



## **fragilités**

Galerie Rudolfinum

(20. 10. 2022 – 8. 1. 2023)

Curators: Elena Sorokina, Silvia Van Espen

**Francis Alÿs** is a Belgian artist (b. 1959, Antwerp) living in Mexico. His creative production spans an interdisciplinary space of art, architecture and social practice. In 1986, he left behind his profession of architect and moved to Mexico City. He explores geopolitical and ethnological questions using a wide spectrum of media, from painting and video to performance, scrutinising individual memory and collective mythology and examining the transmission of the spoken word through the prism of the oral tradition. While in the early years of his work, the artist was the main protagonist of his performances, during the last decade they have mostly featured children. Francis Alÿs focuses his poetic and imaginative sensitivity on anthropological interests, concentrating on the observation of everyday life. His works have been exhibited in the most prestigious galleries and museums all over the world. In 2022, he is representing Belgium at the Venice Biennale with the project *The Nature of the Game*. Francis Alÿs is one of the most respected artists, in November 2022 he will receive the 2023 Wolfgang Hahn Prize.

**Michael Armitage** (b. 1984, Nairobi, Kenya) lives and works between London and Nairobi. His paintings weave multiple narratives that are drawn from historical and current news media, internet gossip, and his own ongoing recollections of Kenya. Armitage paints with oil on *Lubugo*, a traditional bark cloth from Uganda, a natural material which keeps occasional holes and coarse indents. The use of *Lubugo* is at once an attempt to locate and destabilise the subject of his paintings. The visual iconography of East Africa lies at the heart of his practice: its urban and rural landscape, colonial and modern vernacular architecture, advertising hoardings, lush vegetation, and varied animal life. Undermining this rich colour palette and dream-like imagery, however, is a quiet exposition of Kenya's sometimes harsh reality: its politics, social inequalities, violence, and extreme disparities in wealth. In 2021, the Royal Academy of Arts in London organised the solo exhibition *Michael Armitage: Paradise Edict*, just a decade after his graduation from the Royal Academy in 2010, and he was elected as Royal Academician in the category of painting in January 2022. More recently, he had a solo exhibition of new works at Kunsthalle Basel (May–Sep 2022) and was announced as the designer of a new £1 coin which will enter circulation in the UK in 2023.

**Maria Bartuszová** (1936–1996) frequently drew on the creativity of nature. Employing fragile materials such as plaster and confronting them with hard ones like wood, stone and metal, she expressed not only an affinity with the natural world but also her awareness of the need to open up ecofeminist issues. Born in Prague in what was then Czechoslovakia, she studied at the Studio of Ceramics and Porcelain of the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design. Most of her life was spent in Košice (Slovakia), where she accomplished many works for public space. In 1969–70, she was a member of the Concretists' Club. She gained international renown after her death. In 2007, her work was



presented at documenta 12 in Kassel; in 2022 Cecilia Alemani, curator of the 59th Venice Biennale, included her work in the exhibition *The Milk of Dreams*; and the same year in September the Tate Modern in London launched her solo exhibition. Maria Bartuszová is one of the most original sculptors to have worked in Slovakia, a representative of the “organic line” in sculpture of the second half of the 20th century.

**Bianca Bondi** (b. 1986) was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. She lives and works in Paris. She graduated from l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy in 2012, having previously studied at WITS School of the Arts in Johannesburg. Multidisciplinary, her practice involves the activation or elevation of mundane objects through the use of chemical reactions, most often by salt water. The materials she works with are chosen for their potential for mutation or their intrinsic and symbolic properties. Passionate about ecology and the occult sciences, Bianca Bondi combines the two, resulting in pluridisciplinary works of a transformative nature where the aura of objects is of primary importance. Often site-specific, the poetic results are very much connected to the places in which they are to exist. Her work has been shown in solo exhibitions: La Fondation Louis Vuitton, France (2021); Le Voyage à Nantes, France (2021); Le Parvis, Tarbes (2020); Les Limbes, Saint Etienne (2018); Hazard, Johannesburg (2018); La Cité des Sciences, Paris (2017); and La Villa Belleville, Paris (2017).

