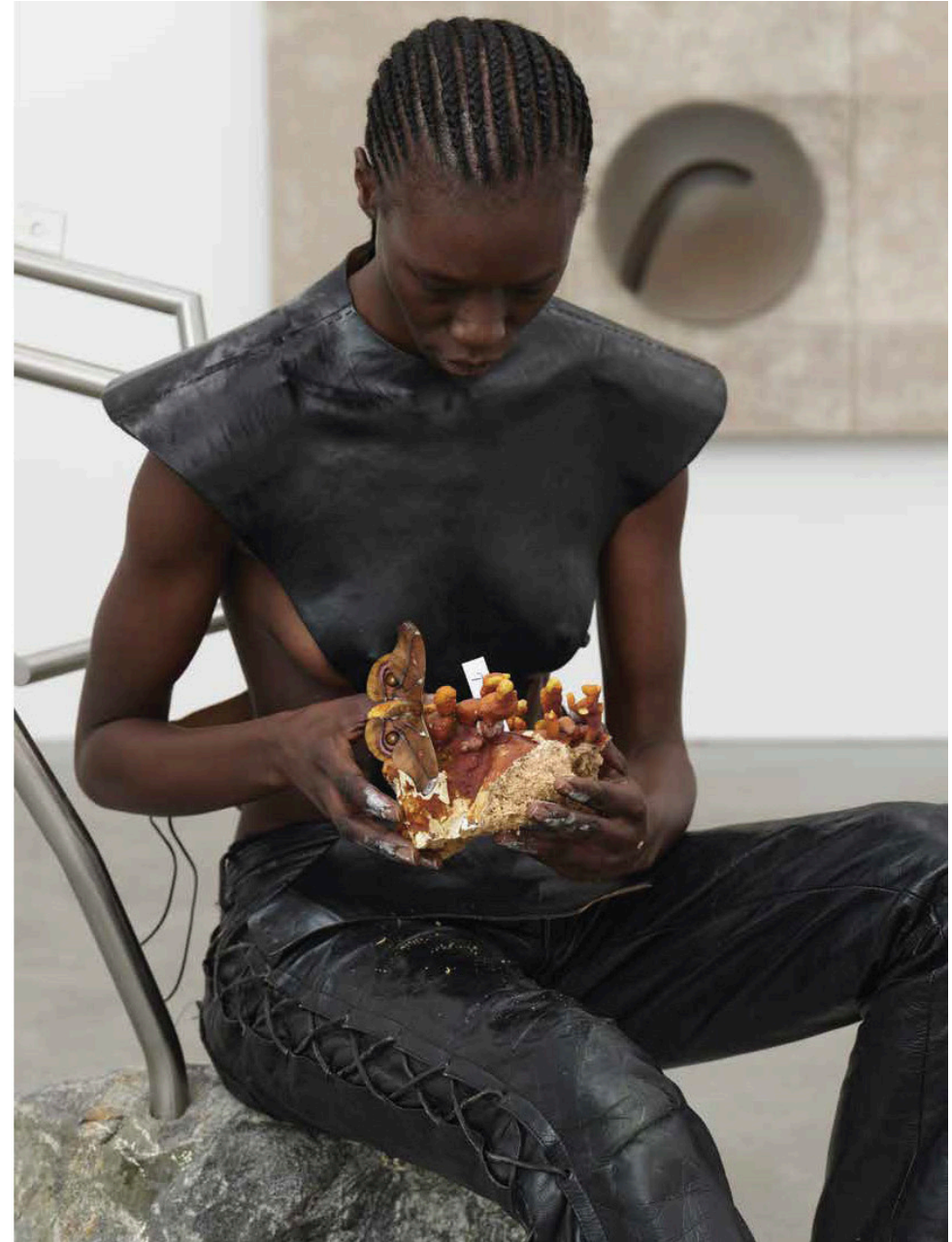


**165 SPOTLIGHT  
KLARA HOSNEDLOVÁ  
IN CONVERSATION  
WITH ANNA GRITZ**









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AG "There is an interior in the detective novel. But can there be a detective story of the interior itself, of the hidden mechanisms by which space is constructed as interior?" says Beatriz Colomina in *The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism*. In your work narrative also plays a key role, if not in the shape of writing per se, much more through a set of visual clues embedded in the aesthetic references you chose. How consciously do you evoke this sub-text and where does storytelling enter into your process?

