

*2 November - 21 December, 2019*

*Heroines Now*

Melanie Bonajo  
Gluklya (Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya)  
Anne Wenzel  
Sarah Naqvi  
Lungiswa Gqunta

## About

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



Melanie Bonajo, *Cruising*, 2019, c-print, 30 x 42,8 cm, courtesy the artist & AKINCI

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.

### 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.

### 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 II' 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."

### 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.





*Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





*Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tjihuis)



Melanie Bonajo, *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





Melanie Bonajo, *Cuddle Coven*, 2019  
c-print, framed, museum glass, 72,4 x 108,4 cm, courtesy the artist & AKINCI





Melanie Bonajo, *Relaxing with friends and friendly strangers*, 2019  
C-print, framed, museum glass, 72,4 x 108,4 cm, courtesy the artist & AKINCI



Melanie Bonajo, *Furniture Bondage - Hanna*, 2007  
ultrachrome print, canson, bubond, museumglass. framed, 151,8 x 116,8 cm





Anne Wenzel and Melanie Bonajo in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





Gluklya in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)



Gluklya and Anne Wenzel in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)



*Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin, 2011-2015*



Gluklya, *Undetermined position VII, Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin*, 2011-2015, textile, wood, approx. 80x40 cm (dress), stick approx 250x40cm



*Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin, 2011-2015*



Gluklya, *Guys all over the world unite, Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin*  
2011-2015, textile, paint, approx. 80x40 cm (dress), stick approx 250x40cm



*Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin, 2011-2015*



Gluklya, *Get out!*, Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin  
2011-2015, textile, approx dress 120x70cm, stick 250x40cm



*Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin, 2011-2015*



*Gluklya, Undetermined Position II/Venice, Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin 2011-2015, textile, paint, approx. 80x40 cm (dress), stick approx 250x40cm*

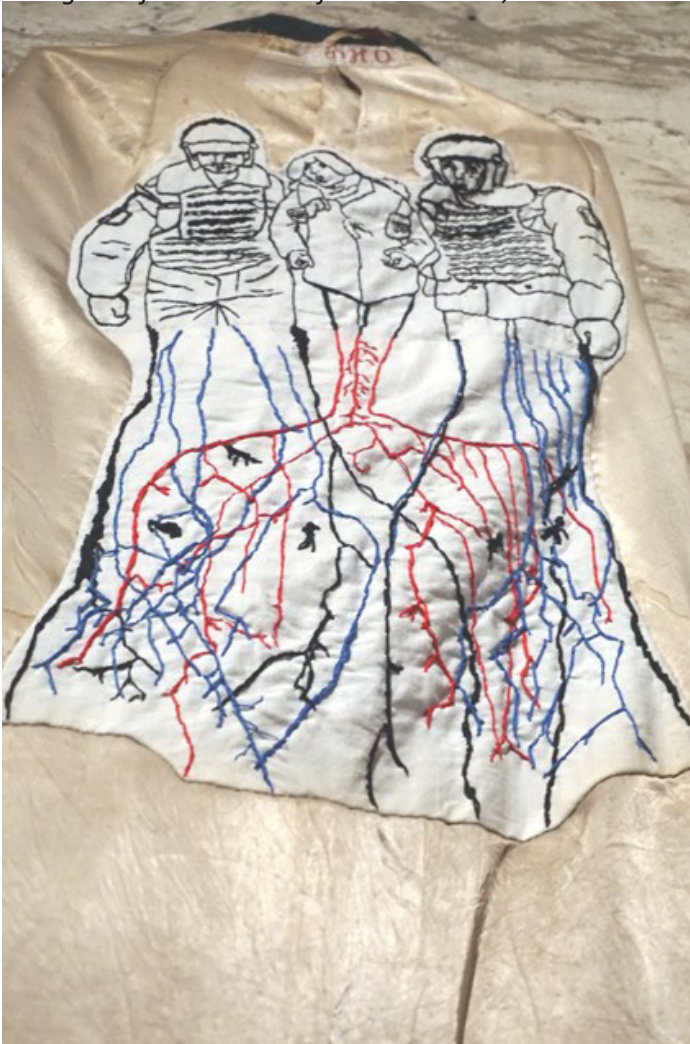


*Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin, 2011-2015*



Gluklya, *Undetermined Position V/Venice, Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin* 2011-2015, textile, paint, approx 100x40cm, stick approx 250x40cm

*Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin, 2011-2015*



Gluklya, *Undetermined Position III/Venice, Clothes for Demonstation against false election of Vladimir Putin*  
2011-2015, textile, approx dress 94x70cm, stick 250x40cm





*Propaganda Flowers*, 2019, watercolour on paper, each approx. 32x 24cm (photo: Peter Tijhuis)

## Propaganda Flowers

### Kimilsungia

“Kimilsungia” – named after Kim Il Sung – General Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army, the Eternal Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. This flower is strong, and his foundation is universal! I brought it from North Korea and rooted it in a Brussels famous botanical garden. You can see the flower there, unfolding around 7 am and closing around 6 pm. During this time you can observe the spectacular appearance of the flower’s centre part and an amazing smell which gives it a special aura and look.

The plant grows between 30 and 70 centimeters tall. Each stalk produces between 3 and 15 flowers per growth cycle. The flowers have three petals and three calyxes that measure between 6 and 8 centimeters. Kimilsungia blooms for between 60 and 90 days and is at its most fragrant and beautiful state on the 30th day. Kimilsungia is a flower with AAA-rated socialist credentials! It needs very little water or light or love for this matter- this flower is mankind’s triumph over the tyranny of nature! Gary smells the flower with deep breaths for a long time – he touches the flower and the way of talking turns from strictly rational to sensual and dreamy AROUSED. The Kimilsungia violet orchid is now seen as a symbol of Kim Il-sung’s “peerless character” and he is “fully reflected in the immortal flower” which is “blooming everywhere on the five continents”. Right now, we are negotiating with the Association of Sculptors in order to make this flower an eternal monument to Socialism.

### Brexit Rose

Let me introduce you a Hybrid of the Red and White Roses, with a percentage of Wolfsbane seeds. My father was the professor botanist specialized in Roses. The Red/White hybrid of Roses was created by him. As you might imagine I have a contradictory relationship with Roses because of my father - a despotic man and sorry to say, a homophobe. Additionally, let me tell you that my father voted for Brexit with no deal — a so-called hard BREXIT. Probably these personal complexities plus the situation in the United Kingdom gave me the impulse to create the new type of Rose: Brexit Rose.

### Congo Flower

I met a young man from Congo. His accent was very strong and it was difficult to understand him. BUT: what I understood was this- there is a hallucinogenic drug from Congo called IBOGEEN. It comes from a flowering tree called Iboga. Before westerners arrived in Africa it was used for medicinal purposes and as part of witch doctor rituals. When white people came and tried to replace the traditional religions with Catholicism, they discouraged and banned Ibogaine. Apparently, some people use it for toothaches (in small doses) and to get high and for magic (in big doses).

Ibogaine is used to help heroin addicts in detoxification treatment.

### Yellow Iris

This gorgeous flower is the symbol of Brussels. Legend told that the flower showed the way to crusaders as it was flowering on the ground where they could walk. The rest was the dangerous swamp. An activist from Capetown who wants to remain anonymous told me this story: the government there is fighting a relentless battle against an invasion - a flower invasion. The invasion is that of certain non-indigenous plants that begin to spread across South Africa. This is a futile battle but has all the same grown into a collective obsession. In South Africa, non-native plants are called Aliens. There is a blacklist of the invasive plants and the Yellow Iris is on that list. A praised saviour in her home country of Belgium, a blacklisted Alien after her migration to South Africa.



**Gluklya about *Clothes for Demonstration* as presented in the installation 'Clothes for Demonstration Against False Election Of Vladimir Putin (2011-2015) at Venice Biennale in All the Worlds Futures, curated by Okwui Enwezor**

The idea for this work came along during the time of the first big protests in Russia, beginning of December 2011, against Putin's false elections. It was unpredictable for everybody; none of us could have imagined the day this might happen, because of the complete a-politicization of our society. The atmosphere of these events was inspiring, sublime, challenging, and constituted the basis for a lot of hope. I was literally amazed, being there, in the middle of the crowd, absorbing the spirit of togetherness by reading the expressions written on the urgently made objects of the protest, the real 'people's poetry' or a collective voice of those who disagree with the political regime in Russia. For example: What's up in Russia? Thievery (in the original Russian a quote from Karamzin), A thief must sit in prison, Bring back BANYA (the steam baths), I would like Russia to become the most beautiful country in the world, and so on. My friends and I went out to demonstrate with items of clothing with the slogans: Anti-abortion law—Russia's shame, Does Russian mean Orthodox? Pensions must be dignified, Let's bring back free education, and a white table cloth on which was written: Are we really all like this old rag ... I have «scanned» what was happening and perceived the expression of all the people's protest as a basis for the artist's statement.

