

Gluklya

(Natalia Pershina–Yakimanskaya)

To those who have no time to play

Portfolio



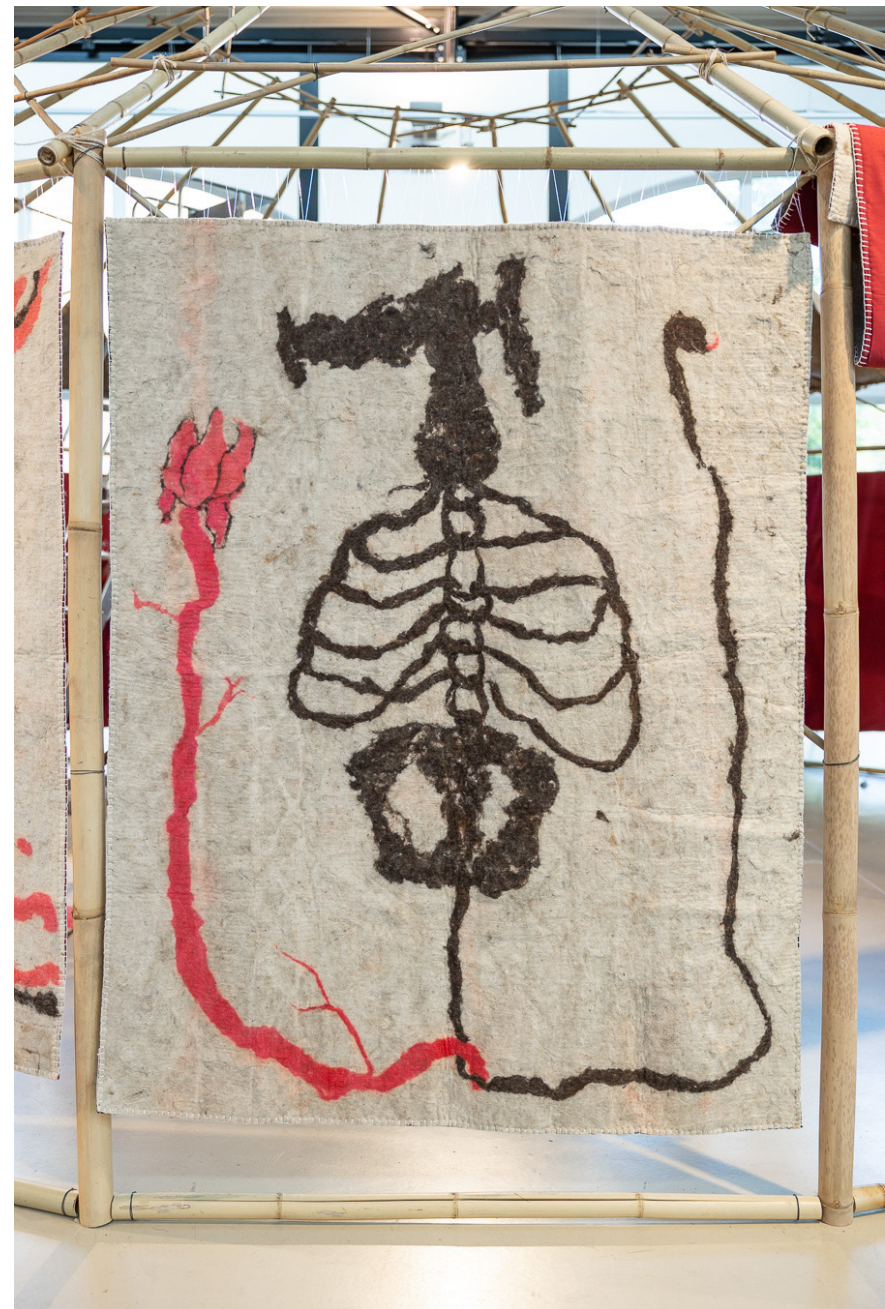
Antigone Update: Peace Queer May, work on paper, 2022

To those who have no time to play

Commissioned by Framer Framed, Amsterdam
Curated by Charles Esche

In collaboration with

Murad Zorava
Roger Cremers
Anna Bitkina
Samira
Liah Frank
Natalia Grezina
Vladimir Rannev
Marianne Koeman
Zayna Ayazbekova
Dinara Akylova
Anisa Ibrayeva
Benjamin Roth
Matras Platform
Moawya Alkhadra
Shepherd Camara
Nurlan Alymseitov
Kunduz Asanakunova
Shaiymkan Chylgobaeva
Saadat Aitalieva (BiSCA)
Gulmira Tursunbaeva
Rahat Bolotbek kyzy



Installation detail Red Yurt, 2022, photos by Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

About Gluklya

Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya (artist name Gluklya) lives and works in Amsterdam. Gluklya co-founded the artist collective *The Factory of Found Clothes* (FFC) in 1995 using conceptualized clothes as a tool to build a connection between art and everyday life and *Chto Delat* group, of which she has been a member since 2003.

She is considered as one of the pioneers of feminist performance after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. The performative approach still forms the basis of her practice today, though her works now encompasses a wide range of media and working methodologies including installations, sculptures, texts, videos, watercolors, staged performances, workshops with migrants and newcomers, performances-rituals, participation in political demonstrations, visual poetry and conceptual clothing.

Gluklya's oeuvre speaks of indignation and hope. With her projects she proposes playful ways to resist injustice and find empowerment. At the 56th Venice Biennale Gluklya presented forty-three *Clothes for Demonstration Against False Election Of Vladimir Putin* (2011 – 2015) in the exhibition *All the World's Futures*, curated by Okwui Enwezor. The installation documents hopes, dreams and traumas of people who went into the streets in 2011-15 to demonstrate against the oppressive government. From 2019 to 2022 in the context of her research *Two natures of Colonialism: Russian and European' / Lives and work of oppressed women*, Gluklya visited Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, and those experiences continue to have a strong influence on her work.

Her appearance as an artist is rooted in perestroika times, when the Soviet Union tried first to reform itself and finally collapsed in 1991. The following years of wild capitalism were corrupt and ultimately destructive, but they did harbour the fruitful delusion for artists that suddenly everything was possible. This delusion of liberty allowed for perspectives to open and for a new artistic and poetic language to shape utopian fantasies of real change.

Dialogues with other artists were equally significant and the subject of clothes became a core issue for her with the development of the *Factory of Found Clothes* (FFC) project in Saint Petersburg together with her fellow artist Tsaplya. The FFC developed a philosophy of clothes as artistic means, understanding the composition of human, body, dress, fabric as a way of building relations between human and non-human representatives.

The conceptual clothing that emerged from the FFC followed two main directions: one as an artistically personified object, or a sort of *Thing -in -Itself* that stood for possible relations and another as a tool to actually create relationships with communities outside and inside the art world in a way that might be comparable to 'meals' used in other participatory artistic projects. More recently, the relations between human and non-human spread to include chairs, puppets and specially constructed architectural spaces.

From 2012 on, Gluklya has been working on the project *The Utopian Unemployment Union* (UUU) uniting art, social science and progressive pedagogy. The project gives people from all kinds of social backgrounds the opportunity to develop their own statements about themselves and their position in the world through using the artist's method of embracing human *fragility*. This term the artist has developed over many years and is perhaps best described by Marina Vischmidt in [an interview for the "Untitled" Magazine](#):

"Factory of Found clothes (FFC) developed the logic of 'fragility' as subjectivity antagonistic to that which is the state of things – be that the repressive social and political climate of Russia or the reflexive futilities of international art scenes. With this negative-utopian, rather than affirmative-ironic version of the subject of participatory aesthetics, something akin to Wittgenstein's "the subject does not belong to the world, it is a border of the world", FFC's-approach puts an interesting swerve on the 'relational turn' as enunciated in Western art discourse."

