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Shapelessness

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OBSAH DOKUMENTACE:

TEXTOVÁ ČÁST	s. 4 - 13
OBRAZOVÁ ČÁST	s. 14 - 26

Dokumentace je strukturovana následně

Abstrakt-anotace v českém jazyce

Abstrakt v anglickém jazyce

Úvod do konceptu v anglickém jazyce

1. Shapelessness and blandness - *Beztvarost a mdllost*

Motivace a popis uvah nad tělesností v anglickém jazyce

2. Odd corporalities - *Zvláštní tělesnosti*
3. The aim of Shapelessness as a project- *Cíle Beztvarosti jako projekt*

Obrazová část

4. Documentation of the visual aspects of the art project - *Dokumentace vizualních aspektu uměleckého projektu*

TEXTOVÁ ČÁST

Abstrakt - anotace

Hlavní část mé diplomové práce tvoří několik obrazů většího formátu. Jde o olejomalby, které zobrazují hybridní spojení dvou těl; lidského a těla houby. Invaze, splynutí a metamorfóza dvou těl, když se spojí v jedno, jsou výjevy, které se objevují na mých obrazech. Pečlivě vrstvená olejomalba vznikala na plátně bez tradičního rámu a spíše připomíná kus látky. Tato volnost je rovněž zachována v instalačním řešení. Obrazy obsahují kousky propletených těl masitých tónů, a to těla autorky a hlívy ústříčné. Ty tóny jsou tedy tvořeny podle tradičního evropského inkarnátu, barevnosti, kterou pozorujeme i na hlívě ustříčné, která sloužila jako předloha pro tělo houby. Vedle velkých obrazů jsou dva malé formáty, které mají evokovat jakési zmorfované, proměněné orgány mezi dvěma hlavními modely. Tyto dvě menší malby jsou na dřevě a reprezentují jakoby již pevně dané nebo ustálené a fungují tak v juxtapozici k velkým plátnům bez rámu. Oba typy obrazu, které tvoří výslednou instalaci, malé formáty na dřevě i velké plátna, přiznávají a tematizují svou ilustrativní povahu a takřka se hrají na schovávanou s vysvětlujícím audiem v instalaci, které je určeno pro ty diváky, kteří se v ní toulají příliš dlouho.

Koncepčně obrazy odrážejí úvahy o křížení, míšení a hybridizaci bytostí různých ontologických povah. Akt zobrazení hybridního těla vyvolává otázky týkající se rétorického přirovnání těla modelů. Medium malby mi jako autorce, která se již v minulosti zabývala tělesností a tématem hranic vlastního těla, nabízí bezprostřednost. Centrální myšlenkou diplomové práce je, že hybridnost, existence “na půl cestě”, tím pádem i beztvarost, což je i název mé práce, není negativní, nýbrž pozitivní vlastnost. Jenomže současný svět tradičně není takovému pohledu nakloněn, naopak, všechno má existovat ve svých pevně daných kategoriích, jinak je to jen stěží bráno v potaz. Při prezentaci díla se neomezují jenom na samotné malby, ale usilují i o instalační řešení, ve kterém je zakomponován audio doprovod, který seznamuje diváka s problematikou hybridu a beztvarosti.

Textová dokumentace diplomové práce je strukturována následovně: etymologická logika použitých slov (důvod, proč je pojem “beztvarý” nejvhodnějším slovem pro popis ambicí mé umělecké práce), dále filozofické implikace, které takové slovo vyjadřuje, a konečně vazba mezi mým dílem a vědeckými kontexty, ke kterým se jako autorka díla odkazuji. Text je psán v angličtině kvůli zjednodušení překladu mnoha slov, jako jsou rozdíly mezi výrazy “shapelessness” a “formlessness” které se do češtiny překládají oba jako beztvarost, a slova jako je “blandness,” které se překládá zjednodušeně jako “mdlost”.

Shapelessness

The main body of my diploma work is composed of several paintings of large formats. These paintings depict the fusion, invasion, and profound alteration of two bodies being mixed into one. The paintings contain chunks of interwoven bodies of fleshy caucasian tones, that of my own body and that of oyster mushrooms. The large paintings are approximately the size of a twin bed (approx. 97 cm x 203 cm). These paintings are made with oil paint meticulously layered on canvas that has been installed without a traditional stretcher frame in order to resemble a piece of cloth. These formats are not placed in rigid confines. Along with the large paintings, there are two small formats on wood that resemble morphed organs between the two main models (the human body and the mushroom). These two small formats on wood play a fixed role in contrast to the loose canvases. These illustrative works of art play hide and seek with an explanatory audio for whoever roams too long in the installation.

