Creature at the Broad

November 5, 2016–March 19, 2017

On the surface, museums dedicated to private art collections seem more like glorifications of investment than valorizations of creativity—though what comprises a collection makes clear on which end of that spectrum it truly is. When billionaire philanthropic and art-collecting duo Eli and Edythe Broad—whose surname appears on virtually every cultural edifice in Los Angeles—announced plans to build a museum to house their own art collection, it was more a given than a surprise. Yet the mystery lay less in the couple's imminent desire to construct a monument to their art holdings and more in how this collection-cum-institution would actually function in an age of global museum expansion and private foundation proliferation.

At the time of the Broad's inaugural exhibition, the reviews were almost exclusively negative, with many critics pointing out the installation's safe, art market-approved homogeny. It is true that the collection is overwhelmingly comprised of blue-chip, auction-sanctioned art; however, "markets always distinguish between what's salable and what's not, but they can't calculate quality."[1] Thus the real question is: Can vital, culturally significant exhibitions be mounted purely from such dedication to art's established markets? If *Creature*, the current exhibition at the Broad, is any guide, the answer is probably not.

Regardless (or possibly because of) the collection's oft-cited limitations, *Creature*'s thesis seems willfully porous. Its introductory wall text states, "We navigate constantly a fluid zone between our instincts and our learned behaviors," and goes on to posit that "art can reframe—at times even rupture—preconceived or stale notions about what it means to be human." Certainly, the conflict between our instinctual, desire-driven selves and the body as a physical, mental, and social construct makes for an intriguing and fertile exhibition context. Yet such curatorial succinctness was either unattainable or was simply not the goal here. The wall text goes on to state, "this exhibition examines the wide-ranging terrain of creaturely life, from everyday animals to extraordinary monsters to human beings."

With these additional obfuscating layers, *Creature* becomes a nebulous, rambling display that is essentially split into three commingling divisions: tension between subjectivity and societal systems (Baselitz, Golub, Wojnarowicz), corporeal spectacle (Houseago, Koons, Murakami), and zoological allusions (Balkenhol, Basquiat, Vaisman). Unsurprisingly, the latter two categories' respective sensationalistic and non-human qualities irreparably compromise the integrity of the former. For instance, Andy Warhol's *The Kiss* (*Bela Lugosi*) (1963), which opens the show, is an appropriated image from the 1931 film *Dracula*, in which the titular vampire prepares to feast on his female victim. In this context, Warhol's screenprint sets an unshakable art-as-spectacle tone, one that is echoed by Thomas Houseago's monstrous *Giant Figure* (*Cyclops*) (2011), Tony Oursler's suspended cloud, *Dust* (2006), and Takashi Murakami's inexcusably misogynistic sculpture *Nurse Ko2* (*Original rendering by Nishi-E-Da, modeling by BOME and Genpachi Tokaimura, advised Masahiko Asano, full scale sculpture by Lucky-Wide Co., Ltd.*) (2011). The exaggerated and uncanny nature of these and other works injects the physical aspects found in the work of Kiki Smith and Cindy Sherman—to name just two—with a debased, overly theatrical tenor.

This is not to say that *Creature* does not incorporate exceptional artwork. In addition to excellent pieces by Georg Baselitz, Bruce Nauman, Jenny Holzer, Cindy Sherman, and Ellen Gallagher, is David Wojnarowicz's *Late Afternoon in the Forest* (1986), perhaps the one work in the show that perfectly ticks all three of *Creature*'s thematic boxes. It makes sense, then, that it appears both at the beginning and end (due to the show's circular layout viewers experience this particular work twice). The Broads own at least three of Wojnarowicz's works and, according to

1. Christopher Knight, "An early look in the Broad museum reveals a show that doesn't quite gel," *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-broad-museum-review-20150913-column.html.

Thomas Duncan

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1
Thomas Houseago, *Giant Figure (Cyclops)* (2011). Bronze, 177 × 67 × 66 inches. Courtesy of the artist and The Broad. Photo: Ben Gibbs.

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Sam Pulitzer & Peter Wächtler
(2016) (installation view).
Image courtesy Gaga Reena.
Photo: Jeff McClane

3
Karl Haendel, *BY AND BY* (2016) (installation view). Image courtesy of the artist and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer.

