

Anna-Sophie Berger

EUGSTER || BELGRADE

Viline Vode BB (Objekat 5/3)

September 6–November 2, 2019

At the center of “Time”—Anna-Sophie Berger’s first solo show in Belgrade—is *Shed* (all works 2019), a modest wood-framed shelter clad in transparent plastic. Its door is closed but not locked; in the air floats a tacit understanding that viewers will not enter. Inside the structure, inspired by the provisional architecture the artist observed during a residency on Newfoundland’s Fogo Island last year, sit stacked boxes of candies labeled with the exhibition’s title. These contemplatively named treats are available in various flavors in Belgrade; those on view here are strawberry, and their presence in the gallery amounts to a sly mockery of the dumbness of product branding, if little else.

Nearby on the floor lies another standoffish readymade: a red milk crate titled *Theft Box*. The warning emblazoned on one of its sides emanates an unnerving severity: “Theft of this case is punishable by law.” Meanwhile, a minimalistic wall-mounted speaker plays dialogue from the once-banned 1971 Yugoslavian drama *Young and Healthy as a Rose*, which chronicles one young man’s rise from petty thief to Belgrade crime lord. The artist intervenes in the gendered logics of the film, interpolating its male-spoken dialogue with English-language voice-over by the Serbian-born artists Katarina Šoškić and Julija Zaharijević. While Berger attempts to confront stereotypes of misogyny, machismo, and criminal behavior, the effort seems (un)intentionally frail. The sound, emanating from the far corner of the gallery, drifts in and out of audibility as the viewer moves throughout the space. Its semantic instability reverberates in the nearby ink-jet print *A Sign in Decline*, which depicts the gradual narrowing of a smiley face into a

simple one-dimensional line.

“What makes mass society so difficult to bear, is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily,” Hannah Arendt wrote in 1958, “but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together. . . The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst.” Berger mentioned this passage at an artist’s talk in Belgrade, and her show, like Arendt’s séance, seems organized around a substantial void. Rather than cohere into any reconstruction of broken relations, Berger’s loose fragments of meaning and material encourage us to wander the intervals between them.

— Maja Ćirić

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