

# KERSTIN BRÄTSCH

[PELE'S CURSE]



The Arts Club of Chicago  
15 September – 19 December 2015



*Towards an Alphabet*  
(Unstable Talismanic Rendering Dino),  
Kerstin Brätsch, 2015, digital file

**Pele's Curse**

...is wind, rain, fire, ocean, wave forms, and cloud forms.<sup>1</sup>

It is an established recognition that abstraction may yield to figuration. Leonardo da Vinci acknowledged that in accidental paint splotches, one could readily see animals, battles, clouds, and seas. It was the artist's challenge, then, to use skill and imagination to make such images visible as well as significant.<sup>2</sup> Similar convictions were held by Max Ernst; the surrealist quoted Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting* in 1925, when he realized that some over-scrubbed floorboards could produce the hallucinations and amorous imaginings that he sought as inspiration for an evocative painting technique.<sup>3</sup> These pathways of thought, however, have long been out of fashion. Abstraction, as it was conceived at mid-century, was to be purified and cleansed of its associative value. An art of form and self-reflection, painting was to be about color, field, and frame. While such stringent and self-defeating definitions of painting have now also been left far behind, remnants of the feeling that abstraction should remain pure and uninflected persist.

German painter Kerstin Brätsch, who in 2009 came to prominence in the United States after her inclusion in the New Museum's first generational triennial *Younger than Jesus*, is not afraid to look back into the eyes of the beast. Along with a very distinctive painting idiom, which features a graded brushstroke (fig. 1) in striped, scalloped, or jagged patterns and glowing orbs, Brätsch has embraced a contamination of her form that comes not only through associative and ideational meanings, but also through collaboration and hybridity. Established as a solo artist, as well as a member of such collectives as DAS INSTITUT, founded with Adele Röder in 2007, and KAYA, founded with Debo Eilers in 2010, Brätsch rarely exhibits paintings in their unadulterated form. Instead, she pierces, performs, combines, hooks, leans, wears, quotes, perforates, animates, repeats, accumulates, collages, fragments, straps, splices, conceals, corporealizes, and layers them. Even with so

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from Kerstin Brätsch, "Pele's Curse\_Unstable Talismanic Rendering Series (with gratitude to master marbler Dirk Lange), Expulsion Version," 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, "Chapter CCCXLIX—Universality of Painting; a Precept," *A Treatise on Painting*, 1802 English edition published by S. Gosnell, London. Trans. John Francis Rigaud reprinted as an ebook via Gutenberg.org. Accessed 7 July 2015. Although this collection of manuscripts is no longer believed to be authored by Leonardo, its impact in the history of art is no less diminished.

<sup>3</sup> Max Ernst, "On Frottage," originally printed in "Au delà de la Peinture," *Cahiers d'Art*, Trans. Dorothea Tanning. (New York: Wittenborn, 1948) and reprinted in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 428.



**Fig. 1**  
**Kerstin Brätsch's studio, 2014.**  
 Photograph: GayLen Gerber

much violence, Brätsch's paintings radiate both mischievousness and authority.

At The Arts Club of Chicago, Brätsch brings together a trio of investigations that begin with a fundamental desire to break apart painting through visual, linguistic, and methodological associations. Inventing new techniques, Brätsch has made paintings that are not paintings anymore, or paintings in forms we do not initially recognize—monumental marbled papers, baked antique glass with sliced agate, and stained glass “brushstrokes.” All three versions of painting require the collaboration of expert artisans, who ironically serve to deskill the artist of a certain facility with her medium. The “making strange” of painting is accomplished in part through a turn to craft—stained glass and paper marbling—but also in Brätsch's willingness to allow associative meaning through the recognition of figuration in abstraction, as well as a systematic refusal of conventional modes of presentation.

There is an alchemical fascination in Brätsch's move from painting to glass; she calls attention to the magic inherent in the transformation of a base substance like sand, and its consequent adoption of qualities shared with painting, namely transparency and light. Through bilingual association, her poetry points further to the geological heat of agate and volcano, emphasizing the evocative aspects of language over the expository:

Men started fire by the sea  
 Achat  
 Adlerstein  
 Alabaster

Melted sand  
Augenstein

discovered glass  
Beichte vor dem Stein

Bring the glass back to the Sea  
Bewegung des Steins

A Volcano is made of glass [LAVA]  
Blitzsteine <sup>4</sup>



**Fig. 2**  
**Single Brushstroke**  
**in lead (from *Glow Rod***  
***Tanning With / Various***  
***Strokes*), Kerstin Brätsch,**  
**2015, baked Artista glass,**  
**leadline, antique glass**

Photograph: Uli Holz

The “antique glass” works exhibited at The Arts Club (fig. 3) draw on imagery from her collective KAYA and incorporate leftover agates that were preserved by master glassmaker Urs Rickenbach, who had worked with Sigmar Polke on his final installation at Grossmünster Zürich. The “brushstrokes” (fig. 2), also made with Rickenbach, translate Brätsch’s particular brushwork as solid forms that come to look like shells or waves, simultaneously creature and pattern. Isolated and framed in transparency, these single strokes recall Brätsch’s paintings on layered Mylar, a signature format for the artist.

On a parallel track, Brätsch has worked with Dirk Lange, a master marbler from Germany, to devise a method that allows traditional paper marbling to succeed on a grand scale (fig. 4). These monumental works play on the connections between the technique of marbling, done by dropping ink into a basin of cargeenan, and the radical rotation of the painting canvas to the horizontal plane by Jackson Pollock in the 1940s. Brätsch, however, allows the orbs and constellations in the resulting pigment formations to accrue meanings, using language and form to draw to mind Pele, the Hawaiian volcano goddess, or Japanese anime, bodily orifices, and esoteric dinosaurs. Brätsch further transitions from glass to paper through wordplay that, like Duchamp’s maladroït puns between English and French, often relies on her translations from German to English. She has explained that she mistakenly referred to these marblings as marbles, but now has used that confusion to understand how a tiny glass ball is, like the marbling ink, also a “drop” of color, a tear, or an occult amulet. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Excerpt from Kerstin Brätsch, “Pele’s Curse\_Unstable Talismanic Rendering Series (with gratitude to master marbler Dirk Lange), Flood Version,” 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Allison Katz, “What is at Hand? Transcript of a lecture delivered by Kerstin Brätsch, Rutgers University, 24 February, 2014, quoted in Kerstin Brätsch, *Unstable Talismanic Rendering* (NY: Gavin Brown’s enterprise, 2014), p. 201.

