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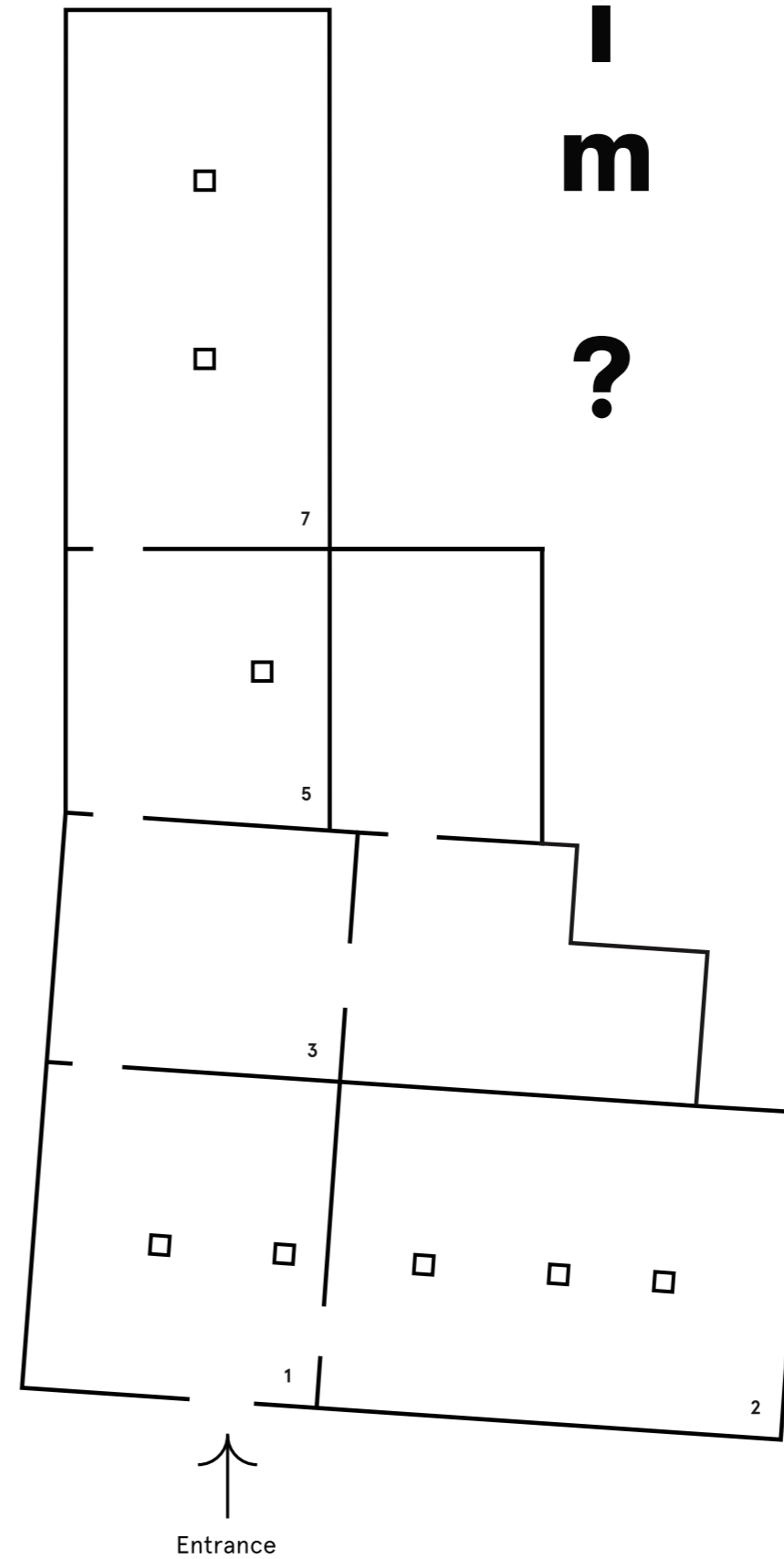
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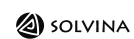
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IEVA KRAULE

α: *DECEIVED DECEIVERS*

Sophie is facing you from the exhibition space. She is created to follow a predetermined sequence of instructions – to tell stories. Hiding behind the rhythmic repetition is her lack of experience. Hiding behind the rhythmic repetition is her impassivity. Hiding behind the rhythmic repetition, these stories are no longer so wholly strange, but not one’s own either. Her name suggests unlimited knowledge trapped in her incomplete stature, its Greek origin – beauty of her body and mind. Maybe Sophie is just a primitive automaton – the uncovered mechanisms underneath the shell of the face seemingly attest to this. But she is also something more – a servant of her creator, the star of the show, and at night, when the lights are turned off, just a frozen decoration on the gallery wall.

