

INTENSIFYING, EXHIBITING

By Charlotte Sprogøe

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thus, a formless form*

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EGG

CAT COW is an exhibition filled with eggs. Nina Beier has created an organic microcosm in the kunsthalle's off-site barn building, where water, soil, smoke, milk, cats and performers are incorporated as living sculptural elements on an equal footing with artistically processed figures and objects. The abandoned barn, with its scenic 20-metre-high beamed ceiling, is one of many found objects that together create a kind of weird assemblage that comes to life in the exhibition. The barn forms a scenic backdrop and is itself a central character in the choreographed situation that unfolds between the things – and which generates the exhibition as form.

CAT COW unfolds as an (soil) floor-based sculptural installation that extends, landscape-like, across 750 square metres. Hundreds of eggs lie scattered across the rammed earthen floor, and on the lions, like torn-out eyes, a luxurious overabundance, or as a result of overproduction on an egg farm. There are decorative eggs made of alabaster and marble, ranging in colour from Bianco Statuarietto, Rosso Imperiale to Breccia Salomè or 'Leopard marble'. Among the deco eggs are organic chicken eggs, quail eggs and other bird eggs in various stages of decay, desiccation and calcification. There are also yoni eggs done in crystal, rose quartz and jade. Yoni eggs are intended for vaginal insertion to tighten the muscles and massage the wearer from the inside.

ÆG

I CAT COW er en udstilling fyldt med æg. Nina Beier har skabt et organisk mikrokosmos i kunsthallens off-site ladebygning, hvor vand, jord, røg, mælk, kattedyr og performere indgår som levende skulpturelle elementer på lige fod med kunstnerisk forarbejdede figurer og objekter. Den forladte lade med dens sceniske 20 meter høje bjælkeloftskonstruktion, er et af mange fundne objekter, der sammen skaber en form for *weird* assemblage, der kommer til live i udstillingen. Laden udgør et bagtæppe, et scenisk *backdrop*, og er selv en central karakter i den koreograferede situation, der udspiller sig tingene imellem – og som genererer udstillingen som form.

CAT COW folder sig ud som en (jord)gulv-baseret skulpturel installation, der som et landskab strækker sig ud over 750kvm. Der ligger hundredevis af æg spredt ud over det stamperede jordgulv, og på løverne som løsrevne øjne, en slags overdreven kostbarhed eller som resultat af en overproduktion på en æggefarm. Det er deco-æg i alabast og marmor, som findes i alle typer fra Bianco Statuarietto, Rosso Imperiale til Breccia Salomè eller 'Leopardmarmor'. Blandt deco-æggene ligger organiske hønseæg, vagtelæg og fugleæg i forskellige stadier af forrådnelse, udtørring og forkalkning. Der ligger også yoni-æg i krystaller, rosenkvars og jade. Det er æg til kvinders underliv, der kan føres op, stramme muskulaturen og massere indefra.

The egg is a perfect shape. Matter, the cell, generates the form, the oval, which is without beginning and end. It is sculpturally simple and heavily charged as a sign. It is an ancient symbol of life – from the cellular level to the cosmos and the universe – although we most often encounter it in its last phase, where the (chicken) egg's interior is dying. The egg can, in the thinking of Georges Bataille, be said to a picture of the energy expenditure consumption characteristic of the universe; the excess energy that informs all living things: 'In a sense, life suffocates within limits that are too close; it aspires in manifold ways to an impossible growth; it releases a steady flow of excess resources, possibly rendering large squanderings of energy.'²

The absence of life in these things is perhaps the most striking feature of Beier's exhibition. Life is being drawn out of the objects, as in Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, which features eye/egg, milk, cat, farm as recurring elements – symbols that are pulled out and down from their exalted level, dissolving in an orgy of violence and death. In Beier's work, however, the dissolution of ideal forms takes place in a quite cool, detached manner at a conceptual level – with an intensity that is not violent but rather takes place with a disturbingly brutal simplicity in the way the exhibition's elements are orchestrated,³ and to a certain extent also animated as objects with agency and being.⁴

The eggs range from man-made to non-man-made, in-animate to animate. Some are 'soiled', dirty and in stages of decay, other are ornaments. The organic ones transform from being organic matter to become mineral products when the liquids have dried out, the gases evaporated and the calcification begun. The marble eggs of culture, on the other hand, can encompass versatile symbolism: in Asian culture they were seen as auspicious, as amulets of hope and purity, while in a Christian reading they symbolised the tomb. With their marbled veins resembling blood vessels, one can see them as a form of petrified life. They have been used as decorative objects exchanged to wish each other prosperity and celebrate spring – or they have been ritually buried in the ground to help the seed germinate and render the fields fertile. The egg was a symbol of the cycle of life and of the beginning of the world.

The tension between the aesthetic form/ the formless, re-presentation/presentation and the living/ the real is echoed in the rest of the ex-

Ægget er en fuldkommen form. Materien, cellen, genererer formen, ovalen, der er uden begyndelse og afslutning. Det er skulpturelt enkelt og tungt ladet som tegn. Det er et ursymbol for liv – fra celleniveau til kosmos og universet – selv om vi oftest møder det i den sidste fase, hvor (høns)æggets indre er ved at dø ud. Ægget kan være et billede på det ødsle energiforbrug, med Georges Batailles koncept, som universet er karakteriseret af; den overskudsenergi der præger alt levende: "In a sense, life suffocates within limits that are too close; it aspires in manifold ways to an impossible growth; it releases a steady flow of excess resources, possibly rendering large squanderings of energy."²

Det er fraværet af liv i tingene, der måske er det mest markante i Beiers udstilling. En form for trækken livet ud af genstandene er i gang, som i Batailles *Historien om øjet*, hvor øje/æg, mælk, kat, gård går igen – symboler der trækkes væk fra deres ophøjede niveau og opløses i et orgie af vold og død. Hos Beier sker opløsningen af idealformer dog helt køligt og på et konceptuelt plan – med en intensitet der ikke er voldsom men i stedet findes i en foruroligende brutal enkelthed i den måde, hvorpå udstillingens elementer er orkestreret³, og så vidt også animeret som objekter med agens og væren.⁴

