

*Black Glass on the Way* is a poetical and estranged title of Amela Frankl's years-long art project, which the artist has been developing since 2019 motivated by her stays in Mauretania, the West African country connecting the Sahara Desert and the Atlantic Ocean. Through a series of exhibitions in different gallery spaces, Frankl elaborates the selected sets of motifs inherent in her African experience with media procedures consolidated by a performative artistic approach to, e.g., video and sound, but also to text and photography. Simply put, the essence of the project is made up of testing different models of communication with a series of artistic means with which the autobiographic, documentary content is poeticised and fictionalised. Thereby it grows into a multi-layered narrative, in which the artist's recognisable individual perspective serves as a lucid and often quite humorous toying with the social positions of us Europeans, faced with the authenticity of cultures we consider exotic (with which the individual relations are also inevitably mediated by the colonial past), but also with problematising the purpose and manner of artistic work that can modify inherited personal and social roles with its transformative potential. In the case of Amela Frankl's exhibition at AŽ Gallery, the artist configured the aforementioned in a situation in which the very sharing of a story, the direct and amicable creative giving is justifiably placed in the foreground.

The deliberate setup – relatively small by the number of the works, albeit substantial by the broadness of content – of the exhibition *Hadidja and Harmattan* begins with a text in form of a B2 poster on the central wall of the gallery space. This is an anecdote from the trip which Amela Frankl recounts to Žitnjak's photographer Boris Cvjetanović, on the basis of which it dawns on him to invite her as a member of the AŽ Gallery council to spatialise this story in this exact space. The photographer friend is the artist's first interlocutor on this occasion, while the spontaneity of their exchange invites both the Žitnjak collective and the visitors to join them as a kind of choir without which the story remains incomplete. The fact that the title of the exhibition is made up of two proper nouns – the first is a common name in Mauretania, while the second is the name of the hot desert wind blowing from the east to the west, from the Sahara towards the ocean – seems to accentuate the possible mythical character of its content, and perhaps of narration itself. For, couples who are connected or separated by the epic motif of travelling as an act which modifies both them and their world, stand in the roots of stories archetypal for humanity, for civilisation. Amela Frankl reduced the mythical and the archetypal in the story of Hadidja and Harmattan to everyday, human, and thereby mortal measure, for which the capability of memory to preserve the form of bygone times and spaces, smells and tastes, scenes and sounds is important, thus giving meaning to the finalised journey, i.e., the life which still passes. Towards this flow, Frankl maintains a healthy self-ironic attitude, evident in the series of Cvjetanović's photographs and in the video of the performance filmed by Miran Krčadinac, where both show the artist who, hindered by the artificial wind from a large ventilator on the north side of the Sava embankment, seeks to pull a veil – a gift from a Mauritanian friend – over her entire body.

The author's self-irony is hiding in the seemingly absurd obstacle in putting on the veil, the artificiality of which is hidden by nothing; however, it is oh-so-carefully tuned in the emotional tonality of both the photographs and the video that there is no doubt that the memory of Mauretania indeed possesses a strong charge for Frankl; it is just that she is aware of the danger of direct representation, of excessively talkative narration. The author abstracts the meeting point of the desert and the ocean so as to let in her present reality – which she shares with the exhibition visitors – real memory of authentic experiences, not at all broached by European baggage on the coast of Africa. The original sound of the Harmattan wind, recorded in 2022 in the desert formation of Guelb er Richât, resounds throughout AŽ Gallery as if it simultaneously threatens and acclaims everything through which it passes, thus rounding off the dialectics of the exhibition setup with the immense apathy of the Sahara.

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