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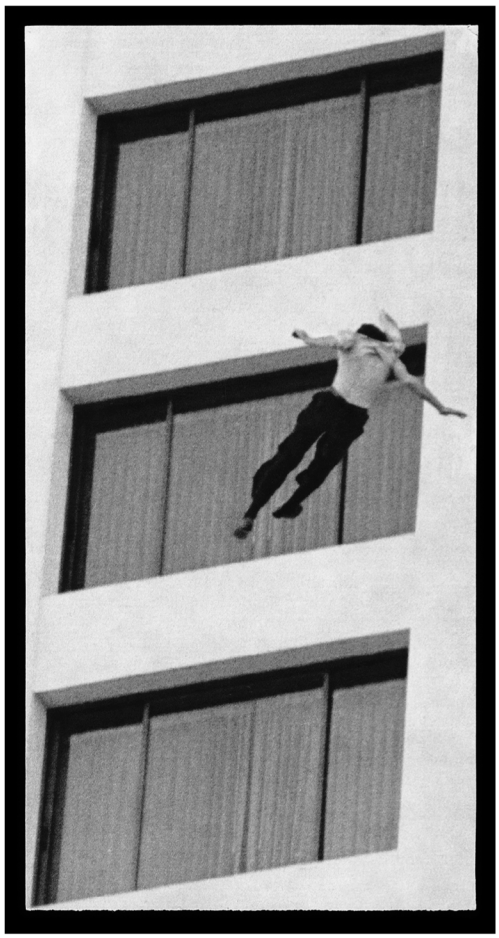
SARAH CHARLESWORTH: STILLS

at the Art Institute of Chicago
by Stephanie Cristello

The first fall is hard to replicate. Since Milton's original passage on Lucifer, cast out of heaven, falling unrestrained and without resistance for nine days—the severity of *the fall* in art has only gained in significance as a motif. The drama and spectacle of the fall has since been used, and reinvented, by the conceptualists as an iconic metaphor on the secular loss of control, on coincidence and chance. While the archetypal may have played less into the performative falls in the 1960s and 70s—Bas Jan Ader falling from trees, on his bicycle into a canal, or simply on the pavement, and Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void*—it was no less serious. Within this cannon, one series stands singular—not as solemn staged performances, but as accidental captures. Opening this week, the complete collection of *Sarah Charlesworth: Stills* is on view together for the first time at the Art Institute of Chicago, marking the first US museum solo show of the artist's work in fifteen years. The exhibition features fourteen individual falls, closely cropped stills of figures suspended largely against the backdrop of buildings, though their surroundings are sometimes formless and less distinct. Each of the images is lifted from the media archives, depicting suicides; the photographs, appropriated and repurposed by Charlesworth, offer glimpses into a type of news that reports without words. Over her entire career, and here especially, Charlesworth is committed to the rule of the image over language.

Ancient myth is easily applied to these works. The vertically and sense of elongated time in Charlesworth's compositions make Lucifer an easy target. In the catalogue, Jerry Satlz is cited as speaking of Medusa, of an absolute stillness and petrification that takes hold of the photographs themselves. But petrification here would be impossible; the subject's gaze is never met with ours. The figures in Charlesworth's frame never stare back. They fall anonymously, like distant stars. Yet, at the same time, the images propose an affront to gravity; they levitate, appearing as if suspended in thin air. There is an element of impossible weightlessness in both the literal and conceptual heaviness of the falling figures, as if the suspension the viewer sees could at once reverse itself—or transubstantiate at any moment—inverting its trajectory and transforming into an altogether different ending. While the footage is stark and very real, the implications open themselves up to mysticism. There is a persistent mystery within the pictures that inquires: perhaps these figures float upwards? While this sentiment is something we never accept as true given the context of their source, it somehow remains a possibility we entertain, echoing in our experience.

This exact contrariness—as above, so below—is a part of Charlesworth's own mythology and process, developed within the cropping and restaging the source images of these singular figures. *Unidentified Man, Ontani Hotel*, Los Angeles, 1980, pictures a man in a suit, beautifully inserted against three diagonal Bauhaus-style windows; *Patricia Cawlings, Los Angeles*, 1980, one of the few identified subjects in the collection, is shot against an unadorned white wall, her shadow extending well beyond her figure (it must be high noon), stretching her presence. In a preview of the exhibition, curator Matt Wittkovsky relates, "there are two figures in each of these images, them and you." Each of the reproductions are human scale, the bodies pictured within the nearly 6ft frames could logically be contained within the frame; the black edge of the photographs acts as a of kind surrogate chamber. The equivalence of scale within these images has become so easy for us to understand in our contemporary landscape, and is indeed expected—but these images are an anomaly of their time. The scale of this work is a signal of invention. While the technology was certainly possible prior to produce these images since the mid-twentieth century, the enlargement of these photographs—produced in the 1980s—was an innovative contribution for Charlesworth's own work and the Pictures Generation as a whole.