At The Arts Club, Brätsch further enables the corruption of her medium and authorial voice through a collaborative turn. She has engaged Chicago-based artist Gaylen Gerber to help orchestrate the exhibition. Working together to balance visceral and intellectual aspects, the two artists have varied the framing of the work to heighten the relationships between elements in a way that emphasizes an embodied engagement and a more open form. Garments designed and worn in a previous performance by Berlin-based artist Mariechen Danz further animate the rooms. Made from fabric drawn from Brätsch's marblings, the garments appear on corporealized metal stands designed for this exhibition. Danz's original performance, entitled *Clouded in Veins: Possible Readings of Kerstin Brätsch's Unstable Talismanic Renderings*, 2015, and set to music and vocals by her band UNMAP, is shown as a small-format video. Her gestures and songs approach Brätsch's marblings as geographic and anatomical territories, and like Brätsch's own poetry, point toward a variety of possible associations. Always seeking to expand, pervert, and challenge her considerable talents, Brätsch presents the exhibition as a space of cross-fertilization, where purity is eschewed in favor of fortuitous mutation.

**The format of this catalogue, like Brätsch's career so far, aims** to include and highlight the work of others, along with her own. We are grateful to Ei Arakawa, Tomoo Arakawa, Nhu Duong, Debo Eilers, Allison Katz, Adele Röder, and Sergei Tcherepnin for their contributions, and especially Mariechen Danz and Gaylen Gerber for becoming our interlocutors. Thanks also to Marta Fontolan at Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, and Esther Quiroga at Gió Marconi, Milan, for helping with logistical details. The lenders to this exhibition were exceedingly generous as they allowed their fragile works to travel long distances. As always, we are grateful to The Arts Club staff, especially curatorial assistant Yechen Zhao, and Gallery Manager Adam Mikos, for stewarding the exhibition at key moments, as well as our catalogue designers Sonnenzimmer. Daniel Chew helped the artist to produce the phenomenal collages on these pages with very short notice. The artist would like to further acknowledge Dirk Lange, Urs Rickenbach, Gavin Brown, Gió Marconi, and the installation team at The Arts Club of Chicago. It is, of course, to Kerstin Brätsch that we express our most sincere appreciation. Her fierce intelligence and intuition show distinctly in every detail. ●



**Fig. 3**  
**PELE'S Tears ...is Hot Stone Red Eyes Red Stone,**  
**Kerstin Brätsch, 2014, luster and enamel on**  
**antique glass, with agates, 38 ½ x 24 ½ inches**

Photograph: Thomas Mueller



**Fig. 4**  
**Unstable Talismanic Rendering, Pele's Curse Nr. 24**  
**(with gratitude to master marbler Dirk Lange),**  
**Kerstin Brätsch, 2014, Ink and solvent on paper,**  
**108 x 72 inches**

Photograph: Thomas Mueller

**Adele Röder**

THE ONE  
WHO KNOWS  
HOW TO WRAP  
HIM/HERSELF  
WITH A SINGLE  
PIECE OF  
CLOTH LOOKS  
THE MOST  
BEAUTIFUL.  
BRUTAL,  
COSMIC AND  
RAW.

**Mariechen Danz**

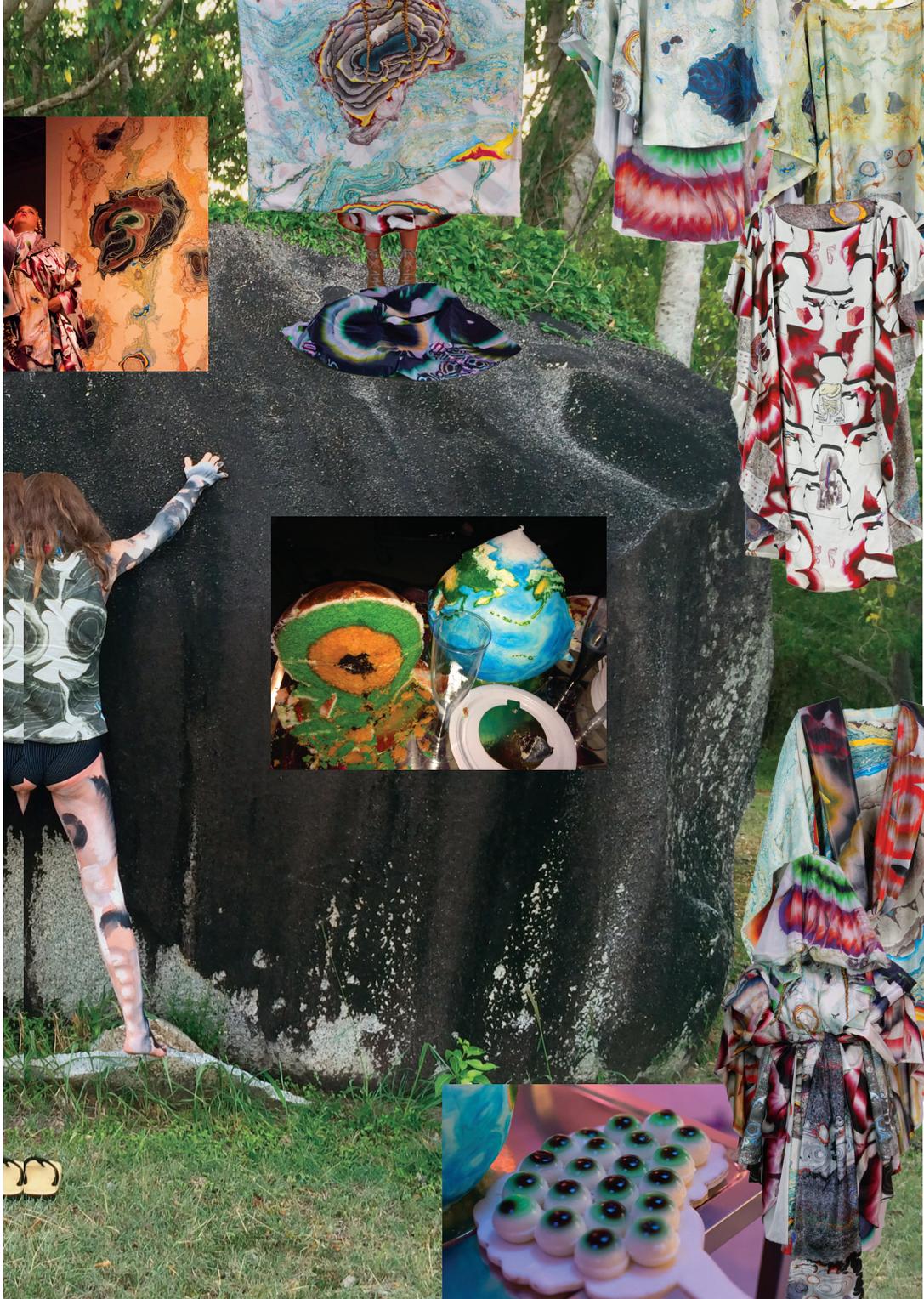
NO MEMORY  
NO LEARNING,  
ORGAN INPUT  
OUTPUT  
SYSTEM

