



## CHADWICK RANTANEN

Chadwick Rantanen (b. 1981, Wausau, WI) appropriates the forms of familiar consumer goods and modifies and re-contextualizes them into sculptural tools. In doing so, he creates opposing acts of compromise and dissent, acquiescence and insubordination, tension and harmony and the passive aggressive. Adapting and conforming to architecture and infrastructure, Rantanen's sculptures mimic installations or site-specific works, often taking the form of an adaptor, wedging between objects and their sources of power, articulating a web of accommodation, compromise, maintenance and parasitism by slightly detouring energy, but never causing harm.

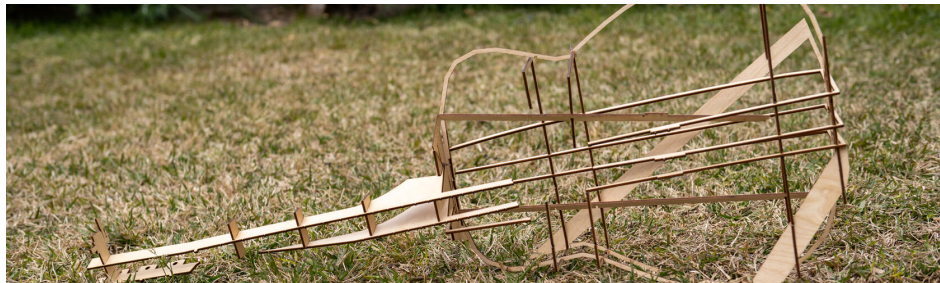
Solo exhibitions include Secession, Vienna, Austria; Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome, Italy; Standard (Oslo), Oslo, Norway; Essex Street, New York, New York; Overduin and Co., Los Angeles, California; Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, Bel Ami, Los Angeles, California; CAPITAL, San Francisco, California. He has been included in group exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, Michigan; Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, Austria; Tanya Bonakdar, Los Angeles, California; Tanya Leighton, Berlin, Germany; Luhring Augustine, New York; CLEARING, Paris, France; Swiss Institute, New York; and Kunsthaus Glarus, Glarus; SculptureCenter, Long Island City, New York; and Artists Space, New York. His work is in the collections of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; ArtNow International, San Francisco; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Albright-Knox, Buffalo, New York. Rantanen's work has been reviewed in Mousse Magazine, Frieze, Artforum, The Los Angeles Times, Art in America, New York Times, Flash Art, and CARLA.

# frieze

## Kate Spencer Stewart and Chadwick Rantanen Throw a Backyard Party

The artists present playfully experimental new work in the convivial outdoor environment of Hakuna Matata, Los Angeles

BY GRACIE HADLAND IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS , US REVIEWS | 08 MAR 23



Launched in 2015, Hakuna Matata is less an exhibition venue than, as noted on its website, ‘a sculpture garden, project space, serialized novella’. Here, directors Anh Do and Eli Diner present ‘Youth’ – their first two-person exhibition which features new works by Chadwick Rantanen and Kate Spencer Stewart – in their steep backyard in Cypress Park, Los Angeles, a space ripe for precarious experimentation.



Kate Spencer Stewart & Chadwick Rantanen, ‘Youth’, installation view, 2023. Courtesy: the artists

At the edge of the property, visitors gingerly climb a ladder into a treehouse, ducking their heads beneath the doorway. Inside, Stewart’s painting *All for the Best* (2023) is installed on the unfinished plywood ceiling. I sat on a child-sized chair across from a stranger; together, we craned our necks upwards. The encroaching darkness made it difficult to see the work in detail, so the directors-cum-hosts provided a flashlight. Under the beam, the canvas’s dense, cloudy surface of black and brown oil paint, typical of Stewart’s style of drone-y abstraction, was activated in its installation. Outlines of flowers, rendered in light blue, became fluorescent. Looking at the painting overhead – an unusual perspective in

contemporary art – evoked the experience of admiring frescoes on the ceiling of a church in Rome, transforming a Los Angeles treehouse into an almost transcendental experience.



Kate Spencer Stewart, *All for the Best*, 2023, installation view. Courtesy: the artist

Rantanen shows five sculptures of acoustic guitars made from laser-cut plywood based on a 3D model, each part cut then assembled like a dollhouse (*Acoustic Guitar*, 2023). Reminiscent of Pablo Picasso's cubist sculpture *Guitar* (1912), Rantanen's works are devised through a process of negation: he eliminates extraneous detail, printing only the basic structure. The thinly rendered sculptures seemed to morph as I walked around the garden, becoming abstracted from some perspectives and stick-like or near-invisible from others, camouflaging with the thicketed yard. Installed as if carelessly scattered on the lawn, only one work was damaged during the opening – a remarkable achievement with kids and dogs running amok. Seemingly alluding to their referent's impotent machismo, Rantanen's flimsy sculptures, though produced meticulously, are ultimately unstrummable: they form a silent, almost pathetic jam session serenading their counterpart in the treehouse atop the hill.



Chadwick Rantanen, *Acoustic Guitar*, 2023, installation view. Courtesy: the artists

Rantanen and Stewart are a couple, as are Do and Diner. Possibly as a result, the show carries a warmth and intimacy that evokes being at the home of friends. The gallerists, indeed, live with one of Stewart's paintings in their parlour. Equipped with that information, visitors might perceive the exhibition in a different light: perhaps the 'Youth' of the show's title alludes to the sense of freedom to experiment and engage with the environment that a space like this affords which traditional, white-cube settings rarely do



Chadwick Rantanan, *Acoustic Guitar*, 2023, installation view. Courtesy: the artists

I've grown weary of articles, such as Janelle Zara's article 'Los Angeles is the home of the house gallery' in the *Financial Times* (2023), heralding the 'house gallery' as Los Angeles's primary contribution to the art world. What may have been borne of scrappy informality in the 1960s has become, in some cases, stilted and awkward and, in others, institutionalized: domesticity has been sterilized by professionalism. The exception is a space like Hakuna Matata, which sustains a spirit of playfulness in relationships and artmaking, and which has no intention of moving into a bigger venue or one with more foot traffic. Like the work and lives of so many young artists before they achieve commercial success, these spaces reflect a lack of rigorous constraint, liberating those who show in them to produce work that allows them to extend past the aesthetic vocabulary which has brought them success to forge new vernaculars. Such spaces exist wherever the owners choose to call home; and, as seen here, artists and audience respond in kind. pathetic jam session serenading their counterpart in the treehouse atop the hill.

*Kate Spencer Stewart & Chadwick Rantanan, 'Youth' is on view at Hakuna Matata, Los Angeles, until 19 March.*

*Main image: Chadwick Rantanan, Acoustic Guitar, 2023, installation view. Courtesy: the artists*

# Art in America

Shoots and Ladders: Chadwick Rantanen at Bel Ami

By Travis Diehl

October 4, 2022 2:27pm



Chadwick Rantanen: *Wooden Boards and Flowers*, 2022, pigment print in walnut frame, 14 by 20½ inches.  
COURTESY BEL AMI, LOS ANGELES

Chadwick Rantanen's show at Bel Ami played out on two registers: One set of works, a surprisingly conventional series of walnut-framed color photographs of odd arrangements of objects, flora, and the occasional fauna, hung on the walls at the standard 60-inch height. The other, a series of small models of staircases and ladders produced in thin plywood, hung much lower, at shin or dollhouse height. These parallel displays (all works 2022) suggested two shows installed at once, phasing in and out of sync. *Press Fit (Ladder)*, for instance, a thin stepladder that, at five inches high, looks like a smudge on the wall, resembles the woolly brown object in the middle of the sidewalk depicted in *Farmer Gene*—which, in turn, echoes the longer, angled strip of gray tufts of grass growing from the crack in the same image. Just as ladders have twin rails, the majority of the photographs' compositions are laterally

mirrored. *Window*, a shot of a pane of foggy glass, is split by a finger wiping it clear down the center—and this fat vertical is itself doubled to the right, as by the grass, with a thin diagonal smudge. Rantanen often puts the “mediated” in media. His previous series of sculptures elaborately, superfluously broker connections—between lightbulbs or batteries and their sockets, for example, with overbuilt adapters shaped like lobsters or butterflies, or between the floor and ceiling of almost any gallery or studio via extendable struts covered in prismatic foil. His modeled objects are flagrantly artificial, or artful. The tiny staircases, useless as such, are laser-cut and notched together in a format usually reserved for the flat-pack souvenirs at a science center gift shop (the titular “press fit” kits), meant to be punched out and assembled into the ribs of a *T. rex* or the armor of an M1 tank. The sculptures’ machine-induced discoloration troubles their dollhouse calm—a few of them haven’t been cleaned and still bear the smoky hatching of the laser’s burns, an effect something like rust creeping down fire escapes. What do they connect?



Chadwick Rantanen: *Press Fit (Staircase)*, 2022, laser cut plywood, 6 ¾ by 2 by 4 inches.  
COURTESY BEL AMI, LOS ANGELES

Both series share this wooden, maquette quality. The sculptures hang flush against the wall by some subtle tape or cleat, appearing to float. *Press Fit (Staircase)* includes a side representing the exterior wall of a building, cut with three windows, hugging the supporting surface so that the stairs appear to protrude not just from an imaginary tiny building but from the gallery too. Other ladders are oriented as if to serve

the wall. At least two have “patches,” places where the laser etching implies that the sides were broken and splinted back together with tape or rags, offering a bit of character to these crisp-cut constructions.

