1000M is thrilled to announce the INTERATIONAL COLLECTION, a new series of condominium plans inspired by luxury towers throughout Europe, Asia and Canada. Balanced space, gorgeous views and 40,000 square feet of world-class amenities await in a fresh concept for modern luxury living.

Located on Chicago's historic Grant Park, 1000M is a soaring 74-story tower designed by internationally-renowned architect Helmut Jahn, with interiors by acclaimed designer Kara Mann.
“The room is not only the beginning of architecture; it is an extension of self... a choosing, conscious individual.”

-Louis Kahn
A masterpiece of design in Chicago, a new perspective on luxury

Designed by award-winning architect Jeanne Gang, Vista Residences bring a new level of modern ultra-luxury living to the Chicago skyline. Each home offers elegantly adorned interiors, exquisitely crafted finishes, and sweeping panoramic views unlike any other in the city. Indulge in resident-exclusive amenities and five-star hotel services available within the building, and enjoy prime access to lakefront, riverwalk, park spaces, shopping, and dining just steps from your front door.

Move-ins begin Spring 2020

Lakefront Ultra-Luxury Pied-a-terre from 1,097 SF to Full Floor 6,800 SF 360 View Penthouse Residences

1 to 5 Bedrooms Starting from $840,000s to $16,000,000

To schedule your personal VIP tour
Leila Zammatta - Magellan Realty - 312-767-7026 - VistaChicago.com
Sales Gallery - 345 E. Wacker Drive - Chicago, IL - By Appointment

FINANCING SOLUTIONS FOR THE GLOBAL ART MARKET
Bespoke art backed lending and purchase financing

WWW.ATHENA-ART.COM

©2019 Athena AD EXPO Chicago SEEN_v2.indd   1
7/30/19   1:09 PM

A DEVELOPMENT BY MAGELLAN DEVELOPMENT GROUP AND DALIAN WANDA GROUP
DEV. LICENSE #2418452 - DESIGN DETAILS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
Chicago’s International Journal of Contemporary & Modern Art

ISSUE 09

THE SEEN

Newcity Custom Publishing
372 West Ontario St.,
Suite 100–223
Chicago, IL 60654

A必須的

BOMB

International Exposition of Contemporary Studies Department. She is currently the Artistic Director of EXPO CHICAGO; the International Exposition of Contemporary & Modern Art, and the Director of the Chicago-Munich Art Scene. She holds a degree in Art History from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has been a grantee of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, a Robert Lehman Foundation, the Rosenwald and Wexner Foundations, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She was formerly the Director of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a Professor of Art Theory at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She is a critic and curator living and working in Berlin, Germany. Her writing has been featured in numerous catalogues and exhibitions, as well as in publications including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Bomike Odufunade

Tel Aviv University, and a degree in Art History and Theory. In addition to her academic work, she has written extensively for a variety of publications, including Artweek, Art and Auction, and the Art Newspaper. She is currently the Assistant Director of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and has been a grantee of the Ford Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation. She is currently the Editor of the art agenda and is the founder of the Chicago-based publishing company, the Aces Press.

Antoine de Galbert, Paris; Fondation d’entreprise Hermès, Brussels; Dr. Kostas Prapoglou, The Chronicles of Fortune, and others. She is the Executive Director of the Latin American Press, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that publishes the Latin American Journal of Literature and Society. Kuennen participated in the 2010-2011 Art and Society residency program at the Hôtel de Ville, Paris, and in the 2012-2013 Art and Society residency program at the Fondation d’entreprise Hermès, Brussels.

Willem de Ridder

is an interdisciplinary artist and writer. They have been published in a variety of publications, including Artforum, Artweek, and the Art Newspaper. She is currently the Editor of the art agenda and is the founder of the Chicago-based publishing company, the Aces Press.

Joel Kuennen

is an interdisciplinary artist and writer. They have been published in a variety of publications, including Artforum, Artweek, and the Art Newspaper. She is currently the Editor of the art agenda and is the founder of the Chicago-based publishing company, the Aces Press.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Brown University in 2019. Her article in this issue of THE SEEN is her critical debut.

Brown has presented work in numerous exhibitions and public commissions. His latest projects include the large-scale exhibitions The Dangerously Delicious Project, as well as the Chicago and Houston. She was formerly the Director of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a Professor of Art Theory at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She is a critic and curator living and working in Berlin, Germany. Her writing has been featured in numerous catalogues and exhibitions, as well as in publications including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Juliana Cerqueira is an artist and editor living and working in Berlin, Germany. Her writing has been featured internationally in magazines and journals online and in print, including Hyperallergic, The Art Newspaper, The Los Angeles Times, and the Los Angeles Review of Books. She is currently the Co-Founding Editor-in-Chief of Orientum, a multi-lingual magazine that combines art through time, and as a visual art medium.

THE SEEN

Issue 09

Chiara Beutler is a writer and interdisciplinary artist from Chicago, IL.

Guillaume Dufresne is a freelance writer, editor, and curator. His writing has appeared in various exhibitions and publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Robert Lichter was born in Brooklyn, New York, and is a writer and editor. He has written for a variety of publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Chicago’s view,
Patrick J. Reed
Minh Nguyen
Mayne
Shana Hoehn
Ryan Filchak
Jill Danto

Tim Skovronek

Bomi Odufunade


Stefanie Cristello

is a writer and critic based in New York. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Robert Lichter

is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History, Theory, and Criticism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a Bachelor of Art Theory from Tel Aviv University, and a degree in Art Administration from the Book-Route Foundation in Morristown, New Jersey. She is currently the Curator of Current Artists and is a regular contributor to the Institute’s Learning and Leadership, as well as a Research Assistant for the exhibition Hélio de Chaves: To Organize Delirium at the Art Institute of Chicago. She has written for the Chicago Reader, THE SEEN, The Exhibitionist, and ArtWise.

Stephanie Cristello

She holds a Master of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Bachelor of Arts in English at Trinity College, Dublin. She has served as a Curator of Collections and exhibitions for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; as the Director of Diversity and Inclusion in Chicago and Houston; and as the Director of Jewish Artist Fellowship, at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership. She wrote for numerous exhibitions and catalogues, as well as for THE SEEN and other publications. Until recently she Co-Directed the project space Triumph, Chicago and Triumphal Manifold, Project in Triumph, Illinois.

Calte Mathew is a writer and critic based in New York. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Mayve is a writer based in New York. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

THE SEEN

is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History, Theory, and Criticism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Professor of Art Theory at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She is a critic and curator living and working in Berlin, Germany. Her writing has been featured in numerous catalogues and exhibitions, as well as in publications including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stuart Seager

Lauren Sharrock

is a writer and editor based in New York. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Seán Corcoran

is a writer and organizer of curatorial projects in Chicago, US, by way of Singapore, Vietnam. Her writing has appeared in Artforum, ArtSlant, and ADME, among others.

Patrick J. Reed is an art writer and art critic based in Los Angeles, where he is a regional contributor to artagenda and a Staff Writer for THE SEEN. He has written for exhibitions at COLOGNI and the Venice Biennale, and his criticism has been featured in Art Magazine, Art and Culture from MADAM EX and deadworld, and Sonatype Review Art.

Chloe Phillips is a writer and editor living and working in London. Alongside her role as a researcher for a major international art-ship gallery, Phillips is an editor of a number of art magazines that she is more, and regularly publishes in publications including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

THE SEEN

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Joel Kuennen

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stephanie Cristello

is an art writer and editor. They have been published in a variety of publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stefanie Cristello

is a writer and organizer of curatorial projects in Chicago, US, by way of Singapore, Vietnam. Her writing has appeared in Artforum, ArtSlant, and ADME, among others.

Patrick J. Reed is an art writer and art critic based in Los Angeles, where he is a regional contributor to artagenda and a Staff Writer for THE SEEN. He has written for exhibitions at COLOGNI and the Venice Biennale, and his criticism has been featured in Art Magazine, Art and Culture from MADAM EX and deadworld, and Sonatype Review Art.

Chloe Phillips is a writer and editor living and working in London. Alongside her role as a researcher for a major international art-ship gallery, Phillips is an editor of a number of art magazines that she is more, and regularly publishes in publications including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

THE SEEN

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Joel Kuennen

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stefanie Cristello

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

THE SEEN

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Joel Kuennen

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stefanie Cristello

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

THE SEEN

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stefanie Cristello

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Stefanie Cristello

is a Chicago-based writer and editor. She has contributed to numerous publications, including Artforum, Frieze, Flash Art, and the International Review of Modern and Contemporary Art.
...AND OTHER SUCH STORIES

EXPLORE HOW ARCHITECTURE SHAPES OUR COMMUNITIES, CITIES AND ENVIRONMENT FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

19 SEPTEMBER 2019 – 5 JANUARY 2020

CHICAGOARCHITECTUREBIENNIAL.ORG
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Stephanie Cristello

OPERA AS FORM

In the course of assembling this issue, one reference has been particularly present: opera. To paraphrase Lina Lapelyte, one of the contributors to the Lithuanian Pavilion, featured in an interview by Natalie Hegert in Notes on Venice, “Opera is as related to the visual arts as any other kind of installation. It is literature; it is music, it is a gesamtkunstwerk, and none of the features are more important than the other.” This sentiment rings true for the Golden-Lion-winning project, entitled Sun & Sea, whose operatic critique of the issues facing climate change unfolded in perhaps one of the most complex, yet delicate, works in installation I have seen in recent years. The concept of ‘opera as form’ is further explored in a range of texts included within Issue 09, such as in Jill Danto’s writing on Anne Imhof’s Sex at the Art Institute of Chicago, or Caroline Picard’s meditation on the exhibition Bel Canto at SITE Santa Fe, which features eight distinct projects by contemporary artists responding to the operatic tradition through a series of individual works ranging from photography, sculpture, and film. As Picard notes in her piece, the origins of opera date back to the 1600s, through the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice from Greek mythology, whose account is as embedded in the form as it is to the implications of art itself.

To position an operatic turn in contemporary art may be a stretch, given the fragmented state of our twenty-first-century landscape, but it is certainly an argument, in the truest sense of the term—a description of the scene at the beginning of an act, before the drama fully unfolds. In comparison to opera, the time we spend in an exhibition of contemporary art is minimal. This issue seeks to adopt an operatic time, allowing the narratives, references, and ideas within the work of the contemporary artists discussed to slowly develop. While artists whose work touches upon the sonic or filmic is privileged—such as Hong-Kong-based Samson Young’s first museum solo exhibition in the United States at the Smart Museum of Art, a piece on the recently institutes Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Archive and Listening Room at Corbett vs. Dempsey, or Minh Nguyen’s feature on the rise of slow cinema—other pieces take this tempo to its limits, the texts existing as works almost in themselves within the context of cultural critique. Specifically, Mayne’s On the Death of Camp, that grafts the form of Susan Sontag’s seminal text to examine the phenomena of the Met Gala, to Volume I of The Sirens by Ruslana Lictzeiter and Shana Hoehn, an image-based essay that explores the visuality of women and madness across time and space. On the cover is a collaborative work by Danish artists Stine Deja and Marie Munk, whose practice was introduced to me by Artistic Director of the Kunsthall Aarhus Jacob Fabricius. Deja’s work, which looks at how intimacy is affected by our increasingly digital environment, is further explored through a Special Edition Insert.

The unconventional use of the journal format that THE SEEN proposes joins the approach of our Staff Writers, feeling into different ways we can write about and publish on art.

STEPHANIE CRISTELLO
Editor-in-Chief

An immense thank you to THE SEEN Staff Writers; Managing Editor, Gabrielle Welsh, for her work in assembling this edition; Editorial Assistant Clare Bentley; our dedicated advertisers; Newcity Custom Publishing for managing production and distribution; and Ashley Bramon of the JNL Graphic Design for her continued excellence in the artistic direction of the journal.

Reviews
The story is well-known and repeated often: Orpheus and Eurydice are in love. Orpheus is renowned for his voice. Eurydice is an oak nymph and the child of Apollo. Just before the wedding, she is bitten by a snake and dies. Unable to accept his grief, Orpheus travels to the underworld armed with only his lute. Surely, if he can sing the sweetest song, Hades would be compelled to return Eurydice to the bard and the land of the living. Somehow, Orpheus succeeds. His music is so profound, so incredible, the human convinces Hades to make an exception—one that could disrupt the balance of life ever after. And yet, Orpheus doubts the audacity of his wager, doubts in the power of his music and talent, he even doubts Hades’ word. Orpheus’ fatal, human insecurity undoes the effect of his art. Against Hades’ single condition, which is that he not look back as he and Eurydice ascend from the underworld, Orpheus turns despite himself—only to watch the specter of his beloved withdraw into the afterlife, where she will remain forever. The earliest surviving operatic work, Eurydice, from 1600 by Jacopo Peri, tells this story. It sets a baseline for the operatic gesture, establishing opera’s premise and aspiration. Art has the capacity, opera suggests, to overcome the bounds of mortality and its affiliated heartbreak.

Given its enduring prominence as an artistic form, it makes sense that contemporary artists would mine the musical field of opera—its affiliated compositions, librettos, politics, architectures, socioeconomics, and history. SITE Santa Fe’s current exhibition, Bel Canto: Contemporary Artists Explore Opera, presents the work of eight such artists, produced in partnership with the Santa Fe Opera who furnished the show. The selection of artists on view, including Vasco Araújo, Suzanne Bocanegra, Candida Höfer, William Kentridge, Guillermo Kuitca, Matthias Schaller, Yinka Shonibare CBE, and Bill Viola, each present work within a range of mediums—from video and performance, to installation, music, drawing, animation, and photography. Rather than offer one cumulative argument about opera, the show unfolds as a series of small solo exhibitions, each utilizing different aspects of the form—its architectural spaces, stories, formats of distribution, history of performance, or music—as inspiration.

A series of distinct violet and green curtains billow around the exhibition’s entry. As contemporary art museums typically prefer spare environments to perform (for better or worse) aesthetic neutrality, the gesture is striking. Variations of this fabric occur throughout the show at each transition point between a given room and hallway, recalling in some way the Baroque aesthetics of an opera house, while also attempting to unify the various artists. Through these visual cues, the exhibit is intentionally playful. The museum is positioned as an active participant, creating a correlation between the galleries and the theater where each artist’s installation functions like a separate act.

The textile embellishments also cue the show’s interest in architecture—a theme that plays throughout the works on view. For instance, the first piece encountered is Fratelli d’Italia (2005–2017) by Matthias Schaller, a grid of 150 photographs of Italian opera house interiors. For twelve years, the artist traveled the country documenting theaters to create an indirect historic and anthropological national portrait of Italy. Perhaps responding to the legacy of Bernd and Hilla Becher, Schaller has a controlled and regimented approach to documenting each space. The photographs are beautiful, yet spare and drained of most color; light corals and blues stand out from the details within the ceiling paintings, while theater boxes are dark, appearing almost like blackened teeth—the bones of the room are blown out to near-whites. Taken from the perspective of the stage, what is consistent in each photograph is a blood red ground of velvet chairs, inscribing a sense of duality, as if the ‘body’ of the opera house is tethered to a light soaked, and thus seemingly eternal, ceiling. Unlike the more fleeting and industrial subjects of the Bechers’ portraits, each opera house is presented as a relic of culture, not industry—enduring spaces dedicated to a communal, but fleeting, appreciation of the voice.

Candida Höfer, a student of the Bechers, also has two large format photographs of opera houses included within the show, including Teatro di Ville Mazzucotti di Bologna (2006) and Teatro
...Implicit in Höfer's work is centuries of careful and ongoing restoration, inscribing, and securing a stable rendition of history, even as opera's relation to class and popularity has fluctuated.

Marc Cotven/Garden I, III, and IV, each captures a view of the London West End theatre from the vantage point of the stage in a limited pallet of black, white, and red. Kuitca adeptly creates an illusion of space through a minimal visual repertoire of squares and lines that nevertheless fall out of sense. In Acoustic I, white rectangles and periodically broken lines layer upon another atop a black background, concentrating in a streak that travels, almost vertically, through the center of the audience. It looks as though an earthquake is erupting in the middle of the picture plane. Compositionally, it suggests that the viewer is witnessing the impact of sound as it ripples through a darkened room.

This last May, in Sydney, an opera called Outback closed its first act with the song of a stampede of kangaroos sung by a 100-person chorus. The sound was so big and low that it produced cracks in the foundation of the building such that the opera had to be rewritten. Kuitca's compositions remind us that these spaces have been created to house sound—that it is not enough to look at them. The sounds that are produced within the operatic theater are shattering—whether in music's ability to bridge the gap between the seduction of music and the heartbreak of weakness, or its societal and historical implications.

The way in which this projected performance evokes its audience from sound compounds the performance of time and nostalgia that Araújo's objects present, especially because the crisp tones of the overvoice feel like such a contemporary intrusion. In this way, Araújo explores variations in how the operatic form plays with the time and repetition to dislocated audiences. ———

The show includes more formal collaborations with ——— ——— ——— ———


Bel Canto: Contemporary Artists Explore Opera at SITE Sante Fe runs until January 5, 2020.

PREVIOUS SPREAD:

OPPOSITE:

BELOW:
THE SEEN

MARY REID KELLEY AND PATRICK KELLEY // STUDIO VOLTAIRE

By Claire Phillips

What does a mogul of a wellness empire have in common with a philosopher best known for exposing the virtue of selfishness? Oscar-winning actress and founder of $250 million lifestyle brand Goop, Gwyneth Paltrow, is the least likely bedfellow one might expect for Russian-American writer and philosopher Ayn Rand. Yet, at their first institutional show in London, entitled Rand/Goop, American husband and wife duo Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley have brought these two women into conversation.

“What is the proper function of government? / When people irritate us / With avocado / At every successive disaster?” a shrill voice demands to know. Inside the converted Victorian chapel of Studio Voltaire’s gallery space, six towering video sculptures posit, retort, and query. The pithy lines recited by the characters on-screen (named Tiff, Paige, Nell, Liv, Cher, and Dawn) are created by splicing together the voices of Rand’s most ardent followers with the titles of articles from Goop’s website. Their faces flicker and contort. They are unstable. The results are laughable, capricious, and unsettling.

For those not au fait with her philosophy, Ayn Rand (born Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum) is the leading theorist of Objectivism, which argues that “man exists for his own sake, that the pursuit of his own happiness is the highest moral purpose, that he must not sacrifice himself to others, nor sacrifice others to himself.”1 Brought to the brink of starvation and persecuted for her Jewish heritage during the Soviet revolution, Rand fled to America in 1926 and became known amongst a cult following as the author of novels The Fountainhead (1943) and Atlas Shrugged (1957). In both pieces of writing, Rand’s protagonists lionized the alpha-male capitalist entrepreneur. From fiction, Rand continued to explore the principles of Objectivism through copious articles, lectures, and courses at her own institute, the Foundation for the New Intellectual.

At the height of the Cold War in the 1980s, during the eras of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, Rand’s brand of selfishness and laissez-faire capitalism became entwined with neoliberalism. Today, Rand has been reincarnated as the poster child for the princes of Silicon Valley and tech billionaires like Elon Musk and Peter Thiel. Despite her devout atheism, Rand has also become a valued resource for Republican Politicians such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan, who notoriously gifted his staff copies of Atlas Shrugged each Christmas. Another, perhaps surprising, admirer of Rand is the leader of the free world himself, Donald Trump, who has described The Fountainhead as one of his favorite books.

Gwyneth Paltrow and Ayn Rand might seem incompatible, but upon closer inspection, they are perhaps cut from the same cloth. Goop was launched in 2008 when the global economy was crashing, and the sub-prime mortgage disaster was at its height. Paltrow prides herself on the brand’s aspirational, cutting-edge techniques and products, which provide a one-stop-shop to heal mind, body, and soul. Hashtag live your truth. Hashtag live your best life. While Paltrow is often the source of ridicule for new age schemes, like her infamous ‘conscious uncoupling’ from Coldplay front-man Chris Martin, Goop is frequently criticized for being elitist. Inviting its followers to wellness summits that cost upwards of $8,000 for a weekend, Goop profers detoxes, cleanses, and spryable elixirs to eliminate bad juju and jade eggs to regulate menstrual cycles that your average
consumer could never possibly afford. Greed is good, Rand might say.

