

BPA//Exhibition 2021

01	Kévin Blinderman	by Bettina Steinbrügge
02	Sofia Defino Leiby	by Georgia Sagri
03	Mooni Perry	by AFSAR
04	Shirin Sabahi	by Joanna Pope
05	Jana Schulz	by Bob Kil
06	Joshua Schwebel	by Joseph P. Henry
07	Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw	by Mitch Speed
08	Xiaopeng Zhou	by Clemens Krümmel

Somewhere between Kevin Rainbow and Hard Boy

Some music and a dog pacer in a room. I hear: *somewhere over the rainbow, way up high, and the dreams that you dream of, once in a lullaby...* Is it a performance? Everything here hinges on ambiguity... what is a dog pacer anyway? Visually, a dog treadmill hardly differs from a human treadmill. This is not surprising at all. After all, it serves the same purpose as a device for bipeds. The biggest difference is the addition of short panels on the left and right sides. These give your friend a sense of security and safety. A dog treadmill is equipped with a training computer so that master and mistress can always keep an eye on the mileage. The screen is timed, ensuring easy operation. The pacer (aka sculpture) stands in the space like a late Duchampian joke, befitting our age of self-care and self-optimization perfectly... only here it is for dogs, whatever that means.

I can't help but relate this device to myself, having totally missed it at the beginning of the pandemic only to rediscover it later at a friend's private gym. Nevertheless, the fetish in the room seems enormously strange, especially through the protective barrier, which in me evokes not only protection but also prison and confinement. Is it an image for the pandemic, social distancing, and the growing importance of digital space? As I wrote earlier, it isn't the sculpture alone in the room; rather our senses are also touched by music, which has an impact on the overall scenario. Kévin Blinderman works with sound and music, with the viewer's movements and impressions in space, with what happens when different sensory impressions—the sculpture as Hardboy, or the sound of a familiar melody—collide and evoke different reactions simultaneously. How do we construct reality? How do we construct situations?

The song we are listening to is *Kevin Rainbow* by Bulma, composed using *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, one of the most famous songs of the late 1930s and a classic from music history. It was written for the musical film *The Wizard of Oz* and sung by Judy Garland. Part A begins with “somewhere over the rainbow...” and then proceeds to describe a fairy-tale-like situation, such as a land like the one in the lullaby, where blue birds fly, the skies are always blue, or dreams come true. In part B, the singer describes wishing for something one day and it being true when she wakes up. The song is about the hope that one day the bad times will be over, a hope with which everyone can identify. This sentiment stays in sharp contrast to the dog pacer, this tool for self-optimization that blinks in the white cube, slowly moving in circles, staying very sure of itself and its purpose in this whole thing we might call a neoliberal society. Looking at the advertisement for the dog pacer, however, we learn the following: “The dogPACER dog treadmill is the solution to our schedules and the weather is never a problem. In studies with over one thousand dogs, we have found that training on the dogPACER treadmill is very good for the dog's cardiovascular system as well as building a happy and balanced nature.” Maybe neoliberalism is good after all.

But let's think a bit about the title *Hardboy*. The musician Frawley wrote a song about it:

Sometimes I think I want a bad boy

Wake up like, woop, not a good choice

...

So let's see how hard, how hard you actually are

When I leave

'Cause you think you're such a hard boy, baby

And that's just the fix I'm into lately

But I know I won't feel this way come tomorrow

So let's see how hard, how hard you actually are

When I leave

Frawley compares the Hardboy with the bad boy, the guy who is desirable because he is not nice to you. If one digs deeper and googles the word, the following explanations of the term appear the most: Hardboy is the opposite of a Softboy but also different from a Fuckboy. The Hardboy doesn't appeal to emotions or give mixed signals or sleep around with other people. Instead, the Hardboy is much more straight forward, he guns for only one girl or boy at a time but actually cares and may even commit to a relationship. Everything about him is hard from playing hard to get, hard looks, hard swearing, to always having a hard-on for you, he is the epitome of hard. The only downfall is that he may constantly have a boner because he likes your butt too much, which makes walking around with him difficult since he has to hide his hard-on all the time. And actually, those hard boys we are always talking about, half of them, they're just playing gangster.

I am still puzzled by the contradictions of this sculpture: its title, the softness of the music and its long history. For Kévin Blinderman, Bulma, a French DJ and producer who lives in Barcelona, has brought the song into our modern times, blending it with his diverse influences such as Grime, Metal, and Jersey Club to make a viral remix. Maybe this is the starting point for understanding what is actually going on. Something from the past lands in our time, and while listening to it we realize that reality changed tremendously, that the notion of the body changed tremendously. It is far closer to the treadmill than to the Romanticism we see in advertising and other mass culture with its fantasies about a life that has ceased to exist or never existed at all. In this context, the choice of the original music is interesting, since the text for *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* was formulated neutrally even then, and it can be interpreted unchanged by both men and women. In almost Victorian times, in this cultural war, this struggle for the power of definition over one's own body, which currently determines our lives, one looks back and finds something that propagates openness, humanity, and confidence. The hippie account of the rainbow and the queer account of the Hardboy seem to culminate in the hyper-electric dog pacer. As a signifier, this sculpture contains and compresses within itself a whole

social, emotional, aesthetic, and physical experience. The dog pacer performs even if there is no one on it, even if no one is in the space. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy that acts itself out. The empty center on the machine is filled by the viewer, who suddenly puts himself in it, following the traces of an autobiographical self in this complex and strange situation, which is so contradictory, diffuse, and unclear, as only life itself can be. Meaning is hard to achieve. What is decisive is the experimental character of Blinderman's works, which actually see artworks only as traces or documentations of experimental arrangements. The industrially made work—in sound as in sculpture—reminds one of Duchamp, but a Duchamp that was embraced by the digital age. The body seems out of sync with the machine; discomfort arises, like love and violence are coming together in order to create, in a roundabout way, something that reminds one of tenderness.

Bettina Steinbrügge is the director and the curator of the Hamburg Kunstverein and professor of art theory at the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg. From 2007 – 2017 she has been a member of the programming team for Forum Expanded / International Film Festival in Berlin.

