

SCRIPT — MEMORY

13 April–14 July

Playing it by the book is a necessity of our social contract. It is also its bane. We meet, greet and are in touch – the success of which is based on common codes. As a child you begin to abide by a script, rehearse, learn it off by heart. The script includes your “we”, the people in your immediate and not so immediate surroundings, and you become with them, are familiar, repeat. Securing the ego (which does not necessarily mean security of the ego), the return to the known, is at the core of this repetition. Craving an entity that reinforces and embalms leads to automatism, and the most subtle but defining mechanisms of reproduction occur – gesture, rhetoric, tone. Memory is cunning, it clouds recollection in the soft padding of comfort. It’s a fuzzy space in the mind between reality and fiction. Joan Didion writes: “Time passes, memory fades, memory adjusts, memory conforms to what we think we remember.” The sense of connection to places and people that is so essential to memory is constantly recalibrated, upholding an understanding of common experience.

“Still, much just will not fit the bill!” A loss of control could and perhaps must be a mode to counteract such tendencies.

The works in this exhibition express the need for a gesture toward a loss of control in order to overcome one’s own being in the world. They set a stage for a scriptless act, bound by and fraught with (mis)understanding that could potentially change memory’s course. Key is their conception as tool: Many artists include people they are immediately surrounded with and at times rely on or who rely on them – family, friends, acquaintances. They work with their personal histories as a way to think about involvement, to share the process of making meaning, and to shift the dynamic between author and subject, steering away from making alone, from within oneself, which is still understood as the uncompromised creative process per se. In this they practice a loss of control, letting others define how the work develops with them, in turn redefining their own role. They frame themselves whilst framing others, troubling the idea of the artist as sociologist. Pierced with the emotions of being in close contact, the works’ conceptual frameworks include formal glitches that stress how memory – and the capture of the stories that play a part in

the formation of it – is subjective and partial but also always some mirror of reality. The artists of these works hand over the camera, incorporate articulation of others and document everyday life. They include framing and filtering devices to double (who is telling the story?), blur (it is only part of the story!), and defamiliarize (you can make up your own mind about it.), always moving between immersion and detachment.

On a larger scale, relatability is at stake. There is much talk of collaboration, of the longing for and necessity of community. But what is actually in play in a practice involved with others, especially those we are already in community with? A veneer of consensus cracks under little pressure. They meet, and it becomes clear that they may not understand each other. What happens when the underlying assumption that it is so difficult to work together is an underlying fear of losing oneself? After all, a loss of control can be frightening, embarrassing, confusing. Often, feeling restricted by others is followed by the awkward and uncomfortable state of reacting by default. Whatever it may seem, the conflicted teenager still likes to rear his head. Bouts of longing for symbiosis and reassurance are paired with the fear of being compromised. The latter, as protective behaviour, clearly represents a loss of control and may be a condition too precarious; the question here is not where it comes from, but where we find ourselves again in the jumble of narratives.

The works, awakening moments of surrender, of letting go and letting in, are parables for the cultivation of community in a time of ever-more predictive strategies for the avoidance of risk. It is no coincidence the works often point to contexts and histories that did not automatically belong, in which banding together so as to portray and perform the same language was and is requisite. The exhibition proposes a politics of participation rather than representation, in which the artworks are understood as one part of a process of translation among a group of people. Keen to bring the unforeseeable into the equation, it marks the beginning of thinking about Kunsthalle Winterthur as a space of involvement.

CHAUMONT-ZAERPOUR

Chaumont-Zaerpour, who are Agathe Zaerpour and Philippine Chaumont, most often work in fashion photography, publishing their campaigns in magazines, most recently in *The Gentlewoman* and *An Other Magazine*, or working for brands such as Miu Miu or Lemaire. Their photographs refer to the history of photography and its acceptance as an artistic medium by evoking earlier aesthetic codes, iconic advertising campaigns, women's magazines from the 80s or classic photography. They subvert the language of fetishism that underlies these references with unconventional and often funny representations of their models to the point of absurdity.

