

“Nothing consoles you like despair”

by Boaz Levin

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Last week it was warm once again in Berlin. The sky was a hue of brilliant blue and people filled the cities' parks, basking in the soft warmth of a rare mid-winter sun. It's only February, but it feels like spring is just around the corner. Friends I talked to—particularly foreigners who, like me, hail from warmer climates—expressed a cautious optimism about the possibility that this year's winter might be over, that we might have survived another season of monotonous gray overcast and chilling eastern winds. But this glee is often accompanied by a guilty evocation of climate change—how can it not be? The winter has been mild, and maybe it's just me, but it feels like it's been getting milder every year since I moved here nine years ago from Jerusalem. The past summer, on the other hand, has seen temperatures reaching record highs, leaving scorched yellow patches in city parks where grass once was, drying up the massive Havel river and therewith immobilizing commercial barges, devastating agriculture, with crops shriveling and animal feed-grains toasted in the punishing sun. Even the proverbial protestant work ethic couldn't withstand the heat: lacking air conditioning, offices were forced to a standstill and schools declared *Hitzefrei*—in Germany, when temperatures reach over 30C school is canceled and children sent home—overwhelming sunbaked parents, who's last resort were often the subsidized public pools (the one in my neighborhood saw 330,000 visitors over the summer.) I spent many of those days by the pool

too—what else could I do?—but the warmth, comforting as it was to lounge in, felt ominous. The past summer was a watershed moment. Inconvenient truths imposed themselves on multiple fronts: heatwaves, droughts, floods, fires, and one very grim (though, some would say, not grim enough) UN report. An hour drive from my home, forest fires forced the evacuation of two villages in the outskirts of Berlin, with the smoke reaching the city. In California, climate change found its iconic images in an incinerated mountain town called Paradise—the name made for particularly dreadful headlines—the deadliest and most destructive wildfires California has ever seen, and it found its colluder in Trump, who’s steadfast denial of what has become so self-evident, so painfully glaring, shone a cruel radiance of kinship with a long-lasting, if somewhat more oblique, collective complicity. Is denial really any different from indifference? Isn’t my own denial purchased at the price of a biodegradable trash bag here, a recycled puffer jacket there? The solutions offered seem broken, ridiculously inept in confronting the scale and gravity of the crisis we’re in.

Part of the problem, it seems, has to do with the challenge of both perceiving and representing troubles of such magnitude—changes and shifts taking place both at the molecular and the planetary scale—and reconciling these with the mundanity of our everyday life. It’s difficult to imagine our actions—driving a car, taking a plane, purchasing another product or having coffee-to-go from a disposable cup—as irredeemably toxic, to relate them with the constant increase of typhoons, heatwaves, wildfires, ocean acidification, and with the carcasses of bleached reefs.

As I sat on a bench near our home, the soft mid-winter sun washed over my closed eyes. But all I could think of was an essay I just finished reading by Emily Raboteau, where she asks “How to reconcile these twin feelings of pleasure in the city’s enjoyments and terror of its threats? I have learned” she writes “that the world is running out of sand; that every second we’re adding four Hiroshima bomb’s-worth of heat to the oceans”^[01]. She thinks of an hourglass, of her kids.

It’s difficult not to feel utterly helpless when confronted with this reality, knowing that individual action is but a drop in quickly

rising, acidifying, ocean waters, that the problem is systemic, and far removed by orders of magnitude from the influence of individuals. The genie, it seems, has long escaped the bottle, and we've been left searching in the dark for an emission cap. But a realist fatalism can be as paralyzing, and as harmful, as denialism. So, what is to be done?



Richard Frater, *Stop Shell (Live rock version)*, 2019. Fossilised coral, 3D printed macroscopic graphs, coral organism, marine aquarium, bio-media, plexiglass, 1460 x 400 x 400mm.



Richard Frater, *Stop Shell (oyster Filter version)*, 2017. Living oyster, Brita water Filter pitcher, modified oyster shell, marine aquarium, water pumps, chiller, bio-media filter, plexiglass, 1500 x 400 x 400mm. Exhibition view, *Produktion: Made in Germany*, Kunstverein Hannover, 2017.

New Zealand born, Berlin-based, artist Richard Frater has devoted much of his work during the past five years to exploring human complicity in climate change, it's visual culture and governing logic, but also—no less importantly—modes of resistance, nurture, action, and co-habitation, however fleeting. I've known Richard for nearly as long as I've lived here. We met at the Berlin University of the Arts, where I was a student of Hito Steyerl's, who's open class he would attend.

