



END THINGS

September 1-29, 2012
Portland, Oregon

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Claudia Meza

Morgan Ritter

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PICA

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End Things

1. “Ostensibly a remake of the 1951 Howard Hawks-Christian Nyby film *The Thing from Another World*, Carpenter’s film is in fact an adaptation more faithful in its premise and characters to the novella *Who Goes There?* by John W. Campbell, Jr., which inspired the 1951 film, and not a remake in the conventional sense. Although the films are unrelated, each features a potentially apocalyptic scenario; should ‘The Thing’ ever reach civilization, it would be only a matter of time before it consumes humanity and takes over the Earth.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thing_(1982_film)]

By my own admission, I am taking a leap by comparing a fictional spirit possession from a couple of psychological horror films to the concepts driving this exhibition. And yet there may be something to it: stories of bodies (animate or inanimate) being possessed by spirit forces are a common theme across cultures. Fighting or appeasing these spirits with ritualistic objects, collaborative thinking, magic, or other means is the stuff of culture (and many movies). In the case of *The Thing*, the characters fight against a relentless unknown something (most likely they fight against fear itself); in the case of *End Things*, one hopes we welcome a certain possession and allow the stuff in the room through to overtake and possibly change our perception or experience. There is nothing to fear here except our own skepticism.

“Imagination: I employ this word in its most robust sense, as what Coleridge calls, ‘the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.’ To this he adds that through the use of Imagination, the power to ‘shape into one’ (*Einbildungskraft* as Coleridge’s German contemporaries like Schelling were formulating it), we put ourselves into the objective world around us and make wholes out of the outer world and inner self as we fashion them into fresh unities. Coleridge was especially interested in the case of the ‘poet,’ a kind of exemplary human leading us in our quest to make the knowable world ours and to render from within all its glory. By his imaginative faculty the actor we call the ‘poet,’ achieves his work of making organic wholes out of the reconstituted ‘outer world.’” [Frederic Will, “Amulets,” *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 49/50 (Spring-Autumn 2006), p252] —KK

2. Like rocks. “Scientists are infected, of course, as are all those who accept their authority to decide what objectivity exists. But also infected might be those who would claim to be animists, if they affirm that rocks ‘really’ have souls or intentions, like humans. It is the ‘really’ that matters here, an emphasis that marks the polemical power associated with truth.” [Isabelle Stengers, “Reclaiming Animism,” *e-flux journal* #36, July 2012, p. 4]. —RP

3. “A winter’s day/ in a deep and dark December/ I am alone/ Gazing from my window to the streets below/ on a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow/ I am a rock, I am an island/ I’ve built walls/ a fortress deep and mighty/ that none may penetrate/ I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain/ It’s laughter and it’s loving I disdain/ I am a rock/ I am an island/ Don’t talk of love/ but I’ve heard the words before/ It’s sleeping in my memory/ I won’t disturb the slumber of feelings that have died/ If I never loved I never would have cried/ I am a rock/ I am an island/ I have my books/ And my poetry to protect me/ I am shielded in my armor/ hiding in my room, safe within my womb/ I touch no one and no one touches me/ I am a rock/ I am an island/ And a rock feels no pain/ And an island never cries.” [Paul Simon, “I am a Rock,” *Paul Simon Songbook*, 1966] —KK



Exhibit A: Simon & Garfunkle, June 1966, Holland TV (Haarlem)- NCRV

“This thing doesn’t want to show itself, it wants to hide inside an imitation.”

—Kurt Russell, *The Thing*, John Carpenter, 1982¹

That thing over there on the table/ pedestal/ground/windowsill/altar/ wall means something. What exactly, we’re not sure, but we feel like we should keep trying to understand. Our native impulse is to put words to it, to define its purpose and its place. But to truly possess a thing through your knowledge is impossible—its meaning is slippery, subjective, debatable, transmutable. It is better to resist that urge and just keep listening or, at the very least, just let the thing do its thing without getting too much in the way.² In fact, it implores us to do so. That is to say, that thing over there has a voice.³ [Exhibit A]

A great flattening of the world is taking place as we force three dimensions into a virtual space. In a recent discussion with the artist Morgan Ritter, she posited that this flattening is a way to make things legible, to lock down their meanings.⁴ But in this digital arena, matter is replaced with binary code and our constant trolling for understanding is met only with information—heaps of it, all at once, some satiating, but most of it only half right and fleeting. We cannot flatten things into submission.⁵ [Exhibit B]

Even as our lives move increasingly

4. “No wonder! No wonder that our sophisticated civilizations, brimming with the accumulated knowledge of so many traditions, continue to flatten and dismember every part of the breathing earth...For we have written all of these wisdoms down on the page, effectively divorcing these many teachings from the living land that once held and embodied these teachings. [Stengers, 6] —RP

5. “Rather, it is the human mind that extends past the body’s boundaries and can be activated or triggered through manipulating objects... This last point is the stickiest. I manipulate objects, react to their presence, and adjust my behavior when necessary to achieve my aims. When I concede the possibility of an NBO [non-biological object] as actor, this feels suspiciously like allowing an object to manipulate me. Being manipulated is hard enough to accept when the manipulator is a living organism; who or what am I struggling with if the manipulator is no?” [Erica Owens, “Objects and Nonhuman Agency,” *Symbolic Interaction*, Volume 30, Number 4, 2007, p. 570, 572]. —RP



Exhibit B. James Franco, Liz Lemon, and Kamiko (the pillow doll) have a threesome. Episode 4, Season 9, 30 Rock, NBC. “Nisan is part of a thriving subculture of men and women in Japan who indulge in real relationships with imaginary characters. These 2-D lovers, as they are called, are a subset of otaku culture—the obsessive fandom that has surrounded anime, manga and video games in Japan in the last decade. It’s impossible to say exactly what portion of otaku are 2-D lovers, because the distinction between the two can be blurry. Like most otaku, the majority of 2-D lovers go to work, pay rent, hang out with friends (some are even married). Unlike most otaku, though, they have real romantic feelings for their toys. The less extreme might have a hidden collection of figurines based on anime characters that they go on “dates” with during off hours. A more serious 2-D lover, like Nisan, actually believes that a lumpy pillow with a drawing of a pubescent anime character on it is his girlfriend.” [Lisa Katayama, “Love in 2-D,” *New York Times*, July 21, 2009]

online, we’re still obsessed with objects. Television, that great barometer of public desire (and a mysterious, glowing thing itself) is littered with shows that idolize and investigate things: *Antiques Road Show*, *Pawn Star*, *Storage Wars*, *The History of the World in 100 Objects*... and the list goes on. *Hoarders* is one of the finest examples; here, the psychic weight of objects is interpreted as a crushing mass taking over people’s homes. The clutter of things—whether made up of shells, notes, antique vases, rotting cabbage, or a cat corpse—defines the keeper. This sensitivity to materiality can be seen as a disorder triggered by trauma or loss, or it can be seen as an extra-perceptual ability to better understand the accumulative language of stuff.

In a recent lecture at the Vera List Center at the New School, political theorist Jane Bennett—who calls things “vibrant matter” explains the hoarding tendency thusly:

“... they could be said to be artistic, the hoarders, in their exquisite sensitivity to the somatic effectivity of objects. Hoarders participate in the found art assemblages that they live with by conjoining their sensuous, excitable bodies with it, which is why they cannot bear to part with any object of the hoard. Let’s at least consider the possibility that the person who hoards and the artist who creates share a certain something of a perceptual

comportment—one unusually aware of or susceptible to the enchantment power of things. Hoarders and artists hear more of the aesthetic call of things to conjoin with them, play with them, respond to them.”