**Louise Bourgeois** (1911–2010) primarily explored themes of the body and sexuality in her art, as well as searing questions concerning the unconscious and death. Born in France, from 1938 until her death she lived in America. Today she is regarded as one of the most important artists of the 20th century. For more than seven decades, she devoted herself to a multimedia creative process using a variety of media and materials — painting, sculpture, printmaking and drawing, which she pursued constantly, day and night. In 1982, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) organised a retrospective exhibition of her work. Filled with new self-confidence, she created monumental spiders, as well as evocative textile figures made from her old clothes. Her work was driven equally by an introspective revisiting of childhood and its traumas, and an open exploration of female sexuality, loneliness, jealousy and anger. The personal symbolism in her work is associated with memory, fantasy and fear. In 1995, Galerie Rudolfinum held a solo exhibition of her work whose visitors included Maria Bartuszová.

**Geta Brătescu** (1926–2018) is a central figure in Romanian art of the second half of the 20th century, one of the country's first representatives of conceptualist approaches. She studied at the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy in Bucharest, as well as at the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1950, the Communist government interrupted her studies, and she was not able to complete her art education until 1971. She developed a deeply personal practice addressing the theme of identity. Her complex oeuvre comprises collage, drawing, engraving, tapestry, photography, performance, and experimental film. In 2013, she took part in the international exhibition at the Venice Biennale; in 2015, she had a solo exhibition at Tate Liverpool; in 2017, she was represented at documenta 14 in Athens



and Kassel. That same year she represented Romania (as the first female artist) at the Venice Biennale with the project *Apparitions*, curated by Magda Radu.

**Edith Dekyndt** (b. 1960, Ypres, Belgium) established herself as an artist in the mid-1990s. Since then, she has become best known for working with everyday objects, where her work observes, identifies, and transforms the performative phenomenology of ordinary materials, objects, and gestures. She works across video, sculpture, installation, drawing, and sound to address the timeless concerns of light, time, and space in the most subtle ways. Throughout her practice, she manifests a profound interest in physical phenomenon and ephemeral incidents by paying close attention to materials and their transient nature. The experience of her work often confronts us with the insufficiency of our visual approach and demands a wider perception that includes emotion, intuition, and imagination. This component of imagination in the structure of meaning may be related to certain conceptual strategies in which a work of art completes itself in the experience and the thoughts of the viewer. Her first major retrospective, “*Ombre Indigène (Indigenous Shadow)*” was held at Le Consortium, Dijon and Wiels, Brussels from October 2015–April 2016.

**Susanna Fritscher** was born in 1960 in Austria and currently lives and works in Montreuil, Paris. Her work is closely linked with the architecture of the spaces where her installations make guest appearances. She works at some remove from the common perception of the given space, via a shaping of the light and its reflections and the air flow. On many occasions she collaborates in extensive architectural projects, the most recent one is planned for Gare Saint-Maur-Créteil (order by the Société du Grand Paris). The latest projects go beyond an artwork or an installation, creating airy landscapes, which constantly reconfigure themselves. In dialogue with a fragile world, they reinvent our relationship with reality by doubting its apparent stability and permanence. As if by capillary activity, their atmospheric lightness impregnates the exhibition space and blends with the architecture, which suddenly appears to be precarious, elusive, vibratile and liquified. The air flow that circulates in her installations becomes visible, palpable and transformed into an immense sound body, audible to the visitor like a wind instrument that inexplicably change our perception of space. Susanna Fritscher has exhibited at the Biennale in Lyon (2017), the Nantes Museum of Art (2017) and the Louvre Abu Dhabi (2019). In 2020, she had a solo exhibition at Centre Pompidou-Metz, titled *Frémissements* and in 2021, she exhibited at Theseus Temple, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

**William Kentridge** (b. 1955, Johannesburg) became best known for his virtuoso hand-drawn animated films, which he started producing during the 1990s. They are constructed by filming a drawing, making erasures and changes, and filming it again. Often commenting on the socio-political conditions in post-apartheid South Africa, William Kentridge’s work takes on a form that is expressionist in nature. The process of recording, dismembering, and reordering history is essential for his work, which also includes prints and drawings. Kentridge is the recipient of honorary doctorates from several universities including Yale and the University of London, and in 2015, he was appointed an Honorary Academician.



of the Royal Academy in London. He received the 2019 Princesa de Asturias Award for the Arts, Spain, and the 2018 Antonio Feltrinelli International Prize, Italy among many others. Kentridge has also directed several acclaimed operas and theatrical productions. In 2016, his 500-meter frieze *Triumphs and Laments* was presented along the banks of the Tiber River in Rome. A major retrospective of the artist opened at the Royal Academy of Arts London in September 2022, where 4-metre-wide tapestries, his signature charcoal trees and flowers, and the three-screen film, *Notes Towards a Model Opera* will be on view. William Kentridge is one of South Africa's most celebrated living artist.

