125 NEWBURY

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WILD STRAWBERRIES

Hannah Wilke, *S.O.S. Starification Object Series (Curlers)*, 1974, detail. Gelatin silver print. 40 × 26⅜ in. © Scharlatt, Hannah Wilke Collection & Archive, Los Angeles/VAGA at ARS, NY

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Wild Strawberries, the inaugural exhibition at 125 Newbury, assembles works of sculpture, painting, photography, and film by an intergenerational group of seventeen artists, all of whom traffic in a dreamlike exchange between threat and seduction. Taking its title from Ingmar Bergman's 1957 cinematic masterpiece, *Wild Strawberries* brings together works that operate in the space that Michael Kirby called "beyond realism," drawing on an almost cinematic imagination to forge techniques for corroding the seams of rational, ordered, work-a-day reality.

Bergman's film opens with an extended dream sequence, in which a grey-haired man wanders down an empty, De Chirico-esque street. He suddenly encounters a faceless figure whose back is turned to him. When the protagonist reaches out his hand to touch the figure's shoulder, it spins around to reveal a grotesque, abbreviated, inhuman face that suddenly melts into a pool of dark liquid, oozing horribly out from the collapsed clothing now piled on the street. The works in *Wild Strawberries* orchestrate a range of similarly uncanny encounters, implicating the viewer's body as a fragile and contingent thing, an oneiric, organic, and exquisite locus for anxiety and pleasure, fear and longing, desire and repulsion.

Grounded in artists of the post-Sixties generation who mobilized the aesthetics of bodily abjection toward fascinating, disturbing, and political ends, the exhibition juxtaposes the nightmarish and the exquisite. What Lee Bontincous called the ominous "horrors" of her work collide with what Pincus-Whitten described as the "frozen gestures" of Benglis; the corporeal poetry of Wilke with the "crude delights" of Lucas Samaras; what Kiki Smith called the "Sky Goddess" that is her *Virgin Mary* (1995) with the "putrid finesse" of Paul Thek's meat pieces (as Robert Smithson described them in 1965). Involving the viewer on a visceral and somatic level, a similar haunting is at work in sculptures by David Hammons and Robert Gober, and performances by Zhang Huan, made during the 1990s and after, in which the language of abjection is haunted by affective economies of power, politics, race, sexuality, and gender.

Highlighting works that catapult the viewer between oscillating sensations of repulsion and attraction, *Wild Strawberries* traces such visceral dialogues through an emerging generation of contemporary artists who explore the axis between the alluringly grotesque and the discomfitingly sensual, including Alex Da Corte, Julie Curtiss, Doreen Lynette Garner, Shahryar Nashat, Brandon Ndife, Kathleen Ryan, and Max Hooper Schneider. Although wildly divergent, their practices draw on a shared pantheon of precedents—from Benglis to Bontecou to Thek to Kiki Smith, to what Tom Finkelpearl, in his seminal essay for the *Rousing the Rubble* exhibiton at PS1 in 1991, called the "ideology of dirt" at heart of David Hammons's practice—while forging new cross-pollinations between painting, sculpture, film, and installation. Infused with the surreal, they conjure tenuous, fractured, and deeply individual visions of reality.

The exhibition's itineraries traverse the grotesque gastronomy of Da Corte's early films by way of Samaras's multifaceted investigations of selfhood; they explore Garner's hyper-realist sculptural critique of systemic violence vis-à-vis Thek's politically charged mortifications of human flesh during the Vietnam era; and investigate Lawson's probing of identity and intimacy against the seething erotics of Bontecou's interior reveries. Such constellations prefigure the deft fabulations of Julie Curtiss, in which the painterly body is refigured and made partial with sickening pleasure, confused with a panoply of its own parts. And what Jordan Carter calls the "bodies that lack a body" in the work of Shahryar Nashat. Pointing to a latent politics of the abject, Thek's shrine-like reliquaries resonate with the exuberant materiality of Hooper Schneider's sculpture, where obsessive drives toward accumulation incubate an almost posthuman sense of the sacred.

Throughout, tensions between attraction and repulsion suggest real political possibility; form becomes a weapon for critiquing systems of power. Lawson's photographic portraits pierce worlds, rendering form as a matrix of longing and belonging, casting self and community as fixtures and figments of culture. Garner's sculptures conjure the horror of history, its dismembered and unremembered bodies, refusing to forget the terrorisms of slavery and racial injustice. Such works harness the capacity of form to serve as a tool by which visceral experience is interwoven in critiques of colonialism, oppression, and domination.

The alien organicism of Ndife's assemblage-based abstractions and Hooper Schneider's posthuman terraria explode the divisions between our own biological being and external "nature." Between desire and catastrophe, these works suggest the remaking of humanity's relation to the world. Ndife's assemblages and Schneider's vitrines are reliquaries for the body as a technology of desire, fulfilling the promise of Thek's posthuman flesh. These undecayed objects explode fictions of vitality, life, and sentience, just as Kathleen Ryan renders decaying fruits as memento mori, putrescent figures of time's passage. Conjuring states of untimely animation, she imbues beads made from semiprecious stones with the imprimatur of death, generating a newly evocative idiom for the ephemeral and the sublime.

As an exhibition, *Wild Strawberries* cultivates a garden of widely divergent practices which shape and reshape the body. Inhabiting these shared territories, the works mark an intergenerational discourse in contemporary art that restitches the tatters of surrealism to trouble definitions of desire in a post-technological and post-human age. Probing the plasticity of sensation, these works elicit a desire for touch that is also a fear of touch. They probe art's capacity to produce pleasure in the same gesture that it excites horror, tracing the exquisite and often excruciating contours of what it means for a psyche and a body to be indelibly tethered.

This special issue of the *125 Newbury Free Press* celebrates the inauguration of the gallery and the opening of *Wild Strawberries*, surveying the artists in the exhibition in order of birth date, beginning with Lee Bontecou, who was born in 1931. Foregrounding the intergenerational nature of the exhibition, this issue brings together new texts by Vito Adriaensens, Kimberly Drew, and Alexa Punnamkuzhyil; reprinted and excerpted essays by Griselda Pollock, Tom Finkelpearl, and Michael Kirby; interviews by Simon Baker, Margot Norton and Barbara Pollack; and artist writings by Lucas Samaras, Max Hooper Schneider, and Hannah Wilke, which together explore fundamental questions about the aesthetics of memory and history, desire and power, identity and selfhood.

—O.S.

Wild Strawberries is on view from September 30 until November 18, 2022, at Gallery 125 Newbury, located at 395 Broadway (at the corner of Walker St.) in Tribeca.

Still from Ingmar Bergman, *Wild Strawberries*, 1957.

BETWEEN THREAT AND SEDUCTION

Arne Glimcher

I am scuba diving in the floating world of the Tuamotu archipelago, 500 miles northeast of Tahiti in the Pacific Ocean. I am at one of the world's foremost drift dives. The currents filling these massive sunken volcanoes run so fast that I drift at speeds over six knots. I am at a place where sharks gather during the day to save energy for their nights of hunting. Sharks need to be consistently in motion to maintain the flow of oxygen through their gills. Here, however, at the cut in the reef, they hover suspended in the current. I am assured by my dive master that the sharks are harmless: I'm hoping he's right. Drifting through this gathering of at least a hundred sharks, terror wells and ultimately gives way to ecstasy as I see the end of the shark convocation and I'm still alive. I've been trying to focus on the opulent corals lining the sides of the passage. Suddenly a magnificent creature darts out of the corals, its body glistening in the sun's rays like a magnificent jewel. I am tempted to reach out and touch it, possess it, then reason intervenes; it's probably toxic, as are so many creatures of extreme beauty. I am on that tightrope between threat and seduction. That is the theme of *Wild Strawberries*.

Some artists' works stimulate this response. I'm thinking of Rembrandt's great masterpiece *The Slaughtered Ox*, and Soutine's paintings of meat, as well as the response of attraction and repulsion I've always felt when viewing Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined teacup, which I associate with Samaras. The work of Lucas Samaras, Paul Thek, and Lee Bontecou provoke all these responses and their extraordinary achievements originally inspired this exhibition.

My relationship with Lucas Samaras currently spans 54 years of amazement at his invention, countless arguments on issues of art—some of it his own—and the affection we share, which has kept us from killing each other. His work has provided some of our greatest insights into the phenomena of attraction and repulsion. From my first encounter with his work at the Green Gallery in 1962, I was mesmerized by his ability to manipulate my feelings and perception with his objects. An open cube made of glistening pins that makes it impossible to move, a book whose pin-encrusted covers don't allow it to be opened, and dinners on shattered plates laden with shards of glass that both invite and menace the diner. Reliquary boxes encrusted with jewels, insects, and stuffed birds, some pierced by knives, project the warning "open me at your own peril." This is the world of Samaras.

I met Paul Thek in early 1965 after my then business partner Fred Mueller attended a party at his loft. Fred gushed enthusiastically about the work. I recall him saying, "It's so shocking, you're going to love it." The next evening, we visited Paul. I am always looking for the magic that I feel when I see something wondrous that I've never seen before. Paul's work went beyond that—it was something I'd never imagined before. Unlike the paintings of Rembrandt or Soutine, which are transformed by illusion, these appeared so real that I hallucinated the smell of raw meat. It looked like a mad scientist's laboratory filled with experiments. A slab of meat laced with clear plastic tubing rested on his worktable. Another chunk of meat rendered to perfection with hairs sprouting from fragments of skin still clinging to glistening layers of fat was punctuated by veins. I turned away only to be confronted by another slab of meat in an acid yellow plexiglass box. Engraved on the front of the case was a transcript by Sylvia Krauss, a woman who could be found many days in front of the Plaza Hotel passing out papers warning of hippopotamus poison infiltrating society's drinking water. This work inspired me to curate the 1965 Pace Gallery exhibition *Beyond Realism*, which was among the first shows to explore a Surrealist influence on the Pop Art movement. It was the beginning of a mind-bending friendship that lasted only a few years and produced two of the most memorable exhibitions in the history of Pace. During those times, on his many visits, Paul's radiant personality lit up Pace Gallery. Eventually he left New York to live in Europe and we drifted apart, though the memories of these times together are indelible.

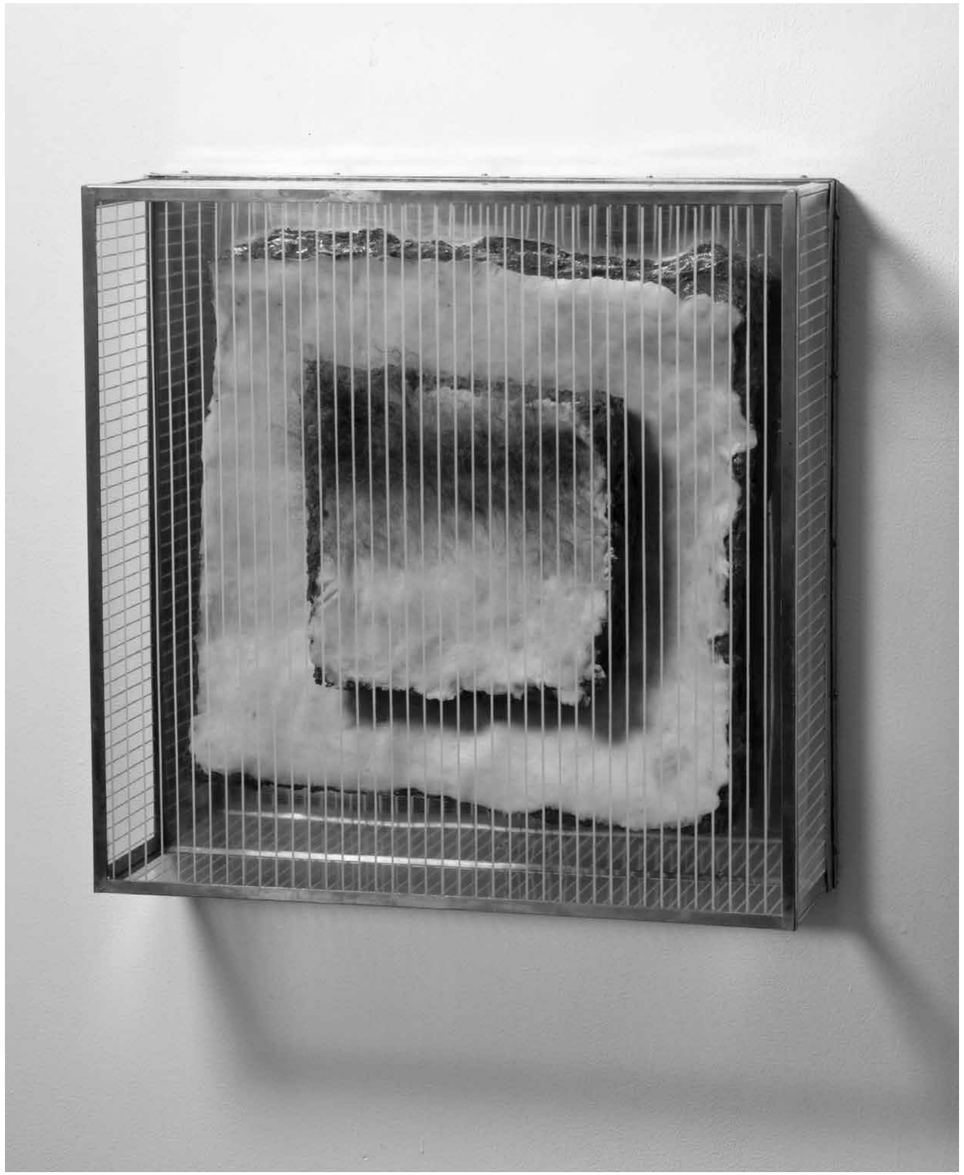
Unlike Samaras and Thek, I didn't enjoy a personal relationship with Lee Bontecou. She was not as visible in the local art scene. Her first exhibition at Leo Castelli's gallery knocked me out. I was totally unprepared for the awesome and threatening sculptures in the exhibition. Novelty and originality were the much-valued currency of the time, a moment when artists were consciously expanding the canon of modernism. At first glance Bontecou's reliefs appeared to be ruins of burned-out jet airplane engines, with the skin of a glider singed by the heat, still clinging to its frame. Frightening gaping mouths, some with rows of metal teeth and some deep black holes, projected danger like the *Mouth of Truth* in Rome that dared you to reach in. They extended the possibility of art making at a time when Pop eschewed mystery for fact. These were at once mysterious and constructivist.

