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Daria Martin, *Sensorium Tests*. 16mm film, 10 minutes. 2012. © the artist, courtesy Maureen Paley, London.

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PUBLIC INTIMACY

Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa

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Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa is jointly organized by YBCA and SFMOMA. Presenting support is generously provided by the Evelyn D. Haas Exhibition Fund at SFMOMA. Major support is provided by the James C. Hormel and Michael P. Nguyen Endowment Fund at SFMOMA; Meridee Moore and Kevin King, the Betlach Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Mike Wilkins and Sheila Duignan, and the YBCA Creative Ventures Council. Additional support is provided by the George Frederick Jewett Foundation and the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District.

MEDIA SPONSOR: San Francisco Chronicle | SFGate.com

IMAGE: Athi-Patra Ruga, *The Future White Women of Azania*, 2012; performed as part of *Performa Obscura* in collaboration with Mikhael Subotzky; commissioned for the exhibition *Making Way*, Grahamstown, South Africa; photo: Ruth Simboa, courtesy Athi-Patra Ruga and WHATIFTHEWORLD/GALLERY.

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PROXIMITIES 3: IMPORT/EXPORT

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The concept that almost everyone touches something that is conceived, mined, manufactured, or outsourced in Asia informs this final installment of our contemporary art series, *Proximities*. Bay Area artists Rebeca Bollinger, Amanda Curreri, Byron Peters, Jeffrey Augustine Songco, Leslie Shows and Imin Yeh examine ways in which trade and commerce contribute to impressions of Asia.

Thurs, Feb 6, 6–9 pm, $5. Enjoy art, cash bar refreshments and music by P-Play of Honey Soundsystem. *Proximities* Curator Glen Helfand will give an in-gallery talk, and some of the artists will be in attendance.

Proximities was organized by the Asian Art Museum. Presentation at the Asian Art Museum is made possible with the generous support of Graue Family Foundation, Columbia Foundation and an anonymous donor. Image: Untitled (detail), 2012, by Byron Peters (Canadian, b. 1985). Single-image projection, dimensions variable. *Courtesy of the artist.*

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Jason Lazarus: Live Archive is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. The exhibition is sponsored by BMO Harris Bank. Supporting sponsorship of The Contemporary Jewish Museum's presentation of *Jason Lazarus: Live Archive* is provided by RayKo Photo Center. Piano provided by Steinway & Sons, San Francisco. Jason Lazarus, *Phase I/Live Archive* (detail), 2011–Present. Dimensions variable. Installation view, *BMO Harris Bank Chicago Works: Jason Lazarus*, MCA Chicago. March 19–June 18, 2013. Photo: Nathan Keay, Copyright © MCA Chicago.

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Mamma Andersson, *Mother's Day*, 2013. Color spit bite, sugar lift, and soap ground aquatints, 38 x 53¼", edition 30.

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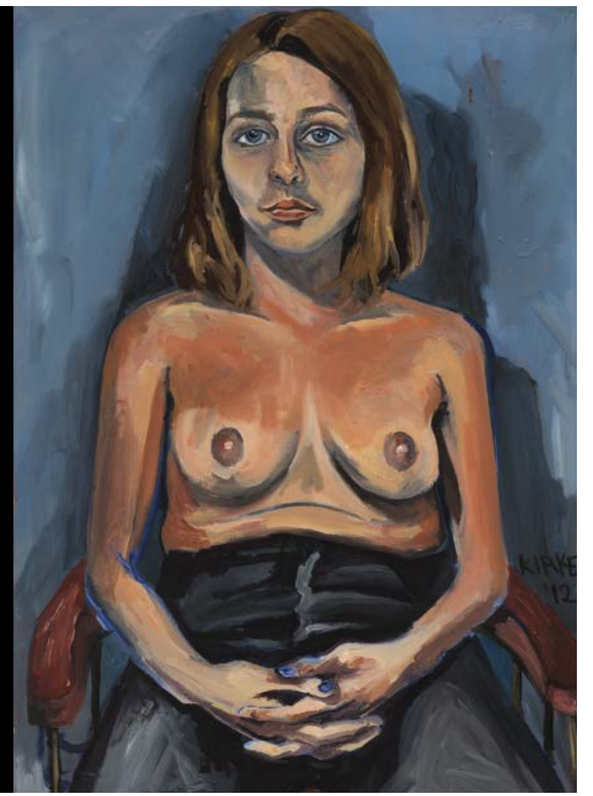

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Francis Cape, *Utopian Benches*, 2011–2012
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Wednesday, February 12

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Friday, February 21

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Thursday, February 27

HESSE McGRAW
Vice President for Exhibitions and Public Programs at SFAI
Friday, March 7

KARIN SANDER
Tuesday, March 11

TERRY WINTERS
Monday, March 24

MARCELO CIDADE
Friday, March 28

JOHN MILLER
Monday, March 31

IÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE
Thursday, April 3

RICHARD MEYER
Friday, April 4

JAMES BENNING
Tuesday, April 8

TIMOTHY BERRY
Friday, April 11

JENNIFER DOYLE
Friday, April 18

BASIL TWIST
Thursday, April 24

ALFREDO JAAR
Friday, April 25

Karin Sander, *Museum Visitors 1:8, Labor Kizu 2010*. 3D body scans of living people in the color of their choice, monochrome 3D printing, and plaster. Scale: 1:8 | Height: 4–9 inches each. Courtesy of Kzo North Rhine-Westphalia Art Collection, Düsseldorf. Installation view courtesy of Kzo Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 2011. Photographed by Achim Kukulies.

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SFAI's Exhibitions and Public Programs are made possible by the generosity of donors and sponsors. Major support is provided by Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. Program support is provided by the Harker Fund of The San Francisco Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. The Distinguished Visiting Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Painting Practices is funded by the Winifred Johnson Clive Foundation. Ongoing support is provided by the McBean Distinguished Lecture and Residency Fund, The Buck Fund, and the Visiting Artists Fund of the SFAI Endowment. Wendy White, Terry Winters, and John Miller are Winifred Johnson Clive Foundation Distinguished Visiting Fellows for Interdisciplinary Painting Practices.

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Kristen Perkins
For the Virgin (Detail), 2011
Archival inkjet print
30 x 30 inches

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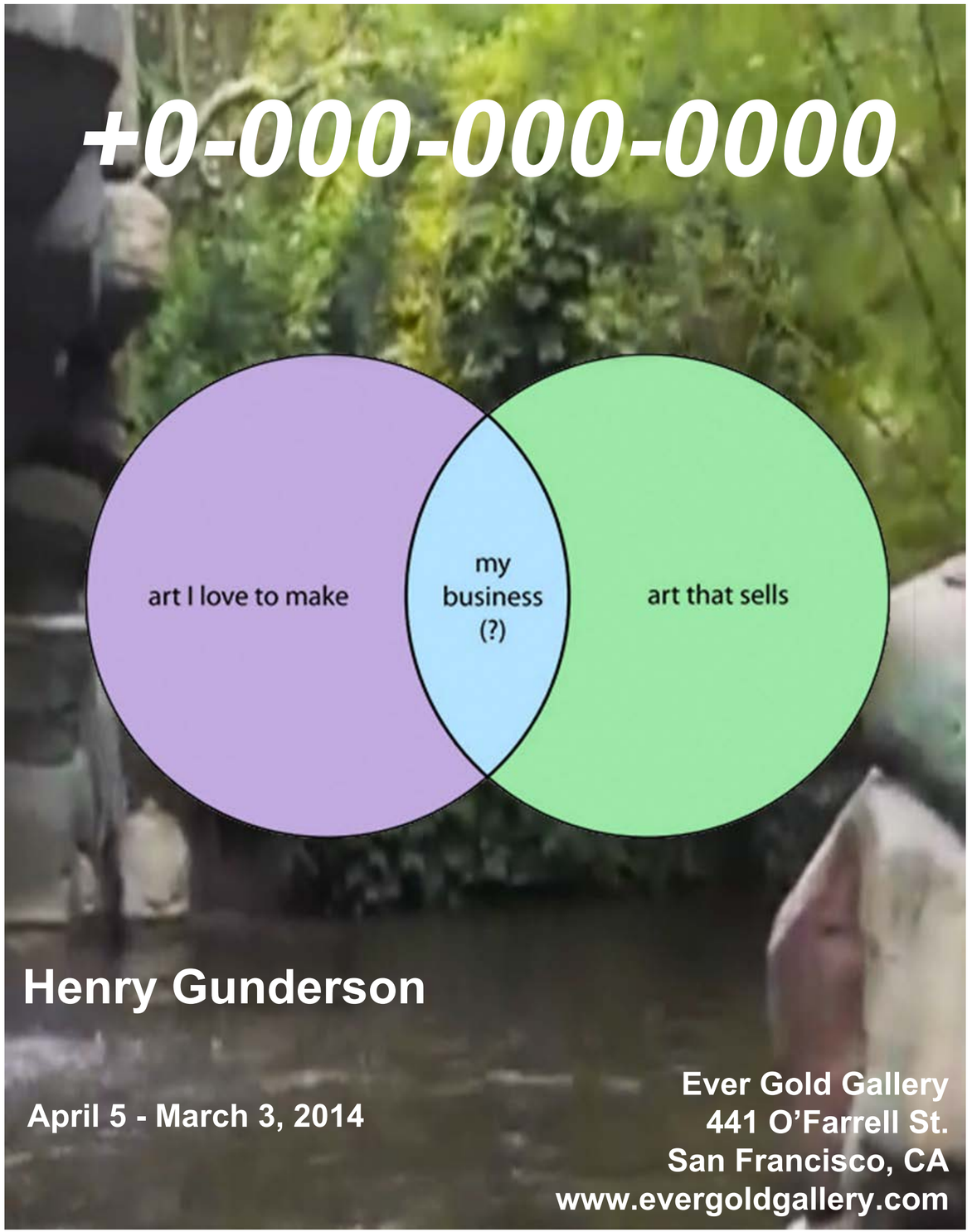

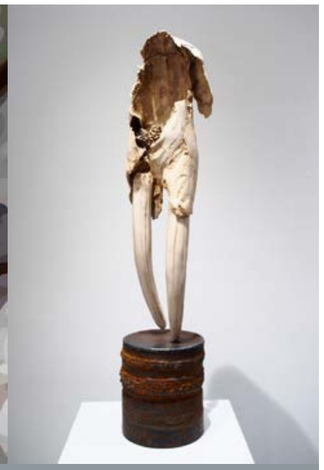

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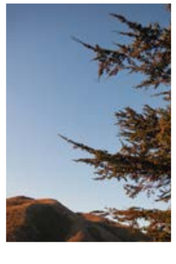

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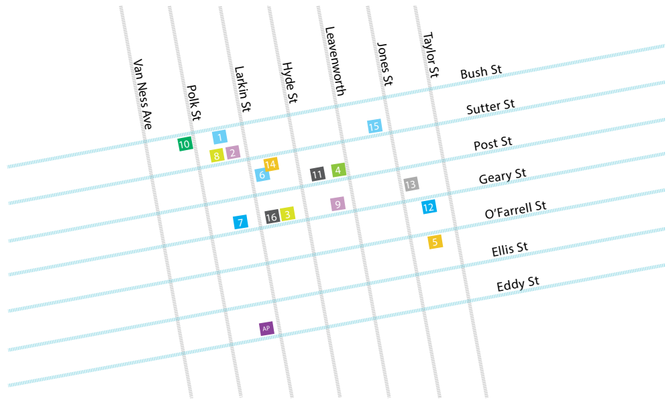
Upper TL Art Walk



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The Upper TL Artwalk makes 16 galleries available late night to the public every First Thursday. This is not a bar crawl. Each location is either a traditional gallery or a retail space with room dedicated to fine art. We occasionally have special events to showcase local independent artists along with food trucks and more.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Kathan Brown is founding director of Crown Point Press, San Francisco, publisher of artists' etchings. The press marked its 50th anniversary in 2013 with an exhibition titled Yes, No, Maybe: Artists Working at Crown Point Press at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Brown has recently published a memoir, Know That You Are Lucky, available on Amazon or at www.crownpoint.com.

Joseph del Pesco is founding director of the San Francisco branch of the Kadist Art Foundation. Located at 20th and Folsom in the Mission district, Kadist presents events and exhibitions, hosts artists for residencies and collects contemporary art.

Dean Dempsey is a visual and time-based artist based in New York City and is versatile in types, tastes and positions. Out-calls only.

Colin L. Fernandes is a Bay Area-based physician, writer and collector. His writing has appeared in The Indian Express, The New York Times, The Contra Costa Times, a Penguin anthology, SF ARTS QUARTERLY, and in the online art magazines ART PRACTICAL and DAILY SERVING.

John Held, Jr. curates the exhibition A History of West Coast Mail Art at the San Francisco Center for Book in February. Later in 2014, he will be organizing an exhibition at Ever Gold Gallery on Fred Martin and friends in the Fifties, and completing a residency at the Emily Harvey Foundation, Venice, Italy, in November/December.

Anna Halprin has been a mover and shaker in the dance and fine art worlds since the late fifties, when she collaborated with innovative musicians Terry Riley, La Monte Young and Morton Subotnik. Her "event scoring" influenced the Fluxus art movement and inspired postmodern dance birthed by Judson Dance Theater contributors Trisha Brown, Simone Forte and Yvonne Rainer, who had previously studied with Anna at her world famous Kentfield dance deck designed by her husband, the noted landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. She and her daughter, Daria, currently administer the Tampalpia Institute, providing training in the movement arts to a worldwide following.

Sarah Hotchkiss is a San Francisco-based artist and arts writer. She received her M.F.A. from California College of the Arts in 2011. She contributes regularly to KQED Arts and less regularly to Art Practical, Squarecylinder and Colpa's Gazzetta. Her artwork has been featured in shows in the greater New York and San Francisco areas, including Adobe Books Backroom Gallery, The Popular Workshop and MacArthur B Arthur. She has attended residencies at the Vermont Studio Center, Esalen Institute and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. In 2011 she received an Alternative Exposure Grant for the curatorial project Stairwell's.

Jarrett Earnest is an artist, writer, and co-director of 1:1, a collaborative that took the form of an art space in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He writes regularly on contemporary art and pursues the interview as a distinct critical form, publishing long innovative interviews with artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Richard Tuttle, and Nayland Blake, among others. He is presently at work on a book of writing and drawing, exploring the aesthetics of intimacy. All of his disparate projects engage the intersections of performance, poetry, the visual arts and politics.

Aaron Harbour is a curator, writer, and artist operating out of Oakland, CA. He is co-director of Et al., a gallery program in San Francisco, and has additionally curated exhibitions at The Popular Workshop, Important Projects, NADA Miami & New York, MacArthur B Arthur, Interface, Liminal Space, and Royal Nonesuch Gallery, among others. He runs Curiously Direct, an art criticism blog on Facebook, and has additionally written for Art Practical, Decoy Magazine, Art Cards, and several small publications/artist catalogues. He also produces art, and would gladly make art for the group show you are organizing.

Glen Helfand is a visiting faculty member in SFAI's History and Theory of Contemporary Art program. His writing, concentrating on contemporary art and culture, appears in Artforum and numerous other publications, and has curated exhibits for the de Young Museum, San Jose Museum, Mills College Art Museum, and Dust Gallery in Las Vegas.

Jackie Im is a curator and writer based in Oakland, CA. She has contributed to exhibitions at the Wattis Institute of Contemporary Art, the Walter and McBean Galleries at SFAI, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Queens Nails, the Mills College Art Museum, and MacArthur B Arthur. She holds a BA in Art History from Mills College and a MA in Curatorial Practice from California College of the Arts. She is currently the co-director of Et al., a gallery in San Francisco's Chinatown with Facundo Argañaraz and Aaron Harbour.

Constance Lewallen was born and raised in New York City. She received her BA from Mount Holyoke College and her MA from California State University, San Diego. She is currently Adjunct Curator at the University of California, Berkeley, Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. In 1996 she curated Jay DeFeo: Selected Works 1952-1989 for Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, which traveled to the UC Berkeley Art Museum.

As Senior Curator, at the BAM she curated many major exhibitions including, most recently A Rose Has No Teeth: Bruce Nauman in the 1960s all of which were accompanied by catalogues and toured nationally and internationally. Her most recent exhibition, State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970 co-curated with Karen Moss, premiered at the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, California in fall 2011, and was subsequently presented at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and toured to four additional venues in the United States and Canada. Her book on David Ireland's house, published by UC Press, will be released when the house reopens.

Courtney Malick lives in Los Angeles, where she works as a writer, independent curator and private art adviser, focusing on video, sculpture, performance and installation. She received her MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in 2011. She has curated exhibitions and performances in both New York and San Francisco. She is a regular contributor to Artforum, San Francisco Arts Quarterly, V Magazine, and is a founding contributor of Dis Magazine. Malick has also worked as Studio Manager for photographer Jane Wattenberg; Curatorial Assistant at LACE for the exhibition L.A. Goes Live, part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time; Assistant Director at Broadway 1602 and Daniel Reich Gallery; as an archivist at Vito Acconci Studio and as Curatorial Assistant to Larry List for the exhibition The Art of Chess at the Reykjavik Museum. In 2013 she was commissioned to write an essay for the scholarly online journal Viralnet.net in association with California Institute of the Arts, as well as contributing text to the catalog for the Palazzo Peckham exhibition at the 55th Venice Biennale.

Austin McManus is a photographer, writer, curator, and publisher. He founded the web-based zine publishing and distribution collective TheFlopBox.com in 2003. Austin is involved in a wide range of creative projects and currently works as an editor for Juxtapoz magazine.

Jasmine Moorhead is the founder and director of Krowswork, a gallery and project space in Oakland whose original focus on contemporary video, photography, and installation has expanded to include all mediums and overlooked historical works. This year she also launched a new imprint, Krowsworkbooks.

Renny Pritikin was born in New York City, and received a BA from New School College, NYC, and an MA from San Francisco State in Interdisciplinary Arts. He was co-director of New Langton Arts in San Francisco from 1979 to 1992. He was chief curator at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts from 1992 to 2004. He was director of the Nelson Gallery and Fine Arts Collection at UC Davis from 2004 until 2012. Career highlights include a lecture series in Japanese museums as a guest of the State Department in 1995. That same year he was a Koret Israel Prize winner and traveled extensively in Israel. In 2002 he was the curator for the United States exhibition at the Cuenca, Ecuador Biennal. In 2003 he received a Fulbright Fellowship to lecture in museums throughout New Zealand. He has been a senior adjunct professor in the curatorial practices graduate program at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco since its inception in 2003. Pritikin gave early support to such noted artists as Nayland Blake, Nancy Rubins, Fred Tomaselli, Barry McGee, Margaret Kilgallen, Chris Johanssen and many others. He is known for bringing work from popular culture into the museum context, including retrospectives of the work of auto customizer Ed Big Daddy Roth, the tattoo artist and painter Don Ed Hardy, the futurist and Blade Runner designer Syd Mead and the magician and historian Ricky Jay.

Gianni Simone escaped from his home country in 1992 and found refuge in Japan, where he promptly found a job teaching people how to shout HELP! and avoid being robbed on foreign buses. Since 1997 he has been unhealthily active in the Mail Art Network, unleashing on the unsuspecting public, among other things, the "Treatise of Pataphysical Anatomy" and the International Fake Political Campaign Poster Project. He has recently opened the Stickerman Museum - Tokyo Annex. When not running after his two kids and from his wife, he is usually busy making zines, writing for high and lowbrow magazines, and exploring Tokyo.

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Cover Image: Vito Acconci, *CLAIM* Performance, 3 hours, 1971. AVALANCHE Magazine Office; 93 Grand Street, New York, NY. Photograph by Kathy Dillon.

Some Considerations Towards an Understanding of the Worlds of Art and Tech.

By PETER DOBEY

In my last essay for San Francisco Arts Quarterly I attempted to articulate specific characteristics of contemporary art by observing particular events that made contributions towards defining visual art in the present tense. I elucidated three broad themes, *the commercial*, *the political* and *the digital*. Of the three, it is "digital" that presents the most interesting aesthetic problems, since it has the ability to be an art medium in its own right. Digital art, one of many ways to describe art made using new computer technologies, does not exist in a vacuum; it is part of a larger "tech" industry, movement and zeitgeist. It is part of a *tech world.*

Digital computer technology has profoundly altered the way we interact with, and make use of the world around us in nearly every aspect of life. To make use of the world around us involves some act of creativity, for when we are not engaging with the world at the level of habit or passive disinterestedness, we are actively inventing methods to know the world and to know ourselves. Indeed, we are always inventing new *techniques* (from *techne* the root word of tekhnologia) to better know our world. We do this instinctively, and at the same time, creatively.

It is my position that an *artistic act* possesses characteristics that transcend mere creativity. Artistic acts do not have a monopoly on creativity, but they do offer a particular kind of creative production that is particularly open ended to reception, and thus especially capable of provoking thought in the mind of the viewer that is not directed in any one given direction. The knowledge made available when looking at an art piece is not the same type of knowledge one obtains when memorizing multiplication tables, reading the instructions to build an Ikea bookshelf, or creating a Wikipedia page for that matter. There is no specific aim when acquiring knowledge through the viewing of art. Additionally, I maintain that some artistic acts are more *artful* than they are *creative*. For example, it is obvious to spot something in an art gallery that clearly looks as if it is art, but it is not very creative. One might judge this to be bad art, while the art object itself most likely does not possess the intentionality, or aim to be bad art. The viewing of art does not come ontologically stamped with intention.

One reason why it is important for thought to have no aim is because desire has no aim, once a desire is grasped, the desire is extinguished. Desire is metonymic; it jumps from one thing to the next. No desire is stronger than the desire for knowledge. Science works by extinguishing old problems in order to make new ones. Art makes old questions new again. Art does not present the kind of questions that are readily answerable, or accessible by going to the library, or picking up your smart phone to access a specific piece of information. Art is not readily consumable, it does not have the instant accessibility to its magic the way ubiquitous digital technology does, for example an iPhone App. I imagine this to be the case even if the artistic act was an iPhone App.

One of the reasons such technology as an Instagram filter has the ability to intrigue the masses is that it does not require extensive background knowledge for one to appreciate the creative acts it makes possible. This is why it is so thoroughly enjoyable. One does not need a background in art history to appreciate the magical way an everyday snapshot becomes picturesque when washed over with saturated hues. It is not an intellectual feat to appreciate an Instagrammed photo, as it is to appreciate a Duchamp urinal. An additional aspect of Instagram that makes it so enjoyable is the ability for creative acts to be shared with others without explanation. Everyone "gets" it.

This is not to say that the viewing of art is always an intellectual achievement and using and learning about digital technology is not. Besides, not everything needs to be an intellectual achievement. But the kind of intellectual achievement in viewing art is qualitatively different, and it is important to have access to both methods of thinking. Of course, there is art that, like the Instagrammed photo, does not require intellectual rigor. Works of art such as the Sistine Chapel or Beethoven's 5th. are readily appreciated both for their "wow" factor or their historical/skilled significance. Much of the world's music is wonderful because it can be mutually enjoyed from a place of undeveloped expertise or appreciated for its historical and technical virtuosity by a sophisticated listener.

A musical instrument is a technology, albeit a difficult one to learn to utilize.

The use of personal computers and their offshoots, what we colloquially call "tech," has been engineered to be user friendly. That is, much digital technology has the intellectual background knowledge *built in* to its user interface. It is made with the unsophisticated user in mind. But then again, so is the pencil, which was upgraded only in 1858 to be a self-editing technology, when an eraser was attached to its end. A pencil can make art on its own, but the key is that the pencil is not art itself. It is a tool.

Art is not a tool. A tool is something that assists a particular task. A tool is something that can be used skillfully to make art, and one interesting outcome of art being made using new tech is that it may mean a return to an interest in skill.

Tools are used to make art, but art is not a tool on its own. If it were to be a tool at all, it would be a tool that does not know what its own use is. In the end, it is only the singular viewer of art that might ever know the use of a given art piece, and even then the viewer may not be conscious of any *particular* use, since the artwork in question is without an external use. Art is literally use-less.

Tech on the other hand, is very use-full. Even when tech facilitates the making of art, it tends have a utilitarian structure built into it. In short, tech *does something*. Art *does no-thing*. At least, no particular thing.

Still, artistic acts are recognized as such. This happens when there is a mutual agreement concerning the word "art," so it follows that there is a shared conceptualization of art. To have a word for something is to have a concept and definition for it. Words are *world creating*, they are the bridge between thought and reality. When people say, "there is no definition of art," what they mean to say is "there is no ONE definition of art," for they have already defined art by using a word for it, namely "art."

Art lives in a world. Art notoriously demands sophisticated background knowledge in order to be accessed and appreciated. Contemporary art is especially difficult to understand because it can be no other way; there are thousands and thousands of years of art that came before it. Paradoxically, the making of contemporary art does not necessarily require a sophisticated set of techniques in order to be considered art, often to the confusion of the lay art viewer. That is because it has been engineered that way. I do not believe the phrase "art world" is arbitrary, for it emphasizes the sociological and institutional nature of how art knowledge is distributed and organized.

For better or worse, the community of artists, curators, and art viewers that engage with the contemporary visual arts have engineered various rigid definitions of what is and is not contemporary art. Members of this community tend to inherently know what they are talking about when they use the word "art." Again, this is because the word "art" has a shared particular meaning between speakers in this community. However, when the same people speak to friends and family outside of the contemporary art community about "art," they are often met with bewilderment as to why they, the supposed art expert, have such a limited definition of art.

Members of the *art world* have a specialized discourse between each other, and so does the *tech world.*

There is however, a noticeable distinction between the natures of what is produced by these two worlds. The technology behind Instagram is sophisticated to make, but easy to use. A contemporary art piece can be either sophisticated or easy to make, but is always difficult to use (or view).

What the iPhone app and the contemporary art piece have in common, and this is a peculiarity of contemporary art that is not shared by earlier manifestations of visual art, is that the relative ease or difficulty that was involved in the making of either bears little on how the user or viewer experiences the end product. An Instagram snapshot you have taken of your friend can become an artful portrait with the touch of a filter button, even though you don't know the underlying programming that allowed for this artful change to happen. In essence, it's magic. Similarly, a urinal placed in a gallery magically becomes a piece of art by virtue of its surroundings and its historical status. Poof! Magic again.

The difference between the Instagram photo and the urinal? The magic of the urinal becoming art relies on a viewer possessing a background knowledge of attributes that determine the given conceptual properties the art piece is predicated on, and therefore can be considered and further defined by. The magic of Instagram does not require a background in computer engineering; its magic is built in. So then, why is the added difficulty needed to appreciate contemporary art important? After all, why do we need to know why something is cool or beautiful? It just is!

The contemporary art world itself is divided. Some members of its world think that's enough. Others think beauty is not enough; they say an art piece must also be interesting. Further still, a common platitude is that "all that matters is if it is interesting or not." I do not think this cuts the mustard. Art must be both.

I think life at its best is when it is *beautifully interesting.* Like true love, art appreciation does not come easily, and it does not come instantly. Sure, it may be a particularly exciting moment that starts love off, love at first sight. But one does not fall in love in one fell swoop; love has to be opened up. One must learn to love. The learning curve for loving contemporary art is incredibly steep. Popular tech on the other hand, is relatively easy to love, or at least fool around with.

There is an art world, and there is a tech world. I suggest they have much to learn from each other, and my hope is that they are at least in the courting phase and that sparks are starting to fly. But first they need to learn how to speak to each other, recognize each other's differences and to learn to live with one another. They must learn how to speak each other's languages.

The topic at hand is what do they have to learn from each other? Is this possible, and is there even a point? I for one have been wondering why the tech world, with all its money and power, has not yet proposed. Sure, both are at fault in their ambivalence towards one another, but it wouldn't hurt for the tech world to pay the art world a little more attention once in awhile.

No less than two brand new art fairs will appear for the first time in Silicon Valley this year. "Silicon Valley Contemporary" takes place April 10th through 13th in San Jose, followed by "Art Silicon Valley" October 9th through 12th in San Mateo.

This is a chance for these two worlds to collide.

The next issue of SFAQ [May 1st release date] will examine art, tech and the worlds they inhabit in order to address and facilitate confluences between them.

Peter Dobey writes a weekly Art and News column called "The Art World In Review" for SFAQonline.com
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ANNA HALPRIN SELECTED WRITINGS ON PERFORMANCE

Edited by JOHN HELD, JR.

"The chief intention of my works at this time was to understand how the process of creation and performance could be used to accomplish concrete results: social change, personal growth, physical alignment, and spiritual attunement."
- Anna Halprin, 1990.

Despite the accolades Anna Halprin has accrued, her unique contribution to American culture has yet to be fully explored. Her performance credentials transcend a seven-decade association with the dance world. In the early 1960s, her experiments in dance "scoring" spawned Judson Dance Theater, a progenitor of post-modern dance, and Fluxus "events." Turning from reliance on the art establishment has propelled her into a broader world of students and admirers from around the world, who continue to be generously informed and invigorated by the ninety-three year-old matriarch of West Coast art and life.

Moving Toward Life: A Preface (1994)

I left the Midwest of my childhood and my budding professional dance career in New York City to move to California in 1945. World War II was over, and I set off to San Francisco to join my husband who had just returned from the Pacific. I was twenty-five years old. Six years later, we had two daughters, Daria and Rana, and our young family had moved into a new home designed by Bill Wurster in collaboration with my husband, Lawrence. Both men are primary influences in the Bay Region style of architecture and landscape architecture, a movement that influenced me and my art on a daily basis. Their style allowed for a free-flowing connection between inside and outside, a major theme in my own work which would develop through explorations of dance both inside and outside the theater. At my new house, sliding glass walls opened onto tan-bark terraces and led into the surrounding redwood groves, and the views reached to the bay and the slopes of the majestic mountain [Mount Tamalpais]. My new house in the country felt like an integral part of nature, and increasingly it was a contemplative environment, free of the distractions of the city. At this time I shared a dance studio with Welland Lathrop in San Francisco, but I felt a gradual and steady pull to spend more and more time at my home studio.

Lawrence and the modern-dance lighting designer Arch Lauterer designed a dance deck that meandered among the redwood trees below our house. The pull was getting stronger. I did not want to be away from my two daughters, and I was ready to make the final break. I left the city and began to dance in this invigorating outdoor environment. I cut my ties with modern dance and began to search for new directions. I offered experimental workshops for dancers and invited visual artists, musicians, actors, architects, poets, psychologists, and filmmakers to join. I called the group Dancers' Workshop, an idea from the experimental Bauhaus school of pre-Nazi Germany. At Dancers' Workshop we were looking for ways to rediscover the basic nature of our materials free of preconceived associations and concepts. We were interested in avoiding the predictability of cause and effect. As a result of our many experiments, we created theater pieces and gave performances on the dance deck and the surrounding wooded area for invited audiences. As people became interested in our work, we were invited to international art festivals, both here and abroad.

The three aspects of my work I wish to illuminate are: I believe, unique trajectories; they have been of the greatest importance to me over the years. The first is that the experiments Dancers' Workshop and I did in the 1960s and '70s with new *forms* of dance led to new *uses* of dance. Dancing outside the confines of the proscenium theater and in the environment – the street or the natural world-had unexpected results. As it came closer to the environments where people lived, dance became more connected to people's lives and more responsive to people's needs. The image-making and sleight of hand common to the theater dropped away and we were left with the raw material of our lives to make our art. The boundaries between art and life, and between performer and audience, shifted and expanded, and the uses and applications of dance followed suit. Some larger force, which I believe has to do with the ancient roots of dance and its primary importance to human beings, was set into motion.

A second aspect developed as we researched new uses of dance and movement, and our forms became accessible to more people and began to exist outside the theater and in the daily lives of ordinary people. As the forms expanded, the kinds of people who participated became more diverse, which brought about profound changes in dance. New methods of communication and a creative process encouraging pluralistic involvement developed as we sought to create an art form speaking directly to various ethnic groups and nationalities, and people of different economic backgrounds, age levels, or physical abilities. Just as we had discovered a total holistic theater, we needed a well-trained holistic dancer-performer. I began to generate forms in which the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual bodies functioned in greater relationship to one another. My search was for the whole person, and my criterion was the meaning in each individual's life.

My early work focused on new forms and uses for dance; later I became concerned with the meaning of the works I was creating, in order to reinvest these forms with emotion and personal motivation. In the process of stripping away all pretense in the theater and then engaging the whole person, we found that an unexpected synthesis occurred. We began to work with real-life themes, so now the dances we made had a real purpose in people's lives. We were tapping into our own personal stories, and the dances we made had transformative powers. I began to call them rituals and identified with materials that created them as myths. This was a turning point for me in terms of how I viewed dance and its potential uses.

The third aspect of my work, and the part that has challenged and nurtured me all these years, has been the ways dance has been instrumental in developing community through the expression of these myths and rituals. It seemed an inevitable direction – the experience of community – and as community became my theme, larger symbols, or archetypes, emerged. The driving, pulsing life force that motivates us all became the inspiration of my later works. The shock of having cancer and the changes it wrought on my life and my work led me to explore the relationship between dance and healing. I began to work with dance as a healing art, and with people who are challenging life-threatening illness. Compassion, health, love, catharsis, life, death – the full spectrum of humanity's striving – needed to be contained in my evolving forms. And over and over again, returning to the mountain, or to the sea, I was fed with images and resources and power, which I recycled back into the work of making vital community.

As many of us struggle to find our spiritual identity, we can, I believe, return to dance to recover an ancient tradition that will serve us in today's culture. The wisdom of dance and the body contains resources that can provide us with tools for the survival of life on this planet. Our connection to the earth and to one another as forms *of* the earth is our crucial next step. I believe that this is the wonderful possibility for dance today. Through dance we can rediscover a spiritual identity and community we have lost, and the work of making this dance current, immediate, and necessary continues to be of the greatest importance. At the moment, nature is the greatest teacher for me, the clearest voice guiding my dance. To feel and experience the earth helps me find my own deepest human nature, and I am directing much of my dancing toward this timeless infinite theater.

("Preface," Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformative Dance*. Edited by Rachel Kaplan. Wesleyan University Press, 1995.)

Collective Creativity (1974)

Collective Creativity is particularly useful in relation to an activity like dance, which is by its very nature a social or group experience. The more accepted and usual form of dance and theater and music has been to use the ensemble of dancers-actors-musicians to carry out the choreographer's vision or the directions of the director or composer. However, there are other artists who are exploring aspects of participation in the performing arts, using methods other than the RSVP Cycles, but striving for similar objectives: John Cage by the use of chance; Morton Subotnick by activating sounds through audience actions; Pauline Oliveros through ritual; Grand Union Dance Group by improvisation; and (in the theater) the Open Theater and the Performance Company by creating communal lifestyles. The important point here is that people participating in all of these approaches are viewed as contributing artists, not as tools to achieve the "master artist's" purpose.

Collective creativity is a way to utilize multiple inputs of all the diverse performing artists. We use collective creativity to teach, train, and produce performances of theater works. Although personal growth will take place in this approach, we do not stop at this level, but move on to creating results together that relate to group and community growth.

From "Life/Art Workshop Processes," in Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformative Dance*. Edited by Rachel Kaplan. Wesleyan University Press, 1995.)

Planetary Dance (1990)

The all-too-common practice of identifying what you are doing by its place in some nonexistent, smooth time continuum creates false categories and false understandings of interrelationships. I began as a "modern" dancer. But how long can anything keep calling itself modern, or postmodern?

Books on the "history of modern dance" sometimes lay out an elaborately constructed family tree based on who came before and who came after and who studied what technique with whom. As firmly entrenched as I sometimes am in these modern dance histories, my fall off the family tree took no more than a small breeze. All I had to do was create a dance (*Apartment 6*, 1965) in which the performers wore shoes (horrors!)…and not even ballet slippers or jazz shoes, or bare feet, but high heels! I had not realized that being barefoot was already such a sacrosanct tradition. Suddenly I was no longer modern. And soon, not even to be considered a dancer.

When an artist begins to work outside the officially recognized context of her discipline, the established artistic community will often ignore her. If this doesn't work (because the artist is either persistent or good, or both) she may be called "avant-garde," meaning that she is ahead of the times or so far behind that she seems to be ahead (which is what happens when things move in circles).

The dance community in the '60s was too conservative to have an official avant-garde; the theatre world, however, was not. So my work began to be thought of as theatre and my strongest artistic rapport was with theatre people like Jerzy Grotowski, Lee Breuer and Ruth Maleczech, Julian Beck and Judith Malina, Richard Schechner, San Francisco's Actors' workshop, and the San Francisco Playhouse on Hyde Street. In the '60s much of the work I did was innocently avant-garde, which is to say that it was controversial, but I was not always certain why. At times there was enormous hostility from audiences.

I was concerned that we had some kind of power that stirred people up. If we could generate this kind of magical power in dance, how should we use it? This power came from within the dance and also from that space between the spectators and the performers. The power was not contained and, in fact, could not be contained within the confines of a stage that was separated from the spectators. Not only could it arise from the whole of life and affect the whole of life, it was most powerful when it did so.

So we were tapping into some source, but did we really know what to do with the connection once we made it? I don't think so. The resulting hostility and confrontation with audiences, although exciting, often fun, and sometimes dangerous, was not what I wanted.

I wanted to know what else we could channel the power toward and how to channel it. So when the riotous atmosphere of the 60s calmed down, we continued a steady exploration based on those two questions. For several years I made no distinction between audience and performers. I preferred designing structures for all kinds of people who would become performers. These structures, or scores as we later called them, explored notions about a group mind, male and female separations and re-joinings, environmental influences, ritualistic initiations, interpersonal relations, and others. Some structures were improvisational while others were formal.

The chief intention of my works at this time was to understand how the process of creation and performance could be used to accomplish concrete results: social change, personal growth, physical alignment, and spiritual attunement. This necessarily involved studying the relationships between audience and performers, between a person's life issues and the performance content, between performance skills and life skills. In other words, developing an integrated life/art process.

While in the middle of this, in 1972, I got cancer. For ten years I withdrew from public performance. I didn't stop working but the work became internally oriented. This was only natural: I was working to regain my life and using the work process in my own healing.

During this time whatever remained of my classical, external aesthetics were of little concern. How a dance looked or how it might be received by an audience was not on my mind. More important was how it felt to the performers and how they were able to use the experience of its creation and performance in furthering their own personal, artistic, and communal growth.

When I gradually began to return to public works I had different interests. First, I wanted to create dances that would influence change. I wanted to apply what I had learned about healing myself to other people and to whole communities. From 1972 to 1986, I explored this idea with an intimate group in a training program. Secondly, I had a strong interest in working with the general public, with large numbers of people who were untrained in dance or any type of performance. I had an opportunity to do just that in a series of community dance classes I led. Each session was attended by 60 to 100 people.

…

Had I discovered something new? Of course not! This large-scale group movement is an ancient phenomenon in dance. Cultures everywhere in the world have channeled the power of such a group spirit to help them bring rain, hunt, raise crops, and initiate the young. It is a power that can renew, inspire, teach, create and heal. What was exciting was that we were learning how to generate this same tribal spirit and energy, this same sense of group ritual with people whose culture contains little of such tradition in dance performances. We were learning how to return to performers and spectators power, which in this culture had often been taken from them and placed in the hands of scientific experts and official artists.

…

More and more, in both workshops and public rituals, I encourage people to work with their own lives as material, to use real-life issues so that the transforming power of dance would have the opportunity to effect real-life changes for them. On a personal level my experience in ridding myself of cancer showed me that it was possible to use the power of dance for a higher purpose, that we could channel the power to experience interconnection with a life force, and that this experience was nourishing and necessary – the right of all living beings, not just artists. This power could be channeled for healing, of our bodies, our psyches, our communities, and for the healing of the planet…for peace.

(From "Planetary Dance," in Anna Halprin, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformative Dance*. Edited by Rachel Kaplan. Wesleyan University Press, 1995.)

SHUJI TERAYAMA

By GIANNI SIMONE

All images courtesy of (unless otherwise noted) Photothèque imaginaire de Shuji Terayama, les gens de la famille Chien Dieu (Yomiuri Shinbunsha, Tokyo, 1975)

School of Hard Knocks
Remembering Shuji Terayama and His Legacy

When Shuji Terayama died, in 1983, he was only 47 years old. Yet in just over 20 years this hyperactive playwright, stage director, poet, novelist, photographer, script writer, film director, lyricist, songwriter, essayist, journalist and critic from northern Japan explored and subverted every creative field he decided to challenge. Prevented by illness to pursue academic studies, he turned to life as his school, learning whatever he needed – as he later stated – by working in bars and following boxing and horse racing. The following is a rambling and admittedly flawed attempt at partially making sense of a very complex personality who has touched and influenced several generations of artists.

I was born on December 10th, 1935 at a place with a small station, but my birth certificate shows that my birthday is January 10th, 1936. I once asked my mother what had happened during those 20 lost days. She said, "You were born on a train, so no one knows your exact birth place," which sounded like a joke. In fact my father was a police detective, and we were right in the middle of his transfer to a new town. However it is not true that I was born on a train.
(From his "creative" autobiography *Who Doesn't Think of His Home?*, 1968)

Terayama began as a gifted poet when he was thirteen and was attending junior high school in his native Aomori Prefecture. He quickly became the leader of its literary club and published his haiku and tanka poems through the school newspaper. It was in high school that he put out his first haiku magazines, *Yamabiko* and *Bokuyojin*.

Haiku constituted a significant part of my teenage life. I was strongly attracted to this old perishing form of poetry. Haiku had an anti-modern and demoniac charm to me, but what actually captured my heart was the Masonic atmosphere of the Haiku Association. I would go to their meetings, get drunk with that 5-7-5 rhythm, and blurt things like "So, it's time to drop words down to Hell."
(From *Who Doesn't Think of His Home?*, 1968)

His third collection, *Death in the Country* (1965), is considered one of the greatest achievements in modern tanka literature. Most poems are autobiographical or about traditions and customs from his native Aomori, a theme that surfaces over and over again in his work.

At eighteen Terayama moved to Tokyo to study at the prestigious Waseda University. However one year later he began to suffer from nephrosis and spent the next three years in hospital. Soon after he met poet Shuntaro Tanikawa who suggested he work on radio plays. These early attempts at script-writing would eventually morph into the more famous work he did with his theater company Tenjo Sajiki.

I wrote a story of a man who tries committing suicide by jumping off a building, but rather than crashing to the ground, he finds himself floating in midair.
(From *Golden Age*, 1978)

In 1965 Terayama began to write his first full-length novel, *Ah Wilderness*, that was serialized in a magazine. When the installments were assembled into a book, he asked up-and-coming photographer Daido Moriyama to contribute the cover image. Terayama even pushed Moriyama to explore Tokyo's streets. Shinjuku's "wilderness" in particular would become one of Moriyama's favorite subjects.

I thought of writing Ah Wilderness *in the form of modern jazz. I took some of the characters as the members of a jazz combo and made the story theme as the main refrain. The rest was composed by improvising. Because of this approach, the story was rather chaotic and hit-or-miss. Yet the process of discussing – with the character itself – how each character plays its role was a very lively experience.*
(From the Afterword of *Ah Wilderness*, 1966)

1967 was a crucial year for Terayama as he published his seminal book of essays *Throw Away Books, Rally in the Streets* and formed the Tenjo Sajiki theater company.

Throw Away's titular message plays such a central role in Terayama's thought that three different works share the same title: the aforementioned book (1967), a drama (1968) and a film (1971). This very iconic title notwithstanding, Terayama didn't actually want to give up books and the printed word. On the contrary, he believed we should read our cities like books. In the film version, for instance, he scribbles and paints words on any surface the city offers: walls, sides of buildings, school grounds, toilet doors, etc. both quoting from his books and his favorite authors.

"When I threw away books and rallied in the streets, I was thinking of turning the city into a book. We made this film as an attempt to liberate the experience of reading from the confinement of printed books. For this purpose we expanded a book into the size of a large city and filled it with signs. Books paradoxically began to have greater and wider meaning in my thought."
(From *The Collected Plays of Terayama Shuji*, 1987)

Tenjo Sajiki was a laboratory for theater experimentation that would greatly influence Japanese contemporary theater. In the beginning, Terayama mainly relied on external personnel as actors and technicians as well as such graphic artists and illustrators as Tadanori Yokoo and Aquirax Uno.

As Poster Hari's Company's Hiroyuki Sasame told Performing Arts Network Japan, "The Tenjo Sajiki posters were designed by Yokoo, Uno, Kiyoshi Awazu, Katsuhito Oyobe and Shiro Tatsumi. With the exception of Awazu, all of these artists were young, in their early 30s. They emerged to fill the gap left by the previous generation of designers who had formed the Japan Advertising Artists Club and created a design revolution before becoming a target of student activities in the late '60s and closing down in 1970. The *angura* (underground) theater posters of the day were strongly influenced by the American hippie culture – people like graphic designer Peter Max, the leader of America's psychedelic art movement. Most of the *angura* poster designers were also doing the stage art for the productions they created posters for. So the posters were also a form of theater. However, when you get into the 1980s, the posters were ordered separately. What's more, there was now a division of labor in which the poster designer and the illustrator were also two different artists."

"Shuji Terayama used to talk about, 'systemizing the randomness of encounters,' and in fact we are all supported by people we have met by chance. And I believe that, in fact, posters and theater are both means of systemizing the randomness of encounters."

When Tenjo Sajiki began to employ non-professionals, they gradually engaged in street theater productions until they gave up performing on a traditional theater stage altogether.

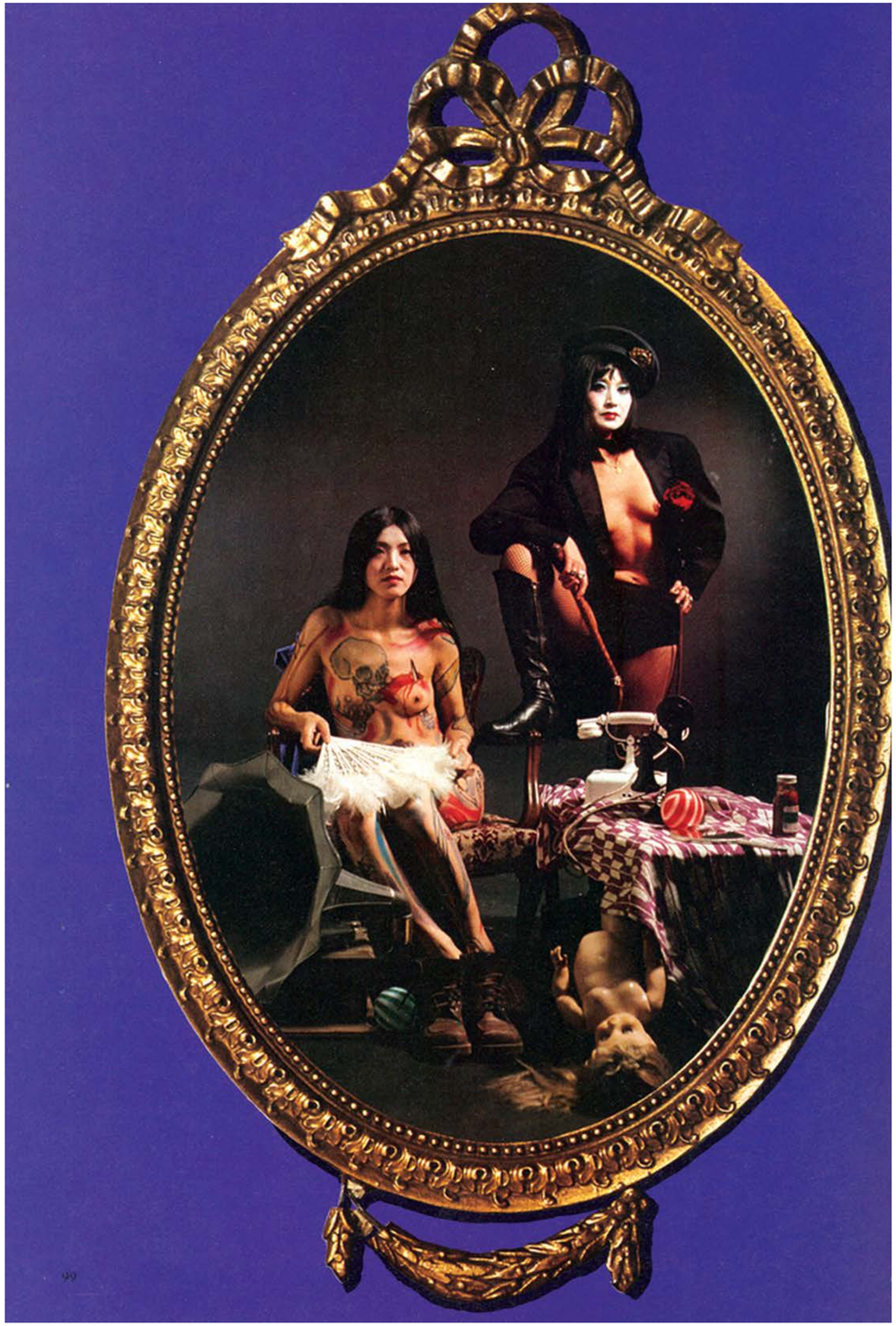
One of Terayama's more famous works – and arguably the peak of street theater in Japan – is *Knock*, a two-day 40-hour tour de force that was performed only once in the Tokyo suburbs in 1975.

I once wrote, "The streets are great books open to us." But now I would like to rewrite this as, "The streets are desperate to become a theater. Come, trash your scripts! Let us go out into the streets!"
(From *Theatricalism II*)

Last year Tokyo's Watari Museum of Contemporary Art featured *Knock* prominently in the memorial exhibition it devoted to Terayama. As Koichi Watari says, "It's like a free-form happening on whose development Terayama actually had little control. It was divided in 19 events taking place all around the Asagaya neighborhood so nobody was actually able to see it in its entirety."

<u>*Map Exchanger*</u>
On April 19th at 1:00 p.m. a map exchanger sits at a table near the railroad bridge at Shinjuku Station's East Exit. As a prologue to "Knock," members of the audience exchange their purchased "certificate of residence" for a map. The map exchanger is a mute and cannot answer any questions from the audience.

Watari: "They had to choose for themselves what to see, and walk around without knowing when a particular piece started. Actually only a part of the audience was aware of what they were actually watching."



Incident at the Public Bath
This is an experiment in organizing a naked encounter. Man 1 arrives at the Botan Public Bath. Men 2, 3 and 4 follow him ten minutes apart. They pay their fee, undress, and start performing various actions:
Entering the bathtub with their right hand up
Washing their body in a motion as though time is elapsing
Standing still
Suddenly standing up and keeping a straight and stiff position

Watari: "Due to spectators crowding the public bath and indiscriminate camera flashes, regular users were surprised, and both plain-clothed and uniformed police came in, but eventually everybody left."

"There was also audience participation i.e. some people were asked to join and follow the troupe's directions. The Blue Cat Makeup Inn was established for the duration of the play in a mahjong parlor next to Asagaya subway station. Here, they replaced their clothes with stage costumes. A mysterious photographer appeared, addressing the audience and taking their picture."

Spinster Exchange
A notice is circulated announcing, "We will trade your old granny for a brand new one." At an appointed place, elderly women from several families are exchanged as they experience life with another family at another place. Five women are packed in a cardboard box complete with a ribbon and delivered to a different family where they spend a whole day before being returned to their original homes.

Family Relay Broadcast
This action involves taking 24 hours of a family's life out into the streets. A video camera is installed inside the house after getting the family's permission and the images are shown on their TV set as well as another television placed outside the house. The TV screen works as a mirror, and the family watches themselves in the mirror while they take their meals.

The Restaurant of Many Orders
From 9:00 p.m. on April 19th to 4:00 a.m. on the 20th this restaurant operates inside the Trivia Bar on Nakasugi Drive. Each guest signs a "pledge to be passive." The contract reads, "No meal will be served if the restaurant's rules are not followed to the letter." BGM music was written by company composed J. A. Seazer and inspired by the sound of waves.

"I see you've taken your hand off the plate. You are now sentenced to drink 20 glasses of water."

Watari: "What is it that you regard as peace and quiet?" This question was posed to unsuspecting citizens as a *knock* came to their front door. The result of this guerrilla theater often went beyond the troupe's expectations. Horrified citizens called the police and actors were actually arrested."

Invitation to Knock
Invitations are printed on flyers and distributed to 1000 houses with their daily newspaper. The flyer reads, "Are you pleased with your current reality?" 36 people answer the ad, and 23 of them are chosen to participate. On April 19th at 3:00 p.m. two actors knock on the door of their house, inform them that they are relatives and abruptly start saying strange things. Later, one of the actors complains he is tired and goes to sleep. When he wakes up, he acts as if he were a member of the family.

Underground Hospital Ward
One afternoon at a housing development, a manhole cover opens and men in white robes appear. They attack passersby and drag them into the manhole. Underground there is a hospital ward and at the far end of a long hallway, an operating room. This is where the passersby are forced to become patients, shoved into wheelchairs and taken to an unknown destination.

Watari: "At the time the media reacted with a mix of shock and disgust, and the event was covered not in the cultural pages but in the news section like it was a big incident or a riot, not like art or theater. So in a sense it made a big splash but afterwards Terayama thought they had gone too far. He had such a radical approach, I guess he managed to surprise himself as well."

According to Karen Eliot, a Tokyo-based writer and editor who closely follows the local theater scene, though Tenjo Sajiki became (in)famous for their *shigaigeki* ("city theatre"), these performances were not as successful or frequent as we like to remember. "When Terayama became ill again, they were forced to return to the usual theater stage. Also, they weren't the only ones to do it. *Angura* in general was doing a lot of this (and often breaking the law). See the tent theatre of Juro Kara, Makoto Sato, et al."

Terayama's works were questions and not answers. They had to be completed by the members of the audience. The same thing can be said about his cinema. In his films and theater plays, he never wrote the final scenes, so that even the actors and the technical personnel had no idea how it was going to end.

In the late '60s, Terayama started to make his films with the help of ATG (Art Theatre Guild) which, in the spirit of the time, was open to non-professional directors. His film *Throw away your books…* was produced by ATG. Terayama broke the classical cinema language, making movies without worrying much about audience response. Most avant-garde cinema of the time is actually barely watchable, but Terayama aimed at creating 'non-boring' experimental cinema. As he believed that half of the film belonged with the viewers, it was extremely important to engage the audience.

Terayama's work required a certain amount of tension. He didn't want his actors and crew to feel too secure. For example, in one of his films, *The Two-headed Girl*, the screenplay merely remarks: "There are no more shadows." The lighting personnel were forced to think how one could make all the shadows disappear. This one-sentence instruction required a lot of thinking. Sometimes, there were things impossible to realize, materially or technically. But he would say: "no, it is possible and it has to be done."

Watarium's 2013 exhibition is just the latest of a number of times the museum has showed Terayama's work.

Watari: "My mother exhibited his works twice in her small commercial gallery, in 1974 and 1978. That was before we decided to build this museum. At the time he was mostly known for his writing and as a film director but my mother encouraged him to take up photography and of course he managed to surprise everybody. It was a revelation as his photos had a narrative element and showed Terayama's fantastical inner world, especially in his famous 'Unposted Postcards' series.

There is a small antique shop in Amsterdam where they have several bizarre goods on sale. Things such as a stuffed dog, the tattooed skin of a sailor in a frame, a family picture of a dead family, a broken doorknob, or a bottled seagull. But what I adored the most were old picture postcards. Among them there were many fake postcards, sent by a nobody to a nobody knows who. The act of fabricating the past and revising memories is accomplished with a pleasure that is followed by a slight sense of guilt. So I decided to join the game and make my own fake postcards. In February 1973 I began to take dozens of monochrome photographs that I later bleached and hand-colored. I then searched for an old pen nib to write a love letter to a lady who had never existed, wrote down the address, and attached an old stamp made in the beginning of the Showa Period [mid-1920s]. I had a postmark seal made which was stamped on the postcard before it was left in the sunlight to discolor. Imagine that it is now 1929 and I am writing a love letter from Shanghai to a girl in Yokohama named Yasuko. I was actually born in 1936, so this could have never happened, but if you think of this as a fact of the past, the different me would be 74 years old. Who could say that it was not my own experience that lead me into the pleasant maze of memory. As an old poet who died young said, "What has not happened in reality is also history."
(From *Chateau of Blue Moth*, 1975)

Watari: "I used to look at him from afar. He had such a huge personality, he was quite scary for a teenager like me. But he was also like a teacher. He used to come to our bookstore and would always tell us about the latest art trends and things to watch out for, like Joseph Beuys who in the early '70s was still unknown in Japan. And then there's his theater. I still remember the shock of attending his performances for the first time. They were something out of this world.

He was like a star. After Yukio Mishima committed suicide, Terayama sort of replaced him in certain cultural circles in Japan. He actually mocked Mishima's right-leaning ideas in *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*, one of his more famous films. There were so many sides to him. It's amazing what a huge and diversified body of work he left. He was constantly at the center of the Japanese avant-garde art scene. He worked with a number of famous photographers as well, like Nobuyoshi Araki or Daido Moriyama. For example, he asked Moriyama to provide a picture for the cover of his first book. In the '60s Moriyama was much attracted to American pop culture, but Shuji would always bring him back to more local tastes. As for Araki, before he became a star he used to work for advertising giant Dentsu. It was Terayama who asked him to contribute some photos to his theater company and slowly introduced him to the art scene. Terayama of course learned a lot from these photographers too, but his sensibility was so particular the pictures he took were 100% a product of his imagination."

A number of themes run through Terayama's work since the beginning.

Eliot: "Youth, rebellion, power relations and hegemony, sex... His theater goes beyond gender and race, and is very sexual with many SM and lesbian imageries. But it wasn't political rebellion, as Terayama was essentially apolitical, and his 'rebellious' is complicated to define, since he was also very happy to work with major public festivals and commercial operators like Parco. In other words, Terayama is not like Jean-Luc Godard or Nagisa Oshima, just to mention a couple of directors who were revolutionizing cinema at that time. While he followed their example in giving the written word a prominent role in his movies, he avoided any strong political or ideological connotation."

"On the other hand, he was obsessed with mothers, and mother figures feature prominently in his work. He was actually influenced a lot by his own mother. Not only was she was very strong and a pretty scary lady, she exerted a big control over his literary

estate after his death, which prevented the publication of his work in English for a while. That's one of the reasons why only in the last few years have foreign scholars been able to publish their work."

Watari: "He believed that theater could change society, but while he was seen as an iconoclast, he also confessed that he had introduced in Tenjo Sajiki plays the energy of folk performing arts in order to revive the modern Japanese theater. His works are very documentary in nature, and he certainly had an ambivalent relationship with his home. On one side, he often described the backwardness of the local traditions. On the other hand, though, he yearned for a simpler life and more human society.

His aesthetics mixed Japanese and Western influences, and his art was extremely visual. People were always interested in this aspect. Probably the most striking feature of his works is intertextuality, combining codes and conventions from different media. He extensively used pastiche and nostalgia, making them forerunners of postmodern cinema in Japan. What makes his films and theater so avant-garde is his radical and anarchic mixing of wildly different styles."

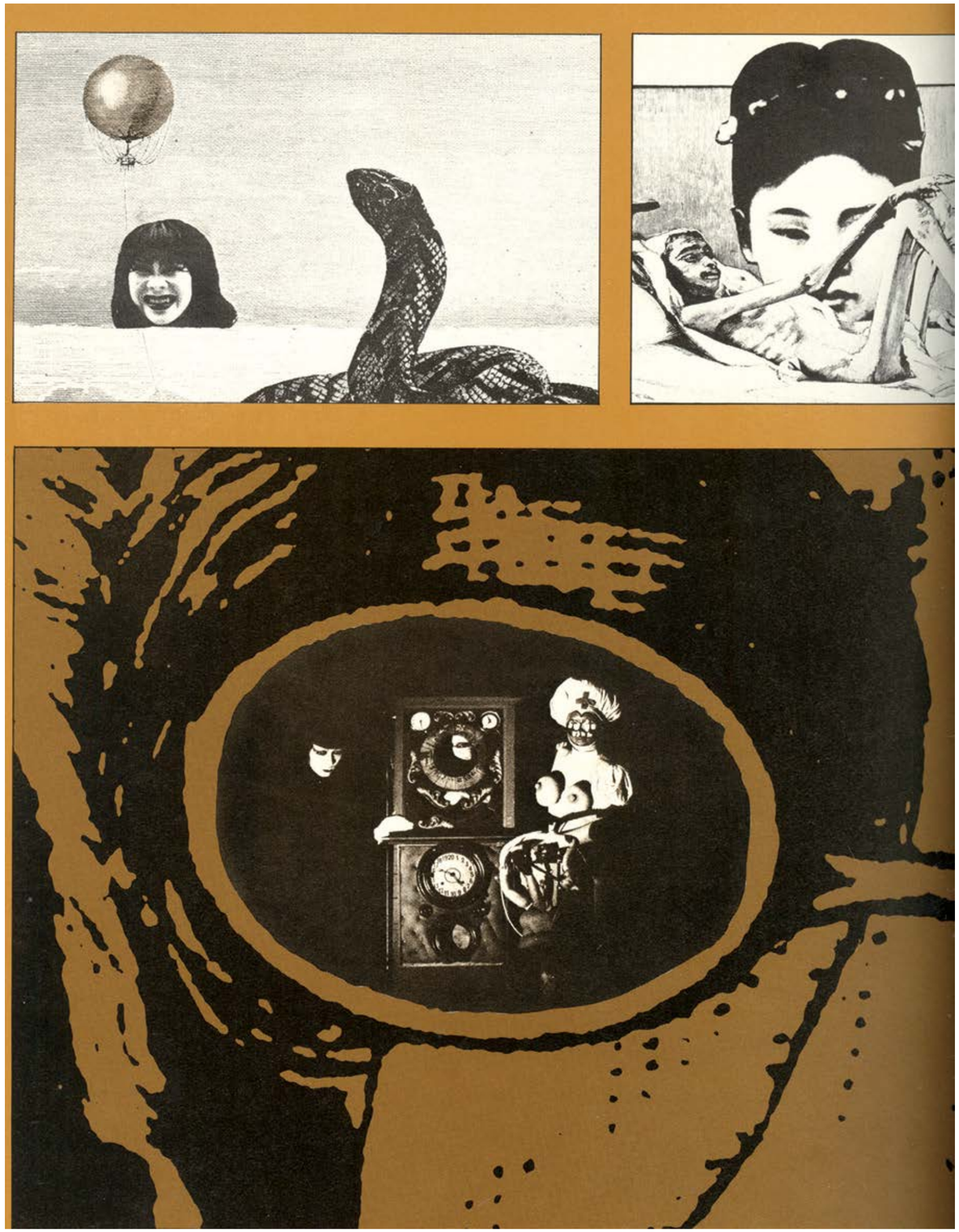
Though Terayama is still considered one of the most creative and original artists of the 20th century, his example hasn't really been followed by the younger generations.

Eliot: "His use of 'man-on-the-street' interviews for his 'Anata wa...' film series have influenced the work of Port B / Akira Terayama. Otherwise, there isn't really anyone directly similar (either in terms of their work or their status). He was just so varied in his output and career, and what he and other artists at the time were doing was so much bigger than contemporary Japanese theater artists."

This said, there has recently been a large resurgence in interest in postwar Japanese experimental arts, including several academic studies and high-profile exhibitions, and Terayama has benefitted from all the attention, with numerous productions of his work, a solo exhibition at the Tate Modern in London in 2012 and the opening of the Shuji Terayama Museum in 1997. Ironically this celebration is exactly what the man himself tried to avoid during his life. The entire *angura* movement was against the commercialization of art and strived instead to free up artistic spaces and expectations, and to oppose mainstream culture.

Even the fact that the Shuji Terayama Museum was built in Aomori Prefecture, where he spent the first eighteen years of his life, is an irony considering the love-hate relationship he had with his roots (Tenjo Sajiki's first production, in 1967, was called *The Hunchback of Aomori*). While it's true that traditional values and even the local dialect appear in his works, the fact remains that he left his hometown for good to live and work almost entirely in big cosmopolitan cities in Japan and overseas where his anarchic genius was better appreciated. Indeed, when the museum opened, most of the locals either didn't know him or weren't particularly proud of being represented by such a maverick figure. As a consequence, even today a large proportion of the visitors to the museum are made up of people traveling up from Tokyo or other Japanese cities.

Another incongruous element in Terayama's memorialization is that his movies, though independent productions, are now distributed by Toho, one of Japan's major companies, which doesn't seem to be too interested in making their prints broadly available, while only the Japan Foundation has copies of some of them. As it often happens in Japan, a mix of incompetence, politics and bureaucratic immobility prevents many interested festivals from making his work known to a wider audience. For the time being, curious viewers can watch a good selection online at the ever-reliable UbuWeb: http://www.ubu.com/film/terayama.html



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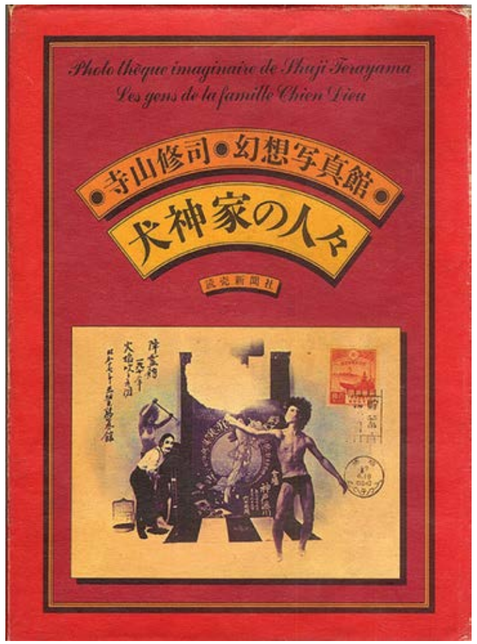


LIA GANGITANO

Interviewed by DEAN DEMPSEY

Lia Gangitano is a doyenne and renegade, pioneering one of the last alternative art spaces in downtown New York. Since 2001, Lia has been the driving force behind Participant Inc., crafting an eclectic program of performances, screenings, exhibitions and critical writings that engage and foster subversive presentation.

Before founding Participant Inc., Lia was curator of Thread Waxing Space, a now defunct alternative gallery and event space in SoHo. As Thread Waxing began to close, plans were already in the works to start Participant Inc. on the Lower East Side. Similar to Thread Waxing, Participant Inc. gives a platform to outsider and underground art with an emphasis on interdisciplinary media.

Alternative art spaces like Participant Inc. serve a vital purpose on individual levels but more importantly to the culturally outcast and to art in general. Their core commitment is to artistic experimentation and inclusiveness. It is a catalyst to artists, curators and writers in realizing sometimes challenging projects that to mainstream and commercial galleries can be, well, hard to swallow.

Participant Inc.'s devotion to creating bottom-up, artist-led, non-commercial exhibitions is a disappearing necessity that Lia strives to keep breathing. Here is some of what she had to say:

So when you moved to New York from Boston you began curating for somewhere called Thread Waxing Space, do tell.
That was an alternative space in SoHo and it existed from 1991 to 2001. I was there for the second half.

What was the program like and what kind of shows did you put up?
When I arrived at Thread Waxing Space it had a strong identity in terms of not only offering artists experimental platforms, but also curators. There was a really interesting history of guest curated and artist curated shows, some of which I think were really influential, but in particular this exhibition by Christian Leigh. He sort of disappeared, literally, but he was a very influential curator in the '90s and all of his shows were roughly based on Alfred Hitchcock, and, in general, borrowed from film theory. In a sense, he was kind of the precursor to the star curator of the late '90s or early 2000s. I don't think his contribution was necessarily what I'm interested in, but he was, for better or for worse, somebody who influenced the art world in kind of a major way. He really changed the way people thought about making exhibitions.

So when I came into working at that space, it was in 1997, and the first exhibition I curated was an exhibition I inherited. Certain relationships were in place that I stepped into. It was an exhibition called *Spectacular Optical* and it was a show that included and was about David Cronenberg, the filmmaker. A relationship was established with his archivist and I spent time in Toronto at the Cinematheque Ontario where all of his early papers and archives were housed. What I found there was completely not what I expected. I had preconceived notions about bodily horror films and B movies and Cronenberg was, at that time, in production for *eXistenZ*, which was almost the late '90s version of *Videodrome*. So that was how I met people in New York. I arrived and had this project to figure out, and in the research phase I understood that I needed to do something unpredictable, not do an exhibition specifically about the body or mutation, or draw from his most obvious themes. Instead I looked at his earlier obsessions, which are totally related, but they had more to do with architecture and issues of corruptibility. I also realized that unlike a lot of filmmakers who were prominent at that time, Cronenberg was very much a kind of literary figure. He didn't study filmmaking specifically, so his early work consisted of manifestos and very arty, bizarre experimental films.

That exhibition was the first time I worked with Lutz Bacher, which became a very important relationship moving forward. It was a very pivotal exhibition for Jeremy Blake, who was an extremely young artist at that time. Also Laura Parnes created an installation within the show, and John Brattin made a film specifically for the exhibition. The connections or interface between cinema and contemporary art were really the baseline of the project.

But going back to Christian Leigh, I was sort of fascinated with his rogue status. He had upset the balance of the contemporary art world, changed the whole structure and nature of exhibition making in a sense, and then disappeared. Mainly because he sort of faked an exhibition at the Venice Biennale and all of the art works were confiscated because none of the bills were paid and artists lost their work, or had to wait many years-- I mean it was basically a scandalous situation. And then poof. He was gone.

You said Christian Leigh disappeared, where did he go?
There have been a couple of articles published about him that are really interesting. The rumor was that initially he went underground, but he was working with Bertolucci on whatever it was he was making at that time. It would have been, I don't know, around the mid '90s. Maybe the span of time is even shorter than it seems, but he was very active for a brief period. So I was still new at Thread Waxing Space and felt very compelled to craft some sort of response to Christian Leigh's concepts of exhibition-making. I thought it would be interesting to curate a show that addressed, almost like a conversational talking back, the residue or aftermath of what Christian Leigh invented.

His exhibitions literally included hundreds of artists, and their names did not appear on the invitation card, it was all about Christian Leigh. His exhibition at Thread Waxing Space in 1993 was titled, *I am the Enunciator*, and the basic takeaway from Hitchcock was that the constellation of artworks all channel back to the curatorial utterance of the director, or in this case Christian Leigh. There was a subservient relationship between the artists' individual works and the totality of his curatorial statement. It was pretty obnoxious, actually, but I think that type of hierarchical relationship in the making of thematic shows still exists; but nobody is really admitting that it's sort of problematic. He was so aggressive about it, that it was easier to accept as some eccentric, wild genius. But now curators do this all the time, as if it's a given and nobody really says, what about the artist? What about the artist's articulation, not the curator's?

That motivated me to choose what I thought was the most opposite cinematic model to make an exhibition, John Cassavetes. I curated an exhibition that basically used Cassavetes' ideas about filmmaking, actors, and emotion -- trying to invert this relationship between the artist and the curator. Meaning, the meaning of the exhibition was basically generated by the actors, or artists, working in some sort of ensemble fashion who have a great deal of agency and voice in the totality of meaning of the project. Also I was really obsessed with Gena Rowlands, John Cassavetes, and Timothy Carey, who became the subject of a much later show, *Dead Flowers*. So this was a really formative project. It was the first time I worked with Ellen Cantor in New York, she made a large scale video projection that bisected the 7,000 square foot space, so you entered and you were confronted by this large scale montage of Cassavetes and Antonioni films, focusing on moments of extreme emotion expressed by women, Monica Vitti, Gena Rowlands—very intense moments. The piece was called *Remember Me*.

The show didn't get tons of attention the way that the Cronenberg exhibition did, but oddly, even though it wasn't overtly stated that this was a call and response with another curator, people really did understand that it represented an engagement with the history of that organization. So that was more the curatorial side, and not to belabor it too much, after those explorations, which I thought were my responsibility to do in the form of a group exhibition, I have to admit that I became totally disinterested in that format. I felt that in that moment, alternative spaces in the neighborhood we were just churning out these large scale group shows based on themes, and that they fostered relationships with artists that were very superficial.

So I really shifted my focus to solo exhibitions produced with artists in that space, and we also started a series of solo exhibitions by experimental film and video artists whose work was meant to be theatrically screened. They were three-day immersive screenings, for example: epic Luther Price screenings on three consecutive days. We did this for Michel Auder, Cecilia Dougherty, and Steve Reinke. We were really interested in how to give a solo show to an artist whose work was generally seen in group screenings or festival situations where you never really get a chance to see a lot of an artist's work all at once. I think it's more common now, but at the time it seemed sort of unusual. We also did small publications for these projects.

So the focus became solo artists or co-productions with artists to make something they had never made, installations like Borre Saethre, who is a Norwegian artist that I met through the International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York. The last exhibition at Thread Waxing Space was Sigalit Landau, an Israeli artist whose work I had seen right before I took the job She had been in Documenta X and the Venice Biennale in 1997 when she was quite young, and I had been pursuing her for all those years. So it took from 1997 to 2001 to make that project happen. It was quite an intensive and amazing experience to say goodbye to the space with this project. Sigalit was living in the space, laboring in this giant vat of sugar where she was making a huge, putrid cotton candy nest, it was the size of the exhibition space.

Julie Tolentino, *For You*, 2005. Installation view, Participant Inc. Photograph by John Berens. Courtesy of Participant Inc.

While I was doing the shut down activities like preparing the programming archives for transfer to CCS -- ours was the first institutional archive that was acquired by the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard, but it has since been transferred to the Smithsonian Archives of American Art -- I was also in the process of starting Participant. A lot of the ideas that formed Participant directly grew out of what we were starting to do at Thread Waxing Space, such as focusing on solo artists and emphasizing artist curated shows. But also Thread Waxing Space had a strong identity, like some people thought it was a club. There was a lot of performance, dance, as well as exhibitions and educational programming, but we were also always a venue for music showcases like CMJ. I think that idea of multiple formats and mediums occurring in the same space—that kind of ethos—is something that carried over to Participant, by not creating hierarchy between mediums. There was no separate theater space or black box, it was like, *just do a rock show in the gallery*.

From early on in the history of Participant, live exhibition formats became very important. It's not unusual for a four to five week exhibition to have its core be a live performance or live video mixing, in the case of Charles Atlas, or making a play, or making a film. And even those concepts are really rooted back in the Cassavetes model—like once you work with an ensemble of actors, you want to keep doing that or keep building on that, whether it's something to be shot on film or a live experience. In my mind, the kind of fantasy of the alternative space is that it sort of functions like making a film. You have all these people working together to make this thing happen and you need this intimate level of collaboration. I think I once compared it to *Beware of a Holy Whore*, the Fassbinder film—it's like a making-of film where you see this whole dysfunctional family trying to get it together to make a movie.

It's not a new practice but so often gallery names are simply the adjoined names of owners or a surname with Contemporary or Projects or Exhibitions tacked to the end, how did you come up with "Participant"?
It's so funny, well, it's not that funny, but there were a couple years at Thread Waxing Space where I was working with Johanna Fateman, who's a writer and musician, right at the time that she and Kathleen Hanna and Sadie Benning were starting the band Le Tigre. I think that both Johanna and I were visiting Sadie in Chicago around the same time and Sadie was making paintings and I was working on a show that she was a part of. Jo was there making samples for the first Le Tigre record with Sadie. Anyway, let's just say that there was a lot of time spent talking about band names, and I sort of think it's the same kind of deal. We would swap ideas or run things by each other and oddly the name Participant came from Jo's email address at the time, which to me sounded right out of a Cronenberg movie, Participant7. Cronenberg would always have these weird, conspiratorial, corporate identities that had names like Spectacular Optical or The House of Skin or Keloid Clinic—I don't know, it just sounded like it came from a Sci-Fi movie. At a certain point I also really wanted to name Participant "Executive Secretary." I think Johanna and I both liked these band names that had these almost fake corporate spins to them or this attraction to the office hutch—it was this kind of a nerd aesthetic of office work, archival work—but the Participant thing just rang so past futuristic, and Executive Secretary, although I like that name, just didn't make as much sense.

As Thread Waxing Space came to a close in 2001 after operating for 10 years, you decided to open Participant. Why open on the Lower East Side and not stay in SoHo? What is it about downtown you are drawn to?
Well, mainly I live here. When I moved to New York in '97 I moved to the Lower East Side. It was a 15-minute walk to SoHo where I worked, but I was also in this neighborhood a lot before I lived here because of music venues, theaters, clubs, bars, etc. There's a million different versions of the history and activity in this neighborhood, from ABC No Rio to Pyramid Club or graffiti writers, you can take your choice of numerous, very rich legacies of art downtown. But before the decision to close Thread Waxing Space occurred, there was a lot of focus on possibly moving that space, a lot of real estate searching had gone on. We had explored every outer borough, neighborhood; Harlem, Long Island City, Williamsburg, the Meat Packing district, Chelsea, Hell's Kitchen. We were looking everywhere. Ultimately that research didn't lead to a continuation of the space, but I had sort of already done it, meaning, I did come kind of close to taking a space in Williamsburg to start Participant, which would have been so crazy and life would have been entirely different. It was like north-side Williamsburg, so weird.

That didn't work out, but the real driving force that ultimately solidified my decision was after the summer of 2001. Thread Waxing Space was cleared out of Broadway, and during that period I was starting to work at home on Ludlow. The business plan for Participant was done, a board had been established, everything was in place or in process, and then 9/11 happened. And that was that. I can't really remember how long I was in lock down. It was a pretty long period of time when mobility in this neighborhood and all of downtown was very limited, there was a great deal of confusion about what was going to happen. We just watched television all the time for weeks, just waiting to see, is someone going to be rescued? When I think about that period of time I think, what were we doing? Oh, we were watching TV, because we had some idea that something good might happen that day. That they would find people. It seems unrealistic now, but in any event, it was a moment of total disillusionment where at the same time as you're thinking why would I even bother doing anything, the opposite feeling creeps in—I have to do this.

So there was all this conflict, which ultimately for me was like, of course, I'm going to do this, this must be done. And then as things went back to "normal," which I'm doing air quotes around because nothing was ever going to be normal again, I realized that I didn't really know how to be in business or function as a business person, which was going to be necessary to get a physical space. You need accountants, you need lawyers, you need insurance, etc. And it wasn't my colleagues in the art world who aided me so much in that way as mentors, it was my friends in the neighborhood, because that's who I would talk to, my friend who had a store or owned a bar. They were the ones who were trying to resume business and they were the ones who helped me figure out certain things. I needed insurance to sign this lease, and basically it was my neighbor who had a store that hooked me up because people were like, "oh, we're not writing insurance policies in Manhattan right now." They just stopped, "too high a risk." Anyway, it took a long period of time to figure this all out, but basically the situation made me really appreciate my own neighborhood, the LES. And I learned that doing things in a community where you belong and you know the guy at the hardware store and the lumberyard really enables you to do things that you wouldn't be able to if you were reliant on some sort of vehicle all the time. If I were trying to do stuff in Williamsburg when I have no real connection there, it would have been a lot harder. So I just embraced the practicality of it because the art legacies of the neighborhood were already so apparent anyway.

What I didn't realize until we were actually up and running was how great it was that people's familiarity with live art or installation was just a given here because the local audience was so used to seeing art all over the street or familiar with the alternative theater scene that was so prominent in this neighborhood in the '80s into the '90s. That stuff is almost all gone now, but there were so many places where people were gathering and doing something, and this was the norm. So the fact that we had this very visible storefront and workspace that you could see from the street, it didn't seem unusual to the people who lived in this neighborhood. It was appreciated, in fact. Spilling onto the street was not a problem. It was just how we do it here. That's changed a lot, obviously.

I know Participant is a non-profit, which largely means you don't rely on sales to operate your dynamic and often unconventional exhibition program, and if you did it might not be the sort of catalyst of outsider thinking it is today. Could you further explain how Participant functions differently than commercial galleries?
There are no sales, I mean, practically no sales. We don't profit from the sale of artwork, it goes to the artists. We produce limited editions, because we're supposed to have earned income outlets, but we encourage exhibiting artists not to be motivated by sales in any way, shape, or form, and I don't think we bear any resemblance to a commercial gallery in that if an artist has something sellable, and we facilitate the sale, the money just goes to the artist. So our funding comes from city, state, once we got a grant from National Endowment for the Arts, but mostly it's from foundations, like the Warhol Foundation, the Lambent Foundation, a number of small family foundations that are related to board members, for example. As far as individual support in general, I would say that our biggest supporters are artists, both as contributors and board members. Artists play a very important role in our survival. I don't really see much correlation between how we function and how commercial galleries function.

This neighborhood, the Lower East Side, has been surviving gentrification for the better part of two decades. The past twelve years of the Bloomberg, or Doomberg Administration has been pretty tough, so what's your strength to stick it out? Why do you endure? Maybe it's not as bad as it appears.
It's pretty bad. I mean, number one, I have a rent-stabilized apartment. I'm never giving that up.

You'll die in that apartment.
Indeed. I could not possibly live in New York if I didn't have that. I'm pretty committed to this neighborhood. I think when you talk about a 16 year span, moving here in 1997, let's say Ludlow Street is a good example—the heroin trade had already migrated, but the transition into a safer neighborhood, that was a slower thing. It was a neighborhood that had this rougher history, but the moments when things get cleaned up can be the most dangerous, with extremes in close proximity, or the illusion of safety. Then later, certain things set in motion by Giuliani were being capitalized upon by Bloomberg, and when the economy took an upturn it was like every one story building in this area was knocked down and much taller buildings started being built. But then, there was a crash and all the construction stopped. All these vacant piles of rubble just stayed that way for several years. I kept thinking initially that it was going to be like the Meat Packing district, which seemed like it was just leveled and built again in two seconds, and now is this weird tourist trap—I mean, how did this happen? Overnight practically. I thought that was what was going on in the early 2000s in this neighborhood, but that economic crash just halted it for several years and now, right now, is when it's starting to become rapid again. I don't know how these things occur. I think it's all sorts of greed and corruption, not appreciating what is good about a place. What happened to Taylor Mead has been happening for decades, the harassing of tenants, trying to make their lives so unpleasant that they'll just voluntarily leave, give up their home. That concept is so antithetical to anyone's survival mechanism. Like why would I leave? People's commitment to this neighborhood means something to them.

As for Participant, it's a real challenge to have a physical space in Manhattan, but it's such a big part of our mission and an asset that we share with artists. I really appreciate all the new models that are emerging, but in a sense, a place for artists to be and work and produce is inherent to what we do.

With New York and downtown always in flux and always changing - a strange, ugly, beautiful living organism - have you noticed your audience changing too? Or is it the same community of people evolving with the space and your vision?
I don't think the art viewing audience on the Lower East Side when there were three galleries and no New Museum has changed that much. Art people go see art, no matter where it is. So when it was just Rivington Arms, Michele Maccarone and Participant, the core art viewing public would come. It didn't really change now that there are zillions of galleries. We've always had a strong contingent of local people, like artists who live in the neighborhood, East Village, Lower East Side, and that is our audience. What changes over time is the community of people that come often, multiple visits a year, and that community has really grown through the artists that we show. Because every artist brings their audience as well, and often those are people who tend to feel at home in this place.

So I would say that the growth is not to do with the growth of the commercial sector in the neighborhood, but just the longevity of the space. It's a cumulative process where people come back. Artists come back because they're interested in the whole platform, not just their own contribution to it. I would say that at any given event or opening there are familiar people and people I'm very close with, but also young people that I haven't met. I think that the tribute screenings that Conrad Ventur organized for Mario Montez were striking, in that there were young people in the audience sitting next to Mario's friends and colleagues. The inter-generationality of the audience was quite moving. It's also how I remember coming to New York. Some of the first people that I met when I moved to Ludlow street were Taylor Mead, René Ricard, and shortly after, Michel Auder. Basically from the minute I arrived, any notion of the Factory as part of the past was debunked. Instead of any premature historicizing of movements or ideas, this neighborhood showed me that this particular history completely overlaps with the present, that's just how it is. And I feel like this is something that occurs at Participant very naturally. And it goes both ways, with the exposure of younger generations. Everybody benefits from the enthusiasm of their peers.

Are there certain artists that you're interested in at the moment?
Umm... yeah. I'm really excited, or interested, or whatever you call it by M. Lamar. We met through a project with Ron Athey called *Gifts of the Spirit*, an automatic writing workshop with Ron. For the culminating performance he invited Little Annie who is also of course amazing to me, on vocals, and M. Lamar on keyboard. I found him so compelling that I started looking at stuff online and then went to his performance at La Mama a couple months ago. I'm really excited by what he's doing. We are planning a future exhibition called *The Negro Antichrist.*

Another project coming up in the not too distant future is an Emily Roysdon exhibition with a performative core, being curated by David Everitt Howe. I'm excited because in the time that Emily's been away from New York, I see that there's been less of a separation between her work in the gallery, work that's two or three dimensional, and performance. The performance piece that she did at The Kitchen was totally mind blowing. But now as time has progressed, I don't really see these two activities as having any separation, so I'm really excited about the project, being a bit seamless between performance and exhibition, and that's just being developed now. In terms of performance, I'm always amazed by Dynasty Handbag and My Barbarian. They're to my mind so integral to how I think about different modes of performance.

What's next for Participant's program in 2014?
I'm about to get on a bus to Revere, Massachusetts to visit Luther Price, an artist I've known since 1986. He's predominantly known as a small-gauge filmmaker. We did a

My Barbarian, *The Night Epi$ode*, 2009. Installation view, Participant Inc. Photograph by Alan Wiener. Courtesy of Participant Inc.

Mr. Fascination, 1999. Installation view: Ellen Cantor, Robert Marshall, Joshua Smith, at Thread Waxing Space. Photograph by John Berens. Courtesy of Participant Inc.

Ron Athey/Julie Tolentino, *Resonate/Obliterate*, 2011. Photograph by Paula Court. Courtesy of Participant Inc.

Ron Athey, Gifts of the Spirit: Automatic Writing, 2013. Photograph Rona Yefman. Courtesy of Participant Inc.

major screening series, but also what might have been his first solo installation in New York around '99 at Thread Waxing Space. Luther was in the last Whitney Biennial and he had the great fortune to not only show these one-of-a-kind 16 mm films in a theatrical setting, but he also showed handmade slides in two locations in the exhibition space. We have been talking for many, many years about revisiting some work that predates his work in film, which is what he's been doing for the past thirty-something years, which were sculptural installations, large scale objects that came before his performance and film work. Luther was shot as a young person and his near death experience and long-term recovery process changed him as an artist. These giant sculptures have been in storage since the '80s. The work will come here in February and Luther will probably be here for around a month doing some restoration, and that show opens on March 2.

Do you have any memorable performances over the past twelve years since you founded Participant? What stands out, if you had to pick two? Maybe it's not a fair question...
Well, there are definitely things that have been formative projects that have really identified the organization or literalized certain aspects of our mission. If I said this is an artist driven organization, what does that mean? I can say that there have been projects such as Julie Tolentino's exhibition/performance, "For You" that had direct ramifications on the way in which we continued moving forward. Certainly being open to Julie's project, which in some way was instigated by Charles Atlas' live video exhibition because it was really about dealing with people and people having to commit to a certain level of engagement to experience a show. People were very willing to do that, so when Julie wanted to do a project, which was a one-on-one performance, meaning, viewers had to make an appointment, they had to show up on time, they had to choose the music, and then they would be guided through a 15 minute experience in which they were alone in a room with the performer, who was at times paying no attention to them, and at times building a real intimate sort of engagement with them. This is a lot to ask of a viewer, but people completely went for it. And it was a very intensive experience, a very singular type of exhibition experience, not something that people were used to doing in a gallery. Julie really made something happen that I for one had not experienced before and I learned a lot in the process from her about what sort of elements are necessary to make that possible, meaning tension, trust, figuring out ways to communicate, not verbally communicating; it was intense and it was very rewarding, so agreeing to that level of engagement with a project, with an artist, with an audience, you don't really want to go backwards after that kind of experience.

We did another project, a 24-hour performance with Julie for that first Performa in 2005, before Performa really became defined. The first one was, for me, the best of performance or something. We did this insane marathon, with Vaginal Davis, Julie Tolentino, Ron Athey and Juliana Snapper, Lovett/Codagnone, Rafael Sanchez, My Barbarian, Luther Price and Katharine Finneran, COUM Transmissions, Breyer P-Orridge (who had just had their first solo show as a merged identity at Participant), Derrick Adams, Charles Atlas and Chris Peck, Suara Welitoff and Thalia Zedek. It was nonstop performance and it was amazing. They're all kind of important to me. Derrick Adam's previous solo exhibition was also like the staging of a performance and began with a performance piece. Vaginal did the Vanessa Beecroft performance in 2005, but really chose not to do performance for the exhibition *HAG—small, contemporary, haggard*, so in a way I thought that exhibition marked a departure, but really, it felt like a performative structure.

We had a whole program of performance for the exhibition *Dead Flowers* that included Marti Domination and Mr. Twinkle, Johanna Constantine, Tabboo! (Stephen Tashjian) and Brandon Olson, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Kembra Pfahler. We did a play with Tabboo! as part of the installation, *The Nightingale*, which was really remarkable. We also did a huge series curated by Carl George of Allied Productions called *One Night Stands* that was organized in conjunction with the Gordon Kurtti Project that included Karen Finley, Hapi Phace, Agosto Machado, Carmelita Tropicana, John Kelly, Linda Simpson, and so many more that revisited a series that happened in the '80s. Of course, Kembra Pfahler just did this amazing cat performance for the Helen Oliver Adelson (HOA) exhibition that was quite something, together on a bill with the legend, Edgar Oliver. Working with Kembra has been a very important part of being here in this location. During *Dead Flowers* we brought some of those performances to Philadelphia, which was also really great. Performance is integral to what we do. When we moved to Houston Street in 2007, we staged a play with Tom Cole and Lovett/Codagnone in the totally gutted, raw space, which was described in the press as 'very pre-Giuliani'.

Is there anything else you want to say? I wanted to ask what are your plans, hopes and fears, but I think we covered all that.
I want heat.

Oh you don't have heat, I was wondering why it was so damn cold in here. When we first met you told me the fascinating story behind Participant's current space on East Houston, could you revisit that for our readers?
It was a carpet store that was a front for drug dealers. There was a huge drug bust in this building around '97, then it became El Mirage, a gay sex club.

An illustrious history.

Tom Cole and Lovett/Codagnone, *Erase, 2007*. A play featuring Jim Fletcher, Stephanie Fischette, and Susan Bowan, costumes by Pleasure Principle. Premiere performance for Performa 07. Photograph by Nicholas Vargelis. Courtesy of Participant Inc.

WORKING THROUGH PERFORMANCE
CASEY JANE ELLISON, ED FORNIELES & YEMENWED

By COURTNEY MALICK

Since we are now forty-something years into the history of performance art, it is rather obvious to discuss the medium as body-centric, time-elapsing, spatially-oriented and generally speaking, for the "here and now." And while there are still performance artists whose work fits this description in ways that continue to be thought provoking, like most things "contemporary," there has also begun within the last ten years or so, an evident split in the road of performance. This split has taken many forms that have lead artists to consider performance as an essential and integral element that is incorporated into their practices, but often in ways that have nothing to do with the body in terms of corporeality, nothing to do with real time or space, and even less to do with an audience that must necessarily be present in the moment. In that sense, such artists are working through the craft of performance, taking the tangibility that performance art initially clung to as a way to thwart the art market, and replacing it with something altogether unfixed, interchangeable and malleable. This is significant because currently what is unfixed is in fact often more relevant to ways audiences relate to art than trying to pin a singular performance to a specific time, place and set of actions.

Such artists, not surprisingly, often use their laptops, iPads and iPhones like studios. Since it is action, characters and dialogue that they take as raw materials, this kind of integrated performance art is wrought through technological systems of modification and communication rather than the performance of the 1970s and '80s that was dependent upon site specificity. From sociology, behavioral studies and the like, we know that performance art is inherently linked to human behavior, as everyone performs to some extent in their daily lives. Therefore, now that so much of our lives are lived virtually, these new directions in performance art are enhanced by and embedded into digital and social circuits such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, Photoshop, etc. Furthermore, such work often emulates or projects the ways in which these kinds of systems (that we at this point take for granted), have reconfigured how we see, communicate, and piece together information within a sped up and ever-shifting set of layered screens at our fingertips.

While many artists in the past may have considered themselves to be installation, new media, video artists or photographers, we continue to see that much of their work shares a backbone of performance that is more about acting and directing than it is about emotion or self expression. Acting is often key, and furthermore, such innovative performance-based artists also adapt the formats of their work to mimic those that are traditionally designated for actors, such as movies, webisodes, soap operas, reality TV, musicals, crime dramas – and even stand up comedy. Such work relies entirely on directors and performers, and their ability to shape-shift. However, it is important to note that through this way of working it's performative crux is often manipulated over and over again to produce various iterations that at times look and function differently from one another while remaining the same in tone and content, creating a conceptual constellation rather than a singular work of art.

Three of such exciting young artists are Casey Jane Ellison, Ed Fornieles (both based in Los Angeles), and the New York based collective Yemenwed. While these three artists' work are clearly distinguishable, they nonetheless speak to one another in a language that has abandoned the visceral root of early performance art in favor of performative and theatrical work that usually involves an initial, somewhat narrative, live action, with or without an audience, that functions more like a rehearsal than a true 'performance,' coupled with any number of video, installation, still image, collage or animated versions, additions or addendums.

Casey Jane Ellison, *It's So Important to Seem Wonderful*, (2012), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

CASEY JANE ELLISON

Ellison is originally from Los Angeles, and after spending some time in New York following art school at the Art Institute of Chicago, she has recently returned to L.A. Over the past few years, her work has progressed into the development of an iconic persona through a variety of media that includes stand-up comedy, 3D animation, holographic photography and robotic representations of herself. Though Ellison has been working in video and animation longer than she has been doing stand-up, she has surprisingly and rather successfully begun to fuse the two, allowing one to inform the other in a loop that allows her practice to take on both live and digital forms. At times the two modes literally overlap, creating a confusing and unusual doubling effect. This occurred during her live stand-up act at MOCA in December 2012, when Ellison, mic in hand, performed the routine she had previously recorded as the audio track that accompanied her video, *It's So Important to Seem Wonderful* (2012), which was screened directly following her performance. *It's So Important…* features an animated, bald, mechanical looking avatar of the artist doing her act with the void of the Internet as her audience.

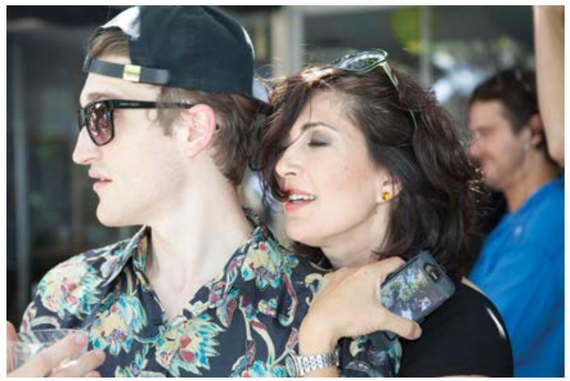
Case Jane Ellison, *Fear of Getting Framed*, (2013-14), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Like many comedians, Ellison's humor often stems from the kinds of dark and self loathing corners of collective consciousness that cause most people to develop weird ticks, habits or addictions. In *It's So Important…* Ellison's robotic (and admittedly tipsy) avatar uses her complaints about her own body and image as the butt of her jokes. She then immediately deflects them off, making her (at times) virtual audience feel as awkward as the scenarios she recounts. In one such anecdote the robot poses a scenario to the audience, wondering if they can relate as she describes, "hating your body so much that you rip framed pictures off the wall and smash them onto the ground, and then take the shattered glass and start stabbing the air."

Like many artists working in this vein, character formation and documentation are fundamental to the development of Ellison's persona. Self-documentation is central to many artists who utilize either their own or a cast of performers' acting as the base for a project and then work off of that footage in various ways. In this sense, documentation becomes a medium in and of itself to a certain extent, and serves as both a major constituent to a work as well as its own referent retrospectively. It is also this initial documentation that allows for so much more experimentation and manipulation of performances through post-production, which is where much of the aesthetic of her work is developed. For Ellison, a project like *It's So Important…* includes an animated video, a recording of one of presumably many takes of that particular stand up routine, and the script for the routine itself, which is also porous in its ability to be re-worked. In this way, the confluence of each of these elements is again, unfixed, and allows for further iterations and interventions.

ED FORNIELES

Born and educated in London, Ed Fornieles recently moved to Los Angeles where he has continued his category-defying practice of fast-paced, young things acting out all kinds of antics and inner-office politics with that all too familiar brand of true-yet-vapid reality TV drama. Fornieles, is clearly fucking with ways that the Internet can disseminate, highlight and perpetuate a particular kind of cloying performativity. Playing out a sitcom via a cast of constructed profiles or "bots" Fornieles' collaborative Internet-performance project with Lucy Chinen, *Maybe New Friends* (2013), was presented in conjunction with American Medium, a "multimedia exhibition platform," and is just one of the many tricks up his sleeve. Fornieles uses such interventions to present the idea of acting out an alternate sense of reality in ways that cleverly slip directly into the lives of those of us communicating and working on approximately 5-10 intersecting digital platforms or networks at any given moment on a minimum of 2 screens/devices simultaneously.



Ed Fornieles, *Pool Party*, (2013), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Maybe New Friends is undeniably a heavily orchestrated performance, yet it takes place exclusively on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Viddy. His character's "bot" "aggregates hundreds of accounts that fit a character profile." Each character is comprised of a mixture of tweets taken from real Twitter accounts that are then coded, aggregated and filtered to create a unified voice. Such ensemble projects that involve casting, scripts, character development, costumes, etc. also contribute to this more theatrical form of performance art that does not distinguish between performance and acting in the clear cut ways that were important at the medium's inception. Instead, projects like *Maybe New Friends* are useful precisely because they confuse such borders.

In Fornieles' most recent video-performance, *Pool Party* (2013), another cast of young, L.A. twenty-somethings come together for the main character, Courtney's, birthday, graduation… it's not quite clear. In any case she is outspoken about her own celebration of herself and the quintessential bitchiness ensues. *Pool Party* is a twenty-four minute video that is the result of over eight hours of taping that Fornieles directed and shot with three camera crews, which are visible in the background of some of the scenes -- only adding to its low-budget, reality TV tone, despite the grainy 8mm, Instagram-inspired film quality filters that were added in post-production. During the party, which is clearly supposed to be fun but is looming with bad vibes from the very beginning, lovers kiss and quarrel, women insult each other and laugh it off, drinks are poured, consumed and re-mixed, and Courtney's oddly young looking, "old Hollywood" attired parents arrive. Soon Courtney's "real Mom," as she is repeatedly referred to, is sneaking to the bathroom to inject her lips and crow's feet with a syringe, a sequence of outfit changes and drug-taking occurs, and eventually an innocent enough girl is ganged upon and slathered in blood. In the end the video, whose title implies a good ole' time, leaves viewers with a sick feeling, like an overdose of narcissism combined with the disturbing long-term effects of reality TV and incessant selfie-taking.

Ed Fornieles, *Pool Party,* (2013), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Yemenwed, *Woman Merges with Car*, (2010), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

YEMENWED

Yemenwed, which includes six core members but can include ten or more collaborators, depending on the project, first formed in 2006. In 2008 they produced their first video, *Episode 3*, whose premise is based on one character's journey through the digitized and enlarged surfaces of one of former founding member, Gloria Maximo's paintings. Yemenwed, more so than Ellison or Fornieles, fully embodies the kind of theatricality with which much recent performance art has been imbued. Through their collectivity, they are able to create entire environments, both actualized and virtual, that incorporate costumes, functioning sets/installations, original scores, lighting, interactive video projections and intricate choreography. While each of their elaborate projects take on different social issues in strikingly abstracted ways, they continue to mirror the complex interconnectivity of social media and technology by weaving live performance documentation with post-production manipulations, that are then re-projected in tandem with later iterations of the same performance. In this way, like so many artists working *through* performance, Yemenwed's end product is often a shifting of contexts with a constant motion and structure set in place by its signature choreography and impeccably designed sets and sculptures.

Yemenwed's ability to stitch together so many interlocking constituents also leaves a great deal of room within their work for the kind of interchangeability that makes these new, unfixed forms of performance art that we are seeing today so intriguing. Through these methods they delve into social issues such as, insiders vs. outsiders in metropolitan cities with their first live performance project, *Bedroom w TV and Woman Lays w Aide* (2009), which takes a sculptural version of the large housing projects in lower Manhattan as its setting. In their next performance, *Woman Merges w Car* (2010), they explore gender roles and a mechanized, futuristic view of femininity. Through their use of post-production manipulations, one of the three videos that represents *Woman Merges w Car,* Yemenwed presents a minimalist, vehicular bathroom and bodily movements that combine grooming and personal hygiene with repetitive, impersonal office duties, through which the three women performers transform from human women into one conglomerate, automated force.

Yemenwed's most recent video, which has not yet been performed live, is titled, *The Source* (2012). Here they hark back to a theatrical shtick that they used in their 2011 performance *No Image,* (which includes versions 1,2 and 3), in which a block of ice, (then a real melting mess, this time a virtually rendered, glimmering cube), is cast as the narrator. In *The Source*, the ice cube jokingly tells his woes of being replaced in other artistic projects by crystals or glaciers. Ice's voice is strangely similar to that of the Chef on South Park, and his tidbits of advice to young artists hoping to "break on through" are about as stereotypical. Interestingly, the video, like much of Yemenwed's work, becomes advertently self-reflexive when Ice begins to talk about his previous experiences collaborating with the collective. In some ways this focus on dialogue is a departure for Yemenwed, whose signature early performances were expressed purely by intensely rehearsed and perfectly timed choreography that was created specifically for their commissioned musical scores. *The Source*, does however also include a fanciful solo dance sequence at both its beginning and end, which is meant to signal the turning on and off of Ice's moment in the spotlight. As always Yemenwed continues to produce real costumes that incorporate unusual items and virtual sets and objects that create an other-worldly environment within which their characters thrive.

Yemenwed, *The Source*, (2013), video still. Courtesy of the artist.

KEMBRA PFAHLER *Performance Art 101*

Interviewed by DEAN DEMPSEY

Kembra and I meet at Remedy Diner around the corner from her place in Alphabet City. Chirstmas music plays overhead as she orders cup after cup of coffee. Always dressed to impress, she's wearing a full body camolflage hunting jumpsuit with coaster-sized glasses that she admits make her see things too clearly.

This is the second time I've interviewed Kembra, the first being at her solo exhibition entitled "Fuck Island" at Particpant, Inc. in September of 2012. She leans forward closely to the recorder, laughing intermittedly as O Holy Night sounds above us in harmonious irony.

Known largely as the lead singer in the glam-punk-future-feminist rock group the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black, Kembra is currently instructing a class from her apartment/studio space entitled "Performance Art 101."

I asked her to tell us more about it...

In Performance Art 101 everyone is accepted, I don't look at anyone's pictures and I don't care if anyone is a sociopath, it doesn't matter. This is a one-on-one class in my apartment, so I had to do no fundraising to build a university campus. In my apartment I have a student lounge, I have student lockers, I have a lunchroom, and I have a workroom. And in the spirit of Availablism, I have developed this very strict vocabulary of images, and share the technique behind the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black, and my performance work, which is also called anti-naturalism; it's also been called extremism—all by me, of course. In 1980 when I started performance, I decided to call my performance work The Manual of Action, which was sort of an invisible book, a dictionary, as it were, of my vocabulary of images. Of course, in 1980 it was a two-page book. I only had a couple of different strong images that I used to project in my performance, one being the egg cracking, and I'm standing on my head cracking the egg in my vulva, that was one of the first pieces I did, and the other one is the bowling ball piece. Those were two of the first things I did.

And now, years later, The Manual of Action has made my career complete. I have a lot of images to share with students on Availablism. My definition of Availablism is making the best use of what's available. It has a basis in finance and commerce, although if there is money available to be used it will be used. It's not a celebration of poverty, but of abundance. It's having the willingness to be an interdisciplinary artist. In my case, performance was about using the available tools that I had, which was my body and one of my first performances, the egg piece, it was having one egg in the refrigerator. It's a training course in how to work with the myriad of tools that are available in our everyday lives. One of the tools that became available to me in 1980 as I was walking down the street and I saw two bowling balls in Gramercy Park. I, for some reason, was compelled to tie them to my feet and try to balance on them and walk on them like shoes. I later got all sorts of affirmations in visual history, a painter Hans Baldung had done etchings of witches with balls tied to the bottoms of their feet. So maybe it was something that had traveled through time and landed in my brain, this image of a woman walking with bowling balls on her feet. Sometimes I sing the theme song to Blade Runner when I'm standing on the bowling balls, and it's really a good time.

Right now I'm just in the process of interviewing the students. It's a one-on-one class and a five to seven day course, depending on the student's availability. I got the idea to do a one-on-one course because I spent the last two years working on a future feminist book with Antony & CocoRosie and Johanna Constantine. We would make a decision to spend a chunk of time together to exclusively work on one idea as a group, and that was the first time I'd ever done that. I found the experience of writing our future feminist tenets so beneficial, and it was as a result of making a decision to spend a concentrated amount of time together, having a dialogue about the work that made it so fruitful. I wanted to use the sort of paradigm that we used with writing the future feminist tenets as the same sort of work structure in Performance Art 101, spending a concentrated amount of time with each student.

John Kelly invited me to speak at his Bard class about performance recently, and I also recently went on tour with CocoRosie, and opened for them. Instead of doing a traditional music act opener, I would go out in front of thousands of people and say, I'm Kembra, and let's do Performance Art 101 together. And people were just going mad for Performance Art 101. We did singing practice with audience members and I walked people through the bowling ball performance. I've also gone to many different universities, like Columbia and NYU, to do performance instruction, but I was hesitant to go into that kind of university lifestyle since I feel like people in New York City, most artists can't even afford to pay their apartments let alone student loans or pay for expensive colleges. I think it's unrealistic, so the school that I founded is a sliding scale program and I'm organizing financial aid for the student artists where I solicit some of the billionaire artists that I know to sponsor the student tuition.

The agenda is very specific, it's to study Availablism, and to bring out of each student their very own vocabulary of images and tools that they can work with after the course. So the next several months I'll just work with the students that have signed up, and we'll together write by way of doing; by way of hitting the ground running and making the best use of what's available; we'll write the core syllabus by way of action, by way of doing it.

I really feel like the technique in the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black, the Availablism is a practice that is extremely contrarian to most other performance work that I've seen. To me, of course, none less valid and none less beautiful. It's just something that I started. And then each student will be interviewed on the area of art work and performance that they want to work on, whether it be directing, working with other people, music, or movement. And if they are interested in working musically with other people I get to play in their band, which I think will be a nice exchange of power dynamic. That we're going to just be working together essentially. I really loved George Kuchar's class at the San Francisco Art Institute. His film class was basically the students made work with him. I was a visiting artist a few times at his class and it was so helpful to me, and a really good experience. So my course is kind of a culmination of all of my experiences in availablism and anti-naturalism over the years, and also taking the best parts from the courses and the artists that I've really grown from, like George.

O Holy Night had devolved into the never ending Little Drummer Boy, and Kembra broke from a long and silent window gaze to end with the following:

You can't change the world if you stick to the same paradigm. You can't do something different, I feel, if you're working in a structure that's a meme, that's a Xerox copy of itself. I just thought that I might be alive for ten or twenty or thirty more years and I want to make sure to share this with people. And it's in a spirit of fun and in a spirit of revolution that I start Performance Art 101. We'll see what happens.

Photograph of Kembra performing by Walter Wlodarczyk.

Kembra Pfahler and Juliana Huxtable at Performance Art 101. Courtesy of the artist.

HOUSE OF LADOSHA

Interviewed by JARRETT EARNEST

BLUE LIP BLACK WITCH-CUNT
The Cult of Juliana Huxtable

Juliana Huxtable and her queer-coven the HOUSE OF LADOSHA are taking New York cultural life by a storm of their own conjuring. Theirs is a cosmic tempest from the future, from another planet that happens to be right now if you want it. Huxtable describes herself as a NUWAUBIAN PRINCESS aka SISTAGURL FROM NIBIRU.

I spoke with writer Kibele Lo who said that meeting Juliana empowered her to transition into the powerful non-binary creature of her wildest dreams. A jeweler showed me astonishing space-queen earrings he designed, saying, "these are inspired by Juliana." Last night someone at a party told me, believe it or not, they know a sculptor working on a life-sized statue of her—"I hope it's marble." All that is to say that Juliana is one of those people you can't explain any other way except that you are just grateful they exist—perhaps the only truly meaningful thing that can be said about anyone or anything. It is as though she is tearing a hole in the world just for her, one that might never exist otherwise.

Being an artist is a way of being in the world, and being is always political. Juliana Huxtable's understanding of that intersection—the aesthetic and political—and of her movement throughout the world make her one of the most important artists I know. This is a fragment of a long conversation we had for a collection of interviews I'm doing with young artists in New York.

When did you first feel like an artist and what do you consider your work now?

I feel that what I'm doing now is slowly pulling off my straightjackets—I still have a lot of them on. Everything that I do at this point is to push myself further and further. I want to get to the point where the high I felt when I first started doing debate - I can feel in front of anyone. And I'm not at that point yet.

It's a weird pastiche of things that I do: writing, sometimes visual work, and performances. One of the things that nightlife has really informed—and the fact that I am *transitioning*—is the creation of a character, and the language and intelligence of how you dress or how you do makeup—questions that can easily be reduced to "fashion" or "style." Being in nightlife as a community there is an intelligence to that, that has really supported and inspired me. I have my Nuwaubian Princess character where I paint myself green and Nuwaubianism is technically classified as a cult, a spin-off of the Nation of Islam and UFO theories—this guy from the South created a religion where he merged the cultural elements and style of the Black Baptist church with the Nation of Islam, weird theories of UFOs and Egyptians and Black people being amphibian creatures originally and all this absurdity. Finding ways to use that to elaborate myself gave me ways to explore my body. Like when I painted myself green—before then I never felt comfortable just "being naked" in public, and when I did I just walked around Bushwick completely topless as this character. I took photos with my friends Hakan Urfalioglu and Christopher Udemezue and I made fantasy collage backgrounds for them.

There's also this Black Christian Guilt, that is something I'm always going to have in my head to deal with. I don't believe in God necessarily but I was raised in the church and I love a lot of the iconography—I love that from no history Black people were able to create these powerful images and narratives. I'm obsessed with Nuwaubianism because I think there's a creative brilliance in it—the paintings, fables and music are beautiful. So finding those moments in culture and religion where I can insert myself allows me to reclaim and feel comfortable in my body but not in a way that is separated from my blackness. Most of what I do visually, and even some of my short fiction, is informed by that impulse.

What is useful about taking something that is going on in nightlife and putting it into an art context?

What is important about it—and this is a question that I dealt with a lot when I was at Bard and continue to grapple with—I feel that there is a straightjacket that a lot of black people specifically—and black people is just where I am speaking from at the time but it could also be queer people or other people of color and different marginalities—feel there are different ways of envisioning it—when you are placed in a context where you are restricted and you are not allowed to enter the aristocratic space.

To think of yourself as a creator, it happens instinctively and almost impulsively. I experienced this a lot when I was at school and in New York in many of the spaces artistic production is showcased or engaged, there is brilliant cultural production that is not credited or given the institutional recognition that it should be. I think that there is a long history to bridge, especially in terms of black art there are certain areas—if we loosely envision a black cultural landscape—there are chunks that have been recognized and have extensive conversations happening around them. But there is also a lot that isn't, and nightlife is an example. When I got to New York I was immediately drawn to nightlife and even those people who were supportive of my endeavors at Bard were questioning what I was doing here as though I was just getting drunk and putting on a look.

I'm actually not. I think there is a lot of very intelligent community-making that happens—people are developing characters with stories and there are legends surrounding people—there are entire traditions that if they are put in the context of other artistic traditions would open up new ways of understanding "dress" for example; new ways of understanding how race and sex exist; how intoxication as a state of mind might be productive; the possibilities of performance. Are there states where the act of creation is simultaneous with how to exist? I think there are moments where that is definitely not happening, but the moments where it seems to happen a lot is bars, clubs, cabarets. There are people who are really pushing new boundaries, even for a single moment for a single night. The characters and, when abstracted, embodied concepts people are creating blow my mind—Black Queens from Ohio, do whatever they need to do just to get to New York just to put on that fucking look and they are playing with race and history and visions of the future all just through ostensibly "just a look." And if that person had the cultural capital to apply for a grant and get a photographer to take portraits of them they would be canonized.

But they are not; because they go to the places and communities that support them. And nightlife is one of those, in the same way that initially debate was a space that I felt comfortable performing, nightlife is that for me now too. I think if there was more of an intentional jamming or overlap between the two—nightlife as art form—there would be new ways of conceptualizing, if not art, than cultural production in all of its forms.

The first thing to do is make people recognize that there is more going on in nightlife beyond a queen and a look, because a queen and a look could be viewed completely differently because it doesn't frame itself as being in conversation with other ideas. I think a lot of it just has to do with framing. There is a lot of documentation of nightlife, but it's not framed as art. When it is written about, it is usually at best as vaguely anthropological. Because it's not seen as valid - cultural people don't apply the same critical standards or acknowledgement.

If you are looking at yourself as a person—you have visions of yourself - you would like to get out in the world. If you are going to use what is at your disposal, you are going to take on dress and presence—that is what you are given. I think it's easy to say, "well someone is just in a look when they could be doing all these other things."

And I say, "Could they? And what would it take and how would they get there?"

It doesn't just happen.

HISTORY (PERIOD PIECE), 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

NUWAUBIAN PRINCESS, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

SAHEJ RAHAL

By COLIN L. FERNANDES, M.D.

It is a striking image: a robed and hooded man, seated and slightly hunched, his stubby fingers resting gently in his lap, his face obscured by an unruly beard constructed of moss. Abstruse and absurd, it is also human, humane and deeply affecting. I first encountered the image in an art review, and immediately knew I wanted to see *The Groom, 2012* in person.

I'd discovered the art of Sahej Rahal while preparing for my trip to Mumbai. Browsing the gallery websites so as to chart an itinerary, I was struck by the cover image on the Chatterjee and Lal Gallery page announcing Rahal's solo show. At once shadowy and luminous, *Tandav III, 2012* depicts a spectral figure encircled by brilliant arcs of light. I was hypnotized.

In the week leading up to my visit, Rahal would resurface many times: in a Time Out Mumbai review [1], Mumbai Boss e-blast [2], and GQ India review [3]. The press clearly loved him; the Mumbai Boss article optimistically proclaimed: "Why Sahej Rahal Could Be The Art World's Next Big Star."

While *Forerunner* was Sahej Rahal's first solo show, he is not a newcomer to the art world, having immersed himself in the art scene since the age of 18 - attending shows, talking to artists and apprenticing with them. One artist in particular – performance artist Nikhil Chopra, who is familiar to Bay Area audiences due to his inclusion in *The Matter Within* exhibition at the YBCA - holds special influence over the Mumbai-based, 25 year-old artist. (Chopra is faculty at Rachana Sansad, the art institute from which Rahal graduated.) Gallerist Mortimer Chatterjee waggishly referred to Rahal as "somewhat of a residency slut," referencing his artist residencies in Zurich (FUTUR), the United Kingdom (Gasworks), New Delhi (Khoj) and Rome (ZegnArt).

Rahal's cross-disciplinary oeuvre encompasses sculpture, performance, and video. His website offers the following artist statement: "I view my body of work as a growing narrative that draws upon mythical beings from different cultures, and brings them into a dialog with the present. Within the narrative, these beings perform absurd acts in derelict corners of the city, transforming them into liminal sites of ritual."[4] Much like Matthew Barney, he is developing a personal mythology, drawing on diverse influences (including Joseph Beuys, Star Wars and Jorge Luis Borges).

Rahal constructs his own costumes, often ideas realized in the extreme: like the overgrown moss-beard (*The Groom, 2012)* or the turban that was so large it obscured his ability to see (*Bhramana II, 2012)*. In an email exchange, he wrote of his fascination with "the seductive nature of ornament, especially the ritualized ornament."[5] Clothed in these fantastical garments, often wielding phallic props like the didgeridoo (*Bhramana II, 2012*) or the light saber constructed from tube lights (*Tandav III, 2012*), Rahal invades urban spaces, performing invented rituals. (By way of explanation, the *Brahmanas* are Hindu commentaries, detailing the correct performance of ritual. *Tandava* is the divine dance performed by Shiva, believed to be the source of the creation- preservation- dissolution cycle; Rahal performed *Tandav III* brandishing tube lights like giant glowsticks.)

As a physician, I've long recognized the power of medical rituals: the litany of questioning; the inspection, palpation, percussion and auscultation; the careful positioning of the human body; its methodical cleansing and draping; the breach of skin drawing blood. There is beauty and elegance inherent in the precision; comfort to be found in the familiarity of repetition. Perhaps this is part of my attraction to Rahal's work: the shared performative and ritualistic aspects of my medical practice and his art.

I visited Chatterjee and Lal Gallery twice – an initial scouting trip, and a second visit to meet Mort Chatterjee and accept delivery of my latest acquisition. I connected instantly with *The Groom, 2012* – I knew its muted colors would work well with my aesthetics; more importantly, I fell under the spell of its mysteriousness and absurdity. It is a picture begging the imposition of a narrative.

The Groom, 2012 traveled back with me, safely shielded in a sturdy cardboard tube. It is currently at the framers. I am considering installing it in my entry alcove: a man in waiting, indeed, "twiddling his fingers" and "letting out a huffing sigh." [5]

Waiting, perhaps, for the arrival of a special guest, or for an unwelcome guest to depart.

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1) http://www.timeoutmumbai.net/art/features/myth-man
2) http://mumbaiboss.com/2013/08/12/a-new-hope-why-sahej-rahal-could-be-the-art-worlds-next-big-star/
3) http://www.gqindia.com/content/bluffer%E2%80%99s-guide-performance-art
4)http://sahejrahal.tumblr.com/about
5) Sahej Rahal. Personal email communications, September 01-04, 2013

The Groom, 2012. Optical digital print, 23.5x16in. Courtesy of the artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

DEAN BLUNT

By JACKIE IM & AARON HARBOUR *Co-Directors of Et al.*

The Redeemer (an excerpt)

One of the most intriguing performances of the year refused to be either a concert or performance art, and we didn't see it live. It involved a microphone, a spotlight and a music track. Dean Blunt's July 19th performance at Artists Space in New York and viewable on Youtube was a radical redefinition of what constituted a live performance.[1] Preceded by over ten minutes of white noise (possibly the sound of rain or a train) in a pitch black gallery, the show "kicked off," if you will, with a loud synth melody as the light slowly rose unveiling a mic stand on a small platform, Blunt pacing, and another man in a suit standing arms-crossed a few feet back.

As the synth melody played, Blunt eventually approached the mic and the beginning chords of "The Pedigree" from his album *The Redeemer* began. As the music for "Dread" began an answering machine message played with a woman's voice: "It's me…look, can you stop calling me…"

There was no band, no instruments, just Blunt, with a black baseball cap tugged low to cover his downcast eyes, pacing and fidgeting, listening to the music with the audience between vocal parts. A commenter on YouTube joked, "The artist is present." But in a sense beyond the obvious reference, presence is indeed what Blunt offers. The performance lacked nearly all the trappings of what is expected of a concert, feeling instead confessional, simultaneously less and more live.

Blunt's strange performance befits his 2013 album *The Redeemer* (and the follow-up *Stone Island*)[2]. Inventively appropriative yet deeply affecting, *The Redeemer* presents a new model of "the personal record." On "The Pedigree," over strings, Blunt's voice quietly, plaintively sings, "For me to get to know you better… there's something I should let you know. To me you're just another lady…" (a simple drum pattern starts) "You're gonna have to let me go." The album outlines a failed relationship and its aftermath. The lyrics recall r&b and folk music, but also how more aggressive genres deal with the political or personal through direct language clouded by volume. It is a cohesive, if roughshod whole. There is rawness to the production throughout, and with a quick "no new messages" recording, the album ends.

That initial string intro, titled "I Run New York" feels cinematic and heartfelt, but a little digging reveals the track is lifted, unaltered, from the beginning of K-Ci & JoJo's "All My Life," a saccharine R&B song from 1998. The angrily yelled "What'm I do now? Huh? It's all fucked up now," occurring midway through the title track is from an odd outburst in a Puff Daddy song; in the original, it seems artificial and tacked on, in *The Redeemer* the same phrase reads as intense, brutally honest expression.[3] The cut-and-paste makeup of the album risks clouding the reading of the music; Nick Neyland in Pitchfork hedges, "Dean Blunt is heartbroken, possibly."

Any attempts at brutal, direct honesty are instantly entangled in the performance and management of identity now so commonplace; the means of offering to an audience a sort of radical sincerity, once the purview of the performance artist, are now widely dispersed, commonplace, and mundane. Blunt places an emphasis on his work being received at face value. "People wonder why nothing is interesting, it's because they try to get a fucking answer to it, to everything."[4] Blunt's practice creates truth precisely by barring or complicating aspects of its inner workings.

In a video on his Youtube page titled "Casting call – Syreeta," a woman reads from a script by Blunt; through poetic language something true emerges: "I ask, I believe, I receive (…) I walk away from that old desperate and dazed love, caught up in the maze of love, the crazy, crazy maze of love… thought it was good, thought it was real, thought it was…"

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1) The full, 40 minute performance is viewable at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSLN1yUzdDc
2) A follow up of sorts to *The Redeemer, Stone Island* was released free while Blunt was in Russia for a performance. Translated from Vulna.afisha.ru: "Almost all of the time spent in Russia, I spent on this record, so I want to, and she remained in Russia, lost in Google translation. Since she was conceived here, let there remain " http://volna.afisha.ru/archive/dean_blunt_stone_island/
3) Hype Williams: do they ever speak the truth? The Guardian, April 5 2012

[above and below] *Dean Blunt, July 19, 2013*, Artists Space Books & Talks. Photograph courtesy of Artists Space, NYC.

HOLLIS FRAMPTON & KERRY TRIBE

By JOSEPH DEL PESCO

For Conjuring a Narrative*

In the first lifetime, a beautiful heiress is born with an immense fortune, and a loving but eccentric father who arranges for her every conscious moment to be filmed, starting with her birth. He establishes a trust for his daughter, with one stipulation that she allow every moment of her life to be documented. She leads a long, varied and passionate life. She travels to the moon where she gives birth to a child, is awarded a Nobel prize for pioneering science research, and is married three times—the third and final being to the cameraman who follows her everywhere. She so saturates her waking hours with lived experiences of every kind that she never once pauses to screen the films of her own expanding past. In extreme old age she writes a will, leaving her fortune to the first child born at the instant of her own death, in the same city, with the single condition that they spend the entirety of their life watching the accumulated films of her own.

Following a brief intermission, the second lifetime starts when the heiress (to her astonishment) is reincarnated as the male child who inherits her own fortune. He emerges from the womb to the projected film of her own, previous, birth. The fortune comes with the condition that each and every moment be spent as a sedentary spectator. Through the accumulated films he receives a quaintly obsolete education from her school days, and watches along as young men court her during adolescence. As the watcher ages he becomes morbidly obese and reclusive, no longer speaking except to occasionally shout "FOCUS!" He relies entirely on the films, and intravenous food and medication to survive. He dies quietly in his sleep the night after he's watched the final film.

Rumors about the bizarre arrangements of these two lifetimes spread through academic channels and a tenacious film historian, after some digging, reveals that during the second lifetime, the obese watcher had hired a team of writers to produce a text. The writers had transcribed each word, listed each movement, and described each location captured in the films of the heiress in extreme detail. The granddaughter of the heiress (the daughter of the child born on the moon) learns of this document and after some legal battles gains control of the rest of the fortune. With it she retains a large and growing pool of actors to perform each character, and hires an army of costume fabricators to remake fashions gone out of style. There are no tickets sold to the living theater, only a schedule of futures dates and locations posted. The anachronistic styles and defunct idioms of two generations ago charm a growing audience of loyal fans. Celebrated as a monumental artwork, it is discussed and written on widely. Video documents of the performance are screened around the world. Just before the heiress reaches middle age it is briefly forgotten, and then celebrated again by the following generation before its conclusion.

* Hollis Frampton opens his essay *A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative*, with a thought experiment involving two lifetimes. I've embellished and edited, and then added a third part. This text is intended as an allegory for Kerry Tribe's performance *Critical Mass*, a live performance of a iconic experimental film by Hollis Frampton.

[Above and below] Kerry Tribe's *Critical Mass*.

TRICIA LAWLESS MURRAY

By JASMINE MOORHEAD *Founder & Director of Krowswork*

The End of the Endgame

In spite of her wide-ranging work, Tricia Lawless Murray's artistic mission is actually very specific: a thorough exploration and re-siting of the feminist body in a geo-psy-chic-historical space. Her art works have taken many forms including performance, sculpture, drawing, collage, video, and most dominantly photography, which she uses simultaneously for its own formal aesthetic qualities as well as a documentary receptacle for her performances. As someone with a background in dance, who also studied art history at Cal Berkeley before years later going on to get her MFA at CCA in 2008, Lawless Murray has always utilized a variety of art forms and engaged specific artists as levers to pry open and uncover her own ontology around this purpose.

Up until the present, the predominant lever for Lawless Murray has been Marcel Duchamp, whose work around gender is well known and yet somehow also undervalued. This aspect of Duchamp's oeuvre may well be the only chess game he left without knowing how the endgame played out, and Lawless Murray has taken it up. Her MFA thesis work, *After Duchamp* [2008], imagined Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* [1915–23] as a performative sculpture, whose power structure was subverted by her role as the chocolate grinder, a many-tubed carousel of both scatological and orgasmic release. A more recent series from 2012, titled *The Sea Folded Its Layers Around Her*, echoed and answered Duchamp's last work, *Étant Donnés*, or *Given*[1946–66], a life-sized diorama featuring a hairless female mannequin in a kitschy wooded scene by a waterfall, which can only be seen through a couple of small peepholes in large wood door. Comprising self-portraits mixed with collages from 1950s to 1970s-era magazine scenes, presented by themselves or in peephole boxes, Lawless Murray's series features her own body as a lithe stand-in for Duchamp's mannequin. She emphasizes a playful and soft eroticism, imbuing her work with a life force, which is almost completely absent in that of Duchamp's. Whereas Duchamp's mannequin is positioned physically apart from the waterfall, Lawless Murray's figure lies in the feminine water, "being held by the sea, psychologically," as she has described. This shift into life is significant both for Lawless Murray personally and art historically. There is a warm, yellow light around the figures in that series that we now can understand as a signal of the quiet emergence of a new energy and direction, as well as a shift in the tide of the match. Perhaps it is not the endgame after all.

First, consider a piece consisting of five photographs of 2013, which she titled *Non-Objectivity Drew Me Forth*. In these, having taken her fill of water and been renewed by it, she emerges in the desert. She photographs herself as a latter-day Annie Oakley (1860–1926), a genius markswoman and star member for many years of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, who was known as "Little Sure Shot."An early feminist, Oakley believed that women should know how to defend themselves.

In this work, Lawless Murray has photographed herself in the desert shooting a shotgun at an unseen target. Naked and abstracted, she is the Duchamp mannequin come fully to life. In each segment of the piece, the artist has framed different geometric shapes of transparent hues of yellow, blue, or violet around the photographs. At first glance this seems merely to be an attempt to architecturally position the photo frame, but the title of the work clues us into her larger intentions here. In the previous Duchamp-influenced series and in a transition work also of 2013 titled *You Ain't Going Nowhere*, she had subtly engaged the triangle, both the shape signifying the vagina and its fulcrum of the empty space between the legs. Now, in *Nonobjectivity Drew Me Forth*, this triangle is starting to form a protective glow around her in these works, suggesting a spiritual light that serves to philosophically position the figure and her action.

This piece in fact signifies the true beginning of Lawless Murray's integration of a new focus in her work, that of Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), a contemporary of Oakley's, though a continent away in Sweden. In her lifetime, Klint was known for her landscape paintings, but working in secret she was making perhaps the first truly abstract art. She created bold, slightly off-kilter geometric forms, drawing heavily on the teachings of Theosophy, which emphasized the spiritual nature of form and its relationship to the cosmos and esoteric knowledge.

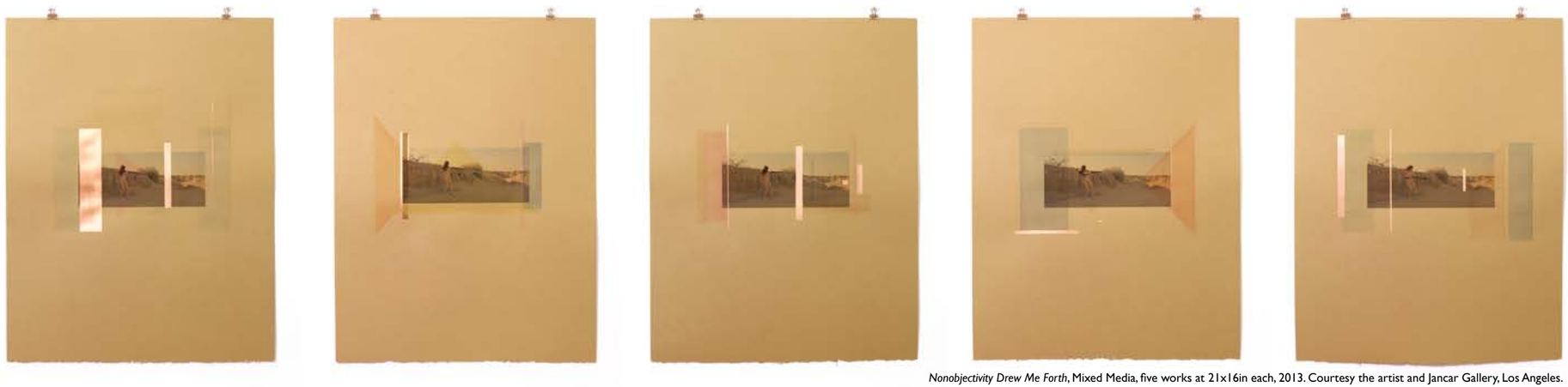
Lawless Murray grew up in Point Loma, CA, where one of the main American branches of Theosophy was located. Headed by Katherine Tingley, this theosophical group created the first Greek-style amphitheater in the United States and invited performance as a way toward spiritual connection. Lawless Murray, as young girl, was exposed to the ideas of Theosophy through one of Tinglely's modern day adherents. Although Lawless Murray's attraction to Hilma af Klint ultimately derives from a shared aesthetic goal, Klint's experiences with theosophy piqued her curiosity.

Lawless Murray's current project titled *Establishing Equilibrium* is an ambitious 21st-century exploration of these overlaps of performance, geometric abstraction, and a search for esoteric knowledge—correspondences that were much more clear 100 years ago in Hilma af Klint's era but were obscured and subdivided by much of twentieth century art and the critical language around it. She is melding the spiritually infused geometric forms of Hilma af Klint while re-engaging with a performance by David Askevold (1940–2008) called *Taming Expansion* (1971).

Existing only in print, as a description of the work and diagrams, Askevold's piece called for six performers standing equidistant from one another around a circle formed by the points of a six-pointed star. Each performer held a branch out to a coiled mass of snakes in the circle's center in order to "tame" them. According to Askevold, whom his student Mike Kelley once admiringly described as "a difficult conceptualist," the performance was set up and then thwarted by the fact that one of the participants was bitten and in the ensuing melee the film was destroyed. (According to other sources the performance never actually took place.)

Regardless, in *Establishing Equilibrium*, Lawless Murray now brings a very different intention to the forms of the circle and the star composed of intersecting triangles. No longer content with the spectacle of postmodern conceptual performance, Lawless Murray is seeking grounding and enlightenment by reuniting the conceptual with the esoteric, blending a lineage that goes back hundreds if not thousands of years, threading back through to a time when ritual and art, spirit and body, mind and cosmos were one. This is potentially the end of Duchamp's endgame, one he, perhaps, in his all-knowing way, deliberately set us on a path away from, but to which happily now, Tricia Lawless Murray has returned.

Establishing Equilibrium (in process), document of performance painting, 2013. Courtesy the artist and Jancar Gallery.



Nonobjectivity Drew Me Forth, Mixed Media, five works at 21x16in each, 2013. Courtesy the artist and Jancar Gallery, Los Angeles.

VAGINAL DAVIS

By DEAN DEMPSEY

I was first introduced to Vaginal Davis' work at Participant Inc. last year in New York for her solo show called "HAG-small, contemporary, haggard," a reference to an LA-born subset of the Queercore movement from the 1980's. A self-proclaimed "woman trapped in the body of a woman" and the queen bee of intersex and outsider art, this gender-fucker has been a rebel-rouser and performance artist for over three decades, consistently pushing the envelope and redefining herself within transgressive cultural production.

Her name pays homage to revolutionary author Angela Davis, whose criticisms of patriarchy and capitalist white power structures run parallel with Vaginal's performance and writings.

Fun Fact: Ms.Vaginal first established international attention with her tabloid Shrimp, "the magazine for licking and sucking bigger and better feet." Gross! Yes!

There is an undeniable sense of humor to Vaginal Davis' work, and I love that about her. Now based in Berlin, I asked Vaginal to give us some background on what she does, who she is and where it's all coming from. Here is the prose she fed me.

I am known primarily as a performance artist but I see myself more as a visual artist who uses performance as one of the many tools in my arsenal of effects. I really don't like to be pigeonholed as one thing or the other. It's bad enough to be an underclass outsider artist. When you aren't upper middle class you become erased, so I am very sensitive to any kind of labeling as a way of devaluing and positioning me as less than less than zero.

I've often said that when I perform I don't think in terms of entertaining anyone. If someone does find my performance work entertaining that is purely by accident. I have never been interested in making work that is polished and slick. If you want that, go to Blue Man Group, STOMP or a revival of Cats or Joseph and the Amazing Technicolored Dream Coat or whatever that musical was called. People from the mainstream have always been trying to give me advice on how I can break out of the underground and become more accepted to get parts on stupid TV or in Hollywood movies, like that is my goal. That's why it's so wonderful living out of the USA. I have been based in Berlin, Germany since 2006 and having lived so long as an expat I could never see myself living back in America. The only thing I miss about my birth city of Los Angeles is the lovely winter light and the delicious Mexican and Central American food. Not being in the shadow of the mainstream industrial entertainment complex is a major blessing.

I grew up in a lesbian, separatist, feminist household with no men allowed. I was raised in a total female driven society, pure utopia and my mother was the leader of a group of powerful women who broke all the rules and were literally fighting with weapons to establish a feminist state somewhere in Palestine. It's a long story that I have to go into at another sitting, but it's things like that, which have had a profound shape on my art as life. There is no separation. I am a woman trapped in the body of a woman.

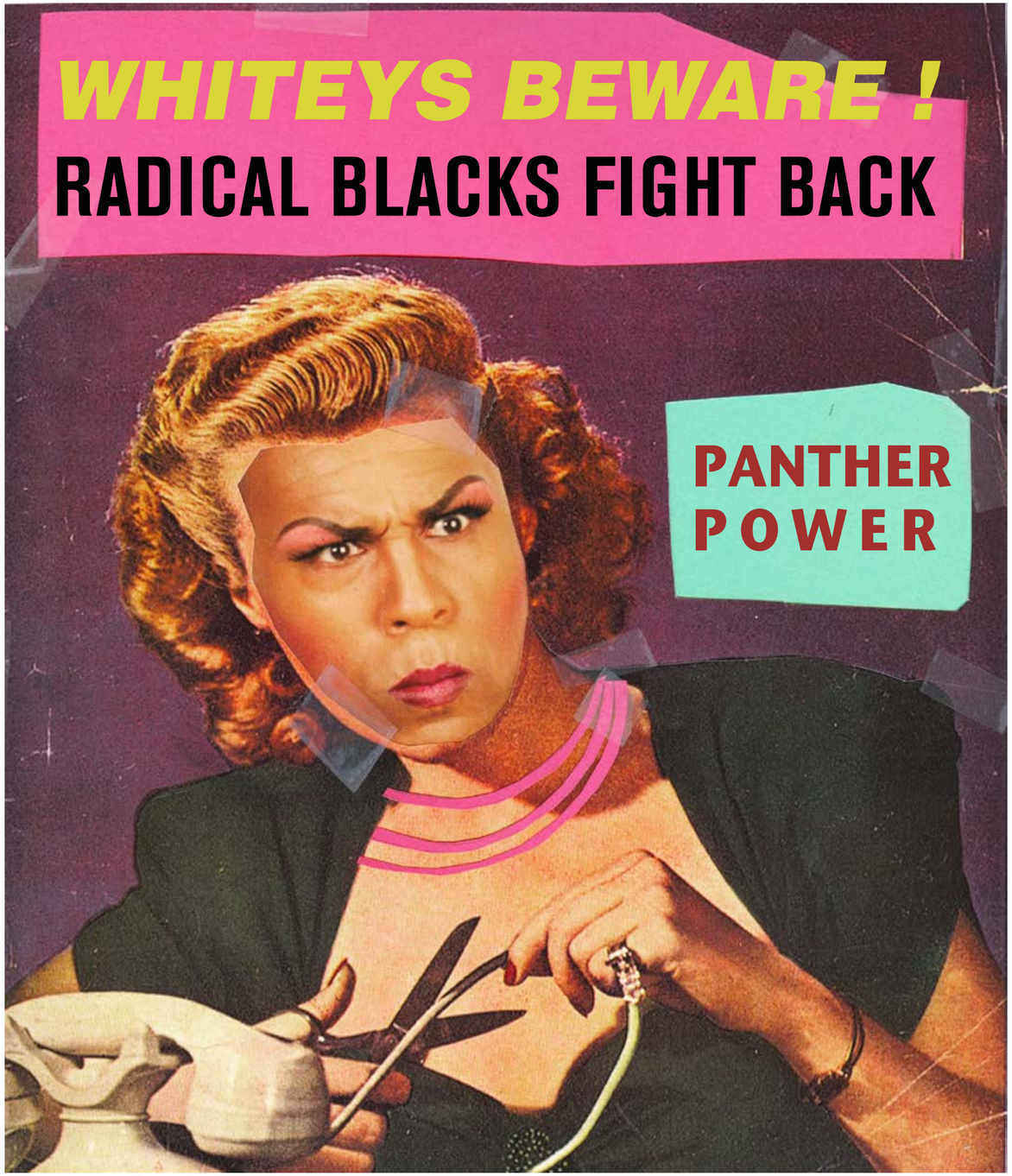
Performance art isn't for sissies. I have been at it since I was a tween and pretty much doing things the exact same way, so I have developed devotees in a grass roots-like manner, very painstakingly slow. I am all about resistance to the boutique city life and rejection of icky, danger capitalism. I live very simply and frugally. I try to keep myself out of jail, as I am very Madame Defarge/Madame Mao. When I take off my earrings I am ready to beat someone down who excludes or disrespects me; so in that light I am very much an identify artist in that I will knock fools in the head if they rub me the wrong way. I am not proud of my violent urges but I can't ignore them either, so if a curator or art institution tries to take advantage of me or rip me off, beware! If I have to go to prison, so be it. At least a woman like me can get really good penis in the penitentiary. Artsy-fartsy types of men are lousy in the sack. The only kind of men who do it for me in bed are criminals and thugs. They know how to hit that spot and appreciate these fat binockers, bullet nips and hefty rump cakes. Yowza!

I believe strongly in the DBD: Doing-By-Doing approach to life and art. So when I moved to Berlin in 2006, I already had an infrastructure built up because I was part of an art collective called CHEAP that was established in 2001 by American film historian, Marc Siegel, his girlfriend, the classically trained intermedia East German actress and director Susanne Sachsse, and Marc's boyfriend, the Scandinavian-Muslim translator to the stars, Daniel Hendrickson. Our first project was a performance piece called CHEAP Jewelry, inspired by the genius of filmmaker and performance artist Jack Smith and the legendary Brazilian film and singing star Carmen Miranda. This piece galvanized the music, art and theatre scenes in Berlin and opened up a lot of people's eyes to a certain way of presenting challenging work.

In Berlin I am most proud of curating a long running monthly performative film event called "Rising Stars, Falling Stars", which takes place at Arsenal-Institute for Film and Video and also working under my fabulous, feminist, genius of a boss Stefanie Schulte Strathaus, who created the Forum Expanded experimental section of the Berlinale International Film Festival and is one of the most respected film curators and programmers in the world. I have also been teaching regularly at art schools and universities, like Malmo Art Academy in Malmo, Sweden and Goethe Universitat in Frankfurt, Germany. I'm never going to have any children of my own so I get my mother instincts fed through teaching and mentoring. My breastage can feed dying nations. One of my current projects re-imagines a relationship between Chinese-American, golden-era Hollywood actress, Anna May Wong and Lucia Joyce, dancer daughter of James Joyce. This piece that I won't perform in but will just stage, will travel to several museums throughout Asia in the 2016-17 season. I will also participate this year in the "Big Girls Against God" event at MoMa with Bianca of CocoRosie, Kembra Pfahler and others. In 2015, I have this commission piece for Performa where I will stage an akshunist version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute."

When I first started out performing and making my weird art I wasn't even a tweenager. I was just doing what felt right organically and I didn't care who was interested in it. I was doing it just for me and my own amusement. The gay scene was assimilationist, even back then, so they didn't offer me much encouragement. If it wasn't for the punk scene I wouldn't have had a place to experiment and get some traction. I was introduced to punk by my cousin, Carla Duplantier, who was the out lesbian drummer of the early LA punk band, The Controllers. Of course the punk scene later turned out to be very conventional like the gay scene, but in different ways, so I started Queercore with other likeminded idiots who were gay and straight as a goof. All these oddballs who didn't fit in anywhere. Who knew that it would turn into this whole nutters movement, and that I would even still be around in a new century? I guess if you just don't die you wind up being eventually recognized. The secret is staying alive.

…and that's all she wrote.



Communist Bigamist, Two Love Stories, a performance collaboration between Susanne Sachsse and Vaginal Davis, 2011. Poster designed by Nebojsa Tabacki. Courtesy of the artist.

MELISSA WYMAN

By GLEN HELFAND

The mind body split is particularly pronounced in contemporary art. We are encouraged to use the clean white walls of a gallery space to give any experience a critical contrast, a zone to rethink the ordinary—drinking beer, eating curry, binge viewing trashy television shows. We can stand at a metaphorical distance and process, putting a hand to the chin to ponder our interactions with lowbrow appetites. It's a process with cultural value, though one with distancing side effects. Too often an artist, trained to anticipate theoretical weakness, can be overtaken by a crippling self-consciousness, while viewers who grow to mistrust their instincts in reaction to a piece, or are free of implication.

Those of us steeped in that sense of critical distance perhaps yearn for art experiences that tip to the other side and offer a bundled array of input: a sense of exhilaration and endorphins along with the artistic aims. Melissa Wyman's work fits that bill in her ability to address interpersonal interactions in a physical manner. Her subject is how we as humans might productively negotiate conflict. Informed by graduate art school curriculum—she got her MFA in Social Practice from California College of the Arts in 2008—along with extensive training and practice in jiu-jitsu (the Japanese and Brazilian varieties), Tai Chi, and mixed martial arts—her practice brings together interactive performance, therapy, drawing, video, and installation.

Her projects have employed intimate interaction and group dynamics. With her 2008 *Fight Therapy* project she supervised training and wrestling sessions between two individuals negotiating various sorts of relationship concerns, a piece that is perhaps the most directly reflecting a therapeutic component of her subject. (She's published book on the topic, *Fight Therapy: A Discussion about Agency, Art and the Reverse Triangle Choke*, available on Amazon.com.) She's tapped in to the audience-galvanizing effects of spectator sports by organizing public matches such as the staged art school battle, *Art vs. Craft*, 2008, in which a weaver duked it out with a conceptualist, and the 2009 *Spring Play*, in which Wyman wrestled her husband, a diplomat, as part of a public arts festival in South Korea.

Her more recent project, *Collaborative Combative Drawing*, operates in a charged middle ground where multiple matches happen simultaneously, and result in dually rendered works on paper that fully acknowledge the idea that collaboration is literally messy. If you elect to participate, and I highly recommend that you do, you'd be wise to suit-up in workout wear as you'll sweat and depending on your drawing medium, will get dirty. This evolving project, which has presented at various venues since 2012, begins with a training workshop in self-defense techniques, and wrestling holds and how to maneuver from them. A period of drawing follows—each participant in a pair selects an animal to articulate on a large piece of paper with a line dividing the center. A leisurely amount of time is allotted to sketch the body of the beast. But after that period of calm, the time-frame radically shrinks and each participant is charged with drawing the head on the other side of the line, with their opponent doing the same. Both attempt to block the other from realizing their animal's face.

At this point the project clicks into raucous athletic mode. The room is activated by grunts, squeals and laughter as creative energy mixes with full-fledged aggression. Wyman orchestrates a moment of catharsis and exhilaration that may come as a surprise to anyone who thought they were a calm, cool, collected art viewer. The best of the drawings reveal an expressionistic energy at the intersection of primal energies, though as in the most effective relational works, the takeaway is an eye-opening sense of surprise and the memory of an exquisite, mind/body endorphin high you've been able to share with others.

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www.melissawyman.info

Animal: Collaborative Combative Drawing at Southern Exposure on November 9th, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.

VIAF International Performance Festival in Seoul, South Korea, Spring 2009. Courtesy of the artist.

DYNASTY HANDBAG

By KARA Q. SMITH

"When it's time to do the right thing, I like to do the wrong thing," croons Dynasty Handbag on the first track of her recently released album "Cosmic Surgery."

Accompanied by electronic sounds and reverberations, the song is recited like improv-style spoken-word (think Lydia Lunch), or what she refers to as "depressive black metal." The end of the song lures the listener in with sexual-sounding mantras, are these supposed to be sexual? Or are we just trained to be pervy listeners, consuming provocative narratives the only way we know how?

Conceptually, consumption is a theme throughout the album, from material goods to how we consume sounds and messages, and it can be very hard to follow. This is Dynasty Handbag's jam.

The alter ego of Jibz Cameron, Dynasty Handbag is a New York-based performance artist that Cameron has been developing for over ten years. Embracing comedy, theatricality, and haptic-ness, she typically appears clad in some sort of leotard, donning disheveled hair and wild colored makeup that looks as if it has been frantically applied, smeared across her face. While the narratives and personas of her performance vary, Dynasty Handbag always appears visibly awkward, clumsy, and often distraught, yet she always manages to finesse the viewer's relationship to her as a performer, often by rejecting the audience completely. Still, each time feels like a new experience.

I am reminded of Gertrude Stein's "Composition as Explanation" (1925) where she writes on the relation of art and beauty to acceptance: "Of course it is wonderfully beautiful, only when it is still a thing irritating, annoying, stimulating, then all quality of beauty is denied to it."[1] Through rejection, denial, and personification, Dynasty Handbag complicates status quo tropes surrounding beauty, and it's beautiful.

In her performance *Brothers and Sisters and Motherfuckers* (2010), Dynasty Handbag hosts a holiday family dinner and performs as each of the family members which embody a dysfunctional group of kin, each member with their own stereotypes (e.g. the snobby high-maintenance sister). It's comedic, but there is a deeper connection: we all have family so we know this shit is real. Do we laugh at ourselves as we laugh at her performance? In *Eternal Quadrangle* (2011), Dynasty Handbag is on a dating show, and she performs the voices for her eccentric array of potential suitors (which includes a stuffed animal and a disembodied brain) in front of a live audience. Each "bachelor" has his own lure, for instance, the golfer looks great on paper and fits properly into a heteronormative structure of what a proper suitor should do and say. In the end, Dynasty Handbag chooses none of them, wondering if these are her only options. Here rejection is the ultimate freedom.

I'm particularly obsessed with a video of Dynasty Handbag performing "Santa Baby" at a theater in New York City in December of 2012. In the video, she is dressed in a metallic jacket with tights as pants, here, with the crotch area oddly emphasized, almost as if they were on inside out. She improvises and modifies the holiday song, wailing, and screeching. She rolls around on stage, legs spread. The song is about desire: a sexualized cry for material goods, with immaterial emotional undertones.

Prominently, a listener hears the following in her refrains: I NEED A DADDY… I WANT A BABY…A BOOPY BOOPY BOOP….I'M A BABY…YOU'RE A DADDY… the song goes on. It's absurd and bewitching.

Through embodying the woman delivering the song, interspersed with made up lyrics, it's hard to tell if this is mockery or provocation, or if these assessments even need to be made. Perhaps this is just a better version of the old classic, which can be read as capitalism wrapped in a melody. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Judith Halberstam poses the concept of "low theory" which is a process of discovering alternative perceptions to conventional notions of success and society, which includes being taken seriously.

Halberstam writes, "Being taken seriously means missing out on the chance to be frivolous, promiscuous, and irrelevant."[2]

In my opinion, "Santa Baby" is an embodiment of Halberstam's hypothesis. Dynasty Handbag performances and songs embrace comedy and failure as a different version of success. Her consistent frantic-ness is the message.

1) Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation," 1925. http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/238702
2) Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 6.

View Dynasty Handbag's work at www.dynastyhandbag.com and listen to her album "Cosmic Surgery" at dynastyhandbag.bandcamp.com

Photograph by Ves Pitts, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

Santa Baby (still from performance), 2012. Courtesy the Artist.

Photograph by Allison Michael Orenstein. Courtesy of the artist.

Talk My Language: LISA RYBOVICH CRALLÉ, CHRISTOPHER FÜLLEMANN & BAILEY HIKAWA

By SARAH HOTCHKISS

Given two months to create an entirely new body of work for "Beatnik Meteors," di Rosa's inaugural exhibition under new curator Amy Owen, artists Lisa Rybovich Crallé, Christopher Füllemann and Bailey Hikawa approached the challenge with gusto. When the show opened in November 2013, an entire landscape of sculptural pieces dotted the di Rosa's Gatehouse Gallery, collectively titled *Talk My Language*. From monumental canvas-wrapped wooden armatures to backpack-like constructions, the three artists produced a variety of incredibly tactile, brightly colored, interactive objects.

From the beginning of their collaboration, the end goal was to invite a small group of performers to activate the objects through loosely choreographed movements. During the opening reception for "Beatnik Meteors," the performers, outfitted in an assortment of studio materials styled by Esra Canoğullari, caressed, draped themselves against and variously responded to the sculptures, using them as props in both senses of the word. The fluent and visually stirring outcome of *Talk My Language* makes it difficult to believe it was the group's first collaboration.

During our interview just one month later, the artists referred to "my studio" and "our studio" interchangeably, seamlessly moving between their individual and collective identities. Their adjoining spaces in a cavernous West Oakland warehouse were perfectly suited to the large-scale realization of their shared interest in (according to Füllemann) "painting slash sculpture that wants to be performance."

"Being more than one person is amazing," he asserted. "The beauty of the collaboration is that you can make something that you wouldn't be able to make yourself." Beginning with 2D sketches and small sculptural models, their working process was part show, part tell. According to Crallé, "A lot of it was trial by error. It was very verbal, but also a lot of physically manipulating things."

The artists struck a balance between careful planning, intuitive gesture and group decision-making. They borrowed materials from their individual repertoires and learned to treat surfaces in new ways. Working from a portfolio of source images, they rotated through their studios at a frenzied pace. Crallé pointed to a large scrap pile in one half of her studio: the residue of rejected elements, failed experiments and entire sculptures that didn't make the cut.

While performative possibilities constantly at the back of their minds, Hikawa noted their main priority was always the formal object before them. Füllemann elaborated, "You can tell the sculpture has this desire to be activated. We didn't want it to be obvious by making objects for performances."

Though a few of the performers came from Craigslist and SF Casting, most were known to Crallé, Füllemann and Hikawa prior to "Beatnik Meteors." They encouraged the performers – many artists with their own practices – to respond to the sculptures in their own terms. "The direction we gave left room for the performers to create their own structure or their own rules within the framework," Hikawa said.

One group of three young women rolled languidly across the floor. Another performer systematically tapped golf tees into a wall. Without a starting or ending time, the performances appeared to the crowd as inherent elements of the installation – confusing and mesmerizing elements that challenged the audience to reevaluate their own relationship to the sculptures throughout the space.

Crallé reveled in the uncertainty it created, "I got great feedback from somebody at the opening… seeing people acting so weird but also naturally, doing regular movements, but doing them at a sculpture or with a sculpture was so strange that it released something for him." Instead of obeying the agreed-upon protocols for engaging with artwork, the performers wrote their own rules.

Will they continue to collaborate? "Why not?" answered Füllemann. For Crallé, their partnership changed the way she relates to her own work – she looks forward to returning to the fruitful group dynamic on occasion. And for Hikawa the experience of "boundary crossover in real life" brought up exciting questions of remix culture, ownership and ego.

Talk My Language is a cohesive body of work even without performers present, but by ceding their proprietary rights to outside activators, Crallé, Füllemann and Hikawa create truly collaborative works in which audience, performer, artist and artwork are all actors within a new and dynamic environment for artistic engagement.

Talk My Language is on view at di Rosa in Napa, California through February 9th, 2014. "Beatnik Meteors" features work by Paul Clipson, Lisa Rybovich Crallé, Chris Duncan, Christopher Füllemann and Bailey Hikawa. Additional events on January 16 (Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco) and January 18 (di Rosa) involve live performances.

Talk My Language, activated by Scotty Slade. Dimensions variable, varied materials. 2013. Courtesy of the artists.

Talk My Language, activated by Wilder Alison. Dimensions variable, varied materials. 2013. Courtesy of the artists.

Talk My Language, activated by Mara Poliak, Sara Pritchard, and Mary Alachman. Dimensions variable, varied materials, 2013. Courtesy of di Rosa, photograph by Israel Valencia.

Talk My Language, activated by Jonah Susskind. Dimensions variable, varied materials, 2013. Courtesy of the artists.

Talk My Language, activated by Esteban Partida. Dimensions variable, varied materials, 2013. Courtesy of the artists.

ALYSON SHOTZ

By KATHAN BROWN *Founder of Crown Point Press*

When Alyson Shotz first visited Crown Point Press in early 2013, she was engaged in creating a 56-foot-long commissioned sculpture in the Li Ka Shing Center for Learning and Knowledge at Stanford University, a few miles from San Francisco. The sculpture takes the form of a "glimmering, undulating lattice [that] appears lightweight and ephemeral—like a scaffold made of dragonfly wings" according to the press release.

It is truly beautiful; it hangs in the lobby ceiling and is covered in a material that reflects light in iridescent colors.

The title of the sculpture is *Three Fold*. Shotz folded a single form in three different ways to design the work. When she arrived at Crown Point Press, she had the idea of folding in her mind.

Here, rather than folding by using a 3-D computer program as she does in planning her sculpture, Shotz began by folding paper. At some point she folded paper that was freshly printed in colors similar to those that bounce off her essentially colorless sculpture. When she ran that folded sheet through the press, the ink transferred in different densities depending on the folds. The next step was to make plates that would hold ink in the densities printed by the folded papers.

Shotz sees *Sequent*, her portfolio of five prints, as one work in five parts, each part more complex than the previous one. Although backgrounds remain stable, the folds in the foregrounds increase exponentially. Each image adds a new color while retaining the colors previously used.

The small prints in *Sequent*, the portfolio, served as tests for *Sequent II*. Shotz and the printers used the same procedures for both groups, but the *Sequent II* plates, somewhat more than two feet square, are approximately double the size of the portfolio prints. At first the colors were also the same. But then Shotz had a brilliant idea: print everything in one color. She started with a red from the earlier prints and ended lightening it to pink. The four images have from three to five plates each, and the ink is all the same. The variations in tone come from varying depths bitten into the plates to match the varying layers of paper folds.

Forty-one years ago in 1972, Dorothea Rockburne made a series of magnificent folded prints at Crown Point Press. They were printed folded and then unfolded for presentation. They are titled *Locus* and are part of her series called, "Drawing Which Makes Itself." These are earth-bound works. Shotz admired them before beginning her two *Sequent* series, which (in the pink version, at least) are gossamer. I remember Rockburne talking at the time about the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty, and of body experience. Recently (in *The Brooklyn Rail*) she wrote that in the 1970s she was engaged with "the topological premise of neighborhoods, borders and parameters."

Shotz, much younger, is using parameters of light and air and weightlessness—which are, perhaps, not parameters at all. Both Rockburne and Shotz employed the formal mechanism of a folded sheet of paper and the medium of etching, but in the time that separates their projects at Crown Point Press, the world changed.

Good artists make art that holds a kernel of its time.

Alyson Shotz, "*Sequent*", 2013. A portfolio of five color aquatints with collagraph embossing. 13¾ x 13¾", edition 20. Published by Crown Point Press.

Alyson Shotz, "*Sequent IIb*", 2013. Color aquatint with collagraph embossing. 30¼ x 29¾", edition 10. Published by Crown Point Press.

CY MORGAN

By JARRETT EARNEST

To be only an intermediary between the uncultivated ground and the ploughed field, between the data of a problem and the solution, between the blank page and the poem, between the starving beggar and the beggar who has been fed. – Simone Weil

Grace exists in-between. It is always "in relation to." From one person or thing to another. There is a profoundly personal form of gracefulness I admire. You can see it in the way someone puts away dishes or greets a friend at a party, which is to say, grace discloses itself idiosyncratically, both spatially and socially.

Trying to detail the universal qualities of gracefulness is stupid because that is a religious idea. Instead, lets look at specific and unusual grace in some recent sculptures by Cy Morgan at Ferro Strouse Gallery in Brooklyn, New York. *Propping Corner Object A* (2013) is just a foot off the ground, so you might walk right by. It consists of a wooden square—red-orange with a hole in its center—and a whitewashed length of a branch, bark still clinging to it. The horizontal plane is wedged into the corner, propped up by the stick slanting from the ground up through the hole. It is all held together by balance—each part shows the ways it is dependent on each other, and on the walls and floor.

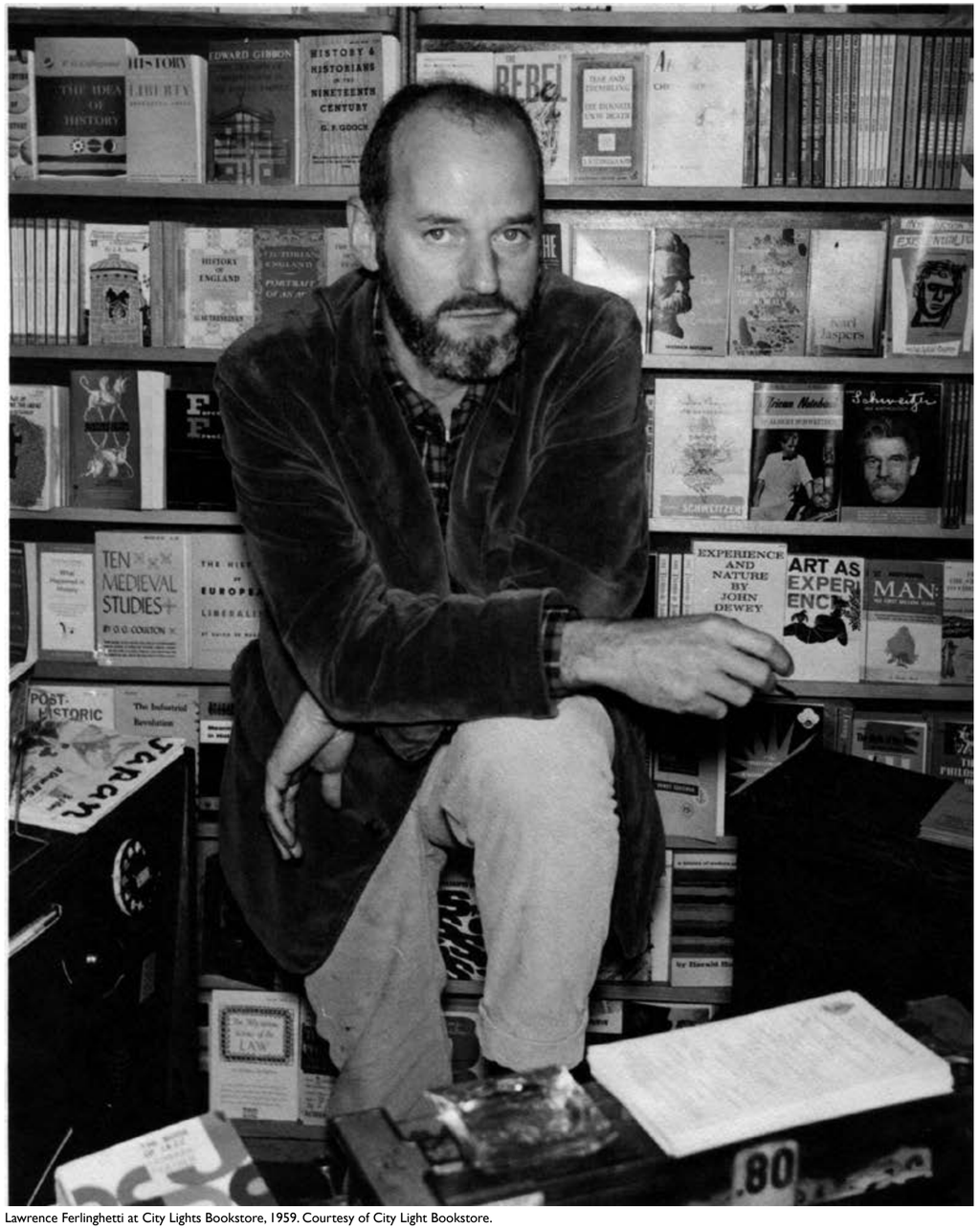
Of course grace has been thematized since Ancient Greece in *The Three Graces*, a group of harmonically intertwined figures. Rodin pushed this further with *The Three Shades*—identical casts of the same sculpture, pivoting in an arc—though undeniably different from their slightly shifted vantages. In Morgan's *Standing Wall Group With Shelf A (graces)* (2013), he unraveled bits of heavy rope into three parts, dipped them in plaster and balanced them ever so. They are individual but also parts of a whole. Seen in a group they feel like dancing.

The way these works delight is in how the materials touch each other. In *Projecting Submerged Collage A* (2013), rusted metal pieces and a shining ring are overlapped and suspended in clear but bubbled paraffin wax. This layer is a gravitational field: it creates their relationship but also makes you feel their contingency—at a high temperature the wax will soften and allow the metal pieces to tumble out of the picture plane and onto the ground. Morgan's sculptures are about getting these things to stand up, to stick together—to have special kinds of relationships. All of them share a tender sense of balance, an unpretentious awkwardness that pushes through to his own kind of grace.

Propping Corner Object A, 2013. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI PART 1 OF 4

Interviewed by JOHN HELD, JR.



Lawrence Ferlinghetti at City Lights Bookstore, 1959. Courtesy of City Light Bookstore.

I'd like to talk to you today about your painting, rather than your poetry or publishing, which receives the bulk of attention directed to you. I don't know of any painter who had a more difficult childhood than you. I don't know how deeply you want to discuss this, but I wonder how it impacted your development as a painter?
Well, it would take a book to answer that. I've got a project going now, which I'll probably never finish. The book would be called, "Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man," which would pretty much cover your question. But I don't know. I don't think there's really anything specific that would apply to painting.

After several setbacks in childhood, you found yourself in the midst of a wealthy family, due to your aunt taking a job as a housekeeper.
No. She wasn't a housekeeper. She was a French tutor for the daughter in that family. In other words, she was the French governess.

At some point she disappeared.
I went back to France with her before she disappeared, when I was only about three or four years old. I stayed long enough to learn the language. When I got to the Sorbonne after the Second World War, I had the accent but had only baby vocabulary. I was in the graduate school and I really had to work my butt off, because everything was in French, including the soutenance. Do you know what that is? The soutenance is to uphold your thesis in public in one of those beautiful Renaissance lecture halls at the Sorbonne, with three professors sitting jury on the stage, and you facing them and the audience behind you. I was more afraid in making a mistake in French than in what I was talking about, because I knew more about American poetry than they did. I could just about say anything I wanted to about it, Walt Whitman, for instance, or Edna St. Vincent Millay. So, actually it happened - my oldest friend in the world, George Whitman, who just died four years ago now- he came to the soutenance. He didn't have his bookstore yet. He didn't have Shakespeare and Company. I'm talking about 1948. I think he started Shakespeare and Company in about 1950. It turned out those academics - this is before the 1960s revolution when the students revolted against the antiquated system and the antiquated teaching methods – everything was so boring for those professors – here comes this guy from America who's spouting off about poetry they'd never heard of, and it got quite lively. I got through the soutenance.

There's a great story about this, which I wish you would relate. You were doing quite well during the thesis defense and then a lull occurred and the tide seemed to shift, and you gave them a great quote about translation.
Where did you read this?

It was in the Neeli Cherkovski biography [Doubleday & Company, 1979].
Today I'd be murdered by women's lib. I was just quoting a famous French author, someone like Balzac, who said, "A translation is like a woman. When she is beautiful, she is not faithful. When she is faithful, she is not beautiful."

It's a great quote, and quite perceptive about the art of translation.
Well, I'd rather not noise that quote around these days. I'd be murdered by my fellow editors at City Lights.

Well, it helped break the ice for you during your thesis presentation.
It got a big laugh from the three professors, because they weren't used to any levity or wit.

George Whitman was the most important American bookseller in Europe, so it's very interesting that your lives were so intertwined.
Have you been there to Shakespeare and Company?

I was there in 1978, and had the pleasure of being taken up to his apartment over the shop, which I considered a great honor.
I was going to graduate school at Columbia in 1946, and his sister was in the graduate Philosophy Department. I met her there and when I went to Paris, she gave me George's address.

He was one of the first people you met in Paris.
The first. His was the only address I had, and he was living in a third-class hotel, the Hotel de Suez on the boulevard Saint-Michel. Really a dump. He had a room about ten feet by ten feet, and it was stacked up to the ceiling with books on three walls, and George was in the middle in an old broken down easy chair making his dinner over a can of sterno. Sterno was a can of fluid you would buy and light it with a match. It was what bums used…

They used to drink it. It had alcohol in it.
George was selling books out of his hotel room. So, that was the idea when I got to San Francisco – I thought of having a used bookstore like George's. But unfortunately, just then, in 1953, what became known as the paperback revolution, just took over the book industry. Up until then, there were no quality paperbacks, just cheap thrillers, some science fiction and murder mysteries. The big publishers in New York started publishing quality fiction in paperback, and there was no place to buy these books, because they were only merchandise on newsstands. So, that's where City Lights rushed in. We were the first ones…We're on the wrong subject now. We're suppose to be on art.

It's good background. You met Peter Martin, and you stumbled into this when you saw him opening up a bookstore.
You know who he was?

He edited Beatitude, didn't he?
No. No. Beatitude came along long after he left. He had a little magazine called City Lights, which was the first pop culture magazine that I ever saw. He published the first Pauline Kael film criticism. He graduated from Berkeley about 1950, maybe. Pauline Kael was one of his contemporaries, and she went on KPFA, and then she became famous at the New Yorker. The main thing about Peter was he only stuck around for a year. He got divorced and moved to New York. He was the son of Carlo Tresca. You know who that was?

He was a Communist that was assassinated, right?
He was an anarchist. Assassinated on the streets of New York. Probably by the mafia. We had this anarchist background for the bookstore. I was getting my anarchism from Kenneth Rexroth on his weekly programs at KPFA.

Can I just go back to New York City before we get to San Francisco? You did your Master's thesis at Columbia University. It was on the critic John Ruskin commenting on the work of the painter J. M. W. Turner.
It was Ruskin on Turner. Ruskin wrote a series of volumes called Modern Painters, and it was all pointed toward Turner. The whole thesis of the series was that there was no light in the paintings until he got to Turner, and then suddenly light burst on the canvas. I was in the Columbia Library and found the Kelmscott Editions of Modern Painters by Ruskin. Quarto size, beautiful books printed by the Kelmscott Press around the 1890s in England. Full reproductions of all of Turner's works.

He was almost an Abstract Expressionist in certain works.
The last show I saw of Turner's works at the Tate Gallery, almost twenty years ago, was totally – no figuration left. The whole room, a huge room, was nothing but pure light – just canvases with light and no figuration in the paintings, or hardly any. Extraordinary.

The interesting thing is that you were writing about a writer and a painter, and later on, you would replicate that in your own life. Although the thesis we were talking about at the Sorbonne was specifically about poetry and the city, and didn't have anything to do with painting. But while you were in Paris, in addition to attending the Sorbonne, you were attending the Académie Julian.
Well, I was in and out of there. I wasn't registered in the school. I was just going to their open studio. For about two francs, you could draw from the model. It was great. Well, we did get to the art.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but when you did move to San Francisco, you lived in the old studio of Hassel Smith [the painter then teaching at the California School of Fine Arts]?
Oh, you couldn't live there. He had just moved out. He was just rejecting figurative painting and becoming a totally abstract – non-objective - painter. I make a distinction

between abstract and non-objective. Abstract is still an abstraction of an actual physical object, whereas non-objective doesn't begin with an abstraction. New York Abstract Expressionism is actually a misnomer, because they were doing non-objective painting. It was one of their principle grounds that they weren't basing it on anything that existed, but it was a totally new, novel creation every painting.

You were doing art criticism for Art Digest around this time.
Hubert Crehan was a painter living in Berkeley, and he was the West Coast editor of Art Digest. He got me to do a monthly column, and it happened that the Anton Refregier murals were in the post office – the Rincon Annex at the foot of Mission Street, about one block from the Embarcadero – and they're still there. Because what happened was that the American Legion or some other organization wanted to get rid of them, said they were not obscene but defamed American history. Actually, the murals depicted white men beating up Indians and killing them and so forth. I wrote a column defending the murals, and eventually they weren't taken down, so they're still there. Refregier was evidently a Communist, and that was a strike against him, and they wanted to get rid of him and his murals.

What other things did you write about for Arts Digest?
I also did a review of Jay DeFeo. I was brand new in town. I didn't know anybody in the art world. So, I could say anything I wanted to without offending my friends, because I didn't have any friends in the art world. I wrote that looking at one of her paintings, I didn't know whether she painted it or backed into it. And she never forgave me for that. Twenty-five years latter I met her at some party, and she really brought it up. *(laughs)*

That was a good way to meet artists and get to know the art scene in San Francisco – for better or worse.
It's too bad Kenneth Baker [San Francisco Chronicle art critic] can't commit himself more. In particular, he wouldn't make a statement like that. In fact, we're wondering at Krevsky Gallery, where is Kenneth Baker? He's never reviewed a show at the Krevsky's gallery, and he's been there for twenty years. There was a very important show curated by Peter Selz at the Meridian Gallery about a year ago. It was really an important show, and Baker didn't review it.

I reviewed it. That was an incredible show. It had yourself, Jack Hirschman…I believe the name of the show was "The Painted Word," if I remember correctly. Robert Duncan was in the show. The person who really impressed me, aside from yourself, was Kenneth Patchen. Patchen's work was really unbelievable. Did you attended salons with Patchen?
He didn't go to parties or salons. We published two of his books of poetry, and we had a publication party at City Lights, but he never showed up. He was only living three blocks away.

Did you ever attend the salons hosted by Duncan and Jess, by the way?
No. I went to Kenneth Rexroth's Friday night soirees, and Duncan was often there. Generally, I stay away from discussion groups of any kind. At Rexroth's you just went and listened. He had encyclopedic knowledge. When I first went there, I had just arrived in town, and I was totally awed by his range of knowledge. Later, I realized how much of it was… he had a way of letting you know that he knew all about whatever the subject was. *(laughs)*. Many times he made up things and exaggerated things, but there was a huge amount of knowledge there. It was extraordinary what he could come up with.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Battle with the Image*, 1956. Oil on canvas, 46-3/4 x 34-1/2 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and George Krevsky Gallery.

But he would say things like, "Oh yeah, I met Oscar Wilde when he came through San Francisco." Well, you look up the facts and you find out that Wilde was here around 1910 or 12, and Rexroth would have been two years old near Chicago. *(laughs)*. He had an autobiography published by Doubleday, and Doubleday insisted it be called an autobiographical novel. There were so many doubtful truths in there. But, he was an old Wobblie and you could get great anarchist arguing points from him. He could make you believe that anarchism was a possible way to run society. Which was quite possible back when he was still alive in 1960, but today the population of America has doubled since that time, and so what was possible with a small population, like the 19th century, is (now) impossible to manage that many people on anarchist principles.

Anarchism was one of your first "coming of age" educations, wasn't it? Previous to that you had been an Eagle Scout. And when you were still in the Navy, you witnessed the effects of the bombing of Nagasaki only weeks afterwards. That also had a profound effect on your thinking.
Well, I didn't know it at the time, but years later I started saying that seeing the devastation in Nagasaki about six weeks after the bomb was dropped made me an instant pacifist. That was kind of an exaggeration, because I don't remember consciously thinking anything like that at the time. I was still a good all-American boy. So, it was only after I came out here under the influence of Rexroth and started thinking things like if the Japanese were white skinned, we would have never dropped the bomb.

THE POETIC CITY THAT WAS

The painter, who thought he was Stephan Dedalus in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* setting forth to articulate the uncreated conscience of his race, saw San Francisco for the first time from the deck of the Oakland ferry some fifty years ago.

He had come overland by coach train from New York, having left Barcelona just a few weeks before. He'd been in Spain for several years on the G.I. Bill, learning the language and attending art school. And someone there had told him that San Francisco was the most European city, the most Italian city, the most polyglot city, the most bohemian city in America, except for Greenwich Village. He had no inclination to return to the heartless stone canyons of Manhattan where the art establishment seemed as entrenched as in Europe with no footholds offered to the young and unknown. And anyway, being a red wine addict, he was attracted by the rumor of San Francisco as the center of the only real wine region in the United States. "All those dagos," someone had told him, "They're not going anywhere where you can't grow wine." That was enough for him, and to hell with the rest of wineless America.

Fifty years ago the city seemed an ideal place for a poet and artist to live, especially one who considered himself a kind of expatriate. Hew as to learn much later how so many poets and artists in America increasingly saw themselves as expatriates in their own country, a country in which the "subjective," or the "inner self," was increasingly under attack in a ravenous consumer society. In fact, Henry Miler had prophesied it all in his *The Air Conditioned Nightmare*, written upon his shocked return to the U.S. after many years in France. "Another breed of men has taken over," quoth Henry, or words to that effect. Greed would be king, but that wasn't evident in 1950s San Francisco, as our anti-hero prepared to land on the Barbary Coast.

Approaching the Ferry Building, he stood on deck and saw a small shining white city, looking rather like Tunis seen from seaward, a Mediterranean city, with small white houses on hillsides, brilliant in January sunshine. Near the Ferry Building there were some larger, mostly white buildings that he later learned to call "highrises" — not really qualifying as skyscrapers by New York standards. And their clean sharp shadows had the look of early morning, though it was already past noon. It seemed an early morning city, rising up the hills, the air itself flashing with sunlight — that special San Francisco January light, so different from the pearly light of Paris beloved by painters.

He was the first off the ferry, with no idea where to go, except up. The city rose up before him as he started up Market Street, his sea bag over his shoulder, paint box underarm, still wearing his Basque beret.

He walked and walked and walked that day, and got the impression that the natives had a kind of island mentality, considering themselves San Franciscans first, on an island which wasn't necessarily a part of the United States. He felt right at home from the first. It seemed as ideal as any city could be for an artist or writer, perhaps like Athens at the height of Greek culture, or Dublin at the time of the Irish Renaissance — a city small enough for human conviviality and large enough for intense creative ferment, with a metropolitan sensibility.

It took him some time to discover North Beach, the Italian and bohemian center of the city. But in a few days he found a big sunny flat for sixty-five dollars a month and a huge painting studio for twenty-nine dollars. There was no electricity above the ground floor, and he had a pot-bellied stove for heat. There was a whole new school of poets brewing, and there were pioneering artists around the School of Fine Arts who later became famous as San Francisco Figurative painters and abstract expressionists. It was the last frontier, and they were dancing on the edge of the world.

Fifty years later, he awoke one fine morning like Rip Van Winkle and found himself again with his sea bag on his shoulder, looking for anywhere he could live and work. The new owners of his old flat now wanted $2500 a month, and his studio was $3000 plus. Many of his friends were also evicted, and it seemed their buildings weren't owned by San Franciscans anymore but by faceless investors with venture capital. Corporate monoculture had wiped out any unique sense of place, turning the "island-city" into an artistic theme-park, without artists. And he was on the street.

-Lawrence Ferlinghetti
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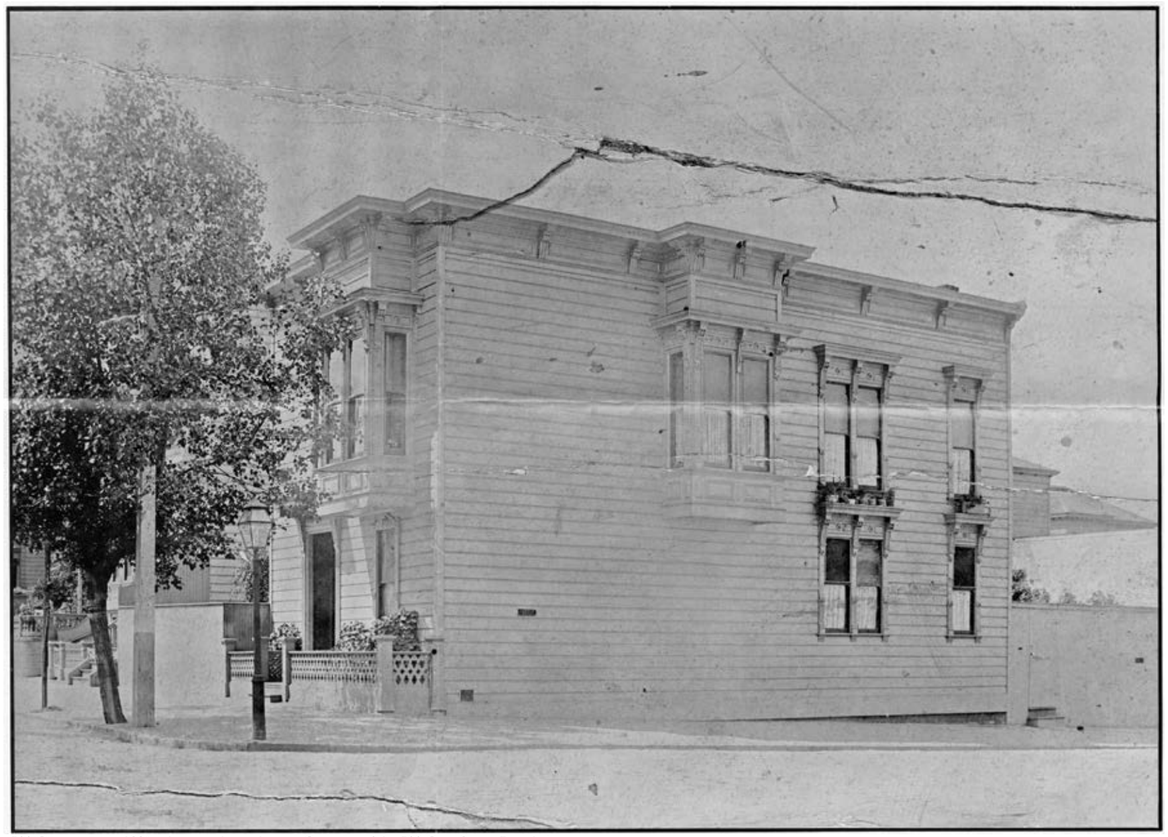
CARLIE WILMANS

DIRECTOR OF THE PHYLLIS C. WATTIS FOUNDATION & 500 CAPP STREET FOUNDATION

Interviewed by CONSTANCE LEWALLEN



500 Capp street in 1886, photographer unknown. Courtesy of the 500 Capp Street Foundation.

I want to start with you some biographical questions. I know that you were born and raised near San Diego. Where exactly?
In a community called Rancho Santa Fe, in North County, inland from Del Mar and Solano Beach.

You spent your entire childhood there?
Until sixth grade. My parents bought a cattle ranch southeast of Hollister, outside of King City, and we commuted back and forth between San Diego and the ranch. When I graduated from eighth grade, my parents decided to live at the ranch full time. I was sent to boarding school in Virginia for one year, then came home for one semester of high school near the ranch in King City, and then back to boarding school in Virginia for the remainder of high school.

I know you majored in Art History at Sonoma State, since you were in my class (laughter), and then went to the University of Texas, Austin, to further your studies in art history. What was your area of concentration?
Pre-Columbian art.

I didn't know that was an interest of yours.
It wasn't, initially. When I applied to graduate school, I planned on studying contemporary art. After I submitted all my applications, my mother invited me to go to Belize with her on a trip sponsored by the California Academy of Sciences led by Richard Hanson, an archeologist who was excavating a large Mayan site in Guatemala. I knew nothing of the Maya until then, but I became so intrigued I put it in the back of my head that I might want to study Pre-Columbian art.

When I received my acceptance letters – I was accepted at my three top choices – UC Santa Barbara, University of Texas, and Boston University – I looked for one that had both a strong program in contemporary and Pre-Columbian; the University of Texas had both. The faculty included Richard Schiff in contemporary and Linda Henderson, the Duchamp expert. Linda Schele, who had passed away just before I arrived, established their Pre-Columbian program.

She was one of the premier epigraphers and iconographers. In fact she made almost all of the drawings of monuments and glyphs in any book on the Maya. In my first semester I took a Pre-Columbian course and a course in contemporary art. I was one of fourteen graduate students, and twelve were studying contemporary art. I felt that there was a lot of work to be done in Pre-Colombian, so that's what I decided to do.

Are you still involved in Pre-Columbian art?
After I left Texas, got married, and left the University, I was no longer in the community, and once you leave the community it's hard to keep up. So I've lost my Mayan. I am afraid I can't read it anymore. But I can still read the dates and do the calendar.

David Ireland working on 500 Capp st. circa 1980. Courtesy of the 500 Capp Street Foundation.

That's impressive. I took a course in Pre-Columbian when I was in graduate school at Columbia, but I was never at that level.
It's not that I am not interested. I just became so involved with the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, which focuses on new and contemporary arts, that it has left me little time to keep up with my Mayan interests. I did enjoy the Olmec exhibition at the DeYoung a few years ago!

To continue, I know you are the granddaughter of that great philanthropist, Phyllis Wattis. Was she on your father or mother's side?
She was my mother's mother.

I can't say I knew your grandmother, except casually, but of course I knew of and admired her, and she supported the Matrix program when I was running it at the UC Berkeley Art Museum. I understand how she must have been a great role model.
She was. When I was at Sonoma – I commuted from Mill Valley – I condensed all my classes to Monday through Thursday. Pretty much every Thursday evening, except when I was in your class on Thursday evenings, I would come into the city and have dinner with my grandmother at her apartment.

Which wasn't far from where you are living now.
No, just about six blocks from my house; my mom lives there now. I would come in often and have dinner and, especially when I was taking your class, we would talk about contemporary art. She would ask what I learned that week; I would tell her which artists we discussed; she would ask what I thought about this artist or that artist, and I would say, "Oh my God, he or she is the greatest," or, "Oh no, I don't know about that one."

And very often we agreed. It was a lot of fun.

What was so amazing about her was that even when she was quite old, it seemed she never lost her enthusiasm or curiosity. That should be a lesson to us all.
Absolutely. I believe her forward thinking and curiosity about what was new contributed to her longevity.

I'm sure.
Toward the end of her life she wasn't in great physical shape. She had several knee replacements and had lost most of her hearing and eyesight, but she still had her mind, which kept her going. I always admired that.

One of the stories I like to tell about her is the day before she passed away in 2002. I was here in the city with my husband, and we went to visit her in the hospital. She held my hand and asked who I was, because she couldn't see, I answered "It's Carlie," and she said, "Oh, Carlie, have you seen my new painting?" And then she fell back asleep.

That was the last thing she said to me. We drove back to our house in Tahoe, and the next day she passed away. Later, when we all gathered at her apartment, I saw the new painting, which was Ed Ruscha's "Noise." I looked at it and started crying and thought, "That makes such sense."

I remember reading once that her favorite rock group was The Police.

(Laughter)

It could have been The Police or Pink Floyd. When you would ask her what she wanted for Christmas, she would say, "Give me the latest rock album, I want to hear what's new, what all you young people are listening to." You know, she didn't start collecting art until she was in her sixties, because my grandfather was not a fan of modern or contemporary art. He thought contemporary artists were con artists.

They were philanthropic, however.
Yes, they gave to the symphony, the opera, ballet, and the Academy of Sciences.

You have followed in her footsteps in your strong support of the arts community here. Which institutions do you support privately now?
I have been on the board of California College of Art since 2006. The way that happened is Ann Hatch called me one day out of the blue, and said, "Would you like to take a walk with me?"

I agreed, though I wasn't sure what she wanted. During our walk at Crissy Field, Ann asked me about the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, which was established after my grandmother's death, and told me her story, about how when she was young a foundation fell into her lap. I started to see Ann as my mentor. And it wasn't long after that, she invited me to join the board, which was fortuitous. Not only does CCA have the Wattis Institute, which was named after my grandmother, but when I went to the Oakland campus to have lunch with the then-President of the school, Michael Roth in 2006, I pulled into the parking spot they designated for me, looked up and saw a plaque with the name of the building in front of me, which was Nahl Hall.

On my father's side, my great-great uncle was Charles Christian Nahl; his brother was Arthur Nahl, and his son Perham Nahl was one of the founders of CCA.

I am also on the board of SFMOMA.

So you have connections with the school on both sides. Are you involved in other Bay Area arts organizations?
I used to be on the San Francisco Ballet Auxiliary, but I am no longer.

And American Conservatory Theater?
I served on the board from early 2005; I just resigned.

And, of course, you direct the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation. Tell me a little about that?
My grandmother passed away in June 2002, and a couple of months later I received a call from my cousin Paul who said, "We need to get started on this foundation." I was standing in my kitchen in Tahoe and said, "I have no idea what you are talking about."

Only then I was let in on the fact that my grandmother had set aside a certain amount of money to establish the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, and its only mandate was, "to support the arts in the Bay Area."

Years before she died she famously gave away much of her fortune to institutions she had been supporting.
That's a wonderful story. She and my grandfather had established a small foundation in the 1950s, and it grew over time to be quite large. In 1988 my grandmother decided to liquidate the foundation. Without telling anybody she started cutting checks, very large checks, to Stanford, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), the UC Berkeley Art Museum, and other organizations. She mailed them on a Thursday and they were received on the following Monday–out of the blue.

Some organizations got five million dollars, some a million dollars. That was the way she liked to do things. She liked to be a little under the radar, but to make a big impact.

Your foundation is devoted to supporting art in the Bay Area, maybe not at the five million dollar level.

(Laughter)

No.

I know you cover a range of organizations, not just visual arts.
We support a dance companies, theater companies, music presentations, visual arts and occasionally film organizations, such as the San Francisco Film Society and San Francisco Cinematheque.

I understand that your grants tend to be around ten thousand dollars.
The maximum grant is fifty thousand. Very rarely do we actually give that amount. They average about twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars.

That can make a huge difference to a nonprofit.
We don't give to any organization that has a budget of greater than five million dollars. For example, we don't give to the Ballet or the Opera. We made a conscious decision to give where it would have more impact.

You are also known for supporting organizations that are experimental and encourage innovation.
We like to follow donor intent. And although my grandmother gave on a much larger scale, she was a maverick and supported cutting edge, challenging work. One of the examples I often give is her support of San Francisco Opera's, "Dead Man Walking."

She invited me to her apartment, turned on the tape recorder, and played Jake Heggie's music. When she asked my opinion, I said I thought it was great. This was an example of her willingness to support a work that dealt with issues that were not reflective of her political views, because she knew it was challenging and important. In the process, however, it ended up changing her belief system. It's an example of how art can effect change if you are willing to embrace the challenge.

How do you feel about the arts community in San Francisco? Do you see it growing in spite of sky-high real-estate costs that are making it difficult for artists and arts organizations to find survive here?
It's tough. I do see the real-estate situation being a big problem. A lot of artists leave the area not only for that reason, but also, and this is not to target anyone in particular, because, despite the fact that there are a lot of major collectors in San Francisco, I don't see them collecting Bay Area artists. It's potentially detrimental to our community, because artists are moving to Los Angeles, not necessarily New York anymore, but to Berlin, London, Tokyo, or other major art centers.

There's a wealth of creative history and art education here. So many students come to the Bay Area to study art at CCA or the San Francisco Art Institute, or Mills, or Berkeley, but then they often leave. It's really frustrating. Pardon me for digressing a little, but to make the point, when Jens Hoffmann came on from the Institute of Contemporary Art in London to direct the Wattis Institute, he and I had dinner, and he observed that everyone in the art world knows about the Wattis Institute, except San Francisco. Many collectors and art aficionados here think that everything outside it is better.

It's always been a problem. We have great museums and world-class collectors who are not supporting the local scene, as you said. I don't know how that is going to change, but I do notice that there are several artists who have chosen to remain in the area, and, nonetheless, have become known nationally and internationally.
Finding some financial success elsewhere enables them to stay.

And they are not necessarily known as Bay Area artists, which is healthy, because in the past that identification was almost like the kiss of death.
The Bay Area is a great community, a great artistic community, and increased communication means that geography isn't that important. But it would be nice if collectors here would begin to buy locally. There are a few who support local artists, but compared to the wealth that is here, it's a shame that San Francisco collectors aren't doing more.

Getting back to Jens, when he first arrived, and I didn't know him, he called me and said that he understood that I knew a lot about Bay Area art and wondered if he could visit. We had a good conversation, and he borrowed a box of my catalogues, some pretty obscure, about Bay Area art and artists. I thought that was great. No one else had done that before. He really wanted to learn about the region.
Jens had his focus, which is different from that of the new director, Anthony Huberman, but I think Jens was very good for the Wattis in that he brought in a lot of interesting artists and embraced the local scene as well.

However, I have great enthusiasm for Anthony's vision for the Wattis.

Now, let's talk about David Ireland's house at 500 Capp Street, which you purchased in 2008 with the intention to restore it and establish it as a study center. The way I heard the story was that David's sister Judy Ireland, who is a realtor, was just about to put the house on the market after various attempts at saving it hadn't worked out, when you ran into Ann Hatch at a CCA event and…?

Phyllis C. Wattis

I had originally heard about the house during an accessions committee meeting at SFMOMA when the museum bought David's untitled broom piece. Madeleine Grynsztejn, who was then senior curator, gave a little background about the house in order to put the work in context, and said that the house would probably be sold.

Several months later I ran into Ann at an event at CCA. We had a conversation about David and the house, and I asked Ann what was happening. She said that it was definitely going on the market and asked if I wanted to see it. I think this was Tuesday. I said I would love to – it was just out of curiosity.

Were you familiar with David's work?
I was vaguely familiar with David's work from the Headlands, but I didn't know a lot. On the following Thursday, I met Ann and Ed Gilbert from Paule Anglim's gallery at the house and they walked me through it. By then, Ann was helping Judy and her daughter pack up the contents of the house. They gave me a copy of the Oakland Museum catalogue of David's retrospective, which I took home and read over the weekend. I called Ann on Monday morning and said, "I don't know what I am doing, but I am going to buy the house."

That decision made so many people happy, not the least of whom was David, who was ailing but still alive at the time. Although he wasn't living in the house any longer, he still spent time there – it meant everything to him. It's wonderful that the two of you were able to meet. In the couple of times I was with you and David in the house, your respect for him and for the house was evident, and I know that he was pleased.
Thank you for saying that.

Did you know that I had helped him write a grant to provide resources for him to research house museums and residency programs in order to formulate a plan for the future of his house? This was at least six years before you bought the house, and although he didn't get the grant, it shows that he had been concerned for a long time about what would happen to the house after he died.

At one time SFMOMA was considering purchasing the house, but finally decided not to. One reason was a change in leadership at the museum. I found out later that the museum was planning to approach my grandmother for the funds to acquire it. The proposal was that if SFMOMA bought a million dollar's worth of David's artwork, he would give the house to the museum.

The story indicates that there wasn't sufficient support among the staff and trustees of the museum for acquiring the house. Obviously, such an acquisition goes beyond simply the purchase. As you well know, there has to be an endowment for its maintenance, staffing, etc. And, as we have noted, there is a lack of support of local artists even though of the Bay Area artists in David's circle, he was the best known.

He had shown in New York at MoMA and in galleries, as well as in Europe, and had a retrospective that Karen Tsujimoto curated at the Oakland Museum of California, which traveled.
But in the long term, the way things turned out may be better for David's legacy, that is the house remaining independent from a large institution.

I agree; it turned out for the best, but no one could have known that at the time. I know plans are underway for the renovation. Due to unforeseen circumstances the plan for the renovation has undergone several changes. What is the current status?
I purchased 508-508 Capp Street, the house on the adjoining lot. As you know there had been a fire in that house in 2011, which came dangerously close to 500 Capp Street. I thought acquiring it would be a great solution, because I have always intended to establish a residency program for artists.

As you know, David was very supportive of young artists and customarily invited people to see his house. As a consequence lots of artists were influenced by his work, so an artist-in-residence program was important to me. The house next door, which was a duplex, would have provided units for a caretaker and for a resident artist. Originally, we were intending to build a very narrow, impractical, very expensive addition to 500 Capp for those purposes.

Interestingly, Martin C. Walton, who built the house at 500 Capp Street, had also purchased the neighboring lot.
So it seemed to come full circle. I purchased 506-508 with the idea of keeping it in my name rather than as a part of the 500 Capp Street Foundation, which I had formed when I bought 500 Capp. I then had a meeting with Steve Oliver and learned that over the last few years, construction costs and materials had escalated and, therefore, the cost of renovating 500 Capp Street had spiked even without the addition of the caretaker's unit.

Oliver and Company will replace the foundation, I understand, which is one of the major requirements.
Yes Steve Oliver will do the construction. I engaged him because not only is he a great contractor, but he has a tremendous sensitivity to the house and art in general. Mark Jensen and Associates, who have done work at CCA and SFMOMA, are the architects of record. Since I bought 506-508, real estate values in the Mission have risen considerably, and I decided to sell it to raise the money to do the work on 500. The 506-508 property is now in escrow.

Congratulations. This is a case where the real estate boom worked to your advantage. In there a new plan? Where will the caretaker unit be?
Now the offices for the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation and the 500 Capp Street Foundation are on the ground floor of my house. What we are going to do is build out the space in what was the garage area at 500 Capp that will be the office for both foundations, so we will be on site almost everyday.

Therefore, you won't need a unit for a live-in caretaker. But you will still need to house a resident artist?
Not at the beginning, since I want to start with local artists, artists who have been touched by David's work. I've already been in conversation with a few. I have also identified a couple of international artists, but I really want to start with our artists.

So there really isn't an immediate need for a residency apartment. How many resident artists do you plan to have each year?
Maybe two a year. One of the things we have talked about is not only having an artist in residence, but also having an institution in residence. Not only is the 500 Capp Foundation managing the house, but it's also managing the works that are in the estate. So there's an opportunity for other institutions and curators to work with those.

The artwork that came with the house is going back into the house?
We plan on retaining anything that is related to the house. We might be able to sell some works, or donate them, but we will retain everything that has to do with the house.

Which aren't already in a collection?
There are pieces that have gone into collections, but we have been able to bring back a few and are coaxing other collectors to consider donating them to the foundation rather than to a museum. We have a relationship with SFMOMA and will negotiate with them for Broom Collection with Boom to be in the house, especially since the museum will be closed for the next few years while it is being expanded.

The broom piece is the discrete sculpture that is most identified with the house. As you know, I have been working on a book to be published by UC Press that will recount the history of the house, both before and after David acquired it. The book will be fully illustrated. Luckily, not only did David take a lot of photos, but also noted photographers such as Henry Bowles, Lee Fatheree and Ben Blackwell documented it, as well as many amateurs.
I need to give an enormous amount of credit to Jessica Roux, my assistant, for taking on the archive room, finding and cataloguing photographs. She has been great.

I agree. She has been an invaluable help to me as well. Do you have a schedule for the completion of the work on the house?
No, but I have been given a timeline of eight to ten months to get the work done. However, that's a contractor speaking, so it might be a little longer. We are just waiting for the permits from the city.

We have engaged Architectural Resources Group, which is consulting on conserving and making sure that everything inside will be stable before we start work. They recently completed a project with the Mission in Carmel and came highly recommended. We have a very strong team. The foundation work will be done beautifully and it will be done right, and the interior will be preserved

Many people have asked why the house has been painted white?
The city insisted that we scrape and remove the grey paint because it contained lead. It is primed now, but soon it will be painted grey. We have engaged a great company run by a woman who is meticulously matching the original.

Now the house is in the middle of an arts hub—there's Southern Exposure, the Kadist Foundation and several galleries.
We are talking with Southern Exposure, as well as the Community Music Center down the street. We intend to take advantage of the vibrant art community around here.

Do you plan to have concerts and lectures?
For the reopening we will have a whole series of events. We have a dance company that's interested in a performance that will move throughout the house, an actor who is interested in staging a re-envisioned Hamlet, and I've spoken with the Kronos Quartet, and they are interested in participating.

I attended a performance by Douglas Dunn in the house. Dunn was a good friend of David's.
We had a "Bones" evening as part of the 20th Street arts corridor event in which Southern Exposure, Kadist, Meatpaper, and Rebar also participated.

People moved through the house; it was very successful. I envision such events as an ongoing part of the program, I want it to be an engaged art space that collaborates with others. In my work with the Wattis Foundation, I have noted that collaboration strengthens the fabric of what is happening in San Francisco.

You will also schedule tours?
Recently we were offering two tours a week. Once the house reopens, we will have some open houses to be part of the community, and also will do private events that will be a revenue source. To have a dinner in that dining room is very special. There will be a patio on top of the structure that will house the offices, will be an event space, as well as what is now the archive room. We will re-activate the door that leads from 20th Street to the archive room.

Which will serve as a reception area?
Yes, or an exhibition space for an artist, or for a poetry reading, for example.

The archives will be in the basement?
Yes, we will excavate that space for storage or for people to study David's work.

David, as we know, had several open houses, one right after he completed the renovation. What you're doing is a continuation of his att tude. The house was his home, but he wanted to share it
We hope that resident artists might gift a work that might have been inspired by the house. While David lived in the house, there were works by other artists, and we have found correspondence in the files from artists who tell of being inspired by the house. We hope to see the collection grow in that way. In any event, the house will not be static. We are not putting a bell jar over it.

There's still trace of the previous owner Mr. Greub's gold leaf accordion sign on the front window.
We will probably stabilize it rather than restore it.

What's remarkable is that the house has only had three owners since it was built in 1886.
And you discovered the real owner!

Yes. Martin C. Walton.
I still imagine him as a ship's captain, as David always described him.

That's a lot more interesting than the fact that he was a roofer. There was a real-estate boom in the 1880s, and lot of people became realtors. The last Walton to live in the house was Martin's daughter Flora, who is listed as a clerk in the San Francisco city directories.

She sold the house to the Swiss accordion maker Paul Greub in 1937, who sold it to David in 1975. It seems that there were always boarders and/or servants living in the house.
Mr. Gordon being the remaining tenant when David purchased the house.

The Greubs lived in the front rooms and used back rooms as rentals.
Mr. Gordon is achieving cult status.

Mr. Gordon?
Every year on Facebook we celebrate his birthday, as David did, before Mr. Gordon moved out.

The interior parlor at 500 Capp street. Photograph by Ben Blackwell. Courtesy of the 500 Capp Street Foundation.

THE POSSIBLE

DAVID WILSON interviewed by RENNY PRITIKIN

So David, thank you so much for sending me this summary of your upcoming show The Possible [Jan 29-May 25], at the Berkeley Art Museum. Reading your outline of what you hope to do, I don't know if this has gotten bigger or smaller—
It's expanded, mostly it's a working expansion.

It's insane.
[laughs] The metaphor I've been using to describe the show is a vessel. Rather than developing the content, we've been developing a framework, like a shape, and then letting the participants fill it.

When we opened at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in 1993 the building was about 85% done and we didn't really have a mission or a constituency and the metaphor we used is that "we're building a ship at sea."
Yeah! Where is it going, where is the land? It's an experiment, but it's also a growth that has begun over many years.

A manifestation and culmination of everything you've done.
A lot of people who are developing the key platforms in this situation are people that are connected in a deep way. There's a real degree of trust in such an improvisational open format, and having those relationships is central.

I've been doing a lot of research on local history this year and I learned about this 1969 exhibition at Berkeley called The 80s. You know about that?
Yeah, and actually I learned about it in part through the help of your [Art Practical] article, but also through someone participating in this show as a primary artist/documentor. Lauren Mackler runs a space in Los Angeles called *Public Fiction*, which is both an exhibition space and a publication. She's a graphic designer and curator so she creates these installations and then reinterprets them and re-presents them as a journal. She is collaborating in the creation of *The Possible* catalogue, and she was the one to say do you know *The 80s*? At the time of *The 80s*, the museum was about to move into its current building, imagining what a museum could be, and *The Possible*, obviously it's coming at the tail end of this building's history. So that was a big inspiration, thinking about sending things off into the museum's next chapter. Lauren showed me *The 80s* catalog, and oh my god, when I looked through it and saw the artists in this conversation about "What are we going to do?" it just resonated with the correspondence that has been happening now in developing *The Possible*—it has just been such a pleasure to see that there really is an extended conversation.

That's kind of profound and moving that you're thinking about that project; for the record, Brenda Richardson was the curator, when Berkeley was still in a power plant and the current museum was being built. She asked approximately ten local artists, to think about a show that anticipates the world twenty years in the future. And I believe there were three meetings where they sat around a room and thought about what a show about the 80s should include. There were so many echoes of your project. They talk a lot about space, where anyone could have access to it. It's the rhetoric of those times. Breaking down the walls.
I love that idea of a show that begins as a group conversation. Saying, "we're creating a whole—we're in this, let's voice it." So it was exciting that Lauren pulled this up as she looked through exhibition files and researched the ghosts that the building has hosted.

Was that part of Larry Rinder's vision, like a farewell to the building?
No, though I know he's excited to bring this kind of energy into the museum. I have a relationship with that building and I know people have a place in their heart for that building. So taking this as an opportunity to experiment and exist in the building became a primary focus. Letting people experience the building and work within it as a space before we no longer have it.

It's interesting because I wrote about Barry McGee's recent show there, and I said this was one of the very few times that I felt an artist was allowed to completely change the feeling, overwhelming the museum with energy and ideas. It seems like that's kind of becoming an occasional curatorial model under Rinder.
Exactly, I think we're attempting to bring some of that energy. I watched that installation and that action was some of the most exciting problem solving and play that was happening. That transmitted a feeling. With *The Possible*, it's like we're going to be constantly installing and de-installing. That's what we want to be engaged in.

How much of the building do you have?
It's five galleries. There's Gallery A, which is called *The Possible Kid's Club*, where artists will be engaging kids with projects. Then there's the big Gallery B, where we'll be setting up an active studio space that is the heart of the show, combining a Textile Studio and Dye Lab, a Printshop, and a Ceramics Studio. This studio will host a steady stream of guest artists coming to create new work, but also to lead public classes and projects as part of an Open Workshop series happening every Sunday of the show. There will also be a gathering space in Gallery B, anchored by the giant spiraling rug installed by Fritz Haeg. Up in Gallery 2 we'll have the Library, a place for engaging with context and research. There will be recordings and publications, historical materials from the museum's collection, and materials selected by the artists regarding references and inspirations. The next gallery, Gallery 3 is a space to collect and present the work made during this show. The artist Kori Girard has designed a shelving structure for this purpose, a large pinwheel-like pyramid object that will begin empty and fill steadily with works and ephemera. The final gallery is another studio space devoted to experimenting with sound and video-synthesis led by art collective *The Something*, and will also serve as an open space for movement, screenings, and performance. We'll have a recording studio based in this gallery run by sound engineer Jamie Dutcher, hosting regular recording sessions often connected to a performance series. Oh, and there's going to be an Outdoor Shower in the garden designed by Drew Bennett to host a series of physical education experiments called *Sweat Session*. So bring a towel.

You know (the band) Matmos, who were students at the Art Institute, who went off working with Bjork for a couple years in the 90s and then they came back? I was at Yerba Buena and Rene de Guzman and I did this series of projects where we gave the medium sized gallery at Yerba Buena to various artists. We gave it to John Woodall, a first generation Bay Area performance artist. The gallery was almost empty for the opening. Over the period of time he engaged anyone who came to just talk while he made stuff. And he said it was a highlight of his career because he said he had never engaged with an audience in that way before. So that was great, and then when it was over it was pretty much full and it was beautiful. But other things in that gallery that we did is, Claudia Tennyson do you know her?
I've met her.

We gave her the gallery, people brought in broken items and she fixed them. But it's in air quotes because she fixed them by ruining them, making them art. Then people could come claim them. And then the highlight was Matmos, because they turned it into a recording studio for two weeks. They published a CD, in November 2004, so in the mornings they would rehearse and the public could come help them, participate, ask questions, and then in the afternoon they would record and the public was also welcome.
Exactly, an authentic time to make your work while also opening that up into an engagement. In this case, we're thinking about the materials that we can offer and the situation we can offer as something that can inspire authentic experimentation. For example, using the building as a sound chamber is a unique opportunity to experiment with recording sound. Sound travels through the building in a really special way, it's got an amazing resonant quality. We'll be installing microphones all over, and people whose medium is sound will have ideas just based on the invitation to work in this building.

Plus the relationship with a public space. So how do you anticipate the public—
Engaging? I think what you're saying, I mean, letting it be porous. Rather than thinking of it as a performance, it's just an open space. So if you happen to come in on a day that someone is making a recording you are entering into a very active situation which, I'm sure will tune you in in terms of sensitivities to sound yourself and your own sound, and also sensitivity to someone's process in the observation of work being done.

So what happens if nothing is happening in the space?
I think the space will just in itself be a place—I think you'll either be seeing an action or deciphering more of what has happened through the objects that are around, whether through process or midway through creation.

It's an interesting issue for me because I recently went to a local show of performative sculpture by a young curator I admire. The performance detritus was on view and I didn't quite, you know, I didn't feel, my heart didn't leap. I'm sure with the event it was great, but it felt a little ghostly. Like I broke into somebody's house!

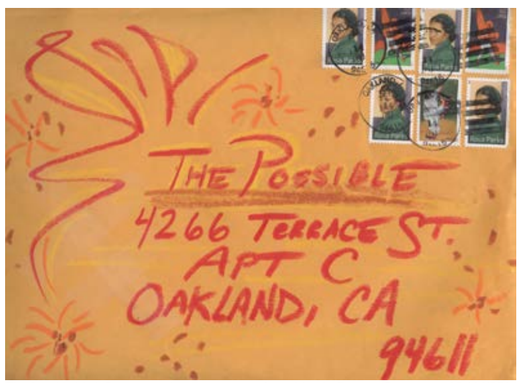

Fritz Haeg, *Domestic Integrities*, Part 1, 2012 (installation view from the Museum of Modern Art), photograph by Jack Ramunni, Mildred's Lane. Courtesy of BAM/PFA.


Fritz Haeg, *Domestic Integrities*, Part 5, 2013 (installation view from the Walker Art Center). Courtesy of Fritz Haeg.


David Wilson, Prospect Park Gathering, photograph by Martha Fleming-Ives.


Anna Halprin dance workshop, photograph by Peter Larson. Courtesy of BAM/PFA.


Pope Valley Ceramics Residency, clay studio elements, photograph by Aya Brackett. Courtesy of BAM/PFA.



The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Nicole Disson. Courtesy of BAM/PFA.

Yeah, as much as this show is considering the audience, it's again, just trusting that engaged participants will lead to engaged audiences. So we're putting a lot of energy to make this a vital situation for participants and not have it feel like they're there to kind of be on stage for someone.

One of the other projects that your project made me think of was this—the San Francisco Art Institute Annual used to be probably the biggest show in San Francisco every year, it was like the SECA award, and it went back to the 19th century, to get into it was a big deal. But then it hit the '70s and people were messing with form and structure and authority. And Tom Marioni and others organized the '75 -'76 Annual, and it had always been in museums, but being that it was 1975 they rented a storefront in the Mission for a year and gave 50 artists the storefront space for a week each. So you got the key Monday morning and the next Monday morning you had to turn over the key and the space had to be clean, and you know, the work was mixed. The spirit of that kind of sharing and being away from the museum was always interesting to me. But one of the things that echoes your project was called the Floating Seminar Temporary School of Art, and the schedule for the week included public relations for artists; an art and city politics primer; a meeting for discussion of the first two meetings; the end of modernism; art and media theory in late capitalism. And then a party. That was March 1976, the artist was Paul Kagawa.

There was a notion that was very big when I was your age, of alternative institutions, but that seems to be coming back now, most particularly, it might have been before your time, like Jon Rubin's Independent School of Art here, you know about that? So I guess, on the one hand your project is making me think of these things, but also I'm seeing your work in a long Bay Area tradition of inclusion, education, celebration, activism, so it's very exciting.
Absolutely, these are all on point as models. We're just trying to make a space for convening and exchange. The show's four months, so it'll be a semester, and that's how I've been thinking of it, since there are definitely all kinds feelings for education and experimental, experience-based learning in the mix.

So it's going to take over your life.
This is two and a half years in planning, so by the time the show opens I'll be the guy with a big smile on my face hanging out.

Do you know about the 'Hand in Glove' conferences? It's organizations run by people in their 20s and 30s who are running community-based projects to engage art making at a grass roots level. If there's another one you should definitely be featured! If you survive the next six months.
Yeah, well, retreats have been a big reference point, previous projects that I've done have functioned like convenings or temporary gatherings that have brought people into some kind of situation in which again, each person can contribute what they do and their questions, but there's also a focus on the time and the place that can host it. There's been a group of people involved at a property up in Ukiah and that's been a place to experiment with coming together for weekend projects.

And is this group the same folks who are going to be participating?
A lot of artists have come up and just worked on projects, it's a real pleasure to have these intensive times to spend long days with a group of people and try things. So that's been a big way that ideas have grown.

Back to the printshop publication studio. That's in the library or separate?
So the Library is all previously created things, and then there'll be a functioning Printshop down in Gallery B featuring some traditional printmaking tools as well as Risograph machines, which are Japanese automated screen printing machines. They look just like clunky office machines, but you can work on one color at a time and then layer and register other colors. Luca Antonucci and Carissa Potter of Colpa Press in SF are helping design and facilitate this printshop, and because we're going to be hosting this regular current of guest artists, they're thinking of tools and techniques that can be approachable as well as inspiring. They're amazing.

Do you know about Joseph del Pesco's popup print shop that he did? He was trained as a graphic designer. He found samples of artist's handwriting from artists that use text in their work, and he made fonts of their handwriting. If they hadn't used certain letters then that letter was missing. So he had fifteen or twenty major artists as fonts, and then the project was he loaded those onto a computer in the gallery and rented a copy machine and you could make posters in a famous artist's handwriting, and then all the posters unedited were put up on the wall.
Nice one, yeah a printshop opens up all kinds of potential. With this series of Sunday Workshops, artists will be able to create announcements, flyers, pamphlets, posters, mail instantly in the space, and then go around town to spread the word. We'll actually be creating an artist book during the show as a primary project. It'll contain original print work and ephemera all hand bound together as a big assembly line the final week of the show. So yeah, that print shop will be pretty active.

Tell me about Kori.
Kori Girard is a collaborator, he lives in Los Angeles, he lived in Berkeley and San Francisco for a number of years but he's lived in Los Angeles for about three. His family is the amazing Girard family; his grandfather was an important artist, Alexander Girard, who's a well known modernist designer who worked with Eames. His whole family has a very highly attuned sense of composition, design, texture, material, cataloging, collection. Aleishall Girard, Kori's sister, who makes incredible jewelry, and their father Marshall, are both artists in *The Possible*, which is very exciting. Kori and Aleishall's grandfather traveled the world and was one of the first collectors of folk art. So the whole family has been surrounded by collections. I've collaborated with Kori a number of times and we've connected on some of these different retreats and gatherings. When I just started to think about what this show, this was over two years ago, I first thought, "are we making site-based work? Is it a series of installations?"

So Kori first came up with the idea of creating an installation of objects that he would collect and present in this careful formation. As the show and the ideas grew toward something that was more unified rather than a series of individual artist's presentations, we realized that this idea actually has functionality in there—we need a place to collect and present. So it developed in this way. Take that design and that idea for how you would hope to present a batch of work as a collection and just make it available within this situation. With that, he took all the objects in his mind out of this installation and just designed the object for display as his piece.

So this will be on the third level and these things will be generated on the fourth and fifth level?
They'll be generated primarily downstairs and then moved up into the gallery. And it could be a work by a well-known artist next to a work from some kid who came through and tried to make a papier-maché mask. So we're thinking of it as a hybrid and broad spectrum.

One of the issues I had at Yerba Buena was that we basically had three streams of activity: contemporary art, community-based work, and popular culture. And the argument that we made curatorially was that if you came to see the tattoo show or the surfing show you're then exposed to work from developmentally disabled adults. But we got a lot of shit for it. "Why are you showing art from the halfway house around the corner next door to a gallery of Fred Tomaselli?" It was never an issue for me but I had a lot of people—didn't like it.
That's bound to happen when you're changing the perception. So, it will be an experiment.

It's not an issue for you. Visual culture is visual culture.
Yeah, just the quality of an experience and the quality of an object. That can happen in so many ways.

So who else are key figures?
All elements of the show are connected to inspiring characters, right down to the exhibition furniture, which feature designs by Lucas Ford and Kelly Best in the Studios, and Anzfer Farms in the Library. Sasha Duerr, Deepa Natarajan, and Tessa Watson are developing the Dye Lab, focusing on plant based dyes. Tessa is working with Rebecca Burgess, who is the founder of FiberShed and an indigo farmer, to develop a large indigo vat that is naturally fermented using Rebecca's organic crop. Mark Rogero from Concreteworks in Oakland is fabricating an amazing custom concrete vat, so it's a very rich collaboration on all fronts. We'll be offering this indigo vat along with the other plant dyes as possibilities for working with color and creating new textile work.

In terms of key people that you're counting on to move this forward, would you—
So, coming up from Los Angeles, Luke Fischbeck and Sara Rara are collaborators as Lucky Dragons. Lucky Dragons is performance based, but they have a very broad practice including Sumi Ink Club, a participatory drawing club. They've done some really beautiful group drawings as well as performances that have synthesized sound and electronics and touch, you know, touch as a way to create sound. In *The Possible*, they are both taking on roles of observers and document creators. Sara is a filmmaker so she's going to be engaging in 16 mm film episodes throughout the show, and Luke is also interested in recording and visual recordings. He's going to help set up a database of images and sounds that the show generates. All will kind of filter into the catalogue publication in collaboration with Lauren Mackler. So they're key collaborators.

So a lot of folks living in LA, I think of this kind of work as very Bay Area. Is that an old fashioned idea?
This is very Bay Area. This is fertile ground for these kinds of situations and experiments. I've been excited to bring in some outside voices—there's a nice potential for exchange. The show is primarily people who I've gotten to collaborate with here in the Bay Area but we're reaching out as well.

...we were talking about artist-made soap.
You were just talking about presenting what some people must see as juxtaposing art work with non-art work or non-professional—I guess with objects, I think about the consideration someone has put into something, how do you participate with that object on the most basic level? The idea of taking a shower and someone has placed a bar of soap there thoughtfully, well, then you might want to use it, and that is an opportunity for something—the person who has dedicated themselves to learning about making soap, they can add to the situation in a very real way because if you're going to have soap you might as well have it made by someone who really has thought about it.

And then academics, Gwen Allen.
Yeah, exactly. So Gwen's going to be helping in the library, bringing out the context of the publication reference material. Publication is a real central theme of this project, both because we'll be producing an artist book and because so many artists who are involved have found that as a helpful medium for their work. Gwen has apprenticed herself to artist publications and she's contributing her rich research experience to this situation.

Isn't Jerome Waag a chef?
He is, OPENrestaurant is a project that he and Sam White and a few others started a number of years ago which produced a whole series of events, each kind of deciphering a different element of a food experience.

I'm friends with this guy, Jim Denevan, he's a guy from Santa Cruz who's started this thing called *Outstanding in the Field****, which I've been to, meals in fields that generate the food, with the farmers speaking...***
Beautiful. That must have been a very rich experience on all levels. The amount of attention and intention you can add to a situation. Yeah, Jerome is someone who—that's been part of his practice for a long time through OPENrestaurant.

He's also the head chef at Chez Panisse in Berkeley and food is his medium, but he's also a conceptual thinker himself, so he's actually engaging *The Possible* in a research project with Amy Trachtenberg regarding qualities of the minimum dwelling.

One of the other things I thought of was this project that I did—because you talked about artist-made instruments and that's also an interest of mine. I did this project at Yerba Buena called *Sounds Like Art****. One part was artist-made instruments—Beth Custer composed this symphony for chamber orchestra and artist instrument makers.***
It makes a lot of sense, I think it's one of the oldest art forms, I mean, creating an instrument.

They can make some god-awful noise too.
It will be ugly, it will be who knows, all kinds of things, boring at times, it might sweep us off our feet at times. So that's the whole spirit of this show in general.

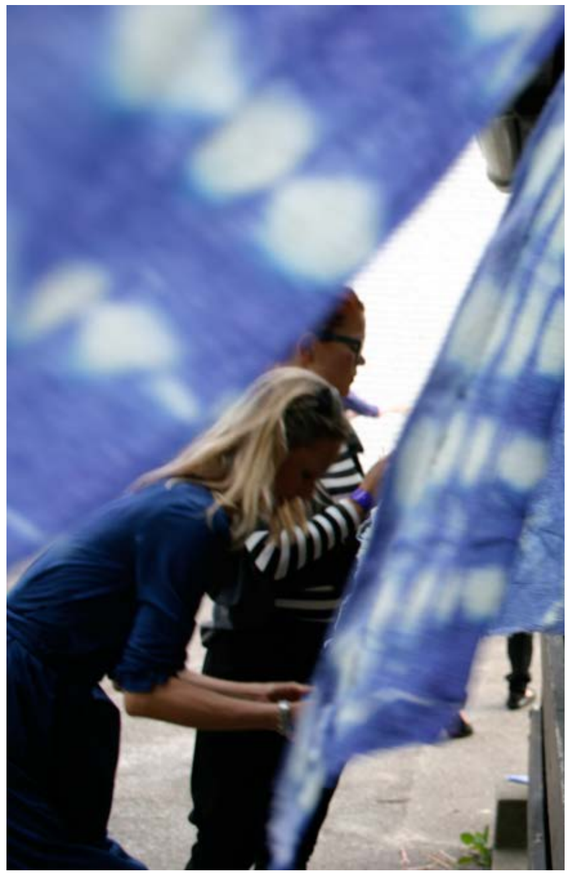
You've been exchanging mail art?
Kori and I initiated a mail correspondence project and it became this ideal avenue to explore what the show is about. We created a rather involved piece of mail and sent it out to the people who had begun to enter into the conversation about *The Possible* and asked people to send some things back. Kind of this little burst of spirit that would hopefully turn someone on. I wrote a little note, just a letter explaining where the plans were at for the show, and what to expect to find in the space when you come, and then also included a return envelope and a survey that asked about inspirations, but not the definitive answers, just what comes to you. So it was a kind of playful invitation to send things back—don't over-think it, just send something back, it doesn't matter, get it going, let's start these conversations. So we've been processing. We have this amazing collection of all this mail, over a hundred pieces of mail.

So will you include these pieces?
Exactly, so these are going to be in the library along with specific readings, books, passages, essays, poems, quotes, that people noted in these surveys. We'll see what that collection looks like, and if we can decipher this cloud of references. We've gone through a couple rounds of this exchange. The mailings became the way to invite people to participate in the show and capture some sense of what we hope to do with this situation. The act of invitation has been such a simple but profound way the show has come together, just through reaching out and seeing if someone might be interested in engaging. It's a process of self initiation. I sent messages in the mail to people I had never met, but I'd admired for a long time, and maybe didn't receive any message back, and that's fine, just little transmissions. But that kind of offering of the conversation has really been one of the most exciting parts of this project, the offer to enter the conversation—if you engage this then you're a part of it. It will continue throughout the show, using the Printshop as a mail center to create and send mail both for the sake of growing this mail art collection and as further invitations to participate. We hope to encourage others to create mail with the Printshop and really offer that space so people can make print work as a transmission that will go directly to someone's home. I think what makes a piece of mail so exciting is that you open it and hold it, and it's not saying this is the most amazing collage in the world, it's saying, how did this get here?

That's going to be something that will inspire a lot of use in the print shop and give it a purpose. That's going to be fun.

Anybody else you want to talk about?
The *Creative Growth* runway show is something. This is going to be amazing—*Creative Growth*, for the past three or four years has hosted a runway event on their anniversary, featuring the fashion and textiles that their artists produce. It's such a high-energy event, with a mix of artists and models walking and wearing these pieces of art, and it's just an exciting wonderful thing. This year is their 40th anniversary and so we are going to be collaborating and hosting their runway event at the museum on April 4th. This event will feature work for the *Creative Growth* textile studio, and will inspire many artist involved in *The Possible* to get to the next level with customization of garments. We'll be trying to cross-pollinate these textiles studios, hosting artists and exchanging materials, to share in this spirit of creative experimentation.

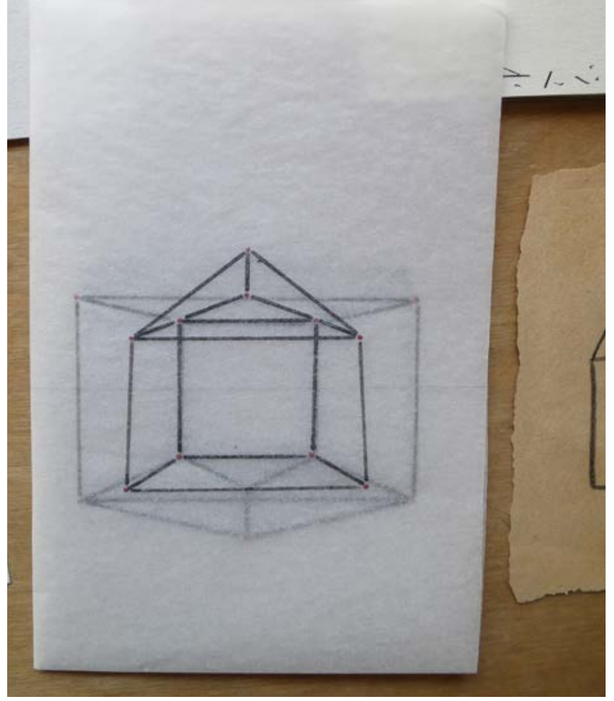
Finally, in the Ceramics Studio, we are lucky to have Jessica Niello, Travis McFlynn, Daren Wilson, and Atelier Dion facilitating the space. This group of artists have been reaching out and drawing together an amazing network of ceramicists to contribute to the studio, including incredible support and donated materials from John Toki of Leslie Ceramics and a custom clay mix from East Bay Clay. We're also partnering with Richard Carter of Pope Valley Pottery, who will be hosting a wood firing with the Anagama on his property, which is a traditional wood-fired Japanese kiln. Towards the end of the show we'll bring work from the museum to the kiln for a ten day intensive firing that will require around the clock monitoring of heat, so it will be something that requires people to come together, hang out and keep the fire going, cooking, sleeping. It's going to inspire a lot of work in the ceramic studio at the museum. So we're excited about those moments that punctuate the practice in the studio.



Permacouture Institute, natural dye experiments, yellow onion skins, avocado pits, red onion skins, photograph by Sasha Duerr. Courtesy of BAM/PFA.

The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Liz Harris.

The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Zachary Adams.



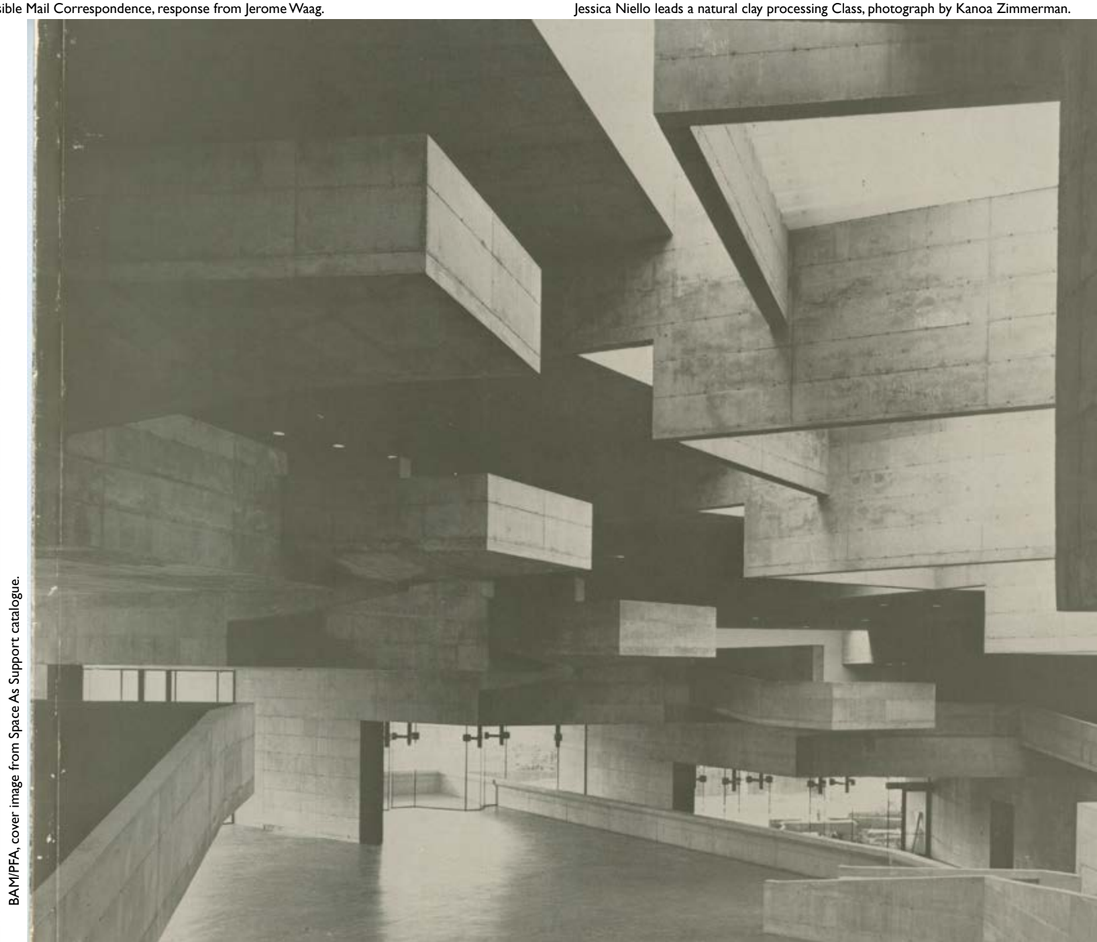
The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Jerome Waag.

Jessica Niello leads a natural clay processing Class, photograph by Kanoa Zimmerman.

The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Robert Shimshak.

The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Cliff Hengst.

The Possible Mail Correspondence, response from Chris Duncan.



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REIKO TOMII

Interviewed by JOHN HELD, JR.

Osaka born, now New York City resident, independent scholar, art historian, curator, translator, essayist and author of a forthcoming book to be published by MIT Press, Reiko Tomii is simply put, a highly respected scholar of post-1945 Japanese art, specializing in bringing previously neglected avant-garde individuals and groups such as Gutai, Mono-ha and Anti-Art, to the attention of the wider international art community. She recently appeared in the heralded motion picture documentary, "Cutie and the Boxer," featuring the Japanese expatriate avant-gardist, Ushio Shinohara, who like Yoko Ono, and Tomii herself, left Japan for New York to make a mark at the perceived core of art.

Tomii earned her doctorate at the University of Texas at Austin, in 1988. She recently contributed to the Guggenheim Museum catalog accompanying the winter 2013 exhibition, "Gutai: Splendid Playground," co-curated by Ming Tiampo and Alexandra Munroe, who Tomii began working with on the first U. S. retrospective of Yayoi Kusama in 1989 (at the now defunct Center for International Contemporary Arts) and continued their collaboration on the 1994 exhibition, "Scream Against the Sky: Japanese Art after 1945."

Reiko Tomii is an exemplary activist art historian in many ways: founder of the major academic listserv circle of Japanese Modern and Contemporary Art scholars on the Internet (www.ponga-genkon.net), recapitulating historic performances to examine their intricacies and a strong voice for inclusive globalization in an expanding Modernist canon. Research conducted in both Japanese and American cultural institutions are beginning to pay major dividends, paving the way for the incorporation of neglected avant-garde movements and individuals, bereft of geographical, political and social advantages, toward mainstream acceptance.

You're originally from Osaka?
Born and raised in Osaka. Although Osaka is a large area, so it has lots of satellite cities. I never lived in the city of Osaka, like Yoshihara did [Jiro Yoshihara, founder of the Gutai Art Association]. He was born in the downtown part of the city, but I was born in a satellite city.

Were your parents involved in the arts?
Both my parents are pharmacists. My father had a drug store and my mother worked with him. My father was an intellectual, reading Chinese poetry and French novels. The thing is, I was very bad at art as a child, so at one point at junior high, the art teacher summoned my mother to school and said, "Your daughter is terrible. You have to do something about it." And what happened is, my father hearing that –do you know what he gave me to look up? – Erle Loran's, "Cezanne's Composition." You know the book? What do I do with Cezanne? *(laughs)*.

He's a difficult artist to begin with.
My father thought that would be a good education for me. He's kind of a weird intellectual. "If you need to know art – look at Cezanne."

It's a good start but a difficult start. You went on to Osaka University. What did you study there?
Mathematics. I was disappointed, however. It wasn't as beautiful as I thought. Then I didn't know what to do. In Japan, good daughters practice flower arrangement and tea ceremony. My mother wanted me to do that, but I was rebellious, and I didn't want to do that. I said, "OK. Tea ceremony – no thank you." But flower arrangement is useful and about form, and I thought - I can do that. Like I said, I was not very good at art at all, but suddenly I realized this is something I can do.

Flower arranging?
I was very serious about it, but flower arrangement more than art requires money – the politics and such. So I said, "This is something I cannot do."

Then I became interested in contemporary art, and Constructivism came into the picture through my study of flower arrangement. I went to see a professor of Western Art History, and he said, "What do you want to study." And I said Russian Constructivism. He said, "Sure." I finished my degree in Math, because my mother was insistent. I repeated the junior and senior year in Art History, and I did my Masters at Osaka University.

What was your Master's concentration?
My senior year graduation thesis was Naum Gabo. For my Master's thesis, it was George Rickey, who makes moving sculpture. You know him? Some people don't know, because he's a forgotten figure now. He wrote a book on Constructivism ["Constructivism: Origins and Evolution"] in 1967 or '68. It's a serious book. It's a survey of Constructivism from abstraction to Kinetic and Pop Art, which was part of postwar New Constructivism. He made kinetic art. He was a part of the New Tendency movement. He was a scholar and studied history in Oxford. So, it was a natural extension from Nam Gabo to George Rickey. That's my Master's thesis.

After that, there wasn't much I could do in Japan, so coming to America on a Fulbright was an option. Many of my senior colleagues did that, and my professors expected me to do that. In order to do that, you needed to concentrate on something American. George Rickey was convenient [for that purpose]. I loved his art, but it was also convenient for me to extend my studies. That's how I came to the United States. Everybody asks, "Why Texas?" And you have to ask that too. *(laughs)*. I applied to several schools and [The University of Texas at Austin] was the only one to give me a scholarship.

That's the financial reason, but why I applied to Texas is because of Linda Henderson. Do you know Linda Henderson? She was a modernist art historian specializing in the fourth dimension, the beginning of abstraction, and also Duchamp.

[sequence of images] Reiko Tomii restaging "Challenging Mud" by Kazuo Shiraga.
Photographs by Ming Tiampo. Courtesy of Reiko Tomii.

What did you study with her?
She's a Modernist, so the background of George Rickey, Constructivism, and especially the methodology of intellectual history, but she felt I'm not strictly in her territory. She sent me to John Clarke, who is a Roman specialist, but his sub-teaching major was Twentieth Century Contemporary Art – Postwar American Art, actually. John thought he had to take me on. I was a basket case. So, I was lucky to get a teaching assistantship, and so forth. My four years there were completely financed by the university.

What four years? The early eighties?
1984 through '88. It was right after the Texas oil boom passed and before everything went crazy.

I was living in Texas at the same time. I was in Dallas working as an Art Librarian at the Dallas Public Library.
Oh, interesting.

Were you interested in Gutai at all during this period.
My professor at Osaka University, his major was rock painting, tribal art and prehistoric art, but Twentieth Century art was his sub-major. He was very encouraging. He was well published as an art critic, so he knew many artists in Osaka, so of course he knew Gutai artists. He would invite artists to school and have them talk, and we would ask questions. It's not unusual to do such dialogues with artists here, but it was unusual in Japan at the time.

Who were some of the Gutai artists you heard speak?
Motonaga. Shiraga. Those are the two I remember. They were close to my professor.

What about the Gutai archives of the University?
At that time, nobody knew about archives. Gutai's archives took more concrete shape when Ashiya City Museum of Art and History opened, because they used the resources in Yoshihara's archive and other [Gutai] members archives. That's when the idea of archives and research began.

At Osaka University my professor had the art salon by inviting artists. That's how I met Shiraga, Montonaga, and I heard them talk. That's the beginning of my association with the artists of Gutai. You know, they were local artists. We are very proud of them, of course. I thought they were world famous. *(laughs)* I thought they were world famous and everybody knew them.

When I got accepted by Texas and got ready to go, I asked one of my fellow students to lend me some material from which I can shoot slides. I think I used the book, "Eighteen Years of Gutai," which was the first major publication in Japan [Osaka: Osaka Fumin Center, 1976]. Probably that's the publication. It was a compilation of photographs. I made a set of slides, and since I'm from Osaka I expected everyone in Texas to make an automatic connection – Osaka, budding art historian coming to Texas, Gutai- "Oh, Gutai! Can you talk about Gutai?" "Yes, of course, I have slides here." So, I could give a lecture. I envisioned that, but it didn't happen.

No. Because nobody knew about Gutai.
(laughs) No. Obviously not. I was very surprised. When I first came to Texas, my English was not that good. Also, I was busy with my coursework and dissertation writing, so I didn't really have extra time to develop the material. In retrospect, I didn't know that much. But at the time I was very disappointed secretly. Nobody knew about this. It became a running joke with myself – Texas and Gutai.

But it's funny. The same time you were thinking this, I was hosting a visit of Shozo Shimamoto [a founding member of Gutai] in Dallas in 1986. I knew about Gutai.
How did you know about Gutai?

Shozo was doing Mail Art at that time, and he was an active correspondent of mine.
You had that connection. Gutai is in Kaprow's book ["Assemblage, Environments & Happenings." New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1966], so I thought, American art historians look at that book. I thought it was automatic that they knew Gutai, but it was not automatic at all. I was so shocked. I'm still shocked when I think about it. That was the state of art history and how we looked at the world back then.

The problem was there wasn't much written about Gutai in English at this time. Basically, the Kaprow book consisted of photographs, but not much in the way of history or explanation.
Then Darmstadt did their show in 1991.

And Oxford, too. Gutai was just beginning to surface on the world stage.
That's true. I didn't know those things at all. I wasn't in New York. I was in Texas. The good thing was, I could cultivate my own taste and develop myself in Texas. If I had been in New York, it would have been very competitive and hectic, and probably I might not have made it. Honestly. But in Texas, it was a nice sheltered environment.

What made you decide to stay in the United States, rather than return to Japan?
I thought I was going back, and I was avidly shooting slides wherever I went – artworks. I was shooting slides so I could take them home and teach. The more time I spent here, however, the less I was interested in returning, because I didn't fit.

In Japan?
To begin with I didn't fit well in Japan. After four years in Texas, I wouldn't have fit any better, maybe worse. So, I didn't want to go back. There wasn't much prospect in 1988 – either you get a teaching position, or you can be a museum curator. But then it's administrative, collection management and such.

The problem was, I decided to stay at the very end, and I was not prepared. If you want to be a museum curator you do an internship to gain experience. If you want to teach you cultivate teaching skills while still at school. I did nothing of that sort. Suddenly, I said I want to stay, and my professors said, "Oh, my god, what should we do?" If I had been in New York, the professors might have found some way through their connections. They might have been able to do something. But professors in Texas, their connections outside were limited. Their priority was placing good students in the real world. In a way, I did it backwards.

I decided to use my visa status for practical training, and I looked around to see what I could find. Well, it was pretty miserable out there. The only thing was the Center for International Contemporary Arts, which opened in the fall of 1989. In the summer of 1988, they were looking for a Director and staff. My advisor said, "Why don't you apply for the Director." I said, "I cannot be a Director. I don't know how to be a Director." He said, "That's alright, you can just show up and say something." I thought he was crazy. *(laughs)*

I applied, and he wrote a recommendation. I applied for the Director position, although I wasn't qualified. They knew that. And I knew that. But they needed a research person, and they wanted to do something Japanese to open the Center, and they already had a connection with Alexandra Munroe. Having me wasn't a bad proposition for them. They didn't have to worry about my visa at all, because of my practical training status. That's how I got my first professional position.

Interestingly, CICA's Executive Director Bhupendra Karia was a photographer and printmaker and also a bit like you [an archivist]. He created a catalog of sales results for photography. He was also familiar with Japanese things, because he studied printmaking in Japan in the fifties and then came to New York in the Sixties.

He knew [Yayoi] Kusama as a living phenomenon in New York in the Sixties. He knew she was big at the time, although few knew her in the 1980s. It was an interesting project. I think he knew from the beginning he wanted to do Kusama for the opening show. He contacted Alexandra Munroe to be our guest curator. She didn't know if she could curate a Kusama show, because we had only half a year for preparation time. We thought it's impossible. It is impossible usually. *(laughs)* So, she didn't think we could do that. But Mr. Karia wanted to do it anyway. So we did it.

It was a great opportunity of research for me. It was hands on. At school they don't teach you how to deal with artists' materials, and how to organize artists' archives, like I know you do well. Of course, we scholars and students organize our own library, or what we have – research material - but not in a sharable form. That's what the librarians do, the archivists do – to create sharable resources. They create the shareable physical space of those materials and give them a structure. Mr. Karia taught me how to do all these things, and I organized Kusama's archive for the CICA's research. It was really hands on. I actually liked doing that.

Plus you had the opportunity to work with Alexandra Munroe, who was an emerging specialist in the field of Japanese contemporary art.
Yes. She previously worked at the Japan Society gallery, where she began looking at postwar Japanese art. She established her reputation with the "Scream" show ["Scream Against the Sky: Japanese Art after 1945." Yokohama Museum, Guggenheim, SFMOMA, 1994-1995]. She was a trailblazer. I admired her for that. Without her, I was not what I am now.

We both learned on our feet, I think. There was little scholarship previous to us. In our Kusama research, both of us were probing our way together. As I said, of course, she's ahead of me professionally, and also she worked on Kusama before me. But Kusama had been part of my interest through George Rickey, too, because they both showed in the '65 Nul exhibition, in which Gutai also showed. In the group picture, you have Kusama in kimono and George Rickey sticking out his head in the back row.
That photo is very symbolic to me. Gutai was there, too. Yoshihara was there. Kusama was there. Rickey was there. Important artists I have studied in significant ways.

Kusama was a great show to have to inaugurate the Center for International Contemporary Arts, because she embodies, especially in the Sixties, a type of internationalism. Working on that show was a really good experience for me. That's how I started. Then the Center closed because of the financial situation in 1992, after four years. By then I was married to an American man, a photographer, so I didn't have to worry about a visa anymore. But suddenly the Center disappeared, and I didn't know what to do, so I seriously thought about going to Library School, because I liked dealing with books, working with archival material, and I know art history. I thought, if not MOMA, I can work at New York Public Library.

I considered that very seriously, but then Alexandra [Munroe] contacted me and said she needed assistance in research. She was preparing for the Yokohama [Museum of Art] show, which became the "Scream" show. I decided to help her research, reading materials together, like a seminar. I discovered I actually knew a lot by then, because one of the works I did at the Center was to build a library on modern and contemporary Japanese art using a grant from the Japan Foundation. I collected pretty much what had been in print and available. At the Center, I was the only one who could read Japanese, so I read and read and read them. In a very interesting way, what she knew about the postwar avant-garde art, and what I knew about, the broader context, complimented [each other] very well. That was also the first time I wrote a text in English on postwar Japanese Art for publication. Alexandra was very encouraging, and she gave me an opportunity. I am very thankful for that.

Which publication?
The "Scream" catalog. Also, that was the first time I "edited" a book. At the Center I started editing without knowing that's what I was doing, by helping with the exhibition catalogs. I kind of knew, doing it, and I became a de-facto editor of the "Scream" catalog because I was actually doing the work. So, that's how I made an entrance to editing.

The good thing about working with Alexandra on the "Scream" book was that I had certain responsibilities shaping it, some parts of the catalog like Glossary, Bibliography, and the artists and critics writing in the back of the book. Of course, I read Alexandra's texts carefully, and I was in charge of collecting photographs. I did a lot of mechanical and intellectual parts of that book.

The outcome was that for the first time, I really discovered Japanese postwar art. That is to say, I had studied postwar American art history at graduate school and, what I thought at that time and what I still feel the same way, is that, oh my god, postwar Japanese art is as interesting and as important as postwar American art. Maybe more so and sometimes way more radical than the American Sixties, which was what I loved the most at the time. I was especially fond of Conceptual Art. With the knowledge of that, I found those guys in Japan phenomenal.

You've gone on to do much work in the field. Working with the Getty ["Art Anti Art Non-Art: Experimentations in the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan, 1950-1970," 2007], and the exhibition, "Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s," at the Queens Museum of Art [1999].
A letter came to me from the Queens Museum of Art asking me to recommend a curator who could put together a Japanese section for their show, "Global Conceptualism." I said, "I recommend myself." I knew that Conceptualism was something I really loved. Together with performance art, conceptualism was the area more than anything else that Japan was ahead of its time.

Just like we feel Gutai was very advanced in the Fifties, in the Sixties I thought there are great artists not known here in the States. I said, "I want to do it." I pitched my idea, and they said ok. That was my first curatorial project.

I was in the States, working very closely with the organizers of the Queens Museum team. I worked very closely with them, because the idea of global conceptualism is to look at the different places outside the usual mainstream or Eurocentric places, and that became my mission, too, basically. Since I was interested in American Conceptualism, I enjoyed discussion with them about it. We needed a revisionist approach. What did we think about North American Conceptual Art, not just New York, but including Canada, the West Coast, and so forth.

Another thing you were doing around this time -2003, I believe - was your organization of the listserv group PoNJA-GenKon [Post-1945 Japanese Art discussion Group/Gendai Bijutsu Kondankai].
Yes, 2003. This year [2013] is our tenth anniversary. "Scream" was 1994. The "Conceptual" show was 1999, and in 2001 I did the Tokyo section of the "Century City," at the Tate Modern, which was a direct outcome of the "Global Conceptualism" exhibition, because they saw the catalog, and noticed a name other than the usual suspects, so they said, "OK, we really have to include this person." It's also a very global, multi-centric project in line with global conceptualism. Tate Modern became another occasion for me to pursue my mission.

Those things were going on, and because of "Scream," studying postwar Japanese art became legitimate in American academia, Students could say to the faculty, "Here you go – look at this. We can do more." Alexandra [Munroe] in that sense established the standard – the benchmark. Students can say, "We want to continue this direction." There were many graduate students – more than a handful- who started directly inspired by Alexandra's work.

Let's get back to activism, because [you mentioned previously] PoNJA-GenKon. In 2003, I noticed that there were many graduate students working in many topics [on postwar Japanese art], but we didn't know each other. Also, Ming [Tiampo, co-Curator of the 2013 Guggenheim Gutai exhibition] and I were beginning to have a relationship as colleagues, sharing research and sharing ideas, and that's what is required in bringing scholarship to the next level, or understanding to the next level.

Kazuo Shiraga, *Challenging Mud*, 1955. Courtesy of the former members of the Gutai Art Association and Ms. Fujiko Shiraga

You cannot just work on your own. It's a young field, Japanese postwar art. If you alone are established in American academia – that's only one person. We need ten of us, or even more – very prominently – working in different manners. In order to make that platform, myself and Miwako Tezuka, who at that time was a graduate student at Columbia University writing her dissertation on Jikken Kobo/ Experimental Workshop ["Jikken Kobo Experimental Workshop: Avant-Garde Experiments in Japanese Art of the 1950s."] - now she is the Director of the Japan Society Gallery- we decided to make a network. We did it online using the Internet technology.

That's activism – creating a community. At that time, I was hoping someone would make a community for me. *(laughs)* I was waiting, but nothing was happening. I realized if I don't make a community for myself, there's no community. That's how we started this community of PoNJA-GenKon. The number now is more than 200 registered names. The active membership is probably 100, or so, including art historians, graduate students, curators, who are interested in postwar Japanese Art. That became my "independent" platform. In 1988, or even in 1995, we could find no position for a trans-regional art historian. Nowadays, it's easier to find some positions, but at that time – not yet. I didn't think I could get a position.

Besides, I don't like organized teaching. *(laughs)* I like private teaching, because I can customize what's necessary –what I can give to that particular person. That's another way of creating a community, too. Even with my "mentees," it's all individual relationships.

PoNJA-GenKon was the beginning of my activism, to create my, or rather our own community – our own platform. The members know this well, but I borrowed my life motto from Yoko Ono, "A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality." The spirit of collectivism, working together, is very important for me. That's the key to making activism work.

You know the Ashiya petition drive? Because of financial difficulty, the city of Ashiya wanted to close down the museum [Ashiya City Museum of Art & History – the largest depository of Gutai documentary materials]. At that time we did a petition drive. Please don't close it – because it's important. Especially for us outside of Japan - maybe not for them. *(laughs)*. PoNJA-GenKon started a petition drive, and then we got a respectable number of signatures and sent it to Japan. [http://www.petitiononline.com/petitions/ashiya/signatures?page=23]
We worked with Yamamoto-san [Atsuo Yamamoto]. We were a news item – that we were doing this outside Japan became news in Japan. That's activism.

You became an activist art historian by restaging Shiraga's "Challenging Mud" [An artwork by Kazuo Shiraga first performed in 1955.]
That's another kind of activism. I didn't do it myself. It was initiated by my only official student and PoNJA-GenKon member, Ai Arakawa.

He's my only official student, who went to School of Visual Art. We did independent study under the school's auspice, so he's my "official" student. All the others are private. *(laughs)*. He's really an interesting artist. He's very historically minded. He used the precedents of the postwar and modern Japanese art to create a dialogue. That's how he creates his own practice. He had a project at the Museum of Modern Art [New York]. It's completely outside of my doing, and he didn't even think I would do anything like that, but he created the situation for "Challenging Mud" for an archivist in Tokyo as a concept, asking a question: how do you do an archive performance?

It's a metaphor. It's not looking at photographs, and such, but you recreate a sense of the performance and then the archivist will do his job sorting this out. He said, "You can come. You want to do a performance?" He didn't ask me to perform, [but said], "If you bring a change of clothes, you can play with mud." And I said, "Of course, I will!" *(laughs)* Then we started talking about logistics. What you do afterwards. We need water. You have to wash it off immediately. Things like that. What do I do? What do I wear? Shiraga was half naked, wearing only short pants. First idea was bikini – swimming suit. I said, "No way!" *(laughs)*. I wasn't going before the public half naked. So, we had to figure out lots of things about how to do it.

I think one of the more interesting things you had to think about was how the mud was created.
Indeed. For example, with [Suburo] Murakami's paper breaking ["Entrance," 1955] there is a certain method of recreation, recipe or instructions, whatever you call it, made by the artist. There are procedures to follow – what kind of paper to use, how to stretch the paper and so forth. Shiraga never left anything like that. Murakami recreated his paper breaking work and also built upon it in later years. In Shiraga's case, he never restaged his mud piece. That's an interesting point, don't you think?

He did it three times.
Three times for the same exhibition. It almost doesn't count as three in a way Murakami did his paper breaking many times, Shiraga was done basically in one stretch. And he never restaged it afterwards. In those three performances he did for one exhibition there was a process of improvement. In Murakami's case, when he did it later, it becomes a reflection on it, a recreation of it and an extension of it. It's a very different situation. So, we don't call it restaging in Shiraga's case, even though he did it three times.

I looked at the oral history by him, in interviews describing what he did - we didn't have much time to research. I would have loved to ask [Tsuruko] Yamasaki-san, even [Shozo] Shimamoto, how did you make mud. We didn't have time to do that. My performances happened rather quick, in a week or so. In some interviews and photographs, Shiraga talked, his recipe for two tons of mud, which was a kind of wall plaster, how much of cement powder mixed in. There are also some documentary photographs, which I never saw from this perspective. If you see the photographs, you can see the consistency, the texture of mud. For MOMA, we used garden soil, because the museum couldn't get the wall plaster, and they also got bags of cement. Ei Arakawa and I tried to mix them. We didn't know how much water. So, we poured little by little, and I looked at the documentary photographs, we all looked at them and said, "Does it look like it? Yeah, it looks like it." *(laughs)*. We didn't know what we were doing. I think we did a decent job, though. *(laughs)*

The interesting thing to my mind was that you did it at all – an art historian entering into the performance to discover the intricacies of the performance.
Yeah. The interesting thing is if I was organizing this project [of restaging], say, as part of a Gutai show, or my own performance studies, I would have asked an artist to do it for me. Ei and I worked together to figure out the consistency of mud and other aspects of the performance, but the most interesting part of this project was that an artist wanted no [other] artist to work on it. But he wanted either an archivist or a historian, who has knowledge of the work. He was very specific. I was a puppet, basically, of this artist – a very talented artist- who didn't know what would come out of it.

We started e-mailing each other how we should do it. He had some idea how we should do it, because he's an artist in a creative way. I think I'm creative as a scholar, but I'm not creative in a way an artist can be. I had a very conservative approach. I had to know how Shiraga had done it. But, Ei Arakawa didn't think it was important how he had done it. To me, it was very important how he did it. I put together photographs. I also saw a very short film some time before that. So, I put together all my knowledge to try to figure out how he had done it and how I can do it.

I'm not a performance artist. I cannot pretend I'm an artist. So, to the audience, I said, "I'm not an artist, which is a very important premise. Please don't expect me to give you a performance. I'm going to investigate it with you, the audience." That was a good decision I made, and it was also a good decision Ei made - to let me do what I do best. It's like a performance lecture. When we the scholars give a lecture to investigate a work of art, be it painting or performance, we use a PowerPoint slide show. You know, you can show a close up and say, "Here you can see the footprints. Yes, exactly here." At MoMA, I used live action instead of the PowerPoint – that's what I did. In a way, I was a very good show person.

It was a very good interview you did, which explained the performance.
You know, I actually like telling people what I know. I'm a lecturer. People usually enjoy listening to me talk. At MoMA, I was doing a hands-on lecture. He was very surprised – Ei Arakawa, the artist- that I was so much into it, writing a text afterwards about what I had done with him. A kind of essay-poem. I had to write that, because it was interesting to me, because scholars don't usually get an opportunity to do that. But once you do, you really understand what is involved in doing that. John, you're an artist yourself, and you do performance. It's probably different, but for me it was an eye opening experience.

It resonates with me, because I'm a librarian and a Mail Artist that collects Mail Art. Someone saw my collection in the Archives of American Art, and called me an activist librarian, because I entered into the practice of Mail Art to collect the Mail Art. I wasn't a disinterested person collecting. I involved myself in the process, which is what you did in this instance, which I found interesting.
It's always important to remember that art is made by somebody – a living person. If he's already dead, he lived in that moment. Art historians tend to forget that, don't you think? We look at the work as if that's an objective entity that we can dissect to our wish. I have a tremendous respect for a person who made art. Without art, art history is nothing. That's kind of a conservative approach to art history right now, because art is now considered an artifact. But an artifact can have its own life. That aspect I study too. But before I can study any aspect of art, somebody had to make it.

Especially with Performance Art, but maybe painting, Performance and Conceptual Art, all the same probably. I cannot paint, but maybe if I had known [earlier] that there was such a thing as Conceptual Art, I could have been a good Conceptualist Artist. *(laughs)* I would have loved to become a Conceptualist Artist. But I didn't have a chance to see if that's possible.

Performance Art is one area we can engage ourselves more actively, if an activist, research is a scholarship option. In that sense, my mud experience was interesting because restaging is always an issue for studying Performance Art, whoever does it – the artist himself, the curator in a museum environment, or a complete stranger.

We can get into the Marina Abramovic thing right now, with her restaging of previous performances, but I really don't want to do that.
No, let's not do that. *(laughs)*.

What I would like to touch upon is your feeling for the artist, and in particular, your relationship with the artist Ushio Shinohara, and the recent film on him and his wife, "Cutie and the Boxer," in which you made an appearance. How did this come about?
He's a legend of sixties art, of course. He lives in Brooklyn. I first came to know him when I was at the International Center for Contemporary Art, but not closely. In "Scream Against the Sky," I had some interaction with him. For a long time, he didn't know what I did. He always thought I was a good translator, because that's how he knew me. At some point, I became a good art critic, because I wrote on him for newspapers, which he read. Finally, I became an art historian, *(laughs)* because I began working with him on exhibitions and other projects.

The first time I worked closely with him is when he and Noriko, his wife, had a two-person show at hpgrp Gallery in New York in 2010. That's the first time I wrote something substantial on him. Before that, I was helping him and helping other curators working on projects with him. His wife is a really great artist. After this exhibition, we became much closer, like a friend of the family. We did Ushio's retrospective at the Dorsky Museum [Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY New Paltz], thanks to Hiroko Ikegami, who wrote a great book on Robert Rauschenberg's world tour in 1964 [in Japan]. She's one of my mentees and I aided her book. Shinohara was an important part of her book. And that's how the exhibition at Dorsky came about. This exhibition brought me really close to the family. I'm probably a mixture of a family friend, a fan and a historian. To me, he's an important figure, but I don't want to go too exclusive. He has a good number of supporters.

I work on other artists, important artists, who may not have much support like him. I also developed personal relationships - sometimes friendships, sometimes just as an artist and art historian relationship - when I worked on "Global Conceptualism" and "Century City." I always want to know about the person of an artist I study. How a person can become an artist. I'm very interested in that, because I didn't become an artist myself.

It's a rather conservative view, but I think the secret of creativity often lies in the artist biography, because I am very interested in how a person becomes an artist. I tend to develop a very close relationship with the artist I study, even for a limited time. With Shinohara, that went much broader and deeper, because my husband and I, we are their friends. Although he has been rather well supported in Japan, he is not outside Japan. He is very poor, as you can see in the documentary film. He still has to develop his market.

With Contemporary Art, even Modern Art - not so much in Renaissance or Baroque Art, not so much Impressionism, because they already have a market – scholars are part of the market equation, whatever we do. If the Museum of Modern Art does a retrospective on, say, Jasper Johns, it has an immediate impact on his market. Even though we pretend whatever we do with the museums or books, has nothing to do with commercialism, we do have an impact. I am aware of that. I work with galleries too. Galleries need scholarship too. They cannot present postwar Japanese artists like they show Pollock or Warhol. They have to explain. I am good at explaining.

Like you did with Shiraga at McCaffrey Fine Art [New York].
If a gallery wants to have someone like me to work with them in a serious manner, I'm more than happy to work with them. I'm independent and not in the constraint of museums and institutions. Also I think, ultimately I'm working not necessarily for myself. My work is nothing if there is no artist. I'm an art historian. I work for them – for artists.

(laughs)

Seriously.

Ushio Shinohara with Motorcycle Oiran Kanzashi (1988) at Shinohara Pops! exhibition at Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY New Paltz, 2012. Photograph by Reiko Tomii. Courtesy of Reiko Tomii.

Theda's Island, Chapter 6 (part1): THE GAS TITANS

By MARK VAN PROYEN

I know what you are thinking: "hey, wait a minute! What happened to Chapter 5?" The short answer is that I don't want you to read Chapter 5, at least not yet. I want to hold back some aspects of the narrative so that it will be more difficult to figure out certain things that need to be kept under wraps (for the time being). Also, there were a few things in Chapter 5 that caused some distress amongst my team of legal advisors, and I take their advice very seriously. So on to Chapter 6 we go, and it takes place at an academic conference held in the canyons of your mind. And just so you know, this is indeed a work of fiction, and at some junctures it even lapses into outright hallucination. And all of it is protected by several draconian copyright laws.

Even though it was less than forty miles from San Francisco, the San Jose Convention Center proved to be a bad choice of venue for the annual conference of the University Art Association. The center was a huge facility that oftentimes hosted multiple events to take full advantage of its size, meaning that, in chilly mid-February, the UAA conference had to share the vast building with a large boat show that was situated on the ground floor, while the third floor was occupied by another group called the Universal Association of Life Coaches. The second floor was given over to the UAA conference, but given the fact that it contained two grand ballrooms as well as a dozen smaller meeting areas, it was more than adequate for the lectures and symposia hosted by the conference, all the more so since the building's spacious mezzanine was made available for the job interview center and university press book fair sponsored by the conference. These were the two places where most of the conference participants would informally congregate before and after the formal sessions devoted to topics such as *Post-Coloniality and the New Technology*, *Artistic Competence and the Death of Experiential Learning,* and *Art in the Age of Nachos*.

Since the art criticism panel that I was on was slated to take place during the late Friday afternoon segment of the conference, I decided to take the train down the peninsula early that morning. This would allow me to check-in and attend one of the early sessions before having lunch. Afterwards, I could mingle a bit, and then give my paper. More mingling at one of the center's makeshift cocktail bars would inevitably follow the critics' symposium, leading up to a late train back to San Rey. Since I lived just two blocks from the Amtrack station, and since the SJCC was only three short blocks from the Diridon transit hub, my travel plans seemed to be a model of smart planning. But even smart plans can run horribly awry, which is exactly what happened. All in all, I would have to say that the conference session went well. At least, I was able to deliver my paper without any major fit of aphasia, and there was some polite applause when I finished my reading, which had the minor merit of directly addressing the topic that was announced by the session's title. That much said, I had to admit that all of the other papers were far more erudite then mine, each one delivered by a truly gifted orator. Even Jerzy Salk was spellbinding in his own way, reciting his Top Ten list of reasons why no one reads art criticism with a shrill voice that lapsed into cartoon character intonations when he would shriek "loved it!" or "hated it" while gyrating back and forth like an animated bobble head. Salk was filling in for an absent Dave Hinckley, and his presentation followed one by Kenworth Bascomb, who spoke in finely polished phrases about the ways that sarcasm poisons the air of responsible public discourse. Earlier, Burton Donaldson made a sensible plea for criticism to challenge the premises of what he called "pseudo-populist karaoke culture" by arguing for a reconnection of art to its "deep psycho-historical imperatives" which meant that art would have to do something other than unsuccessfully compete with the mass media's cynical simulations of popular culture. And after Donaldson, Yervant Juba spoke about "Old Africa, New Africa and the Global Architecture of Transnational Critical Opportunity." Because of his thick Afro-French accent, it was hard to gauge exactly what he was getting at, and I suspected that the gist of his presentation was really a plea for more African artists to be written about by art critics whose travel plans rarely included forays to the southern hemisphere.

The final presenter was Orphelia Kraut, who seemed eager to whip up a controversy about how Mondrian's theory of dynamic equilibrium could be used as a model for social organization. Of course, she was just bending her most recent research into a form that was vaguely suitable for the conference session, and the result seemed formulated from far too many statements that sounded like "what I will try to demonstrate" and "my intention here is to open up onto…" which were followed by other statements such as "what we can see from this demonstration" or "clearly, what follows from all of this," all peppered with strategic insertions of exquisitely pronounced French and German terminology. What exactly had been demonstrated beyond a very quick jump from the statement of premise to a presumptuous conclusion was as unclear, as was any claim of value that was clarified by her assertions.

Nonetheless, when she was finished, there was a hearty round of applause from the sixty or so people sitting in the sparsely populated ballroom. Even without its anemic stench of re-circulated air, the room could easily pass as a model of architectural sterility, an effect that was partially mitigated by a disproportionately large chandelier hanging from the high ceiling, looking as if it were made of cheap plastic. When the applause ended, the moderator demurred from playing the role of discussant so that "in the interest of time," questions from the audience could be taken. The first of these was from a slender man in a loose fitting double-breasted suit coat. He stood up without raising his hand, almost as if he was doing so on cue. "So Orphelia, what is at stake for you in this discussion about the social implications of dynamic equilibrium?" Waiting for an answer to his query, he set his arms akimbo, glancing around the room to see who might be looking at him. His measured pronunciation and arch tone of voice helped me to recognize him from previous conferences—he was Herb Shields, a well-known critic who had once collaborated with Kraut on the development of a widely respected quarterly publication called *November*. Kraut snapped back at him in a stagy imitation of an angry voice. "If you have to ask that question, you haven't heard, or haven't understood a word that I have said." The sharpness of this response seemed to get the audience's attention by whetting its appetite for confrontation, but I had witnessed the same scene before, so I knew that, once again, we were going to witness some contrived theater. I remembered going to concerts given by the brilliant violinist Issac Pearlstein, who happened to be partially paralyzed from the waist down. After every intermission, he would return to the stage with the aid of crutches, only to stumble and fall—producing a collective gasp of concern from the audience. Stagehands would rush out to help, but he would wave them off in rather dramatic fashion. And then, after a moment of visible struggle, he would seize his crutches and slowly stand up without any assistance. After the sympathetic applause finally died down, he would then play a stunning rendition of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in A Minor. Needless to say, this moment of musical resurrection was much less inspiring the second and third time that I had witnessed it, and the same could be said for Shield's tiresome reintroduction of the perennial "what's at stake" question.

Assuming that he was the only one in the audience who was in a position to challenge the panel of critics, Shields then posed another question to Juba.

"So Yervant, it seems that your presentation used terms like 'revolution' and 'insurgency' and 'reformation' rather interchangeably. Now, we all know that there are insurgencies of many kinds, but what I want to ask you, specifically, is about your remark about the May 1968 revolution in Paris, as well as in other places. It seems that your characterization of that event as a nostalgia exercise for bourgeois students was a bit off the mark, and even a little outrageous. Even though that revolutionary moment failed, it changed France and forced important members of the government to flee the capital. I would say that your dismissal of that moment, and your valorization of other insurgencies in South America, Asia and Africa are not at all consistent." At the exact moment when Shields stopped to catch his breath, Juba jumped to his own defense. In the same Afro-French accent in which he read his paper, he loudly shouted, "In 1968, I was six years old in the middle of a civil war. My family was forcibly removed from our home. When my parents were executed by right-wing terrorists, I was sent to boarding school in Antwerp, so you can see, I too was close to the events of May 1968, much closer than you. And from my perspective, I can tell you that the student protests in Europe and North America were nothing like bloody civil war. In Africa, there was bloody civil war! In Nigeria, the Congo, in the south, and the stakes were life and death, not merely arrest and tear gas—bloody civil war I say! So you can see why I am impatient with those in the art world who hark back to 1968 as some kind of golden age of revolutionary aspiration, just as I am impatient with those so-called Marxist art historians who keep trying to rewrite the history of French painting in the mid-nineteenth century as proxies for their fantasies about 1968. The fact was, and still is that, from a global perspective, the student revolts of 1968 were not important, especially in light of the bloody civil wars that were being fought against colonial and post-colonial regimes in Africa! Bloody civil war!"

Juba's rousing defense led several in the audience to break out into spontaneous applause, but it died down rather quickly, because in another part of the seating area, one could hear a low rumble and a collective gasp. A woman stood up wearing a read blazer that, combined with a white blouse and a black necktie, conveyed the look of a corporate real estate agent. Her jet-black hair was tied up in a tight bun, and she sported heavy-framed glasses and bright red lipstick. The fact that she was wearing argyle knee socks was also notable, but not nearly so much so as was the fact that she was without skirt, pants, nor even underwear. Her hirsute pudendum was plainly visible, showing up as a worthy sister to the famous subject of Gustave Courbet's *Origin of the World*. Indeed, there was no mistake to be made: we were about to witness one of Andrea Franco's performances pertaining to Institutional Critique, and we on the panel were about to be cast as the representatives of said institution.

Thus spoke Franco: "It seems clear to me that all of you are the unwitting agents of a vast and far-reaching dissemblation, in that none of you have acknowledged your complicity in maintaining a division of labor that stems from exploitive assumptions. By isolating your comments on selected works of art, you mask the lack of analysis of a system that keeps real rewards out of the hands of artists and in the hands of those who would pretend to support them. We must recognize the unsustainability of this situation. I want to suggest that we use this occasion to turn the tables on the bad faith inscribed into this situation, by focusing our so-called criticism on the mechanisms that surround art rather than the art that is enslaved by those mechanisms. Certainly, some exercise of critical negation is called for, and I implore all of you to take up this important challenge—even if negation becomes the fetish that esthetic autonomy once was. But I would also go even further to suggest that we not merely go from a critique of art to a critique of institutions, we need to take the next step, and establish an institution of critiques, so that we might be able gain great honor in establishing the institutional support of institutional critiques for all eternity! In so doing, we also need to remember that the relevant history of art began with Andy Warhol, and that his revolution is still our revolution! Are you with me?"

There was something that resembled applause coming from the audience, but it came to a halt when a gruff baritone voice from the back of the room shouted "put your pants on!" As sensible as that advice was, Franco was unmoved by it or any other response. She commenced to silently move about the room pointing accusatory fingers at the real and imaginary persons that were contained within it. This produced a rather odd effect, part dance performance and part plea for help, and the moderator seemed too shaken by what had just happened to call for the resumption of order. She just sat in her seat, dumbfounded as to what she might be able to do to bring the session to a dignified close, as if that were even possible.

Sensing that the proceedings had deteriorated to the point of conclusion, several members of the audience came up to exchange pleasantries with the panelists. One of these was The Barnacle, but at that moment, I felt quite safe because she had already attached herself to an uncomfortable looking Kenworth Bascomb. Nearby, Balso Packard was handing an exhibition announcement to Jerzy Salk, who treated the large postcard as if it were rare treasure. Meanwhile, Franco wandered over to Kraut, Juba and Shields, who were all standing close together to share the good laugh of long-standing camaraderie, none seeming even slightly concerned about the fact that one of them was in a state of partial undress. I noticed that Juba spoke and laughed the loudest, as if the volume of his voice would somehow signal a position of dominance. Then I felt a sharp tug on my tweed sport coat, so I turned to find out from where it came. No one was there, but a packet of slides had been expertly placed in the side pocket of my coat. Looking around, I was unable to identify the one among three rather furtive looking bystanders who might have put it there.

Near the side doors, the conference center's event support crew were lethargically folding and stacking chairs onto a large cart. It was clear that they were hoping that we would all leave so that they could get their work done in some semblance of unsupervised peace.

Burton Donaldson walked over to me to offer a handshake, "Your presentation was quite good---in fact, first rate! It's too bad that the situation deteriorated to the point where we couldn't have a proper discussion about the important issues that you raised. I really liked your idea about economies of narcisssistic reward—you should do a whole book about it. But it's good to see you. How are things at your school? Are you still the single voice of reason toiling amongst the idiot savants?"
"I keep waiting for the savant part, but otherwise, yes. I guess you heard that we have a new president. So far, it all seems fine, except that the school's gallery has been taken over by a curator who thinks that redefining the outer threshold of sheer crap will land her a job at the Whitney."

Donaldson paused for a moment, looking around to make sure that potential eavesdroppers were at a safe distance. Then he spoke. "Is the curator Anita Boby?"
"Yes -- do you know her?"

"I know of her. Let's get out of here—we can get a drink at one of those bars on the mezzanine. Let's find one with a seating area, near the book fair." The timing of Donaldson's suggestion could not have been better, because I could see that The Barnacle was tacking in our direction. Fortunately, her progress was impeded by the gesticulating duo of Salk and Packard, and we were able to use the chair gathering of the events crew as a screen to abet our escape to the hallway.

I have always held Donaldson in the highest esteem, and the philosophical seriousness of his exceedingly literate art criticism was the chief inspiration for my own modest efforts in the field. Clearly, he was deeply interested in a great many things, and the fact that my own work was one of them was a source of some pride on my part, although I often wondered what about it actually deserved his attention and support. After reading a few of the things that I had written, he had gone out of his way to help me get published in some of the better art journals, including one which he himself was guest editor. Soon thereafter, I had written an introduction to a collection of his essays, an effort that turned out well by both of our lights. I suspected that he was in some way behind my appearance on the UAA art criticism panel, as I had too few other friends in high places to have garnered the invitation on my own allegation of merit.

We went down to the mezzanine, found seats at a bar and ordered beers from a uniformed server with a shiny pewter nametag proclaiming her to be Yolanda Perez from Paso Robles. These were quickly provided, along with napkins and a basket of salted pretzels. I was keenly interested in Donaldson's information about Anita Boby, but I knew that getting right down to cases would be bad form, so I asked a more innocent question. "How is your book about PostArt coming along?"

"Actually, it's finished, and in about half an hour I need to go upstairs to talk to the editor about some last minute stuff. But the book really isn't about PostArt of the kind that Allan Kaprow proclaimed to be the future of art in 1971. It is more about a group of artists that I am calling "renegade realists;" artists who use a high level of traditional technique to take up the challenge of making pre-modern history paintings in a contemporary historical context. As you know, the art world has gotten far too Hollywood for me, and for far too long. So, I am going out on a limb to suggest that the situation has become so laughably absurd that the most avant-garde thing that any artist can now do is repudiate the all-too conventional practices of creating institutional avant-garde art. I am claiming that the renegade realists that I am writing about are all engaged in that repudiation. Obviously, I am working on he assumption that the real essence of an avant-garde practice is both necessarily and by definition at odds with any institutional mandate, or should be if it begs for any serious consideration. But now, all we have are trivial things made by trivial people for trivial purposes. Even the most cutting edge art is only cutting edge in a predictable and contrived way, because thinking outside the box has become the new and all-too-routine box du jure. The sheer predictability of it all is almost as numbing as is the perpetual recirculation of diluted

clichés. Diluted and deluded clichés, if you asked me, "And written about by trivial people for even more trivial purposes?"

"Well, really, it's all just influence peddling, or even worse, the sycophantic lubrication of influences that has been pre-peddled. For example, we have just witnessed the brayings of Mr. Salk and that silly diatribe by Little Miss Exhibitionist. That was why I liked your paper so much—you put the real issue right out on the table and it went right over everyone's head, or at the very least past the range of their astigmatic, non-peripheral vision. I especially liked the way that you disassembled the art economy in a way that proved that it is not merely a luxury goods market, but instead, an equities market where curators function like hedge fund managers—that was brilliant! In fact, I would like to borrow that part for something that I am working on, can you email it to me? I say this because, and you are one of the first people that I have told this to, I am working on another book, a kind of Suetonian collection of short art world biographies—short psycho-biographies actually, and I am going to apply some aspects of Tomkins' Affect Theory to them. In fact, I am going to call the book *The Lives of the Little Art Caesars*. If that doesn't bring out the torches and pitchforks, I don't know what will."

"That sounds like some real toe-tappin' fun! I wonder if your use of Affect Theory will make any sense to the art book reading public, but someone has to start reaching beyond the holy trinity of Lacan, Foucault and Derrida. And by saying beyond them, I mean to also include the legion of their many parrots and popularizers."

"I'm glad that you agree with me on that point. One of the problems with French postmodernist theory and all of its directives is that, despite its seemingly endless rollercoaster of evasive discursivity, which almost always was an elaborate deferral that pretended to be a strategic retreat from an untenable utopianism—that very discursivity always returns to and ends with the Self/ Other binary. In turn, the default position remains us versus them, but the perpetuation of that antagonism in a new guise only masks the fact that the real beneficiaries of that antagonism are those who would presume to be its referees, who never care nearly so much about the outcome of any conflict nearly so much as they care about sustaining their right to arbitrate those outcomes.

Another way of saying the same thing is to point out how the Self/Other binary always sees the world as a circus of entitlements rather than an arena of competitive competencies. Now the Marxists do have an important point in that, very often, historically speaking, cultures of competency are cleverly constructed masks for cultures of entitlement, or at the very least, rigged confirmations of those cultures. But in the neo-liberal post-Cold War environment, that point no longer suffices, and emphasizing the question of 'who gets to be an artist' at the expense of 'what constitutes a successful work of art' only digs the point into an ever-deeper ditch of irrelevance. That is because reversing the polarity of entitlement only creates another form of entitlement, subtly revealing that it doesn't matter who is entitled at any given time, so long as the very idea of entitlement is upheld. You touched on that in your paper when you said something about the pseudo-radicalism of post-modernism serving the very agendas that it pretended to critique. It really is just loyal opposition pretending to be something dangerous."

Donaldson finally paused to take a breath, giving me a chance to wrap my thoughts around his lengthy remark. Then, after gathering his words, he continued, "The question of who gets to be an artist is the *idée fixe* that misses the bigger picture of the necessary shift from an artist-centered art discourse moving toward a viewer-centered art discourse, which is made inevitable by the end of the Cold War's ideological contest. This is true not only because artist-centered discourse fell into the absurdity of defining a work of art as anything created by an artist, while simultaneously defining an artist as anyone who proclaims themselves to be such; it also suffers from commodifying the careers of artists and their institutional supporters, rather than the actual work that was being produced. Now the question is finally returning to what constitutes a successful work of art, rather than who gets to be an artist. No one seems to have a clear answer, at least not yet, but I am glad that the question is being asked."

When Donaldson paused again, I turned the conversation back to his remark about my paper. "Glad that you found my paper worthy of that kind of interest. I am pretty sure that Kenworth Bascomb would disagree—I couldn't help but think that his little diatribe against sarcasm was directed toward me—but maybe that was just wishful thinking on my part. In any event, I would gladly take honest sarcasm over genteel hypocrisy any day of the week, and twice on Saturday. Truth be told, it is the genteel hypocrites who are ruining art criticism, and ruining the art world as well—of that I am sure. Sarcasm is the only path left if there is any salvation to be had.

Donaldson nodded in reluctant agreement. "I think that Roland Barthes said something to that effect—how did it go-'What I claim is to live to the full the contradiction of my time, which may well make sarcasm the condition of truth.' That's the real reason why we are hearing so much about the linkage of contemporary art to this idea of post-criticism. Obviously, it has something to do with Kaprow's idea of PostArt, but it has been twisted and contorted by other sordid motives. The ideas of PostArt and post-criticism were behind Juba's point about the critical function passing on to the curatorial function. Does he really think that unvarnished influence-peddling can operate on the same plane of seriousness as…thought?"

I paused to take a sizable gulp of beer, and quickly pondered the horrifying possibility that unvarnished influence peddling had indeed become the new gold standard for art world seriousness. Slightly sickened, I then steered the conversation into another direction, with more sickness to follow. "So tell me, what do you know about Anita Boby?"

"Well, she had this low level job at the Pearl Art Gallery at the University of New York, and rather suddenly, in about six months, she was named interim director on a very thin set of qualifications. Because of her interim status, she was automatically a candidate for the permanent job. Then there was a bit of a scandal when it came out that she had claimed that she was ABD at Columbia, even though the registrar's office at the school had no record of her even applying to the doctorial program. After that, she resigned with some payoff money, and disappeared into in a gaseous cloud of non-disclosure agreements, partly because our good friend Ms. Kraut went on record as saying that she had personally admitted her into the program, which had to have been a lie."

"Was there any follow-up?"

"That's the most amazing part of it—there was an initial boo hoo hoo in the Manhattan Guardian, and then, suddenly, sheer silence, as in *oh look over there, a squirrel!* There was even a student petition circulated to keep her, even though she never had any teaching role in the department."

"So, at this point the missing part of the puzzle is how does Anita Boby connect to NCSAD's new administrative team, which is to say, how does she connect to Theda Vohn der Pahter?"

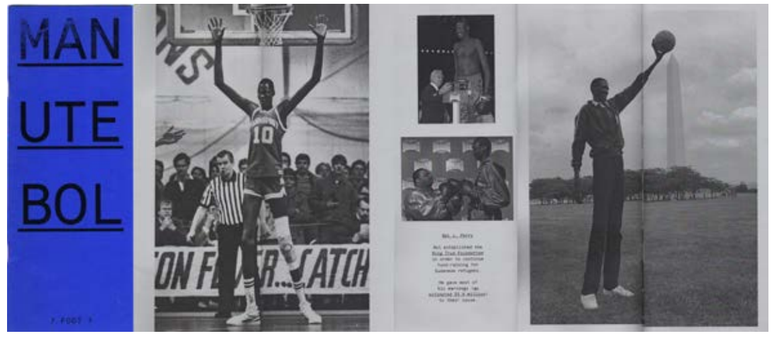
"That I cannot help you with, but there is certainly something going that is hidden from plain view. What was that part of your paper about undeserved self-esteem being used as an exchangeable commodity that could be regulated in the economy of narcissistic reward? That was brilliant! You should do a book about that. You certainly have a major case study set right down on your doorstep."

"Well, I should do some kind of book, that's for sure." Donaldson paused for a few seconds to leave some cash for the beers. Then he said, "I need to get up to the meeting, I don't know how long it will last. I hope that I will see you at the book fair. If you can't make it, I hope that you will get in touch when you come to New York." While we shook hands, he said "I think that woman over there is trying to get your attention."…

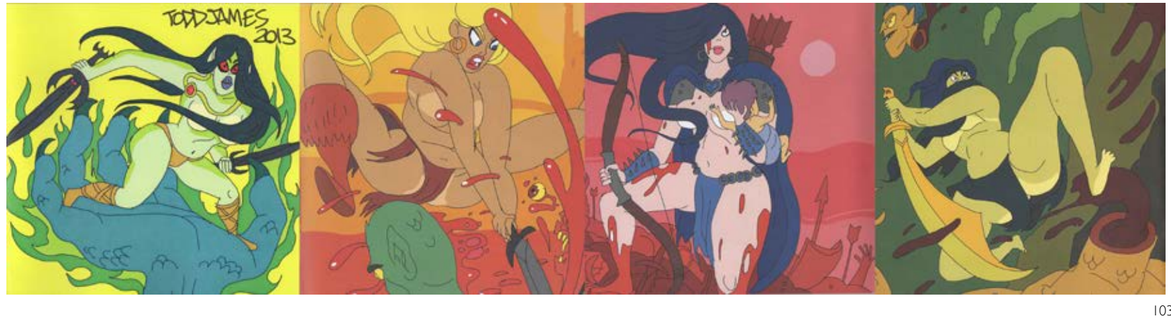
(to be continued).

ZINE REVIEWS BY AUSTIN MCMANUS *www.theflopbox.com*

Alfabeto.Ilegal
Daniel P
I'm not going to lie, I know very little about this zine. I picked it up, flipped a few pages and knew immediately I was going to buy it. Every page is filled with photos of well-organized drug bust displays, each with various letters spelled out in money, bullets or the actual drugs themselves. Some are modest, others elaborate. The only deviation is a display of Red Bull cases that spell out the letters "PRF." I assume those smugglers thought they were home free with their ingenious disguise. I would have never figured it out, but I'm not a trained DEA, FBI, ATF or border patrol agent. Where were these photos taken and how did they end up on the Internet? And what do the letters signify? I will be patiently waiting for Volume 2 with a thorough explanation.



Swords & Sorcery
Todd James
Does this really need an explanation? The illustrations in "Swords & Sorcery" speak for themselves. You got big-booty bikini-wearing babes wielding swords, severing limbs and getting 'bout it with magic. They are not to be fucked with. A few of them even have tan lines. If this was ever your sexual fantasy you'd better send Todd James a thank you card and chocolates now, because he did it justice. These were printed in an edition of 50 to coincide with a pop-up event and they lasted about an hour, causing the last few copies to be raffled off so people didn't punch each other over them. Luckily, I know a guy who knows a guy who knows a guy who got me one. Kidding. Not really. I just know the guy.



7 Foot 7
Brian Paul Lamote
It saw this zine nearly 7 times before I took it home with me, reminding myself that it was too silly a concept not to own for the bargain price of $5, and I would likely regret not purchasing it once it was sold out. "7 Foot 7" is a tribute to the Sudanese-born professional basketball player, Manute Bol, who was, in fact, 7-ft , 7-in tall. Growing up, Spud Webb was my go-to unconventional baller, but Bol was an equally intriguing anomaly on the court. In 1987 Muggsy Bogues, the shortest player in the NBA, was drafted to Bol's team, the Washington Bullets. For a single season Bol and Bogues were like The Avengers of Basketball. There is an entertaining fold-out portrait of the two that serves as the centerfold. Interesting bonus trivia included in this zine: Bol was the only player in NBA history to have more blocked shots than points scored. After winning a boxing match with William "The Refrigerator" Perry (due, no doubt, to his 102-inch reach) Bol donated all his earnings (estimated $3.5 million) to the Ring True Foundation to help Sudanese refuges. And, his first name means "special blessing." Indeed.

KURT DALEN *(1983 - 2013)*

By AUSTIN MCMANUS

A little under two years ago, I made the plunge from San Francisco to New York. It was anything but painless; in truth, it was the most obnoxiously challenging and problematic move ever. But above all, even with 8.3 million humans, the most frustrating thing for me was finding like-minded people with free time to hang out. I started returning to S.F. often, getting responses like, "Oh, you're here again?" or, "Are you back permanently? I just saw you three weeks ago!" In retrospect, it's possible that part of my motivation for frequent returns was the need for a friendship fix, and Kurt Dalen was a staple for acquiring it.

On my most recent visit to S.F. I was fortunate to spend some memorable time with Kurt, before a cruel world snatched him up without warning. I learned on these return visits that it seemed more difficult to get people to go out than before I had moved. It's as if everyone had become unmotivated by the City's few nightlife offerings and limited safe havens from the techie takeover. But Kurt was always down.

I met Kurt back in 2003. He lived not far from my apartment with his dad and was an important part of what I consider my "golden years" of living in S.F.; when all my closest friends conveniently lived within a few blocks of each other in the Western Addition. That whole area was our crew's playground for reckless behavior and the City's cops were even lazier than they are now. Kurt was always up to no good. I think he was preprogrammed for mischief and San Francisco allowed him to continue on through the years, taking full advantage of it. One of the most memorable nights I spent with Kurt was Halloween of 2011. Wearing a painter's outfit and a bug sprayer filled with latex paint on his back, Kurt rampaged through the streets well into the early morning. If you came in close contact with Kurt - chances are you had some white splatters on you somewhere. Everything and everyone caught the wrath of the sprayer with nothing spared, including a set of huge, manicured bushes on Van Ness Street that read VOTE the next morning. It was a hilarious and ridiculous looking sight.

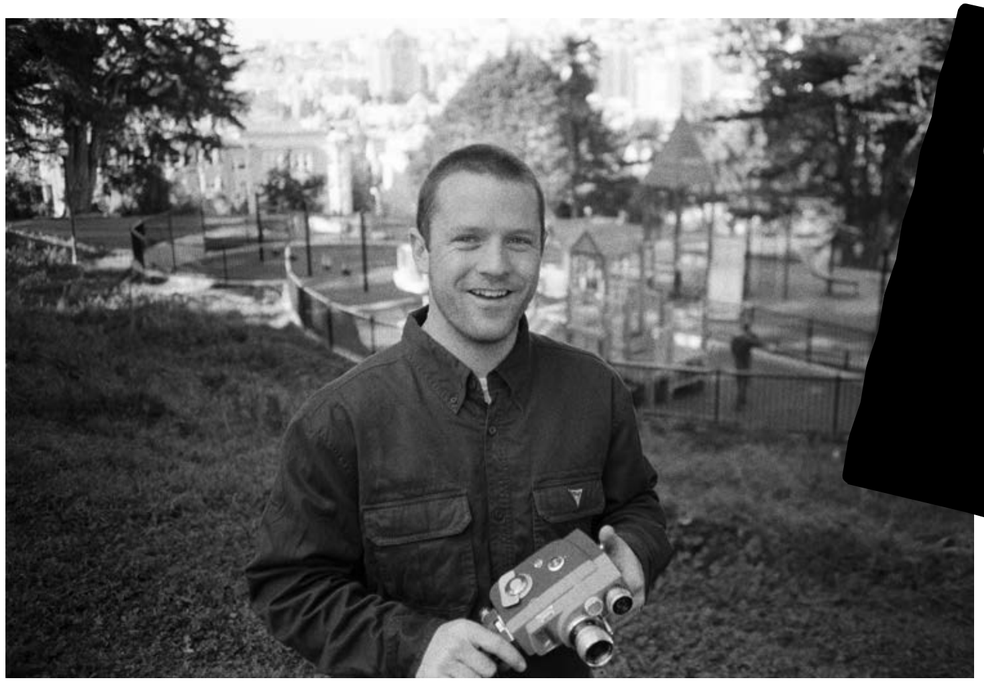
Anyone who knew or met Kurt would mention his smile. He was *never* not smiling. If he was up to no good, he was smiling twice as wide. But if there was anything that resonated with me, it was his oddly contagious optimism. He was so damn good at being positive and living for the moment. I really don't know anyone who does it better. I recall him saying a number of times, "Cheer up, 2Tall (a nickname he called me), it's not that bad!"

And he was right; whatever I was stressing about was never that bad. If people were talking shit on others, he would always say, "Awww, he's an alright guy," or something equally kindhearted.

For his memorial, his close friends and family threw Kurt his first solo show ever. The turnout was phenomenal and it certainly would have sold out if the paintings were actually for sale. There was this god-awful painting of a cat that was so perfectly ugly that every time I looked at it made me smile. It had Kurt's satirical and humorous touch all over it. Kurt never really took himself seriously as an artist, but he could throw paint on a canvas better than most. I don't think anyone realized, not even his parents, how many people's lives Kurt touched until he was gone, and that's partly because he completely disregarded social hierarchies. He didn't pay any mind to who you were associated with or what you did. If you were cool that was sufficient enough for Kurt; if you could party hard, even better. Not a day has passed that I haven't thought about him, and I know it's no different for all those who loved him. Every time I picture him I see his big ole' smile, and it reminds me to smile more, and smile every day.

Various paintings by Kurt at 111 Minna. Courtesy of Austin McManus.

Kurt with Sprayer on Halloween 2011. Photograph courtesy of Austin McManus.



Kurt with a Super-8 camera, 1998. Photograph by Austin McManus.

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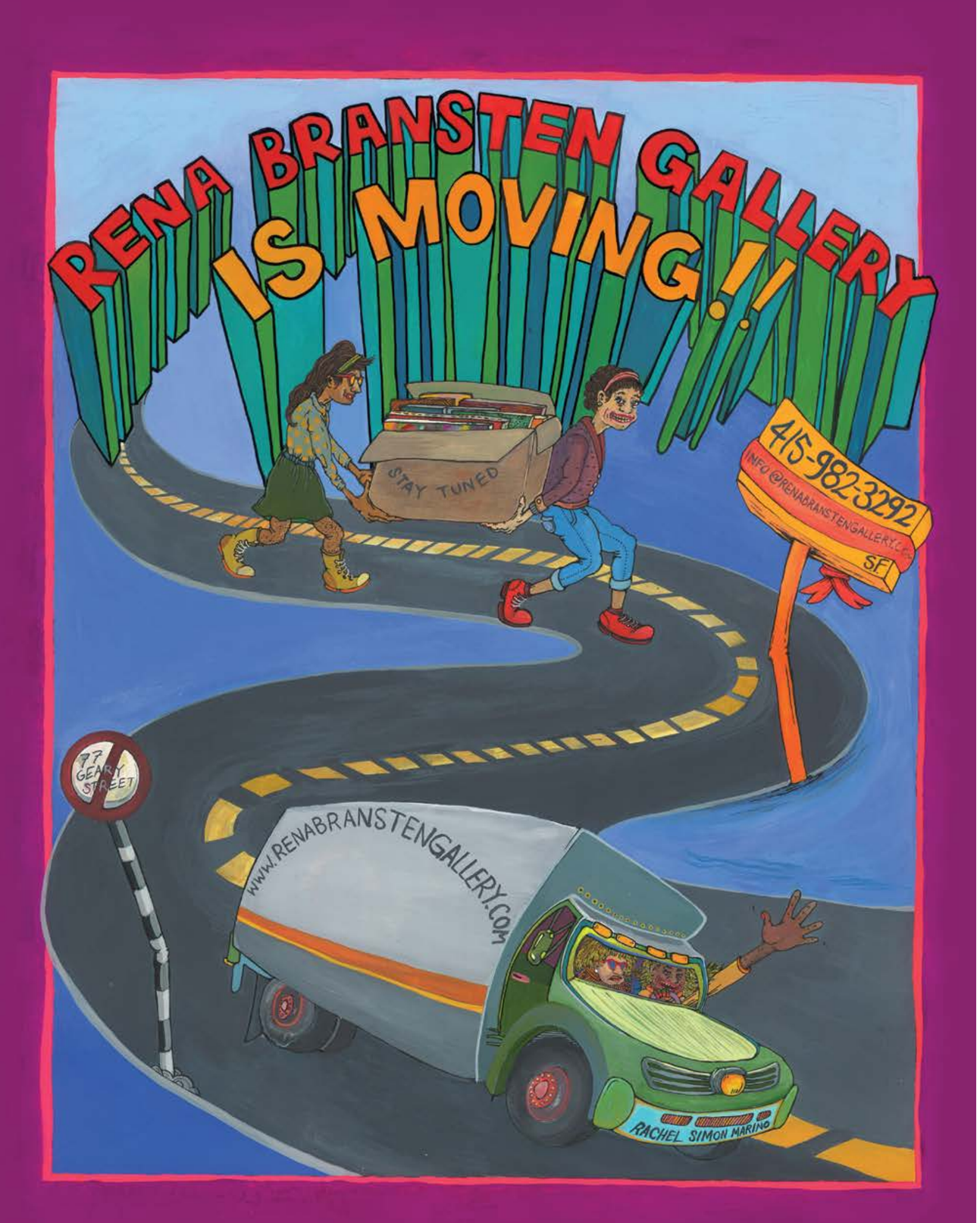

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