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Jeremy Deller interviewed: ahead of his opening as Britain's representative at this year's Venice Biennale, artist Jeremy Deller – creator of collaborative art projects including Acid Brass (1997), The Battle of Orgreave (2001) and Stonehenge bouncy castle Sacrilege (2012) – talks to Mark Rappolt for ArtReview.

Jeremy Deller's Great Britons: Jeremy Deller guest-edits a special features section highlighting some of his own favourite creatives, including former coal miner turned flamboyant wrestler Adrian Street, boundary-pushing film director Ken Russell and Britain's earliest Stone Age artists, plus portraits of bat-fan Deller's favourite web-winged flying mammals.

Anri Sala's Venice pavilion swop explored: In the Venice Biennale's first national pavilion swop, France and Germany switch exhibition venues, with French representative Anri Sala creating an audio-visual installation in the German pavilion. ArtReview explores both Sala's masterly musical work and the complex history behind the two countries' transnational exchange. By Christopher Mooney.

Venice Biennale Bahamas' representative Tavares Strachan interviewed: Nassau-born, New York-based Tavares Strachan is the first artist to show in a national Bahamas pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Strachan talks to ArtReview about his multi-faceted work exploring climate change, frontier exploration and cultural difference via neon sculpture, cloned polar ice chunks and a Nassau school choir performing an ancient Inuit hunting song. By Christian Viveros-Fauné.

City Focus: New York (Part two): In the second of a two-part focus on New York's contemporary art scene, ArtReview explores Manhattan's Lower East Side. By Jonathan T.D. Neil. Photography by Frances F. Deny.

Plus **Coulumns**, **Great Minds**, **Comic Strip**, and of course, **Reviews**.

ISSUE 69
SUMMER 2013
Art Review:
Contains 4% ANRI SALA; 3% TAVARES STRACHAN; 6% LOWER EAST SIDE;
34% PANTONE 801; 1 STRIPED HAIRY-NOSED BAT
Great Britons
JEREMY DELLER'S BRITISH ART HEROES
Is the Venice Biennale still top of the pile?
A GUIDE TO THIS YEAR'S ART EXTRAVAGANZA

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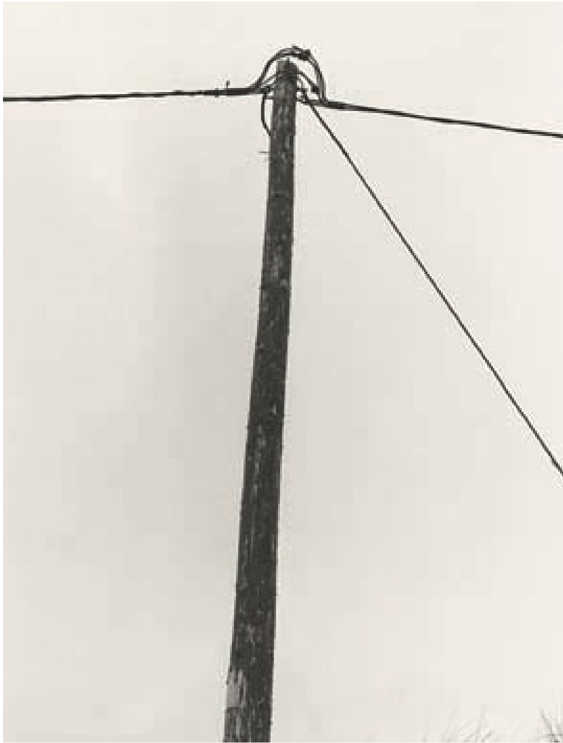

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New Monograph: *Rebecca Warren: Every Aspect of Bitch Magic*
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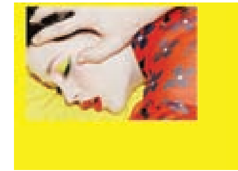
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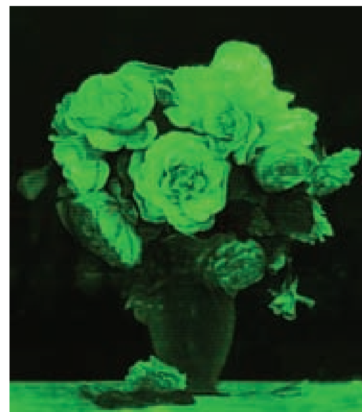
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Douglas Gordon: portrait of james, 1966
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On the cover
Adrian Street (top) in the ring with Mick McMichael, 1971. Courtesy Adrian Street

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Contributors

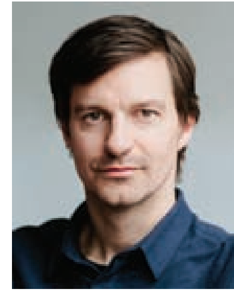
Rob Young
is a contributing editor of *The Wire* magazine and the author of *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain's Visionary Music* (2010). He edited *No Regrets: Writings on Scott Walker* (2012) and is currently working on an occult history of British film and television. This month he was **invited by Jeremy Deller** to write on the films of Ken Russell. For **further reading (and viewing)** he suggests the director's autobiography, *Ken Russell, A British Picture* (1989; revised 2008); the essays by Mark Kermode, Craig Lapper, Sam Ashby and others that accompany the BFI 2012 DVD release of *The Devils* (1971); and the 2012 BBC documentary *Ken Russell: A Bit of a Devil*, directed by Eleanor Horne.

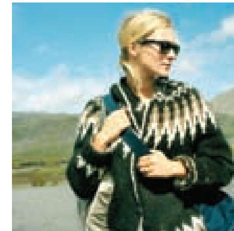
Mike Pitts
is an archaeologist, writer and broadcaster who has been a museum curator and restaurateur, and has directed excavations at Stonehenge. He is currently working on a new study of Hoa Hakananai'a, the great Easter Island figure in the British Museum, and edits *British Archaeology* magazine. This month he was **invited by Jeremy Deller** to write on early British art. For **further reading** he recommends *Britain Begins* (2012) by Barry Cunliffe, a well-illustrated and current survey of ancient Britain up to AD1100. For world art in general, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Prehistoric Art* (1997) by Paul Bahn is stil a good bet.

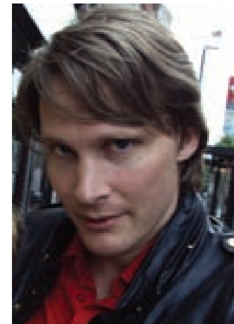
Frances F. Denny
is an MFA candidate in photography at the Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence. Her work has been exhibited in New York City and across the US, and is held in the Flak Photo Collection. In addition to *ArtReview* (see her **photography** of New York City's art scenes in the two-part City Focus running in the May and Summer issues), her editorial work has appeared in *Into the Gloss* and *The Boston Globe*, as well as an upcoming issue of *A Public Space*. Denny is a founding editor of *Scrapped*, a new magazine for emerging artists working in all media. She spends most of her time in Providence and New York City.

Sean Ashton
is a writer of fiction and criticism. A former contributing editor of *Map*, his recent essays and stories include 'Post-Avant-garde Provocation', in the book *Provocation* (2012), and 'Mr Heggarty Goes Down', in the forthcoming issue of the philosophy journal *Collapse* (vol. VIII). He is the author of *Sunsets and Dogshits* (2007), a collection of reviews of imaginary cultural phenomena. A new collection of stories, *Nights In with My Wife*, will appear soon. This month he **reviews** Laure Prouvost's exhibition *Farfromwords* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London. As **further reading**, he recommends Melissa Gronlund's essay 'A Complicated Enterprise: "The Sun on My Face"' in *Laure Prouvost: Farfromwords* (2013); T.J. Demos's *The Migrant Image* (2013); and George Saunders's novella *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil* (2005).

Jacquelyn Davis
is an American writer, arts and culture critic, independent curator and educator. She is the founder of the small publishing press and curatorial node Valeveil, which is devoted to strengthening creative connections between America and Scandinavia. This month she **reviews** Chris Burden at Magasin 3, Stockholm. For **further reading** she suggests the books *Chris Burden: A Twenty-Year Survey* (1988) and the originally self-published *Chris Burden 71–73* (1974). Burden's film are also available to view on UbuWeb.







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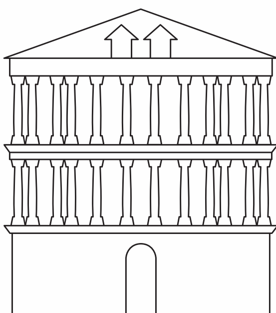

Editorial

Art Biennials: Heading South?

As a genre, the biennial is something of a bête noire for the artworld (along with its anxious-to-please but no less reviled counterpart, the art fair). It's had a pretty bum rap over the past years, occasioning little more than blasé sighs of ultraprivileged weariness from those beleaguered by the great misfortune of having to jet off to, say, Taiwan, Havana or Moscow in order to look at art. This misfortune, though, is one that, irony aside, becomes understandable if the art all kind of looks the same. Or in a worst-case and slightly nightmarish scenario, if it actually *is* effectively the exact same biennial with the same themes, curators and artists. Indeed, if the 1990s were characterised by the undue proliferation of biennials, then the noughties were characterised by an infernal sense of déjà vu, *Groundhog Day*-ness woven into their very fabric. It's as if, to a degree, the imagination of the last decade was not quite equal to the ambitions of the one that preceded it.

British Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia Giardini. Photo: John Riddy. © British Council

All that said, Venice seems to escape this dystopian scenario. But why? Or how? A crucial distinction needs to be made at this point, in that what we whinge about when we whinge about biennials tends to refer to a kind of biennial in what is known as the 'global south'. I hasten to add that this is not nearly as damning as it might initially sound. It just means that the biennials of this region – by which is meant, at least in this case, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America – are largely among the younger of the world's 100-plus biennials. These biennials, which have their partisans and promoters, serve entirely different functions than those of the global north.

One of the biggest partisans of the peripheral or global south biennial is Okwui Enwezor. Integral to his postcolonial investment in shifting the artworld's focus away from Western centres, such biennials have, he has said in an interview, 'exploded the myth of the lack of practice in very different parts of the world'. Enwezor is also particularly interested in how 'these biennials have really infused a new sense of the contemporary in cultures that did not or do not have an institutional legacy to carry it forward'. Essentially, such events develop a momentum, infrastructure and local and international forum for the discussion of contemporary art. Their lack of institutional heritage allows them to be more flexible and, consequently, more open and experimental. What is more, given their pioneering novelty and corresponding interest in forming local audiences, education often plays an important role in their structure, making them more discursive than the global north counterparts. Last but certainly not least, these biennials are marketless. Indeed, if there is any single distinction between the biennials of the global north and those of the south – with the exception of São Paulo – then it is their relationship to the market. While participating in the Dakar Biennale might look nice on an artist's CV, nothing ramps up their market value like participating in perennial exhibitions such as

the Whitney Biennial, the Berlin (and to a certain extent, Istanbul) Biennale, Documenta or, most importantly, Venice.

The implications of this last distinction are manifold, but probably the most important one is the relationship of both north and global south biennials to the promotion of the new and, conversely, to the ratification of the established. It is no secret that the model of the biennial is predicated upon the World's Fair, the most obvious example of which is Venice, with its national pavilions (a direct legacy of the World's Fair, even if Venice's pavilions were not featured in the first few editions). Along with affirming nationhood, colonial and imperial power, one of the primary functions of the World's Fair was to imagine the future, through innovation, technology, geography, etc. Paradoxically, this specific aspect of the World's Fair model can no longer really be found in the global north, but it can be found, like a second- or third-generation atavism, in the global south. In other words, Venice is not necessarily where you are going to see what's new. If you want to make discoveries, at least in theory, you'd be better off going to Taipei, Marrakech or Montevideo – for these points of the global south tend to be the places where artists enter 'the biennial circuit', which may or may not evolve into the abovementioned, quasi-conspiratorial sense of déjà vu. Akin to the Whitney, São Paulo and Documenta, Venice is a biennial of ratification. (This distinction does not necessarily presuppose a direct evolutionary relationship between the two: Venice's purview of ratification is actually very narrow and is often, but not exclusively, limited to what has already been ratified by the Western market.) If you doubt this for an instant, consider the national pavilions – rarely does a young artist represent his or her country, especially with regard to the West. Far from inaugurating, Venice crowns a career.

VENICE IS NOT NECESSARILY WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO SEE WHAT'S NEW. IF YOU WANT TO MAKE DISCOVERIES, YOU'D BE BETTER OFF GOING TO TAIPEI, MARRAKECH OR MONTEVIDEO

Of course, this evolution is in keeping with the relative maturity of an institution. In most cases, the older the institution, the less flexible and more necessarily beholden to the procedure of ratification it becomes. This is the nature of the institutional beast. Being the first and oldest biennial, Venice's status as an institutional one is incontestable. Indeed, this is why Harald Szeemann, along with Italian curator Achille Bonito Oliva, created the 'Aperto' section of the biennale in 1980. Intended to explore emerging art, Aperto ran for several editions but was eventually abolished by the biennale's first non-Italian director, Jean Clair, in 1997.

It goes without saying that the process of ratification, both in general and more specifically with regard to Venice, has a very charged and in some cases fraught relationship to the market. This relationship is also attended by an uneasy paradox. The high institutional calibre of the Venice Biennale necessarily generates expectations of market purity – as if the biennale were so prestigious that any association with the market is somehow not just automatically forbidden but also unthinkable. The purpose of this fiction – aside from conceivably preventing the artworld from degenerating into a thoroughgoing den of wolves, total cynicism or both – is not entirely clear, but is probably not as nuanced as it might at first seem, being a lot more complicit with that which it so piously seeks to deny. Whatever the case may be, what's curious about this is that one of the initial objectives of the Venice Biennale was to create a new international art market; and until 1968, works were for sale, with the biennale taking (and being supported by) a percentage of the overall profits.

Incidentally, probably the most widespread critique I encountered regarding the last edition of Venice, curated by Bice Curiger, was its alleged resemblance to an art fair. The irony of this resemblance being its total lack of self-conscious irony. All that said, if Curiger homed in on and valorised the historically repressed commercial character of the biennale, then Massimiliano Gioni's edition seems intent on underlining its institutional profile by presenting a patently museological exhibition. This is not to say that discoveries will not be made – many of the 'outsider' artists set to be featured in it are definitely news to me – or that the edition is lacking in younger, soon-to-be-ratified talent, but of the approximately 160 participants, 40 are dead, making this one of the most museological Venice Biennales ever. The temptation to see this necrological mode as allegorically symptomatic of the so-called death of Venice – and what is more, of the Western or global north biennial – is strong, but somehow too easy. To expect the artworld to be beyond the exigencies of institutional ratification is as fanciful as the belief that ratification should be totally devoid of commercial consequences. It is nevertheless hard to ignore how much this state of affairs, by which I mean new (global south) vs. ratification (global north), reflects a general, geopolitical shift away from the traditional centres of power. What with the growing, institutional significance of Istanbul as an un avoidable stop on the primary biennial circuit, it's probably just a matter of time until the power to ratify undergoes a no-less productive redistribution.

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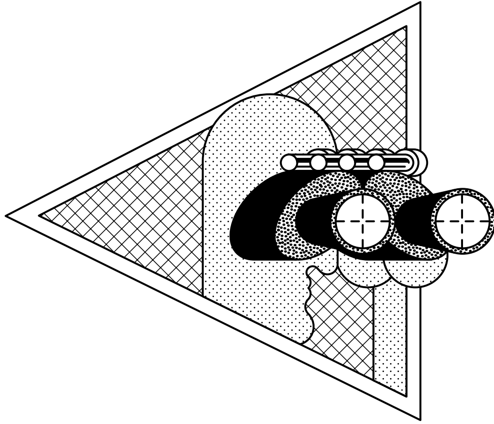

Ten exhibitions you don't want to miss this summer
By Martin Herbert

Venice Biennale
1 June – 24 November

Manchester International Festival
4–21 July

Approximately Infinite Universe
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego
8 June – 1 September

Cameron Jamie
Kunsthalle Zurich
9 June – 18 August

Momentum: Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art
Various venues, Moss
22 June – 29 September

Nari Ward: Iris Hope Keeper
Galleria Continua, San Gimignano
18 May – 24 August

Ellen Gallagher: AxME
Tate Modern, London
1 May – 1 September

Ellen Gallagher: Don't Axe Me
New Museum, New York
19 June – 15 September

Brian Griffiths
Tramway, Glasgow
2 August – 22 September

Pedro Reyes
Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo
3 July – 3 August

We know what Massimiliano Gioni plans for *The Encyclopedic Palace,* his International Exhibition at the **Venice Biennale:** an *insalata misto* of known names, modish youngsters and woolly outsiders, peppered with Melanesian graphic art. What of the rest? Silence enveloped Jeremy Deller's project at press time, but not all national commissioners come as cagey as the British Council. Alfredo Jaar's *Venezia Venezia* for the Chilean Pavilion sounds promisingly gnarly: a critical response to the Biennale's organisational structure touched off by a photograph of Lucio Fontana in bomb-wrecked Milan in 1946, and progressing, apparently, into a site-specific installation referencing historical utopias and possible reconstruction. Valentin Carron's phantasmagorical-sounding Swiss Pavilion, meanwhile, unites sculptural references to the young artist's Alpine home canton of Valais – including an 80m-long double-headed iron serpent, flattened musical instruments and fibreglass abstract 'paintings' – into a dreamworld of estranged civic decor. We're also looking forward to Akram Zaatari for Lebanon and Sarah Sze's US Pavilion; and if Duncan Campbell, Corin Sworn and Hayley Tompkins do well by

VALENTIN CARRON
(see VENICE BIENNALE)
Imperia V, 2012, polystyrene, fibreglass, acrylic resin, acrylic paint, wood, steel, 180 x 150 x 41 cm, unique. Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography, Zurich. © the artist. Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

DAN GRAHAM
(see MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL)
Past Future Split Attention (still), 1972, b/w, sound, 17 min 3 sec. Courtesy the artist

up. In San Diego, ***Approximately Infinite Universe,*** named after an album by participant Yoko Ono, probes the intersection between art and sci-fi. Geek out, then, along with Edgar Arceneaux, Matthew Buckingham, the Otolith Group and a host of other Ursula K. Le Guin fans, to 'aliens and others, bodily mutations, disorientation and weightlessness, reproductive technologies, utopia and dystopia, cities of the future, Afro-futurism, and meta-histories'. Seemingly nowhere in the PR, however, does it note that this show is on at the same time as sci-fi-nerd utopia Comic-Con, also in San Diego. Synergy much? We suspect someone's being disingenuous. Any fringe types not diverted by

Scotland, maybe we'll forget those WTF smiley-artist photos the press department sent us.

A month after Venice opens, it's the turn of another city famous for its canals and its weather. This year at the premiere-loving **Manchester International Festival**, Hans Ulrich Obrist returns for another group show, *Do It*, the curator's ongoing solicited-instructions-for-artworks project. Some artists, Ai Weiwei and Theaster Gates among them, will be issuing their instructions to the public. Others will be responding to instructions created by now-dead artists (*Do It* turns 20 this year), and elsewhere there's an archive and a film room. That aside, projects old and new are slated by artists including Dan Graham and Tino Sehgal; there's also an urban farm, *The Biospheric Project*, and a lot of popular music, theatre and chat. (And some of us will be heading straight for the awesome Martha Argerich playing Shostakovich's first piano concerto.)

So that's a couple of wide-girth events précised already. Let's scale

LUKE BUTLER
(see *APPROXIMATELY INFINITE UNIVERSE*)
Landing Party IV, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 71 cm. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco

FUTURE GREATS 2013

ArtReview and EFG International are proud to present the third in a series of six specially commissioned poster projects featuring unique artworks created by artists following their selection as 2013 Future Greats. Each artwork is reproduced in *ArtReview* and is available as a full-size limited-edition poster in subscriber copies of the magazine.

Poster series: No 3

Katja Novitskova

selected by Laura McLean-Ferris

'Nature is over', declared *Time* magazine last year, in its roundup of new ideas for the twenty-first century. That's right. We are now, according to Nobel Prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen, in the Anthropocene – a period in which humans are the dominant influence over biological, geological and chemical processes on earth. This is hardly news to Katja Novitskova, who has been approaching our technological age as a new evolutionary stage for several years now. A recent body of work charted the evolution of new technological species against the demise of existing biological ones – a rare, delicately winged butterfly becomes extinct, but is traded for a new silicone wafer. Images of cute baby giraffes might survive better than the actual creatures themselves, suggest her large display stands featuring aluminium cutouts of the animals, while digital prints of the Cambrian dolphin, on papyrus, no less, reference animals that have been bred and trained to carry out military operations. Novitskova's work is undeniably appealing and has an authoritative, almost helpful manner, as though the artist has taken it upon herself to smooth our passage into the future.

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CAMERON JAMIE
Massage the History (film still), 2007–9, colour 35mm film with Dolby Digital stereo, soundtrack by Sonic Youth, 10 min. © the artist. Courtesy the artist, Gladstone Gallery, New York & Brussels, and Bernier/Eliades, Athens

that, meanwhile, might happily topple into **Cameron Jamie**'s countercultural melting pot. The LA-born, Berlin-based artist-cum-'backyard anthropologist', attentive in the past to the semiotic nuances of wrestling, metal, Detroit garden decorations for Halloween and the legend of the horned Alpine beast Krampus, gets a retrospective in banker-stuffed Zurich, set to tour, that includes all his films as well as photographs, drawings, etc, and covers 33 years. Since Jamie was born in 1969, you do the maths.

For **Momentum**, the maths is simple: divide everything by two. The incumbent curators of the 15-year-old Nordic biennial, Power Ekroth and Erlend Hammer, appear to be producing the biennial in discrete halves, each with a separate title and separate list of artists. Can't people just get along? The Moss Kunsthalle – one of the main venues – has been split in half, with Hammer using the existing architecture and Ekroth, so she tells us on the biennial's regularly updated blog (which currently seems to feature about six posts from her to every one of his), having 'gone bananas' building new walls which look 'freaking amazing'. We appreciate this kind of unmediated inside track, and look forward to the curators staging the inevitable boxing match at the opening. We congratulate them also on finding a fascinating new wrinkle in exhibition organising, the split-curated biennial that actually opens (Manifesta 6, RIP).

GORAN HASSANPOUR
(see MOMENTUM)
Tower of Babel, 2011

Housed in a former cinema, Galleria Continua in Italy's San Gimignano doesn't do poky little shows, so hearing that one work in **Nari Ward**'s exhibition *Iris Hope Keeper* – named in part for his mother – will be a 9m-high hot air balloon constructed from scrap metal, *Beyond* (2013), isn't wholly shocking. Particularly if you know the Jamaica-born, US-emigrated, fiftyish artist's mixed-emotion-laced past works, such as the sombre, darkened array of 365 abandoned baby strollers in the shape of a ship's hull, *Amazing Grace* (1993), lately reprised in the New Museum's *NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star* exhibition. The polysemic dash of poetic discards is what Ward works with: the 'balloon' is festooned with 100-plus bottles, each containing the word 'beyond' in a different language, a sort of baroque message-in-a-bottle affair that suggests at once, Ward has said, dysfunction and the desire to move.

The selfsame New Museum (not on their payroll, no) is about to launch the second part of **Ellen Gallagher**'s 2013 institutional blitz, *Don't Axe Me,* following the opening of *AxME* at Tate Modern in May. These 20-year surveys spotlight the American painter, collagist and filmmaker's method, which has often involved taking archival material from black-audience magazines like *Ebony* and doctoring them in detailed ways – incising, accoutring – that defamiliarise imagery in order to draw attention to racial stereotyping and the fragmenting of American identity. Gallagher's art, replete with references to Melville, seafaring and the slave trade, Agnes Martin-style Minimalism, sci-fi and the Drexciya legend of a lost undersea civilisation, verges on reassembling a lost past: taken together or apart, these two shows offer a somewhat overdue opportunity, as the cliché runs, to put its sharp-edged pieces together.

NARI WARD
Sun Splashed Di Giugno, 2013, c-print, 75 x 100 cm. Photo: Lee Jaffe. Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Beijing & Le Moulin

ELLEN GALLAGHER
Wiglette from *DeLuxe,* 2004, photogravure and plasticine. © the artist

BRIAN GRIFFITHS
The Body and Ground (*Or Your Lovely Smile*), 2010 (installation view, *British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet*, 2010, Nottingham Contemporary), mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy Vilma Gold, London

The minimalist legacy couldn't be more contrastingly addressed than in **Brian Griffiths**'s exhibition at Tramway. Following the ambivalent canvas-covered cubic structures of his *The Invisible Show* at Vilma Gold, London, in 2012, the London-based artist here plots something less austere though perhaps comparably theatrical. Cuboid or cylindrical structures covered in colourful patchworks of painted canvases that look somewhat used, worn and discarded – though how so isn't clear – they're likely to suggest and refute physical and conceptual entry and, if the result is anything like Griffiths's recent works, to offer a ticklish, oddly pleasurable mental masochism. To fill this former tram depot's spacious space, there'll have to be a lot here, but Griffiths appears to plan exactly that: plenitude and emptiness, space-filling smartly and explicitly done.

How to leap from that to **Pedro Reyes**? You don't. For a recent show at Lisson in London, the Mexico City-born artist showed more than 30 musical instruments made from recycled weapons. The show was entitled *Disarm*, which summarised the intention – to draw attention to the violence that bedevils the border city of Ciudad Juárez, where guns are easily available, and to literally take weaponry out of circulation: he convinced locals to swap their guns for domestic appliances. Making issues tangible and accessible, and offering cures, is key for Reyes, who in the past has made a puppet show starring Karl Marx and Adam Smith (*Baby Marx*, 2008) and set up a working clinic offering offbeat therapies for the stresses of city living (*Sanatorium*, 2011). For his first show at Luisa Strina, the one clue we have to go on – since the gallery appears not to be receiving our emails – is a photograph of a shelf of surrealist-looking paintings featuring body parts. We're not sure what was wrong with us before, but we feel better already.

PEDRO REYES
Imagine (Xylophone), 2012, recycled metal, 113 x 125 x 62 cm, unique. Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London & Milan

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Henna-Riikka Halonen, *Moderate Manipulations*, 2012, HD single channel video, 6 mins. Courtesy the artist. Photograph: Minttu Mantynen

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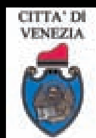

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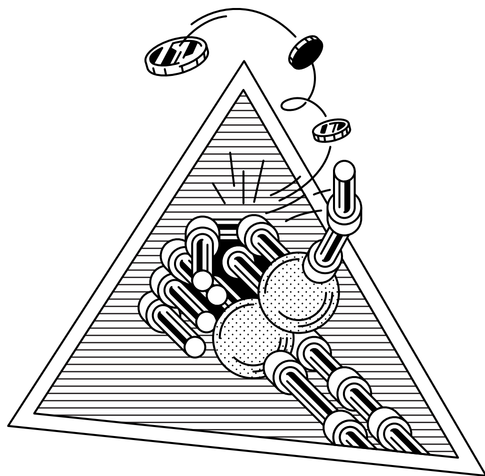

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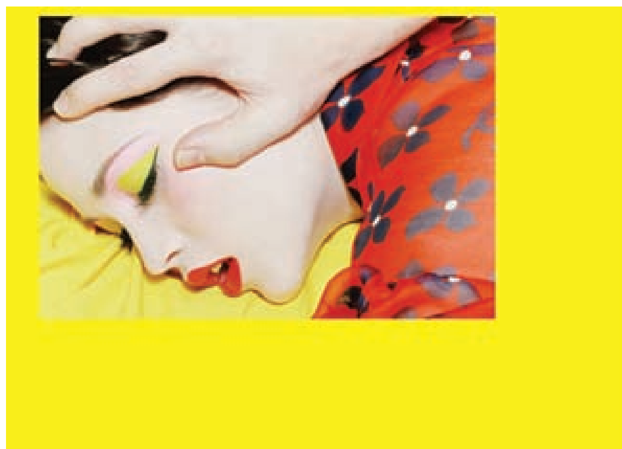

Staged

The photographer Miles Aldridge – whose hyperreal staged imagery has graced the pages of pretty much every fashion magazine you might care to name – is the subject of a retrospective at London's Somerset House this summer. As a preview, Brancolini Grimaldi has published a portfolio of 32 lithographic and silkscreen prints, limited to an edition of 180, including this 2002 work, *The Ecstasy #2*.

brancolinigrimaldi.com

£6,500

Leisure time

Skowhegan – which, established in 1946, offers an intensive nine-week summer residency programme for emerging artists – has got former visiting tutor Chris Ofili to produce a fundraising edition. The etching, limited to 55 copies, has something of the summer about it as two naked bohemians romp by the poolside.

skowheganart.org

$1,500

Rugged

Anni Albers was one of the most prominent textile designers at the Bauhaus, having taken up the weaving course reluctantly (her initial plan was to take the glass workshop, alongside tutor and future husband Josef, but women were banned from that course). This rug design by Albers dates from 1926 and has been revived by Christopher Farr, made from hand-tufted wool, as a limited edition (numbered to 150).

christopherfarr.com

£750

Scott King

Bitchy

The disco is loud. You're trapped in the corner. A fan comes up: "Oh. My. God. You're my favourite artist." The woman gets more and more hysterical with excitement, trash-talking other artists to emphasise how much she likes your work. "Aaron Young? Macho. Whatever." "Lali Chetwynd. Spartacus Jabba-Fancy-Dress. What-*everrrrrr*." "Dan Colen. Pigeon shit." "Anish Kapoor? Big-business bore." "Liam Gillick. Intellectual Meccano." So goes the scenario in this frankly insane 12" by British artist Scott King, released as an edition of 150. King says he hopes it sells well so that he can release another musical work, *The Artist and the Arms Dealer*.

thevinylfactory.com

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Beatriz Stix-Brunell and Nehemiah Kish in Trespass, Metamorphosis: Titian 2012 (©ROH/Johan Persson, 2012)

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Geometric bubbles

The shape of Ruinart's champagne bottles – with the ballooning body and giraffe-like neck – comes from a seventeenth century design. Taking their odd proportions as inspiration, twenty-first-century designer Piet Hein Eek (see this month's Art in the Real World column) has recently created a trapezoid case to fit a limited run of Jeroboams. Launching at Masterpiece London on 26 June, these containers are made from the recycled wood that characterises much of Eek's product design, displaying a roughness at odds with the type of packaging that champagne houses usually choose to signify the drink's prestige and glamour.

ruinart.com

£550

Hug a hoodie

The British artist Ryan Gander has collaborated on a clothing collection with Toyko-based designers A.Four Labs. The line, which includes trousers, a sweater, a cap, a t-shirt, shirt and this hoodie, all sport the same white-on-black spot design. Though reminiscent of the laser-cut holes in Gander's 2008 paper work *The Universe as I knew it at aged 5, collapsed and expanded several times or more*, which marked out the position of all the stars in the universe as they were in 1981, it's uncertain whether these white dots are equally meaningful.

afourlabs.com

¥21,000

Obsessive

Lars Laumann's work is characterised by intricate and often bewildering narratives, frequently meditating on the subject of obsessiveness and mixing fact and fiction. Earlier this year Birmingham artist-run space Grand Union staged a show of two works from a project Laumann embarked on with the artist Kjersti G. Andvig, which documented the latter's relationship with an American death row inmate. This print, in an edition of 25, draws an analogy to Les Tricoteuses, the women who would knit during guillotine executions in the French Revolution.

grand-union.org.uk

£50

An inane conversation about mobile phones is slowly, wonderfully obliterated by a heavy synth bassline and a chant of "Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic". *Neo-Lover* is a stomper of a song by Longmeg, the band fronted by artist Edwin Burdis. Anarchic, with little structure, wavering delightfully all over the place and coming in at just under six minutes long, it's one of the tracks on a new LP released by fellow artist Andy Holden's Lost Toys Records.

losttoysrecords.com

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Here art grows on trees
Simryn Gill

Australian Pavilion
55th International Art Exhibition
la Biennale di Venezia
1 June – 24 November 2013

Commissioner: Simon Mordant AM
Curator: Catherine de Zegher

Simryn Gill works in the area of the ephemeral and the domestic, with its daily habits and repetitions in a lived social reality. Hers is the tidal zone, the insecure in-between zone, its significance lying between absence and presence, spiritual and corporeal.

Through (photo)graphic series and object collections, which can seem casually thrown together, her art brings into play her, and our, day-to-day experiences. Once gathered and assembled, these works have the unexpected capacity to momentarily disturb the systematisation of life. Consequently, our daily lives seem to unfold in front of us in a perpetual becoming. This 'being in the present', or what is often called 'the everyday', is notoriously elusive to objectify, and it is this mobile indeterminacy and openness that gives the quotidian its powerful and radical character.

A temporary building, the Australian Pavilion in the Venice Giardini della Biennale, seems ideal to host Gill's site-specific project, a few months before the structure will be dismantled and discarded for a new pavilion. With its appearance resembling a modular beach house, it has an uncanny association with the mangrove tree-lined, beach-front house of Gill's youth in Port Dickson, Malaysia. As always, Gill's work is precise and poignant. She considers the building's structure, composed of two rectangular volumes alongside each other, each having a different height and floor level, and unified by a wavy roof, which follows the split of the two levels. The upper floor holds the series of twelve large screens of collaged drawings, *Let Go, Lets Go*, while the lower section shows the series of mine photographs, *Eyes and Storms*. In the upper room, comfortable seats in a style of tropical modernism are placed for visitors to pause and look at the collection of books from which Gill has drawn her paperwork. On the lower level is a big bowl with a nippled basin, *Half moon shine*. Necklaces of *Naught* made both of organic and synthetic materials, of plastic derived from petrochemicals and of metal from iron ore, close the circle—around and around.

Here, amidst the trees, Gill's site-specific project, *Here art grows on trees*, presents paper works as being of vegetation, as a cog in the whole system of turning wheels, as just a link in the chain, in the string of gems that the world is offering—a cyclic instead of linear world-view.

Image: Simryn Gill, "Untitled," 2004. Still from Super8 film.

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ERIK BULATOV

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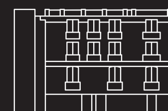

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Erik Bulatov, I'M GOING, 1975, Oil on canvas, 230 x 230 cm, Private Collection, Zurich

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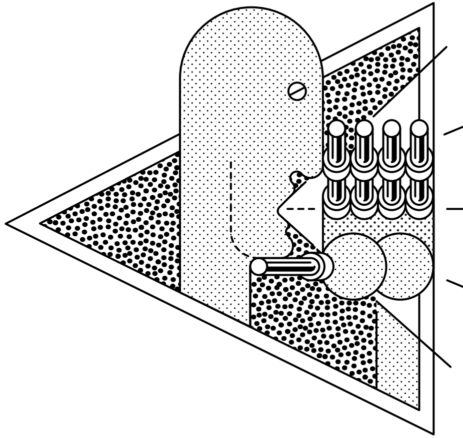

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J.J. Charlesworth, London
Turner Prize 'not controversial' shock

Turner Prize announcement time again. Now, the Turner Prize used to be 'controversial', and because the mainstream media, who the prize seems largely to be for nowadays, has a vision of contemporary art that got frozen stuck somewhere around 2004 – the good old Britpop days when contemporary art was still all a bit *weuargh!*, a bit *woowoowooh!* – it still wants to think of it as, er, controversial. Except that this year, it's super obvious that the shortlist is about as controversial as, say, a Boy Scout helping an old lady across a busy road. Tino Sehgal? Great stuff. David Shrigley? You're so funny, we love it. Laure Prouvost? We don't necessarily understand it, but we like it anyway. Lynette Yiadom-Boakye? Well done, just for being you. So the mainstream media has been a bit dumbfounded. Turner Prize. Here's the list. Um.

So against the deafening sound of the public collectively pausing for a moment, then getting back to whatever it was doing, is there much to say about this completely reasonable, uncontroversial and well-balanced shortlist? Well, yes, if we choose to look not at the artists themselves, but at the arrangements that have brought them to the shortlist. Now, we're not going to go so far as accusing anyone of nepotism, but there seems to be a certain – how shall we put it – *institutional cosiness* appearing in the relationship between shortlisted artists and the judging panel. After all, it can't have escaped anyone's notice that Sehgal is shortlisted for his show at, well, Tate Modern. Or that Shrigley was nominated for his retrospective at the Hayward Gallery, which just happens to be run by Ralph Rugoff, who happens to be one of this year's judges. Or that Prouvost was nominated for another Tate-commissioned project this year. And though, in the fog of my conspiracy-theory-addled musings, I can't find any smoking guns to link Yiadom-Boakye to the judges directly, it must have been handy for Susanne Gaensheimer, Turner judge and director of Frankfurt's Museum of Modern Art, that Yiadom-Boakye has previously shown at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and the Kunsthalle Mannheim, not an hour's drive away. Good motorways, the Germans.

Now, you know… I'm only saying. After all, it would be silly for an artist to be excluded from the Turner Prize's shortlist just because the Tate had the foresight and good judgement to already have given you a show. And

Laure Prouvost, *Wantee*, 2013 (installation view). © the artist. Courtesy MOT International, London

the idea that curators shouldn't be actively interested in what's going on around them, especially only an hour's drive away (probably faster if you take the train) is just an insult to curators. And yet, such alignments appear a little problematic when a prize is assumed to take proper account of the broadest field of activity across the country.

Such questions become a little sharper when one notes that, for the third year running now, the Turner Prize's panel of judges doesn't include an independent critic or art journalist. Turner Prize juries used to have one or other newspaper critic or art magazine editor thrown into the mix, but that got nixed in 2011. Admittedly, what with the Turner Prize being presented in Northern Ireland, as part of Derry-Londonderry's year as UK City of Culture, the Dublin-based academic/curator/critic and all-round Eire mover-shaker Declan Long is on the panel, but Long's institutional status is comparable. Why, after all, not a Northern Irish curator or critic?

