

IRIS TOULIATOU'S OPEN DOOR POLICY

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At Grazer Kunstverein, the artist reveals the institution as a sum of its dependent parts

The doors of the Grazer Kunstverein are flung wide open, and the entrance fee has been waived. Per the list of works, *untitled (lungs)* (2022) simply comprises ‘multiple entrances, permanently open doors’. Altogether, there are six separate ways to enter Iris Touliatou’s solo exhibition ‘appendage’ – a disproportionate number given the institution’s relatively small size. With each entryway leading to a different part of the space, this architectural intervention requires visitors to continuously move between inside and outside, performing the notion of the appendage as a structural, as well as a conceptual, device. The etymology of the word is explored in depth throughout the show, including in the accompanying catalogue, where Grazer Kunstverein artistic director Tom Engels looks at the preface as an appendage of literature, writing that it ‘trembles between context and pleasure [...] in the shadow of its counterpart’.

appendage (2022) is also the title of a work on which the artist and institution have collaborated, which relocates the Kunstverein’s main entrance to a narrow passageway. Rather than enter as usual from the busy main street, visitors must slip between buildings to reach a quiet courtyard where a fountain babbles and echoes, each space functioning like an antechamber to the next. On the floor of the first exhibition space, light smatterings of pinkish papery fluff gather in corners; the material stirs and buffs around when agitated by passing footsteps or a breeze from outside. *untitled (sweet and low)* (2022) is the resulting debris from shredding the red and white stationery of the institution’s former administration, rendering mute its function as a communicative tool. Beyond this, the room appears largely empty. It’s easy to overlook a wall-mounted Black Olympia phone and a signed member participation agreement behind glass.

Both form part of *untitled (diversion)* (2022), the latter element stating that participating Grazer Kunstverein members' missed calls be redirected to the institution's landline. Confusing public and private spheres, the work disrupts the landline's administrative purpose. More literally, with Touliatou's treatment, the objects seem to recede into the bare walls of the institution, as if part of its architecture – literal appendages of bureaucracy.

For *untitled (oral)* (2022), Touliatou diverts the building's water supply through a snaking network of slightly elevated stainless-steel pipes connected to eleven drinking fountains. Originally designed for use in hospitals or schools, the fountains spurt ice-cold water when activated – a welcome refreshment during the summer heatwave – and hum as they adjust their temperature. The performance of Touliatou's score reveals what theorist Lauren Berlant, in *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (1993), identified as an 'intimate public sphere' – a fleeting, collective affinity triggered by overlapping, affective components of political, economic and social life. Avoiding formal predictability, Touliatou realizes works wrought with tension by removing objects from their usual contexts, thus interrupting their interpretation. For instance, *untitled (still not over you)* (2017–ongoing) comprises repurposed lighting fixtures while *untitled (placeholder)* (2022) is a sculptural intervention made of MDF floorboards: the materials for both works were gathered from bankrupted businesses and empty office buildings in Athens, the artist's hometown, which were deserted following the Greek financial crisis of 2009.

In an inconspicuous back room – the director's office – a collaborative sound programme, *In Tongues* (2022) featuring contributions by Eduardo Costa, Lutz Bacher, Alison Knowles, Hannah Weiner and Eleni Poulou, is hosted aloud, upending the usual privacy of such a space. By slightly adjusting and diverting ubiquitous services, such as water supply or landline access, Touliatou stretches the sanctity of certain public and private socialized attachments. The resulting distortion reveals the institution as a sum of dependent, specific parts, an insecure place easily undermined by gestural intervention, less permanent than we might imagine.

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