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Gallery Guide

Exhibition:

In Practice:

Fantasy Can Invent

Nothing New

2016 Curatorial Fellow:

Olga Dekalo

Exhibition Dates:

May 1 – August 1, 2016

Curator's Preface

Freud, that's kid stuff

A hundred years ago, Freud delivered eleven lectures on dreams during the academic winter sessions of 1915–17 at the University of Vienna. These extemporaneous presentations comprise a third of *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, a frank and conversational volume that was later published. Subversive in facilitating a process for the mind to author fantastical scenes and narratives, Freud's notion of "condensation" was addressed in his lecture titled "The Dream-Work." In the talk, he carefully and emphatically explained how individuals translate disparate conscious thoughts into a composite of visual elements—proposing that latent dream thoughts (achieved through association) bring forth dream elements in the form of fragments, abbreviations, and "plastic, concrete piece[s] of imagery." Freud's subsequent work was shaped by the realization that individuals work on their psychic survival less like scientists and more like artists. He credited his patients with an extraordinary capacity for representation. He called them fantasists, and it is believed he envied them for it.ⁱ

The tragedy of Freud is that, at some point, he stops being conversational. He becomes essentializing and paternal, an ideological determinant of our social being. His inadmission of multiple subject identifications outside the parental, Oedipal dyad built an enterprise that no longer credited subjects with defining and defying theory. The hierarchical dilemma became dogma. As psychoanalysis became an increasingly prescriptive institution, poststructuralist and social feminists endeavored to destabilize the vertical paradigm. Synonymous with the oppositional theoretical projects were visualizations and depictions of nightmares, revulsions, and terror that the conservative climates produced. In the 1980s, particularly, the horror film genre captured a sense of abandonment and alienation, implicating victims of harsh upbringing and circumstances to enact revenge by fantasizing how to render those oppressors powerless.

Although a progenitor of his own horror, Freud dissected the notion of inherent versus created evil—in many ways, constituting the genre's foundation. Making explicit that individuals err in attributing a disagreeable power to something outside and foreign to themselves, he defined the super-ego as a "self-criticizing faculty, the ego-censorship, the conscience . . . the same censorship exercised at night upon dreams, from which the repressions against inadmissible wish-excitations proceed." This internalization is coupled with a parental agency. He says, "When this faculty disintegrates in the delusion of being observed, we are able to detect its origin and that it arose out of the influence of parents and those who trained the child, together with his social surroundings, by a process of

identification with certain of these persons who were taken as a model”—the real masters of horror!ⁱⁱ

If the psychic apparatus functions as a corrective, a critic, a coroner of guilt, then Freddy Krueger is the perfect emblem for anyone who came of age watching '80s horror. My childhood fantasy was permeated by fear of annihilation by Freddy. The red curtain was tearing, and VHS tapes were pouring in. I didn't and couldn't read the shiny jackets, mostly steering toward the anonymous bootlegged cassettes full of *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, the first four or five, from 1984 to '89. At eight and nine, I devoured Freddy as much as I feared he would devour me. I was too young, but the films' actors were school age: Johnny Depp's and Patricia Arquette's first roles. In a small, burgeoning Soviet town, my mother worked as Deputy Mayor of Economics, and my dad as Chief Mechanical Engineer *and* a member of the Communist party. While they worked, I watched. For me, no one symbolized omniscient and terrifying power more than Freddy. The terror was easier to access than the fear of being left home alone. It made company. Teens were the protagonists in the *Nightmare* films. The adults, often absent, drinking, or dead, were depicted as intrusive and penalizing—like Freddy, crushing young souls.

Wes Craven, the late creator of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, was attuned to the angst and dissent felt by American youth at the time. In the 1987 *Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*, the teens are pulled into dream scenarios where they are spied on and invaded by the malefic Freddy. He knows their every thought. In the film, Nancy, the heroine of the original *Nightmare*, returns as a grad-school “hot shot” to intern as a therapist at the Westin Hills Psychiatric Hospital. In a group session, organized for the teens to “straight talk” ('80s lingo) about the nightmares that landed them there, Philip, a habitual sleepwalker, interjects that he and his peers are merely the victims of group psychosis, “a mellow mass hysteria.”

Psychiatrist: “You won't make any progress till you recognize your dreams for what they are!”

Nancy: “And what are they!?”

Psychiatrist (looking at Philip): “The by-products of guilt; psychological scars stemming from moral conflicts and overt sexuality.”

To which Kincaid, a defiant black kid, replies, “Oh great, now it's my dick that's killing me!” To which Freud, and Freddy, would say, “Precisely.” But Freud and Freddy, that's kid stuff—kids getting traumatized by adults. Both personas, in their own way, meet tragic ends: Freddy is finally, and, hopefully, dead; and post-Freudian projects identified that more horrific consequences result from intragenerational conflict and violence. And when deployed imaginatively within horizontal, affinitive structures, that confrontation makes for scarier films/TV and by far richer fantasies. I can't dispense with Freud, his identification and emphasis on the capacity and operation of the psyche is particularly useful in proposing operations by which we engage the imagination. It's imperative in the context of this exhibition. It aided my process of selecting twelve fantastical presentations, by artists who engage in representation by combining and blending often-contradictory elements into a collective image. Distinct in their use of materials and process, the works designate the self—disguised, longing, mirroring, doubling, afflicting, and repairing—as the site and source of this formation.

Christopher Aque's assemblage of a fragmented, slumped glass body and a video work, *Identity Intelligence (World Trade Center)*, explores subjects of desire situated against a backdrop of devastation, smoothed over. Here, the projected fantasy is directed not toward an object but toward its setting. Eliciting the political history of male cruising at the site, the transparent figure acts as a blank stand-in for a presence that's both void and voluminous—in the way that looking, desiring, moves from body to body as an unfulfilled act, full of possibility. The erected glass facade (a regularly recurring dream symbol of the male form) is also the subject of the video, which indexes anonymous bodies in crowds

and further defines the work in terms of negation, longing, and multiple possibilities for pleasure.

Phillip Birch's hologram actors, in many ways, are an extension of the artist appearing in the altered form of a child, a man, and an older male figure. As his visualization of a split subject, Birch's alters could read as an insistence on being and a defense against the fear of obliteration and insignificance. Building on earlier investments in rendering self-conscious and evolving beings, Birch poses new possibilities for what he calls reliquaries of spirit, or *geist*. Periodically inhabiting the scene, Birch stages interactions with the characters.

Onyedika Chuke composes an ahistorical narrative by condensing and reversing decades of time. Mapping geographical locations of import and trade, he brings together a sculpture of a conveyor belt imprinted with a military tank; a figure resembling a canonical image of Christ and the Statue of Liberty, referencing disabuses of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP); and sculptural objects deploying oceanic imagery. Chuke casts and outfits these objects as a form of reparative tracing, designating emblems that carry devastating effects of empire production.

Jonathan Ehrenberg's video is informed by Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*—a novel whose protagonist dies in the first chapter and spends the rest of the novel in limbo, repeating the scenario. The video is presented in the first person and structured as a loop. Shooting in SculptureCenter's underground exhibition space, the artist and his camera navigate a circuit of strange rooms and courtyards, presenting a play between fantasy and actuality that is mapped onto a series of photographs depicting three-dimensional studio constructions, which are also on display. Exploring loss of control, disembodiment, and mortality, the rendered representations and models comprise the narrative through formal devices of motion-capture and digital animation. While the imagery is fantastic, the movements are strangely familiar, and the viewer's experience is pushed through the skin of the story unfolding on-screen.

Tamar Ettun's colorful site arrangements of cast limbs and repurposed objects diverge from the mental impact of trauma. Ettun engages in an incessant dismantling and reconstituting of objects. In her video work *feedback*, two subjects engage in what appears to be an upside-down game of tetherball, simultaneously evoking a grown-up version of fort-da (Freud's shorthand for repetition in early childhood) and the snow-covered playground in the Swedish romantic horror film *Let the Right One In*. Teasing out notions of instinctive empathy and physical mirroring, the work, according to the artist, creates relationships between the human body and inanimate materials in order to stretch, twist, take apart, assemble, and transform meaning in absurd and desperate situations.

Intended to read like bad fan fiction, **Raque Ford's** work—a Plexiglas polyptych and a zine—reveals an erotic tale of a sexual encounter between a dreamt-up figure of Rihanna and the artist, going by the pseudonym beyonce. The panel's enigmatic narrative, comprised of laser-cut lyrics sourced from songs, fiction, interviews, and personal conversations materializes as a projected surface and an embodiment of desire and adoration. Meandering between visual symbols of angels, Statues of Liberty, crowns, and roses, the lyrics are fragments of a larger story that's told in the accompanying zine. In its totality, the work operates as a wish fulfilled and a reach for the forbidden, unattainable object.

Jeannine Han presents a tableau vivant accompanied by a 16mm film, *Eastern Setting for a Western Writer*, made in collaboration with Daniel Riley. Referencing the telenovela—functioning as a mouthpiece for a third-person narrative—the film's oneiric space is comprised of interiors, props, and costumes that blur the line between subject and object. The created mise-en-scène situates a prism through which objects and environments in the film appear inverted. The *Kunstkammer* and a cognitive-tableau represent these

inversions: flat to rotund, distant to focused—composing a taxonomy of symbols that get suspended in a fictive space.

A snide take on lifestyle furniture that references modernism as status, **Elizabeth Jaeger's** ceramic vessels reveal an insidious nature of form in the guise of the common. Functioning on multiple levels, depending on where the viewer is standing, the work is a kind of unfolding. A focused, prolonged reading can facilitate a moment of intimacy. From a distance, the forms situated on the steel shelving structure can read as a catalogue image and, on closer inspection, a protruding body.

Situated within opposite ends of a narrow wall partition in the basement space B, **Meredith James** invites the viewer to inhabit a mirrored scene of altered perception. Mining the orchestrated sets in Stanley Kubrick's 1955 noir film *Killers Kiss*, and, more explicitly, drawing from 1920s and '30s historical photographs of interiors housed at the Astoria Historical Society, James's miniature architectural interventions force a shallow perspective, restraining viewers from fully accessing the works. The scenographic dioramas appear as a double, with subtle physical differences in architecture and lighting. When mindfully considered, two discrete moments in time are evident and are equally insistent on articulating the uncanny and the obscure.

Jamie Sneider explores sustained memories tied to loss in a scene composed of steel and aluminum medical equipment along with dyed paper and textiles. Through obsessive duplication and repetition, a pattern of coupling is formed by sanitized containers mixed with messy works about the body stained with solvents made of urine, dye, lemons, squid ink, bleach, coffee, and tea. A personal space is created through suggested transitions—the constant flux of absence and activity. Memorializing character and persona via collections of objects, paintings, and sculpture, the arrangement of works posits the artist's investigation of woman as witch—traceable back to the semiotic roots of the history of witchcraft—as well as themes of domesticity and ritual.

Patrice Renee Washington arranges two milky ceramic replicas, divided into four parts and inserted between three concrete shelves. Conveying a parasitic, animistic quality, the pieces, titled *Third Wheel* and *The Freeloaders*, leach off the architecture. Reading as both pervasive and marginalized, the forms, especially as titled, explore the necessity of draining more powerful sources than oneself in order to survive. Investigating mythologies and the cultural space of ceramics, the formal resolutions stage the artist's evolving concern with ideas of the primitive and modes of access.

Tuguldur Yondonjamts combines elements of mythos and the real in a dislocation and mapping of subjects who get suspended in time and across the continental space. The three components: a video narrative about his search for a falcon in the Mongolian steppe, three solar panels, and an “antipode suit” (*Antipode suit #4*) stem from a virtual chess match between the artist and his father that supplies coordinates for patterns that comprise the works. Taken in their entirety, the elements constitute the fulfillment of a wished-for unified dream world. Questioning how relocation, shared memory, crossed timelines, and travel factor into physical and psychological space, the installation functions as an index of journeys between worlds tame and wild.

ⁱ Adam Phillips, *Becoming Freud: The Making of a Psychoanalyst* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 150.

ⁱⁱ Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, ed. Joan Riviere, Eng. trans. of rev. ed. (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 370.

In Practice: Fantasy Can Invent Nothing New

Christopher Aque (b. 1987) lives and works in New York. He attended the University of Chicago, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and Hunter College. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Laurel Gitlen, New York; The Suburban, Oak Park, IL; and Regards, Chicago, among others. He previously had a solo exhibition at PEREGRINEPROGRAM, Chicago, in 2012.

Phillip Birch (b. 1978, Detroit, MI) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He received his B.F.A. from The College for Creative Studies (Detroit, 2005). Recent solo shows and performances include Master Dynamic: Frontier, Lyles & King, NY, The Hand of God, Essex Flowers, NY, The Crown of Modernity (An Intervention in the Napoleonic Age), 47 Canal, NY and The Chair After Its Method of Implementation, Cleopatra's, Brooklyn. Recent group exhibitions include 247365, Brooklyn, Gallery Four, Baltimore, ADDS DONNA, Chicago. Birch's work is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. He is represented by Lyles & King, NY.

Onyedika Chuke (b. Oneisha, Nigeria) lives and works in New York. He received his B.F.A. from Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. Since 2011, he has worked on the project The Forever Museum Archive in New York, Switzerland, France, and Rome. His work has been exhibited at the Queens Museum of Art, the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the American Academy in Rome. He attended artist residency programs through Wave Hill's Van Lier Visual Artist Fellowship, Residency Unlimited, Bronx Museum of the Arts' Artist in the Marketplace (AIM) Program, Verbier 3-D Sculpture Park Residency, Verbier (CH), and the Queens Museum Studio Program 2014-2015. His work was recently included in *Open Sessions* (2015) at Drawing Center.

Jonathan Ehrenberg (b. 1975) lives and works in New York. He received a B.A. from Brown University (1997), and an M.F.A. from Yale (1999). His work has been included in exhibitions at MoMA PS1, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery (New York), LAXART (Los Angeles), David Castillo (Miami), Futura Center (Prague), and Galeria Espacio Minimo (Madrid). His work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *Art in America*, and he has participated in residencies at LMCC, Harvestworks, Islip, Skowhegan, Triangle, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and Glenfiddich in Scotland.

Tamar Ettun (b.1982, Jerusalem) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She is the founder and director of The Moving Company. Ettun received MFA from Yale University (2010) where she was awarded the Alice English Kimball Fellowship. She studied at Cooper Union while earning her BFA from Bezalel Academy (2008). Her exhibitions and performances include: Fridman Gallery, The Watermill Center, Madison Square Park, Vanity Projects, e-flux, Transformer, The Queens Museum, Braverman Gallery, Indianapolis Museum of Art, The Jewish Museum, PERFORMA 13, PERFORMA 11, PERFORMA 09. Ettun has been honored by several organizations including Iaspis, Franklin Furnace, The Pollock Krasner, Fountainhead Residency, The Watermill

Center, MacDowell Fellowship, Abron's Art Center, The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Art Production Fund, Socrates Sculpture Park, Artis, RECESS, and Triangle.

Raque Ford (b. 1986, Columbia, MD) lives and works in New York. She received her B.F.A. from Pratt Institute (2010) and her M.F.A. from Mason Gross School of Arts at Rutgers University (2013). Recent solo shows include *That Which We Call A Rose By Any Other Name Would Smell As Sweet* at Soloway, Brooklyn, NY (2015) and *Raque* at Welcome Screen, London, UK (2014). She has exhibited in group shows at S1, Portland, OR (2016), Evelyn Yard, London, UK (2015), and 321 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2014). She is also the recent recipient of the New York Community Trust Van Lier Residency at ISCP.

Jeannine Han (b.1979, Oakland, CA) lives and works in Queens, NY. She received her B.F.A. in Design/Media Arts at University of California, Los Angeles (2004), an M.F.A. degree in Textiles at The Swedish School of Textiles (2009), followed by a guest-studies program in Fine Arts at The Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm (2010). Jeannine is a Lecturer at Parsons School of Design, The New School and has taught at other prominent international institutions. Her work has been shown at Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania in collaboration with Pakui Hardware (2015), Institute of Contemporary Art, London, in collaboration with Tamara Henderson and Daniel Riley (2014), Kunsthall Stravanger, Norway (2014), Performa 13, NY (2013).

Meredith James (b. 1982, New York, NY) lives and works in New York. She received her B.A. from Harvard University in 2004 and her M.F.A. from Yale University in 2009. James' videos and sculptures explore the workings of perception and the fallibility of observation, pursuing the surprising, even disorienting, potential in the world around us. Recent exhibitions include *Catalyst* at the Queens Museum, Queens, NY (2015), EAF14 at Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY and a solo show, *Land Lock* (2014), at Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, NY. Her first solo exhibition was *Espalier* (2010) at Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York, NY. From 2010-2014 she founded and ran *Primetime*, a project space in Brooklyn, NY with Scarlett Boulting, Gary Fogelson, and Ryan Waller.

Elizabeth Jaeger (b.1988, San Francisco, CA) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She holds a B.A. from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Her sculptural works were featured in solo exhibitions at *And Now*, Dallas, as well as Jack Hanley Gallery, and *Eli Ping Frances Perkins*, both in New York. Jaeger co-founded and operates *Peradam* with Sam Cate-Gumpert, a publishing house specializing in small-run artists' books.

Jamie Sneider (b. Boston, MA) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received her B.F.A. from New York University and an M.F.A. in Fine Arts from School of Visual Arts. Recent exhibitions include *NEOCHROME* (Turin), *Thierry Goldberg* (New York), *Zach Feuer* (New York), *Alpineum Produzentengalerie* (Lucerne), and *The Living Art Museum* (Reykjavík).

Patrice Renee Washington (b. 1987, Chicago, IL) lives and works in New York. She received her B.F.A from Metropolitan State University of Denver (2011), and M.F.A in Visual Arts from Columbia University (2014). Her recent exhibitions include Center for Visual Art Denver (2015), Blackburn 20120 (2014), and MoCADA (2014). She has completed residencies at Anderson Ranch Arts Center (2015) and Vermont Studio Center (2014).

Tuguldur Yondonjams (b. 1977, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia) lives and works in New York and in Ulaanbaatar. Tuguldur received a B.F.A. in Mongolian traditional painting (Thanka) from the Mongolian University of Arts and Culture in Ulaanbaatar (1997) and he graduated Fine Art from the University of the Arts, Berlin (UdK), Germany (2004). He received a M.F.A. from Columbia University, NYC (2014). His recent works has been presented include Between two giants, American Museum of Natural History, NYC, (2015); in group exhibitions The Joshua Treenial, CA (2015); and How The Sphere, Having In Vain Tried Words, Resorted To Deeds, Cuchifritos gallery, NYC (2015). In Practice presents his collaboration work with Batmunkh Bataa a designer and Mergen T. a story teller/ a drone pilot.