

## *Contour Fatigue*

Sophia Al-Maria & Lydia Ourahmane,  
Adriano Costa, Namio Harukawa, Jasper  
Marsalis, Jonathan Okoronkwo, Margaret  
Raspé, Michael E. Smith, Alessandra  
Spranzi

11 April – 24 May 2025

To be contained is to be formed in relation to an edge: a threshold that marks what is held in and what is kept out. But containment rarely holds – it fatigues, often slowly; not always through spectacle, but through accumulation. *Contour Fatigue* brings together nine artists whose work turns toward these sites where containment falters. Through sculpture, installation, painting and video, alongside historic drawings by Japanese fetish artist Namio Harukawa, the exhibition explores how life can exceed the forms devised to hold it. Rather than rupture, we experience oversaturation: a surface too full to reflect, say, or a rhythm too worn to signify. Drift, deformation – where matter slides away from its form and begins to pool elsewhere.

When it is successful, containment can lend form, transforming one object into a carrier for something else. Where it fails, it becomes entrapment, giving way to an affective range of violence, disappointment, misrepresentation. In Namio Harukawa's drawings of domination, the act of containment is not violent. Rather, it is a gesture of devotional enclosure, in which the self is not broken but reconfigured. Male bodies disappear beneath thighs and bottoms, immobilised by the weight and flesh of Harukawa's seated women, vast and impassive. These smaller men become furniture: no longer self-contained, they are transformed into surface and support; folded into the architecture of the scene. Each seated pose becomes a configuration of containment as fetish: a loss of self under the pressure of another.

For Georges Bataille, it is moments of reconfiguration such as this that give rise to eroticism. The Bataillean understanding of the erotic emerges not from outside containment, but within it, as the internal pressure through which an edge begins to disintegrate or transgress. It is not a question of pleasure, but of proximity – to excess, to uncertainty, to the undoing of form. Where the self is relinquished, even momentarily, boundaries loosen and the body moves into continuity with something beyond itself, merging with the world. The other works in the exhibition, too, stay close to this pressure, to the threshold where structure grows porous and something formless, intimate, or obscure begins to take shape.

EMALIN

1 Holywell Lane  
London EC2A 3ET  
[www.emalin.co.uk](http://www.emalin.co.uk)

In Alessandra Spranzi's *Ogni mattina* (2006), a woman waves from her balcony each morning to an unseen recipient. The gesture, held within the frame and returned to each day, appears unchanged but slowly accrues difference, a steady insistence that reflects Spranzi's ongoing interest in how repetition can both preserve and unsettle the rituals of daily life. Containment here is temporal: an accumulation of moments that don't resolve. The artist's wider practice often involves rephotographing, reprinting, and rearranging found images until they become something else, not clarified, but estranged from their use. In *Ogni mattina*, this approach takes the form of a quiet, sustained attention to a solitary gesture — one that marks the distance between subjects, even as it insists on connection.

Jonathan Okoronkwo's paintings stage containment as both substance and struggle. His large-scale compositions, constructed through digital fragmentation and physical layering, translate the disassembled and repurposed nature of the scrapyards he draws from — a site of breakdown and excess. The use of motor oil as pigment literalises the impossibility of containment; an unstable, staining, seeping substance that refuses fixity. The resulting works stage fragments of mechanical life held momentarily in order—yet always shadowed by the entropy from which they emerge. These are not static representations but imprints of repair and decay, where the very material of the painting carries the residue of what once functioned. Containment here is always partial — an ongoing negotiation between absorption and resistance. What leaks is not only matter but memory: of labour and of extraction. Works that undo themselves in their own making, like light that annihilates the star it leaves behind.

Where these artists hold matter in suspension, Jasper Marsalis and Margaret Raspé take up the threshold of vision. Marsalis's *Face* series abstracts the facial field through mirrored surfaces — soldered metal, disco tiles, foil — constructing works that scatter recognition. The face is not depicted but dispersed: reduced to flicker and fragmentation, where light strikes and fractures. Across his practice, Marsalis draws out the tension between looking and being looked at, between subjecthood and spectacle. The face becomes both screen and stage: a surface that reflects the viewer back at themselves, but only in fragments — pixelated, deformed, delayed. Containment here is optical; the frame holds, but the surface resists legibility, dispersing what it captures.

