VIEWS

Vincent Trasov,
Mr. Peanut on the Staten Island Ferry,
New York, 1972

Image Bank, archival materials in twelve sections,
detail from "Fanzini, Stationery, Mailings and Polaroids",
KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2019

THE CORRESPONDENCE NETWORK

Image Bank
KW Institute for Contemporary Art
22 June – 1 September 2019

Like many countercultural projects, Image Bank – a nebulous collective founded in Vancouver in 1970 by artists Michael Morris, Vincent Trasov, and Gary Lee-Nova – created work that elicits tough questions about utopia's limitations. KW's retrospective produces a picture of young artists playing with bohemian relish a line between revolution and escapism. Through mail networks, the group collected and displayed printed and written matter, incorporating photography, postcards, poetry, and correspondence. This practice of distribution became an alternative model to bureaucratic and capitalist channels of information dissemination. The group's use of pseudonyms extended their evasion of regulating structures to include a symbolic disassembling of identity itself, a slippage between passport names and a gonzo realm ruled over by the likes of Dr. Brute and Mr. Peanut.

Selections from Image Bank's archive (here institutionalised, thankfully if ironically) are presented on a long table, conveying the various chapters through and identities with which the group sought to de-regulate modern life. One quadrant of this table chronicles Mr. Peanut, the Planters Peanuts mascot whose identity Trasov appropriated in order to run in Vancouver's 1974 mayoral election; another shows photos and correspondences related to "colour research" projects, conducted on a rural property christened "Babyland". All in all, a picture emerges of the group's rhizomatic sprawl, and their bravely incoherent languages. Trasov's Mr. Peanut costume looms nearby, and Peanut also appears in a montage video showing his campaign – ill-fated, despite the ambitious legume's penchant for tap-dancing and a written endorsement from beat generation artist William Burroughs, also presented here. Another video finds the "colour researchers" sending rainbow-painted wooden blocks down a stream. In a large projection, one of two statuesque twenty-something bodies uses a mirror to lick the other's body with orbs of light. A small monitor hosts a video of Image Bank members cleverly explaining their pseudonymous philosophy.

In addition to scrupulously framing the collective's work, this show presents a group of young artists in their intellectual, comedic, and conspicuously homogenous prime; the late Kate Craig is the only woman listed. The distance between this work's artistic-political purpose – charming, spirited, and nothing if not hermetic – and the sociopolitical contexts which loomed outside: anti-war protests, second wave feminism, gay liberation struggles, racist residential schools for indigenous children, and the 1970 bulldozing of a black Vancouver neighbourhood called Hogan's Alley – is palpable. Image Bank's members weren't apolitical; many of them engaged with these issues outside of their artistic work. Still, seen in proximity to these unmentioned struggles, the perfectly understandable desire to evade bureaucratic structures and identities – along with the playful way that they undertook this evasion – at times seems a suspiciously buoyant performing of politics, clashing against the seriousness of surrounding sociopolitical circumstances. In reflecting its time, this show triggers important questions concerning the degree to which it is possible to find social or political meaning in absurdist gestures.

A directory covers one wall of the exhibit like a gridded mural. Image Bank made use of this list of pseudonyms and contact information to solicit the materials that would come to make up their archive. The contacts were collected through the magazine *FILE,* a send-up of *LIFE* magazine, produced by Image Bank's collaborators General Idea. Here, the glint of an activist edge appears only peripherally or as a subtext via the politics of General Idea who famously engaged the 80s AIDS crisis in their text-based public intervention *Imagevirus* (1987–94).

Unquestionably, this is an exhibition of substantial present resonance. A meandering historical line extends from Image Bank's subverting of networks and media to that of the recent digital-native generation. If this contrast amplifies the work's historical distance, it's also to oddly beneficial effect; their frolicking energy can seem naive, but it is a naiveté free of the self-serious institutionalised coolness of, say, post-internet artists. The extent to which we (bizarrely) submit to the mass-archiving of our lives through data collection situates Image Bank's work as a strangely cheery prelude to the dark future we now know. Equally, the show reminds that there exist alternatives to the highly individual and highly capitalised neoliberal artist typology that continues to enthral us. In capturing these signals, the show also captures – albeit in the negative form of an excluded memory – the complicated social circumstances in which these gestures were couched.

Mitch Speed

Colour bars at Babyland, 1972–74

Ant Farm envelope, 1972

Henry Rapapport postcard, *Are words things?*, c. 1971

Yael Bartana
"The Graveyard"
Capitain Petzel
14 September – 9 November 2019

In the epic films of Yael Bartana, nothing is ever what it seems. In her newest, *The Undertaker* (2019), the Israeli-born artist turns her attention to the second amendment, staging an armed, military-funeral-style procession through the streets of Philadelphia that culminates in the performers throwing their weapons into a mass grave. Throughout, Bartana "quotes" sections of the dance piece Noa Eshkol created for a 1953 Holocaust Memorial Ceremony, translating the Israeli choreographer's sparse movements into a "a monument for the living". The film is presented alongside a new series of sculptures made to look like fossilised weapons at her exhibition "The Graveyard".

IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Chloe Stead: *The Undertaker* takes place in Philadelphia. Can you explain the significance of this location for film?

Yael Bartana: It actually started with a previous project, *What if Women Ruled the World?* (2017) That was a very big theatre performance project with a fictional, all-female government and one of the statements from these women was: "bury our weapons not our soldiers." At the same time, I got invited by the Philadelphia Museum of Art to make a new project within the context of the city. Thinking about the history of Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States were both written, I wanted to concentrate on the second amendment, the right to bear arms, which is a very present issue in the United States. I translated "bury our weapons not our soldiers" into "bury our weapons not our bodies," first making a live public performance based on that slogan and then the film.

Despite the fact that we seem to be talking about gun control on a near-constant basis, especially in the context of the US, nothing ever seems to change. Is including dance in your film a way of trying to get at something non-verbal – something that can't be expressed in words?

In the original performance we actually had six speakers in Philadelphia

Above and top right: Yael Bartana, *The Undertaker*, 2019, video stills

City Hall delivering statements about gun control and violence in the US, so in that context dialogue was very important, but in the movie I decided not to use any words. I was interested in performativity and the body. Visually there is an interesting relationship between the shape of a gun and an arm. In my mind, the idea is that if we free ourselves from guns, we can dance. In my fantasy it should be a global movement. It's not just about the US. The film is basically saying, "we could all change it if we wanted." It's just a matter of throwing these attitudes into the grave.

When did your interest in Noa Eshkol and the Chamber Dance Group begin?

I was very interested in the specific dance she created for the 1953 Holocaust Memorial Ceremony because there is something so progressive and daring in her way of thinking. First of all, the way the dancers are organised and composed reminded me a lot of the way that Nazi soldiers moved, so in the context of a Holocaust memorial, there is something so freaky about it. She also allowed her dancers to look like victims rather than heroes, which is interesting within the context of commemoration. I was extremely moved by the piece and I thought that it could be a great way to talk about violence and not be too literal about it – to create enough space for emotions and interpretations of the audience.

One of my favourite scenes from the film is when you realise for the first time that the performers are being protected by a group of real-life police officers. Not only does it reveal that the film is clearly a work of fiction, it also reveals the material reality of making such an artwork in an American city in 2019.

We rented those guns, which are film props. Each gun had red tape to show that they are dysfunctional, and on top of that, a special police person checked every single gun. We had to do it because we were in the middle of the city walking around with forty guns. I wanted to include the reality of these actions clearly within the film. I thought it was so strong and somehow ironic that the police were there to protect us, but we know that they can be very violent and that the whole system is based on racism.

Yael Bartana, *Bury Our Weapons, Not Our Bodies, Mask 1*, *2*, and *3*, 2018
Silkscreen on aluminium,
51 x 63 x 3 cm

In the film you stage a military funeral. What was it about that particular ceremony that resonated with you?

During my research trip to Philadelphia, I encountered a strong culture of reenactment, especially of the Revolutionary and the Civil War. Moreover, military culture in Israel is very strong; we inhale it. We're raised with the notion that all have to be solders. Of course, it's changing now, but I was born in the 1970s and our ability to go against this culture at the time wasn't there. I feel like it's almost part of our DNA. It's also quite interesting in the context of Eshkol's work because I feel that dance is the thing that keeps the dancers sane. The film takes place in the context of Philadelphia but there is a personal aspect to it; I experienced shooting a gun and I want somehow to kill that history.

Chloe Stead

Performance by AUN with Amnesia Scanner, Atonal, Kraftwerk Berlin, 2019

AN OCEANIC FEELING

Atonal
Kraftwerk Berlin
28 August – 1 September 2019

Berlin Atonal can be an exhausting, if not excruciating, experience. The festival's location, an impressively brutalist concrete former power plant, becomes an adult playground to slide in and out of dreary and euphoric states that nonetheless take a physical and psychological toll. Close to midnight, the lowering of a giant screen in the middle of the former turbine hall signalled a potential moment of repose. The live performance of Cyprien Gaillard's film *Ocean II Ocean* (2019) offered an immersive and contemplative experience rarely possible within art institutions. The presentation was an adaption of his 11-minute video shown at this year's Venice Biennale, but at Kraftwerk Berlin, the work was extended to half an hour, accompanied by live playing of steel pan drums, and hundreds of sweaty – many likely high – festival-goers.

The film seemed to go through three loops with a series of shots that cycled through close-ups of fossils embedded in the marble of Soviet subway stations, large freight ships dumping New York subway train cars in the ocean, underwater scenes of those cars, and the sea creatures that roam the empty vehicles. The film's visual narrative provided a romantic retort to the bleakness of the anthropocene. It suggested instead an ultimately optimistic – but not necessarily less critical – interpretation of humanity's industrial and technological expansion over the planet as one that still holds potential for renewal, if not redemption. There can be progress in all this barbarism.

The film and music looped three times, triggering a certain kind of boredom. As the second loop started, and the already familiar images began to appear, part of the audience departed, while an endurance challenge ensued for those who fought – or embraced – the boredom. Was it possible to stay attentive, to allow oneself the freedom of ennui and contemplative reprieve? When the loop did not appear to be identical to the former cycle, a competing and somewhat anxiety-inducing impulse emerged, raising doubt as to one's own memory. By the third loop, the experience of the film occasioned a more attentive looking, as attendees searched for what had been missed. Embracing the monotony as an opportunity for rediscovery and absorption had its comforting payoff. Viewers could let their thoughts wander, thinking about the need for such respite at the festival, and in life.

Later that evening, the Berlin-based electronic music duo Amnesia Scanner, Ville Haimala and Martti Kalliala, started their set with deep, skin-penetrating sonic vibrations, powerful strobe lights, and smoke machines. Associated with the "deconstructed club music" epithet, they've positioned themselves in relation to the club scene much in the same way that early post-internet art positioned itself in relation to the white cube gallery: suggesting – or some could argue, predicting – its obsolescence. They ended up in a somewhat similar position too, embracing the culture industry through micro-subcultures. The art world has welcomed them in return, with many of their performances taking place in art institutions. Resulting in a kind of punk-futurism that embraces the present, Amnesia Scanner's music, especially their debut album *Another Life* (2018), mixes hard techno with pop music (and many more genres), distorted human, and AI vocals. Their strength lies in adopting pop's structure, length, vocals, and lyrics, which, according to the duo, take up the "built-in phonetic power of words".

