

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

FLINT JAMISON

selected texts & press

FLINT JAMISON

Flint Jamison is a conceptual artist working with sculpture, digital media and video, publication, as well as performance. He co-founded the art center Yale Union in Portland, Oregon (2008 – 2020), and the artist-run center Department of Safety, which operated from 2002 until 2010 in Anacortes, Washington. Jamison is the founder and editor of the ongoing serial publication Veneer Magazine, an 18-book publishing project established in 2007.

Flint Jamison was born in 1979 in Montana. Since receiving his M.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2006, he has initiated the long-term serial publishing project Veneer, and has exhibited internationally, presenting solo exhibitions at Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2022–2023), Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen (2019), Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2025, 2017 and 2015); Air de Paris, Paris (2025, 2021, 2015 and 2012); Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf (2021 and 2017); Pied-à-terre, Ottsville, PA (2016); ETH Zürich (2015); Artists Space, New York (2013); Cubitt, London (2013); Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva (2012); Artspeak, Vancouver (2012); castillo/corrales, Paris (2011); and Open Satellite, Bellevue, Washington (2010). His work was included in sum, at Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (2026), Stand Up Comedy – Personals at 80WSE, New York (2024), Signal or Noise at S.M.A.K., Ghent (2018), Other Mechanisms, curated by Anthony Huberman at the Secession, Vienna (2018), the 2017 Whitney Biennial, curated by Christopher Y. Lew and Mia Locks, the 2014 Liverpool Biennial, curated by Anthony Huberman and Mai Abu ElDahab, and the 2016 Incorporated! - Les Ateliers de Rennes, curated by François Piron. In 2008, Jamison co-founded Yale Union, a contemporary art center in Portland, Oregon, and oversaw the transfer of its property rights to the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation in 2020.

His work is held in numerous private and public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library; and the Princeton University Library, among others.

ArtReview

Notes from New York: A Second Chance

Jenny Wu Opinion 05 March 2025 artreview.com



Boris Mikhailov, *Yesterday's Sandwich*, late 1960s–1970s, slideshow transferred to digital video, sound, Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery

Why faulty first impressions only tell half the story, and the beauty of never quite making up your mind

I disliked Boris Mikhailov's exhibition at Marian Goodman on my first visit to the gallery's new Tribeca location, where I watched two of the Ukrainian photographer's videos on the first floor. I found the experimental language, especially in *Yesterday's Sandwich* (late 1960s–70s)—a ten-minute montage of surrealist images made from superimposed slides of his photos, set to Pink Floyd's *Breathe (In the Air)* (1973)—stale and off-putting. Practically every other slide featured a sensuously posed and unidentified nude woman. One sat on a boulder with her legs raised, her chin tilted back, her image superimposed on a mountain landscape. Another, with her eyes closed, breasts bared and arms raised, was overlaid on the exterior of a cabin in whose windows stood two more unclothed women, one heavily pregnant. Even given the Soviet Union's history of censoring pornography, the nudity here felt bathetic rather than politically transgressive.

But February wound up being a lesson in slow looking, a month marked by repeat visits to exhibitions, conversations that grew in fits and starts, and faulty first impressions brought into focus over time. When my date dragged me back to Marian Goodman, I realised I'd missed the entire second floor of the gallery. There I found three of Mikhailov's photographic series, one of which, titled *By the Ground* (1991)—sepia-toned gelatin silver prints made on the streets of Kharkiv and Moscow the year the Soviet Union fell—stopped me in my tracks. In this work, women were not only objects of the viewer's gaze but also the ones looking: spying on others' property, seeing into walled-off urban areas. One, shown from the back in a trench coat and heels, steps onto some rubble to peek over a wooden fence and into a yard. Another peers through the narrow gap between two segments of a long, pale partition, her companion watching from behind, neither of their faces visible to the camera. An elderly figure in a baggy dress, standing in the shadow of a tall industrial gate, seems to wait for someone or something to materialise in the crack between the metal panels. Where *Yesterday's Sandwich* had seemed to me too saccharine, these photos had a coolness about them, accentuated by Mikhailov's choice to shoot from the hip with a horizon camera, creating wide and lonely panoramic views.



Flint Jamison, *Jersey Barrier Mold*, installation view, 2025, fir and purple heart wood, metal, motor. Courtesy Miguel Abreu Gallery and the artist

Another good second impression: Flint Jamison, known enthusiast of plastic pipes and [information flow](#), had concurrent exhibitions titled *Class: Weight* and *Installation View* at Miguel Abreu's two Lower East Side locations. Both featured sculptures made to explore what the press release described as 'the lack of data concerning an artwork's weight' in institutional archives and galleries' inventory software. A large triangular structure in the first space caught my eye. *Jersey Barrier Mold* (2025), an 86.6kg wooden frame resembling a form for moulding concrete, unlatched and open on the floor, referenced the modular walls installed on highways to prevent head-on vehicular collisions. Another large and car-related work in the second space, *Installation View* (2023/25), a 67.6kg garage door that the gallery attendant could open and close with the press of a button, was made of fir and purpleheart and placed behind sculptures resembling a domestic entertainment system. The garage door opened onto a sterile white wall; in the first space, motorised shelves slid up and down, portable power stations whirled and there were ample allusions to the transportation of artworks, but nothing – not even the air – seemed to circulate.

On opening night, I'd thought the round-ended, roughly centimetre-wide grooves found all over the wood on *Jersey Barrier Mold*, *Installation View* and Jamison's other sculptures had been made by the artist; I'd referred to them as "scratches". It wasn't until later, while scrolling through photos on my phone, that I noticed how deeply the grooves were incised in the wood and was struck by a spell of trypophobia. I returned to the gallery's Eldridge Street location and picked up one of the artist's 'maintenance manuals' for the works, which informed me that the grooves were made not by the artist but by worms. Jamison had sourced the 'worm-infested fir' from an estuary in the American Northwest. The worms were gone now, but I could still imagine their bodies boring through the sculptures, the traces of their movement reinstating organic action – not labour per se but something wilder – to the material manifestations of Jamison's conceptual propositions, which grew more unnerving the closer and longer I looked.



Studio Wenjüe Lu, *OOii*, 2023. Courtesy Studio Wenjüe Lu

Then there was Studio Wenjüe Lu's *Portraits of Aufhebung*, a sculpture exhibition-slash-clothing collection launch at Komune, a store in the Lower East Side. An invite had landed in my inbox; it wasn't my usual beat, but I decided to pop in because I was already nearby. The event was so crowded that I couldn't get a good look at the clothes – all creamy beige, the colour of unprimed canvas – or the beige cotton and polyester soft sculptures sitting next to the garment displays. Instead I got into a long conversation about linguistics and philosophy with one of the studio's cofounders, Michael Fang, during which I was distracted by his DIY baseball cap, made from half of a camo Kamala Harris hat and half of a red Trump hat. The garments, I gleaned, were made to fit the cartoonish sculptures before being scaled up to fit humans.

Afterwards, I paid a visit to the designers' Williamsburg studio, where their sculptures hung from the ceiling like decommissioned automata. Some were bulbous, others distended; some were pitted like moons and others antennaed like microbes. Most had small pert hands and feet but no heads. They hung above racks of shirts and pants, all crafted as per the designers' minimalist palette. Fang played music, made tea and sat with me while the other half of the duo, Wenjue Lu, stayed on her feet, traversing the studio and taking photos of their garments one by one, the sound of her camera punctuating her partner's sentences. The pieces she photographed looked intimidating. Their silhouettes were complicated, ambiguous; I surmised they'd be difficult to put on, even harder to style. Much like at the opening, Fang seemed more interested in discussing philosophy than introducing me to the clothing and the creaturely forms that surrounded us – 'humanoids', he called them. I left intrigued by the ways in which these two, with their multidisciplinary practice, seemed intent on devouring everything from the desire and mystification of fashion to the academic aspirations of fine art to the everyday exigencies of practical use.



Studio Wenjue Lu, *Mannequin .4*, Berry Street Community Garden, New York, 2022. Courtesy Studio Wenjue Lu

Their brand still felt opaque to me, though. It wasn't until I returned to Komune and actually tried on pieces from their previous year's collection that I began to recognise their sense of humour. Dressing myself in an earth-toned, semitransparent linen shirt with wrinkly round patches, irregularly spaced buttons and overlong sleeves that swallowed my wrists and hands – evoking a languid, gangly-limbed sculpture the designers named *Mannequin .4* (2022) – I, too, felt looser. Donning a pair of their baggy linen trousers, I felt like I was climbing into a burlap sack with a crinkly inner lining. Before the mirror, my legs morphed into two fusiform tree trunks. But I was surprised to find the silhouette neither intimidating nor unpleasant. I suspect the whole initiation process had been necessary for just that.

The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in February

By **Travis Diehl** and **Holland Cotter**

Published Feb. 6, 2025 Updated Feb. 13, 2025

This week in Newly Reviewed, Travis Diehl covers Glenn Ligon and Julius Eastman's music, Flint Jamison's robotics and Marc Kokopeli's unnerving TVs.

LOWER EAST SIDE

Flint Jamison

Through March 8. Miguel Abreu Gallery, 88 Eldridge Street, Manhattan; 212-995-1774, miguelabreugallery.com.



Flint Jamison, "Applicate 6.0 (Weigh Station)," (2025), aluminum, load cells, linear actuators, servo motors, electronic components, portable power stations, cables, hooks. via Flint Jamison and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York; Photo by Stephen Faught

The artist Flint Jamison is known as a founder of Yale Union, an art center in Portland, Ore., and for editing the boutique art journal *Veneer*. His solo show at Miguel Abreu's Eldridge Street gallery (he has a related show at Abreu's Orchard Street location) features half a dozen motorized sculptures that marry the aesthetics of D.I.Y. robotics to fetishy woodworking.

A pair of vibrating columns made from worm-eaten fir and powered by batteries, both titled "Cascadia," provide a mumbling ambience. Other wall-mounted sculptures resembling thin easels

whine and twitch up and down on long threaded rods, such as “Applicate 4.0 (Veneer Magazine),” a thin, shallow, moving shelf of the exotic hardwood purpleheart.

Mercifully, there’s an instruction booklet that includes descriptions of what these crazy robots are up to. The changing shelf height in “Applicate 4.0,” for instance, somehow “references the heights of the 13 issues” of Veneer. “Applicate 2.1 & 2.2,” consists of a pair of aluminum gantries facing off across a side room — their cycling heights mimic the bottom edges of works in the Kunstmuseum Bern’s permanent collection, including 1,600 pieces bequeathed by [Cornelius Gurlitt, the son of a notorious art dealer for Hitler](#).

The logic of this tinkerer’s idyll can be opaque. What’s more striking, though, is how Jamison’s focus on height and weight conveys a pained skepticism about art’s less empirical dimensions.

"The Manhattan Art Review"

Flint Jamison - Class: Weight / Installation View - [Miguel Abreu](#) - ****.5

I've mentioned before that Yale Union directly and singlehandedly got me into art about a decade ago, and Flint's own work was very important to my own thinking about art for a number of years, particularly *Veneer Magazine*, but funnily enough these are his first solo shows I've ever seen in person. It's appropriate that this comes right after bringing up my reservations about the legacy of Stanley Broun because Flint is one of the very few contemporary artists who has wholeheartedly taken up the mantle of conceptualism. He's preserved its intransigence while developing its language in new directions, which is to say that if the conceptual heritage could use more examination then he's already done some of that work in his own practice. The art itself is a data-centric institutional critique: "Class: Weight" is oriented around an examination of how the gallery's inventory database records the weight of artworks. Their software has no category for recording weight except as shipping information, which in the artist's text on the exhibition is related back to the "penchant for motion" artworks have as "efficient instruments of the circulation of capital," thus the weight of an artwork implies its circulation in the global art economy. The works in the exhibition continue these themes of data, movement, and weight: there are scales, vibrating sculptures, five motorized wall works that adjust a bar up and down on a track in reference to the contents of various museums and libraries (one functions as a scale), two printed images made from layering the images of all the works in the Miguel Abreu inventory and the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art "Masterworks on Loan" program respectively, and a replica of the mold for a Jersey Barrier, the concrete walls on the sides of highways. "Installation View" in the space on Orchard Street takes the form of a semi-boutique space, in line with other businesses on the street, with a custom stereo system playing an excerpt from Harun Farocki's *Still Life* of a Cartier watch photo shoot, the results of which are in a binder in the space, and a functioning garage door system placed against the back wall that acts as a sort of mechanical theater curtain. Most of the wood in the exhibition is fir that has been eaten (with holes that are the record of their movement) by invasive (implying transportation) worms, and the exhibition pamphlet includes instructions on how to maintain the artworks, mostly on turning them on and off, which also implies the movement of gallery attendants through the space at the beginning and end of the day. All of this is enjoyable to digest and think about, but it still raises the problem of conceptual art because the enjoyment is largely deferred from the experience in the gallery, or it was for me. I had read the exhibition texts a couple of weeks before so my understanding of all the components was hazy at the time, but I withheld coming to any conclusions until I read the full pamphlet later on. The text succeeds in bringing the artworks into a considered, polished system of thought that is articulate without being didactic, an almost poetic or metaphorical turning of the art economy into an ecosystem and the artworks into individual organisms that are alive in some sense. I have no reservations about being a successful exhibition, but nevertheless I wonder about the nature of that success. It lies less in the artworks themselves than in the thoughts surrounding them, but the work is still an indispensable component that goes beyond the simply illustrative, which is a common pitfall of the conceptual. The value of the work has something to do with the loving craftsmanship put into the realization of each object, and more to do with their physical implication in the information systems he is working with, but ultimately I don't really know what it is. That's fine though, wondering what makes it compelling without being able to pin it down is precisely in the spirit of Flint's art.



Make Sure to See These Shows in New York This February

Reframe is a monthly column in which contributor Sam Falb discusses timely openings to view in New York. Each edition offers commentary on the latest exhibitions, performances, and installations. Dynamic and ever-evolving, the content reflects the fluidity of the market it travels through.



Flint Jamison, *Class: Weight (inverted)*, 2025. Steel, aluminum, rubber, load cells, servo motors, portable power stations, electronic components, purple heart wood, cables. 42 x 26 x 20 1/2 inches (106.7 x 66 x 52.1 cm), 143 lbs (64.9 kg).

Welcome back – this month's edition reads much like a downtown gallery walk, with our guest recommender saving us from this exclusive title (more from Lauren below). While many will soon be spreading their wings toward Zona Maco and Frieze LA, New York's galleries continue to launch their own storytelling endeavors across an array of compelling shows. From a garage door installation featuring worm-eaten wood to a truly perplexing, life-size rabbit sculpture, no medium or technique is too novel for you, reader. Down a flight of stairs on Hester Street, a NAFTA-oriented show meets the moment of politics in-extremis. Over on Walker Street and up an elevator (past the previously-covered [TIWA Select](#) and [Kapp Kapp](#)), a symphony of skulls and vixen-forward characters can be found. Raw, textured experimentation meets polished poise this month, setting up salons of thinking, questioning, and marveling throughout this period.



Flint Jamison, *Installation View*, 2023/25. Fir and purple heart wood, metal, motor. 4 boards: 21 x 110 x 1 inches (53.3 x 279.4 x 2.5 cm) each, 84 x 110 x 1 inches (213.4 x 279.4 x 2.5 cm) total. Photo courtesy of the gallery and artist.

