

**Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz**

**Iris Andraschek  
I love you :-)**

**Exhibition Booklet**



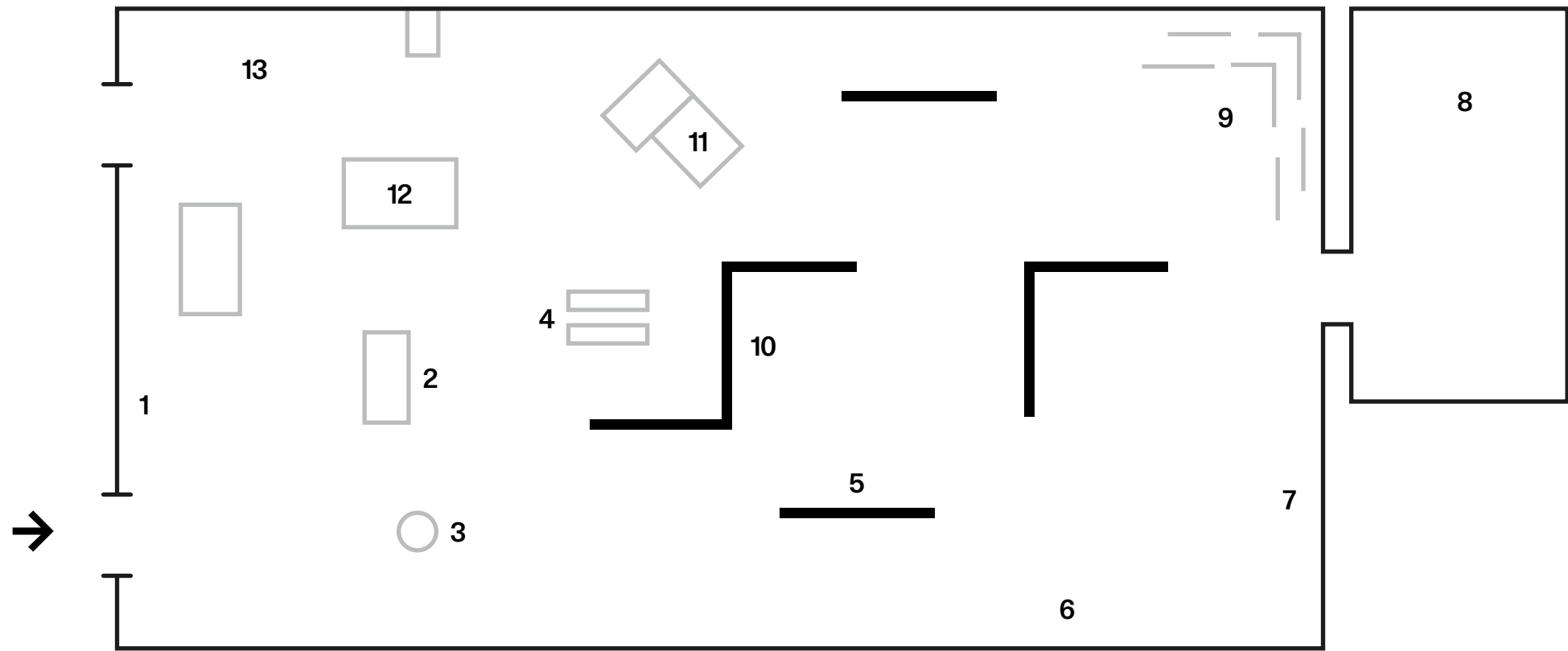
# Introduction

The oeuvre of Austrian artist Iris Andraschek is shaped by her interest in motifs taken from the worlds of everyday culture and social policies. The relationship between humanity and nature, alternative life designs and questions about a more just co-existence are recurring themes in her work. Communication is crucial for her research-based work. This is reflected in her projects, which focus on personal experiences.

For the artist's first solo exhibition the Lentos Kunstmuseum pulls together works from the last 35 years. As a comprehensive selection, the show features drawings, photographs, and spatial installations, some of which were expressly made for the occasion.

Iris Andraschek was born 1963 in Lower Austria's Horn and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She has been awarded a number of prizes for her work, such as the Österreichischer Kunstpreis für bildende Kunst.

