

47 rue Ramponeau
75020 Paris
France

T +33 (0)1 43 48 15 68
gallery@balicehertling.com
www.balicehertling.com

Press release

Goswell Road at Balice Hertling

Forbidden to Forbid

curated by Paul Clinton

With works by: Lionel Soukaz, Oreet Ashery, Giles Round, Beth Collar
Archive materials from : Pierre Klossowski, Pierre Zucca, Claude Faraldo and Bazooka group

May 31st | July 13th, 2018

Can desire, freed of all restrictions, really dismantle society and capitalism? The answer was emphatically yes for many involved in May 1968 and the years of civil unrest that followed, which gave birth to the gay and women's liberation movements in France. Family, morality and reproduction were seen as bourgeois and repressive by Marxists and sexual revolutionaries alike, with some declaring that it should be 'forbidden to forbid'. This exhibition explores a counter current of artists who, while remaining committed to ending oppression, questioned the idea that desire is an inherently revolutionary force waiting to be unleashed, or that sexual freedom will free all subjects equally. This includes artists working in the immediate aftermath of '68 – Claude Farraldo, Lionel Soukaz, Pierre Klossowski and Pierre Zucca – alongside recent works from Oreet Ashery, Beth Collar and Giles Round, which express ambivalence about freedom of many kinds. The ironies of the title highlight the central problems that would emerge in the liberation ethos – it's a rule against rules, a prohibition against prohibitions. Revolutionary groups would soon confront their own internal conflicts and laws. Just as the phrase implies a contradiction, so this exhibition is a speculative attempt to tease out complications in the idea of sexual and gendered freedom.

The show includes the work of experimental filmmaker Lionel Soukaz, a pivotal figure in the French gay liberation movement. *Amor* (2006), is untypical of his output, focussing on moments of tenderness left out of his earlier militant work. It is composed of off-cuts from his most militant and visceral film, *IXE* (1980) made over thirty years before, which had been designed to outrage the censors. Although at first seeming nostalgic for the era of gay liberation, the use of music in *Amor* is reminiscent of Kenneth Anger's ironic soundtracks which present scenes of transgression as romanticised and commodified – an illusory form of freedom – whilst the onscreen sex in Soukaz's film is more silly, playful and non-committal than it is revolutionary. Indeed, in his work Soukaz has often expressed reservations about the utopian promise of free sexual expression – his most famous film *Race d'EP* (1979) ends by warning homosexuals against the false liberations of gay ghettos and the risks of assimilation – while in interview he has been quick to accuse '68 of tending towards machismo and homophobia. But as evidence of the gentle, open-ended sexuality left out of an earlier combative, militant film, it's arguable that *Amor* shows that, on occasion, the means of protest could be seen to engage in a macho, heroic form of politics. Oppositional struggles can sometimes resemble the very thing that they oppose.

One dominant line of thought linking sexuality to anti-capitalist politics after '68, was the argument that industry deadens the emotions – a claim which, according to artist and philosopher Pierre Klossowski, gives no account of how capitalism harnesses desire. His final book *La Monnaie Vivante* (1970) – published just two years after the protests – makes the radical counter claim that capitalism, far from repressing desire, is in fact the product of the erotic forces within us all. Simply ending restrictions upon eroticism would not be enough to change this system.

47 rue Ramponeau
75020 Paris
France

T +33 (0)1 43 48 15 68
gallery@balicehertling.com
www.balicehertling.com

Press release

His erotic drawings, as well as the soft-core films and photographs he made with Pierre Zucca, repeatedly return to the same images, indicating quite how difficult it is to separate desire from its objects – to truly unlink passions from commodities. But the photographs also undermine their own erotic effects. Theatrically staged, with mannerist gestures and vignetting which looked outmoded by the 1970s, they emphasise Klossowski's argument that sexuality does not provide access to some unmediated, authentic experience outside of the system of representations, illusions, signs and other exchangeable objects. (Throughout the exhibition anachronism recurs both in the works, and in the strategies of display.) *La Monnaie Vivante*, would go on to influence Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* (1974) and Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976), books central to gay and leftist thought in that decade.