KH What Beatriz Colomina says plays a major role in my work. In this essay she speaks about a system which is used for placing women in the interior of Adolf Loos architecture. It affected me a lot, consciously and unconsciously. Especially by approaching how we can read architectural language from the position of emancipated women. In all of Martin Gerlach's period photos (the main photographer of Adolf Loos) clear spaces appear with absolutely no evidence of women's presence in the interior. Women's spaces are very open, even walkthroughs with no intimacy or places to hide. Those parts of the houses are prepared for immediate interaction with guests. We can easily investigate them in direct juxtaposition with the male designated rooms which are more hidden. When we spot some personal items they are predominantly male accessories such as hats, cigarettes or pairs of sunglasses. We can never see items like a lipstick or a purse or any pieces of women's clothing. I have to say that my first look at those photos didn't leave much of an effect on me. I was not particularly disturbed by this scenario. Eventually I've come to realize how much deformation was already rooted in my mind, in my expectation of visual information about normal family life. These highly profiled images are presented as casual situations from everyday life—a man arrives by car, entering the house where his wife is playing with their children. This could be an absolutely normal situation for a lot of viewers, and it was kind of a normal situation for me as well, but a second look could provide us with a closer look inside. How did the woman arrive? Where is her car? Why are men photographed always looking outside from the windows like looking to the future, and women are photographed

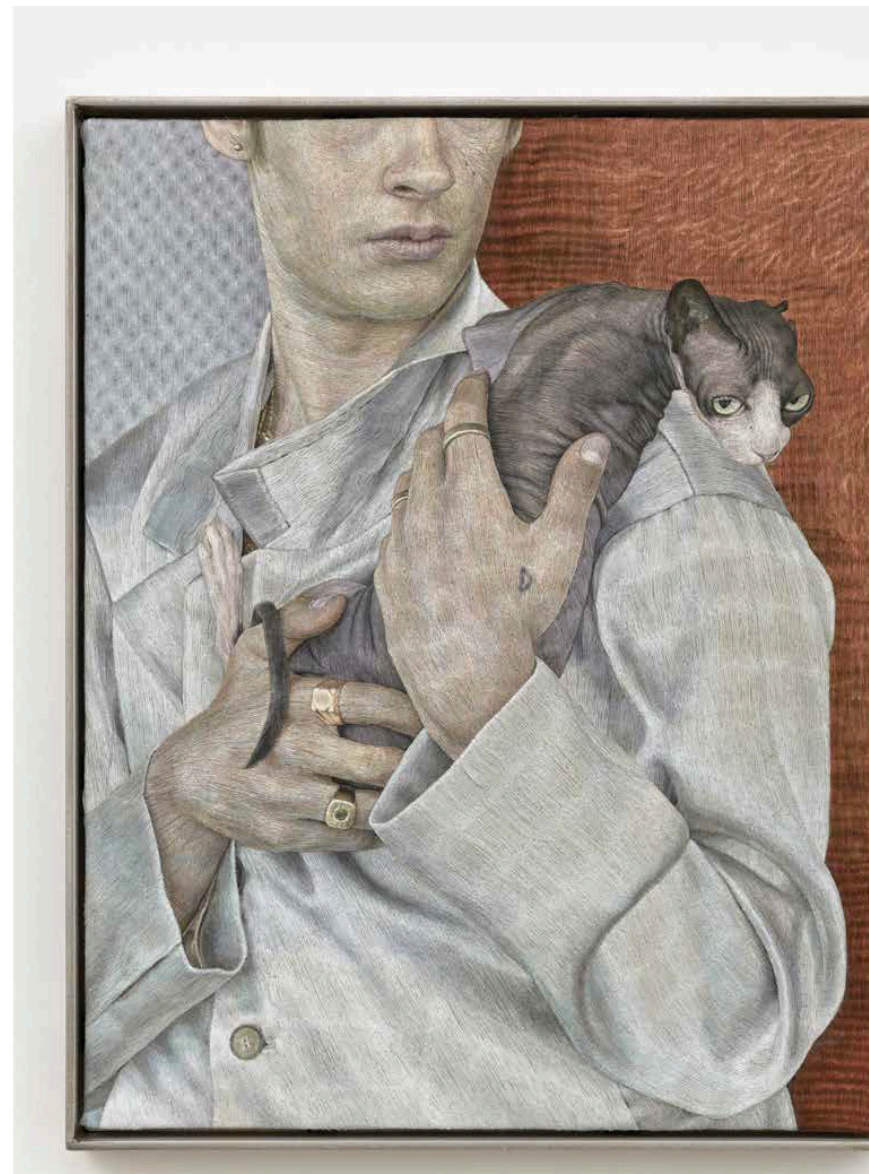
tion about the divided role of women and men that we've been taught inserted into these photos. In most of my installations I feel a desire to give the spaces associated with women more attention. The performers are not exposed in my work as objects of desire, but there also wouldn't be any complete feeling without them. My work is literally waiting for someone who is about to enter. Performers are leaving items after themselves as evidence of some activity in the space.

