

## EDITORIAL

### Eigenheim at Soft Opening



Soft Opening debuts their new gallery space on Minerva Street with a contemplative group show. In Eigenheim, the artists fill the former tattoo studio with objects and talismans of past lives, fretful prophecies and “spaces that invoke the presence of an individual implied by their absence.” At once devotional and lonely, stepping into the gallery feels like moving around outside time – a still and private purgatory where memories are held for safekeeping.

Antonia Marsh, Soft Opening’s director and curator, has taken inspiration from a Mathew Higgs curated group show at the Gladstone Gallery in 2006, Dereconstruction, where “works seek to establish an entanglement between the organic and the inorganic, between interiority (i.e. that which is hidden, or suppressed from view), and exteriority (i.e. that which exists on or beyond the surface).” This feeling of entanglement is perfectly embodied in the delicacy of Marsh’s curation.

Shannon Cartier’s painting *Summertime* aptly marks the entrance to the show, gently ushering you in from the midsummer heat of the pavement outside. A fruit bowl rests precariously on a girl’s head as she slumps forward against a sea scene. Fanciful and adrift, anxious and waiting. Tenant of Culture’s fossilized boots and hats, monuments of waste and preservation, are arranged henge-like around one of the structural steel columns. Encased eggs look on, plastically transcending their sell-by dates in their lofty homes (a pair of works that Carlos’ Reyes made for the exhibition).

Gina Fischli’s confined glitter paintings are suspended on either side of Kayode Ojo’s looped video *Lower East Side (High Rise.)* A triptych of sparkling clues that nod to the cyclical and endless time-scape that rules the exhibition and our own reality. An empty birdcage, the repetition of luxury demise through mirrors, a floral map of daily infinity.

A selection of diagrammatic felt tip drawings by Brie Moreno foretell visions of potential selves marching into trivial fates. Brook Hsu delves into the complexity of relationships, intricately reproducing the last letter between Paul Thek and Susan Sontag in a spiralling and obstructive script over three panels. Both artists deal with the sacred language of letters and paper, and the ability to exercise aspiration, grief and love through repetition.

Theodora Allen's paintings present ideas of herbal inhibition, framing psychotropic flora suspended in heraldic shields and a chipped chalice to be sipped as a portal to a veiled blue world. The faded but mystical power of botany is substantiated and electrified by Ariana Papademetropoulos's painting *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered*, in which a female eye bores sideways out of the centre of a fiery flower, eerie and erotic.

On the opposite wall, fantasy is established in six egg tempera panels by Stephen Polatch, depicting faraway landscapes and fairytale archetypes in various states of searching and in vibrating shades of warmth. The last panel, *I'm so lonesome I could cry*, shows a pinstripe cowboy singing at the tearful moon and is bookended with Nevine Mahmoud's glass blown breast sculpture, emanating pink and glossy. The positioning is such that the forlorn moon from Polatch's dreamworld seems to have cried itself into the oscillating breast.



Carlos Reyes, *Untitled (Eigenheim) 1 Detail*,  
2020 Eggshell, dye, acrylic paint, lace, plastic  
30 x 12 x 12 inches

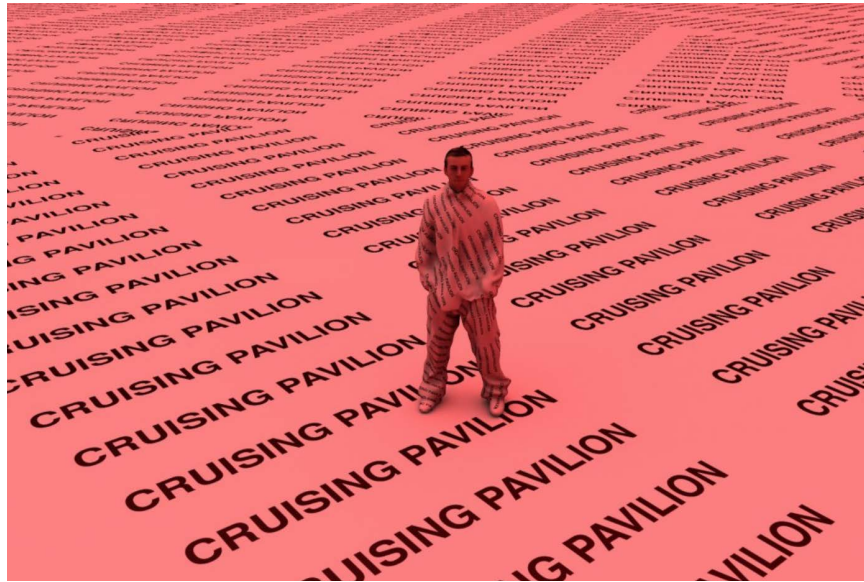
We close on Olivia Erlanger's architectural and symbolic understanding of the home. A model of a suburban house in an oversized snow globe provides a striking and damning image of the American Dream, surveilled and suffocating itself.

Marsh details how the word 'Eigenheim' translates from German to 'describe a single-family home or stand-alone house'. Throughout the exhibition there is a creeping sense of something natural and fantastical overrunning the industrial sparseness of the gallery, upending preconceived ideas of what home has been. *Eigenheim* reflects and reacts to this point in time where our notions of homes, material and in ourselves, have become overgrown, complicated and are re-wilding themselves.

*Eigenheim* is on view at Soft Opening until September 13th

# PIN-UP

## CRUISING PAVILION CONSIDERS THE ARCHITECTURE OF QUEER SEX, FROM GRINDR TO GLORY HOLES



As a Catholic teen in the mid 90s, my gay coming of age started in the aftermath of the AIDS crisis, which cast a terrifying shadow on a sexuality that was already considered socially unacceptable. Gay men in the small Massachusetts suburban town where I lived were exclusively closeted. There was no public space officially designated for us to meet each other. Like most of those living outside cities in those pre-Internet days, the only way I could experience the encounters I longed for was to choose high-risk public sex. I almost instinctively learned that the I-95 highway rest stop, the Emerald Square Mall bathrooms, and the steam room at Gold's Gym were where I could connect with my kind. I didn't know how or why, but even at 15, I understood those places were for sex. Living in a heteronormative society where monogamy was the law of the land, the fundamental pursuit of satisfying my libido defined me as a sexual outlaw, a status that came with equal pride and shame. I couldn't fully contemplate the factors that had pushed me into those spaces or how my participation in them had formed my sexual psychology. I just believed that anonymous public encounters were what we, my fellow deviants and I, naturally deserved, and I learned to fetishize the thrill. In 1997, Aaron Betsky's book *Queer Space* was published, examining the disregarded histories of disenfranchised sexual minorities who were forced to carve out their own spaces within a hostile mainstream society. This was the first academic declaration that the sociological phenomenon known as cruising was of value to architectural theory and practice.

Two decades after Betsky's landmark publication and half a century since the Stonewall riots, a series of exhibitions titled *Cruising Pavilion* explores the history of gay sex in public space and the changing character of anonymous encounters in the new millennium. My teenage self could not have imagined a future in which I would be able to discuss these activities publicly, let alone view a series of high-profile international exhibitions investigating them. While the gay mainstream today increasingly pushes to be embraced by conservative and historically exclusive institutions (marriage, military, religion), the team behind *Cruising Pavilion* — artist/curator Rasmus Myrup, architect/writer Octave Perrault, and the collaborative duo of curators/art critics Charles Teyssou and Pierre-Alexandre Mateos — focused their project on an activity that will never politely align with the quest for heterosexual assimilation. Over the last two years, they've dedicated three exhibitions in three different countries to the subject

of cruising — the pursuit of sex with strangers — a topic that has never before been given curatorial consideration within the world of architecture. In many countries, over many decades, and often at great risk to themselves (physical danger, blackmail, arrest), queer people have carved out space for their sexual pursuits both by adoption (public restrooms, bathhouses, gym saunas) and by design (gay bars, nightclubs). Though the text is never explicitly mentioned, the Cruising Pavilion exhibitions expand on Betsky's *Queer Space*, updating its thesis to align with a millennial worldview informed by the Internet, marriage equality (at least in many Western countries), and the game-changing HIV-pre-exposure-protection pill PrEP, and expanding his definition of queer beyond gay men to include lesbian, trans, bi-sexual, gender-non-conforming, and non-binary definitions of identity. These relatively recent developments allow the curators to approach a once-taboo topic without the stigma and shame that were pervasive less than a generation ago.