Later, in 2012, I decided to incorporate the spirit of protest and political uprising that I was confronted with at different demonstrations into my long-term project Utopian Clothes- the poetical agents of my artist universe, which is part of the long term project FFC(Factory of Found Clothes). By conceptualizing such everyday object as a dress or cloth or any other piece of garment, I am creating the space for the speculation about the topic of experiment unfolding in the present, in everyday life. The same time it is becoming the necessary alienation to speak about everyday life. It starts from the gesture while I put the clothes I was working on my studio in St-Petersburg on the sticks and moved out to the demonstration (together with my mother and little daughter, important to mention them in the context of the extraordinary importance of these protest, as before 2011 it was unthinkable to go with my family to a protest demonstration).

The hanging on sticks clothes represent a new type of demonstration banners that tend to make the voices of protesting people visible, they might give a voice to people who cannot speak, showing their struggle by the slightly more artistic way than just quick writings on a piece of paper. Each example of clothing has its own story

and aura and represents a certain voice, a precise position in society. Gradually the number of clothes with protest expressions has grown into its own series with the project title Clothes for Demonstrations.

For the 56th Venice Biennial, I am presenting an expanded version of my project Clothes for Demonstrations where more voices and more representatives of our society are presented. The installation has grown more complex as the political situation in Russia.

The Venice Installation presented three groups of clothes. In the first group, I took some expressions of protest from people without changing them and literally had them sewn onto pieces of clothing that I specially chose for each inscription, the second group of items represents Undetermined positions referring to the young nature of our protest pointing on the true and dignified, but spontaneous and unprepared nature of these protest where a lot of people were sharing the feeling of togetherness, but not clearly articulated and with well-reflected demands . And the third category of the clothes contains the Utopian Prepositions, which I decided to make visible using the situation of the Venice Biennale where many people can read it. For example, Students and Veterans against Criminals, Pensioners must be treated with Dignity, Artists and Migrants Unite, Russia means Orthodox? , Gays all over the world Unite! , Veterans United against Swindlers and Thieves, Stop Slavery. We do not have a carnival tradition in Russia, but my project with clothes was always linked with the idea of Carnival and related to M.Bachtin's theory. The installation 'Clothes for Demonstrations against False Vladimir Putin Elections 2011-2011 represents the memory of the first outburst of the free will of people in Russia who just woke up from a long, long sleep.

GLUKLYA (NATALIA PERSHINA-YAKIMANSKAYA)

Anne Wenzel

AKINCI



Anne Wenzel and Sarah Naqvi in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





Anne Wenzel in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)



Anne Wenzel and Melanie Bonajo in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





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



Anne Wenzel, *Under Construction (Fuck The Dictator)*, 2018  
Ceramics, steel plinth, Sculpture : 154 x 74 x 55 cm  
(photo: John Stoel)





Anne Wenzel and Melanie Bonajo in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)



Sarah Naqvi in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





Sarah Naqvi in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)



Sarah Naqvi, *Shanakht (identity)*, 2018  
natural dyes on cotton,  
121,92 x 60,96 cm





Sarah Naqvi, *Shanakht (identity)*, 2018  
natural dyes on cotton,  
30,48x60,96 cm



Sarah Naqvi, *Shanakht (identity)*, 2018  
natural dyes on cotton,  
30,48x60,96 cm



Sarah Naqvi, *Aks (Reflection)* 2018

Acrylic on canvas, mounted on board, 55,88x 55,88 cm





Sarah Naqvi, *Suqoon* (relief), 2018,  
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 86,36 x 55,88 cm (photo: Peter Tijhuis)