Perhaps, when seen from another angle, the hoarder is more attuned to the magic life of the inanimate—replace “hoarder” with “artist” and we’re certainly familiar with hearing people talk about objects as extensions of themselves. Artists, in this sense, work to eliminate the negative space or potential void between us and “it.”⁶ Their practice preserves sympathy or, perhaps more accurately, empathy for the physical object. Outside of the digital no-space, they still fashion things by hand from materials pulled directly from the earth, the original object. They return us to the core.⁷

To begin to understand things, we⁸ need to be as still as they are, to slow down time, to stand like sculptures in a room, to create a positive space, an exchange.⁹ [Exhibit C]

End Things is a series of artist statements and it is a collection of objects.¹⁰ Some might call it an exhibition. I will leave it to the philosophers (Heidegger, Thingness!¹¹; Riegl, The Crystalline!¹² The Moving!; Spinoza, The Speed of Time!¹³) to put sticky words to abstract concepts. And I will ask the artists to make things, or make things

6. In another way, we could say that the artists in *End Things* leave the objects as whos, rather than whats. But, “the idea that we might enter into direct interaction with a thing is for most adults counterintuitive, even uncomfortable. It is one thing to understand interaction with objects where one shares agency but directs action. If action is to be shared, it seems there should be someone else involved. [...] We experience tension when we must share both agency and actor status, as illustrated in Cohen’s vignettes (man and dog, man and ship on a stormy sea). In each case we are not the only ones doing something” [Owens, p. 574] —RP

7. “On the other hand, emotional investment does not have to be located in the object itself to be sufficient to prod me toward doing mind for the object.” [Owens, p. 578]. —RP

8. “‘We,’ on our side, presume to be the ones who have accepted the hard truth that we are alone in a mute, blind, yet knowable world—one that is our task to appropriate.” [Stengers] —RP

9. Perhaps this exchange is nothing but a “hope” that could be made real by proximity, touch, will, or maybe it is just a myth... “When he (Pygmalion) returned home, he went to see his statue, and leaning over the couch, gave a kiss to the mouth. It seemed to be warm. He pressed its lips again, he laid his hand upon the limbs; the ivory felt soft to his touch and yielded to his fingers like the wax of Hymettus. While he stands astonished and glad, though doubting, and fears he may be mistaken, again and again with a lover’s ardor he touches the object of his hopes. It was indeed alive!” [Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch’s Mythology*, Chapter VIII. Pygmalion—Dryope-Venus and Adonis—Apollo and Hyacinthus, New York: Modern Library] —KK/PL



Exhibit C. Pygmalion and Galatea, Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, Vésoul 1824–1904 Paris) ca. 1890, Oil on canvas, 35 x 27 in. (88.9 x 68.6 cm), Gift of Louis C. Raegner, 1927, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

10. Or, even evidence of a struggle for a relationship with things. “It appears that if there is to be an act where efficacy and action must be shared, we require someone against whom to struggle, or presumably, with whom to collaborate. This is a striking set of circumstances, as it necessitates that we perceive a sense of discreteness or separate volition—a sense of identity as “me” versus

“you” and the uncertainty that this entails—belonging to the other... Taking into account the differences between mind and thought, it is not terribly surprising that mind is required... while thought is not... Mind is often described as the self-referential internal dialogue that we use to sort through and come to an understanding of objects in the field of action relevant to completing an act. I must be able to think to have mind, but thought itself is not sufficient” [Owens, 575] —RP

11. “The vessel’s thingness [lies] in the void that holds.” [Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” originally delivered as a lecture to the Bagerischem Akademie de Schonen Kunste, 1950. Translated by Albert Hofstadter in *Poetry, language, thought*, New York; Harper Row, 1971] —KK

12. “‘All things in the world’ that can be subject to artistic representation, Riegl said, are divided into two groups: one consists of ‘the inanimate, dead, inorganic motifs;’ the other of ‘the live, organic motifs.’ The criterion that separates one group from the other, he emphasized, ‘is life, and life manifests itself in movement.’” [Moshe Barasch, *Modern Theories of Art, Vol. 1: From Winckelmann to Baudelaire*. New York: New York University, p. 107] —RP

13. “No one doubts but that we imagine time from the very fact that we imagine other bodies to be moved slower or faster or equally fast. We are accustomed to determine duration by the aid of some measure of motion.” [Spinoza, *Ethics*] —KK



Exhibit D. Destroying a Clay Sculpture. YouTube, uploaded by therandomnessofluke on Mar 20, 2011



Exhibit E. Unknown identified man (M) asking unidentified woman (W) about the effects of LSD during a trip. M: So far these visual things are the only effect you have had. W: No. M: What other effects? W: (while contemplating a small orange, held in her hands): It is all to do with round, with shape, everything is colored, everything, ah, it must have to do with orange, not only with orange, oh, I have not seen color, I live in a monochromatic world, I can’t use color, It can do everything. (LSD Girl, YouTube, uploaded by vwitch on Mar 9, 2007)



Exhibit F. “Let us take, for example, this piece of wax: it has been taken quite freshly from the hive, and it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey which it contains; it still retains somewhat of the odour of the flowers from which it has been culled; its colour, its figure, its size are apparent; it is hard, cold, easily handled, and if you strike it with the finger, it will emit a sound. Finally all the things, which are requisite to cause us distinctly to recognise a body, are met with in it. But notice that while I speak and approach the fire what remained of the taste is exhaled, the smell evaporates, the colour alters, the figure is destroyed, the size increases, it becomes liquid, it heats, scarcely can one handle it, and when one strikes it, no sound is emitted. Does the same wax remain after this change? We must confess that it remains; none would judge otherwise. What then did I know so distinctly in this piece of wax? It could certainly be nothing of all that the senses brought to my notice, since all these things, which fall under taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing, are found to be changed, and yet the same wax remains.” [Rene Descartes, *Meditations of the First Philosophy*]



Exhibit G. Performance, Yvonne Droge Wendel Yvonne Droge Wendel, lecture prof. dr. Petran Kockelkoren, Vrijhof, University Twente, 2011 opnames: Alexandros Zakkas.



Exhibit H. John Cage, Water Walk. “In one of the manuscripts Cage subtitled Water Walk as Water Music No.2. Like Sounds of Venice it was composed for the Italian TV quiz “Lascia O Raddoppia”, using the Fontana Mix as a composing means. In it, Cage used 34 materials, as well as a single-track

tape, 7½", 3 minutes. The materials required are all related to water. Some examples: Bath tub, toy fish, grand piano, pressure cooker where steam is being released, ice cubes and an electric mixer to crush them, rubber duck, goose whistle, 5 radios, etc. The score consists of a list of properties, a floor-plan showing the placements of instruments and objects, three pages with a timeline (one minute each) with descriptions and pictographic notations of occurrence of events and a list of notes "regarding some of the actions to be made in the order of occurrence" (from score). Timings are not accurate: "Start watch and then time actions as closely as possible to their appearance in the score" (from score). Water Walk led Cage to compose his Theatre Piece. Sources: New York Public Library online catalog; Score as published in Stefan Schädler & Walter Zimmermann (Ed.): John Cage - Anarchic Harmony; William Fetterman: John Cage's theatre pieces: Notations and performances; C.F.Peters website (John Cage worklist). [<http://www.johncage.info/workstage/waterwalk.html>]



Exhibit I. Rachel Peddersen, Curatorial Assistant, visited the Pergamon Museum (Berlin) in the Summer of 2012, and took notice that despite the freize's missing pieces, there were over fifty snakes left intact. She documented each one in a series of snapshots.

14. "Our motives, goals, and options may affect a temporary shift in our perception of 'thing,' allowing it to become actor until these requisite contexts are no longer present." [Owens 587] "The symbol thus becomes a mode of transcended unification of opposites, and these opposites refer not to objects, but to unconscious, therefore unresolved, psychological forces." [T.A. Pasto and P. Kivisto, "Art and the Clinical Psychologist," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.12, No.1 (Sept.53), p 78]. —RP



Exhibit J. Scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory have put out a new video to address false claims about the

"Mayan apocalypse," a non-event that some people believe will bring the world to an end on Dec 21. Invoking the astronomer Carl Sagan's famous maxim, he said: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Since the beginning of time there have been literally hundreds of thousands of predictions for the end of the world, and we're still here." [Natalie Wolchover, "Lifes Little Mysteries," Huffington Post, March 9, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/09/2012-end-of-the-world-mayan-calendar_n_1335683.html]



Exhibit K. "Avisé La Fin" the Scottish family motto of Clan Kennedy is translated from Old or Heraldic French to English as "Consider the End".

