

museumsplatz 1 • 1070 vienna

PRESS CONTACT

katharina schniebs

+43 1 5 21 89 – 221

presse@kunsthallewien.at

www.kunsthallewien.at

## Laure Prouvost *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama*

11/5—1/10 2023

PRESS CONFERENCE: Thu 11/5 2023 • 10 AM  
OPENING: Thu 11/5 2023 • 7 PM  
CURATOR: Carolina Nöbauer  
ASSISTANT CURATOR: Andrea Popelka  
CURATORIAL COORDINATION: Astrid Peterle  
EXHIBITION VENUE: kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

A joint exhibition of kunsthalle wien and Wiener Festwochen

Laure Prouvost's works stimulate the senses and imagination of those who see them. The great concerns of the present-day world are set to simmer in her humorous cosmos. By means of playful storytelling, she seeks paths forward. Over the last two decades, the artist (born 1978 in Croix, Northern France) has developed an inventive audio-visual vocabulary characterized by wit, a singular sensory quality and joyful play with misunderstanding and linguistic ambiguity.

After numerous international exhibitions, *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama* is the first solo exhibition of the Turner Prize winner in Austria, jointly conceived by kunsthalle wien and Wiener Festwochen. It comprises a series of works created especially for this occasion—including a new film—that form an expansive as well as immersive multi-media installation.

Prouvost's multi-dimensional art practice moves easily between various media and techniques, characterized throughout by the singular performative and narrative aspects of her gesture. The artist works in film, painting, sound and sculpture, using glass, textiles, ceramics and found-object assemblages, among other materials. All these elements converge in imaginative worlds and interwoven storylines.

The works of Prouvost dissolve reality and fiction into unusual stories. Inspired by the strategies and poetics of Surrealism, she gracefully yet purposefully subverts linear narrative and socially normative articulations of word, image, and material. The works resist any obvious reading, instead inviting an intuitive and affective mode of examination. They present gaps to be filled by the personal realities, emotional worlds, and imagination of the viewers, in the process opening a broad spectrum of new meaning.



Laure Prouvost, *Moving Her*, 2023  
(detail) • PHOTO: DÁNIEL MÁTYÁS FÜLÖP

The cryptically spelled title *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama* is a perfect example of Prouvost's witty use of language. In its play on spelling and pronunciation it leaves meanings to shimmer, working through multilingual consonances. As the title suggests when spoken aloud, it is about the fine gesture of homage—to the oma, the grandma, as ancestor and trailblazer.

In her exploration of the very figure of the grandmother, Prouvost engages with the concept of origin and its possible interpretations, and in a broader sense with the construction of history in its transmission through generations. Her

works generally emphasize the importance of interpersonal relations and family units in their various forms. Thus, the protagonists of her films tend to be close-knit groups held together by a form of elective affinity or seeing themselves as "chosen family" by virtue of their allegiance and intimacy.

And so the Vienna exhibition begins in search of those who made us what we are able to be today. We encounter an audaciously invented genealogy of "grandmothers" (a list which of course can never be considered complete), ranging from the prehistoric figurine known as "Venus of Willendorf", the baroque painter **Artemisia Gentileschi**, the civil rights campaigner **Rosa Parks**, to the mountaineer **Junko Tabei**, theorist **Donna Haraway**, the filmmaker **Agnès Varda**, and the electronic music pioneer **Éliane Radigue**, to the grandmothers of the curator, a neighbour, a friend, and the studio manager.

Prouvost uses stories of intellectual role models and inspiring historical characters interchangeably with people personally known to her or important in her immediate world. The artist's subjective reflections on their significance underpin the script of her new film, *Here Her Heart Hovers* (2023), feeding into the narrative of the entire exhibition, in which the film stands as centrepiece. The main part of the film follows a sisterly group of women who embark on a journey over land and through time to pass on the valuable things they carry.

But the story doesn't end on the screen. Prouvost invites us into a sensual, cavernous darkness that—by means of an intricately synchronized score of lighting effects, sounds and video projections—evokes an originary place from which everything seems to have emerged. Her exhibition works like a tangled surreal dream where past, present and future dissolve into indistinction: stories, encounters, and fleeting memories proliferate here, materializing in multiple bodies, voices, and objects.

