

PIS—RUF

**FALKE PISANO
PRINCE RAMA
HANNA PUTZ
ROSA RENDL
MASUMI RIOJA
ERIN ROBINSON
BEATRIX RUF**



FALKE PISANO
SHOT BY KATHARINA POBLOTZKI



PRINCE RAMA
SHOT BY COLEY BROWN

HANNA PUTZ
SHOT BY JORK WEISMANN





ROSA RENDL, SELF-PORTRAIT



MASUMI RIOJA SHOT BY LEWIS CHAPLIN



BEATRIX RUF
SHOT BY LUKAS WASSMANN

FALKE PISANO

BY TOMMASO SPERETTA

Hailing from Holland, Berlin-based artist Falke Pisano has made the impossibility of completely controlling the senses a trademark theme of her work. There's a certain dose of mystery behind her work. It never stops reminding the viewer to pay the attention. Her work is "a black hole that absorbs all matter in its proximity" – as Falke herself once said.

The legacy of modernism and modernist abstraction is the initial suggestion of Falke's artistic research. The concrete objects and sculptures she creates are points of departure; her sculptural constructs travel far from where they start – to the point of becoming complex linguistic reflections. Falke gives an objective form to theoretical propositions and theorizes about the philosophical nature of an abstract object, framing it using the tangible realm of language or re-creating speech through what actually are physical sculptural paradigms. When I asked Falke

Falke Pisano, *Structure for Repetition* (not representation) with 5 blackboard panels, 2011, exhibition view Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam, 2011.



to give me a glimpse of what her art is all about, she came back with a series of short texts she used in a recent installation she did which themselves reflect the ambiguity and conceptual abstraction her work is based on. As contemporary art scientists, we have to accept the fact that things sometimes elude human comprehension. What seems true and clear today might not be tomorrow; the deductive method remains the only way of verification.

(Pergamon 199) A young man is lying on his back on a pull cart. He is wearing knee-high boots, a short skirt and a belt. A man in a toga is touching his breast while a boy holds his head. A helmet and a weapon are lying on the ground. Through the open door one can see an arena where another man is presenting himself to a balcony with spectators.

(Amsterdam 1571) A woman is tied up to a ladder, her hands are touching each other and she has her eyes on the sky. Two men are pushing the ladder up straight. A man with a cape and top hat is standing near, with his hands in his sides. A mass of people – soldiers, monks – is standing more towards the back. The woman is being pushed towards a big fire. When the ladder topples she won't be able to escape and will be burned alive. The burning branches of wood are looking like snakes coming out of the fire. The fire is producing black clouds that spread over the city.

(Amsterdam, 2011) A



Falke Pisano, *Structure for Repetition* (not representation) with 5 blackboard panels, 2011 (detail), exhibition view De Vleeshal, Middelburg, 2012.

video shows a sequence of images fading in from white, until it is possible to understand the situations they represent – a woman, suspected to be a witch, tied to a ladder being pushed towards a blazing fire, a gladiator being treated out of sight of the spectators in the amphitheater, a WW1 soldier depicted as a skeleton and so on. A voice-over describes the images and places them in context – but simultaneously a black bar slides across, concealing them from view before they become entirely distinct from their background.

(Mons, 1915) A soldier has become a skeleton in the trenches. Still wearing his ragged army clothes, the skeleton-soldier leans against the earth wall. He holds his rifle, pointing it at his head. The holes in his clothes resemble the holes that are his eyes. He lost one shoe but has kept his helmet on. His ribcage is visible because fabric and skin tissue have disappeared.

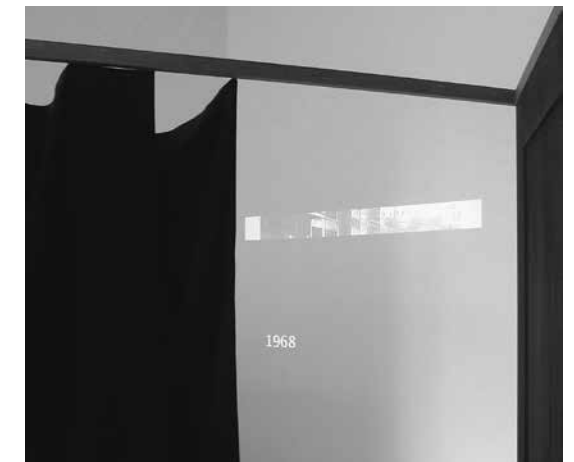
(Amsterdam, 2011) A form of repetition

has been constructed, consisting of a series of black panels, partly obscured by black curtains. The panels have been placed in a chain, each one connected to the other by a wooden triangle. The chain is placed in the form of a spiral and in this way a display structure becomes a sculpture. In each of the panels a space has been designated, framing a possible presentation space. These spaces however are left empty.

