

Freedom= individual decision + maximum stretch of the running leash

In this exhibition, Viennese artist Maria Peters shows a selection of works from her cycle "Voodoo Raga", which was created for her artist book of the same name, published in summer of 2021.

Peters is interested in human fates and social currents. Like an ethnologist or sociologist, she collects subjects and stories as a "participant observer" on hikes, on trips, or while roaming the big city.

The works created on the basis of these "nature studies" (Peters calls them *Artnographies*) report on different social conditions and the resulting (forced or comfortable) acceptance of social happiness or unhappiness.

Peters juxtaposes these seriously real observations with paintings in the form of tapestry-like scroll pictures, in which she fictitiously and ironically exaggerates the social tensions into the dystopian or utopian. In this way the artist swirls our thought bubble around, and in this cycle of works she thus *absurdizes* the dogma that has long since ceased to be merely neoliberal: "Everyone is the architect of his own fortune".

For how much freedom of choice do we actually have, considering the preconditions by birth and thus the found social and cultural context, or considering individual strokes of fate and political currents, which limit our "freedom". Peters calls these limitations *running leashes*—for the maximum stretching of which she vehemently pleads, but at the same time adds in her opening performance in the finale: "... but don't bite it off!".

In the course of her opening reading performance, Peters adds scenes and pictorial works to the motif of the *running leash* into her exhibition in which narcissism and the complete self overestimation of man in general (assumed by the artist to be the basic problem par excellence) are thematized in an exaggerated form.

The artist thus also places a wood print with a reference to the Internet keyword "June 25, 2021 UAP" (= Unidentified Aerial Phenomena), which leads to a report by the Pentagon and further to reports—such as that of the TV channel of the New York Times. If one follows these reports, one gets into doubt whether mankind is really the most intelligent existing species.

"*Because: What is here (still) narrative and what (already) information,...*"¹ asks Sabeth Buchmann in her essay "Marias Milieus".

So the question arises, what would happen to the length of our *running leashes* if these more highly developed beings really existed? What if they suddenly would intervene in our lives?

Would we as mankind thereby finally be capable of to pull together?

In her book Peters writes: "... If you really would want (Note: The mirror was standing mightly in the way),... "

1 See Sabeth Buchmann, *Marias Milieus*, in: Maria Peters: *Lars hatte den Mut - oder - Voodoo Raga*, Vienna, 2021 (abo-verlag), pp. 92 - 98, here p. 98.