

*Family Fictions* (Laura Herman & Charlotte Van Buylaere)  
Published in Camera Austria, n° 148,  
Spring 2019, p. 80-81

Translated from French by John Doherty

auf den Screens die Grenzen von Haptik und Optik, von Taktilität und Sichtbarkeit, von Materialität und Digitalität, und diese Unschärfen wirken zurück auf die fotografischen Bilder, die Abeles von diesen Endgeräten des täglichen Gebrauchs macht. Ihre oft in Geschäften aufgenommenen Bilder werden auf digitale Devices geladen, deren Screens fotografiert. Konterkariert von händisch übermalten Bildschirmoberflächen, auf denen mitunter auch Wasserspritzer und Farbleckse landen, abermals wird das Verhältnis zwischen Fläche und Raum unterwandert: Wo beginnt der digitale Bildraum eigentlich und wo endet er? Was verbindet Akte dies-

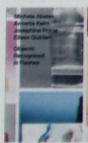


Josephine Pryde, *Relax* (grey), 2004, 2-teiliger Lamdbdruck, je 125 x 231 cm. Courtesy: die Künstlerin und Simon Lee Gallery, London / Hong Kong / New York.

Kaufens und Konsumierens mit Modi des Darstellens und Zurschaustellens? Accessors bürgerlicher Genussskultur, angesiedelt zwischen Glamour und Retro-Lifestyle stellt wiederum die Arbeit »Z-E« (2019) zur Disposition.

Und genau dieses Inszenieren spiegelnder Oberflächen, mit dem hier gespielt wird, ist ein Moment, das auch Josephine Pryde aufgreift. Im Rückgriff auf das Erbe der Moderne und die Ästhetik der Neuen Sachlichkeit, lotet die in London und Berlin arbeitende Künstlerin die Schmerzgrenzen zwischen Sein und Schein aus (»The Necessary Level of Repression I & II«, 2001). Prydes Arbeiten führen unsere Visualisierungskultur mitsamt ihrer an die Grenzen getriebenen Verwertungslogik vor: Hier werden Marktstrategien bloßgelegt, intime Blicke entlarvt und die Fokussierung aufs Objekt mitsamt ihrem Zwang zur Makellosigkeit mit einem Augenwinkel kommentiert. Dieser Kunstgriff ist auch nicht zuletzt eine Frage der Zeit und der für die Ausbeleuchtung notwendige Sekundärbruchteil ist dafür vollkommen ausreichend (»Relax [grey]«, 2004).

Die Berliner Künstlerin Annette Kelm wiederum spielt mit den Inszenierungsmechanismen



Objects Recognized in Flashes: Michele Abeles, Annette Kelm, Josephine Pryde, Eileen Quinlan. Hrsg. von Matthias Michalka, museum moderner kunst stiftung ludwig wien.

Mit Textbeiträgen von Tom McDonough, Matthias Michalka, Juliane Rebentisch. Mit Arbeiten von Michele Abeles, Annette Kelm, Josephine Pryde, Eileen Quinlan. Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln 2019.

250 Seiten, 21 A x 27 cm, ca. 200 SW- und Farbabbildungen. € 28,- / ISBN 978-3-96098-731-4 (ger.) ISBN 978-3-96098-732-1 (eng.)

men sogenannter »neutraler Darstellungen« von Objekten und bringt damit auch die politischen, historischen und gesellschaftlichen Kontexte der dargebotenen Alltagsgegenstände und Konsumgüter aufs Tapet. Bizarre Kompositionen aus Pflanzen, eine Serie von aus der Zeit gefallenen Handtaschen, ein Korbstuhl, der auf Smiley-Kartonboxen steht, oder ein Arrangement aus Dollarscheinen und Schilfhalmen kreieren aus Absurde grenzende Szenarien in oft knalligen Farben und entbehren dabei nicht einer gewissen Situationskomik – »recognized in flashes«.



Josephine Pryde, *Relax* (grey), 2004, 2-teiliger Lamdbdruck, je 125 x 231 cm. Courtesy: die Künstlerin und Simon Lee Gallery, London / Hong Kong / New York.

Größbild- und Mittelformatkameras und – wie ihre Kolleginnen – seit einigen Jahren auch mit digitaler Apparatur. Die Hintergründe, auf denen ihre Objekte präsentiert werden, legen nicht selten auch die Produktionsbedingungen offen, die zu deren Darbietung geführt haben oder dies zumindest suggerieren: Fluchtlinien in Form von Papierändern und Fingerspitzen, die die papierene Unterlage in den rechten Winkel rücken, relativieren den Bildrahmen und nehmen der Perspektive ihre Frontalität.