The UUU method is always in collaboration and often involves creating temporary collectives that lead to collective writing and making. As an artist, Gluklya analyses the conflict between the inner world of a person and the political system, creating co-written scripts for her performances and Installations based on characters derived from the real stories. Before creating a work, she interviews people and uses the recordings as the basis for the fictional narrative or word-collages. In her most recent exhibition, this methodology led to the creation of the Matras Platform group and to a collective script for the performance called *Antigone Update*.

Gluklya's methodology though includes the works which need a solitude. Such important balance between collective approach she is considering as principle for her practice. The therapeutic effect of creation in the solitude gives the strength and vision to continue the collective work.

The most recent exhibition was called *To those who have no time to play* and took place in Framer Framed Amsterdam from Oct. 2022 to Jan 2023. It showed the results of research in Kyrgyzstan and the artists' different collaborations with migrants in Amsterdam. The research in Kyrgyzstan is particularly important at this time of renewed Russian imperialism as it directly addresses the historic and ongoing colonial exploitation by Russia of indigenous societies in Central Asia. As a result of the research, Gluklya is currently developing the Utopian Union of Bishkek – a strategy to engage the sewing workers of the city in a collaboration with artists under the working title *Sanatorium for Seamstresses*.

Gluklya continues to work on establishing a dialogue with newcomers and finding ways to help express the condition of migration and movement, the psychological effects of integration and inclusion policies and the possibility of collective action and creative work from those perceived to be on the margins by much of mainstream society.

See the exhibition *To those who have no time to play* at Framer Framed [here](#)

See an interview with Gluklya about her *Clothes for Demonstration (...)*, presented during the 56th Venice Biennale [here](#)

See an interview with Gluklya on her exhibition in the van Abbemuseum [here](#)

Click [here](#) for the text *To Those Who Can Imagine* by Ana Bitkina

Click [here](#) for a review of the exhibition *To those who have no time to play* by Artforum



Installation detail Red Yurt, 2022, photos by Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

Red Yurt



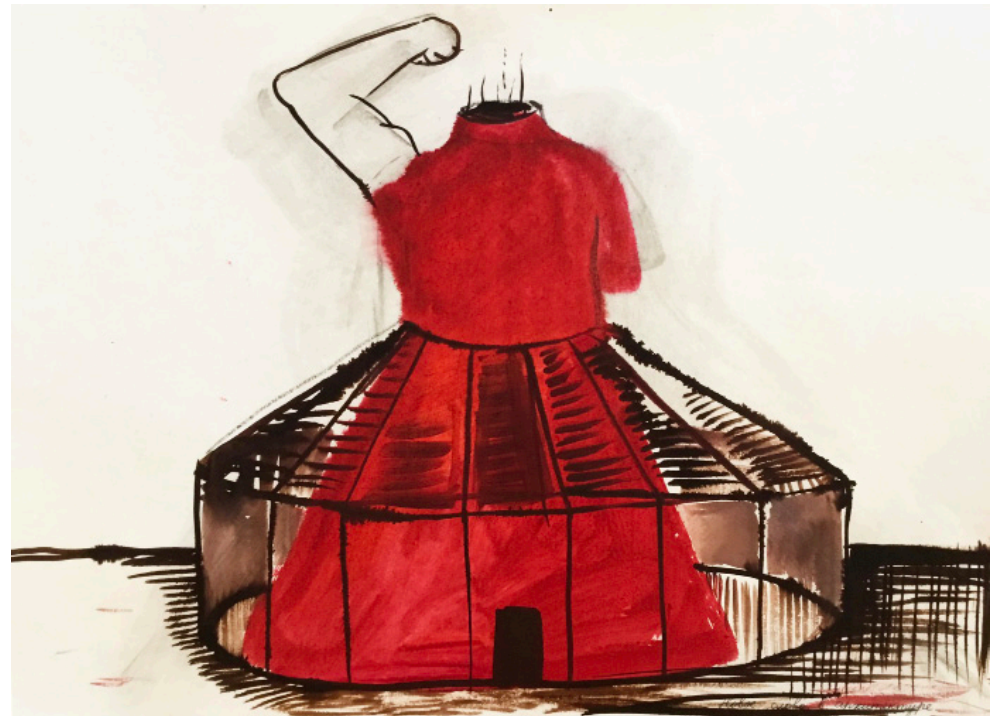
Red Yurt (Kyrgyzsan), 2022, bamboo, felt, plywood, 10 m. diameter x 3 m. high photo by Eva Broekema, Framed Framed

In 2020, I was invited to participate in the research laboratory Space 1520, organised by Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, which focused on Soviet and post-Soviet colonialism. I was at this point already concerned with the issue of exploitation of women working in textile and fashion industries. During my research with Space 1520, I discovered Kyrgyzstan as a country with one of the largest textile industries, sewing the garments for export mainly to Russia. So, I travelled there and finally saw the conditions of seamstresses with my own eyes. This profoundly changed my view of reality.

The title of the exhibition at Framer Framed *To those who have no time to play* came from my visit to the house of the seamstress Rahat, where I was shocked by her living conditions and realised that all the words and questions that might fall from my mouth will be futile in this context. I had a myriad of reactions: feelings of confusion and guilt, combined with the urge to try and do something. I made an effort and asked her: What were you playing in your childhood? Rahat answered that she played with stones.

The protective distance for human beings from becoming robots comes through play and humour. But it turns out that the game itself is a luxury that cannot be afforded by people who are overworked and cannot take time to reflect or even read a bedtime book to their children. The neoliberal structure of the market places the responsibility of the working day on the individual, there is no control to limit the working hours as it was during the Soviet era, where seamstresses were coming in at 8 am and leaving at 5 pm. Seamstresses become like machines, filled with concern for producing as much as possible, since it is the amount of production that determines the amount of money they will be paid. They are regularly tortured by overworking, often through the night, until their bodies become full of pain. Let me share a fragment of an interview with seamstress Dinara:

“Hard to recall good days. Every day is in a bad mood. You take a lot of work and work 18-20 hours at times to have it finished. Often, I work up until two or three in the morning. It is beneficial to the owner, inasmuch as his profits grow the more we work. Taxi expenses are taken from my pocket. And so, on almost every day. No time for recess. There’s a family to feed. It should be eight hours of work as a norm, but I have not ever even tried to. At a minimum it is 10 hours a day, but mostly 15-16 hours. It even happens to work 24 hours without sufficient sleep. After work I rush to lay down and sleep. On my day off I strive to replenish my energy sleeping.”



Problematizing Red Yurt, work on paper, 2022

The title of this space *Red Yurt* references not only the controversial Soviet Likbez (“liquidation of illiteracy”) campaign among women in Central Asia, but also the sacrifice of the women oppressed by the new wave of patriarchal orthodoxy, which came along with the freedom of Kyrgyzstan from Soviet power.¹ One example of this is in the tradition of bride-kidnapping, or *Ala kachuu* (meaning “to take a young woman and run away”). While the tradition was suppressed during Soviet rule, it has re-appeared in Kyrgyzstan’s search for a new/old identity after the collapse of the USSR.

A reflection and artistic digestion on this phenomenon of *becoming the nation* unfolds inside the *Red Yurt* in a video installation showing the performance of actress Gulmira Tursunbaeva, who plays the role of a TV host telling feminist fairy tales as the video cuts to scenes of dance and street performance. The stories in this film are based on my interviews with the Bishkek seamstresses, material from the human rights organisation Open Line and materials from the Moscow archive of female workers in the USSR.



Installation detail Red Yurt, 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed



Installation detail Red Yurt, 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed

The dark clothes and puppets together with the curtain inside the structure reference the terrifying symbol of bride-kidnapping: *koshogo*, a sheet used as a screen behind which rape takes place, leading to forced marriages. Outside, the yurt is decorated by the outcome of my workshops with Felt Art Studio, Issyk Kul, which I have visited during my research in Kyrgyzstan in 2021. The felt paintings displayed at Framer Framed have been produced in collaboration with the studio, based on my sketches and through their felt production method.

To speak of activism sounds confusing in this context of misery and despair, but I have approached my collaboration with the seamstresses in Kyrgyzstan as a way of processing the huge gap between us, and an attempt at building forms of support and sharing that might exist between myself and these women.

