



Anna-Sophie Berger & Hayley Silverman & Flaka Haliti

I Surrender, Dear

24 September – 27 November 2016

(Main Hall)

Vienna-based artist Anna-Sophie Berger has invited American artist Hayley Silverman and Kosovar artist Flaka Haliti to co-produce an exhibition that explores the nature and value of constructing social environments of artists. As both a testing ground and a series of expressions made visible, this exhibition serves to both encompass as well as give occasion to possibilities made manifest through an open-sharing and non-dualistic, non-individualistic praxis between these three artists.

The exhibition is comprised of these three divergent artists' voices considering the body explicitly and implicitly. American artist Hayley Silverman presents photographs silk-screened on partitions, depicting queer bodies in states of play and pose. Austrian artist Anna-Sophie Berger contributes a series of works, including textiles partly petrified through concrete. Among her artworks, Kosovar artist Flaka Haliti includes sculptures modeled on security barriers that enforce boundaries and borders on unwanted bodies.

[Anna-Sophie Berger](#), born 1989 in Vienna, lives and works in Vienna

[Hayley Silverman](#), born 1986, lives and works in New York

Flaka Haliti, born in 1982 in Pristina, Kosovo, lives and works in Munich

Anna-Sophie Berger & Hayley Silverman & Flaka Haliti

I Surrender, Dear

In 2015, Séamus Kealy invited Vienna-based artist Anna-Sophie Berger to develop an exhibition at the Salzburger Kunstverein with one or two artists of her choice. These artists could be of her generation, or work with some parallel methodology for example, but no certain parameters were given. In turn, Anna-Sophie Berger invited American artist Hayley Silverman and Kosovar artist Flaka Haliti to work with her on the exhibition. Together they have co-produced an exhibition that makes reference to and presents conversations about human bodies through converging sculptural, conceptual and representational works of art.

Each artist lives and works within very different contexts from the others. Each also comes from her own specific geo-political background, which form a conscious backdrop to this collaboration. While Anna-Sophie Berger lives between Vienna, Munich and New York, Flaka Haliti lives between Munich, Vienna, Kosovo, and at the moment, Florence, and Hayley Silverman lives and works in New York. The artists have been in contact with one another and with Séamus Kealy for the past year, making considerations about how to present an exhibition that brings together this dialogue on contemporary bodies.

I Surrender, Dear consciously offers a space for the visitor to walk through and make considerations on the contemporary body. A dialogue between our bodies as visitors and this exhibition is immediately made evident by the tumbled barricade (by Flaka Haliti) at the exhibition entry.

We might begin considering this exhibition by ruminating on the human body today. Our present times are often dominated by immaterial, digital representations of the self, and thus, the body. Despite this, the everyday-ness of urban life often remains dominantly tied to our bodies, whether our bodily relationship to architecture and space, our sensual, psychological or emotional interactions with others, or as we are coerced into conforming or reacting to demanding circumstances, among other matters. The exhibition itself offers a visceral setting for visitors to make a modest encounter with, much alike the spirit of meaningfully engaging ourselves with daily life. That is, this exhibition mirrors and reflects quotidian life and space, albeit from differing sources simultaneously.

Anna-Sophie Berger contributes a series of works, including colourful textiles partly petrified through concrete. Traces of the human form and its movement and life are demarcated in these fabric-sculptures. Each sculpture is indexically linked to a garment—a coat—that the artist produces herself after a pattern that remains unchanged. Conspicuous prints on the fabric allude to individual taste and choice, which are now reduced by the intervention on them. The garments appear like relics while their forms are rendered dysfunctional by the partial concrete layer. These sculptures follow a line of investigation within Berger's overall practice that features fabric coats, with previous iterations undergoing sculptural manipulations such as binding, dipping in water, dipping in mud and now finally a connection with concrete. The forms are rendered non-functional and even dysfunctional by the partial concrete layer over them, which itself references the passage and burial of clothing and bodies. There is here clearly an acknowledgement of the prevalence of images of clothing discarded in different landscapes today in Europe. Namely, these are images deeply associable with the refugee situation,