The documentation of the thesis is atypical to say the least, for the text focuses on the partial historical reevaluation of humanity's notions of hybridity in a scientific and cultural sense. The following text is structured to define the etymological logic of the keywords used to characterize the project, the philosophical implications these words convey, and to follow the links that tie my project to scientific concepts that are creatively misused in contemporary artistic practice even among other artists. To sum up, the text is structured in such a way as to define the reason why *shapelessness* is the best word to describe the ambitions of my artwork.

1. Shapelessness and blandness

Beztvarost a mdlost

At the beginning of the creative process, the main motor for my work was rooted in the various interpretations of the word “bland”. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word “bland” has many meanings:

1. a) smooth and soothing in manner or quality. b) exhibiting no personal concern or embarrassment.
2. a) not irritating, stimulating, or invigorating. b) dull, insipid. c) lacking strong flavor.

With a quick google search for bland, the list of synonyms is impressive. It is almost as if “bland” were an all-encompassing label for the intact state of things, as if how things are before given a significance.

/bland/ adjective

lacking strong features or characteristics and therefore uninteresting.

uninteresting, dull, boring, tedious, monotonous, dry, drab, dreary, wearisome, unexciting, unimaginative, uninspiring, uninspired, weak, insipid, colorless, lustreless, lackluster, vapid, flat, stale, trite, vacuous, feeble, pallid, wishy-washy, limp, lame, tired, lifeless, torpid, unanimated, spiritless, sterile, anemic, barren, tame, bloodless, antiseptic, middle-of-the-road, run-of-the-mill, commonplace, mediocre, nondescript, mundane, inoffensive, humdrum, prosaic

(of food or drink) unseasoned, mild-tasting, or insipid.

tasteless, flavorless, insipid, mild, unflavored, weak, thin, watery, watered-down, unappetizing, wishy-washy

showing no strong emotion.

temperate, mild, soft, calm, balmy, soothing, benign¹

Blandness can be positive, as the term “benign” implies, it can be rational sobriety. Therefore choosing to work with blandness is a necessary starting point for the artwork of the thesis. In order to fuse the two bodies, first one must strip the models of their strong features and of what defines them, to question their form and later render them shapeless. Another way to look at the concept is by replacing the word “bland” with the phrase “in the middle of the road”. I beg to differ from common interpretations that standing on the margin, being situated on the border, literally “being in the middle of the road” has its advantages. The feeling of nonbelonging is good. However, when associated with “humility”, “bland” has a benign mellow after taste to some extent. Old Christian traditions which are inherently entwined with Western thoughts, values, and concepts do give value to blandness.² Food that is bland is therefore humble. A tame animal is a good animal, the less animate that the creature is the better livestock the cow will be, therefore a bland animal will fit well in the flock. Ambitions that are vacuous are bland and therefore righteous. That which is not loud nor silent becomes the everyday rumble. Bland is therefore being down to the ground.

Retaking the “in the middle of the road” expression, being situated in the middle of two poles automatically should make you a well-centered person. However, we live in a world of polarities and one can be either one thing or the other, in-betweens and mixings are not well received.

¹ Oxford Languages [online]. © 2022 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>

² “Do not let your adornment be merely outward... rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”

1 Peter 3:3–4 NKJV - Do not let your... | *Biblia* [online]. Biblia, 2022. [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: <https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1-peter/3/3-4>

Further on humility, see Owens, Nellie. 4 Things Everyone Should Know About Christianity. In: *Active Christianity* [online]. Brundstad Christian Church/bbc media foundation © 2022 [cit. 20 April 2022].

Accessed at: <https://activechristianity.org/4-things-everyone-should-know-about-humility>

Bland is just a state in which things may be, it is a state that describes lack. However, this word *lacks* the ability to describe the freedom that ambivalence allows. How much freedom may an „in the middle of the road“ creature profess? What if instead of lacking strong features the creature is so saturated with them that no bound shape is discernable? Or what if they are discernable bits that just lack a place in the everyday „common sense“ systems? The world is full of “in the middle of the road” beings such as the platypus and a handful of humans that do not belong in the ridiculous and shortsighted two categories of gender. The comprehension of the world is full of “either this or that” rarely any “and”. The thing is the world is filled with “and” so there would need to be an infinite amount of boxes for each and every single thing, nevertheless all similar entities get put in the same box, leftovers get either smudged into boxes that still had space or get tossed in the “we didn’t know what to do with it” box.

