

*I Hate My Superego* Sylvie Hayes-Wallace 29 September – 11 November 2023

Sitting on a concrete beach in Marseille, Sylvie spoke about her obsession with celebrity home tours – think MTV Cribs or Architectural Digest videos – and most notably, Cara Delevingne’s “vagina tunnel” that the model crawls through when home alone to be “rebirthed and cleansed.”<sup>1</sup> This conversation has summarized the majority of my discussions with Sylvie, almost all of which have centered around interiors, bodies, femininity, self-care, pop culture and, of course, the absurdity of it all. A few weeks after this conversation, she gave me a home/studio tour, not of her actual home in New York, but of the Chalet Lecoq in Clermont-Ferrand where she has been living and working for the last eight weeks. Crossing the threshold of the main entrance that leads directly into the studio, instead of saying “welcome to my crib” like many a celebrity in the early aughts, she could easily have said “welcome to my brain,” because her work is precisely that: an exposure of her cage of interiority.

One must not be fooled though: Sylvie Hayes-Wallace is a gatekeeper.<sup>2</sup> Quite literally because to access the Chalet Lecoq which is located in a city park closed to the public after 9 pm she has to open a gigantic iron gate with an electronic key that only few obtain, but also because her laying bare of her intimacy is hardly a diaristic regurgitation: it is done with a neurotic precision of withholding. For the exhibition “I Hate My Superego”, Sylvie has imagined a new form of portraiture creating a sculptural depiction of what one could imagine as her superego entitled *My Dictator*.

The work is almost aggressively salacious, not only because of the pornographic images in which vulvas have been covered by computer generated glitter bombs, but also because the column itself feels like a scantily clad secret. Fissured and covered in hardware, it stands erect (yet precariously) with cut outs in each corner through which we can peep to get a glimpse of Sylvie’s way of unraveling – or reinforcing? – the relationships between the exterior and the interior. The architecture of the self thus takes on a truly physical dimension – the width is determined by the width of the artist’s own body – while the voice of the artist’s superego fragments it.

*My Dictator* feels like a love child of Lee Lozano’s idea for *Companion Piece* (1969) for which she wrote “toss your own printed matter on top of [a] pile and keep it on top of the pile;” and Isa Genzken’s *Little Crazy Column* (2002) in its handmade “full of cracks” craziness.<sup>3</sup> Except instead of a pile, Sylvie erected her own printed matter – including everything from bills to self-help listicles, time logs, to do lists, passport renewal forms, photos, and cut up dollar bills, to name a few – into a huge, insane column. “Finally finished...Looking at all of these makes me realize I’m insane lol,” the artist wrote to me at 1 am on September 20th when the work was completed. I laughed when I realized the voice was none other than that of her dictator.

We all have these dictators, voices inside of our heads that both critique and praise us, and Sylvie’s work gives a spatial reality to these internal thoughts. For *Cage (Head) #4 (08/05/23 - 09/30/23)*, she returned to her usual visual language in which she creates cages based on the dimensions of her head, this time in thick, painted glass. Based on her urban surroundings in Clermont-Ferrand and the accent wall of her bedroom at the Chalet, the glass cage feels like an ode to brain fog, or the dizzying sensation of navigating new, foreign spaces and languages, and how, in turn, they alter our self-perception.

“I seek my hot depths in the hot exteriority of the other.”<sup>4</sup> Sylvie shared this quote from Luce Irigaray’s book *To Be Two*, which feels like a burning truth. Sylvie’s impulse to connect with herself through a selective exposure to the other feels almost like a game of seduction in which the seducer entices the other to reinforce their own sexiness – and this is far from a pejorative statement. In *Cincinnati* – an image of a car framed in a truly Sylvie way – the word sexy, and other assertive bumper stickers embellish a caravan, recalling any kind of branding that feels like a negotiation with one’s inner critic/inner praiser.

To go deeper, one can descend into the basement, where the artist has plastered the floor with credit card statements (*Freedom (Over Me)*). Each statement reveals the artist’s expenditures, leading us to question if we can fully comprehend a person simply through their purchases.

(I think of my bank teller and cringe). Instead of imagining that we are holding a magnifying glass, squinting one eye, and investigating Sylvie as a person, I see this self-exposure as a larger unveiling of how absurd and disorienting it is to navigate our neoliberal world.

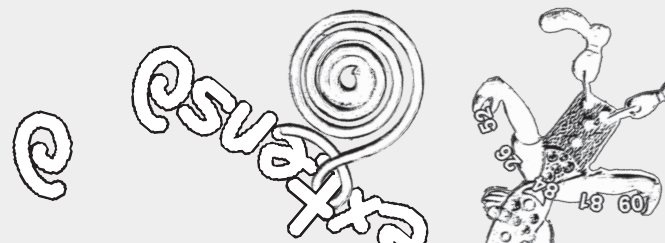
How should you situate yourself in regards to all of this? As a voyeur, an empathizer, intruder, seducer, seduced? I prefer to consider us all as accomplices, witnesses of an event that surpasses the deeply personal, taking root in a larger, complex world controlled by superegos and a desire to connect. Albeit architectural and almost archival, every work in "I Hate My Superego" feels like a fine print production: a non-attentive eye could wrongfully confuse Sylvie's understanding of our unstable society for an auto-curious, indexical frenzy.