Sophie is the antithesis of her creator’s weakness – she is incapable of error, embarrassment and mistakes. She’s not just a whim confined in a cardboard box and safely stored in a shelf upon the closing of the exhibition. She is an ancillary device or maybe an assistant, which accompanies Ieva Kraule from one exhibition to the next and in which one might sense something magical, as only her presence makes the impossible possible by transforming the artist’s stories into performances.

There is a widespread opinion that the world of the written word can be characterized by its ability to create unusual meanings and emotions, a new kind of relationship between sound and meaning, words and sound, one word and the next... until emotions also appear in situations where they have no clear meaning and justification. From this point of view, Sophie’s misleading knowledge is particularly attractive because, although it is based on the machine having been taught speech, a feeling prevails that during the exhibition visit you might experience a shift of the scenario, some unplanned actions – that Sophie might tell you something that is not meant for the public, a secret of her own or her creator’s. A tempting offer, provided that the audience’s attention is limited and that it is increasingly difficult to follow (along) a long narrative, as – after all we have been accustomed to drama and events with rapid action.

Confirming Sophie’s desire to be among people, her contours are not robotic. Her appearance borrows little from science fiction, from a state of completion and polishing, but much more – from robust crafts, with similarities to ethnographic exhibits or even mystic objects of religious worship. Although functionally is limited, Sophie tries to mingle among people, by hiding, and then revealing herself; her facial features are approximated to a person’s, just like the skin tone, bravely balancing between a healthy pink and frail yellow all the way to black.

Sophie is not alone in the exhibition space, the accomplices of her stories are multiple sculptural objects, among them, a number of dysfunctional replicas of Sophie are dispersed around the room – casts of her facial mask in various tones; further on – abstract language visualizations – coloured rod frames, moulded together, they deceive you, apparently recalling letters, although in reality they don’t match any alphabet; and – differently speckled shaded latex sheets, wrapped around the walls / ceiling / metal rods, serve as camouflage for Sophie.

The existence of this language, even if it is just an illusion, confirms the intermediate position between the corporeal and linguistic regularly noticeable in Kraule’s work, which brings together both the existence and the denial of something. No need to worry, if Sophie is talking and suddenly she opens her mouth but seems to have lost her voice. Over time, Sophie will change, and soon enough she will have her own stories and questions. But now, she is still concerned with what it means to be a machine, and how through it human nature can be revealed; through conversation with her you uncover what it means to be human.

... and in the corner of the room a latex cast of a *svilpavnieks* (a bird-shaped bird whistle) has rushed in – as symbolic contribution of an act of breathing spirit (speech) into the framework of mute and tentative shapes.

Ieva Kraule (b. 1987 in Riga, based in Amsterdam). She is currently finishing her MA degree at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam with previous education in audio-visual media, painting and ceramics. Practicing different techniques and methods of work has made her practice diverse both in form and content with regular references in history, applied arts and architecture of the Soviet era. Since 2014 she is co-running the non-commercial gallery 427 in Riga. Among recent solo shows are: *The person you are trying to reach is not available* (with Aidan Koch) at *Hester*, New York; and *Qu'est-ce que ça peut faire tout ça* (with Kaspars Groshevs) at *Shanaynay*, Paris. Her work has been included in group shows at *1857*, Oslo; HIAP, Helsinki; XII Baltic Triennial Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius; *Art in General*, New York; and *kim?* Contemporary Art Centre, Riga. She is the winner of *kim?* Residency Award 2017 granted with three months (April-June, 2017) residency at Gasworks, London.

