

AMANDA LEE
RE:ACTION

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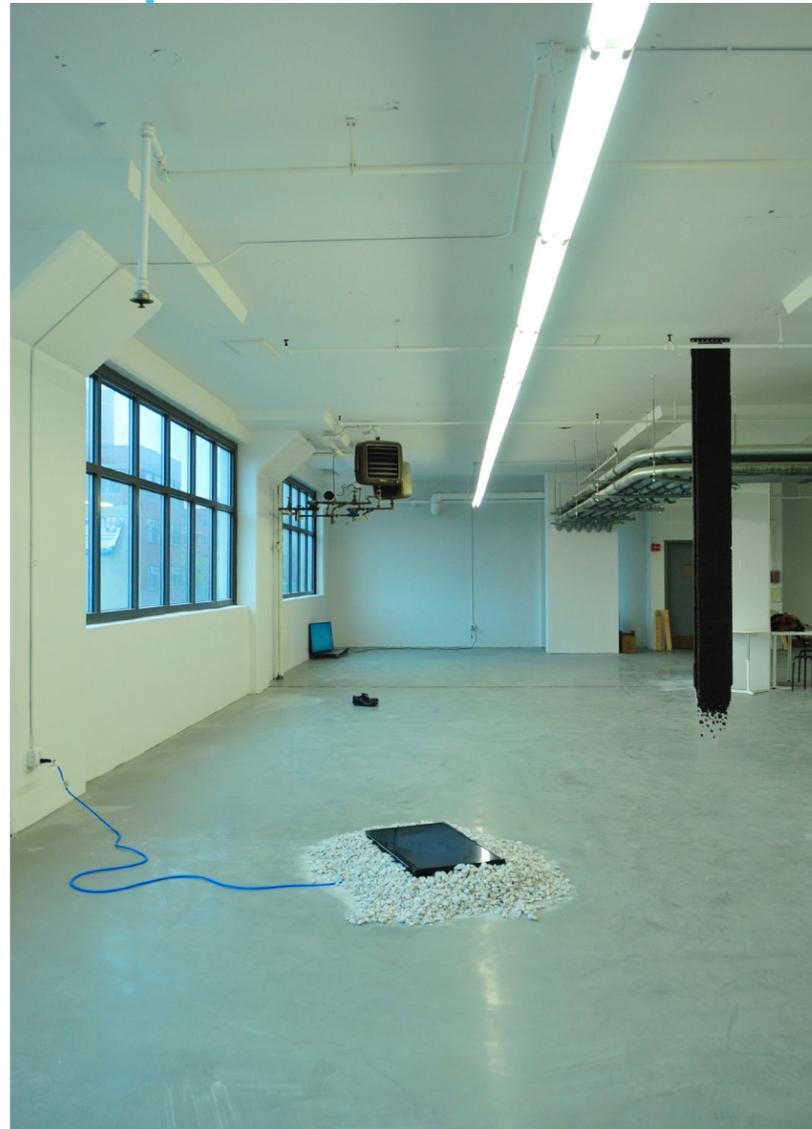
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AMANDA LEE RE:ACTION

5	Preface
9	Chapter One: Mizaru (See not)
12	Chapter Two: Kikazaru (Hear not)
15	Chapter Three: Iwazaru (Speak not)
18	Conclusion: Shizaru (Do not)
22	Bibliography
23	Artist Checklist



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Birdie Piccininni.

¹ Trevor Paglen, *Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches To Landscape, Cartography, And Urbanism*. New York. Melville House Publishing, 2008.

PREFACE

The human condition is characterized by a feedback loop between human activity and our material surroundings. In this view, space is not a container for human activities to take place within but is actively “produced” through human activity. The spaces humans produce, in turn, set powerful constraints upon subsequent activity.

—Trevor Paglen, *Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space*

When you are served on a broken plate, will logic, trust, and assurance be your reaction? Would you place your faith and belief in this shattered plate, confident that you and your welfare will be undamaged? We live today in what has been satirically dubbed the “Post-Truth era,” an era riddled with fictions, deceptions, and manipulations in the public realm. Although such phenomena have of course existed in the past, they have currently been amplified through a chain of serious and unexpected events occurring one after another, such as Brexit in the United Kingdom, the U.S. presidential election of 2016, the demise of net neutrality, numerous controversial sexual allegations in the entertainment, media, and sports industries, and more. We are living in a society where the levelness of the playing field is being tested, and its inequalities have been brought to

light in an intensified way through the pain that has been inflicted on some of society’s most significant figures and role models. But what if these events are symptoms of a larger social situation, consequences and results of a broader phenomenon? If so, what phenomenon would that be?

