ART RE-VIEW OX-FORD

TT19

Dear Reader,

I am writing this in the quiet before the Trinity storm (and sun) - but that is not to say that all has been quiet since the last issue of *ARO* was launched two terms ago. Just after that launch, the Turner Prize returned to its native Tate Britain for its 34th year and brought us an exhibition composed entirely of moving-image based works: a first in the prize's history. While the popularity of moving image in contemporary art is no secret, the absence of anything not film-based here was unsettling at first, as if to assert that we are only capable of engaging with 16:9 screens in a world dictated by the digital. Thankfully, more was on offer - not only in Luke Willis Thompson's enormous contraption for projecting (somewhat opaque) 35mm film countering the digital media spectacle of our iPhone generation, but in the poetics and politics of Charlotte Prodger and Forensic Architecture's contributions respectively. The latter two nominees were, for me at least, by far the most engaging, innovative, moving, provocative - all the things I would hope the prize is looking for. But it was on Forensic Architecture, a research group emerging from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, that I repeatedly said (but never followed through on) I would bet good money on winning the prize. The group's work, although shadowed somewhat by the old-age question 'but is it art?', marks a seismic shift in the nature of art practice in the 21st Century more generally: away from the studio and towards collaboration, activism and ultimately addressing the 'real' world. By no means should all art practice follow this trajectory, nor any political agenda, but the Turner Prize's platform has given Forensic Archiecture the attention and respect it deserves, not just as a human-rights research agency, but as a practice capable of producing a fascinating, accessible and incredibly well-designed exhibition. I was lucky enough to see their nominated show at the ICA almost a year ago, and it has stuck with me to this day. So as you can imagine I was suprised (but not financially afflicted, fortunately) to find out that Prodger's iPhone-shot film won the big prize. I suppose I must admit, it was the better work of art.

I won't go on too much longer, but in this third (and biggest!) issue of *Art Review Oxford* you will find some great, short and incisive reflections on the changing nature of the art world and its significance beyond gallery walls:

Harrison Taylor, incoming editor of *ARO*, and **Kathleen Quaintance** reflect on two recent exhibitions by Mounira Al Solh and Lawrence Abu Hamdan respectively, Hamdan having studied at the Goldsmiths Centre for Research Architecture himself, and both artists making the voiceless victims of international violence their research subjects. **Gregory Woollgar** and **Florence Heyworth** book-end the issue with two pieces that (if this issue on time, in February...) particularly resonate, and contribute to, LGBT History Month in the UK: with pieces on both perfomance artist Cassils' work and the lesbian perspective in contemporary art more generally. Another well-matched pairing comes out of the Pembroke JCR Art Gallery, a great student-run space for exhibitions and projects on Brewer Street: **Jason Waite** shares an edited extract of his conversation with internationally-acclaimed artist Ahmet Öğüt as part of a wider project of which the exhibition *The Sleepless Alliance* is reviewed by Assistant Curator at Modern Art Oxford, **Jonathan Weston**.

Accompanying many of the contributions you will see a small *Ruskin Degree Shows 2019* roundel. This indicates that the contributor will have their artwork on public display at the Ruskin School of Art's Degree Show this June. The show is open on the 22nd, 23rd and 26th of June with a private view on the evening of the 21st - I implore you to visit and support the Ruskin and its students as a vital and exciting part of art in Oxford...

RUSKIN DEGREE SHOWS 2019

See you there!

Harry

Email **artreviewoxford@gmail.com** / *Instagram* **@artreviewoxford** / *Facebook* **ArtReviewOxford**

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Words by

Gregory Woollgar

Kathleen Quaintance

Harrison Taylor

Ahmet Öğüt *and* Jason Waite

Jonathan Weston

Grace Crabtree

Michael Kurtz

Milo Nesbitt

Adam Story

Nuala Burnett

Florence Heyworth

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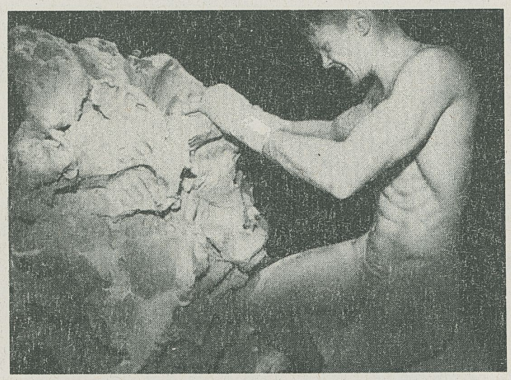
RESILIENCE OF BRONZE

GREGORY WOOLLGAR

Cassils is a Canadian contemporary performance artist based in Los Angeles, who challenges established notions of contemporary art through their approach to body politics and queer methodologies. They initiated a three-part project in 2014 with the performance of *Becoming an Image* at USC's ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives. Within a dark studio room, surrounded by an audience, the artist attacked a 2000-pound block of clay in a roughly twenty-minute fight. The scene was only illuminated to the crowd by the sudden flashes of the photographer's camera, which were memorialised in a series of prints, *Becoming an Image* (2012). The remnants of the fight, which was recreated fourteen times – was a mutilated mound of clay, clearly presenting the indexical trace of the artist's struggle. Cassils cast the clay body into bronze to monumentalise their labour and titled it, *Resilience of the 20%* (2016) as a testament to the recent 20% increase in violent crimes against trans people. Cassils endeavoured to introduce this sculpture into the public fabric of monuments in Omaha, Nebraska. Having only two casts of the sculpture but desiring to commemorate the many outnumbered sites of gendered violence in the city; the artist and their friends push the several tonne sculpture around the city. This new performance work is titled *Monument Push* (2017) and serves as an emblematic symbol for private/public struggle, but also the potential for the medium of bronze monument to surpass its site specificity and cemented historicity. Significant to this project is not just the body politics and performativity of the process, but its cumulative product, a challenge to the heterogeneity of bronze sculpture. The manner in which Cassils manoeuvres through this matrix of the monument tells us of the potential boundaries of bronze. Cassils reclaims the stereotypically male, monarchical bronze monument, to be emblematic for another type of person, the marginalised queer artist. This reclamation is not rhetorical, nor representational. Cassils does not merely represent a disenfranchised person in heroic bronze. Rather they change the paradigm of the monument by situating the sculpture as the antithetical opposite of the artist - not its product, rather its adversary. In this model, the artist needs to spar with the material to imprint their creative force and the collective experience of the marginalized communities. The act of moving the work around the city expands the field of monument as being non-site specific and belonging to specific subset of society. This galvanised portrait is charged with the communal memory of disenfranchised people. Though it holds none of the same modes of historical presentation as the typical bronze monument, it is arguably more evocative of a collective history. It is abstracted in its representation, but not to its cause, which clearly legitimizes Cassils' anger as legitimate creative production. Cassils challenges the medium of bronze monuments, not by denying their existence, nor through iconoclasm, nor by pushing for more equitable representative demographics, but by memorializing the artist's Sisyphean struggle with the material itself.



Cassils, from *Becoming an Image* (2012). Punching and kicking a 2,000-pound clay block in total darkness. What is the formal shape of a violent attack? Courtesy of the artist

Gregory Woollgar is reading M.St History of Art and Visual Culture at St. Benet's Hall, having received a B.A in Art History at the University of British Columbia.