— In the hands of Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, Paltrow and Rand’s mantras are removed from their context and remade into a series of double-edged puns and quick quips, complicating the meaning of each snippet and making their fables evident. Cake and cancer, soviet takeover and plant milk, body language and NATO, all somehow converge. — Language has played a vital role throughout the artist duo’s career—lifted from literature, myth, and history, and translated into contemporary syntax, words are often strewed together and set to a specific poetic rhythm with spell-like results. As with other films by the husband and wife, limits are enforced upon the language used in Rand/Goop. As speech is only in the format of a four-line cento poems, a ripped up and reconstituted “patchwork” of lines taken from different third-party sources. This tactic is recurrent in the Kelleys’ practice, as they restrict themselves to an austere palette of black and white in their sets, props, costumes, and makeup, in a way that feels timeless and dreamlike. At Studio Voltaire, the entire space of the gallery is painted from floor to ceiling, surrounding visitors in the artists’ stark aesthetic, like the color has been drained from a faulty television screen.

“—Fed for their ultra-ylized monochromatic films, the Kelleys’ works lie somewhere between fine art, performance, and poetry. The artists are at once burlesque and Shakespearean, comedic and tragic, ridiculous and sincere. While Patrick shoots the videos and transforms herself into a cast of characters that range from the terrifying Minotaur and a prostitute from World War I, to a corpse on a pathologist’s table and the drowned soldiers of the USS Sturgeon. At Studio Voltaire, Mary’s embodiment of six different female figures is intoxicating and fearsome—words filled with humor and fallacy in a way that veers between the vapid recommendations of Paltrow and the dark philosophies of Rand. Within the setting of the converted chapel, the cento poems are heard as four-line cento poems: a ripped up and reconstituted “patchwork” of lines taken from different third-party sources. This tactic is recurrent in the Kelleys’ practice, as they restrict themselves to an austere palette of black and white in their sets, props, costumes, and makeup, in a way that feels timeless and dreamlike. At Studio Voltaire, the entire space of the gallery is painted

—Their faces flicker and contort. They are unstable. The results are laughable, capricious, and unsettling.”

— Claire Phillips


Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley: Rand/Goop runs at Studio Voltaire in London through October 6, 2019.


Rand/Goop | 25

The Seen | 24

Rand/Goop | 25

The Seen | 24
ANNE IMHOF // ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

By Jill Danto

Sex

we lived.” 1 Anne Imhof is foremost considered an artist where we begin to doubt that we ever lived where unsettle are daydreaming and we reach a point appear to be detached from us. Such dreams past that clear memories of our childhood home dreams go back so far into an undefined, dateless ——— In the words of Gaston Bachelard, “Indeed, lapsing the real with a perceived memory palace.

of art institutions—provides a spectral home, her performances—the constructed architecture and media-influenced isolationism, the place of imbrication of technology, commodity fetishism, panoramic installations and technically advanced hometown can be seen interpretively through her time as an active artist, she has constructed three multi-venue operas, and a slew of other ventures with the help of remarkable talents from her home base to the wider world. What led her to a Chicago-debut is equivalent to a marathon within the span of a second. ——— Perhaps a history of Berlin is a bad place to start, given that Imhof is from Gießen, a college town in central Germany near Frankfurt, about five hours from the capital. Known for Mathematikum, a science museum in Gießen, a college town in central Germany from Gießen, a college town in central Germany near Frankfurt, about five hours from the capital. Known for Mathematikum, a science museum near Frankfurt, and occasionally New York City. They bonded over the span of a second. ——— In an interview with internationally-renowned stylist Lotta Volkova, Imhof noted that she is in a phase of transition, moving constantly between Berlin, Frankfurt, and occasionally New York City. They bonded over this feeling, in Volkova’s words being, “everywhere and nowhere at the same time.” Their dialogue confirms a growing trend amongst artists, and specifically performance-based artists: the demand to be nomadic. Given Imhof’s underlying critique of neoliberalism, subjecting oneself to this surreal demand may seem to undo the potential degree of any possible criticality. Yet, Imhof’s submission to the virtual community that her work questions—actively allowing social media to inform the formal qualities which are archived online forever, as well as the image circulation which never ceases—while being visibly present at each of her performances, has allowed for this demand to roll into the oeuvre beautifully. ——— In essence, unlike how performance art has been defined within art curriculums since the 1970s, Imhof is not exactly the performer in her performances—as opposed, the artist primarily operates as a producer. She can be seen watching the work unfold amongst the crowd, with a heavier hand in the creation behind the scenes. The object in question is never her own body, but a construction of collaborators whose both intentional and non-intentional affect appear to predict the futures of an apathetic community. ——— In her latest work, Sex, performed in its second iteration at the Art Institute of Chicago, Imhof maps contemporary politics and aesthetics into something that looks like a four-hour opera, but evolves into a romantic mythology. Performers are adorned with Balenciaga, images of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Grateful Dead, Adidas track pants, normcore gothic attire, and the occasional polo all in the same space; each of them acting steadily disafflicted by all movements made. Though this is one of three parts of what will be considered a single vision, the mysterious nature of Imhof and her co-artists likely being the only people to see the entirety of this cross-continental artwork leads me to question this: what can abstraction do to conjure emotion when toying with depersonalization? Why are the aesthetics of disdain more unifying than anything else in this moment? Looking back to her previous endeavors, Imhof has been known to construct peculiar bodily honesty under impending hegemony. Though her practice is rooted in drawing and painting, her career began to take off with performances such as the School of the Seven Bells (2012–2013), Aqua Leo (2013), and Rage (2014–2015), all of which combined aspects of sculptural practice, live durational performance, and gestures of minor emotionlessness within gallery walls. The popularity around her ephemeral installations has allowed larger institutions to
take note, and summoned the opportunity to expand while bringing each of her previous performances inwards towards the creation of her first large-scale, multi-venue performance, Angst (2016). Angst was also to be her first foray into the form that she is most known for: exhibition-as-performance. In Latin, opera translates to, “work,” both in the sense of labor involved and the result produced. Pushing performers to their limits, as well as an audience patiently rotating through the activation of the work, Imhof sees opera not only as a test of physical ability but also as a test to its monumental cultural tradition, questioning what deserves to be celebrated or recognized on a larger scale.

In placing a mirror in front of consumption and popular culture through iconographic mythology—such as staging live falcons in the role of the Prophets for Angst, while adorning the space with Pepsi and Diet Coke—Imhof locates a framing device through which chaos can ensure. Her next large-scale performance would be Faust (2017), performed at the Venice Biennale within the German Pavilion. Transitioning between performers reclining under a glass floor, sitting at the edge of a twenty-foot tall gate at the border of the premises, and occasionally walking around the space amongst onlookers, the work took a further turn towards abstraction. Instead of blatant branding, the interest turned towards communication. Relating to the title of the work, Faust takes on the German legend of selling one’s soul to the devil by speculating how an obsession with power and excess may be born anew through means that render our bodies as a material commodity, rather than an operational point of empathy.

The trajectory seems clear, and even after taking a year break between Faust and Sex, the similarities that unite each of her pieces seem to culminate into this most recent performance to date. Each iteration of Sex is approximated to be around four hours long, touring the world from its debut at the Tate Modern, London, onto the Art Institute of Chicago, notably curated by Dittrich Curator of Contemporary Art, Hendrik Folkerts, and ending at Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin. Alongside frequent collaborators Eliza Douglas, and a slew of models and actors including Jakob Ellingenhoff, Ian Edmonds, Sacha Eusebye, Josh Johnson, Edad Marcelo, Stine Omar, Nomi Ruiz, and Kizito Sango, Imhof provides her most complex work to date.

— While hearkening back to symbols used throughout her previous performances—such as a falcon statue as an illusion Angst, the mattresses installed throughout the gallery are ever-present in each of her operas to date—Sex finds further footing between worlds, this time using binaries as a symbolic methodology to splice open and collapse any semblance of order. At the Art Institute, the pier that tears the room into East versus West, dark versus light—and through interaction; male versus female, inside versus outside, life versus death—remains only partially used, skin to the installation surrounding the performers. Modelos sit unopened. Kink gear is used as a frame rather than a promise of pleasure. Mere suggestions. The performance unfurls amid strobe lights, slow, slow drags around the gallery, trust falls, texting, vaping, grunge music, spoken word, and a whole lot of La Croix in a kiddie pool.

Somewhere, perhaps in accordance with other cinematically-inclined live endeavors that are increasing in mainstream popularity (such as work by artists Brendan Fernandes, Tino Sehgal, and the most recent phenomenon of Sex & Sea within the Lithuanian Pavilion of the Venice Biennale), the new notion of home takes place in a non-space past where dreaming can load. The disbelief in ever having a home is more comforting than the baggage that a domestic life may carry. There are some who may argue that this is of generational distinction—that the smartphone lends to an addiction to instant gratification—yet, there are always exceptions.

Counter-cultural movements have provided an escape from the trappings of a conventional life throughout history, and leaning against a wall in a club, body clinging to an ambient drugoeugue thump, is not a new pastime. Each day I hear more people longing to move to Berlin, or a place like it, teeming with artists and opportunity. The truth is, the next Berlin is nowhere. As explored in Am Czeckiewicz’s Depression: A Public Feeling, isolation is less associated with a medical condition and is now more of a culturally unifying force. Unification does not happen under order or categorization, unification will always be unset-tled. For Imhof, the prescription to be filled is how to get an audience together to realize that nothing will be realized.

Anne Imhof: Sex ran at the Art Institute of Chicago from May 30–July 7, 2019.


2 Interview Magazine, “Anne Imhof is Creating Hard-Core Performance Pieces That Speak to the Anxieties of a New Generation.” Online.
The Luminary, an anchor arts organization in St. Louis helmed by founders Brea Youngblood and James McAnally and curator Katherine Simóne Reynolds, undertook its first triennial this year. The triennial, Counterpublic, took form as a series of installations and provocations within local businesses in a predominantly Mexican business district known as Cherokee Street.

On the first day of my visit to Counterpublic, in an already sweltering Missouri summer, I sought refuge from the heat in a charro store called Carillo Western Wear, a concealed exhibition site. I thumbed through brocade, pearl button shirts, and gazed around at the stacks of cowboy hats that cascaded down from the ceiling in shades of tan. There was a pink one, with spikes, and then another and another, mixed in with the rest. I looked through more shirts and found one with odd, iron on patches with a script that read like a dare:

Do TWO of the following, choosing a different group for each:

a. Go to a festival, celebration, or other event identified with one of the groups. Report on what you see and learn.

b. Go to a place of worship, school, or other institution identified with one of the groups. Report on what you see and learn.

c. Talk with a person from one of the groups about the heritage and traditions of the group. Report on what you learn.

d. Learn a song, dance, poem, or story which is traditional to one group, and teach it to a group of your friends.

e. Go to a library or museum to see a program or exhibit featuring one group’s traditions. Report on what you see and learn.

I remembered this... why did I remember this? It seems so altruistic nowadays, these dares to go experience the diversity of our nation. Or maybe it seems sinister—post-9/11, it is hard not to read the command “Report on” in Orwellian terms. Then it dawned on me: they were steps to fulfilling the requirements for a Boy Scouts of America merit badge, specifically the American Cultures merit badge. Requirements for the Citizenship in the Nation and the World and American Heritage badges clung to other panels of the shirt meant for peacocking.

This was the work of Yowshien Kuo, and while the cheap, iron-on patches felt unconsidered, but albeit necessary—the majority of the artist stipend went to purchasing hats and shirts from the store—the gesture was perfectly executed. Here I was, in a charro store, a store I would likely not have gone into had it not been on the map of Counterpublic locations, having an hour-long conversation with the store owner’s son about the development and maintenance of charro culture, his experience as a first generation American, and this triennial that had inserted itself into the Cherokee Street neighborhood. Kuo’s work illustrated acculturation while avoiding appropriation, forming ties with cultures that exist as a way to create something new, something that can be called home.

‘Counterpublic,’ a term coined by Nancy Fraser in the 1990s, is used to describe groups developing counter-discourses within the public sphere to construct identities in opposition to the dominant paradigm. In the past, these groups have always existed voraciously, but were separated by distinct media spheres. Independent publishing arms like AK Press, for example, served as a hub for the anarchos-communist inclined, within a hardening neoliberal America. Those on the evangelical right would scarcely ever know or hear of this press. Counterpublics developed in relative isolation. However, all this changed when the media that shapes and holds the public sphere went online. Michael Warner points to the Internet’s ability to breakdown the broadcast model from three main networks that determined public discourse for decades, saying it has “fractured the language of the public.”

That is where we are now, a fractured public. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Yes, we see a lot more of the repugnant counterpublics; the alt-right, neo-nazis, straight-up racist dumbasses. But we also see Queerness, Blackness, Desiness, all this changed when the media that shapes and holds the public sphere went online. Michael Warner points to the Internet’s ability to breakdown the broadcast model from three main networks that determined public discourse for decades, saying it has “fractured the language of the public.”

That is where we are now, a fractured public. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Yes, we see a lot more of the repugnant counterpublics; the alt-right, neo-nazis, straight-up racist dumbasses. But we also see Queerness, Blackness, Desiness,
Latinxness, Indigeneity. We see a normalization of socially progressive values at a speed unheard of in the last century. The public sphere of today, it could be said, is one of many counterpublics entering an expanded sphere of public discourse and power.

—- This public of today is seen in Kimi Hanauer’s dedication posters that cover a building at the corner of Cherokee St and Jefferson Ave, which state, “TO THOSE FOR WHOM THE ENTIRE WORLD IS A FOREIGN LAND.” It is seen extra-urban in Domaine DinoYoshi’s placards that read “OCCUPATION, GENOCIDE, STERILIZATION,” covering the shop windows of the coffee shop, Foam. Posters on the wall inside the shop implore patrons to “LISTEN TO INDIGENOUS VOICES,” outside, a towering, stereotypical statue of a “Cherokee Indian” erected in the 1980s by the local chamber of commerce, in an attempt to gin up business on Cherokee Street. The concrete sidewalks of Cherokee Street are flecked with bits of the brownish-ochre chert, now a valuable stone for making tools to farm the land. The concrete sidewalks of Cherokee Street,2 gazes eastward towards Cahokia—the site of the largest Native American city north of Mesoamerica. The city, which at its height in the third century AD, was one of the most populous societies in the world, and founder of the first Black shaker community, Rebecca Cox Jackson.

Counterpublic run throughout the city of St. Louis from April 13 to July 13, 2019.


——— Lewis’ occasion ended with her turning to the audience to ask about gardening. What does it mean to tend? To allow for flourishing? Audience members shared their experiences living with plants, caring for them, and the eventual realization that the love we show plants, providing a conducive environment for growth without forcing control, is how we must tend to each other.

Counterpublic ran throughout the city of St. Louis from April 13 to July 13, 2019.


——— This public of today is seen in Kimi Hanauer’s dedication posters that cover a building at the corner of Cherokee St and Jefferson Ave, which state, “TO THOSE FOR WHOM THE ENTIRE WORLD IS A FOREIGN LAND.” It is seen extra-urban in Domaine DinoYoshi’s placards that read “OCCUPATION, GENOCIDE, STERILIZATION,” covering the shop windows of the coffee shop, Foam. Posters on the wall inside the shop implore patrons to “LISTEN TO INDIGENOUS VOICES,” outside, a towering, stereotypical statue of a “Cherokee Indian” erected in the 1980s by the local chamber of commerce, in an attempt to gin up business on Cherokee Street. The concrete sidewalks of Cherokee Street are flecked with bits of the brownish-ochre chert, now a valuable stone for making tools to farm the land. The concrete sidewalks of Cherokee Street,2 gazes eastward towards Cahokia—the site of the largest Native American city north of Mesoamerica. The city, which at its height in the third century AD, was one of the most populous societies in the world, and founder of the first Black shaker community, Rebecca Cox Jackson.

Counterpublic run throughout the city of St. Louis from April 13 to July 13, 2019.


——— Lewis’ occasion ended with her turning to the audience to ask about gardening. What does it mean to tend? To allow for flourishing? Audience members shared their experiences living with plants, caring for them, and the eventual realization that the love we show plants, providing a conducive environment for growth without forcing control, is how we must tend to each other.

Counterpublic ran throughout the city of St. Louis from April 13 to July 13, 2019.


——— Lewis’ occasion ended with her turning to the audience to ask about gardening. What does it mean to tend? To allow for flourishing? Audience members shared their experiences living with plants, caring for them, and the eventual realization that the love we show plants, providing a conducive environment for growth without forcing control, is how we must tend to each other.

Counterpublic ran throughout the city of St. Louis from April 13 to July 13, 2019.

In the 1970s in Vancouver, Canada, Vincent Trasov and Michael Morris established the correspondence-focused artist collective, Image Bank—now emblematic of a practice that was at once distributive and acquisitional. The current Image Bank retrospective at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin presents an extensive archive of correspondences in the form of written notes and postcards, as well as visual juxtapositions through collages, video compilations, props, and photographs, elucidating the often Duchampian approach to mass visual culture and language practiced by the network of artists. The exhibition touches upon a vein of ‘70s mail and correspondence art that has been in high circulation recently. Just across the street on Berlin Mitte’s Auguststraße, a recent exhibition at Museum Frieder Burda’s Salon Berlin featured the work of correspondence artist Ray Johnson (in collaboration with his estate, another archive), physically manifesting the network connectivity between these artists through their proximity in neighboring institutions. Johnson, and his New York School of Correspondence, had retained a close connection to Image Bank and its activities from the start—his letters and collages can be found among those displayed at KW. ———

In the exhibition halls, statements such as “Are words things?” or “The word is not dead: it is simply changing its skin,” are printed among the postcards that line the interior of a large central vitrine. These texts point to a use of words that is material, further articulated through the prevalence of puns, appropriated brand names, acronyms, and pseudonyms that crop up throughout the show.

The name ‘Image Bank’ itself was borrowed from William S. Burroughs’ novel, Nova Express (1964). Meanwhile, affixed to one large wall of the space is wallpaper printed with an artist directory and image request list compiled by Image Bank and published in FILE Magazine (1972–1989)—a publication of General Idea (another Canadian collective and close collaborator). The visual identity of FILE Magazine becomes quickly recognizable as a quotation of LIFE Magazine, appropriating the font, color, and layout of the magazine’s logo, and simply rearranging its letters. This cut-and-paste restructuring of elements was a characteristic mode of production employed by the artists, with the aim of opening up the possibility for new meanings to materialize, and thus unsettling dominant and accepted structures of the time in the process. This mode of upturning the system at once recalls the collage and assemblage techniques of a Dada tradition, while predating both institutional critique and current processes of mass image distribution.

Alongside the distribution and solicitation of images via mass mailing (which bears a strong correlation to the now extremely prevalent sharing and networking channels of the Internet), Image Bank’s work can be seen in parallel to alternative modes of production in contemporary art: namely, production as exchange, facilitated via the connective tissue of collective creative consciousness. Contemporary artist collectives, such as the Switzerland-based Louise Guerra Archive—which was initiated under the umbrella of a single
...Image Bank artists were known for having established numerous interchangeable aliases in order to counter the notion of the solitary artist figure, underlining the fluidity of identity. Fluctuating between personas, the group dematerialized the distinction between manufacture and authenticity.

