



A Talk With Kate Cooper

January 14, 2016 Nora Hagdahl

London-based Kate Cooper's art touches on questions about women and labour in the digital age. Her practice has primarily been collaborative; such as the artist-run exhibition space Auto Italia. The Schering Stiftung Art Award gave her the opportunity to produce the large-scale installation RIGGED, presented at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin in 2014. The acclaimed solo exhibition marked the start of her solo career. This year, during Berlin Art Week at ABC Berlin, she presented her new work Experiments in Absorption. The presentation took place at the young gallery Neumeister Bar-Am, with which she recently started to work. I met Kate Cooper in the lobby of her hotel in Stockholm to talk to her about RIGGED and the status of images in a digital world.



N.H: I first came across your work when attending your show at KW. The billboard-sized screens in RIGGED displayed an ideal woman rendered in CGI techniques. It made me think of the idealized bodies that surround us everyday in contemporary consumer culture. Describe “the perfect woman” in RIGGED?

K.C: I was really thinking at the time about these highly modified images of computer generated women. The representation of bodies within these images really fascinated me, there was a link to female bodies found in commercials and pornography and I wanted to understand what was at stake with these new CG rendered

Neumeister Bar-Am

images? Also watching how women were operating online and how they positioned themselves in relation to their bodies – bodies manipulated to accrue a new kind of capital. I wanted to explore my gut reaction, the problematic combination of violence and desired these CG images produced. What was the inherent politics in these images -I simply couldn't unpack them? I wanted to make work that circulated and existed within the same terrain, uncover their potential function. I wanted to produce, render and create images that operated in the same way to get my hands dirty so to speak within the material.

N.H.: Her movement and her smooth, caring, yet numb, voice feels both personal and pre-programmed, creating a chilling ambiguity. I felt the work raised questions about the feminine character working for us, connoting to Apple's Siri. For me, the virtual woman in your work embodied a new digitalized caretaker.

K.C.: At the moment I feel really interested in how the Internet is connected to our feelings and how people use the Internet to manipulate and track people's emotions. How this is connected to ideas surrounding care work and affective labour. Those jobs, traditionally undertaken by women and what that might mean in terms of new infrastructure's being created around immaterial and cognitive labour.



N.H.: I feel this connects to questions frequently discussed within feminism. How do you relate your practice to feminist ideas?

K.C.: I'm from a working class background with a strong matriarchal community however these women who would never talk about feminism in the way that my friends and I do, yet they totally enact those ideas throughout their daily lives. My grandmother for example lives in a close knit community with other women sharing labour, caring for each other's children and families and even sharing working shifts in factories to work around childcare.

I'm always questioning my politics in relation to how I operate as an artist. You know, it's the familiar narrative; that most of the artists I know are men and the majority of curators I work with are women - the caring continues. I think that this awareness is apparent in my work automatically. Recently I've been thinking about creativity, and how you allow yourself to have a practice is in itself a feminist position. Not being apologetic and just giving yourself that time to do that work you want to do.



N.H.: With your background of mostly working collaboratively considered, how does your method change when you work on your solo projects?

K.C.: As *Rigged* was my first institutional solo commission it was a way for me to work out how to have a studio practice on this scale. I had to ask myself: who is involved in the work? The project at KW was really a collaboration and that's how I like to work in most of my projects. I'm working a lot with Theo Cook, my partner who is a photographer and filmmaker. I wouldn't say that we are a duo, but that we maybe work with each other like a director and a cinematographer. Also for the script for the video for *Rigged* I collaborated with artists Marianne Forrest and Marleen Boschen. I often refer to my process of working in terms of 'we' and other artists are often involved in all of my work. This comes from an awareness of the history of women's work and how women been working in collaboration. For me, it's important [for an artist] to emphasize that you do work with other people and not alone.

N.H.: Could you tell me a little bit more about your other collaborative work, such as *Auto Italia*?

K.C.: *Auto Italia* is a project I've been working with for 8 years now. I founded it with some friends after we graduated from art school in London and it really started off as a very grass roots initiative. The space has moved around in London at the moment we're moving into a new long term building in East London. The project is really directed by what we are interested in and it kind of expands or contracts depending on what us as artists and other people we are working with. The thing I really like about it is its flexibility. What's most advantageous is being able to make our own rules and the stuff that we like. Last year, our discussion revolved a lot around immaterial labour, gender and different forms of representation. Recently, we've been working on a project called *On coping*. The ideas came from discussions about gentrification and we think of the results as an anti-real estate campaign or a mini think-tank for artists to reflect on their own conditions.

N.H.: On that note, what's it like being an artist living in such an expensive city as London?

K.C.: London is pretty much impossible. At the moment, in England, it's class warfare. The Conservative government just want to push out anyone who is poor and doesn't fit within a neoliberal agenda. I feel in the UK there are serious fundamental questions why need to ask right now about who has access to make and participate in art or any form of creative or cultural practice. I personally feel this is very pertinent question. A lot of our friends and even more established spaces have shut down. That's also one reason I continue to be involved in *Auto Italia*, since it is one of the projects where a lot of younger artists are involved. *Auto Italia* can define

its own terms and the artists are really involved in the conversation about what those terms are. I find it very interesting that it works almost like an institution perhaps in order to challenge other institutions. For example, we make sure every artist gets paid, which is a huge achievement in London. It's a project and a group of people that I'm really proud to have been a part of.



N.H.: Finally, would you label your work Post-Internet?