Emenhiser-Harris, Karen. *A 1,900-Pound Sculpture Pushed Through the Streets of Omaha, in Tribute to Its LGBTQ History.*

Jones, Amelia. *Material Traces: Performativity, Artistic "Work," and New Concepts of Agency.* The Drama Review 59, no. 4 (2015): 18-35.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding media: The extensions of man.* (1994)

Mitchell, W. J. T. *What do pictures really want?* October 77, 71–82 (1996)

Powell, Amy. *Depositions: Scenes from the late medieval church and the modern museum.* (2012)

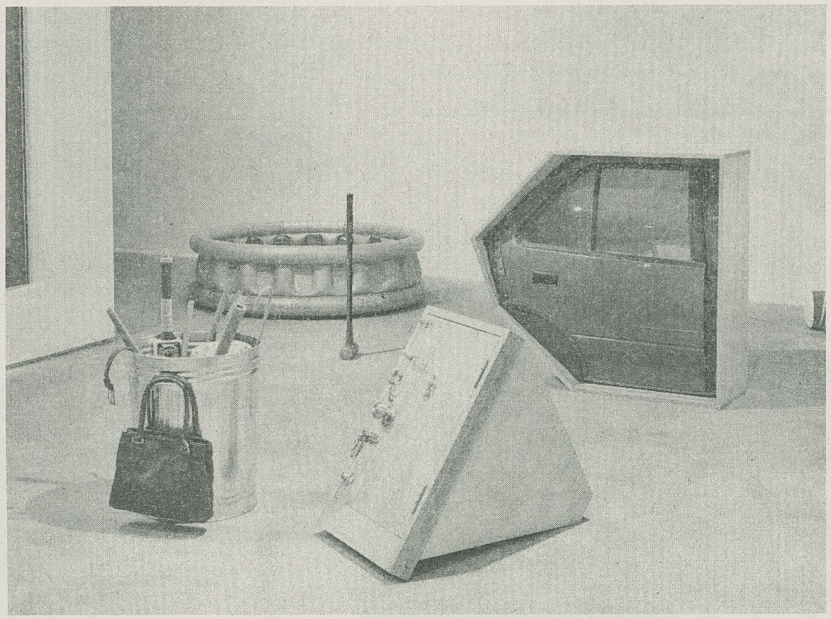
Steinbock, Eliza. *Photographic Flashes: On Imaging Trans Violence in Heather Cassils Durational Art.* Photography and Culture 7, no. 3: 253-68 (November 2014)

Various. *A Questionnaire on Monuments.* October 165, 3-177 (August 2018)

Cassils, *Monument Push* (2017). With community members, advocates, and allies, in Omaha, Nebraska, Cassils pushed Resilience of the 20% (2016) to six sites of resistance and violence in downtown Omaha. Courtesy of the artist.

Earwitness Theatre

Lawrence Abu Hamdan @ Chisenhale Gallery



Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Earwitness Inventory* (2018). Chisenhale Gallery. Photo: Andy Keate

Lawrence Abu Hamdan is a Beirut-based artist who works with sound as a medium to reflect time, space, and truth. His sound investigations have been used to establish justice in collaborations with human rights organizations.

Sound is a powerful tool. It can also be a weapon of terror.

Inside the white walls of Chisenhale Gallery, Lawrence Abu Hamdan has arranged a silent library of sound titled *Earwitness Theatre*. The space is completely silent and resembles a bizarre crime scene. Despite its silence, it is a repository of sound. Ninety-five objects, all of which could be used to produce noise, are scattered about haphazardly. Among them is baby pool filled with water, a wagon wheel partially submerged in sand, and a doorframe. A smaller black cube within the gallery acts as a bunker, completely dark and empty but for the sound of voices of describing torture. These voices speak of Saydnaya, a Syrian torture prison whose design uses sound as a terrorizing force. Prisoners do not leave the four walls of their cells, but walls seem arbitrary when sound is the weapon of choice. The architecture of Saydnaya weaponizes sound: a hollow central tower sends every minute noise ricocheting like a bullet. Every noise is mutated and amplified, increasing the terror experienced by the prisoners. Listening was the only way for the prisoners to form any concept of time or space. Besides the noise of mealtime bags of bread slapping the floor, there was not a hopeful sound. Crouched next to a bag of this bread, I watched as words silently appeared on the walls in cadence of a human voice. To my left, Lawrence Abu Hamdan had placed the PVC pipes, chosen as weapons due to their sonic effect. When swung violently, air rushes through the pipe, amplifying the noise of flesh being decimated. Any item whose properties cause haunting sonic effects were selected as weapons, even family-size soda bottles, which stood on the gallery floor in a cluster. The bottles, like most of the items, seem universal and commonplace. Hamdan uses this universality to connect us with victims of violence so severe that we may otherwise be unable to fathom it.

Auditory processing creates empathy that leaks through borders, walls, and language barriers. Lawrence Abu Hamdan plays the role of a foley artist, by creating an encyclopedia of sounds to give the survivors of Saydnaya a vocabulary to communicate what they experienced. The gallery-goer is thus invited into a studio where the sounds of torture are created. Hamdan uses the Earwitness Theatre to ask essential questions: Can we trust our sound memories? Can they establish justice? When voices of the marginalized are silenced, Hamdan strives to listen to their din. Fighting for the soundless by using sound seems to be the most obvious solution, and Hamdan does so with artistic nuance.

Kathleen Quaintance

Kathleen Quaintance is a visiting student from Sarah Lawrence College, NY, currently studying History at Wadham College.

Now Eat My Script

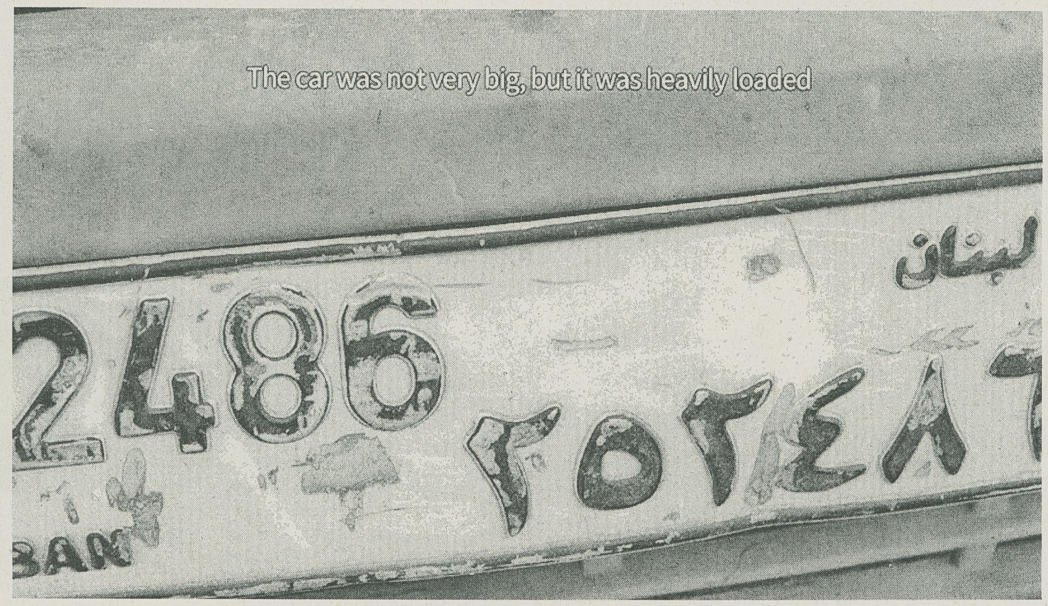
Mounira Al Solh @ Store X

Mounira Al Solh's *Now Eat My Script* is a 'sentimental documentary' which merges the traditional objective method of storytelling with personal memories. The film opens with a seemingly contradictory subtitle in which we are told that "The script of this video has not been written yet", and rather than suggesting an absence of narration and form, is simply indicative of the personal memories that the contemporary events in *Now Eat My Script* are inextricably bound to.

The camera pans over a blue car which is "heavily loaded" with the belongings of a refugee family seeking to preserve their bourgeois identity. Textiles, cushions and bags adorn the front of the car in a multitude of tessellations and colours bound by string, taut with the effort of its making. We learn that this car is a reminder of the artist's own family migration from Beirut to Damascus during the Lebanon civil war, and we begin to understand that the narrator is a silent witness to these events as she observes the flood of Syrian refugees into Lebanon from her Beirut apartment, just as we can only observe the subtitled narration on the screen. The lack of a voice narrator creates an impersonal dialogue in which as the artist asks "Hold on. Was this someone else's story?", we realise that the story applies not just to her, but to the millions of other refugees who have experienced such trauma and suffering.

Trauma is navigated through a butchered, sacrificial lamb and as we examine its carcass in a clinical way we find it alludes to the religious nature of the war, but that it is also representative of violence and death since "we kill the intimate moment of death each time we record it." The sexual connotations of 'voyeurism' and 'intimacy' are used as a subversive mechanism to describe the personal nature of death against a depersonalised landscape of violence, in which the heritage of a person is the reason for their suffering. Yet the artist's refusal to show suffering is a revelatory comment on image fatigue within contemporary journalism. When the "agony of the other becomes banal", both for the refugees themselves and our perception of suffering, personal documentaries like *Now Eat My Script* provide an enlightening re-awakening of the suffering of others. Perhaps it is the case that personal and surreal storytelling such as this is the final frontier against the continual attrition of truth, yet the film ends on a note of ambivalence in which Al Solh notes that "Of course you can report on events", asserting that it is also "the most difficult and useful thing you can do." *Now Eat My Script* illustrates with great profundity how memory and history do not just precede the future; they also inform it.