Circling the room, a visitor could see two photos hung on parallel walls come into view at once—to the right, near a corner, was *Wooden Boards*, a vertical closeup of two blocks of dark, stained wood, and to the left, a few feet deeper into the space, was *Wooden Boards with Flower*, which depicts two very similar blocks, also framed roughly symmetrically, but this time with a cluster of yellow flowers growing through the central gap. The wood resembles, or maybe is, the grainy walnut stock framing every photograph. These quotidian scenes appear in fine art dress; their formalism pervades the room. Descending from the mezzanine-level gallery, you wonder how the stairs would look as a model; you wonder how the double doors would look as a photo; the world appears replete with formal correspondences, replete with art—unnecessary bits of beauty between things.

# Mousse Magazine

Benjamin Hirte and Chadwick Rantanen at Museo Pietro Canonica, Villa Borghese, Rome



Chadwick Rantanen, *Spinning Globes (Black, Beige) [Monarch]*, 2016, Museo Pietro Canonica, Villa Borghese, Rome, 2017

Ca' means house in Italian.

The “canon” is a set of rules that, according to convention, determines an ideal of physical beauty. The “canon” in sculpture was formulated by Polykleitus in the fifth century. Much more than a statement of rules and proportions, Polykleitus invented a style that integrated the body in movement. In effect, the contrapposto generates a movement of the hips that frees the figure from its archaic frontality. One often forgets that figurative representation already represents a rupture with the non-representational funerary stele. The contrapposto introduced a chiasmus, in other words two lines of opposed directions (the line of the hips and that of the shoulders) and this “twist” generates an impression of movement.

The Canonica Museum, located in the garden of the Villa Borghèse, is dedicated to a 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian sculptor, named Pietro Canonica.

This museum is a mansion, a house, where one can find the artist’s studio, a dining room, a living room and a bedroom. We are simultaneously in an intimate and private space and a public space that can be visited, one that leads by example, but this place is also the little fortress, “La Fortezuela”. Curiously, Pietro Canonica



seems to have taken literally a whole set of rules for production and his production was typical of what is usually called “academism”.

The place is a collection of the artist’s artworks, of copies and reproductions of it, also containing examples of antique sculpture, and in the end, all of this reveals itself to be staged.

There is an uncanny atmosphere in this place, with its tiled floor like those found in public buildings, and we can really understand what Mike Kelley meant when he used the word “uncanny” in his text *Playing with Dead Things* (1). Beyond the gap that exists between the animate and inanimate that Kelley explained so well as he revisited Freud’s experiments that led to his seminal text in 1919 and gave rise to the actual idea of the *The Uncanny* exhibition in 1992 can be used to improve our understanding of Benjamin Hirte and Chadwick Rantanen’s project at the Canonica museum in 2017. Actually, Mike Kelley revisits the genesis of his exhibition in an interview with Thomas Mc Evilly, (2).

As much as “The Uncanny” was a response to a certain Modernism that excluded any figuration (similar to Kelley and McCarthy’s piece *Heidi*, 1992), Rantanen and Hirte propose a confrontational experience between the newer contemporary canons (“post-post-modern”) and the model of academic art itself.

What Mike Kelley said in 1993 continues to resonate today:

-TM : *“So the figures you choose will convey this feeling of uncanny uncertainty about the interface between life and death?”*

-MK : *“Right. And the effect is compounded by the fact that, until recently, academic art was forbidden, taboo, in the realm of fine art practice. So not only is there this strange feeling produced by the question of realistic art being alive or not alive, there’s also the strange attraction/repulsion to something that’s forbidden. Figurative art itself is like a corpse or mummy, and one wants to resuscitate this forbidden thing, bring it back to life. Because it’s bad, one wants to make it good again\_breathe life into it.”(3)*

The ‘genie de lieu’, the spirit of the place, is that we feel that *Fortezuelais* truly a box filled with “dead things” that look at us with empty eyes. It seems that Canonica has produced, with no critical historical awareness, based on commission, portraits of political and bourgeois characters, of children with terrifying gazes, with an absence of any singularity coming from the fact that the canon has been applied with no soul, in other words, a form of “off the rack” academism. The identical white pupils are strangely fascinating. One is reminded of the *Village of the Damned* (by Wolf Rilla, 1960, remade by John Carpenter in 1995, then again as a television series by Joe Chapelle in 2010) or even the children from the film *The White Ribbon* by M. Haneke (2009).

It is as if the empty eyes refer to a single cast used for all of the eyes of all of the children that have passed through this studio. In English you say “casting at a glance”, and this is literally what the configurations of Benjamin Hirte and Chadwick Rantanen propose – and this first glance is deceptive.

Once past the entrance, one discovers a large room in which casts, plaster works and bronzes follow, one after the other, on plinths that are whiter than the sculptures themselves.

On the ground, strange objects, metallic or colorful, seem to be the remains of ongoing work. Are some of the spaces still in the process of being renovated?

A flat metal box covered by a grate is placed in the center, surrounded by noisy, colorful small figurines. The rectangle is missing a corner, as if “bitten” by a curve, and is partly made up of a piece of grating like those that can be seen all around us every day, in the street on the ground or in the corridors of buildings, offices, subways...a type of metal grill that covers electric piping, sewers or drainage ducts.

The piece is placed on the ground but we are not invited to walk on it, like with certain sculptures by Carl Andre. If you lean over it, with its position on the ground inviting us to do just that, you can see small things, tickets and pieces of paper, that raise doubts about the object itself. Is it a vernacular element that has been hijacked from reality and transposed here? A bait to make us believe in “sculpture” but at the same time mocks our expectations of art? The treatment of the metal surface is not that of the “finish fetish” that

“minimalist” sculpture has made us familiar with. The presence of small objects that are “rejects from reality” contradicts any attempt to compare it with known modernist forms.

The birds, because the small colorful motorized elements are indeed birds, spread on and around this “plinth/sculpture”. They are plastic toys in the size of a pigeon, but whose form and color are those of a sort of idealized psychedelic sparrow. Oversized perhaps and very bad taste indeed. The body is lemon yellow, the tips of the wings and feet are black, the beak is dark pink red like the belly. But upon approaching the small body that is racked by sporadic fits and starts, we realize that the abdomen is not regular.

Another pair of small, bright pink wings emerge from what should be the belly of the bird. The animal has been turned upside down to allow for the batteries to be replaced with these new ones, that are not quite the right size and that produce an alternative sound and vibrato instead of a continuous one. What’s more, the small wings are those of another animal, a kind of pink bee of which we can only see the pathetically protruding wings.

Further along, slumped against a plinth, a soft, white form is placed like a bag waiting. It is pierced by a hole. Just beside it a larger similarly made shape with the contours of a cross or an X is placed at the foot of an Arab horseman. We are reminded of the soft sculptures of Claes Oldenburg in stiff cotton canvas that represented elements of mass consumer society, in his gallery in New York in the early sixties. Benjamin Hirte explains that the disk has the shape of the Atlas, the first vertebra in the spinal column.

We rediscover grated metal structures at various points in the space, sometimes at different heights, sometimes with a black liquid that is animated by a pumping system or a strip of rubber floating in the water. Again we are reminded of elements from sewer systems, fragmented and with no clear function. These five sculptures are located on three different floors along the path of the exhibition that runs through the house and their geometric, indexed forms relate to a map – or a model-like floor piece by Hirte in black and white, located on the first floor.

The sculptural metal blocks are in fact pieces of an alphabet, invented by Benjamin Hirte, called *Lochband*, (2015). Together they form the letter C of the alphabet that can only be perceived in hindsight, from memory. One thinks of the “theater of memory” and this rhetorical technique established by Quintilian and Cicero that has been used since antiquity, re-conceptualized by Giulio Camillo during the Renaissance. The speaker visualizes the different parts of a speech as if they were different rooms in a house in order to better remember them accurately. This mnemotechnical form uses the house as a metaphor for the different parts of a text. Here the house of Canonica becomes the framework for a different story, whose elements are distributed among those of the museum. Aby Warburg spoke of artworks as the images of a film lacking movement. And in fact a *Lochband* formally resembles a film roll.

C is the first letter of Canonica, and becomes the triggering element, the incipit of a text to be imagined from visual forms. Imagine a grammar of forms, whose scattered elements are spread out over space (the different rooms of the house) and over time (the different periods evoked by the sculptures or furniture that belongs to different eras). We should then, adopt a “bird’s eye view”.

The “bird’s eye view” is a way of getting a view of the whole, from above, and also of synthesizing what we are seeing. In French one speaks of traveling “at birds flight” to simplify a distance, shortening the perspective of a journey.

The presence of Rantanen’s birds, and indeed this vision of the bird, encourages us to consider the different objects both as distinct forms, artworks in their own right, and as clues to a hermeneutic form. The sculptures become signs to be deciphered, a “language of the birds”.

Strips of rubber can be found partly arranged in two of Hirte’s metal elements on the ground floor but also in a more visible fashion on the first floor. There in the living room with its piano, *Untitled*, 2016 forms a flexible network on the ground. The black rubber strips intersected with white strips of fibre resin form a maze of lines

that spreads from the feet of a sofa and goes around the piano's footstool. There are more black elements than white. They yet again resemble holes in film roles or notes on a keyboard. The white seems to mark an interval, indicating a silence within the curves.

