

The Dancing One. Silent party taking place inside my body – intimate, internal, hidden. The trembling fear of losing you spreads throughout my body like a sensual pleasure. I embrace the cheek on which you kissed me goodbye. Yearning hand gestures, searching for you under closed eyelids. The sensation of intense passion moves me deeply. Tears flow. I dance hoping that whatever I ask for will be granted once this ritual bodily need is served. This is my idolatrous dance around the thoughts of you.

Glass Eyes. ‘Lips moving in whispers of pleas, confessions and promises. Breaths of loneliness’. I put forget-me-nots in my mouth, the symbol of us lovers. Lest one betrays the other upon momentary separation. With a pink carnation, I make you my one and only. So do not let go of the white rose I offer you – tears are not always cool. A heartfelt kiss blurs the face. A glassy gaze softens the contours.

Clapping Game. Why does the first to strike win? We start by gently caressing and tickling each other, only to seize the moment and strike with all our might. What rules guide us in this life’s game? Trusting the Self is different from trusting the Other. If you wish to resist, you have to give up control. Thus, let the hands wander – glide across the body to find themselves entwined. There, where they clench tightly in unexpressed anger. Where they fold in prayer pleading to find refuge.

Unconditioned Reflex. A natural bodily reflex, protecting against the intrusion of a foreign body. How many sleepy days and sleepless nights does it take to expel unwanted milk-like coloured fluids? When I was a little girl, my mother would advise me to relieve nausea with dry bread – it never failed to help. This time, the crumbs intensify the sensation in the throat that cannot be undone.

Grounding. In a concrete forest, I find an electrically neutral body. Temporary electrification by rubbing against another body triggers emotionally charged experiences. The ground connection allows the body to release a negative charge and accept a positive one for the safe and proper functioning of the corporeal device in the future. So that it would not feel that it is what has happened to it.

Sticky Hands. Touch is a way of expressing feelings. He lies and puts his hand over her mouth. She takes care of herself with one hand and tries to please another person with the other. The same hand acts differently during the day and at night. It provides support or inflicts a wound – depending on how much light it receives. It dazzles or frightens. It offers warmth or takes it away. This hand is touching me again.

Awakening. Sleep, dream sweet dreams night and day until you are woken with a kiss by the one who wants to dream your dreams. Eros, awakened by a drop of hot oil, do not leave the forever naked Psyche, whose only fault was her desire to see you.

Morning Call. Psyche to Eros: feed me with yourself. Eros to Psyche: satisfy your hunger with me. Invisible lover, you who visit me each night in my dreams, when shall we dance? Ritually, by moonlight or under the light of a disco ball. We rarely have the courage to dance in the daylight that reveals every slightest move. Much like we feel anxious to reveal our true feelings to another person. We bottle up our emotions, store them inside our bodies, only to express them most deeply under the cover of night. Darkness conceals so much, blurs boundaries, colours fade and shapes overlap, so how do you build up the courage to look at your expression in the sunlight? When I look at it in motion, in its life’s dance, it is as if I have never known it at all.

MONIKA FALKUS

KURATOR / CURATOR: PIOTR LISOWSKI

SILENT DISCO



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Monika Falkus. Silent Disco

curator: Piotr Lisowski

In 2021, Monika Falkus remarked: ‘I want so badly to be with someone, and at the same time I want so badly to be alone. It is healthy to feel lonely. Seclusion is meant to prompt our bodies to pursue relationships, just as hunger requires appetite. Yet, when I am hungry, I try to trick my body by drinking plenty of water. Perhaps I can substitute the need for intimacy with conversations on Messenger and masturbation’. Following the words of the artist searching for love, we step into emptiness and fear. It is no coincidence that ambivalent feelings and contrasting emotions become the central motif guiding the exhibition’s narrative.

The titular *Silent Disco* takes place within the body, in its physical and mental layers. The body needs a reason to move. A touch that may be both affectionate and oppressive. Skin flushes, muscles flex, hands clench. Bitten lips try to whisper, only to give a vomitous grimace a moment later. Hands dangle involuntarily, and legs trot in place. The radical changes of gestures and movements turn into a ritual, choreographed by subsequent layers, this time those of myths and legends, fables and dreams, stereotypes and personal encounters.

