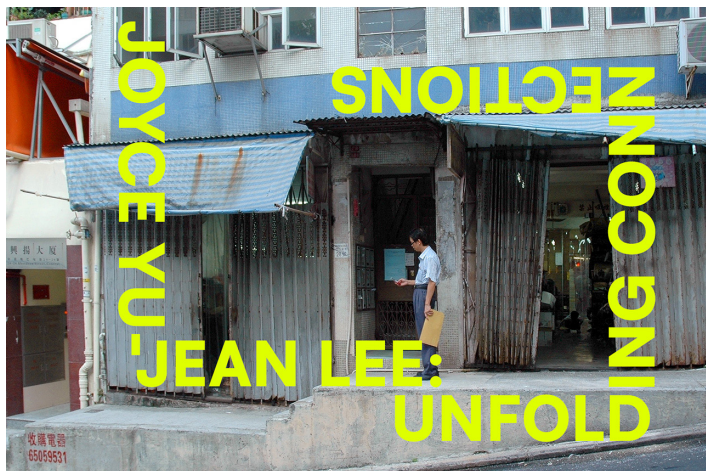




**The New Media  
Artspace  
Visiting Artists**

# Joyce Yu-Jean Lee: **Unfolding Connections**

## **SPRING 2025**



### **Curatorial Statement**

The title for this exhibition is selected from a constellation of works by the Asian-American artist Joyce Yu-Jean Lee. The first unfolding comes from the artist's desire to excavate her family's history. In *Unfolding Nai Nai* (fourth floor) the artist reaches out to her aunts, uncles and father to learn more about her paternal grandmother. An émigré who was displaced by the Communist Revolution in 1949, Nai Nai took her four children and flew first to Shanghai, then eventually out of China. The work's own opacity mirrors the challenge in reconstructing the life and personality of a family member through the lens of those surrounding her. By the time Nai Nai is interviewed a sense of her indomitable personality and penchant for artistic creation is already established. She shares her experience of rearing children and demonstrates her focus and skill at transforming discarded paper into functional objects and crafty representations. Through these scenes we recognize an immediate connection to her own granddaughter's creative output. *Unfolding Connections* tracks a contemporary artist's search for knowledge, identity, and understanding as she unravels the web of mediations that obscure and contain her families' roots in China.

The piece *What It's Like, What It Is* on the top (fifth) floor brings us back immediately to the recent history of the 2020 pandemic. The global health crisis unleashed a local thinly-veiled xenophobic hostility toward Asian-Americans as

misinformation on the COVID-19 virus' origin began to spread throughout the internet. Asian-Americans found themselves a target in their own communities, and this piece was made, as the artist states:

A text-based animation made in collaboration and solidarity with the Asian American community in NYC when violence against Asians erupted at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Made in homage to Adrian Piper's video installation, "What It's Like, What It Is #3 (1991)," a ... video displays words submitted by members of the community: both derogatory and stereotyping words that they have been labeled by strangers, as well as positive words that reframe, redefine and reclaim their identity.<sup>1</sup>

The simplicity of the work shows the mobility and power words have to shape, reassert or attack notions of what it means to be Asian *and* American in New York City. The piece appears here as a single channel video iteration of a two-channel work. The animated quality of the words flashing on and off on each screen (in rapid intervals) reflects the speed at which these notions and words circulate in the public domain. From piecing together her matriarchal roots, to utilizing art to dispel erroneous misconceptions, the artist turns her attention to the

**Joyce Yu-Jean Lee: *Unfolding Connections***  
**March 10 – May 1, 2025**

**Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion**  
March 24, 2025  
March 27, 2025  
April 2, 2025  
April 7, 2025

**Public Artist Lecture at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
April 2, 2025

*Supported by the Baruch College Student Technology Fee.*

*All images appear courtesy of the artist.*

Internet. Can the channels of communication which make up the Internet help us understand who we are as citizens? Are our ethnic roots accessible through clearly monitored, often privatized and curated lines of communication? Do older forms of communication, oral history, testimony allow us a more direct understanding of our present and our past? These are some of the questions that drive Lee's work. Her photographic series *Passages III* featured in the display cases on the fourth and fifth floor document the artist's trips to her family's country of origin, China, as well as diasporic "homes" in Taiwan, Hong Kong and New York City. The photographs capture transnational residents framed by political history, and impacted by their cultural and economic interactions with the West. Street scenes show the city's inhabitants carrying out their daily lives as the artist discreetly records their presence. In addition to her family's own journey, *Passages III* also shares the artist's interest in oculi and their ability to both shape and direct light as it moves from one space into another.

Finally *Unfolding Connections* culminates in the artist's work, *FIREWALL Cafe*, on floors two and three. *FIREWALL* looks at China's primary search engine, Baidu and allows you to compare it simultaneously to our own most widely used search engine, Google. The comparison of image search results reveals how some keyword searches are curated or at least directed toward a specific area. An image search of "3D printed weapons" using Google displays a variety of ghost

guns, while the comparable search in Baidu only shows one image of a printed gun amongst a larger collection of images of knives. Based on these searches one gets a sense of the limits of both search engines, and how their predetermined limits can shape our dominant imaginary. The difference is subtle, but as the amount and scope of your searches accumulates, the results raise a number of questions. What pool of data is Baidu searching? And is it part or separate from a larger database of images available to Google users? Are the results algorithmically filtered in real time, or are their independent parameters native to the search engine itself? As the artist reveals in her documentary on the artwork, *Invisible Visible*, the censorship is layered. Companies in China who want to have a web presence must register their website with the government and must abide by government regulations. In addition to this, Lee suspects searches are also determined regionally depending on where you are located in China. The "Golden Shield Project," (as the artist states) imposes external filtering on websites, a practice often referred to as the "Great Firewall of China." Lee's project did not go unnoticed by Chinese authorities in 2016, and was subsequently presented in a number of sites internationally.

The third-floor iteration of *FIREWALL Cafe*, allows visitors to see and browse through keyword searches that were executed since the project's inception in 2016. The project remains as relevant today as the year it debuted. The banning

of TikTok in the United States recently reanimates the battle over censorship and internet freedom. Lee's work displays in real time how politics interfere with our ability to seek truth and understand the greater world we live in. Should state policy govern how we shape our notions through accessible media? *Unfolding Connections* takes us through that complex process of forming our own identity, and understanding how notions of truth are shaped by media and our socio-political environment.

—Dennis Delgado

---

<sup>1</sup> Joyce Yu-Jean Lee. "Joyce Yu-Jean Lee." Accessed February 24, 2024. <https://www.joyceyujeanlee.com/portfolio/>

# Joyce Yu-Jean Lee: **Unfolding Connections**

## SPRING 2025



*Invisible Visible* 未见之见, 2025.



*Unfolding Nai Nai*, 2010.



*FIREWALL Cafe*, 2016-ongoing.



*What It's Like, What It Is*, 2022.



*Passages III*, 2012-2020.

### Visiting Artist: **Joyce Yu-Jean Lee**

Joyce Yu-Jean Lee is a visual artist who combines video, new media, glass sculpture and installation with social practice and institutional critique. Her artwork examines how media, technology and culture shape notions of truth and understanding of the "other."

She recently exhibited at The Delaware Contemporary and Kreeger Museums; and her artwork has been covered in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Hong Kong Free Press, Huffington Post, Hyperallergic and on BBC Radio. She received grants from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council; Arts Mid-Hudson, Asian Women Giving Circle; Franklin Furnace Fund, Maryland State Arts Council and The Walters Art Museum; and fellowships from the Vermont Studio Center, Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower and Hamiltonian Artists.

Her project about Internet censorship, *FIREWALL Cafe*, garnered backlash from Chinese state authorities in 2016 and has been presented at the Hong Kong Center for Community Cultural Development, Austrian Association of Women Artists (VBKÖ) and the Oslo Freedom Forum in New York, Norway and Taiwan.

Joyce received her BA from the University of Pennsylvania and her MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). She is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at Pratt Institute in NYC. She has also taught at Marist University (formerly Marist College), Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), MICA, Corcoran School of the Arts & Design and New Jersey City University.







**Algorithms of Resistance: The Work of Joseph DeLappe**  
October 16 – November 27, 2024

**Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion**  
November 18, 2024  
November 19, 2024  
November 20, 2024

**Public Artist Lecture at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
November 20, 2024

Supported by the Baruch College Student Technology Fee.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.

### Curatorial Statement

As you enter Baruch College's Newman Library, immediately to the right of the circulation desk you encounter the very first screening room of the New Media Artspace. Beginning with the piece *Elegy: GTA USA Gun Homicides* (level 2) we have an immediate sense that the familiar action-adventure game environment of *Grand Theft Auto V* has been appropriated and reprogrammed in a specific way. The initial game introduction is absent and the otherwise active protagonist inadvertently becomes the viewer as a statistically-fed algorithmic cycle of violence is visualized. With this unfolding we get the first glimpse into the practice of artist Joseph DeLappe. In a strategy familiar to contemporary artists today, DeLappe utilizes open-source and publicly available software as well as web-based news media to reconfigure and present a message within the space from which the media itself is drawn. At times collaborating with creative coders and game designers Joseph DeLappe performs or re-enacts history to send his own message which often undermines the chosen space's own ethos. DeLappe circulates his complex collages or "mash-ups," within the platforms he often critiques. In the timely piece *The Origins of Totalitarianism: A Reading by Donald Trump* (on level 4) the artist adopts the form of familiar news spots (depicting former President Donald Trump speaking to the media) and juxtaposes them with the historical text by German-American historian and philosopher, Hannah Arendt. Using free, user-friendly and accessible artificial intelligence software (in this case a voice emulator) the artist generates a voice track and corresponding lip-synching of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* ultimately mapping the lip synch to the moving face of Donald Trump to create what the artist himself calls a "shallow-fake." A riff on the feared practice of using artificial intelligence's deep learning tools to deceive or construct

media that is meant to pass as factual representation. In this case, the artist foregrounds the synthetic nature of the images by immediately delineating the two software packages used to create the piece in the opening credits. In other words, communicating to the viewer that this is not a "deep," fake, but rather a "shallow" one. It is this transparent and open approach to creating art work that invites the audience to participate in and possibly attempt their own intervention in our shared visual culture.

As stated above level 2 begins with *Elegy: GTA USA Gun Homicides* a game modification and data visualization artwork that re-enacted the total gun homicides beginning in January of 2018. The project itself launched on July 4th of 2018 and would re-enact each midnight the updated statistics for gun homicides in the United States. Gun homicide statistics were updated daily and fed algorithmically into the game from the website *Gun Violence Archive* and each total was re-visualized in a different way using the algorithm and graphics of the video game. The piece was live streamed for the duration of a year ending on July 4th, 2019. In the video documenting the project (for this exhibition) inhabitants randomly brandish guns and begin shooting neighboring bystanders accompanied by the historical radio broadcast of *God Bless America* (as originally performed by Kate Smith in 1938). The violence abates for small periods of time as characters in the space walk through (or knock into) the cumulative bodies laid out within the virtual landscape. The seeming indifference of these inhabitants is an eerie reminder of just how accustomed (and perhaps numb) US citizens have become to the endless school shootings and random gun

violence that continues to go unchecked in our society. The work provokes us to face our own inaction and conditioned indifference. Faced with these questions the viewer's experience of the exhibition begins. *Algorithms of Resistance: The Work of Joseph DeLappe* is a selection of artworks that look at how an artist enacts resistance and executes his own personal protocol (or algorithm) utilizing a variety of virtual tools and online media.

As the exhibition proceeds, on the next floor (level 3) we are presented with *dead-in-iraq* where a different kind of patriotism is at play. The virtual environment of *America's Army* is dramatized by punctuating gunshots as players in the space make their way through what appears to be a residential neighborhood in Iraq. The first-person shooter game *America's Army* was developed and released by the Department of Defense and the US Army as a public relations and recruitment tool in 2002. Development of the game was financed by the US Government and civilian tax dollars. Within DeLappe's video documentation of *dead-in-iraq*, single-story homes are raided and presumably suspected insurgents are engaged. In this chaotic scene the player through which we experience and enter the space throws down his weapon and continues walking through the terrain. He is suddenly killed and his subsequent interaction is played out through the text feature of the video game. The now dead player types in the name, rank, age, and military branch of a real-world US armed services casualty. The names typed in by the artist are sourced from [icasualties.org](http://icasualties.org) an independent website founded by Micheal White to track casualties in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In this act a haunting parallel is drawn between the virtual death of the player and the real information connected to an actual death in Iraq. The artist contracts the distance between the virtual theater of *America's Army* and the real-life space of the Iraq war. This work

is amongst the most engrossing and poignant. How do we as US Citizens continue our escapism and consumption in the face of war abroad? The work raises a whole series of uncomfortable questions. Is presenting the fantasy of a sterile and disembodied experience shaping the way US citizens learn to imagine war? Perhaps questions are the answers we have been looking for?

As we leave *dead-in-iraq* and ascend the staircase to the next level (level 4) we encounter *The Origins of Totalitarianism: A Reading by Donald Trump*. A video depicting (ostensibly) Donald Trump reading a chapter from Hannah Arendt's book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The video immediately foregrounds its use of artificial intelligence by enlarging those two letters (AI) in its title. As the work plays out the manipulated nature of the video becomes more and more apparent in what the artist describes as a "shallow fake," a reference to the discourse and practice of using artificial intelligence's deep learning tools to generate media that are synthetic in nature or as they are called, a "deep fake." The familiar space and context of a political speech is algorithmically re-engineered to present the artist's own message. Through a classic gesture of appropriation, the artist activates a historical text asking us to consider its relevance today, in 2024. The work also makes reference to the use of social media and online platforms in disseminating "fake news." By debuting and circulating the artwork online the artist again raises questions about the veracity of online media.

At last, we arrive at level 5 where we come face-to-face with a computer console placed atop a Catholic church kneeler. The interactive artwork, *The Computerized Confessional* is based on the pioneering work of computer scientist Joseph Weizenbaum. Weizenbaum developed an early version of what is today called a

chatbot. DeLappe originally developed the artwork in 1984 as a "skeptical" look into engagement with automated digital platforms, the piece echoes the original concerns of Weizenbaum toward the use of artificial intelligence. Instead of replacing a psychotherapist with the chatbot *Eliza*, as Weizenbaum had done, the artist replaces the priest with the very same technology. Representing the work here in the New Media Artspace, the artist asks us again, do we engage with this technology? are we looking at yet another form of a dispositif? can we trust artificial intelligence? How do we resist and assert our own algorithm?

—Dennis Delgado



*Elegy: GTA USA Gun Homicides, 2018-19.*



*The Origins of Totalitarianism: A Reading by Donald Trump, 2024.*



*dead-in-iraq, 2006-11.*



*The Computerized Confessional, 1983/2024.*

### Visiting Artist: Joseph DeLappe

Joseph DeLappe, born in San Francisco in 1963, is an artist, activist and educator. He relocated to Scotland from the USA in 2017 where he is the Professor of Games and Tactical Media at Abertay University, Dundee. Working

with electronic and digital media since 1983, his projects using online gaming performance, sculpture and electromechanical installation have been shown throughout the world. He has developed works for venues such as Eyebeam Art and Technology in New York, The Guangdong Museum of Art, China, the Southern Utah Museum of Art, NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC], Tokyo, Japan and Transito MX, Mexico City, among many others. Creative works and actions have been featured widely in scholarly journals, books and in the popular media, including the New York Times, The Australian Morning Herald, Art in America, The Guardian and the BBC. He has authored several book chapters, including "Me and My Predator(s): Tactical Remembrance and Critical Atonement, Drone Aesthetics: War, Culture, Ecology, Open Humanities Press, 2022; "Making Politics: Engaged Social Tactics, A conversation between Joseph DeLappe and Dr. Laura Leuzzi", Art as Social Practice: Technologies for Change, Routledge, 2022; and co-edited with Leuzzi, the book "INCITE: Digital Art and Activism", 2023, Peacock Visual Arts. In 2017 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in the Fine Arts.



# Silvia Ruzanka: Botanical Computing

## SPRING 2024



### Silvia Ruzanka: Botanical Computing

March 4 – May 2, 2024

Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion

April 10, 2024

April 11, 2024

April 15, 2024

Public Artist Lecture at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC

April 10, 2024

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.

### Curatorial Statement

#### “At Vegetal Velocities, or Coded Coexistence”

The New Media Artspace is proud to present *Silvia Ruzanka: Botanical Computing*, a solo exhibition of digital animations from an ongoing cycle of interdisciplinary new media artworks. At the New Media Artspace, Ruzanka's science fictional animations are accompanied by digital ephemera and analog research materials, which shed light on how she simultaneously conceives, creates, and theorizes her *Botanical Computing* world. The collected works imagine environments where organic and human-made beings coexist in mutuality and even hybridity. In Ruzanka's speculative world, biological and computational processes might generate life, and Jewish principles of caring for the natural environment as stewardship might manifest. *Botanical Computing* pays tribute to such potentialities in circuits of plants, air, breath, word, language, code, and care.

*Botanical Computing* coalesces layered accretions of three different scales of time—technological time, botanical time, and human time—within the time of creation, which in turn includes the creation of meaning, the creation of life, and the creation of art. The online exhibition uses shifting colors and Sunderings of the interface to destabilize human time, melding time periods and temporality. The design of the website contrasts contemporary 3D rendering with pixelated references to 1990s World Wide Web culture and early 2000s net.art. As human viewers peer into *Botanical Computing's* worlds, they may encounter “easter eggs”—hidden elements of the interface that reveal failed remnants of abandoned past projects predating the artist's present iterations. Further incorporating artistic process across time, the in-person exhibition includes *Process in Bloom*, four evolving research collages—created with the New Media Artspace Docent Team—that unearth continuities between botanical and technological patterns as form, structure, and content. Mixing in yet another timestamped reference to 1970s scientific illustration, these elements draw a connection between the processes of technological and biological growth, and the creative process artists engage daily, through which a creative world buds, morphs, withers, and blooms.

In *Botanical Computing*, Ruzanka positions the special potentialities of care and cultivation against the trope of depressive overdetermination that is frequently attributed to technological futures. To break through the

truncated imagination of overdetermination, *Botanical Computing* reaches what we might call a “vegetal velocity,” as though breaking the sound barrier or in the language of *Star Wars* science fiction accelerating into “hyperdrive” to achieve lightspeed. At this velocity, *Botanical Computing* summons audacious hope for coding new forms of coexistence.

In *Botanical Computing*, four tableaus each represents a stage—or in the artist's term “dream”—excerpted from an ongoing body of work of the same title. Ruzanka's animations stage glimpses into a world devoid of human life where technological and botanical beings grow in lush harmony, cultivating care for each other across species lines. Each view onto the *Botanical Computing* world stretches time, its denouement reflecting ongoing cycles. Scenes employ static shots, perhaps in reference to conventions of landscape painting. Yet belying the unmoving camera, minutia mount into vicissitudinous evolutions, perceived slowly at first, then with mounting velocity and expansion.

In the first dream, *Plant Growth Dreams*, we look through an aperture surrounded by darkness, reminiscent of a microscope lens or ship porthole. In the glowing center of the screen, we witness microcosmic growth and evolution in fast-forward, like cells dividing. *Plant Growth Studies* questions how something—anything—evolves toward complexity. How does anything come to be? At times the rapid pace of the animation recalls the rhythms of timelapse, reminiscent of educational films in a science classroom. Coupled with a green-hued color palette, the timelapse style summons 1970s nostalgia. In other moments, the too-loose over-averaged rendering quality reads like Google's hallucinatory Deep Dream, an imagegenerating artificial neural net, evoking the creepiness of AI meme culture in the here and now. Across the entire animation, the aperture is interlaced with green diffusion patterns. The green color could be interpreted as being vegetal like leaves or as being digital like a blinking command line cursor. Yet the diffusion pattern oddly conjures hand-crafts like the patterns of cross-stitch, reintroducing the human sense of touch like a ghost in the machine.

The second dream, *Still Running*, is an homage to the 1972



science fiction film *Silent Running*, which Ruzanka cites as a major source of inspiration. In the film, Earth has become so polluted that the only remaining forests are in artificial biospheres aboard spaceships. Abandoned in space in the last forest, a botanist teaches his only companions, robots called "Drones," how to care. The robots learn to care for the forest, cultivate plants, and tend the botanical world as its only surviving stewards. Ruzanka's *Still Running* imagines the how the relationship between a tree and its robot drone caretaker would evolve years after the movie's end. We see one of the unmistakable drones from *Silent Running* watering the biosphere forest with a silly watering can just like in the movie. Beside it grows a giant tree, but this tree is unlike the forest trees in *Silent Running* which exactly resemble trees on Earth. Unlike Earthly trees, this tree's branches support twigs that look like LEDs, leaves that look like microchips, and fruit that looks like resistors. What the tree's branches have come to bear isn't botanical; they bear nothing short of a resemblance to the tree's closest companion, the drone. Through caring, coexistence becomes coded and cross-coded, and the botanical and technological grow so close as to intermix.

Remarkably, this closeness comes to animated life in *Still Running* when the tree takes steps toward and eventually bows over the drone. This bending over and leaning toward literalizes a form of recognition that in her theoretical work Ruzanka sees as essential to both caring and thinking as acts that contain potential. Citing the German philosopher Martin Heidegger who wrote, "we truly incline toward something only when it, in turn, inclines toward us," Ruzanka recommends that we "think of this inclination as a force of possibility that needs an engagement with other forces in order to be enacted."<sup>1</sup> And so, by inclining toward a drone, a tree becomes something beyond its tree self and what it would otherwise ever have been.

The third dream, *Memories of Care*, represents the introduction of language into the world of *Botanical Computing*. Emphasizing the centrality of text, *Memories of Care* portrays a biological world created through computational processes. That is, created through lines of code—which are precisely language. The animation depicts hands tenderly planting seeds, but as Ruzanka explains, the hands also expose "the errors that generative AI makes when trying to render hands."<sup>2</sup> In order for a generative AI system to create images, images must first be "understood" through and as language. Specifically, generative AI creates images based on previous

training data that must be labeled (that is, objects in training images must be identified using words) and AI images are produced in response to text-based prompts.

