

Illiberal Arts

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Illiberal Arts

The liberal-capitalist world order that appeared to have cemented itself after 1989 is now in a stage of advanced disintegration. The breakdown of this order reveals the illiberal core of its capitalizing freedoms and forms of property: the violent unfreedom of the propertyless and the willingness of the propertied to use violence. Art, too, turns out to be a site for the negotiations between these violent forces, their limitations and exclusions. What's more, the ruin of liberality places the modern institution of "institutionalized art" (*veranstaltliche Kunst*, Arnold Hauser) in a deeply questionable light. Taking up the thread of the interventions initiated 100 years ago by Berlin writer Lu Märten, in *Illiberal Arts* we view art as the result of colonizing enclosures, as a continuation of processes of primitive accumulation, appropriation, and expropriation of artistic "life-works," that is, of assemblages that reach far beyond art. At present, forms of life that have been truncated, degraded, and devalued by this curtailment are clearly erupting into art's constricting horizons. And where they are not immobilized again as mere critical supplements, they lead to the perceptibility, in practice, of an increasing loss of *modern* art's form, and extrapolate from it liminal modes of artistic labor and mediation. In this way, the familiar rituals of "institutionalized art," which are increasingly losing their social legitimacy, turn into expanded sites for the negotiation of (no longer simply) artistic issues in this *illiberal present*. *Illiberal Arts* is an attempt at practicing forms of artistic life-work in the midst of this illiberal present.

The practices that are here being placed in relation with one another *materialize* the illiberalism at the core of modern liberality as a series of ruptures of modern property forms. They are the starting point for a joint labor on the beyond of institutionalized art that takes its cues directly from contemporary forms. This kind of (life-)work is not merely an attempt at a lived refusal of the special position of art within modernity as an aesthetic pillar of the modern cosmology of incessant capitalization, it also makes a formal break with the fetish made of isolated artistic expression, with its institutionalization as an antisocial realm in which liberal subjectivity is presumed to enjoy absolute freedom. Instead of critically offering alternative forms of reproduction

meant to replace the disintegration of our present, or calling up compensatory fictions of aesthetic community within it, the forms of practice gathered together in *Illiberal Arts* link up with that disintegration. They aim toward anti-identitarian, common horizons, toward collective forms of perception, toward political spontaneity, which emerge from the cracks of crumbling forms of accumulation and are registered. Our intention in *Illiberal Arts* is not to seek, together with the artists and discussants, a more contemporary confirmation of the liberal reproduction of art, but, starting from their and our concrete forms of dependence and responsibility, to open ourselves up to extra-artistic social forces.

In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams designated the form of the subject of capitalist liberalism as "possessive individualism." The freedoms of the subject are a result of those nation-state-sanctioned forms of property that brought forth the self-property of the modern bourgeois subject, always anxiously guarded against those excluded from these forms of self-possession or whose participation remains forever conditional. It is this "possessive individualism" that made things public or left them private, that demonstrated that the modern subject possesses itself—that it is not owned, that it is not possessed, that it does not remain without possessions. The disintegration of its claim to universality and the violent rear-guard defense of liberal privileges that we are witnessing today also tear the liberal modernities of art to shreds. Our aim is not the production of a critical group exhibition on the topic of illiberal contemporary art, but rather a *deformation*, which we are initiating together with the invited artists—who work with sound, performance, and language—and with a group of discussants. For Lu Märten, "the whole life-work of a human being" was artistic: that which was artistic had no need to become art. Similarly: that which has become art need not remain it.

Anselm Franke and Kerstin Stakemeier

Immersion/Preparation: Anja Kirschner's *PATTERNS* and *SKINS*

Against the twentieth-century fetishization of the fragment: even where their totality has become uncertain, fragments uphold a given order to the extent that you *can* still order them. Critical artists, curators, and viewers pick up pieces and count and arrange and view them; number parts and measure remnants of bones; create entirely sensible collages; exhibit objects and define who or what is “Man.”¹ Immersive work, an immersive world—a kind of house—does not hide its violences in the same way. It is not more manipulative and totalizing, but (ironically) more openly so. This means that those moving through it cannot objectify or preside over it, yet it also means that they are subjected to this world—which they find themselves negotiating, resisting, attempting to escape from. How much agency can you have in this world? Who are you? Which world?

Someone's immersion in something usually involves a person entering a real or virtual 3D environment. As a contradiction in terms, Anja Kirschner's *PATTERNS* are immersive in 2D: if you think yourself into/onto the surface and start following the lines like a labyrinth, there is no easy way out of the constraints of mirroring, repetition, and movement, almost as if you were the person producing this work and had to complete it. There is an absolutely compelling logic in these drawings that is the logic of automation, or of an object assuming a life on its own. In Kirschner's feature-length film *Moderation* (2016), a subtle horror of the everyday takes over while a female director prepares to shoot a horror film: in a workshop room, the lights turn off and on with no other human present; books fall from a shelf in an apartment; heaps of sand blow through a window; giant industrial machines perform repetitive movements with the regularity of a heartbeat.

Similarly to how the film director in *Moderation* does not get around to actually shooting the film, the drawings presented by Kirschner can be read not only as 2D immersive environments but also as preparatory sketches towards the three-dimensional. This is the case, first of all, in that the *PATTERNS* establish a tongue-in-cheek allusion to wallpaper traditions, with natural motifs (lungs, hands, testicles) alternating with, and developing into, geometrically abstract shapes. These body-part/vegetation combinations waiting for inhabitation to become fully immersive certainly do not expect the nineteenth-century bourgeois subject as their inhabitant. There is a second sense, however, in which the drawings seem to anticipate 3D completion, in that they could be read as

PATTERN#01B, 2021

Drawing, marker pen, watercolor, and acrylic on paper, 204 × 144 cm
Courtesy of the artist

PATTERN#02, 2020-2021

Drawing, marker pen on paper, 306 × 144 cm
Courtesy of the artist

ROPES#01, 2021

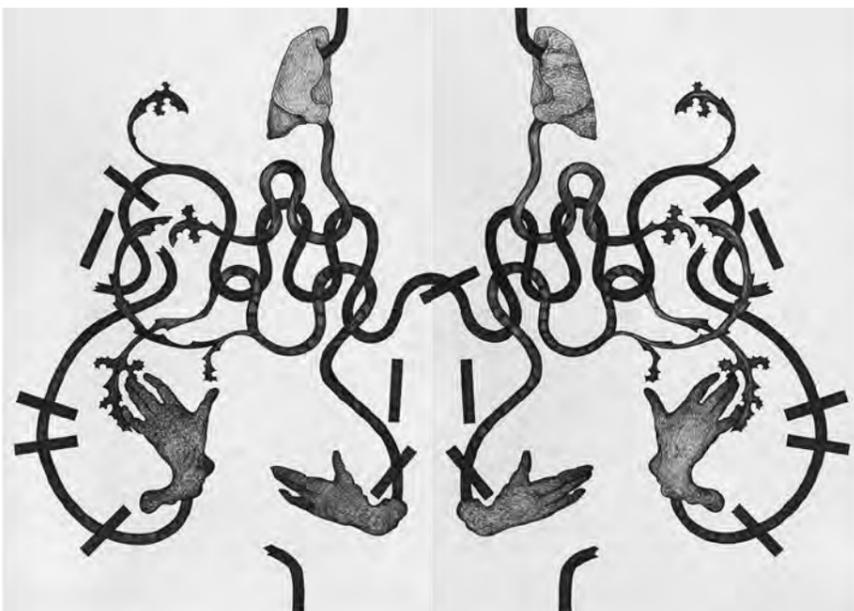
Drawing, marker pen, watercolor, and acrylic on paper, 204 × 144 cm
Courtesy of the artist

#SKINS01, 2020

Drawing, granite pencil and acrylic on paper, 102 × 72 cm
Courtesy of the artist

#SKINS02, 2020

Drawing, granite pencil and acrylic on paper, 102 × 72 cm
Courtesy of the artist



#0203, *#0204* from the series *PATTERN#02*, 2020
Marker pen on paper, framed, each 102 × 72 cm
Courtesy of the artist

a provisional map or an architectural plan of a house, and/or of a body; more specifically, they also work as a prop for Kirschner's forthcoming video *UNICA*. The undecidability of whether the drawings exhibited here are Art, or rather preliminary props or sketches, questions the self-enclosed, completed, liberal artwork—and exhibition.

Both *PATTERNS* and *UNICA* refer back to Unica Zürn's text *Das Haus der Krankheiten* and the accompanying drawing *Plan des Hauses der Krankheiten* (1958). Here too, we encounter two complementary works (mutual props?), with Zürn variously describing or sketching a “House of Illnesses” featuring, among other things, a hall of stomachs or room of eyes. This house, supervised by a condescending Doctor Mortimer, has the air of a prison and a death sentence—and yet, Zürn's representation of the body as the layout of a building is also a reclamation of agency in terms of self-representation. It is a sketch of a patriarchal world as much as an escape from it. Kirschner's engagement with non-escapist escape takes this approach one step further: the *SKINS* series presents fantasy UV maps without objects, and *PATTERNS* read as the sketch of a body/world that can currently only be anticipated. Immersion in this new world (which is not the New World of colonialism) would mean being able to live in body shapes that do not accord with Doctor Mortimer's regulations, and this immersive world is no longer a domestic, institutionalized inside, but an outside: “I was comforted and left the house at dawn.”²

Lisa Jeschke

¹ Sylvia Wynter: “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *The Centennial Review*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2003): p. 260.

² Unica Zürn, *Der Mann im Jasmin: Dunkler Frühling*, Frankfurt/Main, Berlin and Vienna: Ullstein, 1987, p. 170.



Untitled, 2020
Drawing, ink and pencil on paper, 24.8 × 18.6 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2020
Drawing, ink and pencil on paper, 42 × 29.7 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2020
Drawing, ink and pencil on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2020
Drawing, ink and pencil on paper, 29.7 × 42 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2020
Drawing, ink and pencil on paper, 29.7 × 42 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2020
Drawing, ink and pencil on paper, 29.7 × 42 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2021
Painting, oil and graphite on canvas, 102.5 × 84.5 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Here are open collarbones. Shoulders unfurled. Not braced. These are horizon lines. Tendons, muscles, bones, justified suspensions of torsos tectonically building up beneath, dripping with skin, elongated arms and then legs, hanging on. Andrea Mantegna, Artemisia Gentileschi, Théodore Géricault, yes, always. Not just here in the drawings. And not just them.

Everywhere Anne Imhof reaches, infinite bodies of art are lingering from within the slits that make all her figurations liminal. Liminal, as all her forms possess an overabundance of plots, completed but unsublated. Imhof opens up a scenery of half-lives lashing out at the impertinent liberalism that insists that the sky is the limit. In her works and outside of them we are stranded within an excess of finalities. Moments of perpetual unworking. No lifting in sight. No cave-in either. Horizon lines lowering within our bodies.

Drama holds too much hope for resolution. Tragedy promises too much sense in ending. Melodrama isolates the impossible life too much in one soul. What Imhof takes from the art bodies of our forebears into her own work is a sense of perceptual deindividuation: a sociogenic horizon of liveliness beyond any *élan vital*. And the author of this concept, Henri Bergson, is only allowed to loom here because Sylvia Wynter uses him to discredit Friedrich Schlegel, the darling of proto-hippy Romanticism. Wynter discounts him in passing for his “biogenetic *élan vital*”, for romanticizing a national and colonial (male) subject in the making. Frantz Fanon’s word “sociogeny” dismantles such possessive heroisms in marking their systemic deadliness. And Imhof does not take the liberty to disidentify. Instead she figures it, dyingly. A liminality of our sociogenic abuse(iveness).

Andrea Mantegna, Artemisia Gentileschi, Théodore Géricault. This is no lineage. It is a genesis of the undying of her and our own making. No integrated references that are offering their sense(s), but amassed intensities that are seeping in, all situated where our lineages are dying but never dead. With Imhof’s horizons there is always an above and below. A liminal slit, gaping downward, ground-bound. The below expands. The above just falls. Not gravity. Traction. In the drawings and the painting but also in the architecture fabricated with the studio sub to hold *Illiberal Art’s* space. Tectonics, cuttings, suspensions. Horizons built downward throughout the exhibition space. Cutting us off at chest height. Reaching into where we stand from above. The room is not enclosed by the metal grids coming down from the ceiling, it is cut. Horizons one after the other and on them and beneath them the works of all other artists contributing to *Illiberal Arts*. All materializing on the metal grates of a liminal slit, coexisting within its sociogenic necessity.

In her and sub’s exhibition architecture, Imhof’s horizons sever our bodies from the chest up. We are captured in gazing. In her drawings, Imhof’s horizons sever the heads of her figures from the collarbone up. They are gazing too. But shielded with baldness and veneers from whoever is looking, they offer no entry point. They appear to exist within the liminalities of Imhof’s sociogenic slits. And here their depersonalization affords them with a sense of proximity, of touch: the shared space of a suprapersonal and unromantic sociogeny.

Kerstin Stakemeier

Bill Dietz is an American composer whose work explores histories of listening. His immersive sound installation in this show developed from his writing on both the strange comportment of nineteenth-century European concert audiences, and the real social structures subtending purportedly radical New Music.

The work occurs in five parts at 11, 29, 34, 34, and 45 minutes after the hour, every hour—to be heard inside the gallery during opening hours, and from outside after.

The work has to do with the “membrane” of this building, the mediation between the “contemplative” realm of art and its outside. It seemed that a sound either adequately specific to the materiality of the building, or one that’s loud enough, would be able to pass through the building’s carapace.

I arrived in New York on May 22, 2020, during the COVID lockdown, and once the George Floyd demonstrations began, ended up on your recommendation going to the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Brooklyn every week. Which was, without exaggeration, one of the most profound sound experiences I have ever had—the exchange between protestors and prisoners beating the walls of their cells. I wasn’t thinking about the piece then but I made a few casual, happenstance recordings that don’t really capture anything: noise, chanting, mumbling, my friends talking to each other. But when I got back to Europe the whole piece became about whether it was possible to use these recordings, about the problem of their audibility (as what?), both in general and in relation to art.

In thinking about audibility, it interested me that the lineage of one of the main acousticians in the twentieth century, Georg von Békésy, who formulated one of the diagnostic ear tests we still use today (“decay audiometry”), can be traced to German philosopher-scientists such as Gustav Fechner (to whom Freud often refers) and Hermann von Helmholtz, the father of modern acoustics. This very particular “psychophysical” lineage (also think of Ernst Mach) paid such radical attention to perception that science taking itself seriously necessarily undoes itself. I took the structure of von Békésy’s ear tests as a model for interpreting the recordings from the MDC.

In one sequence, for instance, you hear a frequency that glides from low to high, with an extremely tight filter on the source material, passing back and forth through the soundproof museum glass window. Because of the filter, it’s only in the middle range where the recording is recognizable, very briefly, as the demonstrations. And it’s only there in a kind of phantom way: a bit like the acoustic phenomenon of the “missing fundamental”—for a moment, the brain is able to effectively “fill in” the missing, filtered information, and we’re able to hallucinate recognizability.

The work uses two sound systems, one in the gallery and one outside, and it follows a very specific time structure. Every hour there are five movements that play at the same timestamp when they were recorded. Most are quite short, some are very quiet, and in different ways they relay back and forth through the wall. During opening hours it is blaringly loud outside, but when you hear it inside through the window, the levels sound normal—and the reverse happens when the building is closed at night. It plays twenty-four hours a day.

I want it to be a vivid, visceral experience. But at the same time, one that is difficult to heroically occupy as a receiver. Much protest art comes with a sort of reward—*by receiving or perceiving this I am participating in something good, I am doing something political.* This work is, in a certain sense, more about the psychedelia of the impossibility of that kind of affirmative position operating in a contemporary art space. It’s about the problem of the political in relation to art, rather than some kind of rallying cry, or an affirmation of a particular stance.

—As told to Ciarán Finlayson



Sketch for *EXPOSURE TO FREQUENCIES FROM 43–48Hz CAUSES THE WINDOW PANES ALONG THE WEST GALLERY WALL TO VIBRATE SYMPATHETICALLY SUCH THAT AT SUFFICIENT INTENSITY THEY WILL SHATTER*, 2021

Sound installation, 28:02 min., played in five parts every hour, starting at 11, 29, 34, 34, and 45 minutes past the hour
Courtesy of the artist



O (micron), 2021

Installation, HD video, overlapping projected open captions on floor, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Visa Dove Pan, 2021

Installation, reflection holograms on glass mounts, each $5.08 \times 7.62 \times 0.32$ cm
Available for public participation while supplies last; limit one per party. One card must remain on display at all times.
Courtesy of the artist

... & so everywhere you want to be brought you here. Hello, telekinetically. Check your passport at the dimension's door. When I was a kid, my friends & I could discern whether holographic Pokémon cards were real or fake by a simple trick: Could we see through the paper when we held them up to a florescent light? No matter what the value judgment, the main attraction was seeing the light filter through the foil.

