

In contrast to the human figures that populated these works, Shtini's painting *Carbonio*, 2015, presented a shadowy abstract form, although its textures evoked hair and genital features. What is perhaps so unsettling about this image—one that is typical of the artist's practice—is the extent to which it evokes the humane. We are, after all, in a constant state of becoming.

—Mike Watson

HØVIKODDEN, NORWAY

“Myths of the Marble”

HENIE ONSTAD KUNSTSENTER

With fourteen works by eleven artists, the mazelike group show “Myths of the Marble” is an insistent plunge into the depths of the virtual in contemporary art. Curated by Milena Høgsberg of the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter and Alex Klein of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, where the exhibition is on view through August 6, it includes seven large works commissioned for the occasion. Apart from the fetishized material of Western art history, the title alludes to the nickname given to our planet inspired by the iconic 1972 NASA photograph of the earth as seen from space: the Blue Marble. It seems to hint at a close connection between distance and desire—the virtual always at the far end of possibility—that will never be completely resolved in our constantly shifting perspective on the world. From the viral to black mirrors, metaphors of our current post-reality are often exhausted by dystopian reservations or just pure media panic. No one here seems to think the hand brake is still within reach. Wherever we're heading, the future seems to exert an irresistible, though possibly fatal, attraction.



Jacolby Satterwhite, *En Plein Air: Music of Objective Romance*, 2016–, HD video, color, sound, 10 minutes. From “Myths of the Marble.”

From this contemporary viewpoint—teetering between antiquity and the space age—the materiality and tactility of our new prosthetic organs demand careful attention: Are our bodies being sidelined in spaces of new technology? Daria Martin's 16-mm film *Soft Materials*, 2004, which depicts robots and performers interacting in the Artificial Intelligence Lab at the University of Zurich, could almost be a Merce Cunningham or Trisha Brown piece in its breakdown of the mechanics of the human body. The CGI worlds of Sondra Perry's *IT'S IN THE*

GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection, 2017, and Jacolby Satterwhite's *En Plein Air: Music of Objective Romance*, 2016–, acutely demonstrate the emancipation of imagination from physics at opposite ends of the scale: reproduction of real-life power structures versus a baroque actualization of desire. Like the disorienting geography of Florian Meisenberg's virtual-reality painting installation *Of Defective Gods & Lucid Dreams (The Museum Is Closed for Renovation)*, 2017, the push and pull between unsanctioned freedom and the opacity of algorithmic rules resonate through the exhibition.

Arranged as a series of solo presentations, the exhibition at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter comprised a sequence of immersive experiences that only thematically leaked into each other. I was puzzled at first by the inclusion of Chris Marker's *Ouvroir: The Movie*, 2010, a rather clinical video tour of the museum he created in the virtual world *Second Life*. However, I came to see it as an apt historicizing; not so much for its outmoded graphics (*so* 2003) as for its rekindling of the “museum without walls” and the acknowledgment that the role of the art institution is transformed again and again by new media.

The exhibition dreams beyond the museum without walls and toward the figure of what video-game designers call the skybox: a 3-D-rendered horizon, always distant, conjuring the permanent suspension of freedom. The virtual imagination of capitalism might be similar, as implied by Cayetano Ferrer's cunning mirror hall, *Endless Columns (Chicago School)*, 2017, where colored lights are projected on ornamented columns that mimic the art-historical simulations of Chicago revivalist architecture. Multiplying columns disappear in all directions, accompanied by the sound of descending arpeggios, threatening to collapse promise and paranoia into a virtual trap of free-market and casino capitalism. Meanwhile, the delicate display of minerals in Ane Graff's *What Oscillates*, 2017, re-fetishizes the tiny material components of our smartphones that were initially laboriously extracted from the earth. It seems to remind us that the distraction of the glazed touch screen is also a shield obscuring the reality of conditions of production, whether precarious mining jobs or underpaid assembly workers.

Like the concept of virtuality, marble can be slippery, and the exhibition title certainly risks creating its own dissociative hall of mirrors. But as neoliberalism continues to colonize the future with the figure of risk, its reverberation of metaphors might offer hints about how to reclaim the language of optimism from its captivity in Silicon Valley.

—Maria Moseng

ISTANBUL

Leylâ Gediz

THE PILL

Leylâ Gediz's show “*Serpilen*” (an unusual Turkish word meaning something that blooms as it is dispersed) was a poetic rendition of her studio, a distilled portion of her work, a pristine and spiritual space created by paintings and some of her working environment's “clutter,” as she puts it. All became part of a total installation—not a grand, socially loud one, but a quiet contemplation of in-between moments and the intimacy of objects, of lives shared or interconnected, in which viewers could create their own stories through what they saw.

