

I LOVE
IN THE
MARCHES

The Politics of Fertility

Curated by Malkit Shoshan
10.28-12.20.2019
Druker Design Gallery

With artworks and projects by
Atelier Van Lieshout, Yael Bartana,
Lori Brown, Desirée Dolron, FAST,
Rebecca Gomperts, Bernie Krause,
Tabita Rezaire, and Women on
Waves among others



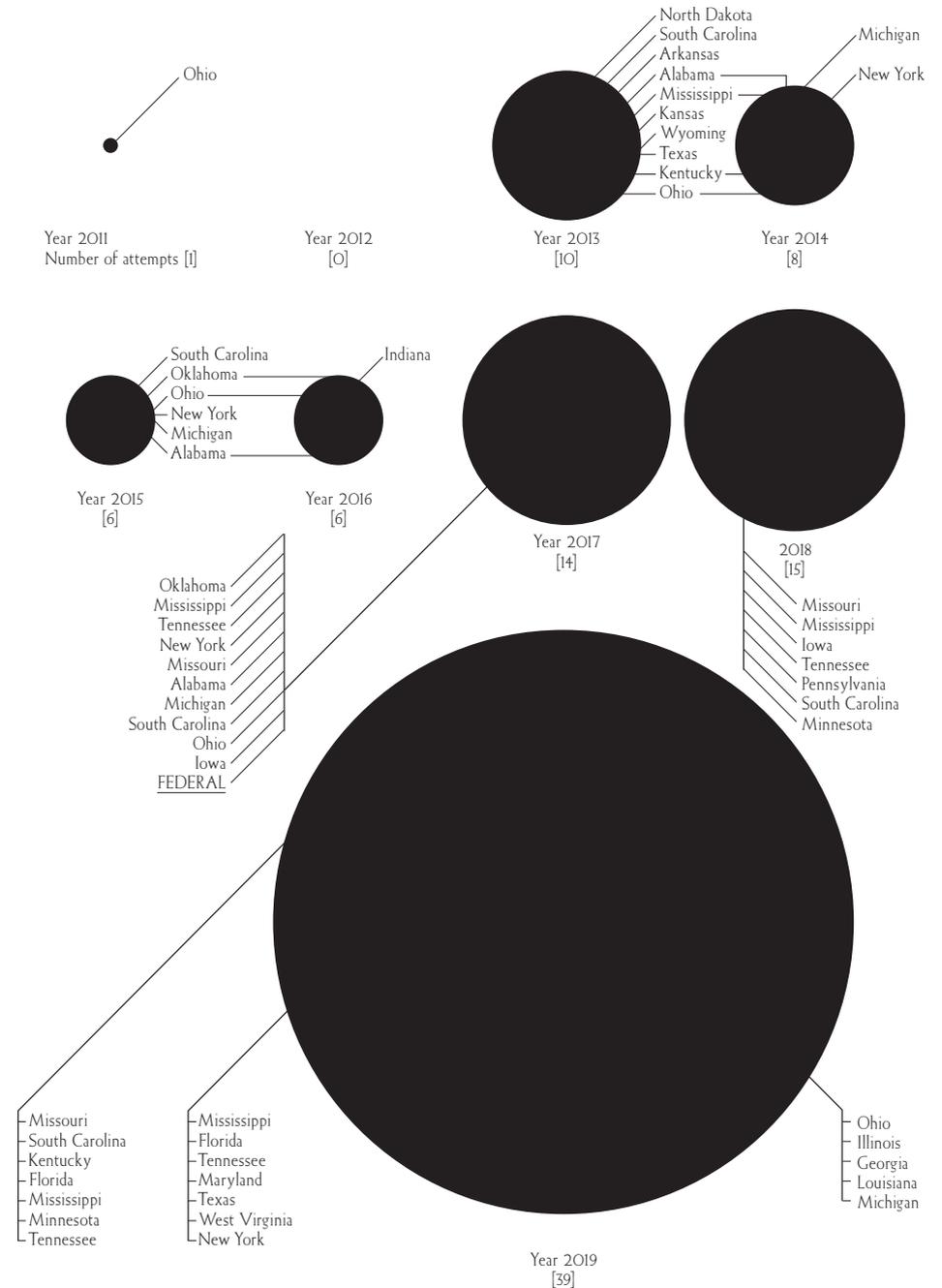
Harvard University
Graduate School of Design

Love in a Mist: The Politics of Fertility explores several evolving narratives on the spaces and politics of fertility, triggered by the “heartbeat bill”, which recently passed into law in states such as Mississippi, Kentucky, and Georgia to criminalize abortions from as early as six weeks into pregnancy.