Each edition of *Cruising Pavilion*, which traveled from Venice to New York to Stockholm, presents cruising's past and present while hinting at its possible futures. The curators show how the gay community has adopted public space, designating particular public bathrooms and specific areas of parks, as well as intentionally designed gay bars, nightclubs, bath houses, sex clubs, and digital platforms, for sexual encounters. The exhibitions bring together art — films, videos, drawings, photography — and artifacts — historical memorabilia, architectural drawings and models, design objects — that highlight the sociological forces — religion, politics, economics, disease, technology, and medicine — that impacted how cruising cultures developed from the 1950s until today.

#### VENICE, ITALY

Venice's canals and densely packed buildings form an elaborate maze of tiny alleys that became a cruising utopia in the days of Proust and inspired gay classics like Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Today the city is so completely saturated by tourist families that the only cruising is done by ships in the canals. Still, it was here in 2018 that the *Cruising Pavilion* curators began their project, as a rogue addition to the most important architectural exhibition in the world, the Venice Architecture Biennale. Coincidentally, their chosen subject auspiciously aligned with the theme of that edition of the biennial, which was titled *Freespace*. Even in an era when major cultural institutions are making a concerted effort to include the stories of marginalized communities, the official Biennale included no mention of cruising, a practice that is perhaps the most comprehensive reimagining of city space by a minority group. True to cruising's outlaw spirit of co-opting, Myrup, Mateos, Perrault, and Teyssou appropriated the naming structure of the biennial — each country showcases its brightest talents in a national pavilion (the Greek Pavilion, the Canadian Pavilion, etc.) — declaring that in a biennial dedicated to free space, cruising demanded its own presentation. The *Cruising Pavilion* curators also “perverted” the biennial's official manifesto written by Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara, replacing every instance of the word “freespace” with “cruising.” They found the resulting composite text perfectly defined their intentions: “Freespace Cruising can be a space for opportunity, a democratic space, un-programmed and free for uses not yet conceived. There is an exchange between people and buildings that happens even if not intended or designed...”

On opening night, hundreds of curious attendees made the trek on the vaporetto from the Giardini, where the official pavilions are located, to the far end of the island of Giudecca, where *Cruising Pavilion* was staged. Dimly lit with a red glow, the hosting arts venue Spazio Punch took on the ambience of a sex club with a previous exhibition's mezzanines and narrow stairways further setting the mood and suggesting the possibility of clandestine encounters. As I made my way through the show, I became aware just how much exhibition design and cruising clubs have in common: both are essentially mazes that guide visitors through semi-secluded areas, allowing them to search for unexpected fulfillment through engagement with unknown entities, whether art or bodies. In this rare case, both were possible. At the entrance to the exhibit, a moodboard-esque timeline paid homage to cruising classics such as a Tom of Finland ink cartoon depicting a leather-clad man heading to a “Pleasure Park,” and an image of Peter Berlin, the German-born artist and porn actor who became a fixture of the 1970s San Francisco scene, and is widely regarded as the patron saint of cruising. As I made my way through the show, I was reminded

of something Berlin said in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist for a forthcoming artist's monograph (which, full disclosure, I edited). Summing up how cruising has changed, Berlin declared that "it went from a great spontaneous outdoor scene with public sex happening everywhere to something you make an appointment for, as you would to visit a doctor." But the post-Grindr transformation of hookup culture wasn't the only transition the exhibition examined. With architectural models of Barcelona sex clubs by Spanish architects Pol Esteve and Marc Navarro Fornós, the curators presented common spatial strategies used by sex-club entrepreneurs when designing spaces that "foster a dynamic where fantasy and pleasure are in constant negotiation," while their inclusion of a video showcasing Diller Scofidio + Renfro's Blur Building (2002), designed for Switzerland's Expo.02, suggested how cruising-specific architectural strategies have been applied to facilitate more mainstream socialization — a temporary open-air pavilion built over Lake Neuchâtel, the Blur Building cloaked its visitors in a manufactured cloud, creating the same level of anonymity and freedom one experiences in a steam room. A rendering of S H U I, a speculative future spa by WangShui and Sean Roland designed for "all people but especially focused on those that have been excluded from gendered wellness spaces," gestured at queer culture's recent movement toward inclusivity, considering spaces that facilitate cruising for more people than just gay men, while Atelier Aziz Alqatami's addition to the show was one of the exhibition's few windows into cruising outside of a Western context. Alqatami's video (Fenestra) (2018) offers rare documentation of cruising practices in his homeland, Kuwait, where, instead of meeting on foot, men seduce each other on the highway through motorcycle tricks or flashy cars. Viewing Dawson's 20-Load Weekend (2004), a seminal piece of pornography directed by Max Sohl for Treasure Island Media, seemed shocking in a public setting with a design audience present, even given the show's theme. Depicting a man engaging in bareback anal intercourse with 20 anonymous partners, the film caused a scandal when it was released because, for a generation brought up with two decades of militant safe-sex messaging, bareback sex, especially with multiple partners, was the ultimate taboo. "To properly address the topics of space and sexuality, we could not ignore pornography's crucial role in gay representation. We chose this film because of its role in helping destigmatize men living with HIV," explains Teyssou. The work also illustrated an element of queer architecture's spatial history, since "monitors screening porn are often the only light in dark rooms."

Cruising Pavilion was staged just blocks away from the Garden of Eden, which served as a notorious cruising ground from the end of the Belle Époque until the Second World War. Popular among the cultural elite of the day, it has been celebrated in French and Italian literature, such as Gabriele D'Annunzio's novel *The Flame* and Jean Cocteau's poem "Souvenir d'un soir d'automne au jardin Eaden." Here the exhibition was supplemented with a rare tour of the now private garden led by the only openly heterosexual Cruising Pavilion curator, Perrault, who explained that the park had been frequented by luminaires such as Henry James, Marcel Proust, and Cocteau. A piece of literary gossip: the garden was where a three-way love triangle began between a young Cocteau, the dilettante Raymond Laurent, and his American friend Langhorn Whistler. It was one of the tour's many anecdotes that made me realize just how much cruising history and gay history are one and the same.

## NEW YORK CITY, USA

In its second incarnation, in February 2019, the Cruising Pavilion curators were invited by the Goethe-Institut New York to take over their Manhattan gallery space, Ludlow 38. New York City, a former cruising paradise, was a hotbed of activity in the 70s and 80s with three bustling focal points: Time Square, the then-derelict warehouses of Chelsea Piers, and an area of Central Park known as the Ramble. It is also, of course, home to one of the most important queer spaces of all time, the Stonewall Inn. Here the Pavilion team went local, showing work by the city's contemporary artists as well as presenting the histories of gay venues both realized and not. They stayed away from the icons of New York gay art — Félix González-Torres, Keith Haring, Robert Mapplethorpe, Andy Warhol — and instead focused on contributions from a new generation, among them DeSe Escobar, Kayode Ojo, Carlos Reyes, and Robert Yang. Like in Venice, the small Lower East Side gallery was dimly lit, this time with a blue glow, offering a similar aesthetic experience to the cruising venues it celebrated.