The *Hanging Strips* (2017) by C.Rantanen is made up of thirty or so suspended elements that, from a distance, bring to mind sticky strips of flypaper. In reality they are small pieces of transparent plastic that are trapped in strips of silicon glue: wires, small pieces of paper and aluminum... These stalactites reach down to eye level and we are left with decoding the indexed traces of an activity that belongs either to industry or to surgery. Their disturbing aspect is similar to that of the reversed birds: a form of abjection crystalized in matter. One is reminded of the definition of the *Formless* by Bataille (4) and of his conclusion that saw the world "as spittle".

Rantanen's sculptures play between "decoy" and "decay". Further along, in a room that in the time of the Borghese was used to breed birds, peacocks, ostriches, and ducks for the hunters, that have since disappeared, lies the back end of a deer. *Deer Rear*, 2017, is a plastic bait used by hunters. The tail is animated by a battery and wags spasmodically. Here Chadwick Rantanen uses a real object, taken out of its context, simply modifying the rhythm of the tail by employing weaker batteries.

The deferred movement of the tail gives it a pathetic quality that is quite funny. Our smile protects us. Deep humor provides distance. The pun on the sound of the words ("deer/dear") plays with what we can see, literally the back end of a deer, but also symbolically, a turn of reality. Once again, the impression of a trap and "bait" sculpture can be felt, much like the "nasty art" of Bruce Nauman (5). This "nasty game" is one that undoes the usual rules of what we think we recognize, with standard art conventions being turned inside out like a glove.

At the very beginning of the exhibition, a metal box is placed at the base of a plinth that hosts a knight on a horse.

It is an aluminum cast of a storage box. In this case it is a "life size" cast of a pedestrian, everyday object. Its functionality as a storage tool has been removed by the casting, replaced by the symbolic use as a sculpture. Many sharp objects that prick the eye can be found in the Canonica museum. For example Benjamin Hirte's "The Realist", 2014 clocks, non identical twins of a suspended time. Hirte transforms things into objects, and objects into sculpture by this change from functionality to absurdist use.

After finishing the tour of the museum, one is surprised of find oneself wanting to begin again, moved by doubt. Did we really see what we just saw? In fact it is a kind of "déjà vu" that requires a "double-take". We can see to what extent all of these objects have been arranged and put in such a way as to blend in with the place: the cuckoos of C. Rantanen over the sculptors bed (small turned Swiss clocks in the shape of chalets) and in particular his *Telescopic Poles* (2016).

These colored (pink) vertical rods give rhythm to the space of the museum and radically change our vision of it (*Telescopic poles*, 2016, *Strips*, 2017). This simple gesture, a pole that runs from the floor to the ceiling, brings to mind a joke by Steven Wright that the artist quotes elsewhere (6) "A lot of people are afraid of heights. Not me, I am afraid of widths". The rods go all the way from the floor to the ceiling and raise the question of gravity in the context of a museum of sculptures. As we approach them we can see that they are made up of a succession of poles. They are tipped with tennis balls of about the same color. This system takes its inspiration from the way that people modify and customize walking aids.

In fact, to dampen the shock as they touch the ground, people add elements to the tips of the frame. This creates a kind of "prosthesis for prostheses". Most people use balls that they have modified themselves, except in the United States where we can find pre-cut balls. These are bought from Asia and "hand cut" by single worker companies in the USA, which means they are manufactured by an invisible "lumpen-proletariat" from the postcolonial area, but are then given the final "handmade touch", the "made in USA". The artist has been collecting these balls since 2009, searching among industrial products for those that conserve aspects of an activity that is the result of "human touch".

C. Rantanen has appropriated an artifact from contemporary society and hi-jacked it by mixing it with another related product: telescopic poles used for purposes like hanging signs, cleaning ceilings, walls or windows – generally for extending an individual’s reach. The artist colors and treats them in a way that is worthy of a minimalist’s fetish for finishings. He customizes them to some extent, a form of “tuning”. There is a deep humor in this that the artist is looking for.

Isn’t it true that comedy is tragedy plus time? The colorful balls become a customized “touch” on this prosthesis for old people’s legs. A “swinging” sculptural potential, looking like the modern sticks of a canonical “contrapposto” sculpture. Bringing the cast of a storage box, bird calls, cuckoo/bumble-bee clocks, and a giant vertebra collapsed at the feet of a low-relief carving, into a museum of casts and academic sculptures, is like introducing dissonant elements into an ‘Epinal Print’. Chadwick’s colorful lines and hidden bees, placed in Cuckoo Clocks on a hanging fabric covered in a bee pattern, generates a shift that makes us look at the whole as being “against nature”. I find myself thinking of the novel by Huysmans. Rantanen’s telescopic lines and Hirte’s grates are two sides of a modernity that is not done with Modernism. They remind us that there is no inside or outside, no structure or décor, but that the cover, the plastic film, the unpolished canvas, is the form of the spirit of the times. This is closer to the idea of a bait than it is to the *trompe l’oeil*, closer to an art that is not one of taste but one that questions the automatic nature of our reflex to recognize certain things as art objects, when in reality art is to be found within surprise.

### *Marie de Bruggerolle*

1. Mike Kelley, *Playing with Dead Things*, in the catalogue of *The Uncanny*, 1992, Tate Modern, Liverpool.
2. *From The Sublime to the uncanny: Mike Kelley in conversation with Thomas Mc Evilly*, Dec. 1992, reprinted in *Mike Kelley, Foul Perfection, essays and criticism*, The MIT Press, p59.
3. Ibid.
4. Bataille George, in *Document 7*, 1929, p 382.
5. Bruce Nauman, for example the neon sculptures “*Run from Fear, Fun from Rear*”, 1972.
6. Snowden interview, received from C.Rantanen, September 2017.

at Museo Pietro Canonica, Villa Borghese, Rome  
until 23 July 2017

## CHADWICK RANTANEN Team Bungalow, Los Angeles, USA

The pall of death hangs over Chadwick Rantanen's exhibition 'Alarmer'. This is ironic because many of the constituent objects in his assemblage sculptures are expressly designed to simulate life. Battery-operated hunting decoys flap their wings and wag their tails in order to attract animals that are living (though soon to be dead).

Rantanen's *Deer Rear* (all works 2017) is a pitiful construction. The stylized hindquarters of a deer are laid on the floor, black electrical guts spilling out of the creature's belly. With an irregular force and tempo, its tail twitches as if it were in the final stages of expiration. In a sense, this is indeed the case: the tail is powered by a dying power pack, which the artist has fitted with batteries smaller than those intended by the manufacturer. As a paradoxical consequence, the decoy is animated with an uncannily realistic weariness.

Rantanen often works with brand-new objects that are already tired in all sorts of ways. Consumer products, probably made in China but associated with red-state Americana, speak of a broader national malaise. Between the petrochemical origin of these plastics and the decoys' intended violence, there lies an implicit position of antagonism towards the natural environment, even as its resources are depleted.

The batteries that power the kinetic sculptures in 'Alarmer' are cased in plastic sleeves, designed by Rantanen, which resemble cartoon bees. These yellow and black striped covers enable them to fit into slots for the fatter (and higher capacity) batteries, while their plastic wings serve no function except to prevent the cover from closing. Today, bees are contradictory symbols: of Utopian collectivism and – as Colony Collapse Disorder takes hold across North America and parts of Europe – of environmental catastrophe.

All around *Deer Rear*, in the shed-like back gallery of Team Bungalow, sculptures that look like ornate, Jorge Pardo-designed flypapers hang from the ceiling. The templates for the scalloped forms come from a pattern designed for products meant for use in hospitals – gowns, wallpaper, curtains, carpets – which is intended to be aesthetically inert. The installation is titled *Hanging Strips (Yellow)* – yellow because parts of the translucent

substance are wrinkled flakes of a darker material, identified by the checklist as antimicrobial film – which Rantanen reportedly painstakingly scrapes off hospital fabrics. The result is an artwork for the post-nature era.

The icky smeared silicone and antimicrobial film reappears in another medically inflected sculpture, *Admitting (Green)*: a folded rectangle of corrugated plastic on the floor, the interior gunk only visible through circular apertures and its two open ends. Far more compelling is the large, hanging sculpture *Crow Spread*, with which it shares Team Bungalow's front space. This show-stopping work resembles the horrific spectacle of six crows strung up by their feet and flapping in panic. As with *Deer Rear*, the birds are decoys hacked by Rantanen's battery adapters, busy bees that seem like parasites, cheerfully speeding the death throes of the trapped birds. The piece is a chandelier for a psychopath's dining room.

The final irony, of course, is that any owner of these kinetic sculptures will be obliged to care for them by endlessly replacing the batteries, which the motors drain all too quickly. The bees may be powering these end-of-life simulations, but they are themselves designed to die fast. Deception is built upon cruel deception: the illusion of life in these works leads to death, if you're a crow, or to a repeating simulation of death, if you're lucky enough to be a human.

Jonathan Griffin

**Below**  
Chadwick Rantanen,  
*Hanging Strips (Yellow)* and *Deer Rear*, both 2017,  
installation view





## ELI COPLAN

Eli Coplan (b. 1992, San Diego) lives and works in New York. Selected solo exhibitions include Disney Plus, Commercial Street, Los Angeles (2023). Selected group exhibitions include Eli Coplan, Rachel Fäth, Oto Gillen, Drew Healy, Anna Rubin, 500 Grand St. B 11G, New York (2024); Quad, a. Squire, London (2024); Jahresgaben, The Wig, Berlin (2023); Yes, But I Don't Recognize Your Voice, Blind Spot, New York (2023); Whitney Independent Study Program Studio Exhibition, 100 Lafayette St., 8th Floor, New York (2023); Slow Dance, Stadtgalerie, Bern, Switzerland (2023); and Manhattan, Claude Balls Int., New York (2022).

a.SQUIRE  
*Quad*  
April 6–May 11, 2024

## a. SQUIRE

*Quad*  
6 April–11 May 2024  
Opening: Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April, 6–8pm

a. SQUIRE is pleased to announce *Quad*, an exhibition of recent and older works by Yuji Agematsu, Gottfried Brockmann, Eli Coplan and A. Michael Noll. The show is titled after the 1981 TV play by Samuel Beckett in which four shrouded and shuffling figures, despite their centripetal imperatives, never occupy the middle of a square. As Gilles Deleuze writes, “*Quad* is a refrain that is essentially propulsive, with the shuffling of slippers for music—like the sound of rats.”

