

Ľuboš Kotlár
selected works
2018 – 2025

chapel series (in progress)

object

various sizes

wood, stainless steel, wood stain, acrylic paint, mother of pearl, gold leaf

2024 –

During summer of 2024 I took part in a symposium organised by Fundacja Jaw Dikh in Rzepiska, Poland. These objects are directly inspired by the numerous chapels I've observed in the area, that are being built by the residents in front of their homes for the purpose of spiritual protection. I became increasingly interested in this subject, since while a house itself serves as a shelter for our physical safety, I assume these chapels are supposed to deliver psychological one – bring their builder a peace of mind, also warmth and calmness to the house. I actually very appreciate the idea of building a talisman to look after you, after all, it is very typical for people across various cultures to put meaning into objects.

I was working with bare physical structure of these chapels, which – when stripped down to their simple shape – suddenly become very obscure and inherently queer objects, leaving the viewer questioning their purpose. They might be reminiscent of a dollhouse, a birdfeeder, an actual cabinet, a postal box etc. While the arrows (derived from the tourist signs found in the same area) keep showing the directions, without the information provided on them it's impossible to know what they are pointing towards.

The viewer is therefore left with the concept of having to make a decision and choose a path, while not knowing what is at the end. The texts are written in an informal language ("the horrors persists but so do I"; "I'm not so sure I believe in beginnings and endings", "I've already waited a long time") and are referring to seemingly random subjective feelings and/or thoughts, however they represent a much broader and objective lived experience, which the viewers can instantly connect to. These objects, even though robbed of their original religious significance, might still be able to bring a sense of fellowship and hope to the viewer.



*installation view; Atchin Than; Willa Oksza, Muzeum Tatrzańskie w Zakopanem, Zakopane, PL; 2024



*installation view; Atchin Than; Willa Oksza, Muzeum Tatrzańskie w Zakopanem, Zakopane, PL; 2024



*installation view; New Stage of National Theatre, Prague, CZ; 2025



untitled (climber)