¹ Szálkai, Kinga. “The Soviet Union as a ‘Feminist Colonialist?’ The Women’s Question in Early Soviet Central Asia.” *Corvinus Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2019): pp. 4-14.

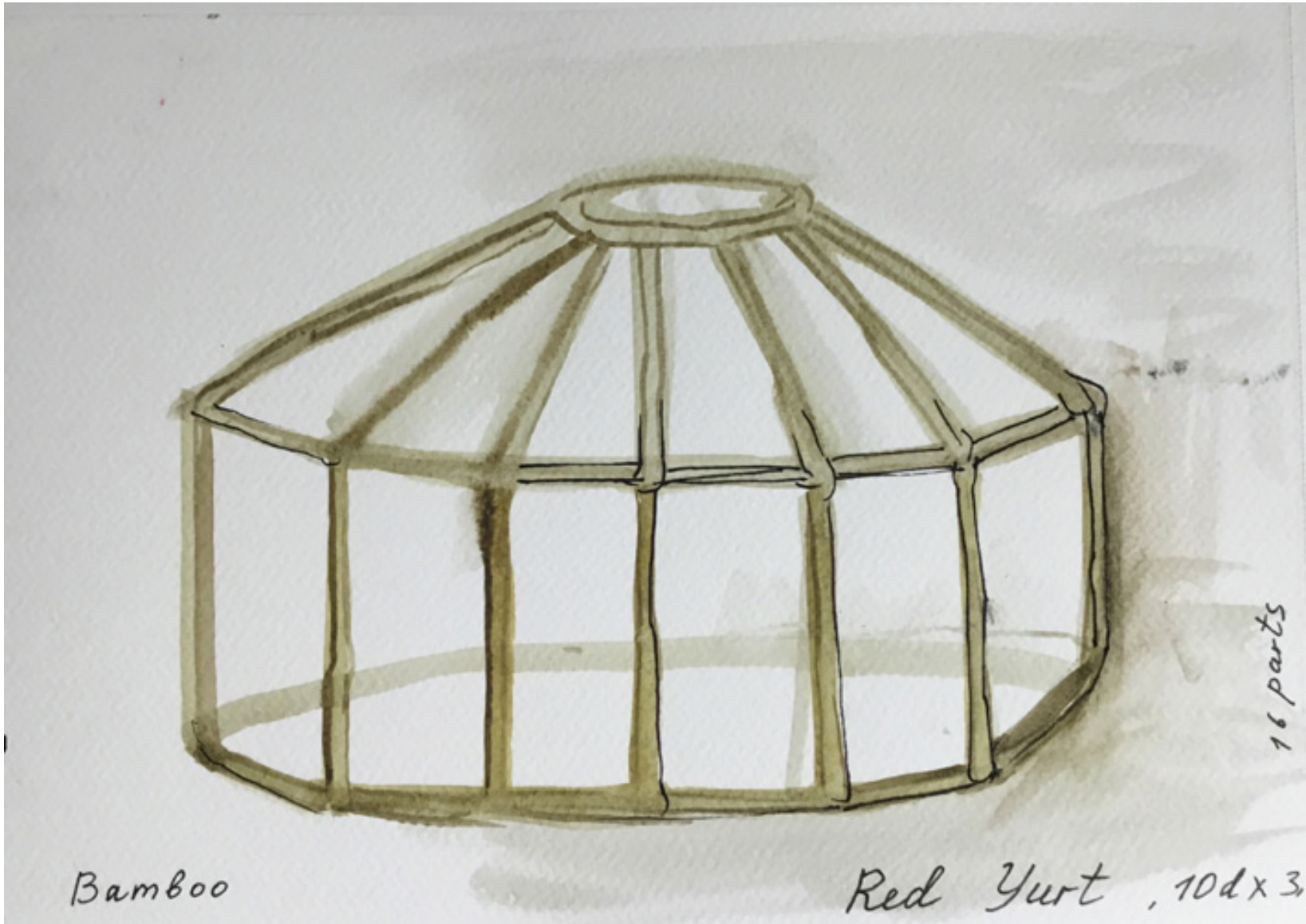


The video consists of the stories that Gluklya gathered from female sewing workers during her visits to Kyrgyzstan researching post-Soviet colonialism.

Film stills from video Gulmira's Fairytales, 2022, HD 16:9 Full colour with sound Stereo, 37:38 min. Dramatized by the actor Gulmira Tursunbaeva, edited by Nelly Erkin



Performance by Gulmira Tursunbaeva in Red Yurt, photo by Marlise Steeman, Framer Framed



Red Yurt Sketch, 2022, 10 m. diameter x 3 m. high



Red Yurt (Kyrgyzsan), 2022, bamboo, felt, plywood, 10 m. diameter x 3 m. high, photo by Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

Two Diaries Shelter



Shelter Two Diaries, 2022, bamboo, textile, wood, 4 m. diameter x 1,65 m. high, photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed

This space references the publication of the same name, which emerged as a collaboration with Kurdish activist and poet Murad Zorava. In 2017, I was renting a studio in one of the two towers of Bijlmerbajes, a former prison in Amsterdam-Zuid-Oost. The second tower was then being used by the government as an Asylum-Seekers-Center (AZC). My plan was to attempt a collaboration with the refugees staying there at the time, among whom was Murad.

Fragment from Murad's Diary, when he first arrived to the AZC in Bijlmerbajes:

“When in the room, something that is crucial to me attracted my attention. There was no pillow on the bed. Pillow... is crucial to me. When I was just 16, I was taken into custody for the first time and tortured a lot. There was no pillow in the room where they were keeping me after the torture. I lay down without a pillow for a few nights, but I couldn't get a wink of sleep. The reason for my lack of sleep surely wasn't the lack of a pillow, it was my fear from being beaten and becoming helpless... But it seemed as if that pillow had been a symbol of the hard, dark and horrible times... After this terrible experience I went through, I never again could fall asleep without a pillow. To top it all, I always used to use two pillows when sleeping.

I turned to the official and said, “I need a pillow.” And the official responded, saying to me, “I can't give you a pillow today because we are at the end of the shift, and the attendant responsible for pillows and mattresses has gone home. But tomorrow come to the reception desk and we will give you one.” And after this response he left the room and went back to his work.”

In and around this shelter you will see it flying pillows and lying pillows, pillows of hope and sorrow, humor and fear and some come from the game *Language of Fragility*.



Installation detail Shelter Two Diaries, 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, Framers Framed



Gluklya, work on paper from *Two Diaries: Gluklya & Murat* (2022) from series in *Bijlmer Bajes*, 2017 (Prison corridor)

Fragment from Gluklya's Diary:

“Slowly I am coming to understand that the project should revolve around the topic of language. What could be the concept of a language that opposes the verticals of power, money, and the Cartesian vision of the world? I think that creating ‘our language’ might embrace the phonetic pronunciations of words in our different languages. Imagine, it is a universal language somewhere, before the Babylon tower. Mistakes and confusion are definitely a part of this game, together with the humour.

For example, the Dutch word dom (stupid) to the Russian ear sounds like the word for house or home.”

