



Igor Grubić, *366 Liberation Rituals (Against Trash)*, 2008—2009, Courtesy Igor Grubić, Zagreb

Vienna, 18 September 2018

**Belvedere 21**

Arsenalstraße 1  
1030 Vienna

**Opening hours:**  
Wed to Sun 11 a.m.–6 p.m.  
Wed and Fri to 9 p.m.  
(also on bank holidays)

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## THE VALUE OF FREEDOM

19 September 2018 to 10 February 2019

**What value does freedom have today? How can society's balancing act between self-determination and social responsibility be negotiated successfully? Works by more than fifty artists explore this complex issue from different viewpoints, creating an awareness of the fragility of freedom.**

*According to director and curator Stella Rolling, "Faced with a climate of fear and insecurity, there is an increasing social consensus that the state should exercise more regulation and control. The urgent need for a debate on the consequences of this is what prompted this exhibition about the value of freedom."*

The notion of freedom is constantly in flux. In historical terms, it has been shaped by alternating counterforces and has charted an important course for democracy ever since the *polis* of Classical Antiquity. Since the 1990s, democracy in concert with the market economy has increasingly been touted as a system to which there is no alternative, while globalisation has, at the same time, fomented growing tensions between these two concepts. Today, neoliberalist thinking seems to be gradually undermining democracy by eroding the very freedoms that have already been achieved and taken for granted.

It is against this backdrop that our exhibition highlights *The Value of Freedom*. Given that individual self-determination is influenced by so many internal and external factors, the show describes a complex tapestry of mutual dependencies and countereffects. The works on display, contributed by more than fifty artists, approach this issue from a variety of perspectives.

One central aspect of the exhibition is devoted to the fundamental essence of freedom. Is it about being free on the boundary between nature and culture, or is freedom merely a game whose appeal lies in its rules and the resistance to them? Can the individual cope with freedom, or are rules required? Works by Alexander Kluge, Artur Żmijewski and Dara Birnbaum address these and similar questions.

Another aspect of the exhibition addresses the political formats that determine the structures of communal life. For instance, Oliver Ressler questions what democracy really is, and how it might be, while Christodoulos Panayiotou analyses the choreography and construction of public life, and Carola Dertnig urges open debate.

The public space, reflecting political ideas and diverse individual needs alike, is the theme presented by Šejla Kamerić, Nina Könnemann, Teresa Margolles and others. Aspects of the public space are juxtaposed with the mechanisms of social media, where the power of knowledge meets the impotence of disinformation.

Other works in the exhibition deal with the constraints imposed on freedom by surveillance, control and censorship. The instruments of control imposed by the state to ensure public safety while at the same time securing its own power, are the themes evident in the works of Eva Grubinger, Aernout Mik and Betty Tompkins. The exhibition not only highlights the control of information as a key element of power, but also addresses the resulting sense of exclusion from the political process. Activist works such as those by Center for Political Beauty, Forensic Oceanography, Igor Grubić and Hiwa K. all generate critical counterpublics.

A number of works in the exhibition indicate the fragility of freedom. Artists such as Christoph Schlingensiefel or Superflex examine issues that threaten democracy, such as the social leitmotifs of fear, insecurity and corruption. By contrast, Anna Witt, Tobias Zielony and Johannes Gierlinger look at utopian visions and the notion of a flight into other worlds.

Yet another aspect of the exhibition explores forms of subjectification and strategies of emancipation. This includes addressing new imperatives of identity politics. Ashley Hans Scheirl and Philipp Timischl take on the deconstruction of heteronormative gender roles and the construction of individual identities, while Isabella Maund and Marlene Haring confront the struggle for social recognition and rights.

A light is also shed on the question of freedom in economic terms. Harun Farocki addresses the maximisation of productivity, while Pilvi Takala shows how productivity becomes a collective goal, and Amalia Ulman questions the economisation of the self: does the constant increase in productivity through self-optimisation actually constitute increased freedom?

All in all, the exhibition weaves a tapestry of mutual dependencies and countereffects, between the individual and society, between democracy and economy, between work and leisure, body and mind, nature and culture. In all of this, freedom invariably stands in relation to other factors and so must be constantly renegotiated.

According to Severin Dünser, curator of the exhibition, *"Freedom is like the proverbial carrot that we dangle before our very own noses. Whenever we think we are within reach, the next carrot appears right in front of us. For we cannot possess freedom – we can only experience it by striving for it. Just how juicy that carrot seems to be depends entirely on how hungry we are for it."*

## WITH WORKS BY

Zbyněk Baladrán, Dara Birnbaum, Jordi Colomer, Center for Political Beauty, Carola Dertnig, Simon Dybbroe Møller, Harun Farocki, Karin Ferrari, Forensic Oceanography, John Gerrard, Johannes Gierlinger, Lola González, Johan Grimontprez, Igor Grubić, Eva Grubinger, Marlene Haring, Hiwa K, Leon Kahane, Šejla Kamberić, Alexander Kluge, Nina Könnemann, Laibach, Lars Laumann, Luiza Margan, Teresa Margolles, Isabella Celeste Maund, Anna Meyer, Aernout Mik, Matthias Noggler, Josip Novosel, Julian Oliver, Trevor Paglen, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Ivan Pardo, Oliver Ressler, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Ashley Hans Scheirl, Christoph Schlingensiefel, Andreas Siekmann, Eva Stefani, Superflex, Pilvi Takala, Philipp Timischl, Milica Tomić, Betty Tompkins, Amalia Ulman, Kostis Velonis, Kara Walker, Stephen Willats, Anna Witt, Hannes Zebedin, Tobias Zielony and Żmijewski.

## CATALOGUE

### **The Value of Freedom**

Editors: Stella Rollig, Severin Dünser

Authors: Severin Dünser, Scott Jordan, Oliver Marchart, Elżbieta Matynia, Stella Rollig

Graphic design: grafisches Büro, Vienna

Publisher: Verlag für moderne Kunst

Scope: 168 pages, c. 270 images

Format: 22 x 30,5 cm, hardcover

German & English in one volume

ISBN 978-3-903114-63-0

Retail price: € 29,-

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition title	<i>The Value of Freedom</i>
Curator	Severin Dünser
Duration	19 September 2018 to 10 February 2019
Exhibits	approx. 60
Venue	Belvedere 21 Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Vienna
Opening hours	Wednesday to Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Extended opening: Wednesdays and Fridays until 9 p.m. Includes bank holidays
Tickets	Regular   € 8 Belvedere 21 annual season ticket   € 21 Concessions   € 6 Children and young people under 18   free
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