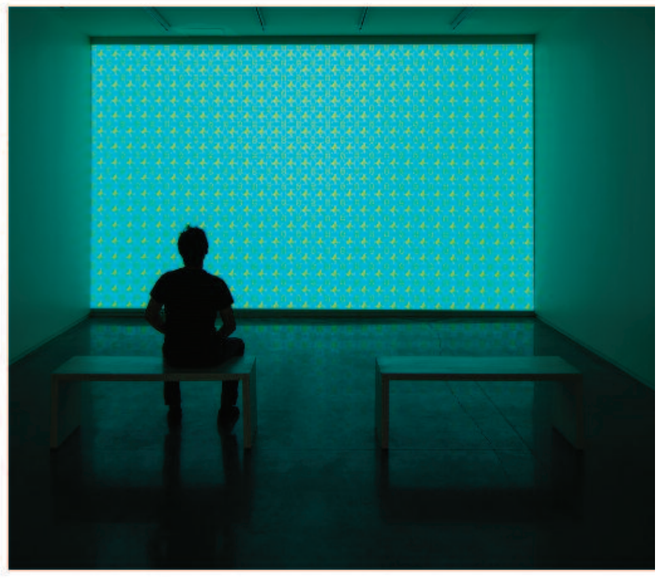
ISSUE // 01

THE SEEN

CHICAGO'S INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY & MODERN ART



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COVER:
Charles Ray. *Shoe Tie*, 2012.
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Issue 01

Chicago's International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art

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EXPO CHGO

THE SEEN
Issue 01

Chicago's International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Not long after we announced EXPO CHICAGO, we made a commitment to also launch THE SEEN, Chicago's International Online Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art, providing a free portal of information on local, national, and international art news and exhibitions. ——— Our intent then—as it is now—was for THE SEEN to grow as part of our overall organization, but remain independent; building a global online readership to better serve cultural institutions, museums, galleries, and artists worldwide. After twenty-one consecutive months of online issues, we came to the realization that the logical next step was to publish a stand-alone printed version to compliment our online presence, and further our outreach. ——— I am most grateful for the tireless efforts of our Editor-in-Chief, Stephanie Cristello for shaping every aspect of this endeavor, Jason Pickleman and the JNL Graphic Design, team for their design and artistry, Brian and Jan Hieggelke, of Newcity Custom Publishing for their support, and Nancy Lerner and David Frej of Otherwise Inc., for encouraging and facilitating the development of THE SEEN many, many moons ago. Additionally, sincerest thanks must go to our readers, contributors, partners, and most importantly our advertisers for sharing in our vision to make this first edition happen. ——— We have grand plans for THE SEEN, both online and in print, and I welcome you to grab a copy, subscribe online, and watch where we go from here.

TONY KARMAN
Publisher

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Stephanie Cristello (Canadian b. 1991) is a critic and curator living and working in Chicago, IL. She is the Senior Editor US for *ArtSlant*, and has been the Editor-in-Chief for *THE SEEN* since 2013. Her writing has been published in *ArtReview*, *BOMB Magazine*, and *New American Paintings* among other outlets, as well as numerous exhibition catalogues nationally and internationally. She graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a BFA and Liberal Arts Thesis. She is currently the Programming Manager at EXPO CHICAGO, the International Exposition of Contemporary & Modern Art.

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Caroline Picard is an artist, writer, publisher, and curator. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Artforum, Flash Art International, Paper Monument*, and *Artslant* among other publications. In 2014 she was the Curatorial Fellow at La Box, ENSA in France, and became a member of the SYNAPSE International Curators' Network of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2015. She is the Executive Director of The Green Lantern Press—a nonprofit publishing house and art producer in operation since 2005—and the Co-Director of Sector 2337, a hybrid artspace/bar/bookstore in Chicago.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Stephanie Cristello

WAYS OF SEEING WITH LANGUAGE

It is important to give an object to ideas. This was my initial thought when the possibility of moving THE SEEN, Chicago's International Online Journal of Contemporary and Modern Art, into print presented itself. My second was that we would have to change the name. The tangibility of THE SEEN Issue 01 is just one aspect that offers something different than texts published online to date. As our online presence continues to grow, this step is significant; not only for the reach of the publication, but also for the pieces it holds. Each article contained within these pages offers an experience that through the act of reading cannot be replicated online. The reviews, features, and interviews in this issue take into account the intimacy required of seeing, first and foremost, and use text through the material experience of reading (holding language) as a way to enter a dialogue with the work. As an editor, I have gained the eyes of my writers; as a reader, both the work and the writing on its subject gains eyes of its own. The hidden discourse of these pieces is, for me, an endless stream of references, rhetorical sources, anecdotes, and midnight observations. The artifacts of these unseen conversations are of course approached fresh by the reader; unfolding through their own previous experiences, altering the texts in a way that I cannot edit. This is the greatest excitement. Deviations, narratives, and fictions were encouraged throughout the process of this publication. Fiction is the greatest form of representation—under the guise of art criticism, each text and its visual form on the page should be seen as a work in and of itself. ———— Issue 01 is not a transplant of a predetermined online modality, but rather an extension specifically designed for the printed form with the reader and the artwork in mind. Here, an original interview scrawled in the artist's hand—its surface marked, illustrated upon in diagrammatic gestures—is placed next to the transcribed conversation; images designed by the artist to support the text replaces documentation of the work; installation views are reproduced in a way that is immersive in full-color spreads; and premises for curatorial exhibitions are transformed into thematic features that span artworks and geographies that have never been displayed together before. In addition to these elements, standard premises of art writing provide a groundwork for coverage on major international exhibitions, as well as focus on younger emerging artists, through THE SEEN's Staff Writers' contributions. Including a stable of content that covers major artists on view in Chicago at the time this piece is distributed, the publication also delivers writing from other cities including Berlin, Vienna, Istanbul, London, Athens, Venice, as well as more broadly from Cuba, Ghana, France, and Canada, among others locations. Through a focus on contemporary exhibitions, the writing traverses various histories that are not our own. This constellation of artists and exhibitions covers what I hope to be a recurring exchange between Chicago and elsewhere—in both space and time—beyond the established centers of contemporary art. ———— It has been my vision for a publication of this nature to be available to the Chicago contemporary art community, and it is with great thanks to a stellar roster of writers that made this possible. Their commitment is unwavering, resilient, and a motivation for future editions of THE SEEN. A great thank you must go as well to EXPO CHICAGO, and publisher Tony Karman, for supporting and valuing this journal as it moves into this new phase of publishing model. The feel of Issue 01 would be nothing without the JNL Graphic Design team, so a thank you must go to Jason Pickleman and Daniel Marsden for their superb aesthetics, as well as Brian and Jan Hieggelke and Newcity Custom Publishing for making THE SEEN a reality. With this inaugural edition, my hope is that the affect of these texts will lead to a new space, where the ideas surrounding concepts outside the realm of contemporary art can collide and evolve. ———— Visibility is not seeing. Seeing requires language. THE SEEN is a speculative portal for what the written word can contribute to the experience of contemporary art we enjoy the most—I hope you enjoy looking.

Stephanie Cristello
Editor-in-Chief

Reviews

Charles Ray

SCULPTURE, 1997–2014 // ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

By Terry R. Myers

No artist of his generation takes up space like Charles Ray, even when he sticks to a single sculpture in a room. Like many of the most important sculptors before him, size, scale and space have been core concerns of his since the late 1980s, and he has kept his investigations of them idiosyncratic and unpredictable by taking his time. In all of my years of seeing many of his exhibitions, I don't remember a circumstance in which he claimed space as a power grab. Instead, Ray regards space more as a topic of discussion, a philosophical dialogue or debate, orchestrated to take apart critical issues and then put them back together in an almost always genius way. With this survey of eighteen works produced between 1997 and 2014, currently on view at the Art Institute of Chicago, Ray has been given an ideal situation to provide a level of contemplation rarely achieved by contemporary art these days. In no uncertain terms this show reminds us that, yes, patience is still a virtue. So is persistence.

My first experience with one of Ray's sculptures in 1989 has stayed with me ever since. Situated alone in one of the rooms of Feature Gallery when it was in Soho in New York, *Tabletop* (1988) provoked me at the time to write, "We've probably never been asked to look so hard at any of these objects." The things in question—a plate, glass, bowl, canister, saltshaker, and potted plant—were on what I called then "a Bonnard breakfast table," and were all turning at a pace that was barely perceptible. It may be that I still think of this sculpture as one of Ray's best—mainly because it was, so to speak, my first time—but it remains for me a kind of visual and mental slow-burn explosive device; mind-blowing and understated all at once.

Ray's mid-career survey that traveled the United States in 1998 effectively encapsulated his work up until that time (I saw it at all three venues), but it seems as well that it helped the artist sharpen his focus while slowing himself, and then us, way, way down. The decision to de-install the Art Institute's contemporary collection and open up the second-floor space by reconfiguring it into three large galleries is brilliant for at least two reasons. The first would be lost on the first time visitor, but notwithstanding I found the memory residue of the galleries' presentation of history poignant: the temporarily-missing Donald Judd acts as a type of refined locator of space and ground, the absent Eva Hesse as a reminder of play between pictorial

In no uncertain terms this show reminds us that, yes, patience is still a virtue.

and actual space, etc. That Ray's well-known *Hinoki* (2007) stayed pretty much in place helps here—the timeless and time-consuming recreation of the fallen log is recast as a witness to monumental change. For all of us, however, the installation creates a dynamic environment for the significant space *between* everything; the entire situation is transformed into what I have taken to be a kind of morality play about the ways in which a lot of big ideas about absence, form, mass, presence, and space all matter now more than ever. ———— The seriousness of these ideas is what makes Ray's focus on figuration all the more potent. A quick glance into these galleries could lead us to jump to the conclusion that we had traveled back in time, into the comfort zone of the monument: the statue in all of its historical meaning and specificity. By starting the chronology of the exhibition with *Unpainted Sculpture* (1997), a painted-in-gray fiberglass work based upon a car that had been involved in a fatal crash, Ray anchors its missing human body as its own kind of grounding presence, eternalizing a violent and fleeting moment, and making it shockingly serene. It is this almost tangible sense of serenity that hit me hardest in this exhibition, a quietude that doesn't sacrifice intensity, but rather puts it to work, whether in the almost vibrating sharpness of *Tractor* (2005), the pristine smoothness of *The New Beetle* (2006), the solid liquidity of *Mime* (2014), or, most dramatically, the complicated yet calming transcendence of *Huck and Jim* (2014). Even though this last sculpture is the only one in the exhibition not installed to provide for what still comes across as its full potential (placed in a niche outside one of the entrances to the large galleries), it presents itself as a triumphant masterpiece for our time right now, condensing all that is powerful about Ray's work into that space between Jim's outstretched hand and Huck's back. It speaks volumes.

—

Charles Ray: Sculpture, 1997–2014 **at the Art Institute of Chicago runs through October 4, 2015.**

TITLE PAGE:
Charles Ray. *Huck and Jim*, 2014. Installation View, *Charles Ray: Sculpture, 1997–2014*. The Art Institute of Chicago, May 15–October 4, 2015. The artist and Matthew Marks Gallery. Photograph by Charles Ray. © Charles Ray.

SUBSEQUENT SPREAD, BOTTOM:
Charles Ray. *Unpainted Sculpture*,1997. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Gift of Bruce and Martha Atwater, Ann and Barrie Birks, Dolly Fiterman, Erwin and Miriam Kelen, Larry Perlman and Linda Peterson Perlman, Harriet and Edson Spencer with additional funds from the T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1998. © Charles Ray, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.

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PREVIOUS SPREAD:
Installation View, *Charles Ray: Sculpture, 1997–2014*. The Art Institute of Chicago, May 15–October 4, 2015.

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ABOVE:
Charles Ray. *Hinoki*, 2007. The Art Institute of Chicago, through prior gifts of Mary and Leigh Block, Mr. and Mrs. Joel Starrels, Mrs. Gilbert W. Chapman, and Mr. and Mrs. Roy J. Friedman; restricted gift of Donna and Howard Stone. © Charles Ray 2007, Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

Darrell Jones, 2014 Awardee. Photo by Dan Merlo.

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Afterword via Fantasia

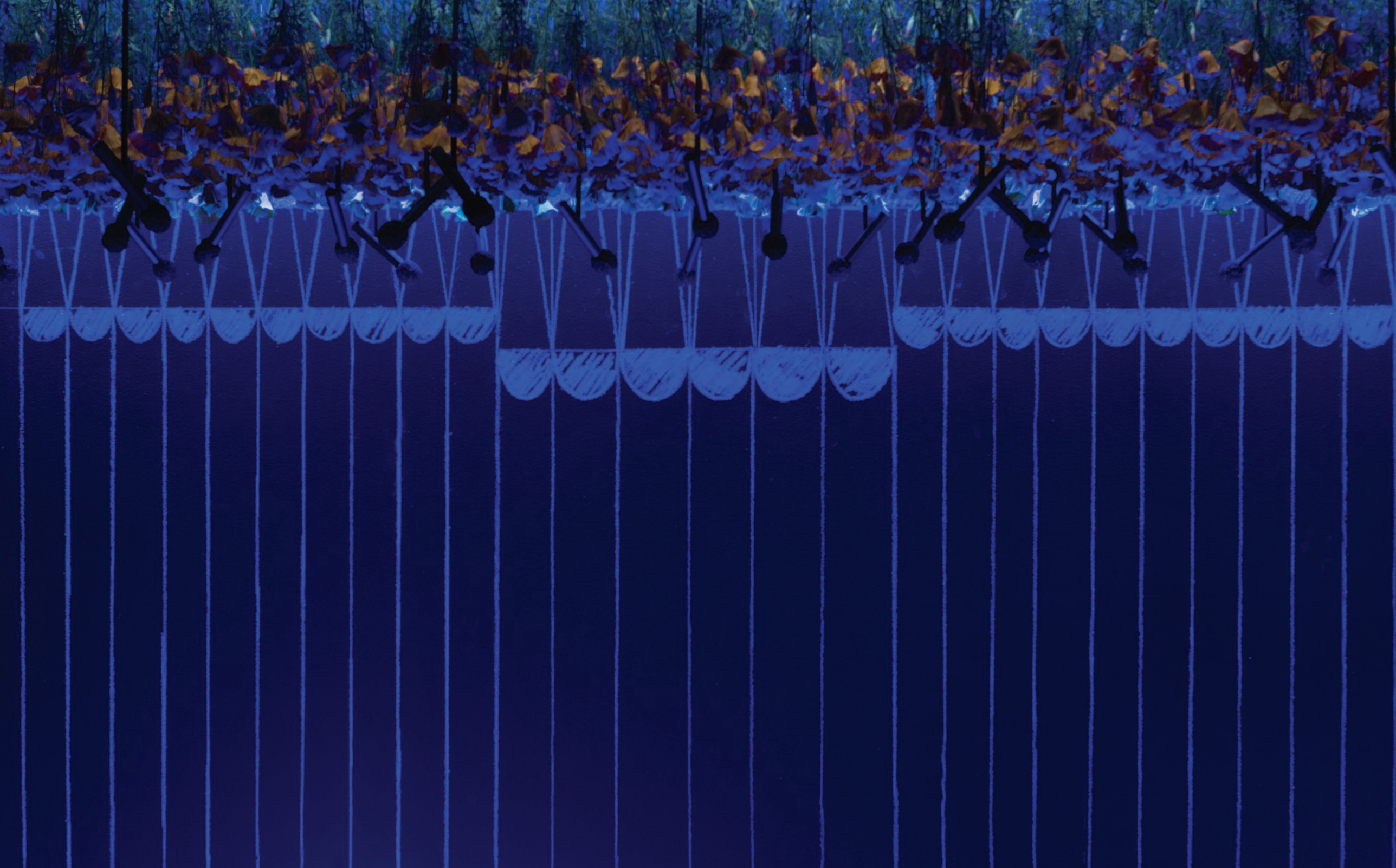
THE FREEDOM PRINCIPLE: EXPERIMENTS IN ART AND MUSIC, 1965 TO NOW // MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO

By Stephanie Cristello

"ADMIRABLE AND AMAZING ARE ALL THINGS OF WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW THE CAUSES.[1] – FRANCESCO DE'VIERI, 1586

On July 9, 1975, artist Bas Jan Ader sailed out of the harbor in Cape Cod, Massachusetts to perform *In search of the miraculous*. He never did return. Ader's voyage to sea—"a romantic and adventurous trip in a very small boat across the Atlantic"[2]—was the second performance in a trilogy. The work was never finished, but it was complete. His miracle was one that was never realized, existing instead in the liminal space between intention and action, as an idea—the image of the artist forever lost at sea. The mythology surrounding Ader's disappearance has, in itself, been a subject of his work that in many ways equals his output, an influence that permeates the context of his earlier pieces. *In search of the miraculous* was his final poem. Its message was simple: ——— The miraculous was not here. The miraculous was elsewhere. ——— The piece was arguably the first instance in contemporary art toward a fully secular shift in the idea of a miracle. Miracles require loss; or perhaps better phrased, the experience of a miracle requires the suspension of belief, a loss of reason. While this was always true of the traditional definition, Ader's piece approached a new framing of loss. It positioned the miracle as an event that not only occupied a space of the unknown—a parallel world where enchantment replaces logic—but relegated the experience to the status of the image. The artist was not dead; he was supplanted by the concept of absence. Within this manufactured space, Ader is immortal. He wrote his own history—his absence was his own authorship. But what of the forced absence in the histories of those whose voices were not valued enough to write their own? How can their performances, their own searches for the miraculous, use fiction as a way to reclaim authorship? ——— *Afterword via Fantasia*, the title of the collaborative film installation by media / theater artist Catherine Sullivan, composer and musician George Lewis, artist Charles Gaines, and director Sean Griffin—currently on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*—uses this 'elsewhere' as a device to expose a miswritten history. At once otherworldly and visceral, the film is an adaptation of George Lewis' libretto for the forthcoming opera *Afterword*. Within the intimate screening room at the MCA, which can be viewed as a satellite to the exhibition as a whole, the single-channel projection presses against the

whole of the space, the bodies of the performers on screen to scale with the viewer's own body. Lewis and Griffin's dissonant sounds contribute to the recording, unfolding in waves of symphonic minor chords that clash with the movements of the actors in the film. The figures in the piece exist not as fixed characters, but as musical identities—disembodied and transitive. Gaines' contributions—whose work is also installed in the larger galleries of the fourth floor exhibition, co-curated by Naomi Beckwith and Dieter Roelstraete—creates an environment to hold the projection. A chalk drawing of a church organ occupies one of the painted black walls, its delicate white lines illuminated amid a shallow field of fake flowers, glowing under a black light cast from above. Microphones are placed among the petals, as if either the drawing or the blossoms will emit a sound. They stand waiting. ——— The experience transports the viewer into an estranged place—a place that floats in history, pairing 16mm film with spliced scenes of HD footage that creates an anachronistic atmosphere. History and speculation collide. The term 'fantasia' here operates on two registers—the first, as an explanation of the improvisation and free form means that led to the adaptation, and the second as a reference to an extemporaneous site, a fictive location where the retelling of Lewis' narrative of the AACM can take place. A man groans "*Mississippi*," his head bobs slightly forward and back again—he breathes, his eyes meeting the camera in supreme clarity briefly before the camera cuts. "Do you know how this music came from the heritage of our people?," another voice says, on the backdrop of a grainy black and white parking lot, "Their psyche was awakened by the very vibrations of the air." ——— The spoken and sung voices of the ensemble of actors, dancers, and artists, including current members of the AACM—the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, an experimental Chicago group whose fifty year anniversary precipitated the exhibition—represent an identity, but not necessarily a single body. These are the *afterwords*. By definition, an afterword is a conclusion written by another that is not the author. Here, this concept is acted out in plural—*other authors*. The choreography in Sullivan's film destabilizes the boundaries that define a singular role. Throughout *Afterword via Fantasia*, the movement inherent to one character is easily replicated by another. This transference of self, a quality that operates as a type of possession, conjures a series of hybrid identities, each carrying with it a voice capable of telling a story. This concept of authorship stands in stark contrast to one of the sets where the film was shot; Porgy and Bess is often cited as one of "the most incongruous, contradictory cultural symbols ever created in the Western World."[3] The opera was a fiction; its plot was rife with racial stereotypes, with the pervasive myth of poverty and violence as intrinsic to the everyday experience of black



life, even in Gershwin's demands of the performance, which imposed a hyperbolized dialect on the actors. As composer and critic Virgil Thompson said in a review of the opera, "Folklore subjects recounted by an outsider are only valid as long as the folk in question is unable to speak for itself, which is certainly not true of the [African-American] in 1935."[4] While source material of Porgy and Bess is outside of Sullivan's experience, as a white artist living in the twenty-first century, it is also necessarily outside of *any* authentic experience—the adaptation is based on an original form that was conceived as a fabrication. The difference in *Afterword via Fantasia* is that its fiction approaches a means of authorship through the purposeful abstraction of its narrative. Sullivan touches upon a pressing question through the means of film, which is more relevant today than ever: how can art progressively impact—and even alter—the canonized history of others? If history is to be presented as fact, its stories must remain conspicuous. The canonical history of the Western world is not known for being a polyvocal one. *Afterword via Fantasia* exists as one of the few pieces of cultural phenomena that is successful in telling a story of an identity from a perspective that is not its own. The stereotypical portrait of Black America has been subject to countless cultural contributions directed by white voices. As with *In search of the miraculous*, it too exists as authorship through absence. One of the greatest oppositions to this absence is music. In fact, one of the most ubiquitous songs in American repertoire, *Summertime*, was lifted from the score of Porgy and Bess, yet has gained an entirely independent identity from the narrative of the play through its various adaptations. This same tenet of independence is proposed by *The Freedom Principle* as a whole, but is made explicitly clear in Sullivan's film: "The insistence by blacks that music has to be saying something becomes part of a long history of resistance to the silencing of the black voice," reads one character, from a scene in *Afterword via Fantasia* set on the stage for a production of Waiting for Godot at Court Theatre. "Indeed, as might be expected from a people whose genetic, historical, and cultural legacies were interrupted through sustained, systematized violence. Every effort was made by the musicians to recover, rather than disrupt, historical consciousness. Rather than an ordering of sounds, for which the composer ultimately claims parenthood, and disclaims moment-to-moment responsibility, the new black musicians felt that music could effectuate the recovery of history itself."[5] The dangers of a white voice directing a film with this message are clear. *Afterword via Fantasia* is built on precarious territory, where the residue of the systematized colonization of Black voices in contemporary America remains at the forefront of our consciousness. Current events are rarely untouched by the same racist narrative of Porgy and Bess. Fiction disguised as documentary is still fiction. *Afterword via Fantasia* is successful because it takes this fiction to its limit. "There is something healthy in not being certain where you are, when your sense of place is not confirmed," said Sullivan. "No element of this piece is presuming any kind of authenticity."[6] On the concept of *Meraviglia*, the Latin term given to the study of miracles, Francesco de'Vieri stated in 1586, "Admirable and amazing are all things of which we do not know the causes."[7] Now over four centuries later, in *Afterword via Fantasia,* we know the causes that led to its creation. Yet the piece still retains the qualities described of *Meraviglia*—not through unknowing, but through a hyper-awareness of fiction. While the approach in Sullivan's film locates a space where a fragment of black history has the potential to be reconstructed, its status as an invention should not be discounted as utopic. By Ader's definition of a miracle, *Afterword via Fantasia* finds elsewhere.

