



**Scarecrows Don't Talk**

**31.05 - 07.07.2024**

**Salome Jokhadze | Jennifer Merlyn Scherler | Rhona Mühlebach**

### **Scarecrows Don't Talk**

In Palazzina #24 resounds the exclamation: "You **did** say something!" - even if we're not used to them talking, or sometimes like to think that they don't have a brain and thus don't talk. Yet, the Palazzina house is currently populated with characters like the Slime Mould who seems to leak into our rooms while enacting its narration that goes beyond time, a group of teeth who gain a surprising agency when removed from the artists' mouth or a soothing voice taking us into the confidence of that passion lying behind the words. In our more delirious moments we even start remembering the meaningful moments we spent together with the characters presented on the timeline/scroll on the first floor. When plunging into the worlds featured in the works of Salome Jokhadze, Rhona Mühlebach and Jennifer Merlyn Scherler we, as spectators, begin to feel the contact points of "this great heavy sack of stuff"<sup>1</sup> on our back. This bag is filled with small things, tiny remnants, most of them not larger than a mustard seed. Daily we engage amongst ourselves in structures and thoughts that begin without an end, we experience transformations and translations which we nourish from our great heavy bag, and which feed back into our great heavy bag.

### **Rhona Mühlebach - *Ditch Me***

Is it an invitation, a provocation or a slightly sordid wish that addresses us? And who is this "Me"? In the title, Rhona Mühlebach already announces with humour and subtlety that we are expected to do – something.

Rhona Mühlebach's installation is a new iteration of a multichannel video installation, recently presented as a solo show in Glasgow (UK). The visual language of the work is embedded in that specific geographic context, in which the Antonine Wall, erected to mark the geographical delimitation of the Roman Empire in Britain, has left a scar in the environment that is still visible today.<sup>2</sup> This scar, this ditch, is used by the characters of the ditch-world in many different ways: it materialises a border, but also the end of the world, a dog's favourite playground, a grave, the ultimate sign of tender love - and Slime Mould's monument to randomness. The narrative function of the ditch then is to accompany us in a wormhole-like free fall through non-linear (historical) time.

In *Ditch Me* a multitude of characters are portrayed, they oscillate between uncommon forms – ranging from partially animal over partially fictional to partially human, digital or vegetal. A particular role is embodied by the Slime Mould. It has ultimately produced a film setting in which nature and its characters temporarily assemble into one of many possible and strange realisms.

Finally, the title involves (us) – if one form wants to be singled out – in the last of the above proposed forms and functions as a slightly sordid wish to *Ditch Me* and "guide us, of course, to the end of the world"<sup>3</sup>. But wait! Don't get too excited, neither about ditching Me nor about crossing the border - it's during the fall in the ditch and on the way to the border that we are more likely to find the beginning of many other worlds.

### **Salome Jokhadze - *My Teeth Bite Through Flesh***

Salome Jokhadze uses a fridge of Palazzina as her main stage: attaching porcelain magnets in the form of teeth to it. As with most of those magnets on fridges, they pretend to hold a note, a postcard or a photo, but in reality, they themselves are the souvenir. Before my inner eye I see fridges with Eiffel towers and Niagara Falls stuck to them, with Edelweiss and "I love Tokyo". Now we have teeth, parts of our body that the artist associates with wisdom or the feeling of knowing – the world, things and what we are made up of. However, since all the artist's wisdom teeth have grown and subsequently been taken out of her mouth, her tongue has gone numb and the doctors don't know if her tongue will ever feel normal again.

<sup>1</sup> Ursula Le Guin. *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, 1986

<sup>2</sup> Francis McKee, 2023

<sup>3</sup> Francis McKee, 2023

On the embroidered fabric of *My Teeth Bite Through Flesh* multiple colourfully dressed characters are on the verge of retrieving a treasure. The treasure is a group of teeth. The characters ride on strong horses, and they wear long hair and hats that look more like being prepared for a traditional harvest ceremony than for the battlefield. The group seems to have developed other strategies for fighting, they're not in line but spread out and still somehow together - raising their fists. And there is the broken snake, referring to a Georgian legend, according to which women know spells that freeze snakes if they happen to come across one when collecting vegetables on the field. We can feel it: here, Georgia is always somehow present. Not in a nostalgic or meaning mediating way, but to manifest that this place exists - with all its implications and political trials and tribulations.

Finally, the artist smiled and told me: "I don't plan artworks beforehand, I draw the outlines of the image on the fabric and then I start filling the outlines. I'm working in an intuitive way, so I do and then I see - the material comes first and when it has happened, I discover which elements appeared (again)." Thus, Salome Jokhadze uses the structure of our language into which she gently but persistently introduces new words - thus allowing new stories to be told, knowledge and wisdom to be bent and other sentences to take shape.

### **Jennifer Merlyn Scherler - *Hi <3 look at this thing that I love!, Lipsync is not enough***

Succeeding an epic soundscape opener, a round and warm voice flatters our ear canals with the words: "Hi <3. Hello. Look at this thing that I love!". It is Jennifer Merlyn Scherler's own voice, guiding us through a text about passionate ways of accumulating. The sound piece is not only about such a process, but also practises this accumulation itself: the soundscape is conceived from found footage audio pieces and sound elements that resemble the style of fan audio edits.

This accumulation habit, the voice tells us, wants to be purged from the misuse it experiences in our current economic context, where we observe an ever more unequal accumulation of income and wealth. As a counterpoint, we hear about accumulation due to love for knowledge of (fictional) worlds, about the pleasure of sharing attentiveness with others. Accumulation here is directly connected to the impossibility and tristesse of containing the things accumulated in one single person or household - not only because (fictional) worlds are infinite - and thus emphasises the importance of holding knowledge together.

"The internet is public space, real space; it's increasingly where we interact socially, do our work, organise our lives and engage with politics [...]"<sup>4</sup> and Scherler draws visual, sonic and textual elements from this space to augment or modify these elements with their own personal experiences. The artist always begins their creative process with words and not with sketches and this can be felt when looking at their second work: *Lipsync is not enough*. The words and images, presented in a form that alludes to practices of devotion, materialise a mental collaboration between the artist and the song lyrics by the musician Hozier. Here, the artistic process is visible in the work itself and is, once more, at the same time proof of the admiration for and accumulation of the knowledge of an existing (fictional) universe as it is an engagement through its spiralling off this material and its joyful way of sharing it with us.

**Text:** Vera Mühlebach.

**Save the date:** Lecture performance by Jennifer Merlyn Scherler on 30.6.2024, at 2 pm.

---

<sup>4</sup> Laurie Penny. *Unspeakable things : sex, lies and revolution*, 2014