

MINUS EGO

7.10.–
22.12.2016
Opening: October 6th, 7pm
Goethe-Institut Barcelona
Roger de Flor 224, 08025 BCN

Minus Ego is an exhibition addressing universal and timeless questions of “ego”, focusing on the challenging aspects of its reduction as well as on a search for the contemplative essence.



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Thilo Droste
Christoph Schwarz
Jordi Tolosa
Toni Serra *) Abu Ali
Jakob & Manila Bartnik
Kimsooja
Susanne Bosch
Michael Wesely
Antoni Tàpies

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Mon-Fri 9-20h, Sat 10-14h
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CURATED BY
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WITH THE SUPPORT OF
Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
With the collaboration of
transart institute
GRAPHIC DESIGN BY
PROLINE

GOETHE
INSTITUT



Jordi Tolosa, *I will never die*, 2009



Christoph Schwarz, *Rhodopia*, 2012



Thilo Droste, *Self Portrait*, 2013



Toni Serra *) Abu Ali, *Satsanga [en compañía de la realidad]*, 2013



Susanne Bosch, *Prevision I*, 2015



Antoni Tàpies, *Reflection Room*, 1996

* Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Edifici Jaume I, Carrer Ramon Trias Fargas, 25-27 - 08005 Barcelona. Opening visit: Friday October 7th at 7pm. The space is open and free for the public every Wednesday for the entire run of the 'Minus Ego' exhibition, from 7pm to 8pm.



Kimsooja, *An Album: Havana*, 2007, still from single-channel video projection, 6:57, loop, silent. With the courtesy of Galeria La Fabrica, Madrid - Keweenaw Gallery, Berlin and Majorca, and Kimsooja Studio, New York.



Michael Wesely, *IGG*, 2015



Jakob & Manila Bartnik, *I DO*, 2015

* Join us for the *I DO Café&Kuchen* (Wednesday 14 December, from 5:00pm at Goethe-Institut Barcelona) where all *I DO* participants are invited to have a coffee and kuchen and share their experiences.

MINUS EGO

RENOUNCING – DISAPPEARING – SHARING

Herman Bashiron Mendollicchio

In the era of the narcissist *selfie* it is both urgent and necessary to reflect on the nature of Ego, on how it influences and affects our existence. As stated by Alejandro Jodorowski: "The ego is a cage with no bird that believes it's a bird with no cage".

Surface and appearance become the system and rules that drive our actions. Egoism permeates political and social life and ego grows as strong, unsustainable and destructive entities that benefit neither the individual nor the collective.

Ideologies, propaganda, seductive corporate messages, hyper-productivity and the astute artifice of capitalism, compose the elements of that cage which oppresses the essence and enhances the ego.

Kaja Silverman, a psychoanalytic theorist who has studied the links between the ego, the gaze, the look and image, considers Lacan and Freud's well-known perspective on the ego: "Lacan proposes that the ego comes into existence the moment when the infant subject first apprehends the image of its body within a reflective surface, and is itself a mental refraction of that image. Thus, the ego is the representation of a corporeal representation". She also underlines: "In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud maintains that the ego is "first and foremost, a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface".

How can we free ourselves from the ego's cage? How can we move from optical consciousness, the threshold of the visible, the material surface towards

the imperceptible self, the essence, mind consciousness? What's behind our mirror-image?

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What do we refer to when talking about "ego reduction"? Is it about renouncing? Is it about disappearing? Perhaps, sharing? Is it related to silence? Is it about creating different relationships with people, ideas and contexts?

The complexity and diversity of the ego is a central issue in the life of every human and has been analysed from the perspective of philosophy, psychology, ethics, mysticism, religion, politics and culture in different times and spaces. The exploration of ego goes hand in hand with the evolution of humankind and thinking: from the psychic apparatus [id, ego and superego] defined by Sigmund Freud; or the radical

individual autonomy proclaimed by Max Stirner; to the multiple senses of annihilation, fading, fusion, dissolution or illusion that we could find in different spiritual beliefs, rituals and practices.

The transient passage of life, the concept of impermanence, the Buddhist *Anicca*, the *Fanaava* vision in Sufism, the Hindu concept of *Samadhi*, the Pall term *Mek-khama*, the active nihilism of Nietzsche's philosophy, Heidegger's *Mitsein* or Vattimo's *weak thought*, all deal – in one way or another – with the idea of renouncing and disappearing.

These main notions – renouncing, disappearing and sharing – compose the reflections on "Minus Ego", dig into the idea of essence and raise different questions and thoughts concerning the structure, definition, position and composition of ego.

The "Minus Ego" project explores both the convergences and divergences of ego, its dependency and independency, its eternity and impermanence. Reflecting on this

from within artistic contents – themselves often filled with egotism – will provide an opportunity to explore the spirit and nature of "I", "Self", "Ego" from different perspectives and their relationships with the "We", the "Other" and different "systems and superstructures".

The different works forming the exhibition reveal the many possible interpretations of the "Minus Ego" concept. Envisioned as a research and exhibition project, "Minus Ego" will be developed through several steps in different places and times, changing and transforming itself just as egos and identities do.