# Floor Plan



## ***Foto Andraschek & Töchter* [Photo Andraschek & Daughters], 2013**

From June to November 2013, Iris Andraschek transformed the exhibition space KunstRaum Goethestraße xtd. in Linz into her temporary photo studio. In addition to exhibition visitors, random passers-by and residents from the local neighbourhood took up the opportunity to have their portraits taken by the artist. Andraschek used the 1960s equipment that belonged to her father, who ran his own studio as a professional photographer and whose work influenced her.

The participatory art project explored aspects of coexistence in a neighbourhood characterised by cultural diversity and people of different nationalities. Based on encounters and conversations with the people portrayed, the artist collected images, personal objects and words and incorporated them into the production of the photo backgrounds. In this way, people's different life contexts were visualised and the project became tangible as a process of negotiation about identity, culture and tradition. Over a period of six months, Andraschek displayed the photographs she produced in the window and inside the exhibition space.

## 2 *Aquarien* [Aquariums], 1992–2022

Objects are driven by pumps through the water, like exotic sea creatures wafting in the artificial current. The fascinating movement holds the viewer's gaze, the found objects appearing weightless and deceptively colourful. These are the carelessly discarded leftovers of daily life, revealed to be foreign bodies in the aquariums.

Since the 1990s, Iris Andraschek has realised installations involving aquariums in various settings. In light of the constantly growing amount of waste in our oceans, the themes she explores have lost none of their relevance. A large part of this debris is plastic, now also detected in the human organism due to its slow decomposition into microparticles. The poetic dance of the debris swaying in the water is interspersed with moments of eeriness – for example, when mirrored surfaces create visual doubles – and examines our problematic approach to the environment.

## 3 *Hanging Water*, 1994/2022 With a literary text by Esther Kinsky

Like a stalactite made of plastic bags covered in handwriting, the installation *Hanging Water* grows down from the ceiling of the exhibition space. Originally created in 1994 for the group exhibition *Trivial Circuit* at Künstlerhaus Klagenfurt, the work was restaged and its content reinterpreted by Andraschek with reference to the exhibition location in Linz.

The bags are filled with various liquids and water from the Danube, as well as diverse found objects collected by the artist from riverbanks. A literary text by the German writer Esther Kinsky appears on the plastic bags: In a poetically associative way, *Ader, 27. Juni* negotiates Kinsky's autobiographical observations of the Romanian-Hungarian River Száraz Ér, whose changing appearance is shaped not only by the seasons but also by human influences. The site-specific installation refers to the Danube as a river that shapes the landscape and encourages humans to have a greater awareness of their surroundings. This artistic approach can also be seen in the aquarium installations that Andraschek has been creating since the 1990s.

## 4

### *Early drawings, untitled, 1986/87*

In fine lines, drawn bodies overlay an abstract structure of lines in strong colour. Blossoms, leaves and creatures fill the spaces in between – sometimes only hinted at, elsewhere formulated in fine detail. Many of the motifs and themes that Andraschek currently explores in her work were already present in the early drawings of the 1980s. For example, depictions of bodies that have been drawn over are reminiscent of series such as *Where to Draw the Line*.

For Andraschek, the collection was created at a time of biographical transition between her studies and her budding independence as a freelance artist. It reflects in an associative way the inner and outer images that preoccupied her, such as questions of identity and demarcation, sexuality and femininity, hierarchies and power relations. Besides a variety of materials, the pictures also include a wide range of colours. The base for the drawings is paper found by the artist in an attic and whose traces of ageing give the works a distinct aesthetic. By partially exposing the base to natural weathering, Andraschek incorporated the principle of chance into the artistic design – something she also used in her later series *STRICT NATURE II*.

## 5

### *30 Reasons a Girl should call it a Night, 2013*

Fine lines weave across translucent paper to produce fragmentary depictions of young women overlaid with ornamental tendril patterns and lettering. The sometimes steep perspectives and deliberate recesses of the facial features leave open the identities of the subjects. The drawings in this series explore the disturbing manifestations of youth culture in an age of smartphones and social media.

On the internet, the artist came across a public forum where minors had uploaded photos of their shared party excesses. Some of the pictures showed girls in degrading poses, passed out from alcohol or smeared with obscene writing. Fragments of the comments about the images from the internet can be found in the drawings. These expose the patriarchal gaze regimes on the female body inherent in the uploaded photos. In her works, Andraschek processes this form of voyeuristic display of young women, which is characterised by transgressions and stigmatisation, by appropriating their contents in order to critically break them down, as it were, in an associative interplay of image and text.