Eine weitere Ebene des Oberflächen-Vermessens eröffnet die ebenfalls in New York arbeitende Eileen Quinlan in ihren feinsinnigen Beiträgen: Sie arbeitet zum überwiegensten Teil in Schwarz-Weiß und präsentiert Materialien, Menschen und Formen, die ob ihrer Flüchtigkeit mitunter Verwirrung stiften – in positivem Sinne. Strategien der Inszenierung sind auch bei ihr ausschlaggebend: geschult hat Quinlan ihren Blick in Studios kommerzieller Fotograf\*innen sowie in der Werbebranche: erblindete Spiegelbruchstücke, sich spiegelnde Rauchschwaden und Experimente mit den Farbspektren kollabierender Scanner befragen das Verhältnis von Fläche und Raum und kratzen, dem Wortsinne nach, an der Beschaffenheit der Oberflächen: Wer oder was sind diese Körper und Dinge eigentlich? Was erzählen die schrill beleuchteten Yogamatten-Settings mitsamt ihrer Noppenmuster über Optimierung und an Glasscheiben gepresste intime Körperzonen über die Ökonomie des Begehrens in der Konsumkultur?

»Objects Recognized in Flashes« prangert weder pauschal Dynamiken des Fetischierens an noch vollziehen die in der Ausstellung versammelten künstlerischen Arbeiten läuternde Akte der Entschleierung. Vielmehr werden hier die Sinnlichkeit und Faszinationspotenziale von Dingen und Waren anerkannt, denen Abeles, Kelm, Pryde und Quinlan mit genauso viel Scharfsinn und Offenheit begegnen wie den dazugehörigen Brüchen, Schiefgaben und Widersprüchlichkeiten – ein Genuss!

Antonia Rahofer, Wien (AT) / Athen (GR), ist Autorin, Kuratorin und Kulturvermittlerin mit Fokus auf Film- und Medienkunst, dokumentarischen Strategien sowie dem Interview als künstlerische Praxis.

## Family Fictions

Kunsthall Extra City, Antwerp, 14. 9. – 8. 12. 2019

by Yoann Van Parys

A remarkable exhibition is being put on this autumn by the curators Laura Herman and Charlotte Van Buylaere at Antwerp's Kunsthall Extra City. Its subject, which proves to be audacious, is the family. Important as it may be, the family has not actually given rise to many exhibitions in art venues. It almost seems like a taboo, perhaps because of its bourgeois, conservative connotations, which the curators deftly avoid along with any simplistic rhetoric. They look at the family in terms of its aura, its hidden aspects, and its speculative fantasy nature, as suggested by the title: "Family Fictions."

The works presented here, though limited in number, are dense in content. There are seven artists (including a duo), each with just one work; but broad perspectives are opened up. The spatialization, occupying one floor of the building, is not linear. It can be seen as a more or less starlike pattern, with branches that one can explore before coming back to the center – assuming that there is a clearly identifiable center (a significant indeterminacy). This arrangement is necessary to the underlying rationale. Metaphorically, the family is a core radiating out in different directions that one follows, returning each time. We might provide an overview of the exhibition by analyzing four of the seven works.

In Alice Wong and Aryan Javaherian's multimedia installation "Marriage Matters" (2019), there are flat screens on a wall, and another on top of headphones. The installation is both rigid and welcoming, and it is completed by mural texts



Lucy Beech, still from: *Reproductive Exile*, 2018, 4K video (color, sound), 30'. Courtesy: the artist and Lafayette Anticipations, Paris; De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill; Tramway, Glasgow.

and black benches. The videos show something resembling scenes from a TV series. A family is quarrelling about what is seen as the shame of a woman who, at more than twenty-five years of age, is still not married. In 2007, the Chinese government introduced the term "neglected woman" as a way of putting moral pressure on young unmarried women. The "one child" policy created a demographic disparity, with a shortage of women. And if, moreover, these women aspire to emancipation, it is a threat to the Chinese social edifice. Hence the government's anxiety. The wall texts resemble a curriculum vitae addressed to potential employers. So, the installation is not just a "documentary" about the consequences of the policy in question. It also gives a complex comparison between familial and corporate structures, with a constant stream of interviews in which the aim is to make a good impression. The

generalized "dating" that we see on Tinder, Facebook, et cetera, and the continuous assessment, with Airbnb, for example – does this not representation a highly capitalistic form of business logic? Something else that is thrown into relief by the installation is an encounter between cultural values. And the videos do indeed derive simulacra, mostly from American and Chinese TV series.



