

## ATHLETIC VALENTIN

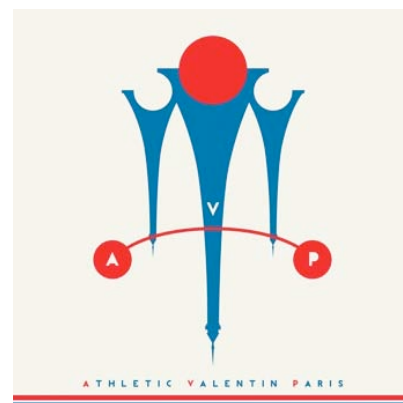
A group show with:

EI ARAKAWA, ANNABELLE ARLIE, GABRIELE DE SANTIS,  
MIKE GOLDBY, ANTHEA HAMILTON, DANIEL KELLER,  
JACK LAVENDER, FEDERICO PEPE, BILLY RENNEKAMP

Curators: Andrea Baccin and Ilaria Marotta, CURA.

October 23rd – November 22nd 2014

Opening Thursday, October 23rd, 6 – 10 pm



Installations, sculptures, ready-mades, anthropomorphic figures, graphics, useless machines, sounds and videos representing the production of nine international artists – Ei Arakawa, Annabelle Arlie, Gabriele De Santis, Mike Goldby, Anthea Hamilton, Jack Lavender, Daniel Keller, Billy Rennekamp and Federico Pepe – are devices for the conversion of the exhibition space of the gallery into the gymnasium setting of Athletic Valentin. The collective project curated by the directors of CURA., Ilaria Marotta and Andrea Baccin, looks at a long and influential tradition of artist works and curatorial projects aimed at manipulating the exhibition space to turn it into a place meant for a different function.

From the recent settings hosted in the Frieze pavilions in New York, which saw the re-enactment of historic sites of artist-run places such as FOOD, the restaurant founded by Gordon Matta-Clark in 1971, or the tribute to Al's Grand Hotel which, reflecting the legendary project carried out by Allen Ruppersberg again in 1971 in Los Angeles, saw the reconstruction of the original hotel lobby. Or even the Secret Bar, designed by the American Lyzz Glynn, which the public could only reach through a secret key that was getting passed around during the days of the fair like in a treasure hunt. Going down memory lane, the transformation of an exhibition space dates back to those early attempts by artists to make the visitor not simply a passive element of fruition, but an actor functional to the success of the project. In his iconic essay *Inside the White Cube*, Brian O'Doherty identifies the transition between the two-dimensional space of the painting to collage, i.e. between representation and real life, in some of these moments and writes: "with the *tableau*, the gallery impersonates other spaces, becomes a bar (Kienholz), a hospital room (Kienholz), a bedroom (Oldenburg), a living room (Segal), a "real" studio (Samaras)."

In Athletic Valentin, the nine artists involved are called to destroy and rebuild, cancel the dimension of the original space and activate the conversion of space into another space. All this brings back to memory the projects, spanning his entire lifetime, developed by Gregor Schneider ("a wall in front of a wall, a window in front of a window"), but also the various interventions aimed at transforming places normally open to the public into art pieces, from the sculpture-bars by Tobias Rehberger at the Venice Biennale in 2009 – conceived after the Hotel Americano in New York – up to many other places that would be too long to list here. Here we are in front of, or rather within, a space in which the original meaning of the gym, linked to the classical concept of the gymnasium, is lost to make room to a homologated, aseptic, anonymous space, addressed solely to the care of the body according to the well-known standards of beauty, health and lifestyle imposed by today's media and adverts. The transformation process that until now has often led the viewers to immerse themselves into a different space – not only display but also environment – in this context paradoxically goes back to being display. The circular path that has brought us here has gone one step further. 'Display' understood in its most current meaning, a middle ground between real and virtual, or between real and fictional, the shadow area normally absorbed through the filter of a screen appears not real but almost. The process thus arrives at a further stage of its development, partaking in the creation of a scene, in which the elements involved come close to the real world, they brush against it, deceive the viewer, and only on closer inspection one recognizes the scam. Like on a movie set, of which every detail has been recreated, the scenes have been set up, the extras are ready to enter the scene, but we realize that the backdrop is made of cardboard, the carpet is not fitted, the extras are motionless mannequins. The advanced model, born in the wake of previous attempts to turn an environment into another environment, intentionally leads us into a third hemisphere, the one closest to our age, which turns fiction into the reality that we want to see, where behind a watching big brother's mirror, a morbid public is ready to swear that it is real. And thus, stereotyped patterns, based on identification-ambiguity-recognition-estrangement-involvement rules resurface, a plastic world where we are viewers/players/viewers (again).



