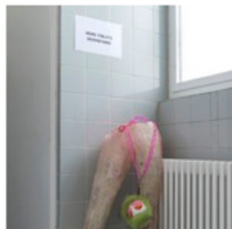
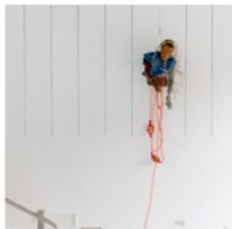
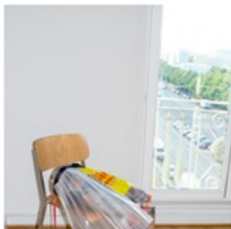
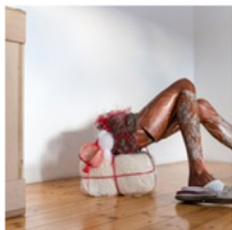
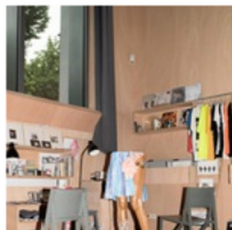


# Contemporary Art Writing Daily

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Tuesday, August 30, 2016

## Amy Lien, Enzo Camacho at various locations



- 1** Galerie Buchholz (first floor back hallway)  
Fasanenstraße 30  
Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-6pm  
Contact: [post@galeriebuchholz.de](mailto:post@galeriebuchholz.de)
- 2** Mathew Gallery (window display)  
Schaperstraße 12  
Viewable 24 hours  
Contact: [info@mathew-gal.de](mailto:info@mathew-gal.de)
- 3** TRUST LTD Office  
Kluckstraße 25  
Open by appointment  
Contact: [soraya@trustlimited.eu](mailto:soraya@trustlimited.eu)
- 6** Schinkel Pavillon (upper level bathroom)  
Oberwallstraße 1  
Thursday-Sunday, 12-6pm  
Contact: [info@schinkelpavillon.de](mailto:info@schinkelpavillon.de)
- 7** Image Movement  
Oranienburger Straße 18  
Monday-Saturday, 11am-7pm  
Contact: [info@imagemovement.de](mailto:info@imagemovement.de)
- 8** Lars Friedrich's Apartment  
Rosa-Luxemburg-Straße 22  
Open by appointment  
Contact: [mail@larsfriedrich.net](mailto:mail@larsfriedrich.net)



## Double Speak

by Levi Easterbrooks

The Manananggal is a mythological monster from the Philippines. She is a self-segmenting viscera-sucker. During the day, she appears as a human woman. Some find her to be exceptionally attractive. Though her appearance may be alluring, she detests groups and, when forced to interact, her behavior is erratic and anti-social. She plays marginality strategically. People suspect there might be something wrong with her though they find it difficult to describe. She is constantly under suspicion, suspected of misdeeds without proof.

In the night, she retreats beneath beds, inside closets, or into a density of forest. Within these spaces, the Manananggal stashes her lower-half after her body splits at the waist. In this splitting, her torso raises up from her middle, now a cleaved stump, with the flap of huge wings that sprout from skin dabbed with noxious oils. As her torso parts from its waist, the Manananggal's entrails hang down from her ruptured abdomen. Her intestines and torn uterus trail her body like the long proboscis which emerges from between her teeth. She takes off in flight to parasitize sleeping humans, extracting their internal organs, viscera, and unborn fetuses with her insectile straw. The Manananggal's own uterus is ripped to shreds and rendered useless after her splitting. She must cannibalize her own family as a rite of passage.<sup>1</sup>

The Manananggal is just one type of "aswang," a Filipino term used to designate a slew of shape-shifting monsters. Other creatures that fall under this designation are witches, were-beasts, bloodsuckers, and corpse eaters.<sup>2</sup> Manananggal, the self-segmenting viscera sucker, attempts to pass as human in order to lodge itself within the social world of non-aswang. In passing as human, the Manananggal camouflages herself within the systems of social and spatial movement that allow her unchallenged persistence. She must partially assimilate to the human world in order to become the parasite of its collective viscera. The Manananggal speaks as both human and aswang. Still, she is the target of vicious rumors. She scrapes by under the suspicious gaze of misogynists and xenophobes that force together her gendered appearance and potential malignance. The Manananggal frequently appears as a troubled wife, a solitary grandmother, or a scheming mistress: roles that bind back to the family which she transgresses.<sup>3</sup>

Her dispersion in halves and covert mobility are repressed in the day as she is held under duress by the conduct expected of human women. These expectations set the standard against which her fluidity and double speech are marked as deviant. She is both the human woman of the day and

the Manananggal of night, both the legs and the torso, always capable of inhabiting conflicting roles simultaneously so that she may survive.

The Manananggal is not only a mythologized monster contoured by misogynistic suspicion and violence. She is also the folkloric figuration of historical violence from a patriarchal colonizing force comprised of Spanish missionaries towards the matriarchal dominance of women shamans in indigenous Filipino society.<sup>4</sup> Though the Manananggal, or "viscera-sucker" more broadly, is of variant gender identities in all of its recorded manifestations, the Manananggal is most often feminized and referred to as "she."<sup>5</sup> The feminization of Manananggal came to historical prominence in the lowland areas of the Philippine archipelago that were most intensely christianized by Spanish colonial forces between the early sixteenth and late nineteenth century. This colonial violence, which included executions and forced conversions under torture, enacted through the missionizing activities of Spanish priests, sought to eradicate the socio-political power and sexual agency of native women in religious leadership.<sup>6</sup> The feminized Manananggal may have been created as a poisoned double of these women. Scholar Herminia Meñez Coben proposes that this was meant to sow seeds of distrust, distancing indigenous people of the archipelago from the pre-colonial ubiquity of women in power. She also suggests that Manananggal's uterus-in-shreds and her predatory harvesting of human fetuses were strategic reversals of shamans' roles as healers and midwives.<sup>7</sup> This symbolic reversal was meant to discredit these women and their pivotal role within society to pave the way for a patriarchal society less at odds with the imposition of Spanish rule. Strong parallels can be found in the simultaneous persecution of women in Europe practicing midwifery and other healing techniques as witches. These witch hunts vilified women, the elderly, and working people that posed a threat to the development of nascent capitalism.<sup>8</sup> The production of the gendered Manananggal is shot through by these processes. While the Manananggal's capacities may have formed in the *longue durée* of European colonial misogyny, her parasitism, bifurcation, and inhuman mobility are tools through which she can push back to find holes and traps through which she can pass and ensnare others.

