

Rafael Moreno *projections*

Curated by Amanda Weimer

Amanda Weimer and Lynn Stechert
Introduction

In Rafael Moreno's solo exhibition *projections*, the city becomes a "mega body." A constantly running system that produces promises and at the same time tears them apart in chaos. A scenario of repetition, desire, and excess. The metropolis becomes a projection screen for fantasies, fears, and power structures.

Two towers rise on the right. A larger-than-life mannequin looks down from one; a flower grows from the other. The light of a blue moon shines onto the urban structure, twilight in a retro-futuristic Metropolis. *She changes all the time (for Margot)*, 2024, and *Untitled*, 2025, reflect the vertical densification of the city. In reference to Ingmar Bergman's film *Persona* (1966), identities blur and fold into one another. *Strategies*, 2022, a skyscraper placed on a red surface – as a monument to male dominance – reveals what lies beneath the polished facades of the skyline: fantasies, kinks, productivity, and functioning within the system. In *Pussputers*, 2025, computer cases and incubators glow in red light and offer shelter to small cats. The cases are covered with collaged reports from the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo*. Here, the city processes itself. Information is absorbed, reproduced, and circulated; ideology becomes infrastructure. Behind it, a screen, *Personal Computers*, 2025, repeatedly shows the Manhattan skyline. It becomes the mise-en-scène of Empire State of Mind, the promise of endless possibilities, the prism of desires and dreams in the big city: *These streets will make you feel brand new – big lights will inspire you.*

Rafael Moreno, born in Colombia in 1993, lives and works in Paris. She graduated from ENSBA Paris in 2021 and is developing a research-based practice on automation, communication technologies, DIY cultures, and their relationship to trans identities and political resistance. In works that combine installation, performance, text, and research, she explores the inter-relationships between bodies, technology, and socio-economic structures, drawing on experiences of migration, work, and class. Rafael Moreno has exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo, CAPC Bordeaux, and CCA Berlin, among others.

Lou Ferrand
What's in Her Bag?

Terminal 4E of a state-of-the-art airport – she's heading toward boarding – I can't tell whether it's a business trip or tourism – she's just come back from duty-free with tax-exempt products – here the prices haven't shifted yet, apparently that's not the case everywhere – she passes through the metal detector – when suddenly – oOps – everything starts beeping...



The bag itself has the sheen of skyscraper façades – in its metal clasp the distant skyline is reflected – she is returning from a short trip to a pilot city – a technopolis pioneering in many respects – and yet the traffic there is dense – the weather deceptive – and nothing ever quite goes according to plan.

Yesterday's New York Times – she follows world affairs closely – I'm impressed that she reads it in English – she has noticed that whenever the poems turn bad, the news must be to blame – they report on police violence, escalating unrest, Cybertrucks set on fire – but also on AIs falling in love for the first time.

A pair of scissors – potentially utilitarian, still a bit belligerent – maybe to cut a few words out of the newspapers – a spray deodorant – it was pretty obvious that wasn't going to get through... – a nail polish the color of banknotes – a customized pocket fan and a few cigarettes for indulging in her favorite activity – sitting on a bench, watching the sky and the planes go by.

A worn magnetic key card leading to one of the rooms of a hotel in the city center – she keeps it as a souvenir of a particularly star-filled night – it must be said that in the past many wanted to objectify her – even though she knows exactly how to seduce, she now appreciates it when men simply stop talking for once.

A loyalty card because she adores the enchantment of shopping and a well-executed purchase – she knows her beauty is a unit of exchange and a generator of capital – she has an ambivalent relationship with the state and distrusts system – she occasionally embraces certain conspiracy theories – her makeup bag really has nothing to envy – everything for glass skin and thwarted hormones. A paperback on probability – she's trying to learn the mathematical combinations that might multiply her winnings – she's always loved economics, cash, stock market crashes, but not so much merit – she believes in her luck but sometimes cheats at dice – she sees in their roll a slightly dramaturgical metaphor for the geopolitical stage.