Valérie Mannaerts, *M.M.*, 2019, C-print, 50 x 36.5 cm (framed). Courtesy: the artist and Bernier Blades Gallery, Athens / Brussels.

Moralistic family values are in constant interplay. There is an intrinsic conflict, into which the individual is drawn, perhaps unwittingly, when the definition of a family is essential to a society of control and consumption.

Lucy Beech's video work "Reproductive Exile" (2018) presents another contemporary paradox. Its heroine is a young woman who wants to have a child with medical assistance. It is the story of a journey that takes her to an unsettling clinic in the Czech Republic – a country that is privileged by comparison with those in which medically assisted procreation is more strictly regulated. The film combines hope and anxiety. Hope is what guides the woman's desire to have a child at any cost. Through science, she finds that she can assume her desire, and defend it, alone and free. This work expresses the independence of a woman in the quest for maternity – a marker of our age. But the film also reveals a darker facet of her quest: the market that has developed around this desire, and governmental panic in the face of this phenomenon, but also the solitude and moral distress that accompany the subject's initiative. This is a portrait of a woman desperately clinging to a future embodied by a child, for lack of a present time that she could fully occupy.

There is a set of photographs by Valérie Mannaerts, who is best known as a sculptor. For these new images, she used clothes that had belonged to her father. She arranged them into ephemeral "installations" in interior settings. The result is a crosscutting portrait/self-portrait, between daughter and father. It is a meditation on what constitutes the filial bond, accentuated by the death of a father or mother. What is it that makes what are the objects that exemplify the traits of heredity? After the death of a father or mother,

might we not say that a process of recollection takes place, but also a reinvention of their presence in our minds? A sort of new imaginary filiation is created (though we might also wonder whether the original bond was not itself imaginary).

Kalup Linzy's hour-long video "Romantic Loner" (2012-13) resembles a music clip with an ironic, melancholic atmosphere. The protagonist of African origin who is seeking "love for his own sake." The embedding effects used in the editing process mean that underlying scenes constantly accompany the main action in a smooth blending of images. The artist is tacitly speaking of homosexuality (homosexuals being forbidden to have families in many countries), and of the social image to which he supposedly responds, but from which he dissociates himself, either deliberately or simply by yielding to his nature, which resists compartmentalization. In the context of "Family Fictions," this film also subtly speaks to us of the families that we can construct within ourselves: individual families (where we ourselves play all of the roles) of a new kind which, in the end, represent a reality that is experienced by many of those who live alone or in fleeting romantic relationships that do not particularly define them, but who rather identify with a plurality of personas that can be embraced by a single individual.

The two curators' stroke of genius, forming the essential quality of "Family Fictions," is to be found in their peripheral, impressionistic approach to the theme, and their nuanced view of the selected works. This approach actually gives a highly realistic image of the present-day family, as a conjunction of human relations subjected to the central forces of our time – an elusive social structure in a state of metamorphosis.

Translation from French: John Doherty

Yoann Van Parys is an artist, art critic, and curator, born in 1981 in Brussels (BE). His texts appeared in *Artforum* (US), *Art Papers* (US), *Art press* (FR), *Dis* (BE), *Esse* (CA), *Espace* (FR), *Fluxus News* (BE), *Frog* (FR).

## Bergen Assembly 2019: Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead

Various venues, Bergen, 5. 9. – 10. 11. 2019

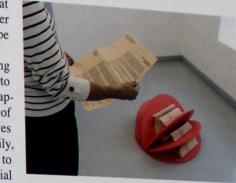
by Mercedes Vicente

The task is to make kin in lines of inventive conjunction as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present. – Donna J. Haraway

Contrary to most biennials, showcasing the expected acolyte of contemporary artists, this year's Bergen Assembly, titled "Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead," brings the dead into active presence in order to "redefine our alliances with those not presently living" and "communicate with the specters of the past and who are no longer, or not yet, here." Such ingrained reverence for opposing the binary thinking that has been responsible for the exclusion, silencing, and imprisonment of those not conforming with the idealizing norms that restrict our bodies, identities, abilities, and thought processes. The Assembly embraces multitudes and expanded approaches with conviction, in a state of becoming

and becoming-with-each-other that promises new alliances to our present, restitutions to our past, and the makings of our future. There is as much about ideals as there is about grassroots work dealing with realities produced by injustice and bigotry, resulting from experiences that are personal, social, and political. Firm is the Assembly's conviction that art in its unrestrictedly identificatory and activist powers leads to new action, and the exercise of equality and justice; equally firm is their response-ability to redress the ills of our time and to make a meaningful impact.

