

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JOAN JONAS, KEN OKIISHI, LUCY RAVEN
AND JENNIFER WEST CURATED BY FILIPA RAMOS

US artist **Joan Jonas** (born in 1936, based in New York) is one of the most influential figures in post-war American art, due to pioneering work in performance and video that reinvents the relationship between art and narrative. Alongside video images, props and performance, her pieces incorporate the presence of words as a driving force of the imagination. After her solo show at HangarBicocca in Milan – a gargantuan retrospective that ranges through the forms she has produced in her almost fifty-year career – curated by Andrea Lissoni, Jonas will be featured in the US Pavilion of the next Venice Biennale, in yet another acknowledgement of the seminal importance of her work.

Ken Okiishi's work reveals a fascination for circuits of communication, agency, and the translation of meanings and materials in a digitally networked culture. Born in Iowa in 1978, Okiishi studied art at The Cooper Union with Hans Haacke and Doug Ashford as professors. He now lives and works in New York and his work has been exhibited around the world in settings such as the 2014 Whitney Biennial (New York), Pilar Corrias (London, 2013), the MIT List Visual Arts Center (Massachusetts, 2013), the Hessel Museum of Art (CCS Bard, 2013), Mathew (Berlin, 2012) and Take Ninagawa (Tokyo, 2012). Using video, performance, and installation, Okiishi's work considers – always with a significant degree of humor – how subjects are produced by totalizing concepts such as international real estate, the art world, or the dream of perfect translation.

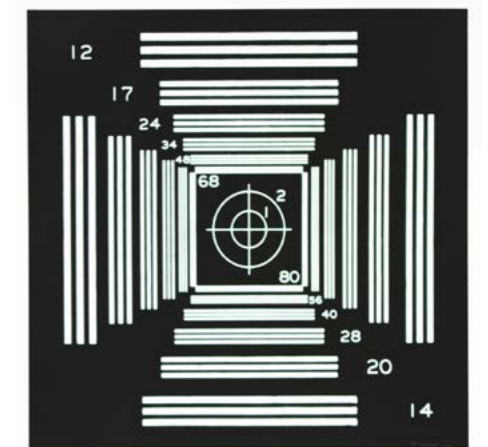
American artist **Lucy Raven** (born in 1977 in Tucson, Arizona) works with the expanded techniques of film. Making use of animation, sculptural installation, performance and live television, Raven explores the relationship of still photography to the moving image. Her projects address issues concerning the new digital movie industry, image production, and how community is created. Wide audiences have seen her works in solo and group exhibitions at the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), MoMA (New York), mumok (Vienna) and in many other galleries and institutions. Raven is also an art writer and curator and has lectured in numerous universities, including UC Berkeley, School of Visual Arts, New York, The Cooper Union, New York and CCA, San Francisco.

The practice of LA-based artist **Jennifer West** combines hypnotic, fast-paced films and performance. Instead of using cameras, her process involves manipulating the celluloid film itself through alchemical transformations using elements such as nail polish, mascara, body glitter, paintballs, and alcohol, or by staging interactive events where people are invited to perform actions on the film strips – like skateboarding directly on them. Performance is as essential to West's practice as material composition – both used to construct the work and to provide a conceptual context. In 2014, she began to make interactive "cinematic filmstrip environments." Her practice also includes performances, sculptures, filmstrip quilts, drawings, photo-based works, zines and lectures. Significant commissions include PICA (2014); High Line Art (2012); Aspen Art Museum (2010) and Tate Modern (2009). Solo exhibitions include Focal Point Gallery, Essex and Marc Foxx, LA in 2013; S1 Artspace, Sheffield in 2012; Vilma Gold, London in 2011; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, Western Bridge, Seattle and Kunstverein Nuremberg in 2010.

Lucy Raven, *On Location* (stills), 2014. Courtesy: the artist

FOUR ARTISTS FROM THREE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS, WORKING IN DISPARATE CONTEXTS, MEET ON THE COMMON GROUND OF WORK, LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS, MOVING IMAGE AND PERFORMANCE. SHARING THEIR IDEAS, PROCESSES, REFERENCES, AND SOURCES OF IMAGERY, THEY ANALYZE AND DISCUSS THEIR PRACTICE, AND ITS RELATION TO TIME, HISTORY, POPULAR CULTURE, THEATRE AND NARRATIVE IN AN OPEN EXCHANGE THAT INTRODUCES FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES ABOUT TIME-BASED PRACTICES AND THEIR CURRENT RE-EVALUATION IN CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC SCENARIOS.

(Introduction by Filipa Ramos)



Lucy Raven, *PR2*, 2012. Courtesy: the artist

FILIPA RAMOS
There are such a large variety of artworks incorporating film and video. What place do you see your work occupying in this field/area?



Joan Jonas, *Volcano Saga* (still), 1989. © the artist. Courtesy: Electronic Arts Intermix, New York; Wilkinson Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

JOAN JONAS
Inspired by the Happenings I saw in the 1960s, I decided to step from sculpture into the space of performance. My major references were certain painters and sculptors, poets, novelists, filmmakers, and rituals of other cultures. I wanted to refer to sources outside the scene in New York and other cities at that time. I saw the Hopi Snake Dance in New Mexico. It was an amazing experience. In 1968 I made my first film, *Wind*. In 1970 I visited Japan where I saw Noh Theater. This made a deep impression. I brought a Portapak back from Japan and began to work in front of the camera while watching myself in a monitor. This led to *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972), a performance with the same closed-circuit system. The audience saw the live performance simultaneously with a detail of the performance captured by a live camera on the set. There were also prerecorded videos. Single channel works have always been generated by this process. I continue to work with these ideas concerning perception of space, of narrative, altered by a medium.