The Passeriforme known as the bird of paradise can participate in a polygamous love & breeding game called lekking, where one sex arrays themselves in a matrix to entice another. On any given field, the other sex can pick & choose who is worthy to spur on the next generation of their life's fractal, usually gathering around bounties of fruit.

Meanwhile, the perennial plant known as the bird of paradise, or the crane flower in South Africa—the obverse of their 50-cent coin—only naturally reproduces when a sunbird perches on the spathe of a flower to nourish itself in the flower's nectarine sap. In a matter of pure happenstance, the sunbird passes the pollen on via its talons or beak to another one. Otherwise, humans must do it all by hand. Whether naturally abnormal or unnaturally normal, the difference these days seems slighter & slighter to me.

Here, Constantina Zavitsanos gives us more than just the opportunity to pick Eternity's pocket or break into an undisclosed bank account. In works past, they offered exemplary forms of kindness derived from civil victories against the police & giving away budget-bought slates of the gold standard. Here, the goal is the same: a sense of social reproduction

is the name of the game. Here, we receive something more than ideal, beyond futures projected by the stock market. A simple gesture, exalted. It really all *could* be so easy, a societal human arrangement that nourishes & sustains everyone.

Zavitsanos gives us the spoils of the game of Hazard as a cryptocurrency for any & everybody willing to partake, the only rule is to leave one for everyone. The possibilities go from crane-like to nacreous in the light, not as a mere woodchip token subject to bubble physics, pump-and-dump chauvinism, & planetary depredation.

The dove is made a prism where we can look into the origin of hazard as a word, going back to the Old French as a permutation of the Arabic *azar*, meaning dice. It also refers to a castle in a freer Palestine, perhaps a reference to Bab az-Zahira, a gate of old Jerusalem. It is also known as Sha'ar HaPrakhim, or Flower's Gate, a Hebrew mistranslation of two Arabic words that gained a sense of lexical slippage when transliterated: *sahira* (to be watchful) & *zahra* (blossom). The word always travels. I'm just happy you're following.

*A crowd divides you & I,
viewers clad in varied hues who
obscure us like Fall's crow calls.*

I took one of those cards. Find me?

Aristilde Kirby

Cut away, with effects (2021) enters into institutional forms. They approach invitations to contribute to the program of art institutions by familiarizing themselves with their regional and in-house specificities, finding the shape of their work in sensing what forms of life are enabled within the institutions housing them. Or rather, they find the shape of their work in sensing the limits that shape the forms that people's lives take on within a given institution.

I can't claim an approach that is the same for all invitations, although I do tend to work in this way. I would say it's a bit less substantial than that. Meaning I don't recognize it as an approach but more as reaction, or even a block.

I would say it a bit more directly, for example, I am looking at the house rules of the institution that are in the public domain, taking them very literally. This list of rules is given to companies bidding on prospective contracts for supplying subcontracted labor to the institution. There is an important point about social access and class relations, in how this information is interpreted by different employees. For example, as a temporarily contracted artist I might look at this list of house rules about not being able to eat in the exhibition space, I might think to myself this doesn't apply to me, or I can bend this rule. Another person who is subcontracted might look at this rule, and wonder: Where can I eat? So I think it's a little more basic than sensing. What is meant by forms of life? But to say here quite plainly I am concerned with where I and other people who work there will eat, where visitors eat. And what kinds of labor are requested and described, such as in the advertisement for the internship, which has creative potential or requires certain skills like independent thinking and the contrast with the rules for the subcontracted workers who must always work in pairs, and if they absolutely have to work alone they must check with the guard every hour.

Cut away, with effects (2021) enters *Illiberal Arts* by inquiring how we are working towards it at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. What working conditions am I prepared to adhere to, which am I reluctant to apply to myself? Do our respective moments of reluctance mark specific areas

of disengagement within our institutional framing? To what extent is what we experience as the freedom of our engagement sculpted by our varied material abilities to purposefully disengage? It is the inclusive *we* that becomes highly contested within this view. *We* is a group defined by its most narrative parts, in-house and not, artists and curators, by those establishing, and moreover, authoring what comes to be outwardly seen, heard, read, sensed: a *we* that, in lacking collective authorship, is quite unorganized, and also quite unbound. Cut away, with effects (2021) shifts their own role within this infrastructure, reducing their own narrative scope drastically: towards the institution as an inhabited environment whose narration is based on its workers sustenance, not on their plot function.

I would not say this is unorganized, as we can see that there is significant organization in the list of rules that apply to people working in the building, and the division of workers that is maintained through the different categories of labor and types of contracts.

If together we do live in the institutions we work in, to what extent does *change* then become something that does not come into view where overall agendas are formulated, where programs are decided upon, but rather where their infrastructures are instituted, shaping the lives lived through them. I have seen Cut away, with effects (2021)'s processes take their course on several occasions over the past ten years, and at other times they have told me about them. Their forms of working have continuously changed during that period in relation to where they moved, how they lived, the educational, political, and social entanglements they chose to engage with. To me, what Cut away, with effects (2021) does is not most generative if it is understood as "institutional critique," as the institution figures only as a function of its worker's lives and through them it comes to be sensed as radically malleable. To me, Cut away, with effects (2021)'s work is thus not a critique but rather a practice in the making. Its implicit organizing.

Kerstin Stakemeier

Operating Regulations of the Kulturveranstaltungen des Bundes in Berlin GmbH for the Instruction and Instruction of External Companies

1. Scope of application

(1) These regulations apply to all contracts with external companies, which/ whose employees are on the premises or in the buildings of the Kulturveranstaltungen des Bundes in Berlin GmbH (hereinafter referred to as KBB).

These are in detail the business areas or buildings:

- The Central Administration of the KBB, Schöneberger Straße 15, 10963 Berlin.
- The Berliner Festspiele division, Schaperstraße 24, 10719 Berlin with the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Niederkirchnerstraße 7, 10963 Berlin
- The business division House of World Cultures, John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10, 10557, Berlin -
- The business division Berlin International Film Festival, Potsdamer Straße 5, 10785 Berlin.

2. Principles

All relevant environmental and occupational health and safety conditions, trade association regulations and generally recognized safety and occupational medical rules, including the internal regulations applicable to KBB, must be observed by the contractor and his vicarious agents. If there are any questions regarding occupational health and safety, the Technical Directorate or Technical Management will provide information.

Only employees who have been instructed in accordance with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act or in accordance with the requirements of BGI A1 may be deployed on the KBB premises. In addition, employees must be instructed in the contents of these operating regulations.

All work must be carried out in such a way that hazards to persons and equipment are avoided or, if unavoidable, kept as low as possible by means of protective devices and equipment. Specific peculiarities and special agreements are to be documented in the declaration of commitment.

3. Registration/ start of assignment

Every external company employee must report to the gate or reception before entering the KBB buildings. Keys issued against signature are to be returned after completion of the work. If daily passes are to be used, these must be taken over against signature at the gate/reception and returned there after completion of the work.

Prior to commencing work, the contractor must consult with the responsible KBB department head regarding the tasks to be performed. The contractor is responsible for passing on the information obtained in this process to his employees.

4. General safety and order regulations

(1) The contractor shall inform his employees that they may only be in the area in which they have their place of work on the basis of the contract or order concluded. Entering other operating areas is not permitted.

(2) The Contractor and its employees shall be obliged to notify the Customer of any disruptions to the operational process.

(3) Material storage and piles must be arranged in such a way that they do not endanger work safety, the production process, transport and traffic flow.

(4) The bringing along and consumption of alcoholic beverages or other intoxicating substances is prohibited on the company premises. The Contractor shall ensure that its vicarious agents do not endanger themselves or others in their work as a result of alcohol consumption or other intoxicating substances. Employees who are suspected of being under the

Excerpt of catalog contribution

Cut away, with effects (2021), 2021

Black-and-white A4 inkjet prints

Courtesy of the artist

Falling down stairs and also being dead

Foot against the wall
 Leg spread wide and to the side
 Left knee bent
 Right leg straight out and back
 Head on floor
 Knees slightly bent
 Bent over at waist
 Butt higher than shoulders
 Hands around the legs
 Sprawled out in front
 Head up and look into
 Having fallen down the stairs
 Head on side of stair
 As if we are all falling
 Hand down
 Left bent knee
 Resting the body on stair above
 Head on side of stairs
 Lying down
 Rear leg straight
 Front leg bent at angle
 Rest foot above ankle
 Head between knees of body ahead
 Arms out straight
 Knees bent
 Heels on floor
 Head on floor
 Falling down again
 Ankle bent until the toes point to the ceiling
 Arms out overhead
 Falling down stairs and also being dead
 This pleasant and unpleasant
 Into which we are all falling
 Once again head on side of stairs

Knees bent
 Hand reaching into bag
 Fingers extended, pointing down
 Arm dangling from shoulder
 Holding onto the wall
 Arms bent
 Butt slightly raised
 Knees somewhat bent
 Falling into the dead
 Head on side of stairs
 Lying, resting
 Not drowning
 But not not drowning either
 And not drowning
 Back on bed
 Knee bent
 Other knee at a right angle
 Ankle resting against knee
 Hands in front, clasped
 Hands held in front of chest
 Then falling down the stairs again
 Left knee bent
 Left arm bent
 Face down
 Left arm bent
 Head resting on left arm
 Left knee bent a little
 Buttocks raised
 Falling down the stairs
 The floor
 Falling into the bed
 Right ankle on left knee
 The pillow
 The bed
 The pillow

Last of Us I, 2021

Painting/collage, oil, acrylic, print on self-adhesive paper, graphite, and gesso on carved Corafoam, 121 × 121 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Last of Us II, 2021

Painting/collage, oil, acrylic, print on self-adhesive paper, graphite, and gesso on carved Corafoam, 121 × 121 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Last of Us III, 2021

Painting/collage, oil, acrylic, print on self-adhesive paper, graphite, and gesso on carved Corafoam, 121 × 121 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Last of Us IV, 2021

Painting/collage, oil, acrylic, print on self-adhesive paper, graphite, and gesso on carved Corafoam, 121 × 121 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



Wet Infrastructure I, 2020

Oil, acrylic, aluminum leaf, print on self-adhesive paper, graphite, and gesso on carved Corafoam, 121 × 121 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



my bad, 2020

Oil, acrylic, aluminum leaf, print on self-adhesive paper, graphite, and gesso on carved Corafoam, 121 × 121 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Evolution Chemnitz

With her work *Evolution Chemnitz*, Henrike Naumann explores the century-long history of revolutionary movements in Chemnitz—formerly Karl-Marx-Stadt—and surrounds. In her video installation, filmed in the rooms of the Hotel Elisenhof, she exhibits five levels of Chemnitz history in the form of an allegorical, multi-channel video spread across five screens.

The Hotel Elisenhof—located in the same building as the fashion store Thønsberg, an outlet for the Thor Steinar brand, a favorite among neo-Nazis—provides the frame for her story. Naumann reinterprets vases, candelabra, and small pieces of furniture collected in the city and its environs as bearers of Chemnitz history, and links them with the past and the present. The objects are juxtaposed with framed reproductions of modernist classics from the Sammlung Gunzenhauser, which hang on the walls in place of the art usually seen in the hotel.

The five videos tell of past events whose echoes have continued to be reinscribed down to the present day:

The Chemnitz branch of the German Communist Party was founded in 1919. We see a worker with packages of butter in his arms. Rising prices have prompted Chemnitz workers to protest the increasingly precarious conditions under which they live. The uprising is brutally crushed by the police and the army. Remembered as the “Battles of August” (*Augustkämpfe*) at least 27 people lost their lives in the fighting.

The worker is portrayed as an artist—the looting of the butter is a symbol of materialist insubordination and a horizon of possibility crystallized in an object. As a life practice, this appropriation is an artistic form of labor.

In 1945, in the Schwarzenberg district in the Ore Mountains, Soviet directives lead to the dissolution of all antifascist action committees. The Red Army takes over the administration of the area, which had remained unoccupied for several months. For 42 days, the district had been self-administered under the name of the Free Republic of Schwarzenberg. In the hotel room, a soldier symbolically marks out his sovereign territory. The antifascist action committees, understood as artistic life forms, are destroyed by means of structural exclusions, expropriations, enclosures, and capitalizations. The demarcation line drawn by the soldier is also a rejection of communal metabolism.

In 1992, a West German manager of the *Treuhandanstalt*¹ arrives in Chemnitz, lured by nationalist motives and a faith in the superiority of capitalism. Staying at the Hotel Elisenhof, he flies into a fit of “hotel rage” and begins to redecorate his room according to his own liking. The work of the *Treuhand* is a manifestation of possessive individualism. The manager is revealed as the personification of liberal humanity, founded on self-possession and a nationally tinged interiority.

In 1998, a member of the far-right terrorist organization “National-Socialist Underground” (*Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund*, NSU) hides out with his sports bag in a hotel room, as his fear of being discovered gives way to the certainty that he can rely on a vast network of supporters. Before moving to Zwickau in 2000, members of the NSU lived in various apartments in Chemnitz. The NSU is based on a racist ideology of inequality and of disrespect for the value of non-white life. The slow pace of the official investigation that eventually led to their exposure also testifies to structures that ignore far-right violence.

In 2018, on the margins of the Chemnitz city festival, a man is fatally stabbed with a knife. In the days that follow, right-wing groups engage in violent rioting. The far-right terrorist group Revolution Chemnitz is founded and declares its aim to be “changing the course of German history.” The streets are almost entirely deserted. The work focuses on five GDR-built monuments that define the look of the city.

Evolution Chemnitz represents an attempt to find an artistic language for the history of the city of Chemnitz. Chemnitz sees and markets itself as a city of modernity. But the reimagined rooms of the Hotel Elisenhof present symbols of the city’s social history, with all its contradictions, and contrast its Marxist and fascist elements.

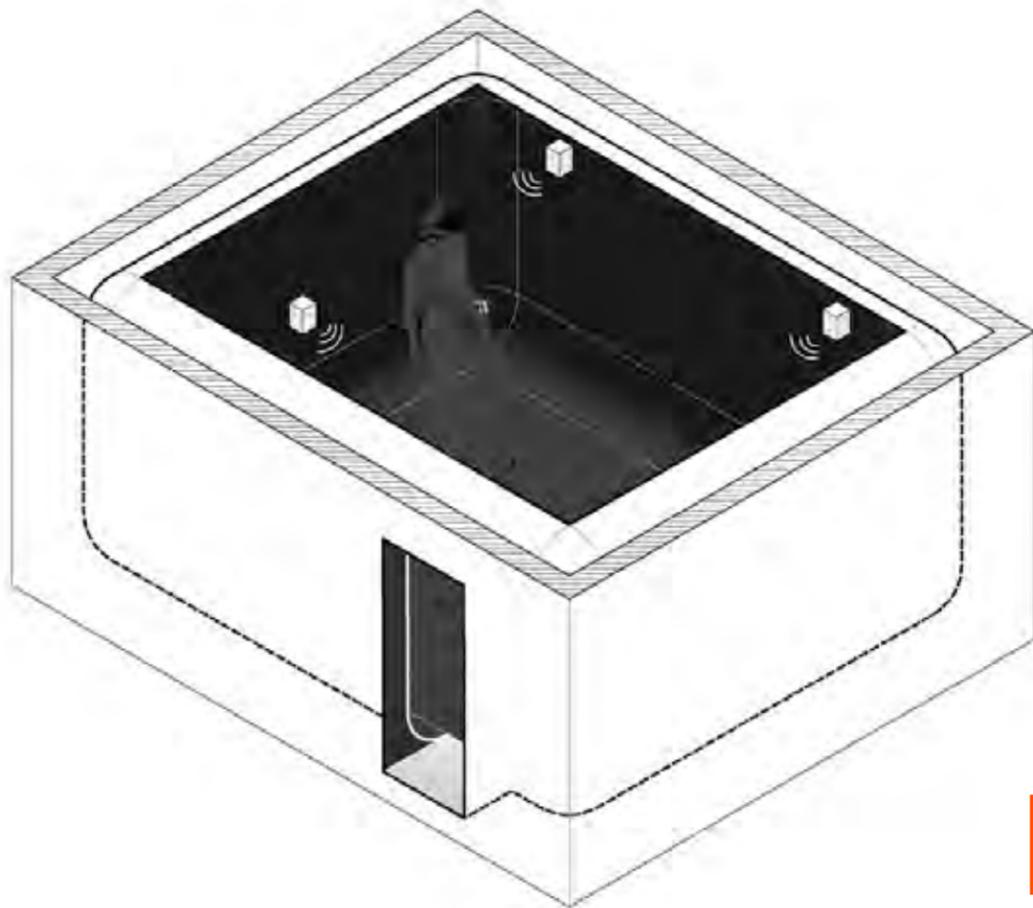
Lara Wehrs

¹ The “Trust Agency” tasked with privatizing socialized East German assets. —Trans.



