

# AGNES QUESTIONMARK | THE UNBORN PATIENT

KÖNIG TELEGRAPHENAMT

27 APRIL – 25 MAY 2024

KÖNIG TELEGRAPHENAMT is pleased to present a solo exhibition THE UNBORN PATIENT by Agnes Questionmark, which will feature a full program of performances to take place during Gallery Weekend Berlin 2024.

Agnes Questionmark (b. 1995 in Rome, IT) works across multiple platforms – performance, sculpture, video, and installation – in an effort to highlight the medical and reproductive systems that determine identity through biological determinism. Examining the genetic and surgical processes that provide the groundwork for normativity, Questionmark's practice unsettles these systems by forcing her body and her audiences into spaces where humanity fails to fully realize its normative demands. Questionmark disrupts the biopolitical implications of transgender and transpecies bodies in a human-dominated world. She recently launched her first artist book with NERO Editions and is currently featured in the main program of the 60th Venice Biennale.

## "The Unborn Patient"

Text by Agnes Questionmark

Before we are born, we are all patients. Although it is unclear when the formation of personhood occurs, a single diploid cell is provided legal rights as early as in the initial stages of fertilization. Prior to its birth, the patient transcends the biology of the carrier's body, subordinated to the surveillance of the medical apparatus. The vital function of the host suddenly becomes as mechanical and artificial as a respirator, its sole function to ensure a safe, somatic environment for its unborn guest. Medical surveillance and its power structures become the core of human subjectification, preceding our own existence.

The inability to see within oneself results in the delegation of scrutiny to an artificial apparatus. Either by an endoscopic camera guided by software or the cold hands of the sterile doctor's gloves, the apparatus overcomes its creator. Surgery is one of the vehicles through which the internal spaces of the body can be accessed, tracked, and monitored. Robotic hands penetrate the human dermis, replacing the soon-to-be-extinct scalpel with a cold, steel, camera-faced tube. In the attempt to search for a completed image of human representation (both fetal iconography and genetic maps), we unwittingly submit ourselves to the surveilling medical eye. Only via the artifact – the medical apparatus – can we ultimately defy ourselves.

If artificiality has become the only condition through which we can access and assert our identities, the rules of biological determinism that once established the threshold for a normative survival are bound to collapse. Proclaimed before birth, biology erects social, political, and class roles that determine the life of the patient. Gender assignment is one of the many practices endorsed by science (and fortified through its complicity with the state) and used to satisfy the demands of a binary and polarized society, ruled by a failing biological paradigm.

Though "genetics" have been construed as the unwavering rule of legitimacy in establishing human normativity, certain subjects (most often transgender) refuse to comply with this rigid scientific principle. By deploying the same artificial practices already in place within the medical system, transgender bodies demystify the fragility of humanity, proving its inability to satisfy its own biological demands as well as its unfathomable dependence on the artifact.

Deemed unhealthy and pathologized for their inefficient (re)productive values, the transgender body relies on the medical system to define itself. Always in flux and never quite born, the trans-patient is by all means "the unborn patient". Rather than staunchly race towards the devotion of a completed human image, accommodating all of its violent discriminations, we must work in tandem toward a deconstructed, liquid self. The subversive trans-body leaks out from the riveted grip of humankind.

To be a patient is to be in transit, towards a radical transformation.

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