These histories and methods perforate Manananggal's global movement between Southeast Asia, Asia, Europe, and North America in the art of Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho. In the Summer of 2016, Lien & Camacho produced an artwork titled *Manananggal has appeared in Berlin*. It consisted of sculptures of Manananggal's legs and torso that split across Berlin galleries, apartments, and stores. This was the first time that the artists presented Manananggal. Their use of the figure is ongoing.

Like the Manananggal of myth, the Manananggal of their artwork was the target of rumors and spread through gossip. The presence of Lien & Camacho's multiple Manananggals was not formally announced by the majority of venues where the sculptures were installed. Press details only circulated through the artists' email contact list and a website they created with the blogging service Tumblr. Institutionally validated information was scarce. Suspicions and doubts undermine the Manananggal when she attempts to move through the human world. Lien & Camacho's framing of her Berlin appearance played with this history of inquisition. *Who is she? Where does she come from? She's not from here, is she? What is she hiding?* The press release answered these questions only partially, while implicating the reader in the violation of Manananggal through their desire for such information. "Trail her with your suspicion, you misogynistic-xenophobic cop brain."<sup>9</sup>

Lien & Camacho's Tumblr provided necessary contextualization for a work that would intentionally forego types of didactic disclosure expected of a gallery context. The first entry made on the site was the press release. The text was posted alongside a Google map of Berlin that marked each location of the sculptures, listing contact information below hours of access. This was the most didactic of the texts and images Lien & Camacho aggregated to contextualize the Manananggal. The materials did not say much about *what* though they did tell *where*. Following the map, fan-made drawings of Manananggal sourced online were posted alongside photographs that documented the construction of Lien & Camacho's sculptures and their subsequent installations. All of this information was presented in a digitally distributable format within the informal space of a personal blog, held apart from the physical manifestations of the artwork with more predictable siting and duration.

The Manananggal sculptures were not typical mannequins simply cut in half at the waist. They were sliced and bent at joints, connected by gaudy metal brackets and strung through with rope and fibers. A textile circulatory system kept them together in pieces. Though they were not meant to appear as convincing simulations of the creature in the flesh, they had more "life" than plastic clothing models altered only by their shifting outfits. Still, Lien & Camacho's sculptures did function like most mannequins in that they became display systems for a particular kind of fashion. The clothing, like the mannequins themselves, was fragmented and broken, oscillating between ornament, garment, and intervention into the skin of these plastic figures. Bootleg designer charms of fluffy rabbits and cartoon creatures hung from the wrists and waists of these Manananggals. Designer patent leather bucket hats and modded cheap plastic sandals accented legs

and torsos directly bedazzled with pearls or covered in floral patterns. On the leg of one Manananggal, the YSL logo of the fashion label Yves Saint Laurent was détourned to read "ESL", for "English as a Second Language." Like the artists' own movements between Manila, New York, Berlin, and other sites of temporary residence, the appearance of such accessories and translated designer fashions was enabled by a globalized exchange of art and other aesthetic commodities that move with networked velocity between divergent locales. The same forces that propel Lien & Camacho's travel between Manila and Berlin, as well as the mirrored movements of their Manananggal, opened a comparative encounter meant to prod the transnational circulation of commodities and their variant and location dependent translations.<sup>10</sup> These translations appear in spaces of fracture that include former colonies and trade hubs, fragmented garments, and Manananggal's self-segmenting body. Stuart Hall suggests that globalization ruptures the systems of representation that undergird cultural identities and their attendant communities, especially when linked to ethnicity.<sup>11</sup> As a result, it is increasingly difficult to reduce identity to geographical origin and cultural systems that are firmly rooted in a singular place. Manananggal's split form and the translations she embodies in Lien & Camacho's usage are indicative of this fracture, "a crack in our community," that disallows her reduction to a single site or source of meaning.<sup>12</sup> Her nuance can not be interpreted with recourse to her Filipino origins alone. She is globally diffuse.

Though diffuse, she is not unrepresentable or anonymous. The mannequins supporting Lien & Camacho's Frankensteinian fashions lacked the heads they might have been sold with. 3D printed visages, ambiguous yet indiscernibly distinct, took their place. Despite the superficial anonymity of these faces, Lien & Camacho's Manananggals were socially specific. Much like a semiotics of cool and community marking elaborated through self-modified garments, Manananggal spoke knowingly to its sites of occupation, parasitizing their codes to perform her double speak.

Two years prior to *Manananggal has appeared in Berlin*, Lien & Camacho authored an unpublished essay titled *Network Cannibalism and its Emotional-Dysfunctional Categories* in 2014. The essay attempted to unpack a relatively recent phenomena in "critical" art practices stemming from a melancholic and disenchanting engagement with the efficacy of critique generated within the sphere of art. It attempted to map the fallout from this malaise along a New York-Cologne-Frankfurt-Berlin art axis. The sorts of critical practice that artists within the scenes in question moved against were those that dealt, in a lineage of institutional critique, with lines of politicized and supposedly radical inquiry that would always be recuperated by the art market and the

institutions targeted.<sup>13</sup> Though this might not have meant a total invalidation of such a pluriform methodology, it voided its potency as a subversion of the limits of institutional Euro-American art.

The artists marshalled in *Network Cannibalism* swing towards modes of art practice that implicate the artist in the formulation of critique, collapsing the distance between themselves and institutions of art as they manifest in one's social milieu and the art market that enfolds it.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, the most hyperbolic of which may be the artist Merlin Carpenter, these lines of critique rebuke, lament, and map, but ultimately reaffirm, one's pre-existing network of artists and art workers. In his essay *The Tail that Wags the Dog*, Carpenter suggests a way out of the supposed crisis of art criticism and critique when he writes, "If you criticised your friends you would be implicated. Self-criticism then maybe starts with your friends."<sup>15</sup> According to Lien & Camacho, art practices turning towards such a self-involved critique can be grouped through their relation to the emotional turbulence of rage, depression, heartbreak, and frigidity. These practices incite distress as they simultaneously reinforce the pre-existing contours of largely white art scenes, with all their racialized exclusions at the level of both participants and content. An insular circle of friends is fortified by self-reference. The dialogue is never broken between a scene and itself. But what might the figure of the parasite offer as a mode of intervention in this self-sustaining reprocessing of the familiar?