## HYBRID TALKS, 2020/2022

Plant stems, leaves and roots float along thin wires on the wall, in a fragile balance. Facing each other, they seem to be engaged in a lively exchange: speech bubbles made from silver sealing lids reveal to us that they are talking about biodiversity, agriculture and plant breeding.

Iris Andraschek's wall installation uses poetic imagery to examine the hybridisation of seeds. While natural hybridisation is part of evolution, the modification of seeds carried out by humans has far-reaching consequences. In agriculture, it increases the economic dependence of farmers on large corporations, since natural seed propagation is no longer possible. In addition to the resulting reduction in biodiversity, neocolonial dependency relationships are created through global sales. By borrowing speech bubbles from the comic genre, Andraschek gives the plants a voice and so encourages us to perceive nature as an organism with equal rights.

## Korridore / Übergangsräume [Corridors / Transitional spaces], 2019

Clinically sterile zinc and aluminium panels – like those commonly found on farms – show a reflection of the exhibition space in a distorted perspective. Iris Andraschek uses these materials as the starting point for her installation *Korridore / Übergangsräume* [Corridors/Transitional spaces], assembling a hotchpotch of found objects whose purpose is often not immediately obvious: bulky iron chains covered in red rust, a three-legged old wood and metal object used for motorbike repair. With the addition of documentary photographs of milk cans and car tyres, the work refers to the kind of places on farms and in old rural buildings where the yards and attics can turn out to be a real Wunderkammer.

Alongside these *objets trouvés*, which inspire the power of free association, the artist positions photographic works produced in the Austrian-Czech border region. Over the course of her many years of work on the subject of agriculture, the artist has created a series of photographs that provide insights into the community structures of rural coexistence and work.

## *Sapun Ghar, 2015–2022*

Iris Andraschek began her research into 'Aleppo soap' in 2015. In a millennia-old tradition dating back to Roman antiquity, soap was made from laurel and olive oil in what is now Syria. Driven away by the civil war and the destruction of Aleppo, Syrian refugees carried the knowledge and tradition of soap production to the Syrian-Turkish border region.

Andraschek attended the harvest in the laurel groves, documented the soapmaking process and spoke to refugees about their experiences. This long-term project led to a series of artworks in a range of media: while videos and photographs illustrate the process of production, the quotes written on transparent paper tell of the individual fates of the people in exile, their portraits appearing in fine pencil lines between the intricate lettering. As material for her spatial installation, Andraschek uses the solid brown blocks of soap to recreate parts of Aleppo's bazaar destroyed during the war. The scent of the soap transports the viewer to places far beyond the exhibition space.

## *Fragile Territorien / Chongqing [Fragile Territories / Chongqing], 2017*

During a stay in China in 2017, Iris Andraschek met people who were farming right in the middle of the megacity of Chongqing. This photo series documents the lives of these farmers who are building a new life in the city following their forced relocation after the Three Gorges Dam was built on the Yangtze River. Adapting to the changed ecological, social and economic realities of life amongst high-rise buildings and motorways, they have created new temporary farmland. Inhabitants farm these pockets of land for their own personal survival, holding on as long as they can while urban development steadily encroaches on their space.

The photographs show the reconquest of urban space through agricultural practices, also making tangible the people portrayed and their living situations. Serving as an exhibition display for the works, the bamboo-pole structures reference the natural regional materials used by farmers for agriculture in urban space.



## 10

### *Passion of the Real*, since 1994 – ongoing

With documentary sharpness, Iris Andraschek sheds light on new forms of ritual behaviour and traditions. Marked by a sociological interest, over the course of several years she took photographs of people at festivals and raves in rural areas, at esoteric fairs and motorbike meetings.

Her observant gaze searches for situations in which community manifests itself and which can sometimes take on destructive forms – such as excessive partying. The works harbour moments of the absurd, they can be irritating or surprising, and often tell of specifically sought-out or deliberate transgressions of boundaries. The artist reveals the rituals and codes inherent in a community in photographs and reduced black-and-white drawings. Andraschek's interest in newly developing ritual actions continues beyond this cycle of works and into the series *30 Reasons a Girl should call it a Night*.