—

The opera, *Afterword*, will be presented on the MCA Stage on October 16 and 17, 2015. *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965* to Now runs through November 22, 2015.

TITLE PAGE:
Installation view, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, MCA Chicago. July 11-November 22, 2015. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

PREVIOUS SPREAD (RIGHT):
Bas Jan Ader, *In search of the miraculous*, 1975. Image: Claire S. Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, black and white postcard, 8.9 x 14 cm.

—

PREVIOUS SPREAD:
Installation view, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, MCA Chicago. July 11-November 22, 2015. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

—

ABOVE (LEFT, RIGHT):
Installation view, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, MCA Chicago. July 11-November 22, 2015. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

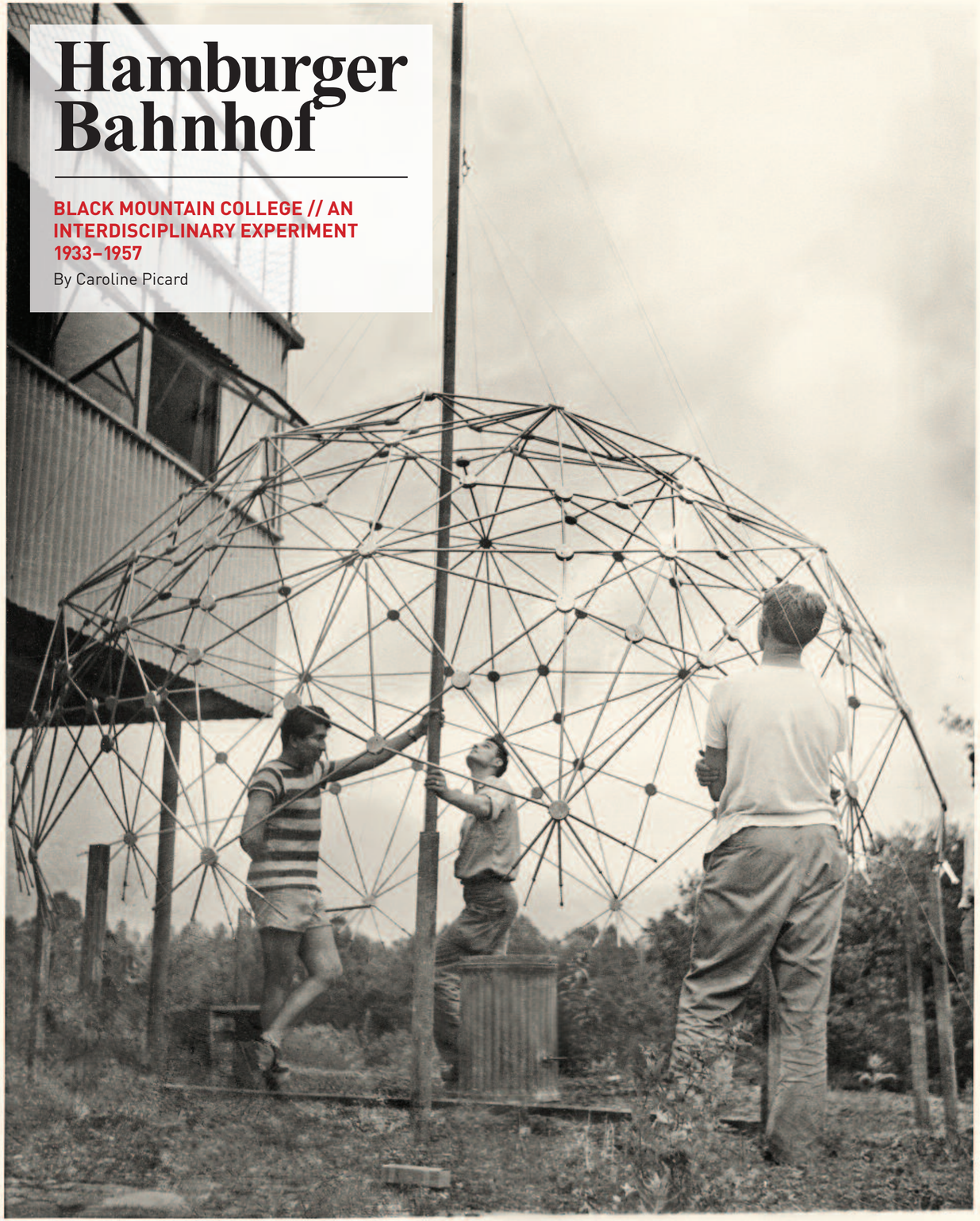
Installation view, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, MCA Chicago. July 11-November 22, 2015. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

1 Francesco de'Vieri, *Discorsi delle Meravigliose Opere di Pratolino e d'Amore*, Florence, Giorgio Marescotti, 1586, p.57. translated through Brunon, Hervé. *Céleste Boursier Mougenot: Rotations, "As If by Enchantment"* Venice: Institut Français, 2015. Print.
2 Beenker, Erik, Tacita Dean, and Rein Wolfs. *Bas Jan Ader: Please Don't Leave Me.* Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2006. Print. p. 102–103
3 James Standifer, *The Tumultuous Life of Porgy and Bess*, HUMANITIES, November/December 1997 | Volume 18, Number 6. Web. 2 August 2015.
4 Review, 1935, Virgil Thompson.
5 sullivan&co on Vimeo, https://vimeo.com/135164014, 2015.
6 Catherine Sullivan in conversation with the author, 2015.
7 Francesco de'Vieri, *Discorsi delle Meravigliose Opere di Pratolino e d'Amore*, Florence, Giorgio Marescotti, 1586, p.57. translated through Brunon, Hervé. *Céleste Boursier Mougenot: Rotations, "As If by Enchantment"* Venice: Institut Français, 2015. Print.

Hamburger Bahnhof

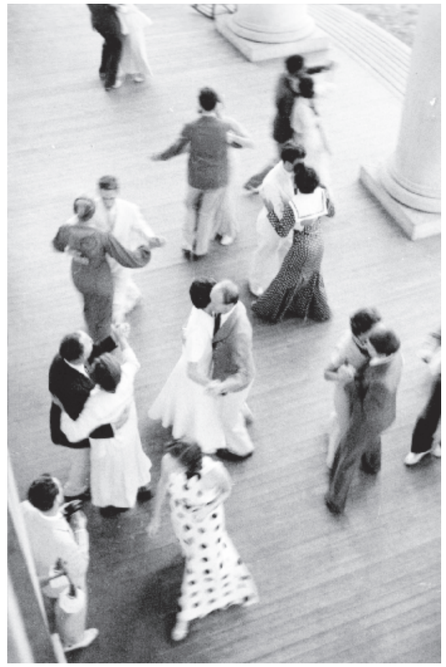
BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE // AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERIMENT 1933–1957

By Caroline Picard



FINDING BLACK MOUNTAIN: A WORKING MODEL FOR SENSIBLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

The idea of Black Mountain College has baited my imagination since it first emerged into my experience—an accidental and auxiliary reference—from the otherwise vast sea of culture. The college came up periodically thereafter, breaching conversations as a peripheral point of reference, its significance intuited rather than explained. A friend's father reciting a Robert Creeley poem in a kitchen the morning before his daughter's graduation. He made a point to recreate Creeley's breath. As one unfamiliar with the poet, I asked about the author. "A Black Mountain Poet —" my friend answered. "He was asthmatic so he wrote in short lines." Or again, encountering the various manifestations of John Cage reproduced by privately smiling colleagues and students, learning thereafter not only that Cage taught at the small experimental school but further, that the first happening took place *there* also. Merce Cunningham's dance company was similarly founded on the premises. Or again, in Gloucester: my partner and I arrived at a plaque fixed to the first floor of a modest apartment building. "Charles Olson / Poet / 1910–1970." This place, clearly inhabited by others with all the banality of life's material encumbrance: plastic chairs, ashtray, a few neglected plants, a contemporary child's toy. Again, I asked, Who. "Polis is I!" My partner answered; he'd drawn us here on purpose. "Olson said the *polis* is only as large as the distance its citizen walks in a day…" Me confused still. "He was also the last Rector at Black Mountain." Black Mountain: a spirit you find in a mirror standing right behind your shoulder. The flood of influence is constant: MC Richards, Elaine and Willem deKooning, Arthur Penn, Clement Greenberg, Katherine Litz, Robert Rauschenberg, Helen Frankenthaler, Cy Twombly, and Einstein just to name a very few. How did everyone end up there? ——— Black Mountain shifted into focus as I accumulated these references according to an oral, and largely accidental, network. A recently hired professor mentioned how, like many liberal arts colleges, Mills was inspired by Black Mountain. A newspaper article announced that a public art high school in San Francisco renamed itself after its founder, Ruth Asawa—another student of Black Mountain. Black Mountain surfaces within singular artistic acts as well: Stephen Lapthisophon's *Black Mountain* (2012) drawing, for example comprised of the college's name scrawled in black ink on paper. Written like revolutionary graffiti, a call to arms, the drawing acts as an homage that, as the letters deteriorate crookedly in Lapthisophon's hand, convey some sadness too. A loss. Just as Olson's plaque points to the breadth of a life, while failing to describe its nuance, Lapthisophon's quotation calls to mind the *idea* of Black Mountain to such an extent that one feels the absense of its flesh-and-blood dimension. ——— In another example, Chicago-based photographer Eileen Mueller's series of black and white photographs provide glimpses of the school's archive within a larger visual frame. *Construction of silo: placing stones in concrete* (2011–2014), includes a primary, yet small historic photograph of a man and woman working side by side at Black Mountain—him in a brimmed hat, her with gloves and a coat. The image is blurry, sitting akimbo on a large wooden desk with a crisply defined wood grain. In *Please Return to Josef Albers, Black Mountain College, Black Mountain, NC* (2011), one sees the reverse side of a photograph without accessing the image that Albers wants returned. As with a photographic negative, its lights and darks are reversed and the text is similarly backwards. In this series, Mueller creates facsimiles with an archivist's appetite, emphasizing the remote vulnerability of her source material. Rather than provide the viewer unmediated access to Black Mountain's fragments, Mueller emphasizes the ways in which an archive leaves its visitors unrequited. ——— As someone who enjoys feeling at once excluded from the mythology of Black Mountain, and wants to access its histories, I was eager to discover a related group exhibition in Berlin. From June–September of this year the Hamburger Bahnhof is hosting a robust group exhibition entitled *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957.* The survey, curated by Dr. Eugen Blume and Dr. Gabriele Knapstein, collates original correspondences, college publications, photographs, audio recordings, interviews, and architectural plans amidst original artworks by Black Mountain students and faculty; here the curators are turned into archeologists to produce a tightly choreographed installation that unpacks the intersection of lives and works facilitated within the institution. Correspondences between the college's co-founder, John Rice, and Bauhaus alumni Anni and Josef Albers, begin the show. Rice asks the couple to join him to start an experimental college. Josef would lead the art department. Anni would teach textiles. The Albers agree. The year is 1933, Hitler has just been elected chancellor, and The Bauhaus is closed as a result of pressure from the party. Rice's proposition gives the couple an opportunity to continue their visual and educational work overseas; a seed of the Bauhaus legacy thereby crosses the ocean and hatches in the little well-known North Carolina locale. In the show's exhibition catalogue, Anni Albers describes her first encounter with the place, having heard rumors that it was a nudist colony, "When we arrived in Black Mountain, North Carolina, which just as well could be the Philippines or something like that in our mind, we met the first people…And the secretary, a very healthy, luscious girl greeted us on the porch, and I remember that her fat little pink toes were in sandals. And I thought, 'Well, maybe this [nudist colony] is a true story'."[1] ——— With such beginnings, the exhibition takes an understandably German-centric path, charting how the arrival of immigrating professors fits "neatly into the larger narrative of the flight of assimilated, secular, educated Jews and anti-fascists from the discriminatory and ultimately deadly grasp of the National Socialist Germany."[2] While not emphasized in the exhibition, some American students were responding to parallel conditions. Born from Japanese parents, Connecticut-born Ruth Asawa spent much of her childhood in internment camps. She arrived at Black Mountain in 1946, after being refused the teaching opportunities she would need to finish her degree because of "lingering ill-will against the Japanese."[3] ——— As the exhibition points out, the groundwork of Black Mountain was laid by outsiders; refugees of circumstance, all arriving to North Carolina with various backgrounds and highly developed skill sets. A central question amongst this largely disenfranchised group—John Rice himself was fired from his previous teaching post—would explore the notion of good citizenship: a question always in play and never settled. With that question in mind, the Black Mountain community was eager to rebuild a better world using aesthetics, education, and collaboration. ——— The exhibition's archival materials



TITLE PAGE:
Black Mountain College: Buckminster Fuller Class, Lake Eden Campus Sommer, 1949. © Courtesy of Western Regional Archives, States Archives of North Carolina. Photo: Masato Nakagawa.

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LEFT, TOP:
Exhibition: "Black Mountain, An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957" at the Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart—Berlin. Photo: Hazel Larsen Archer: Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn und Robert Rauschenberg dancing, ca. 1948. / Cy Twombly, Untitled, 1951. / Robert Rauschenberg: Pink Door, 1954. / Robert Rauschenberg: Untitled (Black Painting), 1952. / © Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, SMB / Thomas Bruns.

LEFT, BOTTOM:
Exhibition: "Black Mountain, An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957" at the Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart—Berlin. / Von links: Cy Twombly: Untitled, 1951. / Robert Rauschenberg: Pink Door, 1954. / © Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, SMB / Thomas Bruns.

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ABOVE:
Exhibition: "Black Mountain, An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957"at the Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart—Berlin. © Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, SMB / Thomas Bruns.

RIGHT:
Josef Albers: Tanz auf dem Portikus der Lee Hall, Blue Ridge Campus, 1934-38. © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2015.

proceeds chronologically, while interspersed with a-chronological artworks, including a large painting from Josef Albers' color studies, *Homage to the Square: On the Way* (1959), a suite of textile experiments by Anni Albers including *Study in textile appearance through imitation in corrugated paper* (1934), Paul Klee's *Felsenkammer* (1929), and a hanging, woven sculpture by Ruth Asawa, *Untitled S. 055* (1950). The works are positioned to illustrate a visual conversation between its members: Anni Albers' interest in squares and weaving corresponds both to Asawa's woven screen sculpture, and the rectangular color studies of Klee and Albers, all of whom similarly respond to one another. The works themselves are additionally nested within the specter of daily life — something undeniably present via letters, diaries, and photographs of college life by Helen M. Post — while remaining nevertheless remote, as something conjured or imagined by a constellations of effects, rather than grasped and inhabited as a place. ——————————— Passing a glass vitrine of books read at the college (i.e. *Theoretical Soil Mechanics*, by Karl Terzaghi, or *An Introduction to the Theory of Relativity* by Peter Bergmann) a subsequent nook in the exhibition emphasizes the act of teaching: one black and white silent video captures Josef Albers in a drawing class. Students walk around the classroom Albers' instruction, practicing their ability to chart circles' bounds and proportionality according to the student's changing perspectives. More artworks by Black Mountain alumni appear in this same nook, such as the cardboard collage paintings by Ray Johnson, hung beneath a looped slide projection of additional student works. The Black Mountain student body is consistently emphasized—not only for its talent, but also (and perhaps most of all) their unique ability to activate, challenge, and thereby fulfill the institution's potential. ——————————— "Other colleges, we knew, existed as ends in and of themselves… Black Mountain, we said, would be a means; the end was the individual."[4] As such, initiating professors built a flexible, participatory framework whose constituents had the power to modify and participate at will. Within that main premise, science and art were integrated. "The sciences and arts were taught with equal esteem at the college, and the arts were supposed to contribute, as part of a comprehensive education, to the students' development as sensible members of society." [5] ———————————

While no less idealistic (in most cases) contemporary institutions often negotiate a pressure to measure the value of a degree according to the professional placement of alumni. I am reminded here of Frederick Wiseman's 2013 documentary, *At Berkeley.*[6] UC Berkeley could not be more opposite from Black Mountain in many ways—Berkeley is public, massive, with sports teams, and a spanning legacy. Nevertheless, as Wiseman's film reveals, it shares a deep-seated idealism about the potential for multi-disciplinary education to transform society for the better. Throughout the documentary, footage from trustee meetings decry government funding cuts, emphasizing the pressures faced by higher education today. Ever increasing withdrawal of state support obliges the college to raise student fees. By becoming more expensive and less accessible, the trustees worry about a reciprocal diminishment of campus life. Occasional footage of construction of a new gym interrupts these discussions, recalling the impulse institutions of higher learning have to engage in; an arms-race-like competition with fellow universities. Like for-profit businesses, many colleges focus on constant, visible self-improvement—new gymnasiums, new libraries, new dormitories, or theatres—not only to wow prospective students with state of the art facilities, but also to establish quantifiable bench marks of institutional success. On the one hand, Berkeley suffers from state budget cuts; on the other, in order to maintain the visual prestige of its reputation, it is committed not only to its remarkable curriculum (which Wiseman's film also captures) but to provide students with the best (always The Best) material provisions. ——————————— In answer to that predominant logic, it is striking to look into a glass-covered vitrine with architectural plans and college brochures for Black Mountain fundraising. In 1940, Black Mountain decided to design and construct a new building. In its brochures, the school argues everything be done as affordably as possible; in keeping with Black Mountain's progressive multi-disciplinary education, and based on the $2,200 the college had available for construction—which, by the way, "had to cover the cost of a tractor, the building materials, and Godfrey's [the site manager/building contractor] salary"[7]—the building was constructed by Black Mountain constituents. "Students and faculty volunteer one to three afternoons of work a week…The construction of the building and the planning of

Everything at Black Mountain had a self-made confidence; as if participating members stubbornly insisted that the materials at hand were assets rather than limits.