Harrison Taylor



Still from *Now Eat My Script*, Mounira Al Solh, 2014. © Mounira Al Solh

Harrison Taylor is in his first year studying Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Art and New College.

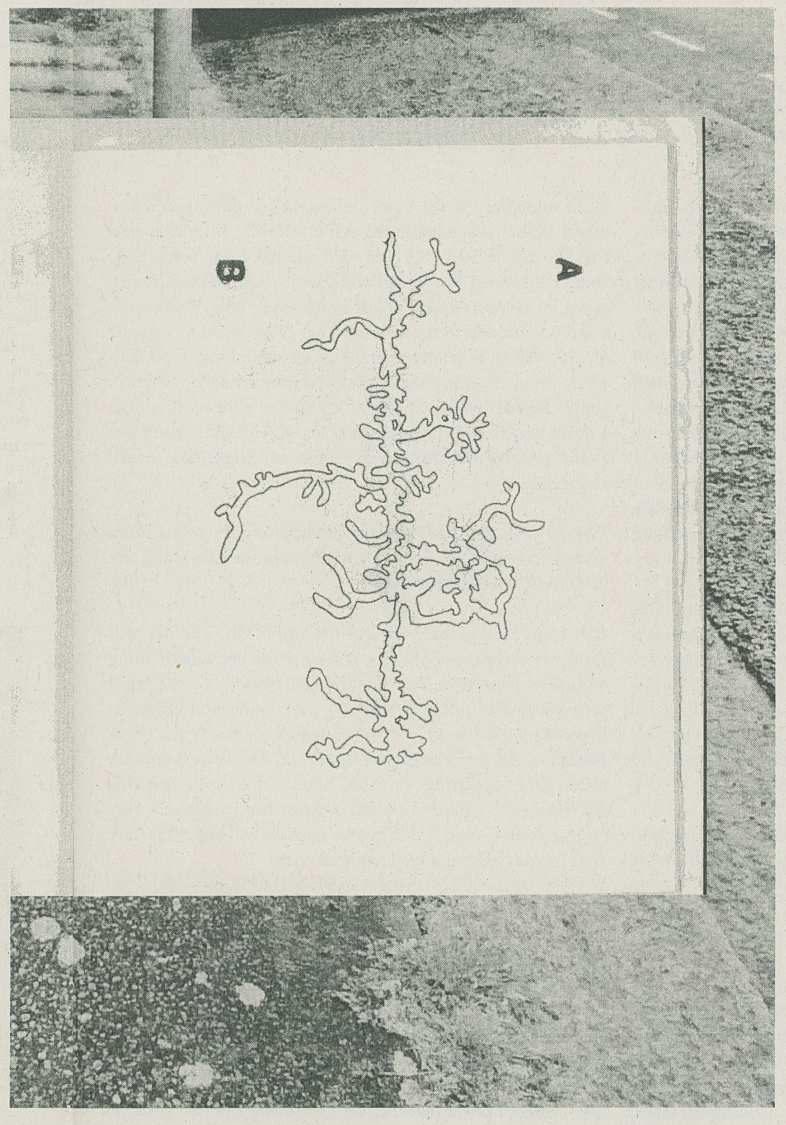
'The front lawn has become contested territory'

'he too has lost his own space of earth and found it fenced off ...'

'She saw herself as an archaeologist who could reconstruct the workings of an underground metropolis based on the scantest traces on the surface.'

'He still remembers the excitement he felt when he would see a sprung trap. But, he added, "even, then, there was this sadness". The landscape, once dynamic and alive, soon grew still.'

CLARA ATKINSON



Clara Atkinson is in her final year at the Ruskin School of Art and Brasenose College.

RUSKIN DEGREE SHOWS 2019

Ahmet Öğüt on
THE NEXT PRECARIOUS DECADE

JASON WAITE

The Amsterdam and Berlin-based artist Ahmet Öğüt has been at the forefront of experimenting with a practice where poetics meets the political, developing an approach to art making that is multifaceted in both its scope and trans-temporal aims. This abridged interview with the artist is excerpted from the extended version on display in the exhibition, THE SLEEPLESS ALLIANCE, at Pembroke Art Gallery, University of Oxford. It was on show from February 23 to March 23, 2019 and was curated by Jason Waite, Margarida Mendes and Kenji Kubota as part of the ongoing project ART FOR THE NEXT DECADE.

Jason Waite: Thinking through the finite period of 10 years, which is both a future hypothetical, however one that doesn't extend into the distant future as still remains within a lifetime: what societal shifts do you hope can happen during that time?

Ahmet Öğüt: Well when I think of myself 10 years ago, thinking about what's going to happen in the coming 10 years? Where I will be? Many real things that have happened felt first as if they were part of a lucid dream after a short nap—something you can only imagine in your dreams. All of my friends coming from different times, from different places in my life, normally speaking different languages, and then all of a sudden like a dream they appear in the same city at the same time, speaking the same language. So dreams makes these kind of things possible.

Then you wake up with a confused feeling because this shortcut in time and space comes as a shock. Thinking of a phone booth, for example, sometimes they are still there but we hardly remember they were regular tools for our daily life. It's interesting how these things become artifacts - historical remains - and the rest looks more dream-like and utopic. It's important to catch the moment when the idea of a utopic and dystopic imagining of a future becomes ordinary.

…As well as questioning the necessity of all things, for example, why do we need the artists in the first place and why I should be one of them? It is a good wake up call.

JW: And how does the notion of precarity and resilience come into your practice?

AO: Well, it's easier to deal with the future or the past than the present moment. The now is too fragile. I hope and try to address issues linked to a recent history or a recent future. But often, other people don't want to touch them. A few years ago there was a car factory in the process of closing in Genk, Belgium, for instance. I was asked to make a proposal for a permanent work in public space, and I wanted to address that ongoing issue. The local art institution and the municipality were enthusiastic. But when I talked to workers' union members from the factory they said that it's not the right time to do something about it, as the factory was closing in a few months. They suggested to me that it would be better to come back in maybe 10 or 15 years if I wanted to do something about the factory. The factory was the main income for the city and a lot of people were about to lose their jobs. There were still doing protests at the time and they didn't want to step out of that frame. Whenever I want to do something, especially when it is happening right now where everyone is currently being affected by the situation, it's always a lot harder. And I think that this is the mission of art, to somehow enter life and its realities that are not very comfortable right now to talk about them.

JW: 10 years ago in 2008, the financial crisis started. If we understand crisis as a cyclical process, what do you think the next crisis in a decade might be?

AO: Everything is kind of layer on top of one another and whatever is on top looks like it's the most permanent thing with most present impact. Yes, the financial crisis is a cyclical process, and it needs to happen every now and then for hyper-capitalism to keep existing. Before there was the Great Recession and then the Great Depression. And there is another catastrophe occurring on this planet: the anthropogenic warming of the Earth's climate system, happening at a very large scale and speed. I think in 10 years we will hopefully have time to worry about a new financial crisis.

JW: How do you see your practice shifting in 10 years?

AO: Maybe we won't use the term artist anymore. Maybe we will all need to become creative mechatronic engineers with scientific, algorithmic, ecological and political awareness and yet still staying with the human even if everything is automised. Thinking long-term, I try to construct my projects and ideas in that way, to consider that they might not stay as projects, and I might not stay as an artist. Everything will find a way to transform into life.

Jason Waite is a DPhil candidate at the Ruskin School of Art and Christ Church, Oxford

THE SLEEPLESS ALLIANCE

@ PMB | ART

JONATHAN WESTON

The Sleepless Alliance, on display at Pembroke Art Gallery has been informed by a series of interviews developed by the Pembroke JCR Art Committee alongside the exhibition's curators, exploring modes of artistic practice and reflecting on how we might imagine a future society.

The exhibition asks its viewers to wake up and take note of today's ever-increasing rumblings of social and political chaos and unrest, and to consider how as a society we might act to shape our own futures. The works on display offer up different cultural perspectives and alternative social models, challenging the accepted structures and power balances in society.

Upon entering the gallery visitors are greeted by a monitor delicately propped up against the gallery wall displaying the video work *Wake Up*, 2015, by Tokyo-based artist collective Kyun-Chome. This series of short videos documents the reactions of sleeping street dogs in Bangkok to being awoken by alarm clocks set to ring at specific times related to major crises: 8:15 (explosion of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima August 6, 1945); 8:46 (Flight UA175 hits the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001); 14:46 (Tohoku Earthquake, March 11, 2011). Kyun-Chome playfully suggests that like the street dogs (blissfully unaware of the alarm clocks before they ring) these catastrophic moments in history were our time to wake up.

