

and a looping fragment of Egyptian director Maher Sabry's unprecedented cinematic depiction of homosexuality, *All My Life*, 2008. This cultivated sanctuary was, however, thrown into sharp relief a few streets away by the Istanbul-based collective Yoğunluk, whose work *The House*, 2017, saw their studio-atelier converted into a humid, slimy-to-the-touch and sinisterly lit defamiliarisation of the domestic, a familiar habitat repeatedly under threat of disappearing into an encroaching darkness, highly suggestive of Istanbul's own painful histories of dispossession.

Such loss is enshrined historically in the Galata Greek School, a haunting indication of the forced relocation of Greeks during the 1920s. The school provided a temporary home for the Biennial's strongest selection of works; while Mark Dion and Bilal Yilmuz employed topographical tools to map both the persistent weeds and the recession of Istanbul's artisanal handicrafts respectively, Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe's cluttered installation and film *Scenario in the Shade*, 2015-17, performed a psychotropic lament for the youth cultures of an imaginary California just as prone to the threat of gentrification as any real-world counterpart. Heba Y Amin's *As Birds Flying*, 2016, and Volkan Aslan's *Home Sweet Home*, 2017, were hypnagogic video reveries that presented contrasting articulations of flight as paranoid evasion or recuperative interval, but it was Erkan Özgen's understated yet indescribably affecting *Wonderland*, 2016, that brought the most pointed depiction of traumatic migration to the fore by documenting an interview with a deaf and mute 13-year-old Syrian boy who describes in honed detail the atrocities he has witnessed through a series of simple hand gestures.

At the Pera Museum, Monica Bonvicini's video *Hausfrau Swinging*, 1997, captured a similar pained expressivity through its naked performer who wore a wooden house on her head (modelled on Louise Bourgeois's *Femme Maison*, 1990, shown nearby) which she continually smashed into abutted partition walls. Calling to mind President Erdoğan's recent statement that 'childless women are incomplete', this brutish display of frustration amplified the reproductive strictures that continue to characterise the home as a site of conflicted independence.

In a post-Occupancy milieu, the 15th Istanbul Biennial's emulation of a neighbourhood to evoke the intimacy of home – its potential frailty and status as a locus from which tolerance might be measured – treads an ambiguous line between acting as a mechanism of state power and constructing a rampart against it. That certain discussions regarding its content can take place only beyond the limitations of its specific context betrays the need for a cacophony of critical responses that might hopefully reassemble into political expressions of indignation, communality and care. ■

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Zach Blas: Contra-Internet

Gasworks London 21 September to 10 December

Zach Blas asks perhaps the biggest existential question of today: what would life be like if the internet ended? If the internet's collapse is perhaps desirable, it is because the liberatory tenor of networked life, emblematised in the 1990s by hackers and cyberfeminists, has been lost to the mechanisms of corporatisation, surveillance and governmentality. Blas tackles this crisis in his latest video installation and series of screen-based works at Gasworks, as well as in his earlier thought-provoking articles and interviews published in periodicals from *e-flux* to *Mousse* and *Little Joe*. As a queer questioning of the internet, Blas's question refreshingly pushes beyond less ambitious, if nevertheless still urgent, investigations into issues of online self-representation, to instead apply queer theory's radical upturning of power systems to the internet itself. The internet seems to have become a totality, an ideology without an outside. As the late Mark Fisher noted, it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Against this fatalism, Blas's exhibition 'Contra-Internet' asserts that there are always points of resistance and renewal: local and transnational networks, communities and endless social and political struggles.

At the heart of the exhibition is *Jubilee 2033*, 2017, a queer science-fiction video inspired partly by Derek Jarman's visionary punk classic *Jubilee*, 1978. Drawing on Jarman's time-travelling narrative, Blas centres his own video on the figure of Ayn Rand, the hyper-individualist and ideological capitalist cult author who has inspired many of Silicon Valley's most power-hungry moguls, plus at least one president (Donald Trump). In Blas's video, Rand is accompanied by her acolytes, painter Joan Mitchell and neoconservative economist Alan Greenspan, who were married briefly in the 1950s. Together, they meet an avatar from the future, a Japanese CGI 'virtual girlfriend' called Azuma Hikari (yes, this virtual character and the technology that created her actually exist). Travelling into the future to the year 2033 when the internet has finally collapsed, they witness a meeting of queer militants presided over by a silver-bodied post-human entity called Nootropix who delivers a monologue on the death of the internet. Nootropix then dances around with feline grace to Andrea Bocelli's sweeping and saccharine *Con Te Partirò* (Time to Say Goodbye). It is a euphoric ending, and one that leaves the central question of what comes after the internet teasingly unanswered.

If the plot seems convoluted and reference-heavy, it works well in the video itself, which delights in the aesthetics and *mises en scène* of the stolid Rand in her mid-century get-up, Azuma in her incongruous digital kinkiness and the extraordinary physicality of the silver-skinned Nootropix. It is not quite up there with Jarman's aesthetic exuberance and keen sense of cinematography, and Blas's video also suffers badly from



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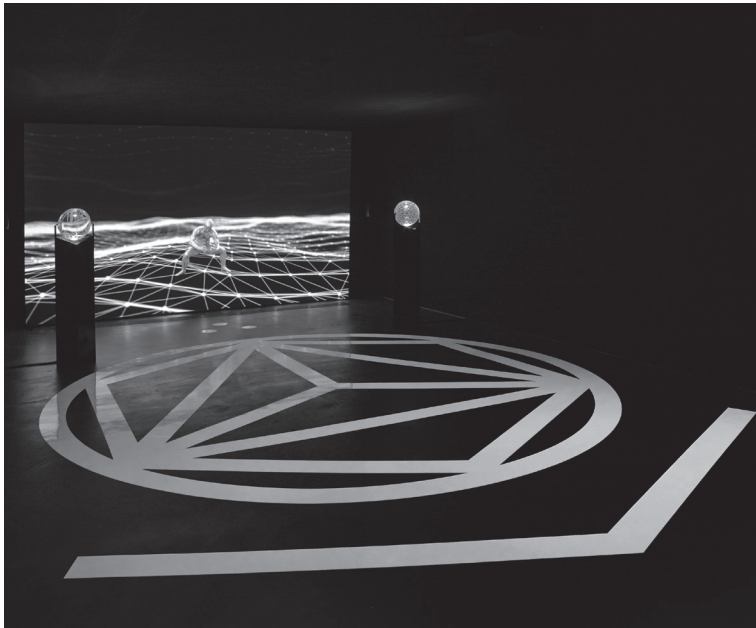
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**Zach Blas**

Contra-Internet 2017
installation view

a muddy soundtrack that makes important speeches hard to follow. Yet it shares Jarman's sense of reflecting a radical community, which in his case was London's early Gay Liberation and drag scenes, and for Blas is a more transnational queer performance culture. Here, Nootropix is played by transgender performer and bodybuilder Cassils, and Rand is performed by actor and director Susanne Sachsse, a founder member of Berlin's CHEAP collective and a collaborator with Vaginal Davis. This sense of communality is vital to *Jubilee 2033*: in the scene where Nootropix delivers a speech, the introduction is made by a gun-totting queer militant, while a small queer audience sits in rapt attention. Moreover, the exhibition's title 'Contra-Internet' is a nod to Paul B Preciado's queer 'Contra-Sexual Manifesto', 2000, which outlines strategies of resistance to existing forms of gender power.

In *Jubilee 2033*, there is an urgent sense that the post-internet world would be one that embraces difference and dissent. Critiques of technologies of surveillance are evident in the film's surrounding installation, including two glass orbs mounted on plinths, which are based on the form of the 'palantir', the all-seeing eye from JRR Tolkien's 1954 opus *Lord of the Rings* (the name has reappeared sinisterly in US tech-security organisation Palantir Technologies). 'Contra-Internet' also includes smaller video works, captured from computer screens that digitally *détourne* elements of contemporary networked life: social-media texts are rasterised into images and erased, maps of networks are plucked from Google Images and transformed into 3D-rendered fragments that spin off into the cyber-void. Blas also includes his own writing in the form of a book, *The End of the Internet (As We Know It)*, mounted on a plinth like a bible, and an on-screen version of his manifesto-like text. Blas's text concludes in a prophetic tone: 'IN OUR DREAMS, we have seen another network, an honest network, a network decidedly more fair than the one in which we live today.' There is a delirious and almost utopian spirit to this exhibition, a sense of hope against today's hyper-capitalist internet. ■

COLIN PERRY is a writer, editor and lecturer.

Miranda July: Interfaith Charity Shop

Artangel London 31 August to 22 October

Miranda July's *Interfaith Charity Shop*, 2017, must be the most true-to-life simulation of a charity shop within an art context that I have visited since Christoph Büchel's *Piccadilly Community Centre* at Hauser & Wirth six years ago. While the latter managed to accurately reproduce the crowded clutter and down-at-heel grubbiness of the real thing to giddily disorienting effect, however, July presents a rather sanitised version that ultimately suffers from too many compromises to land any critical punches.

It must have looked good on paper. Work with four existing London-based charity shops that between them represent Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist charities. Build a facsimile charity shop complete with cheap laminate flooring, suspended ceiling, strip lights and ugly shelving system. Fill it with donated goods from the original four shops and parachute the whole thing directly into the heart of London's most ostentatious and opulent department store in order to generate some critical dissonance. It has the pleasingly tidy coherence of a neat idea.

A little too neat, in fact, right down to the bright blue Instagram-friendly shop front and a tiny footprint that is only large enough to accommodate a couple of clothing rails. My local charity shops reuse old plastic bags from Iceland and Lidl rather than the classy custom yellow paper bags being dispensed here. They colonise vacant shop units and have to make do with leftover fixtures and fittings, whereas these are all too obviously brand new. But it is the position of the shop on Selfridge's third floor that fatally undermines any aspirations there may have originally been towards critique or subversion. This is an area set aside for small designer labels with artistic pretensions, where the garments are offered for sale on a variety of pseudo-sculptural display stands and striking backgrounds. 'We have worked with leading designers and artists,' goes the blurb, 'to commission a series of architectural installations blending the worlds of art, fashion and design ... bringing true retail theatre to our Designer Studio.' It is the one area of the store, in other words, where contemporary art is already explicitly employed to add value to the products. In this context July's intervention inevitably comes across as just another quirky piece of creative marketing in the same vein as designer Christopher Kane's transparent cubes or Gary Card's artificial rock face displayed nearby. Since many of Selfridge's clientele may never have been forced to shop for secondhand clothes in a real charity shop, it also has the distinct air of poverty tourism.

Early press coverage of the project has made much of the fact that it is possible to buy an item of secondhand clothing in the shop for just a few pounds, right next to the designer label Vetements, which is known among the fashion cognoscenti for sending ironic secondhand garments down the catwalk at top-of-the-range prices. This juxtaposition is meant to indicate the incisive critique being performed, but it misses the point, of course: Selfridges is only able to charge an insane £1,250 for a pair of cream jewel-encrusted trousers precisely because of the cultural capital it has acquired through many years of sponsoring artistic projects like this. To buy those rather revolting trousers is to buy a little piece of the credibility and glamour of July's reputation.

If you were looking for a signifier of the way contemporary art has entirely capitulated to the power of the market in recent years, it is instructive to draw a direct comparison between this project and