

Kunsthalle Wien  
Museumsquartier

EN

Aleksandra Domanović  
5.9.2024–26.1.2025

Aleksandra Domanović's expansive practice focuses on the intersections of technology, history and culture. Working across sculpture, video, print, photography and digital media, she considers how they shape our understanding of identity and contemporary society. This exhibition brings together different bodies of work made over a period of eighteen years, beginning with an early video that she produced while studying at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. It surveys the development of a playful yet critical oeuvre produced across two decades and shaped by information culture and mass media in the post-internet era. The exhibition includes a series of new and updated works that were specially commissioned for this exhibition. It is the first exhibition of Domanović's work in Austria and the largest presentation of her work to date.

### Early Works

*New Me* (2006) is a music video that was originally presented as part of Domanović's graduate exhibition as a student of Graphic Design at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Domanović choreographed and filmed a single dancer performing at the Helmut-Zilk Platz in front of the Albertina in Vienna. The anachronistic street scene is digitally tiled in twenty-five non-sequential parts. As a graduate in Vienna, Domanović (together with fellow artists Oliver Laric, Christoph Priglinger and Georg Schnitzer) founded the influential blog, 'VVORK' and began presenting her work online. <http://hottesttocoldest.com> (2008) is an example of Domanović's early digital works which took the form of single-serving websites. Projected here on the wall, it is programmed to order capital cities of the world in descending order according to their current air temperature in real time.

### Paper stacks and videos

A series of works made between 2008 and 2024 look specifically to the Western Balkan peninsula of Europe. Domanović's 'paper stacks' are monolithic sculptures that were originally conceived to commemorate the deletion of the internet domain for Yugoslavia, 'yu'. Composed of thousands of sheets of paper printed with an inkjet printer, from a digital file, they are a physical work that can be sent electronically and produced remotely. Early stacks quote topical images sourced from news websites referring to incidences of football hooliganism and civil unrest. More recent additions include a triptych of stacks dedicated to the Bosnian footballer and manager, Ivica Osim who managed the Austrian team SK Sturm Graz between 1994 and 2002. The video *From yu to me* (2013) charts the arrival of the internet and the concurrent collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. Domanović's film is structured around the accounts of Borka Jerman Blažič and Mirjana Tasić, two computer scientists who registered and administered the 'yu' domain between 1989 and 2010.

Two earlier videos are presented elsewhere in the exhibition. In the Studio on level -1, *Turbo Sculpture* (2009/2024) addresses the relatively unknown phenomenon of celebrity monuments that became popular in the Western Balkans in the early 21st century. Beginning with a public sculpture of the actor Bruce Lee, erected in Mostar in 2005, Domanović collages texts and images sourced from news websites. The title draws a parallel with turbo-folk music, described in the film as 'a local collision of electronic dance beats and neo-traditional melodies'. The original film is updated with an epilogue for this exhibition. In

the exhibition hall, the film *19:30* (2010–2011) compiles graphics and music from television news broadcasts made between 1958 and 2010 in the geographic region that was Yugoslavia. Domanović's project draws a parallel between the collective experience of watching the daily evening news broadcast at 19:30 and techno parties in the 1990s: 'I was a part of the generation that experienced the break-up of Yugoslavia during my early teens, young enough to be engulfed into identity-defining scenes and movements that came after. Techno created a distance to a political period of nationalistic tendencies and simultaneously represented not only newfound freedoms but a spirit of tolerance and the prospect of international communication... In Slovenia, where I grew up, our notion of techno was not so much the specific musical genre as a scene mapped around various aspects of electronic dance music... Techno became our transitional symbol... I recall the post war techno craze as something that brought us together again... Young people, including myself, travelled, some even for the first time, to and beyond the borders of the newly formed republics in order to attend bigger techno parties, so-called raves. We started to discover the neighbouring countries ourselves.'

### *Portrait (mesing)*, hands and *Votives*

A series of works digitally recast figurative motifs to imagine futuristic, post-gendered, post-human bodies. A 'queered' portrait of President Josip Broz Tito entitled *Portrait (mesing)* (2012) is hung at an elevated height on the wall. The former president of Yugoslavia (1950–1980) and chief architect of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1946–1992) appears in military uniform but with his facial features altered to appear more feminine. The term 'mesing' in the title refers to a word used for brass metal in various languages spoken in the former Yugoslavia. Other figurative sculptures refer to scientist Rajko Tomović's design for the first five-fingered prosthetic hand which was produced in Belgrade in 1963. The monolithic *Votive* sculptures are made in the tradition of 'Korai', a genre of ancient Greek sculpture depicting female figures bearing offerings. Domanović's *Votives* (2016–2018) present a broad array of objects including basketballs and a sculptural representation of a genetically modified calf. The most recent work in the exhibition to quote Tomović's so-called 'Belgrade Hand' is documented in a photograph displayed next to the Studio on level -1. The artist explains: 'The *Admiral mit Doppelgänger* [Admiral with Doppelgänger] by Ludmila Seefried-Matějková is one of my favourite works of public art in Berlin. I pass it almost daily and at some point, I noticed it was missing a hand, someone probably cut it off. I waited a year for the city to do something, to restore the work, nothing

happened. I gave the punk sitting at the base of the sculpture her hand back.' Elsewhere, *Bubanj Fist Relief* (2012) quotes a 1963 antifascist monument made by Ivan Sabolić for the Bubanj Memorial Park in Niš, Serbia. The park commemorates the mass killings of Serbs, Roma and Jews by fascist execution squads between 1942 and 1944. Numerous such 'spomeniks' were constructed throughout the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to commemorate the past and establish a new national identity. Many have since fallen into disrepair.

