

Schinkel Pavillon HR Giger & Mire Lee

18.09.2021–02.01.2022

SEX, VIOLENCE, BIRTH, DEATH

At a time in which dystopian, near apocalyptic visions have proliferated widely, the HR Giger & Mire Lee exhibition brings together two artists whose work, saturated with an age-defying Freudian horror, explores the darkest aisles of the human body and psyche. The worlds of the late Swiss visionary HR Giger and the South Korean artist Mire Lee coalesce, transforming the Schinkel Pavillon into the site of a hypnotic interplay between sex, violence, technology, birth and death.

HR GIGER

HR Giger (1940–2014) born in Chur, Switzerland, was a painter, sculptor and designer best known for his creation of Xenomorph—the monster in the 1979 Ridley Scott's 'Alien' film—which won him an Oscar for Best Visual Effects. During a career that spanned more than five decades, Giger was a witness to rapid technological progress, the Cold War, the fast-growing destruction of the planet, the psychedelic era, sexual revolution—all of which informed his dark Surrealist Gesamtkunstwerk. This first institutional show of Giger's works in Germany presents his mythology for a nightmarish future, full of grotesque 'biomechanical' creatures, mutated fetuses, horror-esque landscapes and dark eroticism—highlighting the societal fears so deeply implanted in the artist's work and repositioning him as a late surrealist.

ATOMIC CHILDREN (5, 6, 7, 20)

Affected by his unconscious and the societal fears of his time, including chemical and biological warfare, viruses, industrialisation and technology, Giger created numerous ink drawings picturing grotesque, morphed beings that seem to have endured the poisonous conditions of an imaginary post-atomic-fallout world. Some of his earliest works: *Phantom der Oper* (1966), *Atomkinder* (1967), *Cthulu (Genius)* (1967) and *Frau mit Kind* (1967) depict phantasmagorias of humans and machines that form an indissoluble whole. The exposed spines of these creatures and the pneumatic tube systems they are connected to coalesce with Lee's Carriers. They exude attraction and provoke revulsion, as they defy the social constructs of repulsion and beauty, male and female, dead and alive, human and animal.

1 exhibited downstairs

HARKONNEN ENVIRONMENT (11)

Harkonnen Environment (1981)—the table and chairs set—was created by Giger for Alejandro Jodorowsky's unrealised film adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel 'Dune' for which artistic icons such as Salvador Dali and Mick Jagger were cast. Giger was asked to create an image of the story's villain—Baron Harkonnen, the home planet of his family, and his castle. The heavily industrial planet's once-rich natural resources are exhausted, and its environment is fouled with poisonous pollution, while the castle is a symbol of gluttony, exploitation and aggression. Harkonnen is a story of a civilisation that engulfs its inmates before swallowing and digesting them.

BIOMECHANOIDS (4, 9, 10)

With the sexual liberation on the one hand, and a sweeping social isolation from the rapid technological progress of the 20th century on the other, Giger's imagination was further fueled by this dichotomy. Inspired by Duchamp's 'Bachelor Machine' and its mechanical representation of eroticism, Giger created a series of works he referred to as 'Biomechanoids'. With scenes full of sexual symbolism, part-organic, part-industrial beings are trapped in positions within an incubator-like apparatus, as captured here in the *Biomechanoid* (1969) sculpture and the two rarely exhibited oil paintings *Hommage à S. Beckett II* and *III* (both 1968). They echo characters imagined by Samuel Beckett—who Giger personally admired: limbless, blind, and awaiting an unspecified 'end'.

Unless otherwise stated:

all HR Giger's works are Courtesy of Museum HR Giger, Gruyères
all Mire Lee's works are Courtesy of the Artist; Antenna Space, Shanghai, and Tina Kim Gallery

