

DILITHIUM, CHAPTER 2: DOPPELGÄNGERS

Sept 13 – Oct 19, 2024

curated by Jen Kratochvil

with Hynek Alt, Nikola Balberčáková, Květoslava Fulierová & Petra Feriancová, Laura Gozlan, Martins Kohout, Astrid Proll, Jelisaveta Rapačić, Anna Rusínová, Sráč Sam, Miriam Stoney

i wrote jen this summer from paris, while overlooking the seine. i have no idea where jen is. somewhere in the us, i guess. but she (she?) could be anywhere. jen and i are google-doppelgängers. jen has my email. she (let's settle with she for simplicity's sake) beat me to it, getting my address earlier than i did. she has one "k". i'm using two, like a crazy person, just because of her. but it's not her fault. she didn't know about me. i opened my account in 2011. three or four lifetimes ago. jen receives a lot of my mail. i got a single one from her, by accident. did you know when you were setting up your gmail that it would stay with you forever? i'm afraid jen is a terf. or even worse, a trump voter. why does one always need to fear the worst? that obviously says more about me than about her. jen might be my friend. even though my over-cluttered brain and overflowing heart can't physically encompass more human beings. even though i still try. i love them. human beings. i love you. all of you. mostly. if you're not terfs, or trump voters and such, that is. and this show was supposed to be about doppelgängers. about shadow images whose stories we don't want to, can't, or are not willing to tell. doppelgängers of who? not important. of us. all of us. the rest of us or the last of us mushrooms. we keep fighting binaries. binaries are winning though. just look around. winner/loser. harris or trump. poor and proud or a hypocrite. east and west, still, can you believe it. a delicious sweet energizing beverage or boycott. morality, or not. no left, no right anymore, yet still searching for luke skywalker at every step. it's her or him and don't you dare to think otherwise, hide in your little corner and pls just shut up. punch. punch. crying. boxers, i mean, shouldn't sport be just? why, oh why. i really hope jen is not my mirror image and we don't live in a multiversal simulation because this one life is too much already. overwhelmed. that's what i am. and tired. and that's ok, they keep telling me, memes. do i need jen? nope. i don't. simple as that. does she need me? probably the same. but how would i know? i'm not her and have no idea what she's dreaming of, what flowers she likes, how much the concept of the so-called traditional family means to her, or what's her favorite conspiracy. do i fear jen? tbh, i don't know. fairytales say doppelgängers are scary and ominous. but does that apply to email addresses too? one can't even ask these stupid large language model things anymore, because. i want to hide, i want to hide in anna's armor; transform myself with nikola, one way or the other; levitate with hynek, oblivious; love deeply with petra and květoslava; pierce walls by threads with jelisaveta, live through times made mythology with astrid; age endlessly with laura; and simply curl up and dive in those nostalgia fetishes with martins and wonder if miriam's dog would be open for a cuddle. a warm embrace. calming. reassuring. i was afraid of being too loose. so i did my best doppelganging be-a-western-gurl act to make this proper. and now i'm trying to smash the whole thing to pieces. but it is a gallery show at the end of the day. too proper actually. i'm disappointed with myself, but also, who cares. i just hope jen would come.

jen

E X I L E

after all, i would even call this a family show, a nicely packable suitcase of a family show, good old duchamp-style. not necessarily as catering or accessible to families, as a new disney musical might be. neither understanding family as a core political concept for the new fascism of jd vances of this world, or declared normality of tim walzes for that matter, no delicious sandwiches on offer. no state power implementing violence over bodies of its citizens or inhabitants bearing children present around here. families, yes, but not those. and doppelgängers seem to be directly related to the organizational structures we place ourselves in, calling them families, communities, or modes of solitude. structures given and adapted or accepted, chosen and pimped, feared, wished for, even desired, curated or randomly assembled by circumstances. maybe this is a disney musical actually, where every character has their doppelgänger and you never know who is who. there are no stars included, though. just your usual family members. your queer niece. the slightly crazy grandaunt. the good grandma. the difficult uncle. someone's dog, for sure. kilroy, weirdly enough. and such. i mean, let's go through the characters together, or rather the footprints and traces they left behind.