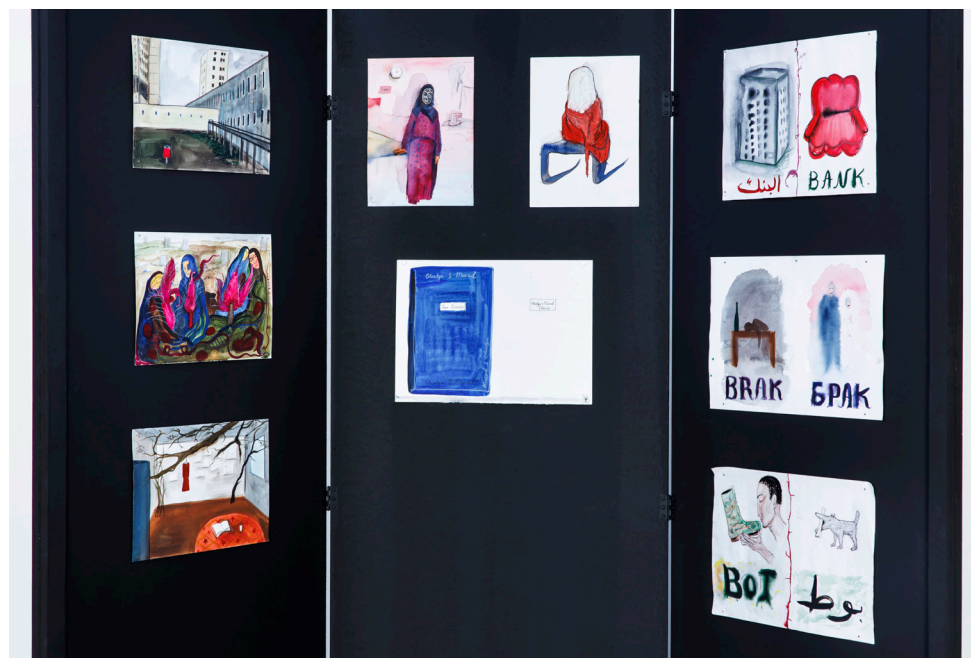
We started to draw pictures together with refugees, and compare words from their languages to words in Dutch, English, Russian. It was surprising how engaged and joyfully absorbed they became doing that. And, how it helped us to become friends. I believe that the game of the *Language of Fragility* that started as an attempt to understand the inner world of refugees, is in fact an attempt of transition or, more precisely, representation of complex and sometimes painful relationship of a refugee with the language of their destination.

During my project in Bijlmerbajes, I was confronted with eye-opening questions: What does equality mean, when it is equality between a refugee and an artist, between – so to speak – trained artists and the person who did not study art at all? Can we imagine rethinking and abandoning the idea of enlightenment? How to deal with the notion of Care without falling into patronization, but soberly stay within the frame of Radical Care?

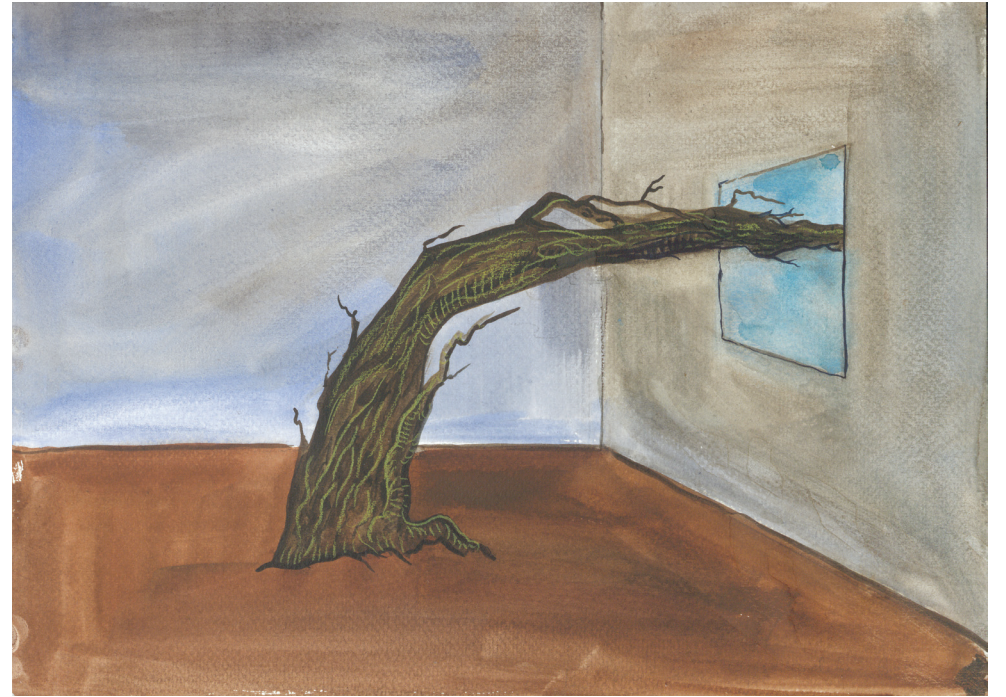
At the start of my research, I visited AZC meetings. These were some of the regular lessons provided to the refugees to teach them about the social structure of the Netherlands and what they could expect here. Nothing was said during those meetings about the culture and art, let alone contemporary art. This was surprising to me.

It felt as if these people were held not equal to us, westerners, as many westerners believe they cannot survive without a breath of cultural or artistic air. Another thing that struck me was the fact of placing people in the environment of a prison: bars on windows, no locks form inside the rooms, no actual privacy, and unpleasant communal places.

Being haunted by this image of Murad in the cell of former prison, I started to think about what exactly I could do in this situation. During one of the workshops, I proposed participants to write a diary, and Murad accepted this idea. I am very happy to hope that the project had a practical outcome in reality. Murad believes that work with publishing of his Diary helped him to settle down in Amsterdam, in a flat in central part of the town – near the park after all.



Gluklya, work on paper from *Two Diaries: Gluklya & Murat (2022)* from series in *Bijlmer Bajes*, 2017, photo by Eva Broekema, *Framer Framed*



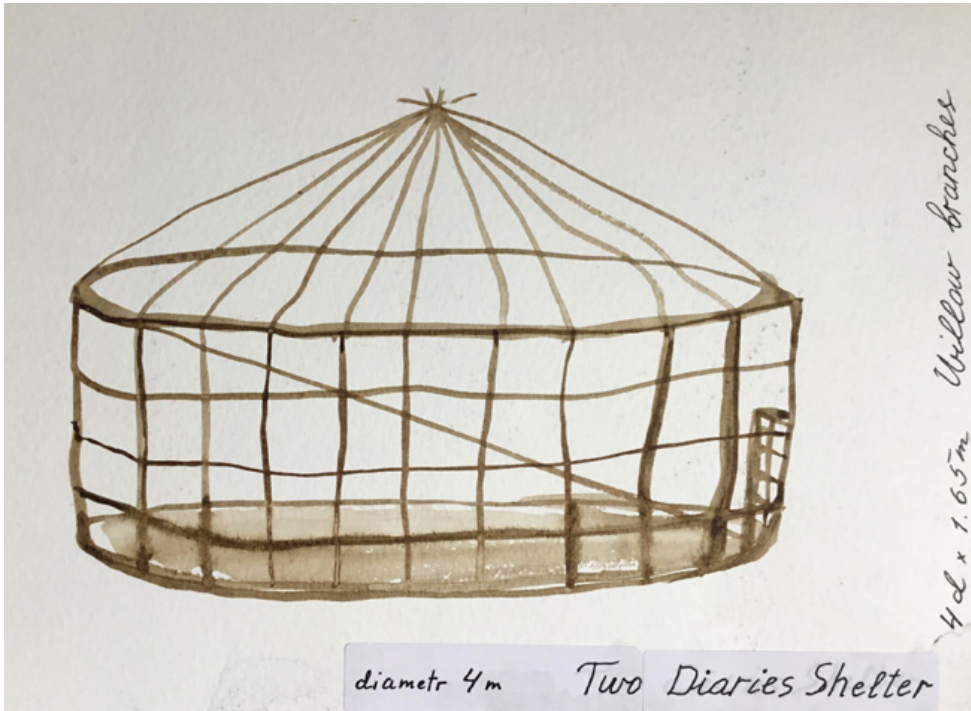
Gluklya, work on paper from *Two Diaries: Gluklya & Murat* (2022) from series in *Bijlmer Bajes*, 2017



Gluklya, work on paper from *Two Diaries: Gluklya & Murat* (2022) from series in *Bijlmer Bajes*, 2017



Installation detail Shelter Two Diaries, 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, Framers Framed



Two Diaries Sketch without roof, 2022, 4 m. diamter x 1,65 m. high



Two Diaries Sketch with heartroof, 2022, 4 m. diamter x 1,65 m. high

Antigone Update



Antigone Update, 2022, wood, OSB, textile, approx. 12 m x 65 m, photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed

The idea to create this performance in the context of the long-term project Matras Platform came to me after the start of the war in Ukraine. Since 2012 I was busy developing the concept of a theatre for migrants, where professional and nonprofessional actors might blend their energies to create a performance together. During the pandemic, I came to realise the necessity to call for collaborators living here in Amsterdam, and after my first meeting with Khalid Jone from We Are Here (a refugee action collective), the title came: Matras Platform. It derived from our sessions of writing questions on mattresses left out on the streets, directed to the city as an open environment for exploring a new way of communication. We started to meet regularly at my studio, talking on different topics, developing trust and trying to understand what kind of performance we should produce which might unite us despite gender, status and experience differences.



