

S P A C E D O U T

SPACED OUT | Gut Kerkow

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Open daily 10am – 6pm

Kasia Fudakowski

Living with grave potential

8 November 2021 – 30 January 2022

Opening: 7 November 2021, 2 – 5 pm

This culture is coming to an end.

This society is coming to an end.

This economy is coming to an end.

Your body is coming to an end.¹

The rooms in this country manor provide a grand, yet decidedly domestic, setting for Kasia Fudakowski's new fabric works entitled *Curtains for you – Oh Pancreas, Oh Pancreas!*, and *My Heart, My Heart!*, both produced in 2021 for this exhibition. "It's curtains for us!" is a comedic English idiom, that implies demise is near and is typically uttered by a character (hyperbolically or humorously) who is facing their own death.

The generous rooms in Kerkow are uncannily empty, save for the presence of these ornamented curtains. On closer inspection their pattern reveals itself to be an intricate collage of malignant drawings that repeat over the cotton folds. The delicate painted design printed on the fabric depicts symptoms of pancreatitis, gallbladder distention, cancerous tumours, aneurisms, and Ischaemic heart disease; all of which represent some of the most common causes of death in modern-day Europe.

Together with the collective A.P.T, (Association for the Palliative Turn) Fudakowski has begun to consider ways in which her work might embody a more palliative attitude towards the state of demise which the planet and humanity are now in. An attitude defined by A.P.T. as a movement away from the expectation and fixation on art's 'curative' role, instead seeking to acknowledge and assuage the horror of the inevitability of The End. The Association for the Palliative Turn takes the fundamental principle of end-of-life care that is encapsulated in the question 'How would we like to go?', but they apply this to the wider social body and the role of culture within it. *Curtains for you*, is an active acknowledgement of an imminent end. An acknowledgement that affirms life while celebrating dying as a normal and necessary process; one which must be actively *lived* with.

Bringing this profound truth to a setting originally designed for frivolous entertainment and secreting it in the soft furnishings is a carnivalesque gesture of morbid humour. Visitors are invited to be entertained by the inevitability of their own failing bodies. The latent self-sabotaging nature of such a memento mori is both horrific and comical, inhabiting Fudakowski's preferred realm of investigation. Her practice, which encompasses sculpture, film, performance and text often treads the fine line between the comic and the tragic, almost always veering towards a self-implicating punch line, which we find all of ourselves to be the victim of.

Similar strategies are evident in Gut Kerkow's old corn-store, where her complex installation *Where is your alibi, Mr. Motorway?*, sits in session. Centred around the narrative structure of a rural criminal court, a sculpture is here accused of breaking local law and subsequently put on trial. Various elements of a legal proceeding, from the authoritative courthouse architecture to verbose judicial logic, are parodied in this installation with both their tragic and comic potential extracted and distilled.

¹ APT manifesto, 2020

The bulbous, rotating phallic sculpture, central to the installation is titled *G.S.O.H.* (which stands for Good Sense Of Humour) and embodies the accused. Made four years prior to the other works in this installation, it was “captured and brought in”, re-contextualised within a court room drama, and assigned the new title of *Mr. Motorway*, (emblematic of every rural community’s greatest hope and fear). The short video *A Show Trial*, reports on the courtroom exploits from both an ‘official’ and a ‘local’ perspective, revealing a string of fallacies, warped material logic, bias and mistranslation which take material form in the sculptures on display.

Evidence Cabinet, for example, which hangs somewhere between wall and ceiling, displays ‘evidence’ made from salt dough, appears worryingly homemade. *Identitisch* recalls the photofits of faces constructed from witness statements. Here deformities in wood veneer create faces of potential suspects. A backwards sloping bench-like structure partially folded up constitutes the piece *Reasonable Doubt* which offers the traces of an absent jury. The presence of an absent public is also discernible in the carved graffiti on the wooden fence-like structure of *The Public Are Thirsty*, where offerings are strung up in salt dough, dividing the space. The hastily erected, and therefore flawed structure from which flash photographs of salt-dough mug shots hang, carries the title *Precedents* and insinuates the Common Law practice of referring to past cases in order to form future legal arguments.

This is a portrait of a system of sentencing based on evidence fixed from salt dough, justice on the basis of sporadic knots in wood, a hastily built courtroom, a jury of extras picked from the gathering, thirsty crowd, a legal system based only on local tradition, trial as a theatrical bluster, and judgment as an arbitrary formality.

In this slap-stick makeshift maelstrom, the horror emerges from the comic only to concertina back into uncertain laughter, ultimately lurching between comedy and tragedy, humour and pain. In fitting contrast *Curtains for you* offers an existential aesthetic consolation, where the bodily grotesque becomes something hypnotically intricate and beautiful. From the courtroom to the anatomy theatre, Fudakowski dissects our human conceits with an absurd yet forensic rigour, the effect of which leaves us unsure if we should laugh or cry or both.

Text: Leila Peacock

Kasia Fudakowski (b. 1985, London, UK) lives and works in Berlin. She studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University, graduating in 2006 before moving to Berlin.

Her diverse and playful practice, which includes sculpture, film, performance, and writing, explores social riddles through material encounters, surreal logic and comic theory. Her ever-expanding, life-long sculpture *Continuouslessness*, (2017-ongoing), employs a fixed modular system of connecting panels to allow for complete sculptural freedom within its rigid framework, and is intended to reach completion only in the event of the artist’s death.

Often referring to the allure and danger of binary categorization and the subsequent absurdity that it unfolds in our political and social climate, her work reveals the discrepancies amongst cultural norms. Her interest in the limitations of language is explored through her ongoing film series *Word Count*, (2016- ongoing) which takes as its premise a globally limiting law on the amount of permitted spoken words.

Where she employs comic mechanisms, the tragic is never far behind, so that her work often hovers between the horrific and the comic. Frequently the target of her own attacks, she explores her own role as an artist and the stereotype thereof with both a seriousness and irreverence typical of her approach. Her long-term infatuation with failure, and redefining success, has resulted in a number of tragi-comic performances and pieces of writing.

Fudakowski’s work has been exhibited in venues such as Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana, Venice; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Sprengel Museum Hannover; LOKremise – Kunstmuseum, St.Gallen; Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden; 15th Istanbul Biennial; SALTS, Basel; Kunstverein Braunschweig; Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen; Museo Marino Marini, Florence; 1646, The Hague, Futura Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague; Max Pechstein Museum, Zwickau; GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; and the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin.

In 2019 she participated in the BMCT residency at IKSU, Istanbul, received the Villa Romana Fellowship in 2017 and the Fürstenberg Contemporary residency in 2016. She was a recipient of the Günther Peill Foundation grant from 2018 to 2020. Collections including works by Kasia Fudakowski are in, amongst others, Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland; GAM, Fondazione Torino Musei, Turin, Italy; AGI Verona, Italy; Fürstenberg Collection, Donaueschingen; Frac des Pays de la Loire.