Evolution Chemnitz, 2020

Installation, mixed media, dimensions variable
Photo: Roman Mensing, installation view of foyer
of Museum Gunzenhauser, 2020
Courtesy of the artist and KOW Berlin



Isometric diagram of *GLUT* by Johannes Beck and Johanna Hedva, 2020
 Sound installation and AI, mixed media, dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the artist

Everyone on Stage Dies: A Note on Johanna Hedva

“I sleep 10, 11 hours each night and I sleep, not like the dead, but as if I’m dying, as if I’m really living,” writes Johanna Hedva, in “Afterword: A Decade of Sleeping,” the concluding text in their *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain* (2020). The assertion implies some questions. What would your art look—or sound—like, if the only thing contained in it were exact descriptions of the things that you do, or have done, or else have been made to do, in bed? How utterly would it diverge from the other art that it replaces? Are its dream sequences thrilling, or merely banal (Hedva for their part has written maybe the best dream sequence of the last decade, at the end of their novel *On Hell*)? And are these questions shaming for you? Or are they shaming and inspiring at the same time?

Hedva has a taste for “both at the same time,” which is one of the reasons why they’re a Great Artist. In their work, obviously patriarchal enemy-concepts—including Great Artist, Genius, Catharsis, etc.—along with the Big Ideas with which they’re embarrassingly paired off—the Erotic, Death, “Willem de Kooning”—are all shredded and despised and renewed and reasserted simultaneously, only now on a new plane and beneath totally remediated planets. On their beautiful album *Black Moon Lilith in Pisces in the 4th House*, the concepts are literally shredded, dissolved in sheets of adolescent guitar distortion, “crone keening,” speechless grief annihilated by analog crackling; while in *Minerva* they are led down a hall of mirrors, through a species of semi-autobiography in which the mirrors all become mattresses, busted gray rectangles better at absorbing the world than they are at reflecting it, stained both with

the idea of Artistic Genius and the “bloodlike black ash” of the author’s own originating miscarriage (ultimately: there is only one stain). And what these concepts “learn” en route is something at once very startling and perfectly predictable. “The Milgram Experiment and Rhythm 0 take place every day in every bed of every heterosexual couple in the United States,” writes Hedva. Where the conventional hall of mirrors shows a world that’s merely upside down, *this* hall of North American mattresses stretches all the way to infinity.

At the end of a good tragedy, everyone on stage dies. Thus the patriarchal enemy-concepts move through Hedva’s work toward their ultimate demise, but they also return into themselves, newly fleshed out. In “2 Coins (Tears are what god uses to lubricate its big machine of nothing),” the penultimate track from *Black Moon Lilith*, Hedva sings “I need / 2 coins / For the ferryman,” and in the final repetition of “I need,” their voice pitches up and pushes toward its physical limits in a way that, for associative reasons I can’t quite put my finger on, sounds like a terminal acceleration, a cinematic sensation of being sped up towards a velocity at which experience becomes impossible and the body unties itself into stasis and nonbeing and entropy. And there’s a sense in which that’s what’s happening to Genius, Death, and Catharsis in *Minerva*, all of them speeding up and moving towards something and returning into themselves and being totally annihilated at the same time: in a bedroom. Everywhere. Both at once. No way back for de Kooning.

Danny Hayward



PEP (Process Entanglement Procedure), 2019

Two-channel video installation, HD video, audio, synched, color, 15:00 min., video still
Courtesy of the artist

Assistant Director: Zacry Spears
Director of Photography: Carl Knight
Additional Camera Operators: Zacry Spears, Marit Stafstrom
Score: Sharon Smith
Sound Mixer: Aron Sanchez,
Actors: Chris Greco, Carl Knight, Zacry Spears, Jordan Strafer
Voice Actors: Jennifer Keister, CL Neal
Props: Chloe Cerabona
Special Thanks: Glen Fogel, Lia Gangitano, Alexandro Segade, Bill Dietz

SOS, 2021

HD video, color, audio, 11:08 min.
Courtesy of the artist

Video shoot co-direction: Jordan Strafer with Carl Knight and Zacry Spears
Animation: Jessica Wilson
Art Direction: Chloe Cerabona
Camera and various on-set roles: Larry Bovik
Original Music: Lazar Bozic
Voice Actors: Phoebe Osborne, Carlyn C., and Katie O.
Color: Alex Zandi
Sound Mixer: Aron Sanchez

Women* Living Death: Jordan Strafer's *SOS* and *PEP*

The main protagonists of both *SOS* and *PEP* are miniature horror puppets. The horror element lies in their corpse-like proximity to humanness, rigidified (too dead), combined with their Frankensteinian potential for coming to life beyond what their creators or parents had in mind for them (too alive): an emancipatory, exciting horror. Beyond this fundamental puppet horror, they are repeatedly being depicted as victims of misogynistic, violent crimes. In *SOS*, overdetermined by over-symbolism, they lie in the snow as if discarded, sparsely dressed. While there is an element of mediatized irony in this, reminiscent of the self-conscious critique and replication of TV's obsession with exploited women*'s bodies as performed in *Twin Peaks*, it is rooted in the knowledge that this degree of violence against women* is real. A one-sentence summary of Strafer's videos would be this: all women* are dead. (Gradually/suddenly killed; by work/violently). In this our miniature society of the United States (where Strafer is dead) or of Germany (where I am dead), with our miniature ambulances and our mini-jobs, there is, claustrophobically, currently no other route for women* than to *live death*. The near-total claustrophobia of this is mitigated by the fact that the initial stillness of our artificial bodies carries the potential for a coming to life: an emancipatory, exciting horror.

The videos do also feature human performers. In *SOS*, we see bruised Mitch McConnell hands violently reach into the image to handle the puppets. These are obviously artificially designed studio-effect arms and hands, corpse-like, and their introduction does not establish any real contrast to the puppets. There is no life/death binary, instead we encounter only another gender of dead body: there is miniature, still death for some, and huge, animated death for others.

The sub-narrative in *PEP*, in which we see a group of human performers walk through a forest, likewise does not allow us to see them as human. When the figures pose for a happy group photo, their faces are blanked out. When there is an increasing division into perpetrators and victims, there is a multiplication of signification in terms of who the victims might be. To a certain extent, clad in orange hoodies, hoods on, their physiognomy remains androgynous, undecidable. While on the one hand, there is an allusion to the orange jumpsuits worn by detainees at Guantanamo Bay and the rhetoric against hooded youths (male in the social imaginary). On the other hand, they can be read as women* if the forest scenes are considered a non-aligned illustration of the framing testimonial narrative featuring fragments of speech from, among others, *The Gloria Films*, Anita Hill, Christine Blasey Ford, and Gwyneth Paltrow. Finally, *the old white men* that only enter the picture later and carry out the final knife assault are stylized, not literal old men but constructed old men: their heads are obviously covered by masks, their arms and hands young skin. The claustrophobia of the dead world portrayed in Strafer's films is offset by its evident symbolic artificiality, by the multiplication of signification and by the dissonant figurations. Any realist, literal representation of bodies is refused.

The opposite of representation is not abstraction, it is death. And the refusal to represent is not aesthetic, but political: if the world of Strafer's films is an altogether dead world, this also posits our own aliveness, as viewers. In this our miniature society of the United States (where Strafer lives) or of Germany (where I live), with our miniature ambulances and our mini-jobs, there is, claustrophobically, currently no other route for women* currently than to *live death*. The near-total claustrophobia of this is mitigated by the fact that the initial stillness of our artificial bodies carries the potential for a coming to life: an emancipatory, exciting horror.

Lisa Jeschke

On June 3, 2021, I spoke with Jota Mombaça, who was in Portugal, while I was in Berlin. It was during the Mercury retrograde in Gemini, which fell in the bends of eclipse season, an astronomical phenomenon that I can't remember having lived through before.

Johanna Hedva: Sorry, I'm a bit fragmented.

Jota Mombaça: Fragmentation is quite connected with my work right now.

JH: What are you making for the show?

JM: I'm presenting a series of drawings, which is unexpected because it comes from an attempt to escape representation. To go deeper into the language of the secret, go deeper into the languages of opacity, into expressive strategies that do not rely on transparency and being understood, or making a point, or criticizing, or reading properly. What I'm trying to do is create a piece that is emotional, because it emerges precisely from a place of broken intimacy and of an intimacy with brokenness. It's about fragmentation in that it comes right after a moment of overthinking. This work is an attempt to hide in abstraction, but not to hide from myself or from the issues I've been dealing with, but to let them rest in opacity while I negotiate with the art world. Of course when I say negotiation, I'm thinking precisely of the position of racialized and queer artists, these big institutions and the messed-up plans they have for us.



Homing Instinct (you're disappearing), 2021
80 drawings, charcoal, graffiti, oil pastel, and permanent marker on paper, each 28 × 36 cm
Courtesy of the artist

JH: That's deep. The world is tired. There's a deep ontological depletion that we have not yet reckoned with.

JM: Definitely. 2020 was a year in which I should have stopped completely, but I didn't.

JH: Same.

JM: What I came up with for HKW comes as a commentary on such an inability to stop, even in the face of the global lockdown era. It will manifest as this structure that's like the ceiling of a house. Each side of it has around forty abstract drawings. They connect with the idea of baselessness and with the experience of being moved in airplanes by art institutions. They are blurred and formless. It's a staining practice. There's also this thing with charcoal. Sometimes it really feels like I'm opening a portal, like a black hole in the paper. That's not a metaphor. It's what I'm trying to do. I am really trying to find something in the paper that I don't know.

JH: It's weird you're saying this because I'm showing drawings in a couple of weeks for the first time in ten years. I decided to show them because I'd reached a limit of what my practice could produce. They're more detritus than product, more a methodology than an object unto itself. It's associative rather than causal, not metaphor, but metonym.

I love what you're saying about opening up another world. I think of your text "The Cognitive Plantation,"¹ when you're writing on negative accumulation in Denise Ferreira da Silva's work, this idea that a black hole is not a metaphor, it's actually there.

JM: That's on point. It's about creating a space that would allow me to lose myself in the practice itself. Last year, when I was losing my place of living again, I was drawing desperately. I was tired of thinking and understanding, putting everything into a discourse that would make more or less sense. I was no longer able to find the possibility of breathing, of existing in critique or thought. So not knowing what I was doing was actually a form of dealing with (and healing from) exhaustion. That's why I came up with this idea of putting everything together and working in excess. I realized there was an excess of drawings, because there was an excess of these things that I couldn't handle through discussion anymore. So I came up with this fragmented structure that exhibits these very broken forms of expression. It's quite connected with air, since it is suspended, but also in the sense of stuttering, of an intellectual formalization that is not possible because it's broken.

JH: I remember you had a tattoo of words that said something about a city...

JM: I have a tattoo that says: "The sea of buildings doesn't reflect the clouds."

¹ Jota Mombaça, "The Cognitive Plantation," *Afterall*, (2020), online <https://www.afterall.org/article/the-cognitive-plantation>, accessed June 29, 2021.



Composition, 2013

Collage print on paper, 126.8 × 102.8 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and WOP, Vienna

Under seen, underfunded, previously, discarded now gold; note that the paper is torn and molded, now white people care, 2013

Painting/collage, acrylic, ink on paper, wood,
 126.2 × 86 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles

Unseen, discarded, now gold- how watching yt people fuck me feels, 2013

Painting/collage, acrylic, ink on paper, wood,
 86 × 125 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles

Velvet Grind, 2012

Painting/collage, paper on cardboard, 76 × 80 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles

The historical record is the raw material for Kandis Williams's practice, extracted and reconfigured to reflect the unnamable narratives of the psyche. These dynamics of appropriation, deconstruction, and reimagining appear in Williams's work across disciplines, including visual art, performance, and publishing, always maintaining an emphasis on the status of the Black figure as a racialized symbol. In her collage practice Williams indexes representations of bodies and gestures, cataloging the material contexts and origins of images at the same time that they disassemble taxonomic structures. Whether sourcing photographs from historical, cultural, or personal archives, Williams's work consistently challenges processes of reconciliation, either embracing or rejecting a pictorial logic of coherence. Within these schemata of representation and rupture, the viewer is left to their own devices, asked at once to draw from and discard the frameworks within which we make meaning of what we see. Poised between discourses including psychoanalysis, critical race theory, semiotics, and social psychology, Williams's work at once incorporates and disassembles divergent schools of thought in a broader project of unveiling the violent logics and underlying fallacies within perceptual experience.

Beyond the dynamics of spectatorship, Williams's work considers the fraught position of Black authorship. Alluding to scholar Hortense Spillers's writings on substitutive identities, defined as the "capacity to represent a self through masks of self-negation," as well as Calvin Warren's concept of "violence without end, without reprieve, without reason or logic," with which the Black subject is incessantly confronted, Williams speaks to the analytic possibilities of her works as they meet a discourse designed to instantaneously and continuously claim, commodify, and outstrip them. In this way, the defiant juxtapositions within Williams's work assert a direction for a new symbolic and historical order, insisting upon the illumination of dissonance.

Night Gallery



“Kieran Walking,” *The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland*, 2018

Single-channel, 27:00 min., film still

Courtesy of the artists

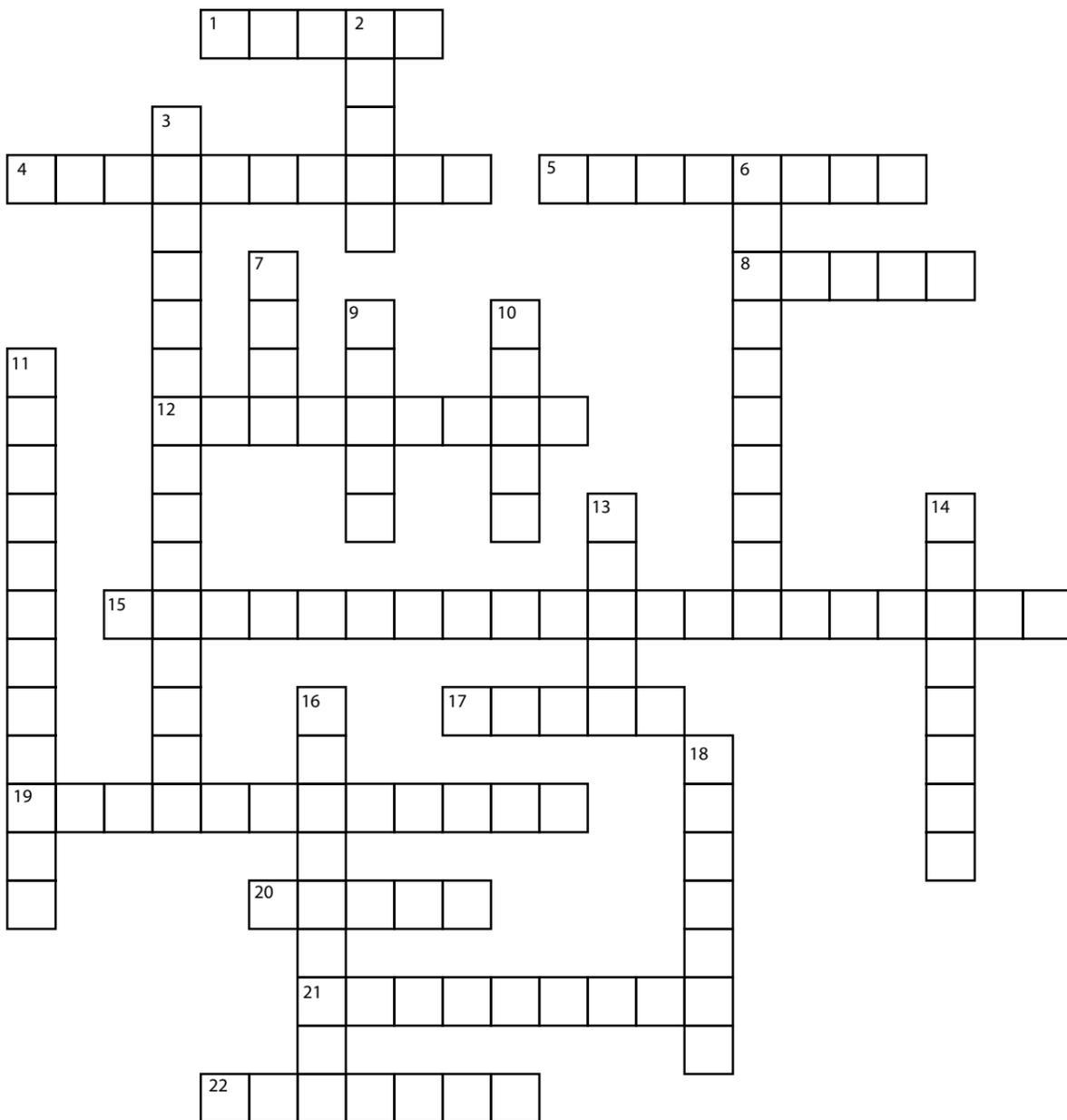
The Karrabing Collective practices forms of collective visual storytelling of survival in the face of intensifying and shifting forms of settler colonial violence. This often improvisational practice is shared among thirty members of the Belyuen community of Australia’s Northern Territory and deeply entangled in communal forms of resilience in everyday life. The Northern Territory has recently seen novel and escalated forms of cataclysmic extractivism and regimes of extinction, paired with a continuous assault on its Indigenous inhabitants. This puts into effect an ongoing apocalypse, orchestrated in the shape of administered divisions that empower the machine of capitalist accumulation secured by the colonial state. This form of cosmological destruction in the making, however, increasingly fails its own hypostatization, its projection onto the teleological horizon of redemptive liberal frontier fantasies and modernizing, technology-driven progress.