AG At the center of your work one often finds highly detailed framed depictions based on staged photoshoots that you direct in the architectures that you reference or inside the installations themselves. They display delicate close-ups of actions that carry a certain intimate charge, as if observed through a keyhole. This sensation is only heightened by the fact that what appear at first glance to be paintings are actually extremely time-consuming embroideries. You speak of Balthus as a painterly inspiration, and his painting of course thrives on a taunting if problematic sensuousness. Do you think of your work as erotic?

KH I mentioned Balthus as an inspiration primarily for his approach to the making of a second reality in pictorial space. There is some kind of exponentiation of the real world in his work. It's like he took all the fragility from around the world and inserted it into the painting. I don't want to place him in the position of my personal hero, but I would say there was a lot to learn about the manifestation of sensitivity in works of art from Balthus's paintings. It's difficult to look at his work without prejudice, especially when you place his figure behind such a sensitive theme as the adolescence of girls. It would be interesting to look at the artworks without knowing if the author is female, male, non-binary, heteronormative or queer. Maybe I deviated a bit from your question, but sexuality in art is very often amplified by the person behind it and I think it's not very objective in every case. For example, if I were a heterosexual man, a lot of people would maybe be outraged by the theme of my work. It could be interesting to exchange the persona of the artist behind the work. In my case I feel a very strong presence of sexuality in my work but not sexuality with erotic undertones. There's more a confident

Exhibition views: Nest, Koura; Tushany Zadbler, Berlin 2020 Photo: der image (pp. 163, 168, 166-167, 168-169)

1 (from the series: Nest), 2020 Photo: der image (pp. 164, 171)



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yourself and your advantages. For *NEST* I decided to work with more exposed body parts primarily because of the context referring to a second skin as a shell or natural armor that we wear every day.

AG Upon encountering your work one finds oneself thrown in the middle of an unfolding set of circumstances. The assembled installations tend to be intertwined constellations, linking both back to staged photo shoots as well as foregrounding future activities as suggested by the scenography of the installations. You often produce your own architectural backdrops that serve as the ground on which you hang the image-based side of your practice. How do these different components weigh in your work?

KH I'm not trying to reconstruct original interiors from the '20s and '30s or communist era architecture. I do my own research before each project. This often means collecting photos, working with archives, and finding craftspeople who still use original methods of production, for example mold melted glass. The architecture, whether interior or exterior, which was used for the photo project is almost hidden in the final installation and a new story is created. This artificial story is not connected only to the place where the photos are made, but also to the performers who I'm working with. It's also important for me to identify the next place for potential projects through the possible characters I would like to place there.

There is some transition between the energy of the building process outside and inside of the actual installation that I can't see before I begin the process of creating the work. I'm sometimes surprised when I see the real scale of a piece in real life. I believe all those elements, which I'm finding out during the photo project, are united in the end with the fragility of the first briefly sketched images. I can remember that I felt the need to construct a specific environment, not only for placing my work, but with the intention to involve all my work into one living organism. Not only embroideries, but all other elements too.

This basically mimics the process of building spaces for artificial environments, or places where some kind of unusual process is going on. I'm interested in many kinds of novel spaces. It's not exclusively Czech architecture from the

'60s and '70s, but I need to say that there is definitely something about those projects built during the communist regime. There was a lot of convincing of the authorities behind the scenes before official approval of the proposals back in those days. Those ideas were often very fragile and futuristic and also very far away from the regime's ideology, but people were able to cover them and redress into something more acceptable.

AG Can you speak more about what draws you to the references that you chose, such as Adolf Loos' domestic and commercial spaces, the stage design by Karel Hugo Hilar for the National Theatre in Prague, and most recently the historical site of Ještěd Tower?

