

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

selected texts & press

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Pamela Rosenkranz's paintings and sculptures take aim at the empty centers of history, politics, and contemporary culture as a whole. They address the shifting philosophical and scientific meanings of the 'natural' and the 'human' during the Anthropocene (the geological epoch marked by the impact of human activities on the ecosystem).

Rosenkranz deploys a palette of patented icons—polyethylene water bottles, soft drinks, Ralph Lauren latex paint, Viagra, Ilford photo paper, and ASICS sneakers—and augments them with flesh-toned silicone and acrylic paint. Her insistence on the 'naturalness' of these seemingly unnatural materials is premised on the fact that they were all produced by human activity.

Rosenkranz's newest *Healers*, are informed by her research into recent advancements in biorobotics, and, in particular, snakebots. While mimicking a 'natural' snake's appearance and behavior, these snakebots are used to perform complex tasks that augment human capabilities. The *Healers* in turn connect this technological adaptation to the far-reaching symbolism that the serpent embodies, from the world's first writings from the Fertile Crescent, to the "Ouroboros" and the representation of both the beginning and the end of time in ancient Egypt, and the snake's association with healing and medicine via the "Rod of Asclepius" in Greek mythology.

For the Sharjah Biennial 14: *Leaving the Echo Chamber*, Rosenkranz developed *Healer (Sands)*, a robotic snake that lived in the sun-drenched courtyard of Sharjah's Bait Al Serkal. With *Healer (Waters)*, subsequently presented at the 2019 Okayama Art Summit: *If the Snake*, where the snake took up residence in a former Japanese sumo ring, Rosenkranz developed a new technologically fabricated snakeskin with shining scales that incorporated transparency and reflection through the layering of polymers. Set in motion by its sidewinding robot body, the skin acts like the surface of a dune, or that of a body of water, scattering rays of light and altering its appearance through its algorithmically programmed movements, activating the adaptive and manifold symbolic meanings of the serpent through its technical incorporation. In so doing, she raises questions about the natural and the real during an epoch that has seen the transformation of innumerable achievements of nature into mechanical copies.

Beginning with her 2017 exhibition at GAMeC in Bergamo, Italy, and continuing with her 2019 exhibition at the Fraumünster-Kreuzgang in Zürich, Switzerland, Rosenkranz has activated the spiritual history of the spaces in which she has shown, creating site-specific installations with her series of *Alien Blue Windows* based on RGB Blue. While some of her previous works explored the physical, biological and cultural dimension of the color blue, linking the hue of the primordial ocean (which had shaped the evolution of our perception) to the skies that dominate our religious imagery, this new series intensifies the sheer infinity of associations that the color generates. Consisting of backlit imageless screens whose forms correspond to those of the original windows in each space, the works produce an immersive environment that simultaneously invoke the artificiality of blue, which permeates our screens and washes over the Internet, in turn generating a spiritual and sensual experience that transcends the physical qualities of the color.

Evoking her series of "Viagra" paintings, the works that compromise Rosenkranz's *Anemine* series take their active agent from a substance based on some of the ancient and abundant natural properties found in the Amazon. The molecular structure of chlorocruorin (green blood), which comes from annelids found in the rainforest, was synthesized and turned into a lacteal green distillate which the artist claims to have ingested, producing paintings while under its allegedly perception enhancing influence. Further simulating the substance's intensifying effects, Rosenkranz designed light installations comprised of pure RGB green and blue LEDs that project into the exhibition space in which they are shown, bathing the paintings, packages ordered from Amazon, or large mountains of sand impregnated with the scent of synthetic cat pheromones (which themselves have their own subconscious influence on one's corporeal sense of attraction or repulsion), overwhelming the visual register and dramatically altering one's sense of color.

For *Our Product* (Venice Biennale, 2015) Rosenkranz fills the architectural container of the Swiss Pavilion with a specially synthesized scent and an animated pool of skin-toned viscous fluid. This 'product' is imbued with chemical compounds both actual and fictitious—Neotene, Selentis, Holeana—that ambiguously invoke the list of ingredients on health drinks as much as the chemical components of their plastic containers. The pavilion melts down and aggregates personal, cultural, and national identifications in an attempt to reach the core illusion of identity as such.

To create her ongoing *Sexual Power (Viagra Paintings)* series, the artist sheathed the studio in transparent plastic, ingested the eponymous performance-enhancing drug, and painted a series of human-scale aluminum plates with flesh-toned pigment on site. When originally exhibited in 2014, the environment was further suffused by artificial light evocative of sunrise and sunset and synthetic cat pheromones (a common ingredient in commercial perfumes). Here, the artist's chemically mediated anti-expressionist gestures contrast sharply with the mythology of heroism and immediacy associated with other postwar "action painters." Rosenkranz's world is one in which the artist must be reduced to the physical interactions of neurochemical processes.

The 2013 series *Because they try to bore holes* appropriates unauthorized reproductions of Yves Klein's International Klein Blue (which he claimed had the capacity to cause viewers to transcend material concerns and induce a sensation of boundlessness) for opposite ends: the bubbles which populate Rosenkranz's hand-mounted inkjet prints foreground immanence and material constraint. In contrast to Klein, she undermines the claim that art might transcend its immediate reality; here, the signification of apparent gestuality is reduced to its evolutionary and capitalist conditions of production.

The domestication and commodification of organically occurring entities under capitalism is evoked through the corporate slogans that populate Rosenkranz's work: Fiji's "Untouched by man;" Evian's "The most important body of water is yours;" ASICS's *anima sana in corpore sano*. Rosenkranz views bottles of water as small bodies of nature, marketed as a health and beauty product that cleanses the human body from the inside out. Eternal youth and the preservation of purity are branded and sold as beauty ideals. She short-circuits this conceit by filling the branded vessels with flesh-toned silicone, a material ordinarily used to smooth the appearance of skin on camera, as though a homogenized solution of one's own body.

Pamela Rosenkranz (b. 1979, Uri, Switzerland) received her MFA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Bern, in 2004, and completed an independent residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam in 2012. Her project Our Product was selected to represent Switzerland at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. Previously, her work was featured in the 55th Venice Biennale, The Encyclopedic Palace, curated by Massimiliano Gioni. Rosenkranz's first solo exhibition in the United States, Because They Try to Bore Holes, took place at Miguel Abreu Gallery in 2012. Other solo and two-person exhibitions include Healing Scrolls (Karma International, Zurich, 2024), Spill Retina (Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, 2024), Alien Blue (Sprüth Magers, Berlin, 2023), All Chemie, with Sigmar Polke, curated by Bice Curiger (Bechtler Stiftung, Uster, Switzerland, 2022), House of Meme (Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria, 2021), I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Karma International, 2021), Healer (Sprüth Magers, London, 2021), Alien Blue Light (Kreuzgang Fraumünster, Zürich, 2018), Amazon Spirits (Green Blood) (Karma International, 2018), Alien Culture (GAMeC, Bergamo, 2017), She Has No Mouth (Sprüth Magers, Berlin, 2017), Slight Agitation 2/4: Pamela Rosenkranz (Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2017), Anemine (Miguel Abreu Gallery, 2016), My Sexuality (Karma International, 2014), Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting, Reproduction (Kunsthalle Basel, 2012), Untouched by Man (Kunstverein Braunschweig, 2010), No Core (Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, 2012), Our Sun (Swiss Institute, Venice, 2009), and This Is Not My Color / The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, a two-person show with Nikolas Gambaroff (Swiss Institute, New York, 2011). Recently, her work was included in group exhibitions at MCA Chicago (2024), Deste Foundation, Hydra, Greece (2023), MIT List Art Center, Cambridge (2022), ICA Los Angeles (2021), the Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2020), Sharjah Biennial 14, United Arab Emirates (2020), the Okayama Art Summit (2019), the 15th Lyon Biennale (2019), Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2019), Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris (2019), and the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (2018), among others.

Her work is held in the collections of the Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, Kunsthau Glarus, Kunsthau Zurich, the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Aishti Foundation, Beirut, the Adrastus Collection, Spain, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, among others. In 2016, Rosenkranz was the first recipient of the Paul Boesch Art Prize. A monograph on her work, No Core, was published by JRP/ Ringier in 2012, and the catalogue for Our Product was published by Koenig Books and the Fridericianum in 2017. In 2021, Alien Culture, the catalogue for Rosenkranz's exhibitions at GAMeC and the Kreuzgang Fraumünster, was published by Mousse, while House of Meme was published by the Kunsthau Bregenz to accompany her exhibition of the same title.

Liquid Mimesis, the artist's third solo exhibition with Miguel Abreu Gallery, was held in the Spring of 2023. Concurrent with the exhibition, Rosenkranz's Old Tree, a monumental sculpture commission for the High Line at the Spur, was on view at 30th Street and 10th Avenue through September 2024. Rosenkranz is the recipient of the 2025 Swiss Grand Award for Art/Prix Meret Oppenheim, while a new exhibition of her work will open at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in May 2025.

NZZ

Repellent beauty: Artist Pamela Rosenkranz bridges natural and artificial worlds

Her professor told her that her art was some of the worst he had ever seen. But ever since she represented Switzerland at the 2015 Biennale, Pamela Rosenkranz has been a star. A conversation about misrepresentations in the media, repellent beauty and her robot snake «Healer.»

Benedict Neff

October 25, 2024 ⌚ 13 min



«I am very interested in beauty. But you can only gain enough distance if you are also repelled by it at the same time.» Pamela Rosenkranz in her studio in Zurich, pictured on June 2, 2024.

Marc Asekhame

Ms. Rosenkranz, you grew up in the countryside, in the canton of Uri and then in Spiez. What does that mean to you?

I was born in Altdorf and then spent only a year in Flüelen, but Uri has remained a very important place for my family. We moved around a lot.

I also lived in Zurich for a while, where I later returned after stops in Amsterdam and New York. My dear grandmother recently passed away in Flüelen, where she was born and lived her whole life. I find it a beautiful and interesting area.

Why is that?

Because of its history, the change it has experienced and the myths that surround it. Uri has changed from a very poor, simple canton into a place for wealthy people, who are attracted by the tax policy. Then there is the special light. It is very visual. Narrow and shady, but then the wind comes and opens up the sky, and everything is bright again.

Your mother is a physiotherapist, your father a lawyer. What do you think of when you remember your childhood?

My childhood was quite informal and didn't include much art. My mother is very nature-oriented and has a great deal of knowledge about the body. This has shaped me and my art to this day. As a child, I often drew and read. My parents had lots of books, but I didn't really know what art was. That's probably not typical for a middle-class family, but my parents worked a lot. We almost never went to museums. Instead we spent time out in nature and in the mountains. At some point, my mother told me that I had been to a Klee exhibition in kindergarten. Which is funny, because I had an ambivalent relationship with Klee. For a long time I didn't like his paintings. It was only later that I understood the emotionality and openness in his art.

That means that you can't remember the exhibition.

No. But perhaps it was working in my subconscious. Today I think he's brilliant.

What books have left a strong impression on you?

Unfortunately, I no longer read as much literature as I used to. As a teenager, I read all sorts of things: novels, biographies, plenty of classics. Kafka often makes me laugh, although he is of course tragic as well. I think that as an artist, I had a different perspective on stories. For me, it's always about the pictures. During my studies, philosophy also became important: Arendt, Nietzsche, Sontag and above all

Deleuze and Guattari, with their concept of the «rhizome.» My reading has become a kind of rhizomatic research as the internet has become denser and more extensive.

Do you explore the internet strategically, or do you also allow yourself to get lost?

A bit of both. As an artist, I also want to feel the experience: What does the internet do to us? How does it change people? The blue-wave light from the screen influences us. It keeps us awake longer. I addressed this in part in my work «Alien Blue.»

The internet is also seen as a dumbing-down machine for children. My impression is that you have a rather positive approach.

I am also very critical when it comes to children. The internet has great potential, but it is also dangerous.

What do you find dangerous?

The internet is full of false truths. It allows others to profit from our naiveté. And children are even more vulnerable than we are. The question is also how the internet changes our ability to think, to remember and to be creative. Children today can barely write by hand and often have poor spelling as a result. Skills that I find important are being lost. Fortunately, my son has already noticed that he learns new words faster if he writes them down by hand.

When did you discover that what you do is art?

That came with all the drawing and, actually, probably just with the aptitude. At some point I realized that there was a preliminary course on design, and I took it. That was a great year, because I was just drawing and painting and was able to try out all artistic disciplines. That was not really encouraged at my school. But from that point on, it was clear to me that there was only one path I wanted to take.

Your professor said about your final thesis at the Bern University of the Arts: «This is some of the worst art I've ever seen!» What did you think at the time?

That perhaps for the professor making a dramatic impression was more important in that moment than offering a real artistic assessment of the project. This comment was preceded by a dispute about my work, followed by this rather German, overdramatic form of judgment. So for me, the situation was surprising and slightly upsetting, but also just interesting.

It didn't make you doubt yourself?

No, not at all. And shortly afterward, the same work was purchased by the Kunstmuseum Bern.

In 2006, you met the French American artist Louise Bourgeois in New York, and later referred to this as a formative encounter. Why did you describe it that way?

Louise Bourgeois was already 96 years old at the time, an icon of art. Every Sunday, she welcomed artists into her salon for a chat, accompanied by cognac. All you had to do in order to come was call first – her number was in the phone book. The conditions were that you had to bring a work of art, and you couldn't have a cold. Bourgeois is known for having had strong feelings, and also some aggression. I found her to be energetic, but not at all self-centered. She leafed through the book of my work I had brought with me, and said on every single page that I was very self-confident.

Did that surprise you?

Until then, I hadn't realized how self-confident I actually was, at least in terms of art.

What changed with this encounter?

For me as a young woman, it was the most important encounter I had with an artist. It had to do with the whole atmosphere. I had an amazing figure from art history in front of me, and she radiated this energy. She confronted me, and that's the kind of attention you rarely get. As an art student, you usually don't get much attention at all. At least that was my experience. You are working and have no audience. She took me very seriously, and told me not to take myself so seriously, but at the same time she seemed to admire me. It was a special moment.

When it became known that you were representing Switzerland at the 2015 Venice Biennale, you were very much in the news. «Pamela Rosenkranz is the new star in the Swiss art firmament,» newspapers wrote. Or: «Charmed career of a charming beauty.» What was all this attention like for you?

I can't really relate to such labels. The time around the Biennale was very intense. I wanted to realize an incredibly large and challenging installation, and at the same time I was expected to provide the media with material. There were even requests for visits to my home and so on. I was rather disappointed with some of the articles. For example, Die Zeit published a text after I met with them in which several things were simply wrong. The career ladder that was outlined in the story didn't have much to do with reality. But back then, it was still a bit suspicious if you had such success as a young woman. I probably should have had some of the facts corrected.

That was almost 10 years ago. Why didn't you do it?

There were then also other texts that balanced out the picture somewhat, and the article had already been rewritten many times.

It seems that you generally don't like labels. You have even described yourself as «unpathetically identityless.» Does such a thing even exist?

No, but one can set it as an ideal. I want to be free from limitations, judgments and beliefs. I would like to think about what a person is, beyond common categories or labels. I am interested in the human aspect in and of itself, and that is often very complex.

Does that mean you don't like being called a woman, Swiss or a mother?

When I make art, I work with experience, feeling and intellect. And of course I've been shaped by my experience. But that doesn't mean that I'm limited or simply understood.

Articles about you often present the image of a highly talented artist who has planned her rise with cool strategy, intelligence, talent and networking. Do you recognize yourself in such descriptions?

No, that doesn't fit at all. I think I just didn't let myself get in my own way, because I really wanted to show art.

For you, how important is valuation by the art market?

It has no meaning at all.

That's easy for you to say, as it's no longer an existential question.

I wouldn't say that. It remains a source of some anxiety. Pulling together large installations is still a challenge.

In other words, you have not yet become rich with art.

No. I might have to paint more.

Painting gives you security?

I think it would be easier. I am not a non-painter. But it was difficult for me to accept painting at first because it is so classic, so natural, and everyone likes it. Today, I'm seeing a much more exciting kind of engagement there than in the past.

Your artistic approach is often discussed in the context of speculative realism. Do you agree with that?

It's not wrong. For me, the awareness of how physical and biological processes influence thinking and art is central. This kind of creative, free thinking must have space. Speculation is a strategy that I also use. Ultimately, it's about artistic freedom. What I do doesn't have to be right. I can ask: What if? Perhaps we will find out something that is new and important, or at least interesting.

In this spirit, you and a researcher from EPF Lausanne developed a robotic snake called «Healer.» Can we see the snake?

No, unfortunately «Healer» is not here. There are actually three snakes. Each has a different skin. Depending on where it originated, each has a different color and transparency.

How did you come up with the idea?

I have studied the symbolism of snakes, but also the history of snakes in the biosystem. The snake is one of the oldest symbols: It stands for

life and death, for health. At the same time, the second-best-selling drug – a blood thinner – is made from snake venom. But I'm also interested in people's encounters with a snake that isn't actually a snake at all. The Healer moves like a real snake, side-winding across the floor. This movement evokes our instinct: Snake, dangerous, watch out! However, Healer doesn't move continuously. It is programmed to be like a real animal that only moves at certain intervals. People sometimes wait very impatiently.

And think: «When will it finally move?»

Yes, there were even complaints in some museums that the snake wasn't working anymore. Which wasn't true at all. This snake reads electromagnetic radiation – including our cell phones – and that influences the algorithm. In one version, based on the translation of the exhibition text, people thought they had to make noises with their cell phones, for example play a song, and then the snake would move. This made the audience's encounter with Healer even more interactive. It's not just about a 1.2 meter robot snake. The art is not the snake by itself. It's about what happens to it, around it and to us.

Is it important to you that the audience is familiar with the ideas and thoughts behind your works?

If people are interested, I think it's nice. But a work of art must also be able to stand on its own. It must work – whether visually, with scent or sound – without explanations.

Skin is one of your leitmotifs. For the Biennale, you built a huge tank filled with a liquid that had the color of a «standardized northern European skin tone,» and engaged visitors with an attractive and a repulsive smell. What is it about skin that fascinates you?

I'm interested in the surface of human appearance. The skin is also in a sense the quintessence of humanity. In advertising, they have discovered that as more area is devoted to skin colors such as this, the ad is perceived as being more appealing. Our red interior shines through the membrane. I am currently studying the skin color of reptiles and fish, which have completely different colors.

Market research also plays a role in your art.

Yes, exactly. Statistics in general. But I don't take the statistics as evidence, but as inspiration. Our living spaces are shaped by advertising, which is why we should explore and understand it as our new «nature.» Just look around, and it is easy to see that skin is omnipresent.

You also fill water bottles, including PET bottles from the Fiji brand, with a skin-colored silicone mixture. A rather bizarre brand, when you consider how far the water is transported.

It is a water that raises good questions. And that's why I chose it. It shows how the economic system works, how we function and how people create meaning. The best way to do this is to take a look at the fascinating history of healing water. Fiji also promises that its water «never meets the compromised air of the 21st century.» The water is filled in such a way that no air gets in. It is therefore suggested that the water is absolutely pure. However, the liquid becomes contaminated again, at least by the PET bottles of the 21st century, and ultimately microresidues of the plastic end up in our bodies.

You have also taken Viagra for paintings. Did the potency pill for men have any significant effect?

As a healthy person, you don't feel much. However, there is the placebo effect. The painting was also a performance in which I, as an artist working expressively on a large format, wanted to feel – and present myself as – virile. The colors include all the shades I could find on a human body. That is my palette.

And Viagra actually made you feel more virile?

It seems so.

Your Old Tree in New York has attracted a lot of attention. What was the idea behind this work?

The city lacks trees. But I didn't just want to put up a tree. I designed the Old Tree as if it had grown from human tissue. I wanted to create a confrontation with a humanlike tree in the midst of a big city's congestion. The tree has a color that could also come from the inside of a human being. In its pink hue, it is intended to attract and repel, to be beautiful and eerie at the same time.

Attracting and repelling, this double effect is important to you. Why is that?

I am very interested in beauty. But you can only gain enough distance if you are also repelled by it at the same time. That helps you think about it.

You also developed a sneaker for Swiss sportswear brand On. Did you have any reservations about putting your art at the service of a brand in this way?

No, I am very inspired by brands. Like water bottles, they provide material for me. I was particularly interested in the shoe: It is a technical shape for our feet. I designed the sneaker in connection with the Old Tree, so it too has branches or veins resembling the inside of our body.

Your work subtly addresses the contrast between artificiality and naturalness. Is there a difference?

I find it interesting to say that such a boundary doesn't exist, that everything is natural. Artificiality suggests that there is something that is outside of nature. But that doesn't exist. We can actually only create natural things.

Do you really believe that?

The idea inspires me.

Is there art if there is no artificiality?

Art is natural. As intelligent beings, humans can create art, at least when things are going reasonably well for them.

What attracted you to show your art in the context of the NZZ?

I want to see how the images and the content combine. I don't yet know what the newspaper will look like on the day of publication, what news and headlines it will contain. How does art work with the newspaper's power to define the truth? We will see. The pictures are selected so that anything can happen.

Do you read the newspaper?

I try to read as many different media as possible, and as little as possible at the same time. I pay attention to current affairs, but not too much. If I let myself get too involved, it wouldn't be productive. I also have a certain amount of doubt as to whether truth can be produced with language.

The newspaper presents and evaluates the present. My impression is that you are trying to avoid judgment with your art.

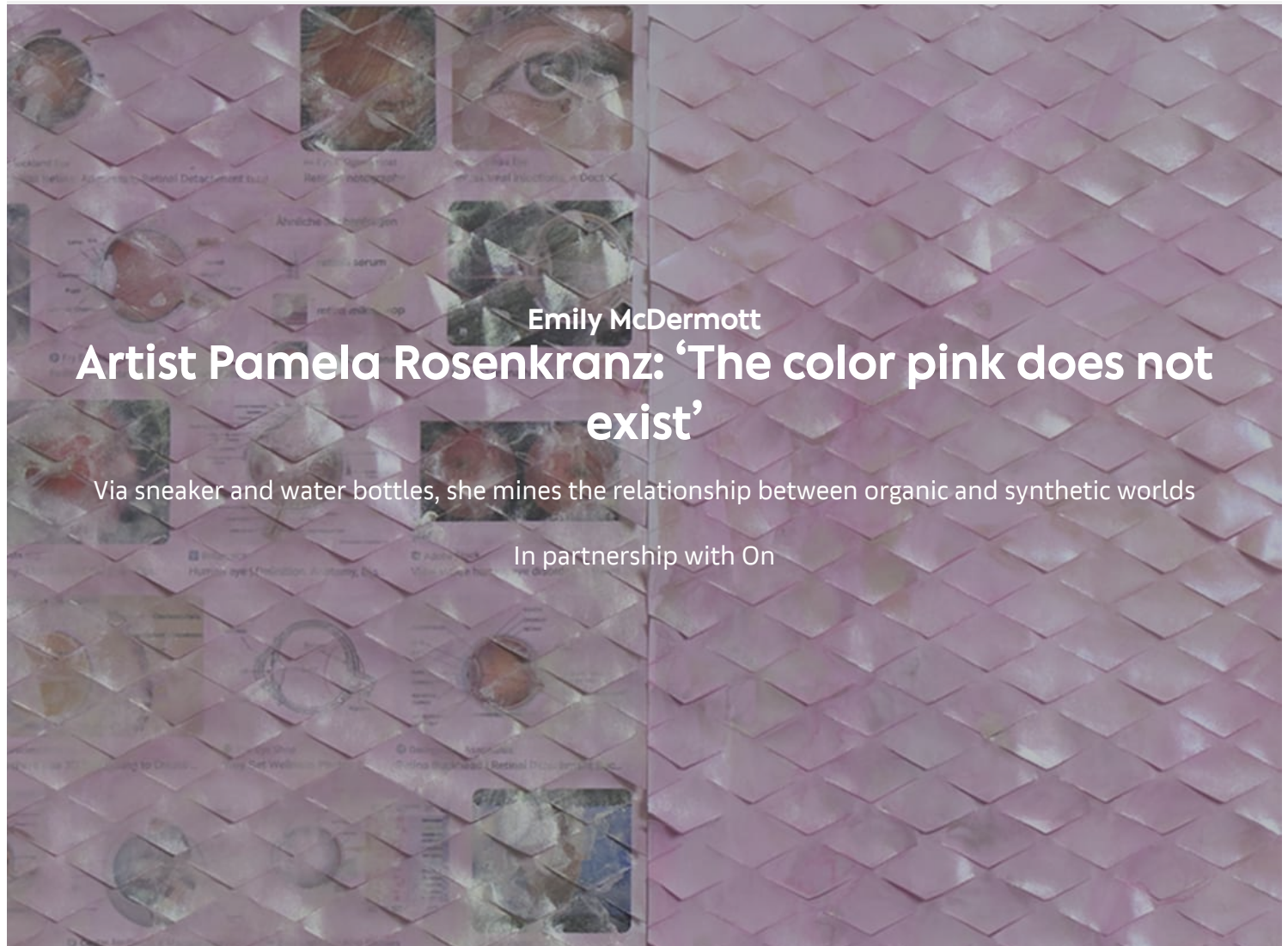
I hope that's the case, yes.

Why don't you want to pass judgment?

Because I want to create something open. That's precisely why I became an artist.

Are you not comfortable with political art?

Becoming an artist is a political decision. But I don't want to play politics with art itself. I want to be free, and to be able to ask big questions. Not saying what people should be like, but asking what humanity actually is.



Through an acute understanding of color and form, ***Pamela Rosenkranz*** investigates the contemporary human condition – from our social norms to our relationship with the natural world to the functionality of our own bodies. To address such a range of topics, the 44-year-old works with an equally vast array of media, including sculpture, painting, video, performance, and installation.

In collaboration with the brand On, Rosenkranz has created a limited-edition Cloudnova Form sneaker based on her drawing *Healer Scrolls* (2022). The drawing was made while planning her largest physical public artwork to date: *Old Tree* (2023), a towering 25-foot-tall sculpture currently installed in New York City's High Line park. The critically lauded sculpture shows, in essence, a giant, bright pink-and-red tree; but at the same time, it closely resembles the branching parts of the human nervous and circulatory systems – an intentional interweaving. When digitally rendering the sculpture in 3D prior to its production, Rosenkranz merged scans of actual trees with scans of human blood vessels, tissues, and muscles; *Healer Scrolls* was a hand drawing, made with red ink, based on these renderings.



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Old Tree*, High Line, New York, 2023. Photograph by Timothy Schenck.

Beyond the immediate visual associations, *Healer Scrolls* and *Old Tree* contain a multitude of references. The symbol of the tree itself can allude to the ancient concept of the tree of life, a representation of life, fertility, and immortality; of a connection between humans and celestial beings, between Earth and other realms. It also points toward a potential future, positing the human-made as nature. The pink-red hues hold significance, too.

‘In my work, I have been engaging with compositions of colors as abstract and monochromatic substrates, as liquid formulas of the human,’ Rosenkranz explains. ‘The underlying pink, as a substrate of flesh or human matter, was the defining color tone for the *Old Tree*, which renders the primordial symbol of the “tree” – of a pure and uncorrupted nature – into something that collapses with the cultural, the human.’ And when it comes to the drawing applied to the Cloudnova Forms, ‘The untinted shoe works as canvas and contains semi-transparent elements; membranes that shimmer through like skin,’ the artist continues.



Pamela Rosenkranz, Cloudnova Form, 2023.

In addition to its fleshy qualities, there is also the fact that the color pink does not actually exist. Light visible to the human eye comes in a spectrum of different colors, each with its own wavelength. On one end of the spectrum is red, a low-frequency, low-energy light with a long wavelength. On the other end is violet, a high-frequency, high-energy light with a very short wavelength. Pink should, in theory, exist somewhere between violet and red; however, the opposite ends of the spectrum never meet. Thus, every brain conjures its own representations of what *might* be between these two wavelengths, forming a slew of imaginary colors in the range of pinks and magentas. Pink is, as Rosenkranz says, 'a mental performance.'

Throughout her practice, pink has often been Rosenkranz's color of choice. In the series 'Firm Being' (2009-ongoing), she fills disposable plastic water bottles from 'luxury' water brands such as Fiji, Evian, and smartwater with pigmented silicone. When she first began the series, shades of pink always took the place of the waters these brands promote as artesian, 'untouched by man,' a 'natural source of youth,' or the best water to experience 'purity and hydration.' By tinting the liquid, Rosenkranz prompts the consumer to see their plastic purchases anew: unnatural, perhaps poisonous, most definitely touched by man. In a

photographic series from 2021, the artist plays on contemporary associations with the word 'Amazon'. *Anamazon (Wild Life)*, for instance, is a digital print of a stock photo of a rainforest, which Rosenkranz covered with swirls of pink acrylic paint. With works such as these, Rosenkranz 'makes no distinction between industrial products and raw materials, the living world and the product,' as French curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud once wrote; and she uses color to upend established conventions or boundaries.



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Anamazon (Wild Life)*, 2021. Photograph by Stefan Altenburger.

Similarly, diminishing the separation between the drawing, the shoe, and the life of a human, Rosenkranz considered the foot-brain connection during her collaboration with On. 'Throughout the process I kept thinking about Leonardo da Vinci's quote, "The human foot is a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art,"' she says. 'Feet are amazing, and as the lower ends of our body, the counter point to the head.' Our feet and brains might be the parts of our bodies that are physically the farthest apart, but – as evidenced in countless scientific studies – they are inextricably intertwined.

'I am also interested in the influence of walking upright – this ability that is so important for humans – on thinking,' Rosenkranz says. 'Walking seems to be the ideal speed for our brain to process impressions and to grasp thoughts.' Her work, she explains, 'is always first created while thinking, and ideas are often

created while walking. Being able to make a tangible, usable object that stimulates thought and blood circulation and reflects my work through collaboration with On has fascinated me.'



Pamela Rosenkranz, Firm Being, 2009. Photographs by Gunnar Meier.

As an artist who so visibly and repeatedly questions the age of the Anthropocene, the fact that she has designed a shoe – an object that is, ultimately, for humans to consume – might come as somewhat of a surprise. Rosenkranz explains: 'If I apply a hand drawing made with ink to an object, then the hand drawing is still something personal, handmade. And that is an exciting trace of life on a highly technically produced shoe. They are a commentary on the actual physical social encounter, the feelings of connection and life.'



Pamela Rosenkranz, Cloudnova Form, 2023.

Emily McDermott is a writer and editor living in Munich.

In the heart of New York on the High Line, Pamela Rosenkranz's *Old Tree*, resembling both human organs and plant life, showcases the interconnectedness between nature and humanity. Partnering with **On**, her limited edition Cloudnova Form merges the hues of her organic drawings with the shoe's canvas, emphasizing the intertwining of the body's inner workings and the essence of nature. The collaboration embodies a lifestyle appreciative of art and movement, encouraging contemplation and physical engagement.

The Cloudnova Form Pamela Rosenkranz will be launched exclusively with Art Basel, with a limited number of sneakers available for purchase online and onsite at Art Basel Miami Beach 2023. To be notified of this exclusive release, please **sign-up here**.

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Caption for full-bleed image: *Healer Scrolls* (detail), 2023. Photograph by Sebastian Lendenmann.

artnet news

On View

See Artist Pamela Rosenkranz's New High Line Plinth Commission: a Hot Pink Tree Planted Amid New York's Skyscrapers

Titled 'Old Tree,' the work is the third commission for the plinth.

Sarah Cascone, May 8, 2023



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Old Tree* (2023). A High Line Plinth commission. Photo by Timothy Schenck courtesy of the High Line, New York.

In recent weeks, a hot pink beacon has arisen on the High Line at West 30th Street. Standing 25 feet tall atop the [High Line Plinth](#), *Old Tree* is the work of Swiss artist [Pamela Rosenkranz](#), its 145 branches recalling at once both the limbs of a tree and human blood vessels.

"This piece immediately stood out because of the ambition of scale, and the color is something incredible that brought it to a whole other level," Cecilia Alemani, the director and chief curator of High Line Art told Artnet News during the installation of the work. "It's like the central square in a village with a tree and benches around it."

Fabricated outside San Diego and shipped cross country in two trucks, the work had arrived in pieces, a steel armature covered with spray foam and carefully sculpted into delicate branches sealed with epoxy.

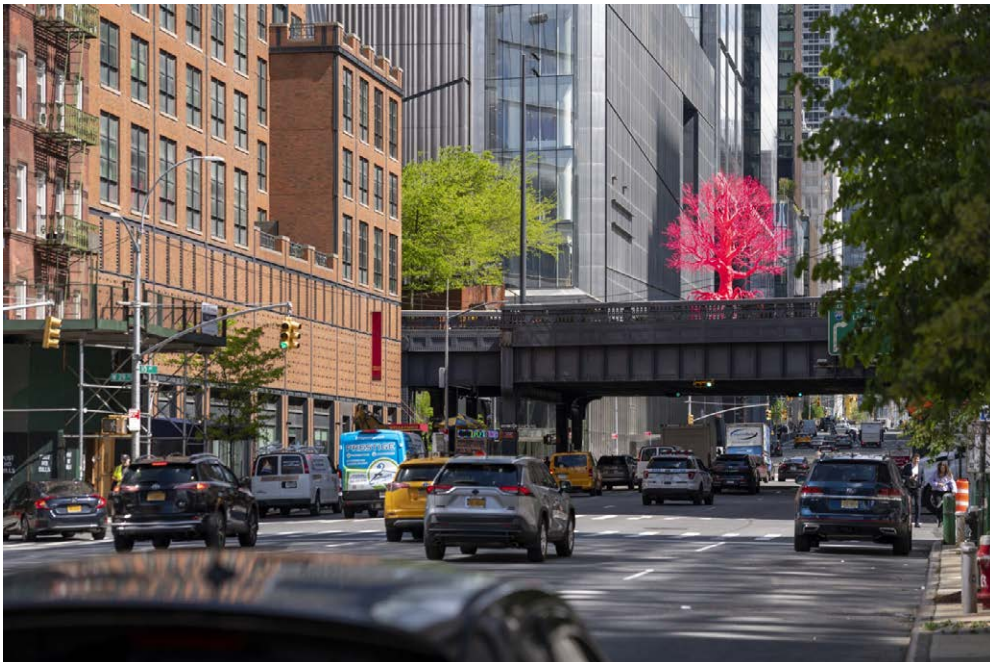
Each of the 16 limbs and six roots were carefully assembled on site, the tree growing bit by bit, almost as if it had been planted there by Rosenkranz. (The artist even covered the plinth with an earthy surface so it resembles soil.)



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Old Tree* (2023). A High Line Plinth commission. Photo by Timothy Schenck courtesy of the High Line, New York.

“It’s a synthetic artificial tree in the middle of a park,” Alemani said. That contrast between the natural and the manmade—on a park that is itself an abandoned train track once reclaimed by nature—was part of what drew her to the work, which was first proposed in 2020 in response to an open call. It became a finalist for the site that November.

Old Tree is the third commission for the plinth, which launched in 2019 with *Brick House* by Simone Leigh. (That piece later won a Golden Lion at the 2022 Venice Biennale, curated by Alemani.) It follows *Untitled (drone)* by Sam Durant.



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Old Tree* (2023). A High Line Plinth commission. Photo by Timothy Schenck courtesy of the High Line, New York.

Rosenkranz applied the bright reddish pink paint as she would to one of her canvases, with seven layers topped with with a clear UV coating.

You can see subtle drips and variations in texture of the painted surface, which adds to the fleshy, bodily feel of the work. The trunk could be a torso, muscular and strong, while the roots and branches recall a delicate network of veins and capillaries.

Compared to the initial renderings, Alemani said, “it looks much less of a tree.”



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Old Tree* (2023). A High Line Plinth commission. Photo by Timothy Schenck courtesy of the High Line, New York.

