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Exceeding norms and acting beyond visibility almost always foretells significant shifts or even revolutions.

As in my artistic practice I have been mostly using photography, I was influenced and inspired by such artists as Diane Arbus and Nan Goldin. My practice is not limited to photography, while the way when I use this medium is probably more conceptual, postmodern and more concerned with anthropological, economic perspectives. Yet, my intention is the same as the above-mentioned photographers: to bring what is shifted beyond the shared gaze, towards visibility.

I use photography to enter hermetic industries and communicate with socially marginalized groups to explore unexposed production and consumption of cultural “fetishes” – artefacts that represent the tabooed desires and unexposed practices, with frequent reference to the body, gender and identity.

*La matière extensible est douce comme une caresse et se réchauffe vite au contact de la peau. Dans cette troublante photographie où un personnage masqué fait face à son double sans vie, le tissu adhésif épouse les membres, maintient ferme les chairs et laisse deviner, par transparence, quelques excitants détails intimes. Ici, sous la couche fine et luisante, on devine un large tatouage sur l'épaule. Jouant sur le sentiment de frustration, sublimant les formes et dévoilant les orifices, cette deuxième peau a une odeur particulière puisqu'elle masque les effluves corporels, coupant le lien olfactif avec l'autre - pour certains fétichistes, le gant médical est un pur objet de fantasme.*

fragment: De latex aux pieds - text by Clémentine Mercier, Libération, April 2020

*My first thought was „second Skin”, and the exhibited performativity of the portrayed. The normally intimate process in portrait photography seems at first to be removed by the material of the second skin, but at the same time it is brought back again by the fact that the process of masking itself is a very intimate procedure. The photographs generate an intensive pre-occupation with questions of identity, with possibilities of identity change through completely analogous means of masking in times of Second Life, VR and AR. The proximity of these works to theatre, performance and live art aesthetics interests me, as well as their social background.*

fragment: curatorial text by Carena Schlewitt accompanying the „Fetish of the Image” exhibition, HELLERAU European Center for Contemporary Arts, Dresden, DE 20.03–20.04.2019

# Fetish of the Image

Photography, video

2018 - 2019

“Patriarchal, masculine, powerful” – these adjectives might not come to mind when seeing the photographs. Yet, this is precisely what they depict. The portrayed people are wealthy, successful, mostly straight and white men. The images come from the most intimate moments of transition that happens in strict privacy and secrecy among the hermetic, yet popular worldwide Masking fetish subculture.

Using silicone, realistic costumes imitating female bodies, Maskers transform themselves into their feminine alter-egos. Alike in theater traditions in the past where women were not allowed to act, the men are the experts on how to perform the most seductive, attractive kind of femininity.

Queer desires are socially tabooed. Yet, they are accepted as a source of revenue. An industry producing the masks has emerged specially to fulfil Maskers' needs. The silicone skins are sold as costly commodities that only few can afford.

As a young, middle-class woman, not much connects me with the characters of my work. Fundamentally, my experience of femininity comes from living as a woman while for Maskers, it derives from performing femininity. The only access to and connection with my models was photography.

While posing, the men permitted me to look deeper underneath the silicone costumes. Masking seem uncanny, claustrophobic or even cannibalistic. But for the men, a Mask is a symbol of emancipation.

At the first moment it seems that Maskers disguise to escape their masculine identity and experience being powerless and objectified. But in fact, they desire to create and become a living, independent female subject. To fulfill this need, they commodify and consume female identity. Self-expression, self-centeredness and consumption are characteristic for our times. Masking well illustrates how they blur the borders between a body and a fetish, desire and narcissism, emancipation and submission.









