The lack of controversy, then, could have a lot to do with how inward-looking, institutionally, the Turner Prize has become, and how much it reflects not an act of independent and public debate about whatever the best art has been in Britain this last year, but an increasingly tedious and administrative process of peer-to-peer reputational horsetrading among directors of art institutions. To win the Turner Prize it's good to have already won a prize (Prouvost is winner of the 2011 Max Mara Prize for Women; Yiadom-Boakye the 2012 Future Generations Art Prize; Sehgal lots of prizes). Put simply, nobody cares about the Turner Prize because it's none of anyone's business anyway; nobody, apart from the endlessly-cycling network of curators and kunsthalle directors who, as Woody Allen once quipped, 'do nothing but give out awards'.

Marjane Satrapi, *Peintures*, 2013 (installation view). © the artist. Courtesy Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont

Violaine Boutet de Monvel, Paris

Closure of Jérôme de Noirmont Galerie, and beyond

'The unfavourable political, economic and social context in France today, along with the unhealthy ideological climate and stifling tax burden, compromises any prospect of a future art market in France and alters any enthusiasm as well as any entrepreneurial spirit!'.

Gasp. Announcing – completely out of the blue – the imminent closure of their gallery, the page-long letter (doubled via email) from the renowned French art dealers Jérôme and Emmanuelle de Noirmont, which was received simultaneously by all their followers and friends on 21 March, caused much surprise and huge turmoil within the Parisian art scene. 'We have taken a carefully thought out, personal decision', it additionally clarified, 'to put an end to the activity of the gallery at the end of Marjane Satrapi's exhibition on March 23.' Two days later, indeed, after nearly 20 years of assuredly successful business and at the end of said show – 21 paintings, entirely sold out in a few hours a month earlier – the gallery did permanently drop its commercial curtain on Avenue Matignon next to the Champs-Élysées. If you wonder, though, they're not literally taking French leave, since their company Art & Confrontation, which they created back in 1994 parallel to the gallery, will continue to exist for projects that have yet to be determined. Still, their precipitous retreat from the art business, just a week before the opening of 2013 Art Paris Art Fair at Grand Palais, felt as if the sky had finally fallen on us.

At a time when the delirious yet symbolic 75 percent millionaire tax or the possible inclusion of artworks in wealth tax kept hitting daily headlines (and tempting potentially loaded French collectors to flee for better horizons), the national press was quick to spread the Noirmonts' news, quoting their missive as if it were the voice of doom, especially the passage censuring the antientrepreneurial complexion of current national politics. That said, it is here absolutely necessary to clarify that the couple's decision was not due to any immediate (or even remote) threat of bankruptcy. Financially speaking, their gallery was doing very well, representing a limited yet very keen catalogue of 15 artists any rival would envy – Keith Haring's estate in France, Pierre et Gilles, Jeff Koons, Shirin Neshat and Fabrice Hyber, among others, as well as younger talents such as Benjamin Sabatier and Yi Zhou. All the artists were of course informed of the gallery's irrevocable decision prior to the public, around mid-February, while the now ex-gallerists are currently assisting them in finding suitable new art dealers and vitrines in France or abroad. So what really went through their heads?

While her husband was away in Newcastle for the opening of Hyber's exhibition *Raw Materials* at Baltic, and after shutting up shop, Emmanuelle de Noirmont told me that for the past three years they actually had been looking forward to larger premises and more artists to represent. As their letter pointed out, 'The future appears to be in certain specialized niches for simple structure galleries, and in the branding of mega-galleries, with several international locations'. Since they weren't interested in leaving France, their plan was crystal-clear. In order 'to continue to ambitiously serve the artists in this increased competition', they had to extensively grow their business here in Paris. But the 2012 election of a socialist government altogether dissuaded them from taking such a risky step and took away their desire to race: 'Surfing the wave and keeping the gallery in its current form would ultimately be a disservice to the artists.'

Now, caught between a rock and a hard place, what they didn't explicitly communicate in their letter but Emmanuelle de Noirmont was kind enough to share with me is their strong desire to find an alternative to the rush for always-bigger money. Indeed, she and her husband deplore the 'glamorisation' of their profession to the extent that nowadays, the monetary weight tends to overtake the 'humane' value of the artists' works. So if their personal decision to shutter their business could be quite damaging to the Parisian artscape within the increasingly rough competition that occurs in other marketplaces (though in case it's still some kind of a hot topic, aren't you aware by now that conservative Paris is mostly relying on its art history rather than gambling on the new?), at least their intention seems noble: 'Our future commitments will always put art and contemporary creation at the heart of a social project drawing new paths through focused actions, both professional and charitable.' The Noirmonts will disclose more on those by the end of the year.

Kimberly Bradley, Berlin
Bohemian glam

On a recent visit to the playground with my small daughter, a knit cap came flying through the air, just missing her as she swung on the swing. Following the cap was its owner, a boy. Running after the boy was a man, who stopped dead at the swing (so as not to get smacked in the head, I would assume). Our eyes met in a moment of friendly parental tension, then he bounded off.

The dad was Tino Sehgal. The pregnant pause was, weirdly, reminiscent of his art. But that it was Sehgal wasn't weird at all. I often see the artist in everyday places, as I do other Berlin artworlders who've become household names and happen to live nearby in Berlin-Mitte. Olafur Eliasson sometimes bikes past. Isabelle Graw often emerges from the yoga studio as I go in. Omer Fast lives a block away. And when the silver-haired Klaus Biesenbach is in town, it's easy to spot him walking along Auguststrasse, the street he helped gentrify, then stopping into a place like Pauly Saal, a year-old fancy restaurant across from Kunst-Werke, in the company of one or other famous person who definitely doesn't live here (any more), like Marina Abramović.

It's been interesting to observe that the previously scrappy, defiantly counterculture and anticelebrity Berlin artworld has evolved into its own art-celebrity solar system; one with veterans (old: Baselitz, Katharina Sieverding; new: Eliasson, Sehgal), visiting returnees (Rirkrit Tiravanija, Biesenbach) and newcomers. Douglas Gordon just bought two buildings near Potsdamer Strasse with studios and offices for himself and people like Kasper König. Matt Mullican has had a studio here for about a year (see 'Gentrify This', *ArtReview* January & February 2013). A few months ago, Tomás Saraceno moved from Frankfurt into a studio next to those of Thomas Demand and Tacita Dean (though apparently they're all moving out soon: gentrification).

OK, Kippenberger definitely had his groupies when he briefly lived in Berlin; during the 1980s, the Neue Wilde painters were also rock stars (come to think of it, Hans-Peter Adamski walks his Dalmatian past my house every day, but I only recently found out who the artist is), but all of this had an insider chic that could have only existed before the brave new world reflected by artforum.com's openings-and-parties column, Scene & Herd. As for the post-Wall generation, it's reassuring that Eliasson, Elmgreen & Dragset and Jonathan Meese lived here long before Berlin became so cool and they became so famous.

The newer art stars have come for different reasons (love, a spouse's job, a DAAD fellowship), but many stay because, they tell me, it's easier to 'breathe' here than elsewhere ('breathing' likely meaning cheaper studios and labour, and less pressure, since their galleries are elsewhere). But while it's wonderful that some art stars have settled in, upping the ante and inspiring – and employing – the emerging generation, the higher-end influx is noticeable and, in a city that's always been so deliciously low-key, a little scary. Mixing celebrity culture and art too much in this day and age can lead to icky things (Jeffrey Deitch's MOCA is a far cry, with the emphasis on 'cry', from Warhol's factory).

Luckily Berlin is far from both of those scenarios. The vast majority of its luminaries have, after all, made their most visible big breaks in other places (the Tate's Turbine Hall seeming to be a big starmaking machine for Berliners), and the city tenaciously hangs on to its laidback image. The question is simply how long that easy-breathing feeling can last when what was once a bohemian reality and is now a bohemian myth finally morphs into complete commercialisation. Speaking of which, James Franco recently had a show at the new Peres Projects space, and the German press (and the maidens of Neukölln) jumped all over his comment that he'd 'like to live in Berlin'.

If he does, I have a feeling he'll be a big hit with the new crowd that one now hears humblebragging in American English at group shows in cool temporary spaces. Me? I'll stick with my daily encounters in the 'hood, and dream that the one really big artist who was supposed to move here, Ai Weiwei, will someday be allowed to do so. For Ai, even I'd become a groupie.

Illustration: Viktor Hachmang

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Marie Darrieussecq, Paris

Liquid Loft's 'Talking Head'

The city of Créteil, in the southeastern suburbs of Paris, was entirely reconfigured in the 1960s and 70s, its new buildings nicknamed 'the cabbages' and 'the corncobs'. The architect, Gérard Grandval, was anxious to avoid the effect of cubes and boxes. It is here, in the vegetal curves of a district that has remained symbolic of urban utopia, that the annual EXIT festival is held, at the Maison des Arts (designed by Jean Faugeron in 1977).

On that particular evening, Project Eva, a collective that works with robots and kinetic structures, presents an imposing 'electro-mechanical, immersive and somatic' installation. About 50 of us stand in the darkness beneath a large articulated metal ceiling. The autonomous metal plates start to move and descend on us to the accompaniment of a great percussive beating of sheet metal and jets of light. It is so tremendously oppressive that the only thing to do (apart from bending over) is laugh.

Next, in the main hall, Liquid Loft, the dance company of Austrian Chris Haring, presents *Talking Head*, in principle a more traditional spectacle: two dancers in front of video projection screens. Addressing the timeworn subject of the lack of communication in an overconnected world, the two impeccable dancers – one male, one female – enmesh themselves in poetic, funny conversations via webcam, during which they neither listen to nor understand one another. They play with their own image as if with other dancers, and create visual miracles with tools that are now familiar to us all: the face-morphing software offered on our computers. It makes one think of the warped reflections of old fairground mirrors, and of all our conversations over Skype or somesuch: those moments when one doesn't hear and can't see, yet continues to speak anyway, amid the *chhrrr* and *bzzz* that have become part of our everyday experience of technology. In 2050 we'll look back on these stuttering first steps as we now do at our grandmothers' dial telephones, but we won't necessarily be any more sophisticated in the art of listening to one another.

The text is by Fritz Ostermayer, the set design by Thomas Jelinek, the soundtrack by Andreas Berger. The dancers are Stephanie Cumming and Luke Baio. With their 'danced textual sculptures', all add life to the truism: one can try to get the better of new media and networks, but one will remain alone. They put all our stuttering on display: the failed flirtation, the lost love, the artistic tangles, the imbecilic interviews, the big global hullabaloos; but also tenderness and absence. These great themes of humanity are here danced in a perfect hour, at once moving and funny. Hello? Bravo!

Astrid Mania, Moscow

National Centre for Contemporary Art's Innovation Prize

When it comes to contemporary art, the Russian government seems to adhere to a carrot-and-stick approach: lock up some artists in labour camps, support others through a system of state-funded institutions, exhibitions and awards. Among the latter is the Innovation Prize, now in its eighth year, supported by the Russian Federation's Ministry of Culture. This national prize is awarded for projects or exhibitions that are, mostly, submitted for attention by the hosting or funding institution itself. An expert committee brings the number of applications down to five nominations in each category. Works by the shortlisted artists, as well as shows and publications, are then publicly displayed in Moscow (some in the form of documentation only), this year at the National Centre for Contemporary Arts. A jury of seven has the final say, and their choices are announced during an awards ceremony that can only be described as dizzying.

In April, the organisers hosted an impressive show at the giant Manege Central Exhibition Hall, a stone's throw from the Kremlin, broadcast via TV. The spectacle was something like an unintentional parody of Soviet-style rituals, complete with children's chorus intoning songs scripted for the occasion – making, say, Tino Sehgal's performers declaiming 'This is so contemporary' look pale by comparison – accompanied by Addams Family-style organ music. Moreover, the Innovation Prize involves so many categories, plus out-of-competition nominations, that it is hard not to lose track. But most bewildering was the fact that some protagonists recurrently returned to the stage: the boundaries between selection committees, jury and nominees were certainly blurry. (There's something refreshing about this unhidden overlapping of interests; it is blamed on the allegedly small size of Russia's contemporary art scene.) Iara Boubnova, for instance, appeared as jury member and returned as the winner of the Curatorial Project – she curated the main project of the 2nd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art. She then *re*-returned to receive the special prize from ViennaFair, involving a presentation in the not-for-profit programming at that very fair. Rumour has it that Boubnova wasn't originally nominated by the selection committee, but added to the shortlist due to some internal pressures. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

The Ural branch of the National Centre for Contemporary Arts in Ekaterinburg – the NCCAs are the Russian way of decentralising contemporary culture – was rather successful with its applications. One of their candidates, Ivan Plusch, took the New Generation award for his installation at the biennial, an evocation of the glory and decay of the Stalinist era, housed in a dysfunctional workers club from that time. And another Ekaterinburg nominee, Timofey Radya, received the special prize from the Stella Art Foundation for his commissioned public street art project during that same biennial, giant inscriptions of commonly used words on rooftops – a popular vote with the audience.

Most intriguing was Andrei Erofeev's winning of the 'U-Art: You and Art' Cultural and Charity Foundation prize. Erofeev, also a member of the jury, was praised as

curator of the Leonid Sokov solo exhibition at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Erofeev had previously made international headlines when he and Yuri Samodurov, former director of the Andrei Sakharov Museum, were found guilty of 'incitement of religious and ethnic hatred' for their 2007 exhibition *Forbidden Art 2006*. They got away with fines, but as a consequence, Erofeev lost his job at Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery.

Very clearly, the Russian government is trying to instrumentalise the contemporary art scene, and funding it ensures control, appeasement and also brownie points. Moreover, the government is competing with a number of private initiatives and foundations that heavily support contemporary art – as vanity projects, but also as a philanthropic endeavour. It may thus be purely coincidental (but maybe not) that there seems to be a growing interest in the country's recent art history: namely its unofficial art scene from the 1970s onwards, which developed creative survival strategies during Soviet rule. What is still lacking, though, is an increased interest in Russia's contemporary art scene from outside. This might also make Russian artists more independent from funding at home.

Christian Viveros-Fauné, New York
Whither the gallery world?

There was the end of the art object, the end of painting and the end of art. Is this the end of the gallery show?

Suddenly, like experienced footballers hanging up old cleats, a crop of art veterans is bailing on the gallery system. Rather than the game being finished with them, however, this time *they* claim to be done with the game.

After 30 years in the business, in March New York dealer Nicole Klagsbrun told *The Art Newspaper*, 'I'm not sick and I'm not broke. I just don't want the gallery system anymore.' The same month, in Paris, Jeff Koons's French dealer, the *soigné* Jérôme de Noirmont, announced his retirement from the bricks-and-mortar art trade, claiming that a global 'economic model for galleries' increasingly divides dealers between those 'who support young artists with few costs' and 'mega-galleries' with multiple venues around the world. In April a third gallery, Brooklyn's Parker's Box, made public its plans to close its doors in May after being open for 13 years. Disillusioned by its proximity to Williamsburg's 'clothing boutique-land by day and party-land by night' (as he wrote in an email announcement), its director – the artist Alun Williams – also decried the creative limitations that currently come with 'a conventional commercial gallery formula'.

But why, exactly, have these influential art mavens retired in the midst of what the media still largely characterises as an art-market boom? One answer lies in what New York's own art Zelig, *New York* magazine critic Jerry Saltz, says constitutes 'the death of the gallery show'. Describing a situation in which gallery attendance has declined and 'the self-knowledge that comes from looking at art' is also 'shrinking', Saltz summarises a current dilemma that involves rising rents, proliferating art fairs, expanding 'online sales platforms' and what American-born, UK-based art dealer Kenny Schachter has called 'higher and higher prices for fewer and fewer artists'. For a growing number of galleries, these issues resemble not so much a new can of worms as a barrel of hydra-headed monsters.

A perfect storm of brand identities tossed into Web-ready bytes, bifurcating global wealth and piss-poor middle-market sales, the current gallery climate has resulted, according to Saltz, in an 'art world [that] has become more of a virtual reality than an actual one'. Gone, largely, are the artistic ties that once helped bind dealers to certain artists' neighbourhoods. Gone, too, is the sense that galleries offer the public anything more than the experience of niche retail. But key among a raft of other concerns is one fundamental question: will the current dealer fallout remain controlled, or are the present defections a glimpse of a bigger exodus that will affect not just New York's ecology but the global gallery landscape as well?

In New York, at least, there is plenty to complain about among what were once considered established galleries. Take the venerable Postmasters Gallery, for example, a standard-bearer for three decades of experimentation: its rent at its West 19th Street space was recently doubled to $30,000, requiring an upcoming move. Other midlevel Chelsea dealers have also been priced out of their west Manhattan real estate. Among them are Schroeder Romero, Larissa Goldston and D'Amelio Terras (Christopher D'Amelio, its principal, recently closed his 17-year-old space to join David Zwirner's growing empire). At its height, Chelsea was home to more than 350 galleries; today only 204 remain. As D'Amelio himself told Bloomberg News, 'If you are a midsize gallery and want to survive, you have to keep growing. Otherwise you would shrivel and disappear.'

Opening reception of *Reaching 100*, 2013, Parker's Box, Brooklyn. Photo: © Etienne Frossard

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A new government flood map issued in April by the Federal Emergency Management Agency makes matters even worse, exacerbating the already devastating effects of Hurricane Sandy. Chelsea, deemed a flood-safe area in the 1986 map, is literally engulfed by the new redrawing. The expansion of the flood zone is predicted to raise insurance costs on businesses exorbitantly, while tightening the financial squeeze on dealers already straining from Sandy's damage. When you factor in what responsible members of the art media characterise as a worldwide decline in middle-market sales, the future for Gotham galleries looks less than rosy.

But the fate of many of the highly inventive, noncorporate, middle-class galleries in New York and beyond really rests on an even more complicated bit of calculus. That is, namely, whether figures like Klagsbrun, de Noirmont, Williams and others, can find another self-sustaining model for exhibiting contemporary art in the world's great capitals. At times like these, it really is all about bucking trends and staying inventive. So far, the jury is out.

Jonathan Grossmalerman, New York

Beauty parades, interrupted

If you're having an important meeting with the Museum Ludwig's chief curator, you should be able to expect a certain level of quiet. Am I right? I mean, that's not a crazy thing to ask of, say, an employee or even your ten-year-old daughter, is it? I just want to be clear on this. If, oh, I don't know, a director of White Cube was in your studio, for instance, trying to glean from your work whether they should consider representing you (and thereby release you from the shackles of that hideous troll of a man Maximillian Bingeweary and his joke of a gallery!), you would probably hope no one would take that opportunity to march through the studio beating on an old bass drum while farting loudly. Agreed? Or, and this is simply to clarify my point so that there is absolutely no misunderstanding, if you were to have a meeting with the Museum of Modern Art about a possible retrospective. Yes. That's right! The Museum of Modern Fucking Art! I assume that you'd hope not to have to compete with the spectacle of your idiot assistant Neal writhing madly in a puddle of blood, having shot himself in the leg 16 times with an air-powered staple gun and somehow, through a series of events I cannot explain, though I was there, set himself ablaze.

So I think we've established that it's a good thing, when having an important meeting, for it to be in a reasonably quiet, well-lit room, free from interruption, odd cooking smells or, and this simply for the sake of argument, a hungry grey wolf. All agreed? Good! Then why is it that that's exactly what keeps happening to me? It's like my studio crew is deliberately undermining me. It's like my *own daughter* wants me to fail! Why!?

Just yesterday, for example, I met with none other than a director of Hauser & Wirth (the only gallery in the country large enough to show my work without it seeming cramped) and my daughter walks in with a homework question! I mean, who the fuck does she think she is? And it wasn't just any homework question. It was a homework question designed to make me look like an idiot. You see, it seemed that she had been 'asked' to 'describe' Poussin's *Shepherds of Arcadia*. A painting so sublime and full of meaning that it caused my entire oeuvre to – and I say this with all due respect to my oeuvre – look silly. When I dutifully explained the allegory of the shepherds coming across an ancient tomb inscribed with the cryptic words 'Et In Arcadia Ego', I made sure to do it in a sweet, almost fatherly way. I believe I even impressed the gallery director with my rich tones and the sing-songiness of my doting manner. But then that little bitch unsheathed her daggers! With that awful feigned simplicity small children employ:

"Wow! That's pretty awesome how much that one painting means…"

She paused for dramatic effect and comically raised her eyes to the sky in order to signify that she was thinking hard. I saw it coming as though it were a huge wave, lumbering and hellish, rushing the shore and I was unable to do a damn thing about it!

"Do your paintings mean anything?"

"Well…" I didn't finish.

I knew the meeting was over from the look on the gallery director's face! And most importantly, I knew *why* it was over! That damn meddling daughter of mine with nothing but ice in her heart! At least when my important meetings with any number of artworld power players are interrupted by, say, for example, a lost goat or I don't know… maybe a screaming hooker chased by hornets, it doesn't reflect poorly on my work!

Jonathan Grossmalerman, Hauser & Wirth director and my stupid fucking daughter. Guess which one wasn't invited?

Oliver Basciano, London
Off-space no 13: Jerusalem, on the road

Standing in a darkened, deserted corridor within Knole, the ancestral seat of the Sackville-West family since 1603, I'm struck by how uninspiring the paintings that fill the wall are. The amount of art in this 'calendar' house in Sevenoaks, Kent – spread throughout what apparently amounts to 365 rooms, 52 staircases, 12 entrances and 7 courtyards – is staggering, yet none of these oil works, mostly depicting Sackville-West descendants, have much expression or life to them. The paintings, after all these years, seem as dead as their subjects. Simon Martin comes round the corner (I give a little nervous start – there's just six of us here, plus a National Trust curator, in the otherwise empty, heavily shuttered building). "Its just *stuff,* isn't it?" the artist says. He seems to be thinking along the same lines as me about these dusty memorabilia of people long forgotten.

Knole is the last stop on a two-day roadtrip across the southeast of Britain. There are three artists in our two-car convoy. The first carries Martin, Ursula Mayer and Becky Beasley, together with curators Claire Feeley and Ciara Moloney – the minds behind the Jerusalem project, the banner under which this sojourn has been instigated. The second car carries a requisite core of documentarians, including myself. Our weekend is the third Jerusalem roadtrip. Similar weekends have been organised – each with a different trio of participating artists – along the east coast of Britain, and north to Sheffield. All are described as travelling residencies by Feeley and Moloney.

Perhaps the paintings at Knole feel so inert because for the past two days I've seen art in its rawest form: so raw, in fact, that it might not even end up being art at all. Each artist had requested visits to places of architectural significance that chime with the general interests of their work. The first morning, then, Beasley organised a tour of her hometown of St Leonards-on-Sea in the company of local historian Edward Preston. Specifically we walked the route of the long-built-upon waterways, while Preston pointed out evidence of its subterranean survival: a pond here, a pothole there. Beasley's sculptural objects ask the viewer to tease out hidden histories – real or otherwise – from them. Here she seemed to be putting herself in her audiences' shoes, and allowing Preston to reveal the hidden narratives of a place already very familiar to her. Even for those who had not visited the seaside resort previously, the tour turned an otherwise generically pretty English town into a place layered metaphorically and literally (geographically, architecturally) with histories.

Then Martin took control of the navigation and we visited Sea Lane House, a privately owned villa in East Preston, West Sussex, by Bauhaus-trained architect and designer Marcel Breuer (which is now set amid suburban hell). Happenstance was one of the best features of the weekend. We were at the house – and soon after, the Arts and Crafts home of a middle-aged couple – as part of Martin's research for an ongoing work, *UR Feeling*. The artist has been interested in peripheral architectural elements (eg, doorknobs, worn steps, the parts of a building that most often come into contact with the human body) as a way of talking about objects, domestic or artistic, in both sensual and cultural terms. Yet it was Ursula Mayer whom was most taken with the Breuer building: in particular a room still under renovation by the present owner, in which the only other object beside a dustsheet-covered sofa and bed was a 3m-high, grainy reproduction of one of the most famous images from Helmut Newton's 1981 *Big Nudes* series, otherwise untitled. When one recognises that Mayer's work investigates the apparent gendered nature of architectural styles (the perceived masculinity of Modernism, for example), it's clear how this serendipitous setup might be catnip to the artist.

Dinner back in St Leonards was spent ingesting wine and digesting the day's events. The next day officially belonged to Mayer, tracing the buildings that told the story of the relationship between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. First Woolf's cottage, Monk's House in the village of Rodmell; and then an hour's drive north to Knole. Essentially, of course, we were tourists, but ones whose experiences had the potential to become something more than just racked-up memories. Along the way nuggets of information were picked up, little windows of interest opened. Whether these will actually result in anything tangible is uncertain, but perhaps also – and brilliantly – beside the point.

Photo: Jon Lowe

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William Scott developed in collaboration with Tate St Ives and Ulster Museum, Belfast. *Haroon Mirza* supported by The Henry Moore Foundation. Image: William Scott, *Still Life with Orange Note*, 1970, (detail). Collection Ulster Museum, National Museums Northern Ireland © 2013 estate of William Scott.

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Sam Jacob, Design
'Game of Thrones'

I'm deep in the box-set of *Game of Thrones*, HBO's super-high-production-value fantasy drama. It looks and feels gorgeous: to bathe in its pseudo-historicism, as the flickering screen illuminates the room, is like being transported to another world. It almost hurts when an episode ends, and the hallucinatory quality of *GoT*'s fantasy evaporates and you're back in an ordinary room slumped on a sofa. And so it should: the production budget for its first ten-episode series clocked in at $60 million.

Like all fantasy, *GoT* has an obsession with *things*. All its objects are treated like fetishes: swords, books, thrones, cloaks and so on. What *GoT* does so amazingly well is to communicate the sensation of its things and places. Though it is nothing more than flickering light, it has incredible texture. Exaggerated through sound, light, cinematography and postproduction, its props acquire a sense of more-than-realness. They feel more real than any real medieval sword propped up in a stately home or suit of armour in a museum. They are visually and sonically coaxed into a state of hyperreality. *GoT* fur, for example, feels – even though you can only look at it – simply furrier than any fur you've seen before.

Things in fantasy often possess more qualities than things in real life. They operate more symbolically, or they can do impossible things: rings that make you disappear, for example. Sure, fantasy can be pompous, and dominated by overly RSCish baritones clad in breastplates and backslapping with feudal bonhomie. It's full of unspellable names and dialogue that sounds like *Shakespeare for Dummies*. But despite this, it betrays perhaps something of our real-world relationship to objects. Just as science fiction is often a vehicle for contemporary comment, fantasy operates on a similar level. Similar, but usually dumber. Strip away those medieval trappings and you get tales of good and evil, honour, character. The dragon-festooned spectacle becomes a dreary, half-baked statement-of-the-obvious. It's a strange irony that for all the possibilities of the genre, fantasy often creates the least imaginative of worlds.

But then strip away its narrative too and you find something that's really not of this world, something altogether weirder; a kind of pan-historical technological cocktail. *Game of Thrones*'s title sequence is the epitome of this: a flight through a giant map of the fantasy's territory performing as a CGI equivalent of the cartographic frontispiece to the *Lord of the Rings* books. But this one is animated clockwork, so the flight takes in whole cities that rise up as though driven by the most complex series of dials and cogs.

Better even than the cities is a weird landscape/construction called the Wall, a kind of mechanised piece of geology, of which it is impossible to say whether it's supposed to be natural, manmade or just a vertically pinched version of the *Star Wars* ice planet Hoth (of course fantasy recycles itself faster than German refuse, creating a veritable vomitorium of ancient myth, historical reference, pulp novel plot, *Dungeons & Dragons* figurines and anything else in its vicinity). Up and down this Caspar David Friedrich-scape runs a lift, as ingenious as it is incongruous, manifested in a half-timbered rawness with a clanking chain.

It's these moments of imaginary engineering that fantasy does so well. It's where art direction meets plot device through the medium of technology. Think of all those *Indiana Jones* and *Tomb Raider* temples whose passageways and caverns are set with complex mechanical traps: spring-loaded arrows firing out of rock slits, giant carved spherical stones that roll down tunnels with the precision of a BMW ball bearing. Trapdoors, secret passages and rotating stone idols all merge frictionless technology and ancient artefacts with wilful historical abandon. They project the future into the past and cloak technology in primitivism. What's fascinating is how fantasy's imagined mechanisms redraw the boundaries we usually draw between science and art, between technological progress and historicism, between narrative and function.

Of course, the ultra-high-definition fantasy world of *Game of Thrones* is only enabled and made so very plausible, so saturatingly real, by technology itself, by the brute force of CGI processing power that conjures it into existence. Technology itself is what makes the space in which imaginary medieval speculations occur. And only when we're bathed in the pure sensual pleasure of these invented histories, perhaps, can we really experience it.

Stephen Dillane as Stannis Baratheon, *Game of Thrones* (season 3, 2013). Photo: Helen Sloan. Courtesy HBO, New York

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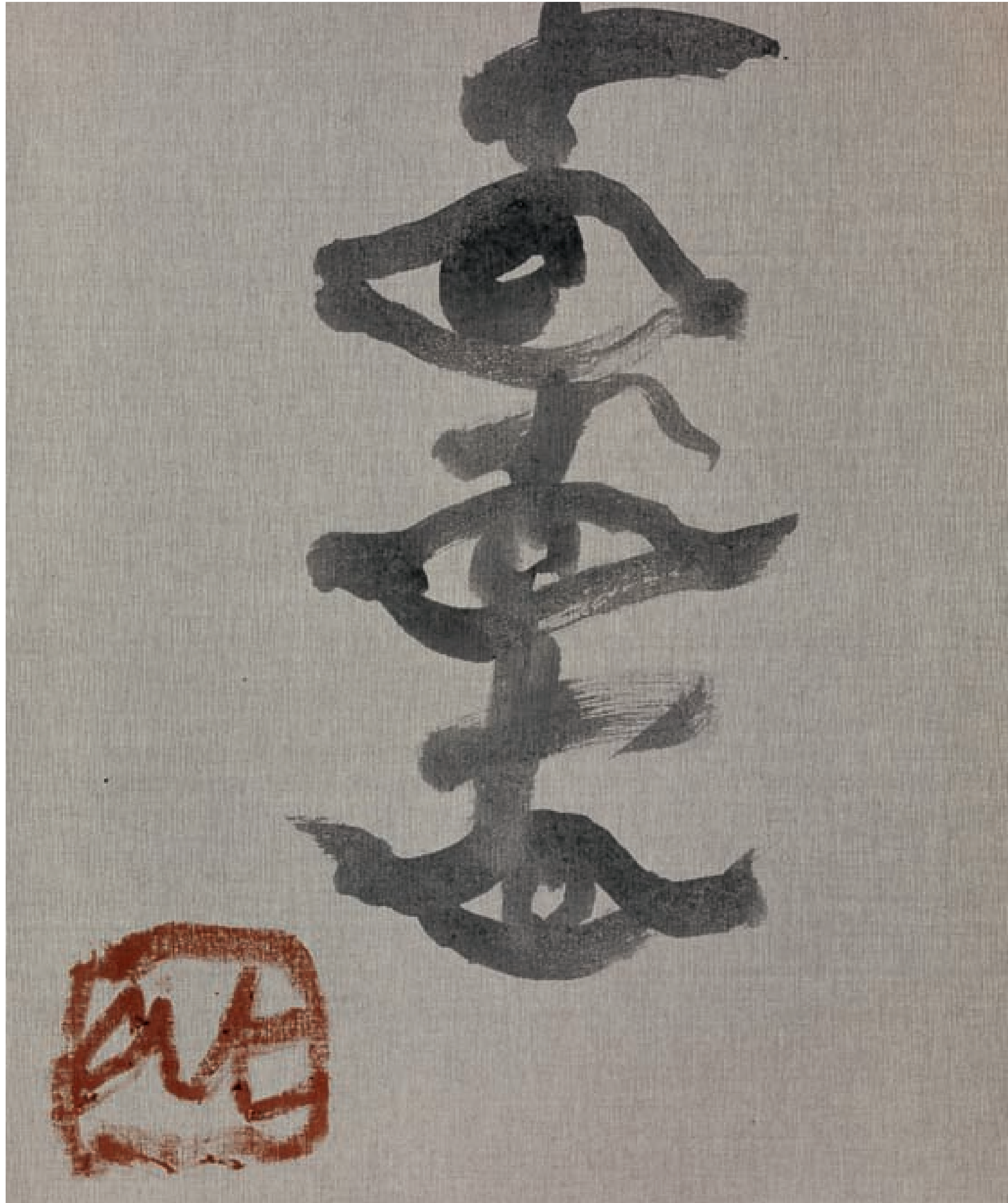

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Hettie Judah, Art and the Real World
Piet Hein Eek

Once home to a Philips electronics factory, the buildings of Piet Hein Eek's enterprise in Eindhoven are glass-sided, and in many places glass-walled as well. You can stand beside a richly lacquered table and watch its twin brother under construction through high interior windows. Across an access road, the fortysomething Dutch designer's kitchen and restaurant are visible in the adjacent building, and from that building one can see the heaps of scrap wood and junk that will no doubt make their way into one of the company's much-copied salvage creations. That the see-through buildings are symbolic of the company's own transparency in manufacturing can hardly be coincidental.

Having evolved gradually over 20 years, Eek's practice is emblematic of many of the modern design world's defining concerns. He has a substantial manufacturing outfit based in the heart of Europe; he pursues dogged efficiency in his use of new materials; he prizes craftsmanship and solid construction; he works with salvage, offcuts and deleted stock; he manufactures according to demand, closely monitored via his own showroom; he is interested in modular structures that can be compactly shipped; he has designed for ethical enterprises, for top-end collectors and for the mass market.

Exuding a disingenuous nonchalance towards matters commercial, Eek proudly makes no practical distinction between a commission from a budget mail-order company and one from Ruinart, for whom he has recently designed limited-edition champagne cases. His decision to accept a commission is based on the client's approach; Eek is attracted to offers that combine respect for his work as a designer with enough of a technical challenge to keep him interested. He pooh-poohs the notion of something fitting into his 'brand' or overarching business plan, saying "people are often asking me why I'm doing something in a certain way, saying that it doesn't fit. I say; if it doesn't fit, then it fits!" Beyond his playfulness and roving curiosity, there's a traditional Dutch combination of pragmatism, enterprise and antiauthoritarianism, tempered by the mood of the times.

Eek is, somewhat by happenstance, also a gallerist. Originally he'd considered displaying art in the showroom – something to go above the sofas to complement the ambience. With an overabundance of floorspace, he eventually dedicated a sizeable chunk of the building to exhibitions; the art above the sofas has become two storeys full of art above the sofas, open to the public as an extension of his showrooms. Eek's response to his new status is typically direct: "I don't dislike art, of course. I like art, but I'm not a specialist or something."

Rather than pursuing a reverential hands-off approach, Eek the gallerist inevitably becomes Eek the collaborating partner – if his exhibitions could be said to have a house style, it's that he and his team have generally constructed part of the work on display. On the first floor, heroically proportioned floral sculptures by Linda Nieuwstad have been tamed and placed in bespoke Eek vases like vast, carnivorous bouquets in a petrified flower shop. On the second floor, Bert Teunissen's photographs have been boxed in custom frames, making them viable 'products'. Teunissen's commercial photography is shown in context alongside this personal work – an upfront acknowledgement of the compromises that characterise life as an artist in the current economic climate.

Rather than wanting a slice of artworld cool, or the waning kudos of a 'curator' tag, Eek approaches each show as a problem that he as a product designer has been given to solve, regarding the artists with a whiff of the paternalistic fascination one might extend to very young children, or blind mice. "We collaborate a lot with the artists because they are not able to make the things like we do; they don't have the skills, they don't have the opportunities and they don't have the money," he states. Describing the interplay of skills within the gallery, he happens on a typically artless distinction between the closely allied fields of design and art: "There's a great understanding, but a different attitude to the reality of the world."

Piet Hein Eek, Eindhoven. Photo: Iesaja Hizkia

Joshua Mack, Sharjah
Sharjah punts

Ernesto Neto, Enquanto a Cultura Nos Separa, a Natureza Nos Une (While Culture Moves Us Apart, Nature Brings Us Together), 2013, crochet with polyester rope, ice, stones, plywood, grass, fiberglass, water, clay and wood connectors, and loam, 486 x 1,038 x 1,029 cm. Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation. Courtesy Galeria Fortes Vilaca, São Paulo, and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Shortly after the opening of the 2011 Sharjah Biennial, an installation by the Algerian playwright Mustapha Benfodil that explored religiously motivated violence in his country was removed from a public courtyard when neighbourhood residents deemed its content offensive. Following the demonstrations in Cairo's Tahrir Square and the dispatching of Saudi and UAE forces to quash antigovernment protests in nearby Bahrain, the incident highlighted, in a smaller way, the contentious politics of public space, real and virtual, playing out from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street. Anger over Benfodil's piece was whipped up on BlackBerry Messenger much as Egyptian activists had relied on Twitter and Facebook to establish communities of shared outrage and commitment.

