THE SEEN
Issue 07

Chicago’s International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art

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As publisher, I am proud to write ———— Again, thank you to all who again, that this is our largest and most extensive program in the city has played at the crossroad of Chicago in 2018—including Hans Ulrich Obrist’s Creative Chicago: An Interview Marathon, presented in partnership with the Chicago Humanities Festival and Navy Pier on September 29. We are ever grateful for their support and partnership on numerous initiatives and for their commitment to celebrate the extraordinary contributions Chicago’s artists have made and the vital role that our great city has played at the crossroad of creativity and commerce.

Again, thank you to all who have contributed to this edition and we hope you enjoy Issue 07.

Onward,
TONY KARMAN
Publisher

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As publisher, I am proud to write ———— Again, thank you to all who again, that this is our largest and most widely distributed issue to date—the fifth of THE SEEN in print would not be possible without the generous support of our advertisers, and the thoughtful Staff Writers who have contributed to Issue 07. ———— Aligning with the seventh edition of EXPO CHICAGO, Issue 07 continues the legacy of featuring a limited edition insert within the publication’s pages. Located at the center of the journal, this issue’s special edition was curated to feature work from renowned artist and founding member of AfriCOBRA, Gerald Williams.

Williams, alongside his fellow artists, have been pushing the boundaries of the conceptual art movement, rooted in their work which is included in various concurrent exhibitions, including The Time is Now! The World of Chicago Art from December 2013, The Art Index at the Defacible Museum of African American History through March 4, 2019. An exhibition curated by Williams on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the group, AfriCOBRA 50, is on view at Karo` Art Gallery in Chicago through November 24, 2018 and will be on view at the museum. ————

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TONY KARMAN
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ARTICLE
Stephanie Cristello

Stephanie Cristello (Canadian, b. 1991) is a writer and critic in contemporary art and writing in Chicago, IL. She is the founding Editor in Chief of THE SEEEN, Chicago’s International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art. She was previously Senior Editor for Artlink and is a frequent contributor to the London-based publication, Artlink and Deleuze Magazine—her writing has appeared in Frieze Magazine, RMBA Magazine, and New American Paintings among other outlets as well as numerous exhibition catalogues nationally and internationally. Recent exhibition projects include a partnership with the Rite de Tokyo and the Milan-based financier to present their first of five exhibitions in the United States at the Residence of the Dallas Museum of African American History. Her writing has appeared in the Afro-Hispanic Funds and Chicago scenes in alignment with the Chicago Architectural Review. Most recently, she founded dual-form project open space in a garage in Chicago, IL, attended Chicago Musical Jury and PhD. (Publishing Sciences and Art History). She is the Executive Curatorial Assistant at The Art Institute of Chicago. Formerly, she was Exhibition Curatorial Assistant at the Walker Art Center and has held positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, among others.

Alfaro Crambrom is a writer, curator, and creative director. Director of MOTH Arts and Head Curator of APT: Artist Pension Trust, he complemented in work in the UK with series participation in the visual art world. In recent years this has included curating Scots on the Edge of the World at the Hong Kong Arts Centre (2018), Lexicon in exhibitions with the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), EXPO 2018 Chicago (2018), Browns with the Venice Biennale (Maina in 2015, Wolves and Sophistication (2017) and Boreal (2015) in Iceland) and biannually it in Spain with the former in a Research Grant for Doctoral Research at the European Centre for Documentary Research, University of South Wales, and Visiting Lecturer in Universities throughout Europe and the Americas. He is Editor of the Critical Photography Book series and his own publications include Forewords: Hypereutopia and Hyperautomation (2018), Designing the City: Perspectives of Future and Aesthetic Journalism: How to Inform without Informing (2009).

Ryan Feltsch is an arts and culture writer based in Chicago, IL. Originally from Illinois, Feltsch, earned English at Transylvania University, and he earned his Master’s in Art History and Visual Studies from the University of Kentucky. Currently he works for the Publishing Director of the Chicago artsite

IIhi Aii is a writer, curator and editor based in Chicago, IL. Her digital and sculptural installations and performances focus on the history of objects and the ways that our relationship to them have evolved. She has written extensively on various publications such as InSociety, The Sessions, and Fifty24.

Natalie Hogue is a visual artist and writer based in Lubbock, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Studio Art from Texas Tech University and her Master of Fine Art from the University of Iowa. She has been published in numerous publications and artist books, and has recently had solo exhibitions at the University of Texas at El Paso, the independent press Paige L/Projects. She has written numerous articles on a variety of topics. Her digital and sculptural installations and performances focus on the history of objects and the ways that our relationship to them have evolved. She has written extensively on various publications such as InSociety, The Sessions, and Fifty24.

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Ivan Navarro, *Come to Daddy*, 2015


Tom McKinley, *Open House*, 2015


Joseph, *Warhol*

Lee Broom, *Hanging Hoop Chair*, 2015

Anne Lindberg, *Unfold 13*, 2016

Donald Judd, *Set of (6) Chairs*

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Stephanie Cristello

ISSUE 07

Some myths are absorbed through tradition, and others are ascertained by feeling through how to describe the structures and subjects of our times. The tactic of mythology, as a form to describe broader experience, acts as a primer for many of the pieces included in Issue 07 of THE SEEN, whose newly commissioned texts explore narratives from ancient Greece and Arabia, to Indigenous histories both of the Americas and northern and eastern Europe, applied to contemporary artistic practices today.

On the cover of this edition is documentation of an ephemeral land work by Postcommodity—an interdisciplinary collective comprised of Cristóbal Martinez, Kade L. Twist, and until recently Raven Chacon—entitled Repellent Fence (2015), installed along the US-Mexico border. Floating one hundred feet above the desert landscape near between Douglas, Arizona, and Agua Prieta, Sonora, the tethered balloons are installed across two miles, featuring Indigenous medicine colors of yellow, red, white, black, and blue with iconography known as the ‘open eye.’

The graphic, an appropriated readymade from the artist’s fifty-year retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, an interview with Candice Lin that traces the desire embedded within the material histories of cochineal and porcelain, whose recipes mystified and seduced Europeans for nearly two centuries; and artist Sable Elyse Smith’s inclusion in SITE Santa Fe, which explores the normalized brutality that seeps through the systems under which we live, intertwining subjective experience with institutional power structures. Other mythologies of race and colonization are imbued and investigated through larger exhibitions, such as Don’t Need Another Hero: The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, curated by Gabi Ngcobo, to reject the assumption that the role of the artist exists to educate the masses—against the notion that the ‘job’ of the colonized is to educate the colonizers—a tactic of oppression often utilized within institutions of contemporary art.

Other pieces more poetically challenge how allegory can ascribe new lore to an image—such as Naoki Sutter-Shudo’s series of vignettes on five representational paintings, as well as an index of works that seeps through the systems under which we live, intertwining subjective experience with institutional power structures. Other mythologies of race and colonization are imbued and investigated through larger exhibitions, such as Don’t Need Another Hero: The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, curated by Gabi Ngcobo, to reject the assumption that the role of the artist exists to educate the masses—against the notion that the ‘job’ of the colonized is to educate the colonizers—a tactic of oppression often utilized within institutions of contemporary art.

The framework of mythology extends to other specific works, such as Adrian Piper’s Mythic Being (1973) to address race and gender, as discussed within the context of the artist’s fifty-year retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; an interview with Candice Lin that traces the desire embedded within the material histories of cochineal and porcelain, whose recipes mystified and seduced Europeans for nearly two centuries; and artist Sable Elyse Smith’s inclusion in SITE Santa Fe, which explores the normalized brutality that seeps through the systems under which we live, intertwining subjective experience with institutional power structures. Other mythologies of race and colonization are imbued and investigated through larger exhibitions, such as Don’t Need Another Hero: The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, curated by Gabi Ngcobo, to reject the assumption that the role of the artist exists to educate the masses—against the notion that the ‘job’ of the colonized is to educate the colonizers—a tactic of oppression often utilized within institutions of contemporary art.

Art is a treatise on how language and feeling are inextricably linked. While myth serves as a starting point to reading each of these works, it is by no means an ending.

Stephanie Cristello
Editor-in-Chief

Reviews
"If I don't tell you who I am, then I have to pass for white. So how do you propose we solve it? What are you going to do?"
——Adrian Piper
We are within you
was also about the world crashing in on [her] hermeneutically indexical practices.”

— Events such as Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia, the Jackson State and Kent State shootings, the Women’s Movement, art, art world, and the closing of CCNY inspired this change in Piper’s development driving her interest beyond of the codified gallery context. “Mostly,” Piper writes of this period, “I did a lot of thinking about my position as an artist, a woman, a black; and whether her personal effects are philosophical academic writings, art works, or bodily remains. What will Become of Me thus reminds viewers of a basic and even generic materiality in this odd equivalence.

As the exhibition framework of A Synthesis of Intuitions continues, the audience’s implication within it expands. That expansion is perhaps most evident in The Humming Room (2012), a piece originally commissioned for Hans Ulrich Obrist’s Do site series. The room occurs two-thirds of the way through the show, audience members must pass through the room in order to continue, linearly, onto later works on display. According to a free-standing museum sign, The Humming Room requires visitors to hum while passing through the space and—at least when there—join and encouraged by the attending guide. The Humming Room is joyful, while other contemporary works remind the viewer of a more sobering complicity: works like Imagine [Trayvon Martin] (2012), where a photolitograph is divided into crosshairs that overlay a faded and barely visible portrait of Trayvon Martin, with the typewritten courier text in the bottom right hand corner, “Imagine what it was like to be me.” Or a series of photographs entitled Everything Will Be Taken Away (2003–ongoing), where subjects in personal photographs have their faces erased. The show concludes with a performatical work, The Probable Trust Registry (2015), a series of docks where viewers check in and agree to a series of promises like “I, the undersigned, hereby certify that I will always (absent uncontrollable Acts of God) do what I say I am going to do,” and in so doing, enter a registry and effectively become data.

Piper’s Mythic Being (1973) furthers this experiment of disruption via a developed gender bending persona. In answer to the question, “What does a ‘static emblem of alien confrontation’ wear?”, Piper dressed herself in reflective sunglasses, a moustache, an Afro wig, and the performed affectations of a man—a swagger, for instance. In his periodic and public appearances, the Mythic Being further embodies and extends preceding computations of Piper’s works on paper—as though the energetic, and perhaps even frustration, we can imagine the artist taking to the streets to experiment there, with her body, and show the ways that more pointed expectations of race and gender might grid and flex against alternate personas.

— Writer Jörg Heiser cautions us against assuming that Piper is solely reacting to her own racial and gendered identity: “To identify Piper’s Mythic Being (1985–ongoing), a piece originally commissioned for Hans Ulrich Obrist’s Do site series. The room occurs two-thirds of the way through the show, audience members must pass through the room in order to continue, linearly, onto later works on display. According to a free-standing museum sign, The Humming Room requires visitors to hum while passing through the space and—at least when there—join and encouraged by the attending guide. The Humming Room is joyful, while other contemporary works remind the viewer of a more sobering complicity: works like Imagine [Trayvon Martin] (2012), where a photolitograph is divided into crosshairs that overlay a faded and barely visible portrait of Trayvon Martin, with the typewritten courier text in the bottom right hand corner, “Imagine what it was like to be me.” Or a series of photographs entitled Everything Will Be Taken Away (2003–ongoing), where subjects in personal photographs have their faces erased. The show concludes with a performatical work, The Probable Trust Registry (2015), a series of docks where viewers check in and agree to a series of promises like “I, the undersigned, hereby certify that I will always (absent uncontrollable Acts of God) do what I say I am going to do,” and in so doing, enter a registry and effectively become data.

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From the Front

FRONT INTERNATIONAL // CLEVELAND TRIENNIAL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

By Susan Snodgrass

Urban activist and author June Jacobs saw cities as “immense laboratories” for invention. “[V]erily, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration,” she argued, “with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves.” An American City, the inaugural edition of FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, is an experiment in urban development: a cultural laboratory that lepso to replace the image of this post-industrial city by positioning itself as a “heartland document.” — diced Situationist sites, Victorian-era arcades, and a city market, best of which include museums and cultural unfold is a remapping of the city; the coordinates transcend its spatial conditions. Thus, what community—that simultaneously frame and political and artistic—racism, violence, immigration, the role of art in healing and building community—that simultaneously frame and transcends its spatial conditions. Thus, what itself as a cultural experiment in urban development: a cultural...
Like the closing refrain of the Langston Hughes’ poem from which the project takes its name, Bey’s constructed landscapes celebrate blackness while giving material evidence to this significant narrative in African-American history.7

Against the Biennale

WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO // BERLIN BIENNALE 10
By Gabrielle Welsh

“Can’t make the same mistakes this time / We are children, the last generation / We are the ones they left behind / And I wonder when we are ever gonna change?”

—TINA TURNER, WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO
In late July, I stumbled my way into the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, in search of the press entry into the tenth edition of the Berlin Biennale—without a press badge or any official credentials, but with a student ID (useless) and a vague professional email I had forgotten to respond to from a previous Biennale (useful). I had never intended to attend an international contemporary art biennial—much less write on, or be granted free entry, into one. I was working three jobs in New York City (two arts institutions, one service), and happened to be dating the cousin of an international flight attendant. The stars aligned, offering myself and my partner a round trip to Europe for $100, and a chance to attend an organized event that I—a seemingly aware “arts” person—was entirely unaware existed. Thus, I had accidentally found myself assigned to write a review on the beautifully titled We Don’t Need Another Hero: The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art.

— As it is known, the structure of a biennale presents a challenge to any curator attempting to educate the colonizers is a tactic of oppression, not the responsibility to “teach” the masses—the entire notion that it is the ‘job’ of the colonized to become a proper decolonized white person, that is always serve this need by explaining why the merit to working turned on its head, or rather, the end of heroism that occurs within the mass-production and globalization of things and objects. The text points out to the similar circling arts circle within which biennials, curators, and the like exist. In a certain press release, the Biennale is described as “…a collective dialogue and a space that holds a historical process already in motion, in Berlin as in many parts of the world. The work of undoing and reconfiguring centuries of repressed vocabularies and their complexities is an undertaking that has thrown us into states of disarray.”