(and now Shapelessness)

In her work „Borderlands, La Frontera: a new mestiza,“ Gloria Anzaldúa describes very accurately this amorphousness that being a mixture conveys.³ She describes this struggle perfectly. She uses the term *mestiza*, a Spanish word in feminine form, that describes a human of mixed race. The term has colonial roots and is still used in many Latin American, more properly Hispano-American, countries.

Anzaldúa brilliantly describes what it is like to lack a shape. She compares her corporal and cognitive being to “I am an act of kneading”, she compares herself to “dough”. Since in Spanish, more concretely in Mexican Spanish, a way to describe that someone is a disaster, or to describe that something is a hectic cluster of elements is to say *amasamiento* which in the literal sense means that “something is being kneaded” correctly pastry or *masa*. *Masa* can be translated as dough, but also as mass, body, and multitude. Most importantly *masa* is a word used in Mexico to describe dough made from corn, which again has local cultural connotations. Anzaldúa uses the playful phrase “Soy un amasamiento” to describe the various significations the act implies. To have one’s body broken, or better said to be perceived so, for lacking a form is a positive matter. The fluidity shapelessness offers and allows the amorphous being to develop a tolerance for ambivalence.

“The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.” ...“She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.”

Shapelessness is defiant of the system of values. That which is bland lacks prominent features whereas to be shapeless means to prominently deform all characteristics that could be considered a form. It has been mentioned a few paragraphs above, how Christian

³ Anzaldúa, Gloria. La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness. In: *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987, p. 79.

traditions do indirectly give a certain value to blandness when associated with humility. However, it is important to mention that it is not the case with the word “formless.”

There is a “patina” to the paintings that evokes a long past ambition, even the untrained eye will see traces of surrealism. The thing is that there is a “patina” to the word “formless” the word itself redirects us to an era of past taboos, past stereotypes, and past speculative futures. Formless and shapeless is the same concept, the difference being that the first word was given its status in philosophy and art by Georges Bataille. Probably one of the most quoted bits of his work is a thought he developed in a surrealist journal, *Documents* in 1929, about “l’informe”. It seems that the text was mainly focused on destroying categories while at it to knock off art from its metaphorical pedestal.⁴ This process would place art along with all the other gutter of the world, and all in the world is gutter to Bataille, (however filth is one of his favorite subjects and one of his most admired concepts.). We can read this fascination in his work such as in „Eroticism“, „Story of the eye“ and basically everywhere where his ink sat to rest on a piece of paper. There is a strong interiorized hatred in his literary work towards the form in which society functions, and a much stronger love/hate fascination for corporality which is fetishized and, I argue, self-harming. Nevertheless, Bataille does in a very interesting matter dive into these concepts or anti-concepts, and it is fascinating how formlessness was reintroduced by the cultural theorists Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois in 1996 as a definition of many modern and postmodern artists.⁵ Tomáš Jírša on the other hand attributes “l’informe” to almost the entirety of literature in the XX century.⁶ Oddly it is mostly an anti-concept as Yves-Alain Bois mentions.

But it's not a concept. Indeed, it's an anti-concept. Were you to define it as a concept it would be the concept of undermining concepts, of depriving them of their boundaries, their capacity to articulate the world.⁷

Somehow I do believe Bataille's work focuses on how inarticulable the world is, how unrelatable and strongly detached everyone is from everything and everyone else. Now for the bit of ink that made him so well known:

A dictionary begins when it no longer gives meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each and everything have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand affirming that the universe resembles

⁴ See the definition of concept “formlessness” according to Tate: Tate. Art Term: Formlessness. In: Tate [online]. © 2022 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art-terms/f/formlessness>

⁵ Down and Dirty: “L’informe” at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Interview, Lauren Sedofsky to Rosalind E. Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois., Print summer 1996
<https://www.artforum.com/print/199606/down-and-dirty-l-informe-at-the-centre-georges-pompidou-32949>

⁶ Jírša, Tomáš. *Tváří v tvář beztvarosti. Afektivní a vizuální figury v moderní literatuře*. Brno: Host, 2016.