In *The Parasite*, Michel Serres writes that, "The parasite has placed itself in the most profitable positions, at the intersection of relations. The elementary link of [her] individual activity was to relate to a relation; its performances are far better in spots where several relations cross or meet."<sup>16</sup> Serres' parasite is also an interruption in these intersecting relations, an agent of disruptive noise that finds detours out of a consolidated system.<sup>17</sup> Lien & Camacho's Manananggal was a parasite twice over: both as a parasitic viscera-leaching creature of folklore and as an artwork that preyed on a nexus of sites throughout the Berlin contemporary art world. Manananggal settled in with hosts across Berlin that were provisional and convenient in their appearance and underlying social connection to the artists. She was installed in the apartments of friends Yuki Kimura & Q Takeki Maeda, and of the gallerist Lars Friedrich. She also found space in the offices of Galerie Buchholz and Texte Zur Kunst, the basement of Schinkel Pavillon, and the storage closet of a "Japanese & international avant garde" boutique called OUKAN. Manananggal made other appearances, all in locations that friends had made available to them. In the credit line following each installation image of Lien &

Camacho's individual Manananggals, the specific site was listed in full. In compiling these sites through image captions and the map that marked each location across Berlin, *Manananggal has appeared in Berlin* created a social map extending between Lien & Camacho's own network of peers. Though this might sound like the setup for a network cannibalistic practice, Lien & Camacho parroted these forms as double agents, with their stylish parasite occupying an "intersection of relations" with an eye towards exceeding its limits. She would not be satisfied with the self-confirming and exclusionary normalization of network affirmation.

When Manananggal appeared in Berlin, the sculptures bore resemblance to the eclectic effigy-like figuration employing the mannequin made so visible in the work of Isa Genzken. The artists Ajay Kurian and Stewart Uoo, also represented by Lien & Camacho's New York gallery, 47 Canal, both produce cybernetically torqued, fashion conscious, and materially junky mannequin figures formally similar to Lien & Camacho's Manananggals. Might their cyborg figures be her friends? The effigial sculptures of Jimmie Durham and their identity-parodic engagement with an art practice frequently labeled "indigenous" also come to mind. These were some of Manananggal's art-social "ins." Like the Manananggal of myth, these precedents allowed her to partially assimilate to the social networks, allusions to art history, and systems of conduct expected by the zones of her inhabitation.

Lien & Camacho's Manananggal formally assimilated, but this assimilation was as a parasite who dragged something "external" into the spaces of insiders. On the infringement of this generalized dichotomy, Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "Any attempts at blurring the dividing line between outsider and insider would justifiably provoke anxiety, if not anger. Territorial rights are not being respected here. Violations of boundaries have always led to displacement, for the in-between zones are the shifting grounds on which the (doubly) exiled walk, Not You/like You."<sup>18</sup> Like you but not you. The anxiety produced here is not that generated by the network cannibal, whose social mapping obsessions already generate such negative affect. It is an anxiety that bubbles up in those who police what can and cannot be integrated into their sphere of art by endlessly fortifying the boundaries of the same. Manananggal's intrusion through parasitic methods produced a discursive crack, where signs legible on both sides of a geo-cultural divide spilled in and pooled together in a new knot of references unique to this specific violation of boundaries. Lien & Camacho became the funnel through which Filipino and other globally dispersed references flooded the center; the center of a Berlin art world in which this content remains largely unfamiliar.

In the essay *Polytropic Philippine: Intimating the*



*World in Pieces*, art historian Patrick Flores writes on the geographically mobile cross-referentiality of the Philippine. Removed from the body of the essay, split from its "legs," this could also elucidate the drive at the heart of Lien & Camacho's Manananggal:

*The volatile device they smuggle in, at once plaything and terrorist prop, may well be the bomb of deterritorialisation, a potential threat that sits quietly on the fireplace or the carpet or close to a cat, finally replacing identity and homeliness with intimation [...] It may well also be an incendiary imminence, the postcolonial polytrope of immanent critique, that proverbial blast from the past, nothing less than the horror and catastrophe as well as the thrill and fearlessness of belonging in a world that refuses the hospitality, migrancy, and rights of others whenever the latter threaten the privileges of settlement.*<sup>19</sup>

Flores characterizes the "Philippine" as a condition of geographical mobility and dispersion. The polytropic Philippine's capacity for dynamic movement and multi-locational occupation is realized by its skills in imitation, its capability for impersonation without total assimilation.<sup>20</sup> Because of this, the polytropic Philippine passes without harm into zones that might reject something or someone whose foreign otherness is flagged immediately and deemed too great a threat to bordered geo-cultural stasis. Manananggal, the "bomb of deterritorialization," the quiet threat, was snuck into spaces across Berlin by Lien & Camacho, its intimations of its knowing participation in German art letting it settle into privileged place. While it passed in the offices of Galerie Buchholz or Lars Friedrich's apartment, diasporic networking scattered Manananggal across media and continents. This is what situates the Manananggal as the figure through which a postcolonial inflection of immanent critique can be enacted. If the most basic methodological drive of immanent critique is to dialectically expose a contradiction from within a given system towards emancipatory ends, then Manananggal did so in her art world infiltration that brought the referential edges of the spaces she inhabited into relief.<sup>21</sup> Lien & Camacho's Manananggal can not be fully explicated on the terms of the spaces that she parasitized. The "outside" needs to be brought inside to comprehend the contextual borders and contours of the latter.

The Manananggal gives a singular name to the plural histories and social forms that pass through her. Film scholar Bliss Cua Lim suggests that, "The aswang remains monstrous and suggestively impure because the discrepant historical moments

and interpretive communities evoked by aswang call attention to the selvedges, fissures, repurposings, and adaptations that are stereoscoped into this never-singular figure, carrying with them the index of multiple incompatible worlds, historical periods, and nonhistorical temporalities."<sup>22</sup> The Manananggal is monstrous in the discordance internal to her. Combatting histories, temporalities, cultures, and politics intersect in her split body. It was this referential monstrosity that slid without great alarm into Berlin. This was only compounded by Lien & Camacho's additive circulation and translation of the figure. The covert passing of such chaos as imitated Berlin art normalcy, allowed *Manananggal has appeared in Berlin* to initiate a silent and prolonged detonation of the polytropic Philippine's critique.

