

ORLOWSKA  
ERNESTYNA

Selected Works

## **Artist Statement**

My artistic practice takes place at the intersection of visual art, choreography, and performance, and my primary interest is the human body in its various areas of conflict.

The often sensual and immersive performances create an idiosyncratic imaginarium populated by mysterious and often monstrous creatures that seek to deconstruct everyday realities as contingent, not constituent property.

Norms and ideals are questioned and the automatisms of seeing and classifying are destabilized, attribution and categorization are undermined.

The aesthetics used are about the handmade, unsmooth, ramshackled, the limits of the material. Often, work is done with pre-existing things, such as secondhand clothing that is deconstructed and reconstructed, making visible its function as a transporter of cultural norms, bodily elusiveness.

The performances are characterized by associative, open images, sensuality, the physical presence of all, embodiment and temporary communities. It is an attempt to create fictional post-anthropocentric situations in which we can physically experience our own entanglement with everything that exists, and the binary categories of object-subject, nature-culture, mind-body dissolve.

Again and again I am driven by the question of how we can create resonant world-relationships with everything that exists, be it human or non-human.



## AC-Stipendium Werk 1

### The Murmur

Durational Performance  
during 4 weeks  
2022

**Co-Choreography:** Tyra  
Wigg

**Performers:** Aaa Byczysko,  
Kamil Wesolowski, Stefa/n  
Gosiewski , Filipka Rutkow-  
ska

**Sound Design:** Magda Drozd

Comissioned by  
Studio Galeria Warsaw

Curated by Paulina Olszewska





## When Two Hands Touch, How Close Are They?

This question comes from the essay *On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am*, by American feminist theorist Karen Michelle Barad, and it was the starting point for the work "Murmur", prepared for Galeria Studio in Warsaw by Swiss artist Ernestyna Orlowska. In her work, the artist refers to the body and its perception in cultural contexts. In preparing the new work for an exhibition in Warsaw, she continues to consider how to live with the body, and in particular, life as a body. She poses questions about people's relationship to the body they possess. As she has noted, this is visualized in language through the phrase "we have a body". However, viewed de facto, from a biological-chemical angle, "we are a body". Following Barad's reflection, the artist sees us and our bodies as a set of various chemical elements. If we look at ourselves from this perspective, we see and perceive ourselves differently, but also in relation to other people. We begin to see and feel ourselves as a condensation of earth, light, air and heat, and interpersonal communication moves into a chemical-physical realm and the reactions that happen there. So it is with touch, which the American theorist invokes in their text. What is touch if not electromagnetic transmission between atoms? The artist asks the question: When we touch each other, are we not really touching ourselves? Orlowska sees our existence as living by means of the forces that constitute the human subject, and thus undermines the object-subject and culture-nature dichotomy. Existence comes to be through these forces, and they should be understood as a cosmic murmur. Starting from questions of corporeality, of what is inhuman in our human existence, the Swiss artist creates a multi-element performance to affect our senses on various levels.

To this end, she will visually transform the gallery, letting smoke into the space along with warm air. Her project will be created along with invited collaborators: Tyra Wigg (co-choreography) and Aaa Biczysko, Stefan Gosiewski, Filipka Rutkowska and Kamil Wesolowski (performance). The choreography will start with the visual element placed in the gallery, namely an orange carpet, and develop with the performers, through their bodies. She will incorporate meditation, immersion and the senses into the performance to achieve a moment in which body and mind are not separated but become one. The goal of these activities is to evoke in the performers their own personal experience of movement, and through this to achieve a state of feeling in the dual sense: to feel that one is feeling. Only when the performers develop their own feeling of the physical matter that they are, will they interact with

their bodies and with each other. This work with the body was based on a set of notations developed by Orlowska, which allow for improvisation and interaction with the situation which has been created in the gallery space.

The visual and performative experience of "Murmur" will be enhanced by costumes prepared by Orlowska. The artist treats these in a sculptural manner, while she sees the people who wear them as "living sculptures." The starting point for the costumes is sportswear design based on principles of aerodynamics. By their shape, texture and colour, they also to evoke the aura of physical activity, which is supposed to testify to vitality, energy and power. The artist reworked used clothes on the principle of quick and energetic dissection, in order to then assemble the finished pieces into new sets that constantly emphasize the strength and energy contained in the human body. The second-hand clothes also draw attention to the problem of overproduction in our modern world.