Kévin Blinderman is a French artist based between Berlin and Paris. He recently opened a solo exhibition at Confort Moderne, France in 2021 and participated in *No Dandy, No Fun*, a group exhibition at Bern Kunsthalle in 2020. He will open an exhibition at Keur Paris in autumn 2021.

Poster Kévin Blinderman, *Hardboy*, 2021.

BPA// Berlin program for artists

www.berlinprogramforartists.org

01 Kévin Blinderman

02 Sofia Defino Leiby

03 Mooni Perry

04 Shirin Sabahi

05 Jana Schulz

06 Joshua Schwebel

07 Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw

08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by Bettina Steinbrügge



BPA// Exhibition 2021

How Come the Painting Doesn't Fall?

When it comes to hanging a painting, you will definitely need a hammer. Any hammer will do the job, but some prefer to use a small framer's hammer, as it is less likely to bend your nails. Most prefer a traditional claw hammer that has some weight to it. Weight helps you drive the nails in more quickly. An occasional bent nail is a minor inconvenience. A good tape measure is also invaluable. Cheap tape measures will bend and jam—spend a few extra to get a sturdy one. Some people can sense how level a painting is by pure instinct. I'm not sure this is the way to go with Sofia Defino Leiby's paintings, therefore, I recommend you to have a level handy at all times. The level has to be one of the greatest inventions of the last millennium. Several years ago, I purchased a laser level. The laser creates a line that extends the length of the level, which somehow makes you feel certain and high-tech. I've found that I end up using the laser function quite a lot but an old-fashioned way will do the job just as perfect. What you must not forget is the pencil and the hangers that come in several forms and types. Painting hooks are available at most hardware and home improvement stores. The variety they carry is okay. Most spaces nowadays come with drywalls or thick cement brick walls, therefore you will definitely need another type of hanging system. Most paintings will come wired on the back, ready to hang. However, it's always a good idea to verify that the hardware Leiby provided is sturdy and well-mounted. Her paintings may not be presented in a traditional frame, or the mounting may not work with wire and hooks. In those cases, or if the piece is heavier than you expected, you may need a heavy-duty drywall anchor in order to mount the piece. A number of different types are available. I prefer the expanding metal screws that are driven into the wall with a hammer and then screwed in, to expand a kind of flange behind the drywall. Plastic drywall anchors and metal drywall screw mounts are also available, but I haven't found these to be as stable as the expanding screws. Some of the most difficult hangings have been on stone or block mantles. My advice in this kind of situation is to get professional installation help. These installations can be very tricky, and a professional will have the experience and tools requisite to handle almost any scenario.

Immediately we realize that this object called 'painting' is not part of the wall, it is hanging on the wall. By that simple move of hanging it creates an illusion that it shares similar strength as the wall and the context of the building that supports it. Gravity here is presented as a supportive phenomenon for the frame and this possibility for this object to lean on a surface and maintain its stability. It suggests that a complete world could exist within the support system that holds it, effortless and unquestioned.

What a great thing to not be productive with painting.

There is a lot of training involved for such a *sin* to occur, especially when Sofia Leiby insists on using painting as a navigator's tools—sextant, compass, calipers, rule—navigation can determine exact location and purpose. If the navigator is also proficient in survival, then it could grant them some sense of safety. By taking careful measurements, a navigator could determine their position on a map or any chart and the time of day. The role of a navigator involves flexibility, adjustment, moving and in moments of the changing weather they need to predict the shifts and effects on a voyage, keeping detailed notes of the journey and able to deduce any unnecessary accident or misfortune while out there, in the unknown. The role of painting or—to phrase it better—the role of the act of painting is to plot the voyage's course, to determine Leiby's exact location out in the open sea of signs, textures, materials, expressions, extreme sensations, passing by, ephemeral and unfamiliar voices. Any change of weather might affect her voyage. Without painting, she would



Sofia Defino Leiby, *Lucky Seven*, 2018
Watercolor, collage, mixed media on 30 x 40 cm

probably turn into a lost ship with no sense of horizon, unprepared for the harsh waves.

To do so, to navigate, let us assume that Leiby creates her own rules to allow us into her travel system. She presents us with the location of the horizon, which changes in each painting. The light is flat, it is the white well-prepared soft surface of canvas or wood. It is the handmade fabrics from Portugal, the antique wallpapers from Paris. We already know that the sun is above our heads, every little detail is burned out and what is left for us to look at are the billboards, advertisements of city centers, rude slogans, tags, marks—including hers—on the street. By admitting that her eyes are burned with info, the paintings give us hours, which can happen during short rests of our gaze on any random detail. Leiby studies the skies, the ocean currents of the progress' leftovers in her path, she charts how this depression feels. Her paintings are not craving to embody the extraction's power and the frame as is. The ambiguity of her paintings is that they invite us to see the precarity of the paintings' rectangular mid-size shape; they fit perfectly in hand luggage, amongst t-shirts, lingerie, and dirty clothes. They don't ask us to look at them, they ask us to hold them

like a book, to track down the navigation tasks, the list of groceries, the note, stuck by a magnet on a fridge, dropped from a plastic bag, found on the street. Her paintings are not welcoming simply the act of representing an already digested viewership. They are dizzy, slippery steps of linguistic cross games. When the tongue is strict on finishing a sentence it can certainly complete paintings. To hang out, to stroll, to run away, to return with no logical reason, *ritournelle*, to find the meeting point but being completely lost on random streets that you have no concern to know anything about. A catharsis of tourism, and its privilege to access what is already known, aiming to become the master of survival, which reveals the desperation to touch something familiar. What an oxymoron, to make paintings with objects, words and places that you would love to be part of but stumble upon the syntax of their specific articulation.

Photographs glued on canvases, plastic pigments imitating street signs and slogans, landscapes that situate the thing and the place in conflict. The dream and the real are part of a distant narration in which situations are painted as if they are already in the past and forgotten. Remembering a city but still living in it. Forgetting a place that you were for so long inhabiting, rejecting it by trying to recall. The word and the sentence in a book. The book sometimes has blue lines, or it is blank. Perhaps the words are under the bottom of a date. It is a calendar of unknown listed tasks, most of them unresolved.

