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Art Review:

Contains 7% RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE; 22% SILVER PANTONE 877;
7% SCIENCE FICTION; 1 DIY MISSION TO MARS

Polite Society
the return of the
New York salon

Tino Sehgal
actions speak
louder than words



Documenta 13, Kassel, 9 June – 16 September, d13.documenta.de / **Manifesta 9**, Limburg, 2 June – 30 September, www.manifesta9.org / **Un-Scene II**, WIELS, Brussels, 22 June – 26 August, www.wiels.org / **David Claerbout**, Parasol Unit, London, 31 May – 10 August, www.parasol-unit.org / **Alice in the Wonderland of Art**, Hamburger Kunsthalle, 22 June – 30 September, www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de / **Muzi Quawson**, Annet Gelink, Amsterdam, 1 July – 31 August, www.annetgelink.com / **Paola Pivi / Oscar Tuazon**, Public Art Fund, New York, 20 June – 26 August / 19 July – 26 April 2013 / **Seher Shah**, Nature Morte, Berlin, 8 June – 28 July, www.naturemorte.com / **Ciprian Mureşan**, Galerie Hussenot, Paris, to 20 June, www.galeriehussenot.com

Now SEE This

If not the widely reviled seventh Berlin Biennale, something good ought to come out of Germany this summer. Will it be **Documenta 13**? Initially, aside from a warm-up series of philosophical publications, *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, dedicated to propositional thinking, the quinquennial behemoth's advance-publicity machine seemed content to spin out photographs of curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in smiley poses. But now it's clarified (via a curator's statement) that the show is 'dedicated to artistic research and forms of imagination that explore commitment, matter, things, embodiment, and active living in connection with, yet not subordinated to, theory and epistemological closure'. This Documenta will be concerned, then, with how different fields of knowledge contribute to reimagining the

world; but also with productive deferral, with resisting nailing knowledge production down. Christov-Bakargiev, preshow interviews suggest, desires to produce something that evades the prison of categorisation, to the point of building a section of the show – in the main venue, the Fridericianum – that she sees as an intractable riddle. (It contains fragments of destroyed sculptures from Beirut, a photograph of a former bombsite, and Morandi paintings and their source material.) Underwriting this tactical feinting, the contributors (at press time, we were still waiting for a complete list) range from activists to zoologists, from Theodor Adorno to Salvador Dalí, Mario Garcia Torres (see his text 'A Few Questions...', page 46) to Pierre Huyghe, wildcat filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky to, um, wildcat curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. You'll learn *something* here, for sure. Even if it's only that you can't learn something.

Think of Limburg and what comes to mind? This is a test. No points for Rush Limbaugh, one for cheese that smells like body odour, two for Brian Eno's *The Fat Lady of Limbourg* (1974) and three for **Manifesta 9**, since the itinerant biennial is setting up in the province of Limburg, Belgium, centring upon the former Waterschei coalmine in Genk. For *The Deep of the Modern*, cocurated by Cuauhtémoc Medina, Katerina Gregos and Dawn Ades, 39 selected artists are engaging, we're told, with industrialism, postindustrialism and global capitalism. What we know beyond that: the list straddles centuries and diverse practices – Carlos Amorales to Richard Long to William Heath Robinson to Henry Moore – and 16 tons of coal have been delivered to the venue.



**Documenta 13 venue
Gloria Kino, Kassel**
Photo: Nils Klingner



Marcel Broodthaers
(see **Manifesta 9**)
Trois Tas de Charbon (detail),
1966–7, installation with coal,
wood, paper, variable dimensions.
Collection Marie-Puck Broodthaers
Gallery, Brussels. Courtesy
Estate Marcel Broodthaers

Spotlighting Belgium makes sense, with increasing numbers of artists supposedly choosing Brussels – ‘a complete mess, but in the good sense’, as one gallerist who decamped there in 2010 told *The New York Times* last year – over Berlin (or anywhere else). **Un-Scene II**, the second impression of WIELS’s scaled-down national triennial, uses the fact that the country patchworks former territories and languages as a rationale for the stylistic and thematic pluralism that Brussels in particular, uh, sprouts: the dozen artists this time include the appealingly off-beam, darkly faux-naïve painter/sculptor Dorota Jurczak, artist/detective/adventurer Olivier Foulon, who’s previously devoted his time to hunting down and filming Courbet paintings; and Peter Wächtler, whose videos anatomise ad hoc, under-the-radar social groups.