*Botanical Computing* as a whole, and *Memories of Care* in particular, draw inspiration from the theory of language developed by Walter Benjamin, among the most significant philosophers of modernity in the 20th century. While Benjamin's influence on the field of new media arts is typically attributed to his canonical essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility," Ruzanka turns to his lesser-known *On Language as Such*, and on the *Language of Man*, drawing out a crucial moment in which he discusses language and breath. Benjamin understands the biblical passage "God breathes his breath into man" as uniting "life and mind and language." This unification mirrors what Ruzanka seeks as "a botanical form of computation [namely] one that arises before logic, before naming."<sup>3</sup> Even if human language circles in imitation of the divine creative word, human language, conveyed by breath, is nevertheless what humans (and, we might add, computers) must use to generate art. Plants are the companion species that provide the air humans breathe. They provide the material conditions of possibility for human and technological creative language—hence "botanical computing."

From a new media arts curatorial perspective, this aspect of *Botanical Computing* illuminates another media theory in Benjamin that applies not to replicative or simulative media (as Benjamin's media theory is usually understood), but rather to generative media, which is increasingly the media of today. Further, the main thrust of "The Work of Art" is that reproduction renders art too knowable, too available, at the expense of its aura. By turning to *On Language* Ruzanka's work seems to suggest a Benjaminian media theory of generation that re-infuses art with an element of the unknown. Thus, this exhibition offers an important contribution to scholarship on a canonical Jewish thinker.

In the fourth dream, *Growth Study*, we witness what Ruzanka refers to as the "completed world"<sup>4</sup> of *Botanical Computing*. This world is rife with saturated contrasts—blood red skies invert the color of the lush computational green in the landscape—yet nevertheless in balance. The wide landscape cycles in and out of focus with sophisticated forms—sometimes vegetal, sometimes technological—fading in like established

forests and new growth. Flickering like apparitions hovering above the scene, we catch glimpses of forms like potted chips and wires, or sprouting transistors, that harken to the timelapse of *Plant Growth Dreams*. Whereas in that dream, the hybrid cellular forms seemed to be growing in the isolation of a microscope slide, here we see them zoomed out, having found their "natural" habitat. The close aperture of the first dream opens into a full vista. Newly unbounded in the wide expanse of landscape, these forms appear less nascent and more juvenile: playful, toy-like, inventive. Their emergent potentiality dances on screen in an unmistakable figure ground relationship, while the background landscape slowly shifts, fading in and fading out, and lapsing into smooth red fields.

When Ruzanka writes that "The internet is an invasive species,"<sup>5</sup> she is decrying the monocultural overgrowth of technological determinism. In contrast, the vast variety of forms flickering through *Growth Study* show the speculative velocities we may yet reach. While the three temporal registers of human, technological, and botanical time are harmonious, *Botanical Computing* leaves open the question of interpretation. This exhibition presents a speculative world where the coded coexistence of the technological, the botanical, and the human mean that *human interpretation* is certain not to have the final word, and the world is richer for other inclusions.

—Katherine Behar

<sup>1</sup> Unpaginated, unpublished manuscript, 2nd page of PDF.

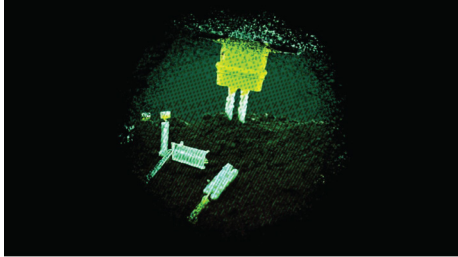
<sup>2</sup> Correspondence with the author. February 16, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Unpaginated, unpublished manuscript, 25th page of PDF.

<sup>4</sup> Conversation with the author. February 5, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Unpaginated, unpublished manuscript, 24th page of PDF.





*Plant Growth Dreams, 2024.*



*Still Running, 2024.*



*Memories of Care, 2024.*



*Growth Study, 2023-24.*

### Visiting Artist: Silvia Ruzanka

Silvia Ruzanka is an artist-philosopher whose projects include virtual reality, interactive installation, video, and performance. Her work is concerned with the archaeology and memory of technology and media, and their intersections with everyday life. Her work has been presented at galleries, museums, and festivals internationally including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; SIGGRAPH; ISEA; the New Forms Festival (Vancouver); and the Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture (Shenzhen, China), among others. She holds an MFA in Art and Technology Studies from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a B.A. in Physics from Smith College. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and is a Ph.D. candidate in Visual Arts: Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Art Theory at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts in Portland, Maine. Her current research is in the philosophy of computation and care.



# Gabriela Vainsencher: **Inheritance**

## FALL 2023



**Gabriela Vainsencher: Inheritance**  
October 16 – December 1, 2023

**Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion**  
November 1, 2023  
November 2, 2023

**Public Artist Lecture at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
November 8, 2023

### Curatorial Statement

"There is a center but the center is empty." —Lydia Davis, "The Center of the Story" (quoted in Gabriela Vainsencher's *Negative Capability*)

The New Media Artspace is proud to present *Gabriela Vainsencher: Inheritance*, a solo exhibition of single-channel videos alongside sculptural and photographic media. *Inheritance* brings together four video works created between 2014 and 2016 (exhibited in-person and online), in particular one created through dialog with her mother. These works are accompanied by details of one of Vainsencher's large-scale ceramic works from 2021 (exhibited online only) created after she became a mother herself, as well as artifacts of her practice (exhibited in-person only), including ceramics and photographic props that appear in the videos and provide context for these works. The exhibition sets a frame for understanding Vainsencher's work over this span of several years, and that work in turn is enframed by her experiences being Jewish, Israeli, Argentine, trilingual, an immigrant—and no less, being a daughter and a mother.

Emerging from this intersectional inherited identity, Vainsencher's feminist artistic practice highlights learning as a non-hierarchical collective process. This extends to an emphasis on community, on text and commentary such as the Talmudic practice of framing a text with other texts, and on learning from one's elders and learning together, all of which Vainsencher attributes to Jewish traditions. Vainsencher's creative process revolves around dialog, textual commentary, and collaboration. In turn, this "revolving" is literalized in the forms of her videos and sculptures, which are continually circling around, looping, swerving, turning, and not quite returning. From speech comes stutters, from touch comes porosity, from openings come closures, from surfaces come circularity, from daughters come mothers. Vainsencher's works are always coming around again with layered meanings, which the artist holds open to make space for interpretation and transformation.

*Negative Capability* begins with a shot of the upper torso of a woman (the artist) wearing a black shirt and nearly disappearing against a black background. Her hands and throat, exposed above the neckline and below the sleeves or her garment, are the only parts of her body that are visible against the black void. Also visible is an object, a cylindrical ceramic sculpture, which she holds with both hands in front of her chest at the dead center of the frame. She rotates this object aiming its mouth at the camera, and in sync the video image moves in and out of focus,

as though by manipulating the hollow sculpture she controls the focal ring on the lens. After a few turns, an older woman's voice commences a one-sided conversation, speaking in Hebrew which at times gives way to Spanish, while white subtitles in English pop up in staccato rhythms of short phrases usually offset toward the bottom or sides of the frame. The cryptic narration mixes anecdotes, metaphors, humor, and wisdom. Generally, it seems to concern coming to terms with what isn't known or knowable, what may or may not happen. Eventually it becomes evident that the narrator is discussing her practice as a psychoanalyst.

Like talk therapy itself, once it begins the voice doesn't stop. Instead, the image shifts: hands, always doing, manipulate rolling and sliding abstract ceramic forms; a throat swallows; the figure hides behind masks; more cylindrical forms rotate around her missing head, obscuring it; hands attempt to piece two ceramic fragments together to form a circle, but the gaps are too wide to close its loop and any way she turns the fragments spans only half the curve.

Eventually the narrator explains the meaning of the phrase "negative capability," a concept introduced by the poet Keats to refer to "the ability to be suspended in not knowing, ... not having closure ... not doing." The narrator praises this difficult work of keeping things unknown, not rushing to closure. Finally, after the figure disappears and against an image of undulating waves, comes a question from the narrator, the artist's mother, who asks "What's this all about Gabriela?" and then—like the analyst she is—begins to speculate as to her daughter's motivations, but—like the mother she is—with laughter.

On one level, *Negative Capability* explores intergenerational communication and miscommunication. The psychoanalyst mother works in her medium—talking and words—while the artist daughter works in her medium—images and objects. The two parts never quite align in form; yet, in content they are in uncannily perfect alignment. This is because on another level, the piece compares how mother and daughter both contend with something similar in the different work they do. Both engage a process. Both allow space for an empty center—the unknown that must be held in abeyance to keep a process—whether creative or therapeutic—richly alive. Vainsencher has written about the how analysis and art share an

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.

# Gabriela Vainsencher: **Inheritance**

## FALL 2023

investment in interpretation.<sup>1</sup> For each, the empty center holds an elusive meaning that can't be arrived at or even articulated, or else the artwork would be trite, or else the self-realization would be too pat, or worse externalized (as the mother points out in her first lines).

*Negative Capability* originated in audio recordings of phone conversations between the artist and her mother, which she first painstakingly transcribed, then translated, then remixed. Only at the last step did she abandon her devotion to faithfully conveying her mother's words. In this artfully (re)interpreted conversation with her mother, Vainsencher emphasizes a process giving rise to a collectively authored frame circling an unknown, which she likens to the *Gamra* page in Talmudic traditions. At the center of a *Gamra* page sits holy text, and enframing that text are other texts consisting in mutable commentary. In the case of *Negative Capability*, the mother's text lies at the center, and the framing commentary, open to interpretation, is the artwork that emerges from the daughter's reworking. This encircling processing of a holy or wholly unknowable connects psychoanalytic process and artistic process, as both attempt to apprehend something intangible at their heart.

The complementarity of two disciplines in *Negative Capability* is explored figuratively in the next video, *Duet*, which features another collaborator of Vainsencher's, the dancer and choreographer Leslie Satin. Satin faces the camera with the tight frame grazing her forehead and chin. Her face is in slow but constant motion. As she moves her head side to side, like indicating a silent "no," the camera swivels on a tripod, mimicking her movement. The duet unfolds as parallel movements between the discipline of performance represented by Satin, and the discipline of video, represented by Vainsencher's camera.

In this duet, the empty center is where the dancer's gaze and the gaze of the lens intersect. Continuing the themes of *Negative Capability*, Satin's solemn refusal suggests a negation, while both the shaking head and the panning camera follow the arc of a semicircle. Combined, the two might make a complete circle, but instead they draw attention to the empty space between the performer and the lens. The simple eloquence of *Duet* is to hold empty that space between them, which is Vainsencher's invitation for the viewer to fill in their own experience.<sup>2</sup> Vainsencher's intention is to make room for the viewer, which she understand requires an artist not take up all of the space herself, burdening an artwork with overprescribed meaning. Following the garrulous *Negative Capability*,

this silent video might even be interpreted as its inverse. Whereas Vainsencher's mother only speaks and never appears in *Negative Capability*, Satin's face embodies the frame as she shakes her head "no" in a refusal to speak.

Satin appears again in *Leslie Across the Floor*. Again, much as *Negative Capability* locates a common ground between artistic and psychoanalytic process, *Leslie Across the Floor* explores a feature in common between the two collaborators' disciplines, video and dance. Both utilize entrances and exits and the choreography of this video is reduced to exactly that. Satin enters from the left side of the frame, inchworming on her back along the floor until she exits at the frame's right side. Unlike *Duets* which focuses exclusively on Satin's face, here her head is turned away from the camera so that her face is never visible. The movement of her body is exaggerated by foley audio which unexpectedly substitutes the sound of dragging heavy metal in place of the softer sounds of cloth and flesh on floor.

Entrances and exits, and the anticipation they entail, are performed again in the last video, *Here It Comes* but this time the performer is the ocean. Recalling the final watery image of *Negative Capability*, this video shows waves lapping against a coast. As the waves slowly roll in, choruses of whispers repeat "Here it comes" overlapping with "It's coming." Just as the ocean's waves never stop, the anticipation never reaches a conclusion. Instead, this video holds our attention, like the voices hold their breath and gasp for air. The empty center of *Here It Comes* is that which might come, which might fill in what's missing from an evacuated center constantly being washed away, sucked back to sea like the vacuumed void of undertow.

In the online version of the exhibition, each video is bordered by close detail images from one of Vainsencher's largescale ceramic works, *Mom*. The sculpture itself is a wall-scaled relief work showing a twisting looping, many-limbed figure. Created after the birth of Vainsencher's first child, *Mom* shows the many roles she takes on as a daughter turned mother to a daughter. As though pulled in many directions, the clay surface bears the touch of a million clamoring fingerprints. The deeply textured surfaces recall the busy hands manipulating clay objects in *Negative Capability*. In *Mom*, hands are also constantly doing things, now cooking, shampooing, and carrying. In *Inheritance*, the textures of *Mom* mimic the enframing form of the *Gamra* page, also becoming a frame for the video works Vainsencher

created as her mother's daughter.

Many of the works in the exhibition take the visual shape of a frame: from the hollow ceramic cylinders and circles in *Negative Capability*, to the panning semi-circle arcs gestured in *Duet*, to the bracketing device of entrances and exits that motivate *Leslie Across the Floor*, to the anticipation that holds attention in *Here It Comes*, to the curatorial decision to use the textures of *Mom* as a border around video works. These enframing forms make reference to the Talmud which inspires the design of the *Inheritance* exhibition. They also function much like a family does—they encircle, enshrine, and protect something precious at the center.

Vainsencher is also inspired by the Jewish practice of learning together, *Be'Tzavta*, which she loosely translates as "as a team; together." *Be'Tzavta* involves reading as a group and discussing a text while seated together in a circle, a practice she was introduced to by the artist Ofri Cnaan's feminist reading group at AIR gallery. Once again, "there is a center but the center is empty." Vainsencher consciously connects *Be'Tzavta* to the anti-hierarchical feminist approaches she applies throughout her work. At Baruch, she will present a special participatory performance of *Here It Comes* that literally embodies *Be'Tzavta* circular communal form. Additionally, at the New Media Artspace in-person exhibition, she shares several of the artifacts and process pieces that contribute to her work, inviting viewers into her process by creating an intimate learning community in the Newman Library. Mirroring the *Gamra* page and the *Be'Tzavta* practices, encircling text and (re)interpretive commentary underpin Vainsencher's process at every level. In *Inheritance*, these are continually come around, revolving and enframing through the artist's reinventions, reincarnations, and inheritances.

—Katherine Behar

<sup>1</sup> Gabriela Vainsencher, "Negative Capability," Master of Fine Arts Thesis (Hunter College of the City University of New York, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Gabriela Vainsencher, interviewed by the author, online, July 5, 2023.



*Negative Capability*, 2016.



*Duet*, 2015.



*Leslie Across the Floor*, 2014.



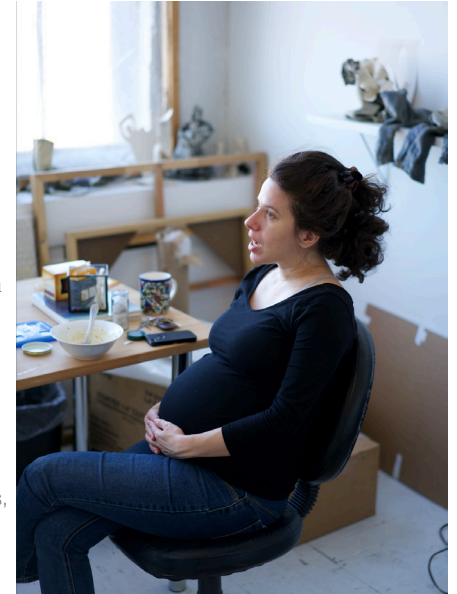
*Here It Comes*, 2014.

### Visiting Artist: Gabriela Vainsencher

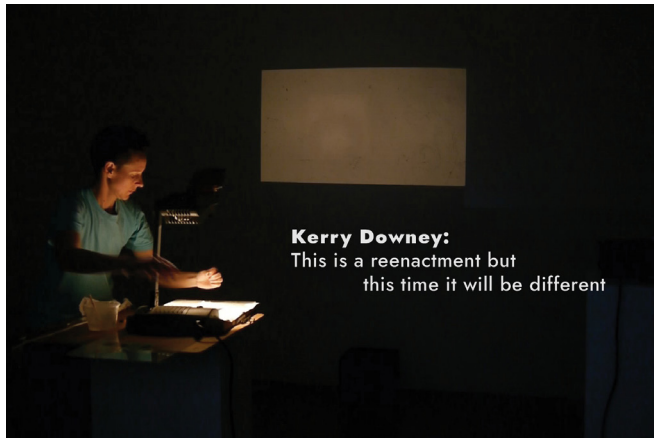
Gabriela Vainsencher was born in Buenos Aires, raised in Tel Aviv, and currently lives in Montclair. She received her MFA from Hunter College, CUNY in 2016. Past solo and two-person exhibitions include Asya Geisberg gallery (solo) CRUSH Curatorial gallery, NY, NY, A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (solo), Hanina Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel; Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux, Le Havre, France; Parker's Box Gallery, Brooklyn, NY and La Chambre Blanche, Québec City, Canada (solo).

Her work has been included in group exhibitions including Marisa Newman Projects, NY, NY, Bergamo Modern and Contemporary Art, Italy; Kunstforening, Tromsø, Norway; Pierogi gallery, Brooklyn, NY, The Freies Museum, Berlin and The National Gallery of Saskatchewan, Canada. Residencies include Yaddo, The Atlantic Center for the Arts, Byrdcliffe Artist Residency, Woodstock (USA), Triangle Arts Association (France), and La Chambre Blanche (Canada).

Vainsencher is the founder of the [Morning Drawing Residency](#). Her writings about art have appeared in [Hyperallergic](#), [Title Magazine](#), and [Tohu magazine](#). She occasionally teaches art at Williams College, and the Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, CUNY.







**Kerry Downey: This is a reenactment but this time it will be different**  
February 28 – April 27, 2023

**Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion**  
March 22, 2023  
March 23, 2023

**Public Artist Lecture at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
March 21, 2023

## Curatorial Statement

"Every artwork is a reenactment, a time machine, a fantasy, something terribly true and spectacularly fictional." —Kerry Downey<sup>1</sup>

The New Media Artspace is proud to present Kerry Downey: *This is a reenactment but this time it will be different*, a solo exhibition of single-channel videos and two-dimensional elements that reflect this New York-based artist's interdisciplinary process. Focusing on reenactment alludes to how performance undergirds Downey's manifold practice, as well as to the genre of historical reenactment by which seemingly fixed hegemonic narratives can be resuscitated and reimagined in the present. Reenactment opens spaces for infiltrating received histories, both personal and political, and for torquing them toward alternate horizons of inclusion and justice. Downey's reenactments veer again and again toward the possibility of something "different." *This is a reenactment but this time it will be different* brings together videos (in-person and online), prints (online only), and artifacts of their research-intensive practice (in-person only). Across these works, Downey's reenactments inhabit, mimic, and shape the forms and materials of their surround, and their position in relation to them. Immersing themselves in abandoned spaces and materials, they queer the relation of form to history and of person to place in matters of political positioning. Their moving images move us between the fictional, the possible, and the true.

The exhibition begins with *What we came to see*. A voice narrates a pilgrimage to visit a collection of *Spomenik*, now-dilapidated monuments constructed during Tito's era and commissioned by local towns throughout the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The narrator, we learn, is an artist who "came to see" the derelict monuments after recognizing that a chance encounter with one monument years prior had been a formative experience, resonating with her present-day art practice. The monuments welcome viewers to climb into their architectural forms, rewarding those who do with an otherwise unattainable view of their surroundings. She now strives to recreate the monuments' invitation to inhabit a viewpoint in her own sculptures.

The narrator's voice does not belong to Kerry Downey, but rather to a friend. Nevertheless—and despite not having visited these sites—Downey is an active presence as an editor reconstructing photographic documentation of the trip and their friend's voiceover to develop meaning as the video unfolds. It presents Downey's computer screen intensely

zoomed in, obsessively panning the photographic surfaces. In a momentary zoom out, Downey reveals a figure poised aloft in a concrete hole, arms goofily extended to mime the gentle slope of a hilly horizon line. This visitor is reenacting the form of a place in the distance—a place they aren't—as a means of bodily connecting with it. This image does not stay on screen for long; soon overtaken by another zoom, it evaporates into nondescript pixels (until, that is, the image is reenacted in another artwork, *Nothing but net*, when Downey performs the same gesture to match the contour of a projected abstract shape). Even as Downey's friend recollects their journey, Downey's searching manipulations of the pictures—scrutinizing pixels that remain only pixels—implies a hunger for more than or more to the story. By zooming, panning, scrolling, and repositioning, Downey keeps the still image—and the story that manifests across its surface—restlessly moving.

The narrator offers a clue as to why—or better yet how—we could say "Kerry Downey's moving image works." Unlike many Western political monuments that place viewers at or below the feet of heroic patriarchs, toward whom they can only passively gaze up, these enticing structures solicit participation and embodied involvement. Being bodily in the mix goes beyond reframing the landscape; it also reframes the modality of political participation. If *What we came to see* suggests a queering of monumentality and political subjecthood, Downey reenacts that queering when they themselves get into the image, and get the image moving.

*What we came to see* offers a cypher for many of the artist's other works. Downey describes their usual process as flowing between two-dimensional printmaking, drawing, and painting, and four-dimensional time-based performance art and video works. For example, the second video in the exhibition, *Nothing but net*, is staged on and with an overhead projector. The action unfolds on the projector's surface or in its beam, where Downey transforms the basic elements of their practice—ink, paper, their own body—into an otherworldly landscape. The voiceover is a long poem that articulates tensions between being and becoming:

This is a reenactment but this time it will be different.  
This is the pressure of bearing between  
moving closer while further away<sup>2</sup>

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.



The work begins with something like primordial ooze. Seeping black ink becomes something celestial, uncontrollable, as the sound of breathing emits an aura of perpetual expansion and retraction. Eventually, these liquid forms give way to solid shapes, colored cut paper shapes that reappear in Downey's accompanying print works. Downey herself eventually appears amid the colored shapes, first as hand in shadow and ultimately in a "STAFF" cap lit by the projector's glow. Bathing in image, they point to an excess that cannot be contained by a still image or words alone. This work unfolds, as the voiceover suggests, "where the sense suffers the word."<sup>3</sup>

As is common for Downey's practice, unique monotype prints accompany this video, and the video itself is produced by projecting through plexiglass plates used to produce the prints. While both arise from the same process, the still images appear self-contained, unlike the moving images that evoke what Downey calls a "tension between the video frame and something that clearly exceeds the frame, like smoke or entropy."<sup>4</sup> Downey's visual language momentarily coheres in these still images, combining symbols, shapes, and abstract compositions. The prints are purposeful, but their meanings remain private. Abstraction enables Downey to build a personal lexicon of shape-symbols that deflect what they call the "violences of being looked at but not seen."<sup>5</sup> The danger of being misunderstood or misplaced is acute for Downey as a genderqueer artist. Their bodily vulnerability as a performer in their moving images contrasts with the inscrutable symbolic vernacular of their print works.

