

**MARTA MARGNETTI
«SERENATA»**

**NEW HEADS: JPP & ALEXANDRA
SHEHERAZADE SALEM**

17.2.-12.5.2024

Marta Margnetti dedicates a «Serenata» (Italian for *serenade*) to the women in her family and explores domesticity, memory and generational trajectories with different media. In her search for the worldviews and self-perceptions of the women in her family, Margnetti collects memories, sounds and atmospheres, weaving them into various materials. Her largest institutional exhibition in German-speaking Switzerland to date assembles ceramics, traditional construction techniques, delicate bronzes, sound installations and found objects.

At the core of her solo exhibition is a personal sound piece based on an exchange with her mother. In *Autoritratto con mamma (credenza)*, engl. *Self-portrait with mum (cupboard)*, Margnetti records a

conversation with her mother, recalling memories of her grandmother. By editing out the words, only the sounds of the two women listening, thinking, and remembering remain. They give life to a simple 1960s kitchen cupboard, stripped of its layers of paint and restored to its original appearance by the artist.

Another work is dedicated to Margnetti's paternal grandmother, who used to pinch her cheeks as a child. She recreates this key memory with her mother in the video work *Autoritratto con mamma (pizzicotti)*, engl. *Self-portrait with mum (pinching)*. The artist emphasizes the firm yet tender nature of the gesture, which assumes the image of rosy cheeks. The close-up is shot on video 8, whose camcorder aesthetic is typical of the 1990s and thus of the artist's childhood.

The pixelated skin tones captured in the digitised video connect to the wall works crafted from clay. To Margnetti, the material properties of clay bear a kinship with human skin. While her self-portraits explore domesticity through family memories, here she turns her attention to the architectural elements of the home. She is particularly interested in the close relationship between architecture and social norms: to what extent do spatial divisions inform values and pre-define stereotypical roles? How (and why) do we draw the line between what is inside and what is outside?

Gelosie (parete), engl. *Jealousy (wall)*, was originally part of an outdoor installation. Exhibited in the Vaud Alps, the clay panels formed the wall of a small cabin with a slanted roof. Working in sgraffito technique, Margnetti carved lines

into the dried clay, initially rigid and fence-like, which quickly dissolve into undisciplined curls. They point to the permeability of boundaries – be it fences, walls, or skin. Beetles, seeds, and even a bat couple came to inhabit the clay-walled shelter during its installation in the forest, as if to prove its porosity.

The group of works titled ... *fa formicolare la stanza*, engl. ... *makes the room tingle*, extends Margnetti's investigation into clay wall panels. Following a traditional construction technique, the panels are made by layering clay with straw, coarse sand, and then fine sand. Here and there, the artist's own hair emerges within the clay mixtures. To Margnetti, architecture, the body, home, family histories, and memory are closely intertwined. The grid pattern, also present in *Homeplace Placeholder*, becomes a signifier for a faded recollection of her mother's childhood home.

On the other side of the room, a blue glow lures us into a nocturnal scenario. 130 cicadas cast in bronze sit leisurely on the wall, typical beings of the outdoors, taunting us within an indoor space. This is the serenade's choir (*Coro per serenata*). In the rise of climate change, cicadas are moving further north, now filling the Ticino with their distinct calls. In response to this, Margnetti incorporates a sound element: if you remain still, you can hear soft clicking noises. It is once again the conversation with her mother, distilled into the subtle and unconscious clicking sounds we make while speaking.

Margnetti's piece *Oasi (batticuore)*, engl. *Oasis (heartbeat)*, marks the transition to the exhibition New HEADS: JPP & Alexandra Sheherazade Salem. Consisting of found illuminated letters from a highway gas station, *Oasi (batticuore)* is a meditation on border regions and idealised places of longing, like the Ticino. Emulating the artist's heartbeat, the letters illuminate themes such as home, foreignness, origin, migration and family, which also play a role for the artists JPP and Alexandra Sheherazade Salem.

JPP (*1997 in Geneva/CH) and Alexandra Sheherazade Salem (*1996 in La Gruyère/CH) are graduates of HEAD - Genève Master's programme in Fine Arts and winners of the New HEADS prize for young artists awarded by the school. They share an artistic interest in questions related to identity and language. Not unlike Margnetti's process for «Serenata», JPP and Alexandra Sheherazade Salem address their family history and ask how their parents' migration experiences have shaped their own world view.

JPP draws her artist's pseudonym from the french *j'en peux plus* (engl. *I can't take it anymore*). This feeling, mentioned ironically but shared by an entire generation, is visualised in the work *Cri du cœur vers l'Absolu I*, engl. *A cry from the heart towards the Absolute I*. For the Albanian artist, who grew up in a sporty environment, Adilettes typically symbolize the moment of relaxation after sports activities. In the floor piece, the cosy footwear transforms into an immobilising restraint, rendering moving forward impossible. However, the heavy slides also allude to the importance of standing one's ground in the wake of increased violence, hate speech and wars.

