

With a view to a later date, or never

Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe
8 October to 15 December

The water in Karlsruhe contains a lot of salt, a detail that was confirmed in the lower-ground gallery of Badischer Kunstverein where, just catching the light, traces of salt – left behind from the water that had overflowed onto a surface from a recycled glass vessel component of Lili Huston-Herterich’s multipart installation *Real 'Til I Come*, 2018/21 – could be seen. The thoughtfulness of this three-person exhibition, ‘With a view to a later date, or never’, with works by Emma Hedditch, Jean-Paul Kelly and Huston-Herterich, shone through with a similar mercurial richness of material, aesthetics, politics and form.

Descending the short staircase into the gallery, which is supported by original maroon-coloured pillars (a tone echoed in the rewoven and textually embroidered waste-cloth of Huston-Herterich’s *The Whole Roach*, 2019), I listened to the artist’s four-channel sound work of the same title made last September with amateur vocalists Linus Bonduelle, Chypko F, Tisa Neža Herlec and Juliet Van de Voort, who struggled to reach the notes of Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps*. This 25-minute audio work, or poem, featuring fade-outs and fade-ins, made aesthetic use of sound as a transgressor of public/private distinctions that might elsewhere be implicated in protest, mourning, celebration or a combination of all three.

In *Lanolin River Water*, 2018, a cream-coloured hanging, hand-netted by Huston-Herterich, is attached by curtain rings to the top of the wall nearest to the art handler’s passageway into the gallery; the fabric is sourced by the artist from factories in the Netherlands which have progressively closed since the 1960s. If *Real 'Til I Come*, 2018/21 refers to metaphors of holding – with part of its composition repurposing as sculpture numerous salvaged rings and basket-like conical spools – the vocalisation of *The Whole Roach* in this exhibition comes across as a kind of letting go.

Trust and foreboding can go hand in hand. Having provided advance notice of my intention to visit, on arrival I received a cardboard envelope with my name handwritten by one of the Kunstverein’s technicians. It contained Hedditch’s *Copies*. Inside the envelope was an off-white A4 sheet of card to which one key, folded in white tissue paper, had been secured with masking tape. ‘Emma Hedditch, “Copies”, Copies of used keys’, it said on the card, in the same hand as the exterior of the package. I felt instantly responsible for this piece of work, and turned over the homophone of ‘piece’ and ‘peace’ in my mind. Responsibility is perhaps the most intractable thing. Of the intensification of labour, and industry-specific historical change, Karl Marx describes as ‘irrational’ both the form of time-based and piece-wages. Artistic labour resists commodification, yet in regular employment, exploitation may



John-Paul Kelly, *Cite (Spectrum Colours Arranged by Chance)*, 2019, installation view

‘within certain limits’ consist of paying workers per number of items delivered rather than for the duration of the working day.

Pandemic conditions affected each artist differently. Huston-Herterich, and Toronto-based Kelly and curator Jacob Korczynski were able to travel, and stay (as did I) in the Kunstverein’s top-floor apartment, but Hedditch (based in Brooklyn) made no site visits. Barely noticeable at first, Hedditch had stuck keys no longer in use (from former places of work and housing) with reusable putty at intervals on the gallery walls, approximately 5ft from the floor (images of these works are not available in the form of institutional photo documentation), thereby passing comment on logics of possession, mobility and access to local resources.

Second Possessor, also by Hedditch, is available as a PDF of files, if requested, of a ‘selection of 16 digital colour photographs printed 8x6cm, in pairs on a double-sided A4 paper inserted into exhibition handout’. The photo captioned ‘Pomo Realty Co, Inc’ shows a padlocked and graffitied gate, beyond which it’s difficult to see. It reminds me of Ridgewood in Queens, New York, and of communities destroyed by gentrification.

Kelly’s *Cite (Spectrum Colours Arranged by Chance)*, 2019, is the artist’s first sculptural work. Walking clockwise from the gallery’s entrance is an archival binder containing 18 letter-size inkjet prints and other records that foreground intersections of racialisation, poverty, queerness and criminalisation. I read, for example, a profile of Ellsworth Kelly made by the FBI at the time of the painter’s application for paid employment outside of the arts which included details of his sexuality. Yet I had to leave these materials behind in order to proceed to the acrylic screens held by steel struts, a series of frames which reference our lens-mediated experiences of the world. I could see my own reflection as I moved between and around the four panels, which also resembled pedagogical tools, or the evidence boards used in ‘crazy wall’ moments in detective crime dramas. The screen featured holes and abstract compositions lifted from a colour palette of Ellsworth Kelly’s paintings: green, blue, red, yellow, black and grey. A clockwise turn at the fourth panel,

**John
Hansard
Gallery**

Matterlurgy: Hydromancy

Derek Jarman’s Modern Nature

Niamh O’Malley

1 November 2021 to 31 January 2022

27 November 2021 to 26 February 2022

27 November 2021 to 26 February 2022

www.jhg.art

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

supported by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

with my back turned to the Kunstverein's public restroom, afforded the best view of Kelly's drawing: *Whatever I try to do, I never succeed, I am always pissing at the moon, after Brueghel, 2021*. It is meant to be funny – about wasting time, being resourceful about where to piss, or standing to pee (STP), suggestively commenting on the discriminatory divisions of lavatories, how they present obstacles and require workarounds, campaigns, political education and change. The base of the steel frames are on casters but they do not appear to be easily pushed, indeed they are corroded as if by the figure in the drawing who directs urine at a public wall.