To pursue Tintinland with dangerous alacrity, Parasol Unit’s *The Time That Remains* covers ten years of Belgian **David Claerbout**’s patient, passively aggressive practice, his digitally augmented videos looping or tweaking modest events and gifting them with flustering airs. In the half-hour *Shadow Piece* (2005), set in the 1950s, figures repeatedly try to get through a modern building’s glass doors, endlessly barred (as the artist has suggested) from a hygienic modernist future that would never arrive. In the 25-minute two-channel projection *Riverside* (2009), the man and woman scrambling around on the riverbanks in each are, we realise, heading towards the same topographic point but never to meet onscreen; the storyline, like its maker’s art in general, speaking of endless irresolution and elegant structural frustration, much solar-plexus twistiness from minimal means.



David Claerbout
Bordeaux Piece, 2004, single-channel video projection, DV CAM (progressive) transferred to hard disk, colour, stereo over headphones and speakers, 13 hr 43 min. © the artist. Courtesy Collection Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris



Dorota Jurczak
(see *Un-Scene II*)
Dym w Oknie, 2007, acrylic, watercolour and ink on canvas, 70 x 30 cm. Courtesy the artist and Corvi-Mora, London

VIENNA

Vienna’s art institutions have seen much change in the past year – the MAK got a new director, the Belvedere opened its 21er Haus, Francesca von Habsburg’s TBA21 foundation secured the use of a new exhibition space and Kunsthalle Wien director Gerald Matt was asked to take a three-month leave in January 2012 (in late March he stepped down of his own accord).

Now the commercial side of Vienna’s artworld is quietly rumbling as well, with its art fair, Viennafair, on the faultline. In January, Russian investor Sergey Skaterschikov acquired a 70 percent stake in the fair, which has never been a big sales powerhouse, but since its founding in 2005 has evolved into a respectable regional event with a focus on Central and Eastern European art. In mid-April, citing ‘differences’ under the new regime, fair artistic directors Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer announced their resignations. So the search was on, fast, to name new artistic directors: within two weeks, Kazakhstan-born Christina Steinbrecher, who directs Art Moscow, and Vita Zaman, formerly of Ibid Projects in her native Lithuania and London, then Pace Gallery in New York, were appointed as two-thirds of the ‘curatorial cluster’, with a third person still up in the air.

The wait for an unnamed third director has created a level of local buzz with some humorous side effects. Even before Steinbrecher and Zaman were named, Austria’s mass-market tabloid *Kronen Zeitung* printed news that none other than Gerald Matt would be ‘taking over the Viennafair’. Viennafair’s press department returned with a statement that their third director was a person with close ties to Vienna’s museum scene but that a preexisting binding contract was causing the announcement delay, which couldn’t be the jobless Matt. Within days, Simon Rees came up as a likely candidate. New Zealander Rees was curator at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius before joining the MAK in autumn 2011 and curating the inaugural exhibition under director Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, *Erschaute Bauten*. Rees was sighted having long conversations with Steinbrecher at Berlin Gallery Weekend’s huge gala at the end of April, arousing even more speculation.

Among Vienna’s stalwart dealers and cultural producers there’s a mix of excitement and trepidation, indicating that the bigger question is whether the outsiders will pull influence away from the local artworld and its commercial players. The selection committee is largely the same as in previous years, but the new directors’ international cachet and hands-on Eastern European experience, the new late-September time slot and other projects, like Skaterschikov’s planned Art Vectors Investment Partnership sfund, indicate change that might just be what the fair needs. Attracting stronger artistic positions and a solid collector base is never a bad thing, even if it shakes Vienna up a bit.

KIMBERLY BRADLEY



Max Ernst
 (see *Alice in the Wonderland of Art*)
Alice in 1941, 1941, oil on paper
 mounted on canvas, 40 x 32 cm.
 © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2012.
 Courtesy Museum of Modern Art,
 New York / Scala, Florence

And if Claerbout leads us down rabbit holes we can't easily rise out of (and if we've already, via Manifesta's mining motif, broached the subject of deep dark holes), there's an easy segue to *Alice in the Wonderland of Art* – but we're above such crassness, obviously. Suffice to say that *Alice...*, convening some 200 works from the last 150 years, uses Lewis Carroll's heroine as an ingenious, adaptable, Zelig-like character who has inspired surrealists (Max Ernst, Dalí), psychonaut artists of the 1960s and 70s, and younger artists such as Anna Gaskell and Kiki Smith. **Muzi Quawson**, too, draws artfulness from fiction: specifically the vast storehouse of myth on which America rests. Working the blurry edges of photojournalism, contouring her work to reflect American film, music and literature, she has in the past befriended and extensively photographed young mothers in Woodstock, grizzled cowboys and runaways crisscrossing America on Greyhound buses. In her latest work, the 16mm film *Shawmut Circle* (2012), the London-based photographer scours the milieus of the Deep South that haven't shown up in cinema: here, a scuffling community located between Georgia and Alabama.

Muzi Quawson
Shawmut Circle, 2011,
 three-channel 16mm film
 installation. Courtesy Annet
 Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam



NEW YORK

The most striking thing for me about the Cindy Sherman retrospective at MoMA (closing 11 June) is the impression that, for all the specificity of the personas the artist puts on and the various stereotypes she skewers, there is ultimately no one present in most of her work. In the *Untitled Film Stills* series (1977–80), for example, it's the settings – empty road, seedy motel – that set the tone. If the girl weren't there, the images would still channel the Hollywood clichés. Yes, I get it: Sherman's talking about objectification, stereotypes and the evacuation of identity that they effect; but still, there's an absence at the centre of her art which can make it seem gimmicky, if not empty.

There's a similar vacuum playing out at the heart of American politics, especially as the presidential campaign heats up. Mitt Romney will stand for anything and thus means nothing. Obama's pursuit of compromise with what's proved a nearly implacable partisan opposition is a classic example of Freudian transference: he'll do anything, be anyone, to try to gain the approval of the father absent during his childhood. As in *Untitled Film Stills*, it's the noise around these men, intangibles without agency, like hope, change, the deficit and congressional gridlock, that define them, rendering them *tabulae rasae* onto which anyone can project his own dreams and nightmares.

In a body politic of over three hundred million, it's easy to drown in the chatter. But as is indicated by *9 Scripts from a Nation at War* (2007), a multichannel video installation by David Thorne, Katya Sander, Ashley Hunt, Sharon Hayes and Andrea Geyer, presented four floors below the Sherman retrospective, the resulting sense of inconsequentiality that allows citizens to eschew personal responsibility, much as politicians do by blaming circumstances, is bogus. Each script – there are actually ten – spins the fallout from Iraq and Afghanistan from the putative perspective of, for instance, the correspondent, veteran, actor or detainee, roles which affect how information is filtered and culpability assigned and evaded. But where Sherman creates fictive screams, the characters here are rendered vivid by accents, moles and imperfectly concealed wrinkles. Individual presence, and thus culpability, is inescapable.

It's not only that all choices are political. As the work of Sharon Hayes – featured in a retrospective titled *There's So Much I Want to Say to You*, at the Whitney from 21 June to 9 September – fervently argues, the political is a macrocosm of the personal. How we act, and allow ourselves to be acted upon, in both spheres is unified by our ethics and passions. Behind the grand platitudes of our politics stands what really matters: us. It's our choice whether to be a Cindy Sherman or something more.

JOSHUA MACK



Elsewhere in America, credit to the Public Art Fund: outdoor sculpture commissions make substantial sense for both **Paola Pivi** and **Oscar Tuazon**, who inject emphatic outlandishness into New York's parkland this summer. Pivi, who's honed a compound of the askew, allusive and extremely striking over the last decade, once tipped a huge red truck on its side only to photograph it, and put a lone donkey on a boat for the same purpose; Tuazon's modular wooden structures, meanwhile – raw materials meeting industrial construction techniques – often seem bigger than the galleries that house them (and *are* bigger, his wooden beams punching through walls). In Central Park, Pivi's irruptive *How I Roll* is a rotating, twin-engine plane; in Brooklyn Bridge Park, Tuazon is modifying his aesthetic: expect cast-concrete cubes, steel hoops and triangles interjected with tree trunks – a playground you can't play with, maybe.