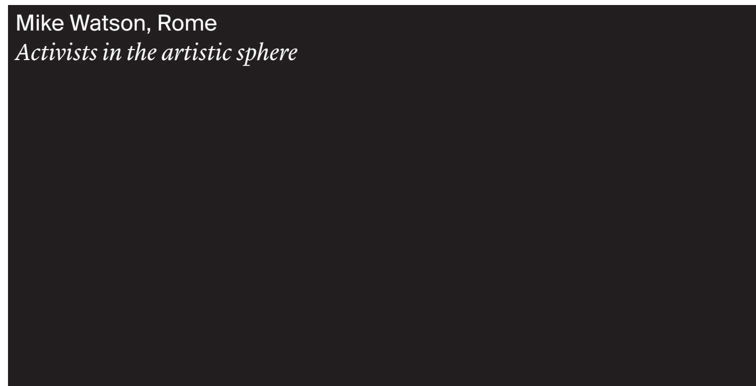
If this reaction indicated the limits of what it is possible to discuss in Sharjah, it also suggests the engagement that the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) – the entity that sponsors the biennial – had developed with art addressing socially urgent issues. So there was at best an unintended irony, if not a knowing slap, inherent in the theme of the 2013 biennial: the courtyard as 'a place of experience and experimentation'. Organised by Yuko Hasegawa, chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, the show was structured around installations in public spaces: for example, a pavilion by the Brazilian sculptor Ernesto Neto and a playground by Danish collective Superflex based on designs solicited among the locally based migrant labourers who constitute over 75 percent of the city's population. Hasegawa imagined such projects as places of exchange where nonintellectual and nonlinguistic responses would evoke and fuse individual 'cultural memories', much the way goods and ideas once moved across regional trade routes. Opposed to 'Western' analytical thought, such intuitive responses and overlapping histories constitute a new 'cultural cartography' centred on that great catchall of everything non-European, 'the global south'.

But the idea of the globalised world – another platitude – as the sum of myriad subjective experiences is becoming stale; and while Hasegawa rates 'politics as culture itself', her concept overlooks the economic, religious and ethnic tensions that have, throughout history, made exchange fraught and hence culturally productive. Asked in a harried moment about the effect of the Benfodil incident on her thinking, she replied that her artists were "nice and polite". But politics is not politesse. With work by artists like Gabriel Orozco, Francis Alÿs, Thomas Demand, Olafur Eliasson and Carsten Höller, this biennial seemed tamely apiece with the right-thinking institutional liberalism that often dominates such large, international surveys.

The choices might also reflect ambition as much as tactful caution. This year the foundation inaugurated a cluster of handsome, white cube exhibition spaces in the city's historic centre. Concurrent with the exhibition's opening, it also hosted a private conference of the World Biennial Forum. According to associates, Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi, daughter of Sharjah's ruler and president of the SAF, has been travelling widely, fostering a network of contacts beyond the tight-knit group of artists and curators from Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and London who have tended to dominate events in past years, and who were noticeably absent this time.

Sharjah's strength has been its commitment to community. Beyond its signature exhibition, the SAF has striven to create relationships among artists and grass roots cultural workers – theatre directors, curators, directors of alternative spaces – in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and their diasporas through an ambitious programme of residencies and annual conferences. Long-term projects like the Mumbai-based collective CAMP's films about the dhow trade, made with sailors whose boats dock in Sharjah's harbour, and sound artist Tarek Atoui's exploration with students from the emirate's Al Amal School for the Deaf of how people unable to hear experience music, realign social relationships by engaging local people as collaborators, not as the source of material for projects conceived elsewhere by others.

Sharjah may need to broaden its purview lest it become parochial, but if it strays too far from its base, or eschews honest – not offensive, but honest – engagement with cogent issues that its constituencies face, it risks producing more anodyne shows like so many in the global north.



Mike Watson, Rome
Activists in the artistic sphere

At the time of writing, it's two months after the election here in Italy and a makeshift government has only just been agreed. The fact that it was put forward by President Giorgio Napolitano – himself now reelected to great controversy, leading to public demonstrations – as the only possible administration hardly inspires confidence. The reforms that must now be pushed through, in the midst of economic crisis, require a strong and decisive government rather than one made up of widely varying interests. The new prime minister, the centre-left Enrico Letta – who presides over a government composed of centre-right, centre-left and technocrat MPs – immediately faced a crisis when, on 28 April, a lone gunman opened fire outside parliament on several policemen, injuring two. The gunman came from the deprived southern region of

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Calabria and told police officers he had intended to shoot at politicians. This marks a worrying return to political violence in Italy, as dismay turns to despair for the poor and jobless.

What is strangely absent from the political scene, however, is a coherent hard-leftist opposition movement that might otherwise pressure the government to implement fair social policies and job market reforms. In Italy politics revolves around a kind of ineffectual centrism, in part because the presence of polarised political extremes has destabilised the country in the past. The question – often asked here by foreigners – of how Berlusconi managed to be elected prime minister three times can only be understood in light of Italy's very particular situation. After the 'years of lead' (*anni di piombo*), a period running through the 1970s to 1981 in which political violence tore the country apart, a leader with no vision or policies other than those that would keep him in power became, by default, the least unappealing option. Because Berlusconi had no ideology, his premiership was less threatening to the political extremes, and it therefore marked a period of relative stability.

Berlusconi is again the big winner of this election, with the secretary of his People of Freedom party serving as the deputy prime minister in the current government. Further, Letta is the nephew of rightwing politician Gianni Letta, a close aide to Berlusconi, performing a number of political roles for the media tycoon.

With any hardline opposition to the cronyism of government being viewed as potentially incendiary, it is no wonder that political expression has in many respects migrated into the cultural field, where it can sit fairly innocuously. This can be seen in the various art occupations that have come to prominence in the cultural and political field in Italy (such as MACAO, Teatro Valle, Teatro Garibaldi Aperto, to name a few). In this way alternative political thought can evade censure and gather momentum for some kind of as-yet-unspecified future move into the realm of concrete political action. The principal advantage of this kind of art–political hybridism is that the porting of politics into the artistic sphere allows for boundless feats of the imagination. The principal drawback is that so long as thought stays in the artistic field, it fails to act concretely, leaving the social and political fields open to unchallenged abuse by the political class.

This leaves two options: either to stay in the artworld, where unlimited possibilities can be imagined but not acted upon, or to enter the concrete political realm, where possibilities diminish yet change can be made, albeit within very narrow confines.

The latter option has been taken by Lorenzo Romito, mayoral candidate for Rome under the Liberare Roma (Free Rome) banner – and member of Stalker, an art-political group active in the city since the 1990s. He has been continuing the activities of *Primavera Romana* (*Roman Spring*), a Stalker project that organises long rambling walks around the periphery of Rome in order to breathe life into territories; the walks are envisaged as a 'political and aesthetic practicality, to reconnect the many socially and culturally innovative experiences of a city in decline'. Years of reconsidering urbanisation as art activity are being put in the service of politics in the hope that Rome's periphery will be rejuvenated. The act of walking, and of observing, represents a commitment to carefully considering a given locality. It is the opposite of the tendency for electoral candidates to want to be seen to be everywhere simultaneously, as if speed of movement and the brevity of successive public encounters equalled competence. As Wittgenstein said, a philosopher should be met with the greeting 'take your time'. The same perhaps should be said of politicians. Indeed, time is what the movement of activists into the artistic sphere has allowed for. Porting it back into the political sphere would prove invaluable, if it were possible.

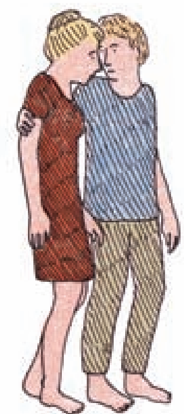
Paul Gravett, Comics
Marion Fayolle
(see overleaf)

While studying at the Strasbourg School of Decorative Arts, renowned for nurturing highly individual graphic artists, Marion Fayolle arrived at her personal approach to comics through her illustration tutor, who opened her eyes to the diverse French and international traditions in books and magazines of stories told through pictures and enjoyed by adults. Fayolle decided "to work on stories without creating recurring characters or elaborate plots. I make fun of conventional storytelling. I don't want to know my characters or go into the details of their lives. I use them only as theoretical figures to express ideas or feelings."

Fayolle strips the comics medium back to its essentials by removing speech balloons and narrative captions and limiting her text to brief titles, clues to what lies ahead. Her choice of wordlessness seems to suit the experience of dreaming, where purely visual reveries can unfold before our eyes. It also returns us to a childlike, preliterate mental state where our only choice is to look attentively and fathom what we see. By removing all sets, locations and backgrounds except for the minimum of necessary props, Fayolle leaves the white paper of the blank page as her characters' open, borderless environment. They always appear full figure, mostly in profile and curiously barefoot, like mute actors in a play on the most minimalist stage, or dancers choreographed within an empty gallery, a white cube. "My approach is a bit like improvised theatre, a discipline I discovered in Strasbourg, where you give yourself a constraint, a theme and just a few props or setting with which to come up with a coherent story."

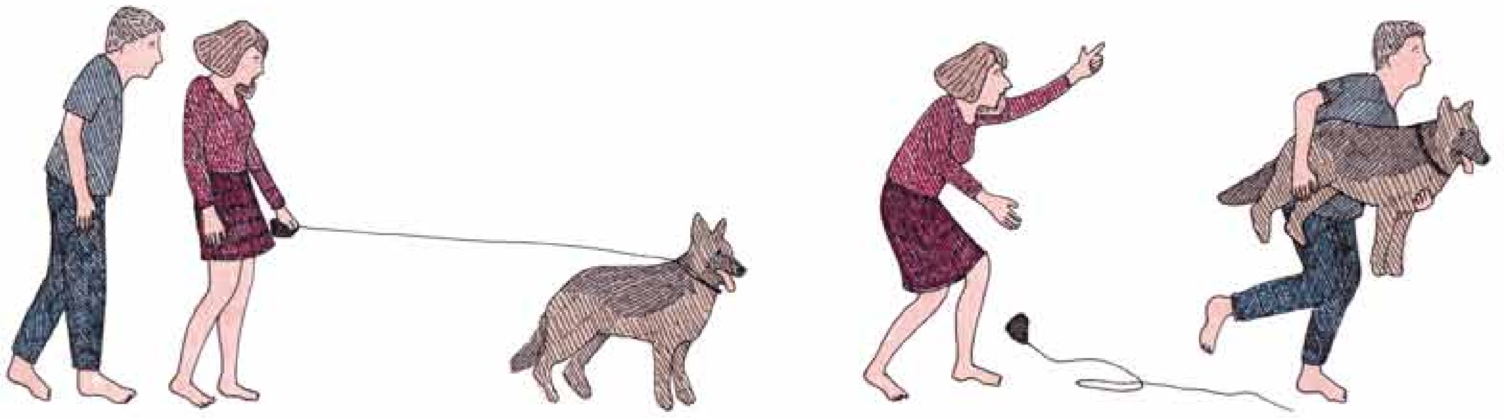
A potent image, a graphic metaphor, such as a woman whose dress strangely resembles a birdcage, acts as her springboard. "I become the character which lets me think up the rest of the story, not by writing it but by acting, living, miming and visualising it." Body language becomes all-important in her silent narration; one tilt of the head, one hand gesture, one facial expression, one posture, one physical contact can be as eloquent as pages of prose. In her 2011 debut collection, published in Britain in June by Nobrow as *In Pieces*, she improvises the fantasies of diving into the pool of wax left by your melted boyfriend, or transforming your long dress into a tent or a tablecloth for men to climb under. The tensions between desire and despair, joy and jealousy, possession and freedom, haunt these poetic, absurd and sometimes cruel fragments.

In the reverse of the usual process, colour comes first in Fayolle's images, starting as areas of digital tints, which she prints out and applies to the paper using a stamping technique, harking back to prints and engravings from the past. Her palette is subdued, her surfaces weathered, her figures' body parts flesh-toned and textured. She then chooses whether or not to add a fine black outline around these colour fields. For her new strip 'The Collector', overleaf, Fayolle imagines the lengths one lonely man will go to assemble his ideal family portrait.



Marion Fayolle, *The Collector* (detail), 2013

Marion Fayolle, *The Collector*, 2013



-MARION-FAYOLLE-

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Artist: Wu Di

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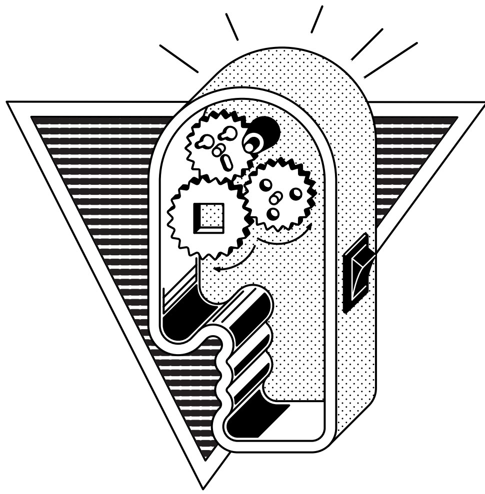
Great Minds



Great Critics and Their Ideas
The authors of Genesis
Interview by Matthew Collings

Other People and Their Ideas
Bert Kreuk
Interview by Mark Rappolt

Great Critics and Their Ideas
Interview by Matthew Collings

No 23: The authors of Genesis on deskilling

The book of Genesis is the first book of the Bible. It was probably composed in the sixth century BC. It has had a profound effect on the history of Western art.

ARTREVIEW
How well do you know each other?

THE AUTHORS OF GENESIS
Oh, we rarely get together. It's awkward. Some of us come from a culture that believes the universe was created out of the carcass of a slain demon. It's hard to relax and shoot the breeze with someone like that if you're part of an intellectual elite trying to bring about social revolution – you may perceive parallels with what happens now in the artworld. On the other hand, different as we all are, we have the creation of this text in common.

How do you sum it up?

TAOG It has a great swinging narrative and it's an interpretation of existence.

How long did it take?

TAOG It was begun during the Israelites' first captivity by the Babylonians, which we call Exile, and completed in the post-Exilic period, that is, by the fifth century BC. But editors entitled to call themselves authors were still working on it in the second century BC. It's in that period that Genesis becomes fixed in the form known to modernity.

Wow, so long, and it's had such an influence – the meaning must be really heavy.

TAOG [Modest silence.]

Is the Book of Genesis that is read today the same thing that you wrote, or has it become unrecognisable over time?

TAOG The text known as the Hebrew Bible is of course slightly different to what Christians call the Old Testament. The amazing thing is not that these two texts are substantially similar but that both are similar to versions that existed in the period when Alexander the Great was alive.

How does anyone know that?

TAOG Until only a few decades ago the oldest known copy of the Bible was from the ninth century AD. So it was indeed, as you suggest, impossible to ascertain the extent to which 'the Bible' in its many modern variations really matched the original Israelite version. Following the conclusion of the Second World War, the manuscript fragments now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. They seem to have been stored by a religious sect in 70 AD, the year the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews throughout the world. Scientific examination revealed that many of these fragments date from a much earlier period. Astonishingly, they include passages from nearly all the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible. And in all there is substantial continuity with modern translations. Genesis really is a very old text, or we should say, collection of texts. It's not of course written by one hand, it's multivoiced, it has multiple perspectives and it contains contradictions, some very startling. We could tell you about them but we suspect you have called us here for a different, more urgent purpose – you want to know what we think about this year's Turner Prize, the lineup for which has just been announced?

Giovanni di Paolo, *The Creation and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, 1445, tempera and gold on wood, 46 x 52 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Malcolm Varon 2013. © Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence

Exactly!

TAOG Of the four shortlisted figures we think two are the usual ninnies, one is humorous for the populace and the other is the inevitable (excruciatingly privileged) winner.

Privileged?

TAOG Tino Sehgal's education combines modern dance with economics, which we must admit makes us laugh, and his father was a manager at IBM. We confess we think of Tino as an artworld pet, one who controls lesser pets, paying his volunteer army small amounts of euros and dollars to prance like ponies. This goes on in the art institutions, which, we are supposed to imagine, he undermines. We can't get IBM out of our minds when we consider his success. The multinational corporations call the shots today. Fashion-conscious art serves their regime – this new moment of capitalism, the consumer society, which dates from the postwar boom in the United States. Its power setup is well known. The media provides placatory illusions on its behalf.

You've lost me. What's that got to do with the Turner Prize?

TAOG It is designed to titillate the media with scandal. It is hoped this year the media will rise to the bait of an artist whose works can only be experienced once.

Well, that's pretty good as a gag, don't you think?

TAOG Indeed, his relational aesthetics sophistication places him on a different level to the others. By the way, by 'ninnies' we meant obedient observers of the current professional art system's rules. We concede they are achievers of a kind, and deserve our respect as fellow artists. And we don't really object to Tino being privileged. His interfacing of sophistication and daftness might be irritating to some. But in terms of trying to put the codes together that make something like 'the Turner Prize' even possible, he is the obvious winner – it is a clearer endpoint than the shortlist has had for some time.

Do you really think there's anything in common between him and you?

TAOG The credo of It Makes You Think strikes a chord. An audience of the befuddled gets the impression that someone is in charge: someone knows the answer. That's how the Turner Prize serves power. This particular artist excellently sums up that aim. He has his own style: you could say he is a minimalist of the aim to give the viewer the illusion of autonomy. And in our case, we too sum up a major aim: with our work we wanted to give the Israelites the feeling that they could be a united people. Genesis is invention, philosophy, poetry and chronicle. There's no 'mythology' in it, contrary to popular belief, because there's no account of the creation of the gods, which is the technical meaning of mythology. Plus, there's no religion in it. Our language had no word for that. We weren't describing basic religious beliefs, as the common assumption erroneously has it, but what it might mean to be in a community.

What's Noah's Ark about?

TAOG We honed our narratives and fashioned our images in order to convey dense, complex, revolutionary ideas in swift, stark passages. Noah is an example. The legend of a world-destroying Flood already existed, in the dominant culture's mythology; in Genesis it is recast. For the Babylonians, existence was summed up in the mythology of Gilgamesh, which had its Flood catastrophe and its theme of fall and redemption. It existed for over two millennia before we rewrote it with a new slant. We presented our conquered community with a version of existence they already knew, but altered in the service of a new order. No longer was there a universe of nature gods, as there was in the mythology of the Mesopotamian civilisation that caused our suffering – or gods who existed because of a meta-divine force that fashioned the gods' world and conveniently also fashioned mere mortals for the purpose of working hard to maintain this world, so the gods could be free to be depraved, indulgent, oversexed and lazy; to be careless narcissists. Instead there was now only one God. Arithmetical variation was not crucial; rather, the difference in quality was the important factor. Not a nature god, but a God of history and events, and not limited by being subservient to pregodly forces, but unlimited: He is pure origin, pure creation and pure goodness. Of course the world He created, in our text, contained men, whom He fashioned to possess independent will, so there would always be the possibility of evil. And Genesis is full of arrogance, conceit, spoiltness and imperfection: Noah's Ark, Jacob and Esau, the Tower of Babel, Joseph and his brothers, the cherubim guarding God's throne with a flaming sword: these are all complex allegories of psychological states. But evil is not portrayed in Genesis as part of primordial existence, as it was in the old life-world that Genesis challenged. In the emergent life-world the Divine was neither self-conflicted nor alienated from mankind. There was a covenant: He will always save us. The revolutionary challenge we authors laid down was to the Israelites' own sense of things. Our people were divided. Some were polytheists, some monotheists, some enlightened, some shared the same demonic view of history that the ancient kingdom that enslaved them had. Some really were effectively Babylonians. But Genesis fought the status quo. It was an intervention in ideology.

YOU ARE ASKING US TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ARTWORLD APPRECIATION RITUAL, TO WHICH WE CANNOT RELATE

Crikey. Hey, what about Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, the London-based artist of Ghanaian descent: her paintings look interesting, don't you think?

TAOG You are asking us to participate in an artworld appreciation ritual, to which we cannot relate. As paintings, 'interesting' is far from what they look. Maybe as strategy they are interesting, both the artist's and the selectors'. We think of the historical art that Yiadom-Boakye is supposed to be referencing when the Turner Prize press release says her work might appear 'traditional'. It's clear there's absolutely no connection to it whatsoever. The posh papers dutifully repeat that non sequitur, and nothing is revealed other than the problem of there being no shared values that could be drawn on in order to find art interesting or not. And yet mass feeling or mass notions must always be sovereign. The Turner Prize can't sort all that out.

How could you make the Turner Prize good?

TAOG It exists because of greater things that need remedying, such as the absence of socialism, which itself is an answer to the failure of idealisations such as 'God'. When we invented Him as literature we gave Him the task of creating a good world. Whenever he finished a part of it, we repeated that word, we said, 'He saw that it was good.' Perhaps in desperation we might suggest to the Turner Prize that making could come back as a value in art – that is, belief in the material properties of made objects, as opposed to artists just presenting some signifiers any old how.

Have you anything good to say about Lynette's paintings?

TAOG We note the press release's contention that the body of work in question, having first tricked a nonexistent, idealised perceiver into thinking it is 'traditional', subsequently questions interpretation of 'pictures in general', particularly ones featuring 'black subjects'. We'd love to be able to say it sounds like a good cause. But we think her paintings are about viewer empowerment: they relate to the problem of elitism, and strategies over the years to break it down and instigate a new order of everyone being able to have a go, more attuned to a notion of the needs of the viewer than to the previous cultural order's insistence on understanding the internal structures or internal meanings of art. In this transition neither the selection committee nor Yiadom-Boakye are necessarily conscious players or agents, they are just enacters of a change.

Next month:
V.I. Lenin on
Reena Spaulings Fine Art

Interview by Mark Rappolt

No 7: Bert Kreuk

Over the past few decades, a US-based Dutch businessman, Bert Kreuk, has assembled one of the most impressive collections of contemporary art anywhere in the world. It includes works by big-name artists such as Christopher Wool, Jeff Koons, Luc Tuymans and Damien Hirst, as well as more recent stars such as Matthew Day Jackson, Theaster Gates, Danh Võ, Klara Lidén and Kaari Upson. This month a selection of works from the collection goes on display in The Hague, so ArtReview *caught up with the collector to find out what motivates him and what he thinks a public showing of all this art can achieve.*

Bert Kreuk in front of Kaari Upson, *Recollection Hysteria*, 2012 (installation view, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague), latex, pigment, metal. Photo: Gerrit Scheurs

ARTREVIEW
What made you want to show works from your collection in public?

BERT KREUK
At a certain moment you have so many works that you say, 'OK, what's the fun of storing it all?' – you can have only so much space in your own homes, even if you change it regularly. You can never see it all in one spot. Even here with this exhibition, it's just a very small part of the collection. Many years ago I had this idea that I needed to show my art in order to make sense of it in a framework where everything flows, and that's the ability that I have now, and that's the reason I'm thinking, maybe slowly, but in the years to come that I will have my own space, to tell the whole story of the collection. Now it's just bits and pieces.

How did you select which artists to include in this exhibition?

BK That's the tough part. It is basically those artists who are really most intriguing, and I think can tell in their own unique way – an authentic way – what they're trying to reveal in their art. There are a couple of young artists working now who can do that excellently, like Latifa Echakhch. All her art is about women's rights, free speech and awareness in the Muslim world, but it also leaves room for interpretation. She guides you, but then it's up to you to find what's in your mind, what you like to see, and it's this kind of artist that basically intrigues me. I have work by a lot of established artists – like Christopher Wool, Rudolf Stingel and Sherrie Levine – so I do want to show them as part of this show. I'm most interested in really conceptual art, because I started out collecting those artists.

How did you first start collecting contemporary art?

BK That's a long time ago. At a certain moment I was involved with impressionist art. When you have collected that, and been involved in that collection, and you have the best, you start to be intrigued about what else is out there. And then I got in touch early on with work by Christopher Wool. He is basically an extension of the abstract and minimalistic ways of painting. He always says in his art, 'It's not about what I paint, but how I paint,' and that's important. That's where I started to make the switch. If you look at Andy Warhol, he uses the screenprinting process, but it's all about the image, what he wants to present – Christopher Wool was the other way round: he used the screenprinting process, but for him it's not about what he's presenting, the image, it's about the process, and there is where it started to become interesting.

Is that connected to you being in America?

BK Yes, I think so. I was often in galleries in New York, where you are confronted with those artists. I come back regularly to Holland, but those artists who are really well known and shown in New York, like Stingel and Wool, were almost not recognised in Holland. That's part of the reason behind this exhibition: I haven't seen something like it before. It has to do with the fact that in New York the whole environment breeds talent. I always say a flower blooms better in full sunlight than in darkness, and all the right circumstances are there in New York, where those people can enhance each other. I don't think you have that in Holland. They have initial talent in Holland and they bloom, but there's not a group where you have lots of people talking to each other, enhancing each other and making good art, like you have with say the Brooklyn group that includes Matthew Day Jackson in New York. That's why a great number of artists in my collection are American.

In your collection generally, are there Dutch artists? In terms of the contemporary part of it?

BK I almost bought a Marlene Dumas; she is a great artist, but I'm waiting for the right work. There's so much offered to me which I don't think holds up to the quality of the collection. Before I buy something I really have to research it, I really have to understand the art. I'm thorough. I'm not somebody who's following the herd. I have to determine a purchase based on my own experience and knowledge of art. I have to understand what I'm buying, and it has to make sense. No, not many Dutch artists, but then again, I'm not really Dutch any more, because I'm living most of the time in America.

So what is it that makes you want to acquire a work of art?

BK I've owned a business for the last 30 years, and in business it's all about money, and it's all about working, and at a certain moment you come to a realisation that there's more to life. It's not about only chasing goals of business and money, so for me it's like an educational process, trying to enhance your life with nice things around you, and to open yourself to the idea that people can make great works of art, and try to reveal ideas. Most of the time I'm very attracted to tough conceptual art with some political or social message. It's about life. It's about expanding your mind, to keep your brain working in a different way than just about commercial ways of thinking or doing things. I always said that the art was a counterbalance to what I was doing in business.

Are there kinds of works you wouldn't buy? Do you have limits in terms of sex or violence?

BK No, when art is done for the right reasons, and it is uniquely done, and the artist is very truthful to what he is thinking, and he wants to communicate that in an artwork, then I don't have a lot of limits. But it needs to be done for the right reasons. If he or she has done it only to shock, or to do something out of the ordinary because they think they can become more popular or get the conversation going, that doesn't work. That's why I'm doing a lot of research, because I'm trying to understand if they do it for the right reasons. If they don't, I don't buy it.

Are you similarly open about the work you have in your own house?

BK Yes. Very much so. There are skeletons in my home by Matthew Day Jackson. It's eerie, but it tells the story of life and death, and as I said, when that is done for the right reasons, I don't have a problem, because if I see it, it intrigues me, and it tells me the story about the artist, not about the skeleton. It's not about anatomy but about the concept, and the intent of the artist.

I guess to some extent when people come to visit your exhibition, they will be forming a portrait of you through it.

BK Yes. If they look at the art, it is a very tough, social, political philosophy, and I always try to ask questions about what the world presents to me. Take Luc Tuymans. I was so intrigued about his painting called *Studio*, which I own, because it is all about manipulation of media. And we are living in a world where that kind of thing happens. It doesn't really mean I agree or subscribe to their ideas fully, but you know, at least they are presenting an idea that keeps your mind working. If you look at my exhibition, it is about those artists who have a unique way of communicating. Most of the subjects interest me, but do I subscribe to the conclusion? That's a different question.

What would you like people to take away from it?

BK You know, what I'd like them to take away is that art is not only about a nice two-dimensional picture. Art is also very much about learning, and about an educational process. People should look at an artwork, not because they think it's ugly, or it's beautiful, because ugly is a very subjective word. Something beautiful might be very superficial – somebody came up with an idea, made it commercial so that people buy it. That's easy. It's always easy to buy an artist who is clever enough to present something which is attractive, but staying truthful to the concept of their own ability and their own ideas, that's something else. Ugly is maybe even nicer. It's about the educational process, and helping people on their way to think differently about art. That's what I'd like people to take away from it, that they have to think for themselves.

IT'S ALWAYS EASY TO BUY AN ARTIST WHO IS CLEVER ENOUGH TO PRESENT SOMETHING WHICH IS ATTRACTIVE, BUT STAYING TRUTHFUL TO THE CONCEPT OF THEIR OWN ABILITY AND THEIR OWN IDEAS, THAT'S SOMETHING ELSE. UGLY IS MAYBE EVEN NICER

I ALWAYS WONDER MYSELF,
ABOUT MY COLLECTION,
WILL THIS ART REALLY MATTER
MANY YEARS FROM NOW?
HOW TRANSFORMATIVE IS THIS ART,
REALLY?

Do you ever find that you've bought a work that made complete sense at the time you bought it, and maybe five years later saying, 'Oh my God, what was I thinking?'

BK Yes, there are works like that. I make mistakes. It's all part of the learning process.

What was the first piece of art that you bought, and do you still have it?

BK I still have it, yes. It was an oceanic picture, but it's somewhere in the guest room. I have an emotional connection with it. I don't sell a lot of art. I try to keep those works, because it tells me about where I'm coming from; it tells me about the emotional value when I bought it, under what circumstances I bought it, so in that sense it doesn't fit in the collection but it does fit in my story.

Do you commission much work?

BK No. I have a very big problem with the commissioning of work, because I don't think you can push a button from an artist and expect a great work. It's inspired by what, by you as a collector? OK, you can inspire them, but before you know it there is always this influence from the collector. There is always some kind of instruction. Inspiration's good, but instruction... That's why I don't do it, I just buy it because I like it, but I hate when people say, 'I have a nice space above my couch and I need something there' – it doesn't make sense. That's nothing to do with art, that doesn't have to do with art collecting in general. That's not how I collect. I don't think you get the best collection by doing that, honestly speaking.

What's the attraction of political art?

BK Maybe it's not to do so much with the politics, but I am a little bit rebellious, in the sense that I like artists to question the status quo. Usually people's lives are configured in a certain way – that you have to have a job, you have to do this, you have to do that. It's always within a structure, and that structure is basically laid upon us from society. But there are these artists who are questioning, why this, why that? I don't subscribe to the conclusions from different artists, who are far left or far right or whatever, but I think it's about the uniqueness, and the questioning that attracts me.

Do you think about what will happen to your collection in the future? About whether the works in it will endure?

BK I always wonder myself, about my collection, will this art really matter many years from now? How transformative is this art, really? And if it's in a historical context, what does it do? These are some important questions, because so many people buy art without even asking themselves the simple question of whether they want to have it in their homes. Then it becomes speculative, it has nothing to do with art collecting, so if you collect for the wrong reasons, you'll never end up with those artists that matter in the long run. I always consider that when I buy something.

How can you tell that an artwork is going to meet these expectations?

BK If I can associate a piece of artwork or a concept directly with another artist, another contemporary artist of today, I will not buy it. It needs to be unique. Of course, it can have references to other artists and artistry, but art is a revolution, it must not be a one-on-one copy, and so much of what you see today is.

Do you work with art advisers?

BK I listen to people whose opinions I respect, but I'm not going to be led by advisers, because you never know if there's a second agenda or what is behind it. On the other hand, if you have 20 years of experience in art collecting, then at the end of the day, nobody can really advise you any more. It's in your complex process of thinking as to what you like or what you don't like. Nobody can say to me, 'You need to collect this, or you need to collect that.' I mean, I collect what I collect based on certain rules for myself, but at the end of the day, it's your collection, it's not the collection of your advisers.⁝

Transforming the Known: Works from the Bert Kreuk Collection *is on show at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, from 8 June to 29 September*

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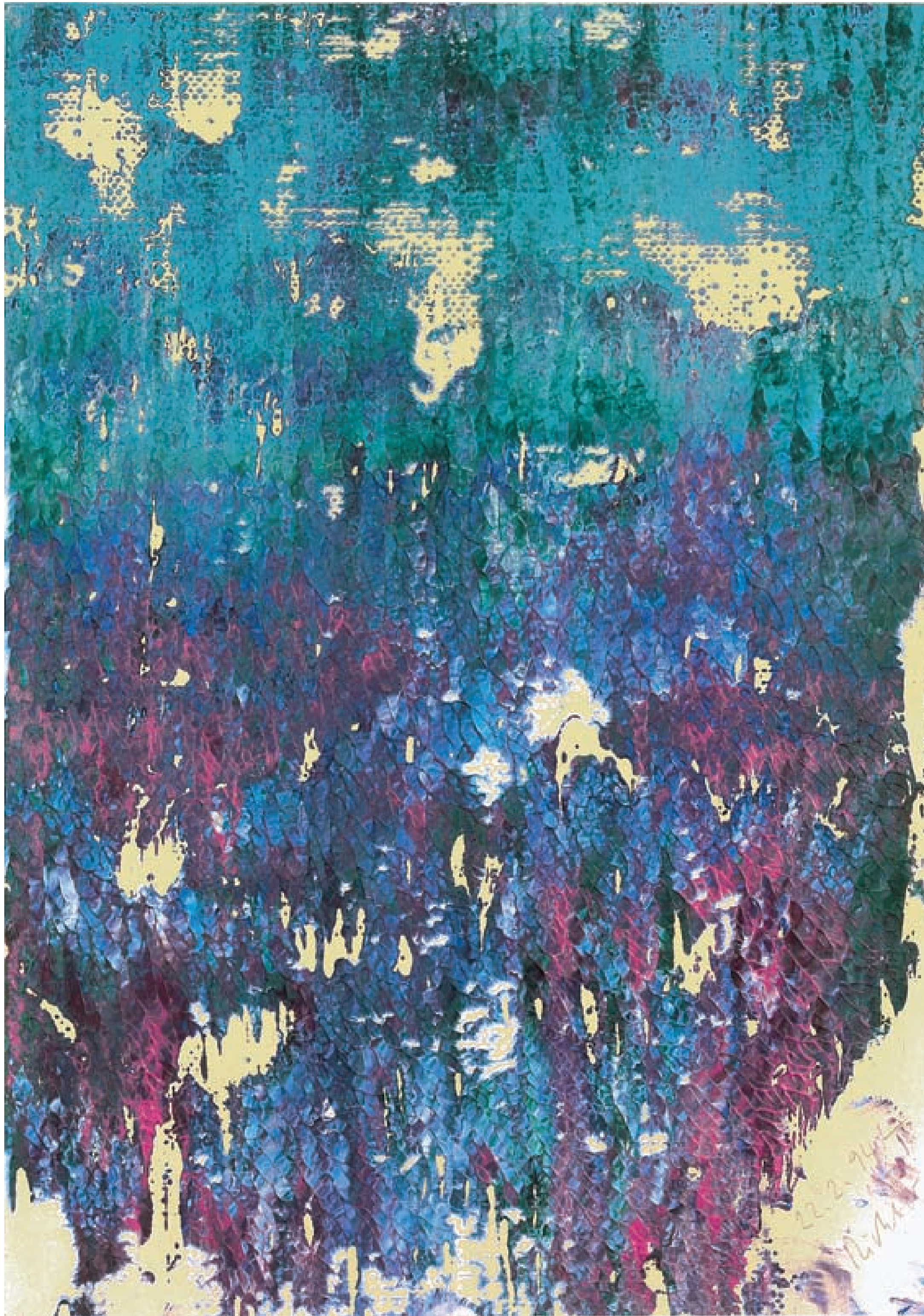

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THE LOWER EAST SIDE'S LIVELY, IDIOSYNCRATIC ART SCENE

Jeremy Deller

Jeremy Deller's artwork spans a variety of media, from installations, processions and posters to documentary films. Among his best-known works are Acid Brass *(1997), which fused traditional brass-band music with acid house, and* The Battle of Orgreave *(2001), a filmed reenactment of a notorious conflict between miners and the police during the 1984–5 miners' strike. Deller, who won the Turner Prize in 2004, cocurated* Folk Archive *(2000–, with Alan Kane), a touring exhibition of contemporary British folk art. Last year* Joy in People, *a midcareer survey, opened at the Hayward Gallery, London, while* Sacrilege, *a bouncy castle modelled on Stonehenge, toured the country during the summer of the 2012 Olympic Games. This summer he has been commissioned by the British Council to exhibit at the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. To mark the occasion,* ArtReview *asked the artist to guest-edit a special features section in the magazine.*

Interview by Mark Rappolt

this page:
Acid Brass, 1997, performance in Regent's Park, London, 2006. Courtesy the artist

facing page:
California leafnose bat (*Macrotus californicu*). Photo: Jeff Foot/ Discovery Channel Images/Getty Images

ARTREVIEW
What does it mean to be in the British Pavilion at Venice? Does it mean anything different from another exhibition?

JEREMY DELLER
It's a lot of work! I think that's the most immediate thing. And I think people assume it means more than it does. Once you get to a certain point, in terms of career, you're used to having challenges and being put into quite high-profile environments. Obviously it's… I'm going to contradict myself: I think people invest a lot in it, but people outside it probably invest a lot more into it. I'm just treating it like a big exhibition, but people around me, maybe, or yourself or within the artworld, as it were, invest a lot of attention into it, don't they?

You don't think of yourself as an artistic symbol of Britishness in a way you didn't before?

JD: No, I don't, because it's not really meant to be about Britishness, the British Pavilion, is it? Oh dear, Ed Vaizey will be upset

Well, I guess historically, at some point, it was.

JD: I suppose in a wider sense you're probably right. It is; it's meant to represent British culture. This is the best you can get [laughter].

If you read some of the reviews of the Biennale from the 1950s – say – in the British press, you'd think it was all about showing how brilliant British culture is and how superior it is to other countries' cultures.

JD: Really?

Yes.

JD: Well, it won't be happening this time round, I think we've learned our lesson about that, but obviously there are references to British culture. It would be strange if there weren't. So people probably read a lot into that, and I think probably Venice has become, even in the last ten years, like the artworld itself, a bigger and bigger deal. It's become more of a news story as opposed to an art story. So inevitably there'll be a bit of fuss for a day or two, and then that will die down and it will be the next thing, so I'm not so worried. I mean, the thing that is – I wouldn't say 'bothering' me, but I am aware of it – is that everyone will have an opinion about the pavilion. Of course, they'll compare it to other pavilions, but they'll have an opinion about it, even more so than the Turner Prize.

Yes. They give prizes at Venice, too…

JD: Yes, which I'd never really thought about. I didn't even know about that until recently, that you get this… there's potential. But it's not like the Turner Prize, where you've got a one-in-four chance. You've got a one in 100 chance or something, so I'm not really thinking about that.