In folklore, the Manananggal will die if she cannot reconnect with her waist before the sun rises. Salt, garlic, or ashes may be applied to the severed flesh to prevent reattachment if one stumbles across her disconnected lower-half. Her splitting leaves her vulnerable. When the Manananggal's sculptural legs and torsos were placed into the homes and offices of others for her 2016 exhibition, she entered their care. Those who became Manananggal's hosts, knowingly or not, preserved her body to enable her persistence as a parasite. Supposedly, a Manananggal can be identified by day if you are able to discern your own image inverted in the pupils of her eyes.<sup>23</sup> You will have to be close...friendly.

## Endnotes

- (1) Herminia Meñez Coben, "The Viscera-Sucker and the Politics of Gender", in *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996), 86-91.
- (2) Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 97.
- (3) Maximo D. Ramos, "Viscera Sucker Legends", in *The Aswang Complex in Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City, Philippines: Phoenix Publishing House, 1998), 43-67.

- (4) Herminia Meñez Coben, "The Viscera-Sucker and the Politics of Gender", in *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996), 86-87.
- (5) Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho, Manananggal has appeared in Berlin (press release), 2016, <http://manananggalinberlin.tumblr.com/post/147376328727/manananggal-has-appeared-in-berlin>.
- (6) Herminia Meñez Coben, "The Viscera-Sucker and the Politics of Gender", in *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996), 86-87. Ibid., 89-91.
- (7) Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2009), 133-143.
- (8) Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho, Manananggal has appeared in Berlin (press release), 2016, <http://manananggalinberlin.tumblr.com/post/147376328727/manananggal-has-appeared-in-berlin>.
- (9) Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho, *Artists' text in People, Money, Ghosts (Movement as Metaphor)* (Bangkok: James H.W. Thompson Foundation, 2017), 62.
- (10) Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2017), 109.
- (11) Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho, Manananggal has appeared in Berlin (press release), 2016, <http://manananggalinberlin.tumblr.com/post/147376328727/manananggal-has-appeared-in-berlin>.  
Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho, *Network Cannibalism and its Emotional-Dysfunctional Categories* (Unpublished, 2014), 3.
- (12) Some of the case studies the essay provides are the artists Merlin Carpenter, Jana Euler, Michael Krebber, David Lieske & Mathew Gallery, the blog Jerry Magoo, and the gallery Reena Spaulings.
- (13) Merlin Carpenter, *The Tail that Wags the Dog*, 2008, <http://www.merlincarpenter.com/tail.htm>.
- (14) Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 43. Ibid., 11-14.

(15) Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red* (New York City: Routledge Publishing, 1991), 70.

(16) Patrick Flores, "Polytropic Philippine: Intimating the World in Pieces", *Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions: Connectivities and World-Making* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 65, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13wv81.6](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13wv81.6).

(17) *Ibid.*, 58.

(18) Robert J. Antonio, "Immanent Critique as the Core of Critical Theory: Its Origins and Developments in Hegel, Marx and Contemporary Thought," in *The British Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 32, No. 3, 1981), 338, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/589281>.

(19) Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 144.

(20) Herminia Meñez Coben, "The Viscera-Sucker and the Politics of Gender", in *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996), 90.



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5:06 AM - 15 Jul 2016



*Manananggal*, 2016

Matthew Gallery, Berlin

installation view





Amy Lien, Enzo Camacho at various locations  
On view at Schinkel Pavillon [top half] and Daniel Buchholz  
[bottom half]









*Manananggal*, 2016

Image Movement, Berlin

installation view



DEC  
13

## The Movement of Manananggal: Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho with Levi Easterbrooks

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Invited by Cici Wu



Amy Lien, Enzo Camacho at various locations

On view at Yuki Kimura & Q Takeki Maeda's apartment [top half]  
and Texte Zur Kunst office [bottom half]



Amy Lien, Enzo Camacho at various locations  
On view at TRUST LTD office [top half] and Schinkel Pavillon  
[bottom half]

## Thought Experiment II

by Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho

She is known as the *al dente* curator. This is because she possesses a singular talent for spotting and framing an emerging artist, an ability to squeeze them into that fresh space where power and vanguardism intersect. You feel it as much as you see it, this buzzy public arena where sexy students, hardened gallerists, slippery curators, trendy intellectuals, hungry artists, anxious critics, eccentric collectors and clueless bystanders converge and knock heads over glasses of Sancerre under the too-bright lights of an opening. This is the space for new outfits and chewy conversation. It's what keeps this scene sprightly and delicious.

For the last few years she has been having a recurring dream. In the dream she is watching a woman with a face like a porcelain triangle, with an almost translucent white glaze of a complexion, large eyes which are bright without sharpness, a thin nose and lips spread in an unconscious half smile. This woman spends all her energy maintaining the exquisite standards of her class, does so unconsciously, and with only the vaguest curiosity of what lies outside of its parameters. The demands on her life as it stands consume all her attentions. Although the demands never seem to inscribe themselves upon her so much as they are serviced within. The hair on her head seems to spring out of luxurious thoughts, instead of being styled at an expensive salon. She has always worked outside a conception of competition, because she has always thought of herself as incomparable.

One day, the woman goes to lunch at the newly opened restaurant of her grown son's friend. The son's friend is an ambitious upstart from the impoverished South. The son's friend eyes her from the shadows of the open kitchen. She orders. The son's friend whisks something in a pan. Her plate arrives and when she lifts a morsel of food into her mouth, something radical happens. One plane of this bite is burning and seared, while the underbelly is almost raw and yields to a primitive sensation of mud. The two sides meet at a crackling juncture. An herbal latticework reflecting a childhood memory is underscored by something ash-like and unknown, a spurt of gel. Something anachronistic on her tongue is thrust into the future while something in her throat weeps and shudders. Her body splinters. The woman loses her mind. Very shortly afterwards, the woman has left her husband and family, leapt into her son's friend's tanned, working class arms, and dropped all her clothes to the ground. The woman and her son's friend also drop to the ground and roll around in the fresh, raw soil of the earth.

