

Matthew Brown

TARWUK

Good night, Ernst Toller!

April 29–June 15, 2024

390 Broadway

In war, markers of identity are often arbitrary, magnified into repeated divisions, doubling and fragmenting until individual identities dissolve. Having come of age during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Bruno Pogacnik Tremow and Ivana Vukšić bore witness to such ethnic and national tensions—and the false distinctions and oppositions that ensued, resulting in devastating societal collapse.

As TARWUK, they reevaluate loss of selfhood as a potentially creative act rather than one of pure destruction. This is primarily enacted by their refusal to identify as a collaboration or duo, instead characterizing themselves as a “condition”, a state that surpasses any notion of two individuals brought together. This condition is circumstantial, but very much alive and dependent upon their artistic output—although their artwork only exists through the exploration of this same condition.

Approaching theater as a means of social and self reorganization, TARWUK considers ways of displacing and reconstructing the ego through the ascribed roles of actor and spectator. Within the space of a stage, physical or conceptual, decay becomes rebirth and fracturing of the psyche emerges as expansive potential. In TARWUK’s theater, the threshold between the experienced and the enacted moves ever closer.

Their sculptures forge this fragile terrain, emerging as progressive ruin and surrealist dystopia. A towering, imposing figure, appears like a hollowed totem: a shell emptied of personal legacy or a tribute to a lineage unrealized. Two small, costume-clad surrogates (stand-ins for TARWUK, not Pogacnik Tremow and Vukšić themselves), allude to the performances conducted within the privacy of their own studio. Ritualistic, improvised explorations of self-abandonment, these happenings are nonetheless the manifestation of pure Gesamtkunstwerk; the costumes, sets, and makeup are meticulously crafted and planned.

Aside from photographic self-documentation, these performances are not recorded or attended, occurring only in the immediate and only involving TARWUK. Instead, the aftermath of these performances enters the public space as replicas and residue. Here one is recreated in miniature, like stop animation, in a diorama-like display. Displaced from the initial action, it reads less like a model and more as an artifact of a self already shed, now visible in phantom form.

A series of large-scale paintings, evoking Byzantine patterns and Art Nouveau sensibilities, suggests a narrative of the wider action unfolding. Yet this is an illusion, a projected desire supported by familiar tropes and figures, rather than a discernible storyline. Languid figures and motifs of the natural world recall Symbolist metaphors, but here the language, signified and signifier, remains cryptic.

Denied a passive position of observer, our role as spectator collapses. We are not the actors, nor are TARWUK, though the artworks come close to holding this role within the exhibition space. In this sense, all the artworks—not only those with a physical resemblance to TARWUK, serve as surrogates, alternative embodiments of their otherwise immaterial condition.

–Sabrina Tamar

TARWUK is the artistic collaboration of Ivana Vukšić (b. 1981, Dubrovnik, Croatia) and Bruno Pogacnik Tremow (b. 1981, Zagreb). Vukšić received her MA from Faculty of Political Sciences, Zagreb and Bruno received dual MFAs from Columbia University and Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb.

Solo and two person exhibitions include *Conceived for the Stage*, White Cube, Paris (2023); *Бољи живот*, HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Graz, Austria (2023); *Posadila sam kost u zimskom vrtu*, White Cube, London (2023); *Ante mare et terras*, Maramotti Collection, Emilia Romagna, Italy (2021); *A Musical Score at the End of the World*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles, (2021); *Bijeg u Noć*, Martos Gallery, New York (2020); *Pčele su prije bole češće. Nije li tako? Molim?*, 15 Orient, New York (2020); *Vernacular River Holds 6 Bodies Down*, Lauba, Zagreb (2020); *Second Celebration of the Five*, Evening Hours, New York (2019); *LENT*, Taito Ryokan, Tokyo (2019); *TARWUK with Gee Vaucher*, Gauntlet, New York (2018); *'...Ti živiš već hiljadu godina.'* Team Gallery, New York (2018); *Tužni Rudar*, 15 Orient, New York (2018); *HOST2*, Jaakko Pallasvuo and Anni Puolakka, GMK Gallery, Zagreb (2018); *0621_141332 (2)*, Museum of Fine Art, Osijek, Croatia (2017); *HOST*, Jaakko Pallasvuo and Anni Puolakka, Showroom MAMA, Rotterdam (2017); *Tout est pret. Au premier signal que vous nous enverrez de Trieste, tous se leveront en masse pour l'indépendance de la Hongrie. Xrzah.*, Ethnographical Museum of Istria, Pazin, Croatia (2017); *help you, help me*, Essex Flowers, New York (2017); *The Tyranny of White Teeth*, Hannah Bonaguoro and Ryan Foerster, Museum of Fine Arts, Split, Croatia (2017); *The rash of tommy Borgia*, Hannah Bonaguoro and Ryan Foerster, Lazareti 1-5, Dubrovnik, Croatia (2017); *j_KOPSA_LUCIS.32*, Practice, New York (2016); *M491A192()INKAROH*, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia (2016); *4D/Dominant Doorman Doorstep Document*, Pony Project Gallery, Vienna (2015); *No New Followers*, Lauba, Zagreb (2015); and *Family Totems*, Pony Project Gallery, Berlin (2014).

Select group exhibitions include *Papertrail*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2023); *Door to the Atmosphere*, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA (2022); *I'm Not Your Mother*, PPOW Gallery, New York (2022); *Dissolving Realms*, Kasmin Gallery, New York (2022); *Strange Attractors. The Anthology of Interplanetary Folk Art. Vol. 3: Lost In Space*, APALAZZOGALLERY, Brescia, Italy (2022); *Recent Sculpture*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2022); *Exploratory Drawings*, Maximillian William, London (2022); *Studio Visit. Thoughts and Practices Surrounding Ten Artist's Studios*, Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy (2021); *Anarchy of the Imagination*, Kerry Schuss, New York (2021); and *Nesvrstani*, Lauba, Zagreb, Croatia Drava Art Biennale, MLU, Osijek, Croatia (2020).

TARWUK's work is in the collection of The Al Thani Collection, Paris; The Bunker, West Palm Beach, Florida; Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; Fredriksen Family Art Collection / National Museum of Norway, Oslo; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, California; Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, Croatia; TANK Shanghai, China; Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art, Rizhao, China; and Zabłudowicz Collection, London.

A new print by TARWUK published by Utopia Editions will be released on David Zwirner's website at the end of June. The print, a multi-plate etching with aquatint, is made with Harlan & Weaver, a 40-year-old intaglio print workshop on the Lower East Side in New York.