⁷ See note 5.

nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider of spit.⁸

Shapelessness is the name given to the current series of artworks that the thesis is focused on, the work depicts the merging of two known shapes or forms, the models used are the human body (my own body) and the fungal body of my pet oyster mushrooms. The fragments of the two discernible bodies merge into an amorphous body. This process is to render shapeless the final painting. Although the anti-concept of "l'informe" of Georges Bataille is correlatable, I associate shapelessness more with a way of talking about existing forms of hybridity that are linked to questions of identity.

A better description of what it is to be „shapeless“ in contemporary society comes from a paragraph by Gloria Anzaldúa altho she uses different words to describe it.

As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both creature of darkness and creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.⁹

The paintings reflect thoughts on crossbreeding, mixing, and hybridization of beings from different kingdoms. The act of reimagining the hybrid body raises questions about the rhetorical simile of the flesh of the models. The act of painting allows me immediacy when I speculate upon the borders of corporality. Mostly threw out such a process the I rethink categories; to a minor extent those reshaped by current findings in the field of biology; to a medium extent those given to the meanings of words (which are bound culturally); and to a large extent the social practice of dismantling my beliefs.

2. Odd corporalities

Zvláštní tělesnosti

What is enviable about the mushroom's body?

One of the key topics studied through the act of speculating upon the two bodies that are used as models and as a mirroring simile (the oyster mushroom and the person) is the fascinating thing we call border. It is in large order that borders have always been a topic to

⁸ Theophanidis, Philippe. GEORGES BATAILLE: "L'INFORME" ("FORMLESS") 1929. In: *Aphelis* [online]. © 2008-2022 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: <https://aphelis.net/georges-bataille-linforme-formless-1929/>

⁹ Andalzúa, Gloria. La consciencia de la mestiza

ponder upon. Where does something begin and where does something end? If not, the better question is, why is it divided in the first place, and where is the margin, where do we draw a line?

The formalities that constitute a regular human being, what a human being should have in opposition to the formalities of the fungus used in the project, seem so much more loose and undefined. This blandness gives them the freedom of shape we as humans lack. The counterpart model to the human seems to have a much less rigid margin than what this body can have. A less rigid law upon how its body may be constituted, on how the mushroom may arrange its sexual organs, how many sexual organs a fungal body may have, of where and into what its hyphae can sink in. There seems to be more freedom in how the body of the oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) can organize its corporality. The act of painting the human and the mushroom as one body fuses the border between the physical reality of the two corporalities mentioned.

Fungi is a kingdom that for very long was a deviant from the human system of categorization. Interestingly, fungi have ancient origins and likely appeared about one billion years ago. It is fascinating to know that the existence of vascular plants would have not been possible without our fungal pioneers. Altho the fossil record of fungi is scarce, fungal hyphae have been found within the tissue of the oldest plant fossils.¹⁰

Misinterpretation is the odd case of *Prototaxites*, a being from the Devonian Period (419.2 million to 358.9 million years ago) whose fossils were found in 1843. The giant stood eight meters tall and was abundant all over the world. John Wiliam Dawson who gave the giant its name believed it to be a conifer. Later on, the giant got recategorized as giant algae by William Carruthers. If it weren't for two factors the body would have never been identified, 1) molecular phylogenetic analysis and 2) the acknowledgment of fungi as a separate kingdom. The verdict was set to rest in 2007 once there was a chemical analysis done to the bodies. However, doubts surrounding *Prototaxites* still lurk in the scientific community.¹¹

In order to avoid a sophist act on my behalf, I must describe how the autonomy of the Fungi kingdom is correlatable to the re-evaluation of *Prototaxites*. Arthur Harry Church (1865-1937) who was a botanist and botanical illustrator fascinated with morphology, did speculate in "Elementary notes on the morphology of Fungi" that *Prototaxites* were a fungus.¹² Nobody did however pay much attention to this work of his. But the inanimate and dull beings known as mushrooms were not sufficiently appealing to biologists to be regrouped within the eukaryota empire. Therefore the acknowledgment of the differences that place the mushroom apart were recognized until the second half of the 20th century. Carl Linnaeus coined the term Fungi as a plant class in 1753 and it was until the work of Robert Harding Whittaker in 1959

¹⁰ Britannica. Evolution and Phylogeny of Fungi. In: Britannica [online]. © 2022 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at:

