

Press release

Poetry for Revolutions. A Group Show with Manifestos and Proposals
Ceylan Öztrük, *Pink Tabula Rasa*

Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich: 06.10.2023–31.03. 2024, Opening: 05.10.2023, 18:00
Istituto Svizzero, Rome: 20.10.2023–18.02.2024, Opening: 19.10.2023, 18.00

A collaborative project between Cabaret Voltaire (Zurich) and Istituto Svizzero (Rome) with Bassem Saad, Ceylan Öztrük, Guerreiro do Divino Amor, Giorgio Zeno Graf, Industria Indipendente, Ivona Brđanović, Maya Olah, Mathis Pfäffli, Michèle Graf & Selina Grüter, MigrArt/DACZ (Deniz Damla Uz & Niştiman Erdede), Ramaya Tegegne, RM, Sandra Mujinga, Shirana Shahbazi and Ursula Biemann.

Curated by Gioia Dal Molin and Salome Hohl

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In the historical avant-garde, such as Futurism or Dada, the manifesto advanced to become an important stylistic device for expressing convictions and criticism, for making them “tangible” and “evident,” as the etymological origin “manifestus” already indicates. Art should not preserve and maintain appearances, but rather reveal, “do,” change the world and people. In the exhibition *Poetry for Revolutions*, artists and writers respond in their own artistic language to the globally entangled crises or reflect on the culture of sharing and manifesting. They do so at a time when manifestos or monuments seem to have gone out of fashion, yet events call for action, for remembering whilst at the same time for breaking free. Art does not depict one-dimensionally, it condenses, isolates, differentiates, confuses, unravels – be it poetic, radical, subtle or concrete. This raises the question of what position the authors take and to what extent art shapes political people or rather creates a pseudo-political space.

The group exhibition *Poetry for Revolutions* brings together manifestos by fifteen artists – one contribution each for Zurich and Rome, some identical, some slightly different. The content and formal characteristics are diverse. They deal with the ecological crisis, the power of language or the pharmaceutical industry, the handling of ideologies or resources, longings in dystopian times, collective imaginations and identitarian attributions. From a curatorial point of view, the contributions also deal in a certain way with the great ideology of “democracy,” which can never be neutral, but is committed to certain values.

Some of the manifestos are poetic, abstract, others prosaic, concrete. They are texts, drawings, photographs or sculptures. In both institutions, the manifestos are additionally available photocopied on Ceylan Öztrük’s *Choreographed Manifestos* sculptures, which allow the papers to glide along the walls like leaflets. The artist is interested in how information formally circulates and who feels empowered to share what knowledge. Visitors can take the manifestos with them and take them to the streets.

Ceylan Öztrük’s *Phantasm Manifesto* furthermore extends the exhibitions and the idea of manifestation with a group of works reminiscent of architectural elements with a propagandistic purpose. At second glance, however, the paper sculptures seem ironic, as they are deprived of any function and convey images or writing that do not refer to anything concrete. Perhaps they are to be understood as artistic “counter- or anti-monuments,” but they can also be read, as Öztrük’s overall contribution titled *Pink Tabula Rasa* suggests, as a possible re-description. In keeping with the title *Phantasm Manifesto*, she also wants to give space to the imaginary, surreal, or illusory aspects of a particular concept.

The fifteen manifestos and Ceylan Öztrük’s contributions are on view at both institutions. In Rome, additional works by some of the participating artists accompany the show, and a historical showcase highlights the manifestos of the feminist movement in Italy in the 1960s and 70s. At the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, the reference system is shown in the context of Dada.

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Ceylan Öztrük is an artist, lives and works in Zürich. She completed her practice-based PhD (2016) in Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Istanbul) that she initiated her subject in Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna at Post Conceptual Art Practices in 2014. She received her graduate and undergraduate degrees from the Fine Arts Faculty, Sculpture Department at Anadolu University. Ceylan Öztrük opens up accepted forms of knowledge and focuses on how these come about; how these redirect a particular flow and influence power structures. Among other places she exhibited and performed at Gessnerallee Theatre (Zurich, 2023 and 2020), Geneva Biennial, FriArt Kunsthalle (Fribourg, 2021); Longtang (Zurich, 2020), IV. Berliner Herbstsalon (2019); My Wild Flag Festival, Stockholm (2019); Call me Venus, Mars, Istanbul (2016).