Is it a scribble, a mumbling or a humming painting? To not speak the language is to abandon all the standards of communication. She doesn't speak Greek and she stayed in Athens for a few months at λη[matter]HYLE where she frequently returns. She doesn't speak German and she insists on living in Berlin, to explore the surprising paradox of insisting to speak through the most conventional medium of our times.

How come the painting doesn't fall?

Georgia Sagri (b. 1979, Athens) is an artist who works in performance, sculpture, video and digital media, installation, writing, and drawing. Her book *Stage of Recovery* was published by Divided Publishing in Spring of 2021. She is a tenured professor of Performance at the School of Fine Arts, Athens, and founded λη[matter]HYLE, Athens.

Sofia Defino Leiby has shown her work in solo and two-person exhibitions at Page (NYC), λη[matter]HYLE (Athens), Kimmerich (Berlin), and Clifton Benevento (New York). Her writing has been published in *Texte zur Kunst*, *Spike Art Quarterly*, and *BOMB*. Defino Leiby has been included in group exhibitions at Sweetwater (Berlin), The Green Gallery (Milwaukee), Springsteen (Baltimore) and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery (NYC), among others.

BPA// Berlin program for artists

www.berlinprogramforartists.org

- 01 Kévin Blinderman
- 02 Sofia Defino Leiby
- 03 Mooni Perry
- 04 Shirin Sabahi
- 05 Jana Schulz
- 06 Joshua Schwebel
- 07 Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw
- 08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by Georgia Sagri



BPA// Exhibition 2021

- 01 Kévin Blinderman
- 02 Sofia Defino Leiby
- 03 Mooni Perry**
- 04 Shirin Sabahi
- 05 Jana Schulz
- 06 Joshua Schwebel
- 07 Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw
- 08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by AFSAR

H: It is sexist to call a woman *unclean*. You refer to the defined unclean ones as the *falling beings*. The Chinese word ‘墮落’ (lit. *falling falling*) is an example of a common style of word-formation where two synonyms are coupled. ‘Fall(ing) not once but twice,’ as is sung in the first part of your video.

It is necessary to reveal that falling is often judged as willing to fall. The one who is falling must have taken a leap herself, thus here you use the word ‘jump,’ adding another layer to this discussion. From the designated fall to the abandon of jumping.

M: Falling has symbolic meaning in this project. Under patriarchy, women are considered as ‘fallen beings,’ a step down from ‘standard’ humans, but women who are defined as ‘unclean’ (whatever that means) fall one more time. This subject doesn’t belong to any category (not human nor woman), but therefore can approach ‘the Real’ by Lacan’s definition. A being who is ‘willing to fall’ is in this monstrous gap (neither A nor B), and when the subject cannot be grasped by a language (category), people feel uncomfortable. However, in consequence, new ethics (the Truth) can arise (jump).

I have been researching the history of selling sex (the sex industry) in Korea, which has complex frames within it. In my early stage of research—from the Joseon Dynasty to Japanese colonization, the USA military army, sex tourism encouraged by the government, cybersex trafficking etc.—the notion of Necropolitics (who can be dead and replaced?) was used as a critical lens and this will be discussed in the third chapter of my video.

H: In your telling, in the process of falling, the woman starts to jump through time and space. Her body deforms, she appears in other dimensions and she is seeking... thus falling (and jumping in your work) indicates transformative potential. The falling and the portals become viable tunnels through which the defined ‘Other’ revives. Her continuous search in different spaces entails the awareness of her subjectivity. Hence the story of a tainted falling woman is, in fact, a story of resistance and restoration. Could you elaborate on this inversive power that your work is devoted to?

M: When you fall into the ground what’s the first thing you can do? Probably try to go up again to where you thought you belonged. But what if somebody says “what’s so wrong about being unclean/falling?” In this sense, projecting the binary gaze of either ‘clean’ or ‘dirty’ onto somebody doesn’t function anymore, hence this ‘in-appropriation’ gains the power to reverse the discourse.

Filmmaker and feminist scholar Trinh T. Minh-ha conceived the concept ‘Inappropriate/d Other’ to question the paradigm. According to Trinh the term can be read in two ways: as someone who you cannot appropriate, and as someone who is inappropriate. This notion set up a dimension that indicates simultaneous development, neither linearly nor successively.

Thus, many different possibilities of Other and Otherness exist within the Inappropriate/d Other.

H: The unclean woman has been configured as *Binlang Xishi* (lit. *betel nut beauty*), which is also the title of your video. Since 2002 the Taiwan local government started to regulate Binlang business. Here the discussion of clean/unclean is entangled with the hearsay and myths of Binlang, as well as socio-historical transformation in South East Asia.

M: Betel nut is an intriguing topic that delivers many social/historical stories. Betel nut chewing was defined as unclean/uncivilized when Taiwan was colonized by Japan, as it has also been in many other South East Asian countries. It was considered ‘green gold’ in the 80s and 90s in Taiwan due to its high profit, but the Taiwan government started to impose regulations on it for a number of reasons. Firstly, for ecological purposes. There are too many Betel nut trees to control and they harm the other agriculture fields. Secondly, chewing Betel nut causes mouth cancer. And lastly, the business surrounding Binlang Xishi is a breeding ground for sexual crime and makes the city aesthetic unclean.

Through three chapters in my video, I want to demonstrate the empty space of discourses around ‘unclean subjects,’ between projecting them as tragedy and interpreting them as empowered women who control their sex autonomously, resisting being considered as victims.

H: I find it is very intriguing that you deploy the film *Green Snake*, an interpretation of the Chinese folk tale, *The Legend of the White Snake*. The narrative of your work portrays the Binlang Xishi in Taiwan as a reincarnate of the green snake. Thus, the story of Binlang, symbolic of love between spouse and brothers, is merging with the story of *Green Snake*, symbolic of love beyond species and gender.