Æggene går fra det menneskeskabte til det ikke-menneskeskabte, *in-animate* til *animate*. Nogle er 'soiled', beskidte og i forrådnelse, andre pyntegenstande. De organiske transformerer sig fra at være et organisk materiale til et mineralsk produkt, når væskerne er tørret ud, gasarterne fordampede og forkalkningen i gang. De menneskeskabte marmoræg kan derimod rumme en alsidig symbolik: I asiatisk kultur blev de set som lykkebringende, som amuletter for håb og renhed, mens de i en kristen læsning var symbolik på gravkammeret. Med deres marmoreringer, der ligner blodårer, kan man se dem som en form for forstenet liv. De er blevet brugt som dekorative objekter man udvekslede for at ønske fremgang og fejre foråret – eller man gravede dem ned i jorden rituelt for at hjælpe såsæd i gang og befrugte markerne. Ægget var symbol på livscyklus og på verdens begyndelse.

Spændingen mellem det formfuldendte/det formløse, re-præsentation/præsentation og det animerede/det organiske går igen fra æggene til resten af udstillingen. Den er på én gang en stram æstetisk form, en composition af elementer og en organisk tidsbaseret proces,

hibition. It is simultaneously a tightly controlled aesthetic form, a composition of elements and an organic time-based process consisting of mutations and rhythms. The exhibit is like an organism that comes together in formations and dissolves again. It is formless as it transforms over time – as an operation or a series of scenarios.

Informe, Bataille's concept of the formless, is the movement away from the idealistic notion that everything must take a form. It is a base materialism in which dirt, soil, secretions and dust are considered fundamental elements of the universe: 'affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit'.⁵

Like the yoga position with which it shares its name, CAT COW alternates between form and *informe*. 'Morphogenesis is the process of becoming form', a kind of unconscious self-organisation of chaotic matter, to quote Franco 'Bifo' Berardi.⁶ For Nina Beier, it is a creation of form, a process that brings together essentially different elements in formations and then disrupts them again. The processes and the operation are what constitute the work itself.⁷

LION

Animals came from over the horizon. They belonged there and here. Likewise they were mortal and immortal. An animal's blood flowed like human blood, but its species was undying and each lion was Lion and each ox was Ox. This – maybe the first existential dualism – was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected and worshipped, bred and sacrificed.

—John Berger, *Why Look at Animals*

What Nina Beier presents in the barn is a kind of bestiary. An exhibition consisting primarily of animals, from cell to beast, in a formation created as a network between the wild and the domesticated, the dead and the living, the rural and the mythological. Twenty two marble lions, almost life-sized, lie overturned in the barn. The cavities formed by their carved surfaces

der består af mutationer og rytmer. Udstillingen er som en organisme, der samler sig i formationer og opløser sig igen. Den er formløs, da den transformeres over tid – som en operation eller en række scenarier.

Informe, Batailles begreb for det formløse, er bevægelsen væk fra den idealistiske idé om at alt skal antage en form. Det er en basal materialisme, hvor skidt, jord, sekret, støv betragtes som grundelementer i universet: "affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit."⁵

VII CAT COW veksler som den yogastilling den deler navn med, mellem form og *informe*. "Morphogenesis is the process of becoming form" en art ubevidst selvorganisering af kaotisk materie, med Franco 'Bifo' Berardis ord⁶. Hos Nina Beier er det en formskabelse, en proces der samler væsensforskellige elementer i formationer, for derefter at forstyrre dem igen. Processerne, eller operationen er det, der konstituerer selve værket.⁷

LØVE

Animals came from over the horizon. They belonged there and here. Likewise they were mortal and immortal. An animal's blood flowed like human blood, but its species was undying and each lion was Lion and each ox was Ox. This – maybe the first existential dualism – was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected and worshipped, bred and sacrificed.

VIII

—John Berger *Why Look at Animals*

IX Det er en form for bestiarium, Nina Beier præsenterer i laden. En udstilling bestående primært af dyr, fra celle til bæst, i en formation skabt som et netværk mellem det vilde og det domesticerede, det døde og det levende, det landlige og det mytologiske. Toogtyve marmorløver i næsten *life-like* skala ligger væltet om i laden. De hulrum, der er dannet af udskæringerne i deres overflade, er blevet beholdere for mælk; havremælk, kattemælk, komælk, der giver næring til en gruppe katte der strejfer

have become containers for milk; oat milk, cat milk, cow's milk to nourish the group of cats roaming the barn. Eggs lie scattered around the ground as if connected with the lions in a strange multiplication of decorative marble and living animals. Between the lions, bathtubs have been dug into the ground. Resembling the troughs made from such old baths often seen in pastures, they join the animals in generating a sense of belonging to a bizarre landscape. At the same time, they were originally made for human bodies, creating an intimate presence – a private space in the barn.

In the medieval books on animals, known as bestiaries, animals, stones and organic life in nature were categorised according to their mythological and metaphorical meanings, arranged in the books to ultimately form a final moral about the coherence and rules of the universe. The list was determined by the order of things, as was the today perhaps better known *Manual de zoología fantástica* by Jorge Luis Borges & Margarita Guerrero from 1957. A catalogue of imaginary beings with entries such as: "The Sphinx of Egyptian monuments ... is a lion having the head of a man and lying at rest; it stood watch by temples and tombs, and is said to have represented royal authority".⁸

The lion holds a prominent place in bestiaries from Aesop's fables to modern texts, being described as the king of all wild beasts and a magical creature. Nina Beier's marble lions, a figure she has used in various constellations in *Total Loss*, RIBOCA 2, 2020, *Guardian*, Lichtenfels Sculpture, 2021; *Housebroken*, Kunsthalle Gent, 2019; and *Baby*, Metro Pictures, 2018, is a guard animal like the sphinx, but one that has mutated as a sign through a variety of appearances and uses. The lion is one of the oldest figures in art. We know it from the ice age 'Lion Man', from the Piraeus Lion – an ancient Greek sculpture from 360 BCE now guarding the arsenal in Venice, from the four Trafalgar Square lions, from Bertel Thorvaldsen's dying lion, monument to a fallen army – and we know them from Middle Eastern and Asian sculptures where they symbolised power and strength and the boundary between inside and outside.

