

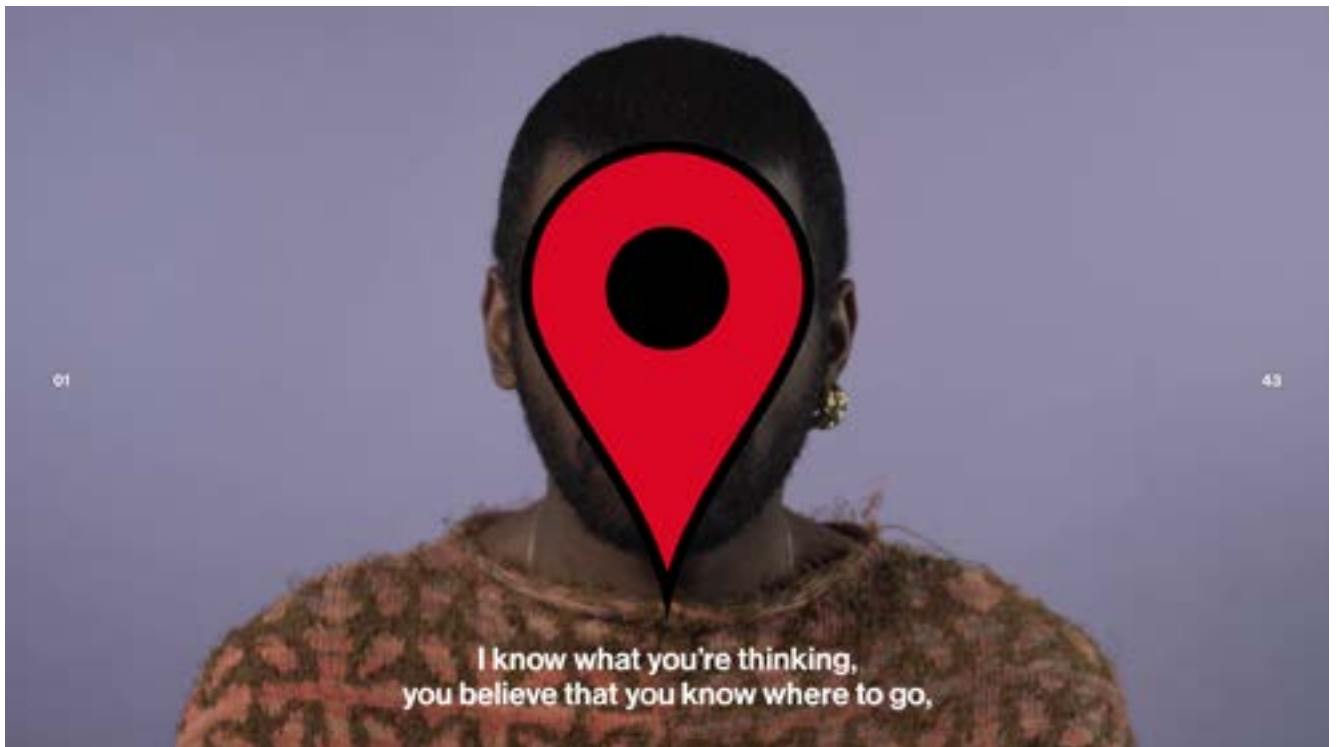
Like Dracula dodging the Cross The video Fortnight

Carte blanche to Line Ajan

With Mona Benyamin, Deniz Eroglu, Hilary Galbreath, Ndayé Kouagou, Rayane Mcirdi, Gaspar Willmann and Hoy Cheong Wong

January 26 – February 12, 2022

41 rue Mazarine, Paris 6^e



Ndayé Kouagou
GOOD PEOPLE TV - ÉPISODE 1, 2021
7 min 23 s
Courtesy of the artist and Nir Altman gallery

“Television is conversant on a million topics and broadcasts itself as an exquisite generalist, an encyclopedic skimmer that avoids specificity like Dracula dodging the Cross. It flaunts a fluency in more than a few languages and speaks in hundreds of voices, juggling gender and race like a spirit trying on bodies for size, like a manic quick-change artist on a binge.”