The quad is an ambiguous space and a public one. It is predicated on illusions of openness, cleanness, and sublime mobility. It might bring to mind a university or a plaza—the forecourt of capital—or the fancy of an urban pasture, such as a garden square in Bloomsbury. In each instance it is a buffer zone to commerce. New things flow within it in continual transaction. Exhausted things are sequestered by the economies of waste.

Yuji Agematsu consumes space just as space is devoured by consumption. He moves through the city and so does the detritus he collects. Unlike Beckett’s, his is a choreography of interruptions.

In Eli Coplan’s sculpture, a piece of would-be trash is also interrupted and interrupts the visual field of a flatscreen television. A deflated air cushioning bag is inserted beneath the glass of a product it might once have protected. It appears to be an image but in reality is the material disruption of the device. It is today’s pressed flower.

Diagonally opposite Coplan’s screen sits an older model: the black box TV on which A. Michael Noll’s 1965 *Computer-Generated Ballet* plays. The dancers twirl or glide across it like the first particles of dust pirouetting in a vacuum.

Movement is also distilled to essential contours in Gottfried Brockmann’s work. A pair of figures pivot about a central axis: a set of superimpositions soldered in revolution.

Stadt Galerie  
*Slow Dance (1)*  
 March 3–April 1, 2024

# STADTGALERIE

EN

*Slow Dance (1)*  
 Eli Coplan, Yuki Kimura,  
 The KLF, Miriam Laura  
 Leonardi, Potato Maze,  
 Plumber's Nightmare,  
 Hisachika Takahashi,  
 Wickiana  
 03.03.–01.04.2023

*Slow Dance* is composed of sixteen scenes, consisting of 4 different rooms in four exhibitions over a period of six months. During this time, the exhibition spaces remain structured by two walls, each with a functioning door. Instead of providing an overview, they offer passages. *Slow Dance* could describe the attitudes of a person in conversation as they attempt to provoke reactions in other people. Here, what slowly comes into focus is the political implications of subliminal choreography.

*Slow Dance (1)* grows out of an ongoing conversation around the convergence between the specificities of exhibition making and installation. The artworks and objects cohabiting within the structure of the exhibition form an interconnected logic that mirrors living in constant relationship with various active temporalities and timescales. How we encounter the material world is at once a form of compromise whilst simultaneously an experience of precarious accumulation. Scale, growth and history confuse our sense of ideology. Organic rhythms zoom out from media realities.

The artworks in *Slow Dance (1)* offer a specific glance at systems of broadcast, technology and governance. Sampling and appropriation hijack the timescale, just as the spatial envelopes these behaviours.

+++

The BitTorrent protocol allows large networks of computers to upload and download pieces of data from each other cooperatively rather than relying on centralized servers. The system is vastly more efficient than what consumer streaming services can offer in terms of speed, scale and quality. BitTorrent networks also make possible the distribution and preservation of alternative media. There exists a worldwide, underground, organized network of pirate groups that specialize in obtaining and distributing copyrighted digital media to clandestine networks for free. *ELI COPLAN's Silent Movies (2023)* is a collection of over one hundred movies, released in theaters and on streaming platforms between late 2022 and early 2023, played without audio in a computationally-randomized sequence. The movies are each in Full HD resolution at the highest bitrate available and in this iteration have a combined duration of about 250 hours.

In 1969, *HISACHIKA TAKAHASHI* moved to the US. Shortly thereafter and for a period of about 3 years, he made collages from printed material found in widely available media such as Life Magazine, Esquire, Playboy and Scientific America. The collages group together ubiquitous motifs from a media reality at the turn of the Vietnam war, the Flower Power years and the race into space. Takahashi draws from Pop Art's direct politicization of imagery to reveal what underlying narratives emerge by way of printed facts and apparitions.

A visual way to explore science, the *POTATO MAZE* experiment turns a simple box into a plant obstacle course. Over time, the potato plant winds its way through the maze in search of sunlight.

*Chill Out* is the third studio album by British duo *THE KLF*, released on 5 February 1990. This ambient concept album features a vast range of samples, including Elvis Presley, Pink Floyd, Fleetwood Mac, Van Halen, Tuvan throat singing, radio evangelists, 808 State and field recordings portraying a mystical night-time journey through the US Gulf Coast states from Texas to Louisiana. The album's concept and title spurred a form of music developed to be experienced 'chilling out' in the after hours of 90s rave dance culture. The duo never traveled to the USA.



Commercial Street  
*Disney Plus*  
January 2 – March 4, 2023

Commercial Street  
5152 La Vista Court

Liquid crystal displays are backlit panes of glass coated with chemicals and laminated with flat, plastic light filters. The outermost layer, the surface, is a polarizing filter. This is what you're really looking at when you watch TV, use a computer, or do anything on your phone. You can touch it with your fingers. It's laminated to a thin sheet of glass with a nasty optically-clear adhesive. Between this glass sheet and a second, equally-thin glass sheet is a liquid layer, a toxic mixture of liquid crystals suspended in chemical medium. Behind the second glass sheet is a second polarizing filter with a transmission axis perpendicular to the first. Polarizing filters allow light waves vibrating along a single axis to pass through them. When two polarizing filters are aligned with perpendicular axes of transmission, light travelling through the first filter is blocked at the second. A pure, opaque black is formed between them in the negation of transmissive light. LCD screens default to this negation. The liquid crystals between the glass sheets are yoked to an array of thin-film transistors that make each red, green and blue-tinted subpixel into an electronically-controlled gate, twisting the backlight's rays to cross through the filters and out into the room. This process is similar to that of a more rudimentary device called a polariscope, which is used in factory production to visualize stress points in transparent media and simply consists of two polarizing filters between which materials pass on the assembly line. The liquid crystals inside LCDs make these material deformations into images.

The BitTorrent protocol allows large networks of individuals to share files cooperatively. Because peers in a BitTorrent network upload and download pieces of data from each other rather than relying on centralized servers, the system is vastly more efficient than what consumer streaming services can offer in terms of speed, scale and quality. Significantly, BitTorrent networks also make possible the distribution and preservation of alternative media. There exists a worldwide, underground, organized network of pirate groups that specialize in obtaining and distributing copyrighted digital media to clandestine networks for free. *Silent Movies* is a collection of a little over one hundred such movies, released in theaters and on streaming platforms between late 2022 and early 2023, played in full, without audio, in computationally-randomized sequence. The vast majority are in the .mkv format, an extensible, open source multimedia container designed for preservation. Apple's QuickTime media player will not play .mkv files by design. The files in this exhibition are played off a hard drive using VLC, a free and open source multimedia player distributed by VideoLAN under The GNU General Public License, a free, copyleft license for software and other kinds of works. The movies are each in Full HD resolution at the highest bitrate available. All told, the files are close to two terabytes in size and have a combined duration of about eight days. Movies were downloaded as they were advertised to me while making this show, or as they came up in conversation or just came to mind—which are other forms of that advertising.

The camera filter can be used to block polarized light, to look at the screen without looking at the movie.

*YUKI KIMURA's* door closer follows from a principle of usefulness. The work is an exact replica - produced by a craftsman in Marseille - of a Gothic clasp discovered by the artist during a visit to a convent in the south of France.

The 3D Pipes screensaver, which spontaneously generates a variety of 3D pipes in different colours, also known as *THE PLUMBER's NIGHTMARE*, was included in the Windows operating system from Windows 98 to Windows XP (2001).

*MIRIAM LAURA LEONARDI's Lunatic Duck* (2021) consists of an antique hammered tin duck mounted on a robotic device. Powered by lithium batteries identical to those used by Tesla for their electric cars and defaced with the word «Lunatic» in the Disney font. The moving sculpture is bound by the architecture it is presented within as it senses the limits of the space and roves endlessly.

The *WICKLIANA* is a collection of news from the 16th century by Johann Jakob Wick (1522-1588), a priest from Zurich. From 1559 to 1588, he chronologically compiled current testimonies of the then known world. The collection contains compiled epistolary news, broadsheets or illustrated pamphlets. They are a testimony to the Reformers' apocalyptic understanding of history.

Curated by Luca Beeler & Richard Sides.

Claude Balls Int.  
*Manhattan*  
May 23 – June 24, 2022

New York City as an industrial fossil,  
an island of bedrock,  
a scorched and flattened road-kill rat.

Bill Bollinger's cast-iron *Manhattan* from 1973 melts all these images together. He made this sculpture alongside his *Lake* series—casts in the shapes of glacial lakes in Northeastern US. Heavy like anvils, these pieces would sink straight to the riverbed if thrown in, and they resemble graceful wreckage dredged up. One with windswept iron edges is titled after the *Nike of Samothrace*.

