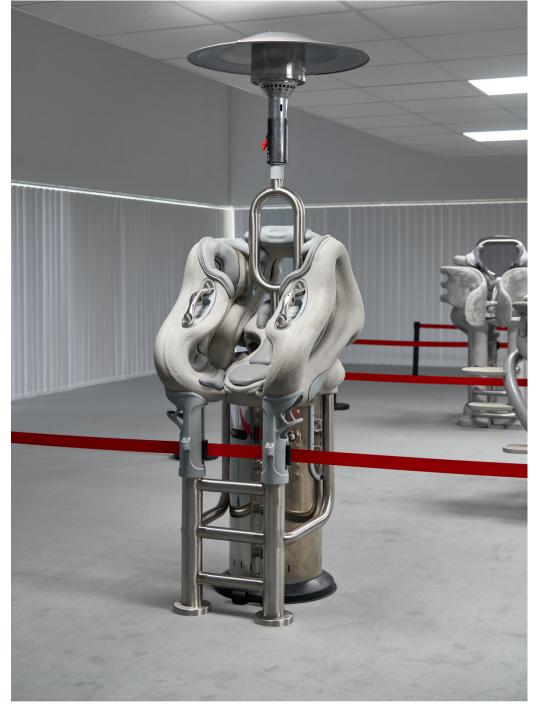
ANNA UDDENBERG

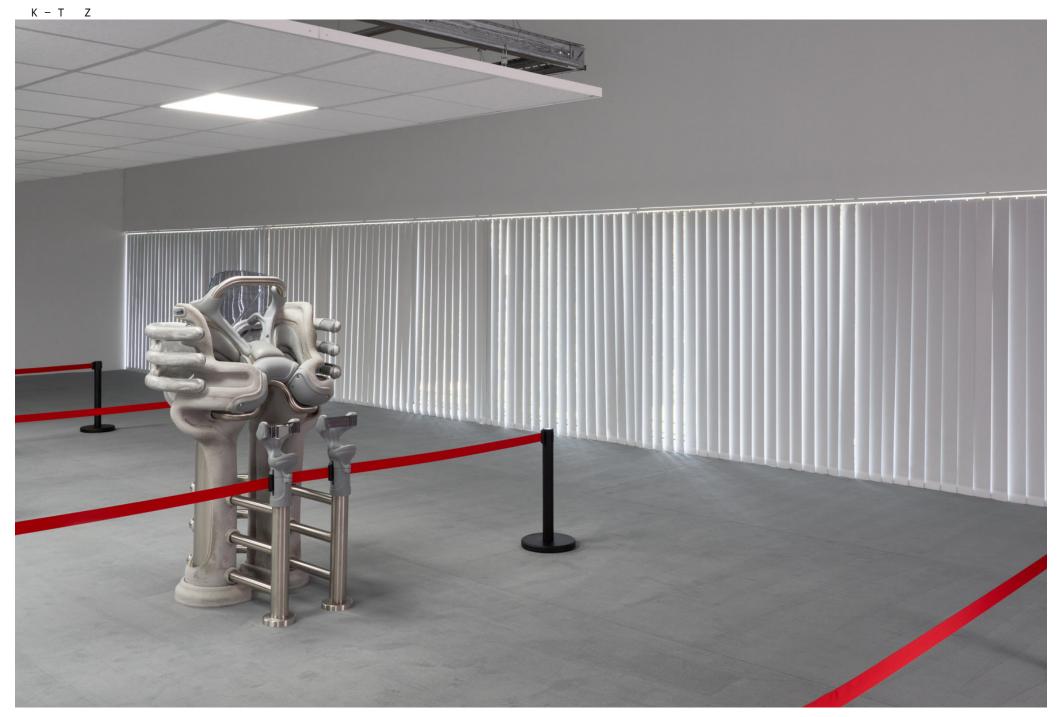
Text by DAVID ANDREW TASMAN

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STANDARD DEVIATION

a contemporary artist or collective.

chions create parallel rows between their red retractable is forthcoming. belts. The completeness of the installation architecture the base and seem capable of accommodating a body, fissures widening in the consumer/capitalist state. though if so, in an unfamiliar way.

bodies into a partial kneeling handstand, hands nearly The Consumer Society. folded, knees planted in stirrups, asses and high heels pointing upwards.

ble pose – a carnivalesque inversion. Travel is a recurring originally completed in 1894 before being motif in the artist's work, seen first in her now iconic damaged in WWII and ultimately demol-Savages and Transit Mode series of female figures set ished. To Uddenberg, these buildings repreatop roller suitcases. While Uddenberg's early works pan-sent an ersatz Berlin dislocated from the tomimed travel in part as a stand-in for the real demands "socio-economic reality of the city." she felt herself as a young artist, her recent meditation offers an expanded perspective, using the airport to frame printer in her studio and finished in veneers of surrender and obedience as a requisite compromise within sprayed concrete, stamped metal, and rattan, a closed capitalist system.