K.C: That's kind of a hard question – how do you link work together? The term belongs to a very specific moment in Berlin, at a very specific time and comes from a very specific group of people. I couldn't say that it was my group of friends or a movement I was involved in. However a lot of brilliant artists who I really like the work of have been put into this category. My investigations come from a slightly different perspective but there's definitely an affinity. Maybe it's just about a set of qualities or a certain set of questions, that make work appear or having taken the similar approach. Or maybe it just the same set of ideas that are dispersed within the same generation of artists. Perhaps that's the thing with Post-Internet art, everybody just got influenced by the same things in the world and so they responded with what was available to them, that was always going to mean a break from the earlier generation.

For me an older generation who critically addresses the politics of images in contemporary culture have been interesting to follow. I feel like they work with those questions in a slightly different way, almost more removed, like Hito Steyerl, Harun Farocki or Mark Leckey. Steyerl who often connects to the issues of Internet has certain remoteness which I find useful. She deals with the internet in a more reflective way. Sometimes a bit of distance can be useful to fully investigate a subject, something that perhaps younger artists don't have the ability to do. But in the same way that's maybe what makes this younger generation of artists' work so interesting- it's without any limits.



Search...

ARTISTS ARTWORKS SHOWS GALLERIES MUSEUMS

Up and Coming: Kate Cooper Takes On the Politics and Labor of Digital Imagery

Is art the creation of a single person or really the result of collaboration, conversation, and work from multiple individuals? This is one of the central questions at the crux of the work of young British artist Kate Cooper.

ARTSY EDITORIAL

JUL 14TH, 2015 2:15 AM



Portrait of Kate Cooper by Elliot Kennedy for Artsy.

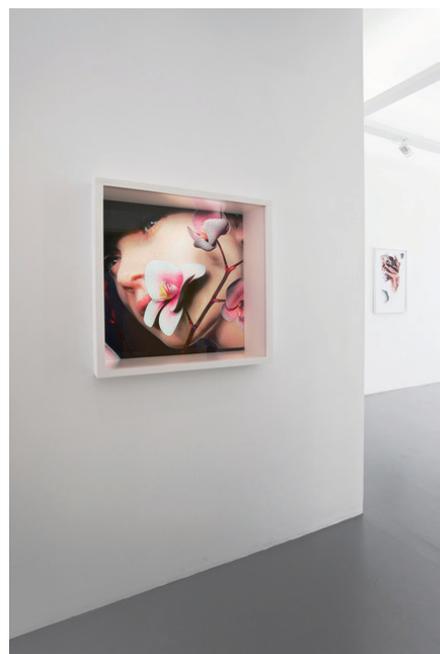
Cooper first made her name as part of Auto Italia South East, an artist-run space founded in south London that has, over time, evolved into an artist collective. During the eight years of its existence, Auto Italia's exhibitions, events, and projects have often been politically charged. Their conversational and performative works have examined issues around labor, creation, and experience in and outside of art production. Cooper's own pieces outside of Auto Italia also address some of those same themes: capitalism and commercialism, in particular.

Artsy Editorial, July 2015



Photo by Elliot Kennedy for Artsy.

Cooper isn't an artist working in a solitary garret with chaos and materials. "I like the difference between working as a solo artist and working within a collective. Auto has been quite important for me because it has been a space that has been about rethinking those conditions. You are constantly thinking: What are the possibilities? But also, what are the restraints?" she considers, sitting in the park outside the Auto Italia studio-cum-office in Bethnal Green. She and the rest of the collective moved here after working in a large exhibition space lent by property developers in Kings Cross. It's a context that lends itself well to contemplating contemporary making, production, and technology today.



Kate Cooper; "Care Work – Der Würfel," 2015. Courtesy Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin.

Neumeister Bar-Am

There is something very of the moment about Cooper's moving image works, which were on view earlier this summer at Neumeister Bar-Am's side space, Der Würfel, in Berlin and just debuted in Ellis King's group show "Cookie Gate" in Dublin. Her breakout exhibition was a 2014 solo show at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, in recognition of her winning the Schering Stiftung Art Award.

Her installation at KW, RIGGED, was based around a moving image piece playing with ideas about the body as a commercial good, the digital representation of the body, and the life and agency of the image in modern culture. Alongside her own involvement in the process of making, Cooper's work involves processes and collaborations with people working with digital images and film. There is no such thing as an artist working within a vacuum, she suggests. "I'm interested in labor practices within this digital imagery—it's almost like a complete collective practice," says Cooper. "I'm interested in the slippage between those labor practices and how that might become quite formalized or not so hidden."

RIGGED's digital aesthetic crossed over between art and the gloss of CGI commercialism. "I am completely fascinated by the images of desire within capitalism but also their violence," she explains. "What possibilities for new relationships to images and new forms of agency can we invent and produce? Who owns these images and who is given permission to use them—also, how are they related to ideas of class and gender?" Cooper notes the long history of women being used as a "digital prototype, the test card within digital imagery." The work itself was driven by an inquiry into "What position that body really inhabits? What are our connections with our bodies?"

Cooper's fascination with hyper-capitalist images came from a desire to understand if there was a possibility for them to take a critical position. Rather than just being images are drawn to, in Cooper's world, the glossy female digital body becomes something more complex. "Could they stand in for some of the labor we refuse to do? I like the idea that we can put these images to work, to be in control of these things, rather than them controlling us."



Photo by Elliot Kennedy for Artsy.