<https://www.britannica.com/science/fungus/Evolution-and-phylogeny-of-fungi#ref1280628>

¹¹ PBS Eons: When Giant Fungi Ruled. In: PBS Member Stations/Youtube [online]. © 2022 [cit. 20 April 2022]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-G64DagHuOg&ab_channel=PBSEons

¹² *ibid.*

that Fungi was given its independent kingdom.¹³ The hallmark that sets them aside is the manner in which they feast, for the fungi excrete digestive enzymes and absorb externally digested nutrients, their table manners have no precedents, not Plantae nor Animalia. The fascinating and bizarre world of fungi has become appetizing freshly in the second half of the twentieth century. If it weren't for the newly found uniqueness of the kingdom, many discoveries and an ever-growing human fan base, would have not been possible. To think that Prototaxites and Tortotubus protuberans, an even older fungus from the Silurian Period (440 million years ago) belong among the oldest of terrestrial fossils.¹⁴

It is until recently that mycology has found its way as a topic of discussion in the humanities and art. The recent discovery that some species of fungi can have thousands of sexes marveled the art community a few years back. Concretely one species, *Schizophyllum commune*, has more than 23,000 different sexual identities and a particular bizarreness once compared to the rigid boundaries that human sexualities allegedly have. This last mentioned fact, maybe has only an indirect impact, since the sole status of Fungi being not Plantae nor Animalia already paved its way into the collective imaginary as a third genre, a divergence from dichotomy. An artwork by Juan Ferrer that was part of *ars electronica* of 2020 correlated humans to fungi, in a very sexual way. The work consisted of a digital installation composed of 3D models and video where the viewer could experience *Museo del Hongo*, an older collaborative piece that can be translated as "Museum of the Mushroom".¹⁵

Juan Ferrer is an interdisciplinary artist who works in Santiago, Chile. His artistic practice is hybrid in itself since he is also a designer and curator. The work "A Fungus Garden: Local Fungi That Look Like Human Body Parts" which was presented in *ars electronica*, doesn't elaborate much on precise scientific knowledge regarding fungi. In fact, the artwork is centered around a metaphor that profits from a creative misuse of such knowledge. The video allegedly puts human body parts in conversation with a variety of mushrooms that grow in Chile. However, it is important to note that these "mushrooms" are fantasmagorical entities that give space to questions on queerness. It allows us to see a variety of "sexes" that are present and fertile in the bodies of many humans, it presents the diversity that exists in Chilean society, altho it has been shushed for some time. Through this work, Ferrer questions disciplinary boundaries between science and art but mostly he diffuses the borders of gender identities, while at it invites the audience to engage with the third kingdom.

Another case of such misuse is Caroline de Roy who is a visual artist based in Amsterdam. De Roy mainly focuses on transparent materials that to her symbolize borders. The skin being somehow the main border between us and society, and among societies. Almost the totality of her work is formed from an anthropological standpoint questioning borders. In a quest to find a material that would reflect the fact that nothing lasts forever, de Roy decided to grow her own material. The project *And Who Are You? A Quest for Transparent Living*

¹³ Holt, Jack R. Diversity of Life. Description of the Kingdom Funghi. In: Comenius. [online]. © 28 March 2017 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at:

<https://comenius.susqu.edu/biol/202/fungi/fungi-description.htm>

¹⁴ See note 10.

¹⁵ Ferrer, Juan. Local Funghi That Look Like Human Body Parts. /exhibition/. In: *Ars Electronica* [online]. © 2022 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at:

<https://ars.electronica.art/keplersgardens/de/fungi-body-parts/>

*Materials*¹⁶ consisted of growing a mutant strand of mycelium of the fungus *Schizophyllum Commune* (yes, the sexy more than 23,000 gender beast mentioned a few paragraphs above). The result was a translucent material that resembled human skin and likewise was meant to grow and decay.

Both of the artists mentioned above, Juan Ferrer and Carolina de Roy, are contemporary artists that employ an opportunistic misuse of scientific knowledge, or looked at from a different angle they employ a reutilisation of factual scientific knowledge to question the notion of “natural”. The word “natural” has become a label defining what is normal, correct, plausible, mundane, all that can blandly be accommodated in our current system of values without altering it. The misuse of such knowledge in the hand of these artists can be a valuable tool to reshape this illusory and feeble notion of “natural”. One must just admire the playful bravery of such artists.