Sarah Charlesworth. *Unidentified Man, Ontani Hotel,* Los Angeles, 1980, printed 2012, No. 14 of 14 from the series Stills. The Art Institute of Chicago, promised gift of Liz and Eric Lefkofsky. © Estate of Sarah Charlesworth. Courtesy the Estate of Sarah Charlesworth and Maccarone.

If Warhol's *Disaster* series struck a nightmare pitch, Charlesworth's *Stills* write themselves as love letters. These images are well-composed disasters. Though they are tightly contained within the limits of the photographic frame, here, the figures fall without boundaries. They are freed from their context, removed from a concrete sense of space (which brings time with it); the absence of both provides a crucial entrance into the work. The enlargement of the photographs is just yet another method of cementing this distance; the quality of the prints deteriorates into more formal passages of light and dark, stark exposure and shade. As Charlesworth masterfully demonstrates, stillness does not equal closeness. Get too close and the image evaporates.

While the inevitable fate of the subjects within the work is implied, the images remain theoretical and propositional in nature. They are forever on the verge, on the cusp of certain action—in limbo in the truest sense. The images deliver the lie of stillness in photography that is not deliberately presented as false, but is also not accepted outright as true. The veritable here lies only in the viewer's ability to suspend their own disbelief in favor of multiple endings, never just one. There is still the hope that the camera is lying to us, tricking us in some way—like an outtake scene in a film that reveals the characters scaling the building as nothing more than a set of a glass façade on the floor, with a wind machine. A temporary heist. We stand in the gallery hoping that the camera will change its perspective, that these figures were solidly footed on the backdrops of these buildings all along.

Ideologically, the fall Charlesworth pictures is in line with the cultural commentary that the artist participated in. The image, like any in pop culture, is a free and accountable castaway—then and onwards.

Runs through January 5, 2014.
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CLEARING HOUSE

With Marc Fischer And Brett Bloom
Of Temporary Services
By Meg Santisi

Marc Fischer and Brett Bloom are not going to be at Expo. Instead, they'll be down the street, operating a small publishing house as part of the highly anticipated exhibit, A *PROXIMITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: Art and Social Action*, opening Sept 19th at SAIC's Sullivan Galleries. Curated by Mary Jane Jacob, the exhibit traces a history of Chicago's long engagement with social art practices from the 1800s to today, with a series of newly commissioned works.

Inside the exhibit, Temporary Services have built a fully operational publishing platform, an installation they've titled *PUBLISHING CLEARING HOUSE*. Evoking banking and financial surpluses as well the DIY spirit of giving stuff away for free, *PUBLISHING CLEARING HOUSE* will feature newly minted artists books written by artists, activists, lone archivists, amateur photographers as well as Marc and Brett themselves.

We sat down during their install to discuss their involvement with the exhibit and their relationship to social practice and publishing.

MS: To start off, who is Temporary Services in their most current formation?

BB: I'm Brett Bloom, and this guy sitting right here is Marc Fischer. It's the two of us currently working as Temporary Services, although in the past it's been as many as seven people. We started here in Chicago in 1998, and have been working together since then. For this project we are collaborating with a ton of other people outside of our group: Individuals, groups, activist organizations, and exhibition spaces – a variety of different things.

MF: One of the earliest ways we've worked is to create a kind of creative structure that contains the work of other people, so this project is very much in keeping with past projects where we, in this case literally, create something like a house or a hut from which about 15 new publications will be created and then move out beyond the exhibit. So a big challenge for us was to figure out how to do something that was social beyond the pre-existing or current audience of the gallery and that would have a life beyond the three-month duration of the exhibit. The creative distribution of work by ourselves and others that we feel deserves an expanded audience is something we've always been obsessed with and publications are a particularly cheap and effective way of making many, many copies of things, at least a few hundred copies of each publication, in some cases 1,000 is more typical for us, so it can go other places, in Europe, or in libraries like Harold Washington Library down the street. So we are always thinking of what exhibits can do beyond their short term.

BB: Yeah, it's to create surpluses out of the situation we are given - an archive of material surpluses, as well as social, and political surpluses. In this case we have 15 publications and roughly 1,000 copies of each. So, yeah, as Marc was saying it's important for us to take an opportunity like this in a show that will have a nice amount of visibility and that's well resourced and to share it with these large communities we are a part of and that intersect with a variety of concerns that we have. We wrote recently that publications are this sort of social, spatial, and political currency and we really use them in this way - to activatea bunch of different subject matters and audiences.

Fischer and Bloom with their installation, PUBLISHING CLEARING HOUSE. Photo by Meg Santisi.

MS: And so what kind of topics are being addressed in the publications coming out of *Publishing Clearing House*?

