

ENG

HEROINES NOW

2 November - 21 December, 2019

Opening 2 November 2019, 17 - 19h

Melanie Bonajo (NL)

Anne Wenzel (DE)

Gluklya (Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya) (RU/NL)

Sarah Naqvi (IN)

Lungiswa Gqunta (SA)

AKINCI



Lungiswa Gqunta, *Feet under fire*, 2017, HD Video, 14:54 min and *Sleeping Pools*, 2017, metal bed frame, led lights, perspex, petrol, water and ink, 160 x 180 x 35 cm, courtesy WHATIFTHEWORLD

With 'Heroines Now', AKINCI launches this year the second edition of a thematic exhibition. The first show was in 2005 and involved 'Heroines', groundbreaking women artists of the 60ies and 70ies as Ana Mendieta, Carolee Schneemann and Valie Export. Again, a feminine approach to the world's needs and visionary concepts are relevant. In 'Heroines Now', AKINCI will present works by Melanie Bonajo (The Netherlands), Anne Wenzel (Germany), Gluklya (Russia/Netherlands), Sarah Naqvi (India) and Lungiswa Gqunta (South Africa). 'Heroines Now' will reveal how vivid and urgent topics seen from the point of view of women artists from different continents and countries are now, with new insight, different visual tools, with humour and seriousness.

What is the face of feminism today? How does it relate to the feminism of the sixties and seventies? Some say feminism is more individual in the new millennium, it is intersectional, less on the street; it manifests itself more on social media. With the #MeToo movement and intersectional* feminism, it is clear that the discussion has flared up again. This exhibition is not so much on feminist issues, it rather responds immediately to the call brought forward by the feminist movement; a call for strong female voices. Through their art, these women offer a worldview, an opinion on a way to be in the world that is implicitly or explicitly present in the feminist discussion.

* Intersectionality is a term asserting how all aspects of social and political identities (gender, ethnic background, class, sexuality, disability, etc.) discrimination overlap (or 'intersect')

Melanie Bonajo

In her work, Melanie Bonajo examines the paradoxes inherent to ideas of comfort with a strong sense for community, equality, and body-politics. In a new series of photographs, Bonajo explores the 'vulva identifying body'. "How can we", she asks, "as sisters and holders of our own future, help and support each other in a safer and sexual space through rituals of purification, intimacy, demystifying and empowering female sexuality beyond the shame and guilt society conditions us with." The artist positions the knowledge about the anatomy of the female body, and more specifically, the pelvic (sexual) area, as a way to get more familiar with her own sexuality in a safe and open environment. Bonajo seizes these topics with humour and intelligence, colourfully spreading and embodying 'hxrstories' (the woke* version of history), what it means to be woke and what femxle independence could look like.

* Woke means being conscious of racial discrimination in society and other forms of oppression and injustice.



Melanie Bonajo, *Cruising*, 2019
c-print, 30 x 42,8cm

Gluklya

Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya (artist name Gluklya) is considered as one of the pioneers of Russian Performance and Feminist artistic practice. In her projects, she addresses the personal stories of her characters, analysing them and revealing the conflict between political systems and a person's inner world. Gluklya's studio often turns into a meeting place where people work together on unfolding and addressing



topics of urgency. In this exhibition, AKINCI presents a selection of garments, some of which Gluklya first constructed for her installation at the 56th Venice Biennale 'Clothes for Demonstration Against False Election of Vladimir Putin (2011-2015)' in the exhibition 'All the World's Futures', curated by Okwui Enwezor. Other pieces evolved from the process when Gluklya worked with refugees at the former prison, the Bijlmer Bajes. Gluklya's adopts and remakes worn clothes since they are a 'second skin', a frontier between personality and society. For example, a dress worn by a mother who lost her son in the war with Ukraine or a dress belonging to the feminist community with a large red circle and a piece of wood sticking out; a symbol of the pain caused by an anti-abortion law in Russia. The artist employs these clothes to physically partake in political statements or as banners to resist and make our voices heard.

Gluklya, *Abortion Dress*, 'Clothes for Demonstration Against False Election of Vladimir Putin (2011-2015)' textile, wood

Anne Wenzel

With her sculptures and installations, Anne Wenzel explores symbols of power. Her raw sculptures of glazed ceramics question the meaning of beauty, heroism, wealth and ownership. The female busts of the series 'Under Construction' look powerful and classic. They are combative but damaged as their faces and chests are scarified revealing incised texts of fury and provocation. The texts are found footage, fragments of slogans found on the internet, used by female demonstrators like Femen; activist women demanding their place in public space through smart provocation. 'My Pussy My Rules' and 'Fuck The Dictator' are two new sculptures that stand not as victims, but as victors on their pedestals. "With busts, heroes are honoured, and in the course of history most busts have represented men, because history was written by men. Women have often been important, but are associated with the less conspicuous things, soft skills, not things that you would erect a monument to. That is why I have now made a series of women."