**Kapwani Kiwanga** (b. 1978, Hamilton, Ontario) is currently based in Paris. Her work traces the pervasive impact of the asymmetry of power by placing historic narratives in dialogue with contemporary realities, the archive, and tomorrow's possibilities. Drawing from her training in anthropology and the social sciences, her practice is instigated by marginalised or forgotten histories and articulated across a range of materials and mediums including sculpture, installation, photography, video, and performance. Kiwanga co-opts the canon; she turns systems of power back on themselves, in art and in parsing broader histories. In this manner, the artist has developed an aesthetic vocabulary that she described as "exit strategies", works that invite one to see things from multiple perspectives. She was named the inaugural winner of the Frieze Artist Award in 2018 and received the Prix Marcel Duchamp Prize in 2020. Most recently, she was included in the 59th Venice Biennale International Exhibition, *"The Milk of Dreams"*, curated by Cecilia Alemani. A new body of work that bridges historical research with site-specific spatial intervention is also presented at the New Museum in the solo exhibition *"Kapwani Kiwanga: Off-Grid"* from June–October 2022.

**Dominik Lang** (b.1980), while studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, transferred from the sculpture studio to space media/installations and began to develop a strikingly new approach to his art. Using a simple and not always sculptural approach, he responds to the current environment in which he is moving or exhibiting. One of his most notable initiatives thus far was his presentation in the Czechoslovak Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, *The Sleeping City* (2011). That project was based on work with sculptures by his father Jiří Lang; he continued working with them and thereby created a new context linking the emotional plane with local history. In 2013 he received the Jindřich Chalupecký Prize for his installation in the Trade Fair Palace (National Gallery, Prague), where he disrupted the walls of the exhibiting space so that the viewer could watch both sunrise and sunset. In 2015, he was awarded the Berlin-Stipendium to the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, and in the same year he had a solo exhibition *Girl with Pigeon* in MUMA (Monash University), Melbourne, Australia. In 2017, he was part of the international exhibition *Labor Relations* at the Wrocław Museum of Contemporary Art in Poland.

**Luboš Plný** (b. 1961, Czech Republic) devoted himself from childhood to his two passions: drawing and anatomy. During his military service, he was transferred to a psychiatric hospital and then began to earnestly study medical and psychiatric literature. Fascinated by decomposing bodies and





dissection, he obtained a diploma as an undertaker, but was mainly employed as a model at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1989–1994), hence the stamp with which he “signs” all his works “Luboš Plný, academic model”. The main theme in Luboš Plný’s art is the human body – its functions, its limitations, and its mortality. Most of his works could be called “anatomical self-portraits”, in which he mixes drawing, painting and conceptual art with scientific projects. He combines colour ink with acrylic paint and collage, and includes organic elements such as blood, hair, the ashes of his dead parents, used medical aids, and “evidentiary objects” from his experiments on his own body. His extremely detailed works in Indian ink and acrylic entered the collections of the Musée National d’Art Moderne (Paris) in 2013 and were notably exhibited on several occasions at the Maison Rouge, Japan in 2021, and at the 57th Venice Biennale International exhibition, “Viva Arte Viva!” in 2017, where he was the only Czech artist to be included.

**Anri Sala** (b. 1974, Tirana, Albania) was educated in Albania and France. Now based in Berlin, Sala investigates the ruptures in language, syntax, and music to validate or invalidate narrative and composition. Inviting creative dislocations into his work, he supplants old fictions with new, less explicit, and less duplicitous ones. His transformative, time-based works are constructed through multiple relationships between image, architecture, and sound, utilizing these as elements to fold, capsize, and question experience. With his first critically acclaimed experimental documentary *Intervista (Finding the Words)* from 1998, the artist formulates his interest in the perception of reality, truth, and historical transformation. Since then, his practice emerged into a study of sound – soundtracks of images, the absence of sound, or the failure of verbal communication. In 2001, Sala was the recipient of the Young Artist Prize at the Venice Biennale and in 2013, he exhibited his acclaimed video works *Ravel Ravel* and *Unravel* (both 2013) for the French Pavilion. Recent museum solo exhibitions include “*Anri Sala: Transfigured*” (2022) at GAMeC (Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo), Italy; “*Anri Sala: Long Sorrow*” (2019) at Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; “*Anri Sala*” (2019) at Castello di Rivoli, Turin; and “*Anri Sala: Answer me*” (2016) at the New Museum, New York.