For *Panorama*, *Panorama 1* and *Panorama 2* (2024), Chaumont-Zaerpour assembled images of shoes to form an encyclopaedia-like collage. "The very act of dressing reveals things that are often secret about the relationship between people and the world, about the quality of that relationship and its emotional intensity." The collage, made up of images from their archives as well as images sent in by members of the Association Friends of Kunsthalle Winterthur, does not, as may seem at first glance, adhere to a categorical logic. The works, as a quasi-social study, call for an organisation and analysis of patterns – codes of belonging according to one's footwear, an expression of social character, perhaps mimicry that aims towards social acceptance. The work undoes this logic, humorously addressing the simultaneous necessity and absurdity of social codes in forming relationships.

CHRIS KAUFFMANN

The work *CallMeChris Archive* (2012–2015) (2023) is a selection of videos the artist made as a teenager with the free video app Video Star. It was popular with children and teens in the 2010s especially for its editing possibilities. The videos were uploaded to YouTube and shared within an online community. Before the influence of apps like TikTok took over, this newly developed common language resulted in joyful experimentation with special effects as a tool for self-expression and gaining credit among peers. As an artwork, the videos shift into a different gear, becoming almost nostalgic, and bordering – as the nostalgic often does – on gimmick. Hopes of sub-culture and community via online platforms have petered out or at least no

longer shine bright. Now self-awareness and critique in posting online are the order of the day, generating a new authenticity mastered by those in the know. Kauffmann is interested in the constant redefinition of such notions and the inevitable loop of conforming, breaking with conformity, and conforming again, which applies to everyday life as well as art. He elaborates on these thoughts in his paintings, a medium still steeped in the throes of academia. Playing with an amateurish flat style as in *CallMeChris Archive* (2012–2015), he shifts the selfie to an artistic subjectivity that often undergoes the same fate of being reduced to information.

HERESIES

The magazine *Heresies* ran from 1977 to 1993. Based in New York City, it was published collectively, with a different editorial, design and production team for each issue, apart from the core members and organisers – the Heresies collective – that included Miriam Schapiro, Lucy R. Lippard, Su Friedrich, Harmony Hammond and Cecilia Vicuña, and many more. The magazine's radical structure was intended to embrace as many voices and topics as possible; the aim was to present work that had been "systematically excluded from educational and cultural institutions". Such issues as *Organised Women Divided* (1980), *Racism Is the Issue* (1982), *Art in Unestablished Channels* (1985) or *LATINA* (1993), containing both texts and images, are still relevant and even shocking today. Alongside the issues is an address to Heresies' members calling out the difficulties of working in the way that they did.

FERNANDA LAGUNA

Corazoncita (2022) (Little Heart), *El encuentro* (2022) (The meeting), *Moñito rosa* (2022) (Pink bowtie): Fernanda Laguna's visual lexicon is already reflected in the titles of her works. She paints and draws an array of symbols such as hearts, bows, clouds, eyes or flowers, which might be read as a diary of her artistic persona. The glittery, bubble-gum-coloured, wicker-framed, personified symbols are cheerful, sad, worried, lost. In and through them, Laguna represents herself and her feelings as well as the people around her. Personal experiences, expressed with amateurish, generic graphics

resembling teenage notebooks are a call for empathy and relatability but also, as overt as they are, they are also excessive, an arbitrary outpour of emotions. Sentimentality in Laguna's work is to be taken at face value, no room for irony here.

"I always feel like if I tried harder, I could do things better than the way I do them. But somewhere in my heart there's a force that knocks me down and leads me back to something much more amateurish." This force is a form of resistance

against art based on canon – a form that Laguna and collaborators term "Arte_lin", which involves the mechanisms of chance and includes what "we don't know about art". It is not surprising that Laguna's practice is defined by a lack of distance; she is always in the thick of things.

As a writer, artist and organiser, she has set up numerous, already legendary art spaces in Buenos Aires such as Bellezza y Felicidad with Cecilia Pavón (1999–2007), Tu Rito (2010–13), Agatha Costure (2013–16) and Norma Mia (2020–), to name a few. Crucially, Laguna's multifaceted work is always about cultivating community and forging emotional bonds.