The camouflaging of the environment starts from the "visionary" installations by **Anthea Hamilton** (London, UK, 1978), featuring John Travolta, whose *Portrait of John (Rubbernecking II)* (2014) – still tied to the vintage imagery of the first films – is isolated and duplicated as the image-symbol of a static aesthetic will, which is non-narrative and definitely iconic. This huge wallpaper is completed by the catatonic movement of the video *Yogic Travolta Screensaver and Clock* (2012), which instead sees the actor floating in a rarefied environment, designed in relation to space and time, with an emphasis on the relationship between the art piece and the surrounding environment through the mechanics of the human body. The weightlessness of an artifact space in which the tension between space and time comes loose is also found in the static presence of the piece by **Ei Arakawa** (Fukushima, Japan, 1977) *Smell Image A (Navasana I)* (2012), both a sculpture and a scenic element. Movement, here only alluded to by the tension suggested by the dummy in the yogic Boat Pose, is the element through which the artist's interest focuses on the performance of state and motion changes of the human body in relation to the public and the surrounding environment. Even the sports equipment exploited by **Billy Rennekamp** (Louisville, Kentucky, USA, 1988) highlight the gap between object-function-fiction. The artist's endless quest for installation options of objects and images belonging to the sphere of game and sport reinvents their function in a process of transformation of sense. Here, three steel-tubing sculptures evoke the typical structure of the ball trolleys found in high school gyms, although the visitor ultimately detects the sham. Object related with games, sport and sportswear, are central to the work of **Mike Goldby** (Toronto, ON, 1991) and Jack Lavender. The first works with sportswear in a pictorial sense, investigating the structure of the concepts of trend, promotion and branding, in their interchangeable role within the definition of socio-cultural codes. In the artist's *Stretch* (2014) series, the crude materialism of a sports brand becomes an experimentation exercise on the power of a trend and the recognizability of a brand through newly configured forms.

On the contrary, **Jack Lavender** (UK, 1983), with the attitude of a collector, gathers found objects and posters, depriving them of their symbolic value, which is given back to them only at the end of the artist's intervention. The artist dwells effortlessly within the gap between reality and deception, because "the important thing is the way the object, either fake or real, influences the viewer and the space around it." The element of unreality thus takes over when real objects are used, manipulated, and re-elaborated by the actors in play. **Gabriele De Santis** (Rome, IT, 1984) plays on this subtle *fil rouge*, offering the public flasks of energy drinks, typically used in sports training. Here, a spatio-temporal transition between fiction and reality occurs when the mixture concocted by the artist with alcoholic beverages is also the drink he normally offers visitors during the opening of his exhibitions. The viewer is thus called to identify with the actor in a play, in the *mise en scène* of a *comédie humaine*, thus ending up playing two roles at the same time. Elements which bring fiction immediately back to reality are the graphic works by **Federico Pepe** (Omegna, IT, 1976), who soars over the boundaries of genre to announce the opening of a new gym in the heart of the Marais, or the sound that invades the spaces of Athletic Valentin, where **Daniel Keller** (Detroit, USA, 1976) replaces the aerobic pop normally used to motivate and boost fitness addicts, with a mix of two 'EP' tracks named after the book *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, by the economist Albert Hirschman. According to Hirschman, among company and organization staff there are two types of human behavior, which can be classified as 'exit' or 'voice' analogous to 'flight' or 'fight.' The first indicates submissive attitudes of desertion and escape – but also a closed way of life like fitness, meditation or Hikikomori NEET can induce –, while the second indicates the ability to react and show disapproval. Thus, Keller reflects on opposite human reactions, offering a literal description of them rather than exploiting the emotional element of sound. And thus we come to the last details – the most important in a scene – prior to the opening of the curtain for Athletic Valentin. These include a pair of sneakers forgotten in a corner. This is *Amitié au soleil d'argent (sample)* (2013), a piece by **Arlie Annabelle** (Tarbes, France, 1986) who, with a touch of lightness, leaves the trace of a passage – maybe of a majorette training...