from "Chalk" by UNMAP











**My first encounter with Kerstin Brätsch followed her 2012 participation** on behalf of DAS INSTITUT (her collaborative partnership with Adele Röder) in the performance *IWAKI ODORI (Sunbathe Museum)* at the Art Institute of Chicago, with Ei Arakawa, UNITED BROTHERS (Ei Arakawa and Tomoo Arakawa), Nhu Duong, Jeffrey Rosen, and Sergei Tcherepnin. It was part of a series of projects by Ei and UNITED BROTHERS related to Japan's nuclear crisis and its relevance, or irrelevance, in the arts. The performance employed ultraviolet tanning tubes as well as visual, audio, and semi-traditional Japanese dance elements. On my way out of the performance, Brätsch pushed me against a wall and frisked me. Apparently, she was attempting to recover from the audience works by Nhu, which had been borrowed as props for the performance but were never intended as souvenirs. It was an inauspicious, no-nonsense, and not especially pleasant introduction. Brätsch's seeming indifference—also there in the UNITED BROTHERS' video *SUNBATHE MUSEUM*, recorded at the museum earlier that week—was stunningly effective. These two experiences informed my initial understanding of her practice.

Not too long after, in the spring of that year, I found myself working on an exhibition with DAS INSTITUT, Allison Katz, and John Henderson at Family Business, a flexible exhibition space initiated by Maurizio Cattelan and Massimiliano Gioni, sited then amid a contiguous row of galleries in Chelsea. Among its immediate

neighbors were Gagosian Gallery, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, and Paula Cooper Gallery. Family Business is a parody—a humorous exaggeration for effect—but it was also staffed in Chelsea by the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College; it must be seen in relation to institutional critique, and to realism. This transitory institution forwards the proposition that for art to be effective requires only a bit of deference and a maybe a sense of humor.

John organized the exhibition and invited DAS INSTITUT and myself to participate; Kerstin and Adele then invited Allison. I offered to do the exhibition scheme for the other artworks and activities in and around the exhibition. This entailed tinting the windows and lights with amber and blue gels and painting the walls a yellowish hue somewhat akin to the colors of John's bronze Cast paintings. The effect was palpable and created uncertainty over where the differences perceived

**Nhu Duong**

**FASHION  
ALWAYS SEEKS  
OUT THE  
FUNCTIONAL  
EDGES,  
BALANCING  
ON THE FINE  
LINE BETWEEN  
FUNCTION AND  
DECORATION.**

were contained. It made it apparent that everything, including the entire exhibition context that would normally be perceived as the background for expression, remained in the foreground of perception and understanding.

John contributed two Casts, one large and one quite small, which we installed on opposite walls, to the left and right of the entrance, and adjacent to the curtain wall of windows. This left the main wall and the center of the gallery empty. Kerstin, Adele, and Allison had just returned from Europe, and entered this in-progress situation a little jet-lagged. Originally, they had considered something like scattering fruit on the floor of the gallery. By the time they arrived that afternoon the plan had been adjusted: they would make confectionary portraits of Kerstin and Adele.

I was immediately struck by their friendliness, humor, and comfort in this situation—it felt closer to making an exhibition on the street than in a gallery. In fact, the doors that occupied half of the gallery's façade were kept open during the installation; the continuous plane of the floor and sidewalk was treated as a staging area. While they initially acknowledged John and myself, Kerstin, Adele, and Allison went about their business seemingly oblivious to our presence. This sounds off-putting, but the situation was familiar and intimate and we were ubiquitous in the process.

