

## Sabine Kacunko “LOOPING LIFE” Review

*by Arty Froushan*

*photos by Michal Andrysiak*



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Upon entering through a dark adjoining corridor, viewers are met with two large projections of indiscernible cellular activity on adjacent walls. A small jagged sculpture sits on a freestanding plinth, a black lacquer surface covers the third wall and, through the panoramic window of the fourth, a small courtyard houses a black, skeletal geometric structure stretching 8 meters high. Although I can't speak from first hand experience, stepping off the blustery thoroughfare of Dorotheenstr. and into the placid back room of the Collegium Hungaricum feels a lot like how it might feel to enter the eye of the hurricane from the storm. For her latest exhibition, Sabine Kacunko has created an eerie inner chamber in which one hesitates to feel at ease.



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The works of Sabine Kacunko offer little aesthetic prettification, nor are they the abstracted products of an artistic imagination running riot. Rather, Kacunko seeks merely to draw our attention, which is all too frequently diverted by technology

and high political ideas, to a perfectly normal, naturally occurring phenomenon – what is already there, unseen and, in the eyes of the artist, wrongly uncelebrated.

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Kacunko's new exhibition is a multimedia presentation that uses the images and sounds perceived through a dark field microscope, and recorded with the help of specially developed software to show the audio-visual effects of various substances- sometimes toxic- on the artist's own blood. The exhibition is dedicated to Ignaz Semmelweis, a renowned Hungarian physician who was instrumental in the development of antiseptic procedures and the modern understanding of bacteria, and with whom Kacunko feels a great affinity. As well as paying homage to the scientist's legacy with her work, she goes further in using him as an example on which to model her principle of the artist as an observer rather than a creator.

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By dripping poisonous substances onto samples of blood taken from a cut in her finger and recording the visual and sonic reactions that arise, Kacunko examines the cooperative behavior of blood cells when put under stress and establishes a reciprocal dialogue between the black and white images of flitting cells and the ethereal soundtrack that submerges the room in its wraithlike drone. The overall effect is quite otherworldly – ironic since its source comprises nothing more than indispensable yet utterly basic constituents of our natural world.

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Despite the use of advanced technological processes and filmic media, the quality of 'aliveness' and vitality are important features of Kacunko's work. "It is important to switch everything off and think, where is man in all this? We let ourselves become ruled by technology. So, my work always deals with analogue and digital, and is also always as if it is 'live'." Instructed to respond organically and instinctively to the 'Soundbilder', dancers interact directly with the spectators by weaving in and out of the crowd, crawling between their legs, entangling themselves in limbs and linking hands. "It is cooperation and teamwork. And that is what I wanted to show".

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In bridging the gap between science and art, Kacunko sees herself almost as an activist in the public domain, a spokesperson for a better way of living with and within our world. 'LOOPING LIFE', concerns the very essence of our being by returning to what makes us who and what we are on the most elemental level. It is a graceful yet potent reminder of our essential biological constitution and the importance of cooperative interaction in today's individualized society. Above all, it is an immaculately executed study in natural behavior, which, although lacking in the warming tones of a David Attenborough voiceover, inspires a similar sense of wonderment to the old ecologist's mesmeric documentaries. We see when the microscopic is used to shed light on the macroscopic.