Miguel Abreu: Class: Weight (January 24 - March 8)

The first thing you might see upon entering Miguel Abreu's Orchard Street outpost is the abrupt rising of Flint Jamison's garage door in the high-ceiling space. The loud, grating noise is complemented by the steady hums of a vintage stereo playing an excerpt from Haroun Farocki's film, *Still Life*, an audio recording of a Cartier watch photoshoot (with a binder of Cartier advertisements – *Ultimate Office AdjustaView 10 – Pocket Desk Reference Organizer* – available to flip through not far from the set-up). Installed by a Long-Island based operator, the garage scenario has played out to a steady stream of buzz and industry-aligned acclaim, seeing visitors from the world of garages, fans of the artist, and curious passersby alike stopping in to view the decidedly unorthodox installation. It features a particular type of found wood in the Puget Sound where Jamison currently lives. Watchful eyes will notice slivers of Purple Heart Wood complimenting the stereo set-up and small gaps in the garage door's frame. Head not far to their Eldridge Street space for some more worm-munched wood works, as well as a variety of splayed cables, linear actuators and servo motors elevating and dropping wooden planks in quick-time, as well as two delightful collections of mounted letterpress prints (*Scope 1 1 Is* and *Masterworks on Loan*) unable to be opened, but piquing this writer's interest for what lies behind the thickly-stacked pages.



ArtReview

Opportunity Zone: Flint Jamison, ‘Veneer’ – Review

Digby Warde-Aldam Reviews 02 December 2021 ArtReview



Veneer, 2021 (installation view). © the artist. Courtesy Air de Paris

Since the 1970s, the idea that the art industry is essentially the advance-guard of gentrification has become a received wisdom. Yet what is the role of art itself in the equation? This is the central question posed by Aaron Flint Jamison in this exhibition at Romainville’s Air de Paris, itself recently relocated to a down-at-heel former industrial quarter designated as an

‘Opportunity Zone’. The American artist’s show is a furious attempt to reckon with the artworld’s associations with neoliberalism and politically enabled gentrification, grappling with the contradictions inherent to staging such an event in this environment. Jamison, who cofounded the Portland arts institution Yale Union in 2008 only to hand it over to a Native American nonprofit in an act of ‘reverse gentrification’ a dozen years later, is evidently uncomfortable not just with his own role in these processes, but with the very nature of the art that fills this kind of space.

His anger is manifest from the outset: the *Opportunity Zone* (all works 2021) series sees planks of cedar wood, riddled with indentations, tilted against the gallery walls beside their aluminium brackets. Closer inspection reveals that the sections carved out from the planks are maquette-like renderings of city plans: one, most prominently, representing the built environment surrounding Air de Paris; another of a brownfield site adjacent to Yale Union; and, poignantly, a third presenting a relief map of the wasteland left following the 2016 fire that burnt down the Ghost Ship artist space in Oakland, killing 36 people. It is now an area earmarked for development.

Quite suddenly, the show changes tack: a second room plays host to *GraDiva*, a multipart installation that directly picks apart the legacy of Marcel Duchamp’s embrace of the readymade. The letters of the title – the name of the gallery founded by André Breton in 1937, whose doors Duchamp designed – are engraved, spaced out, on the insides of two box-shaped cedar sculptures, visible only if one stoops to inspect. In another instance, two tall panes of glass flanked into cubicle form by more cedar pay explicit homage to *The Large Glass* (1915–23), right down to the spidery cracks on its surface. In a repudiation of readymade practice, the emphasis here is on the handmade: rhythmic lines of orange glue seep from the joints in the wood, imperfections left pointedly untidy.

Jamison’s thesis here rests on the idea that the readymade is the conceptual gateway to contemporary capitalism’s more disturbing processes; that it is essentially an analogue to outsourcing and gentrification, a negation of artistic agency that has transformed the production of art into a process of procurement. Whether or not you agree with this argument, the way in which it is argued is infectiously combative.

Flint Jamison, Veneer

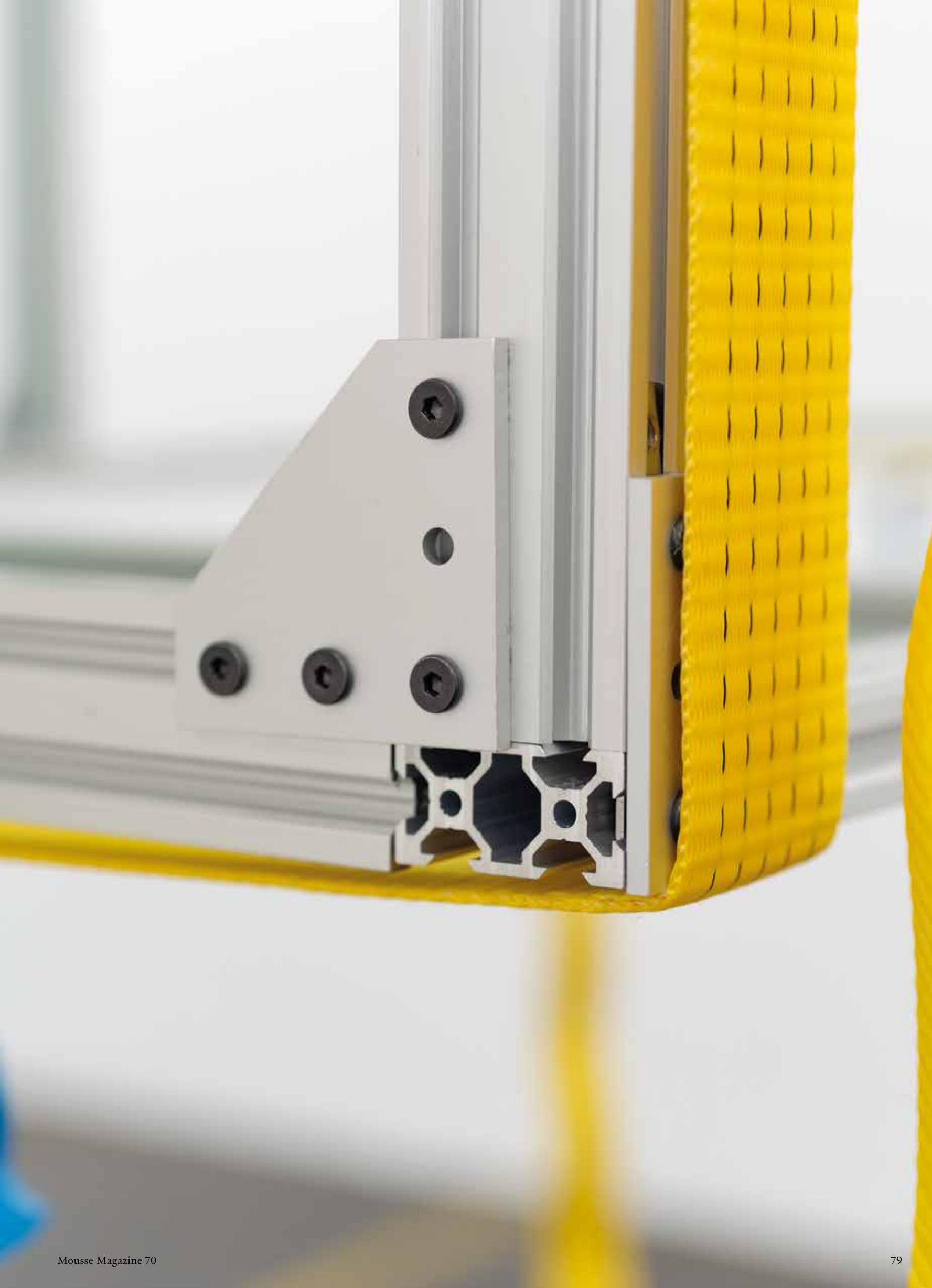
Air de Paris, on view until 9 December



Opportunity Zones: AARON FLINT JAMISON

BY
Nicholas Tammens





Across the courtyard facing AARON FLINT JAMISON's exhibition at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen is a hand scanner used by the municipal police to grant access to their building. This camera happens to face a window, an aperture, in which a single work by Jamison is visible. One cannot help but regard the scanner as a serendipitous simile for the exhibition, and perhaps for much of Jamison's work, given their mutual concern with matters of inside, outside, and the liminal surfaces that separate and provide access between them.







The surface, the place of fetish, is where viewers with no prior knowledge arrive, making it the most egalitarian part of a work of art. What has become less discernible, at least since the 1960s, is exactly where the work begins and ends, and since this exhibition coincides with the publishing of the new edition of Jamison's magazine *Veneer*, we're invited to think about the relationship between what we might call the para-artistic work that runs adjacent to and functions with what we more readily recognize as works of art. The particular work facing the hand scanner across the courtyard is titled *Opportunity Zone* (2019) and takes the form of a fire door rendered in cedar with zinc-plated hardware, scaled down to one-third normal size. This form is horizontally mirrored (rendering the door useless; it cannot fall shut) and hung on the wall (again, useless in contrast to its usual purpose—not to mention the sheer fact of it being constructed from a flammable material). And although it is a sculpture, to my mind—almost to my own embarrassment—mounted on the wall like this, it evokes the shaped canvases of Frank Stella. But it equally signals industrial design, or even the writings of William Morris (more on this in a moment).

It has an aperture, a small hole that passes through the work, showing the wall on the other side. This hole is in the shape of the architectural footprint of Yale Union in Portland, Oregon, an institution cofounded by Jamison; he remains chair of its board. I have worked with Yale Union for many years, first as a researcher, then as a curatorial assistant. It was also where I got my first opportunity to organize a substantial exhibition. Since 2009 Yale Union has contributed to the rise of a kind of new institutionalism in the United States that looks to the European Kunsthalle as a model while maintaining a particularly American voice in its programming—a voice that I would call smart yet consciously awry. These models encourage artists' critique of institutions, leading to a heightened focus on the figure of the artist and their rights in the context of the institution.¹

This is one of two works titled *Opportunity Zone*, a phrase whose plural also names the exhibition as a whole and references schemes in U.S. civic politics describing areas slated for urban renewal. Introduced by the U.S. Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, this new incentive spurs economic development and job creation by encouraging long-term investment in low-income communities. Investors who participate (and benefit in the form of tax relief) do not need to live in the zone in which they are investing, nor do they even need to hold U.S. citizenship. Ultimately, the program leverages tax cuts to encourage financial speculation in property markets that were previously deemed too risky to invest in.

Yale Union is sited within such a zone, and *Opportunity Zones* suggests ways that art, its institutions, and their social relations are directly implicated within property and financial speculation. We can surmise that the title evidences an area of keen interest to Jamison: namely the purposes of art, and more specifically this niche part of the culture industry. I might add that these purposes are contingent on their users.

This was central to Jamison's 2017 exhibition at Galerie Max Mayer in Düsseldorf, which presented *YU Contemporary vs. Dept. of Revenue Oregon & Mult. Co. Assessor* (2017), a published edition reproducing the transcript of a 2016 court case whereby the county in which Yale Union resides attempted to contest its nonprofit status. The verbatim transcript records something unusual for Jamison:

the artist speaking plainly about the intentions of Yale Union, which has always been part of the support structure of his own work (recall, the *para-artistic*). In a text that accompanied the show, Richard Birkett succinctly stated how Jamison's relationship with Yale Union is itself contingent on a set of property relations:

"The value within a non-profit art institution, both that held by artworks and that which is formed through the circulation of ideas and knowledge, is put to work and possessed in many ways. If rights to physical or intellectual property determine who can use, alter, sell or capture the payoffs accruing to it, then the non-profit art institution constitutes a plethora of banked and uncontested rights claims—from artists, directors, curators, and board members."²

This attests to the diffusive economy of cultural capital that both Jamison and I have profited from in various ways, which is completely contingent on a form of property relations that is non-egalitarian by definition and in conflict with our own political positions. This cuts a through-line to what Jamison states for this show: "The underbelly, the apparatus that presents the work, is also the work. Forgetting this can be easy depending on the situations and structures that construct the frames around the work."³

The forms present in *Opportunity Zones* also point to this constitutive outside—what frames the context in which art is produced, distributed, consumed. This should lead us to consider the indexical strategies of the artists who since Conceptual art have brought the viewer to ask how a piece of art can adequately speak to the contradiction between an artist's intention for the work to effectively analyze its social conditions and the work's capacity to do so when it is complicit with/in these very systems. The tendency to deploy a reductionist ethos toward establishing the clearest possible way of communicating these criticisms led many artists to formal dead ends, or in the case of some works of institutional critique, criticism that was completely recuperated into the institution—potentially contradicting the original aims of the work, or conversely, reforming the institution. Regardless, this legacy proves that the old questions regarding art's relative autonomy from society are far from exhausted.

Jamison's work is different in that it is just as allegorical, which is to say representational, as it is indexical. It is not preoccupied with establishing the clearest mode of communication between work and viewer, but rather relies on the evocative. The long exhibition text that accompanies the show might be read by some as an exhaustive description of the work, but I am reminded of the form of the soliloquy in theater, whereby the fourth wall is broken by a monologue of the character's inner thoughts, putting the mechanisms of their unconscious on display. This is the underside, the subterranean, of the work. In this poetically informational text Jamison proposes that the audience think of the circumstances of the exhibition as another form of opportunity zone: the work, the space, the relationship between artist and curator, the position of the viewer, etc. Thus it produces some questions: What is being leveraged? For whom and by who? Who benefits? What counts as capital? These questions center not only on the productive role of the artist, but also on that of the viewer.

Opportunity Zones includes only eight works. The first, which one could easily miss upon entering, is the first of two fire doors rendered in cedar. This material naturally harbors conservational properties (it repels vermin) and has featured in a number of Jamison's exhibitions, including a series of storage racks at the Whitney Biennial in 2017. Unlike the other door, this is scaled at actual size and is installed at the entrance to the gallery space, looking almost functional. But like its smaller twin, it does not work. Set within its cedar surface is a hole in the shape of the Ghost Ship, an Oakland warehouse occupied by artists' studios and ad-hoc living spaces that also

served as an occasional performance venue—in other words, a space like many places in which artists work and sometimes live—that made national news when a fire started during a music show in December 2016, resulting in the deaths of thirty-six people. Jamison knew some of them, suggesting that its intention is partially memorial. Before Yale Union was established, Jamison was involved in running Department of Safety in Anacortes, Washington, a space not dissimilar to the Ghost Ship.

What I have as yet failed to mention about these works is the zinc hardware of the doors, which, as Jamison points out in his exhibition text, is the primary component of sacrificial anodes. Like the conceptual form of the opportunity zone, Jamison extends the idea of the sacrificial anode to the work of art itself:

“What are sacrificial anodes? Sacrificial anodes are highly active metals that are used to prevent a less active material surface from corroding. Sacrificial anodes are created from a metal alloy with negative electrochemical potential that is greater than that of the other metal it will be used to protect. The sacrificial anode will be consumed in place of the metal it is protecting. They are made from a metal alloy with a more active voltage, in this case, zinc. The difference in potential between the two metals means that the galvanic anode corrodes so that the anode material is consumed in preference to the structure.

