

ANTENNA SPACE

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Alvin Li 李佳桓

Artists 艺术家

Mire Lee 李美来

Yong Xiang Li 李泳翔

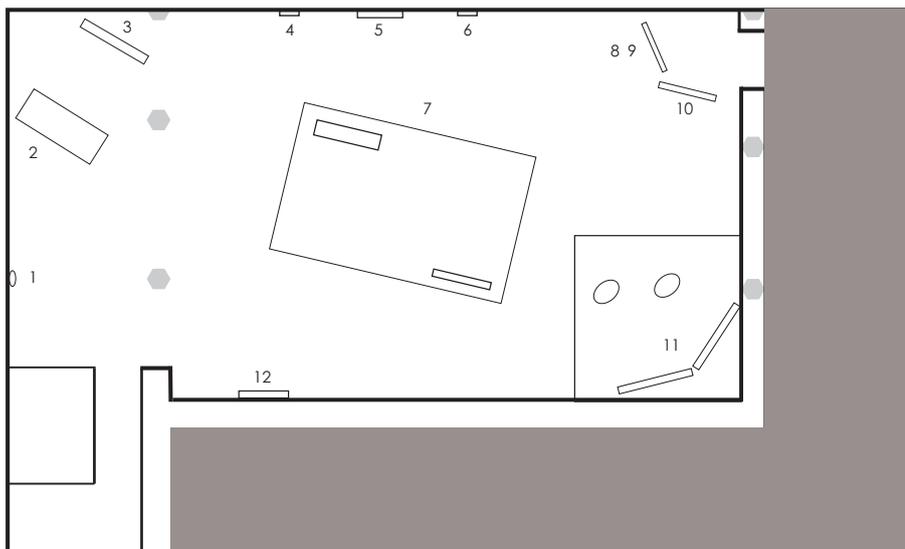
Pedro Neves Marques

Issy Wood

切肤之息

BREATHING  
THROUGH  
SKIN

Nov 7, 2020 - Jan 2, 2021



## 切肤之息

# BREATHING THROUGH SKIN

11/7, 2020 - 1/2, 2021

1. Issy Wood  
*Untitled (higher education)*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
布面油画  
30 x 30 x 2 cm
2. Yong Xiang Li 李泳翔  
*Bench (nothing is forgotten under the moon)*  
长凳 (月下无往事), 2020  
Mdf 中密度板  
250(L) x 86(W) x 60(H) cm
3. Yong Xiang Li 李泳翔  
*I'm not in love (how to feed on humans)*  
我不爱 (吸血鬼食人有道), 2020  
Single-channel video  
单频录像  
27 min
4. Issy Wood  
*Study for 'ass midgets'*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
布面油画  
30 x 24 x 2 cm
5. Issy Wood  
*Europe! Fantasy!*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
布面油画  
140.5 x 100.5 x 4.5 cm
6. Issy Wood  
*Untitled (small world)*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
布面油画  
20 x 30 x 2 cm
7. Mire Lee 李美来  
*Carriers, horizontal forms*, 2020  
Plaster, resin, silicone, pvc hoses, fabric, electronic motors, motor circuit  
石膏、树脂、硅胶、pvc 软管、织物、电发动机、电线  
140.5 x 100.5 x 4.5 cm
8. Yong Xiang Li 李泳翔  
*The hike, a giant*  
登山, 巨人, 2020  
Oil and acrylic on gessoed panel  
木板上油画及丙烯  
120 x 100 cm
9. Yong Xiang Li 李泳翔  
*The hike, a giant dog*  
登山, 巨犬, 2020  
Oil and acrylic on gessoed panel  
木板上油画及丙烯  
120 x 100 cm
10. Yong Xiang Li 李泳翔  
*Doors*  
门, 2020  
Oil and acrylic on gessoed panel, Mdf, Pine  
木板上油画及丙烯, 密度板, 松木  
260 x 160 x 50 cm
11. Pedro Neves Marques, HAUT  
*A Mordida (The Bite)*  
叮咬, 2018  
Double-channel film installation  
双频录像  
20 min
12. Issy Wood  
*Unless you try*, 2020  
Oil on velvet  
天鹅绒上油画  
100 x 100 x 5 cm

# 切肤之息

## BREATHING THROUGH SKIN

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Bringing together new and recent works—several of which have been especially conceived for this occasion — “Breathing Through Skin” highlights four artists and their critical invocations of monstrosity — the monster as constructed motif in horror and the monstrous as an inherent wildness intrinsic to desire. Together, these works traverse a range of binaries, provoking an erotic and affective engagement with bodies in the world, beyond the trappings of monstrified difference.