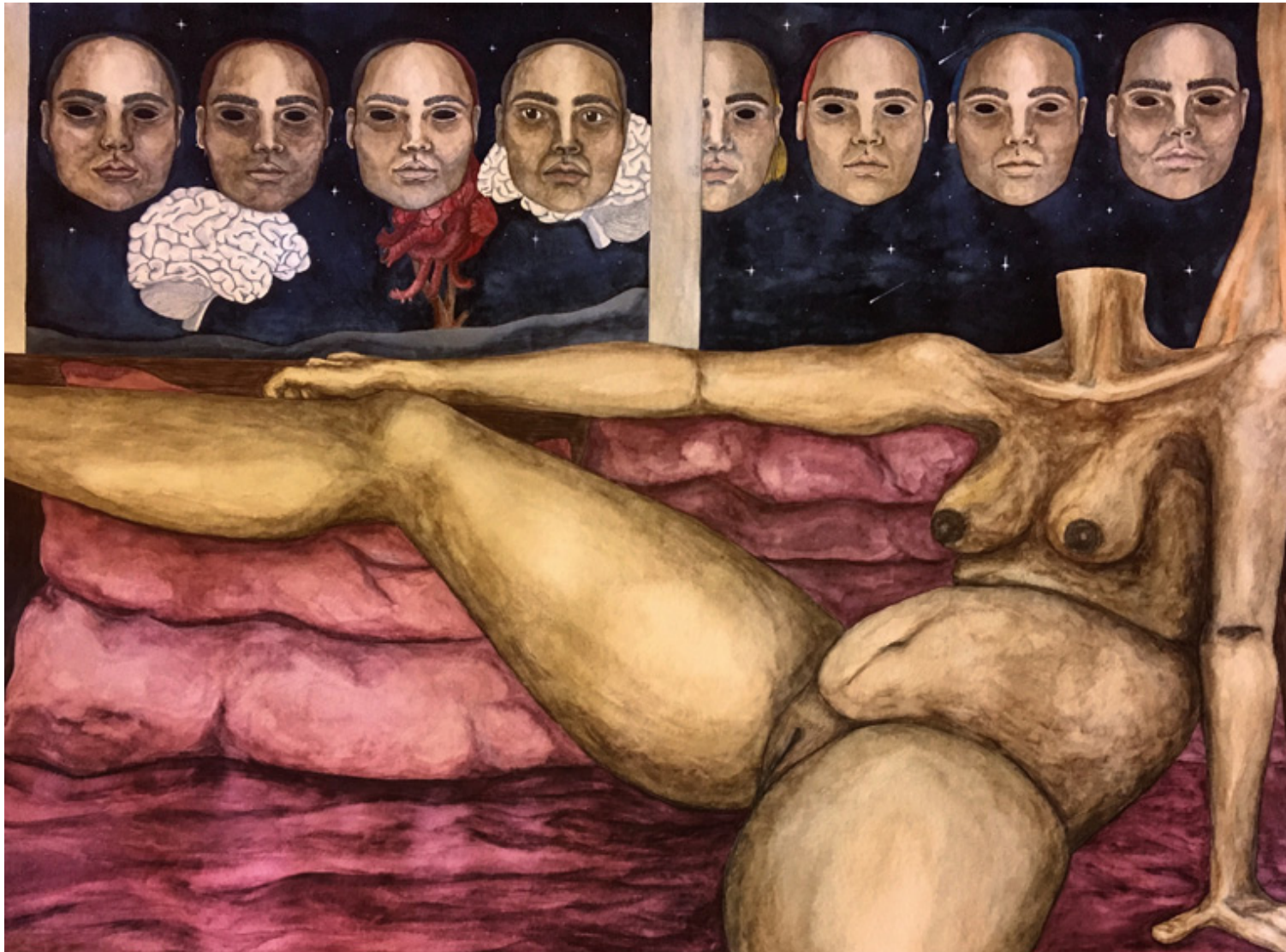


Sarah Naqvi in *Heroines Now*, overview at AKINCI, 2019 (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





Sarah Naqvi, *Safe Deposit*, 2018  
watercolour on paper, 48,26 x 35,56 cm



Sarah Naqvi, *Rituals of Scrutiny*, 2019  
watercolour on acid free handmade paper, 76,2x55,88 cm





Lungiswa Gqunta, *Feet under Fire*, 2017,  
HD Video, 14:54 min & *Sleeping Pools*, 2017, metal bed frame, led lights, perspex, petrol, water and ink, 160 x 180 x 35 cm,  
courtesy the artist, WHATIFTHEWORLD and AKINCI (photo: Peter Tijhuis)



*Sleeping Pools*, 2017, metal bed frame, led lights, perspex, petrol, water and ink, 160 x 180 x 35 cm, courtesy the artist, WHATIFTHEWORLD and AKINCI (photo: Peter Tijhuis)





*Feet under Fire*, 2017, HD Video, 14:54 min, courtesy the artist, WHATIFTHEWORLD and AKINCI

## 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 Kunsthaus 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.