The dream is so vivid that it begins to intervene in rare moments of daytime reverie. The truth of the dream begins to seep in. This porcelain lady is her contemporary art museum. The radical rupturing of this porcelain lady is her

job. She is here to shake up the privileged elite with the thrill of sensory manipulation. The worst part of this dream however, what makes it more of a tiring nightmare, is that after every eruption, the porcelain lady reverts back to her clean, impenetrable self.

*Working in art is a struggle. It's a collaboration. You have to really believe in what you are doing. You have to be committed. You build lifelong friendships. Whatever we do in making art lasts a lifetime. Those bonds you have with the people you work with are very important, whether they are with colleagues in the field, or galleries you work with, or artists, or... it's very important early on to realize that, hopefully, life is long, and that you have to have some ethical standards as to the way you work.*

She has known Foundation from a while ago, around the early 80s. The first time they met she was working under the tutelage of a quite legendary Bavarian museum director. They were hanging an abstract painting exhibition of a famed Soviet defector when Foundation walked into the gallery swaddled in a coterie of older men: a gallerist, an art historian, and the artist himself. Her immediate thought was that Foundation and the artist were having an affair. Artistic European men had for centuries been inspired by Foundation's kind of sloppy beauty. She had a body that seemed to suck volume from the space around it, paired with the wide-eyed vacancy of expression of a twenty-something-year-old spoiled immensely beyond her self-knowledge.

Foundation was the heiress of a pharmaceutical empire which, having profited off of Europe's pain and suffering for nearly a century, was rapidly intervening in the rest of the world. Foundation owned a quarter of the paintings in the exhibit. The gallerist who had sold Foundation the paintings rested one hand gently on her shoulder, while delineating with his other hand a chronology of her purchases to the young art historian who stood on her other side, deferentially a pace or two behind the artist. In this configuration, Foundation struck the curator as looking very much like a benevolent Greek goddess around whose altar these serious men had gathered to study and worship. When Foundation opened her mouth to speak, it was another story.

Later at lunch, she eyed Foundation from across her glass of wine wondering to what extent Foundation's stupidity and helplessness were a front. They did not make friends that day. But the continuing years saw Foundation appearing ever more frequently within her orbit. Over time, Foundation even became a great friend.

*I was just totally taken by the approach of this artist, by the way he translates themes of the abstraction that digital life brought to reality. When I first saw a piece of his work, I thought, what the fuck am I looking at? I think that is a really*



*good moment, when you look at an artwork and your system collapses, and you do not know how to read it, and you do not know how this is functioning in the relationship to 'art' as a conventionalized aesthetic form, or in the relationship to reality, and when that happens, you usually start to ask questions that are more interesting than when you get, so to say, when your canon gets confirmed. (Clapping.)*

She had gone too far. Seduced herself with her own rhetoric. First it was funny, learning the game of producing a language around the contemporary, that kind of soft stump speech. There was a time when she was smart to the point of illegibility, indulging in the convoluted and emotional rhetoric of a post-structuralist, autodidact, brown punk girl. She was a part of that desperate wave of youth breaking into the ideological upheavals of the 70s. Those were times of squatting, underground movements, street protests, and reckless partying. She was a mad dancer and could drink any man under the table. The most risk-taking, like her, if they were not dead by now, had also mutated into neoliberal junkies.

She learned to remove the shrillness from her voice, remove from it a sense of class and racial threat, keeping it warm and concise. She had the brilliant ability not only to adapt the language of the place, but to shrewdly adopt its cultural codes with a kind of debonair insouciance. There was an internal translating machine constantly ticking inside her, which allowed her to understand anyone almost immediately. Adding to this was her proclivity for play, lodged deep within her core, and an ability to project the sensation of a secret to whoever was on the receiving end of her words. When their eyes locked, she would transmit an almost winking sparkle of private complicity.

*I think I was first inspired to be a curator in my youth when I was volunteering in a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border. It was 1980. I was still taking my degree in ethnology, linguistics and psychology at the time. In my bull-headed naivety, I was trying to formulate a macro-theory of trauma as global contagion. What did I know? I was part of the first wave of volunteers and it was chaos when I arrived. Different organizations from different countries were arguing with each other and with the Thai government over all the logistics and distribution of resources, which were limited at the time. Most of the medical equipment came from France. The surgeons from other countries had never worked with some of their tools. But even worse, the French doctors were too close-minded to explain their tools to the others. Every day we had to negotiate water privileges in our section of the hospital. I helped with translation. I knew a little Thai, but less so Khmer. Sometimes I saw language passing through three bodies in order for the message to reach the fourth. Miraculously, communication began to flow. There was a pressing need to provide sustenance, medical help, and care. Everyone's function began to streamline around the urgency of duty, of healing wounds. This is when I began to realize how crucial the role*

*of a mediator is to realize a project whose scope is so far beyond any individual, that it's not the application of the scalpel to the wound which is the most important, but the ability to foresee and intercept all the noise and interference which would disallow such a gesture to be done in the first place. This is how I came to be a curator before I even really knew what a curator was.*

It was a beautiful story when recounted in an intimate corner of a bar after an opening, after the earlier crowd had peeled away and she was left with one or two slightly flushed and star-struck ingénues. It was an anecdote which, like other sparse moments from her personal narrative, straddled two realms, simultaneously truthful and instrumentalized. She carried this story like a kind of amulet. The token of a young mind suddenly struck with a crystalline insight which would be ravenously metabolized into her next move. A succession of opportune moments had spurted forward like a club light locked into strobe. Suddenly she was here. Time had fleshed her out into a kind of octopus figure with tentacles stretched between asynchronous contexts, between the global stakeholders and the weekend culture-consumer, stretching her tentacles thin to wrap the pieces of a fracturing world into the thickly sacrosanct space of the museum.

Chasing after money and envisioning expansion became her game. It was about thrusting forward into the unforeseeable, while rectifying the budget in the aftermath, stretching her body between a dazzling future and its indebted present. Through the years, she had collected, through no small means, a devoted circle of peers and patrons committed to the ever-unfolding sequential phases of her museum vision. What made them gain trust was that she was generous with her knowledge. They had all privately benefitted from her insight. Decades had proven the worth of her advice. Artworks no one thought would squeeze through the other side of history had been funneled through her foresight and direction, through their collective investments, into the crisp space of the canonical.

