

**Listening to Voices**  
**in the frame of the EASTERN SUGAR project**

**artists: Melanie Bonajo, František Demeter, Nicoline Van Harskamp, Satch Hoyt, Thomas Kilpper & Massimo Ricciardo, Khvay Samnang, Pilvi Takala**

**Guest project: Inside Job (Ula Lucińska, Michał Knychaus), And the door was kicked open again (see below)**

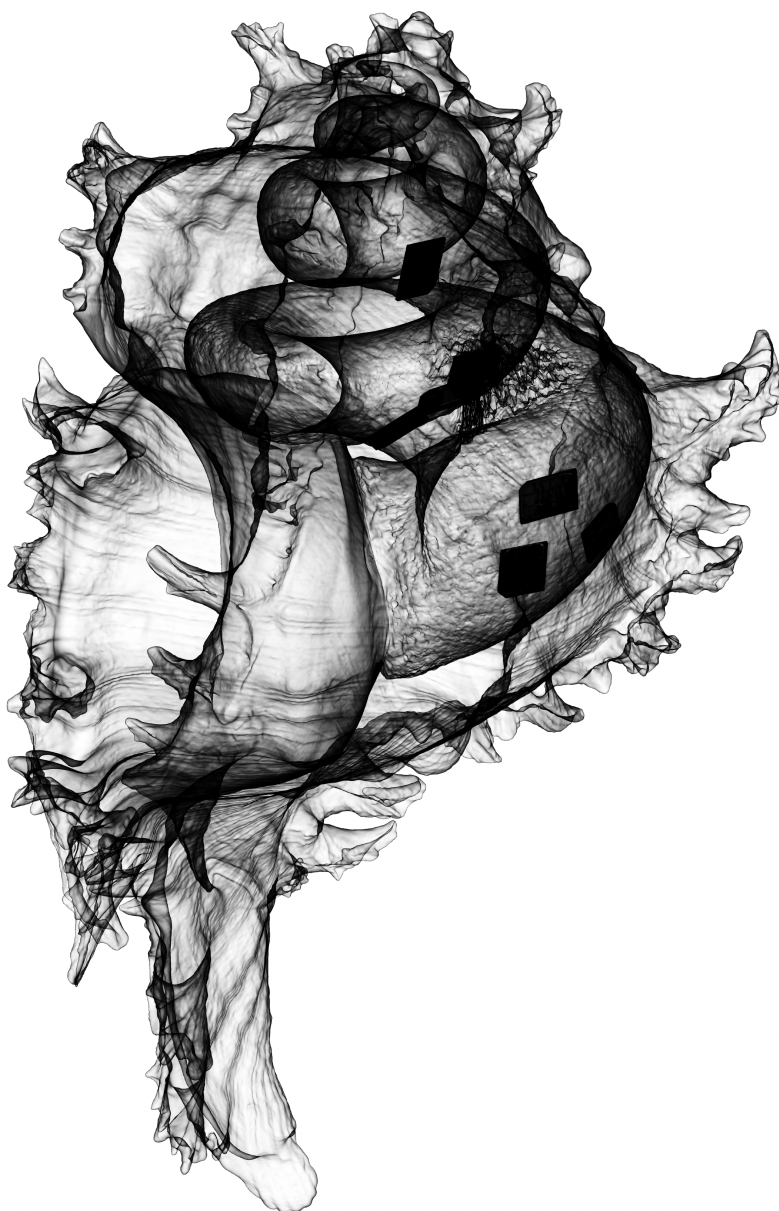
**curators: Mira Keratová, Caroline Krzyszton**

**exhibition architect: Tomáš Džadoň**

**duration: 15th January – 18th April 2021**

The exhibition is part of a research project Eastern Sugar\* by the artist Ilona Németh, which examines the history of the sugar industry and its wider social and environmental impacts. The autonomous exhibition project LISTENING TO VOICES follows the discourse of the Eastern Sugar project developed on the platform of international cooperation.