In *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama*, Prouvost lays out a closely woven genealogy in which kinship relations and the writing of history are not set in stone but persist as fluid and malleable things. The exhibition is dedicated to ancestors and forerunners: those who preceded us but also the ancestors and forerunners still to come. Prouvost invites us to see ourselves bound together in an interconnected world of a collective *We*. One that protects what the predecessors left, and with passing generations will watch over the forays of those who follow. ●

## The Film

*Here Her Heart Hovers*, 2023 • 3 parts, duration in total: 34 min

Laure Prouvost's artistic beginnings are in experimental cinema, and videos are often in the center of her exhibitions and installations. The fictional film *Here Her Heart Hovers* was made especially for *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama*. It consists of three parts and is split between two screens in the immersive installation.



Laure Prouvost, *Here Her Heart Hovers*, 2023, video still • COURTESY THE ARTIST

Mainly shot near Marseille in a grotto overlooking the Mediterranean, it depicts a journey through space and time in search of our grandmothers and connections to our past, towards the history of the future. The world Prouvost invents here might perhaps originate with the 11 cm figurine known as the "Venus of Willendorf" as *great-grandmother* of us all.

The artist borrows the story of this stone -age sculpture, reinterpreting and interweaving contextual motifs. Among the many interpretations that fascinate Prouvost is one whereby the figurine, named "Venus" by her finder, might not be a fertility symbol but rather a representation of a wise grandmother. Scientific testing has established that the figurine (or the material she was sculpted from) travelled a long way to the place where she was found. This is important, as is the discovery of more than 130 similar figures across Europe. A display panel in Vienna's Naturhistorisches Museum affectionately refers to these as "sisters". Inspired by these ideas, Prouvost imagines an expansive genealogy of ancestors: who might the "130 sisters" be for us today? In the third part of the film, children playfully turn to the grandma—this highlights the challenges of the present and appeals to us as potential future "grandmothers".

*Here Her Heart Hovers* was commissioned by **kunsthalle wien** and **Wiener Festwochen** as well as **Remai Modern**. ●

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## The Mobile

*Moving Her*, 2023

Laure Prouvost's new film *Here Her Heart Hovers* is the centerpiece of a large-scale installation work that takes up its interwoven plotlines, references, and images, translates them into other artistic media, and spins them further. In *Moving Her*, a system of synchronized light and sound and finely detailed kinetic mobiles flies over the head of the viewers: among the fragile objects incorporated are twigs, dried leaves, walking sticks, bird feathers, plastic bottles, packaging materials, broken cables, and discarded electrical appliances.

The works of Prouvost breathe new life into found and collected materials, bringing apparently insignificant, forgotten things to light. Strange hybrids emerge and almost accidentally become creatures with a will of their own as nature collides with the detritus of consumer society, basic cultural goods, and new technologies. The objects in *Moving Her* seem like remnants of the film, roadside relics on its protagonists' long journey. On the way they hover above the action, carrying their own stories and throwing their shapes onto the wall. ●



Laure Prouvost, *Moving Her*, 2023 (detail) • PHOTO: DÁNIEL MÁTYÁS FÜLÖP



## The Glass Objects

*Ada Programmed Our Future*, 2023

*Bzzz*, 2023

*Gathering Ho Ma The Glaneuse*, 2023, duration: 11 min

*We Were 130 Sisters*, 2023



Laure Prouvost, Sketch for glass objects, 2023

Talkative glass objects mingle with the found materials in the exhibition: when the spotlight finds them, the figures wake and address each other in short dialogues or make the audience listen to anecdotes. A synchronized system of sound and light underpins the dramaturgy. Laure Prouvost's sculptures often have anthropomorphic characteristics, becoming figures with personality and expression, seeming almost to return the viewer's gaze.

Prouvost frequently works with glass, a material whose optical qualities evoke the preciousness of the moment. She describes it as a material that appears almost as fluid, pausing only briefly before continuing to flow from any point.

Each of the objects—the entanglement of cables, the potato, the fish, the slippers—refers to an important “grandmother” in the genealogy of her exhibition. Together with the corresponding audio track they invoke a defining attribute of the person concerned—a detail of a portrait photo, a key moment in a story, or an aspect of their achievement—which Prouvost interprets idiosyncratically through her own visual vocabulary.

