Of Other Faces
Andrea Cohen + Wiska Radkiewicz, Victoria Fu, Marta Ryczko, and Manuel Saiz
This publication is produced in conjunction with the exhibition

OF OTHER FACES
Andrea Cohen • Wiska Radkiewicz, Victoria Fu, Marta Ryczko, and Manuel Saiz
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Essays appear in the order that they were written. Artist bios appear in alphabetical order.
But we are, I know not how, double in ourselves—so that what we believe we do not believe, and cannot disengage ourselves from what we condemn.

Michel de Montaigne
Of Other Faces

*Of Other Faces* is a presentation of four works by five artists who employ strategies of mirroring and doubling to investigate the paradoxical nature of our dualistic world. Through the representation or evocation of reflections, refractions, echoes, and iterations, these works by Manuel Saiz (Berlin), Marta Ryczko (Toronto), Victoria Fu, (Los Angeles) and Andrea Cohen and Wiska Radkiewicz (Paris, New York) interrogate, express or reveal hidden contradictions within society’s governing systems as they relate to dualities of self and Other. Whether the Other is cast variously as the embodiment of nature, the irretrievable past, the imperfect, or the unknown, the works within the exhibition ultimately represent our attempts to integrate with that uncanny object of our deepest fear and desire, the unknowable within ourselves.
MANUEL SAIZ
Parallel Universes Meet at Infinity
A woman’s face stares blankly from the center of a screen. On an adjacent screen, the face of a snowy owl does the same. Some seconds pass; there is no sound, no motion, save a single involuntary eyeblink from the woman. The owl does not blink. Abruptly, and at nearly the same instant, both the woman and the owl shift their gazes downward, then up again, in a manner characteristic of bird, not human. So begins a remarkable synchrony between opposing bodies that recalls performative modes from mime to dance to Olympic sports, even as it conceptually interrogates the fraught relationships between nature and contemporary humankind.

Parallel Universes Meet at Infinity is a two-channel video installation in which actors hired to memorize and execute the head and facial movements of zoo animals previously filmed by the artist are shown performing the complex sequences in synchrony with the animals.1 The work comprises seven iterations of unique pairings between person and animal, each shown on a separate screen.

Through the viewing of these carefully choreographed synchronies, one becomes a student of movement itself, observing the subtle or startling distinctions between human and animal timing and range of motion, and noting the precision (or lack thereof) with which the actors are able to reproduce the animals’ movements. Over the course of subsequent iterations, the viewer becomes increasingly engaged, marvelling at a seamless integration in one moment, fixating on a tiny detail the next. Under such scrutiny, something as subtle as the flick of an ear or the blink of an eye
A series of black and white headshots confronts us. Unelaborated and impassive, they could be a collection of mug shots, or passport photos. As a sequence of similar images, the series recalls Thomas Ruff’s 1980s project, Portraits. Shooting people as if they were plaster busts, Ruff set aside compositional concerns to “present a picture of a picture of reality”, in opposition to traditional modes of portraiture which aim to portray some aspect of the sitter’s socio-economic status or condition. Ruff’s images are instead about “contingency and fracture”, through which an emphasis on the individual is displaced by the primacy of the picture.1

Existing outside the particulars of place and time, each face initially compels the viewer to meet its gaze, to gauge its literal value. And yet the blankness of their collective façades ultimately confounds or rebuffs any attempt at dialogue between individual subject and viewer, breaking off further communication.

In a similar vein, Marta Ryczko employs ideas of contingency and fracture, through the use of images which at first appear to be neutral and mute. However she extends and actualizes these conditions, subjecting the portraits to a process of fracturing upon which their ultimate value and power are wholly contingent. Alien/Recognition is a series of portraits paired with the product of an otherworldly coupling — the pictured individual’s own mirrored and melded profile. Resembling strange or grotesque aliens or monsters, these transformed figures (or transfigured forms) are the antithesis of mute and neutral.
A black screen fades in to reveal the silhouette of a woman, eye to the lens of a camera she is setting up for a self-portrait. Satisfied, she makes her way to a wide dining table in front of a sunlit window, sitting next to her companion, a woman dressed similarly in white. They adjust themselves, waiting expectantly, as do we, eyeing them from the perspective of the camera itself. In the moments that pass, we observe the edges of their brilliantly backlit bodies dissolving into the gleaming panes, notice how the restless flicker of film contrasts with the stillness of the women’s poses, contemplate the architectural symmetry of their surroundings. But the confirming click never comes, no frozen moment indicates that the picture has been taken. Instead, an abrupt cut transports us to the next scene: another pose, another self-portrait.

Through Self-Portrait in Sweden’s eight successive iterations, Victoria Fu documents two women in the act of documenting themselves. Posing for self-portraits in a variety of seemingly mundane situations, the women engage in a process of re-presenting themselves over and over again. Whether in a sheep field, on a badminton court, or atop a swimming dock, the women share an informal intimacy, standing arm-in-arm, sitting back-to-back, or huddling under an umbrella. Yet there is an overarching sense of resignation in their expressions, a resolute determination in the way they repeatedly arrange themselves — as if this documenting of their quotidian experience is a very serious business.
ANDREA COHEN and WISKA RADKIEWICZ
À deux voix, moments (Moments for Two Voices)
The drone of a buzzing fly. Haunting, harmonic tones; the sound of dripping water. A bird perhaps, squawking strangely. Someone, somewhere, starts to play the piano...