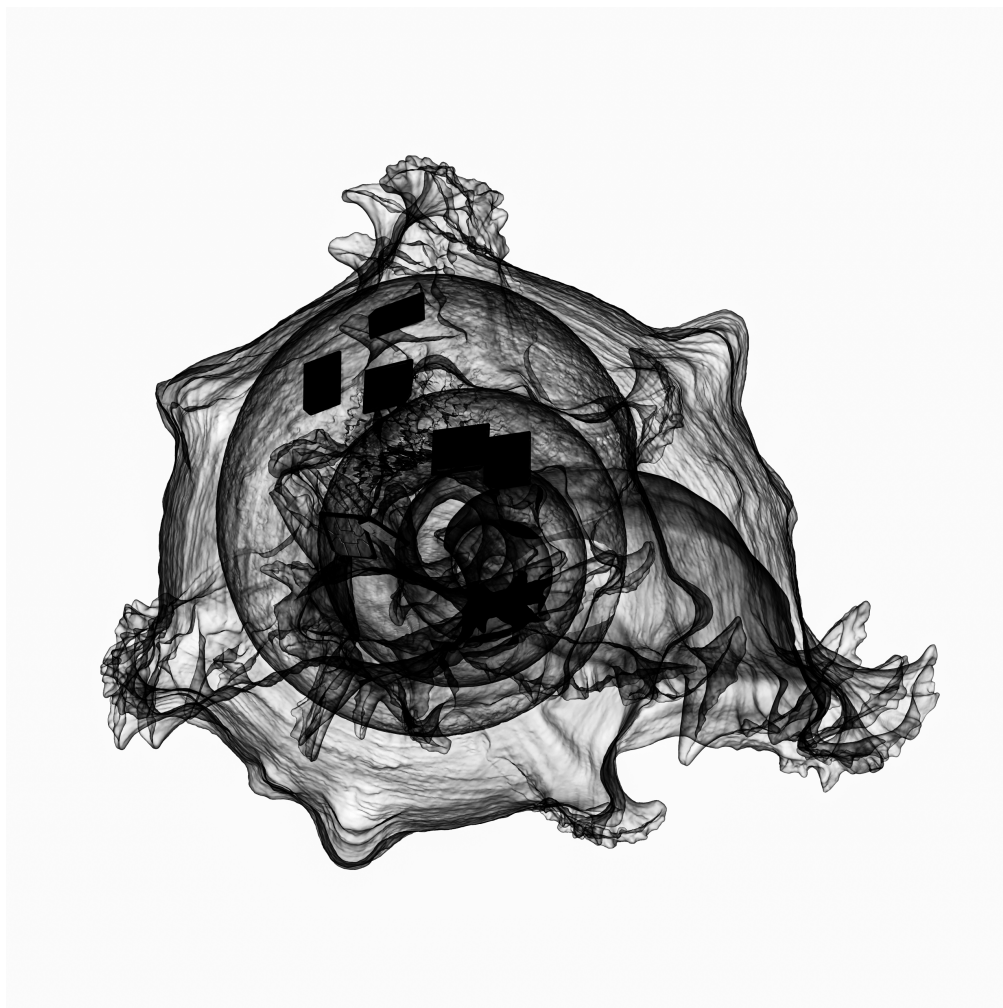
The concept of the exhibition follows possible perspectives for the decolonization of the future from the deconstruction of the following colonial ideologies related to land and further capital, respectively wealth, through the decolonization of language, education, technology, etc. Through decentred positioning, the idea of the exhibition is to address inherited and unconsciously adapted, perpetuating oppressive systems of neoliberal post-growth era, characterized by grief from climate change and deepening inequalities, which remain the dominant and uninterrupted social concept even in times of global pandemic.