15. Additional footnotes by Rachel Peddersen, Curatorial Assistant, research by Claire Christy, edited by Patrick Leonard.

happen: Ritter (Defiant clay!) [*Exhibit D*], Cornaro (Diffusion of meaning!) [*Exhibit E*], Cecchetti (Body and book as sculpture!) [*Exhibit F*], Vogt (Ambiguous ritual!) [*Exhibit G*], Meza (Sonic space!) [*Exhibit H*], and Van Brummelen & De Haan (Reanimation!) [*Exhibit I*].¹⁴

End Things is more of a question than a rallying call. It is a play on the eschatological preoccupation that surrounds 2012. [*Exhibit J*] As we head towards the predicted "end of all things," perhaps the world will not end with a cataclysmic reckoning or a fireball from outer space, but rather when we no longer view the world as a round floating object and instead a flat space that we scroll over until we reach the edge. I ask us to become occasional animists and to believe that each thing has something to tell, maybe even something that could save us all.

Avisé La Fin. [*Exhibit K*]

Kristan Kennedy¹⁵
Visual Art Curator, Portland
Institute for Contemporary Art

Morgan Ritter

Kristan Kennedy: Do you think that a stone can speak? Do objects have a voice?

Morgan Ritter: No, but I think hard objects ambivalently give us clues.

If material is like a sponge, its juices dictate its point of view. The juice is made from an aggregation of psychic, historical, emotional, and physical exchanges. Over long periods of time these exchanges vibrate however violently into the material, no matter how densely composited. These exchanges are clues, which become especially muddled when the object is positioned in the person's mind. Through this instant remediation, the object transcends superficiality and enters swiftly into the person's idiosyncratic point of view. The lingering exchanges from past people obviously contradict some of the current person's assumptions, thereby making a public cloud language. Many hypothetical people have fumbled, rambled, and ruminated with this thing, determining it as a legible unit confined to objective understanding—a vase is a vase and it really works—but the vase thing actually whispers in an ambivalent cloud language which changes and moves depending on the person's sensitivity.

If I were an object I would be applesauce or something else amorphous that literally evades formal understanding.

For *End Things*, Ritter presents two bodies of work across two different venues. For PICA's downtown headquarters, the artist has created a fountain that pumps water through its various ceramic appendages. This water is a vibrant force by which the artist reveals the tension between static and moving space. At Washington High School, Ritter expands on this notion of animating the inanimate through a series of precarious sculptures resting on soft surfaces. All of the works have been made from clay that the artist and a group of volunteers pulled from the earth at various sites around Oregon. This reclaimed and raw "stuff" has been rehydrated and formed by the artist's hands into a working material, which is then crafted and fired into what Ritter calls "charged objects." Her collages of video, sculptures, poetry, and performance come together to form an aggressive and hopeful statement about the importance of our relationship to the physical world.

Morgan Ritter (b.1989) is a Portland-based artist working in sculpture, video, and writing. She recently graduated with a BA from the Pacific Northwest College of Art (2011). Recent exhibitions include *Shelf Life* at the Henry Art Museum, Seattle, Washington (2011) and *Keep Portland Weird* at the Pompidou Center, Paris, France (2012). Publication Studio Portland published Ritter's book of writing, *The Thoughtful Digestion of Unique Objects, Complex Subjects, and Composited Projects*, in 2011.

KK: Your book, *The Thoughtful Digestion of Unique Objects, Complex Subjects & Composited Projects*, is both an encyclopedia of your thinking about your work and the life of things in the world, and also a very practical pedestal for your sculptures. Can you talk a little about your desire to put your objects in physical proximity or relationship to a book? Can the book be "read" or "understood" by just letting it rest under a ceramic figurine?

MR: Yes, this book was very important to me and is still very relevant. In college, I would indulgently make little ceramic heads to place on my books as a way for the material to hopefully expand. Now I am fascinated with the delicacy and challenge of this conversation of charged objects (and other forms which defy their parameters) taking place on screens. Actually, it feels like a problem to me. This tension associated with word versus image is very special. I like the idea of pursuing impossibilities!!!!!!

To talk about charged objects more pragmatically, one example of this thought as a lifestyle is when I walk away from my studio and leave a book spread open. Sometimes this is a divination to the project's next direction, or sometimes it is very calculated and I deliberately make choices about what needs to be in the room when I walk away from it. The understanding is facilitated in a room.

"Get out of it to get into it" motto

Flexible mind

Pedestal

Person with book on head

Person with plate of dinner on head, or basket of fruit, or hat?

KK: What was the impetus for pulling clay from certain sites in Oregon for the work? Where did you go? What was it like? What was the process of turning the raw stuff into something useful? Did the process of reclaiming the earth add anything to your making of the final sculptures?

MR: To talk about material choices, I have to first lay down a ground upon which they can sit. If I am trying to evade superficial understanding and the passive consumption of form (which likely comes with our extra-mediated lifestyle), the vocabulary of flattening (mediating) must be used in order to turn it inside out.

Because I have been working in ceramics for a while, I believe my thinking has been given permission from the clay to be amorphous. I respect the rupture of contrived form through the clay's authority. Digging the clay locally meant I spent weeks pulverizing many small rocks into clay dust in an ecstatic process of it being dried, pounded, sifted, mixed with water, flattened on a large table, wedged, pounded, and contained, then only to be pounded, formed, and made amorphous again, in the eventual documentation and then remediation into people's flexible minds.

Ideally, the result of this process is sculpture that somehow resists flattening, legibility, or peripheral consumption. Like a flirt, but a very defiant, very self-aware and very difficult-to-read flirt who cannot be confined to an objective superficial understanding.

At Moma's Hotel

Anonymous

I had a one night stand
at MOMA's Motel
Not because of the imperial shapes
Or the superior pictures
Not because of the unrestrained style
- so sweet -

I see a Brancusi seeing me see
I Kiss surfaces upon which I ^{you} ^{as} ^{picasso} ^{very} ^{well} ^{aquainted} ^{with}
picasso

And to all the other gentlemen and their
extended techniques
their friendly associates

coverage
I witness a leather jacket ^{being} ^{come} ^{out}
maintained, elevated

Buckminster Fuller inside of an aquarium
filled with tropical fish
yes

straight
~~purpose~~

~~Something to get~~ A freaky ass

I glide moving constantly so as to reject
becoming ~~pr~~ ^{you} ^{know} ^{what} ⁱⁿ ^a ^{room} ^{of} ^{reject}
Instead, a curve, ^{gods} ^{totally} ^{erotic} ^{elusive}
a ~~cardinal~~ ^{cardinal} ^{pool} ~~pool~~

in conversation with the tensions of disobedient
street youth cultures represented upon a
marble vase

How would you grind that vase
Can you see me seeing that vase
What are you going to do without grip
watch me ~~butt~~ ^{butt} ^{drip}
slide

in this conventional disarray ^{you} ^{feel} ^{me}

of sporty balloon typography

KK: We started our conversation about your project with ideas of animation and movement as communicated through static sculptures. How are these works addressing this animation?

MR: With lifestyles becoming increasingly immersed in technology, experiences whether formed or felt are totally threatened by this flattening and freezing that happens with mediation. Kenneth Gross' *The Dream Of The Moving Statue* says that the relevance to this fantasy of moving form is a reaction to our culture of static pictures and frozen experience. Paul Virilio, cultural theorist, says that there is an acceleration of reality marked by images whipping quickly through our daily lives.

Some people are reacting to this by creating simulated realities lush with illusions of fresh life, but I am eager to see a place in that picture for emotions and energy to trip on the 2D composition. Depth can preserve intimacy and expand clairvoyance. Imagine a cordial fountain or a Emersonian landscape. Here is a place the person must spatially navigate, only to be interrupted by a slowing of pace, like a staircase at a library with wide steps. Our experience of daily life is likely escalating into temporal and spatial compression resulting in immediation and anxiety. Virilio calls this accidental. I see the tensions of conflating emotions in the screen and want to trip that picture with confounding poetry and defiant sculptures who spit on peripheral, passive understanding.

KK: Your work for this exhibition is split between two sites, your fountain is outdoors on the rooftop of our headquarters, the rest of your installation is held in a peach and green classroom at the old Washington High School. Do you think there is a conversation happening between both installations or bodies of work?