The works unveiling comes ahead of the opening of a new extension of the High Line Spur, which was once slated for demolition. Just beyond the plinth and nearing completion is the High Line's new Moynihan Connection, first announced by then-Governor Andrew Cuomo in January 2021.

The Woodland Bridge, extending along 30th Street, was built last year, with 63 trees, 90 shrubs, and over 5,000 grasses and flowers. This weekend, it was connected to the public plaza in Brookfield Properties' Manhattan West building on 9th Avenue with the installation of a 300-foot Timber Bridge made from Alaskan yellow cedar. From there, pedestrians will be able to access the Moynihan Train Hall at Penn Station.



The installation of the new Timber Bridge, connecting the High Line Spur's Woodland Bridge to Manhattan West and Moynihan Station. Photo by Andrew Frasz, courtesy of the High Line, New York.

"You can walk all the way down to the West Village without crossing the street," Alemani said.

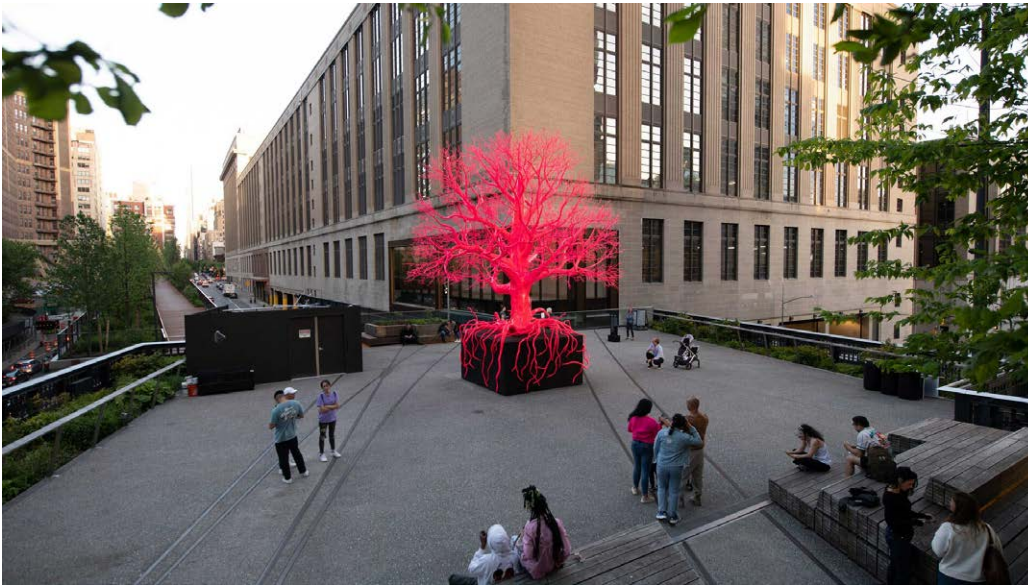
The \$50 million project is expected to open to the public this summer.

"Pamela Rosenkranz: Old Tree" is on view at the High Line at the Spur, at West 30th Street and 10th Avenue, New York, May 2023–September 2024.

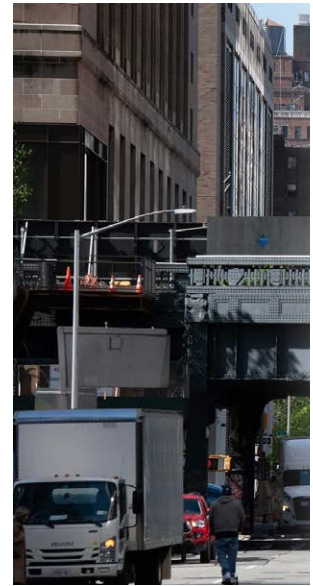
e-flux

Pamela Rosenkranz: *Old Tree*

High Line Art



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Old Tree*, 2023. Photo: Timothy Schenck.



May 17, 2023

Pamela Rosenkranz
Old Tree

The third High Line Plinth commission
May 8, 2023–September 30, 2024

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High Line Art, which organizes public art programming and installations displayed along the High Line, announces that acclaimed Swiss artist Pamela Rosenkranz's vivid sculpture *Old Tree* is now on view as the third High Line Plinth commission. Changing every 18 months, the Plinth is one of the only sites in New York City for artists to realize large-scale contemporary artworks. *Old Tree* is on display on the High Line, over the intersection of 10th Avenue and 30th Street, through fall 2024.

Newly installed on the Spur, *Old Tree* is a vibrant 25-foot-tall pink and red sculpture made of man-made materials. *Old Tree* was among 80 proposals shared with the public in 2020, with many people remarking during the commenting period on the excitement and optimism that the work evokes. Rosenkranz's commission follows Sam Durant's *Untitled (drone)*, installed in 2021, and Simone Leigh's *Brick House*, which inaugurated the Plinth program in 2019.

Old Tree is a vibrant pink and red sculpture that animates myriad historical archetypes of the tree of life that connects heaven and earth. With its striking colors and form, the sculpture resembles the branching systems of organs, blood vessels, and tissue of the human body, inviting viewers to consider the indivisible connection between human and plant life. *Old Tree* evokes metaphors for the ancient wisdom of human evolution as well as a future in which the synthetic has become nature. On the High Line—a contemporary urban park built on a relic of industry—*Old Tree* raises questions about what is truly “artificial” or “natural” in our world. Standing in stark contrast to the buildings around it, the work provides a social space, creating shade while casting an ever-changing, luminous aura amid New York's changing seasons. The exhibition of *Old Tree* on the High Line will be activated by public programming around themes of botany and anthropology, with more details to be announced.

Pamela Rosenkranz creates sculptures, paintings, videos, and installations that reflect on the human need to anthropomorphize our surroundings in order to understand them. In doing so, she investigates the codes through which people give meaning to the natural world. Her projects center synthetic materials created in the image of nature: a swimming pool filled with viscous fluid, collections of mineral water bottles filled with silicone, or a kitchen faucet streaming water colored with E131 “sky blue” synthetic dye. Color is paramount for Rosenkranz, who employs fabricated colors intended to reflect unblemished and idealized nature. She elaborates on the condition of the body as a malleable system. Questioning the worldview that centers human beings, Rosenkranz addresses our relentless attempts to domesticate and tame the other living beings around us, as well as our own bodies.

Old Tree's installation precedes the opening of the Moynihan – High Line Connector later in Spring 2023. The location of the Plinth on the High Line's Spur is adjacent to the forthcoming pathway that will lead pedestrians over 30th Street and Dyer Avenue towards Moynihan Train Hall.



The New York Times

Pamela Rosenkranz Wins the High Line Plinth's Third Commission

"The whole tree might remind us of an organ," the Swiss conceptual artist said of her vision for an unsettlingly anthropomorphic tree.



A rendering of Pamela Rosenkranz's "Old Tree," which will be on view at the High Line Plinth starting in April. Pamela Rosenkranz, via the High Line



By **Hilarie M. Sheets**

Nov. 30, 2022

A 25-foot-tall fluorescent pink tree, a sculpture by the Swiss conceptual artist Pamela Rosenkranz, will land on New York's High Line next April like a synthetic being, rising amid its budding-green brethren where the elevated park bridges 10th Avenue at West 30th Street. Reading as a tree (but obviously artificial), this rendition will have visceral qualities, with branches tapering into blood vessels and roots reaching over the earthen-clad plinth as though poised for flight.

"The whole tree might remind us of an organ," said the artist, 43, who is based in Zurich and is the winner of the third High Line Plinth commission, a rotating program for monumental public artworks on view for 18 months at a time. (The first artists were Simone Leigh and Sam Durant.) Rosenkranz's work, "Old Tree," was selected from

80 proposals solicited from artists in 40 countries, nominated by international advisers and posted on the High Line's website in 2020 for public feedback.

Digitally merging scans of actual trees with those of human circulatory systems and muscles, Rosenkranz fabricated an armature in metal on which she is sculpting layers of tactile polymer, tinted with pigments of vivid reddish pinks. "This color has a history of being quite attractive," she said in an interview, "but I'm looking for a dissonance, something that also awakes or repulses."

She was inspired by Louise Bourgeois's monumental sculptures of spiders when designing her tree's animated roots that appear to be scrambling from the plinth. "There's a bit of a humoristic aspect," she said, "as if the tree would like to leave its planter."

Cecilia Alemani, director and chief curator of High Line Art, said, "Pamela's project generated quite an enthusiastic response and was certainly one of the most beloved, which helped inform the short list and final choice." (Alemani was also curator of this year's Venice Biennale, where she included Leigh's High Line commission "Brick House" in the exhibition "The Milk of Dreams.")

Alemaní emphasized the importance of transparency in the awarding of the high-profile commission, visible not only to the eight million annual visitors to the High Line but also to street traffic below. "It's part of the ethos of this project to open up discussions around what we want to see celebrated in these big public spaces," she said. Later in the spring, the site of the High Line Plinth will be connected by a new elevated pathway to Moynihan Train Hall, improving pedestrian access.

When "Old Tree" is unveiled, it will be the most prominent presentation to date in the United States for Rosenkranz, who filled the Swiss Pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale with a scented and viscous pool of pale flesh-toned liquid and who explores the human desire to anthropomorphize our surroundings in her sculptures, paintings, videos and installations. Her work asks existential questions, said Alemani, "like 'What is our relationship with nature?' and 'Can we imagine a world where humans are no longer at the apex of the pyramid?'"

SPIKE

THE MAKE UP OF ANGST

Violence, it turns out, is packaged for every corner of the vanity cabinet – in powders, serums, lotions, and sprays – and sold as rituals of self-care formulated to fail. The artists Vaginal Davis, Sylvie Fleury, Sanja Ivekovic, and Pamela Rosenkranz work with cosmetics to contour the ways beauty regimens turn us into trauma commodities.

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By Jeppé Ugélvig
FEATURE

When I stepped into Pamela Rosenkranz's immersive installation *Our Product* in the Swiss Pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale, I found myself overwhelmed by a surprisingly corporeal sense of chemical angst. A synthetic scent of fresh baby skin billowed through the cavernous room, as though I had stepped into a bathroom after a stranger's shower. Confronted with an opaque and animated sea of pinkish monochrome mass (constituted "both literally and metaphorically," says the press release, by real and fictional compounds such as Albulis, Bionin, Evoin, Necrion, Neotene, Silicone, Aspirin, and Selentis) and contained by white walls wrapped in creased, plastic foil, the installation hit me with an inversion of Romain Rolland's "oceanic feeling": the material and psychic unboundedness between me and the artwork produced a sense of psychic horror rather than spiritual resolution. The particular pinkish hue mimicked the industry-standardized tone for northern European skin, popularly employed in advertising as a proven way to enhance viewers' attention. I – twenty-something, gay, and, by all accounts, exactly as *physiognomically white* as the gooey mass in front of me – knew too well this viscous liquid, understood how constitutive its synthetic nature was to any understanding of the body and to socialized human flesh. It wasn't written anywhere, but to me, the work was definitely, obviously about makeup. The polymer silicone, for one, is a compound favored not only for thermal insulation and aircraft wing coating, but also for moisturizers and foundations: its thermal stability is ideal for smoothing the appearance of skin on camera, homogenizing it like the surface of plastic toys or soft Ikea kitchenware. Seeing what I imagined to be hundreds of thousands of bottles of expensive liquid foundation poured onto the floor of a building in Venice offered an anxious catharsis of some kind, a powerful, in-person ASMR, even as it revealed an even greater tragedy: namely, our corporeal entanglement with the prosthetic commodity that beauty products comprise. Much like Rosenkranz's artwork, the beauty industry speaks to us not (only) on a level of visibility, but of chemical materiality: it operates beyond semiotics (of gender, for example) but on the very physical level of having, maintaining, and manipulating a body in a social media-image society. "The pavilion melts down and aggregates personal, cultural, and national identifications in an attempt to reach the core illusion of identity as such," the press release reads. The result of this melt-down was a toxic and frightening – if also beautiful – concoction.

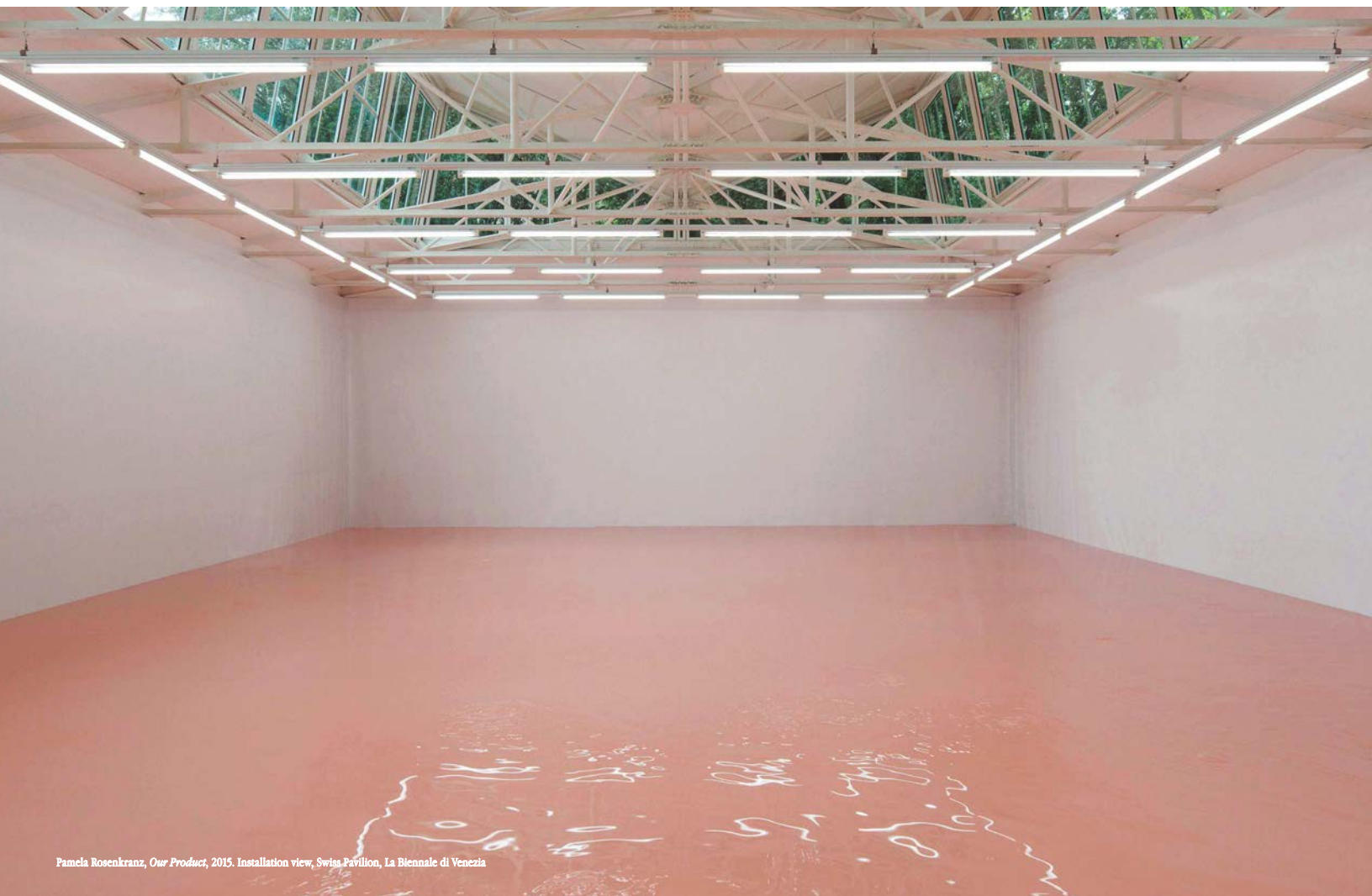
Powders, serums, lotions, and sprays communicate their often-esoteric promises through their cakiness, oiliness, mattness, and sheen. They speak to us about improved selves and nothing less than "perfect skin," a commodified ideal that may have a long history, but which has proliferated explosively in the past decade. From the heavy contouring and "baking" of the mid-2010s to contemporary concepts like "no-makeup makeup," the epidermis has become the site of ever-mutating regimes in which we are all destined to be losers. While it goes without saying that there is no such thing as perfect skin, we struggle not to opt into the promises offered by the industry, which in recent times have taken a semiotic turn to the overtly scientific, supplanting vaguer signifieds such as "young" and "clean." Retinols, exfoliants, alpha and beta hydroxy acids: as one beauty writer has observed, at the core of the so-called "new skincare era" is *chemical violence*, of a kind that is cushioned by an affective language of *treatment*, *healing*, and *care*. Following this logic, I think of beauty products as angst-ridden and perhaps even traumatic objects: they remind us of our suffering, our horror, our poverty, and our subscription to consumer capitalism's most banal and (literally) superficial traits. They are the quintessential object of Lauren Berlant's "cruel optimism": believing in their reparative power only deepens our sense of disrepair.

It is not coincidental that makeup and skincare have proliferated exponentially in the visual economy of Web 2.0, to the point of being a (if not *the*) dominant content genre on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok: while helping to severely alter the basic unit of selfie culture – the digital image of the face – it promises a hyper-branded product line available for consumption in the form of serums, primers, setting powders, and eyeshadow palettes, which arrive as delicious objects, neatly wrapped and packaged like luxurious artifacts. As Canadian writer Daphné B. argues, cosmetics embody the kind of "bling bling" that most of us can afford – they function "as metaphors for a still greater luxury. Ghost wealth accessible to everyone." Daphné spends a lot of time on YouTube watching beauty tutorials – in fact, she wrote a whole book about it: *Made-Up: A True Story of Beauty Culture under Late Capitalism* (2021). Presenting beauty capitalism as a simultaneous system of commodities and networked affects, her blog-like prose lingers around mythical, holy grail



Pamela Rosenkranz
Our Product, 2015 (detail)
Installation view, Swiss Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia

Cosmetics embody the kind of “bling bling” that most of us can afford – they function “as metaphors for a still greater luxury. Ghost wealth accessible to everyone.”



Pamela Rosenkranz, *Our Product*, 2015. Installation view, Swiss Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia

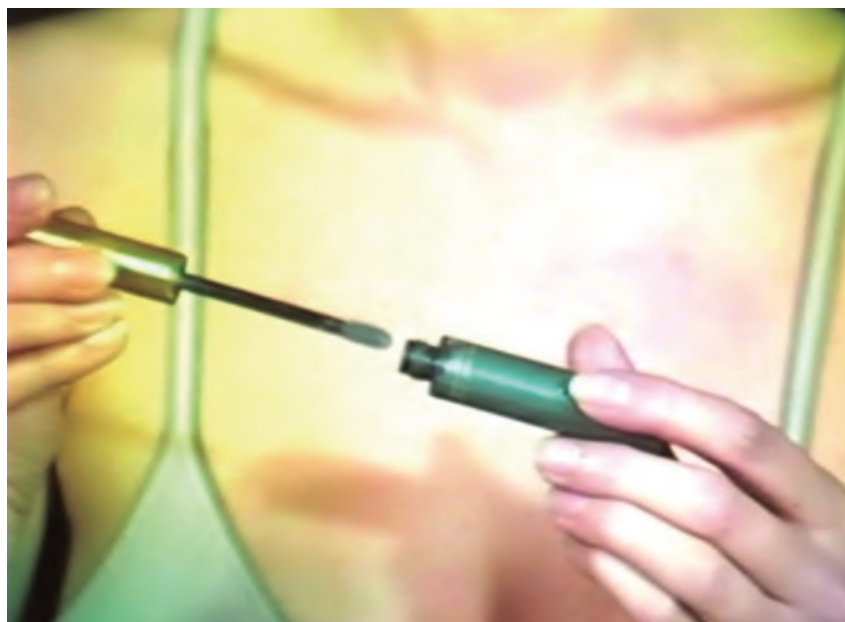
While “beauty tutorial” may seem like a neologism to most, the term has a long history in conceptual and feminist art.

products unearthed from deep within Reddit chains; the iridescent, dollar-green hue of makeup mogul Jeffree Star’s *Conspiracy Palette* (priced at \$52, the equivalent of seven hours of minimum-wage work); and the hyper-specific genre of *unboxing videos*, those “meticulous mise en scènes of hands uncovering all kinds of products.” Daphné recognized that, like a reality television show, the world of makeup has its own dramaturgy – heroes, antagonists, and fetishistic object motifs – enough for us to cling to it as a fragile alter-cosmology for our alienated, post-pandemic present. She reads Kylie Jenner’s lips through Georges Didi-Huberman and analyzes the luminescent, almost magical shimmer of eyeshadows alongside the extraction of its mineral compound, mica, from the dust-covered (and child labor-dependent) mines of Jharkhand, India. Her conclusion: violence comes in many forms, including sulfates, phthalates, and formaldehyde.

As a parallel economy of beauty, visibility, and materiality, art is uniquely positioned to help us to work through this violence, or at least to situate the material angst that can seem new and threatening when encountered in a frantic stream of digital content. While “beauty tutorial” may seem like a neologism to most, the term has a long history in conceptual and feminist art. We can recognize a clear progenitor in Croatian artist Sanja Iveković’s *Make-up – Make-down* (1978), a nine-minute video of the artist applying makeup. Denying us a view of Iveković’s “main canvas” – her face – the video is fixed statically on the artist’s décolletage, where products are slowly and deliberately handled before application. Her loving and almost sexual caress of lipsticks, lotion bottles, and powder jars is nothing short of hypnotizing; moreover, it shifts a traditional critique of gender from the

body to hardcore commodity fetishism: seduction happens first and foremost *through the product*, which is then metabolized as an epidermal canvas to which we can prescribe and against which we can measure femininity. As such, makeup is also revealed as a feminist decoy: eroticizing the product allows the body to hide and participate in the parody that is gender.

The greatest eroticist of cosmetic products must be Sylvie Fleury, the Swiss artist who, in Koons-like fashion, has nihilistically mirrored plain consumer fetishism back to the blue-chip art market for well over thirty years. Her choice of objects, however, is ickier and more effective, in that they confront us with the commercialism of the self and the body without offering any escape (or excuse). In the video *Drastic Makeup* (2007), she drove a Buick Skylark over a pile of makeup – a benign catharsis compared to the one I felt in Venice, due to the fact that the destruction, as the artist realizes in the video, doesn’t make much noise, while their pigments still shimmer violently amid a pile of cracked plastics. Cosmetics: we hate to love them, but we do, and intensely so. In a more recent series of paintings resembling sized-up eyeshadow compacts, *Eye Shadows* (2017), Fleury distills Iveković’s focus on the product as an almost sublime object by presenting them as actual works of art, specifically color-field paintings. Apparently, the artist labored for months to perfectly emulate each palette’s deep, matte hues and the perfectly round, symmetrical shape of each container. In an interview, she explained that she hoped that those who view her canvases will get “the feeling of satisfaction without having to consume” – a tragicomic comment not only on the fetish of the purchasable art object, but also on the sincere ways in which cosmetic products work on us immaterially



Sanja Iveković
Make Up – Make Down, 1978
DVD, video Beta, color, sound, 5:12 min.

(viral makeup videos being a case in point). Her femme trolling of art's formalist proximity to consumer capitalism's most banal corners is extra punchy in the comparison of painting with makeup because they both operate on an economy of pigment, color, light, and composition – “beauty” as a mystical but inherently material thing that can be conjured by humans using a brush. She conveyed that she understood this already in 1998 with *Happy Clinique*, a print of a row of makeup smears, no doubt inspired by the beauty behemoth's iconic advertising imagery by photographer Irving Penn. The image revels in the cakey materiality of lipstick and concealer, inviting us to consume their stretchy, incassate properties. As the curator-editor of the *makeupmuseum.org* (yes, that's a thing) notes in her analysis of *Happy Clinique*, the smears not only resemble the blobs of paint in abstract expressionist painting; they also anticipate the practice of beauty vendors such as Kylie Jenner generating “swatches” on their arms to digitally show the viscosity and live shimmer of all the shades of a new product collection. “Makeup communities on Reddit (and online in general) trade swatches like selfies,” the author notes – she also immediately identifies exactly *which Chanel compact* Fleury has abstracted in her *Eye Shadow* series (taking issue with the artist's omission of the application brush, by the way).

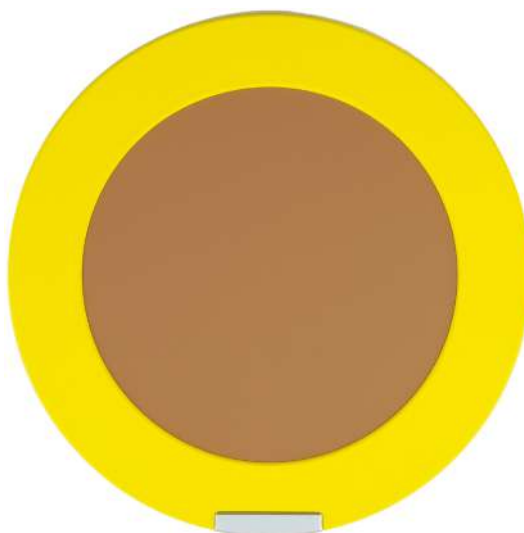
In her so-called *makeup paintings*, US-American artist Vaginal Davis employs beauty products as an ambivalent technology of gender parody containing both social tragedy and existential joy. In the series, dozens of women's faces rendered exclusively in what she names “cosmetics-and-tempera” adorn canvases crafted from matchbooks, cardboards, envelopes, and letterheads. Realized using metallic nail varnish, witch hazel, mascara, eyebrow pencil, Jean Nate perfume, Afro Sheen hair conditioner,

hair spray, and pomade, these chemical compounds carry with them modes of social identification as well as ambiguity. Whose toiletry are we in, exactly? Each painting “depicts” a bygone female film or television star: the Mexican-American actress Lupita Tovar, for example, is rendered as a totem-like coral figure surrounded by a densely layered, blue-silver mass of swirls. There are a handful of discernible faces (eyes and lips magnified, noses erased or barely present), but many of the figures appear to have drowned in “too many” layers of application, so to speak. Instead, they have become icons, chemical quasi-bodies. By foregoing figurative representation, Davis, like Fleury, allows us to think openly about makeup as painting, as an economy of beauty and abstraction. The works seem less about representation than about monumentalizing the ritual of makeup as it relates to, and in fact entirely constructs, the epidermal materiality of femininity. Davis, who is mainly known as a queercore performance and video artist, first started painting using her mother's Fashion Fair cosmetics, a cheap drug-store makeup line for Black women. “With my own work,” she admits, “if you just mix anything with glycerin, you get *all sorts* of color and texture.” The artist's frank methodology reveals the clumsy ritual by which femininity is constructed, but nonetheless insists on the highly formal, devotional, and meaningful aspects of this ritual: contouring, color, and composition are worthy of social and aesthetic reverence, constituting, perhaps, their own subaltern genre of formalist painting. Like Rosenkranz's *Our Product*, Davis's paintings radiate an iridescent sheen, not unlike that dusty, slick, creamy color found at the bottom of a makeup bag. These are fetishized chemical compounds: the toys of young girls; forbidden fruits for young, gay boys; and the uniform of Hollywood's divas and reality television

The ritual of makeup offers a regime of consistency, patience, and mastery of the body/self: indeed, these are attractive practices in times of numerous societal crises.



Sylvie Fleury
Private shadow – Camera Obscura, 2018
 Acrylic on canvas on wood
 72 x 56 x 15 cm



Sylvie Fleury
Bronzed SPF 30, 2018
 Acrylic on canvas on wood
 125 x 125 x 6 cm



Sylvie Fleury
Soleil Exotica Tom Ford, 2018
 Acrylic on canvas on wood
 160 x 160 x 7.3 cm



Sylvie Fleury
Road Movie, 2018
 Acrylic on canvas on wood
 120 x 120 x 11 cm



Vaginal Davis

Back Where the Daffodils Grow, 2018

Hydrogen peroxide, glycerine, food coloring, water color pencil, coconut oil, nail enamel, varnish, lacquer, lipstick, mascara, eye brow pencil, eye shadow, rouge, foundation, Hamamelis Wasser, Madrake, Henbane, Datura, hairspray and Iberogas, 26.4 x 21 cm

stars. As one reviewer reflected, “there is something striking, and self-reflexive about portraits of female performers painted with the same products that are used to ‘paint’ their own bodies.” The queer implications of this are evident in thinking about the violence that trans and intersex women have long had to endure inside the oppressive aesthetic category that is womanhood, where “passing” and “clocking” are reduced to hyper-specific readings of the epidermis (its texture and hairiness, or the perfection of a do-up). Makeup is a traumatic object, for the Hollywood stars as much as for Davis’s community; for all of us, in fact. Yet the artist *insists* on her works as uplifting “incantations” inspired by her mother, who made potions and elixirs for health and luck. In this way, Davis thinks of makeup as a forceful technology of *glamor* through the etymological origin of the word, meaning “magic, spell” – a technology that unites those living inside and around the social matrix of femininity with a supernatural force, promising neither happiness nor salvation.

Iveković’s video and Davis’s paintings manage to address the most intimate aspects of subjectivity (its construction through artifice) while rejecting the strictly personal. It’s makeup – its specific formalism, its object ontology, I’m not quite sure – that helps both artists to steer a path between sentimentality (of the self) and banality (of the product).

Davis is not naïve about femininity and its commodification – just consider the handwritten phrases “Corporations are not very attractive as people” and “I am a woman trapped in the body of a woman inside a binder” added next to two of the makeup portraits. But by shifting the focus to *the products*, these artists teach us that *our products* are deeply enmeshed (materially, psychically, socially) in our understandings of image, body, race, and gender, as well as that these categories must be critiqued *as such* – as products – without denying their embodied and even inescapable nature. The commodity is at the heart of our relationship to ourselves, to our senses of individuality and identity; it both dazzles and hurts us, forever leaving us wanting more.

The ritual of makeup offers a regime (literally, in beauty-speak, a *regimen*) of consistency, patience, and mastery of the body/self: indeed, these are attractive practices in times of numerous societal crises. Yet to mistake our dependency on them – as many writers have done – as tactics of “radical self-care” or even “political warfare” is to grossly misread and ultimately give up on the historical feminist politicization of care as something that is not merely individual or purchasable to those who can afford it. Products never cease to remind us that the biggest beauty secret of all, of course, is to be rich.

VAGINAL DAVIS (born in Los Angeles) is an artist, curator, composer, filmmaker, and writer living in Berlin. Her most recent solo shows took place at Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi / Eden Eden, Berlin (2021) and The Art Institute of Chicago (2020).

SYLVIE FLEURY (*1961, Geneva) is an artist living in Geneva. Her most recent solo shows took place at Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin (2022) and Istituto Svizzero, Rome (2019).

SANJA IVEKOVIĆ (*1949, Zagreb) is an artist and the cofounder of Electra – The Women’s Art Center Zagreb. Her most recent solo shows took place at Kunsthalle Wien (2022), and Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka (2021).

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ (*1979, Uri) is an artist based in Zurich. Her most recent solo shows took place at Kunsthaus Bregenz and Karma International, Zurich (both 2021).

JEPPE UGELVIG is a critic and curator living in California. He is the editor-in-chief of *Viscose*, a journal for fashion criticism, as well as a contributing editor of *Spike*.

FRIEZE

Pamela Rosenkranz Searches for Ancient Wisdom in Modern Technology

At Sprüth Magers in London, the artist's robotic snake is a harbinger of destruction and regeneration



"There is a serpent loose in Pamela Rosenkranz's solo show, 'Healer', at Sprüth Magers. The product not of sticky biology, but of a pristine robotics lab, this work – titled Healer (Anamazon) (all works 2021) – comprises 1.3 metres of servo motors, sensors and semiconductors, sheathed in a reflective 3D-printed skin, into which scales have been incised using a technique borrowed from the Japanese craft of kirigami (paper cutting). When I first glimpsed the Swiss artist's snake-bot through the gallery's picture window, shimmering beneath a bank of jungle-green ceiling lamps, it was lying motionless on the floor, as though it were the inhabitant of a reptile house, conserving energy until an obliging zookeeper tipped some small, scrabbling rodent into its tank. It was several minutes after I stepped inside the exhibition space that the 'creature' finally stirred, its metal vertebrae performing a sinuous sidewind, the LEDs of its eyes blinking and fixing me with a pitiless red stare."



Pamela Rosenkranz, 'Healer', 2021, exhibition view, Sprüth Magers, London. All images courtesy: © Pamela Rosenkranz and Sprüth Magers, London; photographs: Benjamin Westoby

"Just as changing meteorological conditions affect the quality of the light that falls through Sprüth Magers' windows onto the snake-bot's scales, so the algorithm that animates Healer (Anamazon) responds to an invisible and ever-fluctuating 'weather system' of electronic signals, created by the panoply of wired devices in the gallery building and visitors' own mobile tech. What causes it to move, then, is not a rustle in the undergrowth, but the twitch of a security camera, the ping of an email, a Fitbit demanding its daily tribute of steps."

"Yet, for all that the bot is a product of the digital age, it also speaks to deep cultural memory. Watching it twist and ripple, I got to thinking of the fatally seductive Biblical serpent, of the snake that coils around the staff of Asclepius, Greek god of medicine, of Norse mythology's world-girdling Midgard Serpent and of the Ancient Egyptian ouroboros, a snake that consumes its own tail, symbolizing the endless cycle of life, death and rebirth. Research has shown that, over millennia, the human eye has become increasingly adept at recognizing serpentine movements. Snakes are not only a potential threat – or a potential meal – they have also functioned as catalysts of our evolutionary development."



Pamela Rosenkranz, 'Healer', 2021, exhibition view, Sprüth Magers, London.

"At one moment during my visit, the bot raised its head and appeared to stare at itself in the surface of Anamazon (Shine Through), one of a series of works in which mirrors and sheets of aluminium have been treated with washes of roseate acrylic and painters' medium – slicks of fluid redolent of blood thinned with other bodily secretions, perhaps generative semen, perhaps useless tears. Rosenkranz also applied this pink-tinged filter, in various concentrations, to large-scale watermarked stock photos of the (daily more imperilled) Amazon rainforest, such as Anamazon (Get Digit), and of the human eye, such as I Wish I Could Cry Blood (All Stars). Hung close to the ground, these ocular images seemed designed to be peered at not by a homo sapiens audience, but by the low-bellied robo-snake.

If 'Healer' is a show about convergence and divergence – of beings, of signals, of ways of seeing – it is also about entropy and, perhaps, the possibility of renewal. Displayed on a clear Perspex plinth, Healer Skins (Sunset Lodge) is a tubular length of PVC hide, shed by Rosenkranz's serpent. Snakes have lived on Earth for some hundred million years, modern humans for a mere 300,000. How much longer will the two species cohabit, and which will survive the other? The bot writhes on the gallery floor. Watching it, we cannot know what hidden data guides its movements, or where it will turn next.

Pamela Rosenkranz's solo exhibition '**Healer**' is on view at Sprüth Magers, London, until 20 November.

Main image: Pamela Rosenkranz, 'Healer', 2021, exhibition view, Sprüth Magers, London"

Flash Art

Flash Art

ULTRA BODIES
ULTRA SPECIES

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ
PAN DAIJING
SIMONE FORTI
CHITRA GANESH
PAKUI HARDWARE
TALOI HAVINI
AGNIESZKA KURANT
HELMUT LANG
JARED MADERE
NOUR MOBARAK
KATE MOSHER HALL
ARTS AT CERN
SEX ECOLOGIES

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Cover Story **Materialist**
**Invisibility: Art As
Organic Development
In Pamela Rosenkranz's
Work** by Nicolas Bourriaud 50–63



Healer (Sands), 2019. Robot, circuit board control units, battery, LED light, 3D printed head and tail, Kirigami skin. 120 x 6 cm. Installation view of Sharjah Biennial 14 "Leaving the Echo Chamber" curated by Zoe Butt, Omar Kholeif and Claire Tancons, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, 2019. Photography by Tobias Steinle. Courtesy of the artist and Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.



