

**MEDIA INFORMATION**

**Oh, make your fingernails into spades,  
Your palms into shovels**

**Opening:** TH, 31 03 2022, 7:00 pm  
**Duration:** FR, 01 04 2022 – SA, 14 05 2022  
**Artists:** Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė  
**Curator:** Katharina Brandl

**PRESS TOUR:** WE, 30 03 2022, 10:00 am

**PRESS and  
IMAGE MATERIAL:** [www.kunstraum.net/en/press](http://www.kunstraum.net/en/press)

**PROGRAMME:**

**Curator Tours with Katharina Brandl**

SA, 02 04 2022, 1:00 pm (with Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė)  
SA, 30 04 2022, 1:00 pm (special tour on Walpurgis Night)

**Public Guided Tours**

SA, 23 04 2022, 1:00 pm  
SA, 14 05 2022, 1:00 pm

**Oh, make your fingernails into spades,**

**Your palms into shovels**

Pointed fingernails and palms full of earth, burning heads and dystopian landscape animations: The visual language of Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė's first institutional solo exhibition in Austria is prodigious. A towering haystack brings witch hunts to mind, a menacing floating rake conjures images of famine, peasant uprisings, an earth that is brutally exploited, yet only feeds a fraction of humanity sufficiently. The title of the exhibition *Oh, make your fingernails into spades, Your palms into shovels* refers to two lines from a dirge the two artists wrote as the basis for their video installation *Mouthless Part II*. In the spirit of *dziady*, the Baltic-Slavic "Day of the Dead", the video work depicts a world in which conventional categories, such as human, nature, city, country, are no longer valid. The singing performers navigate a landscape in flux, animated by artificial intelligence. The Anthropocene and its impacts stand like an elephant in the room—a comparison that is only appropriate because the elephant, unlike so many species, has not yet fallen victim to mass extinction. Or, to put it in the words of curator Katharina Brandl: "No representation of landscape is innocent anymore in the Anthropocene."

Inspired by Baltic-Slavic traditions and ecofeminist theories, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė create a space of collective grief in Kunstraum Niederoesterreich. In doing so, they do not freeze in melancholy, but open up mental spaces in which boundaries become blurred. Their works propagate the possible coexistence of all beings in this world, which vehemently resists the default "eat or be eaten" mindset. In their artistic practice Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė create an atmosphere in which all elements exist in harmony with each other. Whether human or spirit, whether living or dead, whether performer or visitor.

*"Titled Stages of Grief, the annual programme of Kunstraum Niederoesterreich 2022 is dedicated to the liminal shape of our present – the collective trauma of the health crisis of recent years is not yet over, but our mourning for all that we have lost is becoming all the more evident. Gawęda and Kulbokaitė's solo exhibition connects to this sentiment, while still*

*maintaining its own aesthetic and theoretical universe. Literary references, allusions to Baltic-Slavic traditions, and contemporary theory underpin their artistic works and make them so multifaceted and ambiguous.”* (curator Katharina Brandl)

## **The artists**

After meeting during studies at the Royal College of Art in London, Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaite have been working as a duo since 2013. Their multimedia practice – which includes performances, videos, sculptural and installation works, but perfumes, too – draws from extensive historical and theoretical research processes, a high sensitivity towards materials, and intellectual openness. They founded the YOUNG GIRL READING GROUP, a nomadic reading circle, in 2013, and received the Swiss Performance Art Award in 2021 along with the Collide Residency Award, which will support their residencies at CERN (Geneva) and at Hangar in Barcelona in 2022.

## **Works**

*Mouthless Part II*, 2021, Three-channel video installation, 23:08 min

*Death by Landscape (Fribourg)*, 2020, Digital print on glass, lead, larch wood frame

*Hexanol (IV)*, 2019, Aluminium, steel, hay

*For when I look at you for a moment, then it is no longer possible for me to speak; my tongue has snapped, at once a subtle fire has stolen beneath my flesh, I see nothing with my eyes, my ears hum, sweat pours from me, a trembling seizes me all over, I am greener than grass, and it seems to me that I am a little short of dying. (I-II)*, 2019, Spruce wood, polished steel, deformed lab glass

*Votive Flowers (I-III), Freestanding Votive Flowers (I-VII)*, all 2022, stainless steel, LED flowers

**Images available for download (selection)**



**Credits:** Mouthless Part II © Dorota Gawęda & Eglė Kulbokaitė



**Credits:** © Markus Gradwohl

**Press contact:**

Maximilian Steinborn, [Maximilian.Steinborn@kunstraum.net](mailto:Maximilian.Steinborn@kunstraum.net), +43 664 60 499 194

Image material: [www.kunstraum.net/en/press](http://www.kunstraum.net/en/press)

**Opening hours:** Tuesday–Friday, 11:00 am – 7:00 pm, and Saturday 11:00 am – 3:00 pm