The next morning, Allison came by the gallery first. Adele followed with stacks of boxed donuts and two large buckets of marzipan, along with brushes, food coloring, and confectionery decorations. Kerstin arrived last, and the three of them set up a workstation on the concrete, sharing chores, rolling the marzipan into flat sheets and decorating it. As I remember it, Allison primarily painted the portraits of Kerstin and Adele, who, in turn, decorated and positioned the marzipan sheets. They started by siting the portraits, and, to my delight, chose to place each at the margins of the gallery, close to and much like we had done with the Casts. Interestingly, they measured themselves by lying on the ground and outlining their silhouettes, so that the portraits were literally life-size. This kind of verbatim use of scale was reinforced later as Allison measured her friends' features directly against their faces, before transferring the measurements unaltered to the marzipan.

The gallery was filled with confectionery items, brushes, rolling pins, and photos of both K. and A., as well as numerous images of Alexander McQueen's designs, which were the inspiration for the decoration of the marzipan garments. It was the evening before the opening, and the portraits were complete: they were amazing, funny, poignant, political, and real. We left late, planning to clean up in the morning.

I arrived at Family Business close to 11:00, and was surprised to see Allison, Kerstin, and Adele again rolling, painting, and

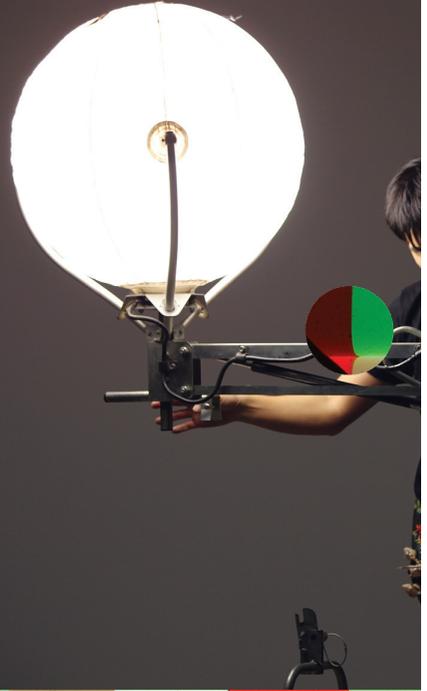
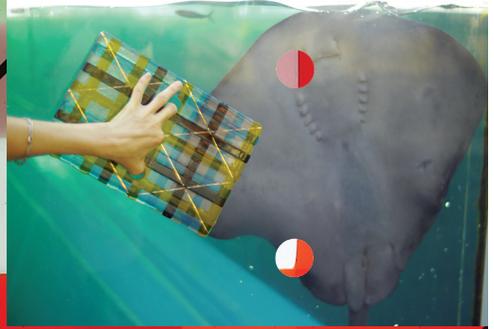
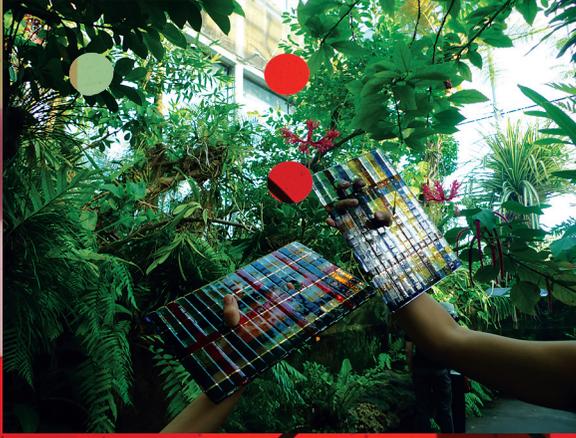
**UNITED BROTHERS**

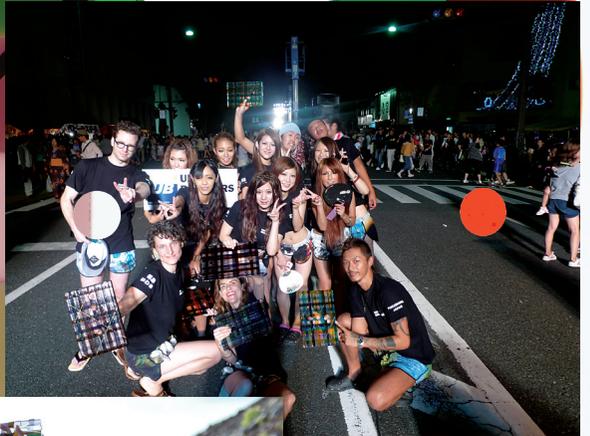
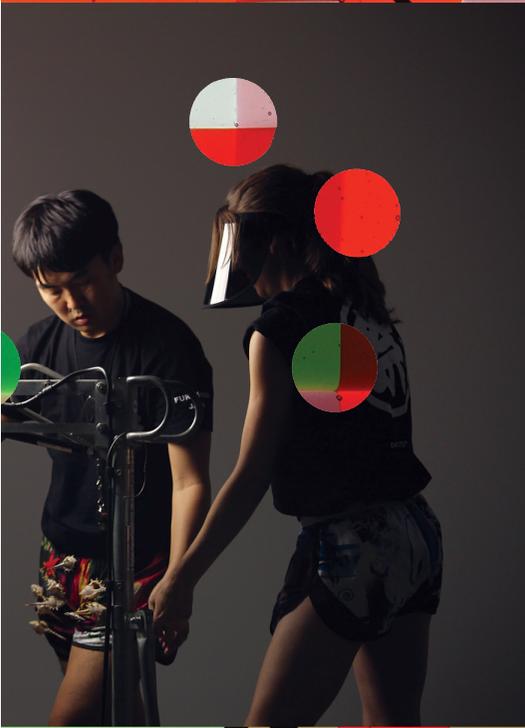
POWERFUL  
OBJECTS IN THE  
WORLD  
COME TO ME  
LET US CONTROL  
THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
POWER SOURCE  
DON'T LISTEN  
TO ANYONE  
THERE IS  
SOMETHING  
TO FEAR  
MYSTERIOUS  
SISTERS TAKE  
OVER THE  
WORLD BAD  
PREMONITION  
THIS IS TOO  
GOOD

"Bad Collectors,"  
from Fukushima Android,  
Episode 2:  
The West Coast Affair









decorating. I couldn't understand why they were there, except for perhaps a certain artistic anxiety. But as it turned out, the marzipan that had been positioned vertically for Kerstin's portrait had fallen overnight and they were in the process of remaking the work. All without a hint of frustration and only hours before the exhibition's opening and a scheduled conversation between Kerstin and Massimiliano at Gavin Brown's enterprise. I learned a lot that afternoon, about them individually and collectively, as artistic roles were interchanged and the new portrait was added to each of the existing ones, making each now a double portrait.

