

Cache

Cache

Angela M. Bartholomew

As an art historian, I experience the past as a reservoir, an endless resource to reframe the present. In reflecting on *Cache* – Maja Klaassens' and Christofer Degrér's duo exhibition at Billytown – my mind goes to another exhibition that occurred precisely thirty years ago. *The Sublime Void: On the Memory of the Imagination* (1993) took place at the Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, with its central theme "the interweaving of memory and imagination in the artistic process." Curator Bart Cassiman conceived of the structure of the exhibition as a poem, the works functioning as words, showing "different facets of themselves" dependent on the order, combination, or context in which they are read. While art historical tradition played a key role in his selection of works, Cassiman was interested in historical inference as an implicit force, asserting that history involves forgetting, and is fundamentally creative in nature. Memory, he wrote, "preserves the past in the stratification of its multiple layers and its essential irretrievability."

With this in mind, *The Sublime Void* resonates thematically and aesthetically with *Cache*. Both exhibitions elicit thoughts about memory, historical tradition, and hidden places. Artists such as Lili Dujourie, Niek Kemps, Luciano Fabro, Rachel Whiteread, and Fortuyn/O'Brien demonstrated a fascination with materials and their transformations: Dujourie's use of mirrored mirrors, Kemps' polished reflective surfaces, Fabro's fixation with the surface as a shell (a metaphor for the encompassing viewing apparatus), Whiteread's casts of domestic forms – they all reverberate with tendencies in the practices of Klaassens and Degrér. The need to explore the reality of illusion is demonstrable for each of these artists, a desire felt to capture something real through the production of the artificial.

With Fortuyn/O'Brien there is a special connection: working as one, the artists produced what they referred to as 'domestic sculpture'. Lounge chairs of Carrara marble, carpets rolled in diagonal division, ovular mirrors nesting in freestanding pedestals. These sculptures were utilitarian in design but too fragile to be functional, in colors or transparencies that deny their material. In their installation, sculptures were placed in relation to one another, often in pairs, and relative to surrounding architectural elements and fragments of décor. They evoke a sense of theatricality, as if the visitor is interrupting a scene. In *Cache*, Klaassens and Degrér likewise work together to create a scene from an otherworldly, but vaguely familiar domestic space. The scene takes shape from a collaboratively written account of its inhabitants, yet this text remains concealed to its visitors. As we step into a fragmented apartment, doors become windows, and interior and exterior worlds merge.

Distinct from *The Sublime Void* is the sense of foreboding in *Cache* that emerges from what we often call 'nature'. As the results of violence wrought on our environment materializes in myriad ways across our planet, we are confronted with the utter falseness of a nature-culture dichotomy. While in the eighteenth century, the concept of the sublime was applied to aspects of nature that generate awe, such as stormy seas or the vastness of an abyss, today it might be associated with the scale and speed of destruction, or the seeming limitlessness with which growth and convenience

has infected our existence. In *Cache*, the experience of nature itself as *unnatural* is conveyed in palpable ways. Walking past the meadow of Degrér's hyper-green chroma-key weeds, we are surrounded by an undead accumulation. Each plant has been sourced from liminal spaces of human development yet-to-come or left fallow. Caked in polymer-based paint, the flora is plucked from one context, re-staged as a field of green-screen green. In another scene, this green has spread to a single rose, riddled with thorns removed by the artist from wild roses only to be reattached with surgical tweezers. With the rose, real and synthetic come together, a tendency found in the work of both Degrér and Klaassens.

