

Katarzyna Kozyra | *Fressen*

Exhibition: 3 March – 22 April 2023

Opening: Friday, 3 March 2023, 6 – 8 pm



Katarzyna Kozyra,
*Feast (Fat Woman
Face And Octopus)*,
2021

For this year's EMOP Berlin (European Month of Photography), Persons Projects is proud to present a project *Fressen*, the most recent work of Polish-born performing-video artist Katarzyna Kozyra. On view are the photographic series as well as the video recordings of the performance that was realized in the fall of 2021 at Warsaw's Teatr Powszechny.

As one of Poland's most famous female artists, Katarzyna Kozyra is known for her works that question social stereotypes or break with taboos, such as nudity, old age, disease, and death. Unveiling the facts of reality, she forces the viewer to re-examine and validate a new set order of cultural values. Kozyra has been regarded as a controversial figure by the conservative Polish society ever since the very outset of her career. Her performances, quasi-theatrical productions, and audience-participation happenings challenge the traditional boundaries between artist and audience – including *Fressen*, for which the guests were explicitly invited and actively planned to be part of it:

Kozyra starts her filmed performance by playing wildly on a spinet while being naked. The scenery then changes to the elaborate preparations for a feast: A group of cooks enters the stage and 'performs surgery' on a large female latex body on ice. One after the other harvests different kinds of seafood from the silicon doll and carries it to the kitchen area at the back of the stage. While the cooking proceeds, a political meeting – resembling a council of war – takes place simultaneously in the background. Five men in military uniforms stand around a map, seemingly deciding on a course of action. Kozyra – still naked – switches between the council and the kitchen, then enters the audience ranks to await the dinner. The performance ends with the collective act of eating and sharing food between the artist, the actors, and the audience.

Besides the subjects of nudity and gluttony, which are of particular interest to the artist and have been treated in several of her previous performances, *Fressen* (German for 'guzzling') focuses on the many aspects of food culture: in its ability to create social connections beyond national borders, despite language barriers or political differences. The culinary sphere is one of the most essential parts and basis for human interaction. The different relations of giving and receiving, serving and consuming between strangers, friends, or family members all play their part in initiating a space of encounter.

The significance of *Fressen* thus lies within the collective experience of eating, sharing, and feasting together. But it does not end there:

The performance is actually the artistic re-enactment of the Landshut Wedding (1475), one of the most important political events in German-Polish history. The arranged marriage between the Polish princess Jadwiga Jagiellonka and the Bavarian prince George the Rich was considered to be the greatest feast of the Middle Ages, surpassing every other banquet at the time. Recreating this medieval pageant thus intends to raise awareness for the shared German-Polish heritage. Moreover, the idea of showing the documentary footage of the performance in Germany intends to grant accessibility to a bigger audience – making it possible to be part of the mutual act of cultural understanding.

Katarzyna Kozyra (*1963 in Warsaw, Poland) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw in 1993, and studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig, Germany. In the 1990s, she took part in initiating the Polish critical art movement and quickly gained great international attention by representing her home country at the 48th Biennale in Venice (1999). Ever since then, her works have been exhibited in numerous solo- and group exhibitions worldwide, including shows at Sidney Biennale (2010), Barbican Art Center (London), Brooklyn Museum (New York), CCA (Tel-Aviv), Three Shadows Photography Art Center (Beijing) and many more. In 2003, Kozyra was granted the DAAD scholarship in Berlin.