For example, in *Wormholes*, Downey's most recent video work appearing third in the exhibition, Downey shows themselves attempting to merge into diverse settings often overflowing with overwhelming quantities of refuse materials or showing signs of neglect. In *Wormholes*, Downey's reuse of art materials extends to their own previous artworks, and even themselves. *Wormholes* recuts footage from over a decade's work, a project Downey was inspired to undertake when they were struck by similarities across their archive, as though each project reenacts a recurring dynamic. Describing the making of this video, they refer to themselves as a material, too. "As I started reconfiguring these videos, I was playing with different experiences of time and cutting up images of myself, past versions of me."<sup>6</sup>

*Wormholes* stitches together moments across time when Downey assimilates themselves into a particular setting. They use quotidian

techniques of material immersion and camouflage, like hiding, reflecting, disguising, or decorating. In conversation with their therapist, also a queer artist, Downey arrived at the metaphor of a composting worm, working through "decomposition and tunneling" to achieve a queer orientation to its environment. Their therapist uses the phrase "a radical openness to the more-than-human. To materials, sites, elements, to one's own bodily and artistic production"<sup>7</sup> to describe Downey's relationship to their surround.

Unlike the dynamic of separation that supports the distinctions of Western CIS image-making—for example separating figure from ground or spectator (demos) from monument (hero)—the composting worm reprocesses and regurgitates its surroundings, flattening distinctions. Downey refers to the sites of these video performances as "liminal or transitional," but it is worth noting that most (factory, museum, office building, convent) are also institutional sites. So, in digestively meshing with these spaces—infiltrating the apparatus of power with a genderqueer body that defies distinctions—Downey gnaws at their authority and at their capacity to regulate who or what goes where. Downey's reflection that the "composting worm feels very queer to me, my trying to find my way in the world and feeling disoriented, but doing a kind of creative labor that sustains me. I have no idea if it'll provide rich soil for anyone else, but it makes my own life livable" reinforces this dynamic of subversion.<sup>8</sup>

It may be that an element of subversion is needed to gnash and mash together the distinctions that define space, and regurgitate it all whole. If the worm's re-masticated world is "where physical and psychological transformations can synch up,"<sup>9</sup> the result may be "a third space." In a recent lexicon about their work and longstanding involvement with psychoanalytic process, Downey aligns a "third space" with "that which is neither me nor you but the space in between or beyond, translocation, transitional space, liminality, interstitial space, bathrooms and hallways, dis/orientated spatial relations, queer phenomenology (Ahmed, 2006), how to make space spacious, margins as sites of resistance and radical openness (hooks, 1989)"<sup>10</sup> With this notion, the exhibition concludes with *A Third Space*, a mostly monochromatic video largely captured from Downey's manipulations of black ink and cut out paper shapes, again on an overhead projector.

Luminous Rorschach-like shapes in flux are informed and reformed by a voice-over that intelligently fuses psychoanalytic modes of association. Pouring fluid on a projector, Downey reenacts the processes of making

their still image work. It seems a still image is always first a moving image. Or, as in the two monumentally scaled heads that accompany *What we came to see*, a still image doesn't arrest motion, but rather is revealed by movement, like Downey's abrasions that expose outlines of statuesque heads with obsessive sanding. Yet the process of sanding fuses "closeness" with "erosion,"<sup>11</sup> so like liquid on a projector, the sanded image emerges out of a state of flux and eventual disappearance.

The overhead projector is among Downey's quintessential tools. On the one hand, a projector is an almost too-perfect decoy for their investments in psychoanalysis. On the other, even if its obsolescence suggests regression, it is immediately recognizable as a didactic aid. It evokes classroom learning and the dissemination of cultural "truths" or norms, when teachers reenact standardized lessons at the helm of a class. As a long-term art educator in museum settings, Downey is aware of the problematic nature of these forms of reenactment that reproduce cultural hegemonies. Yet, as in *A Third Space*, reenactment is also a tool for prizing apart the stranglehold such hegemonies have over our self-determination. This involves remaking our relationship of self to surround, how we position ourselves in spaces and places, and how we learn and "un/learn" together. As Downey elaborates, "For me making art is also the making and unmaking of parts of myself. Un/learning is kinesthetic, requiring an embodied approach to play, a certain amount of truth in the nonsense."<sup>12</sup>

For Downey, this nonsensical logic of reenactment is summed up in Gertrude Stein's insistence that there is no such thing as repetition, only difference.<sup>13</sup> "This is a reenactment but this time it will be different" is a paradoxically true statement because as reenactments, Downey's artworks offer experiences of difference. They enact material transformations and offer viewers an opportunity to witness change.

—Katherine Behar

<sup>1</sup> Kerry Downey, "Making Mountains into Molehills: A Lexicon-in-Process." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Kerry Downey, *Nothing but net*, 2016. Video.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Kerry Downey and Tusia Dabrowska, "Ghosts of transformation: Interview by Tusia Dabrowska." *Temp.files* (January 2022), accessed January 16, 2023: <https://temporayfiles.net/march-22-kerry>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Downey, "Making Mountains."

<sup>11</sup> Kerry Downey, personal communication with author, December 2, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Downey and Dabrowska, "Ghosts of transformation."

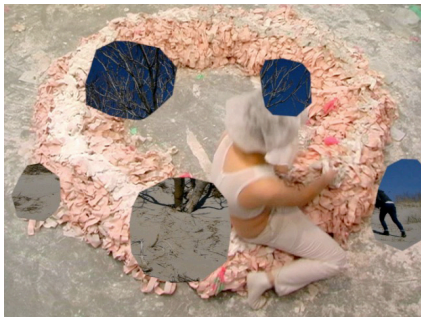
<sup>13</sup> Kerry Downey, personal communication with author, January 17, 2023.



*What we came to see*, 2018.



*Nothing but net*, 2016.



*Wormholes*, 2022.



*A Third Space*, 2014-2016.

### Visiting Artist: Kerry Downey

Kerry Downey (b.1979, Ft. Lauderdale) is a genderqueer artist and educator based in New York. Downey's interdisciplinary practice explores embodied forms of resistance and transformation. They use experimental strategies to draw connections between interior worlds and sociopolitical landscapes. Downey's lifelong experiences in queer and artist collectives, their work with people with dementia and other disabilities, and the close overlaps between their art practice and teaching, have all utilized art as a strategy for engagement and care.



Downey's first major publication, *We collect together in a net*, was published by Wendy's Subway in 2019. They have exhibited at the Bureau of General Services-Queer Division (New York, NY); Queens Museum (Flushing, NY); Bard CCS / Hessel Museum (Annandale, NY); Danspace Project (New York, NY); Knockdown Center (Maspeth, NY); Kate Werble (New York, NY); Cooper Cole (Toronto, CA); CAVE (Detroit, MI); and Taylor Macklin (Zurich, CH). Downey is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Emerging Artist Grant and Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant. Artist-in-residencies include Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Madison, ME; Triangle Arts Association, Brooklyn, NY; SHIFT at EFA Project Space, New York, NY; the Drawing Center's Open Sessions, New York, NY; and the Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT. Downey participated in the Queer|Art|Mentorship program in 2013 (paired with Angela Dufresne). Their work has been in Artforum, The Brooklyn Rail, and The Washington Post. Downey holds a BA from Bard College and an MFA from Hunter College.

Downey spent over a decade running community-based arts programs at The Museum of Modern Art; they have recently taught in the at Rhode Island School of Design, Parsons/The New School, City College, and at Hunter College. In the 2022-23 they will be a visiting critic/artist in the Art Department at Williams College.

# Sarada Rauch: *If All Things Were Equal, You'd Only Be the Sequel*

## FALL 2022



### Curatorial Statement

The New Media Artspace is proud to present *Sarada Rauch: If All Things Were Equal, You'd Only Be the Sequel*, a solo exhibition of eight single-channel moving image works by the New York-based artist. Rauch's projects are frequently set at intimate scales of personal engagement—a tabletop, a tablet, a domestic tableau, a neighborhood. At a time when the world's problems often seem inconceivably large, Rauch scales everything down into a framework where intervention becomes possible. With deceptively modest means, they craftily manipulate things in the troubled present to arrive at impoverished but hopeful images of how the world might be otherwise. Even while Rauch dares to imagine "If All Things Were Equal," their works unflinchingly acknowledge a present reality in which that is far from being the case.

A homespun aesthetic runs throughout Rauch's work. As an interdisciplinary artist, Rauch has a practice that seems to swallow whole whatever media lie in their path. They employ animation, video, performance, photography, poetry, music, and sculpture, overflowing these categories freely. Several of the video works in *If All Things Were Equal* derive from an art album, *In the Realm of a Dying Star: Side A*, featuring Rauch's own music. Like their animation style, the music makes self-aware reference to Rauch as a one-person band, remixing themselves and filling every role. Endearingly underproduced, the songs at first seem to deliver anti-capitalist un-slickness,

flying in the face of mass-production norms. This could be interpreted as an anarchist commitment to self-sufficiency, but while the work operates this way, it is more complex, too. Rauch is aware that even their restrained production values nevertheless rely on technologies that are themselves the spoils of war and products of human suffering. They voice this critique in *Second Law of Thermodynamics*, which pans through a domestic interior across a countertop littered with everyday items that in Rauch's words, "hold a history of exploitation [... including] merchandise made on the backs of human rights abuses, oil and gas, and the militarization of the police." Even Rauch's homemade works unfurl tentacles outward into networks of allyship and complicity.

Perhaps for this reason, Rauch constantly reminds their audience that they participate in every element seen or heard in their work. Rauch leans heavily on "tricks" of the eye, literally reframing what we see. Yet, Rauch is continually showing their hand, exposing their methods and undoing their magic, while nevertheless keeping us captivated. In the title of one work, Rauch baldly admits "*I've Got a Hand in It.*" They imply that they—and by extension we—are culpable for suffering on the other side of the world, as distant as it may seem from their comfortable life. At the same time, this phrase also means that their

**Sarada Rauch: *If All Things Were Equal, You'd Only Be the Sequel***  
September 19 – December 2, 2022

**Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion**  
October 21, 2022  
October 26, 2022  
October 31, 2022

**Public Artist Lecture at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
November 15, 2022

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.

hand is literally in their work, touching their images, and pointing to themselves as creator in their role as an artist.

What is the role of an artist? For Rauch, it seems to be in experimentation, in messing around sometimes playfully but with serious intent. It is also in dogged introspection, speaking hard truths to herself, and—crucially—with this information crafting political consciousness. Against the odds, the handmade imagery and self-styled soundtracks in Rauch's works, coupled with their coyly outspoken political awakening, leads to enfranchisement, and their preoccupation with apocalyptic end times retains optimistic opportunity. The exploit at the heart of Rauch's practice seems to be this lesson: Political identity becomes a matter of craft, of self-fashioning, and of pragmatic agentic intervention. Politics is in the craft of making do and making better by whatever means are available at hand. If this is so, an artist's role is to take things as they are *quite* at hand, making them available to manual manipulations, and making the present (even the doomed present) malleable.

Rauch shows their hand again and again, with examples of their manipulative technique (or anti-technique) that undercut the investment in illusion that undergirds media consumption habits. The opposite of keeping one's cards close to one's chest, showing your hand gives away for free the value media purport to hold (over us). For instance, Rauch's life-size index finger interrupts the collage-based animation *Middles*. Pointing to the center of the work, the finger disrupts its illusion, and points out a lesson in perspective that

applies equally to philosophy, physics, and optics. Meanwhile, in the video work *Gravity*, a jokey premise—children's make-believe and obvious greenscreen—manages to generate real joy and potential by liberating kids to fly away and soar above it all. The joy is as real as the manipulation is obvious; the children's knowing participation in faking it results in genuine smiles. In both cases, Rauch leverages a medium at the precise point where it is conventionally most manipulative—that is, where it convinces us to buy in to its seamlessness. Rauch has discovered that that is also exactly where the medium is most available to manipulation. The apparent seamlessness of images is really a seam that can be opened onto another world.

In the first work in the exhibition, *Topple*, the political relevance of Rauch's anti-technique is at the fore. Rauch recreates monuments of patriarchal and racist oppressors at miniature scale and shoots them against diorama-like backgrounds of the public spaces where they were installed. Then, with their full-scale hand and a bit of string, they topple them one by one. Showing their hand, they seem to say, "It can be as easy as that."

—Katherine Behar

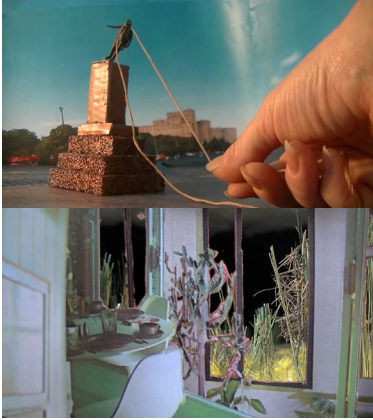
---

<sup>1</sup> Sarada Rauch, "Second Law of Thermodynamics." <http://saradarauch.com/2ndlawthermo.html>. Accessed September 1, 2022.



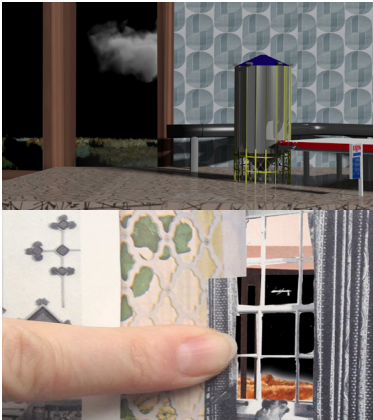
# Sarada Rauch: *If All Things Were Equal, You'd Only Be the Sequel*

## FALL 2022



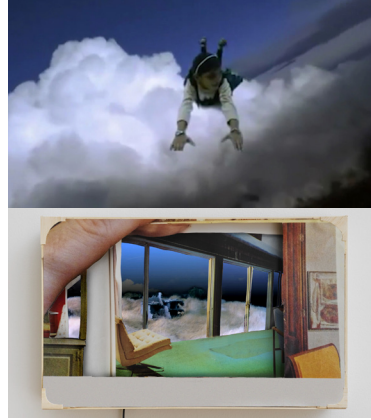
*Topple*, 2020.

*In doing so you become the monster you are trying to combat*, 2016.



*Second law of thermodynamics*, 2019.

*Middles*, 2016.



*Gravity*, 2017.

*I have a hand in it*, 2018.



*Boomerang*, 2019.

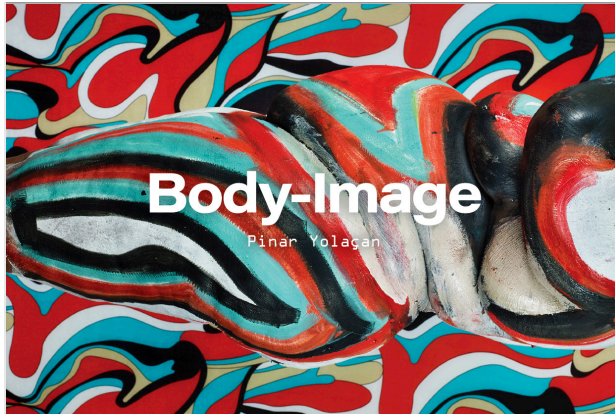
*This is what it feels like in the end*, 2020.

### Visiting Artist: Sarada Rauch

Sarada Rauch is an artist, poet and musician born in Los Angeles and based in Brooklyn. Their work reenacts popular media and personal experience to explore the construction of histories and Unbelonging. Sarada exhibits, performs and screens internationally in spaces such as The Drawing Center, New York; Hessel Museum of Art, Hudson; Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami; Central St. Martins, London; La Conserveda Center of Contemporary Art, Cueti; RISD Museum, Providence and Aesthetica Short Film Festival. Artist residencies they have participated in include Open Sessions at the Drawing Center, New York; The LMCC Swing Space, New York; Lakkos Residency, Heraklion, Crete; \_Hannacc, Barcelona; Greatmore Studios/Triangle Network, Cape Town; amongst others, and they received the BBK Saxony Fellowship in Leipzig. They are an Associate Professor of New Media and Technology at LaGuardia Community College.







**Pinar Yolaçan: *Body-Image***  
March 7 – May 9, 2022

**Public Artist Lecture**  
April 5, 2022

### Curatorial Statement

The New Media Artspace is pleased to present *Pinar Yolaçan: Body-Image*, the first online exhibition to bring together image and video works from different contexts and series by this acclaimed Turkish artist. *Body-Image* includes carefully constructed studio images in which the artist painstakingly paints and adorns the bodies of her subjects, alongside a more recent collaboration with Chief Tuire Kayapó from the Mebêngôkre Territory in the Brazilian Amazon. Tuire is one of the only female chiefs of the Kayapó, among the only ethnicities to practice full body painting in everyday life.<sup>1</sup> Seen side-by-side, Yolaçan's diverse series illuminate one another, yielding fresh insights on her work. Together, they show how presenting women's bodies as images concerns not merely images as works of art in a painterly tradition, but also images as objects of media that attain currency in circulation. With women deploying their body-images as a means to self-possessed empowerment, *Body-Image* echoes with this demand to be seen.

Yolaçan's "body-images" are the result of intensive collaborations with marginalized people who may seem unlikely to wield authority over their own representations. However, before ever collaborating with Yolaçan, her subjects—ranging from SSBBW subcultural internet stars to Indigenous groups—had become sophisticated media users who deploy their body-images toward self-determination. *Body-Image* makes clear that women are not necessarily disempowered or silenced when their bodies become images as the conventional critique of photographic and ethnographic objectification might have it. Yolaçan's work shows the opposite dynamic unfolding: produced through trusting relationships often built over the course of years, her works reveal—and more recently deploy—the power of her subjects.<sup>2</sup>

*Pinar Yolaçan: Body-Image* is a hybrid online and in-person exhibition organized as *Body-Image*, *The Bricoleur*, and *Tuire Kayapó (First Contact)*. The exhibition appears online in its entirety, with *Tuire Kayapó (First Contact)* also on view in-person.

### I.

Yolaçan first received widespread recognition for works of portraiture that conceived bodily flesh as a site of slippage between human and nonhuman organisms. In contrast, these body-images are coolly

artifactual and seemingly inorganic. With these works, Yolaçan veers headlong into the nonhuman, forsaking even the organicism of flesh. In place of flesh, these works evoke material misrecognition, picturing bodies—in part or whole—as iconic, powerful, even totemic. Among her varied sources of inspiration, Yolaçan cites a Pre-Neolithic anthropomorphic vessel from Anatolia that borrows the shape of a woman's body,<sup>3</sup> as well as modern and contemporary painters from Jenny Saville and Francis Bacon to the early 20th century Italian Futurists. Across archaeology and Modernist abstract painting, we encounter body-images of women mimicking the forms of objects that mimic the forms of women.

Culled from distinct series, these constructed photographs are punctuated by short videos all shot in controlled studio settings. In sequence, they travel from mimetic abstraction with bodies retaining a referential quality, into high abstraction with bodies appearing as pure color and shape. In works from the *Mother Goddess* series (2009), textured and ornamented bodies recognizably reference ancient objects like vessels and statues celebrating feminine powers of fertility. By comparison, coated in a single vibrant hue of latex, bodies in the series *Like a Stone* (2011), appear as absolute form, like a singular brush stroke of paint standing out against a contrasting solid ground. These graphic body-images might be becoming the gestures and materials of painting. Finally, in the *Corpo Mechanico* (2013–2014) and *Nudes* (2012) series, bodies meld with and move against their backgrounds. *Corpo Mechanico* seems to recall surrealist Roger Caillois's famous depiction of insects that so successfully camouflage themselves as their leafy surroundings that they cannot discern the difference between their kind and their setting—resulting in cannibalism. For Caillois, such non-adaptive mimicry is "a luxury and even a dangerous luxury."<sup>4</sup> Instead, Yolaçan's non-adaptive mimicry incites movement. In *Corpo Mechanico*, movement on the surface of body-images seems to vibrate, burnishing figures to blur into grounds. *Nudes* takes movement further, capturing a body in ongoing motion as a frozen image.

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.

Yolaçan credits shooting the dynamic images in *Nudes* in improvisation with her subjects as impetus for her moving image works. Each short video results from a years-long relationship and rapport cultivated between Yolaçan and the individual performers: a belly dancer, a Kathak dancer, and a funk-caroica dancer. Across these diverse cultural contexts, Yolaçan considers changing cultural and historical perceptions of body-images among dance practitioners and in the public eye. Her videos highlight feminine power in these dance forms which all center on the female body.

## II.

Body-images appear “in the making” in *The Bricoleur*, sharing never-before-published frames from a series that shows Kayapó Chief Tuire painting the body of a young woman in her community.

It is no simple matter to visit, much less to photograph, Indigenous communities in Brazil. After much effort and research laying groundwork, Yolaçan was invited to Mojkaráko village by Chief Ak'jaboro. Leveraging her role as a photographer, she was asked to publicize an urgent political issue—PEC 215, a bill threatening demarcation of Indigenous territories—in the international press.<sup>5</sup> Defying the stereotypes of naïve, passive objects of ethnographic representation, the Kayapó community members thoughtfully negotiated the circulation of their own images. Such astuteness on the part of remote Amazonian villagers to the function of images in global media contexts might seem surprising; however, Kayapó people have been active participants in their own media representations for decades. In the late 1980s, anthropologist Terence Turner (a leading expert on Kayapó cultures) worked with filmmaker Vincent Carelli to help initiate the first-of-its-kind Kayapó Video Project. Kayapó people have been deploying new media from video to recent Internet and social media campaigns to proactively document, promote, and protect their culture and stories ever since. Of the Kayapó Video Project, Turner wrote, “The Kayapo goals of self-education and self-representation, to outsiders, required a degree of self-objectification and analysis of their own culture.”<sup>6</sup> Such self-determination through self-objectification aligns with the notion of Body-Image and the priorities of this exhibition.