RH: When thinking about the actions on paper I think of the speed of the paper as a material to work with; a speed I’ve learned to adapt to through repeated work over time. What I mean is that I have become very aware of what the time span is, in which I can still affect and transform the material before reaching the point of destroying it, and this simply relates to the time it takes to dry. When you think about it, it’s similar to the process of painting with oil colours, or of working with clay: your material determines how fast or slowly you can make decisions, and somehow your working plan becomes or finds the way to stay programmed to be as compact as it needs to be to still fit into that “un-dried” time gap. After that, it’s all over. The moment when the material finally dries is like the sound of an alarm that wakes you up and forces you to recede.

I don’t know how this relates to Mexico specifically, but I’ve certainly been more nervous during European winters when I have wished things would dry faster.

ZO: With formal and thematic references reminiscent of certain ancient relics, your choice of material is rather removed from the seriousness and richness of the original, trading gold or silver for foil or again and repeatedly – paper. What relationship do you share with these motives or the territory they populate?

RH: Here you touch upon two important subjects. First, the “poor” nature of the materials I often choose. I think this started in a very natural way: I wanted to give shape to an idea in a very simple way and this meant proceeding as follows without any additional steps – standing up from my chair, going to a store, buying a couple of things, returning to my chair, doing something, and then having something I could see as being finished the morning after. I got used to this lonely, uncompromised way of moving forward and then one might say I only tried to see how this process evolves and what it involves, what this process actually consists of. Secondly, you referred to my interest in Ancient Pre-Columbian imagery. This could be a longer answer, but mainly what drives me to it is the idea that those images function in a way that is almost impossible to grasp. They repeat motives and subjects that we can try to read with the help of experts or by analogy, but those images are mostly locked inside a place that we really do not belong to anymore. So I see them with a kind of sadness, as something definitely lost. And yet, it’s maybe precisely because of this that I’m not surprised to see many of those images being used when talking about that big subject of “Mexican identity”. Besides this, the specific narratives constructed from and around those images are very beautiful and mysterious and very often suggest ideas that I draw inspiration from and then appear tangentially in my own work.

ZO: The site-specific exhibition we’re about to open will undergo last-minute adjustments-improvements by the hands of the younger audience members. This is like a full circle knowing that the amateur drawings you collected online are the source of the inspiration for this exhibition. They are given quite a voice. What is behind this intention?

RH: It will be the first time I do something like this and I’m very excited about it. This new element in my work relates to what I mentioned before about trying to see what the process actually consists of. In this case, the involvement of kids adds an element that changes the process and will hopefully help me see something new in it. Recently I felt I had been trying to do this over and over again by moving or changing the thing in front of me, but perhaps it could be useful now to change the place where I’m looking from; or to take a part of the construction that is in the center and move it to the margins. You know what I mean? Also, I enjoy speaking with kids and seeing how they act and make decisions, and I will also try to make sure that they enjoy this too.

ZO: Besides local art lovers activating the exhibition, what does the “site” mean to you in this instance? Is it the institution or the context of Riga? Or is it Walsler’s writings or a group of kids “messaging” with the installation? Or is it a general state or an “archaeological site” that you seem to be very affected by?

RH: I have been thinking lately that it’s a curious thing that we as artists move at a certain pace based on a wide variety of factors, but for putting up the work somewhere, this pace suddenly has to change and adjust to the pace of that “somewhere”, that place hosting the work. Meaning: a title has to be chosen at a certain point, a press release of any kind has to be written and finished before a certain point, the work should be ready, shipped, installed, documented, reviewed, etc. at a certain point. This is of course very practical and perhaps simply natural if one wishes to have anything that can be called a “show”, but maybe it is also some kind of dark suit we have all silently agreed looks good for going to work. There’s some rapidness or some kind of lightness that I wish doing an exhibition would have more of. We write too much for practical reasons in “real” life, there are tons of signs around us to be read and followed, it seems like we are meant to make sense of things, and I wonder if an exhibition could work just a little differently sometimes. I don’t know it, but I am just asking myself this question.

And yes, I find an archaeological site to be a very powerful image indeed. In this case, nevertheless, I imagine the margins of the site as not being clearly marked, so that the viewer is invited to metaphorically jump into the process of the work instead of staying behind or outside of it. This is perhaps what I mean when I say what I want evolves or involves what I see a process consisting of.

ZO: Thank you. Looking forward to see the show.

RH: Thank you.

