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A WORLD OF STATUES

PEGGY AHWESH
MATTHEW BOOTH
OLGA CHERNYSHEVA
SARA Cwynar
NONA FAUSTINE

6 JANUARY 2019 TO 27 JANUARY 2019

“A world compartmentalized, Manichaeian and petrified, a world of statues: the statue of the general who led the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge. A world cocksure of itself, crushing with its stoniness the backbones of those scarred by the whip.” *Frantz Fanon*

Fanon’s words from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) were written in the context of the colonial struggles of their time, but they could equally be applied to the moment we now find ourselves in, where histories are being both questioned and defended.

The word “monument” comes from the Latin for “warning,” as if a memorial’s original function were to caution from the vantage of history. Some monuments are considered grand symbols of past civilizations, others are statues of famous or forgotten men, often forged in bronze or stone, sitting in parks and on roundabouts, celebrating wins and glossing over failures. Whom and of what do they warn?

A World of Statues is a group exhibition of photography and video about the poetics and politics of memorial and memory.

Peggy Ahwesh’s films and videos cross many genres - including documentary, drama, found-footage, and installation - as they intersect themes of violence, gender, and sexuality. Ahwesh’s short video *H.D.* (2005) remembers Hilda (H.D.) Doolittle (1886 –1961), the American avant-garde poet whose work was reassessed by feminist critics in the 1970s. H.D. lived most of her life in the European literary world, but her memorial, inscribed with her poetry, sits in a cemetery in her hometown of Bethlehem, PA. Ahwesh’s work is an elegy to both the poet and her birthplace.

Matthew Booth’s photographs depict details and fragments of the everyday and the iconic. His subjects—rendered at times with unsettling clarity, at others with evocative suggestion—include artifacts of ancient Greece, the National September 11 Memorial, and the World Trade Center. Capturing familiar subjects at transitional moments and in partial views, he produces scenes that open received histories to question, allusion, and emotion.

Often using Moscow as her subject, Olga Chernysheva makes films, photographs, drawings, and paintings that capture the turbulence of social change. The artist’s *Alley of Cosmonauts* (2008) series of photographs captures the avenue of memorials to the Soviet space program while undergoing reconstruction. The monument, “To the Conquerors of Space,” a modernist needle piercing the sky, seems to vainly struggle against the building site below it. Her photographs tell a poignant story about forgetting, remembering, and revising past glories and fallen pride.

Sara Cwynar’s composite photographs involve archiving, sculptural arrangements, collage, and re-photography. Her “Plastic Cups” series involves models constructed from found plasticware that have been inspired by iconic buildings. The photographs’ odd repetitions and perspectives and their mix of color and black-and-white give them an uncanny sense of instability and improbability. Her Presidential Index series of photographs of men’s after-shave bottles in the shape of US Presidential torsos delineates how power is pictured, symbolized, and gendered.

Nona Faustine’s camera reveals the ways history and power inscribe themselves upon bodies and architecture. Her *My Country* series includes photographs of some of the USA’s most iconic structures, including the Statute of Liberty, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington Monument. The artist’s subjects are shot from behind, past gates, or through barriers that cause blurry horizontal lines. They are not so much obscured as deconstructed: the artist’s distancing effects both limit and expose their political and personal charge.

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Peggy Ahwesh (Canonsburg, PA, 1954) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received a BFA from Antioch College, OH. Selected exhibitions and screenings include: *The Women's Film Preservation Fund: Four Experimental Films*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2018); *Verily! The Blackest Sea, The Falling Sky*, Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, England (solo) (2017); *Peggy Ahwesh: Warm Objects*, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ (solo)(2015); *Kissing Point*, Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn, NY(solo)(2014-15); *Performance/Anxiety*, MOCA Los Angeles, LA (2014); *The Ape of Nature*, Gladstone Hotel, Images Festival, Toronto, ON (2011); and WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution, MoMA P.S.1, Queens, NY (2008); and *Peggy Ahwesh*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (solo)(2006).

Matthew Booth (Toronto, Canada, 1982) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He holds a BFA in Photography from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, BC, and an MFA in Photography from Yale University, New Haven, CT. Selected exhibitions include: *Evening*, Melanie, New York, NY (solo); *Scripts for the Pageant*, Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (both 2018); *We Were Here: Absence of the Figure*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA (2016); *Inside the White Cube*, White Cube, London, UK (solo); *...but the clouds...*, Room East, New York, NY (both 2013); *Millennium Magazines*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and *On Walls*, curated by Nancy Lupo, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (both 2012). The film *Gray House*, of which Booth is co-author and cinematographer, will be shown at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 2019, and has screened at Lincoln Center, New York, NY; Centre Pompidou, Paris; ICA, London, UK; and the Greek Film Archive, Athens (all 2017).

Olga Chernysheva (Moscow, Russia, 1962) lives and works in Moscow. She holds a BA from the Moscow Cinema Academy and an MFA from the Rijksakademie Van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. Selected exhibitions include "Ordered Equivocations," Kohta, Helsinki (solo) (2018); "Chandeliers in the Forest," Secession, Vienna, Austria (solo) (2017-18); "Vague Accent," The Drawing Center, New York, NY (solo); "The Historical Exhibition: Sites Under Construction, Manifesta: The European Biennial of Contemporary Art," Zurich, Switzerland; "Podróznicy," The National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (all 2016); "All the World's Futures," Venice Biennale, Italy (2015); "Keeping Sight," M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium (solo) (2014); "Compossibilities," Kunsthalle Erfurt, Germany (solo) (2013); "In the Middle of Things," BAK, Utrecht, The Netherlands (solo); and "Ostalgie," New Museum, New York, NY (both 2011).

Sara Cwynar (Vancouver, Canada, 1985) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She holds a Bachelor of Design from York University, Toronto, ON; and an MFA from Yale University, New Haven, CT. Solo exhibitions include: "Image Model Muse," Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis; "Tracy," Oakville Galleries, Oakville, ON, Canada (both 2018); "Soft Film," MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany (2017); "Everything in the Studio Destroyed," Foam Photography Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2013). Selected group exhibitions include: 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil; "Mademoiselle," Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain d'Occitane, Sète, France; "MAST Foundation for Photography Grant on Industry and Work," Mast Foundation, Bologna, Italy (all 2018); "Hard to Picture: A Tribute to Ad Reinhardt," Mudam, Luxembourg; "Subjektiv," Malmö Konsthall, Sweden; "You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred," Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK (all 2017); "L'Image Volée," Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2016); and "Greater New York," MoMA PS1, Queens, NY (2015-16).

Nona Faustine (Brooklyn, NY) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She holds a BFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and an MFA from the International Center of Photography-Bard, New York. Exhibitions include: *Ye Are My Witness*, Higher Pictures, New York, NY (solo); *Half The Picture: A Feminist Look At The Collection*, Brooklyn Museum, NY; *Historos afro-Atlanticas*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo (all 2018); *Regarding the Figure*, Studio Museum in Harlem (2017); *My Country*, Baxter St. Camera Club NY, NY (solo)(2016-17); *Mitochondria*, Institute of Fine Art, New York (solo); and *White Shoes*, Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY (solo)(both 2016).