

Liquidity has served as a metaphor for digital activity now for several decades, not least because of the [1] “randomness, chaos, and even danger” individual users risk when dropping lazily into so-called information streams—fraught with outrageous reactionary currents and devastating emotional riptides. If certain acquired skill (youth, self-loathing) is needed to avoid a total wipeout, the breaking deluge can also be conceptually rethought.

As merely one wave, after another: a rhythmic electrical pulse disbursed in amplifying peaks and troughs; occasionally troubled by directional winds and other microtrends. *Más o menos*, it ebbs and flows—contingent on atmospheric pressures, “real time.”

The mechanical manipulation of water was key to the flourishing of ancient civilization, but the domestic luxuries of indoor plumbing are a more recent (19th c.) revolution—when private concerns of personal cleanliness found ideological expression in public life, and progressive reformists keen to cleanse the engulfing urban masses. “It is not given to every man,” wrote Baudelaire, “to take a bath of multitude.”

Awash in anxiety, today the vile aspect of social hygiene returns—filtered into the mainstream from private-interest channels; buoyed by resentment.

Two new bodies of work by Nina Könnemann examine obscure contemporary activities of subsistence and leisure, as practiced through one’s toilet. Each technically relies on, or is explicitly derived from, a series of plumbing fixtures and commercially available streaming media. Along a narrow shelf in a soothing “comfort room,” *Lithic Reductions* (2015–18) demonstrate the artist’s “how-to”-tutelage in the craft-hobby of knapping. Sample survivalist fantasy tools are flaked from a salvaged washbasin column and postwar American toilet porcelain.

The single-channel video *Que Onda* (2018) blends footage pre-recorded at the outdoor public sanitation facility on Venice Beach Ocean Front Walk with a live-stream filmed by the artist on location during the exhibition vernissage; broadcast over the Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks Office WiFi hotspot. Cleaning rituals performed by day-trippers, musclemen, hustlers, and rough sleepers—cautiously exploiting still-extant public resources—are eclipsed by views of the raw-concrete-and-aluminum shelter, bathed in winter twilight. The video’s texture analogizes the structural masking that enables disregard for clear (“live”) conditions within our midst, while documenting the humble freedoms of dropping out.

With the general erosion of personal dignity and common good, the “perfect bonhomie” of regulated

online sociality converts subscribers into standing data reserves—a Pactolus dense with human sediment, draining, like gray water, out to sea.

Kari Rittenbach

Nina Könnemann (b. Bonn, Germany 1971) is an artist living and working in Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions and screenings include Centre Pompidou, Paris/KW ICA, Berlin; Museum Brandhorst, Vienna; and group exhibitions at Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; W139, Amsterdam and Yale Union, Portland. Thank you to Dr. Sul.

[1] Jean Armor Polly, www.netmom.com, 22 March 2008.

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