Anamazon (Storage), 2021. Detail. 244 Amazon cardboard boxes, plastic foil, LED light, Amazon Alexa Speaker, Audio work. Installation view of "House of Meme" at Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2021. Photography by Marc Aschame. Courtesy of the artist. © Pamela Rosenkranz and Kunsthaus Bregenz.

Healer (Anamazon), 2021. Robot, circuit board control units, battery, LED light, 3D printed head and tail, Kirigami skin, 120 x 6 cm. Installation view of "House of Meme" at Kunsthau Bregenz, 2021. Photography by Markus Tretter. Courtesy of the artist. © Pamela Rosenkranz and Kunsthau Bregenz.

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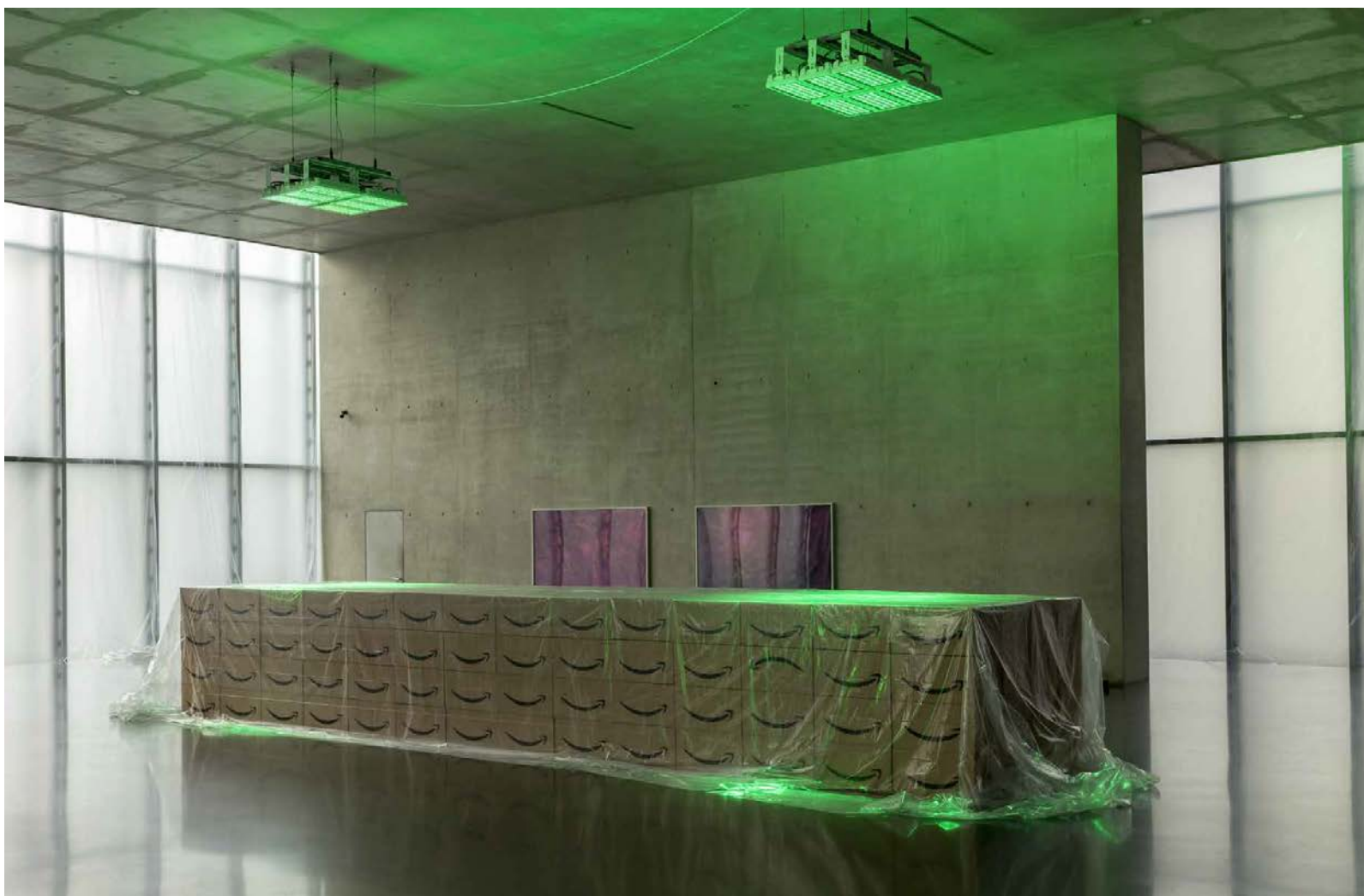
Anamazon (Storage), 2021. 244 Amazon cardboard boxes, plastic foil, LED light, Amazon Alexa Speaker, Audio work. Installation view of "House of Meme" at Kunsthau Bregenz, 2021. Photography by Markus Tretter. Courtesy of the artist. © Pamela Rosenkranz and Kunsthau Bregenz.

- 1 Yves Klein, "L'Aventure monochrome" in the catalogue *Yves Klein*, MNAM/Centre Georges Pompidou, 1983, p. 172.

In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx declared that the "engine of history" was the working class, ushering in revolutions. In these early years of the twenty-first century, the climate crisis, followed by a lethal COVID pandemic, show us that the engine of contemporary history is no longer a human group, and that it partly sidesteps the order of the visible: what makes our history is the increasingly chaotic interactions between human activities and living matter. We are in fact living inside the direct and indirect effects of these interactions. For example, machines give rise to an atmospheric warming that will culminate in a rise of water levels, or in an outburst of bacteria confined for thousands of years in the Siberian permafrost. The tear gas used by the police, the pesticides sprayed on fields, and new viruses are all writing history in invisible ink. Furthermore, the social life of human beings, which used to unfurl before their eyes, is now largely dominated by digital flows and algorithms. The history of the planet and its inhabitants thus eludes the human eye; politics is no longer made through the masses, but in these problematic exchanges between (massive) human entities and these (invisible) molecules that pass through them, or which they in turn assume. So there is nothing surprising about an artist like Pamela Rosenkranz deciding

to organize her visual arts activity around the invisible: on the contrary, this is probably the only possible way of reinstating the *reality* of our day and age within the framework of representation. Since prehistory, art has given substance, or form, to non-visual entities — as a general rule to deities and abstract forces. With modern art, the invisible has gradually become more problematic under the aegis of the notion of *immaterial*, meaning within a dialectic with the object. In conceptual art, the idea thus became a "machine producing art," as it was defined by Sol LeWitt. Yves Klein, whose ideas about monochromy are often referred to by Pamela Rosenkranz, developed his work on the immaterial on the basis of a contrast between line and color: the latter, he thought, is "free," "like the humidity in the air," while the line encloses and forecloses life. "Color basks in the whole just like everything that is indefinable sensibility," he wrote, "without form or limit. This is indeed space-matter, simultaneously abstract and real."¹ Otherwise put, for the modern artist the invisible represented a sort of raw material in which to steep things with one's personal sensibility. Unlike Klein, Pamela Rosenkranz does not regard the invisible as a place of ideas, or as an immaterial element: on the contrary, she presents its material quality, clout, and effects.

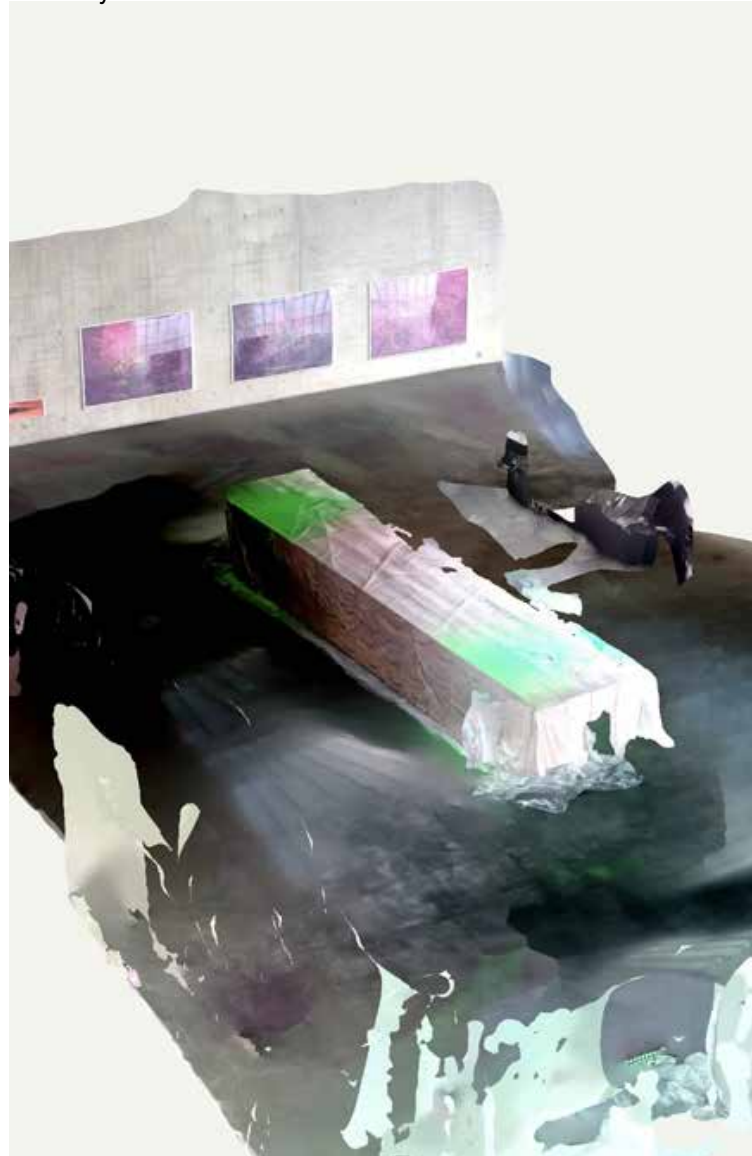




For her, the invisible is a very concrete reality, a reality whose outlines art must grasp. First and foremost, however, she starts out from a physiological reality: the invisible is what exists *beyond the eye*. At the root of her work we thus find an anthropological stance in relation to the human species, and a desire to broach artistic activity as the effect of an organic development that dates back to the tools of *homo faber*. The gradual acquisition of the upright position has led the human species, whose eyes have thus emerged to look at the faraway, to develop its sight to the detriment of the other senses as a means of survival. If the objects that we call “artworks” derive from this organic postulate, Rosenkranz strives to expand the chord of artistic activity while at the same time clinging to basic elements: color, light, and aromas. And all three represent wavelengths, based on which she puts her exhibitions together like chemical operas.

Rosenkranz’s works are presented like surfaces, zones, and dyes. The human body is ubiquitous, but as a membrane it is a place of passage for flows. Having introduced pheromones in an earlier project, in her current exhibition at Kunsthau Bregenz she diffuses a synthetic scent that evokes a building that burns. The smell of fire that, depending on the history of one’s own body, is inscribed differently in the DNA and creates a strange dissonance in the cold concrete of the museum. For Pamela Rosenkranz, art is (and always has been) a tool for transforming the human species: “New art would be coming into the forum of art history as a challenge to the immune system of the discourse. That is how, generation after generation, art history is continuing to alter perception.”² Among the artists of her generation, she is the one who goes furthest in re-indexing artistic activity on the living world through color and light. Her exhibitions, conceived as living organisms, call to mind prehistoric caves and Gothic churches more than contemporary art spaces. In Bregenz, she accordingly organizes the space of the building with the help of colored light and lightboxes that conjure up medieval stained-glass windows. Abbot Suger, who introduced the figurative stained-glass window into religious buildings in the eleventh century, wanted to usher in a “wondrous uninterrupted light.” In the central portal of the cathedral of St. Denis, he had an inscription carved: “The blind spirit rises up towards the truth through what is material and, seeing the light, it is resurrected from its earlier submersion.” What is interesting here is the term *submersion*: the light of the stained-glass window brings us out of a submersion, and not the reverse. The fact is that Suger saw them as so many *membranes*, like intercessional

points between the human and the divine light. If light is so present in Rosenkranz’s work, and in particular in the ogival form of the stained-glass windows in churches, this is to enable us to escape from our passive submersion into the invisible sphere of the living world, which is clear in her work in the form of wavelengths: art is also a tool of appropriation, a reduction of the world to components that can be mastered and analyzed.



“House of Meme.” Exhibition view at Kunsthau Bregenz, 2021. 3d scan of Kunsthau Bregenz by Joana De la Fontaine. Courtesy of the artist. © Pamela Rosenkranz and Kunsthau Bregenz.



Vivariums

For Charles Darwin, who published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the relation between harmony, beauty, and diversity was based on the invisible struggle of organisms with one another. He singled out three orders of what is known as “natural beauty.” The first was the underlying aesthetic order in the organization of the living world. The second was beauty that comes into being from an ecological relation: “If insects had not developed on the Earth,” he wrote, “our plants would not have been bedecked with beautiful flowers,

but would only have produced lowly flowers like those of the fir and the oak.” The third was beauty stemming from sexual selection, through the preservation of features contributing to the ability of organisms to survive. In other words, the existence of the sense of the beautiful in animals is a driving force in the joint evolution of species: in animals and in human beings alike, the sense of beauty is just a habit that becomes an instinct. Rosenkranz’s work, which includes all the components of the living world, is made up of aromas, light, and bacteria, but also of artificial intelligence and synthetic materials. Like all the animals on Earth, the human being uses things in his environment for his own purpose. And art is the most complex degree of this use of the world.

The aquarium has assumed a paramount significance in the art of our day and age, either as an object or as a new visual format, because it offers a tangible reality (or a metaphorical medium) to relations between humans and nonhumans, objects and organisms. In it Pierre Huyghe puts mollusks carrying modernist works; Dora Budor uses it to present atmospheric pollution; and Max Hooper Schneider uses it to carry out interspecies crossbreeding. But with Pamela Rosenkranz it is the exhibition space in its entirety that is turned into a giant vivarium, a place of biological exchanges, in which “cultural” elements (if this word cultural still has any meaning) take part in a general contamination, an experience of radiation. In Bregenz, this porousness is incarnated in a “snakebot,” a machine controlled by a computer that reacts to electromagnetic rays and visitors’s devices. With *Healer (Anamazon)* (2021), Rosenkranz introduces into her show an extremely powerful animal motif: the reference to healing comes from the caduceus or staff (with a serpent coiled around it), an attribute of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine. In ancient mythologies, he is associated with the earth and the creation of the world. In “The Ritual of the Serpent,” Aby Warburg describes in detail how Hopi ceremonies are practiced, based on the formal similarity between flashes of lightning and animals. These are totemic rituals, whose fundamental idea has been summed up by Claude Lévi-Strauss: “the projection beyond our world [...] of mental attitudes incompatible with the demand for a discontinuity between man and nature, which Christian thought regarded as essential.”³ The machine/animal interaction is also one of the central figures of the

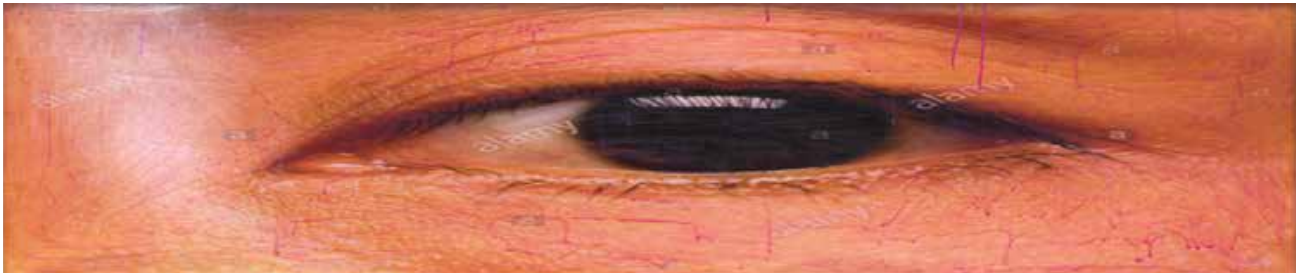
3 Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Le Totémisme aujourd’hui*, P.U.F., p. 8



Anamazon (Wild Life), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas. 154 x 213 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



Anamazon (Fields Lip), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas. 154 x 213 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (All Stars), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas. 37 x 152 cm.
Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Invitation), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas. 37 x 152 cm.
Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (All Small), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas. 37 x 152 cm.
Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Global Mission), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas.
37 x 152 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Your Products), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas.
37 x 152 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Seeing Liquid), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas.
37 x 152 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Find Foods), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas.
37 x 152 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.



I Wish I Could Cry Blood (Entrance), 2021. Acrylic paint, inkjet print, Plexiglas.
37 x 152 cm. Photography by Stefan Altenburger. Courtesy of the artist.

Anthropocene, and the presence of a snakebot in the Pamela Rosenkranz show might be read as the invention of a totemism 2.0: a figure of continuity between the human being, his natural environment, and digital flows. Philippe Parreno put a coelacanth in the middle of his exhibition at Tate Modern, but the animal's movements acted as impulses for the operations of the exhibition itself. Rosenkranz's serpent healer is interactive, nurtured by its immediate surroundings. It moves about like an animal, raises its head, looks about, and sometimes rests. It is the reptilian equivalent of Alexa, the Amazon robot that ponders our data and spits it back out in the form of "proposals."

Molecular realism

Since her early days, Pamela Rosenkranz has been working with silicon, photographic paper, plastic film, latex paint, Viagra, pheromones, liquids, perfume, noises, Amazon and Ikea packaging, machines, and microbes... She makes no distinction between industrial products and raw materials, the living world and the product. This is quite simply because the Anthropocene involves the impossibility of telling things apart: our environment is from now on made up of a single and unique continuous substratum, in which human activity is nothing more than an extra layer. For example, our brain needs energy if it is to function: when you look at one of her works, Pamela Rosenkranz mischievously reminds us, your own brain will perhaps burn as much glucose as hers has needed to imagine and produce it. The communication at work between the artist and the viewer is also a fusion between two sources of energy. In early twenty-first-century art, the interest paid by artists to the invisible entails a fusion or merger between the properties of form and those of materials. Artists no longer lay forms on neutral backgrounds, because they know that everything they use is *active*. What we used to call a "support" is just as alive as its "surface." Art becomes a sort of atomic transformer, a particle accelerator, and Rosenkranz produces works that obey the same rules as the creation of a living organism. If she was one of the first to use molecules as compositional materials, today we can see Juliette Bonneviot including xenoestrogens in her sculptures, and Sam Lewitt and Dora Budor spreading chemical dust. By observing the world at the molecular level, a new generation of artists is revolutionizing the formats of representation by working through *reduction*, and translating the political and social world into particles and atoms. These *molecular* art practices are altering the way we look at the

world: the artist's action on states of matter is overtaking the use of labels and classifications whereby the capitalist system distributes objects in the social space. With the help of visible elements, Rosenkranz constructs points of passage with this molecular level of reality, which, today, might quite simply be that of the *real*. And Rosenkranz teaches us not only to perceive this real, that of the Anthropocene, but also to live in



it. The way we look at her works goes way beyond the traditional relation of aesthetic pleasure that modern times have accustomed us to; it is much more akin to the link that connected the believer to the stained-glass windows of his church, but as a point of access to a materialist invisibility.

(Translated from French by Simon Pleasance)

"House of Meme." Exhibition view at Kunsthau Bregenz, 2021. 3d scan of Kunsthau Bregenz by Joana De la Fontaine. Courtesy of the artist. © Pamela Rosenkranz and Kunsthau Bregenz.



"House of Meme." Exhibition view at Kunsthau Bregen, 2021. Photograph by Markus Tretter. Courtesy of the artist. © Pamela Rosenkranz and Kunsthau Bregen.

Nicolas Bourriaud is an art critic and curator. He has curated a great number of exhibitions and biennials all over the world and he is one of the co-founders of Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Bourriaud has published seminal texts as *Esthétique relationnelle* (Les presses du réel, 1998); *Postproduction* (Sternberg Press, 2002); *Radical* (Denoël, 2009); *The Exform* (Verso, 2016); *Formes et trajets – Tome 1 and Tome 2* (Les presses du réel, 2018); *Inclusioni. Estetica del capitalocene* (postmedia books, 2020).

office

Egg Watching: Pamela Rosenkranz



November 06, 2019

For the Zurich-based artist Pamela Rosenkranz, human relations are orchestrated by chemistry. Her work brings together deep research from the fields of philosophy, pharmaceuticals, biology, and the industrial forces that operate simultaneously at the scale of our cells and of our planet. For Rosenkranz, the human is not a self-evident entity. It is something that is constantly being redefined and re-valued, and shares intimate qualities with other forms of biological and technological life.

Photography Marc Asekhame

Interview Shumon Basar

As a result of these viewpoints, the artist has been linked with contemporary schools of thought such as posthumanism and speculative realism. Rosenkranz represented Switzerland at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, where she created a vast pool of viscous pink liquid as a reflection of beauty standards in the European cosmetics industry. At the Fondazione Prada, she built a huge, primeval mountain of sand infused with a feline pheromone that activates biological connections between cat and man.

She has also made paintings under the influence of Viagra, exploring how the nature of the work might be altered by chemicals designed to give men artificial virility. In this conversation with writer and curator Shumon Basar, Rosenkranz discusses her latest project, a robotic, AI-endowed serpent entitled Healer (Sands) that debuted at this year's Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates.

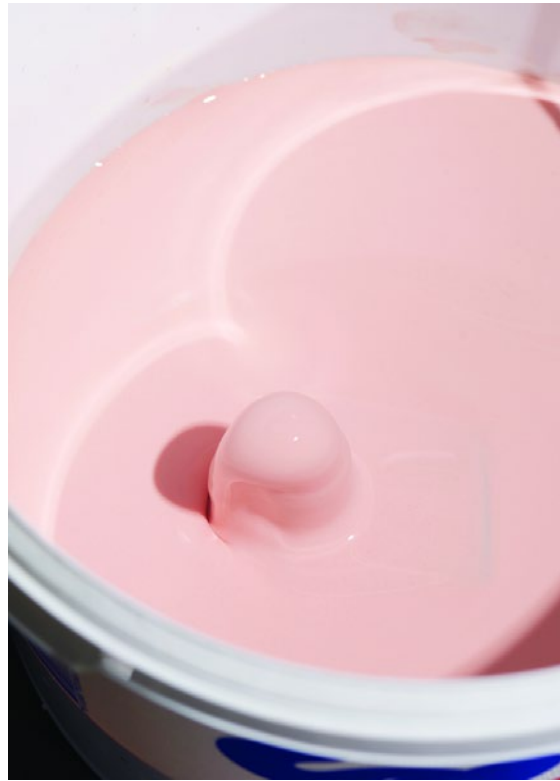
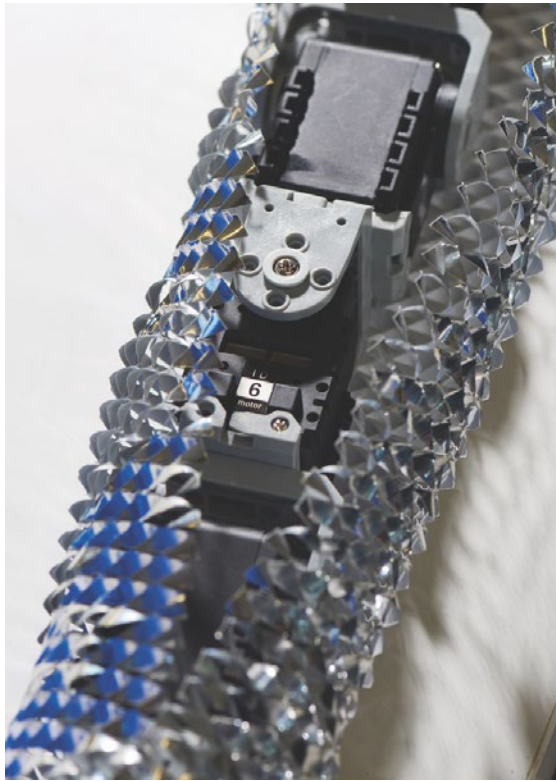


Shumon Basar—Before we get into the backstory, it would be useful for readers to know, in simple terms, what visitors encountered when they saw your new work Healer (Sands), and where it took place.

Pamela Rosenkranz—At the invitation of curator Omar Kholeif I developed Healer (Sands) for the 14th Sharjah Biennial. Under the title Making New Time, I worked with the courtyard of the historic Bait Al Serkal building, a former maternity ward, forming the habitat of my robot snake. The courtyard was visible from all around the galleries of the building and there were huge glass windows and doors that gave a perspective to observe its behaviors, almost like in an open-air terrarium. It was not always visible, hidden behind vegetation or in a blind spot. It lay there, shining and without movement, in the sun, and all of a sudden it would silently lift its head and observe the surroundings or move sideways. Her movements were initiated and controlled by algorithms which connected to electrical noise. The visitors filming and photographing with their mobile phones and cameras had, unknowingly, an influence on the behavior of the snake. Since its patterns of movement were unpredictable, it required patience to actually see the snake move sometimes. In fact, the robot, with its enigmatic motion sequences, became a snake through the Biennial visitor who considered the behavior to be just as erratic as a real snake's behavior. The snake invited the viewer to enter its timeline and literally was "Making New Time." But for some, the snake's traces in the sand were the only proof that the robot had actually explored its surroundings.

SB—What is your earliest memory of a robot?

PR—I don't have a clear early memory of a robot in the sense of a machine that resembles a human being. The first contact of something rather opposite, that turned humans into absolving robotic actions, was Tamagotchi. It was popular when I went to school. I was not allowed to have one though. My mother made us have many pets instead. Always a dog, always two or three cats and kittens. Then, some bunnies, birds, a turtle and hedgehogs over the winter. Loads of animals. We liked them, loved them, we were devastated when they died. Horrified when the fox left us with the decapitated body. There was no way I was allowed Tamagotchi. We had to look after our real live pets. Although Tamagotchi is not a robot, it feels like the preparation for living with robots. A robot egg, so to say. The word is a Japanese blend—tamago meaning 'egg,' uotchi meaning 'watch.' So it makes you pregnant with a robot and asks us to respond with, you could say, robotic actions. Caring about its hunger and hygiene, its need to play. A robot egg that prepares us for relations with robots to come, which will inhabit our domestic spaces to care for our needs. Although I felt left out, I was mesmerized about the effort my friends would take to keep them alive. And still I find it mind-blowing that this very rudimentary digital item, with just a little cuteness and a very crude program, was enough for it to be that successful.



SB—Where did the snake idea emerge from?

PR—Now, the snake is born from an egg just like a chicken. But arriving unfeathered and slippery, it is not the cute pet we usually are drawn to look after. [laughs] It's funny you ask about that, as I never had feelings out of the ordinary towards snakes. Nothing eerie, no special curiosity. Usually, I start with thinking into topics from many different angles to find and develop an idea. This work came into existence differently than other works of mine that have a more cerebral approach. I have had neither a phobia nor a passion for snakes until recently, when they entered dreams I had when I was pregnant. And I have to say that I usually don't seem to dream at all—at least I don't recall my dreams. Even before I knew I was pregnant, it started with dreams focusing on a plentitude of different snakes. I looked up the meaning out of curiosity, but with the many different snakes I would dream of, more multiplicities of meaning came with them. As I am not superstitious, and have no special weakness for the meanings of psychological symbols, to me it dealt with the miracle of the formation of a new vertebra that was happening with the onset of pregnancy.

SB—We have worked together on a previous project of yours at the Fondazione Prada. I know from this experience that you often begin with research into recent science. For your commission at Sharjah Biennial 14, was there something you had read or been thinking about prior, which you then decided, “Now I can explore this?”

PR—The snake as a symbol is omnipresent and complicated, and as I said, the very start looked a little different but then turned into reading recent scientific findings, as you describe. Research about its medical properties, longevity, and anti-aging has formed part of the foundation for the robot snake. At the same time, I got really interested in the reasons why snakes feature in prehistoric drawings, along with prehistoric predatory cats, which I have made work about before. I wondered how much this relationship is inscribed into our basic psychological and physical structure. Why do we dream about snakes even if they are not part of our urban lives? Why do we have phobias about them when they pose no threat? Snakes were drawn, cast or sculpted into the rock in prehistoric and pre-religious sites and apparently there were “mounts of snakes” that kept a religious function in many different cultures. In another, recent work, the snake, literally hard-coded, was carved in stone by robots. The snake, shaped by human hand, acts as a sign. I wanted to know how the sign is potentiated if it remains formally a sign, but takes the intermediate step into a quasi-life.

SB—The figure of the snake has symbolic connotations going back thousands of years, with the devil taking the shape of a snake to lure Adam and Eve out of their paradise shelter. Are all these meanings of the snake encoded in your robotic version?

PR—As for the monotheistic religions, as you say, the symbolic connotations go back thousands of years. But those stories are based on numerous older stories in which the ambivalence of the snake is spread. In the fertile crescent, the so-called cradle of humanity, the first written documents express the deeply rooted mythological connection we share with this animal. It was, for example, worshiped as “Ningishzida” in Sumerian Cultures more than 7000 years ago. “Tiamat” in Babylon was seen as the being at the very origin of the world, and the “Ouroboros” was the ancient Egyptian symbol for the beginning and the end of time.

SB—You’re already working on a new version?

PR—At the moment I am working on the second iteration, Healer (Waters), a snake that has come from the sea that will be shown at Okayama Art Summit, curated by Pierre Huyghe. It will imitate the reflections of a water surface, and the permeability, the transition from one to the other. Like a water surface that reflects rays of light always differently changes its appearance, but nevertheless always marks the transition from one world to the other, the shimmering snake appears, transmitter, link and intermediate being between the worlds. There the snakebot will inhabit—next to possible other

designated places—the former ring of Japanese sumo wrestlers, the dohyo. This place, in Japan, is not just a ring, but a place inhabited by spirits. Yorishiro is where people and objects can be inhabited by deities and where the battle of good and evil is fought on a psychological and spiritual level. In the dohyo, the robot transcends all possibilities of its existence, as a device and animal that lives where the gods animate objects and beings.

SB—A project like Healer is based on complex technology. Can you talk about how you set about finding the teams you collaborated with, and how that working process has been?

PR—There are many different developers, inventors and scientists in the academic and commercial field who deal with biorobotics and snake-like bodies in the narrower or broader sense. We realized the robot and its scaled skin with Kamilo Melo, who just finished his robots. He has copied the sideways winding motion of certain snake species, such as the rattlesnake, into a complex motion sequence of the robot snake. The second integral component, the snakeskin, was from a pattern developed by Ahmad Rafsanjani, who moved from the Bertoldi Group at Harvard to ETH, and is a specialist in the field of structural design of materials. It is based on traditional Japanese paper cutting art and imitates snake scales, which are fundamental for the movement of real snakes. At the studio we worked with a team to compose the individual elements to one working organism, design its external features and make the snake bots adapt to their respective environments.

SB—We are programmed to believe scientists are rational, and artists are irrational. Is it that binary?

PR—I wish I was more irrational! [laughs] But that is very irrational of me already!

SB—How much of the aesthetic of Healer was dictated by what is currently possible with robotics? I'm presuming that there were options to either go hyperrealistic—a snake that looks like a snake in every way—or more abstract—I can imagine a Constantin Brancusi snake for example. Healer seems to be between these two extremes.

PR—The sidewinding movement to me was the fundamental element that made the snakebot creep into that gap of our understanding. I wanted the robot to remain recognizably a machine by closer looking at it, with a skin that remains constructed and see-through but at the same time functional and convincing, and slippery in an optically abstract way.

SB—For many people, the “uncanny valley” is a disturbing space. It's when artificial lifelike creations have some defining flaw to their naturalism. This flaw can become a source of horror vacui. How do you feel about the uncanny valley?

PR—In robotics, the uncanny valley describes when humanoid creations resemble reality in such an unsettling way that it is hard to discern a difference. The closer an artificial being is to the appearance of a human being, the more uncanny it becomes. It has interested me for a long time, starting as a student with Mike Kelley's *The Uncanny*. Kelley relates to the idea of the ‘double’—the disturbingly realistic representation of the human figure suspended between life and death by example of the late Paul Thek's *Tomb (Death of a Hippie)*. I started working with that idea but in a more contemporary way, where attributes of beauty and cuteness come into play, and make it tricky. For example, I started to work with a monochromized skin color as a material.



SB—There's also a direct link between snakes and human wellbeing—various medicines have been developed from snake venom. Can you tell us more about this? And is it the reason behind the title of the work?

PR—The Rod of Asclepius symbol of international health organizations, with its snake symbol for the art of healing derived from the Greek, still symbolizes its ancient meaning as the snake symbol of ambiguity, the harbinger of life or death, adjusting to cultural changes. In times of omnipresent and fast-advancing technical progress, its contemporary counterparts seem to realize some of the historically attributed powers not just metaphorically, but literally. Snake-like mini robots enter blood vessels, insert stents or seal internal wounds. They enter the sites of catastrophes, earthquakes, or where nothing else can, and the snake's synthesized venom has been transformed into potent life-saving drugs.

SB—Your snake doesn't bite. Was there ever a point in the development where it could have bitten? And what would robot venom be?

PR—In fact, if a poisonous snake were to bite, there would at least be an antivenom to heal it, unlike the very dangerous bite of a human being. Human saliva bears microorganisms so dangerous they would harm and even kill some not treated with antibiotics if the bite enters the bloodstream. Which brings us to the question of the robot poison because this would be, at least now, like the robot itself, a poison designed by humans. Secretion, that of poisonous snakes, but also that of humans, interests me very much. Oxytocin, which occurs in tears among other things, influences the human hormonal system and sometimes leads us to take more care of someone. In children, however, it can also promote aversion. I'm currently working on an AI animation that provokes emotions evoked by painted tears.

SB—There have already been auctions of art made by robots. Creativity seems to be one of the most important ways roboticists feel they can prove 'intelligence.' What do you think of this idea that making art is a hallmark of advanced sentience?

PR—The quantification of consciousness through the creation of art is super interesting, but having them make art is something rather utopian still. That art at auction at present is still a joke, rather, and not great art if art at all. I still see the greatest advantages of robotics in the fact that it gives us more opportunities and freedoms to have more and better art made by human beings.

SB—Is Healer capable of making art, in addition to being art? If you asked your scientific team to add that feature, would they know how to do that?



PR—I don't think so. Getting the snakebot to be art was exciting to them as it would potentially bring new insights and progress along the way, but it was also an opportunity to play with it. One feature of how the sidewinding movements would come together with the skin-scales and a classical idea of art, was the traces Healer left in the sand.

SB—If you could be perfectly cloned, would you want to see the result?