object

160x200cm

stainless steel, plexiglass, analog photography, digital print, LED

2024

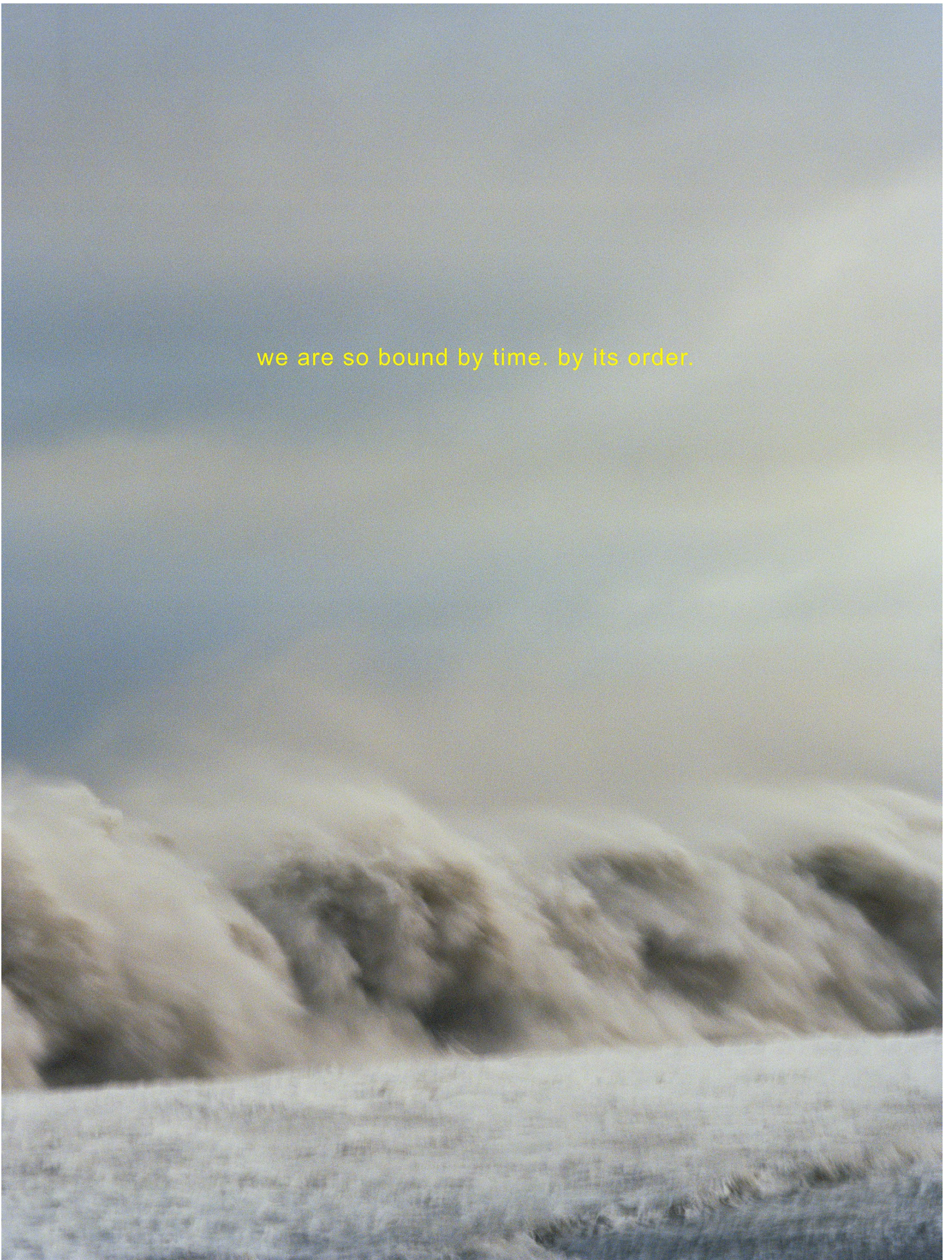
Main characteristics of the object “untitled (climber)” are printed image in large scale and metal structure surrounding it. The image depicts the waves at the seashore in motion. While the scene may appear very romantic at first glance, it is at the same time somehow frightening. Through this image the artist draws attention to climate change, the healing and/or destructive power of nature and our inability and/or unwillingness to protect it and/or escape it.

The text on the picture says “we are so bound by time. by its order.” It is a quote from the movie “Arrival” (Villeneuve, Denis; 2016), which in this context refer to the present moment, the shortness of a single-human life compared to geological age of the universe, therefore the ambiguity of our understanding of linear time and space.

The structure surrounding the image is on the other hand very sharp and cold, its main feature being the ladder, that frames the image from behind. It is obvious that the object was designed with the human body in mind, since we know right away how it should be used. We can also feel the sensation of a cold metal touching our skin just by looking at it. The object therefore brings an anticipation of a performative action, of something that is yet to come and while it refers to playfulness, in fact it speaks of absence.

The addition of lighting feature brings mysterious element and astonishment. Reading of the object is very subjective, it is directly prepared for the viewer to be physically confronted with the structure, which exceeds their physical body and have a possibility to reflect, while seeing their own reflection in the plexiglass covering the image; they can also climb the ladder though, it's possible.

we are so bound by time. by its order.





*installation view; Under a Shared Fragile Roof, Slovenský institut Praha, Prague, CZ; 2024



*installation view; last summer i have fallen in love madly, Summer swimming pool Mičurín, Bratislava, SK; 2024

last summer i have fallen in love madly
performative installation/event

Summer Swimming Pool Mičurín
Bratislava, Slovakia
October 17 2024

exhibition design: Gabriela Smetanová
sound: NaiKavols
voicerover: Jana Kovalčíková
texts: Gabriela Smetanová, Ľuboš Kotlár
text edit: Katarína K. Cvečková
production: Gabriela Smetanová
photo documentation: Leontína Berková
video documentation: Martin Toldy

* financially supported by Slovak Arts Council in form of stipend and Bratislava City Foundation

The period after the end of the summer season is associated with a cooling of the climate, an intense return to work and school duties, and seasonal affective disorder. The swimming pool, as a space primarily intended for public relaxation and/or sport, is often tied to a set of individual memories that are largely associated with childhood, family life and collective activities. In its emptied/non-functional form, it loses the purpose of its own existence and loses its justification. A popular public place becomes a dreary and disturbing space which in turn disturbs and/or poses a direct physical threat. It becomes a space that is inherently non-normative, and as a result has the potential to exist autonomously outside of established social patterns.

