

Lala Raščić: The Laugh of the Medusa

Gallery Nova • Teslina 7 • Zagreb

CURATED BY Ana Dević / WHW

Nov 9 – Dec 3, 2022

Wednesday • Nov 9, 2022 at 19h

— artist talk and guided tour

Exhibition opening: 20h

Tuesday • Nov 15, 2022 at 19h

— public talk with

Damir Imamović and **Iva Nenić**,

moderated by **Mojca Piškor**

OPENING HOURS

Tue – Fri 12 – 20 h

Sat 11 – 14 h

The work of **Lala Raščić** represents one of the most intriguing oeuvres of a regional mid-career artist also enjoying international acclaim.

The Laugh of the Medusa is **Raščić**'s major solo exhibition of newly produced works in the form of a performative audio-visual installation. Utilizing carefully crafted artistic objects, images, collages, and audio-visual elements, the exhibition consists of a complex installation that transforms the gallery space into a kind of laboratory/*wunderkabinett* where two of **Raščić**'s works meet: **GORGO** (2019 – 2021) and the new project entitled *Počimalja* (2022).

While **GORGO** is centered around the mythological figure of the Gorgon — an ancient chthonic deity who was beheaded by Perseus, *Počimalja* is based on the artist's interdisciplinary research of the outsider, folk women's musical practice of *tepsijanje* ("panning"). This type of singing while turning a copper pan, which is practiced predominantly by women even to this day, comes from extremely patriarchal communities where women were generally discouraged from playing instruments. It is for this reason that women often resorted to using household objects as accompaniment to songs performed in the home. **Raščić** interprets this practice as an authentic expression of suppressed feminine subjectivity and a proto-feminist gesture. Through her continuous artistic research, which she dubs *The Exoneration of Tradition*, **Raščić** studies traditional forms and critically examines the ideas of folklore and folklorization as a means of repatriarchalization and neo-traditionalization of society, and reflects on the evolution of traditional forms, freeing them from the normative cultural context. While *tepsijanje* persists to this day due to its visual appeal in folk choreographies and its simplicity of performance, the artist focuses on the acoustic specificities of this practice, as well as on the conclusions, previous research, and field work of various ethnomusicologists and folklorists. She adopts and experiences her own practice of *tepsijanje* through collaboration with **Azra Pondro**, a storyteller, *tepsija*-player, and a *počimalja*, the chorister — the one who starts the song.

As part of the exhibition, there will be a public talk with **Damir Imamović**, a renowned author and performer of *sevdah*, and anthropologist **Iva Nenić**, moderated by musicologist and anthropologist **Mojca Piškor**.

The exhibition title *The Laugh of the Medusa* is a homage to the eponymous essay by the French feminist and philosopher **Hélène Cixous**, in which she

advocates women's writing (*écriture féminine*). **Cixous** interprets the beheading of the mythical Gorgon/ Medusa as a violent act of patriarchy, calling for the empowerment of feminine subjectivities. Claiming that women should be able to write their own history — from which they had been violently severed, like Medusa — **Cixous** concludes that women must put themselves "into the text — as into the world, and into history — by their own movement." In the context of **Lala Raščić's** work, this call is realized precisely through body movements, copper pans, and the female voice. **The Laugh of the Medusa** celebrates the magnitude and multiplicity of women's voices, and the act of making the fractured Medusa whole again is performed by the artist symbolically in the **GORGO** video, in which she assumes the role of the Gorgon by donning copper armor. The exhibition will also showcase armor fabricated by using the traditional technique of planishing copper, which is also used for making kitchenware such as pans. The armor was made by **Nermina Beba Alić**, one of the rare women in the predominantly patrilinear field of metal processing (*kazandžije*).

The Laugh of the Medusa affirms the interstices of women's emancipation that are based on the experiences of everyday life, collaboration, knowledge exchange, mutual learning, or simply being together, giving women's experiences a clear voice. In this time of amplified patriarchy, this exhibition reflects on genuinely useful knowledge and tools. *Tepsijanje* is a class- and gender-inclusive practice that provided women who did not have access to education and leisure with a space for creativity and subversion of censorship. Through *tepsijanje*, women's voices and perspectives on life and the world break away from the margins and silence, thus shaping history but also the present moment.

The screening and talk accompanying **The Making of GORGO** (2022) are supported by the **Croatian Audiovisual Centre (HAVC)**. As part of **WHW's** audience development project *Coming Closer (Ciklus približavanja)*, **Raščić** is going to hold a mini-masterclass on November 15, where she will present her artistic research and some aspects of the practice of *tepsijanje*. The number of participants is limited — please apply at: ana.kovacic.whw@gmail.com.

BIOGRAPHY

Lala Raščić (born in 1977 in Sarajevo, lives and works in Sarajevo and Zagreb) is a media and performance artist who uses performative strategies in order to create new narratives and stories that include verbal video pieces, performative installations, video screenings, objects, light, drawing and painting. She is intrigued by different ways of performing a text, which is evident in her interest in traditional and contemporary storytelling practices, oral history, and monodrama. The majority of Raščić's projects are research-based. She builds her artistic narrative around the issues of feminism, history, new readings of tradition and mapping its traces in today's society. Her works exist on the border between performance and multimedia, combining the audio-visual, movement, painting, drawing, and sculptural objects.

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