KEN OKIISHI
My genealogy as an artist traces directly to "video art" as it became distinctly related more to "painting and sculpture" and "performance art" than to narrative and experimental film. But a genealogy, as in all diagrammatic thinking, always contains bits of lies that are necessary to clean up the lines of the diagram or maintain belief in family origins. The lie in my first sentence is this: Robert Breer "discovered" me in 1997, and is the reason I was able to go to art school. But his own positioning within the rather manly world of Visionary Film was also both a true and untrue fit: Carolee Schneemann borrowed his film camera one day in the 1960s and he was pretty unnerved by what she did with it. He mumbled a lot when he spoke. His

moving sculptures are much too cool for the proto-slacker "dirtiness" of Anthology Film archives. He always said that Stan Brakhage's films had the world's most pretentious titles. My genealogy as an artist also traces to things that are not necessarily directly apparent in my current work: the most rigorous being an aesthetic and theoretical study within the frame of "lesbian feminism" and its afterlives, via Laura Cottingham, Leslie Singer and Cecilia Dougherty. Hans Haacke was also the bad dad of institutional critique—and a surprisingly gentle teacher when I studied with him right before his retirement. Doug Ashford made all formal questions into social ones, and the other way round, almost as a mania. Rita Myers took me through every iteration of video history as a performance with a camera in space. I know it is rather "Japanese" (but also "German"—I am both) of me to focus on the masters with whom I studied, but I guess that is also a positioning within specific impossible social relations that are afforded in New York: that of the hybridity of American-ness as an entirely schizophrenic "freedom."

In this way, I see my work occupying multiple positions at once, as the materials of the work (whether they are mental or formal) cross uncrossable boundaries. A concrete example: a recent museum acquisition of a work of mine that is both "painting" (oil paint) and "video" (screen playing an .mp4 file) led to my being approached by multiple museum departments about the possibility of acquiring the work at the same time; eventually, I met with conservators from multiple departments, since no single department could "deal" entirely with the work. The work also had to be installed by multiple departments, in an almost self-parodic display of "union rules," where it became an absurd but real discussion as to which department, Audio-Visual or Art Handling, was allowed



Jennifer West, "Flashlight Filmstrip Projections" installation views at PICA, Portland, 2014. Courtesy: Marc Foxx, Los Angeles and Vilma Gold, London

to touch the work at which time in the installation process.

JENNIFER WEST

My latest interactive light projection works take the form of populist pre-cinema spectacles like the Magic Lantern and shadow theater shows of the 1800s, as well as expanded or paracinema and performance. The work uses research, history, language and process-based tactile abstraction. It approaches the translation between the analogue and tactile to the digital. Lastly, it exists alongside other practices that use video, film and the moving image in connection with other media like as drawing, painting, performance, text-based work, etc.

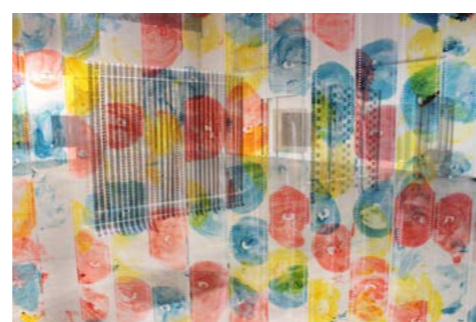
LUCY RAVEN

In many of my works, I try to slow down the process of looking. I want to

loosen up time so it's not so beholden to production, and unhinge production from its slavery to time. I'm not sure where this places my work in relation to that of other artists, but the work of other artists is important to me. I think a lot about images of work, but also about *how* images work, and how they're circulated. When an image becomes exhausted, how can it stop working, take a break, reorganize its position, or go on strike? While I mostly work with animation, the form of my works varies, and is specific to the ideas and questions in each project. I studied sculpture, and in many ways, I think of my moving image work—groupings of still frames—as Philip Guston once described the objects in one of his still life paintings as chunks of matter floating in uncertain space.



FR What historical examples of film and video work do you think it is important to consider?



Top - Jennifer West, "Flashlight Filmstrip Projections" installation views at PICA, Portland, 2014. Courtesy: Marc Foxx, Los Angeles and Vilma Gold, London. Photo: Evan La Londe

Bottom - Jennifer West, "Flashlight Filmstrip Projections" installation views at PICA, Portland, 2014. Courtesy: Marc Foxx, Los Angeles and Vilma Gold, London

intersect as continuously unstable glitches against the "smooth" time of networked culture (where the term "network" makes you want to barf; where you don't really know what day it is; where it is always a rather

JW

My latest work has shifted focus to a new set of historical examples that include performance-based projection works, "paracinema" such as Malcolm Le Grice's *Horror Film 1* (1971) and Ken Jacobs' *Nervous Magic Lantern* performance works. However, since these new pieces require the viewer to be the projectionist using a flashlight, I also think of the Surrealist exhibition of Duchamp and others, held in nearly total darkness. Man Ray had the idea to give visitors flashlights so they could see the work. I've also been thinking about Joan Jonas' use of the white costume as a projection screen, in relation to Loïe Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* from Paris in the 1890s. In addition, I've been looking at objects in the collection of the Getty Research Institute from the 1600s to the 1900s from pre-cinema, everything from magic lantern slides and ephemera to camera obscuras, to other projection devices and anamorphic cone-lens pieces that created 3D perspectives. I've been thinking about Loïe Fuller's practice of directed lighting and illumination techniques.