An empty wrapper from a cucumber and cream cheese sandwich – they were graciously handed out by the airline – she asked the flight attendant: *ma'am, please, could I have an extra sandwich – it's for my daughter, my little baby girl* – even if I have a rather ethereal experience of motherhood, I still wouldn't want her to go hungry – there are also baby wipes and a small brush to comb her hair.

Finally, at the bottom of her bag, I see a scrap of paper – for years she found herself in a rivalry with a former high-school classmate – people said they were alike – after so many duels and manipulations, it reads:

You're everything you wish you are – you're just a superstar... So no need for good wishes – & que sera, sera, I guess.

Luise Thiele
LUMINARY BUZZ

The city is a place consisting of genres and narratives. A loose affectively invested zone of expectations about the shape a situation will take. However, many ways of what you call yourself and how you write your name.

I wrote this theory about the *figura* while I was thinking about my friendships and my relation to the city I grew up in. I remember, I could always watch and feel how that city changed while I was living in it. I remember to feel this city like a body that I am inhabiting. I could feel all its trials, and all the failures.

DE FIGURA

Gabriele Brandstetter's theory of the figure, published in 2002, describes *figura* as the external, plastic form of a body whose most important characteristic is that it acts in relation to the imagination and derives its productivity from being alive and unfinished. Brandstetter's *figura* conveys ideas of its own plasticity, giving it a performative dimension, at the center of which is the figure itself and its transformation into a scene. The term *figura* thus describes contour, drawing and image as well as all forms of transformation. Since the concept of transformation is related to the concept of novelty, the figure, according to Brandstetter, rises above the level of consciousness. The figure describes an imaginary construct, something invisible or at most physical, since the figurative is not bound to a place. The *figura* contains the dual form of image and likeness, as the imaginary is in a constant relationship with the real, creating a moment of speech between promise and fulfillment, word and body, event and history, idea and matter.

Brandstetter quotes the writer Novalis in her text: (...) „that this suspension does not produce a subsequent connection, that the productive power of imagination for its part only produces the extremes – that which is suspended between the two.

disappearance is a movement that is full of energy. The energy of disappearance is not ineffective, on the contrary, it can as well unbalance the existing.“
It is therefore a force that empowers and releases itself by neither disturbing nor destroying the power of formation, but rather disempowering it. Its law is to stop the figuration at its conclusion and in this process to make it eternally whole at every moment. It is the „energy of disappearance“

It is important to note here that a real completion of the imaginary figures would simultaneously mean an absolute end to the imaginary bodies, as the figures are about an endlessness that makes the in-between space possible.

Therefore, *figura* means a state of transformation FOREVER, in which the figuration is completed at every moment. This is where the paradox of *figura* lies and it is at the same time its performative starting point, aiming to be eternally whole.

GLASSES

Wearing glasses without prescription or with the wrong prescription is like a half-dream between sleeping and waking, in which what you've heard is mixed with what you've read and experienced.

Under this guise, we invent our own meanings. This makes it possible to react to the disorder we are accused of, to build on it and within „being misunderstood“, to achieve a misunderstanding in a broader sense – namely to deliberately create confusion and thus adulterate our surroundings. Being delusional is therefore seen as an inability and being unproductive, while in fact there is cooperation and a structure of their own within it, which in its supposed inability and disruption represents a resistance, a point of irritation and thus their „mistake“ becomes an effect in itself, as it lies in the way like a stumbling block.

Delusion, like the scene, performs itself.

The spotlight, Kate

The spotlight, which points to the stage floor, is circular. The shape of the circle on the floor becomes the location of a performance. It separates itself from the rest of the room. The viewer's attention, which is directed towards the stage (the circle), is a force that acts from outside. Meanwhile, its own content acts from the inside outwards and on the viewer out of an independent impulse.

If you remove the inside of the circle,
it becomes a ring.

A round entrance, a portal or a passageway between two. An exchange between two worlds can take place here. Something can pass from one into the other and transform. It is a change of scenery. Since the figure itself is infinite, we cannot achieve its goal, which lies in self-expression, in a single sphere of time.