3. The aim of Shapelessness as a project

Cile Beztvarosti jako projekt

In the current artwork of my thesis called “Shapelessness”, I seek to question the dichotomy of corporality and to analyze hybridity by painting the two models. One of the bodies (that of the author) seeks to steal the attributes of the other by reimagining itself with the freedom that its own form lacks. The abject forms that once bubbled over the figurative paintings which were executed to analyze my body, slowly evolved from tumors to fruiting bodies of mushrooms. Viewers might read a morbid subtext into the topic if it is left without my commentary, so I wish to do so as loudly and clearly as possible. In 2016, there was a big retrospective exhibition of Anselm Kiefer’s life work *Über Deutschland* where mushrooms are employed as a beautifying morbid aspect where they strongly evoke decadence and destruction, while rebirth is softly evoked.¹⁷ Although fungi are associated with decay, they are considered to be often frail beings lurking in dark humid environments. In my “Shapelessness” thesis project, they are to be seen as enviable figures. They are to be seen as relatable kin.

Naturally, all aspects of this world are related, and it is to some extent far-fetched to correlate animals to fungi as closest of kin, yet the two kingdoms share many similarities. Although in my particular current art project “Shaplessness” the similarities are about the sensorial aspects of the two bodies used, the link is within the feeling, texture, touch... about the fleshiness of these two bodies. These similarities are apparent physically and not so much on a strictly biological level. However, there are studies about how mushrooms are more similar to human form than we would think, and those studies are from the field of biology.

¹⁶ See Nai, Corrado and Meyer, Vera. The beauty and the morbid. Fungi as source of inspiration in contemporary art. In: *Fungal Biology and Biotechnology*. [online]. © December 2016 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311163089_The_beauty_and_the_morbid_fungi_as_source_of_inspiration_in_contemporary_art

See also: Caroline de Roy [online]. [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: <http://www.carolinederoy.nl/about.html>

¹⁷ See note 16, Nay and Meyer.

In the 1960s, Lynn Margulis presented a then very unpopular thought, that of symbiosis as the key element of evolution.¹⁸ It proposes that the coexistence of living beings is the motor of eukariotic life in its core. Specimens of symbiosis that actually are formed from plural independent beings acting as one exist to the present day, an example of which is the volvox.¹⁹ These are not parasitic beings - they are an odd cluster of many. The volvox are like an alien from an Octavia Butler science fiction. They are a touch of impurity, of heterogeneous cohabitants, like a dwelling city inside the body of one. On the other hand, the symbiotic relationship between the ant and the aphid resembles more closely that of the colonizer and the colonized. However, this could be read as my naive anthropomorphisation.²⁰ The ant and the aphid must have a mutualistic dialog at some point.

The correlation of the portrayal of the bodies in the project speculates certain characteristics that are attributed to both subjects, the main being colonialization. The problematic term "colonialization" is being used positively, or the simile merely reflects a word that is attributed to both subjects: both humans and mushrooms colonize another body, being, entity. The recurring topic of the thesis is the intermingling of these two bodies is the main visual aspect of the paintings. The bodies mutually invade each other, and one body transforms and distorts the other beyond recognition. The final form is there for cultivated from this mutual exchange, from this mutual disfigurement. A chain of associations is sparked from these thoughts, disfigurement is, therefore, good, disfigurement will lead to change, colonization promotes change, and change is good. Blurring and questioning borders is what such an act implies.

¹⁸ Margulis, Lynn and Sagan, Dorion. *Slanted Truths: Essays on Gaia, Symbiosis, and Evolution*. New York: Copernicus, 1997.

¹⁹ Jams Germs. How Did Multicelularity Evolve? In: Journey into Microcosmos [online]. [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ksYI2VvIHc&ab_channel=JourneytotheMicrocosmos

²⁰ Clarke, Kevin. Ants and Aphid Symbiosis. In: *Bugs Under Glass*™ [online]. January 8 2021 [cit. 20 April 2022]. Accessed at: <https://bugunderglass.com/ants-and-aphid-symbiosis/>

OBRAZOVÁ ČÁST

4. Documentation of the visual aspects of the art project

Dokumentace vizuálních aspektů uměleckého projektu



Organs, oil paint on wood, 24.5 cm x 30 cm, 2021



Morphed Organs, oil paint on wood, 24.5 cm x 30 cm, 2022



Research material, pet mushrooms and oil paint study on canvas, 2021



An image of one of the models.