RE:ACTION is a conceptual exhibition addressing these issues. It revolves around American artist Trevor Paglen’s ideas of what he calls the “production of space,” and its causes and effects in relation to the current human condition¹. To use the logic of sound: when an output derives from a dysfunctional audio device, the disoriented feedback scrambles the intended information, making it incomprehensible from the receiving end. Our human activity involves a similar feedback loop: when we have been living in a lie, we are inadequately prepared, mentally and emotionally, for the truth. In turn, our response to this displacement and betrayal of truth transforms into further distortions—acts of fear, terror, and violation—and, once again, the loop repeats itself like an Ouroboros, producing a distrustful space for us to inhabit and in which to engage with each other. Eventually this amplifying circuit may pose a threat to the human condition, which we

have failed to properly protect. During a conversation I had with Paglen, he reinforced the fact that this theory of his is flexible and can be interpreted in many ways:

You can apply it to anything that you want, like agriculture for example, and how humans transform the surface of the earth by making plants and then society is transformed by the fact that we did that, society then becomes more secular and able to create surpluses which then can lead to more stark divisions of labor and start to have things like monarchies. Or you can take cinema—how do films influence the way that we think about certain events and therefore change the ways that we imagine the world and remake our world in different ways? Look at science fiction as well, there are tons of imaginations of different kinds of technologies, and that becomes a blueprint of what people would want to do with the future. So it kind of goes both ways in terms of creating culture and affects the abilities and ways we can imagine changing the world and the ways we can change the world.²

Engaging with Paglen's theory, I have applied it to contemporary art. The title *RE:ACTION* plays on the word "re," the heading in emails and business letters that means "in reference to," or "with regard to." In this case the response is to the the action of humans. If Paglen is dealing with the "production of space," *RE:ACTION* is a space produced by the selected artworks and their premises, and with the overall theme of reinterpreting and reexamining that feedback loop of displaced truth and its aftermath. It is also a space that allows a counterimpulse: our virtues, our beliefs, our faiths, our ethos, are all a part of our human condition, our self-contemplation, that we have a responsibility to maintain.

Through its premises and intentions, the art in the exhibition works to make visitors both subconsciously and actively mindful of the types of products of space that the tumultuous feedback loop we are experiencing today is creating, and therefore enabling them to reflect on their response to the controversial social issues that are affecting them. These artists exhibit their critical reaction to a specific social conflict that has affected them from a cultural, sexual, historical, or geographical perspective. While the issues and topics addressed in the show are diverse, the artworks relate to each other through their underlying need to reconstruct our perilous feedback loop. Knut Åsdam's *Murmansk-Kirkenes* (2017) is a film that narrates the political tension between the northern border of the Schengen area, between Russia and Norway. Richard Barnes's *Still Rooms and Excavations* (1994–97) questions society's and the museums' moral responsibility on preservation and exhibition of objects and artifacts. Andrea DeFelice's *Emergenc/y* (2015–17) displays the modern disorientation in our technological space, while her *Untitled (How Success Fails)* (2015) is a sculptural piece reflectively responding to the measurement of time, human interactions, and surreal but natural landscapes through organic materials. Brooke Holloway's *It's All Easy* (2017) is a four-channel video installation where a hyperbolic female character occupies a typical everyday life scenario such as combing one's hair or arranging flowers in a vase wherein she lays out the blueprint for how to create a revolution. Elisabeth Molin's *Myrmex* (2016), *Echo* (2015), *Decoy* (2015), and *COMFORT 7/32/00* (2015) are videos and installation pieces that together explore the human interaction with absence, spatial displacement, objecthood, and more. And Shuhei Yamada's *Untitled (Kamikaze)* (2013) is a group of historical

² Trevor Paglen, skype conversation with the author, February 1, 2018.



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Birdie Piccininni.

photographs from which he has eliminated the visual traces of planes and battleships in the Pacific during World War II, leaving behind hauntingly beautiful images of the sea and sky.

So why is *RE:ACTION* a necessary narration that needs to be heard now? Paglen's theory of space would suggest that our mental and social disorientation, and the insincerity of the public realm in which we find ourselves and in which we are implicated, are due to the self-fed current feedback cycle, which has been producing a space in which an array of lies informs technological media, social issues, and more. While protests, unified movements, and charitable causes are important in this context, they will not eradicate the problems—they can only make us aware of it. To move beyond simply raising concerns about lies in the social realm, we must also raise awareness of how our own responses are contributing to this cycle of dire effects. Unless we actively recognize the

constraints that we ourselves impose on the space we inhabit, we will be unable to steer it in a positive and constructive direction. Through consolidated acts of humanity, however, we can generate a glimmer of hope of salvaging the core of humanity and the human condition. *RE:ACTION* proposes not the elimination of this feedback loop but a goal of rethinking, reestablishing, and responding to our human activities in a way that will revitalize our subconscious way of thinking and behaving on this earthly space that we call home. Through our own self-exposure and self-reflection, the scars in our fragmented space will move toward healing once we recognize what has been sustaining the disoriented sequence.