Neumeister Bar-Am

Her work, which has often taken the length of a TV commercial spot, draws on the aesthetics of PR campaigns and advertising. Beyond the history of art and artist collectives, an interesting and significant influence on her work is the structure behind fashion production. She references a documentary on designer Raf Simons, fascinated by how the designer's relationship with the (largely female) technicians connects to the way she produces her own work. "I'm always interested in how people work together to produce work. How am I working with these other artists? How are they influencing how I'm working? How am I influencing how they are working? I think the infrastructure of how fashion is produced is fascinating to me, how as a designer all your references are contained within a human body."

Good things are brewing for Cooper. She's in a two-person show curated by the Whitney's director of digital media, Sarah Hromack, at New York space K. (formerly known as P!). This September she will mount a solo presentation with Neumeister Bar-Am at ABC Berlin. With her years of experience working with installation and display, expect a naturally inventive approach to exhibitions where the human body and technology meet.



Portrait of Kate Cooper by Elliot Kennedy for Artsy.

—Francesca Gavin

KW Institute for Contemporary Art



Kate Cooper, *RIGGED*, 2014. Courtesy the Artist

Kate Cooper *RIGGED*

For her first institutional solo exhibition, awarded as part of the Schering Stiftung Art Award, this year's winner Kate Cooper presents a new video and photographic production, made specifically for KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin.

In *RIGGED*, Cooper utilizes the new possibilities granted by CGI techniques, commercial photography, and post-production to render and modify images of the body, reflecting both on the labor inherent in creating such images, and on the work these downloadable, ultra-realized body doubles now perform on our behalf.

Cooper is interested in the fictional spaces of universally understood advertising images, tests our experience of them and relationship to them, and thus openly the questions our conceptions of gender and labor they collectively generate. *RIGGED* explores new possible connections between bodies and images, and presents tensions between presence and invisibility. With these modes of parallel labor, our own bodies use a strategy of refusal; and camouflage becomes a survival technique.

RIGGED displays the human being itself as commercial goods: the billboard-sized figures, installed throughout the space, focus on the body as a place for communicating ideas, for recoding and reconfiguring new meanings. As the rendered images become disturbingly realistic, Cooper's doppelgangers surround the observer in their muted formations, and narrate their own illusionary potential, which is more permanent than flesh.

Ellen Blumenstein, chief curator of KW Institute for Contemporary Art: "With her flawless skin, her young body, and her symmetrical facial features, an ageless young woman moves through the artificial surfaces of her flat, digital space. This avatar is made for maximum productivity, her perfection is inconspicuous, and she takes care of everything in our place. A collection of social codes working on our behalf, she spares us from our social interactions and experiences our fears for us—a small sample of her skin has the power to fulfill our dream of eternal youth. So why does her repeating slogan 'Disappear Completely' end up sounding like no promise, but like a nightmarish threat?"

The Ernst Schering Foundation awards the Schering Stiftung Art Award every two years. The Award is endowed with a prize of 10,000 Euro, a solo exhibition at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, and a monographic catalogue. It honors international artists who may be considered as the most important newcomers in the last couple of years and who pursue an outstanding original artistic approach. By awarding this prize, the Ernst Schering Foundation seeks to support the career of outstanding artists, and through the cooperation with KW, to offer them a platform for presenting their works to an international art public.

The exhibition Kate Cooper: RIGGED. Schering Stiftung Art Award is a collaboration between the Ernst Schering Foundation and KW Institute for Contemporary Art.





discover

distaste

dystopia

disco

discussion

#artselfie

disimages

issues

Kate Cooper: hypercapitalism and the digital body

Artist and Liverpool native Kate Cooper's new exhibition Rigged at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin looks at the agency of the computer generated female within the glossy aesthetics of consumer capitalism. She chats with Jeppe Ugelvig about a feminism that encompasses digital bodies, the language of mass-advertising and a move beyond representation.



The work of British artist Kate Cooper inspires immediate physical and aesthetic attraction. A hybrid of consumer associations, ranging from the glossy iconography of the TV commercial and the sterility of video game graphics to the luminosity of the department store poster and the smell of freshly opened cosmetics, create a subconscious lure. Her use of CGI technology in her artistic practice surpasses a simple study of digital textures (think nostalgic glitch-making) to occupy a full-fleshed, hyperreal space, usually reserved to corporate giants in advertising or entertainment. Cooper was the winner of the Ernst Schering Foundation Art Award 2014, which granted her a solo show at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. Her show, *Rigged*, coincided with the spectacular Ryan Trecartin exhibition curated by Klaus Biesenbach and Ellen Blumenstein, and Berlin Art Week.



Cooper, a soft-spoken, impeccably dressed brunette originally from Liverpool, has been working mostly collaboratively for many years. She runs the collaborative art studio Auto Italia South East in London, which explores alternative forms of labor-structures within art practices. *Rigged* is one of her first large-scale solo projects. When I met her, she emphasized her passion about working collaboratively: “It brings a nice freedom – it means you can be a lot more ambitious, for example with scale and technology. I’m also very interested in the political dimensions of the labor involved in the actual construction of art works and projects. There’s a huge amount of work that goes into art projects; I’ve always been interested in these alternative models of working, and that’s what I try to do with Auto Italia as well; experimenting and trying out different forms of working.” The collaborative effort pans out in *Rigged*, a two story exhibition featuring delicate still-and-video portraits of computer-generated female models, jogging contemplatively to choral harmonies or showing off their shiny new dental braces. By CG models I don’t mean the pixelated scruffy kind: these are state-of-the-art fully-realized human beings, surrounded by the magic of virtual simulation and complete in their flawlessness (pores and hints of smile lines are visible). “This is the first time I’ve had a budget and framework to experiment more with technology, which has been very interesting,” Cooper elaborates. “In the past I’ve made works where I’ve shot things with real life models, followed by a heavy amount of post-production and CGI, but this time all images are entirely constructed. I’m interested in what that entails, the labor involved and the position of those images and what they mean in terms of representation.”