LR

I've been looking at a lot of old cartoons lately, particularly those of Max Fleischer, Chuck Jones, Ub Iwerks, and the UPA studio. Fleischer's cartoons are simply the most beautiful and haunting I've ever seen. With Jones, and his layout artist Maurice Noble, the direction of action through the landscape, and the landscapes themselves, are funny, inventive, and one of the only visual references to the desert I had growing up, watching them from my TV in the Sonoran desert in Tucson, Arizona. Ub Iwerks started off drawing Mickey Mouse for Walt Disney, but got fed up with his lack of credit at the studio, and went on to start his own studio. It was never anywhere near as successful as Disney's, but the cartoons he made have a dark, adult humor, and Iwerks was an early innovator, using sound and color in his cartoons. UPA (United Productions of America) grew out of the ashes of the 1941 labor strike at Disney's studio, the largest to date, at that point. UPA started off making WWII training films (as did all the major studios at the time), then went on to pioneer a style called "limited animation." This was a simplified style of drawing—exploited decades later to cut costs—which was used as an explicit counterpoint to and argument against the cinematic realism portrayed in the cartoons produced by Disney. I also spend time looking at other sorts of animation from that period. Oskar Fischinger's work with color, music and structural form is important to me. So are the films of John Whitney, and his technical innovations toward computer animation. I recently got turned on to Mary Ellen Bute's animations, and find them truly innovative and remarkable. Recently, I've also been looking a lot at forgotten film ephemera of the 20th century—industrial films, training films, workers' films, engineering tests for projections. These movies are often less about content than form. They trace a different path to the present.

JJ

Early Russian and French film, for instance Vertov, Dovchenko, Vigo, Bresson; Japanese film, including the works of Ozu, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, and many others. I am interested in how forms begin. What are the earliest examples? Silent film, for instance, inspires the work today.

KO

Jacques Rozier's *Maine-Ocean* (1985); Leslie Singer and Cecilia Dougherty's *Joe-Joe* (1993); Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne's—with an astonishing English-language voiceover by Shelly Duvall reading Perec—*Un homme qui dort* (1974); Werner Schroeter's *Goldflocken* (1976).

KO

In my recent series "gesture/data" (2013-present), conditions of "screenal" vision are taken to limits where the material, mental, gestural and optical are made to

FR: Can you explain the relationship to time in your work?



Joan Jonas, *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* at Joan Jonas's loft, New York, 1972. © the artist. Courtesy: the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

banal form of "now.") A sigh of relief is a different temporality than cocaine talk; so is a glance at the way the sun makes a certain tiny violet flower on the forest floor in early spring appear and disappear against the viridian green moss. Pushing these irreconcilable forms of time into the same formal field is part of what happens in my recent work.

JW

The *Flashlight Filmstrip Projections* use time in multiple ways. The piece contains the historical time of the last 150 years of cinema, film, movies, language, projection, shadows, lenses, magnification, signs. From the recycled Hollywood filmstrips used in the piece, of underwater films or car chases, to text-to-images shot off a computer screen, to hand-printed images. Additionally, the work requires the viewer to be the projectionist—each person projecting a different fragmented "movie" or set of images. The time is simultaneously that of the close-up and of the projected enlargement—the viewer shifting focus between them as they analyze a filmstrip and use their flashlight to project it and bring it in and out of focus. For the last few years, I've thought of time as a spiral and the film roll as a spiral, capable of containing the

JJ

I have always worked with the idea of narrative. Three images together make a fourth. At first it was poetic narrative—based on the structures of poetry—and I was particularly interested in the ideas of the Imagists. I thought of developing a language of images. The film *Wind* is composed of choreographed movements partly driven by the wind. But the figures, some dressed in mirrored costumes, seem to be enacting a mysterious ritual on a snow-covered beach. The video work *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* was concerned with the question of whether or not there is such a thing as female imagery. I played with the idea of an alter ego, a persona, fashioning the character "Organic Honey" with costumes, masks, objects and actions. There was a narrative but it was fragmented—a sequence of moves made for the camera. When I began to work with stories—fairy tales, news stories, sagas, novels, epic poems—I included edited (by me) texts that accompanied the visuals and generated the images and actions. One of my main concerns was, and is, space—the physical space of a room, a landscape, and how to frame this space. Theater is part of life. I work with the theatrical as effect. There is a difference between theater and performance, though in some cases the two forms have increasingly overlapped, since the 1960s.

LR

I tend to map out the relationships between various ideas and elements that go into a particular work, but narrative is a strategy I use only rarely in the work itself. Theatricality is an important aspect of the work's presentation. Increasingly, the installation of each piece has become a central part of its viewing experience.