**Vivian Suter** (b. 1949) is a Swiss-Argentinian painter. Her mother, to whom Vivian was extremely close, was Elisabeth Wild, a well-known collagist. At the age of twelve, Vivian and her family moved to Basel, Switzerland, where in 1981 she had her first group exhibition at the Kunsthalle Basel. In 1982, she moved to Guatemala. In 2011, she accepted an invitation from the curator Adam Szymczyk for a repeat exhibition of the 1981 group project in Kunsthalle Basel. Since then, she has had many notable solo exhibitions all over the world. Vivian Suter paints in a studio under the open sky, using non-traditional materials such as fish glue, volcanic material, and soil that she finds in her vicinity, reflecting the local environment in her work. In 2021, she received the Swiss Grand Award of Art / Prix Meret Oppenheim. Her work is represented in important collections of world-ranking museums and galleries, including for example the Tate, the Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, and Kunstmuseum Luzern.



**Alina Szapocznikow** (1926–1973) was a Polish sculptor who spent two years in Prague. She is known for her pioneering exploration of the fragility of the human body, which erased differences and moved between male and female, sensuality and repulsion, wholeness and fragmentation. She was born in a Jewish family in Poland, and as a teenager during the Holocaust she survived internment in a concentration camp. Immediately after the war she emigrated first to Prague (in 1947 she studied at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague under the tutelage of Josef Wagner) and then to Paris, where she studied sculpture. In 1951, suffering from tuberculosis, she was compelled to return to Poland, where she devoted herself intensely to her art. From the 1960s, with the relaxation of control over the art scene in Poland subsequent to Stalin's death, her work turned decisively towards abstraction and experiment. She developed, and at the same time cast doubt on, the fundamentals of sculpture, presenting new materials and elaborating a highly individual and original artistic language. In 2012, MoMA organised her solo show under the title *Alina Szapocznikow. Sculpture Undone, 1955–1972*. Alina Szapocznikow is one of the most notable Polish artists of the post war period.

**Barthélémy Toguo** (b. 1967, Cameroon) addresses enduring and immediately relevant issues of borders, exile, and displacement through a multi-disciplinary practice that includes painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, performance, and installation. At the core of his practice is the notion of belonging, which stems from his dual French/Cameroonian nationality. His ongoing series of striking monochromatic watercolour paintings are celebrated for their travel diary-like qualities, where humans morph into abstract, animalistic creatures. Early in his career, he staged several interventions called *Transit* (1996), where performances were carried out in airports and train stations disrupting the routine of the transport security. Through poetic, hopeful, and often figural gestures connecting nature with the human body, Toguo foregrounds concerns with both ecological and societal implications. Recently, his works have been informed by movements and humanitarian tragedy including #BlackLivesMatter and the refugee crisis. In 2008, he founded Bandjoun Station in his native Cameroon, a community centre with an exhibition space, a library, an artists' residency, and an organic farm, aimed to foster contemporary art and culture within the local community. In 2016, Toguo was shortlisted for the Prix Marcel Duchamp, and he presented the installation *Vaincre le virus!* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris. He was made a Knight of the Order of Arts and Literature in France in 2011.

**Anna Zemánková** (1908–1986) was born in Olomouc, Moravia, then a province of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. While still a child, she showed a great fondness for drawing; her family, however, had no sympathy for her predisposition and she became a dental technician. After 1948, she and her husband and three children moved to Prague. In 1960, she returned to what had long ago been her hobby. She was over fifty years old when she began drawing daily (perhaps revisiting her childhood dreams). Each day between three and four in the morning, she started working on spontaneous sketches inspired by plants. Before dawn, she sketched while listening to classical music, often in a state between dreaming and wakefulness. In her extensive imaginative oeuvre, she



unfolds her inner universe before the viewer, intermingling elements of flora and fauna – leaves, flowers, fruits, and animal details. Anna Zemánková is one of the most notable “solitaires” of imaginative art. She was included in Massimilian Gioni’s curatorial selection at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013). In 2017, she had a solo exhibition at Collection de L’Art Brut, Lausanne which acquired her artworks for its collection, as has the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the American Folk Art Museum in New York.