Through her choice of medium and installation, Cooper employs what she calls ‘the language of hypercapitalism.’ She presents her work as billboard-size prints on light boxes similar to those found in the beauty section of any department store. Rather than simply mocking or subverting, her usage of this polished aesthetic appears more as an occupation or redirection of capitalist mannerisms. “It’s very interesting just getting your hands dirty in finding your own agency within this glossy language, to be able to produce it yourself,” she asserts, “When working with this technology, I always feel there’s a kind of hacking element to it.”

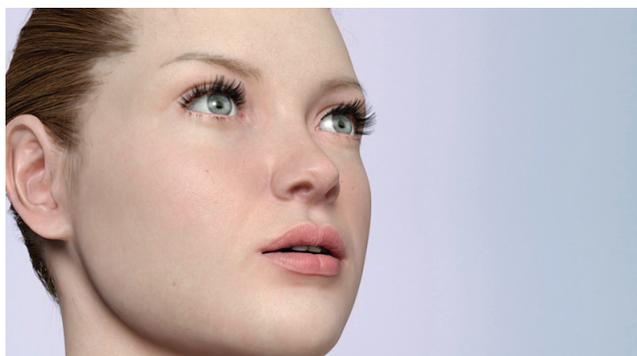


"I'm really interested in how [representation and image consumption] have kind of become more and more divorced from each other," she explains. Cooper's work expresses an ultimate devotion to and faith in the digitally constructed body, a dedication otherwise only seen in the work of artists who exist purely in virtual performance, such as the omnipresent Facebook-persona Laturbo Avedon. Her recent disengagement from 'the real image', (as compared to Cooper's previous work which although highly manipulated still contained some non-CG content) marks a subtle but crucial shift in the discussion on agency and labor within a digital space – surpassing representation, these bodies are now only representative of themselves.

Even the fetishization of the CG model's body alludes to the power of the post-representational female subject; the model has her own body with full potential action rather than being merely a representation of a body. She is a she, not an it. "For me, images are no longer representational in themselves," Cooper adds, "they perform another function, and I'm interested in exploring the possibilities of what that agency could be, what that could produce.

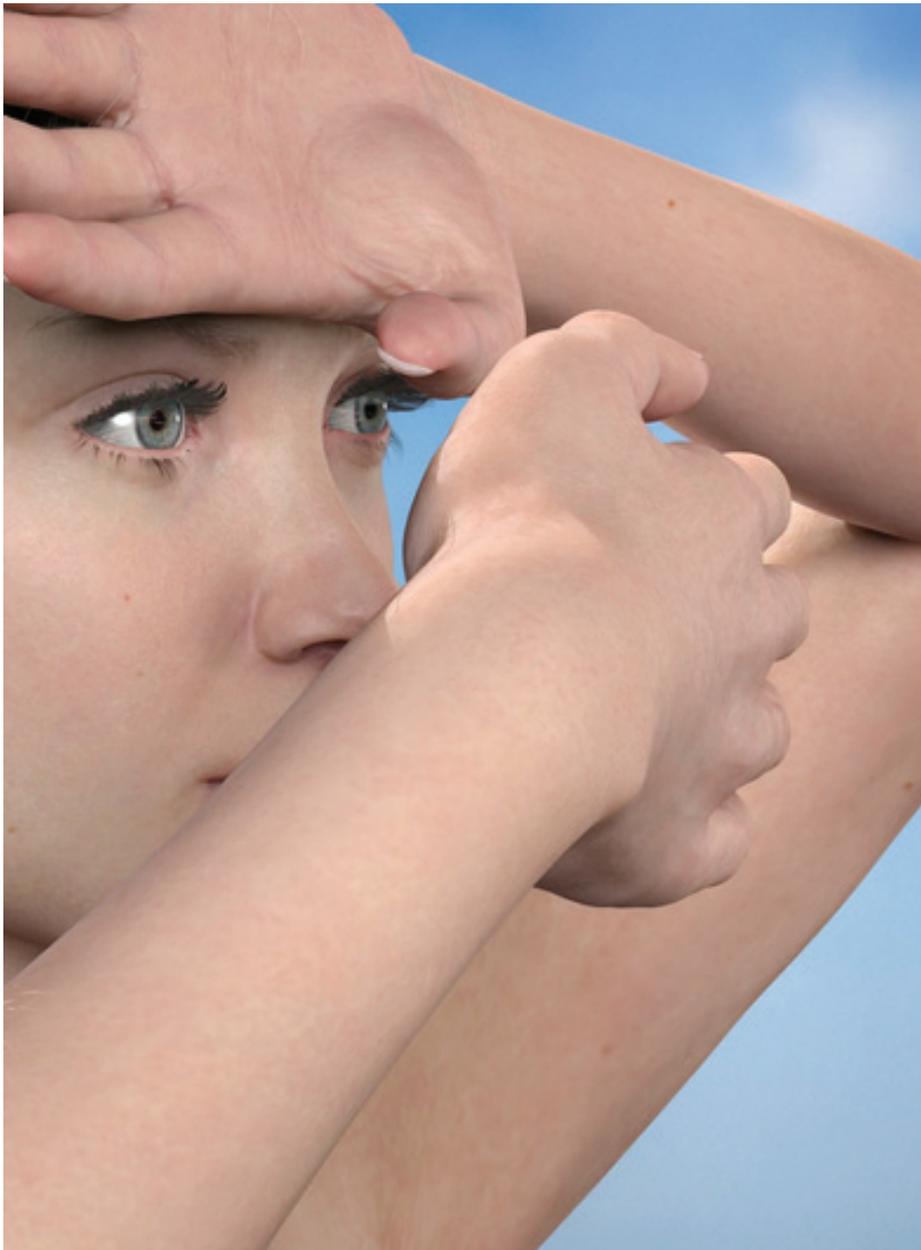
It's very exciting." By creating models (rather than images) Cooper insists that agency is central and becomes the politicized premise of the work itself.