as well as historical waves of forced migration. Our own complicity with this situation is not absent from this reference. One might sense that a feeling of helplessness or despondency is also perhaps present here in these works, albeit not necessarily in the face of the difficulties that these people are facing but rather towards the greater, global forces that perpetuate such crises over and over again. This approach to the work is not itself sufficient however, as these works also assert more universal body-poetics with a nod to the ephemeral, fragile and mortal body that we all share. A landscape that encloses or surrounds the body, whether urban or rural, and in which discarded clothing is often abandoned within, is also a touchstone for the works of the two other artists, and further interplay of ideas and associations between the three artists finds common ground here as well.

Otherwise in the exhibition by Anna-Sophie Berger is her diamond-shaped glass work, collaged with layers of printed matter that appear like framed elements of what is yet again discarded or abandoned. This collage-like work also has snippets of text that revolve, for example, around questions of personal doubt and moral judgment. *Sad Cake Janus* hangs on the wall as a visual question mark that reveals clues to an already overall impoverished landscape of gestures and forms.

Hayley Silverman presents a number of works in the exhibition, including photographs silk-screened on a partition, depicting cropped scenes of queer bodies in states of play and pose. This partition makes reference to a woman's boudoir, a term (according to Wikipedia) deriving from the French verb *bouder* meaning to sulk. The partitions therefore, for the artist, reference a place to symbolically withdraw to, while also dividing an area of the gallery space away itself. These translucent, illuminated screens also negotiate the complicated relationship that gender non-conforming (GNC) bodies have with their representations within more dominant forms of culture. The bodies of lovers appear to be suspended between different actions, whether a form of caring touch or gender plays or some form of opposition. The images actually depict binding, a form of pleasure and body modification in queer communities, for example. This background of a sub-cultural, or practice certainly alludes to questions of queer love's difference from mainstream currencies, and its exclusion and self-exclusion from dominant cultural representations. A potential violence is inscribed within these depicted encounters as well. The bodies themselves in poses of concentrated opposition have an immediate association with the other works in the exhibition, where bodies or people facing one another within different settings or contexts (of opposition, of conflict, of difference, of exclusion, of love, of sensuality) become an important thematic gesture in the entire exhibition.

The puppet-sculpture by Hayley Silverman (produced with Jeannine Haan), titled *The Debt Collector (Tomorrow Always Comes)*, is made of various materials such as plaster, cotton gloves, and copper coils. This figure sits upright holding an antique, roulette wheel, which for the artist references not only the element of chance but also the Tibetan *bhavacakra* (also known as *The Wheel of Life*). This figure asserts a notion of impermanence within the entire setting of the exhibition, and raises considerations on how matters of loss, death, existence and ephemerality are processed as conditions within contemporary life.

All four sculptures by Flaka Haliti are modeled on actual security barriers that enforce boundaries on unwanted bodies. Her work is concerned perpetually with borders and the passage or non-passage of people through and into nations, as well as the invisible but ever-present forces that determine the difference between political bodies or bodies without politics. These works are presented in dialogue

with one another and the other works in the show naturally, as much as they are meant to be in dialogue with the bodies of visitors. When we encounter them, we are reminded vividly of bodies bruised by politics, war and exclusion. We, as visitors who are likely not bound by the geo-political spheres that bound others, may pass by them. Indeed, it is as if these walls have been mischievously knocked over by the artist as a gesture of irreverence towards these geo-political regulations that dictate inequality and indeed misery for many. The artist, in producing these works, attempts to deconstruct the physicality of the authority of a body (such as these intimidating walls) – especially the sense of a military authority and most implicitly, the political power. These are all just from the minds and bodies of mortal men and women, which can also be toppled, we are urged to consider. This work intends to lead to a sense of de-militarising the body aesthetic by manipulating these ready-mades within space and overturning their associations of military and political might. As someone who lives and works in a nomadic manner herself, issues of migration, homelessness, the exclusion of borders and scattered forms of identity are her natural working materials. Despite this, there is a sense of hope, and with these irreverent gestures by the artist, a sense of a possibility of overcoming the current dictates of global inequality as caused by war and migration.