If there's an element of embattlement in Tuazon's engagements with context, **Seher Shah** is even more forceful about how public space and architecture can reflect the will to impose dominion. Trained as an artist and as an architect (she no longer practices, though she used to design skyscrapers), she makes hybridised cityscapes, ostensibly located in Asia or the Middle East and delivered in the form of montaged photographs and drawings, sometimes flipped into symmetries and overlaid with fractal patterns. They're evocations of a chaotic moment, as capitalism sweeps across continents, bringing with it a stark architectural Esperanto that displaces tradition and specificity: in other words, her brooding art might be less about architecture than about what specific examples of it are metonymic for, and why they are where they are.

Paola Pivi
How I Roll (detail), 2012.
Courtesy Public Art Fund, New York

HOUSTON

Houston, the Menil Collection, ten in the morning. Luxuriant oaks and hazy sunshine. The buildings here are by Renzo Piano, built in 1986. The collection here is unique in the world: Magritte, de Chirico, Braque, Picasso, Cézanne, Max Ernst, Jackson Pollock, Frank Stella, Richard Serra, Dan Flavin... And an entire building dedicated to the best of Cy Twombly. What is astounding is to find these art giants in this silent, heat-flattened neighbourhood, where the Parisian I am has the very precise sense of being in the middle of nowhere. One street away is the Rothko Chapel. Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* (1963–9) is reflected in the rectangle of the pool. It is dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dominique and John de Menil, married French-born collectors, had been seeking a painter for 'an intimate sanctuary available to people of every belief'. They had seen Matisse's work at Vence, and Léger's at Assy. It was 1964, and Rothko, after working on the project for a year, had just broken his contract for a series of paintings at the Four Seasons restaurant in New York, realising, according to writer Susan J. Barnes (quoting collector Katharine Kuh), that they 'would be merely a decorative backdrop for the tastes and transactions of a society he abhorred'. The Menils, invited to visit Rothko's studio, where they spoke 'only in whispers', commissioned the artist to create a new series of works for their chapel project.

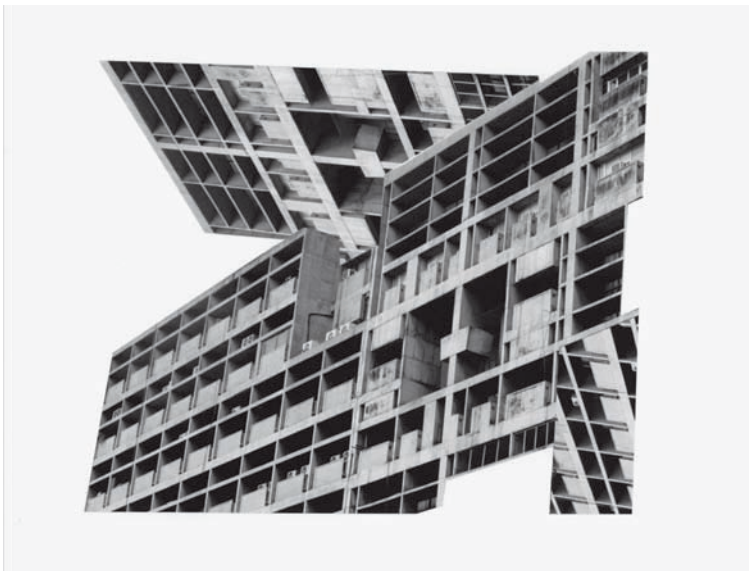
The chapel is one of those buildings that is of little interest until seen from inside, like certain quartz rocks. The 14 very sombre canvases are arranged on the walls of an octagon. There are several benches, and cushions on the floor. The only illumination comes from a narrow skylight at the room's zenith. The eyes adjust slowly, time beats in the veins. Out come the purples, the blues, the blacks, greys and browns. Then a cloud passes, and everything is seen anew. I think of Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* (1971) but I am unable to call forth the notes in my blank mind. I have a sense of falling upwards. 'A place not to think – to unthink,' says one of the messages in the visitors book.

NASA is 30 miles from here. There is a perfect logic to the coexistence, in this haphazard city, of these two places that expand our cosmos. That *elevate* it – even though I resist the religious sentiment that the American context presents as obligatory.

"Does this chapel make you any wiser?" I ask the guard, who has been keeping watch in the shadow of these paintings for five years.

"Everything that we experience can make us wiser," she answers, adding that one brings one's state of mind here: if anguished, then one leaves more anguished still. Her colleague, greeting visitors for 14 years, tells me that absolutely nothing could make her wise.