As technology increasingly vivifies the virtual body, traditional points of feminist critique become difficult: what and/or whose body is it, and what exactly is being performed? "The image of women is constantly changing," Cooper says. "What is my relationship to these images and the way they're represented? It's about being agile as they are constantly shifting and performing. I believe it's not about identification but instead about how we participate in



Neumeister Bar-Am

these images.” This engagement with feminist discourse functions as an overarching ideology from process to subject matter. However, her approach is refreshingly constructive, suggesting a productive critique and utilization of the feminized language of mass advertising and objectification of the female (digital) body: “In all images, particularly of women, there’s a relationship to desire, and within that a real violence; especially within these CG images. Still, I feel like there must be a way to negotiate these worlds, explore their potential, and make them one’s own. It’s not about reclaiming the world or aesthetics of hypercapitalism, but about occupying or invading it. I find that an interesting proposition to myself as an artist. Maybe there’s a freedom in the things that are supposed to restrict us.”



Text by Jeppe Ugelvig
Images courtesy of Kate Cooper

Europe's 12 Best Exhibitions in 2014

Alexander Forbes and Coline Milliard, Wednesday, December 24, 2014

artnet News' European editors Alexander Forbes and Coline Milliard pick their favorite shows of 2014, presented in chronological order.



Kate Cooper, "Rigged" at KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin
Photo: Courtesy KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Kate Cooper

Kate Cooper, "Rigged" at KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin

KW returned to form as an instigator of cutting-edge contemporary art with this show of yet-gallery-less Kate Cooper. Best known for her collaborative London exhibition space, Auto Italia South East, the Liverpool native was awarded the Ernst Schering Foundation Prize this year and presented an uncanny installation of CGI images and animations at KW. Though in their very essence infinitely customizable beings, Cooper's models are presented in various processes of image-perfection—orthodonture, fitness, makeup—keenly suggesting that, rather than the end result, it's the consumption based process of self-betterment (and the constant socially-constructed flux of what "better" actually means) to which we're addicted. —AF

artnet, September 2014



art &
design

digital &
motion

aqnb

events

about



berlin art week highlights: marguerite humeau + kate cooper

reviews

video

transmedia



HD unreality.

by [Eva Folks](#) on 24/09/2014

Alone and in silence is the perfect way to see Marguerite Humeau's latest exhibition at Import Projects and I just got lucky, I guess, shuffling into the gallery as it closed and walking undisturbed through the whole brilliant spectacle. But what can words do to describe Humeau's Horizons? Language falls flat when passions soar, and awe was the only emotion I could concretely feel walking through the haunting three-room installation. All too often, the story behind an exhibition ends up more fascinating than the work itself, the two appearing to have little in common, as though the true artist was the person responsible for the press release. In Horizons, however, the work and the story weave around each other flawlessly, for once telling the same whimsical story.

In the far right of the gallery hangs a massive black shape, a vibrating fighter jet blown up to life size in black PVC rubber, suspended from the wall and looming diagonally across the room. Around the spaceship, a sound installation forms: a low, ominous hum that builds steadily and crashes ecstatically in unison with those filtering in from the next room. The fighter jet, the story tells us, is caught mid-flight in its fictional journey to Europa, the icy moon of Jupiter, and we catch up with it in the following room as an installation of an air cannon exploding black dust onto a crisp white wall simulates the jet's crash into the moon's surface.