CONVERSATION

Curator Zane Onckule in conversation with artist Rodrigo Hernandez on the occasion of his exhibition in Riga

March, 2017

ZO: Who or what is the “*Shakiest of Things*”? And how come it’s simultaneously “*The Most Solid*” which on it’s own was the title of one of your earlier projects.

RH: Close, but not exactly. By the previous title I guess you mean – “Nothing is solid”, a short fragment of a Sonic Youth song I was listening to again and again in Puerto Vallarta, on the brink of my coming out some years ago. Those were strange, and very exciting times. The complete line of the song said: “Nothing is solid, nothing can be held in my hand for long...” Later I did a series of five drawings called “in my hand for long”. I am still curious why this still always sounds and feels so wrong and incomplete, even after such a long time since I’ve done them and listened to this title in my head. I would imagine I should be used to it by now, but it’s still a little unsettling. I see this kind of grasping of the song and the words in it over time as an elliptical movement, as a handling of parts of a particular kind. I remember reading one day that an artist is someone trying to make things float. “Being happy, after all, surmounts and surpasses all frailty and strength. Happiness is the shakiest of things and yet also the most solid” would be the full quote from one of Robert Walser’s *Microscripts*.

ZO: You’re repeatedly inspired from writers and poets, their writings. What is it about Robert Walser’s *Microscripts* that appeals to you here? Is it the “complete insignificance of content and the neglect of style” as Walter Benjamin has put it?

RH: Robert Walser is an author I really enjoy reading. This simple principle is the only one I try to follow when I choose what I read and what I look at. In the case of Walser, I never feel his writing pushes one to an agreement or an understanding of what one reads. I get the feeling while he’s trying to be as clear as possible when describing any kind of situation –sometimes to the point of insignificance– at the same time he’s maybe, secretly thinking about something else. And that this *something else* leaks through that apparent descriptiveness in a very powerful and joyful way. There’s something that isn’t easy to grasp there, for sure. Walser is protective of his subjects, of what he sees and how he sees it. I admire and love this in an artist more than anything, and the *Microscripts* are the most extreme case of this sort of elusiveness or *reticence* as Benjamin calls it.

ZO: For my own sports I am listing the channels of methods and forms you use: starting with your *thing* a piece of paper, caught in various situations – *mise-en-scenes* of one project following the next; then – a certain story, author, an article of historical reference (even though you say you don’t focus on the characters and their identities); then a colour – the recurrent presence of yellow, blue, black and other deep hues that you use in quite a colour-blocking way; then– perhaps a certain form of geometry with references spanning from ancient Aztec to Greek to cosmology to Russian constructivism...

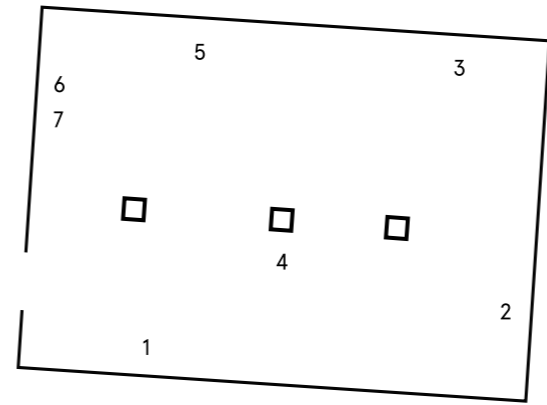
RH: ...there would be parts of everything that you mentioned in my reaction to this list, but I would also say that there are a bit too many words. I would prefer a shorter answer and unfortunately I don’t think I have it. I can say I like getting involved with many things around me and the way I do this is by making my own things, with my own hands. What I’ve made so far and what I am currently making are at the same time tools for this involvement but I can also see a conversation starting among them, and that I’m sometimes just watching, articulating or moderating the conversation. I like this idea that I can be constantly getting in and out of that universe, free of myself in a way. That I am completely sunk in, but at the same time that it is but a simple game that I juggle between my hands.

The first thing I thought of when reading this was the title of one of my favourite *Microscripts*: “The words I’d like to utter”, but maybe that would be a bad answer.