MF: Prison Neighborhood Art Project, a group consisting of both artists and teachers, as well as people in prison, are doing these writings about time and what different types of time structures exist for people in prison. So there's writing and also a creation of timelines talking about the movement of time. Melinda Fries who formerly did the artists web project *AUSGANG* (ausgang.com) for many years, is doing a booklet which is also a map and walking tour about a racially motivated riot that took place in 1919 in the Back of the Yards area. So there's some fairly far distant Chicago history.

MS: Not dissimilar to Paul Durica's audio tour for the exhibit, which is also a nod to far-reaching Chicago history as well as the present moment.

MF: Yeah his work also taps into those more obscure local histories.

BB: There's another publication by Tracy Drake and Sharon Irish about a cartoonist for the Chicago Defender in the 1930s and 40s named Jay Jackson who was depicting the really violent, racial segregation that existed in this city - I mean it still exists in this city - and these cartoons make it so explicitly absurd. They are pretty powerful cartoons. Tracy is an historian and Sharon is an art historian and they collaborated on this publication together. I think there will be a lot of unearthing, or reflecting on, or pulling into the present, some of these deep histories of the city, and how it influences the various ways in which people work that are included in this exhibition.

MF: There are also some people we've invited that are based in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Indiana so the Midwestern region. Stephen Perkins is writing a ten-year history of a space that his family started in their spare bathroom called the WC GALLERY, dealing with just the complete lack of space for experimental, or political, or just weird art culture in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He administered the space and he goes over each exhibit and the issues they brought up.

MS: So did you keep the publications decidedly local to the Midwest?

BB/MF: Yeah/Yes

BB: I mean, so many people have a connection to this city, they work in the city and they are socially engage with it in some capacity. So the stuff we chose didn't necessarily have to deal with that, but it was important that we had some connection to the Midwest or to the region. There's a lot of amazing stuff being made here, and we tapped into that. The audience for this will be quite a large international audience so we [want to] push some of this art further into the world.

Temporary Services as part of *PROXIMITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: Art and Social Practice*, Sept 20 -December 20, Sullivan Galleries, 33 S. State St., 7th Floor. Reception Friday, Sept 19, 6pm-9pm. Work by Jim Duignan, Paul Durica, Pablo Helguera, J. Morgan Puett, Inigo Manglano-Ovalle, Dan Peterman, Michael Rakowitz, Laurie Jo Reynolds, Temporary Services, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Publications by Oscar Arriola, Cultural ReProducers, Tracy Drake & Sharon Irish, Melinda Fries, Wes Janz, Kaitlin Kostus, Nicolas Lampert, Dylan Miner, Stephen Perkins, Prison Neighborhood Art Project, Project NIA, Anthony Rayson / South Chicago ABC Zine Distro, Dan S. Wang and George Wietor / Issue Press.

Meg Santisi is a Chicago-based writer and artist. More at www. megsantisi.com

HOTEL ART

By Thomas Friel

I'm in the middle of the woods, 30 + miles from even a small town and it seems like I've left it all behind, but the clicky clack on the LED screen tells me otherwise. My partner and I got ourselves on a small lake in the woods with a one room cabin and water that smells like farts, and everything is nice and comfy. On the walls are prints bleeding kitsch from the Lazy Sunday School that is Hotel Art.

Theres a blobby portrait of a male lion, culled from Impressionism-lite supermarket romance novels. His legs taper to the ground with the delicacy of tree trunks. To to the left of this, a bengal tiger executes a flawless impression of Falcor, the Luck Dragon. The most impoverished of all is the small print mounted on wood near the frig. Here, a panther suffering from a belly ache is trying to shit in the trees amidst a Renaissance laser light show from the sun.

Oppressive, how they gnaw at me. So static when I always want to move, and now, in this transitory space, they challenge one to hold true, leave the rest of the world behind with their flavorless sashae over wood grain paneling or cream colored walls among the aseptic perfume of disinfectant and air conditioning. Greeting cards free of their captions. To be noticed but unseen, the innocuous predators of tranquility.

One can go to a city just for the art fair and never consider the permanent vacationers displayed on the walls of their rooms that bookend the days. But there is hotel art being shown at the fair as well, there always is. Vulgar while being too kind, boringly transparent shit confined to rectangles on some soft white wall near a toilet that is not your own. A token of wealth and privilege, instead of an actual statement. The post war leftovers as decorative status symbols and such. Don't make Hotel Art. Know it when you see it, and ignore it -- it is only filler between what you really came to see.

WHAT'S IN A MULTIPLE?

By Gan Uyeda

Just on the basis of massiveness, EXPO CHICAGO's top-tier art fair on Navy Pier could be expected to have pervasive and rippling effects through the art system of Chicago, and ripple it does. Museums line up stardusted blockbusters to coincide with the fair, galleries arrange collector-centric city tours, and the city's Cultural Affairs department antes up sponsorship for a gallery crawl shuttle. For the second year running, one of the EXPO ripples will be EDITION Chicago, a kind of mini-fair specializing in the sale of editioned multiples and held at Chicago Artists Coalition.