M: In the 70s, Hong Kong’s film industry often benchmarked Hollywood mainstream films, and action and romance were the significant keywords of Hollywood. Interestingly, Hong Kong films adopted them as martial arts and 異類相愛 (the romance between human and non-human). Heterogeneous love, in particular, was one of Hong Kong’s critical cultural codes. ‘Non-humans’ are often represented as ghosts, Taoist fairies or even spirits of animals and plants. They are 超人間 (the beings above human), or 脫人間 (beings who were once human but not anymore), or 不及人間 (beings who are not qualified as human).¹

One of the most well-known classical narratives in Chinese-speaking countries called *White Snake* is a good example of the last one (不及人間). It’s a story about two sisters who were once a white snake and green snake respectively, but train themselves to become human beings. The film *Green Snake* (1993) is a variant of *White Snake* that tells a story from the green snake’s perspective. In *Green Snake* I found many homosexual romantic elements between White Snake and Green Snake rather than

¹ *A Chinese Traditional Narrative in Hong Kong Movies: A Comparative Research with Focus on “Madame White Snake(白蛇傳, 1962)” and “Green Snake(青蛇, 1993)”*, Moon Hyunsun(문현선), 2007.

the love between White Snake and her male partner. Time and space also seem very vague in the whole story. But most interestingly, unlike White Snake, who has been trying so hard to become a real human, Green Snake always resists by staying between zones (neither human nor snake).

In many ways I am inspired by *Green Snake*, so I wanted to create a short clip of the ‘After story’ of *Green Snake* in the second chapter of my video.

Hanwen Zhang is a researcher and curator based in Berlin, Germany. She received her MA from University of the Arts Berlin. She is currently in Seoul as the research fellow of Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea.

Mooni Perry is a Korean artist living and working in Germany and Seoul. She received her MA in 2016 from the Royal College of Art, London. She was awarded the Ars Viva prize this year and will exhibit at Brücke Museum, Berlin this September and Kai Art Center, Tallinn, 2022. She will also have a solo show this December at CR Collective, Seoul, and at Kumho Museum, Seoul in 2022.

Asian Feminist Studio for Art and Research (AFSAR) is founded by Hanwen Zhang and Mooni Perry. It is a place for archiving contemporary discourses and research and its online platform—launching at the end of 2021—serves as a decentralized virtual space where seemingly different imaginations can meet. AFSAR is funded by Stiftung Kunstfonds and Arts Council Korea.

Poster Mooni Perry, *Green Snake & White Snake*, Binlang Xishi, with Uki and Luu Qoo, 2021.

BPA// Berlin program for artists
www.berlinprogramforartists.org



- 01 Kévin Blinderman
- 02 Sofia Defino Leiby
- 03 Mooni Perry
- 04 Shirin Sabahi**
- 05 Jana Schulz
- 06 Joshua Schwebel
- 07 Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw
- 08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by **Joanna Pope**

My boyfriend once lived in what I thought of as an inexplicably special block of flats in Berlin. Wrapped in an unassuming pebbledash and shaped like an undotted question mark when seen from above, the building embraced a shaded cul-de-sac courtyard, while the apartments on the exterior side peered through a perimeter of trees into the spacious yards of the neighboring blocks. A grassy patch hosted modest garden beds and wooden benches where residents took long calls, or children played hide and seek. It was an urban pastoral idyll, the kind I couldn't believe existed, all watched over by packs of squirrels, birds, rats, and in summer, surprisingly large butterflies. To be clear, my boyfriend hasn't moved. Things are just very different now.

Is there one of those oddly-specific German words to describe the particular misfortune of a real estate giant descending upon your building, and being unable to escape from its claws? Perhaps there isn't need for a new one, since, by no accident, *Aufstockung*, the word for the construction of a roof extension—currently ongoing over the building where my boyfriend lives—is also the word for capital accumulation.

Recently, I left my boyfriend's place and, taking a different route, passed by the south-facing side of the building where construction was almost complete. Looking at the facade, I became disoriented. The concrete balconies with yellow railings were now a uniform gray and the pebbledash had disappeared beneath layers of white plaster. What brought the new color palette together was a gray-and-white apparition, perching, UFO-like, upon the building. The roof extension, with its floor-to-ceiling windows, began to appear to me as if it had always been there. A month later writing this, I can't remember the building before.

Leaving the real estate market for a minute, we might understand the phantom of the roof extension as a relative of that grand architectural statement of the building *on* a plinth. Mies van der Rohe had quite the penchant for plinths. By placing a building on a pedestal, one elevates but also frames and isolates it. The result is an architectonic form that does not dissolve into the growth dependency of urban sprawl, but limits itself to the bounded space of its socle. While the building-on-plinth does so explicitly, and with rather unusual effects, the roof extension implicitly takes (and subordinates) the structure below as its foundation.

With this in mind, I return to the foreign form that has landed on my boyfriend's building. Like many of its kind in Berlin, this *Aufstockung* does not draw attention to itself, or its position within the forces of financialized urbanization. Quite the opposite: it wants to blend in, and goes to great lengths to do so. By remaking the facade of an entire block in its own image, the new floor materializes inconspicuously above the eye level, as if it had been there all along. This disappearance plays out formally, but also at the level of numbers. Extending a building by a floor or two is statistically counted together with other conversion measures, such as filling up unused plots between buildings or converting attics to living spaces. In 2018, more than two thousand of these measures were authorized in Berlin, but no city office can or will tell you how many conversions were

of which kind, or how many were speculative investments that dramatically upended the lives of the tenants.

Shirin Sabahi's series of sculptures *Plinth* (2021) works precisely against this disappearing act; scale models of archetypical buildings that could receive roof extensions have become plinths. Sitting atop each building-plinth, original sculptures by Berlin-based artists Andrea Canepa, Angela Bulloch, Camilla Steinum, Ellinor Aurora Aasgaard, Marina Pinsky, and Saādane Afif reveal to us what roof extensions really are—elevated objects of desire that exist separately from and yet depend on the structure below. These sculptures undo, if only temporarily, the cunning of streamlined roof extensions that dissolve in paperwork and vanish in plain sight by swallowing whole the building they take as their host.