Installation detail Antigone Update: Chorus I, photo by Maarten Nauw, Framers Framed



Antigone Update: Chorus I (foreground), 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, Framers Framed

But 24 February 2022 changed everything. Following the outbreak of the war, I proposed to read the tragedy *Antigone* written by Sophocles. The core Matras Platform group accepted it, and we agreed that I would write the script to then be debated and developed from meeting to meeting. The trust necessary in this process was facilitated by amazing Marianne Koeman. The war also brought an old friend again: I started to correspond with composer Vladimir Rannev and proposed him to write music to our performance, introducing him to my dream of combining singing dresses and live performance together. Through our communication, we developed the structure of this multimedia installation combining soft- and hardware programming with the synchronization of sound and light.

The choice to work with the classic play came largely as a result of thinking how to show the enormous gap between Europe and the rest of the world. Ancient Greek mythology is ruling the game here, penetrating our cultural environment with codes that only people who grew up with them can understand, leaving the newcomers outside the magic circle. Our sessions in studio became like a school of sharing and unlearning these codes together.



Installation detail Antigone Update: Chorus I, photo by Maarten Nauw, Framers Framed



Installation detail Antigone Update: Chorus II, photo by Maarten Nauw, Framers Framed

The first thing that struck me when I was reading *Antigone* in Russian was Antigone's double attempt to bury her brother. My second thought was the realisation of the absence of enslaved people in the story, and another intriguing thing was the doubt of the sentry, who after capturing Antigone said:

“But here is what is very strange: I felt sadness coming over me”

Which showed his unsureness in what he had done.

After reading several versions of *Antigone*, I was inspired mostly by Bonnie Honig *Antigone Interrupted*, who interestingly speculates around the topic of the double burial and the role of Ismene, Antigone's sister.¹



Installation detail Antigone Update: Chorus II, 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed



Antigone II (brown), work on paper, 2022

In my script, I dramatized the preposition that the sisters did the heroic deed together, highlighting the topic of a sororal politics, feminist sisterhood and the problems with self-organisation among women. The doubt of the sentry is emphasised in the performance by splitting the character between the singing dress on the stage and a live performance by The general structure of *Antigone Update* remains from the classic tragedy, but with a twist of protagonists who sing from the stage and a chorus who speaks from our times.²

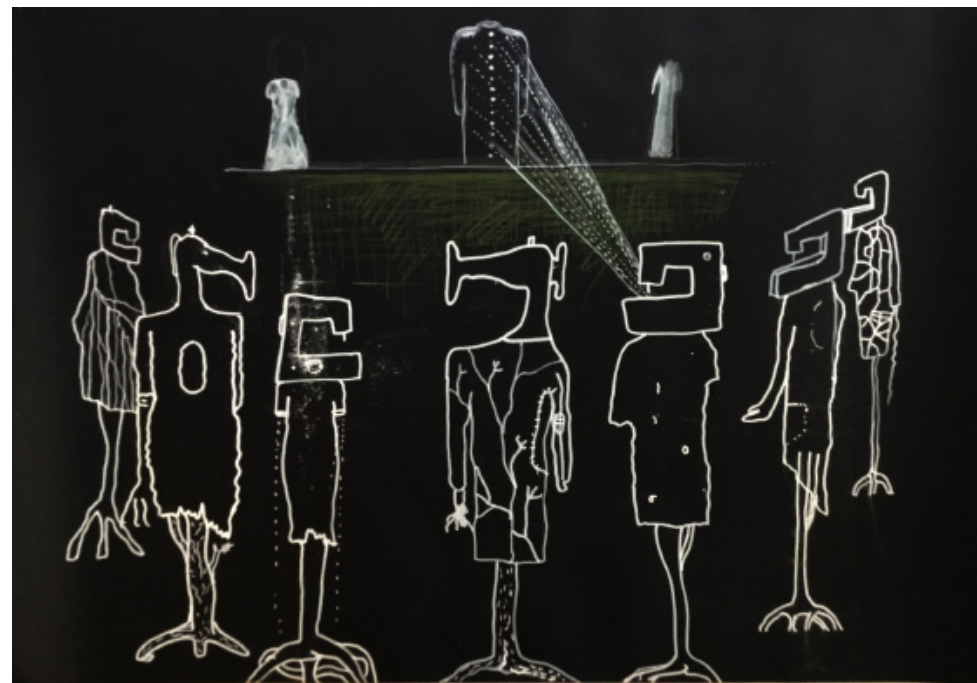
The chorus consists of voices of members of Matras Platform: Marianne Koeman, Natalia Grezina, Shepherd Camara, Anna Bitkina, Elena Melkumova and Liah Frank. Through the rehearsal we were learning from each other, becoming a sort of chosen family for this period of time, without the obligation to be devoted to the project forever.



Installation detail *Antigone Update*, 2022, photo by Eva Broekema, *Framer Framed*

1 “Sophocles’ *Antigone* is a touchstone in democratic, feminist and legal theory, and possibly the most commented upon play in the history of philosophy and political theory. Bonnie Honig’s rereading of it therefore involves intervening in a host of literatures and unsettling many of their governing assumptions. Exploring the power of *Antigone* in a variety of political, cultural, and theoretical settings, Honig identifies the ‘Antigone-effect’ – which moves those who enlist *Antigone* for their politics from activism into lamentation. She argues that Antigone’s own lamentations can be seen not just as signs of dissidence but rather as markers of a rival world view with its own sovereignty and vitality. Honig argues that the play does not offer simply a model for resistance politics or ‘equal dignity in death’, but a more positive politics of counter-sovereignty and solidarity which emphasizes equality in life.” (Simon Critchley, *The New School for Social Research*).

2 *Antigone Update* draws on and re-uses text from the following works: *Sophocles and Other Tragedies* by Oliver Taplin, *Antigone* by Hollie McNish, *The Burial of Thebes* by Seamus Heaney, *Antigone Interrupted* by Bonnie Honig.



Antigone IV (black), work on paper, 2022

Antigone Update opening performance

Watch a short version of the performance [here](#), filmed by Ruben Hamelink



Antigone Update opening performance with Shepherd Camara, Liah Frank and Georgia Boddez, photo by Marlise Steeman, Frammer Framed