An artist's multiple is typically a small run set of identical or nearly identical prints, sculptures, photographs, media work, or any other reproducible media. But then what separates a screen printed band poster at a craft fair from a screen printed text piece at EDITION? In the post-Warhol age, of course, the definition of what is and what is not art has little to do with the object itself and everything to do with the situational, institutional, yes, even discursive context that frames and presents it. The philosopher Arthur Danto changed the Is It Art game in the sixties with his discussion of artworlds, the communities of artists, critics, curators, gallerists, and collectors set within structures like galleries or museums who, through their interactions, discussions, and negotiated positions enabled something like a seemingly mass-produced Brillo box to suddenly shine with the luster of capital letter Art. At the most basic of levels, then, the simple distinction that these prints are presented by a gallery at an art fair and these other prints are presented by a design collective at a craft fair is all we need to know about which is art art and which is not.

Andi Crist, *I Love You, Shakespeare. I Love You Too, Shakespeare*, 2014, Plaster, spray paint 13 x 14 x 12 inches. Courtesy the artist and Chicago Artists Coalition.

Let me say here that I'm not talking about which print has greater or lesser cultural value. The fact that one has Art value over craft value is in part a collective, aggregated hallucination of that very value, one induced by the communal buzzing of professionalized art workers. Of course, to say that an artist's multiple and a set of handcrafted coasters are the same thing except for a perceptual barrier of art worldiness around the multiple is to overly simplify some other important qualities. While not all multiples are numbered into specific editions, many are, and the number of the edition plays into both initial price and longterm value. Sold in order, as edition number increases, so does the initial price, even though lower numbered editions carry a better chance at having higher value later on. In other words, edition #2 of 50 can be purchased at a lower price than #30, even though #2 will probably have a higher valuation further down the line. Designating multiples with specific numbers gives specificity to otherwise identical objects, marking them as unique, and therefore scarce and valuable.

But these are just art market designations, no? Certainly a base metric to use to describe what happens at an event like EDITION Chicago. Indeed, at the kick-off event held at Soho House on September 10, a panel of four Chicago collectors trumpeted the importance of supporting the local Chicago art community, pointing art-collecting initiates to the non-profit auctions held by spaces like Roots & Culture and Heaven Gallery. These are apt comparison points, as these auctions exist largely to raise operating revenue for these nonprofit spaces. The rhetoric also brought to mind threewalls's Community Supported Art (CSA) program, which uses the metaphor (and business model) of farm-supporting ecological localism to produce and distribute editioned multiples from Chicago artists. Like the Community Supported Agriculture programs it's based on, CSArt ensures that artists have a set minimum order, as well as an influx of upfront cash for supplies. One of the biggest differences between the threewalls program and EDITION Chicago on this front is that part of the draw of EDITION are the galleries coming in from New York City, Mexico City, and elsewhere across Midwest. This is where the unabashed globalism of EXPO spills over onto the unspoken "support local" tagline of the EDITION mini-fair.

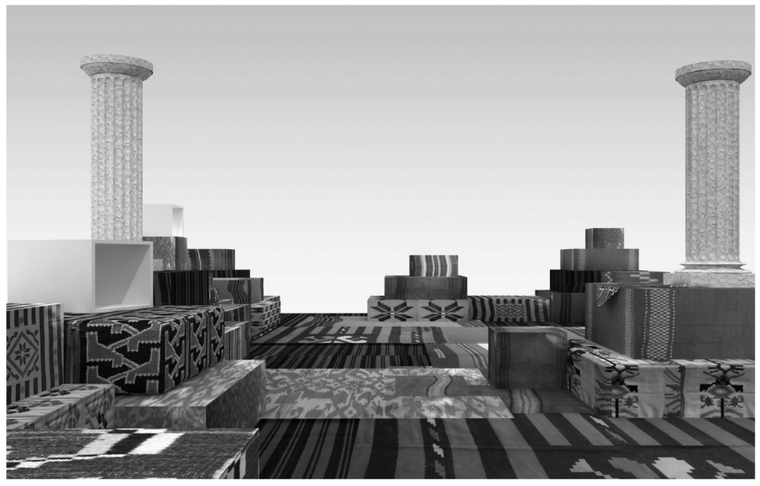
At EDITION this year, among the artworks on exhibit are a special edition set of silicone wall sculptures by Chicago-based Sarah and Joseph Belknap commissioned by EDITION and will be exclusively available at the event. Titled *Fossil Fields*, the small and mute hued pieces have an entrancing, geode-like visual texture and a kind of curdled-milk-supernova beauty. Among other inclusions are some of Peter Shear's casual and spacious paintings (LVL3), Juan Fernandez's deadpan photographs of industrial architecture (Gallery 19), and a smattering of graphic prints from Claudio Dicochea and Enrique Chagoya (Segura Arts Studio), among many others.

