

Katfish

by Ellen Gallagher

Ellen Gallagher's layered painting practice encompasses collage, print, film, and sculptural relief. *Katfish* (2021) is bounded by two silkscreens that enmesh the spaces of Shimmer and Akwa Ibom. The images are frames from *Krazy Kat* (1913-1944), a comic strip by George Herriman (b. 1880 in Louisiana - d. 1944 in Los Angeles). In the comic, Ignatz the mouse detests Krazy Kat, a polymorphous and polyvoiced cat. Yet Krazy Kat loves Ignatz and sees the mouse's violence as affection. Herriman's *Krazy Kat* has often been described as a disorienting hallucination or dream where image, language, and identity are suspended, layered, and obscured. *Krazy Kat*'s gender and race change between the frames, as does the scenery and backdrop of the comic strip.

In the first depiction of *Katfish* (2021), Ignatz is throwing a brick at the back of *Krazy Kat*'s head, whose head bubbles with hearts on impact, a show of unconditional love and affection. In the second depiction, *Katfish* (the water cousin of *Krazy Kat*) gazes up questioningly as a bound and blindfolded *Krazy Kat* sinks slowly underwater, having been thrown from a ship by Ignatz and his crew. Returning to the brick thrown from Ignatz's paw, this is the brick of violent standardisation, of repressive categorisation, but mistaken by *Krazy Kat* as a "missile of love". In response to *Krazy Kat*'s enchanting and relentless love, a mid-Atlantic bestiary of far-flung kin are materialised to reimagine what and where home can be.

Katfish (2021) is silkscreened to our walls with a repeating pattern. There is a pulse to the process: screen, next, screen, next, screen. A movement of hypnotic layering, lapping waves that cross over thresholds like tidal flows into a river, those watery layers that touch everything. The artwork envelopes us, the audience, and thus we are submerged in it. By doing so, Gallagher locates us with the artwork in a present shared history where our "bricks", those inherited destructive social constructions, are inescapable and must be dismantled. This is not exempt from history but charged with a reimagining of political and familial alliances.

Chapter 4 of *World as Lover, World as Self* by Ellen Gallagher and Dora Economou

Curated by Shimmer, Rotterdam and Akwa Ibom, Athens

For the final chapter of *World as Lover, World as Self*, Shimmer and Akwa Ibom proudly presents *Katfish* by Ellen Gallagher and *Sun Rise Sun Set* by Dora Economou.

3 September 2021 until 15 March 2022, Rotterdam

15 September 2021 until 15 November 2021, Athens

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1965, ELLEN GALLAGHER lives and works between Rotterdam, Netherlands and New York, United States of America. Gallagher builds intricate, multi-layered works that pivot between the natural world, mythology and history. Her process involves undoing and reforming trains of thought, often over long periods of time and across linked bodies of works. Over a highly multifaceted career, Gallagher's work has been united by what she calls a 'jitter', an intellectual approach in which aesthetic possibilities are shook loose from seismic cracks beneath the surface of cultural entities normally thought to be unshakable and impermeable. Encompassing painting, drawing, collage and celluloid based projections that fuse technique and material into syncretic form, her arresting compositions are a process of recovery and reconstitution through the accumulation and erasure of media, which results in palimpsestic and topographic surfaces that are often carved, inlaid, mounted, printed, blotted and inscribed. Gallagher's work is included in many major international museum collections, including MoMA, New York; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; MCA Chicago; MOCA, Los Angeles; Philadelphia Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

Sun Rises Sun Sets

by Dora Economou

At Shimmer, Athenian artist Dora Economou projects a collection of sunrise and sunset slides, low on Shimmer's wall. A wall painting of sorts, *Sun Rises Sun Sets* echos the sun as it rises and sets across the Rotterdam port that can be seen beyond our windows. The metronome-like sound of the slide clicking to a new image becomes Shimmer's clock. While at the same time, the click of the slides projector meets the rhythmic beat of the silkscreen on the wall, rise, next, set, next, set, next. *Sun Rises and Sun Sets* encourages us, the audience, to get on to the ground, lying or sitting, to see the work. Under us, is a floor painting made of plastic sheeting with large painted stripes of coloured paint. We find ourselves on the imprint of Economou's work left in Athens, made on the floor of Akwa Ibom, where she has made gigantic pillows that envelope and embrace the audience completely. But at Shimmer, the painting that once protected the Akwa Ibom's floor now is a base for two origami sunsets and sunrises. The artworks are made with mountain and valley folds, making them interconnected and interchangeable. Lit up by the projected light the works radiate and dim at dusk and at dawn.