As the stewardesses hold their pose for several minutes, the audience takes in the controlled scene. The position is sexual but the performers are impassive, exhibiting value, veneers of assimilation of whatever it neither pleasure nor pain. After a period, they dismount the wants to refer to, but without a real connecsculptures and remove their gloves. Their indifference to the tion—a mutant, or a simulation of role play. humiliating pose could be a mirror to the partial detachment Buildings that pretend to be something they necessary to navigate the absurdity of consumerist stimuli are not — a performance." Architectural mockembedded in everyday experiences, such as when survey- ups also served as a touch point for the artist, ing social media and marketing schemes that attempt to the way they showcase the materiality of the pass off the tail ends of the bell curve as the mean, artificial-building, condensing and abstracting it. ly shortening the standard deviation with clickbait and influencers' attempts to standardize identity - making one sculptures relate conceptually more to architecthink, for example, that everyone should be able to twerk ture than furniture; and this makes sense while upside down, hands planted on the floor and feet up, when thinking about architecture's ease with against a wall like one of Uddenberg's sculptures from her overt and covert signifiers that might grace a 2017 exhibition Pelvic Trust. After dismounting the artworks, building's cornices or embellish its façade. the hostesses direct the audience out of the viewing posi- However, here signifiers draw from a surreal tion as if nothing unusual had occurred, and those who have contemporary vocabulary of the everyday, inbeen waiting are advanced in the queue in preparation for cluding heat lamps, hair clips, and roll bars the performance to repeat.

"We are very used to lining up on different sides of Anna Uddenberg - Premium Economy, an exhibition by the the stanchions," Uddenberg says, "the performance in New Swedish-born artist at the Kunsthalle Mannheim, is the cul- York at Meredith Rosen Gallery could have been theatrical mination of her Hector Art Prize award, granted once every but we are so used to complying with rules, sometimes it is three years by the museum and the Hector Foundations to not clear why the rules are in place." That performance and exhibition. Continental Breakfast, was a dress rehearsal of In the museum's largest atrium, a gray carpet sorts for Premium Economy at Kunsthalle Mannheim. covers the floor from wall to wall. A dropped acoustic ceil- Performances were impeccably led by Uddenberg's longing, such as is found in generic office spaces, hangs in the time studio manager and collaborator, Berlin-based artist center of the room compressing the space and turning the Sally von Rosen, A video of the performance was commishall into a stage. Under the ceiling, crowd control stan-sioned by Black Cube chief curator Cortney Lane Stell and

While the blue of Balenciaga's epochal Summer temporarily turns the museum into an airport security 2020 show participated in a conversation around the politcheckpoint of sorts. Interspersed along the rows are eight ical state and restructuring of the EU, Uddenberg's blue airintricate totemic sculptures. Some have small ladders at port shifts the conversation to the present moment and the

During the event, discomfort settles as the au-For the show's opening night, several perform- dience questions whether this performance of control is ers quide the audience into a queue to approach the for their pleasure, or rather, a demonstration of the consculptures. With their tailored skirt suits, tightly drawn tortions that will be expected of them, before realizing hair, and button-down shirts, the performers resemble airline stewardesses in the familiar vestments of a commertions capitalism already subjects us to, forcing us to subcial ritual. The performance unfolds as the stewardesses mit, to bend over in pursuit of services, goods, and archidirect the audience into position to view the sculptures. tectures that are high in price and low in value. The title of When the queue is full, the belt is drawn closed and oth- the exhibition, Premium Economy, reinforces the oxymoers in the crowd are made to wait their turn. Next. uni- ron inherent in contemporary consumer culture - and our formed performers approach the sculptures and careful-voluntary submission to the siren song of its glittering urly, one after the other, draw on black leather gloves and banism. Through another lens, this is Antonin Artaud's climb onto the works, allowing their forms to position their Theater of Cruelty performing a rendition of Baudrillard's

The artist deepened an ongoing interest in urban and architectural issues when preparing for her ex-Unlike a typical transit checkpoint, Uddenberg's hibition FAKE-ESTATE at the Shinkel Pavillon in 2022. audience-travelers do not have to stand with their legs. During that time, she contemplated the many investapart and hands up inside the millimeter-wave scanner to ment properties that had been built around the Pavillon pass unmolested. Here, they need only watch would-be au- and the Kronprinzenpalais off of Unter den Linden, as thority figures themselves strike a submissive and vulnera- well as the 2020 reconstruction of the Berlin Palace,

Often begun on a large-scale 3D the materiality of Uddenberg's sculpture references the artifice of these surroundings.