Margaret Raspé's *Fernsehfrühstück* (1994/2023) presents four portable televisions arranged around a dining table, each screen partially obscured by a honeycomb grid. The image remains visible but never legible— broadcast content diffused into light and motion without resolution. The work reflects Raspé's enduring effort to unsettle automated perception and reorient attention, often using domestic tools and repetitive processes to reveal the structures of everyday life within an increasingly technologised world. Her approach is grounded in a belief that perception, consciousness, and ecological entanglement are inseparable. In *Fernsehfrühstück*, containment is rendered a visual condition, neither total nor fixed, enacted through a filter that withholds resolution while sustaining presence. What is held is not the image itself but its delay: a softened insistence that resists immediate consumption and invites a different kind of attention.

Sophia Al-Maria and Lydia Ourahmane's diptych *Job Lot* (late 1700s/2024) and *Silver Service* (1774/2024) draws out the politics of inheritance through the material residue of two English lineages. First presented in their joint exhibition

*Grey Unpleasant Land* at Spike Island in 2024 – their first collaborative project, though each maintains a distinctive practice – the work examines how inherited objects hold and transmit histories of class, identity and value.

In *Job Lot*, 240 porcelain chamber pots, inherited by Graham Randles from his pub-owning parents in Liverpool, are stacked in precarious excess, recalling their former place suspended from a pub ceiling. *Silver Service* comprises Sir William Bellingham's 250-year-old collection of George III silverware, long stored in vaults and heavy trunks. Installed in separate rooms of The Clerk's House – the chamber pots in what would have been the bedroom, the silver in the downstairs showroom – the diptych plays out the architectures of class and legacy: what is lived with and what is put on display. Containment here is physical, symbolic, and psychic; bound up in domestic rituals, classed histories, and systems of preservation that both stabilise and constrain. Set to be auctioned this year, the diptych is further reframed through the logic of consumption, where vessels of both waste and refinement return to circulation.

Two untitled works by Michael E. Smith consist of brass cymbals, lightly marked with beads, spraypaint and plastic occlusions. The objects remain recognisable, yet their material state is subtly unsettled. As in much of the artist's work, meaning emerges through a shift in register, from the familiar to the slightly estranged, where function is neither restored nor revoked, but held in tension. Containment here is interior and unresolved: not a sealing-in, but a holding together of fragile associations – sonic, bodily, cultural – just before they dissipate.

Adriano Costa's practice attends to the inherent value of all matter, repositioning discarded or overlooked materials through acts of care and devotion. In *AC 22* (2022), a pack of folded black garbage bags – the label "saco de lixo" still visible – is sealed in clear acrylic. The phrase translates simply as trash bag but what is held or implied is less literal. The dense opaque form almost entirely fills the space, turning containers of waste into something contained themselves. Costa has described this fullness as a kind of metaphor – not only for waste, but for all that escapes easy naming. He recalls a scene from Beckett's *Happy Days*, in which a woman buried to her neck in sand continues reaching for a toothbrush. It is a state of near-total enclosure, yet routine persists. That paradox holds in *AC 22*: the black mass feels both banal and bottomless. A container within a container, it speaks not only to utility but to absurdity and a refusal to discard.

**Sophia Al-Maria** (b. 1983, Tacoma, US) lives and works in London. Selected solo and group exhibitions have been held at Spike Island, Bristol (2024); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2023); GARAGE, Moscow (2021); Serpentine x Modern Forms Sculpture Commission, London (2021); Julia Stoschek, Düsseldorf (2020); Tate Britain, London (2019); Fondazione Pomodoro, Milan (2019); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2019); Mercer Union, Images Festival, Toronto (2018); Biennale of Moving Images, Miami (2017); High Line Art, New York (2017); CCS Bard Gallery, Annandale-On-Hudson (2017); Villa Empain Boghossian Foundation, Brussels (2017); Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2017); Project, Shanghai (2017); La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2017); Benaki Museum, Athens (2017); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2017); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016); Villa Empain, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels (2016); LUMA Westbau, Zürich (2015); and New Museum, New York (2015).

**Adriano Costa** (b. 1975, São Paulo, Brazil) lives and works in São Paulo. Selected solo exhibitions have been held at Emalin, London (2024), A Sud, Pescara (2023); Mendes Wood DM, New York (2023); SALTS, Birsfelden (2022); Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2021); Nuno Centeno, Porto (2019); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2018); Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo (2018); David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (2016); Supportico Lopez, Berlin (2016); and Sadie Coles HQ, London (2014). Costa's work has been included in group exhibitions held at Serralves, Porto (2022), Chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai (2021); Seattle Art Museum, Seattle (2017); Lothringer13 Halle, Munich (2017); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014); Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2014); and Musee D'Art Contemporain de Lyon (2014).

