

Anna Bochkova  
Valerie Habsburg  
Violetta Leitner  
Anka Leśniak  
Curated by Anka Leśniak

# Lost Element. Re-construction of the Witch

## Exhibition

**14 January  
– 13 February 2022**

Opening hours  
Opening  
Finissage

Fri/ Sat 14:00–18:00 and by appointment  
13 January 2022, 15:00–21:00  
13 February 2022, 14:00–18:00



**VBKÖ**  
Austrian Association of Women Artists  
Maysedergasse 2/28, 1010 Vienna, Austria  
[www.vbkoe.org](http://www.vbkoe.org)

 **Bundesministerium**  
Kunst, Kultur,  
öffentlicher Dienst und Sport

**THE EXHIBITION**  
***LOST ELEMENT /***  
***RE-CONSTRUCTION***  
***OF THE WITCH***

**CURATORIAL**  
**REFLECTIONS**

by Anka  
LESNIAK



that are ready to fight for a better world —  
past/present/future.<sup>1</sup>

It wouldn't get any better opportunity to present the life and artistic output of Teresa Feodorowna Ries and an artistic investigation of the TFR Archive. The TFR Archive is a group of feminist artists who work with the forgotten legacy of Teresa F. Ries, an Austrian artist of multi-ethnic origin: Jewish-Russian-Hungarian, who had to flee from Vienna after 1938. A biography of the artist and her works, mostly lost, or destroyed have become a starting point for the research and works of a collective of contemporary artists who work with different aspects of Teresa F. Ries's life and art in contemporary contexts and discourses.

■ The exhibition *Lost Element / Re-construction of the Witch* was the next chapter of a collective artistic investigation on the life and damaged or lost artworks by Teresa Feodorowna Ries (1866-1956). It took place at the VBKÖ – The Association of Austrian Women\* Artists – gallery. The show was one of the series of selected presentations in the open called "The Portal." The title referred symbolically to the iconic portal at the Maysedergasse, which, as the authors of the open call wrote in their statement, has been the sole remaining eyewitness of the VBKÖ's history since 1910 and has thus experienced a myriad of challenging, celebratory, historic, empowering, and entertaining moments.

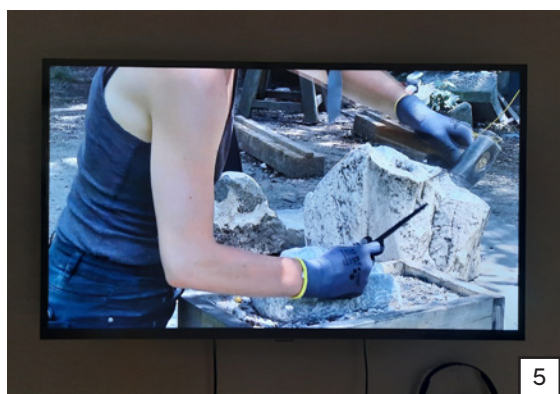
We define these golden doors as a portal, a starting point, a threshold, a wormhole, or a gateway. It stands for new beginnings, time and space travel, change, access, virtual realities, gatekeeping, role play, transformation, a means of passage, progress, transition, or ultimately the ending. The VBKÖ gallery welcomes exhibitions that critically investigate the concept of the portal in its diverse meanings, and ponder why gates might be open for some and closed for others; projects that imagine beyond the physical framework of reality, or those that highlight characters

The collective had its roots in the encounter between Valerie Habsburg and me in 2019. We worked earlier on the story of Teresa F. Ries separately. The word "archive" refers to the private archive of Teresa F. Ries, which Valerie Habsburg came across in an auction house and managed to acquire.<sup>2</sup> The informal structure of the TFR Archive allows other artists to join the subsequent chapters of this research-based project. We explore historical, sociopolitical, and artistic facts and contexts concerning the fate of Teresa F. Ries and her artworks as a Jewish and woman artist, also the victims of the Nazi regime. This forgotten artist was only recently rediscovered. However, the policy of presentation of her works, and access to them, remains problematic. Thus, we as artists decided to work together and reinterpret the case of Teresa F. Ries through artistic research in/with her archive and with a critical approach towards (art) institutions and the distribution of power in the past and nowadays.