The sheer scale of the Biennale is impressive; spread across four venues (Akademie der Künste, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Volksbühne Pavilion, and ZK/U – Center for Art and Urbanistics), the exhibition includes fifty contemporary artists whose work was both commissioned and selected for exhibition. So, in an attempt to draw away from its undeniable subject as an international art venue, the radical approach to this exhibition to curator was refreshing. Yet, the question remained: was the merit to working with these institutions, as opposed to against them? The pieces that I found myself returning to followed a certain Freirean pedagogical criticality that focuses on a de-biomedicalization of knowledge and the importance of community education. This brings into conversation the idea that the artist should not have the responsibility to “teach” the masses—the entire notion that it is the ‘job’ of the colonized to educate the colonizers is a tactic of oppression, and is often utilized within institutions of contemporary art. As the curators made explicitly clear, We Don’t Need Another Hero is against the institutionalization of the tokenized educator. Within a published conversation, curatorial team member Veletze Mutsahumba explains, “If you always serve this need by explaining why the other person is wrong and what they have to do to become a proper decolonized white person, that is the easiest way for that person. But true change cannot happen when you just tell someone what to do. They have to figure it out themselves. That’s why I think it’s not interesting to always serve this demand.”

Walking into the KW Institute for Contemporary art and into the first floor, immediately one is hit with a massive installation: Dinner Sedee Boppe’s Centred (Of Occas Instability (Feyling)) (2016–18). Boppe’s piece takes over the bottom floor of the KW and contains multiple pieces within itself: Jake Arnott’s Discovab! (2018), Lasuell Workman’s Justice for _____ (2014), and Robert Rhe’s EEEEEERRRRRRGGHHH and ZOUNDS (2015). The installation includes bricks, light, sounds, videos, and more, changing the exhibition space into a collapsed pile of rubble—the room is a deep orange, piles of material laid strewn across the floor next to high definition video screens, and water drops from the ceiling into buckets. Examining the relationship between mental illness (insanity) and the colonized body, Boppe’s has created a space of uncertainty and confusion. In the back corner, a small screen plays Nina Simone’s 1972 performance of Feelings, though her voice is heard throughout the space, slightly out of sync with her lips. The experience is odd, and lays the foundation for the rest of the Biennale—the viewer is not given an out-right explanation of what to do with this information, but instead must face the wreckage.

Grada Kilomba’s work, entitled ILLUSIONS Vol. II, OEDIPUS (2018), tucked away in a corner of the Biennale catalogue, curator Gabi Ngcobo has written over the lyrics to this song, which eerily resemble a contemporary crisis: “Can’t make the same mistakes this time / We are children, the last
demonstrate the need.

The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art.

First, let us start with this title. The phrase “We don’t need another hero” comes from the Tina Turner song of the same name, released in 1985 as a single from the film Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome. In an annotated page within the Biennale catalogue, curator Gabi Ngcobo has written over the lyrics to this song, which eerily resemble a contemporary crisis: “Can’t make the same mistakes this time / We are children, the last era of uncertainty. Though I was, admittedly, not alive (nor even a concept) in 1985, the uncertainty of Reagan-era policy changes and
“For once, an artist’s intention cannot be questioned or debated, as she tells you (the viewer) that this story can (and is being) interpreted as a story of father/son rivalry, one that is elevated within black communities.”

—GABRIELLE WELSH

Mario Pfeifer’s film, Again / Noch einmal (2018) was an experience not easily forgotten—within the work, the Berlin-based artist recreates a well-known media story in Germany, in which a young man was dropped out of a grocery store in Eastern Germany by a “vigilante group” after he was reportedly threatening customers. The man, an Iraqi migrant seeking medical attention in Germany, was then tied to a tree, and left for police to deal with. In a country where xenophobia has exponentially increased, the story garnered both national outcry and support, with many blaming the victim. As the trial date neared, the narrators constantly available visual information in the viral video of the incident. However, the narrators constantly pause the proceedings, educating the jury not only on the backstory of the victim and the four men, but also on the ways in which conflict resolution and bystander intervention could have stopped this scene from ever unfolding. Again / Noch einmal reimagines what an art film can be, and thus, what it can do. In a poorly-paraphrased moment that so well echoes the anti-hero feeling of the biennale, Angela Merkel is mentioned in the film—perhaps well echoes the anti-hero feeling of the biennale, reflecting on what I saw, heard, participated in? Would it make sense that I felt this collective—this against the “Thunderdome”—where I was dancing in a queer club to an American DJ remixing Tina Turner while young Germans clad in leather danced all around me? Would it make sense, that perhaps the best way to feel this collective joy, a community, is to feel it in a real space? And not a biennale?

We Don’t Need Another Hero; The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art ran until September 9, 2018.

The general feeling throughout the Biennale was one of contempt towards art and its histories, while simultaneously existing within its same institutional spaces. Perhaps We Don’t Need Another Hero illustrates some of the ways this can be attempted, but it is hard not to forget the massive state and corporate funding that went into the inception and production of the exhibition. Would it make sense if I told you that I, perhaps felt this sense of collectivity that the curatorial staff was most trying to achieve once I was outside the Biennale, reflecting on what I saw, heard, participated in? Would it make sense that I felt this collective—this against the “Thunderdome”—when I was dancing in a queer club to an American DJ remixing Tina Turner while young Germans clad in leather danced all around me? Would it make sense, that perhaps the best way to feel this collective joy, a community, is to feel it in a real space? And not a biennale?

Another Hero

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Mario Pfeifer stages brings together a jury of German citizens to reenact the infamous scene within a studio grocery store. The small group looks on, as actors and narrators recreate all the available visual information in the viral video of the incident. However, the narrators constantly pause the proceedings, educating the jury not only on the backstory of the victim and the four men, but also of the ways in which conflict resolution and bystander intervention could have stopped this scene from ever unfolding. Again / Noch einmal reimagines what an art film can be, and thus, what it can do. In a poorly-paraphrased moment that so well echoes the anti-hero feeling of the biennale, Angela Merkel is mentioned in the film—perhaps well echoes the anti-hero feeling of the biennale, reflecting on what I saw, heard, participated in? Would it make sense that I felt this collective—this against the “Thunderdome”—when I was dancing in a queer club to an American DJ remixing Tina Turner while young Germans clad in leather danced all around me? Would it make sense, that perhaps the best way to feel this collective joy, a community, is to feel it in a real space? And not a biennale?

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The general feeling throughout the Biennale was one of contempt towards art and its histories, while simultaneously existing within its same institutional spaces. Perhaps We Don’t Need
The World as Supermarket and as Derision

MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ // KUNSTHALLE BRATISLAVA
By Ezara Spangl

Upon entering the glass street-level exhibition space of the Kunsthalle Bratislava LAB to view the exhibition of Michel Houellebecq’s photography, a gallery attendant approaches, with exhibition reading materials in hand dubiously state dramatically ironic information: the artist’s images are unrelated to his literature. She adds, on a personal note, that she has not read any of Houellebecq’s novels but, informs visitors she had been told his novels are “very good” and after having spent many hours in this exhibition, she plans to read him. This information presents the visitor not so much with a Catch-22, as with the opportunity to knowingly ignore normative instructions. As such, the welcome into Houellebecq’s exhibition confronts us with a recurring conflict: to address forbiddingness and the natural.

Yet, the photographs on view are in fact made by the notorious novelist and poet. The exhibition text reminds the visitor that Houellebecq is “one of the contemporary authors of French language, who is the most translated and read in the world.” This is the author who has been coined ‘the supermarket Baudelaire.’ It is acknowledged that Houellebecq’s fame is the result of his literary career—this is the reason for the interest in his work, is it not? One is interested in how this complicated writer engages visual language; it is not possible to disremember his work in viewing the photographs—despite the gallery assistant’s instructions, the exhibition is accompanied by an excerpt of Houellebecq’s 1992 essay Approches du Désarroi (Approaches to Disarray), which in this context functions quite like a manifesto. All this being the case, the photographs are visually engrossing and perplexing. Indeed, they do not need to be tied to the literature of their maker in order to be stimulating.

The photographs are depopulated, focusing not on individuals, but instead on landscapes, architecture, and the interaction of human civilization in nature. There are streets and street signs directing motor vehicles, yet no vehicles are depicted—only the clouds in the sky behind the trees are active. Houellebecq uses digital and analog cameras, manipulating some images—heightening the blues and greens to levels that objectify nature in relation to the manmade. We see photos taken from great heights and broad views made to capture the largeness of his subject. One photograph shows a mass of social housing buildings in a suburban district with the words “Avallon suburbs 1.” In another, there is a sculpted cow on a derelict sign advertising a weekend farmer’s market that is defunct. Some photographs are titled in a numbered system (e.g. France #X, or Inscriptions #X); these have coherent phrases seemingly photoshopped onto the photograph.
The work is anti-utopian but also adoring. Though the images depict France as the stand-in for all continuously changing Western countries, the photographs are remarkably anti-nostalgic. They are candid investigations of the place where the city meets the country. Reading the accompanying texts further, we are informed that the photographs do carry a relation to the poetry of the artist. In the re-print of a conversation between Houellebecq and Jean de Loisy, from the catalogue of the Palais de Tokyo 2016 exhibition Rester Vivant (To Stay Alive)—the same title shared by his new film project with Iggy Pop—Houellebecq says about poetry and photography: “Yes, there is a relationship, but I do not know exactly what it is.” Following, Houellebecq states that although he “expresses feelings” in poetry, his photography is absent of emotion. Houellebecq’s use of the first-person narrative in his writings has welcomed broad critical analysis of his person in regard to his novels. Yet, in his photography, this first-person narrative comes even closer at hand, as it is Houellebecq who looks through the camera to shoot the image. While a list of politically incorrect self-descriptions has come out in interviews when he is questioned about his moral intentions, and whether the narrators of his novels truly speak for him, his truest public “I” is in fact made visible in the photography. The works both cherish that which they capture and remain indifferent to any societal abrasion they depict. In line with Houellebecq’s photographic intentions, the exhibition maintains a book-issue-like presentation in that many of the works on view already have been exhibited in, frankly, prominent art world settings—namely the French Basquin at Venus Over Manhattan in 2017 and Rester Vivant at Palais de Tokyo in 2016. This re-presentation of work accords the exhibition with the condition of marketing, affirming an openness to the capitalist economics that is often a major undercurrent in Houellebecq’s literary achievements. Presenting the visitor with the confrontation that any expectation of a new exhibition by Houellebecq, this show reflects one’s commercially cultivated expectations—one where the artist affords the opportunity to elevate his own work through the curatorial practices of others.

Torkwase Dyson
James Samuel Madison

SEPTEMBER 14–OCTOBER 27, 2018
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To Watch and Be Watched

THE RACIAL IMAGINARY INSTITUTE: ON WHITENESS // THE KITCHEN
By Paige Landesberg

In 2016, poet and author Claudia Rankine received $625,000 as a stipend from her MacArthur Genius Grant and decided to put the funds toward founding The Racial Imaginary Institute, an organization that gives artists and writers a platform to address issues of race. This summer, the Institute has found its new home at The Kitchen in New York, through a series of programs surrounding the exhibition On Whiteness, incorporating a day long symposium, a library of books, residencies, and performances.

Within her own work as a part of the Institute, Rankine states “…it is important that people begin to understand that whiteness is not inevitable, and that white dominance is not inevitable.” In this sense, Rankine suggests that whiteness’ hyper-visibility is what allows it to become invisible; a racial default that society has built itself around—the consequence of which is white people having the luxury of achieved racial ‘neutrality.’

While blackness and otherness has been the object of attention in conversations surrounding race, it is equally important that we raise questions and consciousness around whiteness and its pervasive monopoly over cultural narratives. The exhibition presents a collection of artworks that utilize the formal qualities of proximity, orientation, sensation, and visibility to foster a reflexive relationship between the viewer and the work.

The exhibition opens into a small room with a lowered ceiling and a blindingly bright light shining directly into viewers’ eyes—a club-like light fixture spinning overhead. Experiencing this installation by Baseera Khan, [Feat. with lowered ceiling] (2018) is like being in a parody dreamscape of a nightclub. The harsh spotlight strikes like a deer in the headlights, while the lowered ceiling makes one feel so disproportionately large that proceeding to the main room of the exhibition is disorienting.

Continuing into the space, viewers are confronted with the bust of a white woman missing an eye. As a white woman, facing this bust at eye level, the image feels in some way like a mirror held up; one, like her, half-seen (my vision still recovering from the glare of light). Looking out to either side of the woman’s bust at the surrounding works—a scan of many large-scale vertical sculptures, video installations, and photographs—the physical scale and dimensionality of each of the selected works invite a confrontation as one body facing another.

Ken Gonzales-Day’s Untitled III (Antico [Pier Jacopo Alari-Bonacolsi], Bust of a Young Man and Francis Harwood, Bust of a Man, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) (2010) is a photograph of two busts staring intently at one another. Antico’s Bust of a Young Man (approx. 1455–1528) depicts a Roman looking curly-haired male, where Hardwood’s Bust of a Man (1726/27–1783) is one of the first European depictions of an African man in sculpture. Both appear to be cut from the same slick black material, more like ebony than like marble; yet, one is stone and one is bronze. Both sculptures are owned by The J. Paul Getty Museum. The faces, facing one another forever in time, serve as a record of the art world’s relationship with whiteness and the ubiquity of European assimilation of global culture. Both sculptures have a regal air, and if anything, the African man appears distinct only for the fact that this image is less engrained throughout Westernized history. As for the Roman figure, his whiteness appears indistinct, as it assumes what has been defined as the default status throughout historical narratives both in the art world and at large.

The physicality of
The Racial Imaginary Institute: On Whiteness.