Upon entering, I was greeted by three early 70s architectural plans by Horace Gifford, a legend of gay architecture. After studying under master Louis Khan, Gifford almost exclusively applied his voyeuristic brand of queer Modernism — developed to enhance a hedonistic lifestyle — to building for his own community in the Fire Island Pines. These are some of the rare homes in mid-20th century America not created for nuclear families, and among the beach-house plans on display was a commission for designer Calvin Klein. While the show referenced many projects for gay men that were actually built, the few lesbian spaces that were shown were never realized. The plans for one such project were originally published in the first issue of *Out* magazine in 1992: titled *Lesbian Xanadu*, the page layouts detailed the design for a tactile organic pleasure club developed by Amy Cappellazzo, Sarah Drake, Ann Krsul, and Alexis Roworth. Together they aimed to create a space that would challenge conventional capitalist class structures and gender norms. Patriarchal capitalism, in the form of the New York skyline, was the inspiration for two of the works on display: *NYC Go-Go (Postcards from the Edge)* (2014), a collage by Robert Getso, depicted a go-go boy scaled to skyscraper size dancing next to the Empire State building, the image queering the phallic tower's association with straight-male ambition; it was complemented by Madelon Vriesendorp's notorious 1975 *Flagrant Délit* showing the Empire State Building and Chrysler Building in bed together, with a third skyscraper breaking into the bedroom shining a flashlight on them, policing their behavior. Used on the cover of Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*, a book about how pleasure and decadence drove the city's development, it was an image I'd seen countless times before. But it was only in the context of this exhibition that it became clear that these two skyscrapers are in fact intended to be read as a gay male couple, an epiphany that gave me newfound appreciation for Koolhaas and Vriesendorp's famous tribute to the city that never sleeps.

But the real highlight of the show for me came at the end, as I passed through a small hallway to reach the gallery's dimly lit backroom — another instance of the show's cruising-friendly design echoing its content. On the wall were blueprints for the members-only gay dance club *The Saint*, an ambitious addition to 1970s and 80s New York club design which the *Cruising Pavilion* curators describe as the “Teatro Olimpico of architecture's sexual experiments... injecting poppers and LSD directly into the sensual production of space.” When *The Saint* opened in 1980, the club used these technical drawings of the redesigned building for its first invite, advertising the spatial appeal of a spectacular three-story “pleasure dome” and circular dance floor. Architect and co-owner Charles Terrell created the club's fabulous design, which cost 13 million dollars when adjusted for inflation — one of the largest financial investments in the history of gay architectural space.

In the wake of the New York exhibition, the *Cruising Pavilion* collective was invited to participate in the BOFFO Fire Island residency. There they rehabilitated the *Bridge to Love, Lust, & Carnal Pleasure*, a structure facilitating safe passage over a swampy portion of the Meat Rack, an infamous cruising area between two Fire Island towns, Cherry Grove and the Pines. The BOFFO residency also offered an opportunity for the curators to enjoy Gifford's work firsthand and experience one of the only communities in America developed for and by gay people, designed with cruising as a central objective.

## STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

In Stockholm, in September 2019, *Cruising Pavilion* achieved its most prestigious staging at ArkDes, Sweden's National Center of Design and Architecture. In a little less than two years, it has gone from a renegade operation to an institutionalized project shown in a national museum, though ironically it found its most distinguished venue in a city of 2.4 million people with only one official gay bar. Still, it's fitting that *Cruising Pavilion*'s last chapter takes place in an actual pavilion, a structure called *Boxen*, housed inside one of the museum's two main halls. Designed as a space for progressive programming by Dehlin Brattgård Arkitektur, with industrial finishings and a circular cut-out which, given the context, made me think of a giant glory hole, the room-within-a-room felt the perfect backdrop for the show's radical subject matter.

Taking *Cruising Pavilion* into a national museum funded by taxpayers' kronor sharpened questions about

its relevance outside of its own subculture. On the morning before the exhibition opened, ArkDes curator of contemporary architecture and design, James Taylor-Foster (who after seeing the original show in Venice initiated bringing it to Stockholm), was worried about the possibility of the right-wing media exploiting individual pieces — such as Dawson’s 20-Load Weekend — for political purposes. His concerns made me realize just how much of a risk he was taking with this show, which the Cruising Pavilion curators insisted would not in any way be watered down to appease the general public. “In our first conversation, we told the museum there was no point in presenting a censored version of this exhibition,” explains Myrup. Attempting to address the illegality of showing pornography to minors, a wall text before entering explains that the show “contains explicit works depicting sex and is not recommended for people under the age of 15.” During the opening night’s inaugural speeches, Perrault declared, “We are proud to have institutionalized a subject like cruising in architecture.” A heckler in the crowd — one of ArkDes’s largest vernissage audiences — shouted back, “FUCK YOU!” Caught off guard, Perrault diplomatically responded, “It’s true, there are pros and cons to being institutionalized, and I’m happy to discuss them with you in the darkroom.” And when they did in fact talk, Perrault was relieved to discover that the critic wasn’t a far-right zealot but a tantric-sex instructor who finds the word “institutionalized” to be triggering. Inside Boxen, the Frankie Goes to Hollywood song “Welcome to the Pleasuredome” (part of a sound piece by artist Steven Warwick) set the tone for viewers to engage with the works, which were mostly drawn from the two previous exhibitions — although not everything was included, and there were new pieces not previously displayed in Venice or New York. In its Stockholm incarnation, Cruising Pavilion dropped the loose non-linear presentations of the past two shows in favor of a thematic organization, breaking the space into three distinct areas: the Bar, the Dark Room, and the Bedroom.

The Bar has been a crucial meeting place for the gay community for decades. In Cruising Pavilion’s version, you are greeted by Tom Burr’s *Anthology: Writings 1991–2015* (2015), which the curators insist is “a gay psycho-geographical counterpart to Koolhaas’s *Delirious New York*.” Behind the bar hang two soccer scarfs designed by DYKE\_ON, appropriating hooligan accessories to mark community through fashion. Two detailed graphic drawings by the British duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings titled *Family #1* and *Family #2* (2019) reference Tom of Finland, but update the gay canon to include gender-non-conforming and trans bodies in their depiction of friends socializing in banal domestic spaces. The Bar section was rounded out with familiar works from the New York show: plans of the Saint, Gesto’s collage, and Vriesendorp’s skyscraper drawing.

The Dark Room section was designed to imitate the lightless backrooms in nightclubs designed for anonymous encounters, including a sling and a glory hole. This exhibit may be the first time these anonymously authored objects were presented as design objects. The area around them was complete with faux used tissue and faux used condoms scattered on the floor. (The invitations to the show were also printed on a condom.) A key piece in the Dark Room was the floor-to-ceiling wallpaper titled *AIDS* (1990) by Canadian collective General Idea: made at a time when mainstream media could barely utter the word AIDS, the design referenced artist Robert Indiana’s iconic typography for his ubiquitous 1970 *LOVE* sculpture. Putting this work in the context of the Dark Room demonstrates the horrific impact the disease had on gay culture, demonizing and closing down many public spaces throughout the 1980s and early 90s. The AIDS wallpaper was cleverly juxtaposed with the reappearance of Dawson’s 20-Load Weekend: because of this pairing, the film felt more politicized than it had in the Venice show, the new context helping make clear the shift in sexual psychology that has resulted from pharmaceutical breakthroughs.

