

MQ: Levitate! – An exhibition at freiraum Q21 INTERNATIONAL/MQ

The exhibition explores the potential of levitation as the power to overcome gravity and make people and objects rise as a form of protest, resistance and liberation. Levitate! Curated by Daria Khan (RUS). The Opening is coordinated with *viennacontemporary* on Tuesday 22 September, at 7pm. There is a guided tour for the press at 10am on Tuesday 22 September.

In July 1967 a group of social activists organized the action "Levitate the Pentagon". They were endeavoring to exorcise the Pentagon by singing until it levitated and turned orange, driving out the evil spirits and ending the war in Vietnam. People kept singing day and night, but the Pentagon failed to rise, although some people claimed to have seen it shudder. The spectacle, togetherness, and humor of the action are relevant today in a context of increasing pressure, control and total surveillance.

This action provides the thematic starting point for the exhibition. With the verticality implicit to Levitation, the exhibition deconstructs the hierarchies of social and gendered dominance, elitism and authority. The artworks in the show deal with hocus pocus and delusion, with a performativity embedded in the act of levitation, and with cheating and pleasing the eye.

The major public sculpture by Columbian artist Ivan Argote is located on the square at the entrance to the MuseumsQuartier Wien. The artist's exploration of symbols of power and masculine domination culminates in this monument. In Ancient Egypt an obelisk was considered a ray of light petrified by the solar deity Ra. Light is subject to gravity, it can be curved, and fossilized in the melting obelisk. The obelisk is deprived of its verticality and power, and ends up lying on the ground, reverently bowing towards the statue of Empress Maria Theresa on the square across the road from the MuseumsQuartier.

At the entrance, the public is invited to experience levitation by taking a nap and dreaming in the sleep capsules at the pop-up "Oneiric Hotel," 2013, by Julijonas Urbonas (LTU). Using special dream-directing equipment, the project is an artistic reconstruction of a number of scientific sleep experiments on inducing and controlling lucid gravitational dreams. Here, visitors can consciously fly, fall and levitate in a state of induced reverie.

Privacy and intimacy are also central themes of Kristof Kintera's (CZE) "Weightlessness," 2013, which shows a pair of empty socks standing on a flying carpet. The sculpture engages humorously with human empowerment, the capacity to detach from the everyday setting and the search for more. While Cinthia Marcelle's (BRA) "R=0 (Homage to M.A.)" is a reenactment of a school prank in a simple but legible exercise of rebellion that suggests emancipation from social order and the rule of discipline.

Karthik Pandian's (USA) "Abracadabra," 2013, is a sculpture consisting of readymade elements: a megaphone typical of those used at demonstrations, topped with a magician's top hat and gloves. This awkward composition engages with protest and the many aspirations related to it. The aesthetics of the sculpture echo the button worn for the 1967 action "Levitate the Pentagon". Nothing touches the ground; the sculpture is an ironic reminder of the "miraculous" power that underlies social uprising.

Emiliano Maggi (ITA) also addresses the magical component of levitation. His sculpture is based on devices usually hidden beneath the clothes of street performers to create the illusion of levitation. The work is inspired by the artist's archive of concealed levitation devices in historical images.

The video "Manifestul," 2005, by Mona Vatamanu (ROU) and Florin Tudor (ROU) engages with social contradictions and simulacrum surrounding protest. Manifestos in the form of empty sheets of paper were distributed from above in Alt-Erlaa, a 1970s flagship utopian communal housing project in Vienna, as a simple gesture challenging the meaning of resistance.

The spectacle of resistance is also reflected in Christian Jankowski's (GER) series of photographs from the project "Heavy Weight history," 2014. The artist traveled to Poland, where he invited a group of burly weightlifters to try and pick up a number of massive public sculptures in the Polish capital, Warsaw. Wearing their national colors, the Polish champion power-lifters and bench-pressers struggle and strain to elevate hefty bronze and brick monuments, metaphorically attempting to lift the very burden of history on to their own shoulders.

The exhibition is accompanied by a Public Program, which includes artists' talks, performances and interdisciplinary conversations. In addition, visitors will be able to create their own levitation package in the format of a self-composed publication, which is available free of charge in the exhibition space.

A symposium held during the VIENNA ART WEEK on 21 November provides a conceptual and philosophical framework for the show. The symposium begins with a brief history of levitation, and an exploration of the scientific colonization of sleep and lucid decapitation. Speakers include: Julijonas Urbonas, artist, designer, researcher, engineer and writer, the artist Karthik Pandian, writers and philosophers Alexei Penzin (RUS) and Aaron Schuster (GER).

Artists:

Iván Argote (COL), Anton Burdakov (GBR)*, Cooking Sections (ISR/ESP)*, Patrick Hough (IRL)*, Christian Jankowski (GER), Křištof Kintera (CZE), Emiliano Maggi (ITA)*, Cinthia Marcelle (BRA), Rã di Martino (ITA)*, Astrid Menze (GER)*, Raphael Montanez Ortiz (USA), Karthik Pandian (USA), Mona Vatanamu & Florin Tudor (ROU), Julijonas Urbonas (LTU)*

* Artist-in-Residence, Q21/MQ

Curator: Daria Khan (RUS)

"Levitate!" is organized in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. The exhibition architecture is again by the department for Stage and costume design, film and exhibition architecture at the University Mozarteum, Salzburg. Under the supervision of Professor Henrik Ahr, the display concept has been developed by the student Anna Zadra.

Levitate!

Duration: 23.09. to 22.11., Tue-Sun 1pm - 4pm & 4.30pm - 8pm

admission free

Guided tour for the press: Tue 22.09., 10am

Opening: Tue 22.09., 7pm

Location: freiraum Q21 INTERNATIONAL/MuseumsQuartier Wien

www.Q21.at

#levitate

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