MR: The fountain at the PICA headquarters is in a very charged place, at the site of all the lectures and conversations. The deck at the headquarters is a designated thinking space uninterrupted by walls and sort of in the sky. It helps tired people breathe and digest the information they have been absorbing. I appreciate the idea of not just feigning reflection in a sculpture, but having the sculpture actually be used for reflection as a real place for people to dump their questions and thoughts into a pool. The contemplative interactions thereby open up the restrained form of the pool, and dumped thoughts are explosively ejected through the middle finger of the life-size hand which is placed in the center of the pool.

My exhibit in the peach room is composed largely of transcendental sculptures of cats on bean bag chairs. I appreciate the relationship of that hand, which explodes on the deck of PICA headquarters, petting the cats in the peach room. In this room I have set up multiple small videos—one, for instance, associatively suggests that the exploding hand and the resting cats are related. These sculptures are annotations to the videos and daily life.

KK: Can you talk about the hard and soft of the work, and of your language? What is the work's relationship to poetic discourse? Can you clue us into what some might call your highly personal and creative logic?

MR: I have always put a lot of my attention on contradiction, accepting that I embody the tension inherent between polarized forces. This tension between hard and soft, object and subject, and matter and anti-matter is highly concentrated with confusions of distinction. This confusion betwixt parameters is a seriously magical shape that I empathize with. As a female form who, like all of us, is constantly casually flattened into a legible shape (objectified on the sidewalk) I am committed to confronting that shape with complications.

I have a hypothetical bumper sticker that says, "Poetry is a lifestyle." In this way, the poetic discourse is a structure of thinking about the world which evades passive legibility and often uses associations, however abstract, to achieve understanding. Living poetically can be overwhelming, maybe isolating, but every so often you can learn to relax with a new kind of thought. I look to my heroes like Tan Lin, Music, Dana Dart-McLean, and Keren Cytter for gentle guidance.

"A fountain like a book is an index of its own expiration."
—Tan Lin

When someone is on her cellphone standing in a museum right in front of Cleopatra or Buddha's ancient toy marbles, I feel sad.

KK: Is the body a sculpture in your installation? and if so how do you hope the work speaks to the body, and vice versa?

MR: Looking at a cat is like getting a massage. I might have answered this one enough when I addressed being a female form in the last question.

Isabelle Cornaro

Eliding any one medium in her work, Isabelle Cornaro's installations offer ways for viewers to shift their relationship to art objects and their loaded cultural histories. For the first time ever, Cornaro's paintings from the series *Floues et Colorées* will share space in one exhibition. The family of 13 sprayed wall paintings are a series of monochromes, landscapes, and abstractions based on 16mm films of the same title. These thin veils of paint delicately adhere to the wall, merging a history of French impressionist painting, Modernist theory, and contemporary art practice. For *End Things*, Cornaro's wall paintings are paired with several films from the artist's oeuvre. *De l'argent filmé de profil et de trois quarts* and *Figures* arrange objects in ways that comment on their formal and informal associations, while *Floues et Colorées* speaks to the psychology of color, process, and the ephemeral quality of painting. Through her work, Cornaro attempts to make visible the diffusion of meaning that occurs as objects are reproduced and interpreted in different materials and mediums, while illuminating the fuzzy border between the tactile and the temporal.

Isabelle Cornaro is a multi-material artist who grew up in post-colonial Africa, and studied 16th century art history before studying art at the Royal College of Arts in London and Beaux-Arts de Paris. She is currently based in Paris and represented by Balice Hertling Gallery. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Whole World is Watching* at Le Magasin, Grenoble (2012), FRAC-Aquitaine, Bordeaux, France (2012), and group exhibitions include *Vide-Poche* at Sculpture Center, New York (2011) and *Rotary Connection* at Casey Kaplan (2012). Cornaro was the recipient of the Ricard Foundation Prize (2010), a resident at ISCP New York (2009), and is included in the collections of Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris and Centre Pompidou, among many others.

KK: When we met in your studio, we spoke about a “diffusion of meaning” that happens through the reproduction of cultural objects, as well as the formal diffusion of meaning (or information) achieved through the use of color and material. In watching the production of your paintings in the space, I was struck by how earnestly you attempted to reproduce each gesture from the original film, mark by mark. Regardless of the structure of the paintings—which is quite formulaic—they still manage to communicate a certain emotion or an “original” presence. They feel new and alive, surprising, even breathtaking. Can you speak to this quality and how it relates to your thoughts around original meaning versus transmuted meaning?

IC: I hope this diffusion of meaning functions precisely because the paintings are formulaic. In the first place, when realized for the movie, they were done as quickly as possible, in 15 seconds to one minute and with no regards for the attempt to get a “good” form. The idea was to avoid any attempt of making an elaborated form. In the second phase—the making of wall paintings—I liked the idea of trying to reproduce as exactly as possible something that is very blurry, without a decided structure and in a way that has “no shape.” The idea was to avoid the subjectivity that one uses when producing an artwork, and to question the nature of the artistic gesture.

Also, making the paintings raises the problematic issues of taste and evaluation; since they result from a pre-defined process that would allow any form to exist (as you said, “they can’t be badly realized, good or bad”), a “successful” (beautifully realized, let’s say) painting may have more “original” presence and diffuse more emotion than another. But this “original” presence, which is linked to the formal efficiency of the result, may make us forget the process which, to my mind, can bring intellectual excitation and poetry.

KK: Upon viewing the work, someone told me about the filmmaking term “bouquet,” which relates to not being able to focus on multiple points of light, and the resulting fuzzy bursts of color. The vibrational nature of the paint speckling creates a significant confusion; one that blurs, but also creates a fascinating spatial relationship with the work, and even a certain morphing of time. Can you talk about the work’s physicality and how and why film/light/color play such an important role in your work?

IC: With the wall paintings, the idea is to make something very blurry (from far) out of a very sheer image (the multiple dots, from closer).

There is also the optical mix between the white of the back wall and the superposition of the different layers’ colors. I have the feeling that

Green as an intellectual vibration,
snack dab in the middle of spectrum,
can be a problem that's because there's so many different greens inside of
green...

and each one has a different IQ
there's the green that should never've happened...
the stupid green... the green that is green with envy...
then... there's the so-so green
the who-cares-anyway green

but somewhere in green
is a green
that has something to say
a truly intelligent green
a green with integrity—
that's the kind of green for you... and me
there's a green to be seen with
vivid... vibrant... living... alive...
we should spend the better part of our time
with a green like this...
maybe some of it would rub off

—Ken Nordine

"Green" by Ken Nordine, from *Colors* (Phillips) 1967.



On the morning of my studio visit with Isabelle, I met my friend Freddy in his favorite park in Paris, called Buttes Chaumont. We sat on a hill and talked about many things, we climbed the park's bluffs and peeked inside a cave at a glittering waterfall. Freddy had been to Isabelle's studio several times and had set up the studio visit for me. "You will get lost," he said, so he drew a charming map for me which contained no words, just pictures of what I would see when I emerged from the Metro. He said, "you will see a statue of Dalida, and it is as if she is staring into Isabelle's window across the street." He drew a little lump with an appendage sticking out. I said, "Is that her nose?" and he replied, "No, that is her breasts, you will see...".

I followed the picture map and everything was where he said: several flights of stairs, two cafes, a little tourist trolley, and, of course, the statue. Freddy had told me that Dalida was a famous singer and comedienne much loved by the French people. Wikipedia notes, "in 1988, that the Encyclopædia Universalis commissioned a poll, which was eventually published in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, which aimed to reveal the personalities who had the greatest impact on French society. Dalida polled second, behind Général de Gaulle."

The statue is quite plain, meaning it is your standard bronze bust (no pun intended) sitting atop a concrete pedestal. What is extraordinary about it is that Dalida is quite beautiful, dare I say "hot." You don't see many "hot" sculptures, well except for Koons and Cicciolina. I was an hour early for my visit, and because I can't ever figure out how to use a phone when traveling internationally, I had arranged for Isabelle to meet me outside. I decided to just watch the sculpture and the hundreds and hundreds of people who came to see it on various tours and Sunday strolls. I was standing across the street from it, and I could not really hear what the tour guides were saying, I could only see them, one by one, reach up and rub Dalida's breasts, and then each member of the tour do the same, with plenty of time for posing and picture taking. I then noticed that all of their hands had worn away the patina on the bust, creating two glowing metallic nipples. Somehow where the tourists touched looked like flesh, and where the statue was untouched was left still and dead. I later found out that it is said that touching Dalida in such a way brings you good luck. —KK

the difference between the parts that are almost transparent (with only one layer of color) and the parts that are more opaque (where there is an accumulation of different layers of colors) creates a spatiality, beyond the relations created by the different colors side by side.

KK: Unlike your work with decorative objects, such as vases and other vessels and their tautological meanings, the source material for these wall paintings comes from Monet (although you have mentioned that they are not specific to one painting, but rather draw on an "impression" of his work). How do the two bodies of work differ?

IC: This work is different from the series with the vases because the translation from the original image is much less composed and implies much less subjective intervention by me. They are done very quickly, with industrial colors that are the archetypes of blue, pink, etc... The elements of translation are much more direct and less specific.

KK: Is there something in this particular series about moving back and forth between mediums—from painting to film to painting again—or in other words from the physical to the temporal and back again? Are the paintings objects? What is it about objects that intrigues you?

IC: Yes, exactly. They somehow

could be called painting (conceptual) objects. It's the nominalistic change implied that intrigued me in the first place—for example, the fact that the white of the wall around the painting is the equivalent somehow of the “hors champs” [off-screen context] in film.

KK: I am interested in the film *Figures*, in which a collection of objects are corralled together as if they are bodies in a space. Can you speak about this collection and perhaps it's anthropomorphic qualities? What is it about these trinkets that connects us to them, is there something to the mystery of why they are all together?

IC: The three films—*Floues et Colorées*, *De l'argent filmé de profil et de trois quarts*, and *Figures*—revolve around the notions of value/added value: the value we give to objects (because we decorated them, they are ancient, or they carry a memory of something or someone); the value we give to periods, aesthetic qualities, movements (such as the Modernist one); the actual value of a material (such as gold because of its qualities and rarity); and the arbitrary value we give to means of exchange (such as money). The films also consider what we call the “artistic gesture” and the high consideration we give to it (where does this gesture lie and is it necessarily a subjective gesture? What kind of skills (which kind of knowledge) does it requires if any?)

In that sense, the three films show different ways of composing an image by displaying objects or by applying a material (painting). In all cases, the elements used and the way they are used (whether it is painting or objects) have their own significance and history. The composition of the images doesn't imply specific skills (except for the technical knowledge of film recording), and doesn't express much subjectivity. The paintings were done as fast as possible and the objects were displayed quite casually, sometimes by me and sometimes by my assistant.

As for the film *Figures*, the objects were chosen precisely because they represent or relate to notions of knowledge (ancient and current tools) or value (real and fake monies), and, by extension, notions of the decorative (decorated objects), pagentry (jewelry, cosmetics), and so on. Also, I chose these objects because they were used and already looked like they may have belonged to someone. I hope that both their seemingly logical display (where the logic is, in fact, hidden) and their seeming commonalities inspire a search for meaning and a reflection on the personification of objects and, more specifically, art objects.

The wall paintings, as copies of film stills, work a bit in the same way. They relate to highly evaluated forms of modern art history (Impressionism, abstract painting, color

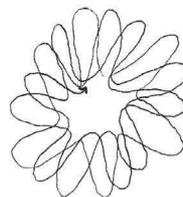
fields, etc.), appear to be expressive and “lyrical,” and they have a “presence,” although they are “only reproductions.” So it's a bit of this same idea: the search for meaning and a subjective relation with value.

KK: Do you think stones can speak to us? Or that objects have a voice?

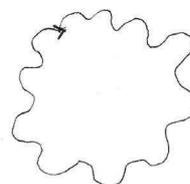
IC: Not really. It's rather that they are surrounded by collective (social, historical, economic) and personal (emotional, memorial) histories.



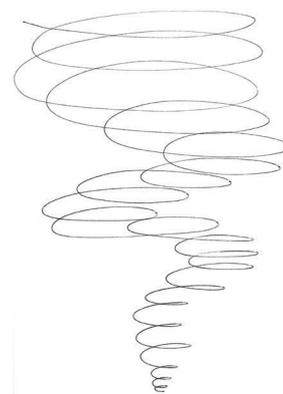
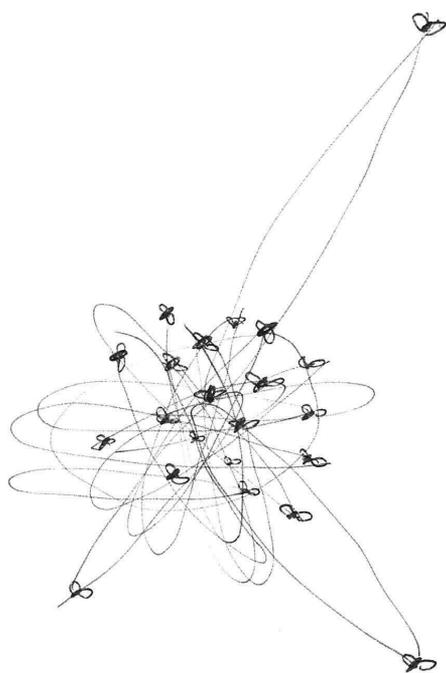
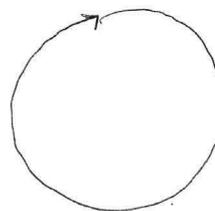
face A



face B



face C



Clockwise from top left: Decapitation of The Sun, Curves of Orgasms, As Much different from the Self, Flies, by Alex Cecchetti.

Opposite: Excerpts from, A Society that Breathes Once a Year by Alex Cecchetti, published by Book Works as part of The Time Machine, a series edited by Francesco Pedraglio, 2012.

Summer

It was that season, and the animals went to drink at the pools more and more often, and the berries were red and dark and there were trees that bowed down under the weight of wild fruit, or clusters of fish eggs, and the ducks flew down and skidded onto the lake and then the bark of the trees could become a dish and Jerzy had even eaten it once and told himself it was good. And in this whole time of abundance for every tree or a stone, for every fire or a bird but even for the wind they used the word thing. And for cutting, sawing, turning, tightening, stretching, pulling, skinning, ripping, throwing, and sometimes even for killing they used the word thingying. So they would simply say: thingy the thing, or let's thingy the thing, or she'd say I thingied the thing with the thingum, or Jerzy would say the thingy thingummed.

Winter

And water seeped into the tent at night and kept them awake, and when they got hungry they never managed to die, but their eyes grew greener and their hands gripped tighter, they clutched things, threw them, ripped them, broke them with much more strength and their legs as well. And Jerzy took the knife and carved an S on a piece of wood, he said that it wasn't a river or a snake but a sort of story, something like life, and Sara made coffee from dark dried herbs and said she didn't feel at all like a line or a curve either. Of course not, you have to add a sort of fourth dimension to the S, you pretend it's moving while standing still. And so Sara sat down and asked about death and he started carving a new drawing. Death was in it from the beginning and couldn't be nothingness, if death were nothingness you would have to give nothingness an idea of existence. Jerzy twisted the knife until the mark became a sort of u or else a c and he decided to explain himself as best he could. I mean that if someone dies it's not like he stops existing, or at least not any more than he didn't exist before. Take nothingness for instance, if it exists it means that it really doesn't exist, that it's missing, but if it's missing it's been there or if it is what it isn't it is in any case, in other words if nothingness exists it can't not exist, but you see? What else could a creature so hounded by existence do but stay constantly in movement? The mark that Jerzy had started to carve as a c had become a sort of S or like when an s is attached to a c and so it looked like an x. So we are nothingness Sara concluded. Yes, but in the fourth dimension. The whole business was still unclear, but they decided to reflect on it further once they were dead.

Alex Cecchetti

Summer is Not the Prize of Winter

Like the childhood game of telephone, Alex Cecchetti's relay performance allows, and even encourages, a dramatic transformation of text and meaning over several days. For the first three evenings, Cecchetti will deliver a story to the audience, illustrated with found and adapted objects. At the end of his performance, the artist hands off his narrative to a selected listener, who will then re-tell the story for the following evenings, and this hand-off continues until Cecchetti returns on the last day to hear what is no longer his own. As a deft and poetic storyteller, the artist moves gracefully between writing, performing, and crafting objects. In each instance Cecchetti invites mutation and allows for chance happenings to affect our perception, and in turn the final reading of the work.

Alex Cecchetti is an artist based in Paris, France, who works primarily in writing and performance. Cecchetti has published several books of his writing, and performed internationally at places including: La Vitrine, Paris, France (2010); Art Pavillion, Zagreb, Croatia (2010); Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France (2009); and Artists Space, New York, NY (2009). Cecchetti was an artist in residence at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2006) and SMART Project Space, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2003).

Kristan Kennedy: In your performance you deliver a story to an audience and, as the days go by, you put the work into the hands (and bodies and voices) of other performers, returning on the last evening to hear a story that is no longer yours. What is to be gained or lost by this transference?

KK: Can a story be a sculpture? Or in other words, how will your story take up space?

KK: When we first met, you pointed me towards your recent novel *A Society that Breathes Once a Year*, published by Book Works. I feel like this novel has some connection to your performance *Summer is Not the Prize of Winter*, mostly in that it is quite abstract and comes together in pieces. What is your interest in poetic discourse? Are the two works related in any way?

KK: Do you think stones can talk? Do you think objects have a voice?

Alex Cecchetti: A poem, sometimes, is a better poem when we do not recall it, or we recall just half of it. How can we know in advance what we are going to forget?

AC: If a sculpture is a story, the inverse process is also possible.

AC: Are you not surprised sometimes to unexpectedly think that there is no language without poetry? The two works you mention are echoes.

AC: I think we chirp and twitter. Chip, chip, chip. When they talk, objects have our voices—mine, yours, our sister's—strange isn't it? Someone said that stones have a culture, otherwise how can they recognize themselves as stones? I only know how to throw them, make ricochets, or promote their beauty.

KK: What is the role of the audience in your work?

AC: As an audience [member], I dislike having to play the detective all the time. Some artists instead play as if they are writers of detective stories, but the killing often remains in between the family walls. The concealing of the weapon is what interests me the most about murdering, and of course the drive. As a bird, I prefer seduction and procreation. In the case of this work, audience has to remember a story, and tell it over and over again, and pass it, and forget it, and lose it or something.

KK: Recently you have been working with choreographers and we had a brief conversation about your theories about walking and how the body works to keep from falling in a sort of perpetual “dance.” How is movement or choreography been influencing your work?

AC: If you want to go anywhere you have to lose balance, and if you fall, it is better to pretend it is part of the choreography. I have been working on choreographies for sleeping dancers, for hiding nudes, and for new painters.

KK: Can you tell me about the title of this work? Is it related to the passing of time? A certain image conjured in the mind...

AC: It is about joy, for some people joy will come always tomorrow, for others joy is now, and now, and now, and for those, springtime is not the prize of winter and sweaters were not invented in the summer.

Erika Vogt

A system with no clear purpose. A series of cast symbols and forms that could be tools or letters in a strange alphabet. A drawing made from pulleys and ropes suspended from the ceiling. For Erika Vogt's contribution to *End Things*, the artist invites viewers to actively participate by handling her ambiguous sculptures. Vogt casts her work from a variety of reclaimed molds that once had one particular function, but have been repurposed by the artist as a series of enigmatic tools or ritualistic objects. Her arrangements provoke viewers to partake in a physical and interactive experience with the work and, in doing so, to shift from the immediate materialism of the things themselves to a mystic and spiritual understanding of the forms. Vogt's animism is interactive; viewers can pull the cast objects up and down for the duration of the exhibition, guided by the artist's hand-drawn index at the entrance. Through the awkward movements and manipulations that Vogt invites through her sculptures, she implores the viewer to leave comprehension at the door in favor of an empathetic relationship with the objects they hold in their hands.

Erika Vogt (b.1973, East Newark, New Jersey) is a Los Angeles based artist represented by Overduin and Kite in Los Angeles and Simone Subal in New York City. She received an MFA from California Institute of the Arts and a BFA from New York University. Solo exhibitions include: *The Engraved Plane*, Simone Subal Gallery, New York (2012); *Geometric Persecution*, Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles (2010); Room Gallery, University of California at Irvine, Irvine, CA (2010); and Daniel Hug, Los Angeles, CA (2008). Selected screening and group exhibitions include: *Affective Turns* at Pepin Moore, Los Angeles (2012) and *Made in L.A.* at The Hammer, Los Angeles (2012), Foam, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2011); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (2011); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA (2010); *Whitney Biennial*, New York, NY (2010) and Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY (2009).

Opposite: *Study for Guide*. Image courtesy of the artist.

KK: When we met we discussed the role of tactility in your sculpture. You mentioned you had read an article about how the simple act of holding something in your hand could make you more empathetic or perceptive. Can you talk about why and how you are inviting the public to manipulate this installation? Do you hope to incite an empathetic response?

EV: There was an article in the *The New York Times* about two years ago. It discussed the idea that holding an object, or having physical weight in one's hand, had an effect on perception. I consider the objects to function like antennae, to ground the figure and focus their attention.

In terms of empathy, the objects open up a space where you can connect with the work. I am far more interested in understanding and thinking, than to say judge a stranger quickly.

This installation is made up of pulleys. I was studying the ideas of ground and air and I became interested in raising the ground level. The pulleys are really supports that raise the ground, and put objects up to the height of the viewer, making the objects bare.

KK: Confusion or obfuscation seem to be a core tenant of your work. The pieces, parts, layers, and symbols laid out in your sculptures, drawings, and films come off as a code hidden in plain sight. What is the role of information in your work? What is the work trying to tell us?

EV: I think more about just having the work be a vehicle for life than I do about constructing a specific point of view. For me, that brings up the idea of image as opposed to experience. One has to walk through something and put your feet in another's shoes to arrive at understanding and empathy. The work requires one's attention and feeling to read it in time and space, but the more that I am asked that question, the more I want to respond, "what's the meaning of art anyway?" Let yourself be carried away. I always feel like I am listening to a commercial or some type of jingoism when someone has a very specific or narrowly defined field of interest. Life takes turns. It makes mistakes. In the future, I want those all to be recorded.

KK: You developed this installation for a specific set of old classrooms. In turn, their walls have been blasted out white; the floor has been painted to form a pitch-black space in the middle; a system of black rope, pulleys, and hanging forms have cut across the room like a drawing; and



PHOTOGRAPH
BY [illegible]

PHOTOGRAPH
BY [illegible]

little colored objects have come to rest on the floor. In this way, the installation seems to move between dimensions; visually flat, but spatially three-dimensional. What are your thoughts on the space you have made? How do you want the viewer to “be” and “act” in the space and with the work? When color interrupts, what is the intention?

EV: The intention is for the viewer to walk through a field of debris and for that field to be designated as other space. For me to make a black field is to make a field that is clearly not the earth, but something or even somewhere else.

The Guide in this way is a bit of a “field guide” to this section from the field of cultural debris. The debris are casts of cast-offs, remnants from the record.

Color makes me think of life and pleasure. What exists outside life? Why deny the generosity of simple pleasure and joy? Can’t art be both engaged and joyful? Or does engagement eclipse joy? Can an artist be generous? Or is the role of the artist always one of self-interest? I don’t think so.

Empathy is a two-way street. Artists should aspire to make the work they want. People should be inspired to engage. I never feel like I can tell someone what something is about. It’s not that I don’t have my own thoughts about that, but wouldn’t that be a type of fascism? One should live their politics. I hate to be extreme here, but we live in conservative and extreme times and everything counts.

KK: Do you think a stone can speak? Do objects have a voice?

EV: Only if you are listening.

Claudia Meza

Kristan Kennedy: I have been reading this article called “Non-biological Objects as Actors” by Erica Owens—in it she makes a case for interactivity between humans and things (which she calls “NBOs”) as being potentially highly collaborative. She proposes that NBOs play an active role. Do you think there will be a strong relationship between the Califone tape players and those who manipulate them?

Claudia Meza: Without having read the article you are referring to, it seems like Owens is extrapolating a lot of symbolism from what I perceive to be simple physical interactions with space and our given environment. On a quantum level, everything we touch does bend and shift. Subatomic particles are constantly jostling and moving around, reacting and even disappearing to our touch. That in itself is participation from the object, I suppose. Conceptually, I also see the way objects influence the formations of ideas and the direction of our work. We are constantly collaborating with our materials or objects at hand, so to speak.

