

amsterdam (21.04. – 21.05.)

stockholm (17.08. – 16.09.)

news from nowhere and the atopia of now

Josefina Anjou (Sweden, 1993)

Antonin Giroud-Delorme (France, 1985)

(nelly Et)

theo van doesburg

stichting

based in each of the hometowns of the artists, stockholm and amsterdam, the duo show *news from nowhere and the atopia of now* is developed by correspondence via zoom and a material exchange via post. the outcome is an immersive scenography, communal effort by both artists and curator jules van den langenberg.

the exhibitions are named after the novel *news from nowhere, or an epoch of rest* by william morris. this soft science-fiction points out how its socialism would entail not only the abolition of private property but also of the divisions between art, life, and work. in the story, the narrator awakens in a future society based on common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. he explores his environment, a house which has no limit of exposed natural elements to its exterior. inside there are handcrafted accents in stone and wood. the outdoors is built-in to the indoors through overlapping architectural features. this book has become a conversation piece and starting point for the artists and curator. it offered a utopian alternative for the forthcoming industrial era. *news from nowhere and the atopia of now* suggests instead an *atopian* state, a fragmented place reminiscent of home, of at once the future and the past. by imagining a *topia*, neither better nor worse, anjou and giroud-delorme are referring back to the history of the two exhibiting locations while at the same time grasping at contemporary contingencies.

the duo show takes place in two parts, at artist associations arti et amicitiae in amsterdam and skf / konstnärshuset in stockholm. the selected locations have a similar spatial outlook and organization, with many arts and crafts related references in their buildings that can also be found in the bodies of work of the two emerging artists. the works deal with agility and adaptability. anjou

is introducing paintings consisting of separate panels, giving them a modular yet architectural aspect. while giroud-delorme is bringing in pipes that visually merge with the internal infrastructure of the different sites.

the shows are in almost identical rooms with similar woodworked interiors, the artists stage new and existing works in a site specific manner. josefina anjou's paintings offer a view into imaginary landscapes where the factual and the wonderful merge. her paintings are made partly using airbrushing techniques and trompe-l'oeil effects, accompanied with self-built frames. antonin giroud-delorme taps into material culture, attempting to embody his take on territories like death and desire by using grotesque imagery combined to a poetic assemblage of materials such as copper, plaster, glass and recollected symbols. his domestic pipe sculptures have a performative quality as they act and react on the exhibition space architecture and on the expectations visitors have of the built environment.

the works are installed separately as well as overlapping each other, reimagining the interior with the duo inhabiting the room. spread over several walls and the central floor, a whimsical household is accumulated with panel paintings, pipe sculptures and a furniture piece from each of the artist associations interiors that is intervened with and embedded in the show.

news from nowhere and the atopia of now takes place at arti et amicitiae in amsterdam from april 21 until may 21 and in skf / konstnärshuset in stockholm from august 17 until september 16. the exhibitions in amsterdam and stockholm are seemingly identical but differentiate through the environmental gestures of the two artists, individually and collaboratively.

josefina anjou

window view, 2022

oil on canvas, tinted pine, 215 × 192 cm

under the cogwheel tree, above the electric suns, 2023

oil and ink on canvas, tinted pine, 245 × 245 cm

*living feels a lot like dying but probably only after you
have done it a couple of times, 2022*

oil, ink and pastel on canvas, aged wood, 141 × 91 cm

man, stretching, 2023

charcoal and ink on paper, tinted pine, 31 × 43 cm

*small window view: orchid plane, shy wheel,
angel valley, 2021*

oil on canvas, iron nails, 28 × 41 cm (× 3)

antonin giroud-delorme

soma-witnesses (lethal jurisdiction i), 2022

copper pipes, artist's tongue, ears and ring finger plaster casts, metallic copper spray paint, screws, stainless steel computer fragment, copper wire, fountain pen nib, custom and charred wax seal, chemistry glassware, solid clear prosthetic bone, dried plant, demineralized water, aconitum napellus seeds, small offerings by different persons from the artist's surrounding.* variable dimensions

soma-witnesses (lethal jurisdiction ii), 2022

copper pipes, artist's tongue, ears and ring finger plaster casts, metallic copper spray paint, screws, stainless steel computer fragment, copper wire, fountain pen nib, charred judge hammer, golden grinding disk, golden lucky charm mouse, chemistry glassware, solid clear prosthetic bone, dried plant, demineralized water, aconitum napellus seeds, small offerings by different persons from the artist's surrounding.* variable dimensions

soma-witnesses (lethal jurisdiction iii), 2023

copper pipes, artist's tongue, ears and ring finger plaster casts, metallic copper spray paint, screws, stainless steel computer fragment, copper wire, fountain pen nib, brass scale weight, black feathers, chemistry glassware, solid clear prosthetic bone, dried plant, demineralized water, aconitum napellus seeds, small offerings by different persons from the artist's surrounding.* variable dimensions