Perhaps it is an overly-simplistic suggestion, but Kayapó people's deft deployment of their representations in media campaigns might reflect

their immersion in another form of media: body painting. As Chief Tuire explains, and scholars like Turner elaborate, body paint functions as a communication system, conveying information about the wearer to the community. Different forms of paint are worn at specific times of life and to indicate particular kinships, milestones, or occasions.<sup>7</sup> For Turner, Kayapó body paint—like fashion—is a visual communication practice that mediates individual and community. In other words, for a Kayapó person wearing body paint, their body already functions as an image that circulates as communications media. As such, it is a short step to conceiving of one's own body-image as a potent unit of media. Political theorist Jodi Dean asserts that media objects accrue value and power through their circulation.<sup>8</sup> So self-possession of one's body-image, and indeed borrowing Turner's term “self-objectification” as a body-image become necessary political weapons when navigating contemporary media culture, as Kayapó community members do so keenly.

## III.

Continuing Yolaçan's work with the Kayapó, *Tuire Kayapó (First Contact)* consists of an hour-long interview between Chief Tuire and Yolaçan, conducted in Kayapó language, with real-time translation in Portuguese by Tuire's brother, and subtitled with English and Turkish translations by Yolaçan. This candid film eschews many of the constructs of ethnographic filmmaking. Tuire appears seated in a simple chair in her village, while Yolaçan's presence behind the camera, the translator's interventions and perhaps omissions in the conversation, and the presence of other activity in the village are all evident in the extended Q&A section that concludes the film. While Yolaçan directs the conversation in the second half, Tuire clearly leads the film's first portion, boldly voicing her concerns and appealing forcefully to the international community to intervene in the plight of her community in the face of what she condemns as government corruption.

A striking moment in the film comes when Yolaçan asks Tuire about a famous photograph taken in her youth, before she became a chief. The photograph, taken during a press conference for the Altamira protest meeting between members of different Indigenous communities and engineers for the Belo Monte Dam (which would eventually devastate Kayapó territories),<sup>9</sup> captures a moment when the young Tuire lunges across a bargaining table, holding her machete to a white

male engineer's face. The image was circulated widely in the press at the time and one has the sense that Tuire might have intuitively masterminded the image at least in part as a savvy media stunt. That is, that she wielded her machete as she did, knowing that her gesture would be photographed by the assembled press, and knowing that the resulting body-image would travel far and wide in a way that her physical body might not. Yet, in response to Yolaçan's query, Tuire explains a slightly different motivation. She put her machete to this engineer because she wanted him to truly see her. “...I heard all of this and I said ... the day of the Altamira meeting I will look into the engineer's eyes. And he is going to see me.”<sup>10</sup> By making herself into an image, she was also making herself into something more than an image: an outright demand to be seen.

—Katherine Behar

<sup>1</sup> The Kayapó, the Xikrin, and the Assuruni are the only ethnicities using body painting in the form of full body covering. Personal correspondence with the author, February, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Akin to this, I have discussed self-possession and political power in objecthood in Katherine Behar, “An Introduction to OOF” in *Object-Oriented Feminism*, edited by Katherine Behar (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Yolaçan shared with me a photo of an anthropomorphic artifact from the excavations at Haçilar and Catalhöyük (Pre-Neolithic matriarchal societies in Anatolia). This object resides in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. Personal correspondence with the author, January, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Caillois, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,” *October* vol 31 (Winter 1984): 16–32. [First published in *Minotaur* 7, 1935.]

<sup>5</sup> In summer of 2016, Yolaçan was invited to the Mojkaráko village in Kayapo territory in the Brazilian State of Para by Chief Ak'jaboro Kayapó during the “seed exchange week,” an official meeting where different ethnicities gather to exchange seeds and senior Indigenous leaders, like Kayapo Chief Raoni, discuss territorial and environmental issues threatening Indigenous people. At the seed exchange, Yolaçan learned about the issues under discussion, including proposed legislation that would affect demarcation of Indigenous territories. The bill, PEC 215, was poised to pass, presenting an urgent threat in the same year that a soft coup had overthrown Dilma Rousseff and installed former member of the military dictatorship Michel Temer as president. Personal correspondence with the author, January–February, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Terence Turner, “The Kayapo Video Project: A Progress Report,” 1990. *CVA Review* (Commission on Visual Anthropology, Montreal) (Fall): 7–10. Reprinted in *Independent* (January–February 1991): 34–40. Cited in Terence Turner, “Representation, Polyphony, and the Construction of Power in a Kayapo Video” in *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State in Latin America*, edited by Kay B. Warren and Jean E. Jackson. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> See Tuire in Pinar Yolaçan, *Tuire Kayapó (First Contact)*, 2021 and Terence Turner, “The Second Skin,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2 (2): 486–504. [First published in *Not work alone: A cross-cultural view of activities superfluous to survival*, edited by Jeremy Cherfas and Roger Lewin. (London: Temple Smith, 1980) 112–140.]

<sup>8</sup> See Jodi Dean, “Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics,” *Cultural Politics* 1: 1 (2005) 51–75.

<sup>9</sup> For further information on the Altamira meeting, including footage of this scene, see *The Kayapo: Out of the Forest*, directed by Michael Beckham with Terence Turner (1989: Granada Television; Distributed by the Royal Anthropological Institute).

<sup>10</sup> Pinar Yolaçan, *Tuire Kayapó (First Contact)*, 2021. English quote appears subtitled starting at 17:14. Accessed February 12, 2022, <https://youtu.be/AK3BDtziq6?t=1034>.



Untitled from *Like a Stone* series, 2011.



Still from *Tuire Kayapó (First Contact)*, 2021.



*The Bricoleur*, 2022.



### Visiting Artist: Pinar Yolaçan

Born in Ankara, Turkey in 1981, Pinar Yolaçan studied fashion at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and Fine Art Media in Chelsea School of Art before graduating from The Cooper Union with a BFA in 2004. Yolaçan had solo shows at YKY in Istanbul, Finnish Museum of Photography in Helsinki, Center for Contemporary Art in Lagos, and Wetterling Gallery in Stockholm. Her work was included in important group shows such as *Turkish Realities*; *Positions in Contemporary Photography* from Turkey Fotografie Forum International, Frankfurt, *Tracking Traces* KIASMA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, *The Third ICP Triennial of Photography and Video* International Center of Photography, New York, *Istanbul Next Wave: Istanbul Modern Collection* Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, *Greater New York MoMA PS1*, NY. New York, *Vanitas*; *Fashion and Art* Bass Museum of Art, Miami, *Expanded Geographies* Lianzhou Photo Festival, Lianzhou, *Out of Focus* Saatchi Gallery, London, *Rites of Spring* CAMH, Houston, *The State of the Art Photography* NRW-Forum Dusseldorf. Since 1997, reviews about her work regularly appeared in *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *ArtReview*, *Bidoun*, *Dutch*, *Rolling Stone* and *i-D* magazines. Yolaçan's work is in the permanent collections of The J. Paul Getty Museum, Museum of Fine Art, Boston, KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki and International Center of Photography in New York. Yolaçan lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.





# kate-hers RHEE: **Inventing Genealogies**

**FALL 2021**



**kate-hers RHEE: Inventing Genealogies**  
October 4 – December 3, 2021

**Public Artist Lecture**  
October 26, 2021

## Curatorial Statement

The New Media Artspace is pleased to present *kate-hers RHEE: Inventing Genealogies*, an interactive online exhibition that confronts and problematizes Asian American and diasporic transnational identity. In common usage, “genealogy” refers to accounts of ancestral descent.<sup>1</sup> But for the transnational artist kate-hers RHEE (이미레/李未來), *genealogy is invention*.

The stakes are high when RHEE repositions genealogy this way, because genealogy frequently invokes DNA and other technologies that secure individuals’ legal rights through patriarchal constructs of lineage, birth, and bloodlines. As a transracial adopted Korean person, RHEE discovered that her family tree was a fabrication created by the South Korean government when she was a small child to falsely construe her as an orphan and thereby expedite expatriating her from Korea to the United States. To claim her own identity and rights without the benefit of a conventional (or factual) family tree, RHEE embarks on inventing genealogies, a process filled with twists and turns and difficult choices, which this exhibition illuminates.

Foregrounding choice, *Inventing Genealogies* replaces a deterministic genealogical account of RHEE’s identity with a choose your own adventure-style narrative that offers as many paths untaken as paths forward. The online exhibition design, created by the New Media Artspace Student Docent Team, is inspired by family trees and DNA. Plunging through tree rings of a family tree made of documents, viewers tunnel through bureaucratic paperwork as they choose a path linking different artworks. At each work, viewers can interact to descramble an appendix that offers commentary about the project, alluding to the process of learning to communicate as a non-native speaker, and the idea of so-called “broken languages.” Meanwhile, viewers track their progress through the exhibition through a mini map that resembles a DNA double helix. By uprooting the family tree as a concept in itself, *Inventing*

*Genealogies* explores what happens when identity and rights aren’t mere matters of inheritance.

In a recent Instagram post introducing herself and her interdisciplinary practice to her followers, RHEE recalls being “literally cut off from [her] ethnic identity as an ‘orphan’ and sent away to be adopted transracially as a survivor of #genderbiasedsexselection abandonment.”<sup>2</sup> Grappling with this experience, the works in *Inventing Genealogies* are derived from the largescale ongoing project that emerged. In 2016–2017, RHEE moved to South Korea for 90 days as part of a durational lived performance called *Transkoreaning*, in which she aimed to become “authentically Korean” (in scare quotes), a process she documented on social media, through accruing massive amounts of legal paperwork, and in a resulting body of artworks using these materials. In her words, the initial goal of *Transkoreaning* was “to become Korean in every way possible in language, culture, traditions, customs, and mannerism by immersing myself as a full time Korean.”<sup>3</sup> Among other things, RHEE signed a contract with herself to communicate only in Korean, despite having limited experience with the language. As the project continued, RHEE sought and obtained South Korean citizenship and endeavored to legally change her name to a chosen Korean name, Mirae Rhee, an ongoing legal process which RHEE explores in the final work in this exhibition. Equal parts bureaucratic paper wrangling and public code switching, *Transkoreaning* involved “changing her cultural presentation to accord with her outside sense of her ethnicity—the idea of what it means to be an ethnic and cultural Korean woman.”<sup>4</sup>

If in RHEE’s artwork, genealogy is a matter of choice, it is something she opts into performatively, rather than a foregone conclusion. Treating genealogy this way

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist.

emphasizes solidarities with queer theory and critical race theory. RHEE's approach corresponds with queer theorists like Judith Butler's understanding of gender identity as performed, and with the notion developed by critical race theorists like David Theo Goldberg, as well as contemporary biology, that race is not a biological category. Indeed, while RHEE considers her attempts to performatively choose her cultural presentation in *Transkoreaning* a "spectacular failure," she also calls it an "earnest search for authentic self."<sup>5</sup> As such, she respectfully engages the prefix "trans-" to help herself understand her own experiences of "ethnic dysphoria." For example, she seeks critical intersections with queer culture's different but parallel modes of drag, coming out, passing, and transition. RHEE contrasts her conscious decision to turn toward and learn from other Others with the headline-grabbing controversy surrounding Rachel Dolezal, a white woman living as a Black woman who, comparing herself to the transgender community, called herself "transracial." As RHEE notes, Dolezal appeared unaware that the term "transracial" had an established meaning among the transracially adopted community, who have long used the term in their academic and political work to self-define themselves as being adopted and raised by families across race and ethnicity.<sup>6</sup>

In *Inventing Genealogies*, visitors embark on a journey faced by quotations from two Black thinkers, Malcolm X and Trevor Noah, concerning the racialization of Asians. Taken together, these two quotations illustrate "racial triangulation," a theory formulated by Asian American Studies scholar Claire Jean Kim, which RHEE identifies as a source of inspiration for many of her projects.<sup>7</sup> For Kim, the cultural construction of racialization occurs in a "field of racial positions," always in relation to other races, which "are in fact mutually constitutive of each other." Kim convincingly argues that "Asian Americans have not been racialized in a vacuum, isolated from other groups; to the contrary, Asian Americans have been racialized relative to and through interactions with Whites and Blacks. As such, the respective

racialization trajectories of these groups are profoundly interrelated."<sup>8</sup> After choosing one of the two quotations, visitors proceed on diverging paths, through which they can view related works. These include photographs and videos, RHEE's contracts with herself, confessional diaries, Instagram posts, an overwhelming archive of paperwork that ushered her passage from East to West as a child and again from West to East as an adult, and finally, her name change.

While this exhibition hews to the process of *Transkoreaning*, and retraces RHEE's steps, it must also account for the steps not taken, the decisions not chosen, the lives not lived. If genealogy is a matter of inventive choice, then it is no longer something that can be "accurately" reverse-engineered. As though in compensation for this dilemma, *Inventing Genealogies* includes subsidiary texts, which RHEE calls "appendixes," that supplement and explain the works. On the one hand, these appendixes flesh out the emergent narrative, much as appendixes in books provide further context to a story. But in books, appendixes themselves are no more than side bars or dead ends. So, on the other hand, these appendixes that flesh out are fleshy themselves, like an anatomical appendix. In a Western medicine approach, which views "organs as separate entities," surgically removable in cases of sickness, the appendix is "an organ that is supposedly 'useless.'"<sup>9</sup> This view contrasts with the approaches of Eastern medicine, which stress holism, interrelation, and interdependent consequence—all of which are guiding principles for *Inventing Genealogies*.

Each major decision that RHEE made in her attempt to "become authentically Korean" is punctuated by an artwork that uses the archival and artistic material she generated throughout her months-long performance. Likewise, each artwork serves as a decision tree point for visitors navigating the exhibition website. At times, the intersecting paths converge at common decision points marked by critical artworks, like the crisscrosses of a double helix of DNA that appear to double

back toward each other when viewed frontally. Even so, *Inventing Genealogies* shows that going backward and forward are far from equivalent and hardly exchangeable. Indeed, RHEE's ambitious undertaking to travel West to East to South Korea to regain the South Korean citizenship she was denied, does not in any way remedy the trauma of her passage from East to West as a child, and the life paths that unfolded from that initial journey. These twinned passages do not cancel one another out. Rather, *Transkoreaning* is another choice in RHEE's own adventure—an ongoing exploration of what she calls "transnational identity, integration, and the self as Other."<sup>10</sup>

To this end, the exhibition concludes with RHEE's newest work, *The Corean*, a project that explores her name change. RHEE's name has changed four times throughout her life and the process remains incomplete.<sup>11</sup> It is significant, then, that the Chinese characters for her most recently chosen name, Mirae (未來) mean *future*, a reference to her future self. Thus, with this work, even as the exhibition concludes, RHEE's journey of conscious choice and self-determination continues.

—Katherine Behar

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "genealogy," accessed September 21, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/genealogy>.

<sup>2</sup> kate-hers RHEE (@studiolo\_estherka), Instagram post, August 23, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CS6TetUAEb-/>.

<sup>3</sup> kate-hers RHEE, "Transkoreaning Contracts and Calling Cards," accessed September 19, 2021, <http://www.estherka.com/contracts/>.

<sup>4</sup> kate-hers RHEE, "Transkoreaning," accessed September 19, 2021, <http://www.estherka.com/trans-koreaning/>.

<sup>5</sup> kate-hers RHEE, personal correspondence with author, September 2, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* vol. 27, no. 1 (March 1999) 105–138.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>9</sup> kate-hers RHEE, personal correspondence with author, August 16, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> RHEE, "Transkoreaning."

<sup>11</sup> kate-hers RHEE, "Entry# 131209: A feminist's struggle to claim cultural identity without becoming a Mrs.," accessed September 19, 2021, <http://www.estherka.com/cms/2013/12/entry-27.html>.



# kate-hers RHEE: **Inventing Genealogies**

**FALL 2021**

Dear friend,

Currently I am doing a public intervention called **Transkoreaning or I like Korea and Korea likes me**. Actually, I am a native English speaker but I am not conversing in English anymore. In order to become an authentic Korean in 90 days, I am immersing myself in the South Korean language and culture from December 6, 2016 to March 5, 2017. To learn more, please visit [transkoreaning.com](http://transkoreaning.com) Thank you.

Mirae Rhee  
Email me: [transkoreaning@estherka.com](mailto:transkoreaning@estherka.com)

안녕하세요?

저는 지금 한국인 되기 프로젝트- **Transkoreaning or I like Korea and Korea likes me** 라는 퍼블릭 인터벤션 작업을 하고 있습니다. 저에게는 영어가 모국어이지만 지금은 한국어로 소통하려고 노력합니다. 한국인 되기 프로젝트는 2016년 12월 6일부터 2017년 3월 5일까지 90일동안 제가 진짜 한국사람이 되기 위해 한국말과 한국문화에 몰두하는 프로젝트입니다. 더 자세한 내용은 제 웹사이트 [transkoreaning.com](http://transkoreaning.com) 를 참고해 주십시오.

이미레 (李未來) 드림  
메일: [transkoreaning@estherka.com](mailto:transkoreaning@estherka.com)

**Calling Cards, 2016.**



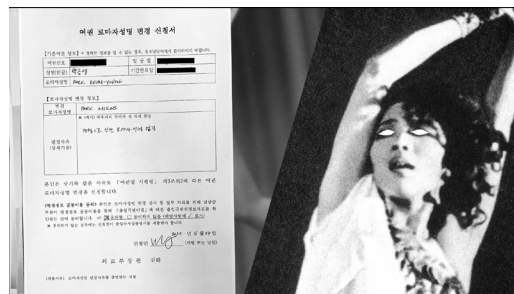
**Korean Face, 2018.**



**Dual Nationality Holder Tongue Twister, 2018.**



**Transkoreaning Instagram Diary, 2016-2017.**



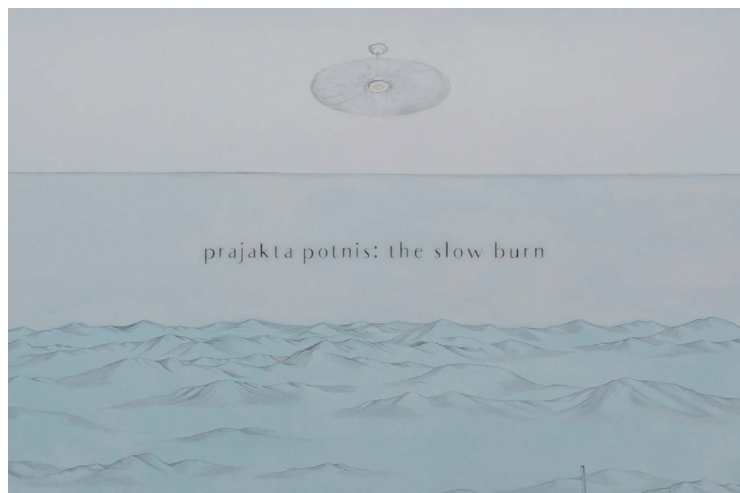
**The Corean, 2021.**

## Visiting Artist: **kate-hers RHEE**

Transnational feminist kate-hers RHEE (이미레/李未來) is an interdisciplinary visual, performance and social practice artist, who works between Germany, South Korea and the United States. She has recently shown work at SOMA Artspace (Berlin), Meinblau Projektraum (Berlin), AHL Foundation (New York), MiA Collective Art, (New York) and Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Berlin). A new installation, dealing with death ritual and the afterlife will be featured at the Pacific Asia Museum, University of Southern California and she is currently preparing for a solo exhibition at the Paul Robeson Galleries at Rutgers University. [www.estherka.com](http://www.estherka.com)



Photo credit ©popcon



**Prajakta Potnis: *The Slow Burn***  
February 16 – May 7, 2021

**Public Artist Lecture**  
April 20, 2021

### Curatorial Statement

In an attempt to negotiate the social, the political, or the private, the domestic space takes on the role of a protagonist.  
—Prajakta Potnis<sup>1</sup>

The New Media Artspace proudly presents the online exhibition *Prajakta Potnis: The Slow Burn*, a sequence of 21 images and videos harkening from various distinct bodies of work from this versatile interdisciplinary Mumbai-based artist. In this interactive exhibition, as users advance through the works, they stitch together an enigmatic narrative in which the shifting, unseen protagonist is someone or something taking shape in a domestic surround. Intentionally staged through the now routine mediation of digital distance, the exhibition interface leverages everyday digital touches—taps on a phone or clicks on a screen—to progress the narrative; as well as to inquire into how, as people come to think twice before touching, the current pandemic is transforming the intimacy of touch and tactility.

Touch sings, and so *The Slow Burn* sears into memory to reinvent the reluctant present. Numerous works incorporate elements of interiors and feature domestic appliances. For example, photographs from Potnis's *Capsule Series* (2016) show surreal landscapes that the artist painstakingly staged and photographed inside of frostbitten freezers and refrigerators. Like stills from a futuristic science-fiction film, the tranquil scenes also forebode of an unknown impending danger.<sup>2</sup> Recontextualized in *The Slow Burn*, these whimsical images of reconfigured frozen spaces and miniature landscapes now appear like a kind of misrecognition of the (over)familiar sites and sights of lockdown. Enclosed in the same four walls, with the same unchanging prosaic objects as constant companions, *something* overtakes the boredom of sheltering in—but it is it an artistic intervention or a mental lapse?

Like a lapse, this breach suggests a general porosity, including the mental porosity of minds prone to confusion, as well as the corporeal porosity of bodies prone to contagion. As with the heightened vigilance surrounding touching surfaces, *The Slow Burn* alludes to our bodies' slow but certain vulnerability to contamination, leading us to question the integrity of our bodily membranes, our capacity to protect our innards and organs from invisible external threats. A number of works in the exhibition come from *A Body Without Organs* (2019) an uncannily prescient series that Potnis created from 2018–2019 and debuted in early 2020 right before the pandemic seized hold and her Mumbai gallery went into lockdown. Notably, these works include X-ray films that appear to show lungs infected by alien presence. The series was inspired by Potnis's uncle who had taken ill with a respiratory disease. His lungs were contaminated by trace chemicals inhaled in the detergent factory where he labored throughout his working life. "These substances," Potnis explains, "laid dormant in his lung cavity for almost ten years after his retirement, until that one morning when they spewed, making it difficult for him to breathe."<sup>3</sup> Like so many of Potnis's works, the X-ray works are concerned with interiors, and show us something alien inside something familiar. Or perhaps, like the apparitional moments of misrecognition in her freezer images, they show how *the familiar is alien*, since on closer inspection these images are composed of ordinary household objects, like steel wool and beads, which she carefully arrayed on the X-ray plates to *appear* as lungs.