— Barbara Kruger, “Remote Control”, Artforum, September 1989

Taken from artist Barbara Kruger’s column on television that was published regularly in Artforum, this excerpt shrewdly dissects television’s versatility (in contents, genres, and rhythms), a quality that is as much a strength as it is a flaw. TV, we are told, “avoids specificity like Dracula dodging the Cross”. Through this visually evocative metaphor, Kruger describes the ever-changing flow of programs on TV, simultaneously revealing the scope of its influence. When her text was published in the late 1980s, television’s reach seemed particularly tentacular—whether geographically, linguistically, or thematically—making it an inexhaustible source for artists exploring the socio-political breadth of image-making, such as Kruger herself.

Today, television’s modes of production and reception have changed, even its physical form has been altered, slimmed, and flattened. The technology’s rapid change has instigated today’s digital screen-culture, yet analog television and its aesthetics persist as references, notably in the practices of artists born between the 1980s and late 1990s¹.

Like Dracula dodging the Cross gathers works by artists who continue to interrogate TV with fascination, skepticism and nostalgia. They use, appropriate, and disturb TV’s functions, as well as its visual and discursive codes. These artists subvert the assumption that TV constitutes a “universal” cultural reference, injecting linguistic, visual and musical elements that relate to specific cultural contexts, geographical or political positionings. Taking advantage of the immediacy of TV’s aesthetics and grammar, they weave within them tales of diasporic transmissions, alternatives and parodies to colonial histories, or reflections on misinformation and cultural appropriation (...).

Created and unravelling in different settings, these works share a methodology: they emanate from a similar economy of means (material, financial, and above all human) that diverges from TV’s own production modes. Each of these artists stages themselves, their friends and families or other amateurs as the main characters of their work, leading to uncanny performances that are not based on the actors’ virtuosity. The artists are then faced with the challenge of filming their loved ones in a moment of vulnerability, all while dodging a voyeuristic gaze.

More than symptoms of the deskilling of art, these processual, visual, and conceptual choices are practical. They reveal the very conditions of the works’ production, some of which were made while the artists were still students (Mona Benyamin, Rayane Mcirdi, Gaspar Willmann) or not yet set on the path of art (Deniz Eroglu). Others claim a Do-It-Yourself aesthetic in relation to ecological engagements (Hilary Galbreath) or concerns of accessibility (Ndayé Kouagou). Within these recent practices, Hoy Cheong Wong’s film stands out as a pioneering work that deftly perceived the intricate links between the small screen and misinformation, eventually exemplifying this quote by Trinh T. Minh-ha: “(...) truth lies in between all regimes of truth”².

—Line Ajan

1 Most of these artists were born right when the CRTs and their accompanying VHS were to become obsolete.

2 Trinh T. Minh-ha, “Documentary is/ Not a name”, *October*, Vol. 52 (Spring, 1990), p.76

Detailed program

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MAIN ROOM

Alternate screenings of:

Hilary Galbreath, *Bug Eyes Episode 1*, 2019, 27 min, courtesy of the artist and In extenso
and

Rayane Mcirdi, *La légende d'Y.Z.*, 2016-2017, 14 min, courtesy of the artist

Installation:

Deniz Eroglu, *Baba Diptych*, two-channel video installation, 2016, 2 min 29 s, courtesy of the artist

SECOND ROOM

Alternate screenings of:

Mona Benyamin, *Trouble in Paradise*, 2018, 8 min 30 s, courtesy of the artist
and

Gaspar Willmann, *Slonfa Shenfa*, 2021, 11 min 49 s, courtesy of the artist

PROJECTION ROOM (basement)

Alternate screenings of:

Wong Hoy Cheong, *Re: Looking*, 2002-2003, 30 min, courtesy of the artist
and

Ndayé Kouagou, *GOOD PEOPLE TV - ÉPISODE 1*, 2021, 4 min 39 s, courtesy of the artist and Nir Altman gallery

Hilary Galbreath



Bug Eyes Episode 1, 2019, 27 min, © Hilary Galbreath 2019. Production In Extenso

Staged in the imaginary New New Orleans, Hilary Galbreath's (American, b. 1989) *Bug Eyes* series unfolds like a reality TV show marked by kafkaesque ridicule: the show's participants are humans-turned-insects, played by puppets that the artist made. In line with this DIY methodology, Galbreath inserts her own face as a cheerful omnipresent figure that looks down on the competitors in the series' first episode. Subverting a genre that has come to epitomize American entertainment, Galbreath imbues it with surrealism and tragicomedy.