The most visible example of the aliases adopted by the artists of Image Bank is the character-performance of “Mr. Peanut,” a clear reference to the brand mascot from Planters Peanuts. The actual mayoral campaign of Mr. Peanut—undertaken during Vancouver’s municipal election in 1974—is documented throughout, with further peanut imagery, in its particular brand of recognizability and banality, dispersed and reappearing across all corners of the KW Institute space. Like Tracy’s peanut drawings, at times depicting an entanglement of peanuts, snaking, intestine-like, or his Eternal Peanut Column (1977), which stands at the exhibition’s entrance, the image of the peanut forms a strong visual link that ties together various media. These types of formal linkages, in fact, appear throughout the exhibition at different points, weaving the broader theme of connectivity—network building—into the physical layout of the exhibition itself.

— The infiltration and destabilization of the institutional framework that supports the art world is at play in the very notion of the archive, both as artistic manufacture and authenticity. — The notion of the archive, both as artistic manufacture and authenticity. — The notion of the archive, both as artistic manufacture and authenticity. — The notion of the archive, both as artistic manufacture and authenticity.

The notion of the archive, both as artistic manufacture and authenticity. — The notion of the archive, both as artistic manufacture and authenticity.


Spectrum and Grey Scale (1970), is placed adjacently to Colour Research (1972–73), a segment of video that gives textual cues to consider the properties of light and surface. Collectively, this body of work is illustrative of a performative gesture that places the focus on process and communication rather than the art object as a closed, autonomous unit. Elements of painterly practice are transmuted into three-dimensional props and sets for an experimental mode of visual research and exploration. The geometric formations of bars of color, moreover, are evocative of analog pixels, facilitating further references to image construction—another type of “bank.” — As a whole, these works are enveloped in a soundscape by Canadian electronic composer Martin Bartlett, which escalates from an even-toned levity to a maddening, carnivalesque cacophony. This crescendo is visually accompanied by projections in the form of a triptych, flipping through catalogs of digitized slides at regular intervals. As the score builds, photos of Mr. Peanut engaged in a romantic encounter with General Idea’s Granada Gazelle pop up in a series across the wall. Directly across, Martin Bartlett’s Peanut Party Platform (1974)—also from General Idea, comprised of five hands made of clear Plexiglas with elongated peanut forms a strong visual link that ties together various media. These types of formal linkages, in fact, appear throughout the exhibition at different points, weaving the broader theme of connectivity—network building—into the physical layout of the exhibition itself.

— The infiltration and destabilization of the institutional framework that supports the art world is at play in the very foundation of Image Bank. Their approach to traditional visual media, such as painting, is distilled down to its literal building blocks throughout the exhibition—whether in the form of gradating color bars, or geometric patches of light. These elements appear in different manifestations across the show: an installation of physical color bars float up from the floor in one darkened room, forming into pyramidal patterns across a spectrum of colors. Adjacent photo and video works show the color bars placed in a natural landscape, sometimes alongside the artists themselves, configured as static geometric structures among the grass and trees. Similarly, another video projection depicts the artists, naked and reflecting light onto one another’s bodies via a small mirror. Image Bank draws with light—enacting the function of light in image making in a material way.

This research impedes is revisited in another corner of the exhibition, wherein Morris’ work on paper, Eight Steps
Admission is always free. All are welcome.

September 18–December 29, 2019  |  Opening Reception: September 17, 7–9 pm

SAMSON YOUNG
SILVER MOON OR GOLDEN STAR, WHICH WILL YOU BUY OF ME?
Through September 22, 2019

TARA DONOVAN
FIELDWORK

October 19–December 29, 2019

MELEKO MOKGOSI
BREAD, BUTTER, & POWER

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

I don't want to. Why does tragedy turn to the world, the world where Echo is.

A woman (Augustine) is led into darkness: A secret.

You keep falling. Your legs give up; the ecstatic surge goes into spasms. It repeats itself because of your betrayal. Your body rages against you like an abandoned child that demands attention. Before you fall, the pain curves with a high pitch note, that in its peak turns into silence; a heavy, full silence. It blankets your insides and hollers your name. Then, you cannot see, you cannot hear. Pain now becomes your body.

I don't know why I should write this. I don't want it. I don't feel able.

I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another 2.

If you ask me what I want I'll tell you I want everything. Whole rotten world come down and break, let me spread my legs.

My love, I am asking you to consider yourself. Your identity—that which is “not another”—is always driven by identification (because you want me, and I change). To realize what our poststructuralist mothers claimed, the center of identity is nonidentity, and it is ok. It's wonderful. Then, let's also reconsider how we can address, differently, the politics of identities.

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

If you ask me what I want I'll tell you I want everything. Whole rotten world come down and break, let me spread my legs.

My love, I am asking you to consider yourself. Your identity—that which is “not another”—is always driven by identification (because you want me, and I change). To realize what our poststructuralist mothers claimed, the center of identity is nonidentity, and it is ok. It's wonderful. Then, let's also reconsider how we can address, differently, the politics of identities.

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.

Dissociative disorders involve experiencing a disruption and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and identity. People with dissociative disorders experience reality in ways that are involuntary and unhealthy and cause problems with functioning in everyday life. Dissociative disorders usually develop as a reaction to trauma and help keep difficult memories at bay.” “Dissociative.”

I wrote that “I re-learned to eat food as to respect ignorance.” I told it was difficult; I gave up on madness. I will give up on almost everything every day.
A rose passes from the hands of a gardener, gloved fingers covered in earth, before it is snipped, bathed in acid, its guard petals removed, thorns stripped, and placed into a refrigerated chamber known as the ‘cold chain.’ Here, the flower lies dormant—the optimum temperature for a rose is just 1 degree Celsius above freezing—before being transported in the same wintry box, soon to be thawed and displayed at your corner market. Later, you would throw the long stem of this flower at the feet of a figure skater, whose diamond-starred skirt flutters above the mass of red as it touches the light blue cloudiness of the ice.

A series of rose petals fall like snowflakes, fluttering across a black background of indeterminable depth, swaths of crimson billowing in space by an unknown source of wind. If you could extend your hand into the darkness, you might feel the hydrated surface of its skin-like sheets against your palm. Yet, suddenly you see that as they pool upon the ground, the petals do not belong to the real flower you originally perceived. They are merely red silk. The rose is a replica. ————————————

You cannot pick this rose; it exists only in digital space. A rose passes from the hands of a gardener, gloved fingers covered in earth, before it is snipped, bathed in acid, its guard petals removed, thorns stripped, and placed into a refrigerated chamber known as the ‘cold chain.’ Here, the flower lies dormant—the optimum temperature for a rose is just 1 degree Celsius above freezing—before being transported in the same wintry box, soon to be thawed and displayed at your corner market. Later, you would throw the long stem of this flower at the feet of a figure skater, whose diamond-starred skirt flutters above the mass of red as it touches the light blue cloudiness of the ice.

A similar aesthetic is used in Deja’s collaborative exhibition with artist Marie Munk, entitled Synthetic Seduction (2018), which incorporates seating forms that resemble bodily organs from which viewers can watch films such as Foreigner (2018) and The Intimacy Package (2019). In the case of Foreigner, the video work features an android singing “I Want To Know What Love Is” to himself in a vanity mirror, a song by the band of the same name of the work. In this sense, the ‘foreigner’—an other—appears as a newcomer learning to experience emotion. The installation of these films and sculptures are immersed within an environment of sterile blue curtains that surround the gallery space, reminiscent of those one might find in a clinic. We can imagine the feeling of our clothes suddenly transforming into the dry touch of a hospital gown, accompanied with the absence of safety that results from having an open-backed garment.

While the aesthetic use of virtual reality, avatars, and artificial intelligence is present throughout Deja’s work, the technological platforms she uses are not as futuristic as they appear. Instead, the artist uses technology to underscore how humans more often transfer the same systems of history and behavior we have learned onto these new platforms. In the promotional image of 4K Zen Hat (2018), a woman wears a VR headset against the backdrop of a bright blue sky. On this, one could write a similar comparison to the rose—from the cerulean hue of a curtain, to the color of a cloudless atmosphere, to the rendering a perfect day simulated by a headset.

The two descriptions of a rose enacted above establishes a kind of foundation for Danish artist Stine Deja’s work, which examines how closeness is affected by connectivity. This dual-experience of the red flower—both as a ubiquitous industry object, alongside its use as a reified symbol of romance—is just one of the registers Deja uses to observe how viewers examine the impact on increasingly digital lifestyle has on intimacy. The comparison between these registers of ‘rose,’ as a hybrid object, was drawn from the artist’s work, Self Service (2017), which consists of a monitor that plays a video piece of petals floating amid the rendering of a metal shopping cart. As a sculpture, the screen of the film itself is placed within the actual device of a cart inside the gallery space. The bottom of its caged structure is filled with silk petals, some permeating through, scattered upon the concrete floor. While notably different in terms of tactility and levels of sentimentiality, the only real difference between the story of the rose and its proxy is a matter of temperature. ———————————— This is a recurrent theme in Deja’s work. Through installations in physical space that take form through digital means, Deja articulates themes of wellness, human interaction, communication, and the limits between our technological and embodied selves. The artist’s critique of these systems is achieved through works that relate to the human body as a warm-blooded vessel, in contrast to the cold, sterile aesthetic of digital space. Take, for example Thermal Womb (2019), a sculpture of a figure suspended upside down that recalls the practice of cryopreservation. The structure is indeed a replica of the mechanism used by companies such as Alcor, which prepares bodies before they are submerged in liquid nitrogen—figures indefinitely frozen, waiting for technology to catch up and revive them. The film component of the work reveals a pair of bright blue eyes, whose only animation is to blink, adding a time-based layer to the otherwise static nature of the piece. ————————————

A similar aesthetic is used in Deja’s collaborative exhibition with artist Marie Munk, entitled Synthetic Seduction (2018), which incorporates seating forms that resemble bodily organs from which viewers...
OPEN CALL

2020 ARTIST RESIDENCY & CURATORIAL FELLOWSHIP

APPLY NOW

www.RedBullArts.com
Thomas Struth

EXPO CHICAGO | NAVY PIER BOOTH 229
SEPTEMBER 19–22, 2019

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

Thomas Struth, Wabash Avenue/Madison Street, Chicago, 1990, Gelatin silver print, 26 x 33 in. (66 x 83.8 cm)
1. Camp is esoteric—something of a private code [...] To talk about camp therefore is to betray it. –Susan Sontag.

2. The unrestrained, bombastic opulence of the Met Gala has turned the hoi-polloi into a teeming rabble of amateur fashion critics decrying the ‘Death of Camp.’ Though when asked, no one, least of all those on the red carpet, could tell you what Camp is without pointing to the outfit they were wearing that evening.

3. The downfall of Camp style is not its ambiguity; it has undoubtedly persisted amorously over decades. This is a rare feat for an aesthetic [Example: Disco].

4. Camp resists definition because it is not an entity, an object, or a proper noun. Camp can exist only in a dialectic between the rich, the powerful, and the beautiful—and the marginalized oppressed.

5. In a classical philosophical opposition, we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically etc.), or has the upper hand. –Jacques Derrida.

6. Camp arose as a way for a hidden undercaste in American society to aesthetically flaunt their subjugation as an act of protest. By willfully exhibiting a visual style that society deemed to be a marker of the “gauche,” or simply bad taste, the creators of Camp were able to exercise a sense of ownership over their marginalized bodies in the public sphere.

7. Camp is considered to be bad taste, but not all bad taste is Camp.

8. Bad taste cannot exist in a vacuum, rather it is a perversion of good taste. Taste is only considered bad when it is witnessed or recorded, and thereby incurs social opprobrium.

9. Designations of bad taste thus must be imposed by those with good taste onto other members of their outgroup who differ in ways the good taste group deems to be significant. By designating someone of bad taste, the elite and powerful exclude others from their echelons even if those in question have all the other implicit requirements to be a member of this in-group (possible “requirements” include: white skin, mainstream religious affiliations, significant amassed affluence, et al.).

10. Bad taste has a particularly acute impact on social relations in the United States. This is likely due to the fact that American society purports to be egalitarian and thus lacks institutionally-coded social distinctions, such as title structures or castes, that were used to distinguish between peoples in many other nations. The elite needed to get creative to maintain their power, and thus, taste.

11. Camp exists as a mechanism of power for the invisible American lower classes to eradicate the stigma associated with taste.

12. This utilization of the arts—fashion, literature, fine and visual arts—as a means for the oppressed to reclaim social standing from the oppressive majority is a recurrent leitmotif in American history. See: the universal perverse fascination at the disgust of Jewish comedian Lenny Bruce or Philip Roth’s Portnoy’s Complaint (1969). See: the popularity of rap music during Reagan’s ‘War on Drugs’ and ‘Tough on Crime’ initiatives.
13. (Camp means) you have to be able to see the absurdity of life from outside of yourself. (...) Then you can laugh at the absurdity. – RuPaul.

14. So what say this of Camp at the Met Gala? In a plain-vanilla Marxist sense, the co-opting of the Camp style by the most viceroyal extreme of the monetized and be-famed was akin to the bourgeoisie alienation of the product from the proletariat. Camp was created & popularized by the Black and queer subcultures, yet they were not the ones getting recognition for the Camp style (both on the Gala runway and in the Met exhibition), rather it was wealthy white men and women.

15. While Black and queer people were present in the hallowed halls of the Met on this first Monday in May of 2019, having representatives is not sufficient to claim diversification. This is tokenism.

16. In more modern vernacular, the theme of Camp is a form of cultural appropriation. It is an exploitation of those who created their culture (i.e. the worker) by co-opting their style (i.e. the “product” of Camp) without due recognition.

17. When Camp enters into the mainstream in such a fashion, as in the Met Gala, it dislocates the aesthetic style from the power it wields. Those marginalized, who championed Camp, can no longer use its bombastic self-parody, or its “view from the outside” (of social sigma), as a means of restoring their autonomy in society.

18. After the Met, Camp was irrevocably altered. Camp, once a manifestation of power outside’ (of social stigma), as a means of restoring their autonomy in society.

19. It seems fitting that exploitation would be a theme in fashion, an industry that thrives on the exploitation of black and brown bodies in non-Western countries to create the pieces they sell for hundreds or thousands times more than one of their worker’s hourly wage (in Myanmar, for example, $3.60/hour). The fashion industry could not help but let the moral tur of their oppression seep out from under the carefully crafted coats of invisibility they place over their supply chain and into the very aesthetics of the garments that they put on the runway.

20. Beauty is pain, but only if the pain is outsourced.

21. Simply showcasing Camp in the space of the Met is enough to wrest the power of Camp as a means to undermine oppression away from those who are oppressed.

22. I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background. – Glenn Ligon.

23. To place Camp in a museum, especially one that garners a religious respect in the expense of ‘cool.’

24. The art object hanging in a museum is enshrined as ‘significant,’ yet simultaneously any object that enters a museum is dead.

25. ‘Cool,’ and all of the term’s variants [rad, groovy, hip, funky] are vacuous. Cool means nothing and is instead populated by what is à la mode.

26. What can be defined, however, is the antithesis of cool. The antithesis of cool is what we call today ‘the mainstream.’ Cool requires novelty, implicit political critique, and reactions of disgust from those who do not understand. (Though these criteria are necessary and insufficient burdens.)

27. Social progress occurs from the universal overcoming of disgust. ‘Contemporary’ and ‘successful’ Art is the vanguard that introduces palatable disgust to the populace in order to prime systemic change.

28. By placing it within the context of the Met, Camp has been canonized. It is classic, rather than cool. Camp as politics, Camp as power, Camp as disgust, is dead.

29. The enemy of the subculture is erasure without political recognition.

30. The soul of the subculture is culture.

31. The Met Gala is thus a send-off to a bygone trend. It has rigorous code of dress [wearing all black] that separates in-group [those who mourn the loss] from out-group [those who witness]. Only a select few [mourners], who are deemed to have ‘really known’ fashion, are invited. In these ways, the Met Gala is indistinguishable from a funeral.

32. The dress code for the Gala is never merely to dress ‘Camp’ in its literal sense, but rather one must take the theme and exaggerate it to its extreme. Attendees were instructed to ‘Campify’ [parody through excess] Camp itself.

33. This was the Gala’s greatest success: the camping of Camp both aesthetically and politically.

34. The theme of Camp at the Met Gala has been controversial and scrutinized—not because the clothing worn was not Camp, but rather because it was an expression of Camp, in all its ecstasy. The Met Gala wrested Camp as a tool of revolution from the hands of oppressed and used the style to bolster their own superior status. And it all happened in such a public fashion.

35. The Met Gala was an unintentional exposure, a peeling back of the curtain to reveal the gears within. One goes to the Met to learn something of fashion, and we have.

Only it was not the intoxicating appreciation of craft and opulence that they wanted to pedal. Instead, it was something closer to the Truth behind the artifice, the thread of exploitation that binds the fabric we drape across our backs day-after-day—we have Camp to thank for that.

---

3 The Late Show with Steven Colbert, ‘RuPaul Charles: Who was Pure Camp at the Met Gala?’ video, 2:04.
4 Glenn Ligon, Untitled (A FEELING ABOUT A GLOWING WHITE PAGE), 1994.
Walks to the Paradise Garden

A Lowdown Southern Odyssey // A Reexamination of Self-Taught Artists in the American South

In 1992, Jonathan Williams wrote the Editor’s Note of his proposed book, Walks to the Paradise Garden, writing, “We’re talking about a South that is both celestial and chthonian.” Williams—an American poet, founder of the Jargon Society, and Black Mountain College member—wrote this statement to preface his uniquely personal documentation of over eighty artists and eccentrics from the American South. Names on this list include Thornton Dial, Sister Gertrude Morgan, Little Enis, among others. Through poems, photographs, and prose, Williams’ travelogues described and showcased the talents of a region not dissimilar from the one we know today—a place and identity built on contradiction and societal complexities: hospitable and unwelcoming, sacred and profane.

Williams originally intended for his manuscript, along with the corresponding photographs taken by his most frequent road warriors Roger Manley and Guy Mendes, to be published at the time he wrote the aforementioned note. Though, due to a lack of interest, these attempts at publishing proved unsuccessful for Williams. Twenty years later, Mendes suggested to Institute 193 member—wrote this volume encapsulating Williams’ travelogues taken in Pennville, Georgia; this typological book of art history reads like a road map of the South (Florida excluded), and given the delayed publishing date, ed. author Jones writes, thus operates as an account “both ahead of and firmly grounded in its time.”

Williams’ jaunty and loose voice makes no apologies for his approach to the artists he champions, and Manley’s photographs capture an aesthetic of a region that is often misunderstood. “It’s a collection of outlandish findings by three Southern Passovans, all white and male. This is something we don’t really fret about, and hope you won’t either. May we please both okra-eaters and non-okra-eaters alike!” writes Williams. Often working within the confines of poverty, racial discrimination, and cultural invalidation, Williams’ enthusiasm and commitment to profile these artists humanizes their efforts, where others faltered to acknowledge the undeniable richness of creativity residing below the Mason Dixon. Manley describes Williams as, “like having Churchill visit you, he was equally comfortable talking to royalty as he was a greasepigeon.”

Despite the lack of academicism in Williams’ prose, Walks to the Paradise Garden serves as an intellectual bridge between two museum exhibitions that both feature artists profiled in the book: the seminal Black Folk Art in America (1982) curated by Jane Livingston and Jane Beardsley at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C., and the de Young Museum in San Francisco’s Revelations: Art from the African American South (2017). While Black Folk Art in America represented a moment for artists like Mose Tolliver and Nelson, Sister Gertrude Morgan to have received recognition as artists in any capacity, Revelations functioned as a ground for further examination into the lives of living artists such as Lonnie Holley and Thornton Dial.