EDITION Chicago takes place at Chicago Artists Coalition on Friday September 19 from noon to 6pm, Saturday September 20 from 11am to 5pm, and on Sunday September 21 from noon to 5pm.

JUAN A. GAITÁN

Curator Of The 8Th Berlin Biennale In Conversation With Vincent Honoré

The 8th Berlin Biennale, curated by Canadian-Columbian writer and curator Juan A. Gaitán and his artistic team, opened on a diluvian day simultaneously in three different venues, two of them (very much) off-centered in West Berlin. Installed throughout the Haus am Waldsee, the Museen Dahlem, and the KW Institute for Contemporary Art –which includes the *Crash Pad*, a single artist installation commissioned as an off-shoot of the KW – the exhibition naturally brings together a varied range of international artists – what else do you expect from a biennale? Structured by autonomous works and individual positions, often forming an archipelago of small museum-like solo presentations, the goal of the biennale to "explore the intersection between larger historical narratives and individuals' lives " is in line with this loose theme.



8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art presents:
Andreas Angelidakis: *Study for Crash Pad, 2013*
Courtesy: Andreas Angelidakis and The Breeder, Athens/Monaco

The exhibition may have suffered from a problematic relationship with its own contemporaneity, notwithstanding the uncommon venues that host it: a traditional art center, a former villa turned into an art center, and an ethnographic museum. Take for instance a project by Mario Garcia Torres at Museen Dahlem, installed in the lower galleries. The darkened space is faced with a highly traditional museum apparatus: vitrines, and documents in these vitrines. The project, as always with Garcia Torres, is remarkably well researched; it focuses on a little-known figure, Conlon Nancarrow (1912-1997), a US-born Mexican-naturalized composer who immigrated in 1940. Nancarrow spent most of his time inside his studio. He lived in relative isolation, yet produced a very challenging oeuvre in line with the avant-garde of his time. The story is fascinating, the material is interesting, but one could also wonder and question the nostalgia attached to the project, as well as the fetishism of every single document on view. The objects are fossilized in an attempt to create a museographical essay, which proves to be classical, if not retrograde. This is symptomatic of the biennale itself, where everything is framed, objectified, commodified, and adapted to a bourgeois conception of what a museum is.

In a work by Leonor Antunes at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, the large gallery is dedicated to the creation of a new environment: one that recognizes her highly formal vocabulary and use of materials, such as cork, leather, brass ropes, and nets. It is very well balanced and elegant; she proposes a rich range of works inspired by female modernist architects such as Eileen Moray Gray (1878–1976), and Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992). The installation is impressive and the works are resolved, creating a very precise exhibition. Signs of an existing house in Brazil inform the space. Presented in the context of this biennale, however, the installation is somewhat too precious, or illustrative, of a certain exotic touch. Perhaps this is the main issue: the biennale may address globalization, but it misses the opportunity to embrace cosmopolitism.

I met with Gaitán at the KW, a sort of hub for the biennale. On a Wednesday morning, the day after the press preview, we discussed the biennale – our conversation focused on investigating approaches toward how one curates such a large event, and its potential to react to its own context, in terms of contemporary culture and with regard to recent developments in aesthetic debate. But, as we were allocated fifteen minutes, I may need to reduce my ambition.

Vincent Honoré: I guess we should start this conversation by defining a biennale, and what that term means in your view?

Juan A. Gaitán: I know the answer may fall a bit flat, but a biennale is an exhibition that appears every two years. But beyond that, you cannot have every event that is called a Biennale fit into the same category – the Berlin Biennale is incomparable with the Venice Biennale, for instance. They are totally different.

VH: What then is the specificity of the Berlin Biennale?

JA.G: In the case of [this exhibition], it is a much more flexible platform – it is primarily a curatorial project. This separates it from Venice or any other event or Biennale, it has the capacity to redefine what it is, and what form it takes, in each edition.

VH: You were appointed to be the curator in September of 2012. From your original concept to the result, how did the curatorial process evolve? Is the result in any way different from the first proposal?

JA.G: Things changed – but that is also a component of how I curate. That being said, I have never had the capacity to have such an inflexible plan: I have a starting point, throw the starting point out there, and from there things develop, in relationship to the works and in relationship to the spaces, and so on.

VH: Did you have a sense of the structure of the Biennale from the beginning, in its first concepts? Or was it something that developed?

JA.G: From the beginning, it was clear that the exhibition was the most important aspect of the process. It is one exhibition – divided into three parts, which varies of course. It varies for instance in the *Crash Pad*, which is one special component of the exhibition, a place where all the discursive events happen surrounded by an installation by Greek architect Andreas Angelidakis. There was also a desire to specifically engage with the Museen Dahlem. I immediately knew that I wanted to work with the context of this museum, and started negotiating to see if I could get some space there, and if they were open to the proposal. The third venue came later. It was a private villa that had actually been turned into an art center, and has been one since the 1950s.

