

# ArtReview



“Nobody understands  
what ‘performance’ is today”

Joan Jonas meets Liam Gillick

# Previewed

Affiliated with California's neosurrealist assemblage scene from the 1950s onwards but a mystic-minded outrider even there, **Bruce Conner** was determinedly elusive in life. He announced his own death twice, officially renounced art in 1999 and earlier operated under aliases including Emily Feather, BOMBHEAD and the Dennis Hopper One Man Show. Conner was also, as his recent resurrection within the artworld reflects, something of a visionary. He was a mocker of authorship who pseudonymously exhibited nineteenth-century engravings; his 1966 film *Breakaway*, featuring hyperactive dancing by Toni Basil, is considered the first music video; his 1975 *Crossroads*, 37 minutes of slow-motion

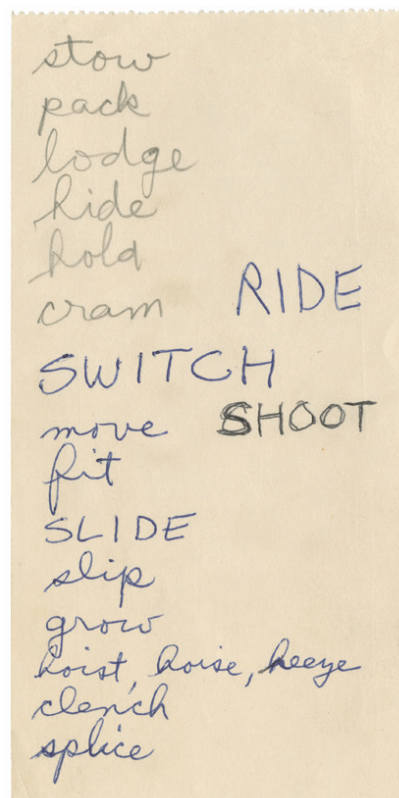
footage (soundtracked in part by Terry Riley) of the 1946 nuclear test at Bikini Atoll, remains bleakly mesmeric and is hardly his only film made from purloined imagery. A transformative out-of-body experience Conner had aged eleven gives its title to *Bruce Conner: Out of Body*, which focuses on his films but also includes photographs and works on paper, and which, as the artist might well have liked, you'll venture to the Philippines to see.

2 Another adept of wilful difficulty, **Lee Lozano** is best known for quitting the artworld – she began *Dropout Piece* (1972) a year after she'd stopped speaking to women, also in the name of art – and staying quit until her death in the same year Conner announced his

retirement. But she was a supremely incisive and shapeshifting figure while remaining 'in', from her fluidly sexualised semiabstract canvases of the early 1960s through the more familiar, greyscale 'Tool' images that followed, with their overtones of gender inequality (and their origins in Lozano's move to a studio ringed by industrial workshops). Her subsequent handwritten, conceptual instruction pieces, meanwhile, recorded bold experiments with drugs and unusual rules for social life. The show at Fruitmarket Gallery, anchored by four huge mid-60s paintings, covers the key phases of Lozano's inquiry into containment and freedom, and brings to light previously unseen materials from the archives.



1 Bruce Conner, *Breakaway* (still), 1966, 16mm film transferred to video, b/w, sound, 5 min.  
© Conner Family Trust, San Francisco. Courtesy Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles



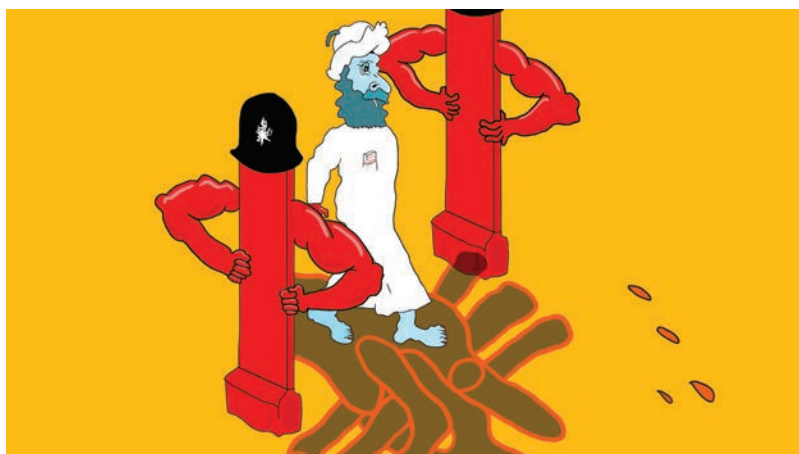
2 Page from Lee Lozano's notes and ephemera, undated. © the estate of the artist.  
Courtesy Hauser & Wirth, London