- 1 HR Giger, *Kofferbaby / Suitcase Baby*, 1967, Polyester
- 2 HR Giger, *Gebärmachine (2. Fassung) / Birthmachine*, 1965–66, India ink on tracing paper
- 3 HR Giger, *Gebärmachine / Birthmachine*, 1967, India ink on paper; Private Collection, Zurich
- 4 HR Giger, *Biomechanoid*, 1969, Polyester, wood and metal
- 5 HR Giger, *Phantom der Oper*, 1966, India ink on paper; Marco Witzig Collection, Zurich
- 6 HR Giger, *Cthulu (Genius) III*, 1967, India ink on paper
- 7 HR Giger, *Atomkinder*, 1967, India ink on paper; Courtesy Kunstsammlung Stadt Zürich
- 8, 13 Mire Lee, *Carriers: offsprings*, 2021, Silicone, pigmented glycerine, PVC hoses, metal plinth, peristaltic pump and other mixed media
- 9 HR Giger, *Hommage à S. Beckett II*, 1968, Oil on wood
- 10 HR Giger, *Hommage à S. Beckett III*, 1968, Oil on wood
- 11 HR Giger, *Harkonnen Environment*, 1981, Polyester, metal and rubber
- 12 Mire Lee, *Endless House: Large egg*, 2021, Concrete, pigmented glycerine; Courtesy of the Artist

BIRTHMACHINE (1, 2, 3)

The exhibition opens with Giger's iconic *Birthmachine* (1967 and 1965–66) drawings and the *Suitcase Baby* (1967) sculpture. The artist's explorations of prenatal psychology and trauma connected to his own birth are recurring motifs in his work. Here, Giger places childbirth within a political context. *Birthmachine*, with baby aviation officers holding pistols to their temples, reflects Giger's deep fears concerning the nuclear arms race that was in full swing at the time, and his anxieties related to birthing children into a world that is cruel and contaminated.

MIRE LEE

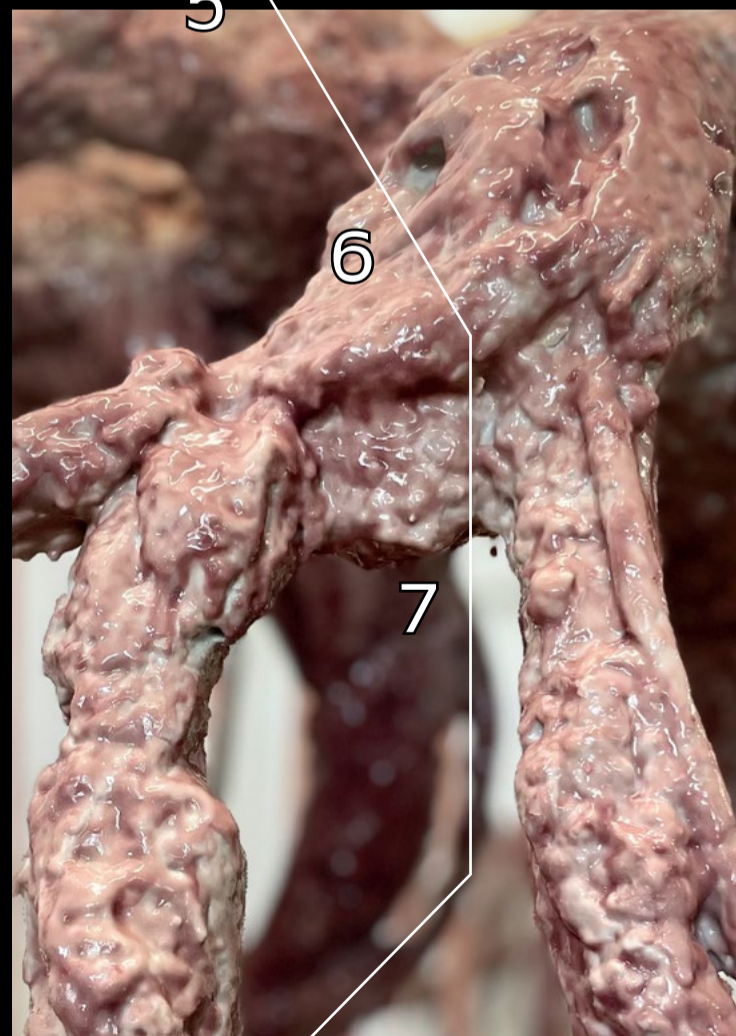
Mire Lee (b. 1988) is a Seoul-born, Amsterdam-based artist, known for her visceral kinetic sculptures and quasi-alchemical motorised installations. Her work explores the subjects of fetishes, erotic desires and anxieties of the modern world. Lee's complex arrangements and haptic structures made of silicone, latex, PVC tubes, machinery, metal and concrete resemble living organisms, dissected body parts, fleshy limbs or intestines. Her work obliterates social norms of aesthetics and eroticism: sexuality, corporeality and technology are glued together in her simultaneously seductive and repulsive mechanised forms that turn and crawl in viscous fluids.