Beyond that, came the process – the curatorial framing. So, if you look at the number symbolizing the Biennale, the 8 is a split graphic: when it is (vertically-speaking) in half, it generates two brackets. I used the symbol of those brackets to represent the curatorial framing of the exhibition and the space. Inside are the works. The framing does not interpret the work for the viewer. But within those brackets the viewer is asked to navigate the exhibition and relate to the works on their own. In a very good way.

VH: And so in this way, the intent for the works is not to relay or illustrate a theme?

JA.G: No.

VH: So then to come back to the process – which is interesting to discuss further for a biennial happening in a city like Berlin – you found the spaces you wanted to engage, the museum and the villa, but what about KW? Was it a central obligation of the biennial that you had to do something in this space?

JA.G: No – the office is here. The building is yours if you want it, but there is no obligation.

VH: The three selected spaces have some very specific functions and architecture, as well as histories and past uses. From that, do you think the buildings, their attached layers of history and the past or present function of the buildings informed the selection of the artists? Or was it more complex in terms of the selection of the works and the artists?

8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art presents:
Andreas Angelidakis, *Crash Pad* 25.1.-3.8.2014
Installation view
Courtesy: Andreas Angelidakis and The Breeder, Athens/Monaco Photo: Uwe Walter

JA.G: The selection of the venues, particularly Dahlem, came before the selection of the artists. For me, the question was: how do these buildings frame the three different institutions, or – beyond their statuses as institutions – how do they figure different approaches to the museum? With the KW, of course, you start thinking about what you might want to do with it from the very beginning. In this current moment, when the autonomy of cultural institutions is seriously being undermined by different interests, I thought it was important to use the KW because it is in an art center, and it should have a dignified space in the city. The Haus am Waldsee came later, it is close to the Dahlem, which was important to me in terms of how it relates to the navigation of the visitor. Berlin is a very large city, larger than people think – but also, the biennial has a different scale from what people expect from such an exhibition nowadays. I wanted to point that a biennial does not have to be only grand gestures, but can also have specific and very precise moments.

VH: Exactly. Concentrated moments, which occur in some specific sections or selections of works. What would you say the main concepts that determined the Biennale are, or the lead motifs that guide viewers through the three venues? How does it appear to us? What moments are being highlighted? There is also an insistence on the individualization of art – in the sense that the artworks are also proposing that we affirm our position as individuals before we are subjects; subject of politics, or subjects of history – and then from there, a proposal to understand our relationship to politics and history, not only in the broader sense of society but also in the affective and most empirical sense.

VH: Would you say this biennale speaks to individuals, or collectivity to the masses, as other big exhibitions tend to do?

JA.G: The biennale is meant to propose that we start looking at our political and historical position from the point of view of the individual. And perhaps this is the answer to the very aggressive invention of traditions currently taking place around the world in the last decade. These are based on certain ideas, religious ideas – or ethnic ideas. There is this sense that we have to belong to an idea and protect it, and it becomes our mission to protect that collective idea. I think the museum is an important point of analysis and critique today. It is not my suggestion that the museum is going to cease to exist, not any time soon perhaps. But we need to understand what its function is. And we need to understand what things appear within the museum according to our logic, and according to our specific consciousness. So in Dahlem, the Ethnographic Museum for example, you still have installations that were done in the 60's, 70's, 80's, and the 90's – you have an anthology of display. And then there is the contemporary art.

JA.G: One important motif is the notion of the museum or cultural institution itself: what are they now? What are they becoming? And what should they be? This is something that is not necessarily present in all the works, but there are many references to art display, and use of the display as a framework. In many cases the artists chose to keep some of the display cases that were already installed in the museum and to include them in their own installations. Through the work, you start noticing that there is a relationship not only to the museum, but also to the craft of showing cultural objects. Another big theme has been, in the curatorial process mostly, the way that history visits us in the present. I hope that when people go through the exhibition, they become aware of not only these current objects, but how we display them, how we put them there. How we encounter them in space.

VH: Is this why you decided to ask many of the artists to produce new works, so that they would more consciously have a dialogue with their context?

JA.G: Yes, I did ask for new productions in most cases. And I wanted it to be so, because I wanted people to get the sense being there with their most current thinking. And with this, we get a more fully committed series of gestures directed at the present, and not merely an anthology of great works.

VH: The paradox to use contemporary art works together with historical displays in classical museums is very interesting, it created this sort of tension, enlightened by the fact we are looking with contemporary eyes.

JA.G: Absolutely.

Vincent Honoré is an independent curator and writer based in Paris and London. He was a curator at Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2001–2004) and at Tate Modern in London (2004–2007). He is, since 2008, the director and curator of the David Roberts Art Foundation (DRAF) in London. He is a frequent contributor to Mousse Magazine and Cura Magazine and had been commissioned a number of texts for catalogues and magazines.

