THE SEE/05

CHICAGO'S INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY & MODERN ART





#### COVER:

Bouchra Khalili, The Constellations Series, Fig. 8, 2011, © Bouchra Khalili; Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

### THE SEEN

Issue 05

# Chicago's **International Journal** of Contemporary & Modern Art

- **MASTHEAD** 04
- **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR** 10 Stephanie Cristello

### Reviews

- THE BOAT IS LEAKING. THE **CAPTAIN LIED.** — THOMAS DEMAND, **ALEXANDER KLUGE. & ANNA VIEBROCK // FONDAZIONE PRADA** By Greg Foster-Rice
- **ARRIVING HERE: CANDIDA ALVAREZ** // CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER By Susan Snodgrass
- FOR LOVE AND MONEY: THE **SUMMER OF LOVE—ART. FASHION, AND ROCK & ROLL** // DE YOUNG MUSEUM By Stephen F. Eisenman
- **BLUE BLACK: GLENN LIGON** // PULITZER ARTS FOUNDATION By Brian Prugh
- **POTENTIAL METAMOPHOSIS: HELENA ALMEIDA // ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO**

By Ruslana Lichtzier

### Features

- 48 **BOXING IN A SUITCASE: MARCEL DUCHAMP VS. ROCKY BALBOA //** PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART By Guillaume Désanges
- **UNCERTAIN HOPE: DOCUMENTA 14** // LEARNING FROM ATHENS By Caroline Picard
- **OF TOGETHERNESS**

By Alfredo Cramerotti

**ANGELO PLESSAS // THE POLITICS** 

- **70 BEYOND BUILDINGS—ANIA** JAWORKSA, JAMES WELLING, AND AMANDA WILLIAMS // CHICAGO **ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL** By Kate Pollasch
- **76** BARBARA BLOOM // **MUSICAL SCORES**

Special Edition Insert Selected and Introduced by Stephanie Cristello

### Interviews

- SPACE, FORCE, CONSTRUCTION **REVOLUTSIIA! DEMONSTRATSIIA!** SOVIET ART PUT TO THE TEST // **MATTHEW WITKOVSKY &** KATERINA CHUCHALINA By Anastasia Karpova Tinari
- 100 GAYLEN GERBER // ARTIST **LECTURE SERIES VIENNA CONVERSATIONS** By Eva Badura-Triska
- 120 AMALIA PICA // THE EXPERIENCE OF STRANGERS By Ionit Behar
- 128 COUNTER-GEOGRAPHY—BOUCHRA KHALILI // PROFILE OF THE ARTIST By Natalie Hegert
- 138 BY RADICAL DESIGN: GIANNI PETTENA//PROFILE OF THE ARTIST By Dr. Kostas Prapoglou
- 144 A PERIOD OF (ECONOMIC) **OPTIMISM—TERENCE GOWER** // HAVANA CASE STUDY By Joel Kuennen

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### THE SEEN

### Issue 05

## Chicago's International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art

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### **SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Gaylen Gerber, The Artist Lecture Series Vienna Barbara Bloom, *Musical Scores*, Courtesy of David Lewis Gallery (Selected by Stephanie Cristello)

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With Issue 05 of THE SEEN, aligned to distribute alongside EXPO CHICAGO (September 13–17), we mark another milestone and celebrate two significant collaborations that have allowed us to present our largest issue to date.

Featured on the cover of Issue 05 is the artwork by Bouchra Khalili, whose work perfectly bridges our extraordinary alliance with the Palais de Tokyo, as her work is included in their special exhibition entitled Singing Stones, curated by Katell Jaffrès. Our collaboration with the Palais de Tokyo began back in October of 2015 with an earnest handshake from its Director, Jean de Loisy—what transpired from that initial meeting was a journey of camaraderie, fearlessness, and the beginning of a truly magical partnership. We are extremely proud and privileged to have worked so closely with this venerable institution, and with the Institut français, to realize their first off-site exhibition in the United States. Singing Stones is being held in the historic Roundhouse at the DuSable Museum of African American History, and features artwork from eleven emerging artists from Chicago and France. I am most confident that the exhibition will leave an indelible mark on Chicago's cultural community, be a significant opportunity for the participating artists and most importantly broaden the international scope, awareness and impact for the Palais de Tokyo.

Also within this edition is a feature article focusing on three contemporary artists-Amanda Williams, James Welling, and Ania Jaworskawhose photography, sculptures, and installations illustrate the nexus between art and architecture. The piece, and their work on display at the Chicago Cultural Center, is an illustrative component that further outlines this juncture, and adds to the long list of collaborative projects that our strategic date and programming alignment with the Chicago Architectural Biennial has fostered. The second edition of the Biennial, entitled Make New History, is Co-Artistic Directed by Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee, of the Los Angeles-based architecture firm Johnston Marklee. I am certain that their vision and curatorial efforts will guarantee that Chicago is the epicenter of international architectural discourse this September through January 7, 2018.

On behalf of myself, and our indefatigable Editor-in-Chief Stephanie Cristello, I sincerely thank our advertisers, our contributing international writers and artists, and the most creative JNL Graphic Design for their commitment and determination to excellence. Their effort furthers our mission to provide a record for contemporary art and architectural practices, illuminating the important international collaborations that we continue to foster.

Onward,

TONY KARMAN

Publisher

#### **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Stephanie Cristello (Canadian b. 1991) is a critic and independent curator living and working in Chicago, IL. She is the Senior Editor US for ArtSlant, and is the founding Editor-in-Chief of THE SEEN, Chicago's International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art. She is a frequent contributor to the London-based publications ArtReview and Elephant Magazine, and her writing has appeared in Frieze Magazine, 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 in 2013 with a Liberal Arts Thesis. She is currently the Director of Programming at EXPO CHICAGO, the International Exposition of Contemporary & Modern Art.

### **STAFF WRITERS**

Eva Badura-Triska is an art historian and curator at the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung (mumok), Vienna. She is the author of numerous publibcations on modern and contemporary rt, with a focus on Vienna Actionism, Franz West, Heimo Zobernig, and other artists emerging in the 1980s; in her early career, she also wrote on the Chicago Imagists.

Ionit Behar is an art historian, curator and critic. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She holds a Masters in Art History, Theory and Criticism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a Bachelor of Art Theory from Tel Aviv University, and a degree in Art Administration from the Bank Boston Foundation in Montevideo. She is the Curator of Collections and Exhibitions at Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership and the Director of Curatorial Affairs for Fieldwork Collaborative Projects NFP (FIELDWORK), a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing cultural capital in Chicago by working collaboratively with the Chicago Park District, CTA, and Public Schools. She has served as a Research Assistant for the exhibition Hélio Oiticica: To Organize Delirium at the Art Institute of Chicago and as a Curatorial Assistant at Gallery 400. Behar regularly writes for print and online publications including ArtSlant, the Chicago Reader, The Exhibitionist, La Pupila, and THE SEEN.

Alfredo Cramerotti is a writer and curator in modern and contemporary art, film, video, photography, and new media. Director of MOSTYN, Wales, Head Curator of APT Artist Pension Trust as well as the roaming curatorial agencies AGM Culture and CPS Chamber of Public Secrets, his most recent projects include the Mauritius Pavilion at the 56th Venice Art Bienniale, Italy, and Sequences VII, the real-time festival biennial in Reykjavik, Iceland. He is Editor of the Critical Photography series by Intellect Books, and his own publications include the book Aesthetic Journalism: How to inform without informing (2009).

Guillaume Désanges is a freelance curator and art critic, and the Founder / Director of Work Method, a Paris-based agency for artistic projects. He organizes international exhibitions projects and lectures.

Stephen F. Eisenman, Professor of Art History at Northwestern University, is the author of nine books including The Abu Ghraib Effect (2007) and The Cry of Nature: Art and the Making of Animal Rights (2014). He has curated major exhibitions in the United States and Europe, including Design in the Age of Darwin (2007) and The Ecology of Impressionism (2010). His exhibition, William Blake and the Age of Aquarius will open in September 2017 at the Block Museum. His reviews, articles, and op-eds have recently appeared in Art in America, the Chicago Sun Times, Newcity, and Monthly Review. This year, Eisenman cofounded an environmental non-profit called Anthropocene Alliance.

Greg Foster-Rice is an art historian specializing in the history, theory, and criticism of photography. As a teacher, he is engaged in a wide range of photographic media and their relationships to a variety of contexts (artistic, cinematic, commercial, photojournalistic, and scientific). His current research focuses these interests towards the intersection of photography and issues of urbanism, landscape, and/ or ecology. He also writes more generally about art and visual culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

**Natalie Hegert** is an arts writer and editor currently based in Los Angeles.

**Joel Kuennen** is an arts writer and curator based in Brooklyn, NY. He is COO, Senior Editor at ArtSlant.com.

Ruslana Lichtzier is a curator, writer, and educator. Born in Siberia, Russia and raised in Israel, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts with honors from Bezalel Academy of Fine Arts and Design (Jerusalem, Israel) and Masters of Arts in Visual and Critical Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Her background as a migrant propels cultural productions that aim to nest radical imagination of difference and change. She has taught at the University of Chicago (Arts Incubator) and SAIC, among other places. Recent productions include the research project in form of a group exhibition Terrorists in The Library, at Harold Washington College (Chicago, Illinois), and Charles Fogarty's solo exhibition, Why All Things Happen, at Fernway Gallery (Chicago, Illinois). She is a Core fellow at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas. Lichtzier contributes to THE SEEN, artseverywhere.ca, and Newcity.

Caroline Picard is an artist, writer, publisher, and curator. Her writing has appeared 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.

**Dr. Kostas Prapoglou** is an archaeologistarchitect, contemporary art writer, critic, and curator based in London, UK and Athens, Greece. His texts have been featured in exhibition catalogues and publications in both countries. His reviews and articles are published in the international press on a frequent basis.

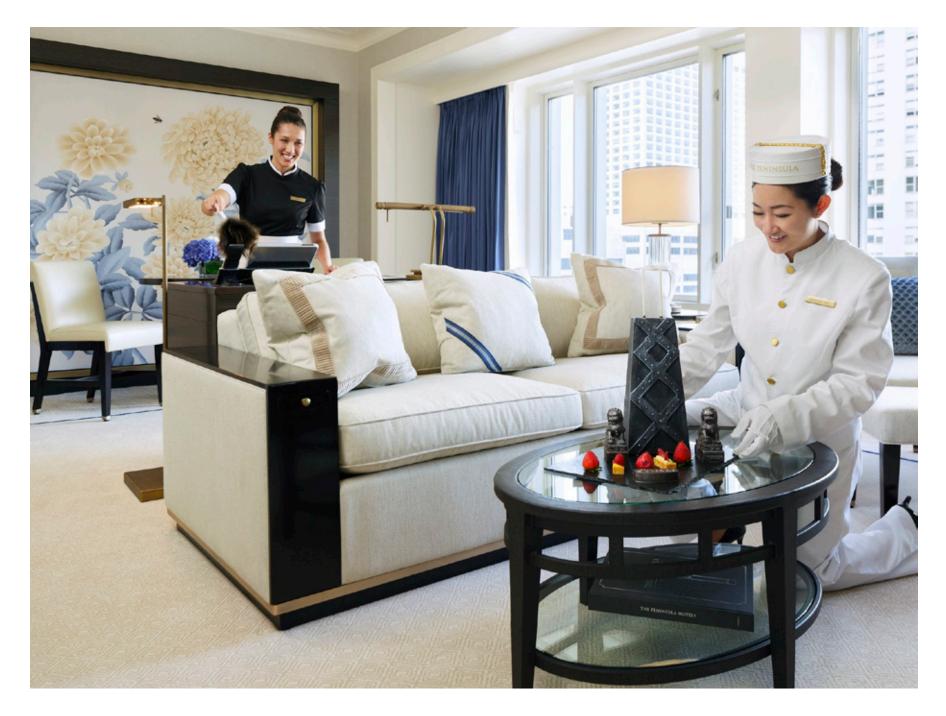
Brian Prugh's essays and criticism have appeared in THE SEEN, The Miami Rail, Little Village, and in Michah Bloom's Codex, forthcoming from The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota. He and his family live in Florida.

Susan Snodgrass is a Senior Lecturer at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. As a critic, much of her writing is devoted to alternative models of critical practice and art making, whether exploring new genres of public art or the construction of cultural infrastructure in post-communist Europe. Her blog, In/Site: Reflections on the Art of Place, explores art and urbanism. She has written for both print and online publications, most notably for Art in America, for which she served as a Corresponding Editor (1994-2013), and ARTMargins Online, for which she is co-editor. She has contributed articles to numerous other periodicals, and is the editor of several books and catalogs. Since 2010, she has served as a mentor for the AICA-Creative Capital/Warhol Foundation Arts Writing Workshop. Her current curatorial projects focus on the architecture of Ken Isaacs.

Anastasia Karpova Tinari (MA, Art History, American University, BA, Washington & Lee University) is a Chicago-based curator, writer, and art historian. She currently works as Associate Director at Rhona Hoffman Gallery, is a Resident Curator for ACRE exhibitions, and contributes regularly to *Newcity* and *THE SEEN*.

Kate Pollasch is an art historian, writer and curator. Her curatorial practice interrogates preexisting notions of history and normativity and advocates for the visibility of often unseen narratives and works. In 2012, she curated the exhibition Roger Brown: This Boy's Own Story, of Chicago Imagist artist Roger Brown's artistic relationship to HIV, sexuality, mortality, and Chicago's gay leather community. The exhibition unearthed previously censored artworks and archival materials from Brown's career and resulted in Brown's induction into the Visual AIDS Artist Registry. Pollasch holds a Masters in Modern Art History and Theory and a Masters in Arts Administration and Cultural Policy from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art and Art History from Saint Mary's College of Maryland. She has held positions with The American Visionary Art Museum, The Art institute of Chicago, the Roger Brown House Museum, Sullivan Galleries, and Rhona Hoffman Gallery.

Gabrielle Welsh is an undergraduate student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Visual and Critical Studies department. She has written for *FNews Magazine*, *THE SEEN*, and various small press publications.



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Stephanie Cristello



### SYMPHONY OF SIRENS

On April 8, 2017, in Athens, my first encounter of documenta 14 was marked by the translation of Arseny Avraamov's Symphony of Sirens (1919–1923). Installed within the upper level galleries of the EMST, National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, archival text and scores related to the composer's original work, Symphony of Factory Horns, envelop the space. The symphony, which intended to transform the framework of the industrial city into a musical instrument in itself, was recorded by Avraamov from telegraph poles; a vast orchestra composed from cannons sounding, marine military vessels, artillery, locomotives, and hydroplanes, among other sources. Avraamov's work unfolds against the backdrop of Soviet political context. Conceived as a sonic interpretation of modernism, the creation of the piece was aligned as a celebration of the 1917 October Revolution, which celebrates its centennial anniversary as this issue of the publication is being produced.

— While Symphony of Sirens marked the first instance of sound within the installation, the first image I was confronted by was a series of two framed works on paper (1930/1931), each with a sequence of black and white patterns drawn onto the surface. The technique—where drawings on celluloid typically used for film animation were run through a recording device, to instead be interpreted as audio—was known as Graphical Sound, which Avraamov was a

part of. The patterns appear architectural, tracing designs such as the meander, but also parabolic waves—somewhere between what one would find painted on an ancient vase, or in music visualization software. The corresponding wall text quotes one of the members of the group, who voiced, "What if we take some Egyptian or ancient Greek ornaments as a sound track? Perhaps we would hear some unknown archaic music?"

Politics are rarely separated from experience, but are especially close in the context of sight and sound. In our current climate, image and rhetoric have never been so discerning. The premise and approach of Graphical Sound is not unlike the work of many artists and writers included within this edition of the publication: taking the disposition of one form, and translating its content by means of another unrelated vehicle to arrive at a new production.

We begin the cover of Issue 05 of THE SEEN, featuring Moroccan-French artist Bouchra Khalili's work from The Constellations Series, on the occasion of her inclusion in the Palais de Tokyo's exhibition, entitled Singing Stones, which traces the literal resonance between art and architecture. Featured as an experimental interview, which splices texts by both the artist and Staff Writer Natalie Hegert, Khalili's work serves as a kind of 'north star'—a touchpoint for which the other pieces can be navigated. The work belongs to a series of many prints that translate the illegal journeys of individuals across borders as white points against deep blue hues. Their pathways are rendered as if they were coordinates in the sky, or the sea—similarly borderless fields.

Khalili's work poetically addresses the current migrant crisis and issues of travel, which are similarly discussed in the context of other pieces, including Caroline Picard's poignant and intricate text on documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens, or Amalia Pica's interview, which traces how the bureaucracy inherent within the immigrant experience translates to her contrastingly celebratory visual language. As with the inclusion of Avraamov's work in documenta 14, Space Force Construction—installed in Venice at the V-A-C Foundation before its iteration at the Art Institute of Chicago this Fall— is similarly timely to the 2017 centennial of the October Revolution, and is featured as an interview with the curators by Anastasia Karpova-Tinari. This political undercurrent is also explored through architecture—in exhibitions aligning with the Chicago Architecture Biennial—such as in Terence Gower's Havana Case Studies at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago, whose interview covers the roots of his research and projects on US Embassies in enemy territory.

———— Issue 05 of THE SEEN is marked substantial collaborations with each of my Staff Writers—including a translation of Guillaume Désanges' brilliant speculative essay on the unlikely, but critical coincidence that compares Marcel Duchamp and Rocky Balboa, sparked from a conversation we had in Paris in 2015. We are also thrilled to be publishing Gaylen Gerber's text with Eva Badura-Triska, in advance of its publication as part of the Artist Lecture Series Vienna, allowing our readers a glimpse into this expansive and insightful consideration of his practice and most current body of work. A special thank you to Gaylen for his dedication in working with us so closely on this piece.

As always, I remain grateful to Publisher Tony Karman, whose continued support of THE SEEN has allowed us to publish our largest issue to date. We are indebted to Ashley Ryann, and Jason Pickleman, of JNL Graphic Design—without your keen design and collaboration, this publication would not be possible. Additional thank you to my Editorial Assistant, Gabrielle Welsh, for her work in assisting with this edition, and to Newcity Custom Publishing for helping to manage production and distribution.

— We close with our special edition insert, which I had the pleasure of selecting and introducing, featuring Barbara Bloom's *Musical Scores*. This inclusion would not have been possible without the collaboration of David Lewis Gallery—thank you to Dmitry Komis for working with me so closely on this piece. The artwork—five spreads for Issue 05—is placed among the center pages of THE SEEN, as if it were a musical composition book itself.

In addition to the select texts and works included within this edition of publication, I could not be more proud of all THE SEEN Staff Writers, and their commitment to producing engaging and relevant art criticism that bridges how we experience contemporary art.

Sight and sound have never been so close.

### STEPHANIE CRISTELLO

Editor-in-Chief



Reviews



Situated beneath a pediment, surrounded by frescoes in a Venetian palazzo, the door's unexpected metal hinges and rounded edges mimic the way a ship's hatches are designed to withstand water pressure in the event of a hull breach. This facsimile of a naval door serves as an ominous portent that the exhibition, The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied., will oscillate between scenes of normalcy and catastrophe, like a ship moving from safe harbor to stormy seas and back again.1 It also temporarily displaces the viewer from the exhibition's location within an eighteenth-century palazzo, creating the improbable sensation of being on a boat. As architecture historian Kurt Forster is quoted in the exhibition catalogue, the experience of buildings is frequently analogous to the experience of ships since "...architecture encompasses much more than what is standing above the ground and is accessible to the viewer. Buildings float in a veritable ocean of conditions, from tacit assumptions to underlying currents, which can be traced only through a real inspection, and sometimes only by intuition." 2 Unlike conventional museum exhibitions, the closed door presents an invitation to engage with the installation, encouraging visitors to open the

passageway and explore the room beyond. The exhibition gestures towards a kind of interpolation, making the audience acutely aware of their subject position within the exhibition space, by virtue of their direct engagement with an object whose status as a work of art is initially ambiguous, although it soon becomes apparent that it is part of an elaborate installation.

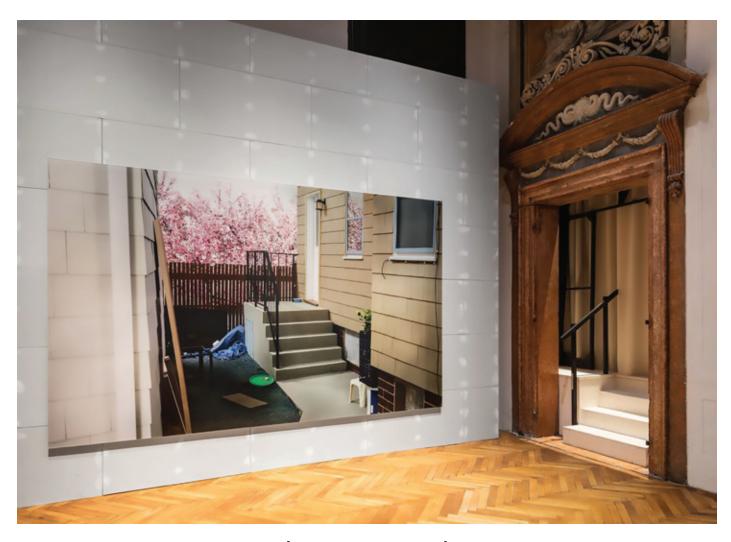
the other side of the portal, the interior of the room is lit only by Thomas Demand's video work Pacific Sun (2012), in which the artist, known for his photographic recreations of mass media, painstakingly animated 2,400 frames of film depicting 1:1 scaled cardboard replicas of wildlycareening furniture. Taken from a YouTube clip of a ship's interior during a tumultuous storm, the work reinforces the maritime analogy embedded throughout the exhibition. Accompanied by alternating loops of naturalistic sounds and a dramatic symphonic score that elevates the uncanny scene to high tragedy, the experience of deciphering Pacific Sun becomes an exercise in perception that extends throughout *The Boat is* Leaking. The Captain Lied. -

The exhibition occupies the first three floors of the Palazzo Ca'

Corner della Regina (now the Fondazione Prada), and transforms them into an immersive environment in which historical artifacts and artistic fabrications are provocatively commingled, much like the way Demand's video meticulously recreates a piece of found footage. *The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied.* is distinguished from other immersive and interactive exhibitions by its high degree of ambition, subtlety, and risk in challenging our expectations about the boundary between art and life.

——— Like the Leonard Cohen and Sharon Robinson song that inspired the title, the exhibition is a similarly collaborative effort between the photographer Thomas Demand, filmmaker Alexander Kluge, set designer Anna Viebrock, and curator Udo Kittelmann from the Berlin Nationalgalerie. And like Cohen and Robinson's song, the subject matter of the exhibition's imagery is frequently ominous—including Demand's photographs of traumatic sites, Kluge's films about totalitarianism, and Viebrock's elegantly shabby theatrical sets—yet the success of the artistic collaboration strikes a note of cautious optimism.

- Given the







individually successful careers and different disciplines of the three German artists, one of the principle goals of the exhibition is the staging of a site for the exploration of space, experience, and historical memory across and between the different media of photography, film, writing, and theater. *The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied.* is highly self-consciously displaces real space with representations of space through the selected works of Demand, Kluge, and Viebrock, effectively foregrounding its own material reality as a space of exhibition. The artworks operate as both representations of reality and material objects situated within space.

The first of these displacements registers on the site of the exhibition, the palazzo itself, which is periodically displaced—like water overflowing a tub—by the insertion of Viebrock's theatrical fabrications. This spatio-temporal confusion is dramatized by the fact that the casual observer cannot at first distinguish Viebrock's interventions from the elements they displace, such as the floor runner that subtly yet ingeniously ties the space of the exhibition together. This confusion is further amplified by the artist's incorporation of repurposed set designs, such as an enlarged replica of a Zeiss lamp from a 2015 production of Jean-Philippe Rameau's 1735 opera Les Indes galantes, or props specifically executed for the space, such as the Safari Bar door and Hotel vestibule. While a selection of the props on view are operable and dynamic, many of the others remain purposefully dysfunctional and inert, further complicating the visitor's experience one that is inevitably marked by attempts at trying to open doors, which in some cases are revealed as clever facsimiles that lead nowhere, while others open to actual passageways. Viebrock already has an established presence within the German theatrical and operatic community, but her participation in The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied. is sure to alert an even more diverse audience to her technical and conceptual mastery of space, form, and fabrication.



"The final displacement is articulated through Demand's photographs, in which he displaces reality with its simulation as a way of commenting on the mediated experience of modern life."

**—GREG FOSTER RICE** 

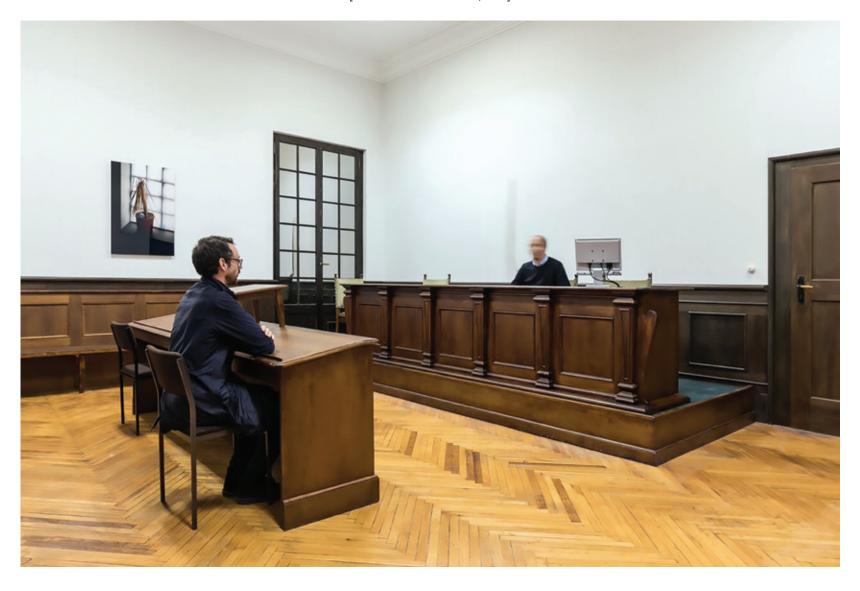
within cinema. Composed of a series of vignettes, in which we see famous German actors being lit by either teams of light-riggers, or by candlelight, the film's scenes are reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975). Originally shot on 65mm film, before being transferred to digital projection, the installation of *The Soft Makeup of Light* similarly introduces the viewer to the kinds of complex lighting effects employed by Viebrock and Demand throughout later portions of the exhibition.

- In yet another striking example of displacement, Viebrock recreates the interior of the courtroom from Kluge's Silver Lion-winning film Yesterday Girl (1966), in which an East German protagonist is detained for a minor theft that is emblematic of her inability to fit into West German society. While the film itself plays in Viebrock's reconstructed cinema in the adjacent gallery, the courtroom set allows viewers to alternately occupy the position of both the male judge and the female protagonist, recreating one of Kluge's most renowned scenes in which he innovatively used cross cuts, camera angles, and alternating first-person point-of-view to place audiences in the ambivalent position of both the accused and the accuser. Although these immediate cinematic and historical references are initially lost on the viewer, instead slowly unfolding through the collaborative nature of *The* Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied., Viebrock's astonishingly detailed courtroom instills an independently chilling oscillation between disenfranchisement and power as well as the sensation of being placed within one of Demand's meticulously recreated photographs. This sentiment is punctuated by the display of two of Demand's photographs on Viebrock's artificial courtroom walls, Tavern II and Tavern IV (both 2006), both of which were from a series that sought to recreate evidentiary photographs from a 2001 murder case in Germany. -

The final displacement is articulated through Demand's photographs, in which he displaces reality with its simulation as a way of commenting on the mediated experience of modern life.

- In

Backyard (2014), for example, the image replicates an otherwise innocuous photograph showing the back door and gated area of the home of the Boston Marathon bomber, Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Devoid of human subjects or precise historical references, Demand's version becomes a subtle meditation on the banality of evil, but



also the unsettling indeterminacy of photographic documentation. Within the context of the exhibition, Demand's multi-tiered displacement of reality through a chain of replications takes on additional urgency, even as the painstaking formal and material qualities of his finished photographs reinforce the significance of first-hand experience. Indeed, The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied. dramatically emphasizes the materiality of Demand's photographs through the juxtaposition of their shiny surfaces with Viebrock's cinder blocks, acoustic ceiling tiles, and other mundane building materials, as well as the luxurious marbles and matte-surfaced frescoes of the original palazzo. The effect is a natural extension of Demand's collaboration with architects Caruso St. John on his 2009 exhibition at the Nationalgalerie, in which his photographs hung against contrasting walls of heavy woolen curtains. In both cases, but especially in Venice, the viewer becomes even more highly attuned to the triple-flattening of space in Demand's work via the sequential acts of photography, fabrication, then re-photography—precisely because the images are juxtaposed against

contrasting environments that do not disappear into the background like the walls of a white cube

— In this sense, *The Boat is Leaking*. The Captain Lied. succeeds in eradicating the barriers between art, space, and audience through a series of strategic collaborations between the three artists on view. The exhibition's encouragement of varying degrees of visitor engagement—from open-ended navigation, to touching the objects, to deciphering the sources of the imagery, to intuiting which objects are part of the installation and which are part of the palazzo—makes for a highly self-conscious viewing experience that foregrounds the role of the audience, and the space of exhibition in the creation of artistic meaning. As audiences set sail on this leaking boat of a building, uncertain of where the voyage of the exhibition might take them, the only certainty is the challenge and the pleasure of discovery.

The Boat is Leaking, The Captain Lied. runs May 13-November 23 2017.

- 1 Udo Kittlemann, "The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied. 21 attempts and transformations," in *The Boat* is Leaking. The Captain Lied. exhibition catalogue (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2017), p. 111
- 2 Ibid, p. 112.

### TITLE PAGE:

Anna Viebrock, stage design for *Lulu*, 2017 and Thomas Demand, *Backyard*. Image courtesy of Fondazione Prada.

### PAGE 13:

Thomas Demand, *Backyard*, 2014, C-print Diasec. Image courtesy of Fondazione Prada.

### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Installation view, Power Distributor Door, Hotel Door, Safari Bar Door and Temporary Construction Door designed by Anna Viebrock, 2017; Floor Runner from the stage design of Riesenbutzbach Eine Dauerkolonie, by Anna Viebrock, 2009; and Alexander Kluge, The Soft Makeup of Light, 65mm film transferred to digital projection, 13 minutes 34 seconds. Image courtesy of Fondazione Prada.

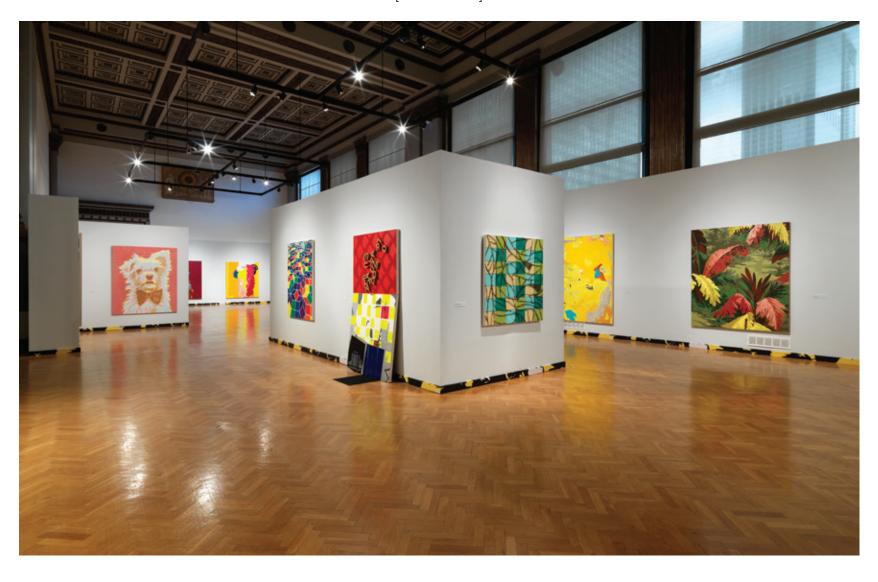
### OPPOSITE PAGE:

Alexander Kluge, Yesterday Girl, 1965–66. 35mm film transferred to digital projection; Anna Viebrock, Cinema room with seats from the stage design for Geschichten ausdem Wiener Wald, 2007. Image courtesy of Fondazione Prada.

### ABOVE:

Anna Viebrock, courtroom based on a scene from Alexander Kluge's *Yesterday Girl*, 2017. Image courtesy of Fondazione Prada.





Painter Candida Alvarez is a storyteller who maps narratives of place, both the interior landscape of the self and the external world with its cacophony of colors, sounds, and images from which she endlessly samples and draws. For Alvarez, place is an intersection of disparate stories and ideas, both personal and artistic, as suggested by her recent exhibition *Here* at the Chicago Cultural Center, guest curated by Terry R. Myers, the first major examination of the artist's practice that spans over forty years.

The exhibition's constellational versus chronological layout evokes the visual and conceptual correspondences between the nearly sixty works on view, revealing that "here" is also a point of arrival, the journey from one place to another. Thus "here" is never a fixed location, but rather a fluid site that allows for continuous movement and exploration. It is also the space where Alvarez's protean practice, one that shuttles between abstraction and figuration, and across cultural referents and borders, finds its infinite inspiration.