It highlights the fact that you're being compared, though.

JD: With other pavilions? Absolutely. You're used to that as an artist, I think. The skill is not actually reading it and not paying so much attention to it. You're really doing your best to worry me, aren't you?

In terms of the broad ideas of the pavilion, are you starting by looking into your own practice or thinking about your audience?

JD: Both. I haven't tried to tailor it in any way, but of course you have a building, a very specific building, so that's interesting. So I've worked with the space. I mean, it's actually a really elegant space. I've quite enjoyed having it to myself for six months to wander around and check emails in. It's a structure and it can structure a show, and that's what it's done, I hope.

I'm interested in Venice and the audience because partly you get the weird crush of professional art people at the beginning and towards the end a much more diverse audience, some of whom aren't particularly there because there's an art show but will wander into it.

JD: I like that. I like grabbing the unsuspecting passerby – not literally, of course. That's almost my core audience, the person who wasn't expecting to see an art show or not expecting to like something. The randomness excites me, the randomness of showing work and giving a talk. When you give a talk, there are 200 people or 10 or whatever in an audience, you don't know who they are and what their interests are and what they've done with their lives, and that's interesting – to see what reaction you get about certain things. I like the random nature of art.

Do you think you have to make an effort to get that audience?

JD: I don't work consciously to do that, but that's how I work. I know that it will have a broad appeal, and I like that. I'm not a snob in terms of who sees work.

There's some part of the audience that will come to Venice knowing your work and having expectations.

JD: Yes, which may or may not be met.

Maybe there's a choice about meeting it or not meeting it.

JD: I don't really think about that. I really don't! I need to actually surprise myself rather than anyone else, so I'm not going to give people exactly what they're expecting or looking for. It's recognisable, but it's not a definite product as such, I hope.

If you wander around an art fair or something, there are people who will talk about your work in terms of 'a Jeremy Deller'.

JD: Would they? [laughter] The problem with art fairs is they're so powerful, so many sales come from that, that you have to show. I've always done quite badly at art fairs on the whole, especially in America.

But you have made works that are well known and that people will always think about when they think of you, regardless of what you're showing now.

JD: Exactly. That is a problem but it's a great problem to have, like the problem of writing *Stairway to Heaven*. The burden of your history. I have a little bit of that with *The Battle of Orgreave*. Every week I get an email about it from someone, from a student writing about it or someone doing some report on the effectiveness of community art and all that. You reply to those questions and just hope that at some point – and to continue the analogy – you'll write another classic rock song that people will want to write about as well. I think you don't want to give people what they want really, do you? A lot of people didn't want *The Battle of Orgreave* and still don't, I'm sure.

Sometimes it's hard to know what they do want.

JD: Well, you want to give people what they didn't know they wanted, and they realise they want it when they see it. It's an unfulfilled need almost sometimes. In terms of this show, I have no idea, and because I've made the show in relative secrecy, things haven't been shared. I have no idea really what the public reception will be. I've been allowed to do exactly what I wanted, so it's all my fault

Do you normally do that?

JD: Well, you normally talk about things a little bit more freely than I have with this show, so that's unusual. I quite like the secrecy, I think it's fine. It gives it a sense of expectation, I think.

Perhaps it's quite constructive to have certain constraints.

JD: Exactly, because we live in a world now where everybody knows everything about everything or at least thinks they do. You can find out anything. Look at how David Bowie handled his album [*The Next Day*, 2013] and single release. It's unheard-of now to have a secret that big kept for years. That in itself is almost an artwork. So I'm doing OK, but not as good as he is. [laughter]

Do you see yourself as a political artist at all?

JD: Well, with a small 'p', not in a party-political sense. I'm not an activist, I'm not very good at joining in on things or going on demos or speaking in debates or platforms. I'm better at other things, I think. I quite like provocation and I quite like art that is provocative and can say things in a slightly different way, so I'm happy with that. I'm not the kind of person that would sit next to Ken Loach on a stage and talk about cuts to the National Health Service. I just don't think I'm qualified for that. I'm qualified to do other things. I was asked by the BBC to take part in this debate they did about the war in Iraq. I just couldn't do it. I think people think that you can be a spokesperson because you make work about something. If anything it's the opposite. You make the work so you don't have to be a spokesperson. You make your point in a different way. Having said that, Bob Smith manages to be both with panache.

Let's talk about some of the articles you've commissioned for this issue of ArtReview. *There's one on the British wrestler Adrian Street...*

JD: He is a character, to put it mildly. I've made a film about him, I'm very interested in him, and my mission is to make him better known in the world, because I think he deserves to be. I think he needs to be seen as the hero of his own life. It started with me seeing a photograph of him and his father at the pithead, which I just thought was the most incredible image about Britain after a war, about Britain trying to come to terms with the new role within the world, as an entertainment service economy, basically. Adrian embodied that – literally within his body. So I saw him as a historical character on a grand scale. I wanted to meet him and talk to him about the photograph and then talk about his life and so on. So it was really to make a little film about him. That was the best way to understand him. I did that [*So Many Ways to Hurt You* (*The Life and Times of Adrian Street*), 2010], and I've kept in contact with him. It's just an unbelievable life that he's had, and all the looks he's had, all the things he's done, all the time very closely related to art and performance art. He understands that instinctively. It's just an interest/mild obsession of mine. As are some of these other things, like the bats. So that's a more visceral, purely visual, aesthetic interest: I just like to see these photographs, and I'm just happy for other people to see them as well.

What about Ken Russell?

JD: I would say he's a kind of film visionary. A lot of British filmmakers – like Ken Loach and Mike Leigh – are known for this 'realist' approach. He's the opposite end. He's a fantasist, a fantastical filmmaker, very romantic, a romantic filmmaker. I love the way he uses classical music and music in general, so he's been a massive inspiration to me, massive. I saw *Tommy* [1975] at the age of twelve or thirteen at my school in the gymnasium, after school. They had a cinema club, which is probably the best education I got at my school. They showed the craziest films to twelve- and thirteen-year-old boys. They showed *Performance* [1970] and I

this page
The Battle of Orgreave (An Injury to One Is an Injury to All), 2001. Photo: Parisah Taghizadeh. Courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

facing page
So Many Ways to Hurt You (The Life and Times of Adrian Street), 2010, film still. Courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

THAT IS A PROBLEM BUT IT'S A GREAT PROBLEM TO HAVE, LIKE THE PROBLEM OF WRITING 'STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN'. THE BURDEN OF YOUR HISTORY

was sitting in the front row. I really had no idea about this film, and it comes on and I was just like...

Who chose the films?

JD: This physics teacher, who was obviously doing it on purpose just to bend the brains of the boys. The way we were taught was so rigid and old-fashioned and learning by rote. It was a Michael Gove [Britain's current secretary of state for education] view of education – just remembering facts, really structured and intensely unimaginative. Then every other week the film club would show freak-out films – *Tommy* being one of them – that went against everything you were being taught at school. We were being shown films we shouldn't have actually seen legally because we were underage. They showed us *Jubilee* [1978, dir Derek Jarman], for example. They showed X-rated films to thirteen-year-old boys, so that was just like an education. That was like growing up on the screen.

Do you think that experience relates to how you think about showing work?

JD: Maybe. You do realise when a young person goes to an exhibition that the effect it might have on them could be huge because they will keep that with them for the rest of their lives if they like the show or have had an impression. I wouldn't say it 'formed' them, but it would be a 'formative' experience, and I'm aware of that.

You were talking about the provocation as well.

JD: Yes. I'm aware of that. When I was a teenager, I was doing my A-level art history project on Francis Bacon, and I met him, totally by chance, in a gallery. I wasn't expecting him to be there. You don't expect the artist to hang around. He was there with his sister, and so I had this 15-minute conversation with him, which was just mind-blowing for a sixteen-year-old. You don't forget those moments, and so you realise people who are that age now will have similar moments when they see work, and it really is important. You get to a certain age and you think, 'Maybe this is why I do this – because of that film or because of this exhibition.' So Ken Russell is the attitude, the excess, the fancy, the mixture of fantasy and reality, the mix of religion and music, all those things, the war, history, biography. I mean; he did it all, all those things that I'm interested in.

Do you think Adrian Street fits into that category?

JD: Yes. Adrian Street is like a self-made version, in a way. He should have worked with Ken Russell. He would have made a great subject of a feature film. If Adrian had been born into a more supportive environment, he probably would have been an artist. Because he was given no opportunities and no encouragement, he found fame and was creative in a different way. So Adrian is an artist effectively, a self-taught performance artist. That's the way I see him. That's one reason I like Adrian – because he's not an outsider artist, that's a totally different thing, but he is like a folk performance artist, as I'm sure a lot of wrestlers and performers are.

Do you think you have an interest in art that comes about outside the conventional spaces of a gallery or a museum?

JD: Yes, maybe. I mean, having said that, I have nothing against galleries in art. Obviously I spent most of my teenage years in galleries, or seemed to. So I'm very much at ease in museums and galleries and with the language of them and the display of them and most importantly the people that work in them. That's something that will be clear in the pavilion. But yes, you look elsewhere, don't you? You look around you for influence.

Yet, for many people, a work being in a gallery is what makes it art.

JD: Yes. It validates it. That's the problem sometimes.

And such people wouldn't necessarily say that Ken Russell was an artist in the same way as Picasso was an artist.

JD: No. I suppose these are relatively recent definitions of artists, aren't they? Relatively.

Do you think you're addressing those definitions? Not consciously necessarily...

JD: Maybe I'm confusing everything. Myself included.

Or expanding it.

JD: Expanding it and confusing. I'm opening things up, maybe, which I'm happy to do, but I'm sure some people will just think it's reductive rather than opening up. But I do like playing with objects, playing with ideas. There's a sense of play and playfulness about the work. Mike Pitts worked on the Stonehenge project – *Sacrilege*. I wanted him to write about what may be the first artworks ever made in Britain, or the very, very early objects that have the look of artworks – ceremonial objects and so on. Also, talking about public art – some of these sites, are they forms of public art? So that's what I'm really interested in him looking at, maybe the first artists in the country. Often you're quite nervous of presenting ideas to people who are experts in their field, like that. Like with *Acid Brass* [in which brass band music is fused with acid house and Detroit techno], and with the miners and so on, you think, 'Are they going to think I'm a total idiot for doing this?' It goes to plan 99 percent of the time. I could make probably a lot of money doing some sort of management classes or something; how to convince people to do things they might not think they want to do. Having said that, I'm not entirely sure how I do it myself. I think much of it has to do with people being bored of routine and predictability.

Do you have kind of a reaction, a kind of feeling you want people to take away from the British Pavilion?

JD: I want them to have the same experience as if they went to a museum they'd never been to before – you can go to Philadelphia and you walk into the Museum of Art, which has objects and art from all over the world, for example – that for me is my height of experience. It's not going to be quite as exciting as that, but you just want people to walk in with an open mind and feel that they're wandering around freely. Museums should be places of freethinking and of freedom, visual and intellectual freedom almost, aesthetic freedom. I mean, a good museum is almost like being on drugs or being drunk slightly when you walk around and you're just looking at things very randomly, almost getting high off objects and images and experiences. That's maybe what I'd like people to have, that kind of narcotic experience.

Is that reacting to a sense that people aren't exploring those freedoms in daily life?

JD: Yes, because they don't have the resources to, or are not allowed to maybe. That's the thing about artists, they are given so much money and resources and freedom – certain artists are – to do exactly what they want and just to do these ridiculous things that no one else would be allowed to do. That is the greatest thing about being an artist, especially with artists at a level I'm at. Let's face it, I'm at a certain point where, you know, people are begging you to do things, they don't even know what it is, but they want you to do it. That's why I think that someone like Damien Hirst is such a failure, really, because he has the world at his feet and yet he'll just do the same thing. That really is just sad. It's almost your duty to do stupid things and get away with it and do things that no one else would be allowed to do.

this page, from top:
Sacrilege, 2012, commissioned by Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art 2012, photo: Angela Catlin, courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow; *It Is What It Is*, 2009, the car in front of a mural depicting the fall of Baghdad near 29 Palms, California, photo: the artist, courtesy the artist, Art Concept, Paris, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, and the Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

facing page:
Seba's short-tailed bat (*Carollia perspicillata*). Photo: Robert Pickett/Visuals Unlimited, Inc/ Getty Images

That's why, again going back to *Sacrilege*, I wanted to make a work that was just absolutely out of control in terms of when people were on it. Simply the most random, out-of-control work, just chaos, effectively, as was taking a car round America [*It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* (2009), in which the artist toured a car from a bombing in Iraq through the US and held ten public conversations in which Iraqi refugees, soldiers and scholars shared their memories of the last decade in and out of Iraq]. We were out of our depths.

Is the work about putting you out of your depth?

JD: Yes, absolutely, that was. We really didn't know what was going to happen to us, who we were going to meet, what was going to happen from minute to minute with the weather, with people, with everything. So every day it was different and we were just making it up, basically, and it was making it up for us as well. I love that. I absolutely loved the random element of it. Of course, that still happens in galleries, where people react to things and the way they look at things, but as soon as you get out of a gallery, that's when you can't control things. If you try to, you're insane, basically, so of course every artist is interested in what people think about the work or how they react to it, unless you're doing paintings that the second they leave will go onto someone's wall somewhere. I know artists who have that kind of career and they're successful, but they end up working in a void, and you talk to them, and you can tell they feel they're just not part of anything. They just have these sort of crises about that.

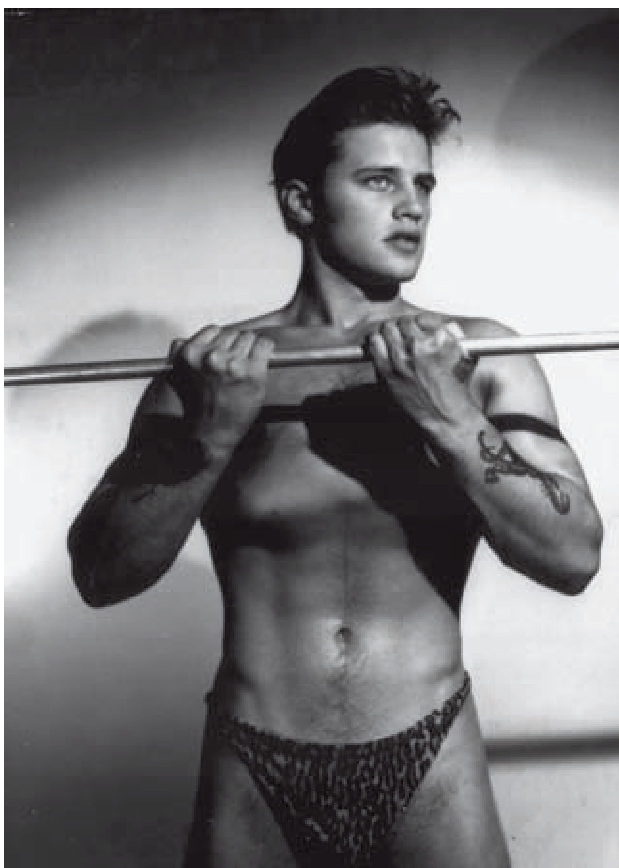
Has that been important to you in your work, avoiding the sense of working in a void?

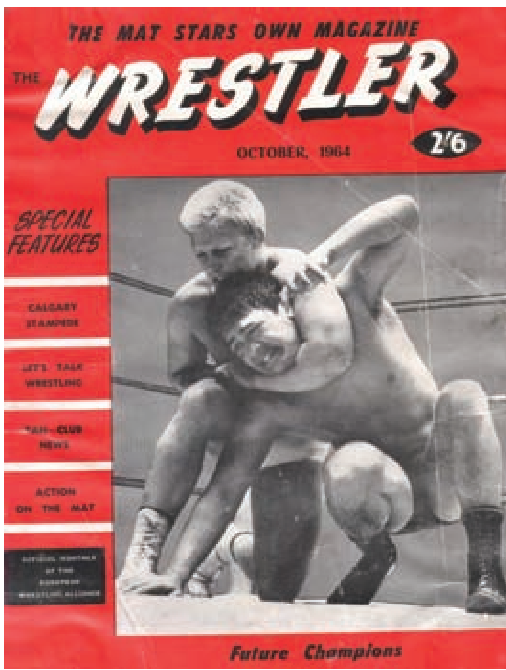
JD: Life's lonely enough as it is, so it's good to have reaction. I like people. As human beings, we want company, we like company, so it's only an extension of that, and I like people looking at work and trying to work out what they think of it. Even if they say something totally different to what I thought, it's fine. Unless they think it's super-racist or something weird like that. You go to an art gallery or a museum, and the first 20 or 30 minutes you're looking at objects, and for the rest of the time you're looking at people looking at objects – well, I am – especially at the British Museum, where people from all over the world are looking at their own cultures or other people's cultures and interacting with it. I think that's such an amazing thing. I love people crowding round maybe the Rosetta Stone and taking pictures of it as if it's Jude Law. These are superstar objects. I think that's fantastic! It makes me very optimistic about the world if people are still interested in cultures and other cultures in the past, and history, and each other and so on. So if you're interested in objects that are made by people, that means you're interested in people. ⁝

Jeremy Deller's British Council commission is at the 55th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale until 24 November

Adrian Street on Camera

Born in the Welsh town of Brynmawr in 1940, Adrian Street left school at the age of fifteen and started work at the local colliery alongside his father and older brother. Having lifted weights since he was twelve, he decided to capitalise on his bodybuilding and prowess as an amateur fighter, moving to London in 1946, where he posed for bodybuilding magazines and entered the world of professional wrestling. In his early twenties, he bleached his long hair and took to wearing flamboyant, feminine costumes in the ring, adopting the name 'Exotic' Adrian Street. Emboldened by the riotous response his persona elicited, Street's makeup and costumes became increasingly showy, and were matched in the ring by flirtatious, sexually ambiguous posturing. Street had prodigious success as both a fighter and a showman. Since the early 1980s he has regularly been joined in the ring by his valet 'Miss' Linda, his real-life wife.

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XXXL PAINTING

SUBMARINE WHARF

photo: Freek van Arkel

museum boijmans van beuningen

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This summer the 5000m² Submarine Wharf located in the largest docklands of the Netherlands is being transformed into a gigantic studio with work by three internationally renowned painters: Chris Martin (USA, 1954), Jim Shaw (USA, 1952) and Klaas Kloosterboer (NL, 1959). The exhibition entitled 'XXXL Painting' brings together new and existing works. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen wishes to demonstrate the resilience and energy of the art of painting with a true 'battle of the Titans' between these artists.

Concurrently two contemporary art exhibitions will open in the museum itself: '25 Years City Collection' and 'Sensory Spaces: Oscar Tuazon'. Contemporary art takes centre stage for the whole summer in Rotterdam. The exhibitions open on Saturday 8 June. Please find more information on **submarinewharf.com** and **boijmans.nl**

The exhibition in the Submarine Wharf is a partnership between the Port of Rotterdam and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Every summer for five years the vast building hosts a specially made installation by a leading contemporary artist. The three earlier exhibitions were devoted to Atelier Van Lieshout in 2010, the art duo Elmgreen & Dragset in 2011, and Sarkis in 2012.

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THE COMMON GUILD

The Genius of Ken Russell

The films of one of the great British filmmakers display some of the most un-British qualities – wildness and excess. At times it might have been over the top, but the romantic legacy of Ken Russell lives on…

By Rob Young

An Appalling Talent, *Phallic Frenzy*, *The Adaptor as Creator*, *England's Last Mannerist*; the titles of various books written about Ken Russell speak volumes about the director's conflicted reception. Revered and reviled for a body of work that – with wildly divergent levels of success – examined and celebrated the Romantic artistic spirit and the Lawrentian quest for an essential life force, Russell remains one of the more contrarian figures in British cinema of the past half century.

Born in 1927, Russell was a child of the 1930s (an era he glamorously saluted in 1971's Busby Berkeley homage *The Boy Friend*). From humble beginnings as a photojournalist, during the late 1950s he began directing documentary inserts for the highbrow BBC arts series *Monitor*. Fearlessly championing emergent trends, he made a historically important portrait of London's bohemian folk culture (*Guitar Craze*, 1959), and shot the city from unprecedented angles in a film on the poet John Betjeman. Stamping his personality on the format, Russell developed a more imaginative approach that included fictionalised portraits of artistic figures such as Elgar, Debussy, Henri Rousseau and Isadora Duncan.

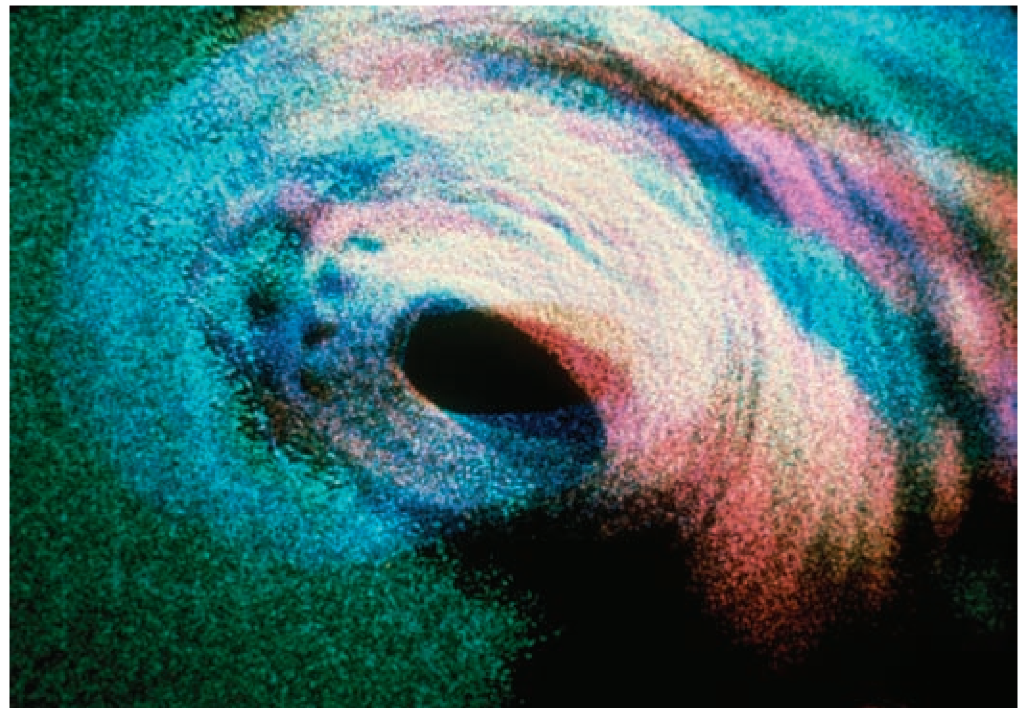
This strand of his work began innocently enough with *Elgar* (1962), a reverential account of one of Russell's musical heroes that placed the Edwardian composer's music exquisitely in the Malvern landscapes that had inspired it. *The Debussy Film* (1965) added a contemporary framing device to its *fin de siècle* mise-en-scène, totally radical for the documentary television of its time. In *Song of Summer* (1968), Russell brilliantly contrasted the cantankerous wiles of the dying Frederick Delius with the earnest innocence of his amanuensis Eric Fenby, using a brilliant dramatic scenario whose dynamics are impeccably managed. Russell includes the tedious process of notating the music on paper, and later films such as *Savage Messiah* (1972) would also show artistic creation as hard labour (Scott Antony's portrayal of a sweaty Henri Gaudier-Brzeska hacking at a block of marble through the night is a memorable sequence).

While Russell was clearly excited by composers and artists whose egos attained monstrous proportions, he often acknowledged the thin line separating these traits from dictatorial fascism. In 1970, the director finally pushed things over the edge with *Dance of the Seven Veils*, a portrait of Richard Strauss shown as part of the BBC's *Omnibus* strand that made such blatant connections with Nazism that the corporation blushingly announced it as a 'personal view'.

this page:
Song of Summer (still), 1968, dir Ken Russell

facing page:
Striped hairy-nosed bat (*Mimon crenulatum*), Iwokrama Rainforest Reserve, Guyana. Photo: SA Team/Foto Natura/Minden Pictures/Getty Images

this page, from top:
Women In Love (still), 1969, dir Ken Russell; *Altered States* (still), 1980, dir Ken Russell



But by 1970 Russell hardly needed the BBC's patronage any more. His ravishing D.H. Lawrence period piece, *Women in Love* (1969), significantly elevated his reputation and featured the memorably ambiguous sequence of Oliver Reed and Alan Bates nude-wrestling in front of a roaring fire. *The Music Lovers* (1970) cast Tchaikovsky's conflicted erotic life among the literal fireworks of his orchestral compositions: the artist as autocratic victim of his inflamed passions. But the next film would sublimate the implied hysteria of these earlier works into Russell's enduring masterpiece.

The Devils (1971) was, he said, 'the last nail in the coffin of my Catholic faith'. Based on true occurrences from the 1630s, it deals with irrational obsession and tormenting lust as hysteria breaks out in a convent, and goes on to demonstrate how these anarchic forces are harnessed by authorities for political expediency. The film's ramped-up intensity, through forced confessions, inquisitorial depravity and hallucinations of blasphemous lewd encounters, climaxes in one of the most powerful finales in British film – an epic immersion in the sensation of pain as defeated hero Father Urbain Grandier (Oliver Reed again) is toasted at the stake to the strains of Peter Maxwell Davies's gouging avant-garde soundtrack.

Russell continued to work through his personal canon of artistic heroes: *The Devils* was followed by *Savage Messiah* and a pyrotechnic *Mahler* (1974), while in 1975 he directed the film version of the Who's rock opera *Tommy*. Again dealing with a skilled savant with innate gifts (the sensorially deprived pinball wizard), and coupled with the rock bombast of a supergroup in their prime, at a historical moment when pop had arrived at a flamboyantly overdressed zenith, this was Russell in his element. The result is a supremely energetic setting that anticipated the visual culture of MTV and the pop video by nearly a decade.

Immediately afterwards, though, he repeated his pattern of overstepping the mark with *Lisztomania!* (1975), a phantasmagorical take on the ultimate Romantic composer/pianist that included the Liberace-like composer (played

by Roger Daltrey) rushing his lover with a giant phallus, Richard Wagner clad as genocidal machine-gunner and the Wagners' castle housing a vampiric Aryan death cult. By any standards, it was a rock folly too far.

Altered States, the sci-fi movie he made after transferring to Hollywood in 1980, mingles restrained scientific discourse with combustible montages of sensory overload, as Eddie Jessup (William Hurt) samples everything from amniotic immersion tanks to psychotropic drugs in an attempt to peel back layers of accumulated genetics and civilisation to arrive at some ur-essence of humanity – a state at once innocent and savage. This story of a postpsychedelic seeker on a monomaniacal quest for the origins of human sensibility extended Russell's explorations of the Romantic impulse, replacing the artist/composer figure with a modern-day scientist whose shamanic journeys unleash shocking metamorphoses.

'THE DEVILS' DEALS WITH IRRATIONAL OBSESSION AND TORMENTING LUST AS HYSTERIA BREAKS OUT IN A CONVENT, AND GOES ON TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THESE ANARCHIC FORCES ARE HARNESSED BY AUTHORITIES FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY

Russell's career from the mid-1980s to his death in 2011 can be seen as a slow, managed decline (concluding with the immolation of his beloved LP collection in a house fire), but he remained an active filmmaker, occasional opera director and controversial TV pundit (he quit *Celebrity Big Brother* in 2007 after a spat with Jade Goody, one of Britain's first reality TV stars). His cheerful contrariety only seemed to increase (his final, deliberately tasteless film was titled *A Kitten for Hitler*, 2007), as did his passion for British classical music, which he hymned in half a dozen episodes directed for ITV's *South Bank Show* (due to be collected in a DVD box set later this year). Russell was far from a parochial filmmaker, but drew his inspiration from repositories of occult energy in Britain's artistic climate. 'We do live on a magic island, without doubt,' he wrote in 1985, adding, 'but so far as British films are concerned there is precious little evidence of this.' In Russell's eyes, movies such as the beloved Ealing comedies presented a bogus, sentimentalised view of Englishness. At the end of his life, he saw mainly squalor, glorified violence and ignorance in British pictures; his own work fought passionately against such base impulses. 'There is another kind of life outside of this which many people in this country would like to celebrate if only they were given the opportunity and not made to feel guilty about it,' he said. 'It is nothing to do with religion; it is to do with the spirit of the land in which we live.' Ken Russell's genius, it turned out, was a genius loci: it was a way of seeing at several removes from the 'realism' of contemporaries such as Ken Loach and Mike Leigh, and linked most closely with what he found in the country's mercurial homegrown sounds: 'music expressing the majesty of nature, forgotten rituals, pagan goddesses and ancient heroes'. It was the unashamed romanticism of such powers that kept Russell enraptured, and their manifestations in his own work will cast their spell over viewers for a long time to come.

this page:
Tommy (still), 1975, dir Ken Russell

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Imran Qureshi, *They Shimmer Still*, 2012 (detail)
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Britain's First Artists

The difference between making things that work and making things that also 'look right' has been a driving force in human development – and it is here, argues an archaeologist, that art emerged from toolmaking

By Mike Pitts

On a spring day in 2010, while using a metal detector, Carl Walmsley disturbed a grave in Dorset. Police asked archaeologists at Bournemouth University to investigate, as the site looked old. 'We thought you might be interested,' the officer told them in a knowing voice. 'The body was buried with a mirror.'

The Chesil Mirror, as it is now known, is a classic example of Early Celtic Art, a label applied mostly to metal objects made between 300 BCE and 150 CE and owned by leaders and warriors. Britain excelled in the art – the mirrors, of which 30 have been found, are unique to this country. Smithing and enamelling continued under Roman rule, but with less style and more of an eye to the market: every Roman citizen might aspire to own a souvenir bowl from Hadrian's Wall, a perfume flask, an inkwell or an ornamental fish – made in a peculiarly British way that was still admired across Europe.

These things deserve to be better known – and thanks to metal detectorists like Walmsley and the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme, as well as excavations funded by builders, more of them are being found today than ever before. Most of us would call them art – they are often functional and undoubtedly had associations we will never know, but they were made to be shown off, within evolving styles and traditions that allowed individual expression of skill and eye. But as we go back into the past, things we recognise to be art, and things the people who made them would have understood, in our terms, to have been art, become harder to pin down.

In Britain, archaeologists use the word in only three other contexts: Rock, Megalithic and Ice Age. The recent British Museum exhibition *Ice Age Art: Arrival of the Modern Mind* left no visitor in doubt that 40,000 to 10,000 years ago people were able to make art. The little that survives in Britain from this era is at least enough to show that here, too, supreme observations of the natural world must have been crafted, in bone, stone, antler and presumably wood.

Megalithic art is more recent, between 6,000 and 4,000 years ago: it consists of simple designs – spirals, zigzags and dots – engraved on large standing stones. Commoner in Ireland than Britain, it evokes a world of early farmers and monumental graves. Then there is what archaeologists like to call Rock art, made from 5,000 to 3,000 years ago. Found across the wilder spaces of northern Britain, it's abstract stuff, almost so much so as to be artless (distinguishing art from natural fissures can be a challenge) – mostly just small hollows or cups pummelled into boulders. What draws people to the sites is not so much the work as the signature, delivering a sense of moments shared with others who were there before.

this page:
The Chesil Mirror.
Photo: Edward Griffiths

facing page:
Leaf-nosed bat. Photo: John Brown/Oxford Scientific/Getty Images

Celtic, Rock, Megalithic and Ice: it's a strange litany. Is that all? Well, no. As long as people have made things, they have conformed to styles, showing a feeling for what looked right in their particular world. And when you define what's 'right', you allow for expertise in hand and eye – if people can say a stone axe blade should look just so, they know when one is fine or beautiful, or poorly made or misshapen.

Such culturally approved ideas about style are so common and regular, and change so often, that archaeologists have long used them to arrange things from the past. Early Celtic art came after 2,000 years of smithing in which every century or so was distinguished by changes. That often meant the appearance of new objects or new technological tricks. But it also meant different ways of seeing things – different ways of styling.

The most intriguing material is stone. Stone, too, was always worked to conventional ideas of form. Most people today find it difficult to distinguish stone tools at all – every archaeologist has faced the excited enthusiast holding would-be ancient hammers that are really just beach pebbles. But to people who grew up and lived with stone as the supreme technology – a condition defining most of history – it was a material that talked to them.

Stone is almost everywhere. Its abundance or scarcity would have defined landscapes, and its quality – most stone is unsuitable for fine toolmaking – must surely

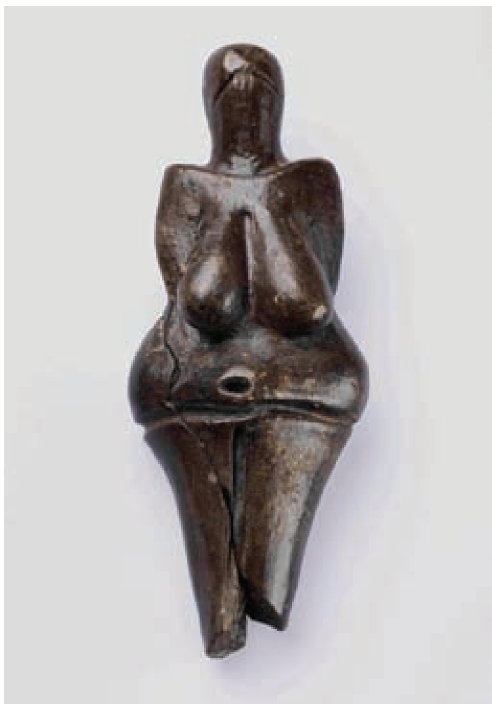
have affected topographical notions of what was precious, and what was beautiful. The most valued stone was found in the least accessible places. In the Neolithic (6,000–4,000 years ago) axe blades were quarried on some of the most dangerous Lake District peaks, from where they were carried across Britain. The best flint lurked deep below ground in southern England, reached only at the bottom of perilous mines. The earth was fertile, but she did not give easily.

Things made with stone carried stories too: the styles of arrowhead or knife that looked just right, or the finish that showed exceptional skill. In a way unique to stone toolmaking, the

AS LONG AS PEOPLE HAVE MADE THINGS, THEY HAVE CONFORMED TO STYLES, SHOWING A FEELING FOR WHAT LOOKED RIGHT IN THEIR PARTICULAR WORLD

products conveyed the thought processes and hand movements of their makers, captured in every ridge and ripple on the stone's surface. This is universal. A modern flint knapper can read the mind of a Neolithic axemaker. The latter, had he chanced upon an ancient handaxe, could have examined it and understood decisions taken by a Neanderthal as he sat and shaped it. And here we see a thing of wonder.

Archaeologists agree that however far back in time we go, stone tools always did more than cut the joint. They had a look. Even two million years ago, they were more symmetrical,



this page, from top:
Female figure sculpted from steatite, found at Grimaldi, Italy, about 20,000 years old, Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, photo: RMN/Jean-Gilles Berizzi; modelled figure of a mature woman from Dolni Vestonice, the oldest ceramic figure in the world, on loan from Moravske Zemske Museum, Brno, Czech Republic

facing page, from top:
Tip of a mammoth tusk carved as two reindeer depicted one behind the other, approx. 13,000 years old, Montastruc, France, © Trustees of the British Museum; entrance stone at Newgrange, photo: G. Chris Clark, under Creative Commons

this page, from top:
Boxgrove handaxe, photo: Mike Potts; flints found at Boxgrove, photo: Fæ, 2011, under Creative Commons

more finished and made with more expertise than was needed for the job. Why that was so is much disputed. But one answer is art.

From the very start, I would argue, concepts of beauty and elegance were integral to the simplest of tools. This is partly why we can now recognise them as tools: sharp-edged bits of rock used by chimpanzees are distinguishable as tools only when we see the apes make them. The first members of the genus *Homo* needed not just to make things, but to make them look right. And that need was part of what drove evolution. Our entire lineage is grounded on art.

Some of the most beautiful handaxes I have ever seen were excavated at Boxgrove on the Sussex coast. They are half a million years old. The axe blades made by Neolithic people look different. The laboriously ground, smooth finish would have added strength to a tool used to cut down trees. But in the old tradition, the finish is often smoother and finer than practical function dictated: people wanted them to 'look right', to serve higher goals.

Yet if you go to the quarries where the axes were made, and seek out the ones that were abandoned unfinished, you see something remarkable. The first stage in making a Neolithic axe 5,000 years ago is almost identical to the handaxe made 500,000 years ago. Along with the idea that a good axe is a work of art, the technology for making one was passed on, from master to apprentice, from generation to generation. Not just down the millennia: unlike any other technology, stone toolmaking transcended human species.

When you hold a Neolithic axe in your hand, you hold something extraordinary: an embodiment of the technology that defined us in our earliest days. It is also, perhaps, an unbroken link to the force that made us.

