



Michal Baror & Amalia Vargas: Bite the Bullet

In the opening scene of Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959), we see a hearse carrying a coffin surrounded by mourners. A moment later, the car is being chased by the police, and only when the bullets begin to hit the coffin, which starts leaking, do we understand that it is not carrying a dead body but contraband alcohol. We learn that instead of a funeral, the car is on its way to a party. It's an uncanny moment when the coffin starts leaking and we, the viewers, who expect the coffin to behave as a solid body and stay fixed as the bullets are hitting it, end up witnessing a very different material behavior – the liquid liquor leaking. One can almost imagine that, at this point, the coffin itself becomes a dead body. The transformation of the coffin can be used as the starting point for the dialogue between the two artists, which began shortly after they met during their residency at MeetFactory. It was not a fateful encounter, but rather a hint of understanding, an inner feeling of connection that they both decided to explore.

Michal Baror's works are usually strongly connected to her local (political) context, and she often works with archives, doing thorough research before each exhibition. With this exhibition, she seemingly abandoned her usual practice. She doesn't connect individual points that she carefully studied beforehand in a final, multi-layered story, but turns her photographs into a kind of a mind map. The gallery becomes her personal memory palace, where she installs photographs into islands of connections. She treats them more like objects that are in dialogue with each other. Their meanings are fluid and leave us space, not only to follow the intuitive logic with which she puts them into context, but they invite us to actively join this game of meanings and to create our own syncretic vision.

Then, Amalia enters this network of dialogues and, with her objects, brings another commentary of our perception of the world that throws us off balance. Plastic flower pots can now be ancient terracotta amphorae. However, this belief is slowly melting, as well as the plastic, revealing violent wounds. The simulation is destroyed by deformation. By capturing the moment of the metamorphosis, she brings us back to the chaotic and violent physical reality, only to send us back to the net of virtuality, and to let us unravel another tangle of connections.

Therefore, the images do not tell us a story, but create networks and it is up to us which thread we decide to follow. They are taken out of their original context and repeatedly dragged into new ones. They combine a simulation of reality – photographs of photographs and paintings from local museums and galleries or plastic terracotta – with pictures of the “basic reality” and gesture of deformation, by which they make its perception problematic. They draw us into the subtle game of visual metaphors, where by using our associative perception they create a peculiar landscape where objects become living creatures, inhaling and exhaling, while the living body freezes. Inside this mind maze, the artists left crumbs (as if one could find a way back). They invite us to pursue those hidden details, peek into each hole and look for the unnoticeable. It is an exercise for our point of view – an attempt to stop calling things by their name without erasing their meaning.

Galerie, Rezidence, Divadlo, Hudba.

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Michal Baror (1984) was born in Israel, where she lives and works. She studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem (2008) and at the Royal College of Art in London (2013). Through the exploration of existing knowledge systems, objects, and institutions, she works to expose the building blocks used to construct histories and identities. She uses photography as a medium and also as a metaphor for thinking about representation and the transformation of objects into knowledge. Many of her works are institutionally specific, challenging the organizing mechanism of the place in which they are shown and from which they emerge.

Amalia Vargas (1994) was born in Colombia. She lives and works in France. In 2018, she graduated at the Ecole supérieure d'arts & media de Caen / Cherbourg. She uses objects and images as tools and is interested in the editing forms of the space where the assemblages are combined. Her sculptures present hybridizations where collective and individual histories, traditions and mass cultures coexist in their own iconology. She continues to work with raw available materials, fragments, signs, and forms that she has transformed in an almost humorous way in order to look at society.

Lucia Kvočáková

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Kostka Gallery

Curator: Lucia Kvočáková

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