

What We Know that We Don't Know

Nazgol Ansarinia,
A.K. Burns,
Nicolás Consuegra,
Trisha Donnelly,
Claire Fontaine,
Ha Tae-Bum,
Walid Raad,
Miljohn Ruperto

June 21–August 19, 2017
Wednesday–Saturday, 12–5PM

What We Know that We Don't Know, organized by KADIST San Francisco and curated by Arash Fayezi, presents works by eight contemporary artists: Nazgol Ansarinia, A.K. Burns, Nicolás Consuegra, Trisha Donnelly, Claire Fontaine, Ha Tae-Bum, Walid Raad, and Miljohn Ruperto. The exhibition explores the poetic space of paradox, where works intentionally provide multiple angles of interpretation and opposing meanings collide.

What We Know that We Don't Know draws inspiration from poetic tendencies in Persian literature, where metaphor, irony, and paradox are understood as devices that allow artists to encode their opinions in complex cultural and political circumstances. In a cultural context, this is best illustrated through the concept of *ta'arof*, which designates a set of social behaviors defining how people should live in society and treat each other. A host is obliged, for example, to offer anything a guest might desire, while the visitor, in equal measure, is obliged to refuse it.

This exhibition is part of a KADIST initiative dedicated to commissioning exhibitions, artworks, and events that deepen the organization's engagement in the Middle East and augment its proximity to artists from Iran.

Claire Fontaine

Foreigners Everywhere (Arabic), 2005. Suspended, wall or window mounted neon, framework, electronic transformer, and cables. 7 1/8 x 39 3/8 x 1 3/4 in.
Courtesy of the artist.

Foreigners Everywhere is a series of neon signs in several different languages. Named for Stranieri Ovunque, an anarchist collective from Turin, the work embodies and projects the ambivalence of their name into various sites and contexts. For this exhibition, the piece appears in Arabic, the language spoken by most inhabitants from the countries targeted by the travel bans signed by President Donald Trump via executive order in early 2017. Lacking context, the neon suggests a factual statement, xenophobic threat, and evokes the estrangement of feeling foreign in a global society, a circumstance legible by the targeted populations.

Claire Fontaine (est. 2004, lives in Paris) is a self-declared “readymade artist” working in neon, video, sculpture, painting and text. Her practice can be described as an ongoing interrogation of the political impotence and the crisis of singularity that defines contemporary art.

Nazgol Ansarinia (in collaboration with Roozbeh Elias-Azar)

Residential apartments/ water reserve & wind towers on Sayad highway, Fabrications, 2013. Plaster, resin, and paint, 7 1/4 x 7 x 4 1/4 in.

In the early 2000s, as urban redevelopment accelerated and intense construction significantly diminished public space in Tehran, state-funded murals began to represent imaginary landscapes on building facades. The municipality of Tehran uses such pictorial representation to exert influence over and come to terms with the flow of communal desire. The protrusion of the unreal onto the real interrupts the values, independence, and functionality of one over the other. It is not uncommon, for example, to find a Kashan-style house with a courtyard painted on one side of a three-story building, a Yazd-style windtower depicted on the other side of a newly built apartment complex, or rows of painted adobe structures on retaining walls girding the expressway. *Fabrications*, a series of architectural models that have no equivalent in reality, gives such forms a chance to realize themselves in the third dimension. The model—a constructed fiction—explores the contested space between tradition and modernity, a binary that continues to consume the artist’s culture, identity, and imagination.

Nazgol Ansarinia (b. 1979, lives in Tehran) dissects, interrogates, and recasts networks, objects, and events to draw out relationships to the contemporary Iranian experience. Her mode of working covers diverse media, including video, 3D printed models, and drawings. Subjects are as varied as automated telephone systems, U.S. national security policies, the memories associated with a family house, and the patterns of Persian Carpets.

Nicolás Consuegra

Nadie sabe de la sed con que otro bebe (No one knows the thirst with which another drinks), 2012. Glasses and mirror, dimensions variable.

A residency program in the blazing hot city of Honda, Colombia, inspired artist Nicolás Consuegra to consider the difficulty in understanding the needs of a distant community. An important town during the colonial era as the main port on the Magdalena River, Honda is presently rife with poverty, unemployment, and environmental deterioration. Here he produced the work *Nadie sabe de la sed con que otro bebe (No one knows the thirst with which another drinks)*, a variable arrangement of cut glasses in front of a mirror so that they appear whole. The title, a popular euphemism taken literally, affirms the impossibility of knowing another person’s experience. In a mirror reflection the glasses appear to be complete, manifesting an innate human paradox: a reflection of unity, but only as reversed projection or doubling.

Nicolás Consuegra (b. 1976, lives in Bogotá) explores the contradictions of modern visual culture through his photographs, sculptures, paintings, and installations. Much of his work deals with subtle differences between one thing and another, whether they are visual differences or semiotic shifts.

Walid Raad

Section 88_ACT XXXI: Views from outer to inner compartments, 2010. HD Video, color, silent, 14:36 min.
Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg/Beirut.

Section 88_ACT XXXI: Views from outer to inner compartments presents digitally manipulated museum interiors slowly fading in and out of one another. The simple and stately rooms resemble Western museums, although absent from both artwork and visitor. A text accompanying the work describes a newly built museum in an Arab country—a repository for culture that is wholly inaccessible to its citizens. The contradiction in the written and visual narratives question the expansion of

Western institutions such as the Guggenheim and the Louvre to the Middle East.

Walid Raad (b. 1967, lives in New York) explores fact and fiction in a variety of media, including photography, video, and performance. His projects include *The Atlas Group* (1984-2004), in relation to the Lebanese wars, and the ongoing, *Scratching on things I could disavow* (2007- present) on “Arab” art.

Room 3 Miljohn Ruperto

Janus, 2013. Digital animation, 3:30 min.

Janus takes its name from the two-faced Roman god of duality and transitions, of beginnings and endings, gates and doorways. He is usually depicted with two faces as he looks both forward and backward, to the future and the past. Animated in collaboration with Aimée de Jongh, the video presents a close-up of a dying “duck-rabbit,” an ambiguous illustration made popular by the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. One’s attention shifts between seeing a duck and a rabbit, prompted by the animal’s movements and sounds. Its red eyes, wounded body, and belabored breathing suggest the end of life. Just as it appears to take its last breath, however, it inhales again, teetering on the precipice. As the video continues its unceasing loop, a resolution is withheld. In this way, Ruperto makes a connection between the ambiguity of visual perception and the paradox of life and death.

Miljohn Ruperto (b. 1971, lives in Los Angeles) is a cross-disciplinary artist, working in photography, cinema, performance, and digital animation. His work refers to historical and anecdotal occurrences, and speculates on the nature of assumed facts and the construction of truth. Ruperto received his MFA from Yale University in 2002 and his BA in Studio Art from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1999.

Room 4 Ha Tae-Bum

The Palestine Wall, 2010. Pigment print, 60 x 40 in.

Ha Tae-Bum’s “White” series, started in 2008, begins with photographic images from the mainstream media depicting sites of conflict or crisis. The artist eliminates human presence, miscellaneous details, and all color from the images, then “rebuilds” them into quiet, achromatic models with thin white paper. Once complete, the models are photographed in a nearly identical composition as the original image. *The Palestine Wall* depicts the structure separating Israel from the West Bank, a barrier that restricts the

movement of people and goods to the other side. The visual and semantic distinctions surrounding its meaning and dimensionality are stark, pointing to the power that pictures and their linguistic counterparts have to both inform and elude.

Ha Tae-Bum (b. 1974, lives in South Korea) was trained as a sculptor in South Korea and Germany. His practice spans photography, sculpture, performance, installation, and animation. Ha’s work often reflects on the force of social conceptions such as discrimination and shame.

A.K. Burns

Unknown Unknown, 2016. Sandblasted steel, 43 ¼ x 80 x 1/4 x 5 in.

In a 2002 Pentagon press conference, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld addressed a question about Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction with an unforgettable evasion: there are known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns, the latter being the most precarious. In a trilogy of nearly identical sculptures by A.K. Burns, the artist conjures the same string of word compounds on a metal gate nearly 15 years after Rumsfeld’s infamous statement. Resembling ubiquitous black fences across New York City, *Unknown Unknown* presents the paradox of this statement as a physical division and linguistic deviation, acting jointly as both a threshold and obstacle.

A.K. Burns (b. 1975, lives in New York) is an interdisciplinary visual artist, working with video, installation, sculpture, collage, poetry, and collaboration. She graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design and received an MFA in sculpture from Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College. Burns was a 2015 Creative Capital grant recipient in the Visual Arts category.

Trisha Donnelly

Untitled, 2007-2008. RC print, 10 x 8 in.

Untitled is a black-and-white photograph of a wave just before it breaks as seen from the distance of an overlook. Donnelly’s interest in the waveform—visually, aurally, and perceptually—is made manifest in works across multiple media, including photography, drawing, video, sculpture, and performance.

Trisha Donnelly (b. 1974, lives in New York) is an artist who implements multiple media in her practice. She received her MFA from Yale University in 2000 and her BFA in from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1995. Recently, she was awarded the 2017 Wolfgang Hahn Prize.

Related programs:

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Composer Shahab Paranj performs at the opening night 8PM.

Saturday, August 12, 2017

Film screening at Canyon Cinema curated by Antonella Bonfanti. Limited space available, more information coming soon on KADIST website.

Monday, July 31 – Thursday, August 6, 2017

Nazgol Ansarinia presents her research as a contributor to KADIST's Instagram residency, *Artist not at the Studio, Curator not at the Office*.

June 21 – August 19, 2017

Selection of exhibition-inspired publications by booksellers Vee and Brian Moran at Owl Cave Books located 3150 18th Street, #105, San Francisco, CA 94110.

KADIST is a non-profit organization based in Paris and San Francisco committed to the idea the arts make a fundamental contribution to a progressive society. Its programs actively encourage the engagement of artists, often represented in its collection, with the important issues of today. KADIST collection and productions reflect the global scope of contemporary art, and its programs develop collaborations with artists, curators, and many art organizations around the world. Local programs include exhibitions, public events, residencies, and educational initiatives, complemented by an online reach to an international audience.

KADIST, San Francisco
3295 20th Street
CA 94110
+1.415.738.8668
www.kadist.org
sanfrancisco@kadist.org

Devon Bella, Director
Pete Belkin, Media & Production
Arash Favez, Online Mediation
Marie Martraire, Asia Programs
Jordan Stein, North America Programs



**OWL
CAVE
BOOKS**

KADIST