The first spectacular event of the TFR Archive, presenting the artworks based on Teresa F. Ries's biography, was the exhibition *Un Paradiso Amaro / Bitter Paradise*, curated by Valerie Habsburg at the Exhibit Studio of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in October/November 2021. This show was one of the four exhibitions accompanying the reopening of the historical building of the Academy at the Schillerplatz after



Anka Lesniak, *Sculpture Rituals*, video-still



1. Entrance to the exhibition. Photo: Anka Lesniak
2. Anka Lesniak, *Lost Element*, video, installation. Photo: Anka Lesniak
3. Lena Violetta Leitner, *Tremate*. Photo: Lena Violetta Leitner
4. Lena Violetta Leitner, *Tremate*, installation, detail. Photo: Lena Violetta Leitner
5. Anka Lesniak, *The March for the Witch*, video. Photo: Anka Lesniak

a few years of its restoration. This exhibition was immensely significant since Teresa Ries couldn't officially study at the Academy, however, she worked there on her sculptures, taking private courses from Professor Edmund Hellmer. Thus, the exhibition was her symbolic and authorised comeback, both through her original sculpture *The Witch* (1895) presented at the exhibition and through the contemporary and new media artworks inspired by her story.<sup>3</sup>

Teresa F. Ries was one of the prominent artists of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a few times also exhibited at the VBKÖ's exhibitions. In 1938, her studio was "Aryanized" so to speak, and taken over by Gustinus Ambrosi, while she had to flee to Switzerland, forced to leave all her professional life and artworks behind. Among the numerous works left in her studio was a marble figure of *The Witch at her toilette before the Witches' Sabbath*. The sculpture depicts a vigorous naked woman looking straight into the viewer's eyes and smiling maliciously while cutting her toenails with big scissors.

Although witches were not a rare inspiration for artists at the turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, Ries's sculpture was an extraordinary example of an artwork challenging the old patriarchal order. Her *Witch* was a symbol of feminine power. The figure seems to be full of vigour and eroticism and at the same time a rebel who challenges the clichés of representations of women in art and goes beyond stereotypes. Perhaps this was the reason for several acts of vandalism on this sculpture during the next decades, especially when it was left unattended on the outskirts of Vienna until the 1990s. Although the hand with the scissors is still missing, *The Witch* has been restored by the Vienna Museum and is exhibited more and more frequently. *The Witch* by Teresa Ries is a witness to the history, of political and social changes. The damaged sculpture feels like an accusation against H1Story, institutions, politics towards women (artists), anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. However, it has an inspiring potential for political and social changes and the

emancipation of minorities. As a part of a research-based art project, the exhibition *Lost Element / Reconstruction of the Witch* also poses the question of how it is possible to symbolically reconstruct the lost element of *The Witch* through contemporary cultural discourses and interpretations.<sup>4</sup>

The exhibition explored different threads related to the history of the damaged sculpture, as well as the role of the witch as a rebel against the oppressive and constraining patriarchal order. Through the presentation of our works, based on historical research and archives, the exhibition opened "the portal" between the past and contemporary women's art practices.

The exhibition *Lost Element / Reconstruction of the Witch* at the VBKÖ shared the space of the VBKÖ gallery with the exhibition *Craving supernatural creatures*. The *Lost Element...* occupied two smaller rooms, where previously was the VBKÖ's archive. My installation presented in the first room consisted of the fence stretched between two opposite walls and the video projected behind it. This work introduced the viewer to an artistic investigation of *The Witch* and the possible causes of damage to this sculpture. The fence in the gallery referred to the fences appearing in the video, which were filmed in the places connected with Teresa F. Ries. It was the fence around the hotel Lido on the island Lido in Venice, where the artist used to spend her holidays at the peak of her career. It was also the fence in Lugano, close to a former location of the Villa Emilia – the pension house, where Teresa F. Ries under the name Loevitowa, spent her last years in exile. The fence stretched in the gallery was similar to the garden fence behind which the *Witch* and other sculptures by Teresa F. Ries were kept, and where they were found in the 1990s by art historian Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber. The video is a sort of patchwork consisting of excerpts from my previous video works on the *Witch*, among others, the interviews on the damaged sculpture with art conservators Marija Milchin and Johann Nimmrichter. The video also includes the documentation of the installation *Spell with*

*Scissors*, presented at the exhibition *Un Paradiso Amaro / Bitter Paradise*. The accumulation of scissors and shears projected onto the fence evoked ambiguous associations – vandalism or removing the barrier alike. The fence itself is to protect, but also to deny access. In the room with the installation, there was also a barred window overlooking the staircase, which fit the character of the work.