The live performance included two guest appearances. The enigmatic Brazilian performance artist AUN came out fully masked, while the singer Lalita intoxicated the audience with her range of gut-wrenching and melodic vocals. The hour-long set was paced by short three-to-four-minute-long songs, with short intermissions breaking-up several euphoric build-ups and moments of cathartic release, injecting pleasure in the pain and chaos of the festival.

Ocean II Ocean upturns the relationship between the natural and the human-made world, and Amnesia Scanner upturns the human and machine relationship. Both the Anthropocene and our ambivalence amidst a contemplative dance experience were taken up in all of their nasty glory (a feat nearly impossible to imagine in the art world). By refusing to distance themselves from reality, to merely fall into escapism, the two performances provided a critical re-enchantment of the present. Without succumbing to either technophobic romanticism or technophilic fantasy, they embraced ambivalence instead, creating forms of enjoyment and pleasure amidst a society in decay.

Laurie Rojas

Screening of Cyprien Gaillard, *Ocean II Ocean*, Atonal, Kraftwerk Berlin, 2019

Still from Cyprien Gaillard, *Ocean II Ocean*, 2019, HD colour video with sound

Senga Nengudi
"Topologies"
Lenbachhaus
17 September 2019 – 19 January 2020

In the 1970s, Colorado-based artist Senga Nengudi worked in Los Angeles as part of an emerging community of African American artists that – alongside the political upsurge of Black Power – engaged in new ways of expression beyond the oppressive and colonial Western art canon. The corporeal aspect of her sculptures often recalls contorted flesh, suggesting genitalia and breasts, and places her into the feminist canon as well. Using quotidian materials to create installations, sculptures, and performances, she was a key participant in a new aesthetic formed through a black gaze.

Based on the recent purchase of four major works for the Lenbachhaus, this retrospective focuses on Nengudi's material and process. The notion of shape-shifting informs the organic and processual understanding of her work. The performative aspect of her sculpture is apparent through the elements of improvisation, movement, and impermanence.

Dorothea Zwirner: The announcement for your exhibition shows a black dancer on all fours like a spider or bug in a web of nylon pantyhose fixed on the wall. I was immediately fascinated by the physical and emotional vibrancy of the photo, which belongs to the series "RSVP" from the 1970s. What is it that motivated you to do this series?

Senga Nengudi: I started with this series because I wanted to express the fundamental experience of pregnancy that I was going through, the ability of the female body to stretch to accommodate a new life, including the psychological stress and pressure you go through. Looking for an elastic material that reflects that state, I finally came up with

Courtesy the artist and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

Senga Nengudi, *Get-Up,* 1979
Performance with Houston Conwill, Maren Hassinger, Billy Hinton, Sabir Mateen, Franklin Parker, Roberto Miranda, Yolanda Vidado

the nylons as both a kind of skin and body. In the next step, I started filling them with sand, which gave some weight and the sensuality of a body.

Were you intent on the performative aspect from the beginning?

No, first there were the sculptures, and then I had the idea of performing with them like a dance partner. I wanted that kind of interaction, I wanted to be with it. But these were very private performances. Working with my friend and collaborator Maren Hassinger, I finally gained enough confidence to hold public performances.

It is only recently that audiences in Germany became acquainted with your work. What prompted this late recognition?

This was a slow process in Europe, but I had shows in Paris 2006, at White Cube in London in 2014, and recently with Sprüth Magers in Berlin and London. Even in the US it took at least twenty years. It was my friend, the artist Lorraine O'Grady who first persuaded me to show my "RSVP" pieces again. Then my gallerist Thomas Erben exhibited the series in New York in 2003. This show got such a great response that it was a turning point in my career.

As a black female artist working in the field between sculpture, performance, and dance, you had – so to speak – three kinds of disadvantages.

Yes and no. Any disadvantage is an advantage at some point, because the marginalisation of Afro-American or female artists allowed me to operate in the shadows. Today, young black artists graduate straight out of college and have an amazing career. Back in the day, it was impossible to break through that quickly.

Not only the elasticity of the nylon sculptures, but also the flexibility of the dance has this strong physical, sensual, and feminine vibrancy. Do you consider yourself a feminist artist?

I'm not particular about labelling myself. But my "RSVP" series certainly puts me in the realm of feminist art. My work comes out of my experience as a black woman in the US, and as a mother. All my pieces were expressions of this experience physically and psychologically, especially as a black woman of a certain body type.

Stephanie Weber, the curator of the show, speaks about your "laid-back cultural eclecticism." What are some elements of this?

There are cultural influences from my own African American background, West African dance, traditional Japanese theatre, free jazz, post-Minimal art, and junk art, just to name the major sources. Many of these influences are clear in the show: there are reconstructions of my early "Water Compositions" (1969–70), photos of my sculptures from fabric, which I installed outdoors in the early 70s in Harlem, as well as videos and photos of performances with artists friends from the 70s und 80s. In addition, the installation *Bulemia* (1988) is on display, a kind of hideaway or utopian place, revetted with newspaper.

Photo & Courtesy: Howard Ehrenfeld

Is there a connection between your artistic, educational, and social work?

Yes, for me the art experience – be it direct or indirect, through teaching and exposure – is critical. It can stimulate a human being to go above and beyond their perceived self. To develop cultural literacy in a community where there is little diversity is very important. The Sankofa African Dance & Cultural Organization, of which I am a founding member, was set up to present various aspects of our culture, such as African dance, philosophy, folklore, and crafts. The purpose was to expose pupils to another culture other than their own. There is no hope if we cannot connect together, one-to-one, and value each other and the culture behind the person. It's a bit like the interaction between man and woman who create a child which is neither one of them but something else in itself. Also, in art, it goes beyond appreciation, to the generation of openness and new thought.

Collection Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy © Senga Nengudi 2019

Senga Nengudi, *Rubber Maid*, 2011
Nylon mesh, rubber, sand,
36 x 56 x 8 cm

Senga Nengudi, *Bulemia*, 1988
Installation with
newspaper and spray paint

THE IN-BETWEEN

MUNICH

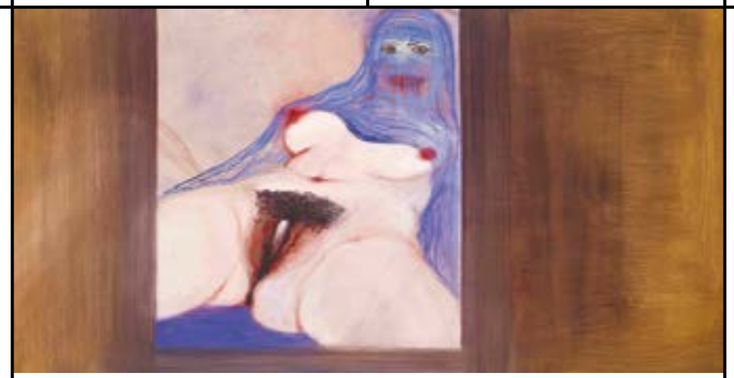
Miriam Cahn
"I as Human"
Haus der Kunst
12 July – 27 October 2019

I AS A PLURALIST

To take Miriam Cahn's manifold, unconventional, and often provocative work as a prime example of a feminist approach to art and art history would seem to be a legitimate aim for a retrospective, as Cahn has always explicitly committed herself to the feminist art production of her time. The recent discussions about subtle daily discrimination against women, triggered by the #MeToo debate that began in 2017, might have made the reading of Cahn's work as a critique of traditional gender roles even more obvious, particularly with regard to the status of the female artist and the Western notion of the artist as genius. So a "rediscovery" of Cahn (who took part in documenta 7 in 1982 and the Venice Biennale in 1984) undoubtedly comes at the right time. But the actual political explosiveness of her work may also be at risk of being misunderstood and overinterpreted for the benefit of an unambiguous political message.

The intention to read Cahn's work strictly from a feminist perspective is expressly pursued by the retrospective now on display at Haus der Kunst in Munich (the exhibition was already at Kunsthaus Bern and will travel to Warsaw in November). This was especially true in curator Jana Baumann's introduction to the accompanying catalogue, where Cahn's work is described as a strong force against "nationalism, reactionary conservatism, sexism, populism, racism, Islamophobia and contempt of pluralism".

Under the title "I as Human", an impressive range of Cahn's works is presented, including her Super-8 films of the late 1970s that show minimalistic



Miriam Cahn, *l'origine du monde schaut zurück*, 16.+21.12.17+20.1.18
Oil and pastel on wood, 90 x 180 cm

"short portraits" of waves, birds, clouds, fishes, trees, and other natural phenomena, as well as her recent painted-over prints and paintings commenting on actual political issues like the refugee crisis or arms production. Despite the retrospective character of the exhibition, it eschews a chronological order. Rather, the exhibition surprises with a wild hanging, mixing older and younger works, varying extreme formats and different media, and almost ignoring conventional presentation rules. Dramaturgically, the circuit starts with more abstract works, like Cahn's atom-bomb pieces, watercolours where flushes of paint were spilled symmetrically over vast pieces of paper. The spills refer to mushroom clouds as well as to human organs or streams of body fluids. Her enormous charcoal drawings of the 80s are also placed at the beginning, depicting houses, machines, or tubes so oversized that they seem to burst the limits of the drawing paper and to break aggressively into the real world.

The show culminates in two rooms where her painterly work from the 90s onwards is presented. Naked human bodies in extreme situations of exposedness – to endless landscapes, to other humans, or just to themselves – penetrate each other or themselves. These paintings can be read as both acts of cruel (self-)humiliation and joyful devotion to lust. Here, in my view, the mis- or overinterpretation of Cahn's work takes place; the nuance of these paintings is lost when they are reduced to pure hostility to the numerous isms that afflict our world. One might ask: Is art in general even capable of intervening in recent political controversies? And subsequently, is it necessary at all to engage art for a – by all means important – fight against all the aforementioned reactionary social trends?

I would say no. No especially because Cahn already offers a conception of the self that includes the abysses, the abject, and the ambivalent aspects of human life, one that needs no explicit explanation or even functionalisation. Her works are political in themselves. Declaring this so unequivocally is superfluous, and, in the end, even leads to a diminished interpretation of her work. Or, worse, it leads to a generalised perspective of "human universalism", as the title "I as Human" also insinuates. Shouldn't we discuss works of art just as they are: made in a particular context with particular references, and not as objects to project our blurry and sweeping wishes and needs onto?

To give one example: the painting *l'origine du monde schaut zurück*, (2017–18) showing the extended body of a naked woman with a hijab over her head and face, is interpreted in the catalogue as the inversion of the "male gaze". This is, of course, legitimate. However, it should have been mentioned that Gustave Courbet's famous *L'Origine du monde* (1866) was commissioned by Khalil Bey, a Turkish-Egyptian diplomat and collector in Paris. This means that a specific reading of the hijab in the context of nineteenth century erotism and exoticism is made impossible. By remaining silent about this aspects – intentionally or not – it becomes impossible to pose the question of other feminist appropriations of Courbet's painting, by Jutta Koether, Lee Lozano, and others.