The Bedroom was the final stop in the exhibition’s three-part journey, illustrating how our smart phones and dating apps have completely transformed the experience of casual encounters. While queer people had to band together in public spaces for decades out of necessity, advancements in technology and improved social attitudes toward queer acceptance have allowed for gay men and women to be able to turn their homes into “digital bathhouses.” While older generations tend to feel that digital cruising isn’t as valid as its IRL equivalent, the exhibition’s millennial curators were not convinced of any hierarchy between the two. “Cruising has always been a game and GPS dating apps allow you to turn yourself into a character, gamifying the experience to a new heightened level,” says Mateos. Two works in particular drove the point home: Robert Yang’s *Tea Room* (2017), which literally turns cruising public

toilets into a video game, and Andrés Jaque's mini-documentary *Intimate Strangers* (2017), which recounts the social history of location-based dating apps, tracking how Grindr, a platform born out of gay desire, transformed the dynamics of mainstream sexuality and investigating its simultaneously liberating and isolating effects. As the app and its imitators connect users individually, they also inadvertently destabilize collective queer public spaces. Having had the rare opportunity of experiencing all three Cruising Pavilion exhibitions — as well the bridge project in Fire Island — I was left contemplating two crucial questions. Are queer spatial histories valuable to the greater discourses of urbanism and public space? And what is gained or lost when the act of cruising, which partially derives its magic from being illicit, outlawed, and taboo, achieves recognition from a respectable institution? I turned to a friend and architect, Charles Renfro, for his input: not only were projects by his firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro exhibited in both the Venice and Stockholm Cruising Pavilions, but he and his office have translated queer-space principles into popular public architecture in many of their high-profile designs. In addition, Renfro maintains a piece of cruising's architectural history as the owner of one of Horace Gifford's first Fire Island beach homes.

Cruising is intrinsic to how Renfro understands public space and its potential. After coming of age during the AIDS crisis and being “essentially celibate” throughout college, he moved to New York and “was thrilled to discover that sexually charged public spaces still existed — in parks, on the subway, in department stores, wherever a fleeting space of privacy could be found or made. These liminal spaces could be used and defined by their inhabitants on the spot.” And it's the improvisational qualities of these spaces that inspire Renfro's approach to design. “The High Line is essentially thought of as a cruising space. We tried not to let the architecture interfere with the experience: we kept the lighting low, the plants high, and visual access to bedrooms and bathrooms to a maximum. The Blur Building provided anonymity to everyone in its mist. The Shed was inspired by the Fun Palace, a project that aspired to be user-controlled and modified according to desire.” For Renfro, cruising's institutionalization at ArkDes raises issues of control and prescription. While “the museum is by definition in control of the narrative,” he thinks that the exhibition “can be a catalyst for encouraging self-determined and unregulated behavior to commence once outside of its scripted walls.” Institutionalization can feel like a death knell: countercultural figures are given national honors only when they're dead or at the very least geriatric; slang loses its vitality when it enters the dictionary. But Renfro underscores how we can take control of the narrative. Cruising is about having an ad hoc and spontaneous relationship with public space and the strangers we share it with, an act of “radical hospitality,” as Mateos and Teyssou call it. It's up to us whether we allow technology to enhance those experiences or erase them as we move through our built environment.

Text by Michael Bullock.

Michael Bullock is a writer and independent media entrepreneur based in New York City. He is the associate publisher of PIN-UP and a contributing editor to *Apartamento* magazine. He also writes for *Aperture*, *Frieze*, and *New York Magazine*. His book *Peter Berlin: Artist, Icon, Photosexual* (Damiani, 2019) is out this fall.

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# Galerie

## Still the Main Attraction, Art Basel Returns to Miami Beach



Carlos Reyes at Bodega  
Photo: Courtesy of Bodega

Kahlil Robert Irving, Kapwani Kiwanga, Carlos Reyes, and Tschabalala Self are our picks in the Positions section, which highlights solo projects by new talents.

At Bodega, Carlos Reyes juxtaposes sun-faded jewelry displays from a defunct shop in New York on newly constructed pedestals with salvaged sections of a weathered awning from the Melrose Spa, a former men's bathhouse in Los Angeles, alongside new panels of the same green fabric to highlight the passing of time.

# Art | Basel

## In Miami Beach, young galleries bring a blazing world to the Positions sector



Carlos Reyes  
7129619 (2), 2018  
Neck form display (Canal Street, New York,  
New York), velvet, maple  
49 x 10.5 x 10.5 in (124.5 x 26.7 x 26.7  
cm)

Sensuousness and grit pervade **Bodega's** program. The gallery, run by Elyse Derosia and Eric Veit, focuses on artists taking mundane details of everyday life as starting points to reflect on our existence. Formats, techniques, and materials one encounters at Bodega are hence often unconventional. **Carlos Reyes**, for example, has used felt hats, bread, discarded drains, or parts of a former sauna in his practice. Reyes is interested in evanescent traces, and how to capture the transition from presence to absence. In Miami Beach, his presentation will 'extend (his) poetic investigations of air, light, and heat as material, as well as the socio-personal trace and weight of objects through locational shifts', says Derosia. Ultimately, these thoughtful yet uncompromising commentaries on contemporary life reflect the concerns of a generation that feels torn between apathy and rage towards the increasing jeopardization of decency.

# ARTFORUM



**Carlos Reyes, West Side Club (detail), 2018**, salvaged cedar, glass, birch, hardware, dimensions variable.

NEW YORK

## Carlos Reyes

BODEGA

167 Rivington Street Lower Level East

March 2 - April 1

2018, Carlos Reyes reclaimed cedar planks from the club's old sauna, converting the timeworn wood into elegantly austere sculptures. The inscriptions on the vintage planks aren't *completely* dirty; only one picture of a dick is immediately visible. But we do read an array of cities and countries: Istanbul, London, India, and Sri Lanka, among others. Perhaps they're memories of travels past or dreams of future trips—a different set of desires and experiences. Names and dates also appear. We don't know who left them, but excavating the emotion of these messages is part of what makes Reyes's installation so intriguing.

The bathhouse's conflation of recreation and sex is closer to the raw spirit of 1960s gay liberation than to the slew of tedious apps and websites for hooking up today. The West Side Club in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood bills itself as the city's "premier social relaxation club for gay and bisexual men." For his installation here, *West Side Club*,

West Side Club joins a string of artworks that evoke queer social spaces, most obviously Tom Burr's re-creations of cruising grounds and Times Square porn theaters. But there's a distinction, as Reyes makes abstract objects out of elements from the original site. His approach, though memorial in its way, is not mimetic.

The artist's materials speak volumes about the need for contact without the hindrance of a digital membrane, of going out into the world to talk to, touch, or flirt with a real person. So, leave home, be vulnerable, take a risk. Arenas for lived interactions persist, and there is hope in that.

— *Nicholas Chittenden Morgan*

April 4, 2018

## CARLOS REYES: *West Side Club*

by Vijay Masharani

BODEGA GALLERY | MARCH 2 – APRIL 1, 2018



Carlos Reyes, *West Side Club*, 2018. Salvaged sauna cedar from West Side Club, glass, birch, hardware, four components, 95.5 × 21 × 6 inches each, total dimensions variable. Courtesy bodega

Carlos Reyes, *West Side Club*, 2018. Salvaged sauna cedar from West Side Club, glass, birch, hardware, four components, 95.5 × 21 × 6 inches each, total dimensions variable. Courtesy bodega

In his first exhibition with Bodega, Carlos Reyes showcases a series of sculptures constructed from wood salvaged from the sauna of the West Side Club. Described on the club’s website as a “premier social relaxation club for gay and bisexual men,” the West Side Club has been at its Chelsea location since 1995. The sculptures, hung such that they hover an inch or so off of the ground, are quite formally restrained; the planks of wood are assembled to create tall cuboid structures with the artist occasionally substituting panels of glass instead of wood. The pieces are taller than the space itself; they extend into holes cut out of the ceiling. Some of these pieces were previously exhibited in a two person exhibition with sculptor Dominic Nurre at Museum Gallery in Brooklyn.