While originally intended to be about the plight of the laboring body under capitalism, these radiological images cannot help but evoke the medical imagery showing evidence of lung scarring among COVID-19 patients. With her X-rays and accompanying gouache paintings,

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist and Project 88.

Potnis links the frailty of the human body to its susceptibility to disease on the one hand, and to its suffering under the greed of capitalist states on the other. In point of fact, this is also the crux of the pandemic's brutality. The disease COVID-19 is surely ravishing, but its incommensurate deadly impacts across race, class, nation, etc. are the direct and unmistakable consequence of the violence of racial capitalism. Indeed this "scorched earth" ruthlessness of capitalism burns slowly too.

While the assembled works predate the global pandemic, their sequencing in *The Slow Burn* gradually opens onto themes simultaneously familiar to and in excess of the pandemic: illness and intimacy, xenophobia and claustrophobia, confinement and contamination, fragility and anxiety. As these thematic pairings indicate, *The Slow Burn* is oriented around the pandemic's contradictions, and even around contradiction itself. Like a controlled flame, contradiction is always circulating but held at bay, until an event like the pandemic exposes it.

In other words, the pandemic is a global phenomenon, but not a universal one. There can be no universal pandemic condition because every experience of the pandemic is a personal one. Even so, one might be led to think otherwise by the data visualizations that have come to dominate the visual representation of the pandemic. The sanitary factuality of data visualization—like hotspot maps or notoriously "the curve"—figures the pandemic through massive scale, scientific objectivity, and geographic expanse. In contrast, *The Slow Burn*'s idiosyncratic imagery offsets the generic sameness of data visualization by envisioning the pandemic in terms that are emotional and uncontainable, as something invisible outside of the miniscule intimacies, distorted subjectivities, and domestic enclosures where it unfurls.

Potnis understands "'place' [as] a geographical entity, that can be reflected upon through imagination, envisioned either within this world or located somewhere in outer space, or as a site within a psychological map of one's mind." That is, *place* is foremost personal for Potnis. This in turn bears on how we understand related concepts like *displacement*, *diaspora*, *alienation*, or simply *home*. Reflecting on local experience of the pandemic in India, Potnis sees the "current global standstill" not as a moment of stasis and stability (like the stable reference of data vis quantification), but instead as a matter of "dislocation [and] displacement." For example, she points to India's "exodus of [members of the] workforce returning to their homelands because of an unannounced government lockdown" which she calls a "retrograde movement which saw people walking on the streets for thousands of miles, [revealing] the utter helplessness they feel with their situations."<sup>4</sup>

The burning urgency of this situation is reflected throughout this exhibition in a persistent ticking of slow-burning rhythms:

Burners flicker like eyes with searing vision.  
A thought burns into consciousness.  
Burning eyes are vigilant eyes.  
Or the inverse—  
A freezer freezes time.  
Its sterile vault wards off uncertain futures and certain decay.  
"Memory functions as a freezer."<sup>5</sup>  
Memory is in my fingertips.  
Residual traces of door handles cling  
with heightened awareness of contact.  
Of contact tracing.  
Touch leaves its mark.  
Everything unfamiliar burns in.  
Anxiety rings like doorbells, alerting to a presence at the  
perimeter.  
Ritual handwashing.

Soap becomes a seascape.  
Slowly, soap dissolves.  
Lungs burn out.  
Freezers and burners contradict each other, melt each other.  
The slow burn thaws.

—Katherine Behar

---

<sup>1</sup> Prajakta Potnis, personal correspondence with the author. December 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Potnis has pointed out that today, passing through deserted streets wearing masks, we might feel as though we are ourselves playing parts in a sci-fi movie. Prajakta Potnis, personal correspondence with the author. January 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Prajakta Potnis, "Press notes for *A Body Without Organs*," (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Prajakta Potnis, personal correspondence with the author. December 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Potnis cites this quote from Boris Groys as an influence in her practice. See Boris Groys, "Unfrozen" in *Anton Ginzburg: At the Back of the North Wind* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2012). Personal correspondence, December 2020.



# Prajakta Potnis: **The Slow Burn**

## SPRING 2021



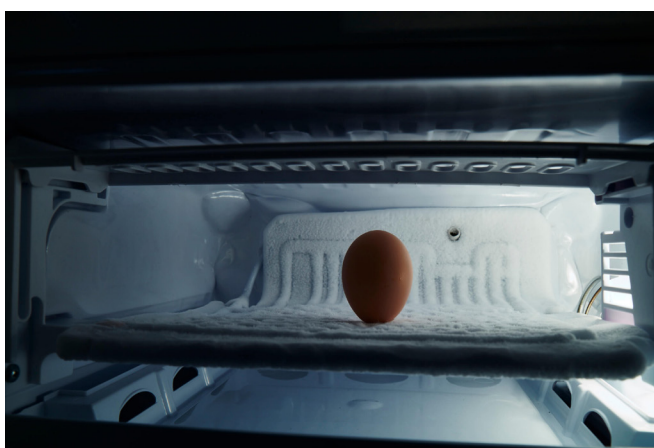
Still from *The Slow Burn*, 2021.



Still from *The Slow Burn*, 2021.



Still from *The Slow Burn*, 2021.



Still from *The Slow Burn*, 2021.

### Visiting Artist: Prajakta Potnis

Prajakta Potnis's practice sails through painting, site-specific sculptural installations to public art interventions. She has extensively shown her works since 2001 nationally in India and internationally throughout Europe, Asia, and North America.

Her solo projects include *A Body Without Organs*, Project 88, Mumbai (2020), *When the wind blows*, Project 88, Mumbai (2016), *Kitchen Debate* at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2014), *Time Lapse* at The Guild art gallery Mumbai and *Local Time* at Experiment,er, Kolkata (2012), *Porous walls*, The Guild art gallery, Mumbai (2008), *Membranes and Margins* at Em gallery, South Korea (2008), and *Walls in between* (2006) at The Guild art gallery. She did an extensive project commissioned by The Sharjah Art Foundation as part of *A Tripoli Agreement* curated by Renan Laruan in collaboration with Air Arabia and The Sharjah Art foundation, Sharjah in 2018. Potnis's work appears in numerous books and she has been awarded multiple international residencies. She won the Umrao Singh Shergil Grant for Photography 2016-17 and her work is held in the collection of *Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg*.

In addition, she has participated in numerous significant international exhibitions including: *Now is the time-25 years collection* Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2019) and *Facing India: India from a female point of view* (2018), both at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg; Kochi-Muziris Biennale curated by Jitish Kalat, Kochi, India (2014); the traveling exhibitions *Indian Highway IV*, at Mac Lyon Museum of contemporary art Lyon, France (2011), *Indian highway III* at the Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark (2010), and *Indian highway II* at the Astrup Fearnley Museum, Norway (2010); among many others.





# Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN: Process Over Product

FALL 2020



**Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?: Process Over Product**  
October 12 – November 25, 2020

**Artist Class Discussion**  
October 21, 2020

**Public Artist Lecture**  
November 17, 2020

## Curatorial Statement

The New Media Artspace presents *Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?: Process Over Product*, an online exhibition that initiates a web-based digital archive of works by the collective HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? (also known as the YAMS Collective). By emphasizing “process over product,” *Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?* delves into the ongoing evolution of artworks in their collective making. The exhibition—which is being produced and conceived in a real-time collaboration with the New Media Artspace Student Docent Team and will evolve as the semester progresses—shows how both artworks and the archives they comprise are always negotiated in a constant flux of incompleteness and reinvention.

With 45 collaborators located around the world, HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? makes work rife with emergent, cumulative process. This exhibition focuses on a single project, *Immortal Uterus* (2007–ongoing), a woven VHS tape installation by YAMS Collective member Jasmine Murrell. Indeed, the form of weaving itself evokes the braided and intertwined relationships that trace along all YAMS collaborations. *Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?* documents how *Immortal Uterus* has evolved over the past decade, mapping its networks of collaborators and contributors, along with associated and kindred works that were created and exhibited in tandem. Having appeared in and alongside numerous works by HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? and counting YAMS members among its many weavers, *Immortal Uterus* makes a fitting inception for a YAMS archive. Underscoring the significance of “process over product,” Murrell explains that the project is “immortal” because it is “never-ending.”

Murrell's *Immortal Uterus* offers a microcosmic reflection on themes that resonate with the specificities of the YAMS Collective's work, as well as the broader cultural moment of this initial instantiation of the YAMS archive in the autumn of 2020. In context, the world is now bracing against an ongoing global pandemic, which is disproportionately and lethally impacting people of color. Meanwhile, many in the United States are grappling with the intersectional atrocities of police violence against BIPOC communities, ongoing legacies of American slavery, and the white supremacist grip of racial capitalism. When set against this backdrop, Murrell's installation seems to draw together such urgent matters, throwing them into relief through a historical framework of Black medicine.

The title *Immortal Uterus* references the “immortal cells” of Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman whose Black body was appropriated as medicine—with neither consent nor compensation. Lacks' cervical cancer cells were harvested without her knowledge and developed into the HeLa cell line, the first so-called immortalized human cell line which continues to be widely used in contemporary medical research. Pointedly and in keeping with “process over product,” Murrell situates the installation as “paying homage to people, like slaves and like Lacks, who are invisible builders” but whose stories are left out of “master narratives [that promote] a white supremacist version of history.”

Chief among the master narratives Murrell condemns is the Hollywood mythology that portrays Blackness as a commodity: one that is caricatured

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

# Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN: Process Over Product

FALL 2020

alternatingly, either as grotesquely subhuman or else as a superhuman threat. Precisely this toxic Hollywood representation is recorded on the VHS tapes woven into *Immortal Uterus*. Murrell traces such Black caricatures to media propaganda events in history like the racist 1915 epic film *Birth of a Nation* (originally *The Clansman*) and the illegal overthrow of elected government in the 1898 Wilmington Insurrection. This little-known coup d'état in American history started when a white supremacist mob burned down a Black newspaper that published positive representations of successful Blacks in government. Both events heavily influenced mass media imagery of Blacks. *Birth of a Nation* glorifies negative imagery, while the Wilmington Insurrection amounts to the inverse: the violent censorship of positive imagery. Recalling such histories, Murrell insists on understanding “toxic images” in broad terms, looking beyond the spectacle of Black death circulating in news media. She warns against a subtler toxicity found in narrative films like the VHS movies that are the raw material of *Immortal Uterus*. In her estimation, the latter are even more dangerous because they work psychologically, ensnaring our emotions and luring our intuitions.

Ultimately, this leads Murrell to refer to such films as “poison.” She describes finally resorting to wearing protective gloves during her prolonged intimate work with the toxic material of VHS tape. Yet the same process of weaving that exposed her to this poison also allowed her to alter the recording. By dismantling and disarming poisonous images, by getting her hands on the film, Murrell literally and figuratively imprinted a different vision. She explains this vision as including Black ancestors who are otherwise never written into history.

Returning to Henrietta Lacks avails a further interpretation of *Immortal Uterus*. Perhaps, as in Lacks’ story, Black people are *already* written into the archive. But if so, their presence in the archive is only material, that is to say without the imaginative, emotional fullness Murrell attributes to narrative, or what I might call the processual quality of human being-in-the-present. Certainly, this describes how Lacks is present in the HeLa cell line. Far from being written out, Lacks is ruthlessly written in. Indeed, the cruel utility of the cell line hinges on its universal applicability, which has nothing to do with the individual Henrietta Lacks. So Lacks enters the archive of HeLa not as a person but as a product, a universal material.

Seen from this angle, we may ask, might this archiving of Lacks pose a divergent media prehistory for Murrell’s work? Could Lacks represent a different kind of archival practice in which Blackness imprints itself despite (even through) the erasure of Blackness? Insofar as Lacks is Black medicine and materially so, this implies a mode of Black medicine (or Blackness as medicine, or Blackness as erasure as medicine) that we might take up against the ills of poisonous images. In this sense, *Immortal Uterus* is itself an alternative archive with a curious relation to time. Woven in and of and as medicine for the present, it augurs a time when Black people can exist as people—a time that’s not yet here.

In this way, *Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?* is no conventional archive. Although a typical archival approach might appear to be primarily concerned with the past, preservation of the past is also a technique to guarantee futurity. Specifically, archival preservation ensures a certain kind of future:

one marked by continuity, not rupture. Even so, the real possibility of rupture—of a future that isn’t merely the inheritance of the past—motivates the archival impulse.

In contrast, HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? transforms archiving into a present practice: a process. For example, this exhibition has taken shape through a process involving many group discussions, calls, emails, and Zoom meetings. Remarkably, in their collective process HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? affirms everything so that all ideas are absorbed and nothing and no one is turned away. This means that with the inclusion of every contributor the project is restated. And so reinstated. In the present. This mode of insistent re-*present*-ing is how Murrell’s installation—a project that first began in 2007 and is in no way “about” current events in 2020—nevertheless feels ever so painfully now.

Consistent with this value of affirmative inclusivity, *Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN?* envisions an archive as a living document shaped by contributors. The website design draws inspiration from marginalia, commentary, and annotation. This archive intentionally contravenes fixed histories and concrete artifacts, instead revealing how artworks surface out of layered relationships, mutual influences, and shared encounters.

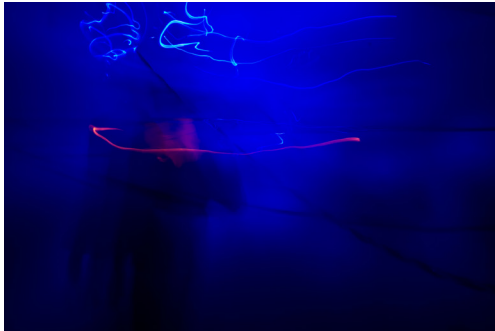
—Katherine Behar

# Archiving HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN: Process Over Product

## FALL 2020



*No Humans Involved, 2015.*



*Pot Liquor Medicine Women, 2016.*



*being here . . . in Memory, 2016.*

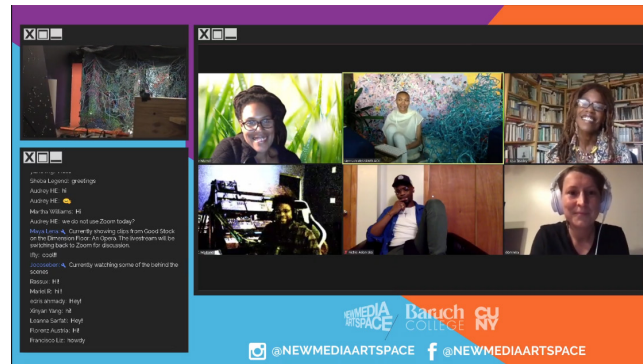
### Visiting Artists: HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN

HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? is a multidisciplinary collective of 45 African diasporic artists who have lived and worked together, in various iterations, for the past twenty years. The collective identifies as a primarily black, mostly queer group that consists of visual artists, writers, poets, composers, academics, filmmakers and performers from around the world who collaborate across disciplines and cities. Projects conceived and created by the collective ultimately function as laboratories for investigation, production and discourse around race, embodiment, restorative justice, institutional apartheid, and global creative culture. The collective's name, which spells out "How Do You Say Yam In African?", playfully acknowledges that there is no such language as "African" — and signifies the yam as a common root in African diasporic cuisines and cosmologies. Collective members embrace the multifaceted moniker because of its irony and symbolism. HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? gained critical recognition as a formal artist collective with their film debut of *Good Stock on the Dimension Floor: An Opera*, at the 2014 Whitney Biennial. Their work has been presented in solo exhibitions including "Pot Liquor Medicine Women" (Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago), "No Humans Involved," (Witte de With in Rotterdam, The Netherlands), and

"Post-Speculation 1 & 2" (P! Gallery in New York and Jacob Lawrence Gallery and The New Foundation in Seattle); and numerous in group exhibitions, performances, and screenings at institutions including ICA Boston, UMMA (Ann Arbor), ICP (New York), Roulette (Brooklyn), Town Hall Seattle, Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, The New School, and the "Black Portraitures II" conference (Florence, Italy).

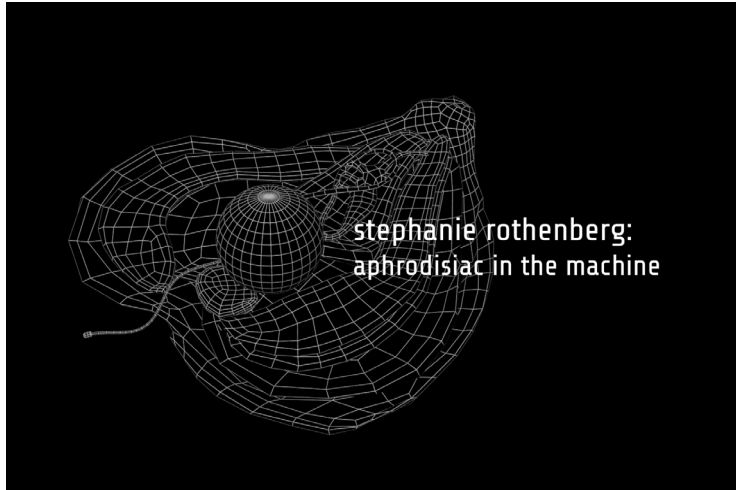
### Jasmine Murrell

Jasmine Murrell is a New York-based, interdisciplinary visual artist who employs several different mediums to create sculptures, painting, photography, performance, installations, and films that blur the line between history and mythology. Her works have been exhibited nationally and internationally for the past decade, in venues such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Bronx Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Whitney Museum, African-American Museum of Art, and International Museum of Photography, and untraditional institutions. Works have been included in the book *MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora* and in *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Detroit Times*, and several other publications.



# Stephanie Rothenberg: **Aphrodisiac in the Machine**

## SPRING 2020



Stephanie Rothenberg: *Aphrodisiac in the Machine*  
February 18 – May 1, 2020

### Curatorial Statement

The New Media Artspace presents *Stephanie Rothenberg: Aphrodisiac in the Machine*, a solo exhibition featuring a new four-channel video installation by the Buffalo-based new media artist Stephanie Rothenberg. *Aphrodisiac in the Machine* presents a sci-fi narrative that spans the four floors of the New Media Artspace, exploring the ethics and economics of bioengineering nonhuman life for human survival. Merging fact and fiction, the project plays on the libidinous myth of the oyster, a hermaphroditic organism being bioengineered in a futuristic aquaculture farm.

Beginning on Floor 2, viewers enter what appears to be the headquarters of an unnamed biotechnology laboratory where they encounter an animated infographic presenting a glossary of key terms: “natural capital,” “ecosystem services,” “bioremediation,” and “aquaculture” are new models of sustainable production being adopted in the face of climate change.

Journeying on to Floor 3, viewers encounter an industrial display presenting a historical overview of the oyster, scientific name *Ostreidae*. Known for producing aphrodisiac—a state of enhanced sentience—when consumed by humans, *Ostreidae* have influenced human cultural production in the arts and literature for centuries.

Floor 4 brings viewers behind the scenes in the laboratory where they learn about the physiology of *Ostreidae* as a hermaphroditic organism, and how that impacts its bioengineering potential. A scientific study reveals that *Ostreidae* produce a rare amino acid that increases estrogen and testosterone production in human and nonhuman species, such as rats. They are also filter feeders, able to filter up to 50 gallons of water per day.

Floor 5 takes viewers to an undisclosed location where testing is being conducted on the *Ostreidae* 2.0 Aquaculture System™. Viewers gain insight into the *Ostreidae* amino acid harvesting process, and discover that toxic water is being converted into this amino acid and is being transferred into municipal water systems. Is this a risk to human populations? Or might this lead to more sentient ways of being?

Shedding light on some of the extreme practices humans are turning to in an era of resource scarcity, *Aphrodisiac in the Machine* is framed by the reality of climate change on the one hand, and extractivist imaginaries on the other. As throughout her practice, Rothenberg draws out the underlying absurdity she finds in current events. In this project, she raises important questions about the ethics of bioremediation and the technological design of living organisms, asking what these practices might look like and what they may mean.

Bioremediation reconfigures the relationships between humans and the environments they perceive as “natural”—which too often simply means available to extraction. So in turn, the desensitization wrought by technological immersion is what makes these practices seem “natural” or normative. For Rothenberg, the oyster could be the answer, but not in the form of “oyster-tecture,” like the (not science fictional) oyster reef proposal for Brooklyn’s New York Harbor. Instead, Rothenberg imagines an alternative: that the oyster’s aphrodisia could provide an awakened state of enhanced sentience, going beyond mere sexual connotations. Perhaps, this work suggests, the humble oyster could awaken humans from their technological stupor and teach them to proactively disrupt the desensitizing effects of media machines.