Stepping back from the wake up call we encounter London-based Pil and Galia Kollectiv's *The Future Trilogy*, 2006-9. These monochrome outfits act as surrogates for a series of performances Pil and Galia Kollectiv developed in the aftermath of the Edmonton IKEA store riot (2005) which took place during the grand opening as 6000 customers arrived to compete for the heavily discounted products. Recalling similarly frenzied scenes such as the London riots in 2011, Pil and Galia Kollectiv take the event as a starting point for a speculative future where a new totalitarian state religion imposes the ideals of modernism on the masses.

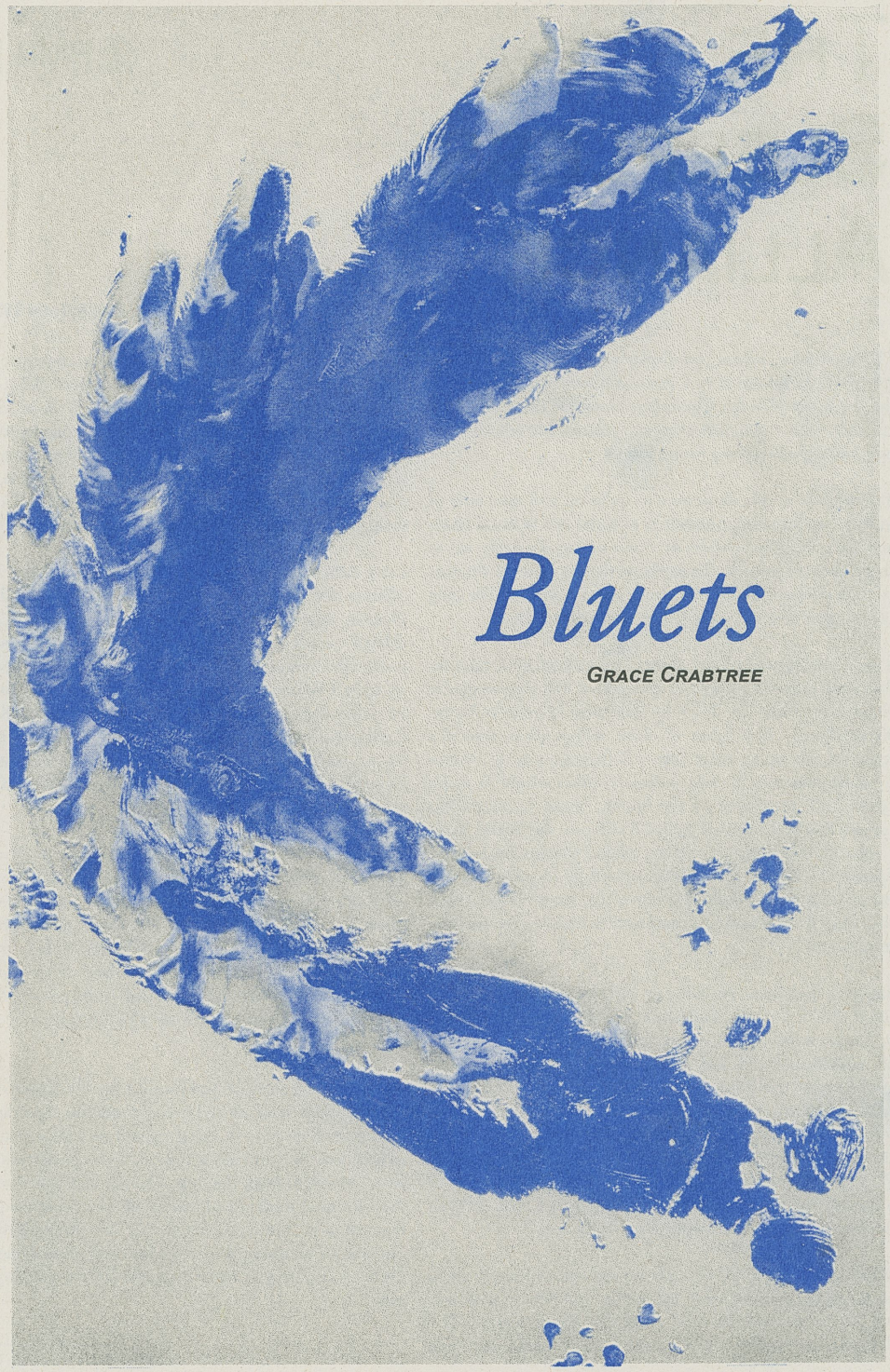
What logically follows on from an act of deviance is the desire to challenge the existing order, hierarchies and power structures. Adelita Husni-Bey's *Postcards From The Desert Island*, 2011, demonstrates this by removing these social mechanisms and inviting children aged between 7 and 10 to construct a desert island through self-ordered collective action. What ensues, organised loosely around scenarios from William Golding's seminal novel *Lord of the Flies*, are chaotic struggles to address issues including migration, the importance of public space and civic disobedience. The scenes feel like déjà vu from months and years of the UK government and House of Commons struggling to come to terms with the very same concerns.

Larry Achiampong's *Pan African Flag For The Relic Travellers Alliance*, 2017, is part of a wider Afrofuturist project addressing identity, migration and postcolonialism, to explore a future alliance between African states and create a fluid borderless unity. The project developed from considering the current social and political climate, particularly in response to the rise in nationalism amid tensions around the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. The vibrant flag signals the hope for an undivided prosperous future for the African states: something that seems a distant reality for the United Kingdom as it stands today.

The final work in the exhibition, Christian Nyampeta's *Comment vivre ensemble*, 2015, presents research into modes of working together and commonality. The video documents interviews with a number of Rwandan philosophers and educators around the question 'What is rhythm for you?', inspired by Roland Barthes' lectures held at the College de France in 1978. Rhythm is expressed as the potential to work towards invention or reinvention while accepting the need for an active space.

The overriding premise put forward by *The Sleepless Alliance* is how artistic research and experimentation can inform new modes of alternative thinking around societal structures and indeed how we can move towards reimagined futures. The works highlight both the opportunities and risks involved in these forms of thinking, ultimately offering up more questions than answers. However this should not diminish from the importance of asking these questions and challenging norms. Only by engaging in such a process can we truly say we are awake.

Jonathan Weston is Assistant Curator at Modern Art Oxford



Bluets

GRACE CRABTREE

In Maggie Nelson's book of personal and philosophical meditations on pain and pleasure, *Bluets*, she recounts hearing, in the eighties when cocaine was at its peak of celebrity, that smoked just once, 'the memory of its unbelievable high would live on in your system forever' and you would never be wholly content again without it[1]. Only partly concerned with the truth of this idea, she wonders whether the same might be true of other spheres of experience: of whether seeing, feeling, or letting within you a particularly potent person or a startling shade of blue could leave you irrevocably altered. And how this loss, when felt and acknowledged, would add to, rather than detract from, the 'cluster of gifts' that make up one's experience of the world when trying to be 'one of the people on whom nothing is lost'[2].

Nelson's writing ranges from art criticism and critical theory to poetry and memoir, winding its way through subjects in a kind of vernacular auto-theory, and in this hybrid manner, *Bluets* pools the poetry, the symbolism, the sensuousness of the blues Nelson encounters. In reading this archive of memories, findings, and evocations, you begin to fill up with blue, as something that is more than a colour scatters out into the abstract.

Seeing the world in colour is no consistent fact: the sea's hue might appear yet more blue in a deeper stretch of water, because blues have shorter wavelengths and are less well-absorbed than reds, oranges, and yellows. Etymologically speaking, blue belongs in the realm of the shimmering: its root *bhel*, to shine, flash or burn, indicates a brightness of hue.

Yves Klein wrote that 'blue suggests at most the sea and sky, and they, after all, are in actual, visible nature what is most abstract.' Perhaps this is in its relation to light, this shimmering, dissolving blue at the horizon; Nelson's blues are often less monumental, in paintings, blue antidepressant pills, and the titular 'bluets' (cornflowers), but all framed by a love that she reinterprets as light:

> *240. All right then, let me try to rephrase.*
> *When I was alive, I aimed to be a student not*
> *of longing but of light.*

Consider then the black, velvety void of Vantablack: a synthetic material which absorbs 99.9% of visible light, so is essentially not colour, but a void, an illusion. It can be sprayed onto a surface; front-on, it transforms surfaces into the flat and the formless, no matter how jagged, wrinkled, or curved. Rather than pigment, it is made up of thousands of infinitesimal nanotubes, strictly a technology rather than a colour. It instigated a petty but intriguing artistic incident: Anish Kapoor, attracted by this seductively strange material, approached its inventors. As Kapoor's 'life's work had revolved around light reflections and voids', not to mention his status as one of the biggest figures in contemporary sculpture, they signed a contract for his sole usage of Vantablack as an artistic material.