I will first focus on two large bodies of Richard's work: *Stop Shell* (2016-19), and *Social Cryptomnesia* (2018). *Stop Shell (Oyster Version)*, from 2016—first exhibited in Conradi gallery, Hamburg, the same year, and later as part of *Produktion, Made in Germany Drei*, at

Kunstverein Hannover—consists of a living oyster, a Brita water filter Karaffe, an oyster shell, marine aquarium, water pumps, plexiglass shelving and parts, a filter and a chiller. The first of the *Stop Shell* sculptures Richard produced, is a transparent pedestal-and-vitrine-cum-aquarium filled almost to its lid with roughly twenty-two litres of water, on top of which rests the Brita water filter, within which an oyster shell floats. Water flows into the filter, and overflows back into aquarium tank, circulating; the chiller monitors and stabilizes the water's temperature, and the biological filter enables bacterial colonies to propagate and break down wastes, creating an ecosystem that supports the living oyster in the aquarium for the duration of the exhibition, after which it is released back to the ocean. Plastic, Richard notes, accounts for a quarter of the demand for fossil fuels extracted today, and so the water resistant parts that make up the innards of this sculpture implicate it in the same dependency on fossil fuels, a somewhat oblique example of what he calls "structural indifference". The idea for the sculpture came in response to a 2010 post on Shell Petroleum's Facebook wall, where the company extolled the oyster's ability to filter "up to 22 liters of salt water an hour". The corporation teamed up with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to explore how oysters might be used as natural filters to help curb ocean acidification. TNC have overseen the creation and maintenance of several artificial oyster reefs. The reefs create alkaline curtains supporting marine life, and to a certain extent, mitigating the effects of rising ocean acidity. A key variable within human induced climate change, oceans have absorbed some 525 billion tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere since the beginning of the industrial revolution, reflecting a thirty percent increase in acidity, which, in turn, is detrimental for marine life, struggling to adapt to rapid change. Shell's celebratory post was published just weeks prior to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill—a disaster which saw 4.6 million gallons of oil eradicate ecosystems in the Gulf of Mexico—and has since been removed, but it is striking example of the audacity of big oil corporations attempts at green-washing, and eco-branding^[02]. The work highlights the parasitical character of the company's visual communication, its cynicism, the way complex and highly unstable conservation efforts are pitched to consumers using easily digestible factoids— "a single 'oyster' can filter 22 Litres of water"—while obfuscating the complicity, or

better, the collusion, of companies such as Shell in the promotion of fossil-fuel dependency. The sculpture becomes what Richard calls a “kinetic diagram” exemplifying a consumer’s relationship to public relations. It demonstrates, in other words, how structural indifference is sustained, how numbness is nurtured. But also, it reflects on art’s own self-congratulatory complicity.

A striking aspect of the sculptures is that they look like art, and I mean that in a good way. They hark back to early Jeff Koons works (*The New* (1979-1987), and *Total Equilibrium* series) and Haim Steinbach, who’s exploration of desire and fetishism in an economy of signs turned a spotlight towards the valorization mechanisms inherent to the art-world—its complicity, in essence— and to Hans Haacke’s early interest in physical and biological systems, in works such as *Condensation Cube* (1965). But while Koons’s inversion of the ready-made (art as commodity, and by extension advertising and display, rather than the Duchampian commodity as art) exemplified a shift towards late-capitalism, an immersion in brands and branding, and Haack’s Cube introduced the work of art as a living system, Richard’s work reflects upon the status of the object (art/commodity) within what Jason W. Moore has called a “world-ecology”, the joining of “power, nature, and accumulation in a dialectical and unstable unity”, characteristic of current age, the Capitalocene^[03]. What I mean by this, is that his sculptures seem to actively point towards the condition of making art in a carbon-capitalist world, art out of plastic, art that is contingent upon, and complicit in, the same infrastructure that’s driving us all off a cliff. As the artist writes “Entering the political economy of art and targeting examples of uneven representation and distribution, requires entering those distributions and representations.” In this sense, Richard seems particularly interested in dissecting the moral ambivalence of various green-branding strategies, which are the subjects of several of the other sculptures in the series.



Richard Frater, *Stop Shell (ghost fishing version)*, 2018. Modified recycled jacket; fishing nets and plastics retrieved from ocean; crayfish trap parts, 1285 x 400 x 400mm.