It is not about a "right" or "wrong" interpretation. It's about recognising works of art as specific cultural objects open to dialectic interpretations and pluralistic readings both positive and negative, readings that would, taken to their extreme, even allow an understanding of Cahn's work as perpetuating those very evils the catalogue claims she is fighting against.

Daniela Stöppel

View of Miriam Cahn, "I as Human", Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2019

Photo: Markus Mühlheim. Courtesy of Miriam Cahn, Galerie Meyer Riegger and Galerie Jocelyn Wolff

Photo: Jorit Aust. Tabita Rezaire, Ultra Wet – Recapitulation, 2017–2018, Courtesy the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg; Miao Ying, Blind Spot – People, 2019, Courtesy Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna

View of "Hysterical Mining", Kunsthalle Wien, 2019

THE FAITHFUL BIENNALE

The Vienna Biennale 2019 "Brave New Virtues, Shaping our Digital World"
Various venues
29 May – 6 October 2019

The Vienna Biennale opened this May to a very different art world than when it was inaugurated in 2015. It was founded as one which, in addition to art, tackles the challenges of design, architecture, and inevitably, ever-advancing technologies. Back then, the question of technology was starting to dominate discussions of art. However, while automation, algorithms, and artificial intelligence continue to be the most critical issues of our time, global biennials and large thematic exhibitions have promiscuously moved on to other topics. This is not the case with the Vienna Biennale. The constellation of institutions around the Museum of Applied Art (MAK) that organises this exhibition has focused on these future-oriented questions in each of the event's three editions.

Various "exhibition projects" approach the theme of artificial intelligence from different angles: environment, urban development, design, architecture. This includes "Climate Change!", housed in the basement of MAK, which showcases fictional technological solutions that have been beautifully crafted in a mix of recycled and recyclable materials. These future technologies invite the viewer to not only imagine but participate in the production of a healthier world. The most striking of the speculative design projects is *Lunar Lander* (2018), which combines the familiar aesthetics of a space vehicle with a technology developed by Bristol Robotics Laboratory researchers. Through their collaboration with the design collective EOOS, the scientists have invented a public toilet that uses urine to produce electricity by collecting it in microbial fuel cells.

Another future-oriented project was *Change Was Our Only Chance* (2019), completed in the University of Applied Arts Vienna at the institution's own exhibition space, Innovation Lab. Here, the artist collective Time's Up has constructed an immersive installation that responds to the impending climate catastrophe by envisioning a dis-/utopia by the sea in the year 2047. Utilising the gallery's darkened space, the collective has brought together large projection screens and a variety of lighting and props from quotidian life. Their unusual setup makes the space feel less like a space-age utopia and more like a steampunk underworld dedicated to a salvaged future.

But the most significant segments of the biennale are Paul Feigelfeld and Marlies Wirth's "Uncanny Values: Artificial Intelligence and You" at MAK and Anne Faucheret and Vanessa Joan Müller's "Hysterical Mining" at

VIENNA

Kunsthalle Wien, both of which concentrate more on art practices than on design and architecture. These exhibitions symmetrically tackle the promises and dangers of technological development without falling into descriptive and prescriptive traps. The MAK exhibition's well-articulated spatial narrative, with an exhibition design by Some Place Studio, unfolds like an intensive course on epistemic transformations brought on by technological acceleration. The nearly all-female show at the Kunsthalle is an earnest attempt to undo not only the gender and ethnic biases that have been built into our digital technologies for decades, but also to do away with the dichotomising logic of 0/1, male/female, mind/body, and human/machine that underwrites their material functions.

If these two exhibits are the epistemological Ying and the political Yang of the biennale, they find common ground in the strategies deployed by the artists Jonas Lund at MAK and Tabita Rezaire at the Kunsthalle. Lund's *Significant Other* (2018) consists of a set of above-head informational monitors that claim to display a mathematically measured comparison of visitors' emotional characteristics. His other piece, *Talk to Me* (2017), is a giant vertical LED display – reminiscent of a mobile phone, only much larger – that engages visitors in a voice-to-text dialogue with a chatbot modelled on the artist's own peculiar speech patterns. Both have to do with the psycho- emotional relationship between technologies and humans who use them. In a similar vein, Rezaire's mesmerising installation *Ultra Wet – Recapitulation* (2017) consists of a large pyramid, the perfect projection surface for a three-channel video work,

EOOS, *Lunar Lander*, 2018

Jonas Lund, *Significant Other*, 2018, dual display ceiling mounted sculpture
"Uncanny Values: Artificial Intelligence & You", MAK, 2019

surrounded on adjacent walls by shiny silver plates that double and triple the impact of the visuals. Rezaire makes several cameos in the video footage, reading and singing. Recalling Lund's interest in the effects of human technology relations, *Ultra Wet – Recapitulation* is a meditation on the potential healing powers of the spiritual dimension of technological transformation. These works hint at the irrational residues of technology that sabotage a supposedly perfect symbiosis between humans and machines.

Another work which successfully balances the potential risks and benefits of advanced technology is the atmospheric installation by Heather Dewey-Hagborg and Chelsea E. Manning, *Probably Chelsea* (2017). It consists of thirty possible portraits of the whistle-blower, both male and female, algorithmically generated by interpreting her DNA. The work points to the inherent flaws of algorithmic objectivity through to the faces' inaccurate correspondence to the actual person they are supposed to simulate. It also celebrates Manning, a currently incarcerated political activist, as a collective "we", suggesting that she could be any of us.

The main strategy of this edition of Vienna Biennale seems to have been blending the works of artists and non-artists, interweaving two distinct branches of knowledge, science and art, and two methods of knowing, the subjective and the objective. By halting the segregation of art from science, even for as short a duration as the biennale's, the curators were able to expand awareness of scientific developments and their implications while mounting a critique of the field's social and political limits.

Mohammad Salemy

Perel, *Pain Threshold*, 2019, performance view, ImPulsTanz, Vienna

Perel
"Pain Threshold"
ImPulsTanz
8 August 2019

The performance has ended and there is silence. "But he was good-looking, are you sure you didn't enjoy it?" The echo of these last words stays in the room. No one claps. Some sobs are audible. The introductory text had informed the audience that topics like disability, trauma, care, and consent would take centre stage. But Perel's fine-tuned choreography and multi-layered narrative struck a chord one can't quite prepare for.

Perel has a magic ability to deliver the care the audience needs, to subtly put cis-men on the spot, and to master the timing of tension, relief, and intimacy while creating a space of learning and unlearning. The performance is structured in three parts: first a member of the audience is chosen to engage in caretaking rituals with Perel, massaging the artist's hip. Part two is a discussion with the audience about how consent, trauma, and the practice of empathy were negotiated in the first section. Finally, the performer wears a long blond wig covering their face while they recount their rape twenty years ago, and the subsequent trial.

Victoria Dejaco: *Pain Threshold* is well-orchestrated and touches the audience on many levels. Tell me about the goals of the performance.

Perel: There is a subtle power shift that I am trying to enact in the show that I've been thinking about for a long time. About how, as a person born female, who is disabled, queer, and working in a context of dance but not dancing in a normative way, I can have power in my work and how I can centre an identity and a discussion that is not about pleasing the male gaze, and that is not about having a sense of humour and "being good". A person can be a radical punk and still be delivering the exact thing that gaze wants. Or can still frame themselves in a way that men understand. And I am trying to collapse that. I don't know what it's like for the viewers when they walk out, if they even respond in a way that allows them to think about it. But I am just trying to open the audience up to the fact that we are not all part of the same reality.

The way you describe the trial after your rape, it seems like a classic victim-shaming of a room full of men.

Only when I started to work on the piece this year did I realise that when all of those men said those things to me, they were making excuses about themselves. It was not about me. As a teenager I internalised those questions and doubted that I even had the right to say "I don't want this." I am taking care of my 15-year-old self by making this piece. Every time I see a new dimension, the burden is gone from me at that age in that chair in a courthouse, thinking that I need to justify my bodily autonomy. The Christine Blasey Ford trial made me understand that justice doesn't come from the justice system and nobody can grant you justice. I had to seek my own forms of justice in different ways. And one of them is performing. It is a form of justice when I go through the audience and interview people about what they saw. When I ask questions of those cis-men. I know whether they get it or not.

It was interesting to me that in the second part, two people looked up the word consent, or had it explained by someone else in the audience upon your invitation.

Yes. It's interesting to me as well. Once the French guy realised, he said: "Well that's what I thought it was all along." When I asked if he could name a moment in the first part where there was consent, he thought it was just fluid all the time. That was interesting to me, his idea that consent looked fluid. And the Russian woman understood. Her answer was one of the most important answers of the night, that if she was going to be the caregiver, she would not have been comfortable undressing me. That would have been something she would not have been able to consent to. That was very interesting to me.

Was it different to perform in a museum this time?

Previously, in other theatres, the people who worked the lighting and sound were women. This was the first time that I have worked with men doing the lighting for this show and that has felt vulnerable to me because they are not necessarily working form an intuitive place like the women have I worked with.

Why do you perform this in the context of dance?

As performers, as dancers, our currency is our bodies. We learn techniques, we learn semantics, we learn therapeutic things, but we are rarely granted bodily autonomy. When we dance for other people, we have to live up to the vision that they have. It mattered to me to do the show in this way, because I want consent to also be a topic within rehearsal structures and within a pay rate and within people's bodies – how they want to use them and how they want to be framed. It's of course still the case that in the field of dance, the majority of successful choreographers and touring artists are men, but the majority of practicing dancers are still women. I can't speak to race, but I can speak to this disparity having to do with what people accept as authority, what people accept as brilliance and what women think they need to do in order to stay in the industry.

CHOREOGRAPHIC JUSTICE

Perel, *Pain Threshold*, 2019, performance view, ImPulsTanz, Vienna

VIENNA

THE LEVIATHAN

Nora Schultz
"would you say this is the day?"
Secession
27 June – 1 September 2019

Making sense of exhibitions is a reflex. We're trained to do so. Irrationality and freedom are both ascribed to art, but with an almost eerie determination, the industry has to create practical meaning.

As art's hobo little brother, poetry is not yet under the same kind of strain, and it feels useful to approach Nora Schultz's show from that angle. Most of the works, materials, and themes are of pliable character. They rhyme and reproduce themselves like an echo, just as the electronically pitched and distorted sounds that circulate through the Secession's space.

The largest pieces in "would you say this is the day?" are airy structures made of nervously bent, thick aluminium wires. They reach all the way from the floor to the iconic, partly opened Secession ceiling, visually suggesting architecture of support and the movement of sound or water filling up the space. This series of three is titled "Atlas/The Day", alluding to two sculptures by Michelangelo. It is not an obvious more to formally relate the three amorphous metal structures on display to the two famous marble figures, but they resonate frequently with the motifs that resurface throughout the show.