I was in New York again during the closing week of the exhibition, and I went by Family Business to see what was left of the portraits after weeks open to the environment. To my surprise, the marzipan was intact and had hardened to the touch. I texted Kerstin to say hello and float the possibility that the portraits might be conserved. She had seen the work earlier, was equally pleased that it had survived, and liked the idea of conserving it, but was at a loss for how this might be achieved. To make matters worse, we were approaching Memorial Day weekend and everyone was leaving town. I called Sean Moyer, a friend who has a company that assists with artist's installations, to ask whether he might help. He agreed, but because of the upcoming weekend proposed that we do it the following afternoon.

Sean and his partner came by the gallery and after looking at the marzipan they thought that we might be able to scoop the portraits off the floor and position them on a new support for transit and conservation. Kerstin was unavailable, Allison was in Europe, but Adele was in town and came by the gallery and she and Sean began to try to pry the portraits from the floor. Although the surface of the marzipan was dry to the touch, underneath it was still a paste. As a result, the portraits came off the floor in pieces, much as they had been assembled. Adele and Sean arranged them on the cardboard support in a pragmatic fashion, with little regard to their original

**Allison Katz**

**July 14 2015 2:38 a.m. "hey dear great to hear your voice today."**

**"ART IS THE LAST  
ORAL TRADITION  
ALIVE IN THE  
WEST. IT IS THE  
ONLY SORT OF  
ORAL TRADITION  
THAT IS NOT  
LOST, AND  
THAT'S REALLY  
ONE OF THE  
MAIN REASONS  
I AM AN ARTIST,  
BECAUSE I  
BELIEVE IN  
THAT KIND OF  
LEARNING AND  
IN THAT KIND OF  
TRADITION."**

from a 1987 interview with Francesco Clemente

orientation. The many relocated pieces fit onto the support in a scattered and dismembered fashion. They were taken away to storage and we began to talk about the possibility of doing a subsequent, follow-up, exhibition.

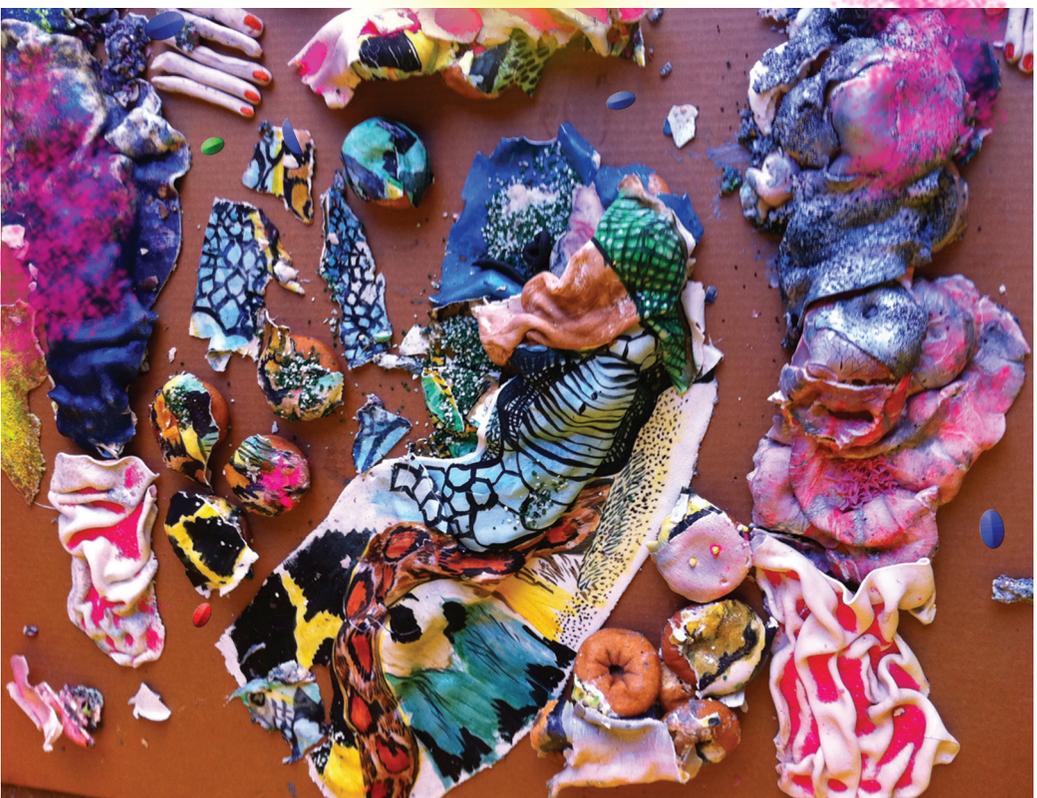
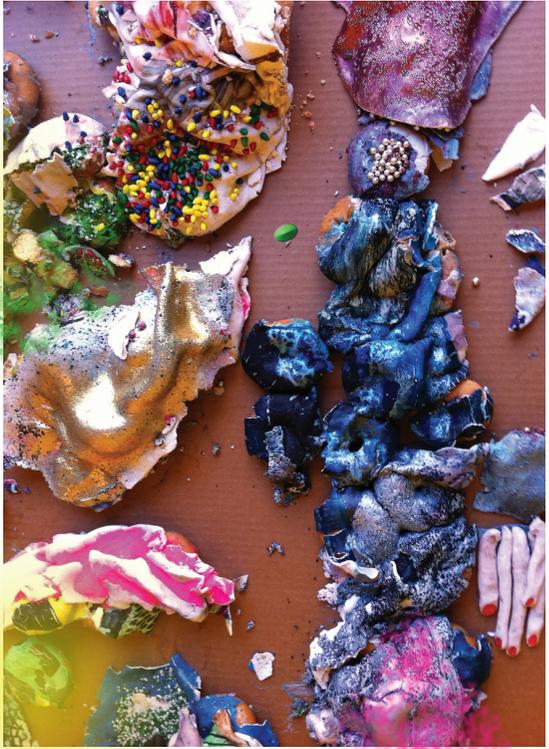
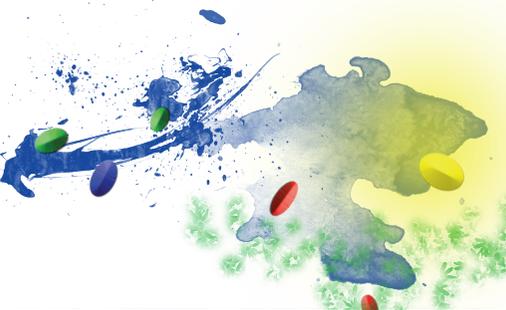
The opportunity to show the portrait(s) again came in the form of the monographic exhibition *Gaylen Gerber* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago during the spring of the following year. Under the auspices of my practice, it was included alongside the work of Cady Noland, Jim Nutt, and H. C. Westermann, among others—and again in a highly hued situation. It was agreed that the marzipan artwork was complete as it existed and that the combination of the two double portraits into one collected work, informed by the residual divides, cuts, and mutilations incurred as the portraits were reconfigured, would be the artwork *Scattered A, Scattered K*. The recognition and understanding of *Scattered A, Scattered K* in its present form of course reveals aspects of its original character.