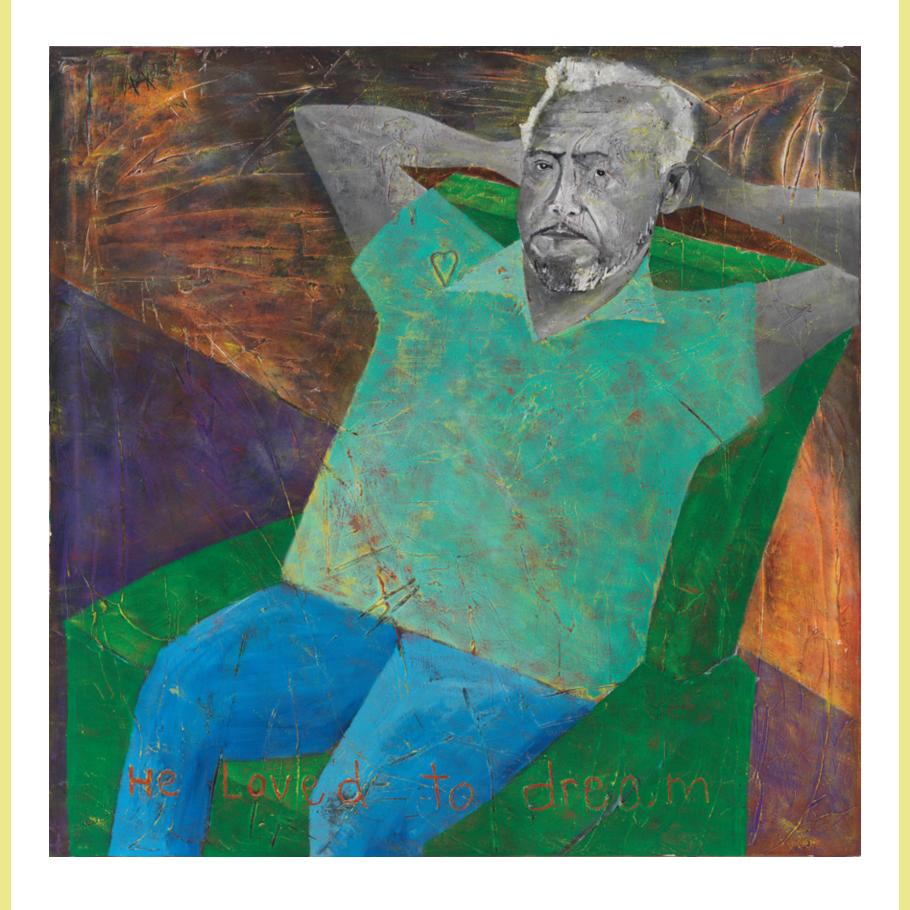
to the exhibition, situates both the artist and viewer within the space of a studio. The spectral bands of color referenced in the work's title are rendered as a dizzying maze of densely saturated parallelograms, echoing the tiles of the Cultural Center floor. Neither an aerial view nor a two-dimensional representation of the playful pattern dancing beneath one's feet, the perspective is slightly askew and disorients our sense of place. *Rainbows* also introduces the artist's ongoing experiments with the somatic and perceptual effects of color and light, while inviting us into her world of private speculation.

These plays between inside/outside, mind/body, felt/seen are explored throughout the exhibition, including in the nearby *Listening to Haruki Murakami* while looking at a sunset (2016), a network of squares painted in a palette of soft peach and gray acrylics, realized at the same scale. Alvarez translates her experience of the titular Japanese writer's fantastical prose and the fading light of an evening sun into an abstract field of subtly oscillating hues reminiscent of Agnes Martin's ethereal grids.

The artist's reverence for minimalist abstraction is openly acknowledged in *Remembering Sol LeWitt* (2016), a checkered canvas that pays homage to the late conceptual artist. However, in this work Alvarez covers her vibrant pattern of alternating squares in a skin of clear plastic onto which she has scripted bits of text in gold glitter and painted a circuitous black web. Here, and in works such as *wonky* and *jive* (both 2014), she challenges the rigidity and authority of the modernist grid by creating a symbol of her own life path—a kind of tributary or labyrinth through which she charts her own course.

Alvarez's process of discovery is as much intuitive as it is the outcome of chance, as intimated in several smaller works that employ numbers, letters, and coins as organizing systems. In *Tossing Pennies* (1995), for example, two stacked wood panels incorporating pennies and colorful painted orbs as nodes within an allover connect the dots, informs a suite of related works layered with graphic circular motifs, each christened with a person's name. *With Intention* (1995), *Convention* (1996), and *Extension* (1996),





similar in format and scale, Alvarez uses nails, wire, and thread, along with painted and drawn elements, to plot intimate spatial territories that—as their titles infer—expose and disorder their own internal logic.

- Alvarez's life as an artist is intimately connected to her upbringing as a Puerto Rican-American, and Here resonates with revelations of self, narratives of family, and personal iconography that draw on Afro-Caribbean traditions of her family's home life, from He Loved to Dream (1985), a portrait of her father, to several works populated with images of women as strong female protagonists, including I Could Hear Her Passing Through/Este Santo me Velaba (1986). In these early works, Alvarez locates her figures within tiered paper and canvas grounds or across multiple panels to create framed views through which we encounter lives in various states of passage. This internal/external view is both a structural and narrative device, one that evolves from the vantage point of the top story of the projects in Brooklyn, where she was born and raised,

"Growing up in an urban environment, windows behave like a huge camera shutter, shifting constantly between a macro/micro lens perspective. Over time, I realized that this was a marker between my private life and everything else, giving me visibility, transparency and material for constructing my paintings formally."

— The sibling works *Sisters 1* and *Sisters 2* (both 1992) are pivotal in establishing this dual perspective. Each black-and-white composition is comprised of nine square panels, ordered on a grid, whose sequential fragments depict either quasi-architectural spaces occasionally populated with small figures (Sisters 1) or more abstract, gestural forms suggestive of a private, internal world (Sisters 2). Generous in both ambition and scale, these works also presage Alvarez's later interest in minimalist seriality and gestural abstraction, in which she abandons her studies in black and white for the sensorial effects of color. To this end, Here pulsates with a lush spectrum of rhythms and hues that occupy several monumental canvases whose richly layered surfaces perform an archeology of textures and ideas. Their titles—hi ho silver (2008), mary in the sky with diamonds (2005) arroz amargo (2010), dadadahlia (2005-08), and chill (2011)—give clues to their disparate inspirations and sources, from pop culture to art history to Mexican flora, which the artist splices and spins to her own ends.

- Building her canvases from drawings based on images culled from her personal archive, Alvarez then overlays them with strata of vivid acrylics and oils (cool aquamarines, sunny yellows, berry reds) that obscure their original identities. At the same time, this act of concealment transforms the artist's private landscapes into verdant, allover patterns that resemble camouflage, subverting the military form of disguise to instead create an abstract symbolism that exposes rather than hides. Alvarez's syncretic process belongs to a strategy of cultural fusion and hybridity that allows passage between different contexts and histories, as does her use of personal narratives and private symbols as markers of identity. To offer oneself is to ask of others, thus Alvarez's paintings offer the viewer multiple points of entry, open to individual interpretation. Alvarez has referred to her paintings as "conversations," with Here as an extended dialogue about the power of place and the journey of one artist's arrival.

Candida Alvarez, *Here*, at the Chicago Cultural Center ran from April 29 – August 6, 2017.

1 As stated in the interview "Candida Alvarez's Embodied Biography," published in Inside/Within, July 2015



# "At the same time, this act of concealment transforms the artist's private landscapes into verdant, allover patterns that resemble camouflage, subverting this military form of disguise to create an abstract symbolism that exposes rather than hides."

### TITLE PAGE:

Candida Alvarez, *mary in the sky with diamonds*, 2005, acrylic and enamel on canvas, 72 x 84 inches. Photo by Tom Van Eynde. Courtesy the artist.

### PAGE 19

Candida Alvarez: *Here*, installation view, Chicago Cultural Center, 2017.

Photo by Tom Van Eynde. Courtesy the artist.

### PAGE 20:

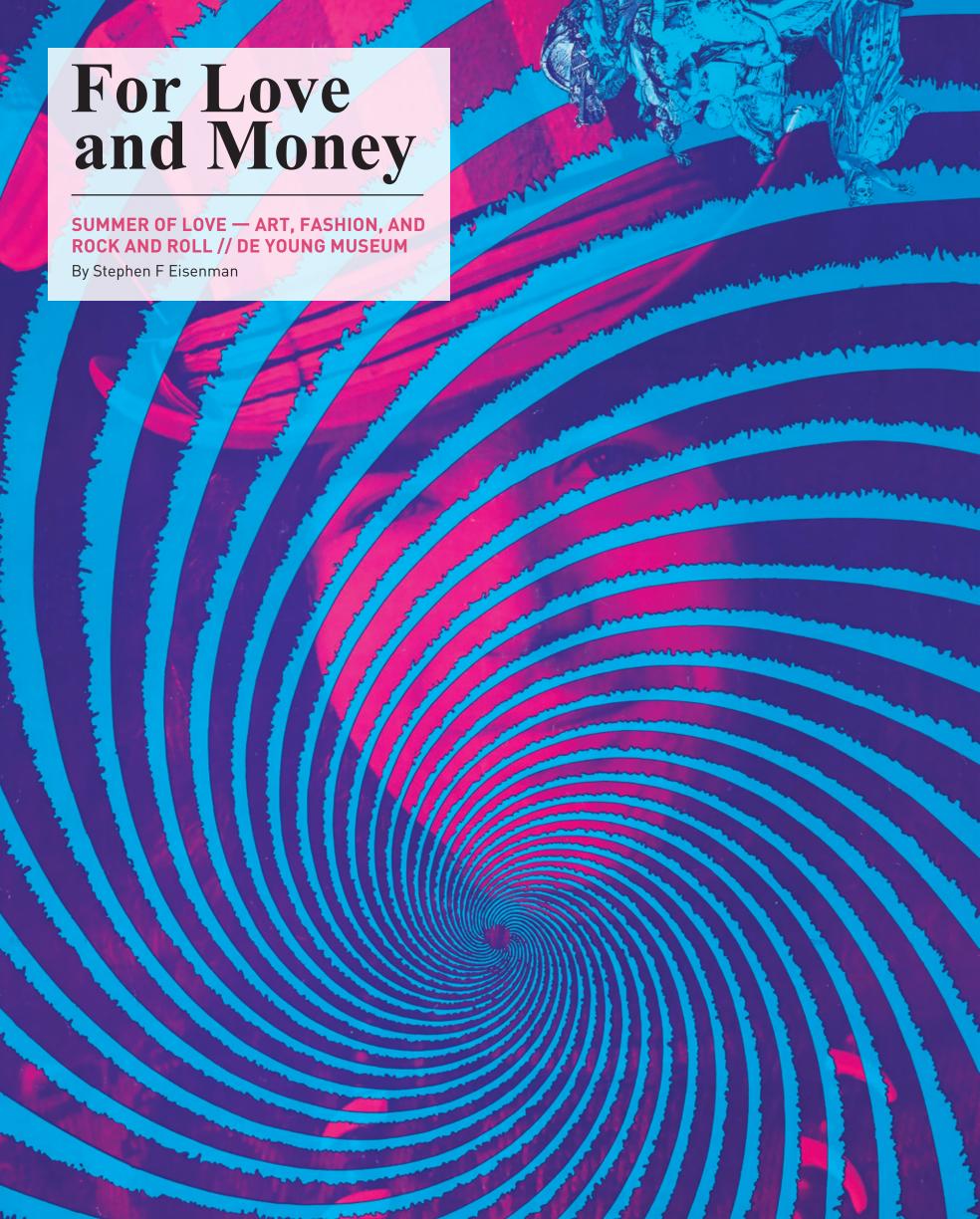
Candida Alvarez, *Remembering Sol LeWitt*, 2016, acrylic, oil and plastic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches. Photo by Tom Van Eynde. Courtesy the artist.

### PAGE 21

Candida Alvarez, *He Loved To Dream*, 1985, acrylic and modeling paste on canvas, 60 x 60 inches. Photo by Tom Van Eynde. Courtesy the artist.

### OPPOSITE PAGE:

Candida Alvarez, *Sisters II*, 1992, oil on birch panels, 9 panels, 66 x 66 inches overall, Collection of Anita Blanchard and Marty Nesbitt.
Photo by Tom Van Eynde. Courtesy the artist.



The City by the Bay is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Summer of Love, but there is a wintery vibe here. Eight thousand people are living on the streets, and sky-high rents (an average \$4,500 for a two-bedroom apartment), have turned students and artists into threatened species. Federal targeting of the LGBTQ community and immigrants, in a city with lots of both, creates a feeling of siege. Weed is legal, but cannot be smoked on the street, so tokers hide in alleys and in the corners of parks, creating a menacing atmosphere beneath sweet, smoky clouds.

And then there is the marketing: there are Summer of Love trading cards promoted on billboards and kiosks; advertisement for hotels and attractions that deploy a Magical Mystery Tour typeface; and lectures, exhibitions, and scholarly symposia exploring hippies, LSD, psychedelic posters, and the counterculture. When an avantgarde has graduated to the seminar room, you know it is truly dead.

———— This leads us to the exhibition at the de Young Museum, *Summer of* 

Love – Art, Fashion and Rock and Roll. It is the third exhibition in recent years devoted to a similar topic—the first, which started its tour in 2015 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, was called Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia, and contained art that few people have ever seen, as well as design, architectural models, music, film, dance, and psychedelic rock posters. The second was Say You Want a Revolution: Records and Rebels, 1966-1970 at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in Summer 2016, and was bigger, more distracted, and less successful, as it tried to be groovy. The darkened galleries, thumping music, costumes, liquid lights, and once again posters, created a disco atmosphere that was untrue to many of the materials on display. Given its title, what was worse was that it paid insufficient attention to the politics and economics of the music business, which while difficult to exhibit in a museum context, could have been done with the right graphics, didactics, and installation. -

The exhibition at the de Young museum has a different focus than the

previous two: more fashion, less music, and less art. In fact, except for the posters and photographs, which are mostly documentary, there is no art in the exhibition at all, save for two lonely but terrific paste-ups by Jess (Jess was a crucial figure among Bay Area artist's for his campy Surrealism and openly queer lifestyle). There are however numerous posters by the five greats: Alton Kelly, Stanley Mouse, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, and Wes Wilson, though the many works are so scattered throughout the exhibition that they resemble wallpaper, which falsifies their aesthetic and purpose. While the originals appeared side by side, and installed floor to ceiling in the places they were originally sold, such the Print Mint on Haight Street and Freidman Enterprises on Grant Avenue, they were intended for individual contemplation on the streets or in rooms preferably while stoned.

The posters' strange typography and layout (letters were often sculpted from negative space), combined with their optic vibration, rendered many unreadable except after long examination. The idea was to slowly feed









into your head names like Quicksilver Messenger Service, The Doors, The Grateful Dead, The Steve Miller Blues Band, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Filmore West, and the Avalon Ballroom. Moscoso's poster, Neptune's Notion (1967), designed for Moby Grape at the Avalon, combines unlikely source material—an Ingres' painting of Jupiter and Thetis (1811) and found images of stylized fish-into a bizarre and unforgettable ensemble. (Either Moscoso got his mythology wrong—Neptune and Jupiter have nothing to do with one another—or he invoked the sea gods in reference to Melville's white whale, as the first name of the rock group was Moby.) Moscoso's training with color theorist Joseph Albers at Yale is apparent here: the complementary blue and orange establishes an electric middle plane while the hot magenta of Thetis and Jupiter advances toward the viewer.

— However, the real core of *Summer of Love* is the clothes: denim, tie-dyed, woven, crocheted, leather, vintage, tight, loose, mini, floor length,

patched and fringed. Their histories tell an important story of insurgency and appropriation. Take the case of Luna Moth Robbins, (born Jodi Paladini), who from 1966–68 was a member of The Diggers, a small but influential San Francisco anarchist and performance group that among other things, established free food and clothing stores. In 1967, Robbins tie-dyed white shirts that had been donated to the store, in order to promptly give them away. Afterwards, she taught her skills to Ann Thomas (aka "Tie-dye Annie") who started a business, selling her products to Cass Elliot, Janis Joplin, and John Sebastien, among others. The trajectory traces the pathway of avant-garde into commodity culture.

— The circuit needs to be examined just a bit more to better understand what happened with fashion during the Summer of Love.

——— In San Francisco, disaffected young people decided to signal their alienation and assert their autonomy—as others had before them—through clothes. In this case, they rejected the

tailored polyester and rayon of department stores for cast-offs from Goodwill and the Salvation Army. They particularly liked clothes that marked a distinct time and place, for example California and the American West. In some cases, they repurposed used garments to make them more colorful, expressive, or idiosyncratic. Quickly, a few entrepreneurs recognized an opportunity. They opened resale shops to cater to this market, and then in succession, small workshops to make ready-to-wear products, and larger ones to produce both off-the-shelf and made-to-measure versions for the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, Grace Slick, Joplin, Bob Dylan and the rest. Finally, national manufactures followed the trend. The Peace Dress (covered with peace signs), made by Martha Fox for the Alvin Duskin label, appeared in 1967, and by 1970, thousands had been sold in multiple color-ways. The entire circuit, from thrift store fashion to mass manufacture and national distribution, occurred within a single year.

What was true for fashion, was also true for

popular music, posters, light shows, and the rest. Small communities of disaffected or dissident young people explored previously unrecognized or undeveloped expressive forms and spaces, thereby identifying for advertisers and manufacturers potential new arenas for investment and exploitation. The exhibition *The Summer of Love* mostly occludes this process by dispensing with chronology, ignoring the interplay of industry and subculture, and instead regularly invoking the terms "hippie" and "counterculture."

The former has a long and complex history, but only came into general use in 1967 after San Francisco Chronicle columnist Herb Caen (who earlier coined "beatnik") used it to describe the kids who had recently moved to North Beach and then the Haight. The term "counterculture" is equally wooly. For the social scientist Theodore Roszak, who coined it in 1969, the term was a portmanteau that included a wide diversity of individuals and groups opposed to "technocratic society." There was never a counterculture that acted in a unique manner, had uniform beliefs, or a clear program of action. So then who was it that descended upon San Francisco in 1967 during the Summer of Love and what did they want?

- First of all, the influx of young people was already underway by the summer of 1966. Second, the love was vitiated by hunger, rough sleeping, sexually transmitted diseases (no HIV yet, fortunately), rape, arrests for drug possession, and lots of bad acid trips. And third, the youth rebellion was short lived. Most of the kids who attended the Human Be-In at the Polo Grounds in January of 1967, or who came to the Haight that Summer, went back to school or moved back home by the Fall. Nevertheless, something highly significant was taking place that year in the Bay Area that had little to do the influx of hippies: a proxy war over class, race and politics in the form of a contest over culture. The Diggers in Haight Ashbury, with their project of giving everything away (they even offered "surplus energy"), challenged the authority of consumer culture and the commodity circuit described above. The Black Panthers (strongest in Oakland) fostered black empowerment and self-protection. Like the Diggers, they opened soup kitchens and clinics, but also promoted the open carrying of pistols and long guns. Thus, they challenged the police monopoly of violence and conservative state legislators passed stringent gun control measures in response. The unsurprising result of Black Panther provocation, however, was FBI infiltration and massive repression.

The various US countercultures that identified with the Summer of Love, the Bay Area, and the 1960s in general, constituted a brief, and occasionally powerful challenge to prevailing political and economic structures and institution. But they operated in the face of enormously powerful assimilative forces and were met with organized state opposition. In 1968, Nixon's election inaugurated a capitalist counter-revolution that accelerated under the regime of Ronald Reagan, (austerity, destruction of unions, imperial war, mass incarceration, retrenchment of the welfare state) that continues today. But the underlying energy and desire of the various sub and countercultures of the Summer of Love (and the like), survived the repression and has resurfaced in recent years in many forms—for example in the Occupy movement, the Sanders campaign, the resistance to Trump, and in the UK, the rise of Jeremy Corbyn's Momentum group.

—— That is how radical change may happen, through the work of memory and the consolidation of forces—what in 1967 was called "a gathering of the tribes." The exhibitions in San Francisco, and the two others that came before, only hint at the great cultural and political stakes at play during the period, yet remain valuable reminders of battles fought and lost, and as anticipations of other, greater struggles still to come.



The Summer of Love Experience: Art, Fashion, and Rock & Roll was on view at the de Young Museum from April 8 – August 20, 2017.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Wilfried Sätty, *Turn on Your Mind (Jerry Garcia Wearing Flag Top Hat)*, ca. 1967. Color offset lithograph poster. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Walter and Josephine Landor, 2001.97.29A. © Walter Medeiros / Sätty Estate. Image Courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

### PAGE 25:

Ruth-Marion Baruch, *Hare Krishna Dance in Golden Gate Park, Haight Ashbury*, 1967. Gelatin silver print. Lumière Gallery, Atlanta, and Robert A. Yellowlees. Courtesy Special Collections, University Library, University of California Santa Cruz. Pirkle Jones and Ruth-Marion Baruch Photographs. Image Courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Ruth-Marion Baruch, *All the Symbols of the Haight*, 1967. Gelatin silver print. Lumière Gallery, Atlanta, and Robert A. Yellowlees. Image Courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

### OPPOSITE PAGE:

Elaine Mayes, *Couple with Child, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco*, 1968. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Joseph Bellows Gallery. Image Courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

### ABOVE:

Embroidered hospital scrub top, ca. 1968. Cotton plain weave with cotton embroidery (bullion knots, encroaching satin, fly, running, and satin stitches). Collection of Arthur Leeper and Cynthia Shaver. Image Courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



When Glenn Ligon visited the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, Missouri, to consider doing a project, he was looking at Ellsworth Kelly's monumental painting on aluminum, entitled Blue Black (2000), when he "heard Louis Armstrong's gravel-strewn voice singing, 'What did I do to be so black and blue?" The song was the germ of this exhibition, curated by Ligon and conceived to explore the space between the rigorous and elegant painting by Kelly, contrasted with Armstrong's "melancholy show tune about racial inequality."2 The group exhibition brings together over fifty works, ranging from abstraction and figurative painting to outsider art, film, and textile, among other mediums.

The curatorial strategy thus sets up two boundaries for the work in the show: the colors blue and black as formal elements on the one side, and associations with the colors black and blue—including race, bruising as a metaphor, and the specific kind of suffering resulting from racism and racial inequality—on the other. It also suggests an opposition: between cool, formal works like Kelly's and more socially and

politically engaged works like many included in the show. I left the exhibition not with the sense that the works were participating in a debate, but rather with a feeling that a deep current unites them.

——Kelly's *Blue Black* is a tall, narrow column of a painting. A deep sky-blue rectangle sits atop a black one, the whole work 28 feet tall and 70 inches wide. Looking at it this time around, it occurred to me that it felt Doric. A little follow-up research on column proportions suggests that it is remarkably close in proportion to the Doric columns at the Parthenon, columns marked by *entasis* (from the Greek "to strain"), the art-historical term describing the way Greek columns enact their architectural function—the bearing of weight. Kelly's painting is formal, to be sure, but it embodies a kind of strain in a way very much like the column it is resembles.

his essay, Ligon attributes the appearance of the song in his consciousness to the work's title and colors, but I wonder if the shape of the painting—this shape with deep historical resonances of bearing weight—does not also have something to

– In

do with the connection. Because it is a song about bearing weight, Armstrong's voice evidences the strain. Many of the works in the exhibition show signs of a similar kind of strain—strain under the weight of the history of race in America, and under the weight of what it is to be human in the face of that.

 The most commanding painting in the exhibition is Kerry James Marshall's Untitled (policeman) (2015), a portrait of a Chicago Police Department officer astride his squad car on a blue night. There is a tightly constructed pictorial logic that gives the limbs of the officer such visual force; the composition of this painting is a primary source of its power. Recalling Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein, Marshall's officer mirrors the pose. The historical resonance of the work builds upon this reference, opening up another level of interpretation. The experience of the work unfolds over the course of looking, and perhaps because of the famously masklike character of Picasso's rendering of Stein's face, Marshall's officer's features took on a masklike character, too.

— Indeed, despite his







"The bruise, a visible manifestation of an interior injury—a wound that sits just below the surface of the skin, and that is healing—is very much like entasis, in that it shows an unseen force, makes visible an unseen strain."

—Brian Prugh



athletic posturing, the personality of the officer seems somewhat hidden. But it is a revealing hiddenness. The officer positions his body with authority, but there are manifold tensions playing across this pose—a tension between the noble vocation to serve and protect the innocent and the ways that policing has systematically inflicted damage on black communities, in particular. There are tensions related to the obscuring of identity that comes along with serving as a functionary of the city government, symbolizing the enforcement of "peace" and "order." The echo of the Stein portrait invokes the weight of history, the weight of tradition, the weight of the medium. All of this hangs on the painting like the uniform on the officer. Yet, a face looks out from the uniform—and if it is masklike, it is only to affirm the existence of what is hidden; the individual straining against the forces (both natural and human) that would destroy it in an instant, and through which it must navigate some meaningful existence -

- A large painting on paper by Kara Walker, Four Idioms on Negro Art #1 (2015), is flanked by a painting by Malcolm Bailey (at right) and two paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat (at left). Walker's painting is a study in brutality: soldiers with helmets and guns, silhouetted in black, attack and wreak havoc on brown nude figures, whose bodies are trampled and tossed about in a grotesque massacre. Glancing to the right, Bailey's painting, *Untitled* (1969) looks like fanciful decoration by comparison. A bright sapphire blue with white filigree brushwork, it seems unconcerned with the travesties depicted in Walker's painting. Upon closer inspection, the flower at center is of cotton, and the abstract designs flanking it are sketches of a plan for arranging slaves below decks on a slave ship, giving the painting an unexpected punch. Thus, in very different ways, both paintings shoulder the weight of America's ugly history that continues to exert a hold on contemporary culture. -

Basquiat's two little canvases, each entitled *To Repel Ghosts* (1986), are the only works in the show that seem to escape weight entirely. On a ground the same blue as Bailey's, the white letters on the painting are crossed out with black paint. The brilliance of these incredibly simple paintings is that they stake a claim and set a task for the painting. In the context of the surrounding paintings, the ghosts immediately suggested are the restless victims of slavery and racism demanding justice. Basquiat acknowledges this

history, while announcing a desire to escape its haunting. But there is a way in which the act of creating a ghost repellent allows the ghosts to dominate the object. So, he crosses it out. And that little action makes these canvases seem to defy gravity, like the leap of a ballet dancer, that looks so effortless and yet is utterly controlled and practiced.

The central metaphor of the exhibition is that of a bruise, which shows up in Byron Kim's *Innocence over Blue* (2016)—a painting about a bruise—and Ligon's *A Small Band* (2016), a neon light installation of the words: "blues," "blood" and "bruise," not to mention the Armstrong song that helped inspire the show. The bruise, a visible manifestation of an interior injury—a wound that sits just below the surface of the skin, and that is healing—is very much like entasis, in that it shows an unseen force, makes visible an unseen strain.

As I

try to think about how to sum up the show, my thoughts keep returning to Susan Rothenberg's *The Caribbean* (2015), an innocuous-sounding

painting of two bathers in the Caribbean. But there is something at work much more intense than a nighttime dip in the ocean. For whatever reason, I get the feeling that the water is deep, really deep. A diagonal black sky imperils the scene. Cerulean and cobalt blues, sitting next to each other, create a vibration that amplifies the unease, for all its delicate loveliness. The two heads bobbing above the water seem oddly distant from one another, each one absorbed in the activity of keeping their weight on the surface.

— The strain here is palpable, the ability to bear it is fragile, and the elemental aloneness of the figures inescapable.

Blue Black is on view at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation from June 9-October 7, 2017.

- 1 Glenn Ligon, "Blue Black," catalogue for Blue Black, published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name at Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, MO, June 9-October 7, 2017.
- 2 Ibid.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Kerry James Marshall, *Untitled (Policeman)*, 2015. ©Kerry James Marshall.

#### PAGE 31

Installation view of *Blue Black*, Entrance Gallery. Pulitzer Arts Foundation, 2017. Photograph © Alise O'Brien Photography.

#### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

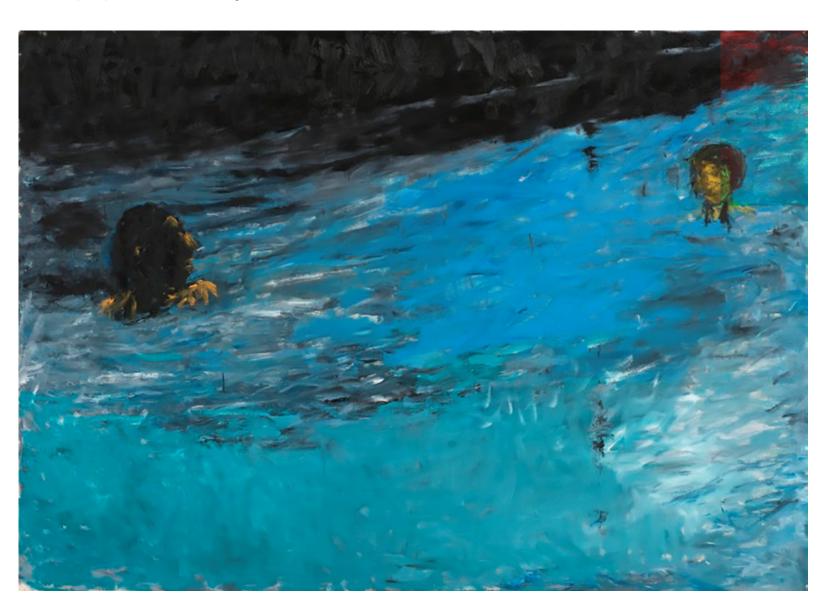
Glenn Ligon, A Small Band, 2015. Neon and paint, 74.75 x 797.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Luhring Augustine, New York; Regan Projects, Los Angeles © Glenn Ligon. Installation view of Blue Black, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, 2017. Photograph © Alise O'Brien Photography.

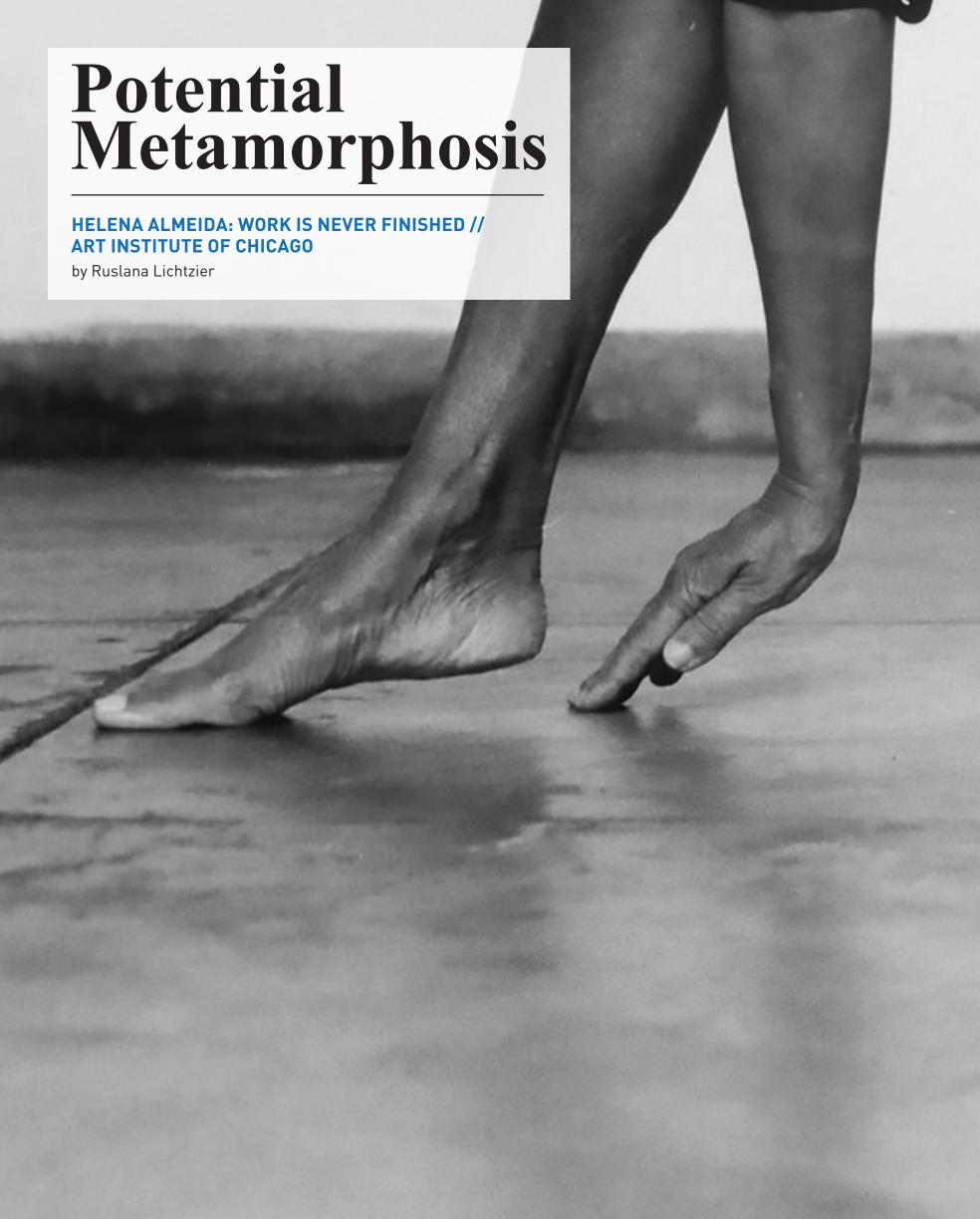
#### OPPOSITE PAGE:

Installation view of *Blue Black*, West Gallery. Pulitzer Arts Foundation, 2017. Photograph by Jim Corbett © Alise O'Brien Photography.