The monstrous body is always a construct and a projection, bearing the traces of historically specific othering processes. In Bram Stoker’s “Dracula” (1897), the quintessential modern vampire novel, the eponymous Count Dracula embodies an eclectic range of traits—race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality—all of which were deemed threatening to British national identity at the time by and within fictional texts, sexual science, and psychopathology. Whereas “Dracula” incarnated the phobias of the Victorian era, contemporary vampires like those in the “Vampire Chronicles” and “Twilight” series are no longer monstrous or even particularly distant from hegemonic identity: they are white, monogamous, purely aesthetic creatures (and oftentimes collectors). This latter-day fantasy of the vampire entails an act of far greater violence than its 19th-century Gothic predecessors: the total erasure of otherness from representation. Meanwhile in reality, through advanced biotechnologies, the monstrification and erasure of certain bodies has evidently continued, if not intensified, becoming ever stealthier.

Jack Halberstam relates the popular consumption of horror to the genre’s defining affective structure: “[The] monster inspires fear and desire at the same time: fear of and desire for the other, fear of and desire for the possibly latent perversity lurking within readers and audiences themselves.” The entwined feelings of dread and want that operate within horror not only make it a particularly productive genre for appropriation, but also reveal the ambivalent, unruly, sometimes ‘perverted’ dimension of desire.

In this exhibition Yong Xiang Li and Pedro Neves Marques contribute new narrative works to the monster canon, appropriating the technologies of monster-making to destabilize and challenge a range of deep-rooted epistemological binaries: us and others, male and female, human and non-human. Meanwhile, interested in abjection and perversion, Mire Lee and Issy Wood present moody, sensuous works that channel a sense of vital eroticism.

The exhibition is curated by Alvin Li

[1] Jack Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Duke University Press: 1995, P13

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## BREATHING THROUGH SKIN

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### Mire Lee

Mire Lee (b.1988, Seoul) currently lives and works in Amsterdam. She creates sculptural representations of the tense, uncertain zone between love and hate. Originating in the interaction between the artist and her created bodies of work, Lee's sculptures are formed from materials such as steel, silicone, and clay, and function with low-tech kinetics and animatronic-like technology. Most of her pieces are site-specific, humanlike, and defined by affection. The tension comes from a personal attraction and attachment that also contains a strong layer of anxiety; jointly these feelings are transferred onto the sculptures, emotionally laden volumes that reveal hereditary discomfort. Lee perceives her practice as a consequence of ambivalent relations in which she takes ardent care of both her material input and sculptural outcomes. She testifies that her affective sculptural dedication can easily slip into fondness, fetishistic obsession, voyeurism, violation, or violence. Thus, her practice revolves around an abusive, almost masochist, relationship in which Lee wants to dominate and mould the material, have it surrender to her wants. At the same time, it is a reciprocal process in which the artist herself also is deeply affected by these intimate confrontations.

Lee has taken part in various exhibitions, including the solo exhibition *War Isn't Won by Soldiers It's Won by Sentiments* (Insa Art Space) and the group exhibitions *Moving / Image* (Arko Art Center), 2016 Media City Seoul "NERIRI KIRURU HARARA" (Seoul Museum of Art), 15th Lyon Contemporary Art Biennale "Where Water Comes Together with Other Water" etc.

### Yong Xiang Li

Yong Xiang Li (1991, Changsha) is a Frankfurt-based artist. He works in diverse media and tests out the intersections of painting, sculpture and music and video. Influenced by writing of diaspora politics, his works often inhabit a spatial-temporal oddity beside the seemingly monolithic cultural formation. He completed *Meisterschüler* at Städelschule, Frankfurt in 2020. He has recently exhibited at Portikus in Frankfurt, Emanuel Layr in Vienna, Deborah Schamoni in Munich, Berlinskej Model in Prague, Long March project in Beijing, Aedt in Düsseldorf, etc.

Recent solo exhibitions include: "Curl," Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna (2020); "Companion," Jean Claude Maier, Frankfurt (2019).

