

What Lies Within

This exhibition breaks down orthodoxies as it presents us with alternative ways of perceiving the world and ourselves. Rather than being an exhibition which defines for us what is going on around the globe, that is, exhibitions which underline, and further imprints the reality of the world in images, *What Lies Within* is an exploration of experience and curious proposals, a set of works which present us with the indelible connectedness of the physical world with our internal, psychological and intellectual worlds, our imperceptible inner domains. Art's intricacies as aesthetic experience should serve to sharpen and complicate our views, and in some (or many) instances, provide alternative avenues to simplistic ideas and unquestioned systems, and acknowledge the inadequacies of uncontested realities. Without entering the spaces of magic, trickery, fantasy or fairy stories, the works of the artists in this exhibition employ evidence-based methods to arrive at expansive forms of psychic, ontological and otherworldly modes of understanding humanity. The breathing spaces induced in Mel O'Callaghan's work, "*Respire, Respire*" (2019) are not engendered by external possessions but by internal control. Using a sensory breathing technique method, O'Callaghan produces trance-like moments through breath and body movements to combine with her glass sculptures. Every element in this work coalesces the physical with the psychological as performers and objects are thrust past their thresholds and encounter forms of ecstatic transformation. O'Callaghan engages with breath as a material form, accumulating and reverberating across video, performance and sculpture to achieve a generous and empathetic form of resilience, re-generation and collective experience.

The performative use of breath as condition for energizing life echoes the bubbling gas from the recesses of deep ocean, that is, 4km down the Pacific Ocean and the Philippines' Verde Island Passage, also known as 'center of the center.' The life that grows under the sea are at their most essential; images of blooms and corals are abstracted from the surrounding silence of the ocean depth, the cusp of life's evolution. The performance also follows a method which ritualises the breath to an extreme point that the performers achieve a trance-like state. O'Callaghan's investigation of extreme states of existence are points at which transformations occur in nature, and where life begins.

This integral relationship with nature and the environment presents itself as well in Laurent Grasso's work "*OttO*" (2018). Grasso's expansive video of the Northern Territory in the Australian outback is an extension of his interest in forms of knowledge, scientific phenomena and invisible cosmic forces. Blending with the colours produced by thermal imaging camera is the outline of a man's figure, that of Otto Jungarrayi Sims, an Elder, a Traditional Owner of aboriginal territory. In a coincidental name doubling, German physicist Winfried Otto Schumann studied terrestrial resonance (*Schumann resonances*), a set of extremely low frequency (ELF) vibrations contained within the Earth's electromagnetic field spectrum, i.e. global electromagnetic resonances are generated by lightning discharges formed by the Earth's surface and the ionosphere.^[1] Grasso's fictive film follows one, then several floating orbs as they traverse the desert, each sphere contains a substance to illustrate energy given off by the earth; and depict unseen phenomena (pulses, spiritual activity), by using drones, thermal and hyper-spectral cameras to try and lend body to the vibrations given off by the sacred aboriginal grounds. Intimately intertwined with Grasso's interest in myth-making and the juxtaposition of other-worldly phenomena within specific pictorial tableaux, he engages the site's geological formations: monoliths, gorges, saltwater lakes, markers for aboriginal lands, to produce images so stark that they border on the artificial. These swathes of desert sand and untouched natural structures are considered interfaces between the Ancestors and the living, between the lower world and the upper world, between the past and the present. The land is a living being, the resonances that Grasso's hovering orbs observe, absorb and calculate, serve as imagined metaphysical conduits between the earth and those who travel upon it.

