

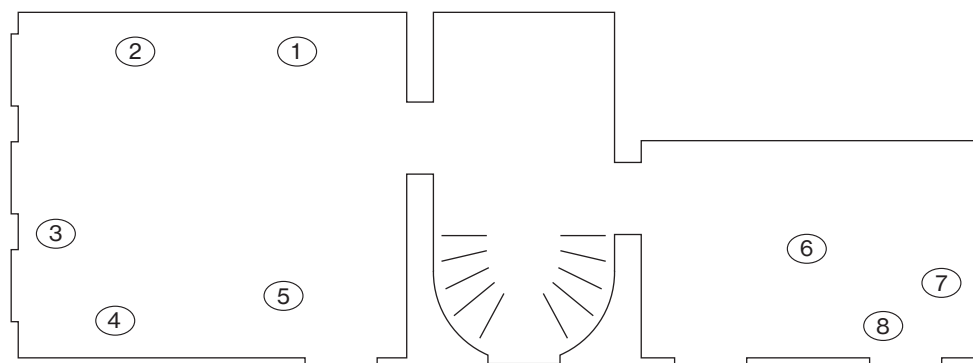
HIT ME WITH YOUR CAR

Zofia Pałucha and Laura Radzewicz
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The car, speeding up to its limits, accelerates relentlessly. Dust swirls around, and the screech of burning tires can be heard. The view from the window blurs due to the achieved speed. The smell of exhaust fills the air, and soon, perhaps, the smell of blood as well. The tension keeps rising. The scene, reminiscent of a disaster movie just before a spectacular accident and destruction, appears in Laura Radzewicz's film and becomes a metaphor for the present moment in the exhibition. We await the climactic moment. Images of violence and disasters accumulate, yet the apocalypse still does not arrive. We are trapped in an endless catastrophe, which we watch in slow motion. Mostly through screens, applications, short films, or memes.

As Steven Shaviro observes in his book „No Speed Limit” the intensification of horror in contemporary capitalism does not lead to the expected explosion and, consequently, revolutionary change. Looking at these images in movies and on the Internet offers rather shallow satisfaction and relief. It's a sense that we have reached the bottom. We already know it can't get worse. If memes are the articulation of collective unconsciousness, then popular memes like „this is fine” „tolerance training for eternity in hell” or those derived from „American Psycho” reflect a comically-sad, resigned attitude towards the permanent state of ecological, political, and economic crisis.

In the exhibition, we present the latest series of paintings by Zofia Pałucha, in which the artist uses manipulated „found footage” materials from the Internet, creating a contemporary „stream of consciousness” as well as VR films and installations by Laura Radzewicz, which tell the story of the human condition in times of automation, algorithmic power, and late capitalist practices. Together with the artists, we traverse the spaces of large corporations, application interfaces, gyms, alt-right chats, and sensational headlines sowing moral panic around satanism. We observe scenes of violence against women - manipulated images from protests pacification and pornographic freeze-frames - which we have seen many times before, yet they still resemble scenes from science fiction films. The artists attempt to capture the aesthetics of techno-accelerationism. They explore the visuality of the Internet, which was supposed to be a democratic and transparent tool but has become a place of manipulation and capital generation by technological corporations that profit from cultural wars, social conflicts, as well as the emergence of neo-tribal groups and the promoted ways of coping with reality, which often border on magical practices or conspiracy theories.



- ① Zofia Pałucha, *I Feel Completely Relaxed in Rebellion*, 2023, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
- ② Zofia Pałucha, *Gorgeous Couple Gets Wild*, 2023, oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm
- ③ Laura Radzewicz, *Tolerance training for the eternity in hell*, 2023, installation with a VR film, 8:08 min
- ④ Zofia Pałucha, *Choosing the Margin as a Space for Radical Openness and Possibility*, 2023, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
- ⑤ Laura Radzewicz, *No fear for failing at the gym. Slime, Sweat and Data*, 2023, installation with a film, 13:57 min
- ⑥ Laura Radzewicz, *Poor cable management*, 2023, installation with blood-filled barrels
- ⑦ Zofia Pałucha, *Beginning of the World*, 2023, oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm
- ⑧ Laura Radzewicz, *Furby*, 2023, installation

The artist works with “found footage” material from the internet to create her paintings. She employs various techniques of image manipulation, such as mash-ups, color inversions, and collage techniques that draw attention to the functioning of images on the internet, rife with fake news and deep fakes. The artist does not define the meanings of her works, referring to them as a “contemporary stream of consciousness.” However, she gives them evocative titles derived from sources like philosophical essays (e.g., bell hooks’ essay “Choosing the Margin as a Space for Radical Openness and Possibility”), art history, or quotes from films and podcasts. The paintings presented in the exhibition often highlight moments of tension. Scenes from protests and their pacification by authorities appear, as well as scenes depicting violence against women and pornographic imagery. These images hang suspended between the past and the future. It may seem like we have already seen these images, yet they simultaneously resemble something taken out of science fiction films, extrapolating futuristic elements from the existing reality.