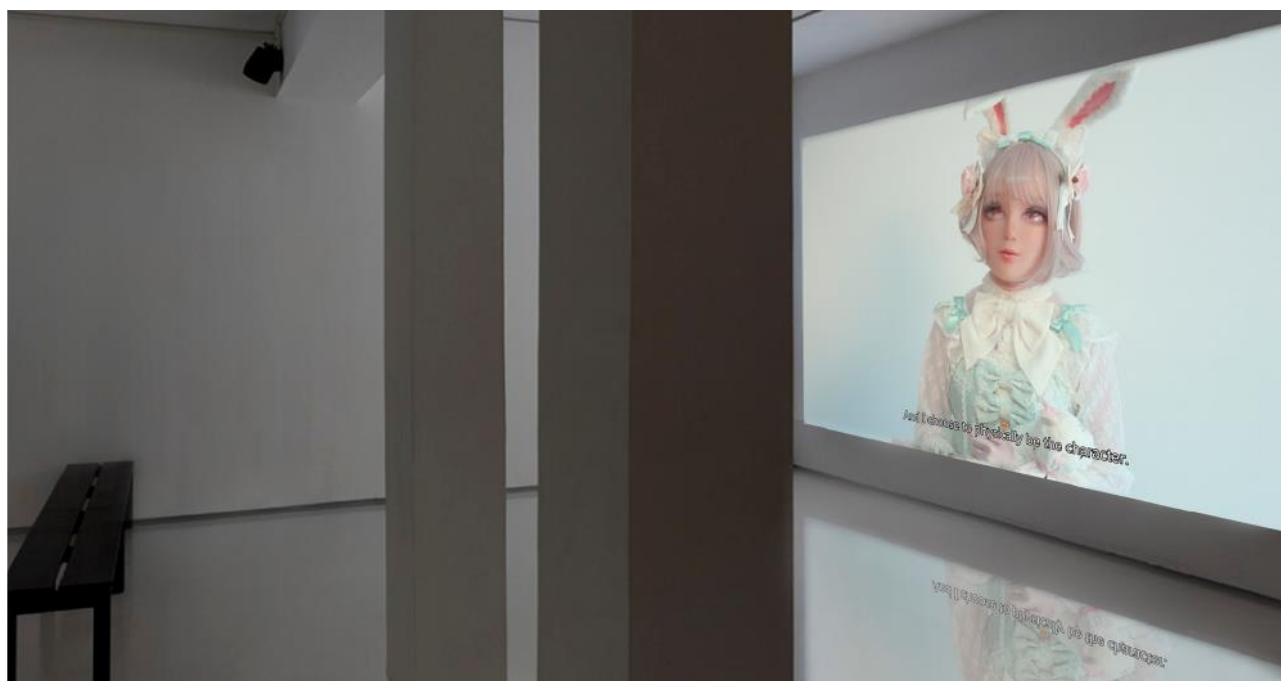




Film stills: *Projections* Full HD / filmed on 6mm, transferred onto DVD 16:9, looped Germany, Hong Kong, China 2018-2019



Exhibition view: Projections Multi-channel video installation FullHD / filmed on 16mm, transferred onto DVD 16:9  
Looped SURVIVAL Art Review Worclaw, PL, 2019



Exhibition view: *Disguised Speech* Video „Prosthetic” exhibition curator: Darko Vukić U10 Art Space Belgrade, SRB, 2019



# Beauty makers

Photography, 2018

The photo series *Beauty Makers* and *Fetish of the Image*, which portray the producers and consumers of silicon female body masks, explores how increased globalization and interconnectivity does not necessarily lead to equal access and visibility.

The two sets of photos are markedly different, both aesthetically and in the way they position their subjects. The photos of the Roanyer factory in Xuzhou, China, depicts a predominately female workforce as they produce costly skin suits for an overwhelmingly male-identifying clientele. The employees do not look at the camera and are instead immersed in their daily tasks: trimming, sewing, airbrushing, and compiling the suits.

The images of the maskers are, in contrast, highly performative and carefully posed. Unlike the factory workers, they stare directly into the lens of the camera, demanding the viewer's gaze. Though the maskers rarely wear their suits in public, many of them enjoy producing and sharing images of themselves dressed in them. Posts on the Female Masking are almost exclusively photographs, which other users upvote and comment on.

However, like most fetishes, dressing in silicon skin suits is still widely considered taboo. The community of enthusiasts is thus pushed out of sight, to the privacy of their homes or online safe spaces.

Though the maskers' desires are socially marginalized, economically they are seen as a source of revenue and thus a market has emerged specifically to fulfill them. Reflecting on the relationship between neoliberalism and gay identity, Ann Pellegrini wonders: "Might these consuming subjects also queer capitalism?". But what does queering capitalism mean when expensive commodities are produced by an unseen "Third World" workforce and purchased by comparatively privileged Western consumers? Marina Gržinić argues that "global capitalism functions not with division but with entanglement," implicating and involving everything and everyone.