In the same room, there was also a monitor with the video *The March for the Witch*. This work was shot during my OeAD scholarship in Vienna in 2019 when I continued my artistic investigation on the lost hand of the sculpture *The Witch*. Then, I came up with the idea of filming the hands of women sculpture students during the classes on carving in stone. It was a year before the centenary of the official admission of the first women students to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Thus, I've realised that the lost hand of *The Witch* keeping the shears, the hand with a tool, the one that is with the ability to act, reappears in many hands of young women sculptors. I filmed them during chiselling in stone and intertwined this action with sentences telling the story of Teresa F. Ries and her sculpture. The video characterises the dynamic montage in the rhythm of the soundtrack with the use of the sounds of chiselling, composed by Justyna Stopnicka June.

The video refers to constraints that Teresa F. Ries faced as a woman in her times. She was not allowed to study at the Academy in Vienna, even though that was a place where she found inspiration for creating a rebellious figure of a witch, and where probably she worked on this sculpture, for which posed an academy model - Anna Faust. Additionally, the sculpture was considered a domain of male artists, where women were the most unwelcome, compared to other art disciplines. On the other hand, the video shows the contemporary academy, where most of the sculpture students are women. Their repetitive, rhythmic chiselling refers to the incessant and growing women striving for equal rights and agency in society. This struggle doesn't bring the expected results quickly, and

we still face gender discrimination. Nevertheless, from the perspective of one hundred years, we can see that full women's emancipation is inevitable, especially thanks to education where men and women have equal access to knowledge.

The aforementioned garden fence wrapped around the corner led the viewers through a small passage to the other room. In this passage, on the wall behind the fence, was placed an enlarged photo of the damaged *The Witch*, taken by Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber in the rural suburbs of Vienna, where she found the neglected and vandalised sculptures by Teresa F. Ries.

*The Witch* and other marble sculptures, as Valerie Habsburg managed to establish the facts, were left close to the compost stack in the park in Oberlaa. This contrast of the marble sculptures as something designed, solid and valuable, and the compost as raw, dirty, worthless material, and the fact that these two entities of opposite features had been somehow equalized, seemed very surprising to us, also fascinating and... "bewitching." From the perspective of preserving artworks as a cultural heritage and regarding the biography of the artist persecuted by the Nazi regime, such a disregard towards her artworks by the institution which should have to protect them, says a lot about the policy towards the artworks made by women, categorized also as the Other. However, if we apply the post-human and ecological perspective, we may assume that the compost is valuable and useful. The decaying, rotting leaves, branches, hay, etc. fertilize the soil and contribute to the rebirth of nature. So, the compost is not that worthless and unpleasant. We are all compost... as says Donna Haraway.<sup>5</sup> And from this point of view, what's the difference between stones and rocks that emerged and were shaped by organic processes and the stone (marble) elaborated by the human hand? The marble sculptures, besides being vandalised by "unknown" perpetrators, began to be "reappropriated" by nature. They started to cover with the biofilm - a dark coating that consists of bacteria, algae, and fungi.<sup>6</sup>

Valerie Habsburg took pictures of today's look of the place where *The Witch* and other sculptures were left for years. In the large-scale photographs entitled *Composted Stone*, one can see a pile of dry leaves, grass, soil, and stones. These works are the analogy to the picture of neglected and damaged stone sculptures by Teresa F. Ries documented by Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber. These photographs of composted nature were placed above an installation by Anna Bochkova.

In Anna Bochkova's work, small ceramic sculptures were put on the soil. Her ceramics objects were expressive and organic. The artist called them *Witch Houses*, like the *Defending House*, *Lost House*, and *House With a Secret*. One may associate them with the houses of Baba Yaga (Baba Jaga), a Slavic witch. In patriarchal versions of the fairy tales, Baba Yaga is a cruel, old woman, harmful to people, especially harsh to children, and is even able to devour them.<sup>7</sup> She gives them very demanding tasks and if they fail, they will not survive. However, the psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés, in her inspiring book *Woman Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, proves that this character may be interpreted in a more ambiguous and even positive way. Baba Yaga as a witch (the woman of wisdom) teaches children that the ability to cope with hard experiences is necessary to survive and to protect our physical and mental health. She starts the process of initiation into adult life.

