

TARWUK

Бољи живот

3. 6. – 10. 9. 2023

Press talk: 1. 6. 2023, 11 a.m.

Opening: 2. 6. 2023, 6 p.m.

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark
Burgring 2, 8010 Graz (AT)

Curator:

Cathrin Mayer

Press contact:

Helga Droschl

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Бољи живот is the first solo exhibition in Austria by New York based artists TARWUK. Working as a single entity, Bruno Pogačnik Tremow (b. 1981, Zagreb) and Ivana Vukšić (b. 1981, Dubrovnik) center their practice around investigating Selfhood. Both were born in Yugoslavia, witnessing the war in the 1990s and the disintegration of a social order that followed it. The duo has been working together since 2014, creating sculptures, paintings, drawings, performances, films, and installations that inform their multidisciplinary practice. *Бољи живот* (Bolji život, in German *Ein besseres Leben*) was created in dialog with the specific architecture of the HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark.

At the center of the artists' work is experimenting with Selfhood, blurring the boundaries between the individuals and closely observing the dynamic conditioning of Self in relation to society. Through the artists' ongoing collaborative practice, in which there is no division of labor, the dividing line between one person and the other becomes completely permeable. In that sense, TARWUK emerges as an overarching entity, capable of dissolving the boundaries of the Self, allowing the two to constantly merge and produce new, unanticipated work.

Given the past cultural landscape of their upbringing and their current surroundings, it is not surprising that TARWUK's practice is informed by the subversion of culturally shaped stereotypes and archetypes. It cannot be observed from a particular artistic program or framework, and maybe the key to their work lies in its resistance to being clearly definable. However, the dissolution of the Self as practiced by TARWUK is primarily driven by the idea of thinking identity outside of the prefabricated templates that history, language, and politics produce.

The starting point of the exhibition is the group of four large-scale sculptures, originally exhibited in 2021 at the Collezione Maramotti, a private foundation based in Reggio Emilia, in 2021. Imagined as an ongoing cycle of metamorphosis, with four sculptures each representing one stage in the evolving process, in Graz they will be presented in the most recent iteration of this process. Restaged, with the existing relationships between the sculptures as they were originally formed in 2021, they appear transformed in Graz and complemented by the large-scale sculpture titled *KLOSKLAS divco/ZUBB32yeltenb* (2020).

The sculptures are made of objects and materials that TARWUK have either "taken," found, or recycled. The previous lives of these objects inexorably take effect in these sculptures, which were made at a certain time but nonetheless existed previously in the shape of their constituent parts. The

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theatrical staging of the five sculptures on a large pedestal, which in itself resembles a stage, is underscored by the idiosyncratic lighting from above. Following the idea of working with objects that have history, TARWUK came across the Reinberger lamp store during a visit to Graz, where they borrowed six Bauhaus ceiling lamps from the *Mithras* series from the 1930s.

The title of the exhibition *Бољи живот* refers to a Yugoslav television series broadcast between 1987 and 1991. This series tells stories from the everyday lives of an average family of five in the post-Tito era, which was characterized by economic instability and growing ethnic nationalism and political dissidence. As a TV show, *Бољи живот* is not a series that remembers Yugoslavia, but rather a series with which the state ceased to exist.

High up along the two longer sides of the main gallery, there is a gold frieze with a passage from the television series's title song. On the left, the text is in Latin and on the right in Cyrillic script. Script and language as codes can be deciphered here by anyone who knows the language systems, and for all other viewers the frieze is free of narrative function and becomes an ornament. This ambivalent relationship between form and content, but also the role of the audience, which itself creates meaning, are important for the artists' working methods. In order to preserve the symmetry of the gallery, emphasized by the wall friezes on the left and right, an additional entrance was built in the left part of the front wall separating the main hall and the apse. On the back wall in the apse there is a painting titled *MRTISKLAAH_Yremogtnom: Gnidnatsrednu fo_Noitavitluc* (2022), which was embedded into the wall and thus integrated into the existing architecture. Acting as the final element of the exhibition, with its formal elements both ornamental and figurative, it makes a particular reference to the turn of the twentieth century in Austria and Yugoslavia, to a modernism-in-the-making where art and architecture combine. *Бољи живот* shows the artists' strong sensitivity for the environment of the exhibition, and also their wish to create a larger context with their works in which the representative functions of art are undermined. TARWUK thus constantly erode dogmatic ideas as to what art can and should be, and they confront us with our own states of being, which determine what we see when we see their works.

TARWUK (2014 founded in New York): Ivana Vukšić (*1981 Dubrovnik, lives in New York), Bruno Pogačnik Tremow (*1981 Zagreb, lives in New York)
Solo (et al.): White Cube, London (2023), Maramotti Collection, Emilia Romagna (2021), Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2021), Martos Gallery, New York (2020), Lauba, Zagreb (2020), Taito Ryokan, Tokyo (2019), Team Gallery, New York (2018), Museum of Fine Art, Osijek (2017), Ethnographical Museum of Istria, Pazin (2017), Essex Flowers, New York (2017), Museum of Fine Arts, Split (2017), Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka (2016), Lauba, Zagreb (2015)

Program

7.6.2023, 6 p.m.

Screening: *baka*, 2021, film, 15 min.

TARWUK, Matthew Goedecke

Guided tour: Jan Tappe

22.6.2023, 8 p.m.

Bentley Anderson, New York

Concert

20.7.2023, 6 p.m.

Valentina Rados

Lecture: *TARWUK*

Senior curator, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek

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