—Each of these exhibitions possessed the curatorial mission to exhibit Black artists from the South—a parameter Williams had not placed on his own research—yet, all three projects highlight the presence of spirituality common amongst the work. In the exhibition catalog for Black Folk Art in America, curator Jane Livingston writes, “Virtually every artist in this exhibition claims to have been commanded by an inner voice or by God to make art.” On the face of it, we discover a nearly unanimous testament to personal revelation. Between Eddie Owens Martin, known as St. EOM of Pasqua, and Howard Finster, Williams profiles two additional examples of artists who prioritize the influence of religion in their practice, each in support of Livingston’s claim in the book’s preface: Finster, a fire and brimstone Baptist from northwest Georgia, follows the voice of the Old Testament to construct the works he displays in Paradise Garden, and the other, St. EOM, follows the beliefs of a self-made denomination, and from this practice built his own artist site, the “Land of Pasqua.” Whether drawing on the imagery of Christianity, or the Post-Neolithic Age movement of Paquianumism, these two artists represent two sides of the same coin—where site and spirituality homogenize to a Southern art vernacular.

—Beyond conceptual themes, the exhibition entitled Revelations represented how current institutions have begun to expand their collections of self-taught artists. From an objective standpoint, Revelations

“Often working within the confines of poverty, racial discrimination, and cultural invalidation, Williams’ enthusiasm and commitment to profile these artists humanizes their efforts, where others faltered to acknowledge the undeniable richness of creativity residing below the Mason Dixon.”
represents the acquisition of sixty-two artworks from the William S. Arnett Collection of the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. Acts of institutional inclusion like this—such as the recent acquisition of fifty-seven works to the Paradise Garden—has caused an increase in market value for self-taught artists by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, also from the Souls Grown Deep inclusion like this—such as the recent acquisition of fifty-seven works.

An expanded effort to reexamine the language surrounding the field of Southern self-taught artists, both in relation to the major museum efforts for inclusion and the shifting language used to place this work within a larger canon of art history.

Way Out There: The Art of the Southern Backroad at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta ran from March 2–May 19, 2019.

Revelations: Art from the African American South at the de Young Museum in San Francisco ran from June 3, 2017–April 1, 2018.

Walks to the Paradise Garden, by Jonathan Williams, Roger Manley, and Guy Mendes, was published by Institute 193 in 2019.

In discussing the subject of this paradigm shift, Editor Jones notes, “I think the increased art world attention around the work and lives of self-taught artists represents an acknowledgment that creativity, ambition, and even genius, can reside with individuals who are not formally integrated into the financial and educational systems of the world. I have always been perplexed by the barriers to entry but am glad to see them being somewhat relaxed.” — William S. Arnett
**Slow Cinema**

**TAKING OUR TIME // FOR AN OVERTHROW OF HOROLOGY**

By Minh Nguyen

Abbas Kiarostami’s film *Seagull* (2014) begins where it ends, with a close-up of water crashing into a sea embankment. Three eggs wobble on a rock as waves lash them in a loose rhythm. That’s all that happens. I viewed this bare piece at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for an event honoring Kiarostami’s work. As a packed audience, we faced the film’s unsurprising repetition—the surges of water blending into an unyielding pattern, the gull-calls and ocean-ropes sprawling into a sonorous drone. As it pressed on, my focus grew restless, squinting outward. I peered at others shifting in their seats and sensed a faint, shared agony. When will it end and release us from its grip? I saw us mirrored in the shaking eggs. There we were, battling for ground, our hearts as potential that burns away, to nothing. The calculation is impossible: if I exchange my time for (insert any possible activity), what will be the nature of my return? ————

How to think about the slow film as a cultural product born from this frenzied, escalated world? As contemporary life becomes increasingly stopped of pace, this genre’s popularity suggests eagerness to design speed bump for time’s passage. “Slow cinema” is generally defined as “nothing is happening,” when there is little editing, dialogue, or action. Imagine a mail-ordered paperback shot across a barren wheat field landscape. Or a close-up of a character’s expressionless face, where only flutters of flyway hair confirm that the image is, in fact, moving. Though on-screen inaction has existed as long as cinema itself, this latest iteration of the genre, according to critics, came of age at the turn of the millennium. Jonathan Romney, credited for popularizing the term in a 2010 article for *Sight and Sound*, describes slow cinema “as a cinema that downplays event in favor of mood.” The canon is as porous as the definition of “slow,” but of this recent wave of practitioners there is likely mention of Pedro Costa, Chantal Akerman, Jia Zhang-ke, or Apichatpong Weer- asethalak. As a form of endurance sport, slow cinema may be best represented by Béla Tarr’s *The Turin Horse* (2011), an outrageously austere 146 minutes of a farmer attempting to find his horse during a windstorm, filmed in black-and-white and only thirty long takes.

This wave seemed a direct reset to mainstream cinema’s fast-and-furious industry complex, a defense against the endurance of what Susan Sontag, in her 1998 essay “The Decay of Cinema,” deemed the “vanished rituals—erotic, ruminative—of the darkened theatre.” Reflecting on the centrality of the filmic medium, Sontag lamented that what used to be sensorially transportive had become assaultive, the craft reduced to “the unprincipled manipulation of images to make them more attention-grabbing.” ———— A defense of vanished erotic cinematic rituals, yes, but for others, slow cinema’s lack of action amounts to a torturous sadism that yields no fruit. Its dominance in the film-festival-circuit over the past decades has transformed it into a homogenized trope, spurring fatigue and resentment. Not only for its characterization of event time’s diminishment, but for its evocation of a sink hole through which time is irretrievably vanishes. Since in capitalism, time is a labor relation, the idea of dead time destroys our hearts as potential that burns away, to nothing. The calculation is impossible: if I exchange my time for (insert any possible activity), what will be the nature of my return? ————

Since its beginning, cinema has always been viewed dialectically, as both a product of capitalist time and a tool for its rebellion. As Moira Weigel expands in “Slow Wars” for *n+1*, the medium came of age under the Fordist arrangement of leisure and labor. Filming—a traveling to the theater to reconsume to the larger-than-life screen with others—became inscribed as a sociality that complemented existing time-fields: the film’s roughly two-hour run easily skated between after work and before bed. Yet film has always carried a radical promise of digging its fingers into time, tearing and pulling apart its sticky mass. Henri Bergson noted its potential to antagonize modern society by militarizing against what he called spatial time, which parcelled time into discrete units of experience, represented by the form of the clock.

Fordist time parcels still persist—as the “shift,” the “weekend,” or the “back break”—but since this period of cinema, these measures have overgone the dissolution that mostly separates leisure and labor. The expansions of digital labor, per-task contractual work, and information as an economic product, have all unmade the line. Vanished too is filmgoing as an intentional experience. Today’s film viewing is more casual and decentralized, on screens of varying sizes at home and in semi-public spaces. Museums are a part of this, reflecting a larger shift in contemporary art. According to Claire Bishop, in their article “Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone,” this phenomenon is transformed from *event time into exhibition time*. Whereas event time entailed a set of temporal and behavioral conventions (arriving at a venue for a seat and watching from beginning to end), exhibition time’s conventions are much more diffuse. A film plays on loop in a museum, and the viewer joins whenever—unsynchronized ————

**What is the relationship between the ‘precious time’ of our lives and the temp morts, or ‘dead time’ of slow cinema? Is the former the sunken cost of the latter?’’**
Perhaps this is part of why the popularity of slow cinema is so vexing, because it is unclear (always so unclear), whether visual experience is pressing or passing, significant or trivial. An event in itself, or fleeting stimuli.

In Chronophobia, Pamela Lee examines new media art as stern commentary "on the accelerated pace of life as naturalized." One piece she referenced was Michael Snow’s La Region Centrale (1971), a three-hour recording of a Canadian landscape established by a camera setup rotating around itself. Lee writes that such experiences of slowness can enable the viewer to parse their present with a distance, "[restoring] to the everyday some degree of agency, perhaps some degree of resistance." In considering the stakes of looking at something that is slow, for attentional resistance to disentangle time from labor relation, I think about how the urban environment renders visual experience as information. Ever-advancing systems of mass communication (news media, advertisements, the Internet), continually change our perceptual ability, the way we register what is around us, mine it for digestible capsules. In this regard, can a slow film be a small act of ‘anti-information’, a method of transgressing accelerator ed life by remaining still?

Slow cinema presents a paradoxical issue, a cultural product that provides a salve for afflictions that its industry exacerbates. Yet, its enduring popularity reveals a vested interest in art that provides a locus of temporal and visual deceleration. The genre is often delegated into the elitist corners of academia, but its glimmering possibility—to defy not only the standardization of time but against perception as “information”—is relevant to us all. Attention, Bishop writes in “Gray Zone,” can be simultaneously experienced with “trance, reverie, daydream, hypnosis, meditation, and dissociation.” These internal states, once regarded as essential to a rich inner life, are in today’s calculations devalued as nonproductive. They are under-practiced, and even when practiced, are co-opted to serve the logic of productivity. Rest becomes a way to recharge the battery of activity, daydreaming a way to harness the entrepreneurial spirit. But slow cinema’s potential is not art that provides another form of horology (the study of the measurements of time), but as its overthrow. As practice of chucking one’s inner watch, set to the outer watch, into the ocean.

3. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.


In her recently published book, *The Undying*, Anne Boyer writes, “Only certain kinds of sick people make it into art.” The book—a poetic meditation, if one could define it by any means—stems from the poet’s own diagnosis of a particularly aggressive form of breast cancer, and the results of such illness. She writes on the varied (and loaded) reactions of friends and acquaintances, the necessary navigation of the capitalist death-machine that is big pharma, the responsibilities (motherhood, waged labor, friendships, and care) that do not stop when one is ill. Perhaps the absence of ‘sick people’ Boyer infers are those of figures in canonized ‘art history.’ As Boyer describes looking at a painting at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, an institution near the art school campus she teaches at (Kansas City Art Institute), and the museum I was first introduced to ‘fine’ art at (Boyer and I are both from suburbs of the sprawling Kansas City). In looking at the Romantic painting of a clown in a sick bed, *The Illness of Pierrot* (1859), Boyer notes, “I’ve never seen a painting of an incarcerated woman sick from breast cancer hanging on the wall of the Louvre. I’ve never seen one of a sick person in a car in a rural emergency room parking lot on the walls of the Met, or a sculpture of a homeless encampment tent at the Vatican, or an installation of a suicide-inducing Foxconn factory at the Uffizi.”

Perhaps the absence of ‘sick people’ Boyer infers are those of figures in canonized ‘art history.’ As Boyer describes looking at a painting at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, an institution near the art school campus she teaches at (Kansas City Art Institute), and the museum I was first introduced to ‘fine’ art at (Boyer and I are both from suburbs of the sprawling Kansas City). In looking at the Romantic painting of a clown in a sick bed, *The Illness of Pierrot* (1859), Boyer notes, “I’ve never seen a painting of an incarcerated woman sick from breast cancer hanging on the wall of the Louvre. I’ve never seen one of a sick person in a car in a rural emergency room parking lot on the walls of the Met, or a sculpture of a homeless encampment tent at the Vatican, or an installation of a suicide-inducing Foxconn factory at the Uffizi.”

And yes, images of sick people are largely absent from the so-called canon of contemporary art, for better or worse. Oftentimes, illness is treated a metaphor rather than a lived existence, or as a profitable enterprise—the *Fault in Our Stars* brand of life-meets-death-but-luckily-not-for-you films and books (and not to mention, the protagonists are white, straight, adjusted). As Boyer notes, the majority of these stories are told from the perspective of a healthy person—the mother, the sister, the survivors. I am not so much interested in using illness as a metaphor, especially within the realm of my own writing. But there is something to be said of the way Boyer situates cancer as not only something affecting her body and lived existence, but as a navigation of the bureaucracies of medical industries, the gendered nature of care and hospitality labor, the loss of language and physicality (through chemotherapy’s effects), and the isolation of simultaneously being a patient—dependent upon doctors and medical care—and a numerical piece of data floating in the lands of medical servers. There is illness, and then there is a confrontation with one’s mortality coming sooner than expected: *We are dying.* This is a piece about pain.

I type cautiously, aware of my positioning as the reasonably (and visibly) healthy relative, the writer of moments not my own. I am worried that I am stealing words; that I am being unfair. I am writing on contemporary literature and art when contemporary art (and perhaps lesser so, literature) is a monster—a monster of inequity and exhaustion that I exist within, alongside artists and authors writing of their ills.
We are supposed to, as the titles of the guidebooks bodily self-destruction. I think of Gregg point had breast cancer, and at one point were on a plate. I think of Barbara Hammer. I think of...messed with the wrong bitch!' In my case, of guidebooks instruct, feisty, sexy, snarky championed as survivors. In artists lost, and the artists who were then filled with mourning, anger, and loss avalanching Bordowitz and ACT UP's DIVA TV, and films Amazon suggest, we are always supposed to be able to tell cancer that 'you messed with the wrong bitch.' In my case, however, cancer messed with the right bitch."

—Anne Boyer
Hidden in Plain Sight

ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV // THE SHIP OF TOLERANCE

By Jill Silverman van Coenegrachts

Since 2005, USSR-born and New York-based artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov have presented The Ship of Tolerance in twelve locations around the world. The work began in Siwah, Egypt, as an installation where children of diverse backgrounds made drawings that became part of a boat’s sail. In some ways, this almost fairytale vision of a wooden-sided vessel—perhaps how children imagine Noah’s ark—has a special set of qualities that question its nature as art or performance, as well as an articulation of one cryptic understanding of the universal need for tolerance. Across each of the cities, contributors to the installation are connected, if only by suffering the indignities that many large-scale cities do: poverty, violence, racism, discrimination against one ethnic group by another; similar headlines fill newspapers in whatever country you read them.

The Ship of Tolerance bears a resemblance in its presence to certain large scale installations I have seen and often helped stage in exhibitions and museum shows. In the catalogue for their recent retrospective at the Tate Modern in London, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Not Everyone Will Be Taken Into The Future, both Robert Storr and Matthew Jesse Jackson, interestingly came to a similar moment of shared vision, though through much different methods. The trope of failed utopia, which often appears in the work of the Kabakovs, is used as a device that does not exactly the tolerance itself evaporates into the daylight that surrounds the structure. This is not exactly the display of an art installation usuallygeary, but the Kabakovs have never done art like any other artists. The Ship of Tolerance is both beyond the so-called “serious” studio practice and many contemporary artists adhere to, and yet very much connected to it. I would suggest, in spite of their philantropic and educational intentions, there is an underlying sigh of relief within their work, audible as we walk through or past the Kabakovs’ iconic large-scale installations. In the case of the piece The Toilet, exhibited at Documenta IX in 1992—a replica of public toilets the Kabakovs were familiar with in the USSR—viewers stand, noticing the dank smell of used clothes, old damp linoleum, and furniture from thrift shops. One is overwhelmed with the notion that even within this dreadful structure, we humans found a way to make a daily, happiness-filled reality, even if it was necessary to turn a communal out-house into a home. The Kabakovs’ installations show us one thing while meaning something else—yes—but then the two opposite positions might be sides of one coin.

“The Kabakovs’ installations show us one thing while meaning something else—yes—but then the two opposite positions might be sides of one coin.”
Yet, for these conceptual artists emerging from the darkness of Soviet Russia, irony—a strategy unfit for the danger that lurks in a totalitarian regime—was not necessarily a friend. One needed a double vision. Perhaps the initial desire of The Ship of Tolerance was to inspire the next generations to face these issues and respond from their own hands. But maybe the work is, in its own way, one of the great Kabakov installations hiding in plain sight, dressed as something we must only see as a brilliant philanthropic idea. Perhaps in actuality, it breaks through the third wall; a performance work that brings the audience into another original structure all together.

The Chicago iteration of The Ship of Tolerance at Navy Pier runs through October 2019.

“But was not everyone happy under Stalin?, they seem to ask us, beseeching our credulity to understand how history of any moment is written.”
I Can’t Imagine Ever Wanting to Be White

ON AGENCY AND SOCIAL PRACTICE
// THE WHITNEY BIENNIAL THEN AND NOW
By Noah Hanna

When critic Glenn O’Brien received an admission tag at the Whitney Biennial in 1993 bearing the statement, “I CAN’T IMAGINE EVER WANTING TO BE WHITE,” he bluntly reflected on the experience in Artforum, “No fucking way was I putting that on.” Designed by artist Daniel Joseph Martinez, the tags gained notoriety due to the response they evoked, but also encapsulated a Whitney Biennial that was at the border of ideological reformations. Now close to three decades later, Martinez’s work continues to offer substantial implications for the consequential exhibition of American Art.

The 1993 Biennial was a polarizing iteration of the then forty-six-year-old exhibition. Curated by the Whitney Museum of American Art’s own Elisabeth Sussman, the Biennial followed what scholar Nizan Shaked described as a period of division between fault lines within American discourse and the art field. American policy—both economic and social—through the 1970s and ‘80s, paired with the calamity of the AIDS crisis and continued racially motivated violence, forced artists and art institutions to negotiate both the rise of an art market increasingly driven by capitalist expansionism, and a greater necessity for political consciousness within artistic practice. For Sussman, the exhibition would serve as a way to “consolidate artworks concerned with actual political situations, which, for example, ask what constitutes a community, or examine in relationship to identity formation.”

There are various interpretations of Martinez’s work at the Whitney in 1993, officially titled Museum Tags: Second Movement (Overture) or Overture con Claque—Overture with Hired Audience Members. For example, the tags, once distributed at the front desk upon purchasing admission, were intended to provoke a discussion about race, identity, and agency. The Whitney, like many of New York’s cultural cornerstones, aimed to draw the chasm between artmaking and political realities closer. As Shaked notes, exhibitions such as The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s (1990), hung collaboratively by The Studio Museum, The Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, and the New Museum, as well as the New Museum’s own Let The Record Show... (1987–88), which featured the now iconic neon installation SILENCE = DEATH (1987) by Gran Fury and ACT UP, sought to bring the turmoil of the AIDS crisis and struggles for representation into the institutional mainstream. While these exhibitions featured work by many of the decade’s most prominent and politically active artists, such as Barbara Kruger, David Wojnarowicz, and Adrian Piper, they remained generally conceptual experiences. The museums set the stage and curated discourse, even while activist-minded artists composed much of the rosters. However, in the case of Martinez and the Whitney, this barrier was broken down in a way that was outside of the institution’s control, presenting what is perhaps the most significant considerations for the most recent presentations of the Biennial.

“The 1993 Biennial lends credence to the most recent exhibitions in 2017 and 2019, which while being commended for increasing the space given to artists of marginalized groups, were also subjected to intense and public debates over artistic and institutional objectives.”
I CAN'T IMAGINE EVER WANTING TO BE WHITE.
admission, could be read as a socioeconomic exchange—essentially mimicking the sale of artwork, scaled down to the level of the everyday consumer. The work also questioned inherent biases within art museums, as it occurred at the point of transition between public life and the socially autonomous institution, where judgments are passed between communities. However, the continued pregnancy of this work is ultimately derived from the expanded notions of social practice and relational aesthetics that occupy our contemporary moment. Once acquired, agency for the work essentially became that of the recipient, who was free to interpret it as they saw fit. Documentation of visitors at the Biennial displayed the many ways that the work became appropriated: guests intentionally and unintentionally arranged the tags upon their bodies to make statements about personal identity—including race, class, and gender. The museum security staff, a position that was disproportionately held by minorities, wore the tags on their own accord as a display of submission.

