

**PRESS**

## Ines Doujak. Geistervölker 1/10 2021 – 16/1 2022

PRESS CONFERENCE: Thu 30/9 2021, 10 am

OPENING: Thu 30/9 2021, 7 pm

CURATORS: What, How & for Whom / WHW (Ivet Čurlin, Nataša Ilić and Sabina Sabolović)

ASSISTANT CURATOR: Aziza Harmel

With *Geistervölker*, meaning "ghost populations", **kunsthalle wien** presents a comprehensive solo exhibition of Austrian artist **Ines Doujak** (b. 1959, lives and works in Vienna), revolving around histories of pandemics, transmission of viruses, and their relation to global trade and to the current economic, microbiological, and ecological crises. The artist traces, in fragments, the origins of pandemics throughout history and links them to a global economy that is based on logics of extraction facilitated by colonial legal mechanisms and late capitalism.

Since the 1990s, **Doujak** has been developing a multidisciplinary practice that encompasses photography, performance, film, and installation and uses political theory as well as natural and human-made objects—sculpture in the broadest sense—to deconstruct the political implications of sexist and racist stereotypes. She draws on motifs from cultural history and folklore—traditions of carnival and masquerade—because these occur on the border between art and life and are usually marked by displays of excess and grotesqueness. Her meticulous research and her strong storytelling ability allow her the prowess to use both science and the grotesque to denounce exploitative structures and inequalities in society.

The exhibition *Geistervölker* is both a continuation and a newly visualized manifestation of her work as an artist as well as an archivist, a researcher, and collector. There is a strong connection between each work, and this connection tempts the viewer to follow a clear path. Yet

such a path would be elusive, as **Doujak**'s work and research mirror and reflect each other, and every exhibition of **Doujak** is, in a way, a retrospective that encompasses different periods and approaches of her artistic practice.

In *Geistervölker*, the artist combines both new and old projects to create a constellation of works that conceptualize the constant and absurd movement between accumulation of capital and the impossibility to continue extracting from Earth because it has reached the limit of what we can greedily and continuously take. Recurring motifs of her practice—fragmented, monstrous, wonderful, bodies of people, animals, and plants populating her textiles, videos, papier-mâché sculptures, and installations—interconnect different spatial and temporal points. They form a narrative linking global chains of economic production, consumption, and exploitation to the present pandemics, as well as the recurrent patterns that caused and spread pandemics historically. In this exhibition, rats, flies, bats, crows, worms, pigeons, and spiders appear in various forms as carriers of diseases, but also as powerful and condensed images of the dangerous limitation and social conditionality of an anthropocentric view that "makes the world go round."

Long before the Covid-19 crisis, **Doujak** has been looking into ill human bodies in relation to flora and fauna and the pending threat of pandemic illnesses. The exhibition takes the title of her iconic work *Ghost Populations* (2016–ongoing), a series of collages made from images collected from nineteenth-century medical atlases on skin diseases. These assembled elements from drawings of diseased bodies are also used to conceive her present generation of sculptures. There is something novel and disjointed about these bodies, something productively different from what they once were. They move away from the notion of illness toward liberating expansion, heroic disregard, and joyful protest against standards that set the limit of sickness and health to sustain system functionality and discipline. By assembling or "repairing" the mutilated, mutated body, she makes a whole that will never be like any preexisting whole. For **Doujak**, "ghost populations proliferate"; they are in constant flux. Just like the flesh of the characters in her collages and sculptures, which keep on expanding, becoming an uncontrollable outgrowth.

But the real outgrowth is the deadly, relentless expansion and "growth" of capitalist production and full-on extraction of natural and social resources. Labor and exploitation are important and recurrent subjects in **Doujak**'s work. She exposes numbers and facts from the outrageous economics of modern slavery, human trafficking, prostitution and shows illegal economies as the flip side of legal trade procedures and production methods whose criminality is naturalized and much more insidious. Therein lies the true monstrosity, not in the superficially monstrous traits of **Doujak**'s characters. In fact, **Doujak**'s universe deeply upsets and decenters disgust and blame that fundamentally shape history and condition our ways of perceiving and dealing with illness, pandemics, and transmission.

## Biography

**Ines Doujak**, born in Klagenfurt, Austria, in 1959, is an artist, researcher, and writer, who works in the field of visual culture and material aesthetics with a queer-feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial focus. In her research, **Doujak** investigates how global histories are characterized by cultural, class, and gender conflict.

**Doujak** has presented her projects in the following exhibitions and institutions, among others: Kunsthau Wien (2021), Liverpool Biennial (2021), NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (2020), Bergen Assembly (2019), Lentos Museum, Linz (2018), Centro de Iniciativas Culturales de la Universidad de Sevilla (2018), steirischer herbst (2018), Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kerala (2018), Belvedere, Vienna (2018), Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh (2018), Para Site, Hong Kong (2018), Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Kraków (2017), Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart (2016), MACBA, Barcelona (2015), Kyiv Biennial (2015), São Paulo Biennial (2014), Royal College of Art, London (2013), Busan Biennale (2012), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2010), documenta 12 (2007).