Today we are experiencing the most pluralistic period in art that I have ever witnessed. This pluralism traverses issues both formal and psychological that have fascinated artists for centuries. They neither began with Samaras, Thek, and Bontecou, nor ended with them. The seventeen artists in this exhibition testify to the ubiquity and mutability of such tendencies. Attraction and repulsion is a response endemic to human behavior, which is reflected in *Wild Strawberries* as a multigenerational exhibition that offers vastly different viewpoints on the subject, whether intentional or collateral. The works of Lynda Benglis, Lee Bontecou, Julie Curtiss, Alex Da Corte, Doreen Lynette Garner, Robert Gober, David Hammons, Deana Lawson, Shahryar Nashat, Brandon Ndife, Kathleen Ryan, Lucas Samaras, Max Hooper Schneider, Kiki Smith, Paul Thek, Hannah Wilke, and Zhang Huan couldn't be more radically different; and yet all of them explore the fundamental tension at the heart of *Wild Strawberries*, operating in that uncanny space between threat and seduction. I am indebted to these artists and estates for sharing their precious works for the inaugural exhibition of 125 Newbury.

LEE BONTECOU

ABOVE: Lee Bontecou, *Untitled*, 1961. Welded Steel, canvas, epoxy, plastic. 32 × 27½ × 14 in. Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation for Art. Photo: Benjamin Teague.
LEFT: Lee Bontecou, *Untitled*, 1963. Welded Steel, canvas, epoxy, plastic. 32 × 27½ × 14 in. Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation for Art. Photo: Benjamin Teague.

PAUL THEK



ABOVE: Paul Thek. *Untitled* (from the series *Technological Reliquaries*), 1964. Wax, metal, wood, paint, hair, cord, resin, and glass. Photo: D. James Dee © Estate of George Paul Thek Courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York
OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP RIGHT: Paul Thek, *Untitled* (from the series *Technological Reliquaries*), circa 1966–67. Wax, wood, metal, hair, plaster, paint, and Plexiglas with wig and fabric. Photo: Richard Grey © Estate of George Paul Thek, Courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York
OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: Paul Thek. *Untitled (Finger of Audrey Flack)*, circa 1964. Wood, plaster, paint. Photo: Richard Grey © Estate of George Paul Thek. Courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York

PAUL THEK: THE MATTER OF MEAT

Oliver Shultz

In 1964, the artist Paul Thek took New York by storm. He exhibited a series of small, startlingly realistic sculptures, which simulated disfigured human flesh—skin, sinew, hair, and all—as if sliced up into vaguely rectilinear hunks and enclosed inside glass-walled boxes resembling vitrines. In some of these works, plastic tubing emerged from the bloody ersatz meat, protruding through valves in their glassine enclosures before emerging obscenely into the space of the viewer. The response to these works was explosive. It would secure Thek a place in the annals of 1960s experimentation, helping define a certain mode of countercultural provocation of which he has come to be seen as exemplary.

Thek achieved low-key fame for his formless, abject, sometimes horrific figurations. They were uncannily successful in evoking actual flesh, later replicating human limbs and appendages with a morbid yet vibrant verisimilitude. Inside opulently chromed glass and later Plexiglas boxes, the abject, grotesque, and surreal horror of Thek's post-human relics was kept safely at a remove. Yet they were also radically visible and perpetually on display, fascinating and repulsive. Thek's meat was unlike anything New York had seen. It was immediately understood as an assault on ascendant trends in artmaking. Decades later, these sensational "meat pieces" have come to occupy a decidedly marginal, if cultish position in post-Sixties art history, a period more closely associated the austerity of Minimalism or the flippancy of Pop than with the sincerity of figurative, painted wax sculpture depicting butchered chunks of disfigured human flesh made by a queer Catholic artist (who later disappeared to Europe for most of the 1970s and died as a result of AIDS in 1988).

In the mid-1960s, Thek's representations of disfigured meat exploded on the artistic scene in New York, where they were first shown by Eleanor Ward in 1964 before being included in the exhibition *Beyond Realism* at the Pace Gallery in 1965, followed by a solo show of the Technological Reliquaries at Pace the following year. Thek's work was immediately understood in opposition to the coolness of what critic Michael Fried called "literalism," and what Barbara Rose labeled "ABC" art—what would eventually come to be known as Minimalism. Thek's works went radically against the grain: made from polychromed wax, they employed a seemingly retrograde and even tacitly religious mode of figuration. The result was shocking enough to jolt the viewer into a state of excitation, as if in rejoinder to what Thek's close friend Susan Sontag diagnosed, in her 1965 essay "Against Interpretation," as the jaded "sensory faculties" of the modern human subject. Thek's work performed precisely Sontag's "erotics of art," in which figuration is mobilized as dis-figuration; in which feeling always precedes form, calling into being the work in the service of a kind of experience entirely opposed to rational modes of thinking and knowing.

Thek's sculptures are never realism per se; they do not so much offer "mimetic correspondence" as figure what it feels like to gaze upon flesh, to feel oneself as that selfsame meat. Thek's waxen sculptures are not mimetic copies of any preexisting referent; they figure more as affect than thing. [...] The early meat pieces vividly convey the feeling of flesh. In so doing they dramatize the empathetic, phenomenal, bodily relationship between viewer and work. The materiality of Thek's disfigured flesh becomes a kind of haptic trap for sensuous engagement; rather than represent the world, dis-figuration

renders it radically present as mediation. Thek's meat is never just an image of our bodies in the world, but of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty called "the flesh of the world," by which he meant the experiential texture or fabric of what it is to exist, to feel, and to know as a body.

Adapted from the introduction to the author's PhD dissertation, *Paul Thek's Untimely Bodies* (Stanford: Stanford University Department of Art & Art History, 2018).

Paul Thek, *Untitled* (detail) (from the series *Technological Reliquaries*), circa 1966–67. Wax, wood, metal, hair, plaster, paint, and Plexiglas with wig and fabric.
Photo: Richard Grey © Estate of George Paul Thek, Courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York

Paul Thek. *Untitled (Hand with Ring)*, 1967. Wood, plaster, paint, and metal. Photo: Richard Grey © Estate of George Paul Thek. Courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York

BEYOND REALISM

The unconscious has always been present in the arts. Thus it was easy for the Surrealists of the 1920's and 30's to find precedents for their work. Painters of fantasy such as Bosch and Goya were obvious nominations, and even Shakespeare, whose extreme range usually kept him from categorization, was appointed to honorary membership. But the Surrealists themselves dealt with the unconscious in a particular manner, the limits of which may be seen fairly clearly at this distance.

Surrealism of that period was essentially intellectual-literary. Thought moves. It must have sequence. It makes, and is composed of, connections between things. Thus juxtaposition, the combination of disparate objects and images, became fundamental to Surrealism. The umbrella and the sewing machine meeting by chance on a dissecting table disrupted the usual combinations of associations and forced thought into new progressions. Just as the unconscious was indicated by the dreams and slips of the tongue that constituted the "psychopathology of everyday life," the artist trapped it with his own creations. The intellect, pressing upon materials it could not handle in the accustomed manner, was left with the significant imprint of irrationality. It was much like the mediums who make plaster casts of spirit hands: the unconscious was seen by the marks it left behind.

In addition to ideational sequence, the intellectual-literary aspects of Surrealism were also apparent in the inclination toward, and susceptibility to, interpretation. The symbols of the "hand-painted dream photograph" were traced back through the "dream work" to the "latent content." The visual language that was developed had a close relationship in both vocabulary and syntax to the young science of psychoanalysis, and "translation" was often an expected part of the experience.

It was not until the war drove Surrealist artists to the United States that one of the major professed ambitions of the group — a non-intellectual "pure psychic automatism" — could be realized. And it was achieved by the American Action Painters of the late 1940's and early 1950's. The spontaneous gesture, devoid of symbolic information or thought, presented new aspects of the unconscious.

More recently, a number of American artists have begun working with the unconscious in their own ways. Non-programatic, non-didactic, stressing individuality, their work does not comprise a "movement," but certain generalities may be made. The tendency is toward a sensory presence that creates the *feeling* of the unconscious rather than an intellectual stimulator that creates the *mental awareness* of the unconscious. The multiplicities, juxtapositions, and inventions of fantasy and Surrealism are abandoned. Symbols, interpretation, and representation — the processes of "standing for" something else — are forgotten. The works tend to be objects. They are things that we experience as directly as the things of everyday life. But their presence is not the everyday, rational one. It is the presence of the unconscious.

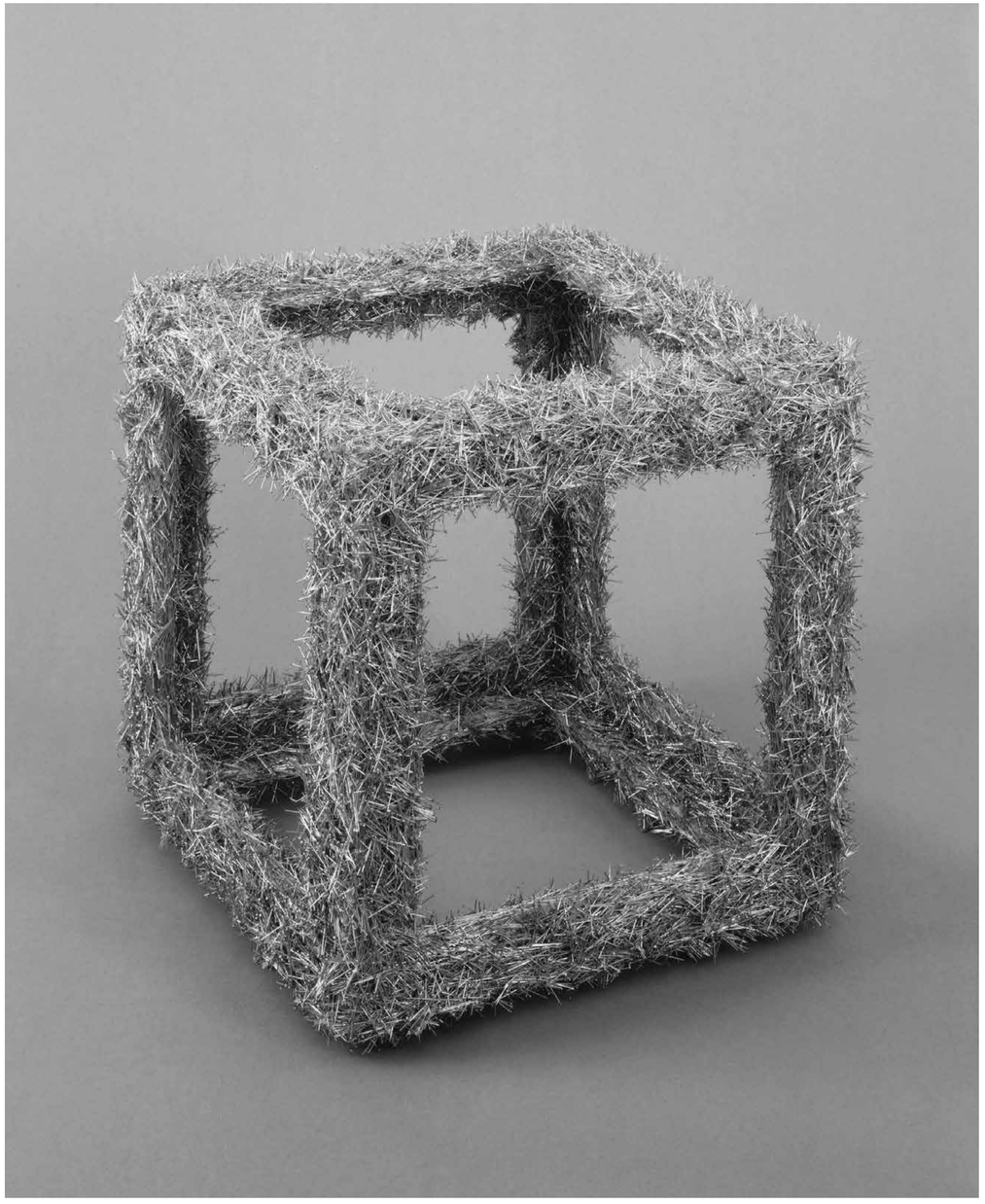
As in a dream, we are aware of irrational contradictions and incongruities: the small is of huge size, the light is actually heavy, the useful is useless, the rigid is flexible. And, as in a dream, these impossibilities are presented with a direct, dominating, incontrovertible reality. (In dreams, even the most bizarre and distorted images have the *feeling* of reality. The occasional simultaneous knowledge that "this is a dream" does not weaken the pervasive "realness.")

While the presence is direct, the feelings involved are complex, contradictory, and sometimes elusive. As is true in dreams, ambivalent effect — love/hate, attraction/repulsion — is felt, and, although the pathological and bizarre are not emphasized, a gross, visceral quality permeates much of the work. At a time when theories and ideas about the unconscious are commonly accepted, these works, in their non-intellectual character, make an important contribution to experience.

MICHAEL KIRBY

Originally published in the catalogue for the exhibition *Beyond Realism*, Pace Gallery, New York, May 4–May 29, 1965.

LUCAS SAMARAS



Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, 1965. Mixed media. 18 × 18 × 18 in.

LUCAS SAMARAS:
ARTIST STATEMENT (1966)

STATEMENT

Stethoscope, oral-anal-armpit-thermometer, antipyrene pills, emetics, douches, rubber tubes, glass vials, fluoroscopes, cotton, steel contraptions, sizzors, twizzers, operations, smells. Intolerable invasions of my privacy. EXPOSURE. I remember a photograph of my great grandfather doctor, he had a large snuff-swollen nose. Catching a slaughter of a lamb, pig, rabbit or chicken in the front yard or elsewhere was somewhat easier. I could turn away if the blood spilled too fast or leave when the smell of boiling water and split intestines got too strong. I would sometimes get too attached to the animal but it wouldn't matter, the butchery would take place anyway and I'd stay to watch. Butchering was an amazing transformation process; a walking breathing animal became through the intervention of a sharp instrument wielded by a determined adult a strange conglomeration of things and textures. MURDER. I wanted to become a doctor but also a priest and be in contact with death, ghosts, shadows, churches, candles, oil, icons, jewels, costumes, music, punishment, incense, bones, devil, angels, magic. I also wanted to be a soldier with guns, powder, planes, tanks, bombs, horses, bombed-cities, heroism, parades, executions, explosions. There was pleasure in opening revealing destroying things. However living and non-living things had a certain immunity. To alter something was a terrible thing to do. Even now, taking a clock apart or tearing a newspaper sometimes gives me the shivers. Everything had feelings, life was erotic-occult. This force to destroy or caress, touch or not touch has always been with me. I became an artist. Art took the place of adolescent love interactions with nature and fearsome authoritarian concepts of being. I make things to seduce myself.

All things in life are erotic even death; perhaps my eyes are erotic organs or I'm drugged by my own internal juices. I don't know why I became an artist, it had something to do with the meaning of things. Things are more than their names, i.e. usage. I guess spoken language always had great mumbo jumbo static noise for me whereas that other language that does not require speech but has to do with emotion or visual-mental perception was more encompassing. I suppose deep inside my psyche I didn't understand why inanimate things couldn't speak. The fear of irrational occurrences was always present. People were more threatening when they were dead or far away. At any rate they were external forces like rain or sunshine or animals. SELF. My first clothes were not words but muddled erotic visions. Art helps me maintain a primary eroticism. Art was my cocoon. A part of art is memory. Memory is erotic because it has the capacity of making past life the exclusive property of the individual who exercises it. Further, it combines stories with past life creating a bottomless beginningless vapor trail. GREED.