A friend once very accurately referred to standing on the terraces of the new Whitney Museum as like being Rose and Jack Dawson on the deck of the Titanic as it's going down. Recently, pulling out from Battery Park or seeing Midtown from the water feels to me like leaving the bluffs of Jurassic Park. All the classic skyscrapers like dinosaurs' necks and the businesses and salad bars below an ecosystem of the past. Vacancies increase in the suit-and-tie office buildings such as Empire State, now that work-from-home has set in, accelerated by an airborne plague. While the super-slim towers of pieds-à-terre shoot up like blades of grass growing through debris, signaling a future for the city as being increasingly out of reach.

For the next few weeks, "Manhattan" is also a beautiful trash yard where people are coming for art. The works installed at night, one per week, by Gianna, Marie, Marc, Olga, and Eli were made or completed in conversation, and some in collaboration with the city at sidewalk level.

—Annie Ochmanek



# HANA MILETIĆ

Hana Miletić's practice reflects on issues of representation and social reproduction, by making linkages between photography and weaving. The artist models her woven textiles after her photographs that document repairs in public space. Miletić uses the weaving process—which requires considerable time and dedication—as a way to counteract certain economic and social conditions at work, such as acceleration, standardisation and transparency.

Miletić has held recent solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Mainz, Germany (2023); Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka; MUDAM Luxembourg (2022); Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2021); and WIELS, Brussels (2018). Her solo exhibition, *Soft Services*, is currently on view at MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Her work was also included in Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka (2023); Manifesta 14, Prishtina (2022); the 13th Sharjah Biennial (2017) and has been exhibited in group survey exhibitions at institutions including Antenna Space, Shanghai; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh; Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; among many others. In 2021 Miletić was awarded the Baloise Art Prize.

Born 1982, Zagreb, Croatia  
Lives and works in Brussels, Belgium

Glean  
April 5, 2024

# Glean

## HANA MILETIĆ BEHIND THE WARP

MIR (María Inés Rodríguez) I would suggest that we start this conversation at what I like to call 'the beginning', that is, a kind of epiphany that led to what we can appreciate today as your work.

HM (Hana Miletić) I used to practise a street photography of sorts, making images quickly with small disposable cameras in urban areas where I was living at the time, predominantly in my current residence of Brussels and my hometown of Zagreb. The fast pace of the photographic process that I was using, which also included making prints, confused me to the point that I started doubting what I was actually doing. I started feeling disconnected from the images I was making. It felt like I was quickly grabbing things instead of sitting with them and getting to know the neighbourhoods and the communities that I was engaging with better. So my work started to move away from photography, towards organising and editing other people's work. Ultimately I ended up weaving, which resolved the problem I had encountered with reproduction in my photography practice.

MIR When I think of your work, when I look at it, different references come to my mind. The presence of the fabric, the weft, the warp, the thread that builds something, takes me back to my initial training as a textile designer. Somehow, I like the idea that we went the other way round to find what we were really interested in and now we are here to talk about it.

HM Indeed, we have a similar trajectory. During art school I never imagined doing any kind of handwork or fibre work. I spent my days photographing, editing and printing pictures, using both analogue and digital methods, and reading critical theory. A few years after graduating, in a parallel movement of moving away from photography and towards organising, I enlisted in an evening course in weaving in a community art school in Brussels. As a child, I did a lot of handwork with my mother, grandmothers and nieces: embroidery, crochet, knitting ... but never weaving. After completing a series of technical exercises like warping threads, threading a loom and learning different binds, my weaving teacher asked me what I was plan-

ning to make. Her question startled me because I didn't come to the weaving class to be productive. To humour the weaving teacher, I brought some of my old photographs to class and said I would weave what is depicted on them: repairs and transformations, small and big, using different materials like tape, plastic and cardboard, applied to buildings, infrastructure and vehicles. That was in the autumn of 2015 and that is what I have been doing ever since, and what I want to do for the rest of my life.

MIR Somehow the process of observation involved in photography has marked your approach to weaving. As well as your way of walking the street and looking at it.

HM Yes, in the series of handwoven textiles entitled *Materials* I remake the mended and temporarily fixed structures that I encounter while walking in public space. The scale, colours and textures of each textile are based on the materials that were used in the original repair and that I captured in the photograph. I also install the works in the same positions (at the same heights) as the original repairs. For example, a piece of tape that was covering a door handle will be installed at hand level and not at the usual eye level. I use my photographs as 'cartoons' of sorts: in the sixteenth century, preparatory drawings were made on hard paper or cardboard — hence the name *cartoon* — before being woven into tapestries. Deeming the photograph a 'cartoon' indicates that it is indispensable to the process in a strictly utilitarian way. The photograph is a model, a draft, a drawing behind the warp. The weaving cannot happen without it but, once the weaving is done, the photograph is discarded. This is how photography sits in my work now, as a support structure. Weaving feels like a situated process that allows me to more consciously deal with the conditions and the transformations of everyday life. I hope to overcome the reliance on reproduction. That is why I prefer not to exhibit the photographic reproductions — the 'cartoons' — on which these works are based, but rather to give prominence to the interconnected processes of making, thinking and feeling that weaving allows.

MIR It is, in a way, how the great tapestries were — and still are — woven: an artist paints a design on a piece of cardboard that serves as a basis for the weavers. Take, for example, Goya and his famous *cartones* for the Real Fábrica de Tapices de Santa Bárbara. Or Rubens. Here and in the nearby region we have many examples and incredible tapestry manufacturers. I recently saw one belonging to the Lady and the Unicorn series of tapestries from the sixteenth century. Do you think this proximity also influenced your working process?

HM Hmm, I'm not sure that I was conscious enough about what I was doing to make that link from the start; I only started calling my photographs cartoons after a little while. It took me some time to figure out what I was doing in terms of the transformation and reproduction of images from reality into weaving via photography, although from the very beginning I did keep my photographs next to or underneath the loom while weaving, exactly as you do with cartoons.

Before going to art school in Antwerp, I studied art history and archaeology at university in Brussels, and I remember learning about cartoons, especially in relation to Rubens and the 'Flemish tapestries'. Though, at that time, I was more interested in the production of tapestries in terms of understanding the different power relations within the art world — including, amongst others, patrons, artists, weavers and merchants or dealers — than in the iconography itself.

MIR We were talking the other day about a picture of you as a child, with your grandmother and a cousin, spinning. When we talk about weaving, we often talk about knowledge, about transmission. I particularly remember a work by the Colombian conceptual artist María Angélica Medina titled *conversation piece*, which she began in the 1980s. She used to sit knitting on a small chair and would offer a chair to whoever wanted to join her in conversation. In a way, she brought her domestic space — and a type of work considered domestic — into the public space, to initiate an exchange with an audience.

HM Yes, as mentioned before, as a child I did a lot of handwork with my family, but never weaving. A few years ago, my mother showed to her mother what I was making as an artist. Upon seeing my weavings, my grandmother mentioned that her own mother had once done something similar. My maternal great-grandmother was involved in a weaving community in the rural area of Lika in the first half of the twentieth century. Despite not having had access to an education, my maternal great-grandmother was using mathematical formulas to help other villagers warp and thread their looms. Unfortunately this story reached me only later in life; it got lost with my grandparents moving from the countryside to the city and my parents and me migrating to Belgium in the 1990s. That's why weaving feels so intimate, I think. The techniques that I use have been transferred to me by many weaving teachers and ancestors, consciously and subconsciously.

I can relate to how María Angélica Medina offers the audience a repetitive and meditative practice such as knitting to create the context and potential for something else to happen. This reminds me of the many conversations and encounters that took place during the participatory felting workshops that I have been facilitating since 2018 together with a group of women and non-binary people from the community arts centre Globe Aroma in Brussels. These 'Felt workshops', as we call them, are opportunities to experience how collective feelings can be formed through collaborative practices, located between stories and technique. There is also a micro-political dimension to the multiplicity of hands and voices, which the technique of felting poetically echoes. The differently coloured parts of the felts are still distinguishable, but up close you can see that they have gently become entangled. I imagine the same to be true for the interlaced loops of Medina and her audiences.



MIR I'm so glad you mention these workshops and how collective work has been present in your work. All these days, faced with the current situation, I've been thinking about the importance of coming together, of talking, of sharing experiences, of thinking, despite the differences in point of view — of how collectively we are a force. Perhaps this is a far-fetched metaphor for weaving, but it is what I imagine at this moment: weaves and warps, or knots, constructing something in a mental space that allows us to imagine and reconstruct something different from what we are living.

HM In retrospect, I think that I started facilitating these workshops to reconnect to the practices of commoning that I grew up with in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, and which seem to be hindered by how lives are organised today, by the architecture and infrastructure we share. For example, on the top floor of the high-rise in which my grandmother lives in Zagreb, there used to be a laundrette that all the inhabitants shared — you had to coordinate with the neighbours which colours of laundry you were washing when. Today this room no longer exists, unfortunately; after the building got privatised, the laundrette got converted into a lofty apartment and sold.

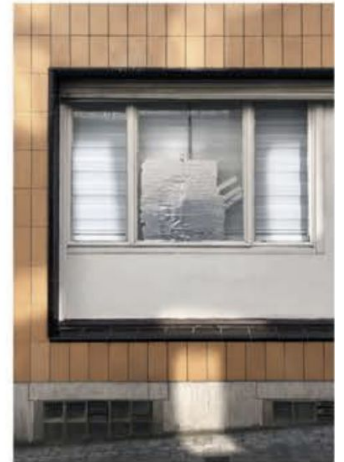
The Non-Aligned Movement that Yugoslavia co-founded in 1955 together with India, Egypt, Ghana and Indonesia, and that your home country of Colombia joined a bit later, has also been very inspirational when imagining how to organise collective work. I have been thinking about it often during the current moment. Ultimately it is about being in 'difference without separability', as Denise Ferreira da Silva wisely says.