The aim of the exhibition project LISTENING TO VOICES is to contribute to the ongoing emancipation processes that anticipate the future of healing and justice through psychoanalytic and feminist approaches of: Radical Ethics with its psychology of contemporary trauma and using a relational perspective as an empathic projection towards ethical co-emergence with Others; and Ethics of Care, which, in contrast to the idea of so-called Universal Justice, instead of abstract principles of morality, deals with justice based framework through Relational Ethics, developed through the individual relational acts in a concrete real-life situations and through responsibility to Others, who are, however, specific individuals.

Visual representation and aesthetic reflection of social or political conflicts should aim at sensitizing the viewer, exploring the ethical dimension of political action and a liberating vision of the world of equality: from questioning fixed norms of behavior (P. Takala) to situational learning (S. Hoyt), through the involvement of digital ecofeminism (M. Bonajo) and traditional cultural rituals related to the environmental impacts of neocolonialism (K. Samnang) to the critique of the new (capitalist-consumer) ethics commodifying the needs (F. Demeter) – from solidarity and inclusive justice (T. Kilpper, M. Ricciardo) to dialogical engagement of dystopian feminism (N. Van Harskamp), to the act of the fictive language of social constructs and shared ideas.

M. Keratová



Captions and individual artworks:

**Pilvi Takala, *The Stroker*, 2018**

**two-channel video installation, color, sound, 15 min 16 s**

Pilvi Takala (b. in Helsinki, FI) uses a format of performative interventions as a means of examining social structures and uncovering implicit rules for their functioning. Disruption of normative rules of behavior in a given social situation triggers the process of questioning canonical truths, which, although they determine our social behavior, often remain unreflected. Her works are based on insider research in selected communities and have outputs in various media, most often in videos in which the author combines the practices of documentary production and performative practice.

The video *The Stroker* was created as part of a two-week intervention by the artist in the so-called Second Home, a trendy East London coworking space for young entrepreneurs and startups. The artist worked here as a wellness consultant under the name Nina Nieminen, as the founder of a top company called Personnel Touch, which was allegedly employed by Second Home to provide touch services in the workplace. However, she treated her colleagues too informally - she entered their personal space during the meeting and touched them easily. This provoked a variety of reactions, from polite defensive to signs of visible discomfort. Gradually, co-workers joined forces against her and conducted conspiratorial office talks, gossiping and nicknamed her *The Stroker*. Individual video footages visualize the embodied negotiation of mutual physical boundaries and express the dilemmas of the bodies under the social pressure of the acceptable, resp. conventional behavior.

**Satch Hoyt, *Ruler 1*, 2016-20**

**Satch Hoyt, *Ruler 4*, 2016-20**

**wooden folding rulers, magnets, steel bars, 200 x 190 cm**

Satch Hoyt (b. in London with British and African-Jamaican origins) is an artist, musician and composer who works with various media, especially sound installations and live performances. He deals with the reflection of the African diaspora and its wider cultural consequences researching mnemonic network of sound and its hybridizations. Through sonic traces and other means, he explores the so called "Black Experience" of an imaginary journey from the African continent, whose driving force and refuge beyond the historical oppression was the spirit of fantasy and transcendence.

Initially, works from the series of *Rulers* were meant to investigate music in regards to measures or musical bars. There are eight vivid lines in each panel, depicting an octave, and each panel is an abstract score that can be played in an improvisational manner. Thus, the idea was assemble an octet (eight musicians) to perform a live improv conduction with a complete series. Works are made from used extendable or folding rulers which artist purchased at various flea markets in Berlin. *Rulers* also investigates the notion of measurement. In 1884, at the request of Kaiser Otto von Bismarck, 14 European leaders were invited to attend a conference in Berlin, known as the Congo Conference or Scramble for Africa. After cutting up the continent like a cake, they employed the metric system to create the borders that divided stolen colonial territories. Not one African ruler was invited and many of these invented borders are still in place today. The series also alludes to African fabric designs, more specifically Ewe and Kente woven fabrics from Ghana.

