

Ilusional frame



ANNA K.E.

Dolorem Ipsum

The moments follow each other; nothing lends them the illusion of a content or the appearance of a meaning; they pass; their course is not ours; we contemplate that passage, prisoners of a stupid perception.

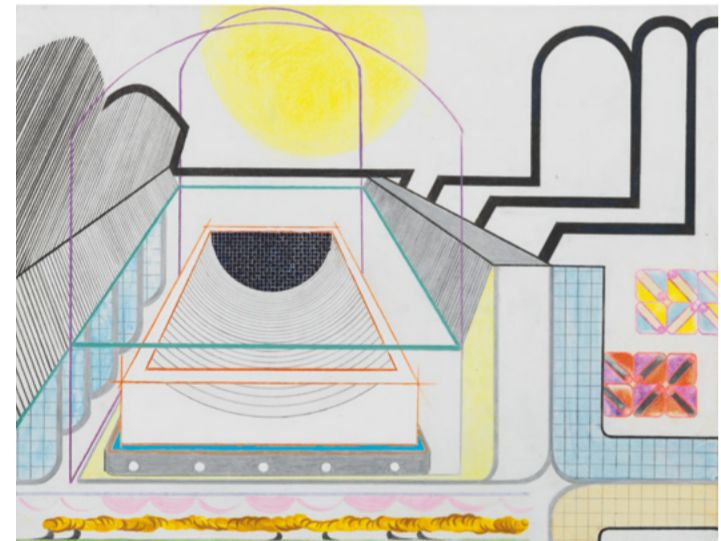
Emil Cioran,

A Short History of Decay, 1949

In her most extensive solo exhibition to date, *Dolorem Ipsum*, artist Anna K.E. (born 1986 in Tbilisi, Georgia) explores the choreographed body and human states characterized by instability, alienation, and transformation within architectural landscapes. With her presentation, K.E. questions the perception and conception of flows of movement in space, humorously examining architectural guidance systems, structures, and barriers, as well as their imagined facades, thereby breaking social norms in the construction and performance of new paths. At the heart of her artistic practice is the continuous exploration of the human body, with a focus on ballet, post-communist conditions, and movement in modern architecture amid historically significant design elements. She investigates personal and collective bodily experiences of time, choreography, and pain, linking them in impressive installations to the physical and digital self. By performatively traversing architectures and interacting with her environment through her own body, K.E. opens up new rehearsal spaces within her graphic and sculptural collages, creating dynamic and poignant zones of confrontation. Trained as a classical ballet dancer, she reflects on the human movement in the environment with her nuanced understanding of her own body, triggering a trajectory and new paths of motion that create alternative spatial structures through dance and performative gestures, contortions, and fluid arrangements.

dolorem ipsum (silence in my pocket)
Anna K.E., Ballet Barre Engraving, 2024

With *Dolorem Ipsum*, K.E. has created a new, all-encompassing installation for the exhibition halls of the Kestner Gesellschaft, where she continues the central concerns of her kinetic and body-oriented works in video, sculpture, performance, drawing and collage, and installations. Her spatial structures divide the two exhibition spaces into two places: the forum *Silence in My Pocket* with pavilions for contemplation and new routes for the



ANNA K.E., Untitled, 2020

flow of movement through the Goseriedebad, simultaneously engaging in a dialogue with the rehearsal space *Dolorem Ipsum*, which is filled with works related to feminism, ballet, and the obsession with the digital self. In her exhibition, the artist poetically reflects on how spatial constructions direct the movements of the human body and how the choreographic delineation affects psychological perception. Concurrently, the artist explores the constellations of physical boundaries and psychological determinants that stage and anchor social experiences of power, violence, and freedom in architectural space.

There is a posture,
that has been hold and defined,
in spirit of freedom, in spirit of revel.