Born in 1989 in Florida, USA. Lives and works in Rennes. Graduated from L'École Supérieure d'Art Annecy Alpes in 2017.

For several years, Hilary Galbreath has been developing a science fiction scenario through videos, installations, editions and performances, featuring a human population affected by strange physical mutations. Transformed into insects of all kinds, the characters go through a series of Kafkaesque ordeals in a world, not too far from ours, that is facing a major ecological and social crisis.

Hilary Galbreath's work has been shown in solo exhibitions at Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain (Brest) and In extenso (Clermont-Ferrand), and group exhibitions at 40mcube's HubHug Sculpture Project (Liffre), Rennes Art Weekend (Rennes), Cellar Door (Arondit, Paris), Postpop (Galerie Art et Essai, Rennes), and HOPE (newsscenario.net). She was nominated for the 2019 Science Po Award for Contemporary Art.



La légende d'Y.Z., 2016-2017, 14 min, courtesy of the artist



Rayane Mcirdi's (French, b. 1993) *La Légende d'Y.Z* recreates scenes from martial arts movies, which were generally produced in Asia (specifically in Hong Kong), but largely exported and broadcast on Western TV. This video reveals the wide influence of the genre, but also how its dissemination through Western circuits paved the way for certain cultural stereotypes. The impressive acting of the protagonist, Yacine Zerguit (Mcirdi's cousin), hints to the impact of these stereotypes on contemporary performances of masculinity, eventually offering a glimpse of the life of a young man of Algerian descent in today's France.

A 2019 graduate of the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris and a 2015 graduate of the École nationale des beaux-arts d'Angers, Rayane Mcirdi is a video artist. He lives in Asnières-sur-Seine.

His work has been shown in several group exhibitions including at the 71st edition of Jeune Création, 2021, Romainville; «Hamdoulah ça va,» curated by Mohamed Bourouissa and Sonia Perrin, DADA, 2020, Marrakech; «Detroit City Guide Book Vol.1, 2, 3 & 4,» curated by Julien Sirjacq, Galerie P38, Le Point Éphémère, Le Doc & ENSBA, 2019-2018, Paris; «Désolé,» curated by Mohamed Bourouissa, Emba / Galerie Édouard-Manet, 2019, Gennevilliers; «Écuries Nord,» curated by Clément Cogitore, 104Centquatre, 2019, Paris; «Par amour du jeu,» curated by Anna Labouze and Keimis Henni, Magasins Généraux, 2018, Pantin; «l-n-t-o-t-o 6,» curated by Thomas Fougérol and Julien Carreyn, Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, 2018, Paris; «La Fureur du Dragon,» curated by Mohamed Bourouissa, Centre Pompidou, 2018, Paris; «Sharjah Biennial 13 - Act II, An Unpredictable Expression of Human Potential,» curated by Hicham Khalidi, Christine Tohmé, Beirut Art Center, 2017, Beirut. He was artist-in-residence at the Emba / Galerie Édouard-Manet in 2020, with the support of the Drac Île-de-France.



Baba Diptych, 2016, two-channel video installation, 2 min 29 s, courtesy of the artist

Another kind of remake centering masculinity is at play in Deniz Eroglu's (Danish, b. 1981) *Baba Diptych*. Here, TV appears as a "domesticated medium": the work is made of footage shot by the artist as a teenager, capturing his father—a Turkish immigrant who stopped his acting career short when he got to Denmark to open a Kebab restaurant—at work. Next to this touching home movie, another screen features Eroglu impersonating his father and repeating the same gestures, twenty years later. This diasporic tale of transmission of language and culture highlights a methodology of working with family, common to other artists in the program.

Deniz Eroglu is a Turkish-Danish artist whose time-based media and sculptural work is informed by his dual cultural identity and perspective as a second-generation immigrant. Drawing from personal history and the experiences of his family members, Eroglu considers how the pressure for migrants to assimilate can produce feelings of alienation and shame. Though he was born and raised in Denmark, Eroglu struggled to situate himself within a culture that oftentimes insisted on his difference.