A change of spheres or a change of scene between the moment and the present. The completed circle without an interior thus signifies a synthesis of opposites, it tells of separation and the past as well as of the moment of transition from pain to pleasure, of perfection without a clear origin.

The circular shape can also be found in the sequin, the round, glittering appliqué for dresses. The shimmering jewels, the focus you put on yourself when you wear a party dress. A perfection in the presentation that has no origin. The aim of the scene is to bring the figuration to a halt in its conclusion and, in this process, to let it seem completed in every moment.

Disappearance is a movement that is full of energy. The energy of disappearance is not ineffective, on the contrary, it can as well unbalance the existing. *Figura* presents their own performance as a figure. *Figura* is therefore a circular figure times two, enclosed by a coat or a cape. The circles are self-contained and touch each other lightly. *Figura* conveys both: the idea of a sculptural figure and its own plasticity.

It unfolds its effect in the in-between of the imagination that opens up the in-between, in the in-between of power and formation. It is about the „matter of two“ without a reason.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DUPLICATION THROUGH SPLITTING

The dual form of attraction and protection.

If I did not tear off a piece of myself and let this germ develop in a peculiar way before my eyes – Novalis

Figura acts as a double figure of two events, in which one of them means not only itself but also the other, meanwhile including and fulfilling the other one. While *figura* withdraws from a theme, it opens up at the same time.

In this constellation, a dialog takes place between event and history and idea and material.

The performance itself has a tendency to go wrong and remains open to mistakes. So if an action turns out to be a failure, a misstep, it is not because something is missing in it or because it is wrong itself, but because it does something other than expected.

A misstep is not simply a failed performance, but a moment of potential and insight.

ACTRESSES BEING ACTRESSES

The effect of repetition consists in the subsequent de- and re-figuration of the figure, in the displacement of the figure.

Only in this way can a perception of finer differences occur. The displacement of a scenic figure makes it possible to observe its process and its fragility. It is noticeable that the figure not only evokes different representations, but also different perceptions. The real remains unknowable to us for our entire existence.

We cannot exert any real power over the real. The real is beyond appearance and perception. The real, in Lacan's sense, lies in repetition compulsions that repeat themselves throughout our lives. According to Lacan, these repetitions are constantly failing attempts to say something that cannot be said. Bette Davis and Gena Rowlands are actresses who have been cast as actresses in films. Actresses who play women, actresses who play at being actresses. Bette Davis in the Hollywood film *What ever happened to Baby Jane*, Gena Rowlands in *Opening Night* as well as Penélope Cruz in *Los Abrazos Rotos* by Pedro Almodóvar. They are a double figure and character whose doubling reminds us that actresses playing actresses are playing a fiction within a fiction.

Ana Viktoria Dzinic
*The Cliff of Signification:
a Kate Moss Top-Shop Dress in Paris,
very Mocha Frappuccino.*

Max Mustermann just opened his first show in Paris. Not a fashion show, but an art show, though in Paris the distinction is operational rather than real. The gallery shares its initials with Coco Chanel. Double C: a compressed signal that fuses intellect with luxury, or luxury masquerading as intellect? Caroline Calloway also operates under the same alphabetical logic; according to Scammer, this repetition produces maximum impact. Branding begins at the level of the name. A good name is an asset. A great name is leverage. Max understands this intuitively, if not analytically.

Max Mustermann was lucky in this way. He believes TikTok videos while riding the metro. Not selectively: rather structurally. The platform teaches him random things in fragments, and the fragments feel complete. The commute from Saint-Sulpice (home) to Gare du Nord (studio) is exhilarating because it is filled with content: “what if I stopped texting because I became a koala,” “deep down I’m still the thirteen-year-old girl who felt like she had no one,” “when God wants to make you successful, He will first take away your comfort, He will test your patience, He will isolate you, He will challenge your faith. because before He gives you the life you dream of, He builds the version of you that can handle it.” The feed is a theology of interruption. It builds him a palace of joy.

