

Contemporary Magazine

KALEIDOSCOPE

Issue 18 (Summer 2013), highlighting ANDRA URSUTA, SHANZHAI BIENNIAL, SERGEI TCHEREPNIN, YNGVE HOLEN and PETRIT HALILAJ, investigating AN UPDATED NOTION OF MATERIALITY, exploring the curatorial practice of MASSIMILIANO GIONI, featuring our regulars, tips and three special inserts.

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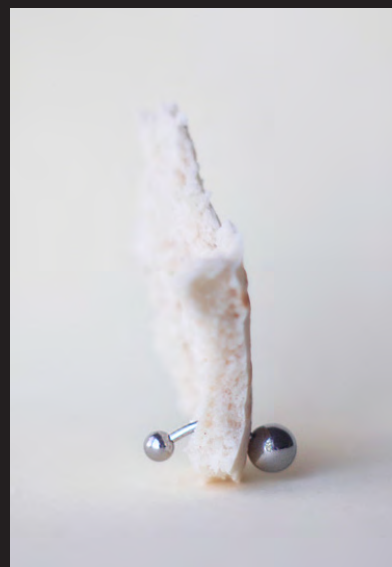


FUTURA

Introducing



Amalia Ulman



Interview by
Hans Ulrich Obrist and
Simon Castets for 89+

HANS ULRICH OBRIST|SIMON CASTETS (89+)
Where does your catalogue raisonné begin? What is the first piece you no longer considered student work?

AMALIA ULMAN I can't pick only one because I usually work in series and relate major changes in my art practice to certain feelings and memories. The first major change was to balance the intimate, autobiographical elements of an artwork with its ability to be part of a discourse. Art school encouraged everyone to eliminate any traces of humanism or subjectivity in favor of clinical, theory-based conceptual artworks, which led to lots of Perspex and references to Benjamin, Barthes and company. Combining this with a bit of cheesy, pre-artschool naiveté was a move that I consider one of my first adult decisions towards art-making. That, and not procrastinating ever again.

89+ Can you tell us more about projects you have not yet been able to realize? Utopias? Dreams? Censored projects? Or as Doris Lessing says, self-censored projects that you did not dare to do? Projects that were too expensive to realize? Too big or too small to be realized? Forgotten projects? The unbuilt roads of Amalia Ulman...

AU I have a few. Some of them are more abstract and improbable, involving aqua-parks, macro-parties, body modification, orgies or large-scale public sculptures. I have two plausible and viable projects that are giving me a hard time in terms of production: a Smartphone app and a group exhibition of flower paintings that I'm curating. I wish I were more of the dreamy type. It's perhaps part of my Capricorn nature to only sign on to a project that I know I will be capable of executing. I tend to dream big, but I never dream impossible. I think Pisces and Virgos are more into that. I love listening to them and stealing their ideas. Ludwig II of Bavaria was a Virgo.

My utopia is to involve myself in politics more deeply and to create a system where shelter and basic needs are covered for everyone. Finally, a project too expensive to realize is to get plastic surgery, in the line of Orlan, but just to be more beautiful, without going back to normal. A proposal I thankfully never dared to approach an institution with.

Biography

AMALIA ULMAN (b. 1989, Buenos Aires) currently lives and works between London and Gijón. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts at Central Saint Martins School of Art, United Kingdom. Solo exhibitions devoted to Ulman's work have been shown at Headquarters, Zurich; Galeria Adriana Suarez, Spain; and Arcadia Missa, London. She has also participated in group shows at Auction House, Berlin; Copenhagen Place, London; Woodmill, London; Lima Zulu, London; and ICA, London.

Current & Forthcoming

AMALIA ULMAN will have a solo show during the first week of June at Future Gallery, Berlin. In addition, her work can be found in group exhibitions at Gloria Maria Gallery, Milan, and Sandy Brown, Berlin.

Authors

HANS ULRICH OBRIST is Co-director of the Serpentine Gallery, London. Obrist has curated over 250 exhibitions worldwide. His recent publications include *A Brief History of Curating*, *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks* with Rem Koolhaas and *Ai Wei Wei Speaks*. He is co-curator of 89+.

SIMON CASTETS is an independent curator and co-curator of 89+. He is based in New York.

89+ How is your iPhone app project coming together?

AU Badly. It's hard to find an investor for something without revenue—the structure of the app is non-commercial and anti-capitalist. When you write with water on hot ceramic it evaporates, and this application functions on the same premise. It's a confessional, Twitter-like app. As an anonymous user you could type something, publish it and see

it disappear before your eyes. The front page would be this constant flow of thoughts, just for the sake of it: no feedback, no accounts, no usernames and no archive. It seeks to analyze human nature and how cultural capital and feedback function as currency to keep social platforms afloat. It's an experiment, something that intentionally sees its own failure as a positive aspect, as a response to the questions and doubts about the economics and sociology in cyberspace.

89+ Among the eight artists we invited to participate in our panel at the DLD Conference introducing the 89plus project, your presence on social networks was the most discussed. A lot of people seemed to already know you, even though you had never met. How would you describe your relationship to online socialization?

AU My extroverted relationship with the web comes from being bored and isolated. I use the internet in the same way I wrote to penpals and bought specialized magazines when I was younger. Now, all my activity is an exaggerated residue of that. I take selfies candidly and almost unconsciously. That's why I would never think of these images as something purposely fabricated. I always loved diaries and now I encounter myself without the time to write one. This means that all the images I upload are deeply personal. Global access to these images is an error derived from innocence, as I basically upload more than I see, produce more than I appropriate and stream more than I watch. Because I only look at a few things when I'm online, I have this idea that my material goes to a black hole when I upload them. This intensified with the iPhone: click click, to the vault, click click, to the vault. I never thought of universality, public exposure or exhibitionism. If I did, everything would be different. Now I'm sort of scared, but I guess it's too late to back off.

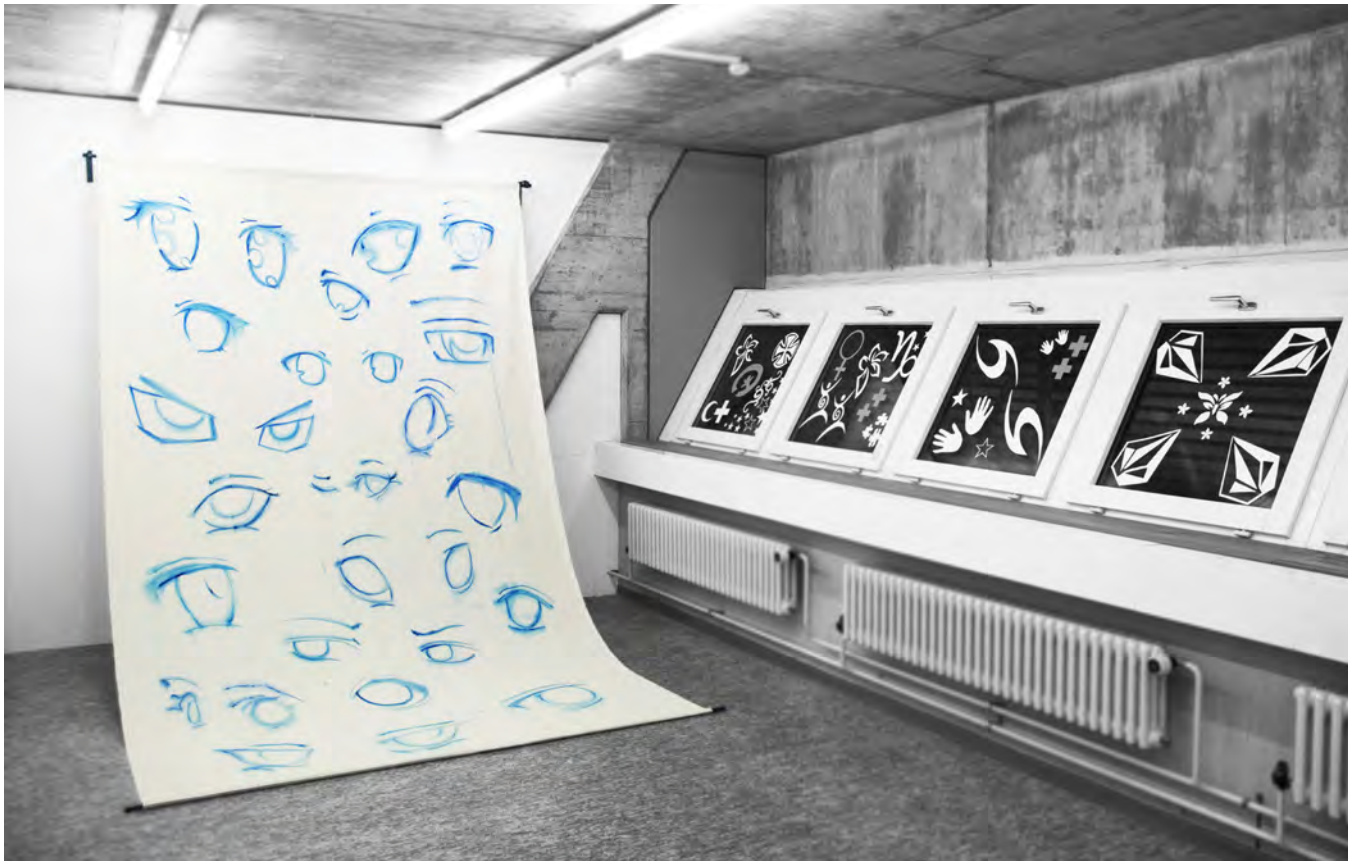


Profit decay, 2012
Courtesy of the artist

REGULARS



App, 2011
Courtesy of the artist



Sketches 2, 2012; Savings, 2012
 Courtesy of the artist

89+ What are your favorite social networks and why?

AU Twitter and Instagram. I really like how these networks meld groups of people together; it's very democratic. I love how you can interact directly with celebrities via Twitter and how the explore section in Instagram gives you the chance to experience mainstream trends, as well as to discover non-western celebrities or Korean girls who document their plastic surgeries in between lots of pictures of flowers, cupcakes and teddybears. Facebook is too cliquy to be interesting.

89+ What role does chance play?

AU I mostly leave everything to chance. I work non-stop, because I don't trust my planning; whatever happens happens and I'd better be prepared. My life is a sequence of the most random, unplanned, extravagant and unexpected events.

89+ Are you a Situationist?

AU That's like kind of related to Sartre, no? I'm more on Simone's side, she's way cuter. There is analysis and critique in my work, but I wouldn't say I'm a Situationist. If I go to the Wikipedia page, I can't do more than pick and choose. Maybe it is a generational thing. At this point, I only want to use images and visuals that I genuinely love. I hate working from irony and mockery. For example, if I've used the logos of Avene and Lancôme in a recent painting, it's because I love to line up my Avene products to stare at them and because I'm personally attached to Lancôme. I want to answer the question "why do I feel so attached to these products?" from sincerity. I aim to shed light on consumerism and gender problematics while being true to myself—instead of giving a lecture and being cynical.

89+ How did the "Weeping Image" work come about?

AU *Weeping Mountain* (2010) was the first idea I materialized after a two year pause. That was definitely a big step for me. It started an all-or-nothing way of working where everything was thrown away after being documented. The work had a physical lifespan of thirty minutes and a digital lifespan of, by now, three years. Aside from that, the piece was pure juvenilia, post-internet and a very big etcetera.

89+ Could you describe the work you presented at HQ, Zürich?

AU I was interested in repetition and accumulation against purity and minimalism; as a metaphor for the binary good/bad taste or rich/poor aesthetics. When I was an otaku in high school, I'd draw all these eyes, just because they were the easiest and most gratifying. There was this sense of instant pleasure over effort, this notion of accumulation against a solid final satisfaction. That's why I decided to make references to all

these teenage class differentiators, as well as to stickers, as referential marks of status.

89+ Where do artists rank on the social scale and what role does their physical appearance play? Can an artist look rich and be taken seriously? How do you choose your own clothes?

AU Artists are creatures that are generally broke but relate to the wealthiest people. Art is at the very top of the pyramid of needs. The whole of society needs art indirectly (without owning it) because it's a form of creative thinking, but who "needs" to own art? Only those who already have everything else. Appearance might be important because there's lots of seduction involved. Most of the artists I know are attractive and many of them look rich. But artists can look however they want, and that's an amazing privilege. I choose my own clothes depending on my

mood. I like to match the work I'm doing and I love role-playing, so it's a vicious circle. I'm playing around with preppy aesthetics now, so I'm dying my hair lighter and wearing my pink shirt tucked into my white jeans.

89+ Your show at Galeria Adriana Suarez ironically commented on the gallery's target customers. How do you think the gallery benefited from that and how do you think it speaks to the potential of institutional critique?

AU I don't think they ever knew it. The show was proper; I looked neat during the private view and posed with children in front of my paintings. Everything was pretty legit. I don't like irony or exaggerated mockery. I really did paint while doing Gwyneth Paltrow's fast and I took inspiration from interior design books I already had. I think I'm too empathic to be cynical. I can't make

a strong critique without thinking about the reasons that led to the thing I'm criticizing.

89+ "Where are you now/ When I need you the most?" –Justin Bieber [From *Where Are You Now* (2010), WalMart, Australia and Japan bonus track of the album *My World 2.0*.]

AU I'm back in the fortress, back at the top of the Villa. This is THE clarifying parenthesis *par excellence*. I miss you but this is necessary, I need my space. (Sent from Cimadevilla, Gijón, Spain)

Info

89+ is an international research project inquiring about the generation of creative minds born in and after 1989. Amalia Ulman met with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Simon Castets for the 89+ interviews series. www.89plus.com



Amalia Ulman with Katja Novitskova, *Profit decay 2*, 2012
Courtesy of the artist