



Natasha Tontey: The Phantom Combatants and the Metabolism of Disobedient Organs

9 MAY – 25 OCTOBER 2026
ATENEIO VENETO DI SCIENZE, LETTERE ED ARTI

OPENING EVENTS: SUNDAY 3 MAY – WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026

COMMISSIONED BY LAS ART FOUNDATION AND AMOS REX

LAS Art Foundation (Berlin) and Amos Rex (Helsinki) present a new commission by Natasha Tontey at Ateneio Veneto on the occasion of the Biennale di Venezia – 61st International Art Exhibition. Tontey's multi-media installation relays the story of a 1950s female resistance fighter in Indonesia. Exploring bodily transformation, Minahasan symbolism and contemporary military imaging, the work addresses agency and subversion in times of surveillance.

The Phantom Combatants and the Metabolism of Disobedient Organs, is Natasha Tontey's largest and most ambitious work to date. It is commissioned by LAS Art Foundation and Amos Rex, two future-oriented art institutions founded within the last 10 years to support new artistic practices in a technological age. *The Phantom Combatants* is on view at Ateneio Veneto, Venice's academy of science, literature and the arts, located in San Marco in a 16th-century building.

On arrival, visitors ascend a walkway into an environment of video, sound, light and sculptural elements. At the centre of the installation, Tontey's video uses the playful aesthetics of campy B-Movies and military imaging—including the latest quantum ghost imaging, LiDAR and thermal cameras—to reimagine the story of Len Karamoy. Karamoy was part of Permesta, a political movement in North Sulawesi fighting the centralised rule of the Indonesian government with support from the CIA—who attempted a coup in 1958. In Tontey's retelling Karamoy moves through time. She is the *Phantom Combatant* and her *Disobedient Organs* are her biologically altered body parts. A powerful “shapeshifter and trickster”, Karamoy invokes a Minahasan ritual of war to make herself invisible and invincible and eludes domination with help from hormones and hallucinogens. Like spores of the forest's mycelian network, her character reappears in a series of avatars.



Karamoy, like Tontey, is Minahasan, an ethnic group based in North Sulawesi whose layered identity includes both Christian and animist beliefs. Ateneo Veneto's coffered ceiling, visible above Tontey's installation, depicts the *Cycle of Purgatory*, painted by Jacopo Palma il Giovane in 1600. An incorporated part of the Minahasan belief system, Purgatory also reflects the liminal state of conflict explored by Tontey in *The Phantom Combatants*.

By rethinking war resistance through biological enhancement, ancestral ritual and the subversion of surveillance, *The Phantom Combatants* speaks to today's technological landscape of military conflict, digital control and the struggle for bodily agency and self-determination.

Natasha Tontey says: "*Through this project, I try to listen to the quieter tones of history—the minor keys where fragments of memory, mourning, and ritual continue to resonate. These subdued frequencies, often drowned out by louder narratives, are where I find gestures of survival, care, and imagination that persist in spite of violence. At the same time, this minor knowledge also opens up the possibility of developing a technological future rooted in other perspectives—not necessarily human—more closely attuned to cosmological knowledge.*"



Bettina Kames, CEO of LAS Art Foundation and Kieran Long, CEO of Amos Rex say: *"We are thrilled to work together on this new commission with Natasha Tontey. The Phantom Combatants exemplifies our shared dedication to enabling bold new artists positions, which use the latest technology as both a lens and a subject of critique. Through reimagining a turbulent period in Indonesian history through the figure of Len Karamoy, the commission opens a window onto a lesser known perspective, but also provides a unique reflection on our present moment of conflict and control. Tontey's parallel exploration of visual enhancement in the realms of biology through "biohacking" and military technology offer a thought-provoking yet playful vision of possible futures in these uncertain times."*

Notes to editors

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ABOUT NATASHA TONTEY

Natasha Tontey is a Minahasan artist and researcher based in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Her practice encompasses film and video, performances and installations and often explores alternative futures from the perspectives of marginalised entities.

Tontey has exhibited her work internationally, including solo shows at Museum MACAN in Jakarta (2024–2025) and Auto Italia in London (2022), and group exhibitions including the MUNCH Triennale in Oslo (2025–2026), the 18th Istanbul Biennial (2025), 14th Biennial do Mercosul in Brazil (2025), Leeum Museum of Art in Seoul (2022), Singapore Biennale (2022), Ghost 2565 in Bangkok (2022), and Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin (2021). Her films have screened at London Film Festival (2025), FID Marseille (2025), and the Singapore International Film Festival (2021, 2023, 2025).

In 2020, she received the HASH Award from ZKM | Karlsruhe and Akademie Schloss Solitude. She was also a fellow of the Human Machine programme at the Akademie der Künste Berlin from 2021 to 2023.

TONTEY.ORG

ABOUT LAS ART FOUNDATION

LAS Art Foundation is a non-profit organisation founded to support new artistic practices in a technological age. LAS works with artists, thinkers and institutions around the globe to catalyse ideas and develop innovative projects and experiences. We explore topics ranging from quantum computing and outer space to artificial intelligence, ecology and biotechnology — illuminating the intersections between art, science and the latest technology. Our programme comprises installations and performances, as well as educational programming, publications and research projects. Based in Berlin, LAS has staged projects at locations around the city and internationally since its launch in 2019.

To date, LAS has commissioned and presented work by artists including Refik Anadol, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Ian Cheng, Libby Heaney, Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst, Robert Irwin, Jakob Kudsk Steensen, Lawrence Lek, Josèfa Ntjam, Laure Prouvost and Marianna Simnett. In 2025 LAS Art Foundation won the European Commission's S+T+ARTS prize for its Sensing Quantum programme.

LAS-ART.FOUNDATION



ABOUT AMOS REX

Amos Rex is a future-oriented, independent museum in the heart of Helsinki, dedicated to diverse encounters with art. Beneath the iconic mounds of Lasipalatsi Square, its underground spaces present imaginative, experiential and often technologically experimental exhibitions by contemporary artists and other practitioners from a wide variety of artforms. The museum explores the future of culture and public space, connects Helsinki to global conversations, and continues the legacy of founder Amos Anderson as a vibrant place for inclusive cultural life.

Amos Rex has commissioned and hosted major projects from established artists in art and technology, including Teamlab in 2018 and Ryoji Ikeda in 2024. It has also commissioned projects with emerging practitioners in the field, including Josefina Nelimarkka and Keiken, whose interactive commission at Amos Rex in 2024 won the Lumen Prize.

In 2027 the *Phantom Combatants* will return to Helsinki for an exhibition at Amos Rex.

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