Returning to the body, and still with the forces of nature working through it, albeit, as a way to make sense of history, nature, internet and the global economy is "*HFT The Gardener*" (2014-2015), Suzanne Treister's large body of work with its central character, the fictional Hillel Fischer Traumberg, a high frequency trader (HFT) and a banker turned outsider artist. One of the exhibition's densest works, the series is composed of multiple explorations made by Traumberg where he presents interrelations between psychoactive plants, economics, and technology, surveying, cybernetics, and terrestrial capitalism. Traumberg employs gematria, Hebrew numerology, so as to discover numerological equivalents of the botanical names of psychoactive plants, then cross-references these with companies in the Financial Times Global 500 Index. He also proposes to commune with traditional shamanic users of the plants whose practices include healing, divining the future and entering the spirit world. Alex Bennett describes Treister's work best in a breathless sentence as one which "*portrays the big picture of interrelated histories, those both common and less known, including the development of cybernetics, the history of computers and the internet, the rise of Web 2.0, diverse philosophical, literary and political responses to advances in technology including the claims of Anarcho-Primitivism and Post Leftism, Theodore Kaczynski/The Unabomber, Technogaianism and Transhumanism, and tracing precursory ideas such as those of Thoreau, Warren, Heidegger and Adorno in relation to visions of utopic and dystopic futures from science-fiction literature and film,*"^[2] so as to allow people to grasp more clearly where we are and where we may be going in terms of potential futures of technology and society.

At the entrance of the space, but necessarily the end of the exhibition, are the works "*Open Flow*" (2019) and "*Firm Being (My Spring)*" (2019) by Pamela Rosenkranz. The Swiss artist is widely known for her use of pigments and substances like silicone in uncanny fleshtones, elements that can actually be read as a monochrome within a strictly fine art sense. Each project and work is however, backed by meticulous research in areas such as marketing, philosophy, religion and medicine. Interested in the ideas of philosophers like Iranian thinker Reza Negarestani, Rosenkranz asks questions such as "*How do we connect with art biologically? What does neurology tell us about the meaning of art? To what extent is art geographically determined? What are we made of and why does it make us feel how we feel?*"^[3] The artist's work questions what it means to be human in contemporary times, how we are formulated as human beings that exist in a time when fluidity of skin colour, gender, culture and looks, can be biologically manipulated and manufactured. For Rosenkranz these features which supply us our identities are not only dissolving, but are dispensable. Her work in the exhibition, a project which she has been working on since 2009 to the present, locates the materiality of water within the market—bottled water being a commodity advertised as pure, clean, untouched. The artist argues that such purity are all market-driven, any such purity is impossible to attain. In an interview, Rosenkranz reveals research on bottled water showing that "*particles that have not yet been identified enter this water from the plastics that hold it, and have made hormone-sensitive snails procreate at accelerated rates. Research links this to the fact that girls now menstruate earlier and sperm cells are becoming slower. So even Fiji water, sold on the idea of a sacred source, water untouched by man and uncontaminated by "the compromised air of the 21st century"—as their slogan goes—cannot escape this unholy connection.*"^[4] Rosenkranz's silicone beings, poured into plastic receptacles, are the skin of contemporary sculpture, an abstracted portrait of a human body contained within a contemporary vessel. Such formulations radicalize our conception of humanity in the 21st century. How are we formed now? How do we become, and exist, in a time when our base carrier for existence, our bodies, can be engineered to our liking? How does the world with its physical manifestations, its social constructs, its mystical elements, animate our essences and our realities? How do we continue to endure? And what does it mean to be alive now? These crucial questions lie within the heart of the exhibition.

Joselina Cruz



a performance of Mel O'Callaghan's *Respire, Respire*, 2019

Sources:

[1] Wikipedia contributors, "Schumann resonances," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Schumann_resonances&oldid=909273976 (accessed August 8, 2019)

[2] Bennett, Alex. "Suzanne Treister." *November Magazine*, nd <http://novembremagazine.com/suzanne-treister-by-alex-bennett>

[3] Rosenmeyer, Aoife. "In the Studio: Pamela Rosenkranz." *Art in America*, January 5, 2015 <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/in-the-studio-pamela-rosenkranz/>

[4] Ibid.

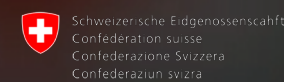
Mel O'Callaghan
Laurent Grasso
Pamela Rosenkranz
Suzanne Treister
5 September -
1 December 2019

WHAT LIES WITHIN

the Centre of



What Lies Within: Centre of the Centre is presented by the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila in partnership with Artspace, Sydney and is generously supported by Pioneer Studios, the Australian Embassy of the Philippines, and the Embassy of Switzerland in the Philippines. MCAD thanks our partners for their support in the production and facilitation of the show.