MIR If there is one thing that interests and inspires me about our discussion, which began a few years ago, it is to see how — despite coming from countries that are so different geographically and politically — there are finally so many points in common, as well as differences that allow us to continue talking to each other.

HM Yes, we keep talking!

MIR To leave our conversation open to the future, I would like to mention the French-Hungarian architect Yona Friedman, who has been a great reference in my work and in my life. Friedman developed urban concepts such as the *Spatial City*, proposing that the city be organised freely by the citizens, and he referred to social utopias as the result of dissatisfaction and suggested that these utopias could be realised through a collective response. His visionary work over the years consisted of seeing the world not only as an entity that can be described by statistical methods, but also as being composed of individual entities that he called 'granules of space', entities with unpredictable behaviour that make it possible to bring to life a mobile architecture and an emancipated society.

HM Maybe an architecture that is radically mobile would help us move beyond the expectation of nation states. That would be a dream. We keep talking and dreaming.



CURA.  
FW 2021-22

## CURA.

### Haven't you been moved by the care you see in human gesture? On Hana Miletić's work

Text by Chus Martínez

I have a book of short stories of Catalan writer Pere Calders at the side of my bed. His short stories constitute the most amazing collection of small individual gestures capable of repairing the whole universe. In one of his stories, a man cares so much about the state of the things and people around him that he barely manages to get a little food into his stomach. The very moment he steps out of his house, a person, an animal, a wall, a bench needs a little bit of fixing and the day ends only few meters away from where he started it. Having lived almost all his life in the same building, every time he bumps into an older neighbor who complains about a little problem, he concentrates all his efforts in trying to assist: holding shopping bags, belittling the fact that grandchildren do not visit too often anymore, making sure there is enough food for the few street cats still in the neighborhood... A life dedicated to care implies a predisposition to think about one's time as the time for others.

I always loved how Calders' short stories describe the universe of acute observers of the real. Almost always men like himself, who seem to be unable to move on with their lives since the lives of others are always in front of them. These characters force us to see every detail, from the peeling of a wall in a building that needs a good coat of paint to the complaints that we constantly express in our everyday lives.





Who would think of a practice capable of being attentive to the universe in its smallest details? Who would invest in repairing every material and situation that needs our personal investment knowing that solving these rather small problems will never bring any big reward? That's why I think the practice of Hana Miletić is so special. If you look without paying attention, you may think she is doing a version of conceptual art or a take on textiles. And yet, the outcome does look conceptual because our eyes are unable to see the whole world she is touching when she touches a material. Her work is an amazing essay on the insistence of western humanities on general ideas and universal concepts without training the minds, hands and bodies of scholars, thinkers, readers into the interventions needed to spend time on the millions of particulars that do need our action. We learned to write the world as a general text and separate its arguments from the voices and the broken tissues that constitute a more immediate network of storytelling in our life. These broken tissues, carrying the pain of inequality or scarcity, or the pain of a paradox in the system or just the mark of the impossibility of continuing with life, constitute literature, visual arts, cultural theory, mass culture, etc. Miletić's work—through photography, weaving and sculpture—constitutes a personal take on the need to invent a proper medium able to provide an account of the social changes that swept millions of people into the capitalist world and the impact of its rapid transformations. Her work expresses something very humble that contradicts the hubris of modernity: before of thinking to replace the old worlds with the magical appearance of new ones we may need to stop and repair, and confront what is already there. Healing may mean just this: to open the senses and train the gestures to the effort needed to accept the task of building on a damaged world. Modernism's program prefers to replace, to dismiss. No time and no love for the damaged. But we are all damaged. Hana Miletić's practice breaks up human activity—artistic activity—into the task of becoming the agents of looking into the fragments, taking notice of the times, places, languages, materials, and genres that constitute the discipline of repairing. With her work she creates the conditions for a dialogue with the past that general discourses and analytic-dialectical practices do not. Cutting across textures and materials, understanding the physical as a premise of the social spaces we inhabit, she reveals solidarities between the different layers that constitute our experience of the real, but also between art and the ordinary, art and the people.



Her works activate several methods of seeing—the photographic image, the haptic, the hand weaving, the object standing, the work presenting itself, the wall activating a background. But also the colors she uses are very particular, creating some sort of illusion of conceptual centers that resonate with certain histories of art and materials that are linked with a memory of politics. Her works intentionally erase any literal reference to the public space that constitutes their origin. And yet they arrange themselves as a sort of main square with the ambition of touching us and make us create an assembly. Her works intend to create sculptural environments where the perpetual self-critique of past systems gets replaced by the possibility of a self-renewal force emerging from immediate touch and care. Have we really outgrown the dilemmas that arise with the dream of a life in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all? I do not think so. And therefore it is so important to invent through juxtaposing and capturing the material realities of the world with the visceral feeling of acceleration and compression, social conflict, and cultural upheaval that define the current urban and non-urban existence. With its focus on materials, Hana Miletić's work also manages to produce strangely physical dream images and ghostly appearances. Memory politics and the mental environments they create are the focus of her work, motivated by the transformations that originated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but not only. The contemporary transformation of metropolitan and rural areas worldwide under neoliberal siege and digital triumphalism raises questions about the earlier development of metropolitan experience in its relationship to certain media, industrial production and, today, digital dissemination. The work of Hana Miletić is not interested in bringing any of those past imaginations back to life. She is, above all, interested in the permanent negotiation between the visual, the haptic, the verbal, and the ancestral which was already constitutive of certain abandoned traditions in 20th-century modernism and which has reached a new crescendo in today's exercise of recovering certain feminist art practices. Her work is unapologetically about an artist aware of this genderized way of looking at languages and media, intimacy and space, big and small narratives.



Artforum  
January 2020

# ARTFORUM

## OPENINGS: HANA MILETIĆ

Kate Sutton on Hana Miletić

By Kate Sutton ☞



Hana Miletić, *Materials*, 2019, handwoven raw wool and metal yarn, 9 × 7 1/2". From the series "Materials," 2015-.

**IN 1804**, French weaver Joseph Marie Jacquard unveiled an invention that would revolutionize the textile industry: an apparatus that automatically controlled which threads were pulled on a loom, based on information stored on a looping series of punch cards. Intricate fabric patterns previously requiring hours of tedious manual labor could now be produced quickly, efficiently, and at scales capable of meeting the demands of the burgeoning global market. But the Jacquard loom would affect more than just brocade. Famously, the invention also inspired the Analytical Engine, a nineteenth-century prototype of a rudimentary computer developed by Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage. (Noting the similarity of the punch cards used to relay instructions to both machines, Lovelace mused, "We may say aptly that the Analytical Engine weaves algebraical patterns, just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves.")



Hana Miletić, *Materials*, 2019, handwoven cotton and raw wool, 7 7/8 × 9 1/2". From the series "Materials," 2015–.

Hana Miletić mobilizes the gendered associations of weaving to give materiality to processes of care and repair while still attending to the textile's specific affiliation with the digital. Born in Zagreb, in what is now Croatia, Miletić studied archaeology and art history before taking up street photography. In 2001, she relocated to Brussels, where, on a whim, she enrolled in workshops at a collective weaving atelier. She soon discovered that weaving—which, as the artist points out, essentially shares a “back office” with digital photography, in that both systems are predicated on grids—allows for manual manipulations in ways the photographic image does not.

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**Miletić discovered that weaving—which, as the artist points out, essentially shares a “back office” with digital photography—allows for manual manipulations in ways the photographic image does not.**

Today's automated looms no longer use cards, drawing instead on the digital input of rasterized images. Miletic works on a 1970s-era loom, which repeats specified patterns four times horizontally, generating a kind of contact sheet. While her textiles tend to stay quite small, concealing this effect, the artist has also parlayed the repetition into a series of larger tapestries titled "Softwares," 2018-. To introduce variations and distortions into each copy of the source image, the artist will tug at a random thread, much the same way that Wade Guyton might yank at a canvas as it runs through the printer. Given the high speeds at which the loom operates, this technique allows Miletic to set constraints on the degree of variation, though the actual outcome remains beyond her immediate control.



View of "Hana Miletic: Dependencies," 2018, Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels. Hanging: Softwares, 2018. Photo: Kristien Daem.

Miletić finds a different way to undermine subjective intention in the series “Materials,” 2015–, which has made appearances at many of her recent exhibitions, from the Sharjah Biennial in 2017 and her solo exhibition at Wiels Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels in 2018 to gallery shows at the Approach in London and LambdaLambdaLambda in Pristina, Kosovo, both in 2019. To make these understated collages—often composed of oddly shaped scraps of woven fabric—the artist begins with a photograph. Over the years, Miletić has built up an archive of digital snapshots of makeshift repairs she’s encountered in her day-to-day life, from duct tape sutured over broken taillights to ad hoc windowpanes fashioned from used cardboard. She lifts the irregular shapes of these patch-up jobs as ready-made models for her weavings and siphons her color palettes from the overall compositions of the original images; the result are the decidedly non-duct-tape shades of forest green, bleached strawberry, and Jaffa orange. In one 2019 work from the series, a strap of green and teal surges up in a stubby vertical, then careens horizontally, before swooping down and back to the vertical axis to inscribe an oblong *P*. Another from the same year suggests the mark of Zorro, fattened up and smushed onto a thick kebab skewer. Here, the fabric is tightly woven in silvery tones and reads like the surface of a metal colander.



