

KATHARINA ARNDT + ZUZANA SVATIK at Station Gallery Bratislava
“Divas After Work”



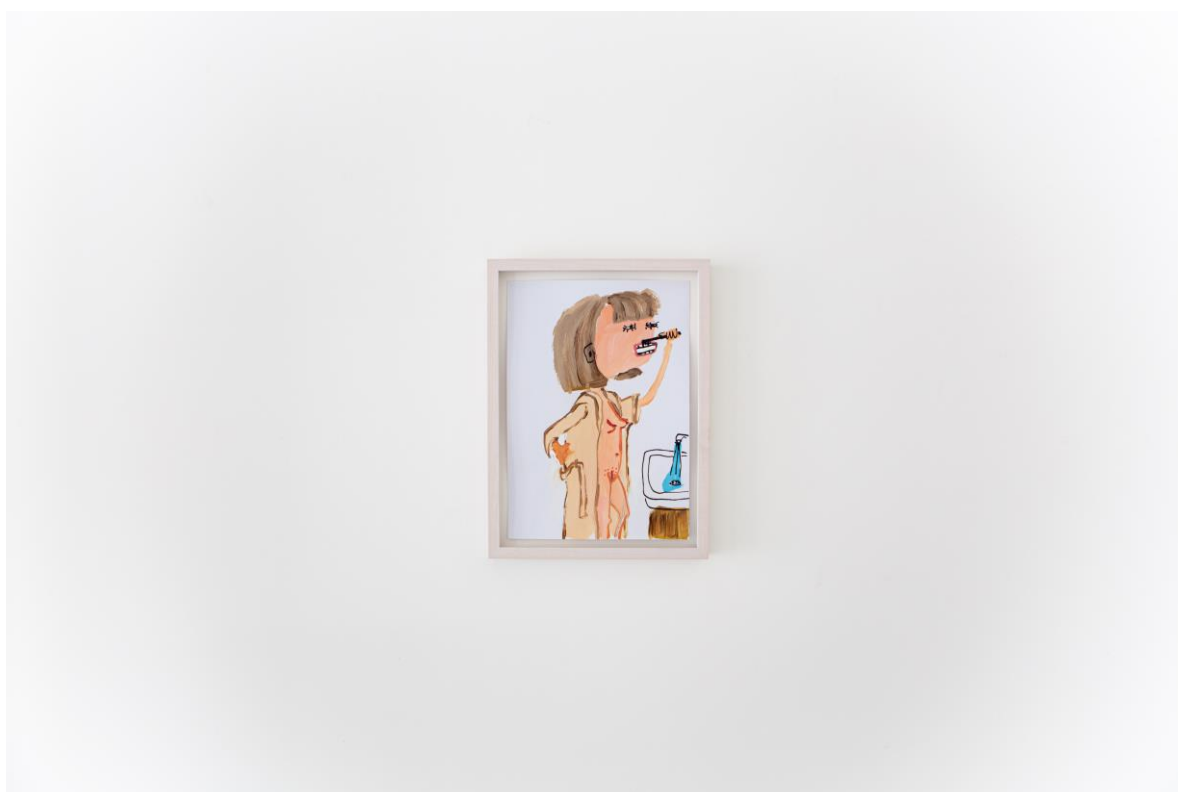
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register No.: 48344/T place of jurisdiction: bratislava slovakia (eu)