The installation in the swimming pool area is formally based on stage design. The original sketches for the project, which I have been gradually developing since October 2022, include objects installed directly in the pool area. These objects were partly based on the concept of scaffolding, construction, or reconstruction of the space. The installation was to include ladders and platforms into which glass panels, doors, lightboxes and other objects were embedded to imaginatively divide the space. Gradually I came to the conclusion that the conceptual framework of the whole project does not stand on the objects that I bring into the pool area. On the contrary, each new artifact in the space, although it adds a new contextual layer, is not a carrier of the main meaning itself. I decided to leave the pool space empty, filled only with the „necessary“ technical equipment (i.e. light and sound) that directly encourage the expectation of performative action.

Around the pools, imaginary communities are formed. It is common that if you regularly visit a swimming pool close to where you live, you meet the same people, just like in cafés, fitness centres or even public transport. If the swimming pool area in its transformed form becomes emptied, its function of building an imaginary community can be restored precisely by embracing it as our own at every stage of its cycle. In its emptied form, we have the opportunity to find new uses for it, new ways of spending time together and thus unconventional ways of establishing and strengthening social relations.

On October 17 the brightest full supermoon of 2024 was shining. October full moon symbolizes the definitive end of the summer season, which is why it is also called the „Hunter's Moon“ in Western culture, and is associated with the preparation of supplies for the winter (however, it carries various other names and meanings in different cultures). Today's event can therefore be understood as an imaginary closing of the summer season and its related activities, or, on the contrary, it can be understood as an opening of the collective imagination in connection with a space that has ceased to serve us at first glance in its current state.



something's wrong and i can feel it
performative installation

Nová Synagóga
Žilina, Slovakia
July 9 – September 8 2024

exhibition design: Gabriela Smetanová
sound: NaiKavols
texts: Erik Vilím, Ľuboš Kotlár
production: Martina Mäsiarová
graphic design: Dávid Koronczí
photo documentation: Richard Köhler, Ľuboš Kotlár

* financially supported by Slovak Arts Council and Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava

For several years now, when writing texts for my projects, I have often used reference to the multiplicity of crises we are currently experiencing. The most characteristic feature of the present time is uncertainty, both on a personal and on a societal level, as a result of which we are experiencing collective anxiety. In relation to these facts, I have long been concerned with the concept of temporality, whereby, with an awareness of an uncertain future, we focus our attention on the present moment that is currently happening, in contrast to a clear vision and planning of events that are yet to come.

The exhibition „something's wrong and i can feel it“ uses the given architectural elements of the New Synagogue space. By uncovering the opening that is present in its dome, if the space is sufficiently darkened, the image is projected onto the floor directly beneath the dome, recontextualizing the building as a „camera obscura,“ a simple optical device that predates the invention of the photographic apparatus. The projected image depicts atmospheric changes in the sky above the New Synagogue building, with the resulting image being dynamic and transforming over time beyond the artist's control. The perception of a given image requires a certain degree of concentration on the part of the viewer and a physical adaptation to the new conditions.

The process of observing the sky and celestial events is directly linked to the objects installed in the towers of the New Synagogue. The fountain with the bucket and the moon refers to the Romani custom of bowing to the new moon, when men „carried a bucket of water and small money in the bucket. They believed that as the moon grew, so would their wealth.“ (Lack, Elena. I was born under a lucky star. 2023). The marble panels installed in the second tower are in turn engraved with inscriptions that come from the astrology app Co-star, which sends me a notification each day with a thought for the day. These objects draw attention to old versus new „superstitions,“ various forms of ascribing meaning to cosmic objects and mysticism that persist in transformed forms across time in various communities, and whose popularity, paradoxically, continues to rise.