The gaze itself— the very thing that produces otherness is turned back onto that of the gazer; I watch it as it watches me.

“The gaze itself— the very thing that produces otherness is turned back onto that of the gazer; I watch it as it watches me.”

Rita Felski


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NOVEMBER 5, 2018

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In Light Of...

Iván Navarro, Robert Chase Heishman, and Kay Rosen

Curated by Stephanie Cristello.

Chicago Manual Style
1927 W Superior St
Chicago, IL 60622

Opening reception and performance with Iván Navarro and Courtney Smith Friday, September 28, 6–9pm

With support by Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York
A border is nothing but a man-made fiction, imagined and realized by those who would never be imprisoned within its bounds. To colonizers, borders were pure cartography—settling matters after beating the enemy. With pen to paper, business was conducted, and a deal was made. To Europeans, North America was seen as property; a barren land meant for conquering, and resources meant to be extracted. This geography was not always known as the United States of America—and to many it still is not. Rather, to the many Indigenous communities that continue to reside within it, the US has encroached upon Turtle Island.

Some call the US-Mexico border, *La línea*; Gloria Anzaldúa calls it, *La frontera*; Calle 13 has called the journey, *Pa’l Norte (Heading North)*, and the current sitting president has called people who come from it rapists, criminals, and gangs. In terms of movement, most Indigenous communities are not ‘settled’—their relationship to the land, its animals, and plants is symbiotic. As early as 1785, Indigenous communities were forced to sign treaties that favored US interests. While the National Anthem claims “the land of the free and the home of the brave,” we must ask: who is really ‘free’ on stolen land? On land stolen from Indigenous people, toiled upon by enslaved black people, whose railroads were forcibly built by Chinese people, and is now home of the biggest incarceration rate in the world? On land that is a hub for separating children from their parents at its borders, where ICE can set up secret checkpoints within a 100-mile radius to detain and deport people without regulation or oversight?

Zoe Samudzi and William C. Anderson state in *Lands On Us*—an excerpt from their 2018 book, *As Black as Resistance*—that, “settler colonialism is a far more invasive mode of colonialism that is marked by the ‘dispensability’ of Indigenous communities. It is a ‘project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement,’ driven by a ruling logic of a ‘sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population. Settler invasion is a structure, not an event.’” The colonization of America was structured and organized—it was planned. Just as the separation of families was also callously organized. In his 1975 book, * Discipline and Punish*, Foucault calls this phenomenon a carceral archipelago. The term ‘carceral’ refers to prisons, while ‘archipelago’ refers to the cluster of systems, i.e. networks used to patrol, surveil, police, and punish. In 2018, it serves to note that the US border is carceral.

Southwestern states—namely Texas, California, and New Mexico—were once a part of Mexico. But before that, they were the sole settlements of different Indigenous nations who lived back and forth throughout the region. The US-Mexico border is a man-made convention, finalized in 1853, yet the communities that have resided upon this geography have always been porous.

Artist collective Postcommodity’s *Repellent Fence* (2015) installation strikes at the root of this convention, highlighting the continued connection of Indigenous communities despite the border. Floating 106 feet above the desert landscape near the US-Mexico border—installed between the town of Douglas, Arizona, and Agua Prieta, Sonora—26 tethered yellow balloons are installed across two miles. Postcommodity—a trio comprised of Zoé Samudzi and William C. Anderson in *What Beyond, Between, and Under the Border*
narrative and discourse are embedded in each scare-eye balloon.”12 In the Americas as instruments of repulsion for more than 500 years. This historical Indigenous byproducts have been rationalized by European colonizers of the appropriation, Postcommodity states, “Indigenous ways of being and balloon is an appropriated readymade from a product meant to deter birds—of oblong concentric circles known as the ‘open eye.’ The inspiration of the colors of yellow, red, white, black, and blue with iconography of the shape yellow balloons are ten feet in diameter, and feature Indigenous medicine MEXUS—featured at the US Pavilion’s exhibition, architect, Teddy Cruz, and political scientist, Fonna Forman, whose project, of the region explored in Postcommodity’s work is similarly heralded by—————————————— The call to recognize the interconnection communities by the side of the border on which they happen to be. ——— the colonial, genocidal logic of gross simplification that separates Indigenous ——————————— Yet, the work begs the question: what does Repellent Fence ———————————— The region’s imbricated layers also feature prominently in the recent exhibition Young Latinx Artists 23: Beyond Walls, Between Gates, Under Bridges, which opened this year at the Mexic-Arte Museum in Austin, Texas. Here, artist Evelyn Contreras’ Untitled (2017) installation features glow-in-the-dark, LED-lined architectural meshes, screen printed onto mirrored acrylic. Simultaneously inviting yet ominous, the installation is an allusion to the invitation of ‘better dreams’ associated with immigrating to the United States. Inspired by low-Casco chicano culture lexicon of So-Cal, Contreras terms the architectural tessellations with pink and purple edges, “a fake space,” where viewers can project onto the space that which they want to see, riddled with bias and assumptions. To her, the off-spotted “border wall” represents the unknown. As the artist states, “People are afraid of the unknown. If you live in a tiny town in which you never were exposed to different people with different backgrounds, you would perpetually see them as ‘other.’ If you have news validating the ‘other’ ideology, you are going to agree on the ‘wall.’ The wall represents fear and nostalgia for a more transparent white supremacist society.”17 ——————— The question is, how many people who have privilege in a white supremacist society are willing to give it up for others? ———— The peril of the border wall are more figuratively imaged in Abil Saucedo’s acrylic painting on wood, entitled Tunnel Runner part 2 of 2 (2017). A man’s head sticks out from above the ground, behind him is a wall with a Mexican flag on top of it. Viewers do not know if he is coming or going, he is stuck in a place of liminality. Scholar Homi Bhabha describes this liminality as a border zone in itself, it “refers to a transitory, in-between state or space, which is characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity, subversive potential for subversion and change. As a transitory space, it foregrounds the temporal border and in narrative is often associated with life-changing events or border situations.“18 The tunnel could lead to freedom or cartel, construction or sewage. We as viewers cannot tell, and Saucedo does not provide any clues—instead, the artist moves us to make eye contact with the subject and engage with the figure’s humanity. ———— What mass media terms an immigrant crisis is actually a refugee crisis. This is just one residue of the United States’ interference into Latin America since the mid-1800s, as the region was regarded as “a sphere of influence” in the minds of politicians, supported by the Monroe Doctrine, and competing with Europeans that made this intervention constitutionally permissible. Historic turmoil, US-centric trade agreements, and coup d’états have wreaked havoc on these economic and social structures. If people want to survive, they have no other option but to go elsewhere. People send young children by themselves across the border only so they can have a fighting chance; people get on rickety boats only when being on water is safer than land, people only take the ‘La Bestia’—a train notorious for unsafe conditions and murders—when there are no other options left.”19 Postcommodity echoes this,
“The US-Mexico ‘immigration crisis’ is, in fact, a human rights crisis of the Western Hemisphere, driven by irresponsible neoliberal trade practices, resource extraction, development, and labor practices of multinational corporations.”

— The sentencing for historic and continued injustice is echoed by artist and activist collective, R.I.S.E.—Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment—and its founder, Demian DinéYazhi’. DinéYazhi is a Diné (Navajo) artist born to clans Tóbin (Bitter Water) and Naasht’ée (Lalo Tábąąh (Zuni Clan Water’s Edge) who was raised in Gallup, New Mexico and is currently based in Portland, Oregon. Their exhibition, A Nation Is A Massacre at Pioneer Works, which ran from May–July, 2018, “considers over 500 years of mass shootings and massacre, missing and murdered Indigenous womxn, queers, transgender gradient/nonconforming, and two spirit folks, and numerous instances of environmental racism/injustice that continue to be ignored by citizens of a colonized country.” Throughout the duration of the exhibition, a Riograph was used to generate posters, zines, and physical ephemera that feature political aphorisms, slogans, wall-based montages, and activist agitprop. For the exhibition, a poster entitled Lincoln Ordered The Greatest Mass Hanging In America’s History (2016) features a portrait of President Lincoln and a news article with a headline, in red block letters over a field of green color, “The US-Mexico ‘immigration crisis’ is, in fact, a human rights crisis of the Western Hemisphere, driven by irresponsible neoliberal trade practices, resource extraction, development, and labor practices of multinational corporations.”

According to manuel arturo abreu, DinéYazhi’s work embodies the concept of survivance, defined by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are an active connection to the past, present, and future generations could live in a world where settler colonialism and imperialism no longer define the framework of existence, in a space where, perhaps, the United States does not exist.”

Young Latina Artist: 20+: Beyond Walls, Between Gates, Under Bridges, guest curated by Rechá-Rochali at Mex Arte Museum in Austin, TX, ran from June 15–August 26, 2018.
Ariadne’s Thread

By Stephanie Cristello

Two lovers enter a vista—it is a vast plane, like a monochromatic desert, grey and barren—and are confronted by a curved expanse of milk-white stone. The scale of the wall to their bodies is towering: its vertical height extends far beyond their sightlines, while its bowed curve vanishes almost imperceptibly in the distance. In the center of this immense, earth-like span is a singular passage, a thin and narrow gateway: the entrance into the labyrinth. As she steps forward (left foot first, then right), the rock turns from pale, unblemished marble to the opacity of a translucent veil. This transformation exalts them both, for through the phantom of complex lines, which weave and double back on themselves (like the interior of a seashell), they can see into the heart of the maze in the distance. There ahead lies the minotaur, which her lover must face. Yet, as she walks by his side to approach the entry, she sees the how the patterns of walls shift, almost glittering, and knows that the illusion is a trick—the ghostly interior is a luminous simulation, one that deceives and regresses, as if a hall of mirrors. The question is not at all about getting into the labyrinth; but getting out again. She gazes at her robe and notices a single fray near her ankle—reaching down, she plucks the red silk thread between her fingers and, drawing it delicately towards her, unravels her garment in a single string. Standing there, stripped bare, she looks to her lover, lacing one end of the crimson strand into a bow on her finger, and hands him the thread.

Theseus, Prince of Athens, having conquered the minotaur by the means of Ariadne, Daughter to King Minos, who fell in love with him, escaped out of the Labyrinth.

—Argument for Ariadne: An Opera (1721)

PREFACE

Two lovers enter a vista—it is a vast plane, like a monochromatic desert, grey and barren—and are confronted by a curved expanse of milk-white stone. The scale of the wall to their bodies is towering: its vertical height extends far beyond their sightlines, while its bowed curve vanishes almost imperceptibly in the distance. In the center of this immense, earth-like span is a singular passage, a thin and narrow gateway: the entrance into the labyrinth. As she steps forward (left foot first, then right), the rock turns from pale, unblemished marble to the opacity of a translucent veil. This transformation exalts them both, for through the phantom of complex lines, which weave and double back on themselves (like the interior of a seashell), they can see into the heart of the maze in the distance. There ahead lies the minotaur, which her lover must face. Yet, as she walks by his side to approach the entry, she sees the how the patterns of walls shift, almost glittering, and knows that the illusion is a trick—the ghostly interior is a luminous simulation, one that deceives and regresses, as if a hall of mirrors. The question is not at all about getting into the labyrinth; but getting out again. She gazes at her robe and notices a single fray near her ankle—reaching down, she plucks the red silk thread between her fingers and, drawing it delicately towards her, unravels her garment in a single string. Standing there, stripped bare, she looks to her lover, lacing one end of the crimson strand into a bow on her finger, and hands him the thread.
The myth of Ariadne is one based on cunning intelligence: throughout history, the ‘red thread’ has come to represent a pattern, or underlying motif. It is this same quality of line that is denominated within Monika Szewczyk’s curatorial proposition in the needle, the hayteck, the thread, which featured works by four artists—Britt-Mari Marakatt-Labba, Lars Mittman, Marusa Velin, Aboubakar Fofana, and Maria Lai—installed at The Arts Club of Chicago earlier this year. The exhibition observed pre-industrial techniques as a method of viewing is one that extends to the entire visual essay as Britta Marakatt-Labba—an artist of Sami descent. For Marakatt-Labba, the visuality of her works, which are largely fashioned out of an ancient Sami tradition that have lasted centuries despite the region’s geography makes identity and identity makes geography. Indeed, each of the artist’s practices make use of the physical world, “It is not an accident of birth that you have to do something with it. You must think you have to do something with it. You must think you have to do something with it.” In the case of the recently deceased Maria Lai, we begin with the deliberate process of tying one’s self to the landscape; to place. In yet another allusion to Ariadne’s thread, Lai’s black and white photographs Legarsi alla montagna (To Tie Oneself to the Mountain) (1981), a series of images that feature a colored ribbon amid a sequence of vernacular images; children playing in a village; Sardinian women smiling in black long-sleeved dresses—bridging between the needle and the haystack, the thread—as well as documenta 14, held between Athens and Kassel in 2017—as nearly all of the selected works hinge upon techniques and traditions that are not readily apparent within the gallery, taking place just beyond the frame of the exhibition.

In preparing to view the exhibition, I revisited my documenta 14 catalogue—a tome of monochromatic texts—and motioned to remove the page marker, a strand of thread travels to the top of the impending mountain, as if an ancient folk tale, yet is one of the first of the artist’s ‘social sculptures,’ which followed in Aggriu, Camerino, Orenti, Silvia, and Villalba. We end, or perhaps begin, with Lala Meredith-Vula’s Haystacks, a series of large scale black and white photographs shot in the Albanian countryside. Born in Sarajevo in 1966, in the former Yugoslavia, the London-based artist’s work documents...
an affinity toward indexing “place”—contested place, impermanent place, persistent place—that is shared among each of the artists. As one of the namesakes of the exhibition, through the collection of compositions—readymade arrangements made by farmers in the region (the series began as the Republic of Kosovo declared independence from Serbia)7—photography becomes a tool to personify the landscape, to analyze its resilience. ———

As a proposal against accelerationism, through which contemporary images and artworks are more rapidly generated and consumed, the needle, the haystack, the thread motions toward a redefinition, if not eradication of, Western progress that weaves and traverses through time. As Szewczyk states, “I am hesitant of terming ‘tradition’ as a ‘past.’ I think it is continuous. Tradition is very renewable. I feel this is a more futuristic proportion. Every time you go deep into the past, you are also thinking about the future.” ———

Approach the haystack and bury the needle between its straws. ———

You will find it again.