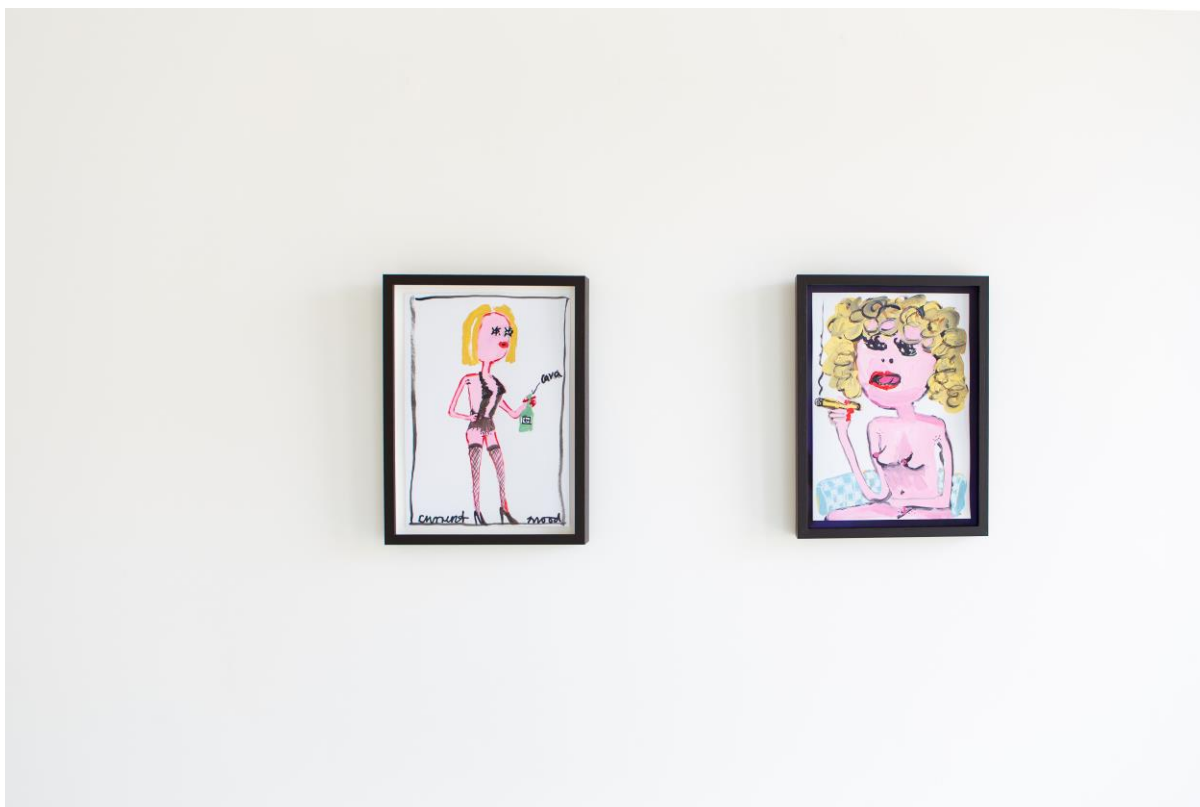
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Curatorial text by Helena McFadzean

Welcome to Station Gallery in Bratislava, where we proudly present "Divas After Work", a duo exhibition featuring ceramic works by Zuzana Svatik and paintings by Katharina Arndt. Playfully employing various archetypes of femininity by pop culture and, this exhibition delves into two perspectives on the layered and contradictory idea of the (Western) woman in leisure, creating a productive tension within the modernist space of Station Gallery.

Both Arndt and Svatik present a thought-provoking dialogue on power dynamics and the performative aspects of womanhood. A sensibility for camp and pop culture infuses these questions of identity in a post-modern, digital era with humour and playfulness.

What attributes truly make a 'diva'? Who is she when she 'unmasks'; when the make-up is washed off in the shower and she gets to unwind with a cigarette in the bathtub? What spackle lies beneath the sparkle of an elevated image, the femme fatale on a pedestal? The diva wears her costume fiercely. She walks the walk but not without faults and sensibility. "Divas After Work" touches on visions of the femme aware of her everyday costume and stage. She exists just as authentically within her perceived identity: clothing, posture, movement, attitude, as she does in moments considered 'private' and 'authentic'.