## Podcast series & live performances

*Geistervölker* will be accompanied by a series of live performances centering around *Transmission: A series of five Podcasts on Disease and Pandemics in a Distorted World* (2021). In these five polyphonic podcasts, **Ines Doujak** and **John Barker** follow pandemics and disease throughout the centuries, artfully addressing timely topics like factory farming, healthcare speculation, and the relationship between the spread of disease and the development of new trade routes featuring the World Traveler and Rat, the Scapegoat.

Every October Tuesday at 5 pm, visitors of **kunsthalle wien museumsquartier** will be invited to join a collective listening of a new podcast episode. The *Transmission* podcast will be also made available through the website of **kunsthalle wien** ([www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at)).

### Podcast *VACCINE*

Thu 30/ 9 2021, 7 pm

Live performance during the opening

Performers: **Wientaler Dreigesang** [**Christine Gnigler** • **Lorina Vallaster** • **Joachim Rigler**] • **John Barker** • **Fergus Fettes** • **Yeeun Namkoong**  
Music with lyrics by **Barker & Doujak**  
Composed by **Volkmar Klien**

The ferret and the prisoner play an unrequited role, and victory is wrongly claimed. The armies of the world see bioweapons and biodefense, but the virus, born in deranged landscapes and encouraged by incontinent trade, knows no borders. Vaccine promises play the stock market and promise that we do not need to change our ways.

All further episodes: every October Tuesday at 5 pm  
Meeting point: entrance of **kunsthalle wien** museumsquartier

**Podcast MEAT**

Tue 5/10 2021, 5 pm

The cost of cheap meat is too high; the focus on "wild" meat (game) a camouflage. The virus cannot believe its luck, transmission in battery farms, production line slaughterhouses, and deforested land all too easy.

**Podcast CLASS**

Tue 12/10 2021, 5 pm

The class structure of the present pandemic highlights the inequalities across the globe. While the rich escape in private jets and into bunkers, the poor have to choose between starvation or infection, dying in numbers, to be deposited in experimental coffins.

**Podcast FORKED TONGUE**

Tue 19/10 2021, 5 pm

Two people weave in and out of their lives, neighborhoods, diseases of the past, and the promises and expectations of religion and science. They think of scary judgments passed on people as functional or surplus to the needs of capitalist-defined production, of the vulnerability of non-productionist Indigenous societies, and seek brief solace in poetic justice, but find that not all beginnings have an end.

**Podcast BLAME**

Tue 26/10 2021, 5 pm

This is about the landless, disease-spreading vagabond, with renewed prominence in today's political discourse; about labor discipline; about infections and contamination, both used as crossover between actual diseases and markers of the political other, the inside and the outside of the body; and about colonial and class attacks. As in the past, a dehumanizing language of disease, parasites, and infestation has entered a political vocabulary directed at migrants and minorities.

*Transmission: A series of five Podcasts on Disease and Pandemics in a Distorted World (2021) was written and produced by Ines Doujak and John Barker for the Liverpool Biennial 2020-2021.*

**Public & educational programs**

Please see [www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at), as well as our social media channels, for regular updates and further details about our public program for Ines Doujak. *Geistervölker*.

**Opening**

Thu 30/9 2021, 7 pm

**kunsthalle wien** museumsquartier

**Curators' tours**

The curatorial team of the exhibition will discuss topics thematized by the works presented in the show and elaborate on their background. Dates will be announced at: [www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at)

### Sunday tours

Sun 3/10 • 17/10 • 7/11 • 21/11 • 5/12 • 19/12 2021 • 2/1 • 16/1 2022, each at 4 pm  
With Wolfgang Brunner • Carola Fuchs • Andrea Hubin • Michaela Schmidlechner • Michael Simku

Every second Sunday at 4 pm, you can discover the exhibition together with our art educators and discuss the context and background of the exhibited works.

Guided tour in German

### Program for kids & families

*Ghosts, ghosts everywhere*

Wed 27/10 2021, 10 am–12 pm and 2–4 pm

Thu 28/10 2021, 2–4 pm

Kids' workshops as part of KinderKunstFest 2021

For children from 6–9 years

Please see our website for further details: [www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at)

Free for all participants of the KinderKunstFest 2021.

*Who woke up all the ghosts?*

Thu 28/10 2021, 10 am–12 pm

Fri 29/10 2021, 10 am–12 pm and 2–4 pm

Kids' workshops as part of WIENXTRA Herbstferienspiel

For children from 6–10 years

## The exhibition at a glance

*Ines Doujak. Geistervölker*

CURATORS: What, How & for Whom / WHW (Ivet Ćurlin, Nataša Ilić and Sabina Sabolović)

ASSISTANT CURATOR: Aziza Harmel

EXHIBITION VENUE: **kunsthalle wien** museumsquartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

EXHIBITION DATES: 1/10 2021–16/1 2022

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

## Press contact

Katharina Schniebs

T +43 1 5 21 89 – 221

M [presse@kunsthallewien.at](mailto:presse@kunsthallewien.at)