

Concept

The Lion's Lockdown

Barbara Hennig Marques and Olivia Lecomte
Online Performance, Lucerne 2020

Normally the Lion Monument is a magnet for mass tourism from all over the world, predominantly from Asia. A pilgrimage site for hundreds of thousands every year, now stands abandoned. The lion is lonely. He feels similar to many people in the world: he is isolated. Like most individuals, he too must now be alone. Who knows, perhaps he will die. Perhaps while the sky continues to shine as it always has, now free from contrails, someone among us will die. It's over with parties, pleasure and freedom. What kind of life is this? An arrangement between isolation, inactivity, boredom, monotony, rage and loneliness? What kind of life is it when renunciation, restriction, distance, respect and excessive hygiene are the new norm?

Barbara Hennig Marques and Olivia Lecomte make use of the unusual situation regarding the state of emergency and the ghostly emptiness at the Lion Monument for their photo shoot, because here the drama of the current situation, as well as its absurdity, is reflected in a particularly (an especially) striking way. Like a monument, people are becoming sedentary loners, withdrawing and avoiding all contact. They are told to be stone-like, silent and mute like the lion and show solidarity in a lockdown against the deadly virus. These days people show their solidarity by doing the opposite of what was sometimes necessary in times of turmoil: they should not actively resist. They are not supposed to be an army. They should not enter into a community, let alone be together. They should not be physical at all. No weapons, no uniform, just stay at home - the pyjamas will do. Now, individuals prove their solidarity through absence. Unlike before, the enemy is not someone who is armed or a politically motivated people. The enemy is invisible and may already be lurking in your neighbours and their children. The enemy could reside within any one of us and therefore everyone is an enemy. In contrast to the historical events that the Lion Monument has been commemorating for 199 years, some fundamental shifts are underway: solidarity in the fight against the enemy has been replaced by "solitude" as a struggle in itself. Being in solidarity now means "to distance oneself". Now, the enemy is not someone, but "something" that could be in everyone. Therefore everyone is a potential enemy, but with whom we are also in solidarity. The political danger does not manifest itself in revolutionary desires, but in the suspension of fundamental rights and lack of democratic participation. The critical mass are no longer responsive to orders or political majorities, but have become susceptible to hysteria, fear rhetoric and manipulation. Weapons are not dangerous objects that we direct against each other, but new "hygiene" measures that we implement on everything and everyone. Barbara Hennig Marques and Olivia Lecomte's multi-layered photographic work deals with consequences of the pandemic that are not only dangerous but also absurd, and the way that people react to them with fear, hysteria, pain, anger, addiction, but also hope and courage.

The photo shoot is developed as an online performance and consists of seven series. The title of each series refers to one of the behavioural recommendations issued by



the Swiss government in the context of the Corona pandemic. The photographs are narrative in nature, with make-up, disguises and symbolic objects supporting the underlying message. The photographic narratives are thus intended to stimulate the imagination and evoke memories and dreams. The subjects, in black and white, are touching, sensual, and support the narrative thread. The photographs are reminiscent of stills from a film, in which the viewer's imagination is free to fill the narrative gaps. Barbara Hennig Marques and Olivia Lecomte explore the effects of the pandemic and, similar to Dramey, they balance heaviness of the topic with ironic lightness.

During the entire photo shoot, Olivia Lecomte as a performance artist and Barbara Hennig Marques as the photographer maintained a distance of at least two meters. This distance was not only a real precautionary measure, but also an integral part of the project's content. An exception was made for the photographs in the seventh series, "Respect". There, Olivia Lecomte handles a Plexiglas panel directly in front of her body, which has the function of a protective mask, which is why close-ups were possible. The panes are reminiscent of the transparent room dividers that are currently installed at the checkout counters in many stores.

Throughout the entire work, Olivia Lecomte plays the protagonist who takes a stand on the new "dogmas" in front of the Lion Monument. At the same time, as an Asian-looking woman, she is a metaphor for the majority of tourists, who come from Asia.

Screenplay

Series 1: "Stay Home"

The first cycle shows an animal skin that serves as a picnic blanket. On it, stands a picnic basket filled with disinfectant spray, as well as empty wine bottles and a self-made crown made of toilet roll cardboard. The protagonist, Olivia, joins this still life. The pattern of her suit consists of small lion heads. She puts on the crown, opens a bottle of wine and drinks directly from the bottle. She sits quietly, looks around, talks to herself. She starts playing with water pistols. Aiming sometimes at herself, sometimes at the dying lion. Finally she jumps up into the air to the lion and forms a bridge from the dying animal to the animal carpet. At the end she ties a brassiere as a protective mask.