In "Murmur" the sound component plays an important role. The composer, Magda Drozd, created a multi-channel musical composition which is played on speakers worn by the performers. Each of the individual soundtracks was inspired by a chemical element found in the body: carbon, water, oxygen and minerals.

Ernestyna Orlowska's performance is conceived as an action in time, with no division between the stage and the audience. We are invited, along with the artist, to join in the performance at any time and be in it together with the performers. As such, we can try to enter the constructed situation and feel ourselves and our bodies on a new level, separate from everyday life.

### Paulina Olszewska





The Murmur is in the first place a moving multi channel sound installation. Each performer carries a wireless speaker with the sound of the elements that constitute us: Water, carbon, stone and air. In the beginning, as the performers stand in different corners of the room, the elements start to call and answer each other. The performers are being drawn closer to each other, begin to absorb, touch each other in an indifferent way, apply pressures and foldings to their bodies. They are involved in a murmur of forces in a constant exchange.

I seek to investigate how we can relate to each other in a way that opens up for embodied, entangled fellowship but at the same time let's us see the constructed nature of the so called given properties and realities.

The durational project the Murmur oscillates between the introspection of our own corporeality and a distant analytical gaze on the various interlayered systems that constitute our everyday life. It poses the question how a de-hierarchisation of the senses and the challenging of the mind-body/object-subject/nature-culture binaries allows us to experience ourselves as entangled with the world, longing for a post anthropocentric experience.



**Teaser & Excerpts:**

**<https://vimeo.com/showcase/10025077>**

**Password: touch**





## AC-Stipendium Werk 2

### Make Your Body Your Machine

Solo Performance at Lokal Int

20 Minutes

2021

The title is taken from a motivational fitness bracelet.

The Performance Make Your Body Your Machine investigates the relationship I have with my own body. This relationship becomes visible in the interaction with my surroundings, in this case a big bouncy corporate backpack with a rather vulgar slogan that fits the title of the performance perfectly. Why are we talking about our bodies as something that we have, and not as something we are?

The body is socially and politically in many areas of conflict. How should a female declared body move and present itself? It should be: productive, reproductive, beautiful, seductive, strong, independent, fragrant, smooth, maternal, soft, gentle, airbrushed. But maybe it is: confused, irritated, clumsy, silly, gangly, too tall, not feminine enough, stressed. In this field of action I move as a performer between the states. The norms and requirements also clash with my queer appearance, which is given by my above-average body size.

I assume that an explicitly dualistic view of body and mind renders the conditioning of

the body visible. I am interested in the tension between the social conditioning of the body and the body's own embodied knowledge. My hypothesis is: If one thinks of the body as a temporary address for the living person, the contingency of all bodily norms of movement and constructs of action becomes visible.



Full length video: <https://vimeo.com/647700671/39f5749651>







### AC-Stipendium Werk 3

#### Should I Do the Man's Part

Performance in Collaboration with  
Daniel Klingen Borg  
60'  
2021

Coproduction: Oh Body! Feministische  
Theater- und Performancetage Schlachthaus  
Theater Bern, Blackbox Theater Oslo, BIT  
Theatergarasjen Bergen

Daniel is 165 cm tall, Ernestyna is 188 cm tall. Their heads have a height difference of 23 cm. The reversed size ratio, in contrast to the usual standard, puts the masculine in femininity and the feminine in masculinity up for discussion and deals with the subversion of binary gender norms. How much does the body control the hegemonic narrative of the construction of gender binarity? And how much does this narrative control the body?

In this peculiar physical encounter, gender identities are set in motion, a fluidity between the masculine and the feminine emerges and these boundaries are denaturalised in a poetic way. The performers' bodies discuss binary gender roles and deconstruct normativity. Is it possible to open a non-binary performative spectrum through one's own body and to move freely within it?

Orlowska and Klingen Borg negotiate the question of how much their bodies define their identity, how far they can move away from this restrictive identity and where the limits of the fluidity they strive for are. How much indifference do the performers have to show towards their bodies in order to enable a de-categorisation of the sexes?