First of all on the level of medium, of course, there is a connection between Schultz's ephemeral constructions and those of Michelangelo – which, despite the weight of clichés and heavy marble, still stand for something like the essence of sculpture. As Atlas held up the world, Schultz's sculptures suggest architectural features holding up the ceiling or supporting the narrative architecture of the show.

Another association with Michelangelo's *Day* (1526–31): The aluminium lines fidgeting from the ceiling could imaginably resemble the shapes and outlines of this sculpture. The immaculate grid of the Secession's ceiling and the looser grid of the wires' skewed extension into space again connect to the wallpaper on the back wall, which shows a scan of a daily planner free of actual plans or appointments. The calendar's grid was slightly altered by adding two folds, creating pictorial depth and even more metaphorical free time. The calendar poses both as "warped" time and as a sculptural sketch. The empty schedule is headlined by the handwritten sentence MY HOPES AND DREAMS and by figurative drawings. The scribbles show stylised human heads, one of them with three eyes, and a goblin resembling one of H.P. Lovecraft's ancient creatures holding a cone of ice cream. Altogether, they form a whimsical dreamscape.

The more the viewer gets sucked into this game, the more topics recur, imitate, and refer to one another, dematerialising to form a weird entity almost like those in a Tarkovsky movie. The idea of an enigmatic narrator is bolstered by the fact that the artist was not present during the installation and opening due to a delayed visa process in the US. In addition to the ceiling, Schultz also opened the back door of the main hall. This, and the exhibition soundtrack, a sample of the sound of Schultz's studio air conditioning, plays with the idea of an almost spiritual invisible circulation. The Secession's own air conditioning runs concurrently at night, a continual breeze that creates a sense of ever-present movement and animation in the space.

A more manifest counterpart to air circulation are the two videos *Whale Watch* and *Simulated Whale Watch* (both 2019), which reference a whale watching trip by the artist. In the former the camera behaves as in a test shoot, manoeuvring from upside-down to fish-eye mode to different stages of zooms. Occasionally the back of a whale appears, but its body is almost never fully encountered. The latter video, equally chopped, was filmed with a GoPro camera, presumably at the artist's studio desk. Small stickers making up work titled *Piece of Whale* (2019) display whale skin as if these animals were rhythmically breaching across the show. Once again, a fractured sensation of spotting the creature of the depths: throughout, flashes of fin and fountain are all that the viewer can see. The whale as elusive as the artist.

Benjamin Hirte

Photo: Iris Ranzinger

View of Nora Schultz,
"would you say this is the day?",
Secession, Vienna, 2019

BELIEF AND DISBELIEF

Omer Fast
"Der Oylem iz a Goylem"
Salzburger Kunstverein
27 July – 6 October 2019

In a very convincing hospital setting, complete with waiting room, corridor, and a typical doctor's office, three films are screened, each involving ghosts. In *August* (2016), Berlin-based artist Omer Fast imagines the last days of the photographer August Sander. The 360-degree film *The Invisible Hand* (2018) was set in China and is based on a fairy tale, as is *Der Oylem iz a Goylem,* which the artist shot in the Alps around Salzburg last winter. The titular film starts with an encounter on a ski lift between a skier and the ghost of an Orthodox Jew who suddenly appears and retells a Yiddish fairy tale: A poor Jewish goldsmith is seduced by a she-demon who makes him rich in exchange for secret sex. The film switches back and forth between the embedding narrative that takes place in the ski resort in the present, and the embedded narrative set in the medieval period. The skier asks the ghost to shut up and, in desperation, takes away his hat, leading him to be silent. When she inadvertently drops the hat, the man starts bleeding from his nose and finally disappears, but his story continues to torment her. Back in her apartment, the woman continues the tale. Dissatisfied with the traditional ending, the film concludes as she struggles with various alternatives, carrying the burden of the story left behind. Here, Fast's three films find common ground: the past, haunting the present.

Klaus Speidel: You said that the hospital setting acts as a sterile zone aimed at keeping death away and that hospitals deal with the supernatural by simply denying it. I found this explanation a bit thin to justify such a big installation. It's rather a lot of material to make a small symbolic point.

Omer Fast: Insofar as they want to keep death and disease out, hospitals are zones of exorcism. By using it as a set, I'm transposing something that is clinical onto a different set of concerns that involve the social: Which characters do we include and which do we exclude? Which messages do we allow? Which pasts do we include, and which do we reject?

So it's an allegory?

To begin with, it's a set. When you walk into a hospital environment, there's a reaction. You cannot experience it as fully neutral. Most of us don't find it very pleasant. When you walk in here, you remember how you felt in this kind of environment when somebody else was suffering or you were suffering yourself. But here you are also removed from the real space, because it's a fake environment. This creates tension. The installation plays with disbelief and its suspension. And the films are also about what we believe and disbelieve: Do we believe in ghosts? Do we believe that telling the truth is vital or that lying is essential for society?

Would you say then that it's not just about the allegory, but about the difference between a picture of a hospital and the experience of entering a hospital environment? We are not just viewers, but "experiencers"?

Yes, exactly. Even if we know that something is not the real thing, we still have an emotive reaction to it. As a filmmaker and storyteller this is interesting to me, because it is also the root of some crazy things that happen to each of us and to society at large: We know that something is unfounded, but we choose to ignore this knowledge in order to believe in some other fiction. The aim of the installation is not to immerse people in fiction. I'm rather trying to point towards moments in society where we draw artificial borders, in order to maintain a fiction of cleanliness or health.

In *Der Oylem iz a Goylem,* you not only have the ghost on the ski lift recount a fairy tale full of stereotypes – a passive wife, a greedy Jew, and a seductress – but you also reinforce this through costumes: the goldsmith has a big fake nose and the she-demon a fake breast. The fakeness of the nose is salient, and yet: Aren't you perpetuating the stereotype even if you do so reflectively?

I don't have so much of a problem with the stereotypes being used in the film because stereotyping is clearly one of the topics that the film talks about. I think that as a viewer you have to deal with how absurd and how ridiculous the nose is from the moment you see it. We intentionally left the little strings that hold the nose there so it becomes very obvious that it's a costume you can take off. The assumption is that you take this off when the camera is not there and when the audience is not watching. The characters are performing the stereotypes for an audience and only as long as an audience is there. Stereotypes, like fairy tales, are something that we inherit. We have to call them out and complicate them in order to disarm them.

Are you taking a position against muting stereotypes or reversing them?

I'm not interested in role models of ethnicity. I'm not sure that we are beyond stereotypes at all; we are mired in stereotypes of gender, ethnicity and identity. They are more present now than even ten or fifteen years ago.

You mean because of identity politics or because of the stereotypes being used by the far right?

Well, of course the nose references *Der Stürmer* and the caricatures recently made by the Austrian FPÖ. But it also references Pinocchio. We cannot talk about identity politics without talking about stereotypes.

Were you trying to provoke the audience?

I like the idea that the nose is provocative. But I also like that – because the string is there – it is something that obviously has been put on for a camera, for an audience, and obviously is something that disappears. As soon as you talk about identity as an illusion or a particular performance, I'm happy. I'm not happy when you talk about identity as something that is fixed or something that is natural or something that we are born with – like a big nose.

View of Omer Fast, "Der oylem iz a goylem", Salzburger Kunstverein, 2019

Omer Fast, *The Invisible Hand*, 2018
VR film in 3D, 13 minutes

Photo: Andrew Phelps © Salzburger Kunstverein

Courtesy of the artist. Comissioned by the Guangdong Times Museum. Production still by Vega Fang

Cinematographer: Stefan Ciupek, courtesy of the artist. Comissioned by the Salzburger Kunstverein

SALZBURG

Omer Fast, *Der oylem iz a goylem*, 2019
Video, 24 minutes 39 seconds

THE ALLEGORY OF PAINTING

Roy Lichtenstein
"The Loaded Brush"
Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac
27 July – 28 September 2019

When walking into a show of an icon-producing icon like Roy Lichtenstein, even a non-expert expects to experience the pleasure of recognition. "The Loaded Brush" is no disappointment: the show has all of Lichtenstein's signature dots, lines and stencilled brushstrokes with thick black outlines. But the exhibition also holds some surprises. One of these is *Artemis and Acteon*, the artist's 1987 take on a tragic theme from antiquity: The goddess Artemis, bathing, is surprised by the hunter Acteon and transforms him into a stag. He is then ripped apart by his own dogs. Lichtenstein's version is said to be inspired by Titian's from 1556–59, but even a fleeting glance at the original makes the affiliation utterly implausible, not only because of the state Acteon is in (still a man in Titian's painting and nearly fully transformed in Lichtenstein's), but also because of the differing posture of Diana.

Lichtenstein either had no specific reference at all, forgot about it while painting, or was inspired by a different image altogether. But it's not the iconographic reference that makes the work interesting. It is spectacular because the interaction of paint and picture in Lichtenstein's work puts image theory into practice. First and foremost, it is certainly not a coincidence that a work about the dangers of prying would make the depicted observer hard to find when we first approach the painting. In order to identify Acteon, we need to know that he is there. Secondly, the work displays, so to speak, brushstrokes with and without quotation marks. Lichtenstein's history painting is a mix of what philosophers call use and mention, a typology of brushstrokes and "brushstrokes", some depicting, others depicted, some more direct, others more ironic.

The most interesting specimens even portray brushstrokes and something else at the same time, with the most prominent example being the goddess' yellow hair. It is made of two strokes, where one is depicted and one is used. Here, Lichtenstein clearly plays with the possibility of a *change of aspects*, as theorised by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Just as we can alternatively see some drawings as depictions of ducks or rabbits, we can here see a brushstroke or a hairdo. That this interpretation is more than a philosopher's phantasy is confirmed when we look at Acteon's antlers, where Lichtenstein uses the exact same combination. Going beyond both the modernist rejection and the post-modern embrace of figuration, Lichtenstein shows the power of combining abstraction and depiction, with the unequal showdown between goddess and hunter being played out in the strokes applied to their bodies and the surrounding landscape rather than the image and the tragic turmoil being conveyed not through the figures themselves but through the real and depicted traces of the brush.

Klaus Speidel

Roy Lichtenstein, *Artemis and Acteon*, 1987
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 213 x 305 cm

VIEWS

Rebecca Horn
"Body Fantasies"
Museum Tinguely, Basel
5 June – 22 September 2019

"Theatre of Metamorphoses"
Centre Pompidou-Metz
8 June 2019 – 13 January 2020

In 1968, while she was still a student at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, Rebecca Horn created the first of her "Personal Art" performances using prosthetic sculptures that extend various body parts to an excessive degree. The essence of these works lies in the performer's transformation during the activation of the body extensions: Equal parts tool and obstacle, they force the bearer – at first the artist herself, then others – to consciously reinvent how he or she uses their body.

Unicorn (1970), for example, is a long horn-like protuberance that fasten to the body with white medical-fetishist bandages. Like most body sculptures, it is presented through its multiple material residues: the prosthesis itself, drawings, and most importantly, documentation of its activation. Black and white photographs, as well as a twelve-minute film, one of the artist's earliest, show the harnessed female performer striding through the countryside. At the Centre Pompidou-Metz, it is shown in the first section of Horn's retrospective "Theatre of Metamorphoses", which traced her career across drawing, sculpture, installation, performance, as well as three feature-films, seeking to create what the accompanying text calls "a sort of Gesamtkunstwerk in perpetual reinvention".

