

**With *a no, A voLcanic attaCk, a hiT, a Muse*, the artist duo Anetta Mona Chiša & Lucia Tkáčová are immersing the exhibition space of Cc Strombeek in their own revisited version of worldly matters and systems. What on first sight seems to be an eclectic compilation of works, in different formats and techniques, addressing various topics, is actually a quite coherent selection balancing between the forgotten past and the unknown future, relentlessly crossing the line between present, past and future. In a back-and-forth email conversation, Anetta Mona Chiša provides some insight in their oeuvre, talking about their ‘Third Mind’, their aversion of the artistic political ghetto and their expeditions beyond the kingdom of Language, Logos and Light.**

*You both started working together since 2000. In what ways did you match so well that you have been working together for such a long time?*

We met in Bratislava during our studies. We very quickly became good friends and we started working together from an intuitive momentum. We gradually began to understand our collaboration as a Socratic adventure and started to see it as the foetus of a possible clan of Amazons. All these years we have worked together accumulating topics that interested both of us, developing overlaps of knowledge and feeling, generating ideas for ideas. This resulted in our ‘Third Mind’, a higher power that unifies our thoughts and activates intentions. It's like mixing two colours and getting a new shade which is sometimes unexpected and unrecognizable, sometimes surprising and alien, yet it contains both colours.

*In Strombeek, you'll present *a no, A voLcanic attaCk, a hiT, a Muse*. The title sounds almost like an eclectic film script. What is it referring to?*

*a no, A voLcanic attaCk, a hiT, a Muse* is an anagram of our names (Anetta Mona Chiša, Lucia Tkáčová). Since 2012, the titles of most of our exhibitions have been generated by permutating the letters of our names. In an attempt to merge creatively with each other—to amalgamate our collaboration by crossing the onomastic frontline in the conception of a ‘third entity’—we mixed all the letters from our names and created new pseudonyms (we like to call them *noms de guerre*). Based on chance but supported by time-consuming letter shuffling, a chaotic universe of poetry opens up every time we try to rearrange the letters into new words and into new meanings. Mathematically, the possible number of anagrams is breathtaking: with the 27 letters of our names it is possible to generate 11 octillions of permutations. Diving into an unfathomable ocean of letter combinations, stumbling upon meaning and modelling words, is a play that stretches language beyond its confines toward a linguistic sculpting of limitless possibility.

*What connects the different art works in this exhibition?*

The exhibition oscillates between the forgotten past and the unknown future. You could say that it is based on a quest for the past in the future and for the future in the past. It runs from a simulation of a cave with parietal art to fake nail sculptures, from fossilized money in the shape of pre- and post-historical tools to a black oasis (a kind of political and economic avatar of the present, but at the same time a posthuman paradise in an apocalyptic future) and from prophetic abstractions of broken screens to extra dimensions ossified in various polytopes.

*The future never seems to be very far away in your works. In this exhibition, too, a lot of works refer to change or provide a tool for another world—a new world. Could you comment on that?*

We see art as more than a mirror that reflects reality, and even more than a hammer that shapes it. For us, art is a device that invents new realities. Rather than making representations of problems or simply visual models of critique, we both felt the need for an expedition through the obscure lands of the unknown/unknowable, unspeakable and unthinkable—beyond the kingdom of Language, Logos and Light. Rather than routinely articulating things that ‘work’, have ‘logic’ and fulfil expectations, we felt the need to move towards a new rationality, towards the invisible, the inconspicuous, the abstract. Rather than simply serving the hegemony of vision and empowering visibility and the privilege of the eye over the other senses, we try to expand our (and our viewers’) sensorial (and cognitive) experience by using other strategies, other senses. We don't want to dismantle, we want to propose. We don't want to point at, but to invent, no to re-think, but to un-think. Everybody that wants to engage with such a point of view is invited to be our audience.

*Could you say that all your works are part of this same invented, un-thought world?*

We are in a mood of constant search and inner struggle. Our major theme is transformation: we want to change the world by unveiling the delusion of the matrix that surrounds us, and invent strategies of resistance and transforming the self. At heart, all our works are characterized by the idea of change and involve complex (alchemistic) processes of converting different value systems into (each) other. All our works grow from our need for a new rationality and from an endeavour to moult our old cognitive, written, causal and logical worn-out scaled skin and acquire a new skin that allows us to grow. So yes, they all belong to the same world.

*Your works all have an activist side, from very abstractly dealing with time (in YyyyYyy), to very concretely in The Descent of Man. Do you consider yourselves as activist artists or artistic activists? In what way does art add something to the statements you want to make? And how important is it for you that artists make such statements?*

I believe all art is activism. If you define an ‘activist’ as a person who preaches publicly and explicitly about political change, we probably do not look like this. But we're constantly looking for new modes of transforming and changing, for spreading freedom and fairness in our world. We are constantly revisiting the tools and symbols of resistance, the difficulty to make a change through visible protests, the impotence of old ways of subverting the system, the institutionalization of all criticism to the point that it can't be critical anymore, and so on. We imagine utopias and a world in which nothing is impossible.

For us, it is important to push open the door of a new consciousness by crossing the dark abyss and the darkness of ignorance and the unimaginable. For us, art is a post-political gesture in a time when political thinking has become a banal convention, a fashionable theme, a sedative and a dead alley.

*Is there a common thread going through all different aspects for which you propose new tools? Or more concrete, when you revisit the tools of resistance or when you talk about cognitive or logic systems, is it because the existing ones aren't suitable anymore?*

When I talk about revisiting the tools and the symbols/language of resistance, I have in mind using the means of art to search for causes of all problems: in deep time and space, in the microcosm and macrocosm, in our logic, in the structure of language, in daily routines we take for granted... rather than adopting the 'right' political positions, pointing a finger and preaching to the converted. Plenty of overt political art is met with nothing more than a wall of furious agreement. We, all those in the art world, stand on the same side of the barricade. The chances of contemporary art successfully promoting any fresh new political principles or triggering a real change in society is close to zero. I think we must get out of this artistic political ghetto, leave this dogmatic political thinking behind us.

This is why a new rationality is needed. A rationality that leads to a different knowledge, by stepping out of an accepted and expected comfort zone. And I do not mean that as an invitation to resign and surrender. On the contrary: by trying to think differently and engage in visual and conceptual speculations, we want to suggest new models of resistance, new ways to mould the clay of reality, new strategies to get to grips with oppressive structures and new processes to manufacture the now.