Richard Frater, *Stop Shell (ghost fishing version)*, 2018. Modified recycled jacket; fishing nets and plastics retrieved from ocean; crayfish trap parts, 1285 x 400 x 400mm.



Richard Frater, *Stop Shell (ghost fishing version)*, 2018. Modified recycled jacket; fishing nets and plastics retrieved from ocean; crayfish trap parts, marine aquarium, marine salt, 1285 x 400 x 400mm. Exhibition view, *A Fatal Attraction*, at Barbara Weiss Gallery, Berlin, 2019.



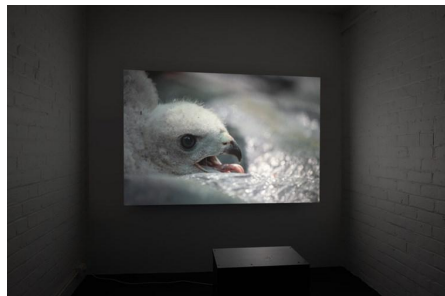
Richard Frater, *Stop Shell (ghost fishing version)*, 2018. Modified recycled jacket; fishing nets and plastics retrieved from ocean; crayfish trap parts, marine aquarium, marine salt, 1285 x 400 x 400mm. Exhibition view, *A Fatal Attraction*, at Barbara Weiss Gallery, Berlin, 2019.

In *Stop Shell (ghost fishing version)*, 2018—currently on view at Berlin’s Barbara Weiss gallery as part of a group exhibition titled *Fatal Attraction*—a jacket, constructed from recycled plastic waste and abandoned fishing nets that were recovered from the ocean, covers the top of the aquarium, semi-submerged in its water. The jacket has been modified to resemble a crayfish trap, referencing ‘ghost’ fishing nets that are left or lost in the ocean as a result of commercial fishing. As he noted in our email exchange, “repurposing ocean plastic waste for the next season of fashion wear is a new niche that has developed by targeting conscious consumers and their consumer literacy and skepticism”, the

recycled jacket, in other words, entraps the conscious consumer. Conscious consumption, is the new conspicuous consumption, it seems. But if for Thorstein Veblen, writing in the late 19th century, the consumer would accrue power through his consumption of luxury goods, the conscious consumer, in turn, accrues a feeling of moral superiority. Yet as Richard reminds us, recycled goods do not, in fact, offset the consequence of capitalist production, and these jackets, warm as they are, cannot protect us from the adverse effects of climate change. In some cases, plastic waste is exported to recycling sites in other countries, where it is illegally burned, contaminating water sources and polluting the air, and in all cases the logistic supply chain guarantees further—even if slightly mitigated—emissions. Of course, recycled goods are still the lesser evil, but by reducing the struggle against climate change to a matter of individual choice, such solutions perpetuate the liberal fallacy of the sovereign and rational subject-as-consumer—a notion in part responsible for our crisis—thus undermining support towards more comprehensive collective action.

Social Cryptomnesia (2018), which was first shown as part of Richard's recent exhibition at Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland, and which I've seen when visiting his studio in Berlin, is a photographic study of birds of prey in an urban landscape. Over the period of one year Richard photographically documented the behaviour of northern goshawks in Berlin, home to the world's largest urban population of this elusive species. The work consists of two slideshows created from an archive of images. One revolves around the bird's seasonal behavior, spanning four seasons and creating a cohesive narrative of its yearly life cycle. The second is arranged according to typologies discovered while going through the archive. The latter focuses on a parallelism between the camera (super-eye), the bird eye and the human eye, where, as he says, "the image-selecting process became a space of sociality between these distinctly separate predators."^[04] 'Social Cryptomnesia' is the term used to describe a cultural bias towards change. 'Cryptomnesia' describes the condition whereby a forgotten memory is recollected without being recognized as such. In other words, it is a memory bias where a person falsely attributes originality or inspiration to a thought or idea, which is in fact recalled from memory. The work *Social Cryptomnesia*, in turn,

refers to an analogue process taking place on a social scale. Here, the term is applied metaphorically, referring to feral species that have experienced refuge from human predation, and even a certain prosperity, however tenuous, in urban environments.



Richard Frater, *Social Cryptomnesia*, 2018, two-channel digital slideshow projection, duration 40:48min, loop. Exhibition view at Michael Lett, Auckland, 2019.