#### BELOW:

Susan Rothenburg, *The Caribbean*, 2015. Oil on canvas,  $50.25 \times 72$  inches.





# "We look at the body and see that it ends abruptly at the feet and the hands. It finishes there. There is nothing more—it is like the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea."

#### -HELENA ALMEIDA

Helena Almeida, a Lisbon native, has been one of the leading figures of the Portuguese art scene since the late 1960s. She represented her country twice in the Venice Biennale and has exhibited globally, and yet her current exhibition, *Work is never finished* on view at the Art Institute of Chicago, strangely, is the artist's first museum show in the United States in over a decade. It is strange that Almeida just received her first solo show, though one should be surprised, since the current statistics still show an insane gender-based gap in the arts: only 27% of the 590 exhibitions by nearly 70 institutions in the U.S between 2007 and 2013 were devoted to women artists

Rather than presenting a retrospective, the museum's curator Kate Nesin and her team chose to feature Almeida's most recent body of work, which presents large-scale black and white photographic prints. Each of the images, except for one, exist as records of the artist's movements in the studio. The photographs, elementary in nature, are a final step of a long and hidden studio process; the bodily compositions are drafted first by hand, then rehearsed in front of a video camera, before lastly being rendered as unique photographic prints. The compositions register the artist's body in specific poses, at times aided by a limited set of prompts: two mirrors, one chair, a wire, three sheets of paper, a set of clothes, a loved one. -

photograph presents the artist's hands leaning against her legs, while her feet bow towards their sides. In a simple choreography, ten fingers, ten toes, two arms, and two legs become a singular sculptural composition. The status of the image

- A close view

remains undecided: does it exist as a photograph, or rather as a reference, as a documentation of a performance?

Almeida, who was trained as a painter and still considers herself one, would say that the works exist as paintings. The feminine performativity paired with the accentuated photographic grain points back in time, toward the 1960s and 70s, while the scale brings us back to present. Throughout the exhibition, the formal cross-generational suspension goes unresolved, and I am not sure what to think of it; but if I am letting it rest, a different reading opens itself up, that of that of the exhibition being a product of an artist in her late career.

– The aerialist works, belonging to one of several major sequences dating since the 2000, were created when Almeida was 66. Today she is 83 years old. The hands and legs of the figure I am looking at, in a print entitled To Seduce (2001), are those of an elderly person. The image presents a skin that is gloriously creased by a lifelong touch of the sun. The photograph, that is at once both aggressive and elegant, is not only a conceptual exercise, but rather a record of a specific women artist at work. My reading disobeys Almeida's narrative; in it, she repeatedly insists on not producing selfportraits, but rather a utilization of a body as a tool—yet, I cannot resist myself, simply because it is not often that a late career work by a women artist enters the contemporary exhibition sphere, specifically not let alone work that features the artist's aging body. Still, it is worth pausing on this moment of a disavow, where the writer refuses to bow to the narrative the artist insists on. I put down the critic's hat and step aside

from being a self-assigned judge of merits and faults of the work. Instead, by writing through my inescapable temporal limits, I strive to reach a sort of temporary understanding of the works' ever-changing nature. Simply, I ask myself what this work has to tell me today. ———

photographs, Inside Me (2001), operate in a complementary balancing act, against each other. In one, a narrow mirror leans vertically between the artist's forehead and her feet, while the artist steps forward. In the other, the mirror leans between the back of her head and the floor, while the artist is stepping away. The diptych presents a double image. The presence of the mirror suggests a reading via psychological tools, and in relation to an assumed interiority. Yet, Almeida's mirror does not reveal her liking, her subjectivity is being kept away. Instead, it mirrors a fragmented image of the artist's studio, her space of work. The two photographs are a proposal of a sort; by positioning the mirror in the center of her body, Almeida suggests an opening of a body, her body, to Work. The photographs propose a break from the given isolation of subjects from objects. The artist, meaning subject, desires to enter the world of the objects. She produces work that defies its boundaries and enters the body-

a diptych from 2006, presents the artist and her husband, Artur Rosa, who is also her primary photographer, embracing one another, while standing. As in all of Almeida's work, one cannot read the subjects' faces—and yet, it is impossible to ignore the tenderness of touch. An arm rests against the partner's back, the head softly settles on the other's shoulder. Almeida and her husband,









stand firmly, both dressed in black, as if about to merge into one body, one form. Only Rosa's white hair pulls me away from completing this potential formal metamorphosis. Through the evidence of the couple's age, my mind steps on a trail that goes through the years of love and an intimate partnership—a partnership that has traversed the boundaries between domestic life and work—and now faces the approaching physical decline and the unavoidable limit of the human body.

In 1998, Almeida stated that "we look at the body and see that it ends abruptly at the feet and the hands. It finishes there. There is nothing more—it is like the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea." This exhibition, which belatedly introduces this artist to the American public, lyrically highlights not only the physical boundaries of the human body, but also the temporal ones. Finishing this text I wonder about the women that were not granted a museum stage, disappearing from the collective memory. The work is never finished; or rather not in a near future.

Helena Almeida, *Work is never finished* was on view at the Art Institute of Chicago from June 29-September 4, 2017.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Helena Almeida, *To Seduce*, 2001. Collection of Dominique Haim. © Helena Almeida.

#### PAGE 38:

Helena Almeida. *Lavada em lágrimas (Washed in Tears)*, 2003. Courtesy Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon. © Helena Almeida.

#### PAGE 39:

Helena Almeida, *Dentro de mim (Inside Me)*, 2001. Collection of Américo Marques Santos. © Helena Almeida.

#### LEFT, TOP:

Helena Almeida, *Voar (To Fly)*, 2001. Collection of Pedro and Vasco Couto. © Helena Almeida.

#### LEFT, BOTTOM:

Helena Almeida, *Untitled*, 2003. Collection of Dominique Haim. © Helena Almeida.

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Takashi Murakami. *Flowers, flowers, flowers*, 2010. Acrylic and platinum leaf on canvas mounted on aluminum frame; 59 × 59 in. (150 × 150 cm). Collectiof the Chang family, Taiwan. © 2010 Takashi Murakami/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

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Valentina Nulagina, international Working Women's Day is the Flighting Day of the Proletariat, 1931, Lithograph on paper, 39 % x 27 % in. (1100 x 725 mm), Ne boltail Collection.

Maris Felixovna Bri-Beyn, Woman Worker and Woman Collective Farmer, John the Ranks of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 1934, Lithograph on paper, 40 1/0 x 20 in, 1009 x 172 mm). Ne bottall Collection. Dziga Vertov and Ekaterina Svilova, still from 7he Three Herolines, 1938, digital transfer from 35mm film, 54 min. Courteey of the Vertov Collection of the Austrian Film Museum.

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Emmanuel Pratt, Concept sketches for Radical [Re]Constructions, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.













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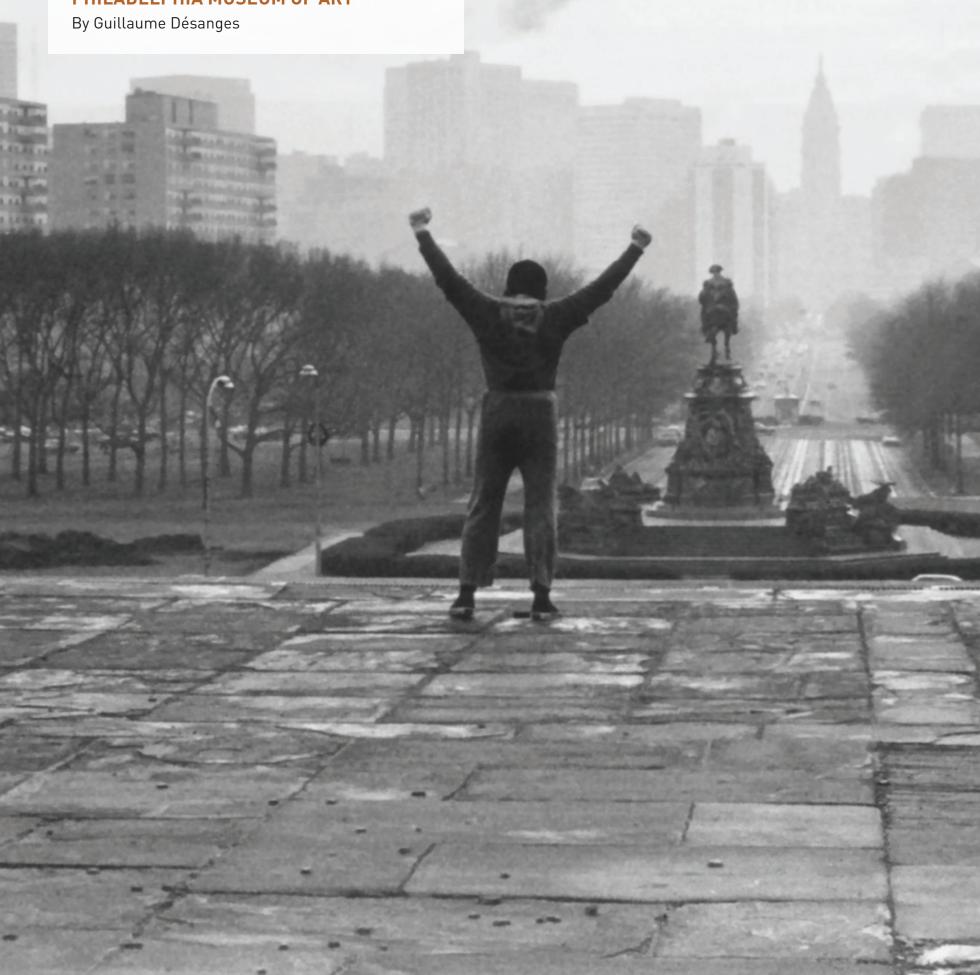
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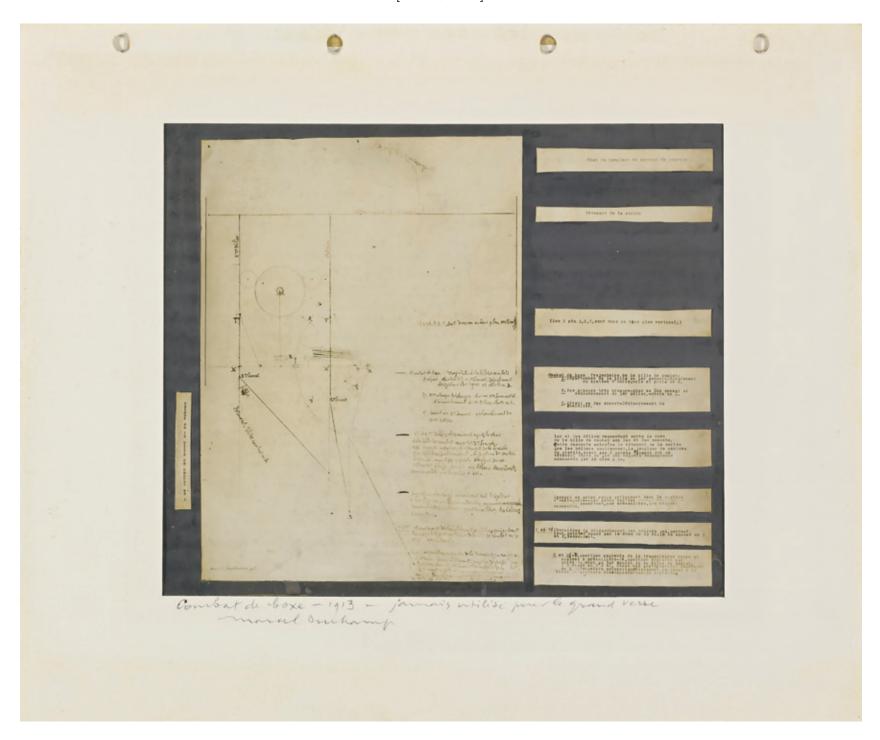
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Features

# Boxing in a Suitcase

MARCEL DUCHAMP VS. ROCKY BALBOA // PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART





# "Genius is nothing but an extraordinary manifestation of the body." —ARTHUR CRAVAN, 1914

Lenbachhaus in Munich, Germany was based on Marcel Duchamp's brief stay in the city in 1912. The show proposed to reveal, by way of extensive research, the essential matrix of the artist's work. Could the achievement of such a proposition be proved either true or false? This was not the question.

Rather, the exhibition suggested that through the mere anticipation of searching, the viewer would be placed in the position of finding something. Indeed, this could be the lesson revealed by Duchamp's art practice—to launch random hypotheses, and appropriate what emerges from its results.

Let us approach this

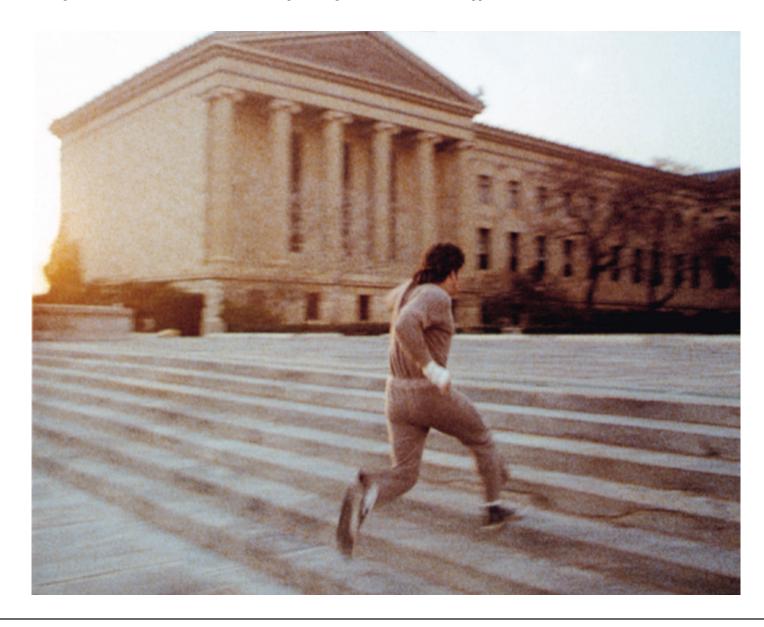
theory from another side.

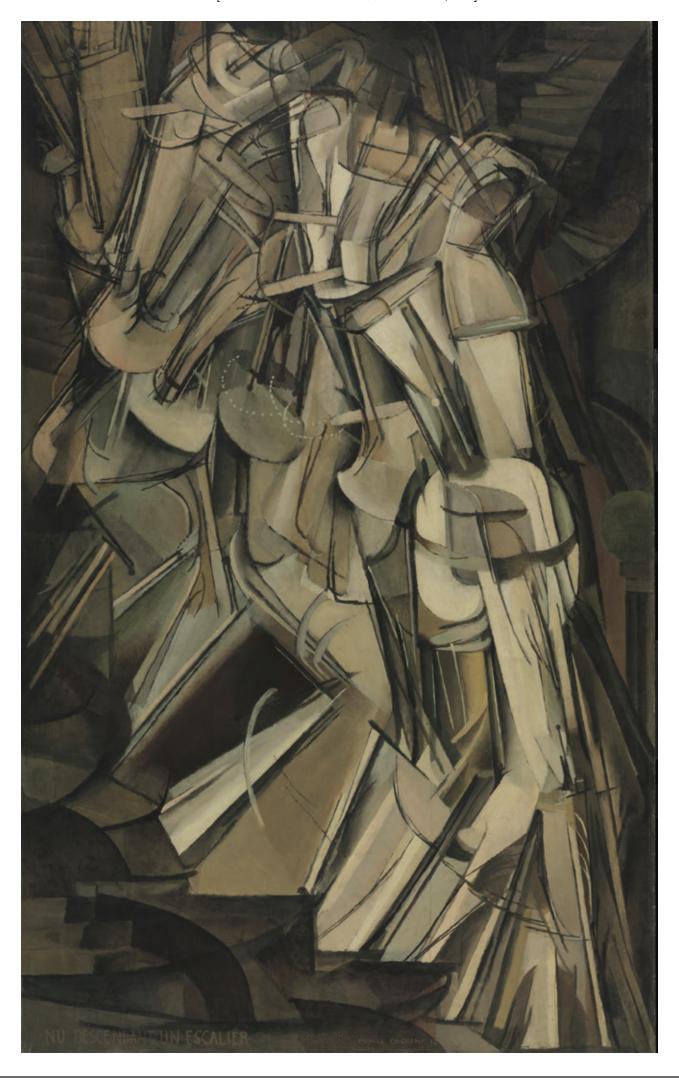
#### ASCENDING AND DESCENDING THE STAIRCASE.

The city of Philadelphia, as a site, is a place of pilgrimage for at least two reasons; the first is Rocky Balboa—the anti-hero boxer, whose persona was brought to life by Sylvester Stallone—and the other is Marcel Duchamp, at once the most important and secretive artist of the twentieth-century. The two iconographic figures, each globally recognized in their respective disciplines, have had an immense impact on my personality (albeit, at different periods of time). However, the synthesis of their mythologies takes place not in this essay, but rather on the grounds of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, whose stairs Rocky scaled throughout the emblematic film series, and whose walls host the most significant concentration of Duchamp's works, including his masterpiece The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, also known as The Large Glass (1912–23). As Rocky ascends the staircase, Duchamp's infamous nude does the

opposite. While positioned out of the view of the camera, this piece and others remain within the context of the film—hidden just beyond the site where the boxer stands, defiantly throwing his two arms in the air. The solitary image of Stallone—a contemporary collector and amateur artist—climbing the stairs of this museum could be said to open an aspirational, and perhaps even more subliminal, parallel between athletic and artistic practice. And in any case, what could this coincidence produce as its hypotheses, especially in the context of such an elusive—and literally ungraspable—oeuvre?

of the sport—but also Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Man Ray, and Pierre Bonnard. For the Dada movement especially, whom Duchamp was part of, boxing represented a jubilant, yet subversively violent, dialectic. Likewise, Arthur Cravan, a poet, fellow boxer, and Dada performer, was admired by Duchamp, for his ability to embody its excessive, exhibitionist, and brazen characteristics across his work. Perhaps, an overzealous investigation of the parallel between these two acts-modern art and boxing-could uncover a more subliminal motive for Duchamp's practice. Indeed, the two counterparts are cited in a small collage, entitled Combat de Boxe (Boxing Match) (1913), included in the Green Box notes. The collage follows the same mechanical dynamics and patterns of the The Large Glass—the text along its perimeter describing speed, jolts, and





#### ROTATIONS AND READYMADES: THE BODY AS A MACHINE.

This Duchampian method of figuration belongs to the reification of the individual. It is a method of representation that depicts the body as a vehicle, subjected to a series of absurd functions and fluctuations—such as desire and love—and shares the same conceit as boxing. The repetitive cinematic montages within the Rocky films articulate similar notions of the body as a machine—the circuitous and perpetual motions captured within gestures such as running, jumping rope, or reeling fists against a speed bag, are not unlike pendulum-like state of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs (Optical Disks)* (1935), or *Roue de bicyclette (Bicycle Wheel)* (1913).

In both cases, the body of the boxer and the figure of the artwork is transformed into a type of 'bachelor machine'—each an engine with no precise intention. In cinema, there is no better personification of this aimless deployment of

energy than in Rocky's character. The predictable plotline of the series mirrors yet another aspect of this circulation. Throughout the films, the stakes remain the same, yet the boxer cannot help but go back in the ring—as Rocky states in one scene, "I am made for that"-without the prospect of either success or pleasure in sight. While Rocky is successful in a handful of matches, it is his precise indifference regarding the outcome of the fight that characterizes his personality. The famous finale of the first film reveals the boxer's animal cry towards the desired woman (Adrian); as the first witness of his ability to take the blows. For Duchamp, as with Rocky, the 'work' is a process in its own right—at once laborious and intransitive, it folds in upon itself, occupying the space between penance and vanity. This masturbatory logic, which counters its own argument to fight against itself, can only function within the mode of failure. -

Indeed, it is this precise quality of failure that characterizes both Rocky and Duchamp, carrying with it a certain grandeur in defeat. The initial rejection of Duchamp's Nude Descending the Staircase, *No.2* (1912) from the Salon in Paris—a work also contained within the Philadelphia Museum of Art collection—was the first and inaugural refusal, precipitating what transformed into a regime of purposeful withdrawal and failure over the course of his practice. What one could call this "shy power" an attribute granted to the Bride in The Large Glass (modeled after Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia),<sup>2</sup> is persistent throughout the Duchamp's solitary practice. Through a similar lens, we view Rocky's silence in stark opposition to the brazen demonstrations of his opponents, whose performance acts out the overtly virile and public display of masculinity.





#### ART AS BOXING: AGILITY, WEIGHTLESSNESS, CLARITY, AND PRECISION.

If silence is a type of invisibility, the refusal to be seen can be said to operate as another gesture in boxing—the "side step"—also known as the elegance of the dodge. For Duchamp, art seems to be an affair of "sliding," in the sense that no frontal contact is made through the work, but rather a fluid evasiveness that escapes any given determinations the viewer may attempt to impose. As the artist stated regarding chess, "A position is beautiful, not in itself, but through the multiple possibilities it presents." Indeed, it is in this way Duchamp constructed his work; each piece exists in a constant, yet unstable, relation to the others. This method of choreography is in part guided along a path of chance, yet does not encroach on the possibility of precision. In fact, the rare blows delivered by Duchamp's work are definitive and searing. Each decision is a determination. For both Duchamp and Rocky, the absence

of talent is mitigated by a genius approach to desynchronization, concluded by an unsuspecting strike. Against the gesture of the virtuoso painter, Duchamp proposes two radically subversive temporalities: the first is the immediate and unjustified form of the readymade, and the second is the vast complexity of works that are steeped in time, such as The Large Glass or Étant Donnés (1946–66). Either too fast or two slow, the artist's polarizing approach to appropriation and time catches viewers on their heels.

Of course, despite the comparison of this synthesis, Rocky is not Marcel Duchamp—yet following the intangibility of the artist's practice, an interpretation of such unpredictability and coincidence functions as a valid exercise of critique. Then again, that the artist's work has always resisted firm analysis recalls the inconspicuous and radical power of the

boxer. In Duchamp's battle against art, while his manner of defiance is characterized by permanent elusion, there is also the search for exhaustion. As the artist once stated, "what interests me most is full indifference." This radical indifference is not far from a K.O. sensibility. Fatigued, blinded, and dizzy, the spectator of Duchamp's work (a Blind Man?)<sup>3</sup> must invent their own resources in order to orient their own rough perception. This is for the better. For, by removing facile visibility—an act that echoes the gesture of slicing the viewer's retina—the artist immediately accentuates our other senses: intelligence, affect, intuition, alertness. In the face of the uncertain impact to come, the viewer is trained to never lower their guard.

Translated by Stephanie Cristello.

Thank you to the Association Marcel Duchamp, and Jean-Marc Huitorel.

"This method of choreography is in part guided along a path of chance, yet does not encroach on the possibility of precision. In fact, the rare blows delivered by Duchamp's work are definitive and searing. Each decision is a determination."

-ARTHUR CRAVAN, 1914

- Boddy, Kasia. "'Dada and the Critical Instinct of 'Knock-Out'." Boxing A Cultural History, Reaktion Books, 2013.
- Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, the wife of Duchamp's friend Francis Picabia, was his mistress and is said to have inspired the figure of the bride in The Large Glass.
- "The Blind Man" is the title of a journal published by Duchamp and Pierre Roché as part of the Dada movement in New York, in 1917.

Sylvester Stallone, ROCKY, 1976, film still.

Marcel Duchamp, Boxing Match (Combat de Boxe), 1913, Graphite, colored pencils, and typing ink on ten strips of buff-colored wove paper adhered to brown paper, 16.5 x 12.25 inches, © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

Sylvester Stallone, ROCKY II, 1979, film still. (c)United Artists. Courtesy: Everett Collection.

Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, Oil on canvas, 57.875 x 35.125 inches, © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

Marcel Duchamp, *Rotoreliefs*, 1935. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

#### **PAGE 53:**

Sylvester Stallone, ROCKY, 1976, film still.

#### **OPPOSITE PAGE:**

Marcel Duchamp, Bicycle Wheel, 1951, Metal wheel mounted on painted wood stool, 51 x 25 x 16.5 inches



## Heartbreaking Duplicity

**DOCUMENTA 14 // LEARNING FROM ATHENS** 

By Caroline Picard

## BEINGSAFEISSCARY



In a sense, the Western World presumes to be (always) learning from Athens, espousing Ancient Greece as its point of origin and thereafter presuming a complex blend of familiarity, ownership, and admiration. The inscribed plaques on the gates at the foot of the Acropolis reinforce this lineage, reminding attending tourists that its ground marks the birthplace of Western Civilization. As a further reminder, the Acropolis is visible throughout the city: a distant hill with a brilliant stone beacon, signifying democracy, philosophy, freedom, and social cooperation; values endemic to Western identity, even if they remain elusive and difficult to implement. So, the

private German company. "The deal is the first in a wave of privatizations the government had until recently opposed, but must make to qualify for bailout loans." <sup>2</sup> The dizzy reverberation between world events, economic policy, and cultural diplomacy therefore comprise an odd maze, riddling the 2017 edition of documenta with hierarchical challenges. These challenges so dominate the national and international dialogue as to make the artworks accountable to their setting. Within a climate, for example, where some 20,000 Athenians visit soup kitchens every day, what is the significance of Rasheed Araeen's tented dining room in Athens' Kotzia Square—a

and transform circumstance. "Our hope is that rather than being a mere reproduction of existing social relationships, art can produce and inhabit space, enable discourses beyond what is known to all, and act to challenge the predictable, gloomy course of current political and social global events that keep us sleepless and suspended." In his curatorial essay, Szymczyk acknowledges Greece's current socioeconomic climate alongside documenta's connection to the German government, suggesting that despite these two poles, artists might yet have the power to infiltrate hierarchal patterns with their own independent and possibly world-changing agency. "We can see

"So, the West has always studied Athens, though the method of 'learning' proposed by documenta 14—the historically Kassel-based quinquennial exhibition, entitled *Learning From Athens*—is of a different kind; one that demands bifurcation to decenter and experience the world simultaneously from Greek and German coordinates: to look up at the Acropolis from elsewhere, while seeing elsewhere from the Acropolis."

—CAROLINE PICARD

West has always studied Athens, though the method of 'learning' proposed by documenta 14—the historically Kassel-based quinquennial exhibition, entitled *Learning From Athens*—is of a different kind; one that demands bifurcation to decenter and experience the world simultaneously from Greek and German coordinates: to look up at the Acropolis from elsewhere, while seeing elsewhere from the Acropolis.

To recognize the radical nature of this project, one need only observe the conditions by which the exhibition proposal for documenta 14 has been contextualized since it was accepted in 2012. The event comes at a time of economic strife in which many Greeks are convinced that "Germany is on a mission to throw the country out of the euro, however hard it tries to implement tough reforms demanded by creditors"<sup>1</sup>—reforms such as the sale of fourteen regional Greek airports to a

people a free meal without requirements save that
they converse? <sup>3</sup>
——————————————————————————————————————
Or does it merely exploit a landscape of
inequality? —
From the vantage of Kassel, one
might suggest that the selected works on view
should be held accountable to these same
concerns, pointing out that there is no safe
distance from which global inequality can
examined through art. And yet the proximity of
Athens' economic trials, combined with its
particularly troubled relationship to Germany,
make the Athenian chapter of documenta
especially strained. On one side, Greece's
resigned Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis,
calls the entire effort "disaster tourism." 4 On the
other, Artistic Director, Adam Szymczyk remains
optimistic about the project's ability to overcome

project intended to serve art enthusiasts and local

documenta 14, therefore, as exactly the acts that can be carried out by anyone and everyone as a diverse, ever-changing, trans-national, and anti-identitarian parliament of bodies—of all bodies coming together in documenta 14, to then disperse and form other parliaments, other instances of destituent power, elsewhere and in another time."

— Select internal decisions of the curatorial team cause the perception of documenta's position to appear additionally ambiguous. After announcing an intended partnership with the Athens Biennial, documenta 14 withdrew from the relationship for allegedly poaching the biennial staff; this was further complicated when new hires understood they would be paid at one rate (9 euros an hour) only to find their wages had been halved a few weeks later. These misunderstandings were additionally paired with the deliberate yet controversial debut of Athens'



Contemporary Art Museum (EMST) collection, in Kassel-not Greece, where the collection had previously remained in storage for years. As such, the "divided self" of documenta manifests in the dual location of Kassel and Athens, and is further mirrored in the organization's two-facedness: desiring on the one hand to build a cultural bridge between Germany and Greece, while inadvertently reproducing some of the same power dynamics it aims to assuage. What is perhaps most curious about this arrangement is how documenta 14 begins to absorb some of Greece's difficulties as its own, "Foremost among the catastrophes that we have encountered as we have worked on documenta 14 has been the economic violence enacted, as it seems, almost experimentally upon the population of Greece."9

— Whether in appreciation for the intellect, energy, and vision required to navigate these complicated waters, or simply to get on and explore the artworks documenta presents, let's say the forty million dollar curatorial project glitters with strange ambivalence, boasting a radical internal optimism that is nevertheless intersected and refracted by a shifting quagmire of economic inequality, practical compromise, politics, hierarchical patterns, and mass migration: themes around which documenta's core program is built. As such, and maybe because doubling one's consciousness is exceptionally difficult, reflection upon the project is disorienting. It is almost impossible to determine inside from outside, to

delineate documenta's setting from documenta's internal curatorial agenda, or even map the movement from one place to another. This disorientation might well encapsulate the crouched and restricted feeling of our times as vital entanglements bubble around every one of us, refusing despite best efforts to provide anyone a sense of agency.

- As though to mirror this ambivalence, New Zealand-based artist Nathan Pohio presents two large scale black and white photographs in Athens and Kassel, Raise the anchor, unfurl the sails, set course to the centre of an ever setting sun! (2017) and Raise the anchor, unfurl the sails, set course to the centre of an ever setting sun! (2015). Reproducing two 1905 archival prints, each scene depicts the British Governor and his wife, Lord and Lady Plunket, meeting the Ngāi Tahu tribe from South New Zealand for the first time. The 2017 image hangs like a banner in Athens' EMST's lobby, as though welcoming visitors to the complexities of the 100day museum. Men on horseback in ceremonial gear stand ad hoc around the western couple in their car. "In a Māori tradition, objects and bodies would be prepared to travel through a folding of space and time. Rather than considering movement as a passage from a point of departure to a point of arrival, the destination is brought to the traveler." This reiteration of space, time, and travel could "enable discourses beyond what is known to all"11 while lending insight to Athens' and Kassel's simultaneity. -

If space cannot be crossed, but instead is folded, an alternate world view breaches the surface of the Western mind: it is the world that comes and goes, not the individual.

– Perhaps then, describing documenta 14 as a bifurcation is a misnomer. Perhaps instead we should think of the show as a type of fold in and of itself, which allows objects and visitors to pass between its two cities. The weekly airplane commissioned to connect Kassel and Athens for the duration of documenta would reinforce this idea, for it further merges these sites through the appearance of convenience. Additionally, each of the artists included in the two-site exhibition present work in both locations, such that the installations echo back and forth with an almost vertiginous, or amnesiac quality. Pohio presents a better-known photograph from the same series in Kassel on the Weinberg-Terrassen; this second image (2015) features the same figures, this time formally posed in a line to produce the shot. The photograph is the same as its Athenian cousin, except for the arrangement of figures. Had I not taken a photograph of the first image, I would not have remembered the difference, save for a queasy feeling of invalidated doubt. Here, in Kassel's photograph, the figures have prepared themselves to meet the camera and, strangely enough, future viewers in different locations, like myself standing on a hill overlooking the Kassel's Orangery. -

- "For

Māori, the relationship between past, present, and future is neither teleological nor linear—the present is molded by the past being before us, and the future is a present continuous." Both images capture an encounter between strangers and customs during a pivotal moment in respective histories. The 1905 photographs were taken during a land dispute between the British Government and the Ngāi Tūāhuriri, underscoring the question for its 2017 audience: can documenta 14 revise the power dynamics it uncovers?

— Canadian artist Rebecca Belmore creates a similarly uncanny juxtaposition with *Biinjiya'iing Onji (From inside)* (2017) a hand-carved, lifesized marble tent. Installed first on Filopappou Hill, overlooking the Acropolis, the tent was later relocated to Kassel to stand alongside Pohio's photograph on the Weinberg-Terrassen. The marble form is inscribed with folds of fabric. The ground of its marble bed is also made to look worn-in at the center, as though having born the

weight of regular use. The tent's door remains open, an invitation almost, and a small hole in the ceiling is at once reminiscent of smoke chimney and a view finder for stars. The work brings the Syrian refugee crisis to mind—a situation that once again amplifies the troubled relationship between Greece and the European Union. Since 2015, more than one million refugees from primarily Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan have traveled to Greece in search of safety.<sup>13</sup> From January and March of 2017, roughly one in four of 29,758 refugees were children.14 "Upwards of eight thousand asylum seekers remain in limbo on the Greek islands. So far, the European Union has only opened seven percent of its possible relocation sites, despite the goal of opening onethird of all relocation sites by the end of 2016."15 Belmore's tent is modeled after provisional architecture, a structure designed specifically for its portability. Fashioned from stone, the tent suggests transience as a permanent state, highlighting a Western contradiction: while international law entitles people the right to protection if they face persecution at home, national fears block many humanitarian efforts. "For other European allies, the continued flow of refugees also poses significant concerns, such as the growing fear of a terrorist attack, or riots between refugees, host communities, and the police." <sup>16</sup> Biinjiya'iing Onji (From inside) reminds viewers of the tepid and static welcome so many asylum seekers find in lieu of the Western promise they might otherwise seek.