Shirin Sabahi with Angela Bulloch, *Plinth (Angela)*, 2021. Cardboard, wood, 163 × 50 × 36 cm.

The critical potential of Sabahi's sculptures are not unlike the self-limiting plinths of Mies van der Rohe. Sabahi and her artist collaborators jolt us out of the architectural stupor of capitalist realism, humoring the possible emancipated and emancipatory occupation of the negative space above the roof. In evoking this negligible form of urban expansion in sculptural language, Sabahi points out an important precondition for a critical perspective, namely, an awareness of one's own position. (My boyfriend agrees.)

It is tempting to read these sculptures through another fantastical scheme that also explores the plinth-like possibilities of buildings. In 1972, artist Zoe Zenghelis and architect Rem Koolhaas collaborated on *The City of the Captive Globe* to imagine urbanization "as a collection of different, and competing, built ideologies."¹ The result is a delicately-drawn rendering of a fictional Manhattan grid, with each block featuring a base topped with a different avant-garde architectural vision. To architectural theorist Tahl Kaminer, the drawing, presented in an axonometric view, "resembles an art gallery exhibition, in which the diverse artefacts, 'architectural sculptures,' are all singular objects."² Sabahi's sculptures embody this art-architectural parallel. But the comparison is most instructive when underlining the viewing experience specific to each work.

¹ Aureli, Pier Vittorio. *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. MIT press, 2011, p. 22.

² Kaminer, Tahl. "Von Ledoux bis Mies: The Modern Plinth as Isolating Element." *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly* 23.1, 2019, p. 25.

The City of the Captive Globe is a series of drawings fixed in the god's eye view. The *Plinth* series is in the spatial realm—objects that can be examined from various angles. The uniform yet varied building-plinths defy a common ground, or a height limit, standing instead at different levels. The plinths and their curious hats aside, one pre-fabricated vision is located outside and framed within the gallery's only uncovered window. This framing reminds us that the way we see a city depends on where we stand—physically in the gallery space, and economically, socially, and culturally in the world outside. This last sculpture, however grand and real, might escape you. But only if you aren't paying attention.



Zoe Zenghelis and Rem Koolhaas of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, *The City of the Captive Globe*, 1972. Gouache and graphite on paper, 32 × 44 cm.

Joanna Pope is a writer and independent researcher with interests in political aesthetics, communities, and de-growth. She studied comparative literature and art history at Freie Universität Berlin.

Shirin Sabahi is an artist whose projects often engage with objects and places as their protagonists and within an extended timeline. Working with and around moving images, her body of work contains various by-products—e.g. props, costumes, and prints—that sometimes come alongside or in place of the actual film.

Poster Shirin Sabahi with Andrea Canepa and Saādane Afif, *Plinth (Andrea)* (left), *Plinth (Saādane)* (right), 2021. Cardboard, wood, clay, metal, sponge rubber, paint. 140 × 47 × 31 cm and 113 × 31 × 26 cm



BPA// Exhibition 2021

Rose tinted semitransparent masking shielding visor

Deep illuminating electrifying eyes

Wiry armpit hair

Dripping maple syrup

Things in slo mo

Sound muted

Colours softly desaturated

A handsome ginger cat wrapped its tail around my shin

serenading its love and expecting mine in return. Are we

good, do you like that, how about this. The cat brushed its

soft hairy cheek against my bare knee. Weeping willows

hunched over, tickling my nose. Hummingbirds whirled

around my mouth, their tiny beaks ajar spitting out honey

on to the tip of my tongue. The kindness. A flamingo

appeared from the trees. Its walk bouncy, its presence

sunny, its posture grand. I straightened my back.

That's it, Bebe, feel that strength of your spine and lift the

crown of your head. That's it, Bebe, hold it tight, bring

those delicious ribs together, knees open and knees closed,

let the hills of your feet meet, let the muscles of your thighs

make a pearl, you are a pearl.

Your sugar free alcohol free body gives me a psychosomatic

headache. Your happy shiny Yoga leggings make the queue

in the supermarket even less bearable. Your smile around

the outer corner of your eyes is dipped in mushroom relief

eye gel. Your face is soaked in retinol. Your fondness for

your country takes up much space in our shared house

making the rest of us squeeze in a bunk bed. Shouldn't you

enclose the flag of your country in a cardboard box. Gaffer

tape it. There are two types of people in this world. People

who celebrate their birthday every year. People who don't.

People who are drenched in their own sorrow pitying

themselves. People who get up and continue to walk.

Shouldn't you stop asking me where I am really from. Like I

said many times before I am a cocktail. I am an amateur

vegan alcoholic who loves you hard at all times at all costs.

Indeed it is another airless hot morning.

The climate is climbing. A global problem.

We are ageing. Another global problem.

We fill our pockets with coins.

We hand them out to those who ask for spare change.

Our sins wash away.

Even steven

Give and take

Are you happy now

Bob Kil writes and performs.
Bob Kil lives in Berlin.

Jana Schulz is a Berlin-based artist. She received her MFA in 2018 from the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig. Recent exhibitions, screenings, and residencies include Center for Contemporary Photography Melbourne (2020), Eigen+Art Lab Berlin (2020), Kunsthalle Bremerhaven (2020), Rencontres Paris/Berlin (2020), and the International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York (2019). Schulz has an upcoming show at Briefing Room, Brussels in 2022.