With sacrificial anodes, the protected metal is affixed on the cathode side, and then a more reactive metal or alloy is chosen and connected to the protected metal as an anode. The reaction will proceed spontaneously. An oxidation reaction occurs at the anode, which means that the sacrificial metal will be consumed. At the same time, the reduction reaction occurs on the cathodic side, protecting the primary material from erosion. Thus, corrosion on the protected metal is successfully shifted to the anode, protecting the metal.”⁴

We can surmise that the lack of infrastructure to support artistic practice, particularly in the U.S.—for instance affordable long-term studio spaces or robust public grant systems—structurally guides a majority of artists into the position where living and working in places such as the Ghost Ship becomes necessary. On a cultural level, such spaces are also sites in which certain subcultures find their hospice (keeping in mind that in regular parlance, once a place like this has been around for some time, we call it an institution). Through the allegory of the sacrificial anode, their position in rapidly gentrifying property markets is one of a certain kind of dependence premised on combustion. Meanwhile, financial investment is directly involved in funding recognized cultural institutions (such as Yale Union), functioning as a form of “impact washing,” drawing attention away from more ethically dubious investments.⁵

On the southern wall of this large and almost empty space, two kinetic mechanical shelves move in ways that appear illogical. In Jamison’s long descriptive text for the show, we learn that they are programmed to place a work of art at the ideal hanging height mandated by museum convention—they awkwardly automate the labor of museum preparators. On the left, *Applicate 2.1* (2019) is programmed with data accrued from all 1,500 works of art in the Gurlitt Collection, which was inherited by Cornelius Gurlitt from his father, Hildebrand Gurlitt, an art dealer active during Nazi Germany tasked by Hermann Göring to acquire art

for the Führermuseum, and subsequently gifted to the Kunstmuseum Bern after Gurlitt was investigated for tax fraud. On the right, *Applicate 2.2* (2019) takes stock of the Kunstmuseum Bern’s broader collection, which we might view as beneficially highlighted by this bequest. In his text, Jamison notes that the Kunstmuseum’s research into the provenance of these works and the subsequent restitution of at least nine looted pieces has shown the transparency with which the Kunstmuseum received this opportunity—yet notably, the museum’s provenance research department is funded by foundations and private donations.

While what motivated Jamison to produce this work was an interest in researching institutional transformations that the Kunstmuseum undertook in receiving the Gurlitt collection as a gift—in other words, its cultural responsibility—the work itself speaks to the mobility of art as capital. One thing to note in regard to these machines is how stupid they are, by which I mean that they are far from the “smart” technology of today. Although appearing to work on their own, their programming was drafted by Jamison, their master. Their ceaseless mobility leads to what may seem an odd reference, but if we are to think of any artist who knew how to represent the absurdity of the machine, it was Jean Tinguely, whose famous *Homage to New York* (1960) self-destructed in the courtyard of New York’s Museum of Modern Art. A lesser-known but important part of the story is that Robert Rauschenberg sacrificially contributed a work to the machine. Although other works of art are only implied in Jamison’s *Applicate* pieces, their data has been mined by the artist in order to motivate his own: they are part of its intellectual fuel, its capital motivation. They are what motivates it. *Homage to New York*’s self-destruction was performed by the machine in the context of an institution (we can even relate it to Andrea Fraser’s museum pieces) and Jamison’s does, too, but the audience is not treated to a spectacle. Instead we are provoked to consider motivations.

The other work in this large room is much simpler. It is a large paper notepad, each page of which reproduces the same image. Although mounted on the wall, it asks to be regarded as a sculpture. The image is a surgical representation of Jamison’s shoulder after he had incurred an injury from the repetitive labor of operating a nineteenth-century printing press to produce his magazine, *Veneer*. For the first time in Jamison’s career, *Veneer* appears here as part of an exhibition. This notepad work, *Untitled* (2019), was produced on this same machine, forming a loop between the artist’s means of production and the physical damage sustained in the labor of operating it. It may appear abstract, but it works on a tender level. As a kind of insider with a certain amount of background information on Jamison’s work, I hazard to say that his output is at its best when it confers something personal from the artist to the audience, although how this is communicated does not remain entirely consistent (which I think could be seen as an advantage). This is made clear with another work, situated in the smallest room, reproducing the same image but as a small open book, splayed like wings on a wooden rest. This shelf, fashioned by a router out of camphor (a wood known for its therapeutic properties), reproduces the bone from that same injury. Titled *Game Ready* (2019), this piece ironically takes the name of a company that supplies post-surgery devices. As an almost awkward form between sculpture and print, it could feel too earnest, yet within this exhibition it feels like a necessary piece of the artist’s body.

Both of these works represent the body literally, but I would argue that all of the work in this exhibition implies the presence of the corporeal as the source of its energy (Jana Euler’s paintings picturing electrical outlets usefully come to mind). Jamison is entirely invested in the biopolitics not only of art, but of the world in general, and the final piece in the exhibition makes entirely clear the dependency of material infrastructure on human beings (not the other

way around). *Servers* (2019) reproduces the general shape of the sixteenth-century reading wheel designed by Italian Renaissance inventor Agostino Ramelli, but in raw recycled green plastic. These are arranged inside modular frames composed of 7075 aluminum (military designed, and as Jamison informs us, alloyed with zinc). There are four of these functioning reproductions—they have working cogs—but they do not move. Either they hang from the ceiling by the kind of fluorescent yellow straps used to secure a load on the back of a truck, or they sit idle on one of the venue’s trolleys (also yellow). While static, in their partly ad-hoc installation they imply some kind of transit.

The forms themselves are oriented toward the viewer. In their original historical moment these machines were dependent on the literate, who held power over the mass public. In a country where it may even seem possible that capitalism works, the service economy that maintains Switzerland’s almost-too-perfect cleanliness is undertaken by labor either brought in from less economically fortunate parts of Europe, performed by newer citizens without the generational privileges of Swiss inheritance, or completely offshored and out of view. While the broader Kunsthalle system is part of a cultural economy that is also composed of individuals beyond Switzerland’s borders, they form a class with certain privileges, mobilities, and literacy in art. This antagonism between these two positions is implied when Jamison quotes Mimi Sheller’s *Mobility Justice* (2018) in his exhibition text:

“Barriers to access and controls over mobility are implemented... to serve elite interests... via formal and informal policing, gates, passes, clothing, regulation of public space, and surveillance systems that limit the right to move, filter entry and exit, and selectively apply protection of the state.”

While suggesting techniques of social control, this remains fluent in the technology of the work itself. Its disparity between twenty-first-century technology and handicraft is completely in line with what I would say is a central theme in Jamison’s work: the techniques of production. I noted earlier that Jamison’s work reminds me of the writings of William Morris, which for me is a way of thinking through the purposes and ethics of the role of the artist. Morris was known for preserving the laborious techniques of the medieval workshop; his philosophy on art; and the fact that he self-published the tracts that undergirded his practical work (recall *Veneer* in this context). Morris looked backward instead of inventing craft for his own time. It took one of his disciples, Charles Robert Ashbee, to recognize that the machine can likewise be the subject of handicraft—think of how we now work with HTML. Following these debates of the late nineteenth century, we have the invention of industrial design from Adolf Loos all the way to Steve Jobs, and the other path: art for art’s sake.

Morris remains relevant today because his questions regarding the aim of art are directly linked to artistic techniques of production. And perhaps from a political standpoint, the problem with Morris (and his socialism) was that he was inclined more toward Thomas More than Karl Marx—he was a utopian, not a pragmatist. The deeply moral character of these nineteenth-century European men toward the production of their work really is not dissimilar to how institutional critique, particularly in the United States, has continued as a way of producing a niche intellectual product (as Andrea Fraser has shown, this can

also be considered a service) catering to a relatively small audience. The argument against Morris and the Art and Crafts movement asked how such an art could square its egalitarian intentions with the niche market it served. As a solution, the industrial design that followed asked how art could reach a common, mass appeal. Art on the left—from Social Realism to Conceptual art—has harbored the problem of its purpose since that time.

While the de-skilling of art since the 1960s pushed questions of technique to one side, Jamison reemphasizes the dependency of the artist on modes of production—technology, skill, craft—thereby calling into question the ethics of the relationship between the work’s production and its purpose. In *Opportunity Zones*, he has chosen purposeful forms of industrial design in order to redirect the parlance of their use, in the process raising questions regarding the purposes of art. These objects show that he is cognizant that the audience is comprised of different sets of users (in the computing sense of the term) who have different applications for the work and different levels of access to the information that surrounds it, and indeed informs readings of it. While there is always the feeling that there are differing levels of access to these works—that there is the position of the insider and the outsider and a continuum in between—the distinction becomes superfluous when there is no ultimate hierarchy between the positions. I believe that there is no goal of attainment in the work itself. Rather, it points out well a simple function of the desire commonly surrounding contemporary art: to gain inside knowledge that will usher you into the hall of the connoisseurs, or which you might avariciously hoard as intellectual capital. In our time, intellectual property equates knowledge with ownership, and ownership implies power. If you have the opportunity.

- 1 For instance, in the last ten years the Artist’s Institute, New York; Artists Space, New York; and the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, all took on a notably kindred focus.
- 2 Richard Birkett, *Aaron Flint Jamison 06.05. - 01.07.2017* (Düsseldorf: Galerie Max Mayer, 2017).
- 3 Aaron Flint Jamison, *Opportunity Zones* (Saint Gallen: Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, 2019).
- 4 Jamison, *Opportunity Zones*, with acknowledgment of material drawn from [https://chem.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Analytical_Chemistry/Supplemental_Modules_\(Analytical_Chemistry\)/Electrochemistry/Exemplars/Corrosion/Sacrificial_Anode](https://chem.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Analytical_Chemistry/Supplemental_Modules_(Analytical_Chemistry)/Electrochemistry/Exemplars/Corrosion/Sacrificial_Anode)
- 5 “Impact washing,” a play on “greenwashing,” refers to a company’s efforts to portray itself as having a more positive (usually social) impact than it actually does.



Opportunity Zone, 2019, *Opportunity Zones* installation view at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, 2019.
 Courtesy: Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. Photo: Sebastian Schaub

Game Ready, 2019, *Opportunity Zones* installation view at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, 2019.
 Courtesy: Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. Photo: Sebastian Schaub



AARON FLINT JAMISON (b. 1979, Montana) lives and works in Portland, Oregon. He received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2006. He has had solo exhibitions at Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2017, 2015); Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf (2017); Pied terre, Ortsville, Pennsylvania (2016); Air de Paris, Paris (2015, 2012); ETH Zürich (2015); Artists Space, New York (2013); Cubitt, London (2013); Centre d'edition contemporaine, Geneva (2012); Artspeak, Vancouver (2012); castillo/corrales, Paris (2011); and Open Satellite, Bellevue (2010). He has participated in group exhibitions at S.M.A.K., Ghent (2018); Secession, Vienna (2018); the Whitney Biennial, New York (2017); and the Liverpool Biennial (2014). Jamison is a co-founder of the art center Yale Union in Portland, Oregon, and of the artist run center Department of Safety, which operated from 2002 until 2010 in Anacortes, Washington. He is the founder and editor of the ongoing serial publication *Veneer*, established in 2007.

NICHOLAS TAMMENS is the curator of 1856, a program of exhibitions and events at the Victorian Trades Hall Council, a trade union building in Melbourne. He is also an associate curator for Yale Union, Portland, where he curated an exhibition on the work of Jef Geys. He teaches art history at the Victorian College of Art, University of Melbourne, and has worked as a childhood educator. He has written for *May Revue* and has presented at After 8 Books and at castillo/corrales with Yale Union.

Art in America

THE DUBAI EFFECT

It's increasingly common for art to be sold and stored in freeports, paradoxical spaces of transit and permanence.

by Rahel Aima

THESE DAYS, an artwork might go straight from studio to storage without ever being shown. Sometimes, it doesn't even take a cursory turn on the auction block. I've begun to think of this as straight-to-storage art. It's a funny term in that it encompasses both work that never sells and maybe never garners any interest at all, as well as work whose primary function is as a unit of inflated value. They say that museums are where art goes to die. But it might be more apt to say that of storage facilities—from an artist's bedroom closet to multibillion-dollar freeports found chiefly in Geneva, Zurich, Luxembourg, Monaco, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

Freeports are duty-free storage facilities for goods in transit. Also called special economic zones, export processing zones, or free trade zones, they are either designated areas of ports and airports or stand-alone entities in their own right. For example, cars might be shipped from Japanese factories to the Shanghai Free Trade Zone before being loaded onto a ship bound for Marseille. Because the cars never leave the freeport—that is to say, they never enter Shanghai proper—the manufacturer never pays Chinese import taxes and is liable only for EU taxes on the French end.

Perhaps the best analogy is the part of an airport you enter after passport control and security. Citizens of most countries would be able to follow the same itinerary as the cars, flying from Tokyo to Marseille with a transfer in Shanghai. Without Chinese visas, they are unable to leave the secure area of the airport and enter Shanghai, but they do not have to pay for transit visas either. Originally, freeports were similarly intended for short-term transit, but they are increasingly being used as long-term repositories for art, wine, and precious metals. Yes, you cannot live with and enjoy your painting or vintage, but for investors who buy art purely on

speculation, the combination of security and tax incentives—if the work is sold at a freeport, owners are usually exempt from transaction taxes—makes it the perfect storage solution. It is also important to note that freeports are generally considered to be outside the jurisdiction of their parent country. As such, these "secrecy jurisdictions" (as tax havens are often called), which effectively shield transactions from concerned government authorities, have gained a reputation as sites of money laundering, tax fraud, and smuggling. In 2003, following the bust of an antiquities smuggling ring, Swiss authorities announced that they would return artifacts and mummies stolen from Egyptian excavation sites and tighten Geneva Freeport regulations to require more precise inventorying. Yet a raid of the same facility—spurred by the 2016 release of the Panama Papers—resulted in the recovery and eventual restitution of a Nazi-looted Modigliani, suggesting that the enforcement of these new laws is lax at best.

Until recently, the United States had only one ostensible artport (as art-specific freeports have been dubbed), a facility in Delaware. In 2017 it was joined by Arcis, a flashy new artport in Harlem. Yet neither of these is a freeport in the global sense: state and local taxes still apply. When you enter the Arcis facility, you leave the United States without ever leaving New York City. Additionally, all art imports into the US (unlike into Europe) are tax free, so the Foreign Trade Zone¹ status of these sites is nothing more than clever branding.

In May 2018, reporter Eileen Kinsella visited Arcis and described its high-tech safeguards against the effects of natural disasters, thousand-dollar lightbulbs in beautifully austere viewing rooms, and irreproachable security involving retinal and vascular scans.² If that sounds like a shinier



A private storage area at Arcis Fine Art + Collection, New York. Courtesy Arcis.

View of the registrar's table in Aaron Flint Jamison's exhibition "The Stored Work," 2017, at Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York. Photo: Stephen Fought.



Storage units act as an annex of a dwelling, but never an extension of comfort.

version of the security theater of international airports, it's a fair comparison. Arcis's decision to scan body parts suggests that its aesthetics—"like something out of a Bond movie," Kinsella writes—might be at least as important as its actual security.

In her 2017 book *Duty Free Art*, writer and artist Hito Steyerl analyzes the phenomenon of freeports. Given their mimicry of offshore financial centers and the paradox of goods that are technically in transit finding permanent homes in these bastions of accumulated wealth, she cogently views the art freeport as "a zone for permanent transit." She adds that "the freeport contains multiple contradictions: it is a zone of terminal impermanence; it is also a zone of legalized extralegality maintained by nation-states trying to emulate failed states as closely as possible—by selectively losing control."³

In 2011, when I moved back to my hometown, Dubai, a city replete with tessellated freezones (as they are known there), it was still feeling the aftereffects of the 2008 global financial crisis that decimated the emirate's economy and the purchasing power of its collecting classes. So I was puzzled by the appearance of continued success at a handful of galleries. Champagne and canapés still abounded at their openings. None of the well-dressed attendees seemed to give the art a second glance. I

learned, in hushed tones, that these galleries were running on Arab Spring Money—the funds that anxious elites whisked away from politically unstable regions. Compared to art, other investments had become volatile and financial transactions were being newly monitored for signs of potentially funding terrorists. Furthermore, high-end gallery patrons didn't even need to find a place to keep the art. It could stay in its crates in the gallery's warehouse forever.

