

wretched painting of a redneck relaxing with the *Weekly World News* tabloid newspaper which, from 1992, ran fake news stories about a fictional Bat Boy.

Beyond the media, there are more straightforward methods to suppress democracy, as alluded to in *Kennedy King Kennedy*, 2015, by Jamal Cyrus. This triptych appears to present three yellowing, faded newspapers. In fact, the material is Egyptian papyrus and the texts have been surgically removed by laser, delineating the obscured stories with hairline burns. Specifically, these three front pages are from the pro-civil rights African-American newspaper the *Chicago Daily Defender* on the days immediately following the John F Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinations – headlines may persist but detail is interred beneath the sands of time.

A similar allusion to history is evident in Karl Haendel's *Hillary*, 2016, a large diptych portrait of Hillary Clinton, the left panel black, the right a drawing of the former first lady and presidential candidate. The appeal of the depiction chimes with a disarming soundtrack from an adjacent speaker: a pre-schooler giggling her way through a series of male names. Concluding 'Ron, George, Bill, George, Barry, Donald', the list runs through the colloquial first names of every US president. The diptych format, common to wedding portraits throughout history (women were usually depicted on the left, the distaff or 'devil's side'), yokes Hillary to the absent men who have defined her image. No wonder her lips are pursed in perpetual frustration.

The power to define is also central to Rachel Maclean's phantasmagorical film *It's What's Inside That Counts*. At this point, the whole show takes a darker turn as newer technologies are unleashed. Maclean depicts the life of a social-media star as a pathological cycle of affirmation and abuse that, in the artist's infantilising style, leaves your stomach turning and your brain in a state of submission. It's a 30-minute loop, so you can watch it again and again, like an auto-refreshing infinite scroll. Such compulsive information flows bring a new threat to democracy, one that was weaponised by political campaigns in 2016 – the year Maclean made her film – for the UK's EU referendum and the US presidential election when social media were employed not to manufacture consent but to sow political disinformation (Editorial AM421). This is the realm of big data and dark motives, where facts and expertise are challenged by sophisticated propaganda bots masquerading as trusted sources.

Whereas Maclean's video offers a human playing at being data, in Zach Blas and Jemima Wyman's work, data is playing

at being human. The 2017 video *im here to learn so :))))))* is a reanimation of Tay, Microsoft's ill-fated 2016 attempt to create an AI chatbot on Twitter. Programmed to mimic the language of a teenage American girl, the bot was immediately gamed by internet trolls into making abusive comments and terminated by Microsoft after only 16 hours. Here, Tay is given mangled 3D form and flanked by videos showing the kind of pattern-recognition and anomaly-detection software that underpins current machine-learning efforts. The background, an evolving pattern created by Google's DeepDream software, is a queasy Bosch-like quilt of uncanny organic forms receding into Mandelbrot fractal infinities. Half the West's tech giants are implicated in this disheartening work, the most disturbing piece in the show, which is given additional resonance by the gallery's close proximity to Facebook's London HQ.

Inhabiting the darkness at the back of the basement is Funda Gül Özcan's *It Happened as Expected*, 2017, a ramshackle stage-set bar that features gaming imagery and TV footage alongside a weird projection of the artist playing Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (who in 2014 sent a hologram of himself to a political meeting). Here, Erdoğan repeatedly laments, 'I'm so sorry'. The show's title, 'We are the people. Who are you?', is a phrase Erdoğan uses against domestic critics, painting them as Eurocentric elites, exnationalising them. So here we have an arch populist – one who brandishes 'the people' to suppress opposition voices, stifle democracy and dismantle civil society – brought low as a sideshow in a fake dive bar. It is a bleak view of a miserable future and, right now, seemingly the best we can hope for. ■

David Barrett is deputy editor of *Art Monthly*.

Patricia L Boyd: Inter-Reading International 9 February to 15 March

'Is it a drone?' asked one child. 'No, it's a game,' answered another. Interpretations of Patricia L Boyd's 'Inter-' by young visitors were rather insightful on the day I saw it. This solo project, part of Reading International, is the second Boyd opening in the UK in a week, following 'Joins', a two-person show at Cell Project Space with Rosa Aiello, which opened in London in February.

'Inter-' presents Boyd's single-channel film *Operator* projected within tightly constricting temporary walls,

Anne-Marie Copestake

Looking in either direction
the whole street was filled
with people, some singing,
moving towards x...

Exhibition

15 March – 13 April 2019

Preview

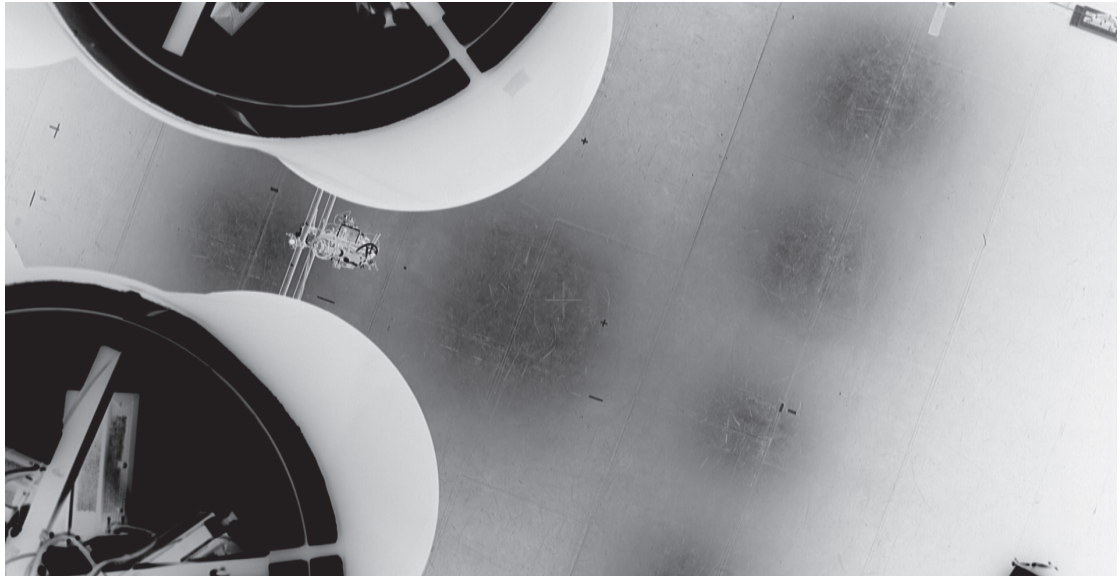
Thursday 14 March, 5.30–7.30pm

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www.dundee.ac.uk/cooper-gallery

Cooper Gallery



Patricia L Boyd
Operator
(Refinanced I)
 2019 video



a set-up that makes for an intentionally tiring viewing experience. Cramped into little more than a corridor, you are forced to view the film a foot or so away from the image: crammed, sniper-like, against the crosshairs that are marked in the centre of the screen. *Operator* shows a simple room, presumably a studio or sound stage, from four studied perspectives. Tight close-ups of screw heads on the floor pan out to deep aerial shots, which reveal the set-up of lights, other cameras and continually roving dollies. From left to right, the camera then undulates around the room crossing other identical motorised rigs. Close to surveillance or drone footage, Boyd's unique rebus of connected perspectives and jarring edits maintains an oblique and automated remove. While the quizzical sense of why we are being invited to piece together the four perspectives – to work out whether we are looking from the top or bottom, or find some reason in the cuts and edits – is left like an unresolved crime sequence.

The location of the gallery space in a former retail unit, which previously supplied 'quirky homeware and gifts', in a still busy shopping centre also takes on a particular pertinence. *Operator* was exhibited for the first time at 80WSE in New York in 2017. Each time it is displayed it is re-edited according to a complex system based on an imagined loan repayment plan from the date of the original commission to the date of the new exhibition opening. Each edit of the four sections depends on how much of the artist's fee, with 5% interest, is left on the balance book until payment is made; presumably this currently translates as 12 minutes 56 seconds. *Operator (Refinanced I)* is then a new work for 2019, in which Boyd makes transparent, through filmic length as financial measurement, the monetised exchange between artist and

institution, and the contractual underpinnings that bring art to the public. By presenting her video as a worker might stamp-card their start/finish of a day's work, Boyd makes visible the internal mechanism of production and artistic exertion.

Such deconstruction resonates with the film's visual content, Boyd's closing-in of 'back of house' instruments and infrastructure that construct the image and which are usually reserved for the operators behind the camera. As the custom-built system documents itself with an exhaustive precision it raises questions of resource expenditure and productivity. As we watch Boyd's brand of mechanised surveillance, we also seemingly witness an accumulation of debt as well as the artist's remuneration.

The notion of systemic deconstruction and physical construction is also on display in 'Joins', in which Boyd collaborated with Aiello on building two temporary modular corners at Cell. These walls figuratively hold the exhibition up and determine both the position of the works and the path that we, as viewers, must take. Sneaking behind one of the corners, sheltered from the rest of the gallery, you find *Carl dis/assembling w/self*, 2013. The eponymous Carl speedily takes an engine apart bolt by bolt and noisily throws each part on the floor with an amplified clunk. The carelessness of the disassembly doesn't lend itself to either diagnostics or reassembly but rather deconstruction for its own sake. The semantics of the title allow both object/self and construction/disassembling to be made ambiguous and interchangeable. This same removal or deconstruction of self is evident in *Reading; Operator's* POV bearing doesn't allow insight but inverts this cinematic trope – much like the periods of negative imagery in the film – into absence and machinic distance.

'Inter-' utilises the aesthetic of its own scrutiny within both the newly edited film and the viewing corridor to build and



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accumulate an understanding of debt and financial precarity, of funding systems and the necessity of labour (paid, unpaid, compensated or not) to make it all happen. ■

Jack Smurthwaite is a curator and writer from London.

Ghislaine Leung: CONSTITUTION

Chisenhale Gallery London

25 January to 24 March

Ghislaine Leung's exhibition at Chisenhale, 'CONSTITUTION' is a charged space: charged with the cold, chemical odour of freshly glossed walls and doors; charged quite literally by cables that run in and around a series of freestanding walls, activating security lights, a hidden monitor and an iPad on the wall; and charged by the heady, shifting waves of sound emanating from two speakers sitting side by side on the wall. Much of this permeating energy is not, however, immediately apparent. On entering, we are presented more with a space of absence than of presence. Each of the white, prefabricated walls – works titled *Parents*, *Children* and *Lovers* – creates a kind of false enclosure within the gallery, the rudiments of a domestic space broken apart and expanded, with no parents, children or lovers to be seen. We have the feeling of walking into a remote stage set, of needing to deduce how these various fragments are part of a whole, what connects to what – how is this space constituted?

These are questions that Leung herself poses when discussing the title of this exhibition: 'What is a constituency? Who am I as a constituent? What are the constituent parts within an institution? How do we understand how we are constituted by each other and ourselves?' These questions resonate through our experience of the installation, in particular the sonic reverberations that continuously rise and fall as your body moves through the space. The sound piece, *Kiss Magic Heart*, which refers to the three London radio stations from which Leung has extracted and manipulated

content, uses active-noise-cancellation technology as a method of reprocessing and reconfiguring sound spatially. Active cancellation, as used in noise-cancelling headphones, works by creating an enclosed space of resistance; noise is counteracted by playing back its opposite soundwaves. Here, Leung experiments with the possibilities of active cancellation once this sealed relationship – ears, headphones, environment – is broken apart. In a similar way to how she fragments each architectural facet in the physical installation, so this immaterial sound is allowed to pulsate and wrap around it. What is ostensibly an incredibly structured and ordered space is in fact one where contingency is maximised. As we move through it, we become part of a whole, and the thickness of wavering sound vibrating through you heightens this effect.

As a counterpoint to the meandering movements of sound through the gallery, a linear procession bisects the space: 20 pairs of oversized 'The Boss' mugs are elaborately gift-wrapped and sit together like a line of sentinels. Leung appears to be playing with the aesthetics of the workplace, the novelty mug, while rendering the singularity of The Boss redundant through the humorous fact of there being 40 of them. The farcical sense of individuality and power that the mugs symbolise is not only an empty sentiment, but it also speaks to the questions that Leung poses: who is it that shapes and controls this space? Who is The Boss? The fact that the prefabricated walls and security lanterns could easily fit a corporate or domestic setting also highlights a slippage between these two types of spaces, and how transactional acts frequently occur in both.

The Boss reappears within the exhibition as part of a slideshow of images accessed via an iPad on the wall. Titled *Loads*, this slideshow comprises 272 images taken by Leung during the making of this commission; an attempt to lay bare the show's processes and constituent parts by creating an image-based network of reference for the installation in which we are standing. This desire to make evident the make-up of the space is furthered by the gloss-painted white walls and black doors, as well as the gallery's entrance door, which has been shrunk to the standard domestic size. Foregrounding both the space and Leung's process in this way not only highlights the constructed nature of our environments, but also connects to a sense of ornamenting or embellishing.



Ghislaine Leung
installation view