Mark Manders
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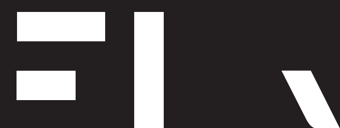

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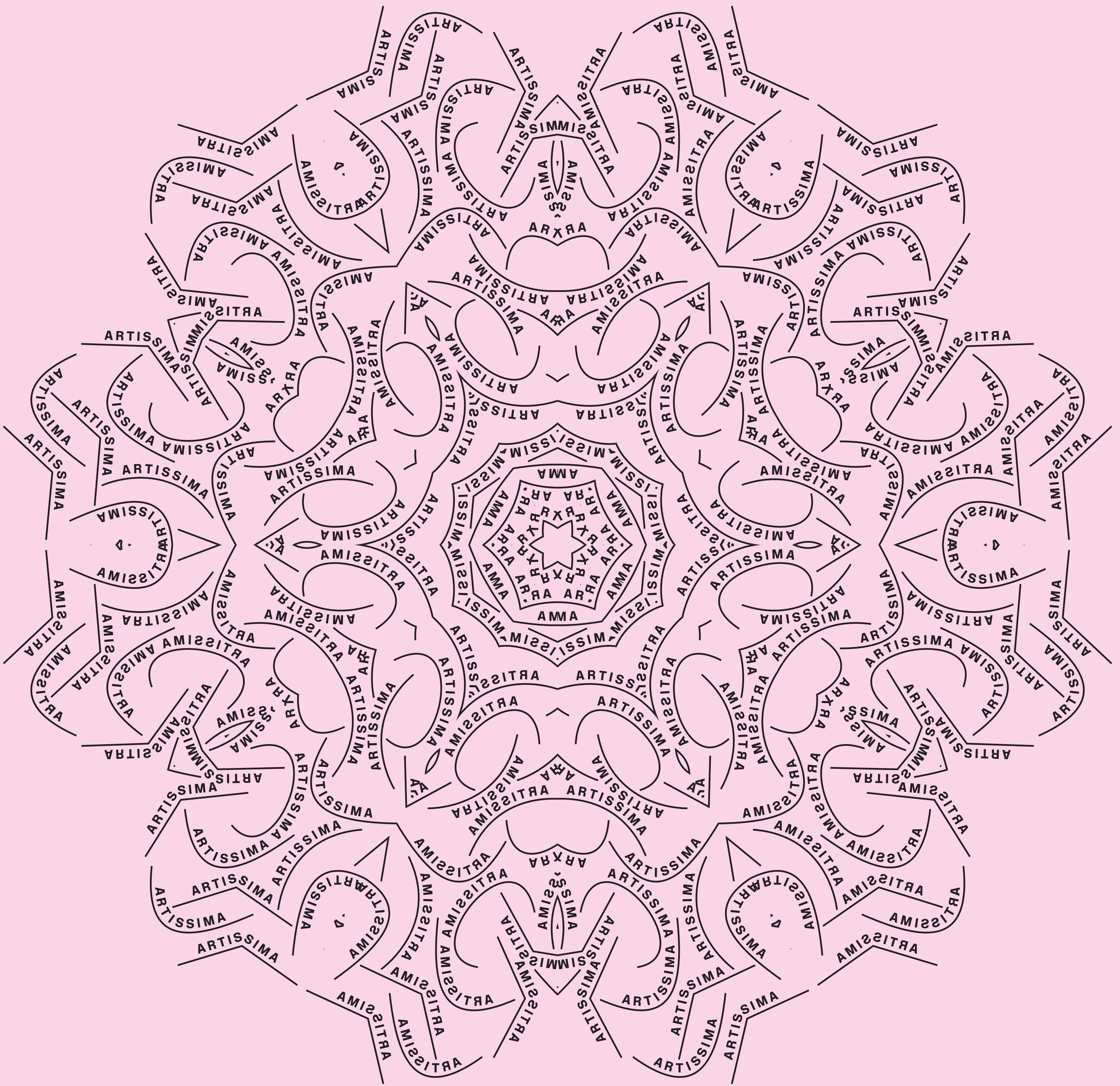

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Anri Sala

An amputee Austrian pianist, an antinationalist French composer and the Second World War are all entwined as the Albanian artist Anri Sala represents France (in the German Pavilion) at this year's Venice Biennale

By Christopher Mooney

Franco-German enmity is Europe's deepest wound, a seemingly unstaunchable source of blood and bile that, just in the last century, twice gushed its poison across the world. Then, suddenly, it dried up – officially at least – when, on 22 January 1963, on a tabletop in a ballroom in a palace in Paris, French president Charles de Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, signed the *Deutsch-französische Freundschaftsvertrag,* also known as the *Traité de l'Élysée* or, to those across the Channel and Pond, the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship.

To mark the document's half-century – and celebrate the seemingly boundless and borderless energies of contemporary art – the two countries have organised a transnational exchange of their pavilions at this year's Venice Biennale. The Germans are showing four artists, only one of whom is German, in the French Pavilion; the French are showing the Albanian artist Anri Sala in the German.

The French building is an innocuous enough space. Built in 1912, designed by an Italian and owned by the citizens of Venice, it presents exhibiting artists with only one problem: how to fill its standard-issue neoclassical shell. The German-designed and -owned pavilion, however, with its temple-like apse and towering Teutonic pillars, presents a surfeit of ticklish issues: architectural, aesthetic, political, you name it. Built in 1909, Nazified in 1938, de-Nazified in 1947 and almost razed a couple of times since, it is overdetermined by history and overloaded with ghosts. Included among the latter is the spirit of the last artist to show there, Christoph Schlingensief, who died in August 2010, a year before his Venice installation opened. Schlingensief's curator and widow turned the building into a Schlingensief mausoleum of sorts, and it worked – the Biennale jury awarded the pavilion its top prize.

Few living artists have fared so well. When British artist Liam Gillick – the first non-German invited to fill the pavilion since Nam June Paik's co-selection alongside Hans Haacke in 1993 – was given the nod two Biennales ago, his first thought was to finish what Haacke had started. The German artist had smashed the white marble floor at the entrance – where Mussolini and Hitler once shook hands for the cameras – and called the resulting rubble art. So, thought Gillick, why not just knock the whole damn thing down? 'The problem was,' he told journalists, 'I wouldn't know where to stop. The one next to it is colonial, and the Italian one is definitely fascist, so that would have to go, too.' Instead, Gillick puzzled over his predicament for the good part of a year, and at the last minute hung some coloured bug strips at the front door, filled the inside with pinewood kitchen cabinets and let a lifesize animatronic cat try to explain what he was on about.

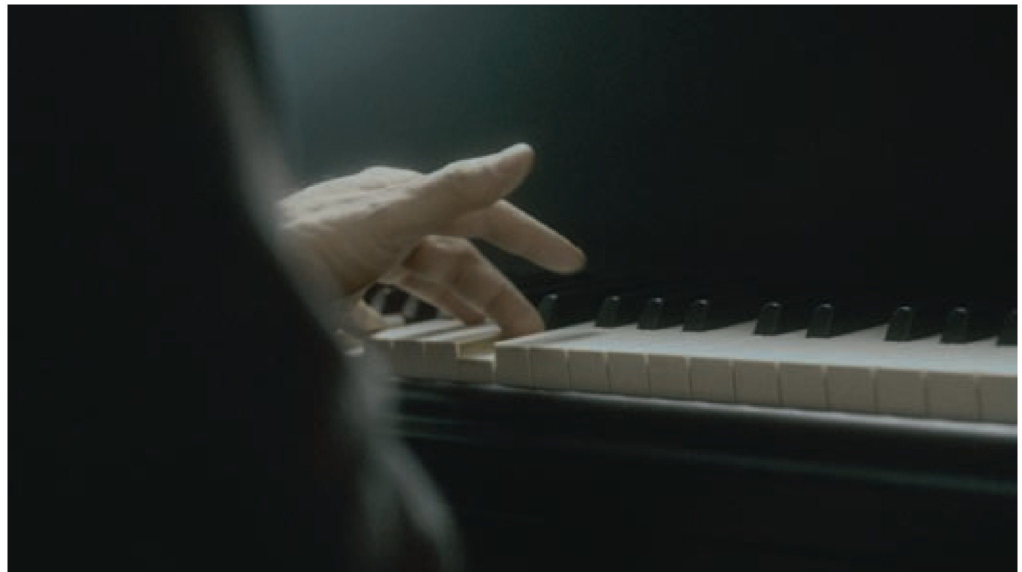
THE GERMAN PAVILION PRESENTS A SURFEIT OF TICKLISH ISSUES: ARCHITECTURAL, AESTHETIC, POLITICAL, YOU NAME IT

Gillick described how in order to solve the pavilion's complex thicket of signifying entanglements he just needed to unknot one single thread from the mass – 'just find one idea, an idea'. Clearly, he never succeeded. With *Ravel Ravel Unravel (2013),* Anri Sala and his French curator, Christine Macel (chief curator at the Pompidou Centre), have instead opted for an exquisitely complicated weave of ideas, orchestrated around the unifying capacities unique to musical composition and performance, and played out with virtuosic finesse.

The choice of Sala is elegant in itself. He has lived and worked between Berlin and Paris for most of his adult life, and his art – videos in which sound is a dominant, independent and mood-altering component – is most powerful when specifically attuned to the physical space in which it is experienced.

these pages, from left:
French Pavilion, photo: © Philippe Zimmerman/Institut Français;
German Pavilion, photo: © Martin Weigert

Like the posthumous Schlingensief, Sala has blocked the German Pavilion's monumental entranceway, forcing visitors to enter by a service door on the left side. A curved ramp inside leads to a dark room containing a single screen, on which loops a silent film of a young woman wearing DJ headphones. Backing up and continuing along the curve brings one to the pavilion's high-vaulted central apse, now a giant semi-anechoic chamber – the walls and ceiling are covered in sound-absorbing material. No ghostly resonances here, only the full, glorious sound of the French National Orchestra performing Maurice Ravel's *Piano Concerto in D for the Left Hand* (1930).



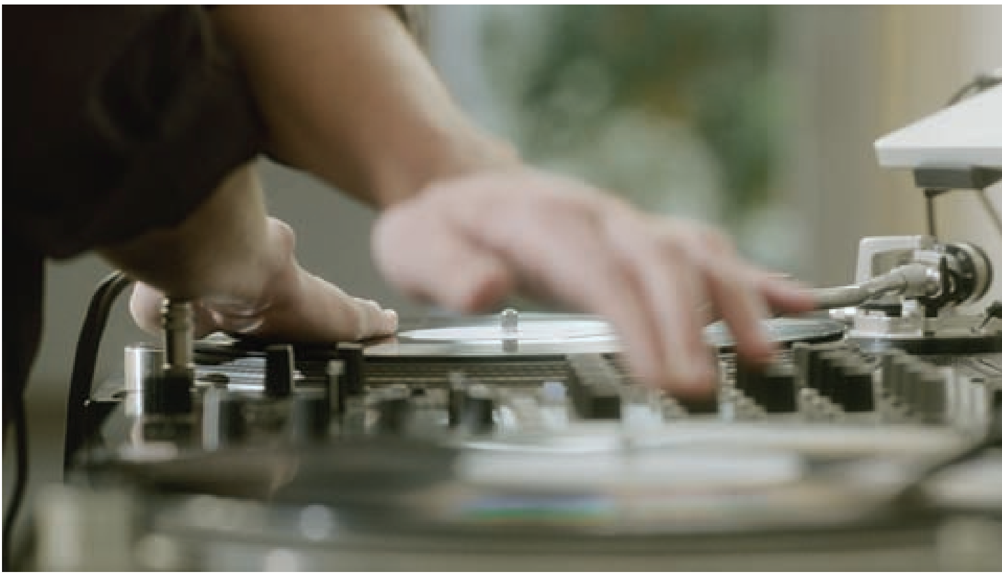
On two screens – one on top of the other but slightly displaced – we see two videos, each showing the hands (active lefts, idle rights) of two performing pianists, Louis Lortie and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Both virtuosi are fully limbed and francophone, unlike Paul Wittgenstein, the one-armed Austrian for whom Ravel wrote the work. Wittgenstein, a fabulously wealthy concert pianist who lost his right arm in the First World War, maintained an active recital career by commissioning works for his left hand from Europe's best-known composers: Prokofiev, Hindemith, Korngold, Britten and Strauss among them. Some he never played, nor allowed others to play – he considered them his intellectual property and not the composers', mere mercenaries who only penned them for the cash. Hindemith's, for example, he sealed away in his studio. It was only found upon the death of his widow a decade ago.

Ravel's *Concerto* is by far the best known. Almost as famous is the falling-out between the two men: Wittgenstein took liberties with the score (it was, after all, his to modify as he saw fit), infuriating Ravel, who never spoke to him again. Today, the issue of ownership is further complicated: Ravel's music entered the public domain in 2009 in Germany, but will not do so in France for another eight years, as the copyright protection of musical works in that country was extended to compensate for the two world wars.

Let's take a crack at untangling this knot: a work composed between France's two wars with Germany by an anti-nationalist Frenchman (who refused to sign a letter in 1914 urging a ban on the performance in France of works by German and Austrian composers), commissioned by an Austrian forced to flee his country by the Germans, now being played in a building in Italy considered part of extraterritorial Germany – a postwar, inoculated form of Pan-Germania, but this year representing France, therefore, because of the wars (or *not* because of the wars?), not belonging or available to the public as a whole…

The confusion of echoes defies the anechoic chamber's efforts to suppress them; they haunt *Ravel Ravel Unravel*, as do so many others, not least being the language games of Paul's younger brother, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Ravel's own disability, frontotemporal dementia, which gradually obliterated his ability to compose – to write

this page, from top:
Ravel Ravel (two stills), 2013, HD video projection on two screens, colour, multichannel sound, 20 min 45 sec each, © the artist, courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich & London; *Ravel Ravel* (production still), 2013, featuring the Orchestre National de France under the direction of Didier Benetti, photo: © Julien Mignot/ Summer 80, courtesy the artist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Hauser & Wirth, Zurich & London



down the music that only he could hear – and eventually, to communicate at all. In late 1937 (just a few months before Wittgenstein, prohibited from performing in public by the Nazis, left Europe for the United States), Ravel underwent 'experimental' brain surgery, fell into a coma and died nine days later.

The concert pianists' performances mirror this dissonant jumble. Their identically filmed left hands – and the sounds they trigger – jump in and out of sync with each other and the orchestra (which was recorded in a separate room from the soloing pianists, who performed a few days apart but with the recorded sound of each other in their ears). The disoriented tempos complicate the piece, lengthening and shortening it, pushing and pulling at the performers' and visitors' eyes and ears and brains as they try, collectively and independently, to unravel and re-Ravel the work: to return it to its initial, unified and harmonious whole. Sometimes, too, the parts excluded by the music – the soloists' silenced and extraneous right hands – occupy the screens, hanging limply beside the hardworking bodies and minds or gripping a leg, struggling to be free to play their absented part in the show.

Before exiting out of the right-side service door, visitors confront a further unravelling in a third space. Here, on a smaller screen, the DJ seen in the first room disentangles the two performances by retangling them – remixing them on two turntables, restoring them to a semblance of their original aural and temporal unity by means of the technology and vernacular of contemporary electronic music. (The DJ, we are told, is a fixture of the Paris and Berlin club scenes; yet another cooperative note of felicitous resonance.)

This is, I think, Sala's best work to date. A nuanced intertwining of the identical and the different played out almost simultaneously – in and out of time – in a space overcharged with political and historical presences by absent, projected performers working together and apart, hand in hand and hand on hand, crossing borders, almost overcoming physical handicap, almost eliminating physical estrangement – almost aligning the world into pure collaborative harmony – by means of the generosity, attentiveness and fellowship of art.

Bravissimo.

this page, from top: *Unravel* (two stills), 2013, HD video projection on two screens in two separate spaces, colour, mono sound (first projection) and discrete 4.0 surround (second projection), 20 min 45 sec each, © the artist, courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich & London, Kurimanzutto, Mexico City; *Unravel* (production still), photo: © Simone Falso, courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich & London, and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City

Tavares Strachan

The Founder of the Bahamas Air and Space Exploration Center has had polar ice cloned in a Yale laboratory, and exhibited a chunk of Alaska in a solar-powered freezer in Nassau. Now he's bringing his chilly skills to the Bahamas debut pavilion at the Venice Biennale

By Christian Viveros-Fauné

The 55th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale will include many 'firsts' in that massive show's 118-year history. Among other surprises, the Bahamas will present a pavilion amid the choice real estate of the Arsenale. One of nine new entries added to this year's list of exhibitors – the other eight are Côte d'Ivoire, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuwait, the Maldives, Nigeria, Paraguay, the Republic of Kosovo and the Vatican (yes, that's right, the Vatican) – the Bahamas' debut will feature 16 works by a single artist on the world-beating themes of climate change, new-frontier exploration and cultural difference. Even more unlikely: it will be orchestrated by New York-based, Nassau-born Tavares Strachan, a wildcard conceptualist who routinely square-knots together farflung locales like Venice, Nassau and the North Pole.

"People don't necessarily think about how closely the global north and south are linked together," Strachan tells me over a beer at a down-at-the-heel Spanish workingman's club on Manhattan's west side, where we've met to discuss his Venice show. "The national model for an exhibition like the Biennale means something totally different today than it did a century ago. There was no discussion of climate change then – but now when there's talk of the polar ice caps melting, it's because islands like Venice and the Bahamas will be underwater."

A thirty-three-year-old creator who grabbed the attention of the international art scene in 2006 after he journeyed to Alaska to excavate a 4.5-ton block of ice which he later displayed in a solar-powered freezer in the Bahamas, Strachan is that rare, cagily confident,

left and below:
Tavares near the North Pole, 2013

right:
Blast Off (detail), 2008–9. Photo: Christophe Thompson. Courtesy the artist and Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn

self-generating artist who prefers autonomy and temporary alliances to long-term gallery contracts in order to get things done. A free agent who has worked with various US and European galleries and institutions, his large-scale schemes routinely require teams of curators, production experts and assistants. One 2008 project, which resulted in the 2011 founding of what Strachan calls "the Bahamas Air and Space Exploration Center" (BASEC) – the artist's version of NASA for his native country – led Strachan to confer with numbers of physicists and mathematicians in several countries before eventually travelling to the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia, for months of gruelling astronaut training.

For his Venice installation, which he has darkly titled *Polar Eclipse*, Strachan has decided – he tells me as we strain to talk over a World Cup qualifying match on television – to "go all out", putting everything he can into a multipart, enormously complex operation of the sort that can sometimes make art acquire outsize, even heroic dimensions. A project that involves, among other geographical dislocations, the artist retracing the steps of Robert Peary and Matthew Alexander Henson's 1909 expedition to the North Pole – the African-American Henson is reported to have led rather than assisted the Caucasian Peary in this historically contested achievement – *Polar Eclipse* also features Strachan in his most complete psychocartographer mode.

"I'm fascinated by the idea of being in two or more places at once, and exploring difference that way," Strachan tells me – namely, the evolving notions of belonging, national identity and globalisation. "The way an institution like the Biennale deploys the idea of 'difference' as cultural tourism, both historically and currently, is something I want to work with and expand till I'm satisfied I've dealt with it completely."

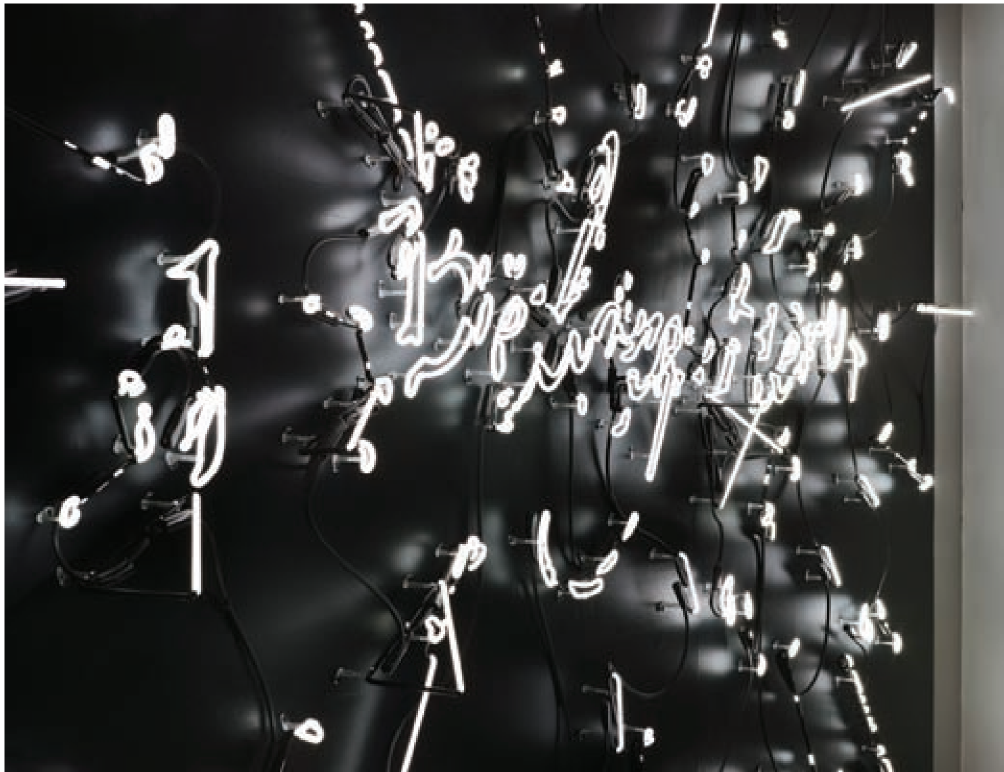
A mental and physical journey the artist will represent as both a 6,000 sq ft, theatrically lit, multisensory space and a 14-channel, 360-degree video he has titled *Magnetic*, Strachan's travel to the outer reaches of human habitability has everything to do with his hauling back striking new images and experiential connections for others to make their own. What more impacting way is there, one might ask – in view of the current ineffectiveness of fact-based data – to illustrate that cities like Venice, Nassau and New York are significantly threatened by global warming?

"When I talk about 'exploration' I am talking about adaptability," Strachan says, measuring his words with typical thoughtfulness. "What I'm trying to do, essentially, is to triangulate the so-called new world, the old world and the uninhabitable poles, while talking to the potential catastrophe or grace that might face all three."

'The traveller sees what he sees,' G.K. Chesterton wrote, 'the tourist sees what he has come to see.' That's how it is with the very mobile Strachan and what he calls his "lean and mean crew of handpicked coconspirators". A group he has gathered to orchestrate the many moving parts of his incredibly ambitious pavilion – the gang includes curators Jean Crutchfield and Robert Hobbs, producers Christopher Hoover, Michael Hall and Tina Gregory, as well as his own brothers, close friends and even Strachan's mother, who made his North Pole gear – these folks have helped make material what is essentially this artist's high-concept, low-stress poetic vision.

In Venice, that vision calls for a virtual cornucopia of perceptual sleights of hand and science-inflected *trompe l'oeil* works. Among the planned pieces on view, for example, are a dark room constructed for three 'shattered' neon sculptures Strachan calls "a catastrophe of light"; several large-scale labour-intensive collages of Arctic animals on the verge of extinction (each took about eight months to make); an exploding lifesize resin sculpture of an Inuit figure made up of 350 separate pieces; a nearly invisible glass sculpture of Henson suspended in mineral oil ("the oil and glass have the same refractive index", the artist explains); as well as a football-size piece of polar ice that the artist will soon have cloned at a secret laboratory at Yale (both the real piece of ice and the 'cloned' one will be exhibited side by side in custom-made freezer units come June).

WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO, ESSENTIALLY, IS TO TRIANGULATE THE SO-CALLED NEW WORLD, THE OLD WORLD AND THE UNINHABITABLE POLES, WHILE TALKING TO THE POTENTIAL CATASTROPHE OR GRACE THAT MIGHT FACE ALL THREE



But the individual work Strachan is most proud of – the one he says brings together the entire installation as an integral whole – is the one that led him to fly 40 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders from Nassau's Sadie Curtis School to Venice last winter. There to perform an age-old Inuit hunting song, Strachan's young guests made flesh and blood the sorts of genuine multicultural experiences he cherishes as part of his own artistic heritage. Filmed and recorded inside the Bahamas' first national pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the a cappella song *Aya Aya* – for which Strachan says there is literally no translation – not only provides the soundtrack for the exhibition. It also demonstrates how cherished words, concepts and ideas from one part of the world can retain, in another entirely new context, multiple yet universal meanings.

this page, from top:
I Belong Here, 2013, photo: Bill Orcutt, courtesy the artist;
I Belong Here, 2011, photo: Tom Powell, courtesy the artist; *The Bear*, 2013, polar bear collage, paper, pigment, Mylar on Plexiglas, 243 x 274 x 5 cm

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The Lower East Side

In the second of a two-part focus on New York's contemporary art scene, ArtReview *looks at how the culture and scale of Manhattan's historic immigrant quarter influence what kinds of galleries have been setting up shop there, particularly during the past decade*

By Jonathan T.D. Neil
Photography by Frances F. Denny

Manhattan's Lower East Side: an impossibly tight conurbation south of Houston Street and east of the Bowery, long a multiethnic enclave and now home to roughly 100 contemporary art galleries alongside boutiques and clothiers, restaurants and their suppliers, community centres and hotels, housing projects and luxury condos. It's a story of uneven, and uneasy, development, and it's not new. It could easily begin on the eve of the 1980s, with *The Real Estate Show*, an exhibition (a pop-up, in today's vernacular) in an abandoned storefront at 125 Delancey Street. The show began with a 'manifesto', explaining that it would be 'a short-term occupation of vacant city-managed property'. Gentrification was the enemy. The city had been dragging its feet on renewal commitments, depressing prices and wooing private developers to pick up the city's slack. As Rebecca Howland's poster for the show declared, 'a building is not a precious gem to be locked – boarded – hoarded', so the artists took over. They cleaned the space, turned on the heat and the lights, and hung the work. It was open for 24 hours before the city's padlocks appeared. In a public-relations coup, the artists held a press conference on the street in front of the locked doors, and the press actually showed up. The attention brought the city to the negotiating table. When it was all done, a different space, at 156 Rivington Street, was made available to the artists, long-term. ABC No Rio (the name comes from an old and nearly illegible storefront sign that capped the entrance) was born.

The Lower East Side has long been a magnet for this kind of upstart, street-level, socially conscious and committed work (venues and organisations such as La MaMa, Abrons Arts Center and PAD/D). It has to do, in part, with the density and the scale of the urban fabric here, which is lower-rise and tighter than the rest of Manhattan. Soho, just to the west, is similar, but there cast-iron warehouses predominate, with open floorplans and ten-foot-or-higher ceilings. One could get a lot of work done indoors, which is why artists colonised the area and ushered in the era of 'loft' living, especially when the streets were dangerous come nightfall. The Lower East Side, in contrast, had long been residential. 'Tenement' living, though much less glamorous, was its main feature. If you wanted light and air, you went up to the roof, or out onto the street, which was your yard, your coffeehouse, your community centre, your court. The ground floor of every tenement building was a storefront, which meant many different stakeholders – eyes and ears, in other words – and so an abiding interest in what was happening outside the front door.

It's this small-scale, street-oriented infrastructure that has made the Lower East Side so attractive to the many contemporary art galleries that have opened (and closed) in the neighbourhood over the last ten years. That, and the fact that many of the landlords are either Jewish or Chinese; two groups that, according to a number of gallerists, are willing to sign commercial leases without the security of pristine credit.

As catalyst for the Lower East Side's transformation into an art destination, however, most people would point to the New Museum's announcement in 2002 that a parking lot on the Bowery at Prince Street would be the site of its new building (the museum opened to the pubic in 2007). And few would disagree that the area gained long-term security with the 2007 arrival of Lehmann Maupin in the two-storey former headquarters of the East Side Glass Co (previously Levine Brothers Glass) at 201 Chrystie Street,

this page, from top:
East Broadway at the intersection of Rutgers Street; gallerists Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin; Lehmann Maupin, Chrystie Street

facing page, from top:
Ludlow Street between Hester and Canal streets, one block east of Orchard Street galleries; ABC No Rio, Rivington Street

which had occupied that address since the 1940s; or with Gian Enzo Sperone and Angela Westwater's Sir Norman Foster-designed minitower on the Bowery, which opened to much acclaim in 2010.

These are big galleries, literally, with big plans. Lehmann Maupin has used the double height of the Chrystie Street space to stage large installations by Do Ho Suh, Teresita Fernández and Jennifer Steinkamp – the kinds of installations meant to appeal to institutional collections (and those that aspire to be). And for all of its verticality, Sperone Westwater has less a double-height space than a double-height wall, which means most of its exhibitions still tend towards a domestic scale, even when showing big personalities such as Tom Sachs and Not Vital. As the name implies, though, on the Lower East Side there is nowhere to go but up.

Not all galleries' ambitions can be equated to such ardent desires for rank. In contrast to Chelsea, there remains an air of refusal on the Lower East Side – if ABC No Rio is any indication, it goes with the territory. Participant Inc, a nonprofit space founded by Lia Gangitano (once of Thread Waxing Space in Soho) has been in the area since 2002 and may be the most legitimate inheritor of ABC No Rio's alternative legacy. Canada, the now well-recognised gallery founded by Phil Grauer, Sarah Braman, Wallace Whitney and Aaron Brewer – all artists in their own right – has been in the neighbourhood since then as well, only recently moving from its lower Chrystie Street home to a new one on Broome Street. Yet the origin of the neighbourhood's current status as a contemporary art haven may be better, or alternatively, traced to the opening of Reena Spaulings Fine Art at 371 Grand Street in 2004 and of Orchard, at 47 Orchard Street, in 2005.

this page, from top:
Sperone Westwater, Bowery;
Orchard Street at Hester Street, in the heart of the Orchard Street galleries; Broome Street at Essex Street, looking north

this page, from top: Reena Spaulings Fine Art, East Broadway; the basketball courts at Rivington Street between Norfolk and Suffolk streets

Reena Spaulings began as a project of the Bernadette Corporation, a group of artists that modelled the form of their activities – bookwriting, fashion design, artmaking, etc – on the start-up creative media companies that had blossomed in the 1990s. It was a type of avant-garde move that joined other familiar ways of changing and challenging the conventional status and romantic image of the fine artist. The gallery, named after the title character of a Bernadette Corporation novel, offered the artists another way of occupying a commercial concern without fully embracing, or succumbing to, the coercions of full-blown capitalism. Early shows and projects by the likes of Klara Lidén, Josh Smith, Seth Price and K8 Hardy, and a notoriously informal approach to running a business, gave the space a kind of cutting-edge credibility and cosmopolitanism that began to extend to the neighbourhood itself.

If the old-school Lower East Side spaces were hamstrung by their history as 'alternative' and anticommercial, Reena Spaulings, though still critical of affirmative culture, showed that one need not be so conflicted about getting involved in the money game (especially when there was very little money in that game to begin with). Orchard possessed similar motivations, but it approached the neighbourhood, and the gallery concern in a less elliptical if still somewhat experimental fashion. That Orchard operated as a profitmaking limited liability company with 12 members is equally as important as the kinds of exhibitions and events it put on as a gallery. Those members came from various different artworld backgrounds (critic, curator, historian, artist, etc), and the programme, as stated on its still-live website, 'eschewed solo exhibitions in favor of thematically, conceptually and politically driven group exhibitions and projects', such as its inaugural outing, modestly named *Part One*, which featured Andrea Fraser's *May I Help You?* (first presented in 1991) in the context of works by greats such as Luis Camnitzer and Martha Rosler and a new generation of academically inclined artists such as Nic Guagnini, Gareth James and R.H. Quaytman (who served as the gallery's director). If Orchard 'represented a commitment to historically-based artistic criteria, as opposed to market criteria' then this was all but guaranteed by its three-year expiration date. And as with all such 'discursive' projects, Orchard-as-gallery may now be gone, but Orchard-as-archive, or Orchard-as-work, still survives, 'discursively', which is what it might mean to have 'made a mark'.

this page, from top:
Lisa Cooley, Norfolk Street;
Norfolk Street, opposite Lisa Cooley, just north of Delancey Street

Reena Spaulings and Orchard are the programmes that inaugurated the Lower East Side we have today, from the louche to the earnestly academic. If they can be credited with any offspring, one guesses those would look very much like Miguel Abreu's gallery, which, with regular exhibitions by Scott Lyall, Jimmy Raskin and the formerly-of-Orchard R.H. Quaytman, easily runs the most intellectual programme in the neighbourhood. And Abreu's gallery, which is also on Orchard Street, has formed the hub around which a number of other storefronts have 'gone gallery'. Across the street is Stephan Stoyanov, whose gallery has a healthy new media, video and film programme with artists such as Shannon Plumb and Heather Bennett. Just to the north, Steve Pulimood recently opened a two-storey jewel-box of a space named Room East (after Ettore Sottsass's journal), which has just begun formally representing Dan Shaw-Town, G. William Webb and Robin Cameron. While next door is Rachel Uffner, who shows Sam Moyer and Sarah Greenberger Rafferty, among other notables.

Pulimood, Uffner and Abreu's spaces are quintessential Lower East Side – small, idiosyncratic, alive. Other galleries have begun to move into the newer, gentrifying construction that has been cropping up in the area over the past five years. After three years of operating Rental Gallery on the sixth floor of a fairly dingy commercial building on East Broadway, Joel Mesler opened Untitled in the ground-floor space of 30 Orchard, one of the first luxury condo buildings on the street (the penthouse is listed for a couple of million dollars). This gives the gallery a bit of a Chelsea feel, but only a bit. With artists such as Brendan Fowler and David Adamo, the gallery maintains more than enough "punk-rock integrity" (Mesler's words) to distinguish it from uptown. Not so much with Lisa Cooley (Andy Coolquitt, Erin Shirreff), who was once next door in a tiny strip of a storefront. Her shop has since moved to a very sleek, very Chelsea showroom – high ceilings, exposed roof beams, polished concrete floors – on Norfolk Street, where one can also find Thierry Goldberg (Ben Grasso, Dave McDermott), who moved there from a shoebox space on Rivington.

There is of course nothing wrong with these moves and expansions, especially when they benefit the artists and their work. If anything, they free up those original and already-proven gallery spaces for newcomers who bring more energy and, according to Stoyanov (who has survived two recessions), an always-needed "optimism".

The question is: optimism about what? ABC No Rio began not out of optimism but from a feeling of urgency and an act of reclamation that required not just artistic and curatorial agency but old-fashioned civil disobedience (the disobedience one finds on the Lower East Side today is less civil and more of the misdemeanour sort, the kind that happens outside unbearably hip watering holes after one too many drinks). If there is an optimism here then it remains aspirational, but for something more than just commercial success and social status. It's a bid for relevance, and the Lower East Side is the last place in New York where the galleries, and the art, do remain relevant to the life of the neighbourhood. How they figure in the relevance of art more generally – its value, its purpose, its promise – remains an open question.

facing page, from top:
Miguel Abreu; Rachel Uffner;
Stephan Stoyanov; Untitled, Orchard Street

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Macau Museum of Art
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Julia Wachtel, Vilma Gold, London
Mick Peter, SWG3, Glasgow
William E. Jones, Modern Institute, Glasgow

Exhibitions/USA
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Zilia Sánchez, Artists Space, New York
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Exhibitions/Europe & Rest of the World
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Kostis Velonis, Monitor, Rome
I knOw yoU, IMMA, Dublin
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Cornelia Parker, by Iwona Blazwick
The Flamethrowers, by Rachel Kushner
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How to Write 1, by Stefan Ripplinger

Off the Record
Gallery Girl turns her back on the secondary market

The Magic of the State

The Magic of the State
Lisson Gallery, London
27 March – 4 May

Political power isn't always to do with rational concepts such as democratic representation, or the enlightened self-interest of individuals or collectives, and the power of the state often extends into the symbolic and mythical aspects of everyday life. Whether it's the Nazis' Nuremberg rallies or the rituals that surround the office of the American president, political power, in the forms of the state, seeks to embed itself as an irrational, even magical force.

That's certainly the contention of *The Magic of the State*, an elaborately coded group show of works whose emphasis is on how the unquestionable opacity of myth and ritual inflects even the supposedly secular forms of the modern state. Coded, because the Lisson show is one of two parallel exhibitions (the other running concurrently at the recently established Beirut, a curatorial nonprofit based in Cairo), and it's tempting to see in the elliptical and labyrinthine narratives woven by these works a desire to avoid any too-explicit confrontation with immediate political conflicts and antagonisms.

In a way, such displacement from art as political activism is a huge relief. Riffing on unorthodox ethnographer Michael Taussig's controversial eponymous 1997 book of 'ficto-ethnography', the works in *The Magic of the State* range dizzyingly in and out of fiction, historical documentation and performance. Most direct is Liz Magic Laser's videotaped performance *Stand Behind Me* (2013), in which dancer Ariel Freedman mimes the hand and body gestures of current politicians and statesmen while the text of their speeches rolls silently by on autocues. Her overemphatic performance, stripped of the verbal rhetoric, becomes a sort of absurd ritual dance – but then, given how much of politicians' performances are styled by the voodoo of spin doctors, you can see Laser's point.

The way in which collective identity and the state is mythologised is deftly examined by Christodoulos Panayiotou's assembling of archive photographs of visitors to what appears to be a Greek amphitheatre, in the years following Cypriot independence from Britain in 1960. There's nothing much to the images – dignitaries, citizens and students in 1960s garb – but the cool repetition alerts us to the obsessive coding of civic form as a symbol of (sometimes invented) political ancestry.

By contrast, Ryan Gander's odd little textual itemisation of various studio ephemera and professional notes, some to do with the artist's project to establish a new art school, seems only tangentially connected to the overall theme; though these perhaps impishly suggest the artist's own mercurial status as an artworld figure who appears to be everywhere and nowhere at once, and whose work loops constantly back into art's historical and institutional self-mythologising.

The most ambitious works here are those that concoct the most bizarre links between current political anxieties and the premodern world. Anja Kirschner & David Panos's inventive video *Ultimate Substance* (2013) makes links between the Greek economic crisis and ancient Athens's development of coinage, switching abruptly from political commentary to staged scenes of naked Athenians hard at work mining and smelting silver. Goldin+Senneby similarly toy with the magical power of money in their licensed instructions for making a reproduction of an 'alchemical oven'; and Rana Hamadeh's elaborate *The Big Board* (2013) again picks up on ancient Athens, marshalling a bewildering array of references turning on epidemic, infection and inoculation as a metaphor for the state's self-preserving resistance to revolution and disorder. Meanwhile Lili Reynaud-Dewar's installation *Cleda's Chairs* (2010) is a somewhat forced comparison between the account of her grandmother's move from the country to the city, with video material drawn from Pasolini's *Notes for an African Oresteia* (1975) in which the film director struggles with the politics of filming Aeschylus's play in the newly independent ex-colonies of Africa – a tense faceoff over the exchange between modernity and tradition, secularism and ritual, with no clear winner.