Immediately following the Arab Spring, Dubai saw a lot of schlocky decorative art, all gilding and geometry and calligraphy, along with the first waves of Iraq War art. This was neither the Beirut standard of the Lebanese Civil War photographic archives, as exemplified in the work of Fouad Elkoury, Akram Zaatari, and the Arab Image Foundation's milieu, nor the rather opportunistic Syrian Civil War porn that would bubble up years later. Of course, the works on view in Dubai referenced relatively "safe"—which is to say, comfortably geographically or temporally distant—conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Tunisia, and maybe Egypt, even as artists shied away from the brutal suppressions of would-be revolutions in nearby Bahrain. Work that criticized neighboring regimes was being made, however carefully, but I would see it in London, not Dubai.

Exhibition: Aaron Flint Jamison, *The Stored Work*
Dates: September 10–11 October 11, 2017

For my second exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, I have proposed a multi-part project. The first aspect brings into the exhibition space all available works by gallery artists that are currently housed in off-site storage facilities leased by the gallery. I have secured the terms for inclusion of stored works from the following artists: Yui Agematsu, Liz Deschenes, Oroni, Sam Lewitt, Scott Lyall, Jean-Luc Moulène, Florian Pumhösl, R.H. Quaytman, Raha Raissnia, Jimmy Raskin, Blake Rayne, and Pamela Rosenkranz. These artists' works will remain in their packaging in the galleries at the 84 Eldridge Street location, while works of scale will be brought to the 36 Orchard Street location and remain in their respective crates or bins. The differentiation between off-site storage and on-site storage is crucial. The gallery's current off-site facilities are:

- American Self Storage, Brooklyn, five units
- SOS/Flexible Warehousing, New Jersey, three units
- DAD Trucking Inc., Bronx, one unit
- Boone Ave., Bronx, one unit



Locations of storage facilities leased by Miguel Abreu Gallery

Miguel Abreu Gallery also maintains multiple storage rooms at 84 Eldridge Street and 36 Orchard Street in downtown Manhattan. The second part of the exhibition invites attendees to view works stored in the gallery's storage facilities, which is where the majority of the gallery's inventory is kept. Each of these on-site storage areas will be open and available to audiences for viewing stored work during the run of the exhibition.

These hundreds of inventory-class works, wrapped for storage by the aforementioned units will be on view. Moreover, if an audience member would like to see any particular work unpacked during the course of the exhibition, because of convenient location, any work is viewable upon request. Audience members are encouraged to speak to one of the gallery's directors to make arrangements for such viewings.

The floorplans below highlight the various rooms of storage as well as the exhibition spaces.



Left and right floor of 84 Eldridge Street location

In 2012 I watched a panel about art and money at the Art Dubai Global Art Forum. A *Financial Times* columnist positively thrilled about the hot new asset class that everyone was talking about. Silver, wine, art, and gold: SWAG. Back then, I thought it was funnier each time she said it. But in retrospect, having realized just how entwined art and global finance are, I find it chilling.

IN FALL 2017, Aaron Flint Jamison mounted a remarkable multipart exhibition, "The Stored Work," at Miguel Abreu in New York. Like many other commercial spaces, the Manhattan gallery keeps part of its inventory in offsite storage facilities. The first part of Jamison's intervention was to take works from participating artists from offsite storage and put them on display, still crated, in Abreu's two Lower East Side spaces. Additionally, all on-site storage rooms and closets, usually off limits to visitors, were opened up for perusal. Literature available at the show included a map showing these locales. Surprisingly, they weren't specialized high-tech facilities but workaday self-storage complexes, offering the kind of lockers you might rent to keep excess furniture, clothing, or camping gear: five units at American Self Storage in Brooklyn, three units at SOS/Flexible Warehousing in suburban New Jersey, and a unit each at DAD Trucking Inc. and an unidentified facility on Boone Avenue, both in the Bronx.

Of course, the works included were, for the most part, unsold, and not all the artists on Abreu's roster were willing to take part in this potentially embarrassing exercise. The *Art Newspaper* reported that a quarter opted out. As Abreu explained: "They said, 'Why are you putting me in this position? I don't want to be in a position where I have to decide whether I'm in or out, or where it's revealed that I'm out or in.'" The final lineup included 373 works by Yui Agematsu, Liz Deschenes, Sam Lewitt, Scott Lyall, Jean-Luc Moulène, Florian Pumhösl, R.H. Quaytman, Raha Raissnia, Jimmy Raskin, Blake Rayne, Pamela Rosenkranz, and Jamison himself; a quick comparison of the list of artists and the gallery's roster would make it clear who's missing.

Data storage was addressed, too; the artist designed a new interface for ArtBase, the proprietary database management software that the gallery uses to keep track of its inventory. Each of the works in the show was tagged with a location tracker, and the collected data was used to populate a new database generated by the artist's custom software.

"The Stored Work" didn't just render this network of off- and on-site spaces visible, it crucially made the wrapped and packaged works physically accessible, too. During open hours, a conservator unpacked each work, inspected it, and updated gallery reports on its condition. Viewers could request that any of the works be opened for viewing—a process usually reserved for intimate tête-à-têtes with collectors. Would gallery visitors spend longer with a work, now that someone had gone to the considerable effort of unpacking it? Or would they take more time simply because it was a far more intentional act of viewing, analogous to picking a song to play instead of listening to the radio? I regret not having given it a try.

Detail of a pamphlet with a map siting several New York-area storage facilities and a diagram of Miguel Abreu's gallery and storage spaces available during Jamison's exhibition.



Above, view of Louis Eisner and Brad Danning's installation *Cannibal*, 2018, at a storage facility in Los Angeles.

Right, view of the exhibition "Holiday," 2017, curated by Conor O'Shea, showing work by Koji Ryui and Bonita Bub, at a storage facility in Sydney.

Images this page courtesy Lock Up International.

The show itself was quietly lovely, an almost monochrome study in texture and form. It comprised thin rectangular boxes and crates, mostly, but also various cylinders, mysterious blobs, and telltale conical packages that could only hold the sculptures of Jimmy Raskin. The palette ranged from the buff and taupe tones of cardboard to the lighter shades of blond wood, interspersed with the occasional grayish white of a box, a polystyrene block, or a bubble-wrapped object. The crates bore stamps, labels, and addresses, sketching a map of their provenance. Only an A4 printout on each object, with a picture and caption, revealed what was inside, creating an intriguing interplay between image and packed object.

Jamison also spent nine months working with Abreu staff to design climate-controlled facilities for a new centralized and streamlined storage site. Unfortunately, the sublease that the artist was negotiating fell through, and he is currently searching for a new site. Still, the project had a lasting impact on the way the gallery stores work. In a 2017 email, Abreu said, "Our logistics team because of the daily challenges brought about by the exhibition now generally handle objects with more consideration of their long-term storage needs." He added that they have since hired an insurance broker and changed their shipper, improved their archiving by supplying a more robust taxonomy for each work, and streamlined their image archive by simplifying file naming conventions.⁵

But it's hard not to feel a pang of remorse when thinking about the gallery giving up all those self-storage lockers. TV shows like "Storage Wars," "Storage Hunters," and "Auction Kings" have stoked a collective fascination with these facilities and the treasures that may be buried within them. In a funny parallel, they mirror the suave prospecting of wealthy speculators buying up works in hope of a quick flip. Like Jamison's show, the whole televised storage locker game suggests a certain democracy. And then there's the sheer stress engendered by consuming, accumulating, being surrounded by things; perhaps it's accompanied by a faint, uneasy fear of becoming a hoarder. Is there a more typical late-capitalist problem than having too much stuff and nowhere to put it?

LOCK UP INTERNATIONAL is an itinerant project sited in storage lockers around the world by artist Lewis Teague Wright. The units are places where art can be seen rather than hidden. Wright cleverly leverages introductory offers—\$1 for the first month, for example—to minimize the overhead of running an exhibition. Since its launch in 2015, Lock Up International has held twenty-five short, weeklong shows in London, Frankfurt, Mexico City, Los Angeles, Istanbul, Tokyo, and Sydney; exhibited artists include Yuri Pattison, Isabel Yellin, and notorious British prisoner Charles Bronson. Wright emphasizes the experience of the viewing, which begins with booking an appointment, then making your way to the storage facility. There, Wright greets visitors and leads them through a maze of units before revealing the show.

Artists who take part in the project don't have to work within the usual limitations of space or location: the appropriate storage unit can be found anywhere. Wright believes that this format lets artists experiment in ways that the fixity of a gallery doesn't. "I had always seen storage units as an opportunity, through their availability and anonymity," he wrote in a 2017 email.⁶ He considers them a new version of the white cube: "Storage spaces are universally accessible and conform to similar aesthetics. They're an almost dead zone, that allows for a certain privacy among inactive objects."





View of Peter Wilson's installation *location photos 1984–2006, 2015–*, approx. 50,000 photos in 200 boxes, dimensions variable, at 55 Walker, New York.

While storage facilities tend to be found on the cheap peripheries of a city, Lock Up International's locations have ranged from city centers to their industrial outskirts. Being in permanent transit, Wright doesn't worry about gentrification as a more permanently situated gallerist might; instead he embraces storage spaces' temporary, interstitial nature: "Storage units act as an annex of a dwelling, but never an extension of comfort."⁷

In November 2018, a number of shows opened at 55 Walker Street, the recently vacated New York address of Artists Space. I was particularly taken with a piece by Peter Wilson, *location photos 1984–2006 (2015–)*, in an exhibition organized by the curatorial collective Manila Institute. The artist purchased a storage locker that had once been owned by a movie location scout. But there was a satisfyingly "Storage Wars"-esque intermediary: Wilson acquired the locker from a Los Angeles memorabilia dealer who had in turn bid on the lot at auction, hoping that it contained celebrity photos (it didn't). Rather, it overflowed with files featuring potential spots to film. Although Wilson has shown individual folders and small clusters of them in the past, the whole archive of fifty thousand images in two hundred boxes was on view at 55 Walker.

The folders were stacked upright in uniform green and white boxes, to be browsed like vinyl at a record store. As someone who encounters file folders only on screens, I was shocked to realize where the metaphor of "tabs" comes from. Like in Jamison's show, notes were affixed to each box, describing their contents—in this case, they were Post-Its bearing a number and some keywords: "Roads, rural, country," "office exteriors," "residential, artists lofts" "forests, coastal, bridges." There was something wonderfully

poignant about this static, stored list of aspirational movement, of all the places you could go but probably won't.

Yet I find myself still thinking about Dubai, which is arguably the world's preeminent tax-free site of permanent transit. It boasts thirty of the UAE's forty-five free trade zones. These freezones include the Dubai Biotech Research Park, the Dubai Design District, the Dubai Outsource Zone, and the Dubai Silicon Oasis.

Global capitals like New York and London are increasingly moving in the same direction, as income disparity accelerates and neighborhoods fill up with empty apartments bought with oil money. These metropolises have more in common with Beijing or Sydney than they do with other cities in their own countries. Various phenomena have been labeled as the "Dubai effect," from the dredging of islands to the construction of spectacular architecture to the eager technocratic embrace of new surveillance technologies. But perhaps the real Dubai effect is the condition of simultaneous mobility and stasis best summarized by American urbanist Keller Easterling: "Goods in freeports are technically in transit, even if in reality the ports are used more and more as permanent homes for accumulated wealth."⁸ Storage art presents a glimpse of this reality. ○

1. This is the US term for a freeport; the monikers vary slightly from place to place.

2. Eileen Kinsella, "Inside the Uber-High-Tech Art Warehouse That Doubles as New York's First-Ever Freeport," *Artnet News*, May 2, 2018, news.artnet.com.

3. Hito Steyerl, *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, London, Verso, 2017, p. 80.

4. Miguel Abreu quoted in Rachel Corbett, "Storage Wars in the Lower East Side," *Art Newspaper*, Oct. 1, 2017, theartnewspaper.com.

5. Email to author, Dec. 2, 2017.

6. Email to author, May 14, 2017.

7. Ibid.

8. Keller Easterling quoted in Steyerl, p. 80.

frieze

Open Letters to Adrian Piper

On the occasion of her MoMA retrospective, six missives to the artist from her peers

BY ADELITA HUSNI-BEY, THOMAS CHATTERTON WILLIAMS, AARON FLINT JAMISON,
POPE.L, KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED AND DREAD SCOTT

Over her career of more than five decades, the conceptual artist and philosopher Adrian Piper has penned numerous open letters to magazines, editors, critics and others involved in the reception of her art. These statements are politically unforgiving criticisms of her critics: cross-evaluations of the ways in which the artist's exhibitions and works have been (mis)read. Correctives in the broadest sense, Piper's missives have included requests to be not referred to in a particular way (*Dear Editor, Please don't call me a -*, 2003), unrelentingly circumspect fact-checking (*An Open Letter to Donald Kuspit*, 1987) or simply observing where others have not (*To the Editor of The New York Times*, 1990). Key to the artist's confrontational and participatory forms of art making, these epistolary interventions are works of conceptual art and can be interpreted in the spirit of open debate and public discourse that is central to Piper's thinking. As she wrote in 1980 about her Four Intruders plus Alarm Systems: 'My interest is to fully politicize the existing art-world context, to confront you here and now with the presence of certain representative individuals who are alien and unfamiliar to that context in its current form, and to confront you with your defence mechanisms against them.'

Piper's letters directly call out the patriarchy, misogyny, racism and ignorance that the artist's non-epistolary works have, in part, addressed and revealed. In our fricative moment, in which individuals fray and flare up against society's abuses of power on these very terms, Piper's letters are prescient. They have presaged numerous instances of public-private calls for accountability: Yvonne Rainer's 2011 letter to Jeffrey Deitch — then director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles — about Marina Abramović's proposed use of young, naked female performers at a gala dinner, for instance; or Hannah Black's 2017 letter to the Whitney Biennial curators about the inclusion of Dana Schutz's painting of 14-year-old lynching victim Emmett Till, *Open Casket* (2016); not to mention the countless institutional disruptions and personal-political retributions of a post-Harvey Weinstein #metoo moment.

'A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965–2016', Piper's current retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art, is a homecoming of sorts for the artist, who is now based in Berlin. It is also a call-to-arms: at stake in the artist's work is the possibility to speak or be called out, to confront and intervene, and for solidarity and friendship to exist in tandem with participation and debate: in short, for the possibility of a 'confrontation between the self and the other', as Piper described in *A. ~A* (1974), her parameters for the work *Just Gossip*. Chiming with the urgency and spirit of Piper's invectives for open critical debate, participation and intervention, *frieze* presents a series of open letters to Adrian Piper from six artists and writers.