**František Demeter, *Houselessness Architecture*, 2020**

**steel and polycarbonate sitespecific installation, variable dimensions**

Originally a painter, František Demeter (b. in Trebišov, SK) stopped painting a few years ago and, from the position of critical modernist revisionism, he expands painting into site-specific installations, which subtly or, on the contrary, robustly refer to the innate structure of painting. He creates his site-specific architectures by constantly recycling and recompositioning previous works concerning his situation in temporary accommodation and specific elements of its architecture, making them a kind of spatial archive of his private, but in fact rather semi-public physical space. As part of his exhibition practice, he mirrors and dialogically analyzes the surrounding environment and its conditions, while dissolving the hegemony of the author's statement in the process of deestheticization.

His site-specific work *Houselessness Architecture* refers to squatted and transforming spaces and is rooted in the modernist concept of social housing, which connects it with the environment of the exhibition space. The point of reference is also the personal situation regarding the impact on accommodation in gentrified cities, where the privatization of commons turned shelter into a super commodity. In line with libertarian socialist thoughts on turning men into machines in the context of a critique of capitalism, especially the commodity character of labor and the commodification of basic needs that do not become fundamental rights, the work is also associated with a famous psychiatric story of Joey "a Mechanical Boy" published in 1950s with rich documentation of drawings about a child who was unable to communicate with the world – who converted himself into a "machine" a sort of mechanical robot connecting his body to a complex of machine-like tools, being connected to the fictional and disconnected from the social and physical world.

**Nicoline Van Harskamp, *PDGN*, 2016**  
**single channel HD video projection, color, sound, 15 min 40 s**

Nicoline van Harskamp (b. in Hazerswoude, NL) focuses in her work on the acts of language and the topic of solidarity. In her works, she uses various forms of internationally-spoken English and considers the future shaped by the constant evolution of language, accepting divergences from hegemonic norms, enriched by many cultural influences. The author's performative actions, plays, documents and video works are created in collaboration with individual actors, students and sometimes linguists in accordance with the content and the aesthetic framework in which it is established.

PDGN is a short fiction video that portrays a future in which a new link language is developing between people across the world through voluntary self-instruction. The script for PDGN was constructed from actually spoken, non-native English recorded in van Harskamp's past work and in a series of workshops. Mixed-language participants lent their voices to the script on such topics as the tower of Babel, cultures of naming and historical female figures. Some aspects of language and narrative were borrowed from feminist fiction that proposes systems of language-change, such as Marge Piercy's *Women on the Edge of Time* (1976) and Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984). The language for the script was further developed by applying common and expected factors of language evolution in the areas of syntax, lexicon, and phonetics. These "distorting factors" were conceptualized with the help of academics in fields such as creole studies, computational linguistics and language acquisition as well as Esperantists, recreational language inventors, and the lead actresses. Subtitle versions with Czech, Swahili, Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, German, Irish, Swedish, Dutch and French subtitles exist, but none in "contemporary" English.

**Thomas Kilpper & Massimo Ricciardo, *Inventories of Escape*, 2014 – 2020**  
**collection of found objects, variable dimensions**



Thomas Kilpper (b. Stuttgart, DE) is best known for his large-scale wood- or lino-cut prints composed into extensive installations, which often depict historical scenes or portraits displaying critical statements on political and legal systems. He engages with history and the public sphere to reveal hidden or obscured socio-political agendas. He collaborates with local communities and brings together people's stories in an effort to create a multi-layered picture of events, which often differs from its official versions.

Massimo Ricciardo (b. Darmstadt, DE and grew up in Sicily, IT) works mainly with archival materials, video and deals with culinary performances. His artistic practice is inspired by models of memory and the effort to visualize the ongoing processes of the so-called living memory.