Series 2: "Keep Distance"

In allusion to the pilgrimage site of the Lion Monument, the artists have created a "Trinity" with the lion, king of the animals, as God the Father in the centre, flanked on the left by his daughter Olivia in a white virginal dress as the female counterpart to the Son of God and accompanied on the right by "Palma" as the "Holy Spirit". "Palma" is as much a fantasy name as it is a figure that is difficult to grasp rationally, whose eerie appearance underscores the ghostly nature of the empty space. "Palma" is "armed" with hygiene products and embodies the attempt to distance oneself from one another, especially to keep away from viruses, which appears miserable at first.

Series 3: "Wash Hands"

The protagonist, seen through a narrow section of a mirror, talks to herself. Or does she talk to the lion via the mirror? Is this a metaphor for a kind of video chat? While an employee of the city cleans the small fountain, Olivia cleans her face. Or does she

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get dirty with great dedication? The germs are trapped as she uses a cleansing mask. Suddenly the public grounds are transformed into a private bathroom. Close by, the quiet pond, with its algae slime trails, slumbers. The mask is laboriously removed. The protagonist sheds her skin - the narrative reaches a cathartic moment. It was worth the wait, because the regenerating cleansing has had its effect. Only: who cares?

Series 4: "Lion's Lockdown"

The title of the fourth cycle is also the main title of the photographic work. The lion is symbolically killed. Shot by a woman with a water pistol and protective goggles. These days, we are all potential murderers, inadvertently yet actively involved in the extinction of species, whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not. The lion is also affected by the pandemic, because he too is in lockdown. His admirers, thousands and thousands of tourists have all disappeared. He should be protected, shielded behind plastic. The protagonist demonstrates this and makes the lion disappear. The plastic itself mutates with its folds into a rock, the protagonist into a monument.

Series 5: "Catch Drops"

The droplets are collected, sealed and put out to sea. Off to new shores with the crown for a sail.

Series 6: "No Shaking Hands"

Shaking hands without touching is not possible, let alone posing together in a protective suit from a safe distance from the lion and camera. However, the proximity to "Palma", our faceless companion, is possible because she represents artificial intelligence. There are people who develop feelings for robots and virtual creatures. Olivia hugs and caresses "Palma". Then again, lately, we have begun to feel like "Palma", feeling like a digital vessel. We must keep our distance from familiar people, we are prohibited from breaching spatial proximity, and at best we can keep in contact via technological aids. Just as the monument carved in stone evokes feelings and empathy in thousands of people, the photographs in this series aim to achieve an emotional response and a reflection on feelings.

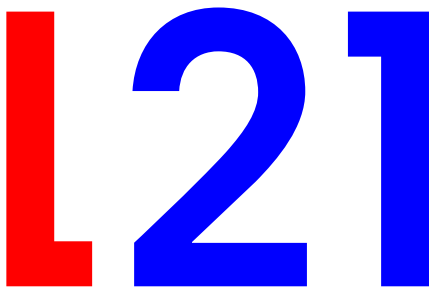
Series 7: "Respect"

In contrast to the other six series, here the camera is very close to the protagonist. No trace of respect. If it weren't for the acrylic disc that provides the sterile distance. Deep inhalation, moist exhalation. Behind the protective glass you can make cheeky faces. And what about virus transmission via surfaces? Who knows. Is the respectful distance that is currently maintained in this country a temporary phenomenon? Could the corona virus benefit us women, because we are allowed to feel safe from harassment? Is the comeback of manspreading only a matter of time? Shouldn't respectful interaction with one another be the norm and not be contingent on a deadly virus? Do we have to deliberately disfigure ourselves to feel protected? We don't give a damn.

Digital Performance

The impressive photographs can be seen on an almost daily basis as a digital performance until early June:

Instagram https://www.instagram.com/lionmonument_21/



Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/loewendenkmal21/>

Homepage des Projekts Löwendenkmal 21 <https://www.loewendenkmal21.ch/>

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Artists

Barbara Hennig Marques

Barbara Hennig Marques, born in Lucerne in 1969, studied art history, medieval history and journalism at the University of Zurich. In 2018, she completed her Bachelor's degree in «Art and Communication» at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Hennig is a multimedia artist and has an active performance and exhibition career in Central Switzerland. In addition to group and solo exhibitions, Hennig has been working with the artist Olivia Lecomte since 2017. In January 2020, their experimental short video «Conquered Concrete» won an award at the International Dance Festival «SzólóDuó» in Budapest. In June, the two of them will give an artistic performance at the Museum M1 in Adligenswil presenting their work «Urban Search, Decadent Rescue».

Olivia Lecomte

Olivia Lecomte, born in Birkenhead, Great Britain, in 1996, has been based in Lucerne since 2016. Lecomte is a graduate of the Codarts Hogeschool voor de Kunsten (BA Dance) and the National Ballet School of Canada. She is a freelance artist specializing in dance, choreography, film and photography. In the last four years she has danced and choreographed for internationally renowned institutions such as Tanz Luzerner Theater, Berliner Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Het Nationale Ballet, HMT Rostock, Korzo, Staatstheater Regensburg and Schauspiel Hannover.