Upon viewing the works, the initial impulse is to attempt to discern the content of the various messages carved into the wood. A couple of the messages are sexually suggestive—one reads, “NYCURIOS—ANY AGE, ANY RACE.” Others are generic and aspirational—“LIVE FREE,” and elsewhere, one finds an elongated smiley face. Not only do visitors to the club somewhat predictably carve their names, or their partner’s initials enclosed within crude hearts—“THEO,” “ANDY,” “Z+G,” “BB,” “G+D”—they also carve the names of different locations around the world. Some of these are more ambiguous than others—India could be somebody’s name, and Irish could refer to national identification or to a UND alum. Nevertheless, as noted previously by Nicholas Chittenden Morgan in his short write-up of the show for Artforum, the countries and cities scrawled point to unmistakably international clientele—Palermo, Trinidad, VNZLA (Venezuela), Portugal, Istanbul, Colombia, Cuba, Sri Lanka.

Although we can imagine that the moisture of the sauna might have made it a little more supple, judging by the crudeness of the marks, the toughness of the wood presumably made it quite difficult for visitors to inscribe their messages. What visitors did choose to represent about themselves was the implicit internationalism of the space. In a similar vein, the press release for the exhibition outlines a kind of rival geography, in which the cardinal directions are redefined according to an individual's relationship with the club. Carlos Reyes's sculptures effectively bridge the local and the global; they act as a locus for movement in an almost religious manner. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, "if the tourist [sic] move because they find the world irresistibly attractive, the vagabonds move because they find the world unbearably inhospitable."<sup>1</sup> These categories are far from stable—we can imagine over the course of an international journey to the West Side Club, an individual's identification could oscillate between tourist and vagabond multiple times depending on political and social context.

These works emanate a kind of aura that can be linked to what Michel Foucault described as heterotopic spaces. Introduced in 1966 in his preface to *The Order of Things* and further elaborated in his 1967 essay "Of Other Spaces,"<sup>2</sup> the heterotopia is defined in relation to a utopia. Foucault writes, "[utopias] are sites that have a general relation ... with the real space of Society ... but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces." Heterotopias, on the other hand, are "real places—places that do exist ... which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which ... all the other real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."<sup>3</sup> Foucault continues to articulate six traits of heterotopias. In the case of *West Side Club*, the aggregated gestures encoded in the grain of the sourced wood alludes to the fourth defining trait, what Foucault would call a "strange heterochrony" or an "absolute break with ... traditional time"<sup>4</sup> insofar as layers of activity and engagement are flattened and represented concurrently. In a sense, these sculptures share qualities with two of Foucault's exemplary heterotopias, the museum and the cemetery. Beyond putting a strain on traditional experiences of time, the club seems to fit many of the other criteria of a heterotopia such as how its function changes as cultural norms (in this case, relating to sexual orientation) evolve, and although it is penetrable, it is not public. It is a pseudo-private space, bounded by a form of identification and a purification ritual.

But Carlos Reyes's sculptures, while they render legible the heterotopic qualities of the original club, are themselves kind of the opposite. They are not spaces; they're objects. What was the inside of the sauna has become an outside to a new enclosure, impossible to inhabit but viewable through the glass panes which, to the extent that they resemble lenses, further increase our awareness of our spectatorship over participation. It could be that the works act as a wayfinding device for the actually existing space, or as a monument to safe spaces for LGBTQ men across the world. Another read considers the fragmentation—from one single enclosure to multiple uninhabitable pillars—as an ominous gesture that alludes to the investment in desire by capital. This is not to speak about the club's membership fees; rather, it is to discuss how today, romance is a highly mediated experience in which, as Ana Cecilia Alvarez recently noted, "desirability and desire are reduced to a data set of 'taste,' [and] the single starts sounding like the job seeker, courting mutually beneficial relationships and setting up coffee dates like one would an interview." Leaving *West Side Club*, the viewer is left wondering whether these pieces are in mourning or in defiance.

## Notes

Zygmunt Bauman, "Tourists and vagabonds: heroes and victims of postmodernity" *Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Institut für Höhere Studien, Abt. Politikwissenschaft* 30, 1996: p. 147. Available online at [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/26687/ssoar-1996-baumann-tourists\\_and\\_vagabonds.pdf](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/26687/ssoar-1996-baumann-tourists_and_vagabonds.pdf) (accessed 29 March 2018)

For a history of Foucault's notion of heterotopia, see: <http://www.heterotopiastudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2.1-History-of-Concept.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2018.)

Michel Foucault trans. Jay Miskowiec, «Of Other Spaces» *Diacritics* 16, (1), Spring 1986: 22–27. available online at <https://foucault.info/doc/documents/heterotopia/foucault-heterotopia-en-html> (accessed 29 March 2018)

*Ibid.*

## CONTRIBUTOR

Vijay Masharani

Vijay Masharani (b. 1995) is an artist and writer. He lives and works in Queens.



## Contemporary artists take on Arte Povera masters at Luxembourg & Dayan

Postwar Italian art and contemporary culture collide at Luxembourg & Dayan where, from October 23 until December 16, Contingencies: Arte Povera and After will explore the relationship between today's artists and the Arte Povera – or “impoverished art” – movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

On the 50th anniversary of the movement that celebrated the use of common materials, Luxembourg & Dayan's New York townhouse gallery will be transformed by the works of seminal Arte Povera artists including Giovanni Anselmo, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascali and Michelangelo Pistoletto – as well as by contemporary makers Olga Balema, Elaine Cameron-Weir, Jason Loeb and Carlos Reyes. The common thread throughout the works on view is transience of material and form – often on a molecular level.

Just as the original Arte Povera artists questioned the political turmoil of the day, so do the contemporary artists in the show. Among the standout works for sale (from \$5,000-\$750,000) will be Pier Paolo Calzolari's *Untitled (Occhio di Dio)*, a 1971 assemblage of tobacco, neon, a transformer and a candle, and in complete contrast, Olga Balema's *Thief in the Night* (2016) – a mixed media work comprised of the artist's signature tulle, latex and steel materials. Jason Loeb's *Untitled* (2014) is a monochromatic work on canvas that employs thermal grease in lieu of paint – that then “leaches” heat from the viewer.



*Untitled (We give back credit)* by Carlos Reyes | Image: White Flag Projects, St. Louis

The exhibition is not limited to hanging works, and Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Mobili Capovolti* – a leather armchair and mirror sculpture from 1976 – and Carlos Reyes' *We Give Back Credit* from 2015 both take centre stage in the intimate Upper East Side gallery space. Each of these works incorporates simple materials in unexpected ways – in the case of Reyes' installation, the unlikely combination of an oscillating industrial fan, an aircraft cable and a round of bread.

“I would like to make it known that I want expansion, democracy, madness, alchemy, insanity, rhythm, horizontality,” said Arte Povera artist, Pier Paolo Calzolari. You can almost hear the cheers from those artists here working today.

# ARTFORUM



**View of “Carlos Reyes and Jo-ey Tang: Black door code 31A5 à gauche puis 2ème étage tout droit à gauche (Black door code 31A5, then left, 2nd floor, then straight, then on the left),” 2016.**

## Carlos Reyes and Jo-ey Tang

GALERIE JOSEPH TANG

1 rue Charles-François Dupuis Building B,  
2nd Floor

October 20–December 10, 2016

“Black door code 31A5 à gauche puis 2ème étage tout droit à gauche” (Black door code 31A5, then left, 2nd floor, then straight, then on the left), the trailing title of this otherwise lissome little show, plots out the path a visitor must now take to reach the gallery after a recent renovation relocated the building’s entrance.

Carlos Reyes also lifted these directions to title each member of a quartet of blown-glass objects (all works cited, 2016), slender, stemlike sculptures that enact a shift in their unconventional negotiation of the space. Two drip vertically down toward the floor, while another pair is suspended horizontally, perpendicular to (or even penetrating) the windowpanes. The effect is as if rays of light were somehow caught and corralled into thick skins of sandblasted glass, creating candy-corn striations of the marmalade hue concentrated at each tip.

