



Real Madrid
Bloodsuckers
January 21 – April 17, 2022

Bloodsuckers is a restless nocturne by collective Real Madrid. The exhibition, their first in the United States, showcases a new body of work that expands on the tribulations of dealing with bed bugs. Founded in Geneva in 2015, Real Madrid stages exhibitions in which hand-crafted objects mingle with readymade commercial products to foreground intimate experiences within larger social networks. The collective, whose appropriated name is a knock-off of the ubiquitous Spanish soccer franchise, works through the ways in which sexuality, illness, fears and attachments are perceived and narrated across time by dominant culture, prompting opportunities for refreshed understandings and camaraderie. *Bloodsuckers* builds upon the artists' sustained engagement with the uneasy processes of navigating disease, stigma and shame by shifting from considerations of interpersonal transmission to something more parasitic.

Across centuries, from department stores to subway benches to movies theaters, bed bugs have thrived, forcing entry into the most private of spaces. In *Bloodsuckers*, Real Madrid invokes these pests and the phobias precipitated by their infestation as catalysts for digressions on hospitality and the dynamics between guests and hosts. Nightly, human bodies serve as oblivious feasts for their unwanted bedmates. Barely visible but all-consuming, the parasites infiltrate body and mind in a way that can never be fully absolved, as the residue of their presence persists beyond extermination. In the words of Real Madrid, *Bloodsuckers* is an attempt to scratch the “psychosomatic itch so hard to exorcise.”

In the gallery, a garment conveyor cycles incessantly and generates a metallic rhythm. The numerals of a digital clock pass along this nervous circuit, an horological *kopfkino*. Three bedbugs, carved from wood, take form here as playground equipment, perched on spring coils. Varied in size, awkward and barbed with grips and handles, these parasites appear unable to accommodate riders. On the wall, silhouettes of fidgety bodies rendered in hand-made crochet reveal themselves within the fabric of rumpled bed sheets and pillowcases, evincing a night without sleep. These cut-outs, soft scabs, allude to bites and to healing.

In “Puppet, Poet, Bloodsucker,” a new text written on the occasion of the exhibition, Eileen Myles asks “Who are the bloodsuckers right now at this moment in 2022 in New York?” In conversation and song, Myles and their five puppets—Bedelia, Montgomery, Oscar, Casper and Crocky—discuss the answer.

Bloodsuckers is made possible in part through the support of the Fonds Cantonal d'Art Contemporain, Genève and Martina Simeti. Real Madrid wishes to thank: Annamaria e Loredana Cortesi, Kasia Fudakowski, Schokofabrik, Charlotte Dualé, Martina Simeti, Elisa Miotti, Miriam Laura Leonardi, Tomaso De Luca, Derek di Fabio, Mohamed Almusibli, Tristan Gigon.

This exhibition is organized by Daniel Merritt, Curator and Head of Residencies.

About Real Madrid

Real Madrid (RM) was founded 2015 in Geneva. RM appropriates their name from the lucrative football franchise and brands itself as a marketable counterfeit commodity. Their work has been exhibited at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich; Plymouth Rock, Zurich; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; Forde, Geneva; Auto Italia South East, London; Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris; and Quadriennale, Rome; amongst others. They received the Swiss Art Award in 2018 and were fellows of the Istituto Svizzero in Rome from 2019-2020.

Planning Your Visit

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About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, SI is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new contexts for celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. Open to the public free-of-charge, SI seeks to explore how a national perspective can foster international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design and architecture.

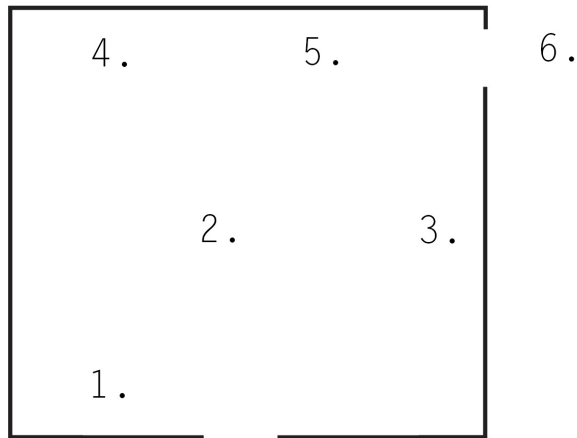
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1. *Guest*, 2022
Wood, metal, rubber, plastic
31 x 25.5 x 21.5 in.

2. *Clock tower*, 2022
Garment conveyor, vinyl stickers
213 x 79 x 29 in.

3. *Table manners, midnight banquet*, 2022
Bedsheet with crochet
75 x 82 x 2 in.

4. *Ravioli walls, tortilla carpets*, 2022
Pillowcases with crochet
60 x 17 x 2 in.

5. *Host*, 2022
Wood, metal, rubber
27.5 x 17.25 x 20 in.

6. *Ghost*, 2022
Wood, metal, plastic
20 x 33 x 24.5 in.

All works courtesy of Real Madrid