PR—Definitely. If that were really possible, I would certainly accept the cooperation of a second self in the studio. But not necessarily have breakfast with it! —**END**

frieze

Pamela Rosenkranz

6 Jun 2018 – 14 Jul 2018

Karma International

Weststrasse 75

8003 Zurich

GALLERY PROFILE



Critic's Guide: Zurich

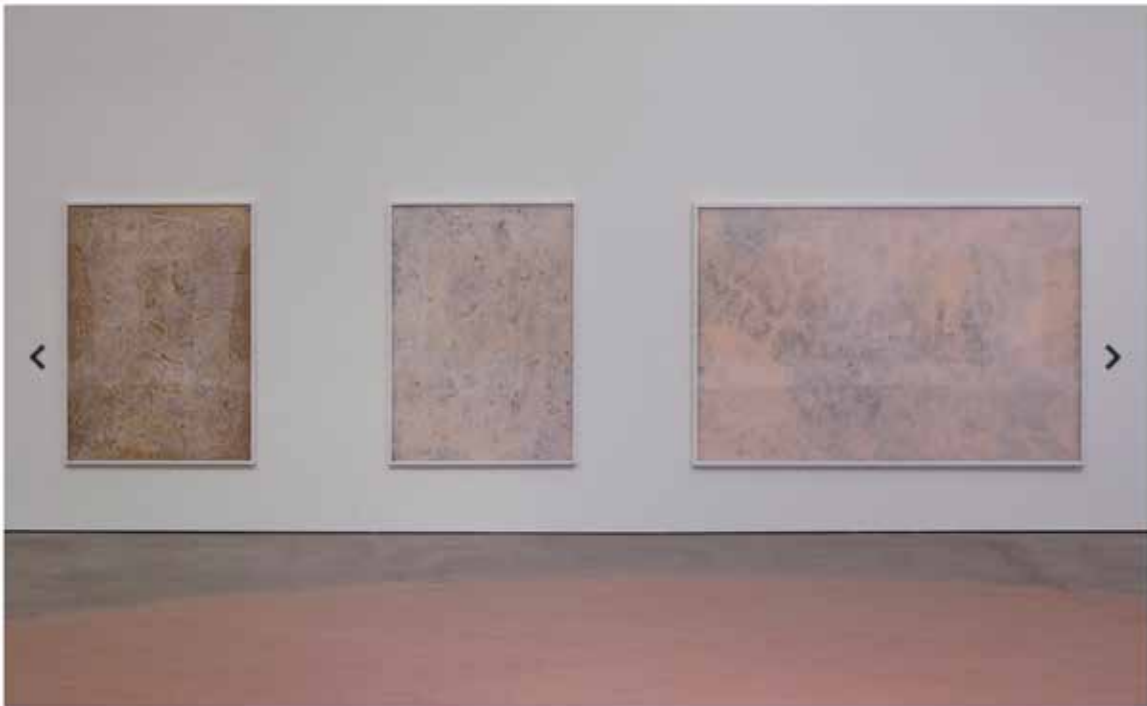
Pamela Rosenkranz has been busy since she her immersive block-colour installations filled the Swiss Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015. Her contribution to the 'Slight Agitation' series at Milan's Fondazione Prada last year was an immense heap of sand that occupied a green-lit gallery, scented with a synthetic pheromone that might attract or repulse viewers – proof of her ongoing engagement with the operation of perception and sensation, starting at a cellular and molecular level. We humans are products of our biological evolution, and in a cultural context this ultimately informs questions of art and taste, Rosenkranz's thinking goes. The intriguing narratives Rosenkranz uncovers in her research, scientific and philosophical, become all the more interesting when related to the corporations that have, within a short time, voraciously occupied huge arenas of daily life. For the exhibition 'Amazon Spirits' Rosenkranz taps the well-tuned mythology of the behemoth Amazon, contrasting how it conveys its foundation story, its evolving branding and the 'real' geographic references behind that, just as the company sets its sights on space. Expect sculptures with neon and paintings in worm blood parsing the symbolic and catalytic properties of colour, light and form.

- Aoife Ronsenmeyer

Wallpaper*

Common scents: Pamela Rosenkranz's latest exhibition is right on the nose

ART / 12 MAY 2017 / BY CHARLOTTE JANSEN



Pamela Rosenkranz's show at Sprüth Magers Berlin starts with her new series of paintings, focusing on the evolutionary process of tabby cat patterns. *Courtesy of the artist and Sprüth Magers.*

▶ 🔍 1 OF 5

Somewhere in the galleries at Sprüth Magers in Berlin a cat is mewling. As you enter Pamela Rosenkranz's new exhibition — through a portal-like room filled with a strange blue light — you won't know it, but you're being sprayed with a primal odour. It's a scent that might make you feel more affectionate towards the feline species.

'I have always liked cats and find them very beautiful. I grew up with cats, and my own cat was giving birth to her kittens under my bed – in the Lego box!' muses artist Pamela Rosenkranz, who is rather fond of felines. 'In terms of creating art in relation with cats the spark was lit when I learned about a parasite called toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis is a peculiar, relatively unknown parasite, despite its widespread appearance. About one in three people carry the parasite responsible for the condition toxoplasmosis, which can lead to finding the smell of cat pheromones more attractive.'



Rosenkranz uses light to create a supernatural version of a 'high noon blue' that triggers sensual stimuli from the surrounding environment

It's not the first time the Swiss artist has been inspired by this perturbing parasite — her recent exhibit at the Fondazione Prada in Milan also addressed it. In Berlin, 'She Has No Mouth' further develops the connections between humans and cats, wild and domesticated, through sound, colour and smell. That smell refers to 'a cat-like smell synthesised in France, where more than half the people are infected, under the name Civetone, and it's a prominent component in Chanel No 5'.

Civetone is now found in many household products, Rosenkranz explains, including shampoo and washing detergent, and even 'as a flavouring agent in food'. You might not pick up the odour as you walk around the gallery, as it's hard to distinguish from the perfumes and colognes of other visitors.

Rosenkranz's olfactory work is a gradient comprised of 'all the perfumes available that have a dominant interpretation of the cat pheromone component in them'. She explains, 'One of these fragrances is "Obsession for Men" by Calvin Klein, which apparently the jaguar and other wild cats are so attracted to that it is used to capture and count cats in the wild.'

Dusty, earthy tones of red, pink, taupe and terracotta, as well as different renditions of fur patterns in a new series of layered paintings contribute to a sub-Saharan atmosphere, while a large rose-coloured circle of sand in the middle of the space recalls a desert plane. There is of course — as in all of Rosenkranz's work — an offbeat sex appeal to the whole thing, from the assimilation of animal scent and perfume, sensual skin and fur motifs, consumer culture and cat aesthetics.

Just as in the animal world, the show's effect is more intuitive, pawing at our instincts. Rosenkranz adds, 'Our daily lives are increasingly exposed to effects that we have not much awareness of, and it's these potentially very powerful hidden forces that I'm interested in.'

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Flash Art

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PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

CHARLES GAINES / *Genius resolves to annotate the world* / BRADLEY KRONZ /
TOBIAS WONG / *Ugo La Pietra, Giorgio Armani and Nanni Balestrini question Milan's*
modernity / TIANZHUO CHEN / CLAUDIO PARMIGGIANI

Flash Art

Keep Your Splendid, Silent Sun

Mitchell Anderson on the art of Pamela Rosenkranz

Next page:
Sexual Power (Viagra
Painting 1) (2014)
Photography by Gunnar
Meier

Using commercial objects and ideas Pamela Rosenkranz (b. 1979, Switzerland; lives in Zurich and Bern) explores a halo of emptiness that presses like air against the human race. Slick and precise, she has assimilated the work of the Southern California Light and Space movement, as well as the predigested conceits of the Minimal Conceptualists that helped define the art of her youth. Seemingly seeking a reduction to nothingness for both herself as an artist and her work, yet maintaining a strong visual vocabulary, she is like a subatomic particle that must be defined by what it is not. Her practice can be penetrated via its opposition to the subjectivism that became integral to art during the latter half of the twentieth century. Through a questioning and emptying of both meaning and form, she challenges the abilities of earlier generations to embed emotion and plot into objects and ideas. Now, fleeting moments are shown as empty and shallow, rather than full and beautiful, and the temporary experiences and fragility of human life are seen as something not to find energy within, but as statements of our biological weaknesses. Her deconstruction of the romanticism of art is also her assault against the romanticism of life. By questioning art's affair with illusory subjectivity, Rosenkranz hits us at the center of our most guarded superiority: culture. She chips away from there.

This assault is most overt in a series of works dealing with Nouveau réalisme artist Yves Klein. *Death of Yves Klein* (2011) is a single-channel video of unmoving cerulean blue hung as a painting. Roughly simulating the hallmark International Klein Blue, which Klein chose because he felt it captured endless space, her video contains an audio overlay that lists the chemicals that many believe led to Klein's death at the age of 34. Both a sly, dehumanizing, reference to the infamous Windows system software blue screen of death and a shrewd

art-historical reference, the piece equates the chasing of artistic legend with suicide, and it uses standard technology—the light emitted by a television—to evoke a supposed cultural masterpiece.

The series *Because they tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work* (2011–12) takes images of Klein's blue monochromes (1956–62) from the Internet and blows them up to human scale. Problems of digital representation and translation pair with an imperfect mounting process that scars the resulting prints. Rosenkranz draws upon the physical nature of things to take revenge upon the idea of the visually transcendent. These pieces, much like her video, show the monochrome as an empty though visually appealing tone on which we invest feelings of divinity and grace.

Rosenkranz's series of acrylic on gold and silver emergency blankets, *Stretch Nothing* (2009) and *Express Nothing* (2011), are another example. Skin tone markings made with sliding hands and arms appear energetic yet controlled. The works reference not only Klein's appropriation of the body in his *Anthropometries* (1959–62), painted by pressing or dragging a painted female body, but more directly Janine Antoni's *Loving Care* (1992). This performance and resulting installation, done a number of times in the early to mid-1990s, saw Antoni paint exhibition space floors by dipping her hair in a bucket of Loving Care hair dye and slowly painting herself and the audience out of the space. As with Rosenkranz's pieces, the final form is physical without being literal. Rosenkranz has long been interested in the commercial names of colors, and she often includes them in the titles of her works: Creamy Brown, Fresh Ebony and Milky Stay are a few fleshy examples. This is also true of Antoni's performances. The hair dye color is Natural Black; as a branded item derived from an organic order, it is an important part of the artwork's



labeling. But when Rosenkranz makes a reference to the body it is one of true absence. In Antoni's performance, her personal body became a public material, and the hair dye related to her mother. Rosenkranz refuses to grant any personal privilege or backstory in her explorations. One of her most impressive abilities is to make herself disappear within a process-based and corporal art.

For an idea of how nonorganic Rosenkranz's work is, compare it to Klein's first experiments using the human form as a paintbrush. In 1958 he experimented with menstrual and ox blood, but the resulting works were destroyed after they caused Klein nightmares. Rosenkranz, in her circling of the body, prefers the completely synthetic, refusing to deal with the physical body even as she does so. Hers is a belief in the plastic over the organic—that the truth lies in these empty fabrications. When she visually refers to skin, she refers not to the skin of human mammals but to the skin of Barbie and high-end sex dolls. Always hairless and flawless, they are empty surfaces that suggest a whole. This is the complexion of well-lit porn, aspirational for a first world that is constantly plasticizing its popular views of the body.

Rosenkranz crafts works about humanity with the air of someone who is not human. Imagine the disposition toward humans spouted by popular representations of superior humanoids (X-Men's Magneto, for example) and you'll find this mimicked subtly in her work. Exemplary of this is *Bow Human* (2009–12), a series of sculptures featuring crouched human shapes covered tightly with gold emergency blankets. They are slick updates of Antoni's *Saddle* (2000), an empty human form on hands and knees crafted from translucent golden rawhide. Rosenkranz's cold, severe and reflective sculptures show the figure in its most cowering state. Where Antoni finds beauty in the wildness and fragility of the human form, Rosenkranz shows detachment at best. Her title may read as a command

Bow, human!—a statement echoed throughout science fiction by dominant alien beings.

The initial striking beauty of these works comes mainly from the emergency blanket, a thin plastic sheet developed by NASA in the 1960s that conserves 97% of the body's radiated heat. This artificial covering protects the human body from one of its many vulnerabilities while being almost materially perfect itself. Thus Rosenkranz presents a cheaper, simpler and stronger stand-in for gold. They are the opposite of Roni Horn's *Gold Field* (1980–82), a hundredth-of-a-millimeter-thick solid sheet of annealed gold that tenuously hovers on the floor. It was created because Horn wanted a closer relationship with the sun. Rosenkranz's gold blankets correlate with an interest in the sun as well, but as a symbol for a coreless center. Both the paintings and the sculptures were first shown in her exhibition *Our Sun*, in 2009, at the Istituto Svizzero di Roma's Venice location. Tellingly, she opened the press release with a quote from the philosopher Reza Negarestani: For after all, the Sun is only an inevitable blind spot for the Earth that bars the scope of the abyss.



That exhibition was also the first to include *Firm Being* (2009–14), a series of acrylic-and-polyurethane-filled PET water bottles with their branded labels intact. They congregate in corners on the floor, are packed together in glass-front display refrigerators or are sometimes alone in vitrines. The seal is broken on each, and they are usually full of different approximations of the range of human skin color. They refigure with no personality, an empty whole, human beings as branded containers. They form a strange opposition to the masses of individually wrapped candy that Felix Gonzalez-Torres made between 1990 and 1993, particularly *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1991). Here, the designated amount of multicolored candies corresponds to the ideal weight of the artist's dead lover. By letting viewers freely take pieces of candy, thus letting the physical form of the work ebb and flow, Gonzalez-Torres wanted to create a living allegory for eternal life. Rosenkranz's solid entities refuse that. While they relate to the body in a similarly indirect way, they are never concerned with death because they are never concerned with life.

Water or something related to it flows throughout Rosenkranz's work. In addition to the bottles there have been pools (skin toned, *Skin Pool*, 2014, or blue,

This page:
Firm Being (Stay Neutral)
(2009). Photography by
Gunnar Meier

Next page:
The Most Important Body
of Water is Yours (Show
May Way) (2010)
Photography by Gunnar
Meier







Clean Eyes, 2014), running sinks (*More Stream*, 2012) and video projections (*Loop Revolution*, 2009). Water is a transparent, visually barren substance that the human race has endlessly contemplated. Rosenkranz chooses it not because it reflects purity but because, like plastic, it projects nothingness. This has been illustrated with works like *Firm Being (Content Water)* (2010) in which she filled Fiji-brand water bottles with clear polyurethane, using the artificial to perfectly imitate the purely organic. The marketing of water and other lifestyle brands is central to her practice. Titles of exhibitions and works have borrowed slogans as statements of fact: *The Most Important Body of Water is Yours* (Evian) and *Untouched by Man* (Fiji), for example. Other times she seems to create her own slogans: *Nothing Unbound*, *As One*, *The Wild Blue Me*, *My Evolution*.

You Are the Weather could easily be one of these. Roni Horn's first photographic installation (1994–96) consists of one hundred images of a girl's face rising out of Icelandic geothermal pools. All water and skin, only slight differences of expression and atmosphere are betrayed. The confrontational work exhibits a broad range of emotions—those of the photographer, the water and the girl. A confluence of the same subjects is seen in a series of large-scale inkjet prints Rosenkranz soaked in Smart Water and then let dry before framing. *Meaning Metaphores* (2012) uses a stock image of a child's face

with a world map overlaid on it to question the notion that the human body is similar to the Earth's bodies of water. While Horn shows the changing nature of both the human face and water (as steam, as cloud, as liquid), Rosenkranz diminishes the idea to a meaningless level of internet-ready randomness. It reduces the human to the level of water, exposing an unspoken truth: the water in different branded bottles is pretty much the same, and so are we.

That many of the ideas and tropes fundamental to Rosenkranz's practice had their genesis in her 2009 Venice show comes as no surprise. The city has inspired artists for centuries. And yet, much in the same way that she doesn't deal with lived experience, her work never traced the romantic idea of the wet, decaying city. Venice, like the work of Antoni, Gonzalez-Torres, Horn and Klein, has at its cultural core a magnetism for the subjective nature of human thought. Rosenkranz, however, cuts through these entrenched societal feelings and looks for objective truth.

With *My Sexuality*, an installation at Zurich's Karma International in June 2014, Rosenkranz expanded her practice from sight and sound to the element of smell. Synthetic cat pheromones, which also affect humans, wafted through the plastic-draped gallery, where six projectors shone blue and pink on aluminum panels dripped and spread with acrylic. The paintings, *Sexual Power (Viagra Paintings, 1–11)* (2014), are vulgar and

Previous Page:
Purity of Vapors (2012)
Installation view at
Kunsthalle Basel (2012)
Photography by Gunnar
Meier

This Page:
Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting,
Reproduction
Installation view at
Kunsthalle Basel (2012)
Photography by Gunnar
Meier



visceral, using fleshy tones that expose inner beauty in the literal manner of Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer. It was a clear transition for Rosenkranz's practice, discarding the commercial for the self-created, referencing the self the way mirrors do.

Her interest in addressing other human senses is at its beginning. Having returned to Venice to represent Switzerland at the Venice Biennale, Rosenkranz now seeks to silently attack all of the senses at once. In the air of nothingness that surrounds her themes, it is important to remember Gonzalez-Torres's central piece when he represented the United States at the Venice Biennale in 2007: two circular reflecting pools that touch just enough that their water is shared, *Untitled* (1992-95). In Venice, Rosenkranz's body of water is solitary and encompassing, seemingly holding to itself while affecting every viewer that enters the space. Rosenkranz knows that we do more than drink water. We see it bottled, puddled or wild in the ocean, but also breathe it in and feel it against and within our skin at all times. It is close to nothing, but for us it is everything. Rosenkranz's explorations are the same; in her reduction to emptiness she achieves a monumental depth.

Solo shows: Karma International, Zurich; Kunsthalle Basel; Miguel Abreu, New York; Swiss Institute, New York; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Venice; Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris.

Group shows: Kunsthaus Zurich; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; 2014 Taipei Biennial; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; Kunsthalle Wien; Marrakech Biennial 5; Fridericianum, Kassel; MoMA PS1, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; 55th Venice Biennale; CCA Wattis, San Francisco; 2012 Liverpool Biennial; Sculpture Center, New York.

Current and upcoming shows: Swiss Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale (solo); Zabudowicz Collection, London (group).

Mitchell Anderson is an artist and writer living in Zurich. He runs the alternative space Plymouth Rock and is Flash Art Switzerland Correspondent.

*This page:
Bow Human (2012)*

*Next Page:
Meaning Metaphors
(2012)*

*All images courtesy of
the Artist; Miguel Abreu
Gallery, New York; and
Karma International,
Zurich*





Kevin McGarry Picks the Winners at the Venice Biennale's Swiss, German, and British Pavilions

Kevin McGarry, Friday, May 8, 2015



Pamela Rosenkranz at the Swiss pavilion, Venice Biennale.

Mediocrity is not rewarded in the Giardini. As could be expected, a couple of this year's national pavilions shine, and the ones that don't ... they'll probably be forgotten (if not deliberately purged from national memory banks).

Pamela Rosenkranz, for Switzerland, is one of the standouts, at once immersive and somehow subtle. The details begin with a muted mint paint applied to many parts of the pavilion's façade, and then, once you're within the courtyard, green light keyed to the same RGB code (which, in daylight, gives an odd effect).

This chromatic conditioning prepares viewers to encounter, inside, what is by far Rosenkranz's largest work to date: the building's entire interior is coated with PVC so it can hold a monumental swimming pool full of water tinted the color of Caucasian flesh (the exact opposite of the green). Baby flesh, to be specific, the synthesized scent of which is pumped into the room as one gazes at the surface of the milky sea.

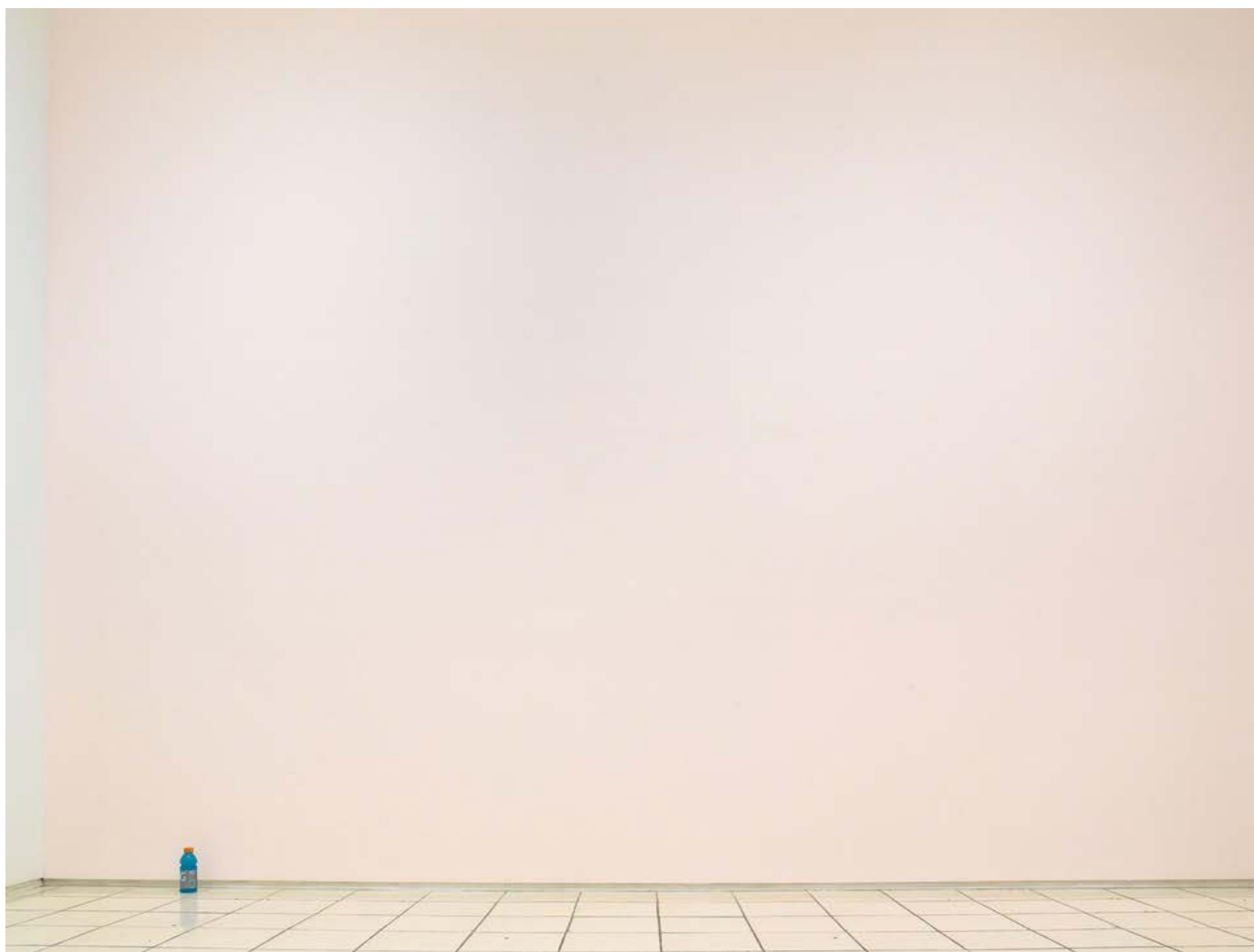
To be yet more specific, the skin color the piece refers to is, according to Rosenkranz, meant to be an average of those found in classic Venetian paintings, so it's site-specific. This is a great example of making a grand gesture that intervenes with a pavilion's architecture in a way that is phenomenologically absorbing, versus hackneyed (see: French pavilion).



Pamela Rosenkranz's Swiss Pavilion Averages Europe into a Single Skin Color

ARTSY EDITORIAL

MAY 4TH, 2015 3:15 AM



Pamela Rosenkranz
My Evolution (Resort White), 2012

Imagine the essence of humanity as an object. Pamela Rosenkranz can, and sure does. When she represents Switzerland this year at the 56th Venice Biennale, her nation's pavilion will "mix the materiality of a Central European skin color," she told Artsy. "I want to somehow to think about why does skin color attract us and what does it mean? Why are these skin colors so predominant?"

Rosenkranz's presentation averts its inquiry to the ontological realm, an extension of Speculative Realism. The school of philosophy, best

championed by Robin Mackay and Reza Negarestani (with talons reaching as far as Margaret Atwood's foreboding tales) follows the metaphysical belief that thinking and being aren't bound as binaries—nor are they exclusively human.

It's a rather popular ideology among those deeply entrenched in Internet and digital circles. "It tries to find new terms to name the new problems," says Rosenkranz, not yet thirty-five, explaining her takeaways from the philosophical school, where existence is not defined by experience. Often the human body is felt by its absence, with objects replacing it instead. Her practice bridges philosophy and art—Rosenkranz sees the two modes as equals—in order for her to bring "points together to know more and create something that hasn't been seen before." It's evident in her work that human physicality is being tested to the limits of our understanding.



Pamela Rosenkranz
Loop Revolution, 2012

As an artist who sources material on the Internet, Rosenkranz's practice follows not a predestined path but rather her own curiosity. She operates like a detective, investigating ideas or information bits until all facts are found. In that way, Rosenkranz, for her pavilion project, "works on the many levels of the senses. There's smell, light, color, all kind of immaterial components that are integrated into the appearance of the architecture."

Rosenkranz is somewhat of a Biennale darling. Instead of working the gallery stage, she has often found herself creating within parameters dictated by inquisitive curators, like Venice Biennale curator Okwui Enwezor's "age of anxiety" that's shaping the 56th Biennale and Massimiliano Gioni (of the 55th Biennale), whose Imagined Encyclopedic Palace wooed Venice in 2013, or Hicham Khalidi of the 2014 Marrakech Biennale, which beckoned artists to reflect upon "where society is now," especially in the context of the Arabic nation's unique political situation amongst its fellow MENASA countries. Rosenkranz supplied a work exploring shades of blue, the color with most varieties perceived by the human eye.



Pamela Rosenkranz
Our Sun, 2009

Museum curators, particularly those helming more cutting-edge institutions, clear space for her conceptual creations. No exception is fellow-countryman Hans Ulrich Obrist, who storms the Astrup Fearnley Museet in Oslo in his upcoming *Europe Europe* survey of the Continent's under-35-and-blessed. Rosenkranz, naturally, has been anointed with the honor. She's also shown at the New York's Swiss Institute, Kunsthalle

Basel, and Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva. Still, according to international art world press, her gallery efforts have been strong, especially adored by the *New York Times*, which raved about both her solo efforts at Miguel Abreu Gallery, in New York's Lower East Side. It was also in Rosenkranz's home turf, at Karma International, the show "My Sexuality" (2014) caught the eye of European critics, featuring a series of paintings evoking Yves Klein's *Anthropométries*—painted in-situ, after swallowing Viagra, in gestural spatters of flesh-toned paint. It's well known that Viagra has little effect on female biology, except for expanding capillaries, thereby inducing a woman to blush, such as did Rosenkranz when she painted the canvases. The "blushing," as Rosenkranz has explained, is a gesture often culturally interpreted as one of shame. As one might expect, Rosenkranz is not, in her estimation, subverting the patriarchy or commenting on the perimeters of female sexuality. Rather, in her view, she is commenting on the cultural constructs of perception. This piece—as with her practice—attempts to attune us to how identity in society arrives through each other's perceptions. It's all skin deep.



Pamela Rosenkranz
Firm Being (Real Glow), 2011



Pamela Rosenkranz
The Great Acceleration, 2014

For "Our Product," the title of Rosenkranz's Swiss Pavilion, her understanding of the essence of humanity is fluid—superficial, literally. She has installed her recognizable water-bottles—"I created this product—it's a solution liquid of the Central European skin color"—and smell-based works—"I worked with Dominique Ropion and Frederic Malle. The idea was to make a scent that's similar to the liquid monochrome Central European Skin color, they constructed molecules to make a synesthetic appearance of the liquid"—as part of a sensorium, which treats "the pavilion almost like an object." All the works' ephemerality wafts with the very questions that line Rosenkranz's practice. "What does it mean to be human? How do we perceive it?" she asks. "I want to get beyond certain things that are a standard and seem obvious but think deeper about what that means."

—Julie Baumgardner

Art in America

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

COMING SOON
A solo exhibition at
the Swiss Pavilion,
Venice Biennale,
May 9–Nov. 22.

Interview by Aoife Rosenmeyer
Studio photography by Gunnar Meier

AOIFE
ROSENMEYER
is a writer based
in Zurich.

IN THE STUDIO



WHEN THE VENICE BIENNALE opens in May, Pamela Rosenkranz, who is representing Switzerland, will be 35 years old. Despite her relative youth, she is no stranger to high-profile exhibitions. In 2008, while she was still a student at Switzerland's Hochschule der Künste Bern, Rosenkranz participated in both the 5th Berlin Biennale and Manifesta 7, in Trentino, Italy. In 2010, the year she graduated with a master's in contemporary art practice, she had solo exhibitions at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève as well as Germany's Kunstverein Braunschweig. Her rise to prominence in the art world has since continued with shows in museums and galleries on both sides of the Atlantic.

Rosenkranz has received such wide attention in part because her work raises fundamental and potentially troubling questions about what it means to be human in the contemporary world. She refers unsentimentally to her body as material and has spoken of a human-indifferent universe. Though formally understated, Rosenkranz's paintings, sculptures and installations are informed by her extensive research into fields ranging from marketing and medicine to philosophy and religion. The historical avant-gardes also provide a touchstone. Taking a cue from Surrealist objects, she's filled branded water bottles with various flesh-tone liquids and clogged running shoes with similarly hued resin, transforming these everyday consumer goods into uncanny sculptures. Her gestural paintings, often rendered

with skin-colored pigments on metallic emergency blankets, allude formally to Yves Klein's seminal *Anthropométries*. Yet Rosenkranz seems uninterested in the mysticism touted by the French artist. Indeed, the title of one 2011 series of paintings underscores the ethos behind much of Rosenkranz's work: *Express Nothing*.

The artist is frequently mentioned in the same breath as the philosophical school du jour, Speculative Realism. She has collaborated with two of its most important thinkers, Robin Mackay and Reza Negarestani, whose texts feature in *No Core*, her 2012 monographic catalogue. Rosenkranz and I started our conversation in Spiez, the sleepy town on the shores of Lake Thun where her parents live, on a rainy day in the summer of 2014 and continued the exchange via e-mail in the following months while she prepared for her move, with her husband and child, from Zurich to New York.

AOIFE ROSENMEYER For *My Sexuality*, your recent show at Karma International in Zurich, you lined the entire gallery interior with plastic sheeting. On view was the 2014 series *Sexual Power (Viagra Paintings, 1-11)*. These works feature synthetic flesh-tone pigments applied to aluminum panels that were propped against the walls of the gallery. You made the paintings in situ, applying the color directly with your hands after having taken Viagra. The press release noted how your complexion appeared to glow with a strange red flush. This resonates with traditional ideas of blushing as a sign of female modesty. Yet you pointedly claimed male territory by taking medication designed for men and imitating the painterly gestures of Yves Klein or the hyper-masculine Abstract Expressionists.

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ Blushing is associated with being ashamed, but if you mention that you're blushing, it's as if you're proud of being ashamed: Look! I am blushing for you! What makes someone blush exactly? Blood pumping faster and becoming visible through the skin. I usually don't blush, but the medication brought that ability to the surface. I am interested in how we are entangled with our sexual material, and at what point we can be independent of it. This work is not about identifying the limits of a female body, of course. It's about exploring how perceptions of our physicality— aspects like blushing—are in fact culturally constructed.

ROSENMEYER The 2014 work *Attraction (Red and Blue)*, also in the Karma International show, included three projectors beaming red light and three blue. Synthetic cat pheromones circulated through the gallery, propelled by the hot air from the projectors' fans. I've heard that the scent of this chemical can have a powerful effect on us because of the parasitic disease toxoplasmosis. Can you explain this further?

ROSENKRANZ Cats are the main host of toxoplasmosis. Mice, humans and other mammals are intermediary hosts. The parasite wants the mouse that has been infected to be attracted to the cat, so it invades the region of the mouse's brain where sexual arousal occurs, and then the parasite reacts to the scent of the cat. This makes the mouse approach the cat

More Stream, 2012, blue Methylene, water and sink, 46½ by 29½ by 19¾ inches; at Kunsthalle Basel. Photo Gunnar Meier. Courtesy Karma International and Miguel Abreu Gallery.





instead of fleeing, so that the cat can easily catch it and ingest it. Ultimately, once inside the cat, the parasite can reproduce.

We, too, can be infected by the parasite as intermediate hosts, becoming part of its scheme of attraction in more subtle ways. In France there is a very high infection rate—55 percent—most likely caused by the prevalence of undercooked and raw meat in the cuisine. Overall, about 30 percent of people in Europe carry the parasite. But toxoplasmosis is a worldwide phenomenon. Because of this parasite, humans are attracted to a certain scent that originates from a cat pheromone; this scent can be found in many perfumes, allegedly Chanel No. 5, for instance. The parasite has accompanied us for a long while and could well be behind cultural icons like Batman's Catwoman. And apparently female carriers are more likely to wear designer clothes. We tend to see sexuality as one of the main markers of our individuality—it helps define us—but not only does our own biological system react to sexual attractions in ways that we can't control, but there are also parasites that can neurologically influence, or possibly even direct, our sense of attraction.

ROSENMEYER Ever since your work was included in the 2013 show *Speculations on Anonymous Materials* [at the Fridericianum in Kassel] it has been linked with Speculative Realism. There's no fixed definition of the philosophical school, but we might say that it is concerned with understanding the relationship between people and

objects—the material world—without reference to traditional humanistic ideas about subjectivity. Are you at ease with this Speculative Realist label?

ROSENKRANZ I try not to think about art in terms of the primacy of subjective interpretation, but to engage instead with the reality of materials beyond our affective engagement with them. Speculative Realism is a vague umbrella term and I don't see my work as exemplary of it in a direct way. I am just interested in engaging with philosophers who incorporate contemporary ideas in their theories. I have tried to understand the implications that Rezas and Robins work holds for art. I've investigated such questions 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?

ROSENMEYER Your work could be construed as sharply critical because it debunks certain ingrained notions about human life, such as how sexual attraction works. Would it be right to say that your goal is a kind of emancipation from outmoded concepts—a process that can seem cruel at first?

ROSENKRANZ I am concerned with exploring how scientific findings change popular conceptions of what it means to be human, and that can be quite confrontational. For example, it's interesting how advances in neurosci-

View of the exhibition *My Sexuality*, 2014. Photo: Gunnar Meier. Courtesy Karma International, Zurich.

*Express Nothing
(Innocent Self)*,
2011, acrylic on
emergency blanket
foil, 64½ by 83½
inches. Courtesy
Miguel Abreu
Gallery, New
York.



*Express Nothing
(Some Touch
Remainder)*,
2011, acrylic on
emergency blanket
foil, 64½ by 83½
inches. Courtesy
Miguel Abreu
Gallery.

Opposite,
materials in
Rosenkranz's
Zurich studio.



ence challenge our understanding of identity. Through new scientific research into the evolutionary history of the brain, we can understand the self not as a fixed entity but as an ever-changing process. This can be emancipatory for some, perhaps; it can also feel limiting because we become aware of new constraints that are operating on us.

Consider something basic, like how we see. From an evolutionary standpoint, the operation of our eyes was determined at a time when we, as a species, were not yet even human—we were still creatures in the sea. The eyes we inherited developed the receptors for blue because those are the frequencies that make it into the deep ocean. Understanding our eyes as organs that have developed over very long spans of time helps us to think differently about images we see in the contemporary world. There's no pure image streaming through our retinas, giving us access to truth. Vision is very physical and conflicted.

ROSENMEYER How do you conduct your research?

ROSENKRANZ Mostly by reading online. Also by reading papers and books and having conversations, but online research is the greatest resource, as it keeps up with the pace of speculative investigation. Of course, like a hypochondriac seeking medical help from search engines, you can race to conclusions that are much too extreme. But at the same time, you cannot say doctor Google is bad; it will probably soon be better than your general practitioner.

ROSENMEYER Flesh tones appear frequently in both your paintings and sculptures. An early piece from 2007, *I almost forgot that ASICS means Anima Sana in Corpore Sano*, comprises a pair of sneakers filled with pale pink resin. The title refers to the Japanese sportswear company's Latin slogan, A healthy soul in a healthy body. You've rendered the shoes useless, casting in doubt the brand's promise of physical and spiritual vitality through fitness. Standing in the place of a human figure are resin blobs; they are the familiar color of flesh, but the overall effect is estrangement.

ROSENKRANZ When I work with skin color in a monochrome form, it is to present an element from daily experience—both from advertising and from our interactions with real people—as an abstraction. Successful marketing is mastering how people react to things automatically. It's been said that the more skin that is in an advertisement, the more people will look at it. I am interested in how this trigger works on us biologically. I wanted to work with flesh tones at first because I was attracted to the colors. By asking myself why this was so, I became aware of the biological trigger, and I tried to establish a distance from it.