1 *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957,* Eds. Eugene Blume, Matilda Felix, Gabriele Knapstein, Catherine Nichols, (Spector Books, Leipzig) 2015; (excerpted interview between Josef and Anni Albers in conversation with Martin Duberman, November 11, 1967) p. 76.
2 Brenda Danilowitz, "From Albers to Wolpe: Unravelleing the Networks of Émigré Scholars and Artists at Black Mountain College," ibid., p. 59.
3 Asawa's Life, "1942–Internment," http://www.ruthasawa.com/life.html.
4 John Andrew Rice quotation, *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957,* 2015, 34.
5 Eugene Blume and Gabriele Knapstein, Introduction, *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957*, p.11.
6 Frederick Wiseman's At Berkeley—Official Trailer (Documentary), viewable at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L2_yLBrQsM
7 Matilda Felix, "Constructing Experience," *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957,* 2015, p. 201

its furniture and textiles are, of course, particularly valuable as specific laboratory problems for the students in the Architecture and Art courses. Even more important, however, is the fact that students come to realize the difference between a practical job and intellectual study—in method, in material dealt with, and in the total quality of experience."[8] Not only did the college insist on the interrelation of sciences and arts, but it also leveraged the school's most basic architecture as a site for interactive learning, leaving the final result of that building in the hands of its polity. That does not mean it was easy—as Rice's co-founder Ted Dreier wrote in a letter, "Will you ever forget the swamp we had to drain, the stream we had to divert, or the piles we had to drive? I am sure that none of us who participated ever will. And yet it all looks so easy to those who come later and see it done!"[9] ——————————— Everything at Black Mountain had a self-made confidence; as if participating members stubbornly insisted that the materials at hand were assets rather than limits. With such successful results then, one cannot help wonder: does one really need professional-grade facilities to experiment? Do such facilities help or hinder the students and thoughts they claim to serve? ——————————— The exhibition at Hamburger-Bahnhof museum is no less provocative—Buckminster Fuller appears alongside plans for his collapsible geodesic domes—a concept which failed at Black Mountain, but succeeded thereafter with help from Black Mountain students. John Cage has various manifestations as well, including a score inscribed to Josef and Anni Albers; footage of Merce Cunningham's choreography streams in a darkened room. The Albers themselves disappear after a separate room that documents a sabbatical trip to Mexico (they left Black Mountain in 1949), and the background context of the school changes as well. While not emphasized in this show, Black Mountain remained doggedly liberal in the midst of Cold War conservatism.[10] Its interest in integrating spoken, written, visual, and scientific languages similarly endured. Cy Twombly's stunning black and white painting *Untitled* (1951) on view mirrors Olson's interest in early linguistic forms—an investigation similarly explored in *The Glyph*—a looped black and white video in the same room that documents Katherine Litz's embodied, performative translation of Olson's originating *Glyph* poem. By collaging historical documents with college publicity materials, photographic portraits, and original artworks, the various types of material on view converse with one another, giving visitors the chance to feel the affects of a poly-vocal discourse. ——————————— *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957* comes at a significant time. Following the 2016 class' collective withdrawal from the University of Southern California (USC) MFA program, where all alumni from 2005–2014 signed a letter of support for the group's decision. Shortly thereafter, the 2015 class called for Dean Erica Muhl's resignation, noting a "strategic dismantlement of a formerly renowned studio arts program."[11] The *LA Times* reflects on the collective sense amongst the USC community that Muhl's interests are shifting from the studio arts to "buzzier academic programs that draw the tech set,"[12] emphasizing digital production, business management, and venture capital. While worrisome, the shift reflects a pervasive trend in prioritizing wealth. Black Mountain presents the alternative institutional model—one strangely radical by today's standards, not only for its shoestring budget, but also because of its radical integration of language, visual art, performance, math, and science (disciplines that *still* observe respective boundaries). It encouraged its students to become "*sensible* members of society." This strangely modest agenda was not explicitly about fostering genius for its own sake. ——————————— And maybe for that reason, there is a final surprise in *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957.* The final work of the exhibition is *Performing the Archive*, a terminal area with a large wall of archival boxes, a piano, tables, and typewriters. Here students from various humanities departments of eight different European universities engage the Black Mountain Archive in a series of actions: movements, readings, or activities according to scores prepared by artist and composer Arnold Dreyblatt. In the hands of these students, the archive becomes a malleable and exploratory medium in and of itself. ——————————— Black Mountain poet, and former student Ed Dorn once said, "One of the things people say now is 'I wish there was a Black Mountain around,' without realizing that it was only around then and never reproducible because it was the result of a certain configuration of people who coincided at that time."[13] As one who stands outside of the intimacy of that place, I would argue that it was not simply the people themselves that made Black Mountain, but also the historical conditions those people arrived from, their geographical locale, the material resources at hand, and the intense, collective desire to find a working model for citizenship. In a world that now measures value largely according to material gain, it is worth remembering Black Mountain as an alternate paradigm. There, its constituents explored education as the medium of a shared, artistic experiment. The benefit of that experiment continues to reward us today.

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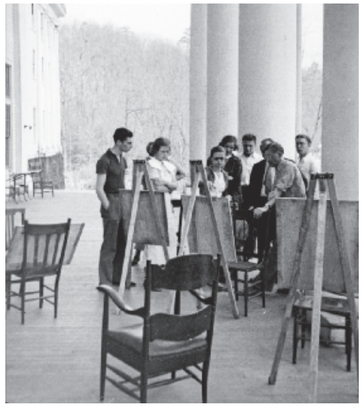
***Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957* runs at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin through September 27, 2015.**



ABOVE:
Black Mountain College: Josef Albers Zeichenkurs auf der Veran-da der Lee Hall, Blue Ridge Campus Frühling, 1936. © Courtesy of Western Regional Archives, States Archives of North Carolina.

8 Felix, "Constructing Experience," *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957,* 2015, 204, footnote 15, p. 204.
9 Felix, "Constructing Experience," *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933–1957,* 2015, p. 207.
10 "Lingering at the Threshold between Word and Image." Tate Modern. Lingering at the Threshold between Word and Image. Web. 02 Aug. 2015.
11 http://mfanomfa.tumblr.com/
12 Miranda, Carolina A. *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, "2016 Class Withdraws in Protest." Web. 02 Aug. 2015.
13 Ed Dorn, *Black Mountain: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957,* 2015, p 9.

Amie Siegel

PROVENANCE // MUSEUM FÜR ANGEWANDTE KUNST

By Heather Findling

Whether artists produce or rich people die, whatever happens is good for the museum. Like Casinos, they cannot lose, and that is their curse. –Adorno

There is a strong comparison to be made between the temporary exhibition, *Provenance,* by artist Amie Siegel, currently on view at the Museum für angewandte Kunst's (MAK), and the location in which the films are set—inside the permanent exhibition of the museum's *Vienna 1900* collection. In order to reach Siegel's three-part installation on display, one must first ascend a large staircase that is surrounded by a set of the once functional (now embalmed) objects designed by the Wiener Werkstätte, a production community of visual artists and architects established in 1903. Shifting from the preservation of modern furniture that has ceased to have use-value in the museum, to Siegel's films that emphasize a chair's current market value, reflections on the validity of modern design are, in both cases, communicated to the viewer.

In Siegel's films, scenes of Pierre Jeanneret's modern chairs move backwards from their life as décor in affluent settings, to their sale at Christie's auction house, to being ripped apart for restoration, and to (firstly) existing as no more than a neglected and damaged good in their place of origin. The chairs, designed in the 1950s for Le Corbusier's progressive Chandigarh government building, existed as part of the collaboration between architect and Prime Minister of India, Nehru. The goal was to embrace an independent India that was untainted by tradition through speculative, modern design. However, it exists today as an example of dystopia, which is further established in Siegel's close-ups of overgrown vines and monkeys reigning over Corbusier's crumbling, concrete building. As the camera zooms in on one of the government buildings, an air of despondency is felt in the film; one shot depicts piles of Jeanneret's chairs, which are unkempt and carelessly stacked. The reverse chronology that occurs within the screenplay presents extremities of value—from worth only in function as they exist in their original intended office setting, to appreciated status symbol on a yacht. The chair's value seems to exist only when displaced. Whereas civil workers in Chandigarh use Jeanneret's creation as a utilitarian item—omitting any exchange value—the chair is only "validated" through private means, through collectors at auction. Siegel's chair exposes its use as an investment in status, aesthetic pleasure, and highlights a commitment to the safeguarding of an object that, as it enters the market, is deemed historically significant. It is specifically this last point that is confirmed by both the collector and the museum, as objects like Jeanneret's chair, and even Siegel's own film, could result in belonging in a permanent collection at a place like the MAK.

After Siegel's film has finished, and one resumes their rightful place amongst a gallery full of pristine furniture, it seems obvious where the last stop for pieces like Jeanneret's chair should be. Museums, infamously argued as places where an object is displayed on a pedestal turned deathbed, have the potential to create a context around the work that ceases to have any genuine relationship with the viewer. A functional piece, like a chair in a permanent collection, clearly lacks its original intent, but it also espouses education and cultural affirmation through its preservation, with the will to escape (if at times only temporarily) its expendability. Pieces by Werkstätte designers like Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, and Otto Wagner, now on display at MAK, were originally created for wealthy patrons in Vienna. Purchased by rich art collectors, the *fin-de-siècle* chairs and tables once existed in lavish Viennese living rooms, where they symbolized one's identity in an ahistorical, modern society. Now, resting in the museum,

these works have turned into untouchable documents—only to be observed at a distance; decontextualized and cherished for their materiality and design, rather than their provenance.

Embracing an example of postwar urban planning, Siegel emphasizes the object's story, observing how one piece of furniture now finds its luxurious home via auction—its cultural heritage stripped, and dispersed to those who can afford it. If the collector deaccessions the piece, it may once again enter the global market, into another auction house, or in yet another collection, until it finds its way to its ultimate resting place in the mausoleum, where the object's story will most likely end in a permanent exhibition.

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***Amie Siegel: Provenance* at the Museum Für Angewandte Kunst closed on August 23, 2015.**

PREVIOUS:
AMIE SIEGEL. Provenance MAK Permanent Collection Contemporary Art. Amie Siegel, *Provenance*, 2013.

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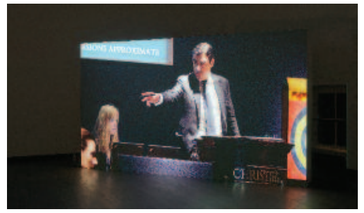
ABOVE:
MAK Permanent Collection *Vienna 1900. Design / Arts and Crafts 1890–1938.*
© MAK/Nathan Murrell.

RIGHT:
AMIE SIEGEL. Provenance MAK Permanent Collection Contemporary Art. Amie Siegel, *Provenance*, 2013.



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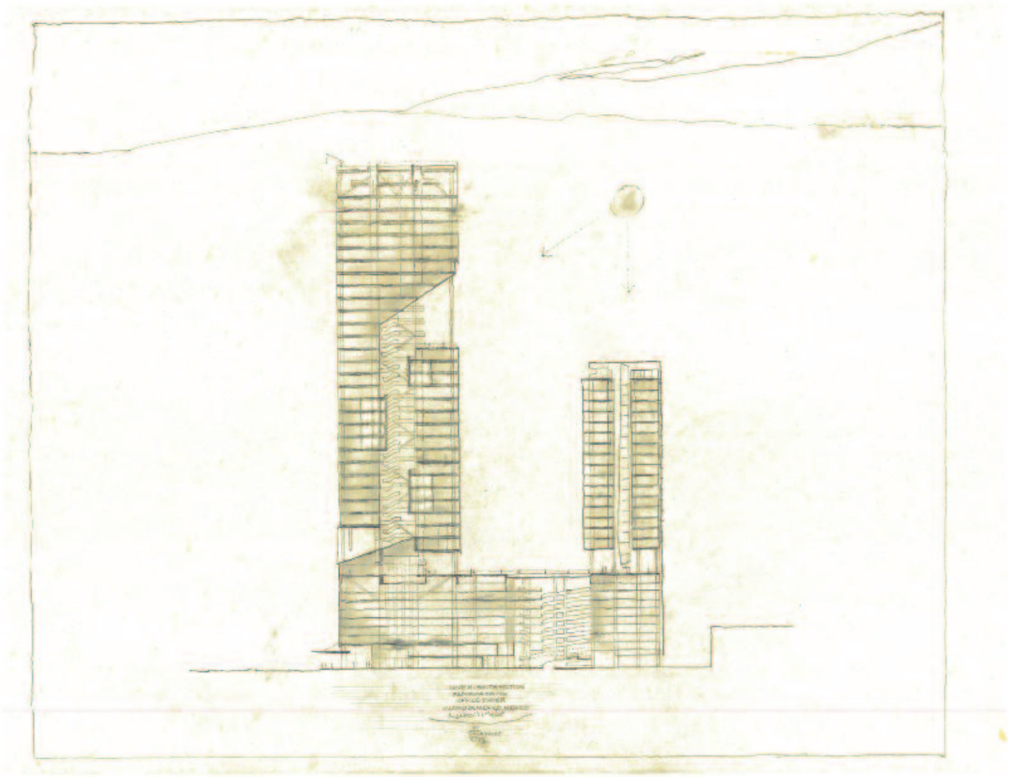

Sketch: Richard Meier & Partners

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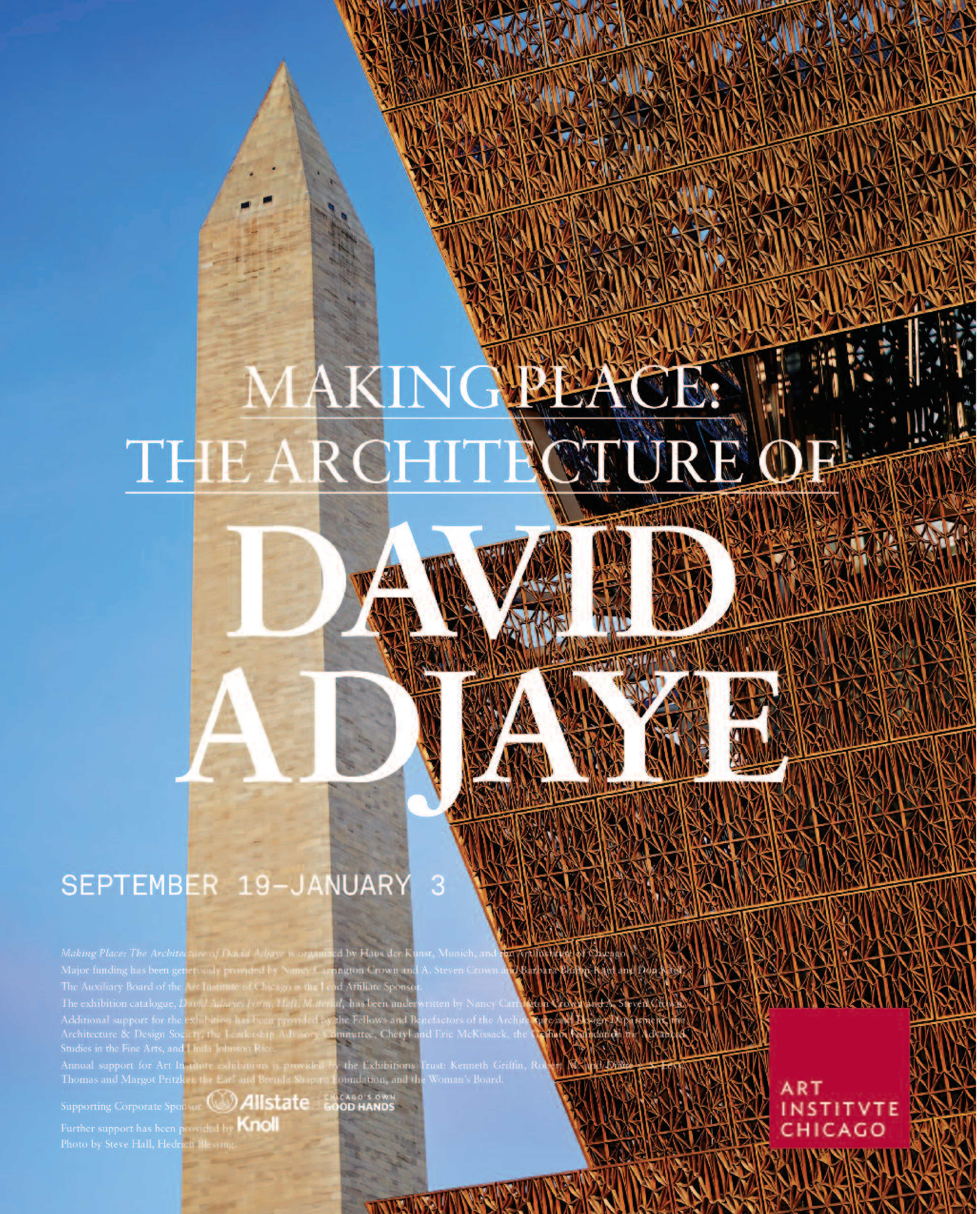
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THE ARCHITECTURE OF
DAVID ADJAYE
SEPTEMBER 19–JANUARY 3
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The exhibition catalogue, David Adjaye: Form, Heft, Material, has been underwritten by Nancy Carrington Crown and A. Steven Crown.
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Features

Irena Haiduk

SEDUCTIVE EXACTING REALISM // THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY & 14TH ISTANBUL BIENNALE

By Natalie Hegert

WAITING IS IMPORTANT FOR THIS WORK.

Please, have a seat. Make yourself comfortable. While you wait I will tell you a story.

Two old sisters who lived in a small house by the sea looked out over the calm waves one day and saw a ship approaching. There was no wind, and the sea was like glass. Barely a ripple moving over its surface. The sisters watched the ship as it ever so slowly came closer to the shore.

"Look!" said one, "How it sparkles! It shines like gold!"

"Yes!" said the other, "This ship must be heavy with riches!"

All day they leaned out of the windows of their small house, keeping their eyes on the ship. "With these doldrums, it may take hours for it to reach us," said the one. They watched for hours, studying the silhouette of the vessel as the sun slowly dipped behind it.

A moonless night settled over the little house by the sea, but the ship still shone bright like gold glinting in the sun. The old women did not sleep. They leaned out of the windows of their small house, mesmerized by its bright light.

The next day the ship was closer to the shore, and the old women could see all the treasure aboard: money, jewels, high fashion couture, sports cars, LV handbags, Apple watches.

The women smiled and embraced each other, they waited for the ship to come ashore. The ship, however, while always coming closer, never seemed to arrive. Days they waited and watched the ship draw nearer, so slowly. Their smiles faded. They did not again embrace. They waited for sleep the way they waited for the ship, their minds beset with the image of it and all its contents. Years passed, with the ship still approaching, still gleaming in the sunlight, still lighting up the night. Years passed, and the sisters kept their sleepless watch.

Some days they walked along the shore. Finally, one day, one looked to her sister and cried, "I don't want what's on that ship. All I want now is sleep. But I cannot tear the vision of that thing from my eyes."

But her cries were met with only a blank stare, her sister's eyes glassy, like the calm, reflective sea. "Yes, but don't you see?" she said, "I think it's a little closer today. It will be any day now that it comes ashore."

The one sister then reached for a sharp stone and, taking one last look at the golden ship, ablaze with light as the sun set behind it, she tore out her eyes.

HOPE IS THE GREATEST WHORE.

—

Irena Haiduk's *Seductive Exacting Realism (SER)*, presented concurrently The Renaissance Society in Chicago and the 14th Istanbul Biennale, seeks to blind its audience. "What this work provides is not a Western image," Haiduk says, "It takes time, it has to strain attention." It is a work that is impossible to consume quickly. It involves the abdication of the sense of sight, opening up our tactile and aural sensibilities. Viewers first stay in a waiting room before being allowed to enter. And in Istanbul, the work is only open when the seas are calm.

What is revolutionary art? This question was posed to the Chicago/Belgrade-based artist recently, and prompted the development of this work. "It hit a nerve," Haiduk told me, "because I think the word revolution is as political as wedding planning." But the person who came to mind as she considered this question is not an artist at all, but rather a political activist and consultant.