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Tom Piccininni.

I CHAPTER ONE: MIZARU (SEE NOT)

Each of the chapters that follows are named after the well-known saying “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” or rather after its Japanese equivalent, “*Mizaru, kizaru, iwazaru*.” A fourth, rarely used part of the saying, “Do no evil” (*Shizaru*), titles the essay’s conclusion. The Japanese suffix *-zaru* on these verbs echoes the word *saru*, “monkey,” also in the modified form used in compounds. The saying is therefore referred to in Japan as the maxim of the “Three Wise Monkeys” (in this case, four). The discussion in these chapters, however, will revolve not around the concept of evil but around our human activities and deductions in response to evil. Like yin and yang, day and night, water and fire, polar opposites must exist to create a sturdy balance. And it is the upkeep of that balance that I want to discuss in this essay.

Mizaru is the monkey who shields his eyes from provocative temptations. Our eyes today have the privilege of immersing themselves in visuals that have supposedly pushed the boundaries of imagination as well as morality. Images today challenge our trust that seeing is believing, since they are subject to digital manipulation, whether their source is history, technology, media,

politics, entertainment, art, or beyond. False, unreal, deceptive images are now more than ever difficult to debunk. How does that affect the production of space? How is our perception affecting the feedback loop and, more importantly, the human condition?

Richard Barnes’s *Still Rooms & Excavations* series (1994–97) is a photographic and conceptual examination of a conflict between morals and media exposure. Barnes was hired to document the renovation process for the Palace of the Legion of Honor, in San Francisco, California. The renovation began from below the ground, and what was meant to be a typical documentation for Barnes turned into a fully fledged investigation when human remains were unearthed beneath the museum’s foundation. The revelation of this unmarked burial site became a tension for Barnes: should he do what he was hired to do, or pursue a conceptual examination? In a way, he did both, photographing not only the removal and conservation of the museum’s valuable collection of art but also the haunting remains from the burials which were revealed to be what was the Golden Gate cemetery, “In the late 1890s, the city of San Francisco, in response to rapid expansion and development, passed

legislation prohibiting the burial of the dead within city limits. Funds were allocated to disinter the existing graves throughout the city and rebury them in less-populated regions to the south. It is speculated that Golden Gate Cemetery was in fact never relocated, but instead the headstones were simply removed, leaving the burials for future generations to deal with.”³ Barnes’s photographs record an obvious divide in the treatment of the precious art and of the human remains in the graves. The conservation process for the museum’s paintings and sculptures, complete with wrapping papers, dust cloths, crates, and empty pedestals, becomes an ethereal framing of the archival collection. The human remains, buried right below the pipes and foundation of the institution, are a different story: instead of receiving a level of care similar to that of the art, they were laid in flimsy cardboard boxes, or, in the case of bones separated from bodies, even piled in a corner. In some cases, excavation tools were carelessly left on the carcasses.

Unapologetic yet poignant, the stark contrasting in the photographs expose the moral ethics and moral priorities with which our society is engaged. Although this is not a dig at the arts, where many questionable situations occur, it does throw a spot light on the boundary-pushing expectations that art institutions have on themselves. Cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han, in his book *The Transparency Society*, writes that

The “human countenance” has long since disappeared from photography—along with the cult value it held. The age of Facebook and Photoshop assures that the “human countenance” has become a mere face that equals only its exhibition value... It is the commodity form of the “human countenance.”⁴

Applying this structure to Barnes’s photographs, humans as well as their humanistic features no longer equate in the moral value, more so on what it entails if calculated as a form of commodity. The long forgotten bodies buried beneath the museum only gained recognition due to the biased acts of care that the museum had provided for its precious artefacts.