According to her, this actively "conceals the global post-Fordist division of labour, which can be best described as an international division of racialized labor between the first, second, and third worlds." As the margins are increasingly blurred, marginalization becomes harder to qualify and protest. Difference is adopted a marketing strategy, and queer desires are swiftly commoditized.

After all, what connects the people in these two sets of images other than the commodities exchanged between them? In photos of the factory workers, the women handle the suits with care, but indifference. For the maskers, however, they are sources of empowerment, the means through which they enter and literally embody the "other." But as the majority of maskers identify as heterosexual men in their daily lives, they do not have to experience the real consequences that come with living as a woman, including lower wages, limited opportunities, and gender-based violence. The human "other" – the flesh-and blood woman producing the suits—remains distant and unknown.

*As such, a prosthesis is always in excess to what it is added, and demands an ideological base in order to retain legitimacy and validity. (...)*

*The prosthesis is thus always a tool subservient to the sovereign, in this case - human, subject that desires its existence and demands its compliance.*

*(...) Our life is prosthetic. We assume that through the variety of processes we can realize our desires which*

*themselves are becoming prosthetic.*

fragment: curatorial text by Darko Vukićaccompanying the „Prosthetic” exhibition (the Wrong Biennale) U10 Art Space, Belgrade, SRB 1.10 – 2.011.2019













Exhibition view: „PARALLEL Review” 21.11.2019 - 14.12. 2019 Lisbon, PRT



Exhibition view: „Fetish of the Image” HELLERAU - European Center for Contemporary Arts  
20.02.2020 - 0.03. 2020 Dresden. DE



# Second Skin

Photography, 2019

Skin is an ambiguous construct. It is the external cover of the body, its soft and firm protection. Yet, as it wraps the body tightly, it cannot be taken off nor changed. Skin not only represents the body but dooms it to its definite form.

It is skin that signalizes individual's identity which criteria – gender, race, age – are frequently used and imposed as fixed definitions to structure political, economic and social hierarchies.

The photographic series combines of self-portraits in the silicone costumes imitating female face and body, used by men practicing Masking fetish. While for Maskers wearing the female costume means emancipation, for me posing in a hampering, silicone disguise was a perplexing experience. Wearing the naked female body seemed at the same time expose and disguise, identify and depersonalize myself.

In the present, women are building their new social identity on independence. We are required and expected to demonstrate independence and power. Self-disguise and self-portrait became a subversive experiment that turned the photographic record into a performative process, drawing out the complex relation between submission and emancipation.

*The recent popularity of images of female masochism expresses not only sexual fantasy, but also refers to women's position in contemporary culture.*

*Depersonalization is thought to be one of the most radical forms of masochism.*

*Depersonalization is a denial of independence.*

*In the times of rapid changes and when women negotiate new social positions and build an identity based on „independence,“ can the feeling of weakness and powerlessness have an emancipatory dimension? Could objectification on demand gives a sense of liberation from cultural conventions?*

fragment: curatorial text by Zofia Krawiec accompanying the „Masochists“ exhibition, ZONA gallery, Szczecin, PL 17.05–15.06.2019





















Exhibition view: „Masochists” Group exhibition: Natalia LL, Aneta Grzeszykowska / Jan Smaga, Agata Wieczorek, Agnieszka Grodzińska, Grupa Sędzia Główny, Iga Świeściak curator: Zofia Krawiec ZONA gallery, Szczecin, PL 17.05–15.06.2019- European Center for Contemporary Arts 20.02.2020 - 0.03. 2020 Dresden

# Family Album

Photography, drawing  
2016-2017

Family Album examines photography as a shared practice that perpetuates social models.

The images were staged in a studio with mannequins, props and scenography. They repeat compositions, gestures, dress codes and scenes frequently seen in the family photographs, including my own.

Together with the plans of how each picture was realized, the series is an instruction how to make one's own, "real", family album.

Here, photography not only demonstrates social relations as an applicable model, but is a model itself. The project demonstrates how vernacular photography can be translated to repeatable, fixed visual codes.