Poster Jana Schulz, *Home Series. Ashley Temba*, 2021, video still

BPA// Berlin program for artists
www.berlinprogramforartists.org

- 01 Kévin Blinderman
- 02 Sofia Defino Leiby
- 03 Mooni Perry
- 04 Shirin Sabahi
- 05 Jana Schulz**
- 06 Joshua Schwebel
- 07 Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw
- 08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by **Bob Kil**



Return, Address

When in 2005 Andrea Fraser wrote the essay “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique” in *Artforum*, she proposed a shift in the understanding of the art institution as an oppressive domain of praxis to an autopoietic generator of critique; a shift, arguably, from the material to the discursive.¹ Fraser’s text was its own kind of domestication, historically enshrining institutional critique in the same moment that artists associated with relational aesthetics seemed to give up on the ‘critique’ component entirely. But the IC torch still burns, albeit with a different kind of flame, in the work of Joshua Schwebel. Operating on the entirety of post-recession artistic production, Schwebel induces processes of labor, capital, and history otherwise too easily naturalized by cultural institutions. Schwebel has in his work inverted an exhibition budget to recompense unpaid interns, counterfeited an expensive museum’s admission tags, and streamed a worker’s writing of a grant application online as if it were experimental performance.

I always laugh at Schwebel’s schemes, but he never so much as chuckles when describing them. What Schwebel takes seriously is not just the political and material truths of cultural enterprise, but the affects they generate. In *Reserve*, his most antagonistic work to date, the artist engaged in a furious dispute over a regional Berlin museum’s handling of Nazi artifacts, and its unwillingness to problematize such handling. It’s ok, Schwebel implies, to resent if not hate the (non-profit) hand that feeds you.

The emotional byproducts of making art in and for institutions motivate *Sinister*, a 2008-12 work reformatted for the KW exhibition. A slide projection and audio recordings explain the story: while finishing his MFA at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in 2008, Schwebel created *Presentation*, wherein he constantly talked up to peers and teachers his ongoing work on an enormous sculpture he would submit for his thesis. At term’s end, evaluators and colleagues instead walked into an entirely empty gallery and Schwebel nearly failed his degree. He met with the school’s Director of Graduate Studies, the artist Bruce Barber, who decided to pass Schwebel but requested at least some kind of documentation for the thesis. Schwebel refused and left Barber’s office, but not before swiping a black leather glove that belonged to the professor. Via one of Schwebel’s colleagues, the object eventually wound its way back to Barber’s home, but upon encountering a black leather glove at random two years later, Schwebel decided to return to his thievery. With all the dedication of a newspaper-baiting criminal, Schwebel continually sent a black leather glove each month to Barber over the next three years. He wrapped every specimen in brown paper and omitted any return address, until 60 gloves in total had arrived at Barber’s home.

There may have been some art historical significance to the glove: both Symbolists and Surrealists, for example, utilized gloves as metaphors for erotic desire and the elasticity of the body. On its own terms, the glove simultaneously signifies and negates the “artist’s touch,” that index of sin

¹ See Andrea Fraser, “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,” *Artforum* 44, no. 1, September 2005. <https://www.artforum.com/print/200507/from-the-critique-of-institutions-to-an-institution-of-critique-9407>.

gular aesthetic interiority long promoted in modernism and then deconstructed by neo-Dada and conceptual projects (the same projects taught and honored at a school like NSCAD). But Schwebel claims to have possessed no rigorous intent when first pilfering Barber’s glove; taking it from Barber’s office was a pure act of malice. *Sinister* (the title even *enjoys* the work’s criminality) continued an earlier 2008 project titled *Plagiarism*, wherein Schwebel, pressured by NSCAD to make better use of his allotted studio space, thieved at first books and then random objects from Barber’s office. Used yogurt cups, loafers, mugs, a gimmicky reproduction of the Mona Lisa as a cat, and other miscellanea found their way into the hands of local curators and collectors, each certified with a bureaucratic deed of gift. What *Sinister* and *Plagiarism* perform is a real frustration with the terms of art school pedagogy, a dissatisfaction with its beholdenness to both advanced notions of artistic practice and the blunt imperatives of institutional economies.



No affect is so singular, however: every act of antagonism is also an act of desire. Reimagining *Sinister* some ten years later for KW, Schwebel includes recordings of an imagined missive written by Barber. “My name is Bruce Barber. I am an interdisciplinary artist, PhD, and Professor Emeritus of NSCAD University in Halifax, Canada,” he begins, “where I have lived and taught for the past fifty years after migrating from Auckland, New

² See Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jonathan House, New York: The Unconscious in Translation, 2016.

Zealand, where I gained some renown as an early practitioner of performance and action art many years earlier.” Schwebel cast several New Zealand male speakers to play Barber, each allowed to fabricate specific lines in the monologue as indicated by Schwebel. “We had a meeting in my office wherein I reiterated my position that it was important for him to foreground his trans identity,” ‘Bruce’ dryly explains. “Why did you believe this was important?” Schwebel prompts his Kiwi surrogates to answer. “I suppose I thought at the time it would help to ground his work,” one speaker improvises. Another skips the question entirely.

Sinister then moves from a record of oedipal conflict, the annoyed student stealing something from the imperious advisor, to a document of loss. The gloves are Schwebel’s parting gifts to Barber, “enigmatic signifiers” (to quote Jean Laplanche), that gesture at correspondence and hint at touch without ever establishing communication. For Laplanche, enigmatic signifiers are those incomprehensible messages or images internalized during infancy that never get explained later in life;² in their obscurity, they form the desirous nature of the unconscious. Read through *Sinister*, that unconscious is distinctly *pedagogical*. At the end of his learning, Schwebel switches the instructional roles, relaying information to the professor but never explaining anything. This position of mastery however cannot be maintained: Schwebel, now an established artist in Berlin, can only simulate the teacher. He fictionalizes Barber, reiterates lack, ropes in any New Zealand man who will do; Barber is the former mentor and, psychoanalytically speaking, the absent father. What Schwebel was looking for, it seems, was a response. That’s the thing about institutions: you hate to love them.

Joseph P. Henry is PhD candidate in the art history program at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Joshua Schwebel is a Canadian conceptual artist. Selected solo exhibitions include *The Tenant* (forthcoming at Centre Clark, Montreal), *Solvent* (Or Gallery, Vancouver, 2019), and *A Dream in Which I am You* (Fonderie Darling, Montreal, 2018). Residencies include Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), Rupert (Vilnius), and air351 (Lisbon). He was shortlisted for the Berlin Art Prize in 2019.

Poster Joshua Schwebel, *Sinister* (ongoing collection of found black leather gloves), 2021.