Orlowska and Klingen Borg liberate their bodies from normative gender stigmas in a playful, vulnerable and tender way.



Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/644335473>  
Full recording: <https://vimeo.com/635318571/661f637e2d>





## I've Been Feeling It Too

Solo Performance at Lokal Int

35 Minutes

2020

This performance deals with the mother figure stereotypes in a subversive and anarchistic way. In January 2019 I became a mother. To be pregnant, to give birth and to be the mother of an infant is like experiencing a force of nature (similar to an earthquake) and is in discrepancy with the image that capitalist and medialized society produces.

Suddenly I found myself in conservative models of relationships, my identity as an artist was weak, my academic world view imploded. But the problem is not the child. The problem lies in the attempt to bring the actual care work for a child together with the ideas, requirements and constraints of a modern adult life that is custom fit for independent men. Meanwhile one feels like an animal, because the main source of nourishment for this new creature is one's own breast, which until now has only served as a sexual symbol.

At the center of the performance is a fictional character who is the PR spokesperson for the force of nature (or force of natureculture) of motherhood. Her mission is to transform space in the same way a force of nature, namely a shift of the weather situation, can transform spaces. This can be done on a subtle atmospheric level, but also on a visual level. But her secret mission is to make motherhood even more artificial than it already is, to make its artificiality visible. It sings every audience member's name to welcome it (like they do in the nursery), squeezes colored milk out of the breast and forms a cup out of it, let's audience members drink from it, pulls out children's song texts from the wet wipe box and performs them.

This performance is inspired by anti-dualistic discourses. These argue against an apriori existence of nature. Nature is produced in the process of its exploration. Nature and culture are inseparably intertwined. According to Donna Haraway, such an



Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/388278716>

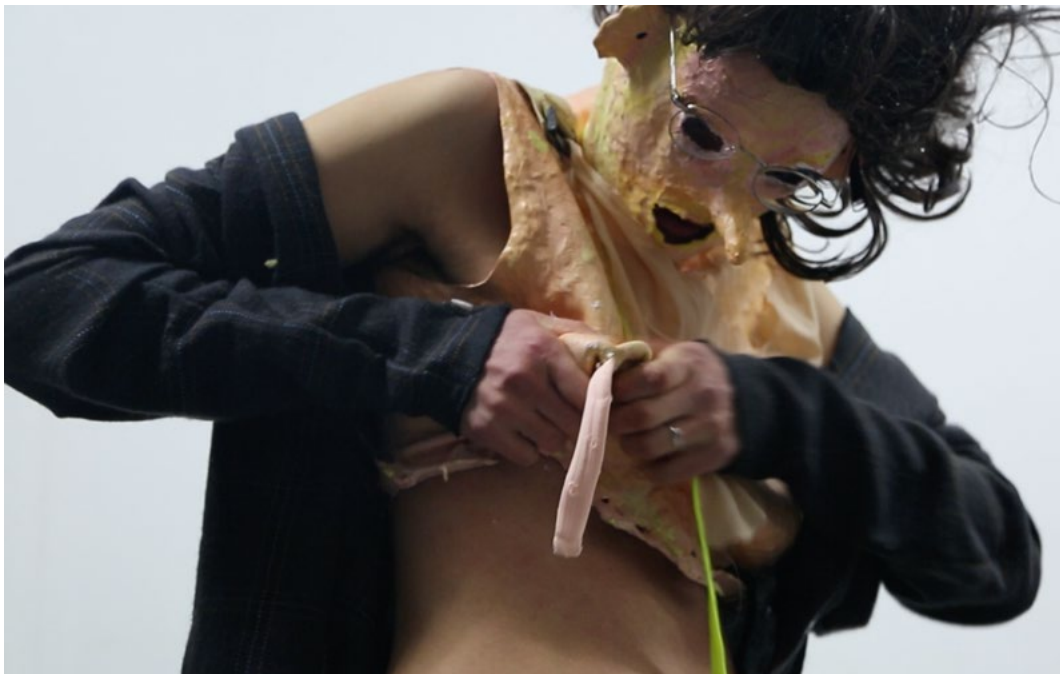
Full recording: <https://vimeo.com/385930265>





attitude implies that all human beings are monsters, because the apparatuses (=discursive processes) that make people into human beings have to keep on working in order to maintain this border or even to shift it.