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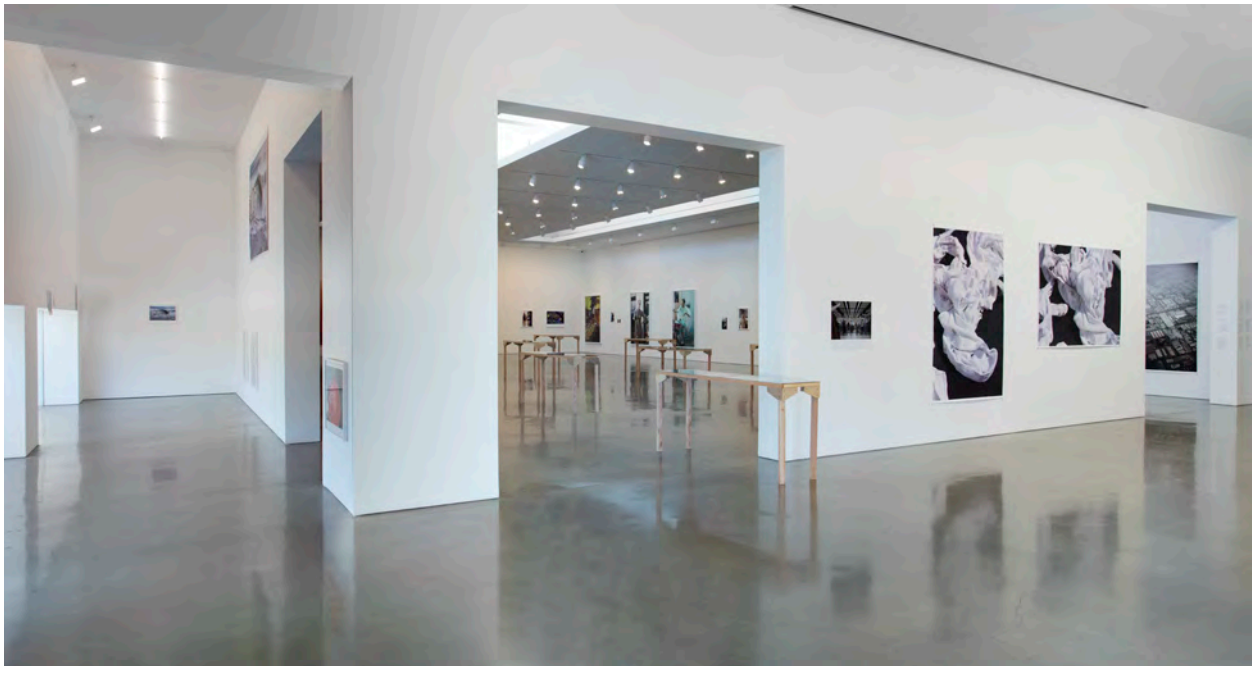

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Wolfgang Tillmans (2016) (installation view). Image courtesy of Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Brian Forrest.

the museum's website, they were acquired in 1986, a time when the openly gay artist was authoring intensely personal, visceral reactions to the AIDS crisis era in which he lived (he died from the disease in 1992). His work's inclusion here is an absolute highlight, one that is tinged with the sadness that seemingly very few works of this kind of zeitgeist vitality have found their way into this collection.

Put simply, *Creature* favors spectacle over substance. As a result, continually urgent issues of race, gender, sexuality, and governmental power that could have been more potently explored are either ignored completely or are dealt with in a sublimated manner indicative of "the synthesis of contemporary art, spectacle, and tourism that has already triumphed in much of the world."[2] This leaves the show's potential for examinations of "the body" in any other sense than corporeally largely untapped.

Sam Pulitzer & Peter Wächtler at House of Gaga // Reena Spaulings

December 11, 2016–February 4, 2017

Given the use of relatively traditional materials and the discernible presence of the artists' hands, one might have mistaken this collaborative exhibition for a study in closeness and tactility. Yet its characteristic mood was one of absence, even disembodiment. The more pointed its references and the more specific its images, the further away the show felt.

Take for instance the installation of Pulitzer's meticulous and varied colored pencil drawings, which were displayed on a series of metal fences standing freely in the middle of the space. At 11×17 inches, each drawing is about the size of a laptop screen. Given their heterogeneity and the fences' gridded backdrop, moving from one to the next was not unlike navigating the internet, except that the mark-making and rich palette communicate a decidedly analogue feel. Their imagery includes cartoonish figures that wouldn't be out of place in mid-20th century magazine advertising; abstract forms accompanied by arch slogans ("When a terrible day turns into a terrible life"); and stylized representational landscapes.