"Many female artists of the period have too often been reduced to their affinities with body art," the curator Emma Lavigne says. "Horn materialises an energy flux connecting human, animal, organic and mechanical." Among the show's strategies to create a new narrative around Horn's work, it seeks to delineate an artistic genealogy of the idea of a "third sex", a gender neither male nor female, through a dialogue with Surrealist artists, many of whom Horn knew personally. Alongside the works of Hans Bellmer, Salvador Dalí, Meret Oppenheim, and Man Ray, the photographs of Claude Cahun, often credited with having coined the term "third sex", are shown. Many, such as *Sans Titre (Mains)* (1936/39), a photograph combining human and doll hands, are less known than her theatrical self-portraits. All of them drew from alchemy and Theosophy to imagine various embodiments of a human-machine, animal-human, or even machine-animal drag.

Rebecca Horn, *El Rio de la Luna*, 1992/2019
View of "Body Fantasies", Museum Tinguely, Basel, 2019

Photo: Daniel Spehr © 2019 Museum Tinguely, Basel © Rebecca Horn, Bildrecht, Wien 2019

Rebecca Horn, *Unicorn*, 1970
Black-and-white silver gelatine print, 80 x 60 cm

Photo: Achim Thode | © Rebecca Horn

View of Rebecca Horn, "Theatre of Metamorphoses",
Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2019

© Rebecca Horn, Bildrecht, Wien 2019 Photo: Jacqueline Trichard © Centre Pompidou-Metz

MACHINE-ANIMAL DRAG

The last of these is prominent in a second, simultaneous retrospective devoted to Horn, titled "Body Fantasies" and curated by Sandra Beate Reimann at the Museum Tinguely in Basel. This show focuses on the kinetic machines and large-scale installations characteristic of the artist's production from the 1980s on. Here, the prostheses take on a life of their own; oblivious to a potential spectator, they enact individuated, closed-circuit metamorphoses. While the first machines still retain the imprint of a potential human body, such as *The Peacock Machine* (1981), a self-operating version of earlier feather-prostheses such as *Feathered Prison Fan* (1978), the later ones invent their own narrative. This is the case with the monumental *El Rio de la Luna* (1992), whose system of pipes moves mercury around into several metal "heart chambers". They do not, however, act out the overcoming of vulnerability through technology to create a godlike superhuman (or superanimal). Quite the opposite: to endow machines with a soul, as the artist puts it, they have to be made capricious and fallible. Thus, steel nuptial parades (*The Peacock Machine*), automated alchemy (*Schmetterling im Zenit*, 2009), or virtuoso pianos (*Concert for Anarchy*, 1990) shiver, belch, and flutter both irregularly and unexpectedly.

Like "Theatre of Metamorphoses", the Basel exhibition also goes to great lengths to widen a reductive reception of Horn's work through the prism of body art. But if, in Metz, a sense of ethereal vitalism risks erasing the historical dimension of her position as a female artist, in Basel the intrinsic vulnerability of the sculptures is lost to a sense of technical mastery, compounded through rather stiff techniques of display, favouring pedestals, vitrines, and spectacular effects – perhaps an inevitable result of the chosen frame.

The Metz exhibition is the more convincing of the two, but one striking impression left by both shows is how in sync Horn's approach is with contemporary theories of subjectivity, anticipating what has become a most fashionable curatorial theme: performing disidentification from culturally coded stereotypes, to make room for a non-gendered, non-anthropocentric position. But if the ideas expressed in her work are timely (or, worse, the order of the day), it may be her methodology that is actually the most relevant today. Starting out from her own body to progressively delineate a cosmos of hybrid realities, her oeuvre embodies what Donna Haraway, and feminist methodology in general, calls situated knowledge – as opposed to the disembodied, unsituated claims of phallologocentric "objectivity". This, in turn, is what makes Horn's work so conceptually on-point. On another level, her practice conveys how the techno-scientific environment affects the individual directly, in the flesh. It is precisely this specific tempo-spatial scale that is often obscured behind grand abstract constructions. This is true of both the dissolution of a human centre in "new materialisms" on one hand, and of post-cyberpunk, neo-Silicon Valley techno-messianism, on the other – two poles that would, in a way, correspond with the approaches taken by these two exhibitions.

Ingrid Luquet-Gad

ANATOMIES OF VIOLENCE

Bea Schlingelhoff
"Piece of Glass"
Off Kunsthaus Glarus at the Museum des Landes Glarus, Freulerpalast
30 April – 10 November 2019

Of all possible, fashionable, desirable mediators in the museum, one stands out as a particularly ambiguous one: the vitrine. Theories about this display device abound, from the chapel to the Chanel store. Their smallest common denominator is a double bind: performing protocols of protection and serving as a means of accumulating value. But who is protected from whom? The object from the visitor or the viewer from the artifact? In her solo presentation "Piece of Glass" Bea Schlingelhoff – critical bedrock of Zurich's art school, informal mentor to many, a true artist's artist – poses this question in a comprehensive project for the Kunsthaus Glarus, which during its renovation successively takes up residency in various cultural institutions throughout the canton of Glarus.

On this occasion, Schlingelhoff's signature institutional analysis takes place at the Kunsthaus's current venue, the Freulerpalast in the picturesque village of Näfels. Once a Glarus general's impressive residence, it is now the Museum des Landes Glarus, which has an extensive collection of militaria. The plexiglass vitrines customarily housing these objects do cut both ways: they safeguard the arms from potential visitor misuse and protect the viewer from the threats emanating from them. Schlingelhoff's main formal intervention was to partly disassemble the vitrines and to rearrange their panels in another gallery, a former living room of the palace that is now the special exhibitions gallery.

A stunning sequence of security protocols was triggered: The local police department installed special fixtures to the weapons (which would otherwise now be up for grabs), a significant number of objects were removed from the displays (mostly bullets, according to a list of missing items on the wall). Now, all visitors are required to register by name and address in a notebook (of the Clairefontaine brand, namesake of a befriended artist group), whereupon a member of the museum staff is called to bring you to the two spaces of the exhibition. In a sense, your hike through Näfels only ends when this guide, after some informal but meaningful conversation, releases you into the exhibition.

But what has ultimately been set free here? The viewer's capacity to become a visitor proper? The agency of the inanimate device? (Not by coincidence is it a gun that Bruno Latour chose as the prime example for his actor-network theory of entangled presences.) Or rather, all that is in between, like the odour of the old felt uniforms, as the guide/guard suggested as we approached the exhibition? Or the violent nature of the display as such, with weapons pointing directly at viewers' faces, thus unmasking the mainly symbolic function of the Plexiglas, in contrast to the actual force on show. In sum: the more obviously missing lines drawn between warmongering, money, art, and power per se?

Another exhibit, Schlingelhoff's *Wimminfesto*, transposes those questions to the hard facts of gender inequality in the contemporary art world. It's a text that the artist has invited her collaborators to sign and/or amend since 2017; here, it is presented in a frame on the wall. A related and ongoing element of Schlingelhoff's practice is her self-designed typefaces named after historical female pacifist activists and artists, which she on this occasion deploys in this manifesto and in a selection of peace poems presented on the Kunsthaus's website. Yet another ingredient of the artist's intervention is the exhibition poster, featuring the word PAX (the exhibition's alternative title) surrounded by the peace movement's rainbow banner. Such gestures leave little doubt of their intention: When it comes to the fetishisation of violence, one must choose sides. True. One may experience the moral heights at stake as too steep a ground, but as the transparencies/opacities of this exhibition perfectly prove, looking at and through the systemic contradiction of protection and violence that underlies most institutions – and their mechanisms of display and mediation – is a risk worth taking.

Julia Moritz

Photos: Gunnar Meier

GLARUS

Views of "Piece of Glass", Off Kunsthaus Glarus at the Museum des Landes Glarus, Freulerpalast, 2019

REMEMBER YOU ARE LOVED

Pipilotti Rist
"Open My Glade"
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art
1 March – 22 September 2019

"Remember you are loved." This is the message included beside an admonition not to touch the art and to take off your shoes in Pipilotti Rist's exhibition "Open My Glade" at the Louisiana, just outside of Copenhagen. Whether we are supposed to rely on the love of the artist, the museum, the universe, or our parents while being simultaneously told how to behave by a stranger is left up to us to decide.

Of course, this declaration of love is just one tiny element of the exhibition, which shows a large number of Rist's works from the 1980s to the present, forming a wild and lavish installation. The soothing words are neither a work of art, nor museum communication, but they end up feeling strangely central to the experience and have duly received quite a bit of attention in the Danish press. So-called multisensory exhibitions have been in vogue these last few years, especially at big institutions. In the battle for mass audiences, museums need to present art as something welcoming and intuitive, which is generally understood to be something that is experienced with the whole body and not just with the eyes and brain.

View of "Open My Glade", Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, 2019

The first impression upon entering the exhibition is that Rist is an artist who lets our senses explode in a riot of colours, menstrual blood, earworms, and beds to lounge upon. But as ever, there are limits to this untamed, intuitive sensuousness. Essentially, the wildest, most far-out thing your body can do in the show is lie down (mind the shoes!) instead of sitting or standing, as in *4th Floor to Mildness* (2016). Otherwise, Rist's videos, fantastic as ever, are pretty retinal at heart, and of course the exhibition itself is set in a space that is every bit as disciplinary as always. To deal with this – admittedly oft-criticised – paradox, the institution must enter into a pact with the audience. The reason why we cannot disport ourselves as we wish is not a question of courtesy towards the institution; it is for the sake of the art – because we each bear a responsibility to respect the fragility of art. The proper regulation of our bodies becomes a matter of personal morality. Control gets internalised, as the saying went in the 90s.

One might choose to be bothered by this confusing reception, where the exhibition invites the entire body inside while simultaneously asking it to keep its distance. But in fact, this strange blend of institutional control and tenderness without an obvious sender opens up a whole new, well, glade; shining new light onto the Rist experience even for those familiar with her work. At any rate, "Remember you are loved" certainly prompted me to realise, for the first time ever, the sheer extent of Rist's foresight throughout her production. That she has actually worked with a wide range of virtual phenomena long before we had the technology and language to mediate and describe it. The artist, of course, has never concealed the fact that she is an illusionist and that she is exploiting our incredible ability to accept the reality of an image as something physical without thinking about the medium that conveys it. We have the knack of perceiving something as "tactile", "sensuous", and having "body" without it ever actually existing materially (or linguistically) for us. This ability has become increasingly evolved, both in terms of technology and in terms of our sensory apparatus. In recent years, it has reached new heights in the YouTube phenomenon of ASMR. The term itself, Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, really just describes the pleasant feeling that a calm whisper, lapping water, a scalp massage, or even a catchy chorus will evoke in most people. Or the clatter of jewels and scratching nails in a rather smaller number of people. What is new is that this has become a form of gratification that you cultivate in virtual reality, on your own, and that it has been given a name, an acronym, that smacks equally of medical diagnoses and of digital conventions.

