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MANUEL ARTURO ABREU, DANIELLE BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY, JES FAN, YONG XIANG LI, DIANE SEVERIN NGUYEN, XIYADIE
Transactions With Eternity
Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin
09.07.2022–20.08.2022

The artists in *Transactions With Eternity* acknowledge subjectivity as affected by the violent regimes of modernity, but at the same time see it as irreducible to such forces. There is always a hint of indeterminacy, of that which cannot be grasped and eludes the prevailing social order. Where there is a “supremacy of thought” (abreu), there is also the sensuous, not as its opposite, but as its deformed underside. The treatment of seemingly eternal categories such as history is constantly transacted, and if some things are indeed set in stone, aesthetics can contribute to their renegotiation.

In *All Electrons Are (Not) Alike*, a 2009 poem by German-American poet Rosmarie Waldrop, Waldrop talks of “transactions with eternity” as being less urgent than the power to name and record in the colonial quests. While Waldrop speaks of such a transaction within a religious context, the tenor of this term lends itself to cracking open ways to decipher artistic practices that broker seemingly enduring historical matters.

While first-person video games strive for technological perfection and an immersive experience, they almost never achieve them, despite their asymptotic promise of endless improvement. Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley’s *BEHIND THE SCENES (OFFICE VIDEOS SERIES 1)* irreverently and humorously exploits the glitches, malfunctions, and gaps of video games, where—just like in “real” life—we always find ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. A corporate, soulless non-place disorients the uncooperative subject that is never able to reach the level of full immersion. Flops and failures here are not a deviation from digital technology, but its structural features. In the films, *MOISTURISING* and *BADCITYENDING*, confrontational one-liners mix with audiovisual cacophony to offer an aesthetic model that counters the politics of liberal Humanism and easy legibility.

Yong Xiang Li’s chair-like objects are foldable, which gives them a utilitarian quality of modernist modulation, but they shamelessly transcend it by delighting in their superficiality, for it is surface, not depth, that is laden with meaning. With ambivalent feelings towards the appropriation of Oriental motifs by 19th-century arts and crafts and the so-called Anglo-Japanese style, the artist reflects on the history in which the aesthetics of the ‘vernacular other’ have been mis/translated as decoration. Echoing Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s Hill House Chair and its ‘unapologetic impracticality,’ the frozen drama of a fleeting moment in Gustav Courbet’s wave paintings and the illusionistic painting of Wang Youxue, a student of Giuseppe Castiglione, who was responsible for a particular vein of “Western painting” that was translated in service of the Qing Dynasty court, Li’s work emphasizes the style of transmutation within the asymmetries of historical and present-day cross-cultural exchange.

Rack II gives a nod to Jes Fan’s fascination with museological displays that are usually meant to be invisible and seamless as is the coloniality and logic of rationality embedded in such taxonomical institutional spaces. Fan finds moments of restraint and extravagance in these structures and molds them into non-subordinate forms that complicate a monolithic reading. Whereas the boundaries in conventional display systems are made to be distinct and fastened, the anatomy of *Rack II* appears porous and leaking. Leakage implies a breach between the inside and the outside, an opening where Fan navigates slippery issues of identity through a tactile, material approach. Here, the leakage forms its own exterior, like a pearl or resin that, against all odds, solidifies its being. Over these bulbous forms, Fan drapes pendulous casts of skin that approximate his own body, but with their enfolded forms, elude the privileged bodily hierarchy.

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manuel arturo abreu is a writer, artist, and poet whose practice is rooted in collective learning and education, often taking the form of ephemeral sculptures and lecture performances. Their reading corner in the first gallery consists of a dried shrub branch system, a light fixture, and cascarilla, which is dried eggshell powder used ritualistically for metaphysical protection. In contrast to European modernism's classical notion of theoretical detachment and its denigration of the sensual or the non-cognitive, here senses co-produce theory, while objects are considered facilitators of a certain kind of temporary relation. Visitors are invited to sit down and browse through the zine, which includes the Berlin Ethnological Museum's rejection letter from the gallery's attempt to obtain some indigenous Ayiti Arawak artifacts on loan, as well as various recent analytical essays, poems, paintings, and Asemic writings that together address certain 'cracks' in modern (art) history and point to the space beyond the artwork as a self-contained entity.

Diane Severin Nguyen arranges and photographs tenuous set-ups where things are pulled apart, twisted, and burned, and the materiality itself becomes a decaying subject with open wounds. Nguyen brings matter like hair, latex, liquid, and notably, homemade napalm into abstracted terrain that embodies what she finds unstable about images in general, namely their power to disfigure and alienate the intractable forces embedded in our historical and collective memory. Harnessing the notion of punctum, that which disturbs and rises from the scene in photography, Nguyen's images retain an aberrant quality that defies naming. By conceding with photograph's constructedness, the artist distances her work from what she calls a "violent lineage of indexicality" that has been perpetuated in the medium of photography.

