

Bobrikova & de Carmen

Living in
the beginning
of times

59.923885, 10.758991 / 10.17



5 october - 29 october 2017
Galleri RAM

The exhibition, at RAM galleri, is a free continuation of the eponymous project Living in the Beginning of Times, shown earlier this year at Greenlightsdistrict National Art Festival organized by Skien Kunstforening, Kunsthall Grenland, Spriten Kunsthall, and Telemark Kunstsenter.

The Subtitle 59.923885,10.758991 / 10.17 refers to the longitude, latitude, and time of exhibition, drawing viewers attention to concentrate on a future even taking place one hundred years later and question whether this site will be in ruins or remain thriving... Only the future will tell.

Martinka Bobrikova & Oscar de Carmen

Living in the beginning of times

59.923885, 10.758991 / 10.17

In the second instalment of Bobrikova & de Carmen's "Living in the beginning of times, 59.923885, 10.758991 / 10.17", this time at Galleri RAM in Oslo, the multi-temporal experimentation with site-specificity that they introduced in Skien returns, but with some added insights and strategies.¹ Specifically, they take on the temporality of plastic and its embeddedness in already existing human and non-human ecosystems. With the material's slow rate of deterioration, it accumulates and pollutes not just the surface of the earth; through ingestion, it enters into living beings, humans and animals alike, and it is also deeply set in the ground we step on and from which plants grow. With a starting point that already considers plastic as eternally embedded in nature, Bobrikova & de Carmen critically examine and imagine its role in the future. They set in motion an immanent scenario that rests ambiguously between dystopia and utopia, where plastic is lethal, abundant and beyond control, yet also a material that needs to be put to use and re-use, as shelter, in social space and as "photogenic objects".

The three parts of this exhibition re-imagine the past, present and future simultaneously and as such do not subscribe to linear time. In museum display cabinets situated in the back of the gallery room, the fragmented remains from the now considered distant age of the industrial revolution serve as objects of curiosity. The setup imagines that in the future, our ecologically disastrous capitalist activities, human infrastructures and exploitation of resources will be looked back at with shame, as "The remain of the traces of an unmentionable time." The three pieces installed here – chunks of welded wire reinforcement – were also part of the previous edition of this project in Skien, presented *in situ* next to other ruins. At Galleri Ram, however, it is as if they have been excavated and put on display.

Another work in the exhibition unfolds itself in real-time, inextricably tied to the present while re-negotiating the future and past. "PostIsotype" consists of a series of wall-hung LCD screens, a digital synthesizer, sound

1 The first installment of "Living in the Beginning of Times" took place in Ibsenhuset in Skien, Norway during Greenlightsdistrict, 11-14.05.17

elements and a pile of paper. Isotypes based on Otto Naurath and Gerd Arntz's Vienna Method are portrayed on the screens and paper, while a rhythmic, industrial sound emerges from the speakers. Via the synthesizer, the figures on the screens are made into moving images which wobble with the sound pulse. This effect dissolves the clear cut categories that these Isotypes represent, merging and bending the boundaries between constructed binary or exclusive categories such gender (male/female), ethnicity (white/black), class (workers/middle-class/upper-class), and in an extended sense also the boundary between the human and non-human. The constructed categories of human subjects are scrutinized and questioned, giving way to a future of blurred boundaries. It exemplifies what the philosopher, Rosi Braidotti calls a nomadic exercise or a "nomadic subject", which she explains as a way of thinking through and moving across "... established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without blurring experience."²

The monumental construction which is made of the green plastic bags Oslo residents recycle their food in serves as the centrepiece of the exhibition. Dubbed "Photogeny of a contextualization for a new revolution," it provides creative proposals for a possible future that can arise from the ruins and ecological problems of our past. The lack of human presence is noticeable, opening up for doubt whether this construction emerged spontaneously, by other non-human self-organized means, or if it represents an involuntary and self-inflicted human-plastic relationship by which humans now have to fuse old garbage bags to create shelter because other construction materials are scarce. Regardless, this doubt and ambiguity is productive, because all options present the human exceptionalism and "bounded individualism" we are so used to as unthinkable options. This serves to illustrate one of Donna Haraway's questions from her recent text, "Tentacular Thinking":

*What happens when human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, those old saws of Western philosophy and political economics, become unthinkable in the best sciences, whether natural or social? Seriously unthinkable: not able to think with.*³

Rather than preserving the the anthropocentric idea of the human as the destroyer of the earth, this installation exemplifies how plastic – although a human product – not only outlives us, but also transforms with the natural environment into unintentional figures. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a hoard of plastic debris which is larger than Texas in the North Pacific Ocean, is an example of this. As an imagined future, the installation considers the more likely alternative in which the earth will adapt after the fall of civilisations and human infrastructure, with or without support for human existence. The robotic voice which emanates from speaker elements in this construction may in that case be a trace of our less mortal digital creations, even connoting – as post-apocalyptic works often do – the persistence of artificial intelligence. It could therefore also be seen as an argument for our present time and all its transformations, following Haraway, that the future is forever unfinished, rather than defined by the so-called "age of Anthropocene" as the final epoch.

Liv Brissach

2 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, (Columbia University Press, 1994), 4.

3 Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking: Antropocene, Capitalocene, Chtuhulucene," *e-flux Journal* #75 (September 2016): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/> accessed 05.06.17

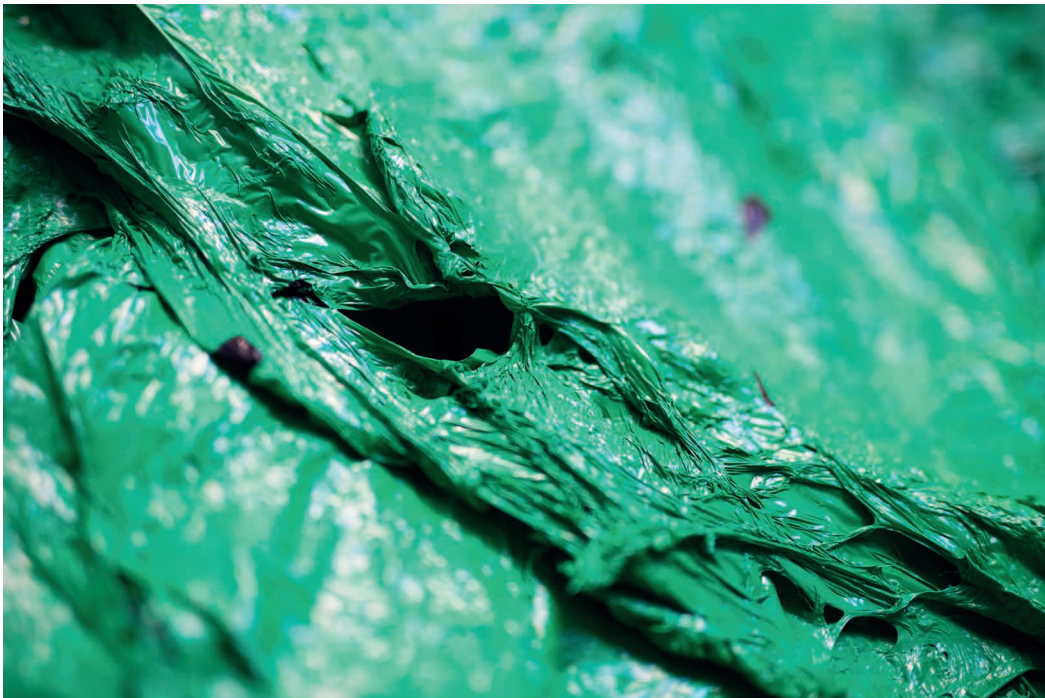




Photogeny of a contextualisation for a new revolution



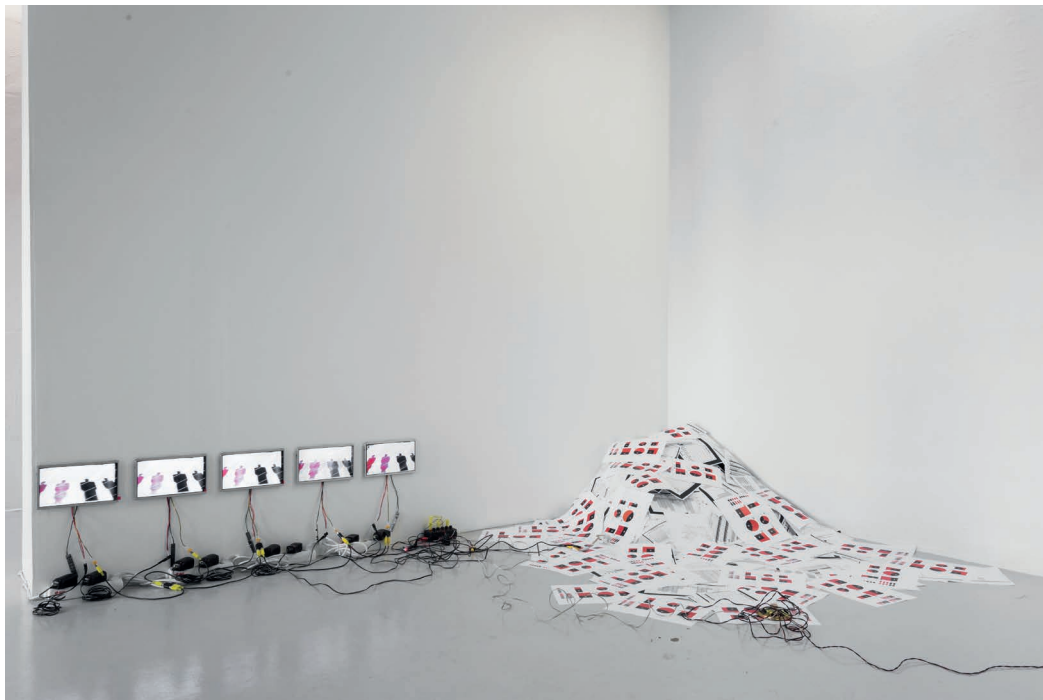
The remains of the traces of an unmentionable time



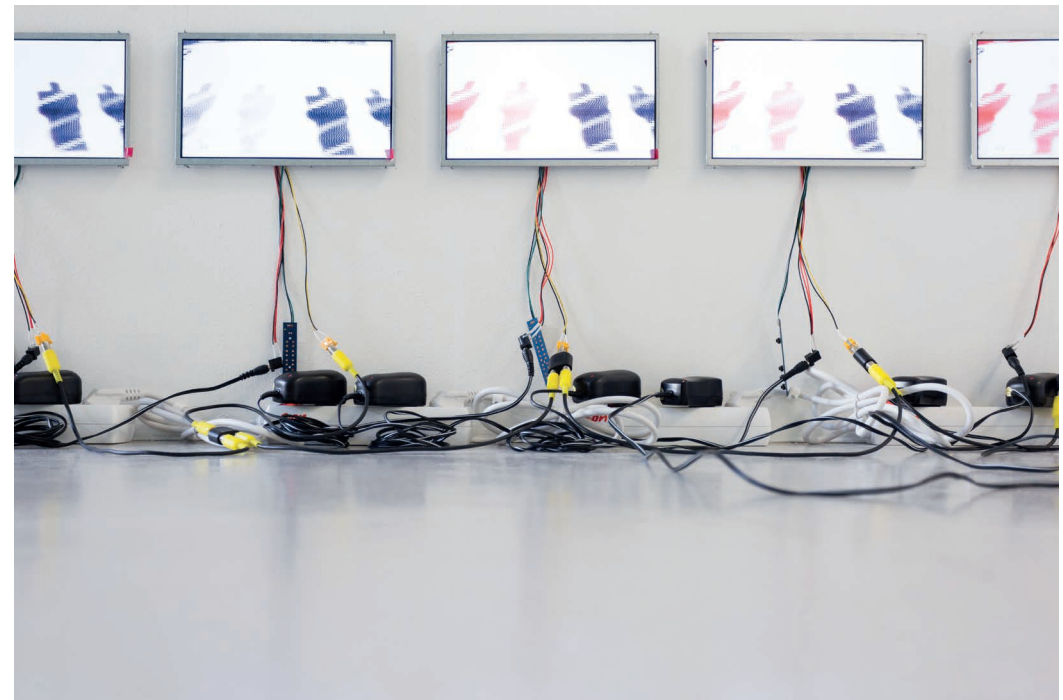
Photogeny of a contextualisation for a new revolution (detail)



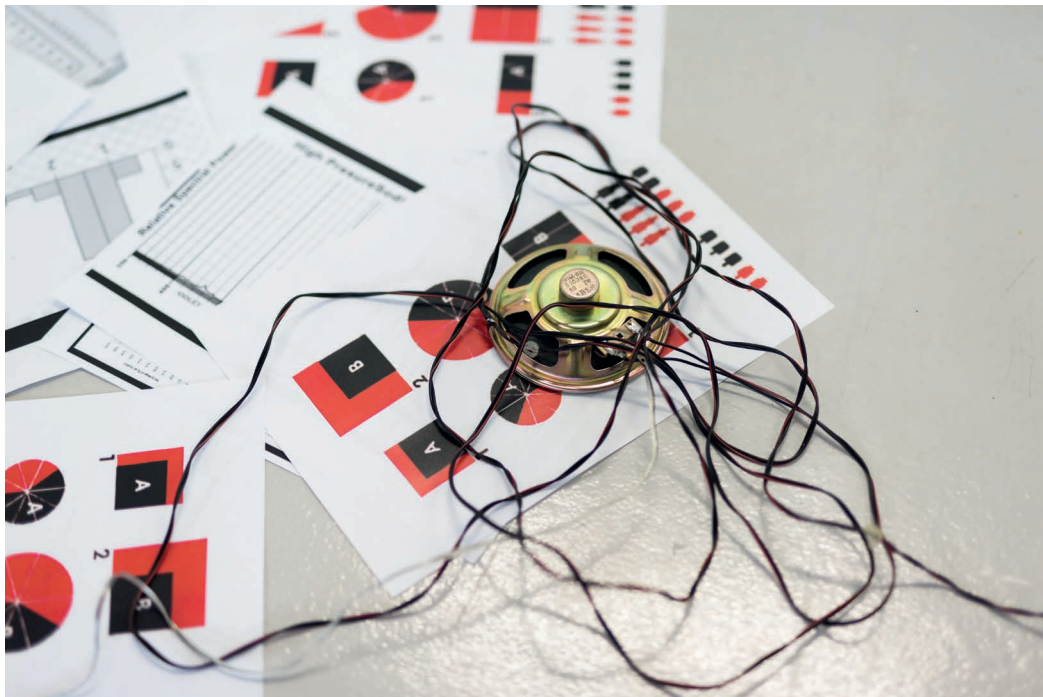
The remains of the traces of an unmentionable time (detail)



PostIsotype



PostIsotype (detail)



PostIsotype (detail)

We warmly thank and acknowledge all of our contributors, collaborators, and the institutions that helped make the installation of this project possible. A special thanks is also owed to: Bård E. Dahl, Linnea Larsson, Madeleine Park

Authors & editors
Martinka Bobrikova & Oscar de Carmen

photo **Jan Khür**
design **Aurélia Garová**
Edition of 200 copies

www.bobrikovadecarmen.org

Oslo, 2017

Martinka Bobrikova & Oscar de Carmen have been working together as an artistic duo since 2005. Central to their artistic practices are the notions of an open interaction within the art world beyond the confines of what is often considered acceptable artistic institutions. They view their artwork as embedded within lived experience, as a single space of coexistence and confluence. They believe that this open dialogue between art and life is a productive context to emphasize the current interchange and flux in social life and to promote social transformation. Through this methodology, the artists critically investigate our roots and social habits, questioning the mechanisms and contexts which create these powerful current systems of values.

They have participated in several residencies such as Seoul Art Space_Geumcheon, HomeBase Saitama, KulturKontakt Austria, Nida art Colony or MeetFactory. Their works have been presented in venues and projects such as the 5th Odessa Biennale, Fotogalleriet, Agrikultura Triennial, Seoul Art Space Geumcheon (2017); the Saitama Triennial, Nitra Gallery, Akershus Kunstnersenter, Tranzit.sk (2016); 2nd Tbilisi Triennial, Prague Quadrennial, Babel Art Space, Entrance Gallery (2015); Centre Contemporary Art in Singapore, Høstutstillingen, Kunstnerneshus, ANX/ Atelier Nord, Skånes Konstforening, City Gallery Bratislava (2014); Karlin Studio, Rake (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art Roskilde, KURANT, (2012); Singuhr (2011); Center of Contemporary Art Tbilisi, Rôda Sten, City Museum of Gothenburg, Space Gallery (2010).