The juxtaposition of Svatik's ceramics and Arndt's paintings creates a captivating visual dialogue. While Svatik's work delves into the nuances of gender stereotypes and the search for a sheen of authenticity within the sexualised image, Arndt's pieces explore the tension between the pursuit of an eternal paradise and the realities of impermanence.

Throughout Katharina Arndt's vibrant and dynamic paintings, the 'diva' when the spotlight is off is a central character. Arndt's works challenge societal expectations placed on women humorously via consumer culture. Armed with logos and media tropes, she explores the idea of costume, consumption and youth culture.

Her 'divas' reference gendered attributes that make up the 'Femme Fatale' archetype. Arndt highlights their vulnerabilities and imperfections, showcasing stubble in their armpits and on their legs, juxtaposed with glamorous, yet harshly highlighted signifiers like red nails, lipstick, and fur coats. Viewers are invited to consider the dichotomy between societal expectations and the authentic selves of the contemporary woman who is expected to 'juggle it all'.

Arndt works primarily with acrylic paint and marker applied in smeared brushstrokes, employing a quick and nonchalant style, which adds an accessible and frank quality to her artworks but also seems to reference artifice as well as the smudge of a finger on the digital screen. She often creates self-portraits or utilises erotic imagery to capture the attitudes and complexities of the female figure. Simply look towards the work "2 angry kitties and a girl (sketch)" to see this duality epitomised. She is a figure that is feared as well as revered. The two cats are angry and balk, despite their soft, gentle fur.

On the other hand, Zuzana Svatik presents a series of ceramic vessels that challenge conventional notions of domesticity and female identity. Her ironic

approach towards the theme of "Divas After Work" explores the objectification and commodification of women in a patriarchal society. Svatik's vessels, adorned with imagery loosely based on women in pornographic contexts, juxtapose the seemingly innocent medium of ceramics with explicit pop culture references. By subverting the conventional association of ceramics with domesticity, Svatik invites viewers to question societal norms.

The concept of a separation between work and personal life becomes increasingly elusive, particularly from a feminist standpoint and within the context of Eastern Europe. There seems to be no distinct 'after work' time, as even arenas of pleasure function as stages where achievement is often objectified and commodified.

In her exploration, Zuzana encounters a plethora of pornography images depicting women who appear to performatively express enjoyment. She scrutinises these images, searching for traces of authentic pleasure within them. Her subjects exist somewhere on the line between the performative gesture and the 'real' sentiment.

Katharina Arndt (b. 1981) is a contemporary artist from Germany who lives and works between Berlin and Barcelona. She studied Fine Arts at Braunschweig School of Art and later obtained her Master of Fine Arts by John Armleder. Her fast and colourful paintings ironise the contemporary mass consumerist aesthetic of a decadent, abundant society in picturing her everyday life in the digital age. With past solo shows at Uxval Goches Gallery (Barcelona) and Strayfield Gallery (Copenhagen), among others, Arndt's works have been internationally collected from London (Saatchi Collection) to Berlin (Sammlung Haupt).

Zuzana Svatik (b. 1993) is a visual artist who works primarily with the media of ceramics, drawing and painting. In her work, she critically re-evaluates the function and potential of applied art in contemporary society. She is currently a PhD student at AFAD, Bratislava. Svatik, whose acclaimed ceramic works earned her 'Newcomer of the Year' from the Slovak National Design Award (2021), recently completed her residency in Paris with a solo show at Galerie Lefebvre et Fils in Paris. Further highlighted shows include Vunu Gallery (Košice) and miart (Milan).

The exhibition was organised by Primecut Contemporary Culture, an independent and global fine arts consultancy placing contemporary artists whose significance is reflected in present day international discourse. Their offices are based in Bratislava, where they are also soon to open the brand new Steinhäuser Gallery in the historic city center in June 2023.

Station Contemporary Art Gallery, established in 2021, is an exhibition space in Bratislava focusing on connecting Slovak and international artists. The aim of the gallery is to present established artists and young budding artists in Slovakia and abroad.

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