The objects in the space were created in the process of materializing the investigation of these motherhood-monsterhood constructs. There is an oversized pacifier from unburned clay attached to a necklace that says Sorry Not Sorry. Actually sucking it would dissolve the unburned clay. Clay would be sucked in by a human, and the first human, according to biblical creation myths, was also created by clay. There is a post-apocalyptic pram with tokens inside, a full length dress made from stuffy checked children shirts that usually middle aged adult men would wear and a baby body shaped handbag made from cow skin, with crocodile pattern.









## **BODIY**

2018

60'

**Performers:** Tanja Turpeinen, Philippe Wicht, Johannes Dullin

**Ceramic Objects:** Maya Hottarek

**Coproduction:** Schlachthaus Theater Bern, Arsenic Lausanne, Roxy Birsfelden, Fabriktheater Rote Fabrik Zürich, Premio Schweiz

BODIY deals with the phenomenology of the body as a potentially poetic material. What is this strange shell that represents our temporary address here on earth? The performers transform themselves into surreal fantasy creatures and question in shimmering encounters the object-subject relationship between them and the audience. Body part by body part is questioned for cultural connotation, artificially expanded and decontextualized.

A performance between installation, sculpture and dance that emphasizes, dissects and frees the body.

The title BODIY is a combination of the words Body & Do It Yourself. Inspired by body modification trends and halloween costumes of disassembled creatures, I was curious to expand the usual known limits of our physical appearances and direct them in a rather absurd and yet poetic direction.

All the objects and sculptures were also inspired by body parts, they were created before the rehearsals for these piece started and the performers job was to find their specific materials agency and bring them into a spiraling, orgasmically culminating dialogue together. The performance has no hierarchy between humans and non-human actants, they are all equally important.