I aimed at questioning private and spontaneous nature of vernacular photography, and observe that it takes part in structuring individual's life and shaping their social identity.

*Always remember that you are absolutely unique - just like everyone else.*

Margaret Mead

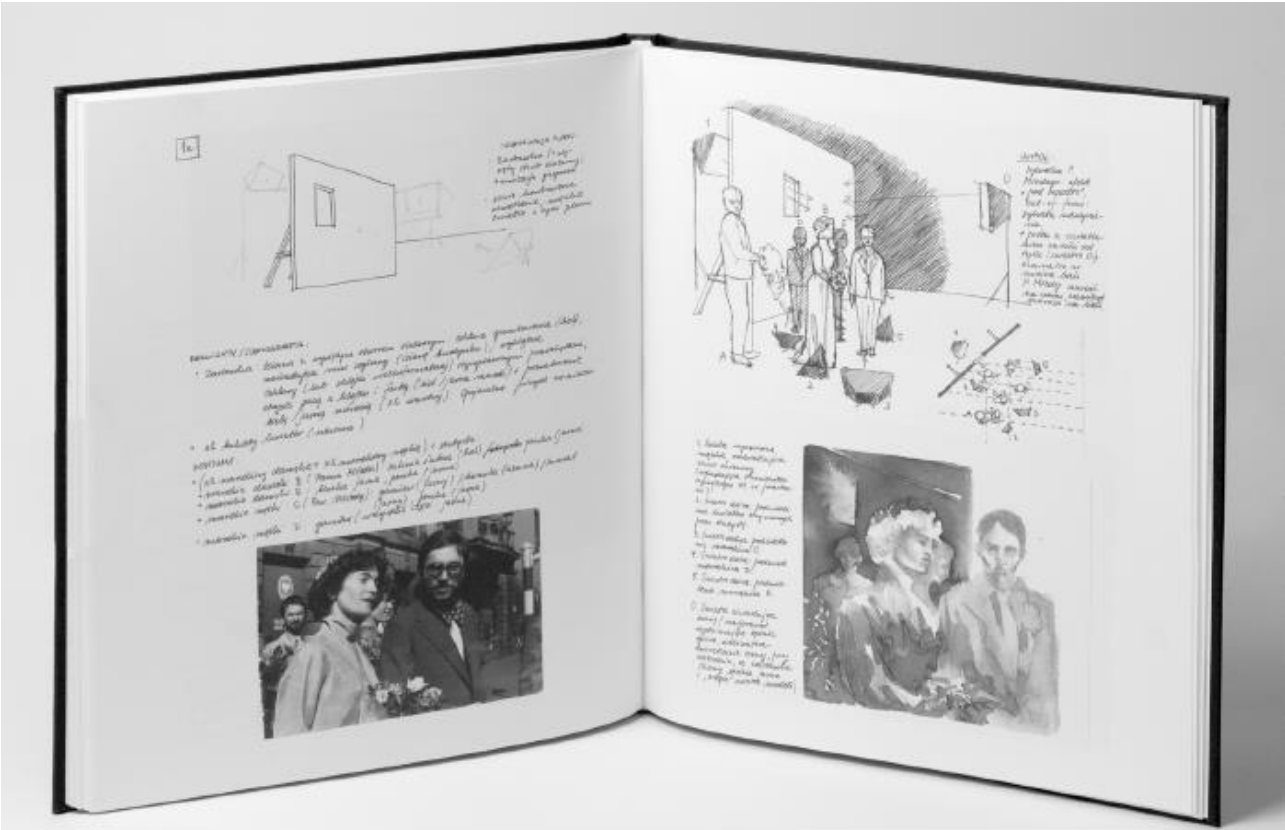












Artist-book: The Family Album & Sketchbook Archival inkjet print 2016