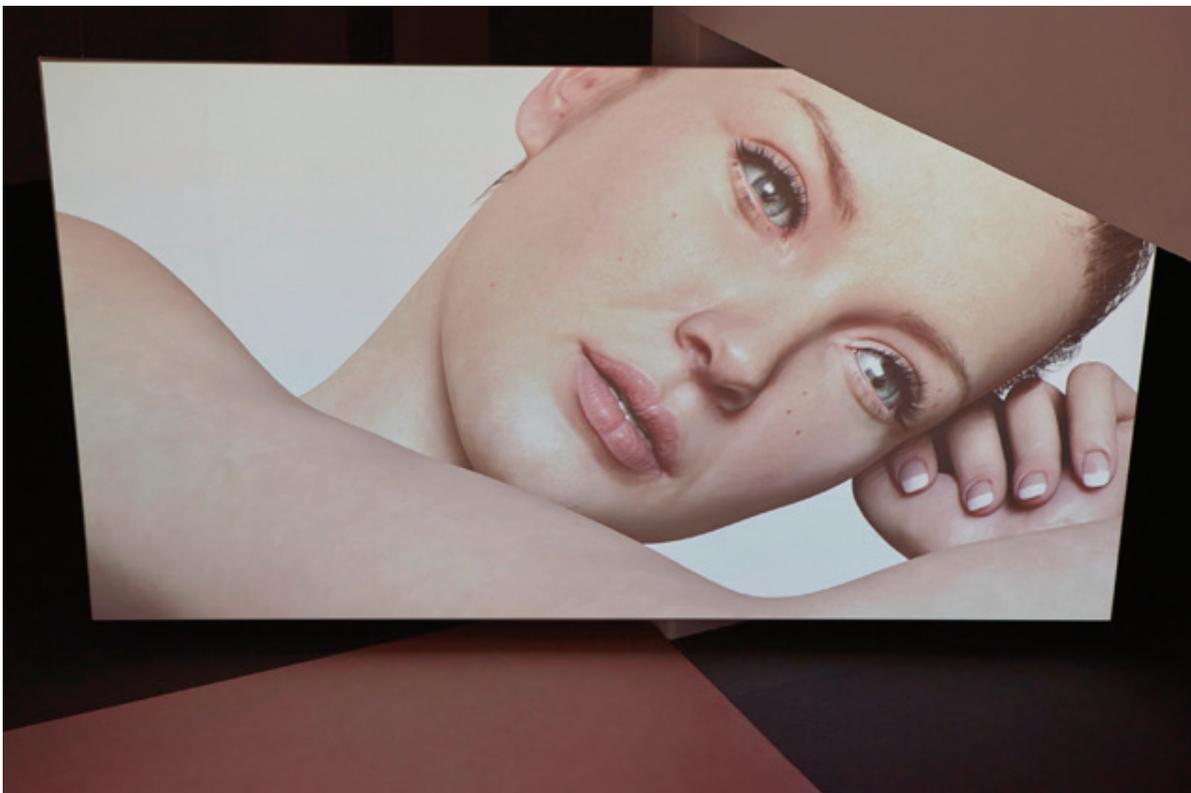
The execution of the pieces is impressive enough, the emptiness of the gallery made stark by the harrowing sounds that bounce off the walls with frenzied insistence, but it is in the story that the installations find their value. Two years ago, in the underwater volcanos found along the ice caps of Antarctica and thought to be the closest earthly equivalent to Europa's enigmatic climate, scientists discovered an unidentified species capable of surviving without light or oxygen, communicating only by a combination of sound, black powder, and light—the most alien-like creatures found to date. Humeau's journey in Horizons is not to the moons of Jupiter per se but to the outer edges of our imagination, to the star-eyed notion that we are not alone and never have been.

Neumeister Bar-Am

Having travelled to future dimensions in the far corners of the solar system, the last of Humeau's installations takes the viewer to primitive times with 'The Opera of Prehistoric Creatures'. Two large white sound-producing sculptures are fastened side by side, abstracted from concrete shape but evocative of the long-extinct entelodont or "hell pig" and the ancient mammoth. With the help of palaeontologists, zoologists, surgeons and, among others, engineers, their imagined cries are re-constructed from old fossils, using everything from windpipes and synthetic larynges to AI systems and resonance cavities to give voice to these "frankenstinian sonic agents". Combined with the grating trinkle of Humeau's 'Angelic Organ', reconstructed from an 18th-century instrument banned due to its rumoured ability to drive listeners insane and marking the entrance to the gallery, the impression of Horizons is captivating, maddening. It is both senseless and completely coherent, a not-too-gentle push into the shadows of imagination and towards a knowledge generated only "through the impossibility of reaching the object of investigation".

Perhaps it says something about me that I could have stayed for hours in Humeau's dark, imagined universe but when confronted with Kate Cooper's CGI-assisted show, RIGGED, at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, I wanted only to flee. Nothing is more discomfiting in our modern age than high-definition reality.