E X I L E

hynek

sculptures stand on plinths. what happens when they don't? do public monuments fly? or rather, do they enjoy flying? gravity should not be considered a political concept. gravity just is. so they say. when you lift a sculpture placed in public space by a specific political establishment with its set of values, rules, and world-building conception, what kind of process do you witness? is it the mirroring of those values you see? is it representation? is it translation of foundational concepts in real-time? a peek into an otherwise impenetrable black box? and when they fly, it's suddenly all completely off the wall. the situation becomes simply too confusing, so your internal gyroscope gets mad. each shot of the process creates a new mirror image and those are here to stay, sealed in permanence alluding ink. advertise that, amazon. and hynek is there on the side, behind the shot, as a photographer, even though he's not. but his doppelgänger might be. and sometimes they even sing together.

nikola

body dysmorphia, anxiety, hostile envy, objectification, eating disorders, risky cosmetic surgeries, isolation, self-deprecation, depression... just name it. looksmaxxing sounds like a new internet-infused generational virus. the goal of it all seems to be the improvement of SMV, or "sexual market value," well, at least in the original core of looksmaxxing, deep within the incel movement, where young men and boys blame women, and especially feminism, for their romantic failings. but a thing like this can't stay just within one community, oh no, there is plenty of looksmaxxing taking place among young women and girls too. spread through social media influencing, bringing up the so-called "glow-up" culture, methods of making someone more attractive, followed by beauty challenges, viral cosmetic trends, and the elevation of impossible beauty standards. same old, same old invisible hand of the market invisibly holding a bunch of kids under their necks, choking them to death. diving into all this is a rabbit hole i'm not willing to go through. nikola did. and what she brought back would make your not-maxxed skin crawl.

květoslava & petra

view from balcony. late 1970s. domestic scene, kitchen. same period. living room. flower pots. men sitting behind a table. no. let them sit. this is not their story. a mirror, 2010s, 2020s. from horizontal to vertical. iphone, heh. rewind. květa and petra met around that time when iphone still felt very new. analogue camera was nevertheless always present, till it broke, only last month. both květa and petra are mothers. both of them are artists. both of them have or had demanding mothers. they like spending time together. bonding over little eastern european canapés. cheese, a slice of ham, half an egg. coffee? actually, i don't know what they drink. there is always an image taken on the way out, by the door, in a reflection of the hallway mirror. image in the mirror, mirrored further by the camera's lens. reality. there is nothing special about any of this. quotidian routine. there is so much. stories are swirling in the air like a tornado. so many lives involved. so many mirrored characters and plot lines. květa and petra bond over various topics, including their art and discussion of family. květa holds her family stories very dear, yet keeps them separate from work. petra involves them in her practice, and květa admires that. their dialogue is sometimes like weaving threads, creating a large-scale tapisserie; other times, they do a lot of brickwork, mortar splashing all over. petra's kids are listening. or rather making a mess. people used to come to the apartment to see the man behind the table, but he's long gone. resilience.

laura

how old do you think memes are? i had no clue. but stalin was supposedly once really shocked by the presence of a meme on his private bathroom during the valta conference. kilroy was there back then. and kilroy, hold on to something,

is also here, today, with us. their notorious nose poking from the signboard into the street's pavement, oh they wish. nose of a goblin, a witch, a jew, or simply a phallus. monstrosity incarnated. with the highest quality nosiness. beautifully liberated by mum. laura's good old doppelgänger, the mum. mum has a tendency to consume, to absorb, to escalate situations and mitigate them by strange dark magic of everyday. all that at a time when identity theft could be considered, but no legal charges are ever pressed. mum is the new kilroy. and maybe she always has been.

martins

it started with extinct pigeons, followed by a very liberating, still ongoing discussion on identity and such and led to random piles of stuff from an athenian flea market. excuse my oversimplification, please, but this whole thing is haunted as fuck. nostalgia is a muscle that one doesn't necessarily need to exercise to keep it in shape. it grows with age. it grows with experience, knowledge, and developing personal politics. it flourishes in disillusion and sobering up from the high ideals of youth. nostalgia is a maze of proxy characters doubling, tripling, or simply multiplying original meanings of things into an endless stream of consciousness. each and every individual piece of that nebulous clatter used to have an original meaning. now they exist together as a unified entity. fascinating, repulsive, cute at times, and mostly sad. nostalgia is being weaponized by fascists all over (and the entertainment industrial complex), so here we try to look at it from a different angle, well, you, dear audience, please try that. because so far, we don't know ourselves.