Hana Miletić's felt workshop, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, May 12, 2018. Photo: Anna Van Waeg.

If in “Materials” Miletić brings images of the street into the studio, in other works she takes the studio to the streets. In 2018, the artist contributed to “The New Local,” a joint project by the curatorial platform Precarious Pavilions and the performing-arts center Kaaithheater sited on the open square of Brussels’s Muntplein/Place de la Monnaie. Participants were urged to reflect on the cut-and-paste character of public art. Miletić’s piece took the form of soft architecture, consisting of a fabric woven with a checkerboard pattern suspended from a simple metal frame. At first glance, the structure looks like a portable voting booth or one of those changing rooms on tony beaches. Inspecting it more closely, one sees that Miletić has left the internal sections of each square partially unbound. The threads hang in gauzy, anchored curtains, neither on nor off.



Hana Miletić, *Softwares (Precarious Pavilion)*, 2018–, Jacquard-woven textiles. Installation view, Muntplein/Place de la Monnaie, Brussels. Photo: Cillian O'Neill and Stine Sampers.

Though emphatically situated in real space, the object, titled *Softwares (Precarious Pavilion)*, 2018–, also points toward the virtual realm of the digital. The checkerboard pattern, woven from white polyester and gray cotton, implies a grid—high modernism’s tabula rasa of utopian possibility—while the grayscale patterning specifically evokes Adobe’s “transparency grid,” the sapless flesh underlying the skin of PSDs, PNGs, and TIFs. Cut something out and you will find this grid filling the hole. Its presence signals not only absence but also possibility, an indiscriminate invitation to patch in the cover of new content.



View of “Hana Miletić: *Incompatibilities*,” 2019, Approach, London. Photo: Damian Griffiths.

*Softwares (Precarious Pavilions)* actualized this invitation by readily hosting poetry readings and sound performances by other artists. Miletic had previously experimented with other forms of production that encourage collectivity. In 2017, she was tapped to lead a yearlong workshop at Globe Aroma, a cultural center in Brussels aimed at integrating new arrivals into the city. Noting a gender disparity in previous years' programming, Miletic oriented her workshop specifically toward women. She first formulated a series of collaborative poetry-writing sessions, but they were quickly bogged down by language barriers. One participant, Salome Grdzlishvili, a Georgian émigré, proposed convening through another format: felting. Thought to be one of the oldest (if not *the* oldest) textile, felt requires community—demands it, even—as multiple hands lather and knead wet raw wool into a solidified mass. Workshop participants started to anchor their poetry compositions in conversations about the colors they were using. The resulting multilingual poem, “txt, Is Not Written Plain,” conjures a palette of “yellow white / like the hair of my grandmother / who smokes,” “dirty pink colours” of “Indian old roses,” and “Earth brown like your hands today, / in small contrast with the brown / dotted, Merino wool shirt you / wear.”

The experience and its immersion in color connected the artist to the legacy of her grandmother, who was a weaver. (Miletic harbored warm childhood memories of learning to knit and of dipping Easter eggs in dyes distilled from onion skins.) For the past two years, the artist has experimented with making her own dyes from red beets, berries, and even avocados, whose pits beget an unlikely pink hue, akin to red-wine stains after one cycle in the wash. The emphasis on color has begun to announce itself in Miletic's captions, where the very specific titles of her materials—“ash grey elastic mohair,” “platinum mercerised cotton,” “indigo coloured polyester,” “cream cottolin”—hint at textile-trade histories.



Hana Miletic, *txt, Is Not Written Plain (Draft IV)*, 2018–19, mixed media. Installation view, 2019, TextielMuseum, Tilburg, the Netherlands. Photo: Josefina Eikenaar.



Miletić would focus on one particular case study for “Incompatibilities,” a series that debuted at her eponymous 2019 solo show at the Approach in London. As part of Yugoslavia, the artist’s hometown of Zagreb had once been the seat of a thriving textile industry. Today, the few factories that survived the general bungling of postwar privatization angle their wares toward the export market, offering only an extremely limited selection of their colors locally. However, yarn whose pigments are, for whatever reason, deemed “incompatible” with the standard is bundled up in bags and peddled at discounted prices. Miletić collects these bags and systematically empties their contents, weaving monochrome patches of each of these deviant hues, which she then pieces together in a kind of color-block collage. The artist purposefully leaves the seams of each section rough, so that the sutures take on a sculptural presence.

Her London show opened the day before Brexit’s intended October deadline (which promised to wreak havoc on markets both home and abroad), and the significance of this timing was not lost on the artist. After all, Miletić’s work springs from the ferment that led to Brexit: a world in which the local and the global have collapsed irrecoverably. Yet as Miletić demonstrates, these conditions need not lead to crisis. Instead, by proactively finding moments of productive intersection—the points where a grandmother’s homemade-dye recipe meets the hypermobile abstraction of the grid—we can tease out moments of communion, care, and collective possibility.

*Kate Sutton is coeditor of international reviews for Artforum.*

*Mousse Magazine*  
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# MOUSSE

## Hana Miletić “XX” at LambdaLambdaLambda, Prishtina

Hana Miletić’s “XX” proposes a series of binary inequalities, sharply delineated and forced into simultaneity, through the work’s marshaling of image, raw material, place, and movement. The unequal relationships drawn together here are distinct yet securely bound in plainly presented interrelation. Beyond the ‘socio-economic’ or ‘geopolitical,’ of which they also are, they encompass the bifurcate experience of human passage, aesthetic hierarchy and material value, and manual and artistic labor. In Basel, Switzerland, which maintains its independence from the EU as part of a pursuit of economic dominance underwritten by nationalist sentiment, Miletić photographed minor repairs in public space, perhaps made by Kosovar or other laborers from the former Yugoslavia, a significant migrant labor population in the region. Woven proxies for these repairs are exhibited in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, a state not only without EU membership but whose very sovereignty remains contested. The converse path also occurs, with textile repairs from the streets of Pristina ushered into the fair in Basel. The steeply disproportionate yet mirrored status of these two sovereigns – outside the EU under starkly uneven terms – provides the foundation for XX’s spate of binaric proportions. For example, in view of this national script, the repairs’ enact the art and craft divide: the handwoven articles teeter between displayed object or unusual household item, delicate relic or graffer tape, and tapestry, farm-house quilt or industrial debris. These separations – between art and craft, low and high material – are situated as maintained by labor hierarchy.

“XX” doesn’t offer or illustrate something as much as enact a series of displacements, which, in their canceling or ‘X-ing’ out of their referent, assume the binary in question while refuting it. Consider the collection of repairs in Basel. These fragile remains copy scenes from granular life in Pristina, partially displacing Basel as the site of current viewership. Are you in Basel, or are you in Pristina, peering at the fine handiwork used to tape a car window back together? In this sense, Miletic has removed the ground of the exhibition you stand in, and the centrality of Basel to its present viewership. At the same time, Basel is excluded but not disappeared, its structural link to Pristina artificially demoted in the autonomous space of “XX”, at this fair. This artificial demotion serves to highlight, as a temporary inversion, the reigning dominant relation of Switzerland to Kosovo and other “economies in transition,” or the UN’s term for the rank of the former Yugoslavia in its annual “country classification,” or development status report. <sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the UN does not use the name Kosovo in its report, despite supposedly recognizing its statehood.

In a very simple sense then, these “exports” from Pristina indicate but refuse the standard capital flow between developed and so-called “transitional” national economies. The repairs, oddly shaped and at first unplaceable, roughly indicate the textile, raw goods like wool, rubber, and metal, and partially constructed commodities that makeup Kosovo’s small export economy. Indeed, Miletic used unprocessed wool from Kosovo for the durable warp threads in these weavings. What they depict – small jobs culled from auto shops, delivery vehicles, and broken shop windows – incorporates the Kosovar population that lives and labors in Basel, but by bypassing their direct representation. “XX” brings this population into the exhibition space by presenting the relation dictating the value of their labor time –Switzerland as a “developed” nation and Kosovo as “transitional” – rather than an image, or even a direct trace, of individuals, everyday life, or craftwork. Further, the work insists on inaugurating a sense of the spatial reality of Pristina through great but withheld minute detail: specific street corners, moments of tape holding glass or cardboard, or wind ballooning a piece of tarp clinging to the side of a building. This device, in lush temporality, makes embodied an otherwise abstracted bond of economic subordination.

“XX”’s conceptual framework mines the structure of weaving. The Basel and Pristina exhibitions are polar points, integral but opposed, which provide the tense structure for the ‘warp and weft’ constitutive of XX’s overarching meaning. To put this another way, the displacement or exclusion of Switzerland within the Basel exhibition you stand in – overtaken by material and daily rhythm from Pristina – is achieved through employment of this dual structure. Like the warp beneath the weft, Basel isn’t obliterated in the scene of the present exhibition, nor ignored in an attempt to perform the importance of the subordinated state, but excluded while shown in its constitutive interdependence, or as inseparable from its relation to Kosovo. More broadly, “XX” suggests the impossibility of any “developed” economy without that of the “transitional,” breaking both down to another kind of abstract duality (XX), which is contrasted using material evidence, in faithful copies, of the ordinary sameness – yet striking separation – between the two as physical sites.