Mona Benyamin



Trouble in Paradise, 2018, 8 min 30 s, courtesy of the artist



The involvement of her own parents is indeed a recurrent strategy for Mona Benyamin (Palestinian, b. 1997). In *Trouble in Paradise*, the remake gives way to parody: the work activates codes from American sitcoms (from laugh tracks to stereotypical gender-roles), only to hijack them by tackling the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine through dark humor. Casting her parents as the protagonists, Benyamin renders the enterprise endearing, playing on their limited knowledge of English, their amateur performance, and their first-hand experience of the Nakba (1948) and the Naksa (1967), which they never talk about.

Mona Benyamin (b.1997) is a Palestinian visual artist and filmmaker based in Haifa. In her works, she explores intergenerational outlooks on hope, trauma, and questions of identity, using humor and irony as political tools of resistance and reflection. Her recent works have been screened — among others — at MoMA, *Another Gaze*, Sheffield DocFest, Columbia University, and more.

Gaspar Willmann



Slonfa Shenfa, 2021, 11 min 49s, courtesy of the artist



Gaspar Willmann was born in 1995 in Paris, where he lives and works. Through his practice of video, installation and painting, he seizes objects, forms and everyday images, mobilizes representations and collective behaviors to question these issues and their circulation in the context of a technocratic society that changes affects.

Titled *Slonfa Shenfa* (Alsatian vernacular for “Sleeping, working”), Gaspar Willmann’s (French, b. 1995) video exemplifies a play on deskilled performances, all while tackling the perils of service-to-user platforms. Played by an actor hired online, the main protagonist named Cliff leaves his native Alsace for “America”. Using an alternative circuit of film-production, the work offers a pastiche of a classical Hollywood story, the iconic journey of the American dream, thus forming a melancholic commentary on contemporary conditions of labors.

Hoy Cheong Wong

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Re: Looking, 2002-2003, 30 min, Commissioned by the Schauspielhaus, Theater ohne Grenzen, Vienne and the 2003 Venice Biennale, courtesy of the artist

Hoy Cheong Wong (Malaysian, b. 1960) replicates the forms and strategies of political documentaries in *Re: Looking* only to posit a fictitious and absurd narrative in which Malaysia would colonize Austria. Wong's visionary exploration of misinformation (what we refer to as fake news today) echoes Ndayé Kouagou's video.

Wong Hoy Cheong was born in Penang, Malaysia, in 1960. He received a BA in literature from Brandeis University, Massachusetts, in 1982, and an M.Ed. from Harvard University in 1984. In 1986, he received an MFA in painting from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and in 2011 was awarded the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Creative Fellowship. In an attempt to escape the solitude and stasis of painting, Wong now employs mediums that he considers collaborative, and which effectively mix historical depth with human immediacy; he works in drawing, photography, video, installation, and performance. During the 1990s, he developed an interest in the migration of plants. This inquiry led him to investigate human migration and the related subjects of race, colonization, and indigeneity.

Ndayé Kouagou



GOOD PEOPLE TV - ÉPISODE 1, 2021, 7 min 23 s, courtesy of the artist and Nir Altman gallery.

In *Good People TV - EPISODE 1*, Ndayé Kouagou (b. 1992, France) adopts the position of a TV host who answers questions asked by an audience in search of personal development. By reactivating the moralizing tone and commonplaces of media language, Kouagou's text and video parody the relationship between anchor and listener/viewer, thus subverting the aura of media personalities and outlets.

Ndayé Kouagou is an artist and performer based in Paris, his practice always starts from texts of which he is the author. Voluntarily or involuntarily confused, he tries as best as he can to bring a reflection on these 3 topics; legitimacy, freedom and love. The result is... what it is. He describes his work as "quite interesting, but not that interesting or maybe not interesting at all". He has presented his work among others at Wiels (Brussels), Auto Italia, South East (London), Centrale Fies (Dro/Italy) and Lafayette Anticipation (Paris) where he also launched his publishing project YBR* (Young Black Romanties). Upcoming projects: Athens biennale, Frieze Londen, Centre Pompidou (Performance), Tallin Architecture Biennale (Performance).