With my new 3D anaglyph video *Curtains*, the ideal installation would be to have it looped inside a cinema. We're going to try this at Oberhausen this spring, and later in the year it will be installed in an old single screen cinema in Mumbai, a city that is one of the locations in the movie. *Curtains* has an episodic rather than a narrative structure. I shot it at post-production studios all around the world—Beijing, Chennai, London, Los Angeles, Mumbai, Toronto, Vancouver—that are converting Hollywood films that were shot in 2D into stereoscopic 3D. This is an extremely labor-intensive, frame-by-frame process, which entails creating a synthetic second-eye view for every frame in the film.

A cousin to that work, *Tales of Love and Fear* (2015), is a cinema made for a single film, which only has a single (3D) image, split into two projectors. The audience sits in the theater, facing forward, while the projectors, which are in the middle of the cinema with the audience, slowly spin in counter-rotation around the walls of the theater, converging briefly on the screen. The piece is a commission from the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) in Troy, New York, and will play there as a one-time event next month. Though the piece a movie, it will be presented as something nearer to a single night of theater.

JW

I think of larger narratives in my work not as storytelling, but in terms of images, titles, text, traces of materials and actions, and the viewing experience, that produce a narrative. I wouldn't describe my work as theatrical—it's about communal viewership, thought and experience of the simple act of casting light, color and shadow, and a thought-based

time of the past and forever replaying that time in the future. I think about this in relation to the filmmaker Chris Marker, who refers to "spirals of time" in his 1983 film *Sans Soleil/Sunless*.

LR

Animation is a way of radically shortening or extending the length of time that an image appears onscreen. Duration is no longer tethered to the recording frame rate of a camera. Stillness can be emphasized, or stroboscopic rate of change, both of which are in tension with the idea of the moving image. In terms of time, and how it's spent working on animations, I like the fact that discontinuities—things that happen between the capture of single frames (preparations, distractions, naps, new ideas)—have the potential to present a sort of ghost story in the gap between onscreen images.

JJ

I work with time as a material. I make drawings and objects. One takes time to look. But in video and performance time is measured. The time it takes to walk from one side of a room to the other. The time it takes to tell a story. Time is edited. Like music. I consider rhythms. Time is mysterious.



Joan Jonas, *Volcano Saga* (still), 1989. © the artist. Courtesy: Electronic Arts Intermix, New York; Wilkinson Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

FR Does theatricality or narrative play an important role in your work?



Joan Jonas, *Reanimation* at Performa, 2013. Courtesy: Performa, New York and Wilkinson Gallery, London. Photo: © Paula Court



Ken Okiishi, *gesture/data*, 2015. Courtesy: the artist; Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York; Pilar Corrias, London; and Mathew, Berlin / New York

interaction with words, symbols, effects, images. However, when I use the installation to perform a live projection light show with the Serpentine dancer to a musical score of theremin and synthesizer, then it is a highly theatrical situation. However, it is not a conventional viewing experience. The performance is done in the center of the room and the audience views the work on the perimeter of the space, as if they were backstage. This flip foregrounds the work of the flashlight projectionists as performers themselves.

KO I've been trying to become more abstract, since when there was a clear narrative in my single-channel video work no one seemed to notice what was actually going on. Time has helped with that—as in the passing of time. People “get it” more now, watching the “early” video work: when reality is no longer the same place that is depicted on screen, many other things can be seen. But a rupture in the current moment has to pretend not to be narrative; it has to seem like an event “outside” of time. It has to heat up time. The present has to feel exceptionally present; the artwork has to extend the feeling of the present moment as entirely alienated from narratives of legitimacy. It has to feel “new,” even if that is, of course, impossible. It has to become impossible. It has to mask its own narrative to become immediate.

I have an older brother who is obsessed with theater, who sees absolutely every single Broadway show; I grew up on Barbra Streisand laserdiscs. As a teenager, I read Samuel Beckett and claimed to hate that “other” kind of theater: the kind that is theatrical. (I still cry in secret to “Send in the Clowns.”) I think that growing up this way made theatricality a rather alienating concept. But then again I saw early John Waters films for the first time recently (I had avoided them for years), and that is a kind of theatricality I could imagine coming into my work. A friend commented on the iteration of “gesture/data” that I realized at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne a few months ago (my show there was called “Screen Presence”), and he said it was “so camp.” It was such a hilarious statement if you had seen the show. A screen showing a work by Günther Uecker in 1:1 scale, across from the physical artwork, at various levels of good and bad lighting on an info screen into which it barely “fits”; with nails that match the Uecker glued to the screen in epoxy that smears light halo rainbows all over the place; appearing in the flow of the museum’s collection as a monstrous glitch in material reality; as if the word “nail” had become an info-spray of actual nails that cannot find the correct dimension of the screen (when a finger touches the touchscreen, are we in 3D or 2D?). If this is a kind of theatricality, if this is a kind of “camp” relationship to sad reality, then yes, theatricality plays a role. I also have a dream of directing a film where I don’t get to choose the actors, script, set—or any other elements. Where I am simply allowed to show up.