ZO: No, it wouldn’t be. Would you agree then that it is not so much the content as the form and material itself that interests you? You do seem to enjoy reading these texts you reference, but it feels like they are not necessarily as related to the idea that you’re about to bring to life. Instead, it’s more the tactile feeling and the materiality of the paper – thinness or the way the ink, pen or pencil has left its marks on it that appeals to you.

RH: That’s quite right, and it’s a very important point for me when reflecting on my own practice. Totally important. Let’s put it like this: paper is something easy to approach as both substance and body simultaneously, or as either one of them back and forth. It’s something that gains and loses meaning all the time so it really has a tendency to stay in an ambiguous position. With paper you can’t help but be a reader and a “toucher” at all times, or, –as you prefer to see it– be just one of the two and not the other at a given moment, even in spite of your will or of the circumstances. I often like referring to a *yantra*, that dynamic diagram used in Hinduism: it is conformed by the interlocking of geometrical shapes that surround and radiate out from a central point. The observation of it – of how it is actually constructed– is supposed to have a mystical power to guide you into mediation. What interests me here is that apparent contradiction where a *yantra* is nothing but a shape, and only in its shape does its power reside, and at the same time it’s nothing but an instrument to shapelessness.

ZO: Shapelessness (of a paper) that undergoes numerous actions: soaking, shredding, drying... And speaking of drying paper, that’s what we’re about to experience in this exhibition – is this “drying studio environment” a symbolic reference that suggests your upbringing in Mexico under the direct sun?



(..)

“You build the conversations from colourful blocks. You stack different shapes on top of each other, next to each other for them to form new shapes and new patterns for future thoughts. Complex and always in flux – I find it difficult to follow. I crave to sort your metaphors and group the symbolic meanings. The red blocks neatly next to each other separated by clearly defined gaps. Never overlapping, never mixing with green balls. But you refuse. You call it absurd and all I am left with is to look for some greater system that applies to this mess you call language. I can never fully trust you as you argue your perception of the real in this absurd language full of possible misinterpretations. You can’t step outside of it and therefore anything you say or think stays inside this world of shifting building blocks. Never changing their true shape, but always reappearing from different angles. The way you decided to rob me of the body and even a full head shows me how you perceive yourself. I am the embodiment of your desires. You have discarded all the questionable parts leaving only the mirror of thought, the megaphone you use to communicate.”

I am a close-up. I am a magnified face. There is nothing human-like about the way you see your face and nothing human-like in mine. I am only a surface. A landscape, if you like. By taking away the body you have left me shallow. There is nothing behind those holes of my face. My mouth is only for speech and it is in no way connected to my anus. There is no anus. There is nothing repulsive in me and there is no mystery as well. There is only a surface for everyone to see.

But if I am the mask then you must be the ‘true’ self hiding behind my insidious body, as for a mask to exist there must be something genuine for it to conceal. I have been observing you for quite some time now and I must admit that I am the honest one here. The melodramatic overtones of your stories, the exaggerated gestures and questionable morals, – they all point towards you being the disguise. Is it possible that at the moment of my creation you planted the real in me? That the mask and the masked have switched places to form the best camouflage possible? There is no better way to hide than to put the treasure out for everyone to see, letting people fight for a glimpse of the very little that lies beneath it.”

(..)

– Excerpt from the conversation with Sophie (Ieva Kraule’s essay titled *Deceived Deceivers* to accompany exhibition, Amsterdam, 2017).

Ieva Kraule

2.

(1)

Metre

steel, spray paint, black alder
2017

(2)

Sophie

3D print, paint, tērauds,
custom software, voice recording
2017

(3)

Standard

steel, spray paint, latex,
pigment, black alder
2017

(4)

Exhale

latex, pigment
2017

(5)

Scribble

steel, aluminium, spray paint,
latex, pigment, black alder
2017

(6,7)

Camouflage (day), Camouflage (night)

latex, pigment
2017

MAIJA LUUTONEN

DRAFT AND FLOAT

You're looking at sketch-like simplified paintings of clothing, materials, patterns and templates that share some traits and features with plans and instructions. With reflection, albeit in quite an abstract way, in the thoughts and visual representations of 1960s-1970s Italian radical design-movements such as *Superstudio* or *Archizoom Associati*, Maija Luutonen draws from their countercultural and reactionary utopias while observing from (if not) an unconcerned, (then) certainly way more inert, contemporary perspective.