The Seven Insights/Stages of Cognitive Discernment (Yoga Sutra II.27)

	Vyasa [c. 600 A.D.] (YFP 200-201)	Shankara [c. 700 A.D.] (255-257)	Vijnanabhikṣu [c. 1550 A.D.] (BL 172)	Vivekananda [c. 1900] (RY 170-172)	Prabhakara [c. 1950] (YAP 94-97)	Haribhāṣana [c. 1950] (YFP 201-202)	Taimini [1961] (SY 202)	Piper [2007] (adrianpiper.com/ yoga/jnana.shtml)
1	Knowledge of objects to be renounced is complete	That suffering is to be escaped is conclusively known	That which is to be avoided is known	Quest for knowledge is satisfied	Spiritual wisdom is inside us	Mind withdraws from affective objects	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> (Consciousness) ≠ the body (the <i>śhīta</i>)
2	Recognition that causes of tendencies have been weakened	Recognition that all tendencies & impressions have been destroyed	Causes of avoidable pain have dwindled	Cessation of pain	Cessation of pain	Insight that afflictions successfully reduced → attempts cease	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> ≠ the sense-data (the <i>Tanultra</i>)
3	Stilling the mind becomes key to liberation	The release of a stilled mind is directly experienced	Dissociation of <i>Puruṣa</i> from <i>Prakṛti</i> directly perceived	Omniscience	Self-realization as <i>Puruṣa</i> / <i>Atman</i>	Striving after final end of stilling the mind ceases	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> ≠ the senses (the <i>Buddhīndriya</i>)
4	Cognitive discernment recognized as means of liberation	Conviction that right vision is established in truth is attained	Cognitive discernment understood as means to perceive dissociation	Attainment of the final end of all duties	External world experienced as appearance	Inquiry into practice of yoga ceases	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> ≠ the mind (<i>Manas</i>)
5	<i>Buddhi</i> 's function is fulfilled	The <i>Gunas</i> as mind dissolve into <i>Atmāśānta</i>	<i>Buddhi</i> has fulfilled its function	Liberation of the mind from disturbances	Mind and world have completed their service	Operation of <i>Buddhi</i> ceases	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> ≠ the ego (<i>Atmāśānta</i>)
6	Operations of <i>Buddhi</i> merge into their cause	As their purpose is fulfilled, the <i>Gunas</i> do not reappear	<i>Gunas</i> merge into their cause	Ability of the mind to devolve into its causes	Tendencies disappear	Knowledge that <i>Buddhi</i> has permanently ceased	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> ≠ the intellect (<i>Buddhi</i>)
7	<i>Puruṣa</i> revealed as pure, self-luminous, independent	<i>Puruṣa</i> 's connection with the <i>Gunas</i> is transcended & is self-luminous	<i>Puruṣa</i> remains established in purity	Establishment in <i>Puruṣa</i>	Permanent union with <i>Puruṣa</i> / <i>Atman</i>	Recognition of <i>Puruṣa</i> 's freedom, independence from <i>Gunas</i>	?	<i>Puruṣa</i> ≠ matter (<i>Prakṛti</i>)

Adrian Piper, 'The Seven Insights/Stages of Cognitive Discernment (Yoga Sutra II.27)', Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin, <http://www.adrianpiper.com/yoga/docs/SevenInsightsA4.pdf>, accessed 26 April 2018

Dear Adrian Piper,

After you critiqued my work, I stopped making art for two years. We were in Switzerland at a summer academy. You were a visiting artist; I was young and amongst other 'emerging artists'. I was privileged to show you a series of mobile-phone jammers I had made for an exhibition there. You said that I had not considered the safety of the audience in jamming their communication signals.

Later that night, while at dinner, you went out of your way to speak with me again about the work. Perhaps you could sense that I was in crisis and, at that moment, you told me that you appreciated the subversive nature of the work. You reiterated, however, that you felt that it did not take responsibility for its own activity. After I recovered, I asked you if I could publish 'Sadhana as a Tapas' and 'Brahmacharya, Vairagya, Kaivalya' in an issue of *Veneer Magazine*, the publication I edit. In the latter text you write:

One of the great revelations I experienced upon becoming a brahmacharin in 1985 was how much easier this practice in turn made the practice of vairagya: the gradual process of letting go of the many entanglements that bind us to the world of name, form and suffering. I don't claim that it became easy, just easier. Before, I obsessed constantly about things, situations, people, relationships and objectives that did not develop in accordance with my plans. I also expended an enormous amount of energy in actively man-aging, guiding and trying to control them accordingly. Since, of course, none of these states of affairs were, in fact, under my control, their fulfillment or frustration of my plans, desires and managerial manipulations caused constant psychological and emotional turbulence that my sadhana just barely contained. (Veneer Magazine, 5/18, 2009, pp. 149-150)

At the time, I was struggling to understand the maintenance of my own health holistically. Comprehending how your yoga practice fit into the context of your life, writing and art also put into relief questions that I had about health interfacing more broadly with institutions. I also asked to publish this spreadsheet (above) that you made. I have spent countless hours looking at this document over the years. It has helped me answer my own questions about why you agreed to let me republish your work in the first place. I cherish your production of that spreadsheet. I think that the decisions you make in your work are brave. I help manage a small art library and your books are the ones that consistently go missing or are returned late. I consider your website to be a very important place. I share your texts with students more than those of any other artist.

Thank you,

Aaron Flint Jamison

Aaron Flint Jamison is an artist based in Portland, USA. In 2017, he had solo exhibitions at Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, USA, and Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf, Germany, and participated in the 78th Whitney Biennial, New York. His work is on view in 'Architecture of Storage' at DAZ – Deutsches Architektur Zentrum, Berlin, Germany, until 20 May and in 'Bureau of Unspecified Services (B.U.S.)' at SALT Galata, Istanbul, Turkey, until July.

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

AARON FLINT JAMISON

Aaron Flint Jamison is a conceptual artist working with sculpture, digital media and video, publication, as well as performance. He is the co-founder of the art center Yale Union in Portland, Oregon and the co-founder of the artist-run center Department of Safety, which operated from 2002 until 2010 in Anacortes, Washington. Jamison is the founder and editor of the ongoing serial publication Veneer Magazine, an 18-book publishing project established in 2007.

Aaron Flint Jamison was born in 1979 in Montana. Since receiving his M.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2006, he has exhibited internationally, presenting solo exhibitions at Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2017 and 2015); Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf (2017); Pied-à-terre, Ottsville, PA (2016); Air de Paris, Paris (2015 and 2012); ETH Zürich, Zürich (2015); Artists Space, New York (2013); Cubitt, London (2013); Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva (2012); Artspeak, Vancouver (2012); castillo/corrales, Paris (2011); and Open Satellite, Bellevue, Washington (2010). His work was included in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, curated by Christopher Y. Lew and Mia Locks, the 2014 Liverpool Biennial, curated by Anthony Huberman and Mai Abu ElDahab, and the 2016 Incorporated! - Les Ateliers de Rennes, curated by François Piron. Veneer Magazine is held in numerous private and public collections.

His second one-person exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery is on view from September 10 through October 15, 2017.

ARTNEWS

ONE OF THE THINGS I saw most often in New York galleries this fall were art dealers just back from a trip or getting ready for their next one, talking about jet lag remedies and art shipments. Even in an unsteady market, they continue to do art fairs at a vigorous pace. They were off to Chicago in September, then London and Paris in October, with a few stopping off for a new mini-fair in the Hamptons along the way. Shanghai and Miami beckoned. Bodies and artworks were in motion.

There's been no shortage of art and theory over the past decade addressing all this movement, including talk of networked painting, the circulation of images, and drag-and-drop exhibitions, but no exhibition I've seen captured it quite like **Aaron Flint Jamison's** at **Miguel Abreu**. For "The Stored Work," Jamison moved 373 artworks from the gallery's off-site storage into its two Lower East Side locations, where they sat in their packaging. Labels on the plastic- and cardboard-swaddled objects indicated artist and provenance as well as more obscure instructions like "must ride with foam blocks."

Jamison, who is based in Portland, Oregon, where he runs the alternative space Yale Union, stipulated that visitors could ask for any work to be unwrapped and put on view, and Abreu had art handling staff on hand for the occasion. This might all sound like a dry conceit, but the setup offered some intriguing possibilities, allowing visitors to stage their own temporary solo or group shows, juxtaposing pieces by, say, R. H. Quaytman and Sam Lewitt. In putting the gallery's hidden holdings on view, Jamison posed questions, both practical (why was the gallery holding these particular works?) and aesthetic (what is one's experience of viewing a transparent acrylic Pamela Rosenkranz sculpture—or any work—when it's wrapped in plastic?). What I liked best about the whole affair was that, unlike so many purportedly radical conceptual gambits these days, Jamison's was not for sale. One could, however, purchase the gallery's entire inventory, priced at around \$10 million.

frieze



BRITAIN AWAKE
MARGARET THATCHER

AARON FLINT JAMISON Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf, Germany

It is likely that, if you are reading this, you are an artist or art student, work in the arts, follow art out of cultural curiosity or for professional gain. In other words: you probably fall on one side of what writer Janet Malcolm once icily characterized as the 'gap' between the 'tiny group of people who consider themselves the professional art public' and the 'ordinary literate' person. What determines this gap and its width? Questions as to whether what we do, make, curate and critique has any value, also nag, privately, at many of us. Rarely, though, are we forced to account for them as directly as Aaron Flint Jamison did last year, when he appeared in court to defend the public value of contemporary art space Yale Union (YU).

Jamison co-founded YU in Portland, Oregon, in 2013, in what a court dossier from this year describes as 'a century-old former industrial laundry', gifted by an anonymous benefactor. YU applied for tax-exempt, not-for-profit status in October 2013 but received a rejection in September of the following year: a fact that would be anodyne were this building's size (a city block) and history (protected) not cause for a (massive) property tax liability. Jamison's exhibition at Galerie Max Mayer, 'YU Contemporary, Inc. vs. Dept. of Revenue and Multnomah County Assessor', contains a book that reproduces the court deposition which followed this rejection, bagged remnants of a Lutz Bacher floor piece (*The Secret Garden*, 2016), once shown at YU, and an R.H. Quaytman edition published by Jamison (*Orchard Spreadsheet*, 2016) with YU designer Scott Ponik's presentation tables. 'Britain Awake' (2017) is a plastic display stand containing letterpress folios, one of which reprints Margaret Thatcher's

1976 inaugural speech (*Iron Lady*, 2017). Such inclusions reference past shows at YU and the strain between private gain and public interest, while also prodding at the contradictory notions of portability, exchange and site-specificity.

Rarely has accounting been so thrilling. Denied not-for-profit status, YU was declared of 'only incidental benefit to the public at large, if at all'. There's a haziness to what conceptual art looks like – when and why dead time, diffuse labour and the hard-to-explain can become 'art'. A tax assessor observes that, 'much of the time', the 'primary exhibit space sat empty and was not utilized at all, let alone for artistic purposes'. He questions: 'How is Yale Union any different than slightly older art-school graduates getting together and partying in a building?'

Why did people appear to be sleeping in this building? Why were animals allowed in? What is the meaning of 'residency'? Is Veneer, Jamison's magazine, printed on letterpress machines installed at YU, a commercial entity? In short: how does an art space contribute to the public good? In the 448-page dossier at the heart of Jamison's exhibition, we read an earnest untangling of the couched implicits about showing art and why it's done. The protagonist of the story becomes its adjudicator, Honourable Henry C. Breithaupt, who listens with responsiveness, curiosity and humour. ('Is that a picture of decapitated chickens?') His reasonable semantic yield signs – 'What do you refer to as a time-based performance?' – meet with defensive, revealing answers: 'Sorry, some of my rhetoric is – it's stuck in – art language.'

Breithaupt admonishes the tax assessors' creaky reasoning and cranky word-twisting. For Breithaupt, the trial was 'very interesting in terms of a view on a world of art that goes beyond my Janson's art-history text, which I had in the 1960s'. In his closing statement, he suggests printing the deposition by letterpress. In the old days, he expands, 'people were much more careful about their briefing' because 'it was literally sent out and printed'. A surprisingly entertaining courtroom drama about art's broader significance has ensued, in the form of Jamison's exquisite, testimonial exhibition. Exemption was granted – on letterpress, to boot.

Pablo Larios

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS
Paris

Aaron Flint Jamison

AIR DE PARIS
32 rue Louise Weiss
September 11–October 24

Craft improbably collides with the aesthetics of network administration in Aaron Flint Jamison's latest exhibition, where the mainframe is *2x Script Huffer*, 2014. Kitted out with turned-wood conduits and mounted to the wall, a lacquered black box—think floating minifridge—houses a shimmering array of application-specific integrated circuits. This processing hub is tethered to a terminal constructed from purple heartwood, a dense material whose enduring appeal to the artist might lie in its sheer resistance to manipulation. With its monitor at face height, the standing workstation incorporates an Ergotron articulated arm supporting a Kinesis Advantage keyboard plus joystick mouse—all features designed to extend worker productivity—forming a negative relief of a human body.

But whirring fans and flashing lights aside, there's no proof of work happening. One can't shake the feeling that this is a Trojan horse, as all signs point to the machine functioning as a pretty nice cryptocurrency mining operation like those devoted to harvesting Bitcoins. As such, the work inhabits parallel planes of financial speculation simultaneously: as art-world commodity and cryptographic block erupter. Jamison's marriage of difficult woodworking operations to high-energy decryption underscores their shared aim at refined ends through excessive outputs of force. Copies of Jamison's book, the two-volume *Checksum Digest*, 2015, hide in plain sight on a lower shelf of the terminal. Its relationship to the rest of *2x Script Huffer* is never explicit, but the particular ends of this hardware are questioned in elliptical prose while commons-based peer productions of more altruistic purpose are floated as possible alternative applications inside the volumes. Beneath the veneer of inscrutability, the artist is invested in shared applications of knowledge and resources. One just needs to know the language to gain access.



Aaron Flint Jamison, *2x Script Huffer* (detail), 2014, application-specific integrated circuits, heatsinks, wood, power cables, data cables, hardware, carbon fiber, copper, foam, peltier devices, ESD material, inverters, ducting, air conditioner, screen, books, servers, dimensions variable.

— Phil Taylor

ARTFORUM

Aaron Flint Jamison

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

Aaron Flint Jamison's first exhibition at Miguel Abreu opened in July—an off time in the art world—and much else about the exhibition was also “wrong.” There was no opening, for example; in fact, when I visited the show, which was located at the gallery's Orchard Street space, I had difficulty even opening the door because there was a motion sensor controlling the lock that I managed, unintentionally, not to trip. Inside, conventions were similarly askew: There was no checklist, and though a press release appeared online, the gallery website had an intentional glitch in it, making this document virtually impossible to find. (Needless to say, images were similarly suppressed.) The space itself was largely empty, the lights dimmed, the gallery's signature bookcases emptied, and the office desk notably absent. The only thing on display (besides the emptiness of the gallery itself) was a single sculpture affixed to the center of the ceiling. Crafted out of purple heartwood and cedar and kitted out with hydraulic arms—the type one might affix to the inside of cabinet doors—the work maintained a profoundly strange and inscrutable air. I wanted to push it and pull it but thought better of it. The thing refused virtually all games of visual association. The next day I described it to someone as looking like an enlarged model of a Peugeot pepper grinder with a cutaway view. That was the best I could do.

I might not have seen anything else had someone at the gallery not casually tipped me off to the fact that there was more downstairs, in

the space typically used as the gallery's private viewing room. There, one found a desk fashioned out of materials similar to those used in the sculpture upstairs, except that it integrated computer parts and a screen delivering a live feed from the internet of the gallery above—providing surveillance that substituted for the gallery attendant's usual view from the absconded desk. (I had missed the heat-sensitive camera hiding in the upper corner of that room.) There was also a massive apparatus, a doppelgänger of sorts of the ceiling sculpture, again made of similar woods. This was one part of a closed, self-regulating system comprising grow lights, fans, and exhaust tubes painted a fantastic, gummy black. Each day as the gallery closed at 6:15, an attendant placed a sheet of black paper in the machine, where it spent the night exposed to the glare of the grow lights. If the machine got too hot, a heat sensor inside cooled things off. It is an art machine in the tradition of Jean Tinguely's Meta-matic drawing sculptures, perhaps, but the feel of the thing is different: Customized, luxurious, artisanal yet technical, it is something like the best, most stylish home-alarm system money can buy. Moreover, the results produced by the machine, titled *Breathers*, 2015, lack all mark of spontaneity, bearing only faint traces of their lightening, like the fabric of an old couch exposed to the sun. Given out for free at the end of the show, these ejected sheets function more like eerie souvenirs than like works of art.