Selected group exhibitions include: "Fantasy Finery," Berlinskej Model, Prague (2020); "Fables of Resurrection," Galerie Deborah Schamoni, Munich(2020); "Rundgang," Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany(2020); "The Deficit Faction," Long March Project, Beijing(2019); "Ford Every Streams," Galleria Acappella, Italy(2019); "Fruit Suspended and Swaying," Aedt, Düsseldorf(2019); "Double Trouble," Root Canal, Amsterdam(2019); "Rundgang," Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main(2019); "Appearing Unannounced," painnale 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand(2018); "Knockon-neighbourwood," Mckinsey Exhibition, Frankfurt am Main(2018); "I know what you did last summer," Basis, Frankfurt am Main(2018); "Summer Buzz," Johanne, Frankfurt am Main(2018); "Radio Ufff! at fffriedrich," Frankfurt am Main(2018); "Back to Them," Gärtnergasse, Vienna(2018); "Rundgang," Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main(2018); "Vida de Cão," Münchener Straße 10, Frankfurt am Main(2017); "Before, After the Butcher," Berlin(2016); "Rundgang," Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main(2016).

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### Issy Wood

Issy Wood (b. 1993, Durham, NC) lives and works in London, UK. In 2015, she received her BA in Fine Art & History of Art from Goldsmiths College, London. In 2018, she received her MA from RA schools, London.

Recent solo exhibitions include: X Museum, Beijing (forthcoming); “daughterproof,” JTT, New York (2020); “All The Rage,” Goldsmiths CCA, London (2019); “Joan,” D.E.L.F., Vienna (2018); “When You I Feel,” Carlos/Ishikawa, London (2017); “Rosetta Stone,” Triumph, Moscow (2015).

Selected group exhibitions include: “Drawing 2020,” Gladstone Gallery, New York (2020); “Must Dream About Blue Tonight,” Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing (2020); “Claude Mirrors,” three person show (with Victor Mann and Jill Mulleady), Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2019); “Arte contemporanea in Gran Bretagna,” International Gallery of Modern Art, Ca’ Pesaro, Venice (2019); “World Receivers,” Zabłudowicz Collection, London (2019); “The Rest,” Lisson Gallery, New York (2019); “Nightfall,” Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2018); “Darren Bader: I don’ t know,” Soci  t  , Berlin (2018); “Dreamers Awake,” White Cube, London (2017), among others.

### Pedro Neves Marques

Pedro Neves Marques (b. 1986, Lisbon, Portugal) is an artist and writer whose films explore ecology, the earth’ s natural resources, and the politics and practices that govern humans’ interactions with them. Neves Marques creates films that teeter between documentary and science fiction and that blur the lines between what in our world feels eerily futuristic and what is simply a continuing echo of the past. Throughout, they delve into topics including genetically modified organisms (GMO), oil rigs and gas pipelines, market growth models and industrial agriculture, and gender issues and the history of colonialism to better understand the ways in which these systems interact and place certain world-views above others.

### HAUT

HAUT (based between Berlin and London) is a sound artist, music producer and performer working across the fields of experimental electronic music, dance and human-computer interaction. Their work spans from live performances and immersive sound installations to music scores for dance pieces and movies.

Recent exhibitions and live performances include: HAU - Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin; Gasworks, London; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Nottingham Contemporary Museum; P  rez Art Museum of Miami; Dock 11, Berlin; HBTQ-Klubb, Stockholm; 3HD, Berlin; Kunsthalle Zurich. HAUT’s music scores for film and dance have been presented in festivals such as New York Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, Pomada Dance Festival Warsaw and PQ Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space, among many others. They are a PhD candidate in Arts and Computing at Goldsmiths College University of London where they research the application of biotechnologies to develop new ways of musical performance. They hold a degree in Medicine from University of Porto and a Masters in Music from Goldsmiths College London. In 2017 they were awarded a scholarship from the Musicboard Senat Berlin.

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ISSY WOOD  
*Study for 'ass midgets', 2020*  
Oil on linen  
30 x 24 x 2 cm

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ISSY WOOD  
*Unless you try*, 2020  
Oil on velvet  
100 x 100 x 5 cm

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ISSY WOOD  
*Europe! Fantasy!*, 2020  
Oil on linen  
140.5 x 100.5 x 4.5 cm

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ISSY WOOD  
*Untitled (small world), 2020*  
Oil on linen  
20 x 30 x 2 cm

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ISSY WOOD  
*Untitled (what I want), 2020*  
Oil on linen  
21 x 30 x 2 cm

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ISSY WOOD  
*Untitled (higher education), 2020*  
Oil on linen  
30 x 30 x 2 cm

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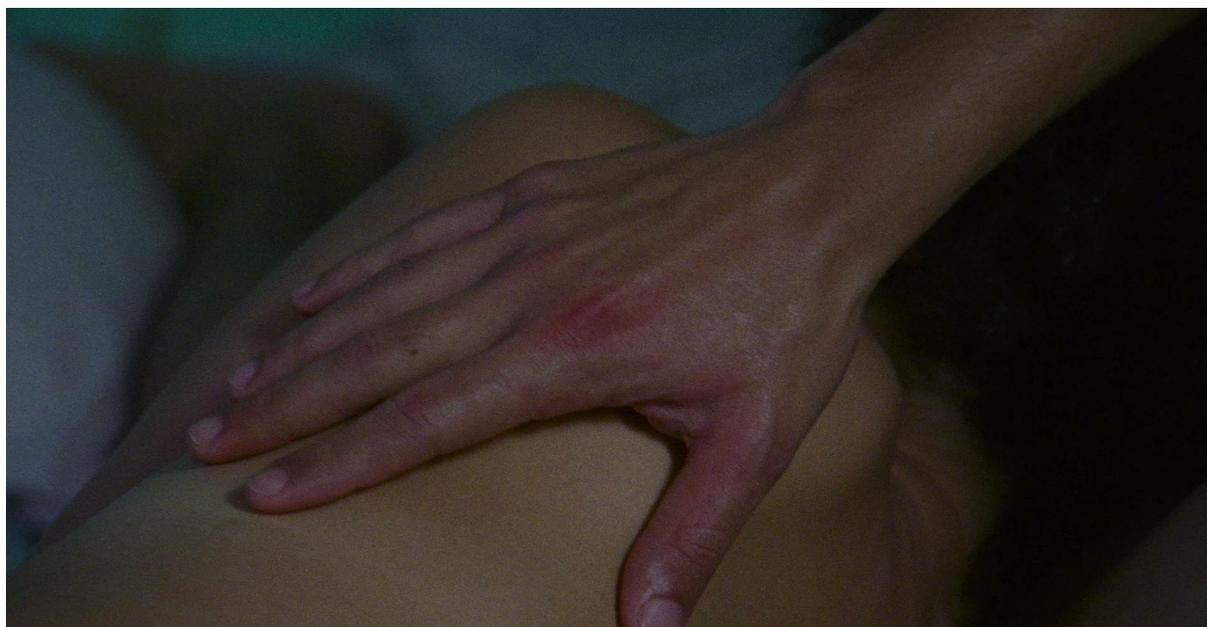
MIRE LEE

*Carriers, horizontal forms, 2020*

Plaster, resin, silicone, pvc hoses, fabric, electronic motors, motor circuit

4.5 x 6.5 m

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PEDRO NEVES MARQUES, HAUT  
*A Mordida (The Bite)*, 2018  
Double-channel film installation  
20 min

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Yong Xiang Li  
*I'm not in love (how to feed on humans)*, 2020  
Single-channel video  
27 min

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Yong Xiang LI  
*Bench (nothing is forgotten under the moon)*, 2020  
250(L)×86(W)×160(H)cm

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Yong Xiang Li

*Doors*, 2020

Oil and acrylic on gessoed panel, Mdf, Pine

260 x 160 x 50 cm

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Yong Xiang Li  
*The hike, a giant dog, 2020*  
Oil and acrylic on gessoed panel  
120 x 100 cm

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Yong Xiang Li  
*The hike, a giant*, 2020  
Oil and acrylic on gessoed panel  
120 x 100 cm

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## Breathing Through Skin

Alvin Li

### 0 - Sea Snakes (The Ones Rumored to Kill)

It is said that most species of sea snakes can breathe through their skin. These aquatic creatures are still vertebrates, possessing no gills, but with their miraculous skin—which provides 25% of the oxygen intake needed for survival—and one enormous lung, they need only swim up to the surface for a single giant breath every couple of hours.

Though rumored to be deadly, they are in fact less likely than land snakes to bite humans. Even when they do, they sometimes forget to inject their venom. Their bodies are sleek, almost eel-like, with a vertically flattened tail that functions as a paddle. Ophiologists believe these are survival adaptations that developed as they abandoned land for water.

If they were to meet their terrestrial sisters, what would ensue—entwine, bite, or fly?

