

Let Me Be an Object that Screams

**Curated by
Matt Morris**

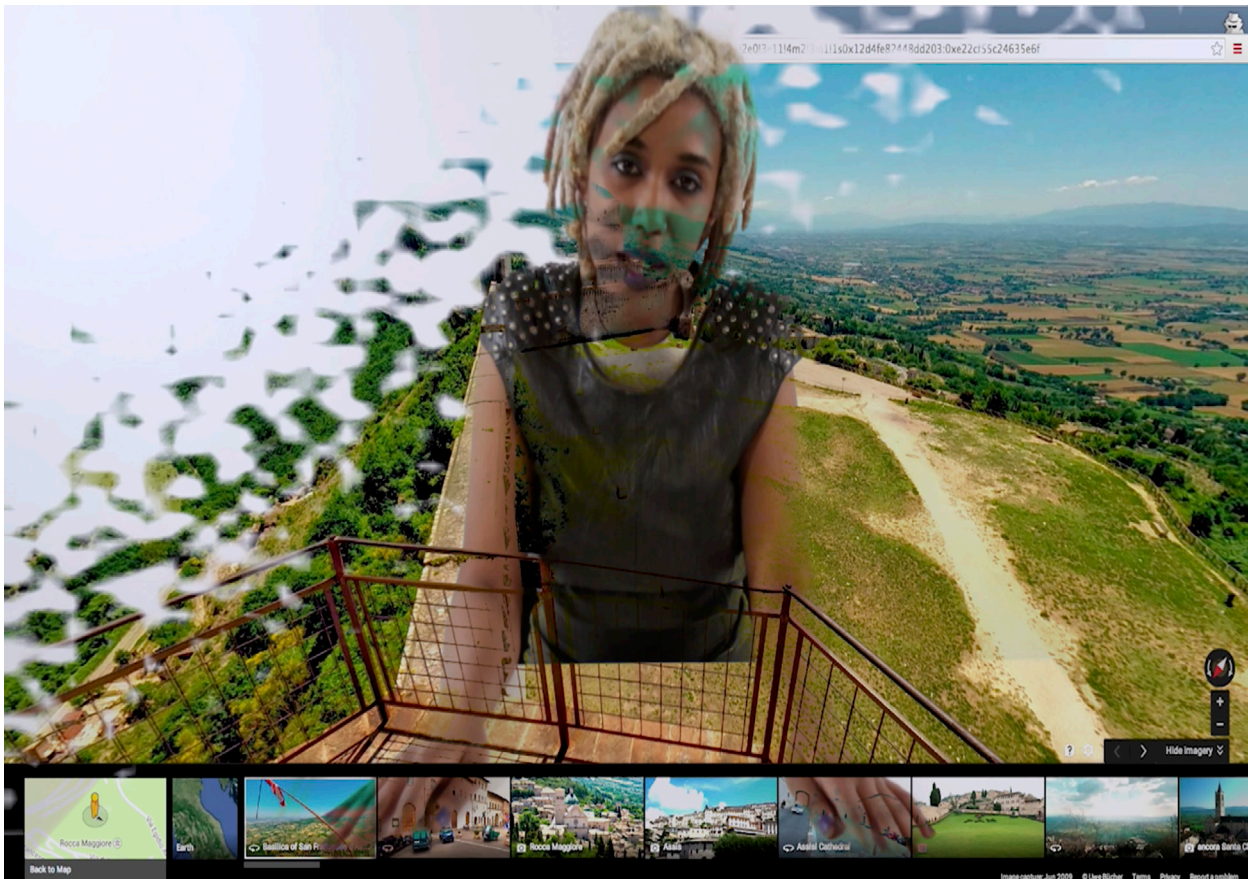
**September 8 -
October 21, 2017**

Terry Adkins
Nayland Blake
Anna Campbell
Nona Faustine
Jeff Gibson
Jennifer Chen-su Huang
Thomas Huston
E. Jane
Arnold J. Kemp
Isabelle McGuire
Catalina Ouyang
Puppies Puppies
Oli Rodriguez and Jovencio de la Paz
Leonard Suryajaya

The object is never innocent, it exists and takes revenge. ¹

I haven't been human for a long time. They wanted me to be an object. I am an object. An object dirty with blood. An object that creates other objects and the machine creates us all. It makes demands. Mechanisms make endless demands on my life. But I don't totally obey: if I have to be an object, let me be an object that screams. ²

Suddenly he began to scream. The sound was piercing, like steam escaping... And as Orvil screamed he knew that he could not stop, that he had been working up to this scream all his life. Through his madness spoke these very clear thoughts, "Now they'll never touch you again. You can be mad for the rest of your life, and they'll leave you alone." ³



Let Me Be an Object that Screams brings together a range of works by contemporary artists in order to test psychoanalytic concepts of 'subject-hood' and the ways a subject's counterpart, the 'object,' has been interpellated by artistic and exhibition practices. The exhibition proposes subversions to how political and psychic power have been traditionally and consistently distributed in accordance to who is perceived to operate

with agency and thought, in contrast to the disinvestment of groups and communities read as "other." Particularly, the persistent privileges of white masculinity are problematized across feminist, queer, and racially critical inquiries. Through sculpture, installation, photography, and video, historical counter-narratives and accounts of the artists' own lived experiences shift emphasis off of the typical subject, while elsewhere projects reject the specious claims of

¹ Baudrillard, Jean. *Fatal Strategies*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1990. p. 121.

