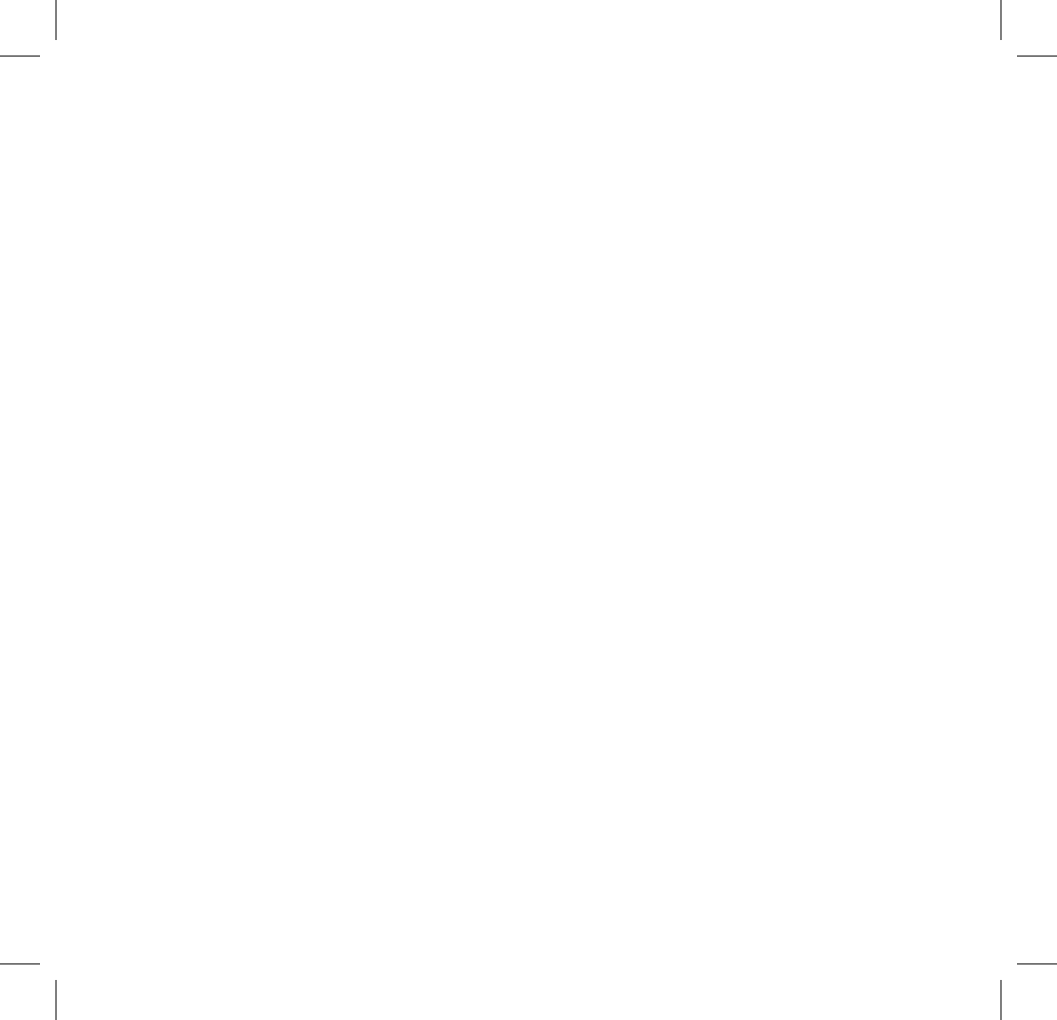


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Selma Klima

Schriftlicher Teil zur künstlerischen Diplomarbeit

„i wish i would have been a better friend to you“

Plexiglas frames with mixed media;

23,5 x 21 x 5 cm;

Soundpiece, 20 min. loop;

