



Susanne Sachsse with Xiu Xiu

I WAS A FORMALIST PENSIONER. AN ANTIOPERA

Based on the libretto *antioper* (1970) by Kurt W. Streubel

September 10 - October 17, 2021

Opening reception, Friday, September 10, noon-7pm

Make an appointment [here](#)

I WAS A FORMALIST PENSIONER. AN ANTIOPERA is an installation with 27 horn loudspeakers, video, 40 miniature slide viewers, photos, objects and paper, made in collaboration with: Şenol Şentürk | Martin Siemann, Jonathan Berger, Maximilian Brauer, Glen Fogel, Richard Gabriel Gersch, Ruth Schönege, Angela Seo, Marc Siegel, Jamie Stewart.

A true story. Formalist! Forbidden! GDR in the 1950s! East German painter and printmaker Kurt W. Streubel (1921-2002) was one of the last members of the Bauhaus. His formalist-abstract images put him in conflict with the cultural politics of his time, which heralded socialist realism as an artistic, civic, and national duty. His formalist art gets labeled *cosmopolitan*, *against the German cultural heritage* and *in violation of the national consciousness*. Because of a work ban, Streubel demands that the state provide him a *formalist pension*, a tongue-in-cheek term he coined. The state surprisingly gives in and pays him 200 marks a month for two years. He was only 31. 1970: Kurt W. Streubel plans an opera. *antioper*. A libretto. Streubel's libretto is a graphic work that turns rhythmically arranged texts into ciphers. His texts, some of which are presented as a kind of concrete poetry, are politically encoded, ambiguously charged sentiments that put pressure on the constriction of thought by absolutist ideologies. „Look here, I am Lenin.“ (Kurt W. Streubel)

Sachsse has written: “I met Kurt W. Streubel in 1981. I was only 16 at the time, and a close and long friendship developed between us. He asked me to become his assistant. I decided to become an actress. Decades later, I took his libretto of the *antiopera* as the starting point for a reflection on formalism, politics, and friendship.”

Donning clothes based on a fabric design by Streubel, Susanne Sachsse and Xiu Xiu engage in formalist frolics in a forest outside of Berlin, against the backdrop of a desolate industrial landscape in Los Angeles, and in the midst of the urban chaos of New York in a concurrent web takeover on participantafterdark.art

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Susanne Sachsse is a Berlin-based artist. She has worked internationally in performance, film, and art contexts with Yael Bartana, Jonathan Berger, Zach Blas, Phil Collins, Keren Cytter, Vaginal Davis, Natascha Sadr Haghghian, Laibach, Ligia Lewis, Josiah McElheny, Vegard Vinge & Ida Müller and Xiu Xiu. Sachsse starred in a number of films by Bruce LaBruce, including *The Raspberry Reich* (2004). In 2001 she co-founded the artists' collective CHEAP. She is a recipient of the Premio Maguey Queer Icon Award at the Guadalajara International Film Festival.

Xiu Xiu is an avant garde musical group founded in 2002 focusing on extremes of emotion, sexual and spiritual darkness, the irresolution of human experience, political history and cats. They have released 15 full-length albums, countless adjunct projects and notable collaborations with experimental and pop luminaries. Given the support of David Lynch, Xiu Xiu released an album reinterpreting the music of Twin Peaks and has had songs featured in numerous horror and experimental films. They have composed and performed commissioned pieces for the artist Danh Vo, LACMA, The Guggenheim, NYU, The Venice and Berlin Biennales, Silent Green, The Getty Center and for the Berlin-based art collective CHEAP. Both members of Xiu Xiu, Angela Seo and Jamie Stewart, are active in solo music, film and literature projects.

Many thanks to Ute Streubel, Catrin Streubel-Ohlsen, Iris Streubel-Stegner, Sebastian Stegner, Wolfgang Bruhm and Ellen Sachße

Safety protocols: Appointments are required and are limited to two people. Visitors and staff must wear a mask at all times and practice social distancing. New York City requires visitors to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter.

Image: Susanne Sachsse, *I WAS A FORMALIST PENSIONER. AN ANTIOPERA*, 2021. Photo: Richard Gabriel Gersch [A horizontal color photograph of a clearing in the woods in which the artist poses in a broken concrete statue of the head of Lenin].



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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets. The closest trains are the F (2nd Ave) and the J/M/Z (Essex/Delancey); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 4/6 (Bleecker/Lafayette). Entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.