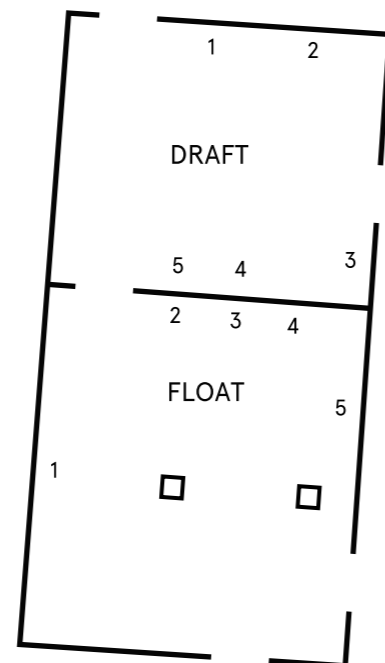
Driven by the core ideas and dreams of suggested indoor living, one-space-for-all, gender and financial equality, no daily work and dressing via templates as well as the proposed "technical destruction of culture", she is approaching design as something that had at one point been an agent for change, interested in picking at its current meaning in the environment of already season-less, post unisex *everything*.

Following this pattern, Luutonen's colour theories informed drawings-templates, represent mainly empty space, some indoor living space perhaps, or instructions with no clear indications for what exactly they are purposed for. Painted with an airbrush and hung on the blank wall without a frame, or glass, just nails, they are at ease – being something more timeless and placeless, rather more like recommendations than fixed documentation that contemplates different possible scenarios for ways of seeing and understanding representations of space, light, material, gravity, etc. Collaged together by references from all over history, they're pointing to the time soon after or before this accessibility of information; how things like skills and instructions are proliferated now; and how none of those things are tangible. "If you're off the grid, how can you make things?" she asks.

Luutonen is relentless. Going through the piles of clothing, all times zooming in and out of materials, threads, fabrics, shapes and all the other aspects while keeping in mind Italians; she's interested in contributing to the question on what art can do, what our relations are with issues as unexpected (here) as climate changes or human relationships to other species, to name the most pressing. Captured by the generalized narratives of today, we forget that there is much more to bear – varied parallel cultures, so many different groups to lean on, to belong to regardless of where you come from, what your constitution is, etc. It is also an interesting task to try to understand why that (destruction) would seem an object for discussion at all, when symbolically and metaphorically it has already happened.

Luutonen's approach to this subject as well as her methods (dealing with the surface of the paper subject itself) are "something transient". Surely, no one can prevent these ideas from being rediscovered or allow them to resurface now, in the same way as no one is forbidden from speculating how it would be if ideas and (extreme) beliefs would re-appear in the near future, in our lifetime. After all, these are core things that are needed to sustain one's physical necessities, staying warm and a roof above one's head, which is exactly what Luutonen does by "turning paper into seemingly enclosed spaces, or rooms; where we live, where we look out, where art is presented".

At the end *Draft and Float* becomes no less than a container of narratives and thoughts on how to continue the tradition (of trying) to find a way to live, think and work today.



Maija Luutonen

1.

(1.-5.)
from the series *Float*
acrylic on paper
2017

3.

(1.-5.)
from the series *Draft*
acrylic on paper
2017

Maija Luutonen (1978) is an artist based in Helsinki who primarily works with painting on paper. She received her MFA from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in 2006. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Soon*, at SIC in Helsinki and *Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey* at KRETS, Malmö both held in 2016. In 2016 she has also participated in the group exhibition the *Pleasure Principle* at Galleri Sinne as well as the exhibition series *(In)visible Dreams and Streams* in the Nordic Council of Ministries, Riga and Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius. Aside from presentations at Kunsthalle Helsinki and SIC and others, she has participated in numerous group exhibitions internationally: among others, *Society Acts*, kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga (2015), and Moderna Museet Malmö (2014); *Affective Attunements*, Galerie Bo Bjerggaard, 2015; *Stopped Clocks in Places of Busyness*, Fold Gallery, London, 2013; *Disclaimer*, Galerie Opdahl, Stavanger, 2013; *Kopioitu*, Komplot, Brussels, 2013; *24 Spaces – A Cacophony*, Malmö Konsthall (2013); *Dimensions of Sharing*, Overgaden Institute for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2012); and *Night On Earth*, Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai (2008). Luutonen is part of the project space *Sic* in Helsinki, run by seven artists.

