

Mimosa House

Do you keep thinking there must be another way

Georgia Horgan, Lee Lozano, Howardena Pindell, Polvo de Gallina Negra, Raju Rage, Georgia Sagri and Emma Talbot

15 February – 27 April 2019
Open Wednesday – Saturday 12–6pm

Do you keep thinking there must be another way is a group exhibition that addresses strategies of representation, resistance and withdrawal. Including installation, painting, performance, text and video, the exhibition considers behaviours towards, and opposition of, presiding power structures.

Spanning across two floors of Mimosa House, *Do you keep thinking there must be another way* presents historic and contemporary works that generate discussions on identity and labour. Within the works strategies for collaborative exchange are mapped out and tactics that include honesty, parody and poetry are employed.

Do you keep thinking there must be another way's title is taken from Emma Talbot's work *21st Century Sleepwalk* (2018). In the exhibition, the title acts as a proposition to consider the ways that artists question and dismantle imposed hierarchies within professional and personal spheres. The intergenerational grouping of artists in the exhibition point to the continuing work that empowers multiple ways of living and working.

The exhibition includes a series of talks, screenings, workshops and readings, with contributions by: Rose English, Karen Di Franco, Caspar Heinemann, Georgia Horgan and Jennifer Kabat.

Saturday 9th March, 3pm

A study group with artist Rose English and writer Jennifer Kabat to re-examine the subversive collaborative performance *Mounting* by Rose English, Jacky Lansley and Sally Potter that took place at Modern Art Oxford in 1977 amidst a Frank Stella painting exhibition. In the piece, the artists used language, character play and costume to question their role in art and its institutions. Through dialogue and readings, the study group will pivot on the artists' book for *Mounting* that was produced in preparation for, and as an invitation to, the performance.

Saturday 23 March, 3pm

An afternoon of readings by Caspar Heinemann, Georgia Horgan and Karen Di Franco, who have all written new texts in response to Lee Lozano's infamous boycott of women in 1971. In what was initially a temporary experiment, that subsequently

became permanent, Lozano publicly withdrew from contact with other women. This radical decision occurred quietly in the midst of the feminist, anti-work and anti-Vietnam movements of the 1970s. It was an act of unapologetic self-sabotage and rejection of her identification as a 'woman artist', as Lozano wrote "I have no identity. I will be human first, artist second"

Do you keep thinking there must be another way is curated by Cicely Farrer, Daria Khan and Jessica Vaughan. With thanks to Ellen Greig and Bryony James.

Generously supported by Arts Council England, Creative Scotland and Hauser & Wirth



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



HAUSER & WIRTH

ENDS

Artists and artwork:

Georgia Horgan's installation continues her ongoing research into 'political pornographies' from the English Civil War and Restoration (c.1640–1690). In the battles of ideology between republicans and conservatives, erotic writing was a method used to assert political values and to define the role of women. Horgan has taken Ferrante Pallavicino's widely distributed novella, *The Whore's Rhetoric* (1683) as her reference to explore this history.

Present are two embroidered period costumes for characters from Pallavicino's novella, Mrs Cresswell, a brothel owner and notorious Civil War republican, and Dorothea, a young aristocratic woman. The style and material of each dress reveal each character's social standing and propriety. Words have been stitched into the costumes, ascribing the bodies with ideas and events that relate to women's positioning in society, class status and the complex relations between the textile industry, politics and dress. The phrases are drawn from the novella and Melissa Mowry's essay *Dressing Up and Dressing Down: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Seventeenth-Century* (1999). Mrs Cresswell's character is based on a real individual, whereas Dorothea is fictitious.

Mimosa House has commissioned *thewhoresrhetoric.com*, a website that hosts the script for a speculative film based on the novella. Considering how the form of a 'pornography' can be repurposed to write women's history, the text draws out themes around sexuality, labour rights, honesty, and historical veracity.

In reference to the book's origin as a 'viral' publication, Horgan has used the rules of *Search Engine Optimisation* copywriting as a framework. Produced with assistance

from her employer, this conceit draws out further references around distribution, precarious labour, and the spread of information – reliable or otherwise.

Georgia Horgan (b. 1991, UK) lives and works in Glasgow. Her work explores histories of labour, gender and sexuality. She is interested in how representations of the past, and its protagonists, sustain cultural and political norms, and what a feminist strategy for re-writing history might look like.

In August 1971 artist **Lee Lozano** began her infamous boycott of women. In what was initially a temporary experiment, that subsequently became permanent, Lozano publicly withdrew from contact with other women. This radical decision occurred quietly in the midst of the feminist, anti-work and anti-Vietnam movements of the 1970s. It was an act of unapologetic self-sabotage and rejection of her identification as a ‘woman artist’, as Lozano wrote “I have no identity. I will be human first, artist second”. Her boycott of women can be understood as an attempt to resist patriarchal systems that create gendered power relations, questioning the construct of gender more broadly. This act chimed with Lozano’s professional withdrawal from the art world, a conceptual artwork known as her *Dropout Piece*, which is not assigned to a specific date. Presented at Mimosa House is a facsimile of Lozano’s hand-written text, extracted from her notebooks, outlining her plans to boycott women.

Lee Lozano (1930–1999, USA) was an artist working in New York until the early 1970s when she disengaged from the art world and moved to Texas. She is widely known as a painter and conceptual artist who investigated issues related to the body and gender.

Howardena Pindell’s 12-minute video *Free, White and 21* (1980) recounts Pindell’s experiences of racism as a young woman living and working in the US in the 1960s. Made in response to offensive encounters experienced in both the feminist movement and the art world, this work depicts Pindell as herself and as a white woman. The work opens with Pindell dressed in the guise of a white woman, who embodies the free, white, 21 year old persona from which the work takes its title. This character discounts Pindell’s first-hand experiences of racism with statements like, “you really must be paranoid,” and “you won’t exist until we validate you.” When Pindell appears on screen as herself, she first recounts the abusive racism that her mother endured, and then discusses the milestones of her own life—including school, college, and young adulthood—via the discrimination that made her advancement such a struggle. The work serves to re-emphasise the fact that her body, when represented by a white-dominated society, transforms into a liability.

Howardena Pindell (b. 1943, Philadelphia, US) lives in New York. Her work features painting, conceptual works, photography, film and performance. She often employs metaphorical processes of destruction and reconstruction. Preoccupied with a fascination with gridded imagery and textured surfaces, her work explores social issues of homelessness, AIDS, war, sexism, xenophobia, and apartheid.

In **Polvo de Gallina Negra’s** performative intervention in a popular television programme, *A Fierce Fight*, the artists question social expectations and hostility towards women in Mexican society in the 1980s. They discuss the artworld in

particular, explaining what it means to create art as women in the male dominated culture prevalent in Latin America at the time. During the live television broadcast the artists Maris Bustamante and Monica Mayer introduce their project Mothers, which attempted to explore the archetypal mother and offer alternative representations of motherhood.

This recording shows **Polvo de Gallina Negra**'s inclusion in a popular Mexican mainstream television news segment, which aired to 200 million viewers. The artists enrol an impertinent male news anchor to become a 'Mother for a day', using a set of props they comically transform the host's masculine body into an expectant mother's body, positioning maternity as a cultural rather than natural construct. Their performance uses irony to underscore a patriarchal understanding of pregnancy and the conflicts of motherhood as labour.

Polvo de Gallina Negra (PdGN; Black Hen Powder) was Mexico's first self-consciously proclaimed feminist art collective, formed in 1983 by Maris Bustamante (b. 1949) and Monica Mayer (b. 1954) and—initially— the photographer Herminia Dosal. Their actions combined radical social criticism with humour to subvert the machismo prevalent in 1980s Mexico. PdGN were part of *Los Grupos*, a movement of artistic collectives that experimented with happenings, actions and ephemeral art during the 1970s and early 80s in Mexico in an attempt to reclaim and reconstruct the relationship between the aesthetic and the political.

Under/Valued Energetic Economy (2017 - ongoing) (a term inspired by Alexis Pauline Gumbs) is an installation and work in progress by **Raju Rage**, which maps out the tangled ecology between "activism", "arts" and "academia". Presented on a trestle table top with objects and artefacts that reference their interest in kitchen-table conversations and the knowledges that they produce, the work highlights informal strategies of organisation, creativity and collectivity. It also explores alternative archiving of his/her/their stories.

Raju Rage (b. 1978, Kenya) is an interdisciplinary artist who is proactive about using art, education and activism to forge creative survival. Based in London and working beyond, they explore the spaces and relationships between dis/connected bodies, theory and practice, text and the body and aesthetics and the political substance. Their current interests are around value, conditions, sustainability and care. They are a member of Collective Creativity arts collective and a creative educator and associate lecturer with an interest in radical pedagogy.

Documentary of Behavioural Currencies / Georgia Sagri as GEORGIA SAGRI (still without being paid as an actress) (2016) confronts the role of the artist and the value of artistic labour, in an attempt to reclaim artistic autonomy and authorship. **Georgia Sagri** exposes institutional structures that exploit artists' work, demonstrating how protest and resistance eventually become neutralised and absorbed by art institutions. In this work Sagri insists on eliminating divisions between affective and cognitive, immaterial and material labour.

This work is a fragment of the ongoing conversations that Sagri had with the production team of an institution where she exhibited her work. The image and audio blurring recall the censoring process that the work was subject to in order to be presented, as well as the artist's decision to keep the identity of those featured confidential.

Georgia Sagri (b. 1979, Athens, Greece) lives and works in Athens and New York. At the centre of her practice lies an exploration of performance as an ever-evolving field within social and visual life. Much of her work is influenced by her ongoing engagement in political movements and struggles, regarding issues of autonomy, empowerment and self-organisation.

Emma Talbot's 10 metre-long silk painting, *21st Century Sleepwalk* (2018) embeds the personal in the political, exploring the experience of a citizen in a contemporary city undergoing massive regeneration. The boxes of text, which are suspended from cranes, or floating in the sky, ask questions about the status of the individual in relation to bigger political forces that determine the world we occupy.

The piece reflects on contemporary angst, in relation to personal fulfilment, achievement and failure, set within a snakes-and-ladders world of flux and uncertainty. Sequences of figures, climbing and falling, which evoke archetypal dream imagery, are set against such questions as '*what are you reaching for something that sits just beyond - that moves as you move - unattainable*'. As the sulphuric skyline turns from night to dawn, the city gives way to an imaginary floating world, where the text asks '*do you keep thinking there must be another way?*'.

Emma Talbot (b.1969, UK) lives and works in London. Her paintings comment on histories of labour, gender roles, environments and the subconscious. She recounts intimate memories and personal narratives to map psychological states and observations on technology, motherhood, relationships, ageing and trauma. Using methods of storytelling, the artist constructs confessional storyboards which offer potential for emotional repair, recovery and regeneration.