Ken Okiishi, *gesture/data* (for Mr. Haubrich) (detail), 2014. Gift of the Kunststiftung NRW. Collection Museum Ludwig, Cologne. Courtesy: the artist; Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York; Pilar Corrias, London; and Mathew, Berlin / New York. Photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv / Britta Schlier

LR Popular (and unpopular) culture informs most of my work in different ways. Perhaps the most direct way can be seen in a recent project called *Bump City*, a series of online videos I made for the Oakland Museum of California with my husband Alex Abramovich, a writer who’s writing a nonfiction book about Oakland. We moved back to New York this fall after four years there, and the pieces we made were newsreels, of a sort. They examined what happens in a city when the work goes away, and what an opposition movement looks like in the absence of organized labor. *Bump City*, which is one of Oakland’s many nicknames, broaches questions we had about our adopted city in the midst of major changes it was and still is going through. One of the entries, *Portraits from the Occupation*, is a series of 16 video interviews with people involved with or impacted by Occupy Oakland. *Notes from the 1946 General Strike* is another. It’s about the last General Strike in America, which took place in Oakland, and its relation to present day struggles. *Notes* is narrated by Oakland rapper Boots Riley, from *The Coup*, and West Oakland resident Raymond Albert. In Oakland, we found, protest and activism are forms of popular culture.

FR Do you consider popular culture a source of inspiration for your work?



Joan Jonas, “Volcano Saga 1985/1994” installation view at Wilkinson Gallery, London, 2011. Courtesy: Wilkinson Gallery, London. Photo: Peter White

JJ When I began I was influenced by what I had seen as a child, like Broadway

musicals such as *Oklahoma* and *Carousel*, or the circus—and then musical films such as those of Busby Berkeley. I am influenced by the world around me.

JW My work places populist and universal cultural references next to and inside of avant-garde references to art, film, painting, performance, etc. It looks at the relationship between them and uses both as reference points with equal weight. Popular culture has always played a role in my work—it contains and reflects the world we live in—everything from politics to economics, pleasure to paranoia to uncomfortable humor. I pull from all sources of cultural production.

KO I think that because no one I know has a TV anymore—they just download or stream things—the sense of shared “popular” culture has become blurred with personal “recommendations” that appear in the sidebar, or strangely, when you go to any website, just appear out of nowhere. So this tailoring of the portal that hovers around your mind of “choices” becomes increasingly irrelevant to anyone else’s taste-portal, except that the feedback loops built into these automatic data aggregators help generate content for the “masses” and also, through recommendations, push likely-to-be-consumed cultural products on you, creating bland affinities for the same things.

I don't know if you can say that "popular culture" exists in this realm; only a bunch of technologically induced narcissists watching exactly the same things alone at home, with no sense that anyone else is watching, since simultaneous viewership also disappears in this realm. So, yes, the changing conditions of the status of popular culture have been important catalysts in my recent work as they relate to changing conditions of being (and "feeling" or "not feeling").

In the past, popular cultural references have appeared in an extremely chaotic way in my work, even as they seemed directly referential. Looking back on this now, one could say that the changing conditions of the possibilities of shared cultural experiences became disfigured in my work at the same time as spectatorship became increasingly focused on the individually optimized "choices" (as "viewers" became "users").



From Top to Bottom - Joan Jonas, *Mirror performance III* and *Mirror performance I*, 1969. Courtesy: the artist and the Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan

FR What role does research, history or archival materials play in your work?



Ken Okiishi, *gesture/data (feedback channels)*, 2014, "Screen Presence" installation view at the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2014. Gift of the Kunststiftung NRW. Collection Museum Ludwig, Cologne. Courtesy: the artist; Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York; Pilar Corrias, London; Mathew, Berlin / New York. Photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv / Britta Schlier

JJ I am interested in different histories. Art is a dialogue with art. For each project I explore known and unknown territory as well as possibilities in the medium of video. I am interested in the layering of these concerns. I read. I travel to different locations to record landscape. I collect objects and materials when I travel, and from my immediate surroundings. I look at the work of my contemporaries, of my friends and colleagues.

For *Volcano Saga*, based on the Icelandic Laxdaela Saga, I traveled to Iceland to explore and record the amazing landscape. I read as many of the sagas as possible, along with contemporary writing. I traced the story to its origins in the oral tradition of storytelling, with which I have always identified. I spent time and traveled with my friend Steina Vasulka. She told me stories. I have always been interested in the superstitions and beliefs of other cultures, other times. This is part of my work.

For *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, based on a text Aby Warburg wrote about his journey to the southwest or the region of the Pueblo in New Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century, I visited the Hopi villages, spoke to people there, and read contemporary accounts of the history. I included in the work the image of Melancholia: a woman and a dog superimposed on the landscape of the southwest. This partly represented the tragic memories in the American landscape.

My latest work *Reanimation* is based on the novel *Under the Glacier* by the Icelandic writer Halldór Laxness, whose work I read in the 1980s, while in Iceland. The book was written in the 1960s. Now glaciers are melting. This fact became part of the narrative.

LR History and archival materials are important to the way I think about making. I often find myself working backwards from a situation I find myself in, to find out how we got here. Most recently, I've been spending some time at the Keystone Mast stereoscopic slide collection at the California Museum of Photography in Riverside. The collection spans the heyday of stereo photography, from 1892 to 1963, including decades where it was more popular than single lens photography. I'm browsing, really. The collection is barely archived. This is one of my favorite things to do—browse unlabeled images you can hold, look at closely, and—in this case—see through a stereoscope as various planes receding into space.