——

the needle, the haystack, the thread ran at The Arts Club of Chicago from March 15–May 19, 2018. 

2. Marakatt-Labba is based in Sweden; the ideological takeover of Sami land began in 1606, with the construction of ‘church sites,’ and in 1685 traditional Sami religion was outlawed. Derived from early shamanism (under the term šaman), handheld divination devices covered in images of humans and animal spirits were confiscated and burned, holy figures were destroyed, and ritualistic song (yoik) was outlawed. Taken from: Kreuger, Anders. “Britta Marakatt-Labba: ‘Images Are Always Stories.’” Afterall, Spring / Summer 2018, 10-11.
3. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes in first person were conducted in conversation with the author, February 2018.
4. The work was accompanied by a yoik performance by Simon Issát Maranien and Axel Andersson.
In an interview printed by the Kunstmuseum Basel, Theaster Gates—in regard to the value of the Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) archives featured in his exhibition, *Black Madonna*—stated, “The value is that the world wants to know more complex understandings of Blackness in the same way it is coming to know more complex understandings of gender.” He continued by saying, “I am bringing race to Kunstmuseum Basel. But I am bringing these politics to celebrate Black ingenuity, fashion, gender complexities, everyday Black life.” *Black Madonna* is centered around this idea of celebrating Blackness and everyday Black life in America, doing so by utilizing archival practices.

For Gates, organized information holds power—it has to do with not just the past, but the future as well. He asks, “…what remains important over time and where does a thing have to live in order to survive time? At some point, families become foundations and corporations become museums and sometimes, things die, and the contributions made to culture or society are interwoven more than they are explicit.” Using browsable slides from the archives of the Johnson Publishing Company, the legendary publisher of *Ebony* and *Jet*, Gates is determined to preserve Black images—over 13,000 images of Black women—and to ascribe them institutional value for years to come.

In Chicago, I was able to experience *A Johnson Publishing Story*, a dreamlike recreation of the JPC’s iconic headquarters and its interior design at Gates’ Rebuild Foundation. Located in the Stony Island Arts Bank, the displays feature John H. Johnson’s own desk, neon wall pieces, African and African inspired artwork, sculptures, publications, the Johnson library collection, office supplies, and furniture. It is this collection of archives that are the focus of this feature. What follows are my own reflections on my visit to *A Johnson Publishing Story* in the form of an experimental screenplay.

* A Johnson Publishing Story, curated by Theaster Gates at the Rebuild Foundation’s Stony Island Arts Bank, runs through September 30, 2018.
INT. STONY ISLAND STATE SAVINGS BANK/CHICAGO-DAY

The white exterior of the Stony Island State Savings Bank catches the sun in such a way that it lobes a blinding glare across the street, causing small tears to well up in the eyes of pedestrians and motorists alike.

VOICE(V.O.)
(Over series of shots)
11 stories. In 11 stories on the south end of Downtown, an entire generation’s purveyor of stories was housed. Stories incepted and edited and cut and packaged and printed and sold; every possible stage of transforming an idea into a story contained neatly within 11 stories.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:
A. A desk sits in front of an orange wall, it is made of a deep brown wood as well as alligator skin-dyed red. The curves of its design are simple and sleek, but abrupt.
B. A neon sign, presumably a contemporary art piece, hangs on the same orange wall. The tubes are arranged such a way that the resulting image resembles a wheel with 6 spokes. The outline glows a bright white, while the spokes are a piercing red. It hums softly.
C. The leaves of a tropical species, possibly a variety of palm, lay silently against a tan leather backdrop.
D. A clock with a white face sits alone on a white wall, its outline is red with plastic.
E. The stone faces of the gods stare outward among an endless wall of books.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. 67TH STREET AND STONY ISLAND AVENUE/CHICAGO-DAY

The sun is lower in the sky now, but the white walls of the Stony Island State Savings Bank continue to glisten. The building sits unmoving, as is the case with most buildings. Things are still.

VOICE(V.O.) (CONT’D)
I use ‘story’ here of course to mean both floors of a building as well as simply tales, a recounting of events. It seems an apt word for both meanings, every story of a building has a history, a story.

INT. STONY ISLAND STATE SAVINGS BANK/CHICAGO-DAY

The foyer of the building is small, there is a doorway leading to a staircase on the right, an elevator that looks much newer than the rest of the building to the left, and a small welcome table in the center.

VOICE(V.O.) (Over series of shots)
And stories are important. When exercising control, stories can be a tool for documenting the past, understanding the present, and if you’re clever, writing your own future. A really good story can do it all at once. But stories are not always written or told fairly, or at all. Sometimes stories become old, and they die. And sometimes it takes a group of people in an 11-story building to make something worth rebuilding. Imagine a story factory so strong and so efficient, that it changed the course of a generation. Imagine growing up without a single story for you.
The pedestrian makes his way around the space, taking in the archives. To his right sits John H. Johnson’s desk, made of wood and red alligator skin with a neon ship’s wheel hanging authoritatively on the wall behind it. To his left an entire wall of card catalogs, with topics ranging from Ancient Egypt to Gothic architecture. If the mid-century sensibilities do not give away the time in which this space is frozen, the card catalogs surely do. As if in response to the catalogs, the pedestrian lets out a soft exclamation.

**PEDESTRIAN**

Jesus...

On top of the card catalog cabinets sit a series of small stone sculptures, all figurative. The pedestrian moves forward, past the desk, stopping for a moment to look at a large abstract painting. He finds himself in the middle of what looks like a waiting area. The furniture, a couch and two chairs, is sleek and angular, but also curved and soft. The coffee table is a solid block of presumably granite, maybe even marble. On top of its polished stone surface sit several editions of Jet. As he moves further throughout the space, he finds larger, life-size sculptures similar to the ones guarding the card catalog, although these made the building’s library their home. And in the library behind a glass wall, sits more vintage furniture, more copies of Ebony and Jet, and John H. Johnson’s entire library collection.

The pedestrian moves towards a shelf and reaches for a book, just as he grips the spine of a Mah-Ah, tall, with a soft yet firm voice—echoes down from a catwalk-like upper level of the library, accessible by a ladder on the far end of the room.

**MAN**

Excuse me sir, if you would like to handle this part of the archives, you’ll have to come back for an orientation.

**PEDESTRIAN**

(embarrassed)

Oh, gosh sorry, I didn’t realize—

**MAN**

It’s alright, you’re free to browse the shelves in the next room if you like.

**PEDESTRIAN**

Oh okay, cool, thanks.

The pedestrian makes his way out of the library, on his way out he starts to notice the signs littered about, which read, “These objects are sacred, please be respectful.”

**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS**

A. Inside some sort of glass case, an old sign can be read, “We Serve Colored Carry Out Only.”

B. On a shelf full of books, one series of volumes stands out. A dry, old, and bland looking collection of books, the title reads, The Biology of the Negro.

C. A portrait of the Black patriot, Crispus Attucks sits alone on a white wall.

D. A vintage Lil Abner comic strip advertises Cream-of-Wheat with racist imagery and dialogue behind a pane of glass.

**END SERIES OF SHOTS**

**VOICE(V.O.)**

(Over series of shots)

Sacred. Respect. Two defining features of this visual story. Scattered around the space, these tiny notecards are meant to be observed but not seen. In fact, the pedestrian making his voyage through the Johnson Publishing Story, did not even consider the words printed on them beyond the main point of “don’t touch.” But these notecards do something else for this story. They remind us that this story is not a fiction. That these objects are sacred because they have histories that are real. They are tied inextricably by time and place and concept to the Johnson Publishing era, to an era of great progress for Black Americans. These individual objects indirectly shaped the culture of a generation. Please come see for yourself, and please, be respectful.

**FADE TO BLACK.**
We might never again live in a world with a real belief in permanence. The advent of thermodynamics and its accompanying concept of entropy, has given us the modern knowledge that chaos unavoidably prevails. No system is stable. Still-life paintings, based on actual witnessed scenes—whether seen live or photographed—pretend to possess this air of permanence, as they fix a fleeting moment down onto canvas, panel, or paper. Flirting with realism, yet never fully committing to it, five of such works invite tales of speculative sight-seeing.

**ALAN MICHAEL**

*Train in the Snow*

The spongy piece of bread, riddled with holes, seems to scream out its refusal to be consumed; this is not what the man imagined when his wife asked if he wanted toast. The bizarre food is called a crumpet: in between a pancake and a muffin, its vile design appears as an aberration. Certainly, it is incomprehensible how anyone would choose it over the myriad of bread types in the history of humanity. He thinks very strongly he does not want to eat it, and it strikes him that the situation is one with no winner. However, filling the crumpet’s pores with jam muffles its pleas of not wanting to be eaten; it is quite good in the end. At least this ridiculous little bread has a firm stance on its destiny as food, whereas most have no opinion. A stance of refusal that beautifully aligns with that of this man. In contrast, he does not even notice the little birds on the branches outside of his windows: they sing, but not about wanting or not wanting to be eaten; in fact, he does not think of them as food, neither do they consider themselves edible. Sometimes, the man eats, with great satisfaction, that which wants to be eaten. Gustatory advertisements whisper to him, and yell in many voices—the man recognizes and chooses the one that knows his tone and mirrors it. The man could go for some hearty piece of meat, one echoing the diet of its living origin—like acorns fed to pigs, like good grass fed to a cow, coming through with boldness, from a dry aged beefsteak. Add to that little shallots, and a reliable red wine. And evidently, potatoes. What a nice meal the cattle accomplished. After dessert the kids will go to bed, as the adults continue their praising of the cow.

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**Alan Michael**

(b.1947)
lives and works in London, England. Recent exhibitions include Jan Kaps (Cologne, Germany), Christian Andersen (Copenhagen, Denmark), High Art (Paris, France), Galeria Zera (Milan, Italy), CAC Vilnius (Lithuania), Galerie Greger Stalger (Zurich, Switzerland), Vitma Gold (London, England). Upcoming exhibitions include Frans Hals Museum (Haarlem, the Netherlands).
In a universe irreversibly cooling down, some things remain warm: the first tears of a newborn, the heat, finally united with the world. Perhaps only then, by accident, a leap into a sea of calmness would be possible; the car able to drift away backseat holler out of boredom: unreasonable. The children in the back seat holler out of boredom: just wait and see what wonders they will soon witness, wonders that their underdeveloped brains cannot comprehend, yet already know to fear. The repair of the decaying infrastructure had been deferred: continuing would certainly mean arriving at cracked roads, fallen bridges, interrupted viaducts. Perhaps only then, by accident, a leap into a sea of calmness would be possible; the car able to drift away peacefully would slowly lose its heat, finally united with the world.

Alexandra Noel (b. 1989) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Recent exhibitions include Freedman Fitzpatrick (Los Angeles, CA), Traviesa Cuatro (Guadalajara, Mexico), Shane Campbell (Chicago, IL), XYZ Collective (Tokyo, Japan), Bodega (New York, NY), and Balica Hartling (Paris, France). Upcoming exhibitions include a solo exhibition at Park Avenue Galleries (Los Angeles, CA), and a solo presentation with Bodega at Frieze London.

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ALEXANDRA NOEL
Ship Spotting

In a universe irreversibly cooling down, some things remain warm: the first tears of a newborn, the heat, finally united with the world. Perhaps only then, by accident, a leap into a sea of calmness would be possible; the car able to drift away backseat holler out of boredom: unreasonable. The children in the back seat holler out of boredom: just wait and see what wonders they will soon witness, wonders that their underdeveloped brains cannot comprehend, yet already know to fear. The repair of the decaying infrastructure had been deferred: continuing would certainly mean arriving at cracked roads, fallen bridges, interrupted viaducts. Perhaps only then, by accident, a leap into a sea of calmness would be possible; the car able to drift away peacefully would slowly lose its heat, finally united with the world.

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LOUISE SARTOR

**Sicilian Lovers**

Burdens, such as the château, with its ample grounds and its various architectural follies, had been sold off long ago. Centuries back, men and women, old and young, had assembled to carve, polish, and paint what visitors from villages near and far had come to marvel at. Obviously, the death of a few workers was inevitable—a square zone of contrasting vegetation could once be found where the corporse were laid, a few minutes away from the obligatory stable. Each of these spaces were demolished efficiently. What the people really craved was not majesty or glory, but fresh, clean water, unsoiled by human contact, sleeping deep under these lands. The gardener would have a maid go and fetch some from the well to fill vases of delightful seasonal blooms for the Lady of the house. None of the above-mentioned occupants left children. The wall crumbled. The rediscovered underground water was bottled by local entrepreneurs and sold in high-end grocery stores, shipped in the same trucks that had formerly transported the contents of the château prior to its bulldozing. Auctioneers scattered the chandeliers, trophies, and portraits, which now occupy a network of tasteful interiors that collectively cover more territory than the original grounds, yet this imprint is smaller still than the web of tasteful interiors that the above-mentioned occupants left behind.