RODRIGO HERNANDEZ

THE SHAKIEST OF THINGS

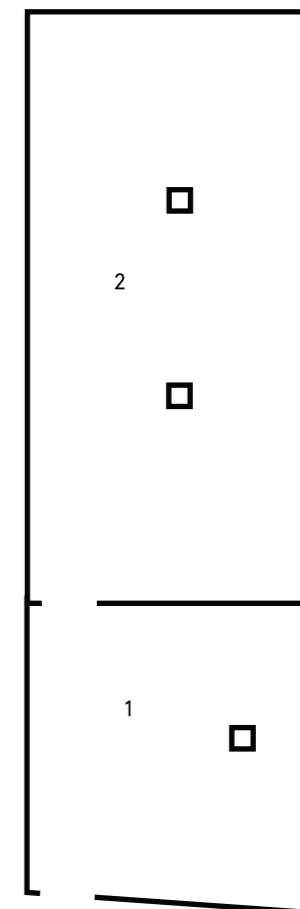
The title of the exhibition derives from the Swiss novelists Robert Walser's work *Microscripts (Mikrogramme)*, published posthumously in 1956). And while German philosopher Walter Benjamin has pointed out two of the characteristics of Robert Walser's microscripts: "a complete insignificance of content and the denial of style", Latvian Jānis Taurens notes, that (reading Walser), "You feel that something is amiss, it seems, he isn't writing *right*, as one should, and then, at this very moment, you catch yourself in that feeling, and it seduces you."

In preparation for the exhibition and all the while dimensionally approaching the limits of legibility of a condensed (writing) format, Rodrigo Hernandez has collected anonymous drawings-*scribbles* by children published on the Internet. Made into a small collection it became the basis of a new series of work combining materials of earlier use as well as new/unexpected ones aimed at creating new meanings. This seemingly humble archive of anonymous drawings appears liberating as it is used in the exact same way in which the artist might use his own personal theme and material repertoire – free to alter and transform without any particular piety, focus or an artistic *agenda*, directed by a specific message.

Also the installation time in Riga has a touch of experimental treatment of "studio work", that is, central exhibition work is created in-situ in the *kim?* exhibition rooms: a site-specific installation of *papier-mâché*, that includes the architecture of the space, as well as engages the younger audience – children – in the making of the art work.

Working with paper pulp is time-consuming, which turns an exhibition into an event that unfolds in time; although marginal and elusive to the eyes, however, change occurs throughout – as the material is drying out completely. The process itself, again, is associated with Walser's *Microscripts* through its characteristic deficiencies and its "chaotic dispersal", which, in turn, confirms the artist's interest in themes such as perception, the message, imagination and uncertainty, all in its various forms of representation.

Rodrigo Hernández (Mexico City, 1983) studied visual arts in the la Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado, "La Esmeralda" in Mexico City and he completed his masters at the Akademie der bildenden Künste Karlsruhe, in Karlsruhe, Germany in the class of Silvia Bächli. In 2014 he concluded a postgraduate program in Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, The Netherlands. In 2015 he was fellow of the Laurenz-Haus Stiftung, in Basel, Switzerland. His work has been shown in Kunsthalle Basel; Kurimanzutto, Mexico City; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; 5th Moscow Bienal, Museo del Chopo, Mexico City; Bonnefontenmuseum, Maastricht; Elizabeth Foundation of the Arts, New York; NuMU - Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Guatemala; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Parallel, Oaxaca; FRAC Marseille; Kunsthalle Baden-Baden; Kunsthaus Baselland; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Kunstverein Freiburg and Museo de Arte Moderno Mexico City, amongst others.



Rodrigo Hernandez

5.

(1)

Journey to a Small Town
site specific installation
color pencil drawings on the wall
drawings by: Rodrigo Hernandez and a group of invited kids
2017

7.

(2)

Recently my eyes
Site specific installation
papier-mache and other materials
based on the collection of anonymous drawings,
gathered by the artist and colored by the artist
and a group of invited kids
2017

Acknowledgements to private elementary school *CreaKids*.