Draft, oil paint on paper, 29.5 cm x 41 cm, 2021



Draft, oil paint on paper, 29.5 cm x 41 cm, 2021



Draft, oil paint on paper, 29.5 cm x 41 cm, 2021



Shapelessness, oil paint on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm (uncut format), 2021



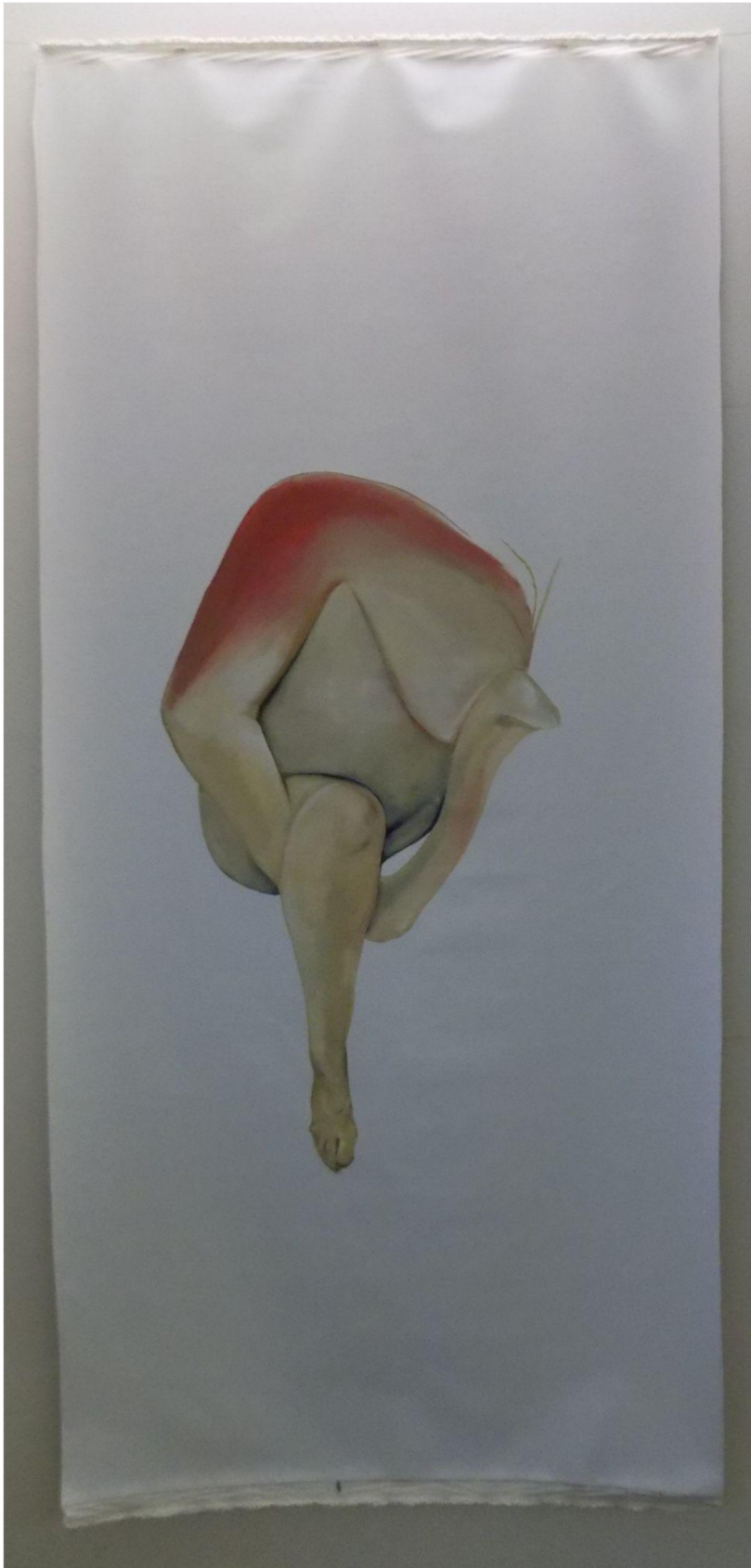
Shapelessness, oil paint on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm (uncut format), 2021