THE SEEN

**Unbeknownst to the war at large, the seaside town stays at peace. Geopolitical and cultural conflicts have not trickled down to the desolate place protected by these dense woods; similarly, pointless modern methods of killing lobsters, such as electrically stunning them to render them unconscious, have not yet reached the region, which will continue its tradition of throwing the crustacean into water that is heated until it reaches its boiling point, transforming the animal’s shell from blue to vermilion. Later, buttered onions accompany the feast, cut in bulk by the cook’s apprentice. As the knife dulls after slicing and dicing pound after pound, the onions, crushed rather than cleanly cut, discharge a white milk; the apprentice weeps from the lachrymatory effusion. He sometimes cuts his fingers that were even an option. Clearly, the idiot should focus on his cooking skills instead of daydreaming about his own biology—his death, followed by the recycling of his flesh into a meal—if that were even an option. Clearly, the idiot should focus on his cooking skills instead of daydreaming about his own biology. Is he a total cretin? The hungry diners in the next room, whose only want is to fill their stomachs before going to sleep, are unanswerable considerations.**

**ORION MARTIN**

**Asleep in a Fish Can**

Unbeknownst to the war at large, the seaside town stays at peace. Geopolitical and cultural conflicts have not trickled down to the desolate place protected by these dense woods; similarly, pointless modern methods of killing lobsters, such as electrically stunning them to render them unconscious, have not yet reached the region, which will continue its tradition of throwing the crustacean into water that is heated until it reaches its boiling point, transforming the animal’s shell from blue to vermilion. Later, buttered onions accompany the feast, cut in bulk by the cook’s apprentice. As the knife dulls after slicing and dicing pound after pound, the onions, crushed rather than cleanly cut, discharge a white milk; the apprentice weeps from the lachrymatory effusion. He sometimes cuts his fingers that were even an option. Clearly, the idiot should focus on his cooking skills instead of daydreaming about his own biology—his death, followed by the recycling of his flesh into a meal—if that were even an option. Clearly, the idiot should focus on his cooking skills instead of daydreaming about his own biology. Is he a total cretin? The hungry diners in the next room, whose only want is to fill their stomachs before going to sleep, are unanswerable considerations. Is he a total cretin? The hungry diners in the next room, whose only want is to fill their stomachs before going to sleep, are unanswerable considerations. Is he a total cretin? The hungry diners in the next room, whose only want is to fill their stomachs before going to sleep, are unanswerable considerations.
On a day I compared to Miami in Chicago
where drawing a breath
was a struggle, a struggle
made real by his sharp attire
a rag + bone ruggedness
solitary
changes into a black cut-off T
and cigarette pants

A black body among black sculpture
yet
both are doing something other than that

There an attempt
a free-throw in loafers
a non-sportsman

An attempt and not an actuality
a caged animal spirit
an awkward moment of applause
“that’s it!”
The previous text is a response to a movement performance by Zachary Fabi, an interdisciplinary artist and one of a network of scholars, artists, writers, thinkers, designers, and advocates with whom Torkwase Dyson workedshopped as part of the Wynter-Wells Drawing School for Environmental Justice. Within the context of Dyson’s fluid and dialogic system guided as an exhibition, which occupied the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Studies in Fine Arts from May to July 2018, Fabi’s performance so ideally embodied the layers of analytic and critical distance at the core of Dyson’s expanded drawings, and their effects of color, form, and relation. ——

Dyson’s practice applies tools of abstraction within a field of spatial justice alongside a contemporary return to the object—a subjective approach to being and objecthood that develops the definitions of both to include, among other concepts, minds, lived bodies, language, signs, power, and social structures. 1 Departing from this social ontology, Dyson explores the possibilities offered by abstraction “as a tool that you try to put in a place when you are trying to articulate something.” 2

Dyson attributes this interest to the place when you are trying to articulate the possibilities offered by abstraction this social ontology, Dyson explores geographies.” 3 ———

For Dyson, abstraction operates as a tool to reveal and examine the potentialities within the design of our physical world towards a self-emancipation, or what the artist often refers to as “hostile geographies.”

For Dyson, abstraction operates as a tool to reveal and examine the potentialities within the design of our physical world towards a self-emancipation, or what the artist often refers to as “hostile geographies.”

In 2016, Dyson designed and built Studio South Zero (SSZ), a solar-powered mobile studio where the context of nomadism became the framework for learning and making art about the environment. It was traveling with SSZ that the Wynter-Wells School extended the connection to Dyson’s work brings a beauty to what Sharpe terms the “afterlives of slavery.” A beauty that holds, reminds us of, and centralizes the “history of people being in the hold.”

It is important here to emphasize Dyson’s architectural thinking, which shares as much of an affinity for the structure-cum-objects of David Adjaye’s projects, such as Elektra House (1998–2000) in London, whose textured facade quietly and resolutely interrupted the nineteenth century row houses known for offering a more traditional attitude towards domestic life. In his practice, Adjaye refers to a history of Minimalism, to which Dyson’s work unapologetically also adopts, setting off a claim around interaction, object, and connectivity. Where Donald Judd’s objects are described as discreet, Dyson’s practice builds out of a spatial awareness of interior and exterior toward betweenness. In her 2015 sculptural work, entitled Edged Into a Void (Garret #2) Dyson’s trapezoidal form exists as both an abscess and a rise, a geometrical wave, a sense of movement. This sense of motion that compels contemplation and expansion of what histories, and critiques, form can serve. Like Adjaye, Dyson, relies on starting her work from a shared experience that is neither completely articulated nor universal. Her work does not eschew the cannon of minimalism or seek to correct its limitations, but instead finds a power within it.
...In a drawing workshop lead by Ron Henderson, Director of Landscape Engineering and Urbanism at Illinois Institute of Technology, Dyson unpacked the works on paper included in the Graham exhibition, such as Tuning (Hyper Shape), 2016-4/70 (2018). A grid of two hundred and ten small-scale section drawings. Adopting formal architectural drawings styles, Dyson does not so much reveal data otherwise unknown, but instead opens its negative space. It is in the negative space, that revealed by section drawings, where Dyson finds the greatest potential of draftsmanship, and as her work best allows, a practice of expanded drawing. Dyson articulates the act of drawing “as a pedagogical tool towards critical practice,” and adds that “abstract drawing can lend itself to the intellectual and psychological pursuit of pulling black compositional thought close.” In Black (Hyper Shape) (2017) Dyson meditates on this — a space of a few inches between wooden panels—is an object that signifies, but more importantly enters a relation with countless other objects.

...Torkwase Dyson (b. Chicago) received her BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and her MFA from Yale School of Art. Based in New York, Dyson describes herself as a painter who uses distilled geometric abstraction to create an idiosyncratic language that is both diagrammatic and expressive. The works are deconstructions of natural and built environments that consider how individuals negotiate and negate various types of systems and spatial order. She began engaging social architecture through her project Studio South Zero (2014-ongoing), a mobile studio that relies on solar power and supports multidisciplinary artmaking. Recent solo exhibitions of Dyson’s work have been presented at the Graham Foundation, Chicago; Drawing Center, New York City; Landmark Gallery, Texas Tech University, Lubbock; Eyebeam, Brooklyn; and the Meat Market Gallery, Washington, DC. Her work has also been included in exhibitions in New York at the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Studio Museum in Harlem; Martos Gallery; Postmasters Gallery; and We Buy Gold, Brooklyn as well as at the Schuykill Center for Environmental Education, Philadelphia, and the National Museum of African Art, Washington DC. Dyson’s work has been supported by the Joan Mitchell Foundation; Nancy Graves Foundation; Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University; and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Center. She is on the board of the Architectural League of New York and is a visiting critic at the Yale University School of Art. She is represented by David Zwirner, New York and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago.

TITLE PAGE
Torkwase Dyson, South Water Table Ocular #3, 2017. Polymer gravure on Hahnmuhle Copperplate White paper. Published by Brodsky Center. Collaborating Master Printer Randy Henninghous. Courtesy of Graham Foundation. © Torkwase Dyson and Brodsky Center. Photo Credit: Peter Jacobs.

PAGE 17, TOP
Torkwase Dyson, Untitled (Hyper Shape, Wood Work #3); Unidentified (Hyper Shape, Wood Work #3), 2017. Pine on aluminum, 16 x 7 x 10 inches; plate, 12 x 12 inches. Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery. Graham Foundation, 2018. Photo Credit: RCH.

PAGE 17, BOTTOM
Torkwase Dyson, Random (Water Table), 2017. Acrylic on canvas, two parts, 154 x 96 inches each. Courtesy of the artist and Rhona Hoffman Gallery.

PREVIOUS SPREAD
Torkwase Dyson, Spring (Hyper Shape), 2016-4/12, 2018. Gouache, ink, and pen on paper; 210 parts, each 9 x 12 inches; 208 x 72 inches, overall. Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery. Graham Foundation, 2018. Photo Credit: RCH.

OPPOSITE

ABOVE
Torkwase Dyson, Untitled (Hypershape, Wood Work #7), 2017. Polymer gravure on Hahnmuhle South (Water Table Ocular #2), May 3-July 28, Graham Foundation, 2016. Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery. Photo Credit: RCH.
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**Creative Chicago**

An Interview Marathon with Hans Ulrich Obrist

Over the course of five hours, Hans Ulrich Obrist will engage in back-to-back interviews with some of Chicago’s creative luminaries—artists, authors, designers, performers, architects and art historians. Collectively, they will examine the forces that have and are making our city a creative powerhouse in the past, present and future.

**Saturday, September 29 | Navy Pier**

**Creative Chicago**

Free and open to the public!

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*Chicagohumanities.org*
Gun Cane (for Mckeehan & Maxwell), 2018, two gun canes in any arrangement.

Special Editions
AfriCOBRA: Gerald Williams

ISSUE 07 // SPECIAL EDITION

Foreword by Gabrielle Welsh
Selected by Stephanie Cristello

The political atmosphere in 1968 is one of extended scholarly inquiry, Leftist reminiscence, and subtle—if not blatant—similarity to our present world, exactly fifty years later. Chicago was a hub of political organizing up until this point, both of national and community-oriented grassroots campaigns. However, by the end of 1968—with the murder of Malcom X by the Chicago Police Department, the protests and anti-police riots of the 68 Democratic National Convention, and the overarching repression of the Daley administration on Chicago activists—the feeling was gloom, perhaps a realization that the good would not always prevail.

In the same year, five artists on the south side of Chicago—Gerald Williams, Wadsworth Jarrell, Joe Jarrell, Jeff Donaldson, and Barbara Jones-Hogu—founded AfriCOBRA, the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists. Previously exhibiting under the name COBRA (Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists), the artists sought to shape the way Black artists interacted with their communities, turning away from the ever-increasing commercialization of the art industry. In their seminal 1970 Manifesto, Ten in Search of a Nation, Donaldson writes, "We strive for images inspired by African people—experience and images that African people can relate to directly without formal art training and/or experience. Art for people and not for critics whose peonliness is questionable."1

The artists created works for mass-production—primarily posters and other printed ephemera—though they also exhibited nationally. These artists, though before their coterie’s founding, were heavily involved with the creation of the Wall of Respect, a seminal mural celebrating Black Liberation, located in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago from 1967–71. In its influential reach, AfriCOBRA revolutionized Black aesthetic of the time, paving the Black Arts Movement in Chicago (which was at its height heavily associated with Harlem). The group met often to discuss contemporary aesthetics and presented their first two group exhibitions with the Studio Museum Harlem (AfriCOBRA I: Ten in Search of a Nation in 1970, and AfriCOBRA II in 1971).

Founding member Gerald Williams became involved with the artists upon his graduation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (which Wadsworth and Joe also attended), where he became a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools system. The painter, still a member of AfriCOBRA today, remembers the founding of the group. AfriCOBRA was aesthetically about capturing the spirit of the age. There was no rioting in our work. A major facet of that age was the concept of black pride—black is beautiful—and a positive outlook on life. Those aspects really became more important than capturing the demonstrations.2

Selected especially for THE SEEN Issue 07, this presentation of pointilist works by Williams from 1970–2013, depict a rare pairing of the full-color compositions adjacent to the black and white designs, spanning over forty years of the artist’s career. As such, this edition unfolds as a photographic essay on what Williams terms “mimesis at mid-point,” conveying a vision of harmonies that are simultaneously informed by contemporary urban symbolism, Indigenous traditions, personal narrative, and a global perspective. Williams’ work is polychromatic, layered, and multi-faceted; flowing between expressive, gestural freedom and meticulous control.

Williams is included in various concurrent exhibitions, including The Time is Now! Art Worlds of Chicago’s South Side, 1960–1980 at the Smart Museum of Art through December 29, 2019. The Art and Influence of Dr. Margaret Burroughs at the DuSable Museum of African American History through March 4, 2019, and an exhibition curated by the artist on the occasion of the fifty-year anniversary of the group, AfriCOBRA II, on view at Kavi Gupta Gallery in Chicago through November 24, 2018.


All images courtesy of Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago.

The SEEN Issue 07, AfriCOBRA: Gerald Williams

Title Page
Gerald Williams, Untitled, 1979, Ink on paper, 16 x 20 inches.

Page 8
Gerald Williams, Portrait V, 1970, Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 18 inches.

Page 9
Gerald Williams, Two Studies for Ascension, 1979, Ink on paper, 19 x 21 inches.

Page 10
Gerald Williams, Untitled, 1981, Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 11 inches.

Page 61
Gerald Williams, Give Us, 1977, Print, 33 x 26 inches.

Page 12
Gerald Williams, For the Children of Sanctity, 1979, Ink on paper, 27 x 20 inches.
WE MUST BE THE BEST OF OURSELVES, NOT TRY TO BE THE BEST OR WORST OF OTHERS.
I. CURTAINS
A Painting Duel: in the 4th century, BCE, at the top of an unnamed Grecian mountain, two of the most famous painters in the village, Zeuxis and Parrhasius, were summoned to a contest. The light was at noon; the sun shone directly above the jury, and not a shadow was seen. Zeuxis is called upon for an unveiling—indeed, behind the curtain (it was important to reveal the work all at once) was his life’s masterpiece. “Draw the Curtain” exclaimed one of the jurors, and dutifully Zeuxis pulled back the deep blue velvet, uncovering the rendering of an exquisite bowl of fruit. The crowd was overjoyed. “You can taste the pomegranates,” said one of the critics, “the pear glistering with such intensity,” declared another. At this moment, a bird flew down from the sky, straight into the painted bowl of fruit—from which it had hoped to steal a grape—and fell to the ground; a victim of illusion. Now standing around Parrhasius’ wall, the anticipation built, until the crowd grew impatient. “Please, Parrhasius, stand in the face of the jury. “I am very sorry, but my painting.” No one said a word.