The manner in which art objects are made are erotic gestures. The Greek word for lick and sculpt is the same. Artistic-creation-eroticism may be a substitute for genital-biological-creation-eroticism, however the eroticism is experienced in the brain in either case. Moreover in the presence of an artistic creation there is a seeming merging of the self with a highly erotic reality called beauty and knowing that you somehow created this beauty, the pleasure multiplies. The eroticism isn't connected with life and death or with a partners changing moods it is continuous. AUTOEROTIC. Narcissism is making one's body into art.

Although I use materials in my works that are often the delectables of the fetishist I am not making fetishes. On the other hand all art can be fetishistic. Whenever I picked up a rock that had horrible shiver-giving bugs and crawling things underneath I would cringe and promptly withdraw. Now I stay longer. I continuously shift my attention to things that bother or frighten me. Photography has pretty much eliminated the need to paint reality. It has brought us closer to such aspects of life as murder, sex, stars, microbes, machines. By holding these things in our hands they become materials sparks. I learn about art from other art as well as from my own body and its functions. I tune up the erotic in materials. Art works must have more than one side or presence. I find high erotic content in things irridescent, sparkling, fragile, sharp, oily, hairy, pimply, fluffy, dendritic, elastic pulsating. I love mirrors, shadows, vortexes, lightning, razzle dazzle, twistedness and nausea, but all these things with control. IMPENETRABILITY. Fire is erotic, so is light, water, rock and wind. I don't like a thick monumentality. I don't like things to be taken out of their context-environment unless they are reworked to function in a new environment. I don't like the total thing to be a fragment although fragments have an uncanny way of dealing with their negative parts; they have a way of grabbing space, grafting themselves anywhere. Complete things don't grab, don't struggle they just stand there. Fragments are less erotic.

I have rejected forgotten or buried many superstitions and myths that I grew up with but I suspect that often when first confronting a new work I get a faint feeling that part of the pleasure is a recognition of some old belief fear presence. I am principally dealing with formalities but when the past shows its face it is an ecstasy tinged surprise. I suppose my work approaches primitive art. Perhaps that is what people consider fetishistic. Artists of the early part of this century used primitive art as a rejuvenating drug but it was in relation to painting. When I think of primitive I think of sculpture, not the weird transformations of faces and bodies but the use of organic materials. SUBSTANCES. I wonder if there are any myths where a god drew man into existence rather than sculpted him. To be an artist is to be god, and I don't know anything more erotic than that.

Lucas Samaras

Originally published in the catalogue for *Lucas Samaras: Selected Works*, curated by Lawrence Alloway, The Pace Gallery, New York (Oct 8–Nov 6, 1966).

Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, 1965. Mixed media. 28½ × 10¾ × 2⅞ in.

Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, 1964. Pins on wood. 18 × 18 × 18 in. Courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery.

ON LUCAS SAMARAS (1974)

By Arne Glimcher

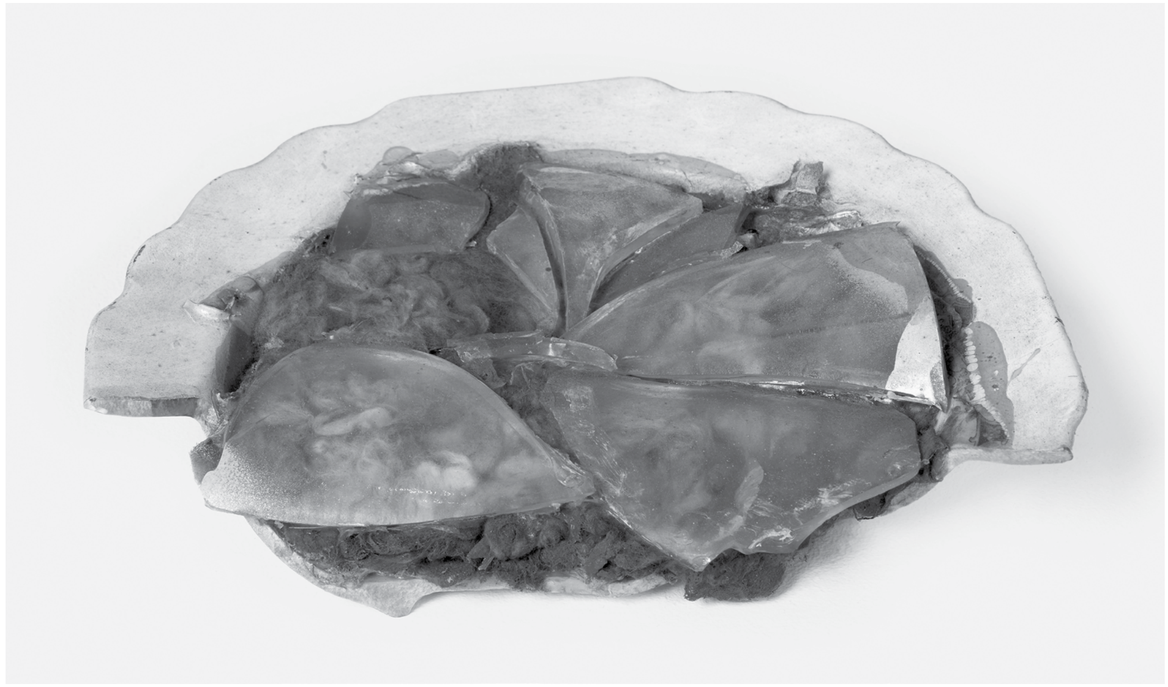
The kitchen is tiny and cluttered with the visual dazzle of dishes and silver stacked to dry and accumulations of postcards, passports, plugs, icons, fruit, binoculars, cameras, tinfoil, mylar, paper towels, honey, sponges, a meat grinder, garbage bags and spices. On a table stacked with pencils, brushes, film, photographs, books and flowers, illuminated by a small lamp and surfaced in the random pattern of newsprint, Samaras reveals the versatility of his essential self in a series of tableaux he calls photo-transformations.

The stage on which these tableaux are enacted is directly opposite his only available audience, the television set that shares his kitchen. His camera records the collective drama positioned next to the television that stimulates his fantasies while playing in a constant technicolor dialogue. "I can do anything better than you can." In a gesture of reciprocity and seduction he returns frames of images inspired by the television's repertory as well as subjective reactions to incidents in his life.

The result of this theater is the production of a series of demonic, comic, and seductive hallucinatory transformations of himself. Previously in boxes, pastels, sculptures, drawings, acrylic paintings and autopolaroids, self-images were cannibalized and spoons, forks and knives were isolated for anthropomorphic focus. His new work is still obsessed with the formation of imagery on associative parallels, i.e. himself as boxes, dinners, chairs, rooms, mandrills, monsters, wizards, etc. and the development of these objects' and images' roles within those contexts by implied function.

To realize these feats Samaras required a medium of immediate expression, and the lag between concept and output of expression has been significantly diminished by the use of the Polaroid SX-70 camera. In previous works he dealt with this need by employing assemblage techniques, which facilitated the selection or recognition of existing images, without having to sculpt them into existence. Selection itself became a

Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, 1961. Mixed media. 18½ × 17 × 3 in.



Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, c. 1961. Mixed media. 8 × 6 × 2 in.

sculptural act just as it now becomes a painterly act in the photo-transformations. This desire for immediacy is not unique to Samaras, it is rather a major tendency in twentieth century art that has led to other solutions for other artists. The desire to produce a work as immediate and fresh as its preconscious model, motivated certain surrealists to produce automatic works as it did DeKooning to produce action paintings. Process itself becomes the tool for the recognition of visual concepts within the pigments by finding external matches for internal schemas. Thus these transformations exist as a king of improvisational theater of painterly expressionism.

The photo-transformations are divided into two types: images in which the figure is transformed by actual physical contortion and extravagantly illuminated or painted with colored lights; and others in which the posed and lighted image is later distorted by altering the process of the film's development. As the image begins to appear, Samaras tests the limits of his fantasies' credibility by manually blending or mixing the photo-emulsion pigments using the surface itself as a palette in a kind of expressionistic finger-painting. The presumptive forms and gestures are thus altered by the puppeteer who exaggerates attitudes by linear embellishments and fields of patterns. Even in instances of the most monstrous distortion, photo naturalistic clues to the object's original identity remain.

The pin boxes of the early sixties have been extended into the image of a figure lifting the flayed sheet of skin from his torso to reveal the contents of steaming, spiky red flesh. His mouth is transformed into an incinerator consuming the fingers being fed from the edges of his lips. A parallel sequence occurs in his 1969 film "Self", in which the camera focuses on a mouth devouring family photographs. The performer from the Happenings of the early sixties now appears as a sphinx with none of the elegance of antiquity but rather the naked clumsiness of a new genus created by the rearrangement of its own familiar elements.

Like a gigantic facial mask that confuses proportion, steely grey buttocks become the central expressionless hippo face out of which spring the arms and legs of a man. In these works Samaras continues his scrutiny of combinations and possibilities for the transformation of his environment as an extension of himself.

Arnold Glimcher 1974

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Lucas Samaras, *Untitled*, c. 1965. Mixed media. 20 × 18 × 19 in. All works by Lucas Samaras are Copyright © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery.

I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION SOME OF THE PEOPLE OR THINGS THAT MAY HAVE INTERESTED, INFLUENCED OR FORCED ME TO PRODUCE THIS GROUP OF CHAIRS. SAMARAS IN GREEK MEANS SADDLE MAKER. KAREKLA, KOUKLA, KLAMA, KATHISMA, KATORTHOMA, HOT SEAT, VAN GOGH'S TWO PAINTINGS OF CHAIRS, MATISSE'S PIANO LESSON CHAIR, KNOSSOS THRONE, EISENSTEIN SITTING ON A TZAR'S THRONE WITH HIS FEET DANGLING, BOB WHITMAN'S MUSHROOM CHAIR, RAUSCHENBERG'S CHAIR ATTACHED TO A PAINTING, DINE'S HANGING CHAIR, MARCEL BREUER, MIES VAN DER ROHE, SAARINEN, PEASANT CHAIR, WHEEL CHAIR, SWISS CHEESE, BABY CHAIR, SWING, SWIVEL, MORRIS GRAVES, CHAIR IN THE MOVIE "SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME", LUDOVICHE THRONE, MAXIMIANUS THRONE, PORTABLE, ANT COLONY BETWEEN GLASS, OLDENBURG, NORTH AFRICAN ANAL DISTENDER BENCH, JOHNS, DEGAS, SCAFFOLDING, LE CORBUSIER, ELECTRIC, THONET, EAMES, RIETVELD, BOOK OF KELLS VIRGIN AND CHILD CHAIR, THINKING CHAIR, MUSICAL CHAIR, ONE THOUSAND PEACOCK THRONE, MANZU, SPOERRI, GEORGE BRECHT, WESTERMAN, NEVELSON, IONESCO'S "CHAIRS", WALTER DE MARIA, BECKETT'S "ENDGAME", BRACELLI, DALI, ART NOUVEAU, ELEPHANT TUSKS CHAIR, HAWAII, KAPROW, SEGAL, APHRODITE OF THE MANY BREASTS, PICASSO'S DRAWING OF HALF A CHAIR, WICKER, PERSON'S LAP, WATTS, AGOSTINI, KUSAMA, ARTSCHWAGER, CONNOR, EPITAPHIOS, TUTANKHAMON, COLONIAL, VICTORIAN, GIACOMETTI, POLLOCK, TOILET, MOTORCYCLE, OPERA CANE CHAIR, ULYSSES, PAUL HARRIS, PARK BENCH, KIENHOLZ, FOLDING, MAGRITTE, DENTIST'S, BARBER'S, PASTRY, CIRCUS, COCTEAU, DUCHAMP, BUSTER KEATON, THE FAT LADY IN THE GREEK PERIODICAL "TREASURE", PALISADES PARK COLLAPSING SOFA, ETC. . . . . L.S.

Originally published in Lucas Samaras: Chair Transformation, Pace Gallery, New York, 1970.

HANNAH WILKE

Hannah Wilke, *S.O.S. Starification Object Series (Curlers)*, 1974. Gelatin silver print. 40 × 26⅝ in. Private Collection, Courtesy Acquavella Galleries. © Scharlatt, Hannah Wilke Collection & Archive, Los Angeles/VAGA at ARS, NY

Hannah Wilke

I become my art, my art becomes me. My art is becoming my heart in my art. My heart is hard to handle, my art is too. I want to overwhelm you. I want to touch your feelings. I want to give you tender strength. Feel! Feel the folds; one fold, two folds, expressive precise gestural symbols. Multi-layered metaphysics below the gut level, like laughter, making love, or shaking hands.

Eat a fortune cookie, don't ask me to sign it. Kneaded erasers; "the grayer, softer chaos that is tragedy" . . . (Barnett Newman. . .) "Eros, amour. A mass. Erase" . . . (Ann Lauterbach) Needed: erase her? Don't! Delicate definitions: Laundry lint; residual magic rearranging the touch of sensuality; Terra cotta, the tragedy of multiple romances; Latex rubber, the loose arrangements of love vulnerably exposed.

A performance: Starification, or S.O.S: (Starification Object Series) and object game of mastication. Starification – Scarification; mastication-masturbation; complete-deplete; directions-erections; contact-cunt act; object – I Object; series—to seriousness; pose-expose; formation-fornication; turn-yearn; choose-lose; expose-disclose; play-lay; desire-inspire; receive-deceive; pick-sick; flavor-savor her; retain-distain; card-hard; lower-slower; S.O.S.—help.

Juicy fruit, super cherry, Black Jack, Adams Apple, -fantastic colors. The double folded gestural drawings, made from gum; a doppelganger, transferring human remains into an androgenous object. These drawings, like Morse code across the wall, relate the many individuals who touched me and I am touched by their lives, not their death.

Hannah Wilke, 1975

Hannah Wilke's "Letter to Women Artists" was originally published in *Art: A Woman's Sensibility*, Feminist Art Program, California Institute of the Arts, 1975, and reprinted in *Hannah Wilke: Sculpture 1960s–80s*, Alison Jacques Gallery, London, 2014.

Excerpt from

HANNAH WILKE: COLOUR AND FORM

Griselda Pollock

The work of Hannah Wilke confronts us with an artist who could absorb the ambition of American painting and sculpture in the 1950s while also being one of the profound readers of its chief contestant, Marcel Duchamp. But what she saw, I am surmising, was little space in either their grandiose or his ironic gestures for a depth that she wanted to convey about being a living, loving, sexual, thinking person who was not 'of the masculine'. I am torturing words here because it is so difficult to say this.

