

# THE CONCH SHELL

a group show with

Thea Gvetadze  
Maria Schumacher  
TZUSOO

At the bottom of the coffee cup, future(s) and past(s) are interpreted through certain symbols that are shaped while turning the coffee cup upside down. The mountain and the meerkat, leveling each other out, is a metaphor for a symbol that appeared in Thea's coffee cup years ago. In 2007, inhabited by a geographical nostalgia the artist did a series of small, fugitive works named *future telling* paintings. It is told that in Batumi, Western Georgia, people turn the coffee cups they drink on a daily basis, it became almost a ritual, a way of connecting to the near future by reading symbols in the coffee cup. The animal that stands in *Future telling*, facing the open mountain, in a seemingly obsolete and mysterious landscape, translates the observation of one's own destiny that is yet to unfold.

In Georgia, the Khvamli or Khomli mountain has several historical caves, one in which Prometheus, the titan god of fire, was punished.

Maria Schumacher's large black and red painting creates a cavernous space or a fragment of a more figurative tetris game. She made it during the pandemic, where the symbol of the cave chameleonicly unearthed itself in many domestic environments. The ludic and split lines of the painting, the Brâncusian shapes that almost exceed the red grid of the canvas, the organic and uncontrolled contours permeate the everyday breathing, body movement and synchronization during paralyzed times.

In Tzusoo's *Schrödinger's Baby* video work, the concomitant possibility of a space both digital and physical is interrogated through the artist's own female identity and her inner grappling with the potential motherhood. Similar to Schrodinger's cat experiment, whereby a cat entered a state of superposition (being alive and dead at the same time), the artist poses the question whether the digital world could absorb the fixed entities of our physical bodies. Her desire as a woman to have babies has always been interrupted by confinements that float around. And yet, identity, skin colour, health issues, marital status, social status, are no parameters in the digital realm.

*A bear called Ung-nyô appears in the Korean creation myth called Tang-gun. In order to become human, the bear carries out the mission of living on only mugwort and garlic for one hundred days inside a cave. The tiger is unable to last one hundred days, but the bear is able to endure it. The bear becomes human and marries a god's son, who descends from the sky, and gives birth to a son. Then she disappears from the myth. In Korean mythology, women disappear after they give birth to sons. They never appear again. The ultimate goal of their existence is to give birth to sons. (Kim Hyesoon part of Documenta 14)*

Inorganic umbilical cords hang from the ceiling as if the artwork becomes the baby, and the screen its own skin. The human realm is however intertwined here through the sound of the video coming out of the artist's belly and heart. If a digital surrogate motherhood existed, how would then the human responsibilities change and expand?

*Falling star*, the abstract embodiment of a Georgian elderly woman as a watermelon, is pieced together with soviet glass, smalta called in Russian, used in the past for mosaic murals. Despite the still patriarchal impression of the Georgian culture, the woman identity is symbolically strong, and together with nature, they are recurrent elements in Thea's work. In this mosaic, there is pain and beauty, mourning and living. And not only with regard to human nature, but also for nature itself. The gown hanging on a headless hanger assembles flowers, vegetables and fruits, mirrored by two mulberries and spring

onions, as well as an 18<sup>th</sup> century wooden vessel originally from Khvamli. *This trinity is homage to nature, culture and history, and universal female intuition*, said the artist while sitting on the bench across the gallery space.

Thea's work also highlights the collective trauma and environmental impact of the enduring crimes of colonization or neoliberalism. Resisting herself the extractivist industry in Georgia, especially the current plan of the largest hydroelectric power station in the gorge of the Rioni river in Western Georgia, the artist precisely returns to the environment in her practice to underline the ancestral knowledge of nature and the cosmological and geological look into decolonized futures.

As the exhibition space follows the conch shell shape, *Never Ending Ending* opens up a portal for hybrid identities that perform, on the canvas, alternative constructions of femininity and masculinity. The lines and colours flow together in a fiction of real life.

Curatorial text by Cristina Vasilescu

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In conjunction with the exhibition, three reading groups will be convened by three local female artists/writers/researchers:

June 29 | 5 - 8PM | Anca Bucur

July 3 | 4 - 7 PM | Daniela Custrin

July 10 | 4 - 7 PM | Laura Sandu

Participation is free and open to all ages and backgrounds. Each reading group will accommodate 10-15 participants, lasting 2-4 hours. The reading groups will take place in the gallery space. Choose your preferred date and send us an email with your choice at [suprainfinitgallery@gmail.com](mailto:suprainfinitgallery@gmail.com) or on our Instagram page [suprainfinitgallery](https://www.instagram.com/suprainfinitgallery).

**Thea Gvetadze** (b. 1971) lives and works in Tbilisi, Georgia. She is an artist creating images of enigmatic scenarios, loaded with tension, emotion and symbolism. Experimenting with traditional techniques in clay and textile amongst other materials, Gvetadze's practice speculates with highly idiosyncratic forms of image-making, representation and story-telling.

**Maria Schumacher** (b.1983) lives and works in Leipzig, Germany. Building compositions with crude cut-out shapes, drawings and monotypes to create negative space, Schumacher's large, bright, one shot process "action abstractions" implement a wide array of painterly techniques. These simple stark abstractions remain aloof to the self-conscious act of painting, the distanced results of an almost mechanical action.

**TZUSOO** (b.1992 in Seoul) lives and works in Berlin, is well known for her virtual images and videos. In her work, the artist experiments with shifting borders by virtually merging the reality and non-reality of objects. The main themes of her work are a deeper scrutiny of social minorities, the conditions of work in the digital age, sexuality and gender. According to TZUSOO, her works always combine a core sociopolitical interest with her own (lived) experience, creating a space for coexistence of multiple perspectives.

THE CONCH SHELL is an exhibition produced in partnership with Goethe-Institut Bucharest.

Special thanks: Mobile Event

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