II. QUEEN OF HEARTS
Playing cards were widely introduced to Europe in the mid-late 14th century. Around 100 years after, there was a war in England between the house of Lancaster—represented by the symbol of the red rose—and their rival, the house of York—the white rose—who were both duking for the throne. Four centuries later, Lewis Carroll writes a story in which a young girl finds herself in the Queendom of Hearts, a land where she encounters playing card soldiers painting the white roses red for fear of their merciless Queen. By that time, playing cards, and the Queen of Hearts herself had become iconic images in the West, instantly recognizable. Although the Queen of Hearts as popularized by Carroll, came to be associated with cruelty, apathy, and a humorous rage. A common phrase today, “painting the roses red” means to attempt to cover up one’s mistake, often poorly. On the contrary, Mika Horibuchi has elected to quite literally paint the roses white in her painted interpretations of playing cards. While 2 of Hearts, and 5 of Hearts—both oil paintings on linen—are devoid of any imagery of hearts or numerals, they are able to rely on the familiar proportions, composition, and format of traditional numbered playing cards to carry the reference. Surrounded by a backdrop of greenery, the white roses bloom in place of the cards’ missing hearts.

“—Patrick Lanford Stephenson

III. DUCK-RABBIT
The duck–rabbit illusion was first presented in an 1892 issue of the German magazine, Fliegende Blätter. The image was later presented and made famous by psychologist Joseph Jastrow, the image visually grounds the later arguments made by Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations. Used as a primer to many semantics courses, the viewing of the duck–rabbit is dependent on the viewer’s past experiences; they may see either a rabbit or duck but never both simultaneously. With the duck–rabbit, Wittgenstein proposes that images are inextricably linked to the social—as thought and language are intertwined—and the act of “seeing” cannot be separated into physiological and psychological experiences.

Horibuchi’s work makes use of the duck–rabbit, not because the duck–rabbit needs rediscovering, but because the duck–rabbit exemplifies (and perhaps explains) the visual illusions she deals with in her body of work. Wittgenstein may propose the tricks, but Horibuchi will build them.

“—Gabrielle Welch


Selected by the Editors


In a recent phone conversation with my friend, the artist Lior Modan, we were speaking about this text in the future tense. Lior said that the art writer should remain truthful to the artwork and to the artist who made it. I replied to him that I am not sure I can. Thinking about it, I agree with him—that contemplative writing should always be supported by research, and that the writer should refrain from the masturbatory urge to meditate on whatever is on their mind, while treating art as a proverbial doormat to such ruminations. But, I do not think that I am capable of being fully truthful to the art object, or the artist, since they are bound to remain, if not completely, partially concealed.

Let us begin by drawing boundaries. For one to write about art, one ought to spend some time thinking about it; ‘it’ being a specific object, an object that one must first encounter, physically: an object that demands a radical surrender to its experience.

The writer must become porous to the objects’ effects. To the simultaneous reception of different, fragmented kinds of knowledge. Physical symptoms may include vertigo, loss of sense of depth, partial blindness, and an irritating state of temporal aphasia. While this occurs, the mind attempts to tie the object to other objects in the world; to pin it in the map of present cultural-political movements and to history. Yet, the work insists on telling a story. At this point, the writer may suffer from a sensory burden, but you must resist the urge to run. Do not. Instead, stay attuned and listen. The story has no words, it has been delivered with forms, textures, images, and matter.

All of this is to say that for one to write about art, one must experience it, and that experience occurs, in part, outside of language; hence the gap you step into while attempting to write about it clearly. The gap is not illuminated, it is dark and cavernous.

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The uncomfortable phrasing of the previous paragraph—the repetition of “I,” “me,” and “my”—aims to bring home, finally, again (please let us be over with this), the fact that thought occurs only in bodies, and in specific bodies. In this case, we are talking about my body, not because it is special, but because it is the one who currently speaks. In doing so, I am reminding you that, a) the originally masculine tendency of thinking outside the body covers-up the historical erasure of bodies of

To think about / To write about—From Onset, I Mark a Gap.
IT TURNS A COLD SHOULDER, SCREAMS ‘FUCK OFF,’ AND BRUSHES YOU AWAY.”
“others,” be it non-white, and non-masculine bodies; and b) writing without the body allows one to speak from the point of false authority (the academic “we”), which is always partially a lie.

I am done with writing; of authoring with false conviction. The one thing I will write about now, is my experience (I will keep the heated language; it brings me joy), and that is hard, because it is not a measured, calm experience: good work, you fall in love with.

It is about to get messy.

Experiencing good work shakes you to your fundaments, it makes you laugh—with pleasure—while mirroring your innermost secret fears back to you. It turns a cold shoulder, screams “fuck off,” and brushes you away. It lures you in, whispering a language you cannot fully comprehend, and brings you to tears, filling your heart with longing and tenderness. Good work leaves you bewildered, disoriented, and bare. Writing about it is an act of masochism, I think.

As Kathy Acker said, “Let one of art criticism’s languages be silence so that we can hear the sounds of the body: the winds and voices from far-off shores, the sounds of the unknown.”

To express the language of silence is to confront with the outside of cognitive comprehension. It is to think through a temporal aphasia, to acknowledge the unspeakable—the sensual—which is repressed. To think through silence, is to strip away the Eurocentric masculine discourse that always knows its order and cause, and exists to tell you just that. If we depart, if only for a moment, from ordinary language, that clings to syntax-context meaning making, and consider another language, that which speaks silence, we are going slightly mad. Then, we write with madness in our minds, with physical breaks, through failures and in multiplicity (this does not mean what you think, and quite the opposite, please stop motioning Deleuze, I beg you). If we want, and I think we must, let the body be present in the art related texts, we must give space for idiosyncratic forms, rather than succumb to the structure that is expected of us. I do not understand why we obey restrictions: we are not cultural workers.

Thinking about the fact I became an art writer forces me to accept my ridiculous irrelevancy. In the past decades, art became a novelty, a stock, an amusement for the rich. People—regular people—remember Pollock. Art failed, and that blame is on us (though I blame the boomers). In the insular art food-chain, art writers are not positioned high. The laughable remuneration for writing indicates it; you are either doing this as a hobby, and/or you belong to the upper class (which I am not a part of). Topping that with the routinely use of critical texts as a boost for the market, leaves an all too sour taste in my mouth. I swallow it and write. I write desipte. I am done with following recipes.

† In commemoration of his new book of poetry LEVON HELM, published by the Ugly Duckling Presse, 2018.

1 Aphasia is a disorder that results from damage to portions of the brain that are responsible for language. For most people, these areas are on the left side of the brain. Aphasia usually occurs suddenly, often following a stroke or head injury, but it may also develop slowly, as the result of a brain tumor or a progressive neurological disease. The disorder impairs the comprehension and producing of language as well as reading and writing. Aphasia may co-occur with speech disorders, such as dysarthria or apraxia of speech, which also result from brain damage. Source: National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD).

2 The same type of listening occurs also when art uses language, as the art object operates in a fundamentally different sphere than that of, let us say, text messages, emails, or literature.

3 Kraus, Chris. Summer of Hate. Semiotext(e), 2012.


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Barbara Jones-Hogu, Land Where My Father Died, 1968,
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Nov 16, 2018–Jan 13, 2019
Reception: Fri, Nov 16, 6pm

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MOREHSIN ALLAHYARI // WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

By Joel Kuennen

Morehshin Allahyari’s latest work is a hypertext fable hosted on the Whitney Museum of American Art’s airport, its online exhibition portal for new media and net art commissions. The Laughing Snake (2018) blends personal narrative and lore in a black, reflective, 3D-modeled environment. The viewer clicks through the story, weaving poetically forward and back, clicking back over passages to find other results in what amounts to meditation. The effect is something like inhabiting a moral: the fable builds out a space of understanding, its boundaries the moral of the story, while Allahyari’s personal experiences counter the vision of the moral’s intended space. The dissonance within this space and the inversion of the monstrous itself make The Laughing Snake a complex tale of the now that reflects back on us, laughing heartily.

When the #metoo campaign was at its peak, I felt connected and disconnected to it at the same time. Because I felt like it lacked the voice of women of other cultures and colors. I think the kind of daily trauma and harassment you deal with as a woman in the Middle East is a very specific experience. It does not only come from a patriarchal culture, but also from religious oppression. And it is not just a man towards woman: a kind of oppression/possession, but also traditional, in a religious sense, with women towards other non-religious women. I wanted this to be contextualized in the space where white, Western feminism still takes a majority of space.

JL: Regarding this choice of format: the hypertext “choose your own adventure” style of storytelling, what is the significance of this kind of narrative-building? For me, there seems to be a parallel to the kind of story-telling prevalent since the rise of the internet—which is multi-narrativistic, with different experiences at different points in time, all presented on the same platform.

MA: I have always been really into open-ended writing. I think for me, one of the most exciting aspects of web art and hypertext narrative has been its potential as a format for playing around with this kind of storytelling and narrative-building. I wanted the narrative to start more as a linear form and as you go through it, things get more and more chaotic and unknown until you spend a good amount of time re-doing some of the paths, choosing other words that take you to other sections, etc. The only way to understand the full narrative, to travel back and forth between past and future and present, is to spend time with the piece. Which I hope people do.

JL: The selection titled “Her Equal” leads to a series of stories from your own life relating to cultural limitations on gender and sexual expression. When and how did you come across the story of “The Laughing Snake” and what did you do it as relevant to your own experience?

MA: For me, art making has always been about finding a space between personal and collective. All of my work relates to political and social experiences, but from a personal space. I am inspired by my/our daily struggles and I want my/our voice to be heard. I want these issues to be seen and known. To make the invisible visible and amplify, amplify, amplify. I have a lot of problems with Universal Feminism and I think it has been used for years to amplify the voice of a certain kind of feminism while promoting that this is what is “Universal” or shared. I think many other WOC are working every day and really hard to talk about these issues and how our problems have been forgotten or silenced consciously and unconsciously over many years.

The story of “The Laughing Snake” is about the female image and reflection. It is about death and laughter. It is about winning and losing. I wanted to take all these concepts and relate them to my personal experiences. As you mention, when you...
choose the “Her Equal” option, you can experience a series of personal experiences about going to school in Iran, about being verbally and sexually harassed, about having a body that is constantly controlled and censored and taken over, about my sexual experiences and desires. If you come from a cultural background similar or close to mine, you know that talking about some of these issues in our communities and societies is still a huge taboo. So, I was very nervous about sharing these stories, while I was also determined that it matters do so. The more we talk about these experiences the more we carve a path, a space that has to accept and embrace us and towards a future that is made by us for us.

JK: What is the imperative to keep old myths alive and what do you find valuable as an artist in this activity?

MA: She Who Sees The Unknown is a body of work of mine in which I research dark goddesses, monstrous and jinn female figures of Middle-Eastern origin to create new narratives about them through several practices including storytelling, 3D modeling, 3D printing, archiving, performance and a series of events. It is not so much about wanting to keep old myths alive, but instead about wanting to create worlds around these figures who are forgotten and misrepresented through 1500+ years of history. I have been working on this body of work for almost two years, and I think what I love the most and care about the most is this practice of Refiguration; as a form of art activism, a feminist and poetic exercise. When I come across a story or a figure that I like, I conduct a lot of research on it to understand other interpretations of it as well as new ones, and then work on that one figure/story for about four to five months to build an archive around it, to write a new visual, text-based story around it, and also put together different talks and panels focusing on that very specific figure. I think going back and reimagining these figures, and reappropriating them, allows for the proposal of another kind of future—a future not taken over by patriarchal and colonial systems and forces. The majority of superhero/powerful role models of the world are male. They are the ones to look up to, to want to be like. And in my research, sometimes I find different interpretations of some of these monstrous figures, Huma, for example, originally was queer or genderless, but through years of oral and written narration, these jinn have become more male. Being ‘powerful’ and ‘influential’ is connected to a system that cannot see women as positive monstrous figures that people can look up to and appreciate. When I rewrite these stories, I return to that queer/female figure that these myths were originally imagined as, or could have potentially been, if we did not live in a patriarchal world. To me, that is the power of this work. To remind women, females, and the peoples of the Middle East that the figures within our stories are not just fictional and actual matter—not just for the present, but for claiming an alternative future. For reimagining a new kind of Middle East and world with a female, non-cis, non-white, non-Western future. I think with all the madness happening in the world right now where we just feel torn between multiple fascist governments (the Iranian government vs Trump for example), with the travel ban and a new kind of “rejection” of our bodies in the West, we need more and more of these kinds of counter narratives, imaginations, and platforms.

“...It is not so much about wanting to keep old myths alive, but instead about wanting to create worlds around these figures who are forgotten and misrepresented through 1500+ years of history.”

MORESHIN ALLAHYARI

And she tells me if I keep doing this A snake will come out of my vagina I do it more and more and more and every time I do it and there is no snake I know this is yet another victory over my own fear of distance

Moreshin Allahyari is an artist, activist, educator, and occasional curator. She was born and raised in Iran and moved to the United States in 2007. Allahyari has been a part of in numerous international exhibitions at the Venice Biennale di Architettura, Pompéiido Center, Museum of Contemporary Art Montréal, Tate Modern, Queens Museum, Peri Museum, Powerhouse Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, Jeu de Paume, Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston, and the Museum for Angewandte Kunst. She has been an artist in residence at BANFF Centre (2013), Carnegie Mellon University’s STUDIO for Creative Inquiry (2015), Autodesk Pier 7 Workshop in San Francisco (2015), and the Višnjev Flusser Residency Program for Artistic Research in association with Transmediale, Berlin (2010, and Eyebam’s one-year Research Residency (2016–2017) in New York. Her work has been featured in The New York Times, Huffington Post, Wired, National Public Radio, Parkett Art Magazine, Frize, Rzhize, Hyperallergic, and Al Jazeera, among others. She was recently awarded two major commissions by Rzhize, as well as the Whitney Museum of Art, Liverpool Biennale, and FACT to work on developing archival and web-based aspects of this project.