The untitled wallpaper work by Flaka Haliti that hangs in two strips plays on notions of absence and ephemerality that are otherwise in the exhibition. The work is itself a tautological form in its double emptiness as an image and non-image originating from digital processes such as photoshop. The work hangs from this wall as an accentuation of some of the concerns the artists all share in their work. Namely, these artists are all interested in countering the elimination of the sensual, political and active body in mass representation and digital media today. This wall, without actually making any depiction, depicts the adversary, especially in representing its emptiness underneath the great spectacular image. The wall work also perhaps evinces a knowing, ironic wink to the entire enterprise that it faces, and that it itself cannot escape, but rather must indeed play its own role within.

Altogether this exhibition acts as a testing ground between these three artists' practice and a resulting series of expressions made visible. The exhibition serves to both encompass as well as to give occasion to possibilities made manifest through an open-sharing and non-dualistic, non-individualistic praxis between these three artists. *I Surrender, Dear* also acts as a subtle model of developing collaborative practice, not only around a few shared concepts and sentiments, but also around an open and dialogical means of artistic praxis today.

Text by Séamus Kealy with Anna-Sophie Berger, Hayley Silverman & Flaka Haliti

Biographies

Anna-Sophie Berger creates objects that connect individual perception and intimate use with questions of material reality as part of a socio-economic circulation and consumption. Populating body as much as space, they freely traverse sites and systems of value physically as much as through image. While preserving this mobility they complicate a reading as discrete objects encompassing elements of material transience such as decay, malleability or modularity. Symbolic of the complexity of human desire her works addresses the ambiguity of a sensual need to yield and a conscious effort to resist.

Anna-Sophie Berger (b. 1989) studied fashion design and trans-disciplinary art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She has held solo exhibitions with JTT, New York; 21er Haus, 21er Raum, Vienna; Ludlow 38, New York; and Mauve, Vienna. She has been included in group exhibitions with Tanya Leighton, Berlin; Clearing, Brussels; 247365, Brooklyn; Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien KM-, Graz; Futura, Prague; Rod Barton, London; Mathew Gallery, Berlin; and Utopian Slumps, Melbourne. Her work has been reviewed in Artforum, frieze d/e, Kaleidoscope and Mousse Magazine. Berger lives and works in Vienna.

Hayley Silverman is based in New York. Her working method is interdisciplinary and recent projects have taken form as sculpture, photography, and theatre. Her performances include an ongoing series in which a cast of untrained dogs take on a role of characters from a range of pop-cultural texts, disrupting the canon of identities traditionally represented in Hollywood as they are re-inhabited by animals. The plays fall into a tradition of mythologies and fables in which animals are carriers of hidden messages, promises, and magical functions.

Hayley Silverman (b. 1986, New York) received her BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Interdisciplinary Sculptural Studies. Recent exhibitions and performances include Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg; Liste, Basel; Atlanta Contemporary, Atlanta; Bard College, Annendale-on-Hudson, NY; Chapter, NY; New Theater, Berlin and MoMa Ps1. Hayley's second solo exhibition at Bodega, New York will open in Spring 2017.

Flaka Haliti (b. 1982, Prishtina) lives and works in Munich. Haliti studied at the University of Prishtina and Städelschule, Frankfurt/M, and is currently working toward her PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Her artistic practice is based on conceptual ideas and relates in its critical analysis of media and society to her distinctly European perspective.

Haliti's work was presented at venues including Mumok, Vienna; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; 6th Moscow Biennial, Moscow; Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig; National Gallery Kosovo, Prishtina; ZKM, Karlsruhe; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; and Portikus, Frankfurt/Main. In 2016, she represented Kosovo at the 56th Venice Biennale.







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www.salzburger-kunstverein.at, Hours exhibition: Tue-Sun 12-7 pm

Hours Café Cult: Mon-Fri 9 am – 11 pm