The exhibition explores society’s quest to control women and nature, and the resulting environmental degradation. It brings together issues such as the historical use of synthetic hormones in women’s bodies; measures to super-size farmed animals and domesticate plants; and techniques to accelerate fertility and extract natural resources.

From the treatment of women’s bodies to the exploitative human relationship with nature, Love in a Mist examines spaces of fertility including abortion clinics, artificial wombs, court rooms, farmed landscapes, and swamps, as extrapolated from diverse accounts and imaginaries by scholars, activists, legislators, ecologists, biologists, artists, and designers.

Heartbeat Bans Attempt to Outlaw Abortions*



*See Reproductive Rights greenhouse for more information

Excerpt 1: Reproductive Rights

From antiquity until the Renaissance, women cultivated a relationship with the natural world. The intimate knowledge of plants, medicinal herbs in particular, was passed down to enable future generations of women “to regulate fertility” and “function with some measure of independence in respect to reproduction” (John M. Riddle). From the thirteenth century on, however, women’s control over their bodies and reproductive knowledge has been increasingly criminalized. Women have been punished and terrorized, their bodies burned, and their teachings obliterated through church-led inquisitions and in civil courts. The pursuit to govern reproductive know-how and rights with impunity is an attack on practices of care, women’s rights, health, socio-economic freedom, and on knowledge itself.

In the United States today, new compounded efforts by pro-life activists to criminalize abortions and prevent women from having access to reproductive health care are being backed by the federal government and legislators. In 2011, there was one attempt to outlaw abortions in Ohio; in 2019, there were 39—including moves to pass the heartbeat bill in Missouri, South Carolina, Kentucky, Florida, Mississippi, Minnesota, Tennessee, Maryland, Texas, West Virginia, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Georgia, Louisiana, and Michigan.

For some foundation, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 2542 in 1969, proclaiming the Declaration on Social Progress and Human Rights, which states:

“All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so; the responsibility of couples and individuals in the exercise of this right takes into account the needs of their living and future children, and their responsibilities toward the community.”

In 1973, US Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* affirmed that access to safe and legal abortion is a constitutional right.

While the pro-life movement promotes the heartbeat bill, the Trump administration has nominated over 150 conservative federal judges and two Supreme Court justices, gaining further support for these measures. And as of March 4th, 2020, Title X, which has provided federal funding for family planning and women’s health clinics throughout the country since 1970, will be under “Gag Rule”, effectively curtailing aid to women:

“Clinics that receive funds from the federal family-planning grant program Title X will no longer be able to perform abortions in the same space where they see other patients. Abortion and other health-care services will be required to be physically and financially separate entities. Title X participants will also no longer be able to refer patients to abortion providers, though they can mention abortion to their patients.” (Planned Parenthood report)

The intrinsic connection between spatial design and human rights reconfigures the spatial typology of women’s health and family planning clinics, the report continues: “about 20 percent of Title X providers would potentially have to renovate their clinics to meet the new guidelines... It will likely cost each of these providers \$20,000 to \$40,000 to come into compliance with the physical-separation element of the new rule.”

Excerpt 2: Accelerated Growth

During and after the world wars, hormones and fertilizers were being developed to increase reproduction of resources and accelerate growth in the natural world. Diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic form of the hormone estrogen—important to reproduction especially in women—was discovered in 1938. Just a few years later doctors began prescribing it to pregnant women as a dietary supplement that could prevent pregnancy-related complications including miscarriage and premature labor. In 1947, Harvard University physician and biochemist George Smith and endocrinologist Olive Smith published studies linking the use of DES in high

doses to miscarriage prevention. Their studies were used by drug company representatives to convince doctors to prescribe DES to pregnant women (DES Action USA).