Friday Evening (all works 2016) depicts four figures composed from flat geometric shapes. Their faces partially covered by balaclavas, they engage in warfare while the sun, a simple yellow circle, emerges from puffy white clouds (of smoke?) behind them. It's as if Playmobil had designed a set of toys inspired by global instability. Pulitzer denudes the violent scene of its pathos, lending it a cheerful veneer that captures the uncomfortably bleak sensation of watching the world's chaos take place at a mediated distance. Accordingly, an appreciation for the impressive acuity—and controlled beauty—of his work was for me inseparable from frustration.

In *The only decision*, Earth herself gets uneasy treatment; anthropomorphized with a toothy grin and googly eyes, the globe sprouts smokestack-like trees into an ashy cubicle of space. There's growth, but of a sickly sort, and the image offers little sympathy, channeling instead a mocking, end-of-times hilarity. The drawing couldn't be more precise in its diagnosis of the current zeitgeist. However, Pulitzer's brand of detached representation also suggests that art has lost the ability to offer the kind of catharsis that counteracts despair. Anguish is held at arm's length, where it can be observed and analyzed but its disruptive (and potentially productive) ferocity can't be fully inhabited. Even when such aestheticization is the opening salvo in a more embodied form of critique, it runs the risk of freezing the emotions and generating privileged nonchalance.

Wächtler, whose works in the exhibition took shape in a diversity of formats, would seem at least on the surface to offer a more Dionysian response. A series of five large pastels on paper, depicting erupting volcanoes against skies dominated by a single saturated color, are titled *I Don't Want to Die*. At once brooding and humorous, they can be read both as acknowledgements of the natural world's inherent

1. Tom McDonough, "Complacency in Crisis: On Jeff Koons at Versaille," *Texte Zur Kunst*, March 2009.

Stuart Krimko

violence and as sanguine expressions of the basic existential fear of death. *Basic* is the operative word: the pastels are self-consciously clumsy, and the viewer was forced to consider the group of them as a single, unarticulated display whose willful flatness offered little visceral connection to the terror to which their signifiers allude.

Their inscrutable sculptural counterparts are a series of five blown glass sculptures of starfish installed on pedestals, entitled *I Don't Want to Live*. Stranger and more moving, though, were the two *Dog* sculptures that Wächtler placed on the floor like sentries beside the short flight of stairs leading from the gallery's entry into the exhibition space. (A third from the series was placed in the exhibition space itself.) Formed from folded and draped pieces of leather, they successfully convey the lovable ennui of sleeping canines, and with less room for ironic remove, either your heart reaches out or it doesn't. Mine did; it's odd to say that the most abstract objects in the exhibition prompted an emotional response.

Formally speaking, however, the dogs are hollow, nothing but skin. And so in the context of the rest of the show, they posed disturbing questions: have we evicted whatever we used to call *heart* from its formerly central lodgings? Must emotional responses to art now be sought, often in vain, beyond the edge of a forever expanding periphery? Wächtler's *River Scene*, a watercolor tucked away next to the gallery's bar, indicates this might be the case. A pair of hands belonging to an unseen body pulls aside the foliage of a tall hedge in the foreground, violently displacing a bird and its nest in the process. Unfortunately, even such a fierce need to see—something, anything—doesn't reveal much besides a muddy slope and a parking lot in the middle distance.

Karl Haendel at Susanne Vielmetter

January 7–February 7, 2017

In a moment as politically and culturally fraught as our own, it's grating to recall the old, tired axiom that the greatest art comes out of times of tragedy—or, in our case, mounting, compounding discontent. It's worth considering the slippage between art in the contemporary era that responds to tragedy, seeking to transform it, and that which revels in or even actively participates in it—capitalizing on pain by anointing oneself it's spokesperson and interpreter.

Haendel's recent exhibition at Susanne Vielmetter prominently featured portraits of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, as well as a number of works in specific reference to the 2016 election and the history of U.S. politics in general. Perhaps the pain of the 2016 U.S. presidential election is still too sharp, the warp of "post-truth" still too disorienting. But in yoking just over half of the works in the show to an aimless glide over the surface of contemporary politics, Haendel begat something far more craven and cynical: art as fandom, pain as capital. Thy will of the market's "invisible hand" be done.