Naming himself after the "Siberian Butterfly," a creature defined by tenacity against harsh realities, Xiyadie unfolds deeply personal narratives of queer intimacy and loss as he cuts and colors paper. Papercutting had originated as folk art in domestic spheres where papercuts would be hung to cast shadows through passages and windows. In keeping with the medium's backdrop, Xiyadie explores the familial space and its thresholds, where safety and risk collide as he looks back on his previously closeted family life. Gates are recurring loci in his work, alluding to the duality that has always existed in his life, one that negotiates privacy within fraught social conditions and celebrates exuberance and harmony in life and nature.

Transactions With Eternity is curated by Sebastjan Brank and Catherine Wang.

manuel arturo abreu (b. 1991, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic) is a non-disciplinary artist from the Bronx who lives and works on lands of Multnomah, Cowlitz, Chinook, Kalapuya, Klackamas, Grand Ronde Confederation, Siletz Confederation, and other First Peoples of the Pacific Northwest. Since 2015, they have co-facilitated home school, a free pop-up art school with a curriculum of non-genre-conforming multimedia edutainment. Recent projects have taken place at Veronica, Seattle (2021, solo); Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna (2021); Athens Biennale 7 (2021); HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Graz (2021); AB Lobby Gallery, Portland State University (2019, solo); Yaby, Madrid (2019, solo); MoMA and MoMA PS1, New York (2018); Rhizome and New Museum, New York (2017). abreu has published two books of poetry, List of Consonants (2015) and transtrender (2016), as well as a book of critical writing, Incalculable Loss (Institute for New Connotative Action Press, 2018).

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley lives and works in London. Brathwaite-Shirley produced a solo performance work at Tate Modern, London, in 2020. Recent exhibitions have been held at QUAD, Derby, England (2021); Focal Point Gallery, London (2020, solo); Science Gallery, London (2020, solo); and MU Hybrid Art House, London (2020, solo); Les Urbaines, Lausanne, Switzerland (2019); Copeland Gallery, London (2019); and Barbican, London (2018).

Jes Fan (b. Scarborough, Canada) lives and works in New York. Fan received his BFA at RISD. Fan's work has been shown at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2022); Lisson Gallery, New York (2022); Kunsthall Trondheim (2022); The Fifth New Museum Triennial, New York (2021); 11th Liverpool Biennale (2021); 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020); X Museum Triennial (2020); Times Museum, Guangzhou (2019); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2019); Hayward Gallery, London (2019); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2019); Para Site, Hong Kong (2019); Antenna Space, Shanghai (2019); Empty Gallery (2018, solo); Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh (2018); Vox Populi Gallery, Philadelphia (2017, solo); Museum of Arts and Design, New York (2017, solo); Sarah Doyle Gallery, Brown University, Providence (2016, solo).

Yong Xiang Li lives and works in Berlin. Li received his BA in Graphic Design & Moving Image at CSM and studied in Judith Hopf's class at Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. Li's work has been shown at LC Queisser, Tbilisi (2022, solo); Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, Germany (2022); FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague (2021, solo); Schwabinggrad, Munich (2021, solo); Sadie Coles, London (2021); Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna (2020, solo); UCCA Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2020), Antenna Space, Shanghai (2020).

Diane Severin Nguyen (b. 1990, Carson, CA, USA) lives and works in New York. Nyugen received her MFA from Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY in 2020 and a BA from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA in 2013. Nguyen's work has been exhibited at The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2022, solo); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2022); Greater New York, MoMA PS1, New York (2021); SculptureCenter, New York (2021, solo); Stereo, Warsaw (2021, solo); 13th Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art (2021); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2020, solo); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2020); Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (2019, solo); Exo Exo, Paris (2019, duo); Bureau, New York (2019, duo). Nguyen will be participating in forthcoming exhibitions including The 58th Carnegie International at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, and a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

Xiyadie (b. 1963, Heyang County, Shaanxi Province, China) is a self-taught traditional Chinese papercut artist, currently based in Shanghai. Xiyadie was educated at the Special Arts and Crafts School in Heyang County, and worked in the crafts department of the Xi'an Film Studio. His works were first exhibited at the Beijing LGBT Center. His works have been shown at Ujazdowski Castle Centre of Contemporary Art, Warsaw (2020); The 33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (2019); Rockbund Art Museum Shanghai (2020); The 12th Gwangju Biennale (2018); NOME Gallery, Berlin (2018, solo); Taipei MOCA (2017); Para Site, Hong Kong (2017); Galerie Verbeeck - Van Dyck, Antwerp (2015); Topenmuseum, Amsterdam (2015); Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg (2013); and Flazh! Alley Art Studio, San Pedro, USA (2012, solo).