### 1 - Vampires (The Ones Who Feed)

The monstrous body is always a construct and a projection, bearing the traces of historically specific othering processes. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the quintessential modern vampire novel, the eponymous Count Dracula embodies an eclectic range of traits—race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality—all of which were deemed threatening to British national identity at the time by (and within) fictional texts, sexual science, and psychopathology.<sup>1</sup> Whereas *Dracula* incarnated the phobias—particularly anti-Semitism—of the Victorian era, contemporary vampires like those in the *Vampire Chronicles* and *Twilight* series are no longer monstrous or even particularly distant from hegemonic identity: they are white, monogamous, purely aesthetic creatures (fun fact: also, oftentimes, collectors). This latter-day fantasy of the vampire entails an act of perhaps far greater violence than those of its 19th-century Gothic predecessors: the total erasure of otherness from representation.

In Yong Xiang Li's *I'm Not in Love (How to Feed on Humans)*, the artist restores the tired motif of the vampire, injecting it with a sense of queer warmth. In this freakish and playful narrative-film-cum-music video, a 386-year-old Asian vampire—*Vampy*—struts about town tending to his three lovers, or symbionts.<sup>2</sup> Apparently, his venom is not venomous at all, but instead grants pleasure and long life. His brows are adorned with rhinestones, not diamonds—a budget vampire,

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<sup>1</sup> See Jack Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Duke University Press: 1995

<sup>2</sup> We may note the influence of Octavia E. Butler's 2005 vampire novel *Fledgling* here. In this, Butler's final work, vampires are also conceived to live in consensual and mutually beneficial romantic relationships with multiple partners, which she too calls "symbionts." Whereas Butler's entry into the vampire genre centers on racial politics, Li's work affords more of a queer reading.

rather than the aristocratic “guardian of Western aesthetic culture” of Anne Rice’s humanistic interpretations.<sup>3</sup> And it’s not clear if he is the one in control in this foursome. During a date, Human Symbiont N, age 32, coaxes him into feeding on her so that she can receive an energy boost to excel at work. Meanwhile, a parallel storyline about a human girl having relationship problems unfolds alongside Vampy’s romances. By weaving the human and vampire worlds into a seamless whole, Li rescues the blood-thirsty creature from the parasitic dungeon to which it is conventionally relegated, and reinvents a benign kind of vampirism coexisting in symbiotic—and polyamorous—enmeshment with its human companions.

## 2 - Mosquitoes (The Ones Who Bite)

Mosquitoes are among the most disagreeable of species, to the human eye. When they become carriers of a lethal disease, as in the case of *Aedes aegypti* during the Zika virus epidemic that began in 2015, the nation of Brazil decided to wage total war against the species. While in São Paulo in 2016—the peak of the epidemic, as well as the focus of a resurgent neo-reactionary politics following the election of fascist presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro—Pedro Neves Marques witnessed the nation-wide campaign with their own eyes, and noticed something “terribly masculine” in its militant language.<sup>4</sup> During the epidemic, different laboratories began to develop genetically modified mosquitoes, particularly variants of the *Aedes aegypti*, as part of the fight against Zika. The British company Oxitec, for instance, built a “mosquito factory” in the state of São Paulo and conducted field trials in the region. Inside these factories, millions of mosquitoes are born every day—an army ready to be deployed across the country.

What interested Neves Marques about this, however, wasn’t genetics so much as the technology’s latent gender dynamics. Since only the female mosquito can carry and spread the virus by feeding, scientists began to modify the males by inserting a lethal gene into their genome, which upon mating they would pass onto the females—killing their offspring before they could reach the stage of reproduction or transmission. This approach to managing the mosquito population echoes the binary logic upon which the biopolitical management of human female reproduction and trans lives has rested for centuries. Through advanced biotechnologies, the monstification and erasure of certain bodies has evidently continued, if not intensified, becoming ever stealthier.

In the double-channel installation *A Mordida (The Bite)*, Neves Marques develops their research and observations into a work of horror fiction, exploiting the genre to turn the horror away from the “monster”—the mosquitos—and onto the technologies of monster-making deployed by a xenophobic regime. Breaking down genres by straddling horror, science fiction, and queer drama alike, *A Mordida (The Bite)* destabilizes and challenges a range of deep-rooted epistemological binaries: us and others, male and female, human and non-human. Finally, it points to intimacy and care as the way forward. As the artist writes in one of the poems inscribed into the work: “sex as

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Grady, “Vampire Culture,” *Monster Theory*, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis & London, 1996

<sup>4</sup> The artist’s own words. <http://www.pedronevesmarques.com/viralpoems.html>

care / in times of crisis / among friends / among enemies / polyamory / see the mosquito resting on the net.”