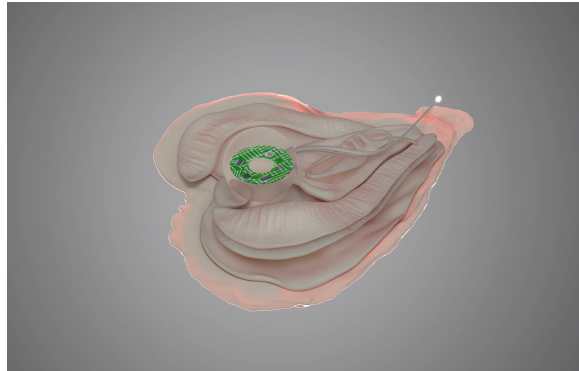
—Katherine Behar

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

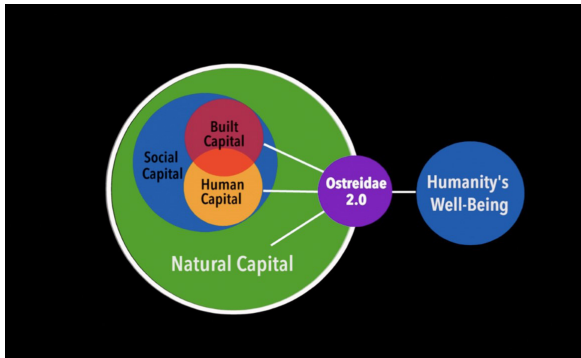




*Aphrodisiac in the Machine, 2020.*



*Aphrodisiac in the Machine, 2020.*



*Aphrodisiac in the Machine, 2020.*



*Aphrodisiac in the Machine, 2020.*

### Visiting Artist: Stephanie Rothenberg

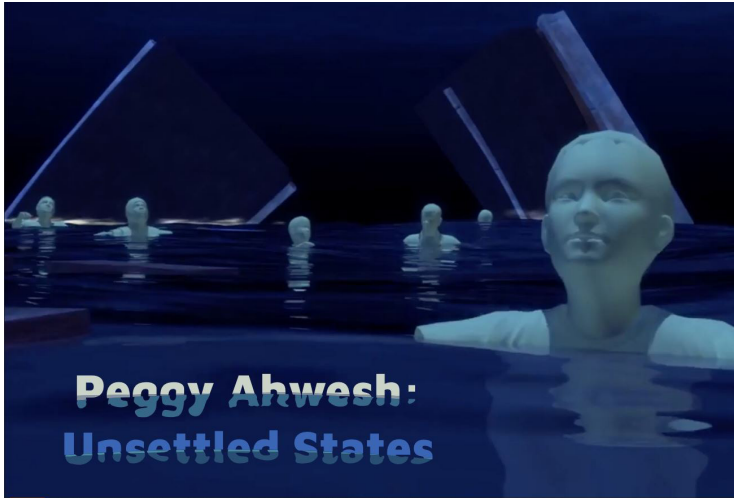
Stephanie Rothenberg's interdisciplinary art draws from digital culture, science and economics to explore relationships between human designed systems and biological ecosystems. Moving between real and virtual spaces her work

investigates the power dynamics of techno utopias, global economics and outsourced labor. She has exhibited throughout the US and internationally in venues including Eyebeam (US), Sundance Film Festival (US), Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art / MASS MoCA (US), House of Electronic Arts / HeK (CH), LABoral (ES), Transmediale (DE), and ZKM Center for Art & Media (DE). She is a recipient of numerous awards, most recently from the Harpo Foundation and Creative Capital. Residencies include ZK/U Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik in Berlin, TOKAS / Tokyo Art and Space, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace, Eyebeam Art and Technology and the Santa Fe Art Institute. Her work is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art and has been widely reviewed including *Artforum*, *Artnet*, *The Brooklyn*, and *Hyperallergic*. She is an ongoing participant and organizer in the MoneyLab research project at the Institute of Network Cultures and co-organizer of the 2018 MoneyLab 5 symposium that took place in Buffalo, NY. She is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Art at SUNY Buffalo where she co-directs the Platform Social Design Lab, an interdisciplinary design studio collaborating with local social justice organizations.



# Peggy Ahwesh: **Unsettled States**

**FALL 2019**



**Peggy Ahwesh: *Unsettled States***  
September 16 – December 1, 2019

**Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion**  
September 27, 2019  
October 2, 2019

**Public Artist Lecture and Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
November 26, 2019

Sponsored by the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

All images appear courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery.

## Curatorial Statement

In this confused series of intervals, between things that do not exist, I ask myself of what remains, of what possible use it is to me.

In Peggy Ahwesh's *She Puppet*, these words are recited by Lara Croft, the eternally youthful—nevertheless perpetually succumbing—videogame heroine. *She Puppet* is the earliest of the six video works that comprise *Peggy Ahwesh: Unsettled States*, a solo exhibition of single-channel videos by the renowned feminist filmmaker that attend variously to borders and their crossings. Spanning nearly two decades and diverse visual styles, these works might themselves be considered a “series of intervals,” or better yet, a series of propositions that borders may be “things that do not exist.” And if so, we must ask ourselves, “of what possible use” are borders and their “remains” to us?

Ahwesh's work supplies a nuanced perspective on the theme of borders, at a time when hot button headlines about borders and immigration feature prominently in mass media. The treatment of these subjects in mainstream news coverage may leave viewers further entrenched in polarized camps; however, Ahwesh's videos take the opposite tack. Specifically, by adopting a dynamic of unsettling, they refuse any form of entrenchment from the outset. This takes shape in manifold ways: ethically, her works trouble borderlines that violently sever families and communities; politically, their ecofeminist stance destabilizes the seemingly smooth operations of settler colonialism; conceptually, they disrupt territorial logics and structures; figuratively, Ahwesh portrays upheavals in wind and waves; and materially, she references the uncanniness of new technologies that document, simulate, and circulate our own unsettled states.

Significantly, *Unsettled States* addresses the external cartographic boundaries that delineate national territories, as well as the internal coordinate systems that define personal psychic terrains. Some works in this exhibition address the borders of nation states and the political, ecological, and humanitarian crises that disrupt them. Others operate more existentially, unraveling the comforting confidence of belonging that borders seek to stabilize. Throughout, however, Ahwesh profoundly questions “what remains” of the very possibility of belonging, asking, for example, what purchase we really have on the objects we call our “belongings” in a historical moment of pervasive war, climate change, and precarious citizenship that makes us foreign to ourselves. As Croft reflects in the final lines of *She Puppet*, “However near my heart seemed to beat, it was always far away. We are who we are not and life is swift and sad.”

Throughout her career, Ahwesh has remained resolutely unsettled in her stylistic choices, eschewing a signature authorial style to rove freely across disparate visual languages. The works in *Unsettled States* reflect this wandering polyglot sensibility, yet taken together they achieve paradoxical unity, displaying a liminal state of being simultaneously inside, outside, and on the move. Harkening to her early punk films and feminist home movies from the 1980s, they seem to probe for origins while attacking patriarchal orders and proprietary enclosures. While Ahwesh's videos simultaneously lament and celebrate the historical porosity of borders, they also solidify an expansive ethic of welcome, compassion, solidarity, and kinship. Perhaps Ahwesh, too, is who she is not.

# Peggy Ahwesh: Unsettled States

FALL 2019

## Floor 2: *Kansas Atlas* (2019)

The exhibition begins with *Kansas Atlas*, a video shot in a small Kansas town that is the exact geographical center of the United States. As the imagery shifts between ground-level and airborne perspectives, the voice of writer Marianne Shaneen describes taking flight in a dreamy litany of associations, mapping her alienation as it spreads, web-like, over the land. Shaneen's ecofeminist text connects ecological degradation with environmental justice and the subordination of marginalized populations. "There are no straight lines in nature," her voiceover reminds us. "I'm flying over the gridlines of Eden's monocrops. Their rectilinear edges are signs of diminishing ecological diversity, species diversity, and cultural diversity." *Kansas Atlas* juxtaposes the sprawling agricultural landscape of an American center known for religious fundamentalism against the asymmetrical distribution of diasporic beliefs that disperse like genetically engineered seeds in the wind.

## Floor 3: *She Puppet* (2001)

In *She Puppet*, Ahwesh narrates *Tomb Raider* gameplay machinima with text fragments sourced from Fernando Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet*, Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, and the Afrofuturist musician Sun-Ra. With their words in her mouth, the Lara Croft character "speaks" of her existential uncertainty. She confesses to being always out of place, even while compelled to run, to swim, to fight; that is, to navigate and master space as she ascends the levels of the game. As we move through our worlds, *She Puppet* seems to ask, might the same not be so for us all?

## Floor 4: *The Blackest Sea* (2016) and *The Falling Sky* (2017)

In a pair of videos, *The Blackest Sea* and *The Falling Sky*, Ahwesh shows how contingencies and crises can breach even the most carefully instrumentalized orders. Both works feature tightly reedited animations produced by the online news agency TomoNews. In the animations, scenes of intact rational order are also scenes of grotesque consumerism and science as spectacle. With dark humor, Ahwesh cuts them against visions of political, environmental, and humanitarian collapse—from police brutality in Ferguson, to climate change, to the Syrian refugee crisis. The resulting montage reveals how unpredictability persists, even amidst a fully coordinated world of data, logistics, and networked communication: the turbulent nature of seas and skies ruptures territorial logics. Mirroring the global reach of high tech, these realms lie outside the partitions of national territories and overflow the rational orders borders impose onto landmasses.

## Floor 5: *Border Control* (2019) and *Re: The Operation* (2014–19)

Inverting *Kansas Atlas*'s perspective from the center of this country, the exhibition concludes with two videos that show political events at the far reaches of the United States, one that took place overseas and one that occurred on U.S. soil. Putting these moments from 2011 and post-2016 into proximity shows how separate incidents, each at the edges of a nation, still touch and inform each other. Entangled, they co-develop a shared historical imaginary in which either one could be possible.

*Re: The Operation* depicts conflicting reconstructions of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden by the U.S. military. A split-screen format shows news animations unfolding side-by-side, sometimes in sync and sometimes deviating from each other. In these rendered retellings, public fascination with an archival's death begins to feel like a movie or game, stoking disbelief, and laying bare how official history, mythmaking, and storytelling converge. *Border Control* is a stylized video study of a series of test models for the Trump Administration's proposed wall at the U.S.–Mexico border; by chance, Ahwesh's camera recorded a man momentarily climbing over the wall before dropping out of view and into the United States. *Border Control* is shot "objectively" through the lens of a video camera, but its refracted imagery makes a moment of mundane desperation—a border crossing—unseeable, so its subject remains unresolved.

—Katherine Behar



# Peggy Ahwesh: Unsettled States

## FALL 2019



*Kansas Atlas*, 16:20, 2019.

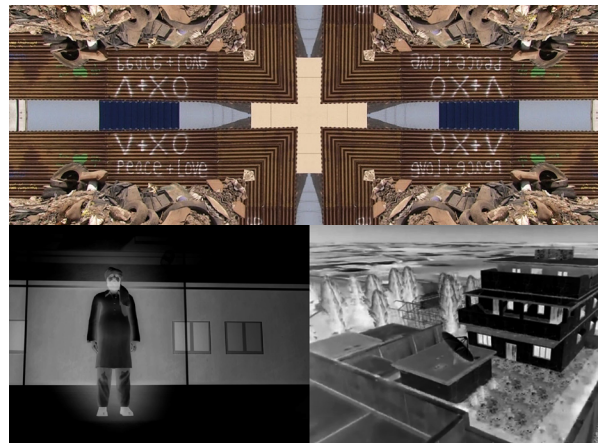


*The Falling Sky*, 9:30, 2017.

*The Blackest Sea*, 9:30, 2016.



*She Puppet*, 16:00, 2001.



*Border Control*, 5:30, 2019.

*Re: The Operation*, 8:00, 2014-19.

### Visiting Artist: Peggy Ahwesh

Peggy Ahwesh is a media artist who got her start in the 1970's with feminism, punk and amateur Super 8 filmmaking. Her works have recently exhibited at The Kitchen, New York; Foxy Production, New York; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles; Maccarone, New York; Salon 94, New York; Murray Guy, New York; Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles, CA; Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Berwick-upon-Tweed, UK; Gasworks, London, UK; and Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, Spain; among others.

Her films and videos have been shown worldwide including at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; New Museum, New York; Film at Lincoln Center, New York; MoMA PS1, Queens, NY; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; The Tate Modern, London, UK; British Film Institute (BFI), London, UK; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain; among many other institutions.

Ahwesh has received grants and awards including from the Jerome Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, Creative Capital, NYSCA and the Alpert Award in the Arts. She was born in Pittsburgh, PA and currently lives and works between Brooklyn, NY and the Catskills.





# Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement

SPRING 2019



*Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement*

February 13 – May 3, 2019

Artist Walkthrough and Class Discussion

February 26, 2019

Public Artist Lecture and Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC

April 2, 2019

## Curatorial Statement

*Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement* brings together four works by the New York-based filmmaker and artist Lily Benson. Throughout her work, Benson "re-visions" odd episodes lost to history. Rather than simply recuperating or retelling the strange stories she unearths, Benson approaches research with a humorous sensibility and in the spirit of intervention. Her films unsettle characters and events from the past, diverting them from expected outcomes toward alternate horizons, untapped feminist futures, and nascent dream states.

The exhibition title is inspired by techniques Benson learned in her training as a hypnotist. Like art, hypnotism reroutes received wisdom, re-visioning and revising internalized ways of seeing and being. Benson's films release potential queer futures from inherited legacies of the past. 3D animation liberates imagery, while creative storytelling augurs alternate narratives. In this light, the works collected for *Future Mechanism Replacement* all refuse the trope of mechanistic causality that anchors belief in historical determinacy as well as habitual uses of technology.

In *A Tour of the Self Cleaning House*, Benson revisits the eponymous invention of Francis Gabe, an autodidact who aimed to liberate women from housework by inventing, building, patenting, and personally residing in a home that accomplished its own housekeeping. Despite the absurd inadequacies of its actual mechanisms, Benson suggests that the house is a mental refuge that projects future well-being. *Feelings* adopts the banal format of broadcast commercials, employing 3D-modeling to advertise apathetic "feel good" personal products. Mechanisms that serve no apparent purpose, the items in these spots seem uncannily futuristic yet quotidian, as if issuing from a parallel universe.

*Buttery Coldness* emerged from Benson's discovery of *The Cold Woman: On Sexual Coldness in Women, Its Origins,*

and *Its Cure*, a 1957 book by the Danish margarine tycoon, Poul Thorsen (1884–1962). The film draws parallels between dominant sexist attitudes of the time, Thorsen's practice of hypnotism as a technique for controlling women, and the history of margarine, which itself embodies a "mechanism replacement" as an engineered foodstuff designed to replace butter. Invented by Napoleon to affordably feed the masses, margarine was "the subject of hundreds of legal battles over the psychologically deceptive powers of food dye" in the turn of the century.

Finally, *New Stratas* derived from Benson's realization that her grandfather had been "trained by the U.S. military to successfully perform amputations with only hypnosis as anesthesia." Experiments with hypnosurgery were contemporaneous with the artist and filmmaker Oskar Fischinger's invention of a filmic mechanism that sliced through melted colored wax and photographed the morphing frames, producing hypnotic swirling imagery. To create *New Stratas*, Benson recreated this effect using analog paper marbling on 16mm film leader.

*New Stratas* exemplifies Benson's abiding interest in the capacity of filmic imagery and mental imagery to heal, to alleviate pain, and to retrain our thinking. The works in *Future Mechanism Replacement* all participate in this activist therapeutic logic. In the artist's words, "In bringing light to sidelined events, I seek to expose precisely why they were concealed, and in doing so, [to] reveal the power structures at play during their time. . . . My work seeks to replace internalized oppression with [a queer] redistribution of power."\*

\* Lily Benson, personal correspondence. January 2019.

—Katherine Behar

# Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement

SPRING 2019



*A Tour of the Self Cleaning House*, 11:07 min, 2015.



*Feelings*, 2:47 min, 2015.



**Visiting Artist: Lily Benson**

Lily Benson is a filmmaker, visual artist, and hypnotist. Her work examines feminist history and reconstructs it into new narrative forms. She currently works as a creative adviser at The New York Times and is the co-founder of Cinema COBRA, a curatorial platform for expanded cinema. Her work has appeared at places like CPH:DOX, Rotterdam International Film Festival, The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Anthology Film Archives, The Hand Gallery, The Brooklyn Museum, Freight and Volume, and Nicolai Wallner Gallery. She received a BFA from The Cooper Union in New York City and an MFA from Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. Lily is on a mission to make our world a more experimental place.



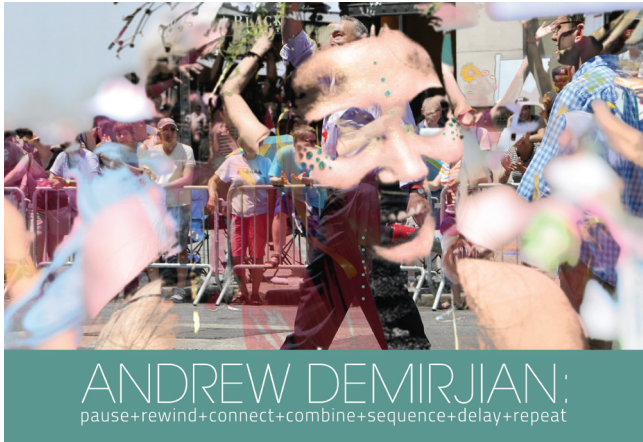
*Buttery Coldness*, 17:51 min, 2016.



*New Stratas*, 5:45 min, 2015.

# Andrew Demirjian: pause+rewind+connect+combine+sequence+delay+repeat

## FALL 2018



**Andrew Demirjian: pause+rewind+connect+combine+sequence+delay+repeat**  
September 12 – November 30, 2018

**Artist Discussion and Gallery Walkthrough at the New Media Artspace**  
September 12, 2018

**Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
November 6, 2018

### Curatorial Statement

Our short-term memory is short. It is tough to remember whole telephone numbers let alone an entire poem. Fragments remain. Slivers stick. A slogan from a billboard is glanced, a book chapter is read, and a phonetic pattern match is made linking the two. A gossip magazine headline is seen while getting groceries while a hash-tagged tweet appears on your phone and overheard dialog interrupts your train of thought. What combines, what attaches? Which sensory experiences resonate?

— Andrew Demirjian

The exhibition *Andrew Demirjian: pause+rewind+connect+combine+sequence+delay+repeat* is titled with a string of verbs. The actions describe a sampling of countless operations that the artist imposes on texts in the creation of his work. Explicitly manipulating a broad spectrum of sources, Demirjian invites viewers to question how we all mentally process texts constantly in our minds, in similar though subtler ways.

*pause+rewind+connect+combine+sequence+delay+repeat* includes interactive and video artworks in addition to an artist's book. All incorporate texts, playfully reworked into the library setting of the New Media Artspace. Demirjian's material derives from diverse cultural expressions, ranging from books and magazines, to anthem lyrics and poetry, to film subtitles. With this, the artist gives a nod to the role of contemporary libraries, where cultural sources overlap and a traditional codex can share a shelf (so to speak) with a natively digital text.

The video *The Rustle of Language*, for instance, remixes the codex itself through a seemingly algorithmic yet game-like approach to reading. And to be certain, motifs of proximity, mixing, and transgressed boundaries are central for Demirjian. His most recent works, *Pan-Terrestrial People's Anthem* and its accompanying book, suggest the political potential and significance of "connecting and combining" by imaginatively erasing or eroding the symbolic borders of nation states. Demirjian has sampled over 100 national anthems and flags, and used this material to algorithmically regenerate a combinatorial utopia where borders are no longer barriers. Users spin through an interactive 360-degree virtual sphere, panning the globe

to witness new visual forms and enveloping audio, passing between cultural fusions and comparisons. A pair of interactive works, *Amiri Baraka from A to Z* and *Mary Oliver from A to Z*, invites viewers to replay these poets' spoken word lexicons, disassembled and reorganized alphabetically. The results are surprising and rewarding, prompting comparisons that starkly differentiate the two poets' language. *I Tremble with Anticipation*, returns us to the question of consciousness and cognition. Reconstituted through a painstaking edit, the video combines found footage from commercial foreign cinema, sequenced so that the subtitles spell out a complaint against the oppressive, burdensome ennui of modern humanity. The mass media we consume can haunt us as partially remembered fragments that stick in our brains, but with a subversive message.

Of this exhibition, the artist writes:

Through remixing and recombinatory aesthetics, the pieces presented here question notions of stable identities, authorial intentions, mass media messaging and the embedded ideologies of language. Our taxonomies, classification systems and information organization techniques seem ill-equipped to entirely capture the porousness of how language combines in our embodied spatial explorations. What can we understand about a poet's oeuvre from listening to the gesture of words out of context? Can remixing music and lyrics of national anthems emancipate our understanding of nations and borders? *pause+rewind+connect+combine...* plays with the shards, the excess, and the sound of language that our pattern finding and meaning-making minds can't resist, turn off, or shut down.

Language, in Demirjian's hands, is unstable and fluid. As conventional wisdom would have it, we express our subject positions through language, but the works in this exhibition suggest it may work the other way around. Our subject positions are constituted, consciously and subconsciously, from the metamorphosing language we continuously encounter. This makes our cognitive mutability a model to embrace in reforming our worlds and selves.

—Katherine Behar



# Andrew Demirjian: pause+rewind+connect+combine+sequence+delay+repeat

FALL 2018



*Pan-Terrestrial People's Anthem*, 3:39 min, 2018.



*Amiri Baraka from A to Z and Mary Oliver from A to Z*, 2013.



*The Rustle of Language*, 2:34 min, 2006.



*I Tremble With Anticipation*, 9:05 min, 2015.



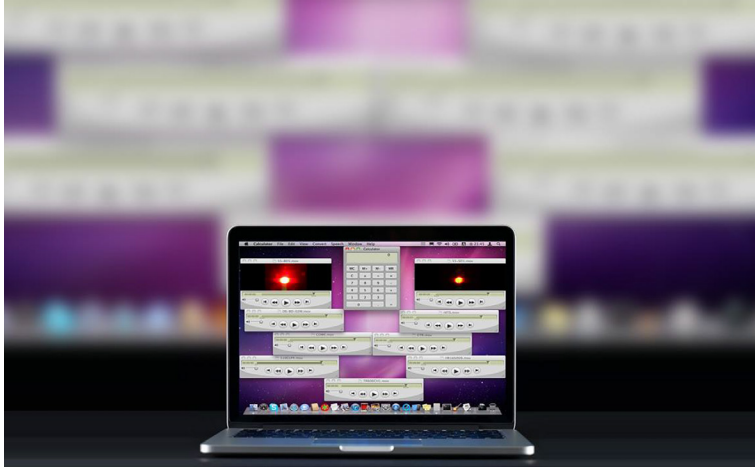
## Visiting Artist: Andrew Demirjian

Andrew Demirjian is an interdisciplinary artist who creates experimental assemblages of image, sound and text. He uses constraint systems, chance operations and remixing to question notions of stable identities, authorial intentions, mass media messaging and the embedded ideologies of language. The pieces take the form of interactive installations, digital poems and audiovisual performances. Andrew's work has been exhibited at The Museum of the Moving Image, Fridman Gallery, The Newark Museum, Eyebeam, Rush Arts, Fieldgate Gallery, the Center for Book Arts, LMAK Projects, and many other galleries, festivals, and museums. The MacDowell Colony, Puffin Foundation, Artslink, Harvestworks, Clocktower Gallery, Bemis Center, LMCC, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts are among some of the organizations that have supported his work. Andrew teaches theory and production courses in emerging media in the Film and Media Department and Integrated Media Arts MFA program at Hunter College. He is currently a Fellow at the MIT Open Documentary Lab working on a computational text analysis and visualization project.