The cables, bearing the title *Ada Programmed Our Future* (2023), for example, refer to the mathematician **Ada Lovelace**, who was hundred years ahead of her time with her vision of informatics. In *Gathering Ho Ma, The Glaneuse* (2023), several glass objects are grouped into a scene of a gathering around a campfire. The glass potato and the overarching title of the installation on the other hand refer to the French filmmaker **Agnès Varda**, her obsession with potatoes, and her documentary film *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* [The Gleaners and I] (2000). ●

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## Sound

Sound occupies the role of the subconscious in Laure Prouvost's works. In the form of intimate whispering (often the artist's voice itself), children's singing, or ASMR-like sounds, sensual audio tracks accompany the flow of visual impressions in her films and installations. These work as emotional stimulus on various levels, deepening viewers' involvement in the setting.

The echo of *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama's* voices and sounds greets visitors at the cash desk, and *Hi Her Garden* (2023), a trellis of six modified cymbals, registers their arrival in the gallery with a brassy clang. Along with the various audio tracks of Prouvost's works, Elisabeth Schimana's sound-composition *Zwiebelfäden* [Onion threads] booms across the space. In the spirit of new artistic and intergenerational elective affinity, Prouvost invited the Austrian composer and media artist to contribute to the installation.

**Elisabeth Schimana**, born in 1958, is regarded as a female pioneer of electronic music in Austria. Beginning her career in electroacoustics, Schimana started experimenting early on with the technological possibilities of new software and later the internet. Her works, live appearances, and projects deal with radical approaches and aesthetics in the relationship between space, body, and electronics.

*Zwiebelfäden* [Onion threads] is a 6-channel fixed-media composition in which **Schimana** interprets and expands the concept of the exhibition with a homage to her own musical role models and companions. She draws threads between herself and composers **Éliane Radigue**, **Pauline Oliveros**, **Beatriz Ferreyra**, and **Maryanne Amacher**, *Ö1 Kunstradio* founder **Heidi Grundmann**, and musicologist **Helga de la Motte-Haber**, and integrates audio recordings from her archive into the piece. The principle of the score is based on the rhythmic structure of spoken words and six motifs of virtual heartbeats. The basses pulse asynchronously through the space, one speech fragment is peeled from another, passes through various stages of modification, disappears, and reappears. ●

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## Language

Language is of great conceptual significance in **Laure Prouvost**'s work. Her experience as non-native speaker of the omnipresent, universalized English language feeds into a game, where mistakes in translation, typing mistakes, accent, and pronunciation create a new poetry. Semantic displacements open new levels of meaning, the creative potential of misunderstandings clears the way for the imagination.

**Prouvost** exposes the process of communication as a slippery and precarious undertaking. Her inventive, unorthodox juggling with language challenges the constant flow of information, linear modes of reading, and the social obsession with interpretive authority.

Especially in the titles in this exhibition one encounters onomatopoeic language, puns, and rich metaphors. The film title *Here Her Heart Hovers*, for example, is a sonorous alliteration with sensory-affective properties when spoken aloud, and serves as a powerful visual commentary that puts an additional layer of association over the film's scenes. The exhibition title *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama* works through multilingual consonance. An "Ohmmm" sound, the English and French pronunciations of "age", the "Oma" (grandma) and the French "je" (I), together form a phonetic "homage, homage" (homage, tribute). Meanwhile, "homme" (man), which might easily have shown up here, disappears in the alternative spelling. ●

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## Excursus: Grandma

*Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama* is an organic and sprawling net, gathering "grandmothers" of all kinds and interpreting their stories. As homage to various ancestors—among them real characters who inspired **Laure Prouvost**—the exhibition introduces an almost documentary undercurrent into the artist's practice.

The artist has already produced a lot of imaginative work about the figure of the grandmother. Over the last ten years, she has established the figure of her own "grandma" as a permanent companion in her work. This character often appears as a central protagonist, and sometimes also a kind of alter ego of the artist. In cheerfully playing

with the question of how biographies and stories are constructed, **Prouvost** has developed a fictional mythology around her own family history. With the grandparents at the center of these emancipatory narratives, there is license for ambiguities, diversions, and clichés. In the figure of the grandma and her story, **Prouvost** speaks of the circumstances and struggles of a time when everything revolved around the "master". She strikes a playful blow against existing artistic practice (in which she herself participates) and pulls apart the cult of genius and authorship. In doing so she formulates a witty feminist critique of the way male careers are canonized at women's expense and of the lack of attention directed to female artists compared with their male colleagues. ●

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## Biography Laure Prouvost



**Laure Prouvost** (b. 1978 in Croix, France) is currently based in Brussels. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Central Saint Martins and a Master of Fine Arts from Goldsmiths College in London and took part in the LUX Associate Artists Programme. She received the Max Mara Art Prize for Women in 2011, the prestigious Turner Prize in 2013 and represented France 2019 at the 58th Biennale Arte in Venice.