#### *The Future Was At Her Fingertips* and *Things to Come*

A number of works combine questions of gender and identity with references to the history of science and technology or to science fiction. *The Future Was At Her Fingertips (timeline)* (2014) is a chronological listing that mixes dates from cybernetics, computing, and science fiction with developments in seemingly unconnected fields such as yoga and women's rights. A series of images printed on clear film form the installation *Things to Come* (2014). They quote science fiction films including *Blade Runner* (1982), *Demon Seed* (1977), *Alien* (1979), *Prometheus* (2012) and *Gravity* (2013) via objects that Domanović associates with their respective female characters. These are isolated, enlarged and reproduced on a material similar to celluloid. In the accompanying *Disney Letter* (2014) Domanović demonstrates the role women played in the history of animation and the discrimination they experienced.

Two other works reproduce short, informal notes, one of scientific and the other of personal significance. *A Note From Boris Ephrussi to James Watson* (2016) quotes correspondence from 1958 between two geneticists, while *Mirka's Coffee Manual* (2020) refers to the artist's mother's ten point instruction list for making coffee.

#### *Bulls Without Horns*

Other works respond to advances in biological or medical science. *Bulls Without Horns* (2016) is a photographic series depicting two genetically modified Holstein bulls, Spotigy and Buri, and the animal geneticist Alison Van Eenennaam who works with them. Van Eenennaam explains in the accompanying interview: 'These two are Holstein bulls that have a change in one of the genes in their DNA. This was done using a tool called a TALEN – a nuclease that basically acts as a pair of molecular scissors – which goes in and cuts the DNA at exactly the location that we tell it to. We told it to cut the gene that grows horns in dairy cattle. We wanted to replace the allele (or variant) of the gene that is present in dairy cattle with that of beef cattle. So we went in and tweaked that gene so that it's now the allele that's found in beef cattle – Angus cattle – and so, therefore, they are naturally not going to grow horns. They're genetically de-horned.'

#### *Worldometers, Becoming Another* and *If These Walls Could Talk*

A series of new and more recent works consider the roles that science and technology play in representation and perception. In *Worldometers* (2021) LED fans display historical photographs of doctors, patients, ultrasound machines and fetuses alongside corporate logos and footage from gender reveal announcements. The painting *Becoming Another (Ultrasound Beam)* (2024) and the sculptural relief *If These Walls Could Talk* (2024), employ the optical illusion named after the meteorologist Wil-

helm von Bezold. These multi-layered works quote the history of medical imaging, making particular reference to obstetric ultrasound technology and the role that it plays in gender identification, women's rights and the debate around abortion. *If These Walls Could Talk* takes the form of acoustic panels upholstered with a specially woven cloth. Commissioned for this exhibition, it connects earlier research with questions of national identity and culture incorporating a diverse array of images including a 1960s portrait of the physician Ian Donald (who pioneered the use of ultrasound in obstetrics) and Slovakian folk patterns. The phrase 'portrait of a lady on fire' appears in the four official languages of Domanović's home town, Novi Sad. The text refers both to an earlier work and the title of a 2019 French film which tells the story of a lesbian love affair.

#### Exhibition publication

The exhibition is accompanied by the first monographic publication on Aleksandra Domanović's work. The book includes an extensive interview between the artist and Michelle Cotton, Artistic Director of Kunsthalle Wien alongside essays by curator Carson Chan, the curator and writer Caitlin Jones, the editor and writer Pablo Larios and the critic and essayist Marcel Štefančič. Published in English and German it will be available from Kunsthalle Wien from October.

#### Limited edition

A limited edition is available from Kunsthalle Wien's shop. Ask at the desk or email [shop@kunsthallewien.at](mailto:shop@kunsthallewien.at) for details. All proceeds support Kunsthalle Wien's programme.

#### Artist talk

Aleksandra Domanović in conversation with Carson Chan, Director of the Emilio Ambasz Institute for the Joint Study of the Built and Natural Environment at the Museum of Modern Art, New York

→ 4 September 2024, 6pm

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#### Guided tours

Guided tours are available in German, English, Einfacher Sprache [Plain German], Austrian Sign Language and BCS.

More information on the programme:



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All works courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin and Los Angeles unless otherwise stated.

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