

Galerie Anton Janizewski

Dorian Sari

Hide & Seek

08.09. - 20.10.2023

"Even though the darkest phase
Be it thick or thin
Always someone marches brave.
Here beneath my skin

And constant craving
Has always been"

k.d. lang

CONSTANT CRAVING

We hide in order to be sought. It is a desire as ancient as the fresco found in the volcano-buried city of Herculaneum showing three cupids at play, what was then called 'apodidraskinda'. Children take a particular pleasure in hiding, not because they will be found in the end, but by the very act of hiding—of being concealed in a laundry basket or a cabinet, of curling up in the corner of a garden—to the point of almost disappearing. How smooth we go in hiding may become a dominant strategy for survival and self-protection in contemporary life, to hide the fragilities and vulnerabilities that make us humans who we are. Sometimes it is in that hiding that some of the most precious pieces of literature and poetry appear. How clever we get in seeking may signify a potential lust and curiosity for life, always looking for something and not afraid of being seen.

Dorian Sari is ever curious about the mysterious relationalities we play as humans to make ourselves and a society that come together in relation. What kinds of roles, positions, and stigmas do we choose to become? What do we actually say in between what we don't say? Sari focuses on objects, scenes, moments, and words that may go unnoticed in what they trigger in the fast pace of today's life. They are interested in the emotions that shape the very surfaces of bodies, following Sara Ahmed's Spinoza-inspired thinking when she notes how attending to emotions shows us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others. They seek to debunk, in the end, the Western myth of individuality, the kind of identity politics it produces, and the symbolic capital it plays with in order to feed itself.

The photography installation series 'The Itch is Back' (2022–ongoing), present in the heart of 'Hide and Seek' with some freshly produced editions, is a good example of how the artist plays with the performative as an exercise of versatility in the visual economy of reproducing the self. They are their various 'victim' selves in these images. Yet they are also the ones that hit and crack the glass in front of them, hinting at how, as 'homo ludens', the playing human, we create the cyclical games with ourselves in the first place. In this parody, Sari portrays us as our own aggressors and victims before anyone else.

The game of aggressor and victim is only one of the games we intentionally or unintentionally choose to play. They feel the necessity to point their finger at the theatricality of a society built on such codes of individualism and identity. Without such an outing, it is almost impossible to move towards the gist of relationality and the desire hidden in the flesh of constant craving. The soundtrack of random phone calls in the exhibition space, the shoe that gets stuck with a pink gum signal at an avoided ghost of urgency No, we can't leave now because we've come quite far. We cannot avoid human-triggered urgencies because of our societal power triggers. The whole

setting of 'Hide-and-Seek' becomes a daring field of outings and role play, underscoring our embeddedness as public in the game. Yet the artist also demands that we shouldn't take ourselves so seriously and play the game. Because the world is bigger than our internal games.

As much as the late capitalist racial discourse attempts to individualise these urgencies from each other, they are all part of the same systemic behavioural pattern stepping back from the eternal question of equality. It becomes another game of hide-and-seek game we play with the more-than-human worlds as humans. The initial steps of the project "Silence = Death" highlight the equality and side-by-sideness of the pink triangle and the green circle. In 1986, Avram Finkelstein, Jorge Soccaras, Chris Lione, Charles Kreloff, Oliver Johnston, and Brian Howard's AIDS consciousness mutual support group created the historical poster that used a pink triangle known for its association with the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s against the societal and governmental blindness towards the AIDS pandemic. This blindness translates today into blindness towards the growing ecological crisis that demands long-term decisions and solutions for the planet and our co-habitation. Sari appropriates "Silent = Death" for the ecological crisis, creating a continuation between the different imperialisms and racisms we are trying to breathe within. The ripped-off surfaces Sari created slowly reveal the green circle, desiring to strengthen our consciousness for immediate, straight-forward actions. While we get lost in the games of human-to-human relationships, we risk losing the bigger picture.

It is not a coincidence that the Dutch thinker Johan Huizinga published *Homo Ludens* in 1938 on the play element of culture, which forms the basis of game studies today. The play is where art and poetry are created; it is a territory of joy and resilience against the silences protecting various forms of oppression, imperialism, and colonialism. How may we transform silence into language and action, keeping the advice of Audre Lorde close to our hearts? Don't play hide and seek, is often a request when communication between two humans is interrupted. What Sari suggests is not to play hide and seek with the world but to play hide and seek for joy, pleasure, and curiosity to make an equal world possible.

- Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu