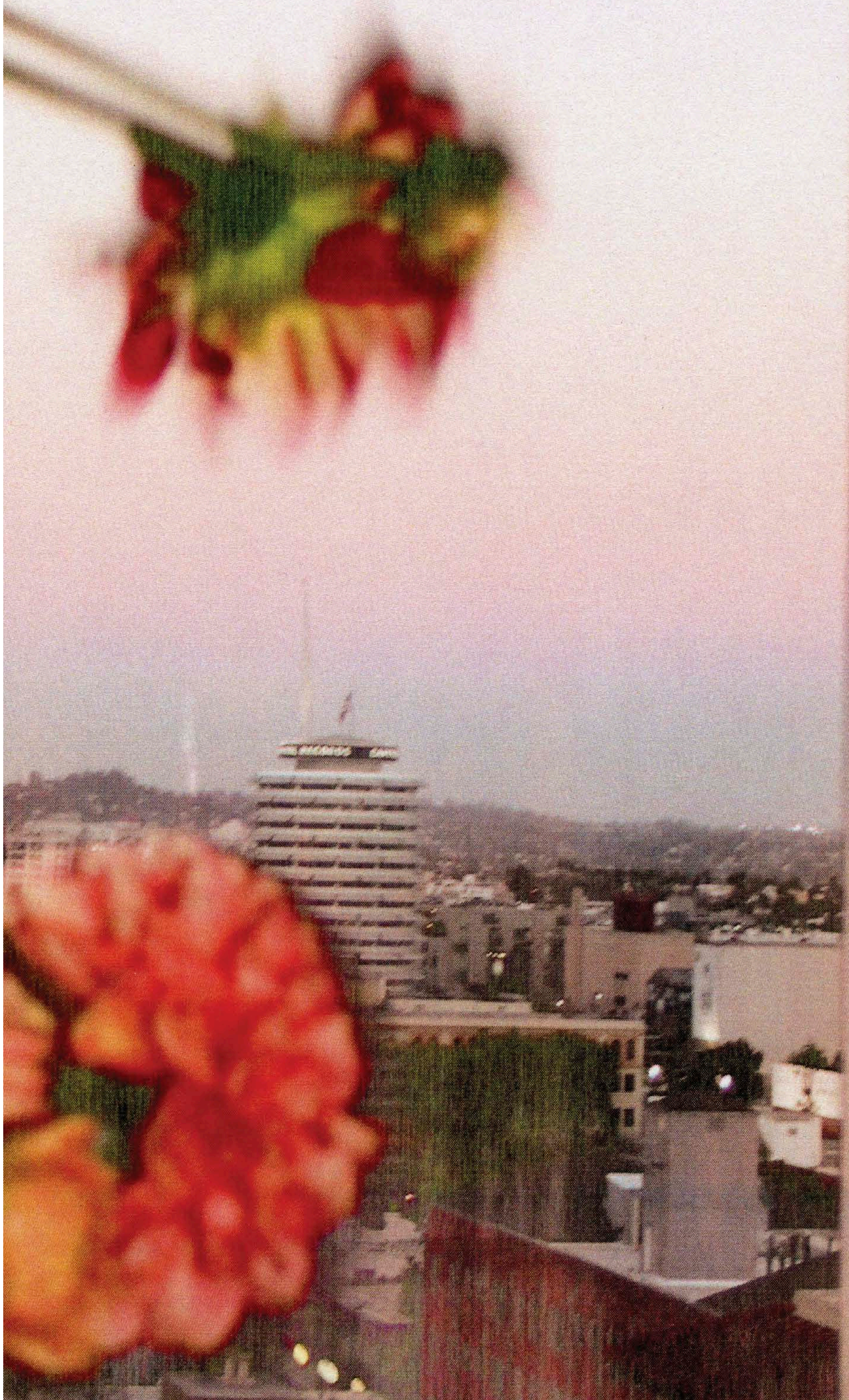
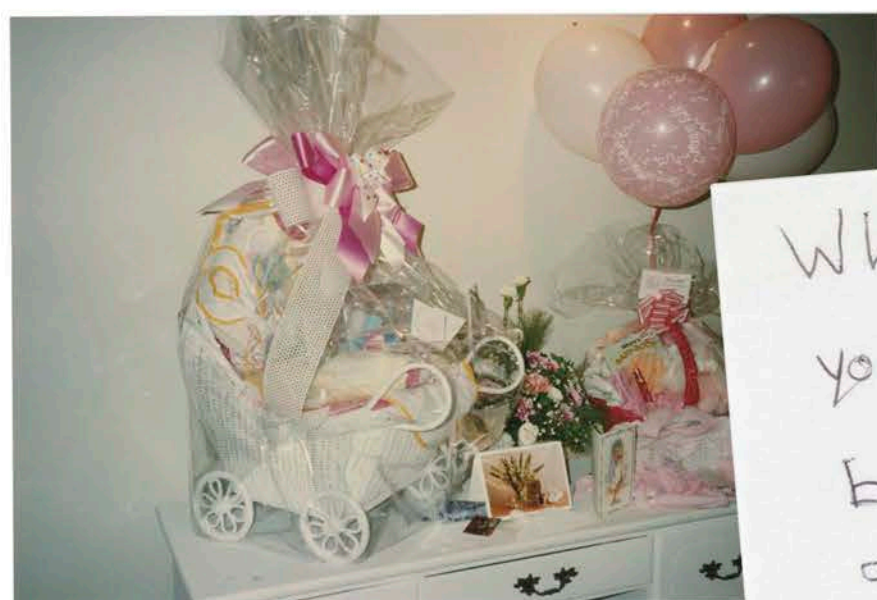


LX AQ

Issue 2 // Free
Parker Ito



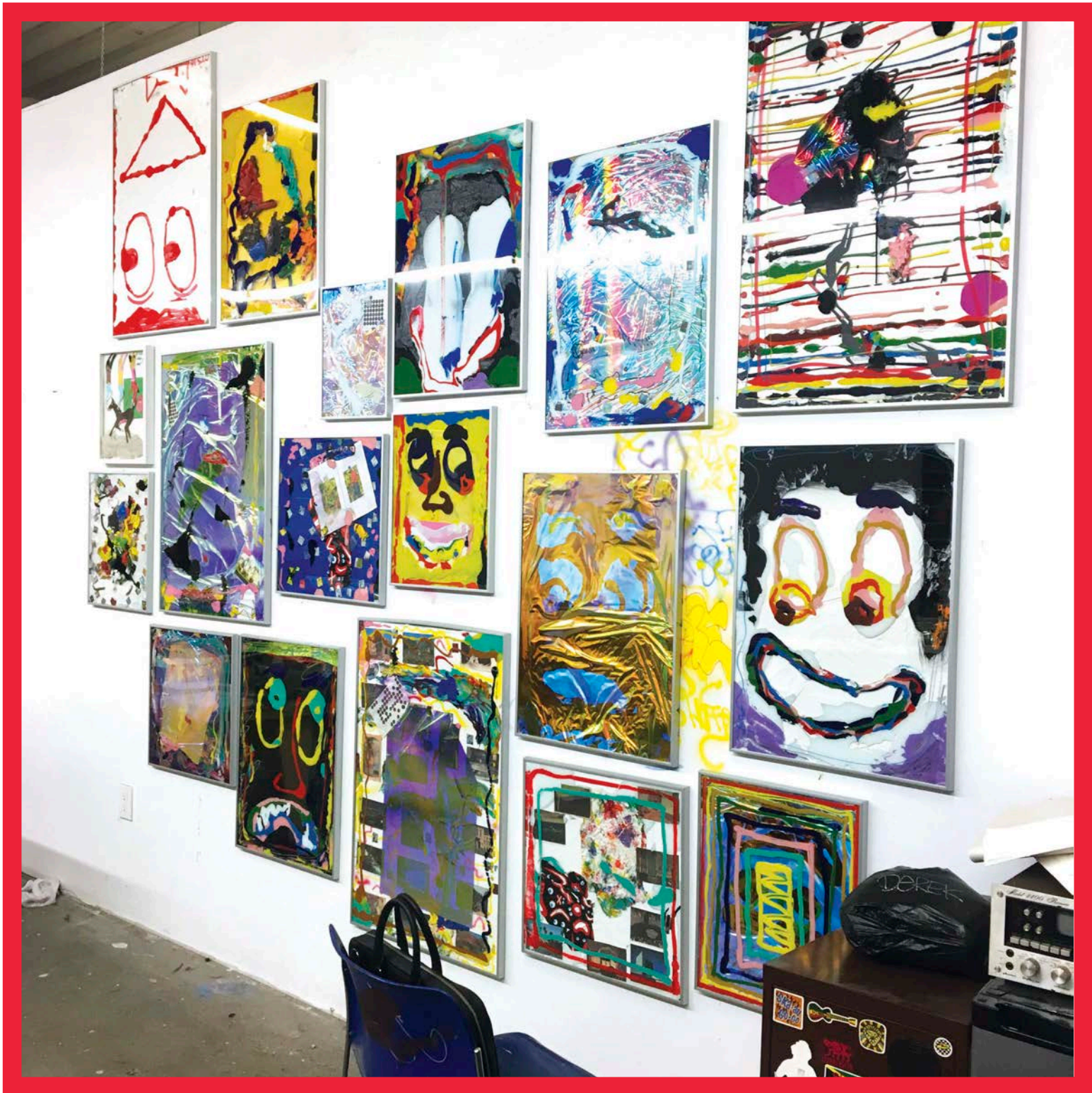
Parker Ito • Sprint Stories & The New Alchemy: Magic And Economy In Late Capitalism • Notes on the Assemblage:
Juan Felipe Herrera • Beyond Repair: Styles of Mending, Cultures of Wounding • An Essay on Los Angeles, Cliché and Palm Trees
• De-Manufactured Machines: A Profile of Survival Research Laboratories • Celebrity Collectors: Dwayne Johnson In Conversation
With Ryan Gosling • Contemporary Poetry • Veteranas and Rucas & Map Pointz • On Point 2.13: Scaling Down Biennial Fever



When I cry when
you are angry I ^{want} ~~want~~ to
backward time so I can
change ~~what~~ I did to
go right.

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Parker Ito

By Franklin Melendez

THE PLIGHT OF P

Where to begin? I suppose with the fact that Parker Ito is currently not doing interviews. Those who’ve followed his practice (and perhaps even those who haven’t) might interpret this as a somewhat surprising turn. After all, young Ito never shied away from provocative declarations broadcast across an array of platforms and through a number of highly stylized personas. Some of these guises eventually became formalized as visual motif, joining the other surrogates, doubles, stand-ins, and refracted self-reflections (physical, artistic, allegorical, and otherwise) that densely populate his work. My favorite incarnation remains the knightly Parker Cheeto, overseen by attendant parrots, seemingly exhausted by the Sisyphean task of envisioning an exhibition so unwieldy it had to colonize multiple spaces across cities and continents—or at least, that is how the artist conceptualized his total output from 2014 to 2015.

Tackled as discrete shows, this year-long undertaking also conjured various artistic roles: the Sunday painter whose amateurish still-lifes had their first taste of the sun in the neighborhood coffee shop in *Prelude: Cheeto Returns (Rainbow Roses Still Lifes at Kaldi Coffee and Tea)*; the art student willfully hijacking the typically unused spaces of an Echo Park gallery, in Part 1: *Parker Cheeto’s Infinite Haunted Hobo Playlist (A Dream to Some, a Nightmare to Others)*; and a blue chip ingénue pushing the limits of the white cube with increasingly fastidious demands, in Part 2: *Maid in Heaven/ En Plein Air in Hell (My Beautiful Dark and Twisted Cheeto Problem)*. I would add to this a slew of other self-declensions, perhaps most notably the studio ringleader/chronic collaborator, who at times took the lead in creative decisions, while at others was happy to recede into the din of production. I have tried to keep track of this colorful cast, but invariably they seep into one another, lost in the overgrowth of LED lights and iridescent surfaces that framed the fullest articulation of the project, Part 3: *A Lil’ Taste of Cheeto in the Night*, presented in a warehouse on Grand Avenue in Los Angeles.

Over time, these shifting guises have provided both the crux and pitfall for a practice that exists through its own proliferation, leaving in its wake a series of objects—some of which could be qualified under the rubric of art, others more slippery in their becoming. Is this the byproduct of the Internet? Who’s to say—but one would be amiss for not crediting the Web’s elasticity for facilitating Parker’s beginnings. Take, for instance, *paintfx.biz* (2010–2011) a loose online collective/club/company organized with like-minded peers Jon Rafman, Micah Schippa, Tabor Robak, and John Transue, who he met through social media. Using various graphics and painting softwares, they embarked on a game of digital exquisite corpse, building an archive of simulated painterly gestures that could be accessed as easily as Photoshop filters. There is much to be extracted from this

protean exercise, particularly as it pertains to the shifting role of the computer screen. For me, it foregrounds the redefinition of “interface” from a point of contact with technology to a conduit onto other unique users. Here, the artist emerges as de facto collaborator, operating in a field where they are in a constant feedback loop with many equivalents. Ito embraced these conditions from the onset, testing out its manifold possibilities through the Paint FX output as well as the repeated outings with Aventa Garden—another loose configuration that’s also maybe a band (I was never really sure) with the artist duo Body by Body, comprised of Cameron Soren and Melissa Sachs. In this configuration, Ito/Cheeto becomes Deke2, the drummer.

Can’t keep track of the shuffle? I suspect that is largely the point. After all, the importance of these personas is not necessarily their family resemblance, but the position they outline: namely, the artist as profile, individuated by so many surface effects. Art historians will quickly point out this is far from a novel concept (insert your own favorite example here), but what remains prescient is how the Ito-Cheeto-Deke2 compound re-contextualizes questions of replication and authenticity within a set of historically specific conditions. Thus, the Internet rears its ugly head once again, but perhaps from a more nuanced vantage point where, in order to grasp its macro effects, one must contend with its micro-reconfigurations, specifically across questions of liquidity, asset building, and branding.

These issues are tackled explicitly in the series, *The Most Infamous Girl in the History of the Internet,** (2010–2013), or “Parked Domain Girl” for short. Developed as painterly memes, these works elaborate on the same, nondescript portrait of a female student wearing a backpack that was used by a parked domain company as a placeholder for unsold websites. The ubiquity of the image, combined with the exchanges and transactions she both elides and embodies, provided the starting point for open-ended variations that call attention to shifting models of artistic production, authorial intent, and the divorcing of personal images from their original referents. Ito is complicit in all of this, exploiting the meme as much as he unravels it, unearthing its backend history along the way. It turns out the mystery girl is the photographer’s sister, enlisted for an impromptu shoot to test out a new camera and unwittingly ending up as a freely-circulating caricature. The strong undercurrent of fetishism is evident in Parked Domain Girl’s repeated usages—but it also applies to Ito himself, who advances this process even as he collapses into it. In the end it is difficult to draw clear distinctions and he becomes her stand-in (rather than the other way around): a Net-y nymphet unwittingly circulating as a placeholder for unspecified value.

This conflation might be clearest in Parker Ito’s contentious relationship to the art market. Boasted as its champion or derided as a harbinger of its collapse, Parker has remained tethered to its ebb and flow in most critical discussions of his work. Granted, this is far from incidental, as his production model willfully undermines (or at least fucks with) the market’s standing currencies: deliberately hyper-producing, refusing to subscribe to the usual signs of authenticity (like signatures), or exploding them to monumental proportions until they too become another visual motif. It’s a tricky gamble, one whose stakes are raised by freely trafficking in editions and multiples, or by piling on the branded swag, including baseball hats, towels, amateur pottery, and other such marginalia that disrupts the sanctimonious space of painting. “I wish I could make a reflector painting for every person that ever asked me for one” was a favorite mantra regarding a particularly sought-after series. Followed to its logical conclusion, this certainly fueled consumption, but only at the risk of burning itself out.

Perhaps this aftermath is one way of approaching the latest exhibit, *live from capital records, b.—i am not a human being I am a disgusting piece of shit* at Château Shatto in Los Angeles. Deployed in six installments, the show has a general tone of evacuation, a ceremonial cleaning of the cache. First, there a series of piecemeal floral still lifes installed over Polaroids (the eclipsed snaps remnants of a long forgotten exercise recently rediscovered in the shuffle between studios). This gives way to other distilled gestures: a video, a tinted window, and a lonesome stainless steel sculpture, all of which materialized unexpectedly if only to announce their ghostly exit. For me, the most telling is *Suit* (2016), the second installment of the series, consisting of a sculpture made from a bespoke suit recently commissioned by the artist. Despite many fastidious fittings and custom touches it somehow never felt quite right, but it found a second life relegated to a hanger, suspended from a power cord, and filled with a latex bodysuit, the deflated outline where a body would be. On the floor below: an amassing of red shoes gathered over the last 10 years, each displaying various signs of wear. Some, like a prized pair of cardinal Adidas, activate a rush of tender memories for me, while a pair of maroon Chelsea boots strike me as curiously mute, standing in stark contradiction to the imagos I hold dear.

It might be tempting to read *Suit* as an act of contrition, or at least a relinquishing of the hazy fictions spun around a creamy dreamy center. But that endpoint strikes me as suspiciously resolute, as do the outward signs of its own authenticity. In a strange way, the encounter brings to mind an online interview with Jason Rhoades I once read. In it, he attempted to articulate the sensorial urgency of his installations: “I think people should be overwhelmed. I think it should shut you down; it should make you give up something.” Rhoades never makes the nature of that “something” particularly clear, but it occurs to me that at this moment Parker would have plenty to choose from.

*All texts and images considering *The Most Infamous Girl in the History of the Internet* have been deleted from the artist’s website since 2014. Any subsequent texts or images referring to the project occur are against the artist’s wishes.

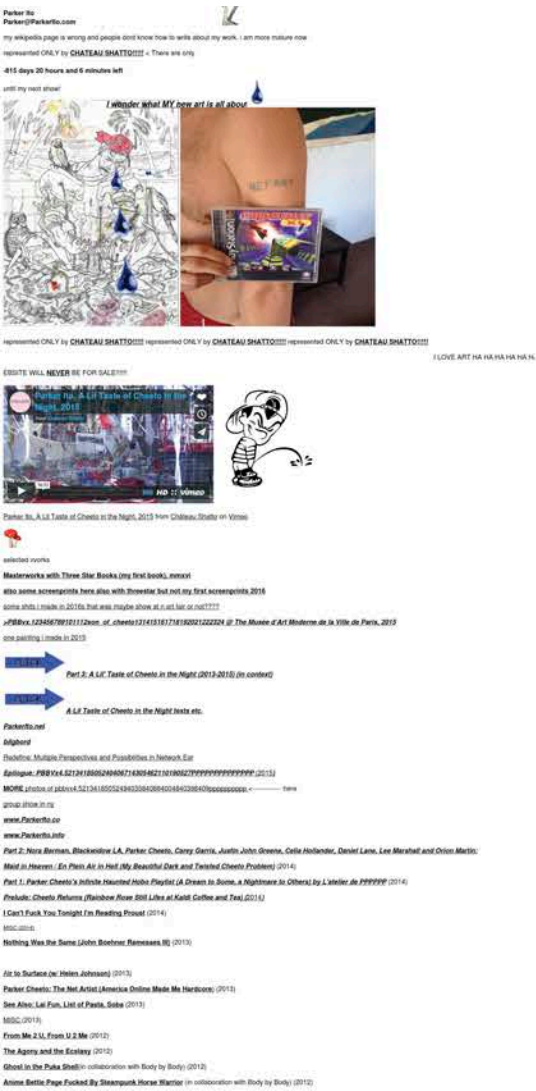


Suit, 2016. Wool, latex, cotton, zipper, wood, nylon, digital print on silk, hanger, Sharpie, power cord, and artist’s shoes accumulated over a 10-year period, dimensions variable. Photograph by the artist. Courtesy of the artist.



The Agony and the Ecstasy, 2012. Vinyl over enamel on 3M Scotchlite, 36 x 48 inches each. Photograph by the artist. Courtesy of the artist.

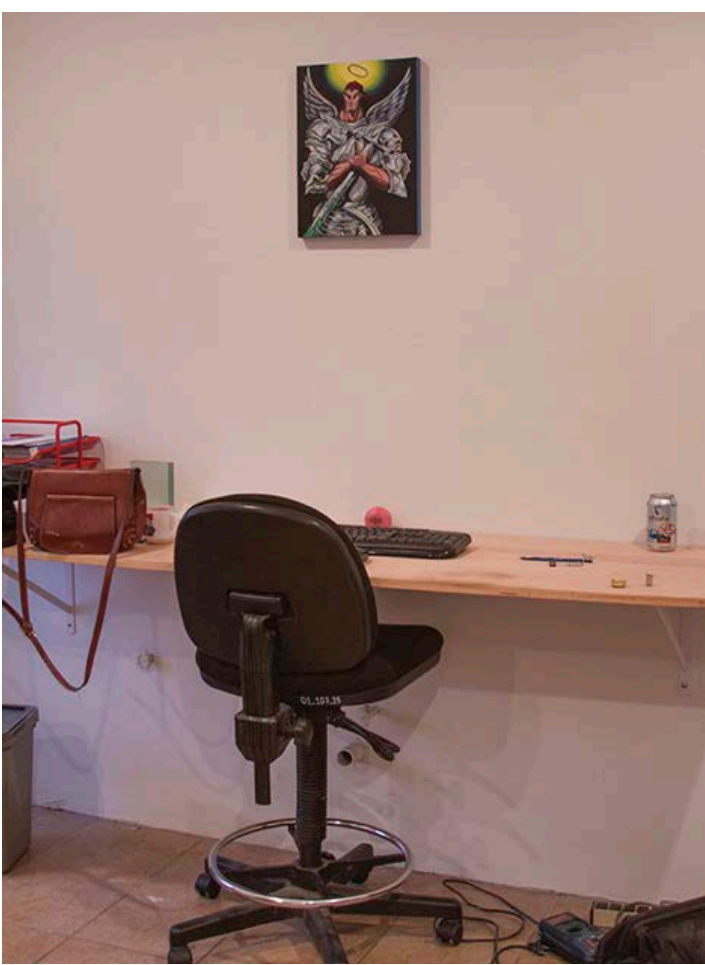
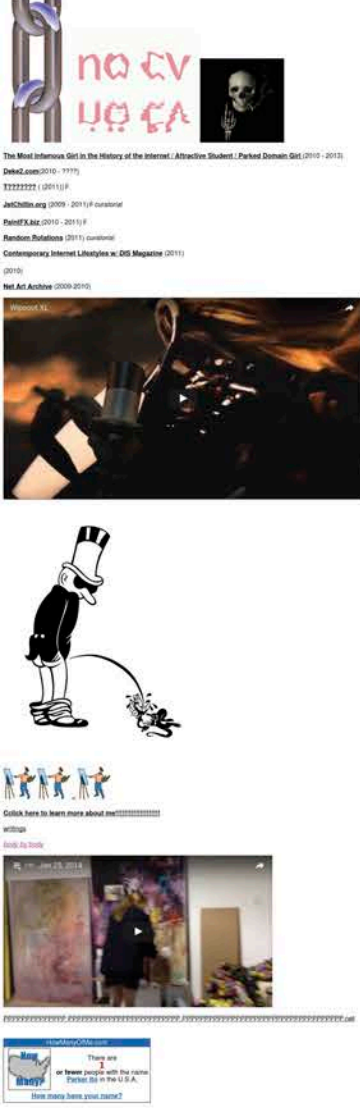




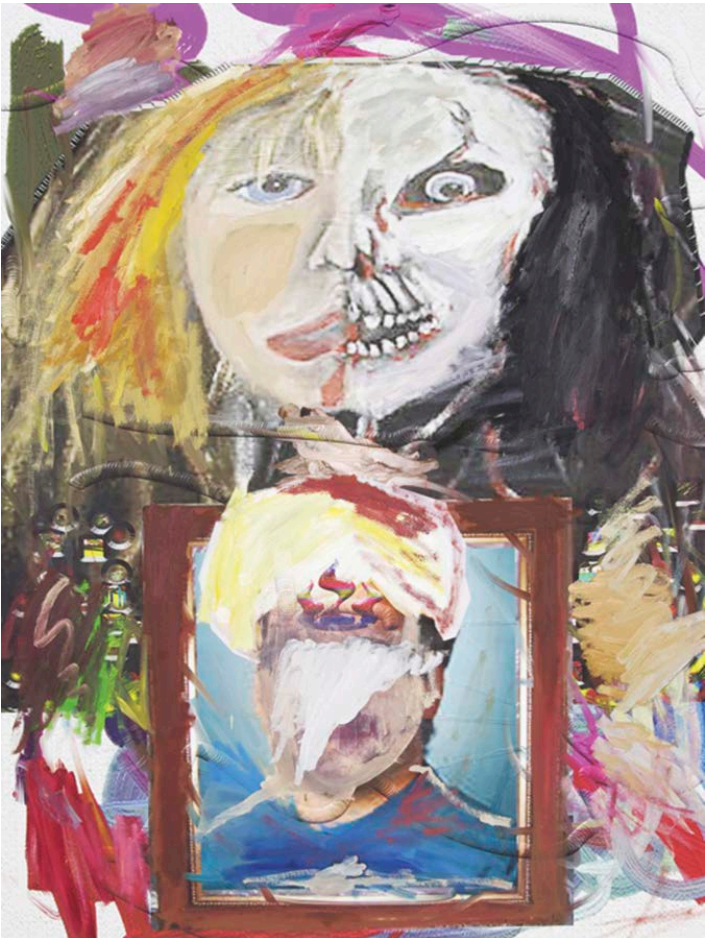
Installation view, *Epilogue: PBBV4.5213418505240406714305462110190527PPP* at Château Shatto, Los Angeles, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



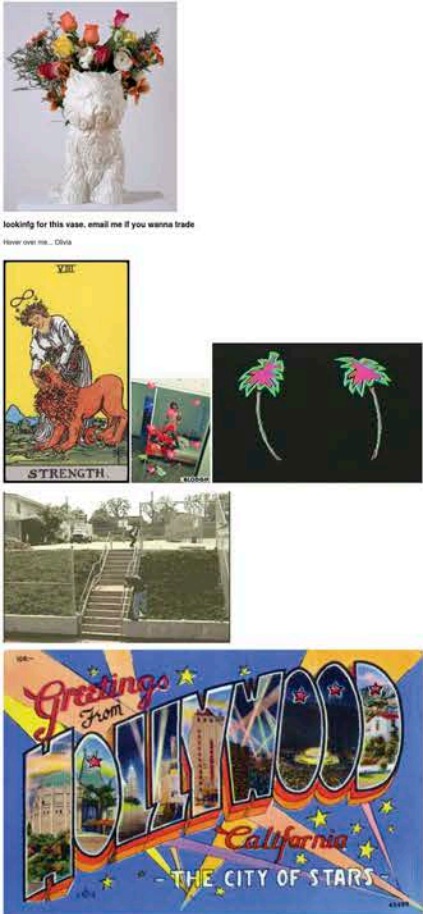
Western Exterminator / Kernel Kleenup / Little Man / Pesterminator (ultimate black), 2013-2015. Bronze, automotive paint, hanging hardware, chain, and LED lights, 34 x 36 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



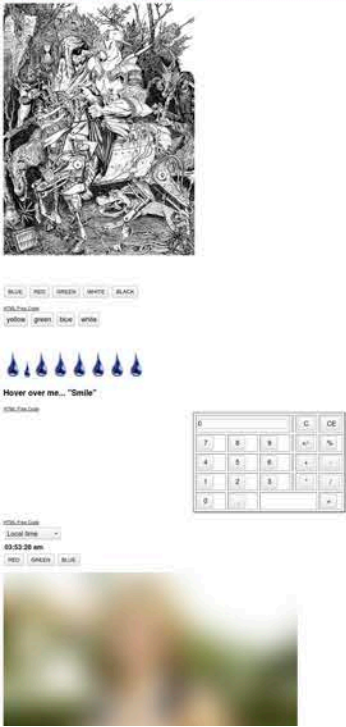
Installation view, *Parker Cheeto's Infinite Haunted Hobo Playlist (A Dream to Some, a Nightmare for Others)* at Smart Objects, Los Angeles, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Smart Objects.



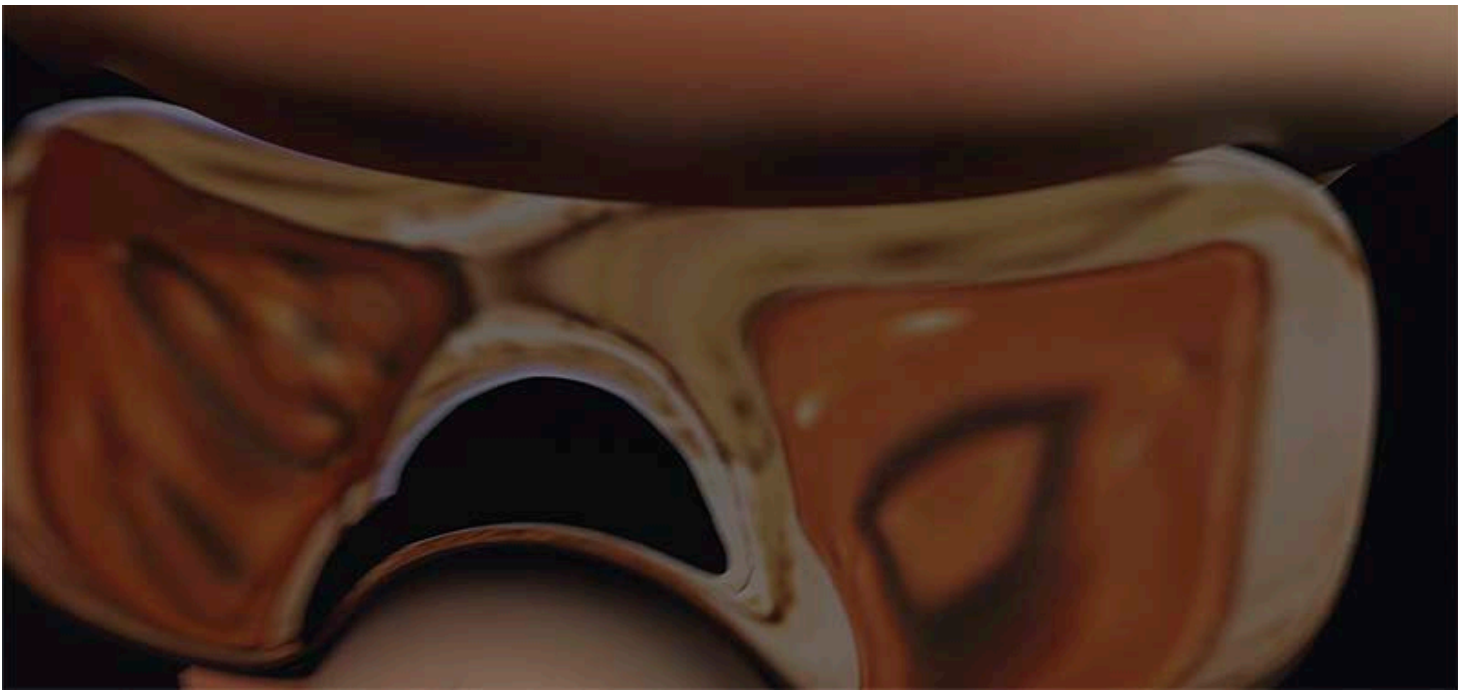
Deke 2, *Mortality*, 2010. Oil on digital print on canvas, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Custom made slippers and ceramic flower vases, 2013-2015. Photograph by the artist. Courtesy of the artist.



ParkerItto.com, 2008-ongoing. Website, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.



Wipeout XL, 2013-2015. Digital video, 15 minutes 44 seconds. Courtesy of the artist.



Installation view, *Parker Cheeto: The Net Artist (America Online Made Me Hardcore)* at IMO Gallery, Copenhagen, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and IMO Gallery.



Installation view, *Masterworks* at Château Shatto, Los Angeles, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



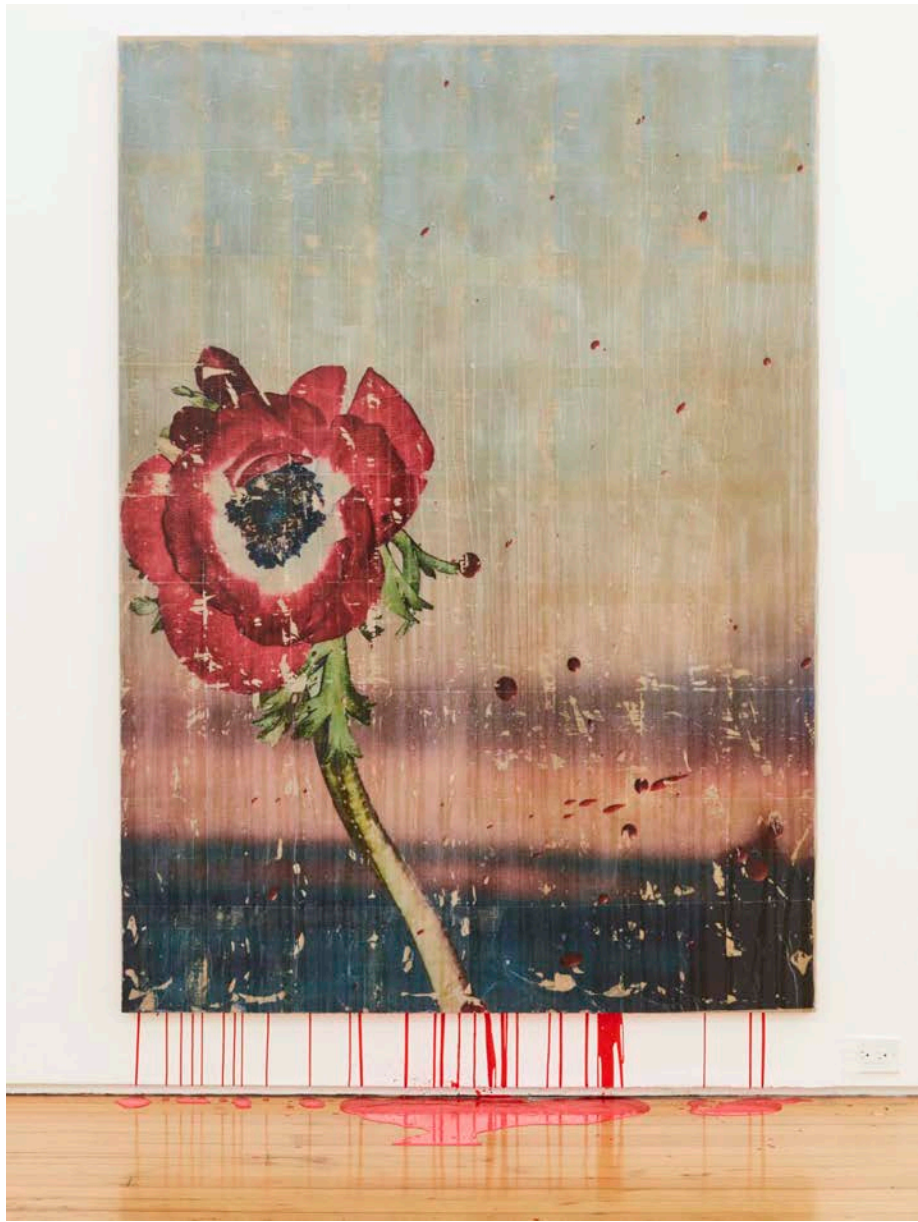
Installation view, *Masterworks* at Château Shatto, Los Angeles, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



February 26th, 2016 (Olivia's bouquet), 2016. Acrylic, toner, and gloss varnish on linen, 84 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



Installation view, *live from the capitol records b. – i am not a human i am a disgusting piece of shit* at Château Shatto, Los Angeles, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



February 26th, 2016 (Olivia's anemone), 2016. Acrylic, toner, and gloss varnish on linen, 84 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



February 26th, 2016 (Olivia's rose), 2016. Acrylic, toner, and gloss varnish on linen, 84 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



Installation view, *Eastern District Savings Bank, Aventa Garden* (Body by Body + Parker Ito), Paris, 2016. Courtesy of the artists and LAPAIX.



Installation view, *live from the capitol records b. – i am not a human i am a disgusting piece of shit* at Château Shatto, Los Angeles, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Château Shatto.



Installation view, *PBBvx.123456789101112son_of_cheeto131415161718192021222324* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.



Aventa Garden (Body by Body + Parker Ito), *Frozen-Saxophone[2].jpg*, 2012. Digital video, 33 minutes 57 seconds. Courtesy of the artists.

Sprint Stories & The New Alchemy: Magic And Economy In Late Capitalism

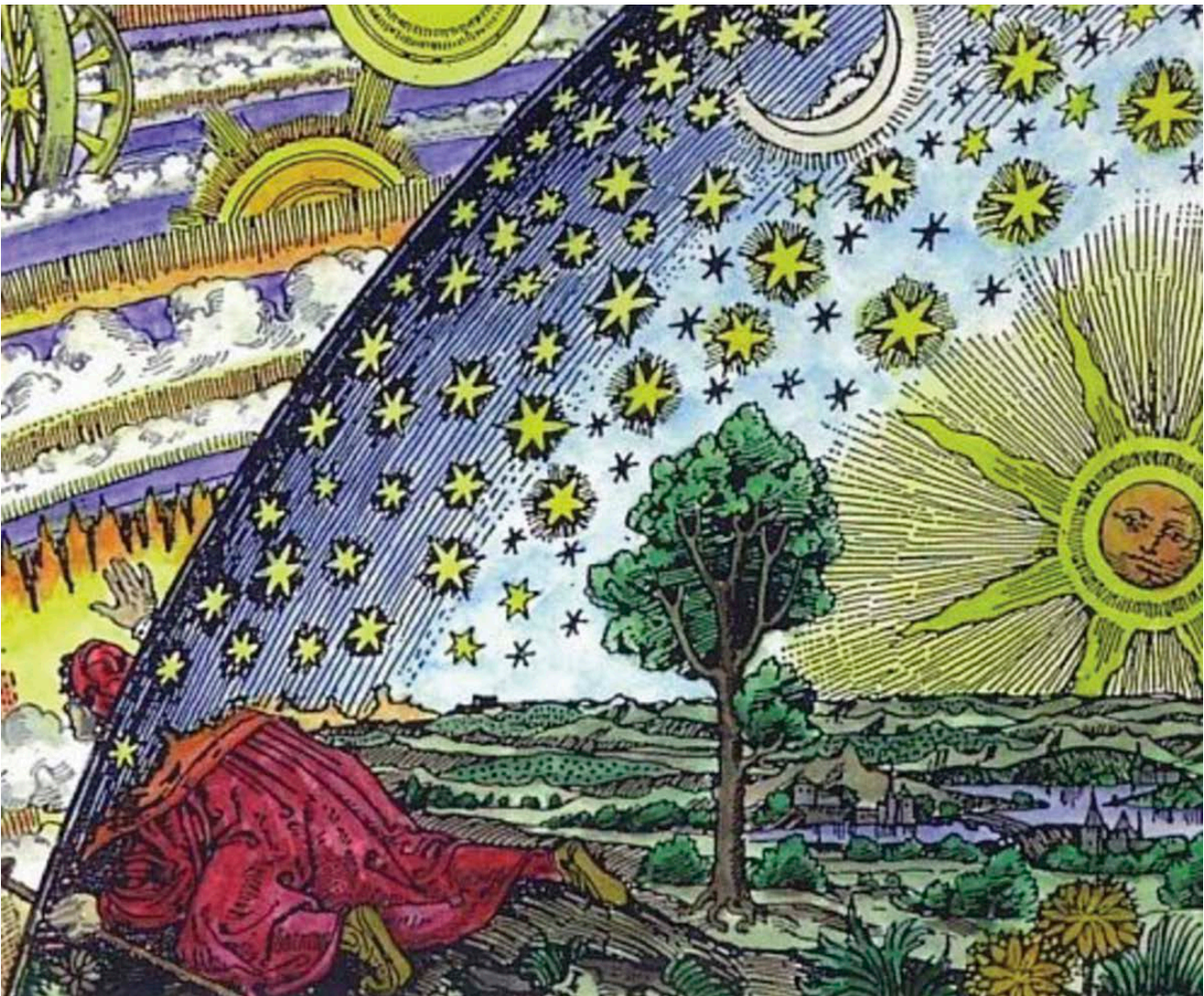
Monica Westin

This spring, Simon & Schuster published *Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days*. Co-written by three men from their team of designers and creatives who swoop into startups to help “ideate” at Google Ventures, (or GV, Google’s venture capital investment arm), *Sprint* purports to offer the secret to solving sweeping business and technology problems in just under one working week. The book presents itself as a solution “for anyone with a big opportunity, problem, or idea who needs to get answers today.” Blurbs from a vice-chair of General Electric and a co-founder of Twitter emphasize swiftness and promise the book will help you “build better products faster.” The value of the sprint would seem to be pure speed, a gift of kinetic energy. There’s an entire channel on Medium (a company that GV helped to sprint) devoted to Sprint Stories.

While the structure of “the sprint” itself turns out to be just a very simplified, accelerated model of the usual process of making production decisions (and settling for more modest goals in most cases), GV has clearly been successful in using this process to add exponential value to the startups in which it invests. More than the content of what is streamlined, it’s the rhetoric of the sprint that’s notable: the fast-forwarding through what would seem to be an unavoidable period of complexity as a sign of economic value in 2016.

The dream to speed up production isn’t new; it is explicitly as old as industrialization itself, and practically much older—we’ve been hacking the creation and distribution of material things since the concept of value was invented. What’s new is the hacking of decision-making itself, or even the process of, which has always been held as unwise to shortcut. At a time in late capitalism when many of our processes for value extraction seem to have exhausted the possibilities for raw potential material, increasingly abstract concepts are being presented as raw materials to be refined for the creation of value.

Sprint highlights one of these new cases, in a conceptual model of alchemy of thought. In a crucial and not always obvious way, we have shifted from a modernist outlook at productivity and product—focused on mastering the natural world and everything in it—into a logic that feels more arcane and supernatural. To use a parallel from the vocabulary of magic, we have transitioned from an *elemental* magic of modernism—mastering the elements, taming them under the forces of human systems—and into a new realm of that relies on conceptual models of *alchemy*, where things can be transmuted beyond the realm of physics, and something can be made out of nothing. This kind of arcane magic can summon and animate forces that are invisible to the modernist mindset. It is exactly this model of beliefs that makes us think that we can turn a year’s worth of work, with all its thinking, planning, ruminating, hypothesizing, decision-making, breaking and fixing, into a ritualistic system that, if done in the



The Flammarion engraving, circa 1888.

proper order, can change the speed of time itself—in other words, casting a spell. The tech sprint of 2016 demarcates a moment in Western cultural thinking when we have shifted from attempting to control the world via modernist thought, and are now attempting to manipulate it through creation *ex nihilo*: pulling worth out of thin air.

For the sprint, a focus on time turns into the magic of discovery. Yet, the rhetoric of value increasingly relies on magical structures of thinking to self-perpetuate across industry, the most widespread magico-cultural logic of the economy being an alchemy particular to late capitalism, where value is abstractly created when there is nothing real of value left to extract. GV’s rhetorical injection of profit-making through the sprint offers a benign model of getting something from nothing, but this logic has become crucial in darker ways at a time when resources (at all levels of abstraction) are scarce. This logic characterizes fracking as well as shuffling debt constructs through housing loan bundles. When there is not enough in the world to do what is needed, we work to get blood from a stone and shuffle the deck of cards until they tell us what we want them to.

The famous Arthur Clark quote that “any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic” points to the role of technology in this logic; the more mysterious a technology, whether in the form of a simple-looking app, injections of high-pressure fracking fluid, or financial markets, the more its impossible mechanics are hidden. This often-invisible magic is pulled, rabbit-style, from the top hat of tech startup culture in a city like San Francisco, where the disconnect between actual value and alchemical value is often at its most palpable. Consider the logic that determines that growth at all costs, even when no profit is even imaginable in a company’s model, makes a firm valuable, or that data itself—any data—is hidden gold, or rather, to continue our metaphor, can be transmuted into gold.

In order to learn what the difference is between fictional value and real value now, we have to ask what the deepest wish is for alchemic thinking. Who are our shamans, our witches, who convince us that the magic is working? And what happens when we stop believing in it? In the next edition of SFAQ I’ll be taking up these threads again to examine how magical value-finding in contemporary economics is taken up in the medium of new formal photography, where the development of post-Photoshop can even be seen as a formal analogue to late capitalism’s alchemy.

Notes on the Assemblage

Juan Felipe Herrera

Ayotzinapa
para los estudiantes, para México, para el mundo
Íbamos de Ayotzinapa hacia Iguala para decirle al alcade que
queríamos fondos para nuestra escuela rural para maestros y
maestras era una protesta por nuestra escuela que es solo para
maestros y maestras rurales nada más nada menos protestábamos
solo por obtener algunos fondos fuimos rodeados por la policía
y sus cómplices nos dispararon quemaron nuestros cuerpos nos
desmembraron y en bolsas de basura nos arrojaron al río pero aún
seguimos aún marchamos desde aquí desde las entrañas de México
este río que inunda todos los salones todas las universidades y todos
los pisos de los palacios de los emperadores aún seguimos a los
veinticuatro años de edad nos abrimos paso a través de la masacre
aquí desde donde nacimos desde donde morimos hacia todas las
ciudades del mundo hacia todos los estudiantes y maestras y maestros
del mundo protestando en todas las calles súbitamente quebrando
incandescentes

nadie supo nadie lo vió

aquí dejamos este número 43 para ti

porque éramos 43 nosotros
no
somos desechables

9-26-14

—42 estudiantes de la Escuela Normal de Ayotzinapa desaparecieron después de
que la policía de la ciudad de Iguala, Guerrero, México abrió fuego contra los
autobuses en que viajaban y secuestró un grupo de 43.

Ayotzinapa
for the students, for Mexico, for the world
From Ayotzinapa we were headed toward Iguala to say to the
mayor that we wanted funds for our rural school for teachers
it was a protest for our school that is all rural teachers nothing
more nothing less we were protesting for funds that is all we were
surrounded by police and their cronies they fired their guns they
burned us they dismembered us in trash bags they threw us into the
river yet we continue yet we march from here from the bowels of
Mexico this river that floods all the schools and all the universities
and all the floors of the emperors’ palaces we continue at twentyfour
years of age we make way through the massacre here from
where we were born and from where we died toward all the cities
in the world toward all the students and teachers in the world
demonstrating on all the streets sprung open
incandescent

no one knew it no one saw it

we are leaving this number 43 for you

because there were 43 of us

we are
not disposable

9-26-14

—42 students from the Ayotzinapa Normal School went missing
after police in the city of Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico opened fire on their
buses and kidnapped a group of 43.

Beyond Repair: Styles of Mending, Cultures of Wounding

Nicole Archer

Style Wars aims to appreciate how critical considerations of style can offer an opportunity to think across subjectivities and cultural practices that are often disassociated or pitted against one another. In light of recent calls to address how dangerously toxic certain forms of masculinity have become,¹ this edition of *Style Wars* explores how the aesthetics of mending—and, in particular, the aesthetics of mending those things that seem beyond repair—may provide a chance to consider why masculinity is so regularly fashioned vis-à-vis acts of violence and wounding, and how this arrangement might be styled otherwise.

“I wonder if a soldier ever does mend a bullet hole in his coat?”
— Clara Barton, US Civil War Nurse and founder of the Red Cross

If you have been to London, you have probably been to Trafalgar Square to meet Admiral Horatio Nelson, a military martyr who stands some 170 feet up in the air, regally surmounting a classical column that is guarded by four monumental bronze lions. With his head cocked slightly downward, Nelson appears staunch and impeccable.² He looks out across the city’s expanse, while simultaneously surveying the crowds that pool beneath his feet, forever judging whether or not these masses are worthy of his singular sacrifice. Of course, nothing draws contempt more sharply than a figure who appears beyond reproach, and nothing can damage the character of such a virile figure more than an injury to his masculinity—particularly an injury begot by the simple suggestion of a markedly feminine conceit.

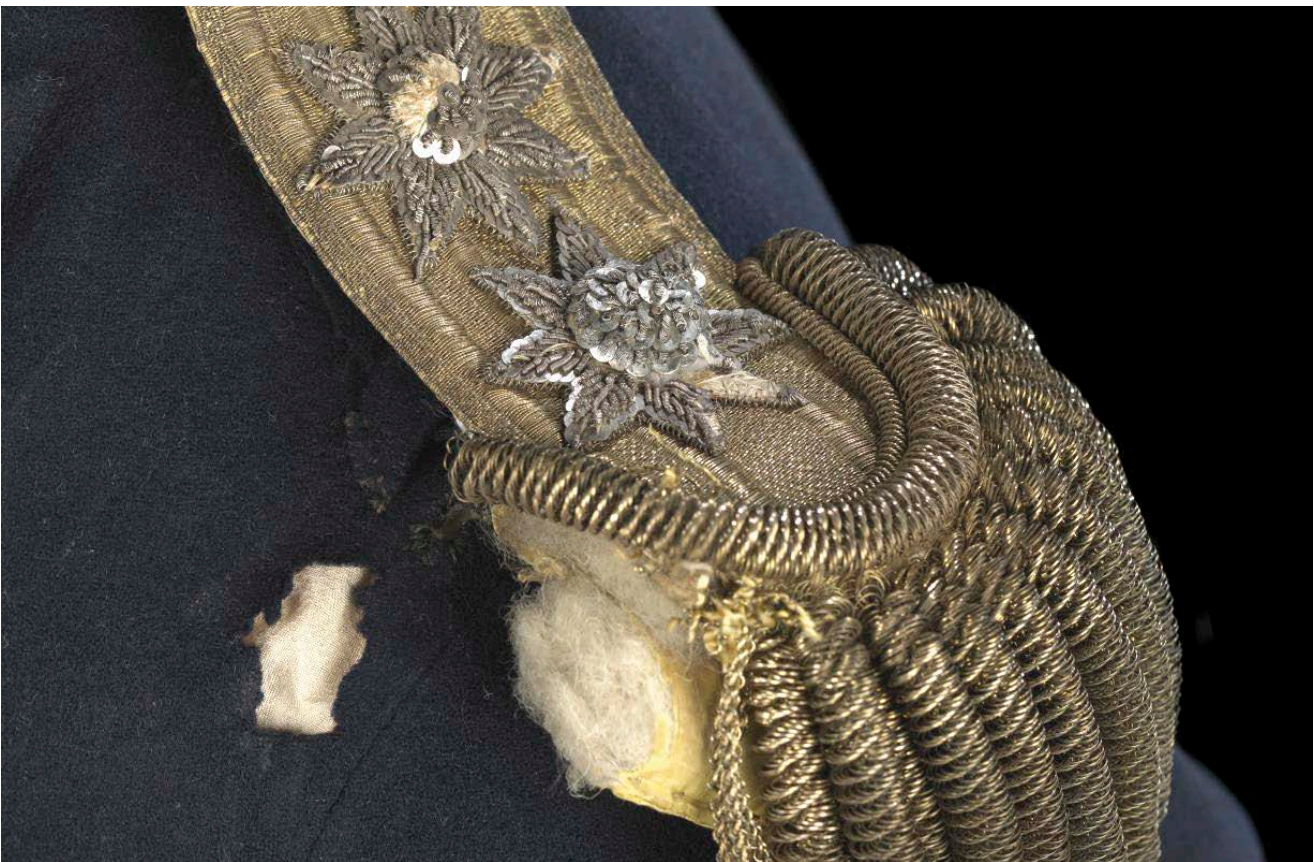
Stand below Nelson’s column long enough, and you’ll hear the rumors that have been churning for the last two centuries: “Yes, he died during battle—but his death was owed to his own vanity! Despite warnings, he insisted on always wearing his navy blue undress coat with all of its conspicuous decorations. Placed upon his chest, the glittering insignia made it easy for the enemy sharpshooters to line-up the perfect shot straight through his heart!”³ A literal fashion victim, this hero is brought down to earth on account of what some might consider a commitment to style over country: a knowingly sordid image of a man who is said to have lead the British Navy into battle with the now legendary rallying cry, “England expects that every man will do his duty.” England expects, in other words, that “every man” will put himself on the line, and earn his masculinity via rituals, narratives, and professions that are predicated on brutality—and that he will do this without grievance, or hesitation.

To be a man under such conditions, is to enter into a deeply gendered dialectic forged through acts of wounding and care that demand “men” to hurt, and “women” to do the work of mending.⁴ The “man of vanity,” or the dandy who dares to tend to his body, complicates the way modern gender binaries synthesize sexual difference. To insinuate that Nelson, a picture of masculinity, dared to care for his dress is to make his lionhearted image dubious. It suggests that he stopped to think and prepare himself for war, and that he didn’t just innately perform his duties—it implies that he considered war’s pomp and its circumstance, that he knew his duty was something constructed, and not simply natural. Nelson, the dandy Admiral, blurs the very lines that work to separate the sexes and to channel the violence that modern systems of power are built to capitalize upon.

On the second floor of London’s National Maritime Museum, a humble vitrine is tasked with the remarkable duty of preserving the actual coat that Nelson wore during his final battle. Within this climate controlled bubble, the “Trafalgar coat” survives to tell many stories. Its small size surprises those who expect their war heroes to have a “larger than life” stature. The coat’s right sleeve is designed to button directly onto its left lapel in order to accommodate a battle wound that Nelson suffered eight years before his death, an injury that claimed much of his right arm and powerfully attests to Nelson’s unabated commitment to perform what “England expects” at great cost.⁵ The coat also features the conspicuous ornaments of legend—each earned as a result of the Admiral’s exemplary service to country, and each boldly embroidered onto the coat’s front. Most importantly, and just above the coat’s uppermost starburst, a rather ominous badge of honor appears: a clear-cut hole on top of the left shoulder, narrowly below the epaulette. Historians attest that this hole corroborates eyewitness reports of Nelson’s demise. It marks precisely where the fatal bullet entered Nelson’s body before it ripped through his spine and eventually claimed his life. In contradiction to the gossip, this small hole does not correspond with the placement of his coat’s more effete embellishments. Instead, it bears witness to the fact that Nelson’s masculinity was not a casualty of his wounding, but that it was secured through it. Or, that Nelson died a soldier’s, and not a dandy’s, death—as if these identities were utterly incommensurate.

It’s rare for such a relic to endure the centuries. The coat’s wool and silk fabrics are incredibly volatile; their preservation requires an extensive amount of technical and affective, emotional labor, along with elaborate fiscal resources. Nelson’s Trafalgar uniform evidences centuries of mending and conservation that are all unironically aimed at preserving that which is effectively beyond repair—the occurrence of a *decisive hole*. This, all so the image of Nelson’s masculinity might be maintained, intact, and in spite of the fact that many people have long worked to question this image through their maintenance of a particular form of gossip. As such, this coat can be said to attest to a cultural need (or a national will, even) to materially substantiate the distance that lies between proper and improper forms of masculinity, particularly in respect to the routine and spectacular acts of wounding that these gender identities presuppose. At the same time, this coat also attests to a critical will to disavow such a construction—and to desire different forms of masculinity. After all, if not for the rumors, there would be no need to do the extensive work of maintaining this sartorial relic in the first place.

Here, the whole business of state violence is revealed to require accepting the notion that our identities are forged through obligatory acts of barbarism, and that the only way to manage this chaos is to assume one of two positions. Despite the obvious tenuousness of this arrangement, many of our personal experiences attest to how we each work to fix these identities, consciously or not: how we each do our duty



Navy-blue Vice-Admiral’s undress coat worn by Horatio Nelson when he was fatally wounded at the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805. Collection of the National Maritime Museum. Courtesy of the Internet.

to uphold the two-fold order of things, regardless of the gnawing sense that things can (and ought) to be otherwise. Presumably, this is owed to the fear that the social fabric will, itself, dissolve if “men” do not work to harness this powerfully primal violence through their bodies, and “women” do not struggle to deal with its aftermath.

Few images encapsulate the complexity of this scenario better than J. John Priola’s 1995 photograph *Dish Towel*. Part of a larger series of photographs entitled *Saved*, *Dish Towels* worn topography is a testament to our repeated obligations to make ourselves susceptible, and to do the maintenance work that modernity requires of us each of us.⁶ The single patch, apparent in the towel’s bottom-left quadrant, is a complex figuration of gendered social relations. If presumed to be recent—the patch appears as the first of many acts of mending, the start of making this holey relic whole again. The rips and tears in this fabric are, thus, seen as an invitation to enter into a specific kind of social relation, and *Dish Towel* can be read as being emblematic of how and why the gender binary is imperative. On the other hand, if one regards the patch as predating the repeated cuts and blows that are scattered across the textile’s expanse, then *Dish Towel* must be read as a way of styling the futility of such an arrangement. It marks the limits of this kind of care and it suggests that the kinds of violence that underwrite “properly” structured masculinity can only produce irreparable damage. As with Nelson’s coat, *Dish Towel* harbors a critical claim, questioning the construction of a social fabric that is organized around holes that tear us apart. It suggests that this kind of social organization forces us to submit to relentless and futile acts of tearing and repairing.

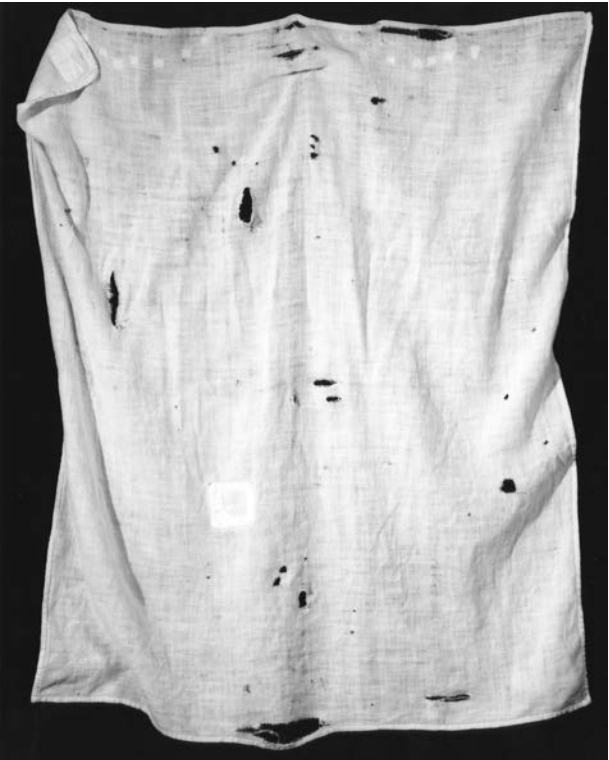
What becomes clear are that some things are, indeed, beyond repair. This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t tend to them, but that we ought not to pretend that they can be fixed, or that the violence can be undone. We need to imagine how to restyle the relation between wounding and care so we can start to transform the fabric of our society.⁷ Here, the work of the artist Mark Newport comes into view—and in particular a recent series dedicated to critically deconstructing the work of mending. As Newport explains, the series was borne out of a flash of recognition that he experienced while folding and caring for his own son’s clothes:

[T]he holes in the knees of his pants remind me of my childhood exploits, the falls that punctuated each adventure and the scars I carry from those accidents. My body and most often the knees of my pants would be repaired the same way: wash then patch (an iron-on patch for the pants and a Band-Aid for me). When things were more serious, stitches might be required for the body and the clothes would be discarded. Even then, darning and suturing leave a mark, a scar. Each pierces the substrate it is repairing, performing a modest violence upon what is to be mended, and reminding each of us of our sensitivity, vulnerability, and mortality.⁸

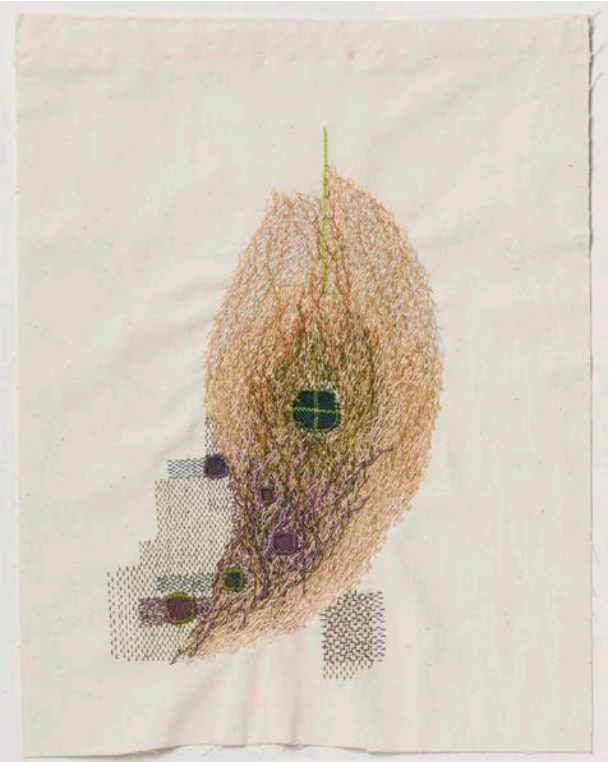
Rather than simply patch over the proper “wound,” Newport’s work lingers in the cut produced by the suture. It appreciates how complex the work of care is and it refuses to reduce care to a simple corollary of violence. In pieces such as *Mend 4* (2016), Newport starts not with a hole in need of repair, but with a complex web of stitches that make it difficult to say what came first, then second. Rather than work to cover over a voided-out space, or to deny the presence of violence within human relations, the patch at center of the work catches us all in its crosshairs and produces what might best be described as a new, networked sense of relationality. Newport’s mending relieves masculinity of its wounded duty and dares us all to consider different, less clear-cut paths of relation and being.



Navy-blue Vice-Admiral’s undress coat worn by Horatio Nelson when he was fatally wounded at the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805. Collection of the National Maritime Museum. Courtesy of the internet.



J. John Priola, *Dish Towel*, 1995. Gelatin silver print, 24 x 20 inches. framed. © J. John Priola, all rights reserved. Courtesy of the artist.



Mark Newport, *Mend 4*, 2016. Embroidery on muslin, 17 x 13 inches. Photograph by Tim Thayer. © Mark Newport, all rights reserved. Courtesy of the artist.

6) For more, see: http://www.johnpriola.com/saved_intro.htm.
7) The work of varied artists proves to be exemplary on this front. For Bay Area readers, Michael Swaine’s multi-year *“Reap What You Sew” Generosity Project*, or his *Free Mending Library*, might immediately come to mind. Over a dozen years, Swaine pursued his desire to help “fix the holes in people’s lives” by literally mobilizing the aesthetics and practice of mending by pushing a treadle sewing machine up and down the streets of San Francisco – offering strangers and neighbors the chance to come together and share the stories of their lives, while patching their clothes. For more, see: <http://grist.org/living/san-francisco-artist-mends-clothes-and-builds-community-just-by-giving-a-darn/>.
8) <http://marknewportartist.com/SENSITIVITIES-Mending>

An Essay on Los Angeles, Cliché and Palm Trees

Char Jansen

In a remarkable photograph from 1926 in the Security Pacific National Bank Collection at the Los Angeles Public Library, two workers dressed in dapper hats, slacks, and shirts, plant fully grown, slender Mexican fan palm trees into the soil along Wilshire Boulevard, between Western and Wilton. In the background are the perfectly regimented rows of palms they have already installed to line the street—as they do today, but perhaps not for much longer.

The bizarre botanical history of palm trees in Los Angeles is hardly a secret. In 1931, an ornamental planting frenzy introduced more than 25,000 imported tropical trees to the Southern California landscape. Most of these alien species became ubiquitous almost overnight, and are now the region's most cliché icons, instantly associated with good times, good weather, and vacation vibes. A palm tree is the ultimate in easy aesthetics: pretty, finely shaped, and exotic.

Palms are, however, essentially useless. They promise a lot, but they offer very little, providing barely any shade from the pounding sun; they suck up copious amounts of water, which is a contentious ecological issue in a desert city. They're also dying. Many of the palm varieties planted 100 years ago are now nearing the end of their natural lives. They were brought to the US to be decorative, but now they are a reminder of displacement and of the brutality of man over nature, a kind of ecological imperialism. Walking around Echo Park Lake, they look eerie, waiting, so it seems, to act out some *Day of the Triffids*-style revenge as you contemplate a ride on a paddleboat.

The irresistible illusionism of LA's palms has kept them in fashion for decades, with appearances in Art Deco posters, David Hockney's paintings, to Kahlil Joseph's film, *Double Conscience* (2014), presented at MOCA last year. For many artists who have lived, worked or passed through the city, the palm cliché inevitably finds a way into their work, ensuring preservation in the public subconscious. The more something is repeated, the safer it is to copy it. Ed Ruscha's iconoclastic 1971 photo book, *A Few Palm Trees*, uprooted the urban palm once again, planting them into the contemporary art's intellectual and visual discourse. His deadpan document of the varieties of trees found across the Los Angeles landscape, is, as Joan Didion put it in her catalog essay for his show at the 2005 Venice Biennale, a distillation: "the thing compressed to its most pure essence." The palm cliché is Los Angeles. In an email, I asked John Baldessari why he likes to dapple his work with palms. He wrote back, "I like palm trees because they're unlike any other tree in their shape, and also because they're a cliché for Southern California."

As a synecdoche of West Coast culture—and a part of near-universal pop culture aesthetics—palms are naturally great material for artists. Yet they're not appealing only for their



Evan Holloway, *Plants and Lamps*, 2015. Steel, cardboard, aqua-resin, epoxy resin, fiberglass, sandbags, CelluClay, and paint, 89 x 82 x 38 inches (installation variable). Photograph by Lee Thompson. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.



Laura Poitras, Installation view, Room 2: *A Way to Leak, Lick, Leek* (Foreground), 2016. Vinyl tiles, resin, various electronic items, paper sheeting, iPads, iPhones, tablet screens, foliage, metal, plastic, wood, cables, polyester seats. Courtesy of the artist and MOT International. Commission: Fahrenheit by FLAX. (Background) *Lick in the Past*, 2016. Video, Duration 8:23 min, Courtesy of the artist and MOT International. Commission: Fahrenheit by FLAX. © Jeff McLane.

omnipresence. Their dark past and equally glum future—where the artificial and the natural have been horribly reversed—given them a subtle political resonance. The cliché is turned back on its audience.

Ruscha's artist's book inspired Paris-born, Berlin-based Adrien Missika's photo series *A Dying Generation* (2011), presented in front of a giant wallpaper backdrop of waves at his solo exhibition at Galleria SpazioA in Pistoia, Italy. Like Ruscha, Missika is interested in the language of advertising and its exchange with the modern imagination: Do we really dream up the tropical vacation idyll all by ourselves? Ruscha's typology is rooted in the region while Missika—who looks at LA from a distance and was initially drawn to the city by its seductive image—considers the nature of representation of foreign things once they are removed from their context. For his series Missika, in direct reference to Ruscha, revisited and rephotographed the Los Angeles palms that Ruscha captured 40 years before. Hanging solemnly, the artist's photographs show the trees in the 21st century, inviting a laconic reflection on environmental change and the fragility of nature in the Anthropocene and the equivocal nature of images in capturing that reality when seen abroad. In 1971 and in 2011, both Ruscha and Missika give us pretty pictures that slowly turn into an ugly truth.



Adrien Missika, *A Dying Generation* #4, 2011. Black and white laser prints, 49 x 39 centimeters. Edition of 5. Photograph by Martin Argyroglou. Courtesy of BUGADA & CARGNEL.

For artists who spend time in Los Angeles—the need to confront the palm tree cliché is inevitable, a way to question the way the city has been constructed and the way it continues to be perceived. Following her residency in Los Angeles last year, Laure Prouvost's installation at Fahrenheit—titled *A Way To Leak, Lick, Leek*—drew out the darker roots of the flora and fauna of Los Angeles. In a 360-degree installation, inspired by the surroundings and substances she encountered while in the city, the plants created a post-apocalyptic atmosphere, sinister and plastic, overbearing rather than protective. Their leaves glowed thickly in a twilight ambience. Similarly, LA resident Evan Holloway presents the charm of the palm as both alluring and fake. His *Plants and Lamps* (2015) a sculptural installation made out of steel, cardboard, resin, fiberglass and sandbags presented at David Kordansky in the spring of 2016, carried connotations of a distorted Californian ideology—the paradox of neoliberalism that begs for biodiversity and sustainability, yet feeds from an artificial, polluting light. The mystifying, terrifying, and pathetic tale of the palm tree, as shown to us in the art of Los Angeles, is the guts of what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron refer to in their 1995 essay, *The Californian Ideology*, as the "West Coast's Extropian cult"—the hell-bent desire to improve human life with technology. As the last palms of Los Angeles sway in the desert air, I can't help but wonder what will happen when they're gone forever, and exist only in images? In another hundred years, if the palms disappear from the landscape, the cliché will shift to the status of idol. Or perhaps, this immigrant community of trees will resist their fate somehow, reemerge, and like so much life that has passed through LA, survive.

De-Manufactured Machines: A Profile of Survival Research Laboratories

Ceci Moss

Mark Pauline, founder of the Bay Area's legendary Survival Research Laboratories (SRL), houses his impressive personal archive, robotics workshop, and business in a garage in a non-descript industrial section of Petaluma. Hulking CNC machines, boxes of tools and equipment, and half-built machines populate this former auto detailing shop. The large parking lot out front allows him to test and maneuver his epic machines (sometimes to the chagrin of his neighbors). For decades, Pauline has dedicated his career to building dangerous, elaborate robots for his performances. A commentary on the military industrial complex—the development of which is a determining force in the Bay Area's own history—as much as a dystopian vision for a post-apocalyptic future, SRL's acclaimed shows push experiential and technological boundaries.

Pauline's practice reflects a kind of resilient integrity; his work grew over the years outside of the constraints of the mainstream art market and without much institutional support. A pioneer in the recycling and reselling of biotech equipment, he's been, in large part, able to support his art through his business, which also provides him with additional materials. His corporate sounding persona "Survival Research Laboratories"—a name he pulled from a 1970s issue of the mercenary magazine *Solider of Fortune*—captures the critical ethos of his work. Building from detritus, waste, and cast-offs from the military and tech industries (particularly those in the Bay Area), his work illuminates a deep unease with these powerful developments and how one might exist with and after them. The risk on display in an SRL show is never a mere spectacle or entertainment, but rather a confrontation with the destructive capacity of human invention.

The first SRL robot ever built was *The De-Manufacturing Machine* in 1979. Installed at a gas station during the oil crisis, the machine puréed and flung dead pigeons dressed as OAPC dignitaries into the audience. Shock, disgust, and fear have always been part of Pauline's performances. An early video with the industrial music group Factrix features one of his pieces—a suspended pig carcass animated by flailing robotic arms and metal bars, being disfigured on stage by a dentist's drill. The industrial music scene in San Francisco yielded a space for interdisciplinary experimentation and transgression, in response to Reagan-era discord and conservatism; SRL was initiated within this community, and its attitude carries through in the work.

In an interview for the 1983 *RE/Search* No. 6/7: *Industrial Culture Handbook*, Pauline describes the early days of SRL, where he scavenged and stole material for his works from junkyards and factories to stage performances, often in parking lots and warehouses. He talks about his interventions as a process of: "Taking equipment and remanufacturing it, turning it against its engineer's better wishes. Making things out of it, it was never intended to do." These efforts reassemble and redirect, taking apart tools and equipment towards a different end. But Pauline's robotic creations have been highly innovative over the years as well. For the 1997 performance *Increasing the Latent Period in a System of Remote Destructibility* at the InterCommunication Center in Tokyo and SRL's studio in San Francisco, Pauline, along with Eric Paulos and Karen Marcelo, created the very first firing system operated by users over the web. Three machines—one in San Francisco and two in Tokyo—were operable by online users using free software. Participants controlled the movements of the Track Robot, whose arm pressed buttons on the Epileptic Bot at the ICC, which then sent commands over the Internet to the Air Launcher in San Francisco hitting a range of exploding targets. That same year, SRL also produced a live online stream of video and audio wirelessly from a performance in Austin, Texas entitled *The Unexpected Destruction of Elaborately Engineered Artifacts*. In order to carry out this early instance of video livestreaming using wireless technology, volunteers built a 60-foot tower that brought Internet connectivity over a microwave wireless network to the show's site at the Longhorn Speedway. Other pioneering moments are more playful. For instance, in the 1980s, Pauline created the *Stu Walker*, which was operated by his pet guinea pig Stu, and probably the first

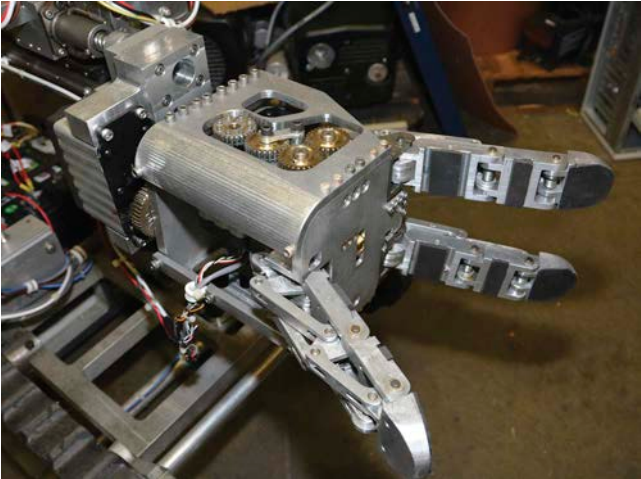
animal-controlled robot in performance. A video from a 1985 performance at the Area Nightclub in New York shows the *Stu Walker* in action, where the spider-like construction awkwardly creeps across the floor and shoots flames in accordance with the guinea pig's movements.

While Pauline is always building and repairing his cadre of machines, he's currently developing two new robots. The *Motoman Flamethrower* mounts a lightweight flamethrower capable of generating a 20-foot flame on a robotic arm known as the *Motoman UP50*, a popular device for automating assembly lines. Another, as-yet-untitled robot, balances on a single wheel while maneuvering a large arm; it is the first single wheeled robot Pauline has come across in his research. 2016 also brought other major breakthroughs. In April, in conjunction with CAPITAL's *Black Standard* exhibit at Minnesota Street Project, Pauline staged one of his first legal public performances in the city in years. He felt that the San Francisco Entertainment Commission understood his work as an artist for the first time, after they issued all the proper licensing permits for the April event. This is after San Francisco had practically banned all SRL performances, a major obstacle and one that Pauline brandished as a badge of honor for some time. If he can find the financial support, he's hoping to stage another San Francisco performance in the near future, bringing his difficult, commanding performances to more audiences, once again.

1) V. Vale and Andrea Juno, "Mark Pauline" in *RE/Search* #6/7: *Industrial Music Handbook* (San Francisco: *RE/Search Publications*, 1983), 35.



A Complete Mastery of Sinister Forces, Amsterdam 2007. Pulsejet spins a large rotating image prop. Photograph by Jessica Hobbs. Courtesy of Mark Pauline.



SRL Underactuated Gripper. Courtesy of Mark Pauline.



A Complete Mastery of Sinister Forces, Amsterdam 2007. Screw Machine lifts Rotating Wheel Prop. Photograph by Jessica Hobbs. Courtesy of Mark Pauline.



"Hangin' with the Prez" at the Whitehouse Christmas Ball, 2012. Courtesy of Mark Pauline.

Celebrity Collectors

Dwayne Johnson

In Conversation With

Ryan Gosling

So this interview was really supposed to be about me but the editors of LXAQ thought that since I'm now the publisher of the magazine, it would make sense for me to interview someone else . . . we pulled straws and your name came up.
Okay, well my publicist—

Yeah, I mean—shouldn't you be interviewing me? I'm Ryan Gosling.
Right, but my art collection is way better than yours—

I don't know about that, I mean what could you possibly have that I don't?
Michael Heizer, Beverly Buchanan, Robert Smithson, Andy Goldsworthy, Jenny Holzer, Gordon Matta-Clark, Yoko Ono, and Chris Burden to name a few. I find the conceptual and land art movements to be a liberating break from the "low culture" aspects of my career, and Chris Burden's early work definitely jives with my early work; I've always thought about the WWF stuff as performance art.

And not only have I just been collecting these artists in the traditional sense, recently I've been working on a project with the Matta-Clark estate to build a replica of *Splitting* and commissioning Michael Heizer to do a large-scale site specific installation, both of these at my horse ranch in Southern California.

Sounds a little boring. I tend to buy exciting young artists.
Yeah, we know you are trying to be in the arts now, but you should stick to what you are good at.

Gosling is always on the cutting edge—Gosling is always on top—
Let me give you some advice Ryan—

Whoa. I'm asking the questions here.
Just because you are friends with some stuffy gallerists who feed you a bunch of bullshit about what to buy, reinforcing your lack of taste, you should read about art history and make your own decisions. Everything is so derivative these days anyways. I like to joke around with my collections manager that we are living in a neo post neo art world . . . (laughs) . . . Know what I mean?

Boring!
Look, I get it—you're mad at me, I'm a bigger deal than —

Yeah, yeah we all know you make over 50 million per movie.
70 million Ryan, 70. But I'm not really trying to bring that up. I don't spend everything on art, I'm also pleased to give to various charities. Recently I've also joined the board of Leo's foundation, which I'm excited about.

I think I'm going to call you by your real name for the rest of the interview, The Rock. Mr. Rock, tell me more about your art collection. Do you actually collect anything that isn't boring old stuff?
Well, yes actually, I really like the whole post Internet movement. I think Jon Raffman and Petra Cortright are standouts. They are both doing some very interesting work.

You should go back to wrestling Rock—or is that too neo post post neo . . .
Neo post me crushing your skull with one hand while Instagramming with the other. (laughs)

Okay bye! I'm leaving . . . Bye!
Whatever Ryan—

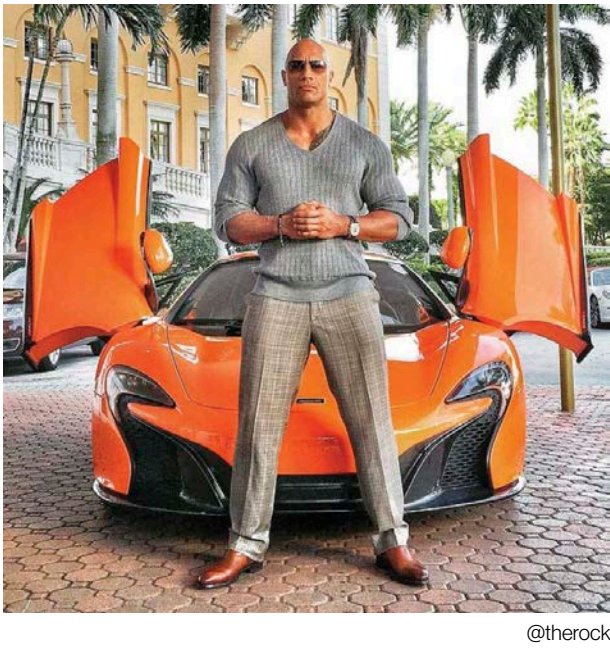
Bye! Interview over
You're acting like a child.

Bye! Bye Mr. Rock, have fun with your land art.

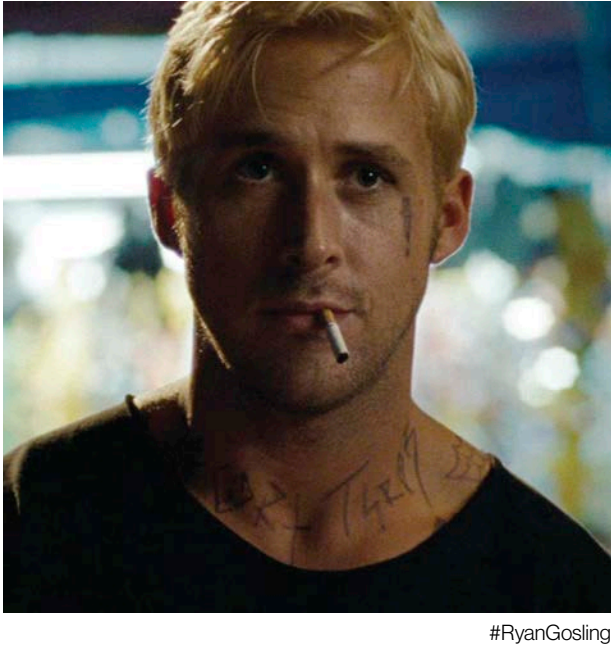
(Ryan storms out of the room)

Andrew McClintock: Sorry Mr. Johnson, not sure what that was about.

Johnson: This is insane—if you guys publish this, you will hear from my lawyers.



@therock



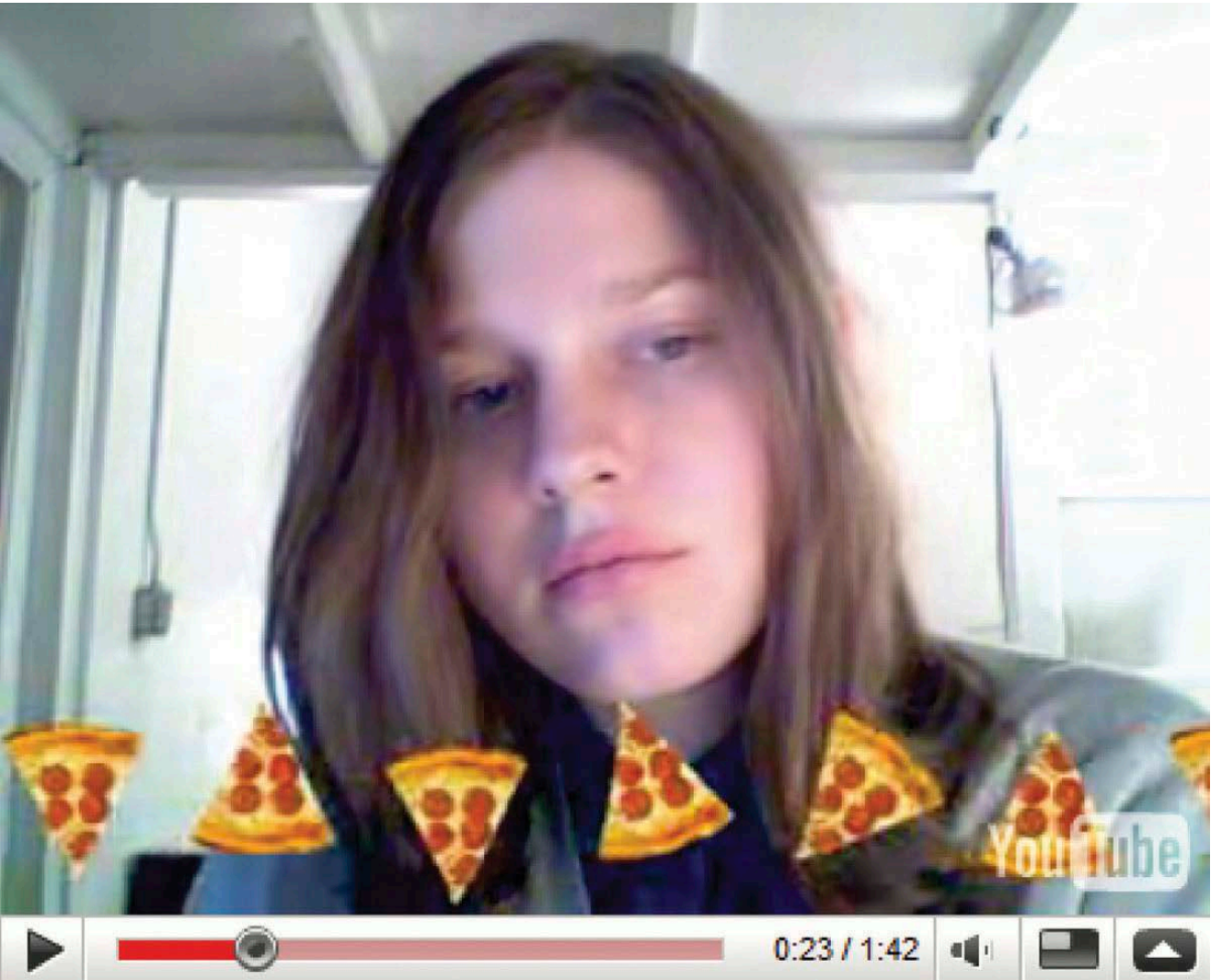
#RyanGosling



#ChrisBurden



#GordanMattaClark



@petcortright

Contemporary Poetry

Organized by Casey O'Neal

Cedar Sigo

Light unburied, unchained
For Jack Giesecking

I am leaving to be driven down to Mexico City
The line between seems incidental

I am going underground in Oaxaca
to flip through rare European monographs on air conditioned mezzanines
Odilon Redon's *Angel in Chains*, Joan Mitchell's
blighted canary and fuchsia permissions (wings)

In the longest dreams I sail my raft to Puerto Vallarta
Thin mauve and pink bands in the sky lie still and hold clear like the tropics, the equator

Brazen heatwaves slice the earth in half...

If Brian and I are allowed to land in San Miguel
The young horses will sprout wings and become handsome, sought after devils.

I will lead a rebellion through the streets of Patzcuaro
and lose my head which (unattached) will continue to organize and write
and reverberate! Become immortalized in oil
a large head, wrought of light
painted by Leonora Carrington

Julian Talamantez Brolaski

younger and queerer

dear Love, I am tired of endings
let love be purposeful, extant, and merry
let it revise its feelings, and yet still
be w/out contradiction
let it transcend death
let it not gnaw away
at the flesh of lovers
who are trying to love

misfortune—took me in an instant
the big rain down can rain
the big rain, ultimately down can rain
the ships clock ran tru
it had its owen logic
despite, or perhaps because of
the crooked line in the cuban stocking
I put my hand over first my left, and
then my right eye in order to try to see straight

Guadalupe Rosales

Veteranas and Rucas & Map Pointz

In Conversation With Mario Ayala

Can you introduce yourself and tell us where you're from?

So my name is Guadalupe Rosales, and I'm the founder of Veteranas and Rucas and Map Pointz. I was raised in LA, when I was a teenager we moved to East LA, but before that we lived in Boyle Heights, and then—what else do you want me to say?

I wanted to begin by asking you about your Instagram project, Veteranas and Rucas.

Veteranas and Rucas is a digital archive that focuses on the Chicana youth culture in Southern California from the '90s back—anything that was pre-social media, actual physical photos. People submit their pictures through Instagram or email and send me information like the city and year and a little bit describing who they are, and I post it. I'm creating a platform where people represent themselves the way they want to be represented, as opposed to having an outsider survey the culture and give their own personal opinion. The reason why I chose to call it Veteranas and Rucas was because, originally, I was posting mostly gang culture, and focusing on women. Then, through this project, I realized that everything—growing up in LA as a Chicana or Latina, we're exposed to a lot more than just gang culture, but whether it's a party crew or any other kind of sub-cultural scene, it's always, from personal experience, it's in the midst of gang culture. So I wanted to make Veteranas and Rucas looser, broaden it a bit more, and it became the platform documenting daily life back then.

So some real basic questions about things that maybe people aren't familiar with, some of the terminology and words that you use, like party crews. I want to ask you briefly about party crews in the '90s, from the photos you post on Instagram, and maybe your affiliation with some of them.

So party crew was—the best way to describe it is a group of teenagers getting together and throwing parties. A party crew consisted of maybe 40, 60, 100 people per crew. I'll use my crew as an example, my party crew was called Aztek Nation. There were two cliques. There was one in Bell Gardens, and there was one in East LA, and we would get together with another party crew and throw a party. So let's say Aztek Nation and East LA's Goodlife, and we'd print flyers and pass them out at school and at parties. On the flyers we only had phone numbers, voicemails, and map points. Map points is what we call the intersection of two main streets where you would go and pick up the directions rather than putting them on the flyer. So we'd put map points like Atlantic and Whittier, or the gas station of Atlantic and Whittier. Then you go there and get the address. The music... we listened to pretty much everything like techno, house music, KROQ, some hip-hop, and the parties took place at backyards and warehouses all over the city.

How does social media inform your work? How did it first appeal to you as a possible platform for your practice?

When I was first thinking about ways to start this conversation, I got really inspired by—I don't know, there was something unique about Instagram, where it's very simple, very minimal. I feel like with Instagram the photo does most of the explanation, as opposed to a blog or a Tumblr or Facebook. I feel like those take a lot of—people focus more on what people say, like on the description, and for me it was important—pictures say many things, you know? I was interested in what other people would say, rather than me trying to describe. I chose Instagram because of that. I saw a lot of pages that were similar to what I wanted to start, but they were mostly focusing on men. So that's what inspired me to start a page that focused on women.

I think some of the comments on the photographs add a lot of value. That's probably one of the more beautiful things that happen on those posts, you know? When would you say you began this archive and reaching out to people? Where were you at that moment and where are you now?

It's funny because I just checked a few days ago. I went to my email, because I couldn't remember the date when I started the Instagram, and I was also thinking that I need to start archiving the conversations that I've had with people. So I found the first email that said you just opened an Instagram account. I started the feed January 23, 2015, so it's almost two years. For me it wasn't really about thinking, "Fuck yeah, I'm going to start something and it's going to fucking blow up." But I knew it was going to be different. When I started the Instagram, I didn't tell anyone who was running it, not even my closest friends. I started just following them, and then people noticed the pictures and they started tagging their other friends, you know? And then people started tagging me, "Oh, Lupe, you might like this!" And I just fucking laughed, like dude, little do they know it's me running this shit. It took a while for me to even put myself out there, because I didn't want it to be about me. It was more about treating this as a collaboration with the community. The reason why I started this was because it was this urge, or this necessity for me. Like, how do I stay connected with my culture—this is me, living in New York—so it was out of necessity rather than trying to come up with something cool or whatever. Now I'm just going day by day and seeing what happens. I do interviews. I'm putting myself out there little by little. I remember the first person that hit me up was LA Weekly, and told them I don't want to make it about me and I didn't want to be in front of the camera. Now I'm kind of like, "Whatever! I don't care! Fuck it." At the same time, I want to give voice to the Instagram feed because I think it's important for the people to know who's behind it.

I find it potentially significant if you want to talk about it—you were talking about being in New York when some of this started. Maybe it felt like you had to reconnect yourself, being on the other side of the country? I find it interesting that this began out there, because I feel like it's so important for you to be here now.

When I moved there it wasn't so much about having the luxury of being able to travel. It wasn't about, "I get to go to New York and explore the world." It was more about "How do I survive?" LA was becoming very dangerous. It was already dangerous and, after my cousin passed away, something clicked. I realized that shit was just going down, and it wasn't getting any better. Some friends of friends invited me, like when someone says, "You should come visit sometime," and you don't really



Ladies of East LA's Aztek Nation Crew at a party in Los Angeles, California in the late '90s. Courtesy of @myr0se and @raerose418.



Courtesy of Society's Perfection Crew (Orange County).

follow through—for me it was a fucking wake-up call; I need to get out of here. When I went to New York, I probably didn't even buy my ticket, I think maybe they spotted me a one-way ticket or something like that. Or maybe I bought a ticket, but I only had a one-way ticket. I went there and—I don't know how I came back, everything seems like a blur—I came back to LA and two weeks later I left again and didn't come back. It was around Thanksgiving and my mom took me to the airport, and I brought as much shit as I could bring with me. I wore like two pants and jackets, like a crazy person—I'm fucking out of here, just whatever I could carry. Then I was in New York not knowing how long I was going to stay... I'm thinking I'm going to go back in a month and that month turned into a year and then five years and then 15 years. I was really fortunate to be there. I met a lot of amazing people. I got involved with the art community, the queer community. I felt like I had found a family. It's something that was very similar to here, but different—it gave me the same feeling, comfortable and free and like I could trust people. Then after I got comfortable with New York, I started thinking about my community here, you know? Kind of like, fuck, all my friends are white. Or how come I haven't met any Mexicans in New York? Or why are the only Mexicans serving food or whatever, you know? That's when I started thinking, how do I reconnect with my community, with my family, or with friends in LA so far away? I just started feeling—what's that word—not isolated, deprived maybe? Yeah, deprived. So I started the Instagram and then it blew up and that gave me a reason to come back. I had a job over there, I was pretty stable and whatever, but I just had to take that risk and be like, "Fuck this, I'm going back home." I felt like this project was getting so big that I wanted to physically engage with people rather than being on the phone. So I'm here in my studio and meeting people, meeting amazing people, people are donating material—I don't know, it's amazing.

I want to talk about your community here in Los Angeles. Now, since moving from New York, you've placed yourself and your work among all these other beautiful people that are doing other things, you know? Maybe talk about investing yourself in that since you've been back in Los Angeles.

It's funny because I was just talking to a friend about this and how I feel like it wasn't that difficult to come back and reconnect with friends, even to meet people who I wasn't friends with before I left—like the younger generation who are deep in the whole Raza movement. I don't know, I trip out on how my life is so different now, you know? Like, in New York, I had my queer artist friends and then here I have some people that I know from New York, but I don't talk to them, you know? Or like, I mean, I don't know, I'm just deep in it. It's crazy, and I need to remind myself that that's happening. At the same time, I want to find a way to have these two things come together.

What are the two things?

I guess it's more than two things. I'm thinking about, where are the queer artists? Where are the feminist artists? And then the POC artists; I want these things, those people, to come together and what would that look like, you know? It's like, instead of separating things, I wonder what it would look like if we all came together... I don't know if I answered your question.

Was that something when you arrived? I'm sure it didn't happen instantly.

Finding the community and the Raza and all that?

Totally, like maybe if you want to name people or not, but how was it feeling like, "Alright, I am no longer just an Instagram handle you might follow, but now I'm in Los Angeles—I'm actually, physically here."

It actually happened really fast. I think when I first started coming around I started hanging out with people who are down with the Pachuco style and all that stuff, and then they just took me in, kind of like, let's fucking hang out. It was just like that. When I was living in New York, I always wondered what it would be like to make art in LA. I felt like I had an amazing experience in New York, but again, how do I tap into being a Chicana artist in LA, you know? I was thinking about this archive and wanting it to be for everyone, not just—I don't know how to explain but I just thought okay, this needs to be here

That's fine, that's great. Maybe not to go on a tangent about this, but I think it's significant because it's something that, before leaving San Francisco—not that it wasn't happening when I was there—but the gentrification in San Francisco got so out of hand and a lot of my friends had to leave. The reason why I left is it's just too expensive to afford housing, studio space, etc., and it became a place inhabited by people that I didn't familiarize myself with or couldn't



Esmeralda and Erica from Hawthorne, California at the Los Angeles Lowrider Car Show in 1996. Courtesy of @artbyesmeraldavillarreal.



Firme Hinas Party Crew in the mid '90s. Courtesy of @firmehinas.

find a connection with, you know what I mean? And that was really unfortunate. I see that happening here now. It's been happening here, but now it's really taking a toll, especially in East LA, unfortunately, the realm that I think we both have a foot in. The art world, has a little bit to do with that, depending on what scene you're in. Or, how galleries are moving east because of cheaper rent. I know that's a huge issue now, especially with Boyle Heights and Downtown leaking over the bridge. I don't know, I think it's kind of a hectic moment, especially to be an artist and especially working in this area.

Yeah, I think about, do we have a place—for me, do I have a place to make work, and to make this material accessible, to be an artist? And this is me talking about, can I come home and make work, you know? Is there a safe place that people are not going to question me? Am I contributing to gentrification, whatever the fuck that means? Am I going to be side-eyed or whatever, just because I want to make work in Boyle Heights, which is where I grew up? That's not to say that gentrification—people being scared about it, people protesting— isn't real, you know? That's fucking real, I grew up through that; my parents brought me up protesting. I remember when we were kids, we would walk from, fuck I don't even know, somewhere in Boyle Heights to City Hall protesting something, you know? And I remember my mom being fucking angry, like we have to do this, this is important. So now, when I see these things happening, I fucking get it, I get it. People protest and I understand protesting. At the same time, I feel like there are other ways of protesting, you know? I think my work is about protesting, it's about resistance and it's about taking up space. But yeah, I still think, am I ever going to feel comfortable in Boyle Heights as an artist? Am I going to feel awkward if I'm sitting in a studio, you know? And now that I have an MFA or whatever, of course people are going to see it as privileged, a luxury, but also I think people need to understand where I came from and how I got here. I guess that's the question. Right now I'm like should I stay or should I go? Should I what, you know? Like if I leave where do I go? Can I afford it? Should I be making work in my fucking bedroom wherever that is? But then again it's like, if I do that are people going to come to my bedroom? Am I going to have studio visits in my bedroom? Like come chill and I'll play you some Wu-Tang or something? I don't know!

An intimate studio visit.

Lay on my bed or something!

I wanted to talk about Map Pointz. I know we briefly talked about it earlier when we were talking about Veteranas and Rucas... how do they connect?

I started Map Pointz about six months ago. I wanted to create this platform focusing on the rave and party scene in Southern California. Both Instagrams are loose in their own way, Veteranas and Rucas is very loose on the Chicano culture in LA and Southern California, and Map Pointz is loose in a way that it's not just photos, it's also of ephemera or artifacts from the '90s rave and party crew scene. People submit flyers, videos, pictures of ticket stubs, or whatever. I feel like people can appreciate the party subculture more than if I were to post it on Veteranas and Rucas, I felt that back in the day people were trying to disassociate themselves from the gang culture and that's why these parties were created. How do we create these spaces in the midst of gang violence? And I think a lot of people were like, "We're not cholos," "We're not gangsters," or whatever. So it's a gesture to that. If you feel comfortable on this side, then you're more than welcome, but if you feel comfortable on Veteranas and Rucas, then totally fine.

That made me think of some of these parties and raves as a safe place, or an outlet for people who—you know, like you just mentioned, didn't want to be involved in the violence that was happening, especially during that time. It seems like from what you're explaining that it kind of had an open invitation to whoever wanted to just be in that sort of zone.

A safe place.

If it's even proper to use that as a way to describe it.

I think at the time we were considering these places as different and unique and intimate. And now that I think about it, it's like yeah, and safe. Safe from people that were causing trouble. We were trying to stay away from that; that's why we avoided mentioning the actual directions or location on the flyers. We were trying to prevent the cops from coming, or the gangs, because we just wanted to have a good time with our friends—music and dancing were the key elements. When I think about youth culture I just think that—we had so much power to change things. This is why subcultures were created. You create something different because it's going to change

something, whether it changes the person or changes the fucking—the whole scene or group of people. And definitely they were safe places. I'm thinking about the things that we did back in the day. We partied in abandoned houses where no one could stop it, or in a warehouse. And we tried really hard. We brought generators with us and we just made things happen.

Just going more into detail about some of these parties in the '90s, before I go into my favorite questions that I have for you. I didn't want to leave out talking about the DJs of this time. You briefly talked about the kind of music that was going on at these parties. Maybe if you want to give a shout to some DJs that you were really interested in or friends with, just a bit more about the music. Like who curated the DJs? Who decided this is going to the person playing to-night? How did that happen?

I think it was just friends of friends. The party crew always had a DJ. The names that I remember seeing a lot were like DJ Mustang, DJ Blue, and then the DJs that became more successful like Dr Cisco . . . but he's more early '90s. Even the stories that they told me, like, "Oh yeah, I started DJing when I was 14." Fuck, that's so young, you know? And how do people get turntables to DJ? But there was always that one guy who had the turntables and everyone would hang out in his bedroom and practice. Dr Cisco was telling me once that he was 17 and was DJing at 21-and-over or 18-and-over clubs, he basically said, "I'm the DJ," and they would let him in. A lot of them have become really successful. They're still doing their thing. I was just talking to a friend last night, his DJ name was Modern Romance, and he's still doing it; he's traveling the world to DJ and that's really fucking dope, you know, people doing what they like. It's nice to think about when we were all kids and also people sticking with it. For example, graphic designers, the people who designed the flyers. Some of them are known for that now—they're businessmen, or promoters, people still throw events or DJs are still DJing at amazing parties. That's the beauty of staying connected or reconnecting with people, just to know what they're doing and if they're still doing what they love. I have a friend who was the graphic designer and was a promoter for East LA Madness—that was his party crew—and I remember he was also hustling, always making sure the flyers were printed. He was like 14 or 15, and I could see that he's still that person. He has his own shop and he's still hustling. I like seeing those traces.

I think that's great. In recent months I feel like you've done a ton, which I don't think is any news, but just for people out there who have been like sleeping, maybe they'll have Instagram to see your work.
I have a website now.

I didn't even know that—I'm sleeping! I wanted you to talk about finishing grad school, it's really new, I know. Maybe talk briefly about the talk that you gave at UCLA, and some of your more recent events, like the picnic—and of course, the few events and talks you hosted here at PSSST and you being a current resident here. I asked you a lot but whatever.