Haendel's portrait of Obama was one of the more anemic catharses you're likely to experience, depending, as all portraiture does, on the meeting between your opinion of the subject and the material and compositional choices of the artist. Haendel's portrait of Hillary Clinton leans heavily, if not totally, on Clinton's conveniently pliable cultural figuration, little of which has to do with the actual reality of who she is or what she's accomplished. Her gaze out from Haendel's graphite void is somber, and sobering for those of us who supported her candidacy. But Haendel's portrait, a remarkably flat, one-to-one depiction of Clinton, seems to rely on the contemporary mood to do all the heavy lifting of meaning. Facile facsimile, however painstakingly rendered, trumps perspective—art attenuated into meaninglessness.

Compounding Haendel's at once breezy and unerringly precise portraiture of Clinton and Obama were a number of nominally political works (a list of presidents' and vice-presidents' names,

Aaron Horst

a map of the United States with each state's motto written within its borders) leaving the viewer to huff an exasperated "Yes, and?" Haendel's nonsensical repetitions of the text "Post-Truth" and "No on Yes" felt like tentative steps towards grasping the meaning and impact of our current state rather than uniquely wrought translations of an especially bewildering reality. Contrast this with Wolfgang Tillmans' recent exhibition at Regen Projects, in which the artist successfully navigated a complex narrative of the United States' political impact over the rest of the world, offering a window out of the self-absorbed political reality that Haendel's vision could not seem to stretch beyond.

Other works in the show included four large action portraits of young women riding horses, and a video of a man's body, with accompanying interview text with the subject (who was accused of committing sexual assault as a minor). These works, while deserving of evaluation in their own right, seemed peculiarly unanchored to their surroundings, transmuting contrast into afterthought.

The political portraits impact on several levels, none of which ultimately have to do with art in its transformative sense, or even art as a lens through which to deepen one's understanding of reality. Rather, Haendel's works are of technical, photographic precision. Photography, in strictest terms, is a kind of representation without interpretation, and the images of Clinton and Obama resemble journalistic photography, in keeping with the medium through which both regularly appear. Haendel's portraiture, in its unerring precision, collapses the distance between source and interpretation in a render so perfect it nearly erases the hand itself. Haendel's skill in rendering grain for grain and at a massive scale is impressive, even beautiful, but seems directly at odds with the often-vacuous touch with which he handles the vivid, horrifying reality to which we are becoming accustomed.

Contemporary art often seems marked, and marred, by privatization and a lack of impact in the public sphere. Beyond this, the ways in which art is, perhaps, supposed to function—placing great value on nuance, complexity, and thought—seem directly in opposition to the functioning of American politics, and its outsize dependence on false contrast and dire imperative. The distance between necessitates a politically charged art that is tricky, and clever, straddling the line between nuance and didactics. Haendel's work here instead left the feeling of an empty spectacle.

Wolfgang Tillmans at Regen Projects

November 5–December 23, 2016

What do I do with my Wolfgang Tillmans poster now? They were giving them out for free at Regen Projects, and I obligingly took one. It features a black–and-white photo of a crashing wave—it's almost painterly—and on the bottom the following message: "Only The Americans Have The Power To Stop Trump." It seemed self-evident at the time of the press preview, less than a week before the election, that yes, of course, the Americans held that power and would soon exercise it to pick the unpopular, hawkish neoliberal who was not half as monstrous as the monster we were told to stop. But Tillmans' admonition turned out not to be, strictly speaking, true. The Americans, or anyway the 57 percent of eligible voters who took a look at this race and thought it was worth picking sides, didn't, from a majoritarian perspective, really have that power.

Of course we'd all seen this once before, and maybe Tillmans should have picked a safer, verified slogan: "Only The Americans Have The Power To Stop Salavdor Allende, Jacobo Árbenz, Patrice Lumumba; Only The Americans Have The Power To Institute Regime

Eli Diner

Change And Interfere In Democratic Elections On A Global Scale." That sounds more like the Americans I know.

The obvious question about the Tillmans poster is to what extent he considered how it would read in the event of a Trump victory. There is, to be sure, something encouraging in its now-altered meaning—the idea that stopping Trump is something we still might have the power to do. But whatever *stopping* means outside of the limits of electoral politics, it certainly entails, to some extent, a shift from a practical to a symbolic register. That wave starts to look like an irresistible force. But whose? Which?