If this work presented itself as a self-enclosed system, that was also true of the show as a whole—this is an art that really doesn't need you. And yet you are somehow implicated within it: caught on its cameras, trying (somewhat comically) to open its doors. Whereas artists such as Daniel Buren and Michael Asher have investigated the ideological and economic realities governing the gallery and museum, Jamison focuses on the various gadgets and monitors that regulate one's experience in these spaces while relating them, more broadly, to our society of control. Everything is painfully encrypted here and yet at the same time prone to leaks and malfunction. What parts are working? What is connected? Where is the information? How will it get out? Is the whole thing a decoy to distract you from seeing something else?

In her 2014 book *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*, architectural theorist Keller Easterling compares the infrastructure of today's world—from our airports to our credit cards, and the way all of this is standardized—to one large operating system. This, too, seems an apt description of Jamison's curious art. While too mysterious to align itself with any kind of programmatic position, his work is nevertheless deeply invested in ideas of program, which is to say, how things run. While there are suggestions of cracks and fissures, jams and dislocations, they mingle with—or run up against—an obdurate opacity. One wonders about the day when these competing forces will come to a head.

—Alex Kitnick



Aaron Flint Jamison,
Breathers, 2015,
multiple sheets of
black paper, each
40 1/4 x 26 1/4".

The New York Times

Aaron Flint Jamison

*Miguel Abreu Gallery
36 Orchard Street, Lower East
Side
Through Sept. 20*

In the 1970s, punk rock served as a correction to the excesses of stadium rock and disco. Art of the same era had its own disrupters in the form of institutional critique. Aaron Flint Jamison, a multimedia artist living in Portland, Ore., draws from both these traditions as well as the Dadaists' subversive approach to art and technology.

For his current show, Mr. Jamison has emptied the gallery on Orchard Street of office furniture, imitating a tradition started decades ago by Yves Klein and Michael Asher. (Mr. Jamison did the same thing for his 2013 show at Artists Space.) The gallery is locked, but motion sensors installed above the front door grant entry. Inside, suspended from the ceiling, is a single sculpture made of cedar and purple heartwood. In the basement, a purple heartwood desk embedded with a PC sits near a bulky contraption consisting of giant tubes, digital temperature controls and an "exposure unit," two 1,000-watt ultraviolet lights inside a black case. Every evening the gallery's employees insert a piece of black paper into the unit and let it bake under the lamps, creating a distinctive, well, cooked piece of paper.

What is the point of this exercise? It is both a test of the gallery's willingness to accommodate Mr. Jamison's demands and of our understanding of objects, technology and institutions. Mr. Jamison "hacks" art with wonky machines and craft, the finely finished wood objects here aligning themselves uncomfortably with furniture, to which Minimalist sculpture was sometimes unfavorably compared. On the gallery's website there is a blank space in lieu of an exhibition announcement, but hovering a cursor over the space links to a document, with Mr. Jamison's somewhat cagey instructions, that can be downloaded.

But again, what is the point? Institutional critique, for all its high-minded moral rhetoric, never upended the system — and neither did punk. Yet all of these — art, craft, technology — channeled in Mr. Jamison's work offer alternative models for living. By disrupting the flow of everyday systems, they perhaps give you permission to do the same.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

ArtReview

Mark Sladen on information flow in the work of Aaron Flint Jamison

from the September 2014 issue

By Mark Sladen



Courtesy Veneer

The work of American artist Aaron Flint Jamison explores the secret life of information. One recent exhibition, at Cubitt in London, included a Jacuzzi turned into a sculptural object and exhaling air. Another show, at Artists Space in New York, featured a 3D scanner mounted on a tripod, surveying the gallery and accumulating massive files. Meanwhile, Jamison's work in the current Liverpool Biennial consists of an array of hugely powerful computer circuits in air-conditioned boxes, linked to a control room that only the most dedicated visitor will discover. In all of these cases, the projects – which also feature plinths and other structures made from purpleheart wood, as well as highly crafted artist books – were mounted without explanatory text, and have been surrounded by clouds of hearsay. These projects appear to follow the flow of information through disparate systems, most obviously those of computers, bodies and books.

However, such gallery works are only one aspect of Jamison's practice, and perhaps not even the best introduction to his work – as it is often in his longer-running and more 'institutional' projects that the artist's distinctive treatment of information is at its most apparent. One such is a magazine, *Veneer*, which Jamison launched in 2007 and which is projected to run for 18 issues. *Veneer* has featured a variety of contributors – including artists as well as figures from science and technology – and has also

**THE IDENTITY OF VENEER
COMES LESS FROM ITS
EDITORIAL THAN FROM ITS
PARTICULAR, EVEN BIZARRE
QUALITIES AS OBJECT OR AS
INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT**

reproduced content lifted directly from textbooks, trade journals and promotional literature. However, the identity of *Veneer* comes less from its editorial than from its particular, even bizarre qualities as object or as institutional project. Indeed, Jamison says that he gets to “ask questions each issue through the magazine’s production and administration”.

Every edition of *Veneer* is accordingly distinguished by lavish combinations of different paper stocks and production techniques, as well as by curious elements of performance. For instance, issue four features a section reproduced in an ‘unprintable’ blue, as well as a page rubbed with Brut deodorant, and was apparently launched with a yoga class on top of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. Other strategies that Jamison has tried out include ‘reverse advertising’ (reproducing adverts without permission and then attempting to bill the companies concerned) and ‘reverse shoplifting’ (secreting copies of the magazine in bookshops as a form of distribution). The artist has said that it’s important to him that “bodies interface with production”, and this principle appears to extend from the printing of the magazine itself – the bulk of which is done by Jamison and his associates – through to its elaborate rituals of publication.

Since issue six *Veneer* has been produced at **Yale Union (YU)**, an arts centre in Portland, Oregon, that is one of the other long-running projects in which Jamison has been involved – he launched the organisation in 2008, in collaboration with music producer Curtis Knapp, shortly after moving to the city. YU is housed in a historic laundry building that occupies half a city block, and in the first couple of years, Jamison and Knapp installed a recording studio, as well as the print workshop in which *Veneer* is now produced. Since then other facilities and functions have been brought on line, including a huge floor of extraordinary gallery space; and other colleagues have been added, such as the designer Scott Ponik and the curator Robert Snowden. The philosophy of YU has always been to add or resolve things as they are needed, resulting in an organisation that evolves over time.

The programme of YU is similarly responsive. For example, the organisation is currently mounting a George Kuchar retrospective, one film at a time, a project that began in 2008 and which is projected to run for eight years. Meanwhile, for a recent Yuji Agematsu exhibition, YU helped the artist develop display systems for his work – which is based on archives of trash that he collects from city streets – with results that included a table top featuring an array of cigarette butts pinned like beetles. This interest in developing particular strategies of presentation for particular projects also extends to the organisation’s attitude to documentation, and exhibition records have included deconstructed publications as well as huge one-to-one image files. YU explores the paradox of a noninstitutional institution: an approach that is signalled most clearly in its ‘identity’, which employs an often highly eccentric first-person voice – presented in a graphic style whose bookish understatement is a parody of neutrality.

JAMISON SAYS THAT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN GENERALISED ANSWERS, AND IT SEEMS THAT THIS REFUSAL TO PACKAGE INFORMATION LINKS ALL OF THE PROJECTS IN WHICH HE IS INVOLVED

While YU, particularly in its more recent years, is clearly a group project, it can also be seen as a manifestation of Jamison’s singular working strategies. The artist says that he does not believe in generalised answers, and it seems that this refusal to package information links all of the projects in which he is involved. Sometimes information is withheld (like the issue of *Veneer* sealed with expanded foam). Sometimes it is flooded (like those churning data engines in Jamison’s gallery work). Sometimes it comes through proxies (the artist often asks others to speak on his behalf). And sometimes it comes through hearsay (there is a river in the basement of Yale Union, apparently). In all of these projects, information is treated as the odd, adaptive, unpredictable property that it is, and is encouraged to find its own level.

Art in America

Aaron Flint Jamison

NEW YORK,
at Artists Space

by Courtney Fiske



Aaron Flint Jamison: *Manifold to Half Matrix*, 2013, letterpress- and offset-printed paper, dimensions variable; at Artists Space.

There's a cultivated obscurity to Aaron Flint Jamison's practice, a hermeticism that borders on mysticism. For his first solo exhibition outside of Europe, the Portland-based artist cleared Artists Space's Greene Street loft of all but a handful of sculptural elements and even relocated the institution's offices to an auxiliary site. The aura of the art object was refigured as the aura of the machine: the "black box" whose defining operation is obfuscation.

At the gallery's entrance stood a FARO Focus 3D scanner mounted on a tripod. Set within twinned modules, its lens revolved at a steady clip, transforming the apparatus into a readymade kinetic sculpture. Its purpose, one surmised, was to scan the room, converting real space, concrete and inhabitable, into data. A black wire fed from an outlet in the backmost wall into the scanner; another led out from the scanner, traversing the floor in a desultory line before meeting an Ethernet switch mounted on a table fashioned from purpleheart wood. Excessively long—it was twice pooled—the wire exaggerated its function of connectivity, as if attempting to materialize the abstract inputs and outputs it relayed.

On a windowsill adjacent to the table, an IBM laptop, linked by a cable to the same Ethernet switch, processed data sent from the scanner. On its screen, a progress bar inched forward, marking the time until the scan's completion. A series of folders also appeared onscreen, each titled with the date ("10-10-13," "10-11-13," and so forth) and containing three high-resolution scans. A white cable extended from the switch, describing the interstice between floor and wall. Architecture thus joined in the FARO-IBM circuit to form a recursive whole, simultaneously mapping and being mapped.

Between scanner and laptop, two isolated elements intervened: the first, a wooden plinth, painted white and topped with a piece of perforated foam; the second, a bizarre device cobbled from six computer fan units, two Supermicro servers and thirty 250 GB hard

drives that stored data from the scanner. In the latter's center, a wooden cylinder spun on an electric motor, while vents on either side emitted soft streams of air.

As in Jamison's recent show at Cubitt in London, press release and checklist were conspicuously absent, compounding the illegibility of the objects on view. Artists Space's website likewise eschewed explanation, linking instead to a spreadsheet of the show's production balances, which detailed entries for everything from "whiskey for gary" to each piece of technical equipment to a copy of Alexander Galloway's 2012 primer on digital culture, *The Interface Effect*. At watch from an incommodious chair, the gallery attendant had been instructed to keep mum. This opacity seemed to be part of the point: the work's mannered reticence and the attendant's muteness exaggerated the system's inscrutability.

In place of standard curatorial literature, two sets of texts—plastic-sleeved pamphlets and an 80-page book, each permutations of the same material—offered an oblique orientation. In them, selections from a 1967 essay by Jean Genet appeared alongside excerpts from the FARO user manual. Printed on varying paper stocks—some pulpy, others smooth—they solicited touch but explained little.

Immured in Jamison's strange circuit, the viewer's body becomes ancillary and at risk, both threatened by and invisible to the technology that surveyed it. The scanner functions best in static, unpeopled, idealized space; moving bodies disrupt the data collection. The machine's paradigm could be described as Yves Klein's *The Void* meets the society of control. As a sticker on the scanner's side warns: "INVISIBLE LASER RADIATION / AVOID DIRECT / EYE EXPOSURE." One can look, but not too intently, and even then, one cannot really see. Art here was posited as something that supplants or exceeds human vision.

GalleristNY

Aaron Flint Jamison at Artists Space

By Andrew Russeth | 11/05/13 5:49pm



Aaron Flint Jamison, 'Manifold to Half Matrix,' Artists Space, 2013. (Courtesy the artist and Artists Space)

It's like a scene from an espionage film. Our intelligence officer is tracking a person of interest, and he has an address. But when the elevator doors slide open in that nondescript office building, the cavernous room that is revealed is empty. The corporation has vanished, or maybe it was never there. It was a dummy address, or a setup. And—is that a bomb?

The Portland, Ore.-based artist Aaron Flint Jamison has transferred **Artists Space**'s entire staff over to its Tribeca storefront, leaving its third-floor exhibition space almost entirely vacant. There are just a few objects here, and they are sleekly ominous. A LiDAR scanner sits atop a tripod, silently mapping the room, writing enormous files within a

stack of black servers. An outdated IBM ThinkPad tracks its progress, displaying that classic pipe screensaver. It completes a scan in about two hours and then loops back to run the process again. Each day, the scanner is moved to a different location in the space. Files, with the most-minute differences, are accumulating. A few other minimal objects, handsomely made of wood and glass, offer no hints as to their uses.

There are no titles, no explanatory materials except for a mysterious, poetic instruction manual-type publication, but the gallery's website hosts a spreadsheet with the show's ledger, listing \$33,844 in expenses (about \$1,350 for Windows Server 2008, \$20 for two *Man of Steel* tickets). Mr. Jamison is cycling between extreme opacity and an almost abject transparency that is ultimately just a mirage. He's inviting you—daring you—to make inquiries. Before the show opened, he organized a concert by the experimental musician Kevin Drumm, an elliptical Helen DeWitt talk, a George Kuchar screening. It's a rabbit hole of a show in that it grows odder, creepier and less intelligible the more time you spend with it. It's about systems and technologies that we try, but fail, to understand, that work around and outflank us, and the ways in which such devices, objects and knowledge shape and color rooms and experiences.

As you puzzle it out, and perhaps question the gallery attendant, cool breezes waft through the open windows, and that unceasing scanner captures you for all time. (*Through Nov. 10*)

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS
New York

Aaron Flint Jamison

ARTISTS SPACE EXHIBITIONS
38 Greene Street, 3rd Floor
September 15, 2013–November 10, 2013

In Aaron Flint Jamison's latest exhibition, a LiDAR room scanner on a tripod connects to a wired network switch that the artist has built into a table of dense purpleheart wood. The table supports a closed handmade book and an LED spotlight that shines its heatless light on the table's surface. The network switch connects to a classic IBM ThinkPad X40 and to a large server rack that is built into a mausoleum-like cube, also made of purpleheart. Inside, a "glory hole" cylinder rotates within a lit chamber that is partially hidden behind half-mirrored glass, which is copied in a wall-mounted glass work nearby. The deluxe hardwood makes the sparse show feel weirdly opulent.

The CAT 5 network cable was once omnipresent in our daily lives. Here, carrying a hyperdetailed rendering of the room's space from the LiDAR to the network switch of server-cum-mausoleum, it feels nearly sentimental and causes the empty space of the exhibition to seem clumsily physical, like thinking through the idea of Wifi backward to arrive at its antithesis. By gathering information about the room, the LiDAR also calls out architectural and sculptural conversations about "space" by going stubbornly and excessively empirical. And yet, silently vanishing into a puzzle-vault, the LiDAR's data is as mysterious and numinous backed up as it is a lived, spatial experience.

These constant reversals—from the dense physicality of rare hardwood to invisible, eye-safe lasers, from the intangible to brutishly opulent corporeality, between knowing and unknowing—are a key Jamison move. From his early lightbulb performances (*Which Side Are You On?*, 2007) to his recent book works, *Veneer Magazine*, and even the pamphlet that accompanies this show, Jamison builds incredible hermetic density into relationships between things. This makes even summarizing this sparse show a challenge. That these man-made objects have a life of their own, independent of human goals and desires, is a telling portrait of the way systems of knowledge now run themselves—a parallel world alongside our human one that Jamison is able to open to us in all its dazzling complexity.