That being said, I feel the relationship between the tape players and those who manipulate them will be a very basic physical interaction. Since it was my intent to make an instrument anyone can play, I wanted the piece to not be in any way intimidating. I also wanted the layout of the room to appear dream-like, but practical, and not so precious that people would feel that they were disrupting or messing something up. How strong of a relationship this will create is entirely up to the participant. You can interact with the tape players as an actual instrument, a representation of an actual instrument, a sculpture, or a sound installation. You can also hang back and simply enjoy manipulated field recordings, if that’s your thing. Above all, I hope the space I was able to create is enjoyed and the objects utilized.

I could be going off on a major tangent, but isn’t this what commerce is all about: the fetishization of objects and our interaction with them? We tend to give objects a lot more power than they deserve. This includes the emotional, social, and intellectual ties one has created with them. Ultimately, we should be in charge of the object. I guess what transcends the baseness of all this is your intent with this object or thing? Maybe I veered off track or got on the wrong one to begin with...

Is there any suggestion of activity or should our interaction with the piece be intuitive? What is possible?

Water is a collection of hanging Califone cassette players that facilitate the exploration of the resonant and sculptural qualities of sounds and their sources. Meza focused her recordings on things that amplify water—ferries, rivers, oceans, waterfalls, water taps, water bowls—isolating their tones and textures on looping tapes. The installation is an instrument without instruction, by which the audience performs their own experience by pressing Play, Rewind, Fast Forward, and Stop. In this way, each cassette deck acts like an auditory “Berlin key” that holds the user responsible for opening and again locking the door before the key may be retrieved. Alongside this sonic space, Meza presents video excerpts from *Mourning Youth*, an in-progress “wordless opera” on the elasticity of self and time, which she is developing with collaborator Chris Hackett.

Claudia Meza is a Portland-based artist and composer who studied music composition and digital music production at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. She has recorded and toured with the bands Japanther and Explode Into Colors, and has performed her own work in clubs, basements, dance halls, ballrooms, art galleries, and music festivals internationally. Meza started New Musics, a platform for supporting new classical musicians and composers in Portland.



Meza composing her score for *Water*.
Photo: Michael Cooper

Anything is possible, but I hope the room feels intuitive and approachable. I try to make simple things that hold a lot of complexity. Aesthetically, I appreciate a four-word sentence over a paragraph, and overtones and textures to melodies. This leaves a lot more room for collaboration with your intended audience allowing for vastness and fluidity in your meaning. I know a lot of people are afraid of being misrepresented or misunderstood in their work, but I actually like the mystery this confusion would bring. My views on purposeful vagueness shouldn't be applied to surgical procedures or city planning though, I'm talking about lofty ideals for my own process in making my work.

So, my suggestion is to do whatever you want. No one will probably approach or play the piece quite like you did and that in itself is meaningful and beautiful. Don't be afraid to sway them or walk between them. Exist in the room and you are doing it right.

Can you talk about how you came to the title *Water* for your piece? And furthermore about your relationship to Cage's philosophy and practice...

I chose *Water* since all the sounds are derived from field recordings I did of water. And I wanted an organic name that juxtaposed with the very electronic and mechanical aspects of my presentation. Also, I'm continuing this installation with different sounds and resonations from other basic materials used to create early acoustic instruments such as wood and metal, and I really liked the consistency and simplicity of naming the series *WATER*, *WOOD*, and *METAL*.

Currently in my work, I find I'm playing a lot with transducing representations of ephemeral or large-scaled soundscapes into objects that people commonly use to digest or transmit information, such as a tape player, or a cell phone, or the Internet. This includes the online world I've created that can be accessed using QR codes for what are essentially naturally occurring soundscapes in my other TBA:12 project, *Sonic City PDX*. The core sounds still exist without me in both projects; I'm simply bringing attention to them and creating ways for participants to interact with them. This act of curating an environment or sonic space by just letting it exist, and taking part by simply existing in it, can definitely be attributed to the influence John Cage has had in my work.

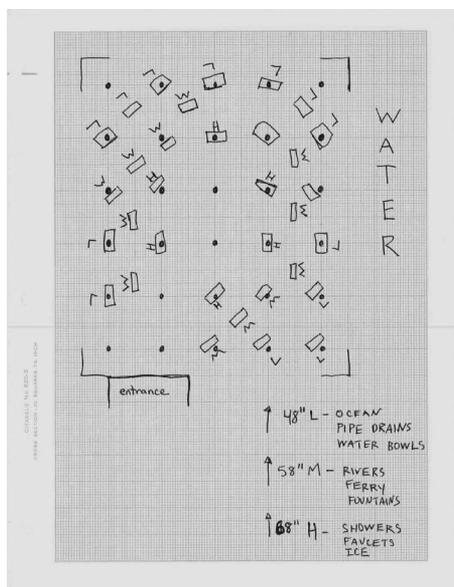
In regards to my relationship with Cage's philosophy/practice, it's some-

thing that changes the older I get and the more work I complete. It's trite to say, but it's true: I always find something new that resonates with me whenever I re-read anything on him or by him. I started reading *Conversing with Cage* by Richard Kostelanetz at a very young and impressionable age. I remember I also bought *Syntactic Structure* by Noam Chomsky the same day I picked up this book. And I still read *Conversing with Cage* routinely. I actually read from it today, and I'm pretty sure I sold my Chomsky book back in college. I'm not trying to pit Cage against Chomsky—apples and oranges—but it most definitely marked a path I chose. And it helped shape my views on life and guided me to concentrate on certain things rather than other things....you know, how a very large influence does.

The thing that inspires me the most about Cage is that he seemed to generally live a very happy and productive life. Google image search for John Cage and see how many pictures come up of him laughing or smiling broadly. The fact that people recognized his work and his ideas as important and worthwhile while he was alive was also amazing. He was such a charming salesman! The way he lived his life was as important to me as to what he produced and that helps me focus on my process, which is very important to me in my work, since I appreciate work that seems like a genuine documentation of the process.

In my early teens I read biographies of every artist, poet, actor, filmmaker, and composer I could because it connected me to weirdos from nearly every epoch and culture, and this made me feel less alone in my pretty strict and religious household. I began to see the pattern that nearly every single one of these stories ended in tragedy, frustration, or sadness of some sort. Also, most of these people seemed to be creating a lot of misery for others in their life, constantly stuck in ruts, or maniacally obsessed with their work to the extent of shutting most people out. The stereotype of a tortured, self-involved artist seemed true and wasn't something I wanted to pursue if it came at the expense of basic human relationships and simple satisfactions of living. I mean, I know I'm a weirdo, but I'm also pretty light-hearted and content with my life, generally speaking. So I was extremely relieved to find an artist that not only created work I found inspiring and wonderful but also lived a life that didn't seem all that awful. And Cage's work was always changing. I admire his growth in mediums, his practical approach to composing, and his consistent work ethic. He said he never composed a piece that wasn't played. I hope to keep the same track record.

Every time I talk to you about what it means to be a composer you suggest it is easy... this baffles me and makes me think about



Claudia Meza, Plan for Water. 2012.

without hearing the piece and then having an ensemble play it, and those experiments usually went terribly because I would then get married to this idea in my head of what the piece is supposed to sound like. I found that I was never satisfied in the interpretations. And this created a lot of hardship for not only me, but my players, since I tended to write (and still do) very difficult or hard to play music. Some people can be satisfied working this way; I like the idea of musically proposing a question and then having it answered. I'm generally a lot happier in life working this way.

In my current work, the act of making something important by bringing it to people's attention is my "composition." This continues the ongoing and very famous discussion started by the Italian Futurists (but also touched upon earlier by a lot of progressive thinkers and composers such as Charles Ives) of what noise is, what music is, what good is, what bad is, what an instrument is, what makes a musician? In my very small contributions, I like being included in that musical tradition and taking part of that long, important discussion.

Do you think sound can be a sculpture, or have physical properties, objectness, thingness?

Yes, most definitely. Sound technically does have physical properties though they are not visible to the human eye. And have you ever been stuck in a room with a loud band that is playing something you don't like? That to me is as physical as running into brick wall.