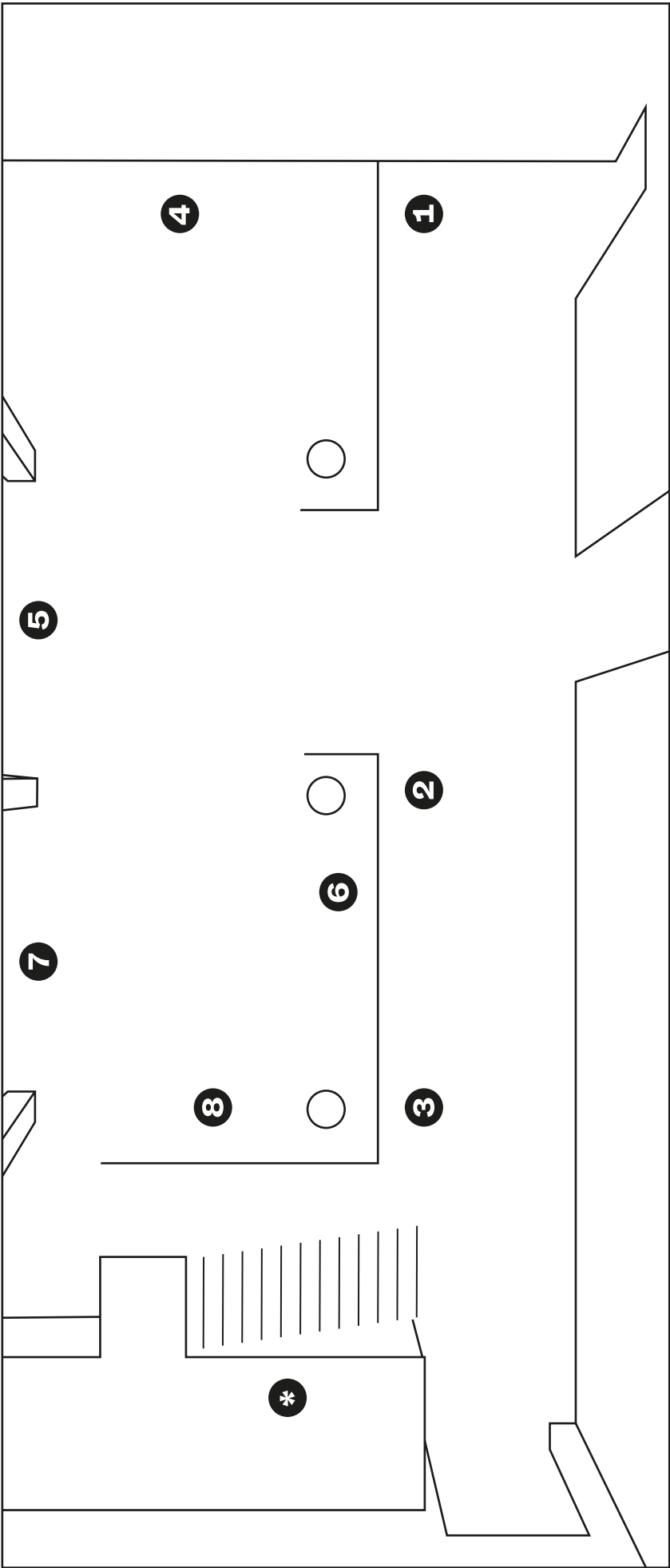
In her artistic practice, Monika Falkus constructs complex statements by drawing on her own experiences, the iconography of art history and contemporary culture. She translates the explored themes mainly into the language of painting and video works. These are often accompanied by writings structured as an intertextual grid composed of literary fiction, observations, and bibliographical references. Monika seeks to adopt different perspectives; her ‘micro-stories’ are subjective narratives that expand the visual forms. Through her work, she reflects on the need to pursue relationships and the extreme emotions involved in the process.

The *Silent Disco* exhibition becomes a kind of psycho-sociological ritual, with dance and loneliness playing a significant role. The former is, on the one hand, a form of bodily expression subject to rules and often codified conventions; on the other, it can also serve as an unrestrained form of improvisation and emancipation. It belongs to the religious and cultural sphere, as well as to entertainment, focusing on the exploration of various cognitive processes. Above all, dance may be perceived as relational art. Loneliness, by contrast, is the opposite of the relationship-building process, as it often results from exclusion, fear or the inability to fit in.

Monika Falkus’s works deal with the clash with the void, the encounter with reality that usually entails pain and disappointment, but also awareness. Consequently, they strive to expose the abusive mechanisms related to the transgression of the sphere of intimacy and the objectification of the body. The artist focuses on tensions and contrasting emotions. She juxtaposes corporeality with oppression, loneliness with the crowd, and silence with presence.

The theme in the background is the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale credited to Charles Perrault, although popularised by the Brothers Grimm and later by Disney films. As with many other fairy tales, here, too, the original differs significantly from the commonly-known versions. Perrault drew the story from a 1634 tale by Giambattista Basile, in which the prince does not wake the princess up with a kiss, but rapes her. That said, it all starts with a wicked fairy who curses the princess at birth, declaring that she would prick her finger with a spindle and fall into a deep sleep. Despite efforts and protection, the young princess Aurora, driven by curiosity and passion, ends up hurting herself with a needle.

Monika Falkus picks out this motif of touch above all by referring to the soundtrack from one of the most classic animated adaptations of the tale from 1959. In the cited scene, Aurora, controlled by the words ‘Touch the spindle’, finally makes this gesture. The artist, however, writes her own fairy tale, in which the visual forms of the paintings, the to-camera video actions, as well as the textual commentary and the sound filling the exhibition space, tell the story of the consequences following the touch. The touch remains an impulse, not necessarily to fall asleep.



- 1 *Unconditioned Reflex* from the *Silent Disco* series, 2023, to-camera action, 1' 27"
- 2 *Glass Eyes* from the *Silent Disco* series, 2023, to-camera action 11' 24"
- 3 *Awakening*, 2023, oil on canvas, 35 x 45 cm
- 4 *Grounding* from *Silent Disco* series, 2023, to-camera action, 4' 31"
- 5 *Morning Call*, 2023, oil on canvas, 140 x 160 cm
- 6 *Clapping Game* from the *Silent Disco* series, 2023, to-camera action, 3' 43"
- 7 *Sticky Hands* from the *Silent Disco* series, 2023, to-camera action, 6' 55"
- 8 *The Dancing One* from the *Silent Disco* series, 2023, to-camera action, 1' 55"

* Jakub Buchner, *Silent Body* [part of the *Silent Disco* exhibition], 2023, sound installation, 11' 38"