Formally countering these sleek missiles is the squat black speaker stationed in the back of the room, where it broadcasts Jo-ey Tang’s crowd-sourced mash-up of sound tracks from the closing credits of over fifty films, ranging from Jean Genet’s *Un chant d’amour* (A Song of Love, 1950) to Richard Curtis’s 2003 schmaltz fest, *Love Actually*. Originally commissioned for “More Than Lovers, More Than Friends,” a show curated by Tang this past summer, in its new setting, the sound piece quickens the pulse of the room, skewing Reyes’s sculptures not so much as objects but as invaders, glistening party crashers who have flagrantly disregarded their own instructions for navigating the space. The strongest chord, however, may be the one struck by Tang’s *guitar strings*, which knots together the strings of the artist’s late father’s guitar into a kind of collapsed mobile. The piece hangs directly in front of the door, so that even visitors who followed the exhibition’s eponymous directions find themselves taken aback.

# ARTFORUM



View of “Carlos Reyes,” 2016

## Carlos Reyes

REAR WINDOW

136 W. 118th Street, #2

March 28–May 8, 2016

For “Feather Belly,” Carlos Reyes’s solo exhibition here, the peephole in the gallery’s door has been reversed, allowing visitors to peek into the space before entering. What you witness gazing through it is a fisheye perspective on an ominous scene: An enormous, spiky deathtrap occupies the entire entrance floor. In a corner, an orb, colored black and blue like a bruise, shines a beam of white light in the direction of the peephole, signaling the work’s menacing

presence to any potential voyeur. An anxiety-inducing sight, to say the least.

The scene unravels, however, once one is inside the gallery. What at first looked like a prop from the *Saw* franchise of torture-porn films is actually *Feather Belly #1* (all works 2016), a sculpture composed of a smooth sheet of luminous steel (formerly the floor panel of a large utility van), pierced by spikes made of walnut. The emotional and intellectual trajectory of this work’s unfolding—from behind the door, then through it—is eerie, mesmerizing. It is a formally beautiful landscape that’s weirdly familiar and utterly foreboding.

The same uncanny transition happens with *Feather Belly #2*, the aforementioned round, light-emitting sentinel. In actuality, it’s a bowling ball with a small LED shining from one of its finger holes. Hanging on the gallery walls are *Feather Belly #3* and *#4*, two unfired clay works resembling charred wood. The surfaces of these pieces—in deep, inky tones of purple, black, and blue—resemble reptile skin. Their psychedelic patina is derived from ordinary desktop-printer ink. Again, Reyes manages to successfully pervert the boundaries between the mundane and the otherworldly.





## Pindul's Rewards | Carlos Reyes and Alessandro Bava



Carlos Reyes, Pindul's Rewards, Installation view

Let's, for a moment, argue that art and politics (as we currently practise their convergent theories, and – with a secondary disclaimer – specifically in western visual art terminologies) has its roots in Italy. We'll point out how the artists' manifesto was the first real example of the merging of art and politics in the form of the art object, and that it was The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (published in Bologna in 1909) that provided the textual aesthetic template that would become common to all subsequent artists' manifestos. Its introduction unpacks a narrative that forms the basis for the propositions that follow; its conclusion takes the form of a rhetorical speech act that defines or critiques these propositions. The artists' manifesto proposes a new social ideal based on embedding the principles and morals of a movement's perceived 'ideal' of art. The manifesto, after Futurism, became the most effective mode of criticism and rhetoric.

Futurism's social impact was due, in large part, to the timing of its emergence. Its rise occurred during a tumultuous period in Italy's recent political history. In the years leading up to the First World War, national conciliation between the political Right and Left became unworkable. A series of strikes and riots in favour of suffrage for the working classes – known as 'Red Week' – brokered a schism between the rich and the poor; worsening economic conditions resulted in the country being coerced into joining the war. Futurism, which rallied for the mechanisation of industry and promoted the (perceived) magnificent racial qualities of the Italian (who they saw as demonstrating "all the qualities of GENIUS"), increasingly appealed to the Italian public. As the Futurists' de facto leader, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti ensured that a large section of the Italian

Ajay Hothi, DIS Magazine, June 18, 2015

population would have access to their series of manifestos because they were printed cheaply and quickly and in great number using the latest in lithographic print technology. With the publication and distribution of their manifestos, Futurism – and subsequent artistic movements – was suddenly able to gain a more public spectatorship than they would have received in just galleries and performance venues.

Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in Bologna at the peak of Futurism's influence in the artistic-political landscape after the First World War. The city and its region, Emilia-Romagna, is renowned for its historic and deep-standing support for the Italian Communist Party – it is known as one of Italy's 'Red Regions'. Pasolini would later graduate from the University of Bologna, but as a child his family moved to Casarsa della Delizia, a small town near the Italian-Slovenian border. Casarsa is in the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, one of only five (of twenty) regions of Italy that are governed autonomously (due to the region's cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity, part self-governance was granted to the region after the Second World War, in 1947, as an attempt to prevent secession). It was in this highly politicised climate that two years later, in 1949, Pasolini also took pen to paper and had people from the village copy posters by hand to produce a series of political posters as a call to arms for the people of Casarsa. These posters are archived in the town at the Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini and were exhumed by curator Alessandro Bava while working with the institution in 2014, before bringing Carlos Reyes in for the project.

For the exhibition Pindul's Rewards at Arcadia Missa, London, organised by artist-architect Alessandro Bava, Reyes and Pasolini are given collaborator credit on the marquee. Pasolini's words provide the starting point for this display; Reyes re-performs the texts written by Pasolini for his posters. They have been made into photocopied replications and projected onto the wall, and they have been laser engraved onto shirts and, incongruously – but most effectively – onto wide-capped, dried mushrooms.

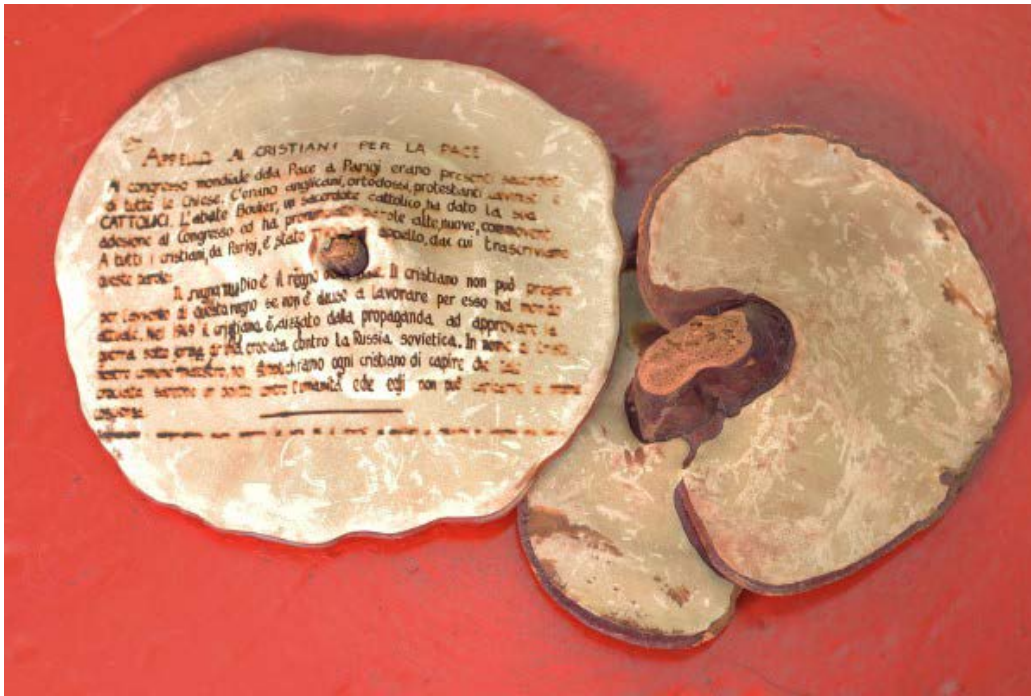
These texts include "The Satisfactions of 'Pindul'," a fable that recounts the 'rewards' of a politically-blinkered man; a series of newspaper clippings, annotated by Pasolini, that highlight how Italian culture is ultimately undermined by foreign aid and 'assistance'; and a polemic against the Christian Democratic Party that accuses them of hypocrisy against the poor. Alongside these texts are sculptural elements: a stemmed wine glass containing ferrofluid (a magnetized liquid), and a hand-painted poster for The Matrix Reloaded that Reyes found in China.