TITLE PAGE
Illustrated manuscript of “The Laughing Snake” from the Book of Futility, Ottoman Empire, 1522. Image courtesy of the artist.

PAGES 124–127

1 The Book of Futility is an illuminated manuscript written in the Ottoman Empire in 1522. The Kitab-i Hikmet, or Book of Wisdom, is an Arabic manuscript dating mainly from the late-fourteenth century A.D.
Candice Lin thinks through some of the most troubling scars of human history. Her work approaches the entrenched legacies of colonialism, racism, sexism, etc., with an intersectional attunement that provides relatable entryways into the magnitude of these oppressive structures. Transgressive historical figures who have been pushed aside for their non-normative identities invoke narrative lines for viewers to make sense of these complex, and often contradictory, pasts. Much of Lin’s practice, however, finds methods of unpacking these histories through dislocating human subjectivity altogether. In her exhibition A Hard White Body, a Porous Slip, currently on view at the Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago, the artist continues her compelling research into how materials and non-sentient life carry similar baggage and trauma. In looking to the non-human, viewers of Lin’s work find that while the stakes of oppressive social systems have obviously fraught consequences for people, they also entangle and structure the rest of the world in a human drama—a maelstrom not easily escaped.
I wondered at how a seemingly insignificant thing—such as an insect or a lump of earth—could become an object of desire and luxury.

—CANDICE LIN
can be a minor or careless mistake; the fall to a lower or lesser standard; or a lose-
fitting garment typically worn by a female-bodied person. For such a simple four-letter word, it really packs some heat! What were your reasons behind titling this show, and were these intentions intentional?

CL: The “porous slip” in the title does refer to the process of ceramic slip casting, which was how the domestic porcelain filters were made by Chamberland and Pusleur. The idea of their filters was to create an unglazed slip-cast filter that remained porous enough to allow water to pass through, but dense enough to keep the bacteria on the other side. But yes—I was also interested in the other meanings of the term, and the way it indicates an incidental crossing of boundaries, for example—a zìp of the tongue, something that is not intended or wanted but “slips through”—again relating to unconscious desires, beliefs, or fears of contamination.

JP: Thinking through language again, the operative words that have been used to describe your work—such as decaying, fermenting, breathing, seeping, staining, etc.—entail a type of slowness. They are processes that often cannot be seen by the naked eye. Rather, they require multiple visits or observations over time. Can you trace how, for example, stain-resistant porcelain sculptures will become marked, and what this gesture might illuminate? Why do you purposefully employ processes that resist instant gratification?

CL: It is interesting that you point out the slowness of these processes, which I had not thought of before—I am actually a very impatient person. I often say that impatience is my tragic flaw. I see these exhibitions as opportunities to set up scenarios that are beyond my mastery or control in terms of outcome, in order to see what gets made when materials are put in new relations to each other. They are also situations that are too large in scale for my small studio, or require a length of time to congeal into something else that I do not have patience to attend to alone. By enlisting the institutional labor into the caring for the live materials and unstable processes, I instigate a collaborative, implicated process that relies on (and is indebted to) the intimate investment of other people’s care. It is also open to outside forces that shape its outcome—meaning, I have an idea of what will happen, but it is often different or has unexpected “problems” that create different outcomes (mushrooms and mold growing out of the porcelain room for instance). I think it is important to move away from the idea of the artist as an individual performing a kind of virtuoso or mastery, and my use of materials attempts to embody that belief.

JP: Can you speak about the work you have included in the exhibition recently on view at Gholley Gallery in New Orleans? What comes next after this iterative series of exhibitions—have any new questions excited your attention?

CL: Yes—my new research and body of work is focused on the history of nineteenth century Chinese coolie labor in the Caribbean, Louisiana, and California. In these works, I am thinking about the role of plants in this somewhat forced migration of labor, and how it might relate to other entanglements with plants—such as the rule of poison in the Haitian revolution—that occurred in overlapping geographies.

JP: One of the elements I have found particularly compelling about your work are how questions of embodiment arise. I have found that the effects of colonial or imperialist projects are often mapped by looking to the human body, either in epidermal, corporeal, or affective terms. Your work also does this, for example, the triangulation of Baldwin, Baret, and Merian. However, I am particularly struck by your inclusion of non-human and even non-sentient life into the installations. Why locate embodiment, or one could even say a performativity, at these multiple levels?

CL: I am interested in decentering the human from how we think of history in order to think about the huge effects of seemingly small, dismissed, or invisible beings—viruses, bacteria, insects. I am also interested in how humans enlist the natural world, particularly plants, in order to experience it differently, or to mediate their relations to one another. Merian recorded in her book, the Metamorphosis of the Insects of Surinam, that there was a particular plant, the peacock flower, that was used by enslaved Indigenous and African women to bargain for power by using or threatening to use this plant to abort their future children. I think that when we think about the world from a decentered perspective of entanglement rather than dominion—or when we think of ourselves as complementsaries (biologically, socially, globally)—we gain an understanding of how our actions do not take place in a vacuum, but are instead tied to an intricate web of other effects that ripple outward through time.

Candice Lin is an interdisciplinary artist who works with installation, drawing, video, and living materials and processes, such as mud, mushrooms, bacteria, fermentation, and stains. Lin has had recent solo exhibitions at Portikus, Frankfurt; Bèrénosalon, Paris; and Gasworks, London, as well as group exhibitions at the Hammer Museum (2018), LA: Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2017); New Museum, New York (2017); SculptureCenter, Long Island City, New York (2017), among others. She is the recipient of several residencies, grants, and fellowships, including the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award (2017), California Community Foundation Award (2014), Fine Arts Work Center Residency (2012) and Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship (2009).
The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. It is a statistic we have become accustomed to hearing. But those numbers leave out the reality, the impact, and the imprint of the carceral state—what Ta-Nehisi Coates terms “the Gray Wastes”¹—on the social fabric of the country, on the landscape, on individual bodies.

The geographic impact alone is startling. A series of aerial views of prison facilities recur in many of artist Sable Elyse Smith’s works: ordered, gray, low-slung Corbusian ziggurats flanked by parking lots, surrounded by rural fields and desert runoff, in extreme isolation. In such a landscape, the individual is disappeared, made invisible, subsumed by the power of the state.

Smith’s work, recently highlighted in a major solo exhibition entitled Ordinary Violence at the Queens Museum in New York, addresses the institutional and often invisible or normalized brutality that seeps through the systems under which we live. In fragmented visions that oscillate from intimate anecdotes, to appropriated blips of music and video clips—from words to images, from narrative to non-narrative—Smith interweaves personal experience with power structures. In her videos, the subject is often absent or just out of the frame, voices get interrupted, the song cuts out just before the groove.
Bedroom door locked and pistol rest just pillow feathers from mothers temple
Sable Elyse Smith: In these works, I am not necessarily writing for the personal or political statement. I’m writing this way to test various mediums, fragments, and becoming more. Yes, our quotidian association with them may be from signage, but they also have a significant art historical reference. The museum of neon was selected for a number of reasons, particularly its materiality. It operates in the realm of seduction; there is this sumptuous quality to it. Obviously, this deals with light, and this light is presented as sexy and seductive, but in a way that it is a sicky light. It is harsh and artificial, and the color of the skin is altered underneath it. It hints to an institutional light and the light of advertising at the same time. The longer you stare at it over time, the harder it becomes to look at. Another very important yet subtle, quality of neon as a material is its buzz—a sound that is emitted almost undetected at times, or that threads itself to the other ambient sound in the room so much so that it begins to seep into you. Often, it is only when it is no longer present that you feel it. This buzz is a repeated motif in my work to talk about that quality of invisibility.

Natalie Hegert: At SITE Santa Fe, you are showing a newly commissioned neon work, the fourth of an ongoing series of neon text works entitled, somewhat incongruously, Landscapes. Owing to neon’s prevalence in commercial signage, many neon text works often come off as vehicles for slogans, amounting to glib one-liners. Your neon works, on the other hand, operate in a different, more enigmatic way, employing poetry to suggest an image or feeling—the words working more on the level of effect than concept, perhaps. There is a tension in these works between the intimate subject matter and the neon as a format for public signage. As a writer, how do you, essentially, write for neon? What initially attracted you to neon as a medium?

SE: Why are they “landscapes”? You have talked about your neon works in relation to painting and the Hudson River School, how do they figure into that history?

SE: The neon works gesture to multiple definitions of the word landscape, and wrestle with the genre of Western landscape painting. A genre that is obsessed with light. The neons are not horizontal in orientation, and the underscore of the space visually renders a horizon line. The neon as a whole—meaning its materiality, color, and the content of the text itself—altogether simultaneously different "landscape images." Here, I am using the term ‘landscape’ loosely, as a dreamscapae, a psychological-landscape, etc.

—With the landscapes depicted within prison visiting room murals, serial photographs of prison complexes, or the landscapes of the Hudson River School, for example—in each of these images, there are bodies being disappeared, and a machine behind that disappearance. My landscapes take us back to the body.

Natalie Hegert: Does that connect to the use of Charles and Ray Eames’ Powers of Ten (1977) in your video work Men Who Swallow Themselves in Mirrors (2017)? How does scale operate as a device throughout your work?

SE: This definitely connects. The inclusion of that Eames’ film was of course to talk about scale, as well as to directly question one’s way of looking at the content in my film—and in media content in general—since Men Who Swallow Themselves in Mirrors appropriates media from our contemporary pop cultural sphere. In this sense, the installation asks you to question the context around the image one might be consuming at any moment, and to really think about its implications if you scale back by “powers of ten.”

Natalie Hegert: Your work deals with the prison system in the United States, and its impact on the landscape, the psyche, the body, and the communities affected by mass incarceration. Your series of coloring book paintings offers a glimpse at the experiences of the most impressionable constituency affected by the prison and court system: children. How did your experiences of visiting your father in prison affect you, both as a child, and over time? You have described the way that your body reacts to entering the architecture of the prison, how your posture and voice change in response, as a kind of quotidian violence that accumulates in the body over time. Does your work serve as a way to reclaim agency in the face of this authority?

SE: My work is concerned with asking us to take a sharper look at the systems governing our lives and the language we use—and are socialized to use—to describe and re-inscribe certain systems and individuals. My work inherently privileges the body. In relationship to prison it is aiming to add complex narratives to the landscape of stories told around incarceraiton. And the practice’s focus is on highlighting humanity.

The fascination for me with the coloring book works is the way that language and image function within them; the racial implicatons of a black and white line drawing, and a camouflaged or inadvertent foreclosure of imagination. This is a suggestion that is dangerous in any space—not just the prison/judicial space. What happens when we accept and internalize a specific type of language?

Natalie Hegert: In making your work, you necessarily have to navigate, work with, and against, the institution of the prison system. How would you define your relationship to the institution of art—is there a struggle to work with and against that institution as well?

SE: I make deliberate decisions about what institutions I engage with, and in what context that engagement takes place. There are things that I do not compromise on. The many facets of my art and education practice operate within and outside of the institution of art and that is important to me.

—My allegiance is not solely to operating in the space and context of the white cube. The stakes for the questions I am asking in my practice are a lot higher.

Sable Elyse Smith is an interdisciplinary artist and writer based in New York. Her practice considers memory and trauma while engaging an understanding of language. She works from the archive of her own body creating new syntax for knowing and not knowing, thereby marking the difference between witnessing and watching. To see it unbearable. She has performed at the Museum of Modern Art, the New Museum, Eyebeam, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. Her work has also been screened at Birkbeck Cinema in collaboration with the Serpentine Galleries, London, Artist Television Access, San Francisco, and MoMA PS1, New York. Her most recent exhibitions include Ordinary Violence at the Queens Museum in New York.

**Title Page**

**Previous Spread**

**Opposite**

**Above**
Hand in Hand with the Handless

PROFILE OF THE ARTIST // JASON DODGE
By Ryan Filchak

Jason Dodge’s sculptural practice adjusts our material world to build moments of narrative, connection, and potentiality through the lens of natural phenomena. The collections of objects involved in Dodge’s practice do not so much stun the viewer into misunderstanding, but instead entice the viewer to engage in a limitless unraveling—what the artist calls the “inward spirals,” or “vortexes in singular things.” Since his first solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan in 1998, Dodge has brought attention back to the alchemical process of things, bringing a mystical contemplation to the otherwise banal and overlooked. In conjunction with his upcoming exhibition at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago, Ryan Filchak and Dodge discussed the artist’s methods toward exhibition design, his collaborations with poets, and working with curator Dieter Roelstraete.

Ryan Filchak: In the past, you have cited a continual pursuit of new working methods for your exhibitions. How do you feel your approach towards your recent exhibition at Casey Kaplan, Jason Dodge: hand in hand with the handless, reinvents your thinking process towards the presentation of your work?

JD: That is a nice question. I do not really know how to answer, because I do not feel like I place myself in the role of writer, as the object of personal experience, or as messenger of meaning. The question of where I exist in relation to the work constantly shifts. I feel most comfortable as a harbinger, or at least operating in real time, something like diving into the present—this is one of the reasons why I do not engage in specific meaning. I see myself engaging with the act of reading more than writing. Perhaps the things I use to make the work are like tools used to read, and that is why they are similar to words, as words are also tools to read. I do not think meaning belongs to me.

RF: The subjects you address in your work, regardless of how you much you as the artist may touch them, trace the infinitely complex possibilities of how objects change over time, and travel through space. Do you care to elaborate on the process of this selection, and why these themes of connection remain a high priority for you?

JD: I like how we [people] use things while we are alive—things made from the same atoms [as us], things that take up space and are our mirrors (cell phones, cars) and our embarrassment (islands of plastic in the Pacific, guns). We pass things, like jewels, on through our families and discard an unused packet of soy sauce after a takeaway meal. Things in the world are like words, they come as they are, and can be infinitely reimagined and ordered in ways that open new worlds and to reflect on our own. The same words can exist in a diary or a political speech, and I see the sculptural manipulation of these words as a platform where their meanings meet their possibilities.