Andrea DeFelice’s works ask us to ponder the human psyche status and its’ deterioration within the realms and production of technological space. *Emergenc/y* (2015–17) questions the modern disorientation of such that. The video begins with a foreign landscape of a rocky surface, filled with patches of moss and grass, ominous-looking mountains and a storm-brewing sky, heavy with clouds (DeFelice had filmed numerous landscapes for this work in Iceland during her residency). However, she altered the coloring of the landscape with shades of dark, and bright magenta, making it appear more alienesque and unfamiliar. Three distinctive landscapes were filmed in the same manner. The only action that occurs in the video is a 5 foot tall, slim green screen, held by DeFelice herself as she runs across the landscape at a distance faraway, making the screen appear smaller while battling against the heavy wind currents. The green screen was then programmed by her to become a canvas to deliver fragmented words that are derived from a live-feed from the social-media platform Twitter. As the video continues in a loop, the green screen occasionally gets cut to a different landscapes scenery, yet the live feed tweets do remain intact throughout. The piece comments on our overall behavior amidst the torrent of information we’re connected to and try to follow—the difficulty of disengaging from the 24/7 always-on news cycle. DeFelice is also

3 Richard Barnes, *Still Rooms & Excavations*, Massachusetts, The Studley Press, 1997.

4 Byung-Chul Han, *The Transparency Society*, translated by Erik Butler. Germany Standford University Press. 2015,10.

5 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Imperial Landscape*, in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002, 5.

interested in the cryptic pithiness of our social-media sources, particularly Twitter—an imperfect conduit of information that is an integral element of the piece. DeFelice’s use of what was meant to be a social-media platform that provides updates on one’s social life in 140 characters has now evolved into a space to project misinformed information, lies, heavy accusations, and even official termination letters. This form of alienation coincides with the very landscape that the green screen scurries through, like an unusual hybrid continuously evolving.

Untitled (How Success Fails) (2018) is an organic sculptural piece from a series that reflectively responds to the measurement of time, human interactions, and surreal but natural landscapes. During a residency in Iceland in 2015, DeFelice reflected on the experience of being in a place with a vast and changing landscape, a limit on the availability of human interaction, and a surreal and uncanny sense of time. She therefore responds by creating sculptures formed out of dirt, wood, cement, metal, and stones, which to her are organic materials that become objectified responses to how us humans measure duration of time, illusions, and experiences of place. It’s almost as if it’s a form of measurement, remnants of the timeline in the production of space. Only one sculpture out of the series is exhibited in *RE:ACTION*, a 10 foot tall column suspended from the ceiling with tiny bits of stone and dirt and wood secured by thin wires, trickling at the bottom, almost as if the column is slowly disintegrating to the floor. These substrate and natural materials, as well as time, space, and light as behavioral entities, became part of an objectified response to duration, illusion, and the experience of place. W. J. T. Mitchell states,

Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package... At a minimum we need to explore the possibility that the representation of landscape is not only a matter of internal politics and national or class ideology but also an international, global phenomenon, intimately bound up with the discourses of imperialism.⁵

Simply put, DeFelice is trying to apply political and social idealism to landscape, a hybrid geography that correlates with such daunting matter that resulted in her uncanny approach to making her landscapes foreign and unusual. Her works make the viewer use the act of tracing, and following in order to understand the depth of *Emergenc/y*’s content as well as how *Untitled (How Success Fails)* is built.

II
CHAPTER TWO:
KIKAZARU (HEAR NOT)

Kikazaru is the monkey who covers his ears. My concern in this chapter is less the way the sense of sound affects our human condition and more the *act* of hearing. I am focusing on how the action of idle hearing in relation to idle talking is part of a deeply rooted fetish that our society can't seem to get enough of. This act not only is part of the journalistic platform, it also feeds into the immorality and accountability of the presentation of information. How does hearing through the grapevine affect the human condition? How do people manipulate speech for ulterior motives? How has this desensitized our moral fiber and our perception of truth? How has this been aiding society to overlook the current production of space?

The work of both Brooke Holloway and Knut Åsdam depend on the act of hearing and on our reaction to filtered information. Holloway has created a persona called Brooke Blake, a combination of hyperbolic feminine and feminist stereotypes. Blake is something of a satire but also a significant embodiment of the current spectacle of the commodification, as well as a symptom who sees herself as the ultimate cure. The four-channel video installation *It's All Easy* (2017) deals with the concept of self-care common to

advertisements, television programs, movies, and social-media platforms. Brooke Blake emits an uncanny persona when performing in the video. She does so by wearing a realistic wig, using a soft monotone voice, giving uninterrupted eye contact with the camera, and upholding herself in a stoic manner throughout the duration of the piece. Meanwhile she occupies herself with everyday mundane scenarios such as shredding carrots in a pristine kitchen, combing her hair while sitting at a vanity with her speaking to the camera through the mirror's reflection, stretching on a blue yoga mat in what seems to be a gym room, and arranging pastel shaded carnation flowers in a white vase. Despite the well polished and pristine environments that Brooke Blake is set in, at the same time she would be reciting instructions of a blueprint for the creation of a revolution. These mundane actions mirror our obsession with documenting everyday banal activities on social media platforms, and the constant feed of self-care and self-improvement of our lifestyle from the media. The activities of our everyday lives, which contributes to the production of space, have grown stagnant due to the growth of these fetishes, but Holloway reinvents this obsession: "the character's repetitive actions are

performed as an automaton trapped in a loop devoid of meaning while simultaneously engaging in a genuine call to action."⁶ In addition to her intricate performance within the video installation, each monitor is assigned to a mounted C-print that depicts an object removed from the scene. Appropriated from stock photography, the C-prints border between the hyperspecific and the generic with the said object placed in front of a white backdrop. For example, the monitor that depicts the video of Holloway's character brushing her hair would have a C-printed image of the used hairbrush with strands of the wig's hair still intact. Or the video where she performs yoga positions, the C-print would be her grey socks piled into a bundle.

The nature of Holloway's images and characters is ultimately unable to be decided, a puzzle left to be confronted by the audience. Edward W. Said writes, "Because the world has shrunk—for example, communications have been speeded up fantastically—and people find themselves undergoing the most rapid social transformations in history, ours has become an era of a search for roots, of people trying to discover in the collective memory of their race, religion, community, and family a past that is entirely their own, secure from the ravages of history and a turbulent time. But this too has provoked very sharp debate and even bloodshed."⁷ Said's argument correlates clearly with *It's All Easy*, which shows how due to the sheer speed of uprooting things in order to discover more about our culture, race, religion, et cetera, it has resulted in disagreements, protests, manipulation, violence, and even revolutions as actions in response to the uprooting. In turn, this correlates with the timeline of the current production of space.

Knut Åsdam explores the psychological and material effects of contemporary society, showing particular interest in the toll of everyday life, including how individuals construct and negotiate their identities in reaction to social rules and organizations. *Murmansk-Kirkenes* (2017) is a forty-five-minute film set in the northern edges of the Schengen area, on the border between Norway and Russia. Named after the Luxembourg town Schengen where the Schengen Agreement was signed into effect, it is an area comprised of 26 European states that have officially dissolved the use of passports and all other forms of border control at their mutual borders. The area mostly functions as a single jurisdiction for international travel purposes, with a common visa policy. However, the states in the Schengen Area do have strengthened border controls with non-Schengen countries. Based on the current European migrant crisis, Åsdam's film narrates through the dynamics and interactions among the residents and the border patrols, architecture and nature, as it correlates with the political tension and the rise of attention to the border. Åsdam's meticulous care in highlighting and using space in his film demonstrates the sheer volume that an intense foreign conversation between two sisters, a silent still of the mountains, an unspoken tension between two border patrols during training or the breeze of cigarette smoke passing through the cold air can have. Åsdam is at ease with time in *Murmansk-Kirkenes*, unafraid to allow the production of the film's space to envelop the mind and perception of the viewer. Ideas of identity, space, and place become an enmeshed wave that rides through the film's hushed landscape scenes.

6 Brooke Holloway, Press Release for *It's All Easy* at CRUSH CURATORIAL, September, 2017.

7 Edward W. Said, *Invention, Memory, and Place*. in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002, 243.

As W. J. T. Mitchell states in *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*,

Landscape is a dynamic medium, in which we “live and move and have our being,” but also a medium that is itself in motion from one place or time to another. In contrast to the usual treatment of landscape aesthetics in terms of fixed genres (sublime, beautiful, picturesque, pastoral), fixed media (literature, painting, photography), or fixed places treated as objects for visual contemplation or interpretation, the essays in this collection examine the way landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity.⁸

With the visual calmness and foreign terrains of the northern Schengen Area, Åsdam’s film uses the classic environment of solitude as a device for one’s mind to reflect, clarify, and reposition one’s sense of what would constitute humanistic conduct toward the habitat. This form of exchange fits well with Mitchell’s statement on how the landscape acts as a medium that sets itself into motion, just like the social and geographical development with the change of political climate that the Schengen border has with Russia and Norway. *Murmansk-Kirkenes* is like an intricate puzzle, with pieces in all shapes and sizes relying on one or another in order for us to see and complete the full imagery. “Landscape,” Mitchell writes, “is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other. As such, it is like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a potentially limitless reserve of value.”⁹

8 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Imperial Landscape*, in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002, 2.

9 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Imperial Landscape*, in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002, 5.



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Amanda Lee.

III CHAPTER THREE: IWAZARU (SPEAK NOT)

Iwazaru is the monkey who muffles his mouth to keep himself from speaking. This chapter deals with the relationship between disciplinary actions and culture and how that affects one’s upbringing, one’s personality, and one’s attitude toward society and its ever changing dilemmas. The act of speaking in this case has to do with passing down knowledge, information, and history from generation to generation in the same cultural setting. What’s interesting to me, and of course in response to my thesis, is how the same story, event, or fact projected has different sides. How does this alter our perception of the truth as well as of our intimate and cultural upbringing? How do our perceptions clash or merge with other sides of the fact? Does this also affect our treatment of our own human condition, both positively and negatively?

Elisabeth Molin has a number of works in *RE:ACTION*. *Myrmex* (2016) is a video work that can be interpreted as a form of sculpture, since the monitor is positioned on the floor alongside with rubbles of stones that Molin had found as a way to extend the architectural element from the video. The video itself is an extreme close-up of ants navigating and communicating along the cleavage and crevices of a shattered

Greek sculpture, a nod to a visit Molin made to the Acropolis of Athens, and to the idea of communal grounds and gatherings. *Echo* (2015) is based on a conversation Molin had with a security guard who dreamed that his shoes were filling up with water. In *Echo*, she filled a pair of worn black leather shoes with burnt motor oil. The motor oil, with a faint pungent aroma and highly seductive reflective surface contrasted against the matt leather shoes, takes the form of the shoes in a surreal way to show the process and circulation of organic substances. *Decoy* (2015) is a video describing a humorous yet somewhat violent confrontation: a fake crow, as a decoy, positioned in an empty pool at a park, attracts an actual crow colony living in the area. The birds’ vocal and physical reaction, while comical, shows similarities to the behavior of humans when experiencing something false or inaccurate, a reaction often ending in upheaval and confusion. Lastly, *COMFORT 7/32/00* (2015) is an installation of a tree log with a fake but realistic apple placed on top and a large label with numerals wrapped around the log. The apple itself emits a looped audio clip of a person eating potato crisps. Here Molin is exploring the notion of objecthood, and how one object can be one thing but also another. The apple is a Western symbol

of knowledge and wisdom. Molin makes the eating of this symbolic fruit as well as the sound produced by the action of eating it an act of spatial displacement and disorientation, one with qualities of the comical and the subconscious. Molin's diverse array of videos and installations speaks of the fragmented human interactions with our society and its mental, geographical, and cultural spaces. Her lighthearted approach also brings up the displacement behind the concept of humor—it is almost a form of defense, a protection that we build up in order to soften the blows from current turmoil.

Shuheï Yamada's *Untitled (Kamikaze)* (2013) is a selection of laser-printed and framed photographs, copies of documentary photographs of the Pacific battlefront during World War II. Through Photoshop, Yamada has eliminated the warplanes and ships from these images, challenging the historical narrative of the war that has been taught from generation to generation in different parts of the world. Yamada questions the facts embedded in the historical timeline of our culture, which innately causes incoherent perceptions towards the public eye. Therefore, he invites viewers to create and visualize their own versions of the war's horrific events in his work. By providing viewers with 'blank' canvases of the environment, in this case the raw images of the Pacific sea and sky where parts of World War II occurred, allows them to be immersed in the enveloping nature scenes while attempting to picture the true bloodshed in this violent war. Said wrote,

Over the past decade, there has been a burgeoning interest in two overlapping areas of the humanities and social science: memory and geography or, more specifically, the study of human space... Memory

and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority. Far from being a neutral exercise in facts and basics truths, the study of history, which of course is the underpinning of memory, both in school and university, is to some considerable extent a nationalist effort premised on the need to construct a desirable loyalty to an insider's understanding of one's country, tradition, and faith.¹⁰

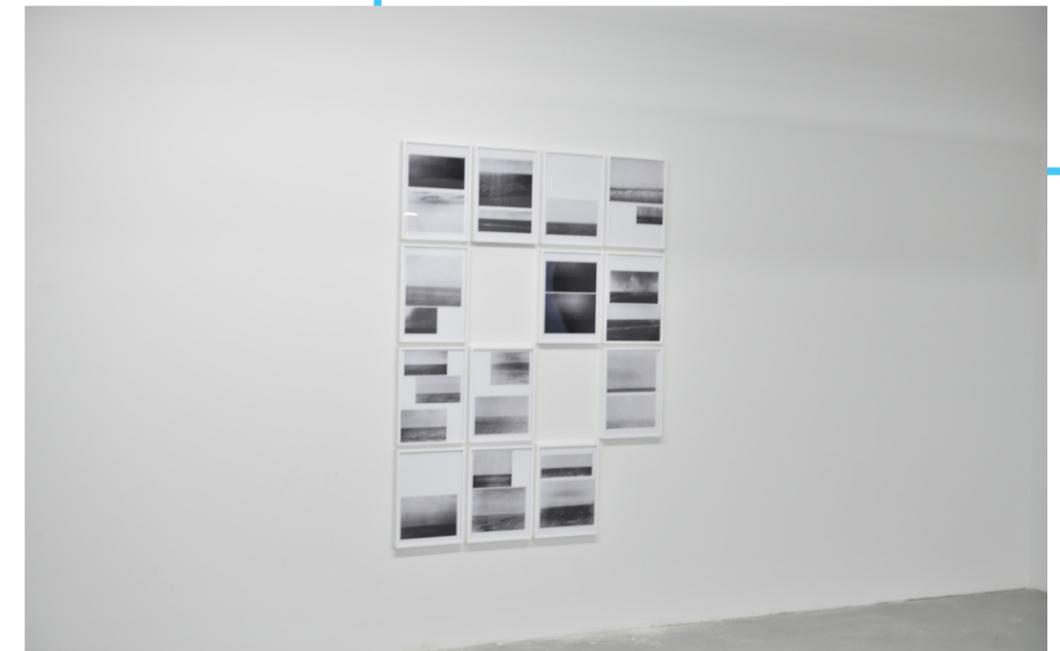
Yamada's piece works with the ways in which cultural traditions, geography, and history come into play. His simple move of erasure provokes thoughts of just how unreliable our resources can be when it comes to documenting our past. Memory and tradition can be so malleable, yet we rely on them to archive our history and culture. What does this say about the security of our future? How can we find reassurance when history continuously repeats itself, and also when false facts or accidents can occur in our retelling of important historical moments? Said also says,

My point... is to underline the extent to which the art of memory for the modern world is both for historians as well as ordinary citizens and institutions very much something to be used, misused, and exploited, rather than something that sits inertly there for each person to possess and contain. Thus the study and concern with memory or a specifically desirable and recoverable past is a specially freighted late twentieth-century phenomenon that has arisen at a time of bewildering change, of unimaginably large and diffuse mass societies, competing nationalisms, and, most important perhaps, the decreasing efficacy of religious familial, and dynastic bonds. People now look to this refashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Invention, Memory, and Place*, in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002, 241-242.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world, thought, as I have indicated, the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened in for sometimes urgent purposes in the present.¹¹



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Tom Piccininni.

CONCLUSION: SHIZARU (DO NOT)

RE:ACTION should be seen as an active site of constant change due to the production and idea of space. The exhibition space itself is a form of contemporary experiment, a raw vessel in which the audience becomes self-conscious on their interactions and yet, at the same time, challenges their own thought processes through the exhibiting artworks as they become part of this production of space. The artworks that are exhibited within this space are a collection of diverse narrations that explain and illustrate the complexity of the conflict that we humans currently manifest within ourselves, and with our geographical and cultural space. Paglen, Han, Mitchell, and Said are theorists whom became my inspirations in opening the necessary gateway for me to better comprehend our human condition, providing hindsight about our past and foresight into our unpredictable future. Paglen has said, “To a certain extent, that essay [Experimental Geography] was actually written for an audience of academics more than artists, it’s just kind of weirdly ended up being taken up much more by artists, but I guess what I was thinking about is you know we need to have critique, we need to be critical but we also need to be imagining what kind of world we want to live in, and trying to build that

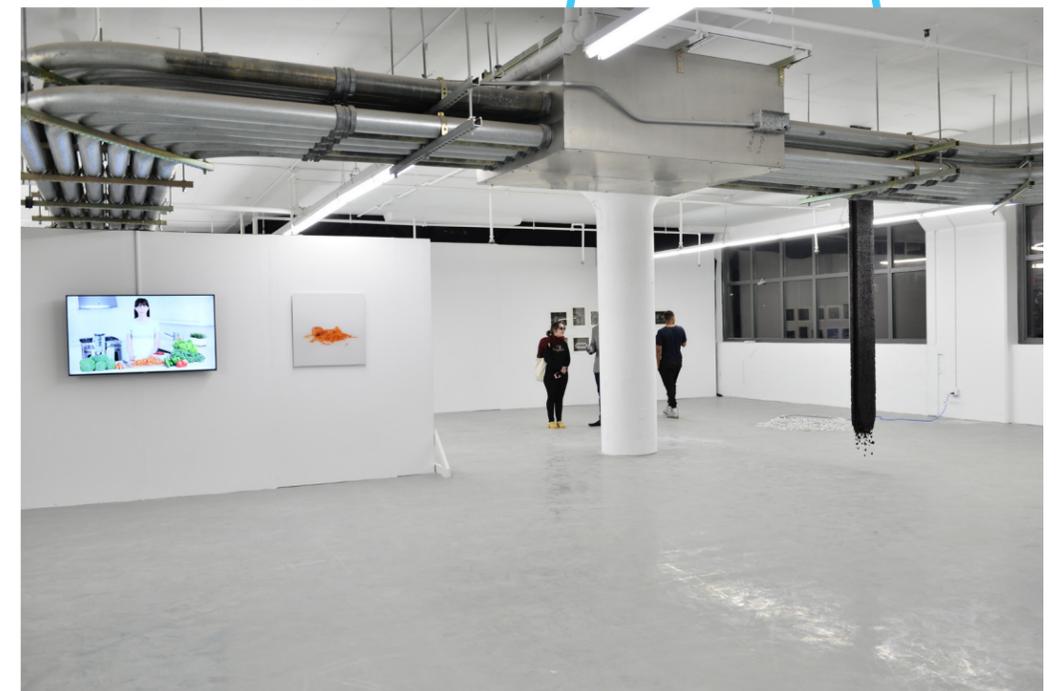
is just as important as understanding the problems with the world that we have now.”¹² *RE:ACTION* is not a space of protest, it is more an expression of the cry for help that our present condition is screaming. The exhibition is intended as an ever changing, ever evolving, and ever thought-provoking environment; the major factor is the feedback loop between the audience and the artworks, urging us not only to critique and reposition ourselves in relation to the contemporary human condition but to also push the boundaries of our imagination to see the type of world the future holds in order to continuously restart that feedback loop on the production of space.

Each artist in *RE:ACTION* becomes an important storyteller, demonstrating to the public just how diverse and fragmented our minds, our actions, our intents have become. The battle of restarting this feedback loop is not just about geographical and physical spaces, it also involves the loop inside our human psyches. Said writes of “the notion of what I call imaginative geography—the invention and construction of a geographical space called the Orient, for instance, with scant attention paid to the actuality of the geography and its inhabitants—but also on the mapping, conquest, and

¹² Paglen, skype conversation with the author. February 1, 2018.

¹³ Edward W. Said, *Invention, Memory, and Place*, in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002, 247.

annexation of territory both in what Conrad called the dark places of the earth and in its most densely inhabited and lived in places.”¹³ *RE:ACTION* in turn invites the public not just to respond but to react to and with the challenges that the feedback loop has set up for us. The point is not to isolate the negative experience or moment, it is to embrace and accept its existence so that our minds no longer attack it, the way a white blood cell attacks a virus, but merge and evolve with it instead. Shizaru—do no evil—that is a plea. Since we are all part of the feedback loop, we all must take responsibility for our thoughts and action in the production of space.



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Tom Piccininni.



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Birdie Piccininni.



Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Birdie Piccininni.

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Installation view, *RE:ACTION*. Photo by Tom Piccininni.

ARTIST CHECKLIST

Knut Åsdam, *Murmansk-Kirkenes*, 2017, film, dimensions variable

Richard Barnes, *Still Rooms and Excavation* series, 1997, 12 x platinum prints, 17.5 x 14.5in

Andrea DeFelice, (1) *Emergency*, 2017, video 1080p, installation dimensions variable
(2) *Untitled (How Success Fails)*, 2018, dirt, wood, polymer and resin, 124 x 10.5 x 4.25in

Brooke Holloway, *It's All Easy*, 2017, synchronized four-channel video installation, plexi-mounted C-prints, dimensions vary, C-prints 28 x 28in

Elisabeth Molin, (1) *Myrmex*, 2017, HD video, 16:9, color, stereo, 6.52min loop
(2) *Decoy*, 2015, HD video, 16:9, color, stereo, 4.48min loop
(3) *Echo*, 2014, leather shoes, burnt engine oil, 14 x 45 x 45cm
(4) *COMFORT 7/32/00*, 2017, fake apple, speaker, 10 x 8 x 8cm

Shuhei Yamada, *Untitled (Kamikaze)*, 2013, 64 x lambda prints, each 270x380mm, framed

RE:ACTION is an exhibition inspired by American artist Trevor Paglen's inquiries into the production of space. The show re-examines the human condition and the ways in which complex actions across a vast field of natural and technological phenomena have altered societies across the globe, creating a never-ending feedback loop of lies, manipulations, and violence. The selected artworks in *RE:ACTION* offer a compensatory prospect of long-diminished virtues, such as belief in beliefs and an ethical ethos, which help to shore up our strength amid the difficulties of our times. The works on view propose an alternative mindfulness, alert to the "products of space" around us that have created the tumult of negativity that burdens so many social concerns in contemporary life.

RE:ACTION

Opening reception: April 19, 2018, 6–9 pm

April 19–May 4, 2018

Pfizer Building, 2nd floor

630 Flushing Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11206

RE:ACTION
By Amanda Lee
April 19, 2018

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