# Simulation Centers

photography, 2020

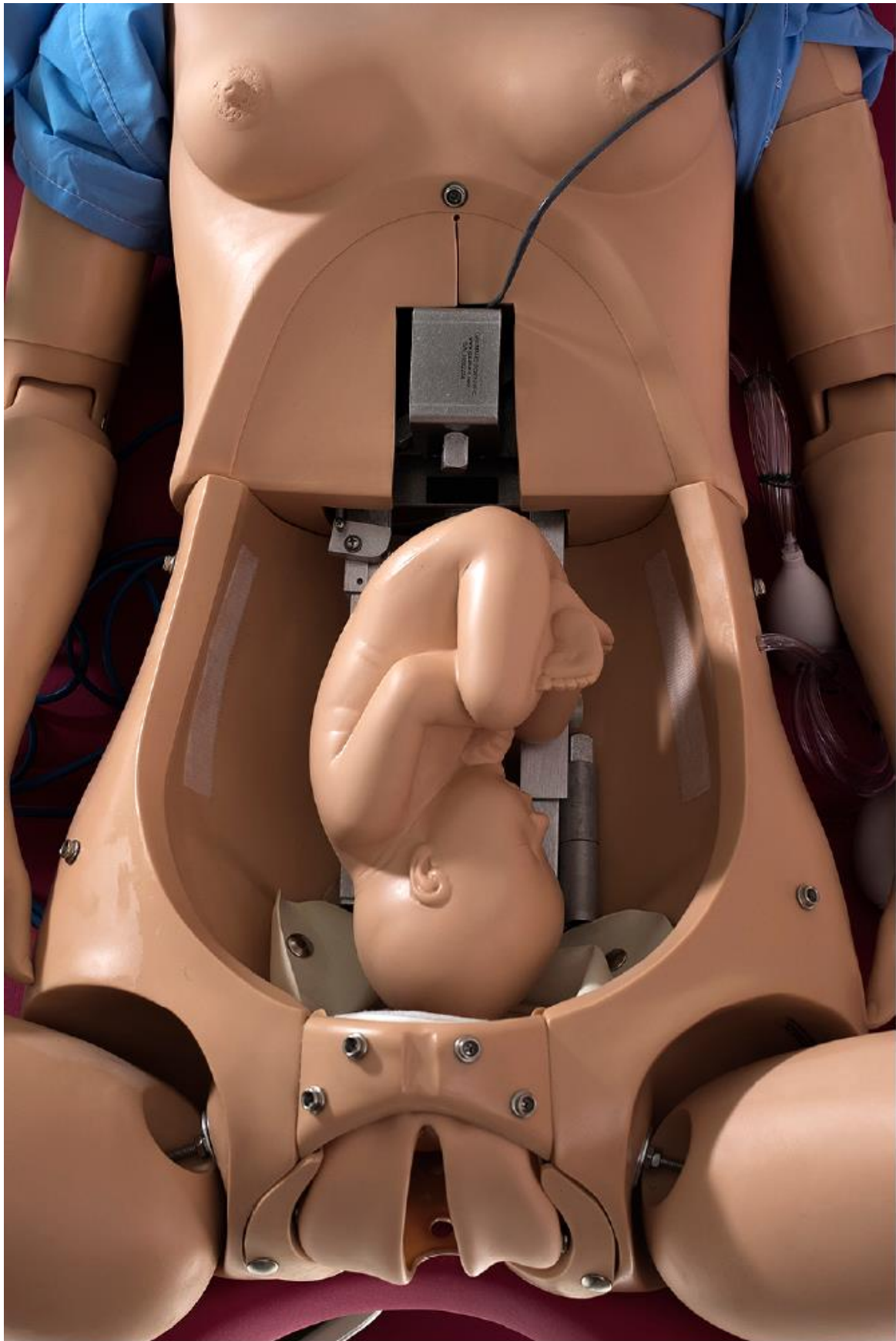
In the recent years, Simulation Centers have become a hallmark of the modern medical education. They do not differ to any real hospital, despite that they are inaccessible to the public and that the human patients have been replaced with humanoid and AI robots.

