

But then I realized how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life, not just in this building but everywhere, and not reacting—do you see? I guess you don't. But that used to be considered a sign of mental illness; they called it 'absence of appropriate affect'.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Philip K. Dick describes the androids as physically indistinguishable from humans. The only way they can be identified as post-human creatures is through a test that measures their physiological responses to hypothetical scenarios that should evoke a moral shock. Though they look, think, and sound human, the one thing the androids lack is empathy, the ability to love and feel for lives other than their own. But in times where pain is more and more mediated through a constant stream of images and visual stimuli, can anyone actually relate to it? How can it be conveyed within our "culture of spectatorship" without transforming the intolerable into fiction and without an irrelevant form of aestheticization?

*The Pain of Others* draws its title from Susan Sontag's eponymous essay analyzing the representation of pain and our reaction, as viewers, to images of horror. The exhibition features the works of artists whose practices evoke both discomfort and empathy, bridging personal and shared memory while allowing a certain emotional charge to crystallize around a material. It reflects on the ability to convey someone else's pain through representation. Does the pain of others titillate us as long as it is kept at a safe distance?

The exhibition aims to draw a non-linear narrative about our human ability to truly comprehend someone else's pain, in the etymological sense of *grasping together* the feelings of others. The artists give substance to the utter incommunicability of violence, trauma and pain, initiating a tender yet sharp dance with the question of what, apparently, makes us human.

About the curator

Myriam Ben Salah (b. 1985, Algiers) is a curator and writer partially based in Paris, where she coordinated special projects and public programs at the Palais de Tokyo from 2009 to 2016, with a special focus on performance, video and publishing initiatives. She is the Editor in Chief of *Kaleidoscope Magazine*. She also co-edited *F.A.Q.*, a periodical image-only magazine with artist Maurizio Cattelan, as well as *FEB MAG*, the publication of the Underground Museum in Los Angeles. She is currently working on the first monograph of artist Neïl Beloufa. Her writings have appeared in numerous international art publications and catalogues. Ben Salah is the curator of the 10th edition of the Abraaj Group Art Prize taking place in Dubai in March 2018.

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