What of Basel in Pristina? These repairs are of a different color palate, indexing the individual and perhaps municipal routines that attend the minor constructions: in Pristina blue and gray tape predominates, so much so it seems it may be a requirement. In Basel, a diversity of adhesives (light brown, pink, red) suggest a larger consumer market, and perhaps an individual predilection for petty hole filling, as catalogued in the tiny mends on mailboxes and car bumpers in otherwise good shape. Exhibited in Pristina, the Basel repairs unravel, through multiple woven techniques, the façade of Switzerland’s unabridged national script, fraying, by threads drawn from within the state itself, its claim to absolute and unmediated sovereignty. Whereas in the Basel exhibition, Switzerland was excluded from the frame, in Pristina, in a country vying for trade with and recognition from the EU, the repairs centralize a view of the dominant state which depicts it as, although wealthy, fragmented, even unstable, with regard to any claim of national cohesion. Even beyond a critique of Swiss nationalism, what is shown in Pristina is the intangibility of the designation of “developed.” The weavings

speak to an immediate and shared world because the repairs from the two cities are only subtly different; wherein everything ultimately breaks down and must be renewed, and where tape is tape, and thread is thread. Conversely, the change in materials in the textile shown in Pristina – the heavy and small gold weave, like jewelry or currency, and bright pinks and blues – suggest a density and diversity of capital in Basel, casual and indifferent to the conditions anywhere else.

For viewers in Pristina, if we are assuming they are Kosovar which they may not be, it is possible relatives or old neighbors who immigrated to Basel made the repairs copied in textile, which posits another experience of both the geopolitical binary and the individual weavings themselves. To receive Switzerland as always already never itself, as not presently possible in its own narrative – and rather continually dependent on others for its most miniature rehabilitations — is the slight advantage from the “transitional” periphery. From here too, where the main export is labor power, the repairs that return become corporeal: the red and nude colored knit like gauze over flesh, or tiny segments of bright pink intestine roughly wrapped in cotton. The weavings’ handmade-ness – their physicality and organic unevenness – speak to the cost, a ‘pound of flesh,’ of national borders amid global economic competition.

– E. C. Feiss



# RACHEL FÄTH

Rachel Fäth's selected solo exhibitions include (Coördinator), Francis Irv, New York; Invisitor, diez, Amsterdam (2023); HAUS, Shahin Zarinbal, Berlin (2022); Lock, Loggia Loggia, Munich (2022). Selected group exhibitions include Gianna Surangkanjanajai, Jannis Kounellis, Rachel Fäth, Isabella Costabile, Gianluca Belloni, le vite, Milan; WEATHERING, Kai Matsumiya, New York (2023); CREWED, New Jörg, Vienna (2023); The Age, Shahin Zarinbal, Berlin (2022); Jahregaben, Kunstverein Munich, Munich (2022); Under the Volcano II, Lomex, New York (2022); Haus Wien, Vienna (2021).

Born 1991, Berlin, Germany  
Lives and works in New York, NY

Francis Irv Gallery  
Rachel Fäth: *(Coördinator)*  
September 29th–October 28th, 2023

Rachel Fäth  
*Coördinator*  
Francis Irv Gallery, 2023  
Press Release (excerpt)

“Fäth sources her steel from a supplier called Rapid Steel which operates out of an old steel plant in Long Island City. Once a major site of industrial manufacturing along the East River, the defunct steel plant, Thypin Steel, has since been repurposed as a site for steel distribution. In the long course of deindustrialization, it’s easy to forget there once was a time when Big Steel was synonymous with “America,” Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, steel-framed skyscrapers, and miles and miles of railroad track. Despite the waning of big manufacturing, steel remains symbolically rich, a nostalgic reminder of Keynesian stability—centralized labor, strong unions, the family wage—and, culturally, an inescapable allusion to the monumental aesthetics of postwar modernism, such as Serra’s large-scale works of forged steel.

Despite its weighty materiality, Fäth uses steel for the purposes of abstraction: to make lines and patterns, compositions in space. Painted red and yellow lines on the body of the extenders gesture at directionality and speed, while loose coins wedged between the layers of steel sheets prompt a question about value. Coins and steel are bound up in seemingly different systems of value, one of exchange and the other of use, however, as Fäth intuits, they are both part of the same system, part of the upside-down world of commodities. As objects with storied pasts, Fäth’s mounting systems exist within a chain of relations, always referring elsewhere. One mounting system, for example, points out the window toward the ever-changing Manhattan skyline, obstructed by the ongoing construction of Chinatown’s mega jail, a 300-ft tower projected to be the tallest jail in the world. Fäth’s deliberate arrangement of steel mounting systems directs us toward barely perceptible details, whether architectural or infrastructural, past or present, in order to begin the process of demystification.” - Eva Cilman

diez  
Rachel Fäth: *Invisor*  
September 8th–October 14th, 2023

Rachel Fäth  
*Invisor*  
diez, 2023  
Press Release

Artist Rachel Fäth uses elementary architectural structures to carve wedges and linkages into perceptual space. For *Invisor*, Fäth highlights the margin formed between diez and the historic courthouse, where it resides. The white cube of the gallery is reduced to a three-walled stage set in the midst of a former courtroom. Fäth builds a circuitry between spaces of varying scales, forging a threshold between monumentality and minimalism. The front side of the gallery walls are marked by Fäth's discrete steel plates, which from behind are revealed to be connected to square tube pipelines, jaggedly jutting out the back of the wall. The austere setup twists into an impending sense of hidden depths, as you walk around the edifice. Paul Klee wrote that "the eye follows the paths that have been laid down for it in the work." In *Invisor*, nothing is placed at eye level so the gaze seeks out interspatial burrows beneath perception. At first, Fäth's steel pipelines draw you towards the intersection of two recesses—the hollow of the steel tubes inserted into the hollow of the walls. However, peering through the tubes, a positive space emerges, a narrow chamber intercepted by a target of concentric steel rings, which focalize perception towards the limit point of the steel plate.

Perception gets trapped in a cross-section, which one sees into but not out of. And yet, this insularity is punctured by light coming through circular apertures of the chamber from the open top of the wall, so that this innermost space is enlightened by the outer space of the room. In another reflective circuitry, Fäth has installed a clamp with a light on the courthouse walls, which reciprocally illuminates an antique ceiling light. A conceptual sculptor in the vein of Stanley Brown and Maria Nordman, Fäth has been making what she calls "mounting systems" for the past 2 years, when she stumbled upon steel tubes on the streets of New York. These "hollow structural sections" are often used in the construction of skyscrapers and are known for their load-bearing capacity. Fäth affixes the tubes to steel plates at skewed angles, cuts them into uneven sizes, and adds sculptural appendages. No longer used as architectural support, the tubes become a conduit to clear through blocks of opaque matter, bisecting walls to traverse and expose the boundaries between rooms. These funnels unfold a continuum from openness to obstruction. When removed from the installations, the tubes index the spaces they intersected—picking up residue, debris, and fingerprints. Fäth's work tests inner and outer limits, reflecting and contorting the infrastructures that underpin our sense of depth, light, measure, and visibility. - Text by Felix Bernstein



Loggia  
 Rachel Fäth: *Lock*  
 July 14–August 26, 2022

>>LOCK<<

Rachel Fäth

*If a life fulfilled its vocation directly, it would miss it.*<sup>1</sup>

Two objects that are separate contain the potential to join together. A cut, or gap signifies a break and a connection. Rachel Fäth's *Lock* includes mounting systems that scale the walls at differing heights of Loggia Loggia. At 45-degree angles, most of these mounting systems, made of sandblasted steel, so smooth that they absorb our fingerprints, protrude from the wall into the room in the form of 4-inch square tubes. Steel extenders slide onto the mounting systems, dressing them. The extenders are clunky, producing shadowlands on the walls. Each part of them is doubled and held together with coins found on the sidewalk, or hinges, or they are welded. Words like *forever-ever*, kitschy, pop language are emblazoned onto them, holding these objects together, sometimes only partially visible, and mixed with the language of codes, the serial numbers already printed on the metal surface. Language connects, but in its nonsensical, Dadaist form. The pieces gesture to a line through the space, which, like its language, deviates and stutters between each part.

The pieces were made in Fäth's Hudson Square studio in New York, a space with visible architectural technology, lacking in natural light. The studio looks onto the financial district where traffic enters Holland Tunnel, connecting Lower Manhattan to Jersey City in New Jersey West. Her objects point to the infrastructure that makes a building and a city operational, but which is usually hidden behind its walls, or contained in boxing, a network of invisible structures that maintain flows of energy, gas and water. *Lock* then, speaks of potential dis-function, of objects breaking down, of uselessness and crassness, of crisis. The mounting system and the extender create an image of non-functional infrastructure to show us the tension and potential for connection. The distance between two parts allows them to come back together.

In philosophy or thinking, Theodor Adorno describes distance from the 'continuity of the familiar' as what produces value in thought.<sup>2</sup> In love, Gillian Rose says that distance, or a boundary must remain intact so that lovers can approach and retire from each other, so that neither meets their effacement or obliteration in their connection.<sup>3</sup> If there is an intolerable quantity of fear between two parts, emotion will feel like it will overwhelm and destroy the singularity of each. *Lock* shows us a similar thought, in the difficulty of navigating the self and other and the other in the self. The mounting system in the extender. The break is always also a connection, cutting away and toward. The objects are made of an infinite number of breaks, discontinuous yet implying a symmetry.

- Rose-Anne Gush

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London; New York: Verso Books, 2005), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Gillian Rose, *Love's Work* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2011), p. 142.