Anna K.E., Ballet Barre Engraving, 2024

Like loose ornaments, the dog sculptures *Rendered Innocence I-V* (2024) resting in curved poses with a fine coating of marzipan are visible on the white tiled surface of the plateau. They merge into figures in a matrix of low-resolution digital pixels within the grid of tiles. Acoustic illusions transform the hall into an infinite echo chamber, triggered by the falling ominous pitches of the threatening metal domes in the air. The tension-inducing "Shepard tone" that can be heard, named after the cognitive scientist Roger Shepard, is a unique tone composed of a certain number of sine waves. This acoustic phenomenon recalls an auditory illusion of infinitely rising or falling pitches. The hanging mud-grey looking speaker domes *Pointing to a New Blue* (2024) and the pure tiled surface of the installation occupy historically relevant places in the Goseriedebad in a nostalgic manner. The water in the sculpture *Colossal Youth* (2024) circulates in a continuous stream through a twisted copper pipe into an unreachable faucet, and, like the fluid of a fountain of youth, back into a petrified basin onto the white stage. The shiny installation recalls a post-communist monument in an unknown city, where time is frozen on its pearl-white shimmering square, and even the slowly flowing water does not disrupt the stillness of the intertwined dogs from their systematic arrangement. The central level is bordered by two metal bus stations *The Days Before Stories* (2024) in the east and west, intended for imaginary travelers and strangers between the poles. Drawing from modern architectures, the pavilion niches with their brutalist and inhuman-looking benches guide the flow of movement of travelers between the stops and the arcades in the space around the swimming pool-like plateau. In the interstitial space of the arcades, older works by K.E. rest on a blue-edged wooden shelf *Synthesizing Trajectory* (2024), like on the workbench of a studio archive. The sculptures, drawings, and material collages reflect K.E.'s artistic practice with references to the human physique, dance art, and architectural design. The curved shelf appears to be in an unfinished process of formation, asymmetrically constructed and varying irregularly in its plywood form.



ANNA K.E., Studio Landscape II, 2020

With the 2024 theme *Between Past and Future*, the Kestner Gesellschaft concludes a trilogy of self-reflection which began in 2022 with the investigation of the notion of tenderness (Olga Tokarczuk) and continued in 2023 with a series of exhibitions focused on the concept of anabasis (Paul Celan).

Amor Mundi and eight exercises in political thought, *Between Past and Future*, by one of the most relevant thinkers of our age, Hanover-born Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), are master narratives for this year's exhibition program and constitute a frame of reference for the future.

The exhibition *Dolorem Ipsum* by Anna K.E. inaugurates this program by exercising our experience of freedom. The artist balances on a tightrope between inner freedom and freedom as a political gesture; according to Arendt, freedom is a performative act: it is an action in the world. Courage remains the highest and most indispensable political virtue, while freedom is what makes us and allows us to be meaningful; this is what it means to be human and how to live together in a chaotic world without authority.

Adam Budak

In the rehearsal room, K.E. directly engages with two fundamental elements of ballet, self-discipline, and muscle memory. In classical ballet, not only the human body but also the mind is trained to perfection and physical exhaustion through endless repetitions of movement steps with mental dance patterns. Confronted with their own reflection and wooden handrails, ballet dancers tirelessly rehearse formations, balances, and figures of physical freedom. Guided by the poetic handrails, the horizontal ballet barres along the wall that limit and delineate the space, texts are engraved in the wooden bars by the artist and filled with marzipan. The engraved mottoes such as "In those timelapses—atoms splitting, rearranging self algorithmically" and "Stretching beyond duties, beyond performing recreational functionalities" recall universal trains of thought and poetic statements on time and being. The recurring marzipan serves as a seductive carrier of central messages and insights into the human body and its choreographed movement in space. Here, K.E. draws an analogy between the human body and a substance that, initially soft and delicate, becomes hard through dehydration and evaporation. The artist is fascinated by the process in which a previously soft and edible food becomes a cement that solidifies words while simultaneously recalling the fragility of the human body, which also loses fluid through sweating and evaporation under exertion. K.E. makes a sharp connection between the empty rehearsal room with its poetic ballet bars for imaginary ballerinas and human behavior in socio-political systems: Practicing new dance formations and routes against entrenched patterns of movement can be an expression of physical freedom and resistance against societal and spatial boundaries.

