

focused at a meta-level, required its own elaborate narration. A written *Model for the Reconstruction of the Abominable House*, 2014, was duly provided and securely chained to a pedestal, upon which three electric lights poked through a large aluminum sheet, or makeshift lampshade, which highlighted the provisional nature of the whole thing. The text deliberately confused Strau's voice with that of Calvino, the preeminent storyteller, who, unlike Strau, pushed the boundaries of linear narrative within the confines of the book format. In Strau's installation, on the other hand, it was the fences—each titled *Beating Fences into Lamps*, 2014—that literally and metaphorically challenged expectations of what could constitute a coherent whole in any conventional sense. What were the fences separating from what here, and could this space within a space stand on its own, or was it actually a conceptual and material smokescreen?

Strau is a storyteller who hides his “literary results,” as he calls them, in plain sight, effectively turning this concealment into its own theme and leaving the reader-spectator to chance upon disjointed particulars. But it is precisely the spontaneous aperçus produced in the process that redeem the reading experience. One such find was the ingenious “lamp leash” mentioned in one of the texts—a prosthetic for switching off the light without getting out of bed—which, besides its intrinsic comic value, can serve as an example of how Strau's texts, while so quantitatively disproportionate that a sense of narrative order remains out of reach, open up spaces in which the dilemmas tend toward a human scale.

—Elisa Schaar

## “Geographies of Contamination”

DAVID ROBERTS ART FOUNDATION (DRAF)

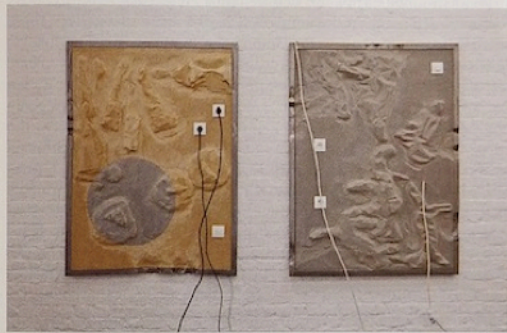
Our moment seems to be characterized by a drive toward the dissolution of the hierarchical subject-object relation in favor of a “flat ontology,” in which all things and matters (human or not) are situated on the same plane of existence. Cocurated by Vincent Honoré (director of David Roberts Art Foundation) and writers Laura McLean-Ferris and Alexander Scrimgeour, “Geographies of Contamination” was a snapshot of an art field in which new materialisms and post-Internet theories flourish.

The best entry into the show's framework of dedifferentiation and pollution of diverse systems, which the notion of “contamination” sought to encapsulate, was Rachel Rose's video *Sitting Feeding Sleeping*, 2013. The work's first sequence of images—footage of a crashing helicopter followed by jellyfish swimming in the blue sea of an error screen—sets the scene for the frenzied entanglement of the technological and the organic, life and death, that unfolded throughout the show. In *Sitting Feeding Sleeping*, video fragments from cryogenics and robotics laboratories and shots of zoo animals are punctuated by disruptions of images, sounds, and documents of the work's own making (e.g., mouse clicks, editing snapshots, reflections on a laptop screen). While Rose's dark and poetic work is undeniably riveting, the flat ontology immanent to its seductive alloy of the technological and biological provokes questions as to what might be lost, perhaps too readily, in contamination—a question that seems no less pertinent to David Douard's animistic installation combining two works, *So' Suckle to Mom* and *So' Suckle to Gro*, both 2014, in which these registers fuse and part uncannily. What is lost, or rather discarded, is the human subject, whose absence is stressed strongly in many of the show's other works.

Obstructed or covered in plastic sleeves, Magali Reus's “Parking,” 2013–, is a deadpan series of folding chairs that are hostile to human occupation. Michael E. Smith's sculptures (for instance, *Meat Wad*,

2013) evoke visceral part objects of surrogate bodies. Renaud Jerez's bandage-wrapped pipe constructions, which belong to his new installation *Pain Corp*, 2014, recall a sick, fragile body in the process of dissolution, an image that resonates with the decaying matter of Olga Balema's fountain sculptures, including *Alchemy*, 2013. Baguettes are awkwardly stuck into or bandaged onto Jerez's pipe constructions: futile phallic prosthetics of a stale vitality that decomposes as uneventfully as dry bread. In contrast to the nostalgia for the body with which this work is tinged, Nicolas Deshayes's large friezes radiate the perverse sexual charm of the inorganic. The faint yellowish surfaces of *Cramps*, 2014, vacuum-formed foam reliefs, shimmer repulsively and alluringly, the slick bulk of matter tantalizing the viewer to touch it.

If the emphasis on thingness and materiality—on the level of the exhibition as a whole as much as on that of many of its individual works—is inscribed into the vexed horizon of a post-human world of objects, the show was at its best where “contamination” became tangible as the digital reconfiguration of (art) objects and subjects alike. Here, “contamination” functioned as the disruption of systems whether bodily, social, technological, or economic. Marie Mul's trompe l'oeil “Puddle” sculptures, 2013–, are breaks in the flow of movement. In his mobile sculptures *Souvenirs 1–3*, 2014, Neil Beloufa explores the circulation of



View of “Geographies of Contamination,” 2014. From left: Neil Beloufa, *Bowling*, 2013; Neil Beloufa, *Cats*, 2013.

artworks and their underlying economies of staging by showcasing means of mobility and presentation (e.g., wheels, framing structures) or by reusing parts of his previously made works. In turn, Sam Lewitt's value-card-interspersed stacks of electronic waste (from the series “SVFS (Stored Value Field Separators),” 2012–, engage with the transmission and interruption of (economic) value in art as much as with art itself as currency. If we look at “contamination” from this perspective, couldn't the disruptions, breaks, and breakdowns that afflict the media of many of these and other contemporary practices be brought into focus as materializations of much larger systematic dysfunctions?

—Jenny Nachtigall

## BELFAST

### Nicholas Keogh

GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY

At the 2005 Venice Biennale, Northern Irish artist Nicholas Keogh took to the waters of the Grand Canal in a homemade motorized gondola. Constructed from a crude jumble of domestic and industrial junk, including a bulky outdoor garbage container, a stained and battered bathtub, and some rusty oil drums, Keogh's *Bin Boat*, 2005, was a ridiculous but nonetheless viable vessel. The artist and his creative