The political message of the show comes through powerfully – Pasolini identified as a Communist, with faith that the State must defend its sovereignty as strongly as the individual rights of its citizens. Any party that claims power within Italy must do so in the name and in support of its peoples. Perhaps this message resonates even stronger at the present time: I visited the exhibition the day after the British general election, when our center-Right minority government won an outright majority on the promise of a more extreme shift to the Right. It was heartening to see that Reyes had replicated one of Pasolini's recurrent emblems in his collages: the silhouette of a big-bellied man with wide grin dressed in top hat and tails, carrying bags fat with cash. Heartening because it's an image that has become common in British newspapers over the past few years – it is a similar image used by satirists when referencing Prime Minister David Cameron, a figure mocked for his detached, monied, upper-class background.

The texts and illustrations appear engraved on mushrooms. It is an interesting material, and one that deserves closer scrutiny. As an organic substance, it begins the process of bio-degradation immediately upon foraging. As a fungus its primary characteristic is that it forms a symbiotic relationship with other organisms and aids nutrient recycling and therefore enables more efficient decomposition. Used in this context, the audience is faced directly with the idea of the parasitic nature of rhetoric (of all persuasions), as well as its rapacity for self-preservation. The mushrooms that Reyes selected for these works are reishi mushrooms. They are incredibly rare in their natural state, found most often today in their dried form. These particular mushrooms

Ajay Hothi, DIS Magazine, June 18, 2015

were individually sourced and shipped from a supplier in New York. They are a treasured ingredient within traditional Chinese medicine. This strain of mushroom is believed to be around two and a half thousand years old, but it has only been in more common use in the past five hundred years. Previously, it was solely supplied to the ruling Emperor. The reishi ('lingzhi' in its Pinyin Chinese name, 'reishi' being Japanese) mushroom is believed to preserve the Qi – the life energy. That when taken for extensive periods of time it has the power to preserve life.



Carlos Reyes, Untitled (After Pindul #2), 2015. Laser-Etched Dried Reishi Mushroom (on left)

Pindul's Rewards is an evenly-balanced display, with strong visual elements tempering the artists' 'Right On' politics. But the exhibition's strongest aspects are those elements that demand close, careful, and detailed scrutiny. Of course, print poster political placards and their distribution don't necessarily equate to left-wing demonstrative politics (let's not forget that even the Futurists supported war and would eventually merge with Mussolini's ruling Fascist Party), but it's worth remembering the enigma posed by German artist-activist Dieter Ruckhaberle in 1968, in opposition to Documenta 4: "What's left to do for artists of nation[s] that wage criminal war...other than to make Minimal Art?"

Pier Pasolini and Carlos Reyes  
 Pindul's Rewards  
 Arcadia Missa  
 May 1 – June 27 2015  
 With thanks to Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini.

# ARTNEWS

## Punching Above Their Weight: Three South London Galleries to Watch

BY *Jamie Sterns* POSTED 06/01/15 3:07 PM

### Shows at The Sunday Painter, Jupiter Woods, and Arcadia Missa

#### Arcadia Missa

#### “pindul’s rewards: Pier Paolo Pasolini and Carlos Reyes”

The title of this show is a bit misleading, for although Pasolini is in the show, he is more a muse and source than a participant. The artist in full view is Carlos Reyes and in this exhibition he takes a series of political posters that Pasolini created in 1949 to reinvigorate and contextualize. Why Pasolini? That was spurred by the show’s organizer, Alessandro Bava, who invited Reyes to work with the Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini as Bava saw an affinity with Pasolini’s archives with Reyes’s own. Is there a link? Yes and no. The works in the show incorporate Pasolini’s archived text and images with consideration and variety but there is a topical quality to it all. There seems to be a lack in synthesis or direct connections between Reyes and Pasolini, which belies the intended affinity, but this is not necessarily a bad thing as the alignment has produced work that opens new doors for both.

Although the direct link may be vague, it did not leave one lacking in engaging works to view. Of particular note is *Laser-Etched Dried Reishi Mushrooms* (2015), which are placed on the floor and walls and are exactly as the title describes. These mushrooms are bizarre objects. They look prehistoric and seem like they could be wood, stone, or paper. They have a texture that seems like suede but also like a painted surface. What is laser etched onto their surface is text from Pasolini’s posters as well as cartoon images of a slightly maniacally grinning man. There is something unnecessarily absurd about it, but it is nonetheless compelling to look at.

The mushroom can also be seen as a metaphor for networks. The concept of information being a spore, reaching out and spreading through medium, through generations, and through influences may be the most interesting underlying concept of the show. This can be seen in other works, including the large hand-painted film poster shipped in from Taiwan that forcefully stakes its ground in the exhibition space, as well as in *Gauze Mesh Shirt*, which is doubled with a *Laser Etched Denim Shirt* that has Pasolini’s text burned in the back. These works feel like afterthoughts of former narratives that may or may not link to the show’s focus, but that seems okay. Just the hint of a relationship is enough to spread a branching idea.

Reyes is an artist that doesn’t give it all away. There is a sense of restraint even within the experimentation. His works are not resolved or complete in a one-to-one way but rather they are investigations into ideas and materials he already uses or has just discovered. This deliberately paced, almost scientific quality in working makes Reyes’s art, and the pieces in the show, slow burners, which is refreshing both aesthetically and mentally. In this time of flash-and-dash art, to see work that may not hit every note perfectly but is hitting them honestly is rare and exciting to see.



## carlos reyes is exploring the pasolini archive

A new exhibition at London's Arcadia Missa is examining the revolutionary film-maker's place in today's cultural landscape.



Dried Reishi mushrooms, laser etched with political provocations in the Italian dialect of Friulian, scatter the floor and walls. A hand painted Matrix Reloaded poster on a linen sheet is stretched across a hand built wooden frame, a wineglass resting on one of its rear crossbeams. Two shirts hang above head height, laser etched with burnt-looking text. The floor is painted deep, earthen red. An overhead slide projector delicately transposes an A4 reproduction of a poster onto a gallery wall, occasionally interrupted by the projection of a hand as you realise that it's a live feed of a shelf containing the exhibition's information and poster handouts.

Carlos Reyes is an artist based in New York. Last week he opened the exhibition *pindul's rewards* at London gallery Arcadia Missa. This put his sculptural practice in dialogue with Italian filmmaker, poet and political activist Pier Paolo Pasolini, who passed away in untimely fashion aged 53 in 1975. Organised by Italian architect and curator Alessandro Bava, the exhibition picks up on a series of pamphlets and posters produced by the young Pasolini in his hometown of Casarsa in the late 1940s. Made available by the Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini, which is located in Casarsa and contains Pasolini's archive, these digital files are re-situated within the material economy of today's digitally permeated, globalised world.

A "Catholic Marxist" affiliated with the Italian Communist Party from 1947, Pasolini maintained a devout relationship to the rural working class, embodied in his use of Friulian and always present in the content of his work. Yet he was a cosmopolite comfortable in the big city and in international film circles. Resolute in political conviction, he was happy to embrace systematic contradictions as a starting point in radical thought - contradictions that are rife in any political or artistic work to this day.