JW Lately I have been looking back on history and looking at how a universal or collective "film memory" functions in our culture. This new project uses the list of 100 films that made an impact on me since the very first one I can remember as a child. My research is not only about shared film memory but also communal and personal movie viewing contexts that continually shift. This structure allows me to re-view, re-remember and research the films and movies themselves in relation to memory and time. Additionally, the piece will include the architectures of my personal cinema experiences, such as drive-in movie theaters, art house cinemas, college lecture halls, video rental stores, multiplexes and museum film theaters and exhibition spaces, YouTube, TV re-runs and the computer screen. The research is forged by my personal memory, which I hope can serve as a catalyst for universal film memory. In addition, I've been interested in each movie's history, archives, contexts of its making, reception and circulation. I plan to develop the project into a one hundred screen installation and single-channel video. Although the list of films is personal, it's intended to forge connections to larger social, political and artistic issues and aesthetics.

KO Last year, I was invited to make artworks somehow related to the Museum Ludwig collection in Cologne, which would then enter the collection. I was, of course, completely flattered—and terrified. How could I deal with such an immense and important collection? (A collection that had even helped to form my notion of art, as a child, through publications such as the wonderful plastic-bound *Kunst der sechziger Jahre*.)

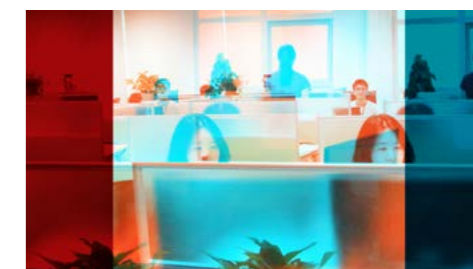
As I started to research the collection via an online database, and within our overwhelmingly screen-dominated world, where many museums have been frantically pushing the "online presence" of their own collections, I realized that any museum collection has now become two: the texture of the visual and textual database, and the material experience of being there. I worked on finding moments when these two modes of collection intersected formally and experientially—and on amping up these unbridgeable gaps between data and "liveness." I wanted to create a garland of material "glitches" in the physical experience of

the museum that could confront the viewing public with the flatness of screenal life, and open up the body and brain to entirely different combinations of stimuli and feelings.

In the second site within what eventually materialized—as I produced artwork within the high-vent chamber of the conservation lab, surrounded by Brillo boxes, a Max Beckmann on its side, and other amazing views of artwork, "configurations in conservation"—I tested out current theories and media-forms of the circulation of contemporary art within art-historical visibility and scenarios in which the old-fashioned theoretical notion of "aura," as developed by Walter Benjamin, had appeared. The Haubrich Collection at Museum Ludwig (1914-1939) is not only from Benjamin's time period and geography in terms of artworks; the transactions of collecting also happened in that particularly violent period, when Germany destroyed its own cultural fabric, both literally, in terms of the Shoah, and in more general terms, by exiling all forms of "sophistication." In this sense, the "aura" of that violence lives on in these rooms.

I inserted a screen, with a view of the screen that houses the Uecker screen tests with the nails on top that I described earlier, smeared with "Olio HD" clear oil paint that holds the "brush mark" and also looks like that fat greasy rainbow-y finger smear on the touch-screen, and hung it directly in front of a postwar portrait of Dr. Josef Haubrich by Otto Dix. It was like a monstrous ahistorical version of an art-collector's iPad—rupturing the presence of the screen itself, like a material glitch in the museum-cum-database, into the presence of the room.

What then happened in this room was a bit uncanny, but also quite beautiful. As I developed the next (and final) site of "glitch" in the museum, I was somehow drawn to a sculpture by Otto Freundlich. I didn't know why, exactly, but it was charged in some way. As I filmed this second screen, hoping to use a video image of it, the camera battery died, and I was left with only a few seconds of footage. A bit frustrated, I threw those clips on the timeline in editing, and a miraculous thing happened as I cut between frames of this supposedly useless footage. The Freundlich sculpture started to move across the room, towards my monstrous screen agglomeration. At a certain point, one of the curators at the museum had expressed concern about certain problematics related to Uecker, the Haubrich collection, and specifically Otto Freundlich, a German painter and sculptor of Jewish origin, who was an important part of the development of abstraction in Paris, but who had been murdered in the Majdanek concentration camp in 1943. While I had not wanted to over-emphasize biographical details—I was simply somehow drawn to this work and wanted to generate glitches within and between sectors of the museum—I could not deny, in the final iteration of the "gesture/data" series at the Museum Ludwig, completed only a day before the opening, that the "aura" of the "angel of history" had appeared within the screen.



Lucy Raven, *Curtains* (stills), 2014. Courtesy: the artist

Joan Jonas, *Volcano Saga* (stills), 1989. © the artist. Courtesy: Electronic Arts Intermix, New York; Wilkinson Gallery, London; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York





Top - Jennifer West, "Flashlight Filmstrip Projections" installation views at PICA, Portland, 2014. Courtesy: Marc Foxx, Los Angeles and Vilma Gold, London

Bottom - Jennifer West, "Serpentine Dance in "Flashlight Filmstrip Projections" at PICA, Portland, 2014. Courtesy: Marc Foxx, Los Angeles and Vilma Gold, London. Photo: Anastasia Tuazon

JW Nel mio lavoro ogni riferimento culturale populista e universale è permeato dalle allusioni avanguardiste di arte, cinema, pittura, spettacolo, ecc. Osservo il rapporto tra questi elementi e li uso come punti di riferimento in egual misura. La cultura popolare ha sempre rivestito un ruolo importante nei miei lavori – perché contiene e riflette il mondo in cui viviamo – qualsiasi aspetto dalla politica all'economia, dal piacere alla paranoia, fino all'umorismo più sgradevole. L'intera produzione culturale è una fonte per me.