*small offerings are individual contributions by diego bretanha fraga, nadh lingyun cao, montserrat fonseca llach, arto van hasselt, sabrina miller, billy morgan, frederique pisuisse, victor santamarina, manuela zammit.

josefina anjou Et antonin giroud-delorme

gateway, 2023

plaster cast of konstnärshuset's door handle, computer keyboard fragment, ink, silver powder, 30 × 27 cm

unfolding rooms, 2023

room divider furniture, ink on canvas, metal pins, black curtains, artist's fingers plaster casts, plant's roots, drilled euro coin, charred art deco style wooden table clock, debit card's cut fragments, clock hands, stainless steel cover plates for computing components, plaster cast of tintin figurine's head, plaster cast of knights of the zodiac figurine's armor, plaster cast of teenage mutant ninja turtle figurine's leg, plaster cast of maneki-neko figurine, golden necklace chains. variable dimensions

the exhibitions *news from nowhere and the atopia of now* are made possible thanks to the support of afk, arti et amicitiae amsterdam, skf / konstnärshuset stockholm.

amsterdam / stockholm interview

writer and curator àngels miralda interviews artists josefina anjou, antonin giroud-delorme and curator jules van den langenberg about the exhibition *news from nowhere* and *the atopia of now* in amsterdam.

àngels miralda: this exhibition has been in the planning for nearly two years due to pandemic delays. how has this time affected your reading of *news from nowhere* and the development of the pieces for the exhibition?

jules van den langenberg: over time, a growing amount of parallels were drawn between the soft science fiction novel *news from nowhere* that conveys the arts and crafts movements' attempt in 1890 to counterbalance industrialization, and contemporary cultural workers that unionise and oppose capitalist systems fueled by pandemic policies. the novel is written in old english, which is quite unreadable for me, but i could filter ideas about the commons, an agrarian society, biology, class mobility, liquidity and water management that have become relevant again now to makers, thinkers and cultural workers all over europe. in morris' novel there is a concept of building an entire house without machines but rather with a fixed group of talented artisans – i see this as a predecessor to initiatives that have been started by alumni of amsterdam art schools who team up to create their own platforms and conditions to alleviate their precarious positions.

àm: both william morris' novel and both of the cultural associations in which this exhibition takes place are from the second half of the 19th century. can you explain the decision to incorporate original pieces of furniture from these spaces into the exhibition itself?

jvdl: *news from nowhere* and *the atopia of now* is a duo show bringing together alumni of two amsterdam art academies in a dutch and swedish artist association. by taking sufficient preparation time the artists enabled themselves and the teams of the collaborating institutes to develop new and site specific works that responded to aesthetics of these exhibition spaces. the emerging practices of anjou and giroud-delorme are intertwined and their sculptures and paintings repurpose the arts and crafts auras of the institutes. to such an extent that existing

furniture is mingled within the show and makes us wonder where institutional interior ends and the exhibition begins.

àm: josefina, your paintings and frames reference the architectural function of windows as a view onto the world – how do they interact with the architecture and history of arti?

josefina anjou: one of the key changes in the transformation of exhibition places like arti into the standardised modernistic space was the removal of windows. so in a way, i flirt with the essence of the space. i am drawn to the idea of art being incorporated into everything around it, there is a borderless quality to the ornamental aesthetic of the 19th century. a window stops being an object in itself and becomes a transitional element – both part of the inside and the outside.

