

## PRESS RELEASE

Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea

### ***My Body, My Choice***

***Cecilia Lundqvist, Charlotte Thiis-Evensen, Parya Vatankhah, Amina Zoubir***

Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea is pleased to present "My Body, My Choice", a group exhibition featuring works by Cecilia Lundqvist, , Charlotte Thiis-Evensen, Parya Vatankhah, Amina Zoubir.

"Your body is a battleground". So Barbara Kruger denounced gender differences within our society in 1989, superimposing the power of the word on monochrome images of female faces and bodies. After more than thirty years the body of women continues to be more than ever a battleground.

*"My body, My choice"* and *"My body is mine"* are feminist slogans used in many parts of the world.

A woman's right to make independent decisions about her body and reproductive functions is at the heart of her fundamental rights to equality, privacy and bodily integrity. What is body ownership and why is it important? Ownership of the body is a fundamental part of the moral standing for human beings. It is through my body that I act on the world, it is through my body that the world acts on me. The control of the female body, of its reproductive capacity, but also of its freedom of movement, of its knowledge and its appearance, is a structuring element of patriarchal politics and power.

In Western societies it is assumed, especially among the younger generations, that the battle of the sexes has been won, that women have been freed and that their rights are guaranteed. And yet, we are witnessing today a sharp regression in women's rights and a sharp increase in violence against women. However, in countries where women's rights are assumed to be limited or absent, such as in Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan or Mexico, women of the younger generation know that they have much to gain from fighting for those same rights that are eroding in the West. So they don't let their guard down and continue to fight fiercely.

**Cecilia Lundqvist**, born in Eskilstuna, Sweden, currently lives and works in Stockholm. She started out with painting, but now works foremost with video and animation. She manages to treat difficult subjects, often from a personal, feminist perspective with a sharp sense of humour. Cecilia's video works are shown frequently worldwide and has received recognition in the art and film world alike. Her work is generally narrative and deal with issues like domestic violence, power structures and human behaviour. She is represented with video works at several art institutions, among them Moderna Museet in Stockholm and Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

**"Making Pancakes"** is an animated video, showing a woman and a man in a totally unbalanced relationship. At times we see a seemingly everyday course of events, and other times they are in a more threatening situation. The man is filled with self-satisfaction and yet he shines from an uncertainty and a longing for acknowledgement. The woman acts in a numb and routine way, doing all she can to uphold the façade. By changing the standard and placing the domestic violence outdoors, where it's visible, and the upholding of the perfect façade hidden behind the closed doors of the home, the absurdity of this behaviour is revealed. The trivial mistakes while making dinner serve as the catalyst of the violent outrages, they serve as the last straw.

The video **"Her Master's Voice"** consists of one simple scene. A recurring motion symbols a social dead end.

**Charlotte Thiis-Evensen** is a Norwegian filmmaker, visual artist, journalist and program director.

As an artist she works with documentarism in video, photo and installations. In her works she touches on close family relationships, everyday rituals, cultural histories and issues related to identity.

She uses new media to create unique and empathetic human narratives. She utilizes a form of documentary based on the lived experience of named individuals, often working from the artist's own circle of acquaintances, community members, or children and teenagers. She is interested in producing work that explores questions of personal freedom. Several of her artworks are about how unspoken power structures affect the individual. She has shown her work internationally as well as at local institutions such as the Lillehammer Art Museum, OSL Contemporary, and The Artist's House.

The video work **Untitled** shows the doubt that three Somali girls experience about their choice of whether or not to use the hijab. The choice itself is visualized through recordings of the three girls taking a hijab off and on. The recording is done with a so-called "high speed camera", and displayed in slow motion, so that the minimal details in the action is preserved more vibrantly, and so that the process takes on abstract qualities. The work contextualizes both the obvious choice about hijab or not, as well as the question of individual freedom in several settings, for example with different sets of expectations.

For many female artists using their body in performances has become a way to claim control over their body, this is the case of the Iranian artist Parya Vatankeh.

She questions in her works the situation of women in contemporary Iranian society.

**Parya Vatankeh** is a Franco-Iranian visual artist, living and working for several years in Paris. Her artistic practice is multidisciplinary and involves painting, photography, video, performance and installation.