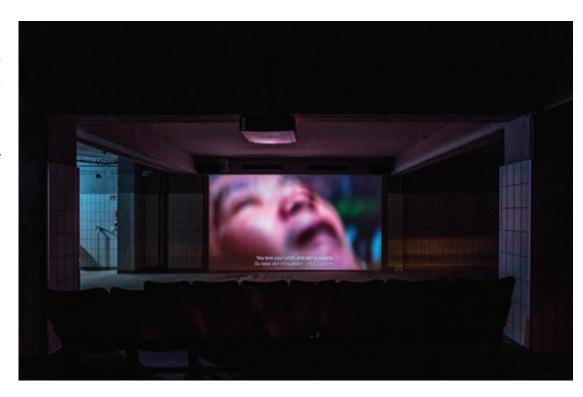
"The world as we know it today remains a place (and time) of mostly fear, not hope," 17 Szymczyk states in the central documenta 14 catalogue text. Describing how these fears baffle progressive political parties, while simultaneously goading neoliberal policies and defensive national reflexes, this fright is a force that stiffens rather than accommodates our shifting global landscape. This sense is further articulated by artist Banu Cennetoğlu's site-specific text work, Being Safe is Scary (2017), which appears on the frontispiece of the Fridericianum in Kassel, or William Pope L's Whisper Campaign (2017) where plain clothed performers and small hidden speakers inside and outside museums emit phrases that elicit doubt and suspicion. Or the filmmaker Naeem Mohaiemen who shows two films in each location, Tripoli Cancelled (2017) about a man stuck in an abandoned airport, and Two Meetings and a Funeral (2017) that looks at the historic but unsuccessful Non-Aligned Movement, an

initiative started in 1956 by countries that aimed to unify and empower the Global South, despite the landscape of Cold War politics. This latter film seems to highlight the tremendous odds self-determination faces when attempting to tackle dominant political forces. It's not clear that any of these artists feel solutions are in reach, but perhaps demonstrating strategies for collectivism, or simply amplifying the predominance of fear and disenfranchisement might yet yield positive actions. These art works reflect the same ambivalence that documenta itself performs, furthering a pervasive sense of mistrust and disillusion—perhaps with a dash of uncertain hope.

- In Kassel, a former Tofu factory (Tofufabrik) screens two films that reiterate humanity's heartbreaking duplicity. Inside, one super-eight projection features a young boy playing in a yard. As visitors pass through a slatted plastic screen to the left, a second fullcolor film projects Commensal (2017) by Véréna Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor of the Sensory Ethnography Lab. Playing with the slip between fiction and fact, the face of an aging Issei Sagawa—the infamous criminal who in 1981 murdered and cannibalized a twenty-five-year-old exchange student—often fills the entire screen, whether because he is speaking, or because he appears to be lying down, chewing. In this sequence, Sagawa references the act that made him famous in the eighties, but for which he was exonerated due to strange circumstances. The closeness of the camera undermines what distance a viewer might otherwise presume, imposing an effective and uncomfortable intimacy. One cannot help but recoil at the cannibalistic narrative. You want to ask: how could this happen? Where does such desire come from? In the context of this transient museum, and perhaps because Sagawa is old, waxen, and frail—having recently suffered a cerebral hemorrhage—it is not so easy to distance oneself. I am reminded of the incriminating mesh of global capital.

How is it that the structures we have built and continue to uphold so willingly abandon refugees to circumstance, or even more generally exploit workers to produce everyday devices—for instance, the suicides that have dogged Apple's main production factory in China such that the factory installed suicide nets around the perimeter of its buildings in 2010.<sup>18</sup> Is this system not another form of cannibalism that implicates everyone? And perhaps worse, the sacrifice of human life and well-being that drives our appetite is not even one of erotic pleasure, but instead a compulsory desire for the newest technological objects that are doomed to expire without a conscience.

As if to demonstrate how recompense might be made in the face of historic exploitation, Rosalind Nashashibi and Lucy Skaer return to sites painted by Paul Gauguin in Tahiti in their film *Why Are You Angry?* (2017) focusing primarily on female subjects as they eat sandwiches, sit still before modern homes, dance together, or recline in outdoor couches like models to be painted. There







is a feeling that the artists are returning to Gauguin's view, attempting to recreate it, by means of demonstrating the limitation of his non-Western fantasy—i.e. the figure wears a tank top rather than being shirtless, and the way the subjects enjoy companionship in contrast to the solitude of Gauguin's women seems enshrined within. The work appears as a hopeful and defiant gesture, perhaps especially for its modest eighteen minutes.

Another exhibition site, The Athens Conservatoire (Odeion), is significant both for its architecture and the themes embedded within the works it contains. This place was, for me, a kind of Rosetta Stone of documenta 14, amplifying the idea of migration, political strife, learning, and the effort to translate movement into sound into image. Established in 1871, the Odeion is the first performing arts school in Modern Greece. It is further situated a stone's throw away from Aristotle's Lyceum, the original peripatetic university, designed by the philosopher to pair movement (or walking) with learning. Proposed by Ioannis Despotopoulos in 1959, the Odeion was rebuilt as part of a larger urban plan that, like documenta in 1955, meant to architecturally embody "Central European Rationalism and postwar attempts at broad-minded cultural policy." -

- The building was never completed to fit its intended purpose due to financial troubles, until NEON, a roving non-profit cultural organization founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, recently completed the building as an exhibition space.20 The overall architecture feels deliberately incomplete as a result. Columns are only halfway clad in marble. Other walls have been finished with cinder blocks, or remain brutalist with exposed concrete—as with a large auditorium on the second floor. Here, in the dark, Emeka Ogboh's The Way Earthly Things Are Going (2017) combines a streaming ticker tape of the stock market—the only light source in the whole room—while Epirotic Song plays ambient in the background. Paired in this way, the stock market reads like a score, illustrating how readers translate information into movement, or in this case turns in the global economy.

Ogboh's installation resonates with Lala Rukh's *Hieroglyphics* (1995) one story below. Featured in another dark room, Rukh's large suite of drawings depict an original tablature that the artist developed based on Islamic writing. A large



digital animation demonstrates the relationship between sound and notation, as though to teach the audience that movement is contained in the works on paper as well, even if a reader is required to produce results. Here again, Szymczyk's challenge comes to mind: is this how art transforms? The concept of movement throughout documenta 14 invariably has political implications, such as in Beatriz González largescale Interior Decoration (1981). Using a historic newspaper photograph as source material, the unstretched painting features Julio César Turbay Ayala, a corrupt dictator, singing with women. Reminiscent of a large curtain, Interior Decoration emphasizes the power of provisional architecture to inscribe boundaries and filter world-views. It is worth noting that González's installation in Kassel consists of a similarly large hanging curtain, wherein the artist instead repainted Manet's Luncheon on the Grass. In this way, González makes a correlation between political propaganda and the canon of Western art history that has, for so long, excluded so many cultures from its discourse. -

screen is similarly dark for the duration of this sequence, until upon arrival, a landscape emerges and the artist retraces steps taken twenty years before while balancing a tower of mirrors on his face. To keep the structure balanced, he can only look up at the sky and thus cannot see the ground, only how it is reflected in the mirrors he carries.

– Premiering at documenta in Athens was An Opera of the World (2017), a documentary by the Mali-born, New York-based filmmaker and writer, Manthia Diawara. The film focuses primarily on Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera (2007), an opera that took place in Bamako in Mali. Bintou Were is the opera's protagonist, and the opening scenes depict her struggles with the local patriarchy, members of whom have raped her, left her pregnant, and try to further take advantage of the situation by claiming fatherhood. Rather than remain in this social structure, Were purchases the assistance of a smuggler who will bring her to Europe for a better future. The opera uses a libretto by the Chadian poet and playwright Koulsy Lamko, and was originally commissioned by Prince Claus of the Netherlands through his trust. As such the opera is a complicated format to work from, steeped in colonial history, and the documentary combines footage from rehearsals of the 2007 production, with archival footage of migrants and refugees, European arias, and commentary from critics Fatou Diome, Alexander Kluge, Nicole Lapierre, Richard Sennett and

#### - [ DOCUMENTA 14 | 63 ] -

Diawara himself. These conversations try to unpack the politics of opera, while still meditating on the real condition that so many migrants face upon leaving one land for another. "If opera is often understood as an über-European art form—the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) invoked by composer Richard Wagner, one of the form's most controversial proponents—Diawara chooses to meditate on its movement or migration as opposed to its expansion or totality. What happens when opera moves south, from Europe to Africa, just as so many people from that continent are moving north, in search of better lives?" <sup>21</sup>

this way, Diawara's film explores similar questions that documenta 14 is embroiled in: can a large Western gesture still be useful in relation to the historic socioeconomic strife and exploitation it has caused? While Diawara seems to suggest yes, the work emphasizes an accompanying puzzle for all to consider: why do we not recognize migration as an opportunity to expand and open, a moment in which to meet new potential optimistically? While Documenta remains uncomfortably two-faced, presenting compelling works in a context chosen for its economic strife, we would do well to take this scenario as an opportunity to examine duplicities riddling the most banal habits of contemporary life—the purchase of pumpkins harvested by migrant workers, for instance, or the collective reliance on fossil fuels despite the danger of a warming climate. How might documenta's audience absorb this criticism to break the borders of inherited assumption, prioritizing instead a collective and inclusive future?

#### TITLE PAGE:

Banu Cennetoğlu, *BEINGSAFEISSCARY*, 2017, various materials, Friedrichsplatz, Kassel, documenta 14. Photo: Roman März.

#### PAGE 58:

Nathan Pohio, *Raise the anchor, unfurl the sails, set course to the centre of an ever setting sun!*, 2015. Various materials, installation view, Weinberg-Terrassen, Kassel, documenta 14. Photo: Liz Eve.

#### PAGE 59

Véréna Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor, *Commensal*, 2017. Video and film installation, installation view, Tofufabrik, Kassel, documenta 14. Photo: Mathias Völzke.

#### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Rebecca Belmore, *Biinjiya'iing Onji (From inside)*, 2017. Marble, Filopappou Hill, Athens, documenta 14. Photo: Fanis Vlastaras.

#### OPPOSITE PAGE:

Manthia Diawara, *An Opera of the World*, 2017. Digital video, screening at BALi-Kinos, Kassel, documenta 14. Photo: Fred Dott.

- 1 "Connoisseurs or colonists? Documenta's controversial stay in Athens," The Economist, April 06, 2017.
- 2 "Germans to run Greek regional airports in first wave of bailout privatisations," The Guardian, August 18, 2015.
- 3 "Connoisseurs or colonists? Documenta's controversial stay in Athens," The Economist.
- 4 Doing Documenta In Athens Is Like Rich Americans Taking A Tour In A Poor African Country: An interview with Yanis Varoufakis by Leon Kahane," *Spike Art Magazine*, 2015.
- 5 Adam Szyczyk, "Iterability and Otherness—Learning and Working form Athens," *The documenta 14 Reader*, documenta and Museum Friericianum gGmbH, Kassel, (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2017) p. 52.
- 6 Ibid p. 29
- 7 Dorian Batycka, "Cultural Diplomacy and Artwashing at Documenta in Athens," *Hyperallergic*, June 12, 2017.
- 8 Nikoleta Kriki, Documenta 14: "Misunderstandings," Problems, and Solutions, Political Critique, May 23, 2017.
- 9 Adam Szyczyk, "Iterability and Otherness—Learning and Working form Athens," p. 23
- 10 Hendrik Folkerts, "Nathan Pohio" Posted in public exhibitions and xcerpted from *documenta 14: Daybook*, 2017. Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 11 Adam Szyczyk, "Iterability and Otherness—Learning and Working form Athens," p. 52.
- 12 Hendrik Folkerts, "Nathan Pohio" Posted in public exhibitions and xcerpted from *documenta 14: Daybook*, 2017. Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 13 Jonathan Clayton, "More than one million refugees travel to Greece since 2015", UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency. Accessed July 15, 2017.
- 14 "UNICEF Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe: Regional Humanitarian Situation Report #22," UN Children's Fund Report, reliefweb, 18 April 2017.
- 15 "Refugee Crisis in the European Union," Council on Foreign Relations, July 13, 2017.
- 16 "Refugee Crisis in the European Union," Council on Foreign Relations, July 13, 2017.
- 17 Adam Szyczyk, "Iterability and Otherness—Learning and Working form Athens," p. 30.
- 18 Eva Dou, "Deaths of Foxconn Employees Highlight Pressures Faced by China's Factory Workers" *Wall Street Journal*, August 21, 2016, and Malcolm Moore, "Mass suicide' protest at Apple manufacturer Foxconn factory," *The Telegraph*, January 11, 2012.
- 19 "Athens Conservatoire (Odeion)," posted in Public Exhibitions, 2017.
- 20 "Get to know Athens Conservatoire," Athens Conservatoire. Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 21 Monika Szewczyk, "Manthia Diawara," Posted in Public Exhibition and excerpted from the *documenta 14: Daybook*. Accessed July 15, 2017.



The work of Athens-based artist Angelo Plessas exists in and around the Internet, or in a form he calls "Internet psychogeography." He registers domain names such as SymmetryOfChaos.com, PlagueOfFantasy.com or MeLookingAtYou.com, placing his characters (either his friends, or versions of himself) in specific situations. Functioning almost sketches for online personas, these websites—and their single domain-name titles—make them unique Internet objects. Plessas Google-Street walks around the world, chooses locations where people meet offline, and organizes events under the guise of the Eternal Internet Brother/Sisterhood once a year, typically crowdsourcing the resources. After each Brother/Sisterhood gathering, he stages elaborate installations with the documentation of these yearly events; works that he considers 'promotional stands' for future gatherings—a sort of agitprop environment. The installations feature videos documenting the past proceedings, along with YouTube statements announcing the next venture referencing social experiments from the earliest days of technology, alternative manifestos on how to be an artist, and made-up recipes for 'emotional interfaces' and 'new social horizons.' In the latest Brotherhood/Sisterhood gathering for documenta 14, positioned between Kassel and Athens, artists, writers, and thinkers are indeed the medium of Plessas' work. Gathering and documenting the way these individuals either produce, play, or deal with Internet freedom (or alternately the lack thereof), the online personality of the work evolves through social media—Plessas acts both as facilitator and coach, chaperone and activator. As an online profile states: "Angelo Plessas' work is a portrait of your online and offline self, Together."





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 Angelo for a moment and let me know what you see?

ANGELO PLESSAS: Okay, I will fade out from Angelo and I see that he builds his ideas in and around the Internet. His work explores different sides of this world. I can clearly see he is interested in the multiple interactions between a strange materialism without matter to the shifts of territorialization of the self to ideas of collective and individual experience using a techno-spiritual visual language. I see that his work refers to how our bodies and minds are becoming omnipresent or trackless, how much our attention is fading away and the ongoing illusion of what is happening in the "now." He also deals with the value of cultural products and how this is being defined within this context of ownership. His work unfolds the present in a way that allows viewers to become participants of his pieces, exploring the physical, spiritual, and intellectual, but also the relations between one another—whether this happens on an interactive website, a museum environment, or a gathering in the jungle.

AC: Did you get any particular source of inspiration for the visual styles of your recent series of works—e.g. Experimental Education Protocol, Delphi or Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood 6 (both 2017), the video and projection formats, the storytelling and DIY ambience, or the viewing structures (wooden constructs and sofas), etc.—or did they arrive in relation to the nature of the 'materials' (read: people) you have used, and locations you were in?

AP: The Experimental Education Protocol,
Delphi happened for the first time as an
installation beyond the confines of the
[Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood]
residency program, and for this, I wanted
to create something that would convey the
environment of a self-made school. So. I

thought to make this structure with doublesided raw pieces of wood, which would put the viewer into the world of Maria Zamanou Mickelson—this year's case study—making a circle of navigating the installation. From the bright-lit outer side, you encounter an introduction to this woman's life going towards the backside of the installation: it would reveal a more emotional and esoteric side of her temperament, presented alongside the events that resulted from her as an inspirational figure within the residency structure. In this vein, I also contextualize the accompanying folded wooden structures as file-browser windows, where the results of a keyword search are placed almost sloppily like file icons on a screen surface.

# "Togetherness, for me, is the most political gesture."

- ANGELO PLESSAS

AC: Can you dive a bit into the technical aspects of the works? Such as the gathering of raw material, the software or hardware used (in the wide sense; they could be thoughts and bodies), as well as the selection and 'editing' process (what you take in and what is left out)? What are some of the particular challenges you and your team face in realizing the works?

AP: It is quite exciting how much material is being generated and archived by these two projects, and in each edition. The challenge is to control and minimize what will go public, what will stay secret, or what will be dug out for later use. This is quite the challenge for me, having the role of the archivist for these activities as well. In this sense, I usually focus on the people and the spirit they bring to the creative process of the project. The content I am filtering for these installations is the energy and

dynamism of each one of us in response to this unconventional space. So I also act a bit like a psychoanalyst. For example, the collective performance we did in the Dead Sea for the third edition, or the Robot Poetry Singing in Kassel now. During every Eternal Internet Brother/Sisterhood and Experimental Education Protocol program, I am the cameraman, shooting various moments, archiving in very extreme conditions—such as dangerous conflicted areas, severe heat and cold, wild nature, or no electricity; it is a bit like shooting for National Geographic. In the videos, there is very little editing or filters for post-production, and the footage is shot entirely from my iPhone. I like maintaining a "primitive" language of the internet, something like a technological arte povera.

AC: I saw a couple of recent installations of your work for documenta 14 in both Athens and Kassel—they were basically made of a series of 'spaces' that the viewer was moving from and to. Visitors would walk underneath, above, and into them—or beside, between, and within them—but could not really see them from an 'external' point of view. You chose instead to have an 'immersive' type of installation. What is the underlying approach to this?

AP: For the Eternal Internet Brotherhood/ Sisterhood 6 installation, I wanted to do something in a setting where the viewers would also be possible participants in a lively and vivid situation. They are surrounded by a material that was produced during and for the residency, which happened in the Lebensbogen commune outside of Kassel a month before documenta 14 opened. As in another iteration of the Brotherhood/Sisterhood after-experience. which took place as part of the Deste Prize in 2015, I wanted the viewers to feel as if they were taking part in one of those meetings, and imagining what they would do. For the iteration in Kassel, I created an amalgam of a distinct aesthetic that I encountered in all the Kassel communes that I collaborated with, but mixed it with my own interpretation of them, as well as the guests I invited for this occasion. In this way, there was an exchange of 'trade marks' with everybody whom I "curated" into the





installation. There is a type of ritualistic passage within the space of the installation, even if you choose to not sit down; you just walk by this central corridor and suddenly, you are temporarily immersed within a communal experience.

I also thought to make the installation operate as a hub for ongoing events, such as the *Inner Outer Circle*, an event which is both a game and group therapy session, which takes place around the installation during documenta 14, in collaboration with Vila Locomuna. For me it is very important that people enter these installations, watch, read, learn, sing, and meet other people; everybody becomes part of a playground for adults. Togetherness, for me, is the most political gesture.

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

AP: Sometimes, while I am working I disconnect from the Internet.

Angelo Plessas (b. Athens, 1974), makes work for the current time of the Internet. The focus of his practice is to network the offline with the online in ways that make us understand aspects of both conditions, and to generate new ways of relating to both. He registered his own foundation, The Angelo Foundation, which he uses as a vehicle for educational meditational participatory setting like the *Temple Of Play* (Frieze Projects 2013) and *School of Music* (National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens 2011). Other times, the foundation hosts performative works, like the auto-complete theatrical play *Fantasy Plot Generator*, where actors recite dialogues produced by a web software fed character names by Internet users. Each of Plessas' works are based on the social lessons that the Internet has taught us: you can say anything, be anyone, meet everybody. Nobody will know what color you are, how old you are, or if you are in fact a human or a bot.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Angelo Plessas, Installation view, Glass Pavilions on Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse, Kassel, documenta 14, Copyright Fred Dott.

#### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

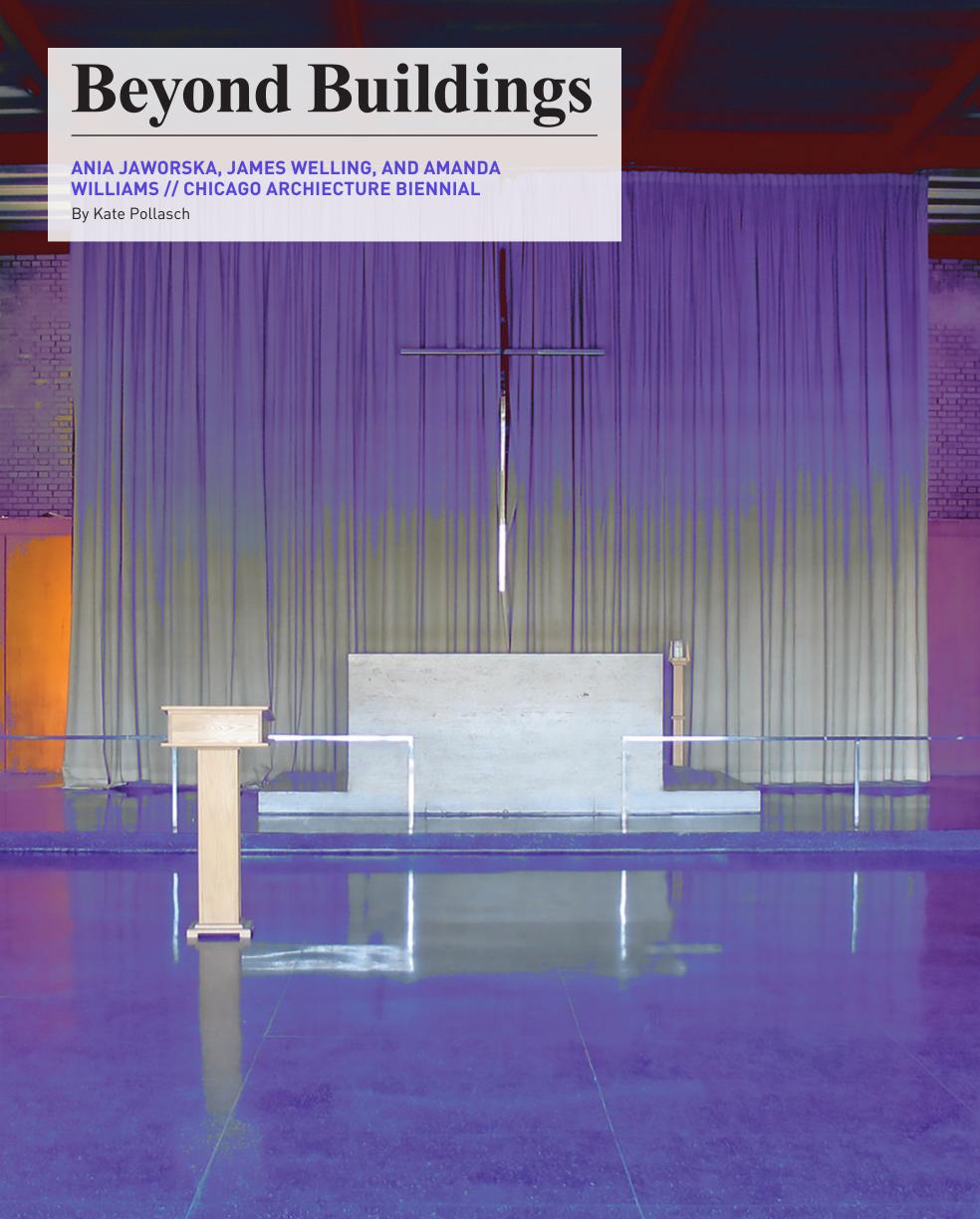
Angelo Plessas. Installation View, *Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood*. Copyright Fred Dott.

#### ABOVE, LEFT:

 ${\it Angelo\ Plessas.}\ {\it Experimental\ Education\ Protocol.}\ {\it Copyright\ Freddie\ Faulkenberry.}$ 

#### ABOVE, RIGHT

Angelo Plessas. Installation View, *Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood*. Copyright Fred Dott.



As it embarks on its second international forum, the Chicago Architecture Biennial opens this fall. Led by Co-Artistic Directors Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee, of the Los Angeles-based firm Johnston Marklee, the Biennial boasts a citywide exhibition and programing engagement plan that brings the proverbial architecture world to the Chicago stage. The theme of this year's biennial, Make New History, unpacks the field's relationship to its own history with a "me, looking at you, looking at me" self-reflexivity. Framed around questions of politics, power, and history, the Biennial poses the challenge: "how might we build connections to the past that are relevant and valuable to our present?" In the expansive complexity of this theme, architecture, design, documentation, and conceptual thinking stand on the same platform of importance, presenting an opportunity to examine the

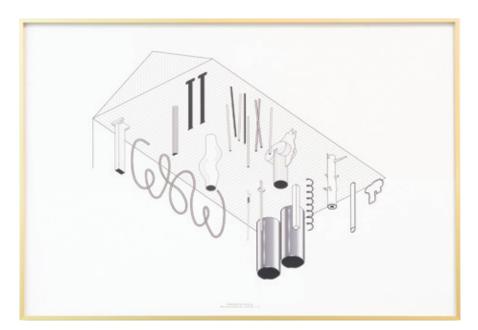
symbiotic ecosystem of architectural history alongside the often-myopic norm that positions the act of building as a prioritization.

Artists have a strong presence in this year's Biennial, with many individuals operating under hybridized professions—that of artist, designer, architect, and educator—as the new norm of creative professionalism. Of the Biennial's one hundred and forty-one practitioners looking closely at the relationship between art and

architecture, the work of Ania Jaworska, James Welling, and Amanda Williams addresses strikingly different content within a similar conceptual language. Their works offer a new way of looking at the past, and a thought-provoking interruption of the present. In their own way, each artist calls forth what can go unseen to the everyday eye, reminding us not only of the flaws of human perception, but also the power in questioning how we consider the image of architecture. Each reflects a different understanding about architecture beyond the building, and beyond space, as a malleable platform for change.

— In many ways,
Chicago-based Amanda Williams sets the stage to

the Biennial with her exhibition Chicago Works: Amanda Williams at the Museum of Contemporary Art, a satellite partner to the Biennial programing. Originally trained as an architect, Williams' Color(ed) Theory (2014– present) project debuted at the first Chicago Architecture Biennial—the series, which included locating abandoned homes in the Englewood neighborhood set to be demolished by the city, featured their exterior monochromatically painted in electric colors, as if marking a declarative outcry on behalf of the buildings' impending demise. The selected palette of the houses, devised from Williams' own system, are associated with consumer products—the hues bearing titles such as Harold's Chicken Shack Red, Currency Exchange Yellow, Safe Passage yellow, Newport Squares Teal, Crown Royal



Purple, or Flamin' Hot Orange, among others.

— Throughout the *Chicago Works* exhibition, Williams builds upon this project, incorporating new sculptural and installations to set a stage that addresses how the forces behind construction, abandonment, revitalization, and demolition—the architecture of a city itself—equally shapes how people are affected by its influence. In speaking about this body of work, Williams mentions that the process opened questions about what it means to single out a community of which she was not resident—to be an outsider entering a community, and working with the insiders. Just as her practice inverses value and memory, Williams is also quick to challenge what community means.

- In works such as Goldmine/is the Gold Mine? (2016–17), Williams inverses perceptions of material value and preservation by gilding a stack of bricks from a demolished house, and placing them in the museum's context. The work begs the question: if what was once rubble is now coated in gold and given space to be studied, does its value change? Williams' artworks refuses easy answers to these challenges, favoring instead the opportunity for more complex inquiry: who chooses value, what is the value of a brick on the streets of Englewood versus its placement within institutional walls? While the buildings and materials Williams works with are not invisible without intervention, her practice operates as a reillumination on how passive gestures of neglect and disconnect can puncture and penetrate a

neighborhood, just as strongly as active gestures of bulldozing, rezoning, and condemnation.

— With Williams standing at the front of the Biennial program, the fall opening at the Chicago Cultural Center anticipates more artistic considerations on what it means to interrupt preexisting relationships to architecture.

— In the forthcoming installation at the Chicago Cultural Center, the work of Ania Jaworska and James Welling similarly imprints the building's structure.

Jaworska—an artist, architect, and educator takes seemingly simple domestic forms and flips their context. In her sculptures and forms, such as bookshelves or stools, their central elements draw a phenomenological realignment, employing a subtle humor that rattles the viewer from their 'bad posture' and complicit relationship with objects and space. Jaworska's work tackles one of the first forms of engagement and connection inside the Biennial's central building that most would hardly notice—the concierge desk at the Randolph Street Lobby entrance. A structure for viewing and being viewed, Jaworska interrogates the form of the desk, which often silently communicates to visitors to approach and engage with staff, while also signaling that they are being



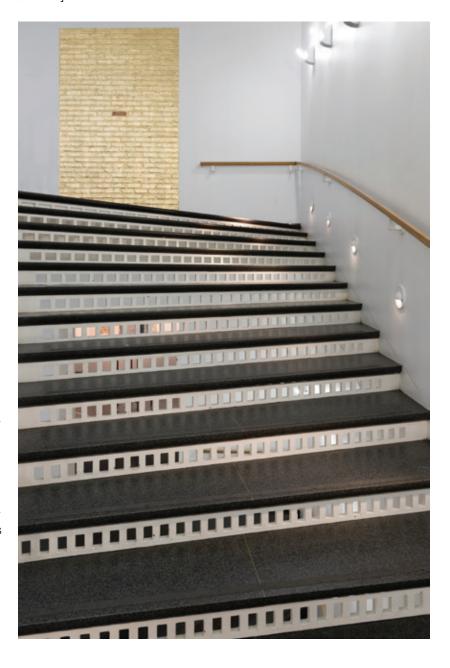


monitored. Using iconic forms, such as the arch and the column, Jaworska's intervention magnifies the entrance, at the same time it places boundaries and complications around its configuration. Elevating the desk and chairs so that seated staff and standing guests will interact at eye level, the installation recalls how Williams' gold leaf bricks intervene with discarded architectural materials. By enveloping the old desk within this new sculptural skin, Jaworska does not destroy or dismantle its purpose, but rather re-visualizes how architecture can mediate information, engagement, and viewership in a public space.

Welling's work will have one of the least subtle locations in the Biennial exhibition—invited to photograph Mies van der Rohe's iconic IIT campus and Lake Shore Drive apartments in Chicago, his photographs are installed on the façade of the Cultural Center in large scale. Through a deep artistic history with architecture, Welling has dedicated much of his career to photographing spaces and structures with visual curiosity and formal ingenuity. Tackling many of the titans of architecture, Welling's photographs collapse time to create a visual space of unfamiliarity. In this recent body of work, as throughout his practice, Welling's photographs render areas of artificial color with psychedelic electricity that counter the streamline, neutral palette of Miesian design to push even the most veteran architecture buff to wonder if they have been there before.

The Cultural Center—designed to speak as a marker of the city's intellectual and metropolitan advances—and has been a longstanding beacon of free public engagement and programing. Layering images of the modern IIT campus and Lake Shore Drive private apartment within the framework of the public space, Welling collapses an additional layer of architectural thinking.

The concept of this collapse remains prevalent in contemporary practice. Welling interrogates what a building can mean at conception, creation, throughout history, and in the present day. In this timeless mobility, we return to Williams, and how her work in Englewood might translate forty years from now. As *Make New History* provokes, we must ask: will this biennial ripple outward as a source of applied change? Or will our new state of awareness leave us mired and unable to fabricate solutions and steps towards change?



# TITLE PAGE:

James Welling, 8554, 2016 from Chicago, 1987/2017, Courtesy the Artist and David Zwirner, New York and London.

### PAGE 71

Ania Jaworska, Pavilion Proposal, 2015, Courtesy of Chicago Architecture Biennial and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Amanda Williams, Flamin' Red Hots from Color(ed) Theory Suite, 2014–16. Courtesy of the artist and McCormick Gallery.

### AROVE

Installation view, *Chicago Works: Amanda Williams*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. July 18–December 31, 2017. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago

# Nathaniel Mary Quinn

Nothing's Funny



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# Seeing Songs

# **BARBARA BLOOM // MUSICAL SCORES**

Selected by Stephanie Cristello

If images have voices, Barbara Bloom gives them resonance. The following selection of works, produced by the artist for Issue 05 of THE SEEN, consists of five compositions from the series entitled *Songs*. In contextualizing these works, the vocabulary of music is helpful in at least a few ways. For Bloom, the inflection (read: tone) of the image is one defined not only by 'composition'—a term that refers to organizational representation in visual art, as well as its notational function in music—but also in the linguistic comparisons that come along with appropriation of the score as a form. For example, the presumed 'literacy' of the image is mirrored by the assumption that one can 'read' music. In a more practical sense, the works function as expressions of music terminology in and of themselves—after all, the series consists of various found photographs suspended on a staff (a fermata). Though, one could also say that this conceptual method of culling, collecting, and display acts as a type of pause or extension of the viewer's attentiveness to Bloom's source material. In their relationship to time, the pace of the images—their tempo, pitch, and syncopation—unfolds like a melody in a similar durational fashion. —

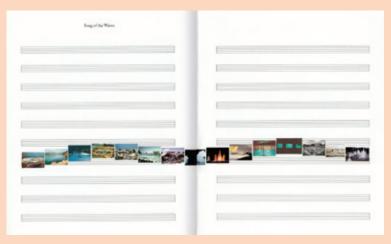


*Safe*, 1999. Framed digital print (still from Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) depicting the gloved hand of actress Tippi Hedren), hinged onto wall, wall safe, mounted into wall. 19 x 23 inches (Image) and 12 x 15.75 x 4 inches (safe). Image courtesy of Galerie Gisela Capitain and the Pérez Art Museum Miami.