Glossed in the press release as "visual metaphors evoking the seminal 'sea changes' in our contemporary global society," waves, sea foam, and Atlantic horizons were the subjects of a few photographs in the show. Precisely which sea changes Tillmans had in mind is harder to discern from the photographs, though they certainly speak to a kind of globality—through a panorama of details and episodes that all seem to be somewhere else, or nowhere in particular. In street scenes, landscapes, apartment interiors, and shots out of windows, Tillmans somehow conveys this sense of both anywhere and just right there. He is a master of evocation, and his photos hinge on the play of specificity and generality, the banal and the sublime. From small snapshot-sized prints to large-scale works, there were casual portraits and even more casual still lifes—a universe of intimacies and details. Interspersed throughout were a number of large abstractions, including several from his *Freischwimmer/Greifbar* series in which he exposes color photo paper to create the effect of roiling fluids and streaking filaments.

Tillmans presents a fundamentally liberal vision of the world—in both the political and economic senses of the word—one of freely moving people and goods. What are those seascapes and liquid abstractions but an image of the flows of capital and commodities, the flight of refugees? And it is precisely that movement that now stands threatened by the rise of the anti-immigrant barbarism and economic protectionism of Brexit and Trump.

Throughout the gallery, Tillmans had also installed the latest iteration of his *Truth Study Center*, a project initiated in 2005. It consisted here of wooden tables displaying printouts of articles accessed online, occasional snapshots, and a variety of short statements printed in large type on printer paper. The articles all dealt with "truthiness" or "post-truth" politics. There has been, of course, quite a bit of handwringing over the subject, and one couldn't help but feel that Tillmans was playing it against the legacy of the critical obsession with photography and truth. *How naïve we must have been to go on that way about indexicality and truth claims. Now we've seen what the construction of truth looks like when put to use by the forces of reaction.*

Of the statements that appeared throughout the *Truth Study Center*, the most prominent were a series of simple declarations measuring distances in time, sometimes explicitly identified with world-historical events. "The beginning of the Iraq War in 2003 was 30 years away from the Yom Kippur War. 30 years before that Italy had declared war on Germany." It's a glimpse of history stripped of interpretation: *at least we can agree these things are true*. But of course that's a red herring; there is little about the Iraq War, about any of these wars, that is easy or unequivocal. It is a reminder, perhaps, that both truth and power are always contingent. "8 Years ago was the year 2008," reads another printout. "8 years after now will be the year 2024." Who knows? Maybe the Americans will surprise us. Or maybe we'll all be underwater.

Ma at Château Shatto

December 10, 2016–January 14, 2017

Across the internet, it's becoming increasingly possible to access high-resolution reproductions of artworks in full, million-pixel color, whose zooming capabilities can give us the sense that we are

Claire de Dobay Rifelj

getting a "true" picture of an object. In the mid-20th century, however, most reproductions appeared in grayscale, with tonal shifts cueing viewers to the delineations and definitions of the photographed object. That is how visitors to *Ma*, an exhibition curated by artist Fiona Connor at Château Shatto, in turn first experienced John McLaughlin's mid-century minimalist paintings: through ten black-and-white photographic prints placed near the gallery's entrance.

Shot by Frank J. Thomas, the go-to documentary photographer for Los Angeles' mid-century art spaces, these images served as Connor's own introduction to McLaughlin's work while conducting research in Thomas' archives. Each print focuses on one painting that reflects the artist's characteristic compositions of rectangular forms: usually symmetrical, always resolutely abstract, and designed to induce internal contemplation on the part of the viewer. Yet at the edges of every photograph are inklings of the outside world, meant to be cropped out before reproduction, that situate the photographs in a particular place and time. We witness a quintessentially Californian stucco façade; a potted orange tree; a broom; even a pair of feet—presumably the artist's.

These charged zones and boundaries between world and object, object and reproduction, past and present are what Connor mines in *Ma*, which took its name from the same Japanese philosophical concept that guided McLaughlin as he structured his paintings. Meaning "void," *ma* refers not just to the space between things, but rather to the experience of that spatial interval. It serves as an apt description for much of Connor's work, too, for which she frequently re-fabricates common objects, in high fidelity, resituating them within institutional art spaces where they exist uneasily between object, document, and artwork.

