

PRESS

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Do Nothing, Feel Everything 18/11 2021 – 24/4 2022

PRESS CONFERENCE: Thu 18/11 2021, 10 am

OPENING: Thu 18/11 2021, 7 pm

ARTISTS: Laila Bachtiar • Sophie Carapetian & Jakob Jakobsen • Tony Cokes • Henry Joseph Darger • Patricia Domínguez • Rahima Gambo • Yesmine Ben Khelil • Stanislava Kovalcikova • Niklas Lichti • Opoku Mensah • Shana Moulton • Tom Seidmann-Freud

CURATORS: Laura Amann and Aziza Harmel

The international group exhibition *Do Nothing, Feel Everything* sheds light on our current mode of crisis when every catastrophe, every threat is instantly overridden by another. Our physical and mental well-being is not an individual matter anymore but we were sharing a state of insanity before we even knew we were insane. Being in a state of constant emergency, often translated into apathy and exhaustion, makes passing through coherent stages of emotion impossible. In this sense, *Do Nothing, Feel Everything* is first of all an acceptance of this impossibility.

The title of this exhibition is originally borrowed from a commercial for tampons, except that the original slogan read: "Do Everything. Feel Nothing." This promise of numbness is more than symptomatic of our times, but the attempt is, through the inversion of the slogan, to express—apart from demanding a different pace of life—a need for a different kind of space and time framework, in which it might be possible both to feel intensely and to process the emotional impact of what we all witness around us, following the temporality of the "never-ending end of the world".

Do Nothing, Feel Everything brings together works, commentaries, experiences, and concepts by artists of different generations. They speak of and with insanity, madness, paranoia, and other similar mechanisms commonly used to exclude. One of the starting points for curators Laura Amann and Aziza Harmel was the issue of madness

and its relation to art history. The mad, the genius, was somehow always celebrated, but under the condition that such people would also bear the role of the "outsider". If we think about Art Brut—a category that has become increasingly questioned in recent years—, for instance, it is still designated as "outsider" art. Considering the politics of access within the art world, this idea of "outsider" and "insider" art continuously holds meaning—and for cultural workers and artists the relation to those politics can only be paranoid, because they are based on hegemonic power dynamics.

Do Nothing, Feel Everything, however, focuses on art practices that distill substances from the objects of a culture—even a culture whose sworn desire has been to reject them. In that sense, these practices are reparative, because they reveal a will to reassemble something that will never be what it once was or what it could have been.

These notions of the "paranoid" and the "reparative" are informed by the work of gender and queer theorist **Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick**. Her writing was an important reference that allows to think about paranoia as a form of resistance and of repair as a coping and survival mechanism. As the curators put it in their introduction to the exhibition:

"It helped us make sense of what it means to make art while being an outsider of what we call 'art history', and to make sense of what it means to work toward a change that you don't believe will ever actually happen. In other words, the back and forth between these two epistemological systems—the reparative and the paranoid one—offers a way to navigate an understanding of insanity as the coexistence of contradictory knowledges within one mind. To consider paranoia as a form of knowledge is not about proving what we already feared we knew but rather knowing that we are seen differently and that we see differently."

This epistemological shift from normative patterns of thought is the repair that *Do Nothing, Feel Everything* seeks to address. Healing is not about fixing what hegemonic culture has deemed broken or finding ways to make "broken things" function according to the society we currently live in. Rather, healing is, first of all, a process of soothing and bearing, but also of choosing *how* to soothe and to bear.

The works on display examine and present a wide range of affects, ambitions, and risks. Nevertheless, they are all attached to a project of survival—one that is as phantasmagorical as it is real. It is this coexistence of contradictory knowledges within oneself that is the only plausible path toward the bearable. *Do Nothing, Feel Everything* thus looks into art practices that understand insanity as a common condition and as a dynamic form of knowledge with something crucial at stake—art practices that, through careful bruising, find ways to soothe and to bear.

After its debut in **kunsthalle wien**, in spring 2022 the exhibition *Do Nothing, Feel Everything* will travel to its next stop – Kunsthalle Bratislava.

Artists' short biographies

Laila Bachtiar

Born in 1971, lives and works in Vienna

Sophie Carapetian & Jakob Jakobsen

Sophie Carapetian, born in 1979, lives and works in London

Jakob Jakobsen, born in 1965, lives and works in Hospital for Self Medication

Tony Cokes

Born in 1956, lives and works in Providence (RI, USA)

Henry Joseph Darger

1892–1973, lived and worked in Chicago (IL, USA)

Patricia Domínguez

Born in 1984, lives and works in Chile

Rahima Gambo

Born in 1986, lives and works in Abuja (Nigeria) and London

Yesmine Ben Khelil

Born in 1986, lives and works in Tunis (Tunisia)

Stanislava Kovalcikova

Born in 1988, lives and works in Dusseldorf

Niklas Lichti

Born in 1980, lives and works in Vienna

Opoku Mensah

Born in 1992, lives and works in Accra (Ghana)

Shana Moulton

Born in 1976, lives and works in New York and Santa Barbara (CA, USA)

Tom Seidmann-Freud

1892–1930, lived and worked in Vienna and Berlin

Public and educational programs

You can find current details and regular updates about the exhibition *Do Nothing, Feel Everything* on our website www.kunsthallewien.at as well as on our social media channels.

Opening

Thu 18/11 2021, 7pm

kunsthalle wien Karlsplatz

Tours

Free admission!

Curators' tours

The exhibition's curatorial team discusses topics thematized by the works presented in the show and shares behind-the-scenes information about them.

Dates and details will be announced at www.kunsthallewien.at.

Art Info

Tue 7/12 • 21/12 2021 • 4/1 • 18/1 • 1/2 • 15/2 2022, 5pm

With: Wolfgang Brunner • Andrea Hubin • Michael Simku

On six Tuesday evenings throughout the exhibition, you can discover the works together with our art educators and discuss the context and backgrounds of the exhibited works.

(Event in German)

Programs for schools

kunsthalle wien offers an extensive program for schools. For information and to register, please contact vermittlung@kunsthallewien.at.

The exhibition at a glance

Do Nothing, Feel Everything

CURATORS: Laura Amann and Aziza Harmel

EXHIBITION VENUE: **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz, Treitlstraße 2, 1040 Vienna

EXHIBITION DATES: 18/11 2021–20/2 2022

OPENING HOURS: Tue–Sun 11 am–7 pm, Thu 11 am–9 pm

The admission to **kunsthalle wien** Karlsplatz is free.

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