**Winner of PREMIO 2018  
(Prize for emerging dance and theater artists)**



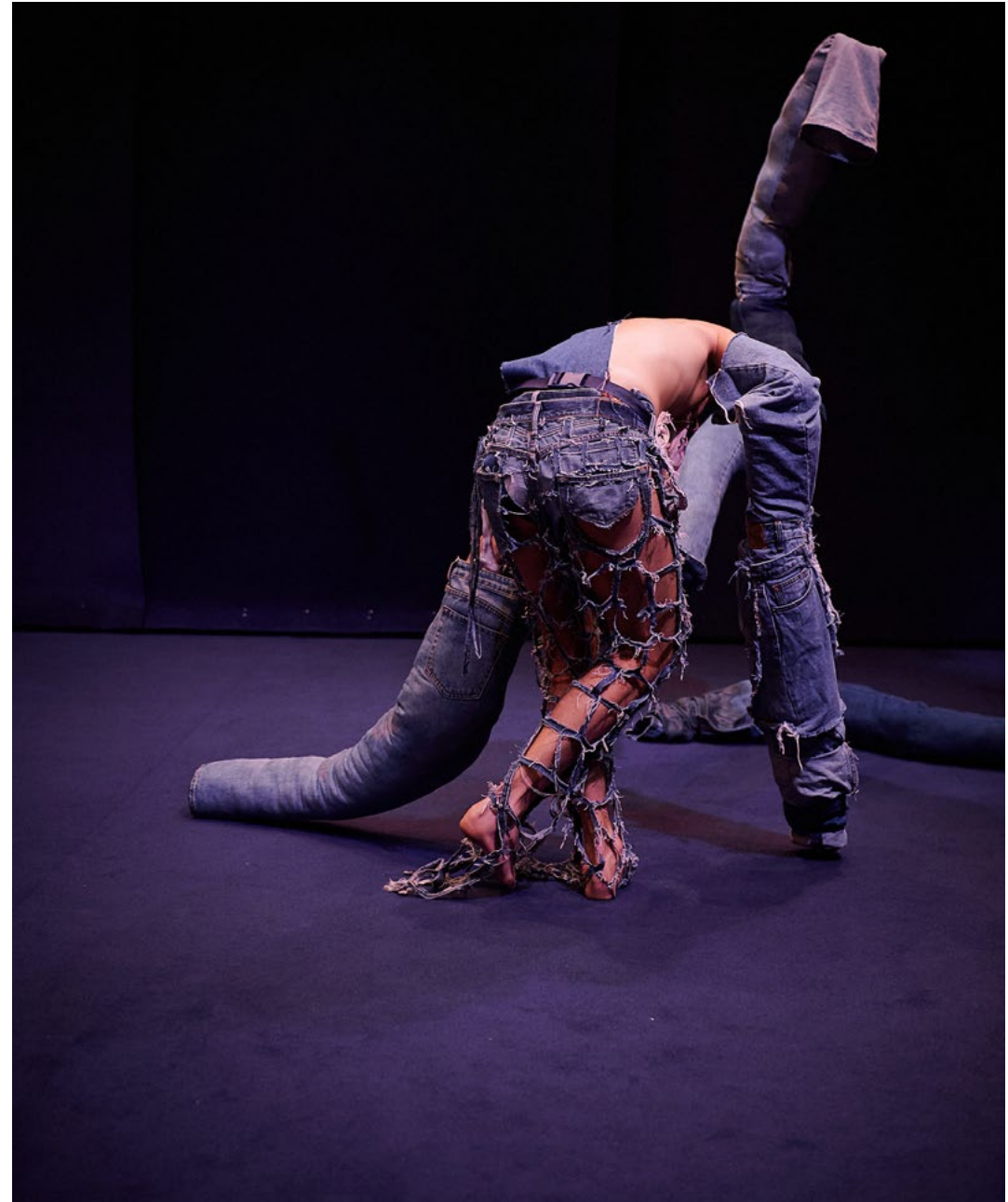






Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/369023382>

Full recording: <https://vimeo.com/368819168/dc26f136d9>





## Dusty Chewing Gum From Heaven

Long Durational Performance

2019

Instituto Svizzero Milano, in the  
Exhibition of Renée Levi

**Performers:** Steven Schoch, Tanja  
Turpeinen, David Zürcher

Curated by Maria Paola Zedda, copro-  
duced with Did Studio/Ariella Vidach  
Residency

Dusty Chewing Gum From Heaven is a durational  
performance about fictional spirits of pop culture.  
The performers are living sculptures, they look like  
apocalyptic artifacts of pop culture and become a  
projection surface for the fictional spirits of this culture  
to manifest.

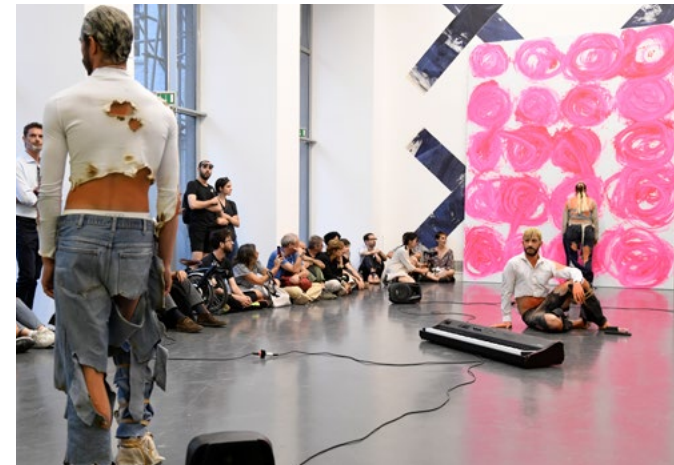
Their presence evokes a mystical atmosphere and  
creates an energetic place that deals with peace and  
hope in a post-pop-manner.

Through singing and movement a visual terminolo-  
gy unfolds, a terminology that is obscure, unlogical  
and sensual and invites the viewer to dive in.

The performance was created during a residency at  
DID Studio Milano. The fact that it should be per-  
formed in Renée Levis exhibition was considered  
during the creation process in the design of the char-  
acters and in the choreography in the space.



**Teaser:** <https://vimeo.com/389722707>











## U Feel Anything

Durational performance, 2018

Bikini Space Basel

**Performers:** Milena Patagonia, Maria Demandt, Sebastian Kläy, Lorenz Orłowski

When taking mind altering drugs, there is that short moment where one is not sure whether the drug is already working or just not yet. In this piece I wanted to interpret and stretch this moment with performative means for a duration of 3 hours.

In this gap between high and sober there is an openness and a vulnerability to one self and the very surroundings, these became the guiding principles of the performance.