Exposure, to light, before the law, to social or self-scrutiny, may be accompanied by radically different effects depending on racialisation, gender, ability or class. This brings to mind recent comments by court sketch artist Jane Rosenberg, who mused to the *Guardian* 'my life is weird' in response to finding convicted sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell returning the artist's gaze, and appearing to document Rosenberg in turn. It is this kind of recursiveness – an infinite hall of mirrors effect – which Kelly enacted with *Cite*.

In our trickle-down, piss-poor economy, the 'opportunities' we take, or to which we are subjected (as framed by Christina Sharpe citing Dionne Brand's 2001 publication *A Map to the Door of No Return*) sometimes appear as forms of redistribution, in accordance with distinct positionalities and the characteristics of the co-dependencies we opt, are forced or coerced into. One way forward, following this exhibition's complex staging of conditions, could be, to borrow a title of a conference convened at Goldsmiths in June 2019, via pathways of 'resisting relations'.

Lizzie Homersham is a writer, editor and PhD candidate.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley: *She Keeps Me Damn Alive*

Arebyte, London, 9 November to 19 February

To play *She Keeps Me Damn Alive*, an arcade-style first-person shooter videogame with pulsating soundtrack and handheld haptic light-gun, players must try to unpack codes relating to how we violently target bodies that appear on the large projection screen. Either side of the work's curtained entrance is a health and safety video tutorial and a mosaic of tablets showing the backgrounds of the various videogame characters, but whose health and whose safety are we protecting? As with all of Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's previous work, the game is correctly and unashamedly pro black and pro trans. Indeed, to fully grasp *She Keeps Me Damn Alive*'s DNA, knowledge of the artist's previous works is crucial in order to understand the leap forward that this solo exhibition represents in Brathwaite-Shirley's career.

The foundational building blocks of this exhibition are what Brathwaite-Shirley has called her 'DOTCOM' works: online platforms that archive black and trans histories in the form of first-person games. These 'DOTCOM' works present the experiences of black and trans bodies in unexpected and often unnamed places, hidden in the textures of the game's surfaces and in the movements of anonymous characters. These games are collaborative, built with members from the trans community, and ask users to be honest with both the

platform and themselves; how they identify informs their experience and what they have the right to access. The game opens with options such as 'I identify as black and trans', 'I identify as cis'. Often, this results in uncomfortable statements, questions and truths. I should say at this juncture that I have always been honest with the games (I am neither trans nor black) and have seen – I assume – very little of the content coded within them. *She Keeps Me Damn Alive* expands on all these aspects, including how black and trans histories are archived.

This show feels like an archive in action: each visit is unique, the characters mapped using motion capture are balletic and DIY. Over time you come to understand them, but we aren't told what to learn; for example, we might instinctively know to protect the character Black Trans Water Soul, but the faceless characters of Lazer Removal Angel and Electric Nerves are harder to decipher without revisiting the game levels and reassessing our previous choices as well as the interactions between characters.

The game unfolds across three levels: a submarine seascape that is alive with the spiritually animated planks of sunken ships, a dungeon where an unnamed ceremony takes place (and where 'trans tourism' is critiqued by the artist) and a realistically rendered city that is in need of being rid of white supremacy – an easily imaginable scenario that translates across borders and languages. If the precedents in existing games and online works are easy to trace in this installation, its corporeal/virtual tension – between a physical space in which a player is held in an apparently intuitive act and a digital space to hold uncomfortable decisions – is an exciting gear change in Brathwaite-Shirley's work.

Rendered in plastic as a fleshy, pink object, the handheld gun is physically uncomfortable. Formed of scores of tiny writhing bodies, it demands to be cradled by the player like a child (Brathwaite-Shirley has also compared it to a handbag) and isn't to be taken for granted. From the start it is different to other trigger-happy games; the purpose of the gun is to *not* shoot but to consider and select whether violence is right and, if so, when. In many ways, *She Keeps Me Damn Alive* inverts the worryingly simplistic tropes shooter games rely on: the perniciously intuitive handling of a weapon, the adrenaline that creeps from the inanimate gun and into the body of its user, rising points corresponding to rising body counts. When one is handed something powerful and told not to use it but to think about how and when it might be used, it becomes an effort of restraint and purpose rather than speed or quantity.

Likewise, the energy and pace of learning that



Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, *She Keeps Me Damn Alive*, 2021, installation view