*A museum is not only what you see in the exhibition, it is also not only what happens in the offices, but it is an organism which has a professional element in every single detail, bringing to the surface an art exhibition which is teamwork, a collaborative act, a much more contemporary way of working. There is always co-authorship.*

Once she impetuously slammed a jackhammer into the polished concrete floor of the main exhibition hall, feeling oppressed by the too-low ceiling structure of the space. The museum's intricate moving-panel skylight, the iconic architectural feature of this former glass factory, had prevented her from building up. What to do? She had never felt so bound by circumstances. The board of directors was already raising a fuss on the expansion, what with the new publishing house, bookstore, and research wing, now sucking more resources from the

museum. It was the mid-90s, financial markets were limp, and no one wanted to invest more. The local art galleries were also angry with her for having been pressured into moving into this now-flagging arts complex in the dilapidated urban center, crawling with heroine addicts and homeless people, on which she had projected so much potential.

*Everything will be transformed soon into a dynamic cultural downtown, everyone just has to grit their teeth and wait it out. It is the time to take risks, not to burrow into austerity. The space needs to be deepened, needs to sink its roots into the very bowels of the city.*

The museum staff stared at her in her jackhammer rage, wondering if this juggernaut woman had finally run into the ground.

There was an invitation on her desk. She picked it up and absently fondled its silky card stock. A curator friend had once introduced her to a billionaire industrialist eager to transfer his wealth into the sphere of culture. This collector would always make a point to stop and see her at the museum whenever he passed through the city on business. He was, like her, a kind of kindred spirit speeding through seemingly endless paradoxes, a survivor of revolutionary ideologies gone haywire, who had come out the other end a ruthless businessman flowing like an agile little brook over a deep bedrock of socialist upbringing. His voracious cultural appetite matched other appetites. In the dredges of dawn after a long night of martinis and cocaine at the local dive bar, they would find themselves wrapped in each others arms, mourning the failure of communism. He had just opened a private museum in his hometown, near the birthplace of her own great-grandfather, who was a clandestine trader during the illegal opium boom. They were basically related. Her insight was invaluable to him. He often sent her invitations to his museum openings, with a flight included. This time, she flew over.

His museum had staged a group show representing little-known indigenous artists from regions marked by ongoing separatist politics and uprisings. The show was hung in a messy and haphazard way, the lighting was terrible, and the wall texts were barely coherent, in any language. But there were some fascinating works on display. It was an admirable exhibition, heroic even. She was impressed that so far the censorship machinery emanating from the country's capital had not yet extended this far south and west. Had the artworks been smuggled in? Not many artists in the show were present. But some of her international curator peers were there, jutting out of the crowd like a group of washed-out ghosts, dousing their jet lag bloat with flutes of champagne and exchanging warning jokes about food poisoning, like the shit-faced bigots they were.

Everyone was corralled post-opening into private cars leading to an unmarked brick building that opened onto an opulent hall full of round banquet tables with spinning lazy susans, on which a dozen plus courses of untranslatable specimens of sea creatures, roasted animals, and ornamental sweets began to pile amidst a spectacular series of stage entertainment which included live sword battles, a regional opera, and a fashion show with lute and zither accompaniment. A confusing mixture of expensive alcohols (Bourdeaux, Chivas, and Moutai) were being poured and refilled with excessive expediency. Even she began to raise her eyebrows at the whole affair.

*How might he allow the flare of ritual feasting to disrupt the academic stiffness of his museum show in order to spice things up a little?*

Just as she was registering these thoughts, the round tables began to spin and warp into swirling colorful patterns, becoming a looming brocade fluttering with dancing tassels that kept flying towards her. The faces around her table started to resemble blushing peonies arranged around a giant spinning golden coin. A Euro coin? Where did her billionaire go? He was hovering around his staff table, mostly pretty young girls, she noticed for the first time. Very shortly afterwards, the entertainment and tables were cleared, and the dinner guests seemed to be furtively scattering towards the exits doors. Not quite knowing where to take her spinning vision, she lurched towards the region of her billionaire. His face was as shiny and red as a supermarket apple. One of his drunk eyes twinkled vigorously at hers.

*STOP! Don't leave!* he shouted at the top of his voice.

There was a split second freeze on all the activity in the room. Some exiting guests quickened their paces to a mad sprint, while others tentatively remained in their tracks. Whoever obeyed was herded into a large chauffeured van with no indication of where they were going. She found herself pressed against a young man who introduced himself eagerly as a local artist.

*Do you know where we are going?*

*Yes, we are probably on the way to the neighboring city, which is famous for its red light district.*

*Do you always have to go wherever he tells you to go?*

*Yes, he responded cheerfully, We are all dependent on him for our survival.*

On her other side was an annoying American who claimed to have been the billionaire's classmate through both college and business school, and who kept referring to the billionaire as a *fucking beast*. The van lurched to a stop in front of a building modeled after a neoclassical opera house bedazzled in neon lights. The private room KTV they were whisked into was actually around the size of a

small club, with a dozen or more cartoonishly fawn-like girls slumped on vinyl couches, their lack of movement highlighted by frenetic laser lights dancing over their bodies. They seemed to pop to life when the billionaire walked in, pouncing on him in mock girlishness, like daddy had finally come home from work. There were screens blaring pornography and K-pop videos in unison, and poles were being utilized for awe-inspiring displays of nude gymnastics. The billionaire was stalking the room as if in a frenzy, grabbing at asses and breasts, stuffing bills into straps and cackling, forcing shots on his employees and friends, forcing them to *gon bui*. The pretty girls who ran his museum were still there, perched in rows on couches, and smiling through their weariness. More than several hours passed and not a single guest made a movement to leave. The billionaire at last staggered up to her with his twinkling eye.

*I know why you finally made it to my opening, and it's not just for the frequent flyer miles, you little bitch. It's because you're in the red. Yes? I knew it! Don't try to play me like an idiot, how much do you need? Muahahahahahaha.*

She was laughing too.

*Alright you fucker, give me your dirty cash. Just don't forget, I'm a man too.*

Soon after, she blacked out and awoke the next day on a private jet heading back to her city. A few months later, the renovated exhibition gallery at her museum re-opened to critical acclaim, debuting an immersive sound piece chronicling the scattering of a group of intellectuals abroad in the aftermath of their government's bloody crackdown, perfectly set within the airy and acoustically exquisite main gallery hall inscribed with the name of her billionaire.