Barbara Bloom, *Steinway Piano Carpet*, 2010. Wool rug, 90 x 72 inches.





Barbara Bloom, Songs of the Waves, 2008. Archival digital print, 24 x 30 inches. Image courtesy of David Lewis Gallery.

*Mrs. and Mr. V.N.* Carl Mydans photograph of Véra Nabokov with reflection of her husband Vladimir Nabokov at their home in Ithaca, New York, 1958. Mr. and Mrs. genius. The photograph of Véra typing is in the typewriter. Véra is the perfect artist's wife and is brilliant. Vladimir is in the picture but disappears from its sculptural re-creation. The magician is in the mirror. Caption courtesy of *A Picture, A Thousand Words* press release, David Lewis Gallery May 5–June 18, 2017.



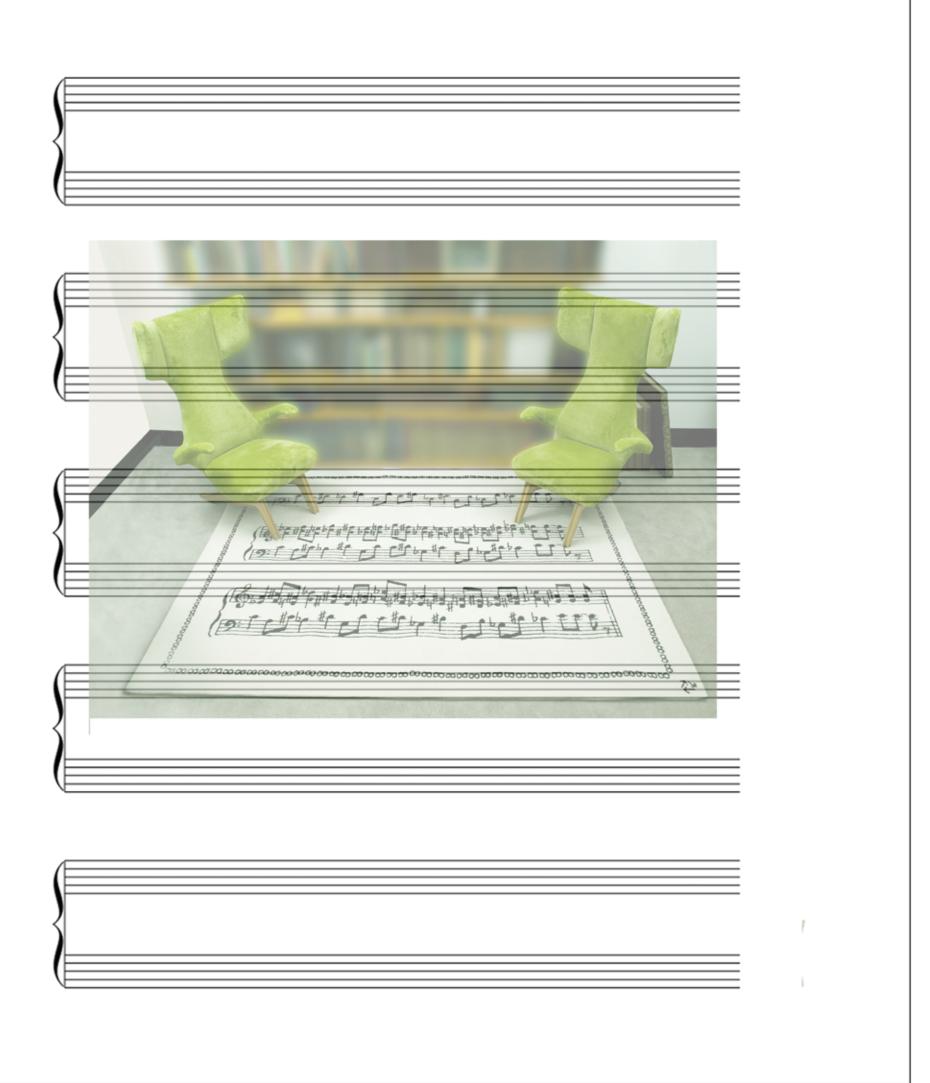
### The Ideal Home.

This one is all about being Bloom. And: a depiction of an ideal world. Three images from left to right:

—In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom describes an ideal home (slipping into bizarre particularity.) In Perec's *Life: A User's Guide*, the interior decorator Henri Fleury includes a doll-house version of Leopold Bloom's description of this ideal home in a house he decorates. This second text is set inside the original text from *Ulysses*. —Anonymous photograph of James Joyce examining a text with a magnifying glass. The photograph includes a .46€ commemorative stamp depicting Georges Perec. Issued in France, 2002. —Layering of images of ideal homes, including a drawing by Barbara Bloom's father of an ideal home.

Caption courtesy of A Picture, A Thousand Words press release, David Lewis Gallery May 5-June 18, 2017.

# Belief Systems

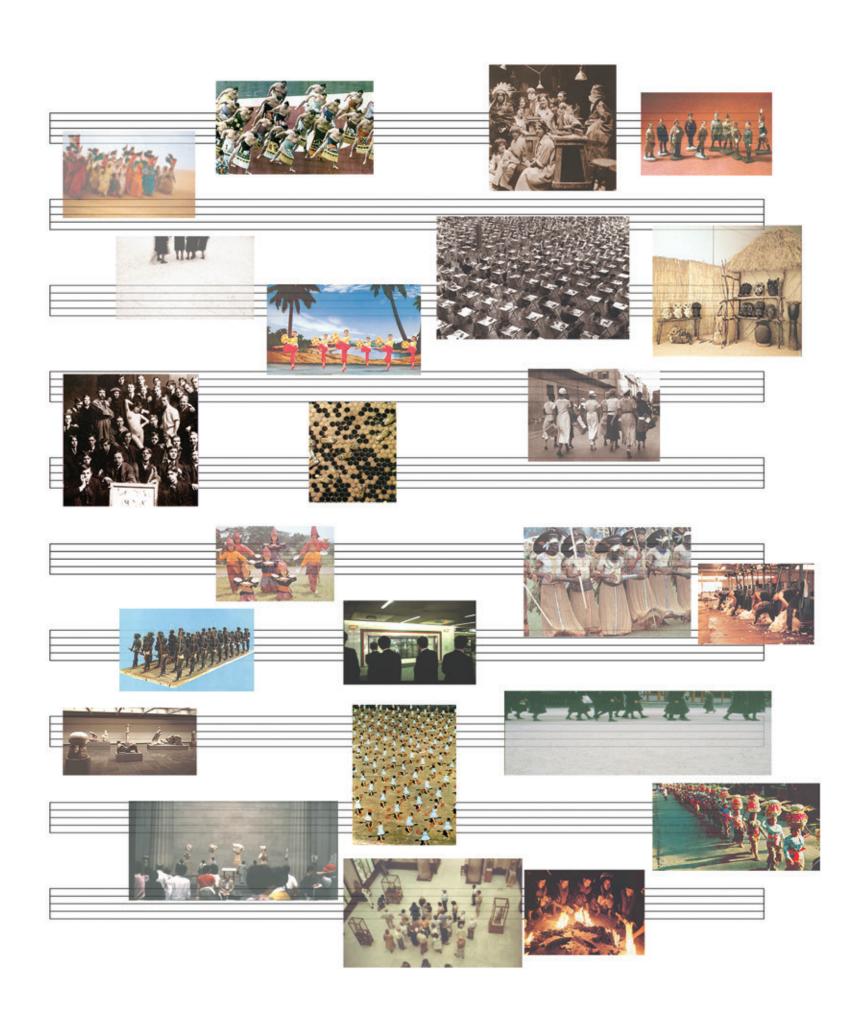


# Gap Scales

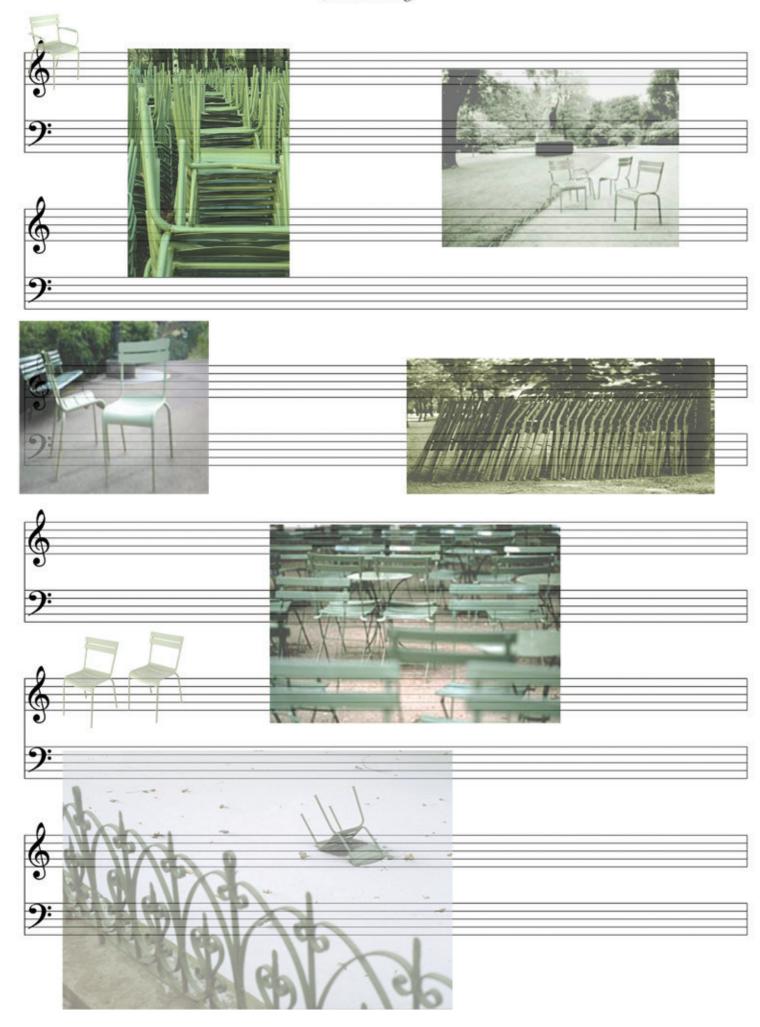


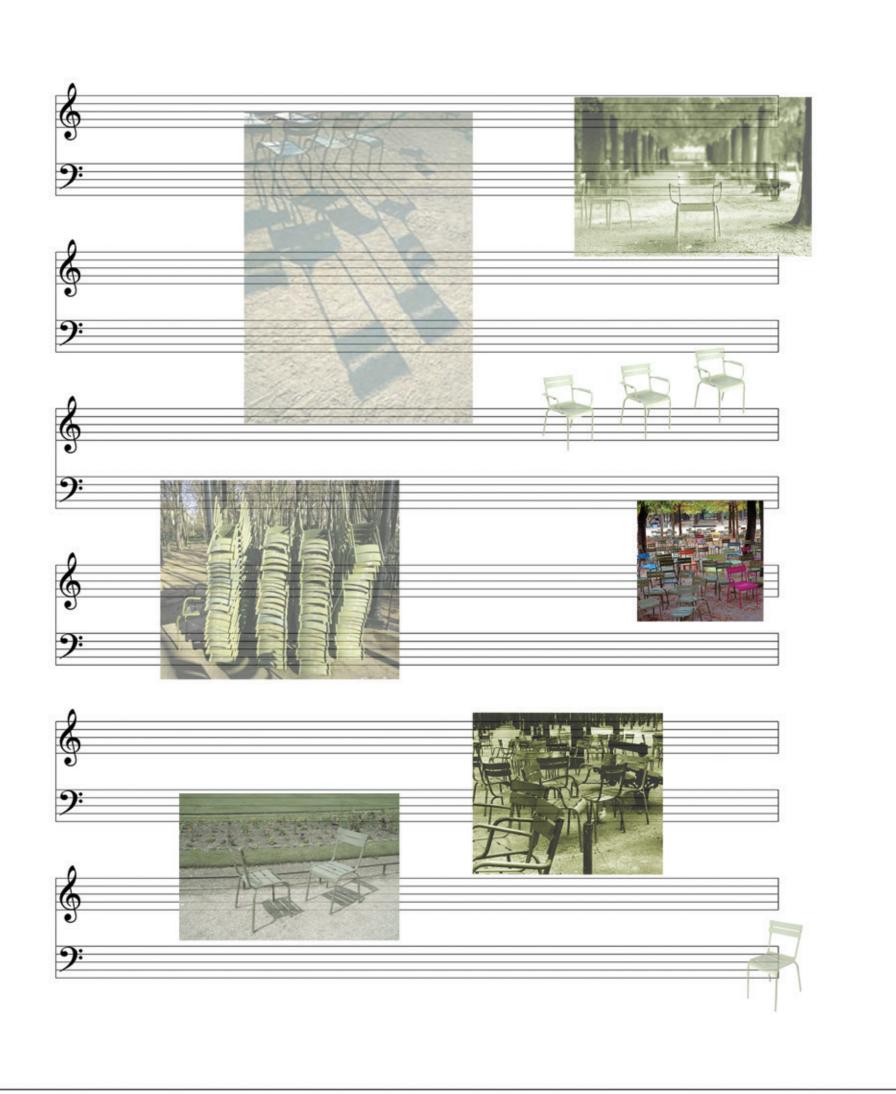


# Crowd Song

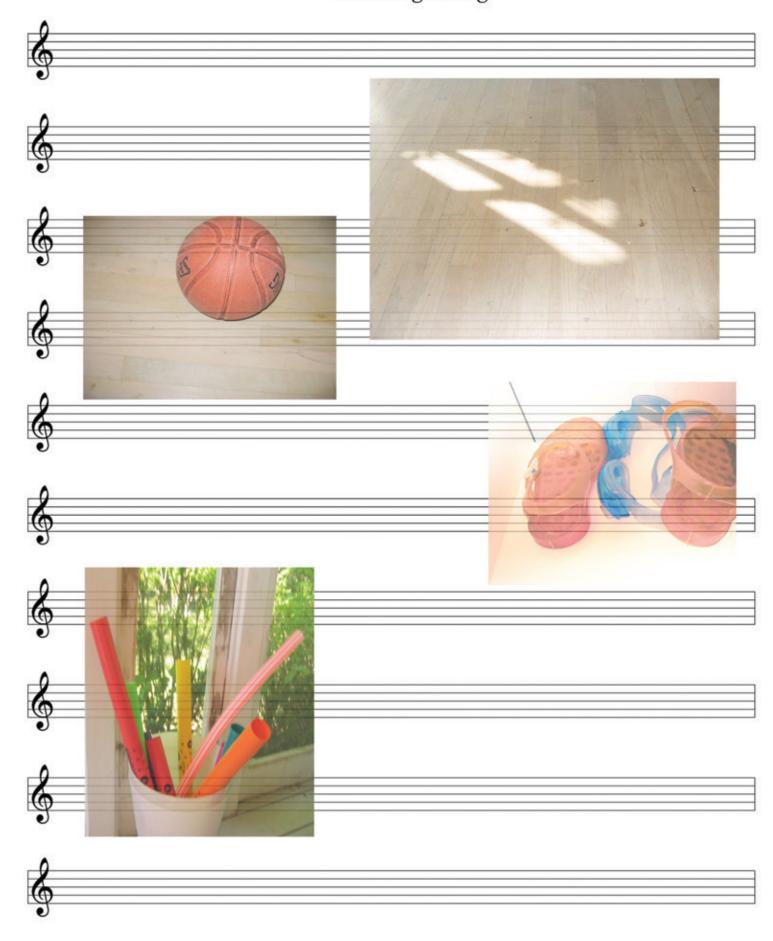


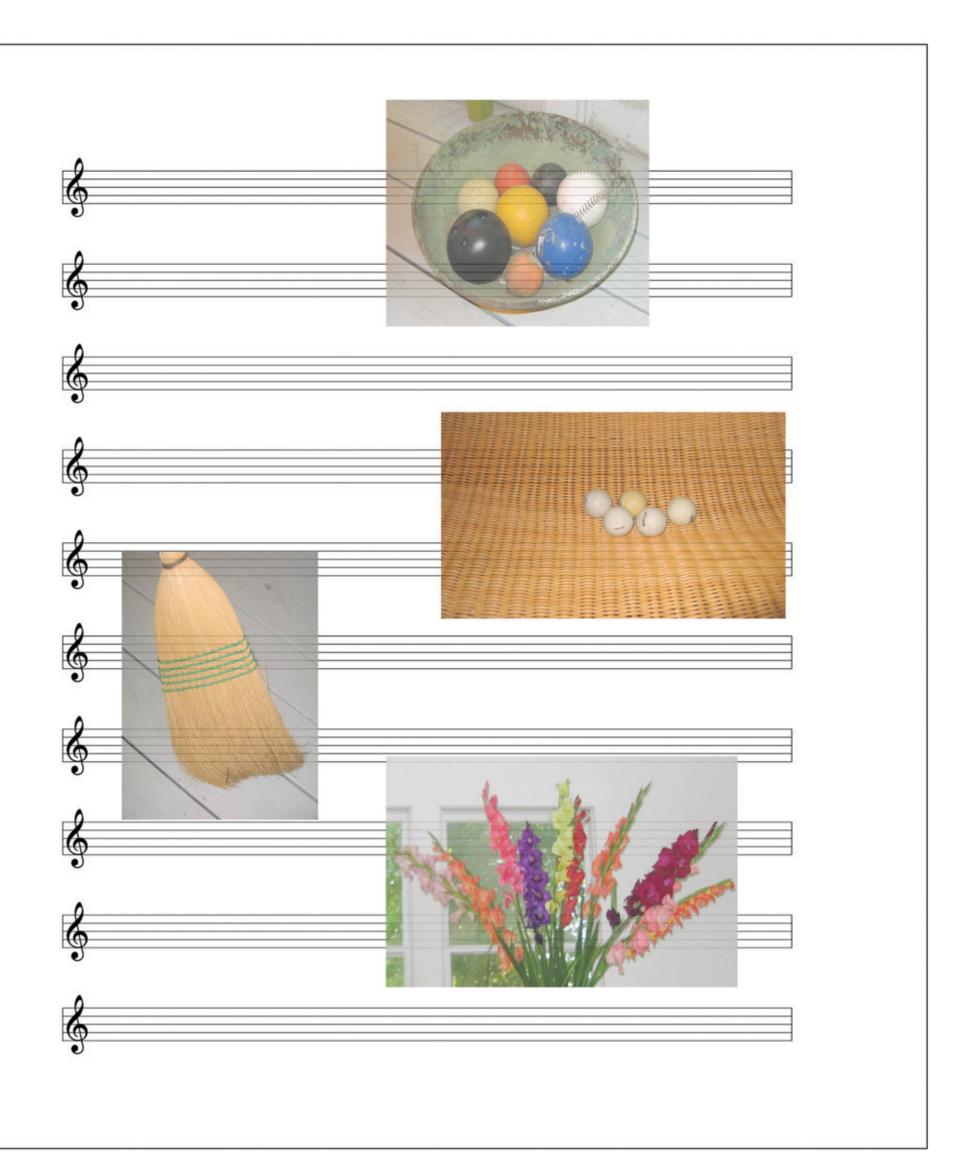
# Luxembourg Garden Chairs (Civilized Song)





# MaHong's Song







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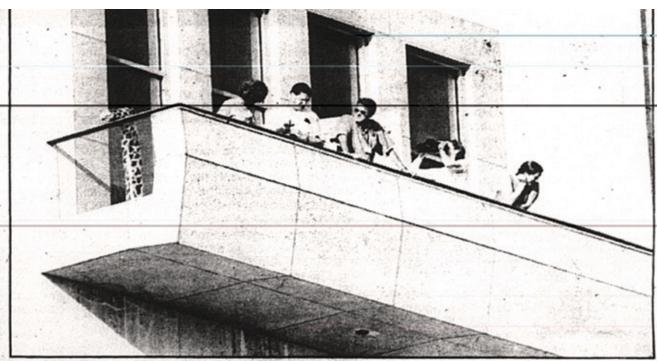
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Pain is a painting, one of my favorites, by Silas Dilworth.

[ THE SEEN   91 ]
[ INE SEEN   71 ]
Interviews



In a time when Russia-US relations are in a strange state of perpetual turmoil, subterfuge, and incongruence, it may come as an afterthought that 2017 marks the centennial year of the October Revolution, in which the Bolsheviks toppled the Tsarist Russian Empire and instigated the communist Soviet Union. Several international museums have marked this occasion with exhibitions on the idealist, utopian, and radical art that proliferated in the 1910s and 20s, before the Marxist experiment went awry and Stalin clamped down on free expression. The Art Institute of Chicago's Fall 2017 exhibition, entitled Revoliutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test sets that chronology aside and instead focuses on how, where, and above all for whom artists re-alized their revolutionary, socially engaged, avant-garde ideas. The exhibition was developed in partnership with the Moscowbased V-A-C Foundation, and a first version of the show took place this Summer in Venice. The resulting two-part exhibitions at the AIC and V-A-C uniquely focuses on re-creating artistimagined public and utilitarian spaces designed by Aleksander Rod-chenko, El Lissitzky, Gustav Klutsis, Varvara Stepanova, and others. —

— The exhibition's first iteration, entitled Space Force Construction, opens V-A-C's new permanent headquarters in Venice and incorporates contemporary projects by international contemporary artists such as Tania Bruguera, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Barbara Kruger, Taus Makhacheva, Mikhail Tolmachev, and many others. Meanwhile the Art Institute's iteration Revoliutsiia! Demonstratsiia!, opening Fall 2017, is a historical overview without contemporary art, but with four hundred more historical art objects and an accompanying scholarly catalogue. Staff Writer Anastasia Karpova Tinari spoke with the exhibition co-curators Matthew Witkovsky and (for the Venice version) Katerina Chuchalina (who was assisted by Anna Ilchenko and Peter Taub) about the exhibition and partnership.

Anastasia Karpova Tinari: How did the two-part exhibition Space Force Construction at the V-A-C Foundation in Venice and Revoliutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test at the Art Institute of Chicago and the collaboration between the two institutions develop?

Matthew Witkovsky: The Art Institute had been planning a survey exhibition of early Soviet art as part of the Fall exhibition program, for the 100th anniversary of the October 1917 Revolution. We have worked with V-A-C for several years, so I brought up the exhibition to them. V-A-C has interest in public art and audiences, and in this exhibition I wanted to look at the audiences for Soviet art: Who was it made for? What conversations were artists and other makers starting with citizens of this newly formed country?

For the Venice version we decided to bring old and new art together, but in both places the show is structured around places of display—spaces where art was deliberately put on view: the theater, street festivals, the pages of the press, the factory floor, the art school, and others. Each section [in the exhibition] features reconstructions of display objects or spaces: Constructivist theater props; Aleksandr Rodchenko's thirty-foot-long *Workers Club*; and a fourteen-foot-tall multi-media news kiosk designed by Gustav Klutsis, but was never actually built.

Katerina Chuchalina: Each of these reconstructions will become a part of V-A-C's collection, and we are very happy that these pieces will be presented in Chicago. We managed to create a unique, universal model that you can twist and turn in a various ways.

The collaboration

and constant dialogue were a great experience; The Russian avant-garde is an area of deep research at the Art Institute, and V-A-C was keen on working with this historcal context—culturally rooted in Russia but also a rouce for global artistic practices. We were interested in revitalizing Soviet avant-garde material to see how it relates today.

AKT: Katerina, for readers who are not familiar with V-A-C, can you tell us a little bit about the institution?

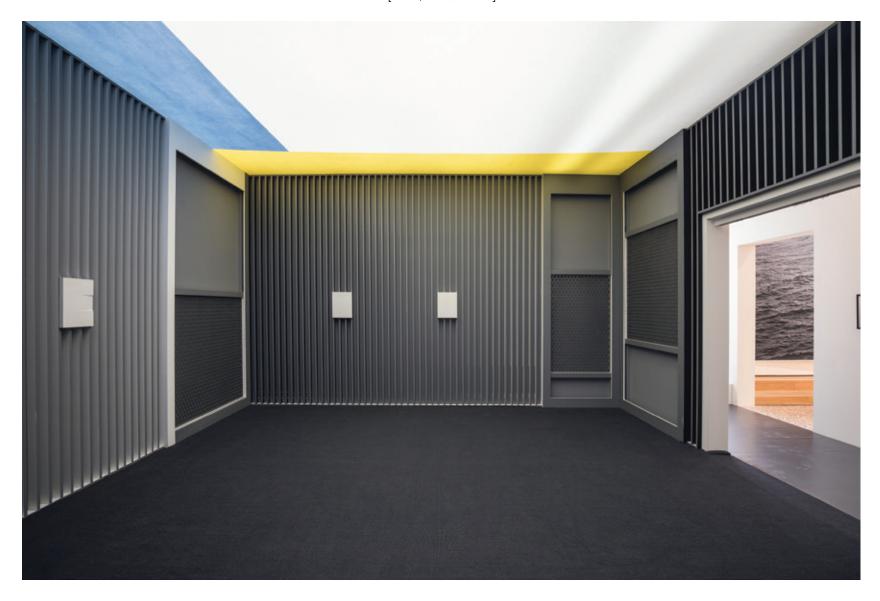
KC: V-A-C Foundation was founded in Moscow in 2009 by Leonid Mikhelson, under the Directorship of Teresa Iarocci Mavica, for the development and international presentation of Russian contemporary culture—across joint exhibition, educational, and publishing-related programming. In 2014, we began collaborating with the Whitechapel Gallery in London, and in 2016 we launched a first "V-A-C live" project, with three evenings of experimental performance.

From 2010–2015, during the Venice Biennales, we produced exhibitions in temporary spaces.<sup>2</sup> V-A-C's new Venetian headquarters, the Palazzo delle Zattere, consists of approximately 21,500 square feet over four levels, half of which will be dedicated exhibition space.

— We also continue to broaden activities in Moscow—in 2019, we plan to open V-A-C's major new site for contemporary art and culture, designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop in a former power station on the Moskva River bank.







AKT: When did the two different versions of the show develop, with Venice featuring contemporary artists responding to historical Soviet works, while the exhibition in Chicago remained more historically focused?

KC: In Venice, working with contemporary artists was the idea was from the very beginning. Matthew and I did not want to create a historical retrospective exhibition, but rather a review of early Soviet artistic ideas and methodologies through contemporary practices. In this way, Space Force Construction shows how contemporary artists relate to the great historical moment of cultural, political, social and economic shift during the early Soviet period. It is not a nostalgic relation, but rather a critical reflection, which is also crucial for better understanding how avant-garde art is perceived today.

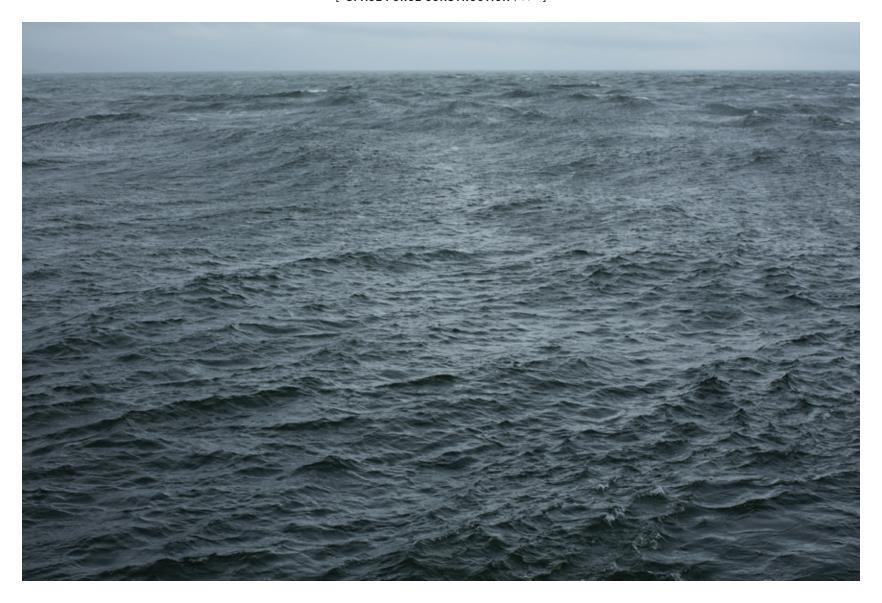
MW: Both shows are structured around spaces of display. In Venice, we asked contemporary artists to enter into a dialogue with a particular reconstruction (or original artwork) and its corresponding display theme. For example, we said to [Viennese painter and sculptor] Florian Pumhösl: "We're remaking El Lissitzky's Dresden Room from 1926 but without the original works shown in it; what would you want to put in their place?" Or to Abraham

Cruzvillegas, "we're remaking the sculptural contents of the groundbreaking first Constructivist show from May 1921, and we think your work would speak well—do you have a proposal?" 3

AKT: Tell me more about the curatorial process: how did you two selected the contemporary artists and how was the performance program developed?

MW: We did everything together. Katia [short for Katerina] has terrific knowledge of the Russian, post-Soviet scene; she came up with Russian artists, and I proposed the international artists. Then we discussed all the choices—who would be good where, and so on. Even though the Soviet art is a hundred years old, and has a particular political and social history, our project seemed exciting and relevant to artists working today.

KC: The performance program was curated by Peter Taub, the former Director of Performance Programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. It consisted of seven projects inhabiting various locations of the palazzo during the first weeks. Before the exhibition was installed, we had invited Peter to Moscow, where he met local artists and got a certain understanding about what is happening now in this field in Russia. I am very glad we could see



new pieces created by very talented people. -

In Stomach It (2017), a menu by Taus Makhacheva, the artist explores the politics of food during the early 1930s, mainly the period of starvation in the Ukraine and Caucasus, raising questions about the value of art. In her performance Isasthenai (2017), Tania Bruguera creates sculptural clay portraits of random people, only to watch their images destroyed and reformed as a portrait of the next visitor in line. The work challenges institutional power and control, in a show built around the question of models, monuments, and commemoration. Documentation of each performance became a part of Space Force Construction, occupying the same gallery space that was devoted to Soviet avant-garde theatre.

MW: It was critically important that about one-third of the contemporary artists and performers come from Russia or the former Soviet Union. While the artists are keenly aware of current political developments in Russia, they were really responding to the early Soviet artworks.

It is noteworthy that Russian artists had a more measured assessment of the Russian Revolution, its impact and consequence. For example, Irina Korina's installation, entitled *The Hall of Columns* (2017) fills one of the galleries with earth and trees,

as that is where people lived during time of festival or spectacle. The viewers navigate the tents within the installation—dark, below, cut off from the light—and in the middle of the space is a gangplank. One can walk up a few steps to see very brightly lit monstrous, caricatured heads of the leaders guiding the festival. The piece is experienced as a split vision of events.

Similarly, Sergei Sapozhnikov, an artist from Rostovondon, Russia, made a monumental structure in the backyard of the V-A-C space, fashioned out of metal, inflatable beach floats, mat-tresses, and other impermanent materials. It is messy, punk, youth culture on display. The artist invited dancers to make a performance on the structure, and then left it to decay under the humidity and open skies. It is an anti-Vladimir Tatlin Monument to the Third International. It is not going to last, or turn around and around forever, it is just going to fall apart. That is a perfectly valid, contemporary Russian take on monumental sculpture.

AKT: Matthew, will any of the contemporary commissions or performances travel to the Art Institute? Where are the additional four hundred historical works in the exhibition coming from?

MW: No, they are quite different shows in that respect. The Art Institute will include all the re-constructions, but none of the contemporary art. We will continue one idea from Venice: using Rodchenko's Workers Club as a gathering place. Artists, teachers, and others are being asked to hold weekly seminars in the Workers Club throughout the run of the Chicago show. The Art Institute will have more than five times the Soviet art works, more than five hundred pieces altogether. The Art Institute has one fantastic Malevich painting, and a few dozen multimedia early Soviet photographs, as well as selected items in other departments, but this is a major loan show. We are borrowing heavily from public and private collections across the United States and Europe. Current Russian law bars the country's museums from loaning to America...

AKT: One of the stand-outs in the Venice exhibition is Barbara Kruger's installation in response to Gustav Klutsis' prototype for a multimedia kiosk, designed in 1922. Contemporary artists Kirill Savchenkov, and Cao Fei also focus on how systems influence and shape individual thought: in the Soviet Union but also in the contemporary moment, through Globalization, Technology, and Social Media.

KC: Yes, this is a very important part of the exhibition—the constellation of the kiosk of Gustav Klutsis, installation by Barbara Kruger, and an educational unit by Kirill Savchenkov. Each of these pieces is dedicated to the mode and regime of the dissemination of information, as well as the algorithms and educational programs introduced in the beginning of the century, paired with those that are used now.