RF: It is interesting you bring up the mutability of language. The title for hand in hand with the handless comes from the 2011 poem “Recurring Awakening” by Franz Wright, and although the works in the gallery contain neither titles nor text, poetry does play a key role in your practice. You treat everyday objects in the same way a writer or poet shapes words at their disposal. Do you find solace in this approach to endless possibility, or do your attempts to attach meaning to the limitless reality of personal experience overwhelm you?
“There is a lot of potential in the cruelty of the use, and cruelty to the ecology of the planet. I want to explore these emotional notions from as close as possible.”

—JASON DODGE

RF: Recently I read your lecture on sculpture, entitled “Subtractions,” and realized that asking about a potential shift in emotion—between the restful and the sublime—has more to do with the projections of my own reaction to your work. Through the exploration of our material reality, there is a transition that occurs from curiosity, to understanding, to connection. This trajectory works so profoundly within the viewer’s experience.

JD: I think what Dieter Roth was interested in, in terms of caressing—I mean to touch the world. This is a theme that was prevalent to the 1970s. It’s what Roth’s work is about. There is a lot of engagement with the world that is so close to the work. I think we’re in a moment where the experience of the work is just as important as the experience of the poet, and that it’s the kind of thing that Roth’s work is really interested in.

RF: Recently, in neurbanne, you have mentioned the idea of the ― PEN;‖ a concept which aims to highlight the potential of poetry to challenge and disrupt the normative order of things.

JD: Yes—because poetry has this ability to break not only the language, but also the rules of how we think about the world. It’s a way to challenge convention, and to question the way we perceive the world. I think this is something that Roth’s work is really interested in.

RF: This role of publisher reiterates your perceived role as messenger—do you see these secondary interactions as a part of the work, or again, simply the message you intend to carry?

JD: I think the role of publisher is a way to challenged the way we think about the world. It’s a way to challenge the way we think about the world. It’s a way to challenge what we think about the world, and to question the way we perceive the world. I think this is something that Roth’s work is really interested in.

RF: How have you always sourced your titles from other poets?

JD: I have been trying to eliminate language from my work for a long time, step by step. Now I do not use language for my works. For the last two years I have mostly asked poets for titles, but the show at Kaplan this year was the line from Wright that I love so much.

Jason Dodge at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago runs through December 21, 2018.

Jason Dodge (b. 1969, Newton Falls) is a conceptual artist who lives and works in Berlin. He completed the Independent Study, in association with Maryland Institute, Malawi Africa (1990), the Independent Study, Studio Art Center’s International, Florence Italy (1991) and earned his MFA from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT (1996) and his BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD (1992). Dodge has exhibited widely both domestically and abroad, including exhibitions at Casey Kaplan, New York, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan, Yvon Lambert, Paris, Andersans Contemporary, Copenhagen, Galleria, France, Noer, Torino. His work has been added to permanent collections, including Astrop Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Modema Musue, Stockholm, Solomom Gunneheim Museum, New York, NY, Frac des Pays de la Loire, Carpeaux, Institute D’art Contemporain Villeurbanne/Rhine-Alpes, Villeurbanne, Israel Museum, Jerusalem. The founder of poetry imprint five hundred places, Dodge has published 25 monographic books of poems by contemporary poets, including Ishion Hutchinson, Eileen Myles, CAConrad, Dorothea Lasky, and Matthew Dickman.
By Kostas Prapoglou

Portuguese-born, Berlin-based artist Leonor Antunes receives her inspiration from tropes within modern art, architecture, and design. Reconsidering and reimagining their applications to sculpture and space, she creates works by questioning and surveying spatial relationships and interactivity while simultaneously taking into consideration the properties of light. Utilizing an array of materials such as metal, rope, and glass, the artist focuses not just on those traditional techniques, but also engages in an ongoing dialogue with the surrounding environment and its evolution across time. Antunes takes into account the historicity and identity of each space where she exhibits and sees a connection they establish with one another. Recently presenting the frisson of the togetherness, an original mark, I invited Antunes to discuss the way her work shapes and swings between diverse conceptual parameters and social contexts.

Coinciding with the occasion of her solo show at Marian Goodman Gallery in London, a thousand realities from an original mark, I invited Antunes to discuss the way her work shapes and swings between diverse conceptual parameters and social contexts.
Kostas Prapoglou: The works on view at Marian Goodman in London engage in an active dialogue with the works of certain female protagonists of the twentieth century such as Mary Martin, Anni Albers, and Alison Smithson. What were the criteria of choosing these individuals, and to what degree have their bodies of work influenced your visual vocabulary?

Leonor Antunes: I was interested in making an exhibition in London that is linked to its context and art history. Mary Martin had been an important artist during the British constructivist period whose practice related to the material and aesthetic potential of geometrical systems and their architectural implications, but her work has not seen much recognition outside the UK. As her work developed a constructive idiom, Martin maintained a role as the primary maker of her work, so there is a sense of craftmanship that I think is inherent in some of her peers. The scale and factura lend her constructions an experimental and provisional quality which opens the work to levels of contingency. Some of her drawings and studies are very similar to some done by Anni Albers. Martin also studied weaving, not thinking of it as an art form, but rather, as a survival kit. She sold all her writings and did a few commissions.

KP: Last year, at my exhibition at Marian Goodman Gallery, I showed one of her weavings which belongs to her son—the artist Paul Martin—on one of the side rooms. Together with her weaving, I also presented five pieces of jewellery made by the artist Lucia Nogueira, another artist based in London. This gesture was linked to establish connections between other artists’ works, whose histories are intertwined themselves, art forms. I asked her former partner, Anthony Reynolds, to lend us a few pieces, where she had only used one piece of silver wire and installed it in jewellery cases designed by Danish designer Karen Kjær. I conceived those jewellery cases for an exhibition she designed after visiting the Kunsthalle in Munich. She was impressed by the glass bowls and museum displays of collections of crafts and archaeological objects. She was very taken with how museum lit their collections.

KP: Space and light are vital components in the creation of your sculptural works. Has this always been the case and how does architecture shape the way you think?

LA: Space is decisive, but so is the nature of some of my sculptures—I would always prefer to use daylight, and be able to establish a relationship with the context outside. But that is not often the case; I have done shows where I have used no artificial light. When it is not possible, I remove all the existing lights and use my own lamps. Or, as in the case of the Pirelli HangarBicocca, where I am doing an exhibition this September, we are opening all the skylights in that space, which have never been opened before.

LA: My exhibited works generate a vivid conversation between the legacy of modern artists through the eyes of the contemporary art viewer. What are the reactions of your audience depending on different age groups? Do younger viewers detect this visual reference?

LA: Probably not, but it is also not relevant. I think of children when deciding where to install my works; I guess because I have a child, I bring my daughter to see exhibitions and she is often in my studio—in that sense I am very aware of how she places herself in those situations. It happens in several of my exhibitions where I create small passages for them that no other person can pass through; I do not want to explain this to anybody. I think it will be very clear for them, and will intuitively impact the children’s understanding or establishment of their personal relationship to that space. At that moment, they feel they have found their own secret passage and as soon as they discover something secretly they can also relate to it. It is very physical. Everything is very tactical and in its own presence as say. Placing the work in space is very important for me. Everything can change depending on how it sits, it stands, and how you navigate yourself through it.

KP: You have worked and exhibited in many countries across the world. Do you sense different reactions towards your works at different geographical locations? Does tradition play an important role when it comes to reading a work of contemporary art?

LA: I have never thought about it. I think of places I would like to exhibit my work, I think of the local history of that place and its surroundings. It is very rare to materialize an exhibition in a space we idealize, unless it is a space where—artists—create ourselves. However, I would rather exhibit my work in spaces made by others. It helps me decide where my work can be placed and how it should be done. I am interested in travelling for research purposes, places like Japan and Western Africa for example, where I have never exhibited before.
Leonor Antunes: the last days in Galliati at the Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan runs through January 13, 2019.

Leonor Antunes (b. 1972, Lisbon) reflects on the functions of everyday objects, contemplating the potential of Modernist forms to be materialized as sculptures. Her most important exhibitions include: the frisson of togetherness, Whitechapel Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2017); a spiral staircase leads down the garden, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA), San Francisco, United States (2016); the pliable plane, CAPC Musée d’Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France (2015); Leonor Antunes: I stand like a mirror before you, New Museum, New York, United States (2015); the last days in Chimalistac, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2013). Furthermore, her work has been included in the following biennials: 57th International Art Exhibition la Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2017); Sharjah Biennial 12, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2015); Triennale Kleinplastik Fellbach 2013, Fellbach, Germany; 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany (2014); 3rd Singapore Biennale, Singapore (2011); Bienal de Maia, Maia,

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Jason Dodge with Ishion Hutchinson

THE BROAD CHURCH OF NIGHT

September 25–December 21
The following conversation between writer Alfredo Cramerotti and artist Mladen Bizumic took place during lunch in the leafy garden of a restaurant in the Museum Quarter of Vienna, in June 2018. It just preceded the preparation for a group show at the Society for Projective Aesthetics!, a Kunsthalle-like exhibition space and program which was the brainchild of the late gallerist and curator Georg Kargl, with whom the artist had a close relationship.
ALFREDO CRAMEROTTI: Let us 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 Mladen for a moment and let me know what you see?

MLADEN BIZUMIC: I see myself as an image maker. As opposed to the today dominant way of digital image making, the vast majority of my images are physical objects printed on paper, mounted onto dibond, and framed behind the glass. Needless to mention, image making has been around since the beginning of humanity. Yet the fact that I often use a medium format film camera is a significant footnote. More closely, my work is about the issues surrounding the nature of photography as it shifts from analog to digital. I see this activity both as related to the history of image making, and as a continuation of my own personal biography marked by all the people, institutions, and services that I previously or still work with.

AC: Did you get any particular source of inspiration for the visual styles of your series of works—for instance, the Kodak series, the Picture in Picture series, etc.—or did they arrive in relation to the nature of the materials you have used, and locations (either physical, psychological or situational) you were positioned in?

MD: The KODAK series started around 2012. I was shifting to my new studio and packing up my Kodak paper, film negatives, and slides; the Eastman Kodak Company was all over the news. The 131-year-old film pioneer that has been struggling for years is adapt to an increasingly digital photographic world, filed for bankruptcy. Some films that I was using were discontinued or replaced with more generic versions.

But the source of inspiration for me was the story that I came across accidentally. According to Steve Sasson, a Kodak engineer invented the first digital camera and Kodak marketing executives suppressed this invention because they realized what its impact would be on their highly profitable business—a case of conserving the past against the unknown benefits of a future technology. For me, this story sums up the short-sighted logic of capitalist “growth”. The Picture in Picture series is simply showing the means of photographic production.

AC: Can you dive a bit into the technical aspects of the works? Such as the gathering of raw material, software or hardware (in the wide sense; they could be thoughts and bodies) used, as well as the selection and editing process? What are some of the challenges you and your team, or the collaborators you work with have faced in realizing the works?

MD: There are too many...to simplify I will focus on one particular work. In KODAK (Four Dimensional Community) (2016) for example, the original negative is mounted in the center of the image surrounded by two successively larger prints, one gloss and the other matte. This negative film no longer produced by Kodak—the end of analog photography being a significant aspect of the background. On a material level, the black surrounds of the film frames is prominent, emphasizing the printing process and displaying its starting point, the film Kodak 160VC. The layout of the three images replicate the relative positions of the negative and the prints inside the darkroom under the enlarger, giving the effect of a zoom—in time and space—traveling from print to negative, or perhaps vice versa. The challenge here was to show how the work makes its own process of production visible, and how it references the economic and social frame that makes this process possible. Paradoxically, my conceptual reflection on the material process of reproduction produces a one-off art work that flirts with aura.

AC: Can you tell me about the relationship you want or aim to have with the viewer? Is your work a sort of a ‘gate’ although extremely subtle—which the visitor could go through but also miss, or is the viewer able to move from and to, around it—or beside it, or between it—but not really see it, or experience it from an ‘external’ point of view? In other words, is the work meant to be ‘faced’ so to speak? What is the underlying approach to this relationship with the viewer?

MD: It is an essential element of my process. Thinking about the viewer is how I remain focused on what is important. What I mean by this is that I think about the function of the viewer not only when I make individual photographic works which seem to come in one of the three approximate sizes (hand, head, and body) but when I conceive installations. The architecture of the exhibition hall determines what is possible in terms of scale, experience, and affect. What I try to do is to activate the space in a way that is always specific. In the past, when I tried to repeat the same approach, I failed. Basicallly, every space has its own unique economics, psychological, social, political context, and it should be treated like that. When I say this, I do not mean that the same work can be shown in different spaces; it simply means it needs to be shown differently to provide generous experiences. The world right now is too absurd and too egomaniacal to disturb people with my ‘extreme’ art. I really do not care to do that at all. It is not fashionable at all, but I am interested in art experiences that can offer empathy, dignity, and mystery. If this is too utopian, I really do not mind.

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

MD: I will tell you a secret about my life: my mother is a shrink. And here is another secret: my brother is a shrink too.

Mladen Bizumic (b. 1975, New Zealand) lives and works in Vienna. His work begins from a deceptively simple question: “What is photography?” While not the first to ask it, Bizumic offers an original and complex answer that unfolds itself between two sets of terms—analog and digital, modernist and conceptual. Among others, Bizumic has held solo exhibitions at MOSTYN, Wales, Georg Kargl BOX, Vienna, Zamak—Centre for Art, Poznan, the Salon of the MOCA Belgrade, Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, ARTSPACE, Auckland and other venues. His work has been shown in the 9th Lyon Biennale, 10th Istanbul Biennale, the 2nd Moscow Biennial, MAK—Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Leopold Museum, Vienna, KM—Künstlerhaus Hall for Kunst & Medien, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Zacheta National Museum, Warsaw, and Foundation d’entreprise Ricard, Paris.
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