She is interested in the contradictions of human thought and the existence of different realities for each of us in the face of a given situation, influenced by our past and by our private and social lives. The subjects of her work are nourished by her intimate and social experiments such as the Islamic revolution in Iran and its consequences on human rights violations and gender inequality, war, economic problems and also the experience of her immigration. Her works address the complexity of building oneself and knowing one's own identity when the violence and suffering caused by political conflicts reach the intimate life. The body is omnipresent in her work, both subject and object, as to become since her arrival in France, a powerful medium to convey her stronger and more provocative messages.

The video **Passage** seeks to explore our journey in life confronted with our limits in space and time. A woman, dressed in white, folded in a fetal position, struggles in a white, cramped space evoking confinement and suffocation. For me, white is the symbol of purity, birth and innocence, but it also represents the hospital universe (including psychiatric one), as much as it can correspond to the color of death (in Iran, the dead are simply draped in a white shroud). The alternating of slow and fast movements emphasizes a feeling of ill-being and the aspiration to free oneself from that situation. The looping video, giving a dimension of "endless bodily battle", challenges the impact of limits and constraints on our lives.

In the work "**Women must be beautiful, Women must be Hidden**" - she questions the situation of women in contemporary Iranian society. She says about her work: "During this performance, in an act of repetition, I put and handed the veil. The pace accelerates gradually, to the point that it becomes a violent and upsetting gesture. This repetitive gesture is a mixture of memories and suffering that have accompanied me since I was seven years old. Every year in Iran, thousands of women are arrested and imprisoned under the pretext of not completely complying with the law on the wearing of the veil".

The first part of the sound is the voice of the female demonstrations in Iran against Hijab demanding equality between women and men, on 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 of March 1979, which is what they had before the Iranian revolution that transformed the country to an Islamic regime.

The second part of the sound at the end of the video is the voice of women screaming because they are arrested on the streets and handcuffed by Islamic Police for not wearing a complete hijab in 2016, more than 38 years after the Iranian Revolution.

**Amina Zoubir** is a French Algerian visual artist and videomaker who works on the notion of the body and its interactions in public spaces to question and analyse social and historical thoughts and archives in North Africa. Through her installations and performances, she makes reference to the behavioral transfer of the individuals' unconscious when they evolve in predetermined spaces by socio-political norms and cultural codifications, while her intention seeks to create a distortion in order to thwart the established order. Through her poetic artistry to view the human/animal/object body, she pushes us to reflect on the established rules of our contemporary society. Her artworks bring constructive looks and push forward the evolution of contemporary society.

She presents the video performance **Glissement**. The scarecrow holds a special place in popular culture around the world. Sometimes a foil, sometimes a perch, it also means an ugly or badly dressed person, or an object or a person of frightening appearance. This feminine body posture T is presented in places starts, of no women's land, urban landscapes become in construction to expand the urban area of the city of Algiers and its suburbs enlarge. The scarecrow is it well placed for the purpose of the female body away from these areas? The posture of the female body in T reveals a shift of reappropriation of a surly urban gap.

#### **Venue**

Muratcentoventidue-Artecontemporanea

Via G. Murat 122 / b - Bari

#### **Inauguration**

Saturday May 20, 2023, 7.30 pm

#### **Period**

20 May - 30 June 2023

#### **Opening hours**

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday by appointment only

From Thursday to Saturday, from 5.30 to 8.30 pm

#### **Info**

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#### **CV**

**Charlotte Thiis-Evensen** (1968) lives and works in Oslo, Norway. She has an MA of Literary Science from the University of Oslo and have studied art at the National Academy of the Arts in Oslo. As an artist she is

working with documentarism in video, photo and installations. Several of her artworks are about how unspoken power structures seriously limit the individual's freedom of action. Beside production of art she has been working as a journalist at the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation for fifteen years both with documentary film and with journalistic programs. For the last five years Charlotte Thiis-Evensen has had her own Television Program in the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation called The Architects Home. She is both director and presenter in this program. Thiis-Evensen has exhibited in national and international venues and artfilmfestivals including: The Artist's House, Oslo in Norway, Bergen Art Museum (KODE) in Bergen, Norway. Riga Photography Biennial in Latvia, OSL Contemporary, Oslo. DOK Leipzig, in Germany, Documentary Festival in Goyang City South Korea, The National Museum of Art, Oslo in Norway and DokumentART, Neubrandenburg in Germany.