Embassy of Switzerland in the Philippines

Pioneer Studios

Project Manager
Clarisse Infante

Graphic Design
Francis Tan Tadeo

Special thanks to
Ruddy Hatumena
Phornpop Sittiruk
Fatima Manallil

Interns / Volunteers
Teresa Avila
Kristen Alimbuyugen
Denise Gutierrez
Aerial Kronberg
Julieanne Ng
Pio Ocampo
James Olaiwar

Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD)
G/F De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde SDA Campus
Dominga St., Malate Manila, Philippines 1004
02 230 5100 loc. 3897

Contact
mcard@benilde.edu.ph
www.mcardmanila.org.ph
@MCADManila

Museum Hours
Tuesday to Saturday 10.00AM - 6.00PM
Saturday 10.00 AM - 2.00PM
Closed on holidays



Pamela Rosenkranz
Open the Flow, 2019
Viva bottles, silicone,
pigments, refrigerator
(127 Bottles)

Firm Being (My Spring), 2019
PET bottles, silicone,
pigments
(81 Bottles)

Image courtesy of Gunnar Meier

Scattered on the floor and housed in a refrigerator are Rosenkranz's PET bottles filled with pigmented silicone, each in a colour approximating a range of skin tones, mostly representing the median colour of the place from where the bottles originated from. This silicone rubber, usually used in the production of prosthesis, is almost perfect, smooth, flawless, without imperfections. This material represents the perfection

that consumers seek to attain, 'improving' nature via the many products that are found in the market: whitening lotions, tanning creams, firming gels, and even the promise of purity and health in the form of untouched mineral water. The water bottles included in this exhibition are local PET bottles from the Philippines, Korea, Indonesia and Thailand.



Mel O'Callaghan
Centre of the Centre, 2019
3 channel HD colour video with sound

Respire, Respire (states), 2019
Reflective glass, metal, wire,
performance

Respire, Respire (formation), 2019
Reflective glass, metal, wire,
performance

Schedule of performances:
Thursdays and Saturdays, 3:00pm

The work presented in the exhibition consists of three elements, a large-scale video work, hanging glass sculptures, and a performance.

The three-channel projection presents remarkable images of underwater life, of hydrothermal vents that breathe out and propel gases, minerals and liquids into the oceans, of colourful, magnificent corals, plants, algae. Shot in two of the key parts of the world where the oceans carry the densest number of marine life, the video is the

artist's attempt to capture the extreme spaces where life is purported to have begun, and continues to persist. The catalyst for this body of work is a small mineral with a small pocket of water (hypothesized to possibly being a million years old with traces of elements that contributed to life on earth) given to the artist by her grandfather, renowned mineralogist Albert Chapman (1912-1996). Large-scale glass sculptures alter the audience's perception as it cuts through the space. Transparency and reflection play with the luminosity of the projected images, while, doubling as objects for ritual, the sculptures become spaces activated by performers with choreographed breathing techniques.



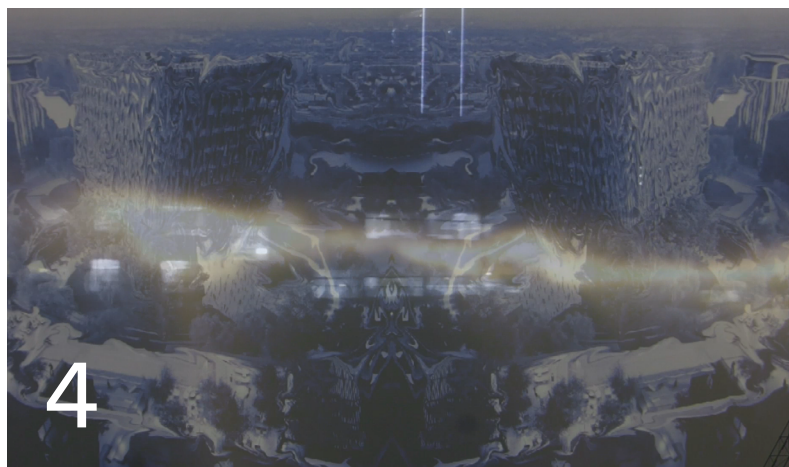
Laurent Grasso
OttO, 2018
Film HD
Dolby Surround 5.1
21 min and 26 sec

© Laurent Grasso / ADAGP Paris, 2018.
Courtesy of the artist & Perrotin.