astrid

who these figures are might be very important. but the grainy haze embracing them makes it hard to point out which way to direct your thinking. google lens? not sure in this case. when marches and protest signs and banners are simply not enough, there is always someone who thinks that burning down a police station is the logical next step. and then there are some who actually do it. feels like we are in that moment quite presently. one can almost feel the warmth of the fire, and the strange stomach-turning stench of scorching plastic. dystopian and hopeful. and for all that, back to disney, you need your chosen family, your comrades not only in arms. so, who those figures are is probably very important. but the shared collective memory is too short and narrow. who knows. so let's just look at them. the casual poses. gazes exchanged outside of the frames of the photographs. the presence of a third person maybe not visible at first glance. this is history. this is now. this is astrid proll, gudrun ensslin, and andreas baader.

jelisaveta

do i cry or do i smash my head over the closest wall? barnier, excuse me?! polio? after 25 years? i mean... is this ever gonna end bibi? maybe it's not my head deserving smashing. but walls have much more potential than that actually. walls can hide stuff, much better than closets. even though, for certain kinds of stuff, no brick is strong enough. sometimes, you can just mask it. with a faux-wall. especially if you're a woman, a certain type of soft faux-ness is almost required by the normalizing society of ours putting you back in your place. and no one cares what you do. weirdly lila. hm. why not. so jelisaveta ran into a wall for sure. same as most of us keep doing. but since she's always carrying at least one or two disposable doppelgängers to mask her exit, she actually didn't run into a wall. she secretly, in a split of a second, exchanged herself for a double who then fell through the bricks. giving it a tangibly invisible touch of irony. work with textiles is for women, post-internet artists, or indigenous people, shouted the big sister from a nearby public announcement speaker. so we all opened our own textile walls and neatly folded ourselves inside with a freshly chilled bottle of something bubbly.

E X I L E

anna

how better to hide than in plain sight? masking. as everyday reality. anna's hooded presents itself as something between a medieval armor for dragon riding, fetish latex second skin, and a pile of petrified gadgets protecting us from our direct vicinity by channeling distant meme-lands. nostalgia included. noise cancelling with its signature dong followed by a soft embrace of algorithmic silence. yes, i do wear headphones even when not listening to music or podcasts. perceive me, if you need to, but i'd never notice that. yes, i am a dragon rider, sure, whatever. keeping the distance. keeping pace, so fast that one might just blend with their surroundings and no catcalling, no shouting, no staring anymore even possible. i'm projecting myself into anna's armor maybe too much, but wouldn't you too? it's so smooth, so desirable, and it makes you disappear, who wouldn't want that. love.

sam

when srac sam moved to the countryside, she was not welcomed with open arms. when srac sam moved to the czech countryside in former sudetenland, she was still quite naive about this whole move-out-of-the-city thing. when srac sam and her partner moved to the village called czech birch tree, renamed from the original german birch tree, she became a victim of endless hate crimes. when srac sam took on her chosen name, which literally means, asshole sam, an aggressive slur used against her, she knew that her way through this was to turn all that aggression upside down. or inside out. the works are out of time, out of place. they represent labor. emotional labor, physical labor, endless labor. acceptance and performance and the best imaginable execution of a role of mother, a strong matriarch keeping a protective arm over her flock, the role of lover, the role of a good - slightly weird - neighbor. auto portraits. we are out of sausages today. get on your knees. you wretch of the east. there is no performativity. as they say, it's just life.

miriam

a story of a dog is always a good story. good girl. indeed. there once was a dog and the dog was a literary scholar and a writer, hardly anyone knew that the dog was actually a dog. she might have been a fairy, but she was a dog. we are at the end in a museum, so all around gives a clear and historically accurate account of the dog's life and oeuvre. or is it a museum really? are we at dorotheum? or in the beauty and the beast's castle? who is mirroring who? at this point you just have to give up the doppelgänger treasure hunt and just listen to the dog and miriam's account of her work. you might even want to get down on all fours and touch the ground to feel something, to get closer to the adequate viewpoint. don't worry. she never bites.

E X I L E

wouldn't you say, that since the end of the lockdowns – or rather after we decided to recategorize covid from a global threat to a common nuisance – that we slowed down with all the mental health talk within the art world? or was it since the russian tanks and ukrainian drones smashing each other to smithereens lost their novelty and transformed themselves into quotidian background noise? or after most of us went to countless protests following oct 7th and only very little has changed? isn't that a good question? where is our newly discovered focus on mental health? where are our healthy, self-aware doppelgängers with newly discovered self-confidence built on analyzed, categorized and almost resolved traumas? oh, or was it after kamala harris took on tim walz and their campaign rechristened itself from brat to normal (in comparison to the “weird” ones on the other side)? i'd call that “the last straw”...time of normalization officially endorsed not just by fascists and populists all over, but also by everyone's favorite democratic candidates. normal, my ass. ah, but maybe we don't talk about mental health that much just because we already wanted so hard to be in a new season of the global art world tv show, a new season tackling a new exciting topic, just wonder what that might be. becoming normal is for sure on the top of the list.