JPP seeks her point of view in the Muslim faith, which she has been connected to since her early childhood through her mother. In the knowledge that faith justifies contemporary wars and current systems of oppression, JPP seeks to reconnect religion to something genuine. She turns to her mother's childlike handwriting to trace the first sura of the Quran on the wall. To her, the wonky letters and scribbled handwriting also stand for dialogue, understanding, and transmission.

Sorrow mobility is a selection from the written works of Alexandra Sheherazade Salem. Writing is the point of departure to most of her work, as she underscores in her text *From where I write / I write about*. Journal entries, recipes, and news headlines mix as the artist of Iranian heritage seeks orientation, explores hybridity and documents defining moments. The Persian *jāt khāli* recurs frequently, a figurative expression for *You are missing*. The saying becomes the anchor point of a video work in which Salem re-enacts a conversation with her father over a game of backgammon. As photographs from her last visit to Iran in 2019 are superimposed with the video images, the plastic sheets repeat the aesthetics of multiple layers in the exhibition space. On the backgammon board, as in real life, the interplay of choice and chance, will and luck, decides the final outcome. Through this allegory, Alexandra Sheherazade Salem delicately explores the life story of her father, and thus, in some ways, her own.

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JPP thanks her parents and Shera.

Alexandra thanks her father, Xheneta, Ramin, Chirine, Kian, Erika and Vahid.

VERANSTALTUNGS- & VERMITTLUNGSPROGRAMM

OPENING

Friday, 16 February 2024, 6 p.m.

GUIDED TOUR ON TUESDAY

Tuesday, 20 February 2024, 6 p.m.

ART SNACK

Thursday, 14 March 2024, 12.30 p.m.

Short guided tour and a snack

Admission: CHF 10/members CHF 7;

No registration required.

GUIDED TOUR ON SUNDAY

Sunday, 12 May 2024, 3 p.m.

WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOL CLASSES

From 21 February to 8 May 2024.

More information on www.k9000.ch.

PRESS

High-resolution images can be found in the press kit on our website under Info/Press. For further questions contact Giovanni Carmine (carmine@k9000.ch) or Barbara Kiolbassa (kiolbassa@k9000.ch).

MARTA MARGNETTI (*1989 in Mendrisio/CH) lives and works in Lugano/CH. Margnetti co-founded the artist-run-space Sonnenstube (Lugano/CH) and was co-director of the independent cultural space Morel (Lugano/CH) from 2018 to 2020. Solo and duo exhibitions (selection): Galleria Daniele Agostini, Lugano/CH (2023); Photobastei, Zurich/CH (2022); Mayday, Basel/CH (2021). Group exhibitions (selection): Swiss Art Awards (2023); Nida Art Colony of the Vilnius Academy of Arts, Neringa/LT (2022); Lateral Roma, Rome/IT (2022); Kunsthalle Basel, Basel/CH (2018); Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Ex Macello, Lugano/CH (2017).

XHENETA IMERI (*1997 in Geneva/CH) lives and works with the pseudonym **JPP** in Geneva/CH. Solo and group exhibition (selection): Art Genève, Geneva/CH (2024); Dampfzentrale, Berne/CH (2023); Lehaim, Sofia/BG (2023); The National Gallery of Kosovo, Pristina/XK (2023); Topic, Geneva/CH (2022); Buropolis, Marseille/FR (2022). Performances (selection): Plaine de Plainpalais, Geneva/CH (2023); Wallstreet, Fribourg/CH (2021).

ALEXANDRA SHEHERAZADE SALEM (*1996 in La Gruyère/CH) lives and works in Geneva/CH. Solo and group exhibitions (selection): Material, Zurich/CH (2023); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich/CH (2023); Le 125, Bruxelles/BE (2023); Arsenic, Lausanne/CH (2022); Forde, Geneva/CH (2022). Screenings: Bangalore Queer Film Festival, Bangalore/IN (2023); Selection 5e, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva/CH (2021). Performances (selection): Plaine de Plainpalais, Geneva/CH (2023); Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva/CH (2021).

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Di-Fr 12-18 Uhr

Sa/So 11-17 Uhr

THE EXHIBITION BY MARTA MARGNETTI IS MADE POSSIBLE BY SCHWEIZER KULTURSTIFTUNG PRO HELVETIA, AND CITTÀ DI LUGANO. THE EXHIBITION NEW HEADS: JPP & ALEXANDRA SHEHERAZADE SALEM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY HEAD - GENÈVE. KUNST HALLE SANKT GALLEN IS SUPPORTED BY STADT ST.GALLEN, KULTURFÖRDERUNG KANTON ST.GALLEN, SWISSLOS, SUSANNE UND MARTIN KNECHTLI-KRADOLFER-STIFTUNG, MARTEL AG. THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME IS MADE POSSIBLE BY RAIFFEISEN.