*We share the knowledge that comes with making it happen, the straddling of worlds and paradoxes that the very survival of art depends on. To confront this head on is to maintain its truthfulness to the world.*

That sentiment is ripe in her mind when she retires after a day's work to her home, a sparse modernist cottage nestled directly across the lake from her museum. This is where, every evening, she returns to feed her voracious appetite for erudition. This is where she lights a joint on the couch, burrows into the next theoretical treatise on contemporary life, listens to the music she loves, and looks across the lake at the twinkling city at rest, while her mind, leaving behind the daily war of bureaucracy, expands into the philosophical.

After selecting a young artist to work with, she often invites them here.

She knows precisely how to identify the ripeness of a young artist. Often it is the magic they spin through an economy of means in a raw off-space. But this potential precedes form, and this form is already at risk of adulteration. The ripening of a young artist is to be understood alongside their anxieties, over-

eagerness, delusions, pretensions, naiveties, which run so deep and are rarely addressed. Under the pressures of their first institutional solo exhibition, the still-becoming channels of their egos have the potential to interrupt each other, to misfire and set the roof aflame. She knows how to redirect these channels, to shape their potential into a form with clear, fresh contours. This can only come under cover of the night, face to face in her lakeside lair, while drinking together. Both let their guards down when her claws come out. She mentally strips them, pulling their minds apart into their basic, fibrous, meaty units. The more she drinks, the more she accesses her own youthful fountain of psychoanalytic mind games and linguistic bag of tricks, twisting their statements into cul-de-sacs of logic, shocking them into self-doubt and reflexivity. They can go and go all night deeper into the twisted forest of their conversation, a nightmarish experience which transforms into a clearing of hope as the sky lightens and a cracked open window allows the dewy lake breezes to blow away the cigarette smoke. As they both sober up, she gently lays out the shreds of their mind on the coffee table, with the options for how to suture it back together. This is a form of love.

*Art is and always will be a collaborative act.*

It seems at first that Foundation is imitating her, and she accepts this as a form of flattery. It is also amusing. Nothing can be starker than that space between her sharp game and Foundation's dawdling mind. She learns very quickly how to sit this girl down and teach her an object lesson in style over a plate of steak frites at the local brasserie, efficiently pocketing thousands in donations to her museum in the process. Well, if she is to be honest to herself, it isn't quite so efficient as it seems, because Foundation keeps coming back. She keeps popping in for more conversations and shopping advice, frivolous lunches, scattered through which are occasions when Foundation doles out donations in a burst of enthusiasm, and occasions when Foundation does not.

Foundation begins her own projects. She begins to organize group holidays, sometimes at her family's ski lodge, sometimes in a beautiful coastal village set into a cliff, where a core group of her friends (the most successful power players of the art world) merge to pool their imaginations and resources, dreaming big ideas for art and capital's convergence. They are a powerful collective. For them, there could be no better tool than contemporary art to revolutionize any facet of the world today... an opera, an industry, an environment, a country! They dream up schemes for new dynamic art fairs, new exhibitionary formats, new schools creating new kinds conversations, new technologies which can transmit art to new audiences. They chirp these ideas at the foot of Foundation's largesse.

*I always tell her she should do less. What she does is unique in its multidimensionality. Her desire to simultaneously engage on so many planes reminds me of*

*superstring theory. Actually, Foundation is beyond superstring.*

Her attentions are beginning to get monopolized. On the one hand, it's a triumph to see an exhibition of one of her debutantes get bought by Foundation in its entirety (and paid in advance to cover production). On the other hand, her growing dependency on Foundation's stream of cash is making her uneasy.

They are both spreading, and mirroring each other's spread. Her museum has become the axis of authority around which she finesses her talents as a giver of advice. She gives advice to art fairs, biennials, corporate collections, private collectors, publishing houses, with one connection breeding another, as the market for art expands and her connections become her currency. Foundation is likewise hemorrhaging money in multiple dimensions, adding weight to her art investments through sitting on boards and committees. Their webs overlap, sometimes intentionally, and sometimes by accident. The glass factory arts complex that houses her museum is now a shining paradigm of cultural muscle. Foundation has stepped in and bought up two floors of the complex's expansion. Foundation now has a museum abutting hers.

A party photograph from the mid-2000s of the two of them standing side by side at a sculpture park gala pulls the doubling of their personas into stark relief. There they are, two aged and burnished orange faces set atop structural black outfits designed to conceal the paunches they have accumulated over the years. How did this veneer of power manage to override their differences, even in the realm of appearances?

And those eyes! What is with that rabbit-eyed stare of hers, uncannily reflected in Foundation's face? It's become the thick filter that defines her vision between places, embedded deep within Foundation's tightknit posse. It's how they survive the throngs of each summer's obligatory biennial-fair circuit, deflecting the sightlines of thirsty young art professionals – boring smurfs who can offer her nothing in exchange for everything they think they can squeeze her for.

She hates the curatorial training program that Foundation established in the woods behind her family's estate, which births yearly batches of fresh stewards to oversee Foundation's collections and assets for eternities to come. She can barely suppress her distaste whenever she notices one of those Foundation alumni lurking around her social space, mortified by the extent to which her maverick profession has been degraded. But neither can she help speculating that they, like all the other subservients quietly plugging away to service her visions, are scrutinizing her carefully from the shadows. They are the noise to her signal, a threat to her being. In fact, that glassy, horizon-bound look in her face has become her form of class protection. It matches Foundation's private jet.

*I admit I had gone slack. I'd neglected to keep my ear to the ground. As a public servant, I acknowledge I betrayed my duties. I sincerely apologize.*

Of course it was a glaring oversight to stage three consecutive solo exhibitions with three emerging white male artists. In different times, it would have been everyone else's oversight too. Locked in the bubble of power for so long, she had failed to properly gauge the shifting social formations that had electrified the public sphere over the last few years. Obviously, she had felt the violent polarization of the political spectrum with some sense of alarm. But the problems of politics could hardly be countered with artistic resolutions. She was skeptical of the sense of urgency being funneled through uncompromising cultural positions. She would prefer to activate a sense of play, pose a challenge to the oppressive posturing of the *politically correct*.

