

# KIM SNAUWAERT & ANYUTA WIAZEMSKY SNAUWAERT

## *Between us*

### INSTALLATION

WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

ongoing ∫ free

28/06 ∫ 18:00 › 22:00

29/06 ∫ 14:00 › 22:00

### TALK

WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

EN ∫ 60' ∫ free

28/06 ∫ 19:00

If you want to keep a foreign national in the country, you can't marry for papers only. You are expected to create and maintain a 'sustainable community living'. That is what Belgian law prescribes\*, otherwise the relationship falls into the category of fictitious marriages.

But what if you have two artists: one who must leave the country, yet both believing that if they stick together they would be able to create a 'sustainable community living'? In 2018, without having a romantic affair, Kim Snauwaert and Anyuta Wiazemsky Snauwaert married exactly for this reason. Since no definition is given in the corpus of the civil code, they also sought to relate to, and define this 'sustainable community living'. The whole process was transformed into a multidisciplinary work *Between us: The marriage*.

After the marriage was made official in August 2018 at the town hall of Ghent, a complaint was filed. The artists became the subjects of a police investigation, one which set out to examine the sincerity of their marriage. Kim and Anyuta were transparent about their motives. The genuineness of the marriage was considered probable and the file was closed.

The material generated by the police investigation became a source for further artistic work. Belgium's marriage migration policy had an active role in shaping both the initial project and the nature of the relationship. What does sustainable community living mean? The discrepancy between bureaucracy and personal liberty is the subject of Kim and Anyuta's work in progress.

\* Law and Art. 146bis. 'There is no marriage if, in spite of the formal consent given to the marriage, a set of circumstances shows that the intention of at least one of the spouses is apparently not aimed at establishing a sustainable community living, but only at obtaining a residence permit benefit associated with the state of marriage.'

### BIO

**Anyuta Wiazemsky Snauwaert** (RU, 1989) is a young Russian-Belgian artist. She graduated from Law Academy in Moscow, before deciding to pursue an artistic carrier. She studied Fine Arts at KASK, School Of Arts in Ghent. Her works have been shown in Moscow, Ghent, Leuven, Kortrijk, Brussels, Rotterdam and in Hyderabad.

**Kim Snauwaert** (BE, 1986) is a Belgian transdisciplinary artist and actress. She graduated from the University of Ghent, as an art historian specialised in Theatre studies, with a minor in ethics. In addition, she successfully obtained a degree in Fine Arts, at KASK, School Of Arts in Ghent. Her work has been shown in Flanders, Lucca, Beijing, Sidney, NYC and The Netherlands.

By and with **Kim Snauwaert**

& **Anyuta Wiazemsky Snauwaert**

Co-production **workspacebrussels**, **wpZimmer**,

**kunstencentrum BUDA**

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**working title festival**

### **How did you come up with the idea of getting married and at what point did your marriage turn into an art project?**

**Anyuta:** It turned into an art project at the very beginning. It's easy to say afterwards but I think I would not have married Kim if it weren't for this project. I am not into marrying for papers only but marrying for an artistic goal is a different thing. In the end the initiative came from Kim. In the last year of my bachelor at KASK I made an artwork where I basically complained that I would have to go back to Russia. There was no other legal way for me to stay in Belgium other than to continue studying forever. Then Kim suggested she could marry me.

**Kim:** Immediately after we decided to get married, we set up a meeting to talk about putting this into an art project. We had to decide about whether the artwork should be more important or the result of keeping Anyuta in the country. In the end she decided that the work would always be the primary concern. It was important to us to try to be transparent about this and the nature of our relationship from the beginning.

### **What were the consequences of this decision?**

**Kim:** Besides a lot of bureaucracy, fear and stress, we also had to move in together. Happily, it has really worked out well so far. We had to ensure that this relationship is sustainable and that it's not for papers only. The word 'only' is very important here. When you have other reasons for being together and show no intention of getting divorced it's fine. The other reason in our case is the art work.

**Anyuta:** We also had to do two interviews. We didn't know what information they expected from us and if it was a good idea to talk about the art project at that moment. For the first interview we wrote a kind of script starting in 1986 when Kim was born up until 2018 when we decided to marry, so we could learn about each other and have something to say about our youth. The second interrogation was done by the police, who wanted to know what we are doing and why our relationship is more sustainable than Kim's relationship with her boyfriend for instance. Our reflections on this experience with the police form a part of the exhibition we are showing at Working Title Festival.

### **How close have you come to answering the question: what is a sustainable relationship?**

**Anyuta:** I think we both believe that what we are doing is sustainable, but we have different opinions about the definition of what that sustainability is, what it means or how it can be realised.

**Kim:** We are now living together because we have to, but also because we think it is a sustainable way to make this marriage what it should be. I think this rule that you have to create a sustainable community is a very beautiful thing, which you can see in a much broader sense than in the relationship between Anyuta and me. You can also say that accepting people of another culture is the basis of sustainable community living. Because that is what it means, to live together with others. I think this is a beautiful concept and that is what we try to do. To accept the responsibility both of us have to keep this living together sustainable.

### **Do you see your project as a political statement?**

**Kim:** We are indeed interested in initiating an alternative narrative with this work, alongside the existing dominant political dynamics. But I do not simply want to profile our work as a political statement. For me the artistic idea of this work is of greater value than the political act that one can read in it. I am more interested in how society deals with moral questions and how I can find freedom within a dominant ruling system. Starting from positive concepts such as love we try to give space to our ethical beliefs and to place them within a certain discourse which might address a question like how we can sustainably live together.

**Anyuta:** This work is a political act but it is in no way a political statement.

Interview with **Kim Snauwaert & Anyuta Wiazemsky Snauwaert** by **Andreas Fleck**