Aaron Flint Jamison, *Manifold to Half Matrix*, 2013, letterpressed and offset printed paper, dimensions variable.

— Steve Kado

ARTFORUM

LONDON

Aaron Flint Jamison CUBITT

In the second issue of the Dada journal *The Blind Man*, an anonymous editorial on Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917, famously proclaimed: "The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges." Aaron Flint Jamison's recent exhibition couldn't but bring to mind Duchamp's urinal, since, upon entering, viewers confronted a luxury Jacuzzi, mounted on the wall like a three-dimensional painting. With this updating of Duchamp's gesture, the Portland, Oregon-based artist managed to forcefully reformulate the contradiction between its assertive (this, too, is art) and negative (this is just some plumbing) power.

Yet this work was only the introduction to a far more complex and elusive project, as became explicit in the next gallery, which could be reached only through a corridor housing files, boxes, spare electrics, and the like. A narrow slit in the wall at the end of this passageway led to a room dominated by the underbelly of the Jacuzzi, its abundance of plastic pipes surrounding a curiously liver-shaped foot basin. Alongside this object, with its insistent and surprisingly organic materiality, was a system of large transparent tubes that linked the Jacuzzi to a cylindrical wall-mounted machine, as well as to a conveyor belt on a wooden pedestal, which was running independently from a small motor: a détourned symbol of empty Fordist labor.

Irregularly but approximately once every hour, the larger machine sucked air from inside the conveyor belt, expelling it into the other gallery through the drain hole of the Jacuzzi. This enterprise, also, was dramatically twofold: In the rear, the sucking air disrupted the smooth motion of the conveyor belt, while in the front, in near silence, a gentle breeze blew right into the viewer's face. Again, an allegory of transmission and permeability was at work, though one that was hard to decipher, even if the change it induced in the Jacuzzi-as-artwork was undeniable.

Other pieces in the rear gallery compounded the impression of a kind of artistic alchemy, one premised on a vacuum, an absence. The conveyor belt was paired with other, more intimate objects that one could take in hand and examine closely: a stack of prints, a tripod supporting a foam-lined box containing five books, a wooden bowl, and four small, enigmatic white forms fitted with lenses at each end. The books, hand-printed with repeating phrases and motifs, offered some words to describe what was happening in the exhibition, as well as images of the works on view. Their spines read MIND WIND/MENTAL RAY; inside were phrases such as PUSH WOOSH, FUNNEL LOGIC! The word AIRLOCK appeared repeatedly, as if a kind of chapter heading—perhaps appropriately, for it seemed to be the most fertile term via which to think about the exhibition. The site of production, poetic/technical research, and gut spilling in the rear gallery may have been complementary to the more traditional modes of perception required in the front gallery, yet they were linked by a cryptic zone of transition, analogous to but not identical with the progression of the viewer through the cupboard, or the passage of air

from conveyor belt to Jacuzzi, itself created through an imbalance of (atmospheric) pressure.

The enigmatic generosity of Jamison's exhibition, presented without a checklist or press release, was made piquant by his use of a vacuum to multiply its interpretive possibilities. A kind of mysticism was at the heart of this process, as the materiality of the Jacuzzi, as a visual object, was accompanied by its negation, in the current of air moved from one space to another: a poetic and critical interweaving of ideas of matter and its absence.

—Alexander Scrimgeour

Aaron Flint Jamison,
Funnel Horn, 2013.
acrylic, fibreglass,
plastic hoses, spray
foam, jets, 82 1/2 x
82 1/2 x 39 1/2".



frieze

IN FOCUS

Aaron Flint Jamison

The spaces between
rumour, information
and circulation

by Jonathan P. Watts

'... So Flint gets on stage wearing an Arnold Schwarzenegger mask with a flashing strobe light inside and begins reading a puritan sermon. He's switching between registers: first-person singular and plural. It's quite beautiful ...' This is one of many stories Jamie Stevens, curator at Cubitt Gallery, London, has told me about Aaron Flint Jamison – known to his friends as Flint. The Schwarzenegger performance occurred on one leg of a toilet-venue tour Stevens booked for Flint and artist Steven Kado in 2007. Passing through Brighton, Bristol, Glasgow, Leeds and Nottingham, it concluded in London where he opened for his friends, Dirty Projectors.

Recently, in the Zürich-based *Du* magazine, Hans-Ulrich Obrist nominated Flint as one of the 27 most important living artists today. Asked by the magazine for a publicity shot, Flint supplied a caricature portrait of Liam Gillick rendered in the hand of a street artist – the kind hawked to tourists the world over. Or so Stevens said. He also told me that, in 2008, Flint organized a yoga class on the Large Hadron Collider as an art work. In fact, there's about as much chance of understanding dark matter as there is of processing information about Flint.

There is intense conscientiousness in these ludic manoeuvres, a punk bellicosity sharpened by more than a decade's involvement in non-profit gallery spaces, studios, and print and record publishing initiatives. In 2002, Flint founded the Department of Safety (DOS) in Washington, a non-profit live music venue, gallery and studios, with a 'zine library and artist residency programme, in a former police and fire station. When DOS closed, Flint and Curtis Knapp co-founded Yale Union (YU), a contemporary art centre in Portland, Oregon, with a gallery, artists' studios and printing press. At YU, Flint has overseen the development of one of the leading independent print workshops in the US.

In 2007, Flint began producing *Veneer Magazine*, intended as a series of 18 issues, currently at issue number

nine, with its own idiosyncratic pricing system. *Veneer* is distributed through a combination of subscriptions as well as bookshops, museums, libraries and galleries. For each issue of *Veneer*, a thousand copies – in two different versions – are lavishly produced, combining different paper stocks, and analogue and digital print techniques. Subscribers receive all 18 of an edition of 300 copies. Those issues stocked in regular outlets are part of an edition of 700 copies. Flint has an algebraic formula that inflates subscriber price as new issues are released. Unless you understand algebra, it's hard to know the price of a subscription at issue 18. One of the many benefits of subscribing is that, according to *Veneer's* website, Flint has offered to build bookshelves to house the issues. Inserted between the leaves can be found postcards and useless implements in specimen bags. Sometimes the pages have been perfumed; once, or so we are told, they were ritually whipped. Perhaps in homage to Marcel Broodthaers's *Pense-Bête* (1964), Flint sealed an issue closed by edging it in expanding foam. For issue three, he attempted to fund an issue entirely by 'reverse-advertising' – running companies' ads without their permission and invoicing them afterwards. Stevens told me that *Veneer's* liberal libel, plagiarism and copyright infringement has meant Flint has needed to work with a lawyer to write a 'shield' to protect him from legal notices.

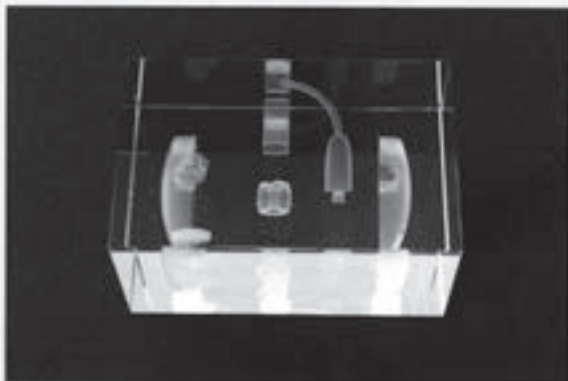
Although artists such as Adrian Piper, George Kuchar and Sturtevant have contributed to past issues, much of the content has the appearance of trade journals, promotional material and textbook literature. In *The Century of Artists Books* (2004), Johanna Drucker characterizes a kind of artists' book 'structured around the presentation of information as information'. 'Which is to say,' she continues, 'they are composed of material which is purely denotative.' No sooner have you read *Veneer*, than you have forgotten what it is you have read. Yet the seemingly limitless intricacies between *Veneer's* printed matter, its anarchic website and Flint's art practice transcend lumpen denotation. Flint has designs on the noisy surface of information aesthetics.

Flint has a gallery-based practice that incorporates lavish printed matter, and made and readymade objects. Among the latter, purple heartwood, 3D printing and other hi-tech materials are motifs familiar across works. *Frank / Canary Book* (2012) is a cloth-bound letterpress book presented on a portable laptop table. For *Rig Buddy* (2012), Flint studied sports rucksack manufacturing and produced his own curtain from georgette, polyurethane and zippers. *Stretched to Place* (2011) is a 'Mastercool' infrared

thermometer presented as found in its plastic case on a white plinth.

'Initially,' Stevens explained to me, 'Flint needed approximately £20,000 to make his latest show at Cubitt – four times the budget.' Told that it wouldn't be possible, Flint decided to do the research and make the thing himself. At the Cubitt opening, I could hear what a quarter of £20,000 sounded like before I could see it. A false wall bisected the space; embedded inside it was a luxury domestic jacuzzi. Its elevation, from horizontality to verticality, precluded any use whatsoever, and the dry pumps were working overtime in the absence of resistant flow. Facing it, two small sculptural works stood on a plinth and a shelf. On the plinth, atop a silver holographic sheet, was a 3D print, a rapid prototype of what could be a machine component isolated from its ensemble. Embedded at the centre of a block of purple heartwood, equal in size to the shelf, was what appeared to be vacuum-formed carbon fibre. A door led through a utility cupboard into the rear portion of the gallery where the botched innards of the jacuzzi were plumbed into a conveyor belt also constructed of purple heartwood. In the corner, filed away in a plastic form-moulded case and mounted on a camera tripod, were five identical handmade books. In one, set in letterpress text on thick paper, I read emblematic questions Flint routinely asks of systems, information and circulation in his work: 'OUTPUT What? To where? To what end?'

Aaron Flint Jamison is an artist based in Portland, Oregon, USA. Recent solo exhibitions include Air de Paris, France; Centre d'edition contemporaine, Geneva, Switzerland; Artspool, Vancouver, Canada (all 2012); and Cubitt, London, UK (2013). He is the co-founder of Yale Union, Portland, and the publisher of Veneer Magazine.



1
He is Risen / Plastikman's
Sternum, 2012, crystal,
6 × 12 × 8 cm

2
Planet, 2013, purple heartwood,
carbon fibre,
installation view at Cubitt
Gallery, London

3
Turbine, STL7, 2013,
mixed media, installation view
at Cubitt Gallery, London

4
A Floating Brand, 2012,
book, LED Technostroke lamp,
purple heartwood, and five copies
of the book A Floating Brand,
dimensions variable



2

Aaron Flint Jamison has designs on the noisy surface of information aesthetics.



3



4

MOUSSE

PAPER LOVE

BY JAMES HOFF

Aaron Flint Jamison is an artist from Portland, Oregon, but he is also the editor of a particular publication that in terms of form and concept blurs the boundaries between the artist's book and the magazine. James Hoff, an avid reader of *Veneer*, met with the artist to talk about the extraordinary handmade quality of the magazine, and the irresistible qualities of purple-heart wood.



James Hoff: It's nice to finally meet you (kind of), perhaps make contact is a better way of saying it. I feel as though I've been receiving dispatches from you through friends and various bookstores now for years, (not to sound too cold war about it). Much of your work does involve a degree of undermining and employing bureaucratic channels and I'm curious to what extent this is a conscious exploration by you as an artist and/or the by-product of your role as a publisher, if you even distinguish between these two roles.

Aaron Flint Jamison: Thank you. I'm unapologetic about the work having a hard life in traditional economies or bureaucracies. That defines things automatically. Amongst other objects and performances I do indeed make books, but am I a traditional publisher? The work that I make has been dropped and rejected by distributors and I'm quite sure that most bookstores and sellers consider it to be a headache.

jh: I've always liked how you dismantle the role of editor/publisher with *Veneer*, formally and conceptually blurring the lines between an artist book and the magazine platform. There is, of course, a tradition to this critical approach—*Semina* and *Landslide* quickly come to mind. Can you talk a little bit about the genesis of *Veneer* Magazine and how it developed?

afj: Perhaps a good way to answer this question would be to speak about the project's early material selections and how those and the specific process forced a rubric for the remaining books. I would hope that someone could look at the first issue that we started building in 2006 and witness a romance with the medium itself. Parts of the book are letterpressed, other sections are printed on an offset press. The trim size is tall and narrow and the paper stocks are heavy and exaggerated. It is typeset in the technical but delicate Baskerville. The spine is excessively glued with a stiff hot melt perfect binding. Many inserts fall out of the pages when flipping through it. Producing in multiple these objects with

such tools and humble materials has been exciting to me since the beginning. This frank eagerness is important to what we are doing.

jh: I think they are great to explore and I always liked how you negotiated formal complications through craft and material.

This brings me to a particular work of yours that has been stuck in my head for a long time. It's a work I've never seen in person—it is *United Bulb* (2007). Part of me wants to ask you how you came up with the idea to build museum grade light bulbs from scratch and part of me wants to ask how on earth you convinced SFMoMA to allow you use them (I mean how many waivers did you have to sign for that one?). I guess the obvious question is whether or not they worked, but the question I'm most interested in is what they illuminated?

afj: A precise definition about where pieces begin and end is rare. It's like the fuzziness in pinpointing exactly where the culture begins and ends in Kombucha. This implies that often tangible aspects of what I'm doing exist outside of this type of documentation, of course. Occasionally and as Joseph Grigely has wisely labeled these things exhibition prosthetics come about as appendages of performances, publications, shows, or bigger ideas. How wonderful. More traditional gallery environments stunting this energy is a concern, but also I love the formal platform such places provide. I hope that it goes without saying that formal questions are also very interesting to me! I'm lucky to have found a few places and individuals who are willing to take these risks with me and communicate them in ways that respect the work. So, actually, I'm unaware of the piece that you are talking about.

What's interesting here is how your work often seems to involve unfolding and mine the opposite. Among others, both have central concerns of economy and like, authenticity. I remember opaquely texting you after watching a stream of you broadcasting your mobile number during a talk at the Walker Art Center years ago. I enjoy being confused by the role that justice plays in your editing. Thank you, 2012. Do you think that the treatment of material is overshadowed by concerns of accessibility? I'd hate for this conversation to digress into one of access, but maybe you could briefly talk about transparency before we move on.

jh: It's a good question, but I'd say that in my editorial work, at least with Primary Information, treatments are mostly driven by source material. That said, the only creative role for the editors of Primary Information is in the artists we choose in carrying out this role we try to maintain a non-influence, though this attempt is usually somewhat cracked by reality. Miriam [Katzeff] and I essentially began the press when we were working at Printed Matter in 2001, where we were completely taken by the Guerrilla Art Action Group archive and wanted to see it (and material like it) out in the world. It was here that our romance for the archive met the institutional dogma of access, likely with a heightened sense of justice given the subject of our focus.

It seems your work with Yale Union (now) and (formerly) with Department of Safety has some altruistic roots. Was this part of the motivation or a bi-product of a larger mission/concern? Contemporary (and now historical) thinking about artists' books requires the viewer to see the book as a spatial and conceptual alternative to the exhibition space, though little sensitivity is given to the qualitatively differences of spaces in formulating this concept. It is clear that you have a vast interest in the materiality of the page, but do you see a difference in the types of spaces that your work inhabits, whether it is at Yale Union, a gallery you are working with, or in *Veneer*. Your movement between these spaces appears seamless, but is it?

afj: That's generous of you to call it seamless. I'm aware of it being cavalier, but thinking about the audience in relation to these centers is something that I rarely afford myself. It's important, but these questions are not part of my particular job there and I work with some great individuals who can process in this way. My availability at YU—and at DoS for that matter—is focused around production these days.