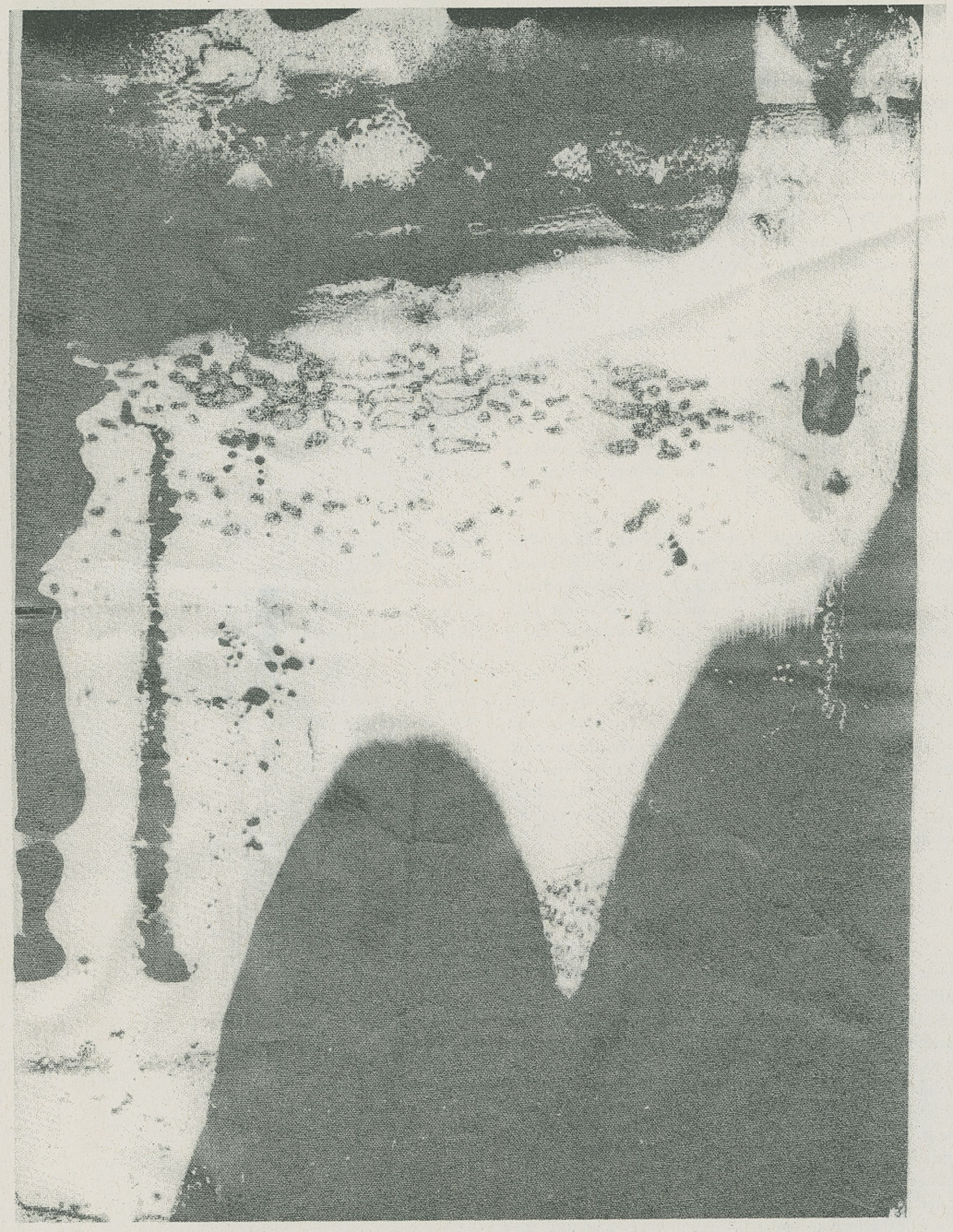
One affronted artist, Stuart Semple, retorted by attempting to create the pinkest pink, grinding pigments and binders to create an ultra-fluorescent pink, rather pettily available to all *except* Kapoor (it's in the small print). Yet in December of 2016, Kapoor posted an image on Instagram with his extended middle finger coated in the pink pigment. Semple persevered, making his own blacker-than-black paints, Black 1.0 and 2.0, non-toxic and available-to-all pigmented versions of the void-like, shape-altering material.

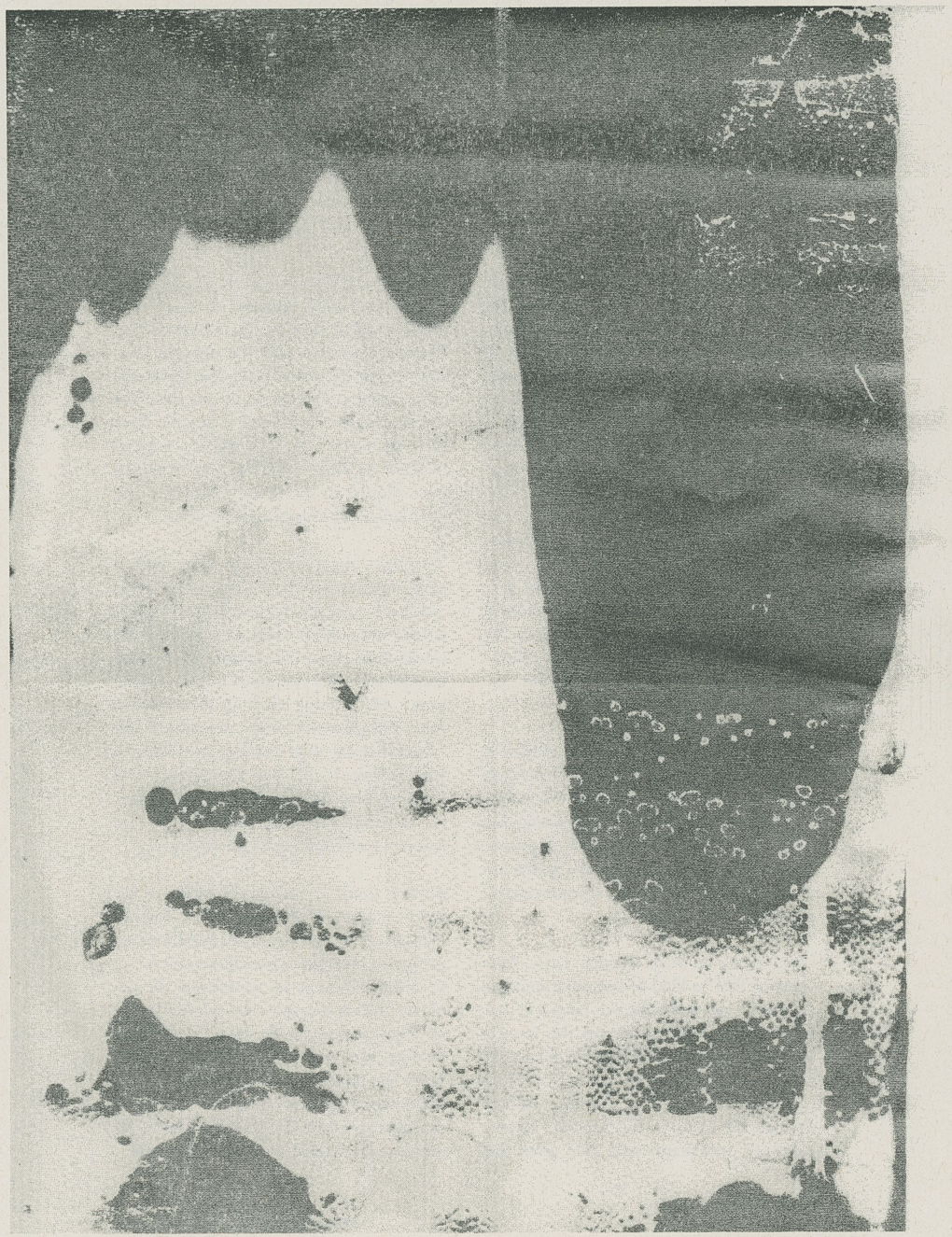
It has since been interpreted as a collective, durational performance piece[3], but what is most interesting is how colour became an abstract, conceptual entity. *Bluets* similarly moves us to wonder what it means for a thing to be blue, and for a thing to have being; and to gather our own fragments in Nelson's swerving, searching manner.