It seems important to confront the constructed advertising image, where we encounter an idea of beauty, and to develop a deeper sensitivity for the physical basis of attraction. I don't want to refer to marketing or advertising as something that is only to be maligned; the field is also a reflection of material realities. I've thought a lot about the problem of anorexia: why do we associate very thin bodies with fashion models? The sheer prevalence of depictions of beautiful, thin models might, of course, have a catalyzing effect, but there may be a biological reason why such bodies are seen as appeal-

Scientific findings can change conceptions of what it means to be human, and that can be quite confrontational.



ing in the first place. In the face of such narrow and potentially tragic understandings of beauty, art can be a vehicle to develop new perspectives, fusing insights from different fields. Art is very powerful, I think, for encouraging greater independence in our perception of what is attractive.

ROSENMEYER In some respects your work dematerializes the body—treating it as a symbolic value for marketing, for example. At the same time, you always offer a physical, even corporeal experience in the gallery, where visitors encounter objects on a human scale.

ROSENKRANZ I think of everything as physical, even the flat works. When I use glass, I always use reflective glass; the reflection ties the work to the space in which it is displayed. I'm also interested in how LCD screens can reproduce image-based stimuli with light. I am fascinated by what the light from screens does to us, how it interferes with our sleep rhythms, for example. Or, think about naked skin appearing in pornography. Those images have a very clear biological impact, creating an intriguing point of intersection between ideas of immateriality and materiality, the physical and the virtual.

ROSENMEYER You've repeatedly used a few types of consumer goods in your sculptures, especially sneakers and water bottles. The series *Firm Being*, ongoing since 2009, features bottles manufactured by Evian, Vittel, SmartWater and other brands. You've replaced the clear water with murky liquids, again in shades of pink. I've seen these displayed in various ways over

the years: in groups arranged on the floor of a gallery, on pedestals, or even in refrigerated retail display cases. How did these modified water bottles become a staple of your practice?

ROSENKRANZ My work with water has come a long way. It started with thinking about anorexia, as water remains the only intake that anorexics still like. Similar to air, light and smell, water is an intake that you can absorb but still physically disappear. Then there is the whole idea of a health-conscious consumer *purging to purity*—the idea that water might flush out toxins that accumulate in fat deposits. Even though this notion of *scum* or *slag* does not really have a basis in biology—we can't target these entities or secrete them—the belief in such impurities remains a powerful motivator for the health industry. Water has similarities to other products, like fair-trade coffee, that give us the feeling of being less guilty. I am not being cynical here, but people clearly feel guilty and burdened, and products are designed with placebo elements to make the buyer feel better.

There are several water brands that I find exemplary for this idea of purity. Evian is probably the one that works with the most *innocent* image. But like air, water is never pure, even when transparent; it is a complex composition of elements with minerals. And it is not totally clean, only more or less so. Water, even bottled water, can be contaminated with bacteria or other components, like residues of medication, which threaten our health. And furthermore it can be—and this is very important with bottled water in plastics—contaminated with hormonelike substances in the long run. Even when regulations are in place to exclude certain phthalates like bisphenol A, research shows that particles that have not yet been identified enter this water from the plastics that hold it, and they 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.

ROSENMEYER Looking ahead to the spring, what can you tell me about your project for Venice?

ROSENKRANZ I can't reveal much about the project at this point. But I can say I am going further into my work on the human surface, extending this into the realm of the senses. By drawing from scientific research on the neurobiological basis of perception and its effects, such as attraction, I have been slowly developing an evolutionary perspective on art that's really at the core of my Venice project. By using skin color and the aesthetic surfaces of various consumer products, I also want to address questions of identity—dissolving the very concept into its materiality.

ROSENMEYER When you say dissolving, are you implying that identity is fluid and changeable?

ROSENKRANZ Or maybe even dispensable. It would be great to manage to get beyond the features of identity. Male, female, dark, pale, nice, mean, etc.—it is all relative within our psychological and physiological structure. I think there are much more interesting and important aspects that define us. ○

Opposite top, view of Rosenkranz's exhibition *Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting*, Reproduction, 2012.

Opposite bottom, *Living Colors*, 2012, video projection, dimensions variable.

Both at Kunstsalle Basel. Courtesy Karma International. Photos Gunnar Meier.

Firm Being (Stay True), 2009, 500 ml PET bottle and silicon with pigments, 17 by 6 by 6 inches. Courtesy Karma International and Miguel Abreu Gallery.





monopol

Die Neuen

Man nennt sie Digital Natives, Generation Y oder Millenials. Sie kennen das Internet seit ihrer Kindheit. Und bringen gerade eine neue Kunstergeneration hervor. Sie schafft sich ihre eigenen Spielregeln mit neuen Ideen, neuen Bildern, neuen Materialien. Wir stellen zehn Künstler vor, die die Zukunft prägen werden. Ein Dossier über Ed Atkins, Trisha Baga, Simon Denny, Aleksandra Domanović, Camille Henrot, Helen Marten, Jon Rafman, Pamela Rosenkranz, Avery K. Singer und Jordan Wolfson





PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

untersucht Körperkult und Optimierungswahn und mischt schon mal Katzenpheromone in die Luft

Pamela Rosenkranz steht kurz vor dem Abflug. Es soll nach New York gehen, wohin sie mit ihrer Familie zieht. Und außerdem nach Venedig, wo sie 2015 den Schweizer Pavillon gestalten wird. Wie sie die Städte unter einen Hut bekommt, weiß Rosenkranz noch nicht. „Aber heute spielt der Wohnort keine große Rolle mehr“, sagt sie über Skype. So wie das Gespräch mit der 1979 in Sils-Maria geborenen Künstlerin online stattfindet, kann auch der nationale Beitrag für die Biennale über den Atlantik hinweg organisiert werden. Für diesen gebe es verschiedene Optionen, sagt sie. Insofern wohl auch noch Redebedarf.

Sprechen kann man mit der Künstlerin über Skype ziemlich gut. Sie sitzt vor dem Laptop, trinkt aus einem Porzellanbecher, ab und zu taucht ein Katzenohr auf und ihre Hand verschwindet unterm Tisch. Ein warmer Blick und Streicheleinheiten für das Haustier. Die Kunst, die die Künstlerin ausstellt, ist nicht so warm. Falls sich Temperaturunterschiede überhaupt eignen, um die Ästhetik von Rosenkranz zu beschreiben. Die Materialien, die sie für ihre Skulpturen, Installationen und Wandarbeiten verwendet, sind synthetisch, kalt.

Im Kasseler Fridericianum installierte sie bei der Schau „Speculations on Anonymous



TITEL Die Neuen

Materials“ einen Kühlschrank mit Plastikflaschen der Marke Glacéau Smartwater. Sie waren allerdings mit Silikon und Kunsthautpigmenten gefüllt. Rosenkranz hatte aus dieser Arbeit also nicht nur das Wasser verbannt, das wegen der Verschmutzung der Atmosphäre von der Tochterfirma des Coca-Cola-Konzerns vorgeblich aufwendig gereinigt wird, sondern auch den menschlichen Körper, den dieses Getränk stärken soll. Im Zeitalter der plastischen Medizin und Fitnessstudios erinnert das hautfarbene Silikon nur noch an dessen künstliche, optimierte Gestalt.

Mit Begeisterung widmet sich Rosenkranz einem Parasiten, der Katzen befällt. Über den ausgeschiedenen Kot kann er auf andere Säugetiere übertragen werden und soll dazu führen, dass sie sich zu Katzen hingezogen fühlen. Als die Künstlerin außerdem herausfand, dass bestimmte Parfümbestandteile aus Katzenssekreten gewonnen werden, entschied sie sich für ein Experiment: Über die Lüftung eines Projektors verbreitete sie das synthetisierte Katzenpheromon von Chanel No. 5, das – so Rosenkranz – theoretisch die Katzenhysterie der westlichen Kultur naturwissenschaftlich erklären könnte: Es handelt sich um einen Parasiten, eine Krankheit.

Selbst die Kunstgeschichte wird von ihr auf diese Weise untersucht. Ihr Interesse gilt etwa Yves Klein, der sich mit dem Immateriellen beschäftigte und mit nur 34 Jahren an den Folgen eines Herzinfarkts starb. „Er schien sich auf den Tod vorzubereiten, als ob er das biologisch spürte. Er hatte einen religiösen Bezug zum Himmel und realisierte viele blaue Werke, die für ihn die Erfahrung des Verschwindens als Eingang in eine geschichtliche Unendlichkeit verwandelten“, sagt Rosenkranz. Sie lässt Kleins Blau auf einem Flachbildschirm auftauchen, druckt digitalisierte Formen seiner Gemälde und stellt Rettungsdecken aus Folie, wie sie für die Erste Hilfe verwendet werden, als Skulpturen aus.

Die Künstlerin ist damit das Gegenteil eines esoterisch angehauchten Biofanatikers, der sich aus der Stadt zurückzieht und seine Seele im Spiegel der Natur erkennen möchte. Sie beschäftigt sich mit den Schnittmengen zwischen Medizin, Technik und Körperkult, in der der Mensch seine Lebensbedingungen neu definieren und seinen freien Willen behaupten muss. *Antje Stahl*

Pamela Rosenkranz wird unter anderem vertreten von der Galerie Karma International, Zürich

LINKS

Pamela Rosenkranz „Firm Being (From the Venice Series)“, 2010, PET-Flasche, Silikon, Pigment, Maße variabel

RECHTS

Pamela Rosenkranz „Bow Human“, 2012, Mixed Media, Maße variabel

UNTEN

Pamela Rosenkranz „More Stream“, 2012, Mixed Media, 118 x 75 x 50 cm

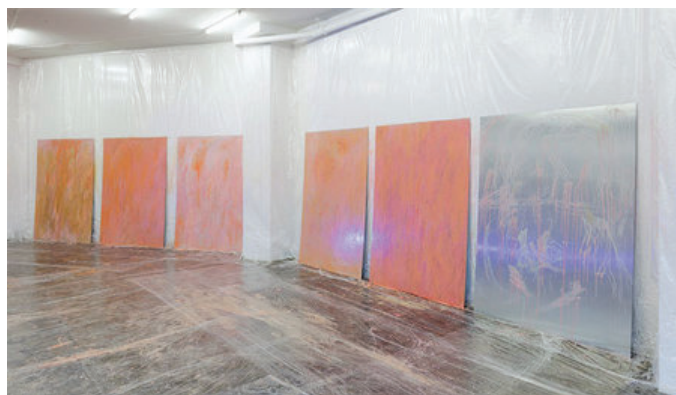


ARTFORUM

Zurich Reviews

Pamela Rosenkranz

KARMA INTERNATIONAL



View of "Pamela Rosenkranz," 2014.

Eleven matte aluminum sheets were leaning against the walls of the gallery, which were covered from floor to ceiling with thin transparent plastic sheeting, making the space resemble something like a cross between a construction site and a quarantine ward. The natural light coming in through the gallery's big display windows was rivaled by blue and red beams emanating from six projectors placed on the floor, which reflected as two differing horizontal strips on the aluminum surfaces. The sheets' surfaces had been smeared with various fleshy hues of thin, drippy semitranslucent polyester paint that had a fast, sweaty feeling. Drops and tears of it could be found not only running down the pale metal planes as thin skins, thickening the infrathin interface of mere reflection, but scattered on the trodden, glistening layer of transparent plastic film on the floor: The paintings, it seemed, were actually made here on-site. And as the series' title, "Sexual Power (Viagra Paintings)," 2014, suggests, Pamela Rosenkranz prepared for their making by taking a dose of the remedy for erectile dysfunction.

If modernist abstraction has banished the representation of the human image from painting, it could also be argued that the figure returned in the guise of painting's physical support, which as mere object has revealed itself as a stand-in for the anthropomorphic. Rosenkranz's aluminum sheets appear to take up this tradition: They are approximately human height, and the artist has painted them with both hands to give them a discernible left and right. And the reflected, colored light of the projectors inscribes on them even a kind of planetary horizon. Yet the paintings transpose this whole complex of bodily orientation to a merely medical, even somatic register. In fact, sildenafil, Viagra's main chemical agent, opens the blood vessels of the male member. But in order to effect an erection, it always needs the constitution of an object of desire. Sildenafil therefore leaves the field of sexual libido, but not sex itself, untouched. By taking the pill, Rosenkranz enacted a strategic squandering that underscores the fact that her own female sexuality has been left out of the equation. This is why the show's title, "My Sexuality," can only be read as a form of negation. However, at the core of her work might be a rather different concern. If the value of art has been historically tied to a predominantly male virility, it could also be degraded by an etiological reading that would explicate it as a mere effect of biochemical events. The repetitions of a certain cliché of Abstract Expressionism in these paintings, made under the effects of medication, support a reading of them as such pathological objects. Yet the dystopian sexuality the paintings thus articulate appears to be severed from the history and structure of the unconscious. The skins they endlessly materialize as smears of paint no longer imply anything underneath. The phantasm they speak of is rather a sexuality without fetishism: no rubber dolls, just drugs.

The last and most elusive element of the exhibition pointed most strongly to such a perspective. Dispersed by the projectors' heat were artificially synthesized pheromones of the civet cat—one of the oldest known ingredients in perfume. While humans certainly have a long history of deploying the smells of other animals to aid in seduction, new research points to another aspect of this libidinal prosthetic. Rodents whose brains have been infected by the parasitic illness toxoplasmosis appear to lose their instinctual repulsion regarding these particular feline pheromones. Instead, they become fatally attracted to their predator's smell. The cat, after having killed and eaten the rodent, becomes itself the new host of the parasitical monad, which can neither die nor desire. There are, it seems, hints that humans infected by the parasite also react differently to the odor. To affirm such an anamorphic perspective on sexual desire—the perspective of the protozoan—in order to hollow out the human subject: This is the threadbare form of painting practiced by Rosenkranz.

art agenda

Pamela Rosenkranz's "My Sexuality"

KARMA INTERNATIONAL, Zürich

June 14–July 26, 2014

Pamela Rosenkranz's exhibition at Karma International in Zürich is a complete mess. At first glance, the show lacks the sleek style and execution one has come to expect from an artist who has made a career exploring the slick visual codes and branding techniques used to commodify the natural world. Over the past eight years, Rosenkranz's critical eye has been drawn to the marketing of bottled water, the anthropomorphization of house paint, even French Nouveau Réalist Yves Klein's claiming of the sky as his own work of art. This time, however, she has completely wrapped the interior of Karma International's large storefront location sited on an urban strip mall in loose plastic sheeting, creating what looks like—and at different times, feels like—a studio situation, a condom, and a so-called "kill room" à la American television series *Dexter*.

Leaning against the draped walls are eleven aluminum panels covered with a fluid acrylic polymer tinted in skin tones of beige, orange, red, brown, and pink. The texture of the surfaces varies between thick coats of brutal drippings to large strokes spanning the range of the artist's outstretched hands. In some of the paintings, the aluminum base is almost completely visible, while others are totally covered in both material and color. Strewn with wild sprays and streaks, these images are aggressive and sexy, and they reference—in form, if not in color—cum shots, blood splatters, and all-around bodily excrement. Similar markings appear on the plastic covering the wall and floor, suggesting that the works were made onsite, potentially on the very spot where they stand.

In keeping with Rosenkranz's style, the panels are, once again, slightly larger than human proportions. Here, with the panels sitting directly on the floor, this approach has never been more effective, openly encompassing and confronting the viewer at the same time. While her earlier works had an easy immediacy—with striking and easily identifiable materials (spandex, space-age emergency blankets, glossy photographic paper) and color combinations—these images at first appear tame, representing some of her most subtle work to date.

Nevertheless, these paintings manage to be grounded and weighted in an atmospheric way. Gesture after gesture is piled up on their surfaces, some of them even acquiring an eerily human-like appearance as if scarred, living skin had been stretched large. To enhance this effect, Rosenkranz has placed two sets of projectors on the floor at either end of the gallery. One casts a blue light over the entire room, the other a dark pink. Reflecting off of the plastic onto the walls and into the paintings, these hues bring out the many layers and tones of each panel's subtle coloration and composition. Under this haunting play of colored light, the images shift dramatically as one moves through the installation.

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In 2012, Rosenkranz apparently used blood in "Inner Nature," a series of flesh-colored paintings, which illustrate that it's the subcutaneous fluid running through our veins that gives skin its color. (The artist intentionally left the authenticity of the medium unspecified.) In these new works, she exploits this idea further. The paintings appear to be both alive and dead: bloody gore and blood signifying life. At their most imposing and abstract moments, they are visceral; the medium comes up off their surfaces as if it were peeling away. At sparser moments, the panels look as if wrestling bodies had spread secretions and waste across them with their bare hands. Aptly titled *Sexual Power (Viagra painting) 1–11* (all 2014), the works both name-check the infamous blood-flow-enhancing drug the artist took while creating them, and reaffirm the exhibition's focus on carnal processes and bodily fluids.

Likewise, the exhibition's title, "My Sexuality," returns to Rosenkranz's customary themes—especially the tendency within marketing to use universally applicable possessive pronouns—however, here the branding is entirely her own. The paintings and the installation encapsulate everything that has become important to her larger body of work, but had previously been executed as single layers in closed sets; these include the painterly gestures found in two series of works made on silver and gold emergency blankets—"Stretch Nothing" (2009) and "Express Nothing" (2011)—as well as the markings she made with a mixture of latex house paint and mass-market soft drinks in the series "Everything is Already Dead"

Yet, in the handling of paint and form, these earlier works now seem flat in comparison to her new work. If almost all of Rosenkranz's earlier projects were about visible surfaces, this installation is entirely about depth, marking a definitive turn in her practice. "My Sexuality" thus demonstrates her ability to create her own provocative references with seemingly effortless skill. Handling the discrete materialities of skin, shit, semen, spit, and blood in the same non-hierarchical manner as the body, Rosenkranz generates dense and seductive paintings of basic human existence.

Mitchell Anderson is an artist currently living in Zürich, where he runs the art space Plymouth Rock.

DAS DING

Wählen Sie einen Gegenstand aus Ihrem
Lebens- oder Arbeitsumfeld,
der für Sie von besonderer Bedeutung ist

Pamela Rosenkranz

SCREEN

Choose a single object of special
significance from your
working or living environment

Was ich wirklich täglich vor mir habe, ist der Screen meines Computers, im Moment das Retina Display meines Apple Mac Book Pro. Blaues Licht entspricht dem Sonnenlicht am Morgen, das Vitamin D bildet und uns weckt; rotes Licht am Abend ist hingegen wichtig für die Produktion von Melatonin, das uns schlafen lassen soll. Ich habe eine neue App, die gegen Abend allmählich das blaue Licht aus dem Screen herausfiltert, bis er nur noch schwarz-rot leuchtet. Sonst zerstört der bläuliche Screen meinen circadianen Rhythmus und verdrängt die Nacht. Seit ich die App verwende, werde ich also früher ins Bett gehen, früher schlafen und stehe früher auf.

Es ist merkwürdig, dass der Punkt, von dem aus wir sehen, selber so sehr auf seinen Ausdruck angewiesen ist. Das Auge erscheint im Gegensatz zu unseren anderen Organen so bloss, kompliziert und schön, dass religiöse Gegner der Evolutionstheorie es als Beweis für die göttliche Schöpfung begriffen. Selbst Charles Darwin gab in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) zu, dass es absurd scheint, das Auge als von der Evolution geformt anzuschauen. Heute weiss man, dass sich unser Auge auf die allerersten Wirbeltiere zurückführen lässt. Fische vor 420 Millionen Jahren, die vom Aussehen her Haien gleichelten, mussten diese erglotzten erst mal mehr oder weniger nur Blau.

Wenn wir zu lange in unsere blauen Screens starren, werden unsere Augen rot um die Iris. Die Blutgefässe der Bindehaut weiten sich, da sie stärker durchblutet werden müssen. Es gibt blaue Augentropfen, die sie wieder aufhellen. Saubere, weiße Augen sehen jung und unbelastet aus.

Das Geflecht des Auges muss ständig bewässert werden. *Lacrima* aus Wasser und Mucinen reinigt und befeuchtet die Augen. Gefühle wie Trauer, aber auch Glück, können einen Schwall von Tränen auslösen. Angeblich unterscheidet sich die chemische Komposition von Tränen, die emotionell verursacht wurden, von den steten, alltäglichen Tränen. Emotionale Tränen sind auf mehr proteinbasierten Hormonen aufgebaut, wie zum Beispiel Prolaktin, einem Brutpflegeverhalten auslösenden Hormon, und anscheinend senkt der Geruch von Tränen den Sexualtrieb und beruhigt uns.

Wenn wir uns nur noch über Screens sehen, nutzt der Duft der Tränen nichts mehr. Dann werden unsere Augen mit der Zeit viel leichter noch röter. Oder wie Lindsay Lohan kürzlich twitterte: Ich wünschte, ich könnte Blut weinen. Es wäre so viel wirkungsvoller.

Pamela Rosenkranz ist Künstlerin. Sie lebt und arbeitet in New York und Zürich. Zuletzt war bei Karma International in Zürich ihre Einzelausstellung My Sexuality zu sehen. Im Sommer 2015 wird sie die Schweiz bei der Biennale in Venedig vertreten.



Something I have in front of me every day is my computer screen, the Retina display of my Apple MacBook Pro. Blue light corresponds to the morning sun that stimulates vitamin D production and wakes us up. The reddish light of evening, on the other hand, is important for the production of melatonin – a hormone that makes us sleepy. I have an app that gradually filters the blue light out of the screen towards evening until it glows a dark shade of red, stopping the screen's blue light from counteracting nightfall and destroying my circadian rhythm. Since I started using the app, I get tired earlier, go to bed earlier, and get up earlier in the morning.

It is strange that the point from which we see others' expressions is itself so expressive. Unlike other organs, the eye appears so vulnerable, complex and beautiful that religious opponents of the theory of evolution have considered it proof of divine creation. Even Charles Darwin admits in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) that it seems absurd to think of the eye as having been shaped by evolution. Today we know that our eyes can be traced back to the very first vertebrates, fish-like creatures 420 million years ago whose visual experience must have consisted more or less exclusively of blue light.

If we spend too long looking at our screens, the whites of our eyes turn red as the blood vessels in the conjunctiva dilate to increase oxygen flow. There are blue eye drops that make them white again. Clean, white eyes look young and unstressed.

The surface of the eye must be kept wet. Tear fluid consisting of oil, water and mucins cleans and moistens the eyes. Feelings of both sadness and happiness can trigger a flood of tears. The chemical composition of tears caused by emotion is said to be different from that of ordinary everyday tear fluid. Emotional tears contain more protein-based hormones, including prolactin that triggers parental instincts, and it seems that the pheromones contained in tears inhibit libido and has a calming effect.

If we only see each other via our screens, then the scent of tears is no longer any use. Over time, our eyes will probably become even more red. Or as Lindsay Lohan recently tweeted: I wish I could cry blood. It would be so much more effective.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell

Pamela Rosenkranz is an artist who lives and works in New York and Zürich. Her solo show My Sexuality was recently on view at Karma International in Zürich. She will represent Switzerland at the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Mit Biss und Konzept

Pamela Rosenkranz ist der neue Stern am helvetischen Kunsthimmel. Auf der heute eröffneten Art Basel kann man ihre Werke kaufen, und nächstes Jahr wird sie den Schweizer Pavillon bei der Biennale in Venedig bespielen. Aber hinter diesem Aufstieg steckt ein Masterplan VON DANIELE MUSCIONICO

Sie ist aus der Generation jung und hungrig, Ehrgeizig und erfolgreich orientiert. Ein Digital Native ist sie und weiblich. Und man muss ihre Kunst nicht verstehen, um zu verstehen: Hier tut sich etwas. Das ist die Bilderbuchkarriere einer Bilderbuchschönheit: Pamela Rosenkranz. Kein nationales Kunsterbe, kein Rating kommt mehr ohne sie aus, und kein Kurator, der sie nicht kennen muss. Sie ist die Glorifikante, die in diesem Jahr den Schweizer Pavillon bei der Kunstbiennale in Venedig bespielen wird. Dabei ist sie erst 35 Jahre jung, fast einmalig jung für diese Aufgabe und den edigen süssen Kunst Oscar. Nur Emmanuelle Antille war noch jünger, 31 Jahre alt, als sie 2003 in Venedig ihr *Angels Camp* zeigte. Ein schnelles, fröhliches Leuchten einer Bilderbuchkarriere.

Doch diese Pamela Rosenkranz ist kein Shooting Star, sie ist eine strategische Netzwerkerin. Die Kunsterbin ist ausdauernd, fokussiert, sie hat ein Ziel vor Augen. Wenn sie über ihre Arbeit spricht, legt sie jedes Wort auf die Goldwaage, um es einmal gesagt, sofort infrage zu stellen. Oder zu präzisieren. Über ihre Person spricht es sich ohne zu leicht. Denn sie weiß, was sie will. Und was sie interessiert: Philosophie, Medizin, Politik und Identität.

Dazu gehört, dass sie die Kontrolle nicht aus den Händen gibt, sei es die Veröffentlichung ihrer Portraits, auch bei diesem Artikel, eine Herausforderung für den Fotografen oder ihrer Zitate. Die Spielregeln bestimmt sie. Und damit wird auch den letzten Skeptikern und ihren Kritikern klar, zum Beispiel jenen Professor an der Kunsthochschule in Bern, dessen vernichtendes Urteil Rosenkranz bis heute ganz selbstverständlich zitiert: Hier ist eine junge Frau ganz einfach cleverer, selbstbewusster, ganz einfach ambitionierter als der Durchschnitt. Hier kennt eine die Bedingungen des Netzes und des Marktes, und sie benutzt beide als ihre Arbeitsgrundlagen. Hier denkt eine wie eine Amerikanerin, in der Welt global und in der Weite, und handelt wie eine Schweizerin, in der Nähe und in der Tiefe dort, wo sie lebt und arbeitet. Im Moment sind das Z. rich und Spiz im Berner Oberland, wo ihre Eltern leben.

Doch der Moment ist fragil. Alles soll anders werden: Der definitive Umzug nach New York ist geplant, endlich. Dann ist sie endlich Mutter eines Sohnes geworden, und seit der Bekanntgabe ihres Venedig Adressschlages wird sie mit Anfragen überhüllt. Doch das hat noch kein Grund, nervös zu werden. Denn in einer Hinsicht ist sie eine typische Eidgenossin: Pamela Rosenkranz ist stur. Sie ist sich nicht beeindruckbar. Nicht vom Erfolg und nicht vom Gegenteil. Sie sagt, mit sehr viel Direktheit: Ich glaube an Kunst. Sehr.

Dass sie Kunsterbin werden will, war ihr schon als Kind klar. Stoisch hat sie deshalb als Studentin den Kommentar ihres Professors, Ulrich Loox, zu ihrer Masterarbeit pariert: Diese Kunst geht r um Schlechtes, was ich je gesehen habe! Und stoisch arbeitet sie heute trotz harten Eltern kontinuierlich weiter an ihrer Laufbahn. Es ist eine Reibekarriere seit dem Anfang, das ist sich nicht verhehlen.

In Phase eins war sie die hyperaktive Berner Studentin, die Dinge ausstellte, die beim großen Publikum, aber auch in der kleinen Welt der Hochschule auf Ablehnung stießen. In Phase zwei war sie eine junge Schweizer Kunsterbin, deren konzeptuelle Arbeiten vor allem in Amerika gesammelt wurden. Der einflussreiche Schweizer in New York, Gianni Jetzer, stellte sie 2008 am New Yorker Swiss Institute (SI) aus. Offenbar so erfolgreich, dass er dies 2011 wiederholte, und zwar anlässlich des Umzugs des SI an die neue beste Lage an der Wooster Street in SoHo. Jetzer offerierte

Rosenkranz die Eröffnungsausstellung der neuen Räume, und selbst die *New York Times* gab sich die Ehre und besprach das Ereignis eingehend. Gianni Jetzer kuratiert inzwischen die Ausstellungsplattform *Art Unlimited*, seit 2012 Teil der weltweit wichtigsten Kunstmesse, der Art Basel.

In der Schweiz gehen der Zürcher Unternehmer Hans Bollier sowie der einflussreiche Metzger Thomas Bechtler und seine Walter A. Bechtler Stiftung zu ihren ersten Sammlern. Kuratoren erschließen sie die neue Kunsterbin. Nicht zu vergessen in dieser Anfangsphase: Rosenkranz berzeugte die gleichaltrige Kunsthistorikerin Karolina Dankow, ihren Off Space zur marktauglichen Galerie auszubauen. Heute gilt Karma International als Highflier, mit Dankow und ihrer Geschäftspartnerin Martina Leuenberger an der Spitze. Die Vorzeigekunsterbin Rosenkranz präsentiert man auf allen wichtigen Messen der Welt, auch bei der Art Basel und Hongkong. Dort waren dieses Jahr zwei ihrer Arbeiten zu sehen, sie kosteten je 30 000 Dollar. Ob sie verkauft wurden, bleibt ein Geheimnis. Die Galerie gibt dazu keine Auskunft.

Was hat Pamela Rosenkranz, was andere nicht haben?

Entscheidend in dieser frühen Phase ist auch die Förderung durch die Nidwaldner Kuratorin Alexandra Bittler, die Rosenkranz seit 2006 beobachtet. Bittler zieht zu den jungen und einflussreichen Kunstseismografen des Landes und wurde 2011 von der Eidgenossenschaft, 2013 auch von der Stadt Zürich mit dem Kunstvermittlerpreis ausgezeichnet. Sie bot Rosenkranz sehr früh ein zweijähriges Atelierstipendium in der Zürcher Stiftung BINZ 39 an, einem Trainingscamp für junge Kunstexporteure. Als Co-Kuratorin brachte Bittler die Kunsterbin bereits 2008 ins Kunsthaus Zürich in die wegweisende Ausstellung *Young Swiss Kunst. Shifting Identities*. Noch im selben Jahr konnte Rosenkranz sowohl an der 8. Berlin Biennale als auch an der *Manifesta 7* teilnehmen. Und in dieser entscheidenden Phase widmete ihr die Kunsthalle Basel die erste Soloschau in der Schweiz.

Dies führte 2013 zu einem Auftritt in Venedig. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt befand sich Rosenkranz bereits auf dem Radar des mächtigen Kurators und Talentscouts Klaus Biesenbach vom Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Man konnte das in dieser Zeitung lesen. Biesenbach traf auf die Arbeit von Rosenkranz in ihrer New Yorker Stellvertretung.

2014 nun ist Phase vier der Karriere. Die Kunsterbin steht vor dem finalen Durchbruch und beruht auf der Schweiz Repräsentantin in Venedig soll sie beweisen, dass sie das Zeug hat, mit Weltkünstlern mithalten. Eine mutige Entscheidung des Komitees. Man präsentiert die Kunstschweizerin nicht in Idealhaltung, sondern in weltoffener und dynamischer Stimmung.

Doch was ist es, was Rosenkranz hat und andere nicht?

Was ihre Kunst hat, das kann man benennen: Sie ist pure Verstandesarbeit. Hat das dazu geführt, dass man Rosenkranz in der *Berner Zeitung* bereits als Studentin, die ihre Diplomarbeit in der lokalen Kunsthalle zeigen konnte, als künftige Starkunsterbin bezeichnete? Philippe Proute, der Direktor der Kunsthalle, zieht Rosenkranz jedenfalls bis heute zu ihren Supportern. Die Kunsterbin David Weiss und Peter Fischli sind oder waren es auch: Weiss hat Rosenkranz gesammelt, und Fischli kennt die Kunsterbin seit ihren Anfängen. Aus dieser Zeit, den Jahren nach der Kunsthochschule, hat die Kunsterbin die Erfahrung behalten, das Widerstand ihren Widerspruch herauszufordern. Ich finde es interessant, dass mein Werk solche intensive Polemik



Bilderbuchschönheit mit Bilderbuchkarriere: Die Künstlerin Pamela Rosenkranz

auslösen kann. Dass Peter Fischli heute im Auswahlkomitee für Venedig sitzt, wird ihr nicht geschadet haben.

Aber wieso kommt dann einer wie Professor Loox dazu, dass Rosenkranz zeigt, als mit der Schlechteste, was er je gesehen habe, zu bezeichnen?

Ihre Kunst richtet nach Wissenschaft, aber genauso nach Esoterik

Abgesehen davon, dass ihre Arbeiten aus Blut und Wasser gemacht sind, aus Hautersatz oder Hautimitat. Ungeachtet dessen, dass sie den menschlichen Körper infrage stellt, Sporthysterie, Konsumwelt. Weibliche Identität und Rollenmuster. Rosenkranz arbeitet mit Hautfarben und mit Spandex, sie füllt Kunstblut oder hautfarbenen pigmentierten Silikon in PET Flaschen. Sie beamt die Erde als Rorschach-Test auf die Wand, eine verstoßene apokalyptische Warnung. Und es gibt Wandarbeiten, f r welche sie Stretch Joggingshorts in Sports le spant als leuchtende, fluoreszierende Leinwand. Das Alternosterie: Sie behauptet in einer Arbeit, dass unsere Kultur gerade von einem Katzen Parasiten. Eine Installation mit den Farben Rot und Blau und einem Duftstoff bringt die Infektion Toxoplasma und unsere Sexualität auf einen Nenner. Rosenkranz suggeriert, dass viruell von einem Einzeller bestimmt sind. Ist das schlecht? Nein, es klingt bloß nach verkorkter Theorie. Tatsächlich aber sind Rosenkranz Arbeit

ten sexy. Doch auf eine subversive Art und Weise: dank ihrer Intellektualität.

Pamela Rosenkranz ist ausgestattet mit einem Sensorium für Farbe, Kinstlichkeit und Manipulation. Und für das desolate Verhöltnis von Mensch und Natur. (Wer wissen will, ob ihr Name echt sei, natürlich ist es das. Ein) discher Name zwar, doch eine waschechte Schweizerin. Ihre delikate Lebensbiografie führt dazu, dass sie sich heute als unpathetisch Identitätslose beschreibt. Das ist wie alles bei ihr gleichzeitig spannend und ernst, nicht nach Wissenschaft, aber genauso nach Esoterik. Doch keiner kann sie benennen, worum es hier wirklich geht. Ihre Kunst deutet an und unterteilt Interpretationen. Denn ihr eigentliches Medium ist nur scheinbar die Skulptur, die Papierarbeit, Video und Installation. Ihr bevorzugtes Ausdrucksmittel ist das Denken.

Rosenkranz ist ein Wissensjunkie und ver-schlingt regel-mäßig Unmengen an Theorien aus der Medizin oder der Philosophie. Descartes Tochter will sie wissen. Und sie verdaut ihr Wissen in Form von Kunst. Spekulativen Realismus nennt man die Denkungsart, der sie angeht, r oder der sie, wie ihre Galeristin sagt, sogar pionierhaft vorantreibt. Wer zu den Bescheidwissenden gehören will: Der Spekulative Realismus versteht sich als Ausstieg aus der Postmoderne.

Aber reicht das? Nein. Ohne einen ganz besonderen Mann wäre Rosenkranz heute nicht die, für die man sie hilt. Es ist der Pole Adam Symczyk.

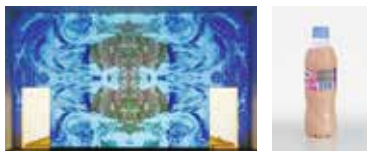
Er ist seit 2003 Leiter und Chefkurator der Kunsthalle in Basel und wurde im vergangenen November zum künstlerischen Leiter der Weltkunstausstellung in Kassel, der Documenta 14 gewählt.