ASMR works against insomnia, stress, depression, and loneliness, and is supposed to counteract the harmful effects of self-control. Self-love, it's often called. Rist has obviously worked with ASMR triggers for years, not least with those associated with water. Suddenly, we realise that she was also an early hydro-feminist. The water seen in, for example, *Sip my Ocean* (1996) is not water understood as an element and a measurable resource, but a force that dissolves all established boundaries, connecting all organisms through time and space. You're loved, remember?

Cecilie Høgsbro Østergaard

COPENHAGEN

Above:
Pipilotti Rist,
Open my Glade (Flatten),
2000
Single-channel video, silent

Below:
View of "Open My Glade", Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, 2019

MADRID

Henrik Olesen
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte
Reina Sofia
26 June – 21 October 2019

William Brown was a married man arrested for cruising in London in the summer of 1726 in a series of anti-homosexual raids and executions for sodomy. When asked to explain his actions, he replied: "I did it because I thought I knew him, and I think there is no Crime in making what I please of my own body." This quotation was one of many typed or scrawled text fragments between collaged photographs on the large black panels of Henrik Olesen's "Some Gay-Lesbian Artists and/or Artists relevant to Homo-Social Culture Born between c. 1300–1870" (2007). The series, consisting of seven distinct but related works, playfully traces various historical gay, lesbian, and transgender histories, spanning the categories of national, legal, art historical, and pop-cultural, and highlights the persistent systemic oppression and exclusion of each of his subjects.

While much has changed in the struggle for LGBTQ liberation since 1726, the exhibition is at its best when noting what has not. Throughout, expressions of gender, sexuality, and bodily autonomy are found to be the continual site of ongoing political and legal contestation. In "Lack of Information" (2001–19), we find a free-standing, slightly raised corridor structure with interior white walls lined with small black and white photographs, images ranging from cityscapes, portraits of queer people, or victims of homophobic violence. Most are accompanied by descriptions that list the depicted country and corresponding social conditions or laws around homosexuality, as expressed through oppressive structures like sodomy laws or high rates of suicide among

Detail of Henrik Olesen,
Box (Caja), 2018
32 x 39 x 32 cm

LGBTQ youth. While the work is useful to contextualize this juridical persecution historically, there was little mention of the role colonialism had in shaping homophobic legal systems around the world. In India, British-imposed laws against homosexuality were only overturned in 2018.

PITHY SMUDGES

Olesen's first solo exhibition in Spain contains an extensive display of more than 75 individual works from the past eighteen years, many of which return often to subjects of routine Foucauldian institutional analysis: the family, the hospital, the school, and the prison are all sites that produce subjectivity. The Sabatini building itself was previously a hospital and as such, is a fitting site for the discussion of sterilization of deviant bodies and sexualities. "How Do I Make Myself a Body" (2008–19) presents a detailed account of the life and supposed suicide by cyanide- laced apple of Alan Turing, a brilliant computer scientist employed by the British government who was chemically castrated because he was gay. the body underneath the skin is an overheated factory said one of the panels of text, among photos of Turing presented alongside images of other objects: apples, screws, computer parts, spoons. There is a play of signifiers with the flicker between image and object, between representation and reality – the screw as image, the screw in the flesh.

While informationally rich, the work is also incredibly playful and steamy. With *After Dhalgren* (2017–2019), made in reference to Samuel Delaney's seminal piece of gay science fiction *Dhalgren* (1974), one enters into an intimate garden shed-sized wooden shelter positioned off-kilter in the corner of a corridor between two larger exhibition halls. The photographs which line the walls (some of which related directly to Delaney's story) contain images of scorpions, leaky pipes, garbage, soot, knives, and a leather daddy atop his motorbike. Standing inside this piece in particular, the importance of the viewing apparatus to the work itself came to mind. Here, in fact, they were one and the same. This shed was one of many

Photo: Joaquín Cortés/Román Lores. Archivo Fotográfico des Museo Reina Sofía

Above and below: Views of Henrik Olesen,
Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2019

apparatuses constructed in order to display something delicate, built to support a tender moment, like in the cosy shack in the cruising area of secluded thicket built for the anonymous fuck.

Through painting, collage, photography, sculpture, architectural intervention, and installation, Olesen's potentially brainy, fact-driven dryness is curtailed, if not eradicated, by both the translation of his vulnerability as a maker – the smear or the scribbled trace of the hand – and his bold yet tender ability to infuse it with eroticism. I found myself succumbing to the frustrating admission that Olesen does so many things right. The exhibition, as with his work, is sexy, insightful, poignant, articulate, complex, fragile, and at times, quiet, but nevertheless – and rightfully so – angry.

Cory John Scozzari

Lee Krasner
"Living Colour"
Barbican Art Gallery
30 May – 1 September 2019

Peer hard at the woodland foliage in the background of Lee Krasner's 1928 *Self-Portrait*, and you might fancifully see her path to Abstraction Expressionism mapped out in the dappled green brush strokes. The oil-on-linen work is one of the first to be encountered in this chronological survey spread across the Barbican Art Gallery's two floors. That the sturdy, brown, Long Island tree trunks contain the DNA of the lyrical paint-handling to come is no accident. It's there again in the pot plant sitting in the background of another self-portrait from the very next year, the varnish applied so thick it glistens. Krasner holds the same expression too: age 21, she retains the stance of a sullen teenager. Here too, it is easy to project forwards, hindsight making the broody handsome scowl a harbinger of the tragedy that overshadowed the painter's reputation for decades.

The show moves through young Krasner's life drawings (with their shades of Cubism) and a series of window displays advertising training courses (hovering between Pop art and Constructivism), the latter commissioned by the Public Works of Art Project, a branch of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Krasner's abstract turn is introduced via a room of small geometric, mosaic-like paintings, her "Little Paintings", paired with a table the artist made in 1947 sporting an actual mosaic surface (the dominant blues and oranges built up from embedded broken glass and jewellery). During Krasner's employment with Public Works, she met Jackson Pollock, marrying the

Lee Krasner, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1928
Oil on linen, 76 x 64 cm

TORN REMENANTS

View of Lee Krasner, "Living Colour", Barbican Art Gallery, 2019

AbEx artist in 1945. It is not until the 50s that Krasner adopted a similar strain of Abstract Expressionism herself, in a series of paintings made from the torn remnants of some geometric drawings she had made, hated and ripped up. *Burning Candles* (1955) is great firework of a painting with its collage of strips of yellow and brown painted paper that explodes from the bottom left corner of the canvas. The larger of these collages lose energy (*Milkweed*, 1955, is, as the title suggests, a little anaemic) but the flaming reds and inky black of *Desert Moon* (1955) and the raw canvas interlaced with fuchsia pink and blinding orange slashes in *Bird Talk* (1955) are as exhilarating now as they must have been then (one critic that year wrote approvingly that the work demonstrated a "disorder greater than [the spectator] might otherwise have thought possible".)

The top floor of this biographical show ends on a cliff-hanger. *Prophecy*, a quartet of paintings, was made in 1956. The first was painted by Krasner while Pollock was mired in alcoholism, the three subsequent works were completed after his death that summer, drunk at the wheel of his car. There are wall texts detailing this biographical information, but there's almost no need for them: the emotional turmoil is right there on the canvas. The tangled, flesh-coloured forms and wide sightless eyes are both reminiscent of a mangled automobile and the frightening chaos of addiction. The three made after Pollock's death contain a blood red only hinted at in the first. These are terrifying paintings for what must have been – for Krasner, or for anyone who has witnessed the self-destruction of a loved one –, terrifying times.

Much has been written about Krasner as a female artist living under the shadow of Pollock, but three further works by the newly widowed artist – *The Guardian*, the vast landscape *Polar Stampede* and portrait *Triple Goddess*

Lee Krasner, *Desert Moon*, 1955
Collage of oil on paper on canvas, and oil on canvas,
147 × 108 cm

(all 1960) – speak to something that goes beyond an insidious patriarchy. All of them are great, all-consuming, swirling compositions of stormy dark brown oil paint that speak to the colonisation of grief (nothing as concise as a black palette; grief is never concise after all), anger, and the invasion of someone else into one's emotional state. Krasner obviously loved Pollock, and he clearly put her through hell.

By 1963, colour returned. That year's *Another Storm* is blood red but feels joyous. It looks like it was a joy to paint. *Happy Lady* has the dancing blue of Matisse, a hero of the artist's. Like *Chrysalis* (1964), in its peach, maroon and cream dancing strokes, *Happy Lady* is floral and dextrous in its composition; Krasner showing off her adept brush-handling. These works express a glee in her craft, like a gymnast at the top of her game, knowing she can produce full ten routines. The title of a work from 1966, *Courtship*, all flighty orange, suggests a romance with her medium, with paint and with canvas. "I like a canvas to breathe," Krasner once said. Closing with the hard-edged works of the 70s, more theoretical but full of zest and spirit with their bright pinks and jungle greens, this adept survey, beautifully lit and well-paced, puts paid to the idea that abstraction can't be a narrative form. This story comes with a happy ending.

Oliver Basciano

THE MOON IN REVIEW

"Apollo's Muse: The Moon in the Age of Photography"
Metropolitan Museum of Art
3 July – 22 September 2019

"There is no dark side in the moon really. Matter of fact, it's all dark." Pink Floyd, "Eclipse" (1973)

Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art

View of "Apollo's Muse: The Moon in the Age of Photography", Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2019

It appears that each scientific revolution that succeeded in eliminating a bit more the mysticism of the moon fell prey to a greater portion of its illusion. That the moon is both object and representation, but never a discourse, might explain why the NASA materials currently on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquire such an auratic dimension. and make the Apollo project appear as the world-historical work of land art that it is.

The Apollo project was comprised of multiple missions, each of which involved a series of artefacts that allegedly remain on the surface of the moon today. If you've never thought to place NASA within the Pictures Generation, this exhibition-as-observatory presents the most reproduced images of American nationalism as a vehicle by which earth's own satellite can be apprehended as a work of modern representation.

On the eastern salt flats of the moon, an anthropomorphised hunk of aluminium plummets into lunar soil. Elsewhere, a pocket-sized photograph wrapped in plastic – proof of the white American family – litters a lunar crater. Fifty years after the first lunar landing, the Met presents these documents alongside a single minute of deprecated CBS footage – a video that not only represents but effectively *was* the peak of the twentieth century.

Here it becomes evident that the astronauts' natural setting is not outer space, but the television set. Staged on a plinth, the gravity is impossible to

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Vital Projects Fund Inc. Gift, through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 2019 © Jojakim Cortis and Adrien Sonderegger

Above:
Jojakim Cortis,
Adrian Sonderegger
Making of AS11-40-5878 (by Edwin Aldrin, 1969),
2014
Chromogenic print,
120 x 180 cm

Below:
View of "Apollo's Muse: The Moon in the Age of Photography", Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2019

ignore. So are the particles buzzing violently underneath the surface of a screen tuned to obsfuscate the internal politics of the Cold War. As the broadcaster describes the "grainy, flat" surface of the moon to a global audience, the viewer's attention is drawn to the grainy quality of the film itself. Was it real or a hoax? Given that the Apollo project today would cost upwards of $125 billion, this exhibition sheds light on terraforming as a medium of political representation: even the highest-projected cost of Trump's proposed US-Mexico border wall would not cost half of that.