The tiny ceramic sculptures made by Anna Bochkova while placed on the soil, evoke ambiguous meanings. On the one hand, they look like precious, fragile artistic objects, on the other, in the context of soil and the photographs of composted stones by Valerie Habsburg, they can be also interpreted as remains, trash. The Baba Yaga houses, according to the fairy tales were hidden in forests. Here, they were shown on dry soil. The soil used in the works presented in the exhibition had been taken from Oberlää, close to the place where Teresa F. Ries's sculptures were left, and then found. Thus, it refers directly to the story of *The Witch*. In the context of global warming (due

to, among other things, the human harmful activity resulting in the gradual destruction of forests), the dried soil touches the ecological issues and reminds us that the patriarchal order, based on disregard, violence, and exploitation of nature, finally will lead the humankind to self-destruction.

The soil was also used in Lena Violetta Leitner's work *Tremate*. Lena Violetta Leitner is an artist working with plants and technology. Her installation consisted of four elements: a living plant and a pile of soil, on which she placed a vessel, where water was turning into steam. On the steam, there was appearing a sentence: "Tremate, tremate, le streghe son tornate," which means "Tremble, tremble, the witches are coming back."<sup>8</sup> The sentence refers to the feminist demonstrations in Italy in the 1970s when women started to protest against the law based on so-called traditional values, that limited their right to divorce and control their reproduction.<sup>9</sup> Women re-appropriated the figure of the witch as a representation of female power and also the expression of women's anger and rage.

This return of witches means for women the regaining the right to express the reactions considered as "inappropriate" for them in the patriarchal world, such as resistance, anger, and even fury, which women use in the fight for, and to defend, their rights. The witches become also heralds of the rebirth of women's knowledge and healers of bonds that have been destroyed for ages in a patriarchal culture. This process of enslaving women reached its peak in the witch-hunt in the Early Modern period in Europe and Colonial America. It was large-scale femicide resulting in depriving women of the rest of their relative independency that they had had since medieval times while helping people using herbal medicine, as midwives, or living together in secular communities such as Beguines.<sup>10</sup>

The work by Lena Violetta Leitner refers to ecological issues, but it's also somehow "uncanny." In her way of connecting the natural elements (plant, soil, water) and technology (steam, clay), one can also see a subtle sense of humour. The



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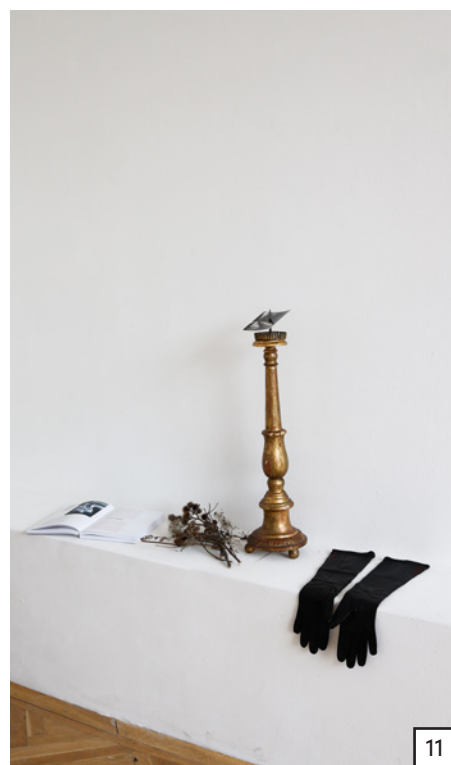
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6. The damaged *Witch* from the Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber's archive. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

7. Lena Violetta Leitner, *Tremate*, installation, in the background, Anka Lesniak, *Sculpture Rituals*, video. Photo: Lena Violetta Leitner

8. Valerie Habsburg, *Hüterin der Erinnerung*, Object N°1; Valerie Habsburg, *Composted Stone #3*, C-Print. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

9. Anna Bochkova, *Defending house*, from the series *Witch Houses*, glazed ceramics, installation. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

10. Anna Bochkova, *Expanding house*, from the series *Witch Houses*, glazed ceramics, installation. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

11. Valerie Habsburg, *Hüterin der Erinnerung*, Object N°2 and N°3. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

12. Valerie Habsburg, *Hüterin der Erinnerung*, Object N°2 and N°3, details. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

13. Exhibition view with works by Anna Bochkova and Valerie Habsburg. Photo: Valerie Habsburg

second part of the work – the plant – "spoke" to us in Morse code. The plant was shaking from time to time unnaturally and in its subsequent movements (longer or shorter) the message "I will survive" was encoded. These two messages – projected on the steam and encrypted in Morse code, could be interpreted in the context of the need to return to so-called female values, such as care, and respect for the environment and other entities, but also with the belief that witches (wise women) can overturn the harmful patriarchal order. Additionally, the plant chosen by the artist was a fern, which is one of the oldest plants on Earth. The soil used in Lena Violetta Leitner's work, contrary to the soil in Anna Bochkova's installation, was constantly irrigated by steam. Thus, it was wet and after a few days, even the sprouts of vegetation appeared.