Produced for the Sydney Biennale in 2018, the film continues with Grasso's fascination with spheres by including these objects in this monumental work. Large spheres move across the bright Australian desert, appropriating an eye,

hovering above the land taking in all the details of this untouched, harsh part of the world. Working with the Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Corporation and the aboriginal community of Yuendumu in the Northern Territory of Australia to produce the film, the artist was keen to materialise the energy of this land, considered as sacred ground amongst the aborigines of Australia. Using drones to capture the extent of the territory, then coupling this with thermal and hyperspectral cameras, Grasso's images became representative of the magnetic energy emanating from this region. More than measuring instruments, these cameras also provide a non-human point of view of the landscape, an abstraction of energy, power and nature.

OttO refers to Otto Jungarrayi Sims, a Traditional Owner of Aboriginal land in Australia, from the Warlpiri community, and Winfried Otto Schumann, a German physicist who studied the Earth's low-frequency resonances caused by lightning discharges in the atmosphere.



Suzanne Treister
HFT The Gardener, 2014 to 2015
Single-channel video, with stereo
sound
11 min and 55 sec

*HFT The Gardener/Charts/
Psychoactive Plants/Gematria/
FT Global Companies Equivalent*
Ink on paper/Digital prints
(6 works)
21 x 29.7 cm each

*HFT The Gardener/Botanical
Prints*
Digital prints (20 works)
29.7 x 42 cm each

HFT The Gardener/ Diagrams
Pencil and watercolor on
cartridge paper/Digital prints
(16 works)
29.7 x 42 cm and 21 x 29.7 cm

*HFT The Gardener/Outsider
Artworks*
Pencil, watercolor and colored
pencil on cartridge paper/Digital
prints (92 works)
21 x 29.7 cm each

*HFT The Gardener/Shaman
Visions*
Watercolor on cartridge paper/
Digital prints (16 works)
21 x 29.7 cm

*HFT The Gardener/Psychoactive
Glitch Graphs*
Digital Prints (6 prints)
21 x 29.7 cm

*HFT The Gardener/Video stills
and photo works*
Digital prints (18 works)
29.7 x 42 cm and 21 x 29.7 cm

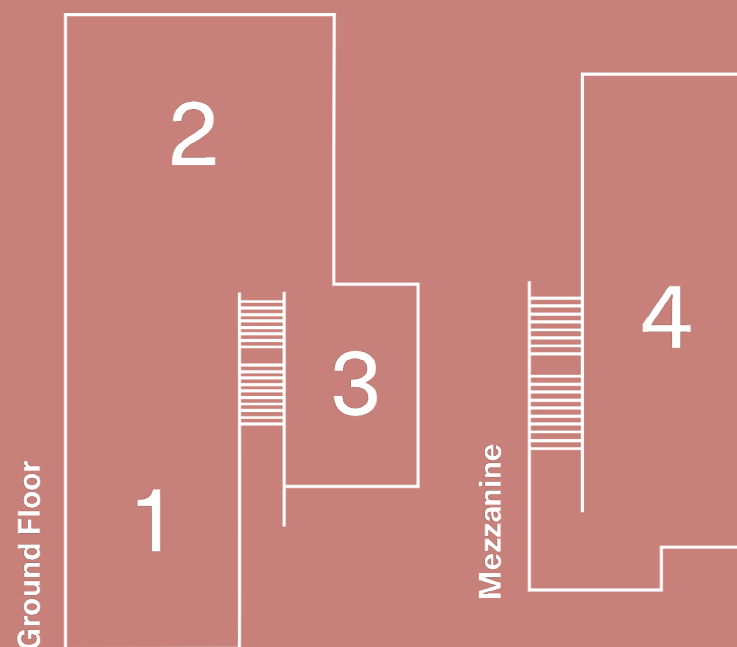
Courtesy of the artist, Annelly
Juda Fine Art, London, and
P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York