If I stress the importance to Hannah Wilke of being an embodied woman, there is the risk of the adjective woman before the word artist disqualifying her from what we want to make sure all recognize: Hannah Wilke was an artist of immense stature. Being a woman artist, given our culture's privileging of masculine experience as universal, downgrading women's experience as local, partisan, minor, secondary, or frankly uninteresting, is a treacherous condition. By the 1970s, this issue rose to the surface of cultural debate generating its own discourse and artistic practices, rewriting art history, making a fuss about gender.

What is important to stress is that Hannah Wilke's work begins before this Feminist movement, which she embraced and fought in equal measure, broke the surface. Hannah Wilke was coming of age as an artist in the presence of the monumentality of American ambition in the 1950s with its tragic-heroic Pollock, its mournful Rothko, its vibrant Frankenthaler and inventive Krasner, or its cool Duchamp. These inspired her, in a sense, to take part in her own and singular voice, but what she added to these varied legacies was that making a difference would mean doing it in her own body.

What forms could do that? That is the urgent legacy, the important one, of any brush with modernism: to think in form. It is the great discovery that formal processes are themselves the language of this complex event, modern art. To some extent we have lost sight of that in contemporary art. This is what makes the art of the 1960s so fascinating today. It was the crucible of a double change. There would be new materials with which dangerous even deadly experiments would be conducted: latex, resins and polyfibres. We see that in Wilke's latex sculptures from the mid-1970s, where she alone spread, peeled and layered the medium in order to construct fleshy or plant-like organic forms, infusing latex with colour, and hanging it on the wall. Formally, materially, these are abstract sculptures.

Now comes the second change. What these works evoke is a whole new sense of the body. Here is another intervention or challenge to the classical body of sculpture that is a closed body, an enclosed body. If an artist understands that the greatness of art is that someone dares to speak in the first person: to share something of being in the world in this singularity, what happens when an artist refuses to speak in another person's voice. By that I mean, if the norm in art has been the voice, the body, the experience of one sex, one class, one ethnicity, all those of the "other" sexes, classes, ethnicities, etc. are forced to ventriloquize, obliged to borrow a voice, and not to speak in their own. Hannah Wilke tested out that exclusionary law. She experimented with creating forms that would involve making sculptures, but she was also making sculpture with her own body. What would that look like?

The vocabulary emerged slowly, producing what we now see as the hallmarks of Hannah Wilke's artistic singularity. For instance, her tiny gum sculptures, some mounted in Plexiglas boxes, or affixed to her face and body in the S.O.S. photographic series, combine an everyday substance, industrially manufactured since the 1860s in the United States with a signature form. It is, in fact, a gesture and a trace of bodies that salivate and chew. Masticating the dry strips of gum until they are malleable, layering their varied colours that are the visual trace of flavours of fruits and herbs, the artist's hand moulds the material into unique objects that nonetheless share the formal property of the fold.

The fold recurs across other forms and other materials. Here it is small in size but grand in scale. Scale is another important feature of Hannah Wilke's sculptural thinking that performs a rethinking of sculpture. The repeat of the gesture of folding clay or gum turns into the cluster of sculptures in conversation. Each work already sets in play both an infinite possibility of differences produced while doing the same gesture and the composite effect of each singular outcome when grouped in informal dialogue or gridded collectives.

When the fold, scale and repetition come into play, Hannah Wilke's creativity bonds the malleability of clay or gum with the trace of another body; neither Apollo's stern, mastering and rational uprightness nor Venus' exposure and eternal shame at her hidden sex. But this other body is not literally female in any medical or anatomical sense, yet it is profoundly female in terms of her search for forms through which to know the female body's potential meanings, its specificities and possibilities that have been denied representation by the limited images of women's embodiment and sexuality. Wilke created forms for the body which are sculptural, an evocation in form and material of what we do not know about any living, lived-in, lived-through, body. This sculptural body hinges on the duality of substance and space. Some might find it visceral, and think of skin and interior organs. But Hannah Wilke is a powerfully abstract artist, evoking never representing.

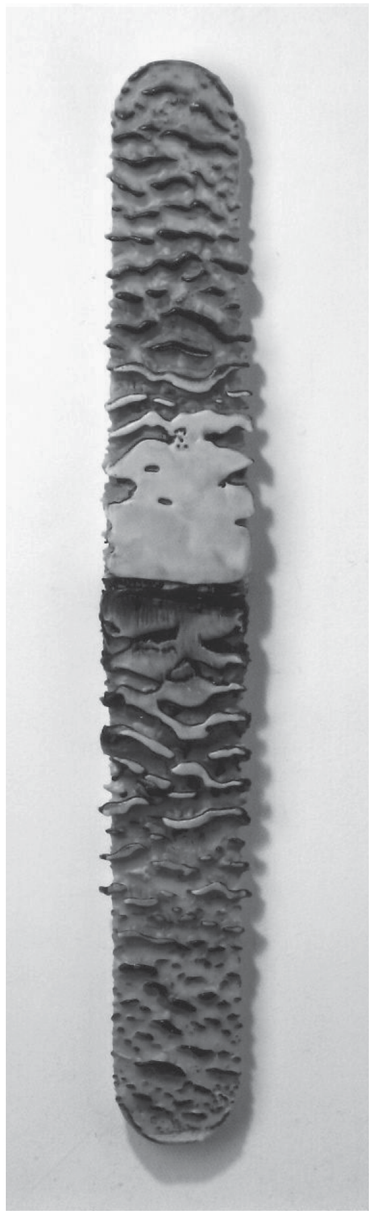
In her 1975 "Letter to Women Artists," Hannah Wilke declared: "Feel! Feel the folds; one fold, two folds, expressive precise gestural symbols. Multilayered metaphysics below the gut level, like laughter, making love, or shaking hands." The key word here is 'like': art is not the translation of experience. It is its discovery. Its forms allow us to confront not-yet-known experience in this novel, aesthetically formulated encounter. Later in the same statement she speaks of her favoured materials: "Kneaded erasers, 'the grayer, softer chaos that is tragedy…'; Terra cotta, the tragedy of multiple romances; Latex rubber, the loose arrangements of love vulnerably exposed." This works like poetry: it is not exact or descriptive. We have to make the leap between moulded, poured, layered or baked materials and the events of life that are the least speakable.

Wilke's drawings bring me back to my beginning, placing her in conversation with both the most ambitious and abstract of American art emerging from the 1950s and in touch with the energies, and traumas, of American modernity that shaped its concurrent popular culture of movies, advertising and, let it be said, sexuality. She held the two in exquisite tension throughout her career, free to evoke the body and at times to work with its living form. Nowhere is this more interesting than in the photographs of *S.O.S. Starification Object Series*, 1974, where her own skin becomes the support for her folded gum forms, decorating, scarifying and running free.

Hannah Wilke, *Untitled*, c. 1970. 25 glazed white ceramics. 27½ × 27½ in. Private Collection, Courtesy Acquavella Galleries. © Scharlatt, Hannah Wilke Collection & Archive, Los Angeles/VAGA at ARS, NY

Hannah Wilke, *The Orange One*, 1975. Latex, liquitex and metal snaps. 18 × 38 × 3 in. Private Collection, Courtesy Acquavella Galleries. © Scharlatt, Hannah Wilke Collection & Archive, Los Angeles/VAGA at ARS, NY

LYNDA BENGLIS



LEFT: Lynda Benglis, *Untitled*, 1968–70. Pigmented beeswax, damar resin and gesso on wood and Masonite. 36 × 5 × 3 in. Photo: Chris Burnside. © 2022 Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

RIGHT, AND OPPOSITE PAGE (DETAIL): Lynda Benglis, *Black and White (Yellow and Pink)*, 1968–1971. Purified pigmented beeswax, damar resin, phosphorescent pigment and gesso on Masonite. Private Collection. © 2022 Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

DAVID HAMMONS

David Hammons, *Untitled*, 2017. Acrylic and tarp on canvas. 64 × 46 in. © David Hammons. Photo: Tom Powell.

Excerpt from

"ON THE IDEOLOGY OF DIRT" (1990)

Tom Finkelpearl

From the full text originally published in the catalogue to the exhibition *David Hammons: Rousing the Rubble*, 1969–1990 at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, December 16, 1990–February 10, 1991

In 1982, Manhattan's South Street Seaport area was a group of rundown nineteenth-century buildings in the midst of the enormity of New York's modern financial district. The fish market thrived at night. At 4:00 A.M. it felt like old New York as you walked through acres of silver fish, fires burning in large metal drums and Italian American men with meathooks over their shoulders, selling to cooks from New York's restaurants. During the day, the streets were relatively empty, except for the occasional Wall Street broker seeking out the pier for a quiet place to eat lunch.

Then, in 1983, the Rouse Corporation opened the South Street Seaport, a shopping and eating mall characterized by a nautical motif. Every brick on Fulton Street had been cleaned. The cobblestones were meticulously restored. Two new mall buildings were added, designed in a superficial manner to sympathize with the existing architecture. Expensive shops lured businessmen and women to the "historic district." Escalators moved from floor to floor, from Banana Republic to The Gap to Benetton, in the enclosed mall space so common in America in the late 1970s. While the motif of the Seaport was nautical, the subtext was commercial, and the aesthetic source was the shopping mall. A new class of visitor began to walk the streets—"clean" people who came to experience a quaint version of American history. It was common to hear visitors remark, "Oh, isn't it wonderful. The Seaport is exactly like Faneuil Hall," another of the Rouse Corporation's sanitized historic modernizations in Boston.

When visitors rhapsodized about the historic district, they were unwittingly revealing how the sanitized Seaport reflects America's middle class hatred of dirt and its search for "authentic" experience without leaving the comfort of what is "clean." For the Seaport's dirt was site specific, generated by an exact place and generations of users who hauled fish and marketed it to millions of other inhabitants. Removing the dirt from the Seaport removed its history, that physical record of time and use. The developers failed to respect the frayed, neglected site. Instead, their version of the Seaport took visitors away from the specific history of New York, away from the city's rich cultural diversity, away from its poverty.

The dirt on the Seaport buildings was visual, physical evidence that will take a century to restore, that is if Rouse doesn't intend to keep the premises scrubbed clean. The fish market may still take place each weeknight, but its setting and meaning have been compromised. The Rouse Corporation's vision of the Seaport depended on the public's acceptance of, and its belief in, "renovating," making new again, rather than on an appreciation or understanding of the old, the gritty, the dirty. In fact, our culture's hated of what's old and dirty is so intense that weathered clothes—distressed leather, stonewashed denim—are bought new but are meant to look old.

To place the notion of dirt within a cultural context, each of the following entries—as compared to the entry it is juxtaposed with—underscores the difference between dirty and clean. An entry may appear in both columns:

Dirty	⟷	*Clean*
David Hammons	⟷	Jeff Koons
Edward Keinholz	⟷	Andy Warhol
Betsey Johnson	⟷	Ronald Shamask
George Clinton	⟷	Michael Jackson
Practice	⟷	Theory
Federico Fellini	⟷	Stephen Spielberg
City Dirt	⟷	Earth
Jonathan Swift	⟷	Alexander Pope
Lower East Side	⟷	Upper East Side
Frederich Nietzsche	⟷	Immanuel Kant
P.S. 1	⟷	P.S. 1 Museum
P.S. 1 Museum	⟷	The Museum of Modern Art
Body	⟷	Mind
Gustave Courbet	⟷	J.A.D. Ingres
New York	⟷	Minneapolis
Friction	⟷	Lubrication
Records (Analog)	⟷	Compact Discs (Digital)
Film	⟷	Video
Pencil	⟷	Pen
Pen	⟷	Typewriter
Typewriter	⟷	Laser Printer
Coal	⟷	Nuclear Power
Letterpress	⟷	Offset Printing
Joseph Beuys	⟷	Daniel Buren
Brown Rice	⟷	White Rice
Boston Garden	⟷	L.A. Forum
Newspaper	⟷	Magazine
Fanzine	⟷	Newsletter
Thelonius Monk	⟷	Duke Ellington
Michelangelo Pistoletto	⟷	Donald Judd
Huey Long	⟷	Dan Quayle
Punk	⟷	New Wave
Humidity	⟷	Dry Heat
James Brown	⟷	Mick Jagger
Mick Jagger	⟷	Barry Manilow

At the same time the Seaport was being cleaned up, the art world was also being sanitized. The early 1980s brought the emergence of a new "clean" look in art that concentrated on slick, media-derived images. "Dirty" and "funky" were words rarely heard in SoHo during this period, although there was a vital and longstanding tradition of dirty art, from Joseph Beuys' huge slabs of fat to Richard Serra's splattered lead to Mierle Ukeles' refuse-based installations.

Dirty art has had its allies within the museum community. Alanna Heiss' series of installation-based exhibitions in loft-like spaces—from the Idea Warehouse to The Clocktower to P.S. 1—used dirt as a positive, engaging element. When P.S. 1 opened in 1976, Nancy Foote wrote a review of the Rooms exhibition, "The Apotheosis of the Crummy Space." She argued that artists in the early 70s had become increasingly disillusioned with the clean, white gallery space because of its aesthetic limitations and commercial bent. A new solution for artists, she put forth, was to work in crummy spaces and:

> *. . . co-opt the crumminess: draw upon it: work it into the art . . . Un-purchasability signified the new purity: the non-art context became its testing ground . . . it began to occur to people that maybe art could survive outside the gallery. More and more artists surreptitiously explored the theory and more and more art began to find itself entering bad neighborhoods.*

During this period artists drew inspiration from the peripheries of the city: Tribeca, Coney Island, the Bronx, Long Island City; they were learning from the power of the physical site.

Around the time P.S. 1 opened, David Hammons was installing works in empty lots in Harlem, creating installations from human hair collected from local barber shop floors, chicken wings from the deep-fryer, bottle caps salvaged from barrooms, even dirt itself. His connection to Harlem, to a "peripheral" site has been central to the meaning of his work. In fact, this centrality is a key difference between Hammons and many other dirty realists.

Hammons has always chosen the dirtiest materials available. He looks for the traces of time in his dirty materials, the physical evidence of human use. Like the Arte Povera artists he admires, Hammons seeks to draw on the strength and poverty of rough materials—always choosing a painted and scratched, discarded board over a new one, and relying on handmade,

dirty construction. But Hammons' love of poverty and dirt is different than the Arte Povera artists, who generally love poverty from afar.

The *Heritage Dictionary* defines dirt as: *1. Earth or soil. 2. A filthy or soiling substance such as mud, dust, or excrement.* The substances identified in this dictionary definition are materials that David Hammons has used in his work for the last twenty years. The dictionary goes on to list other relevant meanings that can be applied to Hammons: *"dirt-cheap" (very cheap) and "dirt farmer" (a farmer who does all his own work).*

Hammons' use of dirty materials relates directly to the social and economic status of dirt, a cheap substance, and to his own ability to control his means of production, like the dirt farmer. His found materials are imbued with traces of use and time; he does not clean them up or sanitize them.

