

# HOŠEK CONTEMPORARY

— EST. 2016 —

## ZU KALINOWSKA - DOOM BAGS

Opening reception: 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024, 6 - 10 pm

Exhibition period: 19<sup>th</sup> July - 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2024

Curated by Linda Toivio

*Zu Kalinowska is the laureate of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hošek Contemporary Prize 2024.*

At dusk, you see one flying erratically across the room and you already know: *Moth er*. The damage has been done.

Embracing decay and deconstruction in her solo exhibition *Doom Bags*, Zu Kalinowska is presenting a series of sculptures combining artificial elements with the organic and living. Referring to those forgotten or neglected collections of random items with seemingly no place to go, doom bags, boxes or even piles are familiar to anyone suffering from ADHD, and they often hide not just random items, but an undefined and awkward sense of shame. *"This exhibition is about approaching existential dread with optimistic nihilism"*, Kalinowska explains, *"Doom Bags is the connection, neglect and discomfort that lies between these intertwined misunderstandings"*.

The forgotten doom bags represent attachment and nuisance to their human owner, but can give life by providing an ideal breeding environment for some, including the common clothes moth. Do moths appear when we are incapable of efficiently managing our living quarters? When we have accumulated too much? They love garments and furniture which have not been moved or touched for a while, in dark corners and unopened drawers. They also love Kalinowska's grandfather's leather vest. And her cashmere sweaters. Considered as one of the most damaging pests in museums throughout the world, their capability to destroy large amounts of natural fibres is terrifying in terms of rate and quantity.

Undesirable pests to us, moths hold an important role in the ecosystem, where they are essential in decomposing protein materials and getting rid of discarded animal-based fibres, that would otherwise amass and foul the environment. *Tineola bisselliella*, the poor misunderstood common clothes moth, is a participant in the process of deterioration and the one appearing in your room in an incoherent flutter, signalling that it is too late: it is not the mouthless adult moth savagely chewing holes, but its preceding larval stage. When left unattended, the moth situation grows exponentially, becoming yet another source of worry for the overloaded ADHD brain and nervous system.

We are aware of the paradox between the ridiculousness of accumulating and storing things, and the emotional stress caused by such behaviour. What makes us hoard and cling so dearly to our belongings? The reasoning goes beyond the material realm, where the presence of objects might evoke memories, but also reflect an unconscious form of attachment and a fear of letting go. The previous generations knew scarcity and shortages. As a late capitalist response, accumulating wealth through material possessions provided a feeling of security and abundance, without the need to address the actual trauma of the past. In this mindset, a material heritage held more meaning than passing on healthy behavioural patterns or human interactions. Intergenerational trauma would persist, until someone would intentionally break the cycle.

*Doom Bags* is part of a process of understanding and consciously working on ending a pattern of inherited family trauma with different therapeutic tools. The polyvagal theory explains how stress and trauma are stored in our bodies, and how they affect our entire nervous system, increasing the risk of long-term health issues. The autonomic nervous system manages the survival and stress responses, however, trauma and chronic stress can disrupt its normal functioning, leaving us in a permanent flight, fight or freeze state. Life becomes overwhelming, normal interactions seem threatening. This can also blur the differentiation between an unsafe past and a safe present.

A dysregulated nervous system can be restored, through individual and collective healing. This can occur within families or entire communities. A powerful form of healing happens through co-regulation, when the state of our nervous system is mirroring and attuning to the nervous system states of others: *"The exhibition is bringing people together in understanding our own demons and celebrating the demise of our dishevelled state within late capitalism"*. Connecting with caring people in a safe environment regulates and rebuilds the resilience of the nervous system, until it is no longer sending constant signals of danger throughout the body.

In this moment, I vision a space free of clutter and free of moths. A space where I no longer feel the urge to hold on to things, keeping them for an unforeseeable future, for purposes and circumstances which might never occur. I think about letting go. Kalinowska is herself moving beyond perfectionism, accepting and showing mistakes in her practice. In her works, she is not discarding materials, but recycling leftovers and broken pieces from accidents and malfunctions. The sculptures are fabricated within the Nutri-Score sliding scale of assigned value and the mixed materials of the installation including steel, glass, gold synthetic and natural fibres are expected to decompose or rust; *"The things we disregard eventually decay and take on new forms in our absence"*.