Gediz's works have always been thoughtfully studied and composed. Her paintings use a limited palette of mostly grays, pale blues and pinks, and black; her drawings of everyday objects are meticulously refined; her installations project a layer of meaning beyond the obvious—a question, a sense of wonderment about what has happened or continues to happen. She tells stories with coolly charged details that are personal and inclusive at the same time. At the Pill, her oil-on-



View of “Leylâ Gediz,” 2017.
Photo: Hasan Deniz.

canvas paintings of cardboard boxes (*Untitled [Boxes]*, 2016), candles (*Doctrinaire*, 2016), wooden stools (*Serpilen*, 2016), a supermarket receipt (*Resistance*, 2016), a table with a mirror (*Palmyra*, 2016), and a portrait of a man seen from one side (*Rip Curl*, 2016) were minimally rendered and faintly hued. But they reverberated with a strange intensity that was further enhanced by the surrounding memory-filled “clutter,” such as fiber cement planter boxes (*Nisilden Nesile* [From Generation to Generation], 2017), stacked tires with a large teddy bear on top (*Peekaboo*, 2016), beer cans and a metal chain (*Zor Zamanlarda Sanat* [Art in Hard Times], 2016), a bed covered with gessoed canvas instead of sheets (*Untitled [Bed]*, 2017). A sense of connection among all these objects was undeniable; from any point in the space, the paintings and the objects together suggested a story, or stories.

In this way, the show was a testament to Gediz’s conceptual approach to painting. For her, a painting is not just two- or even three- but four-dimensional, adding time past, present, or future: One could venture that there were once plants in the tin boxes, that the snuffed-out candles were once lit, that someone was or would be moving since the boxes were taped up. *Explosion*, 2016, a painting of a wooden artist’s mannequin with one leg broken below the knee and seemingly about to stumble out of the canvas, coupled with a frame shaped like a shelving unit, is a study—and perhaps an overcoming—of the limits of pictorial representation. Gediz questions both figure and frame. In the black, gray, and white painting *Default (Self)*, 2016, the lean female figure bent forward is repeated in continuum toward an endless background, suggesting digital layering.

The work used as the poster of the exhibition (*Le Connaisseur*, 2016), is a portrait of an art dealer Gediz read about in a *Life* magazine from the late 1950s. The picture shows a man looking at an abstract painting that apparently earned him a fortune, even though he bought it very cheaply. This was the one work in which Gediz deliberately commented on the financial side of art: She has put a divisive white streak between the painting within the painting and the man. *Histoire universelle*, 2016, which depicts part of the spine of a worn-out copy of a volume from the 1913 *Histoire universelle illustrée des pays et des peuples* (Universal history of nations and peoples), may be another timely comment. Big conflicts and new world orders shake the earth, but beneath the superfluous ambitions of nations and peoples runs a sadness and a joy that only art can tap. Gediz neither condemns nor laments this world, because even though it may seem to be crumbling, it still grows richer in details.

—Mine Haydaroglu

BEIJING

Song Dong

ROCKBUND ART MUSEUM

However much postmodern or global influence has shaped contemporary China, this Confucian maxim has not escaped people’s outlooks: “At thirty I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the mandate of heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of the truth.” This proverb is also the reference point for fifty-year-old Song Dong’s solo show “I Don’t Know the Mandate of Heaven.” The exhibition, curated by Liu Yingjiu and Xu Tiantian and replete with dense materials, provides more than enough jigsaw pieces to construct Song’s life and career, while also presenting the creative path of an established artist who, like many others, struggles between cultures and turns that struggle into conceptual fuel.

The show was composed of seven chapters: one theme for each of the six floors and one commissioned work that occupied the whole building. In the latter, *Sketch: RAS (Exterior)*, 2016–17, Song used LED lights and black tape to mark all of the dimensional measurements of the building, turning the museum’s historic architecture into a design draft. Giant beams composed of arrows and numbers shone on the facade, creating an exterior spectacle every night, and contrasting starkly with the classical lighting illuminating every other colonial building on the Bund. As became evident throughout the show, spectacle making is one of many Conceptualist approaches Song explores. Another example is a series of sixteen life-size statues of law enforcement officers (*Policemen*, 2000–2004), each bearing the artist’s visage, and standing at the door, in the elevator, on the terrace, and in the restrooms confronting the defenseless viewers. Aside from visual and audio elements (Song’s videos have all kinds of sound), the exhibition also contained psychological and phenomenological aspects.

The chapters “Mirror,” “Shadow,” “Word,” and “Revelation” (occupying, in order, the first through fourth floors) covered a wide variety of media, delineating a spectrum of methodologies and Conceptual approaches, many of which Song shares with his peers. His wide range of artistic strategies includes video sketch, word games, conceptual painting, large-scale spectacle-driven installation, participation, plays on translation, oscillation between mundane and culturally specific materials, archiving, and so on. Placed in the middle

View of “Song Dong,” 2017. Foreground: *Policemen*, 2000–2004. Background: *Mirror Hall*, 2016–17.