[1] Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*, 2009
[2] Henry James, *The Art of Fiction*, 1884
[3] Wired magazine, *Art Fight!*, 2017

Grace Crabtree is in her final year studying Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Art and St. Anne's College

RUSKIN DEGREE SHOWS 2019





(Both) *BH2 5LR*, SCREENPRINT

PHILLIP RHYS OLNEY

Phillip Rhys Olney is a first year English Literature & Language student at Corpus Christi College

Reflecting On

SPACE SHIFTERS

The Hayward Gallery's recent show, *Space Shifters*, was designed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the gallery by exhibiting artworks from the last half century that in various ways work with - moving through, reflecting, filling - space. Two works in particular piqued my interest. The first is Helen Pashgian's luminous columns, lozenges of translucent material that punctuated the space, structuring the beholder's experience of the room and changing in subtle, very beautiful ways from different perspectives. The second is by veteran space shifter Yayoi Kusama - a room filled with reflecting balls organised so as to evoke a kind of primordial natural space, a liquid field, playing on the unity of the overall form and the infinite multiplication of reflections within the spheres.

What really struck me about the exhibition was not, however, the artworks themselves as much as the way in which they were displayed and organised. It seems fitting that reviewing a show made up mostly of mirrors, I should focus primarily on the goings on of the gallery: the works' representational content, in other words.

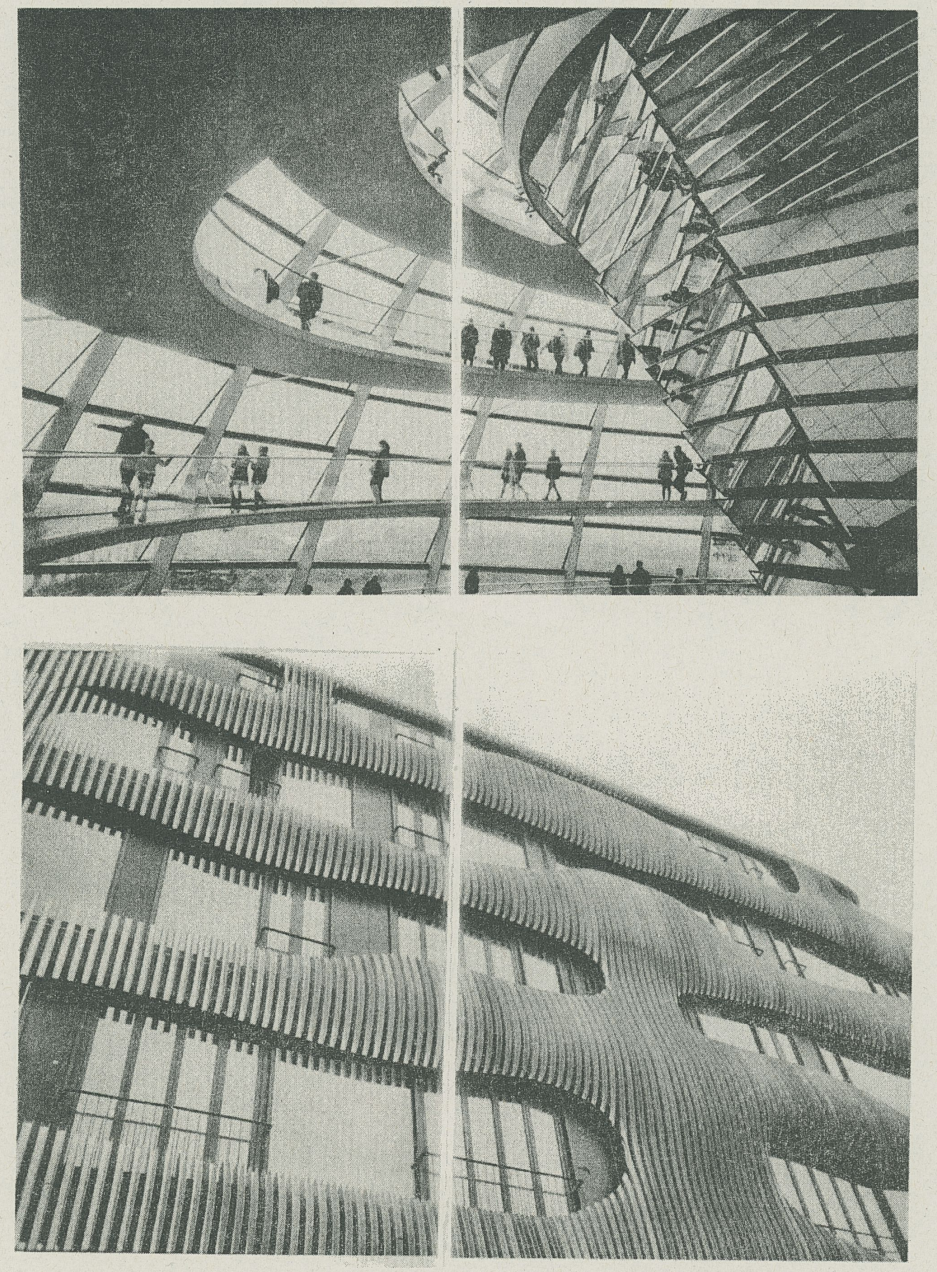
Upon trying to walk through Larry Bell's *Standing Walls*, a kind of pathway composed of sheets of half-reflective glass, I was informed by an attendant that this was the 'wrong entrance'. I had to 'go the other way'. This was, I imagined, to prevent collisions between disengaged viewers halfway through the work. In this way, the viewer's encounter was chaperoned. And given that the significance of these works lies primarily in our embodied response to them, this over-controlled context is tantamount to having a Guardian art critic stood by your side whispering dated platitudes about the artist's genius in your ear as you look at a Rembrandt portrait. Which is to say it ruins the experience - and reinforces received ideas, or no ideas at all. The only thing you were allowed to do, it seemed to me, was photograph the objects and shuffle on.

This frightening thought was almost realised in the final room of the exhibition. My friend criticised a gold spindly installation in a self-assured voice - not predicting how their words would carry across the room. On hearing this criticism, the nearest attendant jumped to our side, offering forcefully to 'explain' it to us. He proceeded to give the official take - describing the piece's history and telling us why he loves it. If I had already been told I was walking into a work the wrong way, this attendant was now insisting that we were looking, even thinking, in the wrong way.

Adding insult to injury, in order to see the final piece of the exhibition - Richard Wilson's *20:50* - we would, we were informed on buying our tickets, have for to wait for up to an hour. And as we approached the exit of the final room, we were confronted by an airport-security style queue of excitable families, first dates and art students, waiting to see the piece. Unwilling to take this slow pilgrimage to get our minute with the work, our photograph in the Santa's grotto of the art scene, we walked away - the right way?