So UCLA was in January and I'll explain how that happened. I was still living in New York and I approached UCLA Chicano studies, I think I emailed them and I still have the email, I printed it the other day, being like, "Hey, I'm currently working on this project on '90s party crews, it was really big in Southern California," and then I said, "Can you guys help me find this material and these magazines I'm looking for?" They were like, "We don't know what you're talking about." I was like, "Okay, can we have a meeting and talk about this, because this is really important." I went over there and I proposed a project. They were like, "Hell yeah, this sounds amazing." So then I conducted a panel, and it was successful, and after that, so much stuff has been happening. It's been nonstop since then. I did a talk at the New Museum in New York, and they are archiving the digital archives in their collection. I guess now, October 15th—I don't know when this is going to be printed—but on October 15th I'm going to have a show at Vincent Price, and it's going to be a group show focusing on the youth culture from 1943 to now. We're throwing a warehouse party that same night. The next day I have a picnic at Legg Lake. The picnic is about bringing back the picnic and crew scene, so yeah, it's going to be a busy month. And then I have a show January 17th, here at PSSST where I have my residency. What else?

The last thing I wanted to propose to you is if you just want to talk about anything else or make any shout outs?

Shout outs. Yeah, to my mom. Thanks Mom, for your support. When I had my thesis show my mom went to my graduation and then she helped me de-install my thesis show. For the show, I covered all the walls with flyers and stuff. For me, that gesture of covering the walls is very nostalgic because back in the day when I was a teenager a lot of us covered our bed-



Midnight Pleasure Crew in the mid '90s. Courtesy of @miss_ceedjay.

room walls with party flyers, whether they were raves or backyard parties. So I did that for my thesis show and my mom was helping me de-install the show and I told her to be very careful because they're the original flyers. Damn, time changes everything you know? I started thinking about how my mom used to literally rip these flyers off my wall and be like, "Fuck these parties, they're evil." And now she respects it and respects my work. And she was carefully taking out the pins, you know? Talk about, I don't know, just reframing history. So yeah, shout out to my mom, shout out to, fuck I don't know, the community, the party scene, everyone that I've met and that I've recently been reconnecting with, and all the friends that I've been making through this journey!

Thanks Lupe.

On Point 2.13: Scaling Down Biennial Fever

Mark Van Proyen

Let's start by stating the obvious: international biennial exhibitions have been looking the same for quite a few years now. These exhibitions feature many of the same artists, and sometimes even the same works by those artists, set in predictably algebraic arrangements buttressed by pretentiously vague thematic purposes that are further supported by notably conservative systems of inclusions, subcategorized in terms of media, gender identity, and country of origin, all loudly paying lip service to a narrow, predictable idea of difference. It may not matter that, in recent years, the international shortlist of artistic directors for these mega-exhibitions seems to be opening up; the higher levels of curatorial prestige have created a protégé system where new voices sing the same old songs. In other words, there is now no obvious path leading from the organization of smaller biennials to larger ones, with the once-every-five-years staging of *Documenta* as the brightest star in the mega-exhibition heavens. Of that, more will be written next June, but for now, the focus is on Asia, with three biennials taking place in Korea and a fourth in Taiwan, with still another opening in Shanghai in November. The list goes on: the Chengdu Biennale, the Beijing International Art Biennale, the Singapore Biennale, the Yokohama Triennial, the Nanjing Triennial, Guangzhou Triennial, and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (all established in the past 15 years) have all made a splash recently, although not all of them are being staged during the current fall season.

It's time to question the merits of these exercises in curatorial gigantism, especially now that so many of these extravaganzas take a cue from 2002's *Documenta11* and expand their operations into multiple venues (or "platforms" as they are now called), into different cities, or even onto different continents. Supposedly, more is better, but that more increasingly seems to appear in the form of bigger budgets, more venues, more square footage of exhibition space, and more curatorial assistants. But something different happened in Korea during the past few months: two smaller biennials, Mediacity Seoul and the Busan Biennale, proved to be more interesting alternatives to the larger Gwangju Biennale and Taipei Biennial, owing to the fact that the clarity of curatorial focus succeeded where sheer proliferation failed. I am going to go out on a limb and say that, for several reasons, this might be a sign that the hyper-additive model of international exhibition development may be passing. Pressingly, the mania for sheer proliferation is revealed as a side-stepping of the kind of criticality that now seems to be even more necessary than it was prior to the past two decades of biennial fever. If everything is important, then nothing is, and we would do well to remember that not too long ago, such exhibitions were the places where contemporary artworks first auditioned for their places in art history. Now, in our post-historical moment, they are events that guarantee large audiences and "museum worthiness," adding a threadbare smidgen of importance to the resumes of the included artists and curators.

Of course, next summer's trifecta of *Documenta14* The 57th Venice Biennale and the Münster Sculpture Project could prove me wrong, but in the meantime, we might want to consider another, more situational counter-argument. It has to do with the way that museum culture operates outside of the European and North American contexts with which most of us are familiar. Since the explosion of tiger economy prosperity in the mid-1990s, the Korean strategy organized large shows and energetically promoted exhibitions that would put the work of Korean artists in proximity to well-known American and Europeans, giving international importance-by-association to not only their artists but also to their local art history. For the most part, this has served the Korean art scene well, creating a great deal of collector interest, and expanding professional opportunities for the artists and curators, although in the case of Gwangju and Taipei, the artistic directors have tended to be well-known European curators passing out mediagenic



Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled (Human Mask)*, 2014. Single channel HD video, 19 minutes. Courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, and Esther Schipper.

helpings of cultural paternalism. But in the case of Mediacity Seoul and the Busan Biennale, the emphasis has been on the projects of Korean curators working in closer proximity to the Asian art scene, staging projects more closely bound to the recent history of Asian art. Although these exhibitions were about half the size of the more prominent and time-honored Gwangju Biennial, they were far better, showing that intelligently focused curation can do things that big budget spectacles cannot, like avoiding the trivializing of the art contained within them.

SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul took place from September 1st to November 20th under the direction of Beck Jee-sook, under the title *NERIRI KIRURU HARARA*, a sequence of Japanese words that point to speculative possibilities taking place in an imaginary future, giving the overall exhibition a science fiction feel (and calling attention to the fact that all contemporary art is an becoming an exercise in science fiction). In some cases, the presented work was not at all futuristic. I was impressed by a three-screen video projection by Cha Jae-min titled *Twelve* (2016), with each screen showing four characters who were engaged in an absurd "negotiation" about raising the minimum wage. The four figures on the left screen were caricatures of businesspeople whose concern was to suppress the cost of labor, while those at stage right were making rational arguments about the larger benefit of an increased minimum wage. The four located in the middle screen played the part of the impartial judges of the debate, but in many subtle ways (gesture, costume, etc.) they made it clear that their prejudicial sympathies lied with the business operators. I was also intrigued by the suite of small, very crafty airbrush paintings by Oliver Laric titled *Missile Variations* (2010), depicting sequential scenes of outbound missiles being launched just prior to another cluster of inbound missiles, sounding a resonating theme in contemporary Korea. As might be expected, Pierre Huyghe contributed the showstopper, *Untitled (Human Mask)* (2014), a dreamy, high-density video projection that followed a chimp as it ambled around a darkened room. The fact that said chimp was wearing a butoh mask and long flowing robes made its perambulations more than just a little bit creepy in a *Planet-Of-The-Apes-meets-Waiting-For-Godot* way.

The Busan Biennale, on view until November 30th, was organized by Yun Cheagab (Director of the How Art Museum in Wenzhou), and was given the title *Hybridizing Earth, Discussing Multitude*, containing the work of 123 artists and collectives, smartly divided into three sections, called *Projects*. *Project 3* was a series of lectures and other events that took place prior to and during the run of the exhibition. *Project 1* was titled *an/other avant garde: china/ japan/korea* and was a stunning historical exhibition that focused on three key episodes in the post-World War II emergence of avant-garde art movements in those countries. The China portion of *Project 1* was titled *Briefings: Avant-garde Art in China 1976-1995*, and curated by Guo Xiaoyan, focuses on a period of artistic turmoil prior to the giant market boom for Chinese art, as seen in the work of such artists as Gu Wenda, who is represented by eight early paintings collectively titled *Drama of Two Cultural Formats Merge* (1987) and Xu Bing, who shows photographs and video documentation of two fornicating tattooed pigs in *A Case Study of Transference* (1993-94). It is worth noting that the pig on the receiving end of this performance was tattooed in Cantonese script, while the one doing most of the performing was tattooed in an Anglo-European alphabet.

The Japan section, curated by a team including Noi Sawaragi, Akira Tatehata, and Yuzo Ueda, was titled *Avant-Garde Art in Japan After War*, and took a close look at the post-1950 period. It features early work from several of the well-known Gutai artists, as well as other artists who made the Tokyo Olympic Games of 1964, the 1970 Osaka International Fair, and the Japanese Constitution subjects of quizzical works that tried to navigate the post-Hiroshima spiral of contested identities. Japanese art critics now call this period *Blazing Flower* (as indicated by recent exhibition at the Kyoto Museum of Modern Art), and one of the things that becomes clear is the extent to which the work of this era influenced the development of avant-garde art in the rest of non-communist Asia. Noi comes to his organizational position as an art critic rather than as an institutional curator, and I would suggest that contemporary Asian art would benefit from more voices like his, if only to counter the authority that is (over) invested in institutional patronage systems connected to government initiatives."

The Korean section was curated by Kim Chandong, and was titled *Korea's Avant-Garde Moment: A Rebellious Escape*. It looked at the period running from the late-1960s to the late-1980s when two very different movements came to the fore: the Dansaekhwa group and the minjung misul. *Dansaekhwa* literally translates to "monochrome," but what this leaves out is the implied sense of performed immediacy that comes with the presentation of minimally inflected surfaces, such as is found in Kim Dong-Kyu's trio of very early monochrome paintings, or Park Suk-Won's *Four Shadows* (1972), which is made of shapes cast by the shadows of four toppled blocks of wood. *Minjung misul* (i.e. "the people's art" was most forcefully represented by an anonymously authored 1967 film documenting the subversive activities of the Korean Young Artists Association.) *Project 2* inaugurates an additional venue for the Busan Biennale, the cavernous repurposed cable factory of Kiswire's Suyeong building. It houses the contemporary section of *Hybridizing Earth, Reflecting Multitudes* and contains works from about 40 artists and collectives from all points of the globe. One of the works that stood out for me was a 2016 piece titled *Handmade Fantasy* by Yun Pilnam , which reminded me of Eva Hesse's final *Untitled (Rope Piece)* from 1970, until you came close enough to see that it was comprised of tens of dozens of cell phones and power strips rendered as Oldenberg-esque soft sculpture. I also liked the dual-screen animated video by Choi Sung Rok , which turned the tensions between North and South Korea into a comical ant farm saga of bellicose rinse, dry, and repeat. Choi's piece resonances for multiple reasons, but after seeing four biennales in the space of a long week, its most salient meaning for me lied in the way that it summarized the normative exercise of curatorial imagination in today's global art world.

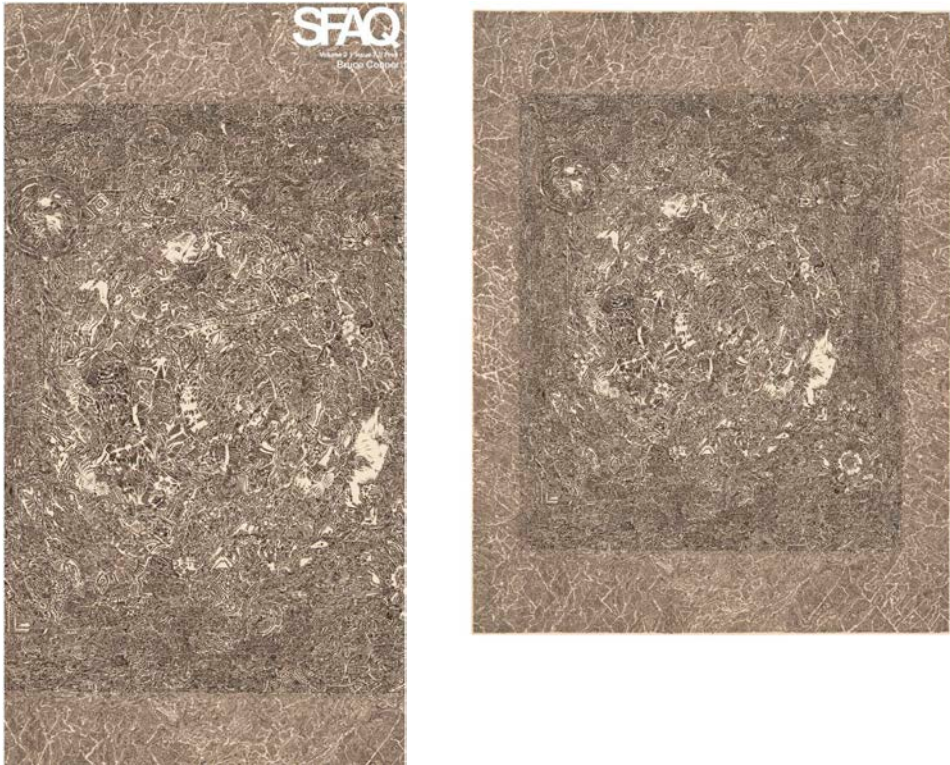
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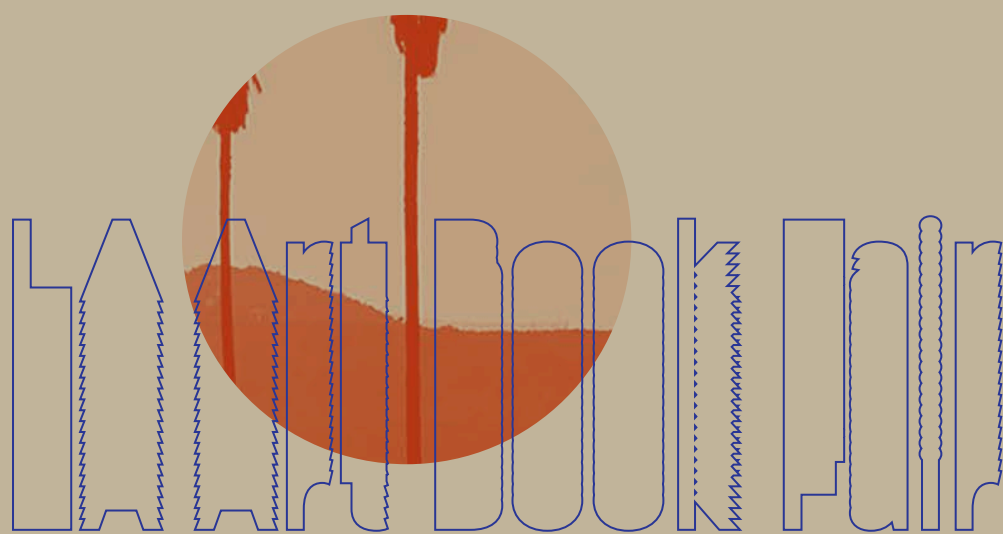


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