In the agricultural world, DES was used as a growth hormone to improve the ratio of feed to desired weight in livestock. Three decades on, however, empirical studies linked the hormone directly to increased breast cancer among the over 4.8 million women prescribed DES, cervical and vaginal cancer in their daughters, and congenital disabilities and deformation in their children generally. Its use in intensive livestock farming gradually led to the contamination of land, water, plants, and consequently also other living species (Paola Ebron and Anna Tsing). In 1971, the FDA issued a Drug Bulletin to physicians, stating that DES is contra-indicated for use in pregnant women. The FDA did not ban DES, but only urged doctors to stop prescribing it for their pregnant patients (DES Action USA).

Excerpt 3: Extinction

On May 6th, 2019, the UN released a report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, warning that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history. The pace of species extinction is accelerating, gravely impacting people across the world. The report emphasizes the need to improve and strengthen practices of care between humans and the natural world by recognizing the positive contributions of women, and indigenous communities in particular, to nurturing human relations with the environment and to regenerative sustainability. It recommends incorporating indigenous wisdom, values, and technology into conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of land and resources, as well as including indigenous peoples, women, and local communities in environmental governance.

Excerpt 4: Compost

The final part of the exhibition is a homage to Donna Haraway’s “Children of Compost” fabulation and her plea to reimagine a different relation between humans, the Earth, and other living entities. The shared fate of human and non-human life on Earth in this time of environmental destruction and social injustice requires joining forces across disciplines, old wisdom and contemporary knowledge, cultures and species, to decenter the human and reimagine symbiotic living and sustainable and equitable futures.

The exhibition *Love in a Mist: The Politics of Fertility* is installed inside four consecutive greenhouse structures, at turns exposed and covered by mesh textile. Each greenhouse hosts a set of artworks. Together, they extrapolate multiple narratives that can be read as “snapshots”, capturing brief episodes in the history of the politics and spaces of fertility from Reproductive Rights to Accelerated Growth, and Extinction to Compost.

The Reproductive Rights structure houses Women on Waves’ mobile treatment room, which provides access to safe abortions at sea, and a campaign with its online sister organization Women on Web that flies drones with abortion pills from women in one country to women in another. The inclusion of Diana Whitten’s film provides an engaging history of their work. Next, Lori Brown’s “Don’t Mess with Texas” considers the state’s vehement antiabortion stance in an essay and maps. Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST) underscores the extent of this condition throughout the United States in archival material about violence against abortion clinics, reproductive rights legislation, and ancient abortifacient potions. Displayed as a series of broadsheet-sized tabloids, the collection is accompanied by an illustration of how the recent “heartbeat bill”—criminalizing abortions from as early as six weeks into pregnancy—has spread across the country.

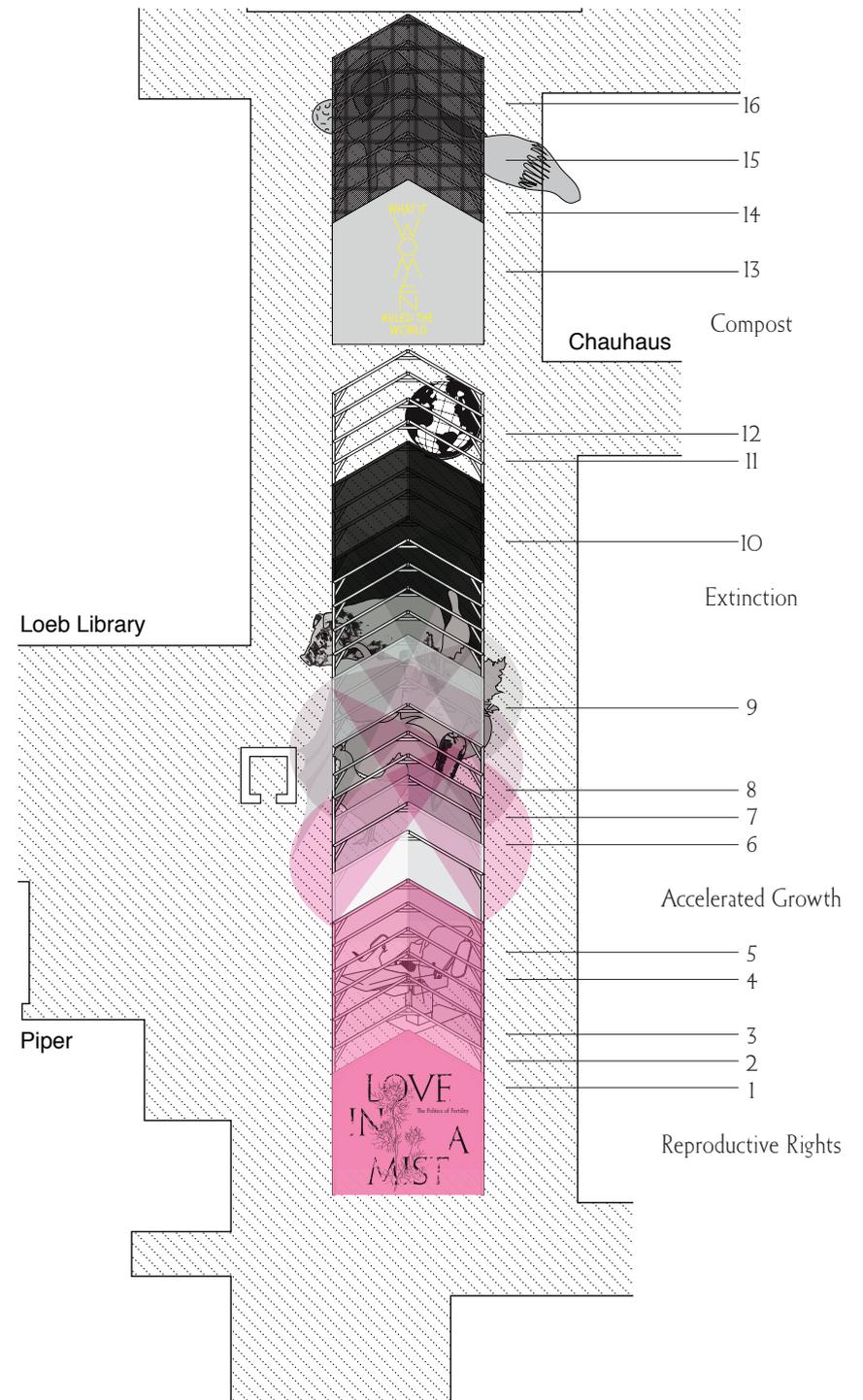
The works within Accelerated Growth, a partly covered greenhouse, explore the genealogy of synthetic hormones and their impact on women, farmed animals, land, and bodies of water. FAST’s inflatable installation “Bodies of Steroids” stands in parallel to Bernie Krause’s recordings of diminishing soundscapes in nature.

Extinction begins with “UNCERTAIN, TX” and “Complex Systems” by Desirée Dolron, the first conveying the deterioration of Caddo Lake State Park, Texas in looping images, and the second evoking the sensitivity of group relations. Bringing scientific backing to this claim, the UN’s Intergovernmental Science-

Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report from May 2019 is made available to show empirical studies on diminishing biodiversity and mass extinction of species worldwide. The document, which also proposes actions across governments, cities, communities, and households, is situated next to an indigenous call for action: “Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change” directed by Zacharias Kunuk and Ian Mauro.

The Compost greenhouse is inspired by Donna Haraway’s book “Staying with the Trouble”. The works weave together speculative imaginaries by artists examining women’s bodies, minds, and relations to the natural world from different perspectives—political, biological, spiritual. Yael Bartana’s trailer and neon work “What If Women Ruled the World?”, “brings some of the world’s best strategic minds together to help avert impending disaster while situated in a replica of Dr. Strangelove’s War Room”. Tabita Rezaire’s video “Sugar Walls Teardom” pays tribute to the imposed contribution of black womxn’s wombs to medical science. The artist’s treatment of their eternal healing power is shared in the closing work titled “Womb”, a sculpture by Atelier Van Lieshout that offers “a stylized representation of the interior of the human body, almost perfect anatomical renditions of the organs that keep us going”.