Since 2014, Kilpper and Ricciardo were collecting lost and abandoned items from refugees and migrants, which they left behind on boats that sailed from Africa across the Mediterranean to Europe, more precisely to the South of Italy. Although they are mostly ordinary everyday objects, they carry a certain inherent quality of, mostly traumatic, experience. Many of them have been laying on the shores of Sicily, in Pozzallo and Siracusa, and in Lampedusa for several months or even years after the stranded boats were confiscated by the Italian state and then left to rot there. Such an attitude is characteristic of a controversial dealing with the phenomenon of migration to the EU, framed by the paradigm of neglect. The exhibited collection shows the fragility of life and, unlike dehumanizing propaganda, encourages sensitization towards policy-making.

**Kvay Samnang, *Popil*, 2018**

**two-channel video projection, color, sound, 21 min 59 s**

Khvay Samnang's (b. in Svay Rieng Province, CM) is engaged in a multidisciplinary practice in which he critically examines the politics of historical and current events, including traditional cultural rituals; he exposes the humanitarian and ecological impacts of globalization and its links to colonialism and migration processes in Southeast Asia. Informed by long-term artist's research of marginalized Cambodian communities in their original localities, Kvay articulates in his film works and installations communities' deep spiritual and physical connections with the land and invokes animistic spirits against environmental exploitation.

In the work *Popil*, he develops a complex dance choreography based around the symbolism of the dragon, generally seen as a symbol for much of East/Southeast Asia, discussing how much the iconography represents specifically Chinese or Cambodian identity formation element. It features two dancers performing a modern version of the classical Khmer "Robam kbach boran" dance – a prayer in movement for rain and fertility – that mimic the movements of a serpent or the flow of water. The dancers, donning masks which the artist has fashioned from woven fishing vines, enact a contemporary love story of two dragons (one representing Cambodia, the other China). Their twirling, circular movements from North-Eastern Cambodia to Phnom Penh to South-Eastern Cambodia mimic both the flows of the nation's major rivers, as well as the circulation of capital throughout the nation. The work constitute a critical remapping of the complex geographies and cultural rites which are enfolded within the wider rotating movements of Cambodian and Chinese relations.

**Satch Hoyt, *Michezo Ya Watoto* (Children's games in Swahili), 2014**

**bullets, acrylic on wood, 68 x 107 x 4 cm**

Satch Hoyt (b. in London with British and African-Jamaican origins) is an artist, musician and composer who works with various media, especially sound installations and live

performances. He deals with the reflection of the African diaspora and its wider cultural consequences researching mnemonic network of sound and its hybridizations. Through sonic traces and other means, he explores the so called “Black Experience” of an imaginary journey from the African continent, whose driving force and refuge beyond the historical oppression was the spirit of fantasy and transcendence.

*Michezo Ya Watoto* is a term for children's games in Swahili. The work is inspired by the publication of anthropologists Mary D. and Louis S. B. Leakey's *Some String Figures from North East Angola* from 1949. Like other games, the String Figures of the Tchokwe tribe echo rituals, symbols, insights, superstitions, and events of the specific society, culture, and locality, and play an important role in the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. String Figures often follow standardised pictographs and are used as a communication tool including the use of so-called serial figures that further develop the story. Some researchers also discussed their possible use as a mnemonic device in learning mathematics, reducing the need to memorize the whole design to a geometric algorithm.

**Satch Hoyt, *RIDE CYCLE: Antiphonal Four Unfolded*, 2020  
sound, 7 min 7 s**

*RIDE CYCLE: Antiphonal Four Unfolded* is one movement in a cycle of four. Each cycle is comprised of four performer's, who play quarter notes on two ride cymbals. The entire ensemble numbers sixteen performers arranged in two sections of eight situated in an inner and outer oval form where a two meter space between each performer is maintained. The performers in the inner oval face outwards and the performers in the outer oval face inward. Consecutively each performer joins the oval at four bar intervals. *Antiphonal Four Unfolded*, represents a quarter of the entire *RIDE CYCLE*. This debut iteration is a solo performance, played by virtuoso drummer Earl Harvin utilizing digital multi track technology.