Conveners Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, in an effort of true assembly ethos, have shared the stage with ten artists, activists, and academics – Murat Deha Boduroğlu, Banu Cennetoğlu, María García, Hiwa K, Katia Krupnikova, Viktor Neumann, Paul B. Preciado, Pedro G. Romero, Simon Sheikh, and Emma Wolouka among themselves and together with others (a hundred participants) in a steadfast, comradely way. Brought together by shared principles – dissent and the emancipatory potential of art,



Feminist Health Care Research Group Sick and Desiring (curatorial contribution by Non Hedgorn), Radical Health Care, Materials, Methods and Activation, 2018–ongoing. (Julia Bonn and Inga Zimpich). Installation at Hordaland Kunstcenter, Bergen, 2019. Courtesy: Julia Bonn and Inga Zimpich. Photo: Thor Brodreski.

a militant inclusiveness of the unheard and invisible, and the need for accountability – their cumulative, unruly voices resolutely embody difference.

Just as expansive is their program with four platforms: the exhibition across five venues in Bergen, following the thematic threads "unseen and unheard" (Bergen Kunsthall), "the museum as the institution that ensures the dead would not return to demand justice" and "Political Parties" (KODE 1), "feminist gaming" (Entrée), "Sick and Desiring" (Hordaland Kunstcenter), and "human rights" (Bergen Kjøtt). Further, there is a social and working space for community groups and an experimental mediation program by Pedagogias Invisibles (Belgin); the Parliament of Bodies (PoB), with two apexes of activities in June and September; and a public program. If the inaugural weekend was representative of this edition, then performances, workshops, and social encounters lure over material objects, facilitating relational and dialogic exchange in Sarlmsjøer, known as the Queen of Angerique who the 1980s, a victim of domestic violence who fought for her emancipation) operated in full capacity with the inaugural back-to-back events.

On the opening night, the restaged "ecological opera" called "Aire del Mar" (1988/2019),



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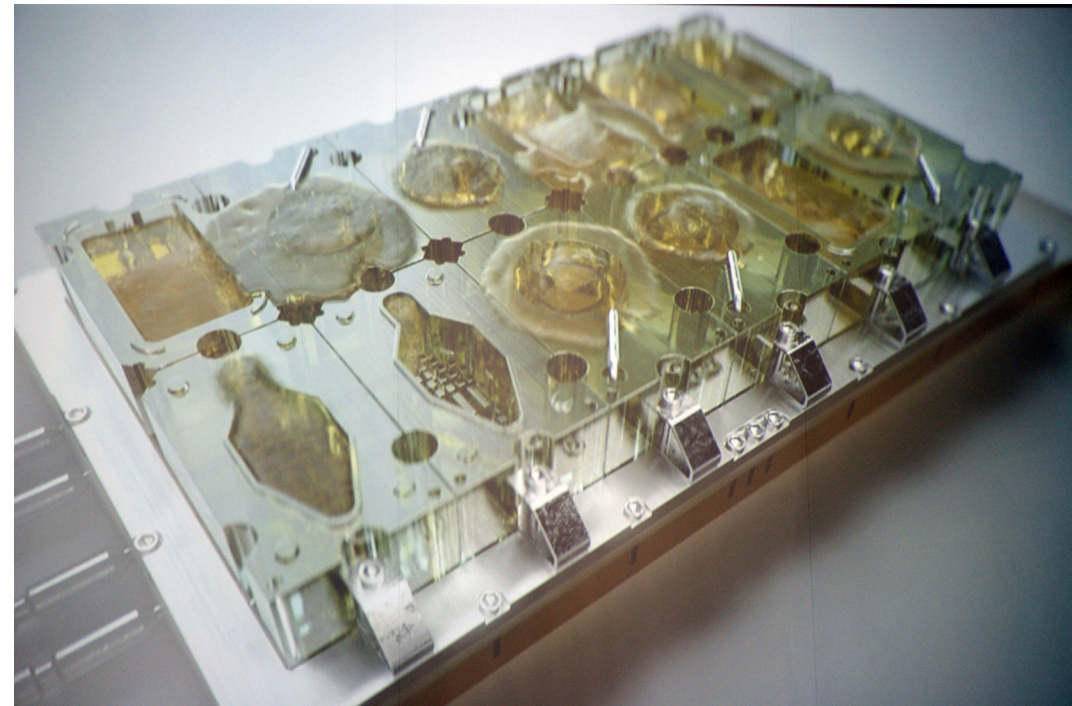
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