

Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė

Mouthless Part III (Panorama)

03.02–26.02.2023

Mouthless Part III (Panorama), 2023

Two-channel video

For when I look at you for a moment, then it is no longer possible for me to speak; my tongue has snapped, at once a subtle fire has stolen beneath my flesh, I see nothing with my eyes, my ears hum, sweat pours from me, a trembling seizes me all over, I am greener than grass, and it seems to me that I am a little short of dying. (I, II), 2019

Spruce wood, polished steel, deformed lab glass. 181 x 80 x 30 cm

[ENTER THE HYPER-SCIENTIFIC](#)

EPFL-CDH Artist in Residence Program 2022

Commissioned and produced in the framework of EPFL CDH Artist in Residence Program 2022, Enter the Hyper-Scientific, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL).

Credits:

Mouthless Part III, 2023

Directed by: [Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė](#)

Performance: Oskar Pawełko

Cinematography: Raphael Wanner with Jonas Stirnimann

Animation: Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė

Costume: Tara Mabilia

HMU: Jasmin Berger

Sound: Haraldur Thrastarson

Music: Gorged by OXHY

Sounds of the Sun, NASA

The GAN animation sequences were created in collaboration with Laurène Donati of the EPFL Center for Imaging and Edward Andò and Florian Aymanns of the EPFL Image Analysis Hub, at the [Swiss Federal Institute for Technology \(EPFL\)](#), Lausanne.

-lalia sequence was created in collaboration with Emanuele Guidi, ar/ge kunst, Bolzano.

Performance: Giulia Terminio

Music: Bill Kouligas

Sound design: Haraldur Thrastarson

Voice: Justyna Chaberek

The production of Mouthless Part III was generously supported by Enter the Hyper-Scientific, EPFL-CDH AiR Program, Lausanne, and Fachausschuss Film und Medienkunst Basel-Stadt.

BIO:

Dorota Gawęda (1986, Lublin, Poland) and Eglė Kulbokaitė (1987, Kaunas, Lithuania) are an artist duo based in Basel, Switzerland. Both are graduates of the Royal College of Art, London (2012) and founders of the YOUNG GIRL READING GROUP (2013–21). They work in multiples across performance, painting, sculpture, fragrance, and video installation—where language breaks down and one genre morphs into many. Transfusing different bodies of knowledge across space and time, Gawęda Kulbokaitė nurture a research-based practice that weaves together fields as seemingly disparate as ecology and technology, science and magic, nonhuman intelligence and shared speculation. An interest in folklore runs through their work and their storytelling weirs the relationship between body and landscape, opening up alternative states and temporalities through queerness and magic.

The duo exhibited internationally including: ar/ge Kunst, Bolzano (2022); Shedhalle, Zürich (2022); Kunstraum Niederoesterreich, Vienna (2022); Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2022); Kunstverein Hamburg (2021); Istituto Svizzero, Palermo and Milan (2021); Kunstverein Leipzig (2021); Swiss Institute, New York (2020); Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf (2020); Fri Art - Kunsthalle Fribourg (2020); Futura, Prague (2019); Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2019); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018); Cell Project Space, London (2018); 6th Athens Biennale (2018); Kunsthalle Basel (2017); ICA, London (2017); MOMA, Warsaw (2016); Berlin Biennale 9 (2016); MaM, Paris (2015) among others. They are the recipients of the Allegro Artist Prize 2022; CERN Collide Residency Award 2022 and laureates of the Swiss Performance Art Award 2021. Upcoming projects will be presented at such institutions as Kunsthalle Mainz (2023) and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2023).

<https://gawedakulbokaite.com/>

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Mouthless Part III (Panorama)

Unfolding through a two-channel video installation, Mouthless Part III (Panorama) brings the spell of Dorota Gawęda and Eglė Kulbokaitė's visual universe into the space. It is part of the research project Synthetic Landscapes and represents the third chapter of their Mouthless series. [Synthetic Landscapes](#) looks into the history of Western landscape painting and specifically the formation of the concept of nature as that which has been defined as alien, outside of the subject, in an effort to better understand the current ecological crisis. The project poses a challenge to the illusory promise of subjectivity as a whole and as separate from the environment, seeking to break normative behavior patterns and negotiate new ways of relating to the world.

For Mouthless Part III, Gawęda and Kulbokaitė collaborated with engineers at the [EPFL Imaging Center](#) and Image Analysis Hub and discussed with scientists at CLIMACT to explore GAN aesthetics and ground the narrative of the work in environmental research. Technical and scientific inputs have been absorbed and integrated into the folkloric tropes of an opulent narrative and aesthetic that develops across two channels as a conversation between two characters: an archetypal Eastern European peasant and a landscape demon.

Alice Bucknell writes about the Mouthless series in *Body as a Journal*: "A strong interest in folklore - how it weirds the relationship between body and landscape through storytelling, while opening up alternative states and temporalities through queerness and magic - runs through Gawęda and Kulbokaitė's projects, particularly the ongoing multimedia trilogy Mouthless (2020-23). The series operates episodically, and while it manifests principally through video, it grafts onto the non-visual and non-linear, the machine-hallucinated, olfactory, and ritualistic, as a series of stories loosely tethered together by language, grief, the collective body, and ego death. Fact, fiction, theory, and folklore intertwine; these speculative stories are infused with scents, chants, and mythical characters. [...] Haunting these worlds are queer protagonists from Slavic and Baltic folk tales and traditions (stemming from the artists' own backgrounds, Gawęda from Poland and Kulbokaitė from Lithuania) - interstitial bodies and spirits that occupy liminal, contaminated, edge-of-world zones: swamps, soils, spills. These characters are complicated and contradictory; their ethics opaque, their bodies nebulous - it's difficult to tell where the monster ends and the human begins." In its digital morphing, the video treads a similarly tense in-between ground—straddling nature and artifice, technology and the supernatural.

The duo are alchemists and directors of a sophisticated research project where engineers appear to be entrusted with executing a task subverted into lavish visual dimensions. Mouthless Part III (Panorama) is a delightful disruption of techno-science, where storytelling, science, advanced digital technologies, the character study, fashion, and a nuanced soundscape all converge, queering genres, haunting the context, and illuminating transtemporal links through a calibrated visual narrative.

Lying on the central table is a 2019 sculpture which belongs to Gawęda and Kulbokaitė's longstanding investigation of transcultural and transhistorical signifiers. The work's title is the following quotation from Sappho's description of the Adonia rite in Ancient Greece, in which women mourned the death of Adonis, consort of Aphrodite: For when I look at you for a moment, then it is no longer possible for me to speak; my tongue has snapped, at once a subtle fire has stolen beneath my flesh, I see nothing with my eyes, my ears hum, sweat pours from me, a trembling seizes me all over, I am greener than grass, and it seems to me that I am a little short of dying. (I, II).

This physical element complements the video work and resonates with it, as if the pleasant and the demon could also materialize and themselves become speakers of the collective knowledge and references they carry. Mouthless Part III (Panorama) contains numerous references to texts such as *The Books of Jacob* by Olga Tokarczuk, *The Wedding* by Stanislaw Wyspianski, *Gravity and Grace* by Simone Weil, *With Stake and Spade: Vampiric Diversity in Poland* by Łukasz Kozak, *The Second Body* by Daisy Hildyard, *The Peasant Nightmare: Visions of Apocalypse in the Soviet Countryside* by Lynne Viola, *Dark Ecology* by Timothy Morton, *Rotten Sun* by Georges Bataille, and words generated by GPT-3.

Giulia Bini