CARRIERS (8, 13)

The main gallery space of the Schinkel Pavillon is transformed into a womb-like cell. Lee's *Carrier-offsprings* (2021)—bulbous multi-limbed sculptural creatures suspended from the ceiling—are being fed and overfilled with viscous milky liquids transmitted via tubes reminiscent of umbilical cords, that occasionally spasm and squirt. Swaying between desire and disgust, Lee's sculptures refer to Vorarephelia or, in short Vore—the yearning to completely absorb a living being, or to be consumed by it, so that both subjects return to a state of prenatal unity. At the same time, *Carriers* are presented as something that contains other things—carrying a child, carrying a disease, carrying fluids and electrons. They could therefore be seen as bodies or beings in various states of plenitude and incompleteness, fullness and hollowness, growth and decline.

LARGE EGG (12)

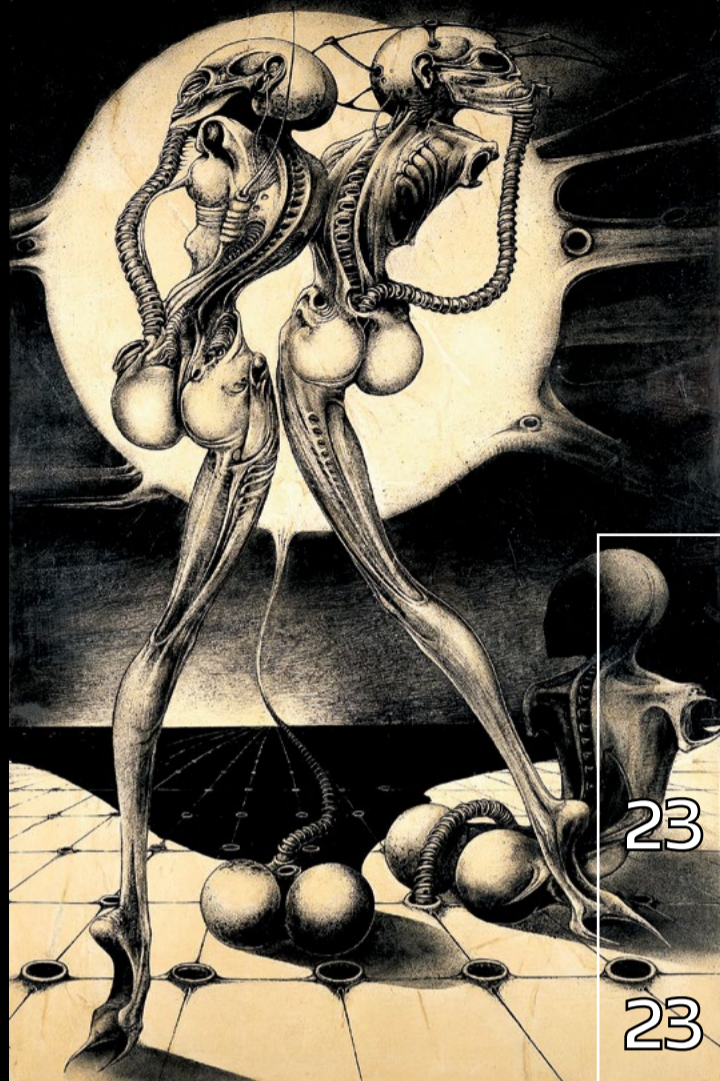
In the middle of the *Harkonnen Environment* table rests Lee's new sculpture *Endless House: Large Egg* (2021). With its fleshy, 'ripe' insides placed on a dining table, it alludes—similarly to *Carriers*—to a gory consumption of a fleshy living thing. Like an egg, the sculpture features a harder shell of concrete housing soft, vulnerable insides. The work is inspired by the story of a hentai artist, Crimson, who tells the tale of a being whose skin suddenly becomes rough with clitoris-like hypersensitivity, as if the insides were laid bare onto the outside. Within Lee's egg, embryonal, sexual and existential connotations collide.