**Namio Harukawa** (b. 1947, Osaka, Japan – d. 2020, Tokyo, Japan) was a pseudonymous Japanese fetish artist. He developed his career in the 1960's and 70's contributing illustrations to pornographic magazines. Notable publications include the two-volume *Kyonyū Katsuai* (2000); *Callipyge* (2009) and *Maxi Cula* (2012) by the French publishing house United Dead Artists; and the anthology *The Incredible Femdom Art of Namio Harukawa* (2019). In 2013, his work was exhibited at the Museum of Eroticism in Paris, marking his first solo exhibition outside Japan.

**Jasper Marsalis** (b. 1995, Los Angeles, US) lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2025), Emalin, London (2024), Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); Emalin, London (2022); Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis (2020); Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles (2020); and Svetlana, New York (2018). Current and recent group exhibitions include the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2025); Nicoletta Fiorucci Collection, London (2025); the Zürich Biennial, Kunsthalle Zürich (2023); Nicoletta Fiorucci Collection, Monaco (2023); Galerie Buchholz, Cologne (2022); Gladstone Gallery, New York (2022); Emalin, London (2021); Lehman College Art Gallery, New York (2020); cfop, New York (2019); and The Cooper Union, New York (2017).

**Jonathan Okoronkwo** (b. 1993, Aflao, Ghana) lives and works in Accra, Ghana. Recent exhibitions include Galerie Neu, Berlin (2025); Kunsthalle Zürich (2023); KNUST Museum, Kumasi (2022); Gallery 1957, Accra (2022); Kunstmuseum Bonn (2022); Kunstverein Freiburg (2019); Acasa Triennial, Accra (2017).

**Lydia Ourahmane** (b. 1992, Saïda, Algeria) lives and works in Barcelona, London and Algiers. Selected solo and group exhibitions have been held at Spike Island, Bristol (2024); CAPC, Bordeaux (2024); Tate Britain, London (2023); MACBA, Barcelona (2023); Julia Stoschek Foundation, Berlin (2023); The National Museum of Art, Osaka (2023); KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin (2022); Progetto, Lecce (2022); Sculpture Centre, New York (2022); S.M.A.K Ghent (2022); Kunsthalle Basel (2021); Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2022); Portikus, Frankfurt (2021); De Appel, Amsterdam (2021); Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2020); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek (2019) and Chisenhale Gallery, London (2018). Her work was included in the 60th Biennale di Venezia, 15th Gwangju Biennale, 34th Bienal de Sao Pãulo, New Museum Triennale and Manifesta 12.

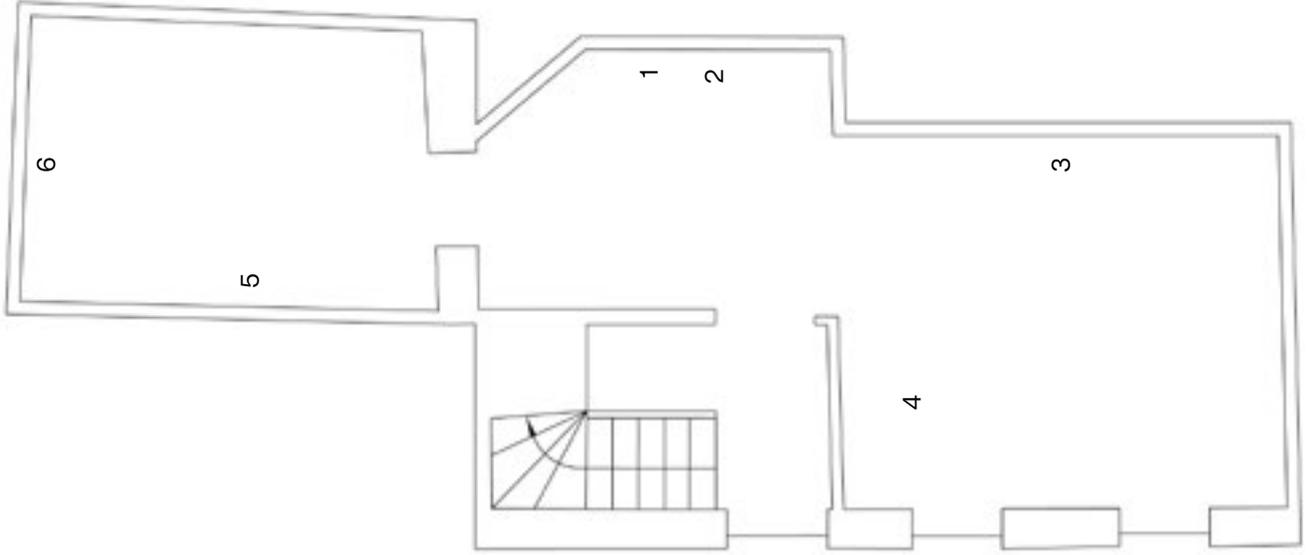
**Margaret Raspé** (b. 1933, Breslau, Poland – d. 2023, Berlin, Germany) explored and opened structures of perception in an oeuvre that spanned five decades and encompasses film, performance, photography, sound works, and large-scale installation. Selected solo and group exhibitions have been held at Galerie Molitor, Berlin (2024); Toyota Municipal Museum of Art (2024); HOUSE, Berlin (2024); Haus am Waldsee, Berlin (2023); Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2023); Josef Albers Museum, Bottrop (2023); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2021); Projekt Galerie Mitte, Berlin (2001) Amanda Wilkinson Gallery, London (2019); Galerie Kunstsalon Bel Étage, Berlin-Pankow (2001); Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (1996); Heimatmuseum Tempelhof, Berlin (1994); Galerie Alpha Centauri, Parma (1994); Kozept Museum Galerie, Berlin (1993); Palazzo Ruini, Reggio Emilia (1992); Gallery Powerhouse, Montreal (1990). Raspé's films attracted international attention early on and were shown at the Anthology Film Archives, New York, and the Hayward Gallery, London, among others.

