



# Art

MONTHLY

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**Oreet Ashery**

Interviewed by Larne Abse Gogarty

**Walk like an Egyptian?**

Omar Kholeif

**Museum as Metaphor**

Mark Prince

**Gintaras Didžiapetris**

Profile by Adam Pugh

Alcântara, the former capital of the state of Maranhão.

Tamar Guimarães and Kasper Akhøj's film *A família do Capitão Genésio*, originally commissioned for last year's Venice Biennale, gains new momentum in the local setting. The pairing of the 16mm footage of spiritist practices in rural Brazil with the highpoints of the country's modernist architecture suggests a convergence in aspiration with the 20 astral cities that the spiritist community believes is hovering above the whole of the Brazilian territory. In many ways the films of Spanish filmmaker Val del Omar provide a missing piece of the puzzle of colonial inheritance, prefiguring in their technological experiments a religious fanaticism characteristic of the missionary fever that tortured the Latin American colonies. The haunting imagery of his films, achieved through cross-breeding various experimental techniques, results in a cinema beyond the limitations of the screen, haunted by starkly lit religious imagery and surreal nightmarish scenarios.

Like breadcrumbs, the abstract sculptural fragments of Asier Mendizabal's *Agoramaquia (The Exact Case of the Statue)*, 2014, lie dotted throughout the exhibition. In response to the work of sculptor Jorge Oteiza (1908-2003), Mendizabal explores the formal qualities of his monument to the Peruvian poet César Vallejo. Through reworking the shapes and positioning them in relation to other works in the show, Mendizabal probes the potential of an abstract language when seen in conversation with specific political realities.

The exhibition struggles in the moral high ground of a curatorial programme that is focused on political art and wilfully ignores the usual household names and market favourites – a suspicious binary – especially as inclusions of this kind could have triggered some fertile clashes and alliances. Whether in the strategic selections of the curatorial team or the stance of the artists in their rejection of Israeli funding (Artnotes AM380), the politically correct attitude cynically circulates in many ways as just another artistic currency: one that pleases another market and that comes with its own set of conceptual stylistic formulae and trends that, regrettably, result all too often in a standardised, post-conceptual, relational practice-informed aesthetic.

In the end, it is the less declamatory works which have the most lasting impact. Works like Edward Krassinski's playful enactment of his spears and Nilbar Güreş's absurd staged photographic and sculptural scenarios both invoke fictional parallel worlds that create momentary escapes which disrupt our assumptions of our immediate surroundings – only to mercilessly reflect back on them. ■

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## Asia Triennial Manchester 14: Conflict and Compassion

various venues Manchester

27 September to 23 November

With work by over 50 artists across 14 venues, Asia Triennial Manchester 14 is bigger than ever, but is bigger better? Its theme, Conflict and Compassion, is certainly appropriate, as is one of the show's biggest spaces, Imperial War Museum North, where, inside the Air Shard, an enormous installation made from hundreds of suspended cardboard boxes soars upwards, evoking a floating city. *Genie*, 2014, is the latest edition of the series 'Enter Ghost Exit Ghost' by UK-based Palestinian artist Bashir Makhoul, deliberately reminding the viewer of the materials used by the homeless to make shelters, as well as the cardboard urban warfare training camps built by Israeli Defence Forces in the Negev



Chen Chieh-Jen  
*The Pusher* 2007-08  
video

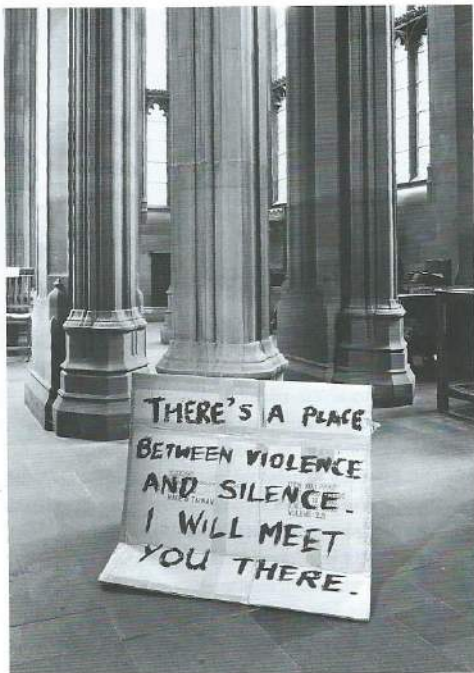
desert. Alinah Azadeh's installation *Child's Play*, 2014, also suspends objects, but on a more intimate level. Many of the plastic toys she uses represent weapons, but all are carefully wrapped in green velvet – the colour associated with Islam but also, touching on the artist's personal background, the colour of Iran's opposition following the controversial 2009-10 general election. However, Daniel Libeskind's disorientating architecture gets the better of some of the other art here. Being forced into a narrow corridor leading into the restaurant compromises Imran Qureshi's powerful series of paintings 'This Leprous Brightness', 2010-11, which evoke the bloody aftermath of an atrocity.

In the car park, a group of shipping containers houses Dark Border Developments' 'Pop Up Republics', a transnational group show that includes the Japanese artist Anti-Cool, inviting visitors to help complete an 18,000-piece jigsaw of a world map, painted over in white. It could take some time. Nearby, Daksha Patel's *Hot Metropolis*, 2014, comments on the continuing connections between Manchester and the global garment-making industry while Chen Chieh-Jen's video work, *The Pusher*, 2007-08, projects against the wall of the container images of people struggling to push another container, and never getting anywhere. This Taiwanese artist – whose newer work appears at the Museum of Science and Industry – excels in seeing the way the body is impacted by neoliberal economic forces.

ATM14's group show, entitled 'Harmonious Society' and curated by the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art, occupies several other venues. In a disused Salford factory now dubbed ARTWORK, Wang Sishun's *Harmonious Society*, 2014, embodies the delicate balance that enables social groups to survive without injury. Elsewhere, visitors enter a dark corridor, its walls studded with tiny video screens and red telephones that occasionally flash. This is Zhou Xiaohu's *Military Exercise Camping – Sentry Post Cinema*, 2009-14. When I intercepted a call, a voice accused me of committing an atrocity. Somewhat perturbed, I found a claustrophobic viewing room where, on a circular video screen, a group of helmeted soldiers did strenuous, pointless exercises – crawling, leaping and shuffling around in a tight circle. Perhaps this is what it is like to be a military conscript, or part of a less than harmonious society.

Walking around Hardeep Pandhal's series 'A Joyous Thing With Maggots at the Centre', at Castlefield Gallery, you are stuck between laughter and revulsion. The large coloured cartoon-like drawings, among them *Where's the Functional Whole?*, 2014, and *The Bathos*, 2014, relate to the artist's Sikh heritage, which comes in for as much ridicule as the former British Raj. *Baba Deep Thing by Mum*, 2014, a large sweater with bloodstains around the neck and a turbaned, bearded head attached to the end of one arm, is a witty representation of Sikh martyr Baba Deep Singh, who, in an 18th-century battle against the Afghans, kept fighting despite having been decapitated. Knitted by the artist's mother, it refers to cultural transition and transformation

Samson Young  
*Muted Situations* 2014



despite, or because of, the language difference between an English-speaking artist and his Punjabi-speaking mother.

Something more conventionally optimistic glitters above the railway lines at the Museum of Science and Industry, site of the world's first passenger railway station. Called *Solar, Manchester*, 2014, it is an installation made by Taipei-based Luxury Logico out of over a hundred recycled street lamps from Salford. If this 'techno-sun' seems somewhat over-enthusiastic, there is a more measured response to technology inside the building, in the form of Chen's four-screen video installation *Realm of Reverberations*, 2014. Filmed in Taipei, the work examines the impact of the city's metro system as it ate into Losheng Sanatorium. Built under Japanese control in the 1930s to forcibly house leprosy patients, many patients were still living in the hospital as demolition progressed, and several speak movingly in Chen's black-and-white films.

The neo-gothic fantasy that is John Rylands Library inspired two works well-suited to these sumptuous surroundings. Even viewed closely, Wang Yuyang's *Breathing Books*, 2014, seems to be a table covered in old hardback tomes, slightly tatty round the edges. Creepily, they are expanding and contracting in size, accompanied by an asthmatic hissing. In fact, the entire construction is made of resin and intricately hand-painted. It is a good trick. But another piece, concentrating on silence, goes deeper. Samson Young's *Muted Situations*, 2014, takes two cultural forms, a Haydn string quartet and a traditional Lion Dance, and, perhaps echoing the experience of being told to be quiet in a library, has them performed without any live audio. The string quartet plays with bows held slightly away from strings – only fingering on fretboards can be heard squeaking – while the Lion Dance is performed without the band, so that all we hear are the footfalls. Both films cause the viewer to begin replacing lost sounds with imagined ones.

Separation is also the theme of Liu Xiaodong's show 'In Between Israel and Palestine', at CFCCA. Single images of the artist's visit to this divided society are painted on double canvases, each image – a portrait, a view of a mosque at sunset, even a view of the Dividing Wall itself –

split in two. At the same venue, Pak Sheung Chuen approaches his own identity with a humour that would once have broken the law. *Resenting My Own History*, 2014, features a film documenting the erasing of the Queen's portrait from Hong Kong \$1 coins by rubbing them on the pavement. Recent events in that territory indicate that the question of identity is anything but resolved: the head of the monarch may have been replaced by a bauhinia flower, but the future of 'one country, two systems' is very much in question due to the recently begun 'umbrella revolution'.

In the somewhat unlikely setting of the National Football Museum, a wry comment on Chinese communism appears in the form of Yang Zhenzhong's *Long Live the Great Union*, 2013. What seems at first to be a large, pagoda-like installation is actually a collection of fragments. When observed from a viewing platform in front, furthermore, your eye sees through a tunnel to an otherwise-invisible portrait of Mao Zedong.

Some of the Triennial's best work, however, is at Bury's Sculpture Centre, where the 'Remix' show marks its continued exchange with the artist-run Platform space in Beijing. Alongside Richard Wilson's squashed Cessna aeroplane, *Butterfly*, 2003, AK Dolven's austere beautiful *Between the Morning and the Handbag*, 2002, and David Blandy's funk and soul-infused *Fortress of Solitude*, 2007, three recent Chinese works take up less space but are not overshadowed. Pi Lei's installation *Miss Lonely*, 2014, is a sort of isolation unit – a box-like construction lined with Chinese newspaper, painted and labelled with disturbing messages such as I am a mental patient/I think I am a mushroom. Video screens show this self-styled 'beautiful' artist painting Vincent van Gogh's *Jrises*, 1889, as graffiti, to the strains of Bobby Vinton's 1964 record responding to army conscription, *Mr Lonely*.

Fifty more videos, shot over 18 months, appear on ten vintage television screens in Jin Shan's installation *One Man's Island*, 2011, in which, among other things, we see the artist trying to recreate his own dreams, eating cardboard, attempting to swallow an electrical plug and wearing a mop between his legs in an attempt to copulate with a door.

Upstairs, in Bury's Art Museum, there is a colourful surprise. The Taipei-Japanese duo Hsiao-Chi Tsai and Kimiya Yoshikawa have produced *Scintilla from Our Sun*, 2014, a series of glowing, flower-like sculptures in glass, metal, neoprene, jesmonite, Perspex, UV pigments and black light, making this part of Manchester seem more like an exotic plant-house on a distant planet. Not entirely consistent, ATM14 is nonetheless worth the time it takes to reach the places where it comes into bloom. ■

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## Bloomberg New Contemporaries

World Museum Liverpool 20 September to 26 October

Given recent debates on the state of art school education (AM377), this seems like a good time to look at the graduates emerging from British art schools today. Thankfully here is Bloomberg New Contemporaries, the 65th edition of the UK's annual self-designated 'barometer of contemporary art', presented at the World Museum as part of the Liverpool Biennial prior to a second leg at the ICA. This year, 1,400 entrants have been whittled down to 55 by artist judges previously featured in the show: Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, Enrico David and Goshka Macuga.

The exhibition begins with a group of works that address the 'current political and economic concerns' suggested in the introductory text. Henry Hussey's textile piece *The Guardian*, 2013, proclaims in stitches, 'my grandmother is like a political pit bull she's 87 but she's still chanting out Marxist slogans', while Marco Godoy's