JORDAN LORD

I Can Hear My Mother's Voice (2018) is made collaboratively with Jordan Lord's mother Deborah Lord. Learning how to use a video camera, Deborah Lord films scenes in and around her home, then describes the footage as she watches it in play-back. Straight-forward descriptions of the images on screen – "there's a sofa with a puppy laying on it", "shimmering light that's reflecting off of the lake" – alternate with emotional response to the footage, though the two merge. We see and/or hear what and how she sees, how her, and by extension the artist's, involvement with the images influences how they are described and compiled. Laying open this subjectivity with methods of access including image captions and audio descriptions – methods that are often intended to be as "neutral" as possible – *I Can Hear My Mother's Voice* demonstrates how the interpretation of images, says Lord, "influences the reality of those in relation to them. This is different to the images being relative." Lord questions the image as a tool with which to access memory and gives space to the subjective and potentially emotional place that could be relatable or not, that could be misread or put off as "just" personal. Their role

as an artist is somewhere in this entanglement. In discussing *Shared Resources* (2021), a film about their family's debt made at the same time, Lord notes what is equally applicable to this work: "It's not just my Dad's story – it's my Mom's story, it's my story and we all have different ways of understanding it. But I also certainly don't think that the act of committing it to film – having the idea to do it and the social and other creative means to make it – makes it mine."

TIPHANIE KIM MALL

In *Schwester* (2021), Tiphany Kim Mall spends time with her younger half-brother and his friends somewhere not far from the City of Basel. Getting ready to go out, they talk about their interests, practice cat-walking and put on make-up, with the artist adapting her look to match theirs. The camera is passed around; at times Mall directs her brother and friends what to do with it, at others she is directed by them. Documentary films usually make a clear distinction between author and subject. Here the distinction is blurred, revealing Mall's own entanglement in family dynamics as well as the interest of an artist in probing the social structures of her immediate surroundings. Involvement and engagement in her brother's realm are precariously close to an intrusive appropriation of codes, while the translation of a common experience into an artwork brings with it, alongside the scenes' rawness, a critical distance. In her practice at large, which includes collective self-organised activities such as formats for and with young adults to make and get to know artistic film and video, Mall approaches questions around relatability and structural dependence that she as an artist and organizer is inherently bound to.

RIETLANDEN WOMEN'S OFFICE

Elisabeth Rafstedt and Johanna Ehde are Rietlanden Women's Office. They appear in the exhibition in a double capacity: as researchers and as the new graphic designers of Kunsthalle Winterthur. They are interested in current and historical methods of collaborative graphic design. Their publication series *MsHeresies* is titled after the New York feminist journal *Heresies* (1977–93). Both publications are on view in the exhibition. Rietlanden Women's Office's series focuses

on research into collaborative graphic design practices, circling around the ornament not just as a decorative element, but as a manifestation of specific social relations. Each issue takes a close look at publishing practices, such as *Triple Jeopardy*, a radical American magazine (1971–75), *Mukti* (1983–87), a publication made by the London-based South Asian feminist collective of the same name, William Morris' lecture *Useful Work versus Useless Toil* (1884) or illustrations by nuns in medieval manuscripts. They uncover urgent, disruptive or hidden political gestures in the design of ornaments as a type of shared visual language that runs counter to the “neutral”, structured grid that is so prevalent in graphic design. Rietland Women's Office's practice is “a visual engagement and dedication to others' texts and images”; they collect, appropriate and reactivate print methods, design elements and work processes, letting others define how the work develops without shying away from a complex and potentially complicated overlap of voices.

NIKLAS TALEB

Niklas Taleb takes photographs of his family and friends going about their everyday lives. *Reverse Psychology* (2020) shows Taleb's daughter eating breakfast, while in *Untitled (Boufarik, Paris)* (2024), an open laptop with a postcard on screen is combined with a friend looking at a painting. The latter, with its several perspectives, seems to suggest both many and no points of view at once. In contrast, Taleb's daughter's defiant look screams noncompliance, and, as the title suggests, she may be doing exactly what he wants by doing the opposite of what he asked her to do. Such disruptions are manifest in the form of the works. Pictures that resemble snapshots show disconcerting features like a hand entering the frame or doubling of the screen. This undermines the anecdotal recording of a personal history and breaks with the photographic impulse to capture something for memory's sake. The subtle rawness of the framing in Taleb's works emphasizes this break: they leave the private space, toy with questions of staging and contradict the idea of the serendipitous shot. The artist's works are, in fact, more like deceptive mirrors than documents of reality and his involvement is that of an ambivalent observer who puts a camera between himself and what he is very much immersed in.