

PRESS RELEASE

Hollow Vessels: Agnieszka Mastalerz & Harit Srikhao

59 Amwell St, London EC1R 1UR

19 November – 11 December 2021

Fabbri Schenker Projects is delighted to present ***Hollow Vessels***, an exhibition by artists **Agnieszka Mastalerz** and **Harit Srikhao**. The artists in the show reflect on the mechanisms and calculation of power influencing human life individually and collectively, taking the body as a central element of investigation.

Bangkok based artist Harit Srikhao considers the ideological propaganda of Thailand's monarchy, narrated through the country's monuments. His aim is to interrogate the systems of control through which people perceive themselves, others, and the world that surrounds them. For this exhibition, the artist obtained permission from the Thai government to access the foundry where the national monuments are cast. There he selected, combined and framed the remnants of sculptures from different time periods, to challenge particular ideas on nation, sexuality and death promoted by the regime.

During his research, the artist noted how the idea of nation associated with the muscular, physical body has been inherited from the West. Before the kingdom of Rama IV (1804-1868) the depiction of one's own image was believed to bring bad luck. It was only during the mid-nineteenth century that the monarchy started to deploy their own image, through photography, as propaganda tool. British Photographer John Thomson was hired to portray the first photograph of King Rama IV in 1865, today present in the Wellcome Collection in London.

Srikhao's research goes beyond the analysis of the distorted consciousness produced by propaganda, to explore how images influence the formation of one's own identity. In The German Hygiene Museum in Dresden, the artist photographed the sculpture of *The Transparent Man*, an anatomical human model made of plastic, exposing the body's internal organs with blood vessels and nerve tracts. These photographs present the controversy that comes with the rationalization of human life, exemplifying what French philosopher Michel Foucault called The Clinical Gaze: the objectifying gaze that reduces humans to their mere physical qualities, depriving them of their essence. Srikhao's work makes us reflect on how the norms formed by the assessment of human's life on a solely clinical level, shape and form paradigms on health, mental illness and sexuality, people will try to fit in. Who shapes these norms? What kind of bodies are accepted in society? What bodies are excluded? And how does one's own body need to bend in order to fit into these parameters?

Warsaw based artist Agnieszka Mastalerz uses video and photography to investigate the mechanisms of control influencing and exploiting an individual. In the video *Play Down* the artist records the act of semen collection from a stallion for the purpose of artificial insemination. The sterile, disquieting atmosphere, as opposed to the stallion's warm and lively body, becomes a metaphor for the cold and rational forms of control, intervening intrusively in natural processes.

In *History of Sexuality* (1975) Foucault used the notion of biopolitics to speak about the governments' management of population as a function of national interest. The technique of biopolitical government develops as a network of power spreading beyond the legal sphere to control in a tentacular way, the entire territory of lived experience and penetrating each individual body. Power operates through the body as a form of social regulation. Society is systematically ordered through visible and invisible forces, in a way to oversee, modify and train bodies to perform and behave in a particular way, without the need for overt coercive measures.

The video *Primary Swarm* is staged in a wind tunnel, used to analyse the flow of air. A group of explorers is moving towards a gate. Their relationship is not clear, they may be competing against each other. From a standing position, they slowly begin to crawl, as if they were learning to orient themselves in the space. Outside the tunnel, there is a luxuriant natural environment. This is an actual area in the city of Warsaw, where new apartments are supposed to be built. The artists wanted to document its current status before it is transformed. While witnessing the slow disappearance of a green area of the city, previously available for the community and now passing into private hands, the artists wonder who will be the people entitled to live in those apartments. The hands in black gloves operate like a gate, which opens and closes, determining who is going to be left in and out of the space.

Agnieszka Mastalerz

(b. 1991) lives and works in Warsaw.

Graduated from the Studio of Spatial Activities by Mirosław Bałka at the Academy of Fine Arts (Warsaw, 2018). She was a guest student of Candice Breitz and Eli Cortiñas at Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Braunschweig (2019/20), and of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg (2017/18). Her work has been exhibited in MAXXI - National Museum of 21st Century Art (Rome, 2021), Wschód Gallery (Warsaw, 2020), Palazzo Strozzi (Florence, 2019), Starak Family Foundation (Warsaw, 2019), Deichtorhallen (Hamburg, 2018), Fondation Hippocrène (Paris, 2018), and Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw, 2017). She also completed a residency in Muzeum Susch (Susch, 2021), within Artists Development Programme (Luxembourg, 2021), and in the Futura Gallery (Prague, 2020). Her works can be found in international public and private collections, including the European Investment Bank (Luxembourg), the Fondazione In Between Art Film by Beatrice Bulgari (Italy), and the Ergo Hestia Group (Poland).

Harit Srikhao

(b. 1995) lives and works in Bangkok.

Srikhao completed an MFA at Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti (Milan, 2019). His work has been exhibited in Castlefield Gallery (Manchester, 2019), Red Hook Labs (New York, 2018), Museum Fridericianum (Kassel, 2018), Gallery Ver (Bangkok, 2017), Foam Fotografiemuseum (Amsterdam, 2017), Nacional de las Artes (Mexico City, 2016) and Musée de l'Elysée (Lausanne, 2015). His work has won multiple international awards including Prince Claus Fund (2021), Foam Talent (2017) and Gomma Grantecond Prize (2016). Srikhao's works can be found in international public and private collections including FRAC (France), Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts (Japan), MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum (Thailand) and KADIST (France).