Morse Code appeared also in my video-performance *Sculpture Rituals*. The video is another work from the series inspired by an unexplained loss of a meaningful part of *The Witch* – A Hand Holding Shears. In this video, I am 'sculpting' an invisible sculpture, with the use of chisels, hammers, etc. I am chiselling it in the air as if I was doing a kind of mysterious ritual around the sculptor's stand. However, the sounds made by knocking a hammer and chisel refer to the letters of the Morse code and contain an encrypted message – spelling out "a witch." The hand equipped with a tool, of *The Witch* by Teresa F. Ries, symbolized agency. That is why hands and sculptural tools are significant elements in my performance. However, their function has changed – they become a kind of sound communicator. The work also refers to the shift observed in the field of art that more and more moves from making an object – an artefact – towards performativity, a gesture, and a process. I also ask about the relationship between what is visible and what is encoded in a work of art.

This video was installed next to Valerie Habsburg's photograph of the blossoming bushes of roses and other plants in the park/garden in Oberlaa, where *The Witch* had been left. This photograph was placed opposite the already

mentioned photographs with the composted stones. One of the possible interpretations of the meaning of the hand of *The Witch* with shears leads us to gardening and knowledge of plants as one of the witches' occupations. The shears/scissors can be also associated with Atropos, one of the Three Fates (Moirai) – she who cuts the thread of life.

Besides the photographs, Valerie Habsburg prepared a series of ready-made objects. One of them *Hüterin der Erinnerung, Object N°1*, (Guardian of Memories) was a head cover made of random objects such as fur, ribbons, and pieces of photos. These torn photos were arranged in a kind of ornament adorning "a hat." While looking closer at the tiny scraps of the photographs, one could recognise that they are photos – looking like old ones – taken in a garden. This gesture of tearing the photographs (frequently taken by the author herself) and using their scraps in a new context, is characteristic in Valerie Habsburg's works. She also plays with photography as a re-presentation of reality and its existence as a physical object, which is particularly visible in tearing and through this the destruction/deconstruction of the consistency of the image.

An intriguing balancing act between the palpability of the objects themselves and the symbolic notions hidden in them was to be seen in the *Hüterin der Erinnerung, Object N°2 und N°3* – a composition consisting of an old candlestick, archival black and white photo, dried flowers, black gloves, and a book. The photo, where the main motif was the dreamlike light of the sun shining through the trees, was punched and put, instead of a candle, on a spike of the candlestick. The dried plants were taken from Oberlaa rural area, where *The Witch* had been left. The book – opened on the page with the picture of the damaged *The Witch*, was a copy of the *Spezialschule*, where one of the chapters referred to the story of Teresa Ries.<sup>11</sup> And the long gloves – black and elegant ones, with the embroidered words: "Dame" (Lady) and "Hexe" (Witch), referred to the ambiguous and often contradictory descriptions of "woman nature" and the social expectations towards

femininity. However, these mutually exclusive notions of "expected" and "condemned" ways of being a woman and represented here as "the lady" and "the witch", don't need to be such opposite as in patriarchal understanding, where if a gentle "lady" reveals her rebellious "witchy" character is considered as false and two-faced. In this context, the gloves by Valerie Habsburg can be interpreted as a symbol of accepting and adopting the whole spectrum of behaviours that empower a woman.

The gloves as well as the torn photos belong to Valerie Habsburg's visual repertoire. She explores this motif through compositions made of found gloves, which also belonged once to women from her family, and through photographs of them. The gloves, in the past the emblematic element of the suit of a higher class woman, are currently being used in a more utilitarian way, not only to protect our hands from freezing but also in a range of jobs where hands may be injured or have to be protected for hygienic reasons. Teresa F. Ries as a prominent artist belonged to the higher society, but being a sculptor, she also did hard physical labour such as carving in stone. We may assume, that, like some contemporary (women) sculptors filmed in the video *The March For The Witch*, she probably protected her hands from cuts and blisters with gloves, while chiselling in stone. The gloves can be also used to protect valuable objects such as artworks and archival documents from our touch that can damage them. Valerie Habsburg as an artist, a caretaker of Teresa F. Ries's private archive, and also a memory keeper of her legacy, used women's gloves as a symbolic representation of different aspects of Teresa F. Ries's personality and biography.