The centerpiece of *SER* is imageless, comprised instead of an audio track, a dialogue between Haiduk and Srđa Popović, former leader of Otpor!, the non-violent student uprising that helped depose Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević, and the current executive director of CANVAS (the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies), a branding consultancy for political demonstrations and regime change that has advised resistance movements in fifty countries, such as Turkey, Egypt, and Ukraine. Their conversation, recreated by voice actors in a melodic dialogue, issues from speakers in the nave of the Renaissance Society, and in a "dead dark" room at the Italian School in Istanbul, like a song of sirens, arousing the senses.

— "All these revolutions fail on their own terms," Haiduk remarks, speaking of the CANVAS-assisted political movements, "what follows is destabilization, privatization, waiting, waiting for the benefits of democracy and capitalism that never come. What CANVAS leaves behind is a permanent futureless present." Whether in Ukraine, or Egypt, or Turkey, these popular uprisings, branded with logos and led by Twitter feeds, watch as their explosive energy leads to interminable transition periods. "All CANVAS touches is left to waste away, like sailors in the arms of sirens."

"But something does arrive," Haiduk says, "New markets for the first world," primed and ready for the consumption of Western images and commodities. In 2011, Wikileaks revealed that Popović colluded with the global intelligence firm Stratfor, demonstrating the structural complicity between Western markets and revolutionary action. This, as Haiduk shows, is likewise a regular feature of Western art institutions. "It really got me how similar Srdja and I are," she points out, "His source of funding and mine are the same; most of the art institutions in the first world are funded by corporations that use Stratfor and companies like Stratfor. But Srdja does something I cannot do, he creates global socio-economic change."

With *Seductive Exacting Realism,* it is not Haiduk's attempt to indict or criticize; rather, she is "trying to feel the features of CANVAS." At The Renaissance Society, long-legged Eastern European models wearing Apple watches, a dedicated *SER* logo, the voice of the Asian Siri, high-street boutique trappings, the music—the complete branded experience—seduce the viewer, enticing them into an environment where the image is withheld, where it becomes instead an oral image. Where they must feel around in the dark, blind, with only their hands and feet and ears to rely on, where all things—object, human, corporation—become equal in the dark. "The Western art institution dreams of revolution," she says, "Perhaps it's a nightmare—enlightenment cannot be at ease in the dark." Haiduk wants you to submit to the song of the sirens.

FEEL THE HAIRS ON THE EARS, AS GOETHE SAID, FEAR COMES THROUGH THE EAR.

Images courtesy of the artist, 2015.

HUMAN $\overset{c*}{=}$ COMMODITY

*corporation

David Adjaye

A SPACE FOR UNTOLD STORIES

By Tara Plath

In September of 2013, I found myself on a public bus in Warsaw, Poland, listening to the tiny reverberations of Kanye West's recently released "New Slaves" coming from the headphones of a young Polish man beside me. The purpose of my trip to Warsaw was to visit the newly opened Museum of the History of Polish Jews, an institution designed to place emphasis on the history of Jewish lives, a story often overshadowed by their deaths en-masse in the Holocaust. ——————————— As I sat on the public bus on the first day of my voyage I could not help but grin stupidly, perhaps naïvely, at the concept of having arrived from New York to this overwhelmingly pale-faced nation to hear the music of one of America's most divisive black rappers. I would spend the next three months in Europe with an increasing interest in the United States. From Kanye in Poland, to Cowboy-Indian window displays in rural France, I began to absorb the meaning of globalization. ——————————— This is a concept ingrained in architect David Adjaye's practice. As the son of a Ghanian diplomat, Adjaye was born in Tanzania, and lived briefly in Egypt, Yemen, and Lebanon before his family settled in Britain when he was just nine. Today, Adjaye Associates has offices in Accra, Berlin, London, and New York, and has completed buildings in four continents. He has proven to be prolific in his style, thoughtful design, and list of accomplishments at the age of 48. ——————————— Initially exhibited at the Haus der Kunst as *Form, Heft, Material*, the work arrives in Chicago with a new title. Co-curated by Okwui Enwezor, Director at the Haus der Kunst, and Zoë Ryan, Chair and Curator of Architecture and Design the Art Institute, a survey exhibition of Adjaye's work, *Making Place: The Architecture of David Adjaye,* opens to the public at the museum this weekend. As construction of his design for the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. nears its completion, slated for next year, and news of Adjaye's selection to redesign the Studio Museum in Harlem, where a solo exhibition of his work *Making Public Buildings* was presented in 2007, the Art Institute's exhibition context is important to Adjaye's buildings, which continue to identify him in the United States. Adjaye's survey at the Art Institute spans two decades of his practice—including sketches, models, furniture, and other documentation of his sprawling career. ——————————— The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) will reside in the last available space for a museum on the National Mall. It will not look like the others. Adjaye is the principal designer for the monumental project, as a part of Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup. Adjaye's design is inspired by the work of Olówè of Isè (1873–1938), the highly regarded Yoruba sculptor whose signature corona forms adorned the heads of standing sculptures that served as veranda posts. Combined with this form, the three upward-angled tiers that construct the NMAAHC, cladded in bronze colored aluminum panels, pay homage to the ironwork of Charleston and New Orleans slaves. Olówè of Isè is a fitting source—now widely considered by art historians as a master sculptor and innovator, he was once nameless, even as his work was acquired by the British Museum during is lifetime, in 1925. The very existence of the NMAAHC itself is an act of naming, registering, and acknowledging the individual persons, events, and collective culture of African Americans that have defined America's history. This building comes at a time when names carry greater weight, in an age where a

new hash-tag bearing the name of a black individual killed by police brutality appears at an ever more rapid rate.

The historical significance of this building is not lost on Adjaye, whose primary interests lie in the African Diaspora. As construction continues in Washington D.C., plans are being drawn for Adjaye's Cape Coast Slavery Museum, at the site of the Cape Coast Castle, one of many slave fortresses through which Africans passed in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Previous projects include *African Metropolitan Architecture*, Adjaye's decade long research endeavor of documenting the architecture of fifty-four post-colonial cities on the African continent. Each city serves as an example of the complicated negotiation of vernacular architecture and colonial styles, and Adjaye's exhaustive documentation creates an encyclopedia of an otherwise overlooked field of study. Through this work, Adjaye fills the void of an architectural survey of the continent, creating in the process a reference guide that he himself did not have.

The social consciousness of an African architect creating built environments for untold stories should not be taken lightly, especially in the United States. We, as a nation, are undergoing a long overdue unearthing of untold stories; we are beginning to shine lights on histories that should never have been silenced, yet continue to be ignored. As confederate flags come down, we have to continue to confront the fabric of this nation's reality. That reality is the roughly 700,000 African slaves that were in the United States when the cornerstone of the White House was laid in 1792. Two hundred and seventeen years later, and one hundred years after the efforts to establish such an institution, the NMAAHC nears its completion.

— It takes a certain distance to allow an individual such as Adjaye to carry the weight of America's sinister history in the design of NMAAHC. But his focus remains one of practical enthusiasm. Adjaye was quoted in a 2013 New Yorker feature as saying, "This building, coming on the Mall in a way most people could never have believed, proves to me how more and more amazing America is, even with its difficulties, in dealing with traumatic issues and working through them. The American civil-rights movement was critical to the way the independence movement happened in Africa, and I think this building could provide a model to Africa about the complexity of history. Things often come at the time they're meant to come, even if they seem late."

While many would argue in the midst of such deep rooted and institutionalized disparity between blacks and whites in this country, it is difficult to deny the forward march of history. Yet, similarly to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, the NMAAHC focuses not on a single historical period of gross injustice, but on the lives and the living of a culture so often defined solely by tragedy. Over 33,000 artifacts are currently in the museums collection and will fill the framework of a known history with the story of African Americans as it continues to be told.

In her essay "Imagined Topographies," included in Adjaye Architecture Africa. Nana Oforiatta Ayim writes, "Artists can harmonize chaos to present new topographies of past-present-future so that we can imagine what is not yet possible and, by imagining it, bring it into being."[1] While Ayim is speaking specifically of select contemporary African artists, her words can be applied to Adjaye's practice with ease. The very act of building is a positive act, creating space where there was once none, a premise that speaks to the possible future of equality.

—

***Making Place: The Architecture of David Adjaye* at the Art Institute of Chicago runs through January 3, 2016.**

TITLE PAGE:
David Adjaye, Eugene Gasana Jr. Foundation Paediatric Cancer Centre, 2015. Image courtesy of Adjaye Associates.

PREVIOUS SPREAD, TOP RIGHT:
Haus Der Kunst, David Adjaye, *Form, Heft, Material*, installation view, 2015. Image courtesy of Wilfried Petzi.

BELOW:
(top) Work by Olówè of Isè (1873–1938). (bottom) David Adjaye, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, 2015. Image courtesy of Adjaye Associates.

1 Adjaye, David, and Peter Allison. Adjaye, Africa, Architecture: A Photographic Survey of Metropolitan Architecture. London: Thames & Hudson, 2011. Print.

"The social consciousness of an African architect creating built environments for untold stories should not be taken lightly, especially in the United States."

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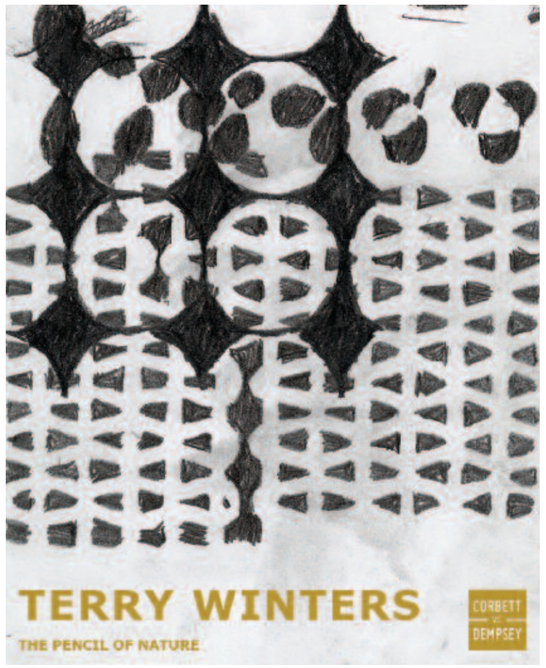

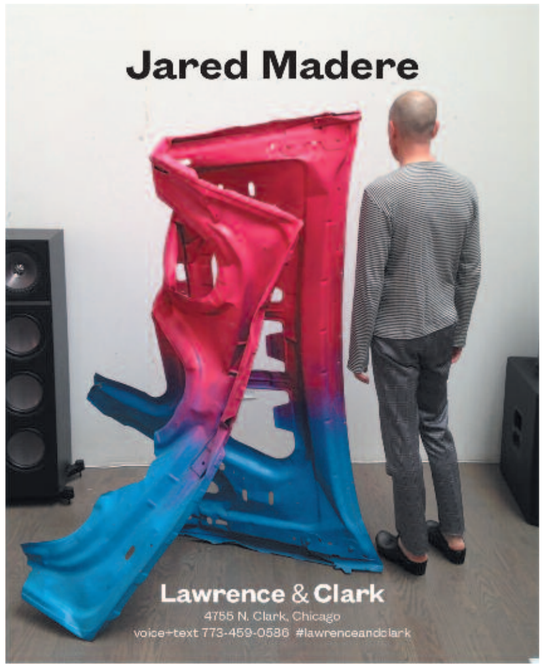

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On Camouflage

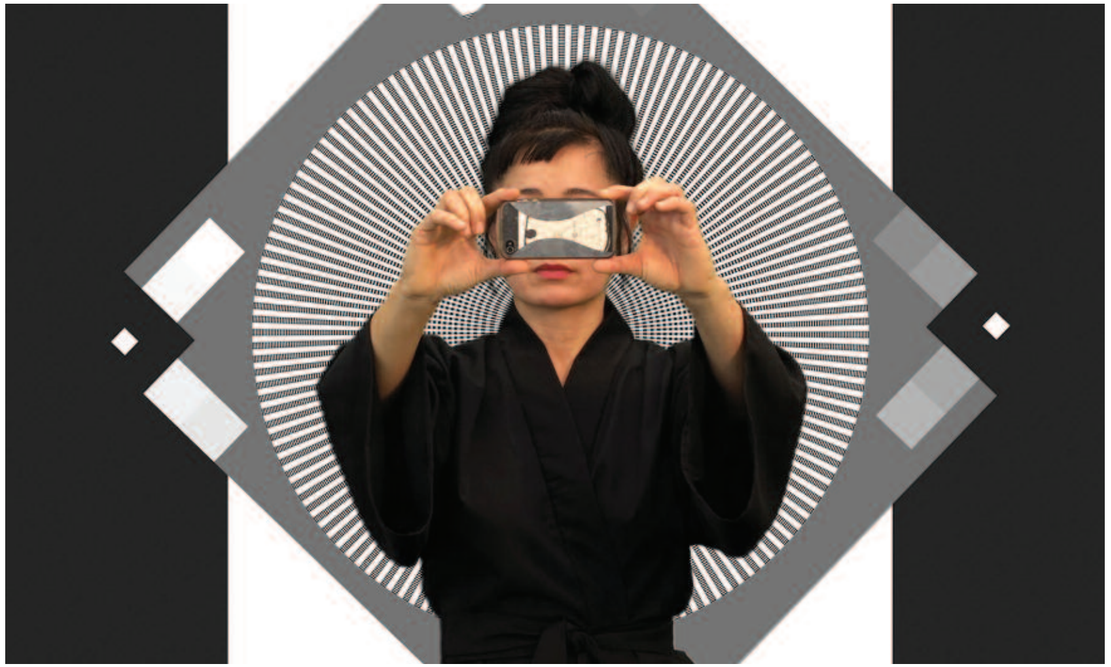
PHOTOGRAPHY ON THE LEVEL OF THE OBJECT

By Gan Uyeda

THE BATTLE OF IMAGES, NOW AND THEN

The resurgence of camouflage: camo is trending, again. As one fashion director put it, "camo is the trick birthday candle of patterns; you think it's gone out, it starts back up again."[1] Within a society of complete visuality and visibility, it has become more and more important to consider the ramifications of camo as a militarized pattern growing in fashionable popularity. Beyond thinking of camouflage as a tactical or sartorial operation, the twenty-first century begs us to look *through* camo toward its underlying principles. Developed a century ago by a group of conscripted artists in Europe, military camouflage existed as a countermeasure to the new intelligence technology that had begun to patrol the sky: aerial photography. To be visible to the camera meant opening yourself to attack, so artists, being specially equipped to think about the relationships between objects and images, were tasked with erasing the visual boundaries between thing and environment. To be clear, this was a battle of images, a struggle to flatten and transform the material of warfare into photographic nothingness for the cameras overhead. Artists were there in 1915 at the birth of camouflage, and in 2015, they remain important public thinkers on the dangers of being visible to the machine eyes of corporations and the state. —

Where the vulnerability of being visible was once a battlefield concern in 1915, the defenselessness of being seen has now metastasized; corporatized social media and hyper-networked state surveillance have transformed state visibility into a pervasive civilian concern. Berlin-based Hito Steyerl is one of the most significant artists working in this vein today. Across extensive videos, lectures, and essays, Steyerl considers the perils of being seeable, but also the opportunities for resistance in a world of total visibility. Her 2013 video installation, *How Not To Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File,* provides an initial step into this territory in seven short "lessons" for escaping visibility, including "How to Make Something Invisible for a Camera" and "How to Become Invisible by Merging into a World Made of Pictures." These lessons revolve around an understanding that the world is already completely consumed by the photographic image, and that the state operates on the level of representability. For Steyerl, the notion of image resolution becomes a crucial analytical tool, because as resolution in an image increases, the space in which to hide—its *noise*—diminishes. "To become invisible," a text-to-speech avatar intones in a robotic accent, "one has to become smaller or equal to one pixel." ——— Escape is only possible by burrowing deep down into the pixelated noise. ——— Within this trajectory, New Zealand-born and Berlin-based artist Simon Denny similarly embraces a different kind of noise within his sculptural practice—one with equally vast implications in the world of networked power. Denny creates object installations that pinpoint the juncture of consumer electronics marketing and geopolitical representability. Joining Steyerl, who is representing Germany, and exhibiting now for New Zealand at the 2015 Venice Biennale, Denny's multipart installation *Secret Power* features server rack vitrines filled with the kind of visual trash one might expect in the clip art folder of an overeager corporate consultant. In fact, the material is quoted directly from internal Powerpoint slides and other bureaucratic material



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of the National Security Agency, as well as other global intelligence actors, available for artistic interpretation thanks to the leaks of Edward Snowden. ——————————————— Denny's practice here makes for an anti-camouflage, a revelation of the banality that informs the visual organization of geopolitical action. In parallel to this work, Judith Butler has noted that the field of state visuality is highly controlled and regulated by state permission, "constituted fundamentally by what is cast out and maintained outside the frame."[2] Ultimately the secrecy of being outside the public frame is what gives this imagery its operational power; under the blaring LEDs of his presentation, Denny underscores both the goofiness and the real effectiveness of the NSA graphics, their cartoony diagrams becoming all the more chilling. ——————————————— The relationship between visibility, intelligence, and violence is likewise at the core of American artist Trevor Paglen's practice. Using pictorial codes that have informed past notions of beauty in American art—including sublime landscapes, photography of the West, American modernism and Abstract Expressionism—Paglen channels attention through his images toward the invisible pathways of the security state. His ongoing photo series, *Untitled (Drones),* embodies this ethos. The series is made of sumptuous pastel skyscapes, tinged with a feeling of pre-packaged nostalgia and prettiness. Yet the works bear titles like *Untitled (Predator Drone)* and *Reaper in the Sun*, giving the viewer pause to inspect more closely. Each picture contains a tiny black speck—a drone

TITLE PAGE:
Simon Denny, *Secret Power*, installation view with *Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of Imagery from NSA MYSTIC, FOXACID, QUANTUMTHEORY, and Other SSO/TAO Slides*, 2015. Photo: Nick Ash. Courtesy New Zealand Pavilion, Venice Biennale.

OPPOSITE TITLE PAGE:
Hito Steyerl, *How Not To Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013. Video (color, sound). 14 min. Committee on Media and Performance Art Funds © 2014 Hito Steyerl. Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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PREVIOUS SPREAD:
Hito Steyerl, Installation View, Andrew Kreps Gallery, 2014. *How Not To Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013, HD video, single screen in architectural environment.14 min. Image courtesy of the Artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.

"To become invisible, one has to become smaller or equal to one pixel." –Hito Steyerl

LEFT:
Simon Denny, *Modded Server-Rack Display with Some Interpretations of David Darchicourt Designs for NSA Defense Intelligence*, 2015. Photo: Nick Ash. Courtesy New Zealand Pavilion, Venice Biennale.

RIGHT:
Hito Steyerl, *How Not To Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013 (Still), HD video, single screen in architectural environment.14 min. Image CC 4.0 Hito Steyerl. Image courtesy of the Artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.