KH The first project that I developed was in an abandoned interior by Adolf Loos in Pilsen, CZ. It was in 2015, and I was at the very beginning of the whole process of creating something together with an influence from a specific place. I was very motivated to do that because there was no chance for exhibiting in gallery spaces at that time. Honestly, I found it much more interesting to do something outside of the gallery environment. Since then, I've started to do research and try to be more closely involved with the historical context of the place and not only use the visual power of the architecture. There were much more than visual objectives to dive into, and I was eventually able to get more into the historical context and specific relationships between people and the places where they lived. From Hilar's stage, I felt the intentions of creating spaces for women to feel comfortable and not just exposed. This element is unfortunately missing in Loos' architecture, but a kind of intimate space is created in his clothing stores in Vienna. Those stores were for men only. I'm intuitively letting women enter in men's styled clothing into these interiors to feel confident and maybe to spend time there. This photo project was made before I found Hilar's *Romeo and Juliet* theater stage, and in that time, I found it interesting to put those two elements together, or maybe better to say, to put them in a contradictory position. A similar clash happened in my recent Ještěd project, where I was able to get closer in touch with the work of Jaroslava Brychtová and Stanislav Libenský, who created the glass meteoroids for the television transmitter and hotel Ještěd in one building. This futuristic hyperbolic

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shaped tower, which extends to the top of the mountain, is attempting to merge with the surrounding nature to blend in and become almost invisible. This backdrop inspired me to place the story more outside and it's the first time that I felt a very close relationship with the nature around the building and not just with the architecture itself. For this project, I was thinking a lot more about technology and questions of leaving messages, data transferring and relationships with humans and maybe future humans finding messages from the past in nature. I think the whole group of people who made this project with me got some kind of this futuristic archeological mood around the tower, and I was really thinking about what we are leaving behind for forthcoming generations.

AG Specific and often local crafts traditions feature regularly in your work, as for example in the glass blown work in your installation *NEST* at Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler. Can you say a bit more about these collaborations with manufacturing companies in your home region?

KH We have a great tradition of glass making in the Czech Republic. I consider Jaroslava Brychtová as the biggest matador in Czech glass making. In the 1950s, she established an experimental center in Železný Brod for applying large glass installations in architecture. It turns out that despite the difficult political and social times, there were also positive moments in women's emancipation and opportunities for young people. Alongside her father, she was the first person who found a way how to implement monumental sculptures from kiln cast glass which were placed into public spaces in the Czech Republic. Despite the challenging times, these huge sculptures were very committed. For example, the piece made together with her husband Stanislav Libenský, *The River of Life* for Expo '70 in Osaka, was strongly criticized by normalization policies for its anti-Soviet occupation content. In this 22 meter long glass relief, there were Soviet army boot prints. The overall impression of this sculpture was rough and soft, and at the same time, there was a quiet power in the fact that someone who has their mouth covered was still trying to make a statement. I also work with Zdeněk Lhotský, who has amazing knowledge in the glass making

process, and established the school for kiln cast glass with Jaroslava Brychtová at Železný Brod. He was also working closely with Brychtová and Libenský, and reconstructed an original glass factory in Železný Brod. It's really great to see people who maintain traditional production for future generations.

AG Not every project of yours finds immediate completion; some of your practice is still waiting for the right framing. One of these projects is your collaboration with the photographer Miloš Budík at Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's iconic Villa of Greta and Fritz Tugendhat in Brno. How did you find Budík and what will it take to show the material amassed as part of the collaboration?

KH Miloš Budík created a documentary photo project in 1956 at Villa Tugendhat. He took pictures of girls during lessons of rhythm and dance that were taking place there at the time. There was not much of a public discourse around architecture in the 1950s in the Czech Republic, and Villa Tugendhat was not considered as an architectural gem. The whole building was large enough to house physical education lessons, and was thus repurposed to house a school for Rhythmic and Dance run by Karla Hladká. Four years ago, I went back to the Villa with Mr. Budík, and made a remake of his original work from 1956. We took photos from the same angles as he did. We diverged from the original concept of taking pictures of the human body during rehabilitation sessions. Sometimes I feel that connections across generations is really important to understand our roots. I'm still waiting for the right moment to come back to this special project and continue it.

I'm not sure why the project has not been completed yet. Maybe the most important thing for me would be to find the right way and a dignified place. Mr. Budík is 85 years old now, and after our project at Villa Tugendhat he told me he won't be photographing anymore, I hope that was just a joke. His work captures the every day. It seems to me that he moves in parallel with the largest Czech historical milestones, and quietly observes them from the position of a voyeur.