As both curator and artist in the exhibition, Connor built upon this notion of conceptual gaps by including not only Thomas' photographs, but also an actual McLaughlin painting—*#13* (1964)—and two works of her own that extended the notion of mediated existence yet further. In one of her works, a group of silkscreen-on-foil prints, she recreates newspaper broadsheets with decades-old McLaughlin reviews, and in the gallery's back corner, Connor installed reproductions of two of the bedroom window frames from the artist's longtime home in Dana Point, CA, replete with accumulated dust and stains.

This added context—much like the marginalia surrounding McLaughlin's paintings in Thomas' photographs—gave an aura of mundane reality to their stark internal geometries. Though this reality was (literally) fabricated by Connor, it rings "truer" than many other forms of reproduction, high-res or otherwise, in the care that she took to gather and present both the aspirational and mundane qualities of McLaughlin's life and work. In this way, *Ma* articulated the English meaning of the word, signaling the nurturing of mothering—not necessarily in a feminine sense, but in a feminist one, which places value in nuance and contingency rather than the seemingly objective fact of reproductive processes such as photography.

Connor initiated a similar cross-disciplinary dialogue in her inclusion of Sydney de Jong's earthenware, which she introduced into Château Shatto's daily operations via colorful cups and bowls meant to be used in the gallery's back office-kitchen space by employees and visitors alike. In that same room, a work by Connor replicated de Jong's studio idea board, offering insight into the artist's wide-ranging inspirations at the moment Connor concretized its contents. The varied hues of the ceramic objects in this room contrasted the dominant blacks, whites, and grays in the main gallery, creating a palpable effect of warmth and inclusion within an ostensibly private zone of activity.

Ma also included a clear paperweight by Bedros Yeretzian inscribed with the show's title and date; and photographs by Judy Fiskin, related to the show's thesis in that Fiskin's signature use of distinct, uncropped photographic borders and hyper-diminutive scale emphasizes the gap between her overtly

representational subject matter and its minimalist translation in print. A video by Audrey Wollen, *Objects or Themselves* (2015), projected a still of Velazquez's *Rokeby Venus* with voiceover and intermittent text overlay that poetically interwove the painting's history of politically motivated defacement with Wollen's personal history of illness and reconstitution—two sides of an unsettling but cathartic coin that entrenched the exhibition's feminist underpinnings.

Connor and Wollen also presented three performative walkthroughs during the run of the exhibition. It was in fact in those moments—when Connor put her work in direct dialogue with that of others—that the exhibition presented its most poignant questions regarding the values we ascribe to artworks in relation to the details of daily existence. In her replications and curation, Connor pointed convincingly to an alternative understanding in which reality is destabilized, not for the purpose of disruption or disinformation, but instead for deeper consideration and expanded consciousness—aesthetic, social, and political—regarding the everyday. Beyond mere contemplation, Connor presented a blueprint for actively inserting our viewpoints and opinions—and by "our" I mean those of us less accustomed to asserting ourselves—into whatever gaps, voids, and in-between spaces that we may encounter.

The Rat Bastard Protective Association at The Landing

October 1, 2016–January 7, 2017

Energetic, close-knit, and radical (long before it was chic), a group of San Francisco artists came to call themselves Rat Bastards. They lived and worked together in "Painterland," a building in the Fillmore District, during the late 1950s. Many of them are now well-known—Jay DeFeo, Bruce Conner, and Wally Hedrick among them—while others remain largely under-appreciated, despite the quality of their work. The Landing's exhibition, *The Rat Bastard Protective Association* (*RBPA*), brought the work of those 13 artists together for the first time since 1958.

Curated by Anastasia Aukeman, author of *Welcome to Painterland: Bruce Conner and the Rat Bastard Protective Association* (UC Press, 2016), *RBPA* paid historical allegiance to these artists and their work, though fell short of capturing an adequate sense of the work itself. In contrast to a cohort known to be socially rebellious, wildly creative, and intellectually engaged, the show paled and was surprisingly staid in its layout. Works were grouped together by artist and were essentially segregated, offering zones of contact but minimal cross-pollination and dynamism across bodies of work. The "choasmotic" nature, to use Felix Guattari's word for osmosis in an environment of perpetual change, of Painterland was merely alluded to but not vibrantly represented as a result.