MW: Barbara Kruger's own space of conversation, or one of them, is the media world we live in dialogue with the media world imagined by Gustav Klutsis. His idea for a media kiosk had magazines shelves on the bottom, a tribunal where someone reads the news live, and at the top—a screen to show newsreel film. It is multimedia, live, and real time. Of course, Klutsis did not imagine the iPhone. Kruger's installation uses iPhone apps that show allegorical vices and virtues: you can go good, you can go bad. That room is a showstopper—her vinyl covers the seventeen-foot-tall gallery walls, which only she would know how to use to the fullest. Across the she quoted the 1920s critic Karl Kraus: "The secret of the demagogue is to make himself as stupid as his audience so they believe they are clever as he."

Kruger is not concerned with politics in a narrow sense—she is not working for or against a particular issue—but rather, she interacts in a broader sense, which makes her the perfect interlocutor. The point of this show is not to moralize, or wag fingers. It is not to say Russia today is great or evil, nor is it to demonize the United States. Maybe in some large-thinking way, the exhibition is a form of conversation between American and Russian institutions—although the artists were deliberately chosen from around the world, to show the reach of Soviet ideas—but the main point is to have a dialogue.

Matthew S. Witkovsky is the Sandor Curator and Chair, Department of Photography at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Katerina Chuchalina is Curator and Program Director at the V-A-C Foundation.

- 1 Other exhibitions organized on the centennial occasion include "Revolutionary Impulse" at the Museum of Modern Art and Revolution: Russian Art 1917-1932 at the Royal Academy in London, and Revolution Every Day at the Smart Museum, Chicago.
- 2 V–A–C produced exhibitions during both the Venice Visual Arts and Architecture Biennales, including Mark Di-on, Arseny Zhilyaev: Future Histories (2015) and IK-00 (2014), a group exhibition focused on the architecture of exclusion.
- 3 The full list of participating contemporary artists is: Cao Fei, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Melvin Edwards, Kirill Gluschenko, David Goldblatt, Janice Kerbel, Irina Korina, Barbara Kruger, Cao Fei, David Musgrave, Christian Nyampeta, David Musgrave, Flrorian Pumhöosl, Irina Korina, Janice Kerbel, Kirill Savchenvkov, Melvin Edwards, Mikhail Tolmachev, and Wolfgang Tillmans, and Mikhail Tolmachev; with an additional seven artists in the performance program performance contributions: Tania Bruguera, Pablo Helguera and Yevgeniy Fiks, Dmitry Volkostrelov, Olga Jitlina with Lampedusa, Tania Bruguera, DJ Spooky, Taus Makhacheva, and Sergey Sapozhnikov, DJ Spooky (Paul Miller), and Dmitry Volkostrelov.

### TITLE PAGE:

Aleksandr Rodchenko. Workers' Club, International Exposition of Modern Decorative and In-dustrial Arts, Paris, 1925, replica constructed 2017, Wood. Produced by V-A-C Foundation. Installation View, Space Force Construction. Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani.

### PAGE 94, 95:

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Surrounded)*, 2017. Printed vinyl. Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers and Mary Boone Gallery.

Gustav Klutsis, *Screen-Tribune-Kiosk*, 1922, realized 2017, Painted wood, metal, and fabric V–A–C Foundation. Installation View, *Space Force Construction*. Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani.

### PAGE 96:

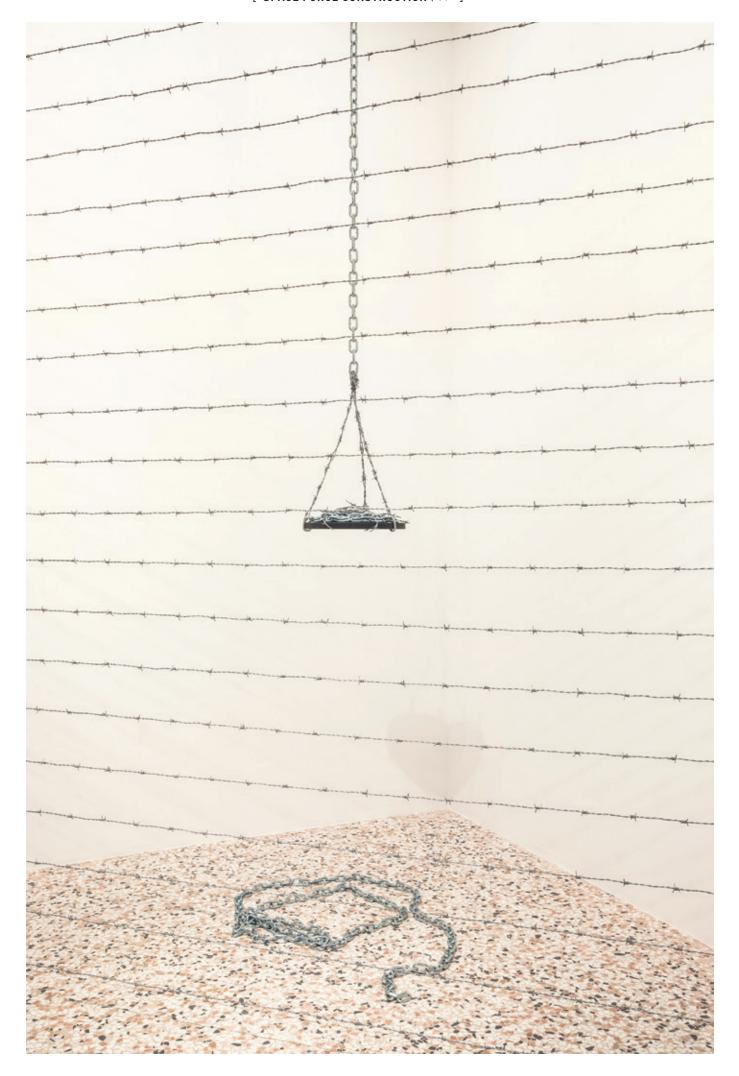
El Lissitzky, Room for Constructive Art, Internationale Kunstausstellung (International Art Ex-hibition), Dresden, 1926, replica constructed 2017. Painted wood, metal, and fabric. Produced by V–A–C Foundation. Florian Pumhösl, Relief I-V (for Dresden Raum), 2016–17, Plaster. Courtesy the artist: Miguel Abreu, New York; and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne and Berlin. Installation View, Space Force Construction. Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani.

### PAGE 97:

Wolfgang Tillmans, *The State We're In, A.* 2015, Inkjet print on paper. Courtesy David Zwirner, New York, Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin, and Maureen Paley, London.

### OPPOSITE PAGE:

Melvin Edwards, *Corner for Ana*, 1970/2017, Barbed wire. Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. Installation View, *Space Force Construction*. Photo: Delfino Sisto Legnani. Kirill Gluschenko.



# Gaylen Gerber



The following conversation between artist Gaylen Gerber and Vienna-based curator Eva Badura-Triska took place at Galerie Emanuel Layr in Fall 2016 as part of the Artist Lecture Series Vienna Conversations. The transcript below is a full record of the talk, on the occasion of Gerber's solo exhibition, which presented a number of recent *Supports*.

### November 9, 2016

Ezara Spangl: I would like to introduce this conversation. To begin, I want to thank Galerie Emanuel Layr for hosting the conversation. Tonight, on the occasion of Gaylen Gerber's exhibition, Gaylen Gerber and Eva Badura-Triska will speak together. Eva Badura-Triska is a Vienna-based curator and expert on Viennese Actionism as well as on Viennese artists emerging in the 1980s; in her early career she also wrote on the Chicago Imagists. Gaylen Gerber is an artist; he has exhibited widely, including recent projects at Kunsthaus Bregenz; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and The Art Institute of Chicago. Thank you, Gaylen and Eva, for speaking tonight.

Eva Badura-Triska: Thank you, Ezara and Rainer Spangl, for arranging this.
Obviously, in preparing for this evening I read a number of articles on Gaylen's work and reflected on it at length, in the process asking what might give continuity to our conversation. Because we are speaking in the context of the show at Emanuel Layr in Vienna, I thought that Gaylen's relationship to this city and in particular the history of his exhibitions here might be a good guide for leading us through his work.

Gaylen, you told me yesterday that you were in Vienna quite often and you have often exhibited here. Having seen a number of these shows, I would like to start with the exhibition you had in 1989 at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, which I remember quite well. In the gallery's first room there was a wall with a row of five paintings, all of which were very vague. You could hardly distinguish anything. They were monochromatic but representational paintings. It was difficult to distinguish the image. I do not remember what was represented.

Gaylen Gerber: Yes, there were three rooms to the gallery and the first two had gray paintings. It is what I think of as my early work, gray paintings, a little bit less than a meter square, all done in very close values of the same gray, and there is a genre image represented. The way I have described it to people is that the experience of the paintings is a little like walking into a dark theater. Initially you see the undifferentiated monochrome, and then, as your eyes adjust to the painting, you are able to differentiate the image. But in the process you lose the unified field. A genre is more of a category of composition than a personal image. I wanted to emphasize

the reception of the work and our changing perception in relationship to it, and in the process address memory, proximity, and conditions of display, among other issues that were central to understanding it, and so a genre was useful. The meaning of these works was as much between works as it was in a single artwork.

EB-T: Exactly. I thought it was about seeing, about making very fine distinctions. And I wonder if it was also about ambivalence?

GG: Yes. Maybe even artistic indifference.

EB-T: Because I think ambivalence is about seeing things in a way that conveys mixed feelings or contradictory ideas, or having trouble seeing things because of uncertainty or fluctuation, it is of importance in your work and we should come back to it. Galerie nächst St. Stephan as you know, is a special place. Rosemarie Schwarzwälder always followed a precise concept. And particularly in those days, in the 1980s and 1990s, it was a very specific gallery. Its program was quite influenced by an interest in positions that aimed at evoking feelings of the sublime, and certainly abstraction and the monochrome were great issues, as was an analytic approach to painting. When I talked to you yesterday, you said you were invited because they considered you a painter.

GG: Yes, they assumed that I was an abstract artist. Rosemarie Schwarzwälder was always incredibly gracious towards me and I enjoyed working with her, but it was kind of a mistake, and it took a while to become clear that I didn't fit into the scheme of the gallery.

EB-T: I know it is a delicate issue, but in those days you framed your work more conventionally as painting. Your work referred to the work of artists like Ad Reinhardt, who was engaged with subtle distinctions or contrasts between elements. Was that an issue you were interested in?

GG: Yes, I would actually say the genesis of my early practice may be attributed primarily to Ad Reinhardt, Andy Warhol, and then, later, to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. In each case, the work articulates an expression and a relationship between a normative ground and an iconic image. Reinhardt's work taught me how to define an artwork in the negative. I think that may have been a large part of the confusion with Galerie nächst St. Stephan—they understood the relationship of my work to the history of painting, but I was moving it in a direction that they had not considered.

EB-T: Obviously you did. But still, it is interesting that you say you were interested in and informed by Reinhardt and Warhol. Normally, one would see their work as quite opposed, but then I believe that reconciling opposites is something that goes through your work.

GG: Reinhardt's and Warhol's work is actually very similar.

### EB-T: Can you explain that?

GG: I would say that both artists posit a relationship between the image and the ground in a way in which the two elements are dependent on and also decidedly distinct from one another. They chose very different terms but the work of both has similar spiritual and ecclesiastical connotations and references. I learned from Reinhardt's work that what art is

not is also an affirmation of what it is. His work resolved in a prime sense the dichotomy that exists between a unified field represented by the monochrome and an iconic image represented by the cruciform. His work also made apparent the importance of structuring the experience phenomenally. Much the same is true for Warhol's work, and he demonstrated a similar detachment. In his early work especially, the monochromatic ground and the iconic image are recognizably separate. Taking a cue from Byzantine icons and the iconostasis, Warhol substituted profane representation from popular visual culture for traditional representation, but the structure intended to facilitate communication with the sacred remained. Both artists' work addresses a sense of the infinite. This was clarified for me later by the work of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, who—building on various



vernacular models—made it apparent that the ground and the figure or sign could be separated completely.

EB-T: Absolutely. This is what I associate with Reinhardt. I also read Warhol's electric chairs as an image that is a meditation on death. The figure-ground is, of course, a painterly issue, but at the same time...

GG: It is a philosophical issue.

EB-T: That is what I want to say. Because the ground in German is the *Grund*, which also means the reason. I think they don't have the same thing in the English language?

Would you elaborate on your relationship to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's work? They are architects and theorists and considered seminal figures in the socalled postmodern dictum, which is broadly understood as the movement that developed across the arts, philosophy, and criticism and marked a departure from modernism. It is typically defined by an attitude of irony and skepticism towards various ideological tenets. They certainly do not seem in line with the intentions of monochrome painting or Ad Reinhardt?

GG: I consider Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's work to be a continuation of modernism and not a break with it. I also do not see a fundamental contradiction between Reinhardt's and Venturi and Scott Brown's practices except maybe in the mode and rate of reception. Venturi and Scott Brown's work popularized ideas that posited a new form of architectural representation that reflected the influence of car culture, among other things. Those ideas later spread through the larger field of representation, but their work was

closer to a confirmation of my thinking than inspiration. I feel their primary contribution was that they made it apparent that the sign and the ground could be aggressively separated. Their practice reflected that separation, and an interest in the accelerated rate at which the architectural sign could be understood. My work took a different course by eventually inverting the sign and the ground, and slowing the rate of reception to something closer to that of Reinhardt's work, which requires time to understand what is being seen.

EB-T: I would like to continue our chronology, this time with a personal aside which brings us to Chicago, where you live. I was there in 1990 and I had a studio visit with Joe Scanlan, who is a friend of yours. You know each other and have worked together, and Joe in these days was working for the Renaissance Society, where, in 1992,



you had an important exhibition. To me it seems that here the issues in your work had changed. The exhibition was more about the space and the ambivalence of the space, or the cutting up and rearranging of it.

GG: My understanding of the work had not changed—the exhibition demanded another solution. Initially Susanne Ghez, who was then the director of The Renaissance Society, proposed a survey of my early gray paintings. Before this exhibition these paintings had been exhibited almost exclusively in broken rows with equal spacing between them. Susanne proposed installing them in this way in a series of rooms, with the paintings organized chronologically. All of the early gray genre paintings are untitled, not dated, and are actually not signed. So not only was it impossible to orchestrate them chronologically, but I also did not like the idea of reinforcing that and the other hierarchies implied in this proposal. I was looking for another solution, a way to level the presentation and retain my intentions. In the end, we exhibited twenty-five paintings installed in a row, and contiguous, on a temporary wall that spanned and truncated the width of the gallery and created a single space, denying access to the majority of the museum and creating a promenade. It is a scheme that foreshadowed much of my subsequent work, in which I position a monochromatic surface itself as the contextual ground or support for the art and activities represented by it.

EB-T: I have seen images of this installation. Were the paintings from the same body of work that was exhibited at Galerie nächst St. Stephan?

GG: Yes.

EB-T: I see. They were different images.

GG: No, they were all the same image.

EB-T: The same image, but...

GG: Well, they are unique paintings.

EB-T: Are they repetitive the same way as you have in Warhol?

GG: Closer to artists like On Kawara and Roman Opałka.

EB-T: I see. Well, there are subtle distinctions. It is really about subtle distinctions in the works.

GG: My work and practice have always utilized repetition and attention. I considered these artworks to be performative objects that often require an acute attentiveness. This is something that I've explored in depth in the work, but describing a performative object's relationship to reception in other than practical terms is complicated. Among other things, the experience needs to engage and foster a willingness in the viewer to see past the limitations of the medium, to entertain the larger premise put forward by the work. It involves the manipulation of space and movement. The result is a contraction and extension of perception that is intended to be notable, but that is just a part of it.

EB-T: Let's come back to Vienna now. In 1994, you had another show at Galerie nächst St. Stephan, with Angela Grauerholz and James Welling, where you provided a background?

GG: The work that I exhibited in that show was part of a group of early photographic artworks. They were silver prints of a clear sky on a bright day. We took a large format camera to the roof, pointed it straight up, and made a number of exposures. When the images were printed they looked like exposed photographic paper without an image—until you realized they are photographs of a clear sky, which is also an image of the infinite. At Galerie nächst St. Stephan, I presented a room of these photographs, each in a highly reflective Plexiglas frame along with one of Jim Welling's early gelatin silver prints of a Wyoming landscape. My intention was to have my representation connect with the almost identical representation of the sky in his photograph, and together I hoped that they might cut the foreground landscape in his image loose, separating it from the unified ground of the skies. It did just that, but the thing that I had not anticipated

was that the Wyoming landscape made my images immediately recognizable as representations too. The relationships I was trying to frame were there, but the exchange between representations and artists was more complex than I had anticipated.

EB-T: Had you painted the wall gray or not?

GG: No.

EB-T: So the work was just on the gallery's white wall?

GG: Yes.

EB-T: Who had made the choice of artists—was it you or was it the gallery?

GG: It was likely Rosemarie Schwarzwälder.

EB-T: So it was really still a group show where you were involved but it was not an installation by you? Not yet an exhibition where you provided a *Backdrop* for works by other artists?

GG: It was organized as a three-person exhibition, but at this point I was already formulating my practice as an ensemble. The room I'm describing was an installation in which I intentionally brought Jim's [James Welling's] photograph into my work with my work functioning as the ground to his expression.

EB-T: So this makes two exhibitions with Galerie nächst St. Stephan. You were represented by the gallery but you were not quite an artist of this gallery. At some point, you must have met Heimo Zobernig, with whom you've worked for a number of years? Heimo is an artist who plays an important role in my life as an art historian.

GG: I had met him earlier, but I cannot remember whether we met here in Vienna for the first time or whether it was in Chicago.

EB-T: In 1990, I was in Chicago for this famous documenta panel at the art fair Art Chicago. It was a discussion with Jan Hoet, Denys Zacharopoulos, Helmut Draxler, and









myself, I was so nervous. Heimo was with us, he made the booth of Peter Pakesch at Art Chicago. At the same time, Franz West's work was in Chicago as part of an exhibition at The Renaissance Society.

GG: That is interesting, I remember seeing Peter's booth. Heimo and I must have met here in Vienna, then, because that was after I began visiting and exhibiting here.

#### EB-T: And when did you start to collaborate?

GG: That came much later. At this point we were friends and we were working with the same gallery in Chicago, Robbin Lockett, which unfortunately no longer exists. We did not actually work together until 2003.

#### EB-T: Okay, to continue with your Vienna shows, the next one was last year, at Galerie Emanuel Layr.

GG: No, there was one or two in between.

#### EB-T: Which ones?

GG: At Galerie Michael Hall, with Helen Mirra in 2002, and then at PRO-CHOICE, in 2011.

#### EB-T: Sorry, apparently I missed these. Can you say a little more?

GG: The exhibition at Galerie Michael Hall had two pieces. A paper Backdrop of mine occupied the rear of the gallery, and Helen Mirra's 48° N comprised of a number of components—an early cotton banding work with an audio installation including a monitor and shelf—ran across it and occupied the room.

PRO-CHOICE was an exhibition space organized by the artists Will Benedict and Lucie Stahl on Zedlitzgasse, just around the corner from here. Will had come to see me in Chicago, and we worked together on his exhibition for Neue Alte Brücke in Frankfurt in 2010. Then I did an exhibition for them here in Vienna in 2011. At that point, I had been addressing a range of expressions using a limited, normative palette, but I had run into a kind of pictorial eddy. I was painting over other artworks, mostly

paintings, and the problem I was having was with Will and Lucie. that when you paint over another painting, you often end up with a rectangular monochrome with a limited referent, which unfortunately did not articulate my intentions as well as it might have. One solution was to displace the original colors of the painting that had been painted over with gray or white onto the walls of the gallery—in essence you ended up with a white or gray monochromatic painting and a very colorful contextual ground.

#### EB-T: And this was in Vienna?

GG: No, but it led to a similar kind of exhibition in Vienna. I had been working with Daniel Buren as part of the survey of my work at Mudam Luxembourg in 2006. He was in Chicago for an exhibition at The Arts Club of Chicago, and so we had the opportunity to see each other. After his exhibition closed in Chicago, I asked for and received a number of souvenirs, or remnants, from his work in situ. All of them were Plexiglas panels—some with his trademark motif of alternating bands and some simply transparent, monochromatic color. I had a number of the souvenirs silver-leafed to heighten their phenomenal presence. Then, as a way to skirt and confront the idea of permeability in an artist's work and practice, and also to visualize the limits of our ability to discern objects, symbols, circulation, etc. from the visual field, I aggressively displaced the color of the souvenirs into the room.

For the exhibition at PRO-CHOICE, I installed the panels now titled Support on walls painted in similar and contrasting hues and bathed in tinted light—suffusing color with color to the extent that our eyes often drown in its saturation. As far as our cognitive faculties were concerned, it was uncertain whether the differences perceived were contained within the image, the frame, or the exhibition space. It almost seemed that everything, including the whole of the exhibition context that would normally be perceived as the background for expression, remained in the foreground of our perception and understanding. So the exhibition had a very different sense of ambiguity about it—and that was the show

EB-T: So "ambiguity" is the word you used and highly saturated hues were involved. Very interesting. It looks like you are going from a kind of minimum to a maximum.

GG: I had not thought of it that way, but I understand why you would say that. When I did a similar exhibition in Essen in 2010, I ran into a gallerist from Düsseldorf who took me to task for not giving him enough for twenty years. He now accused me of giving him too much. If you look at my practice, I have really tried to be with the world, but it seems that I am most often either behind or ahead of it. I have a hard time being with it. This is one example of a phenomenal situation that is not easily shared with another person. It is possible to see it with others, but it is specific to an individual's body.

EB-T: That is really interesting, because now I would like to introduce something that I had not intended to talk about, but I am just preparing a show on Op art and I want to focus on the physical experience these works incite. Op art is about visual phenomena, but it is also something that involves the whole body. Many of the artists involved object to the term "Op art" because they say all art is optical or about optical phenomena and about looking. Talking about your work, it seems that like in Op art there is also extreme overexposure and underexposure. I have seen images of the show at the Kunstverein Ruhr in Essen, where there is overexposure—the saturated room that makes a viewer feel uneasy and unsure of what they are seeing, uncertain of the boundaries that articulate things, ambivalent.

GG: I would like to say one more thing. I also intended the highly chromatic exhibitions to be pleasurable experience. People often assume that I am an ascetic because my work initially seems bare, but I do not think of it that way. So for me this kind of situation was not such a big shift in action or strategy.

EB-T: I think it is marvelous you say all these things, because when one reads texts about your work everybody says it is about context—conceptual art. So now, in your words, it is also about pleasure and visibility. I love that, thank you very much for saying such things!

Let's continue with the exhibition you did here in Vienna with Galerie Emanuel Layr in 2015, where you created a background. It was the first time I experienced one of your Backdrops in person. And this Backdrop, was it paper?

GG: It was gray background paper with an accordion fold, much like the way older roadmaps were practically folded and arranged.

## EB-T: So you made backgrounds that are very physical. Are the folds necessary?

GG: I chose to have them, so I would think so. The pleats are folded to the general proportions of a torso and the work is scaled to an individual body even while the entirety of a Backdrop helps the exhibition take on the form of a single installation. Because the Backdrops most often occupy the rear walls of an exhibition situation, each literally and figuratively acts as the support for the other artworks and activities that are presented with it, to underscore the network of exchanges between elements. These pieces also originally came about because as the work grew larger it also became more expensive to produce. The paper Backdrops were an economical alternative. A paper Backdrop could be folded into a relatively small box and FedExed almost anywhere in the world for a relatively reasonable amount of money. Once there, it could be unfolded and cut to fit that particular exhibition situation.

EB-T: Because your *Backdrops* become part of the background, they play with invisibility. Viewers are not always aware that there is a work by you in the room, because it reads as a wall in the background and not as an artwork. But with the folds in the paper *Backdrops* you underscore your presence.

GG: I think that is probably true, but you would be surprised. Once you install another artwork with the Backdrop, it is

difficult not to read it as background. In the exhibition at Galerie Emanuel Layr with Park McArthur and Jim Nutt, we had intended to install an artwork by Nutt directly on top of my Backdrop. But once it was installed, it was apparent that it was not advantageous to Jim's work. So we arrived at a solution that was more beneficial to seeing his work, and as a result my work became more recognizable and discrete in this situation than I had initially intended.

EB-T: I think it is because of Jim Nutt's work in this exhibition that Emanuel brought us together for this talk tonight. I was introduced tonight as somebody who has written about the Chicago Imagists. This was only a short text, and singling it out as important is really an overstatement, but there is a remarkable group of works by these artists in mumok's collection. In the 1970s, Alfred Schmeller, then director of the Vienna Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts—the precursor of mumok felt quite sympathetic to this work and he was in contact with them and in particular with their gallerist Phyllis Kind. I guess his interest developed because the work of the Imagists is similar in some ways to that of a group of artists in Vienna whom he patronized called Wirklichkeiten ("Realities" in English), which is also a very special kind of idiosyncratic "bad painting." When I was a young curator at mumok, I was not especially interested in this kind of work—something that has changed in the meantime. There were, however, so many paintings by the Imagists in the museum's collection that, when we worked on a major catalogue of the museum's holdings, we had to address these artists. I was asked to write about them. I am far from being an expert on this movement, but I am familiar with it, including Jim Nutt.

Let me ask a question that interests me in particular and seems at the core of your work: how do you choose the artists you work with? Why, for example, Jim Nutt? And why bring his work together with Park McArthur's?

GG: I thought it would make an interesting exhibition that might be beneficial to

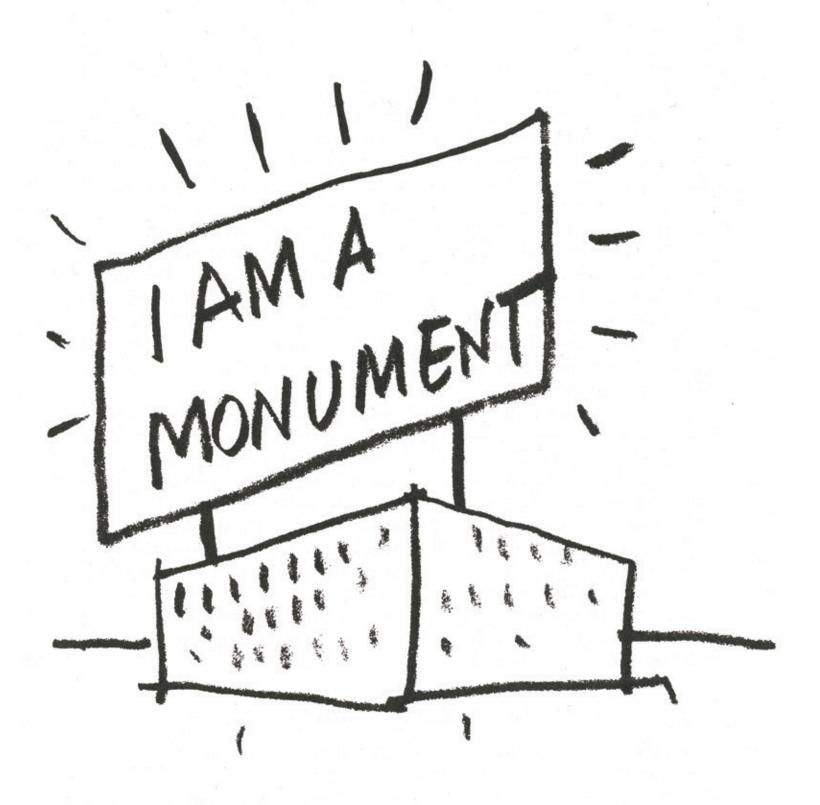
everyone involved, myself included. Park McArthur and Jim Nutt are both great artists and they are both dealing with the body in very particular terms. It was an exhibition that was intended to have each artist's work represent a lucid and independent understanding of the realist tradition within a single, unified situation. And I think it did that.

EB-T: I want to delve a little deeper into this, because you are bringing together artists who are very different. They represent a variety of artistic approaches. Is this something you want to show? Is this an issue for you, bringing together this variety of individuals?

GG: I am interested in difference, the way in which people and things are not the same and in the range of differences. Culture tends to favor homogeneity, but that is in part an inability to tolerate a degree of difference as well as a practical solution. Because of the nature of representation, and perhaps personal inclination, I often approach difference paradoxically. So, yes, I am interested in using a range of expressions. It allows me to approach ideas that are often difficult to address in another way. In practical terms, because I'm using a normative ground, my work benefits from embracing differences, which together tend to amount to something larger than the sum of their parts.

EB-T: This touches on philosophy, so let's go into that a little bit, or rather, into artists' ideology. In the 60s, artists of related thinking and intention, still stuck together, but now the conversation has opened up. Franz West, an artist I knew very well, also brought many artists together—all sorts of different positions on one wall. And he often said to me, "I am interested because they are all so different, I put them together because everybody has his or her own expression." So I wonder if this is also the issue that interests you? Providing a kind of foil for this multiplicity, for this difference?

GG: I feel that my work is close to Franz's statement in character, but I am not interested in being "a foil," in preventing something from being examined. I often





include something because I want to see and to understand it as clearly as possible.

### EB-T: There is also your use of the term "collaboration."

GG: I use the word "cooperation."

EB-T: Cooperation. Okay, yes. I was wondering if you would also accept the term "conversation" between these works?

GG: Between my work and other people's work?

EB-T: I had an interesting conversation with a colleague recently who was talking about art hangings in the eighteenth century. It had to do with bringing different things together and not trying to make something inconsistent seem logical. She referred to a cartoon from the eighteenth century that suggested the works would even converse amongst themselves. It was a bit of a joke then, but when you or when Franz West have deliberately arranged a "meeting" of diverse works, I wonder if a conversation between them happens. Of course, not literally, but a viewer may create or experience a kind of conversation between them. Also in the sense that the artist was conversing with these various positions in making the work. Is this an issue that interests you? Are there unexpected interconnections?

GG: Sometimes there is an opportunity or situation that benefits from what you're describing. I will give you an example. I did an exhibition at Mudam Luxembourg in 2006 in which I included Rémy Zaugg's work. The paintings were from a suite of text paintings he had made close to the end of his life that were meditations on death and art. They were worded in French and mused on the way things disappear at the moment of their perception. I installed Rémy's work in concert with other artworks that sometimes looked foolish, or humorous, or ambivalent, or even ignorant, but they were poignant in ways that were consistent with what I consider his expression to be and with the conversation that the work engendered.

#### EB-T: So this was a very deliberate decision.

GG: Yes.

## EB-T: But then you wanted to break the kind of...pathos...

GG: Well, not necessarily. I thought it was something that Rémy would likely never have done himself and I thought it was an aspect of his work that should be addressed.

EB-T: So, when you are bringing artists together, or rather, making arrangements of various works, how does this process begin? Do you think of an artist and then you start writing letters? Or do gallerists propose ideas?

GG: It is a little bit different every time.
Usually I have seen an artist's work
somewhere and one day it occurs to me
that I should make an exhibition with them.
Usually you can call artists and they are
generally willing—if you have considered
the work—to entertain your idea.

## EB-T: I read somewhere that you are a great networker.

GG: Oh, that is a misnomer. I am a little agoraphobic. I tend to perceive the world to be unsafe with no easy way to get away.

#### EB-T: Okay...

GG: The work needed difference, I chose to delegate it outside of myself. The work is extrinsic in that way—its expression is partly mine, its essential character comes from the world. The objects and expressions have a range of existing meanings and associations and I have tried to treat them with parity in my practice. When I refer to difference, it is with a recognition of the broad range of expressions whose value may not easily correspond with mainstream Western norms.

## EB-T: There is something else that interests me in your work. I want to understand how you pick up on and develop something?

GG: I often notice or recognize something that I might use in the work and give it a

platform in order to understand it better. I will give you an example. When I first saw Park McArthur's work I was taken with its emotional quality. It was succinct and she is a great editor of her own work. She was one of the first artists I have seen since, maybe, Eva Hesse to address the body with such gravity, fragility, humor, and even hubris. She did it in a way that really seemed to have few peers with the exception of, I would say, Cameron Rowland, who turned out to be a friend of hers. I was interested enough that I went to the gallery during her first exhibition to purchase one of her ramps. I thought I should live with one and see if I was correct in my assessment, if it would hold up to repeated exposure. It turned out that all the pieces had been sold. They were placed as a group—staying together—so I could not be angry. A few months later, I was in Miami for the art fair and I saw two of her Polyurethane Foam pieces that had recently been produced. I was walking through the fair during its installation and I was so taken with these pieces that I walked right past her gallerist, Maxwell Graham, who then came up to say hello. All I could say was, "Whose work is this?" When Maxwell said it was Park's, I immediately knew I should work with her. The works are exceptional, but I did not have ideas about an exhibition or how to properly address them. But her work occupied a larger place in my thinking after that. A few weeks later, Emanuel contacted me about the possibility of doing an exhibition in June. As we started talking, it became clear that we might build an exhibition including Park's work. Almost as quickly I knew that Jim Nutt's work should be included too. I had included Jim's work in an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago a few years before, and I had known his work for decades before that. I contributed a gray paper Backdrop to the exhibition that wrapped the back of the gallery. My work had a physical presence that related to both Park's and Jim's work and referenced the body in a way that was also very different. So in this instance I did not start with the paper Backdrop, I ended with it.

## EB-T: You are establishing a relationship between these artists.

GG: I leave that to the viewer, but I would think that there is an interesting relationship there.

EB-T: Everyone confronted with a constellation like this would find a way to address it, and I would think that this is something your work is about.