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Thilo Droste, with his work *Self Portrait*, provokes our narcissist nature by engraving the word 'ego' onto magnifying mirrors. Our enlarged reflected images directly confront the notion of ego, thus triggering thoughts on the state of our own projection, representation and essence. In *humanistic confession manual*, an elegant mirror reflects the engraved sentence 'Ego Te Absolvo' – the Latin formula of the Christian absolution – which, in this case, may refer both to the tendency to absolve the sins of the ego, as well as to the cages represented by ideologies or religious superstructures.

After years of focusing on painting, Thilo Droste developed a more conceptual approach using a wide range of media and techniques. He juxtaposes intense reflections concerning different existing situations and conditions, topics and contexts with humour and formal ease. *Will*, elaborates simplicity and technical expertise define his work. He deals with topics such as authentic and fake, the seeming and the real, raising questions about the role of the artist in both society and the art market. He earnestly scrutinizes common sense, not with a grandiose revolutionary gesture, but with subtle resistance. Interaction and communication between audience and artwork play an eminent role in the perception of his work.

Rhodopia, by Christoph Schwarz, is a personal story that describes – through an ironic approach – the artist's efforts to make his life anew. A self-reflection on the sense of his life – caught in-between artist residencies, work and daily routines – in search of a new identity and other possible layers of existence.

Christoph Schwarz, Born 1981 in Vienna, graduated from the University of Applied Arts Vienna in 2006. Schwarz's projects mainly emerge out of self-involved set-ups, in which he blends fact and fiction into humorous narratives that can find their respective formal shape in performance, installations, and short film, and have been shown at exhibitions and film festivals internationally.

Toni Serra *) Abu Ali's *Satsanga* is a video deriving from a conversation recorded in the 70s in Mumbai (India), between a traveller and the Indian philosopher Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, author of "I am That", one of the most recent and significant exemplar of Advaita Vedanta. The centrality of consciousness surrounded by *maya* (illusion), the abandonment of personal identity, the possibility of renunciation and vanishing and the identification with the body as an impediment to self-realisation are some of the main concepts emerging from the video.

Abu Ali *) Toni Serra. Currently living in between Barcelona (Spain) and Dour Muzar (Morocco). Author of video and video programs. Member of OWI Archives, he is also working in the research projects *Ru'a* (visions), *disReality*, *The Colonial Dream*, and *Babylon Archives*. His videos explore different visions between the essay and the poetry, with a evocation of trance and the realities of dream. His first works in New York and Tangiers were questioning about the beauty and mystery of ephemeral and marginal. In 1998 he finished the *TV Codes* series: a critical immersion into the mass media mechanisms of alienation, a deconstruction of its hypnotic creation of social and identity models. His last videos immerse into the relationship with the visionary, the inner experience, the no man's land between real and unreal, dream and awareness, poetry and prophecy... as a way to deepen the criticism of reality.

The *Reflection Room*, a secular chapel conceived by Antoni Tàpies for the Pompeu Fabra University, is a 500m³ space dedicated to silence and contemplation. As expressed by the artist: "Given the excessive turmoil, mental distraction and the innumerable cults to 'false realities' to which we are subjected in today's societies, I saw an excellent opportunity to contribute to creating an area and some images that help with meditation, concentration and, in short, a better understanding of our true being". A silent space that is certainly appropriate for deepening a reflection on the concept of 'Minus Ego' and the related ideas of renouncing, disappearing and sharing.

Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona, 1923-2012). Painter, sculptor and writer, Tàpies has exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Institute of Contemporary Art and the Serpentine and Hayward Galleries, London; the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; the Kunsthau, Zurich; the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Jeu de Paume and the Centre Pompidou; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia; and the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, among many other prestigious institutions. Antoni Tàpies created the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in 1984 with the aim of promoting the study and knowledge of contemporary art, paying special attention to his role in the consciousness of modern man.

Jordi Tolosa, with his installation *I will never die*, on the one hand, makes a strong statement revealing the powerful presence of the "I" beyond any other spatio-temporal manifestation; on the other, given the movable and flexible nature of the installation, the sentence becomes deliberately ambiguous. In the delicate installation *I and my eternity*, three different iron frames – the 'I', the conjunction 'and', then 'my eternity' – stand solid on the ground, referring to the inner world of the artist, while giving space to otherness, combination and difference as well as to the profound, abstract, infinite and mysterious concept of eternity.

Jordi Tolosa was born one night in October 1956. He studied at Sant Jordi School of Fine Art, in Barcelona. During the 80s began a series of interventions in the street, both individually and collectively. After a short stay in Germany, he had shows in Hannover, Bonn and Frankfurt.

In the video *Prevision I*, by Susanne Bosch, a naked body faces an empty theatre. The utmost static image becomes a metaphor of the self facing the theatre of life – empty, but full of possibilities – with a voice-over that remarks the stages – past, present and future – of life: I remember, I care, I wish.

