

World as Lover, World as Self: Chapter 1: City Pollen

by Magali Reus

Magali Reus's photographic and sculptural work evokes new material association and rendering. Giving Shimmer a new skin, she resurfaces our walls with large-scale images of the facades of Dutch flower trucks. These trucks, beautifully contained lozenges of colour and striking typography, offer up the strange paradox of hard external skins with their organically perishable interior cargo. Featuring detailed depictions of floral exuberance, these blooms transform the metal armour of vehicle anatomy into softly erotic and malleable substance. Framed in isolation, these images question what it means to render an image and how quickly the hierarchy of looking can enter a process of symbolic reversal.

Hung directly atop the wallpaper-sized imagery are two works from the artist's recent sculptural series Settings. The series Settings takes the NO PARKING road sign as its starting point. Immediate graphic communication is the architectural essence of road signs: their message is a first and primary function - go this way, stop here, warning: dog. Yet nested into the public sphere over time they accrue fragments of information, contradictory patterns, or surface interventions that open them up to material collage. Like cultural artifacts they are a quiet canvas for a more unhinged type of mark-making: the obscure shadow-play of nightlife, globs of bird shit or chewing gum, busted headlamp residue, lost dog pleas, advertising, and pornography. In Settings the toughness of the baked enamel surface has been perverted with process interruptions: the surfaces are sanded, masked, adjusted, airbrushed. In each, deliberate erosion creates a slippage of the NO PARKING function, thus altering the original simplicity of the circle-slash pictogram with a more metaphoric type of weather.

Hung at mirror height, the Settings works read as a type of portraiture: polyvocal eyes, heads, or faces, they are watching us as we watch them. Objects from the genre of domestic melodrama (toothpaste, mousetrap, windscreen wiper) are enshrined behind Perspex in small recessed cavities. Like place markers at a table, these utensils are now complicit performers in the watching. Provocatively perfect replicas of their real-life selves, each

implies an action - foaming, a snapping, a killing, an isolating. They amplify the pun of their very existence as signs: take one layer away and beneath it lies yet more language and symbolist instruction.

Between these two works, the structural significance is confused, as Reus collapses the scale and conventional materiality of images as mechanisms for establishing value. An organic form is newly huge, baggy, unidentifiable, whilst fragments of a more domestic ubiquity - toothpaste, a torch, intercom buttons - enter into uncharted cycles of displacement. Everything is abstracted from its expected function: the hinted proximity of human touch lingers, with the material in both its literal and metaphoric sense used as an emotional or chemical sign to subtly morph or force the tone of the work overall.

MAGALI REUS was born in Den Haag, The Netherlands in 1981, and currently lives and works in London. Forthcoming solo exhibitions include Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, USA; The Perimeter, London, UK (both 2021); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Ghent, BE and CAC Synagogue de Delme, FR (2022). Recent solo shows include *As mist*, description, South London Gallery, London (2018); *Hot Cottons*, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen (2017); *Night Plants*, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen (2017); *Mustard*, The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016); *Quarters*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2016); *Spring for a Ground*, SculptureCenter, New York; *Particle of Inch*, The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield; *Halted Paves*, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster (all 2015). Reus has been included in group exhibitions and screenings at Tate Britain, London; ICA, London; CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson; Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover; LUMA Westbau, Zürich; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon; De Appel, Amsterdam and the British Art Show 8 (touring).

Reus has been shortlisted for the Hepworth Prize for Sculpture 2018, and was awarded the Prix de Rome 2015. Her work is included in international collections including Tate Collection, UK; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Collection CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson; Kunstmuseum Winterthur; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Lafayette Anticipation – Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; New York David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Zabłudowicz Collection, London; Sarvisalo, New York; Arts Council Collection, UK; The Government Art Collection, London.

Inspired by environmental activist and Buddhist philosopher Joanna Macy, **WORLD AS LOVER, WORLD AS SELF** turns to contemporary art to help us “relinquish our separateness” and take account of the “residue” of the world that we think we know. Our program does this through the concept of ‘defamiliarisation’ as a means to “turn the familiar strange” to redefine the Self and our subsequent community. Defamiliarisation, or aesthetic distance, is a literary and artistic technique coined by Russian formalists during the 1918 flu pandemic. According to the formalists, the method uses language in a way that ordinary objects are made to be reconsidered, that what is in front of us might surpass our assumptive narratives. It is a process of transformation through language to change perception. It is urgent. How can bodies, technologies and modes be taken outside of predefined cultural presumptions to de-categorise? To shapeshift, to morph, to glimmer, to shimmer. In this program, we estrange not to create ‘other’ but to rethink the community radically, to engage with the *World as Lover and as Self*.

Over more than a year, Shimmer has curated exhibition chapters by artist Magali Reus, Harm van den Dorpel, Geo Wyeth and now Ellen Gallagher and Dora Economou, which fade in and out of each other. We see the chapters crossing over as similar to the crossfade in film or music as a format. The artworks will intermingle, creating entangled relationships and networks of associations. Our approach is also the basis of our relationship with Akwa Ibom that approaches the exhibition as the chapters in a book to give space to experimental means of reception and consuming the afterlife of artworks.

SHIMMER is a Rotterdam-based curatorial studio established by Eloise Sweetman and Jason Hendrik Hansma in 2017. Shimmer is influenced by ‘Shimmer, when all you love is being trashed’, the talk by anthropologist and feminist theorist Deborah Bird Rose. Her learning pushes us to be humbled to pay attention and listen. In this way, we hope the artworks, artists, audiences, and materials gather and stretch across and over time. Alongside our expanded exhibitions are our events program *Sunday Mornings with*, as well as an informal online reading aloud program *Across The Way with* and an online mixtape *On The Waves with*. In this way, Shimmer moves into both the personal and the public space.

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