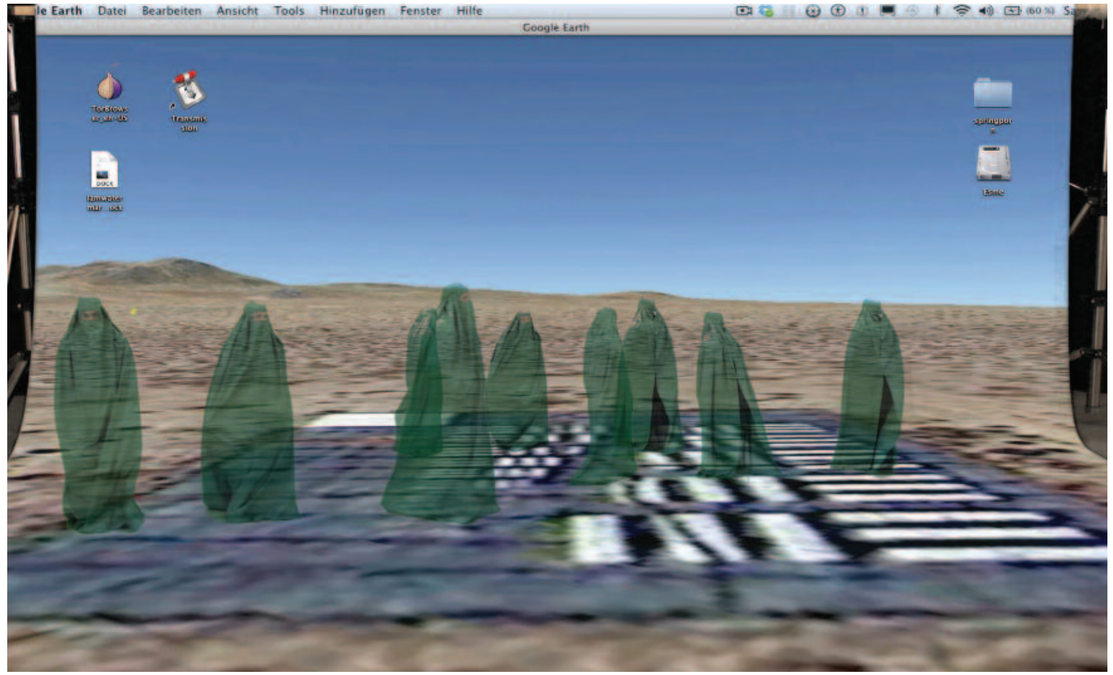
—

FOLLOWING SPREAD:
Reaper in the Sun, 2013. C-print, 68 x 81.5 inches (172.7 x 207 cm).

flying at the far reaches of the visible—that mars the beautiful image and flips the nostalgia into a representation of how secret and pseudo-secret state programs evade proper visualization. ———————————————

Where Hito Steyerl valorizes the poor image as a potential "third space" for the global citizen to recoup power, Paglen's high gloss, high-resolution production of rich images acts as a demand for daylight in state activity. The preparation and research that lead to Paglen's images, including deep dives into public records, Freedom of Information Act requests, and massive online databases, are decidedly anti-visual; the process is boring in its onslaught of data and paperwork wending through legalistic labyrinths. Paglen makes use of a truth observed by David Foster Wallace, that "abstruse dullness is actually a much more effective shield than is secrecy. For the great disadvantage of secrecy is that it's interesting."[3] By inserting the abstrusely dull into the visual coordinates of the Beautiful American Image, Paglen allows the electricity to flow both ways: the contemporary clandestine is made visible and made visibly interesting, while at the same time, there is a kind of historical critique of the Beautiful American Image itself. We see the ideologies of power—Manifest Destiny, American colonialism, Cold War individualism and so on—that informed their production in the first place. ——————————————— From the beginning, human camouflage—distinguished from animal camouflage in its correspondence to technological imaging—revolves around the relationship between image and object. Roger Caillois, a sociologist running in the Surrealist circles of 1930s Paris, declared camouflage a "photography on the level of the object," presaging the increasing transformation of life into an image.[4] This transformation is central to the work of Hito Styeral, Simon Denny, Trevor Paglen and a host of other politically engaged artists working today. We are in a world where images cross back and forth across the screen, suffering new thwacks and bruises each time they emerge and recede. "This is why," Steyerl said in a recent talk, "I think the reality we live in consists of the wreckage of images, of half-destroyed images littering our reality."[5] Living in this contemporary condition, it is important to remember some recent words by cultural critic Ayesha Siddiqi: "Visibility in a surveillance state is not power."[6]

1 Jake Gallagher. "Why Men Can't Stop Buying Camouflage Prints." *The Wall Street Journal*. 1 Jan. 2015. Web. 20 Jul. 2015.
2 Judith Butler. "Torture and Ethics of Photography." *Observant States: Geopolitics and Visual Culture*, ed. Fraser McDonald, Rachel Hughes, and Klaus Dodds. (New York: IB Tauris&Co. Ltd., 2010), 43.
3 David Foster Wallace. *The Pale King* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011), 83.
4 Roger Caillois. "Mimesis and Legendary Psychasthenia," *October*, Vol. 31 (Winter, 1984): 17-32 (first published in *Minotaur*, vol. 7, 1935), 23.
5 Hito Steyerl. "Photography and Political Agency?" Conference proceedings, "The Photographic Universe II," April 10, 2013. The New School, New York.
6 Ayesha Siddiqi. Conference proceedings, "Superscript," May 29, 2015. The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



The Hairy Who & the Chicago Imagists

REFRAMING REBELLION

By Kate Pollasch

My thoughts begin in the bathroom. Not in the bathrooms that house stalls with their juvenile jokes, love notes, and graffiti scrawled on their walls, but in Roger Brown's second floor bathroom, now preserved as a house museum, at the Roger Brown Study Collection. Walk up the winding stairs to this Chicago space, and a curator may have you open the medicine cabinet door, where you will reveal shelves cohesively covered with whimsical doodles, a displaced tooth, a bottle of wood glue, and other accessories. It is within this micro-space of carefully curated corners that I remember locating the macro-ethos of The Hairy Who and the Chicago Imagists (collectively referred to as the Imagists) as a whole. For this group, every crevice of life, every daily moment and interaction, was an opportunity for subversion, artistic intervention, and nonconformity.

Recently, there has been a pronounced resurgence of interest into Imagist history. Beyond crediting this focus to mere hindsight, or considering it as evidence of revisionist work, there is something propelling their legacy into the twenty-first century.

What is it about the Imagists' rebellious example that is so relevant today? ——— The Imagists' story starts roughly in the 1960s and 1970s—where a constellation of Chicago-based artists, including Roger Brown, Philip Hanson, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Christina Ramberg, Suellen Rocca, Barbara Rossi, and Karl Wirsum, among others, worked and exhibited together in a collaborative, collegial, atmosphere. In the early 1960s, the art scene in Chicago offered little opportunity for young artists, and many of the Imagists' politically brassy, "low-brow," comedic, and sexually charged work did not align with the New York commercial art atmosphere. In decidedly not waiting for New York to come calling, and resisting the search for approval from an even more distant art world overseas, the Imagists instead produced their own alternative group exhibitions. Their openings consisted of giving out comic-book style decals and catalogues, coating walls with brightly patterned mismatched wallpaper, or incorporating found objects into the installations. The Imagists' exhibitions were, and still are, the antithesis of a pervasive "white cube" style. Their work was polarizing; garnering both admiration and harsh critique. Brown himself even published scathing reviews of the very critics who admonished their self-created scene.

—— From this early point onward, each artists' career followed a trajectory all its own—though generally, the Imagists continued to will a place for themselves in an often oppositional atmosphere well into the later part of the following decade. ——— The return to a more collective model of working was not necessarily new then or now, and is rather expected at historic moments such as the turn of a century, or major shift in industry—we need only look to the Romantics, Dadaism, or the resurgence of Arts and Craft. But in the twenty-first century, the form has been co-opted by both mainstream commercial industry and non-profit or alternative art communities, allowing artists to operate in both spheres, free from old-guard rigid ideas of either "selling out," or pledging allegiance to the "alterative." Artists are now faced with both. ——

In the wake of an oversaturated art market, with its limited funding and the ever-churning art school industry, international contemporary artists are building their own opportunities outside of the mainstream art market, very similarly to the Imagists' midcentury model. In Chicago, this self-made spirit is still evident in the structure of apartment galleries, a concerted emphasis on the interdisciplinary, and pop-up spaces. This, paired with an increase in contemporary artists who use the Imagists as a source for their work, raises questions on how and why the group's original concepts of *rebellion* are being interpreted. ——

In the 1970s and 80s, Roger Brown's paintings unhinged the walls of high-rise buildings and cut open the roofs of structures throughout the city, to illuminate figures engaged in normally unseen erotic activity. Before the International Mr. Leather competition was a well promoted Chicago event, Brown rendered the predominantly unknown and underground leather Gold Coast Bar on his canvas, elucidating a fantasy where sex and desire slipped into every room, behind every bush and tree, and on every level of Chicago's architecture. But even with the Imagists' subversive agency at the time, much of Brown's erotic work was held back by his commercial gallery, and minimally addressed in art history. —

However, now when the erotic is familiar, even expected in the white cube, Brown's approach speaks more to individual intentionality than it does to pushing the limits of titillation. Chicago-based artist Edie Fake continues this trajectory—the graphic linear quality of his paintings, and the kaleidoscopic electric palette references to the group's formal aesthetic, echoes the conceptual concerns of the Imagists' work. Whereas Brown cut into Chicago's landscape to visualize a dream of group sex and erotic space-making for the predominately oppressed and invisible gay community he identified with, Fake builds up traces and fantasies of buildings that speak to notions of queer and trans history, utopia, loss, and identity. Channeling the ethos of Brown and using the Imagists' dissident approach, Fake's work lives in less of a binary art industry than his predecessors. Fake's generation is one that can be featured in a commercial gallery—Fake's recent solo exhibition *Grey Area* at Western Exhibitions—while at the same time it can receive the Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel, *Gaylord Phoenix.* ——— In an increasingly institutionalized scene, there are still moments within the commercial and non-profit structures built around contemporary art that allow for the same collaboration the Imagists sought out nearly sixty years ago. ———

——— While the likes of Gladys Nilsson, Karl Wirsum, or Art Green celebrated the strange and uncanny, making exquisite corpse drawings together and believing in the spiritual essence of a unique flea market object, high-market artists such as Jeff Koons' practice presents a flip of this culture, reveling instead in the high gloss manufactured star power of consumer capitalism. Locally, the non-conformist legacy of the Imagists reverberates in smaller organizations, such as Threewalls' publication *PHONEBOOK,* and Temporary Services, whose website states, "The distinction between art practice and other creative human endeavors is irrelevant to us." But this influence is also on a larger scale, creeping into established institutions and galleries, such as Corbett vs. Dempsey, whose program champions Imagist art history. Existing as a model of Imagist ideology itself, the commercial gallery fosters musicians, self-taught artists, international film screenings, and a record shop. Concurrently, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music 1965 to Now,* on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, offers an uncanny harmony to Karl Wirsum's fusion of jazz, blues, and painting on an expanded curatorial scale. It was in fact Wirsum's iconic portrait of musician Screamin' Jay Hawkins, which visualized his raw theatrical presence so perfectly, that was used on Hawkins' 1970 album cover. This crossover of art into ephemera, home collections, and collaborative practices was recently recognized in New York at Matthew Marks, both through an exhibition and publication that features the group's collected publications, available this month. ———

——— In the necessary plurality of today's art world—between titles of artist, curator, designer, and collector—the current of the Imagists' counterculture is more relevant now than ever. In willing an individualized ethos into existence amid the unique economic structure of the art world today, the Imagist-style of rebellion offers an example of the idiosyncratic, hybridized system that led to the grounds for their work then, and perhaps a generation to come.

TITLE PAGE:
Karl Wirsum, *Park A lot*, 1975. acrylic on board, 20 x 32 inches #11401. Courtesy of the Artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey.

LEFT:
Roger Brown, American, 1941-1997, *City Nights: All You-Wanted-to-Know-or-Don't-Want-to-Know-and-were-Afraid-to-Ask-A-Closet-Painting* (subtitle supplied by Barbara Bowman), 1978, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 in. © The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Brown family. Photograph: William H. Bengtson. Collection of Mary and Judy Bednar.

—

FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT:
Edie Fake, *Nightgowns*, 2012, ballpoint pen, ink and gouache on paper, 17 x 14 inches, Image courtesy of Western Exhibitions

FOLLOWING SPREAD, RIGHT:
Hairy Who 1966 Poster, Image courtesy of the Hyde Park Art Center.

Recently, there has been a pronounced resurgence of interest into Imagist history. Beyond crediting this focus to mere hindsight, or considering it as evidence of revisionist work, there is something propelling their legacy into the twenty-first century.

NIGHTGOWNS

THE HAIRY who
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Interviews

Luigi Ontani

PROFILE OF THE ARTIST

By Sara Rella

THE SUBLIMATION OF THE SELF

I perceive the action of entering the world of a creative mind with questions related to its work as a hazard, the type of hazard that comes along with a sort of excitement—*do you really want me to try to unveil it through words*? When I found myself trying to condensate, in a few written questions, the interest for one of the most intriguing Italian creative minds, this perception became stronger. The greater amazement arrived after receiving his answers, in his own handwriting, scrawled in green ink over my printed draft.

Luigi Ontani is the greatest traveller of Italian contemporary art. The story of his journey is mirrored in the symbols, myths, and icons of his artworks—shaping the secret rules of a language made to speak only to the initiated. His traveller's spirit, always eager for new discoveries, does not leave any untried road behind him. From his beginnings with photography in the late 1960s, he went through experimenting with nearly all media and techniques, including his own body in the series of *AnamorPoses*, in which he uses his figure and face to personify mythical, historical, and literary characters from the Western and the Eastern tradition. In Ontani's work, the self-portrait becomes the sublimation of the self, as reflected in otherness. Below is a transcription of our exchange.

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SARA RELLA: What do you associate with the idea of freedom?

LUIGI ONTANI: The soul, which is invisible and is the opposite of the imposing Statue of Liberty.

SR: India, along with its myths and aesthetics, is at the core center of many of your artworks. Where did your interest towards the arts and culture of the Indian Subcontinent originate?

LO: As an imaginary journey, it goes back to my childhood; then it became a pose. After having travelled through art and anthropology, I dared to rest. I conceived the costumes, the colours through the different hours, in a place that is not ours.

SR: Which is the aspect of the Indian Art that most attracted your interest?

LO: The Art-Eros symbiosis as the ultimate ceremonial thought, also considering critical points of view, or oversights, from Edward Said to Pankaj Mishra.

SR: Which Indian deity would you identify yourself with?

LO: I adore the creation of the idol, the making of the 'hybrid-idol', by condensing the 'hybrid plus idol' with the mask cast, which is identity, and alterity.

SR: East and West: How did New York inspire your work?

LO: Loving New York, I went from nausea to indifference, observing the triumphant thud of rewarded banality, money, but living of Art despite of this.

SR: Some have said that you tend to identify your art with your own life, is this true? Do you look at your life as a piece of art?

LO: A self-ironic artwork, revealing both Vanity and Truth. Ambiguity is coherence.

SR: It seems that the ludic aspect plays an important role in your work, what amuses you?

LO: Strolling along the labyrinthine independent path, the empiric game.

SR: How would you describe yourself today or through which of your artworks?

LO: Through the *AnamorPoses*, which makes a rite out of the image, the desire, my self, the simulacrum.

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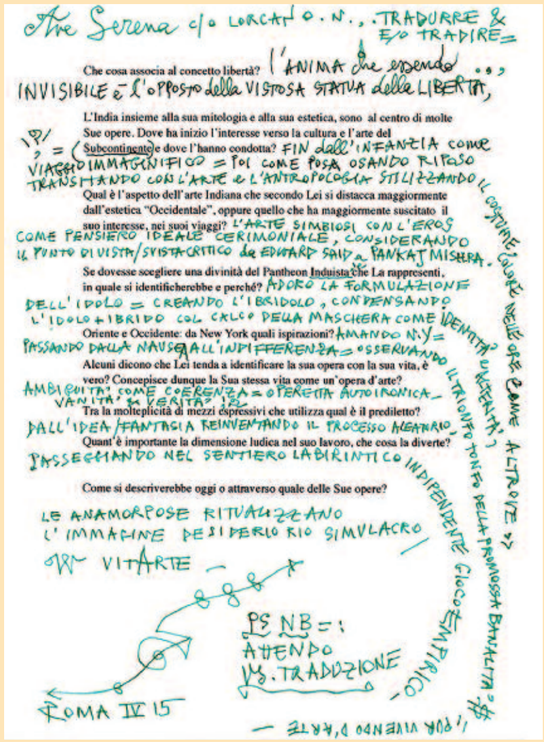
Luigi Ontani was born on November 24, 1943 in Grizzana Morandi, a small town near Bologna. He began his artistic career in the late 1960s. He lives and works in Rome.



TITLE PAGE:
Luigi Ontani, *Leda E Cigno*, 1975, color photograph in gilded frame, 27.6 x 19.7 inches. Courtesy of Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, Rome.

BELOW:
Interview with the artist, courtesy of Luigi Ontani and Sara Rella, 2015.

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FOLLOWING SPREAD:
Luigi Ontani, *Krishna (Jaipur)*, 1977, Photograph with hand-applied watercolor, 31.5 x 36.5 cm (with frame). Photo Courtesy of Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, Rome.

Sung Tieu

VIEWS FROM THE 10*

By Adam Carr

Sung Tieu was born in Vietnam and raised in Germany. Her work addresses the discourse surrounding topics such as cultural hegemony, class, and the gendered or racialized aspects to how we respond to imagery in a visualized world. Questions on how our reactions to the image are embedded in our cultural references—either in actively lived or passively learned experiences—are explored through Tieu's commentary on the effects of continuous aesthetic consumption. Her photographs, sculptural objects, and installations are at once part of the familiar and the identity of the other. Tieu spoke with writer and curator Adam Carr on the sociopolitical conditions of her work, the migrant experience, and the regressive meaning inherent within appropriation and counterfeit objects.

ADAM CARR: Your upbringing, cultural background, and history seem to play out at the forefront of your work regularly. I thought it would make sense to start this conversation in asking about that…

SUNG TIEU: I emigrated from Hai Duong in Vietnam to a small village called Freital, near Dresden, Germany, when I was 5 years old. My mother and I walked through the forest between the Czech Republic and Germany to cross the German boarder in 1992, and sought asylum. We moved to the Berlin two years later, where we lived in an asylum home in Hohenschönhausen, in East Berlin. My work is informed by these experiences of alienation and non-belonging, and the search for defining one's identity elsewhere. I would like to perceive my own subjectivity as in a state of constant flux, which acts as a destabilizing mechanism my work. The cultural collisions and struggle of displacement is very much a part of the discourse in my practice.

My work is informed by these experiences of alienation and non-belonging, and the search for defining one's identity elsewhere.

AC: Living in Germany for most of your life, do you feel German? What culture do you identify with?

ST: I have lived in Germany for 23 years now; a certain part of me feels very German. I owe a lot to Germany—especially to its education system—and my formative years were spent here. Yet, I cannot deny that I am predominately perceived as Asian. I recently interviewed an association called "Danke Deutschland," a Berlin based sociocultural center for Vietnamese culture within Germany. The name of their association stroked me so much that I got curious in their work, and what lead to their decision to call their association "Danke Deutschland." The association emerged from an eponymous conference held at the Technical University Berlin in 2011. Former Vietnamese 'Boat People,' who escaped to Germany in the late 1970s and received refugee status had formed the association in order to meet the needs of the Vietnamese community abroad. As a person who grew up in Germany, but is of Vietnamese origin, the relationship of the diaspora community towards their new homeland and how they relate to their new environment is something I often think about.

AC: The issue of counterfeiting, and its surrounding ideas, is one vehicle through which you tackle your biography. Could you explain these interests, and perhaps give some examples of works dealing with them? The mannequin objects, which are inspired in equal parts by the brand Céline and black-market trading immediately comes to mind.

ST: Within the *Alien Refugee Collection* works, I was intrigued by the "laundry bag" pattern Céline copied for its fashion line in A/W 2013. What caught my attention was that the nylon bag, which was invented and is manufactured in China, first got called among the Chinese population 'mingong' bags—translated into English it means "People Workers' Bag"—since Chinese work migrants would utilize the bag to travel with their belongings from the periphery into town. The Chinese "People Workers' Bag " is called the "Refugee Bag" in Great Britain, and "Türkenkoffer" in Germany; all terms strikingly relating to an immigrant population. In Nigeria, these bags are called "Ghana Must Go" bags, after Nigerian President Alhaji Shehu Shagari enacted an expulsion order in 1983, demanding all immigrants without legal papers to leave the country within fourteen days. I was captivated by how the simple naming of the "Ghana Must Go" bag exposes us to a history of dislocation, of fractured and sudden enforced exile, but also to an underlying social fabric that carries with it economic forces. By one of the most prestigious fashion brand in the world putting its trademark on top of that history, and appropriating this bag, its plaid marker became a compelling opposite. For me, one of the key components was the inherent conflict over various aspects of territory I became interested in, which formed a significant point of departure for that work.

AC: Do you see the work as appropriating appropriation, and perhaps subverting the bag's origin even further?

ST: I see my work as a way of raising questions on the issues and conditions I am both surrounded and affected by, as a way to try and make sense of it. The counterfeit perfumes, for example, which I used for a series, were products that my mother and I had in our apartment when I was growing up. They were very much part of my cultural upbringing. Back then, I was not even aware of the fact that there were "original" versions of these perfumes. I perceive myself as coming out of a conceptual tradition, and for that work, appropriation became particularly a great way to generate images and discourses surrounding topics such as the cultural hegemony, class, and sovereignty issues I wanted to address. There are classed, but also gendered and racialized aspects to the way we respond to imagery. Of course, these reactions are embedded within our cultural references, either as actively lived or passively learned experiences of everyday life, which caters to deep-seated desires and yearnings that are acquired through continuous aesthetic consumption.
I further feel close to Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of *postproduction,*[1] where the recombination of information and data flows reflect altered notions of authorship and originality; creating new interpretations on the basis of pre-existing material. Within today's global culture and information age, I am aware of my contribution to the confusion of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation, copy, and original work. I am not interested in the mere eradication of references, but rather compelled by working with objects that are *already* informed by other objects, and a set of references I can make use of and translate within this context.