The performance was completely improvised. To prepare it, I met with every performer separately, giving them a set of rules and tasks they should follow in the performance. The performers were moving in slow motion and investigating the architectural and interpersonal encounters between their performing bodies, the sculptures that I made, the space and the spectators. Milena Patagonia, a Sex-RnB producer, was creating sensual live sound, sometimes just by walking with her noisy plateau shoes through the space.

The performers always had to look into the eyes of the audience members and be emotionally authentic in their attitude towards the audience. This is a way to create a place of togetherness and resonance between all bodies and object present. The atmosphere was very contemplative and concentrated, people stayed for several hours in this dream-like, acid-trip inspired space.









## God Is A Girl

Solo Performance

15 Minutes

2017

Performance commissioned by Stadt-galerie Bern

In this performance elements and aesthetics from the nightly party culture are taken and remixed into a ceremony of Right Here Right Now philosophy. Together we seek to experience some moments of pleasure and entertainment. The aim is to investigate the notions of freedom and fun in our capitalist society. The master of ceremony is a headless creature, selling roses made from cigarette stubs and a face on the butt that is revealed as the performance climaxes, lip syncing the night-core track "God is a Girl" and shaking the butt cheeks (therefore the eyes) for an absurdly long time far beyond awkward, oscillating between the evoking associations this persistent action causes.



# Ernestyna Orłowska

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Ernestyna Maria Orłowska, born 1987 in Poland, has a Bachelor in Fine Arts and a Master in Expanded Theater from the Berne University of Arts. In her artistic practice she merges the different disciplines of fine art, theater, performance and dance and works in the context of the black box as well as the white cube.

Her works are shown nationally and internationally in galleries, independent art spaces, museums as well as theaters and festivals.

She has two kids and lives in Berne.

## Awards

1st price at the theatre and dance competition Premio Schweiz, for the project BODIY, 2018

Weiterentwicklungs-/Werkbeitrag des Kantons Bern für Wishing Well XXL, 2017

Price of the jury for Wishing Well, Arena Festival Erlangen, 2017

1st price art in architecture competition, City of Bern, 2017

Inkubator Grant, Rote Fabrik, Zürich, 2016

Tankstelle Luzern Grant, 2015

## Residencies

Did/Ariella Vidach Residency, Milano, 2019

Residency Kulturhaus Helferei Zürich, 2017

Balkan Baustelle Residency, Pristina & Belgrad, 2015

Studio residency city of Bern, Progr Bern, 2014 – 2016

Refo Moabit Artist Residency, Berlin, 2013

## Selected Performances/Shows

The Murmur, Galeria Studio, Warsaw, 2022 (solo)

LARVA, Kunstraum Satellit, Thun, 2022 (solo)

Should I Do the Man's Part, Schlachthaus Theater Bern, Blackbox Oslo, BIT Bergen (Norway), 2021/2022

Cantonale Bern Jura, Centre Pasquart Biel, Stadtgalerie Bern, 2020

BODIY, Schlachthaus Bern, Arsenic Lausanne, Roxy Birsfelden, Rote Fabrik Zürich, Le Grütli Théâtre Geneva, 2018/19

Dusty Chewing Gum From Heaven, Istituto Svizzero Milano, 2019

Body & Freedom, Performance Festival FNAF, Prag, 2019

BODIY, Performance Fest, Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai, 2018

God Is A Girl, Kunsthalle Basel, New Swiss Performance Now, 2018

Wishing Well, Transeuropa Festival Hildesheim, 2018

U Feel Anything, Bikini Basel, 2018 (solo)

Wishing Well, Zeitzeug Festival, Bochum, 2017

God Is A Girl, Stadtgalerie Bern, 2017

Wishing Well, Arena der Künste Festival, Erlangen, 2017

Wishing Well, Performa Festival, Losone, 2017

FRUITS, Buzz Cut Festival, Glasgow, 2017

FRUITS, Les Urbaines Festival, Lausanne, 2017

IAMAI, Galerie Duflon Racz, Bern, 2017

Mother Mary, Bone Performance Festival, Bern, 2015/2018

A will lead to Z, Sic! Raum für Kunst Luzern, 2015 (solo)

Talk To The Hand, Helmhaus Zürich, 2013