3 Rising star **Hardeep Pandhal** has cornered the market in combining animation-driven, rap-soundtracked videos with presentations of hand-knitted woollen jumpers. The backstory to these is cultural dislocation: Birmingham-born, Pandhal is a British Sikh who doesn't speak the same language as his Punjabi mother, and making the clothes creates a bond. This is also work that balances a traditionally non-masculine activity with the embroidered faces of American rap stars, and a darkly satirical approach to the relationship between structural racism and misogyny also underpins Pandhal's animations. So, too, do heterodox sources: for example, the new work *Pool Party Pilot Episode*

(2018, showing simultaneously in the New Museum Triennial) explores male fears of their environment, drawing on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 novel *Herland*, involving an all-women society where conception happens via parthenogenesis, and Elaine Morgan's aquatic ape hypothesis, which recasts evolutionary theory by focusing on the female body.

4 **Vittorio Brodmann's** last gallery exhibition was titled *Legs All Water*, which figures: the Swiss-born painter builds his chromatic, flowing, instinctively composed figurations on structural liquidity. In his older canvases, faces and bodies dissolve into each other, social anxiety and claustrophobia and pleasure

implicitly melding; more recently, Brodmann has liquefied his aesthetic further. Contours melt as the artist picks up acrylic, gouache and charcoal rather than oils, his figures becoming misty hints and colours phasing into watery pastel that should suit this latest show's Los Angeles context nicely. Brodmann's art, which fuses soft lyrical abstraction, Surrealism and echoes of cartoons, perhaps ought to be anachronistic in an increasingly dematerialised reality. But, via old-school media, he catches something of the texture of our moment – the sense of entering, or even being outside of, a perpetual flow of fragmentary information – without being wearily doctrinaire about it.



3 Hardeep Pandhal, *Pakiveli Mixtape Cover Art*, 2017, India ink, gouache, chalk, wood, enamel, 44 × 36 × 2 cm. Courtesy the artist



4 Vittorio Brodmann, *Again*, 2017, watercolour, acrylic, oil, lacquer and charcoal on canvas, 200 × 170 cm. Courtesy the artist and Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles & Paris



5 Mathilde Rosier, *Blind Swim 14*, 2016–17, oil on canvas, 200 × 110 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan



6 Michael Raedecker, *public*, 2017, acrylic, transfer and thread on canvas, 158 × 224 cm. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Grimm, Amsterdam & New York

Shuttling between painting, set design-like sculpture, video and performative elements, 5 **Mathilde Rosier** nevertheless regularly stalks a line between reality and warped fairytales. In the French artist's light-touch paintings, humans merge with animals, or sprout abstract protuberances. Over the last couple of decades Rosier has built more angles on her oeuvre, though as if while forever inhabiting another time: resembling childhood, but conveying no safe return to its certainties. In Rosier's last Milan show, dancers spun both in drawings and on video; painted heads became conches. From what we've seen, in the current one the emphasis appears again on painting, with balletic legs en

pointe emerging unnervingly from skirts-cum-shells and the consistency of the artist's concerns signalling ongoing private compulsion.

Another painter who refuses to just paint, 6 **Michael Raedecker** has salient reasons: in a recent interview he pointed out that his trademark use of embroidery places him right up against the canvas, whereas painting keeps the artist a brush's length away. The distinction might seem odd were it not for how deeply the Dutch painter, long since resettled in London, inhabits his work: his motifs of ominous-looking houses and interiors, often in moody hues of blue and grey, always seem to arise from psychological unsettlement that Raedecker

is working out on canvas. If he never fully knows what he's returning to, nor can we; what's clear, though, is that he's endlessly removed from closure with his work in formal terms, balancing comforting familiarity with some unexpected new twist (spacious, near-abstract compositional reduction; portraiture; a combinatory approach to his motifs). Even in coming back to the Netherlands for this show, you suspect Raedecker won't feel to have reached home.