The 8th Berlin Biennale ran from May 29 – WAugust 3, 2014

PAPA'S FACES

A Conversation With Sofia Leiby
By Matthew Robinson

Sofia Leiby is an artist based in New York City, NY, whose paintings carry a formal sophistication and conceptual acuity which resonate at first glance. In this interview, we discuss one of her recent pieces, entitled *Papa's Faces* (2014).

Sofia Leiby: Typically I begin paintings by photographing works I've already made and then screenprinting those images onto a new canvas. When viewing my paintings together, ideally the united compositions result in a formal language that develops between images and forms, and one can observe the lineage of the compositions. For my solo exhibition earlier this year at Devening Projects+Exhibitions, *The Drama of Leisure*, I took the opportunity to talk about the paintings in terms of time: how I was making paintings outside of my full-time job and that informed the mark making and the pragmatism that my situation required of me.

Increasingly I've begun to use appropriation as a method for mark-making and symbolic reference. For instance, looking at the layers of *Papa's Face* (2014): The background is a photograph of a painting that I made this year integrating graffiti tags made by my then middle-school aged brother in an old notebook. They're the darker black and white letterforms that you can just barely see in the end result. I was thinking about what it meant for someone to make a tag, and how that was at once a signifier of the personal in a drawing, and was also something that you practiced as you were in class in a lecture, listening through drawing. A tag symbolizes your relationship to a both intimate community and the larger public. At the same time it's your signature, it's your identity, and that you want to get the handstyle and gesture to be as economical and individualized as possible. I saw a metaphorical resonance between these intuitive, practiced forms of mark making that also function as an individual signature, and their relationship to my own repetition-based process.

The topmost layer of small portraits on the painting are printed versions of drawings made by my grandfather. Since I was little, he has made drawings on Christmas and birthday cards that are these funny little faces. He's been making them for a very long time– since the war, he said. He always said "I can do these with my eyes closed." I took these small drawings, scaled them up and screenprinted them on the surface of the painting. Adding marks from my brother and grandfather was also a way to literally interrupt my typical process and generate a more complex image. In this way, Papa's Faces contains my own subjectivity, my brother's, my grandfather's, as well their individual tags, marks, ways of doing and knowing. It's collapsing and unfolding of all of the influences in my practice.

MR: Do you often take influence from family, or other artists?

SL: Recently, I contacted an artist I met on Instagram named James Watterson who posted a lot of drawings in a graffiti-esque style. I appreciated a similar kind of economy and strength of composition in his work. It turns out he's a beverage distributor in Tucson but his dad was an artist and he's been heavily involved with graffiti for 20 years. He sent me drawings that I've scaled up and begun to make compositions based on. With that series and the others, I work to figure out the balance between these appropriated drawings and my own additions. I sometimes title pieces " 'after' P.D.L." or "J.W." – this indicates another person's shape or a marks are incorporated into them.

MR: When you utilize screenprinting as a tool, it seems like you moving forms and ideas from one realm to another. From an ephemeral realm to then being made present again on one of your canvases. Consider what impact screenprinting has on your images in a formal and conceptual way.

SL: Screenprinting is one way to complicate the image and create contrast between the painted and mechanical mark. I also like the physicality and movement of screenprinting: it involves your whole body when you're dealing with a larger screen, exposing, washing it out, etc. So I don't see it as much as having a distancing effect (a "phantom limb") as some painters do. Screenprinting also allows me to compost a number of individual pieces in the studio. Each work is an echo, or a riff on a previous work. They're not made with a linear narrative in mind, like a line on an X-Y axis; rather they branch off from points on the line. Elements that no longer exist, having been destroyed or painted over can still be preserved when re-photographed and printed again. This aspect of my practice has become a literal document of activities in the studio.

MR: How do you work with scale in your practice?

SL: In the past, my scale made sense for what I was thinking and talking about. The scale was pragmatic, because my studio was also my bedroom, an aspect I addressed when I talked about making them. One tendency I have that I try to avoid is, since I've come out of printmaking and drawing, I tend to treat the canvas like paper at times and relying on standard paper sizes (8.5"x10", 11"x17", 23"x30" etc). That being said, I am actually in the process of scaling up and am excited to see how it changes the work.

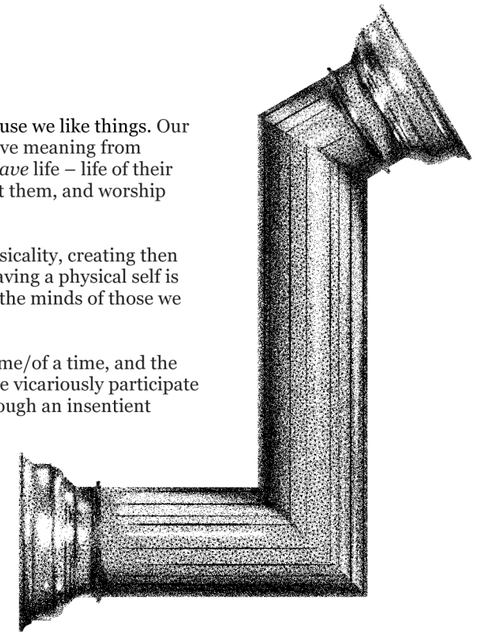
MR: What is next for Sofia Leiby?

