



## Mana Urban Arts Project Presents: Olek: *Good News*



Installation view of Olek, *Good News*, Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, 2016. Copyright Olek.

Public reception: April 30, 2017, from 1PM – 6PM

JERSEY CITY, NJ, April 6, 2017—Mana Urban Arts Project presents *Good News*, a large-scale installation by Olek, which hangs outside Mana's Foundry building. A crochet mural, the artist has rendered the front page of a future *New York Times* issue, dated April 22, 2020. Quite the opposite of the lamentable reports that saturate today's news, Olek's issue of the *Times* delivers only positive headlines—"good news."

Olek's art explores ideas such as sexuality and feminism, and the evolution of communication through colors, conceptual exploration, and meticulous detail. The artist consistently pushes the boundaries between fashion, art, craft, and public art, fluidly combining the sculptural with the fanciful. With the old-fashioned technique of crochet, she has taken the ephemeral medium of yarn to express everyday occurrences, inspirations, and hopes, which has resulted in a metaphor for the complexity and interconnectedness of our body and psychological processes in her work *Good News*.

Olek's bursts of bright colors often mask political and cultural critiques; instead, in *Good News*, they are woven into the fibers, mirroring her respect for artists and writers. She highlights what already exists in the current time and environment. As an active supporter of women's rights, sexual equality, and freedom of expression, she has used the broad appeal of her work to display her solidarity with those stifled by oppressive laws worldwide. Her transformation of public spaces

and objects reflects cultural evolution—mirroring the public response—those watching and those within the art.

### ABOUT OLEK

Born Agata Oleksiak in 1978, Olek's art was the vehicle that transported her from industrial Ruda Śląska, Poland, to New York City.

In 2000, Olek received a BA in Cultural Studies from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, and then relocated to New York City to attend LaGuardia College. Her work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, and public spaces worldwide, and were featured in numerous publications such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Magazine*, *TIME Magazine*, *Vogue Italia*, *Newsweek/Daily Beast*, *Village Voice*, *Vibe Magazine*, *ARTinfo*, PBS, CNN, CBS, ABC, and NBC. She is the recipient of the Ruth Mellon Award for sculpture in 2004, the In Situ Artaq Award (France) in 2011, and a grant in 2011 from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) for performance in a public space. Her residencies have included Sculpture Space in 2005, Instituto Sacatar (Brazil) in 2009, and AAI-LES in 2010. In 2008, Olek was the winner of the Apex Art competition, which aired on PBS. In 2010, the artist was commissioned by the Brooklyn Museum for a one-day interactive performance installation. In 2012, she was part of the *40 Under 40: Craft Futures* exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery, for which her entire crocheted studio apartment was exhibited. Recently, she has exhibited at Miami Art Basel as part of *Women on the Walls* at Wynwood Walls, curated by Jeffrey Deitch.

In 2009, Olek exhibited in the Museu do Traje e do Têxtil at the Instituto Feminino da Bahia in Salvador, Brazil; the Heinz Nixdorf MuseumsForum in Paderborn, Germany; and in the Museum Villa Rot in Burgrieden, Germany, from 2012 – 2013. In 2014, her work was featured as part of the Brooklyn Artists Ball at the Brooklyn Museum in 2014 and 2015. In 2014, the Han Nefken Collection commissioned her work as part of *The Future of Fashion is Now* exhibition at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, Netherlands.

Olek regularly partners with private organizations and businesses to give back to the community and she supports many non-profit organizations with her artwork. In 2012, she partnered with Kiehl's by

crocheting a work entitled *Mr. Bones* to raise money for HIV/AIDS research, environmental issues, and children's causes worldwide. Olek is the ambassador for the Jasiek Mela Foundation Beyond Horizons. In 2013, she partnered with Elephant Family and created an installation at Lancaster House in London's West End for an Animal Ball held in the presence of the Royal Family to raise funds to support the preservation of Asian elephants. In 2012 and 2014, the artist taught crocheting workshops at the municipal jail in Katowice, Poland, and together with the inmates created a twenty-meter-long crochet wall as part of her prison-outreach endeavor.

Olek currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Through her body of work, Olek has always sought to bring color, life, energy, and surprise to any space. Her ongoing goal is to produce new work and share it with the public.

#### ABOUT MANA CONTEMPORARY

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Our philosophy, rooted in rich histories of the Seven Liberal Arts—where interdisciplinarity was seen as a solution to end conventional thinking—intends to create a dialogue between the liberal arts, visual arts, and new media. Our purpose is to provide the kindling needed to spark opportunities among individuals and communities for the open exchange of ideas—and ultimately exercise our freedom as autonomous thinkers.

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