



The final iteration of Montag Modus' three-part series *ShareHolders* takes shape through a procession of slow-paced revelations. Notions of care, home, repetition and ritual punctuate the performative works, but their footing is never sure: we are also confronted by the bitter ends and the ruins. The two gentle, even infantile words—sharing and holding—that shape this cycle of works reveal a corporatist alliance when placed in proximity. The compound word is indicative of the generalized corporatism that buttresses many of our most “trusted” institutions: the nuclear family, the state. Yet it becomes clear that, while some forms of contemporary sharing are monetizable, others remain within the value-deprived realm of social reproduction. Feminized voices dominate 21st century domotics (smart home technology), but their real-life counterparts scarcely make ends meet.

At Alte Münze, the two-tiered, open space is arranged like a vacant theater set, with props scattered around, waiting to be activated. I encounter the first work in the back corner of the gallery. The sense of anticipation in the room is echoed in Fette Sans' screen-based performance *The bitter ends of (the technologies of tenderness)*. A long-haired, femme person appears on the screen in fragments, but I can also see myself reflected there in her phone. It makes me feel exposed, even though we are, for the moment, alone. A chat window at the top displays a phone number and a request for touch. At first, I don't register that it's for me. But then new, more pleading words start to appear, typed in real time in the chat. My impulse is to pick up the phone and call, rather than text back. We have a short, warm conversation, in which I explain my confusion. I touch the hair of the person on the screen, as requested. We linger there for a minute.

Afterwards, I read the artist's description: “A figure is seen. The perfect virtual assistant is female-presenting and will ask you how she can help you. She is always on when you need her. A computer processor is described as idle when it is not being used by any program. When idleness is applied to a person, it suggests laziness... The figure you see is idling, yet she's not lethargic, she is in a state of waiting.”

It reminds me of an essay by Sophie Lewis, published in e-flux last year, in which she disentangles the etymology and history of the midwife, presenting them as stewards of companionship. “The art of the *mit-wif*...” she writes, “is the steadfast solidarity of the unproductive.”

I can think of countless roles—from sex work to care for the elderly—that attend to this deceptively simple injunction of *being-with* and *giving time*. Sharing and holding.

The piece makes me wonder whether these kinds of roles could ever be fully automated? The figure in Sans' piece is decidedly not the perfect virtual assistant. In fact, her virtuality is questionable, borderline. She wants something from us, too. She wants to share, she wants to be touched. Who is caring for whom, here? Am I, perhaps, the one idly waiting for her to activate me? Or is it mutual?



Fette Sans:  
*The bitter end of (the technologies of tenderness)*

Photo:  
Barbara Antal



I'm jolted out of my thoughts by a sound in the multi-channel headphones that I forgot I'm wearing, having been given them at the entrance. I look up to try to connect the voice to its origins. Maru Mushtrieva is standing behind a microphone on the mezzanine floor above, speaking quietly and making almost imperceptible sounds with her fingernails and other objects. It's the beginning of the sonic guided tour, which the artist has titled *scratching the virtual off the skin while taking a selfie at the seashore*. The transition from my previous thoughts, from the previous work, feels seamless. The request for touch—this absent touch, through the screen—is recited here, this time from the perspective of the hand. Mushtrieva refers to it as a "pars pro toto" but it is also known in literature as a synecdoche: when the part stands in for the whole. In this case, the fingers stand for the body, the whole person, offered and accessed via the phone's screen.

In her work, Fette Sans asks: "Does it sometimes feel like a betrayal to go away from the screen for touch?" Mushtrieva's performance replies: we are one with the screen. Ambient noises reach us through our individual headphones, as we stand around the room, disconnected from the acknowledgement of a shared experience. Whispering, scratching, snapping and tapping, all become the background sounds of a meditation on rituals, wherein the fingers are the main protagonists. As I listen, I type out notes on my phone, I take a photo. It's a force of habit, this virtual extension, this cataloguing of experience. Mushtrieva loosely takes us through (this is the "guided tour") a series of socially embedded rituals, like household chores and folk dances, landing us in a numerological study of Google Map addresses. We are led to observe the mystical dimensions of our own unquestioned daily routines, with the phone as the totemic figure. How will these ritualized practices be understood in the distant future?