SL: In October, I have work in a show at Nebraska Wesleyan University, NB entitled *New Abstraction from Chicago*. I'll be doing Untitled Art Fair in Miami with LVL3 Gallery in December. I'm also anticipating a solo exhibition in Europe early next year.

CLASSIC COLUMN

By Amber Renaye

Things



Despite all the glitz and galore native to the lavishness of an art fair, we are here because we like things. Our fixation with inanimate objects uncloaks the brevity of the human condition. We derive meaning from inorganic forms, assign values of philosophy and gold and even believe these forms *have* life – life of their own kind, breadth. We display such objects, celebrate our possession of them, protect them, and worship them.

Perhaps this obsession with things is derived from the fleeting nature of our own physicality, creating then the idolization of objects. Few things are worth more than our own physicality, but having a physical self is an ephemeral thing. We disappear; dissolve into the things we leave behind and into the minds of those we affected.

With art we value the work's connection to the maker, the work's representation of time/of a time, and the work's ability to define us through our relationship with it. By owning a work of art we vicariously participate in the life of the artist, dead or alive. We create a connection with another person through an insentient object – an object with it's own life form.

The physicality of life supports the materiality of breath
Death might be long enough, long enough to care about no single thing
Long enough to live without a thing
Immateriality is no thing
A great subject for the dead and a descent subject for the dying
Ephemera, a dark matter
What a thing

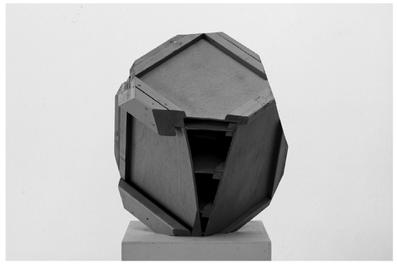
THE MIDDLE AS A MEANS TO AN END:

The Chicago Effect: Redefining The Middle At The Hyde Park Art Center
by Ionit Behar

In the forward-thinking exhibition *The Chicago Effect: Redefining the Middle*, curators Allison Peters Quinn, Christopher K. Ho, and Megha Ralapati explore the notion of the Middle, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the Hyde Park Art Center (the "Center"). Of course, defining the middle is not an easy task. The mere attempt to define "it" and its ubiquity is confusing—but it is this exact confusion that makes the experience of the show all the more intriguing.

In the instance of this exhibition, two aspects of the past appear: first, there is a passion for the past that is escaping, and second, a past that acts as a reproduction. In this exhibition, as well as in their whole programming, the Center asks a series of self-critical questions: What does an institution's history tells us about the present? What do artists need now? How does the Center—as a mid-size institution—relate to others? These questions seem to be symptoms of a mid-life crisis—another "middle"—a conflicted existence that is positively trying to resolve itself.

Rather than deal with hard distinctions or dogmatic oppositions, the artists in the exhibition work around a place—a crossing space, an intersection where the differences are at once blurred and vague. The exhibition is displayed in the lower gallery of the Center as well as in the hallways. Upon entering, it is itself in the middle of everything. The first piece viewers see are donation boxes, entitled *Pay what you wish, but*



Robert Burnier, *Revokon*, 2014, Wood and enamel, 27 x 27 x 27 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Rafacz Gallery

you must pay something (2011-2014) by Devon Dikeou. Like Duchamp's well-known *Fountain*, they are both an artwork and non-artwork at the same time. Dikeou asked multiple museums to let her replicate and display a copy of their donation boxes, procuring nine boxes from the Warhol Museum, the Cincinnati Museum, Bass Museum, Denver Museum of Art, Clyfford Still Museum, and others. Dikeou's installation points to the administrative aspect of art and the artist herself as a mediator. The project also recalls Marx's "*commodity fetishism*," in that the perception of social relationships in production is not between people, but rather between money and exchanged commodities. Here, the donation boxes act as mediators between the public and the museum.

In *Untitled (Series R) (2010)*, Assaf Evron generates five photographic objects of a tall precast concrete wall. The enigmatic construction, which was in fact photographed sitting against the landscape of the desert in Israel, acts as an industrial replica of itself; the piece is an experience based in reproduction. The works are displayed in the lower gallery of the Center in a compelling way: four works are separated from the primary work that hangs by the entrance/exit of the gallery. The distance between the pieces evokes another wall that has yet to come. The photographs contain bureaucratic connotations; the premade walls are municipal developments. However, the five photographs point to additional aspects of the "middle": movement, transportations and separation. Evron's concrete wall is found in a halfway location, in the intermediary space from point A to point B.

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