(text by Andrea Baccin & Ilaria Marotta)

*CURA* is a curatorial project based in Rome that develops the production of a magazine, a publishing house, an exhibition space, an online platform and a series of off-site projects that include different editorial and exhibition activities across many levels. Established in 2009 by Ilaria Marotta and Andrea Baccin, *CURA* is presented as a moving platform, dedicated to exchange and dialog between curatorial operations, critics, research activities and artistic contemporary productions and collaboration within an institutional and independent reality. The curatorial activities, characterized by nomadism, and alternated with exhibitions at *cura*'s basement, are presented as the concrete development of content elaborated in the editorial field, as well as of a wider vision, which is deployed across many levels, utilizing a plurality of supports. Editorial and curatorial consultancy undertaken at an international level places *CURA* at the center of large scale research projects in cooperation with major European institutions. These include, *PIANO*, a curatorial platform of exchange between Italy and France, promoted by d.c.a and L'Europe des Artistes, a project on european scale promoted by Astrup Fearnley Museet di Oslo, Fondation Beyeler di Basilea, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Recent exhibitions include: *Dreams That Money Can't Buy*, MAXXI National Museum of the Arts of XXI century, Rome (2014); *The Time Machine (the Survivors)*, Frutta, Rome (2013); *Sandy Island (AB project)*, Nomas, Rome (2013); *wanna be a masterpiece*, ISCP, New York (2013); *Commercial Road Project*, London Metropolitan University, London (2010-2013). Upcoming exhibitions include a choral project at the American Academy of Rome (January 2015) and a programme of exchange between independent spaces including, among others, the Lissabon Kunsthalle, Lisbon and Fondazione Giuliani, Rome (May 2015).

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**Annabelle Arlie**

Tarbes, France, 1986. Lives and works in Tarbes.

Recent two persons exhibitions: Annabelle Arlie and Adrien Vescovi, *Sugar and spice*, Galerie Torri, Paris, FR (2014); Annabelle Arlie and Maya Andersson, à Omnibus, Tarbes, FR (2014); Annabelle Arlie and Aaron Stock, *Mazeman*, Bahamas biennale gallery, Mukwanogo, Wisconsin, USA(2014). Recent group exhibitions: *One bite No space*, other project, Berlin, DE (2014); *Fool Disclosure*, Henningsen Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014).

*Amitié au soleil d'argent (sample)*, sport shoes, tinsel wig multicolor, 2013

Courtesy: the artist

**Ei Arakawa**

Fukushima, Japan, 1977. Lives and works in New York.

Arakawa is interested in the social spectacle of art in its entirety and in the artistic production in all its phases: preparation, waiting, tuning, creation, consumption, and destruction. The space of his performances contains every moment, from the intimacy of the design to the chaos of demolition. Always open to collaboration, the artist dances around (and with) the categories of art, involving other people in the creation of paintings, sculptures, drawings, magazines, videos and written pieces. People, objects and spaces overlap and collide, as if the very concept of art were skidding on ice, unable to find stability. Among his recent exhibitions: Hollybush Gardens, London, UK, with Karl Holmqvist (2014); Reena Spaulings Fine Art, NY, with Nora Schultz (2012); *Overduin and Kite*, Los Angeles (2012); CAC Brétigny, FR, curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc (2011); The Showroom, London (2011); Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, curated by Beatrix Ruff (2009). Among group shows: Gwangju Biennale (2014), curated by Jessica Morgan; Marino Marini, Florence (2014); The Whitney Biennial 2014, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014).

*Smell Image A (Navasana I)*, wood, fabric, metal, fragrances, 2012

Courtesy: the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York

**Gabriele De Santis**

Rome, IT, 1984. Lives and works in Rome.

Recent solo exhibitions: *The Dance Step of a Watermelon While Meeting a Parrot for the First Time*, Depart Foundation, Los Angeles, USA (2014); *Drop it like it's hot*, Galerie Valentin, Paris, FR (2014); *Which came first, the dice or the dots? Hmmm... the donut*, Limoncello, London, UK (2013). Recent group exhibitions: *Speedboat*, curated by Alex Ross, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, NY, USA (2014); *We've Got Mail*, curated by Adam Carr, MOSTYN, Wales, UK (2014); *New Works #1*, Sprovieri Gallery, London, UK (2013); *Footnotes*, curated by Valentinas Klimašauskas, CAC, Vilnius, LT (2013).

*Titolo, tecnica*, 2014

Courtesy: the artist and Frutta, Rome

**Mike Goldby**

Toronto, ON, 1991. Lives and works in Toronto.

Recent solo exhibitions: *Stress Sketch, Jr. Projects*, Toronto, ON (2014); *Premier Life*, Tomorrow Gallery, Toronto, ON (2013). Recent group exhibitions: *Bien ou Bien?*, Mon-Cheri, Brussels, BE (2014); *Grid Systems 2013*, Art Metropole, Toronto, ON (2013); *The Coffin Factory* curated by Manden Murphy, Toronto, ON (2013).

*Stretch (Grey Asics)*, Activewear jerseys, acrylic, wood, 2014

*Stretch (Green Pro-Combat)*, Activewear jerseys, acrylic, wood, 2014

Courtesy; the artist and Tomorrow Gallery, Toronto

**Anthea Hamilton**

London, UK, 1978. Lives and works in London.