E X I L E

this show is very much about me. autobiographic, one might say. not gonna go to details. i just wanna apologize to everyone involved for dragging you into this. maybe just one thing. remember the duchampian suitcase exhibition? boîte-en-valise. 1935-1941. available at christie's annual resale for a million of millions. or maybe not. now you know, right? that one. well, this is a true boîte-en-valise. only with the valise being an ikea bag. or tbh, rather a couple of ikea bags (and/or an array of brand-less ikea bag inspired sturdy transport bags). i've been installing and installing for years on endlessly all these crazy difficult newly commissioned works requiring insane build-ups, moneys, people-power, transport companies and excel sheets without an end, and and...who knows what else...and now i'm in a premature midlife crisis. or just an institutional crisis. or an art world crisis. and i hate the normalized institutional let's-be-switzerland landscape. so fuck that. this is a tiny show. from plastic bags. brought in by the artists, domen, christian or me. and that's it. thank you all for carrying that stuff. you're all just crazy amazing. and i do love you all. thank you.

i mean, thank you.

actually, one more thing
the czech birch tree
formerly german birch tree?
in the sudetenland?
remember?
that place is not only a home to sráč sam, but also to her
gallery
galerie sam83
and that place is currently hosting a show which throws a
direct shadow over this show
one might even call it a doppelgänger show
and as always
no idea who is a doppelgänger of whom
the show presents mostly the same artists, even though not
completely
some present work, some are present in thought, some on
someone else's ears
others are not here with us, in vienna, at exile,
and wave to us over distance from czech birch tree.
they even followed a good austro-hungarian tradition
and sent a polite greeting fax from the fringes of the land
to the capital
a waving gesture towards the former centre
so let me thank them too

E X I L E

so where are the doppelgängers in the show? there might be none. they used to be perceived as something so special, so challenging to comprehend, so uncanny and frightening, the shadow masters behind the walls, lurking from the dark corners of one's beliefs, shattering core principles. and suddenly, to me, they are just the most insignificant divergences of everyday decision-making, little shifts in vision, perception errors and voluntary resignations to follow, and/or vice versa. doppelgängers are everywhere. and no matter how many sequels you make of them, they won't be as scary as they used to.

E X I L E

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LIST OF WORKS

Downstairs (left to right)

Martins Kohout, *Stye*, series of five photographs on wooden frames, 20 x 15 x 3 cm, 2024

Nikola Balberčáková, *r/ForeverAlone*, 4K video, 11', 2024
credits:
performed by Andrea Cverčková, Maria Kižňanská
cinematography: Kristián Babjar
editing: Marek Bihuň
sound: Lenka Adamcová
technical support: Jakub Pohlodek

Hynek Alt, *Untitled (In the Air)*, slideshow on e-ink display in plexi box, 42 x 30 x 8 cm, 2022

Jelisaveta Rapaić, *To Hide, To Protect, To Save, To Control*, embroidered fabric, 75 x 80 cm, 2024

Miriam Stoney, *Like a Dog*, installation, dimensions variable, 2024

Upstairs (left to right)

Sráč Sam, *Tady padni*, wire, dimensions variable, 2007

Anna Rusínová, *Nostalgiamaxxing*, latex hoody with chain vest and cast elements, dimensions variable, 2024

Petra Feriancová & Květoslava Fulierová, *Vulnerable yet Everlasting*, a series of photocopied photographs and diaprojection, 2015 – 2024

Sráč Sam, *Exclusive*, drawing on paper trays, 2014

Sráč Sam, *without title*, wax and ink on cardboard in wooden box, 2007

Astrid Proll, *Guðrun Ensslin, Paris, Nov 1969*, archival inkjet print, 23,5 x 17 cm, printed 2008

Astrid Proll, *Andreas Baader, Paris, Nov 1969*, archival inkjet print, 23,5 x 17 cm, printed 2008

Office

Sráč Sam, *Ubožáci východu*, text on fabric, drawing on paper, 2024

Outside

Laura Gozlan, *Kilroy's Mom, Mom's Kilroy*, lighbox, 104 x 104 cm, 2024

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