Anne Wenzel, *Under Construction (My Pussy My Rules)*, 2018, Ceramics, steel plinth, 95 x 46 x 41 cm

Lungiswa Gqunta

AKINCI is proud to be the first in The Netherlands to show the work of South African artist Lungiswa Gqunta, who is currently in residence at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Through her work Lungiswa Gqunta grapples with the complexities of the South African sociopolitical landscape and the legacy of patriarchal dominance and colonialism. She exposes different forms of violence and the systemic inequality. AKINCI presents an installation called 'Sleeping Pools', an illuminated metal bed frame filled with a pool of petrol. Gqunta combines the luxury of the swimming pool in a South African suburb with the perceived threat of a township represented by the petrol. The installation is presented together with the video 'Feet under Fire', in which Gqunta's lower legs swing in and out of frame, wearing scrubbing brushes as shoes. The video is accompanied by the sound of voices singing the childhood nursery rhyme, 'Umzi Watsha', which translates from isiXhosa as "The house is burning". The bed, in combination with the video, speaks to us about the concept of 'home' in the townships of Africa. In recalling the flawlessly polished doorstep at the home of her grandmother's sister, Gqunta has adapted the tools of domesticity by replacing the bristles of the scrubbing brushes with matchsticks. In the film, an echoed voice calls out: "Go look there; there is a fire, pour water" An instruction for survival to those living in the close confines of South Africa's informal settlements, where accidental fires unite the community to put out the flames. This element of fire is seared into Gqunta's practice as a both a metaphor and catalyst for change. "Our house, as in our whole country, is on fire, and who is gonna put it out? We have to collectively come together to put it out, as Black people. Not even just South Africans, but the entire continent."

Sarah Naqvi

Sarah Naqvi is an explicitly political, young feminist artist who started a residency at De Ateliers in Amsterdam this season. Her work combines heritage techniques from her native country India, with observations, feelings and activist statements on the cultural and religious practices in India in recent years. Small embroidered vulvas, masks, watercolours, tapestries and large, naturally dyed cottons foreground tabooed topics in her country, such as menstruation and unrealistic body ideals, taking a bold stance against orthodox conversation and braving outraged responses. Even though the women in her pictures seem threatened and affected by fear, they do not appear scared. Dark and conscious they seem of their fate, almost fighting back through the picture, embedded in symbolic signs. AKINCI is proud to present a selection of her works for the first time in The Netherlands.



Sarah Naqvi, *Rituals of Scrutiny*, 2019, watercolour on acid free handmade paper, unframed, 55,88 x 55,88 cm

Biographies

Melanie Bonajo's (1978, Heerlen, NL) work has been exhibited and performed in international art institutions, such as Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2018 & 2019); Rijksmuseum Twente (2019); Rencontres Arles (2019); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2019), Guangzhou Triennial (2018-2019), Haus der Kunst, München (2018); Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018); Tate Modern, London (2017); EYE Film Museum, Amsterdam (2016); Melanie Bonajo had her first international solo exhibition in FOAM, The Netherlands, in 2016. The Frankfurter Kunstverein followed in 2017. In 2018, Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht presented her solo exhibition 'The death of Melanie Bonajo: how to unmodernize yourself and become an elf in 12 steps'. Her work is part of many museum and private collections, including Frac, île-de-France, Paris; Rijksmuseum Twente, Enschede; Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum, Helsinki; Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht; Museum Arnhem; Centraal Museum, Utrecht; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Museum De Domijnen, Sittard; 21C Museum Hotels, Kentucky; Allen & Overy LLP.

Work by **Gluklya (Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya, 1969, Leningrad, Russia)** has been exhibited in group shows as well as solo shows around the world, such as 'Positions 4', curated by Charles Esche, Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, NL (2018/2019); Manchester's Home, Manchester, UK (2017); Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, DL (2017); Pratt Institute, NY (2016); Hero Mother, Berlin (2016); Manifesta 10, St. Petersburg (2014); MMOMA, Moscow (2013); MUMOK Vienna (2013). Gluklya's work is part of many museum and private collections, including the collection of Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, NL; Archive of the Contemporary Conflict, London, UK; Myzeŭ / State Center Contemporary Art, Moscow, RU; MMOMA, Moscow, RU; Museum Reina Sophia, Madrid, ES; The Library of Museum of Modern Art (collection of newspapers), New York, USA.

Anne Wenzel (1972, Schüttorf, Germany)'s work has been shown at leading art institutions in the world. Previous solo exhibitions were held in, among others, Museum ARTER, Istanbul (2019); Museum Jorn, Silkeborg, Denmark (2018); 60th Faenza prize, Faenza (2018); Rijksmuseum Twente (2018); Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam (2017); Princessehof Leeuwarden (2017); TENT Rotterdam (curated by Daria de Beauvais, 2014); Villa Roth, Germany (2010); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam and many others. Her works are included in public and private collections, including Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Princessehof, Leeuwarden, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Collection ARTER Istanbul, Rijksmuseum Twente, Enschede, Stedelijk Museum Den Bosch, S.M.A.K Ghent, and Frac Auvergne.

Lungiswa Gqunta (1990, Port Elizabeth, South Africa) is a visual artist working in performance, printmaking, sculpture and installation. She obtained her undergraduate degree at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in 2012 and her MFA at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in Cape Town in 2017. In addition to her independent practice, Gqunta is one of the founding members of iQhiya, with whom she recently participated in Documenta 14. Gqunta has been actively involved in the South African gallery scene and has exhibited internationally at the Istanbul Biennale (2017); Manifesta, Palermo (2018); Wanas Konst Museum, Sweden (2018) and WHATIFTHEWORLD, South Africa, who is representing her work. Her work forms part of the public collections of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, The University of Cape Town, Zeitz MOCAA and Kunsthhaus Zürich. Gqunta is currently in the first year of residence at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam.

Sarah Naqvi (1996, India) had her first exhibition at Clark House, Mumbai in 2018. In the same year, she was part of several group exhibitions, o.a. at Para Site, Hong Kong; TS1 Yangon, Myanmar (2018); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Apexart New York; Conflictorium, Ahmedabad, ; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin and Âme Nue, Hamburg. Naqvi has been part of the Forecast Forum Residency, Berlin in 2018. She is the recipient of 'The Phenomenal she' award in 2019 conferred by the Indian National Bar Association and NID Ford Foundation Grant in 2018. This season, she started a residency at de Ateliers in Amsterdam.