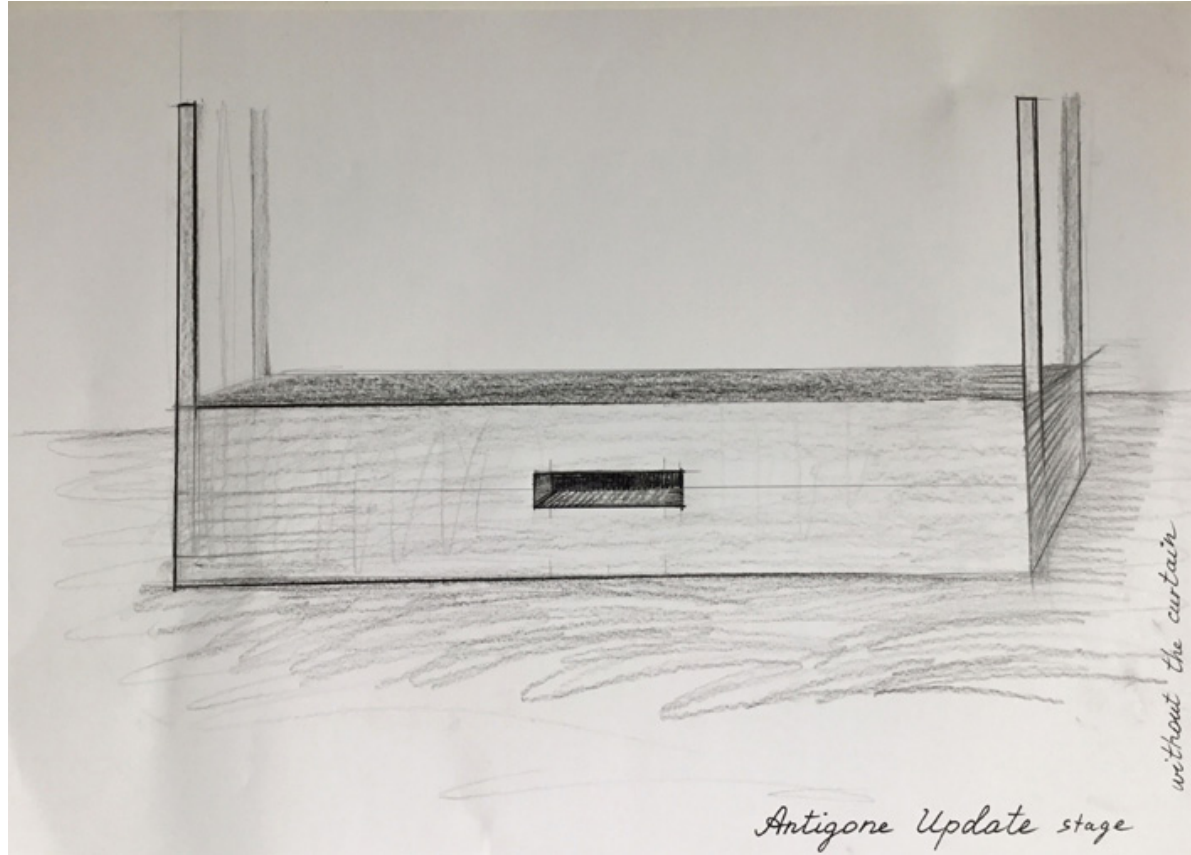
Antigone Update opening performance with Shepherd Camara, Liah Frank and Georgia Boddez, photo by Marlise Steeman, Framer Framed



Installation detail *Antigone Update, Chorus I*, photo Maarten Nauw, *Framer Framed*



Antigone I (gray), work on paper, 2022



Antigone Update Stage Sketch, 2022, approx. 12 m x 65 m

Melting Snow Ball



Melting Snow Ball, Protest 1 May, 2022, PVC-tubes, textile, 6 m. diameter x 3 m. high, photo by Eva Broekema, Framed Framed

The installation consists of three videos of demonstrations unfolding in the streets of St. Petersburg on 1 May 2017, 2018 and 2019. This demonstration had happened almost every year since Soviet times. Now it has stopped, an unbearable and tragic reality.

The title comes from the playful winter fight when children are throwing snowballs at each other. In the context of protest, the snowball might be thought of as a precarious relative of the revolutionary cobblestone – as the Russian protest is fragile. 1 May – *the day of Labour and Spring* – became an important possibility for the artistic community of St. Petersburg to express political protest. This day was only one during which it could be imaginable to unite progressive critical thinkers with other citizens. Year after year it became a sort of protest art festival. More and more people were joining. The imagination of artists brought unique aesthetics to the expression of indignation.

We began to film the 1 May demonstrations in 2017, inviting Nastya Molchanova as a camera person. In preparation, I invited people for a workshop at my studio in St. Petersburg to create costumes to wear during the protest and banners using their clothes (I had conceived of these banners, *clothes on conceptual sticks*, during the first 1 May protest in 2012). We decided to name the demonstration *Column of Fragility*. Our costumes took the form of green cucumbers, referencing the young mind as a reflection on the slow process of raising critical voices among the Russian population. Already in the first 10 minutes of our appearance at the square where the march would depart from, the police came and demanded to make a hole in the costumes, explaining that it was forbidden to cover one's face during the demonstration. We subordinated to the demand with regret.

In 2018, I was invited by the *Union of Convalescents* to join the demonstration together and filmed it myself.¹ The debate revolved around the topic of forced hospitalization in mental institutions and stigmatization of people with diagnoses of mental illness. Covering both problems: the topic of protestors being sent to psychiatric hospitals to shut them up and the orthodox condition of the post-Soviet countries regarding correct diagnoses, horrible treatment of patients and the lack of the support for institutions of care in general.



*Installation detail Melting Snow Ball,
video 1st May Protest Demonstration,
photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed*

2019 brought the topic of police corruption, abuse of power, cruel torture of prisoners and extreme work conditions, especially for migrants. I had decided to film with two cameras; while I focused on people, Vanya Shatravin Dostov would film the police. But this year we faced a new obstacle; the police had installed a check point, like in an airport, and investigated every item of our protest banners. They asked, why is this written here? What does it mean? Why are they looking so ugly and so on... And then they confiscated it all and threw it in the garbage! After the demonstration, we came back and took what had survived.

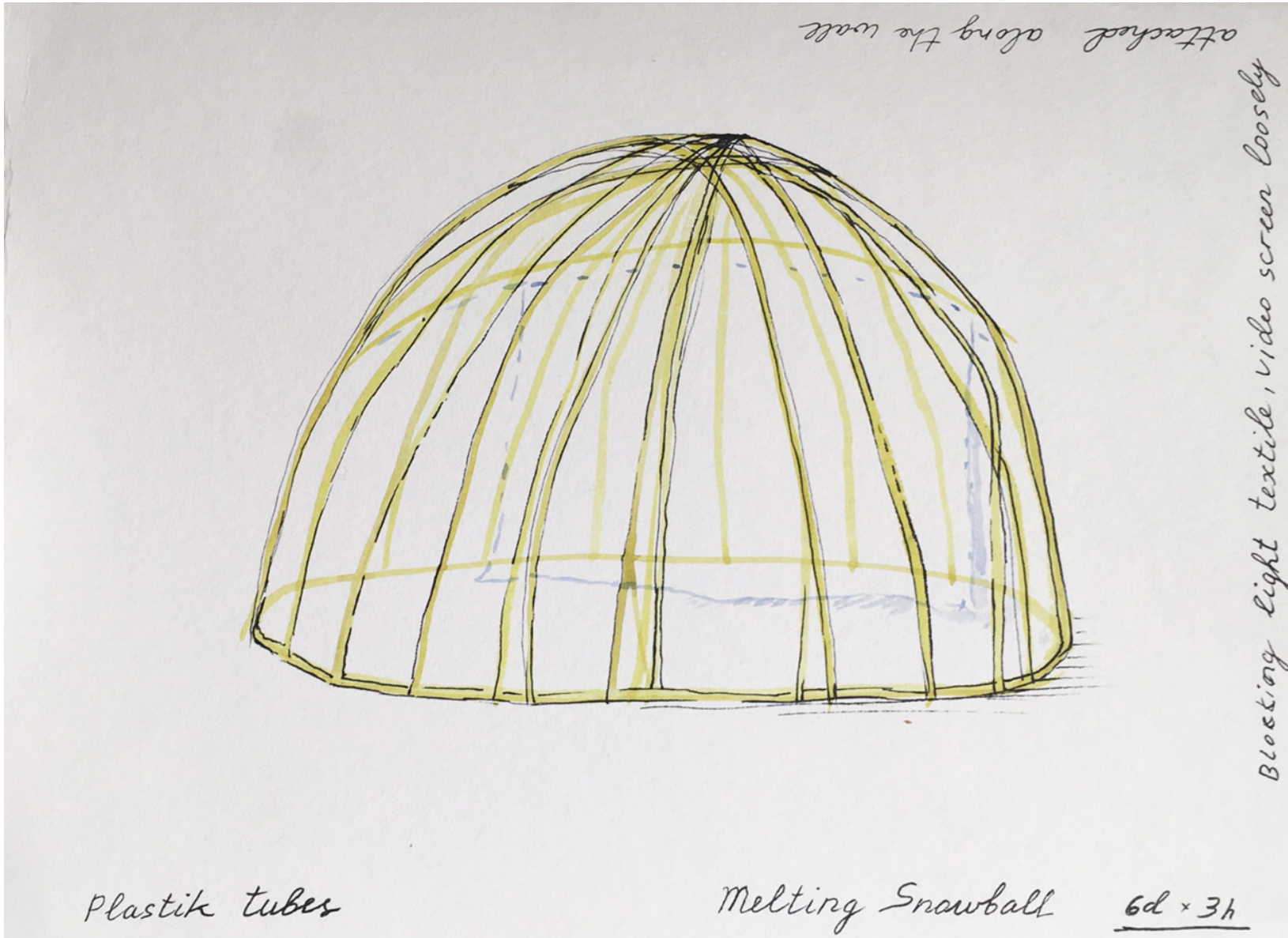
I do not know when or if the 1 May demonstrations will ever be possible again. Most of the artistic groups and individuals seen in the videos – my dear friends – are now facing investigations by the Russian government for their political position, with many forced to evacuate the country.