MICHAEL KURTZ

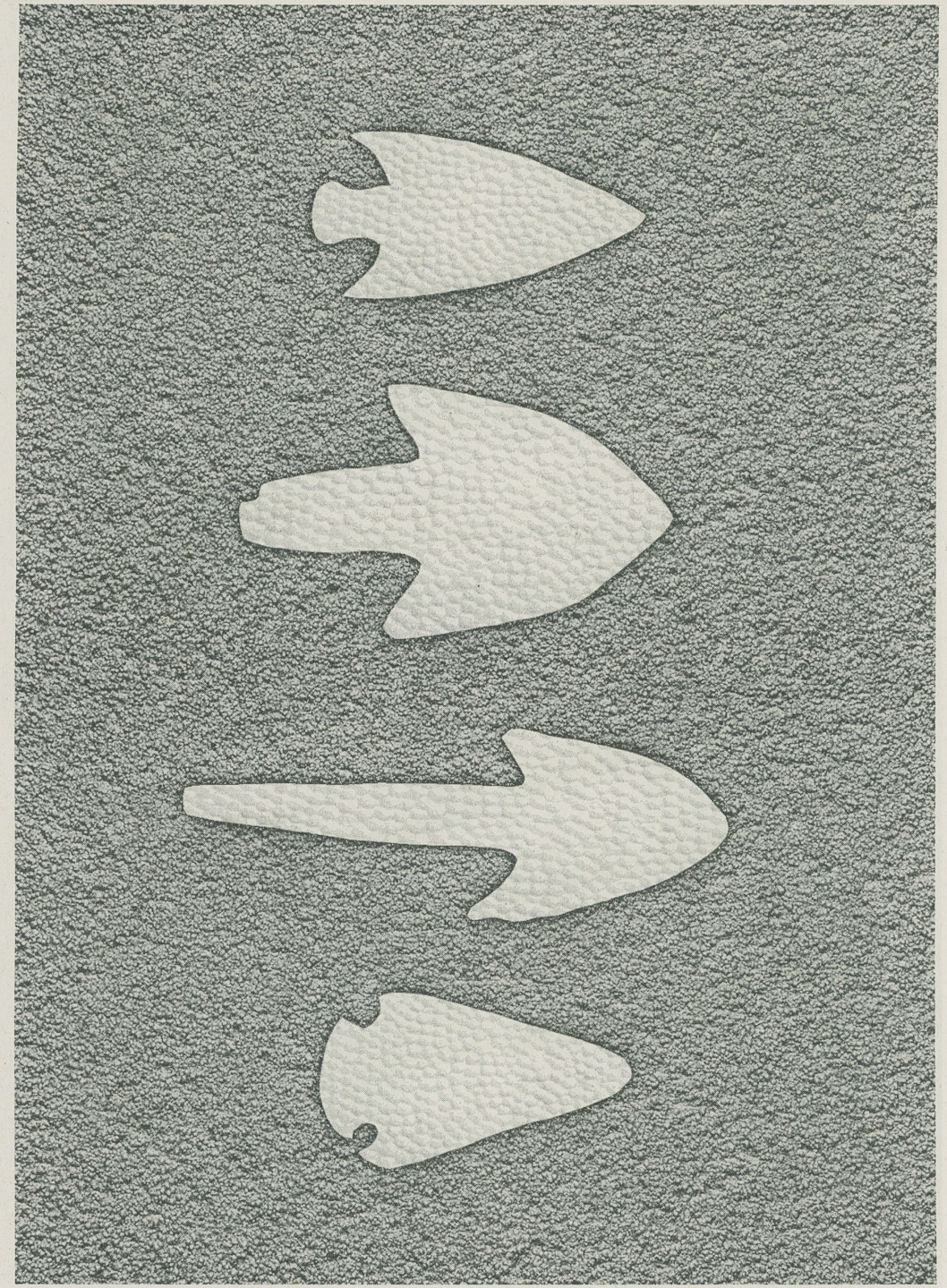
Michael Kurtz is in his third year reading History of Art at Wadham College.



BERLIN [2017]

ALEX WILLIS

Alex Willis is in her second year studying Chemistry at Lincoln College.



INSERT, **JOSIAH MCNEIL**

Josiah McNeil is a second year student at The Queen's College and The Ruskin School of Art

STATE OF THE ART

Maybe you've heard that Tottenham Hotspur have a new stadium – if you have, you might also know that a lot of PR time and money has gone into branding it as the most advanced and perfected yet. What's gone slightly more under the radar is perhaps the only interesting aspect of the stadium, the fact that it has a small art gallery section, containing works commissioned by the Club from four local artists.

Albert 'Agwa' Clegg's *Work, Love, Play* is a triptych of scenes ostensibly from around Tottenham but that end up coming across as modernist clichés of urban life: anonymous figures walking in front of a silhouetted cityscape and drinking red wine under late-summer trees are there alongside an inevitable footballer caught mid-stride. The accompanying description claims that his work is 'opposed to the alienating and inaccessible constructs of modern art'; the vague reference to a pretentious 'modern art' seems like a patronising attempt to market the work to a certain imagined audience – football fans can't be into modern art! – but it's hard to see exactly what is so accessible about it. The dynamism of the city that Agwa's semi-futurist style tries to reflect seems absent, and it leaves the viewer cold.

It's understandable, however, that some hallmarks of modernism – a fascination with the urban citizen, modes of transport, the fleeting and vivid experience of the city – are subject to attempted reboots in art concerned with football, so often a marker of urban identity. Ashton Attzs is better able to demonstrate that this can be done in a meaningful and thrilling way. *White h(e)art, Brown h(e)art, Black h(e)art Lane* shows a range of androgynous, playfully rendered figures around North London bus stops, and this time there's a sense of vitality that doesn't feel contrived.

This, though, is the high point of the display. Marina Nimmo's washed-out portrayal of the greener side of the city in *Tottenham Marshes* is unobjectionable but feels like another safe choice. Meanwhile, Natsko Seki's *A Day in Tottenham* includes depictions of shops around Tottenham High Road, but mostly ones with generic enough names to ensure that everyone knows what they are: Alternative GP Practice, Chicken 'n' Pizza, Florist. One corner shop even has its name removed. The effect here is that a work ostensibly dedicated to the area that produced it is stripped of some of its local specificity: these places could be virtually anywhere.

This feels unfortunately fitting, given the surroundings. The stadium's every aspect has been engineered to maximise efficiency and a vague idea of 'the matchday experience'. The club is keen for people to know that it's been designed to make the crowd sound louder, that it has more wifi hotspots than any other stadium, that queueing time is reduced by pouring pints from the bottom of the glass and only allowing payments by card. The stadium is emblematic of how football under capitalism strives towards efficiency, for the sake of profit, how it takes your emotional ties to a community and sells them back to you in the form of luxury seating and £5.50 pints.

It's hard not to want to like the art on display. These four artists are not particularly established and are openly socially conscious in their work, and the project of popularising art by moving it away from typical institutional spaces is always laudable. This isn't really intended to criticise the art on display, and it certainly isn't to suggest that a football stadium is not the right place for art. But it is to ask why certain art is considered (by those with the power to decide what to do with it) aesthetically compatible with a shiny £850m monument to the ever-worsening neoliberalisation of football. Tottenham's plan is for the display to be regularly updated: it seems unlikely that it will ever become a space for art that challenges football's self-image, but let's hope.

MILO NESBITT

Milo Nesbitt is in his second year studying English at St. Peter's College

The House Below The Bright Sun

[Go to: Google Maps > StreetView > UK > Silloth > Skiddaw Close > The House Below The Bright Sun]

Adam Story

In Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, grieving for his mother, he looks towards the capabilities of analogue photography to capture his mother's likeness. Working from the fact that the development of photography was based upon the discovery that silver halogens were sensitive to light, he states that "the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here". He then states that, "the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, 'will touch me like the delayed rays of a star' ".

More than two years after my grandma's death, I was showing a friend the house in which she used to live in, using Google Street View. As no analogue photos remain of her, I too thought I had no hope of 'finding' her. Taken in 2009, in the doorway of the left block of terraced houses stands the figure of my grandma. She sadly passed away in 2016. Now a decade out of date, this image taken from Google Street View exposes the failure for visual technology to provide accurate representations of reality. It transports me back in time, but through a completely facile lens. Grandma becomes pixellated, in both recollection and coded memory. As digital media appropriates human memory, the feeling of nostalgia loses its resonance. The essence of a person is lost and becomes antiquated. Barthes relays this, relating the photographic image to the act of dreaming. "I know it is she, but I do not see her features (but do we see, in dreams, or do we know?)."

Digital realms become tombs for material things. The light of this image appears so overtly artificial. It is a snapshot of time wherein both myself and my grandma existed as material, yet now only one of us stands to see it in record. The pictured environment becomes entirely redundant or defunct. I am reminded that I can no longer play in her garden. Street View demands that we are seeing in real time. For the image to do this, it must imitate a third dimension. The cutting and blurring marks in the road and sky serve to envelop us, accentuating an otherworldly quality of exploring the world in superhuman speed. No longer is my grandma embodied by material, but as a miniaturised haunted figure recorded in digital space. A flicker in the stars, a flickering on the screen. Delayed rays of her being. The heat of my TV monitor is the only radiating referent force that can serve to touch me today.

This is not her touch though. She will be put to rest when the street view is eventually updated. Then in absence, perhaps I will even miss that.

Adam Story is a final year student at the Ruskin School of Art and The Queen's College.