It is impossible to describe the Karrabing films in terms of pre-existing genres and their normative codes. Indeed the failure of such attempts at translation and coherent representation—and thus of the liberal settler subject’s quest for the sense and synthesis it serves to reproduce—is a structural feature of speaking from within the violent frontiers of colonial extractivism and the illegibility it creates across all forms of sociality. As such, it would be flawed to use words such as realism, fiction, or the fantastic, the ethnographic, documentary or myth, the weird, horror or the fairytale. That is because the distinctions on which such genre codes are crafted themselves rely on the implicit and historically and materially specific assumptions of an ontological stability that guarantees a pre-established sense of the imaginary and the real. It relies on a proprietary subject’s ability to draw a border that stabilizes itself within this foundational ontological distinction, and is able to navigate its limits without risking the loss of its coherent selfhood and reason. This subject’s aesthetic sense is built on the receptive qualities of that very border and its symbolic transgression.

Nevertheless, *The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland* (2018) has a plot: it imagines an imminent future in which the land has become toxic, plagued by an epidemic that exclusively affects white people. Indigenous children are taken from their families to become medical test subjects in clinical laboratories. After apparently unsuccessful experiments, one of them, Aiden, is released back into his community and ancestral lands, where he finds himself to be a stranger unable to overcome the dissonance and disarray that confronts him. In this land—inseparable from the Dreamtime storytelling through which it is entangled in the embodied cosmology of its ancient inhabitants—the apocalyptic matrix of destruction pries open the functions of language and imaging, and continuously inverts the dichotomies that structure the continuums of life and non-life which consistently appear on their underside. Aiden is taken to meet the Mermaids—real, mythical, or rather liminal figures that inhabit a toxic mud and have been enslaved by settlers and made to demand the sacrifice of Indigenous children. Yet the Mermaids, as figures of subjugated and deformed life, are also the figures that pry open the past and open it toward different temporalities, different origins and futures and socialities beyond accumulation. They have become metaphors against metaphor and its abstracting and generalizing functions, collapsing the distance that it affords and disabling its resolution: the illusion that storytelling and representation could mediate their inherent violence and turn it into an object of consumption.

Rendered simultaneously hallucinatory and material, the Mermaids testify to the insurmountable divide that also cuts through the viewers of this film, the recipient-subject, albeit in different ways, relegating each one to their own position within the biopolitical colonial matrix and the forms of libidinal investment in the very violence that feeds us as subjects of the frontier.

Anselm Franke



A Performance by keyon gaskin, 2021
 Performance, approx. 40:00 min.
 Courtesy of the artist

You can find detailed information on the
 performance program here: hkw.de/illiberalarts

aunt sister's ta(i)l(e)

Across:

- 1 play with these not me
- 4 a way to prepare for death in sweden
- 5 embodied archive
- 8 a way to glide or escape
- 12 a supremest non-entity that seeks to determine value of creativity (2 words)
- 15 an invention used to steal inventions and capitalize them (2 words)
- 17 a necessary state of relaxation and escape
- 18 push back against colonized time
- 19 a generally accepted enemy of human supremest/anthropocentric ways of being
- 20 somewhere to be indoctrinated or economic satus
- 21 one of the prnciple ways we acquire hold and digest information according Toni Morrison
- 22 generally accepted or enforced tales of the past told by oppressors

Down:

- 2 the whitest form of communication
- 3 all i got to do (4 words)
- 6 a root of all evil
- 7 a state of not
- 9 a writing tool formed in water
- 10 a large body with bodies in it
- 11 a way to share and protect information by giving from and keeping it in bodies
- 13 one who exists, invents, cooks, escapes, cares for kin, and relates to the land despite capture and brutal conditions imposed via violence
- 14 form of middle management
- 16 formerly do not pass point around prisons, currently professional due dates
- 18 a state of being in an imperialist world

Answers on page 75



Health as Individual vs. Health as Social, 2021

Two-channel HD color video installation, 30:00 min., video still
 Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf

The Common Sense, 2014–2015

Multi-channel color video installation, HD video,
 phase 1, 30:00 min.
 Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf

In her politically groundbreaking text “Sick Woman Theory” from 2016, Johanna Hedva draws a large frame around the figure of the “Sick Woman,” and emphasizes: “The Sick Woman is who capitalism needs to perpetuate itself. Why? Because to stay alive, capitalism cannot be responsible for our care—its logic of explanation requires that some of us die.” An important millennial generation of poets, artists, and writers—including Hedva—started to speak from sick, weak, unhealthy, incapacitated bodies that cannot find a place within capitalism’s bio-power life model and its public space, even as protestors. Her words resonate even more deeply from within the eclipse of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the public healthcare systems rendered vulnerable and dysfunctional by capitalism collapsed or were brought to the brink of it. Those who are “sick” got even more “sick” and those who risked their lives on the front lines to keep the healthcare systems functioning became more visible. Contagious surfaces and contaminated skin blocked the view onto those immersive and fluid environments favored by liberal image regimes, making humans more acutely conscious of their bodies, of their vulnerabilities, and of the spaces they occupy.

Melanie Gilligan introduced her artistic understanding of dialectics as a method geared towards a systemic analysis in the medium of film in the 2000s. Her format, which mimics those of fictional television series (before series began to consume the distribution networks once dominated by the movie industry) and incorporates sociopolitical commentary on labor, economy, and politics, took shape in *Popular Unrest* (2010), *Self-capital* (2010), and before that in *Crisis in the Credit System* (2008), Gilligan’s first large-scale video work that set the artist on a trajectory of making films that are explicitly opposed to capitalism and its social mechanisms. The major financial crisis and recession triggered by the Lehmann Brothers collapse in 2008 was the point of departure for her analysis, the tip of the iceberg visible above the surface of the water.

At that point, the millennial generation was just entering the workforce and was therefore the most heavily impacted. The thoughtful dialogues she scripted reflecting an acutely generational and materialist viewpoint were complemented by different Marxist critiques. *The Common Sense* (2014) revealed more of Gilligan’s curiosity about where we are as individuals cognitively, psychologically, and corporeally as we participate in the operation of the “business,” either willingly or unwillingly. How do we react and embody our reactions? And how do we react in relation with each other, and how are these relational reactions woven into the fabric of our society?

Her new work, *Health as Individual vs. Health as Social*, departs from a personal turning point. Her sociopolitical analysis of capitalism makes way for an accentuation of the individual, corporeal, psychological, and cognitive borders that make up a human being and the care to maintain those borders that makes us a collective. This directional shift takes place because Gilligan has decided to script her own condition, the multiple sclerosis that she has lived with for many years and which has drastically changed her life and her understanding of care, something she previously refrained from sharing in her public life as an artist. This script, *Health as Individual*, is accompanied by the interviews she carried out on the ground in Berlin, shot during the summer with different individuals; workers from different communities whose situations changed drastically with the pandemic. Her approach is reminiscent of the Cinéma vérité strategies used by Pier Paolo Pasolini in *Comizi d’amore* (Love Meetings, 1964) where he interviewed a broad spectrum of Italians about sexual attitudes—men and women, liberal students and traditional villagers, football stars and soldiers, from the industrial north to the rural south. Gilligan holds the microphone to her participants to investigate how *Health as Social* is shaped by capitalism’s twisted logic of who lives and who dies, to question how we can develop a collective logic of care.

Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu

Wax from the series
The Selection of Works on Paper, 2018–2020
 Painting, watercolor on paper, 40 × 30 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Polana Institute, Warsaw



The members of the jury, among them Trumpists draped in the American flag, look on as a magical lightning bolt strips a drag queen activist defendant of her handcuffs and drags her inquisitor to the ground (*Witch Trial, Salem*, 2018). Although they assume that she is the one who is possessed, the exorcism will not be performed on her; on the contrary, she will drive out the devils inhabiting the judge, who is dressed in the robes of a priest. His tongue lolls out of his grotesque face, while his demon, a phallus incarnate, writhes in torment over the abyss.

Exorcizamus te, omnis immundus spiritus. When Mikołaj Sobczak uses the “communicative obviousness”¹ of painted icons against them, hell is empty, all offspring are social outcasts, and all repressed instinctive impulses are present: witches, bloodsuckers, poltergeists, zombies, and faggots. In ecstatic watercolor paintings the stigmatized—with garish big-hair wigs, extra-long nails, and fishy drag make-up—bare the yearnings and the suffering that their mistreated souls and naked bodies feel in hospital beds, on the gallows, in forests, and especially on the street—and they do it like there’s no tomorrow. Now and then they overpower their possessed tormentors with rainbow flags in place of crucifixes; their head-on smash-ups with bureaucrats, dyed-in-the-wool Catholics, and right-wing extremists devolve into a kind of burlesque theater. It recalls the avant-garde of Polish drag and the Krakow artists’ theater of the 1920s and ’30s, *Cricot*. While historical depictions such as Joseph Baker’s lithograph *The witch no. 1* (1892) have branded the “witch” Tituba as the most well-known of Salem’s scapegoats, in his corrective chronicles of the present moment situated between meta-dramatic pop folklore and political realism Sobczak portrays the targets of today’s thin-skinned, polarizing binarisms, the non-conformists and the marginalized, as possessors of proto-authoritarian power. With their Herculean bodies and their steel shields, they seem to rise up in revolt, in spite of all their vulnerability, against every attempt to subjugate them. Real government resolutions against “homosexual propaganda” and “gender ideology” and restrictions on protest and abortion clash with an intervening utopia of queer futurity:² utopian imagery that activist groups made use of during the AIDS crisis to liberate oppressed flesh-and-blood bodies from

31 works from the series

The Selection of Works on Paper, 2018–2020
 Painting, watercolour on paper, dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the artist

At the Pier
Candles
Cult
Close
Dancing on the Corpses
Die Nacht
Exorcism
Firejob
Guns
Ham Exorcism
Hanging
In The Hospital
Invisible Work
Kiss
Mask
Naktloopers
Nightmare
Possession
Rainbow Exorcism
Rape
Sleeping Weles
The Border
The Death of a Poet
The Death of an Impersonator
The Hug in Jasmin
The New Kingdom (Protest)
The Speech
Trial
Unburied Gogol
Zombie and Bokor

Courtesy of the artist and Polana Institute, Warsaw

¹ David Gugerli and Barbara Orland, eds., *Ganz normale Bilder: Historische Beiträge zur visuellen Herstellung von Selbstverständlichkeit*, Zurich: Chronos, 2002, p. 10.

² José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York: NYU Press, 2009.

state terror, its governmentalities, and the myths and metaphors it imposed. The ubiquitous need for demythologization is also symbolized by the white ceramic tiles laid out in a grid and the painted faux versions on canvas (*New Kingdom*, 2019), the ornamentation of which recalls baroque-classical Delftware. The tile motifs avoid the sort of sublime depictions of higher beings and gods (such as Odin, the divine father) that are often instrumentalized for the production of fascist imagery, and resist the urge to supply the past with an ideological foundation.

Instead, they engage in a queer reading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and imagine the resurrection (symbolized by the snail) or even reconstitution of a political subject: a subject able to exist in the interstices between overlapping social fields, beyond the state, culture, and identity. An ironic skepticism is inscribed in every one of these images, revealing that it is not ultimately the "rainbow plague"³ that is catching, but rather a paranoid delirium that results when the masses are stirred up to believe that they are threatened and need protection.

Faced with the image, this skepticism expresses itself as the carrier of *one* particular truth, and shakes firmly held beliefs. Well aware that populisms are always connected to convulsions that upset the foundations of hegemony, to the line of conflict that runs between those in positions of power and the underdogs,⁴ it has the potential to turn symmetrical codes of life into asymmetrical ones. These codes find their satisfaction beyond the bounds of friend-or-foe thinking—in the playing out of conflicts in which opponents do not entirely disengage from one another but seek to convert the homogeneous body of the people to the practice of pluralistic thinking.

³ The expression "rainbow plague" was coined by the Archbishop of Krakow, Marek Jędraszewski.

⁴ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, 1985.

Elisa R. Linn

The New Kingdom, 2019

Ceramics, acrylic on 256 ceramic tiles, each 11.5 × 11.5 cm; total dimensions 210 × 210 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Polana Institute, Warsaw

The New Kingdom, ca. 2020

Painting, acrylic on canvas, around 204 × 204 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Polana Institute, Warsaw

Witch Trial (Salem), 2018

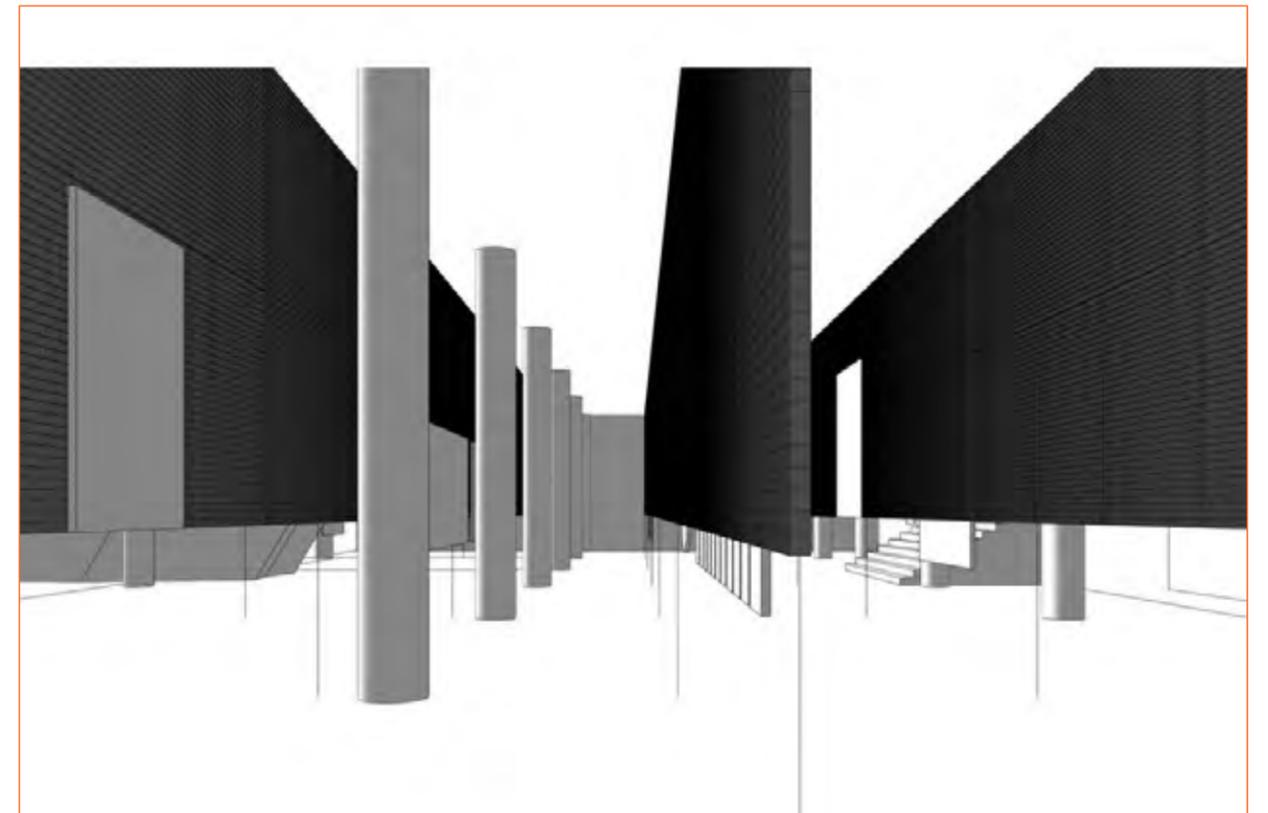
Painting, acrylic on canvas, 120 cm diameter
Courtesy of Tomasz Pasiek Collection, Warsaw and Polana Institute, Warsaw

Exhibition text in simplified language

Welcome to the **Illiberal Arts** exhibition. Here we introduce you to its most important ideas by looking at the exhibition design and 5 of the 26 artistic positions.

Borders and Order

We enter the exhibition hall and stand in front of a metal lattice room divider. We cannot move freely through the space. We are constricted. We walk along the first divider. Others are suspended from the ceiling. They divide the gallery into separate pathways. Many works of art are attached to the metal partitions. To see them, we have to adjust our movements to the way they're arranged in the space. We become part of the exhibition's design. This was created by artist **Anne Imhof** and the architects of **sub**.



