

rongwrong



Directed by Desire

Curated by Daphne Vitali and Arnisa Zeqo

Participating artists: Eleni Bagaki, Mirella Bentivoglio, Tomaso Binga, Becket MWN, Quinn Latimer, Aiki Panagiotopoulou, Iris Touliatou, Raffaella Naldi Rossano, Myrto Xanthopoulou.

RONGWRONG, Amsterdam

Opening: **Saturday 14 May, 6-8 pm** during Amsterdam Art Week 2022

Exhibition dates: 15 May – 2 July, 2022

Opening hours: Fridays and Saturdays 14:00 – 18:00 or by appointment (+31648618238)

Address: Binnen Bantammerstraat 2, 1011CK, Amsterdam



Iris Touliatou

Happiness, 2018 to 2022 (to Laurie), 2022

Unread email inbox, subscriptions, alerts, software, counters, verses, LCD screen, carton, magnets, loans
Dimensions variable (Production still)

Directed by Desire is a collaborative project iterated into a group exhibition conceived and curated by **Daphne Vitali** and **Arnisa Zeqo** and taking place in **rongwrong, Amsterdam** from **15 May to 2 July, 2022**. The exhibition brings together the work of mainly women artists and writers based in Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. The works deal with notions of desire, love, exhaustion and unfulfilled relationships. The sensitivity of the artists weaves together the personal with the political. The artworks invite us to think about the power of interpersonal relations and their effects in daily life. The exhibition presents both existing and newly commissioned works that move between longings for a person and for human solidarity altogether.

Directed by Desire addresses issues of affect and intimacy in the form of longing, frustration, tiredness, personal turmoil and tensions. These are emotions and situations often felt and experienced on a quotidian basis that determine both everyday lives and artistic creativity. In the exhibition, personal stories and imagined fantasies become strategies to confront the complexities of achievements, failures, self-negation, love, uneasiness, devotion and unfulfillment. Sensual pleasure and desire are sometimes linked with harsh, uneasy and demanding conditions such as distance, disillusionment, abandonments and other forms of emotional difficulties. The artists' works engage different registers of intimacy and proximity and act as vehicles for emotional engagement. The artworks were developed between Athens, Rome, Naples and Amsterdam.

Many of the artists participating hold a particular relation to language, writing, visual poetry and artists' books. In 1978 artist and curator Mirella Bentivoglio curated the exhibition *Materializzazione del Linguaggio* (Materialization of Language) that showcased 80 women artists working with verbo-visual experiments at the Magazzini del Sale in Venice within the framework of the Venice Biennale of that year. The exhibition introduced a specific terminology that was attempting to widen the relationship between gender and language. Bentivoglio reflected on examples of works that existed between language, image and object, and what she called "messages of ambiguous nature which move in the field of transgression". In the exhibition at rongwrong, four decades later, the "materialization of language" is presented through few historical works and through a dialogue with contemporary artists and writers who are closely looking at legacies of desire and fictions of the self.

The exhibition was conceived before the Covid-19 pandemic but developed during that time, in a period of uncertainty and emotional instability and when notions of human solidarity, companionship and respect were threatened. This exhibition emerges from a need to think about these issues and provides a space to process them. The title of the exhibition is borrowed from a verse by American poet, intellectual and activist June Jordan (1936 – 2002) who has been an important reference for the curators while thinking of the power of the word and poetic sensibilities in relation to ideas of affect. Jordan writes about the erotic charges of bodies, reclaiming desire and love as important interlocutors and contributors on political discourse.

Most of the artists in the exhibition talk about love, autobiography and frustration as a way to make an entry point of the personal within a wider political discourse. Personal struggles are connected to collective symptoms of alienation and hope. How can the longing for a physical person become entangled with longing for a wider solidarity? How can autobiography as fiction become a tool to liberate subjectivity from prescribed identity roles? The artists' voices create personal diaries and use words to tell, words to challenge, redefine and deconstruct the unsaid; words that matter, words that communicate, but also words that are unable to do so.

The exhibition has benefited with the kind institutional support of Enterprise Projects, Athens.

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