Moments Often Overlooked

Pierre Bonnard's framings of domesticity and their continuing relevance for contemporary art

Nuala Burnett

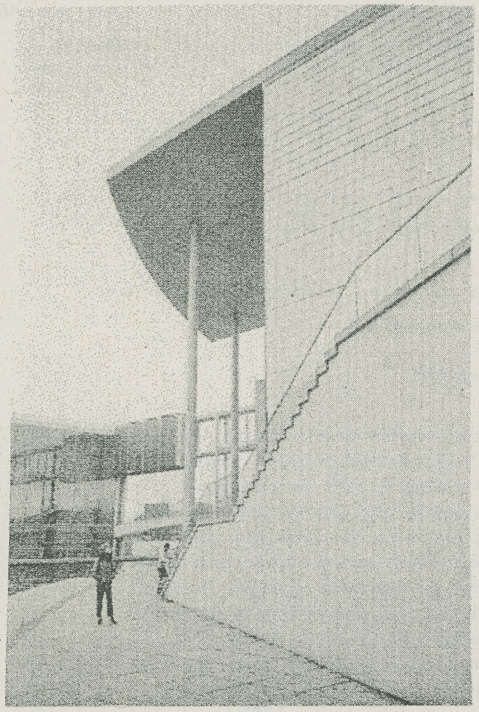
A friend of Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard was a French post-impressionist whose work was highly saturated by bright colours. His work sought to reconstruct movement and setting from memory, and often sets the scene moments after an event has taken place. He is the subject of the recent C C Land exhibition at the Tate Modern in London, and this show offers the opportunity for many to rediscover his work and to re-situate it within contemporary art and culture.

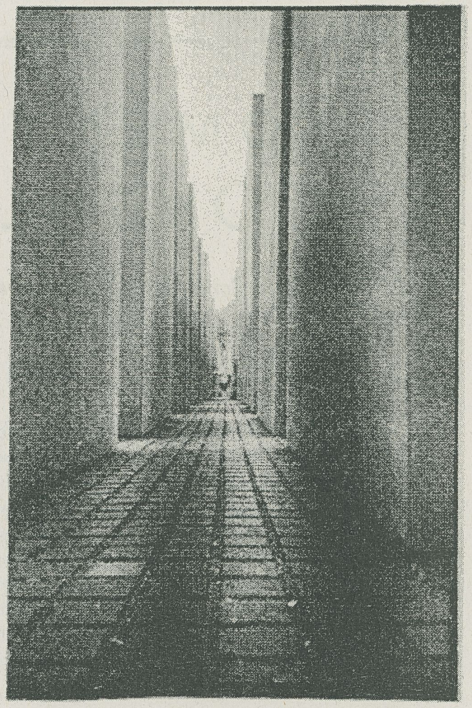
Bonnard offers the audience a view through a window into somebody else's life. His unusual compositional framings provide an intimate vantage point, as though you are witness a scene unbeknownst to those within it. Many of his paintings showcase domesticity; a room that has just been walked out of, glances exchanged over the dinner table or a view that has seconds before been the subject of unguarded observation (see *The Window*, 1925). Bonnard captures the fleetingness of everyday life and asks of the observer a greater deal of appreciation for these mundane moments, a perspective that can be paralleled to emergent forms of contemporary photography.

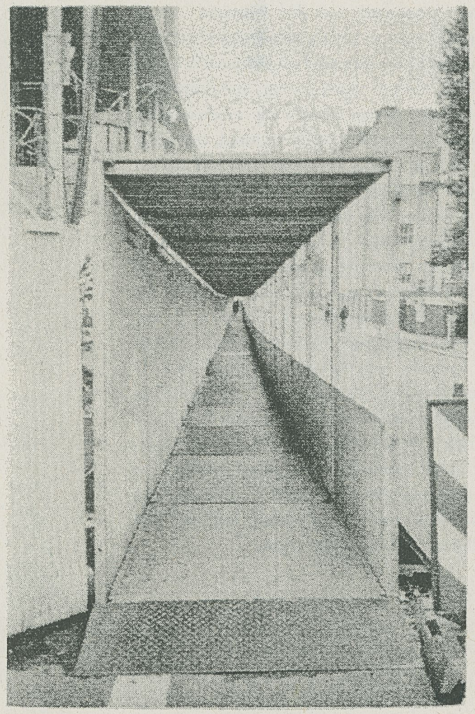
The ability to take hundreds of photos almost instantaneously has led to a great flood of content, both in the mainstream media and in the art world. Never before has it been easier to preserve a moment or an experience, yet in this age of oversaturation, Pierre Bonnard's work offers an opportunity to explore the often-forgotten moments and experiences outside of the main focus. *Coffee* (1915) is a view from above, looking down to a chequered table cloth that now houses empty plates and cups. The audience is asked to reconstruct the scene that must have taken place moments before, each viewer weaving a personal narrative. Bonnard's work lends itself particularly to this kind of storytelling as it depicts the everyday, and this is something that can be seen more and more in snapshot phone photography.

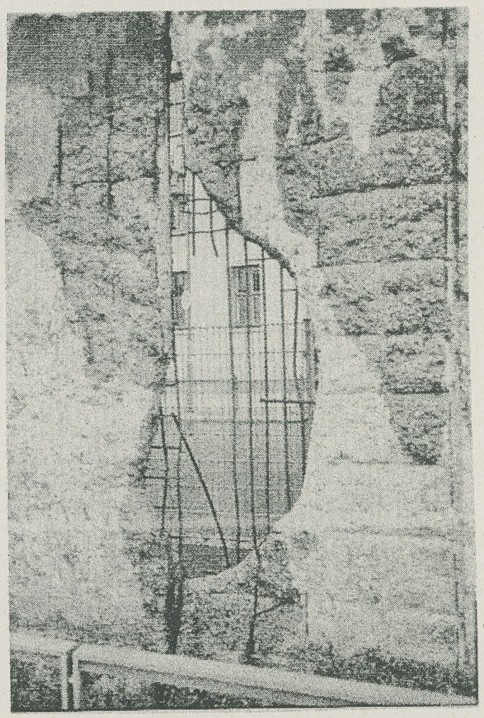
Poor quality representations of life have been presented to the outward world through phone photography since the first cameraphones emerged on the market in the 2000s. The intimate framings and moments-before-action that are now captured everyday across the world are often ignored, cast aside in favour of the best pictures and action shots. The exhibition at the Tate offers a new generation the opportunity to re-engage with these snapshots of moments often easily forgotten, drawing parallels to work such as Elsa Dorfman's polaroid portraiture of the 1980s. Many emerging artists now choose to work in the expansive, unlimited medium of phone photography: most recently seen in Charlotte Prodger's Turner Prize-winning film *BRIDGIT*, shot on the artist's iPhone. Both Prodger's and Bonnard's work, although made centuries apart, provide the reassurance that sometimes the best art does not show the perfect scene, but the one before or just after the action.

Nuala Burnett is a final year Geography student at Worcester College.









ALEX WILLIS

BERLIN [2017]

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LESBIAN PERSPECTIVE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The lesbian perspective in contemporary art must be extricated and distinguished from the lesbian subject in contemporary art.

It is not sufficient for lesbians to be painted and portrayed in art as we are perceived by men; the lesbian as the object of male desire and fantasy presents the very antithesis of the lesbian perspective.

The lesbian perspective can also not be satisfied by an increasing obsession with 'queering' artistic spaces; an enterprise which is at risk of being repossessed by cisgender and heterosexual artists who are profiting from a popular appetite for LGBT representation, but crucially representation which is palatable to their cisgender and heterosexual audiences.

This allows for cisgender and heterosexual artists to undeservedly benefit from strides which were painfully and persistently fought for by LGBT people themselves.

It is important to acknowledge that it is this inauthentic 'LGBT' perspective that is often favoured at the expense of true LGBT representation.

The lesbian perspective can only be witnessed when contemporary art is created, curated and presented by lesbians themselves.

It is easy to compartmentalise and isolate lesbian art as a separate genre, much as lesbian film and literature so often is.

This only serves to seriously undervalue its importance on a broader scale.

While I would be more than content to exclusively be exposed to lesbian art and am certainly proud to think of lesbian art as a wonderful, rich entity in itself, it is also vital to acknowledge the ways in which the lesbian perspective seeps into every aspect of art and the world itself.

The lesbian perspective is not simply a perspective that (rightly) worships Doc Martens and short hair.

The lesbian perspective is the only perspective which truly and exclusively centres women in every capacity.

It is a perspective which is not pervaded and tainted by misogyny and fetishisation. It is not a portrayal of lesbians as the butt of the joke or as a token to satisfy a half-heartedly progressive audience.

It is a perspective which celebrates the beauty of women and womanhood, a beauty that is not to be conflated with beauty as understood by men or within the framework of male desire.

It is a perspective which offers some recluse from a heteronormative and misogynistic understanding of womanhood. It is a perspective which honours and reveres and dignifies the beauty of women in their many complexities.

The lesbian perspective may indeed be the only hope for true emancipation for women in art, and it is thus a matter of urgency that contemporary art and its audience comes to embrace and prioritise it.

FLORENCE HEYWORTH

Florence Heyworth is a first year History student at St. Hugh's College

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