

Dreams Made Flesh

Catinca Malaimare, Xavier Robles de Medina, Zoe Williams, Bruno Zhu

Curated by Luís Manuel Araújo

8 May — 19 June 2021

Queer feelings may embrace a sense of discomfort, a lack of ease with the available scripts for living and loving, along with an excitement in the face of an uncertainty of where the discomfort may take us. — Sara Ahmed, in ‘The Cultural Politics of Emotion’ (2004)

Galeria Catinca Tăbăcaru is delighted to present Dreams Made Flesh curated by Luís Manuel Araújo featuring works by Catinca Malaimare, Xavier Robles de Medina, Zoe Williams, and Bruno Zhu opening May 8, 2021 at Strada Mexic 1, Bucharest, Romania.

Dreams Made Flesh is a group exhibition presenting works by four artists who explore how our identities are shaped by the objects we desire through the lens of a queer perspective.

Queer desires are often oriented towards everyday objects that are considered illegitimate by normative society because their uses challenge the standardisation of sex, gender, and sexuality. This exhibition was conceived out of the belief that queerness can break the repetition of a scripted life and shamelessly create new material cultures by withstanding the oppression of normativity. The dialogue between the artworks calls upon the potential that exists in items we project our reflections onto, recreate emotions through, generate delight from, and adorn ourselves with.

Catinca Malaimare premieres *Eight of Clubs* [a film in which she manipulates a LED photography light with eight parts held together by a circular core, a shape similar to a spider or a withering flower. Malaimare tests the limits of her own anatomy during the performance, using the total reach of her body to handle the object’s limbs. This work generates a sensuous experience amplified by the sound of skin friction against the light’s artificial surface and the performer’s stare at the viewer through the screen. Intimacy between human and machine is also depicted in new prints where Malaimare poses alongside two Discoverer Space Helmet TVs from the 80s, either attracting us with her challenging gaze or disregarding us by looking away. The artist will additionally present live performances that manifest how anthropomorphic technologies appeal to our senses and trigger feelings like love, fear, hate, or desire.

Xavier Robles de Medina has been building a collection of found images from online platforms and printed matter. Through a process of appropriation, these pictures have become part of his own vocabulary as he eliminates all colour and slowly makes changes to their shape and texture. For Dreams Made Flesh, Robles de Medina translated into paintings two of these images, each of them a composite of four photos. A portrait of Shakira is a collage of different angles of a scene where the singer glares at the audience during her 2020 Super Bowl Halftime Show; as the magic of replication acquires the emotions of the characters being portrayed, the acrylic-on-wood painting looks back at the voyeur when contemplated. The other image shows a room that is a combination of four distinct spaces and is occupied solely by furniture and drapery; in the absence of humans, the domestic objects reproduced in the painting communicate feelings of their own. While one painting enacts a humanlike presence, the other frames a conversation between objects that have been liberated of their users.

Sunday Fantasy (2019) by Zoe Williams is a film and installation inspired by a Roman perfume bottle that the artist discovered in the British Museum’s collection. The work portrays the protagonist Veronica Malaise, played by four different actresses. Each performer provides their own interpretation of Veronica, using the ancient receptacle to invoke their most intimate fantasies. Drawings, ceramics, and glass replicas of the

perfume vial, originally used as props in the film, are displayed in the gallery — transposing the playful universe of Sunday Fantasy into the space. Social norms have scripted our relationship with objects in a way that reinforces the definition of traditional gender binaries; through an apparatus of seduction, fetishism, and witchcraft, Williams invites us to explore and release our own deepest desires, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Bruno Zhu's Joy (b. 2019) is a bar of soap resembling an egg on a feathery nest alongside cosmetic accessories kept in bespoke canvas pockets. Joy was born in 2019 in New York and is surrounded by beauty products. We project anthropomorphic behaviour onto this piece of soap because it is presented as a baby associated with gendered signifiers of a possible future: beauty blenders, cuticle cutters, tweezers, and makeup brushes. This assemblage humorously reflects the standardisation of social behaviours and exposes the assumption that our bodies must inherently orient themselves towards some items and not others from birth. Our interactions with the things that surround us can be seen as programs of action that define our social reality — parts of which are performed by humans, while others are entrusted to non-humans.

The four artists have contributed to a booklet published on the occasion of Dreams Made Flesh. Inspired by the Romanian tradition *tăierea moțului*, the publication will show a selection of objects on a silver tray, each embodying a secret desire by one of the artists.

The exhibition will open on Saturday May 8, 2021 from 15:00 to 21:00 and will be open for public viewings on Wednesday-Saturdays 12:00-18:00 through June 19, 2021. Twice during the Saturday Vernissage, at 18:00 and at 20:00, Catinca Malaimare will perform her new work, A sight better than the others, amidst her new installation in the Gallery's courtyard. As a precursor to the exhibition, we will host a Press Preview on Thursday, May 6 from 16:00-18:00, during which will take place a conversation between curator Luís Manuel Araújo and artist Xavier Robles de Medina starting at 17:00.