### 3 - Carriers (The Ones Who Swallow)

When I first met Mire Lee, I told her that her work reminded me of certain characteristics associated with vorarephilia, more commonly known as vore. Voraephilia is scientifically defined as “an infrequently presenting paraphilia, characterized by the erotic desire to consume or be consumed by another person or creature ... Because this sexual interest cannot be enacted in real life due to physical and/or legal restraints, vorarephilic fantasies are often composed in text or illustrations to be shared with other members of this subculture via the Internet.”<sup>5</sup> I was first introduced to the concept by a painter named Sara. According to her, the online subculture’s community is, curiously, mostly made up of women. For my friend Sara, once you set aside the initial revulsion and consider its implications, there is something romantic about this impossible desire to fully consume another, to stay together with the other—inside your body, alive, breathing your breath, for as long as the body sustains. For Lee, who is more interested in the ontological implications of the concept, vore is deeply “abstract, infantile, and even asexual,” as it is linked to the earliest memories of being in the mother’s womb, and to the childhood fantasy of entering a huge animal’s belly (e.g. the enormous whale “*Monstro*” from *Pinocchio*).<sup>6</sup>

This total erasure of distance between one and the other, this being fully absorbed by another, serves as an analogy for Mire Lee’s relationship to her work. Often employing both hard and wet materials such as glycerin, silicone, and machinery, animated by minimal, kinetic technologies like motors and pumps, Lee’s working process is always slippery—denying her the firm grip so important to traditional sculptural practice, and instead demanding her submission. “When combined with execution on a large scale, because many of my pieces use electric power, at times I have a feeling my body is being sucked and consumed into the landscape of the work.” For me, Lee’s ghostly apparatuses simulate the raw, unruly affects and drives that can make or break the body and psyche. *Carriers: horizontal forms* is a new work Lee has created for this exhibition. Two monstrous bodies, interconnected, recline above and below the surface of a massive cement plinth, periodically exchanging viscous matter with each other. The work, consistent with Lee’s oeuvre, tends to trigger an eclectic range of simultaneous affects: fear, disgust, confusion, temptation, admiration... Sensory overload drowns the reasoning faculty; words become meaningless. Instead you approach it, bend, kneel, stretch and crawl, submit your body to the encounter—just like the artist’s own process of creation. You, I, it, her become one.

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<sup>5</sup> Amy D. Lykins and James M. Cantor, “Vorarephilia: A Case Study in Masochism and Erotic Consumption,” *Arch Sex Behav* 43 (2014): 181–86.

<sup>6</sup> Conversation with the artist. May 2020

#### 4 - Bodies of Water (The Ones Who Care)

A bidet with a masturbation-friendly water jet, an ass midget butt plug, a BDSM lamb, a showerhead...The paintings Issy Wood contributes to this exhibition zoom in on our erotic encounters with other bodies, whether inert or in motion.

Our common association of showers with cleansing traffics in the arbitrary binary of purity and abjection. But there is always the sinkhole—an orifice of sorts—that leads to another side; the dirt can go anywhere except nowhere. Let us instead think about the shower as a hot place. It's literally hot, as water evaporates into steam. It's also always a sensuous experience, as you stroke your own body, casting off dead skin—to say nothing of what you might do with the company you sometimes bring into it (a toy, another body, more than one if you wish).

As one further step outside our anthropocentric perspective, we may think of the shower as an encounter between one watery body and another—60% of the human body, after all, is water. The philosopher Astrida Neimanis writes:

“To rethink embodiment as watery stirs up considerable trouble for dominant Western and humanist understandings of embodiment, where bodies are figured as discrete and coherent individual subjects, and as fundamentally autonomous... We are literally implicated in other animal, vegetable, and planetary bodies that materially course through us, replenish us, and draw upon our own bodies as their wells: human bodies ingest reservoir bodies, while reservoir bodies are slaked by rain bodies, rain bodies absorb ocean bodies, ocean bodies aspirate fish bodies, fish bodies are consumed by whale bodies – which then sink to the seafloor to rot and be swallowed up again by the ocean's dark belly.”<sup>7</sup>

Here we go full circle and dive back into the sea, where the deadly sea snakes that don't always bite roam freely—at least before they are killed by even deadlier toxicants released from human waste. Learning to breathe through skin is about an erotic, affective and ethical engagement with others in the world, beyond the trappings of monstified difference. With every such breath the world is remade.

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<sup>7</sup> Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017