Brutality aside, the expansion of DAS INSTITUT (already a collaborative partnership) to include “and Allison Katz,” and the move from single to double to a collected portrait(s) is telling; it is a strategy reiterated throughout Kerstin Brätsch’s practice. Her first “solo” show at Gavin Brown’s enterprise in 2012, *Maler, den Pinsel prüfend*, positioned her among a now-familiar set of collaborative elements: Ei Arakawa and Tomoo Arakawa (UNITED BROTHERS); Sergei Tcherepnin; Adele Röder (DAS INSTITUT); KAYA (her collaborative work with Debo Eilers); GianCarlo Montebello (a jewelry designer that worked with Man Ray); numerous vernacular Japanese artifacts, including the Iwaki Odori, with costumes from Blacky (Tomoo’s tanning salon in Fukushima); and agate shards, souvenirs from Sigmar Polke’s glass project for Grossmünster Zürich.

In similar fashion, her subsequent exhibition at the same gallery in 2014, *Unstable Talismanic Rendering*, included master German paper marbler Dirk Lange. Brätsch’s collaboration with Lange combined the cosmological with various understandings of beauty, exemplifying her work’s ability to invoke connections between the material, emotional, and psychological functions of art.

The exhibition also included work by Mariechen Danz, who designed garments that incorporated prints of the marbled paintings as well as Brätsch’s earlier paintings on Mylar. The artists’ ongoing discussion about the role of hierarchy in various historical systems of imaging inspired the costumes and the performance “Clouded in Veins: Possible Readings of Kerstin Brätsch’s *Unstable Talismanic Renderings*”. Danz, along with musician Alex Stolze (Danz and Stolze collaborate musically as UNMAP), wore the









garments, performed their own score, and used the layers of information in the garments as a guide for their actions.

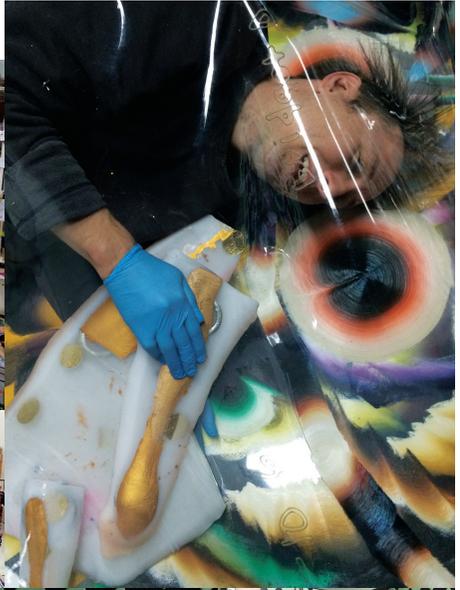
It seems apparent that the distinction between the individual and the collective is used by Brätsch to underscore a sense of ambiguity or ambivalence about the world, even as an appreciation of multiplicity and community are central to her interests. From her framing of authorship as a network of individuals and expressions to the way that she often literally loads her brush with a graded scale of colors and values, she presents a complexity of interpretations that frustrates easy description. Her attitude of cosmic resignation also goes a long way towards understanding her denial of edification. She asks instead that we determine our own way out of her work's myriad associations. These feel surreal, substantive, ethereal—an unwieldy combination of spirituality and popular culture.