In a recent conversation, Hammons related his anger at the way that New York's Circle Line boat tours are conducted. He described how, when a boat nears Harlem, heading north on the East River, the tour guides take a break, only resuming their narration when the boat swings around to the Upper West Side. Ignoring Harlem, Hammons points out, they miss telling the story of the home of America's most original contributions to culture, particularly jazz musicians, and their lives uptown.

Hammons does not accept the circle as drawn by the dominant culture or its vision of centrality. His sites have never been peripheral to his view of New York. And, he has never had to travel far to draw inspiration from the "frayed, abandoned" site; his definition of site has always been social as well as physical:

> *I think I spend eighty-five percent of my time on the streets as opposed to in the studio. So, when I go to the studio I expect to regurgitate these experiences of the street. All of the things I see socially—the social conditions of racism—come out like a sweat.*

Hammons seeks out crummy spaces, the empty lots of Harlem, the streets in the East Village, and sees the site for art in relationship to racial, social, and economic issues. His process is about the street. Even when he is "regurgitating" his experiences in a gallery setting, there is the feeling of the street, a feeling which comes from bringing non-art dirt into the gallery.

Postmodernism grew out of the ashes of Neo-expressionism, and simulationist artists' hatred of dirt needs to be understood in the light of the excesses of neo-X. There seems to be a misunderstanding, however, of the distinction between Expressionism (contrived dirt) and the use of truly funky materials, between messy art and dirty art. While Expressionism is frequently messy, it tends to rely upon clean, new materials, like fresh paint and canvas. These materials are manipulated to represent an emotional state or angst. For example, Jackson Pollock's drip paintings were startlingly new in their messiness, but they were not "dirty." Pollock's fresh vision referred to the process of creating a work in the studio.

The dirt in Hammons' work comes from the street and represents the passage of time outside of any art context, any studio. Hammons' response to Pollock underscores their differences even further. He has proposed a work, a blow-up of the most recent graduating class from Pollock's high school in Los Angeles. The school, mostly white in Pollock's time, is now almost completely African American. Hammons seeks to superimpose issues of race upon the legend of Pollock. His proposed work relates to the change of a neighborhood, to "white flight," and to how Pollock's legendary status as an art world figure who relates to urban reality.

When Pollock put out a cigarette on his canvas, it was a gesture of the artistic process. It was distinctly his cigarette, his lips that had drawn air through the cigarette as he was painting. In his "Night Train" wine pieces, Hammons reminds us of lips that have touched wine bottles, very specific lips of African American people in Harlem. The power and sprit of the bottles are tied to social identification, putting the focus on the materials, not on the role of the expressionist artist. He has said:

> *I just love the houses in the South, the way they build them. That Negritude architecture. I really love to watch the way black people make things, houses or magazine stands in Harlem, for instance. Just the way we use carpentry. Nothing fits but everything works. The door closes, it keeps things from coming through. But it doesn't' have that neatness about it, the way white people put things together.*

He equates clean preciseness with white building. His work is poorly built, but not badly built; precise, but not obsessively so; simply built, but not simply conceived. His forms are frequently elegant, but the tech is low and the materials are rough. He seeks more than the representation of the poverty of materials; he creates a cultural representation, a picture of African American culture. Hammons says of his hair pieces, "Those pieces were all about making sure that the black viewer had a reflection of himself in the work." The same can be said of his use of the spade, from his body prints' employment of the ace of spades, to the use of the object itself. Hammons uses the pejorative term, "spade" transforming it into a literal object—a shovel—and uses this to represent the African American. Thus, his sculpture Charlie Parker is a funky old spade attached to the mouthpiece of a saxophone. The image of the African American is associated with the great artist, and it is not incidental that the artist chosen is "dirty." Parker's music is based on dirty dissonance and improvisation rather than "clean" order.

Hammons has also comments on the work of Richard Serra, whose sculpture is clean in design though dirty to the touch. In one performance, Hammons threw twenty-five pairs of shoes over the top of Serra's *TWU* in lower Manhattan, superimposing uptown on downtown. In "Pissed Off" Hammons urinated on the same Serra piece, and, as documented by Dawoud Bey, was nearly arrested by a passing policeman. Both unauthorized additions to TWU made it dirtier, lending a new element to its relationship with New York City. Perhaps only Hammons could urinate on another artist's work and alter its meaning in a positive manner.

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift shows us that the perception of filth is dependent on who is looking and how closely they are looking, as much as it is the scale of the field of view. In the voyage to Lilliput, the tiny people seem exceedingly clean and smooth to the enormous Gulliver. Gulliver's distanced view corresponds to the clean vision of the simulationists. Conversely, in Brobdingnag, the enormous, local inhabitants seem gross to the diminutive Gulliver:

> *Their Skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously colored when I saw them near, with a Mole here and there as broad as a Trencher, Hairs hanging from it thicker than Packthreads . . .*

David Hammons looks closely at our culture and shows it to us with moles and hairs. His view is focused and unflinching in its critique of issues of race and class. But Hammons also finds power and beauty in our moles and hairs, and in the process of making his art reveals an elegant, affirmative use of dirt.

David Hammons, *Freudian Slip*, 1995. Slip-dress and African mask. 26 × 14 × 8 in. overall; 15 × 8 × 8 in. mask. Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland. © David Hammons. Photo: Ron Amstutz

KIKI SMITH

Kiki Smith, *Virgin Mary*, 1992. Wax, cheesecloth, and wood with steel base. 67½ × 26 × 14½ in. Photo: Ellen Page Wilson. © Kiki Smith, courtesy Pace Gallery

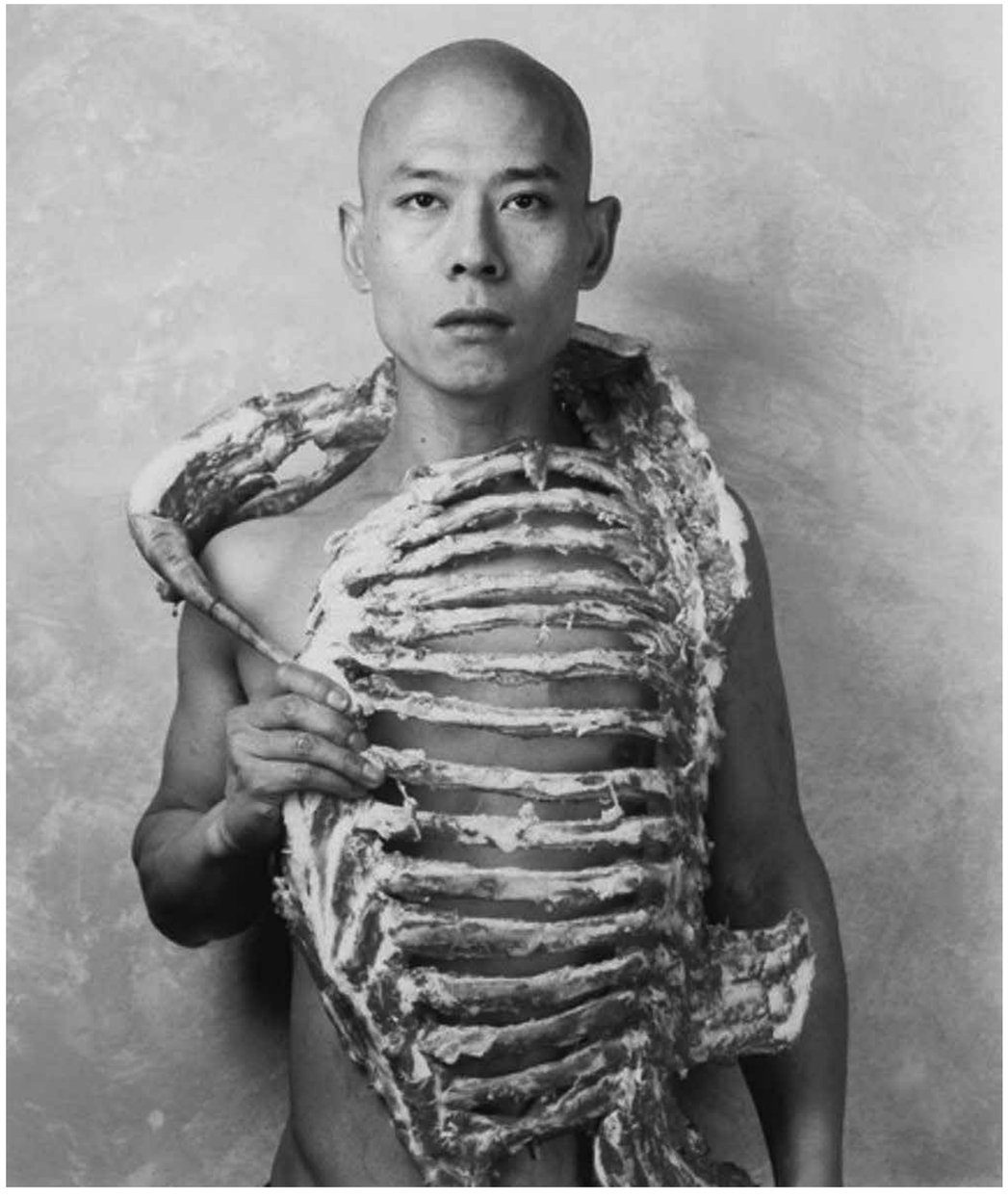
Kiki Smith, *Ice Man*, 1995. Polyester resin and fiberglass. 82 × 30 × 11½. Photo: Ellen Page Wilson. © Kiki Smith, courtesy Pace Gallery

“IN CATHOLICISM THERE ARE VERY FEW FEMALE DEITIES. THE VIRGIN MARY IS THE BIGGEST ONE. SHE’S OUR SKY GODDESS.” — KIKI SMITH

ROBERT GOBER

Robert Gober. *Man Coming Out of Woman*, 1993–1994. Beeswax, human hair, sock, leather shoe. Courtesy the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. Photo: Ron Amstutz

ZHANG HUAN



ABOVE: Zhang Huan, *½ Meat*, 1998. Chromogenic color print. 37 × 31 in. Photo: Tom Barratt. Courtesy Pace Gallery
OPPOSITE PAGE: Zhang Huan, *12 Sq. Meters*, 1994. Chromogenic color print. 60½ x 41 in. Courtesy of Zhang Huan Studio.

ZHANG HUAN IN CONVERSATION WITH BARBARA POLLACK (2015)

BARBARA POLLACK:

You were trained as a painter, but your earliest artworks were acts of performance art, such as *12 Square Meters* (1994), where you sat in a public latrine covered in fish oil and honey and allowed flies to gather on your skin. Where did you get the idea that an artist can do things like that?

ZHANG HUAN:

In 1992, I was in Guangzhou and I discovered a book titled Interviews with Masters. It was a collection of interviews with many western artists, such as Chris Burden, as well as many painters and conceptual artists. I think the next year, I found another book in the library of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, where I was attending graduate school. It was a catalogue of the New York artist, Tseng Kwong Chi, who liked to wear traditional Chinese suits and always posed in a specific position in different locations. That was his performance. These books had a major impact on me.

BP: But when you did your performances in Beijing in the 1990s, did anyone in China understand what you were doing?

ZH: People did not understand and they thought that as a painter, I should concentrate on perfecting my paintings rather than try to get their attention through these performances. In artistic circles, the artists did not understand why I did these rather than just painting. And for general audiences, it was even more difficult for them to understand.

BP: It seems that you like to take the risk that people will not understand you.

ZH: I think I am a person who takes action as long as I think it is the right thing to do. It is just my nature to never attach importance to other people's opinions.

BP: How have your trips to Tibet influenced this new work?

ZH: My trips to Tibet have had an enormous influence on my work. I hope in the future, when you introduce me, you will first say that I am a practitioner of the Sky Burial, then only after that, call me an artist, and then lastly, call me a film director.

During my last trip to Tibet this summer, I became the first person of Han Chinese descent to learn how to perform Sky Burial [in which a monk chops a corpse apart and feeds the fragments of flesh to the birds.] It was beyond my imagination to witness with my own eyes the whole procedure of the Sky Burial.

I was a student of a lama in a temple. The lama is thirty-eight years old and we became friends, and the lama showed me how to organize the Sky Burial. Now, I am anxious to begin my career as a person who performs this ritual.

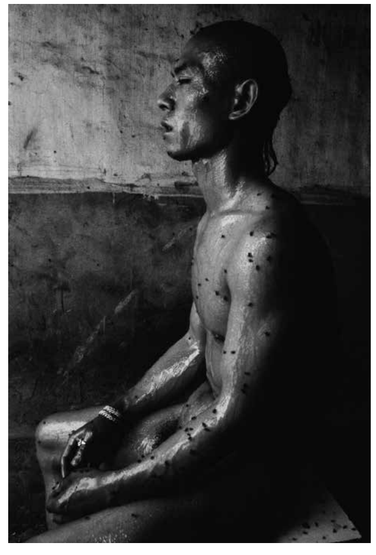
I observed two funerals. The first corpse was of a person who suffered from depression and committed suicide.

The other was from a young man who suffered from acute lung disease. I noticed that the person who suffered from depression held his mouth open while the other person's mouth was shut. From those appearances, I got the impression that they had very different spiritual states on entering the next life. I feel that the person who suffered from depression was happy at the moment of dying, while the person who suffered from lung disease was unhappy at that moment.

BP: It seems that death is never far from your thoughts when you make your works, whether you are working in sculpture or painting. You are also an inveterate collector. You collected fragments of Buddhist sculptures as inspiration for some of your most famous sculptures. Now, I understand that you collect Chinese tombs and coffins. How many do you have?

ZH: There are approximately two hundred, with materials varying from ceramics to stone and wood. I began collecting them five years ago. The first one was a ceramic coffin from the Song Dynasty that I bought from an antiques dealer in Shanghai. Once I had this first coffin, I knew I would be collecting many more because the subject of death and rebirth are just precisely the things that I try to express through my art. I hope in the future my coffins will be shown together with my art in a museum. I would like to build a museum that I would call the Ash Museum and donate these coffins and related artworks to China.

In 1995, in preparation for a performance, I accidentally locked myself into an iron box in my studio. I could not get out and if my shouts hadn't been heard from a woman in the hallway, I might have died there. Some may think this experience is similar to being inside a coffin. But the collection of coffins gives me an entirely different feeling from being locked in an iron box. While our residences in this life are transient and temporary, the coffins can be permanent gardens of humanity. The collection of coffins removes anxieties from my heart and gives me a sense of calmness.



This conversation was excerpted from a longer interview originally published in *Zhang Huan: Let There Be Light* (2015), the catalogue for an exhibition held at Pace Gallery in New York.

SHAHRYAR NASHAT

ABOVE: Shahryar Nashat, *Untitled*, 2021. Papier mâché, epoxy resin, and acrylic. Installation dimensions variable, appx.: 57 × 62 × 27 in. Photo: Elon Schoenholz. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery. Los Angeles and New York.
RIGHT: Shahryar Nashat, *Present Sore*, 2016. Walker Moving Image Commission

THE UNDERSTUDIES (AN EXCERPT)

Jordan Carter

Originally published in *Shahryar Nashat: Keep Begging*, ed. Simon Castets and Laura McLean-Ferris (New York: Swiss Institute; Basel: Kunsthalle Basel; Milan: Lenz Press, 2021), 40–45.

In Mike Kelley's 1992 essay on Paul Thek, he reflected on the artist's color choice:

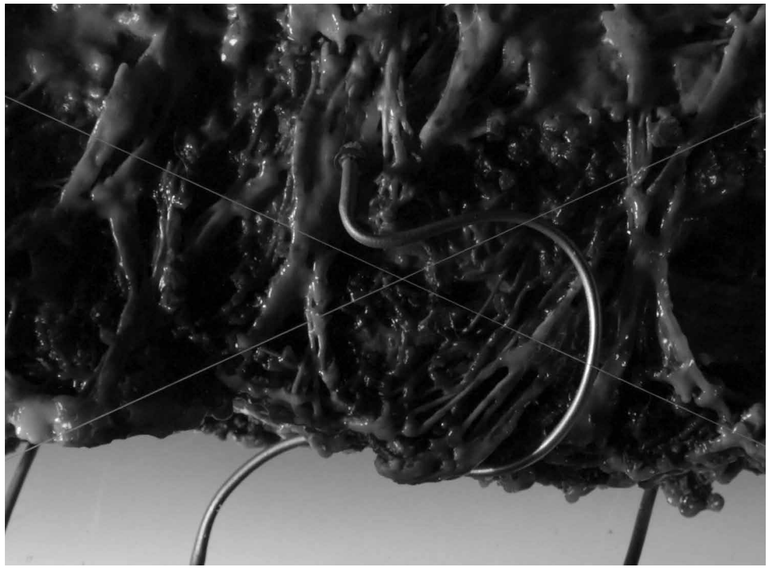
> "This corpse is pink. It is pretty decay. Prettiness is a weapon for Thek. He admits that one of his in- spirations for his *Technological Reliquaries* was the work of Larry Bell. Bell is one of those critically hated decorative Minimalists. John McCracken did a series of simple planks in lipstick shades that rested against the wall. It was "sissy Minimalism." Pink is THE hippie color. It's fairy-dust color, gender-bender color, anti-I Beam sculpture color, the color of the New Man, THE HERMAPHRODITE COLOR."

"Pretty" and "pink" are also weapons in Shahryar Nashat's visual and conceptual arsenal, as demonstrated in the artist's staging of *Present Sore and Chômage Technique*. Magenta-filtered lighting denotes the scenography. Edited between Present Sore's closely cropped body shots, Nashat incorporates close-ups of Paul Thek's beeswax, Plexiglas, metal, and rubber sculpture *Hippopotamus from Technological Reliquaries* (1965) from the Walker's collection. Acting as a celebrity cameo in *Present Sore,* Thek's *Hippopotamus* sets the stage for the off-screen appearance of the wounded prop or pedestal, and also incorporates, by proxy, the corpus of Thek himself. Thek's now iconic "meat pieces"—lifelike chunks of flesh rendered in wax and contained in Plexiglas—provide critical context for understanding the surrounding pedestals of *Chômage Technique* as not solely retired display apparatus, but also sculptural understudies performing and presenting live in the remote presence of the digital body and the absence of a physical one. The notion of sculptures functioning as performance understudies is productive in investigating both this work and the artist's broader practice. Nashat often stages his sculptures as props or scenography for performing bodies—both live and on-screen. However, this relationship to the performing body extends offstage. Within the gallery setting, the sculptures themselves take on the role of performing bodies, or rather, sculptural understudies for the absent human performer. In Chômage Technique, retired plinths are conceptualized as out-of-work actors. But this lack of occupational fulfillment—no longer functioning as institutional display furniture—cultivates a new aspiration, and an indirect responsibility, as the pedestals elicit new modes of desire that demand a new degree of presence and performativity. They become bodies that lack a body, artworks that lack artworks. It is this fundamental lack and longing that constitutes their theatrical presence and embodiment. These props, no longer props, become both instruments and instrumental in Nashat's critical stagecraft.

The vacant pedestal affords the body an understudy that can perform in its absence, exuding a new theatricality akin to the minimal object, but queered insomuch as it is imbued with a sense of desire and longing, even aspiration. Indeed, Nashat does not only render the human body as vulnerable, but the pedestal as well. Coated in a faux-marble veneer, Nashat's pedestals are insufficient and instable stand-ins for the real thing. They are hard up for support, lying in a precarious state of repose as they function as stage props, sculptures, body surrogates, and reliquaries of de sire.

> "[H]emming a performing body into an in- terior ...The body becomes an augmented image put to work ... A site of fragmented desire, supplement, extension, and digital glitch."

Like Thek, Nashat stages scenarios in which the body itself becomes an interior site as though seen through the claustrophobic constraints of Plexiglas, or, rather, the surface area of the screen. Minimal sculpture of the 1960s and '70s incorporated and at times dispensed with the pedestal, allowing the specific object to rest directly on the floor in the bodily space of the viewer. Conversely, Chômage Technique presents the pedestal leveled, troubling differentiations between prop and propped, the body and its housing. Similarly, Thek's "meat pieces"—largely in response to the art world's perceived neglect of the Vietnam War—demonstrated how the vitrine as a reliquary could become violently and sensuously entangled with the body. Restaging this collision of flesh, wax, plaster, metal, and glass against the back- drop of the digital age, Nashat queers and valorizes the pedestal as a powerful technology and prosthesis. In the spirit of Thek's "[p]erverse takes on minimalism," Nashat's pseudo-decorative minimal objects critically expose the social and political dimensions of display apparatus as both stage prop and sculptural understudy in a disembodied age in which the demand for the live, performing body exceeds its physical capacity. In a contemporary art world in the age of the interdisciplinary, where performing bodies are constantly commissioned, traveling, on tour, and on exhibition, the sculptural understudy prevails as both a conceptual device and a practical demand.



DEANA LAWSON

Deana Lawson, *Portal*, 2017. Inkjet print. 43 × 53 in. Courtesy of the artist, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles and New York, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

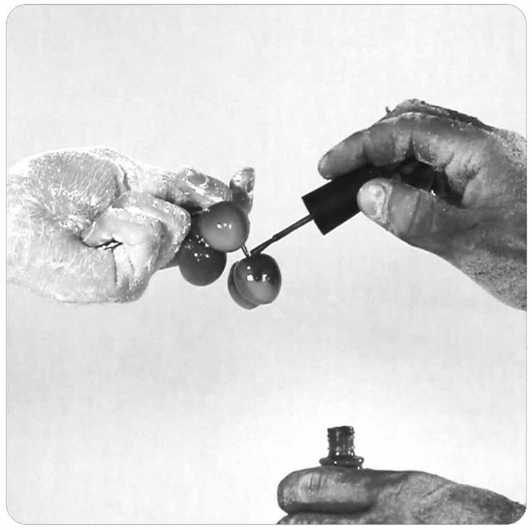
KIMBERLY DREW ON DEANA LAWSON

In Ingmar Bergman's masterpiece *Wild Strawberries* we find ourselves on a journey—in the material and dream-world—alongside our protagonist Professor Isak Borg, a widowed 78-year-old physician who is being honored for his expertise in bacteriology. The original Swedish title of the film Smultronstället, literally means "wild strawberry patch," but colloquially refers to "the place where wild strawberries grow." As we move through the plot alongside Professor Borg, we follow an elderly man making sense of the wild strawberry patch of his life. Dr. Borg's witnessing and recounting of life's wildness and beauty is a methodology that is also readily present in the work of photographer Deana Lawson. Known best for her expertise in light, staging, and composition, Lawson's photographs could also be noted as a smultronstället, or as places for "wild strawberries" to grow.

Take for example, Lawson's *Portal* (2017), which is one of the artist's rarer still life photographs. The image's main focal point, per its title, seems to be the dark gash in the brown leather sofa, a portal to the unknown. More interesting though is the humble painting of pink lilies smuggled into the left side of the composition. Stylistically, the painting recalls artworks which are somewhat ubiquitous in Black homes, a continuation of Lawson's ongoing investment in portraying Black, domestic spaces, localities where her subjects, or her "wild strawberries," have room to grow. Tucked behind the image's focal point, the painting of lilies juts out and draws the eye away from the dark, violent puncture in the brown couch. Unlike many of Lawson's other photographs, this image does not include her traditional cast of Black subjects. Instead, the slash in the sofa and the lilies do the labor of balancing the frame. Lawson's practice has risen to acclaim because of her masterful ability to capture the humanity and dynamism of those who historically have been pushed to the margins of society and representation within the canon of art history. And so, it is apt that here, these lilies, not unlike those in the bouquet of Olympia's maid, hold their own.

In the closing scenes of *Wild Strawberries* Professor Borg explains, "in the jumble of events, I seemed to discern an extraordinary logic." Similarly, in Lawson's photographic journeys, there is an extraordinary logic that can only be found when there is a reverence for "wild strawberries" and where there are optimal conditions for them to flourish. As Zadie Smith writes, Lawson's photographs "open up a portal between the everyday and the sacred, between our finite lives and our long cultural and racial histories, between a person and a people."

ALEX DA CORTE



"I DON'T WANT TO COLONIZE THE JAR OF STRAWBERRIES I BOUGHT FROM FINE FARE. I WANT TO GET TO KNOW THEM—EACH AND EVERY BLOBBY STRAWBERRY, ONE BY ONE"

Alex Da Corte, *Chelsea Hotel No. 2*, 2010. HD Digital Video. 3 min 44 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery.

ALEX DA CORTE AND MARGOT NORTON IN CONVERSATION (2018)

Excerpted from an interview originally published in *Cura* Magazine

MARGOT NORTON:

When I was in your studio the other day, I was struck by a table-top of assembled props for your new work *Rubber Pencil Devil* (2018)—a bottle of Heinz ketchup; a pair of ruby red slippers; a cheerleader's glittery baton; a McDonald's Happy Meal container; a replica of the model trolley from Mister Rogers' *Neighborhood*. Perhaps it was because these objects were given presentational parity atop the table, of similar size, and isolated from their original contexts, but something about their arrangement struck me as a distillation or deconstruction of your practice—as if they were all the ingredients placed in neat little bowls before the chef tosses them into the blender on the cooking show. I thought that we could start with *Rubber Pencil Devil* since it seems to be a bit of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* if you will, incorporating many of the subjects (icons and symbols of American culture) that have haunted your practice from the beginning. The main subject of this new piece is Mister Rogers, and I was wondering if you could elaborate on what it is about him and his children's television series that inspired you for this work?

ALEX DA CORTE:

I like that you compared the table to a cooking show. It has become a bit of a habit for me to arrange objects on makeshift table-tops perched on saw horses. It is the way that I understand the objects, look at them in a void, isolate them and imagine how they may become different or surreal. I borrow this idea from one of my favorite works by Venezuelan artist Marisol, titled *Dinner Date* (1963). In this work, two carved wooden block self portraits sit at a table side by side, enjoying one another's company, about to eat some carrots and peas and do the things one might do on a dinner date. The work always struck me because if you isolate the wooden blocks as individual components, you are left with three pedestals—the two figures and the table, with some objects on top of the lower, table-like pedestal. Similar to a cooking show, the objects that you mentioned seeing in my studio are just pieces of a meal, happy and alone, unbothered to commune,yet in their communion they become something different—a pie, a second course, even hors d'oeuvres. Maybe Mister Rogers is the unbothered ingre- dient in his home: quiet, contemplative, happy. Perhaps the dessert is in the land of make-believe, and through that trolley tunnel you find something new and remixed—a stage that allows for a different way of thinking...

ADC Again I think of food, specifically sandwiches. Wikipedia says a sand- wich is a food typically consisting of vegetables, sliced cheese, or meat, placed on or between slices of bread, or more generally any dish wherein two or more pieces of bread serve as a container or wrapper for another food type. This leads me to *BurgerTime*—a game I played a lot as a kid on Cole- coVision. The goal of the game is to stack layers of a sandwich by running across them to make them fall on top of each other; to make disparate worlds collide. I studied animation in the mid-'90s and discovered 19th-century English photographer Eadweard Muybridge. I liked that animators Lotte Reiniger, Frank Mouris, and Muybridge used multiplicity in their work, squashing many elements together or stretching them apart. They got the most out of a piece of paper or plastic, wanting to create more than just a flat image—the illusion of depth, of "life." It was probably around 1996 when I was thinking of this, concurrent with the release of the movie *Multiplicity* starring Michael Keaton and Andie MacDowell. I think my work does that—it goes in and out, squash- es and stretches, replicates "life." Bringing Mister Rogers into the "Land of Make-Believe" is taboo. It is something that cannot be. He voices the charac- ters and operates the puppets. He cannot be seen singing with them... or can he? Maybe he can if this is *Multiplicity 2*... Maybe seeing this Dale Cooper version of Mister Rogers on the other side of the mirror is what we need right now...

MN Yes! It reminds me of the "man behind the curtain" from the *The Wizard of Oz*—the self-proclaimed "great and powerful" ruler of the Land of Oz who turned out to be an ordinary conman. Speaking of Oz, the character of the Wicked Witch of the West has figured into your work several times: in *Rubber Pencil Devil*, as well as in the wall-work *Haymaker* (2017); as a miniature-ver- sion in your 2016 exhibition A *Man Full of Trouble* at Maccarone gallery; as a large hat in *A Season in He'll at* Art + Practice Foundation (2016); in your and Jayson Musson's *Easternsports* (2014); and your 2015 exhibition at Luxembourg & Dayan was titled *Die Hexe ("The Witch" in German)*. What does this image of the archetypal witch in all her green glory (perhaps perpetuated by Margaret Hamilton's iconic portrayal in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* mean to you?

ADC Throughout history, the witch has been the outlier, a foreigner in a new land, an immigrant, a loner, and a queer. By those descriptions, this makes me a witch.