Discussions of agency have steadily continued at the Whitney. The 1993 Biennial lends evidence to the most recent exhibitions in 2017 and 2019, which while being condemned for increasing the space given to artists of marginalized groups, were also subject to intense and public debates over artistic and institutional objectives. For example, the outrage generated from the inclusion of Dana Schutz’s controversial painting in 2017, depicting the body of Emmett Till, and the Whitney’s ongoing financial connection to Kanders, CEO of Safariland—a munitions manufacturer whose products have been used in conflict zones from Gaza to the US-Mexico border. Organizations such as Decolonize This Place and its many allies challenged the Biennial on their accountability, pressuring the institution to recognize an ever-growing variety of perspectives. The 2019 Whitney’s inclusion of Triple Chaser (2019), a video investigation by grass-roots Forensic Architecture and Praxis Films, which compiled crowd-sourced research and computer algorithms to track the use of Safariland’s Triple Chaser tear gas grenades across the world, was a conscious effort by the curators (Jane Panetta and Rujeko Hockley) to acknowledge the need for such debates. However, despite the commendable and groundbreaking research done on behalf of Forensic Architecture, the work can only be interpreted passively in a gallery setting. Visitors enter the exhibition space, observe the atrocities committed with the aid of Safariland, Forensic Architecture’s attempts to document it, and subsequently move on to other work. The structure of communication and agency remains unchanged, despite curatorial intention. In July, when Forensic Architecture soundbombed the Whitney and opened debates between Kanders and the lethal suppression of protests in Gaza, numerous artists demanded their work removed from the Biennial. Faced with another crisis, the Whitney allowed Kanders to resign his seat on the board of trustees shortly after. Even with Kanders gone, the affair has ultimately spurred far more questions than resolutions. The successful campaign by Martinez and his efforts to document and collaboratively activate discourse within institutional space, but has left many wondering what precedent the 2019 Biennial will inevitably have on future exhibitions and social practice.

While much of the necessity that fueled the 1993 Biennial and Martinez’s museum tags remain unchanged in America, it feels wrong to gauge this work with a sense of nostalgia, or as a means to debate what constitutes a successful artistic practice within the frame of a substantial exhibition like the Whitney Biennial. Rather, it seems prudent to examine the continued relevance of this project analytically—asking how work like this can aid in accomplishing the many objectives faced by any exhibition like a scope. How can exhibitions address representation in art and those it has historically neglected? How can it foster discourse and expression? Paulette and Hockley make note of each in their introductory essays, stating, “Fundamental to the Whitney’s identity is its openness to dialogue, and the conversations that have occurred here and across the country became a productive lens through which to synthesize our own looking, thinking, and self-questioning.”

As the perspectives for exhibitions expand, so too must our practices. Progress must be collective, and agency malleable.

**Notes**


3. Ibid,

4. Ibid,

5. Ibid,

6. Ibid,

7. Ibid,

8. Ibid,

9. Ibid,

10. Ibid,

**The 2019 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art runs through September 22, 2019.**


3. Ibid,

4. Ibid,

5. Ibid,

6. Ibid,

7. Ibid,

8. Ibid,

9. Ibid,

10. Ibid,

**The 2019 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art runs through September 22, 2019.**


3. Ibid,

4. Ibid,

5. Ibid,

6. Ibid,

7. Ibid,

8. Ibid,

9. Ibid,

10. Ibid,

**The 2019 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art runs through September 22, 2019.**


3. Ibid,

4. Ibid,

5. Ibid,

6. Ibid,

7. Ibid,

8. Ibid,

9. Ibid,

10. Ibid,
NEIL BELOUFA // PROFILE OF THE ARTIST
By Guillaume Désanges

For French-Algerian artist Neïl Beloufa, cinema belongs to an aesthetic model that is both industrial and moral. Throughout his practice, the conventions of film are often made into materials for sculpture. While films also exist within the artist’s oeuvre—installations that function like the pans of a movie, elements that perform as stage sets, and collages that appear like story-boards—Beloufa’s relationship to cinema is most closely observed through the many genres of film itself: Western movies, spy thrillers, science-fiction, or college-movies. It is through the regime of cinema that the artist conducts his work. Within this context, the component of Beloufa’s practice that remains within the ‘visual arts’ appears only in the ways in which the structure of his films is built; through either absence or potential. While it is true that cinema is an art, it is also an industry. The economy generated by film is paradoxical; at once technological and symbolic, narcissistic and collective, commercial and idealistic. Each of these dichotomies contribute to the confused state in which the capital in film lies. It is this same complex economy that haunts Beloufa’s practice, which allows viewers to grasp the invisible coherence across his purposefully disparate works. ——— In the aftermath of the May 1968 events in France, the professionals at the head of the États Généraux du Cinéma imagined an aesthetic revolution—one that was political, but also firmly economical. They attempted to not dissociate the critique contained within bourgeois content from a critique of the systems that dictated production at the service of the bourgeoisie, instead responding equally to new ways of both making and disseminating film. ——— This connection—between artistic and economic means, which had long since boiled below the surface of the film industry—positioned Jean-Luc Godard as its (evil) genius. Until this time, no other director had attempted to dismantle the very mechanism of cinema through cinema itself. Godard did so in a way that did not only refuse to spare the artist, but further insisted on pronouncing the insufficiencies of all artists. An idealism realized through fatalism.

Over the length of his career, Godard developed new relationships between mythology and industry, poetry and politics, the sublime and the contemptable. His feeble arrogance belongs to an identity that is at once liberal, but also subordinate, which the director’s work continues to draw on today. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that Neïl Beloufa, who was immersed in the world of political cinema from a young age, has drawn such a renewed attention to positions that do not separate critical modes of production from the criticism of modes of production.
In short, the artist studio is a critical space as much as it is a physical space. It is a reality, but also an image—a form of branding, a site that is invested in producing desires and fantasies.
had been gradually transformed from the trompe l’oeil set of a hotel for the artist’s film Occidental (2016), before becoming a live/work-space for the artist known as ‘Occidental Contemporary,’ which involved artists and curators, but also the public, each pursuing separate activities within the same structure. The significance of a hotel as a backdrop to what became this multi-use space is emblematic in this respect: the hotel is an area for circulation, a fixed system within which relationships are formed, and where parallel lives can either intersect or diverge—all with the potential for affective, perhaps even libidinal, action. ———— It is interesting to note that in French, certain jargon purposefully adopts a philosophical or moral connotation. For example, the technical term for ‘legal entity’ is ‘personne morale,’ which literally means to signify a ‘moral person.’ From this perspective, one could say that Beloufa’s studio is, in effect, a moral person. Or, at least, a type of autonomous and industrial entity that assumes a vague identity, but is no less legally responsible. This semantic relationship can be said to inform the very system the artist denounces across his work; all power is a fiction that is held together by nothing other than myth. Yet, it is the role of a ‘moral person’—which is to say, a reflective person—to never cease in questioning, both in concept as well as in production, the line between the true and the false, sincerity and posturing, or rigor and seduction. In short, the morally good and the morally bad, while continuously playing with the potential volatilities and reversals inherent within these polarities of thought. Following the same logic, the term for ‘business name’ in ‘vocation sociale,’ which directly translates to ‘social reason.’ A closer acquaintance with these semiotics resonates with a kind of organizational structure that attempts to denounce hierarchy—responding to an almost egalitarianism or collectivist idealism, in which material and symbolic capital is shared. ———— This systematic and moral approach reflects Beloufa’s vast reflection on material research into economic systems as well as with a facet of spirituality; the critique of agency, but with a certain love for the same system that produces it. A system that integrates its own criticism, its own negotiations. In this way, the work does not offer definitive solutions, but instead underscores an abstruse complexity of values, whose aesthetic and moral horizon is constantly blurred. Beloufa’s hybridization of the organic, the material, and the technological could pass for a type of nihilism—but it could just as easily be the mark of an unshakable faith in the power of forms when they conform forms of power.

Translated from French by Stephanie Cristello.

Neïl Beloufa, as part of the Méthode Room led by Guillaume Désanges, will be in residence in Chicago at various paints in 2019–2020.

1 Known from the famous line, “Par ailleurs, le cinéma est une industrie”, the last phrase of Esquisse d’une Psychologie du Cinéma (1946) by André Malraux.
2 Les États Généraux du Cinéma was founded in the end of May, 1968, and was the location for political debates across the profession. The group included writers, directors, producers, technicians as well as students.
3 The artist’s father, Farouk Beloufa, is an Algerian director. His only film, Naol, was released in Lebanon in 1979, the mother was an editor for Apollon Films, who notably produced films by Alain Cavadar, Ousmane Sembé, and Etienne Weil, among others.
4 The Next Tenant by Neïl Beloufa took place in the Völkerball-Bahnhof in Hildesheim, from November 5–26, 2016, at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany.
5 Occidental was the first feature-length film by the artist. At the end of the filming, the studio was transformed into a center for contemporary art, named OCCIDENTAL, TEMPORARY, in which exhibitions, marriages, and smaller productions took place over the course of one year.
This is a story about jazz and thinking about jazz, and thinking about the moment being on my mind when a teenager passing me in a car hurled a homophobic slur in my direction. Trut, the bag I was carrying was filled with zucchini and sake, but he did not know that; so I responded with a middle finger—

—in that electric moment, a current within me jumped from one thought to another—from “the bird” to the Bird, as to speak; I remembered the power of defiance and, consequently, the power of jazz. Herefore, I missed the politics embedded in the music; misunderstood its moxie, febrility, and lightning-flash inspirations. Do not mistake me; I am not arguing jazz (and by extension, improvisational or even experimental music) is some lightning-flash inspirations. Do not mistake me; I am not arguing jazz

...———————————————————————— Is not jazz-at-large a long-held, infinitely-elaborate resistance to the oppressive

...———————————————————————— Sun Ra

...———————————————————————— In

... ——————————— The illustrious Sun Ra, whose experimental music encompasses and surpasses most categories—jazz included—and whose aesthetic is a lodestar for queerness and Afrofuturism, certainly seemed to operate on the assumption that improved words, improvised sounds, and whatever inspirations that followed were powerful enough to manifest the personal mythology according to which he lived. In Robert Mugge’s 1980 profile documentary, Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise, the artist, whose reputation as a self-styled, Egypto-revival man from Saturn, was by then well-known, said his music relayed “unknown things, impossible things, ancient things, [and] potential things” rooted in deep time. It suggested freedom unburdened by the shadow of unfreedom; it generated a different ontology

...———————————————————————— Is not this everything trembling in a blue note?

... ———————————————————————— Swept into the mainstream on a wave of exaltation, Afrofuturism

...———————————————————————— The seen

...———————————————————————— In advance of an archive

... ———————————————————————— Sun Ra’s aesthetic philosophies. 4 That these two

... ———————————————————————— Space is the Place

... ———————————————————————— Space is the Place

... ———————————————————————— Ocean Milchstraßenverkehrsordnung

... ———————————————————————— Ocean Milchstraßenverkehrsordnung

... ———————————————————————— Sun Ra also fell prey to the vorticose misusage that spins critical social issues into cultural caché. Consider, for example, Mückenflüglerverkehrsbauordnung (Space is the Place), the August/September 2019 exhibition at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin that sought to combine Elon Musk’s enthusiasm for colonizing outer space with Sun Ra’s aesthetic philosophies.5 That these two ideas are obviously incompatible apparently did not trigger alarms during the curatorial development of the show, nor did the egregious fact that all but three of the twenty-two participating artists on the roster were men, and all but one were white. The Internet, predictably, exploded on this point—the semi-anonymous cultural watchdog group, Soup du Jour (aka Soup du Jour) issuing an open letter to the curator, Bethanien’s artistic director Christoph Tannert, entitled “WHITEY ON THE MOON.” The letter charged the organizer with the exploitation of Afrofuturist concepts, disregard for non-white voices, and the perpetuation of white, patriarchal heteronormativity. Social media circulated news of the scandal with such efficiency that I knew of it before many of my colleagues in Berlin. The incident suggested something particular about the Internet: as an information ecosystem, the cultural climate of summer 2019 is the hottest on record to date.

...———————————————————————— If you’re going to imagine yourself in the future, you have to imagine where you’ve come from; ancestor worship in Black culture is a way of countering a historical erasure.5

...———————————————————————— In recent years, Afrofuturism gained momentum among artists reacting to far-right politics. Although, its presence in Black creative communities, and the problems it seeks to disable, are anything but new. Prominent art world figures such as Larry Achiampong, Arthur Jafa, and Cauleen Smith each work at the forefront of this movement—utilizing the moving image to explore issues of postcoloniality, the African diaspora, violence against Black bodies, Black identity contra white America, and Black identity uplifted by technology. In pop culture, Janelle Monae’s “Cindi Mayweather” video and music enterprise from the early 2010s assumed the mantle of Sun Ra’s most Sci-fi tendencies, coupled with a hefty dose of machine-age glamour. The 2018 blockbuster film Black Panther, directed by Ryan Coogler, dispelled any notions lingering about Afrofuturism’s status as a niche phenomenon or novelty.

...———————————————————————— Swept into the mainstream on a wave of exaltation, Afrofuturism
Maggie Nelson wrote in *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* (2011), her treatise on brutality in art and culture, about the perils of image flow that characterize the Internet. The book raises the ethical questions of what to do with images that spark outrage one day, and stultifies an increasingly desensitized public the next. A kindred peril, I would argue, is the false sense of erudition offered by the image-saturated structure that also supports the Internet-based image regime Nelson describes. The same structure responsible for the high-speed information exchange that makes an anchor escape gout out of anyone, on the subject of anything, is similarly entropic.

Although the Internet has aided in dissolving barriers regarding who has access to what kinds of knowledge (depending on where in the world one finds oneself), it has also flattened the learning experience into a text-and-image putting green in which material qualities, degrees of import, and general discernment are themselves filtered through text and image, ad infinitum. The result: a criticality, made defunct by the bite miss, is divorced from knowledge, and knowledge, deniled its old correlation to empowerment, becomes cheaper than air.
The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:

—José A. Pérez

The Series I: Biographical Inventory list of the “Guide to the Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra,” includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:

—José A. Pérez

The Series I: Biographical Inventory list of the “Guide to the Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra,” includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

The Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra—includes a slim entry:


If one were unaware that the author of “Inherit the Sun” also happened to be the former custodian and forever donor of the Alton Abraham Collection, the latter would have the allure to the book lover who once read it. One’s proximity to the object reduces the proximity to the person who once owned it. — Proximities

The Joseph J. McPhee Jr. Research Library and Listening Room is located within Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.
Congratulations to Remy Jungerman on representing the Netherlands at the 2019 Venice Biennale, and Jan Tichy on his exhibition at the Mies Van De Rohe chapel at IIT. See their work during EXPO CHICAGO.
Every two years, the Venice Biennale reenacts the city-wide theater of an international event that seeks to represent the artists of the world through encapsulating installations and exhibitions representative of nationality. Besides this manifestation of spectacle, the Biennale reaches beyond its physical limits—for months before each iteration artists, maintenance workers, unpaid interns, administrators, cultural embassies, and more, labor tirelessly towards the relatively short event. Despite all of the costs of all incurred through this labor, the Biennale remains as the producer of some of the most breath-taking, and culturally significant artwork seen today.

In celebration of the 58th iteration of the La Biennale di Venezia, THE SEEN gathers reviews and interviews in Notes on Venice, a collaborative feature by Staff Writers on the sprawling exhibition. Prefaced by a more telescopic review by Rashayla Marie Brown grounding the feature, interviews by Natalie Hegert with the artists of the Golden-Lion-winning Lithuanian Pavilion, Anna Searle Jones with Sean Edwards on Wales, and Dr. Kostas Prapoglou with Larissa Sansour on the Pavilion of Denmark follow.
The Privilege of Proximity
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA // A SINKING SHIP
By Rashayla Maria Brown

Writing a first-time review as an emerging artist about the largest and oldest art biennial has led me down a corridor of binaries, squarely placing myself somewhere in the middle of maker and critic. These binaries function to preserve the terms which give touristic art criticism its meaning—quality, curation, economy, and proximity. Like all binaries, they are unsatisfying conclusions that leave us stretched thin, which feels very much like the Biennale; the most stressful vacation one might take. In My Art Guides: Venice 2019, this edition’s curator Ralph Rugoff admits that “being in Venice completely distresses [him] unless [he] runs into a herd of tourists.” After being ignored by waitstaff in one restaurant and cursed at for Venice completely distresses [him] unless [he] runs into a herd of tourists.”

This leads me to a first set of binaries—the privileged versus the underprivileged. The concept of the nation-state and a global Olympics appeared around the same time that the first Venice Biennale took place in 1895, ten years removed from Leopold II eviscerating the Congo as his personal playground. The history of the world’s fair, an event in which colonial endeavors and scientific advancements of European nations and the United States could be put on display for entertainment, weaves itself so deeply into this history that we often hear calls to burn down the concept altogether. Critiques of how vulgar money has become in the art world is a convenient cage around it on view in the same exhibition at the Arsenale. However, in this discourse about money, the pieces could also generate conversations about justice and politics. The concept of the nation-state and a global Olympics compels us to travel, to be a citizen of the absurd social fiction we call the artworld.

In the aforementioned interview, Rugoff states his curatorial position was to find art that had fluidity, openness, and multiple interpretations, but also work that makes the viewer aware of things that most do not pay attention to. The fact that Jafa won the Golden Lion for a moving film about white people being violent and horrible, as much as they are subjects of his love, means that perhaps white people still do not know how they look to anyone who is not. My takeaway from the pavilions: if you are not talking about the immigrant, the Other, bodies, technology, and the Internet as tools or weapons, and you are not being mysterious enough to be misunderstood, then what are you talking about? Many national presentations desperately evacuated themselves of this contention, such as the women-centric presentations by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are formally and physically impressive while maintaining anachronistic political neutrality, complete with friendly, smiling female attendants. Others hung you over the head with their history of violence, such as the well-designed, well-researched, and extremely didactic Chilian pavilion—replete with a gory Subalterns portrait gallery. In these such examples, there is nothing left to be misunderstood. It is within this landscape that the eagerly anticipated Ghana Pavilion is perfect, without blemish. Intergenerational, moody, and formally consistent, photography and painting are shown alongside films with up-to-the-minute social critique and alarmingly emotive cinematography. Yet, what I noted at the super-exclusive Ghana pavilion was the all-star component of this installation, and that the stylishness of African classism often produces work that does not do anything to systemically change institutions that uphold unequal representation and discrimination. This contrast between style and substance is easily confusing if one expects it to change how Black bodies will be either accepted or misrepresented in Venice in the future.

This year, the Venice Biennale was an art exhibition and political platform. Artists and curators alike have lamented the cost of the privilege for being in this artworld, and with this in mind, it would even seem pointless to critique quality without it. What is a good work, after all, to the artists who are generally financially secure? A standout piece—maybe just for scale and cost factor of engineering—could be Sun Yuan and Peng Yu’s massive robot, compulsively painting blood-like material in the main exhibition My Body Live in Interesting Times at the Giardini, entitled I Can’t Help Myself (2016). Even better, might be Yuand Yu’s Dear (2015), a hose whipping violently from the seat of a replica of the Lincoln monument, scouring the plexiglass cage around it on view in the same exhibition at the Arsenale. However, in this discourse about money, the pieces could also generate conversations about justice, politics, and national identity. The ridiculousness of the individual artists’ subjectivity becomes most apparent in a context of international travel that builds national identity through their work. This binary—one subjectivity versus the nation’s culture that programs it—compels us to travel, to be a citizen of the absurd social fiction we call the artworld.

The issue of financing the Biennale has come up in reviews published within The New York Times and the UAE’s The National, pointing to the gallerists present in Venice to “find homes” for artworks by artists on the UAE’s Emirates, which are formally and physically impressive while maintaining anachronistic political neutrality, complete with friendly, smiling female attendants. Others hung you over the head with their history of violence, such as the well-designed, well-researched, and extremely didactic Chilian pavilion—replete with a gory Subalterns portrait gallery. In these such examples, there is nothing left to be misunderstood. It is within this landscape that the eagerly anticipated Ghana Pavilion is perfect, without blemish. Intergenerational, moody, and formally consistent, photography and painting are shown alongside films with up-to-the-minute social critique and alarmingly emotive cinematography. Yet, what I noted at the super-exclusive Ghana pavilion was the all-star component of this installation, and that the stylishness of African classism often produces work that does not do anything to systemically change institutions that uphold unequal representation and discrimination. This contrast between style and substance is easily confusing if one expects it to change how Black bodies will be either accepted or misrepresented in Venice in the future.