To conclude, the exhibition *Lost Element/ Re-construction of the Witch* asked the question of how we can work with loss, which here is represented by the lost hand of *The Witch*. *The Witch* deprived of the hand with shears refers to the woman deprived of her agency. The sculpture also represents the fate of the artist herself who was persecuted by the Nazis because of her Jewish origin and had to flee to Switzerland, leaving all

her life and artworks in the country governed by her oppressors. She survived and spent the rest of her life in a safe place, however, was deprived of everything that brought meaning to her life and died forgotten in Lugano. She was buried there at the Jewish cemetery. The striking fact is that the artist who carved masterpieces in stone doesn't even have a memorial stone on her grave. Only dust... and some weeds...

The word "re-construction" used in the title of the exhibition refers to the symbolical restoration of the "lost element" through contemporary art means such as video, installation, ready-made, etc. The complexity of the story of Teresa F. Ries and the fate of her artworks, allow us to treat her as a case study for posing and analysing the questions related to refugees, women's rights, the attitude of art history towards the heritage of women artists, protection of artworks and archives and access to them as well as questions about restitution. The Nazis looted a huge amount of artwork during the World War. A lot of them were sold and/or disappeared. Some were placed in Austrian museums, and for decades the rightful owners unsuccessfully demanded their return. This problem was described in a complex way in the book by Sophie Lillie *Was einmal war*. One of the most spectacular cases of restitution became the return of Gustav Klimt's painting including the *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I (The Lady in Gold or The Woman in Gold)* from the Belvedere Collection in Vienna to Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer's niece Maria Altman.<sup>12</sup> Teresa F. Ries's artworks were also considered the property of the Vienna Museum. However, according to her last will, found among other documents in her private archive, she wished to give her works to the museum in Israel. The fact that her studio was taken by Nazis and the works were looted, and probably cheaply sold and dispersed, and only after the war they were taken under the protection of the City Collections (later in the Wien Museum) makes the ownership even more complicated. The works are currently under the restitution process.

Contemporary (women) artists from the TFR archive, with the range of "tools" remind, re-work and re-tell the story of Teresa F. Ries in today's contexts and discourses. The research that results not only in scholarly articles but in artworks, opens "the case" of Teresa F. Ries and develops it as a rhizomatic structure, that can grow/expand in different directions. While comparing the methods of working with damaged artwork in the field of art to the methods of treating it in art conservation, like in the case of the lost hand of *The Witch* by Teresa F. Ries, art conservators can only decide if to reconstruct or not reconstruct the missing part, and for each option, we could point out the pros and cons. Art historians can describe their research in publications. Without the pioneering studies and the book on women artists by art historian Sabine Plakolm-Försthuber and also the knowledge and experience of the art conservators Marija Milchin and Johann Nimmrichter, we couldn't have the base for our artistic research and artworks. However, as artists, we are not obliged to "tell the truth" understood as proven facts, and we can adopt the tools of art historians, archivists, and investigative journalists and publish the results of our research as our artworks that also become our manifestos.

Although each of the artists taking part in the exhibition presented her works, there were the shared elements, such as the fence, soil, gloves, plants, and stones, that led the viewer through the visual narrative. These visual signs refer to the story of *The Witch*, but they are also open to other interpretations. While working on the exhibition, I realised that I am somehow obsessed with fences. It was a time when thousands of refugees from the far East started to try to cross the Polish border with Belarus. Used by Lukashenko's regime as a living weapon and by the Polish government as a tool for boosting the popularity of anti-refugee politics, these people were freezing and even died in the forest, treated violently by both countries' border guards. Instead of humanitarian ways of dealing with this crisis, the government decided to invest in a wired fence to stop the refugees.

This fence is also a trap for wild animals, which frequently die in agony entangled in it.