AC: As he is one of my all time favorite artists, I wonder if you could speak about your experiences studying under Andreas Slominski in Hamburg. Your recent work *Subnational MP3* infiltrates not only the artworld, but also (and perhaps more so) the "everyday" world, in a way that could be seen to be reminiscent of Slominski's own interventions. Could you speak more about this project?

ST: I felt very lucky to be able to study under Andreas Slominski in Hamburg. As a professor, he laid emphasis on a strong class dynamic, establishing a tight group of students, which would facilitate us getting to know each other very well. I am still in continuous dialogue with many of them. For my own practice, the one aspect I feel influenced by is his amazing sensibility for space, and how to create a narrative by placing art works in a certain order within a given environment. *Subnational MP3* is an edition I created and dedicated to Binh & Hoa Import Export, a shop within the Vietnamese run Dong Xuan center. The center is essentially a vibrant Vietnamese shopping mall, and the heart of Berlin's Vietnamese community, located in the suburbs of Berlin. The MP3 player itself is an appropriated iPod shuffle I discovered in Binh & Hoa's shop during my research. Elements of the design—the casing, typography, layout—were inspired by Apple's aesthetic.
I worked with graphic designer Per Törnberg on redesigning the entire player.[2] We came up with a new logo, packaging, and typography for the MP3 player's casing that would resonate the sound work I was creating for it. The idea for the project was to re-contextualize this second-rated item, and play with the idea of adding another layer of artistic value onto it. The object provided a great way to emphasize—and to literally resonate—the already existing creative labor invested in the secondrated product itself. For the sound work, I used recordings of a traditional Vietnamese instrument called Đàn bầu; a simple, but very particular sounding monochord zither. Together with music producer Ville Haimala, we worked on generating electronically manipulated new textures for that instrument. I took field recordings at KaDeWe (Berlin's most well-know luxury shopping mall) and placed those sounds alongside product-placement sequences from movies. The intention was to compose an alien and fragmented sound scape that would investigate different audible notions of product value, which could afterwards infiltrate the system of the busy Dong Xuan center sales market and would instantly get incorporated into their commercial structure.

AC: I know that this process of infiltration at Dong Xuan Centre went even further—could you tell me about the LED pieces that you did there?

ST: Yes—in one of the halls of the center, there is a bright glowing LED shop named CECO LED. The owner, named To, imports the LED parts from China, but produces these LED signs in his shop himself. Normally, the signs in his shop either have a kind of template text of an imagined dry cleaners service, or just letter compositions such as AAA. For my show, I re-programmed all the LED signs in his store—in total twelve signs—and equipped each of them with significant dates and countries related to international recruitment agreements and alien laws. One sign, a relevant one for emergence of the Dong Xuan Centre in particular, displayed: "1918 German Democratic Republic & Social Republic Of Vietnam – Recruitment Agreement On The Importation Of Contract Labor." Another LED sign read: "1913 Alien Land Law California," pointing toward limiting rights for certain "aliens ineligible for citizenship." The shop inadvertently became an exhibition site within an already existing apparatus. It was great to have this altered experience of the shop and to incorporate how the reception of events, people, and objects is dependent on context and placement.

AC: This sense of trading, which has ties to your biography, also has ties to your other pieces, in which you have people from nail parlors participate. Can you elaborate on these works?

ST: The first time I asked a nail studio to participate in my exhibition, I was invited to show at a project space in Brandenburg an der Havel. The project space was located on the town's busiest shopping street, and right across from the exhibition space was a Vietnamese-run nail studio. Relating to the shop environment of the project space, I knew that I wanted to work with perforated metal plates, the same ones that hang in hardware or utility stores to display shop items. I decided to ask the nail studio ladies from next door if they could paint them with designs they liked. What came out where very particular, colorful, individual looking nail designs composed across the surface of the metal, which showed the painting style of each nail artist. To me, these nail studio works are an opportunity for conversation. The work titles share the name of the nail studio, and include its exact address, so anyone can go and speak to the workers—but they also lay open the visual representation of a social group that barely has any voice on the cultural or democratic landscape. As most of these workers have a migration background, their German skills are limited, and most of them do not have the right to vote since they are not German citizens. To me, this work became a chance to enter a dialogue with these individuals, and explore their craft, work environment, and the ways they sustained a living for themselves.

AC: What are you currently working on?

ST: The main project I am working towards at the moment is a solo show at Micky Schubert opening in the beginning of November in Berlin. I am also working with eleven nail salons on new works for the nail studio pieces. So far, I have gotten four plates back, and they are vastly different from the ones I received back previously. I am very excited to exhibit them.

—

Sung Tieu is an artist born in Vietnam and raised in Germany. She studied at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg and Goldsmiths College London, between 2009 and 2013. Her forthcoming exhibitions include group shows at Jose Garcia, Mexico City and Chez Valentin, Paris as well as a solo show at Micky Schubert gallery, Berlin, which opens November 7, 2015.

TITLE PAGE:
Sung Tieu, *No #1 Classic*, 2014, photograph. 42 x 29,7 cm.

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LEFT:
Sung Tieu, *Recruitment Agreements Between Nations*, 2015, reprogrammed shop LED-signs. Installation at CECO LED, Dong Xuan Center, Berlin, May 30-June 31, 2015.

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FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT:
Sung Tieu, *Alien Refugee Collection*, 2015. Fiberglass female mannequin, nylon fabric, 160 x 60 x 40 cm.

RIGHT:
Sung Tieu, *Recruitment Agreements Between Nations*, 2015. Reprogrammed shop LED-signs, 70 x 38 x 6 cm & 94 x 19 x 6 cm & 76 x 19 x 6 cm & 76 x 19 x 6 cm.

1 Bourriaud, Nicolas, Caroline Schneider, and Jeanine Herman. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005. Print.
2 Per Törnberg homepage, www.pertornberg.com

* 10 is the region postcode of Berlin, Germany.

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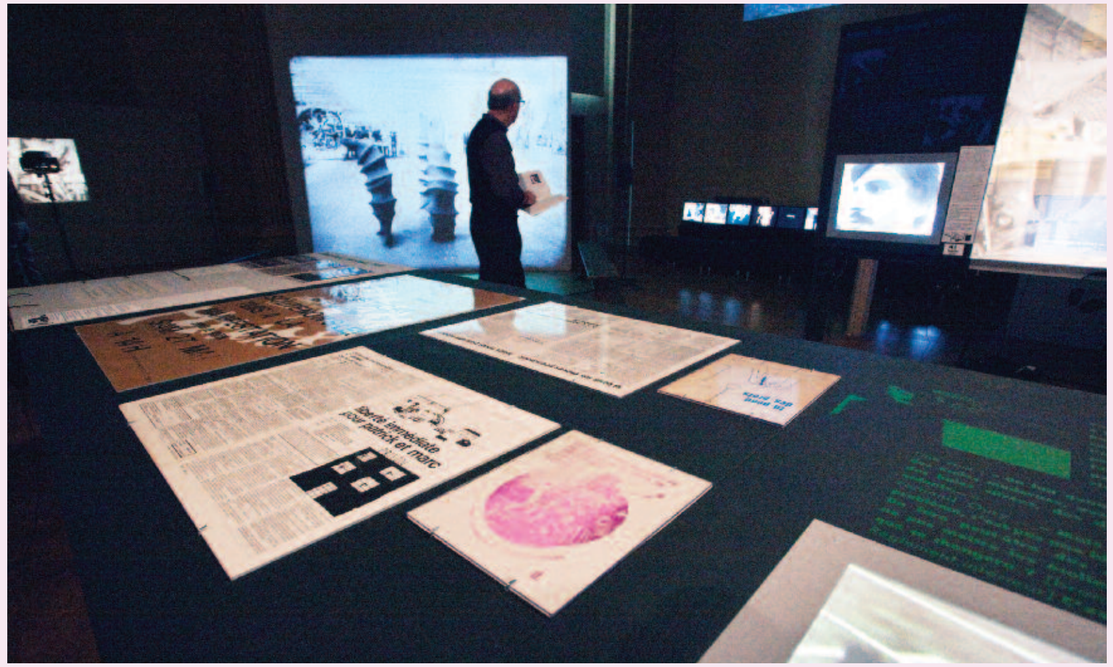
Guillaume Désanges

PROFILE OF THE CURATOR

In Conversation with Ruslana Lichtzier

Guillaume Désanges is an independent French curator and art critic. Visiting Chicago this fall to initiate the first residency of his ongoing project in the South Side of Chicago, the *Méthode Room*, in collaboration with Theaster Gates' Rebuild Foundation, Désanges' French Pavilion will accommodate cultural practitioners for an exchange that aims towards an expansion of local and international ideas and experiences. His first resident is architect Xavier Wrona, founder of the agency *Est-ce ainsi*, who will produce both an exhibition and public program that touches on radical ideas in architecture, the power of ideology, and its manifestation in reality.

This interview was conducted in April 2015, during Désanges' three-week research visit in preparation for the launch of the *Méthode Room* in Chicago. It was recorded, transcribed, and edited. While both sides communicated in English, it will be useful to note that English is a second language for both parties involved.

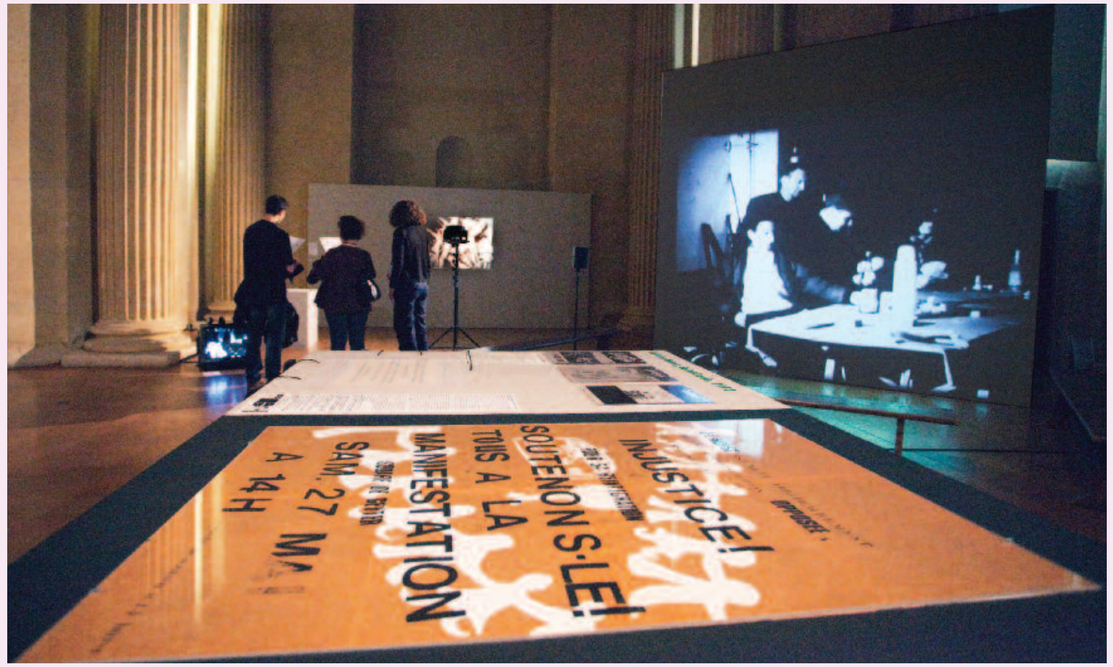


RUSLANA LICHTZIER: Can we start with you describing your plans for the fall, and if they have changed during your visit?

GUILLAUME DÉSANGES: Considering that I have been working on this project since last fall, my current visit did not change my plans much—it did, however, confirm my intuitions about Chicago; it being a perfect place to host this pavilion. I feel that there is a true sense of collaboration here, and a very fertile ground as far as the historical and intellectual context is concerned. This current trip reinforced my will to organize a challenging and experimental residency program in the South Side—although, I do not even think of it as a residency any longer, but instead more as a guest house, or a small scale alternative institution that is run by different people for a certain amount of time. The project is not about a residency, in the sense that its aim is not to welcome people that will act concretely. Rather, I am interested in creating a space that allows an outsider to enter this place, and actually to participate in the cultural energy of the city—using his or her work and desire, while focusing on a specific project. This is quite a challenging idea—to create a zone in which guests are active and not passive observers—and we will have to see if it is really possible. With that being said, I truly believe that such innovative project can take place here.

RL: Recently you conducted a research project in Miami, together with the Spanish artist Dora García. The space hosted you, and exhibited a step in the continuous relationship you have with the artist, as it is not the first time you worked together. I am interested in how you define this kind of practice in relation to it being exported overseas, and exhibited somewhere else, without having the local context. That is perhaps the way I imagine what you are going to do here with *Méthode Room*.

GD: Yes—in Miami, I experimented in curating a one-day performative exhibition. The show was the execution of my invitation to Dora García to publicly brainstorm with me on some of the main themes in her work, focusing specifically on radical marginality, psychiatry, politics, and artistic creation. During this event / exhibition, we materialized ideas by placing documents on the wall; images, texts, words, and objects. For me, it was an experimentation in curating in a mode of emergency, which necessitated the origination of spontaneity and collective intelligence. On the outset, this project had nothing to do with Miami. It was totally exported because I did not have the opportunity, like here, to visit several times in advance, and to prepare for it. Look—I know that there is a problem in coming to Chicago without *precisely* knowing the specific context, but I am fine with it. In this project, the guests are chosen carefully; the participants I select will bring who they are, and therefore confront who they are with what is here. They are not going to give lessons, or act as if they are from within, as locals, but they will interact with a reality—and with fiction too, I would add—from a critical perspective. Their own critical perspective. In the end, it is not a question of The Exterior versus The Interior. It is a question of interacting, meaning taking from a reality but also giving back to this reality. This is the idea.

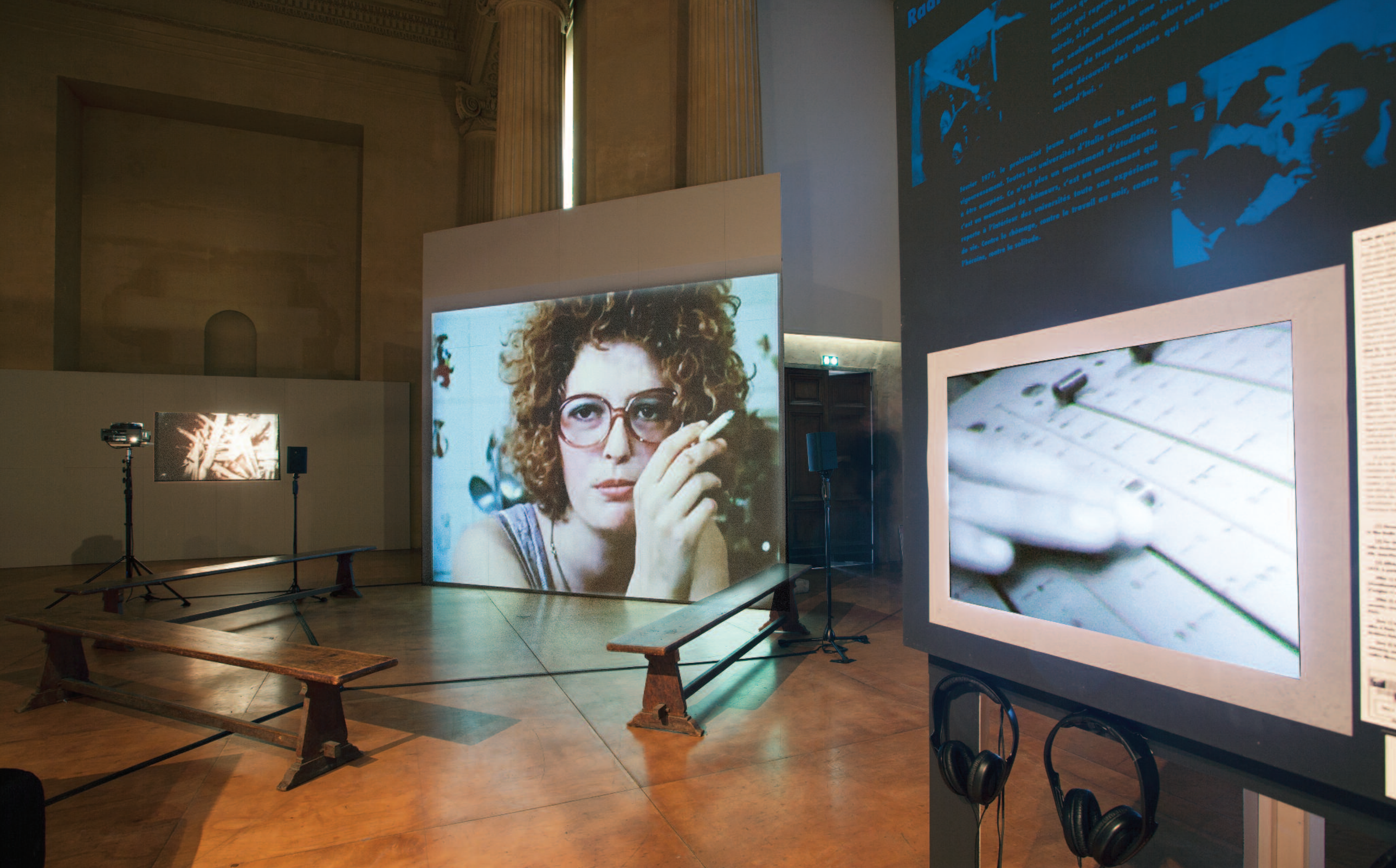


RL: Looking at your work, I would not suspect you to be one of the "free-agent curators," jumping around the world and making projects that are totally isolated from any current local issues. The exhibition you curated, *There was a time in the Past where the Future was Present*, at the Museum of Art and History, Saint-Denis (Paris), is a very political and specific project that responds to the place the museum is located in. Something I find very interesting in your work is that you tend toward dualistic ideas or tensions—one of them is the Universal versus the Specific, and it comes out in your vocabulary as well. In my mind, I pair the project you are doing in Paris together with what you are doing in Chicago as something that brings opposite energies together, but those that are of the same interest.

GD: To be frank, when you say you do not suspect of me being someone who shows something from the exterior—in a way, yes actually, I can do that and I have done that. In this way, I think that the opposition you describe is not valid for me. For example, in Romania I did a project called *Child's Play*, involving young children who reinterpreted selected iconic gestures of the history of performance and body-art. Although the project was geographically un-rooted, and could have taken place anywhere, the way it was executed— having had to cope with the local context—kept changing it. In my mind, that exact point is what made the project so special.

I find the task of responding discreetly to a specific context a bit problematic. The attempt to identify the needs of a place and to address them results in dead-ends, from my experience. In general, I do not find this opposition, working with or without a context, as relevant. A good project is neither blind to, nor determined by the context; it must escape both pitfalls. In my work, I always pay attention to the words I use. For example, I never say that I am doing something *about* the context, but that I am inspired *by* the context. This holds a big difference. I do not know the context of Chicago, and I did not know the context of Romania, and even if I did know it, I am not sure that it would be best to tackle it on its home ground. I would rather do a show about Chicago in Paris or in Romania, than in Chicago. That being said, in Saint-Denis, I wanted to create a site-specific exhibition. I was drawn to its archives—they excited me, but I did not want my work to reflect them. Rather, I wanted it to be inspired by it. Anyway, I had to break the logic of *The context*, although I'm quite familiar with it because I used to work in that area. I had to bring to it something different. Voluntarily, I enforced myself to remain a stranger to the place, which allowed for interesting tensions to surface. This same methodology is applied to the project in the South Side. Gates' *Dorchester Project* is a tremendous inspiration in my wish to organize this experimental residency, it being the hottest spot in the City, full with energy and problematic stakes, but it does not mean that the residents will reflect directly on *Dorchester's* archive. In sum, I am dodging the possibility of having a Stockholm Syndrome with the context I am working with, although I am inspired by its dynamism.

RL: The idea of working with the context is a classic curatorial concept that makes shows that are about something, while from our conversation it is


Février 1977, le prolétariat jeune entre dans la scène, vigoureusement. Toutes les universités d'Italie commencent à être occupées. Ce n'est plus un mouvement d'étudiants, c'est un mouvement de chômeurs, c'est un mouvement qui réporte à l'intérieur des universités toute son expérience de vie. Contre le chômage, contre le travail au noir, contre l'héroïne, contre la solitude.