There's a problematic subtext to such complexities, however. To suggest that the state infiltrates society in ways we cannot fully apprehend risks acquiescing to the dangerous idea that people are incapable of ridding themselves of the security blanket of order, however oppressive, that the state provides. Link that to the confusion about why the Arab Spring has 'stalled', and you might end up with the dubious notion that radical social change is stymied because, deep down, we don't want it to succeed. And that, perhaps, is the greatest act of sleight-of-hand the state can ever achieve.

J.J. CHARLESWORTH

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: *The Happiest Man*
Ambika P3, London
27 March – 21 April

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: *Two Mountains*
Sprovieri, London
27 March – 11 May

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's immersive, installation-based work can sell for millions of dollars, a notion that no doubt would have seemed an impossible fantasy to the younger Ilya (he'll be eighty this year), when he started his career as a children's book illustrator in Cold War-era Russia during the 1950s. But it's also precisely that mix of fact and seemingly unrealistic fantasy that gives the large-scale projects of the now US-based couple their currency.

This two-venue showcase of the Kabakovs' work centres on the installation *The Happiest Man*, first created for the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2000, but set up here within the cavernous, bunkerlike space of Ambika P3. Descending the steps into the darkened venue, viewers are presented with a large cinema screen playing looped excerpts of patriotic Russian propaganda films, in colour, from the 1930s to 50s, where rosy-cheeked peasants joyfully toil away in the fields, harvesting rivers of golden corn, and where happy couples in horse-drawn carts ride through the countryside, all to a rousing soundtrack of uplifting song. There's then a choice – either sit in the rows of cinema seats in front of the screen and acknowledge that what you are watching is a movie and therefore artifice, or enter a roomlike space to the side, furnished how one imagines an ordinary Russian living room might look from that era, and watch the films through the frame of the open window at the end, as if they were the real world, taking place just outside your home. The conceit is a loaded one, with the 'happiest man' of the title being the one who prefers the utopian dream to the reality.

Of course what we're also reminded of is that everything here is fantasy, just to different degrees. It's not only the joyful peasants on screen and the roomlike set that are artifice, the cinema

too is a construct; the seat numbers are out of sequence, the digitised versions of the old films so low in quality that the pixelated imagery jerks and blurs like a smudgy painting, the soundtrack loud but distorted.

Two Mountains, the exhibition title of the ten or so oils and watercolours, dated between 2005 and 2012, showing at Sprovieri, refers to the mirrorlike views of, in most cases, individual mountains and their inverted reflections, so that each pointed peak appears again, upside down, atop itself, creating a shape like a tornado or an egg timer. Painted with loose brushstrokes in turquoise blues and greens, the oils appear almost abstract, in contrast to the more delicate watercolours, some of which feature a tiny figure standing in front of what could be a signpost or viewfinder. As with *The Happiest Man*, there are references here to alternative worlds and opposing viewpoints, but perhaps also to the idea of the microcosm reflecting the macrocosm – as above, so below. As paintings they don't entirely convince, but contain a strange, underlying mystical quality that draws you in anyway. Again there's an effect not dissimilar to the experience of *The Happiest Man* in that the work represents neither true reality nor – as with the immersive environments of Mike Nelson, for example – a convincing version of a fake reality. Instead, like the optical illusions of duck/rabbit or face/vase, it's something that oscillates between the two.

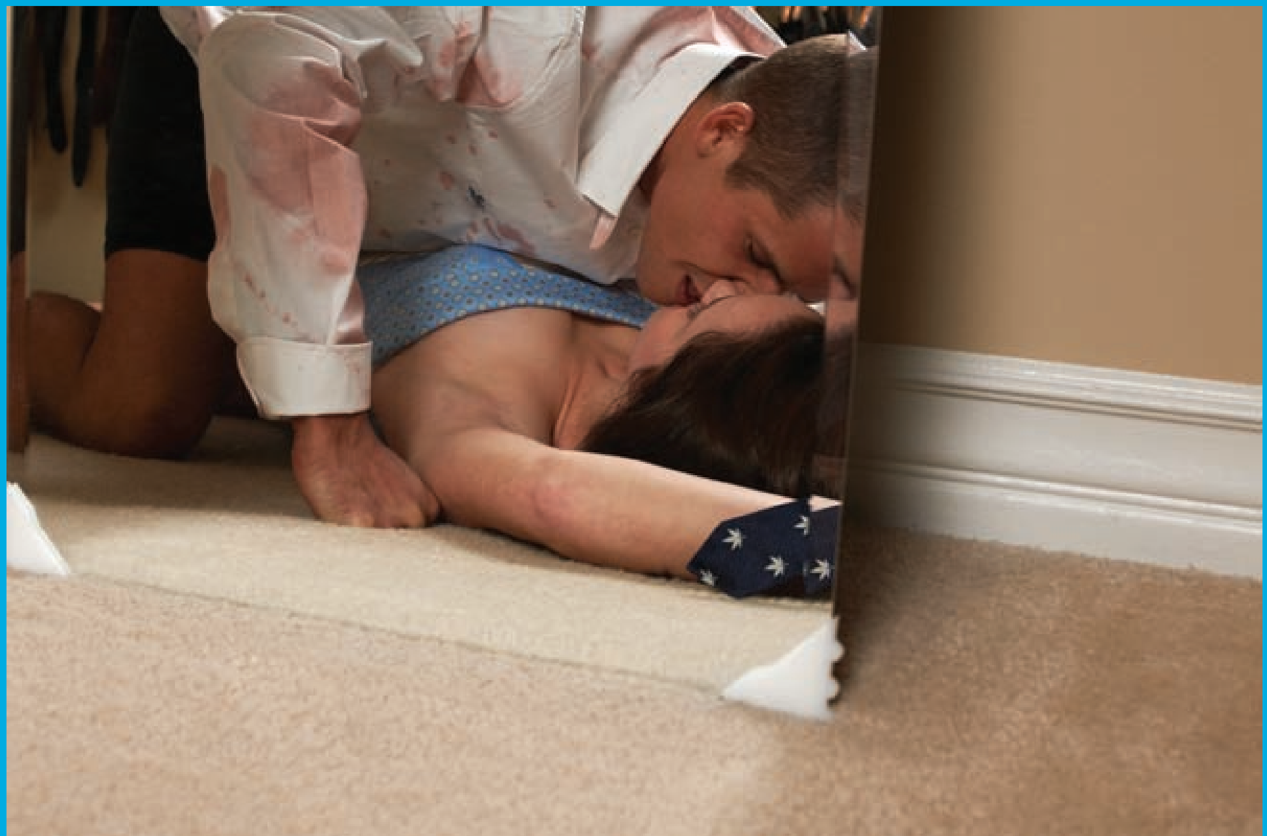
HELEN SUMPTER

Liz Magic Laser
Stand Behind Me, 2013, performance and video with teleprompter featuring Ariel Freedman. Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London & Milan

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov
The Happiest Man, 2000/2013. Photo: Michael Mazière, University of Westminster

Laure Prouvost
Swallow (film still), 2013, digital video. Courtesy the artist and MOT International, London

Max Farago
The Kiss, 2012, digital c-print, 102 x 152 cm. Courtesy Jonathan Viner, London



Laure Prouvost

Laure Prouvost: *Farfromwords*
Whitechapel Gallery, London
20 March – 7 April

The lengthily titled *Farfromwords: car mirrors eat raspberries when swimming through the sun, to swallow sweet smells* is the result of Laure Prouvost's residency in Italy as the fourth recipient of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women. *Swallow* (all works 2013), the central video of this two-part installation, is a meditation on pleasure, seen through the eyes of a hypothetical aesthete on the Grand Tour. Housed within a panoramic grotto of photographic collages that echo its Arcadian location, the film places us somewhere in Italy, by a secluded pond, and the images come at us quickly, as though designed to induce Stendhal syndrome: nude women bathing; raspberries crushed underfoot; a breast pushed into a peeled fig; a pineapple emerging from the water, Excalibur-style; fleeting shots of birds; cutaways to shirtless youths; palm fronds waving against azure sky.

The goal, perhaps, is to offer pleasurable images rather than images *of* pleasure: it's their unfolding that pleases, not what they depict. This is consolidated aurally, sounds functioning as serifs, crisply completing each shot: the uncorking of a bottle, the snip of scissors, the sharp intakes of breath that punctuate the ten-minute montage. We rarely see anything for more than a second, with Prouvost's childlike voiceover addressing *us sotto voce*: "This image is undressing you… You drink this image…" Her laconic commentary has become a signature that some dismiss as French kookiness, but when sparingly used, its cadence augments the character of her image presentation, which is both votive and throwaway. Phrased in the second person, it also anticipates our consumption of the work, making it rhetorically as well as sensorially seductive.

Once you've unshelled *Farfromwords*'s filmic centre, however, the rest feels like a husk. The collaged walls of the grotto, interspersed with plasma screens, do little more than parlay *Swallow*'s erotic content into something more sexual. The sculptures on the gallery walls (there are ten, all untitled) present raspberries on wing mirrors fixed to scraps of car doors. The show's prolix title asks us to imagine the fruit being 'eaten' by the mirrors. Such animism is better explored through the moving image; sculpture's dumb literalness negates the alimentary metaphor.

Six additional works, *Untitled (Relics)*, occupy the rear gallery, each presenting an object on a shelf alongside a caption. Next to an orange we read: 'Under the skin of the orange the flesh has turned pure gold.' The fantastical assertion recalls Michael Craig-Martin's *An Oak Tree* (1973) – in which the artist claimed to have turned a glass of water into an oak tree – but its fairytale register adds satirical purchase: it's as though a work of seminal Conceptualism has been workshopped with schoolkids. The *Relics* suggest interesting developments are afoot, but they are only partially realised here. Prouvost is at her best when seeing the world through a camera; her objects feel like inert props that merely 'reference' the films.

SEAN ASHTON

Max Farago

Max Farago: *Look Like Barbie, Smoke Like Marley*
Jonathan Viner, London
15 March – 13 April

Lauren Greenfield's documentary *The Queen of Versailles* (2012) is one of the more astute cultural responses to recent economic instabilities. It follows the Siegels, an incredibly wealthy American family, as the recession threatens to wipe out their massive fortune. In one particularly telling scene, David Siegel admits that despite his 'riches' he doesn't even own his own home. His mansion, limousine and property portfolio have all been bought on endless credit. We start with Siegel attempting to build monuments to capitalism, only to see him end up with a mountain of debt.

Max Farago's *Look Like Barbie, Smoke Like Marley* attempts a similar excavation of the American Dream. Shot on location in Los Angeles, the photographs are marked by their proximity to Hollywood (and the adjacent porn industry). This is a world populated by young rich kids and surgically enhanced models, and Farago, a photographer more commonly found working in the commercial world, is well versed in selling us this lifestyle. Everything seems like a cypher for something else – things are hinted at rather than revealed, hidden behind furtive glances and vacant expressions. The photographs are situated somewhere between a fashion shoot, a reality TV show and something more ominous.

The Kiss (2012) is characteristic. We see a young couple glimpsed in the corner of a mirror. They are locked in a passionate embrace on the floor. Details destabilise our assumptions: the man's shirt is stained with either blood or wine; are the woman's hands tied? Are we witness to a clandestine love affair gone wrong, or perhaps a more prosaic drunken fumble? We're never quite sure whether we are looking at real lives or fake smiles, acted poses or raw emotions – fact and fiction are continually blurred. Meaning slips off the surface like smearing lipstick.

Authentic or artificial? Farago's images reveal a world in which people have long forgotten what the difference is. It is a place where real crisis merges into melodrama, and emotional literacy is formed by talent shows and gossip magazines. Identities and relationships are never clearly defined: friend, family, actor or model? Personalities seem to be composed through social networking – constantly open and subject to change. The choreographed poses in Farago's compositions take us a long way from a historical notion of documentary photography. Yet what these images make evident is a society that mediates its own therapy as entertainment, within which authenticity becomes just another commodity to trade. Siegel's mountain of debt demonstrated what happens when the fuel that fired the American Dream runs dry; Farago's images tell us what happens when it's running on exhaust fumes.

GEORGE VASEY

Julia Wachtel

Julia Wachtel: *Post Culture*
Vilma Gold, London
16 March – 27 April

Julia Wachtel emerged at the same time as the Pictures Generation in 1980s New York, and her work shares a lot of the same concerns and strategies with regard to media appropriation and ironic juxtaposition – though with a slightly more oblique, cryptic twist. Astonishingly, though, this is her first solo show in the UK – and so takes the form of a miniature survey of works produced during different stages in her career.

Probably her best-known pieces internationally, however, are the large canvases onto which the artist paints oversize cartoon figures copied from chintzy greetings cards, alternating these with pictures sourced from news media. Superficially, then, there's a kind of contrast between the bright, buffoonish, absurdly caricatured emotions and the grayscale, ostensibly factual depictions – the point being that actually both sets of images are emblems of the same simplified and exaggerated mediascape. Yet if her technique sounds slightly formulaic, the results are often decidedly unnerving, richly ambiguous. *What, What, What* (1988) is a case in point, featuring one of those tacky, phallic homunculi you get on comedy erotic cards, together with an utterly bizarre newsprint image of a fur-coated woman wearing some kind of pale, rubbery mask. The combination clearly invites a reading to do with desire and concealment – yet the overall message is as much about the fundamental unknowability and obscurity of meaning. With their open, exclaiming mouths, the figures appear to be trying to communicate something – but all the specifics have been leeched away, as if the sound has been suddenly turned down.

The cinematic or televisual analogy is appropriate. Wachtel's longest-running series consists of sequences of commercial posters, which, read left-to-right, evoke celluloid strips or random channel-hopping. *Narrative Collapse II* (1981/2013), for instance, goes: schmaltzy anonymous flower-girl; Judy Garland in a gold lamé suit; Che Guevara; the same Garland image again; Davey Crockett; middle-aged Elvis. Superimposed on each sequence, additionally, is a portrait silhouette drawn in black marker pen, like a permanent shadow – the idea presumably being that our sense of self is as much a projection, an artistic construct, as these larger-than-life pop-icons.

If these sorts of identity-based issues can sometimes seem a little jejune, Wachtel's *American Color* series from the 1990s onwards, combining monochrome canvases with silkscreened snippets of found imagery, is a more pertinent response to the massive proliferation of media technologies. In *I'm Ok, You're Ok* (1992), a freeze-frame from a daytime TV talk show drifts beyond the borders of an expanse of yellow, as if vertical hold has broken down; while by *ACv2.6* (2012), Wachtel's source material has shifted to the Internet, featuring some incomprehensible extreme sport sandwiched between uneven slabs of grey. In both works, the sense is of a loss of bearings – as if contemporary culture itself is simply scrolling away incoherently; as if all visual material has become completely atomised, hopelessly reduced to an indecipherable level of abstraction.

In which case, might not the logical endpoint, the ultimate abstraction, be total imagelessness? That's the sense, certainly, behind the show's most profoundly unsettling work: a brief sound piece from 1984, in which a sample of brokenhearted histrionics from a daytime soap is followed by a creepy, muffled, oddly beguiling voice uttering the looped phrase, "Come closer… you disappear me". A kind of sinister invocation of oblivion, then: a mantra for the mass media age.

GABRIEL COXHEAD

Mick Peter

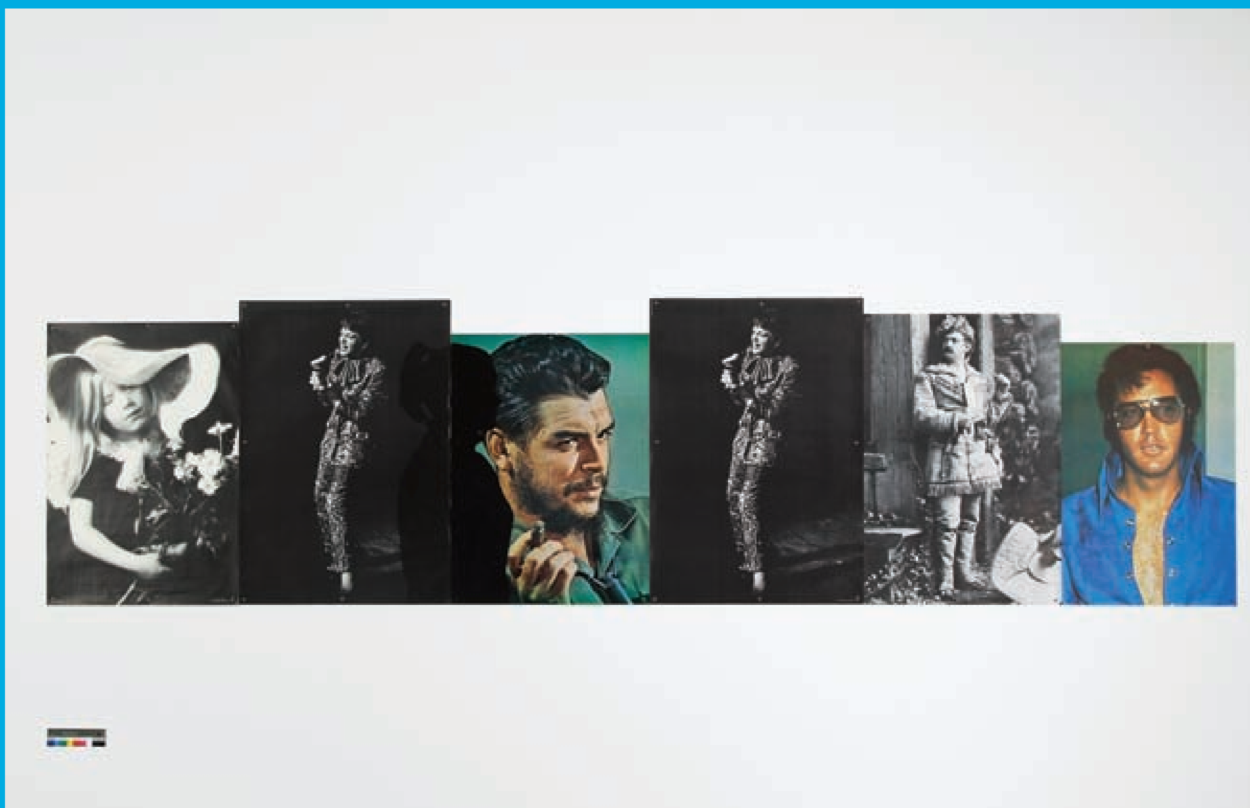
Mick Peter: *Trademark Horizon*
SWG3, Glasgow
16 March – 27 April

The function of brand imagery and logo design, we might assume, is to communicate the beneficial qualities of the product or brand as clearly, concisely and quickly as possible. Signification is intentional and ambiguity is avoided. So far, so semiotically uncomplicated – for design at least. On the other hand, as David Crow notes in his book *Visible Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (2007), contemporary art offers 'many examples of work that deliberately seek to avoid what [Umberto] Eco calls "the laws of probability that govern common language"', going on to reiterate Eco's view that contemporary art 'draws its value from this deviation from common structures'. Is this really the case? If so, Mick Peter's exhibition wholly undermines some of the common (and for designers, infuriating) misconceptions around how art and design 'make meaning' in different ways.

Continuing his interest in the world of commercial art – as seen in last year's exhibition *Lying and Liars* at the Collective Gallery in Edinburgh – Peter has variously appropriated, translated, invented and adapted trademarks drawn from predigital eras of illustration. These form the catalyst for the five large sculptures in *Trademark Horizon*. The trademarks themselves, drawn from old *Graphis* annuals and other sources, are intriguing *because* of the abstract or idiosyncratic approach to the product or brand their designers aimed to encapsulate. Even before Peter's intervention, the downright eccentricity of these 'failed pictorial trademarks' suggests that the anchor had already begun to become unmoored. Working with these signs, Peter has increased the detachment of the logos from their commercial application, focusing instead on the almost fantastical design processes that seemingly underpin them. This is clear in works such as *Toot and Come In* (all works 2013), a large-scale jesmonite and polyurethane foam sculpture based on a supermarket logo that featured the head of a pharaoh. What links an ancient Egyptian king and a mid-twentieth-century grocery store? And what are *Thing Fish* (beyond the title's reference to Frank Zappa) and *Book-Keeper* selling? While the style here is midcentury modern, resembling the imagery of Robert Stewart's textile and ceramic design, it also emphasises Peter's interest in revisionist histories of art and design, the odd moments of madness or brilliance where art and design go completely off-kilter and veer into counterculture.

It is the apparent arbitrariness between form and function that lends humour and playfulness to both the original trademarks and logos, and to the artist's treatment of them as almost animate objects or puppets. Set on a stagelike blue ground that sometimes appears to float above the bare concrete floor of the larger gallery space, the sculptures could be read as strange, lifesize chessmen about to perform in some kind of object theatre, or as monumental props in Jacques Tati's *Playtime* (1967). It is this visual wit, verging on kitsch, which is perhaps Peter's own trademark and the success of this show.

SUSANNAH THOMPSON



Julia Wachtel
Narrative Collapse II, 1981/2013, posters, marker, 102 x 415 cm. Courtesy Vilma Gold, London

Mick Peter
Trademark Horizon, 2013 (installation view). Courtesy the artist and SWG3, Glasgow

William E. Jones
Actual T.V. Picture, 2013, film still

Sadie Benning
Red and White Painting, 2013, medite, plaster, milk paint, acrylic, 124 x 154 cm (each panel 24 x 32 cm). Courtesy the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

Zilia Sánchez
Mujer (***de la serie el Silencio de Eros***), 1965, canvas stretched over wood and acrylic paint. Courtesy the artist

Dan Rees
Gravel Master, 2013, oil, rocks and pebbledash, unique

William E. Jones

William E. Jones
Modern Institute, Glasgow
23 March – 25 May

It was, perhaps ironically, William E. Jones's spell working for porn king Larry Flynt that left the artist with such a nuanced approach to editing found film and video footage. Indeed it was the process of editing bargain porno DVDs from nearly 30 years worth of films in Flynt's back catalogue that afforded Jones an opportunity to witness the changes that technology and economics wrought on the medium. These he has highlighted previously in the films *The Fall of Communism as Seen in Gay Pornography* (1998), which identified an influx of new bodies to the industry, and *All Male Mashup* (2006), in which only peripheral elements such as landscape and dialogue are shown, stripping the material of the sexual act.

While sex, and in particular the history of gay sexuality, has figured largely in Jones's output, it is violence that is emphasised in this impeccably installed exhibition of three videoworks at the Modern Institute's Aird's Lane space. *Actual T.V. Picture* (2013) is a splicing together of two sets of footage from the late 1960s: first, a depiction of aerial bombing during the Vietnam War, the film now faded to green; second a television advertisement in which advancements in miniature transistors are shown, this footage now faded to red, the fate of all Eastmancolor film. The two flicker quickly back and forth accompanied by Morse code-like beeps and loud white noise, as if they are two programmes interfering with one another. Those transistors, we are informed in the press release, were used to mass-produce television sets, but were originally developed by weapons manufacturers: this is TV looking at its own insides, only to find itself networked into a system of violence, a military technology that now broadcasts evidence of itself.

Bay of Pigs (2012) makes further use of documentary, albeit in a more abstract fashion, using a kaleidoscopic mirroring effect on clips from Cuban-made film *Girón* (1974), a film 'captured' by the CIA (and accessed by Jones in the CIA library) on account of its documentation of the 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion from a Cuban point of view. Though Jones's treatment of flying war planes crossing the skies effectively disorientates, playing on the misrecognition that takes place for the video's owners, who see themselves depicted as the enemy, it is edited in such a way as to render the aeroplanes abstract, and an accompanying soundtrack of numerical codes exacerbates this almost mathematical, patternlike treatment of violence. *Shoot Don't Shoot* (2012) is the most successful film here because it creates complex misreadings of a violent situation at pedestrian ground level, having been taken from an old police training video designed to instruct gun-wielding cops as to the right moment to take down a suspect. The unusually didactic voiceover, and its assertion that 'you are the camera' allows one to experience the camera as weapon guiding our actions, rather than the other way around, somewhat like an early shoot-em-up videogame. We see two disastrous scenarios cut together, sometimes on top of one another, both following from 'our' decision to shoot the suspect. Part of the dilemma of viewing this film, however, comes from the fact that our suspect, who we are told is "a black man wearing a pinkish shirt and yellow pants", looks like a handsome, sideburned TV star from an old cop show, and the searching way that the camera follows him ignites something like desire, if only to see him in the crowd. The way that he puts his hand under his shirt might signal the dangerous presence of a gun, or a form of peacockish sexual display. Jones is highly adept at revealing and manipulating the glitches of machines, but his work becomes doubly powerful when these are layered with moments of confusion that speak to desire and disorientation – the human glitches left in material, which Jones has unparalleled skill at unveiling and handling.

LAURA MCLEAN-FERRIS

Sadie Benning

Sadie Benning: ***War Credits***
Callicoon Fine Arts, New York
7 April – 12 May

Sadie Benning's debut at the 1993 Whitney Biennial, a smoky DIY video shot with a toy black-and-white camera, announced her as a precociously talented teenager with a sophisticated understanding of film and a stake in the gender politics of the era. Filmed in her childhood bedroom, the work interspersed snippets from a 1950s psychodrama about a homicidal schoolgirl, hand-lettered signs and confessional explorations of her queer identity. Less an effort to parse the media's formulaic presentation of the sexual and the feminine – although it was a major and early sally in that genre – the piece reclaimed clichéd content by infusing it with the personal and the handmade. It still bites: the video is included, fortuitously, in the New Museum's time capsule survey of New York, *NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*, concurrent with the Benning's one person show.

In her recent work, Benning employs similar formal techniques to comment on life in a nation plagued by shabbiness and institutionalised militarism. *War Credits* (2007–13), a black-and-white video in which the credits from three Hollywood films are reduced to abraded bursts of light and lines of illegible text, suggests America's continuing engagement in the buck-stops-nowhere campaigns abroad. *In Parts* (2012) combines seemingly unrelated outtakes from personal videos: a pacing leopard, the desert seen through the windshield of a moving car, a 45rpm disc spinning on a turntable, wheat in a derelict urban lot, a wall clock. Ghostly whorls burned onto the camera's tubes by overexposure to light float over the images. Things move but never really get anywhere. The scenes are as vitiated of meaning as the lines in *War Credits*, the former perhaps the wages of the latter's sins.

Dissolution and inscrutability appear to be the point: the show also includes two wall reliefs based on generic 1960s abstract paintings, a series of graduated right angles in alternating white and blue, and concentric red and white ovals cut into rectangles and separated to form a grid on the wall. Following the trajectory of those arcs, however, reveals that their curves do not align. The mismatch induces a vague anxiety and pushes the eye to the empty spaces between the panels. The emphasis is on the time and space in which viewers experience the work. As in an existentialist novel, that's where our purpose lies.

The playfully sharp irreverence of Benning's breakout work has matured into a poetic sense of remove, a melancholy sense of time and of individual inconsequence. The shift jibes with the disquiet her work suggests. But the viewer wants more, and given the anomie that haunts this show, perhaps Benning does too.

JOSHUA MACK

Zilia Sánchez

Zilia Sánchez
Artists Space, New York
21 April – 16 June

Referring to the 'object-ness' of new painting, Donald Judd once wrote, during the polemical heyday of Minimalism, that 'almost all paintings are spatial in one way or another'. He was speaking of practices, mainly by dudes, that treated painting with tongue-in-cheek medium-specificity: specifically, Frank Stella's canvases – the shapes of which were reflected by their interior concentric lines – and Ad Reinhardt's tricky, chockablock monochromes. But what should we make of Puerto Rico-based artist Zilia Sánchez, whose paintings, also made during that era, are so spatial and so shapely, literally? They're redolently minimalist yet simultaneously contrary to it. Artists Space's press materials refer to them as a 'queering' of that movement, and with their sexual, almost anthropomorphic protrusions and curves, the label fits. They offer a refreshing, feminist retort to standard art-historical narratives.

Born in Cuba, Sánchez studied at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes San Alejandro, where, in addition to painting and drawing, she designed furniture and theatre sets. Later she became involved with anti-Batista movements and aligned herself with a group of intellectuals and artists known as Sociedad Cultural Nuestro Tiempo. Moving to New York in 1964, where she lived for eight years, Sánchez began making her most identifiable work: one, sometimes two or more canvases joined together, with amorphous shapes of colour extending out towards the viewer, as if a fist was pushing from behind the canvas, stretching the surface to its breaking point.

Taking a cue from Lucio Fontana, one of her professors, this unique three-dimensionality is most simply employed in the earlier works on display, such as *Mujer (de la serie el Silencio de Eros)* (1965), a blue painting that features a white curvy oval reaching almost to its edges. As the canvas is pulled over a wood (sometimes plastic) armature attached to the stretcher frames, a very vaginal slit pushes forward several inches from the wall. With *Amazona* (1968), too, the effect is suggestive, as if the head of an erection was pressing against the back of the painting, charging the work's curving, black foreground with a distinct erotic energy.

Later works such as *Topología Erótica* (1976) push this effect further. With nary a straight line in sight save for the edges of the canvas, the work's three bulbous forms resemble curved cones, or some kind of cross between a breast and a penis. Another painting in the Erotic Topology series, from 1978, features two ovals of light pink, blue and white, one pressed atop the other, set against a dark blue background. An appendage reaches down from the top, while the bottom curves up, almost to receive it, with a swollen, circular form, like a kinky sex act between two consenting canvases.

Clean-cut, geometric abstraction this is not. Rather, this survey of work is so rife with genital forms that it would make Judd blush, proving that Minimalism was not just analytical but, in this case at least, anatomical as well.

DAVID EVERITT HOWE

Dan Rees

Dan Rees: *Gravel Master*
Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas
13 April – 27 July

The first thing that comes to mind when walking into *Gravel Master*, an exhibition of works by Berlin-based artist Dan Rees, is Wassily Kandinsky's colour theories. Not necessarily because Rees's paintings 'set the soul vibrating automatically', as Kandinsky, in his canonical treatise *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), claims an artist can do with colour. But rather the tones Rees uses – mustard-yellow, neon orange, cerulean, hot pink – do not seem arbitrary. Coming upon the canvases, the viewer feels propelled into motion. At the risk of sounding ridiculous, the effect is a bit like dancing.

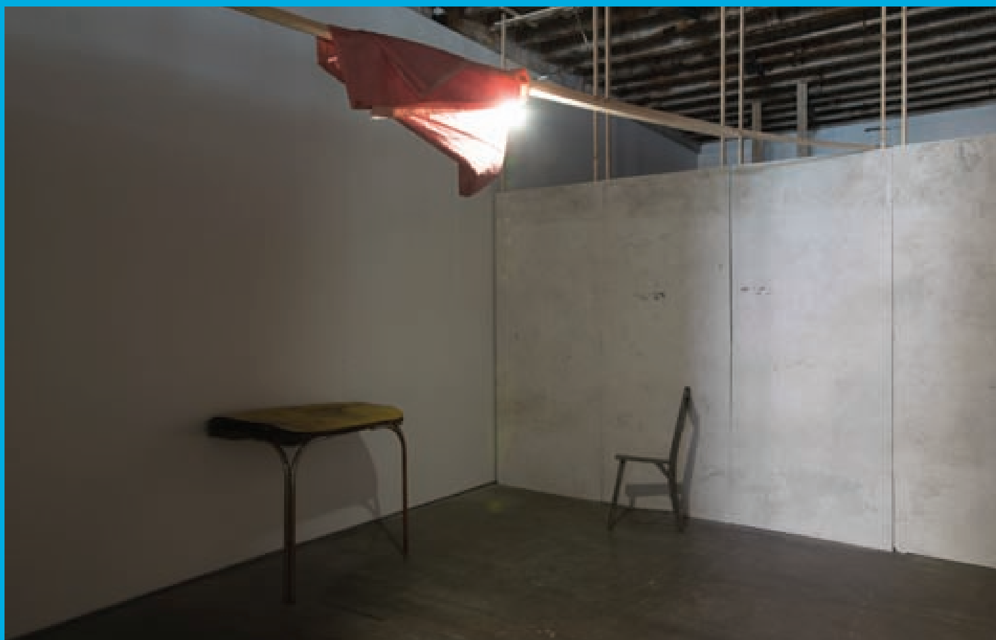
This sense of movement mainly applies to the works hanging in the cavernous main room of the exhibition, where one finds 16 large oil paintings encrusted with pebbledash, a crude sort of cement composed of shells and sand that is used for building in Rees's native Wales. The artist was inspired to give his canvases such a rough texture after seeing a gravel-coated sculpture by Picasso at the Nasher Sculpture Center while on a residency in Dallas earlier this year. To what end is unclear, but the inclusion of the pebbledash is a characteristic nod by Rees to his birthplace, which frequently appears both materially and conceptually in his work.

Depending upon your art-historical attachments, Rees's paintings may recall works of Abstract Expressionism, surrealist automatism, colour-field painting, Australian Aboriginal 'Papunya boards' or even the ink drawings of the Song Dynasty scholar painters. Nine of the works are arrestingly hung only centimetres apart in a horizontal line on a single wall, like Ellsworth Kelly's *Spectrum V* (1969). From far away, each composition looks like a haphazard blob. Up close, the imagination finds figuration. In one canvas dominated by bright reds and yellows, I saw two warriors entangled in battle. In another, a round form accented with turquoise and dandelion yellow looked like a bucolic scene of a bird alighting on a rock. The bright colours in each work help the fantasy along – if they had not been used so masterfully, the relative similarity of the canvases would be boring.

Far less masterful is the *Shaker Peg* series (2010–11), which hangs in the front gallery. Composed of single works, diptychs and triptychs, the nine pieces, which range in colour from blue to pink to green, are rendered in dull tones, almost as if the paint had been mixed with bits of shit before being applied. Dangled from Shaker pegs – wooden bolts from which you might have hung your coat in primary school – these works are best described as amateur interpretations of Kazimir Malevich's *Suprematist Compositions*. To a viewer without any art-historical knowledge, however, they probably just look like unremarkable 'modern art' that only deserves a passing glance.

BRIENNE WALSH

Peter Rostovsky
(see ***Permutation 03.3: Re-Production***)
Night Blossoms, 2012, Photoshop painting created with Wacom tablet, 3014 × 3600 pixels, unlimited edition



Josh Tonsfeldt
Untitled, 2013 (installation view), wood, half a chair, half a Formica table and 18 plaster fibreglass and wood panels (each panel 91 x 226 cm). Courtesy the artist and Simon Preston Gallery, New York

Permutation 03.3: Re-Production

Permutation 03.3: Re-Production
P!, New York
28 April – 9 June

Re-Production, a group show of work by Arthur Ou, Marc Handelman and Peter Rostovsky, is the third in a series of exhibitions mounted at P! ('p' exclamation), which is the project space of Project Projects, a well-known and admired design studio that does a lot of work in and for the artworld. As a whole, the show could be taken as an attempt to update the conversation on art and simulation. Ou's black-and-white photographs, *Double Light Leak 1* and *Double Light Leak 2* (both 2010), take mechanical applications of paint – from a spray can and airbrush – as analogons of photography's own shadow castings. Handelman, easily one of the best and smartest painters working today, offers *Extrusion/Drift* (2013), a large work that could be mistaken for a slab of marble, were it not for a reveal at the work's left edge, which shows both the unpainted primed canvas and the layer of retroflective screen glass that gives the work its opalescence.

The connotations of luxury and illusion here are rich indeed, and this is where Rostovsky comes in. He wants to toss a brick through the art market's cathedral windows – that is, through the semitransparent glazing of market orthodoxy that casts all art in the light of originals and copies, fetishises the unique and throws vast sums of money at securing scarcity as an elite privilege. Rostovsky's work to this point has taken the craft of painting as a given, while the images it presents, and the culture that encodes them, have been his subject of inquiry. In the wake of the Occupy movements, however, he seems to have arrived at a conclusion that those images can no longer be separated from what paintings actually are: products, with a limited audience – not the 99%.

So no more 'original' paintings. Instead, Rostovsky has taken to 'painting' in Photoshop with the use of a Wacom tablet. Witness *Night Blossoms* (2012), a vase of flowers as seen through night-vision goggles (or a *Matrix* filter on Instagram, if there is such a thing). The image file is free to download. In the gallery, the works – there are two identical iterations – appear as Duratrans transparencies in custom-made LED lightboxes, and the edition of these, just like a download, is unlimited.

The philosophy behind the approach, essentially mass distribution minus kitsch, is presented in a dialogue that Rostovsky wrote to accompany the exhibition. In it there is much debate about the value of art versus the value of our experience of it, but the key moment comes when Rostovsky's avatar asks, 'Did your record sleeves not function like art? Weren't they holy shrines that you studied and revered and that connected you to a community? They weren't limited edition.' As a demonstration, Rostovsky includes New Order's 1983 LP *Power, Corruption & Lies*, whose sleeve art, designed by Peter Saville, reproduces Henri Fantin-Latour's *A Basket of Roses* (1890).

It would be a compelling model were it not for one thing: a dependency upon that cascade of neurotransmission we call adolescence. We're all fetishists at fifteen. Continuing to be so throughout our lives breeds the kind of covetousness that begot 2008, and Occupy, in the first place.