KO A mio parere, siccome non conosco nessuno che abbia ancora la televisione, ma tutti si limitano a scaricare video o a guardarli in streaming, il significato di cultura "popolare" condivisa ormai si confonde con quei "consigli" personali che compaiono nei banner o, chissà come, quando entri in un qualsiasi sito web spuntano fuori dal nulla. Così questa sorta di personalizzazione del portale che ti ronza intorno con le sue proposte, diventa sempre più irrilevante per chi accede a un portale diverso, se non che la spirale di feedback costruiti intorno a questi aggregatori automatici di informazioni, che al tempo stesso contribuisce a generare i contenuti per le "masse" e spinge verso quei prodotti culturali suggeriti come i più richiesti, crea anche sottili affinità nei confronti degli stessi articoli. Non credo possiamo dire che in questo regno esiste una "cultura popolare", ma nient'altro che un mucchietto di narcisisti tecnologicamente indotti, che guardano esattamente le stesse cose restandosene da soli in casa, dove non sentono la presenza degli altri davanti allo schermo, poiché in questo mondo scompare anche l'audience simultanea. Quindi, sì, le mutate condizioni della cultura popolare sono state dei catalizzatori importanti nei miei ultimi lavori, perché sono legate alle mutate condizioni dell'essere (e del "sentire" o "non sentire").

In passato i riferimenti della cultura popolare sono entrati nelle mie opere in modo estremamente caotico, seppure con la parvenza di essere direttamente referenziali. Adesso, guardandoci indietro, possiamo dire che le mutate condizioni dell'esperienza della cultura condivisa sono apparse come deformate nei miei lavori, via via che il pubblico si è focalizzato sempre più sulle "scelte" personalizzate. Cioè quando lo "spettatore" è diventato "utente".

FR Che ruolo hanno nel vostro lavoro la ricerca, la storia e i materiali d'archivio?

JJ Mi interessano storie diverse. L'arte è un dialogo con l'arte. Ogni mio progetto esplora territori conosciuti e sconosciuti oltre alle possibilità del video. Mi interessa la stratificazione formata da questi interessi. Leggo. Mi reco in luoghi diversi per registrare il paesaggio. Raccoglio oggetti e materiali sia durante i miei viaggi che nei miei dintorni abituali. Osservo il lavoro dei miei contemporanei, dei miei amici e colleghi. Per la *Volcano Saga* basata sulla Laxdæla Saga islandese, sono andata in Islanda a esplorare e registrare quel paesaggio incredibile. Ho letto quante più saghe potevo oltre a opere letterarie contemporanee per rintracciare le origini della storia nella tradizione narrativa orale con la quale mi identifico da sempre. In questo viaggio mi ha accompagnato la mia amica Steina Vasulka, che mi ha raccontato delle storie. Le superstizioni e le credenze di altre culture, di altre epoche mi hanno sempre interessato. Fanno parte del mio lavoro. Per preparare "The Shape the Scent the Feel of Things" basato su un testo scritto da Aby Warburg a proposito di un viaggio compiuto ai primi del Novecento nel sud-ovest americano o nella regione dei Pueblo in New Mexico, sono andata a vedere i villaggi degli Hopi, ho parlato con loro, e

ho letto resoconti della vicenda risalenti all'epoca. Ho inserito nel lavoro l'immagine della Malinconia: una donna e un cane sovrapposti sul paesaggio del sud-ovest per rappresentare in parte le memorie tragiche del paesaggio americano.

Il mio lavoro più recente, *Reanimation*, si basa sul romanzo "Sotto il ghiacciaio" di Halldor Laxness, lo scrittore islandese che ho letto negli anni Ottanta mentre mi trovavo in Islanda. Ora i ghiacciai si stanno sciogliendo. Questo fatto è diventato parte della narrativa.

LR La storia e i materiali d'archivio sono importanti nella mia modalità di concezione del lavoro. Spesso mi ritrovo a lavorare a ritroso, partendo da una situazione nella quale mi trovo per capire come siamo arrivati a quel punto. Più recentemente mi sto dedicando a consultare la collezione di diapositive stereoscopiche Keystone Mast conservate al California Museum of Photography di Riverside. La collezione comprende materiali a partire dall'epoca d'oro della fotografia stereoscopica, il periodo 1892-1963, compresi i decenni in cui era più diffusa della fotografia a obiettivo unico. La collezione è archiviata in modo sommario, quindi lo sto proprio scorrendo: è una delle attività che preferisco – spulciare immagini senza etichetta che posso prendere in mano, osservare da vicino e, in questo caso, guardare attraverso uno stereoscopio per vedere i diversi piani svanire in lontananza.