He likes passing the stations. The metro produces a soft ambient hum. Everyone is watching something. A synchronized isolation. Pleasure circulates privately but at scale. Each person fulfills a personal kink, an orgy without contact, desire flattened into screens. Pleasure should be shared, Max thinks. He is never depressed. Depression would imply friction.

Today Max is heading to the Louvre. He has never been. He walks from the 7th to the 1st. Rain places a gray filter over the city. A headline about police violence flashes on a public screen, absorbed and discarded. He orders a mocha frappuccino at Starbucks, not for taste, but for the word. Mocha frappuccino. Repetition produces sensation. Whoosh, swoosh. Language becomes texture. Mocha Frappuccino. Mocha Frappuccino. Mocha Frappuccino.

Paris feels different today. The Ryanair economy of tiny round tables, wicker chairs, dirty-blond façades appears suddenly melancholic. Homogeneous, but pleasing. A beauty without interest. Kant, filtered through George. He likes learning. He encounters an artwork by Bunny Rogers: a girl drinking wine in a snow-filled cafeteria, Elliott Smith covers playing softly.

He listens. He walks past glass, metal, stone. He enjoys it. Still, he senses himself being molded, like a cookie-cutter subjectivity. His flesh being shaped like the Eiffel Tower: long, skinny, majestic. Beauty as effortless surface, aged patina posing as authenticity.

He is unsure whether this feeling is positive. He wants freedom at all costs. When fear appears, he aestheticizes it. The Eiffel Tower becomes a Temu object wrapped in leopard print, swinging to Lana Del Rey's Ultraviolence. “He hit me and it felt like a kiss.” Paris turns into a background dancer. Dubai's Miracle Garden enters the frame: European plants arranged as palm trees, electronic ballerinas spinning around flowers shaped like airplanes. Simulation as wonder. A miracle, optimized.

Crossing from rive gauche to rive droite, Max identifies as the bridge. Why choose when circulation is possible? The bridge is mocha frappuccino. His life is mocha frappuccino: funny, beautiful, maybe not tasty. Possibly defined by absence.

Approaching the Louvre, he anticipates the images inside: pain, suffering, death. It makes him emo: an aesthetic he has avoided. Why be sad when happiness is available? Emo feels suburban. Is sadness provincial? Elliott Smith continues playing in his head. Derealization sets in. The world moves. Max pauses. What do you do when you don't feel real?

Then he sees a girl in a Kate Moss x Topshop dress, A.F. Vandevorst heels, a Kiko bag. Fashion Week. The Louvre is closed for the Louis Vuitton show. Institutions as rentable shells. Museums as real estate. In Paris, this feels logical. The music stops. Jacob Elordi exits a car. Phones rise.

Max feels empty again. He walks toward the Jardin des Tuileries. A carousel turns. Children laugh.

Rilke surfaces:

*You, sent out beyond your recall,
go to the limits of your longing.
Embody me.*

Max changes direction. Another border crossed. He plays the song he heard at the gym. *I Like Your Look* by Kim Petras. He feels the need to go to New York and talk to a gay person, hoping the limits will finally embody him. He dreams of being a skyscraper kissing the sky.

chess club is an independent contemporary art space based in Hamburg, founded in 2022 by curator Amanda Weimer. The space is dedicated to Hamburg's local art scene and its exchange with international artists. It brings together artistic positions through exhibitions, performances, screenings, readings, and small-scale publications. chess club focuses on affect, spirituality, and the poetics of community. In 2026 chess club will be in residence at the Kunstverein and develop its own program throughout the year.

Amanda Weimer (b. 1995, Cologne) is a curator based in Hamburg. She studied Art History and Cultural Management in Frankfurt am Main. From 2020, she worked as Assistant Curator at Kunsthalle Basel. In 2022, she relocated to Hamburg and founded the independent art space **chess club**. Between 2023 and 2025, she worked at Sfeir-Semler Gallery. Alongside her institutional work, she curates and organises independent projects with a focus on collaborative and interdisciplinary formats.

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Texts

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