Sequestered in the furthest back lot of the gallery and having little direct physical relation to the majority of work in this show, Wallace Berman's lithographs and collage mailers were largely muted. Despite that fact, his *Untitled* (*Parchment Piece*) (1956-57), one of the show's gems, shone through with tattered parchment and hand-inked Hebrew characters. Berman's collage mailers are multifaceted aesthetic objects used as practical modes of communication that served to engage Berman's friends in a broader creative dialogue. Highly influential, they made their way through the cultural fabric of the artistic and literary underground and permeated mainstream society, making significant impact on American culture at large in their own off-kilter way. A reliance on the convenience of vitrines for the presentation of the mailers did little to articulate to the vim and vigor of their vision.

Berman's mailers are emblematic of the broader discussion that many of these *RBPA* artists were engaged in—a dialogue not simply about aesthetics but one concerned with mobilizing new modes of dialogue as an aesthetic in and of itself. Poet Michael McClure's illustrated poems embody this sense

Pablo Lopez

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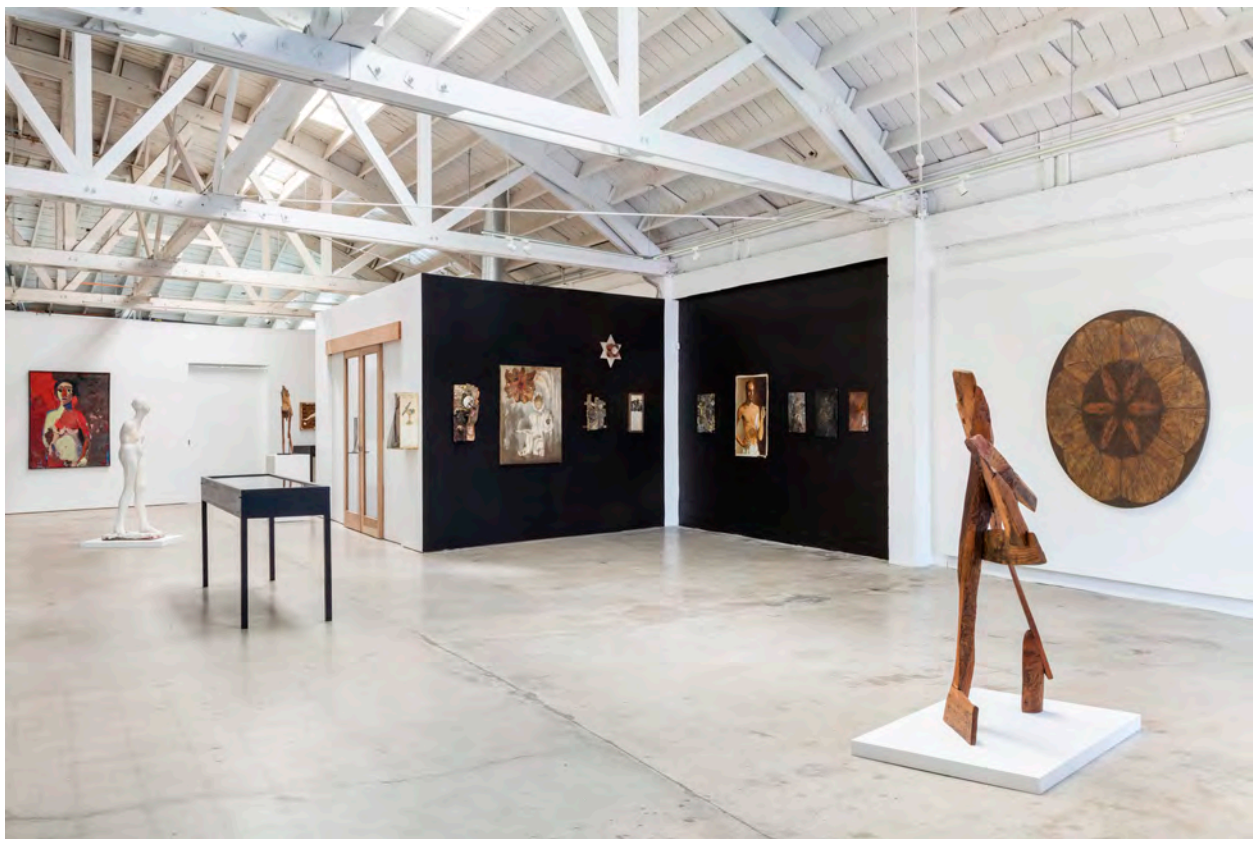

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Frank J. Thomas, *Documentation of paintings by John McLaughlin at his home in Laguna Beach* (1959-1971). Digital reproductions of 4 × 5 transparencies, 8 × 10 inches. Image courtesy of the Frank J. Thomas Archives and Château Shatto.