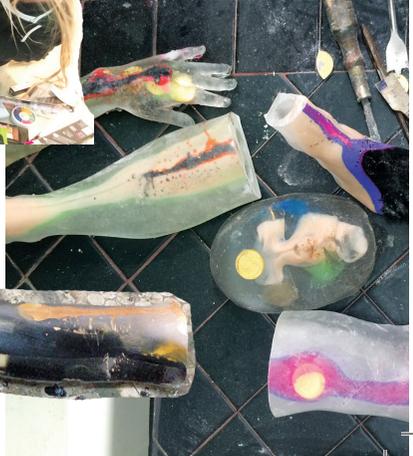
Until the Renaissance we associated artistic activity with discipline and repetition rather than individual expression. Artistic production represented an archetypal body that reflected communal questions of completeness, balance, labor, and normalcy, framed by similarity rather than difference. Expression in our culture now relies on, and benefits from, the strength of a single author and an individual representation of reality. Like others addressing these issues, Brätsch brings together artists and artworks in a representative situation that retains the character and distinctions of the individuals but also raises the expectation that the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts. In an attempt to make visible the things she is framing, she often relates elements uneasily—she disturbs conventional methods of display rather than seamlessly synthesizing elements. This has the effect of making all the elements more distinct and allows her to retain numerous simultaneous positions within a single practice.

The tide of history would seem to be against Brätsch's sensibility, if only because as a culture we are inclined to attribute expression to individuals. Even the "vernacular"—by definition, ordinary communal expression—is now generally discussed in terms of individual artists and their framing of it. If we consider the works of Andy Warhol, Mike Kelley, David Hammons, or Rosemarie Trockel, for example, as representing aspects of the vernacular, the representation of community is a large part of what is explored under the auspices of their practices. This is also why their works, as with so many artists', are often more effectively seen in number, and even as a part of a related field of expression. Brätsch's work is exceptional, but also seems most itself and most individual when understood in the context of others.●

**Debo Eilers**

## MOONCH









SUDDENLY I MADE A DISCOVERY WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLE, YET IT SEEMED TO ME AT THE TIME QUITE FAMILIAR AND OBVIOUS. I FOUND MYSELF RECOGNIZING THAT THESE ACTIVE SOUND-FIGURES WERE ALIVE, EVEN INTELLIGENT. IN THE NORMAL WORLD, LIVING THINGS ARE PERCEIVED AS CHANGING PATTERNS OF VISIBLE AND TANGIBLE CHARACTERS. IN THIS MAD WORLD, WHICH WAS COMING TO SEEM TO ME QUITE HOMELY, PATTERNS NOT OF COLOUR AND SHAPE BUT OF SOUND FORMED THE PERCEPTIBLE BODIES OF LIVING THINGS. WHEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT I HAD FALLEN INTO A LAND OF "PROGRAM MUSIC" I WAS MOMENTARILY DISGUSTED. HERE WAS A WHOLE WORLD THAT VIOLATED THE TRUE CANONS OF MUSICAL ART! THEN I REMINDED MYSELF THAT THIS MUSIC WAS NOT MERELY TELLING BUT ACTUALLY LIVING ITS STORY. IN FACT IT WAS NOT ART BUT LIFE. SO I GAVE REIN TO MY INTEREST.

### Mariechen Danz

Mariechen Danz, born 1980 in Dublin, Ireland, lives and works in Berlin. In drawings, sculptures, costumes and performances, Danz takes communication and the transmission of knowledge as a starting point, placing the body at the center of her practice. Her work has been featured in institutions such as the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Kunsthaus Bregenz; New Museum, New York; and GAK (Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst), Bremen. She is the recent recipient of the Karl Schmidt-Rotluff Prize (2014-2016) and the Villa Romana Fellowship (2013). The Berlin-based band UNMAP, a collaboration between Mariechen Danz and Alex Stolze, together with Matthias Geserick and Thomas Fietz, released their debut album *Pressures* in December 2013 on Sinnbus Records. Danz incorporates their songs into her performances, fragmenting and rearranging them specifically for each installation or event. <https://soundcloud.com/sinnbus/unmapchalk-1>

### Nhu Duong

Born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam as the daughter of a kung-fu master and a tailor, Nhu Duong immigrated to Sweden at the age of seven. Through the progressive use of materials and appropriation of traditional craftsmanship, Nhu Duong creates assemblages that play with both perception and functionality of clothing.

In 2010, Nhu received a H&M Prize as Emerging Talent of the Year at the Swedish ELLE AWARDS. Working beyond seasons and experimenting with new ways to present and produce fashion, Nhu extends her practice through numerous and independent projects, collaborating with artists such as DAS INSTITUT, UNITED BROTHERS, Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff, and Nik Kosmas (AIDS-3D). Nhu has participated in exhibitions at Kunststhal Zürich; Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg; the Art Institute of Chicago; Family Business, New York; Villa Romana, Florence; Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles; Mathew Gallery, Berlin; and New Theater, Berlin.

### Debo Eilers

A “seemingly endless” parade of “small defeats” and “low-order delights”, this Texas-born “New York staple,” is a tad theatrical for many tastes. Which only confirms his sculptures in their “unhurried formality” punctuated by “bursts of flavor.” — Bosko Blagojevic

### DAS INSTITUT

(Kerstin Brätsch and Adele Röder) since 2007

The project: A massive multiplication (and therefore creation, obfuscation, and perpetual annihilation) of the self. The basis (or rather the necessary fiction—or rather *the door to the maze*) being Kerstin Brätsch and Adele Röder. Begin, then, here, now, with them. “Begin, epebe, by perceiving the idea of this invention...”<sup>1</sup> Kerstin Brätsch. *Glow Rod Tanning with....* The subject: the suffering of painting. The aim: to cast a damning light on painting.<sup>2</sup> A painting always asks, craves, to “be in the right light” (to find its place under the sun...). But imagine a Vermeer hanging in a garage: It would suffer. The transparent paintings are exposed to artificial light—to aggressive *light*.<sup>3</sup> Backstage light.