¹ *Union of Convalescents* consisted of: Natalia Nikulenkova, Egor Safronov and Pavel Mitenko.



Three videos of demonstrations unfolding in the streets of St. Petersburg on 1 May 2017, 2018 and 2019. This demonstration had happened almost every year since Soviet times. Now it has stopped. 1 May – *the day of Labour and Spring* – became an important possibility for the artistic community of St. Petersburg to express political protest. This day was only one during which it could be imaginable to unite progressive critical thinkers with other citizens. Year after year it became a sort of protest art festival. More and more people were joining. The imagination of artists brought unique aesthetics to the expression of indignation.

1 May (2017, 2018, 2019), 2022, HD 16:9 Full color with sound Stereo, 02:07:02 hours



Melting Snowball Sketch, 2022, 6 m. diameter x 3 m. high

Who has no time to play?

A text by curator Charles Esche on the exhibition *To those who have no time to play*

In western European states like the Netherlands, the past thirty years appear to have been ones of relative ease. Despite occasional economic setbacks, the lives of many individual citizens have been conducted within a secure, supportive environment in which the means of survival was largely guaranteed. Even more fortunately, the system offered the promise of personal fulfilment of desires as a reasonable life horizon. While the dominance of the neoliberal political consensus increasingly privileged the owners of capital, its citizen-consumers could take comfort from a sense that representative democracy and the rule of law would probably avoid extreme social division or brutal economic exploitation. The decades either side of the millennium harvested the fruits of victory for those who had won the Cold War and it appeared that any significant attempts to return to oligarchic rule or the demonisation of minorities could be safely ruled out across western Europe.

Writing this in the summer of 2022, much of the social and economic architecture that maintained that 30-year-old system still feels to be in place. And yet... it also seems unremarkable to suggest that the disintegration of that liberal system is underway and will happen faster than anticipated even a year ago. The questions citizens of the Netherlands or indeed the European Union are faced with today are not so much how to retain what was won but how to respond to what comes next, both collectively (as a society) and as prec(ar)ious individuals. There are probably still a limited number of choices open to western societies, though the range is narrowing. One way to approach the future, could arguably be to look at societies where the loss or decay of a supportive social contract is already much further advanced. European citizens could look at what care and welfare; protest and reform; communality and individuality; tradition and spirit mean for people that did not benefit from the relative ease common in western Europe in the past in order to start planning how to adapt.

The problem with that approach is that it ignores western European history and its convoluted present. From the moment of colonial and imperial expansion, Europe became entangled with its others in ways far too messy to ignore. Indeed, despite valiant attempts to build a false cultural border wall between enlightened modern European values and the dark side of colonial exploitation, the voices of the colonized would not be silenced.

In a system based on economic engagement, trying to impose a moral or cultural separation was doomed to fail. Each new 21st century catastrophe only reconfirms the vitality of the entanglements and the dependency of the modern-colonial system on its others. The relative ease that Dutch citizens might have experienced in the 1990s and 2000s, was built on a whole set of destructive structures that reached right across the globe and were never likely to be sustainable, let alone socially just or ethically tolerable, over the longer term. It is precisely in the middle of this knot of past and present that Gluklya's artworks enter the fray. What Gluklya's work shows is not only empathy for that difficult truth, but how art offers a way to process the trials of global contemporary life and imagine a future that accommodates to reduced material security without despair.

To those who have no time to play is structured around four stories drawn from the artist's own experiences. Each narrative is represented by its own form of architecture and mode of reception. As someone looking at the exhibition, you are asked to perform different roles during your time there. You become a reader, a viewer, a listener, an emotional participant, an outsider caught in the midst of a protest, a collective presence in a chorus of sewing machines or any number of other roles you can define for yourself. There is a beauty in how the exhibition unfolds and how your attention is called to other people's struggles that ask to become part of your own, if only for a little while.

Two Yurts

There are two yurt-like structures, a dome, and a stage on which there will also be occasional live performances. These are supplemented at intervals with wooden dividing screens on which the artist's drawings serve as a kind of visual commentary or guide to the exhibition as a whole. Each structure houses a different social and emotional geography. The smallest is an intimate space to read the two parallel diaries written by Gluklya and Murad, a Kurdish activist and poet looking for protection in the Netherlands. They met while Gluklya had the opportunity through a commission by the public art agency TAAK to rent a studio in a building where an asylum-seekers centre was established. This building was in fact a disused prison called Bijmerbajes a few kilometres from Framer Framed. The *Two Diaries* broadly cover the same period in 2017 and touch each other in different places while keeping two quite distinct experiences of migration, settlement and family. The environment in which you are encouraged to read the book is inspired by central Asian yurts as a way to displace both Gluklya and Murad's own stories and entangle them with others both near and far. The stories in the book as well as the drawings circling outside the yurt seem to speak about how to build a precarious understanding across cultures, one always threatened with collapse or the return of misunderstanding in a way that beautifully mirrors the experience of migration and resettling itself.

Gluklya calls the larger yurt in this exhibition the *Red Yurt*, in reference to the Soviet emancipatory struggle and the ambivalent impact it had on its many different territories. The yurt form here is more directly associated with its origins as it introduces stories and artworks from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. It is perhaps useful to know that of all the Central Asian republics that emerged since the end of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan has been the least authoritarian and most subject to influence by the citizens of the state. These democratic freedoms have also led to a poor economic record and consistently poor working conditions. The struggles of the Kyrgyz women in particular are what animates the *Red Yurt*.

On the outside, a red flower is held aloft by felt compositions of bodily organs intermingled with the organic forms of nature. The felt drawings were produced together with women textile workers from the Felt Art Studio, Issyk-Kul. The flower has no head but instead a hand held up in protest as a symbol of the rebellious dreams of the women, while the red tulip sown onto some of the clothes was the symbol of the successful 2005 Tulip Revolution. This outer shell shapes the interior, where stories Gluklya gathered during her visits to Kyrgyzstan researching post-soviet colonialism are dramatized by the actor Gulmira Tursunbaeva. The stories mix accounts of life in Bishkek told to Gluklya by Samira, a seamstress the artist came to know particularly well, and other women with older tales from the Soviet past, when socialist emancipation clashed with local patriarchy and the traditional oppression of women. Like all the other textile workers, Samira does not live in a yurt but works under the harsh conditions of domestic production in Soviet-built apartment blocks in the capital city. Her language is a mix of Kyrgyz and Russian, meaning that Gluklya could often understand words or half sentences in her stories, while needing the rest translated for her. This impression of listening to something between music and language finds its way onto the interior walls. Russian for Gluklya is both familiar and a constant reminder of the presence of a European imperial occupier in the heart of Central Asia. In this way the entanglements of the past are shown to partly shape present conditions, while leaving room for productive misunderstandings to emerge and older mythologies to retake their place in people's lives.