Sun Rises Sun Sets is an ongoing series of photographs, slides, drawings, sculptures, and a book that Economou has worked on since the spring of 2020 on the volcanic island of Nisyros. *Sun Rises Sun Sets* is connected to her father who gave Economou the analogue camera that she uses in this work. Purchasing the camera before Economou's birth, her father was an avid photographer of sunsets and rises often the most difficult to capture. In 2020, on Nisyros, the artist used the same camera to collect the sun images marking the days like a secondary clock and creating an unlikely taxonomy that defamiliarised this romantic trope and re-invigorated it in such a way that helped us "relinquish our separateness."

DORA ECONOMOU was born in Athens in 1974, where she lives and works. She is a graduate of the Athens School of Fine Arts and Pratt Institute, New York. She works on sculptures, photography and staged sketches of props and men. She is concerned with materials, their inherent capacities, their metamorphosis when paired in distinct contexts, their relationships with found text and image. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including at Radio Athènes; Athens Municipality Art Centre; National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST); Onassis Foundation Cultural Centre; DESTE Foundation; The Breeder; 2nd & 3rd Athens Biennale; Gazonrouge, Athens; Palimpsesti, San Vito al Tagliamento; Transmission, Glasgow; Artspace, Sydney; 1st Saint-Tropez Cultural Summer. She is represented by RIBOT Arte Contemporanea, Milan; and Françoise Heitsch, Munich.

Inspired by environmental activist and Buddhist philosopher Joanna Macy, **WORLD AS LOVER, WORLD AS SELF** turns to contemporary art to help us “relinquish our separateness” and take account of the “residue” of the world that we think we know. Our program does this through the concept of ‘defamiliarisation’ as a means to “turn the familiar strange” to redefine the Self and our subsequent community. Defamiliarisation, or aesthetic distance, is a literary and artistic technique coined by Russian formalists during the 1918 flu pandemic. According to the formalists, the method uses language in a way that ordinary objects are made to be reconsidered, that what is in front of us might surpass our assumptive narratives. It is a process of transformation through language to change perception. It is urgent. How can bodies, technologies and modes be taken outside of predefined cultural presumptions to de-categorise? To shapeshift, to morph, to glimmer, to shimmer. In this program, we estrange not to create ‘other’ but to rethink the community radically, to engage with the *World as Lover and as Self*.

Over more than a year, Shimmer has curated exhibition chapters by artist Magali Reus, Harm van den Dorpel, Geo Wyeth and now Ellen Gallagher and Dora Economou, which fade in and out of each other. We see the chapters crossing over as similar to the crossfade in film or music as a format. The artworks will intermingle, creating entangled relationships and networks of associations. Our approach is also the basis of our relationship with Akwa Ibom that approaches the exhibition as the chapters in a book to give space to experimental means of reception and consuming the afterlife of artworks.

SHIMMER is a Rotterdam-based curatorial studio established by Eloise Sweetman and Jason Hendrik Hansma in 2017. Shimmer is influenced by ‘Shimmer, when all you love is being trashed’, the talk by anthropologist and feminist theorist Deborah Bird Rose. Her learning pushes us to be humbled to pay attention and listen. In this way, we hope the artworks, artists, audiences, and materials gather and stretch across and over time. Alongside our expanded exhibitions are our events program *Sunday Mornings with*, as well as an informal online reading aloud program *Across The Way with* and an online mixtape *On The Waves with*. In this way, Shimmer moves into both the personal and the public space.

AKWA IBOM is a non-profit exhibition space (est. 2019) conceived in the logic of a book, wanting to explore the extended lifespan of exhibitions by focusing on alternative photographic documentation and mediation methods through text. Concerning the challenges of opacity and format on translation, Akwa Ibom is interested in shows that bring together works from disparate disciplines and geographical and historical contexts to reveal shared sensibilities and forge new narratives.

Born out of an ongoing collaboration between Otobong Nkanga and Maya Tounta in link to Nkanga’s work *Carved to Flow*, Akwa Ibom is one of many endeavours partially supported by the work that Nkanga conceived as a self-sustaining support structure in 2017. Akwa Ibom is named after the state where Nkanga’s patrimonial land is located in Southern Nigeria, which is also the basis for the *Carved To Flow Foundation* established by Nkanga in 2018. The name deliberately references the entanglement of geographies involved in the conception and formation of the space in central Athens.

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Currently open by appointment

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