As compact "mock-ups," Uddenberg's from convertible automobiles or radar arches

from speed boats, stanchions and bollards from the public sphere, or the back of headrests, "These forms have a strong relationship to the body, but the body is absent, and anything the mind might conjure in parallel is unfamiliar to us in daily life, like the body," Uddenberg says, "that we are told comes easily straight out of a gym."

In several works, hair clips have first been digitized and then enlarged as if on steroids; their industrial and organic form both supports itself and grabs onto the main sculpture — a parasitic grasp of consumer detritus of questionable necessity. For Uddenberg, these are utilitarian forms that represent the "overproduction of objects that under closer consideration beg the question, are they useful, or do they just appear useful?" One of Uddenberg's gifts as a storyteller is to magnify invisible forces and portray them with a hyperbolic clarity that makes once-hidden power structures that bear heavily on our subjectivity embarrassingly visible. The submission of the performers to her architectures could be seen as symbolic of the high sacrifice required to possess the asset of architecture itself. In the US, for example, 1 in 4 single-family homes are estimated to be owned by investors and more households are renting than at any time in the past 50 years. Germany. of all the countries in the EU, has one of the largest populations living in rental accommodation. In this light, the exhibition can be seen in part to explore Uddenberg's interest in the relationships between capitalism and consumer culture that have teetered out of equilibrium, their role in the formation of a submissive subject, and as a proxy, the relationship of building zoning to BDSM. "Some of the German past is very present," the artist says, "in drag and normalized through the familiar materials and protocols of where capitalism intersects with our exercise of freedoms, movement, and transit."

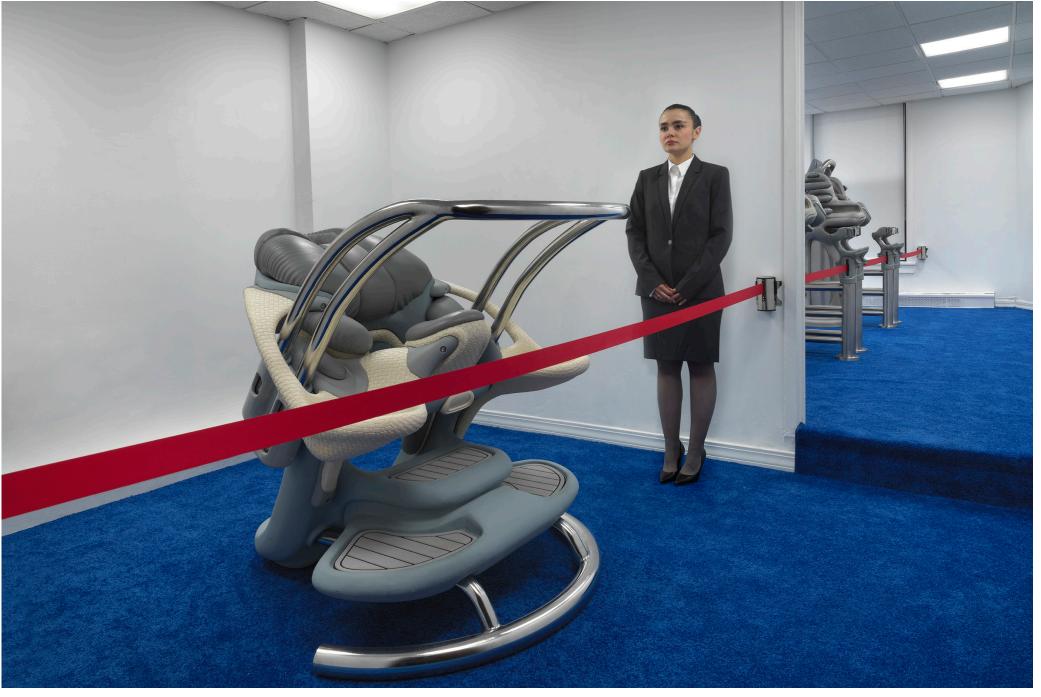
For the artist, rule systems, authoritarian social contracts, invisible boundaries, building zoning and BDSM are similar in that their contracts are very literal, "In other relationships," Uddenberg says, "you have to figure out the rules yourself, but in BDSM contracts everything is spelled out - these sculptures are questionable contracts themselves." For her, the generic buildings that served as reference points for this exhibition represent "big blocks of agreement, real estate, and the financial stress and pressures that are on physical buildings." Like buildings, these sculptures have their own zoning, they "don't take up more space than one square meter. Financial domination that keeps the person in its grip, really tight,"

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