(Amsterdam, 2011) Close to the sculpture but elsewhere, one image is shown after another. In contrast to the formal abstraction of the sculptures, the images' main subject is the human body. Similar to the sculptures, they are partly obscured. However, it is clear that they are appropriated images. While the images had an original function related to a certain context, connecting one body to another, they now hold a more precarious position as historical representations of events that have taken place elsewhere and in another time.

From *The Body in Crisis* (*Distance, Repetition and Representation*), 2011. By Falke Pisano.

Falke Pisano, *The Body in Crisis* (*Notes on Distance, Repetition and Representation*) seen through *Structure for Repetition* (not representation), exhibition view Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam, 2011.



“WHAT WE SEE LOOKS BACK AT US”

NAIRY BAGHRAMIAN

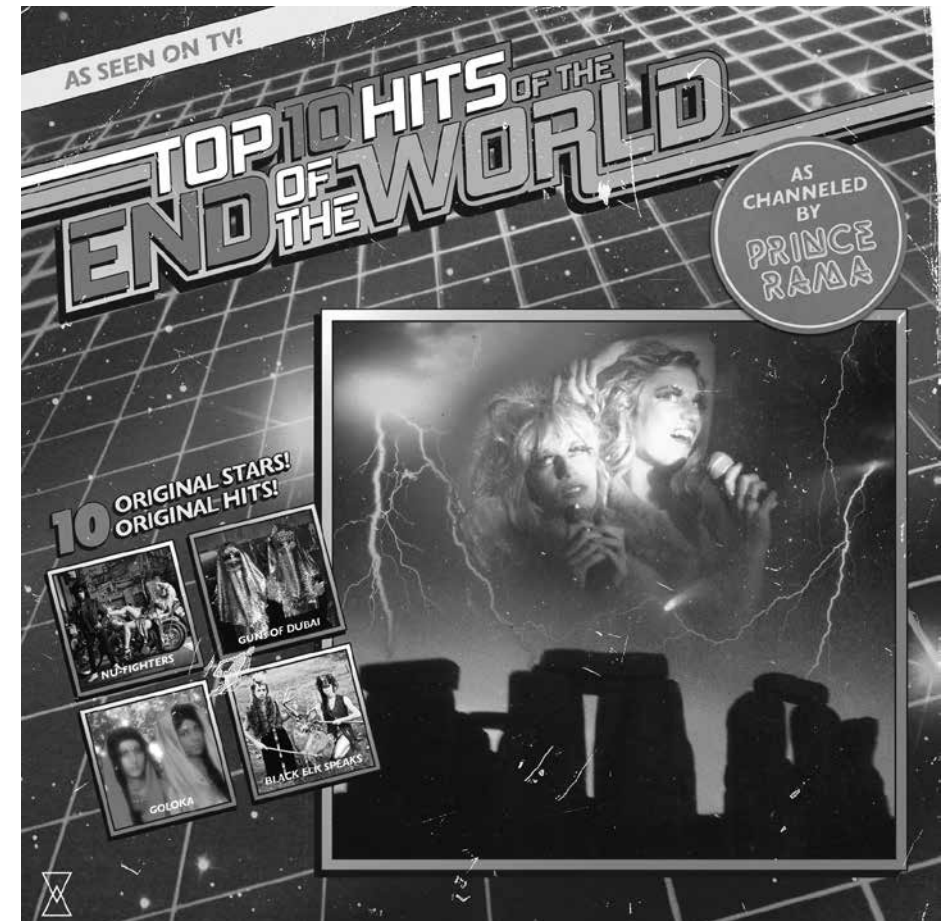
PRINCE RAMA BY MARCO LOMBARDO

The biography of sisters Taraka and Nimai Larson seems like a plot from a tv series, just as improbable as it is fascinating. Raised in Texas, they spent their high school years in a Hare Krishna community in Alachua, Florida, to then move to Boston and attend art school. This is when they founded Prince Rama and took their first steps in an extremely atypical career. Starting in 2008, they produced five albums, walking the line between arty and psychedelic, signing a contract with Paw Records, Animal Collective's

label, and touring at length in the US, arriving in New York, their current dwelling, where their latest record, *Top Ten Hits of the End of the World*, was born. A conceptual album about the end of the world, in which the two sisters pretend to be ten bands that survive the apocalypse, exhibiting a genius very much out of the ordinary.

