

The Virtues of Vulnerability. Societies in Times of Trouble

Symposium in cooperation with IFK International Research Center for Cultural Studies University of Art and Design Linz in Vienna | www.ifk.ac.at

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What fabric are contemporary societies made of? How are globalization as the movement of goods and money, as an ownership of things, and the reality of the flow of human and nonhuman bodies related? How can we describe the fundamental composite character of the self and how can it become the site for the common to emerge? Which steps can possibly be taken to halt the permanent destruction of material and living wealth? Which elements could comprise a political philosophy and a practice of semipermeable borders? How does one draft a constitution for the coexistence of all mortals?

Today, these and other such questions occupy the minds of scholars, but they are also circulating in philosophy and the arts. However, they are far too big for solutions that actually make a difference in real lifeworlds and economic, political, and artistic contexts. On these grounds, the symposium *The Virtues of Vulnerability. Societies in Times of Trouble* examines concrete sites and problem zones where the vulnerable fabric of life becomes political and/or promising strategies of dealing with the bruises of extractivist projects rise to the surface. It will introduce and discuss lines of thought and diverse practices that can turn apparent deficiencies into assets. They are artistic, political, and philosophical approaches that draw from weaknesses, contamination, the ruinous, loss, or mortality in a way that translates these allegedly deficient momentums into virtues: vulnerability becomes something venerable; a faculty for handling fragility; a readiness to open oneself even in risky situations, to be receptive to the unknown and wondrous; to engage with the other without fear, or: to let him/her/it be. It is about an ethics of the dividual, of half-measures and partial alliances. It is about countering the renewed acceleration of purity fantasies with well-charted navigations into the impure. It is about localizing the connecting within the dividing and liberating terms like society, community, and belonging from the clasps of family and nation.

The symposium accompanies the exhibition *mixed up with others before we even begin* (November 26, 2022 – April 10, 2023) which integrates current artistic positions to foreground hybrids, amalgams, conjunctions, and liaisons as socially and politically effective models of thinking and working within contemporary visual culture.

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