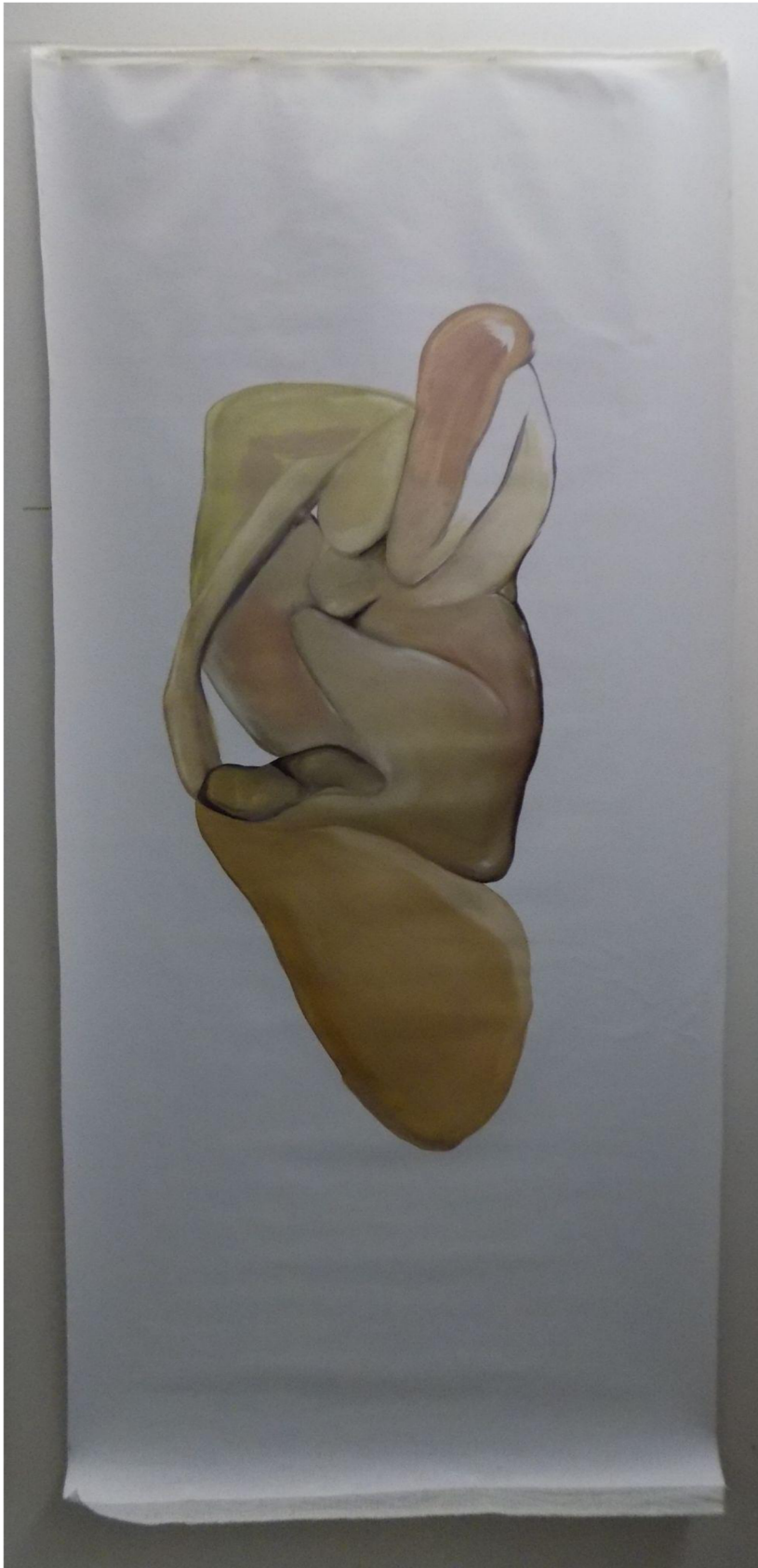
(unfinished) *Shapelessness*, oil paint on canvas, 100 cm x 220 cm (uncut format), 2022



(unfinished) *Shapelessness*, oil paint on canvas, 100 cm x 220 cm (uncut format), 2022



(unfinished) *Shapelessness*, oil paint on canvas, 100 cm x 220 cm (uncut format), 2022



(unfinished) *Shapelessness*, oil paint on canvas, 100 cm x 220 cm (uncut format), 2022



Draft a study of fusion, oil paint on canvas, 26.5 cm x 37 cm, 2021