Bassem Saad is an artist and writer born in Beirut. Their work explores notions of historical rupture, spontaneity, and surplus, through film, performance, and sculpture, alongside essays and fiction. With an emphasis on past and present forms of struggle, they attempt to place scenes of intersubjective exchange within their world-historical frames. Bassem's work has been presented and screened at MoMA, CPH:DOX, Triangle-Asterides, Busan Biennale, and Transmediale. They are currently a fellow at the Berlin Program for Artists. Their most recent film, *Congress of Idling Persons*, received Special Mention in the New:Vision Award category at CPH:DOX 2022. Their writing appears in *The New Inquiry*, *Jadaliyya*, *FailedArchitecture*, and *The Funambulist*. They are currently a fellow at the Berlin Program for Artists.

Swiss-brasilian artist Guerreiro do Divino Amor (*Geneva, 1983, lives and works in Rio de Janeiro) holds a master's degree in architecture from the School of Architecture of Grenoble and La Cambre Architecture (Brussels). His research explores the superfictions, the historical, political, religious, and mediatical narratives that interfere in the construction of territory and of the collective imaginary. His work has been presented at Centre d'Art Contemporain (Geneva), Frestas Trienal (Sorocaba, Brazil), Second Bienal Tropical in Porto Rico, the Center for Contemporary Art in Vilnius (Lithuania), Pinacoteca de São Paulo, the Iberê Camargo Foundation in Porto Alegre (BR), among other institutions. In 2024 Guerreiro do Divino Amor will represent Switzerland at the 60th Venice Biennale.

Giorgio Zeno Graf (*1999, Lugano) lives and works in Zurich. He holds a Bachelor and Master's degree in Visual Arts from the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (ZHdK). The work of Giorgio Zeno Graf focuses on the use of resources through means of sculptures and installations, with a keen interest on the symbiotic relationships one builds with its surroundings. In 2020 Graf was awarded first prize in *Le stanze dell'arte / Premio giovani artisti Genesi creativa*, M.A.X Museo, Chiasso. Graf has participated in group exhibitions including *Bissone Arte 22* and *CALCI (Ai Molti Tesori, Mendrisio)*, *ALLDA (Zurich)*, *Offspace Flüelastrasse (Zurich)* and *Material (Zurich)*.

Industria Indipendente is a Rome-based performing, writing and visual arts collective founded by Erika Z. Galli and Martina Ruggeri. Their research is rooted in language: extended writing that inscribes itself in bodies, environments and surfaces; it becomes action and performativity; it liquefies and expands into sound, voice and light; it opens, contaminates, and blurs the boundaries between self and others, here and elsewhere. Their works always articulate questions and reflections: the 'unproductive' dimension of time, the creation of alternative and fictional worlds where communities and alliances are formed, a constant overturning and recreation of individual and collective identities. They have just debuted at the National Theatre of Rome with the show *Left Hand*, a performative, visual, and acoustic space.

Ivona Brđanović is a dramatist, queer-feminist activist, screenwriter and author. Born in Bosnia and Herzegovina, she lives in Zurich since 1991. After studying environmental engineering in Zurich, graduated with a Bachelor's degree from the Swiss Literature Institute in Biel and a Master's degree in film/screenwriting from Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (ZhdK). She is the editor of *GLITTER*, the first queer literary magazine in the German-speaking world. In addition to regular performances and event hosting in Switzerland and Germany, she writes for series and publishes her own texts. Her focus are minorities, queer and migrant themes.

Maya Olah, born in 1990 and raised in St. Gallen, studied German linguistics and literature and ethnology in Zurich and Vienna. She works as an author and teacher and develops concepts and texts for audio formats and performances and writes prose. Various short stories of hers have won awards, been published in literary magazines, and radio plays have been broadcast on the radio. She leads an interdisciplinary art project on the theme of the dance of death and has published the anthology *Bailando Bailando. Ein Totentanz* published by Vexer Verlag Berlin. She lives in Zurich and is currently working on her first novel.