This is what she had tried to do with her last exhibition, inviting a charmingly complicated jester of an artist into her space. His whiny animatronic mannequin figure bound in authentic 18th century slave shackles was meant to be provocative. But never beyond her wildest imagination could she have anticipated the reaction it would unleash.

First came the online petition to destroy the artwork. Then came the protestors who gathered daily outside of the museum, a crowd which sometimes surged into the hundreds, forming a mock chain gang that encircled and choked the museum entryway. Following that was the online petition to fire her and all the rest of her staff. Following that was the online petition to close the museum, with more than a hundred thousand signatories in the space of 48 hours.

Then there was the anonymous cyber hack. Operation: Malinchista.

The cyber hack wormed its way through the museum's department of finances, and burrowed into her accounting. It shuffled through her email, internal memos and documents. It burrowed into the bank accounts and transaction histories of board members and donors. Then it attacked the museum's website.

The cyberhack overlaid the museum's homepage with a large, gooey web-like graphic, in the middle of which was an image of her face, caught in a drunken leer, Malinchista scrawled over her forehead. Lines shooting out of her face connected her through advising jobs to corporate collections, individual collectors, and art fairs. There were lines crossing between artists she had placed in collections, and exhibitions she had staged at the museum, dragging with them a trail of ever increasing primary and secondary market price tags. Lines cross-linked artworks donated to the museum by patrons, and artworks bought from those same patrons at inflated prices. Another line traced a subsidiary company under the stewardship of her museum to an offshore account. There were lines



connecting her to all her closest advisees and patrons, uncovering their hereditary lineages and the sordid ways their dynasties had aggregated wealth. This web created an effective impression of her full-blown complicity in a deep-rooted system of financialized white oppression.

For anyone working from within this system, none of this information was too surprising. These practices, which she had helped to innovate, were the reason that art had been able to maintain its edge, even in the face of a crumbling public sphere. It was her sacrifice and her sweat that kept it alive. Now some nameless hackers, some overlooked faces that had been carefully watching her from the shadows, were inverting all of her efforts.

She has no choice but to quit the museum.

In the meantime, her advising posts flake away like dried scabs. The buzzy, emerging art fair in the third world cosmopolis declines her advice for the next year. As do the half dozen or so biennials she sits on the board of. The curatorial college indefinitely postpones her next lecture. Even the investment bank whose corporate collection she oversaw for years *feels obligated to temporarily suspend their relationship*, their PR director explains succinctly over the phone.

The world is split in two, fucking Foundation has split it in two. And here she is, moored on this apocalyptic continent of the stupidity of the one percent...

...fat, female, and fading.

She was a very little girl when she witnessed death for the first time. In the village where her mother was born, she saw a pig bleed to death. It was their last visit to see relatives before the civil war broke out and cut them off for decades. The pig slaughter was a big event for the children. They squatted in a circle on the ground while two men held the large sow suspended by her hind legs, wriggling and shrieking. The pig was struggling so hard she was sure it would break loose and kill them all first. She was thrilled with this prospect, looking into the pig's fierce eye. A third man held the forelegs together and made two quick slashes through the throat with a knife. It was surprising how quickly the pig's body gave up and went limp, while the angry blood continued to gush out of her body and dribbled into a bucket placed below her dangling head.

That was the first time she had thought about the inside of her own body and the liquids that flowed through all its separate parts. She saw the pig's guts fall out of its sliced open belly, with all the strings and cords connecting them together, losing heat. Her own bowels moved in empathic fascination. That night they ate a thick soup made from the blood and guts of the freshly killed pig.

She can't move for weeks after it ends. She can only drink. She lies limp on the couch while toxic liquids pass through the tubes and pockets of her internal system, the tubes getting smaller and smaller, becoming capillaries diffusing into the sponge of her brain. Something begins to rot over time. Grime and ulcers bloom like molds on her inner and outer surfaces. It's surprising how quickly her body gives up.

Faces from her past flicker across her vision. But the face of this thing so set on destroying her does not appear. Or she can't see its face. She just feels its nasty intelligence cackling from the shadows.

...more stasis and more rot. Bottles accumulating in a messy pile at her feet.

Toxicity is climaxing. Shallow breathing. The heavy sensation of being interminably upside down. Each thread of her web is mentally snapped, one by one.

She cloaks herself in darkness.

A surprising breath of life bursts through her front door. Foundation's big bronze face beams into her lair. Foundation is pulling her back into the sunlight.

She doesn't have the energy to push Foundation away.

*Work for me.*

*Work for me.*

*Work for me.*



**4** OUKAN (basement)  
Kronenstraße 71  
Monday-Saturday, 12-7pm  
Contact: [hello@oukan.de](mailto:hello@oukan.de)

**5** Schinkel Pavillon (lower level storage room)  
Oberwallstraße 1  
Thursday-Sunday, 12-6pm  
Contact: [info@schinkelpavillon.de](mailto:info@schinkelpavillon.de)

**9** Texte Zur Kunst Office  
Strausberger Platz 19  
Monday-Friday, 12-6pm  
Contact: [redaktion@textezurkunst.de](mailto:redaktion@textezurkunst.de)

**10** Yuki Kimura and Q Takeki Maeda's Apartment  
Allerstraße 38  
Open by appointment  
Contact: [vividluster09@gmail.com](mailto:vividluster09@gmail.com)

(link)

Our bodily tumult like serial killer sprees in some hallowed halls, the offices of Texte Zur Kunst, Buchholz, Mathew, Lars Friedrich's apartment - our representation fractured in the need to stash our bodies everywhere in art franchised, split spread divide and reconnect - of course we become like monsters tentacling and "suck[ing] unborn fetuses out of pregnant women" to maintain our youthful semio-capital.

See too: Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho at 47 Canal

Labels: Amy Lien, Berlin, Daniel Buchholz, Enzo Camacho, Germany, Lars Friedrich's apartment, Mathew, OUKAN, Schinkel Pavillon, Texte Zur Kunst office, TRUST LTD office, Yuki Kimura & Q Takeki Maeda's apartment

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AR: Lucie Stahl at Halle Für Kunst Lüneburg

Amy Lien, Enzo Camacho at various locations