JONATHAN T.D. NEIL

Josh Tonsfeldt

Josh Tonsfeldt
Simon Preston Gallery
24 April – 2 June

Brian O'Doherty was the first to deconstruct, in his 1976 series of *Artforum* essays, 'the placeless modern gallery', and today artists continue the effort to restore geographical and historical context to the 'white cube' by various means. Witness this show by Josh Tonsfeldt's , which combines manifestations of places from the geographically distant past with the 'present' past of Preston's gallery space and with hints of the exhibition's future venue, creating a virtual continuum derived from nothing more than a series of compelling material relationships.

A point of departure is an abandoned Iowa family home, which burned down several years ago. For the exhibition the artist retrieved objects and photographs from the house, and documented his recovery visit with video and photos; he also recreated the space and layout of the house in the gallery by erecting partitions made of plaster and fibreglass panels that he cast from the gallery's floor. Inside these partitions we encounter a water-damaged table and chair that are both sawn in half and affixed to the wall, evincing a debt to the architectural interventions of Gordon Matta-Clark that is also echoed by a square excision of the rear gallery wall that reveals an ancient window. For a previous show at this venue, Tonsfeldt unearthed a newspaper article about a doctor who had been robbed of his horse and carriage while living at the address in 1906, and the excised wall harkens back to that story. An adjacent partition maps the floor plan of the Galerie VidalCuglietta in Brussels, which is hosting an exhibition of Tonsfeldt's works this summer.

While these spatial and temporal juxtapositions are relatively forthcoming, the two-dimensional works hung along the walls are more hermetic, and more open to chance. A series of pigment ink prints on the reverse side of Fuji crystal archive paper overlay pigments and faintly discernible drawings and text, declining to reveal any image that may be on the side that faces the wall. Another group of foamcore and Hydrocal panels, faced with spraypainted spider webs and found objects, charts a path between aleatory and deliberate composition, including three nearly identical photographs Tonsfeldt found at the burned house, each showing a pig marked with the numeric code 25–1, as if one of his relatives long ago decided to make a work of conceptual art.

Walking through the exhibition, you might kick a worn volume of the *Reader's Digest Practical Problem Solver* that Tonsfeldt salvaged from the remains of the house, and this seems like a key to the show. It evokes a pre-Internet economy of information, skills and habits that feels impossibly removed from the international network of galleries and exhibitions in which the book now has meaning. Looking at it and the other remnants of the house, I couldn't help thinking of Walter Benjamin's 1925 insight that 'allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things'. Tonsfeldt's ruins are dispersed, but they reconstitute here, to varying degrees, according to the ways of meaning available to them today.

LIAM CONSIDINE

Channa Horwitz

Channa Horwitz
François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles
13 April – 8 June, 2013

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The above is 'Channa Horwitz' in binary. With enough ones and zeros we can code the world. Binary is the reduced language of computers: any picture can be pictured, any poem uttered, any song sung, if only coded just so. Notations like binary provide order to an unkempt universe: they simplify, grid-out and impose logical, rational order. Modernity doesn't truck with gods and saints, only mathematics and geometry, numbers and grids.

'The grid is an emblem of modernity by being just that: the form that is ubiquitous in the art of our century,' wrote Rosalind Krauss.

Channa Horwitz has long translated song and dance into a system of intersecting lines and blocks of colour. This dancing and moving under a set of directives makes for drawings with a spare beauty. In this show, all of those abstractions have aggressively inserted themselves into reality. Standing in the gallery, gridded by Horwitz's orange lines, with black blocks placed neatly into a few squares, you feel that aggression, the dreams of a mathematician's purity laid over the real world. Noise invariably enters; no line is perfectly straight. But the attempt at order is convincing enough. The clarity of the encompassing abstraction imbues you with a certain cleansing joy.

A grid is an attempt to flatten, to understand, to reduce labyrinthine complexity into the stretched lines of intersecting parallel bars. This reduction is violent. We might jig in front of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942–3), but its dance is that of pure, forceful progress – the straight lines of street grids laid out by planners, rather than the organic paths beaten out by horse carts and human feet. Those hard roads lead to the lusted-over speed of futurist manifestos, the obliterating juggernaut of a mechanised age.

Fly over the world, especially America, and the landscape is more gridded map than undulating topography. Crossing even the wilderness we see in our head the map we are traversing with each footstep. On our smartphone, all those binary bouquets of ones and zeros find form – just pinch to zoom. But if notation can obliterate difference, it can also invite explorations. The reduction teases out freedom. Other civilisations may have looked over the emptiness of unmapped territories and longed to fill them in, to grid them out. This one now sees grids and yearns to destroy them with lived experience, to puncture their purity with the wet slap of lived experience, the messiness of subjectivity.

Standing in Horwitz's installation and looking at yourself is a start, but it's best to see someone else to fully understand it. Look over at your friend, in his socks, standing on the lines crisscrossing the stark white floor, and with all the noise stripped away, he looks beautiful in his uneven humanness, his distinct personality made more powerful by its singularity in the stripped-down harmony of this compelling pattern.

Krauss wrote that the grid wiped it all away, but the grid really only provided parameters, lines to cross, planes to traverse, abstracted countries to discover. Though Horwitz's notation predates the current ubiquity of binary, you feel all the strange possibility of it when crossing, in stockinged feet, these coded abstractions. All that falls out of these notations reveals itself more beautiful against the simple grace of her specific order.

The artist Channa Horwitz passed away at the age of eighty shortly after this review was written.

ANDREW BERARDINI

Kaz Oshiro

Kaz Oshiro: *Still Life*
Honor Fraser, Los Angeles
13 April – 25 May

Kaz Oshiro is firstly a painter. This is easy to forget. Over the course of a decade, he has made a career of creating *trompe l'oeil* objects, seemingly exact replicas of everyday items like kitchen cabinetry, speakers, truck tailgates and, a couple of years ago, a large yellow Dumpster (stains and all), recently acquired by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Ultimately, however, these objects are just paint, Bondo, canvas and stretchers, and though Oshiro always leaves one side of them open to reveal their structure or armature, one still strangely believes in them as objects and not as paintings.

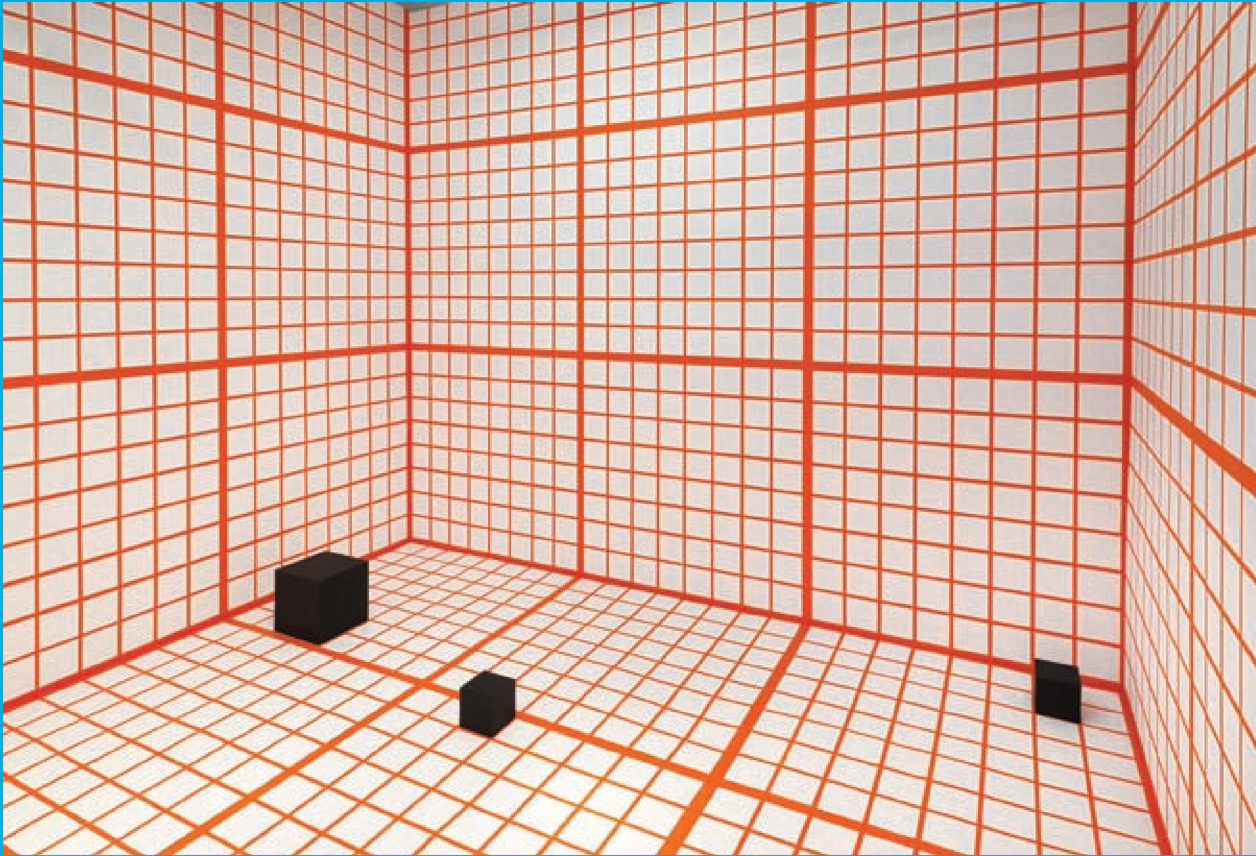
Oshiro's commitment to mimicry with a shy reveal, and the discipline with which he has pursued this practice, makes his show at Honor Fraser a breakthrough. Unlike the earlier *trompe l'oeil* works, here there is absolutely no doubt that the nine works in the exhibition, all pressing at the edges of the gallery (bumped up against the ceiling, propped on the floor or lodged in corners), are paintings, and there is no need for them to be anything else.

Oshiro's relationship to painting and illusion has changed. He now imagines whole paintings, guiltless monochromes, twisted in actual space. Oshiro does not build these works from visual phenomena as, say, Ellsworth Kelly responds to the interactions of certain colours or tries to mimic a shadow thrown by a barn door. Nor is he intent on experimenting with abstract form and materials, as, say, Imi Knoebel does in his idiosyncratic enterprises. Instead, Oshiro has made paintings that exist as complete, rather ordinary monochromes first – finished and resolved thoughts – and then they somehow come into contact with, are distorted and torqued by, and ultimate adhere to, the gallery in which they find themselves. One feels as if the paintings flew in and stuck to the walls in unusual positions, like pieces of paper in a windstorm.

Now the illusion resides not in the real object/false object two-step of Oshiro's early work, but in the theatre of the circumstance, the narrative of how Oshiro relates his paintings to the gallery. The paintings are paintings, built to be where they are, but in being placed in such a way, able to cant and play with the gallery, they paradoxically seem more imaginative, more prone to beauty and flights of fancy. There is no visual trick to the work, just painting opening a space for itself on its own terms and having fun.

The one false note in the show, the unnecessary inclusion of a traditional Oshiro object, a *trompe l'oeil* file cabinet, further draws out the artist's development. The file cabinet seems twice an anchor for the proceedings: it shows Oshiro clinging to his old work, not quite confident in fully letting go; but more importantly, the object made of painting seems the most earthbound thing in the show. What was illusion now feels leaden, and what is real – the paintings being paintings – seems liberated to dream. Nice trick indeed.

ED SCHAD



Channa Horwitz
Orange Grid, 2013. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer. Courtesy the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles

Kaz Oshiro
Untitled Still Life, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 361 x 122 x 53 cm

Charles Garabedian
Shy Girl, 2013, acrylic on paper and canvas, 122 x 74 cm. © the artist. Courtesy LA Louver

Rineke Dijkstra
(see ***Fail Better: Moving Images***)
Ruth Drawing Picasso, Tate Liverpool (film still), 2009, single-channel video, colour, sound, 6 min 36 sec. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Jan Mot, Brussels & Mexico City

Charles Garabedian

Charles Garabedian: *re:GENERATION*
LA Louver
11 April – 18 May

There is a painting in Charles Garabedian's exhibition titled *Beauty* (2013). It is one of the ugliest works in the show. And it has some stiff competition: *Blue Lipstick* (2013), for instance, portrays the cyanotic features of a person of indeterminate gender who appears to have been recently chewing on an ink cartridge. *Giotto's Tree* (2012) shows an ungainly woman with big legs and no arms (literally – no arms!) entangled in the branches of a sapling.

Beauty, however, takes the biscuit: a panoramic length of paper (actually six sheets conjoined) within which a naked pink figure is trapped as if in a sealed coffin. His/her torso is dramatically elongated, and his/her legs are folded uncomfortably under his/her belly. Much attention has been paid to the knobby forms of the knees, which command the centre of the picture. Likewise the wrinkled skin of the wrists. The person's gaze is fixed on a point offscreen, while a weak smile plays on the lips.

It is a captivating image. Since Garabedian began painting in his early thirties, the Los Angeles-based artist has ploughed a determinedly idiosyncratic furrow, never adhering to contemporary fashions (though he was included in Marcia Tucker's 1978 *'Bad' Painting* exhibition at the New Museum, New York) nor to received conceptions of balance, taste or beauty. He is now eighty-nine, and as prolific and restless as ever.

This selection of works on paper is titled, clunkily, *re:GENERATION* (the artist reportedly has a friend come up with titles on his behalf). But regenerate Garabedian does. Among those on show are pictures that clothe the artist's typically nude subjects in patterned garments and improbably coloured hair. In others, dynamic, vibrant backgrounds do their utmost to distract the viewer's attention from the ostensible subject. In *Full Frontal* (2012), for instance, a pattern of fish and ocean waves threatens to swallow the figure of the woman in front, who is herself half-hidden behind the floral design that explodes from her dress. The only face we see is inscribed on that dress, at belly height.

There is much in Garabedian's paintings that does not add up. Incomprehension, indeed, might be said to be one of the artist's muses. That, and beauty; between them they signify a prize ever tantalisingly out of reach. Two tall vertical paintings take the story of Salome as their subject. It does not matter whether you know the details of the myth (why does each image contain a hole in the ground?) nor that here Salome, that icon of erotic desire, is not much to look at. It is enough just to lose oneself in the artist's use of line, in gorgeous pools of deep and subtle colour. Beauty, in Garabedian's work, exists in the thrill of visual storytelling at its most unpredictable, and in stumbling into unexpected moments of clarity along the way.

JONATHAN GRIFFIN

Fail Better: Moving Images

Fail Better: Moving Images
Hamburger Kunsthalle
1 March – 11 August

We have heard this show's fundamental message many times. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. (The introductory wall text reheats that crumb from the Samuel Beckett cracker-barrel.) Another pseudo-palliative you may have heard, no doubt from your mother when you've flunked something or been dumped, is 'what's for you won't pass you by'. This show may well pass you by if you can't make it to Hamburg; but don't worry, because it's highly likely you have seen these canonical videoworks (many from the early 1970s) several times before.

We start, unsurprisingly, with Bas Jan Ader, the artworld's patron saint of snafus. Watch him again and again swerve his bicycle into a canal in *Fall 2, Amsterdam* (1970). This daffy dip does not feel like failure. This was deliberate self-harm, a calculated error and a successful gesture about stupidity. Ader loved a carry-on, a stramash; he was a slapstick merchant up for the splash. He was no Donald Crowhurst, the figure referenced here in Tacita Dean's film *Disappearance at Sea I* (1996). Crowhurst, who, like Ader, was swallowed up by the ocean, really *was* a failure, because he had every intention of success. True failures are intent on victory: that's why their failures are so poignant. Ader, most of the time at least, wanted to screw up. In one sense he was not dissimilar to those jerks that climb a wintry Ben Nevis wearing plimsoles and a cagoule, only to set off a frantic helicopter rescue. One wonders if Ader may have been, in Fitzgerald's words, careless with other people's lives. He certainly was with his own.

This show seems more concerned with carelessness and rampant ego than noble losers and their attempts at glory. Tracey Emin, that paragon of British triumphalism, is here with her film *Why I Never Became a Dancer* (1995). This is more a work of revenge against predatory pricks than an analysis of her failure as a bopper. Time, and Emin's historical support for the Conservative party, have lent an ugly cast to this work: it now seems to say (maybe in a Michael Caine accent) something like, 'I've pulled myself up by my bootstraps and it's arseholes like you who remain on benefits.' Fischli/Weiss's overexposed *The Way Things Go* (1986–7) has more in common with the kids' game Mouse Trap than with grand notions of defeat. The film is as pointlessly reiterated here as *The Great Escape* (1963) is on TV. (Now there was a failure!) John Baldessari's whimsical *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1972) is another gesture of uselessness, as genuinely funny as the Monty Python fish-slapping dance and just as profoundly daft. Elsewhere, Rineke Dijkstra's *Ruth Drawing Picasso, Tate Liverpool* (2009) is a cute video portrait of a wee soul in Ugg boots trying to copy Dora Maar weeping. You can't in all seriousness talk of an eleven-year-old 'failing' here – she's only doing her best! Maybe she'll be the Emin of 2025, win the Turner prize and stick the finger up at us all.

Annika Kahrs's Strings (2010) has a quartet swapping instruments, but their idea of failure mocks this viewer's limited musical abilities. There's smugness here, as with professional footballers bemoaning their double-figure golf handicap. Christoph Schlingensief's *Siegfrieds Sturz* (1999), shown in the lift, is a 14-second loop of an accidental fall. That's not reassuring in a lift. German humour, then: no laughing matter. Oddly there is no space here for Martin Kippenberger, that *echt* German klutz. This show about failure, in short, is not a success. A fake profundity is proposed, that direst of clichés and delusions – if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.

JOHN QUIN

Chris Burden

Chris Burden
Magasin 3, Stockholm
22 September – 2 June

Given that Chris Burden has not shown at Magasin 3 since 1999, one might expect a more comprehensive exhibition than this. What one instead encounters is a focus on select pieces that express the American artist's interest in personal freedom and man's desire to move freely without constraints – making the impossible possible through sheer will. Responding to a question from the audience during an artist's talk at Stockholm cinema Bio Rio, Burden made it clear that his own will was never to be an entrepreneur in the traditional sense but rather to continue on his own self-constructed trajectory for as long as he could.

Curator Tessa Praun chose to not highlight Burden's more controversial works or 'danger pieces' such as *Shoot* (1971) and *Trans-Fixed* (1974), instead offering a combination of archival and new works considering the human body in motion and its relationship to transportation, technology and engineering. In what served as both a partial retrospective and a platform for emerging architectural forays such as *Mexican Bridge* (2013), Burden's desire to reignite that which never was or never quite came to be is evident, for the cast-iron bridge (designed in the 1860s) that would have allowed the Mexican railroad to cover the span of the Metlac Gorge was never realised. As we're reminded, some Burden projects begin by noticing an unfilled space – a historical glitch – and from there he overrides a previously documented reality with his own interventions.

Wrapping around the entire space, sketches and photographs illuminate the artist's process, offering newspaper clippings and advertisements related to the automobile as American dream, and Burden's inventive response. Preliminary renderings of the artist's *B-Car* (1975) coexist alongside black-and-white photographs of the low-slung contraption on a road test in Saugus, California, and later making its way through streets of Amsterdam and Paris; the actual vehicle has also been installed. The *B-Car* emphasises an allegiance to environmentally conscious technologies; the artist's lightweight vehicle stands as hybrid of bicycle and automobile, reaching speeds of up to 100 mph at 100 mpg. Burden was a trailblazer for a DIY community of makers and activists who eagerly followed suit, but there remains the question of whether or not the public remains interested in the American dream. Other dreams are happening elsewhere, in less obvious languages, tapping into emerging mediums.

The exhibit emits nostalgia, yet it remains simultaneously forward-thinking: the collage work *Ode to Santos-Dumont, A Work in Progress* (2013), for example, hints at Burden's endeavour to build a scale model of the Brazilian aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont's airship. This work is one of Burden's more fantastical undertakings; it does not represent a structure that simply didn't make the cut when looking back on history, but rather it is one that does not function in the world as we know it. The aluminium airship is not a sound structure, like a bridge or house. It was intended to be supported by a helium-filled balloon and gas engine as it revolved around the Eiffel Tower. Burden often expresses a possibility unrealised, yet this upcoming work mimics an illogical construction which desires to exist – not just in another era but in another gravitational realm. Is the poetics of creation magnified when one creates not only for this world but for another? Does a work that thrives in multiple spheres possess heightened meaning? Perhaps we'll find out in September, when, in its final form, *Ode to Santos-Dumont* appears in Burden's solo exhibition at the New Museum in New York.

JACQUELYN DAVIS

Bon Travail

Bon Travail
Argos Centre for Art and Media, Brussels
3 March – 7 May

In his 1938 book *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga argues that play is the primary formative element in culture. Associating mankind with autonomy, Huizinga seeks to establish play not only as an aspect of culture but as a defining component of it. Marx's theory of alienated labour, meanwhile, presents the working man as deprived of the right to conceive of himself as the director of his actions, being instead defined by the system/culture he resides in. According to Marx, work replaces life as the worker provides labour to substantiate his living. Such thoughts feel pertinent to *Bon Travail*, which tackles the paradigm of working to sustain a life and, at the same time, living for work.

Against this, the art on show aims to discuss the possibility of something assuming the status of nonwork. In other words, it positions the act of producing a nonwork as a political, performative involvement within society. Basing itself on a paradox, the exhibition already announces via its title – which translates approximately as 'good work' – that something has been done and bears an adherent value, while that 'thing' (artwork) itself displays futile effort: there's a discrepancy between action and consequence. For instance, Mladen Stilinović's photography series *Artist at Work* (1978), which shows its maker lying in his bed, assuming different positions, speculates about the thin line between contemplation and procrastination, between productive labour and an artist's ineffectual endeavour. Jean-Luc Moulène's photograph *Chef de Rayon Paris, 11 Avril 1998* (2005), of a man seen from behind, fixing a shelf in a strangely empty, possibly new megamarket, hints at various modes of generating work, wherein something that might seem nonsensical to do at leisure times attains meaning. Boris Chouvellon's intervention of hanging a pallet truck from the ceiling of the exhibition space, *Untitled* (2009), not only provides an aesthetically pleasing composition but also marks the Deleuzian distinction between an object and a tool – where an object only becomes a tool when it is used to perform a function. Video pieces by Roberto Verde & Geraldine Py follow a similar thread line: in *Caprice Boulevard Isidore Dagnan* (2009), the artists commission a crane driver for a spinning-the-crane-on-the-building-site performance, allowing the driver to abandon his (and the crane's) function for a short period of time.

Moreover, *Bon Travail* complicates the position of the artwork at group exhibitions, plainly suggesting that every exhibition is a process in which works of art are recontextualised. In other words the artwork, though physically unchanged, may articulate itself variously through diverse conceptual frameworks. *Bon Travail* effects this by presenting some of the works from the exhibition that preceded it, *Brouillon*, in a completely different context. The former show – curated, like this one, in collaboration with French dancer and choreographer Boris Charmatz and Musée de la Danse, Rennes – was devoted to activating the spaces of encounter and experience of the artwork while treating them as resonant sites for performative interventions. In a way, the seemingly low-effort act of borrowing from the former show suffices to shift the artworks to a nonwork context, which strengthens the conceptual build-up. It must be said, though, that some works dialogue over-literally with the concepts of labour and leisure, and set up tangents that weaken *Bon Travail*'s conceptual weave and paradoxical proliferation.

FATOS USTEK

Chris Burden
B-Car, 1976, road test, Saugus, California, 30 June 1976

Mladen Stilinović
(see ***Bon Travail***)
Artist at Work (detail), 1978, eight b/w photographs, 13 x 18 cm each (unframed). Collection of the artist

Magnús Logi Kristinsson
(see ***Sequences VI***)
Sculpture, 2008/2013, performance, pedestal, acrylic wall paint. Photo: Oliver Basciano

Sequences VI: Real Time Art Festival

Ian Kiaer
A.R. Petit Théâtre, 2013 (installation view), paper, Plexiglas, cellular concrete, acrylic on taffetas, carboard, wood, metal. Photo: Aurélien Mole. Courtesy Alison Jacques Gallery, London, and Marcelle Alix, Paris

Sequences VI: Real Time Art Festival
Various venues, Reykjavik
5–14 April

In Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* (1953) there's a short, desperate line uttered by its anonymous protagonist: 'I can't go on, I'll go on.' That brief pause before the dichotomous resolution emphasises the sentence's central concern: the unstoppable nature of time. Temporality, time passing, and – by logical extension – the irrevocable end of a life lived are the themes underlying Markús Þór Andrésson's curation of the ten-day 'real time art festival', Sequences (est. 2006). But if this all sounds a bit heavy, you'll be relieved to know that Andrésson's chosen artists address the themes with a distinctly Northern European sense of absurdity and gritty humour.

Gretar Reynisson's retrospective *Decade* – the largest show of the event – sets the tone. In it, Reynisson portrays everyday life as a repetitious endurance test through various collections of objects used during a set period. For example *365 Glasses, One a Day* (2003) is a table displaying all the glasses the artist drank out of in that time, each annotated in marker pen on the rim with the date it was used. *52 Shirts, One a Week* demonstrates a similar level of attentive hoarding. In a separate room there's a vitrine with ten piles of photographs, each documenting various mundane facets of everyday life – titles include

Lights (2006), *Hallways-In* (2004) and *Windows Out* (2003) – collected and collated to become oddly beautiful and sad in equal measure.

There's no beauty, but perhaps some sort of grim poetry, to Curver Thoroddsen's similarly retentive documentation project, *The Fine and Delicate Art of Archival Processing* (2011). In a pitch-black, low-ceilinged cellar across town, the artist subjects his audience to an audio recording of all his defecations over a month. It's gross listening – a horrible project, really – yet simultaneously, like Reynisson's work, it gives a comforting familiarity to the messiness of life. We eat; we shit; time passes.

Emily Wardill's 76-minute film, *Game Keepers Without Game* (2009), which tells the story of a girl in social care whose mental health issues and aggression reach a devastating crescendo, offers a converse depiction of drama and tragedy. What would be a run-of-the-mill (though nonetheless exhausting) kitchen-sink drama is nicely skewed, however, by the action playing out before an antirealist white studio backdrop. This has the effect of abstracting and universalising the characters' experiences, making them feel brutally resonant. Trauma is also the central facet of *Yes, Angel* (2011), Aleesa Cohene's evocative cinematic collage of movie clips, which reduce various characters to telling body language and facial tics. Appropriating these images, the artist uses narration to superimpose a new narrative upon them, addressing the AIDS crisis and a sense of queer collective identity, its disintegration and (perhaps) mutating reemergence. It's sharply perceptive stuff.

One of the highlights of the festival proved to be the work of Magnús Logi Kristinsson, whose performances are all about endurance. Of the two I was in town to catch (there were another three), one saw Kristinsson stuck in a box; the artist's suited-and-booted leg stuck out from one appropriately sized hole in the front of his white-painted wooden container, an arm from another. For the other performance, the artist caked his arm in white paint and rested it on a pedestal in a gallery of the Einar Jónsson Museum. The work had the tragicomic quality of clowning, objectifying the artist's body and drawing attention to its physical limits. Encapsulating Andrésson's largely successful curatorial meditation on the prologue to what Erasmus termed the 'terminus that yields to no one', Kristinsson's work reminds us of the body's role as arbiter of our time spent living.

OLIVER BASCIANO

Ian Kiaer

Ian Kiaer
Centre International d'Art et du Paysage, Île de Vassivière
14 April – 23 June

There are those moments when, half-asleep, you can't tell whether a sound you heard came from your dream or the real world. There is a mutual interjection, the sound inserting itself into the dream, the dream diffusing into the waking world, as you muddle awake uncertainly, trying to tell what's what. A similar sense of sifting hesitantly through things balanced precariously on the edge of existence characterises Ian Kiaer's work. His sparse, humming arrangements of flimsy, worn materials might position him simply as a poetic postreadymade formalist. Huddled around the work like shadows, though, is a host of explicit references and allusions to a set of artists, architects, writers and aspirationalists that I'd prefer not to recount here. Kiaer's work is, for me, at its best in that loose, associative oneiric state, where his inspirations hover over barely constructed objects that can't possibly bear their weight, half-gestures and incomplete ideas that haven't yet been abruptly awoken.

On the island in Lake Vassivière, a manmade lake in the middle of the sparsely populated logging region of Limousin, it's hard to ignore the Centre d'Art. A postmodern building jutting imposingly out from a hill, its focus point is a conical lighthouse, with the adjacent main building conceived of as its 'aqueduct', designed by Xavier Fabre and Italian urban theorist and 'analogical' architect Aldo Rossi, and completed in 1991. Kiaer has, as much as is characteristically possible for his work, dealt with the building directly. The exhibition is a series of five sculptural tableaux, each assemblage simply named after the room it occupies. *A.R. Atelier* (*A.R. Studio*, all works 2013) is the bluntest, scattering the floor with disassembled model versions of the centre itself, some stained with old bird shit. Three slide projectors flick through photos of the building under construction, rough preparatory drawings, shots of the island landscape, one of them refracting onto the model ruins. A plastic sheet covered in frayed silver leaf crumples on the floor like a distant to-scale mountain.

In his spatial propositions, Kiaer is adept at quietly shifting between direct and indirect metaphors for material (silver leaf or plastic sheeting as water, cardboard or more plastic sheeting as brick, adhesive tape or, again, plastic as glass) and scale. (Are we to take on the height of the sole tiny figure on the floor in *A.R. Salle des Etudes* (*A.R. Study Room*), meant to occupy the odd little half-built maybe-buildings strewn about the place? Or are we giants standing outside looking down? Being just the way we are, right where we're standing, suddenly seems awkward: a suspended option.) Here, alongside his usual sly understatement, Kiaer deals with such an overbearing housing for his work through a particular sense of presence. In *A.R. Phare* (*A.R. Lighthouse*), a projector dangling from the ceiling sways slowly back and forth as it shines a black-and-white image on the concrete aggregate of the structure's inner cavern. A black sphere with an adjacent flat box bobs erratically on a water surface, a live CCTV transmission from a model sitting in an inlet from the lake just below at the base of the hill. Just next to a small square window, facing out to the lake from the back of *A.R. Petit Théâtre* (*A.R. Little Theatre*), is a smudged painting attempting to replicate the view. These displacements unsettle the consonance of place asserted in the titles of the work; they're all self-underminingly elsewhere. Kiaer's unsteady, paradoxical indexing of spaces is fragile, and while the precision of, say, an archival photograph can puncture the fugue, they suggest the amniotic state in which most dreams and aspirations remain.

CHRIS FITE-WASSILAK

Franz West: *Where Is My Eight?*
MUMOK, Vienna
23 February – 26 May

Between the conception of this exhibition and its realisation, Franz West died. It's something of which any visitor cannot fail to be acutely conscious. Not simply because a notion of 'the final bow' is inherent to MUMOK's marketing drive, but also because of the way in which, to anyone who has experienced Vienna's art scene over the past decade or so, West sat at its heart – collaborating with local and international artists (works made with, or incorporating works by, Martin Kippenberger, Jason Rhoades and Heimo Zobernig, for example, are included in this show), supporting younger artists and being just as interactive as a personality as is his famously participatory art.

The exhibition title derives from a gouache, *Lost Weight* (2004), featuring a newly slim woman showing off her now dramatically oversize trousers. Transformation is key to West's output; even if precise meaning (of the exhibition title in particular, although it's tempting to think of it in terms of the drink measure *ein achtel*, or eighth) can be obscure. That said, the 'W' lost in the translation between title of work and title of exhibition does foreground the artist's absence. It's a sensation only enhanced on the first floor (there are three) of the show, where prior to encountering several of West's famous *Adaptives*, sculptures first developed during the late 1970s that were designed to be handled and adapted to the body (or vice versa), is a wall text warning that 'for reasons of conservation it is not possible to use all of the works originally intended by Franz West for physical interaction. Please consult the wall labels.'

In such cases, where a wall text lists West's instructions for interaction before the museum text countermands it, the interaction that remains is more about the relation between artwork and institution than artwork and viewer, and seems almost the opposite of West's conception that such works should generate 'a moment of not knowing what to do next'. At times the experience here is akin to walking past some ancient tool in an archaeological museum. Although perhaps this is the fate of all art objects. And the artist himself was not unaware of such relationships or transformations: see, for example, *Genealogy of the Untouchable* (1997), a vitrine featuring three early adaptives and one of the first of many West-designed chairs.

While the top floor contains some of West's more recent, more conventional sculptures (eg, *Untitled*, 2012, a typically turdlike snake of yellow-painted aluminium), it's on the second floor that the show comes to life. First up is a reading room, with a dimly lit ambience that's part drinking club, part rundown library. From a collection of sofas (which you can sit on, unlike most of the sofas on the floor below), you can watch videos of interviews and performances, read magazines and catalogues – from back in the day to last year – featuring West's work. The artist is present, so to speak. And it's followed by *Studiolo* (2005), a collaboration with the aforementioned Zobernig and Zlatan Vukosavljevic, which comprises a curtained stage featuring a chair and a table on which is an inflating rubber glove and a control switch for the 'studio's' coloured lighting effects. Clambering onto the stage – particularly when other people are around – you feel a moment of self-consciousness, ridiculousness, childish glee and the sensation, too, that you are really and emphatically present. Now, where's my eighth?

MARK RAPPOLT

Kostis Velonis: *Gra(m)mary of Puppetry*
Monitor, Rome
28 March – 4 May

Kostis Velonis's *Gra(m)mary of Puppetry* represents a philosophical enquiry on the Greek artist's part: one that broaches classical influences and the contemporary political situation both in his home country and the wider world. The title of the show is a play on words, exploiting the similarity between 'grammary' (archaic English for 'grammar'); 'gramary', meaning 'magic', or 'the occult'; and 'gram', a Greek prefix meaning 'write', or 'written'. A study of puppetry, then, as the title suggests, but one that takes into account the controlling auspices of rationality (grammar as a form of puppetmastery) and the life-giving properties of 'magic' (puppetry as a means of breathing life), Velonis's exhibition thus reflects pointedly on some current philosophical themes. These principally revolve around the viability of a distinct human 'subjectivity' that might mark out the individual from both the economic machine and the wider objective reality of which it is part.

The 22 works here – collages, inkjet prints and sculptures incorporating wood, clay, granite and marble – all reference in some way the contradictory essence of being. Namely, that life is both magical and a mechanical construct, with all rationalist attempts to reduce being to mere 'matter' going some way to explaining 'how' but failing to resolve the 'why'. While some of the prints appear to be early astrological diagrams and studies – tentative yet accomplished renditions of a vast and unknowable universe, *Neptune* (all works 2013) and *Moon Miranda* being memorable examples – a notable exception, *Entre Nous* (*Between Us*), features two theatrical masks placed on a stone chair. With the masks hung to meet the average eye level, the effect is such that while it is the masks that lack human bodies and heads to give them life, it is as if they look into the viewer. (The work is influenced by French artist Claude Cahun, who worked with theatre and issues of gender, sexuality and role reversal.)

At hand is a notion of duality – of the object that lives and of the living being that is an object – which recurs throughout. *Touching Hades* is a modestly scaled floor-level sculptural work, featuring a small piece of wood that bridges a gap between two pieces of granite placed on a plinth. This 'bridge' also represents the wooden handle via which a string puppet is operated. The title refers to the underworld (Hades being, in Greek myth, the god of the underworld), signifying that puppetry is both a form of liberation and of control. Another sculpture, *Grotto* (*Every Thought Flies*) – is inspired by the Bomarzo Monster Park in northern Lazio, commissioned by Pier Francesco Orsini, a warlord and patron of the arts, in memory of his wife. Built in the mannerist period, the park features oversize animals and mythical creatures, including a large ogre's head (large enough that it can be walked into) bearing the inscription 'every thought flies'. Its title suggests both the fleeting nature of life and the difficulty that thought has in grasping reality.

In all, the show adequately describes an eternal problem that has particular relevance today as science reveals the purely chemical nature of cognition. Specifically, should we privilege human thought or objective reality? In light of current concerns in philosophical thought – the object-oriented philosophy of Graham Harman, the speculative materialism of Ray Brassier, Quentin Meillassoux, et al. – this is timely; and a bold admission that perhaps we have never had the answers to the bigger questions.