The installation „something's wrong and i can feel it“ is intended to provide the audience with a space for slowing down and introspection, a safe space for awareness of physical experience and perception of the present moment, impermanence and ephemerality. Feel free to throw a few pennies at the fountain and read some of the motivational thoughts. Everything will be all right.



*camera obscura site-specific intervention



*Untitled (Fountain); 3D print, metal, rubble, tripod, hose, water, motor, pump; various sizes; 2024



*Untitled (Lapidarium); marble, dirt, found plant; 200x200cm; 2024



*Untitled (Lapidarium); marble, dirt, found plant; 200x200cm; 2024



sugar

performative installation

Šaloun Studio

Prague, Czech republic

July 21 – September 15 2022

created in collaboration with Robert Gabris

curator: Piotr Sikora

photo documentation: Jonáš Verešpej

* within Biennale Matter of Art

We are looking at sugar as a significant commodity in European history – while in the past sugar was reserved for upper classes, today it is the poor that rely on these cheap, easy-to-get and easy-to-process ingredients. As a result, these disadvantaged population groups suffer from health consequences, such as a widely spread diabetes in Roma settlements in Slovakia. For casts, we used our own fists, bringing the Roma Queer body into an institution in both metaphorical and physical form. A fist can be understood in several readings – is it a revolutionary gesture, an aggressive beating hand, or a hand of sexual practice of fisting?

Without any conservation, these objects change over time without our control, creating new forms and contexts. We explore collective and individual inclusion in political systems and ourselves, questioning identity in cultural contexts and societal inclusion. Our work aims to liberate from power structures. We, as queer Roma identities, need to create open participatory spaces for imagining collective identities and futures. We question the concept of a collective body in art institutions.

Our bodies are the tools absorbing, accepting, resisting complexities, reflecting individual and collective experiences. We form a collective body from diverse perceptions, creating chosen families and rules for stability. We practice resilience, merging into each other like liquid.



nowlessness

Ľuboš Kotlár's nowlessness project (from 2017) offers several ways of reading, although there is no way that is correct or otherwise privileged. These ways are not strictly separate from one another, but they are linked by lesser field-paths on which our thinking can turn aside and change direction, or take a more arduous or a less demanding course. Disburdened entirely of the terminological terrain with its obstacles, nowlessness is in the first instance a specific situation that is naturally played out in time; it is mutable and temporary, has its beginning and end, but also an indefinite continuation. nowlessness has no firmly defined "programme" or strictly set goal – each of its new material realisations respects the contemporary change and development of social or natural reality, and on this basis updates its form in a new time and space. It does not try to create an exhibition that would last a few weeks, linear-style, until another replaced it; rather, by its form as an event it draws primarily from a ritual experience in which social hierarchy is lost, the norms of everyday life dissolve, and from a structured community an interconnected whole is created. The difference between viewer, exhibitor and curator becomes almost unrecognisable. nowlessness does not reproduce a conceptual grouping of artistic objects. It produces an associative spatial play without a strict narrative line: the works are designed for contemplation, in the context of which our bodies are equal partners of the mind – looking and asking have an equal weight. The space itself is not a neutral player in the background, but an accomplice supporting the "speaking voices" of the individual works.

Time here is not merely a physical magnitude, and Kotlár fills it with symbolic potential – he makes reference to the contemporary dissolution of its linear flow from past, through present, to future. The general ignorance of the ecological crisis on the part of political representatives has radically "blurred" the view of the future, in which humanity will not necessarily continue to write its new story. Technological dominance and the irrevocable collapse of ecosystems compel us to adopt a perspective in which only the present remains, without relation to a future. To comprehend this new "unanchored" temporality, Kotlár uses the metaphor of queer time. What is involved here is a response to the normative life of the individual in the capitalist system, which is characterised by a linear flow of time (birth, marriage, reproduction, death). This social norm preserves not only the continuity of the family unit but also the accumulation of (financial or cultural) capital. We can see it being implemented explicitly in our local politics. The non-reproductive life of the queer individual represents a political problem, and for that reason also they are so intensively demonised by politicians proclaiming the Christian anchoring of values. For the queer community the preservation of reproductive continuity is impossible, and thereby it creates a temporality in which the future loses significance – that is to say, it is defined by temporariness. And that is precisely what Ľuboš Kotlár's concept of nowlessness is referring to, which may be a key to comprehension of a present deprived of relation to a future.

