

1 “What is the moon?” is an adolescent and romantic question according to writer and curator Arnisa Zeqo, and the impetus for this publication: an appendix to an exhibition by the same name, held at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht. The four-page foldout was produced by Jon Frenken and edited by Hernández at the Charles Nypels Lab of the Jan Van Eyck Academie of Maastricht, Netherlands, 2014–2015, supported by the JVE Academie and the Laurenz-Haus Stiftung Basel.

2 José Miguel Covarrubias, *Indian Art of Mexico & Central America*, New York: (Knopf, 1957) Mexico.

3 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Guerra sola igiene del mondo* (War, the World's Only Hygiene) (1915), in *Opere di F.T. Marinetti*, vol. 2: *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Mondadori, Milan, 1968).

4 Oliver Martínez-Kandt, “Go, Gentle Scorpio,” February 2015, Terremoto, Mexico City.

## Rodrigo Hernández: *every forest madly in love with the moon has a highway crossing it from one side to the other* Kurimanzutto, Mexico City February 6 – March 17, 2016 by Xenia Benivolski

The sun's light undergoes a profound change when it reflects off the moon's cool surface to reach our planet. Mixed with ambient starlight and the light reflected by the Earth itself, its speed is measured in years. Over the course of each day, the moon surveys our entire Earth, both past and future bouncing off its surface. In countless books and movies, characters wax poetic about looking at the same moon at the same time, as if the celestial body is a mirror where time is of no particular consequence, a fictional portal to another. The sentimental phrase, “When I am looking at the moon, I imagine you looking at the same moon and somehow we are together,” is simultaneously proclaimed by a chorus of many through a long history of fictions, displaced from the real flow of time. It was thus a happy coincidence to find Rodrigo Hernández' 2014 publication, *What is the moon?*<sup>1</sup> resting on the counter at the entrance to his solo project exhibition curated by Chris Sharp, an American curator who relocated in 2012 from Paris to Mexico City, where he co-directs the small but influential gallery Lulu.

Hernández's commitment to ambiguity is guided by a sense of responsibility to show his subject from all sides. In his work, he provides a lyrical reading of history as a series of non-linear aesthetic and ideological junctures of time and space, seeking to elaborate on a set of dichotomous assumptions that are inherent to his historical subject. Painted paper sculptures appear to be intricately etched metal plates, flattened by a hammer and covered in silver paint; however, the etched marks turn out to be fingerprints. Resting against the brightly coloured walls, the glimmering pieces depict vague scenes from pre-colonial Mexico. The

images directly reference the anthropological illustrations of indigenous, pre-Columbian life that have become the celebrated domain of Mexico City-born artist Miguel Covarrubias (1904-1957).<sup>2</sup> In the framework of these small, silvery sculptures, figurative elements from Covarrubias' book, *Indian Art of Mexico and Centroamerica* (1957), have been conflated with formal aesthetic elements of Italian Futurism, in particular the polemical 1915 text by Italian Futurist poet Marinetti *War, the World's Only Hygiene*<sup>3</sup> from which the artist borrowed the title of this exhibition: *Every forest madly in love with the moon has a highway crossing it from one side to the other*.

Rejecting the virtues of the Italian Renaissance, Marinetti announces the arrival of aesthetic liberty, a construct utilized in Hernández's retrofuturistic reconstruction of the historical visual element “Let the tiresome memory of Roman greatness be cancelled by an Italian greatness a hundred times greater... [sic] there is nothing for us to admire today but the dreadful symphonies of the shrapnels and the mad sculptures that our inspired artillery molds among the masses of the enemy.” According to Hernández, Covarrubias similarly quotes a progressive visual ideology that promotes “simplicity and sensual realism in the shapes: vigorous and original concepts” in opposition to the “formalized and rigorous art from the highlands, and the baroque, unbounded art of the lowlands of the classic period, both impregnated with symbolism and ceremonial functionalism.”<sup>4</sup> This sets up an oppositional premise between ontologies of the tenses, across continents. But the opposite of the moon is neither the sun, nor the Earth. A true dichotomy does not necessarily dictate a common ground. This exhibition conflates radical scenarios perched on the edge of a collective consciousness, only to collapse back into fiction. If both past and future have a historical potential, then the contemporary must lie at their intersection, one that clearly no longer needs to take place in the present tense. A tropic of contemporaneity turns out to be where such radicality is asserted through fictions. Both risking and resisting a nostalgia for an ideological now, the work addresses the contemporary historical subject in a nuanced way, propelling the *geodesic spacetime dynamic* into an aesthetic that hosts a life of its own.



Rodrigo Hernández, installation view of *every forest madly in love with the moon has a highway crossing it from one side to the other*, 2016, Kurimanzutto, Mexico City.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND KURIMANZUTTO, MEXICO CITY

This combination is arresting in its flattening of not only the physical sculptural form but also of perspective and history itself. Citing a bird's-eye view of pre-hispanic Mexican depictions of Indigenous living, seen through the lens of divisionist cubist perspectives that were prominent in post-World War I Europe, the aesthetic is obtained through the mechanization of production and the influence of photography. The meeting of these visual forms sets up a strange epistemological ground, breeding a serendipitous dynamic of human history through time: a history repeating variations on the manifestation of radical language and symbolism. Within this landscape, Hernández is a witness to a vastly different array of characters all singing the same song.

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**Aleksandra Domanović:**  
***Mother of This Domain***  
 Plug In Institute of  
 Contemporary Art, Winnipeg  
 Sept. 26, 2015 – Jan. 3, 2016  
 by *Monika Vrečar*

One of the best views of Aleksandra Domanović's show *Mother of This Domain*, while it was featured at Plug In ICA, in Winnipeg, wasn't from the inside of the gallery. On pitch-black winter afternoons, accidental passersby could experience the piece *Things to Come* (2014) curiously spilling out of big glass windows on the east side of the exhibition space. From the sidewalk, a set of futuristic images printed onto thin sheets of polyester foil seemed ghostly, and appeared to be violating the familiar physicality of space. Inside, the installation gained some materiality. Hung from the ceiling, about 40 inches apart, soft transparent panels completely filled the room, and allowed just enough space for visitors to walk in between them, and get disoriented by the strange environment. Despite being presented in familiar formats – namely, as installations, sculptures, and video – all five works featured in Domanović's show possess an uncanny digital dimension, allowing for unexpected connections between facts, probabilities and improbabilities, and generating a rich hypertextual interplay of perspectives.

Named after a 1936 sci-fi film written by H.G. Wells, *Things To Come* features carefully selected allusions to significant portrayals of women and technology in popular science fiction. One such allusion reproduces an image of the MedPod – a device for automated, generalized surgical procedures that the patient himself operates – from Ridley Scott's 2012 *Prometheus*. And I do mean *himself*, for when the female protagonist tries to perform a life-saving caesarean on herself, the interface informs her that the machine has been programmed for male bodies only. In Domanović's work, this notorious enmity between human and machine in sci-fi is rewired back to socio-cultural reality, and exposed largely as a gender tension. This makes sense, considering that not only are most sci-fi films directed by men but most devices are also indeed programmed by men. This tension reaches a culmination in a superimposed detail from the MedPod image, which places a woman quite bluntly in the role of a technological extension, and comes, alarmingly, from a real-life historical document. Sticking out of a slot in the MedPod, as if from a giant typewriter, a copy of a 1938 rejection letter, typed on letterhead adorned with Snow White imagery, confronts the viewer. This letter from Walt Disney Pro-