Richard Frater, *Common Birds*, 2018. Exhibition view at Oracle, Berlin, 2018.

Berlin's Goshawks population is a rare conservation success story. With over 100 breeding pairs (compared with around 450 in the entire UK) the fowl is often sighted gliding over the city's parks, hunting for prey. In some parts of Berlin, the population density has reached 10-13 breeding pairs per 100 square km, the highest documented density world-wide. The species' notorious elusiveness has made it into something of a "dark grail" for birdwatchers, as writer Helen Macdonald describes it in her *H is for Hawk* (2014). Their agility and stealthily aerial gymnastics make them both particularly attractive, and evasive. But in Berlin, they populate the cemeteries' and large parks for all to see, if ever briefly, swooping and whirling down from cell towers after their prey, or perched on skyscrapers, watching.

In an earlier related work titled *Common Birds*—produced in collaboration with Georgina Steylter and Scott Rogers, and first shown at Oracle, Berlin in 2018—Richard invited Rogers and Steylter, who share an avid interest in ornithology, to each document a species of their choice that has adapted to urban space. Richard devoted his to the Goshawk, and the images overlap with the later work. The three then exchanged the resulting images and prepared a selection of each-other's work. The slideshow was accompanied by short texts written by each

contributor. What made Berlin attractive for these birds? In his text, Richard notes that in woodlands, hunted prey can undergo population build ups, and crashes. The city offers an abundance of food resource, in relatively stable conditions^[05]. His images and text attest to the care and dedication that goes into guaranteeing the bird's well-being by a combination of hobbyist volunteers and professional researchers. He contacts an ornithologist to inquire about a ringed Goshawk his camera captures, F16. We learn it was ringed in one of the cemeteries, in Schöneberg, as a nestling, then found injured as an adult—probably following a collision with a glass facade, one of the main threats facing urban avifauna—taken to a rehabilitation center, and finally, when fully recovered, released again. Richard's sighting was the sixth the ornithologist knew of. A sign of life. A tentative confirmation that the bird is still thriving. Richard describes the work as one of discovery, "in which a positive social transition has occurred in the broader context of Europe's rapid declining insect and bird biodiversity"^[06].

It was through this work that I was first introduced, and made attune, to the Goshawk's presence in the city. Just yesterday I noticed a pair sparing with a pesky murder of crows, then hovering above the train tracks and a large urban park nearby. Was it F16 and his partner? I don't own binoculars, and probably wouldn't have been able to tell without a professional lens, but these fleeting encounters give me some hope in times of despair. Looking at the birds, barely visible at a distance against the clear blue skies, I was reminded of a quote I read the other day in a review of a book by Israeli Indologist David Shulman about his experience as a long-time activist in the Palestinian-occupied territories. Shulman quotes the pre-Islamic fifth century poet Al-Harith ibn Hilliza: "Nothing consoles you like despair." and adds "Sometimes the worse things get, the more hope there is"^[07]. Maybe that's a place to start? To seek hope and consolation from despair? As Timothy Morton has noted, ecological writing often fuses elegy and prophecy, becoming elegies that presuppose the very loss they want to prevent. Instead, he bids for a "politicized melancholia" a move from despair to hope and action, "a presence to the idea that something is happening, right now, not at some impossible future date"^[08].



Richard Frater, *Compound*, 2017. Installation view, KW Institute, Berlin.



Richard Frater, *Compound*, 2017. Installation view, KW Institute, Berlin. Photo: Richard Frater.



Richard Frater, *Compound* (detail), 2017. Installation view, KW Institute, Berlin.



Richard Frater, *Compound* (detail), 2017. Installation view, KW Institute, Berlin.



Richard Frater, *Compound*, 2017. Installation view, KW Institute, Berlin.

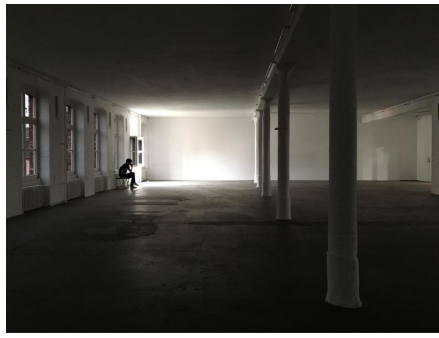
In December 2017, at the opening of Richard's exhibition at the KW in Berlin, there was a long-line leading from the stairway to a window in the far side of the third floor gallery, facing the building's back-yard, which is actually the main exhibition-hall roof. The space was empty, and its windows shut, sole for the window people were queuing towards; from it one could view the roof below, where Richard teamed up with Jonathan Hamnett, an experienced urban garden manager and local foraging specialist, to