One more point, your *Backdrops* have such a physical presence, I do wonder about the role the body plays in your work. Did you ever have something performative happen in relation to your *Backdrops*?

GG: Well, I think it is all performative. And these artworks are, by their very character, performative objects, which is why they are titled *Backdrop* or *Support*. But you are referring to explicitly programming a performer. I do not think that I have done that. But there is another generation of artists doing work related to this, and many of them are explicitly using performance and performers.

EB-T: We are recording this talk sitting in your current show at Emanuel Layr, where you are bringing objects together on pedestals. All the works are titled *Support*, if I understand correctly?

GG: Yes.

EB-T: At first I thought that the pedestals were the support, but now I understand that the objects are the supports and that you have moved the background out of its usual location and into the foreground by literally painting over the objects colors that are normally understood as neutral backgrounds. So it is the painted surface combined with the original object now acting as its ground that constitutes the final artwork, called Support. And the painted surface's institutional quality continues to function as a background to everything around it even though it now has an individually separate and distinct form. Is that how it works?

GG: Yes. The Supports are artworks or artifacts onto which a representation of the context has been displaced. The traditional relationship between context and object has

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been inverted. They are not dissimilar to my understanding of Piero Manzoni's Socle du monde, or Base of the World, in which an inverted plinth presents the entire world, recognizing everything as its subject.

EB-T: But it is an actual Makonde mask? Some of the *Supports* look like they are casts or an inexpensive version of the original object? What are you showing us?

GG: Are you asking me if they are authentic? They are surviving relics—artifacts and artworks from the world. I understand them as readymades. I paint over them with the understanding that the image and the object are not the same thing. What I am presenting is an image, a contextual representation of a *Lipico*, or Makonde helmet mask. It is a framing device employed to contradict the viewer's common assessment that the image is the object.

EB-T: Seeing these pieces now in person after having only read about them, I realize that you are using two colors—gray and white. Is it always the same gray?

GG: Yes, it has been the same gray for a very long time—thirty-five years or so.

#### EB-T: And which gray? Is it a special gray?

GG: It is a medium value, medium hue—a gray that is made up of various colors and intended to be somewhat fugitive in character so that it appears differently depending on its situation. Once I had started using that color there did not seem to be a good reason to change it.

## EB-T: There is a sense of literalness to your work.

GG: I often intentionally confuse the literal and figurative. It is a simple mode for beginning to work through some of the dilemmas of representation, but it is a strategy that I used early and it is still visible in my work.

EB-T: Can you talk a little bit about your choice of objects? Why those objects in particular? I think you would say because you like them.

GG: I selected them initially because they addressed a distribution of attention and expression in a way that I am interested in. The objects are not from one culture, class, or time period. Some objects are or were valuable, and some are more vernacular.





Most of them tend to evoke an empathy with the individuals and cultures that produced them. One of the issues that is raised in this work is the idea of aura. I do not believe that artworks have an aura, but I do think that there is a language to visual expression that often transcends culture and time period, and so when I am working on something I often feel that I will understand it and its associations better after I have worked with it, whether that has been pleasant or not.

EB-T: You are bringing together objects, some quite culturally valued and others less valued. It's analogous to how you combine works by other artists—some of them are highly recognized and others less so. I think in that way you are also making a statement about the equivalence of many expressions.

GG: I am interested in creating a field.

EB-T: Exactly, but also showing multiplicity.

GG: I am interested in difference. I just approach it paradoxically by making everything normative.

EB-T: You could say you approach it democratically by treating everything the same. The MDF pedestals make me think of Heimo Zobernig's work. He has done similar looking pieces that play on the notion of ambivalence, these objects may be read simultaneously as functional objects and as artworks. They oscillate between both understandings.

GG: I understand what you are saying, our concerns and interests are not unrelated.

For example, I chose MDF as a material for the pedestals because it is homogenous— it is the same all the way through and used commonly around the world for counters and other supports. I also wanted something that was not gray or white, and that was not thought of as an expression per se. And this was the most practical solution. Heimo likely uses it for a similar reason.

EB-T: I would like to talk about what this really means. What is the purpose of doing it?

GG: To try to see something, to help make it visible.

EB-T: When I was preparing for this talk, assembling questions I might ask you, one night, when it was late and I was

"Some objects are or were valuable, and some are more vernacular. Most of them tend to evoke an empathy with the individuals and cultures that produced them. One of the issues that is raised in this work is the idea of aura. I do not believe that artworks have an aura, but I do think that there is a language to visual expression that often transcends culture and time period, and so when I am working on something I often feel that I will understand it and its associations better after I have worked with it, whether that has been pleasant or not."

tired and being a little facetious, I wrote a question asking, "What if Donald Trump wins the election?" I put this question off, it seemed too absurd. Now, a day after the opening of your exhibition, we are faced with the incredible news. What can art do in such situations? Can it resist the more aggressive tendency towards the homogeneity of society? Can precise thinking and reflection on difference be part of an effective response?

GG: There is always a question of how we value difference. I do not think any social movement is secure. One of the things I think this work does well is that it acknowledges difference and value but locates them extrinsically, which makes each of us responsible for their definition on an ongoing basis. In that way this exhibition is a part of a tradition that attempts to perceive a world in flux, as it is.

## EB-T: And give it *beauty*, a term that is being talked about again?

GG: Beauty is relative. It is possible to see the world as only a positive void, suggesting that if you develop a desire for beauty you also begin to refuse what is not considered beautiful, and so limit experience. It is an idea related to indeterminacy. The composer John Cage described it as letting things be themselves.

## EB-T: You once did a work over wall drawings by Sol LeWitt.

GG: This was at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, in 2010. It was soon after Sol died, and Rhona did a large exhibition of Wall Drawing #530s-tilted forms (A, C, F, G, I, K, M, N). I understood that after the exhibition LeWitt's wall drawing would be painted over and that other artists' expressions would then be installed on top of them. This layering of expressions is close to my heart. An early exhibition strategy of mine was that I added only a painted monochromatic Backdrop to an exhibition situation. It allowed me to insert my work into the flow of activities in a way that both looked towards the gallery's exhibition history as well as all the subsequent exhibitions that would follow

my intervention. In this instance, I painted a white monochromatic *Backdrop* directly over LeWitt's wall drawings, covering them completely. My painted *Backdrop* then became the background for Kehinde Wiley's work, which was the next exhibition in the gallery. Positioning my work so that it was seen as in between things proved really effective in terms of having the ground considered as an expressive element in and of itself. Seeing these two disparate artistic expressions joined was valuable for me.

EB-T: I remember when Sol LeWitt did a big wall drawing on all four sides of the Vienna Secession's main exhibition space and there was a discussion afterwards. One of the issues was what does it mean when after such a show the work is destroyed. A young artist who had been on the team that had realized the installation with LeWitt stood up and reported that LeWitt had said, "The work is not destroyed, the work vanishes." I thought this was very, very poetic, and a wonderful way of seeing it. So when you painted over a LeWitt, did you think you were destroying it, or did you make it vanish? This idea of strata can also be read metaphorically—that things build up over time.

GG: Well, it also implies becoming aware of the entire history of the situation and everyone involved before and after. I would like to say that I did the exhibition because I thought it was a good idea. The circumstances were favorable and effective for what I wanted to address. And pragmatically I was in a position to do it. Rhona and I have known each other for years, we have always been on good terms, and this exhibition also fit with the spirit of the gallery.

## EB-T: Are you painting such things personally?

GG: I have painted enough walls in my lifetime. I did not feel the need to personally do it. I was there and I kept Ben Gill and Ben Foch company as they painted over it.

EB-T: In thinking about strata and history, I wonder if, were one to find, in the process of restoration, the old painting underneath...

could a restorer come back to it?

GG: To a white wall?

#### EB-T: No, to the Sol LeWitt.

GG: I do not think Sol LeWitt would consider it an artwork, at least not by him.

EB-T: Franz West once did a piece where he also "used" a LeWitt that happened to be in the room in which he was invited to exhibit. He responded to it by creating an installation that included this wall drawing. You once realized a Support in a private collection, in a private house, and, if I understand correctly, the owners of the house were allowed to install on the Backdrop whatever they wanted. Do I understand this correctly?

GG: I am going to answer more generally. The Backdrop is a ground and I prefer that other artworks and activities rotate on top and in front of it. Peter Friese, then senior curator at the Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, kept a paper Backdrop in situ for five years after its exhibition in 2000. He rotated the subsequent exhibitions in the museum on top of it until the Backdrop became so ragged with use that the director suggested it be removed. That was an interesting cycle for the work, which, of course, may be re-made later.

#### EB-T: And you liked this idea?

GG: I thought it was brilliant. I had arrived at the same conclusion that Peter had arrived at independently. He took it upon himself to flesh out the possibility. I only learned about it later, and I appreciated that he understood the work and took authorship for it.

EB-T: Could you say that with your
Backdrops you are creating an ambience,
creating an atmosphere that also brings
about a certain feeling in a room? Franz
West used the German term Befindlichkeit,
which is difficult to translate. I don't
know how to translate it—perhaps "a
state of experience of being." Franz West
was always talking about these Italian
restaurants with walls full of all sorts of

artworks, often kitsch and put together at random, but creating an atmosphere to bring about a certain Befindlichkeit.

GG: I am interested in the ambient, but my work is more akin to visual semiotics. There is a feeling, but it is most often revealed in another way.

EB-T: We have not touched upon the issue of institutional critique and all that. which is so important to your work. But I deliberately cut it out because all the other conversations with you and many of the texts deal with this. I thought that in this talk I would go in another direction. That said, at least brief mention should be made of artists like Daniel Buren, Michael Asher, and Marcel Broodthaers, who are very much involved in this question and whose work has relevance to yours.

GG: But also Adrian Piper, Andrea Fraser, Jimmie Durham...

EB-T: Exactly. This is a very dense topic, and as I said, it has been explored elsewhere. So I have deliberately directed the conversation toward other issues tonight. One thing I still want to ask about is that you once worked with a fifteenth-century collection.

GG: With a collection of fifteenth-century Swiss primitive painting at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, in 2005. It was an exceptional experience to have the museum deinstall an entire room of these early paintings, wrap the room with a gray paper Backdrop, and reinstall the artworks exactly where they had originally been. The effect on viewing the work was palpable.

#### EB-T: Yes, exactly. Can I ask what are your favored conditions or modes of display for your Supports?

GG: Once they leave their exhibition, I prefer that they are integrated into living situations, that they use a part of the world like the floor, a tabletop, or a shelf as their support, but it is also possible to use a MDF pedestal. With my work it is often best to treat it with both sensitivity and a little indifference.

are often more effective in pairs or groups, and that often a number of them together helps clarify their position. It is not true, of course, all of the time, but as a general rule it is accurate.

I tend not to make work for specific exhibitions. There are always multiple pieces in the studio. When I begin to assemble an exhibition, I start with one piece and then look for something that moves away from it, and I go from there. I have increasingly ended up with more pieces rather than less in a given situation, but the sum of the parts rarely has an overarching narrative.

I worked with Kerstin Brätsch on her show at the Arts Club of Chicago last year, and we edited the exhibition together. In the process, we were often faced with the dilemma of how to make a certain area of the exhibition work. My inclination was always to take something out, and Kerstin's inclination was always to put something in. She was often right. There was a time during the development of the exhibition for Galerie Emanuel Layr when my scheme for this exhibition was effective, but because of my time with Kerstin I ended up adding additional Supports. It is one of the many instances where somebody I worked with expanded the way that I understand my practice.

EB-T: That is interesting. There is an age difference between the two of you—she is from another generation.

GG: Yes, she is twenty-five years younger than me.

EB-T: You are working with a lot of younger artists, and you are working with very established artists like Sol LeWitt. This is a wide spectrum.

GG: I would say that is by design, but I do not especially think of it in those terms. I work with artists, and if you treat artists with respect, most often they rise to the occasion. What they do is almost always exceptional.

whether the pieces in the present show at Emanuel Layr are individual or arrangements? Do I purchase the pedestal with them?

GG: Supports are like Backdrops. It is advantageous if their display shifts and they often benefit from being seen in tandem, but they are discrete objects.

EB-T: "Discrete" is an interesting term. You will have to explain—I would like to know how they are discrete.

GG: It is a paradoxical surface. A Support is discrete in the way a mirror is discrete. It is mobile, but it is a surface that forms its image by reflection and that provides a faithful representation of something else.

EB-T: "Paradox" is a wonderful term that we had not come to yet. Is it an important issue for you?

GG: I think it is in my work from the beginning. It is a useful understanding that has allowed me to exploit a normative posture to address an understanding of "discrete" in a way that uses the mirror as a metaphor. Implying that the real or imaginary reflected image offers critical insight into the context and our thinking. It also emphasizes the role of pictures and metaphors in determining our philosophical convictions.

EB-T: We could finish by saying that your work is about difference and paradox, and about recognizing that the world is continuously revealing these aspects of

GG: Yes. I think it is about trying to see, to perceive clearly.

EB-T: "Perceiving" is a wonderful word. It combines the intellectual and the perceptual—a kind of reflection with the eyes.

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#### TITLE PAGE:

Gaylen Gerber, Foundation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Ville de Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2006. Installation view (left to right): Gaylen Gerber with Kay Rosen, Backdrop/The Forest for the Trees, n. d., 1990–1999, latex and enamel on canvas, 166 x 527 inches; Sam Salisbury, Support/Untitled, n.d., 2004, oil on canvas, 23.6 x 19.6 inches; Kémy Zaugg, Le Monde voit (N.T.11a), aluminium, peinture au pistolet, lettres sérigraphiées, vernis transparent, 48.6 x 43.4 inches. Photo: Jean-Noel Lafargue.

Zaugg's text translates: "and if, as soon as I think, the world becomes a stranger to me."

#### PAGE 102:

Gaylen Gerber, The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Installation view (left to right): constructed partition, 25 paintings each *Untitled*, n. d., oil on canvas, 38 x 38 inches. Photo: Gaylen Gerber and Tom Van Eynde.

#### **PAGE 103:**

Gaylen Gerber, James Welling, Angela Grauerholz, Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna, Austria, 1994. Installation view (left to right): Gaylen Gerber, Untitled (Clear Sky), n. d., gelatin silver print, Plexiglas frame, 31.25 x 31.25 inches; James Welling, Hillcock Granite, WY, 1992, toned gelatin silver print, 39.75 x 35.25 inches; Gaylen Gerber, Untitled (Clear Sky), n. d., gelatin silver print, Plexiglas frame, 31.25 x 31.25 inches.

#### PAGE 105:

#### TOP:

Gaylen Gerber, Park McArthur, Jim Nutt, Galerie Emanuel Layr, 2015. Installation view (left to right): Park McArthur, Polyurethane Foam, 2015, polyurethane foam, 85 x 54 x 43 inches; Gaylen Gerber, Backdrop, n. d., 2015, background paper, aluminum pins, dimensions vary with installation. Photo: Gaylen Gerber.

#### BOTTOM:

Gaylen Gerber, Park McArthur, Jim Nutt, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2015. Installation view (left to right): Park McArthur, Polyurethane Foam, 2015, polyurethane foam, 85 x 54 x 43 inches; Gaylen Gerber, Backdrop, n. d., background paper, aluminum pins, dimensions vary with installation; Jim Nutt, Untitled, 2012, graphite on paper, 20.7 x 22.8 inches. Photo: Gaylen Gerber.

#### PAGE 106, 107:

Gaylen Gerber, Kunstverein Ruhr, Essen, Germany, 2010. Installation view (left to right): latex paint, lighting gels, vinyl film, Gaylen Gerber, Support, n. d., Silver leaf, varnish on souvenir from Crossing Through the Colors, a work in situ, Daniel Buren (amber), 2006, 71.75 x 48 inches; Gaylen Gerber, Support, n. d., silver leaf, varnish on souvenir from Crossing Through the Colors, a work in situ, Daniel Buren (yellow), 2006, 94 x 48 inches. Photo: Gaylen Gerber.

#### PAGE 110:

Robert Venturi, *Recommendation for a Monument*, from *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977 Revised edition), by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steve Izenour, The MIT Press, page 156.

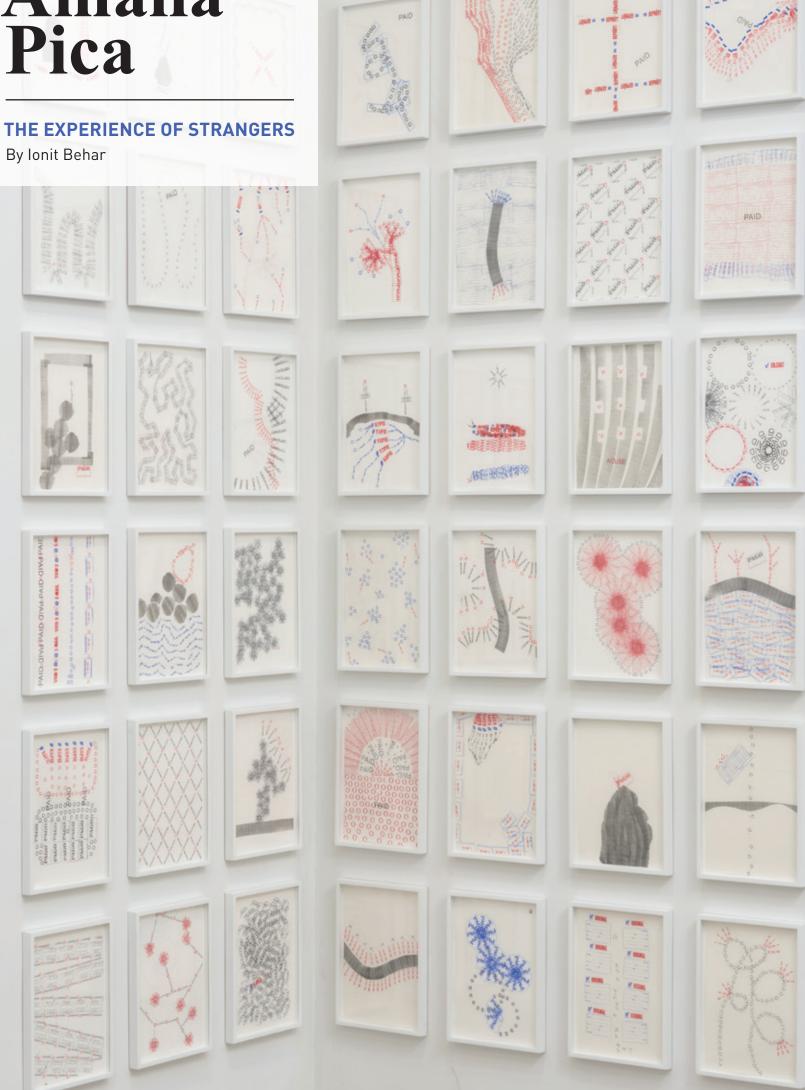
#### PAGE111

Gaylen Gerber, Support, n. d., oil paint on Lokapala (figure of a guardian), China, earthenware, pigment, Tang Dynasty ca. 618–800 C. E., 20 x 10 x 4 inches. Photo: Gaylen Gerber and Tom Van Eynde.

#### PAGE 114, 115:

Gaylen Gerber, installation view: Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, Austria, 2016. Photo: Gaylen Gerber.

# Amalia Pica



London-based Argentinian artist Amalia Pica focuses her work on the problem of communication: our performative nature of thought and speech. Pica's wide-ranging practice includes sculpture, photography, drawing, film, installation, and performance. Her work often alludes to communal experiences, especially those we share with strangers—either at a party, a public square, or a museum. Pica in London and myself in Chicago, six hours apart and many miles away, met for the first time via Skype, adding another layer to our conversation about strangers communicating. A transcription of the conversation is below.

Ionit Behar: Your work is very much about communication and relationships between people—strangers or acquaintances. What is it about communication that mostly interests you? What drove you to focus on this aspect of life and art?

Amalia Pica: I think it all began from an intrinsically artistic question, which is the question, or sets of questions, that we inherited from the 1960s and 70s: is there such a thing as visual language? What are the possible relationships between art and language? Are there images that function as words? I was always very interested in this—if art was language, or if there is a relationship between art and language, then there is something to be understood. The possibility of understanding artworks is a bit problematic in the sense that you would be asking your audience to decode something. The message in art making is never so straightforward, so I slowly became more intrigued by the idea of enunciation, and how you did not think everything beforehand. In other words, when you talk with someone else, you usually come up with what you are thinking, at the same that you are talking aloud—so, in a sense, speaking is thought being performed. I like to approach my art making in a similar way.

IB: How does the dictatorship in Argentina and its aftermaths influence your work? In multiple artworks you reference the dictatorship and its repression.

AP: I felt the impact of the dictatorship through my family. My parents exiled to Patagonia because they got into trouble. One of the things that I realize, which is not an international concept, is the idea that there is a social or political responsibility of being an artist. This was very prevalent in the National School of Visual Arts in Buenos Aires, but the school had a very academic approach. I was part of the Centro de Estudiantes and the Students' Union then we were fighting against the absorption of the art school into the University structure, which we did not think was the best thing to do. We took over the school for ninety days, and it was through these actions that we came in direct contact to other [artist collectives] and groups that were working





with the aftermaths of the dictatorship, such as Grupo Etcétera or Grupo de Arte Callejero. At that time, I was still trying to understand my role as an artist within a political landscape, but I still had a desire to develop a more subjective or individual work.

IB: I am very interested in your interventions to public monuments and plazas. For example, in 2011 you painted the General San Martín Monument in Neuquén with a white solution made out of white chalk in commemoration of 30 years of democracy of Argentina.

IB: When you use party objects, such as fiesta lights, banners, confetti, and drinking glasses, are you trying to bring joy and play to the museum? I read somewhere that your favorite activity is dancing!

AP: My obsession with communication is trying to find things that people would recognize by themselves. What I like about celebratory objects, is that they are almost indexes of how you are allowed to behave or feel. So in a sense, yes, there is an irreverence to try to bring this attitude and relaxation into the museum, but also because I think these sort of celebrations are very useful metaphors. What I like about

IB: In some of you works, I see connections with other iconic Argentinean artworks such as Oscar Bony's *La Familia Obrera* (1968) and Marta Minujin's *La Menesunda* (1965). Do you see that as well?

AP: These artists that you name have a built a vocabulary and my generation is using it. La Menesunda is a great example of an artwork that is about communication, social intimacy, and celebration. It was very influential not only to me but to a whole generation of artists. Of course, Bony's La Familia Obrera is a work that is much more provocative and problematic, because it deals with real life in a different

"Celebrations are a metaphor of cultural intimacy or social space that you can share with strangers in a positive way. While I am interested in being critical and analytical, I do not want to make art that is always constructed in opposition of an argument. It is important to try to find positive, affirmative, happy moods or reasons to make art."

--- AMALIA PICA

AP: Actually, the first time I did this kind of project was in Montevideo in 2007 or 2008 with a statue of Bolivar. At that time, I had just finished art school and I was teaching primary school. As the art teacher you are asked to do all the sets for the school plays, so for a couple of years I was the person that was drawing the Independence House or other national monuments. I just realized that I was participating in this machine that repeats historical images in a non-critical way. I became aware that the transmission of memory—especially in Argentina and Latin America—is created by these public monuments. In my mind, I was enacting a sort of school teacher that was correcting the monuments and trying to unveil them. I wanted to be that teacher that encourages you how to re-read history, how to re-draw and re-write monuments.

a street party or carnival is that it is a goodhappy time that you share with strangers. It is beautiful to be able to do that with people that you do not know. I think it is easy to imagine how the world could be better if you live with people that you love, but there are a lot of people that we live with that we do not know and we do not have reasons to love. So in a sense, these celebrations are a metaphor of cultural intimacy or social space that you can share with strangers in a positive way. While I am interested in being critical and analytical, I do not want to make art that is always constructed in opposition of an argument. It is important to try to find positive, affirmative, happy moods or reasons to make art.

way. It steps out of being fictional. I have not thought about this specific piece in relationship to my Stage (as seen on Afghan Star), for example, but I can relate our practices in the sense that my work offers a platform to people—when you offer a platform in a museum, people play a version themselves. The balance of paying a family to be there, as Bony did, or the possibility of offering this platform to a family to play themselves is different. Though, it is only because of artists like him that we do these other things.

IB: Your more recent body of work deals with bureaucracy and its materiality. How does this project relate to your experiences as an immigrant?





"I tried out the possible relation between joy and suppression, or whether happiness can be a revolutionary act, even on an intimate scale."

---- AMALIA PICA

AP: Bureaucracy is such a big part of becoming a grown up, and it is such an oppressive thing. While I was recently naturalized British, I had been in Europe for over twelve years with a South American passport. The Joy in Paperwork series (2016) was completely related to me trying to gain British nationality, and not being able to travel—while I had my home in the UK, it was not easy for me to get the documents I needed to travel for work. When my first application was rejected, a lawyer suggested that I stay put and not travel. There is all this talk about digitization of everything, but you still travel with a passport and you get stamps, so each time I would deliver a lecture in Europe, I would get stamped and it would be counted against me. It was through these stamps that I had basically gotten into trouble, so I decided to not travel and instead ask my friends to send me stamps from where they were going. In a private and personal way, I was trying to inject joy in these processes which are so overwhelming, scary, and frustrating. I instead went back to those childhood moments where you play with stamps my mother is a doctor, so I played with her stamps. In this project, I tried out the possible relation between joy and suppression, or whether happiness can be a revolutionary act, even on an intimate scale.



IB: I am curious about your titles, especially the choice for the series *Catachresis*, for example *Catachresis #8* (head of the nail, teeth of the comb, eye of the needle, head of the screw) (2011). Your titles seem point to your interest in language and its mechanisms.

AP: I often feel that the title of a work functions as this little bit in which you can insert text, and give [the viewer] a pointer. In the case of Catachresis, the title of the series references terms given to many different types of figures of speech, in which a word or phrase is being applied in a way that significantly departs from traditional usage. For example, we call the legs of a table legs, even though they are not human or animal, because we do not know what else to call them. I started to collect objects that were named with words from the human body, such as the eye of a needle, the head of broccoli, elbow of a pipe, the tongue of a shoe. Then language would be the absurd meeting point where these objects became sculptures. My whole interest with communication is because I have a sort of childish desire to be understood, and I want people to understand what I am saying—from there, they can take their own conclusions.

Amalia Pica (b. 1978, Neuquén, Argentina) studied sculpture at the National School of Visual Arts in Buenos Aires and completed a two year residency at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten. Her work has been shown at important institutions including one person exhibitions at Kunstverein Freiburg, Freiburg (2016); Portlligat, El Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala (2015); Instituto de Visió, Bogota (2015); KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin (2015); Van Abbemuseum, Amsterdam (2014); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Neuquén (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2013); List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2013); and Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, Gallen (2012). In 2017, upcoming solo exhibitions include The Power Plant, Toronto; the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; NC Arte Bogotá, as well as group exhibitions at S.M.A.K, Ghent; The Drawing Room, London; Netwerk Center for Contemporary Art, Aalst; FRAC Lorraine, Metz, and more. Pica currently lives and works in London and Mexico City.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Amalia Pica, *Joy in Paperwork*, 2016. Stamp ink on A4 paper, 12.625 x 9.5 inches. Courtesy the artist and Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles. Photographer: Robert Wedemeyer.

#### PAGE 122, 123:

Amalia Pica, *On Education*, 2008. Super 8 transferred to DVD, color, silent, 4 min 3 seconds. Photographer: Process shots by Oscar Bonilla. Courtesy of Herald St, London, UK.

#### PAGE 125

#### TOP:

Amalia Pica, *Procession (Reconfiguration)*, 2016. Acid free paper, acrylic, wood. 91 x 290 inches. Courtesy the artist and Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles. Photographer: Robert Wedemeyer.

#### воттом:

Installation view. Photographer: Marc Doradzillo. Courtesy of Herald St, London, UK.

#### ABOVE:

Amalia Pica, *In Praise of Listening*, 2016. Unique. Marble, paint, silicone tubing. Courtesy the artist and Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles. Photographer: Robert Wedemeyer.



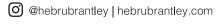


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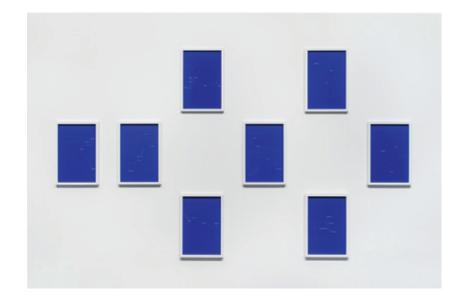


## Counter-Geography

**BOUCHRA KHALILI // PROFILE OF THE ARTIST** 

By Natalie Hegert

**ISTANBUL** TRIPOLI **AL FASHIR**  DEEP MIDNIGHT OF THE SKY, DEEP BLUE OF THE SEA. THE FOLLOWING TEXT BY STAFF WRITER NATALIE HEGERT AND ARTIST BOUCHRA KHALILI SIMILARLY FLOWS BETWEEN 'PASSAGES,' FLUID CHANNELS THAT EXCHANGE VOICES BETWEEN ARTIST AND WRITER, UNFOLDING TOWARD A SINGULAR READING BETWEEN TWO PERSPECTIVES.



#### TUNIS - NAPLES - MARSEILLE - AL FASHIR - TRIPOLI - ATHENS - ISTANBUL.

Drifting trajectories connect unnamed locations and cities that appear like stars on maps of the night sky in Bouchra Khalili's *The Constellations* (2011). The series of eight silkscreen prints, translate the illegal journeys of individuals, mostly migrants, in white lines on midnight blue. Landmarks, borders, landmasses, and waterways are subsumed by its hue, revealing a subversive geography where nation-states are rendered formless, with no power to say what and who belongs where.

Each of the eight prints represents a line drawn on a map by a person recounting the details of their journey in the Moroccan-French artist's eight-channel video installation *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008–2011). The narrators tell of setbacks, arrests, evasions, and deportations, while carefully marking their paths on paper. *The Constellations* crystallizes these details in the lines' digressions and deviations, indicating by their meanderings the conditions of the stateless: force, compromise, waiting. But the prints' cosmic transpositions orient these maps toward the utopic—to a borderless, free vision of the world.

The idea of The Constellations came from the articulation of language, speech, and drawings. I started with asking myself simple questions: how do you translate a journey? How to translate a subjective geography challenging borders as embodied by the nation-state model? Constellations are by essence reference points located in spaces where landmarks do not exist: the sky and the sea. As maps, they

were used for centuries by sailors looking upward
to locate themselves below. —————
Astronomers call pieces of sky where constellations can be seen "the sea." But constellations are also visual translations of narratives: many of them are based on mythology.
Translating these forced illegal
iourneys into constellations of stars also aims to
challenge normative geography in favor of a "human
geography"—based on micro-narratives and singular
lives. ————————————————————————————————————
————— The limits between the sky and the sea
blur, eventually suggesting an alternative form of
orientation: the landmarks are [no longer] boundaries
as established by nation states, but the path of singular
lives, from where the world can be seen. I have quoted
it often, but I believe that Oscar Wilde was right when
he wrote: "A map of the world that does not include
Utopia is not worth even glancing at." As alternative
maps of the world, The Constellations suggests a
counter-geography, of singular gestures of resistance
against arbitrary boundaries.



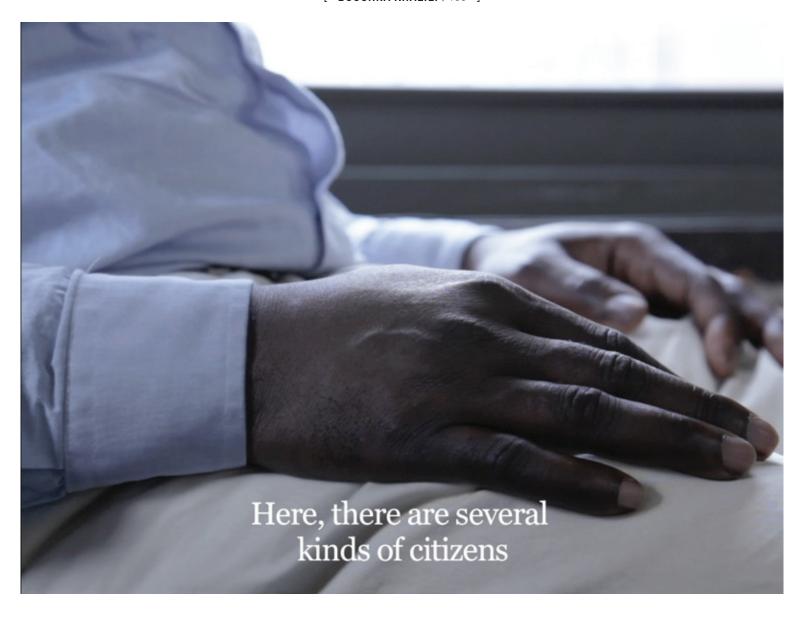




French-Martinican philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant spoke of the utopia of a world where all have the "right to opacity." The Western method of "understanding" the Other, on the other hand, is predicated on rendering them transparent, he says. Transparency is reduction—what a wonder that President Trump not only calls for a wall to be built separating the United States and Mexico, but that this border wall must be transparent—whereas opacity allows for "irreducible singularity." Glissant writes, "There would be something great and noble about initiating such a movement, referring not to Humanity but to the exultant divergence of humanities."