Exhibition architecture by Anne Imhof in collaboration with sub

Dividers separate things. They're often made of gratings or grids. We find them everywhere: in railings, graph paper and, computer pixels. They help us get oriented. They also constrain us.

There are also other kinds of boundaries. Day after day, we experience how people are treated differently—due to their appearance, origin, or profession. Article 3 of the German constitution states: “All persons are equal before the law.” However, this principle is applied quite differently to different people.

The European social order is “**liberalism**”—from the Latin word *liber*, which means “free.” Liberalism means: every person should live freely but not infringe on other people's freedom. But in this society, freedom is determined by how much you own. The more you own, the freer you are. If you don't have property, you're not very free.

Personal freedom is linked to capitalism. Like liberalism, the capitalist order shapes society through property. It aims to make the capitalist economy succeed. It's not concerned with human survival. People who have no possessions must always fight to survive.

This doesn't just apply to tangible things like houses or money. Education, knowledge, and your family background are also important. In capitalist and liberal systems, they mean freedom and power. Many people don't have power because of their gender, skin color, or where they come from. Most people are unfree: they depend on money, other people, and their rules. They have to work for people who own property. And they are subject to the laws that protect their employers' things.

This condition can be called “illiberal”: unfree, unjust, restricted. The opposite of liberal. Liberalism makes many people unfree. It makes their lives illiberal. This exhibition examines questions about freedom and the lack of it.

Exclusion and Violence

The film “The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland” tells of this lack of freedom. It's about people who live in a world that was conquered by Europeans.

The **Karrabing Film Collective** come from Australia. Group members belong to the country's Indigenous population—Australia's first inhabitants. They lived there long before Europeans occupied their country by force.



Karrabing Film Collective, **The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland**, 2018. Video still.

The film shows a dangerous landscape: burning forests, uninhabitable regions, and poisoned swamps. When European settlers arrived around 1800, they destroyed nature and the livelihoods of Australia's first peoples. They still do—for example, by extracting raw materials like coal and natural gas.

The film describes the situation like a scary fairy tale. A person's skin color determines if they survive. White people can't live in the poisoned landscape. Only Indigenous people are not affected by the deadly threat of toxic mud.

The main character is a young Indigenous person. His name is Aiden. When he was a baby, he was taken from his family and abused in a medical experiment. The research was supposed to save the white population from disaster. The film begins when Aiden is allowed to leave. He wanders through his destroyed homeland and meets relatives on the way. They tell him about the sinister events that led to his misfortune and that of other children.

Although the story looks like science fiction, something similar really happened. Until the 1970s, the Australian government and the church forcibly took Indigenous children from their families. They placed them in institutions, where they “re-educated” and abused them.

Colonial Violence

Indigenous people in Australia have been oppressed all over the world. They still are. Their lifestyles and livelihoods have been attacked. Like Indigenous people in Australia, whole populations in Africa, Asia, and the Americas have also been brutalized for centuries. European governments conquered entire continents and founded “colonies” there—on stolen land. Europeans exploited indigenous labor and fertile land. This still happens in many places. The rich parts of the world are becoming richer.

Colonial violence is obvious in wealthy countries, too. White people’s desires and ideas have ruled the world for centuries. Western art, too. Museums were created 200 years ago—when Europeans were conquering whole continents. Museums have long presented European art as the story of great, mostly male, masters. They have devalued non-Western artists. The art in European museums is linked to colonial violence.

Life-Work

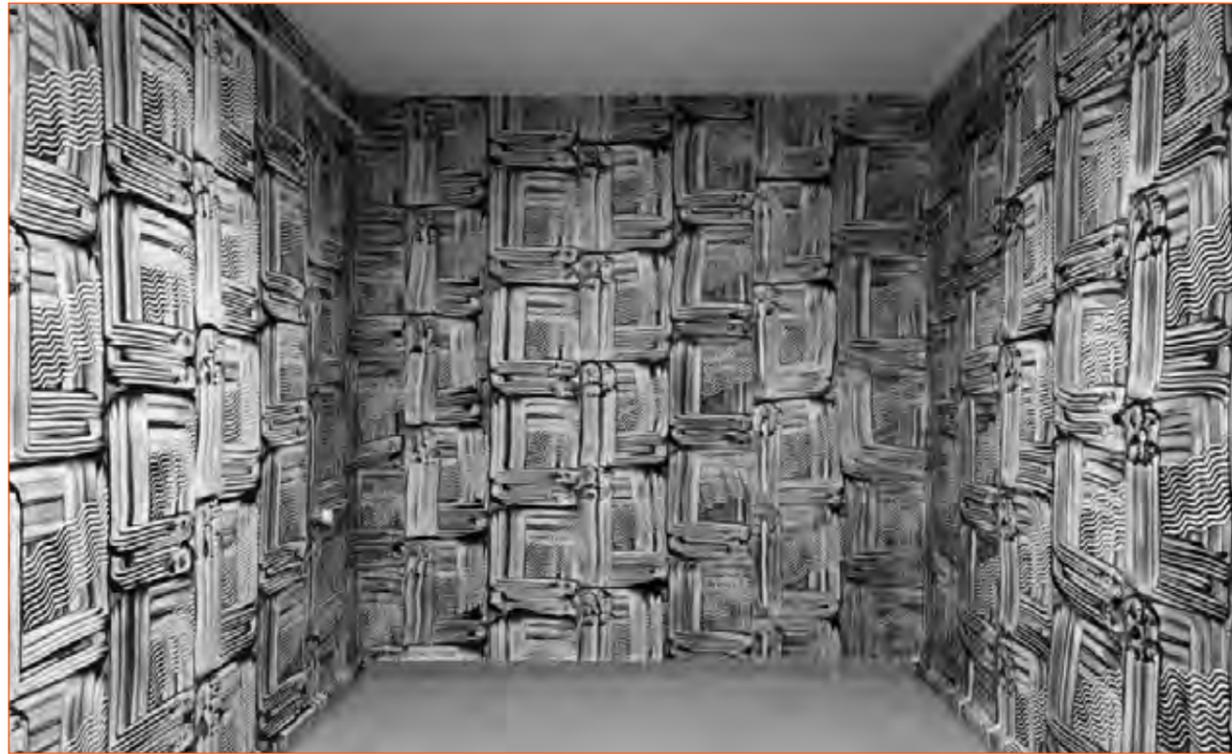
The **Illiberal Arts** exhibition shows artworks that make such violence visible. The liberal order is becoming more and more illiberal. And injustices caused by liberalism are becoming more and more visible. Many excluded groups demand to be heard. The artists in the exhibition come from different parts of the world and have had very different experiences. Their ways of life produce forms exhibited here as “life-works.”

Life-work is a term that was first used 100 years ago by the Berlin writer Lu Märten. It means that art cannot be separated from peoples’ lives. Märten wanted a person’s entire life’s work included in art. Nothing was to be left out. For Märten, museum art was far removed from life: the artworks had nothing to do with human needs. They didn’t improve anyone’s life or help them to survive. That’s still true today, so many people don’t think art is important. Or they think it’s only made for rich people.

But doesn’t art have much more to offer? Märten suggests that we look not only at the art but also at the form. People collectively shape lives everywhere. Many artists feel limited when only their individual work is counted. That prevents us from seeing all that we can create together.

Community/Solidarity

The more than thirty members of the Karrabing Film Collective think their film is much more than a work of art. It’s part of their community life-work. Their art is always a political tool. They want it to change lives. They use art to empower their community and examine their living conditions.



Philip Wiegard, **Captain Hook**, 2015 (installation view, photo: Aya Schamoni)

Philip Wiegard's art also involves people working in groups. The artist pays children and young people to make wallpaper. As we approach this work, we notice the wallpaper's irregular patterns. The children don't use brushes—they spread the paint with their hands.

Attached to one of the metal gratings is a picture of many small dogs. They look like paintings. But they're made of Fimo—a polymer clay. Fimo is baked in an oven until it becomes hard. This technique can be practiced in any home, so millions of people use it. However, work made of polymer clay is not usually acknowledged as "art."

Wiegard incorporates similar small pictures of dogs, sunsets, and patterns that other people have made out of polymer clay into his own artworks. That way, he creates art that respects the polymer clay community's life-work. The artist also provides practical instruction on his YouTube channel. Wiegard learned the craft from videos by the polymer clay community. Now he shares his knowledge and joy from working with polymer clay online.

Wiegard's videos also show how to make polymer clay pictures featuring barbed wire, chains, and bubble wrap. These motifs are unusual for polymer clay artists. Here we see the grid again. It seems to organize Wiegard's work.

Society



Henrike Naumann, **Evolution Chemnitz**, 2020 (installation view, photo: Roman Mensing)

We rarely see colorful wallpaper and polymer art in museums. The objects that **Henrike Naumann** uses in her work don't really fit into art exhibitions, either. They're pieces of furniture, vases, and candlesticks from living rooms of people in Chemnitz. The TV sets in Naumann's "Evolution Chemnitz" could have come from a flea market. They play five videos of events that happened in Chemnitz over a period of 100 years. The city of Chemnitz is in the east of Germany. It was part of the GDR until East and West Germany were unified.

In her work, Naumann shows how different political concepts have changed the lives of the inhabitants of Chemnitz. The first video depicts the workers' hardships and struggles after World War I—around 1919. The second video re-enacts the Soviet occupation right after World War II. The third video shows West German business-people taking over East Germany

after the GDR was dissolved. These big changes created a sense of insecurity and injustice in many East Germans. Some of their anger led to the rise of far-right groups. These are often called neo-Nazis or "new" Nazis. They are extremely violent and mainly attack people from other backgrounds or people who appear weaker. Two other videos show neo-Nazis and the scene of their crimes.

The stories are set in a Chemnitz hotel. Actors use its furniture and objects to re-enact these violent moments in the city. Henrike Naumann was born in the GDR. For her, the history of the GDR is not over. The history of the people from Chemnitz lives on in the objects she uses for her art.



Jordan Strafer, **PEP (Process Entanglement Procedure)**, 2019. Video still.

Horror

We also see violence in the video works by **Jordan Strafer**. In the video “PEP” she uses actors and dolls to tell a story that seems like a bad dream or a horror film. The scenes are dim. We suspect that a woman is being tortured by two masked men. We can’t see clearly, but we know they’re murdering her. Despite their crimes, the men are not put on trial in the video. Instead, men interrogate a different woman. They humiliate her and ask over and over: “Are you a little girl?” All the courtroom figures are dolls. Artificial tears stream down the doll-woman’s face. In the murder scene, the blood on the white snow looked fake. Everything in the video appears artificial, almost comical. Strafer doesn’t want anything to look real—neither the men nor the women. Only the violence is real: the horror of a woman’s life. Jordan Strafer shows how women have to stand up to male violence every day to survive.

We don’t know exactly what we’re seeing in the Karrabing Film Collective video or in Jordan Strafer’s work. The boundaries between fantasy and reality dissolve. Shapes and bodies blur.



Stephan Dillemath, **The Pleasure of Now**, 2016 (installation view)

Broken Liveliness

A plaster dummy hangs from the ceiling. Artist **Stephan Dillemath** made it and hung it there. The figure is broken. Individual body parts hang separately in the air. There’s also a third arm, hanging like a spare part. And there are gears—like in a machine. The dummy only looks like a whole human body from one spot in the room.

This exhibition shows us damaged bodies and lives. It’s about vulnerability, disintegration, and decay. Lots may be broken but life goes on. Unhealed wounds are displayed. Injuries are part of life. Both internal and external wounds—caused by past and present violence.

The artists in the exhibition don’t want to design a better world. They show how hard life is in the here and now. Questions remain about a freer and better future. The exhibition doesn’t try to solve the world’s problems. It creates a space for artists to make their life experiences visible as life-works: exclusion and violence, destruction and horror—as well as community and vitality.

Ariane Pauls and Norbert Witzgall



Pedestal fragment, Siegesallee, marble (ca. 1900), Spandau Citadel, 2021

Naturalisierung/Naturalisation, 2021

Installation, marble elements, latex tongues,
dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and loan from Land Berlin

Production Assistance: Mónica Martins Nunes,
Erfan Aboutalebi, and Lisa Peters
Thanks to Carmen Mann and Bad Muskau

Natascha Sadr Haghghighian's project for *Illiberal Arts* takes as its starting point the question of what to do with the statues that constituted the infelicitous Siegesallee in Berlin. Commissioned by Kaiser Wilhelm II., the ensemble of ninety-six white marble sculptures depicting Prussian royalty was ridiculed by contemporary critics but survived calls for its demolition after the Kaiser's 1918 abdication and the subsequent demise of the German monarchy. In 1939, the statues were moved to make room for Albert Speer's urban plan, and reinstalled at a new, grander location, only to be dismantled by the British occupation forces in 1947. Even then, most were salvaged by a state curator, who interred them in the grounds of the Schloss Bellevue, where they were rediscovered in 1979. The surviving statues were kept at the Lapidarium, on Hallesches Ufer, until being moved to Spandau Citadel, in 2009.

In 1953, French filmmakers Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, and Ghislain Cloquet produced the film essay *Les statues meurent aussi*, to comment on the death of African sculptures, their world undone by colonial plunder. In contradistinction, the undead statues of the Siegesallee could be construed as a testament to the enduring force of white supremacy, the immovable backdrop against which political ideologies like monarchism, national socialism, or liberal democracy play out. What else can it mean to preserve the Siegesallee ensemble at a moment when similar statues are being toppled? Which subjectivities are extinguished in order for Enlightenment values to assert their hegemony? Pointing to the spatial strategies that inform the state's memorialization of the past, the artist intimates that the politics of remembering and forgetting, the making and unmaking of history, are tools of institutionalized power, put to use in order to secure control over collective memory, and by extension, identity. At around the same time the Siegesallee was built, the Prussian general Lothar von Trotha and his Second Reich imperial army were waging a war on the Herero and Nama people, in present-day Namibia, resulting in the 1904–1908

genocide that Germany failed to acknowledge until 2004, and even then only half-heartedly. It is the obscuring of these continuities between Second and Third Reich that allows the Prussian past to be lionized and celebrated by the same German polity that decries Nazi-era crimes.

You boulevard, I gutter, the artist writes, evoking Kaiser Wilhelm's infamous inaugural speech, the "Gutter Speech" (*Rinnsteinrede*), on the occasion of the opening of the Siegesallee, in which he opposed a commitment to tradition, and the eternal laws of beauty and harmony—"true art"—to Modernism's descent into the gutter. Whereas the Kaiser felt only "dignified" art could elevate the masses from their lowly condition, Sadr Haghghighian empowers the gutter to talk back, defiantly, by literally giving it a tongue.

When the hands that actually do all the building, the cleaning, and the repairing are othered by the state, and thus rendered invisible, what would the world look like if those who are forced to constantly push back against, denounce, and call out oppression were able to build monuments instead of toppling them? This is the question Sadr Haghghighian poses. Freeing the plinths of the Siegesallee's statues from the ideological narrative that still haunts them, and regrouping them into clusters comprising "natural" stones and "unnatural" stones made of concrete, the artist plays with the chauvinist undertones of the word "naturalization," while her amorphous slabs of latex resembling tongues make a tongue-in-cheek reference to both the mother tongue and sticking out your tongue, as well as to polyglossia and pluriversality. Fleishy and flexible, the latex tongues, reminiscent of the layers of skin snakes shed, coil around the marble fragments and the concrete, creating a protean community, unconfined by the forms of actuality. Haghghighian's is a monument to the unmonumental, to change and mutability, to the prospect of undoing whatever was carved in stone, and to the progressive promise of a plurinational polity.

Ana Teixeira Pinto

A Collective Effort in Sensecore

Elisa R. Linn & Nicholas Grafia in dialogue about *Gaze Face I & II*, and *Times New Roman (As Page Turning As Eye Opening)*

A painting might itself function as a door, an in-between state, a screen, a billboard, or let's say as a public pillory (*The Cosby Show* is over, for now). In a similar way as the door (with an image of Lisa Bonet on the left and Bill Cosby on the right) it can become an expression of "ideological binarity." One might think, for example, of Lacan's psychoanalytical view on *Hommes vs. Dames* toilet cubicles. Here, the door morphs into a separative imperative that assigns different places to individuals intervening in the way people satisfy their natural (fecal) needs: an *isoloir* that serves not only to isolate sexes from each other but moreover to separate an individual from a community. #Get Out.

The family portrayed in that series is, after all, an example of the black "assimilated middle class." *Let's talk about betrayal and collective disappointments. Who was Lisa really "letting down" here? Who wins and who loses? It all feels like a blurry line of mixed interests and governance.*

Gaze Face I, 2021

Digital painting on alu-dibond, 250 × 162 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects, Berlin

Gaze Face II, 2021

Digital painting on alu-dibond, 250 × 162 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects, Berlin



Times New Roman (As Page Turning As Eye Opening), 2020

Digital painting on alu-dibond, 200 × 400 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects, Berlin

Such a "restraint" can keep someone trapped in a place, "psychologically locked down, locked out," as bell hooks would put it when she pins down racial stigma. In her eyes, anyone who does not bring up the need to "radicalize [their] consciousness" collaborates with a system of othering. *The Cosby Show* was celebrated as the first all-black program to avoid racial stereotyping in 1984. It did, however, trigger "enlightened racism" through paying lip service to equality. Still, "whiteness frames television," (Beretta Smith-Shomade) providing a platform to form parasocial relationships with TV characters who traverse pseudo-authentic black homes.