MIKE WATSON

Franz West
Studiolo, 2005 (installation view), with Zlatan Vukosavljevic, Heimo Zobernig, mixed media, dimensions variable. © Franz West Privatstiftung

Kostis Velonis
Touching Hades, 2013 (installation view), 62 x 8 x 5 cm, granite, wood, acrylic, glue. Photo: Massimo Valicchi. Courtesy the artist and Monitor, Rome

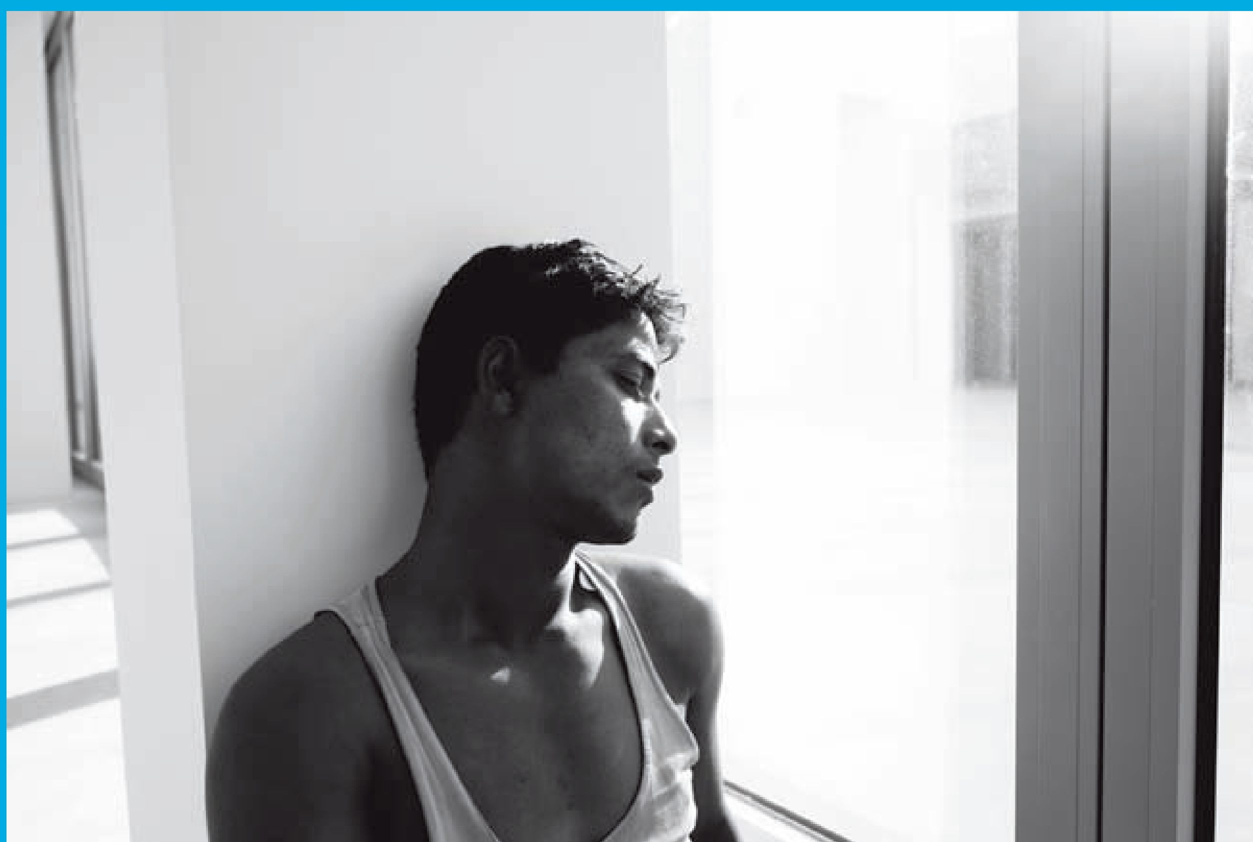
Thomas Zipp
(see ***I knOw yoU***)
Polymorphous Oratory, 2012 (installation view), mixed media, dimensions variable. Photo: Denis Mortell. Courtesy the artist and Alison Jacques Gallery, London, and Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin

I knOw yoU

I knOw yoU
IMMA, Dublin
19 April – 1 September

It is one key to this survey of young and youngish artists connected with Frankfurt's Städelschule academy that, despite the school's cultish reknown in art circles, for most people in Ireland (and in a couple of other PIGS-ish destinations), when one talks about things 'coming out of Frankfurt', contemporary art practice won't be the first thing that comes to mind. Tobias Rehberger (the Städelschule's sculpture professor) and Nikolaus Hirsch (its director), who curated

Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Chai Siri
(see **Sharjah Biennial 11**)
Dilbar, 2013, courtesy Kick the Machine Films, Chiang Mai



this show with IMMA's Rachel Thomas, do not need to be told that Frankfurt, home of the European Central Bank, is associated with a kind of financial strong-arming that has few friends outside Ireland's political class and those embedded, in the military sense, with the occupying forces.

Still, the curators remain gutsy and, perhaps even winningly, unfazed by such challenges, courting further offence by raising the letters I, O and U into upper case in the show's title. But who owes what, and to whom? Or can (and even should) a thematic programme that looks at 'circulation' and 'cultural capital' be welcomed as something other than the cultural brigade of the same army? The curators can assert that their strategy here – to invite artists associated with the Frankfurt art academy, past and present, to take part; and for them in turn to invite one friend – will lead to an open and inclusive structure: one that will somehow counterpoint what is happening at a political level, evoke an alternative type of circulation that austerity has not quenched.

That, of course, remains the occult aspect of what has come to Ireland in *I KnOw yoU*. The work itself, by some 50 artists, has an eye – or in the case of Thomas Zipp's contribution, an ear – fixed elsewhere. Zipp's *Polymorphous Oratory* (2012) features a pair of skyscraping, steampunk telescopes, each with earpieces attached via cables to the thin ends, all the better to attend to the silence of God, an activity aided by a side chapel-like installation of electric votive candles. A comparable slapstick mishearing, of sorts, lies behind *Letters from Mexico* (2011), a cross-cultural Mexican whisper from Simon Fujiwara: a set of framed letters that he dictated in English to non-Anglophone street scribes in Mexico, who gamely typed up phonetic approximations of the artist's words. Another bizarre and presumably unwitting collaborator shows up in Danh Võ's *Looty*, 1865 (2013), an appropriated print of a nineteenth-century portrait of some canine colonial spoils, a Pekinese puppy, the credit for which work is officially shared between the artist and Queen Victoria.

The show climaxes – or possibly comes to a halt – with Holger Wüst's *Zekher* (*Teil Eins, Das gemeinsame Werk der Warenwelt*) (*Zekher, Part One, The Joint Work of the World of Goods*) (2012), a remarkable photocollage-cum-video that marries Jeff Wall-like storytelling with one of those VR shots used to convince us of the conviviality of a hotel bedroom. Here time is rolled up into an image projected at extra-large scale, but still far smaller than its 'real' size inside the computer, which is about 30 feet high. Every inch of the image is, like nature itself, full of rewarding detail if only you'll zoom in. In this case, Wüst has done the zooming for us, creating a moving tour of the image, scanning over its surface, homing in on some scattered pages until we can see the Marx, as it were, edging around the frame, and we finally find ourselves caught in an immense, nightmarish weather system. The image's exploration/journey takes nearly two hours to complete, at which point we will have seen a globe lapped up and regurgitated by the winds of capital, as destructive as they are apparently impossible to confine.

LUKE CLANCY

Sharjah Biennial 11

Re:emerge: Towards a New Cultural Cartography
Sharjah Biennial 11
13 March – 13 May

Visiting the Arab world in spring could easily bring to mind the explosive news images from the region in recent years. But a visitor who comes to Sharjah with romantic expectations of a politicised biennial is likely, this time, to feel disappointed, even accusatory. What curator Yuko Hasegawa provides instead is a statement starting from a study of history, framed by cartography, exquisitely produced and with a lot of architecture-related instalments – a biennial that is full of rhythm and spatial flow. Taking a lesson from its controversial predecessor, this year's Sharjah Biennial is a gentle one. The works situated in public space are mostly installations or structures for play and relaxation. Lots of the works are emphatically beautiful, for all that the quality is so rare in contemporary art.

Almost half of the works on show were commissioned by the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF), and many of them relate to Hasegawa's central theme of the courtyard, and to local architecture. In Ole Scheeren's design for the Mirage City Cinema project, for example, solid structures simulate the rooftops of traditional local residential buildings. When audiences are invited to sit or lie down on the carpet to see the film, they are experiencing what locals would have felt many years ago, when the custom was to sleep on rooftops on summer nights. But the works that speak in a subtle voice, send messages that are obscure or play in the zone between visibility and invisibility come closest to the aesthetic values of Eastern architecture. Thus, the biggest attractions are found in the heritage area, where SAF's buildings are located. The five newly completed spaces are connected with courtyards and pathways, allowing Hasegawa to physicalise her curatorial idea geographically. From outside to inside, from downstairs to upstairs to rooftop, and from one side of the floor-to-ceiling windows to the other, every artist has his or her own discrete space to work in. Yet works by Francis Alÿs, Wael Shawky, Ryuichi Sakamoto and others seem to flow together, as viewers process them like a series of scenes written in verse. This area as a whole feels like a piece of art in itself. Elsewhere, the biennial notably manages to avoid spectacle. The largest-scale work, a landscape installation by Superflex, is an oasis of sorts where local people can play or rest on benches.

Some attendees have complained that they can't see a critical attitude towards social realities in Hasegawa's show. Indeed, her curating says nothing about politics. But the same is not necessarily true of her participating artists. Art audiences, it would seem, have seen so many monumental installations, radical oppositional performances and commercial-slogan-like catchphrases that they find it hard to spend time actually looking at and engaging with the artworks. Here, several major projects reveal artistic concerns with local social conditions: Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Chai Siri's *Dilba* (2013), for example, explores the body, sleepiness and dreams of Dilba, a Bengalese working on the biennial construction site, and shows a mysterious link between his life, the white cube viewing space and the water source underneath the desert. *Shimabuku's Boat Trip* (2013), meanwhile, is a performance by the eponymous Japanese artist that invites the art audience to meet immigrant workers from South Asia by taking a local ferry boat, and to physically taste a local 'sensation' by sprinkling pepper or salt on vanilla ice cream. In CAMP's *From Gulf to Gulf to Gulf* (2009–13), sailors in Sharjah and Dubai are invited to use cellphones to record their trips from India, South Iran and Pakistan. Since the screening venue is in an open space beside Sharjah Creek, where ships from South Asia are anchored, plenty of members of the audience are exactly the sailors from the ships.

AIMEE LIN

The Insides Are on the Outside

The Insides Are on the Outside
Casa de Vidro, São Paulo
4 April – 26 May

Setting a major art exhibition inside modernist architect Lina Bo Bardi's former residence Casa de Vidro, or Glass House, always risked the house's lush surroundings overwhelming the art – not least due to the form of its wild gardens, a sensual jolt of jungle. Curator Hans Ulrich Obrist's trick, with this group exhibition, is to enlist the house, gardens and contents, and inviting more than 30 Brazilian and international artists to work on a series of site-specific pieces: to 'immerse themselves in Lina Bo Bardi's world in order to establish intimate relationships with this singularly important figure'.

This exhibition, part of which also takes place at the magnificent SESC Pompéia culture and leisure centre Bo Bardi created between 1977 and 1982, is the latest in a series of 'house-museum' projects curated and conceived by Obrist, the most recent of which took place at the home of the poet Federico García Lorca, in Granada, in 2007–8.

In Cinthia Marcelle's *Audição* (2012), performed during the 'prelude' at the Casa de Vidro in September 2012, 11 musicians simultaneously played different works, self-selected from the Bardis' record collection, resulting in an evocative, dreamlike orchestral composition. A recording of the performance now plays on the record player in the living room. All around it, newly commissioned artworks mix with pieces from the Bardis' collection: a marble statue of *Diana* from the fifth to first century BC alongside a Sarah Morris painting, *Lina Bo Bardi* (2013), describing the curves of Bo Bardi's nearby 1951 *Bowl* chair.

A reworked vintage portrait of Bo Bardi, installed on the glass facing into the house by the contemporary artist Renata Lucas and a pair of 1948 cartoon portraits of Bo Bardi and her husband, Pietro, by Alexander Calder, are the most literal representations of the house's charismatic former inhabitants. And while pieces by some of the most interesting young talents in Brazilian art approach the house from oblique angles – eg, Jonathan de Andrade's hundreds of glass plaques, bearing images of an abandoned, flooded modernist yacht club, snaking around the floor and Paulo Nazareth's rough concrete watermelons and bananas – Rivane Neuenschwander's intervention nails it with all the grace and harmony of simplicity.

Taking Bo Bardi's love of Brazilian vernacular art as her inspiration, and with a nod to the elegant furniture she created for the Casa de Vidro, Neuenschwander presents a set of found, handmade stools – one from a street seller in Bahia, north Brazil, where Lina spent some of the most fulfilling years of her professional life; one found in a carpark; another fished from a skip. Reconditioning them without compromising their spontaneity, Neuenschwander places them inside the house, infiltrators from the world of folk design. An elegant red number can be found in the master bathroom, and another, in the radiant magenta of purpleheart wood (*roxinho*), sits at Bo Bardi's work desk as if it had always been there.

Olafur Eliasson's work also strikes a harmonious tone: *Fading Self Wall* (2013) sees a large looking glass set on one of the plinths Bo Bardi created to display artworks inside the MASP museum – an unparalleled glass-and-crimson structure, and her most famous architectural work. The mirrored portion of Eliasson's sheet of glass multiplies its immediate surroundings and the tangled green aura beyond the windows; then, as the mirroring gives way to an expanse of transparent glass, it reveals the entrance hall behind, seen across an internal courtyard in a confusion of reflection and refraction. The work's many, complex lines of sight are in contrast with the more formal reflective interplay of an installation by Waltercio Caldas, in which mirrored bedroom walls reflect each other endlessly, their printed words, 'camouflage', 'cylinder' and 'boomerang', ricocheting back and forth to infinity across an ugly blue carpet.

Cildo Meireles's intervention, *Pietro Bo*, is a bitter smell of roasting coffee that pervades the house and the garden studio, overlaid with a strident imitation of Pietro's voice saying in Italian, "Lina, go and make some coffee!" As I lingered there one stormy afternoon in April, rain spattering the glass house, the voice soon became irritating – presumably Meireles's intention. The phrase's origins have been trotted out over and over in the material produced for and about the exhibition, as if it were some sort of explanation: that when talk veered towards a political disagreement at the Bardi house, Pietro would bark it out as if to end the discussion. The response of Bo Bardi, a profoundly erudite, opinionated woman, and a former member of the Italian Communist party, is recorded nowhere – except, perhaps, in the hearts of invigilators, who have to listen to the recording all day long, dreaming that Bo Bardi might materialise to put a stop to it once and for all.

CLAIRE RIGBY

Sarah Morris
(see ***The Insides Are on the Outside***)
Lina Bo Bardi, 2013

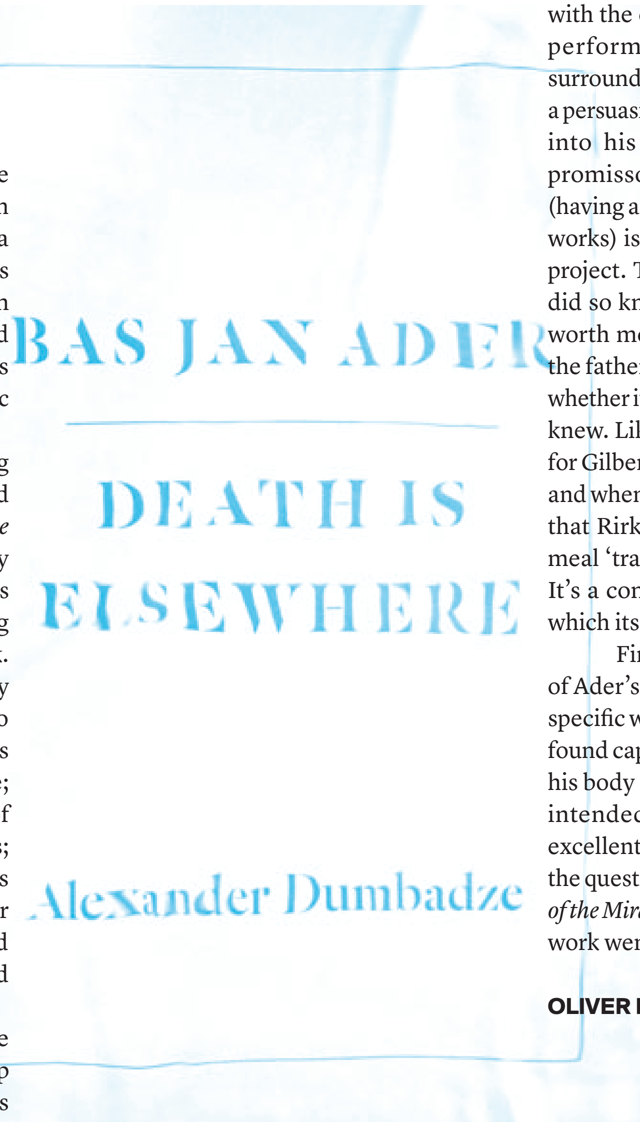
Rivane Neuenschwander
(see ***The Insides Are on the Outside***)
found stool, 2013

Books

BIOGRAPHY

Bas Jan Ader: Death Is Elsewhere

By Alexander Dumbadze
University of Chicago Press, $27.50 (hardcover)



How much should an artist's life affect how we look at their work? In *Death Is Elsewhere*, which is more akin to a literary biography than a monograph, Alexander Dumbadze dedicates as many words to relaying the details of Bas Jan Ader's life and death as he does to describing and contextualising the artist's work. The result is one of the most enjoyable and affecting academic studies you might hope to read.

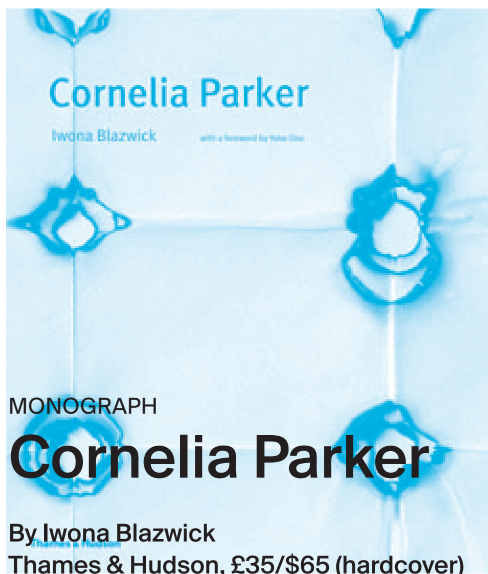
Ader was lost at sea in 1975 while sailing the Atlantic as part of a planned multifaceted work-in-three-parts entitled *In Search of the Miraculous* (1972–). The tragedy, like any premature death, has tended to shroud the artist's name in myth, unhelpfully generating retrospective symbolism within his earlier work. Dumbadze, an associate professor of art history at George Washington University, endeavours to rebalance the widespread knowledge of Ader's death with a detailed picture of the artist's life; his Calvinist upbringing in Holland; the death of his father, a minister, at the hands of the Nazis; his early long-haul sailing trips; his love of Los Angeles, where he studied and settled after graduation; the absurdist slapstick jokes he used to play; his simultaneous ambition and ambivalence vis-à-vis the careerist game.

But Dumbadze also engages in a more general investigation into the relationship between an artist and his practice, using Ader as the quintessential case study. And it's here that the book gets exciting. Ader appears in many of his own early videos; in *Fall 1, Los Angeles* (1970) he's seen on a chair, the legs of which straddle the apex of the roof of his suburban home. The slowed-down 16mm film shows the artist leaning slightly to his right, propelling himself forward; the chair scoots from beneath him and he begins his tumbling descent to the garden below. Just as iconic is the same year's *Fall 2, Amsterdam*, where Ader deliberately veers his bike into a canal. Yet as the artist wrote in 1971, 'I do not make body sculpture, body art or body works.' Where, then, does the art fall in the falling works? Is the film the work? Or is the act? Ader's statement seems to suggest that it's certainly not the latter. Dumbadze's proposal, too, is that the work lay within the artist himself. Ader can represent the act of falling, but never recreate it fully – the air, the fear, the thud to the ground, the cold canal – for his audience.

Three years prior to his death, Ader started to play the futures market. He only told a couple of friends about it, in passing, claiming it to be a work. If so, it was a totally undocumented one, save for a single mention in a letter from 1972 to the founders of the Amsterdam gallery Art & Project. The interiority of art – the idea that an art object is defined by the artist and not the presence of an audience – is difficult to square with the experiential nature of much of today's performative practice and the critique surrounding it. Yet Dumbadze goes on to make a persuasive case, bringing a wide variety of artists into his discussion. Duchamp's issuing of promissory notes to fund his roulette habit (having all but abandoned making 'conventional' works) is given as a precursor to Ader's futures project. The people who lent Duchamp money did so knowing that a signed slip of paper was worth more than the amount they were giving the father of Conceptualism to gamble with. Yet whether it was an art project or not, only Duchamp knew. Likewise, the author notes that it's solely for Gilbert & George to decide 'when they are art and when they are just ordinary individuals', and that Rirkrit Tiravanija's cooking and serving a meal 'transforms the ordinary into the artistic'. It's a convincing if brainteasing take on art in which its creator is present.

Finally the reader is left with the question of Ader's death. It came about in the pursuit of a specific work, yet the artist's loss at sea – his boat found capsized south of Ireland on 18 April 1976, his body never recovered – was not the project's intended outcome. To follow Dumbadze's excellently researched argument, the answer to the question of whether we should treat *In Search of the Miraculous* as being a finished or unfinished work went, sadly, to Ader's watery grave.

OLIVER BASCIANO



MONOGRAPH

Cornelia Parker

By Iwona Blazwick
Thames & Hudson, £35/$65 (hardcover)

Beginning with a drawing of a bird made on her foundation course in 1974, this chronological survey of Cornelia Parker's poetic, transformative and often explosive sculptural and installation-based practice focuses on the artist's own descriptions of her work. Thus, for Parker's defining installation of the suspended fragments of a blown-up shed, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991), we're given both a personal and a political context behind the piece: the effect on the artist of living in London during a period of IRA bomb threats; her initially ambivalent attitude towards the army – whom she subsequently worked with to blow up the shed – and how she felt about the event itself. The overall result is an accessible mix of autobiography, insight and analysis that functions like a slideshow talk by Parker through nearly 40 years of work, which also includes her collaboration with a sleeping Tilda Swinton for *The Maybe*, 1995; creating sculptural 'negatives' such as *The Negative of Words* (1996), a pile of residue accumulated from hand-engraved silver inscriptions; and in *Political Abstract (Red and Green)* (2010), displaying green fluff collected from the House of Commons alongside red fluff from the House of Lords.

Critical and historical context is provided in the form of five thoughtful, themed essays, interspersed throughout the book, by Whitechapel Gallery director Iwona Blazwick on the subjects of 'The Found Object', 'Performance', 'Abstraction', 'Knowledge' and 'Power Structures', which, alongside an introduction by curator Bruce Ferguson and an endorsement by Yoko Ono, add up to an artist's monograph that's as intimate as it is expansive.

HELEN SUMPTER

FICTION

The Flamethrowers

By Rachel Kushner
Harvill Secker, £16.99/$26.99 (hardcover)

The Flamethrowers, which unites scenes from a somnolent, insular artworld with episodes of bomb-flinging struggle against inequality, is only nominally concerned with mid-1970s America and Italy. It's clear that Rachel Kushner, the Los Angeles-based writer and critic whose outstanding second novel this is, is also talking (or, really, asking) about today: what's at stake and what might be possible in art, life and their mythic overlap.

The book's heroine, known as 'Reno' for her Nevada hometown – the first of many bruising depersonalisations of women here – is an early-twenties fine art graduate and ingénue who, at the outset, like a modern-day Futurist, is motorcycling fast across America and calling it drawing in space. In New York she hooks up, after a couple of false starts, with Sandro, a forty-something, Donald Judd-like Italian Minimalist and scion of the Valera family, which manufactures the very motorbikes Reno rides. In periodic flashbacks, Kushner establishes how Valera Sr. set up his industrial empire – himself inspired by contact with the Futurists in Milan, and with the Italian fascists – and the brutality towards workers that underwrote it and continues to. Whether Kushner is summarising the hazard-strewn life of a Brazilian rubber-tapper for the tyre industry, the grim conditions in the Italian factories or the gilded ennui of the Valera family, the message comes over loud and clear. In picaresque reports from NYC, meanwhile (openings, bitchy dinners, boozy nights in downtown bars, casual sexism, attempts to have sex on Gordon Matta-Clark's hacked-up pier), we see a mostly politically disengaged artworld that has literally emerged out of industrial Modernism – the minimalist style in general and Sandro in particular, his career choice seemingly enabled by something like blood money.

Scenes of an increasingly radicalised Italy – galvanised by the Red Brigades and, given that this is 1976–7, the newly jabbing theorists of Autonomia – tighten the screws, the Valera factory becoming a flashpoint for violent protests. Reno, who through various chancy episodes becomes connected to the Valera motor-racing team, finds herself in Italy with Sandro and his family, sequestered in a Lake Como villa under threat of reprisals from the working classes (which do come later with tragic consequences), and gets caught up in a violent demonstration – which she wants to film, still seeking to somehow find a role for art in all this. Sandro ends up lost and, finally, stays in Italy; Reno ends up first with an on-the-run Italian revolutionist and finally alone, making some kind of decision not to be at his beck-and-call. Points like this are where the personal becomes political in *The Flamethrowers*, on one level a strongly feminist novel, as male–female relations feel paradigmatic for a panorama of inequity. Yet Kushner doesn't pretend to have the answers, just open eyes and some pertinent questions, and her book doesn't end with any kind of pat bromide concerning the revolutionary function of art. Is Reno still an artist at the end of it? Is Sandro? What's apparent is that both still need to get somewhere, work something through – both have had a wakeup call, an abstract clarification, one that seemingly signals the author's unease at art's remove from politics yet inseparability from dirty realities, *and* her reservations about its agency.

We're carried to those questions, anyway, because Kushner is one heck of a writer, a prose stylist of diamond-hard dazzle. The research-driven, poetically framed detail work that powers *The Flamethrowers* is electrifying, whether sensuously describing the flammability of nitrate film, motorbike speed trials in the desert or the violent campaigns of fictional 1960s revolutionists The Motherfuckers, with their excellently named leader, Fah-Q; or creating fluent hybrids of real and imaginary artists. (In a dreamily off-kilter interweave, *roman-à-clef* versions of William Eggleston, Douglas Huebler and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti sit alongside explicit references to historical artists like Robert Smithson and fill-in-the-blanks references to others, such as Chantal Akerman.) Kushner also manages, improbably, to create churning propulsion at the same time that one routinely has no idea where the book is going; and, in Reno, she builds a character confused, keen and sensitive enough that the sense of being young, ambitious and put-upon in the modern world comes across startlingly well. Not that Kushner delivers a faultless performance: she occasionally forgets her characters are speaking words rather than reciting prosy paragraphs, and the plot intermittently turns on improbable coincidences that would suggest New York is a city of about 43 people. But *The Flamethrowers*, wherein revolutionary energy is something that modernity has made ineradicable, overrides such caveats. It's a brilliantly sustained airing of righteous grievances.

MARTIN HERBERT

CULTURAL HISTORY

Spam: A Shadow History of the Internet

By Finn Brunton
MIT Press, £19.95/$27.95 (hardcover)

Writing on his sixtieth birthday about the changes to society he's seen his lifetime, the screenwriter Ian Martin noted: 'It's funny and comforting to know that after you are dead, you will still get spam.' Even when you're six feet under, you'll still receive enticements to launder money and buy erectile-dysfunction pills. Finn Brunton's book charts the dark history of these unwanted digital missives.

The reader learns that the origin of the term 'spam' has its roots in the habit of web pioneers – an early meme, if you like – to quote lines from Monty Python's 1970 'Spam' sketch in messages sent through the early computer networks of university campuses. We find out that, per capita, Pitcairn Island is the number one source of spam worldwide; we read about self-proclaimed 'spam king' Sanford Wallace, who ended up with multimillion-dollar lawsuits from MySpace and Facebook; about how the island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe paid for a new telecommunications infrastructure off the back of the money it earned routing spam-touted American phone sex lines through its old system; and that the Enron scandal provided antispam researchers with a much-needed cache of emails, publicly available after the prosecution, to analyse in order to improve their filters.

These more human anecdotes – which posit the 'pill-selling quacks… white-collar felons, and get-rich-quick schemers' as being the negative, and totally inevitable, background pollution of an online community – help bring what is an otherwise overly technical history (it started life as a dissertation) to life. Indeed, this is what proves so intriguing about the idea of spam. While for the most part it is a form of digital abstraction – a story of techno-economics, mathematics and programming, malware and worms, bots battling with bots – it has its roots in the ancient human vices of greed, lust and stupidity.

OLIVER BASCIANO

THEORY

The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds

Edited by Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel
MIT Press, £34.95/$50 (softcover)

Globalisation is one of those themes that seems self-evident, but is incredibly hard to pin down to specifics. For the artworld, though, it's a hot topic, given that contemporary art is now in the throes of a massive institutional transformation in which the symptoms of economic expansion and global relocation are everywhere to be seen. But what do these changes mean, and might they in fact now define what is 'contemporary' about contemporary art? *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* is the fruit of a research project initiated by the German institution ZKM Karlsruhe that provided the basis of the exhibition *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989* (2011–12) and brings together a mass of historical resources, a thick wedge of essays and an extensive directory of artists whose work fits the art-and-globalisation agenda. It's an impressively useful resource on the subject for anyone trying to get an overview of some of the most insistent issues. But it's also a ponderous reiteration of current orthodox liberal thinking about cultural identity and art's purpose in the era after Western colonial dominance, revealing the depth of confusion about how to privilege the politics of difference when the critique of Eurocentrism, faced with the shift of economic and political power to the East and South, is fast becoming an irrelevance.

Globalisation, in this narrative, starts in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Tiananmen Square massacre and, in Western art, the staging of the Pompidou Centre's controversial *Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin. That show was the first to parallel Western contemporary artists with non-Western 'traditional' artists, and caused no end of debate about how it represented the latter, but Martin is here celebrated as a seminal figure: curator Andrea Buddensieg argues that 'Martin was often

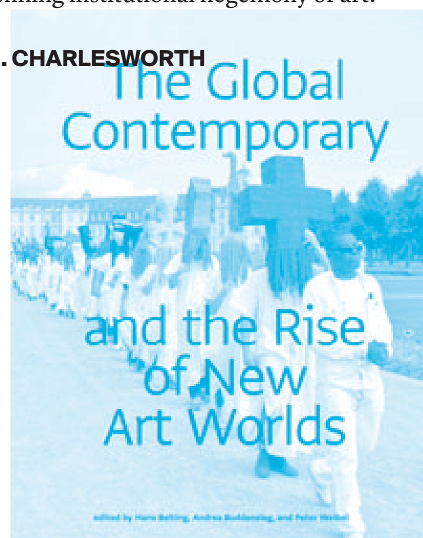
accused of exoticising the “others” in the art worlds, but in fact, his primary concern was to liberate them from the ethnographic prison in which he had found them’.

To release the ‘others’ from the Eurocentric gaze of ethnography of course meant a fundamental widening of the definition of art, away from its previously Western monopoly. As art historian Hans Belting argues, ‘Expanded art production leads to a crisis of the art concept whose limits cannot be extended at will. In fact, the global practice of art deliberately accepts the loss of a binding concept in favor of penchants for national, cultural, and religious connotations of art.’ But Belting seems unaware that, in fact, the ‘penchant’ for localised inflections is itself the new ‘binding concept’ of contemporary art, as it ‘rewrites’ the space once colonised by modern art. Indeed, the key characteristic of the global artworlds (Belting and his collaborators insist on the plural) is, paradoxically, the universal celebration of the local and the particular.

Of course, as is the norm for critics and theorists steeped in the all-too-Western critique of Western universalism, any talk of universalism is nothing more than the mark of the Eurocentric oppressor. Philosopher Peter Weibel happily regurgitates this postcolonialist orthodoxy: ‘Universal culture, a knowledge of the same languages, literary and visual works all became the fraternal signs by which the capital accumulators of the world recognized each other. This universal culture was something that one needed to assimilate to, and historically it aided the expansion of capitalism world wide.’ Weibel seems to miss the irony that, today, global art performs exactly the same function – globalised contemporary art, preoccupied by cultural difference, is now the ‘fraternal sign’ by which the capital accumulators of the world recognise each other. It’s just that the capital accumulators aren’t all white any more.

In fact, it’s the privileging of cultural difference, courtesy of Western-born critiques of universalism, that both suppresses the progressive potential of global art (the internationalising and universalising of cultural forms and audiences) and lets its oppressive aspects (the unchallenged rise of global elites) off the hook. Notably absent in *The Global Contemporary* is any serious critique of globalisation’s most powerful mechanism in the artworld – biennialisation – or any substantial examination of the power of transnational curators and the cultural policies and economics that sustain them. That biennial curators such as Boris Groys, Charles Esche and Okwui Enwezor see biennials as ‘counter-hegemonic’ (as Piotr Piotrowski notes in his contribution) is merely self-legitimating, and obscures the fact that it is the global system of supra-national curatorship, underwritten by the global elite for as long as its power remains unquestioned, that is now the defining institutional hegemony of art.

J.J. CHARLESWORTH



ARTIST BOOKLETS

How to Write 1: Going Astray, Artists Who Write

By Stefan Ripplinger
Wiens Verlag, €15 (softcover)

The first in a series of five booklets (the others featuring lectures or essays by Jimmie Durham, Dieter Roth, Haegue Yang and Thomas Schmit) titled *How to Write*, dedicated to Gertrude Stein and published to mark the 25th birthday of the Berlin bookshop Wien Lukatsch, begins with a list of names sorted into categories that explore the boundaries between the written and the visual arts. It tabulates writers who are also visual artists (Pierre Albert-Birot to Émile Zola), visual artists who are also writers (Vito Acconci to the aforementioned Yang), artist-writers, writer-artists, etc. And then, slowly, it allows these categorisations to break down. Where does a writer become a writer, and where does visual art end? Would Van Gogh’s letters be of interest were he not a renowned visual artist? Where does Concrete poetry or Conceptual art stand in all this? And isn’t art now all about transgressing such boundaries anyway? So why do people have to designate themselves as practising one mode of expression over the other?

Looking for answers, Ripplinger explores the notion that writing and visual art might each be categorised as material art, and that what is specific or particular to each of these genres can only be identified by attempts to disrupt them. Along the way, he breezes through the impact of both artforms on markets and marketing, aesthetic, social and political difference, and ultimately the process of distinction itself. In our globalised and networked present, the relevance of such an investigation is obvious. My only complaint: the limitations of the pamphlet format mean that Ripplinger’s fascinating study can’t go far enough.

MARK RAPPOLT

Subject: off the record
Date: Thursday, May 16, 2013 06:11
From: gallerygirl@artreview.com
To: <office@artreview.com>
Conversation: off the record

"Hmm... *The Encyclopedic Palace*, eh? Vot does it all mean? Vot iz Massimiliano Gioni trying to say, GG, with this so-called concept for the Arsenale?"

I look up from the small pile of fly agaric caps that I've been building on the James Leonard postwar modernist desk that is sometimes referred to by cognoscenti as 'the headmaster's table'. "I have no idea, Aleksandr, aside from we must find what the great curator is showing at Venice, buy as much of it as possible in the next week and then flip it in the autumn sales," I reply.

"Da. I see. I think I'm starting to understand this so-called secondary dealing that you are teaching me about. You must remember to invoice me for your services. Vat iz that pile of mushrooms for? Risotto?"

Aleksandr is, of course, fabulously wealthy. And fabulously dim. It's not a tough gig being his art consultant. I knock back a few of the 'shrooms.

"But look, Aleksandr, it's not as simple as you think. Every art adviser in the world is boning up on Gioni's list. And I mean 'boning' as in reading, not as in what you're thinking, you filthy Ruskie."

I give him a playful slap on his ass, which is covered with a pair of extremely tight D&G tapered jeans. He looks pleased.

"So forget about the obvious ones. Helen Marten, James Richards, Ed Atkins – everyone's all over that post-Internet stuff," I continue.

"Same here, GG," Aleksandr says mournfully. "Jah, I'm post-Internet too, everything iz so boring on these so-called 'adult sites' dat I've had to start vacking off over the gay stuff. Sometimes even dvarves." He looks out the window, momentarily lost in thought. "So I get you, GG. You are saying I should instead buy the weird stuff that is beyond the comprehension of most Johnny-come-lately collectors. Ze elderly African Frédéric Bruly Bouabré? Ze eternally puzzling Enrico David? Ze ponderous film lady Tacita Dean? That stuff is fucking unvatchable."

"God no, not Tacita Dean! We'll never be able to flip that." The 'shrooms are starting to have their effect. "We'll be stuck in a dark room with a 230-minute narrativeless film about an amateur horticulturalist or something shot on 1960s film stock." I start weeping uncontrollably.

"It's OK, it's OK – no Tacita Dean. But if not her, then vat is out there for me to snaffle? Jimmie Durham? Is that Red Indian shit vat I should be sinking my roubles in?"

Aleksandr does a strange dance round the headmaster's table, whooping and hopping in what I take to be his recreation of a Native American ritual. I scream at this fresh hell.

"Carl Gustav Jung?" suggests Aleksandr. "He is on Massimiliano's list. Ze spanker. I have zeen the movie with Keira Knightley. Vat an ass!"

I realise that I'm mentally disintegrating. "Anonymous Tantra painting! They're on the list!" I yell. "Let's go big on anonymous Tantric paintings."

Just three days later I'm in a market in Jodhpur in tow with the Russian. I'm blending in by wearing a flamboyant blue saree. So is Aleks, which is raising a few stares from the native Hindoos, although to my mind he looks very Lawrence of Arabia.

"I vant some anonymous Tantra paintings," Alexandr intones seriously. A procession of market traders produce hundreds of canvases filled with lingams. "I love zis. Forget ze dvarves. I could vack off to these for years, like Sting. I vill have all of zem. Roll zem up! I pay in cash and you can ship zem straight to Sotheby's."

I look on in pride. Aleks is learning fast. The midmorning heat is rising. Rickshaw-wallahs parp their horns. Aleks is high-fiving the market traders and throwing roubles into the air while laughing as beggars scramble around his feet. "Jai ho!" he hollers at them in a friendly fashion. A cow meanders past me and I realise that my work with the Russian is done. Here, now, in a market place in Jodhpur, with the terrible beauty of Michel de Certeau's everyday around me, I realise I have to find Massimiliano's *Encylopedic Palace*. I realise the great curator is pointing beyond Venice to something great. Something greater than all of us. I don't need the secondary market. Bidding a swift farewell to the tearful Russian, I commandeer a rickshaw, get out a bunch of cash and utter the location. The site of all wordly knowledge. The only place where Massimilano's palace might really be. "Take me to the Serpentine Gallery Summer Party, my friend!"

GG

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