The second part of your question is a very interesting one, of course. Nothing is easy. I often think of the Yale Union building itself as a red herring because of the responsibility historic and fetishized architecture seems to mandate. It's a struggle to resist this and attempt to think around exhibition and production responsibly. I'm not alone here. This is why we built the kitchen first. I have little to do with programming, but I can tell you that this is why we are having the Finlay exhibition in a room that is 70 sq/ft instead of an adjacent space that is empty and 10,000 sq/ft. This is why the Kuchar exhibition has been happening for three years and will last another five years. This is why we built the print shop in the basement—because it's always producing and that energy is crucial to the activity of the rest of the project.

I read the Xerox Book for the first time while sitting on a sweaty subway. It was circumstantial, but I found some tears in my eyes. I'm a deep believer, but

I don't subscribe to there being any formula for making these books or exhibitions. They are very different.

jh: I'd been meaning to ask you about Finlay—I see a parallel in your work and his, particularly in the way his work was constantly expanding through traditional and non-traditional partnerships and methodologies, some more stable than others, but never relying on them wholesale. Can you discuss your interest in Finlay? and perhaps talk a little more about the exhibition(s) devoted to him that you and YU are working on?

afj: What a complicated artist! I'll be the last to say that I'm an expert on Finlay or that my work should be uttered in the same sentence as his. I was introduced to his practice during the second Bush regime and then a few years ago Tim Johnson and Caitlin Murray of Marfa, TX, asked me to make an anthology about him. This little book that they subsequently edited and I produced, *The Present Order: Writings on the Work of Ian Hamilton Finlay*, was the outcome. It was a very confusing project for me because I was asked to interface indirectly with the work and then present it and produce it for some abstract interested audience that might actually purchase such a textbook. What is my roll, then a designer!? What does that mean? More recently at Yale Union we have partnered with Reed College to make a few small exhibitions of his work over the next year. The college owns many hundreds of Finlay's pieces and are generously loaning them to us. The way that these exhibitions will happen is that we've asked aficionados who are more seasoned in responding to his work to make selections as individual, humble Finlay shows. Because the body is so diverse these Finlay experts all direct their attention to different aspects of the work. This model allows for different, complicated, and even contradictory edits to be presented from the exact same collection.

jh: I am curious about a re-occurring medium in your work from the past few years: purple-heart wood. It is such a specific surface and material. How'd you come to it? Are you still working with it?

afj: It's true that my interest in this stuff is determined and that I love it! I don't think that I need to go into the particular reasons for returning to its use. I would say that it's a particularly unpleasant material to render. My workshop is covered often in purple dust. How is this natural? I'm admittedly capricious and wide-eyed and have used plenty of materials that are more sincerely seductive over the years but I have never found a suitable replacement for the characteristics I love about the purple wood.

jh: It sits in my mind perhaps because of *Snuggle Kit* which was the last work I saw of yours (at the "Freaks and Geeks" exhibition at Air de Paris last summer). You have an exhibition coming up shortly at Air de Paris in finishing up here can you tell me a little bit about it or give me a few hints about what your working on now? Likewise, when I can expect the next installment of *Veneer*?

afj: The realistic plan is that the next *Veneer*, 09/18, will be on bookshelves everywhere by the end of the year. I'm quite excited about this. It's shaping up nicely. I generally enjoy working light on my feet, but I don't rush the process. Do you know about the story of the previous issue, 08/18? This is a conclusion: The offset printing facility and bindery that I was contracting with in Canada went into receivership and *Veneer* was the last book that it produced. However, the technicians were less concerned with quality control at that point as the bankers were kicking them out of the warehouse. The result of this was that the covers of *Veneer* were bound upside down and then accidentally they shipped me all the improperly bound books even though I refused payment. No one cared because the press was already bankrupt. We used that money we were going to spend on the issue instead on a plumbing project at Yale Union. Then we ripped off all of the covers of the magazine and considered 08/18 remaindered, free for anyone who wanted it. There is not one issue of that magazine that has a cover on it in the entire world. It was catastrophic and a failure at the time because there were entire signatures typeset in lead that were misbound and could not be salvaged, but in retrospect I'm also very proud of the new sinks in the basement of Yale Union.

Opposite – *Veneer Magazine* 01/18-08/18, 2007-2012.
Courtesy: the artist



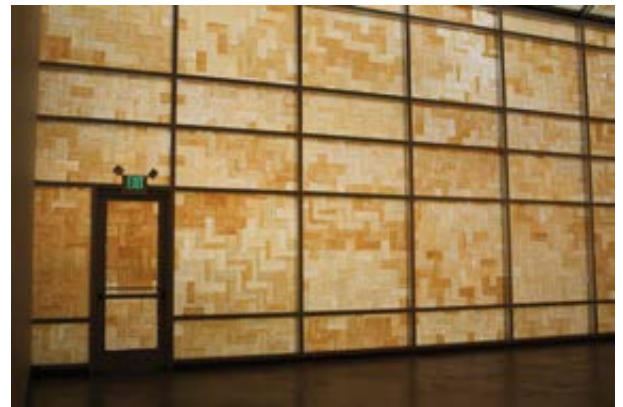
(A)



(B)



(C)



(D)



(E)

(A, D) Exhibition views
 "Peeling Layers Yields Brief
 Openmouthed "Oh!", Open
 Satellite, Bellevue, WA, 2010

(B) The Present Order: Writings
 on the Work of Ian Hamilton
 Finlay, Marfa Book Company,
 2010. Courtesy: the artist

(C) A Floating Brand, 2012.
 Courtesy: Air de Paris, Paris.
 Photo: Aurélien Mole

(E) Exhibition views at
 Artspeak, Vancouver, 2012.
 Photo: Blaine Campbell

KALEIDOSCOPE

VISIT "Millennium Magazines" exhibition at MoMA in New York



Veener #05, Courtesy of Aaron Flint Jamison

Everyone in the art world seems to be involved in publishing of books and periodicals. The magazine, in particular, has emerged as a medium par excellence for critical discussion and as a field of visual and verbal experimentation. One of the largest archives of art-related printed material belongs to the library of MoMA, New York, which regularly provides a themed selection of books to accompany the museum's exhibitions. Although not considered curators by the museum, its librarians, David Senior and Rachel Morrison, occupy positions that, at times, could be seen as valuable as curatorial practices. Their recent initiative, "Millennium Magazines," an exhibition comprising around a hundred magazines from the collection, is a great testament to this. Perhaps more telling of the current state of artistic research than the more conventional art shows, it focuses on independent art magazines, some of which are available for the public to browse, and others displayed in cabinets. *Kaleidoscope* is included alongside many others like *Bidoun*, *Apartmento*, *White Fungus*, *North Drive Press* and *Piktogram*. On view at The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building, away from the crowds and the lights of the adjacent MoMA, the display of magazines is accompanied by documentary material and a final panel with some of the publishers. An impressive survey, "Millennium Magazines" explores the way magazines, since early 2000s, have come to produce culture, rather than merely transmit it. (Francesco Spampinato)

frieze

Books

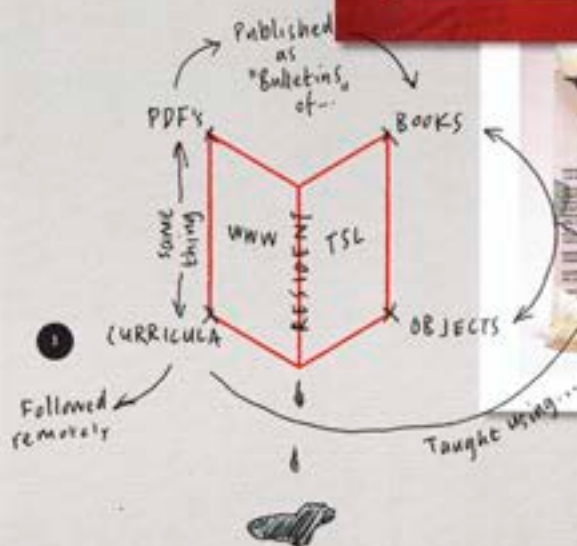
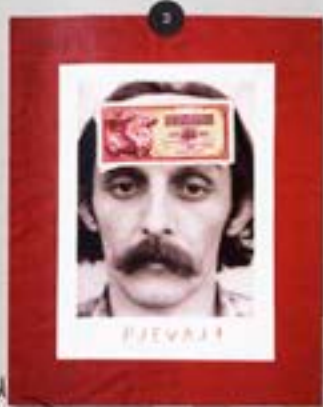
Experimental magazines, absurdist writing and new fiction, *David Senior and Emily Stokes list their publishing highlights of 2011*

1. Dexter Sinister
Diagram showing statement of
intent for the Serving Library
Company Inc.
2009

2. Mladen Stilinović
Phroni (1980)
(1980)

3. *Vineer* magazine, issue 5
2009

4. Stuart Bailey
*It Is The Outside/ness
Flour Of It*
Downloadable pdf from the
Serving Library Company Inc.
(Image: Scott Ponik B., 2010)



David Senior

Bibliographer at the Museum of Modern Art Library, New York, U.S.A.

I went up an elevator in a building – most notable for the degree it had not been renovated – on 6th Avenue, around 46th Street, in midtown Manhattan, on a mid-August afternoon. It led me to an open floor of a bare office space. By the large set of windows in the otherwise empty expanse of the room was a desk and a person. Aaron Flint Jamison had set up an 'office' to distribute his magazine, *Vineer*. It was seemingly a rather sad scene – part Bartleby, part *Death of a Salesman*. But, simultaneously, it was a playful intervention and a willful admission of production at the margins. This was not Chelsea, this was not Art Basel, this wasn't even the New York Art Book Fair. It was a formal decision towards an isolation that is already implied in *Vineer*'s hermetic contents (the spray-foamed issue was one of the most annoying items I've ever received as a librarian), simple distribution (mail to friends, subscribers) and the limits of a limited budget. It's hard to sell an

experimental format. Generally, bookstores don't know what to do, distributors smell a hard sell and the artist becomes at once the designer, (sometimes) printer, publisher and salesperson of the materials. It's thankless and impossible and absurd. Jamison made a new issue of *Vineer* earlier this year – it arrived back to him from the printers with the cover upside-down. He proceeded to tear off the cover of each one, eat the costs and offer the besmirched issues for free + shipping. It's thankless and impossible and absurd. It is the failed economy of making a book. People try – bless their hearts. Does it make sense? No.

Speaking of nonsense, he has also teamed up with designer/librarian/bookseller Scott Ponik to create a library space within a new contemporary arts centre in Portland, Oregon, called YU. They are thinking hard about what kind of library they want it to be and are slowly building up a list of titles. Libraries were *de rigueur* in 2011 – or at least they were in the small world of artists and designers relating back to books and publishing as part of their practice.

I don't mean that sarcastically. It seems like the library provides an opening for a physical space that mimics a book itself – a passage into an elsewhere that includes as many narratives and conversations as possible books. Seems like a worthwhile structure, right? Dexter Sinister have rethought their process and realigned into what they have described as a Serving Library. It will comprise the materials they publish and work with in some physical space, and will be organized through times when the space is activated by classes, talks and also an appointed 'librarian'. Details are still in the works. Again, plans that are rife with suspect economics – building a library space for people to visit, raising money for it to subsidize and to grow? That's the business of Carnegies – not artists and designers, and especially not during our tidal movement onto digital shores of past and future books and current economic implosions.

Mladen Stilinović had a retrospective in Budapest at the Museum Ludwig that opened in April. The catalogue is an extensive tour of the artist's work and a great introduction to the artist

for those not familiar. In regard to young contemporary artists and their absurd publishing practices, perhaps Stilinović can be seen as one possible hero. Starting in the early 1970s, Stilinović along with a group of other artists, turned to little books as a mode of distributing text works, performance documentation and collective activities within their city of Zagreb and wherever else the hand-to-hand distribution would have the books travel. The books contain absurdities – text and image pieces that move across logic and into Ludwig Wittgenstein or Samuel Beckett land. Nonsense moves quickly – in this case, fugitive from the authoritarian language of the state in Tito's Yugoslavia in the 1970s – a humour on the gallows, both ontological and poignantly pragmatic. There was no sense in making his publications at this time, the audience was very small for this material and all the artists were broke and scraped together what they could to assemble the materials for publication.

In 2011, examples of absurd and stubborn persistence seemed welcome and inspiring.

ARTFORUM

Aaron Flint Jamison

11.10.10



Left: *Veneer* Issues One to Seven, subscriber and retail editions. Right: View of *Veneer* in "The Social Life of the Book," Kabinetten van De Vleeshal, Middleburg, Netherlands, September 2010.

The Portland-based artist Aaron Flint Jamison is editor of the publication Veneer. When its run concludes in six years, the series will comprise eighteen issues, including a bookshelf to house the complete set for subscribers. Past contributors to Veneer include Sturtevant, George Kuchar, Kevin Kelly, and Ray Kurzweil. Jamison's work will be featured in a solo exhibition next February at castillo/corrales in Paris.

VENEER comes out of my love for long-term projects and anything that seems to be in progress and slowly unfolding. Books have always been very important to me, but it wasn't until art school that I started to understand how to complicate the medium through using disparate materials and content. When I began, I was focused on the limitations of materiality, but it was also important to do it in a way that I had never seen done before. *Veneer* was published twice a year in 2007, 2008, and 2009. I'm currently finishing the eighth issue. After the eighteenth is produced, the project will be over. It could be said that there is a master rubric for the series, but that is an oversimplification, because I think about the ideas behind each issue on a micro and macro level.

Anyone who subscribes will receive all the back and all future issues, including ephemera that I send out between issues, such as little books that I'm working on, prints, a bookcase, and other surprises. The materials of each issue change in response to the content—different paper stocks, offset and letterpress printing techniques, bindings, and various inserts. It's important to me that bodies interface with production, so as much of the work as possible is done by hand with friends and colleagues—for instance, actions like embedding cubic zirconium gems into the pages of issue three, or rubbing Brut deodorant onto page 127 of issue four. There aren't any names of artists (or editors) on the spine, and the issues are not that wide, so they can be pushed to the back of the bookshelf pretty nicely. They aren't easy to display, present, or even sell. Sort of like a lot of art that is important to me.

For issue five, I spray-foamed the edges of every edition so that the book is very difficult to open. Untouched, it is reminiscent of sea foam, but it actually makes a melodramatic flaky mess when you try to rip it off. The most beautiful thing is that once you actually get it off the sides, you have to individually pull the pages apart, kind of like peeling away a sunburn. And that process relates to the issue, which for me was about *feeling* the edges of the ocean, waves coming in and out. Adrian Piper's article, for instance, talks about these rhythms, pacing, and repetition in yoga and philosophy.

Issue three was filled with stolen advertisements from other magazines—mostly French, but also some Turkish and English. After it was printed, I letter-pressed these really boring invoices and sent them with a copy of the issue to the companies that had inadvertently advertised with us. I received quite a few cease-and-desist letters because I was reverse-advertising, invoicing for contracted monies that were never agreed upon. Subsequently, I worked with a lawyer in San Francisco to write a document to protect me from getting sued. The document became a significant part of that entire issue for me.

The economy surrounding this publication is minimal. There are a few galleries and shops out there that engage with the books and their audience in a way that makes it possible for *Veneer* to be sold. But I've developed relationships with various retailers all over, and bless their hearts if they never pay me and if you still see copies of those early issues around on dusty bookshelves. I think I'm too invested in the process to be any help on a distribution level. But I recently saw a copy in a glass library vitrine and that was really nice.

— As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler