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Exhibition
31/10 – 28/11

FRANCIS ALÿS

**PIERRE
BISMUTH**

**MARIO GARCIA
TORRES**

**JOACHIM
KOESTER**

**TRIS
VONNA-
MICHELL**

Jan Mot
Rue de la Régence /
Regentschapsstraat 67
1000 Brussels, Belgium

History Can Wait (Part 3)

By
Antony Hudek

ANTWERP, OCT. 21 - What follows is an excerpt of a conversation with Berlin-based artist Megan Francis Sullivan, which took place on 9 and 10 October 2015 at Objectif Exhibitions in Antwerp. The exchange constitutes the third in a series of five texts for *Newspaper Jan Mot* devoted to the possibility of queer historiographies of contemporary art that resist the auto-biographical 'survivor' narrative of art before and after AIDS. Sullivan's appropriations, it seems to me, offer one such possibility, allowing her

to sample and connect histories and biographies without falling into the traps of identity reclamation and celebration.

Antony Hudek

The first question I would have concerns the place of the historical in your work – in particular in your Rosa Bonheur piece [*Untitled (Rosa Bonheur)/Version 2*, 2015] – and a certain 'queer sensitivity' that is mentioned in the press release for your exhibition. How does Rosa Bonheur's biography operate in the work bearing her name?

Megan Francis Sullivan

The work is interesting to me because of the layers of one's own perception. When I first discovered Rosa Bonheur's *The Horse Fair* [1852–55] as a kid, I was amazed by its subject matter – an oversized scene of horses. In German you could say that I experienced *Schwärmerei*. I was fascinated by its spectacle, without knowing what it is to be an artist. About five years ago I thought of this painting again, because of its total flamboyance of course – the enormous frothing horses – and because it is by a woman artist, Rosa Bonheur, on display in one of the main rooms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As a kid, the work meant something for that person that I was at that time; later, as an artist, realising that Rosa Bonheur was a woman was an amazing discovery. I always knew it was by 'Rosa Bonheur', but it was only in my mid to late thirties that her gender somehow registered.

There's another side of the story that interests me, which is that this is her masterpiece. She was in her early thirties when she made it, and it was a huge success at the time. After that she stopped painting large-scale works while continuing to make animal portraits, and went to live with a woman lover in a chateau near Paris, where she was said to

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Exhibition
05/12 – 30/01

Opening
05/12
2 – 6.30pm

**TRIS
VONNA-
MICHELL**

Jan Mot
Rue de la Régence /
Regentschapsstraat 67
1000 Brussels, Belgium

Did not work too far from home – different
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Megan Francis Sullivan, *Untitled (Rosa Bonheur)/Version 2*, 2015, and (behind the column), *Dog (for Lutz Bacher)*, 2015. (Installation view, *Megan Francis Sullivan: An Anticipated Retrospective*, Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp, 11 September–31 October 2015. Photo: Christine Clinckx.)

have a menagerie with lions, deer and other animals. What interests me is her refusal to follow in the footsteps of the great ‘masters’ of the time, using her commercial success as an artist to create an exquisite existence, a totally non-normative way of living or being. Dore Ashton wrote really well about her life, and about the construct of her life – such as the necessity for her to get police permission to wear pants. It’s a fantasy, since I don’t have any idea about her real life, but one I’m taken by, way out of the league.

AH

I can see how the historical reality behind the Rosa Bonheur painting fades from it, leaving behind another conception of history, made up of queer histories that have an element of fantasy, or drag. Is this the same kind of operation at work in your Tom Burr piece [*The J-Board*, 2014]?

MFS

The Tom Burr has another element, which is a light parody. I really like many aspects of Tom Burr’s work, and also minimalism as a genre – I really like it, but it’s also a parody to me, because of the absurdity of its construction, its discourse. Tom Burr often uses autobiographical elements in a very straight way, where he’ll have handsome men – I don’t know if you’re familiar with the one with Jim Morrison, or brutalist architecture from Connecticut, where he grew up. To me, and it’s maybe gender-contingent, I’ve never felt that ownership over my own biography is straightforward, or something to be acknowledged. It has something to do with

being suburban – who cares about a suburban girl? I’ve always found it completely unimaginable to own one’s own desires and biography in a straight way. To me it would always be a sort of parody, and yet I like the idea of taking a ‘gay identity’ seriously.

AH

So in the Tom Burr there would be at least two historical layers, maybe three. There’s the minimalist discourse, which Burr is already parodying as a straight construction, referencing someone like Donald Judd, who’s so fantastically hetero-male that he reaches a point of queerness, like Rosa Bonheur, going out into the Texas wilderness. Burr then adds his own layer of serious appropriation. But here minimalism is used to gain a sense of gravitas...