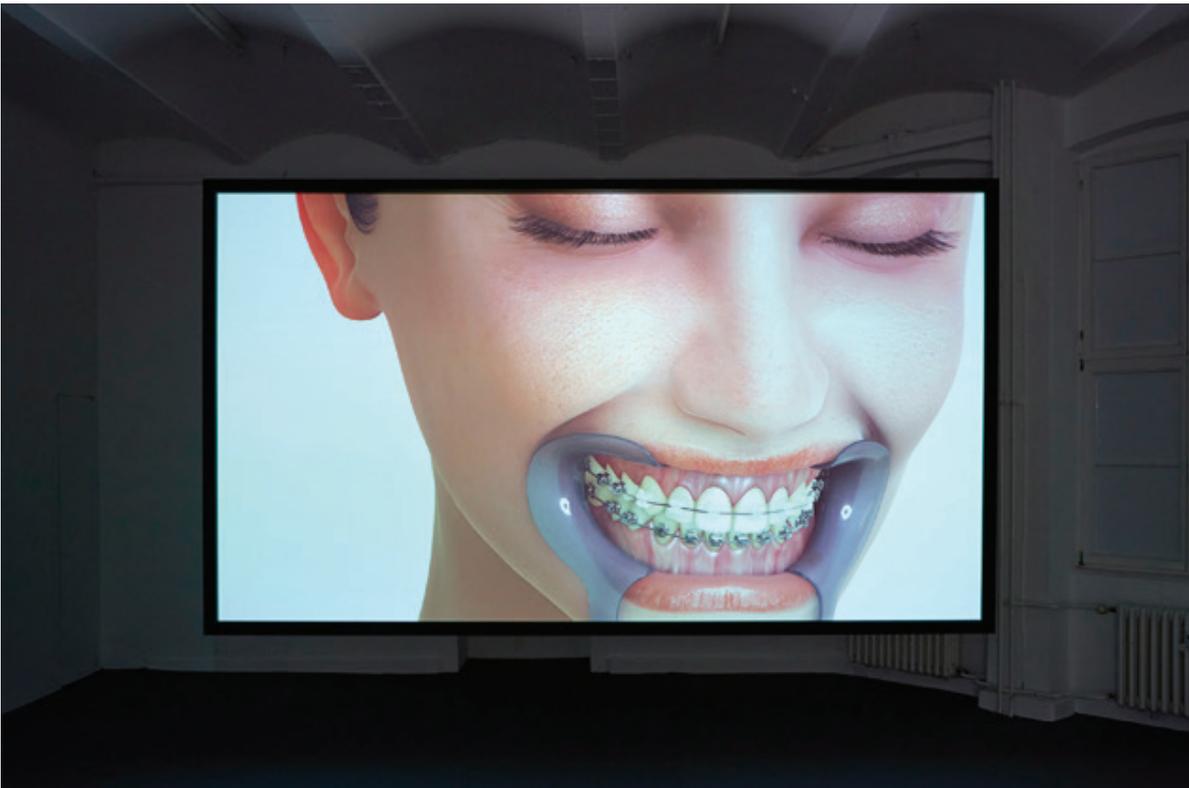
Like Humeau, who won the Berlin Art Week Jury Choice award for Horizons, Cooper's two-storey exhibition won her this year's acclaimed Schering Stiftung Art Award. Standing in front of a large screen on to which RIGGED's only video work is projected, I can understand why, even if I don't much enjoy what I'm looking at. A woman's body, slipping in and out of HD realism, is seen from various angles, performing various tasks. She runs. She lies. She stares at the camera with dead eyes enhanced to flicker. In photographic works displayed on the higher connecting floor, she is seen exposing her teeth, around which silver braces and a grey plastic mouthguard are fastened. Despite the visible discomfort, her mouth rests in a soft smile.



Kate Cooper, RIGGED (2014). Installation view. Photo by Theo Cook. Courtesy the artist.

Neumeister Bar-Am

The aesthetic of the show is repulsive to anyone who, like me, was raised in the age of high resolution. Why else would we filter every photo we take to show wear that was never really there? Looking at the fictional CGI-perfected woman, bought as a stock image by Cooper online and derived from no living human body, the commodification of the self as a reality of the modern world is unavoidable, especially if that self is a woman's self. Her body, pore-less and hairless and smoothed of all error, is not ours, does not resemble ours, but is nevertheless meant to represent our own flawed bodies, implicitly widening the gap between the reality of our experience and its latent expectation. The labour of this visual creation is the Auto Italia co-founder's locus – the human labour inherent in the making of an animated character, but also the labour it relieves humans of as “expensive yet unpaid figures [begin] performing on our behalf” and purely fictional characters start to take on the roles of living ones. But walking through the dark exhibition room aglow with the impossible skin of an imagined body, all I can read in all this is the labour of being a woman. It is a woman, after all, whose body is used to sell everything from automobiles to lettuce and a woman who became the unattainable and idealized star of Spike Jonze's latest film *Her*, which tells you a lot if you really think about it. It's her body around which laws created by corpulent white men are based, this prescribed prison that artist Hannah Black rebels against in her video, 'My Bodies'. Though we can pretend that in this near-future, the idealized, commodified self could easily have been a man, Cooper's show, almost despite itself, seems implicitly to answer: it only ever could have been a woman. **



Kate Cooper, RIGGED (2014). Installation view. Photo by Theo Cook. Courtesy the artist.

Berlin Art Week 2104 ran at various art spaces and galleries in the German capital from September 16 to September 21.

