than a linear progression toward a specific end.

If we want to counter the masculine conception of time, an alternative would be the perspective of time that acknowledges how bodies store traumas, the resilience found in the transient and fragile, and embraces the journey rather than the outcome.

The exhibition aims to answer through the artworks of four women\*. How do women\* artists deal with the exhausting pace of today's world? How do they perceive time? An important concept related to the non-linearity of time is the palimpsest. A palimpsest is an ancient manuscript from which the former text is washed off for reuse. It is used as a metaphor to comprehend memory as a site, that is continuously erased and rewritten. A narrative based on the notion of palimpsest emphasizes the multilayered nature of the memory, which contrasts with the conventional methodologies of history. Instead of a chronological order, we observe a loop of erasure and rewriting, where past experiences are reconstructed in every act of remembering.

It is possible to observe this approach in Miriam Bajtala's video installation, *In the Bodies*. The artist reconstructs her past as a palimpsest, a multi-layered manuscript that juxtaposes different moments of life, mixing emotions, dreams, subjective experiences, hearsays from her family, and objective facts. She also refers to the palimpsestic qualities of space. Palimpsest is often used in architectural theory and urban studies because the memory of space is multilayered and anachronic. Her work questions the possibility of having an objective approach when the research material is the personal experience, and the home becomes the field of study.

Miriam Bajtala reconstructs the places where she lived, in a poetic, minimalist, and abstract visual language. In that dreamy atmosphere, objects are enacted by human bodies, and actors portray herself and her family, depicting the turning points of her life. The bodily performances affirm how bodies store and manifest the trauma. The flight from a communist state, the social shame of being the other, the alienation, the struggle to be accepted, abuse, the invisible and underestimated migrant labor, and her story of becoming an artist as she sees art as a meditative experience, in which she can lose track of time. The artist shows evidence of how the past reshapes the present in each act of remembering.

Jelena Micić combines color abstractions with post-conceptual and political themes. Micić's earlier installations referenced childhood in Yugoslavia, and experiences as a care worker in Austria to support the art studies. Jelena Micić transforms piles of everyday items, such as cotton swabs, and colorful fruit nets into large-scale installations. These disposable plastic materials, carefully categorized and stacked by color are references to the living conditions of the working class, for whom using sustainable material is not an option. They evoke domesticity and housework, merging the personal with the political, and high culture with banality.

The childhood food allergy prevented the artist from eating colored candy ever since. As the artist engaged with the sociopolitical and economic implications of color systems, Micić was inspired by own biological sensitivity to colors. In this performative work, titled *You Can If You Dare* Micić conducts ongoing digestion experiments by eating a candy of a specific color for a set of periods to find out which colors the body continues to react to. The candies are classified in plastic boxes, reminiscent of medicine cabinets. Micić's performance focused on gathering statistical data referring to scientific experiments. The photographs and watercolors serve as time-based evidence of the experiment.

Ebru Kurbak explores the intersection between a time-consuming practice, lacework, and time-based media technologies. In her artistic research, thread is the central material, connecting two gendered domains: male-dominated media technologies and traditional crafts such as embroidery and lacework, often considered women's work. *The Chrono-lace Studies*, as the title suggests, reference the passage of time, focusing on the (lost) time and labor of women as repetitive lace patterns are produced in a meditative practice. The piece challenges the cinematic notion of time, where events proceed linearly from past to present. The intricate, repetitive patterns of the lacework conceal the passage of time, revealing its non-linearity and offering the female perspective.

Maria Walcher explores the relationship between mobility and labor, precarious working conditions, and social structures. The artist playfully creates experimental connections across different times and spaces, engaging with contexts such as site-specific interventions, performative installations, and public artworks. Time is a repeated theme in many of her works. For instance, in the performative, site-specific installation *Jacques*, she invites passersby to write down things they have forgotten.

In the exhibition, she presents her work *Knotten II*, a porcelain knot. Here,

the artist focuses on the act of forgetting rather than remembering, which is more commonly seen in artworks related to memory. She references the gesture of tying a knot as a reminder not to forget something. The fragility of porcelain symbolizes the transience of memories, no matter how strongly the knot is tied. In another work, *Tempo*, she traces the history of the handkerchief brand 'Tempo', which means time in Italian. The evolution from embroidered cloth versions to disposable handkerchiefs highlights the invisible labor of the workers who produced 'time' in the factories and the changing pace of our consumption habits.

- Deniz Güvensoy

#### Curator

Deniz Güvensoy is an artist, curator, and cultural researcher. She earned her Doctorate of Fine Arts from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Istanbul. After working as an artist, editor, art critic, and Assistant Professor in Istanbul, she relocated to Vienna in 2016. Since 2017, she has been working on her second Doctoral degree at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She serves as the chairwoman and program director of Fabrikraum Kunstverein, a Vienna-based art association, and independent space. The core of her professional activity is defined by her role as a cultural mediator between experts and local communities, addressing social issues through interdisciplinary artistic methods. Selected events: Das Goldene Buch: Feminist Zine Workshops (Project Director, 2023), Wienwoche Art And Activism Festival 2022, Working Class Ecologies, (Festival Curator) Quietly Loud (Galerie Peter Gaugy, QM&A Collective, 2023), Resilience & Care. (QM&A Collective, Fabrikraum, 2023), Oikos (Brunnenpassage, 2022), Fanzineist Vienna 2019, (Co-Director), Kunst Kebab (Museum Quartier, 2017), Aporias (Friday Exit, 2016) (Curator)

## Artists

### **Miriam Bajtala**

Miriam Bajtala was born in Bratislava and currently lives and works in Vienna. Her practice centers on themes of perception, space, memory, empowerment, testimony, and representation, often with a poetic undertone. Bajtala has exhibited her video installations and artworks widely, including solo and group exhibitions at institutions like Bildraum 01, Wienwoche in Vienna, and Kunstraum Goethestrasse in Linz. Her works reflect on her personal journey, using spatial structures and performative gestures to reconstruct and narrate her past, often intertwining themes of migration, social identity, and self-empowerment.

### **Ebru Kurbak**

Born in Izmir, Turkey, and based in Vienna, Ebru Kurbak's interdisciplinary practice investigates the intersections of art, technology, culture, and power, with a strong focus on undervalued textile traditions from women's, indigenous, and nomadic cultures. Currently a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Kurbak is also known for her research project *The Museum of Lost Technology*. Her work, which has been showcased internationally at venues such as Ars Electronica and MAK Vienna, explores the narrative potential of textiles, often blending scientific and technological research with marginalized knowledge systems.

### **Jelena Micić**

Jelena Micić, originally from Knjaževac, Serbia, lives and works in Vienna as both an artist and artistic director of the WIENWOCHE festival. Holding degrees in philosophy and Scandinavian languages, Micić's practice explores socio-political dimensions of color and materiality. Notably awarded the "Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos" Award and the Ö1 Talentestipendium Bildende Kunst, Micić's installations transform everyday objects into reflections on class, labor, and sustainability. Micić's recent project, *You Can If You Dare*, examines color as both a

sociopolitical and personal medium, with the artist using their own body as a site of experimentation.

## **Maria Walcher**

Based in Innsbruck, Austria, Maria Walcher studied at the Bauhaus University Weimar and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Her multimedia and participatory installations address socio-political and taboo subjects, fostering dialogue through site-specific interventions and public works. In her piece *Knotten II*, Walcher explores memory and forgetting, using the fragility of porcelain knots as symbols for the transient nature of human recollection. Her work has been featured in exhibitions across Europe, including the Kunstmuseum Bonn and the Musrara Festival in Jerusalem.