Treister creates a character, a fictional trader named Hillel Fischer Traumberg who is based in the City of London, the video which accompanies the installation is a hallucinatory narrative inside the head of the banker who has made the implausible connections between trading in the global market and the plant world, revealing the deep algorithms of high frequency trading. His altered perception of these trading algorithms inspires him to experiment with psychoactive drugs and explore the ethno-pharmacology of over a hundred psychoactive plants from which they are derived. It is Traumberg's artworks, after he decides to become an 'outsider' artist,¹ of more than a hundred botanical illustrations, which are on show. Traumberg, techno-shaman, transmutes the spiritual dimension of the universe and the hallucinogenic nature of capital into artistic forms. Providing a glimpse into the inner workings of the character are gematria charts (Hebrew numerology), glitch graphs and watercolors based on images of rituals.



While the fictional part of the work appear to refer to the speculative quality of trading, it is Treister's interest in the idea of a unifying algorithm that underlie human lives which informs this particular work.

¹ Outsider art is art by self-taught or naïve art makers. Typically, those labeled as outsider artists have little or no contact with the mainstream art world or art institutions. In many cases, their work is discovered only after their deaths. Often, outsider art illustrates extreme mental states, unconventional ideas, or elaborate fantasy worlds.



Mel O'Callaghan (born 1975, Sydney, Australia) lives and works between Paris, France and Sydney, Australia. O'Callaghan's career highlights include solo exhibitions nationally and internationally, most recently at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2017); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2017-18); Kronenberg Wright, Sydney (2017); Galerie Allen, Paris (2017).

O'Callaghan was awarded the Prix SAM pour l'art contemporain (2015) and was a finalist in the Prix Meurice (2017) and for the Bend Lohaus Prize (2015).

Working across film, performance, installation and painting O'Callaghan's works are often inspired by the potentialities of extreme conditions, the origins of life and its regenerative forces.

Pamela Rosenkranz (born 1979, Uri, Switzerland) is a Swiss artist who works across performance, sculpture, painting, and installation art. Her works explore the concept of what it means to be human: its ideologies, emptiness and meaninglessness, as well as globalization and consumerism.

Distinctly interested in moving beyond the identity-centred concerns that often gird art making, Rosenkranz's practice explores non-human-centric ideas and ecological concerns; her works focus on myth-ridden themes, the politics of purity, the dichotomy of mind and body, as well as consumerist concerns that have become integral to human existence.

Laurent Grasso (born 1972, Mulhouse, France) lives and works between Paris, France and New York, USA.

At the crossroad of heterogeneous temporalities, geographies and realities, Grasso's films, sculptures, paintings and photographs immerse the viewer in an uncanny world of uncertainty. The artist creates mysterious atmospheres in which the boundaries of what we perceive and know are challenged. Anachronism and hybridity play an active role in this strategy, diffracting reality in order to recompose it according to his own rules.

Fascinated by the way in which various powers can affect human conscience, Grasso tries to grasp, reveal and materialize the invisible. Ranging from collective fears to politics, through electromagnetic or paranormal phenomenon, the artist reveals what lies behind the commonly perceived and offers us a new perspective on histories and realities.

Suzanne Treister (born 1958, London, England) lives and works in London. Working across mediums, Treister has been a pioneer in the digital/new media/web-based field from the beginning of the 1990s, making work about emerging technologies, developing fictional worlds, and international collaborative organisations.

Often spanning several years, her projects comprise of fantastic reinterpretations of given taxonomies and histories and reveal structures that bind power, identity and knowledge.

An ongoing focus of her work is the relationship between new technologies, society, alternative belief systems and the potential futures of humanity.