**Michael E. Smith** (b. 1977, Detroit, US) lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island. His work has been the subject of institutional solo and group exhibitions at Kunst Museum Winterthur, Winterthur (2024); the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2023); the Whitney Biennial (2022 and 2012); Nottingham Contemporary (2022); the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2021); Fondation Carmignac, Hyères (2021); Secession, Vienna (2020); the 58th Venice Biennale (2019); The Power Station, Dallas (2019); Kunsthalle Basel (2018); 13th Baltic Triennial (2018); MoMA PS1, New York (2017); S.M.A.K., Ghent (2017); Kunsthaus Zürich (2018); and Kunstverein Hannover (2015).

**Alessandra Spranzi** (b. 1962, Milan, Italy) lives and works in Milan. Her work has been shown in solo and two-person exhibitions at Casa Morandi, Bologna (2025); The Women's Darkroom + Gallery, New York (2024); Arcade at CFAlive, Conceptual Fine Arts, Milan (2024); P420, Bologna (2023); COMMERCE, Milan (2023); IUNO, Rome (2022); LCA Studio Legale, Milan (2021); Arcade, London (2019); P420, Bologna (2018); MAGra Museo di Arte Contemporanea di Granara (2016); Centre Photographique d'Île de France, Pontault-Combault (2015); P420, Bologna (2014); and Arcade, London (2014).

## GROUND FLOOR

1. Michael E. Smith  
*untitled*, 2024  
cymbal, plastic  
30.5 x 30.5 x 2.5 cm  
12 x 12 x 1 inches
2. Michael E. Smith  
*untitled*, 2024  
cymbal, beads, plastic  
33 x 40.6 x 7.5 cm  
13 x 16 x 3 inches
3. Jonathan Okoronkwo  
*Kondem Wayers*, 2022  
used motor oil, dissolved metal paste  
from engine parts, plywood  
122 x 244 cm  
48 x 96 inches
4. Alessandra Spranzi  
*Ogni mattina*, 2006  
single-channel video, colour, sound  
duration: 3:03 min
5. Sophia Al-Maria & Lydia Ourahmane  
*Silver Service*, 1774/2024  
two wooden chests, silverware  
each: 60 x 91.5 x 61.5 cm  
23 5/8 x 36 x 24 1/4 inches  
installation dimensions variable
6. Namio Harukawa  
*Untitled 41*, 2011  
pencil on paper  
35.8 x 27.5 x 3.2 cm (framed)  
14 1/8 x 10 7/8 x 1 1/4 inches



## FIRST FLOOR

7. Sophia Al-Maria & Lydia Ourahmane  
*Job Lot, late 1700s/2024*  
240 chamber pots  
dimensions variable
8. Namio Harukawa  
*Untitled 21, 2011*  
pencil on paper  
35.8 x 27.5 x 3.2 cm (framed)  
14 1/8 x 10 7/8 x 1 1/4 inches
9. Adriano Costa  
*AC 22, 2022*  
garbage bag, paper, acrylic  
32 x 19.2 x 5 cm  
12 5/8 x 7 1/2 x 2 inches
10. Margaret Raspé  
*Fernsehfrühstück, 1994/2023*  
table, tablecloth, chairs, televisions,  
honeycombs  
table: 78 x 122 ø cm  
30 3/4 x 48 ø inches  
overall installation dimensions variable
11. Jasper Marsalis  
*Face 12, 2025*  
mirror and solder on canvas  
20.5 x 26 x 3.7 cm  
8 1/8 x 10 1/4 x 1 1/2 inches