This year, the Venice Biennale was an art exhibition and political platform. Artists and curators alike have lamented the cost of the privilege for being in this artworld, and with this in mind, it would even seem pointless to critique quality without it. What is a good work, after all, to the artists who are generally financially secure? A standout piece—maybe just for scale and cost factor of engineering—could be Sun Yuan and Peng Yu’s massive robot, compulsively painting blood-like material in the main exhibition My Body Live in Interesting Times at the Giardini, entitled I Can’t Help Myself (2016). Even better, might be Yuand Yu’s Dear (2015), a hose whipping violently from the seat of a replica of the Lincoln monument, scouring the plexiglass cage around it on view in the same exhibition at the Arsenale. However, in this discourse about money, the pieces could also generate conversations about justice, politics, and national identity. The ridiculousness of the individual artists’ subjectivity becomes most apparent in a context of international travel that builds national identity through their work. This binary—one subjectivity versus the nation’s culture that programs it—compels us to travel, to be a citizen of the absurd social fiction we call the artworld.

NOTES ON VENICE | 115

“The seen—versus a nation’s culture that programs it—compels us to travel, to be a citizen of the absurd social fiction we call the artworld.”
work after Venice to underprivileged audiences in Ghana, including young audiences both in and out of school. For some artists, the work is never really done. The Venice moment extends far beyond what is happening in the Pavilion itself—perhaps one reason why more and more artists will likely go into debt seeking to participate.

— Talking to Strachan as a return participant (he previously represented the Bahamas in 2013) about his work, we landed on the subject of privilege at my prodding. Beyond the formal characteristics of his work, he spoke to the moments when his work went beyond the magical into the practical: “When I think of the context of Venice, and the elements of potential tokenism, it is good to remember that the needle is not moving for a lot of people.” There was a moment when, beyond making a beautiful object, Strachan’s work actually led to the inclusion of first Black astronaut Robert Henry Lawrence Jr. in a major research archive. This leads me to another binary art criticism relies on—does the work do something political or does it only represent something political? Recent critiques of the Whitney Biennial claim that since the work does not destabilize the power that actually exists at the museum on a board level, it failed. When we evaluate work based upon that criteria, then we must start to question whether our first evaluative criteria—quality, curation, economy, and proximity—mean anything at all.

———One of the most polarizing pieces in regard to this moral dilemma regarding political art could easily be Christoph Büchel’s display of the wrecked boat where almost 1,000 African migrants died on their way to Italy. Panned by The Art Newspaper and The Guardian, Büchel’s Barca Nostra (2019) prompted an experience where many viewers took selfies, having no idea what they were looking at (because no label was provided). However, the piece prompted DC-based artist Tsedaye Makonnen to stage an impromptu performance in front of it, to memorialize the lives lost. Speaking over the phone, Makonnen stated that her performance produced an intervention by plainclothes police that led to harassment of Black viewers to produce “papers” or their passports. In this context, Büchel’s piece, with the help of Makonnen, did the work of producing a political effect in real-time. Routine state violence against Black bodies and the particular brand of Italian racism was staged in front of a piece dedicated to the callousness with which migrants are treated. Only a couple weeks later and some feet away, a luxury cruise ship crashed into the dock of Giudecca Canal, injuring multiple tourists. The threat of climate change and tourism to Venice’s unique layout puts it in a precarious position to even be a refuge for people who experience anti-Blackness that refuses to call itself such. The work now highlights this.

———I was curious about Makonnen’s inclusion in the Biennale, as a relative outsider. The binary of inside and outside previously discussed is highlighted by her work—she represents the majority of artists who attend the events. She speaks to those who feel like they are maneuvering for visibility to a group of the socially blind through metaphors of migration and color: “I feel like I am a similar boat, trying to figure out what it is that I want. Am I losing this validation from white people and white culture? Visibility is necessary for black and brown people. We need to be able to see ourselves in them, but I think about being blacklisted a lot.” In this sense, the strength of the artist’s work is that it requires our investment—in her career and over time—to assess it. As artists of color, we share a fear that perhaps the systems we want inclusion in, such as the Ghana Pavilion, are reproducing the same paradigms of power by proximity.

———We will have to see if these interventionist gestures of visibility place us on the sinking ship.
Gathered on This Beach

SUN & SEA // LITHUANIAN PAVILION

By Natalie Hegert

Ah well, what matter, that’s what I always say, it will have been a happy day, after all, another happy day.

—Samuel Beckett, Happy Days

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river...
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

—T.S. Eliot, The Hollow Men

In Nevil Shute’s 1957 novel, On the Beach, his characters—among the last people alive in the world after a hemispheric atomic war—live out their final days waiting for an inevitable cloud of radiation borne by global air currents to finally make its way to the southern tip of Australia. The book is boring and hopeless, as are these last humans putting in their gardens to plant flowers that no one will ever see, taking on last-minute efforts at self-improvement, worrying about sea and tidality.

“Couldn’t anyone have stopped it?” the wife asks helplessly in their final hour.

“I don’t know…” her husband replies patronizingly, “Some kinds of silliness you just can’t stop,” he says, referring to the nuclear war that annihilated the planet.

The much-acclaimed opera-installation Sun & Sea (Marina), in the Lithuanian Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale, likewise portrays passive, helpless bystanders to the end of the world, but it is a much more ambiguous apocalypse. A group of disconnected vacationers lounge on the sand of a nameless beach—at first nothing seems amiss, but as they sing, the details of their world come into focus. “The colors of the sea and sky have changed,” they sing. The sea is “as green as a forest”—owing to the process of eutrophication—the Great Barrier Reef is a “bleached, pallid whiteness.” They complain of sunburns and strange weather, airport delays and trash on the beach. Their concerns are immediate and minor, while the world is clearly falling apart around them.

While other depictions of a post-climate–disaster world succumb to visions of the apocalyptic sublime—such as Waterworld (1995), or Mad Max (1979)—Sun & Sea is decidedly restrained, non-epic, banal. Instead of a deliciously outlandish doomsday scenario, it is just a rather disappointing day at the beach. In both setting and attitude, the installation more closely recalls the absurdist play Happy Days by Beckett, which finds its protagonist buried in a mound of sand, furtively trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy in his life. Likewise, the characters of Sun & Sea, though they find it strange, have clearly adapted to the new normal. And while it is clear that “Everything is out of joint” in the climate, it seems there is nothing to be done (“There is so little one can do,” laments the protagonist of Happy Days). So, you might as well try to enjoy yourself: “After vacation, / Your hair shines, / Your eyes glitter, / Everything is fine,” they sing.

Staff Writer
Natalie Hegert speaks with theater director Rugilė Barzdžiukaite, playwright Vaiva Grainytė, and composer Lina Lapelytė about their Golden Lion-winning production and the message behind it.

IMAGES:
Installation image of the Pavilion of Lithuania, Sun & Sea (Marina) at 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. May You Live in Interesting Times.
Photo by: Andrea Avezzù. Courtesy: La Biennale di Venezia.

NOTES ON VENICE | 119 |
Nataša Hege: Not only has Sun & Sea received abundant and unanimous praise among the critics and the most prestigious prize at the Biennale, it is also proving to make a most lasting impression on spectators and continues to be talked about. Did you have any idea your contribution to the Biennale would be received like this?

Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė: This was beyond our expectations of course.

Vaira Graye: If you ask me, I felt our opera—performance might look distinguishing in the context of Biennale, but we did not have much time to think about success—the logistics and preparation were quite challenging and intense.

Lina Lapečytė: It was not an easy project and it was risky on many levels—so the jury team in Lithuania already was brave enough to select it. What happened during the first week of biennale feels like something that almost does not belong to us. Someone said, it is a Cinderella story.

This was definitely not written in our scenario. Before the opening, we were preparing our performers to be ready for an almost empty pavilion and find a joy in performing if there was only one member of the audience. Now during the performance days, we receive an average of 1,300 people. Every role on the beach has to have at least three people able to perform it.

NH: Why did you create this as an opera, as opposed to another kind of performance art, theatrical spectacle, or visual art? How did you approach its staging within the context of the Biennale—to place it among what is primarily a showcase of visual arts? Was it much different from its first staging, in Lithuania (besides the language)?

VG: Our trio started with debut piece Have a Good Day!(2014)—a contemporary opera for ten singing cashiers, supermarket sounds, and piano. I find opera to be the perfect genre for us to unite our artistic practices (text, music, and visuality). Nonetheless, the educational version of Sun & Sea crosses the boundaries of other arts. ‘Opera,’ I would say, indicates the marriage of different arts, but this piece itself can be called something else: installation, architectural poetry, concert...

LL: Opera is a very particular place for the three of us—we kind of invented a method of working in this genre. Opera is as visual art as any other kind of installation, sculpture, or painting. The genre itself often belongs to the music world but personally, in my own practice, prefer to look at music—opposed to the idea that it is only for listening. Opera is literature; it is music; it is fine arts. It is a gesamtkunstwerk, and none of the features are more important than the other.

RB: Sun & Sea grew from the visual, and still is a very visual work. Other elements—mainly text and music—bring different layers, form-wise, so the work becomes more complex. However, in this complexity we seek for simplicity.

NH: One of the things that is so striking is the opera’s planlessness. There seem to be no great highs or lows, no climax or crescendo, no great emotion expressed. The singers are, for the most part, singing while lying down. There is very little movement, most of it being incidental, and the musical accompaniment is minimal. Even the scenery is quite pared down—there is simply sand, with no unusual lighting or representation of the kind of toxic sea that is suggested by the libretto. It is anti-apocalyptic, but also almost anti-theatrical. Can you tell me why you decided to present it in this way?

RB: You have put it in very right words. We have static bodies, but very often their minds are active, transforming from reminiscences to reflections, dreams, etc. Waves of these inner monologues grow into choirs, then flood back into solos again. Performers are static while they are singing, but other times they are free to move alongside kids, dogs, and other volunteers who are building castles, playing beach games, eating, etc. This brings uncontrolled reality into the fictional construct.

LL: In our case, the representation is based on a very clear conceptual grounding—all the further details of the work follow that concept. We try to restrain ourselves from using self-oriented tricks and effects; therefore, most of the details are there because of the true necessity.

VG: The light picture of lazy holidays is just a surface: we are sunbathing while the world is crashing.

NH: What kind of research into climate change and its effects did you undertake to imagine the world of Sun & Sea?

LL: The research spanned from mainstream media, scientific investigations, personal views, experiences and dreams, and conversations and reflections.

VG: Before writing the libretto, the research was done. It was necessary to understand what CO2, emissions and food miles are, and why our planet is in its current state. After dealing with that scientific information, we came up with the realization that catastrophe is caused by our—home sapiens—uncontrollable consumption. Consumption, which is so pleasant and stands as the core of our lives. The idea was to reveal the tragedy by personal approach, employing micro-stories, as ecology is such a huge topic. That is to say, disastrous pictures of dying and choked-in-plastic animals seem to be too anonymous, too difficult for our brains to process what is happening.

RB: Climate change is such a popular topic, but we did not want to manifest scientific facts, or to be moralistic. It was important to deepen the knowledge in this field. We were reading specific literature, but Sun & Sea is not about facts at all. It is about mundane narratives of holidaymakers, surrounded by apocalypse. But on a daily basis (it reflects something) other than that.

VG: Its up to each spectator to read the message on their own. The mosaic of characters and their songs suggest a kaleidoscopic approach, so there is no conclusion or “one truth” as such.

RB: To expand the beach topic in a global perspective: sunbathing may soon become available where polar bears used to live. I think we are neither giving a sense of hope for the future, nor taking it away. We do not know the right answer, and this is probably our luck.

LL: The work is a question, but also a reflection, on where we are and who we are, but the hope is in every one of us. In the tiny things, the love that we all share. Though that love must also be super critical and questioning many things that are taken for granted. It is hard!

NH: You three have worked together before, on the opera Have a Good Day!, and Sun & Sea is your second collaboration. In light of your spectacular success, do you have plans to work together again?

VG: Success might breed rush and greediness, but our trio is rather slow in terms of developing a new piece. Each piece needs time and mental energy so it could grow in a healthy way. After this prolonged Venetian adventure the performance is coming twice a week until the end of October). We need some time to reflect on what has happened, plus a tour with Sun & Sea will require special attention. We have some ideas for a new work, so probably one day it will be embodied.

RB: Each of us have individual practices, which are extremely important for our common work; everything we learn separately we bring in as an experience. I think we all need some separate creative space and time before considering going into the next trio work.

LL: We do not force the situation and it may take some time for us to come up with a new idea for a collaborative work. The fact that we all have individual practices makes things slower, but also creates a real need for coming back together.

— The Pavilion of Lithuania, Sun & Sea (Marina), at the Venice Biennale runs through October 31, 2019.
Representing Wales in the 2019 Venice Biennale, Sean Edwards’ pavilion piece, Undo Things Done, is reflective of his wider practice, weaving a range of mediums—sculpture, photography, film, audio, prints, textiles, artist’s books—into a poetic meditation on working class life, inheritances, and interdependence. These new works draw in particular on the artist’s experience growing up in public housing in Cardiff in the 1980s, recalling an atmosphere he describes as “not expecting much.”

ANNA SEARLE JONES: The venue for Undo Things Done is a former Catholic convent, and many of the works within the exhibition point to other such institutions: the orphanage where your mother was raised, state schooling, and the British media. Would it be fair to say that this body of work takes the position of an ambivalence towards them? The tension between the active and the passive in the title seems to really embody this.

SEAN EDWARDS: Very much so. I think the work came about from wanting to reconnect, or at least consider, some of this ambivalence. When I first began this research, I was reading a lot of [artist] Moyra Davey’s writings, and came upon something she quoted from Fassbinder about putting the “most honest version of yourself” into a show. I knew for this project that I wanted to return to a way of working that centered my biography, similar to my 2010 film, Maelfa, which was shot in a 1970s shopping center near where I grew up.

I initially thought I was going to return to moving image, but trying to create this tension—between the personal and recent history, between different cultural, political, and social implications, all of which are bound up in school, the state, and community—became much more of a challenge with sculpture. How could all this information be packed in, but exist as if on the brink of collapse?

The title, Undo Things Done, came from something my estranged father, who died as I was making this work, once said to me when talking of the past. It originates from bad grammar, but also achieves so much in its brevity. The institutions you mention, many of which are Catholic, were a central part of my formative years, much more than any cultural experience. For quite a while, I thought about the Catholicism at the heart of my childhood, and belief is an inherent part of this show. I think that belief has this active and passive tension inherently within it, and, like the sculpture on view, it teeters on the brink.

ASJ: What does it mean for you to be representing Wales in this particular moment? And, conversely, how has it been to present this work at the Venice Biennale to an art world that has been very slow to acknowledge issues of class and the perspectives of those outside of geographic centers? The show seems quietly subversive in the way that it holds space for—and, in the case of the work on view, entitled Refrain, explicitly gives voice to—experiences that are not often represented in these circles.

SE: It is a huge honor to be representing Wales, but one that is fraught with complications. I am very aware I am presenting a singular and particular story from Wales. There is a lot of discussion within the United Kingdom at the moment about representing the working-class, particularly within theater and literature, but less so in the visual arts. I wanted to think about what a working-class voice could look like, not just in what it depicts, but how formally it might have an accent, a dialect within the materials.

As for living in Cardiff, it was very much a decision of choosing to live off-center—relative to the geography of the wider UK, which is largely still oriented around London—in an attempt to find a place for slow making and looking. I am equally now trying to think about how to allow this slowness into the work itself. If I am looking for anything, it is an attention focused on the small details.

— Sean Edwards (b. 1980, Cardiff) graduated from Cardiff School of Art & Design before receiving his Master of Arts in Sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art. Edwards returned to Wales in 2005, where he has since contributed to the development of the Welsh artistic landscape through his own artistic practice and supporting the development of emerging artists via artist-led space g39 and now as lecturer in Fine Art at Cardiff School of Art and Design, Cardiff Metropolitan University. Edwards has exhibited widely nationally and internationally, including Spike Island, Bristol; Chapter, Cardiff; and Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany. He has developed permanent public artwork with Studio Response and Future City. In 2014 was awarded the Gold Medal in Fine Art at the National Eisteddfod, and is a former recipient of Arts Council of Wales’ Creative Wales Awards. He is represented by Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin.

— Sean Edwards: Undo Things Done runs through November 24, 2019.

Larissa Sansour

HEIRLOOM // PAVILION OF DENMARK
By Dr. Kostas Prapoglou

*Heirloom*, curated by Nat Muller, is the title of the Pavilion of Denmark, which encompasses the work of East Jerusalem-born and London-based artist Larissa Sansour. In *Heirloom*, the pavilion is divided into two conceptually interconnected parts; the first, a dark room with the mixed media installation *Monument for Lost Time* (2019), a gigantic black sphere whose presence occupies the entirety of the gallery volume to represent a type of repository of memories, which visually appears in the second room’s two-channel film installation, entitled *In Vitro* (2019), directed by Søren Lind. —— The gravitas of the pavilion lies in the philosophical dialogue between the two women within *In Vitro*: Dunia is a survivor of a world disaster and Alia is a younger woman and a clone who carries in her DNA the memory and identity of the past. Set in a post-apocalyptic environment where the two women live underground, the film explores how the dynamics of socio-cultural, and personal or inter-personal, narratives can be organically inherited through generations, or whether it is a construct based on well-orchestrated parameters. An exchange on how the future can be built on the memories or experiences of the past gradually unfolds. The grayscale aesthetics of the film in combination with the brutalist architecture of the underground settlement and the images of the city of Bethlehem (from both historical footage and digitally processed images to depict science fiction scenes) pronounce the artist’s interest in both human and environmental conditions—taking into consideration serious historical events for humanity—filtered through the need of continuity and survival.

---

**Kostas Prapoglou:** The two protagonists of *In Vitro*, Dunia (a survivor from a world catastrophe) and Alia (a clone), engage in a philosophical debate embracing the sense of belonging and the polarities of existence. Did you conceive the clone as a liberated life-form, or as a trapped and troubled man-made being?

**Larissa Sansour:** In *Vitro’s* clone, Alia, is born underground and has never seen the place she is destined to rebuild. She is raised on the stories passed onto her and is expected to recreate the future in the image of the past. Her inherited memories and traumas constitute her primary entrapment. She is brought up to see the underground compound she was born into as a temporary and involuntary exile, a place she is expected to eventually abandon. Liberation, she is taught, comes later, as her entire upbringing is based on the concept of entrapment—both physical and psychological—with even her future limited to a destiny long since mapped out for her. Throughout the film, her rebellion against her predicament increases. She resists the idea of her life underground as a state of exile, just as she rejects the memories of the past as a convincing foundation for a functional future. It is within these rebellions and dismissals that her own definition of liberation begins to take shape, and the conflict she is going through probably reflects that of many people born in a state of exile.

**Kostas Prapoglou:** I have been dealing with the iconography and symbols of national identity frequently in recent projects—the topic interests me a great deal, especially in cases where cultural heritage and national self-understanding are under threat. With no ‘present’ to speak of, the Palestinian psyche is suspended between past and future, between the collective memory of pre-disaster and shared ambitions for a future state. The present is mainly defined by its absences, its voids, its lack of clear definitions. This accentuates the need to pin down a sense of identity—of who you are as a person—but the very urgency of this need also makes the attempt at a unifying gesture, manifest and unyielding in its simplicity, tend to reach for the most basic and simplistic tropes, which applies to national narratives generally. The urge to identify indubitable signifiers of heritage and belonging is a reductive and revisionist endeavor. The need for a national pathos increases in times of despair and disillusion, as emotional content lends a gravity that is difficult to challenge. Nation-building and the preservation of national identity are difficult disciplines. These challenges are central to the generational showdown in *In Vitro* between an older scientist who has experienced the world before the apocalypse, and her younger successor who has been chosen to lead the rebuilding of the future in the image of a past she has never seen.

**Kostas Prapoglou:** Why did you choose the Palestinian city of Bethlehem as the conceptual setting of your narratives? What are these symbolic parameters that collide with your own origins?