Love in a Mist: The Politics of Fertility is curated by Malkit Shoshan, Area Head of Art, Design, and the Public Domain (ADPD) MDes at Harvard GSD and founding director of the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST), an Amsterdam- and New York-based think-tank that develops projects and campaigns at the intersection of architecture, urban planning, design, and human rights.



1. Women on Waves
A Portable Abortion Clinic, 2001
installation

Women on Waves sail a ship to countries where abortion is illegal, so that early medical abortions can be provided safely, professionally, and legally. National penal legislation, and thus also of abortion law, extends only to territorial waters; outside that 12-mile radius Dutch law applies, rendering Women on Waves' activities legal. Millions of women worldwide have used mifepristone and misoprostol to terminate pregnancy with impressive safety and efficacy. The medicines have been on the World Health Organization (WHO) Model List of Essential Medicines since 2005. Women on Waves has already created enormous public interest in its efforts and completed successful campaigns in Mexico (2017), Guatemala (2017), Morocco (2012), Spain (2008), Portugal (2004), Poland (2003), and Ireland (2001). Women on Waves' mobile treatment room, designed by artist Joep van Lieshout and funded by Mondriaan Fund, was first presented in Play-use, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, in 2000, appearing the following year in the 49th Venice Biennale and various art magazines.

2. Women on Web
Abortion Drones, 2019, installation

The drones fly abortion pills from one country to women in another. Drawing attention to differing regulations, women's realities in countries where abortion is restricted are made visible by creating access.

3. Vessel, written and directed by
Diana Whitten, 2014, film

This documentary film written and directed by Diana Whitten on the work of Women on Waves, a Dutch pro-choice organization founded by Dutch physician Rebecca Gomperts in 1999, follows Gomperts as she sails a ship around the world and provides abortions at sea for women who have no legal alternative.

She trains women to give themselves abortions using WHO-researched protocols with pills and creates an underground network of empowered activists who trust women to handle abortion themselves. The film's world premiere took place at SXSW in Texas on March 9th, 2014 and is distributed by FilmBuff since 2015.

4. Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST)
reproductive rights and the heartbeat bill
2019, informative papers and diagrams

Selection of news items, legislation, and information about reproductive rights and access to safe abortions in the US are packaged as a series of diagrams and broadsheet-sized tabloid handouts.

5. Lori Brown
Don't Mess with Texas, 2018
essay and maps

Texas is willing to drastically limit women's access to reproductive health care with little to no regard for the consequences for millions of women. The state's antiabortion policies have been copied by Missouri and Iowa, and the Trump administration is working to expand similar policies internationally by refusing to provide American aid to any international organization that discusses abortion. Many other states are following their lead. Texas serves as a frightening wake-up call to the rest of the country on so many levels: high rates of poverty, incarceration, immigration, and deportation – and extremely pro-gun rights. Its assault on social services and reproductive health care leaves many women with little choice but to travel long distances to access abortion services. Should the situation continue, it will go from very bad to much worse.

6. Bernie Krause
Lincoln Meadow at Yuba Pass, California
geophony sound, 1988, 1999

Location: 39°35'29.26"N/120°30'O2.53"W
Habitat: Sub-tropical forest
Season: Spring

Climate: Sub-tropical coastal rainforest
Weather: Clear/partly cloudy (80.6°F)

About a three-and-a-half hour drive east of San Francisco, at an altitude of nearly 7,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada mountains, is a spectacular sub-alpine meadow surrounded by ponderosa pine, juniper, and lodgepole pine trees with a clear mountain stream bisecting the habitat. When I first began recording there in the early 1980s, the site was an old-growth habitat that, while accessible to hikers and skiers, had not undergone any significant changes over time. Then, in 1988, a logging company convinced local residents that a new tree-cutting protocol they were using, called selective logging (taking out a tree every 65 feet or so – rather than cutting down everything in sight), would have no negative impact on the environment. While the local residents accepted their explanation, I remained skeptical and asked the company representatives if I might record at the site before and after their activity. Permission granted, I recorded the dawn chorus in mid-June of 1988, before logging later that summer, and, again in 1989, a year after the company's action. To the human eye and any frame of a camera, the site appeared as if there had been no change. That observation, by itself, would have supported the logging company's claim that there was no environmental impact from their activity. However, the difference to both the ear supported by a visual image of the sound in the form of spectrograms is clear. In the 1988 example, the signature of the mountain stream can be seen in the lowest third of the image while the bird vocalizations are visible in the middle third. They typically include, mountain quail, red-breasted and Williamson's sapsuckers, Townsend's solitaire, Cassin's finch, western wood-pewee, Hammond's flycatcher, hermit and MacGillivray's warblers, western tanager, Lincoln sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, and the green-tailed towhee. In the 1989 sample, the birdsong density and diversity was all but gone, with only the sound of the stream and a Williamson's sapsucker (woodpecker) present in the soundscape and spectrogram. Despite 15 visits over the past 27 years, the biophony in this fragile habitat has not yet returned to its pre-1988 level.

