

# Flash Art

REVIEWS

## Bojan Šarčević

Modern Art, London

"I have only ever experienced intellectual pleasure on the level of analogy," declared André Breton in a 1947 essay titled "Ascendant Sign." Analogy, both direct and indirect, pervades the practice of Serbian artist Bojan Šarčević. "Invagination," the title of his third solo exhibition at Modern Art, London, is defined by the gallery's press release as "the idea of something being turned inside-out, turned-in, or folded back on itself." First used by the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the term became dear to Jacques Derrida, who employed it to describe a narrative that folds upon itself, perpetually swapping the observer and the observed.

This exhibition stands as a unique cognitive exercise extended over three rooms, each different but echoing the others. The entrance desk has been transformed into a brutalist desk sculpture, *exhibition element (MA-SARCB-00075)* (all works cited, 2016), made up of gray stones and pink metal, whose raised position confers a sense of displacement on the gallery assistant, typing away. Two wall works, *exhibition element (MA-SARCB-00081)* and *(MA-SARCB-00076)*, are positioned in the opposite corner, forcing viewers to pass the desk awkwardly as they enter into private, intimate space.

The last room is occupied by just one piece, *exhibition element (MA-SARCB-00085)*, a four-sided monumental construction of lacquered aluminum and cream plasterboard that challenges the viewer's sense of perception. Hidden at the rear, a blue plastic bag containing dried meat is the source of an acute odor that imbues its ambient surroundings with a macabre tone.

Within this last room, what was previously unsettling at the entrance is all of a sudden pleasantly familiar. To fulfill the "invagination" premise we should start all over again.

by Attilia Fattori Franchini

## James Richards Leigh Ledare

ICA, London

Office Baroque, Brussels

James Richards' works, conceived as a 'suite', surface like interconnected memories. They emerge to the senses, familiar yet distorted, fire up in the brain, gain mass and fall away.

Composed from a set of samples and recordings, the multi-channel sound installation *Crumb Mahogany* (2016) was configured in response to the acoustic characteristics of the downstairs gallery. Six narrow loudspeakers, encircled four black benches placed at the center of the space. The symmetrical arrangement was set off balance by a gray curtain that covered one side of the white room. In an opposing corner, a sleek wheeled cabinet housed audio hardware, and black cables snaked along the floor to connect to the speakers. Entering the room, one felt compelled to take a seat and close one's eyes in abandonment to the austerity of the surroundings. Reverberations, reversals, syncopations and echoes deconstructed lyrical moments, and ambient sounds contributed to a powerful awareness of the corporeal nature of perception.

The body, open and vulnerable, is a key element of the video *Radio at Night* (2015) and the three-channel projection *Rushes Minotaur* (2016), both presented in the upstairs galleries. The vertical format of *Rushes Minotaur* suggested the page of a book in which dissonant sequences are collaged together. The core sequence of *Radio at Night* draws from similar compositional material — extreme close ups of hair follicles, eyes, orifices, gutted carcasses suspended in an abattoir intercut with clinical apparatuses — edited together with surgical precision. The video begins and ends with variations on a closely framed view of trees swiftly moving past, as if shot from a vehicle in motion. Then a scene of a masked parade emerges from the spectral night. The audio repeats the musical refrains heard in the sound installation, bringing the viewer to a state of déjà-vu that triggers associations between the works. Richards' compelling treatment of sound and image exposes the permeability of one's physical thresholds, to create an ensemble invested with intimacy and emotive charge.

by Silvia Sgualdini

For those who discovered Leigh Ledare in Brussels via his survey at WIELS in 2012, the exhibition at Office Baroque might come as a surprise. This recent presentation lacks the kind of controversial material — such as pictures of his mother naked, legs wide open — that gave the artist a nefarious reputation. The main work in the show is *Vokzal* (2016), a sixty-minute film shot on 16mm film and projected in color. It shows individuals, some in a pretty bad shape, as they hang around the eponymous train station in Moscow, unaware of being filmed. Set in a darkened room, the arrangement of three projectors within a purpose-built structure adds complexity to the installation and gives the visitor the sensation of both watching and being watched. The film draws out the figures' loneliness, emphasizing their lack of interaction with one another.

Acting as a counterpoint, *The Large Group*, a seventy-minute single-channel video produced for the latest edition of Manifesta, replicates the improvisational approach of London's Tavistock Institute, which specializes in group psychology. The artist chose twenty-one participants based on different factors, such as family, gender, race, class and origin, to construct a microcosm of Zurich society. Led by psychologists, these participants were invited to react to various topics over the course of a three-day conference that was viewed in real time by visitors to Manifesta. What remains here is the filmed trace of that event.

The third and most cryptic part of the exhibition presents a series of thirty-two framed postcards of Soviet actors from the 1960s next to images of purebred dogs and pages torn from the psychologist R.D. Laing's book *Knots*. According to the visitor's guide, it "suggests representation as a system of typing, pointing to how specific groups are cast by society." If the Office Baroque show reveals Ledare's careful concern for these questions, it also tends to overintellectualize an artist who is, first and foremost, a powerful photographer. Two beautiful (and chaste) pictures of Ledare's mother that hang in the gallery office remind us of this.

by Pierre-Yves Desaive

## OFFICE BAROQUE



From top:  
**Bojan Šarčević**  
*"invagination,"* installation  
view at Modern Art, London  
(2016)  
Courtesy of the Artist and  
Stuart Shave/Modern Art,  
London

**James Richards**  
*"Requests and Antisongs,"*  
installation view at ICA,  
London (2016)  
Courtesy of the Artist and  
ICA, London  
Photography by Mark Blower

**Leigh Ledare**  
*The Walk* (2016)  
Courtesy of the Artist and  
Office Baroque, Brussels  
Photography by Kristien  
Daem