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Mathis Pfäffli (*1983, Lucerne) lives and works in Zurich. Studied graphic design and illustration in Lucerne and Hamburg, as well as free art at the Institut Kunst in Basel. For his sculptures and installations he uses found objects from nature and industry, which he recombines and alienates. Just like his surrealistic drawings, they take up landscape, growth and decay. In doing so, the artist plays with existing images of the world, our language and environment. His works have been shown at Kunsthau Baselland, Museum im Bellpark and Kunstmuseum Luzern, among other institutions. In 2023 he was a finalist for the Swiss Art Awards.

Michèle Graf & Selina Grüter (*1987 in Wetzikon / *1991 in Zurich) are an artist duo living in New York, working with language and translation. They studied media arts at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (ZHdK) and participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program. Recent exhibitions and performances include *More Clock Work*, Fanta-MLN, Milan; *The Besieged Courtyard (Il cortile assediato)*, Istituto Svizzero, Milan; *Clock Work*, Kunstverein Kevin Space, Wien; *Contradictory Statements*, Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg; and *Sequences*, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York.

MigrArt is a Zurich-based association founded by people who had to seek refuge and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) Artists. MigrArt activities are created with the involvement of community, firmly believing that art plays a vital role in connecting and empowering people from diverse backgrounds, identities, and affiliations, particularly those living in the margins. The Decolonial Art Collective Zurich is a long-term project of the association MigrArt, initiated by Niştiman Erdede. It offers space, network, resources and programs for refugee artists and cultural workers in Zurich and elsewhere to pursue their own artistic activities, network with the cultural scene and find space and time to build an artistic arch from their origins to the present.

Ramaya Tegegne (*1985, Geneva) is an artist, researcher and cultural producer living and working in Geneva. Her research and practice attempt to reveal the mechanisms of a dominant model within the cultural fields and in our society by observing the economy, historicization and power relations through which they are constituted. She had solo exhibitions at Künstlerhaus in Stuttgart, Istituto Svizzero in Milan, Ludlow 38 in New York, Kevin Space in Vienna, and Fri Art Kunsthalle in Fribourg. In 2017, she launched Wages For Wages Against, a campaign for the remuneration of artists and better work conditions, which received a Swiss Art Award in 2022.

RM (formerly Real Madrid) is an artist collective founded in Geneva in 2015. The group's works explore the intersections of sexuality, consumerism and identity through large-scale sculpture and installation projects examining social and political responses to stigmatised illnesses, focusing on sexually transmitted infection and disease. Their recent exhibitions include Auto Italia South East, London (2023), CEC Centre d'Édition Contemporaine, Geneva (2023), Swiss Institute, New York (2022), Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2021), Fondazione ICA Milano (2021), Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2021), Quadriennale Roma, Rome (2021), and others. RM was awarded the Swiss Art Award in 2018 and 2023.

Sandra Mujinga (*1989, Goma, DRC) is a multidisciplinary Norwegian artist and musician who works between Berlin and Oslo. Thinking through speculative fiction in Afrofuturist tradition, Sandra Mujinga play's with economies of visibility and disappearance. Her works negotiates questions of self-representation and -preservation, appearance, and opacity, through an interdisciplinary practice in which she often reverses traditional identity politics of presence. The artist's works depart from a purely anthropocentric approach to understanding the transient world we are living in now, for that reason Mujinga is looking for inspiration in how animals are developing survival strategies and adapting to hostile surroundings.

Shirana Shahbazi (*1974, Tehran) lives and works in Zurich since 1997. She is an internationally recognized artist. Her work is represented in public collections worldwide, such as Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Kunsthau Zürich; MoMA, New York; Tate Modern, London; Sprengel Museum, Hannover. Exhibitions have been presented at international institutions, including the MoMA, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Barbican Art Gallery, London and the Venice Biennale. Together with Manuel Krebs, she has published various artist books and monographs. She was awarded the Prix Meret Oppenheim (2019).

Ursula Biemann is a Swiss artist and author, whose practice centers on fieldwork, often in Indigenous territories, and the creation of networks between different fields of knowledge. Her artistic practice reflects on the political ecologies of forests, oil and water, creating critical perspectives on the dynamics of extraction and also proposing alternative ecocentric modes of relating to the natural world. Biemann recently published the online monograph *Becoming Earth* on ten years of her ecological video works and writing with UNAL Bogota, and the book *Forest Mind* with Spector Books (2022).

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