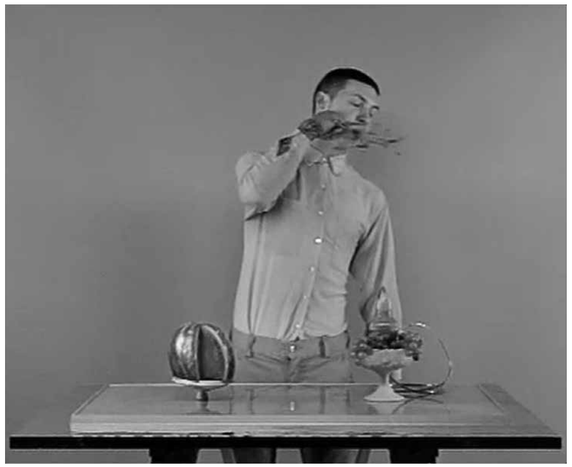
I think the witch has to reimagine normative systems of power. This is a healthy place to be. It makes for new ideas and new beginnings. I recently recreated a banned scene from episode 0847 of *Sesame Street* (February 8, 1976). In this episode, Margaret Hamilton appeared as the Wick- ed Witch of the West in search of her lost broom. There was an overwhelming response from parents that the episode scared children and even promoted Wiccanism. I think it is wild that this episode is still banned from television. I wanted to free this episode from this kind of limbo prison. There will always be room for resistance as long as there is this kind of oth- ering and my witch costume will always be hanging in my studio ready for a new day.

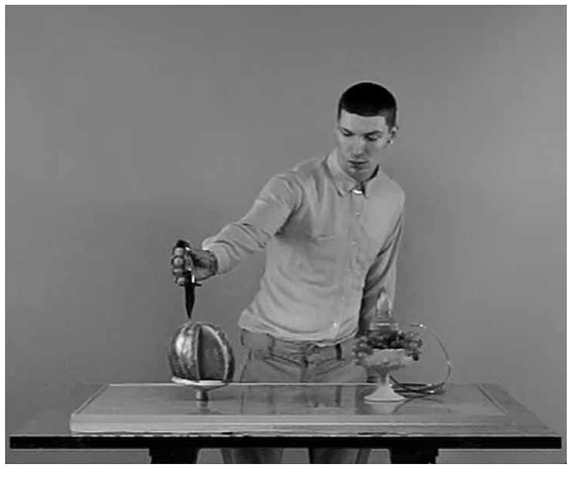
MN ..... In your video, you tenderly handle everyday objects and perform rituals with them that go beyond their traditional uses, perhaps giving them new life—slices of bread are stacked one on top of the other (à la *BurgerTime*), drops of food coloring swirl into a just-popped-open bottle of soda, wet strawberries are carefully placed onto dirty fingertips... Do you think of these items in *Chelsea Hotel No. 2* (and beyond) as liberated in some way, reimagining traditional ideas of beauty or seduction?

ADC I have been thinking a lot about liberation. Freedom fries. Does Freedom fry? Does it ring? It is relative, I guess, but not everyone expects their Fries and Rings to deliver the way the people in charge say they do. I got all of those materials for *Chelsea Hotel No. 2* at Fine Fare Supermarket on Girard Avenue in Philadelphia in the summer of 2010, when I was ex- tremely depressed and hot and ultimately hopeful things would change for the better. Christian Holstad urged me to make a video for a project Lorca Cohen was organizing around her father Leonard Cohen's album *New Skin for the Old Ceremony* (1974). I like skin. All kinds. I like both of the versions of Skins but the Brits do it better.

Can something have a new skin? Leonard says it could. Lettuce be done with old ceremonies. I don't want to colonize the jar of strawberries I bought from Fine Fare. I want to get to know them—each and every blobby strawberry, one by one. I want to touch them and I want you to feel them too. You say that the strawberries will get all over the floor and your clothes and our hands and there is that rat that has been eating all of my work in the studio. It is hot and you are sweaty and we have listened to this song so many times that we cannot hear the words or care to care about Leonard or Janis or anyone. Are these syrupy strawberries edible? I am hungry. Well what next? There are strawberries on our fingers and coffee on our arms and tin foil and tape in our pockets. What next?





"THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE WITCH HAS BEEN THE OUTLIER, A FOREIGNER IN A NEW LAND, AN IMMIGRANT, A LONER, AND A QUEER. BY THOSE DESCRIPTIONS, THIS MAKES ME A WITCH."

Alex Da Corte, *Bad Blood*, 2012. SD Digital Video. 3 min 59 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery.

JULIE CURTISS

Julie Curtiss, *The Sinner*, 2022. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 18 × 14 in. Courtesy of the artist; Anton Kern Gallery, New York, and White Cube, London.

TWO-BODY PROBLEM (EXCERPT)

Simon Baker

This text originally appeared in the catalogue for the exhibition *Monads and Dyads* at White Cube Mason's Yard, London, 14 May–26 June, 2021.

In the early days of the Surrealist movement in Paris (probably no-one knows exactly when, but to be safe let's say in the mid-1920s), the group would play a word game called 'L'un dans l'autre', literally 'One in the other'. The idea was that one participant would describe something exclusively with reference to another, unrelated thing, one clue at a time, with the rest of the players competing to be the first to identify the source object, taking turns at guessing after each clue. The way this principle played out is easier to understand via an example than in the abstract:

This animal has one leg;
It lives in the streets of our towns and cities;
Its neck is long but bent to the ground;
Its fact throws shadows on everything it looks at.
The answer? This 'animal' is a street light.

The game was not intended to produce easy solutions, and with the developed Surrealist imaginations of the highest calibre of player, one round might easily have extended to very many clues and guesses, leading the group to a merry dance through a series of deliberate tangents and misdirections.

It is not as far as one might think to go from a parlour game played in the early years of the 20th century to aspects of practice in painting and sculpture, both around the time 'L'un dans l'autre' was popular, and int eh present day. If we stick to straightforward substitutions, we might well bring to mind the 1936 Lobster Telephone of Salvador Dalí, a piece in which the receiver (of an old-fashioned, two-part telephone) has been replaced by a rose-orange crustacean, thus creating the uncomfortable associations that might be expected from cradling its claws to one's ear. Looking to art of the present, we can find a strategy directly analogous to that used by Dalí in the work of Julie Curtiss, whose paintings are often characterized by substitutions of the expected with other objects, part objects and details of objects. Most obviously there is the use of hair to form body parts and bodies, first human and then animal. With Curtiss's work as a source we might imagine a round of 'L'un dans l'autre' playing out as follows:

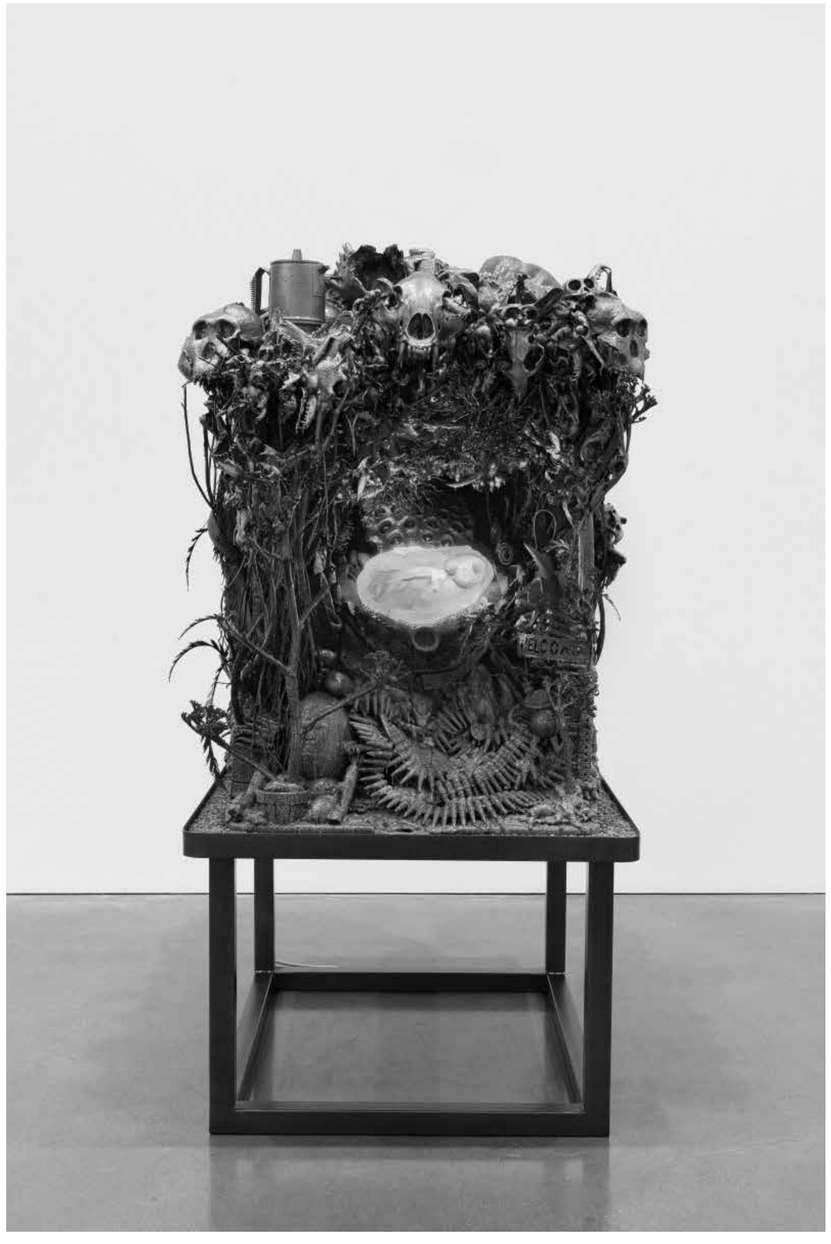
This wig is hung from a hook;
It was made from once-living material;
It could be divided into sections and eaten;
It is unsuitable for vegetarians;
It should be stored at low temperatures;
In the past it could have been purchased in places such as Chelsea in New York;
Smithfield in London, and La Villette in Paris.
The answer? This wig is an animal carcass that has been butchered for food.

Julie Curtiss asks us to reconsider structural problems in both thinking and seeing, whether in the discreet sense proposed schematically by monads and dyads, or via modes of representation hat leave us little space for interpretation or transposition. Writing in response to (and against) the kind of Surrealist practices associated with 'L'un dans l'autre', Georges Bataille elaborated a personal formulation of what he believed would be the most effective and efficient 'non-transpositional' images. His 1930 essay 'L'Espirit Moderne et le jeu des transpositions' ('The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions') sets out to imagine this rarest and most provocative form of representation. Provocative not because they might provoke a reaction, but because they were somehow capable of obstinately holding on to their integrity, and refusing to direct their viewers 'elsewhere.' The simplest and most often-repeated passage of Bataille's essay is one in which he defies 'any lover of painting to love a picture as much as a fetishist loves a shoe'. But elsewhere Bataille is more obviously prescient about the implications of the powerful limitation he sees in avant-garde tactics: 'The Modern Spirit,' he says, 'has never put forward anything other than methods applicable to literature or painting. It is likely that whatever succeeds it will assume meaning only on a completely different plane.' What this plane might be, Bataille (and so we) cannot know, but it is safe to assume that in proposing 'non-transpositional' images in opposition to the quagmire of symbolism and iconography in which viewers are consistently referred elsewhere, Bataille imagined a plane rich in its own allusive poverty.

Arguably, Curtiss's work squares the circle between games of substitution (in which one thing is, rather than is replaced by something else) and the problems of transposition, so that bodies are entirely compromised of hair and yet resemble neither, or figures are completely absorbed by the picture plane to the point that they cease even to adequately represent characters. Her hairy version of Gustave Courbet's 1866 painting L'Origine du monde is a case in point, in that it absolutely refuses the logic of Meret Oppenheim's iconic fur cup Le Déjeuner en fourrure (1936). For where Oppenheim asks us to think about the linguistic and symbolic associations of drinking from a furry cup (and thus radically bypasses the tongue-in-cheek logic of Dalí's Lobster Telephone), Curtiss leaves us in a kind of no-man's land in which the associations of her revision of it, are flattered by an insufficiently allusive pictorial effect. The invasive and intrusive eye for which Courtbet's secret painting was intended is, in both senses of the term, 'put out'.

If for Curtiss something like hair, or something 'like' hair, can take the place of many things, then it is neither still fully hair (or at least cannot signify itself with any conviction), nor is it ever properly a substitute for the thing it replaces (as is in fact the case for Oppenheim's tea cup). Instead it becomes a kind of web, stretching between all the things it has been asked to be. At the end of a long and varied career, [Philip] Guston reached a point of no return, where the niceties of abstraction (for which he was lauded) and the narrative potential of figuration (for which, initially at least, he was ridiculed) collapsed into a highly repetitive but effective practice in which individual pictorial elements hovered between symbolizing, or referring to, things in the real world (like watches, lightbulbs or hooded Klansmen), and standing as excuses for bold exercises in colour and composition. With Curtiss's hair we are far from Guston's 'tally marks', but there is something that both have in common: the insistent way in which we are asked to suspend our disbelief as a single type of thing is used repeatedly to describe not just 'something' else, but everything else.

MAX HOOPER SCHNEIDER



Humans have constructed destruction. Economies of scarcity and analyses of ecological climax foreground the peripheral, the marginal; aura intensifies around the hidden or discarded. Transfer stations, abandoned malls, subterranean fields of E-waste and coffers of thrift store flotsam become playgrounds for re-wondering material relationships and the uncanny gathering of bodies.

Conceptualized within this deconstructive-reconstructive context in which living and dead, past and future, undergo a mutual morphogenesis, a uranium glass-forged turtle fossil from the Eocene epoch is presented as an animate event incubated by a cavernous world of sodden skulls and festering dross rather than as dead representation of a past geological timescale. While its material logic is endemic, its formal massings continue to travel and elude classification: half altar, half organism, part container, part opening; the coruscating contents evoking a desert landscape of archaeological plunder and the depleted of uranium of tribal lands or perhaps even a reliquary coveted by an alien discoverer.

Commodified and fetishized nostalgia, assembled shrines of junk, Hobby Lobby scrapbooking and crafting, no longer exist as the domestic mode of the dabbler but as tactical operations for survival in the mode of bricolage or making do. Whether the concern is species survival or aesthetic survival, nothing is nonfunctional. The dialectic of abandonment and re-collection, disintegration and recombination, exists as the first stage in the dynamic evolution of aesthetic (and species) newness—a newness that in its turn, subject to the unceasing depredations of time, will become something other. The future, then, is always present, always on its way, its specificities only characterizable when a thinker arbitrarily stops time and performs a fossilizing gesture—or produces a work of art.

Max Hooper Schneider, *Roadside Reliquary (Turtle Fossil)*, 2021. Mixed media, cast uranium glass, UV lighting system, custom metal base. 52 × 46 × 38 in. Courtesy of the artist.

KATHLEEN RYAN

Kathleen Ryan, *Bad Melon (Rainbow)*, 2022. Calcite, serpentine, prehnite, rhodonite, amazonite, aquamarine, onyx, jasper, ruby in zoisite, turquoise, labradorite, rose quartz, agate, carnelian, magnesite, marble, acrylic, steel pins on coated polystyrene, Volkswagen hood. 21½ × 90 × 29 in.