BPA// Exhibition 2021

Thinking about Adam's work, I found myself sitting at the edge of the world. Which is really all I want from art. To be pulled to the lip of a precipice. Winds of the unknown drifting up, creeping into my nostrils. Soft vertigo setting in.

I'm working from certain assumptions. For instance, that most of what we call experience would be better described as the processing of synthetic signals:

Window
Storefront
Letter
Word
Building
Essay
Artwork

You know how when we're very small, the world is this throbbing, immanent swarm? Shapes and colors, pressures and weights, smells and sounds, at once forming and tearing apart your sense of things, like a terrifying and exhilarating infant sublime. Then things start acting, talking, morphing. I don't mean that abstract concept where objects have slumbering consciousnesses that we can't see or feel. I mean silhouettes becoming actual nerve-fraying monsters in the dark. Bedroom shadows cloaking hell-sent villains. Doorways egressing into who knows where. Surfaces—wood grain, rust patterns, plant veins—growing faces.

As time moves on, you start learning to use things, start learning how to move through a world of signs. Start learning to produce. Start learning *how to learn* for christ's sake. There's nothing you can do about it. That's just life. Everything becomes usable.

But fuck that. I want bewilderment back. As a matter of fact, I, you, we, deserve it. We deserve to have at least some of the child brain and heart reinstated within our petrified adult carapaces. To have our dried out eyes replaced with fresh ones, like sticky glowing marbles.

From what I remember, Adam's earliest sculptures were about the size of Kleenex boxes. They were assemblages of both actual and facsimile building materials, which under his treatment had this halfway cartoony look. You could imagine a big bouncy ball coated with glue, left to whizz-bang through buildings and through time itself, aggregating all these little chunks of material evidence.

As the years bounced along, this evidentiary impulse grew, in combination with a fantastical attraction to what we often think of as the margins of the built world. With friends, he roamed around cities and their edges, and collected images, eating up and storing photographic evidence of how our known environments peter out and fray, both at the edges of municipalities, and in their under-capitalized nooks and crannies, particularly in Vancouver, where more of these places still existed back then, stubbornly evading the city's ghoulish takeover by finance. He and other artists

delivered their recordings into the community's imagination, by making them into art, in the form of archives and documents, and inhabitation of the places themselves.

There's no point in denying the nostalgia that drove that work and its consumption. It was a way of escaping reality, of transgressing the crumbling edge of our world, into a more raw and possible place. And who could blame him, them? I for one hated the reality of that time, hated the city's capitalization, and the violently smooth, cultural boredom that it imposed. In contrast, the places that Adam and his collaborators found held the potential for life.



Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw, *where decisions are made*, digital photograph from the artist's archive, 2021.

A few years down the road, Adam began producing his own spaces, both as architectural mise-en-scenes that wrapped visitors in hypnagogic interactions with reality, and also in the form of smaller discreet sculptures that, often reproducing building facades, did the same at a miniature scale.

Lurking within these large spaces were characters, creatures, and signs. The method of their birth was paramount. All were hand-carved, and then cast and painted, with incongruous, unsettling results. I always think of handmade tchotchkes tilting supernaturally. The surfaces of these things, and their architectural settings, were patinated with wax and stain, the latter creating depth by pooling in carved crevices and wood grain. While one part of your brain was dazzled by the theatre of this technique, another part knew full well what was going on. This is what makes the experience of these works spin in the mind, at once familiar and baffling, like altars to oddity, a sacred birthright.

Owing to their cultural touch-points, these pieces were doubled simulations. They echoed the effect of quasi-anthropological museum dioramas, kitsch renditions of history, and multiple other realms of folktale and myth culture, right up to actual building facades, themselves always a tricky mixture of the real and the represented. Adam's stuff has juice, size, power, because it revels, in a complex and very involved way, in this netherworld of the real. He hoards the dusty magic of these human-cultural forms. Then he makes it sparkle and twitch with new alterity. Lately, he's again been sifting the visual fields of the city, of history, of culture, sleuthing out curious corners and facets.

Like these windows that he's got on the go right now, with their dog-eared corners and cracks, magnetic in their disproving of built order. They tell a tale about how every inch of everything we know can and will, through animating entropy, and clumsy creative human intervention, become a stranger to itself. Adam's role—through selection, sculptural re-combination, facsimile-creation, and surface-alteration—is to focus on and amplify these encounters with the outward-facing skin of the city.

To look at these these re-made chunks of the world is to enjoy a regeneration of the heart, mind, and eyes; it is to feel something moving in the interchange between psyche and flesh. The pieces sort of become scars and lumps, echoes of our own in-built glitches and asymmetries, which



Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw, *continuous mistake*, digital photograph from the artist's archive, 2021.

would be cool and uncanny if they weren't so goddamn upsetting. Like how, when you catch sight of yourself in a mirror, you're sometimes a wholly different creature than you fantasized. Secretly wishing to god that you didn't have that bad side, that thing down there, that missing patch... But it is what it is. Just like these sculptures. They are what they are. Runaway children of perfection. Exquisite freaks by definition.

Mitch Speed is a Berlin-based writer. In 2019 his study of Mark Leckey's *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* (1999) was published by Afterall Books. In Autumn 2019, he presented a solo exhibition at WAAP, in Vancouver. His collected essays are forthcoming from Brick Press.

Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw studied at The Royal Academy of Art, Stockholm, and Emily Carr University, Vancouver. Solo exhibitions include *Memory Loss* (2020), *Coyote*, Stockholm; *Can there be Forgiveness?* (2018), Ashley, Berlin; and *F-150* (2018), Polansky, Prague. Group shows include *Vigil* (2021), Galeria Wschód, Warsaw; *But Doctor, I am Pagliacci* (2019), The Loon, Toronto; and *Clerks Quarters* (2018), Pogo Bar, KW, Berlin.

Poster Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw, *being and non-being produce each other*, digital photograph from the artist's archive, 2021.

BPA// Berlin program for artists
www.berlinprogramforartists.org

- 01 Kévin Blinderman
- 02 Sofia Defino Leiby
- 03 Mooni Perry
- 04 Shirin Sabahi
- 05 Jana Schulz
- 06 Joshua Schwebel
- 07 **Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw**
- 08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by Mitch Speed



BPA// Exhibition 2021

Among the various artistic technologies that Xiaopeng Zhou is trained in (he works in film, sculpture, different graphic techniques, and might have learned three or more new skills since we met last week), he is also an expert draughtsman with rigorous academic training from a Chinese art school, and is extremely experienced in putting his rich talent to use in reportage-like excursions into live drawing. In recent years, he has accompanied and drawn a Chinese cook at his workplace on a daily basis, and has witnessed and recorded preparations for events like the traditional sacrificial holiday *Bairam* in a Kurdish butcher shop in Berlin. He has also researched the origin and contemporary fate of limestone plates prominently used in lithography, traveling to quarries, museums, and archaeological institutions in different locations all over Europe—research that would then offer a background for his master’s thesis. These projects have helped him not only to improve his drawing technique, but also to



enhance his tremendous observational skills. These skills allow him to transcend his undoubted technical expertise; they open doors to conceptual perspectives and mindsets most people would not expect in drawing, or drawn reportages.

For this exhibition, Zhou has chosen drawings from a completely different situation. For over a year, he has been teaching drawing to someone whose artistic skills lie in the remote past, and it has been a source of both income and professional inspiration for him. Working in one or two weekly sessions of several hours with E.S., a lady in her early 80s, Zhou has now

turned into a teacher as well as an observer, a reporting draughtsman, a conversationalist learning more German from his student than he knew before, and a dedicated and friendly companion. Depending on each day’s weather conditions and motivation, he and E.S. sit together either in her apartment or a public botanical garden. Both started making drawings of the same plants, widening or concentrating their attention for external circumstances and long-term and short-term memories—or for each other. Zhou’s drawings from that exchange form the bigger part of the exhibited works, because it is not his intention at all to expose E.S.’s renderings of plants and other objects to the critical eye of an anonymous art public. He is not trying to ask futile questions like whose drawings are more ‘artful’ or ‘accomplished,’ which of them should be considered ‘art’ or ‘non-art,’ or whether or not there is a visible ‘learning curve’ or ‘progress’ through the teacher/student set-up. He exposes his own perspective as the record of a long-term negotiation; a continuous re-shuffling of personal space, trust, and curiosity; a shared fight with boredom, forgetfulness, and superficiality.

While only three drawings by E.S. are exhibited here, Zhou shows a variety of his perspectives from this dynamic of working, learning, discussing, and playing together: one can see the same plants that his student has been facing for her own exercise, but they are rendered together with her portrait and other elements that add external reference to their artistic get-togethers. These elements can be pieces of furniture like a table, a chair, or a Persian rug, but also botanical labels detailing the scientific classification of each plant-object. Since Zhou often replaces surrounding architectures with a limitless, paper-white space, E.S.’s living room and the greenhouse seem to merge into each other, building a shared space for the two drawing persons, for their teaching/learning relationship, and for all the ‘third objects’—books with meticulously copied titles, all of which represent, to different degrees, lexicographic knowledge, botanical nomenclature, art history, biography, travel literature and poetry—the cultural stand-ins for E.S.’s past cultural life and for her social relations to her sons and friends. Those relations are part of the journals she has continued to write for decades. They include not least a memory of her late and beloved husband, who is said to have invited her to use her (unschooled) drawing skills as a recording technique to work on a catalogue or illustrated list describing the thousands of technical spare parts used in his own workplace—probably in order to have her closer to him during the daytime. During the time of Zhou’s lessons, those drawings finally resurfaced in E.S.’s belongings, and here they allow one to look back on older experiences of drawing.

The common space Zhou creates in his pictures confronts the academically-grown and institutionally-framed greenhouse plants, with their holding and supporting addenda, their possessively inscribed labels, the not-too-comfy benches one is allowed to sit on for some hours in this public wilderness. They sit alongside the private details that personalize E.S.’s apartment: a cordless telephone, a candle holder, shopping lists, clothes, a painting on the wall, a chandelier that hangs from the ceiling, candy, a

sketchpad filled with biographical data of modern artists, fruit, vegetables, a COVID-19 mask, a teacup, golf balls, a magnifying glass, a teddy bear, a box of pencils, a box of cookies, a tree outside the window. These are presented with E.S.’s own drawings—plants and flowers, lists of words from narrowing recollections, a portrait of the teacher-friend, a sketch of a real cow and its prehistoric ancestor on a wall in Lascaux, fruits and doodles, stories and notes, her sadly missed old car. Zhou’s presentation of his own reportage drawings opens channels of artistic ‘influence’ that—with all the differences these two lives have—can run both ways. You can feel it.



Clemens Krümmel is an art historian, curator, and translator. He lives and works in Berlin. Krümmel was the editor of *Texte zur Kunst* from 2000 to 2006, and has worked at Merz Akademie, Stuttgart, and ETH, Zurich. He currently works at the Kunstraum of Leuphana University Lüneburg.

Xiaopeng Zhou lives and works in Berlin. He received his MA in 2014 from the Kunsthochschule Weissensee, Berlin. He recently exhibited at the HOW Art Museum (Shanghai) and Inside-Out Art Museum (Beijing) in 2020, and has upcoming exhibitions at After the Butcher (Berlin) in 2021 and Kunsthaus Dresden in 2022.

Poster Xiaopeng Zhou, *How does a flower bend?*, 2021, polychromos pencils and marker on paper, 297 × 210 mm

BPA// Berlin program for artists
www.berlinprogramforartists.org

- 01 Kévin Blinderman
- 02 Sofia Defino Leiby
- 03 Mooni Perry
- 04 Shirin Sabahi
- 05 Jana Schulz
- 06 Joshua Schwebel
- 07 Adam Shiu-Yang Shaw
- 08 Xiaopeng Zhou

by Clemens Krümmel



Friedrich Nietzsche
Morgenröte
Willen aus Messina
Le Wissenschaft
...
...