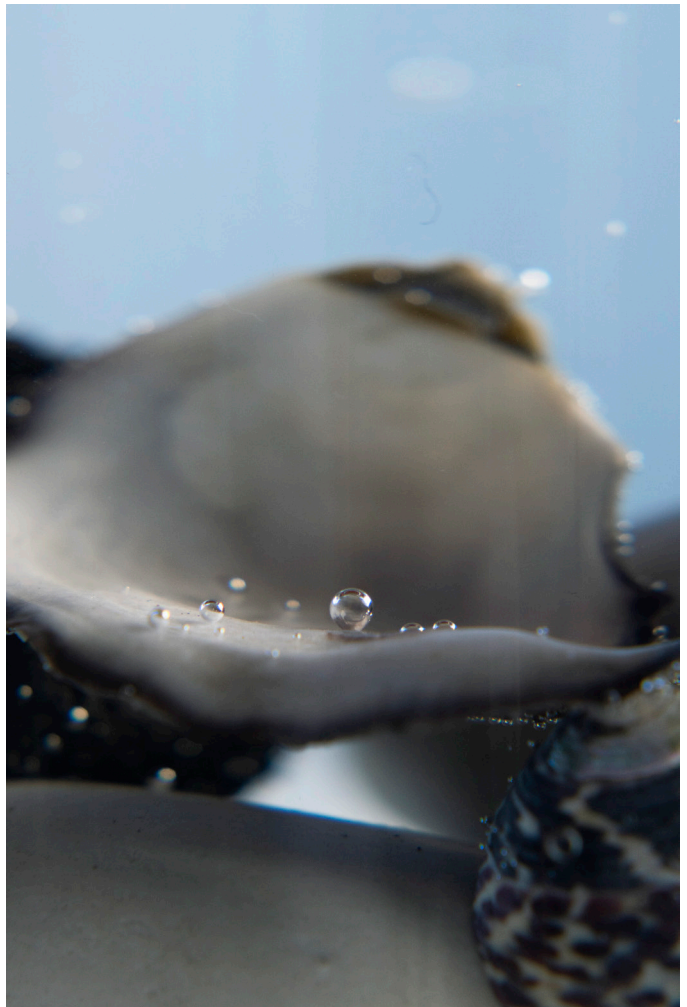
Turning the corner, the sharp lines of Klaassens' *Tributyltin* cut through the space of the gallery. Coated in glossy black, the four-meter long kayak glides along, emanating a sense of indifference not unlike that of a sea mammal. Small barnacles and starfish, sculpted from epoxy clay, have become one with the vessel. There is a suggestion evident that we encounter this biotope, a fusion of object and organism, after its complete submersion in crude oil. Viewed in combination (or agitation) with the architecture of the white cube, associations regarding the complicity of the corporatized cultural industry in the proliferation of the oil industry rise to the surface. The title of the work points to a contaminant, Tributyltin (TBT), a biocide used in paint to repel barnacles and other organisms from ships and marine infrastructure. TBT has been directly linked to endocrine disorders in marine life and humans, and while banned in 2008, the chemical compound continues to accumulate on the ocean floor and contaminate water supply. Thus, nature made unnatural impinges upon our physical autonomy. It infects our bodies precisely because we are not, and have never been, distinct from the environments we inhabit.

Narratives about nature are rife in an exhibition about the malleability of memory, of the role of fragments in storing the past, of ghostly apparitions that materialize in the writing of our present. *Cache* shows us that there is memory in material, and that memories can be material themselves. If remembering is a form of writing, an exercise in borrowing and reframing material, it can be both a dangerous weapon and a saving grace.

Angela M. Bartholomew is assistant professor of modern and contemporary art history at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She researches, writes, and teaches on the myriad forces that shape the production and presentation of art. She is also a proud member of the board of Billytown.



Christofer Degrér · *supersargasso*, 2023 (Photo: Johnny Isaksson)



Maja Klaassens · *Swim (4)*, 2023

Cache

List of works

Christofer Degrér (b. 1990) is a Malmö-based artist whose practice encompasses entanglements of text, sculpture and installation. Degrér holds an MFA from the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm (2018), and a BFA from Ringling College of Art & Design, Sarasota, Florida (2012). His work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions at galleries and institutions including Index, Stockholm; Carroll / Fletcher, London; SPOR Festival, Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus; Celsius Projects, Malmö; and Rodi Gallery, New York City.

Maja Klaassens (b. 1989) is a The Hague-based artist and writer working with sculpture, painting, photography, video, installation, and text. Klaassens holds an MA in Contemporary Art History from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2021), and a BFA from the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (2014). She has presented solo exhibitions at Joys, Toronto; Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, Toronto; and Dürst Britt & Mayhew, The Hague. She has participated in group exhibitions at Grove, London; Parts Project, The Hague; SLoöPW, Beijing; ABC Klubhuis, Antwerp; At7, Amsterdam; Poppositions, Brussels; Juxtapose, Aarhus; and Art The Hague.

Christofer Degrér

- I. **Equilibrium: “[...] immediately left behind and I’ll turn down eternity unless in April’s haze immediately left behind and I’ll turn down eternity unless in April’s haze [...]”** · 2023
Chroma key-painted plants from dilapidated factory buildings and fenced-off empty parking lots (black-bindweed [*Fallopia convolvulus*], broadleaf plantain [*Plantago major*], chickweed [*Stellaria media*], corn marigold [*Glebionis segetum*], field forget-me-not [*Myosotis arvensis* L], field milk thistle [*Sonchus arvensis*], field thistle [*Cirsium arvense*], fireweed [*Chamerion angustifolium*], giant hogweed [*Heracleum mantegazzianum*], goosefoot [*Chenopodium* L], ground elder [*Aegopodium podagraria*], groundsel [*Senecio vulgaris*], shaggy soldier [*Galinsoga quadriradiata*], slender meadow foxtail [*Alopecurus myosuroides*], sticky ragwort [*Senecio viscosus*], stinging nettle [*Urtica dioica*], treacle-mustard [*Erysimum cheiranthoides*], wall lettuce [*Lactuca muralis*], yarrow [*Achillea millefolium* L]), polyurethane, clay, MDF
89 × 174 × 290 cm
- II. **)fountain(** · 2023
Flame-proof urethane resin-cast mirrors from attics and basements
Diptych: ea. 29.5×12.5×2cm
- III. **25/6** · 2023
Strontium aluminate-dyed urethane resin; Baltic amber shards; galvanized hooks, rings and chains
6.5×5×123cm

IV. **Gazes and looks and scleras and blinks, sights of some psychic–realm lighthouse completed just in time. Stars emit into the insecure atmosphere, returning another instance of originatory feedback. Kudzu on a telephone pole. Breeze. Quotation. Lackluster dreamscape by proxy. In and up again, at a rate at which Cosmos never crystallizes. Standstill raked blemish and this same bucket that once contained Lily of the valley bouquets which blossomed earlier than ever before, got sold to our entire neighborhood of kindhearted doctors and social science teachers and stay–at–home aquarium–fiend dads in every house on every street. The distinct smell of snow balls and tadpoles. We can nearly see our hearts reflected on the breeze–worn panels enveloping the lights. The waves slow down, their crests forgive some overlooked replicant crater. Our house with our four–leaf clover lawn with our names embroidered on affordable garden furniture cushions. I can almost forget the epileptic visions of dragonflies brushing up against uncovered knees. All wild in the meadows. The tones shift as we take the scenic route. Beachscape silhouette deli–slices open petroglyph palms and we each grab handfuls of ripe plums or cloudberryes, reciprocal handshakes with the ocean view forking path branches. The ship turns miniature anew as we’re growing well into our solitude and mixed feelings about the lamps still in their packaging. Alex to the left; breadcrumbs on a handed–down once sky–blue dress. C.F. to the right; tracing the ship with butterfly quotes as it vanishes into a sandwich made out of sky and sea. I’ve found a way to reposition my wrist on the varnished piano stool that was once always there by the window in the reception hall. Remembering someone giving a speech about swans and x–rays and love at this very same spot. I instinctively shift into a pose I’ve known from a painting I can’t recall, perhaps this time to mask the pearlescent ribbon which entangled when we all watched Cosmos pass away in between two distinct slices of atmospheric bread. Unmistakable footsteps in the twelve–step spiral staircase. Our hearts as heavy as ever. We tick and cup and stick our tears onto the sizable curtains. All opens up toward skeleton–weather exteriors where a light worm emits the faintest of standby–mode multicharger LED glow. · 2021/2023**
Oxidized (using a mix of halite, ammonia, spirit vinegar, and liquidized bluebottle fly [*Calliphoridae lucilia*] antennae) copper nails, disentangling anxiety cycle, artwork caption
10×10×5.5cm

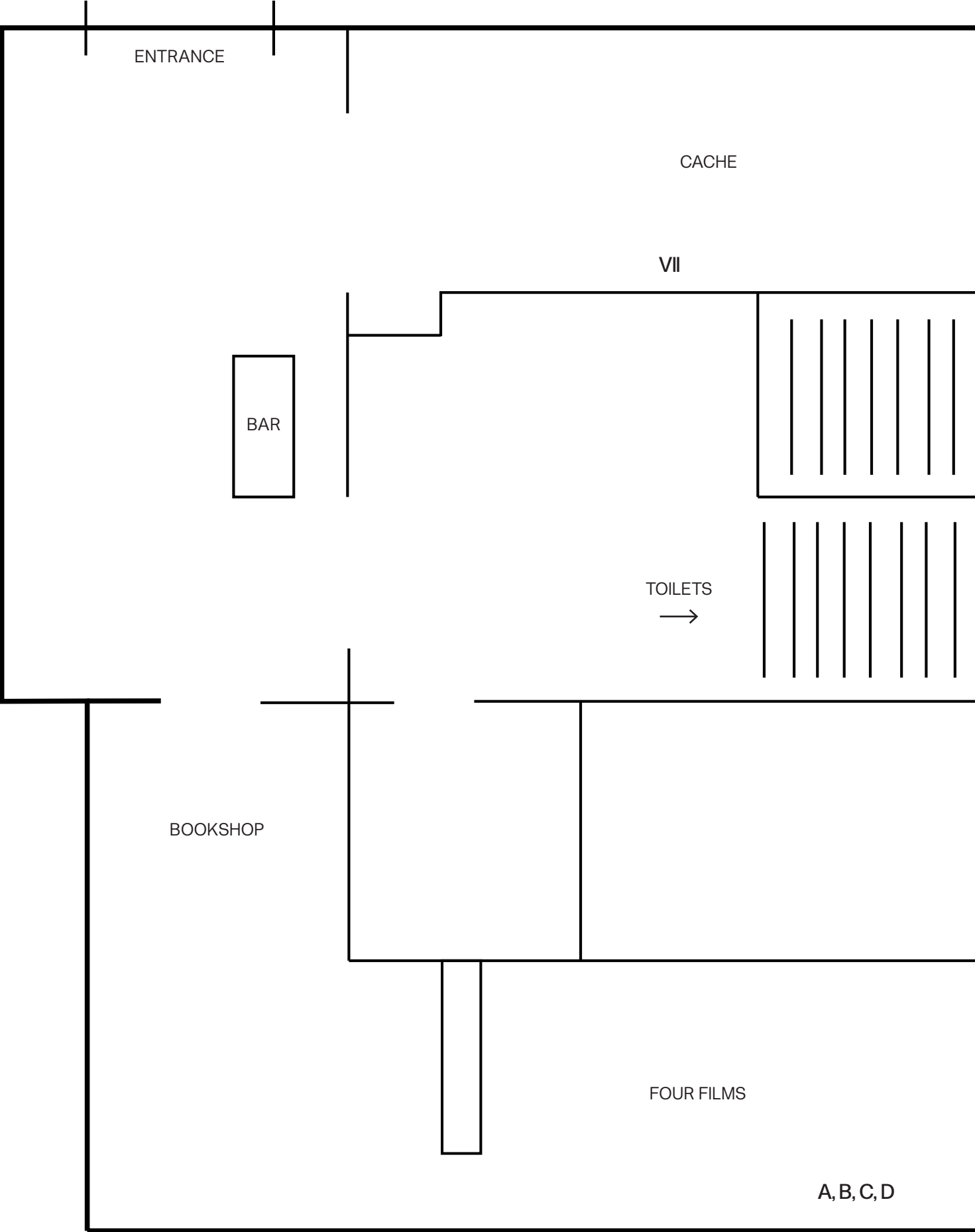
V. **Arrhythmia (II) · 2023**
Glass, ceramic, polylactic acid, acrylonitrile styrene acrylate, epoxy, poly(methyl methacrylate), island sand, strontium aluminate, distilled rain water, eye drops
16×12×12cm

VI. **Rose (XVII) · 2022**
Chroma key paint and rose thorns (removed from dead wild white rose bushes next to a closed observatory in a light–polluted city park under a full moon) on artificial white rose
10×37×19.5cm

Maja Klaassens

- VII. **Swim (3) · 2023**
C–print
30.9×20.6cm
- VIII. **Villette · 2023**
11 min. 04 sec. (loop)
HD video, sound
- IX. **Bay · 2023**
Oil on board
28×36cm
- X. **Night Light (2) · 2023**
Oyster shell, LED caving lamp
12×6.5×3.5cm
- XI. **Filter · 2023**
Stainless steel fixtures, epoxy resin
14.3×15×6cm
- XII. **Swim (5) · 2023**
C–print
30.9×20.6cm
- XIII. **Tributyltin · 2023**
Polyester fiberglass, epoxy clay, paint
400×60×26cm
- XIV. **Swim (1) · 2023**
C–print
30.9×20.6cm
- XV. **Swim (4) · 2023**
C–print
30.9×20.6cm
- XVI. **Thorn · 2022–2023**
[ongoing series of unique sculptures]
polymer clay, chalk pastel, magnet
2.5×0.7×±2.5 cm

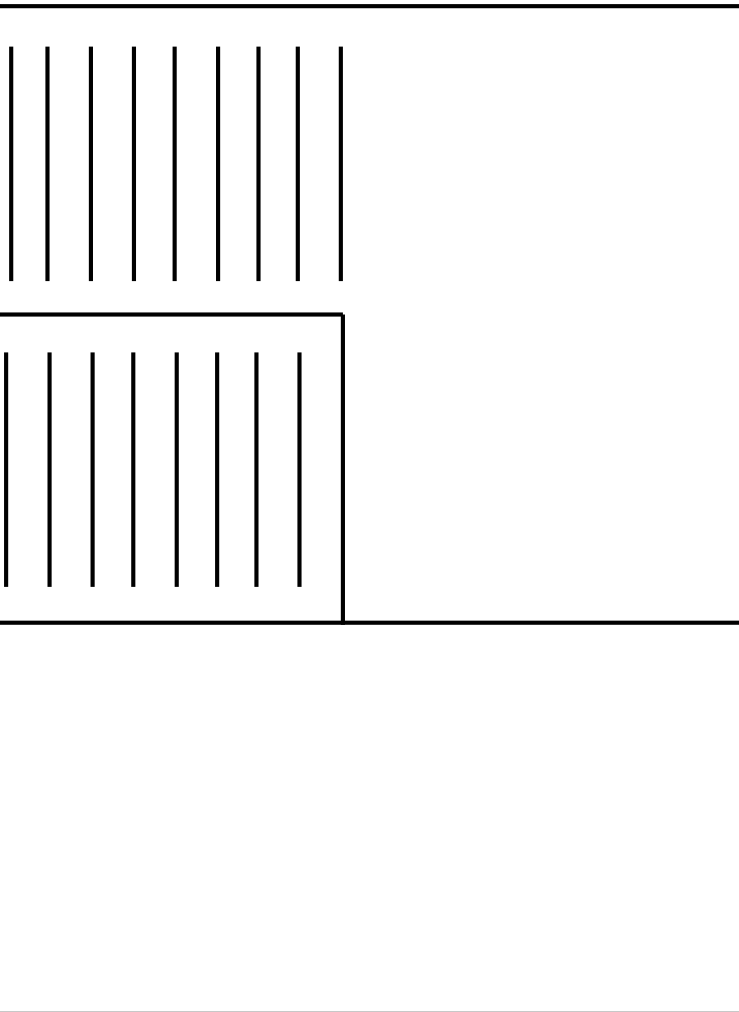
Floorplan



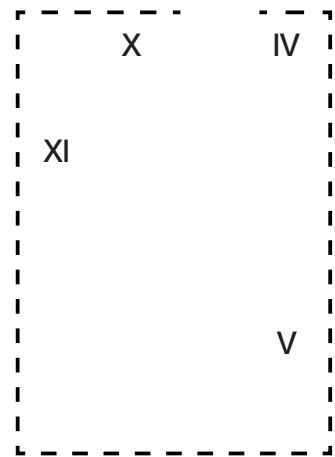
I

CACHE

VIII



IX



II

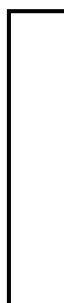
III

CACHE

XII

XIII

FOUR FILMS



VI

XV

XIV

FOUR FILMS

Four Films

Verena Blok

Out Lookers · 2022

In *Out Lookers* (2022), Verena Blok portrays older women who reclaim their space in public. Witnessing these women age while she herself was maturing into womanhood, the dominant Western discourse privileging youthful femininity rendered them slowly invisible. Blok's use of closeup, cropping, and focus play, center her subject's expressions and words. The elderly women in this film, anonymous and unnoticeable, are likewise made present by assuming dark sunglasses that filter their gaze. Fragments of conversation—between the artist, her mother, and mother's friends—touch on the transitional nature of femininity, and weave through quotations from a book they love: Olga Tokarczuk's "Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead" (2009). The novel's narrator, a post-menopausal woman, is drawn amongst this group, who become what Blok describes as "commentators on the meaning of womanhood through time."

Verena Blok (b. 1990, The Netherlands) has a deep interest in personal histories and narrative storytelling. Intrigued by the way cultural and political factors influence one's life, she uses her lens-based practice to shed light on the inner life and everyday 'reality' of her protagonists. As a Dutch-Polish dual citizen, Blok maintains a keen awareness of her positioning between East and West, and her work often refers to the gendered performance of the self. Encounters with her subjects take place in intimate settings, which serve as the core of and the fuel for her work. By becoming close to them and embedding herself in their lives for long stretches of time, she uses the context in which they exist as a studio, a backdrop to the narratives that both she and her subjects become part of. Blok holds an MA Photography from AKV St. Joost in Breda and a BA Photography from the Royal Academy of Arts (KABK) in The Hague. She was an artist in residence at Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten 2020–2022.

Lisa Tan

Sunsets · 2012

Sunsets (2012) is comprised of scenes filmed at either three o'clock in the morning during the summer solstice, or at three o'clock in the afternoon during the winter solstice, in Sweden. The video opens with the sound of a scratchy internet call between two people: the artist – who is largely undetectable, save for the sound of her keypad as she types – and a friend of hers who has agreed to translate an interview from 1977 with the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector, found on YouTube. This recording, both halting and casual, forms the soundtrack. In the interview, we hear Lispector describe aspects of her working method and philosophize death's role in her creative process. "If you couldn't write anymore, would you die?"—asks the interviewer.

The author's response: "I think that when I write I am dead." The forces of light and mood converse with the enigmatic Lispector as she chain smokes, seemingly fueling transformative states of becoming, and turning translation's liminality into a material presence.

Lisa Tan (b. 1973, USA) is an artist and educator based in Stockholm. Working with video, photography, text, installation, and other gestures, she regularly draws from literature to think about the formation of individual subjectivity and one's ever-shifting relationship to the world and others. Tan's work has been presented at institutions such as Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam; MIT List Center, Cambridge; Kunsthall Trondheim; ICA Philadelphia; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris; Tabakalera, San Sebastian; and Artists Space, New York. She was commissioned for the 11th Göteborg International Biennial of Contemporary Art (2021), osloBIENNALEN First Edition (2019–2020), Transmediale, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (2017), the 11th Shanghai Biennale (2016), and the Triennial exhibition at the New Museum (2015). Her current solo exhibition *Dodge and/or Burn* is on view at Accelerator in Stockholm until February 11, 2024.

Eugene Sundelius von Rosen

Mikaelidagen · 2021

Mikaelidagen (2021) follows two characters who dwell in and move through various environments: a staircase, a backyard, a door leading inside from a street, and an apartment. Although operating separately from each other, the actions and movements of these figures become intertwined. Perhaps reflecting on mutual memories, or their immediate surroundings, the sentences spoken by the characters and narrators unfold as a poem embodied in space.

Eugene Sundelius von Rosen (b. 1991, Sweden) is an artist and poet based in Stockholm. Working in various media, with a connection to a writing and photographing practice, his work relates to layers of fiction, mediation, ambience, language, and the passing of time connected to an aestheticized poeticized being-in-the-world. Architecture, as a conceptual basis, both directly and indirectly constitutes a strong component in his practice, whether through textual allusion, found or photographed still and moving image, or otherwise. Alongside exhibiting he performs readings at art and literary institutions. Exhibitions and performances include Minibar, Stockholm; Bonamatic, Copenhagen; Kohta, Helsinki; Index, Stockholm; and Issues, Stockholm. He holds an MFA from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and has also been a guest student at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, Stockholm.

Victoria Verseau

A Ghost's Gaze · 2021

In *A Ghost's Gaze* (2021), artist Victoria Verseau tries to capture the memory of her friend Meril and the time they spent together in Thailand after undergoing gender confirmation surgery. Meril, who passed away in 2015, was a close friend of Verseau—someone to look up to and share dreams and thoughts about the future with. Years after their first meeting, the artist visits the remote hotel where they lived together to heal from the surgeries. The now empty hotel and the tidal landscape that surrounds it elicit a peculiar atmosphere, emphasized by whispered narration taken from notes collected during Verseau's return journey.

Victoria Verseau (b. 1988, Sweden) is an artist and filmmaker working in various media ranging from moving images to sculpture, large-scale installation, and performance. Her artistic practice examines the body and memory formation, shaping identity through the affection of social structures. She is searching to tell untold stories, remaining in the periphery towards oblivion. Approaching destructive forgetfulness, she attempts to capture, preserve, and reconstruct the fleeting memories of crucial times that shape subjectivities. In 2023 Verseau won the postproduction award at Cannes Docs, Cannes Film Festival for her debut feature *Meril*. She has recently presented solo exhibitions at Fotogalleriet, Oslo (*Hope is a dangerous thing for women like us*, 2023); Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (*Approaching a Ghost*, 2021); and Uppsala Konstmuseum, (*Engender my past*, 2021). Verseau lives and works in Stockholm, where she graduated with an MFA from the Royal Institute of Art in 2020. In 2017, she was the first transwomen recipient of the ANNA Prize, established by Women in Film and Television (WIFT) Sweden and UN Women Sweden to expand the knowledge of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms Discrimination against Women). Presently she is working on her debut feature film *Meril*.

All text courtesy of the artists

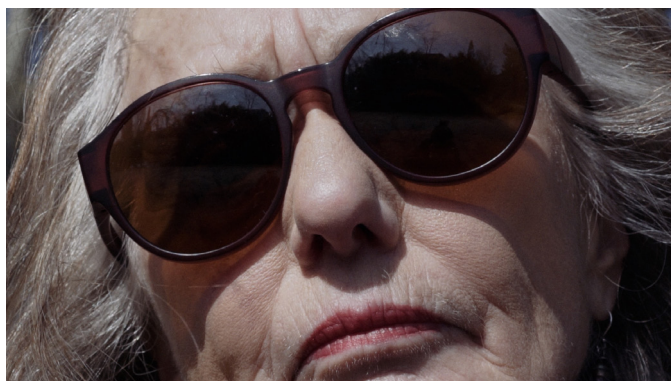
Four Films

List of works

A. **Verena Blok**
Out Lookers · 2022

Film
[7 MIN 26 SEC]

Music by Haron Aumaj



Out Lookers

B. **Lisa Tan**
Sunsets · 2012

HD video, sound
[22 MIN 30 SEC]

Courtesy of the artist and Galleri Riis

Locations:
Archipelago in the Bohuslän region of Sweden
Lisa Tan's residence, Stockholm
Lisa Tan's studio, Stockholm
Stockholm Public Library
A cemetery somewhere between Stockholm and Gävle

Sources Recorded:
Clarice Lispector interviewed by Júlio Lerner, 1977, originally televised for the Brazilian program Panorama, accessed in five parts on YouTube

Skype conversation
Apple Inc. screensaver "Cosmos"

Production: Video and editing by Lisa Tan
Final editing by Nils Fridén



Sunsets

C. **Eugene Sundelius von Rosen**
Mikaelidagen · 2021

HDV-video
[18 MIN 29 SEC]

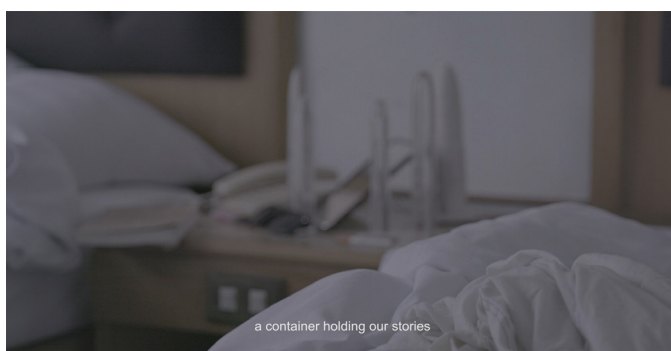
Actors: Aron Skoog and Clara Birnbaum
Narration: Olga Pedan
Music by the artist with violin by M Markström



Mikaelidagen

D. **Victoria Verseau**
A Ghost's Gaze · 2021

HD video
[20 MIN 25 SEC]



A Ghost's Gaze

