



## PRESS RELEASE

### BEYOND BALAGAN!!!

### HERO MOTHER: Contemporary Art by Post-Communist Women Rethinking Heroism

May 14 – June 12, 2016

Opening: May 13, 2016, 7 – 11 pm. Live Performance by Nezaket Ekici, 7 – 8:30pm.

**Press preview: May 13, 2016, 11 am**

Symposium: June 12, 2016, 1 – 7 pm

#### MOMENTUM & Studio 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien

(Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin)

EXHIBITION OPENING HOURS: TUES – SUN, 12 – 7pm (closed Mon)

**Marina Abramović** (Serbia/USA), **Maja Bajević** (Bosnia & Herzegovina), **Yael Bartana** (Israel/Germany), **Marina Belikova** (Russia/DE), **Tania Bruguera** (Cuba), **Anetta Mona Chisa & Lucia Tkačova** (Romania & Czech Republic), **Danica Dakić** (Bosnia & Herzegovina/ Germany), **Nezaket Ekici** (Turkey/DE), **Fang Lu** (China), **else (Twin) Gabriel** (Germany), **Gluklya** (Russia), **Stefanie Gromes & Katrin Hafemann** (Germany), **Sanja Iveković** (Croatia), **Elżbieta Jabłońska** (Poland), **Zuzanna Janin** (Poland), **Adela Jušić** (Bosnia & Herzegovina), **Elena Kovylna** (Russia), **Katarzyna Kozyra** (Poland), **Almagul Menlibayeva** (Kazakhstan), **Tanja Muravskaja** (Estonia), **Hajnal Németh** (Hungary/ Germany), **Ilona Németh** (Slovakia), **Sasha Pirogova** (Russia), **Selma Selman** (Bosnia & Herzegovina), **Milica Tomić** (Serbia), **Nguyen Trinh Thi** (Vietnam), **Anna-Stina Treumund** (Estonia), **Mariana Vassileva** (Bulgaria), **Anastasia Vepreva** (Russia)

Curated by **Bojana Pejić & Rachel Rits-Volloch**. Curatorial Advisor: **David Elliott**.

*HERO MOTHER* presents 30 women artists from 20 countries with communist legacies whose work addresses and defies the frighteningly regressive political agendas in many Eastern European countries today, outing it in the context of broader developments worldwide. The exhibition and the discursive program focus on the role of gender, citizenship, nationalism, migration and personal freedom, as well as the relation between artists and institutions such as state structures. Looking beyond feminist and queer critiques *HERO MOTHER* addresses how contemporary art can act as a mirror to a world turned on its head, and specifically how humor, farce, and parody can form the strongest tools of social engagement and change.

The honorary title “Hero Mother” and the medal bestowed with it were established on July 8, 1944 by Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, to be awarded to Soviet women who raised at least ten living children. Until its abolishment in 1991, upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, more



than 430,000 women had received this state honor. In 2008, the Russian Federation replaced this award with the “Order of Parental Glory”, downscaling the honor to celebrate the smaller accomplishment of only seven children. Up until today this award is still given to mothers in some post-communist states, such as Belarus or Kazakhstan.

As recently as the early 1990s, new “familiaristic” ideologies and the ideal of stay-at-home mothers have been promoted by post-communist governments, and are today aggressively endorsed by nationalist parties all over Eastern Europe (and not only there), making the figure of the Mother, or the Mother of the Nation, still a central role. Yet the conservative agenda which exhumes such an exaggeration of ‘family values’ at the cost of personal freedoms to choose alternative lifestyles is only one of many indications of a turning back of the clock to a time before the hard-won victories of feminism and gay rights struggled across Europe.

What has changed for women since the communist era? Did women who in state socialism used to be “working mothers” become today something else, e.g. women-citizens? How are we to define heroism in a democratic setting? Could it be seen as social disobedience and resistance?

*HERO MOTHER* follows on from the major exhibition *BALAGAN!!! – Contemporary Art from the Former Soviet Union and Other Mythical Places* curated by David Elliott, which was held in three venues in Berlin in 2015. “Balagan” is a popular and much used exclamation in contemporary Russia and the places to which Russian culture has spread, describing a farce, a mess, the most unholy of cock-ups, and at the same time the most joyful of celebrations, the most unrestrained debauchery, the ‘functional dysfunctional’. Using *BALAGAN!!!* as a base from which to research more deeply into the many cultural issues it raises, MOMENTUM is devoting its 2016 program to a series of events, residencies and exhibitions called *BEYOND BALAGAN*, focusing on an analysis of such topics as gender, freedom, humor and the absurd.

MOMENTUM is a non-profit platform for time-based art with headquarters in Berlin at the art center Kunstquartier Bethanien. Established in 2010 as a parallel event to the 17th Biennale of Sydney, MOMENTUM moved to Berlin and has been active worldwide since 2011. Through the program of exhibitions, education, video art in public space initiatives, residencies, and a collection and performance archive, MOMENTUM is dedicated to providing a platform for artists working with time-based practices. Positioned as both a local and global platform, MOMENTUM serves as a bridge joining professional art communities, irrespective of institutional and national borders.

<http://momentumworldwide.org/exhibitions/hero-mother/>

*HERO MOTHER* is supported by funds from the Hauptstadtkulturfonds Berlin.

### **Press contact**

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