Oreet Ashery's video *Party for Freedom* (2013, commissioned by ArtAngel, UK) is a hilarious collage of slapstick, sexual orgies and news footage. Through comedy and absurdity, she shows how the 70s logics of liberation and free love have fed into and been manipulated by anti-immigrant, far right Freedom Parties in the Dutch and Austrian parliaments. Lazily watching all of this is one of Giles Round's figures (*Winter in New York*, 1967, 2018 [A]), which appears to be permanently on strike. They resemble Smurfs, which have been seen by some as symbols of socialist cooperation, and by others as representing totalitarian sameness. Whatever the case may be, Smurf society is unambiguously almost all male, perhaps indicating that the image of the worker/proletariat remains masculine across the political spectrum. Yet each sculpture is perforated with several holes, reminiscent of theorist Guy Hocquenghem's claim for the democratic potential of anal eroticism because that hole does not differentiate between the sexes (although ironically this theory put gay men at the vanguard of sexual politics). Left over from the previous show – titled '1967' – they form a curatorial joke on those moments of continuity rather than rupture in history. Beth Collar's drawing of a disgusted looking crusader is based upon the logo for the British right-wing tabloid newspaper the *Daily Express*: an ambivalent figure of the moralising aspect of claims to liberate.

Archival materials include advertisements for Claude Farraldo's *Themroc* (1973) a cult post-68 film in which a man opposes all rules by leaving his job, abandoning his workmates and giving up language itself. The resulting picture of an urban caveman – who communicates only in grunts – descending into cannibalism, incest and the murder of a policeman, presents an image of the rejection of norms as ambivalent and potentially solipsistic. Alongside this is 'Activite Sexuelle: Normal' a zine on the theme of sexual freedom, published by the punk Bazooka group in 1976, just as the promise of social revolution appeared to be faltering. Often seen as part of an apolitical generation after '68, the group's contesting of ossified ideas, including those of the 68-ers themselves, could conversely be seen as precisely in the spirit of that earlier moment.

In challenging the view of desire as inherently transgressive, transformative or liberating, the works in this show also tell us something about our culture's love affair with notions of action or agency, particularly in relation to sexual politics. They offer a complication and attenuation of the sometime virile politics of revolution.

Text – Paul Clinton, writer and curator based in London.

Accompanying the opening will be a reader edited by Paul Clinton, including texts on many of the artists exhibited, and published by Goswell Road.

47 rue Ramponeau
75020 Paris
France

T +33 (0)1 43 48 15 68
gallery@balicehertling.com
www.balicehertling.com

Press release

Lionel Soukaz (b. 1953) is one of the pioneers of French queer cinema. His work, especially in the first part of his career, reflects a synthesis of the various avant-garde movements he was drawn to in the 1970s and 80s. Affiliated with the activists and intellectuals of FHAR (the Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action) and the magazine Gai Pied, such as Guy Hocquenghem or Copi, he was also active within the experimental film scene, working to promote Super-8mm filmmaking at the Festival des Cinémas Différents (Hyères) or Cinémarge (La Rochelle), and ultimately organizing his own event in 1978: the first Gay and Lesbian film festival in Paris, “Écrans roses et nuits bleues.” His works have recently been shown at Studio Voltaire, London, Anthology Film Archives, New York, and he was the subject of a solo exhibition at University of Paris VIII.

Oreet Ashery (b. 1966) is a London based, transdisciplinary visual artist and an educator working with biopolitical-fiction, gender materiality and potential communities, in local and international contexts. Ashery’s current work which earned her the Film London Jarman Award 2017, is an artist web series titled Revisiting Genesis <http://revisitinggenesis.net/> Recent large-scale works have included Revisiting Genesis solo exhibitions at Rennes Biennale 2018, Thessaloniki Biennale, 2017, Stanley Picker Gallery 2016, Tyneside Cinema 2016, ICA fig-2, 2015. Passing through Metal, Donaufestival Festival, Krems 2018, LPS Malmo 2017. NoNothing Salons in the Dark, Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018, Whitechapel Gallery 2017, Thessaloniki Biennale, 2017. The World is Flooding, a Tate Modern Turbine Hall performance and zine, 2014 and Party for Freedom, an Artangel commission 2013.

Beth Collar (b. 1984) lives and works in Berlin. Selected shows, screenings and performances have taken place at Cell Project Space in London. Horseandpony, Berlin, the Kunstverein München, KW Berlin, Hester in New York, Fig2 at the ICA in London, The Glasgow Women’s Library, at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Cubitt in London, the Serpentine in London and the Finnish Museum of Photography in Helsinki. She’s currently artist in residence on the Waterloo Uncovered archaeological dig, a 5-year project. Upcoming shows include solo presentations at Matt’s Gallery, London and Primary, Nottingham.

Giles Round (b. 1976) lives and works in London. Recent solo and collaborative exhibitions include: 1967, Goswell Road, Paris (2018); They bow. Curtain. No applause., Spike Island, Bristol (2017); Design Work Leisure, part of ‘Underline’, Art on the Underground, London, (2015–2016); Printshop!, with Edwin Pickstone, Tramway, Glasgow, (2016); Ettore. Sorry!, J.W.Anderson Workshops, London, (2016); Ljubljana, 1955, Galerija Jakopič, part of Over you/you, 31st Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, (2015); AGAIN! SORRY! AGAIN! SORRY!, YOUNG TEAM, London, (2015); The Grantchester Pottery paints the stage, Jerwood Visual Arts, London, (2015)

Pierre Klossowski (1905 – 2001) was an artist and writer based in Paris, France. His work has been exhibited widely including solo shows at Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Whitechapel Gallery, London, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, Weiner Secession, Vienna and many more. Group exhibitions have included the Venice Biennale and Documenta, Kassel. In the last year his work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Schinkel Pavillion, Berlin, Gladstone Gallery, New York, Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin and Cabinet Gallery, London. As a writer his works won numerous awards during his lifetime – including the Prix des Critiques for his 1965 novel Le Baphomet – and continue to be released and translated today. A new English language version of his text Living Currency was published by Bloomsbury in 2017.

BALICE HERTLING

GALERIE

47 rue Ramponeau
75020 Paris
France

T +33 (0)1 43 48 15 68
gallery@balicehertling.com
www.balicehertling.com

Press release

Paul Clinton is a writer, critic and curator based in London. For four years he was a senior editor at Frieze magazine, to which he still contributes, as well as a writer for Art Monthly, Art Review, London Review of Books and many other publications. Previous curated exhibitions, screenings and events took place at Focal Point Gallery, Southend, ICA, London, South London Gallery and Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen. Invitations to speak include at HEAD, Geneva, Museum Tinguely, Basel, Fargfabriken, Stockholm, Oslo Pilot, Whitechapel Gallery, Tate Modern, Royal College of Art, Goldsmiths College. Forthcoming projects in 2018 include a queer artist's book fair, which he is co-curating at South London Gallery, and the publication of *Other Hunting* (Ma Bibliotheque, 2018) the first part of his *Mediocre Sex* project ahead of a planned exhibition in New York. He is currently a visiting lecturer at Central Saint Martins School of Art, London.

www.fannypaulclinton.com

Goswell Road (est. 2106) is an artist-run-space and publishing house, set up in November 2016 by Franco-British artist duo Ruiz Stephinson in their atelier in the Paris' 10eme. A book is edited each time they produce a show, and they curate a bouquet of flowers in parallel with the works shown. The name is taken from the road that the artists lived on in London, before relocating to Paris, and is said to derive from the phrase "God's Well" that references the pagan practice of well-worship: the subterranean river, New River, runs under the street in London. Artists shown include: Patrick Weldé, Thomas Cap de Ville, Raphaël Fanelli, Charlie Le Mindu, Laurence Sturla, Harilay Rabenjamin, Dom & Jean Paul Ruiz and Giles Round.

www.goswellroad.com & www.ruizstephinson.com