“A good project is neither blind to, nor determined by the context; it must escape both pitfalls.”

TITLE PAGE:
Curated Session #1: The Dora Garcia files, exhibition view, Perez Art Museum, Miami, 2014.

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PREVIOIS SPREAD, LEFT AND RIGHT:
There was a time in the past where the future was present, Exhibition view, exhibition produced by the Seine-Saint-Denis department, the city of Saint-Denis Museum of art and history, 2015, © Christophe Delory.

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PREVIOIS SPREAD:
There was a time in the past where the future was present, Exhibition view, exhibition produced by the Seine-Saint-Denis department, the city of Saint-Denis Museum of art and history, 2015, © Christophe Delory.

apparent that you are pushing the limits of curatorial practices, this being only one example. In your projects, you are a participant as well, and not only a producer. You have previously quoted Harald Szeemann in saying, “intensity will always find its medium.” Do you agree that this is what you are searching for in your practice?

GD: My main interest in that sentence is the question of the economy of work. I usually quote Szeemann when I am teaching, or when I meet professionals, curators even, that say “you know, I have this project but I am waiting to get the money.” And I think, “No, you don’t need anything to make a show. You don’t need money, you don’t need a space, you don’t even need ideas... what you need is Intensity.” I first heard this sentence in a film about the artist Miroslav Tichy. He is the perfect example of the minor position in art that I love so much. Tichy had nothing; no network, I am not sure he even had any skills. And then he did his wonderful work, which is all about intensity. The same goes for Czech artist Jiri Kovanda, who is a model for me of what I call the nuclear force of art: tiny little frictions that create devastating explosions of meaning and emotion. Whatever the scale of the project (or the form, or the means, or the medium), intensity will find its way to touch people. This is the kind of spirit that I am inspired by as a curator. I am not confident enough to say that I have intensity, but I know I can always find a way to do a show if I want to. If the necessity comes, I can make a show here, I can do a show in the street, or in children’s school, or in a museum.

RL: This intensity is predominant in the curated session with Dora García, that has the aspect of the performative production and the time-based research, which, I felt, had resulted in something different, unique. In your text, you expressed the fragility of that moment...

GD: The outcome was unexpected, as it did not follow not a pre-set course of development, and I was very happy with it. I enjoyed the limitations, although the project had its problems, one of them it being too short. If I had to do it again, I would do it for two days—which does not seem a lot different, but is still twice the time. The second problem was the fragility of the project. What were we actually showing? Not art, nor original documents, but representations of documents, as traces of thoughts; as if they were mental footnotes. Due to this structure, the outcome was decontextualized and quite lost on the surface level; although the work of García is everything but a surface level. And yet, this iconographic surface created something new and different, it brought to light a fragile kind of knowledge; a kind of cognitive cartography that made an immediate sense. As a visitor, you confront with this surface, of hundreds of Xeroxed images and copies, then you are exposed to a new, unfamiliar discourse, that unfold through the relations—the links between the images and titles that create autonomous layouts—while the previous conversation and comments that created this visual, material discourse are vanished.

RL: This opening of thought reminds me of [German art historian and cultural theorist] Aby Warburg.

GD: Yes, I agree. Warburg brings to mind another important force, which is the sensuality of theory. I mean sensuality as mobility, an unsettled relationship to knowledge. This mobility was used by Warburg in a very practical manner. It expressed a choreography of the mind, which allows one to work with intuition as with intention. Also, I really like Warburg’s way of working without synchronization, but rather in a diachronic manner, as if expressing another kind of history, a non-hierarchical and non-progressive one. In my own practice, even while addressing specific periods in history, I try to avoid the order of things. That is how we worked in Miami—while focusing on specific periods of time, we did not attempt to create a new order. We did not try to create a disorder either; we just did not care about order.

RL: Ok, and yet, you are concerned with the question of history as a discipline. Your shows create new links between contemporary artists and previous generations, with fresh historical links. The way I see it, in your work, you operate as a cartographer, but instead of approaching history through a vertical perspective that traces a linear outline, you approach it from a horizontal perspective that creates a kind of a collapse; with this, new historical connections surface, and create a new map.

GD: In French the word “*Coupe,*” means “*Cut,*” as in a cut of a tree. The cut exposes a circular structure; it does not follow lines of progress, but rather connects, on the same plane, different periods of time. This idea, of considering history not as a linear progression, but as a series of permanent spheres that are intrinsically connected to each other, is close to me. I adopted it from Warburg, and Didi-Huberman, and also from Manuel de Landa’s “1000 years of non linear history;” he created a very inspiring image for me to work with as a curator. I am trying to address History in a creative manner, or better, I am trying to oppose “histories” to “The History,” to create a regime of narration rather than of a discourse. It is a way of considering History as an always ideological constructed, movement. To sum it up, it is the projection of some beautiful fictions, which can be indefinitely retold.

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Guillaume Désanges is an independent curator and art critic, founder and director of Work Method, a Paris based agency for artistic projects. He organizes international exhibitions projects and lectures. Recent projects include: *Concrete Erudition* (2009–2011), Le Plateau-Frac Ile-de France, Paris) ; *Wander* (2011, Centre Pompidou Metz) ; *Amazing ! Clever ! Linguistic !*, An Adventure in Conceptual Art (2013, Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria) ; *Gestures of the mind* (La Verrière, Brussels) ; A Universal Exhibition, documentary section (Louvain-la-Neuve biennale, Belgium, 2013), *Curated Session #1 : The Dora Garcia Files* (Perez Art Museum, Miami, 2014), *There was a time in the Past where the Future was Present* (Museum of Art and History, Saint-Denis / Paris, 2014), Ma’aminim, *The Believers* (Tranzitdisplay, Prague, 2015).

Diango Hernández

TIME ISLANDS AND SPACE ISLANDS

In Conversation with Alfredo Cramerotti

Diango Hernández's artistic practice and sculptural constructions are directly related to his biography, upbringing, and socialization. Born in 1970 in Sancti Spíritus, Cuba, Hernández lived in the Caribbean island nation until 2003. He maintains his Cuban citizenship and still regularly visits the country. From 1988 until 1993 he studied industrial design in Havana. For Cuba, the dissolution of communism in Eastern Europe meant an end to economic subsidies and trading partners, resulting in severe shortages of material and consumer goods. These events had a profound effect on Hernández's practice. Through experimentation and juxtaposition, he repurposes and transforms discarded, obsolescent debris into new objects and spatial installations. Since this time, found objects have formed a basis for his works, which are in turn are frequently marked by the imaginary world of socialist ideology; the objects' original purposes are lost as far as possible whilst the half-life of their ideological re-packaging remains intact.

Over breakfast on a cloudy day of Spring earlier this year, Alfredo Cramerotti and Diango Hernández exchanged some thoughts on the artist's approach and methodology. The conversation carried over lunchtime. In the end, they both went to see some art, as if they were incapable of letting each other go. Here are five distilled questions that were touched upon in that conversation.

ALFREDO CRAMEROTTI: Let's start with the main ideas behind your work—I realize this is a big question, and of course I have my own reading of your work, but it may not be the same with what you think are the main guiding principles of what you do. I am interested in knowing how you yourself "read" your work. Can you step outside Diango for a moment and let me know what you see?

DIANGO HERNÁNDEZ: I know how hard is to be ourselves, or perhaps it is better to say to *perform* ourselves. Probably the hardest thing, at least for me, but I can happily "jump" out of myself and see my own "game" from there, a different place. I still remember the first time I had a kaleidoscope in my hands; I was genuinely in love with the object. I used to look through it everywhere; people would think I was looking through a sort of spyglass, or that I was looking at something that was far away. How come something so simple can transform my ordinary view into something so complex and extraordinary? In the fragmentary lens of the kaleidoscope resides an aspect that nowadays I still consider very important. I do not see my work organized by "series," "themes," or "periods," but rather as an articulation of fragments—incomplete and shattered pieces that I carefully arrange and place. I hope one day all these disconnected pieces will come together in a more clear way.

I love to read my art, or any art, under the influence of emotions, I trust them and often think they are both physical and material, and in that sense real. They are sometimes even more real than us.

I am here where you asked me to be, I have in front of me one of Diango's works, I am now just a visitor, a random viewer and what I see has the power of reminding me of something, maybe a place. I cannot precisely tell you what or where it is, but what I can tell you is that I would love to be there and not here.

AC: Did you get any particular source of inspiration for the visual styles of your recent series of works (the waves; the fruits; the sunsets), or did they materialize in relation to the nature of the materials you used?

DH: I grew up very close to waves, fruits and sunsets, that is what you do when you are born in a Caribbean island. For obvious reasons, the island of Cuba is a particular case—at least the island of Cuba of my generation. As you know, I am from a generation that was educated in the belief of the future; this concept was our only religion, at least the official one. The good thing about "worshipping" the future is that you could become a pure optimist or—what I discovered later—a dreamer. The bad thing comes when the future stops, I mean literally stops, and then does not come back again, at least for your generation or to your island. When someone has kidnapped the future of generations, and of an entire country, what do you do? I decided to go back to my waves, fruits and sunsets. They give me those timeless emotions, the same invariable emotions that landscapes offered to the romantics, a view in which you can accommodate atemporal emotions. All meaning behind these bodies of works can only be fully understood by my friends, who are today living all over the world. These works are literally encryptions, and it is through the reading of their hidden and scrambled messages that these pieces can be fully understood.

AC: Can you dive a bit into the technical aspects of the works? The gathering of raw material, software or hardware (in the wide sense) used, as well as the selection and editing process or particular challenges you and your team faced in realizing the works?

DH: As you know, I am permanently collecting things of all sorts—books, objects, paper—generally speaking, I collect whatever could trigger a special thought on me. The process of building hierarchies and at the end deciding what to do with all this material for a specific occasion is usually complex and kind of difficult. Over the years, I realized that artistic ideas are a very fragile thing, they appear and if you are not fully prepare they just vanish. The way that an idea becomes stronger is really beautiful for me, and that is usually the process that I enjoy the most. Crafting ideas is, first of all, an internal fight that can be visualized only by writing; repeatedly writing a word or a short sentence usually helps. Once all ideas are clear, then I fully commit to them. I learned that the process of thinking must be as completed as the process of making, and if not, then I am sure I will not be happy, and as a result last minute changes could happen and could easily destroy months of work. For every exhibition, I develop different set of techniques, and consequently, different advisors and producers help me or guide me through the production process. For instance—the making of the wave paintings is the result of a long process that involved digital, mechanical, and handcraft skills. The biggest challenge for me, and for the valuable team that accompanied me, while I was producing this work was the blurring of every single production—non desired—that traced in this way that something complete could be achieved.

> "Ah, that you escape in the flash when you had come upon your best definition."
> — JOSÉ LEZAMA

Compañeras y compañeros:

Hace casi veinte años, el 24 de octubre de 1947, nos reunimos en la Plaza de la República, ante una enorme multitud, para rendir homenaje al compañero Ernesto Che Guevara. Fuerza política dijo este hombre, nuestro amigo, en que se cimientan los sueños de los constructores del país. Vuelo del libre en la libertad del Norte donde interrogaban los espíritus colaboradores que el Che había dejado en América.

Su tendencia vuelve tiempo en percatarnos de que aquellas palabras eran absolutamente verdaderas, por cuanto hubieron varios informaciones y frases que hacían incontrastable la realidad del lector. Decenas de dijo se recibieron noticias, hasta que ya con todo aquello alcanzamos, porque de que se esperaba, muchos de los detalles que se vienen hoy, con ligar aquella gran conmoción de fuerza, sobre todo en relación en que la revolución política vibraba al compañero caído.

Han pasado desde entonces casi veinte años. Son 6 de octubre. Se que este año este mismo conmemorando en el día, precisamente, en que cayó en combate, luego los internacionalistas, que hay se pensar, en realidad, lo acordamos al día siguiente, después que la cosa pensamos, por encontrarse ocupados o ahogar hacerlo, se nos había visto ese día en el combate. No con los quedado en cierto con nuestro que en el 8 de octubre el día de que se conmemore el aniversario de aquel desgraciado hecho.

Pero el primer año, después los cinco primeros años, diez años, quince años, veinte años, y se hacía necesario en esos estados grandes, discutir no solo a nuestro pueblo, si hacía necesario recordar, en toda su dimensión histórica, aquel hecho, a este todo el principal protagonista de aquel hecho; en de una manera natural, en una manera espontánea, todos los sectores, todo el pueblo los recordaba durante los últimos meses antes de hacía. Y si podía comprender esto en el momento que esto ocurrió, como lo que hemos visto aquí hoy, el vigor de silencio, el temor, el respetuoso silencio de Moncada, Cabaña, que escuchamos los con el mismo acento, con la misma voz con que lo escuchamos hace veinte años.

Se podría creer de hacer aquí un discurso político, muy grandilocuente, al ver escrito, en estos tiempos en que, en realidad, el gran estudio de trabajo operativo de nuestra historia, lo para escribir no discursos, sino, sobre, para analizar con una profundidad sobre todos aquellos acontecimientos y sobre las cosas que aquí podrían decirse.

Por eso quiero esta hora en este acto recordar al Che relacionado con nuestro pueblo, con la actualidad, la relacionado nuestro con el Che.

En mi opinión parte del cual somos responsables en nuestro país, comprendiendo a los propios de sus periodistas italianos que nos traen casi diariamente libros relacionados contra y las cosas de televisión, esta que de televisión de este porque en los relatos de hay que esa calidad relativa a la imagen de todo la vista, no sabía el valor decía que, a veces pone un rollo que dura dos horas, una la cámara de cine, cambiando la relación de plano o simplemente mirando, y así un hombre hablando aquello sentencia —algo que

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No piense que ustedes, compañeros y compañeras, que solo trabajando duro o cuidando los productos los problemas. Hay actividades en que no se puede trabajar duro: si cuentan horas; hay actividades en que, incluso, todas horas pueden ser muchas. Y opiniones que no da cubas los pensado no son que las aspiraciones, hombres, que un cientos actividades, el tiempo fuera de trabajo suficiente —y la satisfacción a nuestro corazón en un empeño— podemos establecer en cierta medida, nuestra de más horas.

Es que quiero decir es que en alguna del tiempo y del sentido del Che es también aprovechar la primera libertad con ideales de verdad, sobre que la calidad optimo el profundo, entre los centros de planillas trabajar organizadamente, desarrollar la conciencia.

Es cierto mismo de que el colectivo de esta fábrica sabe: no acredor de tener de que el cumplimiento pleno del sueldo del Che como extreno urgente de que esta creencia ha sido sensible y esta acreedora a que esto ocurriera se haya celebrado aquí.

Si algo nos hiciera ver desde esta noche en que pese a las dificultades, pese a que cuenta con menos recursos con diversas contrariedades que sabes, por factores que en ocasiones explicado pese a la orgía, pese al incumplimiento del bloqueo imperialista, a pesar con esta creciente el pueblo, a pesar que aquí estas cuatro mil o más personas, no nos

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A kind of total object in which idea and material become a unity.

AC: I saw a recent installation of the Waves piece in the Unlimited section of Art Basel, where it was given a prominent position at the entrance of the Hall 1. It was basically made of two rows of huge billboard sized structures, at the supporting frame and height of actual roadside billboards, so that visitors would walk underneath them—or beside them, or between them—but could not really face them frontally. You chose not to have an "in your face" type of installation. What was the underlying approach to this?

DH: A billboard is an outdoor object that is usually installed in distant, unreachable zones; therefore we rarely see it close enough to realize how big it actually is. Bringing an outdoor-public object to an indoor-private space is indeed very important for this particular work. You probably remember works of mine in which I included electric poles, highway lamps, and TV antennas. Bringing these objects into indoor spaces—private spaces—allows me to show how the content and connotations that these objects carry can have a massive impact in your private life. I am looking forward to seeing this installation in a smaller and more intimate space, then we can better see how difficult is to have the "sea" inside your house.

AC: Tell me a secret about your work. Even a small one.

DH: Secrets? I read this sentence everyday:

Ah, que tú escapes en el instante
en el que ya habías alcanzado tu definición
mejor.

Ah, that you escape in the flash
when you had come upon your best
definition.[1]

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Cuban-born and Düsseldorf-based artist, Diango Hernández, is one of the foremost conceptual artists from Central and South America working today. Hernandez's work has been exhibited in shows at major international art centers and biennials, e.g. MOMA, New York; Haus der Kunst, Munich; the Hayward Gallery, London; the 2005 Venice Biennale; the 2006 São Paulo and Sydney Biennales and the 2010 Liverpool Biennial. Major solo exhibitions were held at Kunsthalle Münster and at MART Rovereto, and in November 2015 a new one will open at MOSTYN, Wales.

TITLE PAGE:
Diango Hernández, *Flying oranges translated,* (2014). Oranges, synthetic cord and metal hook. Variable dimensions. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Capitain Petzel, Marlborough Contemporary, Nicolas Krupp Gallery. Photo: Annette Kradisch.

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PREVIOIS SPREAD:
Diango Hernández, *Visible: Compañeras y compañeros* (2013). Pigment on canvas, pins and offset printed paper; 2 parts, each 60 x 60 cm. Courtesy of Marlborough Contemporary. Photo: Anne Pöhlmann..

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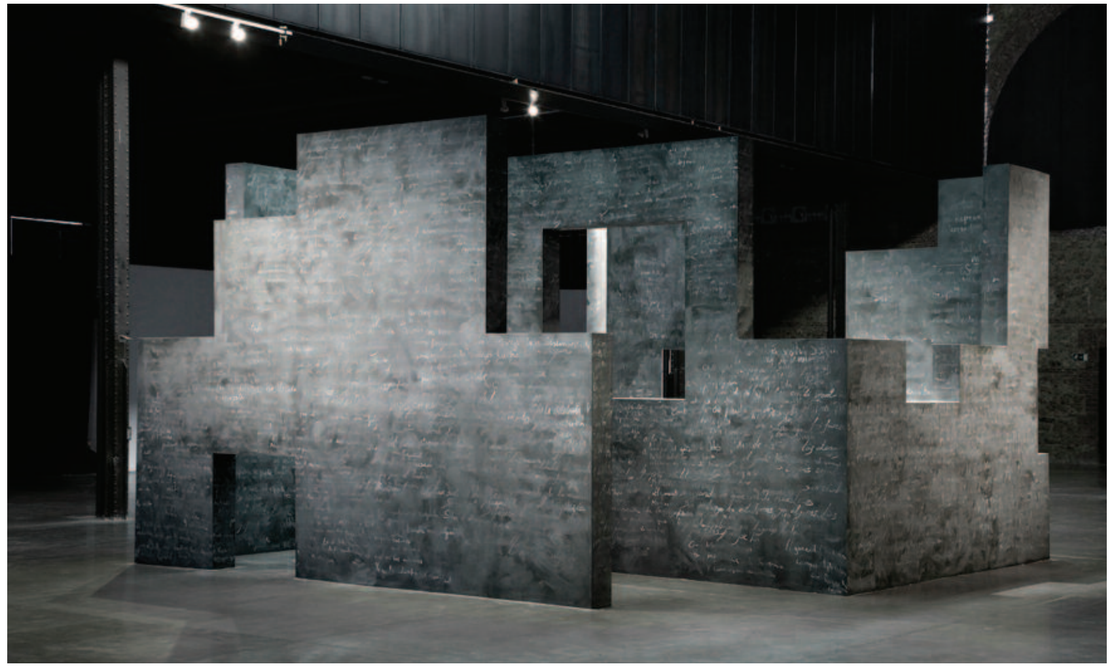
BELOW:
Diango Hernández, *Folded Tiger,* (2013). Wood, iron, mirror, book page, 150 x 140 x 40 cm. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Capitain Petzel, Marlborough Contemporary, Nicolas Krupp Gallery. Photo: Anne Pöhlmann.

RIGHT, TOP:
Diango Hernández, *His signature*, (2015). Oil on canvas (Aluminium stretchers), 550 x 194,1 cm. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Capitain Petzel, Marlborough Contemporary, Nicolas Krupp Gallery. Photo: Anne Pöhlmann.

RIGHT, BOTTOM:
Diango Hernández, *Lestory,* (2009). Wood, paint, chalk and african sculptures, 600 x 600 x 600 cm. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Capitain Petzel, Marlborough Contemporary, Nicolas Krupp Gallery. Photo: Matadero.

1 José Lezama Lima (December 19, 1910 – August 9, 1976) was a Cuban writer and poet who is considered one of the most influential figures in Latin American literature.