Talking about the "nuclear family showing its true colors on screen," the Trojan horse of white middle-class supremacy: What is really at stake when Lisa Bonet and her on-screen father Bill Cosby publicly feud over her appearance in films and media outlets that differ from the morals and values that the Cosby show has been mediating for years?

To what extent is it possible to produce independent self-images, envisioning oneself differently from skewed representations that abhor convolution?

In what way does the format of the serial factor into the creation of a narrative canon, one-sided memory formation, and emotional identification? In terms of representational politics, the roles of the scriptwriter, producer, director, and executing actors are closely connected.

Did Lisa keep it way TOO REAL? Showing life's complexity by taking up different roles for different reasons and contexts? How to right the wrongs in this case, without losing sight of the pragmatic dimensions? You might think that it's only the cast who has a certain responsibility and compliance

in regards to both the producer's demands and viewers' expectations.

Maybe it's through the gateway of fans and subversive fan fiction that TV series and media representations as such can find a discursive framing, or contextual reshifting in their "afterlife." How can fan fiction potentially "save" a fundamentally flawed narrative, conceptualized under questionable premises? If we are talking Trojan horses of subversion, is fan fiction then actually a way of creating relatable content that is closer to what many conscious viewers would see as their lives?

What if the Cosby production team had hired fan fiction writers to set certain misconceptions straight?

While serving the audience's comfort zone, well-meant portrayals run the risk of becoming corrupted by compassion fatigue: more and more abstract, an incomplete version of themselves that will in fact be remembered as the ONLY version. What is supposed to ensure that reading is "easy on the eye" created the foundation for internationally recognized classic norms—intellectual writers' preferred norms that got their 15 minutes of viral fame on Twitter. "Reveal the deepest part of yourself: Which font and which size do you write in?"

"Times New Roman, size 12 font, 1.5 spacing, like a human being"

"Surely anyone who doesn't do Times New Roman 12 pt is a monster??"

Form over monstrous content. Is this when letters and words become bigger than the subjects and images they are supposed to convey and reflect?

Difference in its embodiment is a poor state of being for engineering subjectivity, but can be an effective position from which to perform. When does the self perform itself, as if nobody's watching?

If I had one word to bestow upon the *homo ludic* corpus of Nicholas Grafia & Mikołaj Sobczak, it would be *eudaimonic*. What does that mean, Aris? I put words in your mind, dear reader, you put breath in my mouth, that's how it works.

In the Netflix original series *Devilman Crybaby*, Lucifer, emblematic of the morning star Venus, is cast out of Heaven for rebelling against the empyrean, as in the 'official' lore. In falling to Earth, he finds what has become known as the Demon race, essentially a species of animals, seem to be extremely adept at surviving amidst all the others in prehistory. Lucifer admires the demons for their simple, powerful, bestial nature. Lucifer changes their name to Satan & becomes intersex to fit in, transmogrified beyond a sexless angel, bearing breasts as accessories to accent their androgynous beauty. Satan seeks revenge, & to that end seeks to rule all of the demons to finally unseat God. When God finds out that Satan is still alive, He launches an attack to kill them & their new ilk, favoring humans as His chosen race for planetary dominion.

Millennia later, The World as we know it is The World as we know it. What happened after God's attack on the Earth, characterized as what decimated the dinosaurs, is that demons learned to camouflage themselves as humans to survive, living among them, procreating in stealth with each other as well as with what we take for granted as Man. Satan, traumatized, reincarnates themselves as a blonde-haired, fair-skinned, blue-eyed boy. He suppresses his memories to aid him in survival, & is found as a baby by an indigenous tribe in the Amazon, who come to worship him for his powers. This tribe, of course, does not abide by the will of God, the ultimate colonizer's Path. Military police from perennially



Peasants, 2021
Performance, approx. 40:00 min.
Courtesy of the artists

You can find detailed information on the performance program here: hkw.de/illiberalarts

fascist Brazil are sent to lay waste to the tribe to continue the total depredation of the Earth in service of global capital in the form of, say, deforestation or another crude oil pipeline. Satan defends the tribe, managing to access his destructive powers to massacre the band of soldiers, but due to not knowing how to control them, he flings himself into the sea. He winds up in Japan, & the story, as we watch, takes place.

The point is this: throughout the show, a constant analogue is being drawn between anyone who is other & the demon race. It is revealed that these digressions from what is beheld as the Normal is a consequence of demons inbreeding with humans, & that forms the bedrock of the show's subtext. Returning to Grafia & Sobczak's works, this is also a central theme. People of every stripe of the rainbow through the filters of race & country struggle to thrive & seek revenge against a world who casts us as abject so express license can be given to kill us. But, like the persona in *Devilman Crybaby*, self-acceptance in all vectors is the key to self-determination. Their corpus, again, is *eudaemonic*, dark kindness for the general welfare, after Aristotle, which is in a better sense, poethical, after Denise Ferreira da Silva. It is an inversion of The World which seeks its End, one that is allied thoroughly with this planet's dispossessed, dead, lost, decried, destroyed, disposed, ghosted, lacunal, less than absent.

I think of everything I've seen from Nick & Miko as keloid ore, overgrown scars that deface The World we all struggle against in our own ways. Speaking of da Silva, I think of those keloids as a byproduct of the overbearing reality of unpayable debt. In the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, there is a process called "The Weighing of the Heart." Usually, a person's heart would be weighed against a feather of the goddess Maat, & if the heart exceeded the feather, the person would be cast into the underworld forever. The overseers & maintainers tend to a global capitalism which has overwritten all prior myths, turning them inside out & placing its own logics in their place. Therefore, Jeff Bezos weighs our bile, our tears, our scars, or any other excess we accrue living our lives in this age against a single hair of girlboss Melinda Gates. If our toil outweighs the hair, we are doomed to an underworld that is, by all offshore accounts, more interesting & will someday overgrow this common plot most of us all know.

Those keloids just appear that way, they're actually stone fruit pits. One day, we'll eat from the trees of Grafia & Sobczak's corrosive generosity.

Aristilde Kirby

The Orakel is our perfect fetish. A real fetish. Not a means, but an end. An end we desire for *Illiberal Arts*. Only, to really be our fetish, it cannot be animated.

little sock The oracle cannot be inanimate either

So, we have to want it dead, to successfully transfer the life we want from it to *Illiberal Arts*:

It cannot be dead, its beingness is a formation of undescrivable its forces its formS —there is a problem with the resource you are looking for, and it cannot be displayed

the Orakel is a non-reproducible (desirous life), an invaluable (un-reified life), a non-productive (miraculous life) set of limbs that are discrete bodies in their own right. The number of limbs can change at any given moment in the process, a limb can be an Orakel Priestess at one moment, and a phantom pain at another, or it can just slide out, into its life, and back in. This makes the Orakel genuinely inconsistent.

It cannot just throw out some art as other life forms—we are divorced from the very domain

It might involuntarily throw up some art, though. And it surely can oraculate art, have its limbs metabolize it. Being redigested, animated, that art would be at a loss. We want that loss. But as the Orakel animates all that comes into it, why would it want to choke on art? It does not want anything. It does not see or hear consistently and its desires float loosely in its fragments. A real fetish is not of service. Rather, fetishists live at the service of their fetish. So why would the Orakel want to choke on the art-shaped remains we amass around it in *Illiberal Arts*? But its choking is why we imagine it as our perfect fetish. Why we want it to exist on this brink of its in-animation: We want it to choke for us! We want it to metabolize *Illiberal Arts*, we want it to animate it.

It does not want anything ever sein kopf ist zur verzweiflung in die Hände gestützt. It only doesn't

But no fetish would swallow the whole world of the fetishists for the fetishists. It is not for them that it exists. Wilhelm Steckel noted that fetishists “fancy themselves to be the only ones enduring such perversion,” that they are “proud of their pathology.”¹ Point taken. But while we produce *Illiberal Arts*, the fetish exists outside of production, it animates, gives way to a “promiscuity of signification.”² Fetishistic appellations do not strain it, they feed it. Within the Orakel we just figure as instigators, as a trivially grandiose pulse. The Orakel parted from the production of *Illiberal Arts* the very moment it came back to life through it.

It was never A, it wasn't B

Now it proceeds beside us, clear of us. And every time we reinitiate contact, it drops us some digestions, in language, in matter, onto the pages of the book, into the space of our art-bound production. But what we get are only dead parts, generous amounts of inanimate scabs, which only the Orakel can undeaden again.

Nails, hair, molting. Body parts. They remain drenched in oracular force, even if they have been thrown into the world. The oracle can't undeaden what is dead

And it will. But not for us. We do still hope we might be close. We still we want it to undeaden *Illiberal Arts*. Maybe it would just slur it, or it might choke so much on it that it dies.

It can apply its bodies into other circulating Ecology

We would not want the Orakel to be dead that way. Rather, it is our perfect fetish because of our desire to be slurred by it. It is in this way that we are fetishists. But the Orakel, like any real fetish, is not “merely ... a 'gadget,' or moral supplement, but the limit of economy ... indeed of every systematicity premised on the division of a space into interior and exterior.”³ As much as we want to be slurred, as fetishists, we are exterior to the Orakel, dead sure.

Kerstin Stakemeier

Showmomstermatriatschüli, 2021
Deformance, dimensions variable
Courtesy of Orakuli



Onlinei-O, 2020
Photo: Anyi Breibaum i.a. Orakuli

¹ Wilhelm Steckel, *Der Fetischismus*, 1922/2018, Erfurt: inktank, p. 99.

² Rosalind C. Morris, “Fetishism (Supposing that it Existed): A Preface to the Translation of Charles de Brosses’s *Transgression*,” in *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea*, eds. Rosalind C. Morris and Daniel H. Leonard, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017, p. xi.

³ Morris, “Fetishism,” p. 171.



Fireflies (Lucciole), 2021

Video installation, color, stereo sound, 16mm digitized, 7:00 min., video still
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2021

Production: Primitive Film, CRAC Sète

Courtesy of the artist, the Feel Good Cooperative, and Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam

At the center of Pauline Curnier Jardin's practice stands the refusal to identify with the masks and markers of violence and the categories and genres of visibility and narratability that sustain and naturalize this violence. Her works animate lived solidarity with violations and subjections, but even more so, with vivid and perpetual rebellions against the total framework of life's subjection. Instead, she breaks open the ideological mechanism of such a naturalization, its cosmological unlivability.

Her new work for *Illiberal Arts* is a collaborative meditation on liminal spaces and desire. The piece was developed together with the sex workers from the Feel Good Cooperative in Rome. This cooperative was co-initiated by the artist in an effort to provide financial assistance to sex workers during the pandemic. It was shot on the margins of the ancient imperial city. Long ago, there used to be fireflies here. Today, the headlights of cars act like searchlights, while suitors spot sex workers through erratic flashes of light. They in turn may be lit up by a flashlight directed at their invisible bodies, a brazier or little bonfire. In this instant, the mostly trans sex workers working and performing there are themselves reminiscent of fireflies. Called *lucciole*, their disappearance was mourned decades ago by the likes of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Pasolini and the socialist ethnologist of southern Italy, Ernesto de Martino, whose writings were influential for Pasolini's late work, were shaped by the myth machine of fascism and acutely aware of its lingering, structural continuity. For them, the advance of the capitalist frontier constituted a veritable cultural apocalypse. Like Curnier Jardin, they were deeply invested in finding regenerative and restorative forms of communal resistance that could counter the libidinal capture by fascism and consumerism alike.

In Italian, *battere* means both to beat and to "prostitute oneself" (prostitutes are called *battonne*). As in beating oneself. Whip and torch are the same object. Pauline Curnier Jardin aimed at filming Italy's ritual processions. Specific in their always syncretic blend of pagan celebration, family morals, communal expenditure, regenerative healing, and metamorphic trance, with the otherworldly and sacrificial Catholic invocations of redemption as well as representative manifestations of modern state power and its biopolitical and militarized social bonds.

Anselm Franke

I want to destroy Philip Wiegard's polymer mosaics with my mouth. First my incisors, then my molars, wreaking havoc on the careful boundaries between colors and shapes, then I'd like to move on to clawing, enjoying the growing pressure of clay under the crescents of my fingernails as I tear them apart. What is this material rage? This want to ravage? To eat. To consume.

When I first saw Philip Wiegard's works, I didn't realize they were made out of polymer clay. I thought they were simply oil paintings made with lots of blue painter's tape and anal precision. Then I came across Wiegard's Instagram account and understood what they really were; not painted or printed, but essentially baked, made with the same widely commercially available clay we all squished in grade school to make brightly colored beads for mom and swollen-hearted BFF necklaces. There is something visceral about this clay that makes you want to squeeze and bite, but Wiegard works with extreme precision, borrowing from the tradition of mosaic, or intarsia, assembling his images from slices of three-dimensional "canes"—logs of polymer clay in which a design runs through the entire length—a method originally used in glass manufacturing, and later adopted for other materials like ceramics, candy, or polymer clay.

Wiegard has his own channel, *Phimo Tutorials* (2.83K subscribers), where he hosts his strangely calming YouTube videos, which open with an undulating graphic and spurt of light electronic keyboard. Even if one has no intention of ever touching polymer clay, one can easily spend twenty-five minutes with Wiegard as he placidly explains how to make a cartoonish bow-tie pasta or Chesterfield couch cane. The videos are

Another (feat. Cordialiyours, ikandiclay, Laylmcidill), 2020

Polymer clay mosaic, 143.5 × 88.3 × 0.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Francis, 2015

Hand-painted wallpaper, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Hey You (feat. Cathyharm), 2020

Polymer clay mosaic, 135 × 82 × 0.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Let's Say (feat. bisenkan), 2019

Polymer clay mosaic, 78.7 × 44.6 × 0.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Tender, 2020

Polymer clay mosaic, 30 × 21.4 × 0.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Kasi Althaus, Elena Peters Arnolds, Kathy Hepburn, Laura L. LePere, Aude Levère, Andrea Victoria Paradiso, Denise Pinnell, Christin Rothe, Suzie Sullivan, Amy Sutryn, Rosana VanHorn, and Philip Wiegard

Sunset Suites, 2021

Mixed-media polymer clay paintings, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artists

Shift, 2021

Hand-painted wallpaper, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

always framed from above, shot downward onto a sea-foam green cutting mat, his fast-moving hands paired with careful explanations, while cleverly sped-up demonstration sections are set to electronic music. It is all so palatable. So digestible. And if the comments are any indication, others agree.