- ① *I Feel Completely Relaxed in Rebellion*, 2023, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
- ② *Gorgeous Couple Gets Wild*, 2023, oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm
- ④ *Choosing the Margin as a Space for Radical Openness and Possibility*, 2023, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
- ⑦ *Beginning of the World*, 2023, oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm

- ③ *Tolerance training for the eternity in hell*, 2023, instalacja z filmem VR, 8:08 min, lektorka: Lauren Haughey, muzyka: Michał Chrul (xttpal)

The title of the VR film refers to a meme depicting a white, muscular man or avatar sitting in goggles on a plastic chair in a scorching desert. It serves as an ironic commentary on the contemporary reality engulfed in never-ending crises, including hellish heatwaves. With the wearing of an ergonomic extreme sports helmet, Radzewicz takes the viewer on a cinematic journey. The visual essay resembles a trailer for a disaster film. The viewer traverses through space, human tissue, witnesses speeding cars, and travels through corporate spaces filled with motivational content. The film’s narration references philosophical texts related to accelerationist movements, critiques of neoliberal capitalism, and the hustle culture. The artist engages with Steven Shaviro’s essay “No Speed Limit” from 2015, where he delves into accelerationist movements fascinated by technological advancement, considering progress and extrapolations of neoliberal capitalism as the ultimate method of transcending the system. According to the author, we currently live in a state of constant acceleration and crises, stretching over time and becoming chronic. Only the fantasy of destruction, an apocalypse that would break society’s lethargy and change the global system, remains. Unfortunately, it turns out that crises only strengthen capitalism, which has learned to extract even greater profits from catastrophes and wars (the process of subsumption). The aesthetics of accelerationism, which involve watching horror and a burning world, ultimately provide little satisfaction and relief. We feel that it cannot get any worse.

- ⑤ *No fear for failing at the gym. Slime, Sweat and Data*, 2023, instalacja z filmem 13:57 min

The installation resembles a chair or a prayer bench in the shape of gym exercise machines. The title refers to motivational slogans propagated by fitness influencers who have become not only guides in matters of physicality but also spiritual guides and life motivators. The artwork explores the role of embodiment in the era of digitization. The artist critically engages with the phenomenon of “broscience” which encompasses various conspiracy theories and folk knowledge transmitted by bodybuilders and fitness enthusiasts who experiment on their bodies in an attempt to change their parameters through different practices and supplements. These theories often surface in “incel” forums as recipes for becoming more attractive to women or for success in the job market. In contemplating these phenomena, Radzewicz draws upon Michel Foucault’s concept of “technologies of the self” which refers to individual actions directed towards the development and improvement of one’s practices and values, often through self-discipline or a specific lifestyle. According to the theory of Paul B. Preciado, we live in a pharmacopornographic system where our bodies, bodily fluids, and desires are controlled by an advanced system of technocapitalism, global mass media, and biotechnology (including drugs, substances, stimulants, steroids, and ubiquitous pornography). Data regarding our bodies, health, preferences, and locations are processed and capitalized upon by large corporations. The pursuit of self-improvement and personalization, aiming to free ourselves from everyday problems, further immerses us in them.

- ⑥ *Poor cable managment*, 2023, instalacja z beczek z krwią

The installation consists of metal barrels containing a blood-like substance. The artist references an internet conspiracy theory surrounding adrenochrome, a chemical compound derived from adrenaline. According to various narratives, global elites consume human blood, using it as a drug and stimulant. It is said to be transported in metal barrels disguised as beer by large corporations. Another conspiracy theory known as “Pizzagate” popularized in 2016, propagated legends of alleged child abductions and their sexual exploitation by political elites in the United States, including individuals associated with Hillary Clinton. These and other narratives about blood-sucking elites were spread by alt-right media affiliated with the QAnon movement, supporters of Donald Trump, and were partly responsible for the terrorist attack on the Capitol in January 2021. According to philosopher and conspiracy theory researcher Tomasz Stawiszyński, conspiracy theories serve multiple functions. Above all, they aim to explain unexplainable phenomena that surpass human knowledge, alleviate uncertainty, and impose order on chaos. Conspiracy theories often contain a “kernel of truth” such as the theory about blood-sucking financial elites, who, in reality, are not a pedophile and cannibalistic mafia, but through resource extraction and capital accumulation, pose real problems for democracy and global justice.

- ⑧ *Furby*, 2023, instalacja

“Furby” is a symbolic object deeply rooted in contemporary moral panics, such as the Satanic Panic, which perceive the random behavior of an automated toy as having demonic power. Simultaneously, the first Furby model was withdrawn from the market in 1999 by the National Security Agency due to its potential for collecting user information, which could then be used for corporate purposes. The mascot intermittently speaks to the audience, presenting material related to the phenomenon of Satanic Panic, which is experiencing a resurgence in online forums today.