The lions in the barn are a mutated variation on Western lion figures. Having been produced in China, they have taken on features from the Chinese *Shi shi* or Foo Dogs, stylised and ornamented stone lion sculptures placed

om i laden. Rundt om på jorden ligger æggen
X ne spredt som var de forbundne med løverne
i en underlig formering af deco-marmor og le-
vende dyr. Imellem løverne er badekar er gra-
XI vet ned i jorden. Ligesom de trug der findes på
græsningsmarker lavet af gamle kar, får de her
med dyrene en karakter af at høre til i et bizart
landskab. Samtidigt er de lavet til menneske-
kroppe og skaber en intim tilstedeværelse – et
privat rum i laden.

I middelalderens bogværker om dyr, '*Bestiaries*', blev dyr, sten og organisk liv i naturen kategoriseret ud fra deres mytologiske og metaforiske betydninger og sat op i bøgerne med en morale til slut om universets sammenhæng og regler. Fortegnelsen over dem var bestemt af tingenes orden, som også i den i dag måske mere kendte '*Manual de zoología fantástica*' af Jorge Luis Borges & Margarita Guerrero fra 1957. Et katalog over forestillede væsener med opslag som: "The Sphinx of Egyptian monuments ... is a lion having the head of a man and lying at rest; it stood watch by temples and tombs, and is said to have represented royal authority."⁸ Løverne har en prominent placering i bestiariet fra Aesops fabler til moderne tekster, hvor den er kongen over de vilde dyr og et magisk væsen. Nina Beiers marmorløver, en figur hun har anvendt i forskellige konstellationer i *Total Loss*, RIBOCA 2, 2020, *Guardian*, Lichtenfels Sculpture, 2021; *Housebroken* Kunsthalle Gent, 2019, *Baby*, Metro Pictures 2018, er et vagtdyr som Sphinxen, der er muteret som tegn igennem en række forskellige fremtrædelser og brug. Løven er en af de allerældste figurer i kunsten. Vi kender den fra istidens 'Lion Man', Piræus Løven – den antikke græske skulptur fra 360 f.k., der bevogter arsenalet i Venedig, og fra de fire Trafalgar Square løver, Bertel Thorvaldsens døende løve, monument for en falden hær – og vi kender dem fra mellemøstlige og asiatiske skulpturer hvor de symboliserede kraft og styrke og markerer grænsen mellem inde og ude.

De løver, der ligger i laden, er en muteret variation af vestlige løvefigurer, der igennem deres produktion i Kina har fået træk fra de kinesiske *Shi shi* eller *Foo Dogs*, stiliserede og ornamenterede løveskulpturer i sten, der blev placeret foran paladser og gravmonumenter for at vogte mod onde ånder. *Shi shi* transformeredes til vagtfigurer foran offentlige bygninger, hoteller og restauranter som symbol på magt, ejendomsret og prestige. CAT COW løverne

in front of palaces and tombs to guard against evil spirits. *Shi shi* were transformed into guard figures in front of public buildings, hotels and restaurants as a symbol of power, property and prestige. The CAT COW lions are a Western variation on the Chinese lions, a combination of the Victorian and the Asian figure. Marble objects that here become sculptures when placed in the context of an art exhibition like this. But their latent scripts are still in play.

er en vestlige variation over de kinesiske løver, en kombination af den victorianske og den asiatiske figur. Brugsgenstande i marmor der her bliver til skulpturer i det de sættes ind i en kunstudstilling. Men deres latente *scripts* er stadig med i spillet.

Each object contains what Beier calls baggage, layers of meanings and past contexts. Signs that have mutated, transformed, alternated. In the totality formed by CAT COW, it appears as an unstable vibrating assemblage, to use Gilles Deleuze's concept; composed of individual parts with their own agency and being, their energies pulling them in different directions.

The animals and eggs of CAT COW are animated and orchestrated on the basis of a kind of weird-ontology,⁹ where things are literal and fantastical, hailing from different planes of the real. In a complex juxtaposition like here, our decoding of each element as signs becomes clearer; the familiar industrial chicken eggs appear neutral and 'clean', the less common bird eggs appear more disruptive, remnants of living creatures. Animism, and the idea that things and matter can possess agency and energy, marks out the frontier of where the rationality of modernity collapses, writes Anselm Franke. It paves the way for something 'merely imaginary', and thus for what can claim to be reality.¹⁰ The frontier is a site of 'soft products' and 'aesthetic economies' that use animism to move in and open up notions about other realities.

Bruno Latour's idea of 'compositionism' is about these composed wholes that let the individual elements retain their heterogeneity, their essential difference. 'Nature is not a thing, a domain, a realm, an ontological territory. It is (or rather, it was during the short modern pa-

Hvert objekt rummer det Beier kalder baggage, lag af betydninger og tidligere kontekster. Tegn der er muteret, transformeret, vekslet, der i den helhed CAT COW former, optræder som en ustabil vibrerende assamblage, med Gilles Deleuze begreb, sammensat af individuelle dele med hver deres agens og væren og hvis energi trækker dem i forskellige retninger.

Dyrene og æggene i CAT COW animeres og orkestreres ud fra en form for *weird-ontology*,⁹ hvor ting er bogstavelige og fantastiske, og hvor de kommer fra forskellige planer af det virkelige. I en kompleks sammenstilling som her, bliver vores afkodning af hvert element som tegn tydeligere; de velkendte industrielle hønseæg virker neutrale og 'rene', de mindre almindelige fugleæg fremtræder som mere forstyrrende, som rester af levende væsner. Animismen, og forestillingen om at ting og materie kan besidde en agens og en energi, markerer en grænse for der hvor modernitetens rationalitet bryder sammen, skriver Anselm Franke. Den åbner op for noget 'merely imaginary', det der blot er noget man kan forestille sig, og dermed hvad der kan lægge beslag på at være virkelighed.¹⁰ Grænselandet er feltet for 'soft products' og 'æstetiske økonomier', der bruger animisme til at bevæge sig ind og åbne for forestillinger om andre virkeligheder.

Bruno Latours ide om 'kompositionisme', handler om disse komponerede helheder, der lader enkeltelementerne beholde deres heterogenitet, deres væsensforskellighed. "Nature is not a thing, a domain, a realm, an ontological territory. It is (or rather, it was during the short modern parenthesis) a way of organizing the division (what Alfred North Whitehead



renthesis) a way of organising the division (what Alfred North Whitehead has called the Bifurcation) between appearances and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, history and immutability. A fully transcendent, yet a fully historical construct, a deeply religious way (but not in the truly religious sense of the word) of creating the difference of potential between what human souls were attached to and what was really out there'. In CAT COW, the notion of nature and naturalness is also disrupted – and the element of construction, the distance between appearance and reality, subject and object, is foregrounded.

BARN

What greets us in CAT COW is a synthetic nature; an unromantic sensibility pervades the exhibition. The myth of the rural as a pastoral, a state of nature to which one can return, is redirected to become an allegory of the rural as a post-capitalist landscape, an exercise of a relationship and balance of power in which nature's resources are milked and the relationship to the wild is perverted. The effect is akin to Anna Tsing's concept of industrial animal production in an age where man has become a geological factor, the Anthropocene, as 'Machines of Replications' – factories that produce 'sameness' and purge those elements of animal life that are not productive.¹¹

The farm landscape that forms the context of CAT COW is not portrayed as healing but as an environment shaped by artificial approaches to the organic, a form of non-hi-tech hypernature. It is a post-apocalyptic image of agriculture and the barn as a burial chamber or battlefield.

The barn that makes up the exhibition's 'Theatre of Operations' forms a staged space where relationships and interactions are central. It is not an actual stage, and the exhibition is not an actual theatre; rather, the theatrical aspect is present on a more virtual level, as a choreography and orchestration or as a trope – and in the alternation of elements between being signs and being things.

CAT COW engages in an interplay between a designed nature that is used as a display structure and stage. The marble sculptures, which could very well have stood in a stately park, symbolise power relations and history, determining

has called the Bifurcation) between appearances and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, history and immutability. A fully transcendent, yet a fully historical construct, a deeply religious way (but not in the truly religious sense of the word) of creating the difference of potential between what human souls were attached to and what was really out there." I CAT COW bliver forestillingen om natur og naturlighed også forstyrret – og det konstruerede, afstanden mellem fremtrædelse og virkelighed, subjekt og objekt trukket frem.

LADE

Det er en syntetisk natur, der møder os i CAT COW, og en uromantisk sensibilitet, der lægger sig hen over udstillingen. Myten om det landlige som et pastorale, en naturtilstand man kan vende tilbage til – bliver drejet over i en allegori om det landlige som et post-kapitalistisk landskab, og en udøvelse af en magtrelation, hvor naturens ressourcer malkes og relationen til det vilde perverteres. Det svarer lidt til Anna Tsing's begreb om industriel dyreproduktion i vor tidsalder, hvor mennesket er blevet en geologisk faktor, det antropocene, som 'Machines of Replications' – fabrikker der producerer 'sameness' og udrenser elementer af dyreliv der ikke er produktivt.¹¹

Bondelandskabet, der er konteksten for CAT COW, bliver ikke portrætteret som healende men som et miljø formet af kunstige greb om det organiske, i en form for non-hi-tech *hypernature*. Det er et post-apokalyptisk billede af landbruget og laden som gravkammer eller slagmark.

Laden, der er udstillingens *Theater of Operations*, udgør et scenerum, hvor relationerne og interaktionerne er det centrale. Det er ikke en egentlig scene, og udstillingen er ikke et egentligt teater, det teatraliske er til stede på et mere virtuelt plan, som en koreografi og orkestrering eller som trope – og i elementers vekslen mellem at være tegn og at være ting.

Det er et samspil i CAT COW mellem en designet natur, der bruges som displaystruktur, og scene. Marmorskulpturerne, der godt kunne have stået i en herskabelig park, symboliserer magtforhold og historie, og bestemmer bevægelsen igennem udstillingen – som symbolske

the movement through the exhibition – becoming symbolic signs in its obscure narration. The link between exhibition and stage points back to what has been termed ‘the self-reflective and performative structure of the aesthetic object, its ‘stage presence’ or, in other words, its exhibition’.¹² Art’s dual nature of always being both a thing and a sign. It is like a theatrical double – it depends on the viewer’s gaze and can potentially change according to the current framework and situation.¹³ With a setup as thoroughly orchestrated as in CAT COW, it becomes even clearer that the individual objects (the marble lions, the eggs) are informed by the installation and could change their nature in a different setting.

The building itself is a kind of sentinel, the first thing to greet guests as they drive down the avenue towards the art institution, an architect-designed prestige building carrying logos for the Collet family, who owned the estate in the late 1800s and for a hundred years onwards. However, Beier’s exhibition is not a traditional site-specific project. The barn acts more as a kind of backdrop or scenic setting that could be any other early industrial barn in Europe. The barn can be seen as a form of found object, just like the lions, many of which were bought second-hand at sales of decorative goods in Poland and Italy. Here, the found object becomes an overall framework, a non-human co-curator that generates much of the exhibition as a whole – and in itself carries massive layers of baggage, contributing to a ghost-like sensibility where one senses the life that used to be.

The barn is to be taken quite literally, as something concrete and specific – and at the same time it acts as a metaphor. It is a prototype of capitalism’s accumulation, a place where economic resources are stored and agricultural machinery stands ready to reap more. As such, the barn becomes a kind of monument to industrialisation, akin to Robert Smithson’s use of the abandoned buildings of industrialisation that live on in silence; ‘a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur’.¹⁴

It is a real object, one which Beier posits as part of an aesthetic composition – like the lions, the eggs, the cats. Beier uses the barn both as figure and as a ground. The barn is part of the exhibition, acting a character that plays with the other sign, and it also functions as a display structure, as that which presents the works to us and as the platform on which the choreography

tegn i dens obskure narration. Koblingen mellem udstilling og scene peger tilbage på hvad der er blevet betegnet som “the self-reflective and performative structure of the aesthetic object, its ‘stage presence’ or, in other words, it’s exhibition.”¹² Kunstens karakter af altid at være både en ting og et tegn. Den er som en *theatrical double* – afhængig af beskuerens blik og med en evne til potentielt at ændre sig efter ramme og med situationen.¹³ Med et setup så gennemorkestret som i CAT COW, fremstår de enkelte objekter (marmorløverne, æggene) endnu tydeligere som præget af installationen og som noget der vil kunne skifte karakter i en anden ramme.

Bygningen i sig selv er en slags forpost, der møder gæsterne som det første, når de kører ind ad alléen mod kunsthallen, et arkitekt-tegnet prestigebyggeri, der bærer logoer for Collet-slægten, som ejede godset i slutningen af 1800-tallet og 100 år frem. Beiers udstilling er dog ikke et traditionelt stedsspecifikt projekt. Laden har mere karakter af en form for bagtæppe eller scenisk rammesætning, der kunne være en hvilken som helst anden tidlig industriel lade i Europa. Laden kan ses som en form for fundet objekt, ligesom mange af løverne er købt second-hand i deco-varesalg i Polen og Italien. Her bliver det fundne objekt til en overordnet ramme, en ikke-menneskelig med-kurator, der genererer meget af udstillingen som helhed – og som i sig selv bærer på massive lag af baggage, hvad der bidrager til en spøgelseslignende sensibilitet, hvor man fornemmer det liv der har været.

Laden skal både tages helt bogstaveligt, som noget konkret og specifikt – og optræder samtidig som en metafor. Den er en prototype på kapitalismens akkumulation, stedet hvor økonomiske ressourcer lagres og landbrugsmaskiner står klar til at høste flere ind. Laden får derved karakter af en art monument for industrialiseringen, som Robert Smithsons brug af industrialiseringens forladte bygninger der lever videre i stilhed; “a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur.”¹⁴

Den er en virkelig genstand, der dog hos Beier, ligesom løverne, æggene, kattene, her bliver sat ind i en æstetisk komposition. Beier bruger laden både som figur og som grund. Laden er både en del af udstillingen, som en karakter der spiller sammen med de andre tegn, og displaystruktur, som det der præsenterer værkerne for

unfolds. It is a parergon, a work-frame, a frame-work – which in turn is reframed in a number of other ways.

The barn figures as a monument to the early phase of the Anthropocene in the 1800s. Before then, animals were both food and magical beings; now they are raw materials, produce and products, categorised according to our use of them: pets, breeding animals, etc. The point of John Berger's *Why Look at Animals* is that with capitalism, the bond that existed between humans and animals is cut. They become something out of our reach that we cannot decode, unpredictable elements that create a disturbance – objects we observe which are not objects but living and uninterested in our presence. The cats in CAT COW do not perform themselves as animals, they live in the show. Their agency and their consciousness are beyond our reach. And with their presence, a feeling is activated that something lives hidden under the barn ceiling and in the fields outside and in the cubicles behind the walls. A vitality is introduced that extends beyond the space and enters into a symbiosis with the landscape and the animistic outer world.

MAN

In the sphere of financial capitalism, the prevailing linguistic concatenations produce a spasmogenic rhythm. Not only does the spasm exploit men's and women's work, subjecting cognitive labor to the abstract acceleration of the infomachine, but it also destroys the organisms sensibility by subjecting the sensibility to the stress of competition and acceleration.¹⁵

—Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

There is a life-presence operating on several levels in CAT COW; there is the organic soil, and the eggs, there are the cats, and there is a caretaker in the exhibition who pours fresh milk into the cavities of the lions at the beginning of the day and cleans it away again at the end. From time to time the exhibition is also occupied by a group of smokers who move amidst the animals, sit down, smoke and blow smoke rings. Acting as a kind of

os – og som den platform, koreografien folder sig ud på. Den er en parergon, en værkramme, et rammeværk – der igen er sat ind i en mængde andre rammer.

Laden figurerer som et monument for den tidlige fase af det antropocene i 1800 tallet. Før da var dyrene både føde og magiske væsener, nu er de råvarer og produkter, kategoriseret efter vores brug af dem: kæledyr, avlsdyr, osv. Pointen i John Bergers *Why Look at Animals* er, at med kapitalismen kappes det bånd, der var mellem mennesker og dyr. De bliver til noget udenfor vores rækkevidde, som vi ikke kan afkode, uforudsigelige elementer der skaber en forstyrrelse – genstandene vi betragter, der ikke er objekter men levende og uinteresserede i vores tilstedeværelse. Kattene i CAT COW performer ikke sig selv som dyr, de lever i udstillingen. Deres agens og deres bevidsthed er udenfor vores rækkevidde. Og med deres tilstedeværelse aktiveres en fornemmelse af, at det der lever gemt under ladens loft og på markerne udenfor og i aflukkerne bag væggene. Der introduceres en vitalitet, der rækker ud over rummet og går i symbiose med landskabet og det animistiske udenfor.

MENNESKE

In the sphere of financial capitalism, the prevailing linguistic concatenations produce a spasmogenic rhythm. Not only does the spasm exploit men's and women's work, subjecting cognitive labor to the abstract acceleration of the infomachine, but it also destroys the organisms sensibility by subjecting the sensibility to the stress of competition and acceleration.¹⁵

—Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

Der er 'life-presence' på flere plan i CAT COW, der er den organiske jord, og æggene, der er kattene og der er en caretaker i udstillingen, der hælder frisk mælk i hulningerne på løverne i begyndelsen af dagen, og renser den af igen i slutningen. Ind imellem indtages udstillingen også af en gruppe rygere, der bevæger sig rundt blandt dyrene, sætter sig, ryger og blæser røgringe. Som en form for levende røgmaskine leverer de

living smoke machine, they supply the exhibition with sculptural elements at a molecular level, interweaving with the rest of the installation like a fog. They have grey hair, one of the most obvious signs of ageing – and one of the most under-represented traits in art. The performers activate the exhibition, but they are more like living sculptures than individuals. Once they have finished smoking, they retreat to the back of the barn, sit down on a faded leather sofa and passively wait until it is time for them to go on again. Such performativity has been termed ‘vampiric’ by Juliane Rebentisch due to its way of drawing the life out of the performances, turning performers into images, or, as here, into sculptures. Instead of delivering a sense of being together in a living now – as audience and performers – the experience becomes one of not existing on the same level.¹⁶

CAT COW operates with a ghost-like, dark sensibility, like a state of mental pressure. Instead of an attitude that becomes form, here we find a mental state giving the exhibition form. One can, like Berardi, see the acceleration created by the hyper-capitalist society as a reality so imprinted by stress, so affected by PTSD, that our sensibilities have been destroyed, or one may instead see it as generating another post-human, synthetic and tense sensibility. An aesthetic view and perception of the world as something decoupled, out of joint, a sensibility where signs and things, the digital and the physical, are perceived at the same level and where the acceleration only increases the complexity of the many layers being simultaneously sensed and perceived in one’s reality.

It is a ‘negative aesthetic’ also found in CAT COW, where absence is more pronounced than presence. Where uncertainty prevails about what is alive and what is dead and what has agency. The performers do not govern the proceedings; they are part of the overall composition. Nor do we experience CAT COW from their perspective, either; they are incorporated as elements which are every bit as inaccessible as the animals. The smoke rings they create have traditionally been used as a warning signal, or been associated with weapons having been fired. In the landscape, smoke is a marker of pollution, disaster and death, and socially it is seen as a kind of self-destruction over time.

Just as the animals refer to a ‘machinic reproduction’, there is something machine-like about Beier’s performers. Semio-capitalist thinking uses the concept of ‘Machinic Enslavement’

skulpturelle elementer til udstillingen på et molekylært niveau, der filtrer sig ind i resten af installationen som en tåge. De har gråt hår, et af de tydeligste tegn på aldring – og noget af det mest under-repræsenterede i kunsten. Performerne aktiverer udstillingen, men de har mere karakter af levende skulpturer end af individer. Når de har røget, trækker de sig tilbage til bagerste del af laden, sætter sig i den falmende lædersofa og venter passivt på at de skal ind igen. Det er en performativitet, der af Juliane Rebentisch har fået betegnelse vampyrisk i sin måde at trække livet ud af performances, gøre performere til billeder, eller som her til skulpturer. I stedet for at levere en følelse af at være sammen i et levende nu – publikum og performere – bliver det en oplevelse af, at man ikke eksisterer på samme plan.¹⁶

CAT COW opererer med en spøgelsesliggende, mørk sensibilitet, som en psykisk presset tilstand. I stedet for en attitude der bliver form, er der her en psykisk tilstand der giver udstillingen form. Man kan som Berardi se den acceleration, som det hyper-kapitalistiske samfund skaber, som en virkelighed der er så stressmærket og PTDS ramt, at vores sensibilitet i dag er ødelagt, eller man kan i stedet se det som om at det generer en anden post-human, syntetisk og anspændt sensibilitet. Et æstetisk blik på, og sansning af verden som noget dekoblet, *out of joint*, en sensibilitet hvor tegn og ting, det digitale og det fysiske, bliver sanset på samme niveau og hvor accelerationen blot øger kompleksiteten og i de mange lag der sanses på én gang i ens virkelighed.

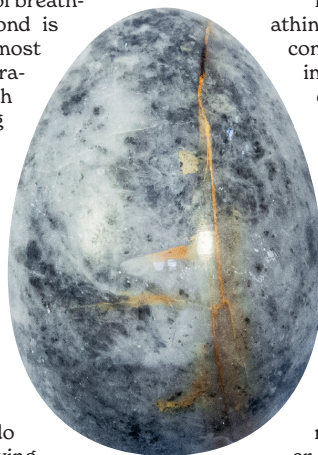
Det er en ‘negative aesthetic’, som også findes i CAT COW, hvor fravær er mere markant end nærvær. Hvor der er tvivl om hvad der er levende og hvad der er dødt og hvad der har agens. Performerne er ikke det styrende, de er dele af den samlede komposition. Det er ikke fra deres perspektiv heller at vi oplever CAT COW, de indgår som lige så utilgængelige elementer som dyrene. De røgringe de skaber er traditionelt et advarselssignal, eller forbundet med våben, efter de er skudt af. I landskabet er røgen en markør på forurening, katastrofer og død, og socialt er det set som en slags selv-ødelæggelse over tid.

Ligesom dyrene henviser til en *Machinic reproduction* er der også noget maskinel ved Beiers performere. Semio-kapitalisme-tænkningen opererer med begrebet ‘Machinic Ensla-

to denote a state imposed on mankind by capitalism. Maurizio Lazzarato puts it as follows: 'In the mode of machinic enslavement, the individual can no longer be understood as an individualised subject, an economic subject or a citizen, but he/ she must be described as a part or a component of the fabric of enterprises, financial systems, the media, the state and its collective institutions'.¹⁷ Humanity, individuality and subjectivity are replaced by an understanding of man as a component of a system. When the smoking performers blow out their smoke rings, they enter into a rhythmic relationship with their surroundings; through their breathing they connect to the world, not overtly, but again on a molecular level.

'I distinguish three moods of breathing: one is inspiration, the second is conspiracy, and the third (and most interesting) is expiration. Inspiration is opening the personal breath to the cosmic breath, opening your mind to the surrounding info-sphere. Guattari speaks of Chaosmosis, the ability to synchronise your rhythm, your ritournelle, to your surroundings,' says 'Bifo' Berardi about breathing, continuing: 'expiration, which is emerging in the public discourse. It means giving back: you breathe to the cosmos, but it has to do with extinction'.¹⁸

CAT COW also has to do with extinction, with what is dying out. It is an exhibition as an organism where everything interacts, but where nothing is actually born or created; it is burned instead. The smoke being exhaled is corrosive and the assemblages formed here never cohere completely, but remain works in progress. Perhaps this very aspect can be seen as the exhibition's 'Chaosmosis' - a rhythm synchronous with the present.



XVII vement', som en tilstand kapitalismen har sat mennesket i. Maurizio Lazzarato formulerer det som "In the mode of machinic enslavement, the individual can no longer be understood as an individualized subject, an economic subject or a citizen, but he/she must be described as a part or a component of the fabric of enterprises, financial systems, the media, the state and its collective institutions."¹⁷ Det menneskelige, individualitet og subjektivitet erstattes af en forståelse af mennesket som komponent i et system. Når de rygende performere puster deres røgringe ud, indgår de i en form for rytme med omgivelserne, igennem deres åndedræt kobler de sig på verden, ikke tydeligt men igen på et molekylært partikel niveau.

"I distinguish three moods of breathing: one is inspiration, the second is conspiracy, and the third (and most interesting) is expiration. Inspiration is opening the personal breath to the cosmic breath, opening your mind to the surrounding info-sphere. Guattari speaks of Chaosmosis, the ability to synchronize your rhythm, your ritournelle, to your surroundings." skriver 'Bifo' Berardi om åndedræt: "expiration, which is emerging in the public discourse. It means giving back: you breathe to the cosmos, but it has to do with extinction."¹⁸

CAT COW har også at gøre med 'extinction', det uddøende. Det er en udstilling skabt som en organisme, hvor alt interagerer, men hvor der ikke er noget der reelt fødes eller skabes, det forbrændes i stedet. Den røg, der bliver udåndet, er tærende og de assemblager der former sig, samler sig aldrig fuldstændig, men bliver ved med at være i proces. Netop det kan måske ses om udstillingens 'Chaosmosis' - en rytme der er synkron med samtiden.

"To curate an exhibition encompasses the score that enables its realisation, the bodies that make it be, the location it inhabits, the time taken for its experience and the memory that

"To curate an exhibition encompasses the score that enables its realization, the bodies that make it be, the location it inhabits, the time taken for its experience and the memory that

remains once the course has run'.¹⁹ Through Beier's choreography of the living elements and orchestration of the dead, the network of things found in the barn is animated. Beier's choreography links different fragmented parts – and operates on the basis of an overall concept that generates a coherent form. It is a way of creating a parallel world, a 4-D exhibition experience where all elements are part of the whole: architecture, atmosphere, light, composition and performance.

Jean-Francois Lyotard speaks of a 'Theatre of Energies' where the signs no longer mean anything in themselves, there is no hierarchy between the things that exist in the world; 'they are forces, intensities, present affects'.²⁰ Even though the artist's focus rests on the individual signs, cultural codes and the melting pot they are mixed in and mutated by, the many elements and references do come together in the exhibition to form a 'Theatre of Energies' – each element changes its mode of appearance and appears with varying intensity.²¹

The off-site installation offers one way of intensifying the object's mode of appearance. Here, the dramaturgy takes place in the interplay between what is in 'off-mode' and 'on-mode'. Between the ferocious and the cold. The formless and the fixed. The living and the dead.

remains once the course has run'.¹⁹ Igennem Beiers koreografering af de levende elementer og orkestreringen af de døde, animeres det netværk af ting der findes i laden. Koreografien hos Beier sammenkæder de forskellige fragmenterede dele – og opererer ud fra et overordnet koncept der genererer en sammenhængende form. Det er en måde at skabe en parallel verden, en 4-D udstillingsoplevelse, hvor alle elementer er del af helheden: det arkitektoniske, atmosfæriske, lyset, kompositionen og performancen.

Jean-Francois Lyotard taler om et *Theater of Energies*, hvor tegnene ikke længere betyder noget i sig selv, der er ikke noget hierarki imellem de ting der findes i verden; "they are forces, intensities, present affects."²⁰ Til trods for at kunstnerens fokus er på de enkelte tegn, kulturelle koder og den hot-pot de er mixet i og muterede af, samler de mange elementer og referencer sig i udstillingen og bliver et *Theater of Energies* – hvert element skifter sit 'mode of appearance' og fremtræder med varierende intensitet.²¹

XVIII

Off-site installationen er én måde at intensivere objektets fremtrædelsesform. Dramaturgien foregår her i spillet mellem det der er i 'off-mode' og 'on-mode.' Mellem det voldsomme og det kolde. Det formløse og det faste. Det levende og det døde.

CAT COW is a commissioned performance exhibition curated by Charlotte Sprogøe. It forms an independent part of the exhibition programme *Soil.Sickness.Society* at Rønnebæksholm, winner of Bikubens Exhibition Vision Award 2020.

CAT COW er en kommissioneret performance udstilling kurateret af Charlotte Sprogøe. Den indgår som en selvstændig del af udstillingsprogrammet *Soil.Sickness.Society* på Rønnebæksholm vinder af Bikubens Visionspris 2020.

ENDNOTES

1
In *Choreographing Exhibitions*, Les presses du reel, 2013.
p. 24.

2
Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, 1988, p. 30. Originally published 1967. Eggs, meat, life consist of a vast, luxurious and heterologous amount of energy – which will always ruin the attempt to produce growth, it will always hold a excess energy that is burned up in luxury, sex or war.

3
“The Void is a lively tension, a desiring orientation towards being/becoming. The vacuum is flush with yearning, bursting with innumerable imaginings of what could be,” says Karen Barad about intensity in nothingness. In the same vein Beier simultaneously presents a low-intensity and ‘lively tension’. Quote from ‘What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice’ in *The Book of Books 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, Documenta (13) p. 648.

4
See e.g. Jane Bennet’s *Vibrant Matter* on how objects, the non-living, can have agency and élan vital, and how e.g. composition can be understood as generating a specific energy: ‘*shi is the style, energy, propensity, trajectory or élan inherent to a specific arrangement of things*’, ‘Vibrant Matter’, Duke University Press, 2010, p. 35.

5
Georges Bataille, ‘Informe’, in *Documents #1*, Paris, 1929, p. 382.

6
AND Phenomenology of the End, Semiotext(e), 2015, p. 258.

7
Copeland also writes: “To consider the word exhibition and its French translation “exposition” is to assert the possibility of both an exhibition stripped bare of all content – as in “exposed” – and the idea of an “ex-position” that was, but is no more, that moves on; a position that is yet to come”. *Choreographing Exhibitions*, p. 20.

8
Jorge Luis Borges & Margarita Guerrer, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, Dutton, 1969, p. 134.

9
Elvia Wilk uses the concept of the New Weird to describe approaches to the incomprehensible; the concept is also used by Graham Harman in his book on *Weird Realism*.

10
Anslem Franke, ‘Beyond the Return of the Repressed’ in *Animism, Modernity through the looking glass*, Walter Koenig 2011, p. 170.

11
‘Earth Stalked by Men’, in *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 34, 2016, p. 3.

ENDNOTES

1
I *Choreographing Exhibitions*, Les presses du reel, 2013.
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Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, 1988, s. 30. Oprindeligt udgivet 1967. Æg, kød, liv består af en stor luksuriøs og heterologisk mængde energi – der altid vil ødelægge forsøget på at producere vækst, det vil altid rumme en overskudsenergi der nu brændes op i luksus, sex eller krig.

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“The Void is a lively tension, a desiring orientation towards being/becoming. The vacuum is flush with yearning, bursting with innumerable imaginings of what could be.” Skriver Karen Barad om intensitet i nothingness. Det er på én gang en ‘low-intensity’ Beier præsenterer og en ‘lively tension’. ‘What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice’. *The Book of Books 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, Documenta (13), s. 648.

4
Se bla. Jane Bennets *Vibrant Matter* om hvordan objekterne, det ikke-levedes kan have agens og élan vital, og hvordan bl.a. komposition kan forstås som skabende en bestemt energi: “*shi is the style, energy, propensity, trajectory or élan inherent to a specific arrangement of things*”, Duke University Press, 2010, s. 35.

5
Georges Bataille ‘Informe’ *Documents #1*, Paris, 1929, s. 382.

6
AND Phenomenology of the End, Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agent, 2015, s. 258.

7
Copeland skriver i samme tråd: “To consider the word exhibition and its French translation ‘exposition’ is to assert the possibility of both an exhibition stripped bare of all content – as in ‘exposed’ – and the idea of an ‘ex-position’ that was, but is no more, that moves on; a position that is yet to come” *Choreographing Exhibitions* s. 20.

8
Jorge Luis Borges & Margarita Guerrer ‘*The Book of Imaginary Beings*’, s. 134.

9
Elvia Wilk bruger begrebet ‘The New Weird’ til at beskrive nye tilgange til det uforståelige, begrebet er også anvendt af Graham Harman i hans bog om *Weird Realism*.

10
Anslem Franke ‘Beyond the Return of the Repressed’, *Animism, Modernity through the looking glass*, Walter Koenig 2011, s. 170.

11
‘Earth Stalked by Men’, *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 34, 2016, s. 3.

12
Tristan Norman, Vincent Garcia & Juliane Rebentisch, 'Theatricality, Autonomy, Negativity', in *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions*, Sternberg press & ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne, 2019, p. 57.

13
Juliane Rebentisch *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, Sternberg press 2012. Its fundamental theatricality resides in this fact.

14
"A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" (1967)

15
AND Phenomenology of the End

16
Juliane Rebentisch 'Dark Play', in Susanne Pfeffer (ed.): *Anne Imhof. Faust*, König Books.

17
Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Semiotext(e), Foreign Agents Series 2014, p. 23.

18
'BIFO Interview by Jefferson Hack', KALEIDOSCOPE Issue 35 - FW 2019/20

19
Choreographing Exhibitions, p. 19.

20
"The theory of value puts us potentially into a non-hierarchical circulation, where the tooth and the palm no longer have a relationship of illusion and truth, cause and effect, signifier and signified (or vice versa), but they coexist, independently, as transitory investments, accidentally composing a constellation halted for an instant, an actual multiplicity of stops in the circulation of energy", *The Tooth, the Palm*, SubStance, Vol. 5, No. 15, Socio-Criticism University of Wisconsin Press 1976, p. 109.

21
Regarding the dialogue on intensity, see *Choreographing Exhibitions* p. 146: 'we could call it intensifying instead of exhibiting' - on the difference of modes of appearance of art works and objects in off-site installations vs. white cube institutional installations.

12
Tristan Norman, Vincent Garcia & Juliane Rebentisch, : 'Theatricality, Autonomy, Negativity' *Theater, Garden, Bestiary: A Materialist History of Exhibitions*. Sternberg press & ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne, 2019, s. 57.

13
Juliane Rebentisch: *Aesthetics of Installation Art*. Sternberg press 2012. Deri ligger dens grundlæggende teatralitet.

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21
Se dialogen omkring intensitet i *Choreographing Exhibitions*, s. 146 "we could call it intensifying instead of exhibiting." - om forskellen på forskellige fremtrædelsesformer af kunstværker og objekter i hhv. off-site og indenfor i White Cubes.