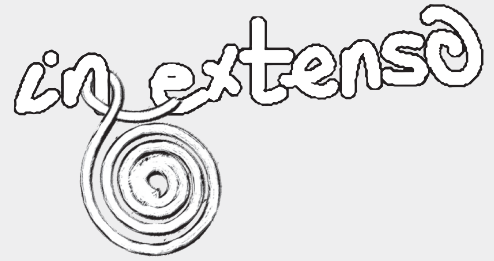
Katia Porro

*Sylvie Hayes-Wallace (b. 1994, Cincinnati, Ohio) lives and works in New York, NY. She received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2017. She has had solo and two-person exhibitions at A.D. Gallery, New York; Bad Water, Knoxville; Interstate Projects, Brooklyn; and New Works, Chicago; among others. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Chapter NY, New York; Simone Subal Gallery, New York; King's Leap Fine Arts, New York; Annex de Odelon, Ridgewood; MX Gallery, New York; and Frontera 115, Mexico City; among others.*

*To prepare the exhibition, Sylvie Hayes-Wallace has benefited from a two month residency at the Chalet Lecoq, a new residency programme initiated by the City of Clermont-Ferrand. The exhibition is also a part of La Tôlerie's programme "Les Coulisses" off-site.*

- 1 See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx09\\_4cEzIM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx09_4cEzIM)
- 2 Gatekeeping is the activity of controlling and usually limiting access to something.
- 3 Svea Bräunert, "Spotlight Essay: Isa Genzken," Kemper Art Museum, [www.kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/node/11591](http://www.kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/node/11591).
- 4 Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, Routledge, 2001, p. 55.





1 *My Dictator*, 2023

Plasterboard, acid-free double sided tape, acid-free cello tape, bookbinding tape, document repair tape, aluminum tape, paper, oil stick, fixative, Passport will call envelope, to-do lists, photographs, grocery lists, interior paint, exterior paint, floor paint, Nuxe Shimmering Dry Oil, Nuxe dry oil packaging, gesso, perfume samples, flight confirmations, logged studio hours, pages from Emily Post on Etiquette, pastry wrappers, magazine pages, porn, ink, staples, junk mail, 5 star folders, sheetmask packaging, Weleda Skin Food packaging, soap packaging, dreams, blueberry packaging, tampon safety data sheets, Rx safety data sheets, "How to be a bitch" listicle, self-help listicles, wikiHow searches, self-defense listicles, google searches, Sephora bag, Aubade lingerie bag, Metropolitan Recreation Center pool schedule, Jenny Hval lyrics, United States of America currency, photograph of my mom for sale online, privacy envelopes, Disposable camera packaging, DS-82 US Passport Renewal forms, the voice of my superego, Planner pages, pages from Cuisine For Dummies, Vellum, X ray scans, old leases, old notes from landlord, supermarket advertisements, Credit Card rejection letters, Payson Breton Demi-Sel Butter packaging, Physical Therapy prescription, Dental appointment notes, Credit card fraud department letter, TurboTax Intuit settlement letter, sugar packaging, Tracy Anderson Method testimonials, Tracy Anderson Method online membership emails, Credit Card terms and conditions, Band-Aids, CVS massage ball instructions, Les Ambiances Cinema screening schedule, Le Corbusier Cité Radieuse postcard, Systema program, Pharmacie Mutualiste AÉSIO Santé Schedule, Tax notes, I Ching notes, pad wrappers, Post-it notes, BRACA genetic screening notes, tampon wrappers, pages from Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicines, Vinted shipping confirmation, Lindocaine pain patches, Scensible sanitary disposal bags, foil paper, dirty cardboard, daily food logs, Sharpie, gel pen, doctors appointment vitals, MyChart notifications, makeup packaging, Northwestern Mutual life insurance policy terms and conditions, Epipen packaging and instructions, plastic, Prada seeds packaging, Treasure Island storage access code card, Savage Fenty terms and conditions, notes-to-self, vinyl, PVA, mending plates, hardware; based on the dimensions of the artist's body

295,5 × 68 × 68 cm

2 *Cincinnati*, 2022-2023

Glass, C-print, acid-free double sided tape, acid-free cello tape, adhesive, hardware

18 × 15 × 1 cm

3 *Cage (Head) #4 (08/05/23 - 09/30/23)*, 2023

Glass, steel, interior paint, adhesive, hardware; based on the dimensions of the artist's head

21.4 × 15.6 × 20 cm

[Basement]

4 *Freedom (Over Me)*, 2023

Artist's debt, printed credit card statements 2018-2023, staples  
variable