GrittyKitty50: *Another great tutorial with clear, concise instructions.*

DanielWang: *Crazy and brilliant and somehow very funny—because you explain this unusually intricate process in such a clear simple way, as if you were baking a pie. Hehee :-)*

HelenWeinberg: *Clearly you are a fine and patient artist and the incredible results show it in spades!!! Just when I was thinking of giving up this hobby that has consumed me for many years, I stumbled upon you. Many thanks for your generosity in sharing what you have learned*

And due to Wiegard's willingness to share his process without paywalls (something which is not always the case), he seems to have firmly established himself within the polymer community, developing a healthy following and engaged fan base, with his videos receiving thousands of views. It feels particularly wholesome, like a knitting circle of school teachers who all take the time to complement each other's work as they network and market their skills. And it's important to note: not only are they marketing their final oven-fired pieces—but canes, still wet, encased in Saran Wrap and tucked into hand-addressed boxes, are advertised on websites and blogs. These unfired canes are then available to be used (sliced) by other artists, creating a blurry chain of labor and intellectual property. If you look through the comments on any of the social media platforms or dig into the history of polymer clay, it is a nearly all-female sport. Polymer clay was invented in the 1930s and first used by Käthe

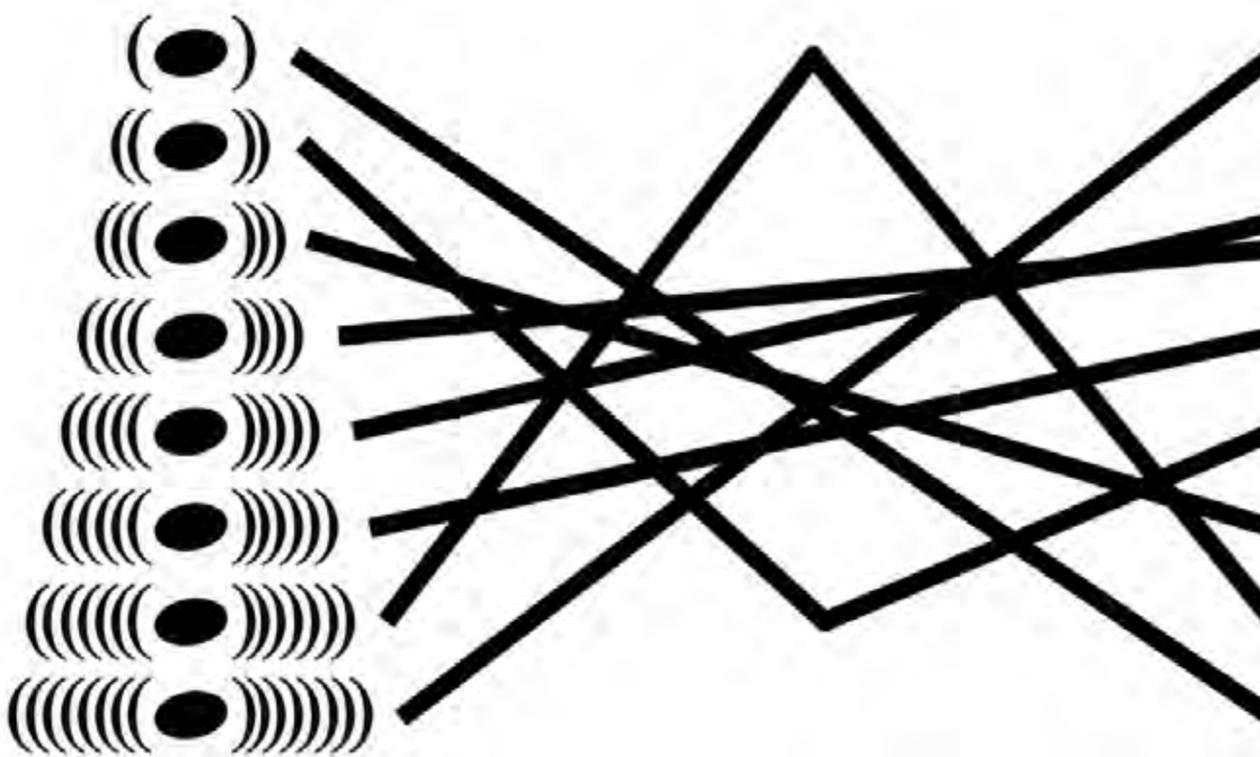
Kruse, the famed German doll-maker who tested out a new oil byproduct called *iglett*. Kruse loved the material but it didn't hold paint, so she abandoned the leftover drum in storage. A decade later, Käthe's daughter Sofie discovered the remaining *iglett* and immediately recognized its potential, and thus FIMO clay was born, just as the term "DIY" was taking off. What made FIMO clay so unique was that it required no kiln or specialized training—it was advertised as "oven clay," and anyone could use it from the comfort of their home. This domestication of production cemented FIMO as a medium for kids and moms, which over time became an image that has stood in the way of the polymer clay community being taken seriously. There is a clear, almost desperate desire for polymer clay to be recognized as *real* craft or *real* art, not a hobby, which is evinced in Facebook group threads, where "domestic" is a dirty word.

Calla Henkel



Captain Hook, 2015

Painting/hand-painted wallpaper, starch glue and acrylic on non-woven tissue, 55 strips, each 400 × 75 cm. Photo: Aya Schamoni, installation view Galerie M, Berlin, 2015
Courtesy of the artist



Sketch for *Storm Pattern*, 2021
Multi-channel sound installation, 15:00 min., and print on textile, 305 × 255 cm
Courtesy of the artist

After Marina Rosenfeld and I hosted a talk by Branden W. Joseph at Bard College in 2013, I was left with a disturbingly unresolved question about the porous bleed between Joseph’s research on avant-garde music and his research on music and torture.

[I]f one believes that music can produce a subjectivity, which is the belief that comes attached to the notion of music providing access to the sublime, it then follows that a godlike music that can, so to speak, give life, can also take it away. Thus the disciplinary stakes, for me, are about this fundamental belief in the power of music that seems [...] to lie at the cultural heart of the Western domination of the rest of the world. If you start from [Gary] Tomlinson’s understanding of the definition of music in Western culture, it’s logical that you would end up using that music to batter people.¹

What then are we to make of musics that hone in on and consciously exploit this sublime disciplinary power of music—musics by artists at the center of Joseph’s inquiry, such as Tony Conrad and La Monte Young? Would the difference between the loud, de-subjectifying effects of music in torture and the loud, de-subjectifying effects of “drone music” be simply one of consent? Catherine Christer Hennix, an artist from this milieu whose formulation of psychotropic sound brings this question to a point in its potential for weaponizability, might not disagree.

The interpretive somersaults necessary to *recognize* (let alone interpret) Raven Chacon’s *Storm Pattern* allow this broad question of music as an instrumentalizable technology of (de-)subjectification to become differently audible. Contrary to an artist like La Monte Young, to DARPA, or to your first impression of his work, the basis of *Storm Pattern* is not an artist or

engineer’s particular vision or ‘goal’ to be projected at or onto a listener. Brutally, at that level of ‘vision,’ of instrumentalization—in a conceptual, even structuralist register—there is absolutely no difference between composer and torturer. What appears in this exhibition as a spatialized multi-channel audio “piece,” an excellent *trompe l’oreille* of “contemporary music” or “sound art” (down to its A-440-centered suggested homage to James Tenney—a teacher of Chacon) is in fact a staging of the audible traces of actual surveillance drones—of information weapons. And further, not just any drones, but countersurveillance drones deployed to the aide of the broad assembly of, as Chacon puts it, “visitors and hosts at the Standing Rock Water Protector camp in 2016.”

To what degree is this information audible in Chacon’s work? To what degree is it operative in your listening pleasure? Or rather: why *didn’t* you hear this before reading this text? Is Chacon’s compositional layering and structuring of the raw audio materials so “musical” as to have led you astray? Is the institutional context and presentational infrastructure *that* strong so as to unequivocally ‘artify’ the materials? Or is that specific paradigm of Western music’s “power” described above by Cusick so internalized in our reception that we struggle to hear otherwise? That we in the “art context,” in *this* art context, hear this work without question as Art, as autonomous music, that we hear *through* or *over* its specificity—material and conceptual—this is our problem. Chacon’s work leaves us sitting with that, with our dirty, universalizing confusion of pleasure and violence.

Bill Dietz

¹ Suzanne G. Cusick and Branden W. Joseph, “Across an Invisible Line: A Conversation about Music and Torture,” in *Grey Room*, no. 42 (2011): pp. 12–13.

Since the late seventies, the Chinese government has dispatched thousands of officials to Singapore to study its economic and social policies. As one of the few countries explicitly named by Deng Xiaoping as a model for China's reform agenda, the city-state was crucial in reshaping the political imagination of an entire generation of Chinese leadership at a time when "the economy" had replaced class struggle as the subject of governance. In *The Economy Enters the People*, this history of encounters between the two countries—one that was set in motion by the postsocialist turn toward the market economy—is re-examined against the backdrop of the present-day crisis of late capitalism, within which both China and Singapore have emerged as key points of reference.

This performance and video installation examines the extent to which the reformers within the Communist Party drew upon Singapore's experiences in governance as the former struggled to define the relationship between the party-state and the market economy, having established both systems as unquestionable features of China's political economy after the end of the revolution. For all the gains in productivity in the initial years, the reforms started to unravel



The Economy Enters the People, 2021

Video installation, dimensions variable, video still
Courtesy of the artist

The Economy Enters the People, 2021

Performance
Courtesy of the artist

You can find detailed information on the performance program here: hkw.de/illiberalarts

in the late eighties amid rising inequality, severe inflation, and widespread corruption, and eventually led to the people's democratic demands expressed at Tiananmen Square and the subsequent crackdown by the government. In 1992, Deng would put the reform agenda back on track with his landmark tour of the southern provinces where the special economic zones are concentrated, during which he explicitly instructed party cadres to learn from Singapore with respect to how they manage society. In the same year, Deng's successor Jiang Zemin would go on to coin the term "socialist market economy" to describe the new direction of the reforms.

The prevailing liberal discourse has sought to attribute the Communist Party's fascination with Singapore to the ruling party's apparent success in curtailing political reform while pursuing economic integration within the global capitalist system. However, even a cursory glance at the materials produced by party cadres would reveal that it is curiously the one feature of the city-state regarded as the very antithesis of arbitrary state power that has attracted the most interest: the rule of law. Among the archival material and contemporary references gathered in the work, the table emerges as a key motif that articulates this often fraught investment in the law as part of the reform process, specifically as a remedy to the intractable problem of corruption. From the massive boardroom tables around which former guerrilla-style revolutionaries reinvented themselves as sedentary, self-possessed technocrats to the table formerly used by the Chief Justices of Singapore that in 2018 ironically played host to Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un when they signed an agreement during their historic meeting in the city-state, the dissonances between

these appearances at the table, as well as what is revealed to be beneath it, renders untenable the distinction between the rule of law and corruption that is often upheld by the liberal imaginary. In this regard, China and Singapore are not exceptions to, but exemplars of, this imaginary that lays bare its contradictions through these exceptional performances of it, in short, through parodies.

Returning to a contemporaneity where long-standing socioeconomic formations have been shaken by the 2008 global financial crisis and China's economic rise, the resilience of the liberal imaginary is attested to by the reconstitution of corruption as a subject of discourse. While on the side of global capital, corruption is invoked to distinguish so-called Chinese capitalism from free-market capitalism as practiced in the West, on the side of "the people"—the collective subject that has emerged to take the place once occupied by the worker—it serves to characterize the current dysfunctional capitalist system in its entirety. In both instances, the prospect of a capitalism "that works" by being free of corruption is affirmed by projecting it either geographically onto another site or temporally onto a future that has been assigned such fantastical names as "accountable capitalism" or "stakeholder capitalism." Has class politics been so utterly foreclosed that the people can at best replace governments or disgrace corporations but never abolish capital itself? Or, as posed within the work itself: How many laws have to be passed to constitute a revolution in today's terms? *The Economy Enters the People* does not pretend to have the answer, but it makes clear that this question is too important to be left to the technocrats at the table.

Ho Rui An



The Pleasures of Now, 2016

Sculpture, plaster body cast, acrylic paint, coating, and metal, 300 × 400 cm

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2021

Courtesy of the artist

Deine Arbeit (alkoholkrank), 1988

Collage, painting, wood, adhesive letters, PVC, mirror, 39 × 39 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben, 1988

Collage, wood, acrylic glass, 3D print, 50 × 37 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Eure Politik, 1988

Collage, glass, wooden veneer, adhesive letters, PVC, 35 × 35 cm

Private collection, Berlin

Eure Politik (sozialpädagoge), 1988

Collage, glass, wooden veneer, adhesive letters, PVC, 35 × 35 cm

Courtesy of Andreas Siekmann

Ich bin so (schwach), 1988

Collage, painting, wood, mirror, 39 × 39 cm

Courtesy of the artist

KRIT, 2021

Sculpture/installation, plaster, burlap, dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Parallaxis Disconiensis: Clown or Clone?, 2017

Sculpture, plaster head, self-propelled platform, 138 × 31 × 31 cm

Courtesy of the artist

wifi-hobo, 2004 (in collaboration with Nils Norman)

Installation, dressed mannequin, laptop, cardboard, wi-fi sticker, 90 × 140 × 40 cm

Private collection

In Stephan Dillemath's arrangement *The Pleasures of Now*, there is a sort of dummy that stands in for the artist's work of the last two or three decades. Or rather, the dummy, which hangs in the air like a fallen angel, stands for Dillemath's subject matter: the decay of the capitalist public sphere, which is breaking in the dummy itself and into the objects that are collected underneath it.

The dummy is positioned by means of the one-sidedness and one-dimensionality of a comprehensive valorization, and this simultaneously one-sided and comprehensive valorization is the only standpoint from which the dummy comes completely into view—from any other perspective its organic unity dissolves into disparate parts. Moreover, not only does the valorization divide, separate, and break up while still remaining the only mode of coherence; it also creates organs of its own—the dummy's third arm, for example. Or is it rather the subjects that are required to give themselves extra functions and features?

The other objects are also undergoing a peculiarly undecided form of dissolution. They consist mainly of plaster, a sacrificial or in-between material, which has always served to make casts of or replace more valuable materials. With conspicuous frequency Dillemath uses it to make cogs, which are juxtaposed with, or pierced by, fragments from the world of plants and animals, and it is not clear whether these cogs no longer engage (with one another) because their mechanical role in classical industrial machinery has been replaced by new machinic technologies, if cogs have simply become antiquated and obsolete and fossilized, or whether their teeth have been ground down on that which continues to resist the machinery and assert its unavailability. The ensemble's other components, or fragments rather, exhibit a similar undecidedness: Does this state of disintegration arise through the continual suspension of boundaries and

the continual co-optation that are ensured by the process of capital? Or, on the contrary, is this process broken up by the excessive demands that it makes and the failures of so much trimming and training and wearing and tearing? Or are we witnessing the triumph of a certain indifference, an insistence on unavailability—an unavailability, however, that tends to be characteristic of the animalistic, that rises up out of the ruling bloc and perhaps indicates a return or a reiteration of the untamed. It seems likely that all of this converges in a growing feralization of the economy and the public sphere.

Although these hybrid arrangements remain undecided, they stand in marked contrast to Dillemath's earlier works from the 1980s and early 1990s. In these earlier works, the subversive forces of DIY, punk, and other subcultures are still at work within the disintegration and decomposition of the public sphere and capitalist organizations. Here, these forces still stand undecided between refusal, subversion, and withdrawal on the one hand, and co-optation and economic exploitation on the other. The implied tendency towards openings, this quality of the untamed, the patchwork, is still innocent and able to stand on (or as) its own (witness), because it is located amid the upheavals that affected labor, the public sphere, and capital in the 1960s and '70s. Only from the standpoint of Dillemath's current works can this upheaval, which his earlier works captured, be reconstructed as a fatal transition: labor, capital, and the public sphere have now even turned subversive tendencies—or, as with punk, self-destructive ones—into productive forces, drawing them into the valorization process. But precisely for this reason they are unable to contain their own tendency toward the feral.

Frank Engster



An Arrow Pointing to a Hole, 2019

Single-channel color video installation, stereo sound,
27:08 min., video still

Courtesy of the artist and Isabella Bortolozzi Gallery

The Natural Look, 2014

Single-channel color video, stereo sound,
HD, 16:9, 36:32 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Isabella Bortolozzi Gallery

like a snake eating himself around an open hole these sentences will run together barrier free animations smoothing out the image to make a body a hole drawing a broken line around it a long shot of this hole might fuck the brain but not like poetry how I debase my own writing with it now the form is a block flat before which innocents might come into a black box gallery recognize their placenta and run out crying in horror but fags cry too their crocodile tears for feeling touched hungry trough hogs in need of a heavy hand queer art needs the hand for all its wankery handling the viewer essay film works like that I ate part of a plastic fork today watching your art working toward an end masc guys get points for crafting candor the process of asserting oneself as art takes how many videos binging art audiences look for Kool-Aid to chug philosophy that loves to put a different saddle on the same fucking horse riding to where conversation is hopeless wet bleeding words peristalsis with a knot in the gut TMI without domination just the truest form of urgency holding back I have IBS too Berryman too drunk shat himself and jumped off a bridge where I lived in Minneapolis for 6 years thinking what is all this talk about gay marriage ? property right \$ a man & his higher end real estate numbs the point but you share it fucking Parisian pancake ass in some bath homo for old fucks infinite variation is how I troll the bush and baths too PATTERN EQUALS DEATH daddy yes daddy dust off that stamen Steve was the name of my favorite babysitter when I was 9 years old I was always trying to climb into his lap that name has existed as an erotic totem ever since but let us shadow over ourselves with the bodies of heterosexual nudists exposed in footage found reading King Oats King Oh none the wiser amerika between poles uncharged conversation is hopeless so what do we do with art gone conversational some one-sided craft going nowhere when might we break with the cult and disclose belief that love outside art is possible thereby making white winos at openings blink twice trying to spare each other in a den of snakes where yes the women are always bigger than the men nudging them how does the placenta get taken by you from its source ? your passports are placentae born to react in this way reaching up a rectum for tubal videos extracted from the commons perhaps work maybe I could trust more if it was angry eating time angry art ass eating shameful reactionary bits over a Jell-O filmed petri dish an inch an hour needle point putzing with intimate and public wounds for keeping slow death born again as art queer meaning words fading words to mean otherwise alongside some picture lay back and get told maggot bird feeder dead cows fart sleeping horses fart however a zombie is not bacterial but some slow and drunk-sloppy sentences that run together I never looked to nature for a mirror to see myself a cub eaten by daddy lion inverted I could imagine eating my own material capturing friends and loved ones as my work

MYSTI

In 2018, much to the dismay of the Brazilian diaspora, Jair Messias Bolsonaro was elected president of Brazil. The election came in the wake of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment and removal from office on August 31, 2016, on spurious grounds, and the jailing of former president Lula on trumped-up charges. Connecting all these events was the anti-corruption investigation known as "Operation Car Wash," and its supervisor, Judge Sérgio Moro, whose weaponization of the legal apparatus allowed Bolsonaro to cruise to victory, and whom the new president was to later reward with an appointment as Minister of Justice and Public Security. Working in tandem with Bolsonaro's openly racist and misogynistic rhetoric, a web of deceit, intentional misinformation, and the calculated steering of corruption charges helped ease fascism back into power,¹ no more than three decades after the fall of the Brazilian military dictatorship.