"Apollo's Muse" is less a retrospective of photography and more a long exposure on an object of prehistory that, in both science and art, has come to represent the unattainable. What's visible from the Apollo mission is the fact that there are as many moons as there are modernities – it appears that the moon, like the modern, will always somehow, eclipse the human race.

Victoria Campbell

Devin Kenny
"rootkits rootwork"
MoMA PS1
9 June – 2 September 2019

Increasingly evident in the wake of the present crisis is the question of what constitutes radical practice. Debates around the highly controversial the Teargas Biennial (this year's Whitney Biennial) – which remains on view through the end of September – continue to rage. At the root of the matter is the position of institutions within the matrix of capital, and the means by which culture and money intermingle and are subject to a series of conversions that appear, in nearly every instance, to trace back to blood.

Meanwhile, a cluster of servers in the IT department of the Museum of Modern Art is quietly mining the Monero cryptocurrency. In a comparable process of alchemy, computer servers are encrypting and decrypting information. The resulting tokens will be converted to US dollars and then be passed on to the Immigrant Bail Fund in order to quicken the churning of incarcerated individuals from detention into freedom. Information into tokens, tokens into money, money into bonds, bonds into bodies, bodies into blood into language into culture – the circulation of which is capital.

This explains some of why it's difficult to talk about Devin Kenny's solo show at MoMA PS1 within the usual paradigms of black identity, subjective authorship, or even institutional critique. Devin Kenny – or should that be Devin KKenny, photorejuve, or dkyk? – is an artist working in as many aliases as they are mediums. This time, he is the shamanic engineer behind the exhibition that brought about the museum's collaboration with the Immigrant Bail Fund. The idea of the self as cipher is most evident in the music videos and the sound pieces in the show, which highlight Kenny's activity as a curator and music historian, blurring the line between entertainment, education, and indexical consciousness. In several of them, Kenny's image collapses into the voices of the rappers he venerates and chases after in lyric and image.

Photo: Kylie Sivley, Courtesy the artist

Devin Kenny, *dkyk "el aire es mugre" "ne2c"* from *Queering the Wheel* curated by Antonius Bui and Tonya Huynh, Houston, TX, 2019

In *los giros de la siguente* (the turns of the next) (2019), by contrast, Kenny jockeys video-game clips into geopolitical commentary in a live "performance essay". This is accompanied by a high-bias cassette tape, available at the PS1 museum store, that overlaps "chopped and screwed" *cumbias rebajadas* music with the rap dialects of the Dirty South. The tensions between these sound forms reflect the personas suggested elsewhere: the singer struggles towards identity – towards meaning – while at the same time refusing its anchorage. One overarching idea in the show is that freedom might find greater manifestation in noise than in voice. In general, the music videos and the sound works seem more important than the sculpture and paintings on view, suggesting that what matters most about the works in the show is how they sound: less like a protest, more like a transposition of political strategy onto the social economy of the art institution.

SQUARE ROOT

More or Less (2015) isn't about trying to escape a system, but about trying to escape control. Dark shadows trace the spectrum of visibility in a dimly lit, steel blue room: the artist's movements are at first only visible through the textural shifts of 2015 camera technology. Imagine Yvonne Rainer playing the lava game (the one where you put objects on the floor to avoid touching the carpet) or the experience of a caste-marked individual walking through an upper-class district. Kenny moves tacitly through a small room trying not to trigger a motion sensor camera. He fails, and the lights turn on, revealing an unremarkable domestic space fitted only with a black chair and a black monitor on the floor. The work is described as a "postmodern dance performance"; it could also be a structural metaphor for the cyberneticised society. Until the lights turn on, Kenny is an anonymous referent, a mass shadow, noise. When visibility is triggered; Kenny stands up and walks out of the room – as a subject, as a civilian profile.

But as strong as many of the works on view are, one can't help but wonder if the artist is using his first museum solo show as a political front job: in the background, Kenny has ordered a number of stipulations that make visible the structural relationship between artist, audience, and institution. That the exhibition is closed to the public for half an hour per day – to allow for the museums largely black and working-class staff to interact with the works (or not, if they so choose) – seems tucked into the foot of the press release after a generic description of the so-called identity politics on display. It's great that viewers can basically ignore the standard-fare discursive litany (why do words like "address" or "interrogate" in the press release read as blaringly juridical here?) while they hang out and watch music videos. These are stationed uncomfortably at neck-wrenching height in the two galleries that comprise the show. The experience of watching them in an art museum is similar to the reprieve of daytime television in the waiting room for food stamps.

While "rootkits" refers to a kind of computer virus that undetectably affects the operating system itself, "rootwork" is a reference to "black-American folk magic." The shamanic dimension of systems administration gets embodied in trash that appears to float weightlessly in consumer-grade DNA jars. This is self as content, as fixed internal referent, not to mention a hilarious insinuation of individualism as a mode of capitalist reproduction. All trash is unique but equal. The question implied by means of cast resin so clean that the viewer confuses the material inside with water is something like "how deep do you need to go into this system of self to combat the alienation that produced it?"

"rootkits rootwork" is a matrix of opposition: Black magic and crypto-economics on one axis; institutional resources and surplus populations on the other. What's ultimately at stake is an interrogation of the radical hypothesis that what's radical is not revolt, what's radical is what gets to the root (√). It is a square root, emblematic of the shape outlined by performers of the cumbia dance step. And what's visible is an attempt to catalyse participation at the margins: both in the opening of the formal and aesthetic boundaries of sculpture, painting, and image-making in general, but perhaps most importantly through a willingness to exploit the vulnerabilities in systems of power and representation in order to reconfigure the social horizons of art.

Victoria Campbell

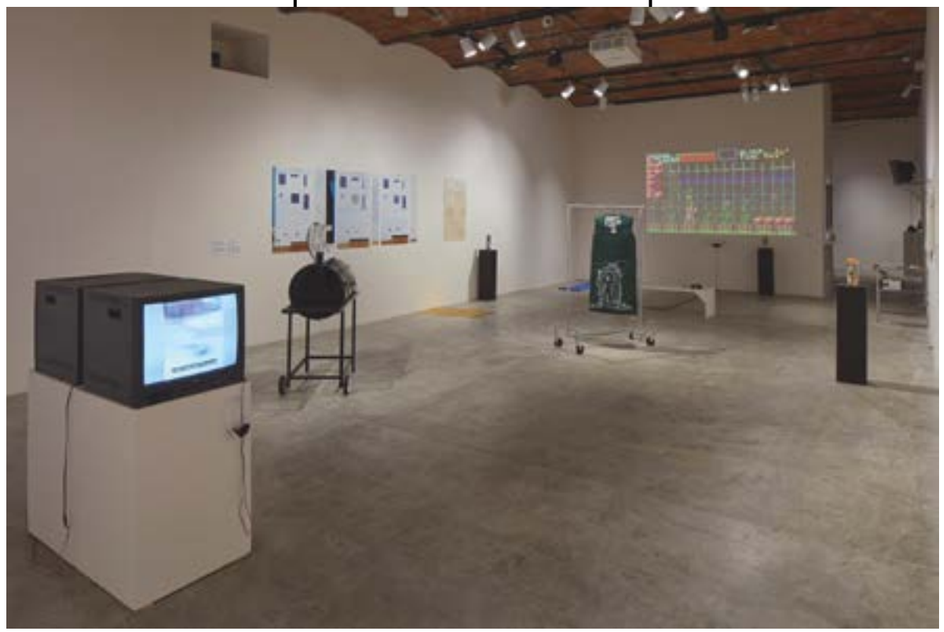


Photo: Matthew Septimus

View of Devin Kenny "rootkits rootwork", MoMA PS1, 2019

"Avengers: Someone Left the Cake Out In the Rain"
Gaga & Reena Spaulings Fine Art Los Angeles
2 July – 10 August 2019

When I asked about the building that houses Gaga & Reena Spaulings Fine Art, located across from MacArthur Park, Reena Spaulings co-founder John Kelsey told me it was once used as a meeting place for a society of people practicing "abstinence and temperance". He said he had seen photographs of the space in the 1930s, straight-laced tea-drinkers, resisting the urge. More recently, in the 90s, it was a hip-hop club, hardly maintaining the legacy of its original purpose. Yet the underground, clandestine qualities of the known and speculated origins of the space linger today. This time the secret society is a group of artists, some fringe-y, some established, all restless characters of the art world. Together they form a troupe with a collective power: the show's title, "Avengers: Someone Left the Cake Out in the Rain", alludes to some superhuman ability. The show, curated by Kelsey with Jacob Eisenmann, and Tyler Murphy, features 16 artists, among them Julie Becker, Bernadette Corporation, Gary Indiana, and Harry Dodge, all of whom share a scrappy, unpredictable talent. Contra to the pervasive LA attitude, they have no apparent need to please nor anything to prove.

Each artist tosses a knowing smirk at the art world and an insider wink at gay culture. Many of the works in the show manipulate forms of new media, an act of queering by abusing the original function. They use something wrong in order to produce something artistically right. Take Felix Bernstein and Gabe Rubin's collaborative self-portrait, *Free Dissociation #1* (2019), taken with the panorama feature on the iPhone. With a tool supposedly for capturing a sweeping idyllic view – your family in front of the Grand Canyon, or on the beach in Cabo – Bernstein and Rubin create a self-portrait. The function often glitches if there is movement, warping the bodies of the subjects, creating pixelated figures, failing to capture the scene accurately. The image becomes distorted through the artists' subversion of the tool's prescribed use.

Similarly, in Larry Johnson's early work *Untitled (Century Schoolbook, Annotated)* (1991), the artist manipulates a more traditional medium. He adds teardrops of ink to a hand-stencilled alphabet poster one might find in a grade school classroom. With the letters dripping, Johnson suggests a repressed eroticism implicit in the materiality of language and written technique. This piece became a matrix for a body of work that deals with the queering of both analogue and digital media. Another work of cutting and pasting is Hedi El Kholti's *Collage sketchbook #10* (2015–19), done in the style of an adoring teen fanboy. Kholti places images of villains or heroes from horror movies on pages of *Artforum* advertisements: the figures trapped in a Josef Albers painting or lost in a Richard Serra sculpture. A kind of sexy, funny horror: recoiling in fear at the commodification of art and the absurdity of the commercial art world.

Matthew Langan-Peck, *Untitled*, 2019
Digital C-print, wood,
acrylic, oil paint, 76 x 112 x 5 cm

Reynaldo Rivera's evocative photographs of queer Latinx nightlife, such as *Cha Cha Girls '87 (1)* (2019), insert an understated beauty into the show. The black-and-white series captures people just leaving the club, lingering in the parking lot or the alley where they feel more drunk and exposed than in the dark bar. Shoes come off, kissing and smoking, swaying back and forth to the din of the music seeping into the streets. The subjects are drunk and conspicuous, existing in a liminal space that reminds us that the whole world isn't a gay bar.

