



fragilités

October 20, 2022 – January 8, 2023

Curators: Elena Sorokina, Silvia Van Espen

Francis Alÿs, Michael Armitage, Maria Bartusová, Bianca Bondi, Louise Bourgeois, Geta Brătescu, Edith Dekyndt, Susanna Fritscher, William Kentridge, Kapwani Kiwanga, Dominik Lang, Luboš Plný, Anri Sala, Vivian Suter, Alina Szapocznikow, Barthélémy Toguo, Anna Zemánková

Fragility has emerged in recent years as a key concept through which to reimagine both human and ecological conditions. The exhibition 'fragilités' unfolds the concerns, visions, and sensibilities expressed by artists who have engaged deeply with fragility and reflected on its tensions, complexities and paradoxes. The traditional meaning of fragility – weakness, powerlessness, passivity – is challenged, and claimed instead as a source of force and agency that encourages sustaining interdependencies.

The exhibition brings together several generations, beginning with a web of connections between the oeuvres of Louise Bourgeois, Maria Bartusová, Geta Brătescu and Alina Szapocznikow. Sensual and reflective, the transformative fragility in their work proposes alternatives to the dominant ideas of the human body as a complete and integrated entity. Distinctions between wholeness and fragmentation, sensuality and abjection, male and female remain blurred in the organic fluidity of their forms. Their innovative explorations embraced what we might today call the *écologie du sensible*, a profound intuitive attention and response to our environments.

The spirit of these pioneers is shared by the exhibition's contemporary artists, most of whom will be presented in the Czech Republic for the first time. Their approach to fragility speaks to our present moment and its concerns, principally an increased awareness of the interdependence of the body and the shifting equilibrium of nature. These artists include Francis Alÿs, Bianca Bondi, Edith Dekyndt, Susanna Fritscher, Kapwani Kiwanga, Anri Sala, and Vivian Suter. Their work explores the fragile coexistence of humans and the world surrounding them, and the need to seek connections and commonalities between human and non-human agencies. Working with objects, processes, and ecosystems, they also imagine complex new relationships with our environments, suggesting novel and unprecedented ways to coexist.

Other artists in the exhibition seek to portray the instability of human nature by embracing transfiguration and metamorphosis. The mutability and porosity of bodies is explored in the work of Michael Armitage, William Kentridge, Dominik Lang, Barthélémy Toguo, Luboš Plný and Anna Zemánková. These artists share an interest in shifting and changing anatomies and identities, as well as open, fluid, and unpredictable forms. They consider the body to be a fragile vessel, unfinished and transitory, interconnected and interdependent.



The understanding that all living things are dependent on their environment and each other has intensified in the context of current crises. These ideas have already been developed by artists and thinkers who have for many years stressed the invisible bonds that link us to other beings, and the myriad ways in which we are entangled with wider ecosystems. In response to these ideas, the exhibition invokes fragility as a lens and language, claiming that neither vulnerability nor power come in expected guises, and that the fragile connections between bodies and the earth constitute real strength.

CATALOGUE

Published by Galerie Rudolfinum, the exhibition catalogue includes contributions by Nour Asalia, artist and researcher, Paris; Emilie Bouvard, Director of Collections and Scientific Programme at Fondation Giacometti, Paris; Gabriela Garlatyová, Curator at the Archive of Maria Bartusová, Košice, Slovakia; and the exhibition curators.

CURATORS

Elena Sorokina is a curator and art historian, currently co-curating the Armenian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2022. In 2020, she co-founded the Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care in Paris. She was chief curator of the HISK (High Institute of Fine Arts, Belgium) in 2017-2018. Between 2015-2017 she was curatorial advisor of documenta 14 in Athens/Kassel. Sorokina is alumna of the Whitney Museum of American Art ISP in New York, previously obtaining her degree in art history from the Friedrich Wilhelm's University in Bonn, Germany.

Silvia Van Espen is a co-founder, curator and artistic director at ZAHORIAN & VAN ESPEN gallery in Bratislava, Slovakia and Prague, Czech Republic. Since 2011 she has been in charge of the artistic programme in both locations as well as international exhibitions and presentations in Europe and USA. She has co-ordinated all artist monographs and catalogues published by the gallery. She obtained her degree in art history from Paris-Sorbonne University (Paris IV), France, 2008.

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