Cru Encarnação:  
The Ballad

Photo:  
Barbara Antal



Maru Mushtrieva:  
scratching the virtual off the skin  
while taking a selfie at the seashore

Photo:  
Barbara Antal

A hint of an answer might be found in Cru Encarnação's contribution to *ShareHolders*. After the sonic tour, I go upstairs, where I encounter a free-standing bathtub, its contents lit in a fluorescent green hue. It's a prop from the filmed performance playing on the wall in the background. In the video, a wet-haired, costumed figure with dilated pupils—like a character from a sci-fi film—moves eerily across the floor, covered in a projection's blue light, while a story of repetition and accumulation unfolds. *The Ballad* asks heavy questions about the construction of our shared realities, and how historical processes get handed down and repeated. A distorted voice, constantly changing in range and pitch, asks: "What is this circular psychosis that is the basic founding of meaning, knowledge, events...?" Encarnação's semi-poetic text is punctuated by thoughts about the power dynamics behind social norms and rituals.

In the quoted text accompanying the work, witches are invoked as witnesses to the condition of collective “sharing”—the accumulative construction of systems of knowledge and science—that was also the source of their demise. Dominant rites have historically forced violent exclusion, in particular of women and gender non-conforming people. The character in the video can be read as an extension or descendant of that exclusionary impulse, reacting to its intergenerational trauma from an ahistorical, or otherworldly, location. The disembodied fingers of Mushtrieva’s piece are here given another, more demonic voice from which to reflect their suspicions about the ways in which we order our world.

The evening of performative works is rounded off with Göksu Kunak’s text-based performative installation *AN(A)KARA* and its ruins, which uses a sequence of carefully choreographed tableaux to interrogate a set of similar themes, this time from an auto-biographical perspective.

The props scattered around the main room of the space, which previously lay in wait, are brought into service one by one in *AN(A)KARA*, in the pursuit of several jarring and powerful images. These semi-frozen moments make up a semblance of a variety show, hosted by Kunak’s alter ego Gucci Chunk, an unearthly creature who mimics human postures and facial expressions with an absurd, exaggerated quality. They first put on a lip retractor used for dental procedures, which in this case forces a wide and terrifying smile. As drool drips from the corners of their mouth, they circulate the room in a robotic series of movements, pausing to look at us or off into the distance. A text is read in the background, harnessing references to Turkish pop culture as well as political ideology, and how they have historically been merged as tools for government propaganda. At one point, Gucci Chunk straps on a pair of cumbersome shoes, a binding corset and a black scarf that covers their whole face. Using ski poles, they thump perilously around the space. Unsure of their ability to see, we move and skirt around them accordingly. It becomes a kind of spontaneous communal dance that we’re all unwittingly engaged in.

In the end, it feels a bit like we’re witnessing, or even participating in, a ritual of a new kind. As with other pieces in *ShareHolders*, the timing in Kunak’s performance is key. The slow pace, they tell us, “registers a stretch in time in relation to the pejorative view of the laziness of the monstrous (!) Eastern.”



Göksu Kunak:  
*AN(A)KARA* and its ruins

Photo:  
Barbara Antal

The idleness I encountered at the beginning of the night comes back, and is harnessed anew in Kunak’s performance. I return to Sophie Lewis’ essay, in which she presents “capitalist time” as the antithesis to a number of unavoidable human processes, like birth-giving and grief in the face of death. To insist on “non-progress” and idleness, on *being-with* and *giving time*, thus feels like a revolutionary act.

*ShareHolders* skillfully encompasses this double meaning, the sharing and the holding as well as their insidious, entrepreneurial contemporary portmanteau. As the evening unfolds, each performative work drips slowly and harmoniously into the next, speaking in the same—often slightly automated—language, despite their disparate authorial voices.

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