

IF A CIRCLE MEETS ITSELF

Peles Empire, Esther Ferrer, Sunil Gupta, Lubaina Himid
Fred Lonidier, Eline McGeorge, Ruth Proctor, Joachim Schmid

“Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again.” – André Gide

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Gathering her notebooks, not yet scruffy, not yet worn - she flicked through the pages, glancing at quotes, references and notes. Her objective - to locate, place and frame. Taking matters rather into her own hands the books were snapped shut, and returned to their place in her bag. The time for reflection was over she thought, if there was nothing else to add to them, she'd have to get back to them another day.

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If a Circle Meets Itself is an exhibition creating conversations across an intergenerational group of artists working with a range of mediums and strategies, including performance, painting and photography. To establish their common ground in relation to an outline or rudimentary character, it is possible to comment that there is a shared engagement and interest in structures and representation; actual structures such as labour movements and the media, through to conceptual and physical interventions into the structures of images themselves. In this way, the exhibition weaves between abstraction and documentary representations, via performance and the figure, both present and suggested. Within this manifold, comment is born of a social reality, that is based on an invisibility of or discrepancy between the experiences of the multitude and dominant cultural or/and state ideologies. Yet as we also know, multitudinous experiences, realities and subverted readings of images, remain present, active, bubbling at work within these inconsistencies. The works here might rupture this appearance of normality, opening up a space to rethink our responses to this reality, our place within it and how we receive and respond to information. And this, all from our disrupted, multiple and dislodged subjectivities.

The artists:

Esther Ferrer's practice spans performance, photography, video and installation. Ferrer was a member of the Spanish music and performance group ZAJ from 1967 until it dissolved in 1996. Like Fluxus, ZAJ transformed everyday objects and actions into art. For over forty years Ferrer has been exploring the presence and transience of the body in (social) space. Her performances, in which her body tends to be the central motif, often take the form of incomplete series, which she picks up time and again, sometimes after decades, to explore questions around transformation and the absurdity of life. On show here are self-portraits of the artist with her mouth overflowing with euros. The series can be seen as an immediate comment on consumer society where the mediating role of money has been cut off to highlight the absurdity of capitalism that demands that we consume more and more.

Sunil Gupta first started taking photographs of gay men in New York in the 70s. This began a practice that continuously focuses on the representation of gay relationships. Since then Gupta has also returned to India to stage portraits of gay and lesbian people. Although the protagonists are not actors they take part in staging their lives for camera. On show are some works made in the 1980s that feature a response to the notorious clause 28 that was instituted during the Thatcher years within local government in the UK that forbade the representation of LGBT relationships as 'pretended family relationships'. Also on show is his *London Gay Switchboard* (1980) which documents much of the work and development of the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. Founded in 1974, the LLGS was the leading source of information on HIV/AIDS, which at the time was a vital knowledge base in a context of fear and ignorance.

Peles Empire consists of Katharina Stoeber and Barbara Wolff, their namesake taken from Peles Castle, a former summer residence of the Romanian Royal family in the foothills of the Carpathians. Reproducing images from the castle is at the core of the artists work. A perpetual fragmentation of an 'original' source, in this case images of interiors from the castle, an architectural melting pot of styles spanning Gothic as well as Art Deco rooms, continues Peles Empire's embodiment of the persistent tension between original and reproduction, authentic and copy, historical and contemporary - interrogating cultures' increasing turmoil around the whirring circulation of imagery.

In 2007 Lubaina Himid began an expansive archive, examining and intervening in the way in which race is represented in *The Guardian* newspaper. *Negative Positives: The Guardian Archive* (2007-2015), locates troubling and undermining representations of race in the pages of this bastion of the 'liberal voice'. On these collected pages she has painted and made comment. Himid's archive extends to 1000s of pages, of which there are about 100 interventions into the pages from the newspaper. Whilst there are many categories that Himid has identified that show how particular people have been 'chosen' by the editors for 'special' attention - Himid has here focused on their representation and juxtaposition of women within its pages and on a select number of covers of *Weekend* magazine that reveal incredible editorial and layout decisions.

Since the early 1970s, Fred Lonidier has challenged the conventions of the photographic image, merging conceptual photography and political activism. He has said: "I always look for the submerged, missed, or forgotten labor issue - or for an issue that is about to emerge". *Aztec vs ATU 1309: Long ago in a far away galaxy* (1995), is an eighteen panel work that merges documentary protest images and transcripts from the ensuing court case including Lonidier's own court testimony. Two years before the court case, Lonidier had documented the protests against the bus company - images that ended up being submitted as evidence in court. This work demonstrates that although Lonidier's works are about specific situations in time and place, they also refer to the structures around representation - considering how the construction of terms such as 'worker', 'management' or 'victim' are simultaneously lived and systematic and can also mirror a challenge to the form of the representation itself.

Eline McGeorge works across different mediums including drawing, animation, sculpture and video. At the core of her work is a continuous interest in issues around alienation and marginalization. *With Space Blankets and Dark Matter Inside a Norwegian Paradox*, 2013 is made out of emergency blankets and black rubber creating a grid-like surface. McGeorge carried out a statistical study of the representation of female artists in the different sections of the art world in Oslo and noted that in all sectors - museum collections, museum exhibitions, private galleries and artist run spaces - there was a consistent underrepresentation of female artists. The black woven elements speak of the 'missing' art works in Norwegian shows and collections and the space blankets highlight the emergency of this ongoing situation.

Joachim Schmid is a conceptual photographic artist who recycles and reuses all forms of found photographic images that could include forged personal snapshots, photo booth portraits to imagery reprinted in magazines. His work can be viewed as commentary on the use value, status and abundance of the photographic image in our daily lives. *Statics* (1995-2003) is a series made from cutting up images found in printed material and real photographic sources, including well known critical theory texts, fashion magazines and pizza menus. Democratizing our frames of reference, Schmid calls equal attention to these forms, demonstrating our fragmented subject position in relation to the ever increasing onslaught of visual information.

Ruth Proctor's practice centres around her ongoing interest in the body as spectacle. A central tenet of her practice has always been the production of drawings that act as choreographies, scores, scripts and poems. Here, one of her early found manuscripts will act in part as performance notation, as well as creating a schism between different physical states and the generation of movement and sound.

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EXHIBITION OPEN TUESDAY - FRIDAY 11 - 6, SATURDAY 12 - 5

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