Glissant's concept of opacity provides a vital basis across Khalili's works, both in the representation of her subjects and in the aesthetic, cinematic choices she makes. The protagonists in her films retain opacity—quite the opposite of the exposure and reduction of minority communities for consumption through photojournalism, for instance, which, arguably reproduces and reinforces inequality. In *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008-2011), previously exhibited at MoMA, the faces of Khalili's subjects are not shown; instead the focus is drawn to what they are showing, and the sounds of their voices, speaking in their native languages. In

## Khalili's works, the withholding of images paired with the resonance of voice and language becomes a strategy of resistance.



Glissant wrote, "The thought of opacity distracts me

In the presence/absence of the protagonists shown from absolute truths whose guardian I might believe my works, who are often members of minorities, re is indeed a sense of opacity preventing [their a proposal for a relation engaging with an otherness station] to restrictive identities, such as "migrants," that cannot be integrally appropriated, but whose opacity is accepted and taken as such, and therefore a chance given to equality.

The recognition and acceptance of singularity does not necessarily mean each individual is an island, irreconcilably separated from others. Or, in fact, it does mean that each individual is an island, but rather part of an archipelago, or a constellation. The sea/sky is not what separates us, it is what connects us.

In Khalili's work, the specificity of the singular draws out the concerns of the collective. In *The Speeches Series* (2012–13), a trilogy of videos in which individuals perform speeches addressing issues of civil rights, labor conditions, and resistance, orality serves as a locus of power, invoking Pier Paolo Pasolini's notion of the "civil poet." In the first video, each speaker performs in his or her native language, a gesture of resistance in the use of "unofficial" languages and unwritten dialects.





"The Constellations crystallizes these details in the lines' digressions and deviations, indicating by their meanderings the conditions of the stateless: force, compromise, waiting. But the prints' cosmic transpositions orient these maps toward the utopic —to a borderless, free vision of the world."

-NATALIE HEGERT

The Speeches Series started from the idea of language	ze
——— The commitment to dialects and unwritten	

poet when he decided to learn his mother's mother tongue: Friulan, a dialect spoken in Northeastern Italy, at the border with Slovenia and Austria. For Pasolini, starting to write in Friulan was a gesture of resistance against a nationalist conception of normative and centralized culture.

interest in vernacular languages and dialects is also connected to the fact that I am myself a native speaker of an unwritten dialect: Moroccan Arabic. From the beginning, I knew that what was at stake was the process of showing how a singular voice develops into a collective one, which is why the series had to shift from existing texts to authorship.

In the first chapter of *The Speeches, Mother Tongue* (2012–13), first produced for the Palais de Tokyo's Triennale in 2012, five members of immigrant communities living in Paris recited historic texts, addressing theories of emancipation and resistance by Glissant, Aimé Césaire, and Malcolm X, among others. Translated into the speakers' native languages, the piece made these historic words their own, collapsing the past and the present. The words spoken by the protagonists of the second and third chapters echo these important texts, resounding in the speeches developed and delivered based on their own experiences on immigration, citizenship, and labor.

The second chapter, Words on Streets (2013), commissioned for the 55th Venice Biennale, took place in Genoa, a location of significance as the site of the protests against the G8 summit, the "Migrants March," and as the place where the first autonomous, self-organized group of undocumented migrants formed. The speeches, delivered in Italian by five immigrants to Italy, reverberate in public spaces as examples of this concept of civic poetry, described by Khalili as "the right taken by anyone to address society from one's position and singularity, with one's language, words, and voice, to call for a collective into being."

The final chapter, *Living Labor* (2013), which was produced for the artist's solo exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum Miami, and will be shown at the Palais de Tokyo and Institut français' off-site exhibition in Chicago, curated by Katell Jaffrès and entitled *Singing Stones*, is sited in New York, where five undocumented workers tell of exploitative working conditions, indignity, and invisibility in the

United States. Mahoma, an undocumented worker who formed a union with his colleagues, delivers a powerful line arguing for his right to recognition: "I am a citizen because my conscience grew up here." This stinging truth undercuts the arbitrary bureaucratic distinctions of citizen and non-citizen that serve as the basis for ongoing state-sponsored discrimination and oppression, a situation only worsening as nationalist sentiment festers among the American working classes.

In a previous interview, Khalili intimated that "what is ultimately at stake is the hope for a *'Tout-monde,'* [a whole world] that looks beyond rigid borders and identities."

I have always highlighted that my work is about gestures, discourses, strategies and tactics of resistance, developed and articulated by members of minorities. Looking beyond rigid borders and identities means to eventually rethink new forms of belonging and communities, freed from the nation-state narrative that is too often based on ethnic belonging and cultural and civilizational supremacy.

This Tout-monde is this call for a world opened up to fluid identities and creolization, in which equality is not a promise made by a State, but a matter of fact from the moment one stands in solidarity with one another.

By means of achieving this vision, modes of resistance, solidarity, and liberation find expression throughout Khalili's work.

Interweaving the history of emancipation—as in *Garden Conversation* (2014), which re-imagines a conversation that occurred in 1959 between Ernesto Che Guevara and Moroccan anti-colonialist war hero Abdelkrim Al Khattabi, and *Foreign Office* (2015), which explores the city of Algiers as the center of international liberation movements between 1962 and 1972—along with strategies for interrogating the conditions of the present, Khalili challenges structures of power. In her most recent work, *The Tempest Society* (2017), in which Athenians of diverse backgrounds gather in a theater to question society, nationalism, and forms of resistance, Khalili's work offers a map, a leading to utopia—a land of blue sky and blue water, free from borders and oppression, where everyone speaks their own language.

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Bouchra Khalili is a Moroccan-French artist. Born in Casablanca, she later studied Film at Sorbonne Nouvelle and Visual Arts at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cery. Khalili's work has been internationally exhibited, including *The Tempest Society*, her latest project on view as part of documenta 14, both in Athens and Kassel. Recent solo exhibitions include: Bouchra Khalili at Lisson Gallery, London (2017); *Living Labour* at Wexner Center for the Arts (2017); *The Mapping Journey Project*, at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (2016); and *The Oppostive of Voice-Over* at Färgfabriken Kunsthall, Stockholm (2016). In 2017, she was awarded the Radcliffe Institute Fellowship, Harvard University (2017-2018), and the Ibsen Awards. Khalili lives and works in Berlin and Oslo.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Bouchra Khalili, *The Constellations, Fig.8*, 2011. Silkcreen print on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

#### PAGE 129:

Bouchra Khalili, *The Constellations Series*, 2011. 8 silkscreen prints on paper. View of the installation at The Opposite of Voice-Over. Solo exhibition at Färgfabriken Konsthall, Stockholm, 2016. Photo by Jean-Baptiste Béranger. Courtesy of the artist.

#### DACE 12

Bouchra Khalili, *The Archipelago*, 2015. Silkcreen print on paper. © Bouchra Khalili; Courtesy Lisson Gallery

#### PAGE 131:

Bouchra Khalili, *The Constellations, Fig.3*, 2011. Silkcreen print on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

#### PAGE 132:

Bouchra Khalili, The Tempest Society, 2017. Digital film. 60'. Color. Sound. Commissioned for documenta 14. Co-produced with Ibsen Awards. With the support of FNAGP, Paris. Courtesy of the artist.

#### PAGE 133:

Bouchra Khalili, Speeches-Chapter 3: Living Labour. Digital film. 2013. 25'. Color. Sound. From The Speeches Series (3 digital films, 2012-2013). Commissioned for PAMM, Miami, for Bouchra Khalili: Solo Project. Video still. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Polaris, Paris.

#### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey Project*, 2008–2011. Video Installation, 8 single channels. View of the installation, solo exhibition at MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York, from April to August 2016. © Bouchra Khalili. © 2016 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Jonathan Muzikar. Courtesy of the artist.



Florence-based architect, artist, and critic, Gianni Pettena belongs to the original core group of the Italian Radical Design movement, and was a member among the Archizoom Associati, Superstudio, and UFO groups. In 1968, he graduated from the University of Architecture in Florence, where he later taught History of Contemporary Architecture until 2008. Showing a preference for both writing and the visual arts quite early in his career, Pettena was invited to the United States as an artist-in-residence at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City in 1971, where he initiated multiple projects and exhibitions. As a critic and architecture historian. Pettena has organized exhibitions on contemporary architecture around the world, and was involved in a number of critical publications, among them *L'anarchitetto* (1973) and *Radicals*: Architettura e design 1960–1975 (1996). His work has been the subject of many international museum exhibitions, such as at the Mori Museum (Tokyo), the Barbican Center (London), and the Centre Pompidou (Paris and Metz), as well as in major exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale, and Manifesta in Zürich. Petenna together with visionary designer and founding member of UFO, Lapo Binazzi, will be the subject of an exhibition at R & Company in New York this November.

I invited Gianni Petenna to discuss his contribution to the Italian Radical Design movement, and other collectives and groups in Italy—below is a transcription of our conversation, which highlights his inspirations and ideas on architecture and design, and how these concepts have transformed over the last six decades of his practice.

Kostas Prapoglou: I wanted to begin with how the interplay of architecture and visual arts accompanied your modes of expression over the course of your career—can you trace these interests?

Gianni Pettena: The history of the twentiethcentury vanguard often recounts how theorists, poets, and philosophers opened the way, which was then followed by visual artists, and lastly, architects. This lineage is perhaps due to the fact that the burden of functionality made the path harder to realize architectural practice. In a way, architecture has always been considered the synthesis of the arts that preceded movements in culture, and for me, the language of architecture—the language of the project—was in this way all-encompassing: it included and contained every manifestation of thinking, every narrative. This is the initial idea that encouraged the cross-disciplinary practice of my work, first as an architecture lover.

Thus, even though I did not always and completely refuse functionality, I favored the story (i.e. the narrative), that the idea of a project in place was designed to be developed, and that it would diligently respond to the purpose of carrying out a use—of profiting from invested capital, while producing architecture or design. Therefore, perhaps one can say that my work—like the work of artists, such as Gordon Matta-Clark—belongs to an environmental art more than architecture, even if produced by licensed architects.

KP: To what extent do you see your involvement of collectives and groups, such as the Italian Radical Design movement—for example Superstudio and UFO, with which you were closely associated?

GP: Much of the conceptual and linguistic scholarship related to the field of architecture and design was produced by students and young graduates of the University's Architecture Department in Florence in the 1960s, as well as by Archigram or Hollein-Pichler. Between Archizoom (Branzi & Co), Superstudio (Natalini & Co.), UFO (Binazzi & Co.), and myself, we theorized our generation's vision by mean of writing and images, and did so in very different ways. Among us, we never forgot the presence of Ettore Sottsass, trained in the spirit of rationalism and functionalism, who taught us—through his work and friendship—that real does not solely mean rational. Rather, with each project we were taught that we could recount ourselves with our desires, emotions, passions...with a project, we could have made love. [He also taught us] that for each day spent designing as a professional, one must have found the time, every day, to freely draw their own fantasy world, without rules or limitations!

KP: The conceptual approach and interpretation of architecture has been part of your criticism, as well as part of your process to understanding significant parameters, such as individuality and social evolution. How do you see contemporary architecture shaping up today?

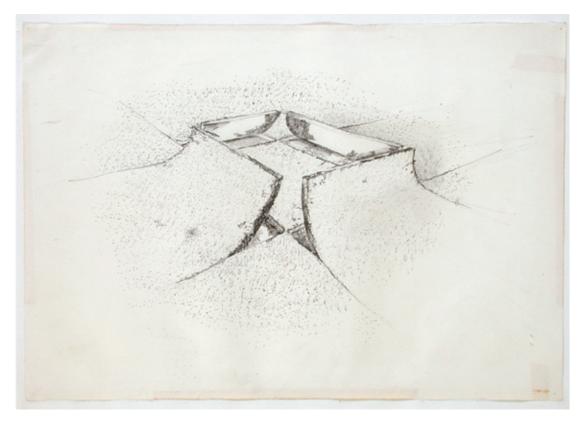
GP: The 1960s and 70s had been years of juxtaposition between modernist heritage—initiated and grown between the First and Second World War—and the late period of its reconstruction. Philosophical and ideological theorizations, organized words and thoughts, as well as innovative behaviors were suitable for the interpretation of these new times. desires, and visions. All of these aspects translated into architecture, and the ideas of architecture, which can be defined as "architecture and radical design." Contemporary research (think about the current Venice Biennale) comes with risks that radicals already perceived and avoided during the 60s: the necessity and need to enrich and revise traditional ways of thinking based on a constantly evolving architectural language. However, today, the Biennale typically presents research and social projects related to needs of developing countries; which in many ways resists the undercurrent of research topics that for many years enlivened the discourse of architectural practice. The risk of a narrow, socially-concerned research focus in contemporary art can, in this way, inadvertently forget or ignore the prevalence of certain research projects that were initiated during this time, which included socially concerned studies and related developments in criticism and language.

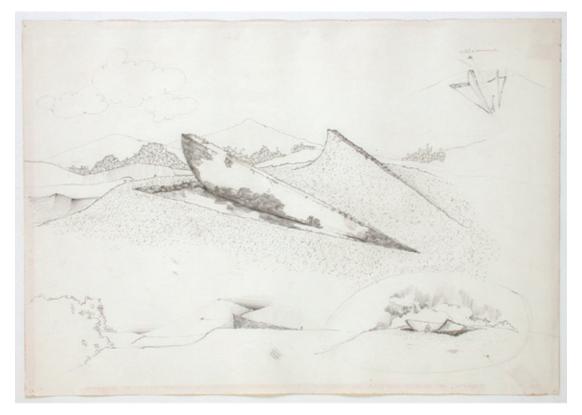
KP: Do you detect any differences or similarities between the criticism and architecture you developed, and their contemporary counterparts?

GP: Yes—during the 60s and 70s, architecture magazines were covering completed projects, research, and visual arts (publications such as Architectural Digest, Domus, Casabella, etc.) including interactions between these practices. Today, architecture magazines often only cover









finished or ongoing projects. Nothing else. Yet, the architecture world is much richer in terms of events, debates, experimentations! It can be said that the funding structure of contemporary publications, promoted by advertisements, has had an effect of the standard of criticism, which is often geared to pleasing sponsors in place of promoting knowledge of the field, and its development.

KP: One of your Wearable Chairs, which was part of your 1971 performance, will be on view at EXPO CHICAGO in September, and you will also participate in the /Dialogues Art & Architecture Symposium. Your contributions to the movement will also be featured in an upcoming SuperDesign publication which will release this October, and you will be the subject of an exhibition at R & Company in New York in November.

## How do you expect younger audiences to react and interact with you and your work?

GP: For the last twenty years, younger audiences have reached out to me to discuss issues of conceptual and linguistic strategy. With new generations, the discourse materializes in publications of books and articles, exhibitions, and recurrent symposia. Such a prosperous relationship infuses me with enthusiasm and energy that I can channel into ongoing dialogues enriching my life and practice, as an almosteighty year old man.

Gianna Pettena (Bolzano, 1940) is an architect, artist, and critic. Pettena belongs to the original core group of the Radical movement in Italy, together with members of Archizoom Associati, Superstudio, and UFO. Pettena graduated in 1968 from the University of Architecture in Florence, where he later taught History of Contemporary Architecture until 2008. In 1967 Pettena designed the furniture for his home-studio in Florence, adapting it to the scale of the place rather than conventional human scale. Some pieces, such as the Rumble sofa and the Babele table, were put into production by Gufram. Pettena lives and works in Fiesole, near Florence, where his studio is concealed by a fake stone wall behind which he likes to scare the visitors from a hidden peep-hole.

#### TITLE PAGE:

Gianni Pettena, *Wearable Chairs* performance, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1971. Image courtesy of Gianni Pettena.

#### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Gianni Pettena, *Ice House I*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1971. Image courtesy of R & Company.

#### CURRENT PAGE:

Gianni Pettena, *Grass architecture I, II, III*, 1971–3. Drawings. Image courtesy of R & Company.

#### FOLLOWING PAGE:

Gianni Pettena, *Wearable Chair*, 1971. Photo by Joe Kramm, image courtesy of R & Company.





#### **TERENCE GOWER // HAVANA CASE STUDY**

By Joel Kuennen



street level. To mit spray, the main of cony, which is abo narrow façade facing the sea is unoroned. To eutrinate interior columns in the tower, ribbed floor slabs spanning 39'-0" from wall to wall were employed. The slabs are supported on rectangular reinforced-concrete piers 5'-0" on centers. The structure is faced with imported Roman travertine, one of the many materials supplied by foreign governments. Windows are of heat-resistant glass, except for windows behind the travertine grill on the south façade of the low building. Windows of tower building have operable sash to permit cleaning from the inside, and for ventilation when air-conditioning system is not in use. Property walls are of local jaimanitas

Landscaped patios (right) in the local tradition bring light and refreshing greenery close to interiors. Visa section has special entrance (acrosspage top) separate from main entrance (foreground below). Photos: J. Alex Langley



#### lavana, Cuba



Just last year, President Barack Obama visited Cuba, becoming the first US president to do so in over eighty years. "I have come here to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas." <sup>1</sup> The image of such a visit, of America's first black president visiting a nation that ostensibly overthrew its white colonial masters in favor of an altruistic attempt at post-colonial governance, was heartening. It marked an attempt to introduce openness, to engender development not by force or coercion, but through partnership. It said, in part, we took different paths but we are here now, together—projecting an image of the United States not as a withholding parent, but as a peer. It was a move of respect.

This parity in positioning is what Trump took issue with when he decided to renege on the thaw, calling it a "completely one-sided deal." Though the US embassy in Havana remains open, the US and Cuba seem stuck again between projections of hyperbolic political polarities.

On the occasion of the 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial, Neubauer Collegium Exhibitions has brought Terence Gower's Havana Case Study to the University of Chicago campus. The second in Gower's interrogations of the architectural arm of the US Diplomatic apparatus, *Havana Case Study* presents Gower's unique approach to research and production. Through researching the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), site visits to Havana, and research with the National Archives, Gower is able to track an evolving logic behind the United States' physical presence in nations with whom it has an historically fraught relationship. From the plantation-esque Jeffersonian style during the height of US imperialism to the high modernism of Cold Warera US-as-protector-of-Democracy-bringer-offreedom, the architecture of the United States' embassies has been both a site of projection and contestation but always one of ideology.

—TERENCE GOWER

JOEL KUENNEN: Your upcoming show,

Havana Case Study, will be on view this Fall
at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and
Society—can you give us a quick overview of
the planned exhibition?

TERENCE GOWER: Yes—we will be presenting all of the elements of the project, installed at different sites around the Collegium. The first showing of this work was at Simon Preston Gallery in New York, this past November/December—timed to open two days before the election—which we knew would have a major effect on the subject of the show: the US diplomatic presence in Cuba. For the Preston exhibition. I removed the interior walls within the gallery, so a viewer peering through the glass looks directly into its long oblong box. A huge rebar sculpture, entitled Balcony, which is twenty-seven feet long, was placed within the space, giving the feeling of a showcase that displayed a single object. The sculpture is a 1:1 three-dimensional drawing of the balcony of the US Embassy in Havana, done in 3/4-inch acid-etched

rebar. For the Collegium installation, we are installing the sculpture outside on a raised terrace—it can be read as either a skeletal ruin, or a component of new construction. I like the idea of the piece displayed adjacent to the surface of a building—it could appear at once ready to be hoisted into place on the façade, or may have just come crashing down.

In many of my architecture and urbanismrelated works, I offer the viewer a display of my research material—a table of documentation and photos. The Collegium show will mark the first presentation of the documentation table for this project, consisting of a narrow table that displays two layers of material: the first is a vast old-school vitrine, with a traditional display of documents relating to the 1953 US Embassy in Havana, designed to look like a small architectural exhibition from the late 1950s. The second is made up of more recent newspapers, books, magazines, and other material that tells the fascinating story of how the US Embassy building was

One of my main goals in working with historical material is to look for progressive models from the past, especially in the post-war period in the US, a period of (economic) optimism, but also the start of the Cold War and the advent of McCarthyism.

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;Obama Visits Cuba." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Mar. 2016.



used for propaganda purposes by both the US and Cuba since the two countries broke diplomatic relations in 1961 (recently restored, sort of).

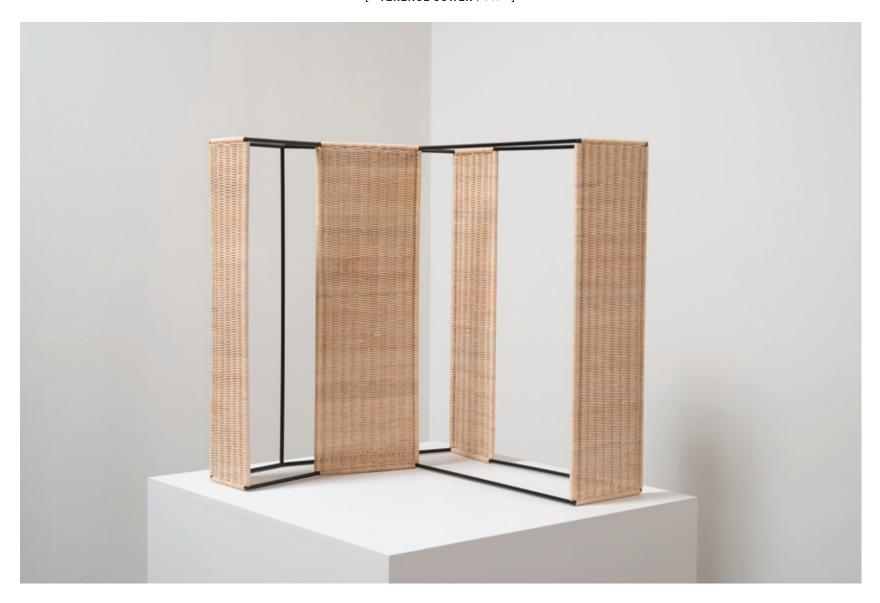
Additionally, a set of collages that play with this layering will also be on view [previously exhibited at Simon Preston], in addition to a few smaller sculptures titled Modules (one of which was shown in New York), based on the balcony form again, but this time some of the planes of the form are filled in with wickerwork. The piece illustrates the difficulty of generating architectural (or sculptural) form under the US-led embargo against Cuba, with its scarcity of materials. One of the materials you see everywhere is rebar, which used for everything and still manufactured in Cuba. In the countryside. came across a lot of virtuoso work in woven vegetal matter, beautiful objects born of necessity.

JK: The embassy sites of your Havana and Baghdad projects are in different states of diplomacy. The US Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, designed by Josep Lluís Sert, became a failed project—discarded half a century ago, and then relocated, rebuilt, and refortified in an act of colonial annexation during the latest Iraq War. The US Embassy in Havana, on the other hand, is now once again in a state of limbo after Trump backpedaled on Obama's move to thaw relations. What qualities led you to choose Havana as the next project location and what kind of dialogue has developed for you between these two sites?

TG: I was drawn to the two sites for different reasons. My original idea, after researching the post-war US Embassy program and its emphasis on good modern architecture by the best architects, was a project about the whole program. However, the Sert project for Baghdad stood out for several reasons:

one, it is a virtually unknown masterpiece that needed to be shown; two, it marked a very progressive new phase in the embassybuilding project, where architects were required to visit the site to research the local culture and building technologies; and three, the utterly fucked up diplomatic scenario between the US and Iraq. The US had already withdrawn its diplomatic presence from Iraq in 1967, leaving Sert's building in legal limbo. Then began the long breakdown between the two countries, regardless of the notorious Rumsfeld/Hussein handshake, leading to the very opposite of diplomatic relations: an illegal invasion and occupation of another country. This made it difficult for me to visit Sert's building—everyone had advised against it—so, the research was done remotely.

For the Havana project, by contrast, I had good access to the building site through a senior contact, but Cuban archives were



blocked to me as a foreigner, even with various invented affiliations. So, I did the political and architectural research in the **US.** The Havana Embassy was very attractive to me as the second embassy in the "modern" project of the State Department **Ithe first was Rio de Janeiro. also designed** by Max Abramovitz), with the contract awarded in the late 1940s. Abramovitz was heavily invested in government projects coming out of the war, where he was designing air force bases. But the UN project was a big factor in the selection of [Wallace] Harrison & Abramovitz for the first fully modern embassies. Interestingly, immediately after Havana, Abramovitz designed the highly secretive CIA headquarters in the unincorporated community of Langley, in Fairfax County, Virginia.

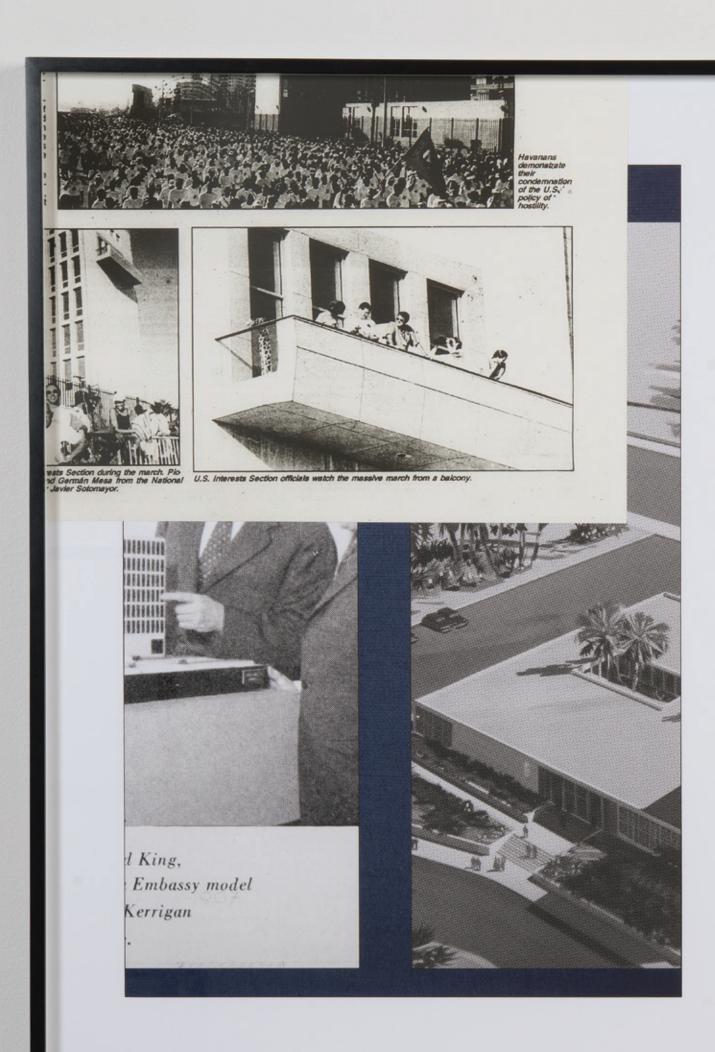
I naturally saw an interesting pattern developing in my series of great State

Department architecture at sites of failed diplomacy. Tehran might be my next project, though less for the embassy building (which is a bland "government-style" from slightly before the construction project I have been studying) than the urban context, which is covered in a previous project of mine on Victor Gruen's Tehran Comprehensive Plan, and the obvious fascination around the ultimate diplomatic meltdown: an embassy occupation. I think the US Embassy in former Saigon also merits study, as an architectural masterpiece that needs to be re-presented in a larger historical and aesthetic context, and not just a set piece for the Tet Offensive.

JK: The Baghdad Case Study work led to your creation of a mock-up of the original pyramidal Sert roof, whereas the Havana Case Study has led you to focus on its curious and controversial balcony. What drew you to the balcony?

TG: In each of my architecture-related projects, I draw a form (or series of forms) out of the research that best represents my argument. These are forms that work equally well abstractly as they do representationally. For me, the Sert ambassador's house roof was the hinge for the Baghdad project, as it represented his attempt at dialogue with local cultural forms, and in turn, a reflection of the progressive function of the State Department (to which this series can be considered in homage to.) When I examined Sert's roof in the plan, I saw the gridded domes of the bazaar or caravanserai, as well as the geometry of middle eastern marquetry, hence the sculpture's fabrication in cedar wood.

The balcony in Havana was the most beautiful and sculptural form on the building by far (the bris-soleil is also pretty nice) and when I saw it, I remembered it had a slightly





controversial history, from Jane Loeffler's account in her book *The Architecture of Diplomacy* (my bible for this series).<sup>2</sup> In opposition to Sert's roof, the balcony is a symbol of American imperialism, even described by a State Department inspector as "Mussolini-style". But it was also a symbol that was soon incorporated into the larger significance of the building, as property of the US government, standing like a sore thumb in the middle of enemy territory.

JK: When writing about your Baghdad Project in Walls and Windows Architektur und Ideologie, you began an essay with "nowhere is political ideology more wrapped up with architecture than in embassy design." How do you equate architecture with what it was meant to convey ideologically?

TG: It is interesting that in the Baghdad Embassy project, my reading of the ambassador's roof was very much in the realm of conjecture with a dash of artistic license. Whereas with the Havana balcony, it took three days of combing through ten years of State Department correspondence with all diplomatic posts (at the National Archives) to find the inspector's report with the Mussolini statement—in other words, a text that actually proposes the meaning of the balcony as a kind of ideological red herring.

JK: Your case studies function as synthetic representations of archival research.
When engaging with this type of practice, what is your leading conceit? What are you searching for with these palimpsestic representations? Is it an editorial activity, as seems the case with your focus on Sert's roof, or is it indicative of a broader ideological framework? Or are you trying to argue a point? Do you view the goal of this activity as constructing an alternative representation of the historical?

TG: I would say I am arguing a point, but not too forcefully. I am presenting my research material with my own commentary to show the viewer how I form my argument, which is then expressed in either the sculpture or video work at the center of the installation. The documentation is carefully

curated into the table installations, but it is still documentation, and is open to the viewer's own interpretation. This is part of communicating clearly, not obfuscating, and is perhaps even an act of generosity toward the viewer, though some viewers may find all that documentation a little daunting. However, the sculptural elements are also designed to offer other points of entry into the project. The presentation of the research also serves another purpose: it is an index of the (conceptual) labor that was invested in the work.

A few years back, I did a public discussion with Claire Bishop at the School of Visual Arts Theatre in New York that addressed exactly this point; the function of archival presentation in art practice.

As you know, artists have been incorporating whole disciplines and practices into their own for some time—I see this as part of the legacy of Duchamp: from objet trouvé, to pictures generation, to relational aesthetics, with lots of other steps in between, of course. In my own case, I have appropriated the techniques of the architect, essayist, cultural historian (to name just three) as a tool to process my subject matter. As far as an alternate representation of the historical, yes—I am trying to draw out alternative narratives from the material. One of my main goals in working with historical material is to look for progressive models from the past, especially in the post-war period in the US, a period of (economic) optimism, but also the start of the Cold War and the advent of McCarthyism. The embassy building program interested me for exactly this reason, as a progressive US government project that put good design in the service of international dialogue: a model we can continue to learn from.

Terence Gower was born in British
Columbia, Canada. He studied at Emily
Carr College, spent the early years of his
practice in Vancouver, Cologne, and Mexico
City and has continued to show widely
internationally. He has been based in New
York City since 1995 where he has shown at
PS1, New Museum, Queens Museum, and
many commercial and non-profit galleries.
Internationally he has shown recently at
Institut d'Art Contemporain Villurbaine,
Lyon; MACBA, Barcelona; Tensta Konsthal,
Stockholm; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City;
MAC, Santiago, Chile; National Gallery of
Canada, Ottawa; Haus der Kulturen der Welt,

#### TITLE PAGE:

Gallery, Vancouver.

Terence Gower, *Political Services 4*, 2016. Collage. Image courtesy of the artist.

Berlin; MUSAC, León, Spain; and Au-dain

#### PAGE 146.

Terence Gower, Detail of *Balcony*, 2016. Acid-etched rebar. Image courtesy of the artist.

#### PAGE 147:

Terence Gower, *Module 1*, 2016. Enamel on steel, wicker. Image courtesy of the artist.

#### PREVIOUS SPREAD:

Terence Gower, *Political Services 5 & 6*, 2016. Collage diptych. Image courtesy of the artist.

#### OPPOSITE PAGE:

#### TOP:

United States Embassy, designed by Harrison & Abramovitz, in Havana, Cuba. Image courtesy of Arch Daily.

#### воттом:

United States Embassy, designed by Josep Lluís Sert, in Baghdad, Iraq. Image courtesy of the artist.

<sup>2</sup> Loeffler, Jane C. "The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies." Princeton Architectural Press.





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Mario Botta, Vase Geo in midnight blue, art edition, limited edition of 8 ex.  $\pm$  2 HC, 2016, 40 x 40 x 17cm

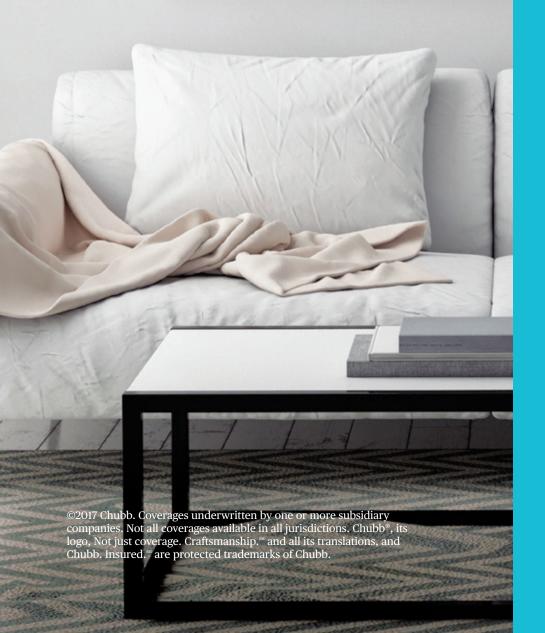
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