**Larissa Sansour:** I grew up in Bethlehem, and my family still has a home there. It is a city I know intimately, and it has gone through many transformations during my lifetime due to the political situation. Today, Bethlehem is a very busy, overcrowded, and in many
ways stifled town—very different from the sleepy and quaint Bethlehem of the 1970s and ‘80s when I grow up. In a sense, the city has undergone and is still experiencing an apocalypse of sorts, starting with a direct Israeli military occupation, and finally being effaced with the completion of the Israeli separation wall. For In Vitro, I wanted the setting to be close to my own experience in order to cultivate the emotional aspect of the otherwise cold rational argument between the film’s two protagonists. Everyone knows Bethlehem, and for many, it is a mythical or Biblical place very far removed from the politically-marred Bethlehem I knew. This contrast is also accentuated in my work via the interplay between fact and fiction.

KP: The element of archaeology seems to play a key role in your practice. What are the mechanisms that inspire you or trigger your creative thinking when it comes to negotiating with notions of the past?

LS: Archaeology is interesting, as it appears to offer the kind of indisputable evidence of belonging necessary to confirm nationalistic narratives—if you can demonstrate an ancestral presence, this validates your sense of territorial entitlement. In the Middle East, archaeology has been part of nationalist projects for a long time, with the instrumentalization of the discipline at risk of rendering it scientifically dubious. If your interest in uncovering artifacts is driven by a desire to confirm rather than to understand, then you are in effect politicizing an inherently neutral scientific method. I used the notion of archaeology as warfare as the basis for a short film, in the Future They Eat from the Finest Porcelain (2015), in which the protagonist decides to play the archaeological game to her own advantage. By planting artifacts for future archaeologists to excavate, she hopes to confirm a politically advantageous narrative and alter the foundations for future political dialogue.

KP: How do you envisage Heirloom will speak to such diverse audiences in Venice, and what kind of reactions have you received so far?

LS: I am hoping that the themes explored in Heirloom will resonate with people on many levels and beyond any regional context. The first indications are that they do. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. While the narratives may unfold within a local framework, the exhibition is about memory, nostalgia, inherited trauma, and generational conflict—all of which are concepts of universal validity. The film’s ambition is to challenge understandings of authenticity and question the constructs of national identity, heritage, and belonging. At a time where nationalism is on the rise around the world, these concepts are staples in political debates reaching far beyond the Middle East.

KP: What are your plans post-Heirloom? Will this narrative evolve further, or will you be working on something completely diverse?

LS: I am currently working on two new projects, both of them further developing ideas already present in Heirloom. One project is a feature film based on the short I did for Venice. This film will focus on collective and personal memories and their role in shaping our historical narrative. It is my first feature-length project, and I am looking forward to this challenge. My other project is a short film dealing with genetics, history, and identity, exploring among other things the relation between genetics and inherited trauma.

Larissa Sansour: Heirloom runs through November 24, 2019.

—

Larissa Sansour (b. 1973) studied Fine Arts in Copenhagen, London, and New York. Her visual lexicon embraces film, photography, installation and sculpture. Sansour has presented her work in several solo shows internationally—most recently at Dar El Nimer in Beirut. Her works have been shown in Cardiff, Copenhagen, Dubai, Jerusalem, Liverpool, Paris, and Rome, among other places, and are part of various collections including the Wolverhampton Gallery, UK; the Imperial War Museum, UK; Fondation Louis Vuitton, France; the Carlsberg Foundation, Denmark; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark; N.B.K., Germany; Nadeur, Germany; Salsali Private Museum, UAE; and the Barjeel Foundation, UAE.
Join us to celebrate extraordinary Chicago artists in the performing, teaching, and visual arts who are energizing and fortifying every corner of our city.

November 4
5:30 – 9:00PM
Museum of Contemporary Art
220 E. Chicago Avenue

$270K AWARDED
20 ARTISTS
1 CITY

3Arts.org/tickets
INFERNO CHICAGO
Sarah Ortmeyer
Curated by Stephanie Cristello
Chicago Manual Style
1927 W Superior St
Chicago, IL 60622
09.20—11.17.2019
Opening Reception
Friday, September 20 6:00–9:00pm
As part of EXPO CHICAGO Art After Hours

With support from the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York and the Goethe Institut in Chicago
Rachel Rossin is a New York-based artist whose exhibitions incorporate quite the media diaspora—from blowtorches and canaries, to deepfakes, holograms, virtual reality, and honest-to-God oil painting. Her practice is uniquely indescribable, in that it fixates so firmly on the experiential. An early adopter of VR (she received a prototype kit from Oculus Rift), an assembler of Tesla spirit radios, a programmer, and a painter, among other monikers, Rossin will end 2019 with shows reaching from an interactive projection at the Zabludowicz collection in London, to a newly commissioned headset piece for the Akron Museum of Art in Ohio.

The artist’s name resembles that of Rachael Rosen, the character from Philip K. Dick’s novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep (1968) portrayed by Sean Young in Blade Runner. But the Sci-fi IP Rossin most resembles is Neo from the Matrix (1999-2003) sequels, who could fudge the lines between dual realities. In the following conversation, the artist sheds light on what goes on behind the scenes and screens, putting a bit of distance behind the spooky actions in her practice.

Caleb Mathern: You were not initially convinced you could affect the residual ghosting artifacts of a zoetrope phenomenon on a gallery-sized scale to complement the six-channel video show Stalking the Trace, at the Zabludowicz Collection earlier this year. But it worked. How?

Rachel Rossin: Have you ever looked at a video of a zoetrope? You know how when it is slowing down, it starts to look like there is an afterimage? In the installation, one would pass it like, “Whoa, what did I just see?” “That is it. It is just a ghost for a second. It works like an optical illusion, similar to moiré patterns. The viewer keeps walking, expecting to see the next frame, but it will never be there. When I was mocking up Stalking the Trace in VR, I kept getting this effect. I did not expect it to happen in real life, but it did—while I was on site, I tried to see if I could amplify the effect with a lighting sequence when viewers move through the room past the apertures. I am rarely surprised by my own work, but this piece was really fun. It would start to feel like people were floating, a sort of repeating déjà vu experience.

It really is simpler than it sounds. The gimmick within the work reveals something true about how simple we are. I mean, that is ultimately what a gimmick is—one can say, “Oh that is so cool,” but also, “Oh, the way I see reality is so frail and simple.” A lot of the delight I have with questions surrounding AI involves that.

CM: In your video for Phillips x DAATA, entitled Recursive Truth (2019), is it true that you worked with neural networks that are heavily utilized in deep surveillance artificial intelligence? This repurposing of questionable tech appears to surface across your works; for example, how you use raycasting as a navigational tool in your VR piece I Came and Went as a Ghost Hand (2015), which informs bullet physics in video games. Do these grander applications linger in your practice?

RR: The libraries and programs I am mainly using to create my work are symbolic. With surveillance libraries, which are what was used in Recursive Truth, I was trying to find new ways to express a reoccurring theme that I cannot seem to escape: uncanniness. On a programming level, I see libraries almost like ABEx painters looked to oil painting as material symbolism. I am mainly using programming libraries that are ubiquitous—the first is called OPENCV; the bulk of our deep learning surveillance, image mapping, image tracking, and all facial recognition apps are built on this library.
It is built into all of our phones. It is a meta-infrastructure. That is one reason why I chose to use it. It is really beautiful, but there is a materiality to it that is expressing something insidious. ——

—The other is called a GAN (Generative Adversarial Network), a type of neural network used for AI that is more advanced, and mainly used at the moment for counterfeiting images—this is how I put my face on Steve Jobs’ and Marco Rubio’s bodies. It has what is called a ‘discriminator.’ With deepfakes and deep voice—these really advanced technological counterfeits—humans cannot tell the difference, since the computer basically treats itself as a human when judging it. There is a little node off to the end result that asks, “If I was a human would this pass?” For say, George Bush talking.

Raycasting is used for many things, but the main application is for bullets in games. It is basically talking about trajectory points. On the VR headset, there is a raycast off from wherever your attention points to. In Ghost Hand it is slowly prioritizing an entry script. It is actually eating parts of the image away depending on what you are looking at. That is one of the things I am attracted to. Perhaps because I grew up playing First Person Shooter games, I make a lot of interventions—I am troubled by much of the simulacrum of violence. I like using and exploiting that. ——

find that the materialism of things that feel ephemeral or invisible is what drives a lot of my work. There is something nice about whitewashing the ethics of what most of this code is used for. I pick programming languages and libraries that have a specific type of materialism and salience to where digital technology places us. ——

CM: What does uncanny (not just in reference to the uncanny valley) mean to you and your practice? How does this relate to the Proteus effect, the phenomenon where people’s behavior shifts in accordance with their digital representation, and your commissioned piece examining the effect? Your view appears to reorient the term back to its Freudian connotation; of an incomplete familiar feeling rather than a visual metric for believability.

RR: Masahori Mori coined that. The idea of the uncanny valley is the fall-off that happens through human representation in media, but ‘uncanny’ was first spoken about by [Ernst] Jentsch. Freud popularized “the uncanny,” defining it as locating the unfamiliar in the familiar—the sense of being displaced, or not feeling there is a home. Jacques Lacan later expanded on that; the evolution of where the eerie meets the familiar. I felt this once before. I had seen the Hudson River Valley in paintings before I had seen the Hudson River Valley. ——

The Proteus effect is more personal, psychological—it is the way we fill in the gaps when we see a representation of ourselves. I think this is really apt for how I experience reality, and how most people experience reality today. Whenever there is a digital representation of a person, especially in VR, your brain projects onto the avatar. You take on the characteristics of how you perceive you are embodied. These characteristics are integrated and then folded into your personality. I see this effect so often in these virtual spaces—so much of the research I was doing took place in VR Chat.

I started to find the name for it; the way I would regard myself would change every time I changed an avatar’s body. It is all about body-hopping. There is an eeriness that is felt when you see a representation of yourself, when instead you are expected to see your own body. Most of my work is seated from the perspective of embodiment. ——

The commission for the Akron Art Museum is headset-based, where viewers are moving in and out of these bodies that I present them. They shed avatars like skins or husks, and when the new avatar comes, it dissociates and explodes the previous, based on how fast the viewer is moving and where their arms are. I have a library of basically all the avatars that exist in the world. It is almost an infinite generative simulation. Raphael from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is in there.

CM: How does your practice evolve in the face of current forecasting in VR gaming? VR is experiencing a downturn because investors are turning to cybersecurity and AI. Think-pieces declaring VR Death are here, though they have been for years. If virtual reality is not the endgame for you, what is?

CM: Is it true that you taught canaries dubstep? RR: Yes—it is a project I did for my first show, N=7 at Signal in 2015. That is just the title—I would burst out into dubstep. I was first inspired after reading about a study about songbirds’ waveform being related to electronic noises. ——

—I love dubstep. I think it is fascinating for a lot of reasons—the build-up and release is very appropriate for how we are feeling right now, and what is happening to us on a biological scale. There are many people who have talked about this in a better way than I will. The same thing happens to our brains when we listen to dubstep as say, an orgasm, like a release of an insane amount of tension. That is why people like a drop, which is really funny. I do not care about the orgasm part of it, but its part that is mimicking something that is natural.

You can be hypnotized through sound, by subconscious signifiers that are present in a lot of electronic music. The megahertz that is in EDM or trance music actually masses your brain into similar rhythms. Heartbeats, the lymphatic system, all have frequencies that are familiar to our brain, but are not perceived by us. These are not the patterns of electronic music finds its natural grove in. Birds also have these patterns; they are built from the same meat as us. Their brains are very similar, the way they move through reality is the same.

The colloquial mythology around canaries is interesting. We once used canaries in the coal mines—horses for travel, dogs to hunt food—as extensions of our body. There were peripherals for the human experience that we evolved biologically. We now see peripherals in cell phones as extensions of our cognitive capabilities. Navigation used to be something that was completely human, inside of us, extended by using a bird or the stars to navigate.


Page 131

RACHEL ROSSIN

“We are driving these entire systems with our thumbs. It is an insane concept, especially when one could be using their entire body to move things.”
The visual language of Rosalind Nashashibi’s film works evades easy categorization, shifting between observational documentary and poetic subjectivity. Oftentimes elusive and eerily slow-paced, her films inquire into familial, societal, and systemic relationships between people, alongside the secret life of objects, the mechanisms of kinship, and everyday rituals performed within various social groups. Rather than documenting reality in an anthropological manner, Nashashibi’s 16mm films blur reality and fiction, exploring the passage of time and the ways humans organize themselves into communities or are organized by institutional structures. Coinciding with her solo exhibition DEEP REDDER at the Secession in Vienna, Staff Writer Fanny Hauser spoke to the artist about her most recent artistic collaborations as means to question and reshape the concept of the nuclear family.
Fanny Hauser: In your current exhibition at Secession, you are presenting a new film in two parts, which explores forms of communal life and the affective potential of relations in today’s society. The writing of Ursula K. Le Guin is an inspiration for your film, in which a multigenerational group of people are brought together to test a novel form of space travel that shuns the idea of linear time. Do you see a relation between nonlinear time and a new concept of family, beyond the traditional nuclear model?

Rosalind Nashashibi: Yes—Le Guin was a Sci-fi and fantasy writer, but she used those genres to look at what could become potential new scenes in society and family life, almost as an anthropologist of the future would. I was drawn to her treatment of a space crew in *The Shoibs*’ *Story* (1990), because she explores the becoming of a functioning group, where strangers who are singles in small families are brought together from diverse backgrounds and ages to spend a month building a crew mentality, before becoming test subjects of the new technology. The question the film asks is, how do we become a group to rebuild after a crisis? And what, therefore, are the productive or destructive moments ones in community?

FH: What is the crisis that you are referring to?

RN: In the film on view, entitled Part One: Where there is a joyous mood, there a comrade will appear to share a glass of wine, and the two parts. The moon is nearly at the full. The team horse goes astray. (2019), the crisis is non-linearity—of time no longer obeying to the before, during, and after. Relationships may be built on two people’s history and they may be built on the notion of possession. In a way, these are very linear structures; there is a history to love, and there could be an end point. The end is expected in all but parental and some nuclear family relations. Love in a community is less finite and less linear, it does not necessarily move on, or attach to only one individual: a wider love. You could say it is an idealistic idea, but basically, the work discusses the potential difference between linear and non-linear relationships.

FH: How did you come up with the titles of the films?

RN: I consulted the I Ching, which is an ancient Chinese oracle. I threw coins, and each time I throw about the meaning of the first shot. These lines came from the response from Hexagram 61, *Chung Fu—inner Truth*. I used these lines as principles from which to make the two parts. Part one is about being together and enjoying the group, part two is about the group fragmenting and then coming back together by means of storytelling.

FH: Fusioning observational footage with staged scenes, your work is often characterized by documentary restraint and close observation of mundane events and nascent relations. Most of the time, you remain behind the camera as an observer. Knowing your earlier work, I was surprised by how constructed many of the scenes in the new work seem and, especially, to see you as one of the main protagonists of the film. Could you elaborate on this shift in your work?

RN: They have definitely been an inspiration, but not to start painting. I started painting again in 2014, something I had wanted to do for some time, but put into action thanks to a Paul Hamlyn Award that gave me both the courage and funds to get a good studio and buy materials. In 2015, Adam Szymczyk introduced me to Suter, asking me to visit them in Panama, and to see if I could make something there for Documenta 14. There is no linear relationship between the paintings and film—they are two aspects of what I can make. In Part One, a painting of mine is held by Elena Narbutate, but the scene says more about my relationship with her and my painting than it does relate to painting the medium of film.

FH: Can you say more about the soundtrack in the new films? Which song do we hear in Part II and how does it connect to the work?

RN: You hear Tu Virginorum Corona from Exsultate, jubilate (1773) by Mozart. It is a song praising the Virgin Mary; I use it after Elena’s character is lost. When Pauline Manacorda and Lidivkas Buklys have given up on her returning to the lander, they stand facing, but are unable to look at one another. This song really captures their mutual feeling of loss and yearning, but also works as a metaphor for the huge emptiness of space itself. This scene is accompanied by the only representation of outer space in my film.

FH: You have often worked with other artists, but you have also used the life and work of artists as a point of departure of your films. Together with the artist Lucy Sker, you have investigated the works of Paul Gauguin and Paul Nash. In your individual practice, the filmmaker Chantal Akerman has been a point of reference, but you have also filmed the artist Remie Levi in her studio and portrayed the life and relationship of Vivian Suter and her mother, Elisabeth Wild, themselves both artists. For your new film, you have been collaborating with the Lithuanian artist Elena Narbutate, who also appears in your film. Some of her paintings are equally included in the book published in the context of the exhibition, juxtaposed on equal with your works. I feel this encompasses an entirely different notion of collaboration, or even kinship. Could you elaborate a bit more on the notion of expanded authorship, the one based on such elective affinities?

RN: This refers again to my decision to open up my practice to various influences in my life—that includes both my family and friends. I find Elena to be a particular influence that inspires and catalyzes things to happen. She helps me to allow stuff to happen, or just be, if it needs to. We have worked together a few times and keep up a regular conversation. Her way of thinking and living is integral to the film; she is at the heart of it. So, like Vivian’s Garden in a way, the film is also led by a character.

FH: Can we expect a third part of the film?

RN: It is possible!
This summer has been a difficult one in Hong Kong. Sweltering, as summers always are in China, and fraught with rising political tensions. On June 16, more than two million people marched across Hong Kong island to protest a controversial anti-extradition bill that threatens to jeopardize the basic judicial rights and safety of citizens, and what is seen by many including the United Nations as excessive police violence against civilians. The afternoon prior, a man fell to his death from a luxury shopping mall roof while protesting the hated bill—one of six such protest-related fatalities as of mid-August. While the colossal crowd chanted slogans in Cantonese (“chit wui,” or “withdraw the bill,” and “gai yau,” a colloquial term of encouragement translating literally to “add oil”), performers stationed under a bridge sang John Lennon songs in stirring harmonies. As demonstrators walking west neared the site of the fallen man’s death in Admiralty—by mid-day, heaped with hundreds of thousands of white flowers—a heavy hush fell over the masses. A silence that trapped air in millions of lungs, a silence that drew tears.

Hong Kong artist Samson Young’s practice is often situated at this loaded intersection between sonics and politics. Working with performance, drawings, animations, installation and (increasingly 3D-printed) sculptures, his works examine sound as a social and politically charged entity.
looks very much like the kind of small neighborhood mall that I grew up with in Hong Kong in the 1980s. There was one right next to my parents’ old place in the North Point area of the city called “City Garden,” which was the former location for one of the most successful local department store in history. “Da Da Company” [Big Big Company.] Da Da Company went bankrupt in 1986, and the City Garden mall has since been taken over by several churches, where they co-exist with empty storefronts and barely-surviving small businesses. If you look hard enough, there are still traces of Da Da Company’s architecture in the City Garden mall today. So the exhibition mixed all these different threads and attempted to twist them together like a composition exercise—like in a song. ———

At the core of this show is an animated music video, Big Big Company (2019), which features the 3D model of Cumyow as a character who danced his way through a series of strange images and environments, to a sound track that is my version of My Favorite Things from The Sound of Music. The second component is a collection of drawings about notions of utopia, which were displayed alongside a set of photographs that were taken at the City Garden mall. The third and last component is the recording and documentation of interviews that I conducted inside of a truck, in the form of a mobile-marathon live broadcast in Hong Kong in December 2018. Entitled It’s a that I conducted inside of a truck, in the form of a mobile-marathon last component is the recording and documentation of interviews and photographs that were taken at the City Garden mall. The third and

SY: Yes, I would agree with that. When I make a show, often I am saying ‘here is absolutely everything that is going on in my head when I am in contact with these materials.’ I do not worry about how much of that gets through to the audience, or whether or not they connect.