The exhibition's title translates the title of one of the featured posters ("*Li sodisfassions dal pindul*"). This tells the parable of two figures, one communist and the other a free market ideologue, arguing over who has the greater freedom: free market freedom to suffer from hunger, or the communist's freedom to suffer the indignity of Alcide De Gasperi, the Italian Prime Minister of the time. If this is a debate still alive in austerity London in 2015, however unsavoury and opaque it's become, it's clear to Pasolini which the ennobling route out is.

### **What inspired you to work with the Pasolini archive?**

**Alessandro Bava:** Pasolini's work has been an obsession since I was a teen, and I found that outside of Italy he is known

Harry Burke, i-D Vice, May 7, 2015

mostly for his films, so it was important to me to try and uncover lesser known facets of his work, especially his ventures into painting and drawing. The posters that are the base of the show are very unique artefacts because Pasolini made them in his early 20s in his more raw, early phase, so I see them as a synthesis of writing, political activism and art.



**Is there a relationship between Casarsa in the late 40s and London today?**

**AB:** Poor labor conditions... Bad housing... But the link is more Casarsa-NYC (where Carlos lives). I read an interview recently between Oriana Fallaci (the Italian journalist) and Pasolini, who after his first trip to New York states how obsessed with how people dress there he is, how “free” they seemed. For him the New York of the 70s was fundamentally anti-bourgeois, as much as the peasants in Casarsa.

**Carlos Reyes:** Casarsa has a complex history especially post-WWII given its proximity to Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria. All these countries were divided along different political ideologies where pre-existing cultural ones already existed - Casarsa is in Italy yet shares the Friulian dialect with parts of Slovenia.

While London’s borders remain the same, its demographic makeup continually shifts. Its cultural borders are always in flux. There are countries within countries here, and competing political ideologies mixed with pre-existing cultural ones. Add to that the possibility of accessing information instantly and forming networks with communities of people globally and one gets the sense of a constant state of disintegration/ reintegration between the mindset of fractured marginal communities and psychologies, and the dominant consumerist hegemonic structure.

**The works of Pasolini you are exhibiting are items of direct political antagonism, flyposted by Pasolini around his community. Is there a conflict produced when these things are brought off the streets and into a gallery space?**

**CR:** The posters are 66 years old and the content refers to a specific time and locality, so perhaps by reinstalling them into gallery they are given a degree of universality. I hope placing them in Arcadia Missa provides a new context and thus new life, a new valence, rather than subsumes them.

But on a broader scale, the conflict only exists if you construct the relationship between politics/aesthetics as a binary. I’ve always wondered about this conflict between politicising aesthetics and aestheticising politics, and about how the realm of the sensual has been positioned as a counterpoint to the literary, absolute, rational, and political. I think one pulls the other and they sort of massage information out of each other. Sensuality is used as the scapegoat for manipulation of politics, instead of the actual people who are doing the manipulating in a very conscious way. This doesn’t acknowledge the possibility of permeability within our heads: I rarely walk around with a fixed position and am capable of assimilating information beyond binaries and beyond gestalt.

Another thing ... why is a gallery considered a private aesthetic zone and the “public” a political zone?

**AB:** To me these belong to a gallery space AND to the street in equal measure, like a Rodchenko or a John Heartfield poster. With Carlos we tried to readdress the posters as works of an artist engaging his community. We saw them as political and

Harry Burke, i-D Vice, May 7, 2015

poetical objects capable of triggering a reaction even within the gallery. I thought a lot about Pontus Hulten's Poetry Must Be Made by All exhibition at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1969 where images from the May '68 demonstrations in Paris were literally taken off the streets and put in a museum. In that case the museum really turned into a space of conflict, so we wanted to deal with the political content of the works with more distance and in a more allusive way.

### **How do posters translate into sculptures?**

**AB:** The idea was to deal with the posters in multiple ways: address their materiality as works of an artist while translating it both literally from Italian to English and as takeaway posters that are translated from a 90s American projector to a British power plug. We didn't want to express respect for Pasolini, we wanted to express love!

**CR:** We spent quite a bit of time translating the works into English as well as looking at the physicality of the objects themselves. We looked at how they were edited, how they were hand printed, and considered the actual material they were printed on. In one instance we realised that the poster which had a decidedly Marxist view-point was hand printed on the back of a Christian Democratic poster. This was no doubt a conscious decision by Pasolini. The wording on the Christian Democratic poster bleeds through the front and graphically plays with the Pasolini text, which recounts a political situation that happened in Hungary. We found these design decisions interesting since they synthesised aesthetic decisions and calls for civic awareness. It was the basis for one of the material translations in the show, one of my own shirts with this "uncovered" poster laser etched on the fabric.



While having a conversation with a friend, he pointed out that I was speaking about the sculptures in very formal terms. For example, I had mentioned how I wanted to give some weight and volume to some of the posters. However speaking about them in formal terms is an acknowledgment of their physicality and doesn't negate the conceptual effort behind the works or the task of translating them materially. Being given access to them as digital files on the Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini's website opened the doors for all types of reprinting given today's "ubiquity" of printers, 3d printers, laser etchers, and digital distribution at our disposal.

### **Pasolini famously wrote in Friulian, a dialect of Italian originating in northeast Italy, where he was from. Do your sculptures have a relationship to dialect?**

**CR:** "Dialect" is an interesting word because it presupposes that there is a universal standard of language and the deviations from that in tone, syntax, construction etc. as different and sometimes subordinate. However, two people speaking from the same regions, in the same language don't hear "dialect".

I suppose I give in to dialect in the sense that when I choose materials, I am not concerned with them being ahistorical vessels for universal truths. I like to think of the construction of the sculptures as more porous - as allowing for regional, time-specific readings of their component parts, and at the same time a rearrangement of those material expectations to uncover other possibilities in understanding what "truths" lay behind the perceptible world.

# ARTFORUM



View of “Passive Collect”

## “Passive Collect”

CHIN’S PUSH

4917 York Boulevard

July 11–August 10, 2014

Spot-welded above the roll-down shutters at Chin’s Push, like an old-timey emblem, is a sheet-steel replica of the Markets Data section of the *Financial Times* by artist Morgan Canavan. The illegibility of its raw figures is rendered as a sculptural pun—ticking digits accrete into heavy, creased matter. The work advertises the problem of data—how to display it, how to draw meaning from its abstractions—and flags the anxiety underwriting “Passive Collect,”

a group show curated by artist Jesse Stecklow. Moving into the gallery, for example, one finds (*CAS Registrations: Siladroxylal and Plus Hydroxycitronellal*) . . ., 2013–, for which Sean Raspset submitted new molecules to the Chemical Abstracts Service database. He then bound the CAS readout in a portfolio and fixed it to the wall on a retractable leash. This awkward workplace presentation is a brutally physical concession for molecules that, if produced, would be perfumes.

With the exception of Raspset’s, the works in this exhibition are simple combines, dimming the notion of passivity by accumulating without intent. Carlos Reyes’s *Not Yet Titled*, 2014, features pink oyster mushrooms sprouting from bags of substrate. A few ambient items—a crusty plate, a roll of flypaper—decorate the gallery, “passively collecting” dirt, spores, and flies. Like the artworks, these objects paraphrase the exhibition’s subtitle: “A Group Exhibition Organized Around Contemporary Notions of Data Collection.” “Data” almost means “stuff” here, yet the subtitle ends pitched on NSA-induced paranoia. Is calling mushrooms “data” the kind of semiotic creep that might conceal a darker purpose—like extending “drones” to cover RC helicopters? Who takes responsibility for all this data? Is data neutral now?