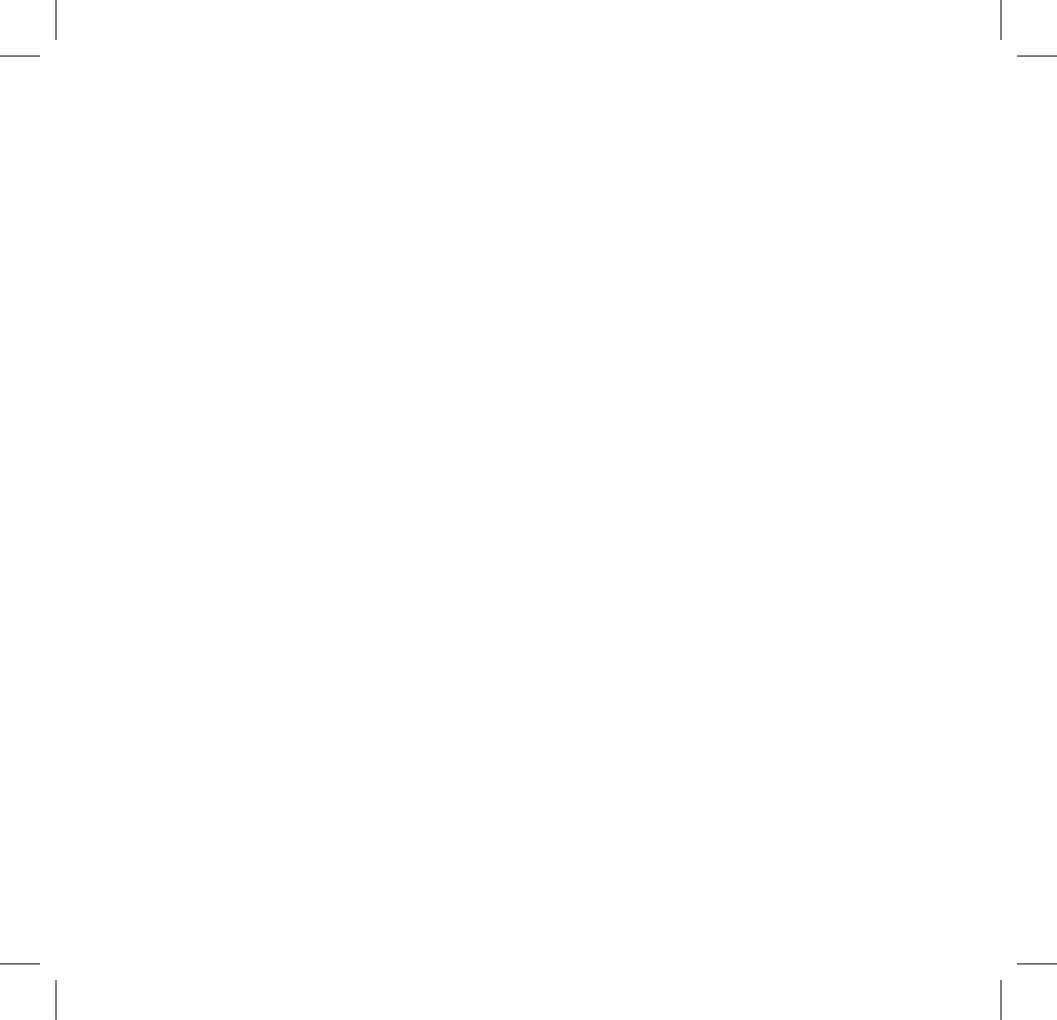
Universität für angewandte Kunst

Institut für Bildende Kunst

Abteilung Skulptur und Raum

Univ. Prof. Hans Schabus

Magistra SS 2022



For Fern, wherever you might be.



Fern loses her mind when she is afraid, it's funny it happens all the time.⁽¹⁾ Once she planked under a car, she can't remember for how long but she remembers seeing 89 pairs of shoes walking by. There was a time in her life when she could not eat with spoons because she always got a terrible sensation when it touched her lips.⁽²⁾ Everytime she visited me, I had to hide all of them. One time, and this was my favourite encounter with her so far, she believed that by walking backwards she could make her trauma go away. I wish that one would truly work. Simply put, spending time with Fern feels like having a trip on mushrooms – It is an experience both eye opening and scary at the same time.

Being friends with her allows you to travel without moving one bit. We've been to many places together- we saw demons, we entered black holes and reached for the sky countless times. Her family and friends were far away, she preferred it that way. I always thought it was sad, but now I realize that this was the only way she could really be herself. Fern would never calculate with or use other people, she was always just herself. Jumping from one reality to another. Often it was hard to keep up. Back then, I got very distressed by this constant fluctuation but now I know that this is the only way she can be. Her mind just works differently, or one might say, in an expanded way.