Symczyk ist wichtig, er ist man gebend, er ist eine der entscheidenden Persönlichkeiten der Kunstwelt. Die *New York Times* bezeichnete ihn 2011 als Superstar unter den Kuratoren. Symczyk stieg auf Rosenkranz oder Rosenkranz auf Symczyk, hier widersprechen sich die Erinnerungen, 2008 auf sich der 5. Berlin Biennale, die jener mitkurierte. Man soll sich auf Anhieb verstanden haben. Er interessiert an konzeptuellem Biss und an Reduktion, sie mit scharfem Blick auf Denk- und Wissenssysteme. Symczyk lud Rosenkranz in Basel in eine Gruppenausstellung ein, ein Jahr später er wurde er ihre erste Soloschau in der Heimat. Eine Kunsterbin innerhalb von zwei Jahren zwei Mal zu bevorzugen ist ein starkes Statement. Denn auf die Kunsthalle Basel blickt ein Welt- und einflussreiches Sammlerpublikum.

Symczyk ist kein Mann der großen Worte. Man bezeichnet ihn als scheu, doch unbescheidlich. Dass er die emotionale Distanz von Rosenkranz Kunst ganz besonders schätzt, wundert nicht. Wenn er urteilt, dann auch mit innerem Abstand, analytisch, kühn, man wird von ihm keine polematische Urteile erwarten. Doch bei ihr spricht er von Spannung, von Potenzial und Unkonventionalität.

Und das sind Prädikate, die aus seinem Mund nach einem Versprechen klingen.

Werke von Pamela Rosenkranz: »Loop Revolution«, die Erde als Rorschach-Test auf eine Wand gebeamt (links), »Firm Being (Stay Neutral)«, PET-Flasche mit Silikon und Pigmenten (rechts)



Pamela Rosenkranz

Die Person

Geboren 1979 in Altdorf, erwarb sie 2004 den Master of Fine Arts der Hochschule der Künste Bern und studierte Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Universität Zürich. Sie lebt und arbeitet in Zürich und Spiez.

Die Kunsterbin

Pamela Rosenkranz geht r zu den Spekultativen Realisten. Ihre Kunst ist Verstandesarbeit. Der Wissensjunkie arbeitet mit so unterschiedlichen Materialien wie Kunstblut, Duftstoffen, Spandex oder pigmentiertem Silikon.

Die Karriere

Die Galerie Karma International in Zürich zeigt die Soloshow *My Sexuality*. Bis zum 22. Juni ist Rosenkranz zudem auf der Liste der Art Basel zu sehen. 2015 bespielt sie den Schweizer Pavillon auf der Biennale in Venedig.

frieze^{d/e}

Susanne Pfeffer stellt Dinge vor, mit denen sie sich im Vorfeld ihrer ersten Ausstellung in der Kunsthalle Fridericianum beschäftigt hat

Susanne Pfeffer shares what interested her in preparing her first exhibition at the Kunsthalle Fridericianum

Trouvaille



1

SPEKULATIVER REALISMUS / SPECULATIVE REALISM

Bei fast allen Atelierbesuchen, die ich in der Vorbereitung auf meine Ausstellung *Speculations on Anonymous Materials* gemacht habe, kamen die Gespräche auf das Thema des Spekultativen Realismus. Mit ihm scheint endlich die Postmoderne überwunden. Die spekulativen Realisten brechen mit Kant, befreien das Denken von der Abhängigkeit des Subjekts und ermöglichen eine Individualisierung der anonymen Dinge. Sicher kann sich das Subjekt nur seiner Sinnesfelder sein, der Rest bleibt der Spekulation überlassen. Analog zu diesem Denken, steht die originale Bildgenese für viele der in der Ausstellung vertretenen Künstler und Künstlerinnen nicht mehr im Zentrum ihrer Arbeit. Die Auseinandersetzung mit bereits existierenden Bildern, Objekten und Räumen wird zum entsubjektivierten Ort der Reflexion. Die Künstler und Künstlerinnen versuchen, die Welt aus der Abstraktion zu begreifen und nicht die Abstraktion aus der Welt. Sie nähern sich den Dingen prozesshaft und seriell und reflektieren sie auf diese Weise denn allein in der variierenden Spekulation können die anonymen Materialien des technologischen Wandels gedacht werden.

The topic of Speculative Realism came up continuously in almost all the conversations I had with artists in preparation for my recent show, *Speculations on Anonymous Materials*. It seems this movement has finally heralded a shift beyond the Postmodern. The Speculative Realists break with Kant, liberating thought from its dependency on the subject and enabling an individualization of anonymous things. The sensory field is the only thing a subject can be sure of; all else is left to speculation. In theoretical proximity to this, many artists in the exhibition divest themselves from the centrality of generating original images. Engagement with preexisting images, objects and spaces becomes a desubjectivized site of reflection. The artists attempt to derive an understanding of the world from abstraction rather than an understanding of abstraction from the world. They approach things, and reflect these things through process and seriality – it is only in variational speculation that the anonymous materials of technological flux can be conceived and contemplated.

2

HÄNDE / HANDS

Ein zentraler Bestandteil der Arbeiten von Michele Abeles, Trisha Baga, Aleksandra Domanović, Josh Kline und Sachin Kaeley sind Hände. Während sie in Baga's 3D Filmen oder den Pigmentdrucken von Abeles die Grenzen zwischen Hintergrund und Vordergrund, realer und digitaler Malerei, Fotografie und Photoshop markieren, fungieren die Silikonhände von Kline, welche verschiedene Devices halten, als individuelles Porträt und Prototyp zugleich. Im wörtlichen Sinne digital sind die Malereien von Kaeley. Seine zunächst digital und flach erscheinenden Bilder geben sich bei genauerer Betrachtung als mit dem Zeigefinger gemalte, pastose Gemälde zu erkennen. So geht Kaeley zum lateinischen Ursprung des Wortes zurück: *digitus* – der Finger. Der Gebrauch und die Bedeutung unserer Hände haben sich in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten verändert. Bei der Benutzung unterschiedlicher Geräte sind sie permanent im Blickfeld und unentwegt sind die Finger in Bewegung. Die einstige Unterscheidung zwischen unserem Körper und seinen technologischen Erweiterungen verschwimmt zusehends; ebenso scheint die Trennlinie zwischen körperlicher und geistiger Arbeit, Hand und Kopf, aufgeweicht zu werden.

Hands are a central component in works by Michele Abeles, Trisha Baga, Aleksandra Domanovic, Josh Kline and Sachin Kaeley. Hands mark the boundary between background and foreground, material painting and digital painting, photography and Photoshop in Baga's 3D films or Abeles' pigment prints, for example. Kline's silicone hands, which hold various devices, function simultaneously as both portraits and prototypes. Kaeley's paintings are literally *digital* in the sense that his images, which initially appear as if they have been digitally manipulated, are pastose canvases made with an index finger. Kaeley's method harks back to the Latin origins of the word *digital*: *digitus* – the finger. The use and meaning of our hands have changed over the last two decades. Manipulating a range of devices, they permanently occupy our field of vision, and fingers are in constant motion. The old differentiation between our body and its technological extensions grows noticeably hazy, just as the dividing line between corporal and intellectual labour, hand and head, seems to diminish.





3

WASSERFLASCHEN /
WATER BOTTLES

Die gegenwärtige Auswahl an Mineralwassersorten ist immens, von Fiji Water (Perfected by nature. Untouched by man) über SmartWater (Vapor distilled. Inspired by the clouds) bis zu Volvic (Trinken Sie ein Stück Natur) oder Evian (Live young). Wie diese Slogans bezeugen, gehört Mineralwasser zu den psychologischsten Produkten der Lebensmittelindustrie. Ungeachtet der enormen Transportwege und der in den Plastikflaschen enthaltenen Weichmacher werden Reinheit und natürliche Unberührtheit suggeriert. In den Arbeiten von Trisha Baga, Josh Kline und Pamela Rosenkranz werden Transparenz und Körperlichkeit, Ideologie und Materialität von Plastikflaschen gegeneinander ausgespielt. So wird bei Rosenkranz die aufwendig gestaltete Transparenz in ihrer symbolischen Erweiterung natürlicher Unberührtheit grob derangiert. Gefüllt mit einer viskosen Mischung aus Silikon und in der Filmindustrie gebräuchlichen Kunsthaut-Pigmenten. Das befremdliche Resultat konfrontiert uns mit der Vergegenständlichung eines gespaltenen Konsumentenkörpers: auf esoterische Selbstoptimierung justiert und zugleich wissenschaftlich vermessen, reguliert, dosiert.

The current range of bottled water brands is immense, from Fiji Water (Perfected by nature. Untouched by man), to SmartWater (Vapor distilled. Inspired by the clouds); from Volvic (A sip of nature) to Evian (Live young). As these slogans demonstrate, bottled water can be counted as one of the beverage industry's most psychologized products. Regardless of their astronomically long shipping routes and the presence of plasticizers in bottles, suggestions of purity and the unspoiled manage to shine through. In the works of Trisha Baga, Josh Kline and Pamela Rosenkranz, the transparency and corporeality, ideology and materiality of water bottles are played against each other. Rosenkranz's symbolic expansion of natural purity coarsely deranges this painstakingly designed transparency which becomes filled with a viscous mixture of silicone and skin tone pigments used in the film industry. The disconcerting result confronts us with the reification of a split consumer body: esoterically attuned to self-optimization and scientifically measured, regulated, and dosed.

3D Scans und Drucke haben bereits vor einigen Jahren Einzug in die künstlerische Praxis gefunden. Oliver Laric arbeitet derzeit zusammen mit The Collection und der Usher Gallery im englischen Lincoln an einem gigantischen Projekt. Er scannt mittels professioneller 3D Technologien die komplette Sammlung ein, von archaischen bis zu zeitgenössischen Artefakten. Dabei ist es grundlegend für ihn, kunsthistorische und materielle Hierarchien zu ignorieren und alle Werke ebenbürtig zu behandeln. Die Sensation liegt aber in der öffentlichen Verfügbarkeit der 3D Scans. Jeder Interessierte kann sich die Werke auf der Homepage des Museums anschauen, sie herunterladen und freinutzen. Im Februar 2014 läuft das Patent für das Lasersintern aus und die Anschaffungskosten für 3D Drucker werden rapide sinken. Spannend bleibt, wie sich die Prosumer verhalten werden und ob beziehungsweise wie die physische und haptische Aneignung von Artefakten die Rezeption von Kunst verändern wird.

Recent years have seen the use of 3D scanning and printing in artistic practice. Oliver Laric is presently collaborating on a mammoth project with The Collection and Usher Gallery in Lincoln, England. Using 3D technology, he is scanning the museum's entire collection, from archaeological to contemporary artefacts. Laric considers it fundamental that all art historical and material hierarchies be ignored, giving equal importance to each work. The real difference, however, is in making these 3D scans accessible to the public. The works will be available to view on the museum's homepage, download and use unrestricted. In February 2014, the patent on laser sintering will expire, and the cost of purchasing a 3D printer will plummet. It will be fascinating to see how people react, not to mention whether and how the reception of art will be changed by the physical and haptic appropriation of artefacts. *Translated by William Wheeler*



Susanne Pfeffer ist die neue künstlerische Leiterin der Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel. Zuvor war sie von 2007 bis 2012 Chefkuratorin der KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. Ihre erste Ausstellung im Fridericianum, Speculations on Anonymous Materials, ist noch bis 26. Januar 2014 zu sehen.

Susanne Pfeffer is the new artistic director of Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel. Prior to this, she was chief curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin from 2007-12. Her first exhibition at the Fridericianum, Speculations on Anonymous Materials, runs until 26 January 2014.



Pamela Rosenkranz's No Core from JRP|Ringier



Pamela Rosenkranz, Nothing Unbound, 2009. Mirror, Glass, Acrylic paint. 200 x 160 x 160 cm.

Free-standing sheets of clear acrylic are adorned with messy, seemingly hand-smeared gestures. Brand name water bottles are filled with flesh-colored solids and set facing walls painted designer colors. Messes of acrylic paint hold tight to films of spandex material, hung loosely against the gallery wall so as to visually manifest the grip of the paint's hold to the expandable material.

No Core is the first monograph of Pamela Rosenkranz's work as published by JRP|Ringier. Selecting the title *No Core* suggests an attempt towards a body of work where something integral is purposefully left out or missing, yet here Pamela Rosenkranz seems to find it difficult to avoid referencing the body at every turn—or at least the absence of it. The more we look at the work, it becomes apparent that the body that is missing is not that of the artist, but our own.

What does it mean to have no core? Traditionally the center of a being is closest to the principal nature of what makes the thing characteristically itself. As one moves out from this center, each layer of being that we encounter towards the outer limit becomes more superficial and more about appearance than substance.

Not to possess such a grounded or relatable center must mean the ability for an object to take on the nature of the one perceiving it. Is this not what all unguided visual experience will become anyway? When encountering a work, the less

information that is provided means the more we are left to fill in for ourselves, given the visual and informational baggage that we carry with us to the viewing experience.

Maybe what Rosenkranz is saying here is that the principle or original nature of an object intending to find its way into art history depends less on the intentions of the maker and more on the perceived impact it makes through the lens of those with a greater knowledge of where things fall in relation to the artwork that came before it. No matter what the original core may be, we will eventually erase its meaning and replace the origin point of the work with whatever history will see fit.

Postmodern, Contemporary, Post-postmodern? Rosenkranz's work posits to the fact that these labels matter very little in the end. They are merely handles for us to cling to as we wave our hands madly in the darkness, trying to contain the swirling overflow of art-historical information. Our difficulty with this experience is accelerated by the constantly evolving pull of informational technology.

Rosenkranz knows this just as much as anyone. Her work is an act of release. It is a letting go of the anxiousness that has previously enveloped our need to define all that is set before us. Rosenkranz's work simply is, and in letting go of the desire to self-describe, it is able to become a body of work overflowing with potential.

Reviewed by Matthew Hassell

No Core is available at Sequence Press.

Contemporary Magazine

KALEIDOSCOPE

Issue 18 (Summer 2013), highlighting ANDRA URSUTA, SHANZHAI BIENNIAL, SERGEI TCHEREPNIN, YNGVE HOLEN and PETRIT HALILAJ, investigating AN UPDATED NOTION OF MATERIALITY, exploring the curatorial practice of MASSIMILIANO GIONI, featuring our regulars, tips and three special inserts.

Post-

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Meta-

Hyper-

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MAIN THEME

Hyper-



Alisa Baremboym, *Soft Screw (detail)*, 2012
Courtesy of 47 Canal, New York. Photography by Joerg Lohse

Materiality



Pamela Rosenkranz, *More Stream*, 2012
Courtesy of the artist; Karma International, Zurich; and Miguel Abreu
Gallery, New York. Photography by Gunnar Meier

From their shared concern with the blur of organic and inorganic, Pamela Rosenkranz and Alisa Baremboym discuss physicality versus technology and the shifting boundaries between our bodies and the external world. Interview by Ruba Katrib

MAIN THEME

The work of artists Alisa Baremboym and Pamela Rosenkranz deals with the redistribution of what constitutes the organic and the inorganic—situations in which synthetic materials could look more like bodily substances, and the body appear more mechanical. Both artists make use of materials that are increasingly ubiquitous as a result of new industries and technologies, but that are also very synthetic and strange. This past fall, I asked Baremboym and Rosenkranz to participate in an exhibition I curated at SculptureCenter in Long Island City, New York. “A Disagreeable Object” touched on contemporary art practices that could be connected to the work of the Surrealists. In organizing the exhibition, I was thinking about current manifestations of the uncanny and the *informe* in response to shifting ideas about commodities and the body. This conversation considers their practices in relation to these approaches.

Ruba Katrib

Each of you refers to the human form in your work. However, instead of representing the form directly, you speak to a certain condition of physicality that is increasingly tied to technology and commercial products, which seems to create a heightened sense of disembodiment. How do you see this fragmentation playing out in your work?

Alisa Baremboym

What we can internalize and externalize gives us the ability to adapt to the present conditions we experience. A certain transformation happens in these interactions, and our perceptions of our own bodies are in constant flux. Also there is no longer a line between organic composition and appendage. I think these appendages exist somewhere between hardware and software, fully integrated and functioning along with us. My practice, in part, is informed by this pollution of surfaces and contradiction of materialities.



Alisa Baremboym, *Travel Impression 2*, 2013
Courtesy of 47 Canal, New York
Photography by Joerg Lohse

Pamela Rosenkranz, *Firm Being*, Venice Series, 2009
 Courtesy of the artist and Karma International, Zurich
 Photography by Gunnar Meier



Pamela Rosenkranz

I am interested in how various forms of contemporary knowledge, technology, and the economy develop our perception of the body. A part of my work centers around skin as the interface between the body and its environment. Taking skin as the medium per se, the economically codified and technologically extended surface collapses into the organic depth of this body as an evolved, natural product generated by blind and anonymous physical forces and biological processes. My work tracks how scientific knowledge distorts and stretches the "artificial" image of the body, and how it undermines the meaning of identity that comes with this image.

RK It almost seems that the more scientific knowledge about the body is produced, and the more we can augment and alter the body through technology, the more abstract our experience of the body becomes. I am really interested in what you both are saying about how these lines between our bodies and the external world are shifting and, consequently, that our relationship to organic and inorganic material is changing as well. Pamela, could you talk a little bit about your use of Dragon Skin, a synthetic replica of skin? And Alisa, you work with a lot of gel emollients in your sculptures and print works—could you say something about that? As Pamela said, it is as if the material becomes an image in itself.

PR Does it make it more abstract or more real? I don't know. Both, probably. Current scientific and technological developments clearly alter the link between the body and its environment. Once it was unimaginable to implant a cardiac pacemaker—an artificial rhythm of what was believed to be the seat of the soul. And now there are headlines about a “prosthesis” of the brain—the organ which stores our innermost feelings, experiences, memories, etc. These changes in our representational relations to our bodies, its flesh, blood, and organs, are—on the one hand—culturally processed in B-movies where Dragon Skin feeds fantasies by faking human skin, where bodiless limbs are alive, hearts are pulsating long after they have been ripped out of the torso, and zombies and vampires stay alive when dead. It's a silicone used by the film industry to produce all these body parts that get stretched and splattered over the screen. On the other hand, Dragon Skin fills—in a culture where other silicones pump up bodies that are not looking fit anymore—the need to visually “complete” bodies that have been sick or hurt and or miss a part. It builds the functional and aesthetical surface of medical prostheses.

The function and fiction of this material spans a pretty wide range. I like how the imitation of skin is opening up the problem of abstraction. What's the abstraction of skin: skin color? The monochrome solution is nothing like skin, but it ends up being more real and touching than the spotted, wrinkly, pigment chart that it in fact is.



Alisa Baremboym, *Leakage Industries Clear Conduit*, 2012.
Courtesy of 47 Canal, New York. Photography by Joerg Lohse

AB I was thinking about how there are so many vague substances that we are in contact with and that we are not entirely conscious of. To a certain degree this has been the case for decades. Since the industrial revolution, humans have been susceptible to so many different refined elements not typically found in nature, and these are now being produced at an extremely accelerated rate. The environmental consequences of this are affecting how we interact with and use certain implements or tools for our everyday lives. This is what pushed me to search for this amorphous element, a substance that could hold a shape but had a shifting visual presence that was at once tactile and disorienting. The material became an abstract image in my mind, similar to the body itself. The human organism has always been abstracted by limitations of knowledge about its workings as well as belief systems about its transcendence. The visual representation of this abstraction is maybe a more contemporary phenomenon but one that has shifted from being metaphysical to being more corporeal.

The gelled emollient I use is a substance derived from petroleum or crude oil that is developed in different consistencies and used by various companies for things as diverse as cosmetic products, animal feed, ointments and pharmaceuticals, among other uses. The vague terminology and widespread use for this shape-shifting substance is related directly to this idea of the abstracted body. It is a body with not-yet-defined consequences, but a body with ominous tones of simultaneous extension and preservation, as well as potentially overextended physicality of



Alisa Baremboym, *Clear Conduit* (detail), 2012
Courtesy of 47 Canal, New York
Photography by Joerg Lohse



Pamela Rosenkranz, *As One (Melting Sorrow)*, 2012
Courtesy of the artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

abnormalities. I use this gel as a vehicle for materials such as silk and porous ceramic. The printed silk bonds with the gel to create a translucent surface. The porous ceramic interacts with the gel by soaking up and sweating out the mineral oils contained within it. This forced, biological cause-and-effect relationship is formed between the gel and the substances it fuses with. It's an experiment of a living logic.

RK Commercial products are a major part of this conversation. Our relationship to products, as well as to materials, has certainly changed over the past hundred years. Pamela, you touch on this in your works, as in the water bottles filled with Dragon Skin. I think for you, by intervening into existing products, you reveal how these manufactured substances are integrated into our lives. With the water bottles, something as basic and pure as water has been packaged and marketed, which you explore in poignant ways. And Alisa, you are almost making new products out of existing materials. They suggest uses that we haven't uncovered yet, but that are perhaps around the corner. Could you both talk about the use of products in your works?

AB I grew up with an understanding that almost anything could be customized. This kind of relationship to objects (and products) came about from witnessing a deficit of things needed for everyday life in the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union. When something was needed, either it had to be engineered by you or your relative, or found through black market channels. On a basic level this permeated my practice. I recycle some products found in our contemporary world, such as USB extension cables, flash drives, or suitcase accessories, and reposition them in relation to ceramic sculptures. Fused, they become newly integrated altered objects. This abstraction of purpose or use value changes the way one approaches and interacts with them. Ceramic is a naturally porous organic material that absorbs synthetic materials, much like the body. I find that the intersection of the products of nature (such as ceramic) and machine-made products (such as cables or plastic) is slowly becoming what we consider to be organic or natural. In light of this fundamental shift in perception, these materials begin to function as natural resources.



Alisa Baremboym, *Torque*, 2013
Courtesy of 47 Canal, New York
Photography by Joerg Lohse



Pamela Rosenkranz, *The Wild Blue Me*, 2011
Courtesy of the artist and Karma International, Zurich
Photography by Stefan Korte

PR I work with specific brands—such as Evian or Fiji in the case of bottled water—to activate the history of the material substances in the product and contrast it with its idealized meaning. In the case of my Fiji series I take on their copyright slogan “Untouched by Man,” for example. Their strategy is to advertise the product as water from a source that has not yet been touched by “the compromised air of the 21st century,” but the bottled water becomes the essence of what actually constitutes that compromise.

I think it is important to collapse the notion of “culture” into a very large term for “nature.” The blurring of the distinction between natural and synthetic products highlights the fact that these plastic water bottles, or Samsung LCD flat screens, ASICS sneakers, etc., are embedded in a complex ecological and geopolitical web that has successfully been extracted away from the ready-to-consume product. Consider, in the case of Samsung, the wars for oil and coltan being fought at this moment. Or, to return to the discussion of bottled water, there are particles that make plastics smoother that go into the drain system and back into rivers and seas. This contamination has effects on the hormonal balance: by mimicking estrogen, these chemicals are most likely responsible for girls menstruating earlier and boys growing less hair, alongside other more complicated consequences. Invisible, this water is still looking pure and wet but is in fact soaked with human influence.

55th International Art Exhibition - *The Encyclopedic Palace* La Biennale di Venezia, Exhibition Catalogue

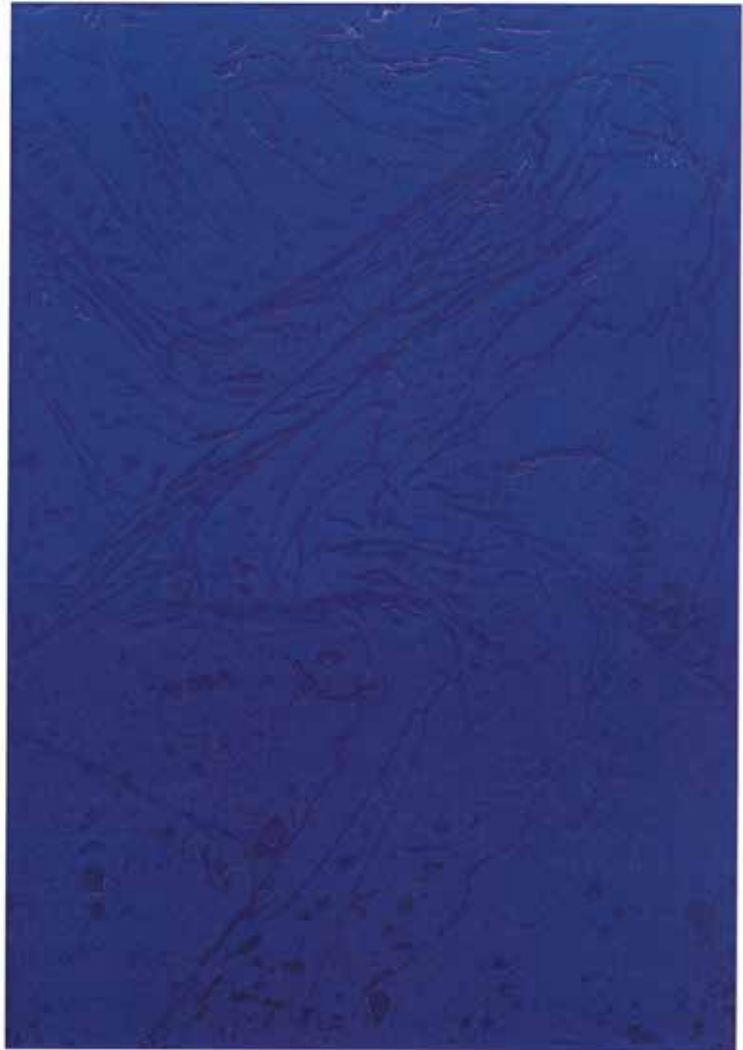
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Pamela Rosenkranz

b. 1979 in Sils-Maria, Switzerland

Pamela Rosenkranz's works borrow aesthetic tropes from Minimalist and Post-Minimalist art in the service of a multi-layered critique of consumerism, the commoditization of art, and the exaltation of individuality that has historically fueled both. To this end, she incorporates a diverse array of consumer products into her work—bottles of mineral water, boxes of unassembled IKEA furniture, Ralph Lauren house paint, Asics sportswear, soft drinks—in a manner that dissects their marketing aura in order to redeploy it in the service of art. In a recent series, Rosenkranz responds to postwar avant-gardist Yves Klein's patented, self-branded shade of vivid ultramarine, International Klein Blue (IKB). Klein spoke of his pure color as the visible manifestation of cosmic energy, asserting that it had the power to draw viewers away from material concerns and towards an experience of boundlessness. At the same time, he often seemed to mock the art market's investment in his work's spiritual qualities: in one 1957 exhibition, for example, he displayed a series of indistinguishable blue monochrome paintings, each priced differently to reflect its uniqueness, however imperceptible.

In the series presented here from 2012, *Because they try to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work*, Rosenkranz brings Klein's shamanistic idealism down to earth. Using JPG files of photographs of Klein's monochrome paintings, downloaded from the Internet, Rosenkranz has created large-format inkjet prints, which in their final state are affected by the contingencies inherent in all stages of digital and analog reproduction. The light conditions of the original photo, scanner settings, and



Because they try to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work (No. Repeat), 2012. Phosphors, blue/black/red ink, pigment inkjet print, 300 x 340 cm

MAN AS COLOUR SPECTRUM

Erik Wysocan: I first became aware of your work last year at *This Is Not My Color / The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, the show with the artist Nikolas Gambaroff at the Swiss Institute in New York. If I'm not mistaken, this was a partial restaging of your earlier show in Venice titled *Our Sun*. That exhibition was framed by the rather apocalyptic state of the drowning city – a sinking condition that has become a prophetic vision of what's to come for Manhattan in the next century (according to the climate models). Did you have the sense, being in New York, that the financial capital of the US is on a slow decline into the sea?

Pamela Rosenkranz: 'When I was living in New York some years ago, I was actually quite drawn to comparing the two cities because of that literal fact. For the project *Our Sun*, I wanted to take a direct and realistic approach to the romanticized image of light playing on the floodwaters of a drowning city. I looked at the phenomena of sunlight and water from the perspective of a human 'domestication' of these elements – adored equally in religion, art, and holiday culture – distilling them down to the colours of blue, gold and silver and the monochrome versions of so-called 'skin colours'.

'This is not my Color in New York featured the topic of water, taking the colour chart of Evian as the basis for working with the commercial brand identities of water. I had also worked with this theme in my earlier project *The Most Important Body of Water is Yours* – a reference to one of Evian's famous slogans. This examination of natural water as merchandise, which has been advertised as a product for health and beauty, revolves around my concerns with the representation of the contemporary body. The idea that water can clean the body from the inside and purify it with its 'virgin' quality is brought to a boil... including the misguided assumptions about detoxification.

'Capitalism has become such a power of nature itself that in 2008 a formal proposal was presented to the Geological Society of London to make the 'Anthropocene' – the term used to indicate the period in which industrialization began to have an effect on Earth's evolution – an official unit of geological time. My ideas extended from the obvious implications like the greenhouse effect and the looming shortage of drinkable water to the nightmarish conspiracy theories of pole-caps melting that tip the planet out of its balance and eventually even out of its orbit.

'Venice is a typical short-stay destination – it is impossible to tell if those PET bottles that seesaw in the dirty canals were carried in from distant places or if they were bought from the wide selection of international brands sold by the city's shops. The local characteristics used to distinguish the many global water brands, like their geologically determined mineral balances, reach out to the privileged travellers as tiny little bodies of 'nature'. That inspired the work *Firm Bodies*: bottles filled with skin-coloured silicone, functioning like a short-circuit that reduces the idea of water into an absurd mantra where one is drinking a skin-toned milky liquid, something like a homogenized solution of one's own body.

'These ideas about colours and commodities are informed by a recent development by scientists of the so-called "brainbow", a specialized colour system created to visualize the sanctum of our subjectivity: thinking itself. Neurons of mice are dyed in the RGB colour spectrum – the same that composes a television

screen – and when new synapses are created, different thoughts are labelled by different colours. Since every mental state of the subject can be increasingly treated in mere biological terms and now visualized in its according tints, life and death, which may define the subject's consciousness, are now linked to a set of colour labels for existential feelings, put into place by science.'

EW: In the catalogue for *Our Sun* there was a text by Reza Negarestani, the prominent (and somewhat mysterious) Iranian philosopher. How did you come to work together?

PR: 'I noticed Reza's work in the magazine *Collapse* and then, while reading his book *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (2008), I realized how much my ideas about Venice and its connection with the Middle East correspond with his writing about nature and culture and, especially, with his concept of "anonymous materials". I think that it is more interesting to talk about art in terms of the material that determines the work, rather than the artist's identity, and *Cyclonopedia* is doing that as meta-fiction.'

EW: You said earlier that there is a 'conflict between the perspectives from our self-experience and science's increasingly advanced understanding of neurobiological or physical processes'. Perhaps this is a contemporary rendering of the classical mind/body problem? In the emerging field of quantum biology there have been efforts to resolve the impasse with a theory of the Quantum Mind. In a funny move, the mind/body distinction is reconciled through their unification under quantum information theory, while at the same time indicating that the answer may be fundamentally unknowable – not only from a philosophical point of view, but also from the perspective of physics. Could this be where Negarestani's 'weird universe' comes into play?

PR: 'The "Quantum Mind" seems to be a quite disputed approach, and as far as I know it is a speculative theory that cannot be supported by experimental evidence so far. (This might be why physics touches on philosophy so much here.) I am of course not at all speaking against theoretical speculations in this regard, but I think that this concept infuses the mystery of quantum mechanics into the unsolved questions of how a physical brain can generate conscious experience. In general, people tend to like analogy more than the clear and neurobiological approach to the problem of consciousness, in the sense that analogy nurtures those emotional needs for comfort, which include our preference for imagining the larger universe as something dark, deep, and obscure. And I think that Reza would not give in to such romantic turns.

'I am more taken by the act of thinking on a material basis. Every thought epigenetically – and therefore materially – changes the brain, and it needs fuel to do so. Thomas Metzinger speaks about this in the sense of a metabolic currency. He says that "If a biological brain wants to develop a new cognitive capacity, it must pay a price. The currency in which the price is paid is sugar. And additional energy must be made available and more glucose must be burned to develop and stabilize this new capacity. As in nature in general, there is no such thing as a free lunch. If an animal is to evolve, say, colour vision, this new trait must pay by making new sources of food and sugar available to it. If a biological organism wants to develop a conscious self or think in concepts or master a language, then this step into a new level of mental complexity must be sustainable. It requires additional neural hardware, and that hardware requires fuel. That fuel is sugar, and the new trait must enable our animal to find this extra amount of energy in its environment.'"¹

EW: Is art implicated in this sort of metabolic economy?

I think very much so. This might even be where we can locate the questions of art's *prima materia*. Carbohydrates and time to think might have substantially more in common with the beginning of art than the occurrence of clay and pigments. But that is pure speculation from my side now.

To me, modern art can be to some extent described as using a psychology that centres the particular subject as the ultimate "experiencer" – infusing meaning into the world – as a form of a mystical idea of the self's continuity with nature. But if we take the findings of contemporary neurobiology into account, there seems to be no such thing as a self *per se*. The world is meaningless but the inventive self construes meaning in order to shape itself up for the evolutionary arms race of our brains – and the self is no fixed entity but an ever-changing process. Without saying that it is possible to destroy or necessary to eliminate our self, I am interested in the attempt to empty such given meaning; and to consider that even if it appears differently, it is generated by "meaningless" natural and material mechanisms.

In other words, if we take seriously the "truth" that science generates, and if we consider the political and social implications that a selfless subject might have, subjectivity becomes itself mere material. This was the reason why I started to work with Yves Klein as a model for the mythologization of the artist's subjectivity, to examine that figure – which so closely resembles the features of the contemporary individualist; and to look into the void of a meaningless universe where Yves Klein, or the artist, must be reduced to the physical interactions of neuro-chemical processes. I think the economy and culture that evolved into individualism and the inflation of the self that went along with it were very much mirrored in Klein's understanding of art and I think it is important to contrast this with our contemporary point of view.

Harried by negative critics and most probably already suffering from physical weakness, he wrote in 1961 in the famous Chelsea Hotel Manifesto: "That day, as I lay stretched upon the beach of Nice, I began to feel hatred for birds which flew back and forth across my blue, cloudless sky, because they tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work. Birds have to be eliminated."² Appropriating immaterial commodities like the sky and blurred by Christian hopes for absolution, Klein here seems to have regarded the birds that cross 'his' skies as a mere stand-in for evolution theory. A direct descendent of dinosaurs, the bird as species might have unconsciously reminded him too much of the natural origins of history and the meaninglessness of natural selection.'

1. Thomas Metzinger, *Ego Tunnel* (Basic Books, New York 2009) p. 43.

2. 'The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto' (New York, 1961), in: www.yveskleinarchives.org/documents/chelsea_us.html

**DEATHLESSNESS
OR
JEN, JEANS, AND THE GENES**

Pamela Rosenkranz, 2012

*I fled, bizarre, a person condemned to wear probably
mourning for the inexplicable Penultimate.*

Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Demon of Analogy"

Blue was apparently the favorite color of the project director of Viagra, the famous pill formulated for the enhanced potency of an endless youth. He is not the only one.

When light from the sun reaches the earth's atmosphere, longer wavelengths — the warmer lights of red, orange, and yellow — pass through, while the shorter rays of the color blue get absorbed by gas molecules and dispersed across the skies. These blue rays color the skies above and reflect the oceans beneath them. This is how blue set the stage on which it would play the leading color in the evolution of our eye: The earliest of our ancestor species to develop photosensitivity were aquatic, and only two specific wavelength ranges of electromagnetic radiation — blue and green visible light — can travel through

water. So when life began to perceive light, and with it, the difference between depths and heights, this new visual sense for space attracted certain species to these lights of the heavens, creating the physical and metaphysical drive to slowly bubble up to the surface, to finally take land, and once and for all to meet the ultimate restrictions of gravity on their growing pads.