MFS

... yes, or pathos. And then there’s another layer, which are the texts written about Burr, by people like Sabeth Buchman and Florence Derieux. I was shocked because these writers participate in this gravitas, by backing up the story of ‘Tom Burr’, but they rather erase themselves as authors. *The J-Board* was a way for me to appropriate ‘Tom Burr’, because I think appropriation is often a form of fandom – I want to have that object, I want to have it in the room – but then the backside is moving from ‘I’ to ‘J’, by playing with grammar and the construction of meaning.

AH

Could there be a kind methodology here, a triple appropriation that keeps all the ele-

ments you describe – the historical reference, the object and the discourse around it – in play? But what could still be missing, and this may be the charm of appropriation, is as you say the elimination of the last appropriator. You just can’t self-appropriate. That’s why I like the story behind your Lutz Bacher piece [*Dog (for Lutz Bacher)*, 2015]: you searched your name on Google Images, and there’s an image by another artist, Lutz Bacher, which interrupts the flow of your own. You then remake it in such a way that it becomes a similar yet completely different work. This isn’t so far from the artist inserting his or her self-portrait in a painting of a historical event.

MFS

That’s what so funny about the Rosa Bonheur, because she only depicted men at the horse market, but she’s rumoured to be the non-descript figure in the middle. So when I copied the painting I felt as if I found her again a few times in the crowd. Even in that painting there is a kind of subterfuge going on, as well as appropriation, because she was quoting works like Delacroix’s sketches – even the horse’s ass has been identified as a quotation. Of course, Cézanne also made numerous copies of his bathers.

Someone once wrote about my Cézanne works [such as *Les Baigneurs (inverted)*, 2015] that they represented a feminist take on appropriation. I found that absurd – like calling someone a feminist bus driver. The works I was doing around 2010, when I was using gay men’s magazines, were quite threatening to my gallerist in New York and some other people. For example, I really like Richard Hawkins, so why couldn’t he be my role model? At the time I was genuinely interested to find out if I could be Richard Hawkins – or him as a genre. But it just wasn’t acceptable, for some externalized conditions of subjectivity, which was interesting, but also hard for me to deal with. It’s not about gender only – it could be any borders or implied identities, which one isn’t able to transcend. This might tie into the homo-normativity we were talking about earlier. To be called a feminist is to be legitimised, just as getting married as a gay person can seem normal. But I’m not normal. What complicates appropriation is that it’s a genuine interest on my part. It can be an attempt to get close to something, to act something out, and you can act out in so many different ways.

Note: A larger version of this interview will soon be available at www.janmot.com



BRUSSELS, OCT 15 - The gallery is happy to announce it started to represent **Francis Alÿs** (Antwerp, *1959, living in Mexico City). A major exhibition of his work will soon open at MALBA in Buenos Aires (06/11 – 15/02). Alÿs is currently participating in the 14th Istanbul Biennial (until 26/11) with a new installation including a video work entitled *The Silence of Ani*, 2015 (video, black and white, sound, 13 min, 20 sec, still). The video can also be viewed online: <https://vimeo.com/141804238>

Agenda

Francis Alÿs

Collecting for Tomorrow: new works at Museion, Museion, Bolzano (IT), 21/03 - 10/01; *Saltwater*, 14th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, 05/09 - 01/11; *The Gap: Selected Abstract Art from Belgium*, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London, 09/09 - 06/12; *2050. A Brief History of the Future*, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 11/09 - 24/01; *Drawing. The Bottom Line*, SMAK, Ghent (BE), 10/10 - 31/01; *Story of Negotiations*, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, 06/11 - 15/02 (solo); *Group show*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 31/10 - 28/11

Sven Augustijnen

European Ghosts, Mu.ZEE, Oostende (BE), 04/07 - 03/01; *Art in the Age of Asymmetrical Warfare*, Witte de With, Rotterdam (NL), 10/09 - 03/01; *(On) Voltlood/VerledenTijd*, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leuven (BE), 15/10 - 06/12

Pierre Bismuth

Maurizio Nannucci Top Hundred, Museion, Bolzano (IT), 18/09 - 07/01; *Expeditie land art*, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort (NL), 19/09 - 03/01; *Group Show*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 31/10 - 28/11; *Walkers: Hollywood Afterlives in Art & Artifact*, Museum of the Moving Image, 07/11 - 10/04