² Lispector, Clarice. *The Stream of Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. p. 71.



subject-hood in favor of stranger possibilities of an object that misbehaves—or “screams,” as the exhibition title, quoted from Ukrainian-Brazilian author Clarice Lispector, describes. The artists in this exhibition search for dissenting positions within, through, and beyond what have been treated as objects in psychoanalysis and in our cultural pasts. An object can dislocate itself within symbolic orders to critique less sensible forms of power and to herald desires yet to be accounted for within prevailing characterizations of society, as with Anna Campbell’s project of queering sculpture. Thomas Huston operates submissively, longing after objects lost in art’s circulation systems and rendering meaningful interstitial non-places and the labor that activates those non-places.

Nona Faustine reenacts the objectification of black and female bodies like her own, and in her performance an interventionist protest is incited. Leonard Suryajaya’s photographs and videos show fantastical scenes that experiment with issues of control as they relate to whiteness and other racialized signs, homoerotics, familial bonds, and nationalist identity. Terry Adkins’ legacy is one of powerfully animated bizarre objects that he made to hold particular and abstract accounts of lived histories. His sculpture *Tonsure* models consciousness as approached from the outside and from within.

Jeff Gibson’s sandwich board signs track how objects of desire are taken up into systems of economics, marketing, and consumption, while holding on to the visceral anxiety that drives feelings of lack and yearning. Likewise, Arnold J. Kemp scrutinizes the ways that display and adornment operate within constructions of identity, and how depictions of such are represented in art. *Puppies Puppies* draws from pop culture to give enchanting voice to objecthood—simultaneously corrupting and erotic. E. Jane shifts problems of selfhood into an Internet-based information economy, testing the effects of a self that is variously fluid in forms especially supported by virtuality and produced “on demand.”

Jennifer Chen-su Huang breaches “object”

as language and taxonomy, spreading her sensual engagements into excesses of both material itself and matters of control. In Isabelle McGuire’s videos, sex objects morph beyond the human, inflating, compressing, and fantasizing into ontological uncertainty. Nayland Blake’s assemblage sculptures hold in their disparate fragments capacities for fetishization, remembering, and non-normative pleasures in the way parts come together.

Oli Rodriguez and Jovencio de la Paz act upon one another in mutual objectification, using each other’s bodies in compositions of domestic kink. And in playing with sculptural interpretations of mythic women’s bodies as well as the roles white men occupy in society, Catalina Ouyang rescripts subject/object relations along lines of gender, sexuality, and race.

These are objects in revolt, confounding those from whom they are designated as other by pursuing otherness yet further. Hopes to be treated as a person preoccupy too much energy when an enormous quantity of caring is required in times like these—a care that is not determined by subjecthood, personhood, or the criteria of either. Rather, an object might be abyssal by contrast—the stubborn opacity of its shell serving merely as a threshold opening into itself more deeply, onto temples of pleasure.

The screams of these objects are heard in the households of queer families and in those of Chinese descent in Indonesia where legal, economic, and cultural discrimination persists. Echoes float before national monuments, amongst the delicate detritus of the streets. These artists explore intimacies in alternative forms of relationships, “to counteract the shattering effects of discriminatory objectification not by striving to convince the public that ‘yes we actually are subjects,’ but to be objects for one another, and to get so much better at objectifying one another. We can excel at being ever more complex and nuanced objects—so much so that we learn together how to see, and do it with a vengeance.”⁴

—Matt Morris

³ Welch, Denton. *In Youth Is Pleasure*. Cambridge: Exact Change, 1994. First published in 1945. pp. 151–152.

⁴ Hall, Gordon. “Party Friends.” *Platforms: Ten Years of Chances Dances*. Chicago: Chances Dances, 2015. p. 154.



Front image: Isabelle McGuire, *Love Me Harder*, 2015, digital video, 3:50 min. (still).
Inside image: *E. The Avatar Ep. 3*, 2015, mp4, 2:01 mins. (still).
Back image: Anna Campbell, *"I have nothing to declare except my genius," said Oscar Wilde to the customs agent*, 2017, bronze.



Related Programs:

- > **Opening Reception**
Friday, September 8
5–8pm

- > **Curator's Tour with
Matt Morris**
Saturday, September 16
2pm

- > **Conversation with
Das Janssen and Oli
Rodriguez**
Thursday, September 21
6pm

- > **Screening: *Thinging
Bodies*, curated by Danny Giles**
Thursday, October 5
6pm

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