Thus begins Andrea Cohen and Wiska Radkiewicz’s collaborative sound composition, À deux voix, moments (Moments for Two Voices). Utilizing recordings from their respective adopted homes of Paris and New York, Cohen and Radkiewicz investigate themes of nostalgia and longing through an intercontinental collaboration. Over the internet, sounds captured from their daily lives — aural snapshots of past moments — were exchanged and composed into a seamless evocation of timelessness and placelessness. Born of and conditioned by an entirely virtual process of making, the composition is a heterotopic echo of the real spaces from which the constituent sounds were sourced, aurally demarcating a zone between and beyond the artists’ originating localities and temporalities.

Building and dissolving in turn, the layered sounds begin to hint at narrative possibility, then collapse and resolve into myriad crystalline images before accumulating once again in sequence or depth. Referencing relationships of duration (winding, ticking, dripping, chimes) and distance (inside/outside, footfalls, entering/Exiting), the artists fuse their disparate sonic memories into a singular expression of being in transition. As such, the work is a negotiation: between the two artists, between places and times, and ultimately between the listener and the work itself. Evolving as a process of
Through formations and processes of mirroring and doubling which refract our relationships with the Other in its multifarious forms, the artists in the exhibition propagate imperfect, inexplicable, or otherworldly reflections which reveal cracks in the surface of our mutually agreed-upon reality. Through such ruptures, we may confront slippages between what is commonly assumed to be known/unknown, normal/abnormal, self/Other. In conceptualizing the territories within which such confrontations should occur, all five artists locate their works outside of normative place and time. From these other spaces — parallel realities which simultaneously re-present, contest, and invert the real places they are assumed to mirror or reflect — we gain new perspectives on what we choose to reveal and recognize versus that which we deny or conceal. In so doing we may embark on a process of acknowledging, interrogating, and dismantling the dualities with which we habitually, unconsciously carve up the world, others, and ultimately, ourselves.

SHANI K PARSONS
Toronto 2014
Rare are the moments when we accept leaving our mirrors empty...

Still, we persist in trying to fix a fleeting image and spend our lifetime searching after that which does not exist. This object we love so, let us just turn away and it will immediately disappear.

Trinh T. Minh-ha
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST / INDEX TO IMAGES

Works in the Exhibition

Manuel Saiz
Parallel Universes Meet at Infinity, 2004
Running time 12:00
detail p. 8, stills p. 10–13, installation view p. 14

Marta Ryczko
Alien/Recognition, 2011/2014
Archival digital print on Epson Premium Luster
11 x 13.75 inches (each photograph in set of two)
details p. 6, 18, 49, images p. 20–23 from left to right: Alien/Recognition (Mimi), (Sam), (Jeannie), and (Ayeshah); installation view p. 24

Victoria Fu
Self-Portrait in Sweden, 2004
Super 8 mm film transferred to video. Edition of 5.
Running time 3:32
detail p. 28, stills, p. 30–35, installation view p. 36

Andrea Cohen and Wiska Radkiewicz
À deux voix, moments, 2009
Stereo audio
Running time 11:12
snapshots from the artists, p. 40, 42–43, installation view p. 44

Produced in conjunction with the Exhibition

TYPOLOGY Edition by Marta Ryczko
Alien/Recognition (Mimi), 2014
6 x 9 inches (each photograph in set of two)

Collaborative Sound Art CD by Andrea Cohen and Wiska Radkiewicz
À deux voix, moments, 2009
Stereo audio (AIFF on compact disc with liner notes in PDF). Open edition.
Running time 11:12
CD includes bonus track, City Soundings, 2011, produced in collaboration with 12 other artists from around the world: Steven Brown (UK), Marek Choloniewski (Poland), Victoria Estok (USA), Brad Garton (USA), Janete El Haouli (Brazil), Andrew Hugill (UK), Malle Malits (Estonia), Hernan Rissi Patron (Argentina), Franziska Schroeder (UK), Andrei Smirnov (Russia), Marie Wennersten (Sweden), and Lidia Zielinska (Poland).
Berlin-based Spanish artist Manuel Saiz has pursued a multidimensional practice since the 1980s, working initially in painting, sculpture, and photography before focusing on video and media installations from 1995 on. He has regularly presented and exhibited work on the international stage, with early work being featured at the Sao Paulo Biennale (1989) and in Artificial Nature (1990), an exhibition curated by Jeffrey Deitch for the Deste Foundation in Athens. Following a move to London in the mid-90s, Saiz received an honourable mention at the Hamburger Short Film Festival for Video Hacking (1998), and then first prize at the Winterthur Kurtzfilm Festival and a special mention at Transmediale 06 for Being Luis Porcar (2005). His installations have been exhibited at the Intercommunication Center (Tokyo), Transmediale (Berlin), Whitechapel Gallery (London), and ICA London, and he has created artist projects for the Tate Modern, Hara Museum (Tokyo), and El Raval (Barcelona). His many artists’ publications include True Art Lovers: 101 Key Ideas (2013) and 101 Excuses: How Art Legitimizes Itself (2009).

www.manuelsaiz.com

What is your background and how does it shape your interest in art? How did you come to be an artist?

I do not have the feeling of having become an artist because I do not recall ever having been anything else. I have my theories of why I am an artist, related to such things as my parents’ backgrounds, the type of city I grew up in, the atmosphere of Spain in the 1970s, and the fact that there is something wrong with me (no irony). But I was writing very early and then started to draw, before I had any desire to be a fireman or an astronaut. Since then I have painted, made sculptures, installations, photographs, books, films, videos...

Where does an artwork begin for you? How do you develop ideas and imagery?

A short and straight answer would be that there is no beginning and ending of a work, and they fade in and out of your daily life. Some have a clear termination, but many of them simply disappear unrealised, even before you notice that they might become a solid identifiable unity.

However I also believe that an artwork begins when the art finishes, and I would like to achieve the art without the artwork, which is of course impossible. So every artwork ends up as a kind of disappointment. This is hard to explain in few lines, so I will just say that I do not go to the studio to see if I can come away with something valuable, but rather to take certain urgent actions in order to finish artworks.

What memorable responses have you had to your work?

Favourable comments to one’s work are very encouraging, and give a bit of steam to continue pushing the train to the next station. But like steam, they disappear once they have been converted into movement. The harsh responses are the ones that change one’s views on things. It doesn’t matter if they are right or wrong. Actually it is the constant pressure of negative responses or even better, a lack of response, that makes one evolve, as it serves as a reminder that one is always somehow wrong.

What art/artists/movements do you most identify with and why?

The artists/movements I can better identify with are those I have questioned more often. There are some that are a mystery for only a few days and some that last for years. Having engaged more or less with the history of art from Romanticism to our times, I feel unable to acknowledge any particular artists without disrespecting many others. Thinkers are at the moment more intriguing for me, and currently I have more clear preferences, like Wittgenstein and Schopenhauer.

What are you reading/watching/looking at/listening to these days?

I have very dissimilar interests that I feed by walking while listening to audiobooks, reading books in the afternoon and watching a film daily. I have just finished listening to George Orwell’s Homage to Catalonia, an account of the Spanish Civil War which is very revealing with regard to the differences between the behaviours of Socialists, Anarchists and Communists. I am reading a book by John Gray on heresy. Yesterday I watched Marquis de O by Eric Rohmer.

What are you working on right now?

I have finished an script for a ten minute film in which an actor gives a lecture about lectures. I hope to be shooting in late autumn. Also I am composing a small book on an alternative history of sculpture.

Name 1–3 contemporary artists whose work you feel deserves more attention.

In the last two years there have been two works that struck me and I hope the attention they deservedly receive doesn’t spoil them, or the artists that made them. They are Renzo Marten’s Enjoy Poverty and Jérôme Bel’s Disabled Theater.
Opened in 2013 by independent curator and exhibition designer Shani K Parsons, TYPOLOGY is a not-for-profit project space for curatorial and artistic experimentation in the production of exhibitions, editions, and related events.

As an intimate venue for exhibitions, our program emphasizes highly focused curatorial projects with an eye toward making new cross-disciplinary connections between artists, art forms, ideas, images, objects, and environments.

Through our publishing program, each project is documented in an exhibition catalogue with original curatorial essay. Affordable limited-edition prints are also produced in collaboration with exhibiting artists as an invitation to beginning collectors.

Through an inclusive and varied program of events and workshops, TYPOLOGY seeks to enrich the exhibition experience and encourage active audience participation in our projects and programming.

Together with guest curators and participating artists, TYPOLOGY aims to build curatorial community and resources for the exchange of ideas on exhibition-making as a way to engage and inform audiences from all walks of life.

www.typology.ca

**Director’s Bio**

Since the mid-90s, Shani K Parsons has pursued a multidisciplinary practice focused on exhibition-making — initially through the lenses of architecture, urban planning and public arts administration, then installation, graphic, and environmental design, and most recently through research, writing, curation, and collaboration. In the process she has produced an eclectic body of work ranging from intimate book works and publications to immersive installations and exhibitions for venues including the American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Rhode Island School of Design and RISD Museum, the Museum of Chinese in America (MoCA NY), and Mixed Greens, a contemporary art gallery in Chelsea.

After nearly a decade of living and working in New York, Shani moved to Toronto with her family. Bringing together her experience in the various aspects of exhibition-making — as artist, designer, critic, and curator — she is building a hybrid space for collaborative and cross-disciplinary experimentation, an independent venue for exhibitions on all forms of local and international contemporary culture.