The mirror is not you.
The mirror is you yourself looking at yourself.
George Balanchine, 1981

In front of a vertically rising mirror that doubles the vision of the space, at the end of the room stands a monolithic block of LED screens capturing the portrait and body of the artist in the videos *Peripheral Monday* (2020) and *(Untitled) Happy Birthday*, (2011).



ANNA K.E., (Untitled) Happy Birthday, 2011, Video still

In *Peripheral Monday*, the artist, wearing a vest smeared with pastel paints, expels her bodily fluids, her saliva, in the direction of the long room and onto the camera lens of the recording smartphone. Slowly, the opaque drops of saliva fall onto the lens, which had previously captured an overwhelming perspective of the artist's monumental self-portrait, and flow into a restless sea of bodily fluids. It seems as if K.E. is cleansing her own self-portrait by submerging her reflection into the mist of obscurity. The nearly one-hour video stands in direct contrast to the subsequent sequence, *(Untitled) Happy Birthday*, lasting only 50 seconds, which shows the fleeting moment of an improvised ballet performance to Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in the artist's studio. The performing silhouette of the artist is seen against a bright pool of light, tracing the letters "Happy Birthday" with her body. In absurd videos like this, K.E. presents her own body as the protagonist, twisting, contorting, and bending like her marzipan dogs, developing its own vibration and interdependence between the architecture and the surroundings. The public narcissism in viewing the video reflection creates feedback between K.E.'s physical self on the LED screen and the environment. The digital image of the artist influences the space, demanding new flows and understandings of movement along the poetic ballet barres within the rehearsal space.

When there is an appointed horizon, the thoughts
rotate and investigate the given.
Lingering inward-outward realms, where the fine
dilemma occurs and connects the links missing between
inner and outer natures.

There is a posture, that has been hold and
defined, in spirit of freedom, in spirit of revel.

There is auxiliary sense of time that has been defined,
in spirit of freedom, in spirit of revel.

In those timelapses—atoms splitting, rearranging self
algorithmically. Stretching beyond duties,
beyond performing recreational functionalities.
Identifying the process as an ultimate
veracity—where the duration and motion has become a
substantial purpose of undefined time; watering
landscapes of Archimedean point
(Punctum Archimedis).

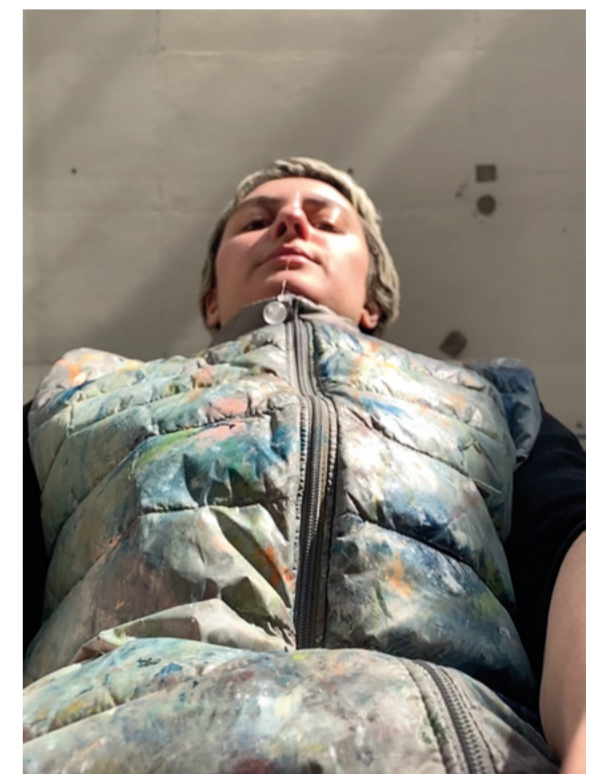
Fall becoming the tolerating form of
self-barring continuation.
Anna K.E., 2023