# exonemo: The Life-Cycle of Interfaces

## SPRING 2018



**exonemo: The Life-Cycle of Interfaces**  
February 12 – May 4, 2018

**Artist Discussion and Gallery Walkthrough at the New Media Artspace**  
February 27, 2018

**Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
March 28, 2018

### Curatorial Statement

For *The Life-Cycle of Interfaces* exhibition hosted at the New Media Artspace at Baruch College, the artists will exhibit a suite of four works:

*Documentation about selected works:* Since 2012, Exonemo has been organizing Internet Yami-Ichi (Internet black market), a “backstreet of the internet”. Artists and creators are invited to occupy a flea-market styled exhibition space, and sell items that are interesting and unique to the internet. Originated in Tokyo, Internet Yami-Ichi has since spread out to New York, Berlin, Linz, Bursells, Amsterdam etc, totalling seventeen countries and continuingly to grow. “Once upon a time, the Internet was supposed to be a place for liberty.” Today, our relationship with the internet has become so intimate that we are bringing it to work, dinner, and into bed. Yet, many aspects of the internet also became more restrictive and foreign to us. The Internet Yami-Ichi invites netizens to step off-line, “browse face-to-face”, and reminisce about the wondrous naivete embodied by the early internet era. The documentation also recorded other works created by the artists, which wonder freely between spaces that are seemingly disconnected from one another.

*DesktopBAM* (2010) is a performance piece entailing programmatically controlling a mouse cursor to DJ on a desktop environment. It's a homage to turntablism, born from using turntables in unconventional ways. The title BAM pays tribute to Afrika Bambaataa, a musician hailing from south Bronx, New York, one of the originators of breakbeat DJing and hip hop culture. The dynamism of this performance is created by the mouse cursor, controlled by computer algorithm, to moves faster and more accurately than any human DJ can possibly comprehend. The

computational movements trigger the audience's physicality, while at the same time evoke the “physicality of computers” controlled by humans in return.

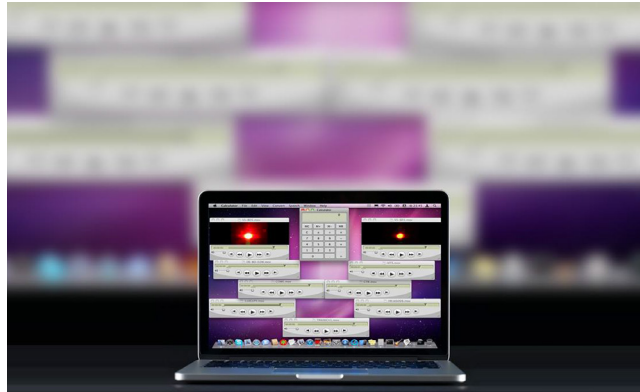
*DanmatsuMouse* (2007) humors with the idea of an electronic interface as an object of spirituality. The video records the process of destroying a physical mouse, while simultaneously capturing the motion of the trembling cursor desperately crawling across the digital screen, beckoning for a last bitwise appearance. The expressive movement of the cursor invites us to reconsider our relationship with a tool, an electronic device, or a technological object. Do tools exist for the purpose of helping its owner? Or do they leave behind traces of their own being? Could a tool serve as an interface crossing the immediate to the grandeur - an alternative space that's ever expanding but never approaching?

*Fireplace* (2014) is a video piece presenting scenes of burning optical mice and keyboards as tinder fed into a fireplace. In the old days of “hearth and home”, the fireplace was the center of the living room and family gathering. With the evolution of technology, fireplace was replaced by TV. In some countries, there are TV channels one can tune in to conveniently display video broadcasts of fireplaces. Entering into the era of hand-held devices, where everyone carries “smart” personal technology with them, PCs are joining the same fate as the fireplace, and other technological objects that are no longer desired. So, how about feeding retired PCs to fireplaces? To burn away yet another legacy as we shift to a new world of decentralized personal displays?

—Zhenzhen Qi



*Documentation about selected works, 15:43 min, 2012.*



*DesktopBAM, 6:30 min, 2010.*



*DanmatsuMouse, 7:02 min, 2007.*



*Fireplace, 5:50 min, 2014.*



### Visiting Artist: exonemo

Exonemo is a new media art collective formed by artist Kensuke Sembo and Yae Akaiwa. Initially established in 1996, they have developed a wide range of experimental works crossing freely between physical and digital, immediacy and virtuality—software programming, hardware circuit bending, multimedia installations, sound and image processing, live performance, networked objects and more. Playing with randomness and error, their work evoke a sense of humorous intimacy from tools and machines we usually think of as simple means to achieve finite goals. In 2016, their work "The Road Movie" won the Golden Nica for Net Vision category at Prix Ars Electronica. In 2012, the duo founded an internet secret society named "IDPW", organizing "Internet Yami-ichi (Black Market)" in seventeen cities across Asia, Europe and North America. They have been members of NEW INC, a museum-led new media incubator since 2015. Based in New York, travelling frequently between Asia and Europe for exhibition and collaboration, their work is constantly inspired by a renewed perspective on boundaries— whether aesthetic, cultural, geographic, or medium-based.

# Richard Jochum: **The New Playground**

**FALL 2017**



**Richard Jochum: The New Playground**  
September 6 – December 1, 2017

**Artist Discussion and Gallery Walkthrough at the New Media Artspace**  
October 4, 2017

**Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
November 6, 2017

## Curatorial Statement

This exhibition highlights selected works from the artist, and utilizes digital media as a playground. Humorous yet profound, Richard Jochum's work creates a temporary space and time. It enables audiences to leave behind immediate reality, and to observe, play, shape, and be shaped by a new opening in return. At a time that seems to be increasingly fragmented, Jochum's work invites us to come together and play. "I think art continually has to create new images for the time we live in. For the conditions and issues we deal with: existentially, politically, physically, and globally. Searching such images is what I am aiming for. My artistic work is often based on participation or embedded in local communities. I believe in an intriguing encounter between art producers and the public. Audiences can make us learn better and see things we would not have known yet. I understand both intelligence and creativity to be profoundly social."

For *The New Playground* exhibition hosted at the New Media Artspace at Baruch College, the artist will exhibit a suite of four works completed between 2001 and 2017:

*Halt* (2001) shows an artist climb a tree, sit on a branch, and pick up a saw in order to saw himself off the branch he sits on. He falls and lands on the same bough. The video is accompanied by sounds: birds twittering, sawing noises, and branch cracking.

*Snow II* (2008) shows how the artist is rolling a ball of snow until he gets exhausted. The ball is growing and continues to grow after help arrives. But there is a limit to it; soon

the group of helpers is bigger than the ball, thus making progress impossible.

*Twenty Angry Dogs* (2010) is a video and sound installation in which 12 performers bark like angry dogs. The selection comprises a group of people that is diverse in terms of age, race, gender, or profession. 12 screens are arranged in a circle, each playing an individual video. Viewers are encouraged to walk into the center of the circle to watch the looped videos. The site-specific piece has been installed using different set-ups and equipment. An additional separate video shows the group of performers barking together in "Group-Bark". The installation reflects the relationship between humans and animals, and the raw emotional power that we all carry in us.

*Catch* (2017) alludes to the childhood game of two people tossing cell phones between each other. The videos recorded by each of the two phones during the playful game are shown next to each other as a projection. Referring to a pervasive selfie culture, the recordings capture the players and their environment in topsy-turvy slow motion.

The selected works document the artist's playful encounters with himself, others, objects, and nature. It alludes to the potential for media art to create new ways to mediate and evolve our understanding about ourselves in relation to the environment around us.

—Zhenzhen Qi



# Richard Jochum: **The New Playground**

**FALL 2017**



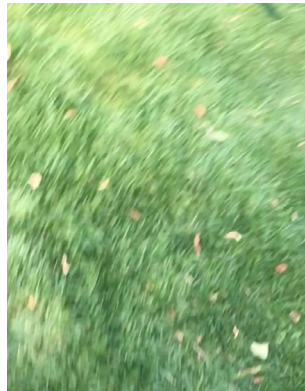
*Halt*, 2001.



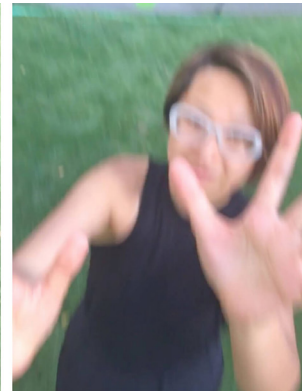
*Snow II*, 2008.



*Twenty Angry Dogs*, 2010.



*Catch*, 2017.



## **Visiting Artist: Richard Jochum**

Richard Jochum is a conceptual artist working in a broad variety of media with a strong focus on video, interactive installation, performance, and photography. He is a studio member at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts and an associate professor of art and art education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He has worked in various media since the late 1990s and has had more than 140 international exhibitions and screenings. Richard received his PhD from the University of Vienna (1997) and an MFA in sculpture and media art from the University of Applied Arts in Vienna (2001). Richard's art practice is accompanied by publications and research in the field of cultural theory, new media, and contemporary art and he has been awarded several grants and prizes. One of his latest projects in New York has been an interactive crossword installation with 27 video monitors, a web-interface, and crowd-sourced questions at the Made in NY Media Center by IFP in June 2017.



# Carla Gannis: **Augmented Gardens and Other Emoji Delights** **SPRING 2017**



**Carla Gannis: *Augmented Gardens and Other Emoji Delights***  
February 8 - May 5, 2017

**Opening Reception at the New Media Artspace**  
February 8, 2017

**Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
April 19, 2017

*All images appear courtesy of the artist and TRANSFER Gallery.*

## Curatorial Statement

*Carla Gannis: Augmented Gardens and Other Emoji Delights* recreates Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, through detailed constellations of animated emoji. Combining animations and 3D augmented reality (AR) imagery, the exhibition transcribes Bosch's late 15th century triptych into contemporary mobile phone pictograms. Despite disparate visual vernaculars, separated by centuries, Gannis's remix retains the eerie perversions of Bosch's masterpiece in which darkness, pleasure, humor, and absurdity cross between earthly and celestial realms.

Bosch's painting is known for its enigmatic scenes in which miniature human figures engage in inscrutable erotic dalliances, surrounded by fantastical bestiaries, otherworldly architecture, and the imaginative instruments of torturous machines. Bosch's cycle of creation, earthly human life, and damnation portrays human excesses through intricate, dense iconography. How appropriate, then, that Gannis has chosen emoji, an iconographic language that also partakes in one of the greatest excesses of contemporary life: communications media. Just as Bosch shows mortal life run amok, Gannis's animations express the wild winking and spasmodic seductions of text messaging's abbreviated emotions. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between these works. Bosch's painting mutates and multiplies

bodies into ludicrous erotics and provocative contortions. Gannis marshals the flattened affect of a standardized alphabet of icons, revealing the impotent emptiness of endless stimulation for stimulation's sake.

Invented in Japan in 1999, emoji are a character set or pictographic alphabet that condenses high-bandwidth image information into a single character. Bosch's layered landscapes present an equally condensed form of encryption, but one without a defined lexicon. The language of emoji is standardized, with a limited number of characters, but the meaning of Bosch's intricate symbol systems remains unknown. Spawning new interpretations, the work's ambiguities and lasting themes provide fertile ground for Gannis.

"This exhibition is a new variation on the "emojified garden" that first appeared in Gannis's *The Garden of Emoji Delights*, which the artist began in 2013. At the New Media Artspace at Baruch College, the artist debuts a new suite of augmented reality and sound works to elucidate how mixed memes and metaphors are shifting IRL ("in real life") experience toward hybrid reality. With augmented reality, Gannis virtually superimposes historical and contemporary symbol systems, much as they overlap in our culture and consciousness.

—Katherine Behar

# Carla Gannis: **Augmented Gardens and Other Emoji Delights** **SPRING 2017**



*The Garden of Emoji Delights*, 2:59 min, 2013–2017.



*The Garden of Emoji Delights*, 4:09 min, 2013–2017.



*The Garden of Emoji Delights*, 6:04 min, 2013–2017.



*The Garden of Emoji Delights*, 4:34 min, 2013–2017.

## Visiting Artist: Carla Gannis

Since 2003, Brooklyn-based artist Carla Gannis's work has appeared in numerous solo and group exhibitions both nationally and internationally. Her most recent solo exhibitions include *A Subject Self-Defined* at TRANSFER Gallery, New York, 2016; and *The Garden of Emoji Delights* at Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT, 2015. Her work has been featured in press and publications including, *The Creators Project*, *Wired*, *FastCo*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *The LA Times*, amongst others. She has participated on numerous panels regarding intersections in art and technology including "Let's Get Digital" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 2014. Her speculative fiction was included in *DEVOURING THE GREEN:: fear of a human planet: a cyborg / eco poetry anthology*, published by Jaded Ibis Press. Her augmented reality artist book *The Selfie Drawings* was awarded the Founder's Award from the 2016 Lumen Prize. Gannis is faculty and the Assistant Chairperson of the Department of Digital Arts at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York.





# Elise Rasmussen: **Unbecoming**

**FALL 2016**



*Elise Rasmussen: Unbecoming*  
September 14 - November 30, 2016

Artist Discussion and Gallery Walkthrough at the New Media Artspace  
October 26, 2016

Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC  
November 30, 2016

## Curatorial Statement

It is said that we become who we are by internalizing the stories we tell ourselves. Elise Rasmussen's artworks tell poetic yet unsettling stories about canonical episodes of cultural history. Her contemporary feminist retellings disrupt and reimagine the "unbecoming" meanings buried in established events, unmasking hidden voices, and unraveling tired logics. *Elise Rasmussen: Unbecoming* presents four video works that engage a range of sources: Surrealism, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Modern Art, and the legacy of the heroic Earthworks artist Robert Smithson. In each, Rasmussen exposes how works that are typically regarded as politically utopic (Modernism, Earthworks) or moral (Surrealism, *Antigone*) nevertheless reiterate a patriarchal framing of history. Often unearthing feminine strength and resistance, she plays against conventions of so-called "unbecoming conduct" that decree what is socially permissible behavior.

In *She Doesn't Get the Rules* (floor 2), Rasmussen delivers a hypnotic PowerPoint lecture that levels a devastating critique of the role of the female muse in Surrealism, and the inability of today's avant-garde to be radical under a patriarchal capitalist system that coopts every attempt to be unbecoming or disruptive.

*I Am Not a Man, Not Now* (floor 3), Rasmussen's collaboration with Chelsea Knight, draws on

multiple translations of scenes from Sophocles' *Antigone* that refer to the role of women in ancient Greece. Showing how women's subjugation, which forecloses unbecoming behavior, continues in the modern world, the work explores *Antigone* as both a proto-feminist play, and a misogynistic one.

*Checa* (floor 4) features a striking set design based on Alphonse Laurencic's "checa" prison cell design, developed during the Spanish Civil War, which applied the philosophy and techniques of Modern artist Wassily Kandinsky to psychologically torture prisoners. The highly aestheticized costume, set, and choreography appear "becoming" in every way, yet the darker context of this piece belies Modernism's utopic ideals.

In *Fragments of an Imagined Place* (floor 5), the lost island of Atlantis serves as Rasmussen's lens to poetically explore utopias, disasters, futures, and pasts. Rasmussen tracks this myth's influence from in Plato, 19th century conjectural texts, the conceptual art of Earthworks artist Robert Smithson, and New Age. Smithson, a heroic art historical figure, is an apt subject for "unbecoming." His interest in entropy echoes through *Fragments*, which incorporates dance, crystalline shapes, and references to string theory.

—Katherine Behar

# Elise Rasmussen: **Unbecoming**

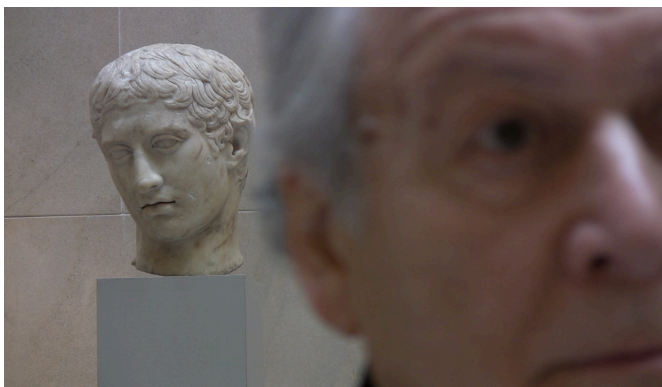
**FALL 2016**



*Checa*, 4:40 min, 2015.



*Fragments of an Imagined Place*, 4:16 min, 2016.



*I Am Not A Man*, 9:02 min, 2012.



*She Doesn't Get the Rules*, 5:00 min, 2015.

## **Visiting Artist: Elise Rasmussen**

Elise Rasmussen received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago on a Merit Scholarship (2007) and her BFA with Honours from Ryerson University (2004). Elise is represented by ESP | Erin Stump Projects in Toronto, and her work has been exhibited, performed and screened at international venues including the Brooklyn Museum, CCS Bard Hessel Museum (Annandale-on-Hudson), Pioneer Works (NY), Night Gallery (LA), Standpoint Gallery (London), Werkschauhalle (Leipzig), ThreeWalls (Chicago), Dazibao (Montreal), TPW (Toronto), Gallery 101 (Ottawa), TRUCK Contemporary Art in Calgary and the Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin) where she was a recent artist in residence. She has been written about in publications such as *Art in America*, *BOMB Magazine*, and the *New Inquiry* and she has lectured at Parsons The New School (NY), School of Visual Arts (NY), OCAD University (Toronto), the Gene Siskel Film Center (Chicago), IADT (Dublin) and Kuvataideakatemia (Helsinki). Elise was a recent Fellow of the Art & Law Program in New York and is an artist in residence at the Nirox Foundation in South Africa this Fall. Originally from Edmonton, Canada, Elise is based in Brooklyn, NY.





**Nicholas O'Brien: *The Four Tools***  
February 10 - May 2, 2016

Opening reception at the New Media Artspace  
February 10, 2016

Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC  
May 2, 2016

### Curatorial Statement

*Nicholas O'Brien: The Four Tools* is a new series of 3D animations addressing labor, technology, and personal history. In each animation, artist Nicholas O'Brien portrays a single everyday tool: a broom, an eraser, a coat rack, and a churchkey. Narrated in the artist's own voice, the animations reflect and playfully speculate on moments when these tools have intersected with his life. His biographical reminiscences of personal encounters with each tool gradually evolve into musings on the nature of tools and their larger meanings.

O'Brien shows that in addition to doing manual tasks for which they were designed, tools also "operate" symbolically. They are not only mechanical devices, but metaphorical devices as well. Tools help us interact with our physical environment, and they aid our understanding of the world by lending meaning to our actions. For example, in *As Much as We Sweep*, the broom attempts to stave off entropy, while in *For*

*the Faithful*, the church key opens up worlds of reprieve. Likewise, the coat rack marks sociality in hospitality and departure in *Where to Hang your Hat*, while, in *Accepting the Essential Errors*, the eraser accommodates human error by providing correction and forgiveness.

O'Brien's portraits of tools strike an uncanny balance by showing us virtual and actual versions of the object at the same time. Visually, the computer-generated images show each tool in the abstract, in pristine, white spaces, beyond time and human contact. But the soundtracks, filled with eccentricities of personal memory, embed the objects in a human world, exposed to the depletions of touch and time and the wonders of free association. *The Four Tools* offers mediations on these objects, exposing their hidden symbolism and everyday profundity.

—Katherine Behar



*As Much as We Sweep*, 7:11 min, 2014.



*For the Faithful*, 6:22 min, 2016.



*Where to Hang Your Hat*, 6:29 min, 2016.



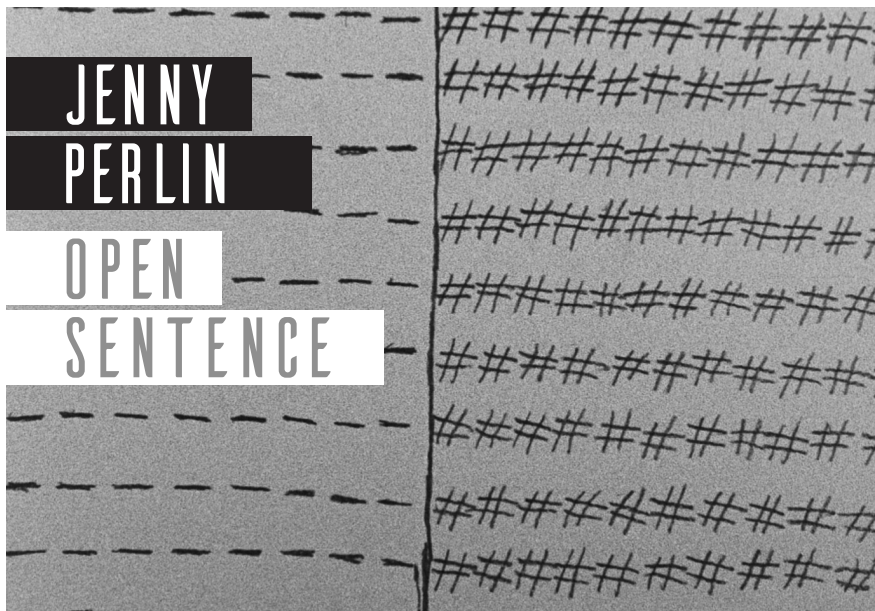
*Accepting the Essential Errors*, 6:20 min, 2016.

### Visiting Artist: Nicholas O'Brien

Nicholas O'Brien is a net-based artist, curator, and writer. His work has exhibited in Mexico City, Berlin, London, Dublin, Italy, Prague, as well as throughout the US. He has been the recipient of a Turbulence Commission funded by the NEA and has curated exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, 319 Scholes, and Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology. As well as making work, O'Brien writes critical essays as a contributor to Rhizome at the New Museum, SFAQ, and Artsy. His work has also appeared or been featured in *ARTINFO*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *DIS magazine*, *Frieze d/e*, *The Atlantic*, and *The New York Times*. He currently lives in Brooklyn and is Assistant Professor in 3D Design and Game Development at Stevens Institute of Technology.

# Jenny Perlin: Open Sentence

FALL 2015



**Jenny Perlin: Open Sentence**  
September 8 – December 7, 2015

**Opening reception at the New Media Artspace**  
September 8, 2015

**View From Elsewhere Film Screening and Discussion at 55 Lexington Avenue, VC-14-230**  
Sponsored by the Jewish Studies Center  
September 10, 2015

**Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**  
December 7, 2015

*All images appear courtesy of the artist, Simon Preston Gallery, New York and Galerie M+R Fricke, Berlin.*

## Curatorial Statement

Jenny Perlin's exhibition, "Open Sentence," takes its title from a mathematical concept. A "closed sentence" is always true or always false, but an "open sentence" is a statement that contains variables or unknowns. Open sentences can be either true or false, depending on what values are used.

Throughout her artistic career, Perlin has questioned the truth-value of historical narratives. Her work shows how statements about history are also subject to variability. Like mathematical statements, historical statements can contain unknowns: political, personal, and material forces that converge to script and rescript our understanding of events in complex and simple ways. Perlin uncovers history's shifting scripts by "reading" alternative texts, from fiction, to musical scores, to redacted FBI documents. And indeed, texts feature centrally in this exhibition, set as it is, in the Newman Library.

On the second and fourth floors, *Mimeograph*, *Transcript*, and *Inaudible*, three films from Perlin's series "The Perlin Papers," show how unknown variables proliferate even in official historical documents—in this case, FBI documents surrounding the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were tried and executed in 1953 for alleged espionage for the Soviet Union. On floor

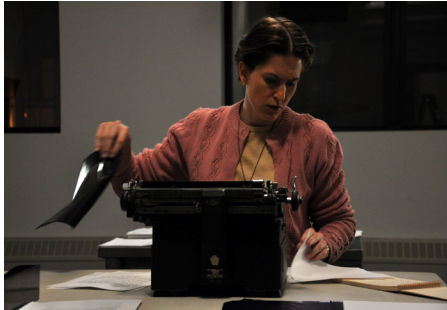
2, in *Mimeograph* we witness the fallible, human production of a historical script as two typists transcribe FBI documents. *Mimeograph* alludes to *Transcript* and *Inaudible* on floor 4, which both derive from an audio surveillance recording. The transcript of the recording provides the script for these films, and its frequent inaudible gaps suggest historical scripts may be always incomplete.

All narratives rely on memory and interpretation, two highly contingent processes. On the third and fifth floors these processes are brought to life through Perlin's projects investigating musical performance and works of fiction. On floor 3, *Sight Reading* and *Schumann* both center on music by the composer Robert Schumann, revealing misinterpretations and slippages in scripts and scores. On floor 5, *Funes* elaborates on a short story by Jorge Luis Borges in which a character gains an infallible memory through an accident. For Borges, thinking requires abstraction, not the perfect fidelity that dooms the main character. *Funes* explores different modes of interpreting this story—drawings of its singular objects, hand copying the text in its entirety, and translating the story from Spanish to English—but each time the narrative it translated, it remains in some way inaccurate.

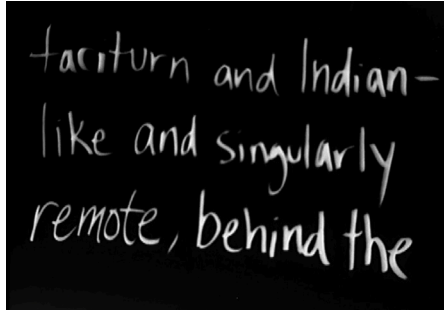
—Katherine Behar

# Jenny Perlin: Open Sentence

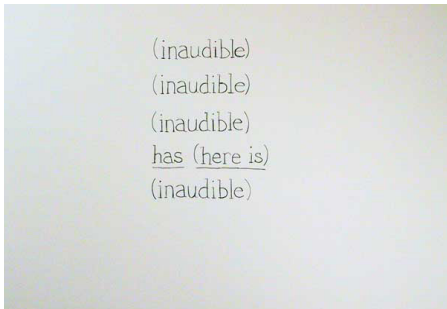
FALL 2015



*Mimeograph*, 20:50 min, 2006.



*Funes*, three part film installation, 26 min, 2012.



*Inaudible*, 4:00 min, 2006.



*Transcript*, 11:35 min, 2006.

## Visiting Artist: Jenny Perlin

Jenny Perlin makes films, videos, and drawings. Her projects draw on interdisciplinary research interests in history, cultural studies, literature and linguistics. Her films incorporate innovative techniques to investigate history as it relates to the present. Perlin shoots 16mm film and digital video and combines live-action, staged, and documentary images with hand-drawn animation.

Her films have been shown as single-channel works and multi-channel installations at numerous venues including the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia (2015), Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio (2015), the Berlin Film Festival (2006 and 2015), Garage Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (2015), The Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, (2014), the New York Film Festival (2014), The Drawing Center, New York (2001, 2008 and 2014), The Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany (2012), Kino Arsenal, Berlin (2012), Toronto Film Festival Free Screen (2011), Guggenheim Museum, New York (2011), Bard Center for Curatorial Studies (2011), Jewish Museum, Brussels, Belgium (2011), Migrating Forms Festival, New York (2011), Mass MoCA (2011), Kunstmuseum Magdeburg, Germany (2010), MUSAC, Spain (2010),



Guangzhou Triennial, China (2008), Knoxville Museum of Art, Tennessee (2008), Itau Center, Sao Paulo Brasil (2008), Light Industry, New York (2008), International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam (2009 and 2006), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007), the Rotterdam Film Festival (2003, 05, 06, 07), the Flaherty Film Seminar (2006), European Media Arts Festival, Germany (2006), and The Kitchen, New York (2006-07). Perlin's work is represented by Simon Preston Gallery, New York, and Galerie M+R Fricke, Berlin. She teaches at The Cooper Union and The New School in New York.



# Zachary Fabri: X BLACK Y

SPRING 2015



Zachary Fabri: *X Black Y*  
February 11 – April 27, 2015

Opening reception at the New Media Artspace  
February 11, 2015

Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC  
April 27, 2015

## Curatorial Statement

Zachary Fabri is a media and performance artist based in New York; *Zachary Fabri: X Black Y*, presents nine video works, spanning a decade of his career. Referencing coordinate points to mark a location, place, or home, *X Black Y* also implies the process of moving from point X to point Y, a trajectory for travel or dislocation. The exhibition maps the artist's journey to locate Blackness and abstract qualities of racial identity in the US. With persistent poetics, Fabri stretches the notion of identity into something at once heavy and ephemeral, at once immutable and nimble, at once distant and close.

Works like *The Big Payback* address the Black Nationalist slogan "Buy Black," part of a historic economic campaign to support black-owned businesses. The video questions the relevance of Black Nationalist ideology, in the context of home ownership and gentrification in black neighborhoods like Harlem today, where the video was filmed. In other works the home itself is experienced as a site of dislocation. In *Kitchen Towels in Pankow* the artist hangs tidy kitchen towels around a German city,

and *Untitled (Home Curtains)* shows Fabri toeing a domestic perimeter, his body veiled in window curtains. Home is no longer a secure point of origin; it is a place that does not fit.

X and Y also allude to genetic identity. The Y chromosome plays an important role in genetic testing for African American ancestry. Simultaneously, it signals maleness, recalling the myriad ways race is gendered. For Fabri, racial identity is always dislocated and in tension with itself, impossibly both hard coded and performed. The exhibition is punctuated by four performances with balloons, a bowling ball, and a scrap of string. The heft and weightlessness of these objects symbolize the shifting embodiment of identity itself. In the nostalgic culmination, *Forget me not, as my tether is clipped*, an enormous cloud of balloons carries the artist's long dreadlocks, a marker of his blackness, into the sky. The gap between X and Y narrows, drawing a path for escape.

—Katherine Behar

# Zachary Fabri: X BLACK Y

SPRING 2015



*Forget me not, as my tether is clipped*, 14:50 min, 2012.



*The Big Payback*, 1:58 min, 2010.



*String Theory*, 1:27 min, 2014.

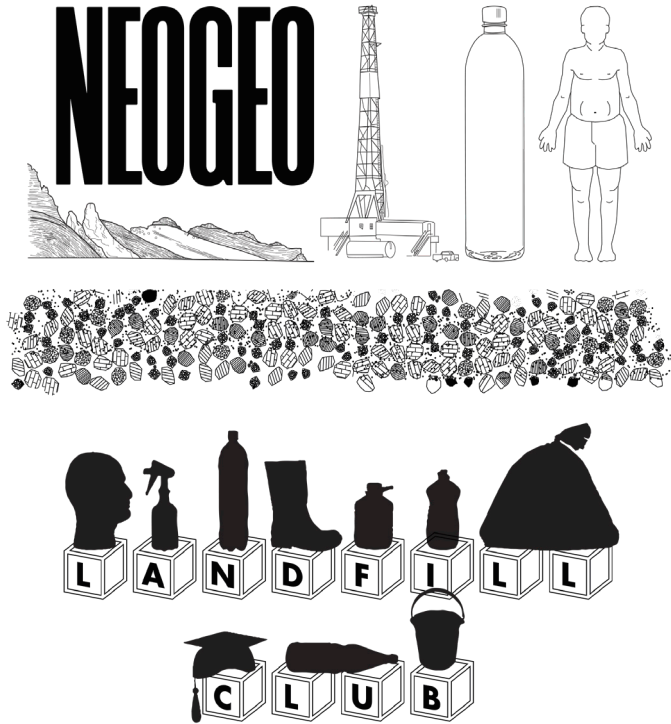


*Kitchen Towels in Pankow*, 4:20 min, 2010.



## Visiting Artist: Zachary Fabri

Zachary Fabri received his BFA in graphic design from New World School of the Arts in Miami in 2000. He continued his studies at Hunter College, where he received an MFA in 2007. His solo exhibitions include *Marrow in the Morrows*, Third Streaming, New York (2012), and *Not Cool: Out of Balance*, Galerie Open, Berlin (2010). His group exhibitions include *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, (2015); *Fore*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2012); *Civil Disobedience*, White Box, New York (2010); *Rockstone and Bootheel: Contemporary West Indian Art*, Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT (2009); *Metro Poles: Art in Action*, Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY (2008); *Neo Neo Dada*, Rush Arts Gallery, New York (2007); *Dark Matter*, Galerie Open, Berlin (2007); *Momentum: Nordic Biennial for Contemporary Art*, Moss, Norway (2006); *Domestic Affairs*, Projekt 0047, Berlin (2006); and *What Means Free?*, Chelsea Hotel, New York (2005).



### Curatorial Statement

New media artist Marina Zurkow fosters new modes of creative inquiry in the sciences and fomenters citizen science through art. Her artistic research practice suggests new roles for art in the university, and for science in para-academic contexts. In *NeoGeo/Landfill Club*, she continues her investigation of the ecological impact of petrochemicals through a series of digital animations and a growing installation that invites public contributions of discarded plastic objects.

Developed in collaboration with Daniel Shiffman, *NeoGeo* simulates drilling for oil, as though drilling through the four floors of the vertically stacked New Media Artspace galleries. Literally “drilling down” for a deep inquiry into the relationship between petroleum (“rock oil” in Latin) and the Deep Time of geological formation, *NeoGeo* uses mathematical visualization tools, combined with painstakingly hand-drawn fragments of rock, to render the unseen seen. The series of four quicktime movies is based on procedural animations created in Processing, an open source programming language and development environment.

While *NeoGeo* explores the Deep Time of the geologic record, *Landfill Club*, co-created with Ben Kauffman, is a social practice project that “drills up” into future Deep Time, looking at long lasting relations between petrochemicals and humans. To acknowledge how these new and evolving forms of chemical and cultural intimacy affect the future of bodies and geology, viewers are invited to adopt a piece of plastic from their personal waste streams, and live with it long enough to get to know it. In the process, participants will learn about its chemical structure and future prospects, before submitting it to a growing archive of objects on display in the New Media Artspace.

—Katherine Behar

**Marina Zurkow: NEOGEO**

September 10 – December 1, 2014

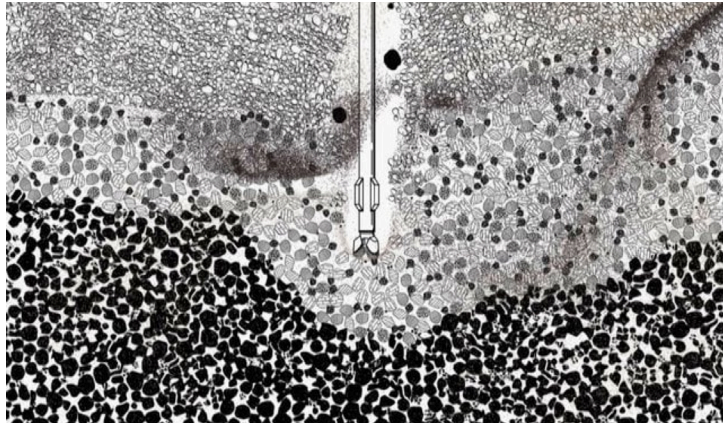
**Opening reception at the New Media Artspace**

September 10, 2014

**Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC**

December 1, 2014





**NeoGeo.** Marina Zurkow and Daniel Shiffman. 0:30 min, 2012.



**Landfill Club.** Marina Zurkow and Ben Kauffman. Installation and social sculpture, dimensions variable, 2014.

### Visiting Artist: Marina Zurkow with Ben Kauffman and Daniel Shiffman

Marina Zurkow is a new media artist who lives and works in New York where she is on faculty at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP). Her work has been featured in exhibitions at the Montclair Art Museum; FACT, Liverpool; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Wave Hill, New York; National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.; Bennington College, Vermont; Borusan Collection, Istanbul; Pacific Northwest College of Art, Oregon; Marian Spore, New York; O1SJ Biennial, San Jose; Brooklyn Academy of Music; Museum of the Moving Image, New York; Creative Time, New York; The Kitchen, New York; Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria; Transmediale, Berlin; Eyebeam, New York; Sundance Film Festival, Utah; Rotterdam Film Festival, The Netherlands; and the Seoul Media City Biennial, Korea, among others. She is the recipient of a 2011 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, and has been granted awards from the

New York Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Creative Capital.

Ben Kauffman is a multi-disciplinary artist and co-founding Artistic Director of the trans-media performance group Manual Cinema, whose work has been commissioned and exhibited by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the University of Chicago, the Detroit Center for the Arts, the Future of Storytelling Conference, and Duke University. He holds a Master's degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP) and is based in Brooklyn, NY.

Daniel Shiffman is Assistant Arts Professor at the Interactive Telecommunications Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He is the author of *Learning Processing: A Beginner's Guide to Programming Images, Animation, and Interaction* and *The Nature of Code*, an open source book about simulating natural phenomena in Processing.





*Lynn Sullivan: Super Impose*  
June 26 – September 3, 2014

Opening reception at the New Media Artspace  
June 26, 2014

Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC  
September 3, 2014

### Curatorial Statement

In *Lynn Sullivan: Super Impose*, the artist explores found language in a series of new video works. On view at the New Media Artspace, the exhibition uses the site of the Newman Library as a point of departure. Yet, in *Super Impose*, Sullivan engages language beyond books, a library's customary purview. Instead, the videos play with language, signs and symbols found off the page, highlighting how symbols and words intersect with the environment.

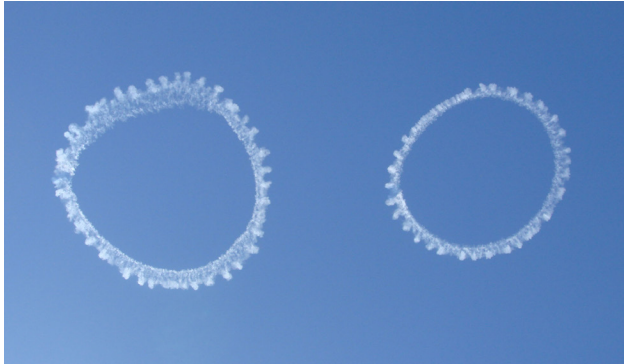
Sullivan presents archives of skywriting, property markers, road lines, scrawled declarations of love, and carved pathways. These outdoor inscriptions appear simultaneously encroaching on and drawing

from "nature." In other scenes, we witness how forces and elements of the natural environment — plants, wind, water, and clouds — hide, erode, and ultimately change linguistic signs. Throughout, Sullivan sequences words together allusively, as if building sentences. A new kind of language and meaning evolves as linguistic, symbolic and natural systems collide. Eventually, a spare narrative starts to emerge, echoing the sense of two coexisting worlds. These disparate systems of meaning are "super imposed" in unlikely ways, at times seamlessly, and at other times in conflict.

—Katherine Behar

# Lynn Sullivan: **Super Impose**

## SUMMER 2014



*oo no*, 1:20 min, 2014.



*Tell Me*, 6:05 min, 2014.



*Waiting*, 1:46 m in, 2014.



*Heart*, 3:48 min, 2014.

### Visiting Artist: Lynn Sullivan

Lynn Sullivan is an artist working with sculpture, video, sound and public actions. Her works present social and psychological symbols that are emerging or disappearing in cultural confusion. Her work has been exhibited in numerous spaces ranging from Gagosian Gallery in Los Angeles to the University of Utah to New York's non-profit Smack Mellon. Her recent projects include a large-scale sculpture installed for "Real on Rock Street" in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood; she will present a solo exhibition of folded and formed digital prints at Fordham University in the fall. Sullivan holds a BA in Cultural History from Cornell University and an MFA in Combined Media from Hunter College, where she teaches as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Art and Art History.

# Jillian McDonald: **Something Wicked**

**SPRING 2014**



## **JILLIAN MCDONALD: SOMETHING WICKED (THIS WAY COMES)**

*Jillian McDonald: Something Wicked (This Way Comes)*  
February 20 – May 5, 2014

Opening reception at the New Media Artspace  
February 20, 2014

Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC  
May 5, 2014

### **Curatorial Statement**

*Strings of carnival flags, tied to an old stone tower, flutter in the wind. The rooms of an abandoned house lie ruined with surfaces peeled and broken. Crows in a rookery cry out and congregate at dusk. A line of fog moves across wintry landscapes, plotting a path. Shot in northeastern Scotland while in residence at Dufftown's Glenfiddich Distillery, these four videos suggest a haunted presence without the usual elements of storytelling. Slight movement becomes remarkable and the ghostliness lies in the settings themselves.*

With these words, Canadian new media artist Jillian McDonald describes the four new video works on view in the exhibition *Jillian McDonald: Something Wicked (This Way Comes)*. In these videos, McDonald extends her longstanding examination of archetypal motifs and themes from horror films and cautionary tales. While her work draws inspiration from the horror genre and its surrounding fan culture, this latest series, shot

on location in Scotland, notably abandons the character-driven formula that marks the genre's plot progression. Instead, each video progresses, compellingly, by focusing solely on landscapes devoid of human life. Although deserted, these lush spaces roll with subtle continuous motion. Movements of birds, fog and breeze permeate magnificent scenery, taking on eerie significance, while relentless edits build suspense in a plot-less progression without end.

In these videos the paranormal achieves literal meaning. The paranormal is "para" – which is to say it is the surroundings, in the landscape itself. Placing the otherworldly in the world, McDonald portrays it as neither ghoulish nor mundane, but rather sublime. Her breathtaking scenery appears at once bewitching and bewitched.

—Katherine Behar



# Jillian McDonald: **Something Wicked**

**SPRING 2014**



*Something Wicked (This Way Comes)*, 6:25 min, 2012.



*Birds*, 11:12 min, 2014.



*House*, 4:54 minutes, 2014.



*Spirit*, 12:30 min, 2013.

## **Visiting Artist: Jillian McDonald**

Jillian McDonald is a Canadian artist who lives in New York where she is an Associate Professor of Art at Pace University. She is hopelessly in love with northern places, snow, fog, and the ocean; and since 2006 has watched a healthy amount of horror films. She spent much of the past year living and working in Northeastern Scotland.

Solo shows and projects include the Esker Foundation in Calgary; Moti Hasson Gallery, Jack the Pelican Presents, and vertexList in New York; The San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery; Hallwalls in Buffalo; La Sala Narañja in Valencia, Spain. Her work has been included in group exhibitions and festivals at The Chelsea Museum and The Whitney Museum's Artport in New York, The Edith Russ Haus for Media Art in Germany, The International Biennial of Contemporary Art in Venezuela, The Sundance Film Festival in Utah, and the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Basse-Normandie in France.



*Ira Eduardovna: Terminus*

September 25 – December 4, 2013

Opening reception at the New Media Artspace

September 25, 2013

Artist Lecture and Closing Reception at the Engleman Recital Hall, BPAC

December 4, 2013

### Curatorial Statement

Ira Eduardovna's videos and installations reconstruct narratives of an autobiographical nature and examines issues of migration and identity, which she shows as being in flux through non-linear story telling.

Eduardovna was born and raised in the former USSR, where she lived until she immigrated to Israel in 1990; she currently lives and works in New York. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the immigration wave that followed it are phenomena that she investigates in her work. She portrays these subjects as a personal experience and a global one: her work contemplates the loss of communist ideals that promised to lead the world to a bright future, and depicts the disassembly and navigation of these ideals in the constant search for a new place.

Eduardovna's video installations examine the border of video and architecture and the influence of architecture on the experience of time and memory. Her installations often involve videos and architectural objects that recreate the spaces in which the narratives occur.

Ira and her family usually perform in her videos. Her work presents the familial structure as a model of society as a whole. She examines the changes that occur in families that have been displaced into a different societal structure, as well as societal structures that have collapsed, in turn affecting families.

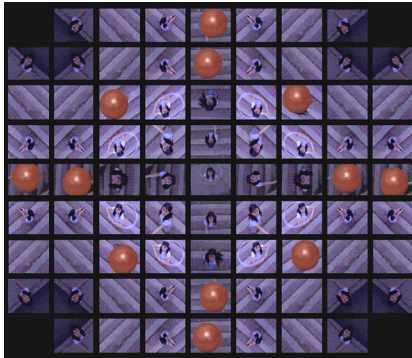
—Katherine Behar



*The Room*, 0:54 min.



*Mother*, 5:12 min.



*Eniki Beniki*, 1:01 min.




*The Projects*, 4:14 min.




### Visiting Artist: Ira Eduardovna

Ira Eduardovna's work has been shown internationally in Israel, Europe, and the United States, including solo shows at Momenta Art in Brooklyn and Braverman Gallery in Tel Aviv. Group shows include the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Bat Yam Museum of Contemporary Art in Israel, Postmasters Gallery New York, LOOP video art festival, Barcelona among many others. Eduardovna is the recipient of the 2012 Artis exhibition grant and The Ostrovsky family fund for experimental film in 2012 and 2013. She will be artist in residence at FUTURA, Prague in fall 2013 and at Residency Unlimited in 2014.



 The New Media Artspace is a teaching exhibition space in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Baruch College, CUNY. Housed in the Newman Library, the New Media Artspace showcases curated experimental media and interdisciplinary artworks by international artists, students, alumni, and faculty.

 Exhibitions are generously supported by the Wasserman Jewish Studies Center, Baruch Computing and Technology Center (BCTC), and the Newman Library.

 **New Media Artspace at Baruch College**  
151 E. 25th Street, New York, NY, 10010  
Located in the Newman Library