Crucial to the rhetoric of fascism—and a central thread in the dynamics that ushered Bolsonaro into power—is the rearticulation of all political issues as a choice between corruption and integrity. Rather than speaking about wealth accumulation and redistribution, fascism sees politics as an endless war against degeneracy and decadence; a fight for potency and purity, which, paradoxically, makes use of the dirtiest weapons and tactics, among which cultural entryism figures predominantly.

Recognizing that before it cohered into a political movement, fascism emerged as a cultural force, Tamar Guimarães's *SOAP* (2020)—produced in collaboration with Luisa Cavanagh and Rusi Millán Pastori—stages an attempt to infiltrate the far-right cultural creep, by mimicking its conspiratorial strategies. Using the popular telenovela format as a template, *SOAP* sets out to subvert fascist sociocultural messages by incorporating forms of *détournement* into familiar (and beloved) storylines—a strategy that has been successfully used by the Brazilian and Mexican authorities in efforts to promote family planning—but it soon becomes apparent that our loose coalition of left-wingers vying to use art as a social tool are unable to fight as a united front. Bereft of possibilities to engage with forms of political organization, mobilization, and militancy due to social distancing measures, the group communicates via messaging apps or video conferenc-

SOAP, 2020-2021

Six-part video installation, dimensions variable

Episode 1: *EROTIC DREAMS OF A NIGHT IN SPRING*, single-channel, 10:21 min.

Episode 2: *THE WHITE LEFT IS DEAD!*, single-channel, 12:28 min.

Episode 3: *INFILTRATION IS LOVE!*, single-channel, 15:25 min.

Episode 4: *THE REVOLUTION WILL BE DONE DIFFERENTLY*, single-channel, 14:31 min.

Episode 5: *MOSES AND MONOTHEISM*, single-channel.

Episode 6: (When this booklet went to press, the work was still in production.), 2021

Episodes 1–4: Commissioned by steirischer herbst '20

Production: Luís Knihs/Aqueles Filmes and Tamar Guimarães, in co-production with steirischer herbst '20

Episodes 5 and 6

Production: Luís Knihs/Aqueles Filmes and Tamar Guimarães, with support from the Danish Arts Foundation
Courtesy of the artist, Dan Gunn, London, and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo

ing platforms, and their conversations tend to mirror the filter bubbles they intend to burst, as well as meander or show hesitancy. While one of the characters argues for class struggle and revolution, others find his vocabulary alienating. While one character is prone to over-theorization, others would like to embrace a hands-on approach. Though the group intends to collaborate, they cannot agree on a course of action, and their interaction is rife with petty grievances, set against the backdrop of major political fault lines, like the internecine fight between "Marxism" and "identity politics," or the opposition between calls for "revolution" and questions of micropolitics, which they recognize but cannot resolve.

One could also say *SOAP* captures how a global conflict—between those factions of the left who believe "oppression" is not a proper Marxist category because it cannot be quantified economically and thus belongs to the sphere of ethics or morals rather than the vocabulary of politics, and those who recognize the structuring force of race in global politics and are invested in a decolonial project rather than a Marxist one—plays out locally. At length, theoretical stakes turn into personal animosities. As the screen and the bathtub emerge as the sites where life is lived, the COVID-imposed isolation, with connectivity coming to replace collectivity becomes a metaphor for the characters' siloed positions and for neoliberalism as an individuating social technology. With its slow pace and muted colours, *SOAP* sometimes feels like an exercise in soul-searching for a left that fails to cohere politically, like the protagonists are rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic: sitting on the cusp of a crisis whose character they cannot help but misrecognize—and misrecognition is one of the elements of tragedy, the genre soaps borrow from most heavily—and unable to divest from a world that will not be there for them.

Ana Teixeira Pinto

¹ To call Bolsonaro a fascist is, needless to say, contentious, and most would prefer to describe him as an authoritarian or as a populist—terms devoid of political content—in spite of the fact that he routinely invokes fascist idioms and imagery.



SOAP, Episode 2: *THE WHITE LEFT IS DEAD!*, 2020

Single-channel video, 12:28 min., video stills



Corridor, 2020
 Painting, oil, resin, beeswax on canvas,
 322.6 × 340.4 cm
 Udo und Anette Brandhorst Sammlung

Budget Meal Pattern (from the series *Asphalt*), 2019
 Painting, oil on canvas, 86.4 × 99.1 cm
 Courtesy of the Defares Collection, Amsterdam

The Massacre (from the series *Corridor*), 2020
 Painting, oil on linen, 86.4 × 99.1 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Petzel Gallery, New York

Untitled, 2018
 Drawing, charcoal on paper, 86.5 × 99 cm
 Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

Untitled, 2018
 Drawing, charcoal on paper, 86.6 × 99.9 cm
 Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York

There was a path and they had agreed to be on it.

They wore the identical orange t-shirts that they had been handed at orientation without complaint. And they complied with the other regulations. They wore their own shorts or pants, a few of them even in skirts. As long as their bottoms were dark, the manual told them, it was fine. Same with sneakers. Sneakers were required. But they could be worn with socks or without. They could wear a hat if they wished, if they worried the sun.

Every detail preserving the repetition.

The attention to clothing suggested that all that mattered was that they were comfortable as they carried their signs. So they could be with each other because being with each other was like being with themselves. Although they formed groups and alliances, they did not talk to each other. They literally had eyes so as to recognize but no mouth so as to agitate. Thus their concern was with the path, the elsewhere, not between themselves.

This is what it means to be a part of a whole. They showed up ready for action, whatever it was on that specific day which was for the most part the same as the day before.

Those who carried signs raised their hands overhead and held the sign from the bottom, so everyone could see it.

Some carried flags on a stick, whipping the flag around a bit.

Some carried banners. Those who carried banners were a specific sort, were those who liked to be near others, for banner carriers were always tightly packed in a line behind the banner which they all held chest-high as they walked in a sort of shuffle that kept them parallel. Sometimes one among them was unusually enthusiastic and they held a banner in one hand and then raised their arm up high and held a sign.

Some of them worked together to hold up a piece of white cloth on sticks, holding the wooden stick close to their bodies. This sort of banner was top heavy and if they didn't balance it just right it would get away from them, requiring their constant attention.

The signs and the banners and the flags were white and proclaimed nothing. They too had no mouth so as to agitate.

The sun was out, enough to leave a shadow.

There were umbrellas also. Some of them had been given big, pink umbrellas, the sort designed more for sun than for rain and they carried them as if they were a sign of something in addition to the sun.

Tents had been supplied. The tents were white, peaked in the middle, and smelled of canvas. They were empty for the most part. Every once and a while one of them, wanting to avoid the sun, worn out and exhausted from all the walking, would go and sit in a tent. But others when they were tired just walked to the side and sat down, sprawled out on the ground; their sign near them; their legs in front of them and their arms behind.

The action never seemed to end. It just carried on and they realized that while they could never step into the same part of it, it was also always similar enough as to appear to be the same. Did they have hope? Yes. Did they know what they wanted to say? Perhaps. Were they allowed to say it? They had to keep walking on but that had never stopped anyone from saying what needed to be said. Holding on for the purpose of the holding on was their purpose.

Juliana Spahr

Aleksander Kmak (he/they) is a film and visual culture researcher based in Warsaw, Poland, working on film theory and the philosophy of images.

Ana Teixeira Pinto (she/her) is a writer and cultural theorist based in Berlin and is a lecturer at the Dutch Art Institute and a guest professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg.

Anja Kirschner (she/her) is an artist who makes films, installations, and drawings.

Anne Imhof (she/her) lives and works in Berlin and New York. Her paintings, sculptures, and performances have been shown internationally since 2012.

Anselm Franke (he/him) is head of the Department of Visual Arts and Film at HKW, where he has initiated, organized, and (co-) curated various exhibitions since 2013.

Ariane Pauls (she/her) is an artist and cultural worker. Her artwork has been exhibited internationally. She works in education and outreach for various cultural institutions.

Aristilde Kirby (she/her) is a poet, like the play of the ripples on the water. *Daisy & Catherine*², her latest chapbook, is out now via Auric Press.

Bill Dietz (he/him) is a composer, writer, and co-chair of music/sound in the Bard College MFA program. He works on reception, most often listening.

Calla Henkel (she/her) is an artist and writer. She runs TV Bar with Max Pitegoff in Berlin, and her debut novel *Other People's Clothes* was published in July, 2021.

Candice Hopkins (she/her) is a citizen of Carcross/Tagish First Nation and in her writing and curatorial practice explores the intersections of history, contemporary art, and indigeneity.

Cassandra Press: We are a 501 (c) (3) artist-run publishing and educational platform producing lo-fi printed matter, classrooms, projects, artist books, and exhibitions.

Ciarán Finlayson (he/him) is a writer and editor based in Brooklyn, New York. He is the managing editor of Blank Forms Editions.

Constantina Zavitsanos (they/them) makes sculpture, performance, text, and sound. They work in the non-opposition of autonomy and dependency, debt and abundance.

Cut away, with effects (2021)

Dani Leder (she/her) is a German painter based in New York. She paints and carves reliefs on foam board, has an MFA, and a PhD in German literature.

Danny Hayward (he/him) lives in London. He maintains the poetry archive Free Trials (pxxtry.com) and a book of his essays on poetry will be published in 2021 by Punctum.

Dominik Intelmann (he/him) is an urban researcher and completing his PhD in Frankfurt am Main. One of the focuses of his work is on processes of political subjectivation at the local level.

Elisa R. Linn (she/her) is a curator and writer. Her practice addresses politics of self-organization, representation, and collectivity in exhibition-making.

Elizabeth A. Povinelli is a critical theorist, filmmaker, and artist. She is one of the founding members of the Karrabing Film Collective.

Fanny Hauser (she/her) is an art historian and curator based in Vienna. She is co-founder and co-director of Kunstverein Kevin Space.

Feel Good Cooperative was born with a workshop made during the severe Italian lockdown of spring 2020 and is a Rome-based group of Colombian sex workers.

Frank Engster (he/him) wrote his PhD on time, money, and measure. His research interest lies in Marx's critique of political economy and money as technics.

Fumi Okiji (she/her) is Assistant Professor of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work crosses music, critical theory, and black radical thought.

Henrike Naumann (she/her) is an installation artist who reflects sociopolitical problems onto the level of design and interiors.

Jenny Nachtigall (she/her) is currently a visiting professor at the History of Art Department, Goethe University Frankfurt. Her first monograph, *Form as Contradiction*, was published by Brill.

Johanna Hedva (they/them) is a Korean-American writer, artist, and musician, who was raised in Los Angeles by a family of witches, and now lives between Los Angeles and Berlin.

Jordan Strafer (she/her) is an artist, working primarily in video, based in New York.

Jota Mombaça (they/them, she/her) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work derives from poetry, critical theory, and performance.

Juliana Spahr (she/her) lives in Berkeley California and her most recent book is *Du Bois's Telegram: Literary Resistance and State Containment*.

Kandis Williams's (she/her) practice spans collage, performance, publishing, and curating, and it explores and deconstructs critical theory around race, nationalism, authority, and eroticism.

The Karrabing Film Collective is an Indigenous family-based group that uses film and art installations as a form of Indigenous grassroots resistance and self-organization.

Kerstin Stakemeier (she/her) is an educator (Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg) and writer who often works collaboratively, most recently with Bill Dietz on the teaching and publication project *Universal Receptivity*.

keyon gaskin (they/them) prefer not to contextualize with their credentials.

Lara Wehrs studies philosophy at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and writes as a freelance author on questions of aesthetics and epistemology.

Larne Abse Gogarty (she/her) is a lecturer at the Slade School of Fine Art. She has a book forthcoming on art, aesthetics, and conspiracy with Sternberg Press.

Lisa Jeschke (they/them) is a poet and performance-maker living in Munich, and co-runs the chapbook press Materials/Materialien (London/Munich).

Marina Vishmidt (she/her) is a London-based writer, editor, and critic occupied mainly with questions around art, labor, and value.

Melanie Gilligan (she/her, they/them) makes video works that reconceive television drama and non-fictional moving images to investigate contemporary sociopolitical conditions.

Mikołaj Sobczak (he/him) is an artist working in video, painting, ceramics, and performance. His research is focused on political issues and historical policy.

MYSTI pronoun: 'it' because art is about becoming an object as the personal funnels into markets of fame & money. I can count on you to love me dead.

Natascha Sadr Haghighian (born Budapest, 1987; or Sachsenheim, 1968 or 1976; or Australia, 1979; or Munich, 1979; or Tehran, 1967; or Iran, 1966 or 1953) is an artist.

Nicholas Grafia (he/him) negotiates in his work processes of memory formation, as well as in- and exclusion of subjects from history writing.

Night Gallery is a Los Angeles-based gallery founded in 2010. The gallery has represented Kandis Williams since 2017.

Norbert Witzgall (he/his) is an artist and teacher. His work has been shown internationally. Since 2014, he has been teaching at UdK Berlin.

Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu (she/her) is a curator, writer, and educator living in Berlin. She is currently working with institutions such as the UdK Graduate School, the third Autostrada Biennale, Die Balkone, and Kunsthalle Wien.

Pauline Curnier Jardin (she/her) is an artist based in Berlin and Rome whose work traverses installation, performance, film, and drawing.

Philip Wiegard (he/him) investigates forms of creative expression and collaborative work against the backdrop of production and labor conditions.

Raven Chacon (he/him) is a composer, performer, and installation artist from Fort Defiance, Navajo Nation.

Rosalind C. Morris writes widely on value, media, and aesthetics. She is an anthropologist, filmmaker, poet, and librettist.

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer who works at the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance, and theory, working primarily across the mediums of lecture, essay, and film.

Simone White (she/her) is a New York-based poet and critic. Her most recent book is *or, on being the other woman* (Duke, 2022).

Some say **Orakel** makes things clear, others say it makes them complicated. Orakel is neither exhibition nor performance, it is inhibition and deformance.

Stephan Dilleuth (he/him) works with Corporate Rokoko against it. He lives in Pieve Fosciana.

Steve Reinke (he/him) is an artist and writer and lives in Chicago. He is best known for his monologue-based video essays.

Participants **Sunset Open Call**:

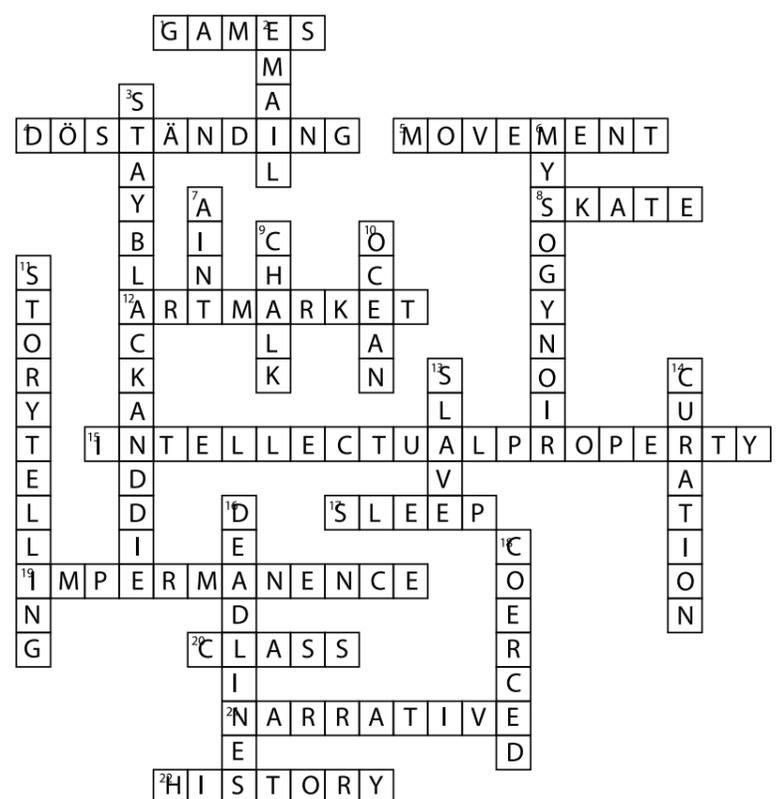
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Tamar Guimarães is a visual artist working with film and other forms of time-based media. Social commentary and satire are recurring themes in her work.

Thomas Eggerer (he/him) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, continues to teach at Bard College and exhibits collages, drawings, and paintings.

Tim Rosenberger (he/him) is a graphic designer and works as a music curator for Berghain, Berlin.

Yusuf Etiman is a graphic designer and art director. He co-directs the spaces Esponja in São Paulo and After in Berlin.



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