EA: What can viewers expect at your upcoming solo exhibition at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago? Is the show related to other recent projects?

SY: The show at the Smart will feature a trilogy of animated music videos, all of which are related to utopia in some ways. In 2018, I started a conversation with the institution about a solo exhibition that would be in conversation with the University of Chicago library’s collection. I was drawn to the materials on the 1933 World’s Fair, which also took place in Chicago. At that point, I already had two other shows lined up—both at Eduard Maltingue in Shanghai, and Centro A—so I decided to digest this rather large topic in smaller bites over three shows. In these three animations, the last of which will debut at the Smart, I am looking at aspirational thinking from different angles.

———The 1933 World’s Fair carried the subtitle “A Century of Progress.” It was an interesting time for such an event. The Great Depression was well underway, and shit was about to hit the fan with the Second World War. It was also an era when all the different ideologies—from fascism, to communism, to capitalism—were still very much in play. Compare that with now, when nothing is in play anymore. We have truly reached the end of history, not in the sense that Francis Fukuyama had defined it, where capitalism is the end game, but with a failure of the imagination to envision a future that is better than now. ———

The third animation, which will be shown for the first time in Chicago, focuses on the World’s Fair. Part of the music video was shot at the ‘Houses of Tomorrow,’ which were built and shown for the first time at the 1933 fair, and have subsequently been preserved. The five houses are now part of the Indiana Dunes National Park.

EA: You use color abundantly—I am thinking of your sound drawings, neons, and brightly-painted walls in exhibitions like The Highway is like a Lion’s Mouth in Shanghai and One Hand Clapping (both 2018). Do you associate particular colors with sounds?

SY: In my installations and room settings, I like to use saturated colors and their playful child-like quality. But the matching of sound to color and shapes in my drawing is a whole other bag of things. The relationship there is more precise. I do not have synesthesia, but I do have a very strong and somewhat consistent sound to color imagination. C major is always a like transparent yellowish color to my ears.

EA: When working with chairs and balls, does the connotation of hellos appeal to you? How do you consider the effect of sounds while you are working?

SY: In some works, yes. For Whom the Bell Tolls (2015) makes reference to this history, and years ago I made a musical theater piece specifically about that too.

———SAMSON YOUNG

“Sound and music are dangerous precisely because they are a very potent tool of resistance.”

—SAMSON YOUNG

EA: You have said that composers are at the forefront of responding to technology. Do you consider forthcoming developments in surveillance, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence?

SY: Yes, I think that is true. There are all kinds of interesting projects floating around in the area of AI and music that are too numerous to mention, but I do think that the history of music is very much a history of technological development.

EA: I thought of you during the unfolding of the Jamal Khassoggi case, which was particularly when Turkish officials announced they had audio evidence of his murder. Do you think of sound as dangerous or as a tool of resistance?

SY: Sound and music are dangerous precisely because they are a very potent tool of resistance. Music cuts right through the intellect and appeal to the emotions. But it plays both ways, right? For example, authoritarian governments frequently use the power of music in propaganda and in rituals.

EA: The use of 3D-printing has become more prevalent in your practice of late. How do you consider the relationship between these objects to the rest of the work? Do you consider them as sculptures?

SY: Sometimes they are sculptures, sometimes they are sets to a theatrical environment that I am trying to create, and not like super precious objects on their own. I like using 3D-printing because I am not a sculptor, but I know how to model stuff in 3D programs. The process gives me a level of control, because there is only a small gap between my mouse sculpting the thing in the computer, and the actual physical printed object.

EA: You have called composing the tool you use to organize yourself. Does this extend to aspects of your life, outside of art-making?

SY: I wish. I have come to realize as I grew older that my art is really the only place where I can achieve a satisfactory level of control of form. And art is a safe space to let my OCD self go crazy—nobody is going to die of a terrible accident if I played around with imposing new forms in my art.

I have always thought that the negotiation between form and content in art mirrors the struggle between idealism and realism in life. In a musical composition, form is what keeps everything together, a temporal structure that is beautiful on its own; the ideal vision of the thing, the blueprint of the thing. But the form itself does not make the work. Content is what you fill the form with, and also all the whimsical craziness that happens in the moment of composing, which sometimes wants to defy the form—you then have to make decisions about whether the form or the content is going to win in any specific musical moment. Then there is also the kind of form that is emergent, and that comes into being organically through acts of improvisation. These organic musical forms are a bit hit and miss—but, when they
EA: What makes a system of notation attractive or interesting to you?

SY: I like order, but I also like seeing what people do to defy that sense of order, or use that structure to propose their own alternate system within a system.

EA: I am sure you also read about how US diplomats in Cuba became suddenly sick (with symptoms mimicking brain injuries) after hearing persistent buzzing noises. While American officials once thought it was sonic warfare, experts now think the sound was simply “lovelorn crickets.” Your work suggests that you appreciate the absurd.

SY: The world is absurd. But sonic weapons are a real thing, and always have been.

EA: If you were not an artist—or a composer—what would you be?

SY: Probably a writer.
We all know we live in the legacy of modernism, whether it be the label of the ‘post-modern’ age, or the normalized sight of Frank Lloyd Wright’s homes in and outside of Chicago. In tracking the aesthetic legacies of the modernist project and effects, within the context of the United States and his native Israel, Chicago-based artist Assaf Evron reimagines imposed architecture and the natural environment within his photographic and sculptural installations. In alignment with the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial, Evron has undertaken several projects: a self-titled solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago as a part of the Chicago Works series, and a public work that imposes the image of an Israeli mountain range upon the windows of the Esplanade Apartments (at 900 N Lake Shore Drive), a Mies van der Rohe residential complex—further marking the artist’s interest in the relationship between the natural and the constructed.

MKM: How did the work for the Chicago Works exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art come about?

AE: Charlotte Ikes, the curator for the exhibition, had reached out—we had been thinking about what would be interesting to do for an artist project that deals with architecture. We both have a distinct interest in architectural ornaments, both formal and informal, and the ways in which the form of certain decorative elements convey meaning that can sometimes be conflicting for different cultures. The idea for this exhibition was to follow the idea of the meander, a Greek architectural decorative border. I like the idea, because meander (the word) comes from the name of the river Meander in Turkey. Because of this origin, the pattern has an inherent layer of meaning—the way that culture and nature interact—and points to the ways that projection can affect our surroundings without us even knowing. For example, few people know that when they say meander they mean the river, and that the root of the word originated from the site before it disappeared: the river changed its name. These types of historical narratives are really interesting to me, because they put things within a wider cultural context. Both in modernism, but also within the proto-modernism of Chicago, the ornament of the meander had been appropriated for different reasons.

MKM: How has meander made its way into your installation for Chicago Works?

AE: As I started to follow the meander ornament throughout Chicago, my work was to turn the building back into a vase. Moving from the work I had done in Israel, I went and photographed the three buildings in Chicago that incorporated the pattern. It has its way into your installation for the exhibition, I am making a sourcebook that includes these visual materials that are related to the work, but are not the work itself.

“... my work was to turn the building back into a vase.”

—ASSAF EVRON
MKM: Can you tell us about the reference images you selected to include in your Sourcebook? Especially your references to the tile works installed in Israel?

AE: Yes—the tile works, which I pull from in the MCA installation, are a very common practice in Israel. They look like trees, but are an artistic tiling installed on buildings throughout various cities that have no authors—they are clearly elaborate and intentional, but they have no attributed architects. I had taken the building plans from the city archives, for buildings that were done in the 1960s, but now the architects are all gone. It is very distinctive, but also very defaulted.

MKM: How do you mean defaulted?

AE: I suppose like the modernist approach to have a resource, such as these prefabricated tiles, at our disposal, and the desire to use them in a way that creates an aesthetic living environment by just reorganizing them.

MKM: Which buildings did you choose to photograph in Chicago? What unites them for this exhibition?

AE: Each of the buildings I am using have the Greek key. They are the Marquette, the Monadnock, and the Sharp Building—all by the same architects, and each very important in their own right. As I was looking for the Greek knot, or the same pattern on different buildings in Chicago, I was also looking at burial vases from the third-century BC. The same pattern is on the Marquette building as the ropes on the geometric vase. And then there are those style-like, snake-like patterns around there, that were appropriated to this city square in Tel Aviv. One of the main sculptors for the exhibition is based on this pattern, which is part of the city square in Tel Aviv, that was meant to represent democracy. I took the form and turned it into a screen, one that is now an obstacle within the exhibition.

MKM: Is there any material significance to the tile works?

AE: Yes, the tile works employ an extensive and laborious process; they are all handmade tiles and are coated in an expensive, complicated enamel called American Accent. So, you have American Accents [laughs], which is the name of the product but also the name of the piece—Untitled, (Kikar Rabin Square American Accent) (2019). Kikar Rabin is the name of the square in Tel Aviv.

MKM: So the work literally and figuratively interrelates Chicago and Israel—

AE: Very much so. In Israel, the idea was about democracy, but in Chicago the idea was about empire. Of wanting to be as great as Ancient Rome. I was looking at the original plan of the Kikar Rabin square from 1965, and only after Rabin was assassinated in 1995, did they recognize his name in the site. Kikar Rabin is now an icon, where we go and protest. The idea of the public in Israel is very different than in the United States.

MKM: How so?

AE: That is a slippery slope—but, for example, the idea of social democracy and the way you own space is very different. In the US, everyone ‘owns’ the space, and because everybody owns it, no one uses it. It is all very political, because public space is then saturated with the politics of the place, but also the motivation, the reality, or even the aspirational.

MKM: There are such subtle details in your work, which point to an irony that when you create a shared space, that the details have to be very quiet.

AE: I like the subtle and the overlooked in that way. For example, once I lift a detail from the floor and instead make it into a vertical barrier, you have to confront it and understand that it is no longer just a floor that you are stepping on.

MKM: What other elements will be included in this show that may have been reworked or updated?

AE: Well, there is the cove. It is interesting that we are speaking about resources, because the source of the cave work that comprises the wall installations and two-dimensional works had been historically used as a quarry, dating back to the tenth-century BC. When I photographed the site, I wanted to use the images of the cave the same way one would use a quarry—digging for materials. Throughout this series of works I used the photographs as building blocks for collages.

MKM: Have you done much still-life work—based on your images of the vase?

AE: For me, photography is a tool. I started my career as a self-taught photographer, but I am not married to any genre or one way to understand photography. I use it to present a visual proposition. In this way, the sculptures also operate as photographs. I can take a photograph of something and then relocate it, or take a photograph of this visual instance and then relocate it in space, the space of the gallery. Sculpture is no different.

MKM: So much of your work attempts to make the viewer face something that is not immediately apparent or completely obvious—

AE: Yes, in a way, the ornamentation in the exhibition is like anti-architecture. My architecture and history friends are talking about how there are these gaps in planning—all these things that are not architecture but are interacting with architecture. That there is not proper architectural research about these things, like blind spots. That is where this work becomes relevant, because it is doing this archival and visual research into something that is otherwise totally forgotten or overlooked.


All the World is a Stage

SARA RAMO // PROFILE OF THE ARTIST

By Ionit Behar

Sara Ramo: Absolutely—in this project, I used the museum as a studio, meaning I recorded the videos within the site, and made the installations inside the museum itself. It is an exhibition that relates to the space, but is also very open to the unconscious; I explored certain convictions about women and the feminine. In the end, I think the exhibition is a sort of fragmented story, or a fragmentation of bodies. This is something I have thought about in previous works as well, yet what is different here is that this museum has a very big emotional load for me—it was the first place in which I had contact with art, where I took refuge, where I went to the library. A place that made me feel welcome. This museum is not neutral for me—it is a place where, in a way, I found myself and left my condition of being a woman.

When I was thinking about lindalocaviejabruja, I imagined a sort of route or path that ran through all of the stigmas women face. For me, it was a difficult process, as I had to go through the work of understanding all the stigmas inside lindalocaviejabruja itself. I spent a whole year reading feminist books and texts, and although it was something that I had already done, this time I really submerged myself in the subject. It was like I started to see the world from another perspective, and it revealed a very painful reality.

IB: What books and texts have you been reading?
SR: I really liked the El Caliban y la Bruja [Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation] (2004) by Silvia Federici and also Brujas [Witches] by Mona Chollet (2019). I reread Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (1929) and Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949), both of which I had read when I was very young. I have also been reading Quem tem medo do feminismo negro? [Who fears black feminism?] (2018) by Djamila Tais Ribeiro dos Santos, who writes on Black feminism in Brazil. It was a process of study that I did to survive, to sort of understand the things that happened and have happened to me.

IB: When you say ‘fragmented bodies,’ what are you referring to?
SR: For example, I am using one of the rooms in the museum—generally used for meetings—that is packed with closets and cabinets, where the audience can walk into. At first glance, it appears there is not much to see but then one can find strange and hidden things inside the closets. There is also one video that shows a theater stage where the curtain covers the upper body of a woman and only her legs are visible. In another room there is a wallpaper with images of arms, legs, feet, and other body fragments. It is hard to explain because the idea of the fragments is more conceptual than illustrative. For example, the interior of one of the closets looks like the interior of a mouth or a vagina. There is a feminine presence being uncovered in the exhibition at different times that is sort of monstrous and unknown. Nothing is completely revealed, but rather everything is fragmented. I believe we, women, have not had the right space to express ourselves. So, in the show I make a non-existent woman made of fragments. The exhibition is a sort of sublimation from woman-object to woman-monster.

IB: Can you tell me about your installation Para Marcela e as Outras [For Marcela and the Others] at the Capela do Morumbi in São Paulo in 2017?
SR: They call this place a “chapel” but it is not really a chapel. It was a place where slaves lived and is now used for contemporary art exhibitions. You can see the construction technique of that time throughout the space—where walls were made with excrement, animal drool, blood, bugs, straw, earthworms, snails, etc. The walls were made in layers and held together with sticks that would eventually be taken out, leaving small holes in the walled foundation. This construction system is very common in Brazil, but in this Chapel, the walls were left unfinished and you are able to see the holes on the walls without the white cover. When I was invited to have a show here, I thought about this space as a body. The holes reminded me of death.

The neighborhood where I live is home to many transwomen who do sex work, and I began getting very involved with them, having conversations with them about our identities. I started to listen to their stories about living under extreme violence, and in many ways, began to understand my feminine condition through them. They suffer a double form of a violence: a violence that a woman lives for the mere fact of being a woman, but they also suffer a violence for not being “womanly” enough. Cismen are very violent towards them. Often, they are attracted to them, they like having sex with them, but at the same time this generates a lot of violence towards them.

The Para Marcela e as Outras exhibition opened a sort of psychoanalytic abyss for me. I began to question my own identity and understand that what you identify with, or what you think your sexuality is, is a completely imposed...
question about Bolsonaro. Well, it is a great sadness, what happened to us in Brazil. Thinking about this makes me want to cry. When he won, I was at the Ocupação Nove de Julho, which is an occupation in San Pablo that is part of Movimento Sem Teto do Centro (MSTC), a movement for fair housing. I might have been very naïve, but I did not think he was going to win. It was the most horrible thing that could happen. We now have a government that allows murder, allows homophobia, allows racism. We have a state that does not protect its people. But during these terrifying times, there are also good things—more spaces of community, solidarity, and dialogue. We have a project with a group of artists in Cidade Tiradentes, one of the most violent districts near San Pablo, where we are creating an itinerant school called “Ali Leslie” where we offer people access to art in a variety of spaces like cultural centers and museums. We hope that this will help them access the university later on. Bolsenaro generates more segregation, and this is always worse for people without resources. ——With Bolsenaro, it has also been a terrible time for the arts—we no longer have a Ministry of Culture. This ministry is now called the “Ministry of Citizenship” and includes sports, culture, and social development.

IB: The first time I encountered your work in person was during a trip I took to Montevideo in 2011, and I had the opportunity to see your video A Banda dos Sete [Band of Seven] (2013) at the Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo (EAC). Since then, your work has been so present for me. In A Banda dos Sete, as well as in your other videos, Os Ajudantes [The Helpers] (2013) there are figures that look half-human, half-creature. How do these characters arise? I feel like these two videos have a lot in common.

SR: In these videos, the human figure gets combined with a sort of mythological figure, an animal, a strange being. I think this has to do with me being a foreigner in my own country. I had this feeling when my family and I arrived in Spain, and there were not many Brazilians living there. It was a time just after the dictatorship, and sometimes we were looked at as if we were bugs. The Brazilian philosopher César Kiraly said that when the Spaniards arrived in America, they thought that the indigenous people they encountered were not sufficiently human. Part of our hate is not being able to recognize or identify with the differences of another person. These ideas and conflicts are very present in my works.

IB: Your installations are like scenographies for an act that happened or is about to happen—as if waiting for someone to put the objects back in their place. Have you studied theater?

SR: I took theater classes from age eight until sixteen. I was actually in a semi-professional theater group, but I had terrible stage-fright. What I liked the most about theater was the simplicity of the scenographies to be able to tell a story—if you needed a door, you would just place a door on stage. Theater and dance have been very important in my life and my imaginary. I read a lot of Ibsen, Beckett, and Artaud. The theater of the absurd is particularly relevant today for me—I think, how can we represent the barbarity under Bolsonaro? In a way, theater helps me materialize and concretize. I have the impression that in contemporary art, “life is a theater.” I like to think that you can play with this.

ABSTRACT: This exhibition was the beginning for my work Undelecaviejabruja at the Reina Sofia. It was also a very important exhibition for me because I had to detach myself from my own aesthetic and take on the energy of the space.

IB: As someone with both Brazilian and Spanish citizenship, how do you feel about having these two identities? I would also like to hear how it has been for you living in Brazil under the dictatorship of Bolsonaro.

SR: I have to admit that even though I have been very lucky to be in Europe and enjoy the things that the government does and offers, such as education or access to museums like the Reina Sofia, I have always felt like an immigrant there. There is a certain humiliation and prejudice against immigrants in Spain—at least that is what I felt when I arrived. On the other hand, in Brazil, my Spanish identity is always more celebrated. My Spanish and Brazilian identities have always been a problem for me. I wish I belonged to just one place, because in the end I am neither Spanish nor Brazilian. Besides, now I have an accent in both languages.

In the arts, it is a bit complicated to have two identities, especially being a Latin American artist. The West looks for a certain type of “Latin American Art,” with Latin American content, made by a Latin American. I admit that I like a difficulty in defining my art as Latin American; I find it interesting because my work is less colonizable as a hybrid thing.
UNLOCK THE BEST

Join Mansion Global Reserve, an invitation-only network offering luxury lifestyle experiences unavailable to the general public.

From after-hours exhibit tours and private gallery visits to one-on-one design consultations with renowned interior designers, Mansion Global Reserve is your ultimate destination for luxury.

Email reserve@mansionglobal.com to request your invitation.
Great Art is Timeless.
The 2020 McLaren 720S
Fearless engineering, elevated with pioneering art by Stephen Eichhorn. See the art car, debuting at EXPO Chicago and benefitting Ronald McDonald House of Chicagoland & Northwest Indiana.
YOUR PASSION. YOUR GOALS. OUR EXPERTISE.

Northern Trust is proud to be presenting sponsor of EXPO CHICAGO.

Understanding what clients care about — then creating an action plan to achieve their goals — is what we do. Similarly, our longstanding culture of caring reflects our commitment to the future of the communities we serve. Because together, we can achieve greater.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Mac MacLellan
Executive Vice President, Wealth Management
312-557-5711

Learn about incorporating your collection into your overall wealth management plan at northerntrust.com/expo


THE INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION OF CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN ART

EXPO CHGO

24–27 SEPTEMBER 2020
OPENING PREVIEW THURSDAY 24 SEPT
CHICAGO | NAVY PIER

Northern Trust is a proud presenting sponsor of EXPO CHICAGO.

expochicago.com
LEON POLK SMITH
ENDLESS SPACE
SEPT 13 – NOV 23, 2019

RICHARD GRAY GALLERY
CHICAGO