In these evocations of up-tempo beats and warm, sticky evenings, it all comes together: the show's title is extracted from the song "MacArthur Park" initially recorded in 1970 by pop-country songwriter and Americana square Glen Campbell. The song was covered by the far cooler, gay icon and disco sensation Donna Summer in 1978. The line goes: "MacArthur's Park is melting in the dark / All the sweet, green icing flowing down / Someone left the cake out in the rain / I don't think that I can take it / 'Cause it took so long to bake it / And I'll never have that recipe again."

Photos: Michael Underwood

Ken Okiishi, *Being and/or Time*, 2013–16
Installation view
HD video, 17 minutes 15 seconds

In Summer's version, what begins as a sober tune of regret and ennui soon turns into a liberated disco number, the dance beats and horn section kicking in and Summer cackling a victorious "ah ha!" Freedom from a recipe, relief at the thought of having to start over. I like the image of the sweet, green icing flowing through the park, infiltrating the lake, turning the water a synthetic green. A scene that was once idyllic becomes a little perverted, a little queer. Each artist in the show imitates this action, working with a form of green icing as they blend and smear, diverting some medium from its original use. This show thus acknowledges something at the core of queer culture: the desire to manipulate prescribed forms of being, to stray from the norm, and destabilise the dominant culture. I wanna hear the disco remix.

Grace Hadland

View of "Avengers: Someone Left the Cake Out In the Rain", Gaga & Reena Spaulings Fine Art Los Angeles, 2019

SOMETHING IN THE WATER

Photo: Emad Mohammad Zyoud. Courtesy Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Ines Schaber, *Dear Jadwa*, 2009
Unknown photographer, Arab Ladies' Union group at K. D. H

POETIC WORD

"Stars are Closer, and Clouds are Nutritious Under Golden Trees"
MMAG Foundation
13 June – 5 December 2019

Jean Genet's political memoir *Prisoner of Love* (1986) is about the historical legacy of anticolonial resistance and international solidarity movements. Genet's attempt to tell a non-heroic and quotidian story of revolutionaries who fought for their freedom like the fedayeen and the Black Panthers finds powerful resonances in the works in the MMAG Foundation's show that engage with questions of desire, friendship, political militancy, and radical kinship without falling into the trap of a romanticised vision of revolutionary struggles. Federica Bueti met with the director of the foundation, Noura Al Khasawneh, and the curator of the exhibition, Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu, for a conversation.

Federica Bueti: How did the collaboration with Berlin-based curator Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu begin?

Noura Al Khasawneh: It started one year ago in the context of *Spring Sessions,* a residency programme conceived as a programme of workshops, mentoring sessions, excursions, and other activities. We organised a 45-day walk from the North to the South of Jordan, spanning a distance of over 400 kilometres and ending in Sinai, Egypt. Participants engaged in the act of walking over a changing terrain as a way of thinking about artistic practices and non-academic modes of learning. Övül joined the walk and contributed a site-specific reading of Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love* in Ajloun, where Genet spent time with Palestinian revolutionaries. Övül and I dreamed up the exhibition along the way.

The exhibition is part of a larger project which unfolds over the course of six months, from June to December. Can you tell us more?

Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu: Considering the current resurgence of right-wing populisms, I believe it is time to remind ourselves of the histories, practices, and knowledges of freedom and how they can be reactivated in the present. Soon after moving to Amman, I initiated a reading group of *Prisoner of Love*, and I had to realise that the stories Genet tells about his two years in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and the difficult relations between Palestinian fighters and the Jordanian government have remained unaddressed for a long time. But a younger generation seems to think that it is time to talk more openly about this chapter of their history. An exhibition alone could not do what we had set up to do, to open a space for this conversation to happen. So, we decided to spread the project across six months, with two exhibitions and a series of events. Inspired by Genet's poetic commitment to radical political solidarity, my colleague and accomplice Nadine Fattaleh and I developed a public programme to expand on the histories of anticolonial struggles, inviting, for instance, curator Greg Thomas to talk about kinship between the Palestinian and black American prisoners' movements. We hosted a lecture by Doreen Mende on the limits of solidarity and today's (geo-)political friendships; a conversation with film-archivist Khadija Habasneh; a screening programme titled "The Space Between: the Invocation, Prisoner of Love" curated by filmmaker Reem Shilleh.

For the exhibition, I wanted to create a space of radical kinship, where Marwa Arsanios's interests in the eco-feminist position of Kurdish Women's Movement actualised in her film *Who is Afraid of Ideology?* (2017) could share space with George Jackson's vision of Black Liberation as depicted in the archival material gathered and presented by Greg Thomas. An affective space where Banu Cennetoğlu's powerful photographic homage to Deniz Gezmis, who joined the Palestinian Liberation movement in 1969, could find resonances in the proud and defiant looks of the Palestinian women in the photographic work *Dear Jadwa (Notes on Archives, Band 4)* (2018) by Ines Schaber.

The second chapter of the exhibition will continue the engagement with the complex motifs evoked in the book, in which the guerrilla campaigns remain more of a background spectre than an immediate spectacle, a "distant gunfire under the stars" as Genet writes. Genet's lyricism can be seen in his personal reflections on desire, forms, political resistance and language.

Photo: Emad Mohammad Zyoud

AMMAN

Babi Badalov, *Walls Words Birds Borders*, 2019
Mixed media

You chose a very evocative title "Stars are Closer, and Clouds are Nutritious Under Golden Trees", in a way that points to poetry in the struggle for liberation.

In the title as well as in many of the works presented in the show, I wanted to evoke Genet's distinctive and poetic approach to the story of the freedom fighters, his special relation to the land and the landscape through, for instance, the works of artists like Salwa Aleryani's sculptural installation *Time in Stone (ORIENT)* (2018). The work is a composition made of concrete and white cement, which plays with the materiality of the stones and its capacity to mark a landscape and hold memories, representing the passing of time. The same is true in the dense landscape of words, signs, and symbols drawn on the walls by Babi Badalov, whose practice investigates the limits of language as the means through which global forces structure the world. But it also explores the possibility of transforming words into ornaments and patterns to create new visual languages.

I think our generation struggles with a crippled sense of political subjectivity while growing up embodying the limits of capitalism. What took the place of poetry was a counter-productive cynicism or a ghostly romanticism, neither of which, I believe, works in the current crisis of values. So, yes, I do believe in the power of poetry as a form of healing and a possibility for action, and I find Genet's proposition for an anti-colonial poetry that can become host to different kind of stories still particularly inspiring.

Mai-Thu Perret, *Les guérillères XII,* 2016

THE MATRILINEAL HORIZON

Zadie Xa
"Child of Magohalmi and the Echos of Creation"
YARAT Contemporary Art Centre
12 July – 29 September 2019

It's always been a woman's world. If not wholly in form then at least in origin – we each arrive here via a mother of some kind, as she did before us and so on and so on. For artist Zadie Xa the matrilineal horizon looms large in work whose start is marked with a visit to her own progenitor in Vancouver. She brought a costume, a mask, her partner and their video equipment "just in case" and so the work was born.

"We spent a lot of time outdoors with my Mom on the beach and in the forest. I felt inspired by the landscape but it was something emotional not intellectual … feeling very deeply that this is my home." Primordial landscapes and their goddess figure forebear are rife throughout world mythologies, and it is the eerily repetitive, cross-cultural similarities therein which intrigued Xa enough to develop her own against a moment in which the role of women and the relationship with the only planet we call home are both being called into question.

Xa's answer is in her first solo exhibition at Baku's Yarat Contemporary Art Centre, a body of work which "confronts the goddesses' shift in cultural status over time from central to marginal". The exhibition includes that film made on the shores of her childhood home, along with several more costumes and masks originally used during performances at the 58th Venice Biennale. Setting the mood are conch shell sculptures emitting soft, gelled light and a pod of orca sculptures, the largest of which is a plush object visitors are encouraged to lay on to watch the projected cut of *Child of Magohalmi and the Echos of Creation* (2019). The room itself is dark and cavernous, with a floor carpeted in the kind of bland industrial weave one finds throughout classrooms, cinemas, offices, waiting rooms, and other void (terrestrial) spaces. The arrangement suggests a subaquatic environment (which of course has its own womb-like connotations) in which the brightly coloured marine life are props, costumes and stage lights. The lasting impression bends towards a neutered psychedelia: A bloodless benzo dream, or a nature soft in tooth and claw.

But on screen, Xa's coastside mythos is woven with images of cosmic splendour which puncture the murk. She blends together a traditional Korean creation myth of a giant "old crone" named Magohalmi or Grandmother Mago – Korea's "original creatrix born out of the rhythms of cosmic music" – with the tale of J2 or "Granny", the world's oldest known Orca, (sadly now presumed dead). She draws links between the rhythms of this cosmic music and the echolocation used by whales like Granny, perhaps in order to suggest that orcas (and matriarchs or both) might bear the secrets of our planet on their strong dark backs as they traverse its darkest waters.

Orca whales are matriarchal, with complex social hierarchies and will move their children across vast distances to afford better opportunities for survival, just as we do. It isn't clean business. Rearing a new world demands blood and toil, excretion, expense, as in the tale of Magohalmi who shits out the world's rivers and hills. They're also one of the handful of mammals to go through menopause as we do, a quirk of nature explained by the "Grandmother hypothesis" which suggests that octogenarian grandmothers are favoured evolutionarily because they increase the likelihood of grandchildren's survival. Somehow, through certain biological rhythms, we're bound together.

In conversation, Xa's sense of natural awe and horror at the destruction of her home and its wild inhabitants is palpable, neurotic even. And as eco-anxiety rises globally (along with temperatures of course) to eco-hysteria, who can blame her? As the costumed figure on screen sifts her hands through sand and shells, it's easy to mull over control, about the effort it takes to be a woman, an artist, a mother, a deity, a planet or any other kind of caretaker/destructor. To shape a life, a landscape, or a body of work, where does one draw the boundaries between creator and creation? Which parts of a self and her progeny must be sacrificed? "The separation of fact from fiction cannot hold" the film's narrator intones in partial answer.

If the work on show is an escape hatch inward from apocalypse then, scatological elements withstanding, it is more of a lullaby than a war cry. At least it's not a dirge just yet. This is where one might question the work's strength – it lacks that fearsome maternal bite. But during the opening night somebody's daughter sits against the whale's belly: hair pulled back in braids, hands balled up in fists but face open, a soft-skinned reminder that after all, some of us still need lullabies. The film blues her cheeks before she bowls off, sparkling sandals kicking off the light from the nearest conch like sun on water. If there is any utopia to be had, any hope for the future in dark moments it is here, in all the world's wide-eyed daughters and what we lay before them.

Ella Plevin

Photo: Pat Verbruggen. Courtesy the artist and YARAT

View of Zadie Xa, "Child of Magohalmi and the Echos of Creation", YARAT Contemporary Art Centre, Baku, 2019

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