Her most recent solo projects include: *A Flying Grandma* in Oslo, *Esmé Blue* in Busan, Helsinki, and Madrid, *An Elastic Arm Hold in Tight* in Copenhagen, *A Swallowing and Breathing* in Eindhoven, *A Smoking Mother* in Copenhagen, *A Melting Into Another* in Lisbon and Sonsbeek, *An Occupied Paradise* in Aalst, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* in Venice, Toulouse, and Lille, *A Waiting Room with Objects* in Minneapolis, *A New Museum for Granddad* in Milano, *a Tearoom for Grandma* in Derry, *A Karaoke Room* in Brussels, *A New Octopus Ink Vodka Bar* for Gregor in Rotterdam, *A Travel Agency for an Uncle* in Frankfurt, *A Lobby for Love Among the Artists* in the Hague and Luzern ... tea bags, and wet floors and tentacles. ●

Laure Prouvost • PHOTO: GENE PITTMAN  
• COURTESY WALKER ART CENTER,  
MINNEAPOLIS



## Public program

### PERFORMANCE

*The Long, very long Journey*

By Laure Prouvost & Sam Belinfante

Sat 13/5 2023 • 4 PM • kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

WITH: Patricia Auchterlonie • Construction Choir Collective • Susanna Gartmayer • Ingrid Oberkanins • OMAS GEGEN RECHTS • Superar Children's Choir

On the opening weekend of the exhibition, Laure Prouvost and Sam Belinfante gather amateur and professional musicians from different generations for a unique choral performance. Inspired by the search for traces of our grandmothers, *The Long, very long Journey* is a musical expedition through the spaces of kunsthalle wien. Processional songs, playful scenes and experimental sounds echo the memories of familiar connections and great heroines.

### COFFEE KLATSCH WITH LAURE PROUVOST

Sat 13/5 2023 • 5:30 PM •

kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

### TOURS

All tours are free with an admission ticket.

#### Curator's Tour with Carolina Nöbauer

Tue 16/5 & Thu 15/9 2023 • 6 PM • kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

#### Sunday Tours

21/5 • 4/6 • 18/6 • 2/7 • 16/7 • 6/8 • 20/8 • 3/8 • 17/9 • 1/10 2023

Each at 4 PM • kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

WITH: Carola Fuchs • Andrea Hubin • Michaela Schmidlechner • Michael Simku

Every first and third Sunday of the month at 4 PM you can explore the exhibition *Laure Prouvost. Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama* together with our art educators and discuss the context and background of the exhibited works.

The Sunday tours will be held in German.

#### My View Tours

*My View* is a program series in which experts, non-experts, and interesting people are invited to present their personal view on the exhibition.

### PROGRAM FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

#### We build ourselves an Omimobile

An intergenerational workshop as part of KinderuniKunst

For everyone from 6 years

Tue 4/7 • Wed 5/7 • Thu 6/7 • each 10 AM–12:30 PM

The exhibition *Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama* by the French artist Laure Prouvost has a lot of grandma in it! Alongside children also grandparents, parents, friends, and other relatives are invited to the workshop to create a work of art. Together the participants



Laure Prouvost, *Here Her Heart Hovers*, 2023, video still • COURTESY THE ARTIST

will search for stories hidden in things. Based on found objects they will build a sculpture that is in motion and comes to life through light and sound.

Please see our website for regular updates and further details on the program around the exhibition *Laure Prouvost. Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama*: [www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at)

## **The exhibition at a glance**

### **Laure Prouvost. Ohmmm age Oma je ohomma mama**

A joint exhibition of kunsthalle wien and Wiener Festwochen

CURATOR: Carolina Nöbauer

ASSISTANT CURATOR: Andrea Popelka

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EXHIBITION VENUE: kunsthalle wien Museumsquartier

EXHIBITION DATES: 11/5–1/10 2023

OPENING HOURS: Tue–Sun 11 AM–7 PM • Thu 11 AM–9 PM

PRESS MATERIALS:

[kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/laure-prouvost/press/](http://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/laure-prouvost/press/)

#### **PRESS CONTACT**

katharina.schniebs

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