

Habima Fuchs: Interview related to the exhibition Optimised Fables about a Good Life

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Habima Fuchs answers questions about a good life, well-being and the conflicts this topic causes.

The artist participates in the exhibition Optimised Fables about a Good Life (22/9/2022–1/1/2023) at PLATO.

“There is probably no one who has no free time. The office is not a permanent retreat and Sundays have become an institution. In these glorious hours of leisure, therefore, everyone should in principle have the opportunity to wake up to real boredom. But even if people do not want to do anything, something happens to them: the world makes sure that they do not find themselves.” (Henri Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life, 2014). How do you navigate yourselves in the so-called free time?

At the moment, my “free” and “not-free” time is like waves, alternating as needed. Activity and inactivity somehow balance each other out. I look out the window, at the computer screen, or imagine images. I dedicate my time to external and internal cleaning. Sometimes I go for a walk or meet someone. To comment on the quote, it occurs to me that when you don’t care about the world (by caring about your inner world), you make room for the world to take care of you.

The tool of the exhibition, which we offer as a kind of supportive element, is the genre of the fable. It is a narrative that somewhat mechanically instructs and provides guidance for a good life, usually in an attempt to impose the truisms and virtues of a given social order on the reader. The identification of humans with animals and their apparent domination over

them naturally offers a number of critical and unanswered questions. Who subjugates whom or what, who cares for whom, and above all who is defined here as an independent subject, are all subject to scrutiny. Could you empathize with some form of fable? Who or what would be its main protagonists?

I haven't read a fable in a long time. It seemed to me more like an observation of animal nature, knowing that animals—on a certain level—unlike humans, did not deviate from their connection with their destiny. I understand that the image of an animal is used by man to be able to talk about himself and explore himself better. I consider the domination of man over animals to be an immature interpretation, an ingrained program that is unfortunately still very widespread and results in cruel practices that in turn reflect on man. But I see a difference between man and animal: man can develop his consciousness. I would write a fable about a fox who is a guardian and a messenger. Western culture has a rather negative perception of the fox, but isn't that because it can't tame it?

Is your everyday routine and healthy living constantly chased by unhealthy rituals? If so, could you name some?

I consider the absence of joy and the presence of internal stress—a reaction to a challenging situation—to be very unhealthy rituals. Although I do see progress, there is still room for development...

American cultural theorist Lauren Berlant's book *Cruel Optimism* is about living within crisis, and about the destruction of our collective genres of what a 'life' is. Lauren Berlant's signature phrase 'cruel optimism' explains further: "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing". Berlant argues: where the tools we depend on to achieve 'a good life' — a safety net, job security, meritocracy, even 'durable intimacy' in our romantic lives — have degenerated into 'fantasies' that bear "less and less relation to how people can live". How the desire for a certain idea of "a good life of the 20th century, the postwar period" (or the belief that if one works hard enough or meets certain conditions, one can achieve it) often prevents people from taking the steps necessary to protect their own

interests; to imagine a different possible future. Are you willing to reveal your personal unachievable fantasies of a good life?

I assume that everything is possible because we create the world ourselves, despite not being always and immediately able to manifest our desires on a physical level because we have not learned to use this potential. There is also strong collective energy we are connected to, and it can prevent us from doing so. For me, a good life is to break free from the shackles of laziness, to continually develop my consciousness and thereby develop the idea of peace and abundance in my life and in the world, to cleanse myself of karmic burdens, to disconnect from destructive collective agendas, to create a world where manipulation is not present, to admire the beauty of creation, to love all living things, to heal, and to “return” to paradise. I would also like a big garden on a hill and a blue Vespa.

Do we choose our lifestyle, or are we chosen by it?

I'd say we create it.

Nowadays privacy means staying offline. Is Screen Time something you can fully control?

This question makes me think about the concept of privacy. I'm coming to the conclusion that privacy is when one is alone with oneself and is not involved in what's going on. It doesn't necessarily have to parallel the online/offline mode, sometimes these two blend. I spend a lot of time in front of a screen when no one is around, doing tasks, studying, and sometimes I overdo it: I watch movies, which is a form of withdrawal from the world because I join the reality of the characters in the story, but even in that process I continue to explore the principle of life. My phone is in offline mode, so there are gaps as I move through space. I have FB and Instagram, but I don't really enjoy them, so I don't pay much attention to them. I have no problem to forget about the screen. It's not controlling, it's more like spontaneously attaching and distancing yourself, while the ratio of these two definitely has the potential to be in a better balance.