Van Brummelen & De Haan

Mia Ferm, Cinema Project

The Pergamon Museum denied collaboration with you on the basis that your work might stir debate about the repatriation of the altar. Has the work stirred debate anyway? If so, where and how?

Van Brummelen & De Haan

The impact of works can change over time, but so far *Monument to Another Man's Fatherland* has been perceived as institutional critique or, as curator Mihnea Mircan¹ tagged it so adequately, as a counter-institution. The project picked up the storyline at the point where the institution ended its narration. Parts of *Monument to Another Man's Fatherland* were included in exhibitions reinterpreting the museum and introducing a new type of monument that criticizes existing historiography, instead of aiming for a unifying authentic experience². We were also invited to present the project in the context of an expert meeting of cultural heritage institutions³. We posed the question: why do heritage institutions—despite repeated attempts at deconstruction and institutional critique—still present themselves to the public as an authority, and hide how knowledge and ideas have developed over time and how their collection was appropriated? It stirred quite some debate amongst the participants when we told them that the Pergamon Museum had created barriers to prevent us making certain connections.

MF

How has the process for this project been similar to or different from your other works?

VBDH

We collaborated with other institutions as well, not only museums but also border patrols, city councils, customs, embassies, etc. It has become our preferred approach to find out how institutions operate by interacting with them.⁴ What was new in the case of the Pergamon was that we were excluded. The museum did not want to collaborate or even communicate. We had to look for alternative ways to examine the institution and its boundaries.

MF

There seems to be a lot of components to the installation. We are presenting Part I, Part II, and the poster print of source materials. There is also a recently added Part III, a film called *View from the Acropolis* showing the abandoned site where the monument once stood. How different did the project look initially from where it is now?

VBDH

Part III was recorded in 2008, but we put the recorded footage on a shelf and only edited the film this year. Recently we also added a series of inkjet prints of the photo collage of the frieze.⁵ So indeed, there are quite a few parts.

Monument to Another Man's Fatherland is a four-part project that investigates cultural artifacts as they relate to power dynamics between Turkey and Germany. The migration of culture between these two countries and its attendant objects shapes our understanding of each place, and draws attention to the politics of geography. Van Brummelen & De Haan's project began with a proposal by the artists to reconnect the Pergamon Museum's *Revolt of the Giants* frieze in Berlin with its place of origin in Turkey; denied permission to film the relief, the duo turned to the numerous printed reproductions of the work in academic books and guides. The artists appropriated these found images—printed in different periods, with diverse grids, qualities, and illumination—and reconstructed the sculptural battlefield on film. Concurrently, the artists asked several would-be Turkish immigrants to read the greek myth of *The Revolt of the Giants* translated to the German, poetically unravelling the current political tension between these two populations.

Lonnie van Brummelen (b. 1969, Soest, NL) and Siebren de Haan (b. 1966, Dordrecht, NL) are an Amsterdam-based collaborative. Van Brummelen and de Haan have been working together since 2002, creating films and installations that question the boundaries of the public realm. Their documentarian methods often look closely at the geopolitics of Europe, using 16mm and 35mm film and text. Presentations of their work have been included in international exhibitions at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2011), Project Arts Center, Dublin (2009), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2009), MoMA New York (2008), and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007).

Perhaps we can explain how the project started. Curator Tessa Giblin commissioned us to create a new art piece that would respond to the context of Project Arts Centre in Dublin, Ireland. The commission was open, but the Celtic Tiger was mentioned as possible starting point. This term was derived from the Asian Tigers, and indicated the rapid economic growth of Ireland between 1995 and 2007. We knew Ireland had used tax breaks and other measures to attract foreign investment and since *Monument of Sugar*, governmental intervention in the market intrigues us.

However, we felt uncomfortable submitting to the wider trend of ‘international artists’ contributing to city and nation branding by producing works that have the hosting city or country as their topic. We let ourselves be distracted by the crossbreed figure of the Celtic Tiger, half-Celt, half-feline. We followed ancient Celtic migrations through Europe and then more or less coincidentally stumbled upon the Pergamon altar in Berlin. Pergamon, a famous but short-lived city-state, built the altar around 200 BC in Asia Minor to celebrate a victory over Celts (also known as Galatians). In the 19th century, a German road engineer discovered fragments of the monument in a Byzantine wall and found support to bring the pieces to Berlin. Together with artworks from Western Asian and North Africa, the altar is nowadays presented in the Pergamon Museum as one of

the “roots of western civilisation.” Further reading made clear that identification with another people’s culture was also at the genesis of the altar. Pergamon’s population was an Anatolian blend, but to gain prestige, the empire adopted a sort of oversized Greek style.

To us, the displaced ancient monument with its different layers of cultural appropriation connected to relevant contemporary issues. We started rather open-minded, not with a fixed idea, and approached the Pergamon Museum to ask if they would be interested in a collaboration to add the sense of displacement to their presentation, but the museum refused and we had to opt for a detour.

MF

In addition to the various parts, there is a variety of formats on which these parts are available. For example, Part I was originally on 35mm (we will show it on 16mm), but it is also available as a series of prints. In a way, this variety mimics your strategy with the virtual availability of the altar itself—gathering images from different sources and time periods to create a unified piece. How did you decide on including all of these components? Was this a way to make the work more accessible and to accommodate different spaces, or did you also see it as an exercise in continuing to reproduce the images of the altar?

1. Currently curator at Extra City, Antwerp

2. Monumentalism, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam 2010, The Slowdown of the Museum, Extra City Antwerp, 2012

3. The Seriousness of Play, Kunstfort Vijfhuizen, 2011

4. In Grossraum (Borders of Europe) a film of Europe’s border landscapes, a long trajectory of permission seeking preceded the filming. In Monument of Sugar we eluded Europe’s trade barrier for sugar imports by molding sugar in Nigeria into a monument. In this way we could import the sugar under harmonisation code 9703 that allows all monuments and original artworks to be imported levy free. We also produced Lookout with Wind Turbine, a collaboration with Marjetica Potrc. Marjetica proposed an architectonic extension for the Pireaus housing block designed by Hans Kollhoff and Christian Rapp on KNSM island in Amsterdam. It took us four years to navigate Lookout with Wind Turbine through the dense fabric of regulation and public financing in the Netherlands.

5. We produced these extra parts at the occasion of our first solo-exhibition with Motive Gallery.

VBDH

Our works are usually composed of different and relatively autonomous parts, such as a film and a book, a film and a sculpture, or three films and an index. Depending on the setting, we show these parts in constellations or separately. We think it's important to invite the beholder to shuttle back and forth and to create personal connections between the different parts, with works of others, and with his or her own experiences from life.

The Pergamon Museum presents the frieze as belonging to a specific historical period and place. For us it ties together different periods and places: not only the period that the monument was created, but also the 19th century—a period of radical nation building—and the current moment of excessive migration of people, objects, and images. It is connected to Pergamon and current Bergama in Turkey; to Berlin, where it became part of German history; and to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, to which the frieze was taken in the aftermath of WWII, later to be returned as a token of friendship between USSR and the GDR. And actually this list of places and times can be extended, for example if one looks at the frieze's presence in publications, where these have been produced, who was involved in these publications, where the materials for these books came from, etc.

By creating different pieces that can be presented in constellations, we want to experiment with how these lines can be connected without unifying them into a complete harmonious whole. In this sense, our *Monument to Another Man's Fatherland* is everything that a monument is usually not: not a monumental unity, not fixed to one place, not celebrating one people, not representing a delineated narrative or single event, but fragmentary, disseminated, ramified. The 20th century celebrated above all the pure and the original. The 21st century re-evaluates the hybrid, the epigone, and the copy.

MF

Part I *Revolt of the Giants—Reconstructed from Reproductions* is originally on 35mm. Why did you choose the time-based medium of film to reproduce a sculptural object?

VBDH

The sculptural frieze seems to be a precursor to the moving image. One can only experience the sculpted narrative with its plots by moving your body along the surface. The paradox of expressing movement and development in time with static imagery is characteristic for both mediums. The narrative presented is dialectical too: a battle between gods and giants. The gods are depicted in serene postures, while the giants seem more expressive, their faces into grimaces, their bodies stretched from the mud.



