

## Trigger Witness

### Curator text

A trigger, or emotional trigger, is a stimulus that suddenly renders present a powerful emotional memory of a past experience or of a reality for which, at the given moment, there was no space—and often still is none. With the exhibition *Trigger Witness*, we examine the potential of these emotional triggers as yet unacknowledged navigational tools toward unseen or unrecognized realities.

These realities are paradoxically both present and absent. Although realistic representation or traditional mimesis of repressed realities fails—because the world that denied them has itself failed, and at the same moment the self that experienced them has fragmented—they do not disappear from representation altogether. That which could not be inscribed into the memory we share returns in forms that elude ordinary language and depiction: in traces, symptoms, fragments, or bodily reactions. For this reason, the trigger—traditionally perceived as a disruptive phenomenon to be eliminated—is introduced here as a method of reading a reality that lies beyond the scope of conventional narrative means. The event itself is not narrated directly; rather, the trigger reliably signals its enduring, and often harmful, effects in the world.

The image does not emerge from the world we know, but from the site of its loss—and it is precisely this loss that inscribes itself into form. A second aim of the project is therefore to move beyond reading the exhibited works as aesthetic artifacts and to perceive them instead as symptomatic structures in which culturally silenced realities, unnamed inheritances, or fragments of violence accumulate in layers. This requires an openness to artistic forms that bear traces of disrupted referentiality and the disintegration of coherent shape. Linear narratives cannot be expected here: time cannot be arranged into a causal chain; instead, we encounter repeated returns, condensation, the accumulation of layers, or even a magical conception of materials.

The third intention is to transform the meaning and role of spectatorship and to propose witnessing as a cultural act. When an artwork bearing traces of the unspoken is read solely through its formal qualities, the mechanism of cultural silencing is repeated. If, however, we recognize that the role of the viewer also contains the role of the witness, another framework opens up—along with a story that remained outside cultural memory and that may be readmitted into the shared world. This is an act of making-present and recognition, allowing what was private, dispersed, or unnamed to become part of shared reality. In this sense, the exhibition has a reparative dimension: healing does not take place (only) art-therapeutically, on an individual level, but through the expansion of cultural space so that it may accommodate experiences that continue to be pushed out of it, along with their individual subjects.

At G99, two distinct artistic inquiries have emerged, initiated by the invitation to engage with *Trigger Witness* as a thematic framework.

### **Nicole Sabella: Trigger Happy**

In Nicole Sabella's installation *Trigger Happy*, the emotional trigger becomes an instrument of seeing through the activation of a zone in which the body reacts before anything can be spoken. Triggers here function as portals, opening direct access to experiences located outside conventional modes of expression (within physiological responses, shifts in voice, or microscopic changes in bodily tension). In a digital landscape created in collaboration with Joanna Zabielska, 3D digital sculptures of objects hover—representations of things that at first glance appear entirely ordinary. In reality, however, they are triggers created in collaboration with invited authors, whose number will grow throughout the exhibition. They function as indices, bearing the trace of what cannot be presented directly. Narrative does not manifest here through reconstruction, but through reactivation.

Sabella constructs a hybrid space that engages somatic memory and interweaves a complex live performative action—drawing on archetypal motifs such as the myth of Baubo and the gesture of *anasyrma* (the act of exposing female genitals, understood as having protective and transformative power)—with an interactive virtual landscape that opens space for a parallel, viewer co-created interpretation of the recorded traces.

### **Alžběta Bačíková: ...cut down the tree, sell the house, lay your father to rest**

Alžběta Bačíková's installation engages with familial memory embedded in the landscape and in the objects that remain after loved ones have departed, or that have accumulated as unnecessary remnants of their lives and relationships. We find ourselves within a transposed scenography animated by performance recordings, intuitive drawings, texts, and embroideries, created primarily during the Brno Artist in Residence program. Fragments of gutters, branches, or a room lamp are not props or symbolic metaphors, but concrete memory traces that cannot be replaced without losing their value as a material archive. Although the constructed space may appear, on one hand, highly transformed and imaginative, it is in fact a faithful image of a site where tabooed events pulse beneath the surface of material reality. We walk through their indirect presence.

Here, too, we do not encounter a reconstruction of the events from which the work originates. The artist's strategy is closer to an archaeology of the present: the recording of traces that survived the moment when the story disintegrated, located somewhere within postmemory, where experience is not stored in narrative form but as a concealed inscription in imagination, body, and landscape. The individual outputs emerge through cyclical returns to the same locus, since no single iteration can fully mediate it.

Barbora Trnková (curator)

BIOS:

**Alžběta Bačíková** is an artist living in Prague. To this date, she has mainly focused on moving image, both in her own work and in her curatorial, production, and organizational activities. She graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Brno, where she completed her doctoral research in 2018 on documentary approaches in contemporary audiovisual art practice. Since 2017, she has worked as a curator at the etc. gallery in Prague, whose program

she redirected, together with Anna Remešová, towards the critical mediation of moving image works. Since 2019, she has been teaching and leading Artyčok.tv at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where she later worked as an editor.

Between 2018 and 2020, she collaborated on her art projects with protagonists with visual or hearing impairments. She received the Czech Centres Audience Award for her audiovisual installation Setkání (Encounter, 2018–2020) for the Jindřich Chalupecký Award finals. She has also exhibited at the Centre for Fine Arts BOZAR (2020), the Matter of Art contemporary art biennial at the Gallery of the City of Prague (2020), and the Kyiv Biennial (2021), and has screened her works at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (2021). She completed a creative residency in Vienna (Artist-in-Residence Programme at MuseumsQuartier) and two residencies in New York (Art in General and the Czech Center).

<https://alzbetabacikova.com/>

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**Nicole Sabella** (she/her/; they/them) is an artist, cultural scientist, art educatrix, and since 2024 professor of Gender & Space at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (AT). They use performative strategies based on queer-feminist, collaborative and participatory practices to explore the sociopolitical connections between body, language, voice, sound, and space in dynamic “choreo:spheres”: artistic constellations that form performative installations and site-specific interventions, often inviting the public to play an active role. Her artistic work advocates for poetic-political co-creation and “vibrational communication” as tools for social transformation.

Nicole’s work series TENTECHULAR DIS:PLEASURES has been presented in solo exhibitions at Mz\*Baltazar’s Lab, Vienna/AT and periscope, Salzburg/AT. Other works have been shown at Natanda Dance Festival, Colombo/LK, Sensor studio, Taipei/TW, HART Hong Kong/HK, Battersea Arts Centre, London/GB, Prague Quadrennial, Prague/CZ, Impuls Tanz Festival, Vienna/AT, New Synagogue, Zilina/SK, and on the radio.

<https://choreospheres.jimdofree.com/>

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