## 11

### *About Care, ONLY LIFE (Memories burn like a forest fire. B. Eilish)*, 2021

This spatial installation situates the viewer in a tiled bathroom with a bathtub, high chair and resting areas. Bands of writing stretch across the tiled benches, old photos lie on the floor and tell of times past, imprints of a naked body adorn the wall. The human is present in the work as a trace, as a memory, as a quotation. Andraschek bases her drawing-installation work on the idea of the hammam as a place of heightened body awareness, investigating the question of care as a challenge for society as a whole.

She started her artistic research by talking to people affected by the issue in various areas. A sound piece in the installation gives them a voice. The statements written in fine handwriting on the walls were also provided by carers, trainers, caring relatives and people who are themselves in need of care. Their often very personal thoughts open up associative spaces and offer insights into this sometimes still highly taboo subject. In a sensitive approach, the installation poses questions about intimacy and shame, labour migration and shared future prospects, affordability and fair working conditions.

## *Ich bin hier.* [I am here.], 2021

The project *Ich bin hier.* [I am here.] was created in public space in the city of Krems. It traces the fates of Jewish women during the National Socialist era. Over a period of several months, Andraschek produced 106 temporary carpets containing the biographical data of expelled, deported and murdered Jewish women, which were painted in distemper onto the streets of the historic old town. It is a gesture of visualisation and remembrance that brings the women out of their anonymity and returns them to their place in the urban space.

In most cases, new historical research allowed the artist to make a link with the women's actual homes or workplaces. The unique carpet motifs direct the attention of passers-by to these often forgotten sites of injustice. In the exhibition space, the stencils used by Andraschek are newly arranged to serve as a visual quotation from this comprehensive project. Andraschek also takes the carpet as a motif in other works: The installation-drawing work *Vorbesitz keine Angabe Verbleib nach 1945 fehlt (Polenteppich)* [Previous ownership no information Whereabouts after 1945 missing (Polish carpet)] examines the theft of cultural property by the National Socialists based on a Persian carpet from Hermann Göring's private collection that has now disappeared.

## *I am / Mein Mund, meine Zunge* [I am / My mouth, my tongue], 2018/2022

Within the context of her researchbased work *I am / Mein Mund, meine Zunge* [I am / My mouth, my tongue], Iris Andraschek spoke and drew with refugee women in an emergency shelter in Graz. She talked to them about their history, about the things they went through when they fled their home countries and the people they left behind. Andraschek visualised important statements from the discussions in drawings on thin transparent paper. Draped on a wooden frame stands a simple Madonna sculpture made of lime wood, which Andraschek found in the collection of the Nordico Stadtmuseum Linz.

Within the context of the installation, the sculpture takes on an interpretation that goes beyond its purely religious connotations. As a symbol of female vulnerability, its 14th-century origins make us think of all the social upheavals it has survived. The missing hands with the Christ child, vanished over the course of time, contain a moment of loss that can stand for the hardships and blows of fate endured by the refugee women. Andraschek adds wooden feet made by a South African sculptor to the installation. As if waiting to set off restlessly on another arduous journey, they give the work another dimension within the context of fleeing and arriving.

## Foyer and forecourt

### *Sekundäre Wildnis* [Secondary Wilderness], 2013/2017/2022

At the heart of the *Sekundäre Wildnis* [Secondary Wilderness] series lies Iris Andraschek's interest in alternative lifestyles and the sustainable use of natural resources. For over 25 years, at irregular intervals the artist has come into contact with people who, for various reasons, focus on promoting different approaches to agriculture: Maria and Willi Prechtel, for example, run a mill and an organic fish farm in the Mühlviertel region, while the Rozanski family aims to lead a largely self-sufficient life on their farm.

In the installations, Iris Andraschek gives a voice to the people themselves: the interior of an old mobile beehive contains photographs as well as interviews with the protagonists. In the outdoor space, the artist positions five trailers which hold a variety of growing plants. Andraschek asked five people committed to alternative agriculture to choose plants that could help them to describe themselves. In this way the trailers become living self-portraits, as it were.

# Impressum

This booklet is published for the exhibition

*Iris Andraschek. I love you :-)*

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