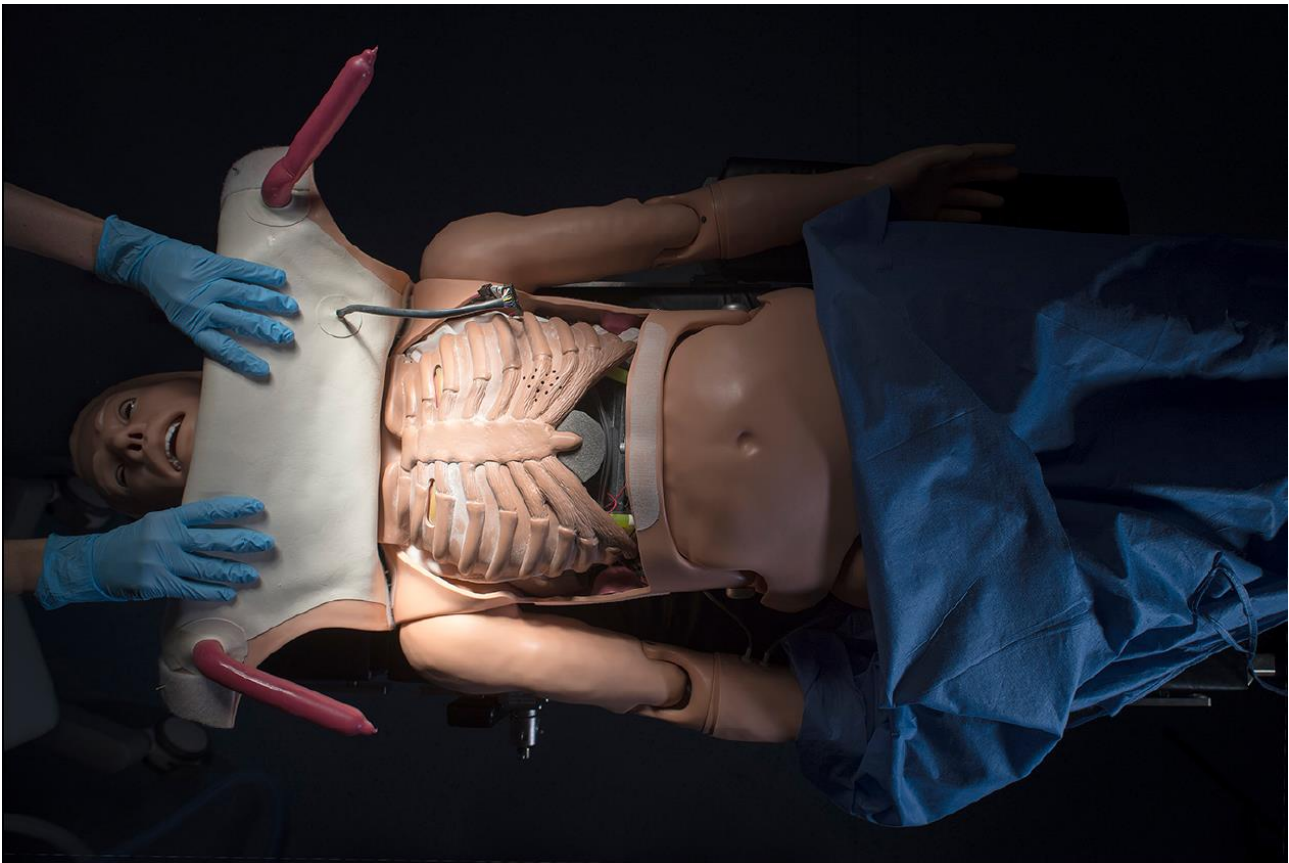
The animatronic dolls demonstrate variety of functions: they bleed, faint, defecate, give birth and die.

The animatronic dolls not only demonstrate, but draws the standards for how the organic body should look like and function. Medicine has always been taking part in perpetuating standards and norms for human anatomy. In the era when human body became central to economic growth due to the technological development, Simulation Centers illustrate the gradual shift where it is the technology that becomes a prototype for the biological life.