àm: antonin, in the centre of the exhibition we see a collaborative work between josefina and yourself. what is the history of these room dividers and how do they relate to the spectators and the space of arti as scenography?

antonin giroud-delorme: these folding screens arrived in europe directly from far east asia out of trade which circulated aesthetic influences from one place to another. in their original context they were used to protect from evil spirits, in the modern era they progressively lost that function and became purely separation devices. dividers seem to have emerged initially in china, but their more ornamented and lacquered versions flourished and developed in korean-japanese craft. although they had already been present in europe for centuries, room dividers regained attention through the tendencies of art nouveau, the arts and crafts movement, and *japonisme* in 19th century europe.

in the exhibition, josefina and i decided to relate to this element on a more cosmic level. we used a multi-directional approach, scaling in and out perpetually from the idea of an abstract floor plan, where the personal intertwines with late 19th century decorative patterns and other mass consumer iconography like pop figurines. the frame of this room divider is borrowed from arti et amicitiae, it lays down on the exhibition floor claiming itself as a space. it contains maybe a subconscious reference to thomas more's island in *utopia* which relates to the title of this exhibition. for me, it is a sort of hazy map where the exhibition frame, the skeletal dimensions of the building and our personal gestures are allowed to meet and unfold. i could engage directly with the pictorial field of josefina as well as symbols from my own childhood that evoke eastern and western geopolitical entanglements.

àm: josefina, your paintings contain biological forms that i recognize from early surrealists as well as ornamentation. can you speak about some of these references as well as how these function within your paintings?

ja: i realise that certain movements and shapes are what signifies that my paintings are made by me, yet, i see those same forms as if sprung out of something other than my individual self. call it automated, spiritual, libidinal, unconscious, or biological: it is for me both an important and pleasurable experience to tap into that kind of painting. in a way this is a method that merges into a topic. in *under the cogwheel tree*, and *above the electric suns* there is firstly the frame that holds the contained image, but there are additional layers of "frames" within the image. i am attempting to conceal the abstract just like us sentient creatures continually do, defining the flow of our unceasing impressions.

àm: antonin, there are a variety of small objects contained within the glass beakers that cap the copper pipes of your installation. can you explain what these objects are and how you got a hold of them?

agd: this work functions on at least two levels: first is the personal desire to develop process-oriented-gestures that bridge different aspects of my work through other mediums. with these objects, i wanted to engage with contributions from other people and to host them inside of this piece. i approached people in my surroundings in order to respond to social conditions and crises brought up during the pandemic. besides the generalised fear of death through viral contagion, fortuitous encounters with new people almost disappeared for a time, the potential expansion of ones' social network also died for a while. in my opinion, this directly linked an erotic aspect of our social life to death. as part of the process, i contacted persons which i feel very curious about but who are not close friends. i asked them to contribute something in exchange for a dinner treat which staged a ritual collective act of grieving. at my request, everyone brought an object embodying a notion of death from a broad, yet personal spectrum. these artefacts were collected following my trust in somatic powers onto matter. these objects are hosted and displayed together inside of glass beakers, i believe that the spoon, the tiny amber stone or the snail shell contributions for example, can work as some concrete manifestation of these networked deaths and, at the same time, trigger certain edges of our classic representational system and its symbolic values.

àm: josefina, the curved frames around your works have to do not only with ornament but with the handmade – how does this relate to morris' novel and technology's adaptations to the body?

ja: although impossible, i seek to spawn images that seem ageless, or at least that contain many ages simultaneously. the rounded corners is something i've been stuck with, a shape found both in wrought iron work as well as in contemporary technology and design. in both cases it has the functional intention to strengthen the otherwise too-sensitive 45 degree angle, like the corner off glass windows or screens. a secondary but maybe more important effect is the increased comfort for eyes and hands.

àm: in *news from nowhere*, morris proposes that in a socialist world people would work because they find joy in a unified medley of art, life, and work that consists of creative pursuits. in your work, the plaster castes of tongues could reference this combination through their symbolism of speech, sexuality, and taste. what do they mean to you and how do they reflect on this moment in society?

agd: these moulded tongues became part of this work as a grotesque and erotic daily ritual that expresses today's biopolitical context. i found it powerful that the organ of speech, once in that position, can no longer handle human language, instead, it is in a position for more sensual and sexual articulations. this intermediary symbolic position ready to become functional hangers of the whole pipe's network is crucial to me, especially because it connects the inside directly to the outside of the body, meaning that it can mingle with other bodies. this loops back to the question about death. i feel that, particularly in europe, because of the additional event of war directly after the pandemic, we have entered times where joy, pleasure, and the medley of art and life, can no longer be segregated from their darker sides. i think we are inhabiting a transitional moment where bodies used to be expressed, represented, controlled and so forth by and through a living definition of themselves. now, they can also be experienced through the negative, outside or beyond their vitality, maybe even through a meta-consciousness of their multiple future potential deaths.

the exhibitions *news from nowhere* and *the atopia of now* are made possible thanks to the support of [afk](#), [arti et amicitiae amsterdam](#), [skf](#) / [konstnärshuset stockholm](#).