Melting Snowball

In a third space – a white dome that Gluklya named a *Melting Snowball*, a precarious relative of the revolutionary cobblestone – clothes are propped up around the base. Clothes are a returning motive in Gluklya’s work and these ones were worn by people who participated in the May protests in Russia from 2015-19. Inside, films show scenes from various 1st May (Labour Day) protests in St. Petersburg up to the year it was made illegal. On one textile, the words Queer-Peace-May appear, words that are also banned in Putin’s Russia today. The three videos surround you as though you have been unknowingly caught up in the middle of the demonstration. The clothes animate the walls of the dome and carry the figures in the videos out into the Amsterdam gallery and beyond. In this way then and now, here and there become confused. At the time of writing, this is even more poignant as many of Gluklya’s friends in St. Petersburg have had to leave the city for exile as the attack on Ukraine becomes ever more costly and destructive.

The final element is not closed on itself but a stage that opens out to the room. On the stage eight figures sing in turn in a new version of the classical Greek play *Antigone*. Keeping the structure of the ancient tragedy, *Antigone Update* features a chorus spread out among the actual visitors. In this new version, the protagonists sing as ghosts from the past and the chorus speaks from our times. The script has been developed in an experimental collaboration that Gluklya proposed to the Matras Platform, an informal group of migrants and travelers from around the world who are living in Amsterdam. The play follows most of the plot of the original *Antigone*, though changed in important ways such as the fact that both sisters plot to bury their brother together. As Gluklya explains: “Antigone and Ismene are doing the act of burial together as opposed to the individual act of the heroic deed and romanticised loneliness of the single hero.”

One innovation in the update concerns the Chorus, which is split into two parts. The twelve dressed sculptures with sewing machine heads stand with the public, bringing the visitors into the action; a second chorus is sometimes present in real life and its script is based on comments and responses from the Matras Platform to the plot of *Antigone*.

The story concludes with the chorus questioning the meaning of the play but also demanding that it ends not in redemption or reconciliation but in simple, unending tragedy. “All is back, all is back, all is back” they shout in unison at the end, accepting fate and the cycle of events as a way to confront the cruelty of modern propaganda and progress that raise hopes only to crush them again.

Although tragic returns and the social conditions in Bishkek, St.Petersburg or ancient Thebes might seem a long way from the contemporary Dutch social imagination, this exhibition brings them squarely into focus. This is achieved through the intimacy and ambiguousness that art can access to create emotion and understanding out of raw material. Gluklya’s works rarely fail to elicit empathy for their subjects and they regularly short-circuit the distance between the old, colonial west and east that media and political analysts still strive hard to maintain. Simply by bringing different locations in dialogue through art already emphasizes connections and relations, but the exhibition does more than this. It is not simply a report from elsewhere, but a clear statement of interdependency and the need to share the care that has been limited to the chosen few. In the multiple disasters looming on the horizon – the climate collapse, extreme social inequality, the threat and actuality of war – there is little sense in defining a here and a there. The realization that might be at the heart of this exhibition is that forced migration, economic globalization, western comfort and the abuse of power all walk hand-in-hand, and that mitigating one can only be achieved by reordering the value systems of them all. To understand where this goes, we perhaps need to return to the title of the exhibition. *To those who have no time to play* appears at first glance to be a gesture of recognition of people who are not able to come to see this exhibition at all; a call to take note and remember them. But what if that is not its only intention? What if the people being addressed are precisely the people in this room; the one writing this text? What if we are the ones with no time to play, the docile subjects of Creon, following painstakingly the laws of apparently secure citizen-consumers in a rigid, careless Amsterdam?

To conclude with some optimism, I would like to quote what Murad writes towards the end of his contribution to the *Two Diaries*:

“We are like a summary of the marginalised of this world. I am not stating this from an arabesque sensibility or because of depression. I hate the literature of victimhood. Mine is an objective reading of reality... These people are running from the governance of those who cannot tolerate differences and who want freedoms only for themselves and at the expense of their desires. The reason they are here is to be as far as possible from the bigoted herds organised by these regressive governments and their dark worlds. It is not just running away to be safe. Coming here is a struggle and insistence for existence. And I think coming here carries with it the hope to return home one day stronger, having cultivated more freedom for those who are forced to migrate for political reasons. This is why to understand and to be understood is not that difficult. The sharing and solidarity between so many from different geographies and cultures gives one strength. If we, the marginalised – meaning those alienated because of their opinions, beliefs, ethnicity or sexual orientation – stand upright, grow our solidarity and bring our resistances from all over the world together, what a beautiful world this would be!”

The exhibition leaves me with just one last question. How can you and I, dear visitor and reader, join Gluklya, Murad, Samira, Antigone, the 1st May protestors and all the rest to find the long-term solidarity and resistance that will be necessary to become part of that beautiful world? I hope we can find an answer together before it really is too late.



Red Yurt, Antigone Update, 2022, overview photo by Eva Broekema, Framer Framed

Biography

Work by Gluklya has been exhibited in numerous group shows as well as solo shows, such as : **To those who have no time to play**, Framer Framed, Amsterdam, NL, curated by Charles Esche; **'Clothes for Demonstration Against False Election Of Vladimir Putin (2011 – 2015)'**, Fashion Show, GLUKSMAN, IR; **They are among Us**, DENANZIATION, ACC Galerie Weimar, DE; **Propaganda Flowers**, Botanical Revolution, Nest Den-Haag (2021-22) NL; **Monument to Modern Slavery**, disturbance: witch, ZAK Center for Contemporary Art, Berlin, DE (2020); **Corona Diary**, Hunger, AKINCI, NL; **Care about the Sun**, Cristal Clear, Pera Museum, Istanbul (2021) TR; Fotogalleriet, Oslo, NO (2019); Circus Truth BOZAR, Brussels, BE (2019); Intercultural Museum Oslo, NO (2019); **Carnival of the Oppressed Feelings** joining KARNEVALET, Oslo, NO (2019); Extra City, Antwerp, BE (2019); **Carnival of the Oppressed Feelings** in Positions 4, curated by Charles Esche, Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, NL (2018-19); Behind the Carnival, AKINCI, Amsterdam, NL; Manifesta, Palermo, IT (2018); Garage Moskow, RU (2018); Pitzer College Art Galleries, Claremont, CA, USA (2018); The Return Of Memory, Manchester's Home, Manchester, UK (2017); dis/order, art and activism in Russia since 2000, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, DE (2017); A Romance with Revolution, ACC Galerie Weimar and Pushkinskaya-10, St. Petersburg, DE/RU (2017); Disturbance, Kunsthalle der Sparkasse, Leipzig, DE (2017); Hero Mother, Berlin, DE (2016); Debates on Division, Creative Time Summit, Lincoln Theater, Washington DC, 2016; Universal Hospitality, Vienna, AU (2016); Feminism is Politics, Pratt Institute, New York, USA (2016); **Debates on Division: When the Private Becomes Public**, Manifesta 10, Public Program, St. Petersburg, RU (2014); Dump Dreams, Shedhalle Zurich, CH (2013); Utopian Unions, MMOMA, Moscow, RU (2013); Reflecting Fashion, MUMOK Vienna, AU (2013), Wings of Migrants, AKINCI, Amsterdam, NL (2012).

Gluklya's work is part of many museum and private collections, including the collection of Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, NL; Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi; Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, NL; Victoria and Albert Museum London UK; Moscow House of Photography, RU; Oslo Contemporary Art Museum, NO; Zimmerly Collection, USA; Mark Suchek, Ljubljana, SL; Archive of the Contemporary Conflict, London, UK; MMOMA, Moscow, RU; Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, IT; Museum Reina Sophia, Madrid, ES; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, RS; The Library of Museum of Modern Art New York, USA., Centraal Museum Utrecht NL, Sanders Collection a.o.m.