Recent solo exhibitions: *HOUSE*, curated by Steffen Handylykken and Per-Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk, Oslo (forthcoming, fall 2014); *Sorry I'm Late*, firstsite, Colchester, UK (2012); *Les Modules*, Foundation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2012). Recent group exhibitions: *10th Gwangju Biennale: Burning down the house*, Gwangju, Korea (2014); *Better Homes*, curated by Ruba Katrib, Sculpture Center, NY (2013); *Abstract Cabinet*, Dave Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK (2013).

*Portrait of John (Rubbernecking II')*, wallpaper, 2014

*Yogic Travolta Screensaver and Clock*, video, 2012

Courtesy: the artist

**Daniel Keller**

Detroit, USA, 1986. Lives and works in Berlin.

Daniel Keller is a Berlin-based artist currently focused on speculative notions of progress, technological disruption and reaction from the perspective of an artist operating within the global networked economy. He co-organized TEDxVaduz at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in December 2013. In 2014, he participated in residencies at Casa Maaud, Mexico City; Siliqoon, MAMbo, Bologna (IT) and among his recent exhibitions *Private Settings*, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw (PL) (2014); *Moving Museum*, Istanbul (TR) (2014); *Speculations on Anonymous Materials*, curated by Susanne Pfeffer, Fridericianum, Kassel (DE) (2013).

Recent solo exhibition: *Avoid, Control, Accept, Transfer*, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin, DE (2014); *eVita*, Casa Maaud, Mexico City, MEX (2014); *Lazy Ocean Drift*, New Galerie, Paris (2013). Recent group exhibitions include *Flat Neighbors*, Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York (2014); *Moving Museum*, Istanbul (2014); *How Far Away is Mars*, T293, Rome (2013). With AIDS 3D he participated to the show *Art Post-Internet*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (RC).

*Exit / Voice*, 2 audio files, mp3 player, speakers

Courtesy: the artist

## Jack Lavender

UK, 1983. Lives and works in London

Recent solo exhibitions: *Jack Lavender*, Mihai Nicodim, Los Angeles, USA (2014); *Dreams Chunky*, The Approach, London, UK (2013); *Smok Gang*, And/Or Gallery, London, UK (2010). Recent group exhibitions: *On the Devolution of Culture*, Rob Tufnell, London, UK (2014); *The Unpainted Landscape*, Mihai Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2014); *Cabinet of Threads*, Van Horn, Dusseldorf, DE (2013).

### *Space raider orange ball*, 2012

Giant tennis ball, posters, glass, Spongebob sticker, bag of crisps, magnets, paint, steel  
190 x 100 x 20 cm

### *Jordan*, 2013

Laminated poster, Chain, ceramic lemon, drift wood, gold ring, rope, woven chain, hooks, copper wire, chocolate sweet tube, bull dog clip. Dimensions Variable

Courtesy the artist and The Approach, London

## Federico Pepe

Omegna, VB, Italy, 1976. Lives and works in Milan.

He's a graphic designer, artist and editor born in Italy, in 1976. He lives and works in Milan. In 2004 he founded together with Pierpaolo Ferrari, the art project *Le Dictateur*, a published collection of projects, pictures and graphic works that received several international awards. Selected by MoMA Museum in New York for their *Millennium Magazine* review, this project was also included in international contexts such as *NO SOUL FOR SALE* (a project curated by Gioni, Cattelan, Alemani), TATE Modern, London (2010), and at Family Business (a space directed by Gioni and Cattelan) in New York. In April 2013 he was invited by Palais de Tokyo in Paris to present a five day long special project. So far this year, he has been finalist at the Curate award established by Fondazione Prada and the Qatar Museums Authority.

## Billy Rennekamp

Louisville, Kentucky, USA, 1988. Lives and works in Berlin.

Recent solo exhibitions: *Grow Room*, Yoga Center, Gothenburg, SE (2012), *WIN WIN*, Cleopatra's, Brooklyn, NY, USA (2010). Recent group exhibitions: *The Time Machine (The Survivors)*, Frutta Gallery, Rome, IT (2013), *#2*, Johnny's project, Reykjavik, IS (2013), *We Don't Know We Don't Know*, Primetime, Brooklyn, NY, USA (2012), *Plantimplant*, Dittrich & Schlechtriem, Berlin, DE (2012).

*Fab Racket End (football configuration 1/3)*, vinyl leather, thread, tubular steel ball rack, 2014

*Supple Demand (soccer configuration 2/3)*, vinyl rubber, thread, tubular steel ball rack, 2014

*I Tread Longingly (basketball configuration 3/3)*, eather, thread, tubular steel ball rack, 2014

Courtesy: the artist