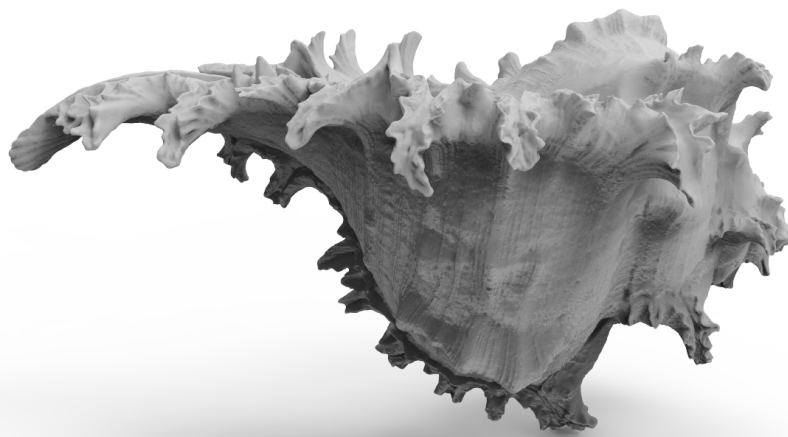
*RIDE CYCLE* investigates a plethora of subjects within the canon of the trans-national African Diaspora. Evolving from artist's current body of work within the rubric of *Afro-Sonic Mapping: Tracing aural histories via sonic transmigrations* (see [Afrosonicmapping.com](http://Afrosonicmapping.com)), the goal is to continue to map the sonic associations, transformations and performances of what Hoyt terms the “Afro-Sonic Signifier” that derives from the contemporary, diverse transnational African Diaspora communities within the context of colonization and Transatlantic migrations. It attempts to map out the multiple involuntary Trans-Atlantic voyages made by enslaved African's. From a Black resistance perspective, it also speaks to the current disenfranchisement and racial divisiveness found in many European and American geographical locations. In its multi layered trajectory, which includes Afrofuturism, it refers to an otherworldly spiritual resolve, the overarching quest of return, the ride back to a promised land, whilst acknowledging the imperative need to construct alternative societies pioneered by luminaries such as James Baldwin, W. E. B. Du Bois, Angela Davis, Marcus Garvey, and Octavia Butler.

**Melanie Bonajo, *Night Soil/Fake Paradise*, 2014  
HD video, color, sound, 32 min 40 s**

In her films, Melanie Bonajo (b. in Heerlen, NL) deals with the relationships between intimacy, technological progress, gender stigmatization and equality, feminism, ecology and feelings of alienation. In her experimental documentaries, she uses humour and staged situations in order to highlight communities that find themselves in the margins of society, either for reasons of cultural exclusion or because of their illegality. Her films are

presented in installations designed in close collaboration with designer Théo Demans. Bonajo also creates related books, performances, music and events.

*Night Soil* is a serie of short documentaries (see the trilogy: *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* 2014; *Night Soil: Economy of Love* 2016; *Night Soil: Nocturnal Gardening* 2016) exploring three growing movements that actively counter or destabilise the pervasiveness of global capitalism and patriarchal structures. Engaging with women users of ayahuasca, sex work activists and an array of alternative farmers, the trilogy considers the socially and ethically progressive facets of these practices – some of which are currently deemed illegal. Asserting new attitudes and perspectives toward sexuality and the natural world, artist's approach to her subjects challenges traditional divisions between humans, nature and technology.