Erik Vilím

untitled (from the series nowlessness)

video

5:13 min (loop)

2021

writer, director: Ľuboš Kotlár

3D artist: Paula Malinowska

editing: Vladimíra Vrbiňáková

sound: Naikavols

dramaturgy: Katarína K. Cvečková

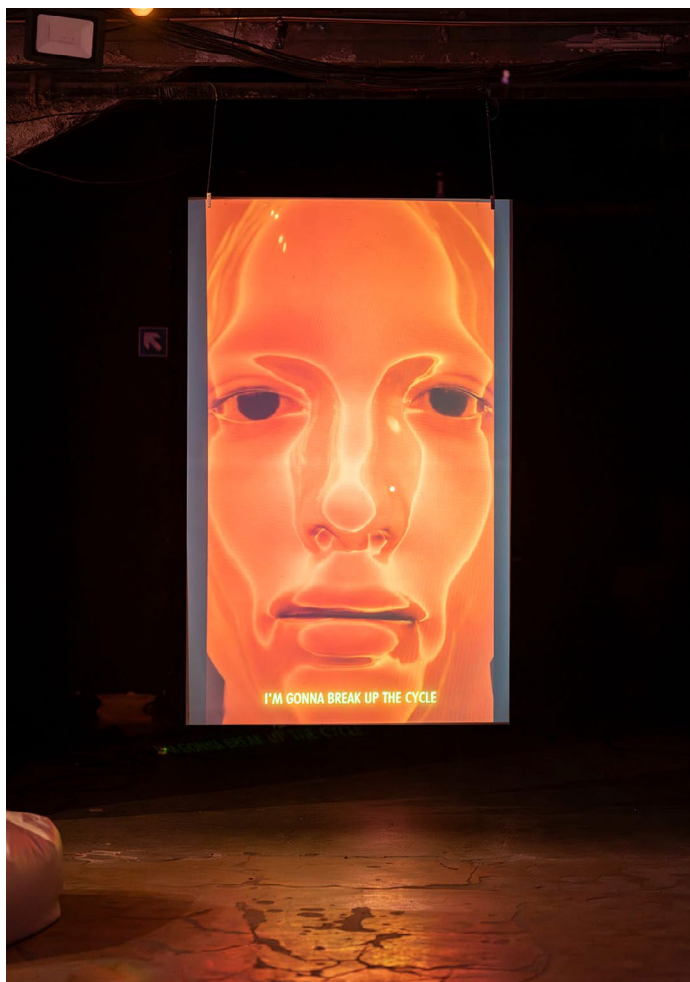
photo documentation: Leontína Berková, Oskar Helcel

Video was created for one-evening event titled nowlessness, act iii: hot in here (2021) that took place in fallout shelter under Kunsthalle Bratislava. Event was a part of my project nowlessness and presented a group of artists that question the modernist duality nature/culture from multiple perspectives (such as new materialism, queer theory, speculative design etc.). The project by its concept and the character of the works arrangements created a temporary contemplative situation, where the dualities between analog/digital, biological/artificial, cultural/natural, male/female are being erased. Conceptually, the video is based on the notion of „singularity“, which comes from the accelerationist theory. „Singularity“ is a radical theory according to which „Homo universus“, a new evolutionary stage of man, will appear in the near future. We will soon reach a catastrophic point at which the capacity of the global digital network will exceed the capacity of all the grey matter present on the planet (the so-called Omega point).