7 Pakistan's first major presentation of contemporary art, the **1st Lahore Biennale**, has faced a rocky road to realisation. After some pre-events were launched in 2016 and an open call for submissions was announced in early



8 Carissa Rodriguez, *The Maid*, 2017, production still. Courtesy the artist



9 T.J. Wilcox, *The Funeral of Marlene Dietrich*, 2017, Duratrans print on lightbox, 115 × 153 cm. Courtesy the artist and VNH Gallery, Paris

2017, later last year the inaugural artistic director, Rashid Rana, announced that he was stepping down after differences of opinion with the biennale's foundation. By December, though, the event was back on the rails, with noted Pakistani academics, novelists and architects joining the advisory committee. At the time of writing, it's still on, albeit with no artist list announced and the organisation still looking to hire 'designers'. Fingers crossed, as the biennale's goal – establishing Pakistan as a known site of contemporary art production – is perhaps unlikely to go ahead swiftly otherwise.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a multitasking artist who directed the collectively authored

8 fictional gallery Reena Spaulings, **Carissa Rodriguez** dwells on infrastructural concerns: the mechanics of art's distribution, presentation, valuation. Opposed to creating 'signature objects', she tends to favour antiauratic remove and, more recently, veer pointedly about: previous shows have involved photos of her own work in private collections, more recently, a project about how the ostensible transformation of the Bay Area relates to technology and creativity. In Rodriguez's first New York museum show, and similarly to how a 2013 exhibition took its cues from *La Collectionneuse*, a 1967 film related to art by Éric Rohmer, her new work *The Maid* takes a cinematic approach to sculpture,

considering 'the conditional relationships between artist, artwork, and third-party agents (institution, caregiver, surrogate) in familial terms': the evolved social dynamics of the 9 artworld, and the laws that underpin them.

We like to check in on **T.J. Wilcox** every few years, because he's usually doing something unexpected, even while favouring 8mm and 16mm film. He's made, for example, tender and poetic collagelike studies of historical figures and a 360-degree panorama of the view from his Manhattan studio (*In the Air*, 2013) relating to nineteenth-century 'cinema in the round' presentations. As for pointers towards what he'll do here, his last London show, at Sadie

Coles HQ, in 2017, suggested his retrospective gaze was turning somewhat on himself, and on his plush connections: it included a film from 1998 concerning the English aesthete Stephen Tennant (as considered by his great-niece, model Stella Tennant), plus filmic portraits of fabled London chef Fergus Henderson and New York jeweller John Reinhold, the former filmed in Scotland, the latter built on dozens of hours of telephone conversations and interjections by Debbie Harry and Marc Jacobs.

10 Five years ago **Judith Hopf** cast a small flock of concrete sheep from home-moving

boxes, completing them with sticklike legs and cartoonish faces. The unspoken word hanging over *Flock of Sheep* (2013), perhaps inevitably, was ‘sheeple’, given its precising of human acquiescence to relocating wherever, suckered by neoliberalism’s lauding of mobility. As such and also for their downbeat humour and empathy, Hopf’s blocky ruminants exemplify the Karlsruhe-born artist’s practice, which since the 1990s has tracked contemporary society’s homogenising demands on body and soul. This institutional show in her adopted city, Berlin, leans on her pivotal series of perverse

red-brick works, cemented and then sanded into the shape of hands, feet, basketballs, suitcases, robots and more – though these evocations of pliant malleability here occupy, we’re told, ‘an intermediary position that fluctuates between sculpture and (exhibition) architecture’. Expect, too, some of Hopf’s laptop sculptures – angular, recumbent, semifigurative geometric sculptures from whose midpoint a screenlike shape pokes up, body and machine fused – plus a new film and a commission for kw’s facade. We’d say go along; but hey, you’re not sheep. *Martin Herbert*



10 Judith Hopf, *UP*, 2016 (installation view). Photo: Luca Meneghel. Courtesy Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bolzano

1 *Bruce Conner*  
Bellas Artes Projects, Manila  
24 February – 24 May

2 *Lee Lozano*  
The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh  
10 March – 3 June

3 *Hardeep Pandhal*  
Cubitt, London  
through 8 April

4 *Vittorio Brodmann*  
Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles  
4 March – 21 April

5 *Mathilde Rosier*  
Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan  
14 March – 5 May

6 *Michael Raedecker*  
Grimm, Amsterdam  
10 March – 14 April

7 *1st Lahore Biennale*  
18–31 March

8 *Carissa Rodriguez*  
Sculpture Center, New York  
through 2 April

9 *T.J. Wilcox*  
VNH Gallery, Paris  
15 March – 28 April

10 *Judith Hopf*  
kw Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin  
through 15 April