**Cecilia Lundqvist**, b. 1971 in Eskilstuna, Sweden living and working in Stockholm, Sweden.

Cecilia Lundqvist is a Swedish artist working in animation. In Cecilia's works animation is used as a very personal form of storytelling where, as the filmmaker, she has total control over the creation of a new world. Educated at Royal Collage of Art, Video Department and University Collage of Arts, Crafts & Design, Art Department, Stockholm, Sweden. In 2004, Cecilia Lundqvist received Filmform's Honorary Award because of the focused way she has developed her artistry over the years.

Cecilia is best known for her short films Trim (1997), Souvenir (1999) and Emblem (2001). Her work has been screened in venues around the world, including Uppsala Art Museum; VKS, Toulouse; Teatro Odissea, Rio de Janeiro; and Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires. Cecilia's films can be found in the collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and the Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

**Parya Vatankhah** ( 1976) is an Iranian artist and researcher who lives and works in Paris.

She graduated from University Paris VIII (2014) with a master degree in Contemporary Art and Multimedia, as well as Visual Art, University of Aix-en-Provence (2011). Prior to her education in France, she completed her painting degree at University of Tehran (2005).

She taught at the University of Culture and Art in Tehran and Rasht for six years, before leaving Iran for France in 2009. She is currently preparing a thesis in Aesthetics, Science and Technology of the Arts on the theme of the representation of the body in engaged and political art. She also teaches process project courses about the representation of the body in contemporary art at the Department of Fine Arts of the University of Paris 8.

Her art is exhibited internationally in solo and group exhibitions, video art and contemporary art festivals, and at university conferences such as the Casablanca International Festival, Les instants vidéo de Marseille, London Feminist Film Festival, RMN-Grand Palais in Paris, Malmö art center in Konsthall, Sweden and the Arad Art Museum in Romania.

She was the recipient of Women's Voice Now award (Los Angeles, 2014), which is an International festival.

**Amina Zoubir**(Algiers, 1983) graduated a Master of Theory and practice of contemporary art and new media from University Paris 8 (2009, France) and DESA graphic design obtained at the Superior School of Fine Arts in Algiers (2006, Algeria). Her works has been exhibited in biennials such as Lahore Biennale (2020), Venice Biennale in the first Algerian Pavilion (2019), BISO Sculpture Biennale Ouagadougou (2019), Cairo Biennale (2019), Dakar Biennale (2018), Lagos Biennale (2017), Lagos Photo Festival (2017), Casablanca Biennale (2016), Addis FotoFest (2014), Biennale BY14 Yakutsk Russia (2014), Pontevedra Biennale (2008) and shown in group exhibitions at museums such as MAXXI Museum Rome Italy, MUSAC Leon Spain, CAAM Las Palmas in Canaries Islands, Torrance Art Museum California USA; at Galleries as

Primo Marella Gallery, PasaJist Gallery, Pink Gallery, Vovatanya Gallery, Photon Center for Contemporary Photography, Artos Foundation, TAC, and video programs at French Institute in Dakar, Casablanca, Algiers, Stockholm, Leonardo Palazzo d'Arte contemporanea. She was grantholder in residency at Konstnärnsämnden with iaspis, The International Artists Studio Program in Stockholm (2020, Sweden), the Bag Factory in Johannesburg (2019, South Africa), Cité Internationale des arts in Paris (2014, France), Cinémathèque Tanger (2013, Morocco), Vidéochroniques Aflam in Marseille (2010, France), Fondation Michelangelo Pistoletto in Bari (2008, Italy). She was awarded the prize Varenne FIGRA France in 2013 with a special motion for her performances Take your place during the web documentary A Summer in Algiers (2012, Algeria). Her works have been included in public and private collections at Markk Museum (Hamburg, Germany), Etnografiska Museet (Stockholm, Sweden), Sharjah Art Foundation (Sharjah, UAE), Fondation Donwahi (Abidjan, Ivory Coast), FRAC Occitanie Fond Régional D'Art Contemporain, Les Abattoirs (Toulouse, France), Foundation African Artists for Development (Paris, France).