7. Bernie Krause
Sugarloaf State Park, Kenwood, California
geophony sound, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2015
8. Bernie Krause
Spread Creek Pond, Jackson Hole
Wyoming, geophony sound, 1981, 2009
9. FAST
Bodies of Steroids, 2019, inflatable
10. Desirée Dolron
UNCERTAIN, TX, 2016, video

The viewer's eye slowly moves across a morass of secular cypress trees, swathed in Spanish moss, immersed in water. Under the surface, a foreign weed is rampant and disturbing the local ecosystem. The succession of images in loop and the suffocating sound of the audio accentuate the impression of the forest's continuous deterioration. The title is taken from the name of the town in Texas where I stayed during production. It also refers to the future of the trees and, in a broader sense, to the fragility of life in general.

11. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Media Release, May 2019
12. Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change
directed by Zacharias Kunuk and Ian Mauro
2010, film
13. Yael Bartana
What If Women Ruled the World?, 2016
neon and trailer

"It is two and a half minutes to midnight, the clock is ticking, global danger looms. Wise public officials should act immediately, guiding humanity away from the brink. If they do not, wise citizens must step forward and lead the way" (The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists). Arriving at a moment of unprecedented worldwide flux, Yael Bartana's performative project "What If Women Ruled the World?" brings some of the world's best strategic

minds together to help avert impending disaster. The experiment uses a fictional scenario to examine real-life issues. Each night, a group of actors playing the female government of a fictional country meet with a group of international female experts in a replica of Dr. Strangelove's War Room: defense advisers, soldiers, peace activists, humanitarians, politicians, and leading thinkers. Together they will spend the evening attempting to solve the global emergency, and stop the Doomsday Clock from reaching midnight.

14. Tabita Rezaire
Sugar Walls Teardom, 2016, video

Sugar Walls Teardom reveals the contributions of Black womxn's wombs to the advancement of modern medical science and technology. During slavery, Black womxn's bodies were used and abused as commodities for laborious work in plantations, sexual slavery, reproductive exploitation, and medical experiments. Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy, were among the captive guinea pigs of Dr. Marion Sims—the so-called “father of modern gynecology”—who tortured countless enslaved womxn in the name of science. Unacknowledged, Black womxn's wombs have been central to the biomedical economy as the story of Henrietta Lack—whose stolen cervix cells became the first immortal cells leading to medical breakthrough—reminds us. Biological warfare against Black womxn is still pervasive in today's pharmaceutical industry. “Sugar Walls Teardom” celebrates womb technology through an account of coercive anatomic politics and pays homage to these wombs; their contributions have not been forgotten.

15. Atelier Van Lieshout
Womb, 2000, sculpture

“Womb” (small) is part of a set of colorful fiberglass sculptures that Atelier Van Lieshout produced in the early 2000s: human figures in various postures and actions, but also a complete series of human internal organs, ranging from heart, brain, and liver to the rectum and female sex organs. These works are a stylized represen-

tation of the interior of the human body, almost perfect anatomical renditions of the organs that keep us going. “Womb” was created in a series of wombs including the functional sculpture “Wombhouse”, now in the collection of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen.