construct a garden full of wild flowers, succulents, and endangered local plants. Part institutional intervention, part attunement, the work seemed to ask the viewers to be attentive, to observe the urban flora growing from between the cracks in the pavement. Richard was acting more like a conservationist, than a gardener. The work, he noted, created “a space that is the result of accumulated interventions, which ultimately foreground a withdrawal from human presence and nurture”^[09]. The rooftop, the institution’s “Other”, its collateral space, here became the subject of observation and conservation of a rich canopy of life that thrives unbeknownst to its hosts. A partial inventory of species was listed—*Sedum hakonense*; *Sempervivum arachnoideum*; *Sedum spathulifolium*; *Talinum calycinum*; *Galium verum*; *Euphorbia cyparissias*; *Aster linosyris*; *Scabiosa caucasica*; *Rudbeckia lgida*; *erbena bonariensis*; *Gaura lindheimeri*; *Sedum spurium*; *Sedum oriferum*; *Rhodiola pachyclados*; *Antennaria dioica*^[10].

The project culminated in a concert in collaboration with Jerusalem born Berlin-based composer and sound artist Maya Shenfeld (who also happens to be my wife). The composition—a pulsating, rhythmic minimal arrangement written for percussion, bass, clarinet and bass clarinet, trumpet and electric guitar, wrapped in resonant micro-tonal drones—built on the harmony of several 1970s pop tribute songs, such as Fourmyula’s single *Nature* (1969), Marvin Gaye’s 1970’s hit *Mercy Mercy me (The Ecology)*, and Teach In’s *Greenpeace* (1979), to excavate the steadfast optimism of a bygone era. These were songs that “were born out of a spirit of protest and celebration and perceived as effective modes of collective mobilization”, and were distinguished by a belief “that complex environmental issues are perfectly communicable to the public through the pop song”^[11]. The concert was performed twice to a full house, the space awash with yellow light, and the piece’s five movements evolved into a retrograde image of the drones from the opening sequence. An inverted image motivated, perhaps, by a desire to resurrect the recent past. But also, a reminder that what is often experienced as novel, is rooted in a longer history, and so is the struggle against it^[12].



Five Compositions for the Environmental Song, concert at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2nd December 2018. Photo: Omri Sebastian Livne.



Richard Frater, *Compound*, 2017. Installation view, KW Institute, Berlin. Photo: Sally Mason.

In a way, resurrection is also the theme of *Stop Shell (live rock version)*, 2019, the most recent of the sculpture series, shown for the first time in Richard's Auckland exhibition *Indifference* at Michael Lett Gallery. The aquarium contains a piece of fossilized coral, and serves to demonstrate an attempt at reversing coral bleaching, with organisms gradually introduced into the coral's environment with the hope that they inhabit the fossil, and revive it. Ocean acidification and rising temperatures have contributed to non-cyclic coral "bleaching", a sort of white death of coral reefs that takes place as distressed corals expel their symbiotic zooxanthellae, the algae that lives in their tissues and provides them with energy through photosynthesis as well as their often vivid colors. "When coral bleaches", writes Meehan Crist, "reef creatures flee or die in droves. In a matter of days, what was once a vibrant underwater ecosystem becomes a barren field of bone fingers reaching into an empty ocean^[13]". The sculpture's aquarium lid is doubled, and forms what is in effect a three dimensional print of a graph of rising ocean water temperatures.

Last's summer's freakish heatwave desiccated the wildflowers of the KW Garden, while the succulents survived. It was an inadvertent anti-monument of sorts, a harbinger of deserts-to-come. Meanwhile, recent reports indicate Germany is projected to fall well short of its targets for greenhouse gas reduction by 2020, with emission decreases in the energy sector likely to be offset by increased emissions from auto and construction industries^[14]. Ironically, the last time Germany saw a drop in emissions was following the fall of the wall, courtesy of the GDR's collapsed economy. Outside, it's raining again, thick clouds have formed,

winter seems to have returned, or at least a milder version thereof, and people are back to complaining about the weather.