Susanne Bosch is an artist and independent researcher. She achieved a PhD about her public artwork in 2012. From 2007-2012, she developed and led the art in Public master programme at the University of Ulster in Belfast together with artist Dan Shipides. As "interface activist", she has an international practice predominantly by with public and on long-term questions, which tackle creative arguments around the ideas of democracy and sustainable futures. Works include issues around money, migration, surviving, work, societal visions and practice models. She develops site- and situation-specific interventions, installations, video, drawing, audio as well as dialogical formats. In her artistic research and as facilitator she works with formats such as writing, holding seminars and workshops in the spirit of 'Art of Hosting' as well as Open Space conferences. She is trained in Open Space and Art of Hosting Facilitation (2008-2014), as well as conflict transformation (2004) and systemic constellationwork (2014). Susanne is, next to other things, a research fellow in the Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme (ICAPP), 2014-2018.

The interactive work *I DO*, developed by Jakob and Manila Bartnik, is focused on the idea of "renouncing". Asking people to engage in a "not doing experience", opens a different space – in terms of thinking and acting – that we are not used to anymore. The *I DO* experience deviates the normal daily course of life through the paradoxical application of limitations and restrictions. The project consists in several steps, including a final meeting where the participants share their own personal experience of renunciation.

Jakob&Manila is a duo of artists based in Osnabrück (Germany) and is formed by the husband-and-wife team of Jakob Bartnik (1974, Wegezwang, Poland) and Manila Bartnik (1973, Manila, Philippines). Both were trained in art, philosophy, and sociology at Osnabrück University. After having individually worked and evolved their art in the sector of performance, installations, and painting, together they began to develop a vision of art as a tool for knowing, evaluating, testing, and connecting together individuals and social groups. In fact, their projects involve participative methods and undertakings that envisage the public's direct involvement: art for them means sparking off a mechanism for "learning by experience" and, as a result, their performances always call for a moment of confrontation and dialogue with the participants. Their creative partnership started off in 2012 with *Many things we don't need*, in the DORIS gallery, Berlin; since then they have created projects in Germany, Poland, Malaysia, America, France and Italy. I DO, one of these projects, was realized for the first time in the Osnabrück Kunsthalle in December 2015 as part of the Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme. In 2014 they founded the BartnikProjectRoom, a non-commercial space to host artists in residence.

In Kimsooja's *An Album: Havana*, we contemplate a silent passage, a travelling sequence, a visual reflection on how life and bodies will – sooner or later – become dust and light. The video and the prints speak of disappearance; they suggest a poetic representation of our passage from the tangible to the intangible, from the figurative to the abstract, and remind us of our quick passage on this planet.

Kimsooja was born in 1957 in Daegu, South Korea, and lives and works in New York, Paris, and Seoul. She has had major exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou, Metz (2015); Guggenheim, Bilbao (2015) Vancouver Art Gallery (2013) and the Crystal Palace - Reina Sofía, Madrid (2006), among many others. She represented Korea for the 24th São Paulo Biennale in 1998 and the 50th Venice Biennale Korean Pavilion in 2013. Addressing issues of the displaced self and others, Kimsooja's work spans performance, video, photo, and site-specific installation using sound, light, and specific cultural references. With the gaze of a mirror and a needle that reveals and brings us to an awareness of self, Kimsooja investigates questions concerning the conditions of humanity, while engaging issues of aesthetic, culture, politics, and the environment we live in. Kimsooja brings together a conceptual and a structural investigation of performance, installation, video and photography, as well as painting, drawing and sculpture, through an exploration of materiality/ immateriality, mobility/immobility, in a manner of non-making and non-doing, that inverts the notion of the artist as the predominant actor. Taking us on her journey that evolves with the continuous unfolding of her concept of Bottari and the notion of Needle and Mirror as an integral point of contemplation, Kimsooja's work invites us to question our existence, the world, and the major challenges we are facing in this era.

IGG, a series of portraits produced by Michael Wesely, reminds us that we do exist in connection with others. The overlapping of images suggests the idea of the *One* that connects to the *Multiple*; the individual who gains another significance upon merging with the collective. Wesely's photography opens up a reflection on the *Mitsein*, on the idea of being-with-others, on concepts of group-individuality and group-dynamics.

Michael Wesely is a contemporary German photographer whose pioneering technique, developed in the late 80's, sees him disconnecting exposure time from its technical function and adapting it to the extent of activities over a specific period of time. Freeing this exposure time from its technical factors, he pushes his photographs to take shape through a process of duration. This shift has allowed him to create uniquely long exposures of cities, architecture, still lifes, interiors and portraits. Wesely uses large-format cameras to create his photographs concerned with ideas of temporality and ephemerality, presenting still images that literally embody the passage of time. Wesely has received numerous awards and prizes for his work, including a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD (1995) for the production of photographs in the Netherlands, and a scholarship from the Free State of Saxony for a new body of work in the US (1999). In 2004, he was commissioned by the New York Museum of Modern Art to carry out a large-scale production titled the Open Shutter Project. Born in Munich in 1963, he lives and works in Berlin.