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The Rat Bastard Protective Association (2016) (Installation view). Image courtesy of the Landing, Los Angeles. Photo: Joshua White/JW Pictures.

of engagement and collaboration, as do the mixed media assemblages of George Herms. Herms' assemblages speak to the inclusive orientation of the collective, and are characteristic of Lévi-Strauss' notion of the bricolage, wherein not only is the overall composition of a work cobbled together from varied materials and methods of construction, but those very materials are constitutive of the bricoleur's immediate locality. Bricolage, according to Lévi-Strauss, reveals an intimacy as it makes an artist's environment legible and concrete, and the product, assemblage in the case of Herms, is the ultimate manifestation of the production. Herms' *Pisces Box* (1965-66) offers a bizarrely imaginative rendering of the zodiac that extends Herms' collage technique into the sculptural realm.

Bruce Connor's paintings drew initial interest perhaps most for the fact that they predate his later, and formidable, film works. *Venus* (1954) is an intellectually vibrant oil-on-canvas rendering of a female nude in gauzy black and white strokes. The subject's posture is self-contemplative—head bowed, not in deference to a viewer's gaze but rather in consideration of her own sex. In that contemplation, the life of her mind is made to appear stimulated and enlarged as billows of paint emanate from the figure and across the expanse of the canvas.

Radicality, in the case of these artists, is active, gestural, and collaborative, so much so that it resists conventional presentation, and that resistance is the fundamental challenge of a curator. As a snapshot of Painterland, the show satisfied, but in a narrow way. The work on display in *RBPA* was representative of the radical attitudes and lifestyle of these artists, as well as the living space that brought them together, but the show's lack of curatorial imagination did little to capture that spirit. As a historical show with a practical theme, *RBPA* succeeded in documenting the work of those involved, but as a show about self-proclaimed *Rat Bastard* artists, hell-bent on making art and affecting culture in profound ways, it failed to meet the challenges these many artists laid out against posterity.

Review Contributors

Thomas Duncan is an independent curator and writer based in Los Angeles.

Aaron Horst is a homosexual.

Pablo Lopez is a writer and art critic living in Los Angeles.

Stuart Krimko is a poet, astrologer, and translator. *Studio Visit*, a chapbook of his new poems, is forthcoming from Song Cave. Other recent books include *Belleza y Felicidad: Selected Writings of Fernanda Laguna and Cecilia Pavón* (Sand Paper Press, 2015), which he edited and translated; and *New complaints. New rewards*, a collaboration with Mark So (DEATH-SPRIAL, 2014).

Claire De Dobay Rifelj is a curator, writer, and art historian based in Los Angeles. She has produced exhibitions for CalArts, the Hammer Museum, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Williams College Museum of Art, and her writing has appeared in exhibition catalogues, *LA Weekly*, and on *ForYourArt.com*. She focuses on postwar modern and contemporary art, in particular considerations of temporality, ephemerality, spectatorship, and narrative, and she completed her doctorate at New York University in 2015.

Eli Diner is the U.S. editor of *Flash Art*. He has written for numerous publications, including *Artforum*, *Bookforum* and *Bulletins of the Serving Library*, and has curated a number of fine shows. In 2015, he initiated the project space sculpture garden and serialized novella *Hakuna Matata*.

Exquisite L.A. Contributors

Claressinka Anderson has worked as an art dealer, advisor, and curator in Los Angeles for the past 10 years. Originally from London, England, she is the owner of Marine Projects and a published writer of fiction and poetry.

Joe Pugliese, a California native, specializes in portraiture and shoots for a mixture of editorial and advertising clients. He has recently completed projects for such titles as *Wired*, *Vanity Fair*, *Men's Journal*, and *Billboard*, as well as advertising campaigns for Netflix, Sony, and AMC. His images have been honored by the Society of Publication Design, *American Photography*, and *Communication Arts*. He lives and works in Los Angeles.