Artificial intelligence is expected to remain subservient to human will despite its newfound majority. As a result, human biology and technology would be fused at last. This consciousness would become programmable, creating a new kind of consciousness that would have unlimited access to replication within a network or synthetic genetically engineered manufactured bodies. Physical death would then become optional. What's more, it would become a necessary part of achieving immortality – one that is independent of Earth's biological resources, independent of our need for biological reproduction. Humanity would know no boundaries as we became the world. In the future, everything will be human. We have decided to leave the glitches in, so that technology has a voice on its own in the production process itself.



*installation view; nowlessness, act iii: hot in here, fallout shelter under Kunsthalle Bratislava, Bratislava, SK; 2021



*installation view; Y: Survive!, X10 Theatre, Prague, CZ; 2023



[*click for the video](#)

nowlessness, act ii: the waves
installation, performance

MEDIUM Gallery
Bratislava, Slovakia
November 6 – November 30 2019

created in collaboration with: Ján Gašparovič, Peter Tilajčík, Terézia Feňovčíková
performers: Peter Tilajčík, Heidi Šinková, Martin Hrvol, Martina Mäsiarová, Gabriela Smetanová, Maroš Greš, Terézia Števuliaková, Ernest Bevi L'acqua, Ester Šabíková, Sandra Ružić, Tomáš Košarišťan, Ľuboš Kotlár
photo documentation: Ján Skaličan
curator: Beata Jablonská

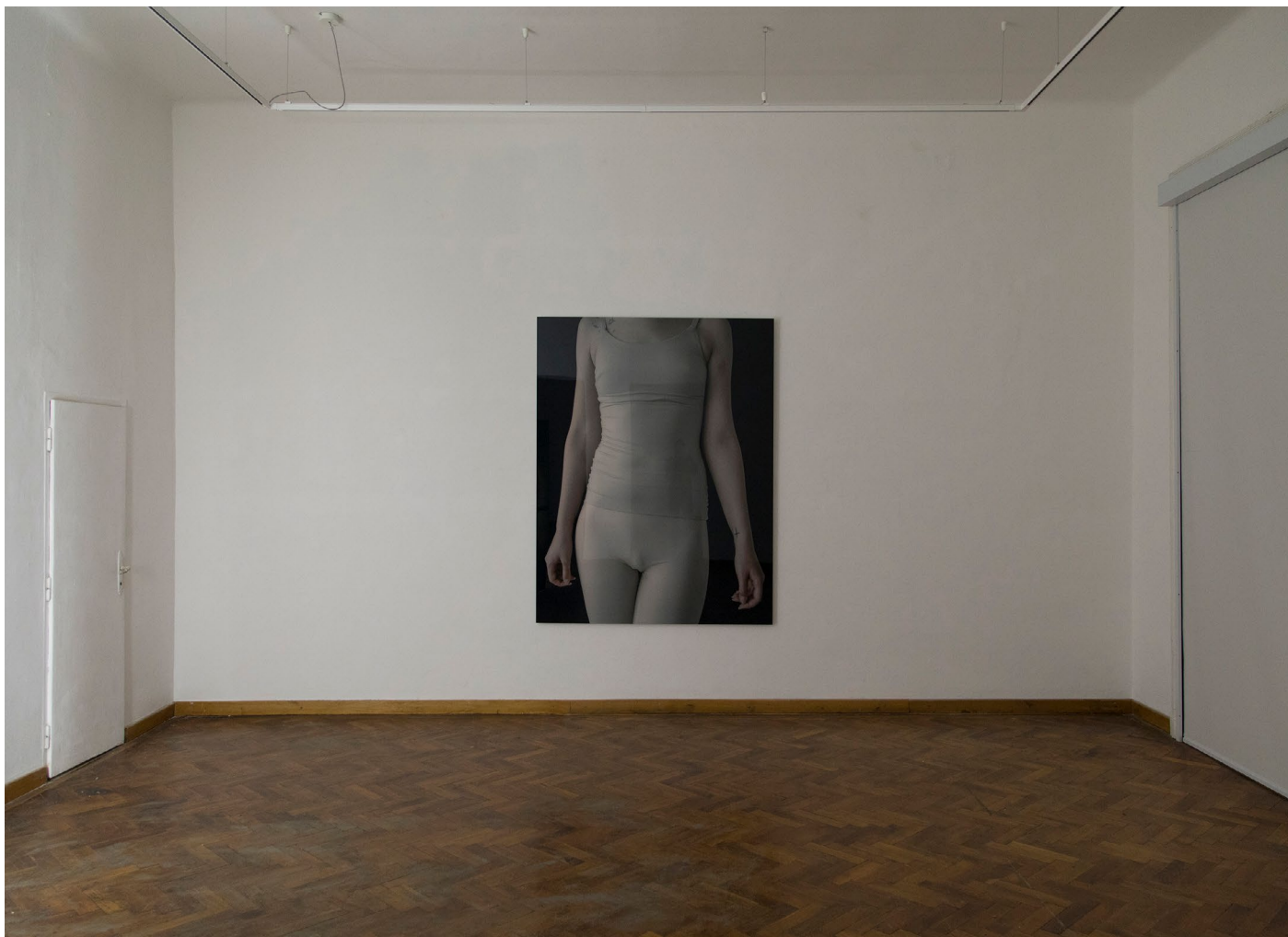
* financially supported by Slovak Arts Council