Taraka and Nimai Larson's music is bound to the fact that they are sisters, a profound bond, which reverberates at many levels. «We are jamming whether

The cover of *Top Ten Hits Of The End Of The World*, a pseudo compilation album. The duo invented ten different pop bands that died during the apocalypse.





Rage Peace's portrait. Another one of the bands invented by Prince Rama in *Top Ten Hits*. In this case, a duo from the 90s.



Guns Of Dubai's portrait. One of the bands impersonated by Prince Rama in *Top Ten Hits Of The End Of The World*.

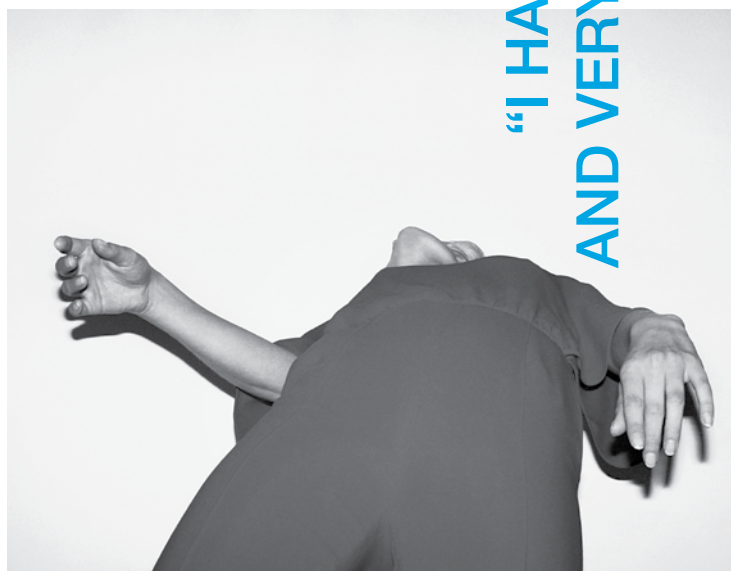
we have instruments in our hands or not. That's just how it's always been. When we're not doing Prince Rama, we're just making music in another form». An almost spiritual attitude which we find in their creative process, described with a bit of irony. «When you totally give up, that is when the creative motion swoops in. It is kind of like when you are single and you really want a boyfriend and you can't understand why no one wants to date you. Then after a while you forget about it and all of a sudden... BAM. James Franco walks up to you and asks for your number. It is the exact same thing with songwriting». The defining career moment was when they signed with Paw Records, the Animal Collective record label, which became their most important sponsor. «Avey Tare randomly showed up at a show we were playing at a dive bar in the middle of Texas and I guess he must have liked it». And they never turned back, dedicating themselves completely to the band. «We made up

our minds when we moved to New York that we weren't going to get jobs other than play music, even if it meant starving, which we did for a while. Sometimes we would play Fleetwood Mac covers on the subways so we could buy some bagels to eat that day. I think because we didn't allow ourselves to get a safety job it forced us to work harder at making Prince Rama a viable lifestyle». A lifestyle that New York helped shape, making them the artists we adore today. «After graduating art school, we were homeless and broke, just touring and living out of our van for nearly eight months. We knew we needed to settle down somewhere. It is a very particular mindset, the tour mindset. Very dangerous. Very magical. Waking up every morning not knowing where you're going or who you'll fall in love with. Greeting each new city with no past and leaving with no future. About three years ago, we ended a tour in New York and realized that you could live here and still feel like you were on tour forever and never lose that sense of wonder. So we just stayed. You ever hear that Jay-Z song, *Empire State of Mind*? That's what we try to embody everyday».

HANNA PUTZ BY SERENA PEZZATO

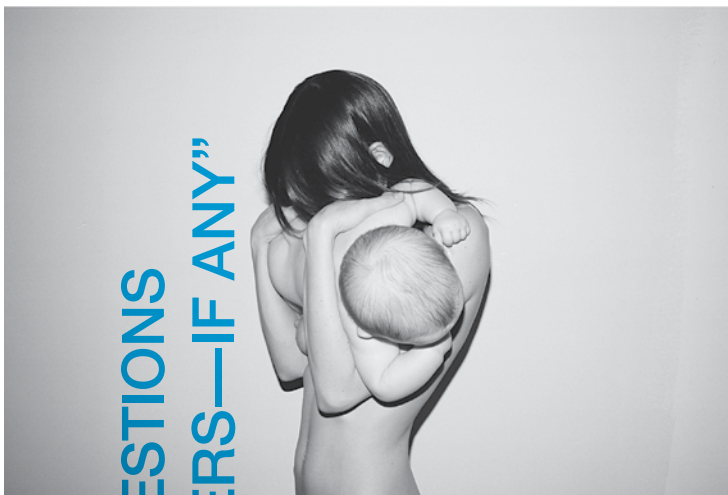
Hanna Putz, exceptional name aside, is a young Austrian photographer who lives between Vienna and London. She shoots beautiful photos but her expertise lies in the comfort she provides for her subjects in front of her lens. Hanna came into the international scene thanks to her participation in the 2012 Hyères as well as her photographs in numerous publications including *Dazed*, *New York Magazine* and the *British Journal of Photography*. A common denominator in her images is their chromatic precision and the natural ease of her subjects which are combined with composition choices that

Untitled (De Waverin), 2012.



“I HAVE MANY QUESTIONS
AND VERY FEW ANSWERS—IF ANY”

recall sculpture – slim bodies in relation with one another, still faces caught in a moment of thought and intensity, «I find two naked bodies intertwined within each other can become an interesting composition. Working with bodies like with sculptures and molding people together, to create new forms». Hanna is getting ready for an exhibition at the prestigious Photographers' Gallery in London which will take place in October. For quite some time, she has been developing a series entitled *Untitled 2012-2013*, in which she explores the concepts of family, intimacy, pose, and exposure: «I photographed eight different families in five different cities (Vienna, New York, London, Paris and



Untitled (Nave 2), 2012.

Untitled (Grandqvist 1), 2012.



Untitled (Peters 1), 2012.



Berlin). I am interested in examining the notion of ‘posing’, the need to perform in the age of social networking and permanent surveillance, so I started photographing some of my friends, who had just had their first babies in 2011, and I found the act of photographing someone with their child to be an inherently different experience. Not only because the young mothers are in an in-between and often vulnerable state of adjusting to their new role of mothers, but also because their attention is mainly on their child, and thus not so much on the moment of being photographed». The moment in which a picture gets taken is something Hanna knows well, not just from a photographer’s point of view, but also as a subject since at seventeen she started working as a model. Thus, the respect and tact which are distinguishing features of her pictures (especially the nudes) seem to take root from her personal experience. «I feel it’s important to show nudity with a sense of respect for the person. That’s my personal opinion. Photographing someone naked is mostly a choice of color rather than wanting to say something sexual, erotic or even sexist. That simply works better for me if the subjects are ‘wearing’ the

same uniform: nakedness, rather than a striped shirt and jeans». Finally, Hanna, the person and not the photographer, seems as fascinating as her photos, «I mainly work on a trial and error basis. I have many questions and very few answers—if any. I’d rather have good questions than useless answers». And if I may put my two cents in, well, I think she is so right.

Untitled (LL 1), 2012.



**“PROBABLY IT DOESN’T
REALLY MATTER WHAT
YOU CALL YOURSELF AS
LONG AS WHAT YOU DO
MAKES SENSE”**

NATHALIE DU PASQUIER

MASUMI RIOJA

BY MAURO SIMIONATO

Masumi Rioja is one-of-a-kind. She used to be a wild beast from the Mexico City underground art scene when American Apparel noticed her and decided to rely on her hypnotic face and modigliani-esque body for their principal international billboard campaign. Soon she was introduced to Gigi Giannuzzi and his Trolley Books and started traveling the world at his side; embracing the spirit of his unique publishing vision. Jewelry designer, art-director and “natural-born-muse”, her storytelling ability caught my attention like that of many other people she has met on her way. Here is the quick chat we had about love, change and chance.

Q: Masumi, this might be a banal question, but how did your life change after the American Apparel campaign?

A: When Iris (Alonzo, American Apparel Creative Director) took my pictures, I never really thought they would end up anywhere big. I mean, like huge

Masumi's jewelry line, inspired by mexican iconography and votive art.



billboards in the center of Echo Park in Los Angeles. I think people at AA chose me because my face is quite unfathomable, my blood is Indian (from different regions) with weird mixes of Chinese. I look exotic to Mexicans as well. That's the portrait of the chicano soul, of chilangos in general. We are completely mestizos. So my life changed, yes, but mostly because that's when Gigi and I met.

Q: How did you meet Gigi Giannuzzi?

A: I met him in Mexico City during the Art Fair, on the street. On the corner between Jalapa and Alvaro Obregon, to be exact. Fabio Paleari (one of Giannuzzi's best friends) told Gigi “If you go there, you got to meet this girl”. He had seen my face before, via Fabio's camera and on the AA billboards. By that time I was following the Art Fair because I used to rent a place in the artsy neighborhood, and when Gigi visited Mexico City for the event and drove by those streets in a cab, he saw me standing on the sidewalk and jumped out of the car with his penguins red shirt... He was amazing. It was sudden and very explosive. We were full of energy. We kissed a few minutes later. From the moment we met, I immediately got involved with his project. For Gigi, his books were his life. So I stayed by his side watching, learning and telling him what I thought anytime he asked for my opinion. He asked very often, like part of a ritual. He believed a lot in my insight.

Q: When did you start art-directing for Trolley Books?

A: In the beginning, Gigi pushed me to take my chances as a jewelry designer. One of the plans before we knew about the cancer (Gigi Gianuzzi was diagnosed

with pancreatic cancer in 2011 and left us last year, on Christmas Eve), was to stay in Mexico and live off my skills as a jeweler. He believed in me. But no matter how hard he tried to set me free, I got involved with Trolley. Before I started working full-time, I was studying Visual Communications, going more for the editorial design field. So for me what I was living being at his side was a wonderful field practice experience. And he felt the need for my contribution. When I was thinking of going back to the University, Gigi said “if you work with me, you could learn in six months what they will teach you in years”. I wasn't sure if he was right – he had studied at Harvard after all – but I decided to join him full-time, mainly because we were living a powerful romance. But through this romance, I saw the process of book creation, deeply understanding his vision, his way of doing things. I sensed his essence in many things. Sometimes, when I realize this, I feel blessed, I feel I experienced real love. I realize this when I think of just how close we were in our understanding of life.

Q: Photographers and artists tried to help Gigi during his illness (Situation Gigi gathered names such as Matt Collishaw,

Extract from *Gentlemen from Bacondo* by Gigi Giannuzzi's Trolley Books, an independent UK publisher specialized in art and photography books.



Masumi shot for American Apparel international billboard campaign.

Nan Goldin, Damien Hirst and Cindy Sherman among others). In January, you helped set up the exhibition Trolleyology – The First Ten Years of Trolley Books. What do you expect from Trolley's future?

A: I think of Trolley as the masterpiece of my master. I hope the books become cult books, each for its own subject. We want to make Trolley live longer and better. New books to come out. New amazing printed objects, permeated with Gigi's vision. Gigi's business partner Hannah Watson is in charge of Trolley now. She asked me for creative counselling, which is amazing. We became very close after the exhibition at the NewLondonCastle, and I believe things will go on.

Q: What else are you up to now?

A: I have been lucky ever since I was a child. Even in the heart of the third world, I was surrounded by all kinds of creative people who always involved me in projects... Which I still work on with many friends, people I admire and totally support. We are living the multi-tasking era and I want to do as many things as possible. I don't know where to find such a job, but that's what I want to do. I currently live in London and it's a powerful place, but I sometimes think about moving to Paris for a while, studying new things... Taking new chances.

ERIN ROBINSON
BY DIANA FICHERA

It all seems simple now: independent video games are used as didactic materials at universities worldwide and nobody is surprised by the existence of a chaotic and lively indie scene anymore. When Erin Robinson began working as a video game designer, the fact that a game could talk about female masturbation or melancholy islands populated by shadows in search of their past was not something to be taken for granted. And neither was the fact that irony and certain literary references could be part of a classic action game. Or that 2D, a self-imposed choice in light of scarce economic resources at the hands of DIY developers, could be a stylistic choice; creating geometric labyrinths that seem like they came straight out of Escher's head and uprooting the rules of video games from the last century. And yet it did happen. And it was also the budget limit, far from those of big production houses, that unleashed this never-ending energy. In this 'new world', Erin Robinson's name is among the first.

Erin Robinson, "The Ivy", is immersed in her newest adventure. The game she's making is called *Gravity Ghost*

"INDIE GAMES ARE FEEDING
A HUNGER FOR UNIQUE AND
WELL-CRAFTED EXPERIENCES"



Erin Robinson's new game protagonist is Iona. In the game she floats through strange planets looking for a way to get back home.

and it will come out before the end of 2013. Her lab is open, anyone can take a look at livelyivy.com. «The game is about a little ghost girl named Iona



Little Girl in Underland, created by Erin "The Ivy" Robinson in 2008. "Top Soviet scientists discover copy of 'American McGee's Alice'. Then, in unrelated happening, they make this game".

and her friend the ghost fox. They're all alone, floating on a tiny planet together, and soon you learn they're trying to find their way home. At the start of the game their planet gets caught in the orbit of something big, and they need to find out what it is». Erin's primary interest has always been in storytelling: «Your main actions are running and jumping as you navigate the gravitational fields of the planets you find. It's very smooth and flowy, and there's no dying (they're ghosts, after all). The game is quite challenging, but also quite forgiving. There's never any time pressure pushing you along, you can just sit back and enjoy the ride». And she's not just about narrative originality, but also continuous graphic research: «My visual style is a mixture of digital painting and photo manipulation. I'm trying to give the objects a very tactile feel, like they're made of

cut paper and cardboard. Indie games often have very limited art budgets (which is why so many of them are 2D), but I figured I'd try to find a way to make the most out of flat shapes. My programmer has created some neat features, like papery trees that grow and blossom on the planets». Exploring every expressive possibility is the motor that moves

the indie video game scene, which is now celebrated in an annual festival (IGF in San Francisco). We asked Erin if it's still a changing world or it has crystallized somewhat as far as its heroes and rituals: «It's absolutely still exciting: the success of independent games is just a reflection of a desire that people already had. Indie games are feeding a hunger for unique and well-crafted experiences. The fact that we have award shows now (one of which I co-hosted) just means that people want to celebrate these developers for their accomplishments».

Erin Robinson has been hosted in the Game Developers Conference. Her interest in games started when she was a child in front of her father's PC.



BEATRIX RUF BY TOMMASO SPERETTA

Beatrix Ruf is the woman behind the success of the Kunsthalle Zürich, which she has been directing since 2001. She contributed in large part to the recent major redesign and renovation project, finally giving to the Kunsthalle Zürich a permanent site in town.

Beatrix has an obsessively curious mind, a characteristic which makes her work on different projects concurrently, including as the associate editor of JRP Ringier, the legendary Swiss publisher, and curator of the Ringier Collection.

I met Beatrix a few days before the opening of two solo exhibitions she curated – of Swiss artist Tobias Madison and Israeli artist Uri Aran. We spoke about art, politics, society, and, of course, about the recent comeback of feminism. «I personally never start with

Installation view of Sturtevant *Image over Image*, at Kunsthalle Zürich, 2012, curated by Beatrix Ruf, photo by Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich.



an 'ism', but too many things have been taken for granted when they're actually not to be taken for granted. All societal problems require awareness; and if it helps to use 'isms', then why not to use them?».

Q: When did you decide to work in the art field? How did it happen?

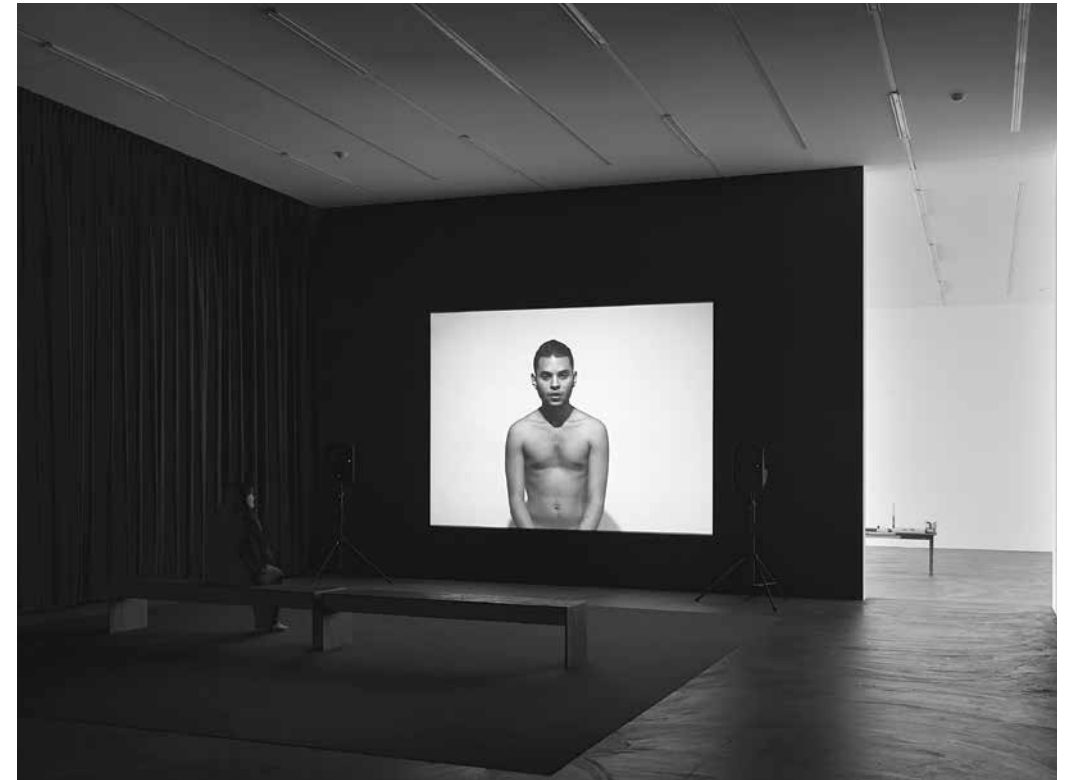
A: It started in high school, when a substitute art teacher came to teach for a short period. She was so different from everyone and everything else I had experienced before. Somehow, from that moment on, I started to feel at home. I subsequently studied choreography and museology in Vienna, and, from then on, it just developed. All the rest was luck.

Q: Apart from luck, what made you become the art curator and museum director you are today?

A: Many things happened because of my curiosity, together with a total lack of interest in hobbies and in dividing my life in work time and so-called leisure time. I am convinced curiosity is a very crucial point. It basically means seeing and experiencing things, meeting people, and asking questions as much as possible. It's all about that. I think encounters with people and their ideas, as well as their obsessions, enable everything to happen. I really do believe that.

Q: How do you think art relates to politics and

Installation view of Uri Aran *here, here and here*, at Kunsthalle Zürich, 2013, curated by Beatrix Ruf, photo by Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich.



Installation view of Tobias Madison *NO; NO; H*, at Kunsthalle Zürich, 2013, curated by Beatrix Ruf, photo by Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich.



Installation view of Uri Aran *here, here and here*, at Kunsthalle Zürich, 2013, curated by Beatrix Ruf, photo by Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich.



society?

A: I think art, if you understand its very specific language, is inherently political in itself, and not in the sense of agitation and polemics, but in terms of a critical attitude and space, which insists on questions being asked. I also see art institutions in the same way. I think their duties are to open a space for discussion within the society, and to maintain it open, and to enable artists to use this space as a place for communication and dialogue regarding what the society is or is based on.

Q: Do you think that art can change society?

A: Oh, that's a lot of work, not even politics can change society, but I think that the language of art is very powerful, because it communicates directly with subjects and creates thought processes in individuals. I consider this political.

Q: Which artist do you think I should have included in this special issue but did not?

A: Laura Owens, for instance. I think she is one of today's few painters who is totally unafraid of experimenting in painting and who is knowledgeable about the medium. I find this incredibly exciting; it is rare that an artist is

totally fearless of running a risk. I would also include Elaine Sturtevant. What Sturtevant said in the 60s now comes around full circle in the production of a younger generation of artists. What I most admire about her is that she has never been afraid of risking at any given moment in her life and artistic career.

Installation view of Sturtevant «Image over Image», at Kunsthalle Zürich, 2012, curated by Beatrix Ruf, photo by Stefan Altenburger Photography Zurich.