They are scrutinized and dissected. And, as in an x-ray, each painting MUST fail—fail its beauty—because nothing is hidden. Adele Röder. *COMCORRÖDER*. *En-Lightening / En-Visioning / En-Signing* “How to overcome the rigidity of fabric, it’s inanimate material being, regular and abstract, and unfold its possible forms projected onto a woman’s body [a *world’s surface?*] How to obtain plastic effects that can highlight, without the use of touch, the metric features of weave, thickness, weight and color? *How to proceed from the idea of De-Sign towards the idea of En-Sign?*”<sup>4</sup>

1 ... this invented world, / The inconceivable idea of the sun.” (cf. being in the right light) | 2 Poussin on Caravaggio, “to destroy painting” | 3 There are also cryptic aggressors in the paintings: hair, fishbone, fluff, spines... | 4 pirate copied from Antonella Huber

### Allison Katz

Allison Katz is an artist and writer based in London. Katz’s work features recurring images and layered motifs such as monkeys, profiles, heads of lettuce and black pears, which collapse distinctions between foreground and background, freely switching guises between subject and pattern, original and copy. Autobiography forms the basis of her choices. That which is felt, heard and seen is not fragmentary and separate; it belongs together as “painting” (which also includes ceramics, murals, sculpture, graphics and essays), as that which can produce a hold or effect on a body in the moment. She considers how a work of art can be incoming meanwhile exiting both itself and a space, how a voice can be thrown or transcribed, and the conceptual and material distinction between announcement, rehearsal and main act. Forthcoming interviews will be published in *The White Review* and *Border Crossings*.

### KAYA

(Debo Eilers and Kerstin Brätsch) since 2010

It starts with a stage, lit from underneath. The figure on top could be imagined standing upright, but is presently laying down, too tired from the performance to continue. Our apprehension of the performer shifts as we are asked to observe its remnants, dissect what has been left behind, read the traces of life still visible after its collapse. The stage becomes an operating table; here lies KAYA. Imagined as a painting from its conception, the work sustains this identity in different ways incorporating the medium either as base, frame, or background. A violent crashing together of the work of Kerstin Brätsch and Debo Eilers. A painting become monster. The real girl Kaya, now aged 18, is a starting point to the project, but the collaboration KAYA exists in a completely different paradigm where the energies of the different collaborations crucial to it take shape. Going beyond the mere labor of the two artists the work reflects a host of other relationships (a community, stitched together) that adds to its growing body. Not only involving people brought in from the outside, the work also includes within itself a portion of the institution, be it a museum or gallery, as part of its process.

### Adele Röder

born 1980, Germany  
 Friends  
 A Black Oven  
 The Institute  
 Image collection, pralines, aqua refreshment spray  
 DAS INSTITUT  
 STARLINE Necessary Couture  
 Psychic rendering / Reclaiming the disembodied / The Connoisseur  
 COMCORRÖDER  
 Projection  
 onto  
 Fabric, Personalised clothing, World's surface  
 Components and Umlaut Neons  
 as  
 3D Archetypes  
 Display in service  
 Conditions of the body  
 Writings  
 F L O R A:  
 or,  
 To cultivate a garden making (after the necessary preparation of the soil) a pleasure,  
 kitchen and storage garden in our climate, in which ordinary vegetables, herbs, ferns and  
 meadows are being planted, cared for and kept alive. Spring 2013.  
 Solar Body Prints  
 Phantom Flights  
 Inverted Button Shells and Burial Places  
 Stick figures and Jumping Jacks  
 Synchronic patterns  
 From DeSign to EnSign  
 (A rug, a flag, a tent, a coat) ... fabrics  
 Clothing  
 As first and last form of dwelling  
 It is not fashion, not about wearing, not a costume, not a prop  
 It is ephemeral, psychological, about the necessity of an internal space on the outside  
 and making space for the inexplicable  
 Weaving

### Sergei Tcherepnin

Sergei Tcherepnin composes multiple-channel sound pieces actualized through sculptural forms, things that exist simultaneously as speakers and instruments. He explores the capacity for visitors to affect and be affected by sound through their bodies as much as through their auditory systems, and his environments allow for sonic discords and dissonances as well as emergent unities, which nevertheless support the heterogeneity of their components.

### UNITED BROTHERS

UNITED BROTHERS are Ei Arakawa, a performance artist based in New York, and Tomoo Arakawa, a non-artist who lives in Fukushima, Japan. After the nuclear disaster in the region 2011, they started to invite and collaborate with international artists to activate the discourse of Fukushima in and out of the contemporary art world. Their recent projects are: *The Radiants* at Bortolami Gallery, New York, 2015. *Does This Soup Taste Ambivalent?* at Frieze Live, London, 2014. DAS INSTITUT inaugurated an exhibition at UNITED BROTHERS's Green Tea Gallery in 2012.

Published on the occasion  
of the exhibition

**Kerstin Brätsch**  
**[PELE'S CURSE]**

15 September – 19 December 2015

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p. 11, still from performance "Clouded in Veins: Possible Readings of Kerstin Brätsch's *Unstable Talismanic Renderings*", Mariechen Danz, GBE, NYC, 2014, 15 mins. | pp. 12 – 13, Mariechen Danz with Kerstin Brätsch and stills from "Clouded in Veins: Possible Readings of Kerstin Brätsch's *Unstable Talismanic Renderings*", Mariechen Danz with Alex Stolze, GBE, NYC, 2014 | p. 14, still from performance "Clouded in Veins: Possible Readings of Kerstin Brätsch's *Unstable Talismanic Renderings*", Mariechen Danz, GBE, NYC, 2014, 15 mins. | pp. 18 – 19 Nhu Duong with DAS INSTITUT and UNITED BROTHERS, 2012 | pp. 20 – 21, DAS INSTITUT and UNITED BROTHERS, 2012 | pp. 24 – 25, *Scattered A/Scattered K*, DAS INSTITUT with Allison Katz, 2013, food coloring on roll fondant, donuts, edible cake decoration | pp. 26 – 27, DAS INSTITUT with Allison Katz, in *Gaylen Gerber*, MCA Chicago, 2013 | p. 29, *KAYA* (Debo Eilers and Kerstin Brätsch) | pp. 30 – 32, *KAYA* (Debo Eilers and Kerstin Brätsch), 2015