## **+ GUEST EXHIBITION**

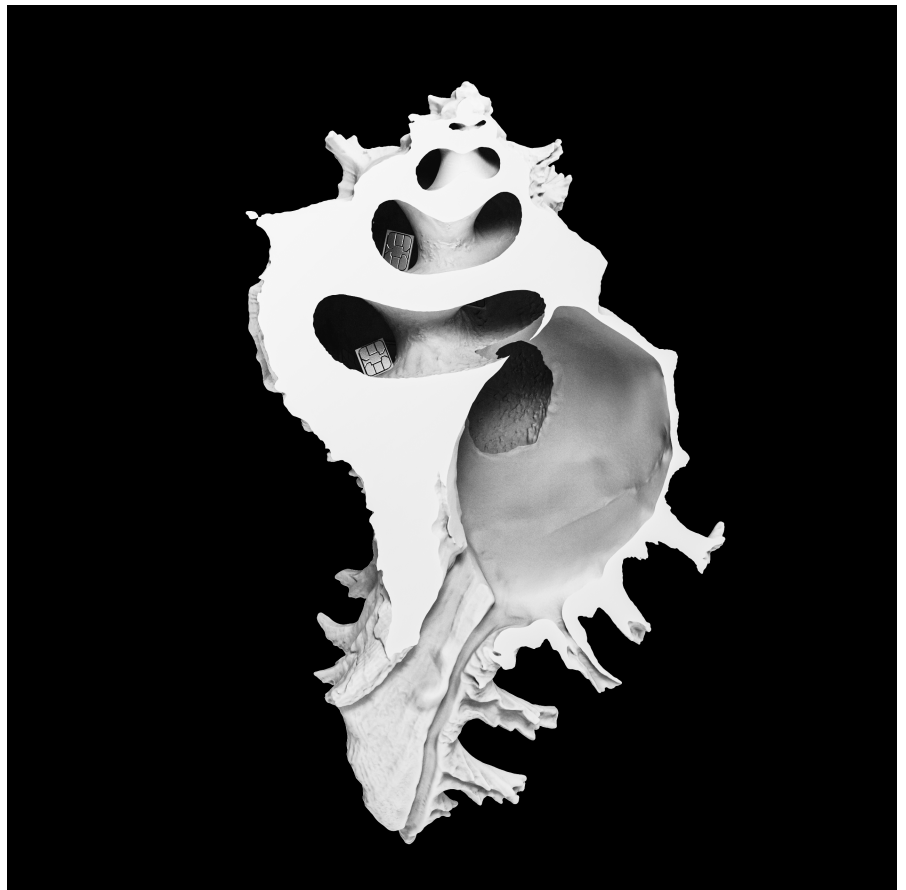
### **Inside Job (Ula Lucińska, Michał Knychaus): And the door was kicked open again**

**Curators: Mira Keratová, Caroline Krzyszton**  
**duration: 15th January – 18th April 2021**

Similarly to Listening to Voices collective show, the starting point of the exhibition And the door was kicked open again is the history and collapse of the sugar industry in Central Europe. The subject is reflected here as a strong illustration of power dynamics and oppression systems through the industrial development and radical changes of ownership in production means in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

As one of the major economic assets of the Central European economy, sugar factories, throughout a few decades were indeed in large majority re-owned by greater companies from Western Europe, which, in order to maintain or establish their monopoly, purposely restrained the domestic production by shutting the factories down and instituting the sugar fabrication as an export market.

Reminding this history nowadays reflects not only its extension to other industries, to other sectors, but also to a global change in our economic systems, later stages of capitalism, globalization, and new strategies, new codes of colonization. If the Listening to Voices collective show explores possibilities to reverse or twist this history by decolonizing our future, the autonomous installation of Ula Lucińska and Michał Knychaus is rather an interpretation of the nature of History itself, viewed as a cycle of irremediable and infinite repetitions, allowing hope to grow only from its mistakes, through individual stories of resistance and resilience.