DOREEN LYNETTE GARNER

ABOVE: Doreen Lynette Garner, *Epigenetic Nacre Noire*, 2019. Silicone, epoxy putty, urethane plastic, synthetic hair, steel, pearls, interference pigment. 76½ × 50 × 18½ in. Courtesy of the artist and JTT, New York.
OPPOSITE PAGE: Detail.

DOREEN LYNETTE GARNER'S EPIGENETIC NACRE NOIRE

Alexa Punnamkuzhyil

Nearly all of the artists in 125 Newbury's inaugural exhibition *Wild Strawberries* have an investment, obsession, and entanglement with the human body and its representation. From Kiki Smith's angelic and demonic feminine forms, to Robert Gober's surrealist forays into the ends and beginnings of the human, to Lucas Samaras's ecstatic and bizarre extensions and of the body, and Hannah Wilke's orificial explorations, there is no shortage of corporeal fascination and fixation. Yet despite sharing with artists like Paul Thek and Samaras an aesthetic of slicing and suturing, of rupture and repair, of torture and healing, Doreen Lynette Garner's fleshy and flesh-like works have stakes that are hauntingly and powerfully singular.

Singular in the way they refer to the dismantling and re-assembling of the Black female body, which is as central to her work as it is to the unspoken history of America. No group of bodies has ever been so systematically tortured, degraded, and commodified as those of Black women, a story Garner conjures by drawing on written and unwritten histories. Perhaps more than any other artist in the exhibition, Garner's work demands a certain self-education about the atrocities committed against Black women in American medicine. Her work draws attention specifically to the nightmarish practices of J. Marion Sims, the historically lauded "father" of gynecology, who performed surgical experiments on enslaved women without anesthesia. Lucy, Betsey, Anarcha, and countless others suffered unspeakable and unknowable assaults at the hands of Sims, and in the name of scientific progress.

Lucy, Betsey, and Anarcha's names arise again and again in Garner's titles. The absence of Sims's name reminds us that white torturers get their own pedestals, their own statues, their own sculptures, and, most vitally, their own whitewashed histories. Much of Garner's work engages with horror-filled aesthetics of operating tables, barbed wire, plague masks and scalpels. Her use of the aesthetics of horror brings us closer to a statistical horror: that in the US, maternal death rates for Black women continue to be three times higher than those for white women; meanwhile Black children have a 40% higher chance of going missing, even as fewer Black children receive Amber Alert status than of any other race. Garner's visual horrors stand in not just for the past, but for this present, for the truth that assaults against Black people and their flesh do not live in some distant era; they define our American present.

In the work on view in *Wild Strawberries, Epigenetic Nacre Noir* from 2019, Garner departs from an aesthetics of blood and suture. Instead, she gives us the wonder and beauty of the vulva, pink, preserved and untouched by the scalpel. The reference to black pearls in the work's title recalls the unsung labor of Black women who have no choice but to transform grains of sand into beauty. The notion of the "epigenetic" expands this idea: in biology, epigenetic alterations are those made to one's genome *after* birth, as the result of living in the world—they are changes to the library of genetic material based on what has happened in life; they are how trauma lives on in the genome. Garner notes of pearls that they are "[thought] of as beautiful and abundant," but that in reality they are "eating the organism inside out." Trauma can be deceptively beautiful in hands of profiteers, Garner suggests, but epigenetically deleterious to the body, the soul, and the history of a people.

Take some comfort in the nacreous beauty of Garner's sculpture, but, as Billie Holliday would remind you, don't take too much. This exquisite, whole, healthy and pearlescent vulval form is mounted, hauntingly and threateningly, on a matte black caliper armature. Even this precious, internal, unalterable beauty, Garner suggests, is subject to systematic violence; Black women are still considered specimens, those to be looked at, studied, objectified. Their trauma, she reminds us, may appear like pearls, but in fact are various hauntings which live in their legacies, bodies, and genomes. Even as they allure and draw us in. Garner's works never release her viewer from this persistent sense of threat; nor should they—that is precisely the point.

BRANDON NDIFE

Brandon Ndife, *Expelled Immediately*, 2021. AquaResin, cast insulation foam, earth pigment, enamel, silicone rubber. 18 × 9 × 15 in. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York.

HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED OF FALLING?

Vito Adriaensens

> "An Ingmar Bergman film is, if you like, one twenty-fourth of a second metamorphosed and expanded over an hour and a half. It is the world between two blinks of the eyelids, the sadness between two heartbeats, the gaiety between two handclaps."

The late great director Jean-Luc Godard had a way of epitomizing the spirit of Bergman's films. It was the marriage of poetry and philosophy that Godard deeply admired. In turn, Bergman was truly disgusted by Godard's postmodern approach to films. Godard was nevertheless correct, and nowhere is this marriage on display as much as in the two films that Bergman made back-to-back in the late 1950s, *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and *Wild Strawberries* (1957). These two films are intensely concerned with coming to terms with death and blend memory with dream in the process.

Watching a film is as close as one gets to dreaming without being asleep. The filmmakers in this exhibition seamlessly transform the architecture of dreams into the language of cinema. Like all great artists, they synthesize our daily emotions, aspirations, and fears into narrative and non-narrative visual experiences. This exhibition allies cinema's evocative powers, as a mass-produced collaborative medium, with those of visual artists taking a singular approach. Like all art, cinema exists on a spectrum of engaging with human experience. Art and cinema are always in conversation with one another, and we hope that this otherwise seldom taken cross-pollination will elicit exciting reactions and create new patterns and connections.

Have you ever dreamed of falling? The shock to your system may have jolted you halfway out of your bed, in a similar way to how Luis Buñuel's clever match cut and associative logic in *Un chien andalou* (1929) will have you grasping for your eyeballs—and closing them. The fear we experience about our bodies being compromised is a visceral one. It's the stuff that dreams are made of, and it's oddly seductive.

Buoyed by the immensely popular writings of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, the Surrealists explored this tension as early as the 1920s, and the camera became their generation's dream machine.

Experiments in optical revelry opened up the body and the mind in a way that continues to influence artists today. We can draw a straight line from the pioneering work of Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Luis Buñuel and Jean Cocteau, among others, to Maya Deren and David Lynch.

Deren, the Ukrainian-born filmmaker who became the mother of the American Avant-Garde, burst onto the scene with *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). The excerpt on show presents her, the star of the film, confronted by her inner doppelgängers. The key to resolution in this somnambulist face-off is violence, perpetrated by a knife (figure 1). Deren's film shows a great kinship with Kenneth Anger's sadomasochistically-charged *Fireworks* (1947), and was the underground, handmade equivalent of Alfred Hitchcock's Hollywood pop-psychology thriller *Spellbound* (1945). The latter features elaborate dream sequences designed by Salvador Dalí, who also co-wrote *Un chien andalou*.

Meshes of the Afternoon (1943) is entered into a dialogue with the industrially nightmarish work of Lee Bontecou, as well as the Freudian hole in the upholstery that lures us into Deana Lawson's *Portal* (2017). Continuing the thread that runs from the 1920s, through Deren's work, brings us straight to Alex Da Corte's *Bad Blood* (2012). The short film, on display and starring Da Corte himself, stuns with its mischievous direct gaze, use of slow motion, and performative violence. Da Corte, like Deren, is most often the star chameleon changing colors throughout his body of work. The climactic moment in *Bad Blood* may be a nod to Yorgos Lanthimos's *Dogtooth* (2009), in which one particularly abject scene can best be described with the name of the subgenre that is devoted to offering catharsis for our corporeal nightmares: body horror.

While the sensibilities of the genre have been around since Georges Méliès Ovidian transformations of the 1890s, it hit its first stride in the 1970s, when visual artists like Lee Bontecou, Paul Thek, Hannah Wilke, and Lucas Samaras were engaging with the haptic, the grotesque, and the political body. The most poignant example on display can be found in the scene from Clive Barker's 1987 *Hellraiser,* in which a puzzle box summons horrific creatures from another dimension who cannot distinguish between pleasure and pain. The scene is paired with Lucas Samaras's sculptural boxes. These boxes invite your touch in spite, or exactly because, of their danger.

It is perhaps not surprising then that a key, a box, and a set of doppelgängers found their way into David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001); or that the entryway into a world of psychotic mystery in Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986) consists of a severed ear, teeming with ants – the same critters that emerge from one of our protagonist's hands in *Un chien andalou*. Indeed, in our excerpt on display, we move from a cookie-cutter, picket fences, Technicolor reality that cannot sustain itself and collapses as the camera burrows into the ground in search for meaning. Since *Blue Velvet* shares an embrace of kitsch and a hyperbolical approach to genre iconography with the work of Max Hooper Schneider, the two live in close proximity to one another in the gallery.

I am reminded of body horror genre tropes by a series of sculptures on display: Paul Thek's *Untitled (Blonde Meat Piece)* (1965) and *The Finger of Audrey Flack* (c. 1960s), Kiki Smith's *Virgin Mary* (1992), and Robert Gober's *Man Coming out of Woman* (1993-1994). These works showcase the deconstructive and reconstructive mimetic power of wax, recalling the life-sized eighteenth-century anatomical Venuses. These dissectible waxen women still invite lust, awe, and fear, and occupy a dreamlike state between living and dead.

Filmmakers were quick to exploit these notions in the wax museum film, bringing to life wax mannequins and transforming the living into wax using the latest in visual effects. Andre DeToth's 1953 *House of Wax*, in 3D and starring Vincent Price, remains the commercial apotheosis, but presented here are two variations on the theme with Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* (1960) and Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989).

In the clip from *Eyes Without a Face*, which is paired with the aforementioned Robert Gober, we meet Christiane, the disfigured daughter of a plastic surgeon. Kept captive while her parents hunt for "donors," Christiane wears a waxen mask that freezes her expression into something uncannily neutral. As she is getting her hair brushed, her emotive eyes, unblinking, convey a deep-seated sadness and determination, beautiful yet terrifying (figure 2). The scalpel is traded for the chef's knife in *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*, where we see the intimate embrace of lovers' bodies become part of a still life of earthly delights in a restaurant kitchen, offset by Zhang Huan's unapologetically carcass-wearing man in *½ (Meat)* (1998).

A still life often presents us with the fruits of nature. Dead or alive. Fresh, or in decay. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century painters explored this overwhelming beauty of nature armed with the concept of the "sublime." They showed nature at its greatest and most intimidating, dwarfing human figures and serving as powerful reminders of our limited time on this earth. Beauty and terror went hand in hand. Mati Diop's *Atlantics* (2019) perfectly represents nature as a force that gives as happily as it takes. The ocean, in the Black experience represented in *Atlantics* and beyond, is a symbol for hope and a means of escape, as much as it is a space for unknowably deep trauma. Even without Fatima Al Qadiri's unheimlich siren-song of a score, the slow motion of the sequence represents a hypnotizing form of perilous splendor. Its rippling waves feel as if they can be touched, akin to the mesmerizing topography of the neighboring works by Lynda Benglis.

The works of art on display here have a way of arresting time and space. They make dreamlike moments and symbols viscerally tangible. Fittingly, Ingmar Bergman's English title *Wild Strawberries* is a mistranslation of its original Swedish *Smultronstället*. The literal translation would be "The wild strawberry patch." The true meaning, however, lies in its proverbial use to denote a precious and secret space that is known only to oneself, where one can truly be who they are. Some of us will never find this space, others never quite possess it, but most of us engage with it nightly.

It is no coincidence that dreams average a runtime of 90 to 120 minutes. The standard length of a film. The ideal amount of time spent engaging with art. The works of art on display in *Wild Strawberries* transport us to this liminal space. They embrace the dream of falling.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Still from Maya Deren, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, 1943.
ABOVE: Still from Georges Franju, *Les yeux sans visage*, 1960.

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

125 NEWBURY:
OUR APPROACH

We have always admired the industrial/commercial typology of the buildings of Tribeca with their changes in use over time.

This old Bank space that had been converted to retail stores for the last six decades (including a onetime branch of the famed Tribeca retailer Pearl River Mart) had the tall ceilings and crown moldings typical of the Bank typology of the Gilded Age when it was built in 1901 symbolizing stability, strength and tradition.

Upon seeing the space with Arne and his team for the first time we felt that the best approach would be to peel back the layers of structure and finishes that had been added to the space that included mezzanines and awkward geometries.

Then once that had been done—everything that was part of the original structure would be painted grey to recede into the background and new gallery walls would be inserted that do not touch any of the existing structural walls or ceiling. The new floor in grey stained oak was selected in unusually narrow yet very long planks referrers to the resilient floors used in the manufacturing spaces that were typical in the area. In this way we created a very flexible gallery space that can be reconfigured and tailored to suit any type of art exhibition.

The office and viewing spaces were tailored around the precise requirements of the Gallery team but still follow the same overall design strategy of the gallery that we collectively designed.

We are very proud to have been able to continue our collaboration with PACE in making this unique space.

Dominic & Enrico
Bonetti Kozerski Architecture

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Lucas Samaras
Max Hooper Schneider
Oliver Shultz
Hannah Wilke

Artists in the Exhibition
Lynda Benglis (b. 1941)
Lee Bontecou (b. 1931)
Julie Curtiss (b. 1982)
Alex Da Corte (b. 1980)
Doreen Lynette Garner (b. 1986)
Robert Gober (b. 1954)
David Hammons (b. 1943)
Deana Lawson (b. 1979)
Shahryar Nashat (b. 1975)
Brandon Ndife (b. 1991)
Kathleen Ryan (b. 1984)
Lucas Samaras (b. 1936)
Max Hooper Schneider (b. 1982)
Kiki Smith (b. 1954)
Paul Thek (1933–1988)
Hannah Wilke (1940–1993)
Zhang Huan (b. 1966)

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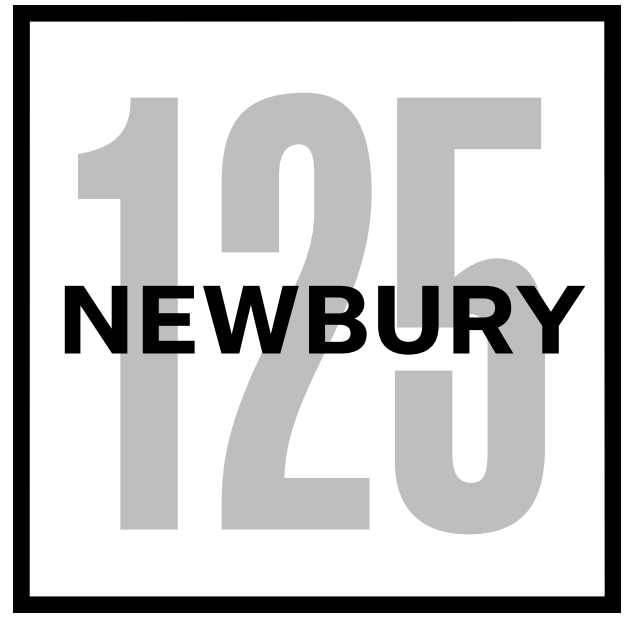

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