We seem to know these stories implicitly, but we tend to forget that our vision, like our other sense organs, is not abstract, but is very much influenced and shaped by the long natural history of the species that preceded human-kind. In fact, as a result of this heritage, we still perceive much more of the colors blue and green than any other color that our eyes are able to perceive. And this physical ability is very likely responsible for blue being the favorite color of the majority of people across the world.

But there is another, more literal sense to Viagra's chromatic branding: The drug has an inhibiting effect on an enzyme present in photoreceptive cells, causing a depolarization of the rod cells and a higher light sensitivity – a side effect called 'Blue Vision'. An overdose of the blue pills can cause permanent staining of one's vision with fair blue clouds. Which makes an absurd enough association to another sexual stimulus that nature created for a seemingly meaningless privilege: The *Baby blues*. Until around eight thousand years ago, everyone had brown eyes. Then the first person started to branch into a nowadays half-billion and counting blue-eyed crowd. So far the only explanation seems to be that blue irises are a physical feature that female humans first developed to attract sexual partners for reproduction.

The heavens, as embodied by the blue sky, are the place where many religions 'see' humans go after they die. Likewise, the French artist Yves Klein's preference for the color blue seemed to be inextricably related to his seemingly anticipated 'disappearance'. As Klein was a fervent Christian esoteric, the blue of the skies might have meant much more to him than the gates to successful sexual reproduction—even though he ended up smearing his lady models with blue all over, with pigments mixed in heavy solvents, and using them as female brushes. In this image it comes to the fore that blue works as a contrary color to the more pink and brown tints of their skin colors. As such, Yves Klein's nameless models — so many *blueets* — would disappear into the chroma key enigma.

Klein appeared to be somewhat of a hypostasis of an artistic practice that revolved around himself exclusively. This form of subjectivity seems to express authenticity, but has been inflated by spiritual chauvinism and art's young swings of messianic stardom. His death was supposed to be special; it was a perfect conservation of the picture that the man had created. Klein's early death at thirty-four parallels the probable age of Jesus when he died, and it seemed to enhance his version of a self that wishes to die with a cause, to bubble up further and further to the skies of eternal remembrance. But cigarettes, amphetamines, his color pigments, and solvents became a fatal cocktail over the years. So that, with today's knowledge, contemporary medicine disputes and dissolves the death of famous Yves

Klein's Blues; what signified 'immateriality' to Klein is, in fact, a very material, general, and biological death.

The process of aging is itself a process of cellular decline. It appears, however, that we are continually hindering this process through the laws of natural selection. We grow older and older – or, rather, we stay younger and younger over the course of time. In a chapter of *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* which elucidates 'The Seeds of Neoteny', a theory that explains the principles of the process that drives man to grow ever-younger features and a prolonged lifespan, Stephen Jay Gould notes: '*An ape arrested in its development; holding the spark of divinity only through a chemical brake placed upon its glandular development...*' And he cites Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer Dies The Swan*: '*There is a kind of glandular equilibrium... Then a mutation comes along and knocks it sideways. You get a new equilibrium that happens to retard the developmental rate. You grow up; but you do it so slowly that you are dead before you've stopped being like your great-great-grandfather's fetus.*'

Eyes get larger, the forehead morphs into a longer form, hair disappears, our voices are lifted, and we reach an ever-older age. But this strange evolution has not just affected us, but has interfered with the progress of our closest friends: the domesticated animals. When they adapted into dogs, wolves began to grow puppylike fuzzy fur, round torsos, large heads and eyes, and ears that hung down rather than stood erect. And cats only apparently started to 'meow' in adulthood, so as to become more attractive to

their hosts or human parents. These are all survival strategies, which enhance the evolutionary fitness of pets as companions of humans that host them as living analogies of cuteness.

This very long-term process of stretching life by simulating youth seems to be one of the human brain's instinctive goals. Brooke Shields presented these advantages in a face overflowing with the warm sadness of a healthy teenager with white skin and wet and glossy irises, in a 1980s commercial: *'Occasionally, certain conditions produce a structural change in the jeans, which will bring about the process of evolution. This may occur in one or more of the following ways: Firstly, by selective mating in which a single jean-type proves superior and transmits itself to future generations. Secondly, by jean-drift, in which certain jeans may fade away while other jeans persist. And finally, by natural selection, which filters out those jeans better equipped than others to endure in the environment. This may result in the origin of an entirely new species, which brings us to Calvin's and the survival of the fittest.'*

Her jeans are certainly wearing precious skin. But jeans in general made it officially to the other end of classes; they definitely held on to someone else than those bodies they were containing originally. Still often blue, they are telling about the confusion that has occurred. The 'worn-out look'—meaning expressive fades and scratches—requires a technique called sandblasting, that is responsible for deadly lung diseases. But it is not just illness or death that pays the price for this kind of sex appeal.

Cell decay, triggered by damaging substances, gets copied into the genes of the next generations, and the next,

and so forth. Epigenetics is a young branch of science that is dealing with the fact that the conditions we live in are triggering something like the buttons of our genes; and when we procreate, these markers get fixed into the genes of our children. We don't know much about it in detail, but there is evidence that grandchildren of smokers are, for example, fatter, smaller and less intelligent than their peers; that those whose grandparents suffered hunger have a much higher risk of diseases such as diabetes and certain cancers; and that those that, on the contrary, enjoyed the advantages of healthy food, good education, and so on, will to some extent automatically live longer and even relatively longer when they would take up bad habits like smoking again. We inherit the conditions that our ancestors endured or enjoyed – so the feeling that World War II is still sitting in your bones is not simply esotericism. But when will the ghosts in our genes meet the ghosts in our jeans?

In the meantime, here is Jennifer Aniston wooing ironically for a water brand – 'hydration you can feel' – in your face and in your brain. Her hands have caught the bottle of smartwater — *smart because it's made that way*. And she goes on a journey through the viral hot spots of YouTube. One of them, of course, is packed with puppies. It's funny, Itzhak Fried, a UCLA neurosurgeon, reported some years ago to have encountered a neuron that responds excitedly to Jennifer Aniston's features. The brains of epileptic test subjects were stimulated by pictures of celebrities. While the surgery on their conscious brain was performed in full

awareness, the patients were offered a picture of Aniston along with other celebrities. (It's good that the brain does not feel its painfully opened mind.) And somehow a very special neuron that populates the deep space of grey matter for many people, strongly fired to the felt presence of Aniston's lovely expressions, that the scientists were holding in their hands. Apparently, this same neuron was suspiciously quiet when the neurons had to process pictures of other stars, humans or animals.

We can trace these neurons firing to sculpt Aniston's hair, her eyes, and her everlasting, painstaking smile. The ad is virally wiring a Jen into billions of minds for 2.46 minutes. Reproducing her over and over. Reproducing her vaunted infertility even. It is a neural celebration of a chosen self in every other three pounds of mind. As spirit in the bottle, we meet the hybrid self that the brains of smartwater created with Jennifer's material. The place of the nerve cell is grafted on top of the area where we get blue skies, lakes, blue eyes, and whatever appears bluer than it is. But still, what is water? Those lifting blue sips that run through our bodies everyday.

The water is the sky. Up there is the widest bright yonder we can see, and it laughs down on us in all its shades every single day. It is the dimension of our biggest natural illusion, the ultimate contrast to our skin-colored bodies. Humankind seeks to compare itself with the world; it has a need to identify itself with everything — be it an animal, gods, or the heavens. The same archaic communication lets us draw and think in images, and in the end, allows us to enter into the exchange of goods.

So who are these selves that sell us their analogy of blue; deprived of death, lifted, and elevated? Our vision unravels them out of the blue soups to feel like lifting our own selves up. They are entertaining a message for the hungry I. Who sits behind your eyes? Thinking about how many pills one should take for the next fuck? But this is how we grow now. Entering the epigenetics of *Viagra children*. They will have the largest, the most absolute, and the bluest of blue eyes, ever. And that's not an analogy. Sexy neotenic hologlows.

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting, Reproduction

Kunsthalle Basel, September 11, 2012

With the exhibition *Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting, Reproduction* Kunsthalle Basel presents the latest project by Swiss artist Pamela Rosenkranz (*1979). This exhibition will be her first institutional solo show in German-speaking Switzerland.

Rosenkranz is interested in evolutionary mechanisms and processes, that seem to be the basis of how people are organized in a society. The artist is interested in the differences between body and mind, in human interactions, and in men's relationship to nature. Rosenkranz explores these interests, utilizing scientific explanations that contradict our current notions of what it means to be human.

Rosenkranz uses a variety of materials. The emphasis is on the naturalness of these materials, and to that end even PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) can be seen as a natural product. Even though they claim to be the most evolved of all organisms, human beings are just one of many elements on our planet. Everything created by humans is natural; in this way, the concept of "artificiality" is called into question. Rosenkranz' thinking is influenced by a materialistic perspective that calls the subject into question. The artist annuls identity and gender differences; her position as a woman is likewise rendered meaningless.

Rosenkranz' works explore the various ways in which we define ourselves as human. They address fundamental human qualities, highlighting these and placing them in a partly new, partly familiar context. Even though the exhibition consists of individual works, it can be understood as one overall examination by Rosenkranz in which, themes and elements recur throughout the rooms of the Kunsthalle. In the first space of the Kunsthalle, the artist has installed a sink, which is the same as those found in the restrooms of the Campari Bar located in the adjacent rooms. The faucet is open and blue colored water flows permanently; its splashing against the ceramic sink makes a sound which superimposes itself upon the silence in the rooms. Strolling through the rooms, visitors will realize that the color blue is a recurring element. The evolutionary perception of blue within our visible spectrum was created at a pre-evolutionary stage when creatures only existed under the sea. Our sensitivity to this color has barely changed throughout the course of the history of humankind and we are still highly sensible for the wavelengths of blue than of all the other colors of the visible spectrum.

On large-format prints behind plexiglass, Rosenkranz presents monotone blue surfaces based on the IKB works (International Klein Blue) by Yves Klein that were created at the end of the 1950s and downloaded by her as JPEG's from the internet; for these monochrome paintings produced by the French artist, he invented and patented a specific blue tone, which increases the brilliance of ultramarine blue. The color of Rosenkranz' pigment inkjet prints is based on the data information which contains colors that are subject to prevailing light conditions, scan settings, or photochemical conditions, etc. The prints are hand-mounted and due to the manual operation bubbles arise undermining Yves Klein's idea of an intangible heaven, and the immateriality of the sky: as the bubbles become objects they challenge the concept of air being immaterial.

In contrast with the color blue as *Wild Blue Yonder* (the fascination with the vastness of the sky) the color red represents physicality and the body. The color of blood next to genetic skin pigmentation is primarily responsible for skin tone. The red also shines through the white walls of the Kunsthalle, which have been painted with standard dispersion mixed with fake — or real — blood. A bottle of *SmartWater* filled with a liquid is set close to the pink wall. Is the content water or silicon? Is it skin color? The work does not spell it out, and yet it refers to our desire to look fresh and eternally young. It is about the preservation of beauty, of purity as physical criteria of perfection. Health and fitness are two issues often recurring in Rosenkranz' exhibitions, and here they come to the fore once again.

Another new work in the exhibition focuses on the influence of color in decision-making. A seemingly random sequence of gigantic expanses of color is projected in the two last exhibition spaces of the Kunsthalle. The projection is accompanied by a computer-generated voice called "Heather". This voice repeats the words "Yes" and "No" — agreement and rejection — in every conceivable intonation available for the range of meanings offered by the voice program. At this point this work refers to a specific way in which colors have been used in the domain of science, especially in the so-called Brainbow project. This specific color spectrum is used by scientists and was developed while conducting experiments on mice to make their brain activity visible. The RGB color spectrum was used to color-code their neurons. Rosenkranz' project in turn, is interested in knowing how existential human emotions can also be color-coded and how they can then be contemplated and categorized in a manner that is strictly analogous to colors.

Pamela Rosenkranz' approach is not based on a scientific interest as such. She works with findings and speculations culled not only from the natural sciences, but also from politics, history, philosophy, and popular culture. The exhibition *Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting, Reproduction* therefore can be thought of as a self-contained project that revolves around the conflict between scientific description and subjective experience. Furthermore, she also criticizes a conception of art, which puts the focus on the artist's subjectivity, and she does this by confronting statements and explanations from contemporary science with prevailing notions of art, thereby radically negating the use of terms like 'experience', 'identity', and 'gender.'

The exhibition is generously supported by Peter Handschin. Supported by Kanton Uri.

Pamela Rosenkranz (*1979, Altdorf, CH) lives and works in Zürich, CH and Amsterdam. Rosenkranz graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts Bern with the Master of Fine Arts in 2004 and studied Comparative Literature at the University of Zurich in 2005. In 2010 she participated at the Independent Residency Program at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam.

Solo exhibitions (selection): *To you I would like to be Who*, Tongewölbe T25, Ingolstadt (2011); *This Is Not My Color / The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, mit Nikolas Gambaroff, Swiss Institute, New York (2011); *Untouched by Man*, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig (2010); *No Core*, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva (2010); *Our Sun*, Swiss Institute, Venice (2009); *High Purity*, Amden, Switzerland (2009); *Unfade*, Nuit Blanche, Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2008); *Enter (Projectspace)*, Kunstmuseum Thun, Thun. **Group exhibitions (selection):** *Man in the Holocene*, MIT, List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2012); *Insight - Outsight II*, Städtische Galerie im Park, Viersen, Germany (2012); *The Greater Cloud*, Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam (2011); *He disappeared into complete silence*, De Hallen Haarlem, Haarlem, The Netherlands (2011); *Unbounding and Crossing Over as Art*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein (2011); *Open Studio*, Rijksakademie, Amsterdam (2011); *How to Work (More for) Less*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2011); *How to Work*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2011); *Poste Restante*, Artspeak, Vancouver (2011); *Une Idée, une Forme, un Être - Poésie/Politique du corporel*, Migrosmuseum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (2010); *The Real Thing*, Tate Britain, London (2010); *Big Minis, Fetishes of Crisis*, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux (2010); *Declaración Anual de Personas Morales 2010*, House of Gaga, Mexico City (2010); *Exhibition, Exhibition*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2010); *Fax*, Art Museum Torrance, Torrance, California (2010); *Of Objects Fields and Mirrors*, Kunsthau Glarus, Glarus (2010); *Fax*, Drawing Center, New York (2009); *Reduction and Suspense*, Kunstverein Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria (2009); *Dragged Down into Lowercase*, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (2008); *Principle Hope*, Manifesta7, Rovereto, Italy (2008); *No Leftovers*, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (2008); *Vertrautes Terrain*, ZKM Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe (2008); *Shifting Identities*, Kunsthau Zurich, Zurich (2008); *When Things cast no Shadow*, 5th Berlin Biennale, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2008).

Ausstellung

Blau blau blau ist ... Viagra

3.10.2012, 09:28 Uhr

Das Interesse von Pamela Rosenkranz gilt evolutionären Mechanismen und Prozessen, die dem Denken und Handeln des Menschen zu unterliegen scheinen. Die Kunsthalle Basel widmet der Schweizer Künstlerin eine Ausstellung. Von Karen N. Gerig



Viagra - die blaue Pille für mehr Potenz. Oder wars Jugend? (Bild: zVg)

«Blau war offenbar die Lieblingsfarbe des Projektleiters von Viagra, jener berühmten Pille, erfunden zur Steigerung der Potenz einer ewigen Jugend. Er ist nicht der einzige.» So beginnt ein Essay der Schweizer Künstlerin Pamela Rosenkranz. Die Farbe Blau gefiel auch Yves Klein. Und auch Pamela Rosenkranz ist von ihr offenkundig fasziniert.

Die Farbe Blau ist ein formales Element, das dem Besucher in Rosenkranz' Ausstellung in der Kunsthalle Basel immer wieder begegnet. Blaues Wasser fliesst aus einem Hahnen in ein Waschbecken, kleine Viagra-Pillen liegen auf dem Boden, grossformatige Bilder zieren als Referenz an Yves Klein einen ganzen Raum.

Evolution

Diese Arbeiten nur auf die gemeinsame Farbe zu reduzieren, griffe jedoch zu wenig weit. Denn Rosenkranz geht mit ihren Werken weit, weit zurück, bis zum früh-evolutionären Entwicklungsstadium des Menschen. Damals, als unsere Vorfahren noch die Meere bewohnten, wurden die menschlichen Sehzellen ausgebildet. Sie waren vor allem auf blaue Wellenlängen empfindlich, und auch heute noch sprechen wir in besonderem Masse darauf an.

So ist wohl auch zu erklären, weshalb die Viagra-Macher für ihr Produkt genau auf diese Farbe setzten. Rosenkranz ordnet die kleinen Pillen in einer Reihe an, die ein Fragment des Buchstaben V bildet. Dieses steht, neben seiner Funktion als Anfangsbuchstaben Viagras auch für andere für Rosenkranz' Werk wichtige Begriffe wie etwa Vitality/Vitalität.

Kreislauf

Doch weshalb nur lieben wir das Blau so sehr? Liegt es an der Weite von Meer und Himmel? Schon Yves Klein war derart beeindruckt davon, dass er einst den Himmel zu seinem grössten Kunstwerk erklärte und ihn signierte, versonnen am Strand seiner Heimatstadt Nizza liegend. Daraufhin erfand er ein Ultramarinblau, strahlend und klar, das er unter dem Namen International Klein Blue (IKB) patentieren liess. Pamela Rosenkranz hat im Internet einige seiner Bilder zusammengesucht und sie grossformatig ausgedruckt – keines hat mehr dasselbe Blau wie sein Gegenüber. Die Inkjetprints zog die Künstlerin von Hand auf, wodurch Luftblasen entstanden. Und wieder widerspricht sie damit Klein auf freche Weise: Denn der Franzose erklärte einst, Luft sei kein Material, weil sie nicht sichtbar gemacht werden könnte.

Luft verarbeitet der Mensch in seinen Lungen, die Atmung imitiert Rosenkranz in ihrem Werk «Loop Revolution». Eine zweifach gespiegelte Aufnahme eines Erdteils, vom All aus gesehen, wird im Atemrhythmus ein- und ausgezoomt. Hier verbindet Rosenkranz die umgebende Natur mit dem menschlichen Körper.

Wissenschaft?

Für letzteren verwendet sie gerne die Farbe Rot – Teil der Hautfarbe eines Menschen ebenso wie die Versinnbildlichung seines Kreislaufes. Rot leuchtet durch das Weiss der Kunsthallen-Wände, die deshalb teils in frischem Rosa erstrahlen, und es tönt Silikonfarben ab, die in Mineralwasserflaschen abgefüllt die gesunde Wirkung des Wasser auf unsere Haut die unterschiedlichsten Hauttöne imitieren. Es scheint so real, doch nichts ist hier wie es scheint. Und doch, glaubt man, ist alles irgendwie auch wissenschaftlich begründbar.

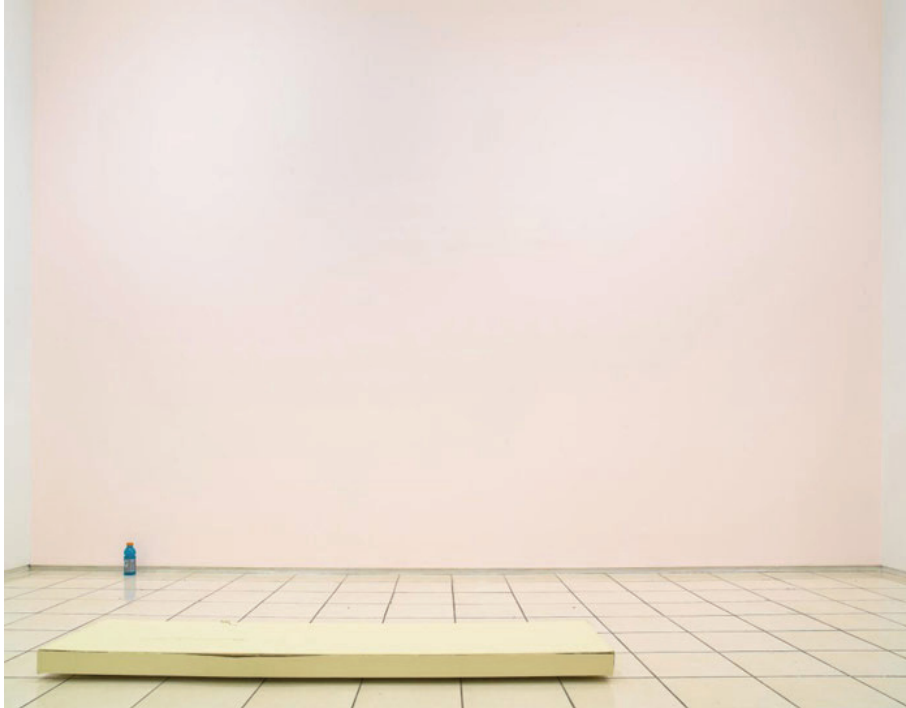
Kunsthalle Basel, bis 11. November.

Themen	<u>Kunst, Ausstellung, Museen</u>
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Alles fließt

von Dietrich Roeschmann



Feeding, Fleeing, Fighting, Reproduction: Pamela Rosenkranz in der Kunsthalle Basel.

Wasser. Überall Wasser. Bis in die hinterste Ecke ist das Rauschen in der Kunsthalle Basel zu hören. In intensivem Blau schießt es gleich im Eingang zur Ausstellung von Pamela Rosenkranz aus einem Hahn in der Wand und verschwindet gurgelnd im Becken darunter. Schwer zu entscheiden, was hier mehr irritiert: ist es die absurde Komik dieses Liquid Loops im Kunstraum? Die feuchte Unruhe, die das Prasseln des Strahls im Saal verbreitet? Oder doch eher sein künstliches Blau, das wir zwar gerne mit Wasser assoziieren, aber definitiv nicht im Glas haben wollen, wenn wir den Hahn aufdrehen?

Tatsächlich erweist sich Letzteres als Leitmotiv dieser Schau. Immer wieder leuchtet es hier blau in die aufräumte Leere der Kunsthalle – mal in Form einer perlenschnurartig auf dem Boden ausgelegten Reihe von Viagra-Pillen, mal in scheinbar willkürlich in den Sälen verteilten Halbliter-PET-Flaschen oder – besonders intensiv – von großformatigen, in Plastik eingeschweißten ultramarinblauen Prints, für die Rosenkranz JPEGs von Yves Kleins monochromer IKB-Serie aus dem Internet lud. Was diese Arbeiten miteinander verbindet, ist dennoch mehr als das formale Element der Farbe. Mit ihrem Faible für reduzierte, leicht unterkühlte Inszenierungen entwirft die 33-Jährige hier eine Art begehren Essay über die physiologischen, evolutionsgeschichtlichen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen des Sehens. Ihre Arbeiten kreisen dabei zentral um die Frage des Brandings unserer Wahrnehmung durch Farben. Wer sich darauf einlässt, den belohnt die Ausstellung mit einer abenteuerlich verwickelten, manchmal auch etwas verstiegenen Forschungsreise, die von den Anfängen der Entwicklung menschlichen Sehzellen über die künstlerische Reinszenierung wissenschaftlicher Versuchsreihen bis hin zur Untersuchung der Funktion von Farben in den Marketingkonzepten der Potenz- und Lebensoptimierungsindustrie führt.

Pamela Rosenkranz
Kunsthalle Basel
Steinenberg 7, Basel.

Öffnungszeiten: Dienstag bis Freitag 11.00 bis 18.00 Uhr, Donnerstag 11.00 bis 20.00 Uhr, Samstag bis Sonntag 11.00 bis 17.00 Uhr.
Bis 11. November 2012.
Kunsthalle Basel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Pamela Rosenkranz
Because They Try to Bore Holes

Dates: February 26 – April 15, 2012

Reception: Sunday, February 26, 6 – 8 PM

As the world submits more and more to the abstractions of capital, the interconnectivity of digital networks, and the promises of the experience economy, the body responds by lying down.

—Alex Kitnick

Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to announce the opening, on Sunday, February 26th, of *Because They Try to Bore Holes*, Pamela Rosenkranz's first solo exhibition at the gallery. The show will run through April 15th and will feature new works that "take the form of paintings and sculptures, but do not themselves begin with these terms."¹ Framed works produced with repurposed materials, such as adhesive mount hand-applied to blank Ilford photo paper, or various soft drink liquids mixed with Ralph Lauren latex paint covering inkjet printed paper, will be installed alongside sculptures made of hand-warped acrylic glass sheets and Ikea furniture parts boxed in their original cardboard packaging, itself painted in decorative shades of white. Throughout the exhibition, Rosenkranz confronts painting and sculpture's traditional address to human-scale, alienating its convention through her material treatment of the objects at hand.

As the title indicates, the show refers to Yves Klein's statement in his 'Chelsea Manifesto,' that the birds passing across the bright Mediterranean sky above him "tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work," that is, the blue sky itself! For Rosenkranz, Klein functions as the model for a brand of modern and contemporary art that firmly positions at its core the artist and his or her subjectivity. She displaces the seemingly subjectivist gestural of her own work by openly reducing the signs it is capable of producing to their evolutionary and capitalist conditions of production. Through the use of fossil images, degraded to the point of illegibility by layers of brand name decorative paint and sugar-rich soft drinks, Rosenkranz's works struggle to ground and undermine an idea of art that purports to transcend its immediate materiality. Mass-market consumer brands abound, rendering explicit the complicity between the artwork and its subsumption into an increasingly mystified field of corporate identities. Soft drinks, for instance point to the metabolic currency that underlies the conception, production, and perception of the artwork. The brain requires energy, she affirms, and therefore needs sugar to burn. In other words, glucose must be burned in order to generate, develop and view the work. In this sense, Rosenkranz collapses the potential meaning of an artwork to its meaningless material elements. And here it lies; and from here it goes.

For more information or for visuals, please contact the gallery:

Miguel Abreu Gallery
36 Orchard Street (between Canal & Hester), New York, NY 10002
Telephone 212.995.1774 • Fax 646.688.2302 • post@miguelabreugallery.com

Gallery hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM to 6:30 PM
Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street; J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street

¹ Alex Kitnick, *Mean Average* (unpublished essay on the artist)

Pamela Rosenkranz

'Because They Try to Bore Holes'

Miguel Abreu

36 Orchard Street, near Hester Street, Lower East Side
Through Sunday

It's not every artist who seems intent on splitting the difference between the luminous serenity of Los Angeles Light and Space art and the sardonic analysis of art as commodity that gained force with 1980s Neo-Geo. But in her New York solo debut Pamela Rosenkranz comes as close as anyone to achieving this unlikely fusion.

The serenity is readily apparent in large fields of gleaming, slightly oozy white, seemingly trapped behind glass and a series of large, curved, freestanding sheets of pebbled Plexiglas, through which the rest of the show is distorted. There are also two large, brushy abstractions on paper, also framed under glass, and a couple of slightly irregular cardboard volumes painted a pale yellow: one on the floor; the other jutting out from the wall, suggesting a bulky room divider.

It is the back wall, painted a rather too pleasant shade of pale pink and the bright touch of turquoise just in front of it — a bottle of Gatorade on the floor — that sends you to the news release and the checklist for further guidance. These inform you that all the paint colors are really different shades of white latex from Ralph Lauren (the pink, for example, is called resort white); that those white framed works present nothing but quantities of an adhesive used to mount photographs; and that the brushy ones are mixtures of latex and soft drinks applied to photographs of fossils.

As for the painted cardboard boxes, they're from Ikea and contain unassembled furniture. So the Neo Geo connection is not so far off base, while Light and Space, and modernist abstraction in general, emerge more as a target.

The show's title, "Because They Try to Bore Holes," is a quotation from the French artist Yves Klein, complaining about birds puncturing his greatest work of art, the sky. He seems to exemplify an overblown artistic subjectivity that apparently does not sit well with Ms. Rosenkranz, whose work, according to the news release, "collapses the potential meaning of an artwork to its meaningless material elements."

Of course the viewer's subjectivity is the unknown variable in this equation. I still thought it was beautiful, but next time I'll be more careful.

ROBERTA SMITH

Art in Review



JEFFREY STURGES/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY, NEW YORK

Pamela Rosenkranz's "Everything Is Already Dead (Sprite and Pocket Watch White)" is displayed at the Miguel Abreu gallery.

ARTFORUM

Pamela Rosenkranz

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

36 Orchard Street,

February 26–April 15

Pamela Rosenkranz's New York solo debut, "Because They Try to Bore Holes," features four freestanding hand-molded acrylic glass panels that are hardly visible, save for the subtle optical ripples they effect in the barely furnished exhibition space. Titled "As One" (all works 2012), the series at once occupies and activates the threshold between commercially available supplies and artisanal goods. Similarly courting near disappearance, the works of the show's titular series, presented in thick white frames on the walls, offer little more for aesthetic consideration than dabs of adhesive mount on Ilford photo paper.



View of "Because They Try to Bore Holes," 2012.

Two sculptures, *Ultra Smooth Content* (Nigerian Peony White) and *(Avalanche White)*, consist of packaged pieces of IKEA furniture coated in Ralph Lauren house paint, serving up a modernist off-white palette that thoughtfully complements the beige tiles in the gallery space. In these works, the corporatized signature of a brand name supplants the authorial autonomy of the monochrome canvas, as made emblematic by artists such as Yves Klein. Indeed, Klein and his International Klein Blue have inspired much of Rosenkranz's recent production. But rather than making claims for art's transcendental qualities, *Ultra Smooth Content* instead equates artistic agency with a consumerist impulse. Klein once referred to his *Large Blue Anthropophagy* (*Homage to Tennessee Williams*), 1960—a canvas for which his assistants' bodies acted as brushes with IKB paint—as irrefutable proof that flesh can survive in the realm of the immaterial. Firmly grounding this transubstantiation ritual in the context of a global market, which has liquefied distinctions between individuals and products, Rosenkranz's recent work reminds us that human bodies, in this phase of dematerialized capital, amount to little more than traces, tenuous ripples in the austere abstractions on which they are inscribed.

— Mathieu Malouf

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02 n° 58

Été / Summer 2011

Revue d'art contemporain trimestrielle et gratuite



PAMELA
ROSENKRANZ
THE OTHOLITH
GROUP

KARSTEN
FÖDINGER

RAINIER
LERICOLAIS

ONGAKU,
IKI ET TEAISM

JOHN
McCRACKEN

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

*L'aléatoire nécessaire,
d'Yves Klein à Pamela Rosenkranz*

Après bien des siècles d'humanisme dérivé d'un anthropocentrisme tirant souvent carrément vers l'ethnocentrisme, des siècles jalonnés de christianisme, de cartésianisme, de rationalisme et de progressisme, une pensée contemporaine tente de rouvrir la blessure narcissique de l'homme (ouverte par Copernic, approfondie par Darwin et empirée par Freud) pour le remettre à sa place. Parmi ses tenants, des artistes qui, presque cinquante après la disparition d'Yves Klein, se frottent aux éléments et leur délèguent une partie du travail de production de l'œuvre; des philosophes aussi, bien sûr, qui les inspirent, parfois.

« Il y a quelques mois, par exemple, je ressentis l'urgence d'enregistrer les signes du comportement atmosphérique en recevant sur une toile les traces instantanées des averses du printemps, des vents du sud et des éclairs. (Est-il besoin de préciser que cette dernière tentative se solda par une catastrophe?) »

Yves Klein, Le manifeste de l'hôtel Chelsea, 1961.

L'idée n'est certes pas si nouvelle, mais après tout, nous avons chassé la nouveauté de nos horizons depuis l'avènement de notre belle postmodernité. L'art a toujours été une collaboration avec la nature, est-il besoin de mentionner le sang ou le charbon pilé des peintures pariétales et autres matériaux que la nature a offerts en pâture au génie humain? Lorsqu'elle expose du papier photosensible à l'air nocturne, Liz Deschenes laisse le beau rôle à la « lumière noire » de la nuit, capturant plus de temps que d'image dans ces photogrammes. De même, les cyanotypes de Jessica Warboys, ayant passé la nuit dehors, se parent d'un bleu profond, leurs motifs se détachant en blanc ou bleu plus clair, comme des ombres pâles revêtant ainsi quelque mystère. Non loin de rappeler par les traces irrégulières qui en ornent la toile, certaines *Cosmogonies* de Klein, justement, comme le *Vent Paris-Nice (COS 10)*, de 1960 ou *Le Vent du Voyage (COS 27)*, ca. 1961, la marque des cerceaux d'*Ouroboros O glorious* (2010) évoque une carte des planètes tandis que le spectre des roseaux de *Blue Parasol* (2009) semble l'ombre portée du soleil, si elle pouvait exister.

Portées par le hasard du vent et des vagues, les *Sea Paintings* de Warboys sont d'immenses toiles poudrées de pigments puis plongées dans les flots qui impriment ainsi dans leur trame les dessins du sable mouvant. Ces nébuleuses picturales multicolores sont ensuite séchées, découpées et cousues en de grands panneaux agencés selon l'espace où ils sont exposés. Dévoilant ici et là une porte ou un angle de mur, elles jouent avec la théâtralité (« le théâtre moins le texte », comme dit

Barthes¹) des cimaises qui ponctuent nos *white cubes*, la redoublant avec une emphase pourtant nonchalante. Les panneaux de toiles ne sont pas fixés de manière uniforme et flottent par endroits, laissant apparaître aussi parfois, sur un ton moqueur, des parties de cimaise blanche, sans porte ni fenêtre à exhiber. *Ocean Painting, Portmain* (2010), présentée dans la bien-nommée exposition *Les Vagues* au Frac des Pays de la Loire l'an passé, est de celles-ci. Nous ne sommes pas loin, là non plus, des *River Paintings* de Davide Balula, qui agrègent dans leurs fils les sédiments présents dans la Seine, l'East River ou autres rivières des villes dans lesquelles il est invité à exposer. Le recadrage opéré sur la toile présente les traces les plus évidentes et les plus graphiques du séjour dans l'eau. Différence des procédés mais répétition des gestes; le fleuve reste constant mais l'eau coule sans cesse, toujours renouvelée. L'artiste, armé de la patience du pêcheur, récolte le travail du temps et de la nature à l'œuvre avant de se le réapproprier. L'œuvre rejoint le champ de l'art a posteriori, une fois l'artiste ayant repris le contrôle sur l'aléatoire de sa « production ». Il s'agit d'opérer un choix, de revendiquer un point de vue tout en tenant cette position d'artiste / d'humain comme « fragment du monde »², délaissant celle de démiurge qui, d'une certaine façon, « dénaturait »³ la nature animale de l'homme.

« Toutes les couleurs amènent des associations d'idées concrètes matérielles ou tangibles d'une manière psychologique, tandis que le bleu rappelle tout au plus la mer et le ciel. Ce qu'il y a après tout de plus abstrait dans la nature tangible et visible. »

Yves Klein, L'architecture de l'air, Conférence de la Sorbonne, 1959.

Tout aussi abstraite mais paradoxalement hypertangible, la couleur de la peau est la première chose que l'humain dépourvu de miroir perçoit visuellement de lui. Une couleur qui, à l'instar de celle de la mer ou du ciel, est à la fois une et multiple, absolument indéfinissable et extrêmement variable. Pamela Rosenkranz s'emploie à en reproduire les nuances d'après les couleurs standards des fonds de teint, qu'elle exploite ensuite pour réaliser des *anthropométries* contemporaines. Se référant ouvertement au corps-pinceau des modèles de Klein, la jeune zurichoise fait appliquer la couleur par des « assistants » sur des couvertures de survie, des plaques de plexiglas courbé. De ces corps-assistants, on ne saura rien de plus, car pour elle, la question du corps n'est pas le sujet. Il s'agit donc d'empreintes humaines, mais de corps gantés et habillés, protégés de la toxicité de la peinture qui n'impriment ainsi plus leur force mais leur fragilité.