If the artist duo built within the gallery an environment inspired by industrial machinery, as the heavy arches that embrace and narrow down the space, the metallic architecture is however somehow “colonized” by organic elements, which seem to defy its resistance and solidity. Flowers sculptures, made from recycled leather (another transformation of matter within the process of exhibition making itself) rise from the ground through thick crafting tables (Anitya), challenging the indisputable technological domination with a slow-process obstinate instinct to redistribute the forces. Another example of this approach is to be found in the Thistle Mirrors series, in which thistle plants motifs are cut into the

steel mirror-like surfaces of hanging reliefs. “Thistles, which are characteristic for their leaves with sharp prickles are known to be some of the most adaptable plants, able to survive in difficult environmental conditions. Indeed, they often cover post-industrial sites and ruins of abandoned buildings” the artists explain.

However, if the slow reappropriation of the space by organic and incidental structures might be interpreted as a potential change of material reality in the scene, the arches, as the only monumental element of the environment, as well as the presence of different types of mirrors on each wall imply the power struggle here isn't temporary. The arches repeat themselves in a pattern that is meant to continue beyond the limited space of the gallery, creating a virtual never-ending “Passage”, from which there is no obvious escape. History repeats indeed its own metamorphoses and transitions, balancing the forces so that one never entirely loses, but one certainly never prevails.

Caroline Krzyszton

#### Captions and artists' bio:

Inside Job (Ula Lucińska, Michał Knychaus): And the door was kicked open again, 2020  
Site specific installation, variable dimensions.

Passage I-VI, 2020  
materials: stainless steel, aluminium, linen

Anitya (There are flowers that are born of mud) I-III, 2020  
materials: stainless steel, aluminium, linen, silk, recycled leather, rubber

Thistle mirror I-III, 2020  
materials: stainless steel

Ula Lucińska (b. 1992, PL) and Michał Knychaus (b. 1987, PL) work together as the Inside Job duo. Their practice is based on the use of different mediums and materials, which often leads to the creation of specific, multi-layered environments. They focus on the processes of how identities are constructed, including the identities of places, within the context of dynamic changes such as: the climate crisis, technological acceleration, political shifts and growing anxiety about the unknown future. Many of their projects refer to futuristic and post-catastrophic scenarios. . They have presented works during art residencies (Rupert Residency, Vilnius, LT; AIR FUTURA, Prague, CZ; Residency Gurzelen, Biel/Bienne, CH; TestDrive, Nicosia, CY; Kulturfabrik, Burgdorf, CH), at individual exhibitions (e.g. Hot Wheels Projects, Athens, GR, CAVE Gallery, Wrocław, PL; Pawilon, Poznań, PL; :SKALA, Poznań, PL; 9/10 Gallery, PL, Poland) and collective ones (e.g. Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, DE; BWA Wrocław, PL; TRAFO - Trafostacja Sztuki, Szczecin, PL; The Death of Man, Warsaw Gallery Weekend, PL; WallRiss, Fribourg, CH; Sattlekammer, Bern, CH; the Athens Digital Arts Festival 2018, Athens, GR; DuflonRacz, Bern, CH; the Ostrale Biennale of Contemporary Arts, Dresden, DE; Musrara Mix Festival, Jerusalem, IL). Selected talks and lectures include: Metabolic Museum - University, The 33rd Biennial Of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana, Slovenia; III Conference of Film and Media, Lodz, Poland.



**\*EASTERN SUGAR is an international, interdisciplinary, contemporary visual art project with strong focus on artistic research. Project reflects the recent facets of European history through the case of sugar industry in Central Europe. By the means of artistic research, curatorial cooperation, creation of new artworks, five international group exhibitions, participative installations, public and educational programs, and a comprehensive interdisciplinary publication the project investigates the “clearing” process of the Central-European sugar production. Thus, sugar can be understood as a metaphor for the notion of Europe and world under constant transformation. EASTERN SUGAR strives to bring the attention to the history of sugar industry in Central Europe and to place it on the global map of the story of sugar. While doing so, it considers colonial impact of the past as well as the present.**

**Both exhibitions are realised with the support of: Creative Europe, Visegrad Fund, KULT Minor.**

**Year-round exhibition program is supported by the Ministry of Culture in Czech Republic, The City of Prague.**



Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union