Throughout our friendship I tried to be the anchor through which she could stay in touch with reality and measure everything in the same manner as I would. I thought it was the right thing to do. I even tried to change her way of speaking to sound more optimistic or more concrete. Fern used to get very upset when I asked her to clarify things. She always said that language per se is too limiting for her. She continued by saying that there are too

many things that are non describable and that there was no language that existed nowadays which could express her perception of things. Mostly, she would then go on to tell the story of how her father would always correct her when she described something acoustically rather than verbally. Her favourite thing was to create the sounds of colors. But she stopped doing this at an early age because her father told her that colors are to be seen and not to be heard. Back then, I understood that my behaviour resembled too much that of her fathers.

I wanted to be a better friend to Fern. It was three years ago today that I decided to invite her on a trip to Carinthia. I thought that it might be refreshing for us to not only travel in her mind. We managed to spend a few nice days together without many uncomfortable incidents. On the last day of our trip we ascended to a mountain lake. The hike was only one and a half hours long. While walking up the path she seemed determined and calm. When we reached the lake we just looked at each other with an accomplished glance. The water and the air had the same

temperature. By the time we jumped into the cold water we could barely breathe, but that was exactly what we needed for our tired limbs which we rarely moved. I haven't seen Fern more content than on that occasion- far away from an environment that constantly tells her that she doesn't fit in and that she has no value to society. She used to tell me that when she was surrounded by people she felt like her words were swept underneath the carpet. That afternoon on the lake I saw her naked for the first time. Not because she wasn't wearing clothes. Her facade went from baroque to brutalist. But not only could I see her, I could also feel her- the Fern that was proudly living between worlds.

She looked at me and I saw a content young woman standing right in front of me. She was present. I wanted to be in that moment with her forever. But this peaceful memory faded soon. We started our trip down in the late afternoon, and I observed her as her nonverbal ticks began to return. The further we climbed down, the more distant she became. The presence of Fern that I saw on that lake turned into her old self as we reached the bus stop that would take us back

into the city. As we descended, Fern started to rip off leaves from trees, formed them into earplugs and put them in her ears. I asked her what she was doing. She answered by complaining about the noise and about the loud vampires which should not be allowed in these woods anyways. Fern used to refer to humans as vampires. This was the first time I just went along with her comment- because she wasn't wrong.

While we were waiting for the bus to get back to our apartment I could see her expression change frequently. One moment she looked impatient, then scared and then her eyes seemed completely empty within a period of a few minutes. I got worried. I knew Fern didn't like to be in closed vehicles with strangers, especially when she is in that kind of state. I went through all of the options of how I could make her feel at ease again and decided that we would just walk back to our apartment. I reached out for her hand, she took mine with a moment of hesitation and we started walking. During our walk many cars stopped and offered to take us but I kindly declined their offers and continued walking with Fern, who seemed to become more and more agitated.

I tried to keep her mind busy, talking about the trees and about how nice the cold water was. Trying to remind her that the vampires were asleep because it was still light out.

My guilty consciousness started to knock on my mind's backdoor. Maybe I shouldn't have taken her away from her usual surroundings, maybe I should have taken my mother's car, maybe I should have never tried to treat her as someone who functions as we expect someone to.

We finally made it back after four hours of walking—we were exhausted. But we made it. Fern walked silently off into the bathroom and took a long shower. I was impatiently waiting on the couch and eating some snacks we bought the previous day. When she came back out of the bathroom, her hair was wrapped in a towel and she wore her favourite shirt from the band “coughs”. (3) She looked at me with a serious and clear expression and said: “Why didn't you tell me that you are a vampire too?”

I was shook. I didn't know what to answer. The only thing that came to my mind was to say: “I am vegan.” And she skeptically smiled at me, walked to her travel bag

and started packing. Meanwhile I kept sitting in the same place and watching her collect her things. I could not move, even the idea of saying something made me nervous. I was afraid that i would reinforce her idea that I was a vampire. So I just silently sat in the same spot while she was packing. When she was done she said, “Please do not eat babies!“ and left the apartment. This was the last time I saw Fern. And this is also the first time I realised, I might be a vampire myself. (4)

(1) Yung Lean; Agony

(2) Bhanu Kapil; 2011, nightboat books; schizophrene; p.18;

(3) Coughs; Bunny Slope

(4) Daniel Johnston; devil town;



*Special Thanks to
Aleks, Bartholomaeus, Emily, Eva E. , Eva G., Jakob, Klaus, Lisa,
Louise, Marcin and Maria;*

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