According to theoretical physics, the object does no longer carry energy and/or impact. Instead, it is the wave assigned to matter. The matter is getting dissolved in the system of corresponding waves, which are the elements creating completely new view on the micro-world. In the general theory of relativity Albert Einstein ascribed dynamic relationship between time and space. The fourth dimension became geometric and epistemological quality. Since then, time is no longer considered as linear quantity. While asking what is real(ity) and where we are, there is now a question – WHAT IS PRESENT?

Installation in the gallery was accompanied by performances – a single performer illuminating large-scale print filling up the room with smartphone, 9 performers in a repeated movement under the heater (being the only source of light), 2 performers constrained in hugging gesture. Each of the performances had no apparent movement to them at the moment of observation. The performances had an indirect relationship to the sounds bound to 2 steel plates, one being the frequency of magnetic resonance, while the other represented seismic activity in the ocean. The two frequencies, despite being asynchronous, harmonized at some point (in combination with the vibrating sound of the metal itself). The installation consciously played with the sensations that are not replicable through still and/or moving images, such as heat, sweat, as well as restrictions in movement around the performing bodies.







nowlessness, act i: calm after the storm
installation/event

Undeadarena.sk
Bratislava, Slovakia
June 6 2018

created in collaboration with: Tomáš Procházka, Terézia Feňovčíková, Mya Javorková, wyme
performers: Dušan Prekop, Dominika Šikulajová, Albert Póda, Šima Müller, Klára Abrahamfyová,
Tomáš Procházka
photo documentation: Matej Hakár
curator: Beata Jablonská

* financially supported by Slovak Arts Council

Set in an empty postindustrial space on the outskirts of Bratislava, this event consisted of several components. In one room, six stainless steel plates (200x300cm each) were installed in the space, each of them printed with portraits of people, who remained formally unspecified – even though they all represent members of the queer community. The size of the plates, their mirror-like surface quality, even the visual language chosen for the portraits, are reminiscent of commercial images known from the public space. The photographs were taken using daylight and plain white or black backgrounds, leaving the models seemingly out of time and space, as this visual approach does not bound to a specific era of the media of photography. The viewers are confronted with their own reflection in these large, durable and sturdy objects, while also questioning the identities of people depicted on them, trying to connect with them. In the same room, pieces of old furniture were scattered across the space, acting as “stage-design” for the performers, who were mounting on them, drinking beer, interacting with the space and the metal objects, not paying attention to the visitors. This room remained in silence. In another room, rave was taking place, with dj playing live set and a bar fully functioning.

This event has several ways of reading, leaving the viewers to question the purpose of what is happening – is this a squat at the city periphery, a hyped rave in the present time, or are we taking place in a post-apocalyptic scene?

