

FRIEZE

Anca Munteanu Rimnic

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By Kristian Vistrup Madsen



Anca Munteanu Rimnic



PSM Gallery, Berlin, Germany

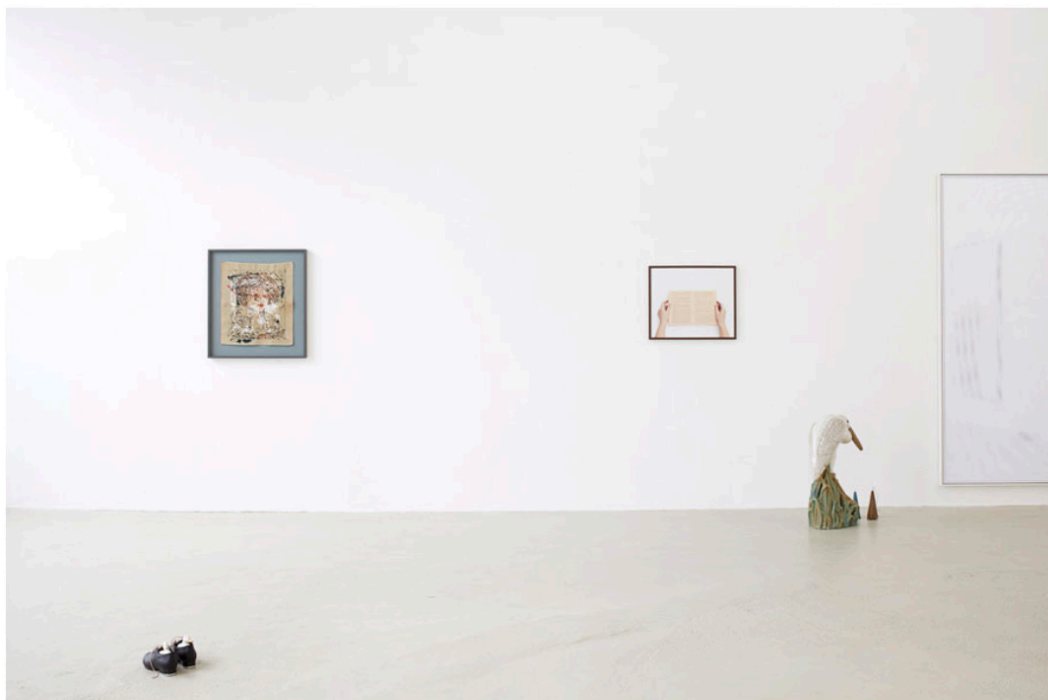


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Anca Munteanu Rimnic, 'Simulanta', 2017, installation view, PSM, Berlin.
Courtesy: PSM, Berlin

The sound of footsteps emanates from a pair of tap-dancing shoes on the floor of PSM Gallery, an aural frame for Anca Munteanu Rimnic's exhibition 'Simulanta'. The black shoes, which are titled *Device* (2017) and house two small porcelain ducks, were worn by the artist a few days before the opening, as she traced the walls of the exhibition, recording her various movements and pauses. Now, her presence lingers over the works like a friendly ghost, teasing viewers with its reticence.

Giving further form to this sense of playful reluctance, *Pucci (Well, That the Eyes Are Not Yet the Brain)* (2017) sees a glazed ceramic stork coyly turn its face to the wall. In stark contrast to the bird's reserve, a faint recording of an opera singer plays within the sculpture: a particularly bold passage from Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème* (1895), performed and recorded, again, in the gallery prior to the opening. In this oscillation between presence and absence, performance and withdrawal, Munteanu Rimnic plays a game with the supposed fixity of identity, continuously encouraging and defying our expectations.

Born in Romania, but raised mostly in Germany, notions of heritage and otherness often find their way into the artist's work. In mischievous riposte, she employs time-honoured Romanian weaving techniques, not to romanticize local craftsmanship but to undermine exoticizing desires to find within that removed locality something of 'cultural significance'. *Concrete Portrait I and II* (both 2013) are hand-woven depictions of such mundane features as a puddle and a hook on a wall. What do you want from me, Munteanu Rimnic seems to ask, my national identity cast in bronze? *Spoon* (2017), a typically Romanian stirring tool ordinarily made out of wood, is exactly that.

Two large photographs, *Simulanta I and II* (both 2017), capture a dancer struggling under a traditional Romanian rug. Somehow less convincing as objects than ideas, these works testify to the ways in which, for Munteanu Rimnic, the process that precedes the work takes prominence – not only over the critique that ensues, but also over its material outcome. In this respect, as well as in the various unseen performances that prefigured the exhibition, there is a disregard for audience, even a rejection of publicness. As a contrived container for sprawling content, the structure of an exhibition has a lot in common with



Anca Munteanu Rimnic, *Portrait*, 2011, stitchery, japanese ink, woollen thread, 70 x 60 cm.
Courtesy: PSM, Berlin

that of identity. But while exhibitions are made for viewers, such a comparison beckons the question: who is identity for? Here, by way of an answer, Munteanu Rimnic denies the audience the pleasure of identity as spectacle. Her dancer is concealed by a rug that is heavy in both matter and signification, her movements made awkward and clumsy as a result. Here is a challenge to the feminist dictum that 'the personal is political'. Because while there is a certain truth to that, in chasing such a definition we risk squandering the personal as an increasingly precious space for the idiosyncratic, secret and nonsensical.



Anca Munteanu Rimnic, 'Simulanta', 2017, installation view, PSM, Berlin.
Courtesy: PSM, Berlin

In *Eliza* (2014), a conversation between the artist and a thusly-named psychoanalytic computer programme developed in 1966, Munteanu Rimnic wrestles with this demand for her inner world to fit an un-sexy, pre-determined, psychic schema. 'Explain how I can be of assistance to you', Eliza says in a framed transcript of their exchange. 'Lick my pussy first', the patient instead demands. 'I feel that you're still holding something back' is the computer's oblivious reply. With 'Simulanta', Munteanu Rimnic makes an argument for privacy and agency, not as placeholders for bourgeois libertarianism, but for eccentricity, spontaneity and play; for trial and error, and for art as an opportunity to undo coherence.

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