Anna K.E. was born in 1986 in Tbilisi, Georgia, as the child of the well-known Georgian artists Gia Edgveradze and Ketik Kapanadze. She currently lives and works in New York. The former student of the famous Georgian ballet school Vakhtang Chabukiani, moved to Germany in 2000 and studied in Stuttgart at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in the class of Professor Alexander Roob, and in Düsseldorf, at the Kunstakademie in the class of Professor Hubert Kiecol. In 2010 she received diploma and Meisterschülerin from Prof. Georg Herold and Prof. Christopher Williams.

Anna K.E. represented Georgia at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia and has participated in numerous international solo and group exhibitions. Her works are represented in renowned public and private collections.

The enigmatic yet familiar exhibition title *Dolorem Ipsum* refers to the tradition of the placeholder text "Lorem ipsum ...", whose words are visually recognizable yet absurdly incomprehensible, endlessly repeatable as a philosophical text on pain and pleasure from antiquity. The Latin text serves as a backdrop of words and is used in the design of graphics, print materials, and websites. It is attributed to an unknown typesetter from the 15th century who took a text by Cicero as a starting point. Contrary to its everyday use and perception, the word sequence "Lorem ipsum ..." is not a randomly generated digital text but comes from Cicero's book *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (On the ends of good and evil) from 45 BC, a treatise on the theory of ethics in a time marked by pain, loss, and yet pleasure. The use of a specific passage from this work as a dummy text became popular in the 1960s and was incorporated into the software of Adobe Systems in the 1990s. This meaningful text thus sneaked into the information age. Today it is an integral part of countless word processing programs, a dummy text without directly decipherable meaning, pointing to the ambivalence between philosophical ideas of pain and pleasure. It is an odd power to possess an infinite repetition of words that are almost meaningless. A moment of discomfort arises in the face of this initially unassuming, silent text facade and its nearly infinite potential to recombine and continue written experience of pain as a human state of mind. With the exhibition title, K.E. consciously takes up her continual investigation and critique of normative language and text systems and their social impacts—a topic that has occupied her since her engagement with the Georgian alphabet and the Asomtavruli script.

Alexander Wilmschen



ANNA K.E., Peripheral Monday, 2020, Video still

Neque porro quisquam est, qui **dolorem ipsum** quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla pariatur?

Nor again is there anyone who loves or pursues or desires to obtain **pain of itself**, because it is pain, but because occasionally circumstances occur in which toil and pain can procure him some great pleasure. To take a trivial example, which of us ever undertakes laborious physical exercise, except to obtain some advantage from it? But who has any right to find fault with a man who chooses to enjoy a pleasure that has no annoying consequences, or one who avoids a pain that produces no resultant pleasure?

Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, 45 BC, translation H. Rackham, 1914

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Cited texts
George Balanchine, in:
Balanchine Salute Tchaikovsky,
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Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, 45 BC, in: Loeb Classical Library, Number 40, translation H. Rackham, 1961

Emil Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, 1949, p. 14

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Galerie Barbara Thumm

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Front page
Anna K.E., *Illusional Frame*, 2020, Wood, metal, marzipan paste, courtesy the artist, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin

Back page
Anna K.E., *Studio Landscape II*, 2020, Inkjet print on paper, courtesy the artist, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin

Anna K.E., *Untitled*, 2020, Mixed media on canvas, courtesy the artist, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin

Anna K.E., *Peripheral Monday*, 2020, Video still, Video 52:06 min, courtesy the artist, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin

Anna K.E., *(Untitled) Happy Birthday*, 2011, Video still, Video 00:50 min, courtesy the artist, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin