

Soft Measures

Wiels Contemporary Art Centre

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The exhibition *Soft Measures* is the result of an attempt to make a group exhibition by employing the intuitive, often inexplicable processes of material and visual decision-making involved in producing works of art. The exhibition uses the central impulses that inform artistic production as curatorial strategies: the gut-feeling discriminations which gives preference to *this* over *that*, often as a result of a haptic, fetishistic or visual attraction to a given quality or surface. In spite of the growing prominence of curatorial practice, these considerations are curiously excluded from curatorial and mediative work in contemporary art. *Soft Measures* explores the possibility of curating as inhabiting and working through a sensual logic, rather than corralling works into a discursive structure.

This is envisaged as a 'soft' approach to organising the exhibition. Selections were made itinerantly, from work to work, through looking for material commonalities and the presence of similar types of sensual logic in potential pieces. The purpose of this method is to stage a shift in the dominance of discourse over visual and sensory properties in both artistic production and exhibition-making. Not only because discourse seems to have exhausted itself in contemporary art, but also because the subordination of the sensory to the discursive reflects an ideological bias that privileges reason, order, and inflexibility over provisionality and responsiveness. In so many fields of cultural history - in the histories of art, colonial education, Western philosophy, the written mediation of scientific discovery - this ideological bias is taken as a natural hierarchy. The counterpoint this exhibition seeks out is conveyed through the metaphor of softness. In each work slack or unstable materials such as ropes, fabric, and stacked or hung wood and plaster provide formal integrity. Moreover, several of the pieces display a shared interest in obscure and ritualistic encounters with these types of flaccid and flexible materials.

The final selection is evidence of an attempt to minimize the influence of pure talk in the curatorial process. However it also demonstrates the emergence of another unintended organizing structure: without affirmatively coordinating the colours and materials of the works included, and without manipulating the selection to exclude potential overlaps, there are several aesthetic elements conspicuously repeated in the show.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Ryan Brewer (b. 1985 in Michigan, USA) is an American performance artist currently based in Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions and performances include *The Temptation of AA Bronson*, (with AA Bronson), Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, the Netherlands (2013), *Bunkerweltanschauung*, (with Alberto Cortes), MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY (2013), *I Know It When I See It*, (with Aura Rosenberg), Martos Gallery, NYC (2013) and *Triskaidekaphobia*, Parade Ground, NYC (2013), *Hard Times*, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York (2014) *NYC Love Aids Riot Sex 2*, (with AA Bronson), NBCK, Berlin, Germany (2014).

Marco Bruzzone (b. 1974 in Genova, Italy) is an artist based in Berlin. Recent exhibitions include *Mehr Teppich*, Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin (2010), *Platonic Solids* (with Dieter Roelstraete) Kunsthalle Basel (2011), *Water Down the Sink*, The Ister, Brussels (2012), *Silent Football, Piano Solo*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012), *Mistaking an Empty Place for a Square*, Kunstverein Arnsberg, Germany (2012), *Sprudelspass and Wurst Tossing*, Almanac Projects, London (2013), *Global Isolation Conference & Exhibition* (with Aude Pariset), M J Gallery, Geneva (2014) and *Acciaio11*, Dingum, Berlin (2014)

Anthea Buys (co-curator, b. 1984, Johannesburg, South Africa) is a curator and writer based between New York and Johannesburg. From 2013 to 2014 she has been a visiting PhD scholar in the department of art history at Columbia University. From June 2014 she will take up the position of Director of the Hordaland Kunstsenter in Bergen, Norway.

Jan Freuchen (b. 1979, Kristiansand, Norway) is an artist working with installations, drawings, sculptures and constructions. Among Freuchen's recent exhibitions are: *Destroy Athens: 1st Athens Biennial* (2007), *If you destroy the image*, Bergen Kunsthall (2008), *Lights On*, Astrup Fearnley Museum (2008), *F.A.Q.*, Erik Steen Gallery, Oslo (2010), *Momentum*, Nordic Biennial, Moss (2009), *The Riot Act*, Gallerie Mor Charpentier, Paris (2011), *Rehersal*, NON, Istanbul (2011), *Ed Ruscha Books & Co*, Gagosian Gallery, New York/ Museum Brandhorst (2013), Munich and *Thetaville*, Fotogalleriet, Oslo (2013).

Phillip Raiford Johnson (b. 1986, Pretoria, South Africa) is an artist based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He recently completed the MFA programme at Goldsmiths University of London, and from 2009 to 2012 ran the exhibition space Cloak & Dagger in downtown Johannesburg. Johnson's recent exhibitions include *The Pool Exhibition*, London, in association with Goldsmiths (2013), and *Back to Orlando* at Canal Projects, London (2013). Johnson has also shown at Blank projects and Stevenson in Cape Town (both 2012) and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (2010).

Magnhild Øen Nordahl (b.1985, Ulsteinvik, Norway) is a Norwegian sculptor currently enrolled in the MFA programme at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Recent exhibitions include *Statics*, NO.5, Bergen Kunsthall (2012), *Spatial Displacements*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney, Australia (2012), *The Armory Show Annex*, ACEHotel, New York, NY, USA (2012), *Få greie på*, Milieu, Bern, Switzerland (2009), *Machine Worries/Machine Hearts*, Blank Projects, Cape Town, South Africa (2012) *This House*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2013) and *Occupational Knots*, Galleri Mejlan, Stockholm, Sweden (2014).

Linn Pedersen (b. 1982, Sortland, Norway) is a Norwegian artist working with photography, sculpture, collage and film. Recent exhibitions include *Scandinavian Forest*, Akershus Kunstnersenter, Lillestrøm, Norway (2011); *X Artworks in a straight line (Seeking the perfect sphere)*, CRISP, London (2010), *Weird Science*, Waterside project space, London (2010), *Floor Arrangements*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2012) and *Sedimentality*, Gallery MELK, Oslo (2013).

André Tehrani (co-curator and artist, b. 1980 in Tønsberg, Norway) was OCA's Norwegian at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre in 2013. Recent exhibitions include *Game of Life*, Kristiansand Kunsthall, Kristiansand, Norway (2012), *The Limits of Language Means the Limits of My World*, Platform Stockholm, Sweden (2013) *This House*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, (2013) *MONIKA STRICKER*, CAB Art Centre, Brussels, Belgium, 2013; *Idiot Cards For a Bygone Revolt*, NoPlace, Oslo (2013), *Sound Versus System*, Kunsthall Oslo, Oslo, Norway (2013) and *Lost Allusions*, Entrée, Bergen (2013).