MARIE DARRIEUSSECQ



Seher Shah
Radiant Lines: Capitol Complex (X-Block), 2012,
 collage on paper, 28 x 36 cm.
 Courtesy the artist

In aesthetic terms, **Ciprian Mureșan** appears to be all over the map. He's made animations in which babies are baptised by Santa Claus, videos of Coke/Pepsi taste tests and, lengthily, a handmade copy of an illustrated book of Piero della Francesca's paintings which resembles a pale, delicate illuminated manuscript. But conceptually he's at one particular cartographic spot: Mureșan was born in Romania, reached his maturity when religion rushed in to fill the space voided by communism's fall, and makes art that changeably engages with and tries to understand the diverse sways of authority. His 2010 show at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein featured a reworking of Maurizio Cattelan's sculpture of John Paul II felled by a meteorite with the Pope replaced by the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, while a work from 2004 featuring a prone man on a pavement sets itself up as the mordant aftermath – three seconds later – of Yves Klein's famous midair photomontage, *Leap into the Void* (1960). Any number of things, this time around, could land and impact here. ☹

Ciprian Mureșan
Portrait of Bas Jan Ader (detail),
 2012, 79 drawings and video
 animation. Courtesy Galerie
 Hussenot, Paris



THE STRIP BY

MARK BEYER (see overleaf)

"For many reasons, the whole issue about whether to be a cartoonist or not has been a source of a lot of confusion for me," says Mark Beyer. As an only child, an average student bullied at school and a disappointment to his father, he used drawing as a way to kill time, gradually evolving his distinct, intense, decorated style, avoiding any forethought, formal art education or guidance from how-to books. Far from being faux-naïf, his art is "the only way I know how to draw. I couldn't draw a realistic picture, or draw in any other style, if my life depended on it." More interested in becoming a writer or filmmaker, Beyer might never have pursued making comics if not for the inspiration of America's uncompromising underground comics and the early support of Art (*Maus*) Spiegelman and Bill (*Zippy*) Griffith, coeditors of the anthology *Arcade: The Comics Revue*, who chose Beyer's second-ever comic for their sixth issue in 1976. Encouraged, Beyer found that his style lent itself to comics and self-published three minicomics, followed by his comic books *A Disturbing Evening and Other Stories* (1978) and *Dead Stories* (1982), as well as being commissioned by Spiegelman for *RAW* magazine and other prestige titles.

Beyer's most recurring characters are Amy and Jordan, a pair of eternal victims, vulnerable, doll-like, one dressed in her diamond-patterned smock, the other all in black with a crosshair target on his chest. Seemingly imprisoned within the panels of their comics, they endure endless urban despair, which is made visible in the unsettling layouts and compositions, and the menacing forms lurking just outside the panels. Traumas are never far away in their besieged subsistence, recounted in the graphic novel *Agony* in 1987 and in weekly newspaper strips from 1988 to early 1996, compiled into a 2004 compendium by designer Chip Kidd. More growing cult than mass market, Beyer's work offers no comforting punchlines or reassurances, but conveys an uncanny nightmarish atmosphere and taps into an undercurrent of modern anomie.

Uncertain of his artistic direction, Beyer abandoned comics around 1997 and resumed making large single images, which he had been exhibiting as early as 1977 at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, near his hometown of Allentown. Not strictly paintings, these drawings in pen and ink were made on glass or Plexiglas and coloured in acrylics applied onto a fine layer of fixative.

Beyer's new Strip for *ArtReview* signals his surprise return to his signature avatars after 16 years, although (spoiler alert!) this may be their swansong. "I wanted to kill off Amy and Jordan in the grand tradition of Fritz the Cat and other murdered cartoon characters," he says. (In 1972, R. Crumb famously created a story in which his feline star was stabbed in the back of the head with an icepick by an irate ex-girlfriend, an act of vengeance for the distortion of his character in *Fritz the Cat*, Ralph Bakshi's then-new animated movie.) It was only in autumn 2011 that Beyer started working again on a comic and feeling happy with the results. "The truth is, I am completely burned out on Amy and Jordan, but I am not burned out on the idea of making comics." As the borders separating comics and art dissolve still further, so too can Beyer's singular, self-invented expression, as both cartoonist and artist.

PAUL GRAVETT