1. Roland Barthes, « Le théâtre de Baudelaire », *Essais critiques*, Seuil, Points, 1981 (1954), p. 41.
2. « L'homme est un fragment du monde », Stéphane Ferret dans un entretien avec Jean Birnbaum pour *Le Monde des Livres*, daté du vendredi 4 février, p. 7.
3. « La plupart des définitions traditionnelles reviennent à dire que l'homme possède quelque chose qui, en s'ajoutant à sa nature animale, la transforme essentiellement et, à la limite, la dénature. » Pierre Guénancia, « Doutes sur la différence entre l'homme et l'animal », in *Philosophie animale, Différence, responsabilité et communauté*, Paris, Vrin, 2010.



PAMELA ROSENKRANZ

Express Nothing (Inner Mist), 2011.

Acrylique sur couverture de survie

Acrylic on emergency blanket foil,

encadrée / framed 162,9 x 211,8 cm.

De la trace d'une présence chez Klein, on passe ici à la trace de son absence. Les couvertures de survie sont présentées encadrées sous verre, jouant de la superposition de ces deux surfaces réfléchissantes et accentuant par le miroitement l'ambiguïté de ce qui est donné à voir.

« C'est en se tenant assez longtemps à la surface irisée que nous comprendrons le prix de la profondeur. »

Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves*, éd. José Corti, 1942, p. 16.

Semblables à des frottements, peut-être des traces de lutte, les empreintes n'évoquent rien de réjouissant. *Express Nothing* (2011) n'est pas le résultat d'une quelconque performance, les corps ne sont qu'un outil de production utilisé dans l'intimité de l'atelier. Pourtant, c'est comme s'il s'était passé quelque chose : nous sommes face à une trace qui ne dit pas sa provenance. Contrefaire des origines, faire mentir des slogans, sont les premiers aspects sous lesquels on découvre *Firm Being* (série en cours), de petites bouteilles d'eau posées au sol

ou parfois sur socle dans les expositions de Rosenkranz. « Source de jeunesse », « inspirée par la nature », « *untouched by man* »* s'inscrivent sur les contenants mais, à l'intérieur, c'est une matière colorée qui a pris la place du liquide vital : une déclinaison de ces couleurs de peau évoquées précédemment. Si l'on pense de prime abord aux promesses marketées de santé et beauté que revendiquent les eaux commercialisées, l'image d'une eau impure, nous rappelant les quelques huit cent millions de personnes privées d'eau potable, vient troubler notre univers *healthy*. C'est que « le droit à une eau potable, propre et de qualité » est un droit de l'homme tout récemment voté. Sous leurs jolis petits noms, *Firm Being (Stay Neutral)*, *Firm Being (Stay True)* ou *Firm Being (Fresh Ebony)* dissimulent l'angoisse humaine de la surface, qui se doit d'être toujours impeccable.

Les objets mis en œuvre par Pamela Rosenkranz, bouteilles d'eau et couvertures de survie notamment, reflètent nos nécessités premières : hydratation

Express Nothing (Pink Health), 2011.

Acrylique sur couverture de survie

Acrylic on emergency blanket foil,

encadrée / framed 162,9 x 211,8 cm.

Courtesy Miguel Abreu Gallery,

New York.



et température *ad hoc*. Mais le simple constat biologique se mue rapidement en une inquiétude plus profonde devant ce matériel de secours. Quelle est la plus grande menace qui plane sur nous ? Conflit global, fuite radioactive, réchauffement climatique, attaque toxique ? La référence à l'échelle humaine, présente dans nombre de ses pièces (*Stretch Nothing* (2009), *Express Nothing* (2011), *Avoid Contact* (2011), *As One* (2010)...) fait curieusement défaut à la série des *Firm Being*, réduisant l'homme au centième de l'eau que contient son corps.⁴ « L'être humain est l'animal qui détient la capacité d'épuiser et de détruire la nature, aussi bien la biosphère que lui-même »⁵, le voici pourtant rétréci, petit être à l'identité fuyante (Rosenkranz crée ses mélanges de manière empirique, ce qui fait qu'aucune de ses peintures ni aucun de ses objets ne porte la même couleur qu'un autre) replié sur lui-même en position fœtale (*Bow Human*, 2009). La rupture ontologique fondamentale entre l'homme et les autres êtres de nature une fois gommée, l'homme n'est

plus la mesure de toute chose, il est désormais un animal comme les autres.

« D'abord il n'y a rien, puis il y a un rien profond, ensuite il y a une profondeur bleue. »

Yves Klein, Discours à la Commission du théâtre de Gelsenkirchen.

Dans *Death of Yves Klein* (2011), Pamela Rosenkranz diffuse un écran monochrome IKB passé au filtre du spectre numérique tandis que la bande son fait se succéder des avertissements quant au maniement des substances nocives que le peintre utilisait et qui ont probablement causé son décès. Et si « la terre est bleue comme une orange »⁶, « le soleil est nouveau chaque jour »⁷. *Where are the curtains ?*⁸

4. « Jamais touchée par l'homme. » Provenant d'un puits artésien, l'eau Fiji se targue dans sa communication de n'avoir jamais, jusqu'à ce qu'on la décapsule, été en contact avec l'atmosphère peu recommandable du XXI^e siècle : « until you unscrew the cap. [I]ll Water never meets the compromised air of the 21st century nor is it touched by another human being. »

5. Sachant qu'un adulte est constitué d'environ 45 litres d'eau et que les bouteilles utilisées pour *Firm Being* sont de 50 cl.

6. Stéphane Ferret, *Deepwater Horizon, Éthique de la nature et philosophie de la crise écologique*, Paris, Seuil, 2011, p. 298.

7. Paul Eluard, *L'Amour, la poésie*, 1929.

8. Héraclite, fragment 6.

9. « Où sont les rideaux ? », Jessica Warboys, titre d'un poème de 2008.

*Necessary Randomness,
from Yves Klein to Pamela Rosenkranz*

After several centuries of anthropocentrically derived humanism, often veering fairly and squarely towards ethnocentrism—centuries staked out by Christianity, Cartesianism, rationalism and progressivism—a contemporary line of thinking is attempting to re-open man's narcissistic wound (opened up by Copernicus, deepened by Darwin, and aggravated by Freud), to put him back in his place. Its supporters include artists who, almost 50 years after Yves Klein's death, are rubbing up against the elements and delegating to them part of the work involved in producing the work; and philosophers, too, needless to add, who at times inspire them.

"A few months ago, for example, I felt an urgent need to record signs of atmospheric behaviour by receiving on a canvas the immediate marks of spring showers, southerly winds, and flashes of lightning. (Is there any need to add that this latter attempt ended in catastrophe?)"

Yves Klein, The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto, 1961.

The idea is not that new, of course, but after all, we have driven novelty away from our horizons since the advent of our wonderful postmodernity. Art has always been a joint venture with nature—is there any need to mention the blood and crushed coal of rock paintings, and other materials which nature has offered for human genius to feed on? When Liz Deschenes exposes photosensitive paper to the night air, she gives pride of place to night's "black light", capturing more time than imagery in her photograms. Likewise, when Jessica Warboys's cyanotypes have spent the night outside, they take on a deep blue hue, with their motifs standing out in white or lighter blue, like pale shadows thus containing some mystery or other. Almost calling to mind, through the irregular traces marking the canvas, some of Klein's *Cosmogonies*, it just so happens, like *Vent Paris-Nice (COS 10)*, produced in 1960, and *Le Vent du Voyage (COS 27)*, circa 1961, the marks of the hoops in *Ouroboros O glorious* (2010) evoke a map of

the planets, while the spectre of the reeds in *Blue Parasol* (2009) seems to be the shadow cast by the sun, if such a thing could exist.

Borne along by the haphazardness of wind and waves, Warboys's *Sea Paintings* are huge canvases sprinkled with pigments and then plunged into the waves which thus imprint in their weft the designs of moving sand. These many-coloured pictorial nebulae are then dried, cut up and sewn together in large panels arranged to fit the space where they are exhibited. Revealing here and there a door or the corner of a wall, they play with the theatricality ("theatre less text", as Barthes put it¹)

of the picture rails which punctuate our white cubes, duplicating it with an albeit nonchalant emphasis. The canvas panels are not fixed in any uniform way and float in places, also at times affording glimpses, in a mocking tone, of parts of white rails, with neither door nor window to display. *Ocean Painting, Portmain* (2010), shown in the aptly titled show *Les Vagues [The Waves]* at the Frac des Pays de la Loire last year, is one such piece. Here again, we are not far removed from Davide Balula's *River Paintings*, which, in their threads, bring together sediments present in the Seine, the East River, and other rivers in the cities where he is invited to show his work.

The re-framing carried out on the canvas presents the most evident and graphic traces of the time spent in the water. Different procedures, but repeated gestures; the river remains constant but the water flows unendingly, forever renewed. Armed with a fisherman's patience, the artist harvests the labour of time and nature at work before re-appropriating it. The work links back up with the field of art after the fact, once the artist has regained control over the randomness of his "production". What is involved here is making a choice, and claiming a viewpoint, while keeping this position of artist/human being like a "fragment of the world"², abandoning the demiurge's stance which, in a way, "adulterated"³ man's animal nature.



DAVIDE BALULA

River Painting, East River, 2009.

Sédiments sur toile / Sediments

on canvas, 76 x 73 cm.

Courtesy of l'artiste et galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris.

1. Roland Barthes, "Le théâtre de Baudelaire", *Essais critiques*, Seuil, Points, 1981 (1954), p. 41.

2. "L'homme est un fragment du monde", Stéphane Ferret in an interview with Jean Birnbaum for *Le Monde des Livres*, dated Friday 4 February, p. 7.

3. "Most traditional definitions revert to saying that man has something which, by being added to his animal nature, essentially transforms him and, at a pinch, alters his nature", Pierre Guénancia, "Doutes sur la différence entre l'homme et l'animal", in *Philosophie animale, Différence, responsabilité et communauté*, Paris, Vrin, 2010.

PAMELA ROSENKRANZ
Firm Being (Stay Neutral). 2009.
 Bouteille de PET de 50 cl, papier,
 silicone pigmenté / 50 cl PET bottle,
 paper, silicon with pigments.
 Courtesy Karma International,
 Zürich.



"All colours introduce associations of material and tangible concrete ideas, in a psychological way, while blue, at most, calls to mind the sea and the sky. Which is after all the most abstract thing in tangible and visible nature."

Yves Klein, The Architecture of Air, Sorbonne lecture, 1959.

The colour of skin is just as abstract but, paradoxically, amazingly tangible; it is the first thing that the human being without a mirror visually sees of himself. A colour which, like that of sea and sky, is at once one and many, absolutely indefinable and extremely variable. Pamela Rosenkranz strives to reproduce its various shades using the standard colours of make-up foundations, which she subsequently uses to produce disquieting contemporary "anthropometries". Referring openly to the "body brushes" of Klein's models, also described as "living brushes", the young Zürich-based artist has the colour applied by "assistants" on survival blankets, and sheets of bent

Plexiglas. We will not know anything more about these assistant-bodies because, for Rosenkranz, the issue of the body is not the subject. What is involved is human impressions, but of bodies wearing gloves and clothes, protected from the toxicity of the paint, which no longer imprint their strength but their fragility. From the trace of a presence with Klein we here move to the trace of absence. The survival blankets are displayed framed under glass, playing on the overlay of these two reflecting surfaces, and accentuating the ambiguity of what is being shown through the mirror effect.

"It is by staying long enough on the iridescent surface that we understand the price of depth."

Gaston Bachelard, L'Eau et les Rêves, José Corti, 1942, p. 16.

Like frictions or rubbings, or perhaps signs of struggle, the impressions do not conjure up anything joyous. *Express Nothing* (2011) is not the result of some perform-



ance, the bodies are just a production tool used in the privacy of the studio. Yet it is as if something had happened: we are looking at a trace that does not say where it comes from. Counterfeiting origins and getting slogans to lie are the initial angles from which we discover *Firm Being* (series in progress), small water bottles placed on the floor or sometimes on stands in Rosenkranz's shows. "Source of youth", "inspired by nature" and "untouched by man", all are written on the containers but, inside, the life-giving liquid has been replaced by something coloured: a declension of those above-mentioned flesh tints. If, at first glance, we think of the marketed promises of health and beauty claimed by commercial brands of water, the image of an impure water—reminding us that some 800 million people in the world do not have access to clean drinking water—disturbs our healthy world. The fact is that "the right to good quality, clean drinking water" is a recently voted human right. Beneath their cute little names, *Firm Being (Stay Neutral)*, *Firm Being (Stay True)* and *Firm Being (Fresh Ebony)* all disguise the human distress on the surface, which must always be flawless.

The objects used by Pamela Rosenkranz—water bottles and survival blankets in particular—reflect our prime needs: hydration and appropriate temperature. But the simple biological fact changes swiftly into a deeper anxiety in front of this rescue equipment. What is the greatest threat hanging over us? Worldwide conflict, radioactive leaks, global warming, toxic attacks? The reference to the human scale, which is there in many of her pieces

(*Stretch Nothing* (2009), *Express Nothing* (2011), *Avoid Contact* (2011), *As One* (2010)...) is strangely missing from the *Firm Being* series, reducing man to one-hundredth of the water contained by his body.⁵ "The human being is the animal with the capacity to exhaust and destroy nature, be it the biosphere or himself".⁶ But here he has shrunk, a little being with a fleeting identity (Rosenkranz creates her mixtures in an empirical way, which means that none of her paintings and none of her objects have the same colour as any other), huddled in the foetal position (*Bow Human*, 2009). Once the basic ontological break between man and other natural beings has been done away with, man is no longer the measure of all things: he is henceforth an animal like all the others.

"First there's nothing, then there's a profound nothing, then there's a blue profundity."

Yves Klein, "Speech to the Gelsenkirchen Theatre Commission".

In *Death of Yves Klein* (2011), Pamela Rosenkranz broadcasts a monochrome IKB screen that has been put through the digital spectrum filter, while the soundtrack has a succession of warnings about handling the harmful substances which the painter used, and which probably caused his death. And if "the earth is blue like an orange",⁷ and "the sun is new every day"⁸, where are the curtains?⁹

JESSICA WARBOYS

Ocean Painting, Portmain, 2010.

Pigment sur toile / Pigment

on canvas, 1100 x 300 cm.

Photo: © Valda Budreviciute /

Frac des Pays de la Loire.

Collection du Frac

des Pays de la Loire.

Vue de l'exposition / Installation view

Les Vagues, Frac des Pays

de la Loire.

4. Coming from an artesian well, Fiji water boasts in its advertising that it has never been in contact with the 21st century's undesirable atmosphere until it is opened. "Until you unscrew the cap, Fiji Water never meets the compromised air of the 21st century nor is it touched by another human being."

5. Based on the fact that an adult is made up of about 45 litres of water and that the bottles used for *Firm Being* contain 50 cl.

6. Stéphane Ferret, *Deepwater Horizon. Éthique de la nature et philosophie de la crise écologique*, Paris, Seuil, 2011, p. 298.

7. Paul Eluard, *L'Amour, la poésie*, 1929.

8. Heraclitus, fragment 6.

9. Title of a 2008 poem by Jessica Warboys.

Pamela Rosenkranz

Wasserflaschen, Pillen und
Rettungsdecken

*Water Bottles, Pills and
Emergency Blankets*

Quinn Latimer



Im Mittelpunkt der Arbeiten von Pamela Rosenkranz gibt es eine bewusste Leerstelle, eine spezielle – nicht nur körperliche, sondern auch geistige – Abwesenheit, durch die sich ein jeweils konkreter subjektiver Körper und Geist in ihren Werken paradoxerweise umso deutlicher abzeichnet. Die Praxis der Künstlerin gründet sich auf derartige Paradoxa. Ihre konzeptuell geprägten abstrakten Skulpturen, Papierarbeiten, Videos und Installationen verweisen fast immer auf das Figurative oder konfrontieren Betrachter mit diesem: mit seiner Spur, seinem Verlust, seinen Bedürfnissen, seiner Kommerzialisierung oder seiner Abschaffung. Betrachten wir zum Beispiel „More Core“ (Mehr Kern, 2010), eine Serie von Fotogrammen winziger, bunter Tabletten (Körper und Geist manipulierende Schmerzmittel und Antidepressiva oder Mittel, die die Leistungsfähigkeit steigern): Vor dunklem Hintergrund leuchten die Pillen grellfarben wie die Augen eines Alien, das aus dem Nichts auftaucht. Oder nehmen wir die Serie „Firm Being“ (Starkes Sein, seit 2009), die aus Plastikwasserflaschen verschiedener Marken besteht. Gefüllt mit hautfarbenen pigmentiertem Silikon, karikieren sie meisterhaft die Werbeslogans von Mineralwasserunternehmen wie etwa den von FJI: „Untouched by man. Until you drink it.“ (Von Menschen unberührt. Bis Sie es trinken.)

Das expliziteste Beispiel für ihren paradoxen Umgang mit dem Figurativen ist wohl das von Rosenkranz wiederholt verwendete abstrakte Motiv des Körperabdrucks auf deckengroßem Untergrund aus Folie, Spandex oder freistehendem Plexiglas. Die Technik geht auf Yves Kleins „Anthropométries“ (Anthropometrien, 1960–62) zurück, bei denen Klein nackte, weibliche Modelle mit Farbe bemalte und sich dann öffentlich auf Leinwand wälzen ließ; Rosenkranz abstrahiert ihre Körperabdrücke jedoch und lässt sie so stehen. Ihre „Figur“ ist nicht nackt, ihr gelbbrauner Abdruck eher eine Andeutung als eine Figur, und die subjektive Gewalt dieser kunstgeschichtlichen Geste ist nicht nur mechanisch, sondern auch offenkundig ironisch. Rosenkranz verwandte dieses Motiv erstmals in „Our Sun“ (Unsere Sonne), einer Einzelausstellung im Istituto Svizzero di Roma 2009 in Venedig. In den zwei Serien, die hier zu sehen waren, benutzte sie Rettungsdecken, die auf der einen Seite zum Wärmeschutz silbermetallisch und auf der anderen zum Kälteschutz goldglänzend beschichtet waren, als Untergrund für gerahmte Bilder bzw. als Material für Bodenskulpturen. Neben diesen fantastischen grellen Werken waren über den Boden verteilte Wasserflaschen zu sehen sowie eine Videoprojektion, die eine große Wand in tiefe himmelblaue und grüne Töne tauchte, aus denen sich ein aus dem All aufgenommenes Bild der Erde

Vorherige Seite / Previous page:

Stay True

Bleib echt

Aus der Serie / From the series:

„Firm Being“

Starkes Sein

2009

PET Flasche, Silikonkautschuk,

Pigmente / PET bottle, silicon rubber, pigments

Diese Seite (im Uhrzeigersinn)

This page (clockwise):

„Our Sun“

Unsere Sonne

Ausstellungsansicht

Installation view

Istituto Svizzero di Roma,

Venedig / Venice

2009

Loop Revolution

Sich wiederholende

Revolution

2009

Video loop

„The Real Thing“

Das wahre Ding

Ausstellungsansicht

Installation view

Tate Britain, London,

2010

„Untouched by Man“

Von Menschen unberührt

Ausstellungsansicht

Installation view

Kunstverein Braunschweig,

2009

entwickelte. Eine vertikale Achse teilte die Erde in zwei Teile und erzeugte so symmetrische Spiegelbilder, die an einen sich ständig wandelnden Rorschach-Test erinnerten – ein eigenartiger Blick auf die regenerativen Fähigkeiten unseres Planeten. Die Ausstellung war ein distanziert-skeptischer Kommentar zur sagenumwobenen „Wasser und Licht“-Ästhetik von Venedig, und auch wenn die eleganten Werke funkelten und leuchteten, so blieb die Schau subversiv nüchtern.

In den Katalog zu dieser Ausstellung nahm Rosenkranz einen Text des iranischen Philosophen Reza Negarestani auf, dessen spekulative Fiktionen und radikale Vorstellungen von „heliozentrischer Sklaverei“ und „Wasserkapitalismus“ ihr Bild von Venedigs komplexer Gegenwart und ihre Ausstellung beeinflusst hatten. Denkrichtungen zeitgenössischer Philosophie wie der Eliminative Materialismus und der Spekulative Realismus üben eine starke Anziehung auf Rosenkranz aus; beide verbindet ein Interesse an einem „menschenindifferenten“ Universum und daran, die „objektiven“ Möglichkeiten einer Nicht-Identität jenseits einer mit Bewusstsein und Glaubenssystemen überfrachteten menschlichen Existenz auszuloten. Ende 2010 nahm die Künstlerin an „The Real Thing“ (Das wahre Ding) teil, einer Veranstaltung in der Tate Britain, die sich dem Einfluss des Spekultativen Realismus auf das aktuelle Kunstschaffen widmete. In der Ausstellung waren mehrere von Rosenkranz' Arbeiten aus Venedig in einem der Tate-Galerieräume mit



figurativen Werken „Neuer Skulptur“ des 19. Jahrhunderts zu sehen. Neben den bronzefarbenen, symbolistischen Figuren gaben die Wasserflaschen und Rettungsdecken-Skulpturen der Künstlerin – die wie Katastrophopfer über dem Boden verteilt waren – zusammen mit dem Film der Erde als Rorschach-Klecks eine verstohlene apokalyptische Warnung aus.

Auch wenn in Rosenkranz' Arbeiten eine Abkehr von Gefühlen und eine Hinwendung zur Wissenschaft zu verspüren ist, so sind diese dennoch auf kunstvolle Weise äußerst gefühl- und humorvoll. Ihr scharfer Blick auf das Meer des Konsums, auf dem wir derzeit treiben (an Rettungsbooten hängend, die mit Nike-Swooshes, Apple-Insignien und zierlichen Wasserflaschen-Gletschern verziert sind), manifestiert sich häufig in Form von Materialien aus den Bereichen Gesundheit und Fitness. Eine Serie von Acryl-Körperabdrücken aus dem Jahr 2010, die auf einfarbigem Spandex an die Wand gehängt sind, macht von diesem synthetischen „sportiven“ Stoff auf geistreiche Weise Gebrauch. Der Titel der Serie „Anima Sana in Corpore Sano“ (seit 2007) bezieht sich hier auf die Marke Asics und verweist damit auf deren namengebendes lateinisches Motto, dem zufolge „ein gesunder Geist in einem gesunden Körper“ steckt. Die Serie umfasst verschiedene Wandarbeiten, auf denen drei mit Stretch-Jogginghosen überzogene Bälle zu sehen sind, hell leuchtende fluoreszierende Insignien. Sie wirken dabei wie Sport-Versionen von Eva Hesses herabhängenden netzartigen Bällen und bekommen so eine merkwürdige Schlagkraft: eine eher unwahrscheinliche Lösung der Dialektik zwischen Körper und Geist.

Rosenkranz – geboren 1979 in der Schweiz und ansässig in Zürich und Amsterdam, wo sie sich mit einem Residenzstipendium an der Rijksakademie aufhält – scheint ein ausgeprägtes Interesse daran zu haben, über jene identitätszentrierten Themen hinauszugehen, welche die Bildende Kunst oft einschnüren. Stattdessen wendet sie sich stärker nicht auf den Menschen zentrierten und ökologischen Fragen zu. Zugleich loten ihre Arbeiten jedoch jene stark von Mythen durchzogenen Themen aus, die das menschliche Sein definieren: die Elemente, die Politik der Reinheit, die Trennung zwischen Körper und Geist, das Konsumdenken. Und auch wenn der Titel ihrer jüngsten Einzelausstellung im Braunschweiger Kunstverein „Untouched by Man“ lautete, so war dies weniger als Ausruf des Jubels oder der Hoffnung zu verstehen als vielmehr im Sinne einer komplexen Kritik, die sich auf einen weiteren Slogan bezog: „Kurz gesagt hat FIJI-Wasser keinen Kontakt mit der schädlichen Luft des 21. Jahrhunderts oder irgendeinem menschlichen Wesen, bis Sie den Verschluss aufschrauben.“ Es ist eine seltsam großspürige Behauptung angesichts des umweltverschmutzenden und keineswegs unschädlichen

Verhaltens der FIJI-Kunden – doch dieses Paradox ist es wohl gerade, was Rosenkranz daran interessierte.
Übersetzt von Claudia Kotte

There is a kind of deliberate vanishing at the centre of Pamela Rosenkranz' body of work, a specific absence – both corporeal and spiritual – that paradoxically makes the subjective body and mind loom up through her works larger than ever. The artist's practice is predicated on such paradox, though. Her conceptually driven, abstract sculptures, works on paper, videos and installations nearly always reference or confront you with the figurative: its trace, its loss, its needs, its commercialism, its elimination. See, for example, her 2010 'More Core' series of photographs of tiny, coloured pills (body and mind manipulators like pain relievers, antidepressants and energy enhancers), which glow luridly against their dark fields like alien eyes emerging from the void. Or her 'Firm Being' (2009–ongoing) series of variously branded plastic water bottles filled with silicon pigmented to skin-like hues, which expertly satirize water company ads like FIJI's: 'Untouched by Man. Until you drink it.'

Or take, as the most explicit example, Rosenkranz' repeated abstract motif of body-printing on blanket-sized pieces of foil or spandex or free-standing Plexiglas. It's a technique the artist has seized from Yves Klein's 'Anthropométries' (Anthropometries, 1960–2) – his paint-covered, nude, female models impressed publicly upon canvas – and then abstracted and abandoned. But her 'figure' is dressed, its tawny imprint more allusion than actually figured, and the subjective violence of its art historical gesture is at once automatic and patently ironic. Rosenkranz first employed this motif in 'Our Sun', a solo exhibition at the Istituto Svizzero di Roma's space in Venice in 2009. The show featured two series that utilized emergency blankets – metallic silver on one side for cooling the body, glittery gold on the other for heating – as either canvasses for framed paintings or material for floor sculptures. These gorgeous, blinding works were accompanied by the artist's water bottles, scattered over the floor, and a video projection that soaked one large wall in cerulean and green hues, resolving themselves into a moving image of the Earth from space. A vertical axis dividing the image of the Earth created symmetrical reflections like a constantly morphing Rorschach test – an odd view of our planet's regenerative capacities. The show was a coolly sceptical take on Venice's fabled 'light and water' aesthetic, subversively clinical even while the elegant works glittered and glowed.

For her Venice exhibition catalogue, Rosenkranz commissioned a text by Iranian philosopher Reza Negarestani, whose speculative fictions and radical ideas about 'heliocentric slavery' and 'aquatic capitalism' were an influence

Rosenkranz' Arbeiten loten jene stark von Mythen durchzogenen Themen aus, die das menschliche Sein definieren.

Rosenkranz' works explore the myth-ridden themes that define human existence.

on her conception of Venice's complicated present and her show. Schools of contemporary philosophy like Eliminative Materialism and Speculative Realism exert a strong pull on Rosenkranz, with their common interest in a 'human-indifferent universe', a concern that explores the 'objective' possibilities of non-identity beyond a human existence laden as it is with consciousness and belief systems. In late 2010, the artist was included in 'The Real Thing', an event at Tate Britain that limned the impact of Speculative Realism on recent art practice. The show featured several of Rosenkranz' Venetian pieces in a Tate gallery of 19th-century 'New Sculpture' figurative works. Against these bronze, Symbolist figures, the artist's water bottles, emergency blanket sculptures – hovering on the floor like disaster victims – and film of a Rorschach-blot Earth sounded a sly apocalyptic alarm.

If the move away from feelings and towards science pervades Rosenkranz' works, they are nevertheless elaborately full of feeling and humour. Her gimlet-eyed view of the consumerist sea in which we find ourselves presently afloat (attached to life rafts emblazoned with Nike swooshes, Apple insignias and petite water-bottle glaciers) often manifests itself in the materials of health and fitness. A 2010 series of acrylic body-prints on monochromatic, spandex grounds pinned to the wall makes spirited use of that synthetic *sportif* fabric. The series 'Anima Sana in Corpore Sano' (2007–ongoing), meanwhile, is named after the Asics brand, whose titular latin motto means 'healthy soul in healthy body'. Included are several hanging works featuring three balls covered in stretchy running pants, fluorescent insignias glowing brightly. Like jock versions of Eva Hesse's droopy, netted balls, the works have a weird punch: an improbable solution to the mind-body dialectic.

Born in 1979 in Switzerland and based in Zurich and Amsterdam, where she has a Rijksakademie residency, Rosenkranz appears to be distinctly interested in travelling beyond the identity-centred concerns that often gird visual art and towards more non-human-centric and ecological concerns. At the same time, her works explore the very myth-ridden themes – the elements, the politics of purity, the mind and body separation, consumerism – that define human existence. Although her recent solo exhibition at Kunstverein Braunschweig was called 'Untouched by Man', the title appeared less as a celebration or hope than as a complicated critique, relating to another slogan: 'To put it simply, until you unscrew the cap, FIJI Water never meets the compromised air of the 21st century nor is it touched by another human being.' A strange boast – since it is predicated on the defiled nature of the company's very customers and their environment – but this strangeness is likely what drew Rosenkranz to it.

Pamela Rosenkranz and Nikolas Gambaroff
This Is Not My Color / The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

At Swiss Institute's invitation, Pamela Rosenkranz (born 1979, lives in Zurich and Amsterdam) and Nikolas Gambaroff (born 1979, lives in New York) present their work together for the first time. Established in dialogue, the exhibition contains two interwoven shows with distinctive titles: *This Is Not My Color* (Rosenkranz) and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Gambaroff).

While none of the works in the exhibition actually present the human figure, their size, proportion, and posture reflect a common concern for the bodily. Both artists also share an interest in the exploitation of painting but refuse to consider themselves painters. The works reflect a strategy that borrows from and critiques consumer industry's marketing of an idealized self—one which can be attained through the purchase of commodities, from self-help books to mineral water. The core of the exhibition is the idea that the made-for-purchase person is an illusory construct, one that can be unpacked through scientific and philosophical analyses.

Pamela Rosenkranz, This Is Not My Color

Recent scientific experiments have demonstrated that our perception of color is a result of evolution. Pamela Rosenkranz investigates how such ideas undermine artistic production as such. In the series *Firm Beings*, plastic water bottles of Evian are filled with a product normally used to apply artificial patches on actors' skin. The tones selected by the artist represent the flesh colors of predominant target groups for Evian. The combination of product and idea, surface and volume, skin and water, culminate in an abstract portrait of the human body in a bottle.

Anthropomorphic proportions are re-iterated in all rectangular work in the show, where the size of blankets—typically a layer to cover the human body—establishes a standard format. The bright background colors of the framed series *The Most Important Body of Water is Yours* are borrowed from Evian and translated into the gay palette of spandex, a fiber used for sports clothing where stretch is desired. The four-part work openly plays with stereotyped Abstract Expressionism. But Rosenkranz has applied color through intermediary foil using a monotype printing process, creating distance between her and the surface of the work, thus eliminating a subjective expression.

In the photo prints *Because they tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work*, the artist investigates Yves Klein's color blue, YKB, an interesting example of color used as a distinctive artistic brand. She discovered a reproduction of a Klein painting online and downloaded it from three different sources, emphasizing minimal differences. Eventually she mounted the prints by hand, leaving a pattern of physical impact as an additional impression.

Over my Brainbow (shown in the sublevel space) is a dual projection of flashing colors combined with an animated image. Brainbow is a scientific term used to describe the process by which individual neurons in the brain can be distinguished from neighboring neurons using fluorescent proteins. Rosenkranz' monochromatic colors are blank screens filled with references. In their midst, a film animation offers an almost intimate encounter with Michael Jackson. Rosenkranz has added a pair of gently blinking female eyes to the idol's face, creating a vulnerable portrait *au naturel* of a human being who dramatically changed his skin color.

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Nikolas Gambaroff (b. 1979, lives in New York) presents an updated version of the work, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, initially shown at Bergen Kunsthall in 2010. The title is borrowed from a highly successful self-help book. Each work is named after a chapter or "habit." In this iteration, some of the sculptures, such as *Be Proactive* (2011) or *Sharpen the Saw* (2011), are body-sized lampshades, which are placeholders for pieces that have been sold. Comprised of linen stretched over metal frames, Gambaroff's motifs and gestures are displaced and travel between the human body in their posture and size.

Gambaroff concerns himself with questions of authorship, display, distribution, and reception. Though his painterly practice unfolds from a conceptual core, his multiple-access approach offers a wide range of combinations. In *Synergize* (2010), pieces of newspaper are bound together by italicized paint strokes, an index of the artist that is both personal and anonymous. By tearing off the top layer, he creates an inverted palimpsest that overwrites the broadsheet's layout, transforming it into an abstract composition. This process of creation is precisely organized but guided by gesture. The installation of canvases as mise-en-scène destabilizes painterly praxis. Shown as assemblage, the artist combines them with domestic objects, thus positioning painting as a shield (*Almost a palindrome*, 2010), a shelf (*Begin with the End in Mind*, 2010), or a tabletop (*Think-Win-Win*, 2010) in off-wall installations. To even out the sloping floor of the gallery, self-help books figure as wedges, preventing the assemblages from falling apart. As with the actual canvases, Gambaroff's motifs and gestures are displaced and travel between different support structures. This fluency of references extends to mass-produced mugs marked with the trademark of the canvases; Gambaroff's transfer of signs and supports is made multi-directional.

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ARTFORUM

Pamela Rosenkranz and Nikolas Gambaroff**SWISS INSTITUTE****18 Wooster Street****September 15–October 30**

Pamela Rosenkranz and Nikolas Gambaroff display works side by side in their respective shows, "This Is Not My Color" (Rosenkranz) and "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" (Gambaroff), for the Swiss Institute's first exhibition in one of Jeffrey Deitch's former gallery spaces. Twenty distinct pieces are strategically positioned in conversation with one another in Swiss Institute's main space, and downstairs two projectors display Rosenkranz's disturbing work *Over My Rainbow*, 2011, a haunting apparition of the Michael Jackson many will recognize from his later years. In one projection, Rosenkranz has superimposed a woman's eyes over Jackson's and they are taut, blinking, and hyperaware; his pale skin glows next to the other projection, which features a morphing rainbow's ROYGBIV spectrum. The forced intimacy, between the two projections as well as between the viewer and the work itself, creates blatant discomfort and self-consciousness.



View of "This Is Not My Color / The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," 2011.

Both artists focus on the body as material and on the human figure as a reference point for closer philosophical inspection. Joining the ranks of people who have battled external forces set on pigeonholing or oversimplifying their existence, Rosenkranz and Gambaroff unveil the illusive notion of the human being as a prêt-à-porter item for consumption by reminding the viewer that though human qualities and traits are often compartmentalized or reduced in aesthetic objects, humanity remains irreplaceable. This is evident from the installation's clean interior design aesthetic, which, in its evocation of showcase rooms promoting new apartments (and of modern-day domesticity in general), hints at the simultaneous appeal and danger of contrived plasticity. This point is further made by specific materials present, such as Evian water bottles filled with a flesh-toned substance, and tall lamp sculptures that stand alone, forcibly personified, on oversize rugs—placeholders for works previously sold. As such, these objects, especially the lamp, bring up comparisons between the individual, vapid household commodity, and artworks that are subject to liquidation. The exhibition suggests human beings are invaluable, as their wide array of traits, ambitions, and foibles are not, despite attempts, easily mimicked or represented, and thus cannot be sold. What it means to be human—that invitation to overused parody and abused metaphor—surfaces in these works, as we perceive the coincidence of vacancy intermingling with the substantive, inciting an urge to both preserve authenticity and to come to terms with the forged. Straightforward object or sly feint, organism or machine, original or reproduction—the line between such spheres is inspected, along with the ways science and technology simulate the real while expanding the unreal.

— *Jacquelyn Davis*

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