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NECRONOM, MUTANTS, MAGUS (17, 18, 19)

In 1970 Giger began using airbrush as his main painting tool. Airbrushing techniques enabled him to find new structures and highlight certain collective forms in the architecture of the human body and apparatus. Working with airbrush eventually became automatic—enabling his subconscious to enter the canvas in a more direct way. Exhibited here, iconic *Necronom IV* (1976) is the painting that caught Ridley Scott's attention and served as a basis for the creation of Alien's Xenomorph, while *Mutants* (1967–1975) and even more so *Magus* (1976) solidify to us Giger's fascination with the occult, death and spiritual traditions.

THE LIARS (26)

The Liars (2021) is a new work in Lee's ever-growing series of curtain-like sculptures. *The Liars* is a reference to people who risk their own reputation, and at times, even their lives, through often sensational public lying. The work alludes to a form of filter between the reality and sensational illusion, challenging notions of selfhood and social acceptability. Sooner or later, the veil falls.

'ALIEN' SKETCHES AND DIARIES (23–28)

Alien sketches trace the design of the Alien creature and other special effects made for the 'Alien' film. Previously unexhibited private diaries provide a more intimate insight into Giger's artistic processes, leading to the two 'red' rooms which present some of his more explicit images of satanic eroticism.

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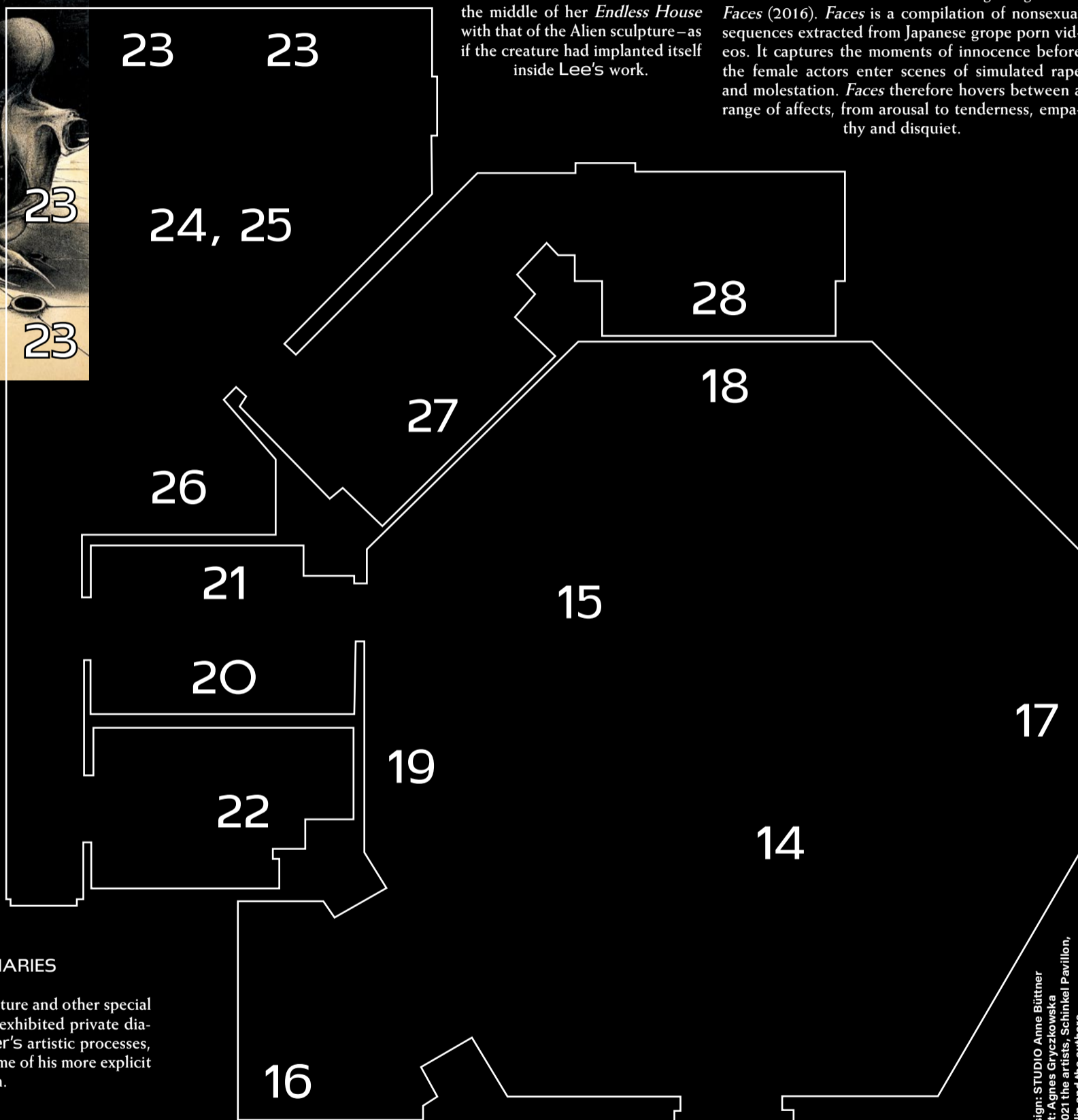
- 14 Mire Lee, *Endless House*, 2021, Concrete, pigmented silicone oil, silicone foam, wire ropes, motors, peristaltic pump and other mixed media
- 15 HR Giger, *Necronom (Alien III)*, 1990, Polyester and metal
- 16 Mire Lee, *Faces*, 2018, Single channel video fit to the vertical screen, 7min 6sec
- 17 HR Giger, *Necronom IV*, 1976, Acrylic on paper
- 18 HR Giger, *Der Magus*, 1976, Acrylic on paper
- 19 HR Giger, *Mutanten*, 1967–1975, Acrylic on paper
- 20 HR Giger, *Frau mit Kind*, 1967, India ink on paper
- 21 HR Giger, *Organic I*, 1966, India ink on paper; Marco Witzig Collection, Zurich
- 22 Mire Lee, *Untitled*, 2021, Silicone, pigmented silicone oil, stainless wire ropes, lead, motor and other mixed media
- 23 HR Giger, *Zeichnung für Alien III*, 1990, Ink and pencil on paper
- 24 HR Giger, *Untitled*, 1984–85
- 25 HR Giger, *St. Germain, Letters*, 1997–2008
- 26 Mire Lee, *The Liars*, 2021, Silicone, fishnet fabric, aluminium chains, towels
- 27 All three: HR Giger, *Untitled*, 1985, Ink and pencil on paper, Marco Witzig Collection, Zurich
- 28 HR Giger, *700 Jahre Warten*, 1991, Zincograph