“The weary listener familiar with [the songs] themes may find the intensification of climate change disheartening” Shenfeld and Frater wrote in the text accompanying the concert. But I am reminded once again of Shulman’s quote, and of another, by Swiss-born novelist and poet Blaise Cendrars that opens his book: “Only a soul full of despair can ever attain serenity and, to be in despair, you must have loved a good deal and still love the world”^[15]. As Richard’s work makes clear, with our world in such a dire state, there has to be plenty of room for a politicized melancholia of despair—for the desperate urgency of battling proverbial windmills, of resurrecting petrified corals—as well as plenty of need for hope.

Footnotes

01. "Climate Signs" by Emily Raboteau, *NYR Daily*, The New York Review of Books, accessed March 14, 2019, www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/02/01/climate-signs/

02. "FIS - Worldnews - Restoration of Oyster Reefs Still Continue a Year after BP Oil Spill," accessed March 14, 2019, www.fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&country=0&special=&monthyear=&day=&id=41763&ndb=1&df=0

See also Richard’s essay: “The Life Support of the Brand” *Un Magazine* 10.1, *Un Projects*, accessed March 14, 2019, www.unprojects.org.au/magazine/issues/issue-10-1/the-life-support-of-the-brand/

03. Jason W. Moore, ed., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (PM Press, 2016), p 4.

04. Email exchange with the author, 2019.

05. “Common Birds. Richard Frater with Scott Rogers and Georgina Steytler at Oracle, Berlin,” *Earth Sciences* (blog), June 13, 2018, www.earthscienc.es/common-birds-at-oracle-by-richard-frater/

06. Email exchange with the author.

07. “Bearing Witness in the West Bank” by Raja Shehadeh, *The New York Review of Books*, accessed March 14, 2019, www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/03/07/bearing-witness-in-the-west-bank/

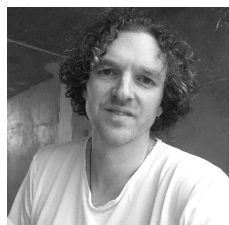
08. “The Dark Ecology of Elegy” by Timothy Morton, *Oxford Handbooks Online*, 2010. doi:10.1093/OXFORDHB/9780199228133.013.0015.

09. Email exchange with the author.

10. “Richard Frater,” KW Institute for Contemporary Art, August 28, 2017, www.kw-berlin.de/en/richard-frater/

11. Richard Frater and Maya Shenfeld: Five Compositions for the Environmental Song, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, November 23, 2017, www.kw-berlin.de/en/richard-frater-maya-shenfeld-five-compositions-environmental-song/
12. Excerpts of the concert are available online: www.mayashenfeld.com/2017/12/02/five-compositions-for-the-environmental-song-2/
13. Meehan Crist, "The Quest to Save Coral Reefs," *The Atlantic*, March 17, 2016, www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/03/saving-coral-reefs/473844/
14. "Germany to Fall Short of 2020 Climate Goals: Report", *Deutsche Welle*, 06.02.2019, accessed March 14, 2019, www.dw.com/en/germany-to-fall-short-of-2020-climate-goals-report/a-47395605
15. David Shulman, *Freedom and Despair: Notes from the South Hebron Hills* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), p 1.

Biographies



Richard Frater (b. 1984, Wellington, NZ) lives and works in Berlin. He received an MFA from Glasgow School of Art, UK, in 2012. In 2016, he was a participant in the Berlin Program for Artists and has continued on the program as a guest mentor.

Recent exhibitions include: *A Fatal Attraction*, Galerie Barbara Weiss, 2019; *Common Birds*, Oracle, Berlin, 2018; *Compound series*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; *Resisting Images*, Heidelberger Kunstverein, curated by Boaz Levin, Farewell Photography, Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie; *Produktion: Made in Germany Drei*, Hannover Kunstverein, Hannover; *Earth League Symposium 2017*, exhibitor and discussant, PIK- Potsdam Institute for Climate Research, Potsdam; *Living Cities 2011-*, Adam Art Gallery, curated by Laura Preston, Wellington, NZ, 2015; *New 15*, ACCA, Australian Center for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, AUS, 2015; *Let's Destroy the Earth but Keep Humans*, curated by Matthew Richardson, Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zürich (2014).



Boaz Levin (b. 1989) is an artist, writer, and curator. Together with Hito Steyerl and Vera Tollmann, he co-founded the *Research Center for Proxy Politics*. Levin was co-curator of the *Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie 2017*. He's currently a PhD candidate as part of the Cultures of Critique research cluster at Leuphana University, Lüneburg.

