
Silvia Kolbowski

Who will save us?

Who will save us?
2022
Single channel
video loop
14 min

Missing Asher
2019
Single channel
video loop
16:41 min

All works
Courtesy the artist

Silvia Kolbowski presents the video works *Who will save us?* (2022) and *Missing Asher* (2019) in two exhibition spaces at Kunsthhaus Glarus. The work *Who will save us?* was created especially for the exhibition. The video is a collage of two films: *Metropolis* (1927, directed by Fritz Lang) and *THX 1138* (1971, directed by George Lucas). Both originals are science fiction films addressing futuristic life and work structures in distinctly two-class societies—albeit with different plotlines. Both films explore themes of workplace alienation, group conformity, and how easily people are manipulated. In *Who will save us?*, Kolbowski's pointedly balanced, experimental compilation of elements drawn from both films examines how various political systems foster specific group ideologies. The explicit choice of two films from various decades of the twentieth century calls attention to their transferability to current events such as the storming of the Capitol in Washington in 2021, or to comparable occurrences based on similar dynamics. Kolbowski is concerned with such social patterns and the subconscious embracing of their ideologies throughout history.

In her work, Kolbowski employs mainly time-based media to grapple with questions of historicity, political resistance, and the influence of the subconscious on socio-politically motivated mass movements. As part of her conceptual approach, she often draws on historical source material in analyzing and working experimentally with cultural phenomena and power-structure imbalances.

The video *Missing Asher* (2019) is a further elaboration on *Enlarged from the Catalogue: Michael Asher Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979* (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1983), a site-specific, installation work from 1990. In this video, Silvia Kolbowski addresses the creation and evolution of her own work. In the voiceover, she recaps the difficulty of surviving on the art market with non-commercial, ephemeral, artistic work. In addition, she investigates the connection between attributes of individualism in late-‘80s-emergent neo-capitalism and the format of the group exhibition and its signs of wear and tear in the gallery system. In *Missing Asher*, Kolbowski is concerned with the rules dictating the commercial circulation of aesthetic values and their only seemingly negotiated neutrality. The video work raises the question of whether the de facto stipulations of the art market are permanently aligned against conceptual, research-based works.

b. 1953 in Buenos Aires. Lives and works in New York. Silvia Kolbowski was co-editor of the journal *October* from 1993 to 2000, and still serves today on the advisory board. She has taught in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the CCC master’s program at the Haute école d’art et de design in Geneva, the Architecture Department at Parsons School of Design in New York, and at the School of Art at Cooper Union in New York. Kolbowski has taught at many universities and her writings have appeared in numerous catalogs and art journals including *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Documents*, *Parachute*, and *October*. In 2013, she initiated a blog as an extension of her artistic practice, where she publishes cultural and political texts and analyses. In 2014, she received a Creative Capital award for this project from the Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant program.