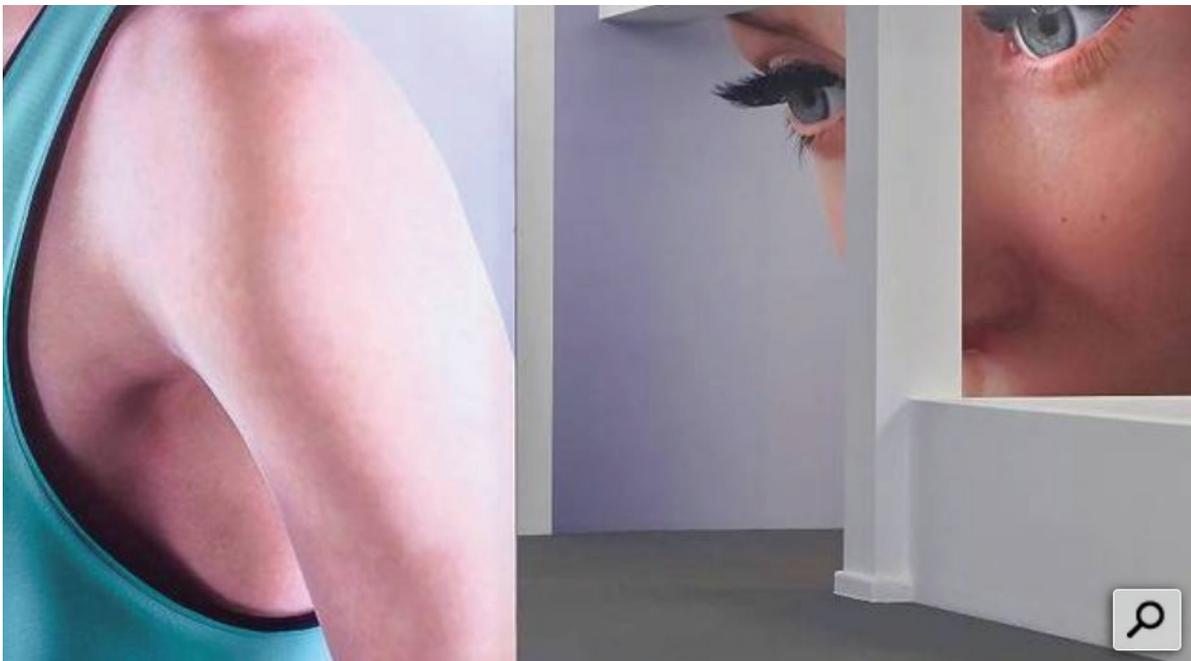
DER TAGESSPIEGEL



Kate Cooper und Ryan Trecartin bei der Art Week

Der errechnete Körper

von Anna Pataczek



Vollkommene Wesen: Die britische Künstlerin Kate Cooper hat weibliche Avatare erschaffen. - FOTO: THEO COOK/COURTESY KATE COOPER

Die Kunst-Werke zeigen zur Berliner Art Week die Jungstars Kate Cooper und Ryan Trecartin, mit einer beängstigenden Dolby-Surround-Klangwelt und überlebensgroßen weiblichen Avatare, die aus dem Computer stammen.

KW, das steht für Kunst-Werke. Es könnte zurzeit aber auch die Abkürzung für Künstliche Werke sein. Denn was das Ausstellungshaus für Zeitgenössisches in der Auguststraße zur Art Week mit Ryan Trecartin und Kate Cooper bietet, ist jeglicher Realität enthoben, unnatürlich und überdreht. Beide Künstler bekommen hier ihren ersten institutionellen Auftritt in Deutschland.

Trecartin, 1981 in Texas geboren, nutzt dazu die ganz große Bühne. Das Erdgeschoss ist kaum mehr wiederzuerkennen. Eine düstere, schachtelige Innenarchitektur hat er einbauen lassen, mit kleinen Kammern, die vom Fußboden über die Wände mit einem dunkelgrünen Velours-Teppich ausgekleidet sind.

Zunächst ist es ein Labyrinth der Töne, denn zu sehen bekommt der Besucher erst einmal nichts. In allen Räumen stehen wuchtige Massagesessel, über ein Dolby-Surround-System werden vielschichtige Tonspuren eingespielt, quietschende Stimmen und Geschrei sind auszumachen, Lärm, manchmal auch Fetzen eines beatlastigen Rhythmus.

Trecartin interessiert sich für skulpturale Gestaltung von Klang

Die Bässe übertragen sich direkt auf die Sitze, sie wummern unangenehm beklemmend im Körper. Je weiter man von den ersten Kammern zum Kern der Arbeit vordringt, desto mehr Klangräume drängen auf einen ein und überschneiden sich. Trecartin interessiert sich für die skulpturale Gestaltung von Klang. Hier wird deutlich, was er damit meint. Dann wird aus dem Kopfkino echtes Kino. Im Hauptraum eröffnet sich ein Zuschauerparkett mit Campingstühlen und Liegen. Sechs Leinwände sind vor, hinter und über den Köpfen angebracht. Passend zur Mehrkanal-Soundinstallation laufen verschiedene handlungsfreie Videos parallel ab.

Junge Männer und Frauen, Mitglieder eines Künstlerkollektivs um Trecartin, sind in Bad-Taste-Kostüme geschlüpft. Sie haben schmutzige Gesichter und tragen Plastikperücken. Wie aufgedrehte Duracell-Häschen laufen sie durch einen Freimaurer-Tempel in Los Angeles, der aber eher den spröden Charme eines Vereinsheims verströmt. Für die androgynen Protagonisten scheint er eine Art Abenteuerspielplatz zu sein, immer wieder stecken sie verschwörerisch die Köpfe zusammen, schauen affektiert direkt in die Kamera. Es wird hektisch gestikuliert, die Handkamera wackelt, passend zu den schnellen Schnitten. Es ist, als habe Trecartin zusammen mit seiner künstlerischen Partnerin Lizzy Fitch Musik-Videos, Youtube-Filmchen und Computerspiel-Animationen einmal durch den virtuellen Fleischwolf gedreht. Reine Überforderung.

Die Installation nervt gewaltig

Für diese radikale Ästhetik ist Trecartin schon seit einigen Jahren als Stimme der Digital-Native-Generation schwer angesagt. Am Moma PS1 in New York war er bereits zu Gast, dessen Leiter Klaus Biesenbach hat ihn zusammen mit der KW-Kuratorin Ellen Blumenstein nun auch nach Berlin gebracht. Die Installation ist beeindruckend. Sie nervt gewaltig. Und am liebsten möchte man schnell wieder hinaus. Surfen im Internet kann manchmal auch schnell zu viel werden. Dann brummt der Kopf.