Thus, the motif of the fence present in photos taken when the damaged *Witch* was found, was replicated in the gallery space as an ambiguous symbol of protection and oppression alike. Teresa F. Ries was also an immigrant and then a refugee. The lost hand of the damaged sculpture of *The Witch* has been replicated in many hands of today's young women artists making their sculptures. However, the gesture of hitting and breaking the stone can also be interpreted as the symbolic destruction of the patriarchal order. But, on the other hand, a question is: why do we have the right to excavate the stone for industry and art with such invasive methods for nature as they are used in quarries now in the first place? Thus the title *Reconstruction of the Witch* means to restore the disregarded values such as sensitivity, empathy, and care, but also the passion to stand against the violence towards human and non-human persons.

The exhibition in the gallery of the Association of Austrian Women Artists was also a great opportunity to reinterpret and give a new spirit to the works of Teresa F. Ries as an artist of multi-ethnic roots, by contemporary women artists of different origins, who were connected through her story. It's also a tribute to the woman artist, who was brave enough to live the life she wanted to live, even though she had to face constant prejudices towards her gender and origin. She was one of the women who paved the path for the next generations of women artists.

### **The Patriarchal Concrete!**

We hammer iron into your cold heart.  
 We are striking it with chisels,  
 passionate and willing to destroy.  
 Disappear you must!

We are penetrating your concrete heart  
 ever deeper.  
 Until you break into a billion pieces.  
 And let your heaven consume you!

Let's reconstruct the Witch!  
 A rebel against the prevailing order.  
 Let's reclaim her power!  
 the power to stir the "divine" order.  
 Let's find the lost element.

Let's enjoy our  
 imperfection,  
 diversity,  
 incompatibility...  
 Let's play  
 The March for the Witch!

Anka Lesniak, 2020

(the manifesto inspired by the poem by Teresa F. Ries, *Der Marmorblock*)

*Lost Element / Re-construction of the Witch*, 14 January – 13 February 2022, VBKÖ, Vienna.

Arists: Anna Bochkova, Valerie Habsburg, Lena Violetta Leitner, Anka Lesniak.

Curated by: Anka Lesniak / TFR Archive.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "The Portal," VBKÖ, <https://www.vbkoe.org/2020/09/09/opencall-theportal/>.

<sup>2</sup> Valerie Habsburg, "The Sculptor Teresa Feodorowna Ries and her private archive," *Art and Documentation*, [https://www.journal.doc.art.pl/pdf21/art\\_and\\_documentation\\_21\\_teresa\\_ries\\_studies\\_habsburg.pdf](https://www.journal.doc.art.pl/pdf21/art_and_documentation_21_teresa_ries_studies_habsburg.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Liudmila Kirsanova, "Un Paradiso Amaro/ Bitter Paradise," *Les Nouveaux Riches*, <https://www.les-nouveaux-riches.com/un-paradiso-amaro-bitter-paradise/>.

<sup>4</sup> Anka Leśniak, "Teresa Ries and the Witch," *Art and Documentation*, [https://www.journal.doc.art.pl/pdf21/art\\_and\\_documentation\\_21\\_teresa\\_ries\\_studies\\_lesniak.pdf](https://www.journal.doc.art.pl/pdf21/art_and_documentation_21_teresa_ries_studies_lesniak.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Francesca Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Eric May, Sophia Papida, Hesham Abdulla, "Consequences of microbe -biofilm-salt interactions for stone integrity in monuments," New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003, 452-471. <https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/en/publications/consequences-of-microbe-biofilm-salt-interactions-for-stone-integ-2>.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Dixon-Kennedy, "Baba-Yaga," *Encyclopedia of Russian & Slavic Myth and Legend* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 23-28.

<sup>8</sup> Irish artist, Jessi Jones, referred to this sentence, see: Aidan Dunne, "The persistence of the feminine, embodied in the witch, demonised, and hounded," *Irishtimes*, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/visual-art/the-persistence-of-the-feminine-embodied-in-the-witch-demonised-and-hounded-1.3543103>.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Feminist Experiences, The Women's Movement in Four Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge / Boston and Sidney: Allen & Unwin, 1986/2013), 95.

<sup>10</sup> Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn NY: Autonomedia, 2004), 38.

<sup>11</sup> Valerie Habsburg, Jakob Krameritsch, Anka Leśniak, *Spezialschule*, edited by Simone Bader, Katharina Hölzl, Jakob Krameritsch et al. (Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor, 2019), 110-127.

<sup>12</sup> Eli Anapur, "How Maria Altmann Fought To Recover Nazi Looted Klimt Paintings," *Widewalls*, <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/maria-altmann-klimt-paintings>.