JOSÉ LERMA

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Profile of the Artists: BGL

CANADISSIMO // 56TH VENICE BIENNALE

By Tina Gelsomini

Something of the magical and humid Mediterranean atmosphere fills the air. As you wander through the lush paths surrounding the select national pavilions in the giardini, you happen on a rather opposing structure. It is supported by long metal beams; to the left, its entrance is small and unassuming, a door to a shack. You walk inside expecting a hidden surprise, and are perhaps disappointed to find yourself standing in the middle of a *Dépanneur* (often referred to as "the Dep"), a Quebecois version of a corner store. A woman to your right shoulder is jostling to get a better look at the believably sparse rows of soda pop and chips lined along the shelves, but its familiar items are out of focus. You expect your eyes to adjust, but the products remain unyieldingly blurred. In a muffled breath, her lips nearly brush your ear as she whispers one unintelligible word: *Canadassimo.*

This store is a stage set. Its props betray all expectations; no clerk will see you at the counter. This is not a run for the basics at midnight; this is a simulacrum of experience. Perhaps you are on camera. You realize this is not the fault of your eyes, but that the products on these shelves are purposefully pixelated, like holograms that show both aspects of their animation at once, without resolve. Perhaps now would be the moment when Jasmin Bilodeau, Sébastien Giguère, and Nicolas Laverdière—better known as the collective BGL—would step out from behind an unseen curtain, and reveal their exhibition at the 56th Venice Biennale's Canadian Pavilion to you in all of its mundane yet mischievous glory. No such theatricality occurs; you are left in the ghost of the recognizable. The identifiable slowly slips away to farce.

Biolodeau, Giguère, and Laverdière have been working together under the collective moniker BGL for nearly twenty years. Once a trio of artist-students at Quebec City's Laval University, BGL rose to national and international recognition through dozens of exhibitions, and are now represented by two major contemporary Canadian galleries (Toronto's Diaz Contemporary and Montréal's Parisian Laundry). Their works are in prominent institutional collections such as the National Gallery of Canada and the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal—institutions which the group promptly broke out of by bringing their primary focus onto the street, as recycled object sculptors who have installed works in public spaces across Canada and abroad. Since this departure, BGL has gained so much notoriety that they were selected as the featured Canadian artists for the 2015 Venice Biennale without ever submitting an application. As they noted in their Vice Canada interview with Kristel Jax, "We just picked up the phone."

Whether by design or by fluke, Canada's newest artworld darlings are constructing a dialogue around the current Canadian artistic landscape—an identity they see as being in line with a series of like-minded artists that provoke viewers through a deadpan inventiveness that prioritizes a sense of inane humor. BGL has undoubtedly carved out their own space within this arena—their gimmickry seems far from slowing down and is, rather, becoming rapidly more accessible toward a definition of contemporary Canadian art. The interview that follows traces BGL's collective thoughts on the international art world, and their local perspectives on a globalized North American culture.

TINA GELSOMINI: As Quebecois artists, you not only have been given the chance to represent Canada, but to do so from a distinctly Quebecois perspective at the Venice Biennale. How did this awareness influence *Canadassimo*?

BGL: Given that we are sculptor-recyclers, we work with what surrounds us. Our creative centre is Quebec City, so our art is coloured by the territory. Our North American attributes are fun to exploit and have always been part of our approach. But are we, as francophones, so different? Perhaps we are just more conscious of the critical mass of outside influences.

TG: Nevertheless, there is an immense amount of expectation to live up to as the selected artists to represent Canada. How did that enormity sit with you individually, and with BGL as the collective?

BGL: Well, to start—it was a huge surprise; we had not heard any rumours [of the selection]. The news came just as we were working on two major outdoor architectural-integration projects—one in Toronto and the other in Montréal. Let's just say that the unprecedented pressure added a few white hairs to our respective beards. It remains to be seen, now, whether these trees will bear fruit...

TG: I've read that your first step for imagining *Canadassimo* was to have a bas-relief wooden sculpture of the Canadian Pavilion carved by a local Quebecois artist. How did the Canadian Pavilion's existing architecture influence the works you created?

BGL: We are always responsive to place and environment. In this case, the physical position of the pavilion in the gardens very quickly gave us the idea of a small convenience store that

We try as much as possible to offer a relevant reflection of our era.

TITLE PAGE:
Installation views: BGL, *Canadassimo*, 2015. Installation for the Canada Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 2014. Photo: Paolo Pellion di Persano, courtesy of BGL, Parisian Laundry, Montreal, and Diaz Contemporary, Toronto.

ABOVE:
"Depanneur-ville-emard" by Minm - Own work. Licensed under CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons and *Canadissimo*.

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FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT:
BGL, 2008 © Richard-Max Tremblay. Courtesy of BGL.

FOLLOWING SPREAD, RIGHT:
Installation views: BGL, *Canadassimo*, 2015. Installation for the Canada Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 2014. Photo: Paolo Pellion di Persano, courtesy of BGL, Parisian Laundry, Montreal, and Diaz Contemporary, Toronto.

would become the entrance to our installation. Also, the building's extensive fenestration inspired the labyrinthine windows into which visitors can drop coins. And the whole place has a "welcoming little cottage" feel that made it the perfect place to create the studio, as if it belonged to a not very adept artist-handyman-hoarder. You have to see it to grasp all the subtleties and the osmosis that takes place.

TG: There are so many found objects and minute details incorporated into the installation, tell me more about the process, the timeline and the team that you worked with.

BGL: We had a whole year to work on *Canadassimo*, which does not happen often in our practice. This extended period allowed us to produce a complex sculpture that went beyond us, and whose meaning we are still trying to figure out.

In terms of the installation, we were working with fantastic teams, in Quebec City and at the National Gallery in Ottawa, who were a tremendous help all the way to Venice, where the logistics of transport are crucial, complex and hugely expensive—but where the gelato is really good.

TG: As irreverent humorists that thrive on low forms of culture and art, one might imagine that you felt at-odds with the aesthetic and intensity of the Venice Biennale and the other artists representing the national pavilions throughout this process. How did this conflict inspire you creatively? In your minds, was Canadassimo a safe-space or break from the "high" art world?

BGL: We saw it as a great opportunity to provide an experience that would contrast with the Biennale's more prestigious aspect. One that would get away from ostentation. Make art simple again. Bring it down to earth and allow spectators to participate. This is what shaped the choices we made. Challenging conventions and clichés will always be an important source of inspiration for us, whatever the project.

TG: Is the expectation of a viewer's curiosity and their potential interaction one of the driving forces behind your work?

BGL: Yes. Very often one of the aims with our installations is to give spectators the feeling that they are discovering an environment. It seems that this sense of discovery heightens viewers' curiosity, and makes them more attentive to details—to particular visual phenomena.

TG: Both BGL & *Canadassimo* not only play on our conceived definitions of art, but also challenge the status quo of consumerist North American culture. How do you balance this critique with playfulness? How does this pre-set define you as artists?

BGL: You know, laughing at one's failings is very healthy. We try as much as possible to offer a relevant reflection of our era. We are conscious of our privileged position as both witnesses and actors in today's world. We are constantly experiencing the beauty of boundless exuberance, which is what inspires us.

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BGL is an artist collective composed of Jasmin Bilodeau (born: 1973), Sébastien Giguère (born: 1972), Nicolas Laverdière (born: 1972) originally from Quebec city. The trio was formed some 13 years ago while the three artists were still studying at Université de Laval in Québec City.

Elina Kountouri

TERRAPOLIS // NEON

In Conversation with Kostas Prapoglou

One hundred and sixty-nine years since its foundation by King Louis-Philippe I, the French School at Athens is the oldest of the seventeen foreign archaeological institutes in Greece. The institution has explored and studied Hellenism and antiquity through excavations and systematic methodology practices in the analysis of primary evidence—with a wealth of excavation projects in its history, including prominent archaeological sites such as Delos and Delphi, the School plays an active role in the domain of research in Classical studies and epigraphy. Its headquarters, on Didotou Street in the neighborhood of Kolonaki in Athens, have been the center of research for over a century for innumerable scholars. Its gardens have remained a hidden secret to the general public—up until now.

Terrapolis, the most recent exhibition presented by NEON Organization for Culture and Development—presented in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery in London—opened an exhibition in the private gardens of the School, for the first time in its lengthy history, to feature the works of thirty-seven artists from eighteen countries. From Lynn Chadwick, Joseph Beuys, Joan Jonas, Yayoi Kusama, and Sarah Lucas, to Aliki Palaska, Kostas Sahpazis and Dionisis Kavallieratos, the exhibition—spanning the School's main garden areas as well as the courtyard of its magnificent neoclassical library—encompassed an ingenious dialogue among the works of Greek and non Greek artists.

Surveying the inter-relationship of humans and animals, the show questions notions of coexistence and interrogates societal parameters imbued with elements of Greek mythology and ancient history that counter-react with the contemporary realm. In *Terrapolis*, viewers navigate themselves through the interchangeability of the past and present. The ongoing discourse, between the natural world but also the exhibition site itself, initiates a conscious realization of our own personal mythologies, and challenges more esoteric trajectories to reflecting a synthesis of our surrounding environment. By unlocking this idyllic secret space, NEON renders a type of ephemeral escapism into an arcadian locus—away from the contiguous political and socio-economic turmoil. *Terrapolis* engages in a continuous exchange with an inspirational, even utopic, public habitat.

Elina Kountouri, Director of NEON, oversees the foundation's activities, projects, and cultural programs. I invited her to discuss the evolvement of the organization with the Greek contemporary art scene, and explain how *Terrapolis* has impacted its audience—a transcription of our conversation is below.

KOSTAS PRAPOGLOU: NEON is a relatively new addition to the Athens contemporary art scene. What led to the decision of founding a cultural organization?

ELINA KOUNTOURI: NEON is a non-profit organization founded and solely funded by art collector Dimitris Daskalopoulos with the aim to bring contemporary art closer to the public, and to introduce the public to contemporary arts and culture. It is based in Greece, and launched its full program of activities in June 2013 amidst a severely shaken financial and social environment. Being the spotlight of the current world economy, international media, and enduring global commentary on a daily basis, the last years have not been easy for Greek citizens. NEON tries to respond to the urgency of the

situation and act in this kind of void. It was our decision to launch our activities within this environment. It is a strategic, institutional decision: we want to make a commitment to contemporary art and culture, to unveil the potential of contemporary art and its ideas as a tool of growth and a catalyst for change. This is the reason why although Daskalopoulos is a collector of international caliber, we moved away from the traditional model of making a space to house the collection. It breaks with the convention that the role of a contemporary art organization, founded by a person who is an art enthusiast and collector, ought to be spatially bound.

Cosmopolis was of Greek origin, after all.

Instead, our space is the city. Art happens within the city. We act on a multi-locality of initiatives, spaces, civic, and social contexts. The open, free and yet structured model of activities of NEON proposes a creative partnership of public-private initiatives. Our platform of collaborations is diverse, and spans from our exhibitions to our learning and grants program. We focus on new commissions, giving the opportunity to artists to engage with the public space through our city and community projects, such as opening up closed gardens within the center of Athens to house public art exhibitions and bridge our formidable cultural heritage with contemporary art initiatives.

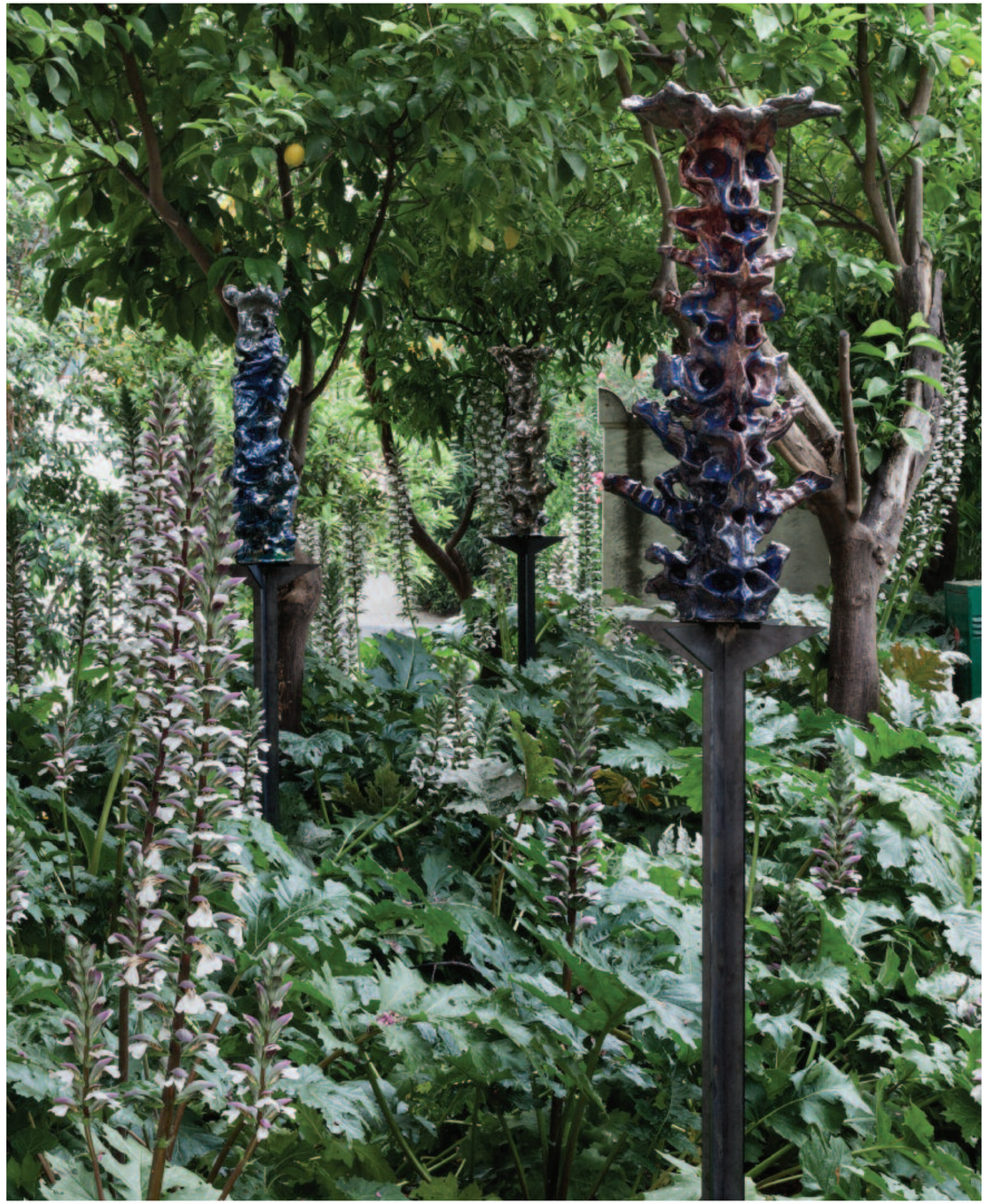
I am positive that an informed society around contemporary art and culture can release a wealth of human potential and regenerate a cosmopolitan drive. The idea of cosmopolis was of Greek origin, after all.

KP: What were the criteria of choosing the French School of Athens as the venue to feature *Terrapolis*?

EK: ***Terrapolis*** has a specific narrative, which investigates the relation between humans and animals. Echoing the satyrs, sphinxes and centaurs of Greek statuary, contemporary sculptures, installations and films draw on myth, drama and the animal kingdom to suggest a 'bioethics' for the century. Iwona Blazwick, curator of the exhibition, masterfully worked around this theme with works ranging from historical public artworks, such as Lynn Chadwick's, ***Dancers*** (1967), to new commissions by Greek artists, such as Athanasios Argianas, Eleni Kamma, Kostas Sahpazis, Dionisis Kavallieratos, and Alice Palaska. It was rewarding that both Greek and non-Greek left-wing scene in Athens. The dynamism in the location, in relation to the fact that the gardens were only accessible to the French School researchers since 1872, made it the ideal challenge for NEON to start a collaboration with one of the oldest archaeological research schools in Athens. The visionary director of the French School in Athens, Alexandre Farnoux, responded with enthusiasm to my proposal, and so the gardens and its secret pathways became the backdrop to bring together Greek and non-Greek artists into the public realm with works of art that reconnect the human with the animal. Visitors behave differently in a garden; they are more relaxed, less timid. It is an ideal setting to approach the uninitiated public and introduce them to legendary public art works and other works made specifically for this exhibition.

KP: *Terrapolis* embraces the work of a wide range of Greek and non-Greek artists. What do you think is the key component that makes this combination work?

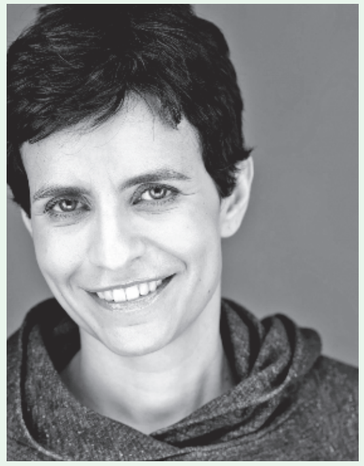
EK: The public responded with tremendous enthusiasm, and to some extent gratitude. It was a strange feeling to come across people and families that wholeheartedly thanked you for providing them with free access to the gardens and the exhibition. It acted as a



“sanctuary,” a place where people came to shut down their feelings of anxiety, alienation and anger. It would be hard to forget that the show ran all through the month of July in the middle of a turbulent social referendum, the closing of the banks, and the imposition of capital controls.

KP: How do you see NEON evolving in the years to come, and what contributions to the Greek contemporary art scene do you expect to see?

EK: I would like our projects to have a connecting, educational and transformational value in the long term; a connecting value in which NEON acts as a link between multi-local networks, partners and activities at different locations. That is why we have created a network of trained volunteers whose involvement is of the utmost importance to us, an educational value that will continue to expose contemporary arts and culture to a wider audience. Finally, a sustainable transformational value; activities that will steadily transform the platform of expression, dialogue, and cultural interaction and put forward Greece’s dynamic voice and intellectual cosmopolitan outlook to demonstrate its creative, liberal, forward thinking and operational capability.



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Elina Kountouri is the Director of NEON, founded by collector Dimitris Daskalopoulos.

TITLE PAGE:
Yayoi Kusama, *Pumpkin (M)* (2014), courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro, London; Asta Gröting, *Monkey Dance 6* (2015) Leather, courtesy the artist and Carlier | Gebauer. Installation view of *Terrapolis* exhibition at The French School at Athens, 2015, courtesy NEON and Whitechapel Gallery. photo credit: Nikos Markou.

RIGHT:
French School at Athens, “Terrapolis,” Co-curated by Iwona Blazwick with the NEON Organization and Whitechapel Gallery, 2015.

—

PREVIOUS SPREAD:
Installation view of *Terrapolis* exhibition at The French School at Athens, 2015, courtesy NEON and Whitechapel Gallery. photo credit: Natalia Tsoukala.

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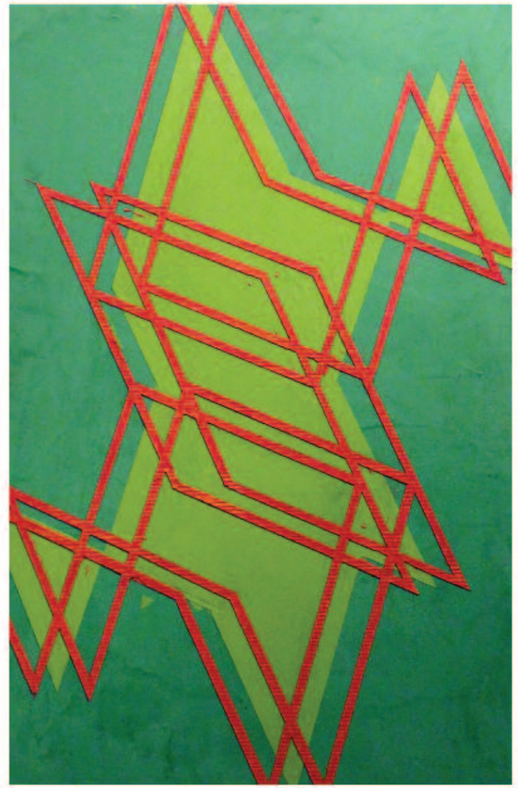
LEFT:
Elina Kountouri, Director of NEON



PICTURED: 2014 Northern Trust Purchase Prize, “Saree,” Elise Ferguson, Romer Young Gallery, San Francisco

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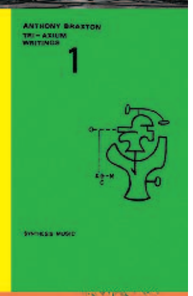
ART YOU CAN HEAR