ENDLESS HOUSE (14)

The octagon-shaped plinth created by Lee turns into a stage for a demonic, violently sexy love story between Lee's new animatronic work *Endless House* (2021) and Giger's iconic *Necronom (Alien)* (1990) sculpture. Lee's sculpture is inspired by Frederick Kiesler's *Endless House*—an unrealised architectural project of a biomorphic, continuous space, which Kiesler saw as 'endless like the human body—there is no beginning and no end'. The idea of body being an endless house becomes something more sombre in the case of Lee's sculpture. Her *Endless House* is a metaphor for a fear of entrapment: an entrapment of a body that is endlessly abused. It also refers to a type of an emotional entrapment in relation to Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Lee's sculptural 'cell' is protruded with holes—exposing the fragility and vulnerability of the slime smeared insides that rotate hypnotically. People who suffer from BPD are said to have no 'outer shell', no 'house' for their emotions, and may find it hard to distinguish between the self and the world. Here, Lee in a homage-like gesture, matches the colour of the gooey 'slime' and 'intestines' that turn in the middle of her *Endless House* with that of the Alien sculpture—as if the creature had implanted itself inside Lee's work.

FACES (16)

While staying in Paris in 2015, Lee was faced with city lockdowns following the Bataclan attacks. The media coverage of the terrorist attacks and grope porn—a genre of pornography in which unsuspecting young women are assaulted on public transport led to the creation of Lee's moving image work *Faces* (2016). *Faces* is a compilation of nonsexual sequences extracted from Japanese grope porn videos. It captures the moments of innocence before the female actors enter scenes of simulated rape and molestation. *Faces* therefore hovers between a range of affects, from arousal to tenderness, empathy and disquiet.



TRAPPED IN ENDLESS LOOPS (22)

Lee's new *Untitled* (2021) kinetic work positioned in the small, dungeon-like room, reuses parts of Lee's older sculpture *Ophelia*. Lee often recycles used and tarnished materials to create her often 'pitiful' beings, as the artist calls them. Hopelessness and power, vulnerability and resilience, organic and machine unite within a cycle of constant metamorphosis as her *Untitled* sculpture incessantly wriggles on the floor in endless loops.

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