Manon de Boer

Music for Museums, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 17/09 - 29/11; *Project 35: The Last Act*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art Moscow (RU), 10/08 - 31/01; *Tabakalera*, San Sebastián (ES), 11/09 - 03/01; *Panorama 17*, Fresnoy, Tourcoign (FR), 18/09 - 12/12; *Drawing. The Bottom Line*, SMAK, Ghent (BE), 10/10 - 31/01; *William Forsythe*, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 20/11 - 21/02

Rineke Dijkstra

... and there was time, Visual Arts Center Foundation Helga de Alvear, Caceres (ES), 25/04 - 31/01; *Picasso.mania*, Grand Palais, Galeries nationales, Paris (FR), 07/10 - 29/02; *¿La vida era esto?, Progreso, libertad, auto realización*, DA2, Salamanca (ES), 08/10 - 31/01; *Rineke Dijkstra*, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York (US), 19/10 - 19/12 (solo); *Mother of the Year: Between Empowerment and Crisis: Images of Motherhood from 1900 to Today*, LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz (AT), 23/10 - 21/01

In Brief

On the occasion of the upcoming 100th issue of the gallery's newspaper a special supplement will be made, entitled *Time Two*. It will reproduce a complete list of all the exhibitions, art fairs, screenings, performances, lectures, book presentations, concerts, etc. which the gallery has organized or participated in since February 2004. The activities prior to that date were featured in the first *Time*, published as a supplement to the newspaper issue 39 in October 2003.

Mario Garcia Torres

"Poor Art" – Rich Legacy, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo, 13/03 - 28/02; *Collecting for Tomorrow: New Works at Museion*, Museion, Bolzano (IT), 21/03 - 10/01; *Expediitie land art*, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort (NL), 19/09 - 03/01; *Where The Day Begins*, LaM - Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, Villeneuve d'Ascq (FR), 02/10 - 10/01; *Group Show*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 31/10 - 28/11; *Seth Siegelau: Beyond Conceptual Art*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (NL), 12/12 - 17/04

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

1887-2058, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 23/09 - 01/02 (solo)

Douglas Gordon

A Brief History of Humankind. From the Collections of The Israel Museum, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 01/05 - 26/12; *Really?*, Arario Museum, Seoul, 01/09 - 28/02; *Take me (I'm yours)*, Monnaie de Paris, 06/09 - 08/11; *Brave New World*, DOX Prague, 11/09 - 25/01; *What We Call Love - From Surrealism to Now*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 12/09 - 07/02; *Letztes Jahr in Marienbad. Ein Film als Kunstwerk*, Kunsthalle Bremen (DE), 14/11 - 13/03

Joachim Koester

Fundação Eugénio de Almeida, Evora (PT), 19/09 - 09/01 (solo); *See (re) watch. Uses and representations of the inexplicable*, MUSAC, León (ES), 19/09 - 10/01; *Group Show*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 31/10 - 28/11; *Blueproject Foundation*, Barcelona (ES), 06/11 - 30/11 (solo)

David Lamelas

Eppur si muove (Et pourtant elle tourne), Mudam, Luxembourg, 09/07 - 17/01; *Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960–1980*, Museum of Modern Art, New York City (US), 05/09 - 03/01; *Mon Amour (y guerra)*, Ignacio Liprandi Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires, 15/10 - 15/11 (solo); *Looking at Tomorrow: Light and Language from The Panza Collection, 1967–1990*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (US), 24/10 - 07/02; *Seth Siegelau: Beyond Conceptual Art*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 12/12 - 17/04

Sharon Lockhart

Selections from MOCA's Permanent Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (US), 15/08 - 30/04; *Relationships and Representation: Perspectives on Social Justice Work*, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis (US), 11/09 - 04/01; *6th*

Fotofestival Mannheim-Ludwigshafen-Heidelberg: [7.1] High-Tech, Logistics & Migration, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen (DE), 18/09 - 15/11; *neugerriemschneider*, Berlin, 13/11 - 20/12 (solo); Gladstone Gallery, New York City (US), 11/12 - 23/01 (solo)

Tino Sehgal

A year at the Stedelijk: Tino Sehgal, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 01/01 - 31/12 (solo)

Philippe Thomas

Off Cardinal Points, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin, 26/11-

Tris Vonna-Michell

A Story within A Story, Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Göteborg (SE), 12/09 - 22/11; *Group Show*, Jan Mot, Brussels, 31/10 - 28/11; *No Song to Sing*, Adn_Platform, Barcelona (ES), 21/11 - 12/03; Jan Mot, Brussels, 05/12 - 30/01 (solo)

Ian Wilson

Hotel Theory, REDCAT, Los Angeles (US), 03/10 - 20/12; *A Fragile But Marvelous Life*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (US), 20/11 - 31/01; *Daniel Buren. A Fresco*, Bozar, Brussels, 26/02 - 29/05

Colophon

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