16. Desirée Dolron
Complex Systems, 2016, video

“Complex Systems” displays a digitally drawn flock of starlings scattering across the sky in a loop of ever-changing patterns. In this work themes such as the fragility of existence, impermanence, and the dichotomy between the individual and the collective form the conceptual ground of the artist's inquiry. The title is adopted from the scientific field of network research, which employs the term to define the complex interactions between different components of the same group. The shapes assumed by the birds are proven to be the result of a defense mechanism system: in order to avoid attack by predators, a singular starling keeps track of seven others simultaneously—in doing so, the starling is able to adapt to the changing flying directions of the entire flock, thus keeping the collective intact. The dichotomy between the individual and the collective is at the core of Dolron's interest in this natural phenomenon. “Complex Systems” investigates the relation between singular and shared intelligence, prompting questions concerning humanity, the psyche, and the possible presence of a collective unconscious. The link to the human psyche is emphasized by the cyclical character of the film; Dolron underlines the full turn of life in which the starlings function as a metaphor. Their movements change from an initial drive to a final slow fall, while the murmuration happens in an eternal loop that symbolizes the cycle of life and its fragility. The movements of the starlings, combined with the pivotal soundtrack of murmuring voices that intensify and fade according to the flock's movements, allude to the human mind in a state of constant flux.

*Descriptions are lightly edited versions of previously published material by the artists.

Biographies

Atelier Van Lieshout was founded by the sculptor Joep van Lieshout in 1995 in Rotterdam. The company create and fabricate widely exhibited works. The name emphasizes the fact that although the sculptor founded and leads the studio, the work produced stems from the creative impulses of the entire team. Recurring themes in the work include self-sufficiency, power, politics, and the more classical life and death.

Yael Bartana is a video artist who explores the imagery of cultural identity. In her photographs, films, and installations Bartana critically investigates her native country Israel's struggle for identity. Her early work documents collective rituals introducing alienation effects such as slow-motion and sound. In her recent work the artist stages situations and introduces fictive moments into real existing narratives.

Lori Brown is co-founder of ArchiteXX, a group dedicated to transforming the architecture profession for women. She is a registered architect, an author, and associate professor at Syracuse University. Her research focuses on architecture and social justice issues with particular emphasis on gender and its impact upon spatial relationships.

Desirée Dolron is a Dutch photographer who lives and works in Amsterdam. Her photographs portray a variety of styles and subjects involving documentary, still lifes, portraits, and architecture.

Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST) is an Amsterdam- and New York-based think-tank that develops projects and campaigns at the intersection of architecture, urban planning, design, and human rights.

Rebecca Gomperts is a doctor based in Amsterdam and founder of Women on Waves and Women on Web, which provide reproductive health services for women in countries where it is not provided. In 2013 and 2014, she was

included in the BBC's 100 Women. In 2018, she founded Aid Access, which operates in the US. A trained abortion specialist and activist, she is generally considered the first abortion rights activist to cross international borders.

Bernie Krause is an American musician and soundscape ecologist. In 1968, he founded Wild Sanctuary, an organization dedicated to the recording and archiving of natural soundscapes. Krause is an author, a bio-acoustician, a speaker, and natural sound artist who coined the terms geophony, biophony, and anthropophony, and, as a founder of the field, was germane to the definition and structure of soundscape ecology. Krause holds a PhD in Creative (Sound) Arts with an internship in bioacoustics from Union Institute & University in Cincinnati.

Tabita Rezaire is a French video artist, health-tech-politics practitioner, and Kemetic/Kundalini yoga teacher based in Cayenne, French Guyana. Her practices unearth the possibilities of decolonial healing through the politics of technology.

Malkit Shoshan is the founding director of the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST), an Amsterdam- and New York-based think-tank that develops projects and campaigns at the intersection of architecture, urban planning, design, and human rights. She is a researcher, author, and designer and the Area Head of Art, Design, and the Public Domain (ADPD) MDes at Harvard GSD.

Women on Waves is a Dutch pro-choice nongovernmental organization (NGO) created in 1999 by Dutch physician Rebecca Gomperts, in order to bring reproductive health services, particularly non-surgical abortion services and education, to women in countries with restrictive abortion laws.

Women on Web is the online sister organization of Women on Waves.

Colophon

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Malkit Shoshan

Participating activists, artists, and designers
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Yael Bartana
Lori Brown
Desirée Dolron
Foundation for Achieving Seamless
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