*The evolution of the „artifacts” only to a limited extent continues the evolution of organic bodies. At the latest from early modernity we observe the reverse process. (...) It is no longer technique that tries to keep up with organic life, but - the closer to modern times - life is being shaped accordingly to the models that derives from the field of technical artifacts.*

Hartmut Böhme  
(„Fetishism and Culture: A Different Theory”)



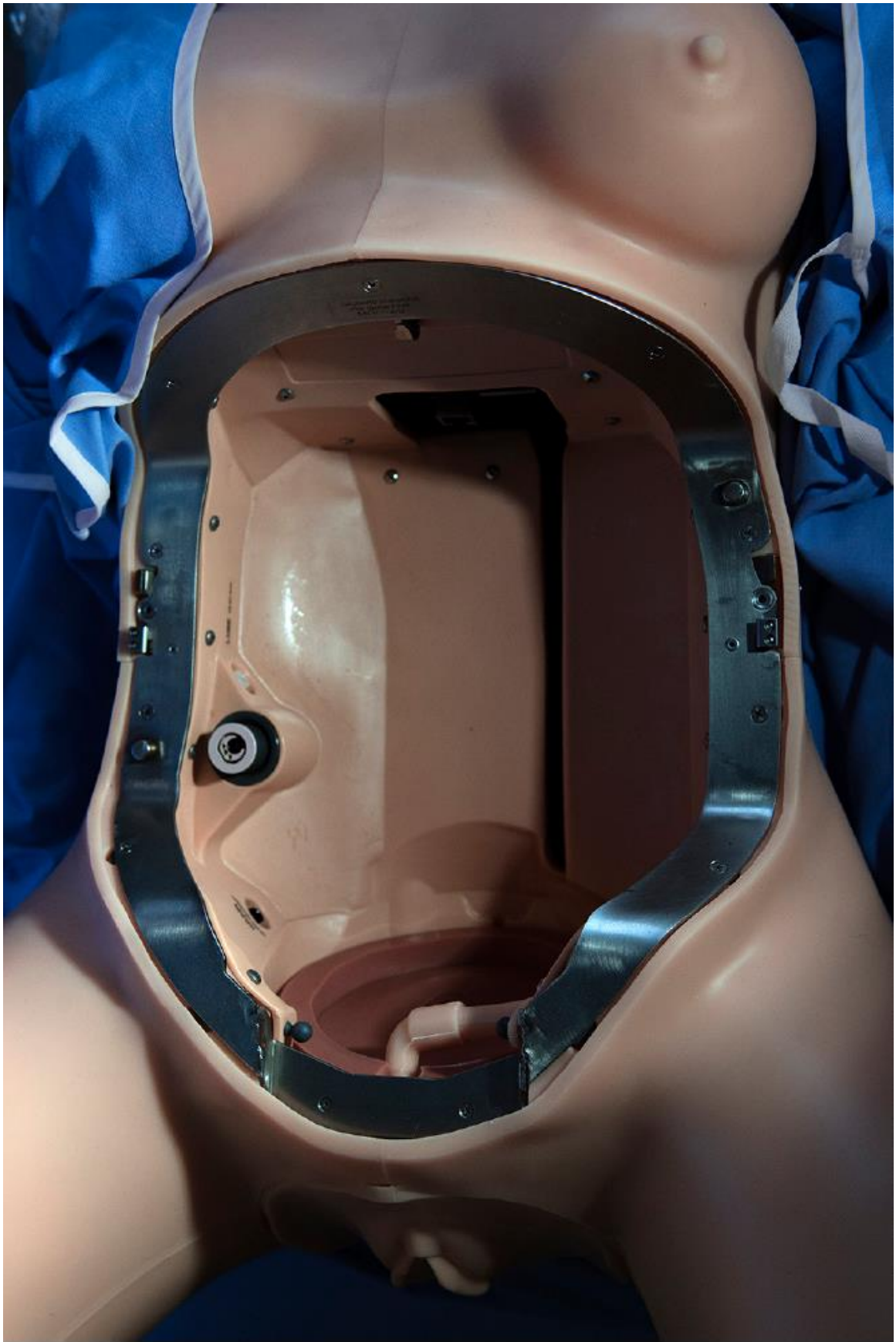








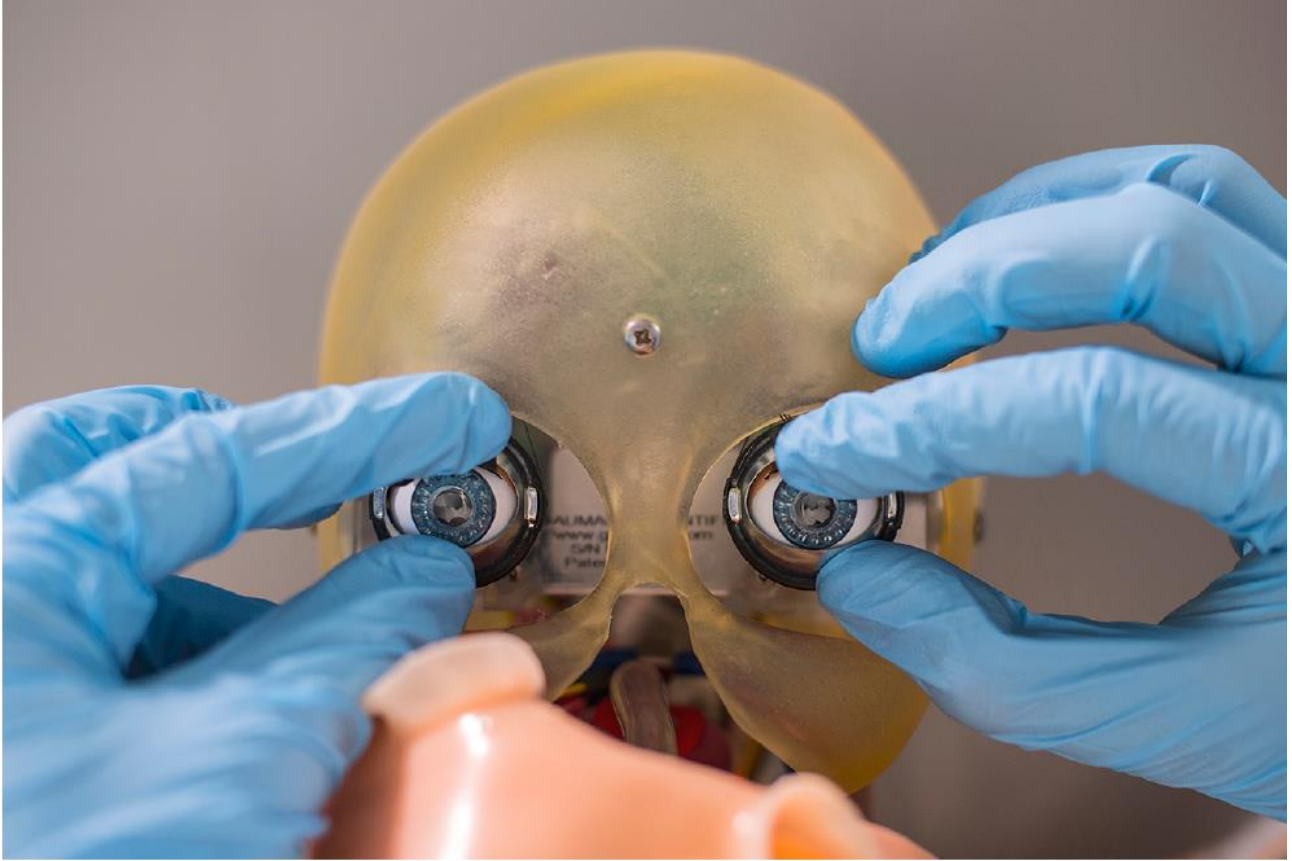














Film stills: „Foibles” Video, Full HD 2017





Exhibition view: „Homo-absurdus” 20.04.2018 - 20.05.2018 Balucka Gallery, Lodz, PL

The idea of a character as an object is the theme of the video that enters ambiguous realm of character's anxiety.

He remains attached to a glass dish - the irrational fear of losing it turns the action into an absurd and endless procedure.

What defines an object is its inert state and inability to take action.

Here, „objectification” is understood as an inability to overcome one's own foibles. It eventually submit character's body into automatic, compulsive set of actions he cannot withstand.

While he fails to break the continual process, he falls into the status of a powerless prop.

Agata Wieczorek (b. 1992 (PL) has graduated from the Strzeminski Academy of Fine Arts and currently studies for her second Masters at the National Film School in Lodz.

Wieczorek's practice combines film and photography, and intertwines documentary and staging.

Their works have been exhibited and awarded internationally, including the Finnish Museum of Photography, Capa Center of Contemporary Photography, Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts (works in collection); among others.