German art theorist Isabelle Graw (In Another World: Notes, 2014–2017) claims: “One of the conditions of neoliberalism is that the market encroaches on areas that were previously considered ‘private’ and protected from its evaluative logic — such as the body, health, social relations — making these areas also subject to economic optimization. Thus, even our most intimate lives — our hobbies, relationships, bodies — become essentially cost centers. If we fail to optimize them, we feel disadvantaged. Thus, well-being replaces morality, but far from energizing us, it creates its own tyranny. Indeed, when self-improvement becomes the goal, narcissism becomes a disease. Are you working effectively, making enough money, eating right, exercising enough? Are you optimizing yourself?”

I guess it depends on what your intentions are. When you try to optimize in relation to the demands of society, it can result in a form of slavery. If you develop your consciousness within the totality of creation, recognize your potential as a creator, and thereby optimize your living conditions and those of your environment, it can be liberating for you. I see the concepts of “efficiency, enough and right” as fluid. Evolving and “optimizing” is an important theme for me and sometimes even the driving force of the process.

Free activity stands quite consciously outside of ‘ordinary’ life as something ‘unserious’ but at the same time immersive, without temporal and spatial boundaries — and above all without the vision of profit. Since artistic work is often mistakenly perceived as a free activity, do you actually spend your free time doing something other than work?

When we become aware of the fact that man is a creator by nature, then “free activity”, in its various forms, becomes ideal for experiencing and exploring the principles of life. Yes, navigating the waves of uncertainty is not always easy and it can be exhausting when confronted with the rigid patterns of the system. What is important is the cooperation and mutual respect of everyone involved, whatever path they take. I use the word ‘work’ to get understood by others, otherwise, I try to ‘not work’ but rather to ‘do’ an activity. And I seek inspiration even in my “free time”.

Do you ever have a compulsive need to run away from your own work ethics, schemas, visibility, form, way of communicating, i.e. in general, what you have set as your own rules?

There are many thoughts running through my head and some of them are carriers of shortcut reactions. Meanwhile, I know that escape is not an option. Evolution and transformation are possible, and so is to change your habits. Since the world is like an ocean that is constantly being formed, is there anything that is “inherent” to us?

In a moment when we have all indicators that the Planet is going to collapse, do you feel any conflict linked to your decisions that are intertwined with the production of artworks and environmental issues?

It used to worry me. But the pressure on one or the other side is probably just as unhealthy. I try to keep things simple as much as I can. Indications of planetary collapse need to be investigated. Some of it may be manipulative and inaccurate. Unfortunately, there are still too many guns in the world and there is certainly a great need for humans to mature and understand the responsibility for their living space and begin to see themselves as part of it.

Wellbeing seems so self-evidently good that it escapes scrutiny, enabling it to slide from useful tool to expectation; of ourselves and of others. In fact, wellbeing has taken the place of morality. Instead of working to improve the world, we work to improve ourselves. What kind of wellbeing activities of the future can you predict?

This only applies to a certain group of people on planet Earth. There are still places where this statement is not so relevant... I believe that “improving the world” starts with ourselves, and how we create our inner and outer reality. Whether we sit on a hard floor or roll around in healing mud while at it is probably not the determining factor...



Czech artist Habima Fuchs (b. **1977**) spent many years in Berlin. She then took several treks in Europe to study its culture and mythology based on personal experience. Habima Fuchs' sculptures, drawings, performances and installations are the result of a sincere commitment to discover the fundamental phenomena of life. Through philosophical inquiry and personal experience, as well as through their intense engagement in religious and mythological iconography, Habima creates forms that erase the differences between material and immaterial ways of being, highlight the interrelationships between entities and their environment, and connect different cultural traditions. Habima Fuchs's exhibited work, *The Field of the Creating Information*, engages the physical body and encourages the imaginative process of making the invisible reality present and realizing the immeasurable power of the human being and its creative potential.

