

Dear Maria


In a semi-fictional letter to the curator Maria Vassileva, the artist Valentina Sciarra contemplates death and its absolute detachment from life within modern Western societies. The text is accompanied by photographs of her artworks – tombs, home altars, a game book, a time machine. They aim to function as proxies to restore and value a cyclical notion of death as a natural extension of life.

Valentina Sciarra – Nov 30, 2022



Dear Maria,

I'm sending you some pictures of the works that I will present in my upcoming exhibition




certain sense. Or rather to perceive the time of death not as an exceptional event, but as a way of being.

As you will see, the objects or sculptures presented can be used in everyday life to better understand the interconnectedness between life and death. These are tombs, home altars for the home, and a game book to find out how we will die; that is, denying mortal reality or accepting its course.

Since the dawn of time, humans have had to deal with the finitude of their »being,« or at least their material mantle, aware that death would occur at the end of their life's path. It is from this awareness, and from the anxieties that derive from it, that men adopt different attitudes, behaviors, and rites according to both the culture to which they belong and the historical period in which they live(d).

Humankind's attitude in the face of death is a dynamic phenomenon, in continuous evolution. Collective sensitivity has the duty to seek its own way of experiencing death. It is important to know what preceded us on this topic, but our responsibility is to find our tools to join the existing life cycle.

Today - unthinkable for most of Western cultures only a century ago - the most common definition in Western society is that death is intended as the antithesis of life, as its opposite, and dying is the act that precedes it: its final and conclusive stage. Death has



modern society, replacing sexuality as the main taboo. Funeral rites are emptied of their dramatic charge; death is an event presented by the mass media as exceptional, anonymous, and especially violent and spectacular.

The social drama present at the moment of death, and how this event is characterized with a strong emotional and ritual intensity, moves into the sphere of theatrical drama. It thus becomes increasingly individual and virtual, largely coinciding with the experience of mass cultural consumption.

I have the impression that even this fear of dying is generated by the perception of time in an absolute way, that is, imposed from above, the same for everyone. On the other hand, this forgets the existence of relative, subjective, inner time, which each of us has the opportunity to choose and listen to. Maria, I'm sure you, too, could add further elements and questions to this talk. Don't forget to do this.

Humans know many things about life and its processes. Death, however, is generally conceived as the only human experience that cannot be told directly. Particularly what

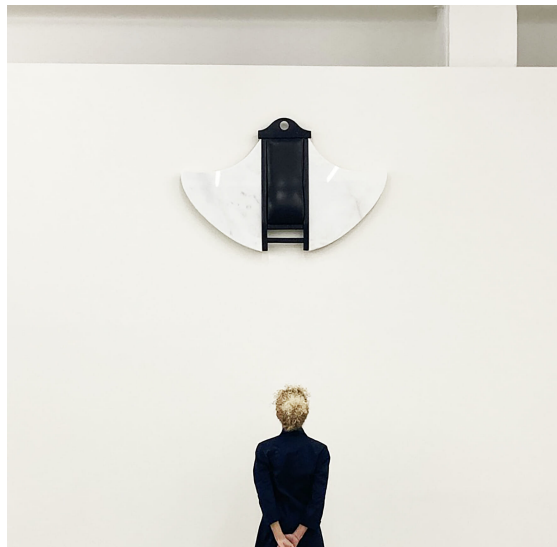
comes after the blue wave (the last energy pulsing in our bodies) that unloads our nerves to stop them flowing inside us has limited the objective scientific study to the sole observation of the body as it decomposes. It is perhaps these limits that make man's

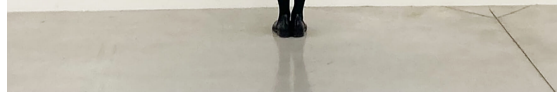
load the concept of dying with mystery and irrationality.

Maria, the works that you will soon see will try to make the »dying/dead way of being« become »alive« on a daily basis. Because I firmly believe that only by bringing the concept of death back into our everyday lives will we have the opportunity to live fully. From a physical point of view, there is no difference between life and death: death is nothing but the mode of passage from one form of life to another. The only thing you need to be afraid of is this inability to be »part of a whole,« and to live your humanity naturally.

So in our home we suspend our tomb, we light a candle on our altar dedicated to our loved ones, and we think daily thoughts to question ourselves about what rhythm our time follows.

Buona vita a te,
Valentina





Valentina Sciarra, *The Mirror, The Door, The Couple, The Bat* (Tomb sculptures), installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

The *Tomb sculptures* are an aesthetic reformulation of the Western world's concept of the tomb. None of the tombs consciously touches the earth. On the contrary they are »suspended« to give exactly the sensation of a trace of passage between life and death, like suspended bodies and lines. Each title recalls not a material body, but a concept linked to the action of »passage« or transformation.



Valentina Sciarra, *Home altars*, installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

Home altars invites the public to reappropriate symbolic objects in our home that can remind us of the importance of dedicating a thought to »our essence« every day. These altars are without precise unique formal features in abstract forms of stone, ceramic, glass. Through these abstract forms, they try to reassume the dualistic conception, as a distinction and synthesis at the same time between good and evil, beginning and end, birth and death.




Valentina Sciarra, *Time machine*, installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery. *Time machine* is a monumental chair that travels through time and shows that a continuous cycle of time is possible. The sculpture suggests a particular position to travel through time: a marble seat and the positioning of the hands on the metal structure.



Valentina Sciarra, *The Blue Wave*, publication, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

The *Blue Wave* game book was created for the Salt free tears exhibition at Structura Gallery, Sofia. It was written by Valentina Sciarra and accompanied by graphics created by Victoria Staykova based on the author's original



presented in the exhibition.
Made as a complex object,
the book embodies Sciarra's
belief that games are a key
element in accepting the
concept of death. The book
offers the possibility of an
inner journey – playful – to
face daily choices during the
last twenty minutes of life
before death. Being a game
book, each reading can offer
different paths to the ending.
But ultimately, the basic
concept remains the same:
how we can accept death in
our daily life.

Valentina Sciarra, former Akademie Schloss Solitude fellow,
lives in Sofia and Rome. At this moment in her artistic career,
she works with stone sculptures. A main theme of her
research concerns time through sculptures, videos,
installation, and writings.

Maria Vassileva is the curator of the exhibition *Salt free tears*,
Structura Gallery, Sofia 2021



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Beteiligte Person(en)

Valentina Sciarra

More contributions



Xapiri

Cássio Diniz
Santiago



I Have
Tried To
Conjure in
Braille and
It Worked

Kuzey Topuz



»Mutations«:
A New
Residency
Program
as a Form
of
Collective
Knowledge
Production

Elke aus dem
Moore,
Akademie
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Solitude



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