JW Ultimamente ho riconsiderato la storia osservando come la "memoria cinematografica" universale o collettiva agisca sulla nostra cultura. Questo nuovo progetto si basa su una lista di cento film che mi hanno influenzato fin da piccola, a partire dal primissimo che ricordo. La mia ricerca non è fondata esclusivamente su una memoria cinematografica condivisa, ma anche sui contesti di fruizione di un film, sia pubblici che privati, che cambiano in continuazione. Questa struttura mi permette di ri-vedere, ricordare e ri-cercare film e pellicole in relazione al tempo e alla memoria. Il mio allestimento ricrea anche l'architettura delle mie personali esperienze cinematografiche, quelle di drive-in, cinema d'essai, sale di lettura universitarie, videoteche, cinema multisala, spazi espositivi e cinema all'interno dei musei, youtube, repliche tv, o il monitor del computer. È una ricerca costruita sulla mia memoria personale, che mi auguro possa servire da catalizzatore per una memoria cinematografica universale. E poi, per ciascun film, mi sono avvicinato ad ogni aspetto: la sua storia, gli archivi, i contesti di realizzazione, ricezione e circolazione. Il mio progetto prevede un'installazione fatta di cento schermi con video single-channel. Nonostante la lista dei film sia personale, è intesa a stabilire connessioni con più ampie questioni sociali, politiche, artistiche e di estetica.

KO L'anno scorso mi è stato chiesto di realizzare delle opere legate in qualche modo alla collezione del Museo Ludwig di Colonia, da inserire appunto nella collezione. Mi sono sentito assolutamente lusingato, ovviamente, ma anche terrorizzato. Come potevo io confrontarmi con una collezione così immensa e importante? (collezione che, con le sue magnifiche pubblicazioni, come quella rilegata in plastica del *Kunst der Sechziger Jahre*, aveva formato la mia nozione di arte quand'ero piccolo).

Appena ho iniziato a consultare il catalogo on-line (in un mondo dominato dall'onnipresenza dello schermo, dove molti musei stanno affannosamente favorendo la "presenza on-line" delle proprie opere d'arte), mi sono reso conto che ormai le collezioni di qualsiasi museo sono diventate due: da un lato abbiamo la consistenza del database visivo e testuale, dall'altro l'esperienza materiale di entrare nel museo. Ho cercato di individuare i momenti in cui queste due

modalità di collezione si incrociavano a livello formale ed esperienziale – amplificando poi i divari incolmabili tra dati inseriti e l'esperienza "dal vivo". Volevo creare una ghirlanda di "anomalie" materiali nell'esperienza fisica del museo, che potessero mettere gli spettatori di fronte alla piattezza della "vita dello schermo" e aprire il corpo e la mente a combinazioni totalmente diverse di stimoli e sensazioni.

Nella seconda postazione, entro i confini dell'opera che si andava materializzando – poiché l'ho creata all'interno della stanza ventilata del laboratorio di conservazione, circondato dalle scatole Brillo, da un Max Beckmann, e da altre straordinarie visioni artistiche – ho testato le attuali teorie e forme mediatiche della circolazione dell'arte contemporanea nell'ambito degli scenari e della visibilità storico-artistica, in cui era presente l'antiquata nozione teorica che era stata sviluppata da Walter Benjamin. La collezione Haubrich esposta al Museo Ludwig (1914-1939) non appartiene, in termini artistici, soltanto all'epoca e alla geografia di Benjamin: le operazioni di raccolta, infatti, avevano toccato anche un periodo storico particolarmente violento, quando la Germania aveva distrutto il proprio tessuto culturale, letteralmente parlando (mi riferisco alla Shoah) ma anche, in termini più generali, mettendo al bando qualsiasi forma di "sofisticazione". In tal senso, l'aura di quella violenza vive tuttora in queste sale.

Ho inserito uno schermo con vista dello schermo che anima i test video di Uecker, e ho applicato i chiodi descritti poco fa, macchiatosi di pittura a olio luminosa tipo "Olio HD", a suggerire il marchio del pennello ma anche le imbrattature untuose che stendono arcobaleni sul touchscreen, e l'ho appeso proprio di fronte al ritratto postbellico di Josef Haubrich, di Otto Dix. Una mostruosa versione astorica dell'iPad di un collezionista d'arte, a interrompere l'esistenza dello schermo stesso dentro la presenza reale della stanza, come un'anomalia materiale in un database che funge da museo.

Ciò che è successo dopo nella sala è un po' misterioso, ma anche molto bello. Mentre sviluppavo la postazione successiva (e finale) della mia "anomalia", sono stato attratto in qualche modo da una scultura di Otto Freundlich. Non so esattamente il perché. Ma così è stato. Mentre filmavo questa seconda schermata, sperando di ricavarne un'immagine video, si è scaricata la batteria della telecamera, lasciandomi appena pochi secondi di riprese. In fase di montaggio, un po' seccato, ho inserito nella sequenza anche quegli spezzoni, e mentre ritagliavo fotogrammi che mi sembravano inutili, è accaduto qualcosa di miracoloso: la scultura di Freundlich ha iniziato a muoversi attraverso la stanza, verso il mio spaventoso agglomerato video. A un certo punto, uno dei conservatori del museo si era mostrato preoccupato rispetto ad alcune problematiche legate a Uecker, alla collezione Haubrich, e soprattutto a Otto Freundlich, pittore e scultore tedesco di origini ebraiche, che svolse un ruolo importante nello sviluppo dell'arte astratta a Parigi, ma che venne assassinato nel 1943 nel campo di concentramento di Majdanek. Benché non avessi mai voluto enfatizzare troppo i dettagli biografici – ero stato semplicemente attratto da un'opera d'arte e volevo creare anomalie tra le sezioni del museo – ho dovuto riconoscere che, nell'iterazione finale della serie "gesture/data" esposta al Museo Ludwig, e ultimata appena un giorno prima dell'inaugurazione, era apparsa tra gli schermi l'aura dell'"angelo della storia".